

Mary Hrbacek at the Elliott Louis Gallery

Mary Hrbacek's work seeks animism in her images of tree trunks and speaks to an eco-disaster agenda. Borrowing directly from the statement on the Elliott Louis Gallery web-site, her works are explained thus:

"To Mary Hrbacek, a tree is a thing of spiritual sustenance and renewal. Her trees are endowed with human-like qualities become the embodiment of mankind's condition: the rising sap is the spirit of life, sexuality and regeneration, the barren winter branches and broken limbs foretell of immanent ecological disaster, disease and death. Hrbacek's trees exert a powerful emotional influence."

The charcoal drawings look great on the web site with a range of dark and light that does not show on the originals. In the latter, the tonal range is reduced to black and white with few dark grey variations between, and the detail of the form gets lost. I liked best the drawing where the shift from the black shapes to the white are blurred as charcoal tends to do (*Monster* and *Multi-faceted*). The greater majority though, were clean-edged to the point where the eraser rubbings on the paper show, roughing up the texture, not to any visual advantage.

When an artist depends solely on shape, the shapes need to be interesting and they need to move the eye around so that the viewer can continue to enjoy the image. It is in the nature of trees to branch out which lends itself to a "Y" shape configuration and Hrbacek has achieved a good variety within this restriction. The overall darkness in the imagery serves to emphasize the sense of a threatening eco-disaster. In this aspect, Hrbacek speaks to the prevailing global concern for the future.

As an outgrowth of these drawings, there are two large acrylic paintings, also of trees. The addition of colour is a miracle to these forms. The painting, *Split Decision*, an acrylic on linen, sings with a bright clear sky; and the mastery of form and shape through shadow are in excellent harmony. This is a painting one could live with for a long time .

Hrbacek's own web-site also provides a broader vision of what this artist is capable of. The web address immediately following points to her tree paintings, but you will also be able to see some of her installations and other three-dimensional work which shows the depth of creativity in this artist.

Kristen Krimmel July 29, 2010

<http://artiseternal.wordpress.com/>