



COLLICULI: In Defense of Trees Jeannine Cook

Resembling complex extra planetary riverine systems, the intricate labyrinths of the human nervous system, blood vessels or the brain, even exoskeletal medieval armour, these works are in fact relics revealed by close scrutiny of nature's tiny worlds: here, the micro-realms of the bark of trees. In my encounters with cork oaks, carobs, wild olives, pine, oak and limes, each tree's bark profile shows itself to be singular, though all barks are intricate living systems that function to defend, transport, insulate and in general regulate a tree's metabolic functions. It seems fitting that the Latin word for bark — colliculus — was borrowed to name important parts of the human brain. Humble and usually overlooked, a tree's colliculus is a magnificent life support system that invites exploration and celebration.

Mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, metalpoint drawing can claim an illustrious artistic heritage, with its use in the Middle Ages in monastic scriptoria and later, as silverpoint, by Dürer, da Vinci, Rembrandt and others. Among today's artists, I am one of a few hundred who are fluent in this technique. As a contemporary artist, I seek to go far beyond the traditional use of metalpoint, while the very fact of using this ancient technique is at the center of my practice. My drawings of nature act as witnesses, questioning their subjects in an intimate and meditative way. I am interested in geological time, our planetary history, and elements of nature much older and more venerable than humans. By drawing with a humble metal stylus, I seek to align my work both with the primordial earth and also with the cultural, even archetypal, role of the artist through the ages. My dialogue with stones, bark, leaves, vines or trees allows me to create a personal and meditative reflection of the natural world. I celebrate the hidden inner worlds of plants and minerals, all part of this exquisite and fragile nature around us which has supported human life for millennia, and which is now under great environmental pressure.

The Artworks

- 1. Obras IV, Olive Bark, silverpoint, goldpoint, 5" x 3.5" / 13 x 9 cm, 2014
- 2. Ariadne's Thread II, Pine Tree Bark, silverpoint, 5" x 3.5" / 13 x 9 cm, 2011
- 3. Balearica III, wild Olive Bark, silverpoint, goldpoint, 5" x 3.5" / 13 x 9 cm, 2012
- 4. Noepoli, The Traces of Time I, silverpoint, goldpoint, 7.5" x 5.5" / 19 x 14 cm, 2012
- 5. Lime Tree Bark, Noyers, silverpoint, goldpoint, 7.5" x 5.5" / 19 x 14 cm, 2014
- 6. Cork Oak Labyrinth II, silverpoint, goldpoint, 5.5" x 3.5" / 14 x 9 cm, 2014
- 7. Obras III, cork Oak, silverpoint, goldpoint, 5" x 3.5" / 13 x 9 cm, 2014
- 8. Cork Oak Labyrinth I, silverpoint, goldpoint, 5.5" x 3.5" / 14 x 9 cm, 2014
- 9. Cork Oak I, silverpoint, goldpoint, 3.5" x 5.5" / 9 x 14 cm, 2014
- 10. Oak Labyrinth, silverpoint, goldpoint, 3.5" x 5.5" / 9 x 14 cm, 2014
- 11. Cork Oak II, silverpoint, goldpoint, 3.5" x 5" / 9 x 13 cm, 2014