

Quick take: “Axis Mundi” sprawls across Curtis Park

By **Ray Mark Rinaldi** - October 4, 2017

Regan Rosburg's "Omega."

“Axis Mundi,” various locations

Artist Regan Rosburg deserves echoing cheers for curating the sprawling “Axis Mundi.” She asked artists to make work around issues of ecopsychology — “environmental melancholia, collective social mania, and biophilia,” as she puts it. But you could also think of it as a collection of responses to a world where the environment, of which we are part, is going downhill fast and panic time is approaching.

The results occupy three large and historic buildings in the city’s core, and each is worth seeing simply because of its architecture alone. Twenty-one artists from the U.S. and Canada have works on display.

The most potent is Rosburg’s own piece, “Omega,” at the Olympic Building (2565 Curtis St.) where she has installed on the floor more than 3 tons of tiny plastic pellets representing the massive amount of waste created by the discard of “disposable” water bottles.

Ron Pollard’s "Extruded Monsters."

Visitors are required to take off their shoes to enter the circular-ish field, about 30 feet in diameter, to witness their bad habits and also to feel them, as tiny plastic bits seep between the toes and make walking a challenge. The assemblage is mysterious, pitch-black and visceral, and drives the point home in an artful way. We rarely see over-the-top works like this in Denver; “Omega” is a thoughtful work and also a moment for the city.

A short walk away, in the yard of the Land Library (2612 Champa St.) are two installations. For “Dirt Soup,” artist Viviane Le Courtois collected thousands of plastic shopping bags, fashioned them into strips and crocheted them into a canopy (under which she served vegetable soup in her own hand-made ceramic bowls on the exhibit’s opening night). The canopy is a shelter for conversation and the topics are waste, recycling and the role each of

us might play in the world's ruin and redemption. This mega-effort took months to construct and involved the community, which collected bags and donated vegetables for the soup.

In the same field is a living installation by Eileen Roscina Richardson, another long-viewed, labor-intensive piece that comes together as a spiraling, walk-through labyrinth of sunflowers. The land work offers a meditative experience around the energy and fragility of nature. She planted the flowers four months ago and most of them are actually dead now, making the piece a little eerie and, in a way, more beautiful.

The exhibit at Platteforum.

The third part of the exhibit is a group show at Platte Forum Gallery (2400 Curtis St.). It's an anxious affair that talks about the interweaving of politics, science, art and anxiety. There's too many interesting pieces to list here, but do pay attention to Ron Pollard's "Extruded Monsters," a series of manipulated photo portraits of political figures, like Kellyanne Conway and Vladimir Putin; Tarah Rhoda's dripping flask connecting chlorophyll to hemoglobin; and Darya Warner's glowing orbs of living, bioluminescent algae.

Axis Mundi continues through Oct. 7. Info at axismundiartistsrespond.wordpress.com. [axis mundi](#)