

Adler Beatty

34 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10021



*Bee Shaman, 2013, Organic material,
handmade abaca paper, 28 5/8 x 24 3/8 in*

Michele Oka Doner: *Stringing Sand on Thread*

September 12, 2018 - February 1, 2019
34 East 69th Street, New York

Adler Beatty is pleased to announce *Stringing Sand on Thread*, a presentation of works on paper, ceramics, and bronze sculpture by Michele Oka Doner.

Oka Doner has spent a lifetime experimenting with natural materials and forms. Her fascination with geology and oceanography began in childhood when she immersed herself in the topography and culture of 1950s Miami Beach. Scouring beaches and forests, she salvages then transforms all manner of detritus. Sculpting, dissecting, casting, welding, and drawing, Oka Doner creates mysterious works of art with poetic mastery.

In the mid-1960s, while many of her contemporaries embraced Minimalism or Pop, Oka Doner forged her own path, exploring the interconnectedness of ocean, earth and sky, often collapsing the categories of fine art and design. Working in both public and private spaces, her practice spans two and three-dimensional work, intimately scaled domestic objects and monumental design, including permanent installations in the transit hubs of Miami International Airport and New York City's Herald Square subway.

Oka Doner's ceramic "Soul Catchers" originate with the earth, made of clay, worked with the artist's hand and crude tools before firing. The imprint of her fingers forms haunting expressions and contortions accentuated by rich maroon and chalky black patinas.

While Oka Doner considers clay her "universal language," metal plays an important role in her practice: "It is primal, it is alchemy, transformation. You take ores from the earth and mix them to exactly the right strength. There's the fluid beauty of the molten metal and fixed form; you are the sorcerer's apprentice." The presentation includes bronze casts of forms as delicate as the wings of a bee. Arthur C. Danto described Oka Doner's work as imbued with a "menacing beauty" here conveyed through thin, bronze spiked branches, which threaten us as we reach for her small but "Terrible Chair."

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Oka Doner incorporates elements of chance when working with tree bark and paper pulp, sandwiching the former between translucent pieces of handmade abaca paper and releasing anthropomorphized forms from a tangle of roots, stems and mulch. The sheets of paper tightly embrace the bark forms buried between them.

This concentrated selection of work reflects Oka Doner's profound encounters with, and transformations of, the human, animal, mineral and vegetal.

Biography

Michele Oka Doner (b. 1945, Miami Beach, FL) is an internationally acclaimed artist whose career spans five decades. Her work is fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world from which she derives her formal vocabulary. Her multifaceted artistic production encompasses drawing, painting, sculpture, jewelry, public art, functional objects, video, artist books and costume and set design. She is as well known for her intimately-scaled work as for her permanent public installations throughout the United States, including "Flight" at Regan International Airport, "Radiant Site," at the Herald Square MTA station, New York and the mile and quarter long bronze and terrazzo concourse, "A Walk on the Beach," seen by 40 million travelers a year at Miami International Airport. Oka Doner's work is found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, Musée des Arts Décoratifs at the Louvre, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Yale Art Gallery, the Princeton University Art Museum, and The Detroit Institute of Arts, among others. She has received numerous awards, including those given by United Nations Society of Writers and Artists, Pratt Institute, New York State Council of the Arts and the Knight Foundation. In 2016 she received an honorary doctorate from The University of Michigan, where she earned her undergraduate and MFA degrees.

Publications about her work include *Natural Seduction* (Hudson Hills Press, 2003), *Workbook* (Oka Press, 2004), *HumanNature* (Edizioni Charta, 2008), *Into the Mysterium* (Regan Arts, 2016), and *Everything Is Alive* (Regan Arts Press, 2017). Her artist's books include *Miami Beach: Blueprint of an Eden*, created with Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. (HarperCollins, 2005), *What is White* (Dieu Donne Press, 2010), and *Intuitive Alphabet* (TRA Publishing, 2017). A selection of publications will also be on view.