



# Artists Speak: Roni Horn

**Born**  
1955, New York, NY

**Education**  
BFA Rhode Island School of Design; MFA Yale University

**Lives and Works**  
New York, NY

**Media & Materials**  
drawing, installation, photography

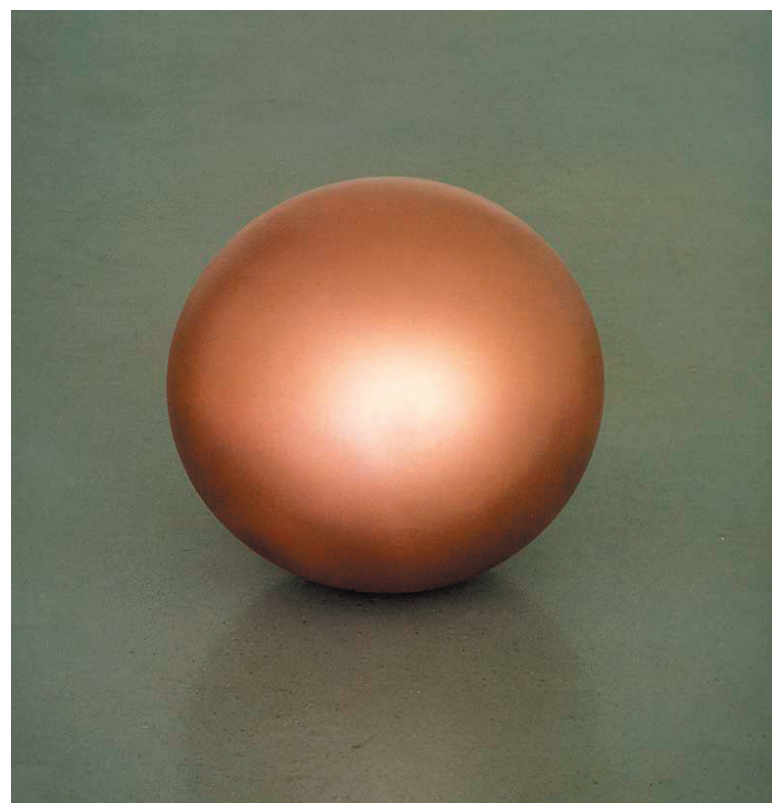
**Biography**  
Roni Horn explores the mutable nature of art through sculptures, works on paper, photography, and books. Horn crafts complex relationships between the viewer and her work by installing a single piece on opposing walls, in adjoining rooms, or throughout a series of buildings. She subverts the notion of ‘identical experience’, insisting that one’s sense of self is marked by a place in the here-and-there, and by time in the now-and-then. She describes her artworks as site-dependent, expanding upon the idea of site-specificity associated with Minimalism. Horn’s work also embodies the cyclical relationship between humankind and nature a mirror-like relationship in which we attempt to remake nature in our own image.

*“Aside from the physical, sensual reality of water, the thing that I love is its paradoxical nature. Water is something one’s attracted to largely for the light...but the Thames has this incredible moodiness, and that’s what the camera picks up. I never intended to have water in everything I do but I almost feel like I rediscover it again and again. It just finds its way back into new work...It isn’t me going out after water, I think water’s come in after me. I’m much more the prey and not the predator in that relationship.”*



Above: *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)—Image J, 1999*. Offset lithograph (photograph and text combined) on uncoated paper, 30 1/2 x 41 1/2 inches. *dude* Edition of 7. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York Below: *Doubt by Water, 2003-2004*. Installation view at Whitney Biennial 2004, Whitney. Museum of American Art, New York. Photographs: 16 1/2 x 22 inches each. Stanchions: 14 inches diameter x 70 1/2 inches overall height each. Photo by Bill Jacobson. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

*“Doubt By Water (2003-04) is a form that I’ve been thinking about for a while. It starts with a two-faced image. That’s really the core of the whole work getting a two-faced image (which is more or less like an object) into a meaningful relationship to space and the river, the glacial water, which is the gray surface, is a kind of cohesive link.”*



*Asphere, 1986-1993*. Solid copper, 12 inches x variable diameter. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

*“You get into this situation where your ‘identity’ takes over your actual being because you get stuck with whatever it is you resemble to other people—not who you are. They’re not necessarily the same thing.*

*I think of ‘Asphere’ as a self-portrait. I don’t think I made it as a self-portrait, but when I look at it I see that it has characteristics that I identify with very strongly. One of those qualities is that it’s not a sphere, and it’s nothing else. I can relate to that. It’s not an egg or a ball. It doesn’t have a name or a word that closes it off from things. In the best way, it’s just floating out there without a clear identity.*

*Of course people will say, “Oh, it’s like an egg.” But the point is that you use metaphor to make yourself feel at home in the world. You use metaphor to extinguish the unknown. And for me the problem is that the unknown is where I want to be. I don’t want it extinguished. So that’s where I try to fit the experience of a lot of my work—on that edge where the metaphors start falling apart or don’t really come together.”*

**Activity Suggestions:**


Create a series of lists that represent your ideas about personal identity, family history, learning from school, and philosophies or belief systems with which you are familiar. Turn these lists into a visual web or narrative that connects related words to tell a story about yourself or your family.

Find a body of water or a view of the sky and record your observations, thoughts, and feelings about it over the course of several days, in different weather. Present your observations as a series of images with accompanying text. Create a view of infinity. Position two mirrors opposite each other and place a small object in between. Write an illustrative paragraph or poem that describes your view of infinity and create a visual accompaniment.



Art21 Production Stills © Art21, Inc. 2006

Art21, Inc. is a non-profit contemporary art organization serving students, teachers, and the general public. Art21 produces the Emmy-nominated, nationally broadcast PBS series *Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century*, a wide range of education materials, and outreach programs. This multi-faceted project introduces audiences to a diverse range of contemporary visual artists working in the United States today and to the art they are producing now.

 For more ways to use Art21 in your classroom, check out:



Season One, Two and Three on VHS and DVD: to order call (800) 533-2847

Free Art21 Educators’ Guides: [www.pbs.org/art21/education/teachingmaterials](http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/teachingmaterials)



Find lesson plans and ideas for the classroom on the Art21 Web site and Online Lesson Library: [www.pbs.org/art21/education](http://www.pbs.org/art21/education)



Art21 slide sets from Davis Art Images: Call (800) 533-2847 ext. 253 to place your order.