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Matthew Ronay

Sac, Cyst, Satchet

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The assumption of the skin is that it functions as a bag to keep the parts from oozing out. *Sac, Cyst, Satchet* is an exhibition of new wall-based and freestanding basswood sculptures by Matthew Ronay (b. 1976, Louisville, KY) that explore depictions of the internal. Forged through automatic drawing, high-speed rotary tools, and loose metaphor, each work divulges an abstracted inner place—bodily or otherwise. Meandering vessels, irregular lumps, and mild hues of dye beckon viewers to contemplate what lies beneath.

Interior-ness has a peculiar relationship to belief; when things are hidden beneath or inside, faith can balance the equation. Nodules and warts on the surface often serve as indicators of hidden decay. In *Snag* (2023), black pimples or mold spores emerge from an exterior splattered with white dye. Other surface treatments hint at the innerworkings of stems or bulges—manual and electric tools leave grooves or render the wood shaggy; it becomes pitted and dimpled like flesh or finely perforated like velvet. These haptic textures incite a response akin to our nervous system when sensing internal injury or sickness. Although we feel that the underlying systems are real, skepticism and bafflement linger.

To achieve the exhibition's subdued color spectrum, Ronay worked with longtime collaborator and life partner, Bengü, to translate colors associated with organs, roots, and other inner components to powder-based dye. The resulting palettes blush and bleach as if changing temperature, from delicate peach to bruised slate or the brown of decay to ripe raspberry.

Despite exceeding eight feet in length, the construction of *Doff* (2023) is unaffected by gravity. Utilizing the wall enables expansive negative spaces, weightless pouches, and delicate threads and tubes. Conversely, freestanding sculptures find grounding through geometric forms in their lower halves. In *Remediating* (2023), a foundation of rectilinear blocks atop cylindrical pegs supports the layers of repetitive forms above. The artist's representations of inorganic structures, whether involving the existing gallery wall behind nets of carved neurons or inventing an architectural system within a work, suggest that a 'sub-' quality need not be human, earthbound, carbon-based, or even alive to be understood.