Jesse Wine: *Love and Other Strangers*
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Jesse Wine's sculptural practice unfolds through an intimate dialogue between making, memory, and material transformation. Working primarily with clay and bronze, Wine treats sculpture as a form of lived notation: body parts, architectural fragments, and vegetal forms emerge not as fixed representations but as mutable records of experience. His recent works move between the weight of hand-built clay—compressed, slumped, and visibly worked—and the surprising levity of bronze, cast from plants gathered during his travels. These materials are pushed against their expected behaviors: the hard appears malleable, the muscular mineralized, the organic arrested in a state between growth and decay. Rather than resolving into stable figures, forms hover in ambiguity, registering corporeality through suggestion—an elbow's turn, a shoulder's breadth—without submitting to anatomical certainty.

Wine understands these sculptures less as discrete objects than as constellations, in which personal biography, domestic space, and the natural world are folded into one another. Houses become bodies, bodies become supports, plants become framing devices or structural thresholds. In works such as *Evening, all day long*, a scaled version of his father's home sinks into a sculpted mattress, limbs and stalks of grass stage a tension between gravity and lift, compression and ascent. Across his practice, motifs recur not as symbols to decode but as ideas held in suspension, allowing multiple meanings to coexist.

Pedro Köberle: Is there a specific direction that you wanted to take for these new works? Did you come to Brazil with any ideas in your head?

Jesse Wine: There are always impressions floating around in my head, and certain forms I tend to come back to—like starting points, or building blocks to get things going. But this time I made a real effort to pause before I started working, just to let the city, the weather, the feeling of São Paulo sink in a bit. That eventually led to this sculpture [*Avenida Ipiranga, 200 - Centro Histórico de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, 01046-010, Brazil*], which is an interpretation of Niemeyer's Copan building, where I'm staying. In that way, the work becomes autobiographical—very diaristic—reflecting where I am, what I'm experiencing, and how those moments make their way into the work.

PK: And the same is true for the bronze cast works, right?

JW: Yeah. Most of these objects are things I gather—plants, bits of flora and fauna—from trips, from the garden at home, or on the walk to the studio in the city. A lot of the time they're already stiff and dry, kind of near the end, like a wilting, dried Queen Anne's Lace (Daucus carota).

I try to pause them just before they start to decompose and return to the earth. By that point, they've already released their seeds, so the cycle keeps going. Conceptually and literally, it's this ongoing loop—their regrowth, my selecting, the making of the work. Often, when you make a body of work and then show it in an exhibition, it feels like the last time those works

will ever exist together. So this gathering of plants becomes part of a larger rhythm, something that feels bigger than any one object or exhibition; it connects the work over much longer periods.

The actual gesture of lifting organic matter comes from my dad. He was an amateur gardener, and he used to gather plants and small trees when he went on walks, using a spoon to lift things out carefully and keep them—somewhat—intact. He'd bring them home and replant them in vessels in his overheated house in North Wales. Inevitably, everything died pretty young, but he saw that as part of the enjoyment. I remember his failed bonsai collection—all dead—arranged as if a strong wind were blowing them in the same direction. I'm always coming back to that image in the smaller bronze works.

PK: You were talking about freezing time—about casting plants in bronze as a way of stopping their decay, or at least capturing them at a specific moment. And that seems similar to the hands as well, which feel frozen mid-gesture. There's a stillness that suggests time has stopped around them.

JW: Yeah, that permanent state, almost photographic.

PK: They seem poised in a specific balance, like they might unmake themselves.

JW: That's a really nice way of putting it. You can't quite tell if they're being made or being unmade.

PK: What do you think keeps you coming back to bodies and houses specifically?

JW: Instead of imagining bodies simply contained within buildings—which feels like the default—I'm drawn to the ways bodies and buildings bleed into one another, both materially and psychologically. Buildings, like humans, have skeletons, skins, and organs: systems that breathe, circulate air and water, and bear the marks of time. They age, they require care, they fail and are repaired—echoes of human life.

The psychological aspect surfaces in sculptures of places I've lived, particularly childhood homes. Through this lens, architecture and body merge into something biographical, a space where memory and lived reality quietly blur into one another.

PK: In *Evening, all day long*, the foot presses lightly into the mattress, like someone testing it—trying to walk quietly, careful not to wake anyone.

JW: Yes, once the works are finished they become almost allegorical. They're loaded with information, and although they're not linear, the roving forms generate a sense of freedom and possibility, as if anything could occur—like moving from a house into a bed within a single piece.

One motif I keep returning to is making something that appears soft—like a mattress—out of a material that's actually very hard. From Bernini to Kapoor, it's a conversation that just keeps repeating itself; I love adding to it.

PK: The body parts in your work are very expressive, very gestural—they suggest energy, or rest. But sometimes the body parts aren't fully identifiable.

JW: Someone once said to me that those moments—not the hands and feet, but a kneecap or armpit—"put you back in your body," and that's honestly one of the best compliments I've ever had: that it makes you feel human, maybe even a bit too human. It's one of the great draws of making representational sculpture, the universality of it, that you might see a small detail in the sculpture and be able to physically feel that in your own body.

My favorite parts are the shoulder blades that push out of flatter surfaces. They become almost architectural—like handles—strangely ergonomic. I make most of the work with metal tools, but those parts I always do with my hands, which means the surface is never even or uniform.

You know when the curve of a back is violently interrupted by a protruding shoulder blade, it's very alien—alien in the Ridley Scott sense. And it's strange, because it's a body part you can't really see on yourself. You can't look your own shoulder blade in the eye, so to speak. So I keep proposing these versions of them again and again.

PK: A lot of the time, it's hard to tell what your sculptures are actually made of. The surfaces and finishes seem to camouflage the ceramics. Is that deliberate?

JW: Yeah, to me this is a question about time. I wanted to use confusion or a sleight of hand as a tool to gain the work a longer gaze. I started playing with how the surface could change the perception of the material, and how, from one work to another, this material play could develop into a slightly dizzying question of what one was actually looking at. When that happens, people start looking more closely—very literally, inspecting the work for clues as to how it had been produced. I remember Erika Verzutti saying that one of the things she loves about sculpture is watching people strike all kinds of poses to understand it—crouching, looking at the underside, examining up close, stepping back to see the whole. It becomes a bit of a dance. The outcome of this small mystery is that the work gets a bit more time with the viewer.

PK: Have you always known you wanted to make sculpture?

JW: Yeah, strangely, I was very clear about that. I didn't know how I was going to do it, what materials I'd use, or what the work would even be about—but I knew I wanted to make things. My mum is a chiropractor, so there's this very definite overlap between our professions. Growing up, our house was full of skeletons and anatomical drawings.

PK: Chiropractors work with pressure points and gravity—how bodies function mechanically. Do you think about sculpture in a similar way?

JW: It's actually quite beautiful how the sculptures behave like us; they break in the same places that humans break, at the weaker points—the ankle, the elbow, or the wrist. They require reconstruction much like we do. You can tell that something's happened to them, but

can't exactly place it, much like looking at someone who's broken a leg. There's a material truth to it that I think is relatable.

PK: There's also this inevitable association between ceramics and vessels, or containers. The houses obviously function that way, but even the windows suggest inner space.

JW: Yeah, and even the figurative elements could be thought of as containers too. I think that's where the ceramics and the bronzes intersect—through this idea of inwardness. The ceramic works suggest different kinds of enclosed space, whether through architecture or the inner intention of a gesture. The bronzes, on the other hand, are literal interiors—open boxes with their contents growing outward. And the way you encounter them reinforces that: they create a more intimate, one-on-one experience, where the closer you look, the more the work reveals itself. The ceramic works are larger; you have to move around them, step back, to really see them.