

Review: **New Work by Grace Knowlton & "Meditation, Dedication and Prayer" by Simon Draper** by Abby Luby



# Organic simplicity

**Turning daily objects into art:  
Grace Knowlton and Simon Draper  
at Van Brunt Gallery in Beacon.**

New Work by Grace Knowlton  
"Meditation, Dedication and Prayer"  
by Simon Draper  
Van Brunt Gallery, 460 Main Street,  
Beacon  
Through April 3  
Hours: Daily, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.  
845.838.2995  
[www.vanbruntgallery.com](http://www.vanbruntgallery.com)



welded together by nature's rust. The two forms appear out of a black background as solid, connected figures - forever.

In "Sparkill Cruciform," a vertical post with two outstretched metal "arms" appears almost three-dimensional because of the flat, painted background that seems to raise the metal bars out at right angles. A simple extension lined in charcoal reaches past the photo with a cap drawn on the top. The line also trails off below the bottom, giving the impression of slipping in and out of reality.

The challenge for an artist to impose his or her mark on a preexisting image lies in striking a balance between the image and the creative brush stroke or line. For the most part, Knowlton succeeds with the darkened background, which highlights the exquisite texture and line of the wood or metal. But in the two pieces titled "Fence (with Conte Crayon)," whitewashed fence beams overlaid with black charcoal lines extending off the matte seem self conscious and extemporaneously distracting - a questionable gesture of remaking reality over an already great image. Knowlton may have presumed her photos couldn't stand alone, but in some cases her sharp eye doesn't need to be justified by her hand.

Three of Knowlton's spheres are placed on the gallery floor and bear a delightful sense of perspective that anchors the show and contrasts the photos. "Green Wabi," one of her older spheres, engages with indented, rough textured copper, brusquely painted white with weathered green patina. A scooped-out crater obliquely tops the sphere, suggesting a small meteor that blasted and hurtled through space.

Shaping resistant material like copper is certainly a different physical creative effort than altering photography, but evident in both formats is Knowlton's high regard for organic simplicity.

Creating art out of found objects or pre-existing images and recycling them from one creative form to another is also what drives Simon Draper's "Meditation, Dedication and Prayer," in the second space of the Van Brunt Gallery. Draper's 52 wood assemblages are inspired by such tragedies as the 2004 tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the recent death of his father.

The 8-inch wood squares are colorful and abstract, each one created in successive weeks for a year, thus a total of 52 pieces. Working from found wood that is rotted and worn, roofing and extrapolated parts of older artwork, Draper flirts with a plethora of styles, from cubism to geometric abstraction to impressionism, all hung in a sequential menagerie on three walls. Luan veneer, various interior paneled woods, are layered and attached with tiny brads and glue. Wood knots, holes - intentional or natural - ridges and splits are compositionally incorporated. Some are mounted on a base, floating them away from the wall, while others are flush and static.

Draper flexes his colorist muscle with a palette that pleases the eye, from muted tones to textured whites and layered primary colors splashed on grooved slats. Deeper tones enrich some of the etched-out striated markings on the wood. There is a sense of urgency in these pieces, reflected by the quantity and the small size of the wood canvas, neither of which detracts from their dynamic intensity.

The work of Grace Knowlton and Simon Draper is at the Van Brunt Gallery in Beacon until April 3. General gallery hours are from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. The gallery is located at 460 Main St. in Beacon. Phone 845.838.2995, or visit [www.vanbruntgallery.com](http://www.vanbruntgallery.com) for more information. e



It's the silent beauty in Grace Knowlton's work that rests the eye in contemplation. Her hand-altered digital prints of post and lintel close-ups, are the small, almost insignificant nooks and crannies that we perfunctorily dismiss, the junctures that hold the world together. Knowlton is currently exhibiting her new work with artist Simon Draper at the Van Brunt Gallery in Beacon.

Nationally known and widely exhibited for more than 30 years, Knowlton's treated photos are a departure from her sculpture and popular three-dimensional spheres, 10 of which are part of the Storm King Art Center's permanent collection.

Knowlton grabbed accessible, universal images with a small digital camera and highlighted their simple beauty with paint or charcoaled lines. Some pieces are labeled "cruciform" and conjoin split rail fences, 4-by-4-inch posts or metal pipes.

In the large piece "Horse Fence," weatherworn horizontal fence beams joined at a vertical post are edged out from the hand-painted black background. Almost imperceptible shifts of black brush strokes echo the play of line and shape and highlight the deeply textured and delicate angle of the wood, emerging weightless from the dark backdrop.

In "Married Couple," Knowlton's satirical side emerges. A round lead pipe is linked to a square lead post by a heavy, thick metal gasket. Both vertical forms are inextricably linked, naturally

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Simon Draper's pieces from "Meditation, Dedication and Prayer" (top left and the two images on the bottom right) are all 8-by-8-inch painted wood assemblages. The middle three images on this page are archival inkjet prints on somerset paper by Grace Knowlton: from left to right, they are "Diptych 53," 22 by 33 inches; "Bound Fence," 46 by 35 inches; and "Fence w. Charcoal 55," 20 by 16 inches.