

# TWO COATS OF PAINT

March 24, 2019

## *Gestures of grace: Carol Saft at Lesley Heller*

10:44 am by [Editor](#)



Carol Saft, Three Man Carry, 2001, bronze, 6 x 7 x 1.5 inches

Contributed by Julia Couzens / [Carol Saft](#)'s plainspoken exhibition, "Fallen Men," in the project space at Lesley Heller, is a suite of small-scaled, wall-based bronze figures engaged in gestures of vulnerability and support. They call to mind the bronze sculpture of Bauhaus artist [Gerhard Marcks](#) and share his ethic of directness and material honesty.



Carol Saft, Dancing Men, 2010, bronze, 6.5 x 4 x 3 inches

Saft's depiction of generic men, nearly featureless, in states of distress, companionship, communion, and mutual aid, is an ode to benevolence and tenderness in this cruel and trauma-racked decade. First carved in wax with a penknife, the small works can be held in the hand. The figures are stripped down to the barest essentials. Men are shown embracing or sprawling prostrate in response to a pratfall, seizure, or assault. Groups of men hold a fallen man, or kneel in unison to lift another up. They serve as everymen in unknown, ambiguous scenarios of physical or emotional stress. Their modest simplicity signals restrained pathos, inviting an uncomplicated response of compassion and empathy.



Carol Saft, Shushing Man, 2018, bronze, 7 x 2 x 1.5 inches



Carol Saft, "Kneeling Man" and "Sprawling", 2006, bronze, 3 x 4 x 2 inches and 4 x 6.5 x 1.5 inches

Saft is widely known for [documentary short films on contemporary artists](#) (including painters Katherine Bradford, Rick Briggs, and Elisabeth Condon), and her wryly quirky video series, *My Brother Todd*. This is her first solo show of sculpture in a decades-long career. Perhaps tellingly, it is a small show presented without fanfare, yet it is not to be missed. It represents experience organically absorbed by an artist who apprehends external realities with acute and moving introspection. No special effects or twitchy surfaces are necessary. In an era of increasingly relative values and truths, amid a crisis of confidence, purpose, identity, and belief, Saft's men offer us intimate and nuanced gestures of abiding grace.

["Carol Saft: Fallen Men,"](#) Lesley Heller, 54 Orchard St., New York, NY. Through April 7, 2019.

**About the author:** [Julia Couzens](#) is a California-based artist and contributing writer to [squarecylinder.com](#)