

Three Key West Sculptors: A Preview of Sculpture Key West 2009

by Joel Blair

While Sculpture Key West begins on Jan. 18, it seems reasonable to become acquainted now with some of the pieces to be on display, since individual works cannot receive adequate public attention even though the exhibit runs until April 18. And it seems just as appropriate to look closely at the proposed works of the three Key West sculptors to appear in the exhibit.

This year's works will be created on site and be related to environmental and social issues. Some make special reference to Key West, its history and its current problems.

Key West sculptors Lauren McAloon, Anja Marais and John Martini will create large works at Fort Taylor. Each will be strikingly different. And we can be sure each will be of the usual high quality and general interest that we have come to expect from these accomplished artists.



Lauren McAloon reprises her theme of Aeolian flutes with "Threshold."

The work that most surprised me was proposed by John Martini. His more familiar works are brightly colored steel birds, animals and elongated men and women. They inhabit an artistic milieu that is both weirdly familiar and quite different from our own less interesting world. And his recent move into etchings and monoprints has been a refreshing excursion into other media. Now, we encounter an altogether different scene: a truncated domestic exterior. Called "Stoop," the piece consists

of paving stones leading up to a three-step exterior entrance to a house. Martini found the stoop on a lot in Bahama Village, in which the house had been demolished. A mailbox on a wooden post is beside the paving. Martini shies away from analyzing or explaining his work, so I also will forgo commentary. And frankly, the piece speaks for itself (as most good art does).

Anja Marais's "False Security" will also, I think, surprise and probably puzzle the viewer. Ever



"False Security" is Anja Marais' innovative concept.

changing the forms of her works, Marais adheres to her principle of focusing on nonwestern, feminine material for sculpture, often soft fabrics, paper or leather.

"False Security" will be an old fashioned camper, rectangular with rounded sides. It will be painted a loud pink; the interior walls will have damask wallpaper with a velvet print. Campers are all over Florida — except in Key West. Nothing could be more banal. Except when you step into this one. Circling the wallpaper will be four dogs (paper sewn over foam); each with open, snarling mouths. They will be attached to the wall across from the entrance to

the camper, except that one will be on the floor looking directly at the viewer; its fangs ready to bite.

The effect of the piece results from the violent juxtaposition of the familiar, domestic camper spruced up in bright pink and Victorian wallpaper with wild dogs about to chew the placid visitor. Feminine material; horror-house imagery; devilish humor.

Lauren McAloon is a most innovative artist. This year she returns to Aeolian flutes, an object used in her 2006 entry for Sculpture Key West. To 47 of these, she will add 10 rudders salvaged from refugee boats that landed

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ROGER
EMMONS

LYNN
KAUFELT

MITZI

SCULPTURE

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at Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas. Her work, "Threshold" will be at the extreme right of the open field at Fort Taylor at the very edge of Key West harbor where water laps constantly at the rocks and sand. Visually, flutes of varying heights will surround the rudders. To that complicated image is added the sounds of the flutes as the wind blows over them.

Mc Aloon's artistic goal is to unite history, human experience and her materials into work that is visually, emotionally and intellectually provocative. It is surprising and gratifying how frequently she succeeds at this difficult creative effort.