

JIM MELCHERT

Channel One, 2015
Glazed broken porcelain, 23 1/2 x 23 1/2 in



COURTESY ANGLIM GILBERT GALLERY

ALISON HARRIS

The Knot

“You twist it through like this.”

The man holds a blade of grass that he has twisted into a loop. He eases the tip of the blade into a knot. The boy looks on, following the movements of his father’s fingers. The concentrated silence is broken when the father leans back, dangling a looped blade of grass with a slipknot at one end.

“Don’t move,” he tells his son. “You have to wait and hold it like this.” He shifts his position so the boy can see how he holds the blade of grass. The loop hangs loosely from his calloused fingers. The boy, transfixed, waits for the next move.

In the stark afternoon light the boy’s father moves like a magician. The summer heat has stunned the world into stillness. It is an hour when color is drained out of the landscape, turning vivid views of olive trees, pinewoods, and painted façades into faded postcards. The father and son sit in an untidy garden waiting and listening for a rustling movement in the crack of a stone wall. They are sitting side by side on a strip of cement. Just beyond the cement is a patch of soil and a wire fence. The sea and coastline are visible beyond the spindly roses and rosemary growing against the fence.

The boy crouches, ready to be transported by his father’s wizardry. The father half kneels, folding his lanky frame so he can look into his son’s face. He holds the blade of grass like a talisman. He is a child again. “Make sure you don’t throw a shadow,” says the father.

The boy looks away from the wall, wondering where his father’s shadow has gone. His father is sitting on it. And then is not. His father lurches forward. The boy misses the scuttling movement and rapid flick of a tail. He sees his father’s smile and then the lassoed lizard caught in the blade of grass.

“You see,” says his father. “This is how you do it.”

The boy nods at the throttled lizard flailing in midair.

“Here, now you try.” The father places the lizard on the cement slab, releasing the slipknot from its neck. The lizard lies dazed, its whole tiny being pinpointed by a frantic heartbeat. The boy takes the grass-blade. It trembles in his unsteady hand as he lowers it toward the lizard’s head. The loop flips between his stubby fingers, missing the lizard’s head. Roused, the lizard scrambles to safety in the garden’s undergrowth.