



Pulse Point: Glass Claws, 2007. Blown-glass lobster claws, sheet glass with UV-transfer CT-scan prints, wooden plinths. L 96, W 96 in.

Richard Remsen

"Pulse Point"

Daniel Kany Gallery
Portland, Maine
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Pulse Point (2007) is a departure for Richard Remsen, an artist based in Maine who is best known for making shiny glass and bronze fishing lures at an exaggerated size, taking otherwise ordinary objects into the realm of sculpture. Remsen's new work is far larger than the early lures, which measure only about 20 inches in length, yet as in the earlier work, scale is employed to take figurative work into fresh territory.

Pulse Point is a collection of 80 hand-blown glass lobster claws. The random pile of discarded shells—apparent remnants of a fine feast—is arranged on four plate-glass sheets, each printed with CT-scan images of lobster claws, medical scans by a technician who is a friend of the artist. The four glass sheets are cantilevered off a supporting white base. When lit from above with hot white light, the CT-scan images depict an interior dimension, which is projected onto the white base.

Pulse Point is a major piece, both in size and scope, and easily Remsen's most ambitious work to date. The base itself is eight feet square, so this is a very large installation-sculpture, with multiple dimensions and reference points.

The claws are the principal focal point. They rest in a pile atop the floor-mounted sculpture, strewn in a mess. The claws represent a shell midden, a heap of clam or mussel shells signaling an ancestor's dinner spot, often found along a river or bay. These middens are important to archaeologists because they offer tangible evidence of the diets and habits of past societies.

As he has proven with his lure series, Remsen is a master of detail. Each claw is oversized compared to those on the one- to one-and-a-half-pound lobsters we're used to eating today, but not at the expense of realism. There is never any question about what we are looking at. He blows each claw individually, manipulating the shape and color so each form is distinct. Each is its own vessel, and worthy of individual display. Indeed, at the exhibition in Portland, Maine, the gallery sold individual claws.

Remsen, who is well versed in bronze and other media, could have made a similar piece using another material. But his choice of glass was brilliant. A lobster shell, compared to a clam's, suggests growth and expansion, a skin meant to be shed. Glass connotes a similar notion of flux. Similarly, glass allows a pass-through of light, and the realization of light and revelation is part of the appeal of *Pulse Point*.

Remsen made muted color choices. Lobsters don't turn red until they've been cooked, and Remsen offers a range of lobster colors, from its living hue of dark green to its beet-red afterlife. Some claws blend colors. Here, in the intimacy of the individual claws,

Remsen's work suggests the influence of William Morris.

The arrangement of the claws appears random, but in fact the positioning of the multiple claws is the result of careful consideration. Remsen has only installed the piece once before, in 2007 at the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine. When he installed it then, he photographed the piece from multiple angles so he could re-create it.

Remsen's piece engages the viewer in a discussion about the intersection of human culture, sea life, archaeology, and science. In archaeology, we can only surmise what took place in the past, based on our interpretation of the evidence. Science, with its X-rays, CT-scans, and probing ability to see within, offers something more precise.

Remsen studied at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and received his bachelor's degree in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design. He was at RISD with Toots Zynsky and Dale Chihuly. Remsen opened one of the first hot glass studios in Maine in the 1970s, and is part of a growing community of glass artists in the state. Maine's community of glass artists goes back to the early days of the contemporary glass movement in America and the founding of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts on the Maine coast.

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