



CAROLINE RAMERSDORFER

Arts



NEW AND recent work by Caroline Ramersdorfer is on exhibit through Sept. 12 at the John Davis Gallery in Hudson.

Cold beauty

Sculptor takes her inspiration from Adirondack river's winter splendor

BY TIM KANE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES UNION

In the heart of the Adirondacks lies Auger Falls, a sharp, boulder-laced plunge down the Sacandoga River. Every winter, mist from swirling water freezes into intricate ice formations on rocky shelves shaped by wind and sudden variations in temperature.

For sculptor Caroline Ramersdorfer, the spindly rods of ice — some opaque, others more translucent — have transformed her normally rigid white marble designs into more tubular pieces that break through the artist's frames.

Taking blocks of marble, the Austrian carves out "inner spaces" with Euclidian lines. Until she encountered the falls, they were inside square or rectangles that refracted light off the searing surfaces from within.

Then "Indicators" was made, the centerpiece of her first solo exhibition since moving to the Adirondacks, "Concept alters Reality." At the John Davis Gallery, the 2009 piece sits in contrast to most of the other 12 works included in the mini-survey. Like a hand, "fingers" jut outward commanding us to stop.

Gone are the volumes of marble; what's left is a distilled abstraction bursting forth with energy, rather than the cool, calculating forms she has constructed on five continents. Other newer examples, like "Inner View-Open 1" and "Open Inner View" shatter their frames as chards of marble — like broken glass or melting ice — stick out like spikes.

Parts of boundaries formed by right angles still exist in the 2008 renditions, but they are cracked, countering the symmetry and precision of "Trilogy," done the same year, which has three fully formed rectangle slabs placed evenly on metal foundations.

The instability of the ice formations at Auger Falls has led Ramersdorfer to rethink things. Subtle changes in wind and temperature dissolve existing ones, while

creating new versions instantly. This changing environment has led her to see the perfection in imperfection; their impermanence has melted away her conformity.

With nature more of a guide, the new works provide a refreshing fluidness and unpredictability that is more evocative than the older works that precisely fit together like the specifications of a building, or a math equation.

Other works show a different side of Ramersdorfer and her experiences interacting with nature. The flow of twisting water is replicated in "Wave Echo" (2007), an early alteration to her customary style. It's playful and amusing, not brooding and forceful.

One section of the exhibit is devoted to maquettes of large-scale works, her signature, offering an intimate look at her process using diamond blades to cut the rock after placing patterns on the surface. Seeking the hardest part of marble — she gets it from a variety of sources, including Vermont — Ramersdorfer shaves slices, indentions and grooves into muscular public art.

Each of the small studies in the exhibit are presented with wall text and photographs describing and illustrating their bigger counterparts in China and Abu Dhabi. Some of the sculptures in the exhibit are medium-scale models completed as she expands the scale, while others, like "Indicators," are experimental.

Weighing nearly a half ton and rising 17 feet, the commissioned pieces are located in prominent roadways and city squares in their respective countries. For years, Ramersdorfer, 49, has led a nomadic life of participating in sculpture residencies all over the globe. She studied in Paris and Florence, outside of the famous marble quarries used by Renaissance artists, and first developed her style in Vienna.

After visiting the Adirondacks for several years, she has taken up residence in an old lumber mill — in the town of Wells in Hamilton County — converted into a studio. "Concept alters Reality" is a hearty introduction to a new artist living in upstate New York. It presents one in the midst of change due to her new surroundings, while not neglecting how she arrived at the new phase without bogging us down with too much history.

► Tim Kane is a freelance writer from Albany and a frequent contributor to the Times Union.

At a glance

"CONCEPT ALTERS REALITY"

- **Where:** John Davis Gallery, 362½ Warren St., Hudson
- **Hours:** Thursday-Monday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., through Sept. 12
- **Info:** 828 5907, johndavisgallery.com