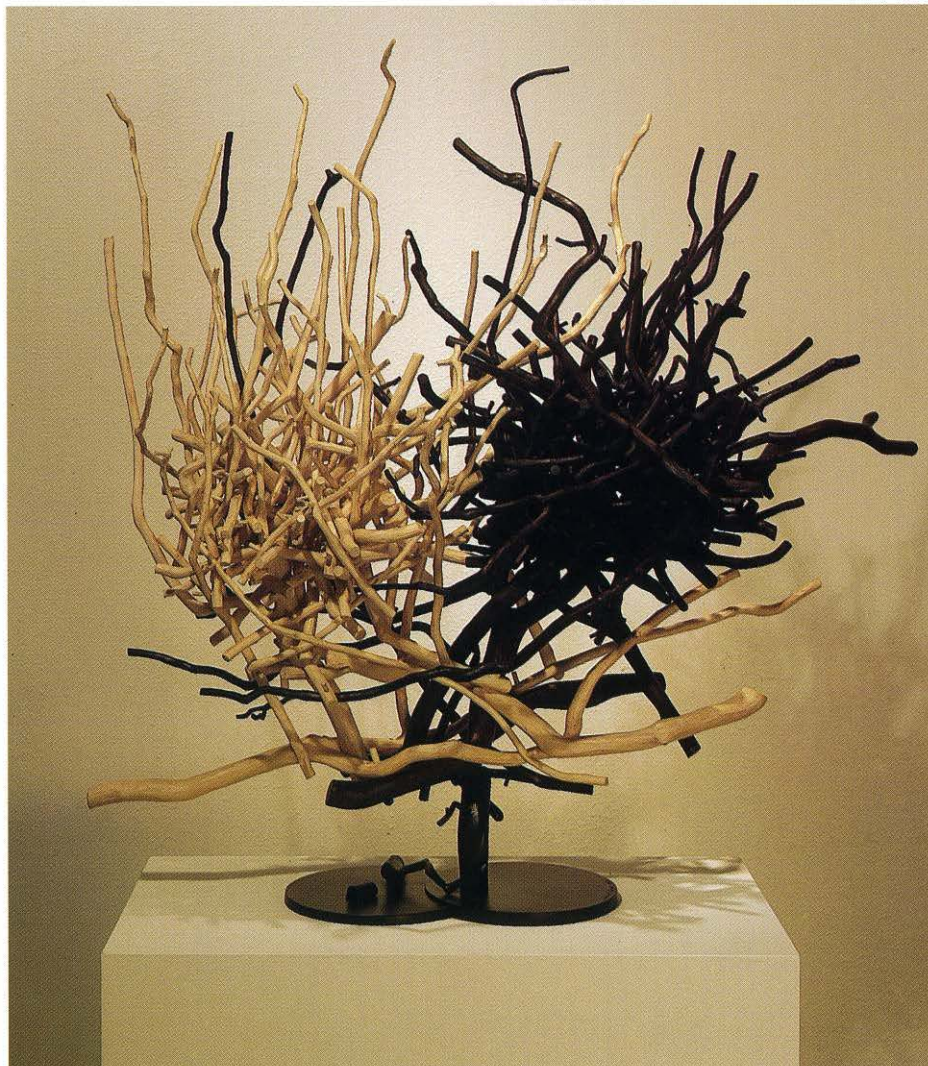


SHERRY OWENS

THIS SEED OF SPACE



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

JANUARY 10 FEBRUARY 14 1998
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Sherry Owens

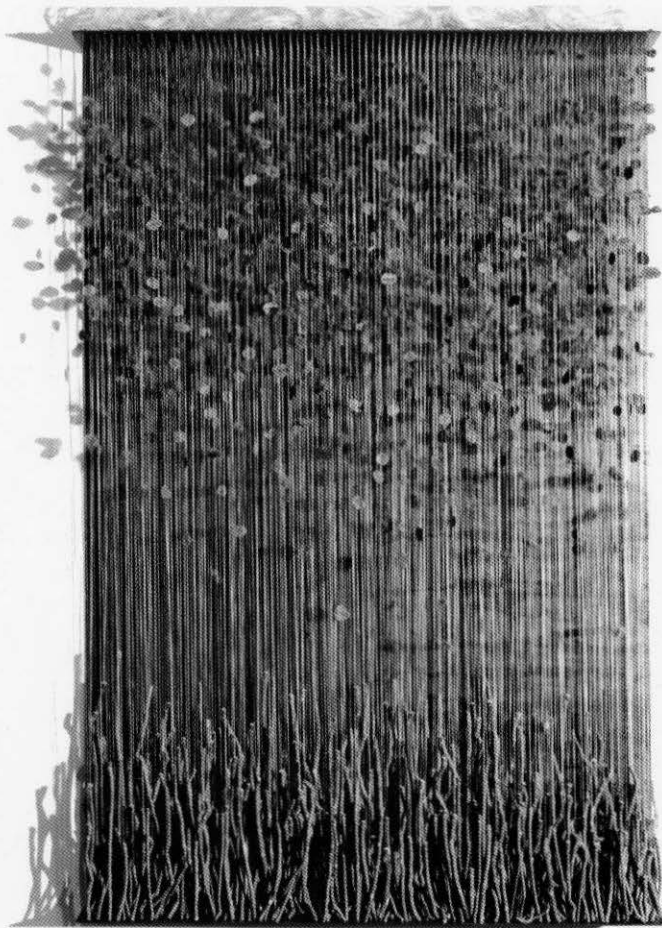
Sherry Owens' artistic practice involves a good bit of collecting and gathering, weaving and whittling. Her sculptures seem remarkably familiar at first glance, referring as they often do to forms found in nature. One comes upon Owens' works as one might stumble across an interesting botanical formation in the forest. They remind us of the awe that such encounters produced in childhood, in our earliest experiences of nature. They remind us of the fear of the unknown that may also have attended such encounters.

Within Owens' sculptures, however, the patient viewer frequently finds a retreat, a haven—a secluded and enclosed space. While their outer structures may seem chaotic or random, these sculptures contain a carefully constructed interior space, hidden from hurried glances. These interiors reveal, through their careful manufacture, an intellect and intentionality at work. They are geometric spaces—perfectly shaped conical, cylindrical, spherical voids—that clearly point to the laborious involvement of the human hand. The juxtaposition of this manmade, carved space within the seemingly natural structure is both a surprise and a comfort. The creation of these spaces seems analogous (on a micro-cosmic scale) to man's interactions in nature, or at least the most sensitive ones. The spaces seem akin to shelters, nests, secret hiding

places in the woods. They resonate with archetypal havens in nursery rhymes, safe places in the darkness.

Yet, Owens' spaces-within-structures are not, in fact, utilitarian. They can perform as neither shelter nor vessel nor container. While beautiful and sensitive, these spaces are, in fact, dysfunctional. The viewer must think twice about residing (even metaphorically) within, and must read them more closely as metaphors. It is, of course, no mere

coincidence that Owens fashions these interior spaces into shapes that recall Minimalist, geometric sculpture. The artist reimagines these reductive precedents as works that did not spring exclusively from the minds of their creators. They might just as easily have issued from nature herself. One thinks of other works in which geometric voids are carved within natural environments, such as Michael Heizer's *Double Negative*. Owens' sculptures are Earthworks writ small.



The Slow Growth of Sameness, 1995, crepe myrtle, hair, linen, lead, steel.
51" x 32" x 4 3/4", private collection. Photo Credit: Harrison Evans

To varying degrees, Owens' works engage the traditional dichotomy of *the natural* and *the manmade*. A work such as *Water* seems to derive its formal structures almost entirely from those found in nature. Its rhythmic pattern of upright twigs could easily be explained by a natural pattern of growth, or the effects of water in motion. The horizontal elements that entwine these vertical members seem, however, more purposeful—less *natural*. And yet, similar structures might be made by nest-building birds. We are challenged to stretch our very definition of what is *natural*. Is a nest intentionally built by a bird *natural*? Or is it architecture? Why is it more or less so than a similar structure built by man? One begins to accept that the traditional binarism of natural/manmade may need revision.

Owens continues to force the question. She is not content to present *Water* in the expected materials, as they might be found in nature. Instead she casts the whole in bronze, adding a further *manufactured* element to the process. This material alludes both to a heightened sense of value (ascribed by man), and to a greater permanence for the construction. Bronze is laden with worth, almost arbitrarily attached to the metal, and sculpture cast in bronze is afforded an historic, *for-the-ages* importance.

Similarly, in *The Marriage of the Sun and the Moon* and *Navigating the Waters*, Owens begins with

structures that seem to have emerged whole from nature. Looking closely, however, one witnesses one of Owens' major achievements—the collapsing of the distance between that which seems natural and that which is manmade. One imagines that the opposing colors in *Marriage* might have just as likely emerged through environmental factors as through the artist's manipulation. The stripping and dyeing of the branches creates beautiful patinas through which the natural wood grains shine. The sculpture's delicate asymmetrical balance is achieved through the cooperation of its forged steel (manmade) base "branches" and the (natural) wood ones above.

In *Navigating the Waters*, the gently bending upright branches seem the result of a persistent breeze or steady current. The carefully crafted interior hollow seems equal parts birdnest, manmade geometric structure, and naturally occurring eddy or whirlpool. In a single sculpture, therefore, Owens is able to allude simultaneously to three distinct possibilities along the continuum of the natural to the manmade.

In a few works, such as *We Dream of Intimacy*, Owens adds the possibility of a more overt narrative to the sculptures' metaphoric properties. In this case, the *outer-mass-containing-the-geometric-space-within* has met its match: a companion form that would seemingly fill its inner space. Any reading of the possible sexual

narratives here (in the phallic and concave forms) is immediately challenged, however, by Owens' material choices. The hollowed vessel component is constructed of stiff crepe myrtle twigs, while its counterpart is covered in a soft down of linen fibers. Owens' subversion of the traditionally ascribed tactile qualities of the metaphoric sexual body brings the viewer back to the sculpture at hand, and limits anthropomorphizing readings the viewer may wish to assign to the work.

Ultimately, Sherry Owens' work marries the hand of intentionality—that of the artist—with nature. One senses her enormous reverence for naturally occurring materials, and for the patterns and order that lie therein. Owens' reordering of the natural, and her realignment of geometric, Minimalist purity with it, results in extraordinarily sensitive and beautiful works. These sculptures simultaneously "perfect" the products of the natural world and naturalize those of the intellectual realm, collapsing the distance between the two and effecting a remarkable reconciliation.

Don Bacigalupi, Ph.D.
Director and Chief Curator
Blaffer Gallery, the Art Museum
of the University of Houston
December 1997

SHERRY OWENS

1950, Born in Mt. Vernon, TX
Currently lives and works in Dallas, TX.

EDUCATION

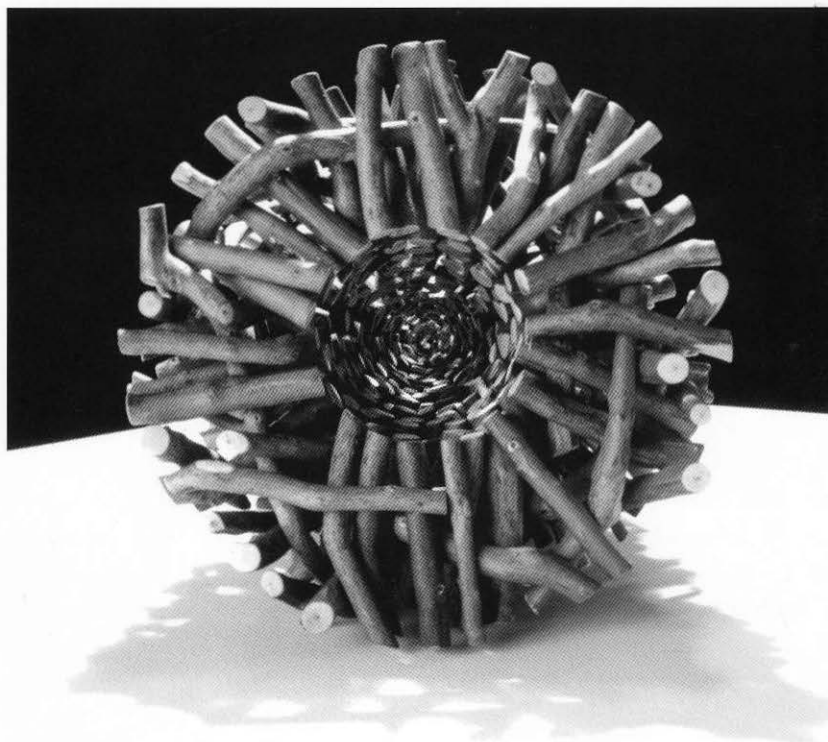
- 1972 BFA, Southern Methodist University,
Dallas, TX
1984 United States Textile Arts and Culture
of China Delegation, People's Republic
of China

ONE AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 1998 **This Seed of Space**, Women & Their
Work, Austin, TX.
1997 **Beginnings**, Conduit Gallery, Dallas, TX.
On Earth & Sky, Parchman Stremmel
Galleries, San Antonio, TX
Patience Towards Obsession, Main
Gallery, Fox Fine Arts Center,
University of Texas at El Paso,
El Paso, TX
1996 **Sherry Owens: Sculpture**, Martin
Museum, Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts
Center, Baylor University, Waco, TX.
Persistence of Memory, Collaboration
with Art Shirer, University Gallery,
Southwest Texas State University,
San Marcos, TX.
1995 **Sherry Owens: AboveBelowAndBetween**,
Studio Gallery and Sculpture Garden,
Brookhaven College, Farmers Branch, TX.
**SHIRER + OWENS A Transformation
of Space**, Main Gallery, Irving Arts
Center, Irving, TX.
1993 **Sherry Owens & Tom Sale**, Gray
Matters, Dallas, TX
1990 **In Collaboration: Sherry Owens and
Art Shirer**, D-Art Visual Art Center,
Dallas, TX.
1989 **Collected Thoughts**, Southwest
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX.

OUTDOOR INSTALLATIONS

- 1995-96 **Sculpture on Campus Exhibit**, Texas
Christian University, Fort Worth, TX.
1992 **Abilene 12th Annual Outdoor
Sculpture Exhibition**, Nelson Park,
Abilene, TX.
1991 **Sculpture in the Parks 1991**,
Mackenzie Park, Lubbock, TX.
1990 **Connemara Conservancy Foundation**,
Allen, TX
Sculpture at the Fair, Texas
Sculpture Association, State Fair of
Texas, Dallas, TX.
1989 **Sculpture By the Lake**, Texas
Sculpture Association and the City
of Dallas, Bath House Cultural Center,
Dallas, TX.
1986 **2nd Annual Kinetic Sculpture
Parade**, West End Marketplace,
Dallas, TX - \$3000 First Prize



We Dream of Intimacy (Detail), 1993, Crepe Myrtle, Linen, exterior cone: 23" x 7 1/2" diameter.
Collection of the artist. Photo Credit: Walter W. Nelson

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
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| <p>1997 Art in the Metroplex, Texas
Christian University, Fort Worth, TX.
(Also in 1995, 1993, 1992, 1987).
Celebration, Lubbock Fine Arts
Center, TX.
Hot Saturdays, Parchman Stremmel
Galleries, San Antonio, TX. (and 1996)
1996 Inside Out, Conduit Gallery, Dallas, TX.
the THING itself, The 1995-1996
Vistas Series, San Angelo Museum
of Fine Arts, San Angelo, TX.
1995 New Work: Mark Lavatelli, Sherry
Owens, Reinhard Zeigler, Conduit
Gallery, Dallas, TX.
The Book Re-configured, Women
& Their Work, Austin, TX.
(A traveling exhibition through 1996).
Made in Texas, Parchman
Stremmel Galleries, San Antonio, TX
House + Garden, Arlington
Museum of Art, Arlington, TX
1994 Bucking the Texan Myth: A
Contemporary Definition of Who
We Are, Moody Hall Atrium Gallery,
St. Edwards University, Austin TX
1994 New Orleans National, Still-
Zinsel Contemporary Fine Art, New
Orleans, LA.</p> | <p>1993 Critics Choice, D-Art Visual Art
Center, Dallas, TX. ('93, '91, '88, '86)
Fused Metal, D-Art Visual Art
Center, Dallas, TX.
Senses Beyond Sight, D-Art Visual
Art Center, Dallas, TX and Grace
Cultural Center, Museum of Abilene, TX
The Book Show, Artsana Gallery
2526, Dallas, TX
Small Treasures, Edith Baker
Gallery, Dallas, TX
1992 Thirty-Fifth Annual Delta Art
Exhibition, The Arkansas Art Center,
Little Rock, AR.
Three Year Review, D-Art Visual
Arts Center, Dallas, TX.
Conflicts & Solutions, Dallas
Women's Caucus for Art, Trammel
Crow Center, Dallas, TX.- Achievement
Award and - Amy Monier Award
The Next Best Show, Gray Matters,
Dallas, TX
FORTY + Views, Arlington Museum
of Art, Arlington, TX</p> |
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REPRESENTATION

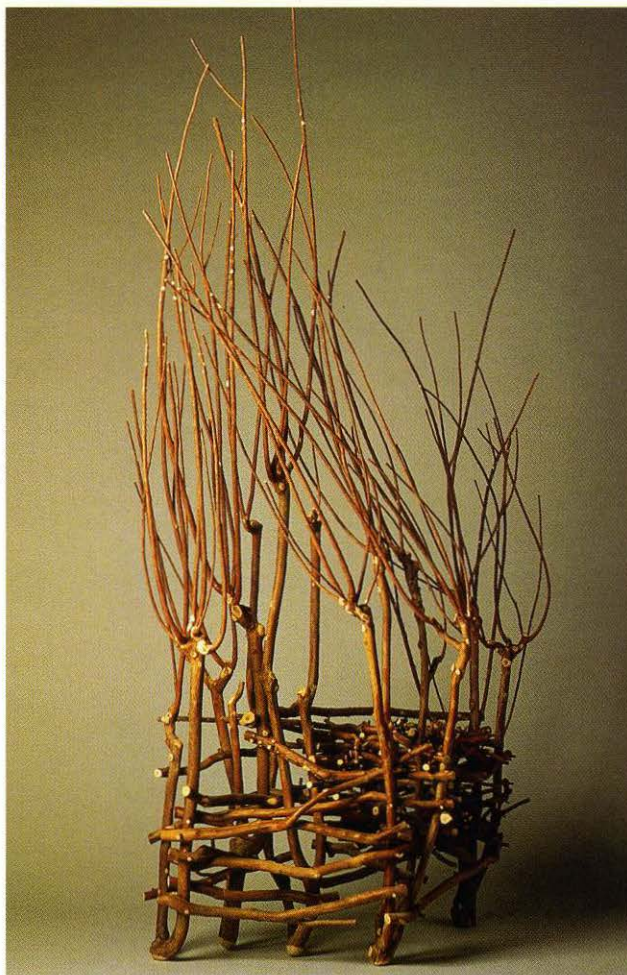
Conduit Gallery, Dallas, TX
Parchman Stremmel Galleries,
San Antonio, TX



This Panel: Water, 1997, bronze, 55 3/4" x 21" x 16" courtesy of Conduit Gallery. Photo Credit: Harrison Evans

Cover Panel: The Marriage of the Sun and the Moon, 1997, crepe myrtle, dye, wax, steel, 32" x 32 1/2" x 19" private collection. Photo Credit: Harrison Evans

Back Panel: Navigating the Waters, 1996, crepe myrtle, 90" x 50" x 36" courtesy of Conduit Gallery. Photo Credit: Harrison Evans



W O M E N & T H E I R W O R K

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Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, Women & Their Work presents over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film. The gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1495 artists in 168 visual art exhibitions, 81 music, dance, and theater events, 19 literary readings, 12 film festivals, and 116 workshops, in programming that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work reaches over 5,000 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



Women & Their Work
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