

CHARLESTON CITY PAPER



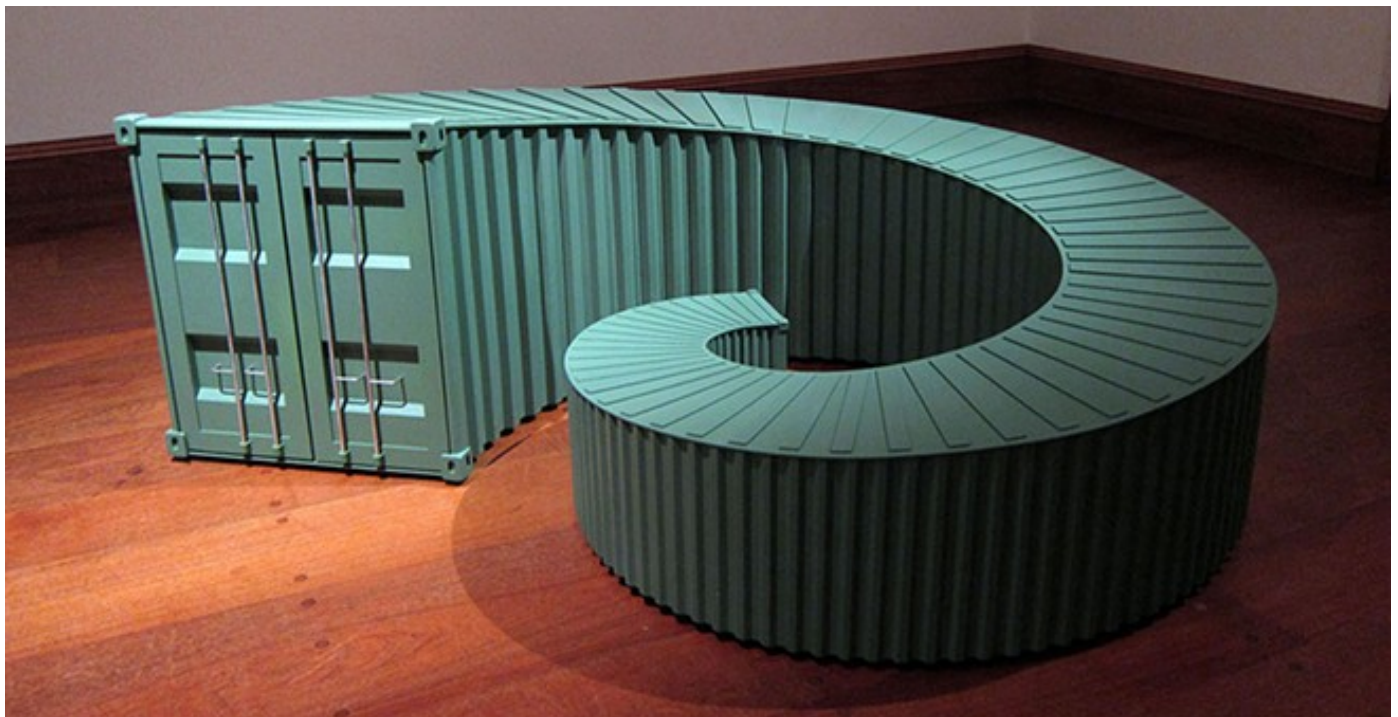
ARTS+MOVIES » FEATURES

October 19, 2016

Peter Eudenbach's *This is Not an Object* explores how we use things

Form over Function

By Matt Dobie



Provided

Situated in the heart of CofC's campus, on the corner of Calhoun and St. Philip streets, the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art is somewhat of a hidden gem, albeit one that is hidden in plain sight. The exhibition space brings innovative contemporary art to the Charleston community — for free. This Friday, Oct. 21, yet another thought-provoking exhibition opens at the Halsey. It's a co-bill, featuring the separate works of Sara Angelucci and Peter Eudenbach.

When the Halsey has a show featuring multiple artists, there is usually a common theme, a thread that ties them together. The works of Angelucci and Eudenbach two artists are quite dissimilar at first glance. But as the Halsey's Director and Senior

Curator says, "If there's anything I can say that joins the two of them, it's this absurdist sense and the idea that there is a kind of a logic at work."

Angelucci's body of work, *Aviary*, melds the heads of endangered or extinct birds with 19th century photographic portraits, ultimately creating a singular being. "There's something so right looking about it, yet it's just so odd," says Sloan. "There's this almost tender relationship between the person in the photograph and the bird that she chooses. It's as if they belong together. It's almost like an inevitable thing."

It's a painstaking process, too. Angelucci goes to great lengths to photograph each bird in 360 degrees. "So whatever the attitude of the person," says Sloan, "she has the same facial frame of the bird. So there's an obsession aspect to that that really appealed to me. And because she's obsessed, it works."

Eudenbach's work is just as odd. Or perhaps more so. As Sloan puts it, "It exists in sort of a parallel world."

For his exhibition at the Halsey, *This is Not an Object*, Eudenbach is exploring the relationship between absurdity and functionality. "Function in the most general sense is filling a need," says Eudenbach. "A problem-solution, cause-effect. And what I like to do is sort of upend that."

For instance: a flashlight with a candlewick where the light bulb should be. "So the flashlight no longer functions," says Eudenbach. "You couldn't light the candle because of the glass and even if you could light it, the candle would go right out because it's encapsulated. Both forms of technology are in a sense negated. And that's really where the absurdity comes in. But at the same time, when you look at it, it makes perfect sense."

Among the many objects Eudenbach has created for this exhibition, there's an industrial shipping container crossed with a snail shell. "Any kind of shell is ultimately a container," says Eudenbach, "and you're looking at this form of organic growth related to this thing that's really the building block of global economic growth."

There's the coffee table that makes coffee, which is not just some silly play-on-words — although it is that too — but once again, the piece explores relationships. In this case, Eudenbach juxtaposes a horizontal object (the table) with the vertical process of making coffee. An interesting concept indeed, but if you're a fan of a nice cup of Joe, don't think this is the next big thing in coffee consumption. "Honestly, the coffee tastes terrible," laughs Eudenbach.

And then there's what Eudenbach considers, "probably the biggest piece I've ever done in terms of the scale of the idea."

Its inspiration was born when Eudenbach read that scientists had discovered a cricket fossil from 156 million years ago and that its wing was so well preserved they were able to reconstruct what the cricket sounded like. "I thought there was a project in there somewhere," says Eudenbach. "There's some poetry in the science."

What he ultimately did was carve the visualized sound wave — it sort of looks like a heartbeat on a cardiogram — of the cricket's call out of amber. "I thought it needed to be amber because amber, of course, preserves insects," he says.

The fossil itself was discovered in northwestern China. For centuries, the Chinese have lovingly kept crickets in their houses, using little cages as homes for the vocal arthropods. "They keep [the crickets] with them just for their song," says Eudenbach. "A form of auditory incense you might say."

This carved amber wavelength is the cage for this ancient cricket, and naturally, it's paired with an audio aspect. Eudenbach worked a sound artist who composed a 10-minute piece based on the original cricket call.

This amber ancient cricket cage may only be five or six inches long, but it stems from a much larger idea. Says Eudenbach, "It may be the oldest sound on earth that's still around."

The eclectic conversion Angelucci and Eudenbach's exhibitions has become a standard at the Halsey, an art institute that always has a finger on the pulse of the contemporary art world. "We originate every show we do," says Sloan. "We don't take any traveling shows."

They may not take them, but they sure produce them. Most of the Halsey's exhibitions turn into nationwide traveling shows. At this very moment, there are six exhibitions that originated at the Halsey touring the US.

Who knows, this Angelucci/Eudenbach exhibition may be the next to join that vaunted list.

Tags: Peter Eudenbach, Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art

Related Events

Peter Eudenbach: This is Not an Object @ Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art