



DERIK HOLTSMANN/News-Democrat

This crocheted fiberglass piece by Yvette Kaiser-Smith is called *Community Structure*, Study No. 10

You won't believe it's fiberglass

BY ROGER SCHLUETER
News-Democrat

BELLEVILLE — Your grandmother's doilies — on steroids.

That's how curator Libby Reuter describes artist Yvette Kaiser-Smith's "Installations" exhibit, which opens today in the Schmidt Art Center at Southwestern Illinois College here.

It's easy to see why. Kaiser-Smith uses a standard hook to crochet not lace or linen, but continuous strands of fiberglass. She then hardens this fiberglass by applying a polyester resin. Color is added to the resin either before its application or painted on with enamel after it has set.

The result, as Reuter notes, is oddly reminiscent of those decorative old furniture ornaments — on growth hormones. Some of Kaiser-Smith's works can fill huge walls or even small rooms.

As Reuter notes, "They are a surprising mix of delicate mate-



Yvette Kaiser-Smith, left, and Susan Taylor Glasgow.

rials and monumental size."

But that's just part of the center's new work that will bedazzle visitors through March 3.

As a complement to Kaiser-Smith's creations, Reuter will show off Susan Taylor Glasgow's newest work involving, of all things, sewn glass. Glasgow creates lacy sculptures literally sewn together with glass to create fanciful corsets and castles for fairy tale heroines such as Sleeping Beauty and domestic divas like Betty Crocker.

"The work by Yvette and Susan is fun and thought-provoking," Reuter said. "Both exhibits play with traditional 'women's work' to create large, contemporary sculptures."

Rounding out the new set of exhibits to open the new year will be "Lawton Parker: Historical Prints," a selection of experimental prints reflecting a recurring theme of the late artist's work: the nude in nature. The selected pieces are from a larger Lawton Parker collection donated by the Dryer family to the Southwestern Illinois College Foundation's permanent collection.

As an added treat, Glasgow will discuss her work during a artists' reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday in the art center. Center admission is always free and open to the public; hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through

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Saturday, except Thursday, when the galleries are open until 8 p.m.

Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1958, Kaiser-Smith now lives and works in Chicago — along with her "best friend," Tim Smith, two dogs and a bird named Freder. She earned her bachelor's in fine arts in 1990 from Southern Methodist University and added a master's four years later from the University of Chicago.

Now, she says, she "articulates narratives of identity in the language of crocheted fiberglass."

"As do all spoken languages, every material language has its own unique way of articulating nouns, verbs, adjectives, thoughts and experiences," she writes on her Web site, www.kaisersmith.com. "My job is to find the fullness of this new language."

She admits she creates her fanciful art language through

mundane objects — fiberglass spun from old car windshields and a standard 6mm, US J-10 crochet hook. But her thought processes can run from the heartwarmingly familiar to the mind-boggling esoteric.

In a work she calls "Community Quilt" that was commissioned by the City of Chicago, she compares the quilt to the city itself, a patchwork of neighborhoods and ethnic groups creating a cohesive and useful community. The quilt also represents home and family, comfort, warmth and safety.

But you'll have to get out your higher math texts to fully understand the 8-by-14 "Community Fourier Transform" that is now in the collection of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria. It's partly named for French mathematician and physicist Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, who developed the Fourier Transformation based on "an infinite sum of sine waves."

Glasgow, who now works out of a 1930s house in downtown Columbia, Mo., has a philosophy that is not nearly so complicated. On her Web site, www.taylorglasgow.com, she says her work has emerged from "homemaking skills gone awry."

"I have always embraced femininity and domesticity in spirit, but not in action," she says. "My life as an artist puts housekeeping last, while instead I cook, arrange and sew glass."

"My internal domestic struggle has led me to examine the concept of domestic expectations and traditional roles of men and women. I am intrigued by 1950s imagery and the false perception of simpler times."

So, Glasgow combines text with nostalgic imagery to produce pieces that explore the complex roles of women within the household. Her creativity has earned numerous awards, in-

cluding an honorable mention at the 2003 Smithsonian show.

In related events, Reuter has scheduled a "sit-and-knit" event from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2. Just bring your latest knitting project, find a seat and knit away as you are inspired by the artwork around you.

Children can get in on the fun Saturday, Feb. 18, when the gallery hosts a Kids Rule String Sculpture program at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Children ages 5-10 will be given a tour of the exhibit and then will be allowed to create their own lacy sculptures from glue-soaked string. The cost is \$5 per child, and reservations must be made in advance by calling the center at 222-5278 (5ART).

For more information on the center and future exhibits, go to www.schmidtartcenter.com.