

Tags : [Alexander Calder](#), [Bill King](#), [Gloria Kisch](#), [Hayground School](#), [Jason Peters](#), [Red Grooms](#), [Steve Heller](#), [The City Firm](#), [Willy Neumann](#)

Eye on Art-The Power of Sculpture

Posted on 25 July 2012



“A Ruin” by Matt Jones

by Helen A. Harrison

When it comes to art, the power of playfulness is often discounted. Art should be serious, and we should approach it with respect and even reverence. Well, gravitas has its place, but sometimes art, even great art, can be fun. Alexander Calder may be the best-known artist whose sculpture is both sophisticated and whimsical, and Red Grooms certainly elicits a chuckle with his 3-D caricatures of urban life.

“Powerplay,” the current sculpture installation at the Hayground School in Bridgehampton, aims to take that attitude one step further by engaging children with sculptures peppered around the school’s 13-acre campus. Organized by The City Firm, a Chelsea-based art advisory service with connections to the East End, the project features work by 28 artists using diverse and sometimes unconventional materials.

On opening day, July 14, a series of events and performances enhanced the overall theme of questioning “the value system of power and how it is interpreted within the American psyche.” For those who, like me, missed the occasion, there’s a YouTube video showing some of the day’s happenings. Apparently the idea was to have serious fun, mixing participatory activities with teaching and learning experiences.

Now that the dust has settled, what remains is a mixed bag of outdoor sculptures, some of which have not weathered well. When I visited, only a week after the official opening, many labels were down, and several of the more ephemeral works were no longer in evidence. Matt Stone’s “Xithform” had lost its embellishments, “Pinwheel Park and Whirligigs,” an ambitious installation by Grant Haffner, Carly Haffner and Scott Gibbons (assisted by the Hayground Campers) was in disarray, with several pinwheels broken and other parts missing, and Matt Jones’ “Obelisk #1” had suffered the fate of some of its Egyptian forebears. But Mr. Jones’ other piece, “A Ruin,”(above) a skeletal art gallery with a single painting on each wall, is paradoxically intact. The artist says that he “wanted to make a space ... that is like a gallery and like an unfinished tract house. A space that isn’t in a city but is with nature,” but I take it as an ironic comment on art’s place in modern life, at the mercy of the elements and with little visible support.

The works that have stood up best are those made of durable materials, like welded metal. Joining Bill King’s family group on the main lawn are some witty entries, like Steve Heller’s “Fintasia,” a whacky rocket ship with a car taillight for a nose cone. (Mr. Heller’s “Cadillac,” a miniaturized version of the vintage tail-finned confection, is appropriately placed in the parking lot.) Also on the lawn are Willy Neumann’s “15 Minutes of Frame,” in which visitors can create their own tableaux vivant, Michael Chairello’s “Split Differences,” a linear interplay of calligraphic curves, and Gloria Kisch’s spidery constructions, “Copper Fusion” and “Golden Fusion,” that appear both organic and metallic at the same time. Jason Peters’ “When There Was Nothing, Now There is Something” makes clever use of plastic, a substance that’s all too durable in the environment. It’s a snaking loop of red and white paint buckets that unfortunately needs a lot of support to keep its shape. The crutches and guy wires detract from its graceful form, but the piece nevertheless makes the point that the artist’s imagination can transform even the most unpromising material.

Many of the “Powerplay” works use recycled or found objects, perhaps as a way of highlighting the exhibition’s theme of critiquing American values. What most people discard with impunity, artists often rescue and rehabilitate. But it seems to me that this high-minded purpose is not the project’s most important message. Regardless of what art is made of, what style it is or what idea it expresses, it should be part of everyday life, an essential element of our experience. Rather than teaching about art from secondary sources like books or slides, sculpture on the school grounds allows youngsters and adults alike to interact with it directly, question its meaning and purpose, and play with it

in the most rewarding sense.

Popularity: 1% [?]

Be Sociable, Share!

+ MORE

Tweet 0

Like 12

0

Share

This post was written by:



[The Sag Harbor Express](#) - who has written 2383 posts on [The Sag Harbor Express](#).

[Contact the author](#)

2 Responses to “Eye on Art-The Power of Sculpture”

1.  Pea says:
July 28, 2012 at 9:43 pm

I recently went w my family to visit Hayground School and to my surprise, I saw the rocket ship,
The big red frame...my children immediately let out little muffled screams of delight, as we
parked and there was a pink Cadillac s sculpture in the parking lot.
They ran to the rocket ship....climbed into the frame.....my husband and our guests from the city
walked through the grounds and also came across a galvanized steel cluster of UNOGAMIS in
sand. Then we heard the ringing of bells form this rather beautiful bell sculpture hanging.

Really nice. Who is responsible for this?



2. Matt says:
August 1, 2012 at 8:42 am

Laura O'Reilly (of the City Firm), Molly Weiss, Sasha Okshteyn, and Pamela Willoughby are the creators/curators/directors of the event and exhibition, Pea.

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Comments are the sole responsibility of the person posting them. You agree not to post comments that are off-topic, defamatory, obscene, abusive, threatening or an invasion of privacy. Violators may be banned. [Terms of Service](#)

Submit Comment

Copyright © 2012 [The Sag Harbor Express](#). Site Design by [BEM Media](#).

Refinance your New York home

\$1,999 Includes all Valley fees
Origination Fee

Visit a branch or valleynationalbank.com/1999 to

Save \$500 [Learn More](#)

800-522-4100

2012 Valley National Bank. Member FDIC

Valley National Bank