

Ice Follies

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ICE FOLLIES

VIRGINIA M. EICHHORN

Maybe this will open new opportunities, if it can work."

Dr. Jinglu Yu manages artists and sells art in both San Francisco and Shanghai. She maintains one of the most successful galleries in Shanghai, located just in the shadow of the Grand Theater, in the new central area of the city. She represents both Chinese and Western artists. "When I first proposed this international competition there was skepticism. Once we began, it was clear that it was gaining momentum and would be a great success.



HANS VAN DE BOVENKAMP, *Portal of Compassion*, 2004. Photo: courtesy of the Shanghai International Sculpture Competition.

Government officials are pleasantly surprised, and since it is a new experience there have had to be changes along the way. But we are learning and growing from experience. The key is to achieve some landmark work from internationally recognized artists. We even invited Maya Linn from the US. However, she was busy and did not want to have to compete. We would have loved to have included her in this process but chose instead to try and maintain the integrity of the selection process. Maybe later, once we have succeeded she will reconsider and come to China and see the possibilities."

According to Dr Yu, cities all over China are expressing an interest in making public sculpture a part of the emerging urban form. "I intend to build a portfolio of sculptors and represent them to these cities over the near future," said Dr Yu. ←

It was over a century ago that Lord Dufferin said "A constitution nursed upon the oxygen of our bright winter atmosphere makes its owner feel as though he could toss about the pine trees in his glee." It is this euphoria that the bracing northern climate induces that curator and gallery director Dermot Wilson celebrated in his bringing together several artists from Northern and Southern Ontario to create temporary public art works on frozen Lake Nipissing. These works, exhibited under the title *Ice Follies* responded to the theme of ice-fishing, specifically, ice-fishing huts.

Wilson's intention in mounting this exhibition was to get art out of the gallery and explore what happens in a non-traditional setting. Projects such as this allow for a different kind of interaction between artwork and viewer. By bringing it into the public realm the work is often perceived, especially by those who do not frequent galleries, as being more accessible. There is a greater freedom and less restrictive feelings in how the work can be addressed and responded too. These kinds of exhibitions have an important and singular role within the cultural community. In the late 1960s French museologist Georges-Henri Rivière proposed the idea of "ecomuseum" which was an interdisciplinary museological approach that emphasizes the importance of place. This stimulated the development of non-conventional and decentralized small museums. Essentially these museums were organized around their communities' interrelations with their physical and cultural environment. They aimed at developing the autonomy and searching for identities under changing cultural and economic situations. In keeping with this kind of responsive philosophy, *Ice Follies* allowed the WKP Kennedy Gallery to present contemporary sculptural artworks in an austere, yet interesting (and unavoidable) setting, while at the same time cel-

ebrating our community and our northern landscape.

The artists chosen were asked to bring to the project their own ideas about the wilderness, architecture, our relationship to nature or lack thereof, the whimsical in public spaces and the ironic connections between contemporary art practice and a disappearing wilderness. The artists invited to participate have also worked with structures and assemblage or within the politics of hunting. They also worked closely with the Ministry of the Environment in North Bay to ensure that artworks are respectful of the lake and the environment and that the icy sites are returned to their original state after the three-week run of the exhibition.

Dan Elzinga created Ice Hut #1 titled *Fishing for Meaning, A Tribute to Clifton Whiten* — a local community member who died recently. From outside, the hut looks like a humble, cobbled together shack. However, within the ice hut one finds a number of significant objects and mementos, chosen for their associative relationship to Clifton Whiten. These consist of strange wood, glass and lead sculptures. Inside visitors could a time delay device that turns on lights and a soundtrack that is built into the shack. Elzinga has stated that his intention, as well as creating a memorial with a specific intention, would also be evocative for those who didn't know Whiten. Essentially, as the title indicates, visitors must find — or fish for — their own meaning in this work.

Ice Hut #2 was created by Ivan Juraki, a Hamilton-based artist, currently completing his Master of Arts degree at the State University of New York. *Lure* is a pure white toy-like hut that blends into its surroundings except for the doorway. Through a large keyhole cut into the door of the hut a strong light shines enticing the viewer to look inside. This keyhole is the only access to the interior of the piece. Entry is frustrated. In doing so *Lure* acts to stimulate the viewer's imagination. One doesn't know what is inside, it might be something horrible or it could be something fasci-

nating. The locked door and the tantalizing title combine to create a work potent with possible meaning.

Through the Looking Glass is Keith Campbell's crystalline work of art. Made completely of mirrors, this work is all about reflecting back in a kaleidoscopic way the beautiful landscape of Lake Nipissing. Additionally, this cre-



ation integrates the visitor within the artwork itself. There is a synthesis happening, a becoming one with the work. Additionally the piece is always in flux as it continually changes depending on what it is reflecting. The material — mirrors — compositionally references the site, specifically the ice and water beneath. It gives one reason to pause to reflect on what is the "real" reality — that which is around one or the one reflected back. In a certain sense it was somewhat disconcerting in how the piece integrated itself so completely within its surrounding landscape. Campbell, a North Bay native, is an internationally renowned ceramics and mixed media artist specializing in porcelain constructions.

Kim Adams' entry into the *Ice Follies* is a monumental work described as being of "subversive engineering." Adams will be

DAN ELZINGA, *Fishing for Meaning: A Tribute to Clifton Whiten*, 2004. Photo: Liz Lott and Snapdragon Photography.

VESSNA PERUNOVICH: ARTWORKS 1998-2004

DEBBIE O'ROURKE

working on his *Minnow Lure* piece for years to come. Completely constructed of corrugated metal, this "bug-eyed" hut comes complete with a heater, a doorbell, peepholes and candy green seats. This work is meant to be a functional work of art that can be used as an ice fishing hut. Adams has described this work as having a



KIM ADAMS, *Minnow Lure*, 2004. Photo: Liz Lott and Snapdragon Photography.

"pop can" look to it. And indeed, in a wonky sense it does.

Catherine Kozyra is a well-known Thunder Bay artist. Her idea for this project evolved from the image of "fishing for the Leviathan" as represented in the Book of Job in the Old Testament. This hut is comprised of a geodesic style dome made of translucent space age fabric. The fabric is stretched taut into shape by an exoskeleton composed of PVC piping. The translucent shell of the tent is covered with a loosely woven semi sheer flesh coloured gauze whose fibres have been pulled and separated creating the openness and organic lines present in natural gut. Synthetic sausage casings, not too unlike the natural casings used in some of my earlier architectural structures, are attached to the gauze fabric creating a subtle effect of marbles veining upon the outer structure. The completed "hut" resembles the tents that are made

by Native Canadians and Inuit. It seems somehow subversive though. These skin tents would normally be used in the summer and there is an intentional sense of disjunction created through its situation on a frozen lake. The work has a strong organic feel to it even though it is constructed out of man-made fabrics and materials.

Susan Detwiler is known as an artist who uses fabric in unique contexts. She has been known to work with road kill and hunter's blinds in the past. For this show, Detwiler has clothed a hut in snowmobile suit material, given it pockets and a sash and in this way "humanized" the structure. The use of the wool and flannel, stuffed with polyfill, gives to the hut a layer of extra protection. This "protection" is something that humankind has needed in dealing and surviving in the natural world, however now it is more often than not the environment that needs protection from humankind. And on another level, the work simply references our desire and need for warmth and comfort. The hut is titled *Red/Green*.

Ice Bubbles by Ernest Daetwyler consists of several smaller bubble-huts that people were invited to enter into. Daetwyler was inspired to create these works by a young girl that he knew, who told him that she'd like to get her family and friends into bubbles and then fly away. It is a whimsical installation that speaks about new life, childhood and our simple, yet profound connections to the lake and nature. Within each of these bubbles hangs a dream catcher, made of chains and locked. In these huts one doesn't catch fish, one catches — and ostensibly gets to hold onto — dreams.

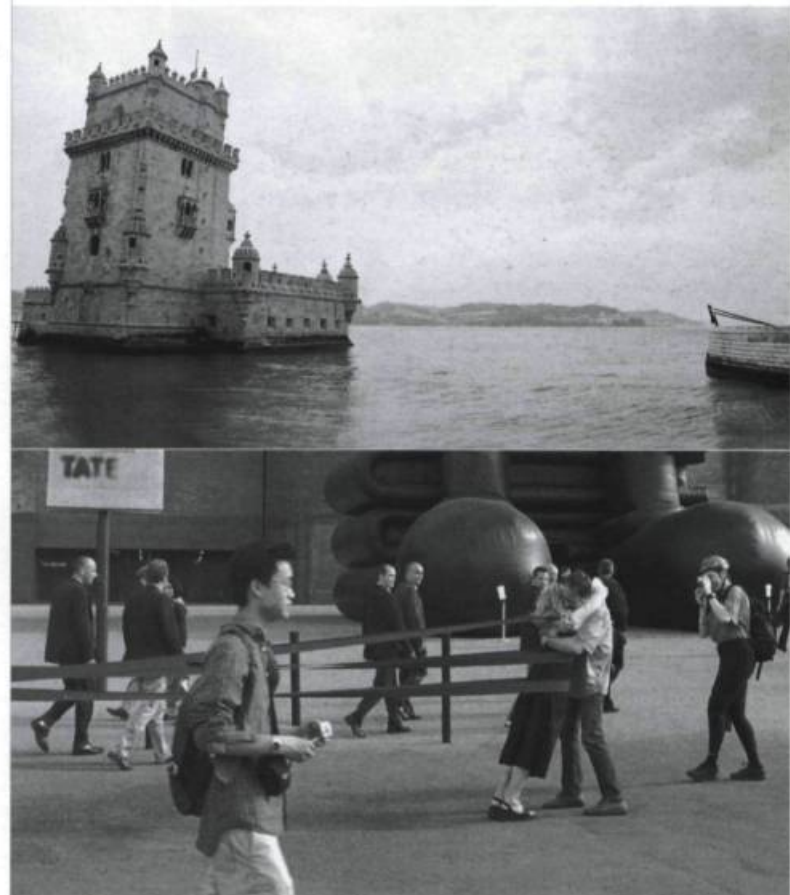
Taken together *Ice Follies* balanced the profound with the fanciful, the spiritual with the sensual, and the unorthodox with the practical. It celebrates both community and creativity. Far from being a folly, this project showed itself to be smart and engaging. Simply put: *Ice Follies* is cool. ←

Ice Follies
WKP Kennedy Gallery,
North Bay, ON

A child is singing. A mother's voice entwines with hers in an aural helix that seems to inspire a flame to dance. Through the magic of projected video, this flame is suspended in mid-air above a child's crib. It burns quietly, reassuring like the first fire tamed to pierce the darkness of mankind's long nights.

The quiet night bursts into a wall of yellow flame that gives way to explosion after explosion. As the gallery blazes, feather-shadows tremble against the flames as if in that millisecond on the very edge of the atomic shock wave that follows the flash, the edge of the End of Everything. The voices continue their loving song under the dance of shattered atoms.

The explosions reverse, flames sink into the cool floor where white balloons huddle like sheep around the legs of the crib. High above, like the mobiles we hang for babies' amusement, the large white feathers rotate unharmed. This is one of mankind's most longed-for impossibilities: to be able to undo what is done, to return to the intact day before. According to currently-known physical law, time's lack of reversibility isn't a foregone conclusion. We only know it's so because despite all our efforts, the egg has never been unfried, the crash reversed, or the loved one de-killed. If a critical mass could be reconstituted, then Sarajevo or Hiroshima would grow back like a crystal, and one would have another



VESSNA PERUNOVICH, *Desire & Desillusion*, 2003. Performance with elastic ribbon. Tower of Belem, Portugal. Photo: Boja Vasic.

VESSNA PERUNOVICH, *I Hug the World and the World Hugs Me Back*, 2003. Performance. Tate Modern Grounds, London, England. Photo: Boja Vasic.