Espace Sculpture

Underwater Sculpture Viewers Take Swimmingly to Trend

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Numéro 68, été 2004

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/8995ac

Citer ce document
transparence et laisse place à l'implacable réalité du monde extérieur. Pourtant en se déplaçant légèrement d'un angle de 30 degrés, voilà que le tout s'inverse. Nous voyons s'inscrire par transparence à droite des motifs de feuilles d'ébène et la transparence s'installe dans la fenêtre de gauche — comme si Diane Gougeon avait dynamisé son œuvre d'opposition en interchanging dans le mouvement la propriété lumineuse des pastilles. Ce jeu de la transparence et de la transparence risque d'échapper au spectateur dans un premier temps. Il exige qu'il se déplace lentement, latéralement et à répétition devant l'œuvre pour en appréhender toute la richesse formelle, comme cette danse de ronds lumineux sur les motifs architectoniques du Complexe Desjardins.

Le travail de Diane Gougeon se prête à une lecture plurielle. Travayant à partir de relations extérieur/intérieur, plein/vide, définies entre autres par leur référence à l'architecture, elle me semble les utiliser ici pour les déconstruire. A priori, tout ce qui semble s'affronter se conjugue. Du combat du blanc et du noir, chacun joue du passage de la transparence à la transparence. Du chaud et du froid, le processus de création et son lieu sont indissociables et même lorsqu'il reste la lumière comme seule écriture, elle s'édifie pour filer la métaphore architecturale, toujours au moins en deux temps.

L'artiste sait merveilleusement bien jouer de ces jeux de perception. Elle a transformé ici tout motif architectural, sculptural et pictural, en un lieu de passage... où se construit le regard, et peut-être même métaphoriquement celui que l'artiste porte sur son métier. Elle s'est jouée également de la permanence de choses. Son œuvre n'est-elle pas d'ailleurs éphémère ?

Diane Gougeon, Les (H/h)istoires que l'on se conte, 2003. Installation in situ dans les fenêtres du Centre d'exposition CIRCA. Les deux fenêtres de gauche : chaque carreau mesure 104,5 x 85 cm. Acrylique de coulée, plexiglas sablé, impressions numériques sur support Duraclear; les deux fenêtres de droite : impressions numériques sur support Duraclear, cadres d'aluminium anodisé. 222 x 181 cm. Photo : Daniel Roussel.


A scuba diving certification card is the ticket to visit the growing sculpture garden beneath the waves. During the next several years the number of works underwater is likely to double with plans to sink a dozen or so statues at dive sites around the world.

Why sink a statue into the sea where it can be moved to the vast majority of art patrons? "Sink it and people will come," said Simon Morris, The Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada, sculptor is completing a World War II aviator bronze, slated for installation on Horsehoe Bay, near Vancouver, this year. His 9-foot / 3-meter tall mermaid bronze castings are gracing dive sites off Powell River on B.C.'s Sunshine Coast and Grand Cayman Island's Sunse House. And he's beginning a series of six Guardian of the Reef statues that will be installed at premiere dive destinations worldwide.

"People like to visit these things," Morris said. "Diving destinations require something to differentiate themselves from other sites. An underwater sculpture does the same thing as a shipwreck in providing an interesting dive and a marketing focal point. I've heard that on a good four-day holiday weekend, Sunset House will sell $4,000 worth of air at $8 per fill. The mermaid draws thousands of visitors per year, and was voted by Rodale's Scuba Diving readers as the most popular shore dive on Grand Cayman Island."

Dale Evers, Cayucos, Calif., said the statues provide a commercial draw that benefits the artist and the destination. "It has sponsorship benefits. There's media hype building up to the initial installation. And after that, it's not going anywhere. It's constant advertising."

Evers' dolphins have been providing a focal point for divers visiting Cayman Brac since 2003. "A sculpture is a tribute to the destination, its people and its environment," he said. His dolphins herald stingrays and dolphins, two creatures associated with the Caymans. It is one of a series of underwater works that Oceanic, a San Leandro, Calif., underwater gear manufacturer, plans to install at sites around the world. Reef preservation is another reason why sculptors are being commissioned to create underwater statuary. "You don't put them in your best area or your worst," Morris said. "You place them in an interesting area where divers can visit without trampling the reef." Visiting divers may be#### Underwater Sculpture Viewers Take Swimmingly to Trend

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The statue, modelled after the record-setting Italian swimmer / diver Duilio Mercante, has drawn millions of visitors since it was installed in 1965. The statue, which was purchased by the National Geographic Society to raise funds for underwater statue installations worldwide, was a common custom among fishing boat captains, who plied their hardscrabble trade in all kinds of weather. The statue was installed on a pedestal in 1994 and is visited by thousands of snorkelers annually now that it is but 3 feet / 1 meter below the surface. Offerings no longer pile up at her feet now that tourism has supplanted fishing as the island’s main industry.

A 6-foot / 3-meter long bronze alligator stumps dive operators on Grand Cayman. The casting has been reinstalled on a pedestal in 1994 and is visited by thousands of snorkelers annually now that it is but 3 feet / 1 meter below the surface. Offerings no longer pile up at her feet now that tourism has supplanted fishing as the island’s main industry.

The Virgin of the Lighthouse, has slipped from Isla Mujeres, Mexico. Photo: Barbara Krooss.

The Christ of the Abyss in John Penncamp Park off Key Largo, Fla., is made from the mold of Il Cristo Degli Abissi, the statue off Portofino, Italy, by Guido Galletti, the father of modern underwater sculpture. Photo: Courtesy of Florida Keys TDC.

Some artists are forgotten long before their underwater works have washed away. Asking who created the Cruz de la Bahia will draw a blank face from Isla Mujeres residents and tourism authorities, even though it was installed only seven years ago. Another statue there, the Virgin of the Lighthouse, has slipped into anonymity as well. The 5-foot / nearly 2-meter solid bronze casting was sunk decades ago by local fishermen at the base of a cantankerous rock that had sunk more than a few skills in stormy seas. Tossing offerings of coins and jewelry to ward off peril at sea was a common custom among fishing boat captains, who plied their hardscrabble trade in all kinds of weather. The Virgin was installed on a pedestal in 1994 and is visited by thousands of snorkelers annually now that it is but 3 feet / 1 meter below the surface. Offerings no longer pile up at her feet now that tourism has supplanted fishing as the island’s main industry.

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