

## Pedestrian Materials Find New Life in Exhibition

By Karah Hosek



LEFT: The piece contains representations of 588 carbon dioxide, 63 methane and 35 nitrous oxide molecules, as well as ozone and sulfur hexafluoride molecules to represent greenhouse gases.

RIGHT: Dallas sculptor Sherry Owens (right) suggests the problems of climate change in her mixed-media installation "Every Breath You Take," which was created specifically for Art of the Everyday.

"Oh, are you drawing my piece?," said Dallas sculptor Sherry Owens to freshman Thu Nguyen, as Nguyen pulled out an oversized sketch paper and got comfy near "Every Breath You Take" in one of the nooks of the Visual Arts Building.

Owens is one of eight artists whose work is Part Two of the University of Texas at Dallas exhibition of Art of the Everyday, curated by Professor Marilyn Waligore. Part One of the exhibition resides at the Bath House Cultural Center through April 18. The other artists whose works are presented include Beth Callahan, John Frost, Robert McAn, Susan Dunkerley, Mary Beth Heffernan, Mark Monroe and Vaughn Wascovich.

Owens' mixed media installation, "Every Breath You Take," which depicts deforestation and climate change, was created specifically for Art of the Everyday. Creation took five months; Owens first envisioned the artistic concept, then did the research to make the chemical construction correct. The piece includes representations of 588 carbon dioxide, 63 methane and 35 nitrous oxide molecules — as well as ozone and sulfur hexafluoride molecules — to represent greenhouse gases found in the Earth's atmosphere.

"There were a couple of chemistry students at the opening reception who immediately recognized the molecules in 'Every Breath You Take,'" said Owens.

Owens began her artistic endeavors as a weaver, but after several years of sitting at a loom, she began exploring other media. Through continued education and self-teaching, she transitioned from weaving to painting to sculpture. She likens her current artistic process to "weaving three-dimensionally in space."



Owens cut up pieces of crepe myrtle wood to suggest deforestation.

Currently, Owens works mostly in crepe myrtle, bronze and steel. She likes crepe myrtle wood for its grain and linear qualities.

"I have a network of friends who call me when people have put crepe myrtle trimmings out for pickup," said Owens. "I race around Dallas to get the discarded materials before the city arrives; I tell people I'm rescuing the branches from the chipper."

Her concerns with the ramifications of deforestation and the decimation of the North American prairie provide much of the inspiration for her sculpture. She is interested in the conversations that arise when people view her work.

“Art is all about communication, about making something no one else has ever seen,” said Owens. “In this installation, I hope to raise questions about the effects of human intervention on the natural processes of our living environment. Is planting more trees the answer? Will that save the planet? Or is it much more complicated than that?”

Owens’ work can be found throughout Texas; in addition to a commissioned piece recently installed at Coast Global Seafood in Plano’s Shops at Legacy, Owens has work in The Great Texas Sculpture Roundup, a 32-artists indoor/outdoor exhibition stationed in Beeville Art Museum through Friday, April 17. The exhibition then moves to the ArtCar Museum in Houston, where it will reside through early August.

“This installation is a perfect piece for our campus, encompassing environmental issues, science and art,” said Associate Dean for the Arts Kathryn Evans.

*“Art of the Everyday” is on exhibition in the Visual Arts Building through Saturday, May 2. Gallery hours are Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, visit [ah.utdallas.edu](http://ah.utdallas.edu).*