

ART

LOOKING INTO A 'TREMENDOUS WORLD'

NEUBERGER MUSEUM PRESENTS SCULPTURES BY LESLIE DILL

By Abby Luby

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

It's not the word-image connection that initially works for us in Leslie Dill's art, now showing at the Neuberger Museum. It's the overwhelming size and intriguing, textural fluidity of these expansive wall murals in the cavernous Theater Gallery.

The exhibit, "Tremendous World," is made up of installations, using wire, metal foil and organza, that sweep you into a vast, surround-sensorial environment. Words above, below and embedded in the dense fabric of the work are from poems by Franz Kafka, Emily Dickinson and Salvador Espru.

Although the poem fragments are weighty, the enormity of Dill's labor-intensive handiwork registers first. In "Shimmer" (2005), 700,000 linear feet of shiny wire hangs down in 10-foot hair-like "ponytails," curling at the bottom. That hair is, in a sense, like a physical aura of our body lends to the idea that these oversized glistening bunches are extrapolated, re-created, multiplied and speak to a collective voice about humanity. (It also fools with our sense of wall hanging.)

Large, gold letters overhead span the length of the wall using phrases from Espru's poem, "Marriage." The phrases repeat in smaller font and lightly shadow the ebbs and flows over the wiry sea of top-knots and on the bottom near the floor. The run-on, looped-around words are, "You may laugh, but I feel within me, suddenly, strange voices of God and handles, dog's thirst and message of slow memories that disappear across a fragile bridge." Small, silhouetted figures dance between the words

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on top as exclamation points.

In "Rush" (2005-06), the metallic silhouette of a young person posing as Rodin's "Thinker" anchors a growing commotional plume of finite silhouetted figures made from hand-painted, aluminum sheeting. The figures multiply exponentially, overlap and become progressively larger, melding into a luminous ooze of life. According to curator Dede Young, the figures are culled from the Carl Jung Center's Archive for Archetypal Symbolism, which explains their fanciful quality while autonomously sparking dream-like recognition.

Inspired by a brief spiritual awakening Dill experienced as a young adolescent, "Rush" appeals to an all-knowing moment of truth. Up close, the intricate layering of fabric and metal are obliquely connected by thin, flowing silver wire intertwined with words by Kafka starting with, "The tremendous world I have inside my head...."

The piece inspires two modes of viewing. If you hang back for the long shot, "Rush" conjures a universal spectacle, dizzying our contemplation of where we are in all of this; close up we're engaged viscerally as one with the throng.

The five single, cut-out figures near



"Rise."



"Rush."

Contributed photos

the entrance are redolent of Western and non-Western figures. They seem to dissolve into the wall, cutting a prescient outline. In "Woman Bringing the Light" (2006), a woman, arms outstretched, holds in one hand a torch alighting from a triangle's pinnacle supported by what seems to be a combined male/female symbol. The other hand holds a staff ensconced with a serpent. Words by Emily Dickenson say "Match Me Silver Reticence..."

Another silhouette, "Dress of Solace and Undoing" (2006), is a 6-foot metal cut-out with letters streaming along one raised arm, led by a pointed index finger, ending in the crown/word "Undoing." The words by Tom Sleight from "Far Side of the Earth" read, "Would a stone stand for a rocket in the hand hurling it? The stone hurled to consummation..."

Black curling, Matisse-like patterns

cascade from the other hand resting on a giant letter "T."

The symbolism in these pieces is visually acute, eliciting our own internal literal translations. Dill's need to append a specific message often feels overstated, and as we teeter-totter from words to images, it somehow detracts rather than connects.

There is no question that Dill's work is mesmerizing, even dazzling, but pulling away from the wondrous material aesthetic while trying to piece the puzzle together loses that strong spiritual underpinning so integral in this work.

Leslie Dill's "Tremendous World," will be on view through June 3 at the Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase College, 735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, N.Y. 914-251-6100 or www.neuberger.org.

MAKING THE ART SEEN

ADMISSION TO EVENTS FREE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Museums & Nonprofit Venues

THE ALDRICH CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM Arturo Herrera: Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps Imagery from children's books and other popular culture sources create a hybrid of works that are familiar and foreign. Through Sept. 2. **The Photograph as Canvas** Explores the technique of making images on the surface of photographs. Through June 10. **David Abir: Tekrar** Sound installation intended to develop an emotional and physical experience from a piece of music. Through June 10. **W(E)AVE** Recent projects by Elena Herzog and Michael Schumacher. Through June 10. **Kysa Johnson: Blow up 73 — the Spores of White Oak, Pine, American Elm and Red Maple** Chalk-on-blackboard drawing of spores native to Connecticut. Through June 10. **Dario Robleto: Chrysanthemum Anthems** Solo exhibition of sculpture. Through June 10. \$7, \$4 for seniors and college students; free for members, children 18 and younger, kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers and all visitors on Tuesdays. Tuesday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m. Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. 258 Main St., Ridgefield. 438-4519 or www.aldrichart.org.

THE BARNUM MUSEUM Grand Adventure: A Celebration of the American Spirit in Bridgeport One-hundred-year-old museum showcases the life and times of Barnum. General Tom Thumb, Lavinia Warren and Jenny Lind; an Egyptian mummy named Pa-lb; and a 1,000-square-foot scale model of a five-ring circus. Permanent exhibit. **P.T. Barnum: Bethel to Broadway to Bridgeport** Guides visitors through Barnum's life and career, from his hometown of Bethel, through his American Museum on Broadway and his later years living in Bridgeport. Permanent exhibit. \$5, \$4 for seniors and students, \$3 for children 4-17; free for children younger than 4 and members. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, noon-4:30 p.m. 820 Main St., Bridgeport. 331-1104 or www.barnum-museum.org.

BRUCE MUSEUM Changes in Our Land Permanent display of the region's environmental and historical development. **Photography from the Bruce Museum Collection** More than 100 photographs by leading 20th-century photographers. Through May 27. **Weaving a Collection: Native American Baskets from the Bruce Museum** Explores five geographic regions of basketry: the Northeast, Great Plains, Southwest, California and Northwest. Through June 1. **Painterly Controversy** Works by William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri. Through April 29. **Zip, Bop and Whir: Toys of the 20th Century** Favorite toys from the 1900s. Through July 8. Paintings by more than 20 artists, including William Merritt Chase, Joseph DeCamp, Daniel Garber, Child Hassam, Willard Metcalf, Theodore Robinson, John Singer Sargent, Robert Spencer, John H. Twahtman and J. Alden Weir. \$7, \$6 for seniors and children 5-12; free to children younger than 5. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-5 p.m. 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich. 869-0376 or www.bruce-museum.org.

THE DISCOVERY MUSEUM A science museum, featuring High-Definition movies, hands-on activities and daily planetarium shows. \$8.50; \$7 for children, seniors and students; free for children younger than 5 and members. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, noon-5 p.m. 4450 Park Ave., Bridgeport. 372-3521 or www.discovery-museum.org.

FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM The Circle of Friends Works by artists of the Florence Griswold House. Through July 1. In addition to the original 1817 Griswold House, where the artists of the Lyme art colony lived, the museum features a contemporary riverfront gallery, education center, historic gardens and a restored artist studio. \$8, \$7 for seniors and students, \$4 for children ages 6-12, free for children younger than 6. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.;

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OPENINGS

ADMISSION TO EVENTS FREE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Special Events

THE ALDRICH CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM Draw on Bring your blank paper to the drawing station at The Aldrich Education Center Tuesday through Saturday to create a drawing that will be displayed at the museum. Drawing stations and drawing-based events will be available through Saturday at Ridgefield Library; Ridgefield Guild of Artists; Enchanted Garden School of the Arts; ESCAPE to the Arts — the Center for Arts & Humanities; Weir Farm Art Center; Westport Arts Center; Silvermine Guild Arts Center; Stamford Museum & Nature Center; and Bruce Museum of Art and Science. Tuesday-Saturday, noon-5 p.m. 258 Main St., Ridgefield. 438-4519 or www.aldrichart.org/education/drawon.php.

KATONAH MUSEUM Tooling Around Katonah Full day of activities centered around "Tools as Art" exhibit to benefit the Westchester County, N.Y., division of Habitat for Humanity. \$5, \$3 for seniors and students, free for members and children younger than 12. Today, noon-5 p.m. Route 22 at Jay Street, Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-9555 or www.katonahmuseum.org.

Openings

22 HAVILAND STREET GALLERY L'une et l'autre New monotypes by Liz Dexheimer and Natasha Karpinskaia. Thursday through May 27.

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