
KAY
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The sculptural work of artist Dominique Morel will be on exhibition at the Kay Garvey Gallery at 560 Crescent Boulevard in Glen Ellyn, from September 8th - October 6th.

Dominique Morel is an Algerian born artist who moved to Montreal twenty three years ago. The style of her sculptural work is highly distinctive, and seems to draw on her North African roots for a certain quality of timeless imagery, in combination with a quality of constraint which one might associate with a more Western experience. Significantly, her sculpture dramatizes the contrast between interior and exterior space so that, while the form itself is always of primary importance, there is always a feeling of tension embodied there on several levels.

Morel's choice of media is crucial in creating these delicately balanced works, and in achieving their carefully restrained elegance. Using such materials as fiberglass, bamboo and coiled and tied cotton string, she creates objects which are intimate, and sometimes fragile. These objects speak to us on a very primitive level; they recall to us mysterious organic forms. And yet their imagery is elusive. Perhaps we recognize these forms as artifacts from a primitive culture or from our own archetypal experience: an artifact, maybe, or a skeleton, or a shellfish. And then again, perhaps these forms are imaginary creations which draw us in a very primal way.

Morel has revealed to us a need to discover and reveal the secret of the object. Poetically beautiful as she reveals this truth to be, we are spiritually compelled to discover this truth with her.

In this highly sensitive, intuitive process, Morel has shaped a personal vision of continuity between myth and history, personally engaging us at the point where this has become for her the creative act.

A reception will be held for the artist on Friday, September 8th, from 6:00 - 9:00PM. The public is invited.

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The Kay Garvey Gallery in Glen Ellyn is currently hosting the evocative sculptural work of Canadian artist Dominique Morel. Drawing on her North African roots and other external and internal resources for timeless imagery, Dominique has created for this one woman show objects of elusive organic form, which draw us in a very primal, spiritually compelling way to confront our own inner truth.

Dominique Morel, who was born in Algeria, moved to Montreal twenty three years ago. Formal training has included Bachelor's and Master's degrees in visual art at the University of Quebec, where she has also lectured. She has had several successful group and solo exhibitions in that country, including the 1987 exhibitions "Contenants Fictifs" at the University of Quebec, "Femmes - Forces" at the Museum of Quebec, "Concours du Boite Deschamps-Villon" at the Gallery du Cegep Edouard Montpetit in Longueuil, Quebec, and "Sculpture 87" at Galerie Daniel in Montreal. These exhibitions paved the way for her 1988 exhibitions "Entree Libre" at the Galerie Lavalin in Montreal, her one woman show at Galerie Elena Lee / Verre d'Art, also in Montreal, and her representation at The Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition in Chicago. In addition to her current show at the Kay Garvey Gallery, she will again be represented at The Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition this year.

The current work of the artist has culminated a long process of "building her vocabulary," to the point where she has struck a pure note in the development of a highly intuitive, highly personalized and technically unique body of work which bridges the disciplines of both sculpture and fiber technique.

In an interview with the artist in September, Dominique describes herself as a "materialist" in the sense that her work is her means of understanding and defining herself in the world. "First there is chaos. Something disorganized. Material is the chaos organized. I use material to understand life." To this creative process she brings a keen intuition. "I am sensitive. I know the world with my hands. I don't see with my eyes, I see with my hands."

The work in the current exhibition bears the mark of this searing sensitivity. The pieces are fragile, organic, archetypal. The primitive feeling they convey, Dominique believes, comes from the immediacy of her technique. "I don't use tools. I use simple ways for building my pieces. I just use my hands and my brain to know what to do ... to make it ... together in one piece."

Her hands have built these objects from bamboo stretched and tied with sisal, which she has waxed for strength and tension. She then extends latex on this frame "to the limits of its resistance," making a shape into which she pours fiberglass resin, creating a "basket." After the process catalyzes, Dominique removes the latex. The fiberglass resin retains the shape of this process on the bamboo. Brown oil pigment mixed with wax and turpentine is then applied to the bamboo and resin to give the works their primal, organic sheen.

But the artist does not wish us to experience these works only as beautiful, luminescent forms, as haunting as they may be. It is the spiritual process of bringing these works about, the cry of the unconscious that these works disclose, that Dominique intends for us to know. It is here that Dominique's concept of the "container" becomes important. In the works represented, we see her move from a concentration on a sense of outer structure and open form, as in "Fragment" #1 and "Fragment" #2 to a more "contained" image, as in "Entrave:Hindrance" #3 and "Entrave:Hindrance" #1. In the words of the artist, "I start to make packages, then I open it and see what is inside, then I close it, open it, close it. I start to work with something inside. I discovered I am looking for something inside. This I realize after ... then it is real." In much the same way that Dominique describes her own body as the "container" for her spirit, works such as "Fragment" #7 and "Entrave:Hindrance" #2 reveal a mysterious pregnancy, an inner truth, a secret stretching to be born, straining toward release.

The dimension of pain the artist experiences in disclosing this inner struggle through the creative process is apparent in its eloquent portrayal and indeed, even in its repetition, in the "Entrave:Hindrance" series #4 through #10. These pieces show the artist driven to repeat the inner process of search and revelation, it would seem, by the "tireless repetition of an act on the material," until her truth is split open, released. These objects are "crucified" forms and do, for the artist reference human form. "For me," she has stated, "it's thoracic, the ... chest cavity ... a whisper, a breath, a cry, going through the mouth. It's almost mystical. Mystical through the material."

If the "Entrave:Hindrance" #4 through #10 series provide a study of inner struggle as revealed in the artist's creative act, "Fragment" series #3 through #6 bear witness to the completion of the struggle: they are translucent shells, silent witnesses to truth made real, hushed and contemplative, suspended in the air like a remembered refrain of haunting music.

The works in this exhibition at the Kay Garvey Gallery are a constellation of open and closed pieces in the same way that the process of self realization, as experienced at a very deep

level and portrayed by the artist, is represented as both ongoing and completed.

In much the same way, we are both spirit and matter. We ourselves are bound, split open and released, to be bound, split open and released again. The work of Dominique Morel, therefore, speaks to the basic contradiction of life, its most intrinsic ambiguity. We are both spirit and material, in an endless cyclical interaction of the natural and the transcendent.

Finally, nothing is resolved for us by the artist. We see her search made real, brought to her own resolution and, for specific moments, completed. But the process we witness is hers alone. For that reason, the exhibition is unsettling. It is as if, in sharing her spiritual process, we are then faced back into ourselves to confront our own intimate struggles with the basic primal issues of being conscious creatures in a material world.

-Patty Bergh

Patty Bergh is a free lance writer who directs publicity for a fine art gallery in Glen Ellyn Illinois, where she resides.