

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



Benglis and Stettner: Bayou monsters and Nazca Lines

Jan Castro

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Storm King Art Center is bright this season with Lynda Benglis' new fluorescent *Hills and Clouds* and her hot-pink *Pink Ladies* fountains. Luke Stettner's *Outlooks* -- abstract charcoal geometric glyphs -- are another addition to the landscape.

Benglis' three *Pink Ladies* in one outdoor fountain steal the show as their 'bodies,' made from uneven stacked cone-like shapes, rise up to peer over the green Storm King vistas. Her exhibition *Water Sources* features indoor and outdoor sculpture in bronze, cast pigmented polyurethane, glazed ceramic, and other media. Three tall golden fountains named "Fruited Plane" and "Amber Waves," (right out of "America the Beautiful") and "Bounty" rise over 25 feet, their tops leaning inward. Sets of darker cast bronze fountains look like swamp creatures yet boast docile names like "Mother and Child." The swamp creatures seem, to me, most interactive with each other and with visitors of all ages. The fountains all drip and spray cooling waters. Benglis' indoor work fills six galleries and ranges from the eight to nine and a half feet tall series "Black Ice" to the sensuously-curving glazed ceramics "Snake Wall" and "Anagama II." An early work, "Nu," 1994 (French for naked, bare, nude) is a series of curving, sparkling tubular shapes.

Benglis, who hails from Lake Charles, Louisiana, became known in the 1960s for her biomorphic shapes. The artist became instantly famous in 1974 when she paid for an *Artforum* ad showing her strutting nude, greased body 'wearing' a large plastic penis. In the same issue, an essay on the artist featured an Annie Leibovitz Betty Grable-like photo of the artist's bare butt. These images stirred up conversations about pornography and feminist theory that have never been resolved. Benglis' work is innovative and playful; the Storm King exhibition is G-rated to appeal to all ages.

Luke Stettner's pictographs, on an eighty-foot square plot of earth, show straight lines with three small circles and vaguely resemble, to me, a standing figure, a basketball hoop, and the math symbol *pi*. They also suggest aerial photos of archeological sites such as Stonehenge, England, dating back to 2600 B.C. and Nazca, Peru where geoglyphs of animals, people, and myths dug into the terrain originated around 500 B.C. Stettner's lines were created from trenches filled with wood-based charcoal. Fallen trees at Storm King were turned into soil-enhancing biochar by a process called pyrolysis. The char is also a rudimentary drawing material. The installation combines sculpture, drawing, environmental/land consciousness, and, perhaps, a new sign language. In Storm King's indoor installation space, Stettner's fossil-like concrete rocks filled with old cell phones are surrounded by re-photographed images.

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Storm King's newest attractions are sited on its 500 acres of rolling hills, prairie grass, and wildflowers. The over 100 art works are fun to explore. A new 40-foot high Mark di Suvero sculpture *Jeanne* stands tall as Andy Goldsworthy's stone walls curve around trees, in and out of waters, and to the top of Maya Lin's *Storm King Wave Field*. Storm King programs include moonlight tours, concerts, biking, and tram tours.

In October, Storm King will publish a definitive monograph on Mark di Suvero. Benglis closes on November 8, Stettner on November 29. The season ends on November 29th.

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