



Managing Memories & Pondering Connections - Darlene Charneco

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by Pat Rogers

Searching for misplaced keys or another crucial item before walking out the door is an experience most people can relate to. But what would happen if an important memory is misplaced? Would you know where to search while your brain plays hide and seek?

Darlene Charneco's art may have a solution. Or, at least, a suggestion. Her latest works are chocked full of musing on memories and connections. Her art is the subject of a solo show at Solar Contemporary Art / Design.



"Winds of Change (New Door to the Palace)"

by Darlene Charneco

The exhibition "Islands of Memory" presents a strand of works that muse on the internal filing systems used in storing memories and information and the ways these are retrieved.

For instance, consider "Long-Term Memory Storage A" and "Long-Term Memory Storage B."

Charneco called upon childhood memories of visiting her grandmother as inspiration for the pieces, she said. Thinking about the ways memories can appear led Charneco's to combine old-fashioned doll house furniture with high-tech conceptual mapping.

Broad fields of color stretching across the composition were used in both artworks so storage possibilities could claim center stage, Charneco said.



"Long-Term Memory Storage A" by Darlene Charneco.



"Long-Term Memory Storage B" by Darlene Charneco.

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The “Long-Term Memory Storage” duet is a slight left-hand turn from Charneco’s typical abstract way of working. For years, she has created implied and abstracted maps presenting ways that connections are made in virtual and actual worlds.

Painted nail heads and tiny toy homes are typical keys that guide viewers from a bird’s eye view of microscopic worlds to intricate webs of connections between people, communities, history and possible futures encased within shiny coatings.



Darlene Charneco beside “Ocean of Infinite Memory”

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Her new series are building on these ideas (and more). Darlene Charneco’s art has become more sculptural as buildings now extend outward from the painting’s shiny surface. Ledge-like surfaces are places where memories can perch. The tiny boxes are storage containers for memories, Charneco explains.



A detail of one of Darlene Charneco’s mixed media paintings.

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In fact, one art work includes a tabletop sculpture made of the Monopoly-like buildings found in her paintings.



“Memory Palace Practice Circuit” by Darlene Charneco. Photo by Pat Rogers.

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While the stark white sculpture may seem a startling contrast to the colorful mixed media works, Charneco’s use of white to dominate is another MO. The sculpture links to her “prayer” paintings where Charneco pounds hundreds of nails into a board. Each nail is a solitary prayer that joins others in an art-motivated meditative practice. The nails are formed into abstracted patterns. They are often white so patterns (and the prayers) speak louder than the colored accent of a painted nail

head.

There are two such works on view in the solo exhibition at Solar gallery in East Hampton. One is prominently placed upon entering the lower level gallery. The other is tucked from view in a niche that is only revealed after walking into the gallery to explore the works there.



“Bismuth City (The Empathetic Civilization)” by Darlene Charneco. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Like her colorful counterparts, “Bismuth City” muses on the ‘What if?’ leading to another strand in the show. Specifically, Charneco questions: What if the choice in filtering information was based on embracing the positive and discarding the negative? What if this was practiced until the world became a network of compassionate beings? Would we then live in a world of peace?

Ultimately, the art exhibited in “Islands of Memory” puts forth the idea that glut of information available isn’t a problem—especially when methods are developed to cut through the information clutter to glean what’s important. Developing ways to retrieve information becomes important as more is gathered.

The exhibition also contemplates the ways societies and communities construct infrastructure (virtual and brick-and-mortar) to collect, store and organize information.



“Deep Sea Memory” by Darlene Charneco.

Similar to personal decisions of which photographs, images and documents to post and save on the Internet, societies make decisions of which histories to keep and which to disappear...especially when memories start to fade.



Darlene Charneco with some of her art work in “Islands of Memory” at Solar. Photo by Pat Rogers.

BASIC FACTS: “Islands of Memory” remains on view at Solar Contemporary Art / Design

through Nov 24, 2011. The gallery is open by appointment. Solar is located at 44 Davids Lane, East Hampton, NY. www.artsolar.com.

Photos from the show (plus more of Charneco's art) can be seen by clicking [here](#).

Darlene Charneco is a Southampton-based artist. Her art has been exhibited at the Parrish Art Museum, Guild Hall, the Islip Art Museum, the Heckscher Museum of Art and the Katonah Museum of Art. Gallery exhibitions include Morgan Lehman Gallery and Spanierman Gallery in Manhattan, Galeria Galou in Brooklyn, Art Sites in Riverhead and others.

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