

PAT MUSICK: UP AND DOWN: OVERVIEW EFFECT

Karl Drerup Art Gallery at Plymouth State University • Plymouth, NH • www.plymouth.edu/gallery • Through October 24, 2009

Pat Musick's minimalist installations of natural stone, steel, and wood invite us to contemplate a quiet constellation of beauty, tension, rupture, and reconciliation between humanity and the natural world. The site-specific constructions gathered in *Up and Down: Overview Effect* remind the viewer of art's potential to heal the rift between man and nature through a spiritual approach to the creative act that balances biomorphic disarray and geometric precision.

Musick's installations are expertly engineered, and they travel replete with detailed templates and specifications for display. Such technical precision results from collaboration with her husband and chief engineer, former NASA astronaut Gerald Carr.

Musick's installations demand thoughtful viewing. In *Grupo Dos*, one of the most deceptively simple works in the exhibition, five smooth, rounded stones perch atop rust-colored steel squares. They stand about shin-high on blocks of unstained wood arrayed in a graceful semicircle, like attentive children. The rusted

metal alludes to human intervention in nature: the juxtaposition reminds us that the steel was created from minerals mined from the ground. But the material also hints at nature's counter-gesture of corrosion that would reclaim the metal as natural elements returned to the earth. Compared to traditional Western art, the installation suggests a group of classical sculptures that have somehow retreated back into lumps of virgin stone left sitting on their pedestals, an arrangement Musick's placement suggests would be no less beautiful.

Each installation reenacts a similar dialogue between the physical world and human intervention in (or abuse of) the environment. A vis-

ceral push-pull emanates from *Locus*, in which a forbidding bundle of inch-long thorns balances atop each of the eleven otherwise invitingly tactile stones, again presented on short metal pedestals. In *River Reeds*, the metalwork

reads as even more industrial. Thin distressed metal tubes suggest the biological forms of nerves, vines, or veins as much as reeds swaying in water. *Hallelujah!* is a visual pun in which the rusted metal blocks are tall enough to stand in for torsos, atop which cropped tree branches raise their arms in gestures of spontaneous joy.

Musick's exhibition is the first in a series of eco-art installations for the gallery.

—Christopher Volpe



Pat Musick, *Hallelujah!*