

REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT EXHIBITION AT BROOKGREEN GARDENS

By Exhibiting Artist, Leo E. Osborne

It was my honor to be not only at the opening evening of ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT at the famous and in my own words, "American Treasure" of Brookgreen Gardens, but to be given the opportunity to lecture about the show the following day.

First I must pluck my heart strings for how I feel towards this amazing sculpture garden and the art contained within. I was first introduced to this spectacular place in the early 80's when I would go to Charleston for the South Eastern Wildlife Exhibition. Since those days I have shown work at galleries in that city and that brings me back from time to time. Often these trips include a drive to see Brookgreen! I have had the privilege of two works being included in their permanent sculpture collection.

But on to the ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT EXHIBITION.

I must say that the square footage of the exhibition hall which is spread into two adjoining rooms with a lovely roofed terrace in between is not a big space. However.....the Director of Brookgreen Gardens, Ms. Robin Salmon through her keen dimensionally trained eye for sculpture managed to place every work into this show that is part of the exhibition, curated by David J. Wagner.

How did that feel? Let me first explain how it impacted me. First I was dazzled by seeing the large hanging works of glass artist, Michael Meilahn, these 3 foot blown glass ears of corn, hanging from knotted stretch ropes holding back bronze castings of husk shapes at various intervals along the 12 feet of hanging sculptural forms. Then too are the magnificently crafted works titled THE TRAVELERS done by artist Sayaka Ganz of Japan. These large hanging wolf / canine like forms are created by using discarded bits and pieces of white plastic utensils, lawn chairs and virtually anything that her friends help her find in the trash heaps of this planet! I kept coming back to these to investigate their construction and to feel the power that they unleash. I had the opportunity to see this show at previous venues and at some it was not possible to hang these large pieces from museum gallery ceilings. However at wondrous Brookgreen they created new temporary beams to handle these works and they did take up the center of each display room. They each blew me away! I was elated to have the opportunity to witness first hand these impressive hanging sculptures of Michael and Sayaka.

And, again, how did this relatively small space make me feel about the show. How was I impacted by ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

I felt taken in by it, absorbed thru & thru, drawn into and shaken up. I would turn a corner and BLAM, hit in the face by the face of BUDDING BOY by Julie Hefferman. This 78x56 painting is a dreamy boy figure amidst a budding tree and he too appears to be budding with fruit as if coming forth from his own center. It is beautifully haunting, but not as haunting as her work of that same size, PINK LANDSCAPE. This work so called into place the book I had just been reading, THE WORLD WITHOUT US, by Alan Weisman. He gives us concrete information about what we are forcing onto the planet and how we might find ourselves extinct, but the world of other life forms may then dwell in peace and harmony. This painting is apocalyptic and summons our mind to look at survival as something real and not simply the illustrations of early comic books! And then too, on a monumental scale of 100x90 inches, is the painting of Ron Kingswood, TAKKEN IN HET BOS (branches in the wood). It hangs on a mid- room panel and its size overtakes you into a wondrous wintery background of snow and branches strewn about the

surface like the spilling of I CHING sticks. I wondered before it, and looked to find its own hidden story and messages of the future.

I still found the sculpture by CHAPEL, the sea turtle bronze and stone work RISING TIDES profound. This turtle is pondering at the side of a human built structure that is flooded, this again took me back to the words in THE WORLD WITHOUT US.

And speaking of sculptures I never tire of seeing the impressive piece REQUIUM by Kent Ullberg. This piece was instrumental in the conception of this show by Wagner along with the works of Bob Bateman and myself who did these pieces over 20 years ago during and right after the Valdez Oil Spill in Alaska. They each document the fact that humanity is STILL NOT LISTENING to the songs, the words, the cries of our planetary comrades in arms.

I have to admit that I am not always the best viewer or critic of photography. However, the works of these photographers is to be strongly considered as a very real view of what we have done and are continuing to do to the planet and to human existence on it. Martin Stupich, Richard Misrach, Peter Goin and Robert Dawson have selected works that inspire awe for the transgressions we have heaped upon our Mother Gaia. Shameful is all I can say about that. Thank you four for capturing this and sharing this viewpoint.

In part, it is my own fascination and love of bees that makes me love so much the paintings of Britt Freda, but Britt has painted these in such wonder and color splashes of paint, dripping like honey from cone and rock cairns that I just love the paint, the forms she uses to capture the eye and content of her thoughts.

And then there was this: There is a video screen on the wall and it contains a loop of 10 minutes created by filmmaker, Drew Denny, interviewing her, Zaria Forman and Lisa Lebofsky as they journey to Greenland and the Maldives. I must mention that their journey was spawned by Forman's mother, fine art photographer Rena Bass Forman who conceived this journey, but did not live to see it through. These lovely young women brought Rena's ashes with them as an offering and a "saying goodbye on scales both global and personal".

The paintings that came from these three women are all stunning and breathtaking. The waters are rising, islands are 'going away' and the icebergs are fleeing into meltdown. I was so intrigued by the painting PETZVAL GLACIER by Lisa Lebofsky. It is done by applying oil paints onto a sanded aluminum plate. It moves, it is there at one angle and disappears at another angle. How so like the subject, icebergs drifting away and melting. The translucency of this painting kept my mind in wonder and yes, I too had to keep coming back to it again and again.

Though I could continue on to illuminate each artist and their works at the show as each work is so profound or simply beautiful in its own, I must try to keep this brief. It is a show with punch, it is edgy and it is an exhibition that should travel the world.

Respectfully,

Leo E. Osborne
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