AKG&

Sarah Braman: Finding Room

July 30, 2022–March 19, 2023

Frank Lloyd Wright’s Graycliff
6472 Old Lake Shore Road
Derby, New York

BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM
**Outside**

01  
Sit, 2022  
Precast concrete, steel, glass

02  
Stay, 2022  
Precast concrete, steel, glass

**First Floor**

03  
Reading, 2020  
Table, glass, maple, book paint

04  
Friend, 2020  
Maple, found wood, and glass

05  
Massachusetts, 2017  
Found door and chair, wood, window film, acrylic, and fabric dye

06  
Her desk, 2019  
Found furniture, anodized aluminum, glass, and fabric dye

07  
Paula, 2018  
Wood, glass, and chair

08  
Blue coffee, 2019  
Painted aluminum and glass

09  
Cooking (For Phil), 2021  
Prying pan, glass, wood

**Second Floor**

10  
Your Room, 2017  
Found table, laminated glass, wood, acrylic paint, dyed fabric

11  
Her House, 2019  
Desk parts, plywood, and colored glass

12  
8 AM, 2017  
Glass, steel frames, wood, acrylic, and fabric dye

13  
Tuesday Dinner, 2018  
Wood, glass, and spoons
When we grow accustomed to our day-to-day environment, we may come to believe that the spaces we live in are unremarkable. Artists like Sarah Braman hope that we take another look. Braman encourages us to think about the ways in which function, history, aesthetics, and spirituality continually shape our immediate environment. Brought meaningfully to the forefront of our minds when we encounter Braman’s sculptures on the Graycliff grounds, we are unable, at least momentarily, to remain indifferent to these spaces.

Braman makes domestically-scaled indoor and monumental outdoor sculptures that celebrate everyday life. In her indoor practice, she combines found objects like furniture, doors, and pieces of scrapyard vehicles with colorful geometric volumes. Composed by similar means, her outdoor sculptures, made from concrete culverts that lie beneath our roads and buildings, are enlivened by the addition of colored glass. This exhibition is the very first time that viewers can experience Braman’s indoor and outdoor sculptures together, and it is the first opportunity for these practices to speak to one another. In the sunporch on the first floor of Graycliff, while standing beside Reading, 2020, viewers can look through the window to see the concrete sculpture Stay, 2022. Each sculpture features books selected by the artist to invite prolonged engagement. The cube of colored glass in Reading has an airy, voluminous quality that almost floats, in contrast to Stay’s heavy, opaque walls. The weight and groundedness of Stay, nestled as it is on the grass and among the trees, suggests it has been in this location long before any of us came along. One might imagine it to be a found object, like the cookery and furniture included in Braman’s other artworks, her intervention the enlivening addition of colored glass and books as she works with the environment. In this, she shares much with architect Frank Lloyd Wright (American, 1867–1959).

Situating Finding Room on and within Graycliff, designed by Wright in 1926, places Braman’s work in conversation with this architectural masterpiece. In their practices, Wright and Braman explore the relationship of nature and found elements to humanmade objects, drawing attention to lived experience with deceivingly simple formal gestures. As you walk through Graycliff, you will see that Wright combined glass, wood, and stone taken directly from the site to create the intricate details of the organic style of architecture that became his legacy. Braman uses similar materials to create forms that revere commonly overlooked aspects of daily life. The interaction between natural and humanmade materials and, perhaps especially, the dialogue between light and glass are springboards for both artists.

Braman’s sculptures can be viewed in relationship to the formal legacies of modernism, like Color Field painting and Minimalist sculpture. Instead of the reverent quality of a white-walled gallery, Braman’s preferred context is domestic, so that the sculptures are experienced as part of one’s everyday life. Placing her sculptures in a house that is itself part of the modernist tradition yet also carries the intimacy of a beloved family home, underscores how Braman’s work both resists and embraces modernist traditions to reconsider our lived environment. When you encounter a work like Her House, 2019, in Isabelle’s bedroom, you witness the glow generated by light passing through the pink and yellow glass volume, while at the same time feeling the warmth of the well-loved and sweetly decorated bedroom that belonged to the house’s matron, Isabelle Martin.

Like Graycliff itself, the monumental outdoor pieces on its grounds will respond to and be changed by the seasons: over the course of the exhibition, both of these structures—these containers for life—will look out onto Lake Erie, be bathed in the heat of sunlight in the summer, witness to autumn, and be draped with snow in the winter. Changing weather and light conditions will provide varied visual and physical experiences of Braman’s sculptures, inviting multiple visits and fostering an ongoing engagement with this important site. Much like Wright’s designs, Braman’s outdoor works rely on human interaction to invigorate the space and connect it to its surrounding environment. They invite viewers to enter their light-filled spaces and be enveloped by her chosen materials. It is from within these volumes that one can truly appreciate Braman’s use of colored glass. One witnesses the additive mixing of colors that emanate from the panes, and contemplating the fullness of these spaces and their relationship to the surrounding landscape.

Shown together, Braman’s indoor and outdoor works have an even greater impact than when they are seen separately. Encountering them inside the home, the viewer takes in Braman’s sculptures as beautiful, external objects: one can walk around them, witnessing the changing play of color and unexpected juxtapositions with the setting. But one participates in her outdoor work: a visitor stands inside of the heavy concrete sculpture, where their own body is colored by the light, and they feel, as well as see, the weight and volume of concrete as they sit within it. Both deeply personal and visually enveloping, the experience of Braman’s sculptures changes how we see the ordinary, stretching our perceptual abilities—from without and within.

Sarah Braman (she/her) makes sculptures that serve as monuments to everyday life. Interested in the interplay between sensory experience and emotional resonance, Braman combines found materials with natural objects and volumes of glass colored in her distinctive palette, suggesting themes of home, family, and nature, with joyful immersion in lived experience and emotional life.

Braman was born in 1970 in Tonawanda, New York, and currently lives and works in Amherst, Massachusetts. She commutes to New York City most weeks to work with CANADA, an artist-run gallery where she has been a managing partner for twenty-one years.

Braman earned a BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and an MFA from Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. Her solo exhibitions include True Blue Mirror, with Ellen Berkenblit, McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco, California (2019); Growth, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York (2019); and Here, Marlborough Contemporary, London (2017). Braman has also participated in group exhibitions at Crystal Bridges, Bentonville (2019); MASS MoCA, North Adams (2017–18); and Kunsthalle Helsinky, Finland (2016). Braman currently has outdoor work installed for public view at Art Omi in Ghent, NY and University of Houston. In 2013, she was the recipient of the Maud Morgan Prize from MFA, Boston.

Reflections

Find the work *Friend* in the living room. Take a moment to observe the piece from different angles and look through the panes of glass. Notice how the colors blend and change depending on where you are standing. How do these color changes transform the way you see Braman’s work? How do these colors reflect in the surrounding space?

There are everyday objects like a coffee mug, frying pan, desks, chairs, and other familiar items in these sculptures. What memories do these items evoke for you? Does the way Braman arranges these objects change the way you think about them?

What connections are being made between the Sarah Braman works and the rooms where they are displayed? How do the works connect to the past and the present?

How do you think the natural and human-made materials in the works relate to the rooms, buildings, and surroundings at Graycliff?

What points of connection or contrast can you make between Braman’s contemporary sculpture and Frank Lloyd Wright’s design?

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