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Art in Review

Lee Bontecou: 'Recent Work: Sculpture and Drawing'

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Freedman Art

25 East 73rd Street, Manhattan

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Now 80, Lee Bontecou has traveled a long way since her militaristic reliefs of bent rods, wire and canvas made her famous in the late 1950s and '60s. In subsequent decades she traded brutalist confrontation for formal delicacy and mental travel into fabulous other universes.

If Terry Gilliam were to make a movie based on Thomas Pynchon's zany historical novel "Against the Day," he might consider Ms. Bontecou's recent suspended sculptures as models for the airship *Inconvenience*.

Constructed with a model maker's craft and Jules Vernian imagination, Ms. Bontecou's assemblages have bowed, sail-like elements made of porcelain and smudgy canvas that seem to be filled by a steady, ethereal wind. Attached below the largest one are long, slender structures like sleds, made of soldered wire, from which teardrop-shaped lead fishing weights hang at different heights, serving either for ballast or as sensing devices.

In hallucinatory drawings Ms. Bontecou envisions submarine worlds, where bug-eyed fish with sharp teeth are refracted and fragmented by shimmering stripes and arabesque swirls. In contrast to the flying machines, these take us down into the depths of the Dionysian id, where annihilation and illumination are equally possible.

This exhibition also includes two low wooden boxes filled with white sand and many handmade and found objects, including porcelain orbs with open mouths and baby teeth, parts of nautical and aeronautical models and botanical curiosities. They evoke an image of the artist as a child at play on the shore of oceanic infinitude.



An untitled Lee Bontecou hanging sculpture of porcelain, wires and leaded weights is among her recent works on view at Freedman Art.