

Rooting from the Ground Up: Dalya Luttwak Brings Growing Art to VisArts

Since early 2007, Dalya Luttwak has been working on a series of sculptures depicting the root systems of various plants. Sourcing from actual roots that she digs up from out of the earth, Luttwak recreates the natural configuration of plant roots through mild steel to “reveal what nature prefers to conceal.” Her series of root sculptures have lodged on the sides of the towers at the end of the Rio del Arsenale in Venice, Italy, perched their way up and across the metal fences and tennis courts at the Kreeger Museum, emerged from the patio floor at the Katzen Arts Center, and made lasting impressions throughout the DC-Maryland-Virginia area.

Now you can see one of her latest root sculptures, “Ground Cover - Roots of Liriopo,” in the first floor lobby entrance of VisArts in the Arts and Innovation Center in Rockville Town Square. Against an orange wall background, a painted white root begins at the bottom of the wall, growing out from the brown molding-trim. From a



single line, the root expands further and further up the wall as it comes alive as a three-dimensional steel sculpture that climbs and reaches the corners of



ground and parts below.” Her work, ranging from metal jewelry, Judaica and small sculpture to large-scale welded steel sculptures, has been featured all



VisArts’ doorway entrance. The way that it grows up from the grounds of VisArts, the root becomes a natural part of the building. However, the sheer white color of the root imposes against the orange wall for a dramatic and contrasting effect, as though it was a gigantic weed that was never uprooted.

Luttwak was born in 1943 on Kibbutz Sde Nehemia in the Upper Galilee and raised there and in Tel Aviv. Although encouraged by some of her teachers, she did not pursue art until she came to the U.S. in 1972. Primarily studying at Montgomery College, but also taking workshops wherever they have been offered throughout the area, Luttwak pursued her artistic passion.

Metal became her raw material of choice for the challenges that it presented. Luttwak explains that, “the challenge of metal is that it’s so difficult to work with. The older I get, the more I want to be challenged.” Luttwak’s 30-year experience working with metal has allowed her to see the beauty of the structure and shape of the plants in order to “explore the differences and relationships between the parts above

over the world.

The idea to sculpt roots came to her after a tree fell on her car. Taking photos of the accident for insurance purposes, the image of the unearthed roots stayed on her mind and became a favorite topic of artistic exploration.

Sometimes working from the roots themselves and other times from photograph, copies or drawings, Luttwak studies the roots to figure out how to physically and aesthetically make them into steel sculptures, how to connect the separate parts, and how to hang the final constructions from ceilings, on walls, place them on floors or place them on buildings in the great outdoors. The dramatic transformation of size, scale, and material lends the works metaphoric significance.

“Ground Cover - Roots of Liriopo” will be a revolving public art piece for the community to see. For the City of Rockville, there is no better home for Dalya Luttwak’s work than VisArts as it hopes to inspire artistic expression and creative exploration.

For more information on Dalya Luttwak, visit www.dalyaluttwak.com.