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ATLANTA ART EXHIBITS

Shrinking Lake Lanier sparks artistry

Mintz's work reveals lake's hidden past

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Donna Mintz's poetic exhibition at the Sandler Hudson Gallery downtown may be the only positive consequence of the drought.

The secrets of Lake Lanier have long fascinated the artist. In previous art works, she ruminated about the people who inhabited the lands that were submerged in the man-made lake's formation.

This show was inspired by what she discovered in the parched lake bed when the waters receded over the past year.

The porcelain shard, the arrowhead, the arm of a porcelain doll — these talismans of the past are the subject and materials of her installations and the impetus for a promising new direction in her paintings.

Aiming, she writes in one installation, "to honor the beauty of lost things," Mintz isolates individual objects on tiny mounds of sand on a series of shelves. Our attention thus focused, each little bit takes on importance, an evocative clue to lives we can only imagine.

For "Lighting the Sun," the Atlanta artist strings some 5,000 shards of glass on strings of mono filament suspended from the ceiling. These floating bits of color and shape are Christmas in July, an airy, festive monument to reclamation and transformation.

The paintings, though, are the highlight of the show. Mintz builds their surfaces with as many as 20 applications of paint, in a muted palette of umber, charcoal, varnish brown, grayed green.

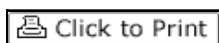
Embedded in these layers are little squares of paper, corners curling like old wallpaper, arranged in an irregular grid. Bits of mica and glass glint like old artifacts hidden in the sand.

Metaphors for her archaeological mission, for the layering of sediment that reveals and conceals, this series is fresher and more vital than the landscapes that came before. Handsome and sensuous incarnations of the past, the paintings augur well for the future.

REVIEW**Donna Mintz: "Lighting the Sun"**

Through July 12. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays; noon-5 p.m. Saturdays. Artist talk: 4 p.m., July 12. Prices: \$3,500-\$24,000. Sandler Hudson Gallery. 1009-A Marietta St., Atlanta. 404-817-3300; www.sandler-hudson.com.

Bottom line: Lovely.

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