

Semblance

Frank Connet's artwork seems sprung from the earth. His forms and patterns suggest the pulse of underground springs, the knot of mycelia, and the structure of limestone. Inspired by close observation of lichens and leaves, of roots, of rocks, of fossils and bones, by sensing their weight, texture, their architecture and smell, Connet captures the essence of what thrives underground—the living interior where chthonic impulse effervesces and twines towards consciousness. In so doing, he is able to express the mystery and vitality of nature, no less than the unconscious earthly impulses of the Self through work that is vibrantly balanced between formal sophistication and organic wildness.

Flow & Strata

Two motifs are central to Connet's recent artwork: the dynamic interaction of moving water, and the stolid resistance of the stone matrix. The dominate figures in *Maramec* and *Maramec II*, companion works that reference natural springs, resemble elegant arabesques of groundwater coursing through rock fissures and opening up into subterranean caverns. Their surrounding ground, the fine rippling of light and dark striations, keeps the surface restless and surprising. Limestone I and Limestone II demonstrate a similar invigorating unease as solid patterns merge and fade into an undulating dusk. Here active ground and meditative void tease each other in a formal play of potential and active energy.

Accumulation

Accumulation is the metaphoric constant at the heart of Frank Connet's work—the process of increase, decay, addition and reformation—that resonates in both the subject and the process of the artwork. Frank Connet's wool pieces involve a complex binding of the material that is then dyed in indigo and walnut. This time-consuming process of repeated over-dyeing, known by the Japanese term Shibori, creates subtle patterns of light and dark that contrast with the open areas of deep solid coloration, allowing for value shifts from the liquid blue of to deepest midnight. The patterns and disruptions are mapped out with intention, but also subject to the mercy of the chance encounter between water, dye and cloth.

Cocoon & Copper

“My cocoon tightens—Colors tease,” writes Emily Dickinson, an apt description for Connet's recent sculptural work which reference accumulation through the process of repeated submersion in a copper electroplating bath. Beginning as a fine volume resembling a three-dimensional drawings—with each submersion they become more elaborate. Connet adds additional wire, infilling between lines, or branching out into an enveloping outer form. The wire form, thread-like and pliable at start, changes too, becoming rigid overtime as it takes on additional plating. Variations occur as copper deposits

unevenly, or, build as nodules and whiskers on exterior surfaces and wire ends. Like the variation within the Shibori, Connet welcomes this chance outcome. Only at the end is the patina refined, offering a tactile, minimal surface evoking a time worn earthy aura.

Describing these processes brings us only so far in understanding the visual potency of the finished work. What began simply with a hint of form, grows richer and more intricate, more robust, and more intriguing through some alchemy of mutation and reconstitution, never regular or orderly, but always gaining strength and presence.

Cipher & Sign

The sculptures here suggest, but do not name, specific forms. Early in Connet's experimenting he wrote the word 'creel' on the wall next to one piece, and indeed, 'vessel' is an obvious reference in some of the early works. But that definition begins to dissolve as the forms evolve into unfamiliar spaces and organic volumes, no longer moored in the human made world. Increasingly, they suggest spores, husks, calyx and cocoon, molecular forms or underground Mycelia with their network of responsive hyphae. As in the textiles, these dimensional works embody the tension between matrix and void, and suggest a place where latent energy continually agitates against restraint. Whether this tension suggests a larger tectonic force, or a tremor of muscle, seed or bud, Connet does not tell us. But the work surely invites us to expand our understanding of both the real and the metaphoric foundation of matter through the syntax of our senses. As a further Dickinson quote intimates, "So I must baffle at the Hint / And cipher at the Sign", Connet delights in leaving us in wonder at the pulse and power and wonder of the world around us.

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