

Poughkeepsie Journal

Wassaic Project summer exhibit a must-see

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'Forever, Almost,' 2012, a panel created with discarded lottery tickets by Adam Eckstrom and Lauren Was, is part of the Wassaic Project's 'Return to Rattlesnake Mountain.' / Davidson Contemporary/Courtesy photo

This summer, be sure to get out to see the Wassaic Project's fifth annual summer exhibition, "Return to Rattlesnake Mountain," referring to its location within a Dutchess County wilderness area. For those who are not familiar with the Wassaic Project, it was founded to provide a genuine and intimate context for art-making and strengthening local community by increasing social and cultural capital through inspiration, promotion and creation of contemporary visual and performing art.

The exhibit is wondrous and the excitement builds the moment you enter the grain elevator that has been reconceptualized into a seven-story exhibition space. There are more than 100 artists presenting artworks in this space, and the offerings are diverse. Entering the grain elevator and directly to your right, don't miss the artworks by Dutchess County residents, Ghost of a Dream, a collaborative husband and wife team of Adam Eckstrom and Lauren Was. Using discarded lottery tickets, they have created beautiful artworks from the discarded hopes and dreams that lottery tickets eventually become. Step back and contemplate the intricate geometric designs in the work, "Forever, Almost," that reference an Escher painting or an ikat carpet.

THE WASSAIC PROJECT 

Another compelling exhibit on the ground floor of the grain elevator is “Notional Field,” a collaborative light projection by Annica Cuppetelli and Cristobal Mendoza. Wave your hand near the artwork and the streams of light appear to play with your movements, causing the viewer to actively engage with the work. Other fun pieces are the enormous set of porcelain dominoes arranged in a curved formation on the floor. The installation, “Mischief in the Boneyard,” appears poised for the delicious moment when one domino is tipped, causing the entire line to cascade. The viewer might consider why there is a taped line on the floor surrounding the artwork, with one end open, creating an illusion of an open door inviting the view into the sacred space.

Upstairs, the exhibition rooms are intimate and allow each space to be arranged with pieces that respond to each other. On the second floor, textiles are well represented by Amanda Tiller’s pop-cultural family trees. Using embroidery on canvas, the artist has imagined who would be related to the Huxtables (“The Bill Cosby Show”) or Tony Danza, Courtney Cox and Fred Savage, TV stars from the 1980s and ’90s. The intricate needlework and embroidered likenesses of the actors are impressive, but it was most interesting to watch other gallery viewers’ connections with the television characters and their mythical families.

This being an election year, seeing the work of Dutchess County resident Anders Johnson’s “Stay Pretty” causes one to reflect on patriotism and the right to vote. The square fabric sculpture references a flag, with the red, white and blue stripes of color. Similar in size to a voting booth, the sculpture has light emanating from beneath, almost reminiscent of the sacred duty a voter brings when he or she enters the booth. The exhibit is at Maxon Mills, 37 Furnace Bank Road, Wassaic, and runs noon to 5 p.m., Saturday-Sunday through Sept. 2.

- Linda Marston-Reid