

Harry Geffert: *Tribute* at Cris Worley Fine Arts, Dallas

By Kasten Searles



Harry Geffert's, "Switchback," 2011.

Geffert, an expert bronze sculptor and founder, has cast hundreds of fragments of Texas foliage to create a series of beautifully elaborate wall-mounted sculptures. The delicate bronze twigs, flowers, and vines are arranged to create their own abstracted and imagined landscapes. These familiar objects compellingly join and multiply to become a near-illustrative forest, field, or stand of trees bent in the wind. Natural forms have a simple beauty and systemic complexity that is often unmatched by the human ability to create or describe. Harry Geffert's cast bronze sculptures at Cris Worley Fine Arts work with plant forms as building blocks to construct work that is both organic in its structure and highly refined in its execution.

The works within "Tribute" overflow with the texture of organic growth and cast a web of complicated shadows behind them. In the piece "Forest" the branches are so closely clustered that the individual forms fade into a richly

entangled crosshatch texture. With the work “Vineyard”, elements have been neatly and evenly spaced in a pattern that recalls unraveling fabric. Geffert adeptly recreates the chaos of a wild forest with as much ease as the regulated growth of an agricultural scene.

Geffert’s sculptures are so delicate that from a distance they can appear to be drawings on the gallery wall. Though Geffert’s work is pieced together and cast from a variety of local plant forms, the resulting works do not assert that they are representations of the Texas landscape.

Apart from occasional painted flowers, the sculptures lack warmth, and their branches appear leafless and brittle. These growths on the stark white of the gallery walls evoke the mood of cold northern winters, not the typically snowless seasons of Texas. The landscapes exist as an odd fusion of the inherent warmth of the living thing and the inherent lifelessness of the white wall. Within a living landscape, these plant forms can grow to fill all available spaces and to connect with all available resources they need to live. Within the gallery, Geffert’s landscapes appear confined to an unseen frame or rectangular composition and are rooted to nothing. This structural disconnect makes it clear that “Tribute” is in fact a tribute to nature and not an attempt to approximate nature itself. The sculptures are necessarily an unnatural representation of nature.

Geffert’s sculptural work is indeed a tribute to the natural world as it remains in the spirit of nature: both complicated and beautifully simple.