

sculpture

july/august 2013

LOS ANGELES
Blue McRight
Samuel Freeman Gallery

Blue McRight's recent exhibition, "Quench," featured a semi-installational aggregation of nearly 50 individual pieces. These objects emerge from a loosely linked set of concepts involving nature, personal experience, and environmental reality, following Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "rhizomatic thinking." As a result of how McRight hooks up, mutates, and disrupts her connections of images and concepts, her pieces become maps of transient ideas. The works consist of elements associated with plants, animals, and the circulation of water; their conceptual basis resides in the issue of water scarcity.

One group of sculptures is made from tubes and hoses originally used for scuba diving or gardening. Cut into segments, the lengths are then bound, folded, or bunched together by bandaging them with heavy thread and elastic fabric. The extremities of the hoses terminate in watering devices such as vintage sprinklers, faucets, and brass nozzles. A second group of objects uses fabric-wrapped plastic animal forms,

sections of trees, and branches surmounted by functional objects related to water. Both groups recall roots or segments of plants.

McRight's works resemble a variety of delivery systems that transport and disseminate liquid. Existing in an interrelated state of flux, each piece combines biological and mechanical, natural and artificial, the real and the abstract. The forms are gestural, urgent, and often humorous. Any number of associations can be made—cocoon, creatures, plants—anything in need of the animating flow of blood or water. Displayed on rectangular pedestals, McRight's menagerie reveals a multitude of sinister, kitschy, and elegant variations. From a distance, the sculptures look like tangled roots; up close, they take on individualized character. Although packed together and related by size and color, these works are too detailed and gestural to merge into a field or single organism.

One of the larger sculptures in the show, *Well Wisher*, is a confrontational piece reminis-

cent of a medieval alchemical symbol—an upside-down tree crowned with a rusted, archaic water pump. The dark, dry root surfaces are tipped and studded with numerous thorn-like nozzles. It's a fool's device that promises water but pumps dry air. It embodies drought, aridity, and an inconsolable longing for moisture.

McRight brings her experience as a diver into the construction of her work; she thinks of these aggregations as colonies or reefs. Like reefs, her sculptures compile accreted parts, each addition

expanding and enhancing the whole. The basic constituents bear a meaning that is emphasized and accentuated within each reconfiguration. The work is richly imaginative, crossing back and forth between the realms of the grotesque and the beautiful. Although McRight intends to make a point, she's never didactic. In "Quench," she has elegantly and economically abstracted the political issue of diminishing resources turning it into a powerfully authentic and personal statement.

— Kathleen Whitney



Right: Blue McRight, *Well Wisher*, 2012. mixed media, 50 x 43 x 29 in.