

*Lily Cox-Richard:
The Stand (Possessing Powers)*

University of Mary Washington Galleries
Ridderhof Martin Gallery
March 18- May 3, 2015

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Lily Cox-Richard's work to the University of Mary Washington Galleries. *The Stand (Possessing Powers)* is contemporary sculpture with strong historical reference; it is at once beautiful and thought provoking, well crafted and conceptually compelling. Not only is this exhibition a delight for our visitors, it has offered the opportunity for faculty and students to be involved in the planning. Professor Marjorie Och and Exhibition Coordinator Rachel Hutcheson, to whom I am grateful, wrote the essays within this catalogue. Students of the Museum Studies minor have provided additional written material to accompany the exhibition. I extend my gratitude to Lily, who has been a joy to work with over the last months and who has graciously corresponded with our interns and students, as well as with all of the gallery staff. Finally, I would like to thank Hirsch & Adler Gallery, New York, New York, for lending us this extraordinary body of work.

Rosemary Jesionowski
Gallery Specialist

Mission Statement

The University of Mary Washington Galleries, comprised of the Ridderhof Martin Gallery and the duPont Gallery, are dedicated to advancing the educational goals of the University through the collection, preservation, exhibition, and interpretation of works of art. The Galleries promote arts education on campus and in the local community.

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Hours:

Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm
Saturday and Sunday, 1pm to 4pm.
Closed university holidays and break periods

Locations:

Ridderhof Martin Gallery, College Avenue at Seacobeck Street
duPont Gallery, inside duPont Hall, College Avenue at Thornton Street

Staff:

Rosemary Jesionowski, Gallery Specialist
Ashley Holdsworth, Collections Manager
Rachel Hutcheson, Exhibition Coordinator

Interns:

Kelsey Cunningham
Diana Inthavong
Dery Martinez Bonilla
Audrey Ricks

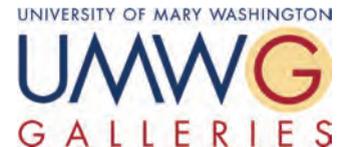
Information:

540.654.1013
www.umwgalleries.org



Cover: Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand*, installation view.
Second Street Gallery, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2013.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Opposite: Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Greek Slave (detail)*, 2013. Plaster, 66 x 33 x 33 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist.



*Lily Cox-Richard:
The Stand
(Possessing Powers)*



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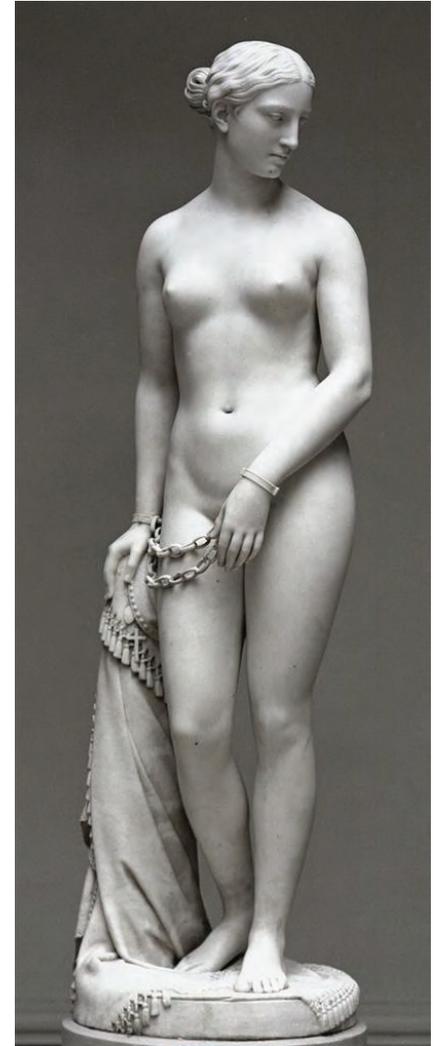
Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand* (Possessing Powers)

A viewer might interpret this title at face value – one takes a stand on an issue, and one sometimes longs to possess powers beyond what are natural. In this series of works, however, Lily Cox-Richard references 19th-century America's most important sculptor, Hiram Powers, and his series of life-size nude statues placed on high pedestals.

In 1847 Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave*, a marble sculpture depicting a female nude with her wrists chained together, was exhibited in museums across the United States. The American public's response was mixed – certainly there was curiosity, but also outrage. Powers's statue was one of many works produced in response to the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottoman Turks; Eugène Delacroix's famous *The Massacre of Chios*, a painting of 1824 now in the Louvre, is another example. However, Americans were not responding to the politics of Powers's statue as much as to the nudity represented. Indeed, scholars today cite this sculpture as the first nude by an American artist. But Powers, himself, was not in America – he had been living and working in Florence, Italy since 1837. And it was in Florence that he was introduced to the great works of Greek and Roman antiquity such as the Medici Venus (4th c. BCE), the source for *The Greek Slave*, as well as his sculptures *Eve* (1839-42), *California* (1850-58), and *The Last of the Tribes* (1867-72). And the Florentine Renaissance sculptors Donatello and Michelangelo also influenced Powers's *The Fisher Boy* (1844).

Understanding that Hiram Powers looked to antiquity and the Renaissance for inspiration and archetype is critical for appreciating the enigmatic and haunting works of Lily Cox-Richard. For both artists, traditions of representation are central to the making and meaning of art. A sympathetic viewer of *The Greek Slave* in the 19th century could understand this statue only as referencing the grand tradition of ancient art, otherwise the object would be considered obscene. For a few American viewers, however, *The Greek Slave* embodied the horrors of slavery as well as the position of women within a patriarchal society. His sculptures were and are open to interpretation.

Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, 1843. Marble, 67 inches high.
James Corcoran Gallery.





Lily Cox-Richard deliberately evokes these compelling sculptures by Powers in her direct repetition of motifs as well as in the titles of individual pieces. While the viewer does not see the figures carved by Powers, one cannot avoid seeing his work in its absence. Elaborate pedestals hold a memory of a standing female or male nude. Are we to read these 21st-century works as evocations of 19th-century attitudes, as works in progress that the sculptor has temporarily set aside, or as objects demanding that we contemplate how we define art and our relationship to it? If we return to the title, *The Stand (Possessing Powers)*, we now might understand Cox-Richard to be asking that we read the title literally and take a stand to possess the power to see what is and is not present.

Marjorie Och, Professor of Art History

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Greek Slave*, 2013. Plaster, 66 x 33 x 33 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

The Greek Slave toured America with a pamphlet explaining the narrative framework that justified the sculpture's nudity as well as expounded upon her piety:

The Slave has been taken from one of the Greek Islands by the Turks in the time of the Greek Revolution, the history of which is familiar to all. Her father and mother, and perhaps all her kindred, have been destroyed by her foes, and she alone preserved as a treasure too valuable to be thrown away. She's now among barbarian strangers, under the pressure of a full recollection of the calamitous events which have brought her to her present state; and she stands exposed to the people she abhors, and waits her fate with intense anxiety, tempered indeed by the support of her reliance upon the goodness of God. Gather all the afflictions together and add to them the fortitude and resignation of a Christian, and no room will be left for shame. Such are the circumstances under which the "Greek Slave" is supposed to stand.¹

¹Quoted in the exhibition catalogue *A Marvelous Repose: American Neo-Classical Sculpture, 1825-1876* by Eric W. Baumgartner (New York: Hirsch & Adler Galleries, 1996), 25.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Greek Slave (back)*, 2013. Plaster, 66 x 33 x 33 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

On opposite page: Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Greek Slave*, 2013. Plaster, 66 x 33 x 33 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.



"Sculpture is born in clay, dies in plaster, and is resurrected in marble."¹

Lily Cox-Richard's *The Stand (Possessing Powers)* begins with the appropriation of Hiram Power's ideal statues, reflecting upon the history of Neoclassical sculpture as well as inhabiting the process of making. Her laborious plaster works are modeled after the supports in Powers's sculptures. Marble sculptures rely upon this structure to distribute the weight of the figure otherwise it would break at the ankles. Disguised as tree trunks or other narrative details these supports also contextualize the nude body of the ideal sculpture. Negating the figure from its relationship with the stand, Cox-Richard's sculptures signal absence but emphasize the point of contact where the figure and support would have met.²

¹ Attributed to both Antonio Canova and Bertel Thorvaldsen.

² Nicholas Hartigan and Joan Kee, "Lily Cox-Richard: On the Powers of Taking a Stand," *Art Journal* (Winter, 2013), 79.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: California*, 2012.
Plaster, 70 x 22 x 22 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist.





Marble sculpting in the nineteenth century was an indirect process that required many translations in both additive and subtractive methods. The artist first sculpts a clay model. The model casts a negative plaster mold from which a positive plaster model is made. With the aid of calipers and a pointing machine the resulting plaster guaranteed the marble sculpture was a precise copy of the plaster reference. Powers pioneered carving directly into plaster, eliminating the need for the clay model altogether and preserving the direct relationship to the “hand” of the artist. Thus, Powers’s plaster sculptures can be called “original plasters” or original models.³ Similarly, Lily Cox-Richard’s sculptures are born as original plasters but lack a final “resurrection” in marble. As such, they maintain a fragile temporality.

Neoclassical sculptors’ use of marble was itself an appropriation of antiquity and the Renaissance, seen as the root of Western civilization and democracy. The nude in the nineteenth century however, had to convey a moralistic message through the purity of white marble⁴ and perfection of form in order to be acceptable to the public. Powers’s sculpture, *The Greek Slave* (1839) is known as the first nude exhibited with major success in the notoriously “fastidious”⁵ United States. Its positive reception was largely due to the nude’s framing with sculptural details such as the cross and locket on the draped column that “clothed” the figure in Christian virtue.

³ Donald Reynolds, *Hiram Powers and his Ideal Sculpture*, (New York: Garland Pub., 1977), 278-279.

⁴ Powers preferred Seravezza marble over Carrara specifically because of its whiteness and harder grain. See: Reynolds, *Hiram Powers and his Ideal Sculpture*, 270.

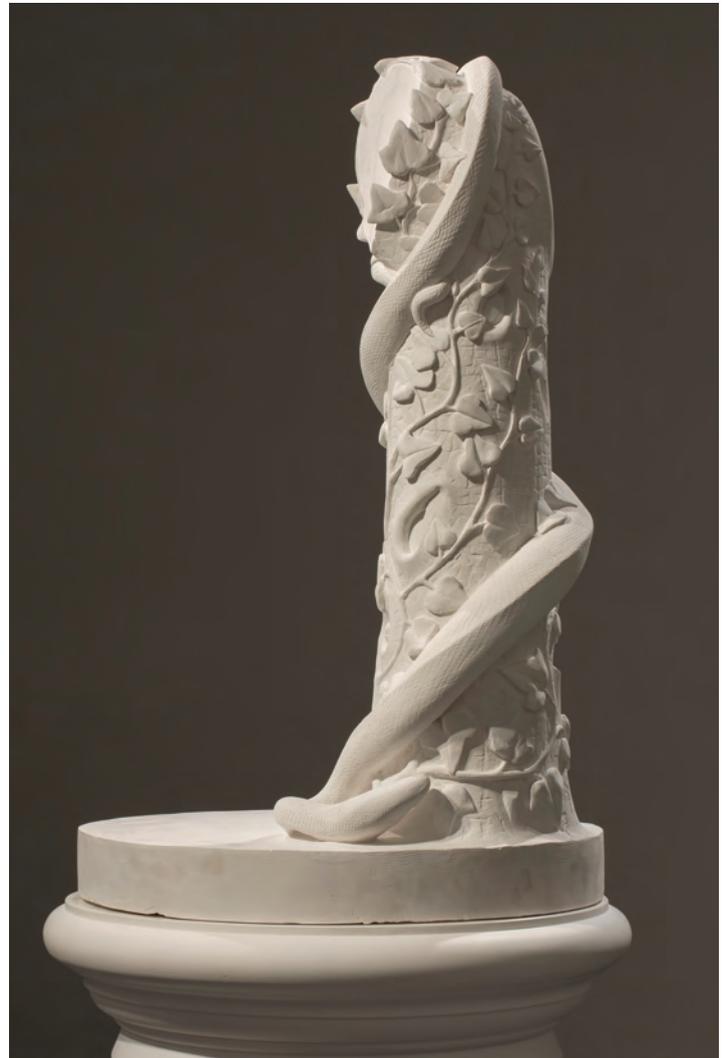
⁵ Her hands [will be] bound and in such a position as to conceal a portion of the figure thereby rendering the exposure of the nakedness less exceptionable to our American fastidiousness,” Hiram Powers quoted in *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-century America*, by Charmaine Nelson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 80.

Hiram Powers, *Eve Disconsolate*, modeled 1855-1861. Plaster. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Through slight alterations of these framing devices Cox-Richard's makes it evident that her appropriation is more complex than a facsimile. For instance, the resolute quartz pillar of *The Stand: California* bends and wrinkles impossibly, the snake's head of *The Stand: Eve Disconsolate* abstracts into a quizzical nub. These supporting elements once so essential to the structural soundness as well as the acceptable reception of Powers's ideal nudes are remnants of the obdurate language of Neoclassical sculpture reclaimed for contemporary audiences.

Rachel Hutcheson,
Exhibition Coordinator

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Eve Disconsolate*, 2013.
Plaster, 69 x 26 x 26 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.





Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Fisher Boy*, 2013. Plaster, 68 x 20 x 20 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Last of the Tribes*, 2010.
Plaster, 71 x 22 x 22 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist.



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Exhibition Checklist:

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Eve Disconsolate*, 2013. Plaster, 69 x 26 x 26 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Fisher Boy*, 2013. Plaster, 68 x 20 x 20 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: California*, 2012. Plaster, 70 x 22 x 22 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Last of the Tribes*, 2010. Plaster, 71 x 22 x 22 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: Greek Slave*, 2013. Plaster, 66 x 33 x 33 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *Shell, Manacles, Moccasin, Apple, Divining Rod*. Cast plaster objects.

Lily Cox-Richard, *America*, 2010. Graphite on paper, 14 x 11 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *Eve Disconsolate*, 2010. Graphite on paper, 14 x 11 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *Fisher Boy*, 2010. Graphite on paper, 14 x 11 inches.

Lily Cox-Richard, *Benjamin Franklin*, 2010. Graphite on paper, 14 x 11 inches.