

Ani Kasten Ceramics in Concord: Inspirational Art for Precarious Times

ANI KASTEN

From The Ruins

October 7 - 28, 2017



I found Ani Kasten's latest ceramics exhibit, which opened yesterday at the Lacoste Gallery in Concord, MA, inspirational. The work, comprised mainly of vessels of irregular shapes and sizes, is delicate, with seams sometimes held together with thin wires, and replete with beautiful, unexpected embellishments, cracks, colors and patterns that make the viewer stop to contemplate.



Entitled *From the Ruins*, the show focuses on vessels and sculptures that are “deconstructed... ‘barely holding together’, ‘coming apart at the seams’, and searching for a cohesive beauty in their tenuous state of existence,” according

to the exhibit writeup.

I mentioned to Kasten that her work “spoke” to me, especially because too many of my close friends and family members have passed away, recently, and that I’m working on writing and photography projects that I hope will help bring shape, beauty, meaning and new life to past experiences. Kasten responded that she, too, has gone through several major losses, which in part, inspired her current work.



Ani Kasten

As she writes in her artist’s statement for the exhibit:

“Investigating the materiality of the clay is the foundation and focal point for all of my sculptural vessels. I create wheel-thrown and hand-built forms in families, and these sculptural groupings explore the meeting point between natural and man-made worlds. The vessels take their influence from plants, water, rocks and clay, as well as from architecture,

industry and machinery.



“The forms integrate both of these sensibilities into a composed landscape, such as a stand of bamboo-like, truncated cylinders, perforated with small windows to look like corroded skyscrapers, or a simple, pure form such as a smooth sphere, marked on its surface with an off-center, wandering imprint, like bird tracks in the sand. The pieces are often truncated, off-center, weathered and perforated, combining natural movement and an apparent state of organic deterioration that invokes the cycle of life, death, decay.

“They investigate the nature of change, the compiling of memory, and a feeling of profound loss—the recognition of temporal beauty bound inextricably with grief. The pieces are like remnants, a landscape of objects that remain after some kind of significant change, grave markers, or organic matter that has survived a great fire.



“As creative expressions of form, movement and texture, my work is infused with a modern, minimal aesthetic while at the same time reminding one of a natural or ancient object exposed to the rigors of time. As does nature, my ceramics often incorporate repeated markings and patterns, and explore asymmetry while retaining balance, lightness, and quietude of form.”-



According to a gallery

publication, Kasten was drawn to the medium of clay as an apprentice to British ceramist Rupert Spira, Then she headed a stoneware making facility in Nepal for four years before returning to the USA to set up ceramic studios in California, Maryland and most recently Minnesota. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally with works in the permanent collections of the Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin; the Weisman Art Museum Minneapolis MN; and the Sana' a Collection, the US Embassy, Sana' a Yemen.

I should also mention that I had a lovely time at the opening, Despite the serious nature of her work, Kasten is quite personable. That's expressed, in the "lightness and quietude" of her work but also emerged in a fun conversation we had with others at the gallery about online dating. _



The exhibit, at the Lacoste Gallery, 25 Main Street in Concord, runs through October 28, 2017. I recommend it highly.

Anita M. Harris

Anita Harris is a writer, photographer and communications consultant based in Cambridge, MA.

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