

LEISURE & ARTS

Art: The World According to Jones/Ginzel

By PAM LAMBERT

New York

Cutting through City Hall Park some months ago, you might have stumbled across a mysterious coppery sphere. A quick look around would have revealed other curiosities. There were dozens of glistening metallic globes scattered about the grass, spiky golden devices dangling from the trees and, floating above the central parterre, a weather vane the length of a Greyhound crowned with a sunburst of gold spokes. They looked like toys abandoned by some gambling giants.

Actually those responsible were Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel.

Over the past few years the young New York-based pair has worked its artistic alchemy in spaces ranging from storefront galleries to the vast vaults under the Brooklyn Bridge. The couple have been building a reputation as bright as the spheres at City Hall with their theatrical kinetic installations, meticulously crafted cosmos in miniature that dramatize the unseen forces animating the universe. The slow cycles of the moving and illuminated elements, along with the frequent use of fire and water, help weave a hypnotic spell.

"Kristin and Andrew are creating a contemplative landscape that takes you out of New York City or wherever you are into an almost trancelike, relaxed state," says Tom Finkelpearl, curator of the show at New York's P.S. 1 Museum where one of the team's most recent installations, "Charybdis," can currently be seen. "What they're trying to do is to create a magical, mystical space."

Like most magic, the pair's work to date has been largely ephemeral: Now you see it, now you don't. But this is beginning to change. Last year Jones, 32, and Ginzel, 34, made their first permanent installation, "Analemma," for the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Conn. They recently created decor and costumes for a new Merce Cunningham dance, "Field and Figures," which will be seen by audiences around the world. They're working on a dramatic pen-

dulum piece commissioned by the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. There's also a commission from the Metropolitan Transit Authority here to create a series of wind pieces for the peaked roofs of the stations on the Astoria Line. And another from New York's Battery Park City Au-



Andrew, Kristin and "Charybdis"

thority to build an installation for the new quarters of Stuyvesant High School.

When you add a couple of temporary projects—including a solo show opening in August in Switzerland—even four hands don't seem enough.

"It's labor-intensive, it's grueling, it takes extreme amounts of hours and concentration and I think alone it would be physically impossible," says Kristin in the quiet, measured manner she shares with her husband. "The execution of our work is not really fun, it's work. It's the dreaming up the projects and imagining them that we really enjoy." "Who wants to go," Andrew interjects, "on their hands and knees looking for wires," Kristin continues, "alone?" Andrew concludes.

Interviewing the couple is a little like verbal volleyball; ask a question and they're likely to bat it to and fro before sending it back into your court. At times during the conversation in their Greenwich Village aerie you feel as though you're talking to a single entity, Jones/Ginzel. The impression is enhanced by the outfits the blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked pair is wear-

ing: matching navy polo shirts, earth-toned sweaters, blue jeans for Andrew and a jeans skirt for Kristin.

"We dream up the projects in tandem but it's as though one of us is an excellent translator," Kristin continues with a meditative twirl of her golden braid. "The ideas that we work on together can be translated into living projects through Andrew's facility in understanding how to best put the work together and make it functional."

Before Andrew began collaborating with Kristin in 1983, he was using these self-taught engineering skills to assist artists Alice Aycock and Red Grooms. His partner-to-be was toiling as an architectural model maker. Both had developed distinctive artistic styles, in which the seeds of their joint work can be seen.

Andrew, the Chicago-born son of two painters, was making complex collages incorporating a "very elaborate personal mythology." Many of these images, including spheres of energy, a whirlpool and weights in tension, have become part of the couple's shared symbolism.

Kristin, the well-traveled daughter of a foreign-service officer and a poet, was also intrigued by natural forces. She began creating sculptures with elastic thread so fine "you think you're seeing rays of light." Her "Smoke Hedge," a 200-foot-long tensile fence she erected at Yale (from which she earned an M.F.A.), hummed and appeared to dissolve into a mirage with the breeze. "It caught the wind that you couldn't otherwise see," Kristin says—just like the tree-hung wind sensors of "Panamemone," the pair's City Hall project.

Striking as "Panamemone" was, building it was child's play compared with some other works. "Spheric Storm," a 1985 piece at New York's Art Galaxy, took them five months to construct. During a four-minute cycle the installation slowly evolved from a dark void into an apocalyptic storm. "There was wind, there were sheets of water, there must have been 25 or 30 different things going on," Andrew recalls. "The

work we do is very much about the way we see the world," Kristin chimes in. "And we don't see the world as a simple place."

One thing Jones/Ginzel works aren't about is technology. Stand in front of "Charybdis" at P.S. 1 in the darkened room your eye may be caught by the flame hovering above the central whirlpool. Or by the pinwheeling shadow in the lower left corner. Or perhaps by the ball of light that slowly sweeps across the curved Pompeian red backdrop, selectively illuminating elements of the surrealistic scene. The furthest things from your mind will be timers, motors, blowers and tracer boards.

"Charybdis" was commissioned by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where it was created last year. The piece's reconstruction at P.S. 1 was partially funded by a grant from kinetic art fancier David Bermant, a longtime champion of the couple's work. But financing much of their fleeting—and therefore unsaleable—art has required invention beyond the usual grantsmanship.

Every summer Jones and Ginzel leave the city so they can savor their prime apartment; this year they'll be at the MacDowell artists' colony for a month and constructing their show in Basel the rest of the time. They get free help by offering work experience to students from several schools. They get donated materials through a program run by New York's Department of Cultural Affairs; for one project they were able to obtain a large pump, \$800 worth of lumber and a 14-foot-wide meteorological balloon. And they've started to sell some collage drawings of what Kristin calls "pieces that really are impossible."

Now that experience is enabling the pair to construct "permanent" installations, requiring minimal maintenance, institutions ranging from aquariums to children's museums are calling to order their very own Jones/Ginzels. The answer isn't always yes. "We're really on a fine line," Kristin says. "We could become designers and do quite well for ourselves, but that's not what we're interested in."

And what does interest them? "I think we'd like to do a large chapel of sorts, not for any particular denomination," Andrew replies. Kristin nods vigorously. "We're interested in providing a quiet, deep space," she says, "a place where you can feel safe and yet inspired."

"Our work to date has been a reminder that you are on some sort of dynamic globe that has real physical properties and weathers," she continues. "I think we're hoping to provide a window into knowing that we're part of something other, that this artificial world we live in is not all."

("Charybdis" can be seen through June 25 at P.S. 1 Museum in Long Island City (718) 784-2084, a short hop from Manhattan via the E or F train.)