



Art and about: If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water

by John Isaacs



Flotilla: A Floating Sculptural Installation in Oakdale Lake by Daniel Rothbart, September 2020, photo credit: DKR.

I remember as a small child, teaching myself to float in the water at Southerndown, the most beautiful beach on the coast of South Wales, basking below the vast North Atlantic sky. As a teenager, that was where “me and my friends” skinny-dipped under the midnight moon, and I first felt fully the sensuality of life.

Metro-rural artist Daniel Rothbart’s new installation “Flotilla” at Oakdale Lake is a flirtatious gesture that succeeds because it floats above the fray.

I’m far from sure what the five or six ambiguous metallic objects drifting ridiculously but serenely in the waters of the City swimming pond have to do with anything, or what they intend to represent (most of Rothbart’s work is famously arcane), but there they are, for a few weeks, ingeniously constructed and audaciously inserted into the most prosaic of landscapes for no particular purpose, as far as I can discern, other than to be poetic, so let them be so.

During these weird times, any sense of bemusement and wonder that we may be granted is nothing to belittle. And if Rothbart’s curious Pan-sized constructions wobbling in the autumn sunlight provide only a sense of serenity, that is enough.

This modest, but curiously lovely and lively artistic intervention into the drab, weary world in which we find ourselves is, if not an elixir, a pleasant dose of tonic. These days, anywhere and anytime you can put your feet up for a few minutes and ponder eternity, especially by yourself, is a good thing.