

Jake Beckman transforms the Sculpture Center in Cleveland with his 'Embodiment' exhibition

by [Steven Litt / Plain Dealer Art Critic](#)

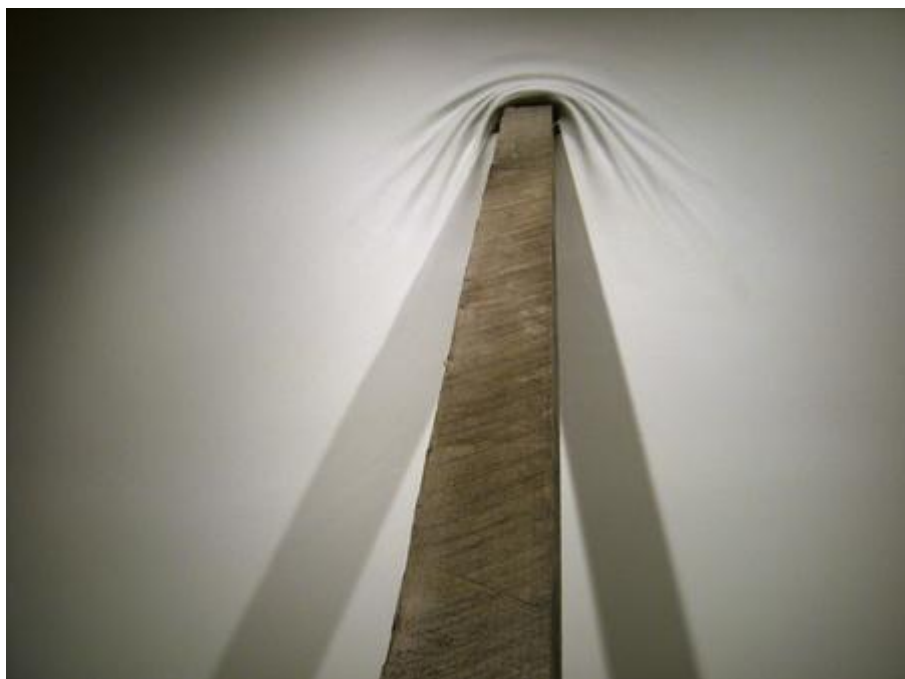
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The Sculpture Center, Cleveland

The walls do strange things in Jake Beckman's exhibition at The Sculpture Center.

REVIEW

The Sculpture Center

What: "Embodiment," installations by Jake Beckman.

Where: 1834 East 123rd St., Cleveland.

When: Through Saturday, April 4.

Admission: Free. Call 216-229-6527 or visit www.sculpturecenter.org

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1834 east 123rd street cleveland ohio 44106 www.sculpturecenter.org
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There are only a few more days to see "Embodied," a compelling exhibition of works by Cleveland Heights native Jake Beckman, at the Sculpture Center in Cleveland.

The show, which ends Saturday, is noteworthy for the ways in which Beckman has transformed the bland, drywall interiors of the Sculpture Center, giving them the appearance of starved or sagging flesh.

One wall seems to have been turned into a membrane pulled tightly over the structural studs, like the chest of an emaciated person whose skin is drawn tightly over his ribs.

Another wall sags like a fat, human gut hanging over a belt. And another seems to be propped up by a wooden post, which juts into a series of folds like the eraser end of a pencil shoved into a cheek of someone's derriere.

The effect is unsettling, and not just because Beckman has made inorganic surfaces seem organic. Beckman's reconstructed walls, which sag or seem to suck wind, create a general effect of unease and disorientation, which parallels the daily barrage of bad economic news in the media.

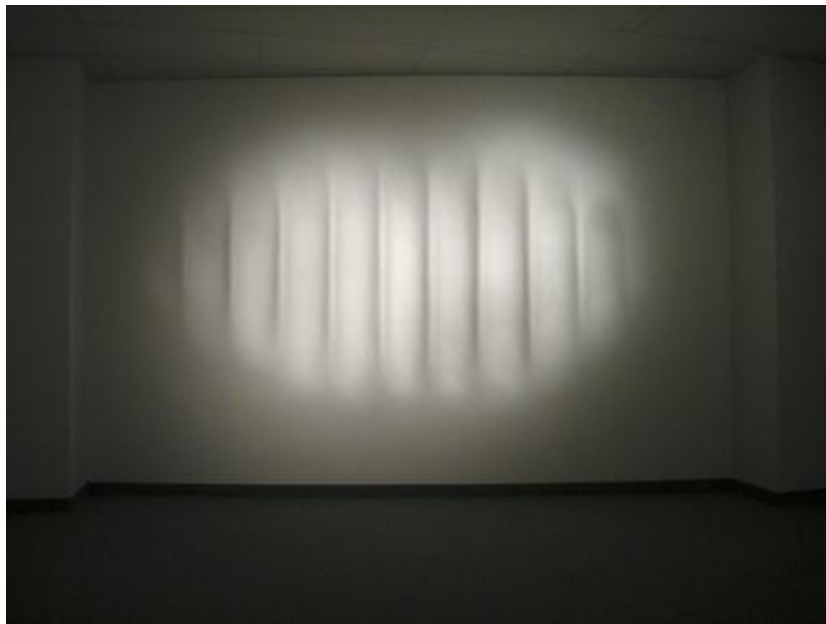
We're used to relying on the stability of banks and investments on Wall Street, just as we're used to relying on the idea that the walls around us will be stable and plumb. Beckman seems to be telling us we can't count on that.

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A wall at the Sculpture Center, transformed by Jake Beckman, appears to suck wind.

His architectural transformation has a long line of precedents, including the crumbling or peeling brick facades designed by architect James Wines for the Best Co. showrooms in the 1980s.

His imagery, as an expression of the current moment, though, is particularly apt. It also raises anticipation about what Beckman will do next, which is a good thing.

A graduate of Swarthmore College, he has worked in a genetics lab at Case Western Reserve University and assisted the construction manager at Swarthmore. His ambition is to earn a master of fine arts degree in sculpture and to teach at the university level, according to a biography published by the Sculpture Center.

With a show like "Embodiment" under his belt, so to speak, Beckman is off to an auspicious start.

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