

Carolyn Shepherd's Burnt Wood Installation:  
A Review by Anton Dolders November 2010

As I entered the inner hall of St. Luke's Church where Carolyn Shepherd's Burnt Wood Installation stood, I witnessed a monument within a monument. Although standing five feet tall at its highest point, it was easy to imagine the connected burnt wood spires from which the installation is comprised, soaring as phenomenally high as any mountain peak or indeed towering church steeple and the ancient stone of St. Luke's provided the perfect backdrop for Carolyn's structurally inventive altar.

Thematically emaciated within its dark yet enticing beams are elements of creation and destruction. Is it an apocalyptic vision or a representation of openness and warmth - visitors opinions varied. It was clearly the result of effectual change by elemental forces, mainly fire, giving the work its enhanced form and strong meaning; the upright wood and horizontal connections resonate with a sense of primordial and natural energy. The installation has an opening enabling ones access to its interior and I was awe inspired as I walked within it. I felt as though I was part of something mythically ecclesiastical; a solid pagan apparition.

Vertical and horizontal components are exquisitely positioned to create haphazard balance. The structure has literal "ups and downs" in its undulating demeanour formed from jagged piercing spears. An extremely sophisticated array of visual and philosophical contrasts exist within this very natural and in many ways, simple piece of work: hard edges: softness; foreboding: welcoming; aggression: meditation; end to existence: new life, all appearing to balance out and yet tug at one another.

It is possible to view this installation successfully from a number of points along its meandering perimeter as Carolyn has cleverly polygonised the wooden forms. Through each of its many sides can be seen spaces and background forms which are always partially obscured by crossbeams and additional textured wooden attachments placed at various heights to complete the compositional flow. Although constructed from spear like components, this installation does flow. In fact, it is aesthetically perfect, with harmonized energy akin to that of a wooden coven: the plots of earth bearing each of its support beams are shrouded in substance.