

Guest **Curator's** Statement

It may have been the sight of April's nor'easter covering spring snowdrops with a blanket of white or the fact that global warming has at last become an accepted if uncomfortable reality. But as I reviewed the many strong submissions for *Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood*, I kept returning to the notion of fragility – as it relates to nature and the environment, but also as it relates to human experience and life itself. Within this overarching idea, two threads emerged – work that was “of nature,” in its material, construction, or affect; and conversely, work that was distinctly out of place in the natural world, seemingly transplanted from another realm – whether real or imagined. I hope that as visitors explore the exhibition they will enjoy reflecting on these concepts that loosely connect the selected work.

Drawing on the tradition of found object sculpture, **Roger Bisbing** and **Joe Bigley** bring to Chesterwood's fields and woods material that has been displaced from traditional office environments. While Bisbing's monumental stack of office desks, jarring in terms of position and size, continues the artist's exploration of unsettling and ambiguous scale, its narrative force is rooted in the image of lifetimes spent behind exactly these sorts of desks. Bigley's installation of metallic doorknobs mounted on dozens of trees plays with the doorknob as it provides or prohibits access, challenging our complacency with regard to the natural world.

Jason Karakehian's *Untitled 5* consists of six orange inscrutable objects, whose smooth finish reveals no touch of human handiwork. Although inspired by natural forms, their size and pristine surfaces make it clear that these objects are not of this world. *Untitled*, a luminous white void or an unearthly portal, takes inspiration from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, written not far from Chesterwood at Arrowhead, the author's Pittsfield home.

Richard Garrison's *Cast Shadow (Toys "R" Us)* is unequivocally of this time and place, part of the artist's wide reaching investigation of the contemporary suburban built environment. Initially a natural phenomenon, the shadow, detached from its source and rendered here in concrete, becomes an inscrutable object in its own right. **Peter Dellert's** *Hope* consists of two elegantly carved Spanish cedar shafts that pierce the ground at slight angles. These abstract forms relate to each other in an oddly comforting way, while

focusing the viewer's gaze on a revealed fragment of reality beyond. The sculpture echoes the meditative tone of French's standing Lincoln with which the sculpture shares a clearing.

Lin Lisberger's *Journeys* presents a rudimentary open boat perched atop an irregular ladder. The work seems an apt metaphor for life's travels or perhaps in its precarious positioning life's travails is more apropos. **Ellen Wetmore's** *The Dead Letter Office* takes the form of a Victorian dollhouse, its gothic-arched windows, clapboard siding and gingerbread trim evoking a slightly eerie presence. Two mail slots receive letters; the interior is fireproofed so that letters can be cremated periodically. A small compartment holds writing materials so that visitors may post their notes to the deceased.

Both **Gordon Chandler** and **Wendy Klemperer** present narratives that could be found in nature, but fortunately not in our time or in this milieu. Chandler's welded steel sculptures depict three soldiers that could be seen in far too many places on the globe, but here at Chesterwood they strike an incongruous note stalking through the forest. Though their poses are lifelike and accurately depicted, their weapons are mysteriously not present. Wendy Klemperer's *Catattack* depicts a tiger in fierce pursuit of a deer—a frozen moment, and one that we would hardly expect to find dominating Chesterwood's charming picnic area.

Lillian Mulero plays with our expectations, offering up a bird watching stand replete with binoculars and a pedestal for note taking. Perched on a distant tree limb, the quarry is not a bird, but a self-portrait of the artist posed before a wall drawing by Sol Lewitt from an exhibition at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College. **Iain Machell** also confounds our assumptions of how things ought to be with his park bench, a resting place he titles *Comfort Zone* and has engraved with headlines from popular magazines. Pointedly reminding us of our inability to measure up in terms of appearance or accomplishments, the phrases render the bench decidedly uncomfortable for occupants.

James Owen Calderwood's *Forest Sphere/Tree Wrap* weaves together a small group of adjacent trees. The piece is fabricated entirely of quite