

Rebecca Lyon

Our Lady of Amchitka

2007

Driftwood, yellow and red cedar, pumice, horse hair, metal, sea shell, glass, pigment and paint

Anchorage Museum Collection,
Rasmuson Foundation Art Acquisition Initiative Fund

The half woman, half fish figure represents the spirit of the island of Amchitka and the natural world. Her crucifixion on a rusty iron cross represents the crimes we, as a nation, have committed against her, in our arrogance, with the underground nuclear bomb testing that took place during 1965, 1967 and culminating with the five megaton Cannikin blast in 1971.

These blasts had an untold devastating effect on the wildlife and environment of this island in the Alaskan Aleutian Chain and the long-term effect of this testing is still unknown. I feel strongly that the island's story should be told again, for many of us have forgotten or know nothing about these events.

We now find ourselves at a turning point, globally, trying to find a way out of our dependency on fossil fuels. It is a time, once more, when grand schemes will be heralded as the answer to our pains. Many of these solutions may prove to be lethal much like the programs of the past, programs like "Atoms for Peace" and "Project Plowshare" that spawned the Cannikin blast.

We must be mindful that science and popular opinion have always been manipulated by politics and greed and it is time to reflect earnestly upon the gravity of our past deeds committed under these influences. Nature deserves our reverence not arrogance, for some part of her will always be unknowable.

Dedicated to my uncle (Sonny) Elmer S. Brown and all the men and women who worked at the Amchitka bombsites, many of who have lost their lives due to radioactive exposure on the island.

—Rebecca Lyon

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