

ENTERTAINMENT

Sculpture exhibit brings texture, color to The Mount



Tresca Weinstein

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“Effram” by James Burnes (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

When you think back on a painting you saw in a gallery, you don't usually remember the frame. But when you see art in nature—like the 30 pieces that make up the SculptureNow exhibition on view at the Mount in Lenox, Mass.—what surrounds the work becomes an indelible part of its impact and of the images that linger in your mind.

For example, Eliza Evans' "Artefactual," a trio of faceless figures shrouded in white, would be striking in any setting. But standing apart from each other in a leafy glade, dappled sunlight glancing over their curved surfaces, they are eerie, haunting, full of mysterious portent. Moored beside a stream, a pair of slender wooden boats (Katryn Lipke's "Anchored") appears to have come ashore only briefly, midadventure. At the edge of a forest crisscrossed by winding paths, Allen Spivack's whimsical "Monument to Lost Gloves," a meditation on death and loss, becomes a gateway to the unknown.



"Passage" by Ann Jon (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

“In terms of our selection, we very much have the site itself in mind, and we spend at least as much time siting the sculptures as we do choosing them,” said Susan Wissler, executive director of the Mount, who works closely with SculptureNow director Ann Jon and her team to install the pieces on the grounds of the historic estate of author Edith Wharton.

Founded in 1998, Jon’s Berkshires-based nonprofit began by showcasing work along main streets or on the lawns of private homes, before teaming up with the Mount eight years ago to establish a more permanent location for its annual exhibition.

“We’ve reached a lot of people who would not normally go to an art gallery or museum,” said Jon, who lives in Berkshire County and has been exhibiting and teaching locally, nationally and internationally for four decades. “However, we found that the great advantage of being at the Mount is that rather than driving by a sculpture, it’s very inviting for people to walk around and look at the work, sit down, have a picnic, then look at some more sculptures.”

This year’s show, which runs through Oct. 13, was curated for 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic, and overall it has a timeless feel—neither overtly political nor a direct reflection on the past year. A downloadable audio tour with recorded snippets from each artist offers insight into their inspiration, materials and process. We learn how Madeleine Lord sourced the parts for her found-object “Donkey,” why Craig Anderson chose corten (a metal designed to rust) for his abstract, kinetic “Wind Water” and the moment that catalyzed James Kitchen’s “Saturn,” a giant welded planet of tools, scraps and odds and ends.



“Maelstrom” by Adam Zamberletti (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

“We used to make a lot more of the things that we use or wear or eat, and we’re not used to making things anymore,” Jon said. “Understanding that these sculptures are handmade, that you can actually make something yourself from whatever materials are available, can be really inspiring for people.”

While the show is typically not built around a theme, groupings often emerge “magically and organically, that we didn’t anticipate and don’t even notice until the final selection,” Wissler noted. Those connections, in mediums as well as concepts, resonate across the open spaces—like the marbled patinas of steel and stone echoed among both abstract and representational works, and the invisible threads connecting the womblike structures, inhabited by inchoate forms, created by Katie Richardson, Laurie Sheridan, Elizabeth Knowles and Kate Winn.



“Nurture” by Katie Richardson (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

Some of the pieces impose themselves on the landscape, such as James Burnes’ massive wood-and-metal bison, “Effram,” and James Payne’s bristling “Unrealized,” which sprawls and cartwheels across the grass. Others gently blend with it: Daina Shobrys’ plastic irises, just yards away from thickets of the real thing, or Susan Arthur’s delicate porcelain “Flower/Fungi” that emerge directly from the earth.

“A lot of people, when they think about art, think about two-dimensional art in a gallery or museum, and when they come out and see three-dimensional art, it has a physicality that they can really relate to,” Jon said. “It’s more like our bodies than a piece of paper on the wall—you can touch it, walk around it, sometimes walk into it.”



“Unrealized” by James Payne (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

The more time you spend with these thoughtfully composed works, the more you begin to recognize the unconscious artistry of the natural world that contains them—the play of foliage against sky, the texture of rocks and tree trunks, the negative space between branches, the myriad shades of green.

That shift in vision is something that Wharton, who was passionate about designing her gardens and grounds, would have found particularly satisfying, Wissler said.

“She would have been grateful for the way the show causes people to slow down and look—to notice the blanket of myrtle she cultivated, and the beautiful canopy of trees overhead,” she said. “Introducing the manmade component into the environment makes people more attentive and attuned to their surroundings, and that’s something Wharton was all about.”



“WildFire” by Natalie Tyler (Courtesy: SculptureNow)

If you go

When: Dawn to dusk, through Oct. 13

Where: The Mount, 2 Plunkett St., Lenox, Mass.

Tickets: Free admission to grounds and gardens

Info: (413) 551-5111 or <https://www.edithwharton.org>

Also: Meet the Artists walk, June 20, 2–5 p.m., free with reservation; Artist-led tours, July 18, Aug. 15 and Sept. 12, 2–4 p.m., \$15; seniors and youth, \$12; 10 and under, free



Written By

Tresca Weinstein

Tresca Weinstein writes about dance, visual art, and culture for the Times Union. She also writes, edits, and manages content for national corporations and organizations, with a focus on the arts, yoga, health and wellness, and positive psychology. Her favorite part of her job is talking to people who are passionate about making the world a better and more awe-inspiring place, whether that means creating beautiful things, researching the science of happiness, or doing eight pirouettes in a row.