

A blood knot joins two monofilament nylon fishing lines together. A fly-fishing angler uses a blood knot to tie their rod's leader to its tippet. It's a strong, sleek knot that needs to be tied quickly, and repeatedly, while standing in moving water.

James McDevitt-Stredney (b. 1989, Columbus, OH), knotter and artist, curates No Place Gallery, a long-running contemporary art space, now located at Gay and High in Columbus, Ohio. In *Triple Blood Knot*, McDevitt-Stredney draws a parallel between his roles as a curator— catching artists in the vast sea of culture—and as a fly-fisher of Bellefontaine's Mad River.

The forms in McDevitt-Stredney's sculptural paintings are derived from the contours of forest canopies, streams, trail maps, and the routes of off-trail treks McDevitt-Stredney has blazed to the Mad River. McDevitt-Stredney took this indexical source material, drew it, and then cut-out his drawings, preferring the shadow forms of his hikes to the ones more traveled by. His journey into negative space, into the mirroring void, recalls the fisherman's act of optimism in casting a lure into the dark deeps, or the gallerist's leap of faith into their artists' as yet unmade art. It's an unsure way to find something one wasn't sure was there.

As Robert Frost said of positive and negative pictorial space:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

"Blood knot," the term, and the coil of the blood knot, the shape of which recalls the barrel of a hangman's noose, key the gallery viewer into the hazards contained in these woods. The triple blood knots roping off the viewer's egress turns that key. It's a Blair Witch Art Project, let's say, McDevitt-Stredney's plumbing of the unknown. Nature, for all its pastoral bounty, for all its whispered promises of escape in the ear of the capitalist subject, is still the setting of slashers, climate catastrophe, dumped bodies, and other Grimm tales. Here be dragons.

It is, after all, called the "Mad River."

—James Payne
Brooklyn, 2021

James McDevitt-Stredney (b. 1989, Columbus, Ohio) earned a BFA in 2012 from the Columbus College of Art and Design. McDevitt-Stredney has shown at Cooler (Brooklyn, NY), Open House (Brooklyn, NY), Quality Gallery (Oakland, CA), and Skylab (Columbus, Ohio). He's created a number of DIY art spaces and runs a small clothing brand called Spring Pond. McDevitt-Stredney is the director and co-founder of No Place Gallery in Columbus, Ohio, where he lives and works.