

## For Immediate Release

**Robb Putnam**

***Exiles***

**15 November 2025 – 10 January 2026**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, November 15, 5-7pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Exiles*, a new exhibition by Robb Putnam that marks a significant departure from his previous animal-based sculptures and signals his bold new foray into abstraction. While these works differ formally from his earlier practice, they continue his deep engagement with fiber and textiles as his primary medium. Putnam sustains his exploration of psychological themes with a focus on the tension between vulnerability and protection, and the shifting boundaries of intimacy. The exhibition marks his seventh solo show with our gallery.

The exhibition's title, *Exiles* refers to a psychological theory that conceives of the mind as a collection of subpersonalities, each with its own emotional landscape. Among these various "exiles" are the hidden aspects of self that hold our most painful and fragile feelings, often rooted in early experiences. This framework became the conceptual starting point for Putnam's studio investigations, evolving into a series of tactile, emotive abstractions that embody both the defense and exposure of the self. Each work in this series is based on rounded, organic forms that alternately expand outward or fold inward. Their minimalist geometries belie the intricate labor of their construction with dense and intricate surfaces of tangled thread, fabric and plant life that seem to pulse with emotional life. Some bristle with protective spines, others reach outward with delicate protrusions, and still others conceal fragile interiors beneath translucent veils of thread. Subtle, freckle-like constellations appear across the surfaces, suggesting both growth and scarring. Through these layered gestures, Putnam evokes the porous threshold between inner feeling and outward expression.

The surfaces of these pieces recall the softness of fur and the rawness of wounds, simultaneously tender and unsettling. They suggest cocoons, organs or protective membranes that hold traces of emotional residue. Stitching becomes a metaphor for both injury and repair – a familiar language of mending in Putnam's work that acknowledges the pain inherent in healing. The tactile complexity of each work underscores the artist's ongoing meditation on transformation and resilience. Within *Exiles*, Putnam reflects on the psychic defenses that form in response to a society that often rewards hardness over empathy. His sculptural abstractions embody the paradox of strength and fragility, suggesting that even within states of isolation or pain lies the potential for connection and renewal. In their physical and psychological depth, these works speak to the resilience of the human spirit and the quiet hope for a better existence.

Putnam received a BFA from the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore and an MFA at Mills College in Oakland. He is a recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. His work has been included in several museum exhibitions such as *Encounters: Honoring the Animal in Ourselves*, Palo Alto Art Center in Palo Alto, CA; *Peace on Earth*, Museum of Art and History in Lancaster, CA; *New Threads: Perspectives in Contemporary Fiber Arts* at the Laband Art Gallery, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles; *Sew What* at the Children's Museum of the Arts in New York; *Travelers: Objects of Dream and Revelation* at the Bellevue Arts Museum, WA and *Elements of Nature* and *Larger than Life: Exploring Scale in Contemporary Art* at the Bedford Gallery, Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, CA. His work is included in the collections of the Palm Springs Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, Frederick R. Weisman Collection and 21C Hotels and Museum as well as many private collections.