



“Alice” Touches Down At LongHouse

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by Mike Solomon

In preparation for what promises to be one of the more spectacular installations of sculpture on Park Avenue in the spring of 2014, artist Alice Aycock recently shared a just finished section of the work *Maelstrom (3) 2013* at designer Jack Lenore Larsen’s LongHouse Reserve. The 30+ foot aluminum section—comprising a multitude of white spiraling cones that wrap around and through one another in an interstitial orgy of centrifugal delight—evokes the vectors of winds of a tornadic temper. The section will be part of the larger installation, “Park Avenue Paper Chase.”



“Maelstrom (3)” by Alice Aycock, 2013. Painted aluminum, 6 x 30 x 13 inches.

LongHouse Reserve is the premier landscape-meets-art venue in the Hamptons that serves the public through hosting installations, events, concerts and tours. Large scale outdoor sculptures by Lynda Benglis, Yoan Capote, Dale Chihuly, Willem de Kooning, Yoko Ono, Alfonso Ossorio and Costantino Nivola, among others, are situated on sumptuously planted gardens designed to stimulate ideas as well as the senses. LongHouse programming is designed to emphasize an interdisciplinary approach between gardens, art, design, music and culture.

Sited just as one comes along the entrance path to view the main area of the grounds, *Maelstrom (3)* with the bottoms of all its curves dug into the ground a half a foot or so, seems almost to have been hurled there by a great force. The irony in this particular installation is that by depicting a number of spinning mini twisters stuck into the ground, Aycock managed to evoke both verb and noun of the tornado idea simultaneously.



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For a relatively impromptu placement of a section of a sculpture designed to spark and tease our imaginations, Aycock found, as she almost always does, a poetical context in the display of large physical form in the installation *Maelstrom (3)* at LongHouse. And the sculpture is indicative of the

vigor of the LongHouse outdoor sculpture program, which added other new works this summer, including Jack Youngerman's never before seen fiberglass sculptures in "Black and White" and Cuban artist Yoan Capote's new bronzes in "The Other Nature of Things (RERUM ALTER NATURA 9)", which deal with the ambiguities inherent in Cuban identity and freedom.

When the piece at LongHouse is installed on Park Avenue, combined with two more sections, *Maelstrom* will be more than twice as long, and one of six separate pieces that will make up the total installation "Park Avenue Paper Chase." *Waltzing Matilda*, *Twin Vortexes*, *Spin the Spin*, *Hoopla* and *Cyclone Twist* will be installed with it, along the avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets.

In a recent interview, Aycock said, "I tried to visualize the movement of wind energy as it flowed up and down the Avenue creating random whirlpools, touching down here and there and sometimes forming dynamic three-dimensional massing of forms."

Aycock's predilection for using architectural scale to address and evoke psychological conditions has evolved from her earliest works, in which tunnels with escape chutes and ladders built-in cement block, brick and timber evoked magic realism as well as the confines of liquidation chambers. Initially, because of the basic materials she worked with, her work had a very primordial vibration.

Through the years, as technology expanded the horizons of her working process, she has been able to grow her original concept and materials to include more lyrical forms and the work has seen an increasing lightness of being while still retaining the undercurrent of psychological edge. In college, Aycock had planned to go into literature when she discovered site-specific sculpture and today the idea of narrative plays a major role in her process and in the viewer's experience of her work.

Depictions of the wind are full of rich associations. In literature we can go all the way back to the beginning. God created Adam by *breathing* spirit into his body. In other traditions, like those of the Toltec Shamans (as detailed by Carlos Castaneda), it is believed that the wind has its origins in the womb and is therefore one of the powers that women possess. Then there's the very recent destruction by tornadoes that have devastated towns in the heartland. I am sure that these kinds of referents and more were a part of Aycock's ruminations.

Choosing to form the wind into a solid of such scale in sculpture is an awesomely quixotic and therefore literary act and one that I relate to personally, having made in my own work large wave shapes with netting and fiberglass.

In the last decade, Aycock has been using the computer not just to image or transpose her drawings and concepts into virtual space but, much more significantly, to conceive and store her incredibly complex repertoire of organically logical structures that have evolved in her work over the years. As systems like CAD have revolutionized three-dimensional imaging, architects and artists have been able to work with a fluidity of forms not possible in previous eras, and Aycock has been among those artists at the forefront of this kind of technology.

This has allowed her to call up and assemble or re-form shapes in an almost unlimited variety and build upon the architectonic palette she has developed over more than 30 years. Once she establishes a project, the virtual 3D forms are then outsourced to 3D fabricators that actualize them

in aluminum or fiberglass. So the multitude of forms she has elicited through her very protean imagination then come to exist in the physical sphere to *give us* the experience that she has discovered: the metaphorical bridges between environmental forms and now their energies, with internal states of being.

In her use of contemporary technology, Aycock is advancing sculpture, taking up where artists like John Chamberlain left off, by utilizing the new processes of industry towards a poetic end, thus expanding the artistic tradition of turning technology back on itself.

If James Turrell is the artist of the moment, with regard to pure light, then Alice Aycock is the artist of the moment with regard to pure form. I can't wait to see the entire work, *Park Avenue Paper Chase*, coming to Manhattan in March 2014.



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BASIC FACTS: Longhouse Reserve is located at 133 Hands Creek Road, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.longhouse.org.

Maelstrom (3) by Alice Aycock will remain on view through Oct. 12, 2013.

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