

# THE PROVIDENCE PHOENIX

**In a Band?**  
Visit the new Band Guide and  
get your gigs listed. »

**SKI +  
SNOWBOARD  
GUIDE 2005**

Google

☐ web ☒ providencephoenix.com

Music Movies Dining Books Art Theater Dance Comedy Sports Other Listings

Home  
New This Week  
Listings  
8 days

Art  
Astrology  
Books  
Dance  
Food  
Hot links  
Movies  
Music  
News + Features  
Television  
Theater

Classifieds  
Adult  
Personals  
Adult Personals

Archives  
Work for us  
RSS

ART

## Home is where . . .

**"Ourchitecture" at the Newport Art Museum**

BY BILL RODRIGUEZ

Home may be where the hearth is, but that's only one of infinite possibilities. Sculptor Elizabeth Keithline has two exhibitions at the Newport Art Museum (through January 6) that explore what else a house can signify, and she has recruited dozens of other artists to join the effort.

Keithline's "The Lost House Project" is a two-story-tall construction that fills the NAM's Ilgenfritz Gallery. "Ourchitecture" is a collaboration with 43 other artists and architects.

The centerpiece of the first show is a monumental installation in the large, high-ceiling gallery. Under light dim but strong enough to cast interesting shadows on the walls, rectangular wire boxes are suspended from the ceiling, roughly suggesting walls and a slanted roof. To the right, suspended in a row are three doors, with empty spaces where windows would be; the doorknobs or latches are immobilized in proper position like metal insects caught in spider webs.

The effect is eerie, like wandering around in the remains of a burned-out building. That is appropriate, since the skeletal doors were made by weaving heavy gauge wire around actual wooden doors and burning away the contents. Just as the absence of a house, and any accompanying comforting associations, is emphasized by the floating wire mesh outline, so too the phantom entryways constitute a kind of negative image of welcome or access or whatever else a viewer associates with a solid door.

Keithline lives in East Greenwich and has studied art at the Rhode Island School of Design and Rhode Island College. In 1990 she devised the sculptural technique she calls "Lost Box," coined



PHANTOM ENTRYWAY A doorknob fragment from Keithline's 'Lost House Project.'



PHANTOM ENTRYWAY A doorknob fragment from Keithline's 'Lost House Project.'

Ads by Google

### **Phoenix Art Gallery**

Find local art galleries in the Phoenix area.  
[www.DexKnows.com](http://www.DexKnows.com)

### **Hillside Wire Cloth Co.**

Manufacturers of wire cloth. Mesh baskets, strainers, filters, cones  
[www.hillsidewirecloth.com](http://www.hillsidewirecloth.com)

### **Art Showing in Hamptons**

NYC Artist Lillian Alonzo-Marin is currently showing, view online  
[www.theartpath.com](http://www.theartpath.com)

### **500 Wire Meshes**

See prices, photos, helpful data and order online or by phone.  
[www.buymesh.com](http://www.buymesh.com)



after the similar "lost wax" technique employed in jewelry making. Before the house project, the largest object Keithline wrapped with wire and burned away was a discarded upright grand piano. That resulted in "Always Goodbye," which won first place in the three-dimensional category at the NAM's 2002 annual juried exhibition.

In the corridor leading to the gallery are a dozen or so black-and-white acrylic paintings by Keithline in a complementary "Lost House" series. The disquieting mood of the installation is maintained with these misty shapes. She creates a photo negative effect with most of them, ghostliness suggested by white outlines of buildings, stairways, and sometimes stock-still human figures against blackness.

By contrast, the "Ourchitecture" exhibition upstairs has a far lighter mood, as a whole. Keithline made scores of simple pine boxes the size and shape of birdhouses. Interested artists and architects were solicited through Sculpture magazine and given the blank-slate objects to decorate, deconstruct, or totally reconstruct. Providence curator Sara Agniel then selected 43 for the Newport exhibition. While 15 entries were chosen from Rhode Island artists, others included range widely geographically, from California to Germany.

Since it's rational to be a little paranoid post-9/11, some of the shelters in the show make a point of providing additional protection. Claudia Sbrissa wrapped her "Homeland Security House" in plastic sheeting that she stamped with the US Department of Homeland Security seal. With "Safe House," Ray Martin went so far as to cover the roof and walls with insulation sheets printed with an invented "Bio-guard Wrap" logo, complete with biohazard symbol.

Some of the most successful transformations, artistically, draw on the desire to transcend confinement or, in contrast, stress the menace that can be felt to surround protected spaces. Wings sprouting from its roof, Joyce Audy-Zarins's birch-bark-covered "Sustainability" is tipped back, about to take flight. John Slavik's untitled piece also is flying, but the black building that a soaring white bird wears like a winter coat is in flames. Reminding us that our homes protect us from harm, several artists applied protective skins to the houses, such as with Anne Sisco's toothpick-sprouting "Porcupine" and the untitled, visually arresting construction by Charlee Swanson, consisting of shattered sheets of windshield glass edged with barbed wire.

Imaginations soar as well here, often through humor. Thomas McKeon's "1 Gallon Paint House," painstakingly layered with white paint coat by coat, looks smoothly frosted in cake icing. Karen Nash's "The Effects of Home Improvement Television on the Built Environment" is heaped with balcony additions and enough colorful decorations to make the Victorian gingerbread style look like minimalism. Bob Rizzo's "Voodoo Palace" is similarly encrusted, but with a muddy cement that incorporates trinkets and religious beads and what could be the hair of unlucky enemies.

You might want to avoid seeing "Ourchitecture" if you're planning house renovations soon. You may walk out not wanting to settle for just a patio or extra bedroom.

**Issue Date: December 16 - 22, 2005**

**[Back to the Art table of contents](#)**

Sponsor Links

---

[home](#) | [feedback](#) | [masthead](#) | [about the phoenix](#) | [find the phoenix](#) | [advertising info](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [work for us](#)

© 2000 - 2009 Phoenix Media Communications Group