

— Brendan Carroll

I am an artist, writer, and curator.

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Babs Reingold

One of the most enduring examples of urban poverty from the early twentieth century is the clothesline, a section of rope slung between tenement buildings on which wet linens may be hung out to dry.

Artist Babs Reingold has firsthand knowledge of poverty, and the clothesline is a reoccurring motif in her work. As an adolescent living in public a housing complex in Cleveland, Ohio, she endured grinding poverty, and the indignities foisted upon the underprivileged – high crime rate, inadequate housing, lack of access to basic social services.

Reingold escaped the cycle of poverty to become a successful artist. In her work, she draws on her early experiences of hardship to create elaborate installations using domestic objects and natural materials like clotheslines, hair, animal skins, silk organza, and tea.

I recently caught up with Reingold as she made some final preparations for a new exhibition she's participating in at the Harold B. Lemmerman Gallery and Visual Arts Gallery, which is part of NJCU. The show, called *Flesh Art*, explores the role of flesh-human skin-in contemporary art; it opens next Thursday, Jan. 27, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.

You were born in Caracas, Venezuela. What brought you to the United States, and how did you wind up in Bayonne?

From Caracas we moved to Barbados. My father was in the industrial sewing machine business with his brother. They had a falling out and my father took a job in Dallas, TX, where my father went to work for Union Special. I was six years of age at the move. My father was a photographer too; though he never made a living from photography he sold some of his photos to National Geographic.

Bayonne?

After my MFA from SUNY Buffalo, I wanted to be in NYC. In 1991, we bought a brownstone on Hamilton Park in Jersey City, near enough. While in JC, my studio was in Hoboken, where I ran the co-op artist group that occupied the 6th floor of the Neumann Leather building. The group is still going.

Ten years later we sold our brownstone and were able to buy two properties. One was a home in Tybee Island, GA., where I was near all the art activity generated by SCAD in Savannah; the second was a small building in Bayonne. I always look for a live-work situation. I had a large split-level space in the Tybee house for my studio, while I took a storefront in the Bayonne building for the studio.

The painter Mike Longo generously shared his studio with me at Neumann Leather building – we were across the hall from Tim Daly. I loved being in the space, going to work, hanging out with the other artists. What was it like for you to have a studio in Neumann Leather?

I loved my studio. I had a large space on the 6th floor, 900 sq feet. I ran the co-op, was on the lease and collected the rents. There was a good group of artists. I missed it a little after I left but I really love having my studio where I live. It is important to be able to work at any time of day or night. I would not go back to a group rental situation.



Babs Reingold's 'Hung Out to Dry No. 4' measures approximately 6 feet by 12 feet by 9 feet and is made with encaustic, hair, silk organza, stockings, rust, tea, door plate, door knob, cheesecloth, thread, clothesline, and clothespins.

How long have you been an artist? When did you first begin to make things with your hands?

BR: Ever since I can remember, I was constructing objects and drawing. I used to watch my father in the darkroom; I loved seeing the images appear. I remember when I was eleven, I constructed a large colored pencil drawing for Halloween and filled an 8-foot-wide picture window by pasting together on 8.5x11" sheets of paper. I love to work with my hands.