



OUR LADY OF THE BAYOU: SLEEPING BEAUTY, by Houston artist Charlie Sartwell evokes a sense of bayou memories, myth and lore. This is the first of three installations by the artist planned for *Buffalo Bayou Artpark*. Measuring 8 x 10 x 9 feet, the piece incorporates concrete, wood, glass, plexiglass, a lace-wedding dress, fish hooks, a wrought iron fence, caladiums and Hawthorn bushes. Vandals threw bricks and rocks, destroying the original glass encasing. The broken glass and rocks were left in place, as vandalism that “worked well” with the piece, according to the artist. Photo by John C. Runnels.

OUR LADY OF THE BAYOU: 3 SITE-SPECIFIC SCULPTURES FOR THE BUFFALO BAYOU ARTPARK

OUR LADY OF THE BAYOU, a series of 3 site-specific sculptures, offers homage to the spirit of women. OUR LADY OF THE BAYOU, SLEEPING BEAUTY becomes a metaphor for the Virgin, the unconscious woman beginning life. The unfortunate but repeated vandalization of this artwork has now become an integral aesthetic consideration and is documented with layers of plexiglass. Thus, SLEEPING BEAUTY, (or Mother Earth) is raped and pillaged, still survives the ordeal like many other women to hopefully create new life.

The seven steps in Alchemy (process of making gold) are divided into three stages, Black/White/Gold. The psychological stages of woman parallel the three stages of Alchemy with SLEEPING BEAUTY representing the first stage, Black or the unconscious state.

OUR LADY OF THE BAYOU, THE BLACK MADONNA, becomes a metaphor of the second stage of Alchemy (White) the conscious woman. Having gone through the fires of life, her dress is covered with the photographic leaves of the Paradise Lost. In the creation myth of Osiris his body was dispersed throughout the world and reassembled, likewise, the photographs have been cut up and reassembled to create a whole person again or new life.

The third sculpture, referring to the dictionary, "OBLIQUE ASCENSION happens when the arc of the equator is intercepted between the first point of Aries and that point of the equator which comes to the horizon with a star." The last stage in Alchemy (Gold) refers to the last stage of growth, the psychologically complete person.

The glass crypt, used to protect the sculptures, becomes a metaphor of the way women in our society are isolated and protected. The reference to death is positive rather than negative and parallels nature. In order for a tree to grow strong the "dead" wood must be cut away. Psychologically, in order to grow, one must "die" to old ways.

Charlie Sartwelle