Espace Sculpture

Is this Not a Renaissance Garden?

Margaret Rodgers

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a **Renaissance Garden**?

Margaret RODGERS

In the village of Carrying Place, in Prince Edward County, on the Bay of Quinte, sits Oeno Gallery, named for its location in Canada's fastest growing wine region. Rich in history, the site offers wide scope for the outdoor exhibition titled *This is Not a Renaissance Garden*. The title recalls the elaborate gardens built all across Europe by Renaissance princes, constructed as a three dimensional journey into their century's thinking, and a synthesis of their era's aspirations. [1]

The Oeno installations take an oppositional stance to the formalities of Renaissance gardens, while adhering to their conceptual aspects. Contemporary art is nothing if not *conceptually conceived* and therefore a manifestation of current thought and aspiration. As guest curator, participating artist, and professional gardener, Anne O'Callaghan brings significant e xperience to the project.

Originally consisting of seven outdoor works, the exhibition now has four remaining pieces, ones that can withstand the rigours of Prince Edward County winter. They include: *the architecture of trees 2007* by Orest Tataryn, *The Transported*

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Robert WIENS,
The Transported Forest,
2007. Site specific – irregular. 200 Black maple trees. Photo: Klaus Lang.

Anne O'CALLAGHAN,
Urn, 2007. Tempered glass and stainless steel. 65 x 48 in. Photo: Klaus Lang.

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Shayne DARK, *Red Nova,* 2007. Ironwood and electrical conduit. 20 x 8 x 9 ft. Photo: Klaus Lang.

Forest by Robert Wiens, *Red Nova* by Shayne Dark and *Urn* by O'Callaghan.

Site-specific, they make rich connection to their location, drawing on local histories and timeless allusion. Quinte is a word anglicized from its earlier Iroquois form "Kente," meaning meadow. The village of Carrying Place is on a narrow isthmus connecting Prince Edward County to the mainland and therefore of historical interest as a point of portage between the bay and Lake Ontario. [2] O'Callaghan's *Urn* makes poetic associations between the history and geography of Prince Edward County and the enduring beauty inherent in the form of this vessel.

Closest to the shoreline, *Urn* is a stainless steel and tempered glass structure that stands over five feet tall, its individual plates reflecting both the changing light of day and the bay over which it presides. It is a visual book of hours, marking the sun's passage through the sky. By evening the reflective nature of the amphora-shaped construction creates an illusion that it is filling up and then slowly emptying of liquid.

The piece collects and disperses light, its shape recalling that most

ancient method for storing and transporting wine, as described below:

> By the first century BC, the Romans were distributing wine throughout the Mediterranean in amphorae . . . They continued in use until the end of the first century AD, when there was a precipitous drop in wine exports. (The replacement of amphorae, which were airtight, by wooden barrels in the second century AD meant that vintage wines would not reappear until the

seventeenth century, with the development of the glass bottle and cork.) [3]

While Quinte waters cannot lay claim to Roman wine distribution or Renaissance princes, the waterway has a lively history as the main method of transport for barley and hops. From eighteenth-century Loyalist settlement, shipping and travel was by water in vessels with romantic-sounding names:

> Kathryn of Hamilton, Nellie Hunter, Fabiola, Annie Minnes, Acacia, Katies Eccles, Wm. Jamieson, Bertie Calkins, Oliver Mowat, Persia, Olivia, Lyman M. Davis, Maggie L. The last named was a survival of the barley days . . . and later was used in the coal trade. [4]

The suggestion of past glory, sailing ports and steamers, the assertion that "when Toronto was barely a village, Carrying Place was in the running to be the capital of Ontario" [5] advance metaphorical possibilities for this urn: the idea, its shape, its filling and emptying process, and even the punning thyme that O'Callaghan has planted at its base.

Within the sightline of *Urn* resides Dark's *Red Nova*, a seemingly storm-tossed and chaotic deposit halfway up the meadow between the water and the gallery building. Like pickup sticks for amazons, it is an assemblage of ten-foot ironwood poles, *painted a vibrant red* and apparently scrambled together with an electrical conduit. This ostensible disarray belies the meticulous planning and arranging required to affect an artlessness in the piece, the choice of material making it almost indestructible.

Indoors, a miniature version by Dark extrudes from the wall in magical defiance of gravity. Like *Urn*, this piece transforms visually as night falls, when its shadows and their wooden source become indistinguishable. Dark's works rely on the delicate interplay of weight and tension, their physical properties carefully developed in advance of the installation. One is red, one blue, primary colours that make up the symbolisms of Canadian history. The deceptively random arrangements are suggestive of detritus washed ashore, perhaps from the Nellie Hunter, the Fabiola, or one of the other ghost vessels with fanciful names and hardscrabble histories?

In his *the architecture of trees 2007*, light sculptor Tataryn creates two five-foot towers near the front entrance of the gallery building. Existing somewhere between test tube, birdhouse and architectural whimsy, the piece consists of neon tubing installed within industrial offcuts and surrounded by glass rods. Popsicle colours emanate from within aluminium housing bearing some resemblance to an urban high rise, its slotted windows stamped out in machine shop conformity. At ground level, the metal is designed with pointed arches that call up some of those euphemistically-named apartment towers such as "Riviera" or "El Mirador."[6] Whether reminiscent of Moorish temple or missile launching system, high-rise

or playful toy, the piece proffers another luminous dimension to the idea of a (not) Renaissance garden.

Wiens' *The Transported Forest* consists of two hundred tiny Black maple saplings, a starter forest planted within the remains of an old orchard. The piece could be considered an extension of Joseph Beuys 7000 Oaks project, begun in 1982 and intended as a beginning for a worldwide tree planting endeavour to induce environmental and social change.[7] Should this incipient wood prevail, it could one day provide maple syrup for the county, since Black maple tree sap is similar to that of the Sugar maple. But initially these tiny trees have a tentative hold on the earth. Indoors, a graphite drawing zooms to a micro-view of the mother tree, exposing the minutiae visible from close observation, and recalling a Renaissance preoccupation with botanical studies.

Earlier works in the exhibition included J. Lynn Campbell's *Stillness*, a black granite slab incised with its titled word, and a circular, bevelled mirror by E.J. Lightman, a window to the sky from its position on the woodland floor. *Bay Glow* was a summer showstopper that drew the attention of boaters throughout the season. Tataryn and Lois Andison installed fluorescent panels on the
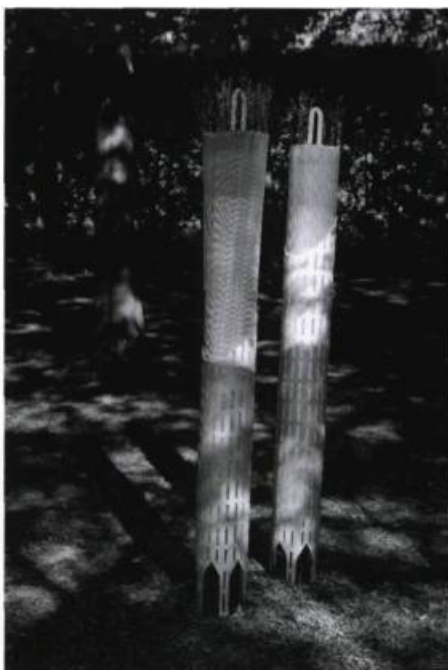
stair risers of the boat launch. Illuminated with black light, they were transformed by nightfall into a brilliant super-graphic, its horizontal bands of colour visible for miles.

Each piece, past and current, finds a way to play with light and memory in a multitude of ways. Art-historical echoes of medieval and renaissance allusions intermingle with local history, with the bay itself, its surrounding orchards and vineyards, and the magical light of Prince Edward County. ←

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This is Not a Renaissance Garden Oeno Gallery, Carrying Place (Prince Edward County, Ontario)

NOTES
1. *The Enchanted Gardens of the Renaissance* http://www.bergerfoundation.ch/Jardin/index _english.html
2. http://www.trentu.ca/admin/library/archives /73-004.htm
3. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/ency clopaedia_romana/wine/amphorae.html
4. http://www.aandc.org/research/early_ship ping.html
5. Prince Edward County Economic Development website http://www.thecounty.ca/cips/town _home.php?location=21
6. http://www.flickr.com/photos/silsurf/6062 18916/
7. Dia Art Foundation, http://www.diacenter.org/ltproj/7000/

Orest TATARYN, *the architecture of trees*, 2007. Glass tubing, neon, wire and metal casings. 60 x 20 in. Photo: Klaus Lang.

Robert WIENS, *Black Maple*, 2007. Watercolour on paper. 44 x 33 in. Photo: Klaus Lang.

Matthieu HUSSER
Déplacement cartographique

Alain CARON

MATTHIEU HUSSER: UN «ARTISTE ITINÉRANT»

Le thème de *l'empreinte*, proposé par le centre Action Art Actuel (AAA) de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu pour sa programmation 2007-2008, constitue le fil conducteur de la carrière de Mathieu Husser. Le projet qu'il a réalisé en résidence à la galerie entre le 16 octobre et le 16 novembre, et dont l'exposition s'est déroulée du 16 novembre au 16 décembre, n'est pas le fruit d'un opportunisme éclairé, mais le résultat de préoccupations artistiques, urbanistiques et sociales profondes. Husser multiplie en effet depuis une décennie les projets artistiques, généralement en résidence

loin de son milieu de vie habituel (Strasbourg), s'attardant chaque fois à révéler par son art un contexte urbain particulier.

Son regard s'est posé sur des villes d'Europe de l'Est et d'Amérique du Nord avec la même curiosité, la même acuité. Usant de la à sa pratique artistique, il questionne les pratiques urbanistiques, dénonce les bouleversements accélérés de l'espace et de la vie quotidienne des usagers. Par la restitution de fragments urbains sous forme de maquettes, il révèle à la population des villes où il s'attarde le temps d'un projet des aspects insoupçonnés de leur environnement.

Husser utilise ses maquettes comme un miroir « reformant », visant à réparer les déformations

Matthieu HUSSER, *Déplacement cartographique*, 2007. Vue d'ensemble de l'exposition. Photo : Julie C. Paradis.