

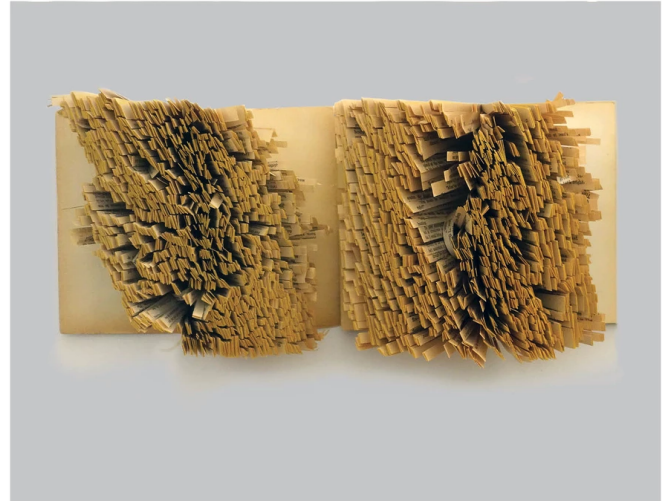


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Tussle Projects: Amy Bassin: In Praise of Strong Spines

Exhibition Review by Miklos Legrady, July 3, 2020



There's a littoral movement in Amy Bassin's work. Littoral characterizes the intermediate and shifting zone between the sea and the land. NSCAD's Bruce Barber defines littoral art works as those shifting on the edge of the conventional contexts of the academic-curatorial complex, the institutionalized art world. Truly original work always takes us by surprise; we know it because it's unexpected.

I've always tried to convey with accuracy where a work falls on the spectrum between the best and the worst. The mechanism of judgment in art is an instinct, as in a short orchestra performance with every instrument loudly out of tune. The other side of the coin is this feeling of being amazed, touched, and impressed on seeing Bassin's work, a feeling that does not dissipate over time but grows with the viewing.

Since artists have cut books before, obviously that's not the littoral aspect, which I use to describe a shifting zone between the typical and the unique, between a professional quality product and a brilliance that's pure magic. Bassin's humble material transcends limitations to a spiritual degree. Obviously these works are made by the simple act of cutting; in this case the transformation turns into art, as in the art of conversation, the art of medicine, the art of cuisine. The body language and visual language in each work, bar none, reminds us of a Zen archer who can hit the target in the dark.

Bassin's work aims to raise social awareness about social injustice against women, children and a free press. The work thankfully isn't pedantic, proof of Bassin's empathy for her audience; Duchamp said that in the past artists used to suffer for their art but today it's the audience. Bassin is credible, she is taken seriously and because each piece is so fascinating, we do spend the time to decipher the social context in the non-verbal language of the damage. We see the spiritual rebirth that transformed pain into something hopeful, spiritual, confident. Where a pedantic lecture would fail, this subtle integration of medium and meaning draws us in. Each work is uniquely so interesting that we readily pay attention to anything Bassin has to say, because she is obviously in tune and accomplished. I have always suspected the body language of form contains the song of the spirit and an intellectual truth.