

Ani Kasten Ceramics at Lacoste Keane: Beauty From Decay



Once again, the [Lacoste Keane gallery](#) in Concord MA presents a stunning new show—in which ceramicist Ani Kasten uses the concept of visual poems to reflect on issues such as environmental collapse, social collapse, and inner and outer strife.



In the show, Kasten creates sculptural compositions from fragments and debris. While some vessels are quite large, other, smaller pieces Kasten calls “poems,” are three-dimensional objects which she likens to written verse. A poem, says the one-time literature major, “shears away everything but the most essential, evoking an emotional response through the sparsest communication, constructing concepts and feelings into a hewn verbal form, without engaging narrative or logic.”



Debris poems; Lucy Lacoste

Kasten uses earth materials like clay and rocks as a metaphor to explore ideas of decay, disintegration and renewal. “Working in clay is about the search for balance between the natural tendencies of the materials and the craft that is brought about by contact with the human hand,” according to the gallery writeup. “Faced with monumental forces of nature and entropy, a sadness and feeling of futility is provoked with the notion that human hubris seeks to create lasting structure and survival in the face of decimation by forces outside of our control—earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, tornadoes, violence and war. “



In this work, Kasten “reveals emerging structures and constructs under stress, made by the human hand but fighting against collapsing infrastructure. They show the cracking, warping and erosion that are natural expressions of the material, and explore the beauty and sadness in building from wreckage, such as a little robot made from scavenged shards of something former, with two little ears made from fossilized hornets’ nests.

Kasten says that “In the act of scavenging, building and creating the visual poems, ” she is “searching for beauty and harmony in the act of piecing back together what may seem like meaningless detritus of a collapsing world, reclaiming a tenuous and fragile feeling of meaning and purpose.”



In my view, she is successful in doing so. The pieces look delicate—as if they could fall apart at any second. But with their pastel colors and seemingly -haphazard-yet-powerful shapes reaching out in many directions, they exude tremendous energy—inviting the viewer to enter into Kasten’s exploration and expression of the tenuous-yet-enduring relationships of natural and human forces.

At [Lacoste Keane Gallery](#), 25 Main St Concord MA 01742, through February 8, 2020.

—Anita M. Harris

Anita Harris is a writer and communications consultant based in Cambridge, MA. New Cambridge Observer is a publication of the [Harris Communications Group](#), an award-winning public relations and digital marketing agency, also in Cambridge.