



Robert Oxnam

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by Joanna Gmuender

“My art is inspired by several Chinese philosophies (especially Daoism) and by taking ancient Chinese aesthetics and applying them to several media. I share Chinese preferences for certain tactile qualities – slightly off-balanced, unusual shapes, deep indentations, bumpy surfaces, intriguing holes. But I emphasize that my art, whether sculptures, photography, or painting, is born of Chinese inspiration, not replication.

When dealing with sculptures, I ‘harvest’ the wood from Long Island beaches, then clean, sand, and balance the object, always keeping to my mantra – do what Nature tells you to do and do nothing against Nature’s original intent. When I begin working on freshly-found wood, I am revealing the inner dynamism of tree trunks and root systems. What emerges is a powerful reincarnation of a tree’s inner energy. I’m often reminded of a story about an archeologist who found an ancient lute in the desert. Inside the lute was a poem in ancient Greek: “When I was alive as a tree, only the wind heard the rustling of my leaves. Now that I am dead, thousands hear my soul.”

My photographs of glacial rocks are close bedfellows of my sculpting. Why? Because the camera, especially with macro lens for closeups, reveals the remarkable art already imbedded in the rocks, letting nature speak for itself. And so, I regularly visit a wonderful beach called Rocky Point, photographing small segments of rocks, confining myself to a limited area less than a quarter mile long. The experience is always different because the rocks speak differently depending on the season, the weather, the time of day, the moisture in the air. And when I juxtapose rock photographs and wood sculptures, they often seem to speak to each other, sharing their own ancient secrets.

More recently, I began exploring cellular, microscopic images found in the natural world and that inspired my ink paintings and pastel compositions. My intention is to create a personal language through my use of gestural lines and minimalism.

In Chinese tradition, the term “qi” has many meanings, but for me, it means an invisible but palpable source of creative energy, both artistically and psychology. I have suffered from severe dissociation all my life, but somehow the linkage between “qi” and art has given me focus and hope.”

Website: www.robertoxnam.com

“Art of Robert Oxnam” on Youtube: youtu.be/JldWUhEMKqA



"Ink Series 11.3" by Robert Oxnam, 2018. Ink on calligraphic paper, 28 x 28 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

"Echo" by Robert Oxnam, 2011. Weathered wood, organic paint and natural waxes, 30 x 23 x 18 inches.

"Pastel Series 1.5" by Robert Oxnam, 2018. Ink and pastel on calligraphic paper, 55 x 28 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



"Cai II" by Robert Oxnam. Weathered wood, naturally embedded rocks, organic milk paint and waxes, 14 x 14 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



"Windswept" by Robert Oxnam. Weathered wood, organic paint and natural waxes, 62 x 36 x 28 inches.



"Glacial Rock 1.17" by Robert Oxnam. Archival photographic print.