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Arcadian Lights by Jonas Stonkus

January 11 to May 11, 2003



Arcadian Lights Time, Substance, and Reflection in the Garden The Explorations of Jonas Stonkus

(Written by Glenn Allison, Director)

The soul of Arcadia is ours. More than Utopia, and perhaps even more than Heaven, the thought of Arcadia lays bone deep in the West.

Three versions of Arcadia are relevant here. The first is the Hellenic Arcadia, the actual geographic territory in the peninsula known as the Peloponnese in southern Greece. Archaeology tells us that the area has been occupied since Neolithic times. Its people boasted that they were older than the moon. Arcadia was hinterland to the Mycenaean civilization. Its sons and daughters populate Homeric epics. Later, the city-states of Argos and Sparta grew adjacent to Arcadia.

By classical times, the interior of the Greek peninsula was considered a quiet and rural retreat removed from cosmopolitan sophistication. Perhaps that is why in Greek myth, Arcadia was home to Pan - half man, half goat - the unruly god of forests, pastures, flocks and shepherds. His domain

is lush, populated by nymphs, dryads, naiads, satyrs and fauns who cavort in timeless pleasure.

Following the pattern of the Alexandrian poet Theocritus (c. 316-260 BCE) Virgil's Eclogues, written c. 37 BCE, impressed Octavian's court with images of the poet's urban sophisticates as shepherds and rustics set in the Arcadian landscape. Later, in the Aeneid, written c. 19 BCE, Virgil's character Evander claimed Arcadian lineage as he founded a colony on the Tiber even before the fall of Troy. Hence, Arcadia permeated into the genealogy of Rome.



Monstrans I and Frosted Grid Circle



Juostas and Emerald Layered Hoop

Always associated with the honesty and dignity that lies close to the land, thoughts of Arcadia were integral to the pastoral tradition of classical literature. Its associated themes form a thread that runs clear through Medieval and Renaissance culture and into this very room.

A pristine environment of natural fertility, rustic innocence, primitive bliss, and uncorrupted existence free from political turmoil all characterize the Arcadian idyll. Yet, always, there is a shadow in Arcadia.

One of the most famous of 17th century European paintings, a canvas by Nicholas Poussin from 1647, draws on the rich pictorial tradition of the pastoral. It depicts three rustics in the company of a Junoesque matron. Together, they contemplate the inscription on a simple tomb: "Et In Arcadia Ego". Death comes even to Arcadia.

This inheritance of Arcadia, this state of mind, is one that Jonas Stonkus has made his own.



Cruise Feathers II



Cruise Feathers II close-up

Most of the work on view here is integral to the artist's home and garden, located close to Delhi in Ontario's tobacco country. It was conceived for distribution there in such a way that art and nature interpenetrate with transparent grace. Pieces are suspended in trees, positioned in allées, imbedded in bushes, and suspended in windows. Subtle glints and reflections rebound throughout his entire property. Here, in the gallery, bereft of all its adjunct greenery, we are left in a garden of refracted light.

Jonas Stonkus' vision is fortified by unique strategies of construction developed over a thirty-year career. Using some of Buckminster Fuller's "tensegrity principles" wherein the tension between parts lends structural integrity to their form, Stonkus exploits the physics innate to the materials, their couplings and connections to strengthen their pensile character.

His techniques are based on the recycling of found materials such as wagon wheel rims and copper plumbing, and on the floating assembly of pieces of unleaded glass, clear and etched. He often allows structural component parts - such as the metal pegs that hold glass plates in the metal grid frames - to contribute to the total graphic design. The work in this show ranges from early totemic pieces where chunks are clamped en masse to recent curtain forms both etched and feathered.

Yet Stonkus' achievement belongs less to the realm of the obdurate materials of which they are made than the ineffable dross of nature and its processes. These works conjure moon glow, hoarfrost, spider webs and thistle down. They invoke the flutter of insect wings. They attest to the

cleavage, the luminescence and the inclusions common to the optics of minerals. His is not the riotous display of urban intensity, but rather the soft, contemplative light that emanates from awn on leaves and dew caught between blades of grass. And his is the realm of shadow-licked flickers.

In the work evident here, Jonas Stonkus reveals an ability to wed aspects of personal place, substance and vision in explorations inherently appropriate to the quiet, peaceful place we all imagine is Arcadia.

Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery January 11, 2003



Tribute to St. Sebastian



Glitter Gold and Mauve
Composition



For the article that appeared in the Record use the link below

GLASS works: Artist breaks down gap between natural and industrial

Thursday June 5, 2003

ROBERT REID

RECORD STAFF

http://www.therecord.com/links/links_03060515850.html

Jonas Stonkus Resume

1945 Born, Lithuania

1969 Graduated, Ontario College of Art, Toronto

1975 Studied Stained Glass, Dublin, Ireland

AWARDS

1997 Ontario Crafts Council Design Award

1996 Ontario Arts Council Exhibition Grant

1990 Ontario Arts Council Grant

1977 Ontario Arts Council Design Grant

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2001 Lighthouse Festival Theatre Gallery, Port Dover

2000 Armoury Hall Gallery, Burford

1998 Station Gallery, Tillsonburg

1996 Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe

1990 Art Zone, Toronto

1977 Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1999 Uncommon Site, Cannery Commons, Simcoe

1997 Image '97, Ontario Society of Artists, Mississauga

1997 Sculpture Society of Canada, Baux-Xi Gallery, Toronto

1997 Entrances Exhibition, York Quay Gallery, Toronto

1996 Gibson Gallery, London

1992 The Gallery, Mississauga

1983 Allegheny College Art Gallery, Meadville, Pennsylvania

1982 Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton

1978 York Quay Gallery, Toronto

1978 Central Library, Toronto

1978 Studio Three, Hamilton

1978 519 King Street Gallery, Toronto

1969 Sol House, Georgetown

Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery
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