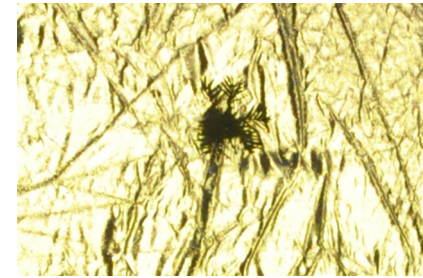


YARA FLORES

Portable Monstrance #21
(The Common Yew, *Taxusbaccata*)







The standard monstrance comes into prominent use in Western Christendom in the thirteenth century, in connection with a new emphasis on specifically visual piety regarding the “Eucharist” — a piece of bread that has undergone sanctifying rituals which some believe convert it into the actual flesh of Jesus Christ. The conventional “solar”-style monstrance is a gilt disk mounted on a pole or stand, and fitted with a central aperture (often called the “lunette”) where a portion of the Eucharist could be mounted for display and worship.

By means of the “Portable Monstrance” I endeavor to configure scenes of suitable reverence for the transcendent and mysterious immanence latent in all things — i.e., in each and every instance of matter (living, non-living, synthetic, natural, debased, commodified). There is no speck of planetary ordure unworthy of a haloed instance of perfect reverence.

And so, here, we encounter — and attend upon, for a moment, in supernal radiance — the apical sprig of a wind-dwarfed common yew (*Taxus baccata*) found in a large, un-serviced concrete planter just a little above Harlem on the island of Manhattan (Washington Heights). I pierced my bounce-card with a pocket-knife on the spot to make the image.

Archaeology suggest that the yew was among the most sacred trees of Neolithic northern Europe. The bark and leaves are highly toxic, as are the seeds, though the soft, red seed-bearing fruit bodies (known colloquially in English as “snot berries”) are edible — mucosal and sweet.