

Marianne Weil

Kouros

"Los Millares: Recent Bronzes and Monotypes," Marianne Weil's third solo exhibition at Kouros, featured 14 sculptures, 12 wall reliefs, half a dozen monotypes and a watercolor (all 2007). The installation's juxtaposition of the various mediums highlighted the dialogues among them, offering clues to the sculptor's process. Conceived during an artist's residency at Fundación Valparaíso in the Province of Almería on the southeast coast of Spain, these tactile, abstract works derive from Weil's research some 40 miles inland at Los Millares, the Chalcolithic (from the Greek roots for copper and stone) site known to mark a transition from Neolithic to Bronze Age culture. Weil has been visiting the prehistoric sites of Western Europe for more than a decade; each journey and resulting body of work builds on the previous ones.

Weil's proclivity toward ancient ways can be traced back to her choice of apprenticeships. While attending Goddard College, she worked with Italian stone monument carvers in Barre, Vermont. In 1986, she received an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York, but not before having spent eight years alongside artisans in Pietrasanta, Italy, carving marble and learning the foundry process. The sensuality that her current bronzes exude can be traced to the fact that Weil builds her hollow pieces directly from wax, her fingers and tools leaving impressions inside and out, before each is cast uniquely (only four works in the show were editioned) by the lost wax process. Their surfaces, marked by pits, incised lines and punctures, bring to mind excavated artifacts. Gouges recall the arrow slits in bastion walls. Weil does her own chasing and patinas. For the Los Millares series, she developed coppery tones, often enhancing their warmth with



Marianne Weil: *Los Millares*, 2007, bronze, 32 by 13 by 6 inches; at Kouros.

pale, metallic greens. The warm colors of the monotypes echo the patina palette.

Los Millares Uno (12 by 9 inches), the one watercolor in the exhibition (two others were listed but not shown), seems to have been an important precedent for the prints and many of the bronzes. Laid in with a washy orange that bleeds into pinker hues toward the top, and centering on an organic shape limned in orange pastel and redrawn in sanguine, the watercolor has a spontaneous look that carries over to the experimental quality of the prints. Its central form could be described as a ribcage sprouting two arterial extensions like those issuing from the heart's aortic arch. An inverted version balances above it so that each pair of "arteries" meets, creating a windowlike opening. The ribcage configuration also resembles an aerial view of a stone-lined enclosure at Los Millares, its top part formed by inverting that shape.

A handsome 10-inch-high wall relief, *Primo*, closely replicates the shape in the watercolor, though the former's more tapered upper parts look more like lotus buds. Taking it off the wall, the muscular, 32-by-13-by-6-inch *Los Millares* has real presence, with glowing patinas and tactile surfaces coming into full play. The elongated opening, formed by the two shapes meeting, could be a metaphor for the site's more than 80 passage tombs. The sculpture's lower part suggests drumsticks, its meaty sections joined at the base, bony parts reaching up into what looks like the original watercolor's lower shape.

In the prints, the same motif occurs,

stenciled in different combinations and positions, the overlaps left visible. In some, Weil incorporated the textural imprint of what look like wire mesh and burlap. A display case near the exit of the gallery contained *Twenty Six Madeleines (A to Z)*, petite, green-hued, shallow cups with coppery scalloped wings, some with concentric circles at their bottoms. Weil's search for a personal vocabulary that reinvents the lost ritual functions of excavated treasures seemed implicit in that assembly.

—Elisa Decker

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