Arts&Entertainment

Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012

Galleries	23
Readings	23
Theater	23

'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy' a moody thriller 21



Artist opens up his work in progress 22



'Suspended' in time

Three artists' visions coalesce in major installation

By Deborah Minsky

BANNER CORRESPONDENT

"Suspended," a quartet of art installations showing in the Duffy Gallery at Provincetown Art Association and Museum brings together four multi-media pieces that are at once distinct and complementary. The exhibition is curated by Frank Vasello with work by Truro resident Nathalie Ferrier and Beth Galston, who hails from Carlisle.

For the uninitiated, "installation art" is unique, often site-specific, three-dimensional work that both defines and is defined by the space it utilizes, whether indoors or out.

"My idea [when invited to curate] at PAAM was to show installation work, the kind of work I do, because it does not get shown very often in Provincetown," says artist-curator Vasello.

To complement the exhibition, Vasello, Ferrier and Galston will be offering a gallery talk about "Suspended" at 1 p.m. on Saturday at PAAM, 460 Commercial St., Provincetown. Their presentation is open to the public, free of charge. The exhibition will hang through Jan. 15.

Vasello describes his curatorial goals in a brochure for this show: "It is exciting to see how a piece interacts with the space in which it is located. ... I selected Nathalie Ferrier and Beth Galston because their work related to one another. Each has installed an organic, immersive environment. Through process that is meditative, almost obsessive, both artists created large cohesive works from multiple smaller parts — which demonstrate both chaos and order in nature."

For her "Ex-votos Series, 2011" Ferrier combined wax paper, ink and crocheted cotton thread on a series of 10-by-10inch wall panels that meld her fascination with human anatomy with her own imaginative artistic concept. "As I was making these drawings, I was inspired by anatomy, but it reminded me so much of nature that I started to draw 'nature' within the body. There is a very strong connection. I ended up making landscapes out of the body," she says.

With overall dimensions of 49 x 88 inches, this subtle yet dramatic piece occupies an entire wall.

Ferrier's larger piece, entitled "Occult Relation Between Man and the Vegetable 2011" (from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*) utilizes suspended fabric, cotton

GALSTON continued on page 20



PHOTO JAMES ZIMMERMAN

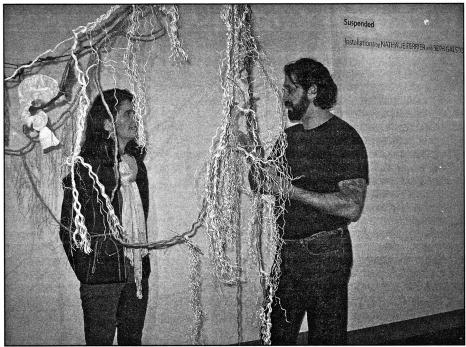
Artist Beth Galston with her pieces "Luminous Garden" and "Tangle," part of "Suspended," an installation at PAAM.

GALSTON continued from page 19

thread, leaves, electrician's tape, masking tape, found ropes and tree branches in a space of variable dimensions. "I find fascinating the many layers of tissues that line the inside of our bodies," she says. "They [evoke] light dresses and delicate sweaters worn one on top of the other. Arteries and veins permeate and bond our whole body, resembling vines, roots and life-sustaining trees. ... This installation exhibits a sustained but fragile, intimate world and intends to take the viewer [into] a body-forest where organs and nature are connected. Crochet is the bond [that] connects, supports and holds the work together."

Ferrier learned her intricate crochet technique as a young girl making blankets with her great-grandmother, who insisted she master this traditional French domestic skill. This signature component of virtually all Ferrier's artwork also recalls her days in fashion design and creation.

For this piece, which is both whimsical and grounded in the stuff of her basic, daily environment, Ferrier also used "found" materials, such as fishing lines, castaway nylon ropes and other beach salvage which she combined with tree branches and the



PHOTOS DEBORAH MINSKY

Nathalie Ferrier and curator Frank Vasello discuss the installation.

meticulously crocheted oak leaves.

"I like 'accidents," she says.
"So anything I come across I can
use if I find it interesting or compelling. The beauty of working
with found materials is every time
I use something new I have to
teach myself a new skill or
process. I have to think about
how I am going to transform it."

Galston and Ferrier had never shared an exhibition before; in fact they met for the first time during the actual installation process at PAAM back in October. It is a tribute to the artists' exceptional gifts, the mutuality of their visions and to Vasello's curatorial skill that their separate pieces coalesce so gracefully.

"The first thing we shared was several days of working in the galleries side by side, which was fun," says Galston. "As the installations took shape, we viewed each other's work and noticed the synchronicities, particularly the use of natural materials and an interest in light and shadow. Frank [Vasello] chose artists whose work he connected with; he was particularly drawn to [our] work for its

unusual use of materials, obsessive repetition and attention to detail. Both of us collect and transform natural materials, so that created a connection as well."

This is the first time Galston's "Luminous Garden (Aerial)" from 2009 and "Tangle" from 2001 have been shown together. Although originally separated by several years, as they were installed at PAAM, the connectedness Vasello envisioned in advance emerged with stunning clarity. In response to this reporter's questions via email, Galston elaborated. "Both sculptures use acorn caps," she says. "'Tangle' is made of tens of thousands of real acorn caps which I collected, drilled and strung together on monofilament. 'Luminous Garden' is made of glowing resin forms cast from acorn caps and tangles of electrical wires. They are not 'new' pieces, but each time I install them I consider the space and configure the installation in response to that [new] space. 'Tangle' can have its ropes piled densely, as it is at PAAM, or it can be extended across the

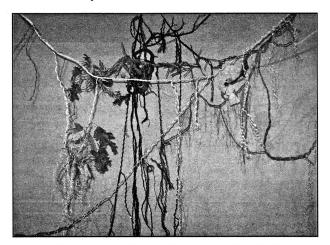
room. If you were to stretch out the 'rope' of acorns, it would be more than 400 feet long."

The interactive quality of her piece "Ariel" is an example of how Galston likes to transform space.

"I create immersive environments so that viewers are in the piece," she says. "They enter and move through it. ... I set up a situation that has possibilities; then viewers create the piece for themselves with their own associations, thoughts and feelings. My original inspiration was snorkeling amongst a variety of magical creatures [in the Galapagos]. There was something about being suspended in this watery world — not removed from, but as part of it as one of the many creatures there — that had a profound influence on me. I wanted to re-create [that] feeling ... [and bring] the watery world above ground and into the gallery so that viewers could experience it as well."

Interestingly, all of the wires in "Luminous Garden" carry electricity. Each LED is soldered to a positive and a negative wire. "The wires are not just there for the way they look; I love [their] tangles and how they create a three-dimensional drawing in space," says Galston.

The Duffy Gallery's stark white walls, low lighting and dramatic hardwood floor become part of the overall "Suspended" installation. The sparseness of the surroundings enables viewers to examine and contemplate each piece without being distracted by anything extraneous. The effect is very quiet and centering. You really can be "immersed" in the experience, all the while marveling at both the creative grace and the out-of-the-ordinary technical skills of the crocheting, welding, drilling or electrical work of the artists.



Detail of "Occult Relation Between Man and the Vegetable," by artist Nathalie Ferrier, part of the "Suspended" installation at PAAM.