For Immediate Release

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Celeste Roberge: Ocean Floors

Flagler College and the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum will host an exhibition of new sculpture and works on paper by Celeste Roberge. The exhibition entitled Ocean Floors opens to the public on Friday, March 7, from 5 to 9pm and will continue through April 19, 2014. Related events include a film screening of “A Man Named Pearl” on Wednesday, March 26 at 7pm, and an artist talk on Thursday, April 10, at 7pm. Both events will take place at the Gamache-Koger Theater in Ringhaver Student Center, 50 Sevilla Street.

As a sculptor, Celeste Roberge has always had a keen interest in the convergence of art and science. In recent years, this fascination has drifted towards the forms of the sea, specifically with Agarum cribrosum, commonly known as “sea lace.” As Jessica Skwire Routhier writes in her recent essay, sea lace “grows deep in the North Atlantic’s subtidal zone, which means that it sees the light of day only during extreme tidal events or when churned up by a storm.” It was after such a storm during a trip to Nova Scotia in 2008 that Roberge noticed a proliferation of this material on the beach. Thus began Roberge’s ongoing investigation into the properties of this natural material.

Roberge began experimenting with cyanotype early on, and a new series of these, “Homage to Anna Atkins,” will be included in the exhibition. Her interests further coalesced in her series of vessels. She writes:

Though the sea lace is intriguing and beautiful in form and material, at first I could not think what I would do to transform it into a sculpture. After observing gatherers of seaweed along the shores of Baie Ste. Marie in their flat-bottomed boats laden with rockweed, I thought why not a boat, a seaweed boat, better yet, a seaweed boat that cannot float because it is riddled with holes, a boat that resembles a seaweed, a seaweed that resembles a boat. So now I am making seaweed boats in wax, in bronze, and in the seaweed itself.

Earlier works were cast in seaweed, whose plasticity and ultimate ephemerality as their reimagined shapes are emphasized by their juxtaposition against the perforated metal sheet on which they are installed, in the work Marine. In Flotilla I, smaller cast bronze and iron boats rest delicately on perforated metal pieces further shaped to mimic sea lace. During a recent Kohler Arts/Industry residency at the company’s foundry in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Roberge was able to realize her plans to cast larger scale boats in iron and bronze.

The works in Roberge’s oeuvre are driven as much by curiosity and research as by her faithfulness to materiality and form. “As an accumulation,” they touch upon on the notions of fragility, temporality, and maritime industry, and “our human impulse to gather, record, and try to salvage things that might someday disappear.” (Skwire Routhier)

Celeste Roberge was born in Biddeford, Maine, and received her art education at the Maine College of Art, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She has held resident fellowships at Baie Ste. Marie, Nova Scotia; Reykjavik,
Iceland; and Kohler, Wisconsin, through the Arts/Industry program of the Kohler Arts Center. Her work is represented in the collections of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas, the Portland Museum of Art and the Farnsworth Art Museum in Maine, the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Harn Museum in Florida, and the Runnymede Sculpture Farm in California, among others. She lives in Gainesville, Florida, where she is a Professor of Sculpture at the School of Art and Art History, University of Florida. She maintains a summer studio in South Portland, Maine.

For further information on the exhibition and related programs, please visit the website at www.flagler.edu/crispellert, or contact Julie Dickover at 904-826-8530 or crispellert@flagler.edu. Please note museum hours are Monday through Friday, 10 am to 4pm, and Saturday, 12 to 4pm.

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