

The Mount Showcases Karol's Interactive Sculpture

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By Emily Gates



"Re-Searches IV" by Fitzhugh Karol at The Mount, in Lenox.

There is a subtle and gratifying symmetry to encountering Fitzhugh Karol's sculpture at The Mount—Edith Wharton's former home in Lenox, Mass. — where he is one of the artists featured in its current show, "Sculpture Now." Wharton is often identified as a novelist, but during her lifetime she was perhaps better known for her writing on architecture and design. Any visit to The Mount (which looks especially ravishing in the lushness of summer) certainly reveals Wharton to be a designer with a thoughtful and expert eye. Seeing the work of Karol there suggests a well chosen simpatico. Like Wharton, Karol is a multi-hyphenate: an artist-sculptor-jewelry maker, who is also deeply involved in the design world, as a co-founder and the co-creative director of The Brooklyn Home Company.

As a sculptor, Karol creates on many scales from the small to the more monumental sizing of public art. But, no matter the scope, there is an accessibility and intimacy present, that is a credit to the nuance and creativity with which he works. Speaking about his inspirations, Karol says, "My work is rooted in silhouettes and ideas of landscape though now it's more abstract. But, outdoors is really where my heart is beginning to feel situated. I really love things where kids can climb on them, where they're interactive, people can sit on them. The interactivity is a really big part of things."

Take "Re-Searches IV," the piece that temporarily makes its home on the grounds of The Mount, but that began its life as a part of a larger work. The sculpture's origin story is a testament to the innovative and expansive way in which Karol thinks about his art. "The story, the provenance of that piece started about two years ago," Karol says. "I had two large steel works in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, and one came down in a bunch of pieces, so, this was a sort of fun recycling process of turning a big hulking, monster sculpture into smaller pieces. It just sort of happened through an exploratory process in the studio, and I made one huge thing into five smaller pieces."

The excellent curation of the "Sculpture Now" group show make an always delightful visit to The Mount even more worthwhile this summer, particularly as it provides a chance to see Karol's work in the local area. Farther afield, the artist's "Field's Jax" series is currently on view in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood, via an art program run by the New York City DOT and Art in the Parks. The Brooklyn Home Company is at work on a variety of different projects that allow Karol "a fun overlap," as he puts it, between design and sculpture. Somehow, the artist and designer manages in his work to strike a rare balance between approachable and unmissable. It's no wonder he is a very busy man.

"Sculpture Now" runs through October 27 at The Mount, 2 Plunkett Street, Lenox, Mass. For further information, go to www.edithwharton.org or call (413) 551-5111. For information on Fitzhugh Karol, go to www.fitzhughkarol.com.