

August 12, 2013



ILLUSIONS OPENING

There was a sparse but lively crowd at Chashama's Harlem location on W 126 for Julia Forrest's solo exhibition entitled "Illusions".

The space was decorated simply, with the work, and some mirrors, changing the space by reflecting each person in the room; making the crowd part of the exhibit itself. Minimalist design done well.

The work displayed was Black and White Silver Gelatin prints, in different series, all taken in or around New York.

The series entitled "Unearth" shows women interacting with nature in ways that invoke the mythos of nature goddesses, the green women, if you will. While the 20 picture series are meant to be taken as one piece; #14, which showed a woman sitting before an arched hallway of bushes stirs up feelings of loneliness: as the hallway fades to black around the sitting form.

The Series "Modification" was taken at Storm King mountain, in the Northern Area of the hudson valley, a place with massive sculptures and impressive trees; here the artist uses perspective and mirrors to transform the sculptures into background enhancements. One particular piece from this set that stood out was Contaminate – showing a woman holding a smoking box, her face covered by her hair, standing in a wasteland; the smoke and the background invoked a sense of dread. Other great pieces in the series were the three water based works Pour, Fabricate, and First Eclipse. The serenity of the water and the use of the sunlight remind me of Thai artist Poklong Anandning's Anonymity series from 2006.

In the artist's brief she writes "In reference to greek mythological stories, these women look gentle and fragile, yet posses a strong power"; and no piece typifies the brief in being Grecian than the work Pour, an ancient jug seemingly pouring water over a tiny woman far in the distance, standing in the sea.

The final series "Illusion" for which the exhibit takes it's name is dominated by the use of mirrors leaving the models strangely anonymous yet effectively changing the environment they are in. Each piece plays with perspective and forces the viewer to look at least twice to see what is a reflection and what isn't.

I had a chance to speak with the artist and found that she prints everything in a dark room next to her bed, and that all the work is performed right in from of the camera, so no photoshop or digital manipulation. The idea, Forrest said, was to show these faceless women in the landscape that the subject is playing with and transforming.

As a whole the exhibit is beautifully done, but the work will leave you unsettled and pondering our relationship with nature at the same time.

Written by John Hutt.