



LAUMEIER SCULPTURE PARK

2015 KRANZBERG EXHIBITION SERIES

ZLATKO ČOSIĆ + ASHLEY MCQUEEN: HARMONY IN 3

OCTOBER 16, 2015—FEBRUARY 14, 2016



This series is generously supported by Nancy and Ken Kranzberg.
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INTRODUCTION

The dynamic collaboration between 2015 Kranzberg Series artists Ashley McQueen and Zlatko Čosić reflects the hybrid nature of Laumeier Sculpture Park. Both artists use the performative nature of their professions—dance and video—and cross-pollinate them with the unique spaces of our grand landscape. While the “high” art forms of dance and video live within their respective traditions, it is McQueen and Čosić’s focus on the honorable labor that goes into maintaining the public spaces of Laumeier that makes this project transformational.

McQueen and Čosić worked with St. Louis County Parks staff members Andrew Brown, Sharon Brown, John Corcoran, Pat Cotter, Gabe Cotton, Rich Edwards, Don Gerling, Josh Gerling, Tom Griffin, Yvette Luedde, Dave Miller, Bob Moritz, Rich Neal, Dan Sachsenheimer, Tom Schweiss, Bud Spindler, Jason White and AJ Brown, along with Laumeier’s Curator of Exhibitions Dana Turkovic and former Chief Preparator Nick Lang, to celebrate the beautiful dance of lawn equipment—mowers, edges, clippers and cranes—that shape our manicured landscape. St. Louis County Parks staff diligently tame and shape our grounds in the way that humans have managed their landscape for thousands of years, using ingenuity and invention to produce food and flowers that sustain life.

McQueen and Čosić’s work asks: What does this weekly dance of Laumeier’s lawn mowers mean in making public space?

Laumeier’s landscape is part of the “filling in” of the westward suburban sprawl of America’s cities. Interstate highways facilitated the abandonment of city cores in the 1950s and 1960s for the newer spaces of suburbia. Today, we are faced with the social and cultural isolation of these very same suburbs. Most Americans maintain their lawns as moats to protect them from their neighbors. Housing is no longer as affordable as promised and transportation to the far suburbs is restricted to those with cars, leaving an ever-widening gap between city and suburb. With the recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, one of Laumeier’s suburban neighbors in north St. Louis County, we can now ask if the dream of suburbia is a reality.

Like all government-sponsored parks systems throughout the country, St. Louis County Parks has grown to provide open social spaces that are the suburban equivalent of the Greek “agora” (social gathering place), where class, ethnic and political divisions dissolve. McQueen and Čosić’s collaboration gives us a glimpse into the importance of green spaces in providing a diversity of dialogue and experience for our changing suburban audiences.

I want to thank our donors Nancy and Ken Kranzberg for their belief and investment in artistic experimentation in the public realm, and our colleagues at St. Louis County Parks for their willingness to look at their own work in the broad context of contemporary art.

Marilu Knode, Executive Director & Chief Curator
Aronson Endowed Professor of Modern and Contemporary
Art and Art History, University of Missouri-St. Louis

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

PUBLIC OPENING
Adam Aronson Fine Art Center
Thursday, October 15, 5:00–8:00 p.m.

COFFEE + CONVERSATION
Discussion with artist Zlatko Čosić and Jesse Vogler,
Landscape Architect and Visiting Assistant Professor,
Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art at Washington
University in St. Louis

Saturday, October 17, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Adam Aronson Fine Art Center

[this side]
Zlatko Čosić
still from *Harmony in 3*, 2015
color film
Courtesy the artist, St. Louis

[other side]
Zlatko Čosić
still from *Harmony in 3*, 2015
color film
Courtesy the artist, St. Louis

HARMONY IN 3

“When men are rightly occupied, their amusement grows out of their work, as the colour petals out of a fruitful flower.”
—John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*¹

Art is a luxury product. Any higher cultural or spiritual claim for art is in perpetual conflict with art’s own grubby status as an expensive, rare commodity. Likewise, when there is no true business but the business of making money, we are obliged to dress up in false emotions as a salesman. Art always risks falling into this trap. Getting and spending, we lay waste to our powers.² For the beauty that we destroy in nature, we substitute in literature and mimic in art; the grief we could share as humans becomes the detached guilty amusement of the nightly news and the angst of social media. If, as Ruskin states, “the naturalism of the Gothic workman was manifested in the fondness for vegetation, the living foliage became an intense affection,” no substitute for nature is necessary. The cathedral of nature and the human-made cathedral playfully fuse in the uncouth hands of 12th century stonemasons who built the dreaming spires of Reims, Cologne and Salisbury. Architectural features like gargoyles, buttresses and vaults correspond to wildlife, branches, trunks and vines as organically intertwined forms. Here in Laumeier’s parkland, an entire ecosystem is maintained with as much care as any human-made cathedral. The work risks going unnoticed and is often taken for granted, but there is an echo of Ruskin’s concept that there is “no wealth but life,” and separating out the work from the beauty in that abundance is impossible.

In 1968, Mrs. Matilda Laumeier bequeathed the first 72 acres of the future Laumeier Sculpture Park, together with a large estate house of cut stone built in 1917, to the people of St. Louis County in memory of her husband, Henry H. Laumeier. In Matilda and Henry’s time, this area was also attractive to beer barons such as the Busch, Lemp and Griesedieck families. What is now Sunset Hills was appealing to wealthy business owners who were essentially looking to recreate their native Rhine River Valley—a scene of hills and woodlands. A landscape architect such as Lancelot “Capability” Brown pushed the idea of sculpting a landscape to cover most of the English countryside in the 18th century, designing massive plots of land and more than 170 parks, manipulating every feature within monumental gardens. Edgar Allan Poe also wrote about the human ability to create fantasy with nature in his book, *The Domain of Arnheim*. In this tale, Poe claims that humans can improve upon nature by both being aware and organizing a composition of its individual components into a fantasy landscape: With boundless wealth and ample landscape design skill, Ellison essentially sought to achieve—using rocks and vines, water and trees—what landscape painters had achieved using paints on a canvas; namely, a fantasy landscape. Indeed, the land was Ellison’s canvas—and his work of art was the fantasy landscape called *The Domain of Arnheim*.³

For the 2015 Kranzberg Exhibition Series, video artist Zlatko Čosić and dancer and choreographer Ashley McQueen emphasize the labor that goes into the manicured landscape at Laumeier Sculpture Park. Through a series of dance performances in 2014 culminating in the short film *Harmony in 3*, Čosić and McQueen explore the Park’s unique relationship with St. Louis County Parks, highlighting the joy and grit that goes into the care and maintenance of our 105-acre landscape. Laumeier’s first “dance on camera” project, the performances of the dancers and the workers in the film mark our continued interest in representing a range of art forms in the Park that encompass our mission to expand the boundaries of art and to embrace the purpose of our landscape.

Dance is often seen as an art form constrained to the stage; however, through this unique collaboration, the Park has provided a new stage for dance. Based on the principle of movement, dance-like cinema began as an art form centered on the human body, physical performance and communication through action and image. The film combines techniques of documentation and abstraction, pitting the real versus the performer and presenting a narrative that brings to the foreground that which is often overlooked. *Harmony in 3* is a celebratory work, organized as a projected triptych that ebbs and flows, shifting among imagery of the dancer, the worker and the “nature” that is Laumeier Sculpture Park. With combing and interlocking views of the micro and macro worlds of the Park, art and nature are literally linked through the language of movement and the story behind (and meaning of) this acreage.

Within their collaboration, Čosić and McQueen demonstrate the pervasive affinities between these two mediums through the play on the sounds of the environment, the dancer as movable kinetic sculpture and the worker as architect and builder.

Dana Turkovic, Curator of Exhibitions

1. Ruskin, John, *Unto This Last and Other Writings* (Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 9.
2. Wordsworth, William, “The World Is Too Much With Us”, published on www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174833, accessed March 21, 2015.
3. Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Domain of Arnheim* (Book Surge Classics, 2009), p. 17.