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Jess Perlitz, *Crotch Pipe*, 2019, steel, 90 x 15 x 24".  
 PORTLAND

### Jess Perlitz

HOLDING CONTEMPORARY  
 916 NW Flanders St  
 November 7–December 14, 2019

Jess Perlitz is well-known for her performances that embrace the awkwardness and embarrassment of inhabiting a body, with repetitive, slapstick-like movements and obsessive behaviors. Props or costumes (which recently took the form of rocks) inject allegory and myth into the mix. Her newest group of sculptures similarly addresses the body in uneasy terms, but here in the gallery, the terms of engagement are more mysterious.

Mounted on the wall near the gallery's front window is an outsize, handcrafted steel megaphone. Its horn arcs above visitors' heads, while its mouthpiece is anchored in the wall just a few feet above the floor. Connecting these two openings is a metal tube. Though the object appears to be an old piece of amplification technology, its mouthpiece is far too low for it to be functional. Its height is, in fact, that of Perlitz's crotch, hence the title *Crotch Horn*, 2019. To sound the work, the visitor must kneel like a supplicant or fellator. A second sculpture also invites participation, albeit less obviously. *Bones*, 2019, consists of a mass of white plaster bones suspended from the ceiling like peppers on a string. When touched or rocked, the bones chime in brittle, discomfiting notes. Together, *Bones* and *Crotch Horn* create a dadaesque soundtrack for these disturbing times.

On display in the gallery's back room are several recent drawings and a row of hollow, semitransparent masks cast from abaca pulp. The masks resemble Roman death masks, *imagines maiorum*, if Perlitz's ancestors were strange creatures with bulbous noses, sagging eyes, and downturned mouths. More than clowns or puppets, they invoke careworn laborers and holy fools; their comedic pulse pushes them to the edge of despair.

— Stephanie Snyder