

The artwork is a vertical composition. At the top, there is a dense arrangement of floral and leaf patterns in shades of pink, purple, and green, set against a dark, textured background. Below this, a woman's face is visible, rendered in a style that blends with the surrounding textures. The face has a soft, ethereal quality. The lower portion of the artwork features a dark, textured background with a repeating pattern of small, light-colored dots. A prominent feature is a series of vertical, wavy lines that create a sense of movement and depth, overlaid with various colors including red, orange, and blue. The overall effect is one of intricate detail and layered meaning.

*Virginia Maksymowicz*  
**THE LIGHTNESS  
OF BEARING**

Exhibition on View  
September 5 - October 28, 2023

**ROWAN UNIVERSITY**  
**ART GALLERY & MUSEUM**

Virginia Maksymowicz  
THE LIGHTNESS  
OF BEARING

*The Lightness of Bearing* is a selection of works by Virginia Maksymowicz that considers the symbolic resilience and strength of the female figure in art and architecture. Pulling from antiquity, Virginia blends the mythology of caryatids, architectural columns of women effortlessly bearing the weight of massive architectural structures, with contemporary imagery of women from indigenous and ethnic cultures bearing the weight of ritualistic traditions. Included are two new pieces that respond to historically significant spaces now occupied by Rowan University, in a nod to its centennial celebration. One work honors the Lenni-Lenape who were native to the land. The other is an installation inspired by Hollybush mansion and its mistress, Josephine Allen Whitney, wife of Thomas Whitney, whose factory gave Glassboro its name.



Virginia Maksymowicz was born in 1952 in Brooklyn, NY, and now lives in Philadelphia, PA. She received a B.A. in Fine Arts from Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (1973) and an M.F.A. in Visual Arts from the University of California, San Diego (1977).

Upon returning to New York, Maksymowicz spent two years working under the auspices of the Cultural Council Foundation's CETA Artists Project (1978-79), a federally-funded program that employed 10,000 artists nationwide (the same number as the WPA's Federal Art Project).

She has exhibited her work at the Franklin Furnace, Alternative Museum, the Elizabeth Foundation and Grey Gallery in New York City; the Mitchell Museum in Illinois; the Michener and Woodmere Museums in Pennsylvania; and in college, university, and nonprofit galleries throughout the U.S. and abroad.

She is a past recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in sculpture (1984), and over the years has been honored with other grants and awards. Her artwork has been reviewed in *Sculpture Magazine*, the *New York Times*, *New York Newsday*, the *New Art Examiner* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Her series, *The History of Art*, appears on the cover of *The Female Body*, published by the University of Michigan Press.

She has been a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome (2006; 2012; 2014), an artist-in-residence at the Powel House Museum in Philadelphia (2006-07), and a fellow at the Vermont Studio Center (2007).

Maksymowicz is a Professor Emerita of Art, Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

“My artwork in recent years has followed a complex journey through architecture and figurative elements. I am interested in the metaphorical implications of the female body, especially when tied to place: buildings, fountains and other structures. The Erechtheion caryatids and the cult of Demeter, with their legacy in architectural ornamentation, continue to symbolically undergird the material and social character of human society, and the role women play in it. I do not aim to “prove” the connections I make through historical methodology. Instead, as a visual artist, I want to give them tangible form so that they can literally be seen from a new perspective.

The title of this exhibition, *The Lightness of Bearing*, was chosen specifically because of its play on words, which references feminist interpretations of architecture – in particular the Erechtheion caryatids. Although these female figures function as weight-bearing columns, they appear to perform their eternal duty without effort. This architectural form is a perfect metaphor for addressing the significance and power of women as structural supports for society.

In *Comparisons*, seven sets of paired images interleave architectural details with the bodies of women from a variety of ethnic traditions. *Caryatids in Five Books* displays photographic images of caryatids and verses from a poem by Romanian poet, Cristina-Monica Moldoveanu. *Panis Angelicus* blends the tangible with the ineffable, the material with the spiritual, and the architectural with the metaphorical. *Zhyttya*, which in Ukrainian means life, references classical architecture, Demeter and Persephone, and the traditional Christmas *didukh* in the eternal hope for spring. Throughout

the show myth becomes matter, through the overlay of imagery. *Bearers* and *Mascarons* present other links between the human body and architecture. “Mascaron” — a word that literally means “big mask” — is the architectural term for an ornamental face peering from the façade of a building. These faces are usually, although not always, human, and sometimes are grotesque. But rather than scaring us away, these mascarons seem to be protecting us. During the initial days of the COVID pandemic, I found myself drawn to, and drawing, these figures, relying upon a totally unexpected type of mask.

*The Architecture of Memory* references another architectural concept, which posits that rooms can function as receptacles of memory. This new installation, made specifically for the Rowan University Art Gallery, employs casts of architectural molding from one of the rooms in Hollybush. It frames the memory of Josephine Allen Whitney, who gave birth to seven children in that house, but about whom history remembers very little.

*The Garden of Earthly Delights* was made for an upper room at the Boland Gallery at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. The gallery’s walls were framed by architectural molding. Working within those constraints, I created a series of festoon-like wreaths encircling a woman’s face. The faces have fruits or vegetables forced into their mouths, with words underneath that are used to describe the characteristics of those fruits . . . or, allegorically, that are often used to describe the characteristics of women.”

-Virginia Maksymowicz



Festa dos Tabulieiros, Tomar, Portugal — Caryatid Corinthian Capital, Lecce, Italy



Corinthian Capital Column, Vatican Museums — Woman Carrying Baskets, Ghana



Canephora, Vatican Museums, Rome, Italy — Folk Statue, Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, EUR, Rome, Italy



Caryatid in Catania, Sicily — Balinese Banten, Indonesia



Bread and Salt Welcome, Russia — Angel of Peace Monument, Munich



Zuni Water Carrier, New Mexico — Sphere Finial Column



Lenape Woman, Delaware Tribe — Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert Column, France

*Comparisons*, 2015 - 2023  
Inkjet print on silk, wooden dowels,  
42 x 96 inches each





*Caryatids in Five Books*, 2012  
 Poem by Cristina-Monica Moldoveanu,  
 hydrostone, lazertran, wood, acrylic paint,  
 11 x 7.25 x 1 inches each



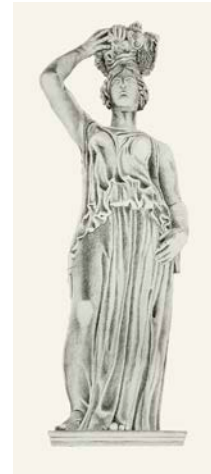
Folk Statue



Simonetti Angel



Demeter



Vatican Canephora



Isis



Hadrian Caryatid



*Panis Angelicus*, 2009-2023  
 Hydrostone and fiberglass/resin, bread  
 casts from loaves,  
 Approximately 72 x 48 inches



*Zhyttya (Life)*, 2022  
 Fiberglass resin, marble chips, wheat,  
 72 x 26 inches

*Bearers*, 2008/2015  
 Inkjet print from graphite drawing,  
 22 x 48 inches each



Pasco 695



San Luis 2948



Anselmo Aieta 1089



Defensa 1024



Liniers 1846



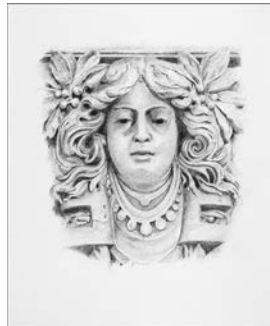
Garay 3231



Cabrera 3899



Entre Rios 1521



Alisana 2540



Billinghurst 1741



Salta 572



Combate de los Pozos 1590

Mascarons, 2020-21  
Graphite and charcoal pencil on rag paper, from photos made in Buenos Aires, Argentina,  
14 x 17 inches each

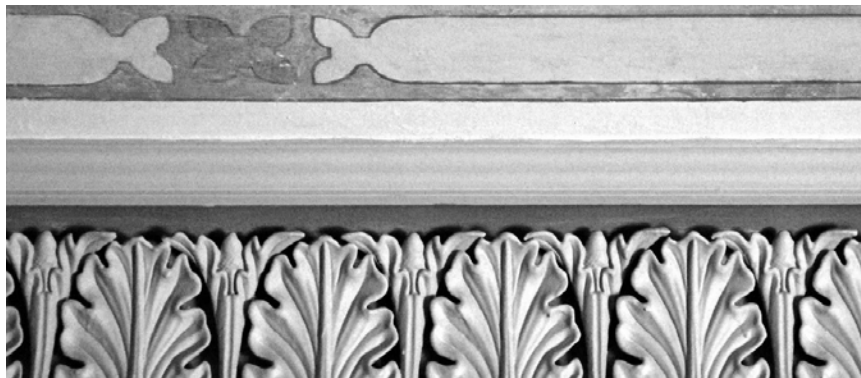


Garden of Earthly Delights, 1998  
Handmade paper and acrylic paint, faces cast from life,  
36 inches diameter each





*The Architecture of Memory* (detail), 2023  
Hydrostone, wood, mixed-media,  
Approximately 180 x 180 inches



Close up of molding in Hollybush Mansion



Hollybush  
Mansion  
C 1850

Built in 1849, Hollybush has had many lives: it was the Whitney Mansion, home to the well-known South Jersey glassmaking family until the early 1900s; a dorm for the earliest students of Glassboro Normal School, now Rowan University, founded in 1923; and the residence for the University's presidents for many years until it was restored in 2003 as a reception and meeting venue. The Italianate villa is one of the most revered buildings on the Rowan University campus and in Glassboro.

"Four years after he built Holly Bush, Thomas Whitney married his second cousin, Josephine Allen Whitney, of New Orleans. Thomas married relatively late in life, if forty years of age can be so considered. Advanced age, however, proved no great handicap, for Thomas, with Josephine's help, produced seven children—six boys and one girl.

'Mrs. Josephine Whitney, during her life, was a living duplicate of Queen Victoria of England. She glowed so in this feature that she read widely and well-studied herself on the subject. She copied the dress of the Queen especially in the lavender purple robes that the Queen delighted to wear when out riding.'

Josephine Whitney was no ordinary woman. Among her attributes was a touch of vanity. There are old-time Glassboro residents, for example, who insist that Josephine fancied herself as the town's Queen Victoria, then the proud ruler of the British Empire. In a letter to a friend, a long-deceased Glassborite wrote:

Mrs. Whitney often would appear on the roads of Glassboro, seated in an open Phaeton, drawn by two beautiful white horses and as the people of Glassboro admired she was in her glory."

*The Glassboro Story*  
1779-1964  
Robert D. Bole and  
Edward H. Walton, Jr.

# ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

Rowan University Art Gallery & Museum serves as a vibrant cultural destination for South Jersey, the Rowan community, and surrounding region. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive, accessible, and just environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration between exhibiting artists, students, faculty, and the general public through the presentation of interdisciplinary art exhibitions, artist talks and other public programming. Our mission is to present diverse forms of contemporary art by professional artists with content that is thought provoking, relevant, and timely. With our exhibitions and programming, we seek to engender curiosity and a passion for contemporary art, enrich the quality of life for area residents, and create a welcoming and inclusive cultural destination at Rowan University.

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Glassboro, NJ 08028

Information  
[rowan.edu/artgallery](http://rowan.edu/artgallery)  
[artgallery@rowan.edu](mailto:artgallery@rowan.edu)

Gallery Hours  
Mon-Fri, 10:00 - 5:00 PM  
Sat, 11:00 - 5:00 PM

**OPEN TO ALL**  
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