

Flux: Nature and Humanity in Harmony
By: Ariel Brown

Contemporary art has a multitude of forms, many of which are criticized as random or overly complicated. Pieces in this area of thought simply require an analysis past the visual pleasure they may lack. This type of art gets showcased at *Flux*, an event that creates a space for local Atlanta artists to showcase their work in harmony with nature at Grant Park. This year's *Flux* event took place from Sept 27-30th at Grant Park. Walking through the park is an experience everyone should have from the sheer beauty of it alone. Interacting with the installations made the experience much more memorable for me. It connected the human experience with nature. Four Atlanta-based contemporary women artists were given this platform to create work that speaks to the environment and what it means to be human.

The piece entitled "Waterlust" was created by Iman Person, a multiplatform artist and gallery curator. It incorporated long pieces of blue-tinted iridescent fabric strategically wound over areas where rivers and streams should lie. Her inspiration behind the piece came from the history of waterways in Atlanta, particularly, how human influence has destroyed these waters. The piece was not only eye-catching, but it educated those who chose to listen. The artist had a recording of an interview playing in the background during the event, which explained the history of the waterways in the city. The recording highlighted the disconnection humans have from nature and how it has resulted in an imbalance that shows up as the domination of man over nature, to the detriment of both sides.

“Many years ago, the city combined its wastewater. It piped a lot of its streams, and then that’s where we discharged our wastewater. And so we’ve piped it and put it outside of the city, and so the area that we’re in is part of a combined sewer system.”

The piece also included the music of drums and the sounds of water, making the forest come to life in an immersive, cinematic way. Person’s “Waterlust” blatantly called attention to the fact that there is no water flowing, making one realize the impact that industrial growth has on the planet. “It’s hard to think about things you don’t see. But everything that we do impacts our waters,” said Person. All art can be propagandistic and can have any interpretation tacked onto it by the spectator, but this piece is very direct in its meaning, and it’s effortless to derive that meaning from simply looking at it. Lauri Stallings’ “Land Trees and Women,” however, is a different story.

Stallings’ installation was more of a performance than a “piece.” Eight women were the subject here, mounted on a curved wooden plank, each climbing on and off at different intervals. They migrated through the park on full display in bright pink jumpsuits. The dancing was very slow and methodical, with subtle movements, but gnawing intent behind every stretch and bend. At first glance, especially without context, the dancing doesn’t even necessarily look like dancing, but more like simple slow movement. But watching the different women come and go, the expressions on their faces, and the passion with which they moved, it was obvious that this performance piece held a deeper meaning.

Flux attendee and Atlanta-native Tova Gelfond shared, “To me, it feels like they’re using the landscape to like, give the idea of going up a hill, a struggle, you know. It’s sort of interpreting the world around it in this upward motion and it looks almost like a painting but in action. And it kind of makes you look at the landscape.”

According to the *Flux* [website](#), Stallings’ performance, “investigates the process and mapping of women as ritual. This live durational piece is an intensive survey of unearthing movement with the fierce urgency of now, that guides us, helping us to silence the mind and free our bodies.” As an onlooker with no background on the piece prior to experiencing it, this sounded like a simple meditation to me, but to see it carried out through dance made it a much more freeing experience. Attendees witnessed a vibrant, visual representation of the body becoming free. The performance stimulated thoughts about freedom for the viewer, while also prompting the viewer to let go of mental control, connect with the performers, and subconsciously embody the feeling of freedom they evoked.

Iman Person’s work is steeped in the metaphysical, focusing on all that life has to offer in the past, present, and future. “Person believes a resurrection of the contemporary divine-body can be made and in turn positively affect the landscape and concepts of nature,” states the *Flux* website. This belief is actualized through her physically replicating what once was, and what could be in the future based on how we choose to continue sustaining our humanity. Laura Stallings founded the traveling movement platform *glo*, with which she choreographs to create a community among ordinary people. The website describes her work by saying it “aims to develop live art activities and strategies that advance the idea of public as a genesis and subject for deep spatial

and spiritual change.” The viewing experience of Stallings’ installation created a communal connection between the viewers, catalyzing her aim for change, and by simply expanding the viewers’ idea about freedom and traditional art. Both Person and Stallings have unique takes on the human experience and exemplify that through the dedication put into their pieces, as well as the meaning one can take away from them.

Flux is an event that I would recommend for all people to experience, whether you consider yourself an art aficionado or not. The event is a chance to not only admire, but also interact with nature, art, and the artists themselves. It creates a communion among attendees, as everyone gets to experience the installations, leaving them with more knowledge about the area, personal connections, and a better grip on the state of human nature. The artists of *Flux* laid out a historical map of the disconnection we’ve created between us as a people and our environment and began designing the blueprint of how we can repair that relationship to restore harmony between nature and humanity.

Sources:

<http://fluxprojects.art/productions/stallings-land-trees-women/>

<http://fluxprojects.art/productions/iman-person-waterlust/>