

Elevated view: deer stands as art



Her son put a tree/deer stand up for her, Jody Isaacson said, which she uses meditatively, and for inspiration.
LILLIAN BROWNE/THE REPORTER

Posted Wednesday, November 15, 2023 12:00 am

By Lillian Browne

SIDNEY CENTER - In her thought-provoking, meditative art, Jody Isaacson of Sidney Center exhibits her artist vision through a deep connection with nature. As part of a recent solo show, “Shhh,” at KIPNZ Art Gallery in Walton, Isaacson showcased deer stands, something near and dear to her - and big game, deer and bear, hunters, too.

Tree stands - commonly referred to as “deer stands,” are open or closed platforms, secured to trees to elevate the hunter and give them a better vantage point. Isaacson is on a continual hunt for a better vantage point, too; and uses the stand her son Turner put up for her in a similar, yet different, way than big game hunters use them.

Like hunters, she seeks clarity and a different perspective. She gets those things from atop her platform in an aged Douglas fir which stands sentinel, devoid of its greenery, an outlier in a mature grove on her forested property.

“When I climb up here, I think ‘seek beauty, be still,” Isaacson said.

Something hunters also strive for.

Quietness and stillness are required while hunting. The same applies to Isaacson’s deer stand meditations, which in turn fuel her art.



Jody Isaacson next to 'Deer Stand 1' exhibited as part of her solo show at KIPNZ Art Gallery in Walton, earlier this month.

She spends a lot of time in the woods and has been photographing deer stands as part of a series of 15 she is working on. Though there are new high-tech models available, many of the stands she sees are unused with frayed and ragged tarps. She loves the spooky views.

“They’re creepy and gothic,” she said.

In addition to ceramics, photographs, wood sculpture and wax work - Isaacson is a printmaker, and works with long scrolls. It was from that skill set that she prints the images of the deer stands and reassembles them into true-to-size one dimensional art pieces.

She had never seen a deer stand before moving to Delaware County from Seattle, she said.

Her work is infused with the materials and textures of nature and quietly insists on the hand of humans. Through her work, she continually poses the question, “How does a human - with all of their suffering, humor, weakness - integrate with the natural world without overcoming it, or being overcome?”



She is inspired to create ceramics, sculpture, and other expressions of art by the nature around her, Jody Isaacson said.

Through patterning and repetition, she seeks to “trace the marks of the lives among us - ones who have come before and the energies we inherit in the trails they’ve left.”

While sitting in her deer stand, she contemplates what she might be resisting and getting a different perspective. It’s an invitation to open herself up to whatever happens next, without resistance. Her deer stand has helped her cope with a huge loss - that of her son and other losses.

“My work has been about loss for many, many years,” she said.

Hunting is about life and death, she said.

“The death, life, death cycle - however you want to view it,” Isaacson said.

Her art, she said, is honest and the art project has reminded her that there is joy in death because there is something that comes after.

Isaacson encourages viewers to perceive the stands as more than hunting equipment; she invites them to explore the dual nature of our relationship with the wilderness.

For more about Isaacson and her art visit jodyisaacson.com



Nature informs her art, Jody Isaacson said, at her home in Sidney Center.