

Photographing Woodlawn

Photographing Woodlawn, which ran in the Lehman College Art Gallery during the Fall 2010 semester, featured the work of twenty-six artists whose photographs explore the sylvan landscapes and Gilded Age mausoleums of one of America's most important cemeteries. Located on 400 acres in the northern Bronx, Woodlawn incorporates the work of some of the country's most accomplished architects, landscape designers, and artists. In this exhibition, the photographers recorded the grounds and monuments using a range of techniques and styles, offering panoramic views, documentary images in high definition, sepia-toned landscapes, and performance-based photography. Along with the exhibit, a series of Gallery Talks at Lehman and walking tours at Woodlawn brought new attention to this historic and serene stretch of the borough's landscape.

Be Still My Love

by Christopher Smith

Be Still My Love illustrates the transient nature of life. The stone monument represents death, yet the stone itself is eternal. It is juxtaposed against the greenery of nature, which represents life, but will one day wither and die.

'I found that a cemetery is a place about life rather than death.'



For One Ordinary Headstone

by Ayakoh Furukawa

I took this picture with a small ordinary digital camera, and I did not use [a] complicated process. I want to show the image/headstone as it is. My work is rather a documentation of people and attempts to capture spiritual presence there. Arthur's headstone is one of them that I feel something spiritual. Photographing the Woodlawn Cemetery made me contemplate life. I see that impersonal headstones are like people. Family members, couples, parents, and newborn babies with no names are united by death once again and stay close in this heavenly garden now. Memories of loving and being loved are engraved on tombstones. Many tombstones and headstones manifest how the deceased lived. I found that a cemetery is a place about life rather than death.

My selected work is the headstone of Arthur who lived until 1894 and is part of a big tree now. The tree was small or did not exist there when he was buried, but it will soon cover Arthur's headstone and take over his remains underneath. Other forms of life, such as trees and birds, are cheerfully alive in the cemetery. My work shows that humans are a part of the greater lifecycle on earth. Indeed the cemetery is full of life both visible and invisible.



Transcendental

by Ira Merritt (M.S.Ed., '77)

Transcendental represents for me the experience beyond the physical in which the souls and possibly the actual bodies of the buried are nourishing the tree that envelops them. We see the limbs of the tree intertwined with the gravestones like arteries bringing the souls of the buried into the branches and leaves.

The tree sprouts in all directions; very much alive. I chose to make this a black-and-white image because ... it felt more spiritual, less corporal, and I wanted to enhance the similarity between the gravestones and the tree making ... as if it was one unit. It was important to me when photographing this image that the gravestones were large enough

and not totally overpowered by the tree, and it was important to see the limbs of the tree (sinews) in detail, and as a result the top of the tree was sacrificed in the shot. The shadow created by the tree separates the gravestones that are part of this family from the rest of the cemetery, which is in light. The leaves on the edges are blowing in the wind, exuding oxygen that completes the cycle of life.

The Call, 2010

by Ray Santiago

