



DIANA CHERBULIEZ

Diana Cherbuliez grew up in the suburbs of Scarsdale, New York, and received an AA from Bard College at Simon's Rock in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, and an MFA from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. She has exhibited widely in New York, Massachusetts, and Maine, where she has been featured at the Portland Museum of Art and the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. Currently, her sculpture is included in *Women Pioneers III: Vanguard* at the University of New England Art Gallery in Portland. A frequent panelist and student mentor, Cherbuliez created a site-responsive installation—supported by the Percent for Art program administered by the Maine Arts Commission—in the public school on Vinalhaven Island, where she has been living since 1993.

Cherbuliez's sculptures are dark, absurd, intriguing, smart, and hilarious. Seemingly unwilling to accept the ordinary limitations of a given material's properties, associations, and common uses, she explores its possibilities in a highly skilled and imaginative way, so that meaning, medium, and technique of each piece align magnificently.

"I've always had a compulsion to make things," Cherbuliez says. Her work is infused by a rich and vibrant interior life that transmutes forms into equivalences of psychogenic experiences, dreams, and memories. She has molded melted vinyl records into intricately engineered bridges

(symbols of transition), arranged cigarette butts into a hand grasping its own tail (an illumination of addictive, self-destructive behavior), and created a Sleeping Beauty out of dust collected from under her bed (symbolizing the length of time it took her to give up waiting for somebody).

The title of *Let Myself Down* is evocative and intentionally ambiguous on many levels. It may connote an acknowledgment of past behavior or could point to the future. It could be an expression of relaxation or of regret. An eight-foot-long rope made of the artist's hair is draped over a bracket carved of applewood. An apple symbolizes the forbidden fruit from the Tree of

Knowledge of Good and Evil and implies self-consciousness, but is also an attribute of Venus, the goddess of love. Does the bracket double as a gallows or does it represent Rapunzel's tower? Is this an end or a beginning? When Cherbuliez imagines different turns to a narrative, or allows wordplays and visual jokes to overlap with critical social issues, an undeniable magic emerges in her sculptures. "I try to present an alternative path to some classic narratives," she says. "I guess they're structures, in a sense, for my personal, social, and artistic concerns."