



Cara Enteles: Bees and Trees and Plexiglas

November 3, 2011

by Pat Rogers

Decimated trees never looked like this. Natural beauty is paired with eerie formations in bright paintings on Plexiglas by Cara Enteles. Trees that became paths for power lines were exhibited in a group show at the Sara Nightingale Gallery this summer. But right now, Enteles has bees on her mind.



“Power Line Tree 5” by Cara Enteles. All artwork images courtesy of Cara Enteles.

Paintings featuring pollinating bees are part of the exhibition, “Hive Culture: Captivated by the Honeybee,” at the Glyndor Gallery at Wave Hill in the Bronx.

On November 5, 2011, Enteles will discuss her “Pollinator” series and its exploration of Colony Collapse Disorder with assistant curator Gabriel de Guzman at 1:30 p.m. The talk is part of Hive Culture Weekend. Also on tap is a family art project, a cooking with honey demonstration and an artist talk on Sunday with exhibiting artist Lenore Malen and beekeeper Chris Harp of HoneybeeLives.org.

A sampling of both series can be found at the Sara Nightingale Gallery.

Disfigured trees and honeybees share at least two links. Both have been affected by human actions taken to control the natural environment. Each is also the subject of a painting series by Enteles.

Enteles noticed the tree-electric line entanglement during weekly trips visiting her family in New Jersey. The strange silhouettes and the human impact on nature got her artist mind going. She began taking photos and eventually transformed her ponderings into portraits of disfigured trees. Other trees (like the one in “Tree Before, Magenta”) were spotted in upstate New York.



“Pollinating Bees 1” by Cara Enteles. Courtesy Sara Nightingale Gallery.

“Trees, which should have been old and majestic, are compromised for our convenience,” Enteles said. “They were abused for our benefit. It’s really upsetting...I’m not against electricity or the conveniences our culture is used to, but there has to be a better way that’s respectful of nature and recognizes the fact that we co-exist.”



“Power Line Tree 4” by Cara Enteles.

At the Sara Nightingale Gallery, it’s difficult to say what drew my eyes first: the neon colors or the tree silhouettes that wouldn’t be found in the wild. The trees are beautifully rendered and I lingered there before considering the liaison between branches and power lines. Realizing that in each portrait, things had gone badly for the trees gave the paintings a slightly sinister tone. And yet, vivid colors creating a surreal sky tempered the horror and made the art even more compelling.



“Power Line Tree 6” by Cara Enteles

Neon colors are purposely used in the art to emphasize the unnatural-natural cross purposes. Bright colors were selected to highlight the shapes of trees that lost their limbs.



“Tree Before, Magenta” by Cara Enteles

Impact is further created by layering colored Plexiglas beneath the painted surface. Sometimes sheets of different colors are layered to create something new through the combination. Other times, a colored or clear sheet is chosen for its ability to encourage light to pass through the painting. Sometimes layers are painted; other times they are layered as is.



"Power Line Tree 3" by Cara Enteles

Even before the trees were the bees. Enteles is an organic gardener and became aware of a rapid decline for pollinating bees. Alarmed, she did some research and then headed to the studio. The bee die-off is suspected to arise from use of a new pesticide combined with "our monoculture farming practices," she said. Enteles hopes her art will raise awareness of the decline of pollinator bees and their importance to ecology.



"Pollination 26" by Cara Enteles

Enteles's paintings at Wave Hill focus on bees. The series includes other pollinators such as bats and humming birds. Both species are in decline because of human impact on their habitats and habits, Enteles said.



"The Field Oil" by Cara Enteles

Paintings in the "Pollinator" series have a different sensibility than the "Power Line Trees" series. The tree portraits are solid yet surreal while the pollinator paintings have a soft and dreamlike quality. Backgrounds are richly colored and accented with lacy patterning found in nature.

Paintings are made on aluminum panels or Plexiglas. Each painting is backed with gold mirror to "convey the essence of pollination," Enteles said. The reflective surfaces change as viewing positions and lighting shifts mirroring the way light changes in nature, she said.



"Pollination 27" by Cara Enteles

Paying attention to the well-being of pollinators goes beyond caring about other species. "They're the bellwether of the health of our environment," Enteles said.

Enteles is currently working on two new series. One depicts “controversial predators.” Another explores the impact of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.



Cara Enteles at the Sara Nightingale Gallery.
Courtesy of the Sara Nightingale Gallery.

BASIC FACTS: In the last few months, Cara Enteles’s art has been exhibited with Four Square Fine Arts in England, at Amy Simon Fine Art LLC in Westport, CT and at AAF (Affordable Art Fair) and Pip-Squeak Chapeau in NYC.

Enteles exhibited in the group show, “What’s Out There” at Sara Nightingale Gallery in Water Mill from July 29 to Aug 19, 2011. Enteles has been the subject of two solo shows at the gallery (2008 & 2004). Several paintings from both series are exhibited at the Sara Nightingale Gallery. See <http://saranightingale.com/> for gallery details.

Enteles’s work has also been exhibited at galleries in NYC, FL, PA, GA, CT, VA and elsewhere. She graduated with a BFA from Parsons School of Design and studied at the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France.

Her work and information can be viewed at www.caraenteles.com

“Hive Culture: Captivated by the Honeybee” is on view at the Wave Hill Glyndor Gallery through Dec 1, 2011. There are 18 artists in the exhibition. They include Deborah Davidovits, Anonda Bell, Lenore Malen, Julia Oldham, Rose-Lynn Fisher, Sally Gall, Hope Ginsburg, Andrea Lilienthal and others.

Lilienthal’s solo exhibitions include one at the Kathryn Markel Gallery. Art by Ginsburg and Davidovits have been seen at MoMA PS1 and Sculpture Center. Gall’s work is in collections held by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art and more. Malen’s work has been exhibited at Apexart, Cue Art Foundation, Exit Art and others.

Wave Hill is a 28-acre public garden and cultural center in the Bronx. See www.wavehill.org for details.

UPDATE: MARCH 3, 2013 New works by Cara Enteles are currently on view through March 2013 at Sara Nightingale Gallery, 688 Montauk Highway, Water Mill, NY 11976. They include art from the continuing Pollinator series.