

RISA PUNO



Uptown Rest Stop

THE COURSE OF EMOTIONS: a mini-golf experience

“The Course of Emotions: a mini-golf experience” is an interactive 9-hole miniature golf course, where each hole presents a different emotional obstacle. Amidst cheery colors and plastic grass, players take on a range of familiar feelings that have been translated into “putt-able” fun.

The first hole, Worry, features a windmill with blades shaped like question marks, because when you are worried your questions get in the way. If players cannot get through Worry head-on, they must putt their way around it.

Next, they progress to an intricate, par-40 maze that actually spells out “Frustration.” There are no shortcuts with this one—players either take the drop or battle the maze. Players’ reactions on this hole seem to be indicative of how well (or how poorly) they deal with real life frustration.

After Frustration, they tackle Insecurity where they must putt while standing on a wobbly seesaw platform, balancing to line it up so that they can make it under the barrier to the hole on the other side. However, if they are overconfident and hit the ball too hard, they end up in the pit beyond the hole.

Insecurity leads to Jealousy, where players start by hitting their balls up a ramp into a cubby hole. After that, it is up to fate to decide whether they are dropped onto an easy section with bright green grass and an oversized target hole, or whether they land in the more difficult neighboring section covered in patchy, olive green turf where one is sure to experience “hole envy” and the grass is literally greener on the other side.

The halfway point of the course is Depression, an intimidatingly steep ramp on which the hole is practically mounted sideways. Players putt from underneath a lattice-lined arbor draped with curtains of teardrop-shaped beads obscuring their view. If they do not sink the putt, the ball rolls back down into their feet and they must fight the uphill battle again.

Depression eventually gives way to Despair, a circular green where the hole is perched atop an inaccessible cylinder, and players are left wondering if there is a way to succeed. While some people just give up and take the penalty, others get creative with how to conquer Despair.

Next, players encounter Boredom, a long green composed of straight, narrow sections. Boredom has no real obstacles, challenges, or tricks to get through it faster.

The following hole, Anxiety, presents players with the opportunity for a hole-in-one... as long as they can guide their ball up a ramp, across a narrow ledge, and into a trough that channels their ball straight to the hole. If their ball does not make it across on edge, it falls onto one of the “plinko”-style boards on either side of the ledge, and jumps around on dowels until it eventually settles on a spot far from the hole.

The final hole of this exciting course is Relief, where players are treated to an easy hole-in-one.

The Course of Emotions is a fun way to look at challenges that everyone faces, and it gives players a rush of exhilaration when they are able to overcome them. Using the kitschy miniature golf format, it allows people to conquer the emotions together, transforming an individual experience into a collective one.



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ARTIST STATEMENT

I make interactive installations and sculptures inspired by elements of everyday life. Everywhere around us there are symbols, colors, sounds, and smells that act as emotional triggers or instinctual cues. I use these signifiers to create my own playful versions of familiar pastimes or functional objects. My art making process begins with an investigation of human impulse and decision-making, as well as an examination of the role objects play in shaping those behaviors. From my findings, I attempt to distill the underlying logic of a particular idea, emotion, or sentiment. I then set out to literalize that abstract concept or feeling, converting it into a tangible physical experience. The finished work is participatory in nature, and often incorporates multi-sensory methods to elicit feelings of nostalgia, desire, comfort, elation, or even frustration. The key to understanding my work is to physically engage with it — to use it, play it, touch it, smell it, and sometimes taste it. While I make every effort to craft objects that are beautiful and alluring, my main objective is to create evocative and memorable experiences for the people who use them.

ARTIST BIO

Risa Puno has exhibited at national and international venues, including: The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park, El Museo del Barrio, SculptureCenter, NURTUREart, Flux Factory, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, apexart, Queens Museum of Art, Galerie Stefan Röpke in Cologne, Germany, and MMX Open Art Venue in Berlin, Germany. She participated in the Artist in the Marketplace Program at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, as well as the Art and Law Residency Program with Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Her work has been written about in publications such as: Hyperallergic, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New Yorker, and artnet Magazine. Puno studied art and medicine at Brown University, and earned her MFA from New York University. She grew up in Louisville, Kentucky where she fostered a love for miniature golf and all things deep-fried.



Photos: Talisman Brolin



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