LINES IN SPACE

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art

by

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DEDICATION

My heartfelt thanks:

to David Elder who allowed me to stay in Sculpture when some of my ideas and work were strange and wild and impractical.

to John Canavier who had so many encouraging words when my work didn't come up to my expectations, or his requirements.

to Louise Lewis whose "Hi, what are you doing now?" was a wonderful lift during a discouraging moment.

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to Chuck and Karen who work in the tool crib and who give excellent technical advice on the use of power tools and unfamiliar equipment.

to fellow students who treated me as an equal even though I'm much older than any of them.

to Bob, my husband, who looked for clinkers in my typed drafts.

to David, my 14 year old son, who found materials for me, tried to understand my sculptures, and was proud to show them to his friends.

My love and gratitude to all.

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LINES IN SPACE

by

Margaret Laurell

Master of Arts in Sculpture

Have you ever seen, in the brightness of an early morning blue sky, arcing silver threads which catch the sun's rays as they float on a light wind's wings? I have. At times I could see only the blue above me, then with no sound bright lines looped and soared in happy freedom on the warming air.

My lines in space are made of common substances used in new ways to create illusions of scenes resurrected from memories.

How did my sculptures come about? I have worked with grids in drawing and painting. My early pencil and ink drawn squares on canvas were partially erased and some
lines strengthened until a "push-pull" relationship developed. One pencil work is in the Home Savings and Loan collection now. Later grids were made of plastic lines over flat, convex, or concave canvases so that line shadows were clear, became distorted or disappeared completely. Finally, being dissatisfied with the limitations of my work, I removed the backing and wove and tied the lines so that the work could be free to hang, drape and fold as its nature required and the shadows became strong participating images.

The one-inch square grid patterns in my wall hangings are of monofilament lines having small diameters, no irregularities and great knot strength. This grid is the supporting base on which all materials are placed. The line comes in 275 to 625 yard lengths, is either colorless or tinted blue, green, yellow or brown, or is high intensity plastic line. Most contrasting components are string and twine, ropes of sisal and hemp, linen, old lace, cotton and silk threads. These have been previously in use; consequently, they already have accumulated stains, knots, and contorted forms. Old strings are easy to get, for my Yankee mother has saved every bit of string she ever came across and is now happy to find a use for it. Also, pieces of clear plastic, aluminized mylar, and gold covered mylar, found wrapped around purchased items, are worked
into the grid for their light reflecting and refracting qualities. The strings knot easily and hang limply in contrast to the idiosyncrasy of plastic in retaining its twisting quality - making working with it difficult. The sisal and hemp strings have a pungent plant odor.

My sculptures are of lightweight materials which are suspended on light-colored walls and move freely as the air moves them. A pictorial pattern of knots is set up to be rearranged when the work is in place. Rhythmic arrangements of clear lines contrast with the frayed, discolored short pieces of string. Each work has a distinctive character due to differences in weight and color of its grid pattern, which gives an identity but not a strong presence.

Indoor lighting must be by clear bulb to produce sharp and distorted shadows which are an integral part of the whole work. When hung in direct sunlight the shadows change as the sun moves across the heavens. Grids strung with high intensity lines and knots glow turquoise blue only in bright sunshine. An illusion of deep space occurs when the object and its shadow are indistinguishable from each other. The additive procedure becomes the most important step in the development of new structures in combining expression with construction.

The lighting clarifies the wall behind my work. I do
not spoil the wall. The classical square room I've known can be changed into curved or oblique partitions, lyrical space can be created, dimensions enlarged or drawn in to intimacy. A blank wall can be covered with my works to open all doors to the depths of dreams.

The simplicity of the sculpture in its rectangular framework gives me freedom to superimpose my imagination and limitless options. Order and diversity, repetition and variety are allies. Since we are swamped with images our eyes are becoming immune to intrusive ugliness. My works are meant to be poetic, magical in their forms and relaxing, restful to observers' eyes. On a different level they might recall pleasant associations from one's past experiences. Anything we learn from art increases our knowledge of ourselves.

These constructions have no apparent significance and yet I want them to seize directly upon the senses. They should have an inexplicable attraction - the magic in their forms. They are a flight from technological frenzy and the visual stimulation in today's bombardment of our senses. They provide a vision of contemporary reality, have symbolic expression, are images out of dreams. Perhaps they have an emotional footing to harmonize inner and outer worlds? These sculptural forms keep my emotional apparatus from atrophying. My discontent with the
world around me compels me to make something new, do a work in a different way - not yet discovered by others. My sculptures represent a regenerative or healing process, and on completion give me pleasure for a moment. But in the next minute I must start another project - whether or not someone has seen and commented upon the finished one. My compulsion is to construct these works. They are my lines in space.
MY STATEMENT

Art to me is the aesthetic arrangement of the materials found everywhere, materials which are incredibly vital to ourselves and our nation. The mechanical revolution has produced the joys of maximum individual liberty as well as huge quantities of disposable materials. Now in our nation we have a shortage of resources and must become a recycle society in which all materials are reused indefinitely. Americans must learn to do more with less.

Art can be made of nearly everything. My sculptures are made of used and worn clothes lines, hemp ropes, plastic strings and lines, and burlap threads. I find an integrity of line in ropes twisted by usage, in aged knots and frayed ends which expose cores of different materials. The shadows of my "string things", formed on walls and broken by the corner vertical lines, are as important as the objects which make them. I want the viewer to notice that these very common and useful materials, having been used once, can be used again in a creative way. I have not used bright colors. The works don't seem to need them. The all white or clear filament sculptures go against white walls so that the shadows are better defined than the objects which make them. I'm trying to build magic and a bit of mystery into my art.
Installation View of Show
Two weights of monofilament lines in grid pattern hung on the diagonal, with gold and silver plastic ties, cotton threads, and small pieces of hand-made lace
$8' \times 8'$

Two weights of monofilament lines
in grid pattern
hung on the diagonal, with
cotton and linen threads, and
small pieces of hand-made lace
4' x 8'

Clear plastic line grid with colored plastic strips, 2' x 1/4", woven through the pattern, gold and silver plastic ties, no natural materials
Light blue plastic line grid with old silk, cotton, linen threads
8' x 8'

Three weights of monofilament line in grid pattern with cotton and linen threads
4' x 8'

Blue and high intensity monofilament lines with worn, frayed, knotted cotton and linen threads
Free hanging 8' x 8' sculpture
with 4' x 8' wall piece
and its shadows
8' x 8'

Vertical plastic lines
hung with
many faintly colored
clear curved plastic pieces
4" x ½"