

FEATURES

28 | NOT-SO-PRETTY PAPER *by Jessica Hemmings*

The deeply unsettling wallpaper Charlotte Perkins Gilman visualized in a short story more than a hundred years ago has finally come to life.

34 | A COLLECTOR OF QUILTS AND STORIES *by Jacqueline Ruyak*

For two and a half decades, Eli Leon has been pursuing and documenting improvisational African-American quilts.

40 | JANE RICHLOVSKY: UNPACKING THE AMERICAN DREAM *by Mary Lane*

In these paintings on textiles, the textiles' patterns are an integral part of the story.

44 | THE IMPERMANENT MADE PERMANENT: TEXTILES, PATTERN, AND THE MIGRATION OF A MEDIUM *by Deborah Valoma*

The structural patterns of textiles have influenced aesthetics throughout history.

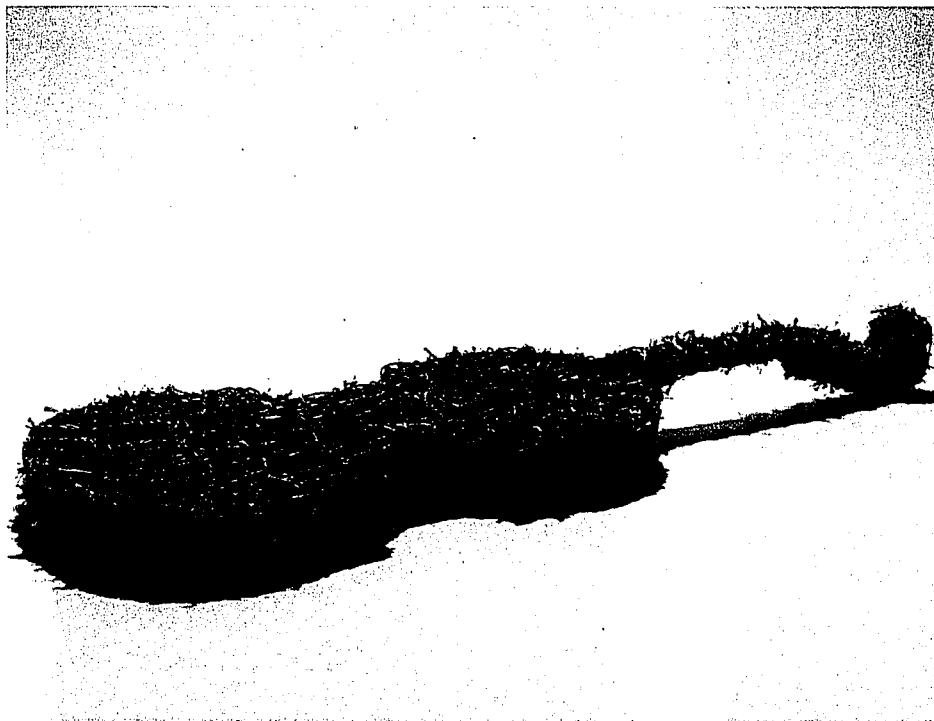
50 | THE CAPTIVATING CIRCLE *by Lynn Cornelius Jablonski*

Three artists—Ilze Aviks, Janice Lessman-Moss, and Donna Sharrett—whose work harnesses the symbolism of this powerful shape.

56 | SUMMER CONFERENCE EXHIBITS: A SAMPLING

A glimpse of work seen at the surface design and batik conferences this summer.

ON THE COVER: Jennifer Angus, Goliathus Hercules (detail of wall), 2004; Heteropteryx dilatata, Phyllium giganteum, Kallima anchluss, Lophacris cristata, Pomphoina imperatorial, Eupholus bennetti, various grasshoppers, and stag beetles. The installation was on display at the John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. To see more of Angus's work and wallpaper designers that cross the boundaries between decoration and expression, see page 28. ABOVE LEFT: Elizabeth Keithline, The Empty Chair, 2000; copper wire, charcoal; 18" x 6" x 6". Photo: Erik Gould. Keithline is profiled on page 22. ABOVE RIGHT: Nancy Middlebrook, Cinco de Mayo, 2004; woven with hand-dyed cotton; 30" x 29". Photo: Ken Yanoviak. Middlebrook is profiled on page 20.



Elizabeth Keithline: Objects Lost and Found Again



A WEAVER BY BACKGROUND, Elizabeth Keithline now transforms ordinary objects into sculpture. She has been moving steadily toward three dimensions for the last ten years, faithfully following an undeniable urge to bring her weaving into the sculptural realm.

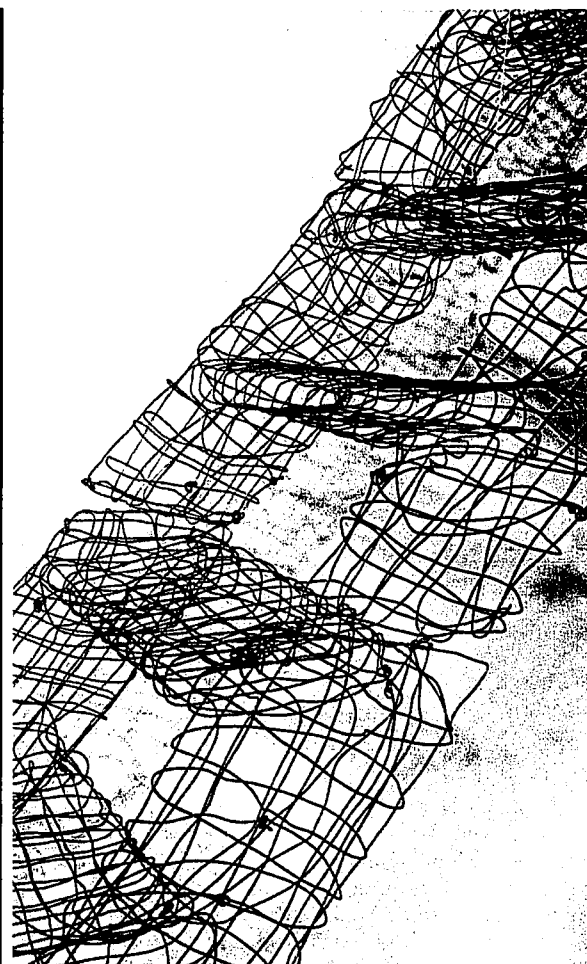
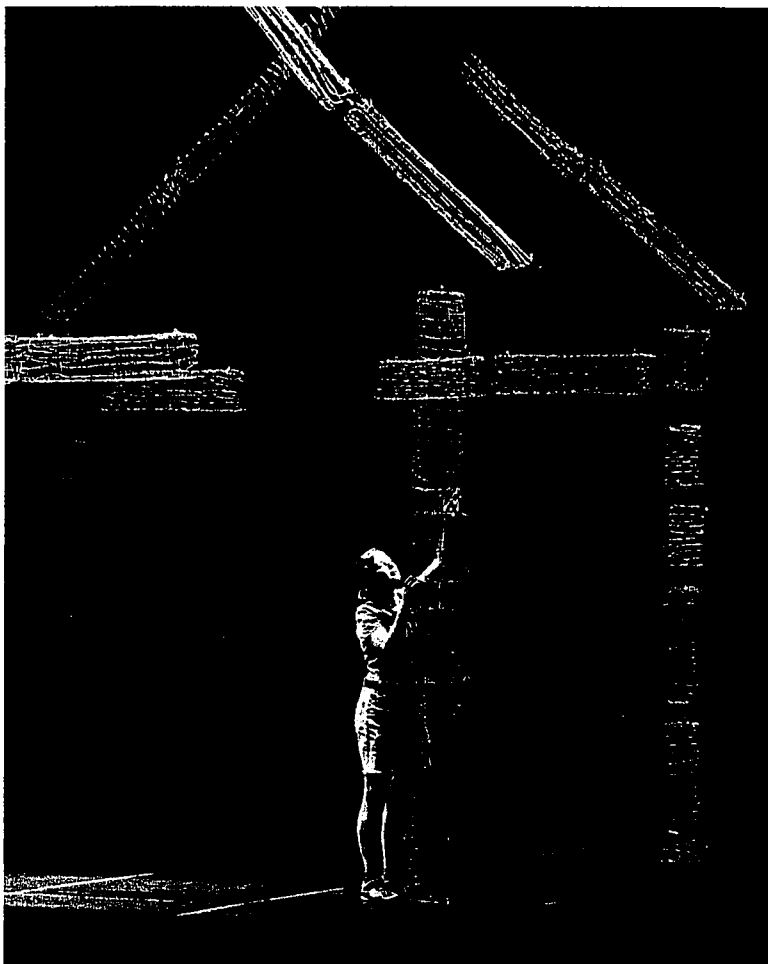
In so doing, she has developed a highly individualistic process that has both informed and become part of the conceptual underpinnings of her work.

Keithline is still weaving, but these days she weaves steel wire around objects. One of her first successful three-dimensional experiments involved a wooden Victorian chair she found by the side of the road and dragged into her studio. After she encased it in a woven wire shell, she faced the problem of how to remove the chair so that only the wire would remain. Borrowing a concept from the sculptors of ages past who used the "lost wax" process to burn out a wax original in order to cast a bronze positive, Keithline set the chair on fire in her suburban yard and burned it slowly to ash. What remained was a steel ghost of the original chair, tempered but intact.

Now that she had found a three-dimensional process that worked for her, Keithline began the series she continues

ABOVE: Violin (with detail), 2002; woven copper wire filled with embroidery floss; 2" x 18" x 6". This piece was included in Trashformations East at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts, earlier this year. Photos: Peter Goldberg. LEFT: The artist at work on a commission, The Arch (steel wire, pipe), in 2004. Cardboard boxes have been burned from inside the wire structure. Photo: Thomas Palmer.

today, which she calls *Lost Box*. Another early piece is a violin, again burned out, but with the interior space of the wire structure filled with scraps of colored yarn. It is almost an homage or a farewell to traditional weaving and, not incidentally, to the colorful world of fiber. Keithline's present palette is infinitely more subtle and monochromatic, limited to the marks left by fire on wire. Since that first chair, she has woven and burned benches, doors, windows, a piano, and even a staircase. Now, with her *Lost House*



ABOVE LEFT: *Lost House*, 2005; woven .090 steel wire; 16' x 12' x 12'. This piece will be installed November 12–January 6, 2006, at the Newport Art Museum in Rhode Island. ABOVE RIGHT: *Staircase*, 2005; woven .090 steel wire; 8' x 2' x 8'. This piece will be shown November 11–March 18, 2006, at the Society for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh; Keithline is one of thirty-two finalists for the Society's 2005 Raphael Prize. Photos: Peter Goldberg.

project on view in the Newport Art Museum in Rhode Island this fall, she tackles an entire house.

Keithline works in an old barn just steps from her house on a small acreage outside Providence, Rhode Island. She lives with her husband, three school-age children, and a rambunctious, long-legged German shepherd. Indeed, the domestic swirl that surrounds her in daily life seems always present in her work as well, expressing itself in her choices of objects

that allude to both her home life and the energy that exists within a house itself. There is something of the archeologist in Keithline in the way she hunts and finds objects with a past, and in the way she allows fire to temper a piece, imbuing it with the experience-based life force that is sometimes felt with archeological artifacts. And there is something of the alchemist at work here as well in the way she brings basic elements together: the found object, the wire, and finally the fire. Ultimately Keithline does not and cannot exercise complete control over her work. She aims instead for a creation both metaphorical and magical.

The *Lost House* project is Keithline's biggest and most ambitious to date, and it takes her in an entirely new direction. Previously her sculptures were discrete, self-contained objects. With *Lost House* she works for the first time with an entire gallery space. Creating a life-sized impression of a house by hanging wire

beams from the gallery ceiling, Keithline has made a space that can actually be entered and experienced. It is a minimalist sketch of a house, not entirely fleshed out and left intentionally incomplete. With this format Keithline puts more emphasis on concept rather than process. *Lost House* speaks of the elusive nature of memory and how the past lives on only as a fragmented remnant. The understated strength of this project bodes well for Keithline's future endeavors should she continue in this new direction of emphasizing spatial experience over simple observation and encouraging both emotional response and conceptual interpretation. ☛

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