

Project #10 Richard Klein "The Understory" Opens September 25

Radio interview today September 14



Hello all,

ICEHOUSE Project Space is excited to announce the opening of Richard Klein's site-specific project "The Understory." The exhibition will kick off with a reception Saturday, September 25, 4-6 pm.

Richard Klein's longstanding interests in history, geology and the natural world have led him to a nine-month investigation of the long-gone iron industry of Northwestern Connecticut. This industry commenced in the region in the 1700s after surveyors in Salisbury discovered that their compasses were being redirected by something magnetic beneath their feet, which turned out to be high-quality iron. Within five years ore was being mined and furnaces in almost every town burned day and night to produce needed items for the colonies from scythes to nails to anchors. It was a labor-intensive and dirty business, though greatly enriching for the owners, and most of our lovely hillsides were denuded of trees in order to make the charcoal that could generate temperatures high enough to coax iron from iron ore. Eventually the iron industry became engaged in producing munitions, first for the

American side in the Revolutionary War and later for the Union in the Civil War. The industry was defunct by the early years of the 20th century and the furnaces abandoned. One of its last gasps was a contract the Ames Ironworks in Falls Village had with Abraham Lincoln to produce 15 cannons capable of firing a 100 lb ball six miles. The war ended before they could be used.

But if you know where to look, furnace foundations can be discovered in each of the Northwest Corner towns - a total of 81 furnaces of various types were located here. Richard and I climbed through brambles and prickerbushes to find the remains of the Sharon furnace by the creek in Sharon Valley and visited restored furnaces in Canaan and Lime Rock as well as flooded ore pits in Lakeville and Amenia. Richard located the remains of Cornwall's and Kent's furnaces and everywhere he went he looked for leftover scraps of iron. With these together with larger chunks given by local historians in one satchel, and large polypore "woody" fungi he cut from dying trees he encountered on his quests in another, Richard journeyed to the Green Foundry in Eliot, Maine, where the proprietors direct casted the fungi in Richard's Connecticut iron.

As Richard has written in a precis that can be read in full [here](#), all his journeys have resulted in an exquisite installation:

***The Understory** is composed of native iron and wood that have been reclaimed and repurposed, not as a historical recounting, but rather as a meditation on deep time and the cycles of both nature and civilization. The fungi, which have been directly burnt out of molds and cast in iron, come from trees in the northwestern hills of Connecticut, and the large, burnt wood form is a fragment of an architectural column from a nineteenth-century house that was torn down in Canaan – a town whose economy was partially based on the iron industry. At the project's culmination, some of the cast iron fungi will be returned to furnace sites, where they will be allowed to slowly oxidize back into the landscape.*



Join us for an opening reception for this exquisite work on Saturday, September 25, 4-6 pm.

**Richard Klein to be interviewed on WPKN, today
Tuesday, September 14 at 4:30**

Please tune in on September 14 at 4:30 to hear Richard Klein discuss "The Understory" with host Valerie Richardson on Southern Connecticut's listener-supported radio station WPKN (89.5) and streaming live at wpkn.org "listen."

I hope you can listen to Richard share the backstory of "The Understory." It is sure to be fascinating!