



Auckland

Chiara Corbelletto *Morphic Field*

Bath Street Gallery
27 November–21 December 2013

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Here are two kinds of objects: modular constructions made of polypropylene called *Organizing Principles* and free-form manipulations of metal mesh called *Space Embryos*. The former are variously sprawling and discrete multiplications of a single motif—a three-pronged shape (for some reason it reminds me of a Sumo wrestler's belt) that comes in blue or grey. The mesh sculptures each have tubular passages within a larger cylinder; some are free-standing while others hang from the ceiling.

Chiara Corbelletto, Italian by birth, has developed a reputation in New Zealand for visually dazzling and conceptually intriguing modular sculptures. Her latest works are highly accomplished examples of contemporary sculpture. They appear to be the product of concepts first, manipulation of form and material only secondarily. Corbelletto is inspired by advancements in the scientific analysis of matter and theories about the structure of the universe. (It is a big topic, certainly, but that makes it all the more fertile for the ongoing production of art.)

Taken in tandem, Corbelletto's concepts and forms are clever, interesting and curiously personal in

spite of the scope of their intentions.

The precision and refinement of the polypropylene sculptures should not be construed as negating the expressive potential of art. What Corbelletto expresses is an inquisitive excitement about the heights of human perception and knowledge.

For the viewer, there is considerable pleasure to be gained from exploring

(left) Chiara Corbelletto's *Morphic Field* at Bath Street Gallery, November 2013

(below) CHIARA CORBELLETTO
Space enclosing configuration 3 2013
Polypropylene, 520 x 550 x 430 mm.

the complex internal spaces of the sculptures. The mesh works—the best of which is *Topological events in a small cosmic landscape* (2013)—also offer the quiet thrill that comes with material finesse and, as one moves around the sculptures, the fine wire strands pulse and vibrate. There is a fascinating tension between surface and volume; between the distant ethereality of the sculptures as opposed to the seams (and the artist's decisions) conspicuous up close; between modest human craft and scale in relation to the immensity of cosmological theories and phenomena.

I can see three interconnected problems that Corbelletto confronts. There is the danger of her sculptures being treated as merely nice patterns; the ideas behind them do not prevail over their decorativeness. Conversely, the visual form of the sculptures is dictated by the particular meanings the artist has in mind; they are illustrations of ideas or theories, and only a few of the polypropylene ones, such as *Space enclosing configuration 3* (2013), are satisfying in their own right. Finally, on top of the things that are good about the sculptures (their ingenuity and feeling), one craves the additional spark of inspiration that would make them seriously good.

