

GALLERIES

Burr tallies experiences poignantly

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 08, 2014



Hannah Burr's "My Father's Last Day," at 555 Gallery.

Hannah Burr makes abstract sculptures that represent real experiences. In her show at 555 Gallery, she assigns particular objects — blocks of wood, ribbons — to specific increments of an experience. The accumulation of objects then embodies a memory. The results are strangely risible and poignant.

She chooses experiences mundane and extraordinary. For "Interval Between Appointments" she counted cars passing (wooden wedges), bites taken (petals of lavender fabric), intervals of quiet (ocher strips), and texts received (pebbly gray-black

pieces of hard foam). It's all piled in a jumble on a corner shelf. She tucks the little other strips between the edges and planes of the wood like cushions. The lavender bursts read like tiny oases. The whole oddly captures waiting.

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The small, intimate “My Father’s Last Day” counts labored breaths, tender moments, physical contact with family, and lucid intervals. The breaths — panels of pale wood — lean into one another, some short, some long. The lucid intervals, held by slips of pink paper, are infrequent. In this piece, the economy of Burr’s system, goofily effective in other works (she has a frothy rendering of the movie “Clueless”), takes on gravity, distilling her experience of her father’s final moments into a sculptural haiku, delicate and powerful.

Burr has several small abstract drawings, paintings, and sculptures on view, as well. In her attention to material and form, her abstract work has always conveyed something awkward and nervy. This new approach to depicting experience (who knows, maybe she has been doing it all along; doesn’t good art always represent the ineffable?) gives viewers a clear way in. She is explicit in her details, even as she abstracts them. We look at her stand-ins for real life, and we relate.

HANNAH BURR: Stand In

555 Gallery, 555 East Second St., South
Boston 857-496-7234, .

<http://www.555gallery.com>

Closing date: July 26

Photographer Gail Samuelson also has a small show at 555. Her digital photos of water’s glimmery surface are all too familiar, but her images of a swamp bathed in creamy late-afternoon light, such as “Beaver Swamp, Fall #1” feel otherworldly. The sky has a hint of tangerine, which, together with the pale, blue-green standing water infuses this forested area with light; it feels at once dense and sparse. Surely, it is a magical place.

From Boston and Berlin

German curator Anette Schwarz has brought together six sculptors from Berlin and six from Boston in a peach of an exhibition at Boston Sculptors Gallery (the same dozen artists show smaller works at Gallery Kayafas through July 26). An electricity runs through the exhibition, a generative energy, as if we're encountering these objects at this particular stage of their becoming.

They're not unfinished, but they are alive and full of possibility, sparked into conversation with their companions. Rosalyn Driscoll's "Incarnation," a great, crinkled mat of rawhide suspended on a steel frame, is dried, but its surface streams and eddies with marks. Across the gallery, Flora Hitzing's large black plastic maw, "Welle," also swirls with fluid life, but where Driscoll's is mostly flat, Hitzing's opens, and perilously draws you in.

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In between, Laura Evans's "Colony," comprises several small, open-mouthed white forms clustered on the floor, which seem to shiver in awe. Momentarily, I imagined I was their god, until I saw how they must be responding to the life force in the works around me.

In the back gallery, Anke Eilergerhard's fay, comic "Kitchenqueen International," shiny, spiky plastic bottles filled with colorful cleaning fluid, looks like a trio of sea anemones, beckoning and threatening. (Several artists here make works resembling undersea critters.) Formally, they make a playful counterpoint to Leslie Wilcox's "Tuvular," a long, gray, spiraling cocoon made of wire mesh, rippling along the floor.

Boston Sculptors usually sticks to a roster of solo shows; it's a delight to see a strong group show, so alive with formal and thematic connections, in this wonderful space.

Finding abstracts

"Abstract (Photo) Expressionists" at Panopticon Gallery spotlights photographers more concerned with formal elements than with documentation or narrative. There are some terrific, lean works on view, but a few seem too satisfied to merely dazzle with color and perceptual pyrotechnics, and don't hold attention.

Jerry Reed photographs his own paper constructions in black and white. “Paper Work #5” shows bowing sheets, the edge of one sheet curling into the arc of the next, to create a still, elegant pinwheel effect of crisp edges, deep shadows, and seams of light.

Paul Wainwright pays similar attention to shape in works from “The Pendulum Project.” He mounts a light onto a swinging pendulum and opens his lens to record the lines the light draws. The results are fluid and elegant. “Untitled #127s” captures a gridded light pattern around a central axis, swelling along the horizontal line and twisting like a samba dancer around the vertical.

Other artists find the abstract in the world outside, sometimes manipulating what they’ve found. Keith Johnson’s series “The Chosen Place” mixes and matches sky and water from many images he has shot of a lake in upstate New York. Dissonances between water and sky startle. In “Sga,” we’re nose-deep in black water skimmed with light. The horizon line is like a cliff’s edge, and the brooding sky so distant, the scene feels dangerous and eerie.

More information:

OVID’S GIRLS — BOSTON/BERLIN

At: Boston Sculptors Gallery, 486 Harrison Ave., through Aug. 3.

617-482-7781, www.bostonsculptors.com

ABSTRACT (PHOTO) EXPRESSIONISTS

At: Panopticon Gallery,

502c Commonwealth Ave., through Sept. 9.

617-267-8929, www.panopticongallery.com

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