

Artist Statement's for Protected Treasure

Catherine Conrad

I was inspired by Brookgreen Gardens to create a conceptual installation sculpture that explores the power of preserving nature – although nature itself is constantly dying in the process of its natural life cycle.

“Protected Treasure” is an installation work that is centered on a maple tree wood slab. Both sides of the slab include painted oil components, as well as mixed media elements (metal, Spanish moss, and fabric). I was first attracted to this wood slab because I could tell that it was distressed. Unlike a blank canvas, this piece of wood already told a story – I just needed to uncover it.

When I was working on this maple tree slab, nature began to reveal new secrets about herself to me through her natural markings. As I cleaned, sanded, and picked sawdust from the holes, I found it to be a process of spiritual discovery. Even in the tree's imperfections, it portrayed immense beauty. As I analyzed every square inch of this wood, I noticed the grains and patterns of growth; I witnessed where the tree had been infested by insects, creating little holes; I saw where stress had caused the tree to lose limbs, creating craters inside and imperfections on the trunk's surface.

I began to enhance these natural shapes and lines through my mark-making. On both sides of the slab, I introduced new colors – slowly at first, allowing the tree to reveal a story. As my mark-making grew bolder, this story incorporated characteristics from the coast: beach reeds on dunes; dried corals; protected pearls; seaweed floating on the water's surface; and sea creatures with dots and tentacles.

As I ended my process of mark-making, I decided to let the mixed media components provide commentary on my work. First, I added a spiral of nails to “Protected Treasure.” Although this group of nails is visually beautiful – almost reminiscent of dew drops or fish eggs – I wanted to reflect not only on the artistic beauty of trees, but also their practical function: literally providing us security and protection from the elements.

Finally, I added a halo to the slab. To me, halos are a physical representation of a spiritual truth. I believe that trees are powerful testaments of how to live our lives. Even in times of adversity and challenges, and throughout all seasons, trees quietly, but boldly, display inspiring beauty and potential for new life. Preserving them, as in Brookgreen Gardens, ensures these treasured lessons from nature will be passed down to and appreciated by the next generation.

Dimensions: 64 inches high x 36 inches wide x 11 inches deep

Side 1



Side 2



Details



