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Christine Cassano

Mesa Contemporary Arts, Mesa, Arizona
Recommendation by Deborah Ross



Christine Cassano, "Corrosion of Logarithms," 2016, mixed media: concrete, circuit boards, lighting, 12 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2". Courtesy of the artist

Continuing through August 6, 2017

"Retro-futuristic" might best describe Christine Cassano's mixed-media work. With nods to ecology, biology and technology, she asks us to consider the tense relationships among them. What would it feel like to live in a future world, knowing that we hadn't protected it in the past? Cassano tries to answer that with "Black Box," a 10-foot-square walk-in installation closed off by black curtains. Inside are light projections, small mirrored discs hanging on strings, and a fossil-like sculpture on a pillar — all encountered while hearing an otherworldly soundtrack called "Lost Signals." The sense is certainly one of dislocation in a black, nebulous space.

The elements of the installation as well as the surrounding wall pieces all rely on mundane materials, although transformed in unique ways. Cassano wrests aesthetically engaging works from the likes of concrete blocks, circuit boards, material made to look like skin, industrial castoffs, found objects, hand-formed porcelain made to look like vertebrae, and her own long, dark hair. The wall pieces consistently juxtapose the natural and the manmade. In works such as "Arithmetic Arrhythmia" and "Sequential Abscission" (the titles reflect a kind of tech-speak), Cassano uses concrete, porcelain and moss mangled together and sitting atop a copper or metal plate. The works are lighted to glow in the center, adding another futuristic element. Already well-known for her sculptural installations of clay, mirrors and found objects, it's good to see Cassano stretching her media vocabulary, and it results in an intelligent show.

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