



## ‘Built and imagined’ – Gleason Library exhibit looks at the artist’s process

by Cynthia Sorn

Art exhibitions usually contain the artists’ final visualization of an idea. What we don’t see are the varied steps that artists take from conception to final products or the ideas that were not fully realized. Carlisle Artist Beth Galston is giving us a glimpse into her creative artistic process in her current exhibit, “Built and Imagined,” at the Gleason Public Library through December 5. Galston works are usually large and filling spaces. They are meant as interaction pieces. Even her two-dimensional pieces

ask the viewer to come closer for a detailed look.

When Galston’s exhibition was installed six months ago, the world was just waking up to the danger of COVID-19. The library closed soon after her art was in place, and it has sat, waiting for the facility to open. We can now call the library for a half-hour appointment to view the show, and it is easier to accomplish the visit in that time by the guiding map to her installation in the library which Galston has provided.

See ART on page 7

September 25, 2020

Carlisle Mosquito

## “I have assembled a retrospective of sculpture models spanning 30 years”

ART continued from page 1

The Mosquito recently joined Galston to tour the exhibition (in masks and socially distancing) to hear about the various pieces on the first and second floor.

The show gives the viewer an insight into how an artist evolves her art over time. Galston has included a variety of her art from 1990 to the present. In general, she creates in three-dimensions, but the resulting product may be two-dimensional, as in her leaf prints.

### Leaf print series started at the transfer station

She has many leaf prints and they are fascinating to study. Her “Poplar One 2017” is a print capturing a half-decayed leaf on an approximately 4’ square poster. Another leaf print, “Cucumber Magnolia,” is a massive 3’ x 5’ enlargement of a magnolia leaf. Galston explains: “The leaf prints begin with an unexpected discovery at the Carlisle transfer station. It was in autumn, and the poplar leaves had fallen to the ground, decayed, and were run over by entering cars. Fascinated by their fragile beauty, I began collecting these and other decayed leaves. They are scanned at a high-resolution and printed at a large scale. This reveals their inner sculpture, which to me looks like landscapes and cities as seen from an airplane.” Accompanying the large magnolia leaf is “Cucumber Magnolia detail,” which is an extreme close up. The graceful veins and cells of the leaf are a natural tan and exposed on white paper. Galston explains: “Each portrait is a frozen moment in time. By collecting the leaves and bringing them indoors, I am stopping the process of decay, then capturing the moment though the scanning process.”

### Drilled copper reveals “feathery marks”

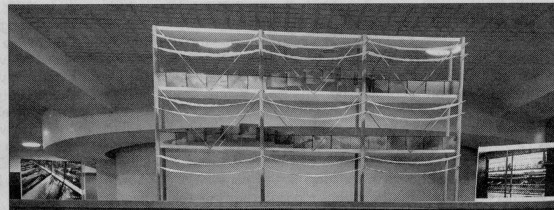
Galston’s other printed series, “Drilled Prints,” is created by drilling into copper plates, inking the plates and printing an image. Different shapes are created depending on the size of the drill bits and how the tool is held. In “Concentric Drilled Print #1,” holes were drilled in concentric circles, some deep and some shallow, which produced a variation in the saturation of the ink. The result looks symmetrical when viewed from four or more feet away, and up close the variations in the holes can be seen. A totally different effect was created in “Large Drilled Print #3.” She said while drilling the copper plate, she held the tool at an angle. It slipped, and she accidentally created “beautiful feathery linear marks,” reaching out from the drilled center. “I followed the process and took advantage of this lucky accident!” she said. Many of her prints displayed in the library are for sale.

### Models help her visualize the end product

Galston has a number of large-scale installations in public spaces, for example her environmental piece “Sound Wave,” which was installed in Nashville’s Music City Center (see “Carlisle sculptor Beth Galston awarded Nashville commission,” 10 April 2013). Before she creates her large-scale art, she starts by making models. She explained



Artist Beth Galston stands beside her model of “Prairie Grass,” part of the current exhibition at the Gleason Library. To see it, call the library for an appointment. (Photo by Cynthia Sorn)



The Model for “Color Walk” an installation in Mesa, Arizona. To see it, call the library for an appointment. (Photo by Cynthia Sorn)

that as an installation artist, she creates works for private clients in her Somerville studio, and she also works on large-scale commissions for public spaces. She said, “For this exhibit, I have gone through my archives and assembled, for the first time, a retrospective of sculpture models spanning 30 years. Most of the models were not for presentation but are working models, often with pencil marks or other notations to help me figure things out.” She said she loves to make models. “They are small worlds and I can imagine myself walking through them. Playing with ideas and materials in a free-flowing way, I explore variations on a theme.”

She said she sometimes thinks the materials themselves make the creation. Flexibility in the process is important, she said. She may create a concept, a model and a plan, and have to modify it to fit unexpected changes during the development process or during installation. For example, her public installation, “Prairie Grass,” on display at the Northwest Service in San Antonio, Texas, needed to withstand 100 m.p.h. winds. Envisioned as prairie grass stems which sway in the wind, she said the “grass” poles (10 to 18 feet high) were modified to have stiffer steel material at the base, but still tapered to allow movement at the top of the stem.

### Models mistakenly make the project look easy

It’s amazing to look at a small model and wonder how it moved from conceptual stage to installation. She has included a model of her installation “Color Walk,” permanently in place

at the Mesa Arts Center in Mesa, AZ. On her updated website she explains in detail the very complicated process of creating “Color Walk,” which consist of colored glass panels affixed to a walkway. “The imagery for the glass is based on photographs of the sky and clouds in Mesa at dusk during a rainstorm,” she said. “The glass was fabricated in collaboration with the skilled artisans at Franz Mayer of Munich, Inc. in Germany. Colored metal oxides were applied to each panel by a process of photo silk screening, airbrushing, and hand painting. Each of 32 panels consists of two pieces of glass that are laminated together: one layer has a photo silkscreened dot pattern of the clouds, and the other panel is freely hand painted and airbrushed.” People walking through become part of the colors and patterns.

### Make an appointment to visit

A half hour doesn’t seem long enough to view the variety of materials that Galston has provided, but in these times, it is a treat to experience such a wide-ranging display. It may be helpful to look at her website, bethgalston.com, before a visit to the library. Art at the Gleason is curated by Emily Stewart, Andrea Urban, Amy Livens, and Sandy Eisenbies. Contact the Gleason Public Library for an appointment to see the exhibit and don’t forget your mask. Δ