The Art of Climate Change

By **John Thomason** - September 13, 2019

Lisa Reindorf's "Surging Seas"

Aphoristically, rising tides may lift all boats. Literally, however, rising tides are slowly but methodically disrupting our ecosystem to the point of irreversible peril.

Climate change, a distant concern for previous generations, has been a four-alarm fire for more recent cohorts. It's only natural that artists, especially in coastally threatened Florida, would find the subject a more than worthy creative concern. Arts Warehouse's sobering new exhibition "Tidal" showcases three South Florida artists—and one from Boston—who address anthropogenic climate disruption through various mediums, in an attempt to probe the overarching question, "How can we, as participants in and bystanders of climate change, alter our own detrimental behaviors before nature holds us accountable for them?

The most straightforward, and grimmest, answer arrives from Gustavo Oviedo: We need to stop littering our oceans to death. The artist spent 10 years exploring, and salvaging, our coastal waters from Miami to the Dry Tortugas, turning his boat into his makeshift studio. "Tidal" includes a potent collage of his underwater photography—an aquamarine montage of fish, shipwrecks, religious totems, monuments, ladders, wheels, doors and other detritus found on the ocean floor.

Gustavo Oviedo's "Bottles"

But it's what Oviedo found floating in the water that is most impactful: His installation "Bottles," arranged on five pillars, includes dozens of bottles of all shapes and sizes, most of them caked in ocean sediment. It's a depressingly stark reminder of man's indifference to the environment that sustains him. Oviedo's nearby sculpture, "Low Tide Shopping," also points to society's intrusive damage to the sea. It's a tangle of buoys, long stripped of their original utility, hanging from the ceiling as an obscene, hulking mixed-media sculpture of foam and rope.

Another installation in "Tidal," Giannina Dwin's "Marea," ponders the effect of saltwater infringing on our freshwater supply. The artist has previously deployed salt to depict her vision of the cosmos, finding wondrous expansion in the

common element. But in "Marea," with its ripples of dried salt on the gallery floor, I thought mostly of recession: This is what a coastline without water looks like, in a blunt reminder of salt's invasive, global warming-enhanced encroachment.

Cheryl Maeder's "Submerge I"

Of the four artists in "Tidal," photographer Cheryl Maeder comes the closest to an optimistic, or at least a neutral, vision. Her "Submerge" series is a meditation on homo sapiens' relationship to water, and as the placard about her work explains, we have plenty in common: The human body is 70 percent water, and water represents 70 percent of the planet. This bond, under Maeder's lens, is literally a blurry one, with human forms plunged underwater, each photograph an unpredictable surface of rippling texture. At least, in the world of this series, we seem to be on the same page with Gaia.

Lisa Reindorf's "Dissolving City"

This is not the case in oil painter Lisa Reindorf's furious abstracts. Favoring a drippy impasto style, "Fire and Water" features layers of water, in mixed blues, underneath a sky of dangerous reds. It's like the first panel in some disaster-story comic book, as the paintings become more ominous as you move through her work: In "Surging Seas," the roiling water seems to be invading a primitive structure. This invasion becomes clearer still in the pointedly titled "Dissolving City" and "Submerged," a word that takes on a much darker hue than Maeader's usage.

The implication is that, if we haven't already passed the point of no return, it's high time we took drastic measures to combat climate change. Because after all, water will always be around—even if we won't.

"Tidal" runs through Oct. 10 at Arts Warehouse, 313 N.E. Third St., Delray Beach. Admission is free. Call 561/330-9614 or visit artswarehouse.org.