

Judith Mullen
Linger
Aug 30 - Oct 10, 2020

Devening Projects

Devening Projects is very pleased to present Linger, the first solo show at the gallery by Chicago artist Judith Mullen. Judith has an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has been showing her work nationally for many years. Judith's exhibition will open on August 30th and will continue until October 10th, 2020.

An appointment to visit the exhibition can be made by visiting www.deveningprojects.com.

In a recent essay on her current projects, Judith said "In walking, interpretation frequently lags behind actual temporal experience. When walking, we transgress and reestablish new boundaries by continually redefining a new "frame" for our field of experience. Walking itself does not make art in the traditional sense except for perhaps a trail as in seen in Richard Long's A Line Made by Walking. The physical act of putting one foot in front of the other is repetitive and tied to rhythms of organic processes. Wandering, the deliberate moving off a set course is about non-conforming and remaining open to a new way of facing everyday challenges. With this type of ambulation, the role of gesture and habit are the foreground and suggest opportunities for ritual as material and conceptual connection with nature. It is an invitation to linger, to slowly immerse yourself in an environment like a cave or a forest that allows for transformation.

Walking or wandering in a forested area is a daily part of my studio practice. Here the tree-forms act as metaphor, respite, teacher and model for my overall art practice where I combine many mediums and textures. While walking I meditate on the ever-present awareness of the impact on the human body and spirit as a result of cultural pressures, communication overload and isolation. I am curious about the psychic and spiritual effects experienced in this ritual of walking in the forest and how these manifests in processing concerns related to a range of emotions such as joy, loneliness, uncertainty and fear. The resilience of the tree and its adaptability to changes in the landscape is a model I use to express our shared human desire for strength and courage. Reflecting on a quote from Janet Laurence from her work found in After Nature, Laurence states, "Trees for me are the great signals of change. They become a register of what's happening through climate change, pollution and poisoned waters." In my sculptures the tree is represented by references to bark using skin like materials such as resin, handmade tree bark, chicken wire, cheesecloth and Ace bandages. The bark of the tree is made up of living cells and acts as a skin which shields the tree from disease, animals and insects much like our own human skin. Following in the footsteps of Ana Mendieta I gather found, upcycled and recycled materials which can be woven and cast into figurative wall and free-standing sculptures and nest like assemblages. My mode of combining materials mimics the ritual and repetition of walking in the forest. Interweaving or layering of materials speaks to a balance between strength and fragility.

My engagement with specific materials has a long family lineage beginning with my great grandfather, Julius Schubert, who emigrated from Denmark in 1870. Schubert was one of a few fresco painters who helped to rebuild Chicago and vicinity after the Chicago fire. A recent trip to the earliest frescoes found in the ancient cave paintings at Grotte de Niaux, France, showed records of daily rituals and interaction with the natural world providing physical and spiritual well-being. The makers of these early frescoes also employed walking, ritual and repetition to speak of their connection to nature. My recent modular figurative sculptures and mixed media objects employ some of this the ancient fresco technique bringing historically grounded materials into contemporary sculptural and painting discourse. It is through a continual process of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing that I reach outside of the familiar and invite the viewer to engage in the shared nuances of the human condition."

Judith Mullen is a Chicago based visual artist working primarily in painting and sculpture. She holds her BFA and MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has been showing her work nationally in both solo and group shows for the past twenty years. She is the recipient of an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship along with numerous scholarships, grants and awards. Her work can be found in both private and public collections.

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