

# LORRIE FREDETTE: THE GREAT SILENCE

Cape Cod Museum of Art  
60 Hope Lane  
Dennis, Massachusetts

Through September 25

**SUSPENDED FROM THIN SHIMMERING FILAMENTS, THOUSANDS OF HONEY-COLORED PODS CREATE AN UNDULATING CANOPY OF SIMPLE BEAUTY IN LORRIE FREDETTE'S INSTALLATION "THE GREAT SILENCE." THE PODS GENTLY MOVE, CROWD AND JOSTLE ONE ANOTHER AS THEIR COLLECTIVE MASS SPREADS IN A WAVE-LIKE MOTION ACROSS A 36-FOOT EXPANSE.**

Fredette's piece was two years in the making, and the installation itself required a small army of 13 people, over the course of four days, to hang it beneath the skylight in the gallery. At first glance, "The Great Silence" is a construct of simple elegance. Employing a neutral color palette and three components — a metal grid frame, nylon line and muslin and beeswax pods — the work is minimalistic and invokes an almost meditative state. Upon contemplation, however, one discovers an underlying complexity in this visually rich piece.

Initially the work appears to be static, composed of identical elements and designed less for interaction than pure observation. The filaments, strung from a hand wrought metal grid, are strung with occasional glass beads and create a visually dynamic interplay of lines. The pods, of which there are 2,618, glow from the indirect sunlight from the skylight and move in silent motion, reacting to the natural flow of air and the disruption of those currents as the viewer moves under and around the work. Each pod, of varying dimensions and facets and hung at specific differing lengths, is unique unto itself and contains subtle surface irregularities. As one moves around the gallery, an engaging dynamic takes place as each view offers another visual dimension to explore.

In part, what makes Fredette's work so unusual, and hence powerful, is that she finds inspiration from the medical sciences and has a particular interest in microscopic imagery. Fredette considers herself a landscape painter who works in a reductive manner, "but my landscape is the skin and the body." A native of Massachusetts, Fredette became interested in the smallpox epidemic,

brought here by European settlers, which decimated 75 percent of the native population on Cape Cod between 1614-1617. "The Great Silence" is Fredette's interpretation of the virus and its history. "With smallpox as my host, I set out to uncover the story around this epidemic and the altered memories associated with it through the years of retelling the story," she explained. In this context, each pod represents either a molecule of the virus or an individual memory; the mass of the canopy, with its convex and concave pattern, suggests not only a layer of smallpox tissue, but the collective memory as well.

Process is an essential aspect to how Fredette works. A fan of organizational systems and statistical analysis, her works start out as drawings that define the structure and almost mathematical relationship between parts. While it would have been easier and much less time consuming to use machines or molds to make the various elements in "The Great Silence," Fredette insisted on making each piece by hand. Descending from a line of tailors, Fredette's pods are made from hand-stitched, unbleached muslin, which is then coated with seven layers of encaustic. The metal frame was bent entirely by hand and then soldered.

In spite of its underlying organization, "The Great Silence" is very organic and its imperfections add to its authenticity, ultimately creating a series of juxtapositions in which the deadly and the beautiful, the complex and simple, and the individual and the collective whole engage in an intriguing and surprising dialogue.

| Britt Beedenbender



*The Great Silence*, 2011, beeswax, tree resin, muslin, brass, steel and nylon line.

