



Slipped Through the Net

vintage shoe lasts, bronze screen, capacitors, resistors, glass beads, metal pulley, copper, rope, twine and deer hide, 2021
 40 x 6 x 3 in, 101.6 x 15.2 x 7.6 cm

Remnant

vintage shoe lasts, bronze screen, capacitors, resistors, glass beads, metal pulley, copper, rope, twine and deer hide, 2021
 36 x 4 x 3 in, 91.4 x 10.2 x 7.6 cm

“Slipped Through the Net” and “Remnant” are two auxiliary works connected to the larger installation of “How Can You Expect Me to Reconcile, When I Know the Truth?” (2018). In these smaller assemblages, Barry Ace has integrated the antique shoe lasts he used to shape the bronze screen into child-sized footwear for the installation work. In “How Can You Expect Me to Reconcile, When I Know the Truth?” all of the moccasin forms are hollow, clinging and cascading down the nautical rope suspended by a pulley system that is positioned like an unbalanced yoke or scale of (in)justice. The rope pools onto the floor where more moccasins become intertwined within the mass. Collectively, these three works consider the impact of the Canadian Indian residential school system on generations of Indigenous children, recognizing that it is a fragmented and entangled history.

In both “Slipped Through the Net” and “Remnant”, the bronze screen moccasins over a solid wooden core are partially embellished with floral motifs, referencing that some traditional knowledge and culture survived the adverse impact of colonization. In his signature style, Ace’s 21st century iteration on the curvilinear beadwork of Great Lakes material culture references medicinal plants and flowers as healing, while his use of capacitors, resistors, and light-emitting diodes are a simile for Great Lakes beadwork.

A common element to all three works are the deer hide fringes that are attached to the moccasin heels, referencing traildusters used by southwestern and northeastern tribes to erase the tracks left by their footprints. One different aspect in Ace’s positioning of these traildusters is that the fringe falls forward over the moccasins to symbolize that these stories must not be erased. In “Remnant,” hemp rope wraps around parts of a pulley mechanism from which the shoe last hangs from. In “Slipped Through the Net” Ace transforms the copper mesh into a rope that suspends the moccasin from a vintage metal pulley. A skirt of mesh encompasses the moccasin which appears to be freeing itself from the confines of the net. Both works are optimistic in their narrative that due to tenacity and perseverance, some of the remnants of culture slipped through; that despite being forced to assimilate to a European semblance, there has always been cultural continuance.

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