



Eye Candy

By David Balzer

Walter Redinger “Return to the Void: The Ghost Ship and Other Tales From the Ether”

Walter Redinger's “Return to the Void: The Ghost Ship and Other Tales From the Ether” may remind viewers of CanArt from the '70s, with its trippy mysticism and fusion of natural and synthetic materials. Redinger is, after all, a significant figure from that era, having represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 1972. Yet, if Redinger's new work still recalls the '70s, it also recalls that venerable modernist tradition of aesthetic gutsiness that goes way back – before the advent of modernism itself. Thus we have the compelling, primal Ghost Ship, a sprawling fibreglass, metal and wood sculpture that takes up an entire section of the gallery (it's 42 feet long). As an existential statement, Ghost Ship succeeds. It is not laughable or outmoded; one instantly thinks of how difficult it must have been to make the sculpture – which resembles a giant carcass, or a death ship out of Melville or Coleridge – and respects the artist for his chutzpah. More important, however, is the philosophy behind the effort: Redinger explores the dark, romantic pulse of creation, wherein a grand work seems almost to sap the artist, taking her or his soul as the price of its production. With this in mind, one might better appreciate the accompanying giclée-on-vinyl and ink-on-paper prints: yup, they look like cover art for prog rock albums, but (like prog rock) they're charmingly sincere in their investigations of time, being and enlightenment.

WALTER REDINGER'S “RETURN TO THE VOID: the GHOST SHIP AND OTHER TALES FROM THE ETHER” RUNS TO MAR 11. TUE-SUN 11AM-6PM. MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN ART, 952 QUEEN W. 416-395-7490.
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