

ART REVIEW

Letha Wilson, Art in General, Landmarks and Monuments



Letha Wilson: Exploring Landmarks and Monuments With A Tactile Intimacy

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The famous architect Louis Kahn said "Truly a work of Art is one that tells us, that Nature cannot make what man can make."

The show *Landmarks and Monuments* at Art In General, confounds this quote. "Landmarks and Monuments" incorporates photographs of expansive canyons, mountains, and moonlit vistas into complex concrete enigmatic sculptural forms."

The artist, Letha Wilson, was raised amidst the red rocky Colorado landscape. Her artistic practice begins with reverence in this setting. Her 35 mil close up images of her native boulders capture the cracks and crevices with tactile intimacy. To double the pleasure she kneads poured concrete in and around the torn paper images creating complex geological sculptural forms. To say they are simply 3 dimensional relief landscapes would deny the brilliant interplay she sets up between her works and the exhibition environment. The site-specific rapport of each work within its setting is what truly makes this show unique.

Art in General is a nonprofit organization that commissions artists to produce and present new work. Art in General's 30 year history has emerged as one of New York's leading non profits devoted to providing an environment in which unconventional and stimulating artists can showcase new work. Letha once worked within the Art In General space as a freelance art preparator, building walls and working with the various installations of their exhibitions. Invited by Art in General to present a New Commissions, which included a budget and lengthy installation period,

she brought in a concrete mixer and got right into her process of a very intimate site-specific exhibition. The 400-pound concrete and c-print collage, "Utah Maine Concrete Slab" was created on the floor of where it is now installed. After a week of drying time – it took 6 people to hoist it up so it could lean against the wall.

"Holey Wave (Cortlandt alley), 2013" is an aluminum mounted photograph that hangs in front of an actual window. Outdoor street light literally leaks thru Letha's carefully cut and folded circles punctured throughout the photograph. NYC's natural light mingles among the Rocky Mountains within the photo. The most striking work of all is "Moon Wave", which sits in the center of the room. It is a floor to ceiling photo, mounted on a curled wood poplar backing. The image is a nocturnal desert scene, replete with hanging moon. Standing before the work evokes the same stillness of the night as when the photo was taken, as the work's horizon line is perfectly scaled to human proportion. To disrupt us from this tranquil moment in nature however, Letha has impaled the photo with a structural white column smack center. The column's sharp intrusion along with the s- shaped curve of the mounted photo give the piece an almost Dali-esque melting of time and the image.

Her work is a visual wrestling match between art and nature. Are they creative rivals or collaborators? In "Landmarks and Monuments" they are locked in a dead heat embrace. Nature cannot edit itself or argue its importance the way Letha Wilson can. In "Utah Maine Concrete Slab," she deliberately creates duets between the ephemeral paper photograph and the relentless strength of concrete. This juxtaposition is reminiscent of the feeling you have on a spring jaunt down a street when suddenly you spot a little flower pushing thru a crack in the sidewalk. She reminds us of nature's wonders whilst standing in the great indoors.

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