

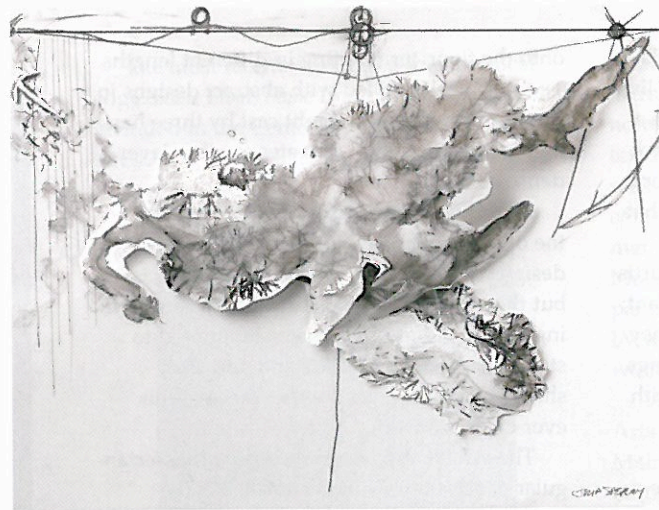
JULIA SHEPLEY: OUT/IN: NEW WORKS

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Julia Shepley is a sculptor who is constantly reinventing herself, although many of the same elements of glass, wood, Mylar, thread, and oil paint continue to appear in her work. In her most recent exhibition, *OUT/IN* at the Boston Sculptors Gallery, she has added a new dimension to her work, a monumental installation suspended from the ceiling, slowly revolving and interacting with viewers. The title, *Sky Habitation*, suggests some of the component parts: unpainted wood, dismembered pieces of chairs, plastic discs, found objects, transparent filaments, thread, and twigs. Although completely abstract, the work bears traces of human presence in its chair components and in the interaction of its segments. As in Shepley's other works, the shadows cast on the wall and floor create another dimension to the piece, an echo of dissolved form, a negative of the positive spaces in a moving panorama. A number of scenarios are created by visual cues, even a literary one in a configuration resembling a white whale impaled by harpoons, reminiscent of *Moby Dick*.

An important part of Shepley's work has always been her drawings, exhibited last year in *Material Drawings* at the Danforth Museum and a similar show at Gasp Gallery in Newton. Some of these are preparatory drawings for sculptures; some are explorations of new directions in their own right. All of them are conceived and realized in three-dimensional format.

Shepley is experimenting with a series of untitled threaded drawings, several of which are in the exhibition. These are installed behind curved glass containers, undulating configurations threaded with transparent aquamarine beads that pass in and out of the glass that is also etched with patterns. Here, drawing is combined with sculpture in new and original ways that captivate the imagination. In another three-dimensional drawing, *Mining the Storm #6*, Shepley



Top: Julia Shepley, *Sky Habitation* (one element in a multi-part installation), wood and lexan, 15" x 15". Above: Julia Shepley, *Harnessing the Weather*, 2010, lexan, paper, oil paint, graphite, and stitched thread, 9 x 15".

uses layered glass, oil paint, wood, Lexan, and thread to produce her sculptural effects.

Harnessing the Weather is a working drawing for the *Sky Habitation* installation.

In it are sketches of the pulleys and suspension

mechanisms as well as a storming representation in ink, thread, graphite on Mylar, and paper. Here again Shepley creates a sense of movement and mystery as well as an anticipation of the final installation.

In the drawing *Look Out!*, a three-dimensional relief of a chair made of wood slats appears to be propelled in space as if launched by a hurricane or tornado, a human reminder of the forces of nature. This movement also occurs in the Mylar drawing *Force Field*, which portrays dynamic tension and oppositions.

The suspended work *Rest*, made of Mylar and wood, creates a wall relief playing form against void, and configuration, shadows, and substance versus suggestion.

Julia Shepley is a graduate of the School of the Visual Arts at Boston University where she studied with Harold Tovish, Arthur Polansky, and John Wilson. She received a strong foundation in drawing and three-dimensional works. Shepley has shown at the Tufts University Art Gallery, Bristol Art Museum, A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, Boston Public Library, DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, and others. This is her third exhibition at the Boston Sculptors Gallery, of which she is one of the founding members. Her work has built up a momentum in innovation in which she has experimented with new forms, new materials, and new ideas. Besides working in installations, sculpture, and drawings, Shepley makes wood-block prints. No two are exactly alike, because she varies the components in each one. Her work is challenging, exploring space and shadow in innovative and imaginative ways. In her latest exhibition, she has produced some of her finest and most exciting works.

—Alicia Faxon