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Snowflakes: Monumental Cyanotypes by Robin Hill

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An encounter with found material (in this case, a mathematician's data) leads to a physical transformation that ultimately becomes the artist's work. Through March 11 at Another Year in LA.



Hill approached UC Davis Mathematics Professor Gravner over a year ago and asked him if he would be open to her using his data in her work. They ended up receiving an Interdisciplinary Collaborative research grant from UC Davis, and Hill was able to purchase the necessary equipment to manipulate and print large-scale negatives. The snowflakes are contact printed with the cyanotype process on Aqaba paper, and are derived from Gravner's mathematical algorithm which is part of his research on probability in crystal snowflake growth. Far from the actual size of a snowflake, these cyanotypes are monumental (8' x 8').

In Hill's art practice, an encounter with a found material (in this case, a mathematician's data) leads to a physical transformation that ultimately becomes her work. She continues to examine the relationship between sculpture, drawing, and photography. The pieces rest in a state of suspended animation, speaking of possibility and potential rather than articulating a finite resolution. The subject of the work is work itself. The vantage point of these pieces is from inside form, describing the hidden order that underlies all living things. In her cyanotypes matter is translated into degrees of opacity and translucency which are the two dimensional counterparts to thick and thin. The cyanotypes document the gesture of placing physical matter on paper. The immediacy of this process serves as a counterpoint to the more deliberate and labor-intensive task of building sculptural forms.

According to Hill, ‘In my cyanotypes, matter is translated into degrees of opacity and translucency, which are the two-dimensional counterparts to thick and thin. As a process, light is the active ingredient and waiting is the passive ingredient. Ultimately, the cyanotypes document the gesture of placing physical matter on paper. The immediacy of this process serves as a counterpoint to the more deliberate and labor-intensive task of building sculptural forms, whose invisible dimensions are revealed in the after images of their companion cyanotypes. Fingerprints, DNA strands, and microscopic cultures contain information that has the power to describe form. Such is the case with the cyanotypes and their relationship to their forms of origin. Of on-going concern is my interest in seeing how much meaning and imagery I can extract from one idea or process. In producing generations of images from one source I am able to extend the life of that source and, in a sense, recycle it.’”