

Emilie Brzezinski

Chainsaw Progression

March 15th- April 29th, 2018



Emilie Brzezinski in front of *Lament*.

Jim Kempner Fine Art is pleased to announce *Chainsaw Progression*, the gallery's first exhibition with the artist Emilie Brzezinski. The works displayed will be a selection of Brzezinski's large-scale wood sculptures dating from 1988 to 2018. The exhibition will be on view from March 15th to April 29th, 2018.

Primarily a self-taught artist, Emilie Brzezinski first gained critical attention in the 1970s when she was sculpting with a variety of media, including resins, latex, and wood fiber. In the late 1980s she turned to wood, a medium that has dominated her practice ever since.

"The medium of wood, which I started using seriously in 1989, was not new to me. Only the tools were new - the axe and the chainsaw. The material is warm and appealing, live, resilient and full of memories: It has grain, knots, grown-over wounds, cracks, and surprises, such as insect invasions, hollows and rot spots. [...] I learned to respect nature, to let it live on in my forms, to have a dialogue with the wood" (Brzezinski: *Lure of the Forest*, Sculpture 1979-2013, p. 183).

Lament, a towering 15-foot, free-standing work, will reside in the gallery's outdoor sculpture garden. It is made up of three tree trunks, each gathered over time in different locations. After Brzezinski discovered the first bent piece, she had a vision of wood crying out for the suffering of the world. *Lament* came into being only after she haphazardly stumbled upon the third extraordinary element of this work, a tree trunk found in a lumber mill on top of a huge pile of wood waiting to be burnt. *Lament* was first exhibited in the garden of the Kreeger Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2014. A bronze casting of this work now stands at the museum entrance.

Brzezinski's extraordinary relationship with wood can be traced back to her childhood wanderings with her father along the Russian River in California: *"It was on these trips that we gathered remarkable shapes of wood, formed by their journey floating down the rivers to the sea, and then washing ashore during storms"* (p. 204).

The indelible marks of the life of each tree are what Brzezinski searches for and works with in the critical process of her sculpting. She allows the natural character of each piece of wood to guide her, as seen in her most recent work *Sticks Arch* (2018), an aggregation of branches from an oak tree. While carving into the larger tree trunk, Brzezinski was drawn to the fantastic curvatures of the tree branches, shaped by their struggle as they reached for the sun. Other works in the exhibition include *Sprites*, carved from a box elder, a very old and rather rare wood typically found along the edge of farmland, and *Totems*, one of Brzezinski's earliest wood pieces.

Emilie Brzezinski was born in 1932 in Geneva, Switzerland and raised in England and the United States, although her family has roots in former Czechoslovakia. Her great-uncle, Edvard Beneš, was twice President of Czechoslovakia (1935–1938 and 1945–1948). Brzezinski's husband, Zbigniew Brzezinski, served as the National Security Advisor to former President Jimmy Carter. Her daughter, Mika Brzezinski, is the co-host of MSNBC's Morning Joe, and her son Ian Brzezinski served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy under President George W. Bush. Her other son, Mark Brzezinski, served as an adviser to President Clinton and President Obama, and as US Ambassador to Sweden from 2011-2015.

Throughout decades as a political wife and mother, Emilie Brzezinski maintained her life as a dedicated artist. She has permanent installations in the US and abroad. *Prague Titans* stands upon the Vltava River in the Czech Republic, and *Broken Blocks* resides in the National Gallery in Prague. In the United States, her bronze sculpture *Arch in Flight* stands two blocks from the White House in front of the Federal Reserve building. Brzezinski sculptures also reside in Chicago at The Society for Arts as well as in New Jersey at Grounds for Sculpture park. She is the subject of a career-spanning monograph titled *Emilie Brzezinski: The Lure of the Forest - Sculpture 1979-2013* published by D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.