

# sculpture

## BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

### Linda Stein

#### Nathan D. Rosen Gallery

Linda Stein is an artist and pacifist with a knight-errant's passion for protecting the world. "The Power to Protect: Sculpture of Linda Stein" showed the latest evolutionary turn in her work, which encompasses calligraphy, drawing, painting, and sculpture in metal, stone, wood,

Stein, installation view of "Power to Protect," with "Ceremonial Scepters," "Blades," and "Knights."



fabric, leather, and all imaginable found objects.

"Power to Protect" confronted viewers with life-sized, knight-like torsos and shields with feminine curves. While there is a repeated, recognizable design to the "Knight" series, no two works are alike. The closer the viewer gets to a work, the more fascinating and intricate it becomes. Stein shapes and blends disparate metals smoothly and seamlessly. Her found objects reflect the detritus of society: fragmented engraving plates, wood and metal type, toys, antique gears, cogs and machine parts, bits of jewelry, and cosmetic what-nots.

The show was also a three-decade retrospective of Stein's work, displaying on one wall the "Ceremonial Scepters" of the 1980s, the "Blades" of bent and reworked machetes from the 1990s, and the "Knights" that she began to create after 9/11. Boca

Raton was a significant location for this retrospective: in 1977, pioneering gallery owner Marjorie Margolis gave Stein one of her earliest one-woman shows, and she debuted at the Boca Raton Museum of Art in 1991 with the group show "Totem," curated by Timothy Eaton.

Stein says that the cartoon character of Wonder Woman, who appeared before Stein's birth at the outset of World War II in 1941, initially inspired her "Knight" series. Wonder Woman pledged to save humanity from the forces of hatred, violence, and evil—all while looking buff and beautiful. In her post-9/11 period of research, Stein discovered the Japanese figure of Kannon, the Buddhist Bodhisattva and the goddess of mercy and compassion, who seemed to relate to Wonder Woman on a more spiritual level. The contemporary Japanese anime figure of Princess Mononoke, protector of the environment, completed a trinity of inspirational female figures, all sharing the mission of protecting and nurturing the creatures of the Earth.

The "Knight" series represents a culmination of the explorations behind Stein's rugged yet regal "Ceremonial Scepters," which were followed by the harnessed violence of recast plowshares in her extensive and wildly imaginative "Blades" series. It comes as no surprise that Stein is a longtime, dedicated feminist, but few other American artists have represented the feminine in such a powerful, tangible way.

In his crude but enormously successful movie *Borat*, actor-writer Sacha Baron Cohen encountered that power when he lured Stein and two of her like-minded friends into a "debate" on the superiority of men over women. Stein wasn't playing that game. After calmly, rationally

trying to refute Borat's absurd sexist remarks, she just as calmly got up and left, dignity intact, unlike many others involuntarily made to look like fools by Cohen's manipulations for cheap laughs. Now that's feminine power, and that's the feeling that infuses the art of Linda Stein.

—Skip Sheffield

Above: Linda Stein, *Asian Armor* 560, 2006. Wood, 49 x 19 x 7 in.