

# ArtBeat

By Renee Dahl

**Donald Lipski's *The Cauldron*,  
Jane Wilson  
The Parrish Art  
Museum, Southampton**

*The Cauldron*, a Scussian installation of immense proportion and purport by prominent Bridgehampton sculptor Donald Lipski, could not have made a more timely arrival on the burgeoning Hamptons art scene. Like the brouhaha sweltering around us on this first hot week, Lipski's rape of the root squeezes the essence from what are already-charred remains.

Two large trees burned to a near crisp in last summer's Westhampton blaze are hung horizontally, their roots bound end to end in a huge white plasticene mass of truly ominous girth. Intrusive hardware and plastic IV tubing produce a continuous dripping of condensation into the basin below. Lemons float in this giant cauldron, in an irreverent attempt at purification (or still-life in motion). Paneled with Renaissance-repro bas reliefs from the museum's own collection, the effect, combined with the pure white shroud (on what one can only speculate to be still living roots) has a sacramental and sacrilegious dichotomy that brings a smile to atheist and anglican alike.

There is a brilliant social narrative running through the tubing of Lipski's giant vegomatic: fraught with little glimpses into various echelons of probability. Each of the high-tech machines — donated by industry giants such as Van der Graaf Inc., Flowdata Inc., Oil Skimmers Inc., Alfa Laval Pumps Inc., Calfran (sounds a bit demonic?), International Inc., and Fluid Metering Inc. — whirring and hissing away, seems somewhat pathetic in relation to the glory of Mother Nature — even in her demise. The bright green fluid of transformation chortles about in vacuous bursts of painstaking irregularity — surviving each machinated incarnation, vivid and uncannily verdant as ever.

If there is a perfect color for magic, then Donald Lipski has captured it in his small vat of fluorescent, candy pink — the hard-won essence of being, eked in precious quantity from the elaborate constructions we build as our lives. A much larger container flanks the opposite wall, gurgling with a sickly, mustard-yellow excrement in all-too-plentiful a quantity. Still there is a small

the wall, a hermetically-sealed jar of carrots dangles in symbolic motivation. I wonder what happens when they turn the machines off?

Also at the Parrish are the atmospheric emanations in oil on canvas by renowned artist Jane Wilson. Thoughtfully curated by Klaus Kertész (who many will remember for the most recent and always controversial Whitney Biennial) "Jane Wilson Paintings: 1985 - 1995," reveals the artist's depth and ability to create a mood based in the vocabulary of landscape elements. Even when her colors extend to the fantastic, the overall effect is still quite believably realistic in its purity and spirit of a mood evoked by a rising storm or a clearing sky.

**"Daniel Maffia,  
Private Paintings: 1976 - 1996,"  
RVS Gallery, Southampton**

Best known for the extraordinarily-rendered portraits that grace the covers of the world's leading publications — most recently Colin Powell on the cover of *Time* — Daniel Maffia's seldom-seen private paintings are a unique chronology of the development of a master draftsman into a true artist. His most recent works, a series of eerie, mystical paintings are a powerful, insightful, and original view on the impending devastation faced by the current denizens of our planet. The ravages of time are a prevalent theme throughout his paintings, first on a more personal level, and then on a global one, as the billowing flames engulfing a doomsday clock on each canvas suggest.

In his large oil *Hollywood*, Maffia presents us with the quintessential celluloid goddess, helplessly clinging to her moments of glory, while time creeps mercilessly forward. *A Brief History of Painting* is anything but, there are layers and layers of magnificent trompe l'oeil effects, fraught with innuendo that ranges from sublime subtlety to quirky clichés, such as a giant needle piercing the entire canvas — "a stitch in time . . ." But as a critic, the most amusing message herein revolves around Maffia's skilled rendering of a gruesome Velasquez dwarf, sliding subterfuge into a huge tome, while a flaming typewriter, rendered in amazing detail, threatens to crash and burn it all. Never were there so many compelling artistic inducements to taking a

