

ARTS | WESTCHESTER

In Figure and Form, Sculpture All Around

By Susan Hodara

April 20, 2012

WHITE PLAINS — Entering “Sculpture: On and Off the Wall,” the group exhibition that fills both floors of ArtsWestchester’s Arts Exchange, you first encounter Emil Alzamora’s “Spaceman,” an all-white ceramic astronaut the size of a toddler mounted just above eye level. Arms reaching back, knees bent upward, helmeted head facing down, the figure might be hurtling through space, were its back not firmly anchored to the gallery wall.

“Spaceman” is one of 66 pieces by 20 locally based artists in the show, which presents a spectrum of sculptural forms, from figurative to abstract and monumental to intimate. In addition to free-standing floor and pedestal pieces, there are site-specific installations, constructions jutting from the balcony and suspended from the ceiling, and works that are, aptly, simultaneously on and off the wall. (Almost all are for sale, priced from \$400 to \$48,500.)



“Studio Chair,” in steel by Daan Padmos. Courtesy of Daan Padmos

“This is a show about three-dimensional work in a variety of media and approaches,” said Janet T. Langsam, ArtsWestchester’s chief executive officer and one of the curators of the exhibition. “‘On and Off the Wall’ is also a double entendre for the contrast in styles of classically inspired work and work that is derived conceptually.”

To assemble the exhibition, ArtsWestchester’s first that is exclusively sculpture, Ms. Langsam and the other curator, Kathleen Reckling, ArtsWestchester’s gallery director, solicited recommendations from museum and gallery directors throughout the county, including Neil Watson and Ellen Keiter of the Katonah Museum of Art; Livia Straus of the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art; Castle Gallery’s Katrina Rhein; Kenise Barnes, owner of Kenise Barnes Fine Art; and Ravi S. Rajan, director of the State University of New York Purchase School of Art+Design. The resulting

mix of established and emerging artists range in age from their 20s to their 70s, and work with the more traditional metal, clay, wood and stone, as well as fused, fired and blown glass, and found objects like storm-felled tree branches, a car's exhaust manifold and nylon stockings. "We were aiming to create both diversity and cohesion," Ms. Reckling said.

"Occupied," bent wood, oil and crayon, by Susan Manspeizer.
Sal Cordaro Photography



While diversity is evident in the sculptors' technical and stylistic choices, the show's cohesion emerges through several common themes. One is the female body.

There are Jo-Ann Brody's long-legged, larger-than-life women who stand faceless and elegant despite their coarse concrete surfaces. Nearby, Mari Ogihara's sleeker stoneware women lounge provocatively. With names like "Sweetheart" and "Kneeling Ardor," these otherwise white figures, each just a few feet long, are adorned with colorful designs applied through patterned pantyhose. "I think of the clay as their skin," Ms. Ogihara said, "so they're pretty naked." As for their poses — seductive but slightly contorted — she said, "It's a thin line. I think serenity can't exist without a little bit of hate."



A tree-branch installation by Barbara Korman. Courtesy of Barbara Korman

Susan Manspeizer's series of wall works serves as a metaphor for aging women. These seemingly impossibly folded and looping constructions of bent and painted wood are based on the concept of a shell, which Ms. Manspeizer, one of the show's older artists, described as "the remainder of an organism that was once something else, and whose primary function is no more." In some of the pieces, such as "Hidden Shell" and "Occupied," a smaller form is contained within the larger. "They have become shelters for other living things," Ms. Manspeizer said. This re-purposing, she noted, is echoed in the wood itself, which was once a living substance, and in the works' placement inside the one-time vault in the Arts Exchange, which was formerly a bank. "There is so much to be said about aging and how one looks at it," Ms. Manspeizer said. "I see it very positively."

Other artists who explore the feminine form include Craig Usher, whose five-foot-tall "Figure in Transformation" separates a classical clay head, torso and legs with webs of welded steel; Barbara Segal, whose intricately detailed children's dresses defy the solidity of the onyx and alabaster from which they were carved; and Sarah Haviland, whose part-bird, part-woman creatures of aluminum mesh seem to peruse the gallery from above.



SUNLIGHT Susan Cox explores light in her sculptures, which are made from translucent glass. "Sunset" contains a rectangular opening to catch the traveling sun. Steven Barall

Another of the show's recurrent influences is the natural world. It is there in David Licata's glasswork: the delicate, autumn-hued, miniature trees; the bone-like "Suture"; the crimson linked rings in "Capillary Action," a wall installation that suggests blood vessels. And it is there in Malcolm D. MacDougall III's steel and bronze "Rhizomes," which references the complex root structures of plants (and, at 1,000 pounds, is the heaviest piece in the exhibition).

Susan Cox looks to nature for its light. Trained as an architect, Ms. Cox works with kiln-formed glass. "I've been exploring how light defines a space," she said. All of her pieces are made from translucent glass, and several, including the amber-hued "Rhythm" and the striated "Sunset," contain rectangular openings that catch the traveling sun.

The interplay of light also figures in Barbara Korman's "Looking at Woods": five partition-like sections are composed of hundreds of vertical willow branches that seem to dance with one another as the viewer passes, and cast shifting shadows as sunlight streams through them. Two other pieces by Ms. Korman, whose wood, bronze and mixed-media sculptures have been exhibited in museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are made from bundled tree branches. "Until recently, wood has been a means to another end," she said, "but these are wood about wood."

Other artists in "Sculpture: On and Off the Wall" have commented on topics as divergent as suburbia, identity and the writings of John Steinbeck. Speaking perhaps for all of them is "Studio Chair," Daan Padmos' gigantic straight-backed, brushed steel chair where, in the significant absence of a seat, an oversized artist's palette rests askew. "You choose the palette instead of the seat," said Mr. Padmos, a Rotterdam-born artist whose sculpture "Time Sharing" is permanently installed on the Peekskill waterfront. "You can't sit down if you're going to make art."

"Sculpture: On & Off the Wall" runs through May 20 at the Arts Exchange, 31 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 12 to 5 p.m., and Sunday, May 20, 12 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For more information: artswestchester.org or (914) 428-4220.

A version of this article appears in print on April 22, 2012, Section WE, Page 11 of the New York edition with the headline: In Figure and Form, Sculpture All Around