

Art Critique

Baltimore Sculptors: Mutants in Making

Exhibit at Joe Squared, Baltimore, MD, 2021

As usual, we tend to take for granted the "Present Tens". In not-so-distant past though, art's main purpose was glorification of mythologies and potentates. Everything was clear and to the point. But then, after a brief brush with realism, artists went on a mutation spree, which continues till this, very day.

Baltimore Sculptors group isn't any different. From stern firmness to an explosive exuberance, and anything in between, they run the gamut of equivocal proclamations of runaways from reality, i.e., mutations! You're not going to find a single representation of reality, just references to it, if any or some summary reflections of the dynamics of nature. A landscape becomes a "Lifescape", a crocodile - a "Port-a-Crock" - you can carry it around like a purse - not really. There are some vague references to mitosis - just a jest of it, and musical instruments, or layers of something sliced up. Vagueness, allusions and allure are synonymous with these, and other contemporary artists' vocabulary. That means, you've got to guess and wonder, and admire the complexity and ambiguity of artists' esthetic paradigms.

In essence, you've got to see it to believe it, even if it leaves you in disbelief. So visit the Joe Squared, grab a pizza (it's excellent) and a sculpture, too, and be happy! :)

Reviewed by Adam Zynger, eBFA, MA, MD

Creative York's inspirational experience - Taking Shape: Stories through Sculpture

Creative York, York, PA 2022

There can be all kinds of stories - documentary, personal, romantic, etc. Visual stories are no different. By "stories" we usually mean realistic accounts of actual or imagined experience, however the sculptures at "Taking Shape..." are anything but realistic. There is, in fact, a strong departure from realistic story telling among most of the exhibiting artists. And yes, the

sculptures do "take shape" into something seemingly incoherent, bizarre and "out of this world."

You can't escape Nature, though! Art is Nature driven, emotionally charged, and harmoniously seized. Since the time artists were allowed to express themselves visually rather than being apologists of totalitarian regimes, the walls started to tumble down. Artists became explorers of the unknown and trivial, as well. This exhibit represents both trends. From bric-à-brac and haphazard accumulation of familiar objects to frigid geometric planes, the gamut is vast and overwhelming. All offer an individual insight into the "nature of things" (NOT).

Nature, in its evolutionary process is presented to us in various layers, as it built up into present social structure. That's why we see on the exhibit primordial planes in intersection, streams of diffracted light, organic brain-like blebs, meandering pseudo-landscape, outpouring of videotape convolutions, grizzly toothy creatures, folksy comical figurine, meat and fat of heart surgery(?), and as a token of realism, there are some ballerinas arranged into a harmonious pattern. So that's the story!!! You owe it to yourself to come and see it, and be inspired.

Adam Zynger, eBFA, MA, MD

Art and Science

Letter to editor, Scientific American, May 2022

When Laura Helmuth, editor in chief of Scientific American defined science, in her editorial of May 2022 , as "expanding the realm of human perception...sometimes making the invisible, visible... changing our literal worldview...", my reflex reaction was - that's art!!! Of course, her examples of expanding reality were that of Galileo's achievements, not artists. Somehow, in a compartmentalized effort of human discoveries, we miss each other's achievements or at best, fence them off as if they belonged to a different universe. Yet, the artists were doing exactly that - expanding the realm of human perception, since the cave paintings some 20, 000 years ago or so. With a little twist, they more than visualized, they were defining the visual language of communication, providing us with technics, insights, metaphors, dreams and hopes of worlds to be discovered. And yes, the artists were expanding the realm of human perception, whether conceptually or realistically, perfecting their ability to render the visible reality with ever greater coherence and skill. Prior to invention of photography, we could call them "pre-photographic snapshots". The expansion of the realm of human perception in art was of somewhat different nature - by gradually increasing acknowledgment of the existing reality, as opposed to that of mythological and theocratical one alone! Such example would be portrayal of "real" people of

various social classes, a real landscape, a still-life, genre scenes, etc.

And it is here when Galileo's and other scientists, and artists paths have crosses. It was not a pure coincidence that Galileo's assertion of planet Earth rotating around Sun got him imprisoned for life just as artists were "discovering" the real world, a strongly discouraged endeavor. Both scientists and artists, each in their own way, were expanding the realm of human perception, visible or not... with or without permission from the authorities.

This expansion of perceivable reality continues till this very day, albeit, in separate mental departments of different disciplines. I attempted to bridge them back in 1976 in my editorial at Artists Equity Newsletter" entitled "Art and Science". Even before, in my graduate paper in Art History (1972), I attempted to decode visual language as visual metaphors of overlapping significance. Helmuth mentions research on birds' communication, but we seem to be shy on deciphering human visual communication. Some scholars are actually afraid of opening a Pandora box of sorts - new Nazism, as they call it. Well, it's true that with better understanding come a more effective control whether of birds' chirp or visual artists' language. My background is in Art, Art History, and Medicine (add some engineering computer programming, chemistry, physics, math, etc.). With all that, I found it irresistible to bridge the two cultures regardless of consequences. As they say, science is a double edge sword - it cuts both ways.

Laura declined my offer to write an article on bridging art and science but asked my permission to forward my ideas to her art editors.

Adam Zynger, eBFA, MA, MD

Scratch vs Smudge or dilemma of audio-visual defiance

While exhibiting my little piece of art (5x5 inch) at MAP/OOO 2023 (that's Baltimore, MD), I got into a conversation with the DJ during the reception. He looked up my work on MAP's website (#158) but his reaction was negative- it's just a bunch of smudges, he said. He was right and yet, I disagreed. A smudge has acquired an honorable place in the modern art vernacular. At the same time he played scratchy techno music. In essence, he opposed to what he proposed to the audience. Smudge and scratch are not the same but equivalent, nonetheless. Both imply damage to the surface.

In a broader sense, both challenge the traditional decorum, be it visual or musical. Instead of hunt, chase and victory (in music), we get just rhythmic and dull scratchy sound, which seem endless, with occasional deliberately annoying missteps. The techno seems to allude to the visceral, autonomous sounds of nature, like a heartbeat. It becomes elemental, foregoing most

of the sentimental references, we are accustomed to and looking for.

Similarly, a smudge, so popular and liberating, in modern art, is an act of defiance. Not only does it cancel the past glory of decorum, but it tends to introduce a new structure, new meaning and insight. It's elemental.

Probably, the musicians need to undergo an audio-visual diversity training, if such exists. :)