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Robert Kinmont: 'trying to return home educated'

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Earth, water, wood, earth: Robert Kinmont's sculptures made from natural materials at Alexander and Bonin

Art in Review

Alexander and Bonin
132 10th Avenue, between 18th and 19th Streets, Chelsea
Through May 24

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The California sculptor and Conceptual artist Robert Kinmont took a decades-long break from art making, dropping out in the early 1970s to become a teacher at a rural school that he built himself and then re-emerging around 2005. His latest show, devoted mainly to works from the past two years, suggests that he still has some catching up to do.

His long, shallow, trough-like copper boxes, filled with water or earth and sometimes adorned with texts hand-formed from copper wire, seem stuck in a post-Minimalist groove. A segmented box containing samples of dirt from five different roads, for instance, could pass for one of Robert Smithson's "nonsites" (little piles of rocks, dirt or the like meant to conjure entropic landscapes).

Some works do reveal an exquisite sensitivity to materials, even if they could use a few new ideas. A box of pine wood holding broken glass, snow goose feathers and a file-like sheaf of papers, for example, plays with texture and tactility. And a delicately curved little floor piece made from carved and jointed cylinders of cottonwood brings to mind the organic-looking sculpture of Martin Puryear.

A large piece in the back gallery, however, finds Mr. Kinmont poring over ephemera without a clear sense of purpose. Titled "Listen," it's an installation of boxed and pinned-up notes, sketches and photographs that might one day amount to something but, for now, looks like an intimidating backlog.