

QUEENS Chronicle

Echoes of the Self By Neil Chiragdin — February 15, 2018



Photo by Neil Chiragdin

Who amongst us has not felt the inclination to shout into a large hollow space? The call and response between man and nature is innate and mammalian, like wolves howling at the moon.

As humans, we project ourselves outward into our surroundings, and onto those around us. We do this impulsively; the ability to communicate and the urgent need for social contact distinguish us from many other forms of life. In what ways do our actions shape the social world around us? What do we hope to receive from the world in exchange? The intangible ripple effects of the mere act of being manifest in countless ways, and are the subject of meditation at a new art exhibition.

“In Practice: Another Echo” is a recently opened exhibition at the **SculptureCenter** in Long Island City that asks: **“How do we, in an ailing and unaccommodating society, extend ourselves out into the world, particularly when what we need so often is sanctuary?”** The artists of this exhibition — in total, 12 artists or artist teams — use sculpture, video, live sound and drawing to examine the ways that consciousness shapes human habitats.

Some of the artists approach the exhibit’s theme by concrete methods. **Juliana Cerqueira Leite’s** sculptures capture the gestures made by reporters and those they’ve interviewed about humanitarian crises. A three-dimensional collage of hands, Leite’s stream of consciousness titles hint at the dialogue that was playing out while her chosen hand motions were onscreen. Often inflected with great emotion while recounting traumatic encounters with acts of God, the works capture these individuals’ hand motions. In casting them in clay, the sculptor solidifies their experiences, creating a visual echo of their stories.

Other artists have curated totems of individuals who have expressed themselves in a visual format, and presented them as a collection within the exhibition. **Nobutaka Aozaki** has assembled a wall of graffiti tags that have been made on U.S. Postal Service label stickers. Perhaps overlooked on the street lamps and crosswalk signs they once adorned, as an assemblage, they command the audience's attention and seem to memorialize their taggers.

Carmen Winant's "Looking Forward to Being Attacked" is a concrete-like block adorned with found images of women engaged in self-defense poses. Winant notes that she began the archive subconsciously throughout 2016, as a response to the political environment of the presidential election.

Several of the pieces are of a more experiential nature, such as **Priyanka Dasgupta's** and **Chad Marshall's** "Passage." Their work addresses the history of immigration in America "by revisiting the paths that blacks and early 20th century Bengali sailors took to the United States, through the holds of slave ships and steamship boiler rooms."

The installation is housed within SculptureCenter's central corridor, which has been walled off from another installation on the other side. To experience it, audience members must crouch-walk below a cedar ceiling that gradually decreases in height. After the uncomfortable journey, visitors emerge into a small space where they can stand normally. Throughout the art piece, the Emma Lazarus sonnet "The New Colossus," which is engraved on the Statue of Liberty's base, echoes in Yoruba and Bengali.

The show includes a diverse wealth of art media, including the "leather totems" of **Elena Ailes** and **Simon Belleau**, which are meant to "push against their surroundings with quiet, expressive force" in the manner of fungi, whose growth process is one of nature's slowest. **Carey Denniston** has created private viewing booths set across from video screens that play edited Facetime conversations with her 13-year-old niece. Denniston's work offers commentary on the digital realm which now accounts for a massive amount of human communication, and within which her niece is already comfortable.

"In Practice: Another Echo" is a fascinating way to spend an afternoon, and may make you consider the reasons and ways in which you assert your own consciousness in the world.