

Annette Gates and Pandra Williams at Kiang Gallery

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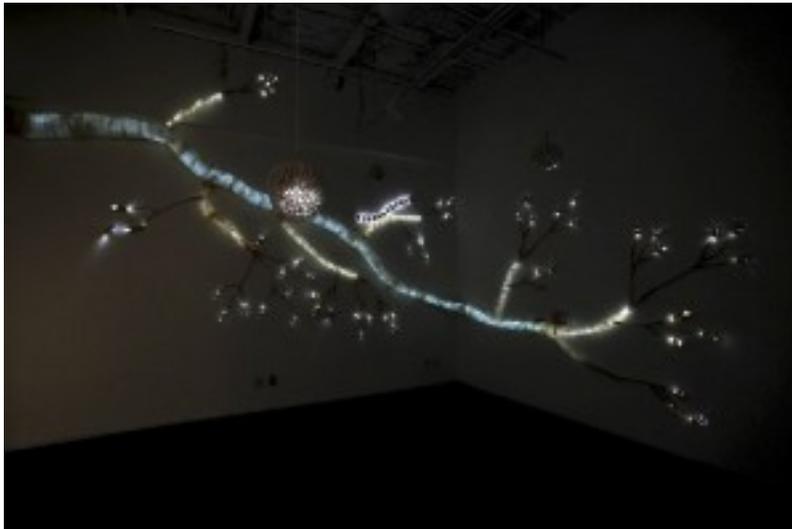
Review

“In Significance.”

Through May 29. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; noon-5 p.m. Saturdays and by appointment.

Kiang Gallery. 1011 A Marietta St. 404-892-5477. www.kiang-gallery.com

Bottom line: Annette Gates and Pandra Williams share Kiang Gallery in an inspired pairing and knock-out exhibition.



"Radicis," installation by Pandra Williams

By Catherine Fox

Annette Gates and Pandra Williams share a fascination with the wonder, complexity and metaphorical possibilities of the natural world. Both proceed from a deep understanding of biological phenomena. Yet, the way these talented Georgia artists pursue their similar interests is deliciously individual.

Williams merges her clay sculpture, installation practice and environmental advocacy in the magical “Radicis,” an installation of abstracted natural forms that glows strange and wonderful like the landscape in “Avatar’s” Pandora.

A luminous tube of translucent laminated mulberry paper snakes across two walls of a darkened room. Its offshoots terminate in organic shapes — blooms? organisms? — made of slipcast porcelain. Additional clay forms, resembling, say, a centipede or a sea shell, climb the walls and hang from the ceiling.

Powered by solar panels the Atlanta artist installed on the roof, the clay elements, all of which are pierced, light up in seemingly random patterns. They are actually computer-driven sequences based on yoga breathing and Fibonacci number series, which recur as patterns in the natural world.

The piece could be construed as undersea, underground, microscopic or life-sized, which, like the Fibonacci sequence, suggests the underlying unity of all life forms. Whatever references it calls up, “Radicis” engenders feelings of harmony and calm.

Gates is fascinated by the forms of life we can't see. She makes them visible in little clay sculptures often assembled into wall-sized installations.

Airborne organisms and particulates are the theme of this show. For instance, a lively constellation of quirky multicolored shapes — spiny spheres in faded rose, blue peanut shapes covered in tiny little indentations ringed with green — is pollen.

For all the annoyance pollen creates in humans, it serves the greater good in the natural world. Not so the menacing blobby black forms strung from the ceiling and hanging right in your face, which represent the carbon we breathe as a result of industrial pollution.

Each little piece is meticulously crafted. For the pollen sculptures, Gates knitted and crocheted the forms, infused them with porcelain and fired them. The fabric burned away, leaving behind the textured imprint you see on the surface

The Athens artist used cotton balls and toothpicks in a similar manner to create the carbon. She tucked tiny shine spheres in the crevices. God, and a jeweler's precision, is definitely in these details.

Gates and Williams collaborated on "Paradox," wall pieces in which mold spores, little spheres that spring from the wall on wires, feast on a seed pod that Williams created out of clay.

The piece makes manifest the life cycle of germination, life, decomposition and death that is the natural order of things.

As with Williams, Gates' work operates on a spiritual as well as material plane. Themes like the interdependence of the natural and human world, endless cycles, unseen forces and life-giving light reverberate through the gallery in a memorable blend of science, art and poetry.