



Performance Art: Mary Coble @ Conner Contemporary

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When she said endurance performance she wasn't kidding. Mary Coble spent the afternoon in a sun-drenched courtyard executing the near-Sisyphusian task of carrying water.



A looming metal frame provided the curtain rod for ropes upon which gallons and gallons of water hung in clear plastic jugs, each neatly labeled with the street in DC from which it was collected. Twenty-five ropes with eight jugs of water hung on each. Coble was going to carry them all.

As observers peered out from the shade, Coble, face red and drenched in sweat, walked purposefully toward one of the columns. She would climb up a rusty ladder to the top, some fifteen feet up, remove the top jug from its s-hook, carry the 2.5 gallons down and across the courtyard before ascending yet another ladder to the top of a three-tiered fountain of sorts.



The fountain/purification system/hourglass structure was comprised of three glass bowls of varying size. Coble would pour off a bit of her jug into the top bowl, where the water would slowly swirl to the bottom before draining down into the next bowl which was filled with (what looked to be) charcoal filters. From this next station, the liquid would drip down into a third catchment bowl where a pump was busy pushing the water back up through a hose to the top bowl.

Coble would rest for only about 7 seconds as she poured water down through the bowls, before capping the jug, climbing carefully down the ladder and back over to the water curtain, climbing back up to hang the jug and take another one down, repeating the process over and over and over.

The library of water was filled with different shades, from clear to cloudy to a muddy brown. But as Coble emulated the arduous routine of so many around the world, her arms straining with the weight of the jugs, the fountain slowly but surely filled with clear water, water from many locations now mixed and recirculated into a single purified source.















