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Cesar Forero at the Canadian Sculpture Centre



Opening Reception: September 14, 2017 / 2 pm

Stepping into the Sculpture Gallery on a recent hot Saturday afternoon seemed like going into a different world where our dimensions no longer existed. That was exactly Cesar Forero's intentions as he created an underwater world for us, guided us into it with his performance and then left us there to play.



Budding Water is an amazing installation that not only pleases the eye but has a deeper, more universal meaning. The gallery was packed to capacity with people patiently waiting for the promised performance. They stood under umbrella-like formations that reminded us of Japanese umbrellas, wedding parapets with twisted white silk and soft coloured strings coming out of them. People couldn't help but touch and pull on those strings, playing with them, so the structure moved above them. Looking up you could see a beautiful jellyfish floating above — and many of them, made more realistic by coloured lights. Forero has created an amazing underwater world, further emphasized by plastic waves and coins mimicking water droplets on the walls.



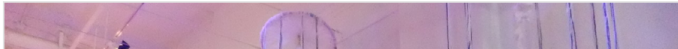


Then a sudden cry pierced the buzz of the guests, a white sack started to pulse and a white being exited it, like a creature emerging from a cocoon — the singer Amanda Scott. Wearing a white dress and strange face paint, she moved singing in a tune that a mermaid might — otherworldly, beautiful and terrifying at the same time. Slowly she moved across the room and hugged a ceramic creature, a bud or a shell, lovingly. Still singing in an ethereal way, she picked up three strings of glass pearls and started to create sounds by clicking them against the ceramic. This was a mesmerizing sound effect.



Three dancers came out, one male, the artist himself, and two females (Alison Parle, Brenna Mosser), wearing costumes that represented underwater beings. Forero was reciting his own lyrics about the environment and how we mistreat it and destroy its balance, emphasizing the words with dance and gestures. Steven Whalley's music, composed for Forero's lyrics, made the presentation wonderfully complex. Everything supported the sadness the artist felt for the loss of the cleanliness of our waters: visual elements as waves, floating jellyfish and shells, music & sound effects as well as dance. Sculpture, music, performance, dance and poetry are all incorporated in the realization of this immersive installation. It was a unique, one-of-a-kind presentation that was a pleasure to see. The audience was spellbound. Performers and visitors came from all over Canada and abroad to be part of this project.







Budding Water addresses the environmental issue of water contamination. The large number of jellyfish in our waters, the central motif of this exhibition, is the outcome of low oxygen level in seas. Thanks to over-fishing, pollution and other factors, jellyfish populations are exploding and exploiting these changes in ways that could never have been imagined. As the artist said, there's nothing is wrong with jellyfish, they have even been used for painkillers for centuries. The intricate balance and interconnectedness of ocean life has kept jellyfish in check but since that harmony has been interrupted their numbers are out of control.

This installation includes ceramic sculptures representing polyps on the ocean floor. Ceramics also depict the jellyfish at the beginning of its life circle when it looks like a plate, slowly moving up in the water, then turning around into its floating shape just like the many mixed-media jellyfish suspended above.



In *Budding Water*, human and mythological creatures share the gallery space of this underwater ecosystem, guiding us through a magical journey.

Victoria Rainoff

*Exhibition information: September 14 – October 6, 2017, Canadian Sculpture Centre, 500 Church Street. Gallery hours: Tue – Fri: 12 – 6, Sat: 11 – 4 pm.

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