

Lace and Gunpowder: The Male/Female Art Exhibition

Overview

This exhibition features four male/female pairs of artists working in four distinct artistic genres. The purpose of the exhibit is to stimulate the audience and open them to more meaningful questions about male or female views. Typically we look at art as individual output/ endeavor. In this exhibit, each pair has similarity of subject matter, theme, and art form; the pairing of both a male and female viewpoint gives rise to the unanswerable question: What are the meaningful differences and similarities of the male/female psyche? This pairing facilitates the viewer to probe more deeply, to try to determine/unveil what can be learned when male and female artists — working in similar veins but with distinct personal artistic visions — are shown side by side.

Gunpowder and Lace has a strong sociological purpose and enduring topic. This show is not about artistic competition between the sexes. Rather it is a gender-balanced show, which is unique itself. Interestingly enough, a male/female exhibit appears to be quite rare and therefore it is likely to warrant interest in the exhibit and encourage dialogue. By providing two views on a specific subject matter, the process encourages the audience to ask: Is there any difference in the artists' viewpoints? What are they? The audience is engaged to speculate what maleness or femaleness brings to the artistic 'statement' of the individual artworks presented. Why is it important? How is the perspective more complete with both male and female views? The title for the exhibit came directly from the artists work to emphasize the show's purpose in stimulating thoughts about stereotypes. Gunpowder, typically associated with maleness, is being used by female artist Lynn Speaker. Lace, more typically associated with femaleness, is represented in Nick Harper's work, and then also in Karen Searle's work where she translates 'women's work' into woven metal sculpture.

This exhibition is the successor to the Father-Son show I curated for the Minnetonka Center for the Arts (MCA) in June and July of 2009. The Father-Son show raised questions about maleness, gave the art of children equal footing to professional artists, and showed fathers taking their sons to creative 'work'. The Father-Son show was featured by Mary Abbe and in a special article by Karlee Weinman in the Minneapolis StarTrib. The MCA was very pleased by the number of attendees, press coverage, and funder response —The Minnesota State Arts Board made special note that the Father/Son show was perfectly on-mission for MCA.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Classical Figurative Paintings: Tina Blondell and Nicholas Harper

Organic Sculpture: Karen Searle and David Aschenbrener

Abstract Nature Images: Lynn Speaker and John Schuerman

Abstract Expressionism: Kim Mathews and Ron Taylor

Tina Blondell and Nicholas Harper: Classical Figurative Paintings.

The great challenge of classical figurative art is character development. The masterful artist manipulates inanimate qualities --color, texture, contrast and delivers human emotional content. Blondell and Harper bring to us the everyday hero. They predominantly paint women --strong women that have endured what life throws at them, have the markings to prove it, and are back for more. We see emoting, living, breathing, canvasses and ask, 'Who are these people?' 'What have they endured?', 'Where did their strength come from and can their strength rub-off on me?' Bondell's characters tend to challenge our stereotypes about power, sexuality, and normalcy, while Harper's characters are more hauntingly passive as though simply surviving life with heart intact is heroic.

"I seek to document the many and varied Americans who are omitted from the mainstream media and the halls of power." Tina Blondell

www.tinablondell.com

"In an attempt to capture the tension I believe to exist in humans today, I strive to present the subject in both divine and worldly aspects focusing on everyday people and not the preordained "holy" people of history." Nick Harper

<http://www.roguebuddha.com/artists/nicharper.html#>

David Aschenbrener and Karen Searle: Organic Sculpture

In the human quest for transformation Searle and Aschenbrener look to nature. Searle integrates human forms of woven wire with tree branches, bark, and avocado skins leaving us feeling the beautiful connection but itchy with our non-separateness. Searle's 'body bags' make the forces of nature personal. We see the effect of aging on the female form. Aschenbrener divines the timeless power of nature. In his work you can see him listening to it. He takes the natural forces of growth and destruction and freezes them into beautiful objects. For example, he uses organic matter and icicles in his mold making --they melt away leaving twisted and distorted forms that he then turns into sensual bronze flowers, birds, creatures and beings.

"I am inspired by nature and all of its mysteries. I rearrange things. I feel connected to this universe and other dimensions. I feel inspiration and spirits flow through me. I am a vessel, a conduit, a transformer that leaves a trail from these experiences to share with others." --David Aschenbrener

www.aschenbrenerbronze.com

“These works began as meditations on the beauty in nature. I delicately mend, bead and join found birch bark " torsos for the figures that I then crochet and assemble. These personages are metaphors for healing and for "women's work:" we salvage, mend, piece together, and adorn-both the objects in our lives and our relationships.” –Karen Searle

http://karensearle.com/Fiber_Works/gallery.aspx

Lynn Speaker and John Schuerman: Abstract Nature Images

This seems much stronger than the other artists.

The wild natural order is a tangle. The forces of destruction and the spiral patterns of growth at close-up range fill the visual field with a cluttered, rhythmic chaos as can be seen in the forest undergrowth, volcanic ash, coral reefs, or the backyard lawn. Schuerman and Speaker examine the tangle, and map its power into art as a way to reckon with it. They both use the forces of nature directly in art-making, and as such, map the chaotic happenings in nature. Speaker ignites gunpowder over vegetation and other natural materials against a substrate, leaving a fire-splattered, halo image of the natural forms. Schuerman rubs, traces, melts, burns, draws, and paints natural forms and often uses layers of paint and medium that interact chemically and make unusual textures and patterns.

“I let many things happen — like chemical reactions — and guide them, paint over some, and preserve others. It is a messy process; one that seems to fit the entangled structures of nature and consciousness.” – John Schuerman ...think this could be one of your other quotes...but maybe you like this best.

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“The ephemeral images remain as a memory, recording subtle shifts in movement and intensity and are a reflection on our own temporal nature. The use of fire and organic form, in the images, parallel the cycles of renewal and loss.” —Lynn Speaker

<http://www.mnartists.org/artistHome.do?rid=1525>

Kim Mathews and Ron Taylor: Abstract Expressionism.

Abstraction in art is often a tap into the subconscious. If you follow the mind into the body (this work comes from the body as much as the mind) you will find patterns of energy and the physical/emotional content. Both Mathews and Taylor pull out these patterns, through the stabilizing act of meditative art-making. Induced by repetition, they extract the primal patterns of our drives, physical and emotional. The two artists explore similar domains but find very different imagery. Mathew’s mono-chromatic and 3-D repetitive other-worldly-scapes lean more to the body, while Taylor’s psychedelic paintings (largely painted in reductive fashion –removing layers) seem to reveal the flux of color and form on the periphery of consciousness.

“The repetition is what's important in these; they allude to counting beads on a mala or repeating a mantra as a way into a meditative state... The physical contact and amount and quality of time spent impart a certain kind of energy to the work that acts on the viewer on a subliminal level.” –Kim Mathews

<http://www.kimmathewsart.com/work/relief.html>

“I want my paintings to show movement, to melt, to began to break down, to appear and disappear, to form, mutate, stretch and bubble. I call it Bublism.” –Ron Taylor

<http://web.mac.com/rtaylor13/iWeb/rtaylor13%40mac.com/website.html>