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'The Drowned World: Waterworks'

P.S. 1 Museum
46-01 21st Street, Long Island City
Through June 25

"The Drowned World: Waterworks" is an inventive, offbeat show in which Tom Finkelparl, a curator at P.S. 1 Museum, offers a look at the relationship between technology and sculpture that only he seems able to provide. It is a show about water in which politics and metaphysics are equally present. What the works have in common is water recycled within the work itself. Several of the 12 artists have actually been plumbers.

The show has themes. A number of artists are involved with water and fire. In the center of Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel's room-sized planetariumlike installation called "Charybdis," a flame burns in the midst of a pool of still water, which periodically begins to seethe. Flames bolt through the center of one of Eric Orr's rectangular columns as water runs and slides down the sides. In Ted Victoria's "Bottle-Pour, Three Views," a magic lantern takes a tiny upside-down bottle and transforms it

into a large translucent wall image of water shooting like a flame out of a bottle that is right side up.

Several artists are concerned with environmental issues. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison built a distillation device that gradually purifies East River water, exposing the crud left behind. In Rebecca Howland's "It's a Sick World," a sickly globe in a coffin is being fed sickly fluids while resting in a bed of sickly water. The water circulating through one of the remarkable pipe sculptures of William Stone is rusty, almost blood red.

For many artists, water is a source of life, in whatever form. Andrew Krasnow's "Core Texts of the Mind" consists of five urn-shaped robots with empty heads. At about heart level, there is a small disk. When the disk is blown into, a light goes on inside the robot's head and an actual human brain slowly floats into view. It reaches the skull, then the water and brain sink and eventually disappear. Only sustained human breathing into the heart will allow the Frankenstein to live.

By MICHAEL BRENSON

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