

Home is Where

Reviews- Tractor- Fall 1995

Work by Jane Gilmore, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, Nebraska, June 19-July 31

Image: Jane Gilmore *Dress*

Sometimes words are not enough to express the poignancy of human experience. Artist Jane Gilmore recreates in artistic form the panoply of experience that forms each of our lives. In these mixed media constructions, Gilmore never lets you forget the insurmountable capacity for hope contained within the human spirit.

Upon entering the gallery, one had the sense of being privileged to set foot in the world personally and secretly transcribed, a world at once contemporary, yet resounding with archetypal figures and situations. Here, in a series of 11 eloquent installations and sculptures incorporating found objects, metal notes, audio tape, videos, potatoes, cabbage, messages from homeless individuals, is presented a haze of disestablished lives. Great care has been taken not to patronize those who have trustingly collaborated with the artist by allowing her into their lives.

Rarely is a viewer in a gallery situation made to be such an accomplice. It takes consummate skill on the part of the artist to project such immediacy of raw emotion. So much of this art deals with stolen moments of forgotten peoples forged from the real and from the imagination.

In *Home is Where the Hearth is...*, a huge installation of found notes and messages from homeless individuals transcribed on 36-gauge aluminum joined together with nails forming a patchwork metal wall, immediately confronted the visitor. Fascinated, one was drawn into the life-like environment where words and phrases slip in and out of meaning as our senses were overwhelmed by its huge scope.

In another installation called, *Wall of Notes and Objects*, many of these same images reoccur but this time not in tandem. On opposite walls, a 5"x7" text and a seemingly unrelated found object form an immutable dialogue, marching in syncopated rhythm, isolated from one another by a good 15 feet, yet part of a mysterious whole. It is this sense of the mysterious that is a *leitmotif* throughout the rest of the pieces. They are approachable but just out of reach; and at first glance it seems as though we only view them through a dark and bitter light. But if we give the pieces some time, we find a cultivated richness, a sense of everyman's family.

A savage intensity coupled with a mordant sense of humor is evident in two other pieces, *Three Beds* (1995) and *Ireland* (1995) The first incorporates metal writing, moss, cabbage

and small figures. In the second, religious and political affiliations are coupled with deadpan wit through the use of potatoes and Kleenex.

Gilmor is an artist who is used to communication. She is currently a professor of art at Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids. The insight and skills used in teaching are constant in her artwork as well. It is her observation of life, the ephemera of a world often given short thrift by those around her that becomes noteworthy. Small transgressions become reformed in her eyes, reused in subversive ways. Her travels to such countries as Mexico, Greece and Italy are incorporated into work that, in the final analysis, speaks of the spiritual permeating the fabric of all our entwined lives. The search for meaning in a life that takes many artists over the edge is here controlled with a refined sensibility and a fierceness that leaves unforgettable images in its aftermath.

-Hope Palmer