

I work with thorns from the honey locust tree to create discrete sculptures and large-scale installations. I regard these works as three-dimensional drawings.

The thorns grow up and around the trunk of the honey locust tree as a form of protection, preventing animals from eating the bark and re-directing them to eat the honey-sweet seedpods along the branches. I harvest the thorns and use them as sculptural elements.

I create discrete sculptures working with the natural thorns and those covered in lichen. Their inherent geometry shapes the work. I use the pencil point tip of a burning tool to burn a hole in each thorn through which they are self-doweled. The process is quiet and meditative; often a thin line of smoke emerges from the burned hole. For many years I resisted casting them in bronze, but recently I have begun to do so. I find that the bronze captures the intricacy of the thorns exquisitely and with organic patinas I have been able to be true to a process that I find authentic. I use a drill press to create a hole in the bronze through which the thorns are self-doweled remaining true to my original process.

As wall installations, I create sections of thorns that interlock as they climb across the surface, anchored periodically by a single thorn embedded in the gallery wall. I envision them as cross hatch drawings, each thorn making a mark that suggests the next and the next to follow.

I began an ongoing series of American flags in 2012.

The first was a complete flag installed directly on the gallery wall. I regarded it as an expression of the contentious nature of American democracy. It appeared somewhat fragile, almost lace-like. The thorns represented the elegance of the theory of democracy while emblematic of the difficult, almost painful, aspects of democracy in practice.

The second sculpture in 2014 was a partial flag with some of the thorns having fallen to the floor of the gallery where it was displayed. The country seemed to be in a growing state of disarray and distress. The third flag was a variation on this partial flag exhibited in a professional arts organization.

The fourth thorn flag has grown larger and denser with deep shadows. It is more expressive of the magnitude of conflict and dissension within America today. It is exhibited vertically, suspended above the viewers' heads in the former Chiesa di San Francesco in an exhibition in Como, Italy in 2019.

Shadow is a part of these works in two respects. In one way, shadow becomes a partner with the drawing, broadening the line, intensifying the mark through the use of lighting. In another sense, shadow is inherent in the thorns themselves. They carry a darkness, a sense of danger, a very real capacity for harm. I recognize that for some they are imbued with religious iconography. My intent is to re-direct attention from this cultural connotation to an awareness of them as extraordinary elements in the natural world, inherently elegant and daunting. They evoke complex cultural metaphors and I embrace the ambiguity and complexity that working with them brings to the work.

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2019

