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Altered bibles, tense faith central to Ekstrom's conceptual religious art



UNRAVELING, an exhibit of sculptural works made from altered bibles by Linda Ekstrom, opens with a reception at 6 p.m. Saturday, November 4th, at the Sherry Frumkin Gallery in Santa Monica.

BY RAHNE PISTOR

Tension that arises between the sacred and the secular has inspired artist Linda Ekstrom to create her new exhibit of sculptural works, *Unraveling*, an exhibit of altered bibles and sacred texts. The show opens with a reception at 6 p.m. Saturday, November 4th, at the Sherry Frumkin Gallery, 3026 Airport Ave., Santa Monica. The exhibit remains on display through Saturday, December 16th.

The works artfully rearrange into sculptural works actual handwritten and published pages of texts, several of which include pages from shredded bibles.

Ekstrom says her work is not at all meant to be blasphemy.

"For me, it's sacred words reconfigured into sacred texts," says Ekstrom.

Ekstrom says she subverts, not blasphemes.

"I am subverting the readability of text to provide new ways of interpreting them through the tactile senses," she says.

Often, she is asked whether her works are meant as a testament of faith or as a critique of religion.

"I ask why it has to be one or the other," Ekstrom says. "Why not both? I am a practicing Catholic, but I have a lot of criticism

and challenge for my faith. It's not just blind faith. I question and ask questions, and I think that's a healthy thing."

A past exhibit she created at the University of California at Santa Barbara centered around issues of the Holocaust was what led Ekstrom to first tie together her dual interests in faith and art.

"I had created a silent and meditative space reflecting on the pain of the events that occurred during the Holocaust. It was during a week of Holocaust remembrance and, unexpectedly, a rabbi decided to lead a ritual at the site of my work. This brought together both of my interests and inspired me to tie themes of religion into future works of art."

A second overwhelming source of inspiration for Ekstrom's work is the life and words of 19th century American poet Emily Dickinson. Ekstrom says she feels a personal connection in the way that Dickinson struggled with her religious faith and dealt with tension between herself and her strict Calvinist family and the tension in Ekstrom's own religious life and thoughts.

The tension that Dickinson

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Ekstrom...

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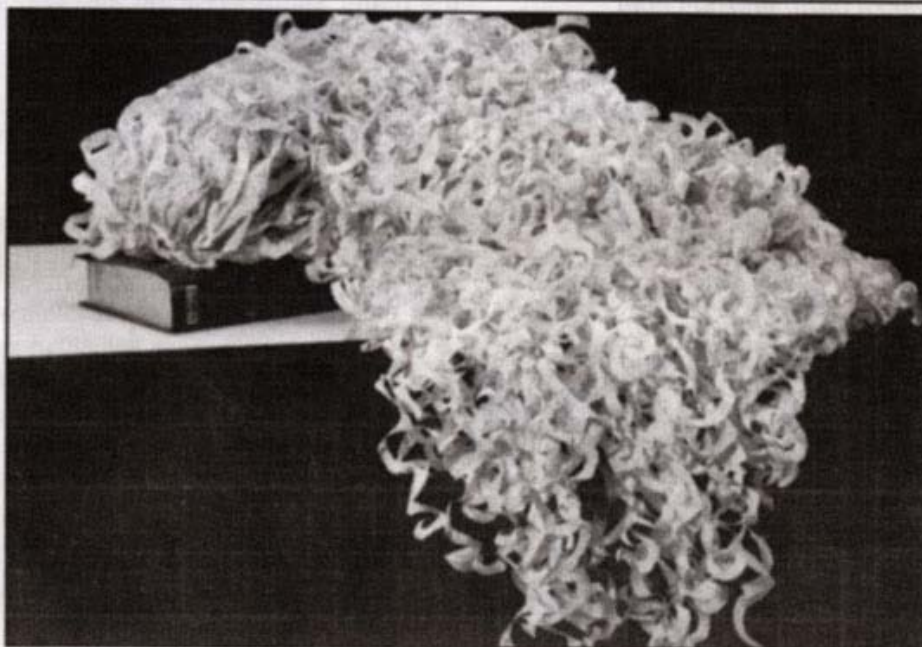
expressed through poetry, Ekstrom seeks to express through art.

For an authentic Dickinson touch, Ekstrom visited the homestead of Dickinson in Amherst, Massachusetts. Ekstrom used reproductions of Dickinson's handwriting in her works and even collected some fallen sticks from an Oak tree on the property that dates back to the days of Dickinson to use in her sculptural works.

In earlier works, as a comment on what she calls patriarchal bias of Judeo-Christian writings, Ekstrom placed a bible in a bee hive and left some of the alterations to the bees.

She cut out the names of all the women in the bible and affixed them onto squares of silk which were then read aloud, according to Sherry Frumkin Gallery.

Ekstrom completed her M.F.A. in Art Studio at the University of California at Santa



LINDA EKSTROM'S images are on display through Saturday, December 16th, at Sherry Frumkin Gallery in Santa Monica.

Barbara in 1996 where she now teaches in the studio art program in the College of Creative Studies.

Her works have been included in both solo and group exhibitions, including past shows at the Sherry Frumkin Gallery in Santa Monica; Montgomery Museum, Pomona College; Center for the Book, San Francisco and New York; Kellogg Museum, Cal Poly, Pomona; and LIMN

Gallery and Quotidian Gallery in San Francisco. Her work was included in the international exhibition, *Faith*, at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

Ekstrom served on the committee for the Los Angeles Cathedral, Our Lady of the Angels, to select art for the exterior and interior of the new cathedral, designed by Raphael Moneo.

Information, (310) 397-7493.