



Linda Leslie Brown
CHIMERIC

JULY 3–28, 2013



Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA

CHIMERIC: A POETIC ECOLOGY OF ENERGY by Mary Bucci McCoy

Chimeric is Linda Leslie Brown's largest, most ambitious indoor installation to date. She further develops the compelling ideas explored in *Nurse Log* (Members Gallery, Kingston Gallery, 2012), and the relationship between her gallery installations and her outdoor, site-specific installation work is increasingly fruitful.

In her gallery work, Brown recuperates discarded domestic and other manufactured objects and, combining them with found natural objects, inventively assembles gestural armatures that she covers with air-drying paper clay and then paint. In some instances the original objects remain identifiable; in other places the original form is subsumed into the wholeness of the new structure. Clusters of quartz crystals are partially embedded in the clay when it is still malleable, and a variety of live plants are added after the clay hardens and is painted. In the outdoor work, such as *Drala Dancing Ground*, an installation created during her 2012 residency at I-Park Foundation in Connecticut, Brown climbs trees to loop strands of antique crystals between branches to create energy pathways.

While the first pieces in this body of indoor work were discrete wall-mounted and freestanding sculptures, in *Nurse Log* Brown introduced an explicit connection between her indoor and outdoor work: the log-like form of the sculpture resting on the floor referenced the woods, and looping strands of energy — this time in the form of ropes of Spanish moss — connected “satellite” sculptural wall pieces to the main sculptural form on the floor, which harbored more plants, echoing in multiple ways her site-specific installation work.

Expanding on this installation, the large, totemic vertical structures that form the heart of *Chimeric* simultaneously reference trees and the human body while smaller, wall-mounted “family member” sculptures connect to the central forms via umbilical ropes of Span-

ish moss. By relating this installation to the space of a forest, Brown introduces a scale shift in relation to both the space and the human body that not only opens up fertile creative possibilities for her but also subtly reframes her audience's relationship to the work.

The title of the work, *Chimeric*, explicitly addresses the issues of combining different things into a new whole. The references are multifaceted: both the genetic phenomenon in which all the cells in an organism do not contain the same DNA, and mythological, hybrid, often terrifying creatures. But far from monstrous, *Chimeric* is simultaneously marked by humor and grace, playfulness and gravity. Brown leverages the possibilities art offers, proposing a poetic, hybrid framework for considering the complex morality of our humanity in relation to the natural world through many interconnected current topics and disciplines: cloning, hybridization, and genetic modification; ecology, recycling and consumerism; and identity and familial relationships. Moving around and through the work offers viewers the opportunity to inhabit this magically recombinant space both physically and energetically.

Brown's early experience working with ceramic materials is a key to the success of her work. The sensing, sensitive imprint of her fingers is everywhere evident, and in this digital era the primal language of human touch — warmth and caring — invites the viewer into the dialogue while offering recalcitrant opposition to a clinically scientific approach to the issues she investigates with *Chimeric*. She gives us an approachable, and hopeful, alternative means for considering our evolving understanding of our situation and role in our biosphere.

Mary Bucci McCoy is a painter based in Beverly, MA. She is a longtime contributor to *Art New England* magazine.



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LEFT *Chimeric* (installation view) 2013
metal, wood, plastic, paper clay, quartz, paint,
air plants, Spanish moss

ABOVE *Drala Dancing Ground* (detail of installation at I-Park) 2012
Antique crystal drops suspended in pine grove



Artist's Statement

My sculpture and installations reimagine intersections of humans with nature. The work is biased toward process: growth, change, and falling apart. “Chimeric” signals transformation and interdependence as symbiotic modes of being joined with nature — in a world where many people imagine they are separate from it.

The materials in my work include domestic objects retrieved from thrift stores and discards harvested from our culture’s prodigious waste stream, relics from kitchens and bathrooms grafted to twisting woody branches. I am drawn to the incongruities while hoping to partially reconcile them, bringing the parts together in a humorous moment of becoming. The forms shift away from fixed significance as natural or human-made and begin to communicate together through gesture, shape and color.

Visual movement and a vigorous tactility engage the body and the haptic sense. As you move around them the works reveal rhythmic structures, and clumps of quartz crystals are discovered sprouting from their branched axillas. The pieces are literally alive, as habitats for growing plants rooted and clinging to their surfaces. Umbilical swags of Spanish moss connect the works in the installation to one another, to their smaller “young” and to the space they inhabit.

Animal, vegetable and mineral, these works display a deceptive insouciance, undercut by the strange hybridity they embody. They are chimeric: like mythological beasts or genetically engineered mutations, they are “trans” beings. For me, these works are not simply visual analogues. A residue of homely utility is embedded in their adapted object parts. This carried life force resonates with my ongoing care for the growing plants and the energy fields created by the clusters of quartz crystals, in a way that gives the work a sort of consciousness and an experience in time.

Our relationship as humans to our environments, shared with countless other living beings, is certainly changing. Today we often feel about nature the same way we feel about our own bodies: there are waves of denial, disgust/disavowal, guilt, desire, and fear. We are surrounded with bio-indicators of displacement and damage to our changing earth. We often forget that we ourselves are super biomes, teeming with a gigantic population of microbes who share our bodies with us, demanding a re-thinking of the notions of community and coexistence on so many levels. Where and how we live, the things we use and discard, the implications of biotechnology and the regard we have for living energy: all are in question. The work here extends the dialogue, inviting inquisitive examination and perhaps a deeper recognition.

— *Linda Leslie Brown*

OPPOSITE PAGE *Chimeric* (installation view) 2013
metal, wood, plastic, paper clay, quartz, paint, air plants, Spanish moss



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Linda Leslie Brown's recent work incorporates a variety of techniques, including sculpture, painting, video/sound, and large scale digital photographic prints. Her work engages the interdependent relationships between nature and human creative perception. Site-specific installations create habitat spaces made of wood, metal, paper and crystal occupied by living plants that attract and protect the energy of place.

She has exhibited her work regionally and nationally. Recent exhibitions include the Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA; AMP Gallery, Provincetown, MA; Bannister Gallery, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI; and Vessels Gallery, Boston, MA. She is the recipient of grants and fellowship residencies from the St. Botolph Club Foundation, FPAC, Women's Studio Center, Hambidge Center, and I-Park among others. Ms. Brown is a Professor and the Foundation Studio Program Director at NESAD, Suffolk University.

Chimeric Young (installation view) 2013

metal, wood, plastic, paper clay, quartz, paint, air plants, Spanish moss

ON COVER *Chimeric BG* (installation view) 2013

metal, wood, plastic, paper clay, quartz, paint, air plants, Spanish moss

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Kingston Gallery

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