



Nature Taking Shape

By Monika Burman

The exhibition "Shape Shifters" brings together artists J. Lynn Campbell and Anne O'Callaghan in a public dialogue exploring our collective relationship with nature in the modern world. Both artists draw on organic shapes and forms in their sculptural works creating a metaphoric language to express issues like consumption, destructive acquisition, objectification, aggressive intervention and control over nature. "Shape Shifters" imagines reconnection with nature through revealing authentic beauty and symbiotic bonds. When discussing the show and their work with Campbell and O'Callaghan, it was clear that the ongoing process of discovery is cherished.

Tell us a bit about your new work.

J.L.C.: These five new works consist of laminated Basswood that have been turned and shaped on a lathe to resemble large eggs. Wood symbolizes the paradise state (a fanciful notion). Two of these forms have openings hand carved into the surface to receive other materials/objects. I was focusing on the egg object, interpreted also as a head, which denotes wisdom; mind; control; rule. This implies potential, but also the possibility of exploitation.

A.O.: I have been making this piece for at least 25 years; returning again and again to nature to help me understand the world that I am a part of. So that is a constant. For this body of work, I had the found objects bronze cast in multiples, there will also be some objects that I have altered and not cast. There is also a cast latex and thorn piece. I paint the rubber latex on the wall and add the thorns. I started using rubber latex and saw the possibilities inherent in its softness, strength and at the same time frailness.

How do you feel your work connects and intersects with the other artist's work?

J.L.C.: I use the body as a site to explore our relationship with the world around us. The human form (or parts of) becomes a metaphor and a framework from which to view the world. Similarly, Anne's work uses the landscape and elements found in nature as a means to address and understand what she sees as our connection with the world in which we live.



A.O.: We both look to nature for our metaphors, and like many artists, use materials in a transformative way, seeming on the surface to beautify them, but at the same time creating a sense of unease and friction.

How are you as artists, shape-shifters?

J.L.C.: Anne came up with this title, and a good one it is. We all change either with ease or reluctantly. Life more often than not pushes change upon us. As artists, we pursue ways of bringing new ideas into being, and in doing so, we constantly push beyond the "known". I reached a point where the third dimension became a necessary inclusion: we take up space; we move through space, it is where real physical communication becomes possible.

You touched on issues of consumption and destruction, but there is obvious beauty in your work; is there hope yet that society's relationship to nature will shift?

A.O.: Am I optimistic? We have been doing terrible things to each other and nature for a very long time. But is there hope? I sure hope so! I am looking out on to a lake. It's a glorious mist filled morning. I sat in a kayak on the lake and listened to the loons. I thought about your question, I have no answers, I am just searching.

"Shape Shifters"

J. Lynn Campbell and Anne O'Callaghan
The Red Head Gallery
October 11 to November 4, 2006
Opening: Saturday, October 14, 2006
12 to 5 PM
www.redheadgallery.org

This page:

J. Lynn Campbell
Untitled
Basswood, leather lace, polycrylic
77" x 7.5" x 9"
Photo: Ric Amis
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Previous page:

Anne O'Callaghan
Sea Urchins
Bronze
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