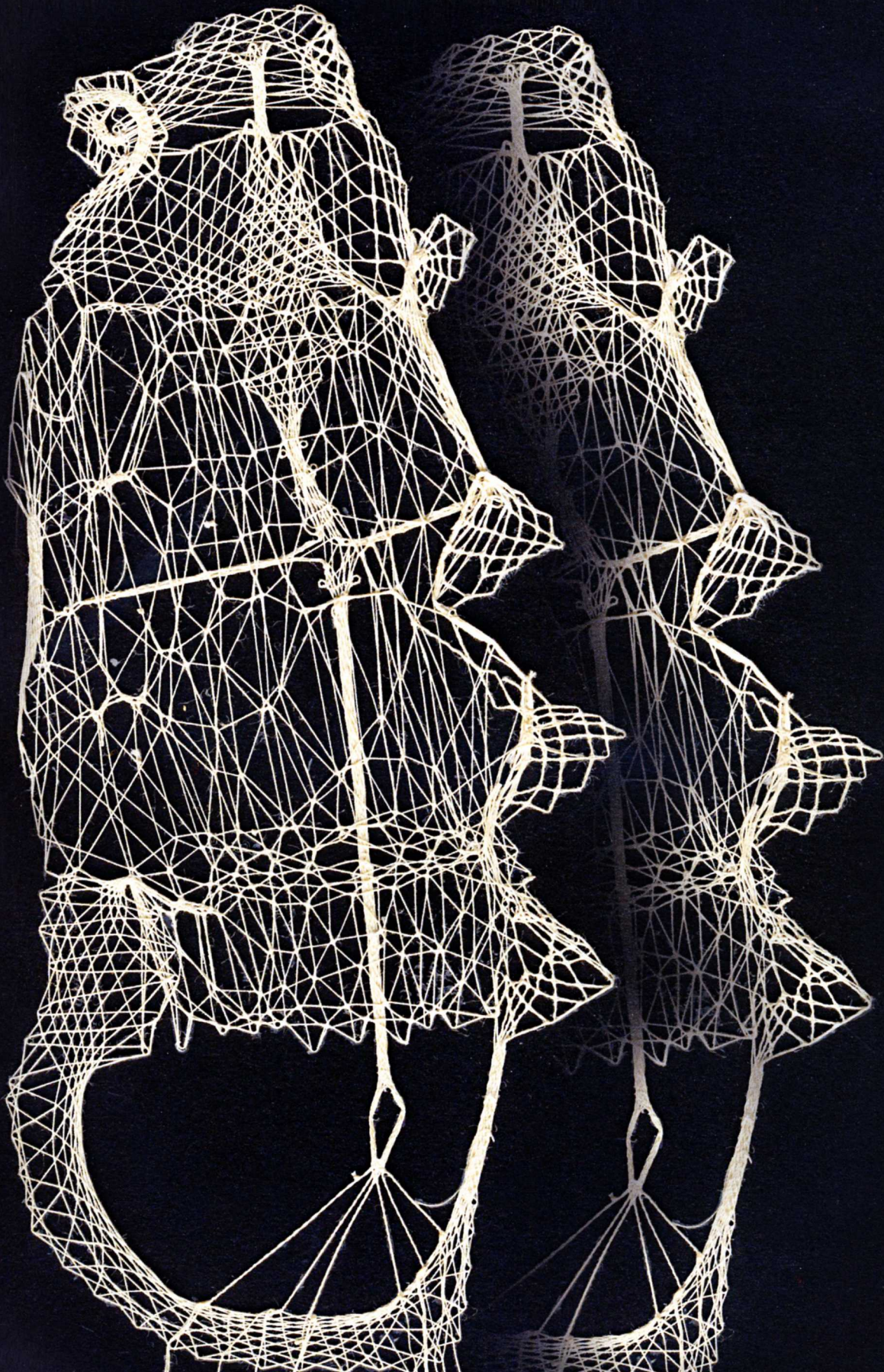


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SPITZE LACE

# INNOVATION AND POSITIVE SPACE

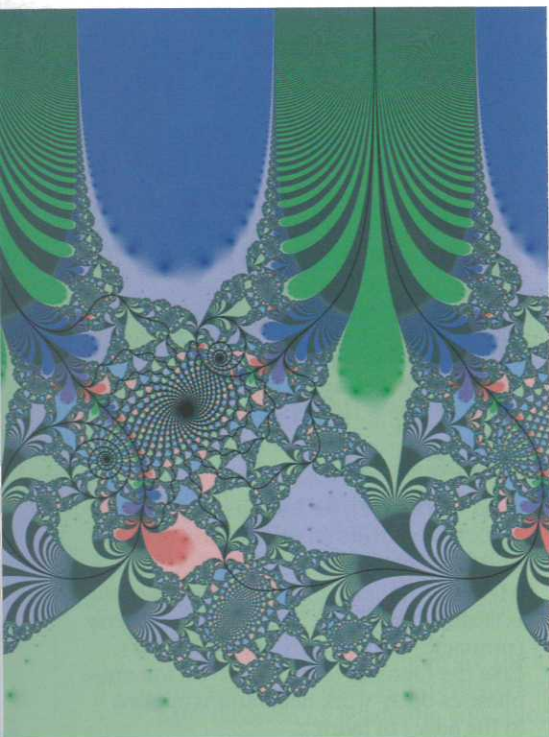
## THE POWERHOUSE INTERNATIONAL LACE AWARD

Lindie Ward

This contribution looks a long way ahead to a major exhibition held during the International Design Festival of Sydney in July/August 2011. It will present the results of the third competition of its kind; previous editions were held in 1998 and 2001. The submission deadline for project ideas was as early as 31st January 2010, thus many of the pieces to be judged have not yet been produced. Nevertheless, we asked the museum for a preview as the competition follows a recent trend of exhibition concepts (see p. 25), and will feature pieces that pick up on lace ideas, but do not always show lace. *Beatrijs Sterk*



Laura Sundin/USA: Pendant, silver, gold, steel



Lasse Rempe/UK: Digital multi media

### About the author and museum

Lindie Ward is a curator at the Powerhouse Museum; her responsibilities include running the Lace Study Centre, which owns some 300 hand-made laces from a great variety of countries dating from the late 16th century to the present.

This is the third competition, following previous editions held in 1998 and 2001. The last competition attracted 150 submissions, compared to 700 for this one.

Address: Powerhouse Museum (of decorative arts & design), 500 Harris Street, Aus-Sydney NSW 1238; <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com>

One hundred and forty finalists for the Powerhouse International Lace Award have now been chosen by five international judges from a field of 700 entries. These contemporary designs feature a broad scope of philosophies, techniques and materials from 33 countries.

Finalists' work was chosen for its visual impact, originality and creativity, innovation in design, materials or techniques and skill in execution. The works also encompassed a conceptual interpretation of place or origin.

The project presents an opportunity for the Museum to support and promote the work of creative artists, bringing together a broad range of skills in textile, wood, paper, glass, plastics, metal and multi media from international artists in a unique exhibition in July 2011.

Prizes totalling 40,000 Australian dollars will be awarded. The overall winner will receive \$20,000. A prize of \$4,000 will be awarded in each category of traditional techniques, built environment, fashion and accessories, digital multi media and Australian and New Zealand student work.

### EXAMPLES OF PROJECT IDEAS

Through his brilliant kaleidoscopic digital multi media, **Dr Lasse Rempe** from the UK would like to 'illustrate the beauty of the world of mathematics and showcase the ability of mathematics to inspire art'. Traditional lacemakers and textile artists know their techniques are innately mathematical.

United States artist **Lauran Sundin** creates ethereal lace jewellery in wire. Though dynamic and light, her work is engineered with a disguised stability and function. 'I have something to offer the lace community. My years working with metal have given me insight into the structural possibilities when combining mathematical formulae, artistic aesthetics and intuition with silver and gold wire. Lace making must continue to evolve and touch the lives and senses of modern people. Perhaps it is a backlash against the machine-made mass produced articles that has led to this wish for beauty created by the intimate touch of human hands.'

Metal is an increasingly popular medium amongst lace makers. Dutch designer **Joep Verhoeven's** *Lace Fence* (see p. 28) in galvanised steel turns a functional fence into a decorative experience. He uses traditional bobbin lace techniques on a large scale to transform a galvanised wire fence with traditional Dutch bobbin lace designs. For Joep, industrial production can be a source of inspiration. 'In our projects we often combine the sensitive and the small with the powerful, large and industrial. Hostility versus kindness, industry versus craft.'

The chosen finalists speak with eloquence about their work in their submissions - how their work evolves and what it represents for them personally. To date the works have been presented as proposals, so images in this article may be of previous work. Many are still to be created and have freedom to evolve before they are presented to the Museum in January 2011.

The project defines lace as 'an openwork structure in which the pattern of spaces is as important as the solid areas'. This very broad definition can encompass a wide range of materials and techniques. The aim of the project is to encourage innovative design and to remind designers and lace makers that every lace design was, at some moment in time, innovative and contemporary. Creating new work in unorthodox combinations involves a continuous chain of problem solving. This is an activity which is at the core of every artist.

The response to the call for entries was outstanding. It was almost as if people were waiting in the wings with their patterns of negative spaces eager to embrace this challenge.

The exhibition will feature many large external 3D works.

United States artist **Janet Echelman** creates monumental suspended sculptural lace environments in polyester mesh that pulse and move with the wind. 'I make living, breathing pieces that respond to the forces of nature - wind, light, water,' she says. Her pieces can measure 40 metres across.

Textiles feature prominently in the broad range of materials in the exhibition.

**Pauline Verbeek** is fascinated by the architecture of cloth and her approach to lace is structural, her aesthetic deeply rooted in her Dutch heritage.

Pauline Verbeek/USA: "Felt Lace Diagonals"



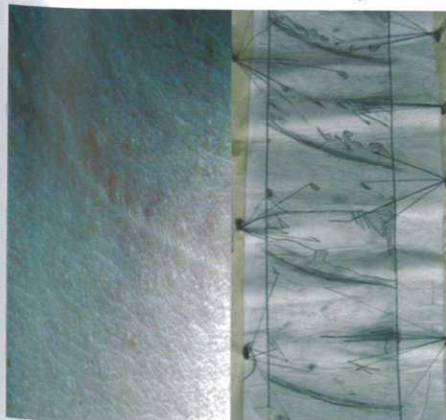


Janet Echelman/USA: "Her Secret is Patience", installation

**Lenka Suchanek** from Vancouver expresses her process most eloquently. 'When I make lace, I am totally at peace and in sync with the inner rhythm. When I study lace, I feel like I am conversing with the lacemakers of the past. When I design lace, patterns are coming as I need them. I am in a special state of mind. I generally do not experience this type of deep connection in any other activity, and it makes me wonder what is so unique about lace. In our modern time, there is no rational explanation for it, and I would consider it abnormal if I had not met other lacemakers.'

English artist **Maria Biehn** emphasises the graphic qualities of lace. 'Lace has been a vital technique in the arts, crafts and storytelling throughout history. An illustrative textile, lace has been worn to convey social hierarchy, inspire courtships and to eroticize the human form!'

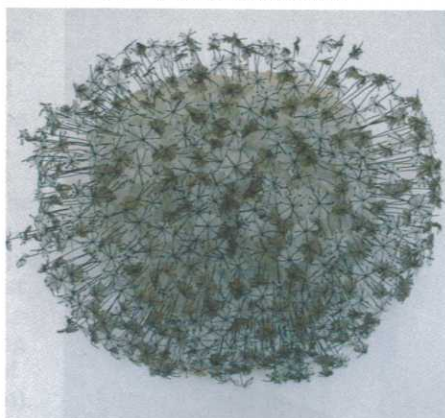
Maria Biehn/UK: "Rannie Lace Study"



**Kate Campbell-Pope** from Western Australia will work with cane, wire, grasses, silk and linen threads to create her work *Bone*. 'The precariousness of human existence, and our tenuous relationship with our natural environment, are issues which are at the heart of my practice.'

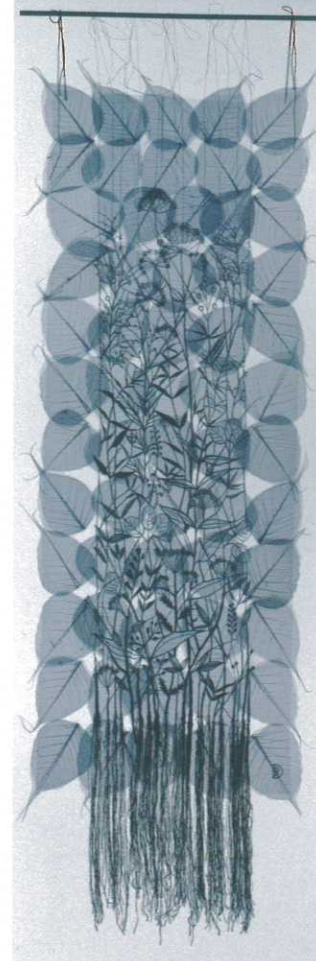
Many of the works have a powerful organic theme. Australian artist **Marita Macklin** has machine embroidered her work 'aspergillus'. 'We live in a world that has a hidden parallel world within it. A world that is so small it is unable to be seen with the naked eye. Only through advanced technology can we see the tiny, fragile forms of the microscopic organisms that inhabit this miniature world. I find this unseen microscopic world around us fascinating.'

Marita Macklin/AUS: "Aspergillus"



This theme of the 'fragility and the delicate microcosm of life' is also expressed in the embroidery *Solanaceae* by Latvian artist **Dina Baumann**.

Destruction drives Canadian artist **Noelle Hamlyn**. 'My work uses the creative power of destruction, as well as the constructive tools of repair and restoration. I celebrate accident, error and imperfection, developing narrative from chance and impulse. Rather than clean or discard, I embroider and decorate spills and stains on linens or canvas, turning the mess into a jumping off point for lyricism and improvisation!'

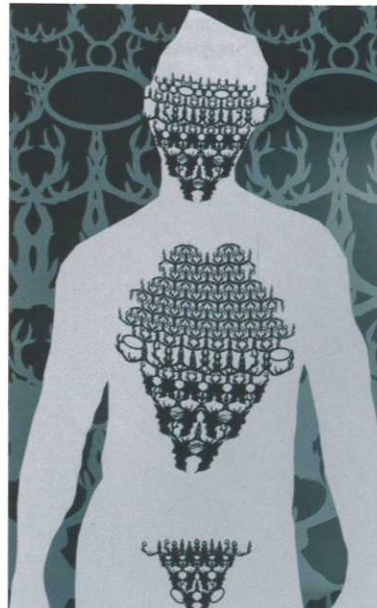


Diana Baumann/LV: "Solanaceae"

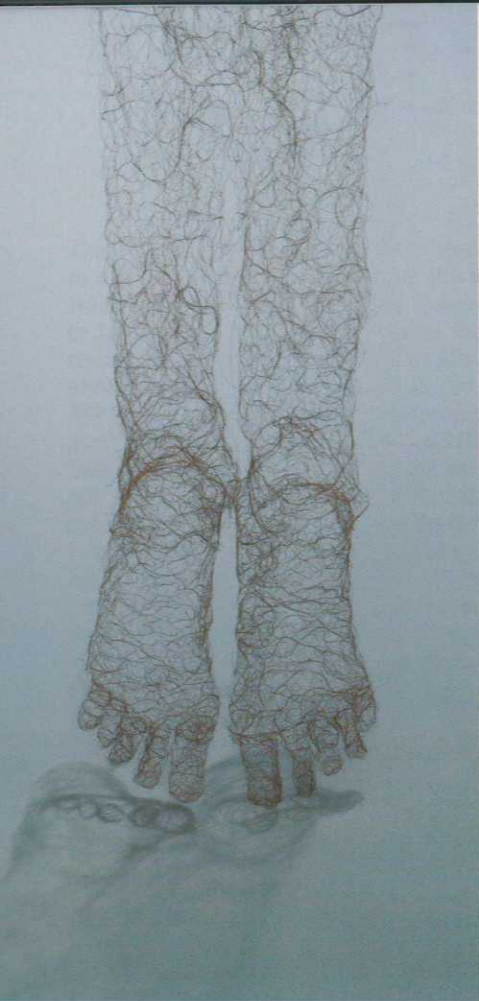
**Karen Richards** will produce a stop motion animation exploring her 3D textile sculpture 'Forest'. Though Lace has been traditionally a decorative medium, Karen interprets lace 'in a random or more organic form as perfect for expressing a delicate or even brittle world. Its see through qualities suggest skeletal forms, calcification, the organic and worn away.'

Creating textile prints from bizarre sources, Australian artist **Douglas Mc Manus** used his pelvic CT scan to create a quirky printed lace textile.

Douglas McManus/AUS: "Beard Burkha", detail



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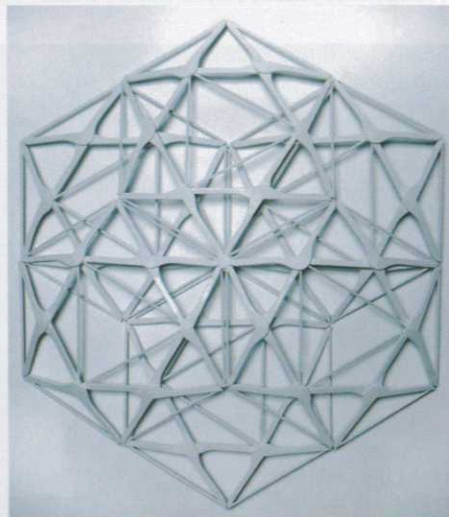
Some works are very personal. **Helen Pynor** creates sculptures in knitted hair. 'In knitting these strands together, history, memory and time are metaphorically entwined into a matrix. Up close, the sculptures reveal a surface of densely interconnecting threads, suggesting the minutiae and endurance of everyday living. Seen from a distance the works take on a spectral quality, blurring the distinction between presence and absence, past and present, flesh and memory.'

Expressions of personal identity submitted by these artists have been a revelation. **Lyndal Hargrave** explains how 'For as long as I can remember, my art practice has served as a filter between the outside world and my inside world. I realize now that the act of making the artwork informs my ideas rather than the other way round. Working intuitively results in a continuous stream of surprises that in retrospect mirror the pressing issues surrounding me at that time.'

**Mavis Gunambarr** describes the Australian place where her works originate. 'The pieces created embody the spirit of North East Arnhem Land as they use all natural materials which are collected from the environment, painstakingly prepared and dyed using plants. Stories are told, laughter is shared as the women weave and in this way the pieces embody these things. In essence rather than interpreting origin, they embody it.'

#### PREVIEW

In the exhibition there will be one hundred and forty finalists. It will include large-scale screens, garments of linked silver, and a bracelet, laser cut from a scribble. Materials such as mulberry paper painted with persimmon juice, echidna spines, fine threads of glass - all these you will see in the exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney in July 2011. ■



Top: Helen Pynor/AUS, knitted woman hair  
Centre: Lyndal Hargrave/AUS, "Sacred Geometry"



Lace Fence: "Fiets Appel", 2010, bike parkade in Alpe

#### "LACE FENCE" BY DEMAKERSVAN

This young designer collective, consisting of Joep and Jeroen Verhoeven and Judith De Graauw, quickly achieved success after completing their design studies in Eindhoven. While still a student, Joep was commissioned to add something new to the product range manufactured by an industrial manufacturer. To complete his graduation piece, he visited a wire fence factory and was so impressed by the braided structures he encountered there that he conceived the idea of adding lace designs to these. To this end, he enrolled in a bobbin lace-making course to learn the manual bobbin lace-making technique and translate it into wire fence structures. He produced his first wire fence lace on commission in 2003, in close co-operation with his brother and Judith De Graauw. The Demakersvan company was established in 2005, and is now in a position to make individual lace fences for anyone, or to insert lace sections into industrially produced chainlink fences.

The metal lace is produced by using a hammer, nails and wire on a wooden board in place of pins and textile threads on a lace pillow. Initially the trio attempted to design a machine for the purpose, but gave up on the idea as the investment required would have been too high. Instead, they now employ Indian iron braiders working in concrete construction who produce their orders manually; designs are soldered into existing fence material. The designer group perceives its range as niche products, and offers remarkably low prices, ca. Euro 140 per square metre. Very small orders of less than 25 m<sup>2</sup> are subject to a surcharge of ca. Euro 500. Their workshop in India employs as many as 25 workers. Their Dutch design studio does not use permanent staff, but works with freelancers and

