

Alexander Castro review of **The Space Between**  
University of Rhode Island Main Art Gallery     March 2017

Sculptor Lin Lisberger chisels, drawshaves and sometimes chainsaws her way to emotive woodcarvings. In **The Space Between**, she presents solemn abstractions, twisting ladders and a smorgasbord of sandwiches. Though varied in temperament and shape, these wooden sculptures are unified by their investigations of betweenness. What does it mean to be squished up against another? To transition from one state to the next? To teeter precariously on the rim of transformation?

The contrast among these bodies of work is almost amusing, with gluttonously large breakfast sandwiches, hot dogs and lobster rolls occupying the same space as contemplations and meditations — such as the titular *Space Between* (2016), in which split lilac cautiously tangoes, the two dancers barely touching. Lisberger is adept at embodying her conceptual concerns through form. That her sculptural vocabulary is expansive enough to include both deli meats and nonrepresentational logs evinces her skills in this regard.

Taken collectively, this exhibit visualizes space and emotion, and the relationship thereof. These sculptures highlight connection and disconnection, innerness and interaction. The medium of wood —organic, earthy, totemic even—heightens the affective textures of the work. In *Bridge to a New Me: Tangled* (2010), a mass of knots halts an attempt at union. The deliciously smooth poplar and sharp angles of *Grilled Cheese* (2016) border on a Platonic form, perhaps suggesting harmony and matrimony —or maybe a communion more airtight, suffocating. Twirl around *Split/Between* (2016), and watch two muscular, sinuous fins of crabapple swivel in seeming confrontation. Their graphite-powdered exteriors glimmer; cracks sprint through their shadowed armor.

There is material poetry in wood, and Lisberger knows how to conjure it. One of her most lyrical offerings is *Burn/Fissure* (2016), in which a tall log of maple offers a peek at its insides, an interior too dim to draw any conclusions. Does this darkness betray a wound, an invitation, a portal? We can't be sure, but we might draw clues from its physique and posture. Notice its flesh, calloused and rough. Its head drooping slightly, as if exhausted. That fissure running through its corpus, as much a site of injury as it could be healing. And yet there is strength here, too: the log's proud tallness. Its head bowed not in weakness but waiting.

The space between guarantees no specific results; liminality makes no promises. To be between is to be unprotected, to exist outside certainties. In enduring metamorphosis, one acknowledges both their power and vulnerability. As a record of the earth's memory, wood itself speaks to these crucial rituals of change. With a gouge, a blade, the roaring teeth of a chainsaw: a hunk of lumber is attacked and divulges these facts. To be between is uncomfortable, yes. But without transition, life is stillness, inertia. In liminality, as in Lisberger's sculptures, we find the movement and mutations integral to life.