



Editorial: Features

Sam Perry

Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, California
Recommendation by DeWitt Cheng

Through October 26, 2019

For twenty years, the Bay Area sculptor Sam Perry has explored the properties and aesthetic possibilities of natural wood — branches, minimally processed — with a quiet determination that is unusual and praiseworthy in our instant-obsolescence digital era. His current show is entitled “Clew,” which is the British spelling of clue. It is also the designation for a ball of yarn or thread, especially the one given by Ariadne to Theseus so that he could escape the Minotaur’s labyrinth. So mystery and adventure-and-return could be said to be the themes in play here, mixed with humor as evinced in the anthropomorphic titles.

“Instrospection,” “Last Dance” and “Navel Gazing” are rope-like loops threaded into themselves or tied into loose knots. All are tours de force of carpentry taken beyond wood’s innate characteristics. “D.Q.” is a ribbon of wood folding in on itself as it falls into irregular S-curves, like soft ice cream falling into cups and cones at Dairy Queen. In the series “Clew I” through “Clew V” Perry uses an assemblage approach, additive rather than subtractive, without the conceptual/metaphorical framework of the other pieces. Assembled from stripped and sanded branches with dowels, these large, airy, treelike sculptures command space effortlessly, three-dimensional analogues to deKooning paintings: dancing brushstrokes, in air, of wood.

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