

# Crocheted art weaves you in

There are a lot of reasons people will find themselves at the Memorial Union over the next couple of weeks, ranging from UW Homecoming celebrations this weekend and Elmar Oliveira's violin recital Friday night at the Wisconsin Union Theater, to just having a beer and a brat and hanging out.

## VISUAL ART

Jacob Stockinger

go is also one of the most hidden: the show of sculptures by Chicagoan Yvette Kaiser Smith that are on display through Nov. 25 in the second-floor Wisconsin Union Galleries.

Now, you probably have seen fiberglass art before.

And you almost certainly have seen crocheting before.

But it's questionable whether you have ever before seen crocheted fiberglass.

In shape and texture the results are spectacular and arresting, all the more so because the artist herself encourages visitors to touch the durable works. You can trace their forms with a finger and play around with the smaller pieces that are mounted on movable drawer tracks, which allows you to slide them around and configure them into your own different works of art.

The artist claims that these works — which are much less fragile than they look — embody much more than a simple desire to work with unusual materials. She mentions identity construction and personal narratives — fancy art-speak for things like making choices and not being allowed to choose, and for telling autobiographical stories that might (or might not) parallel your own life.

Maybe you'll see what she means and maybe you won't. But you sure

But one of the most compelling reasons to

won't forget these works.

The outstanding piece hangs suspended from the ceiling, like a small sail from some historic galleon that is billowing out with wind. (The artist says it was inspired by the feminist short story "The Yellow Wallpaper.") It's yellow and white, and the artist explains colors in her art in two ways. She adds dyes to the liquefied plastic resin before it is applied to the spun fabric that she crochets with ordinary crocheting hooks. She also applies paint to the hardened finished product.

A close second in eye-catching appeal is a single quilt-like, rectangular panel that was one of her earlier works and hangs on the wall, against an orange background. It literally nets your attention and holds it.

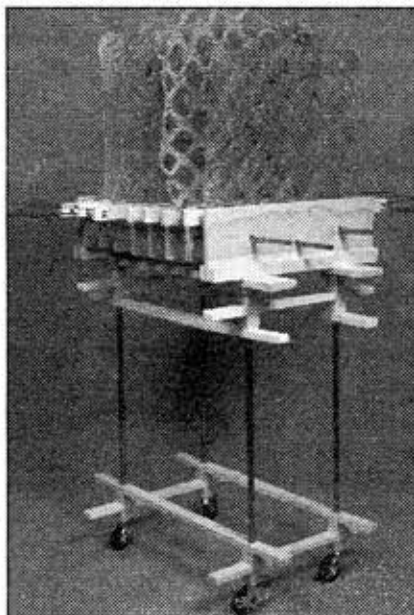
Two other works deserve special mention. One is at the back of the left wall as you enter. It swirls circularly like some picture of the Milky Way. But actually it is based on a formulaic series of numbers that leads to shapes like a nautilus shell.

Over on the rear right wall is a large series of smaller works, laid out against a penciled grid. Some are whole circles, but some of the circles have been split in two, showing the left or right half, the top or bottom half. And some have only the wooden base.

The artist calls it a diary, and you can sort of see what that means as long as you take the word "diary" in a metaphorical rather than literal sense. Here diary is more the sense of permutation, of using the same form in multiple subsets. It's rather like conjugating a verb or running a series of musical notes through all their various combinations.

Anyway, the longer you stare at the work — like many of Smith's constructions — the more you see patterns and make sense of it. And the more you admire and like it.

Reach Jacob Stockinger at 252-6480 or e-mail him at [jstockinger@madison.com](mailto:jstockinger@madison.com).



Crocheted fiberglass, polyester resin, pine, vinyl tubing, steel rod and tubing drawer slides are all part of Yvette Kaiser Smith's work on display at the UW Memorial Union.