

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Diana Cherbuliez works

7/7/17 – 8/13/2017

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is honored to present “Diana Cherbuliez works,” an exhibition by Vinalhaven, Maine-based artist Diana Cherbuliez. The show will run from July 7 through August 12, 2017. An opening reception will occur on Friday, July 7th from 5 – 8 pm.

Cherbuliez transforms her materials in novel ways while remaining true to both their specific physical properties as well as their historic and personal connotations. She asks not only what each thing is in itself, but also how it might be changed into something wholly unexpected that nonetheless more fully reveals its physical and symbolic possibilities. “Diana Cherbuliez works” is a continuation of this effort, as well as a reflection on its meaning—on the significance and difficulty of all effort, which is to say, of all work, in her own life and in ours.

Crucial to her development as an artist, Cherbuliez has been engaged in the ever-ongoing task of constructing her own home and studio through a process of trial and error since 1994, frequently from collected and salvaged materials. Photographs of this work in progress are the source for machine-embroidered and appliquéd quilt squares constructed from the artist’s well-worn work clothes. Each is a component of *Homemaker*, which, as with the process of building her home itself, remains in progress. *Reclamation* also addresses the construction of Cherbuliez’s home. Mounted to the gallery’s ceiling, the piece is a scale model of the artist’s home constructed from the nests of wasps she discovered on its exterior. Cherbuliez reclaims the nests—a product of the wasps’ slow consumption of her labor—by using them to create an inverted miniature of her home. *Reclamation* is both a redemptive act and a resigned laugh in the face of frustration.

Policy, an indoor whirligig, also confronts lost or wasted labor. A carved figure stands atop a scorched plywood platform facing another scorched plywood carving resembling a mound of coal or dirt (albeit in reverse topographical format). An aluminum fan blade supported by a rig drives a mechanism within the figure—which may only be turned by sticking one’s hand into the blades—causes a flinging, shoveling motion that never decreases the size of the mound, which is always out of reach. The platform pivots on a structure resembling an oil derrick, blackened with charred bone and oil and calling to mind the ecological destruction that enables so much of our labor.

Other works in the exhibition address the inability to work. *Static* presents a figure carved—though not fully liberated—from construction waste wood, slumped on a sawhorse propped on wooden shims and blocks. The rough outlines of her features suggest resignation, frustration, depression, and regret. In *Cul-de-sac*, a carved wooden figure of a naked Cherbuliez lies beneath a scale model of her bed, the bedding half-made as though she gave up mid-stream. As in much of the artist’s work, each material

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component is ripe with personal associations: the pillows stuffed with hens' down collected from the brambles at her sisters' neighboring property, the sheet made from an 80-year old shirt that once belonged to her grandfather. *quitting Time* is a rope made from the artist's own hair, tethered to a pedestal by a hand-carved walnut and apple wood comb at one end. The opposite end is tied in an open slip knot, suggesting both an implement of escape as well as something darker. If these works touch on the inability to work, they also allude to the symbolic importance of work in our lives—to demonstrate that we are "self-supporting" (an American imperative), have "self-respect" (same), and are generally "in good working order."

The inability to work, the failure to work, wanting to work and feeling unable—these are often bound up in grief or loss. In *our hands, our eyes, and our minds*, Cherbuliez quietly, compactly addresses these states head-on. Recalling the experience of staring deeply at or examining another person, the works are circular laser-cut plywood puzzles featuring close-up images of the artist's father shortly after his death in various states of assembly and displayed next to cardboard boxes made by the artist. They are manifestations of loss, care, and identification, of deeply personal experiences that are nonetheless widely shared. *All my art from mom and dad's house*, an installation that is exactly as titled, extends the exhibition's engagement with these themes. A quasi-retrospective of the artist's work since childhood, it implicates the many contexts within which and reasons why she, and we, work, and how we assess those efforts, successes, and failures.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email info@grantwahlquist.com.