



After the Pedestal, the 7th Annual of Smaller Sculpture of the Region

Sept. 16 – October 22, 2011

Statement by Barbara Hunt McLanahan, Juror

When I was viewing the submissions for this year's *After the Pedestal*, trailers for a new horror movie were showing repeatedly on TV. The original *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* is a movie that I watched as a tween, while home alone in rural Norfolk, England. At the time, I was terrified, and it made a lasting memory. As I considered these artists' images, my mind kept puzzling over this phrase and what 'the dark' holds for different people. What are we afraid of when the lights turn out?

For many artists selected here, the work urges us to certainly be *concerned*, literally, about the dark – we should be more mindful of mankind's depletion of the earth's natural resources, and planning a future that has found more sustainable forms of energy or safer agriculture. Works poetically, and often humorously, draw attention to consumerism, cultural legacy, environmental damage, genetic engineering, and industrialization. We are prompted to consider our legacy and our ideals.

These works offer a timely commentary on contemporary society. Not surprisingly, given the environmental disasters of the past few years and Western society's war-driving obsession with oil, some of the artists selected nudge us to consider our dependence on fossil fuels, oil and oil derivatives, Western consumer society, the development of agriculture based on genetic engineering, and mass production. Others direct us to history, reminding us of earlier civilizations, hand-labor such as baking and craftwork, and our links with our ancestors. Many of the artists convey their message with humor, others offer observations tinged with regret and poignancy. Each is effective and visually arresting.

All is not doom and gloom however. Some artists consider the act of an indirect exchange with strangers and present "how to" projects to help us find a way forward. All of the works give us pause – a moment to consider issues that simmer in our subconscious – and they remind us of the duality of life. Science/nature, handmade/industrial, light/dark, country/city, the past/the present. The world is constantly in flux. How do we deal with the dark?

Ballad of Impossibilities

One fine day in the middle of the night
Two dead men got up to fight
Back to back they faced each other
Drew their swords and shot each other.