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Christine Arveil's Ilha Ardente Ember Island



Since 2005, Boston-based artist [Christine Arveil](#) has been creating an abstract volcano expressed through writing and painting. The Volcano Project was first installed in 2009 in the Azores islands; key pieces return to Boston and will be on view at the [Massachusetts State House, Doric Hall](#), June 1-11.



What was once the expression of the imagination of a singular artist – the Volcano Project – has met the Azorean collective memory of an historical event – the eruption of the volcano – that is part of the identity of the new American-Azorean generation. Arveil's artwork assembles organic paintings in vibrant shades of red, white sculptures incorporating Azorean deep-black basalt stones, and stone-drawings displayed over metal stands. Ilha Ardente – Ember Island installs an island of art which strength bridges lands and cultures.

Five years ago, I painted a vertical red image of a new kind, The Price of Freedom. A powerful piece that both intrigued and

challenged me, as its elusive complexity precluded any attempt at reproduction.



Around the same time, I began writing a new novel. I was intensely drawn to this fiction, which setting and new style fascinated me more than any of my previous writings. I refined it over three years, focusing on crafting sentences and words that would embody rather than simply describe the art creation process. The vision was that of an imaginary volcano, inhabited by a sculptor; both vision and fictional character sustained my drive for new creations in the painting medium, and revealed an autobiographic undertone. The medium I use on my gesso/panel is based on violin varnish, and as unfit to painting as flowing lava is to sculpting, but allows me to elaborate organic images. I visually "built" the Volcano all over again in expressing how burning life is.



All of this remained secluded in my studio, until it reached a critical

mass and people started to know about my projet fou. My husband suggested that we should look for the location, so far unknown to me, of the volcanic fault that I had so precisely described; we visited several islands before finding the area of Ferraria, Azores. In this location, my art, a work of pure imagination, was now been invested by the Azorean world, its land and its people. When I started my Volcano Project in 2005, I had not foreseen that my abstraction would embed itself deeply into real ground beyond my own, nor resonate with so many people.



The first installation of 70 pieces of the Volcano took place in São Miguel in September 2009. In Boston today, the invitation to present part of the Volcano Project at the Portuguese Heritage weeks came as a surprise and a great honor. Lava flows had changed the destiny of the Azorean people and drove their families to America. Time passing, the narration of the event from generation to generation made the volcano legendary. Seeing my artwork mirror these memories and bridge cultures, shows that when the emotional charge remains and facts blur, art may become the medium of expression.



While news of the recent Icelandic and Indonesian eruptions cast more realism each day over my creation (in the spectators' view), my art process remains centered on inner feelings and solitude. In this dialogue, meaning lies at the center of talk. Meaning is the currency of the emotional exchange.

Christine Arveil

Ilha Ardente / Ember Island

Massachusetts State House

June 1-11, 2010

9am-5pm M-F

An event of the [Boston Portuguese Festival 2010](#)

Image credit: All images courtesy of Christine Arveil

From top to bottom:

Photograph of the artist Christine Arveil.

Mendiants, 2009, lava stones, gold leaf and lacquer on wood, 41" x 14" x 10"

Spinesax (detail), 2008, violin varnish and pigments over gesso on wood

Spinesax, 2008, violin varnish and pigments over gesso on wood, 48" x 48"

First Right of Refusal, 2008, violin varnish and pigments over gesso on wood, 48" x 48"

First Right of Refusal (detail), 2008, violin varnish and pigments over gesso on wood

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11 Responses to “Christine Arveil’s Ilha Ardente Ember Island”

aaltobartok Says:

[June 3rd, 2010 at 6:56 am](#)

I saw the show yesterday and it is truly special. The art is mesmerising and rare in the

sense that Arveil combines deep cultural and social meanings with a complex beauty.

A must-see.

ndiffloth Says:

[June 3rd, 2010 at 9:21 am](#)

A deeply moving and courageous expression... The stories these paintings tell are astonishing in both their emotion and their complexity. There are many layers of meaning to unravel here. One could meditate on the images for a long time. Christine Arveil’s is a wonderful show — one not to be missed!

danielle toth Says:

[June 4th, 2010 at 6:19 am](#)

I was thrilled to see such exciting work be displayed in the State House. The excellent installation provided an intimate view of Christine Arveil’s unique talents. I found myself going deeper and deeper into the paintings and drawings, seeing more each time I returned to a work. Her work is like none other, and deserves a much larger show so that many more people can discover the extraordinary power of her art.

Paulo Cunha Says:

[June 4th, 2010 at 8:33 pm](#)

What a wonderful experience to revisit Christine Arveil’s works at the Massachusetts State House Doric Hall. The set up is perfect and all the works shine as if they were displayed in the crater of a volcano, illuminated by the red-orange lava. Congratulations to the artist. Those who missed the opening, can visit this exquisite exhibition until June 11. Don’t miss it!

Maria da Mata Says:

[June 4th, 2010 at 8:37 pm](#)

There are no words to describe the beauty and deepness of Chrisitne Arveil’s Ember Island exhibition. She captures the organic soul of a living volcano... It’s a bliss to experience the pleasure of visiting it!

Heidi Harvey Says:

[June 8th, 2010 at 4:43 pm](#)

It is amazing and intriguing to see artistic emotions and themes that are timeless and even primordial expressed via a technique that is absolutely new and unique. It was as if Christine needed to invent this technique to fully express herself — existing materials and methods were not enough!

António Santos Says:

[June 9th, 2010 at 9:44 am](#)

Christine Arveil’s Ember Island is an amazing work of art: her absolute control of the lacquer and varnishing technique is a unique experience and gift offered to the City of Boston.

A must see.

Joel Turrow Says:

[June 9th, 2010 at 1:15 pm](#)

During my last excursion to Boston, I had the good fortune to stop by the Senate House.

I was taken entirely by surprise by the wonderful exhibit that graced the walls (and pillars) of this community's principal building. I do not believe that I have seen such quality in a long time, and the depth of the paintings was breathtaking. I sincerely hope that that artist will continue to build and expand the volcano project, and that her art will soon explode on the international scene, so to speak.

João Bernardo Rodrigues Says:

June 10th, 2010 at 6:30 am

After visiting last September the exhibition The Volcano Project, where it was born, in Ponta Delgada, Azores, I was very pleased to be present in the State House of Boston to contemplate with more attention some of the paintings and sculptures with rocks of the mystic place called Ferraria, on the now called Ember Island Exhibition, where I could remember what I already knew, the remarkable talent and creativity of Christine Arveil.

Thank you again for all the good moments full of art and friendship.

Alexa Bresnan Says:

June 15th, 2010 at 12:21 pm

The setting for Arveil's show captures the dynamic of a natural phenomenon: in the midst of formal marbled corridors and hall, this exhibit forcefully evokes the shock and unexpected dynamism of rock in its earliest formation. Anyone who has seen an active volcano is mesmerized by the powerful contrast of fire, molten lava, and its unstoppable movement in the context of layered foundations of hardened rock.

Ms. Arveil's stark line drawings of rock crevices and shapes offer a counterpoint to the multidimensional fiery power and movement exhibited in her paintings that glow from within.

As occurs with an active volcano, the observer is tempted to move closer to the brink of danger approaching the source of fire—just as the viewer here alternates moving closer and backward to fully grasp the intensity and hidden dimensions of the paintings.

Ms. Arveil innovates in three mediums to capture the physical and emotional experience of her subject—in this case the awe inspired by the interactive power of mineral and fire.

I look forward to more and bigger exhibits of this extraordinary and unique artist.

Martha S. Hill Says:

July 12th, 2010 at 3:38 pm

Recently words of wisdom from a source I could not catch wafted in my direction, saying that a true work of art lingers in your memory. Although over a month has passed since seeing Christine Arveil's Boston exhibition, strong images of this vast creation remain a vivid part of my memory.

I continue to find myself captivated by the lingering images in my mind's eye of what my words want to express as fire and ice sculptures. Each in its own way defies gravity while melding ice and fire with a sweeping sense of fluidity. Yet the exhibition was even more. The sculptures were set like gems amidst the striking, large luminescent paintings in reds, oranges, yellows and blue and the sets of more modest sized, stark black-on-white drawings. All were woven together within the volcano theme... a volcano on an ember island living first within the artist's imagination then found by the artist, in actuality, to reside on the island of Sao Miguel in the Azores.

The paintings' visual depth and living, breathing emotions speak strongly and merit concerted attention. The drawings too convey powerful messages, but with a subtle touch. One's eye moves around the collective assemblage of a grouping of drawings

deciphering, mostly at an unconscious level, strong messages. And set amongst these are the captivating fire and ice, fluid and solid sculptures. The breadth of the work and the power and technical skill so evident throughout usher us into a vibrant realm of a modern renaissance artist — ‘renaissance’ as in vigorous artistic and intellectual activity.

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