



Goya Contemporary exhibit addresses humans and nature



An installation view of "Human. NATURE" at Goya Contemporary. Left image on wall, Etel Adnan *Le Poids Du Monde IV*, 2016, *Le Poids Du Monde III*, 2016 and *Sans Titre*, 2014, Left floor, Wilhelm Mundt *Trashstone 630*, 2015. Right image, wall, Oliver Boberg *Sky (Himmel)*, 2001, Right image floor Wilhelm Mundt *Trashstone 494*, 2010 (Goya Contemporary)

By Tim Smith

Considering how much nature and humans are acting up these days, the summer exhibit at Goya Contemporary seems all the more apt.

Nearly two dozen works by 11 notable artists are grouped under the title "Human. NATURE" at the gallery, making for an impressive, absorbing experience. This is not a superficial nature walk. The art here, priced from \$1,800 to \$85,000, has much to say about perception, perspective and purpose.

Consider two large, brightly colored objects on the floor — sculpturally engaging; philosophically irresistible. These are examples from 2010 and 2015 of the extraordinary "Trashstone" series started almost 30 years ago by German artist Wilhelm Mundt from re-purposed refuse. "He has zero waste at his studio," says Goya's executive director and curator Amy Eva Raehse. "There is literally trash inside the Trashstones."

The contents — almost anything otherwise destined for the dumpster — are then compacted into shapes that evoke boulders from ancient mountains or maybe chunks of other planets. These mini-landfills, each with its own serial number, are covered in fiberglass and given a wonderful sheen. Close inspection reveals tiny, fossil-like glimpses of what's encased in the resin. Mundt's rather subversive "Trashstones" pull you in with funky surface brilliance, then provoke questions about what humans do with and to nature. That the works could also be viewed as a comment on the contemporary art world only adds to their fascination.

Another German artist, Oliver Boberg, is represented by a hypnotic series of 10 photographs from 2001, "Sky (Himmel)." The images trace the journey of a wisp of a cloud across a pale blue sky, as if to demonstrate Ralph Waldo Emerson's observation that "Nature is a mutable cloud, which is always and never the same."

More clouds dominate "Factory Store" by Maryland artist Lillian Bayley Hoover. Hard angles of a dark roof contrast with the freedom of cloud formations in this exquisite painting.

Two darkly beautiful monotypes from 1999, "Odd Clouds 1" and "Odd Clouds 2," by the late American artist and poet Mark Strand, add another angle on this theme in the exhibit. A poet-artist still very much with us, at age 92, is also in the exhibit. Three striking abstracts by the Lebanese-American Etel Adnan reveal her keen sense of color and form; two 2016 etchings from her series "Le poids du monde" ("The Weight of the World") exert a subtle power. "Her poetry is crisp, and so is her painting," Raehse says.

Elegant works by the American artist Louisa Chase, who died last year, introduce finely nuanced imagery of animal life. The abstract, vivified lines of "Nest," a set of three solar plate etchings from 1997, conjure up spiders.

Plant life is represented by such pieces as Chase's 1983 woodblock "Thicket" and, especially, a large 2001 work by British-born American artist Judy Pfaff. In "Untitled (Target, Garden, Lily Pad)," Pfaff combines photogravure and other techniques to create a kind of nature study that also reflects the presence — intrusion, perhaps — of humans.

The show also highlights one of Goya Contemporary's most celebrated artists, Joyce J. Scott. Using found drift wood, men's pipes, beads and thread, she confronts a gritty intersection between humans and nature in "From the Day After Rape Series: Gatherer of Wood" (2009). The chilling object gives the exhibit an extra twist.

If you go

"Human. NATURE" runs through Aug. 18 at Goya Contemporary Gallery, 3000 Chestnut Ave., Mill Center, Studio 214 (parking lot on Mill Road). Free. Call 410-366-2001, or go to goyacontemporary.com.