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## Phyllida Barlow Talks 'Tryst' in Dallas

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By [Holly Haber](#)



**DALLAS** – Entering the Nasher Sculpture Center has become somewhat forbidding. Giant wooden crates tower overhead on a thicket of askew wooden stilts. The roomscape evokes the star ship invasion in “War of the Worlds.”

Welcome to “[Phyllida Barlow](#): tryst.” The acclaimed English artist, who shapes common materials into wild and mysterious tableaux, explores space as “a phenomenological experience, a poetic experience.”

“Tryst” is intended to explore the Renzo Piano building, Barlow explained at a preview, and give visitors “a way of looking at sculpture that involves them in almost a performative, choreographic role, where maneuvering around the space involves looking up, looking across and looking through.”

She explores suspension, cocooning and archetypal shapes in a parallel gallery in what Barlow called “playing with a very dysfunctional form of geometry.”

An uplifting experience awaits downstairs, where a dense patchwork of colored banners stretched high on wooden stanchions fills a glass-walled gallery and the space in front of it. Bright orange sandbags anchor the wooden stands to the floor, and visitors can meander — carefully — under the profusion of pink, orange, red, yellow, blue, purple and black banners that the artist described as “blanks” awaiting inscriptions of protest or celebration.

“I think there should be a sign here that says, ‘Enter at your own risk,’” Barlow said. “My one big regret is that we couldn’t make it wheelchair accessible.”

“Tryst” follows a big year for Barlow. She exhibited at both Tate Britain and the inaugural Kiev Biennale, where she received its top award — “The Most Significant Contribution for Contemporary Art.”

Noting that “Tryst” explores formal sculptural language in newly invented ways, Barlow said it is rooted in the primal act of making.

“Sculpture holds onto something that is an incredibly simple, very direct human urge and desire,” she asserted. “I feel there is something about the act of physically making that is becoming more and more removed from our everyday experiences. Children from the age of two become incredibly computer literate, so that very simple act of just enjoying the process of putting things together and wondering what they are, I think, is becoming less and less an everyday experience.”

Barlow usually destroys or recycles her work after an exhibition but she said “Tryst” may be retained.

“There is a kind of decision,” she said. “There is a sense of expediency. I think the idea of storing everything just seems to me ridiculous when I know that I could easily remake it, and it’s probably not expensive.”



