

ART NEW ENGLAND

Newport Art Museum/Newport

ROSA LASAOSA: ODE TO EARTH

With an apparently simple carpet of wheat covering the floor of the Newport Art Museum's Wright Gallery, site/installation artist Rosa Lasoasa connects both with the heartland of America and with ancient rhythms of work and meditation. *Ode to Earth* captures the human need to dig into the earth, to find rhythmic relaxation in work, and to hear and feel nature. What was once an integral, taken-for-granted experience has become a means of discovering peace amid the mad rush of an information-laden society bereft of clarity.

The artist's installation includes a series of twelve judiciously placed balls representing silos that protect the earth's bounty for its future use, and a mantra of threshed wheat pouring into those silos. She openly invites visitors to walk barefoot on the wheat carpet and (to borrow a phrase from Carly Simon) to feel the earth move under their feet. Above all, the experience of this sedentary, almost passive wheat garden insists on solitude, reflection, and a matching of one's own rhythm with the earth's. As a metaphor, *Ode to Earth* fulfills its meditative purpose if you let it; as a practical experience, it slows you down long enough to remain with you as a reminder that, in fact, you should slow down more often.

—John Pantalone