

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Nicole Ondre
'HEATWORK'

18 April – 20 May 2023

Preview: Saturday 15 April, 5–10pm

4654 W Washington Blvd, Los Angeles

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to announce 'Heatwork', a solo exhibition by Nicole Ondre, presenting a series of knotted ceramic sculptures adapted from mathematical models.

Knots imply a physical relation. To think of a knot is to consider how forms get tied down, get stuck, or are looped back on themselves. Working with knots is part of an everyday tactile habit. However, the starting point for this body of work is knot theory, a mathematical subfield of topology. The knots here are classified as 'prime knots,' closed loops that contain a specific order of crossings which cannot be untangled or reduced into a composite form. Ondre's knots are *not* taken from everyday life — they are polymorphous, infinite curves that maintain their original sequence despite the distortion they undergo in becoming sculpture.

For Ondre, these knots contain an elastic sculptural possibility — they expand the grammar of abstraction. The mutability of the form in theory suggests an infinite range of sculptural possibilities as an object. Her knots assume innumerable manipulations and permutations, twists and turns, subtle variations in tension and scale, weight and suspension.

The sculptures presented in 'Heatwork' are displayed as reliefs and dispersed across the ground of the gallery. They appear as though they are emerging from the wall itself, suturing the surface as if it were a stitch. Ondre's sculptures, however, are not reparative, they are more like strange appendages — they intimate a body but they don't cite it directly. When laid out on the ground, they conjure a more abject state, resting like a discarded shell or skin, exhausted and unusable.

Sculpted first in clay, and then fired in a kiln, each knot crystallises into a form which is then rendered permanent. In ceramics, heatwork is the product of the transformative effects of time and temperature inside the kiln. It is analogous to the act of exposure in photography — if photographic exposure is light + time, then heatwork is time + heat.

Contingency is an inherent part of working in clay — you will never exactly know what will come out of the fire. Glazes melt and pool on the surface of each form and accentuate their shape and effect. Ondre's palette evokes glowing bodies of water, rich deposits of soil, the speckled skin of serpentine rocks.

Although sculpture tends to summon a wide range of personal sensations and psychosomatic memories, the obstinate presence of Ondre's knots ultimately exceeds any social referent. Her lesson is a valuable one: the act of sculpture is part of a desire to make things which we do not yet know how to name.

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Nicole Ondre (born in 1986 on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia) lives and works in Vancouver. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Pirl' at CSA Space in 2022 and 'Blood Knot' at Unit 17 in 2018, both in Vancouver. Ondre's work was included in a two-person exhibition, 'The Eyes Have Walls', with Mina Totino at the West Vancouver Art Museum in 2020, curated by Hilary Letwin. Other recent exhibitions include 'Heart View Knot Bird' at Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles in 2022 and 'High Anxiety' at Monica Reyes Gallery, Vancouver in 2021. Since 2010, Ondre has also worked collaboratively with artist Vanessa Disler as Feminist Land Art Retreat.

For more information and images, please contact info@tanyaleighton.com.

The gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday, 11–5pm and by appointment.