

soda bottles containing photographs of a black family dangle from the umbrella. The title refers to a Bahamian drink made from coconut milk and gin. In contrast to the small, obscured photographs, the three giant white snow-people in *Mango Tourist* (2011) loomed like overweight voyeurs, closing in from the perimeter of the gallery.

—Jan Garden Castro

BOSTON

Laura Evans

Boston Sculptors Gallery

Laura Evans is best known for her bronze versions of brown paper lunch bags—crinkles, folds, and all. Real lunch bags are meant to be disposable ephemera. Evans's bronzes will last for the ages. They're comical. Tucked in a bookcase indoors or sitting on the grass outside, they sometimes make people giggle.

While still engaged with the lunch bags, Evans moved on to tree branches in her recent show, "The Aching Web." These antic constructions had a presence even before you entered the gallery. One of them started on the floor of the large room, struggled to climb over a railing, and ended up on a shelf just below the big windows looking onto the street. It was easy for passersby to see, and perhaps some were lured inside. Through the door and up a short flight of stairs, a fuse box was temporarily adorned with a bundle of tiny twigs that could be read as an alternate form of power.

Only one of the works, *Achieving Balance*, was bronze. Like the other pieces, this one is abstract, so it can be placed upright or on its side, with different effects. All of the other works were made of tree branches that Evans found after storms. Maple, cherry, walnut, and other woods are disguised by a coat of Aqua-Resin that turns them pale gray, a neutral tone that emphasizes their intricate shapes. There weren't any thick trunks, just rela-



tively delicate branches of various widths that gave a lacy, though tangled, effect. The joints, made of Apoxie Sculpt, look like insect dens. Evans painted the walls of the gallery a dark gray, and the sculptures, a few dangling from the ceiling on barely visible strands of monofilament, cast eerie shadows.

The lighting, some of which stayed on at night so people could see the works from the street, was theatrical. If this installation had featured a soundtrack, a good choice would have been Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette." Evans's works definitely have a performative aspect. It's easy to imagine a dancer moving among them, reacting to them.

The branches bend, stretch, and hover, and air currents in the room allowed some to move gently. A large opening in one floor piece allowed viewers to see through to the others. As you moved around the room, the composition of the installation changed, though there was always a quasi-comical aspect to the works. They seemed to leer, ready to jab or even tickle you. The show's title, "The Aching Web," didn't seem to match its often humorous spirit. No matter. Evans created a delightful setting that spurred the imagination.

—Christine Temin

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

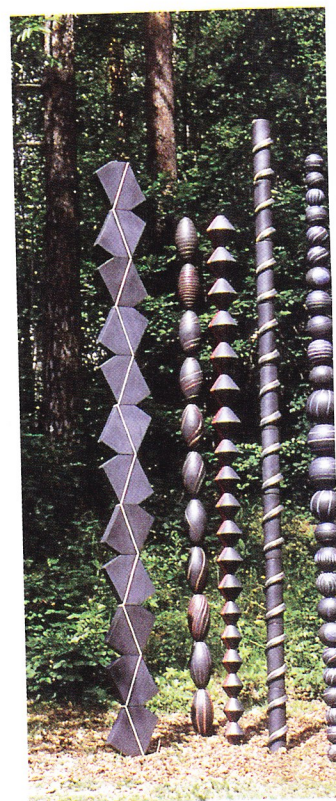
Pat Lay

Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art

Pat Lay, who retired not long ago from the MFA program that she founded at Montclair State University, recently mounted a major retrospective at Aljira, a prominent nonprofit space in downtown Newark. Curated by Lilly Wei, the show covered decades of work, from late-'60s clay pieces to works made as recently as 2015. There was a good mix of three-dimensional and two-dimensional work, including archival prints whose exquisite symmetry is constructed from computer-parts imagery, but Lay has acknowledged that the true turn of her work is sculptural. The show included a fine array of three-dimensional objects, ranging from a tile-work installation influenced by Noguchi to African-inspired totems, to gender-ambiguous cyborg heads, from whose crowns issue Medusa-like wires with variously colored wrappings. Lay's art is endlessly various, which indicates a curious cast of mind. She combines the very old with the very new in ways that push contemporary art forward, toward a statement that covers art history as well as contemporary sensibilities.

An untitled 1975 work, shown in the Whitney Biennial that same year, recalls Noguchi's sunken garden at the Beinecke Rare Book and

Manuscript Library at Yale. Like Noguchi's garden, Lay's (smaller) installation has images on top of a flat surface—in this case, a plane made of ceramic tile. A circle of brown cloth, a pyramid, and a translucent box embellish the exterior, complicating the plainness of the surface. Done some 40 years ago, it is a strong and independent interpretation of the Japanese sculptor, yet it doesn't presage



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