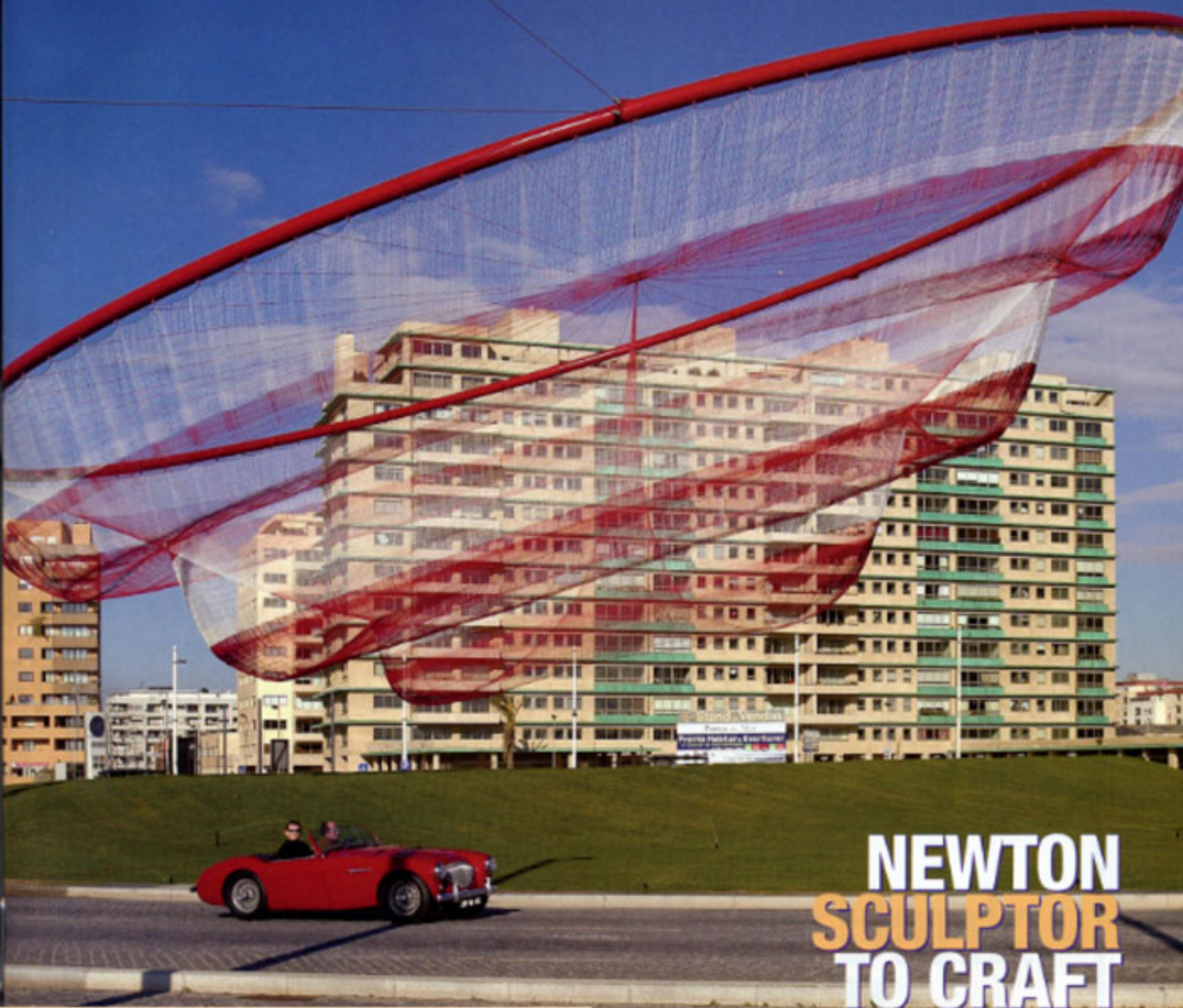


Newton

OCTOBER 2005

MAGAZINE • YOUR COMMUNITY FORUM



**NEWTON
SCULPTOR
TO CRAFT
NEW YORK
9/11
MEMORIAL**



RENOWNED SCULPTOR

WINS 9/11 PROJECT

'LIVING
SCULPTURE'
ON AN
ISLAND

"THE SEARCH FOR LIGHTNESS is a reaction to the weight of living," wrote Italo Calvino. That reflects the philosophy of world renowned sculptor Janet Echelman of Newton whose latest coup is a commission to produce the memorial in the Hudson River marking the death of New Jersey residents at the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001.

It is not an ordinary commission. It embraces a whole island. It requires a deep hole in its center. It also requires wind, sunlight, and tides and wave patterns. It is a signature Echelman piece in which her work encompasses the elements of nature to create a "living sculpture."

"Change in response to environmental forces is an important part of my work," Echelman said. "My art forms are living and breathing, in flux at every moment. They are never static objects."

A recent example of the artist's use of this principle is evident in her piece in Porto, Portugal called *She Changes*, described as a monumental, red and white, membrane-like sculpture along the shoreline outside of Porto. Critic Robert Morgan wrote in the publication of the International Sculpture Center, "I found the work significant as a paradoxical expression of an indigenous culture that had been transformed, in the process of crossing over the Atlantic, into a multi-cultural idea."

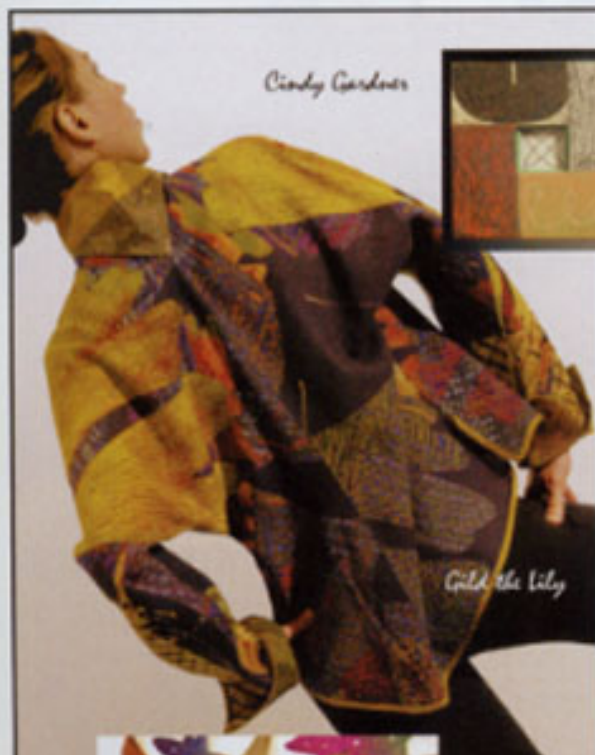
He explained that he arrived at the site where "the elliptical form, with nets blowing in the off-shore breeze, could be seen from nearly a mile away." He continued: "... the Portuguese landscape architect had installed a lighting system below ground level inside a crater-like turf that subtly accentuates the swaying, billowing effect of the huge nets. ... Undulating magically in the salt air overlooking the Atlantic, the piece is enormous in scale, a real spectacle, with a 20-ton, steel-rimmed circle sus-

ended by cables connecting to three diagonally placed poles that extend anywhere from 25 to 50 meters in height. The poles are like the masts of a huge ship, sited in three locations across the road from the elliptical rotunda where *She Changes* is situated. ... to label it merely a spectacle misses the point. Great spectacles—as opposed to trivial ones (based on the repetition of mindless effects)—do not dull the senses. Rather they enliven them. ..."

Such is the feeling evoked by Echelman that now is being applied to the Hudson River project. She developed the concept of a freestanding island to include a "Narrative Wall" with first-person accounts of the events of 9/11, including the experiences of observers, neighbors, volunteers, and medical-triage personnel who witnessed the attack.



Located in the middle of the island will be a "tidal well," a hole in the island's center around which will be a cast-glass "Circle of Names" where each of the 57 names of lost Hoboken residents will be inscribed. At night, the glass well and its water will be illuminated.



Cindy Gardner



Gold the Lily

Amazing Array!

The Artistic Alternative

- Spectacular jackets for in and out
- New jewelry by Amy Kahn Russell & others
- Dressy, black, sexy by Cartise
- Artistic sweater extravaganza
- Scarves - newly defined



Paul Sandona

W.O.W.

32 Needham Street Newton Highlands, MA
617-558-1969 • Open Monday-Saturday 10-6

"The initial idea for an island with a hole cut out of its center grew from my personal experience of irreparable loss after September 11th," said Echelman. Echelman evacuated her New York City apartment due to fumes from the Twin Towers. Soon after, her eldest brother, Ophthalmologist David Echelman of Southboro, Massachusetts, was killed instantly in an auto accident while driving to work at the hospital. The design competition for the 9-11 memorial was announced shortly thereafter, and Echelman decided to participate as "a way to transform grief into the creation of beauty."

Reconnecting people

"FOR HOBOKEN'S MEMORIAL, I wanted to reconnect people with the longer cycles of nature. So when you look down into the island's center, you look directly into the belly of the Hudson, seeing your own reflection as part of the larger flow of a living river."

According to a news release, Echelman's Portugal sculpture "is the world's first permanent monumental work to incorporate fluid movement. New technology and proprietary software made this possible. *Sculpture Magazine* calls the sculpture "one of the truly significant public artworks in recent years".

Echelman's sculptural language was developed in India while preparing an exhibit as part of a six-month Fulbright Senior Lectureship in painting. She turned to sculpture because her paints failed to arrive on time from America where it had been shipped by diplomatic pouch. "I was in Mahaballipuram, a village near Madras known for sculpture and Bronze-casting for more than 1,000 years, so I might as well learn to cast Bronze," she said. "I soon realized that the shapes I envisioned were too large to be executed in metal. So I had holes drilled along the perimeter of each piece, and invited local fishermen to collaborate with me to hand-knot in net a continuation of the gesture to 10 times the size of the original sculpture."

Thus was born her methodology for creating sculpture. It also marked the end of her years as a painter as her principal profession. Her work as a painter was well received in the New York market during prior years as a means of her support. In fact, Echelman has a show of her current paintings and print editions on glass and fabric this fall in New York City and continues to draw and paint. Her main effort, however, has been in sculpture.

Notable young pianist

HER JOURNEY TO ART BEGAN at the piano as she began her creative career as a concert pianist. She was a piano soloist performing Greig's A Minor Piano Concerto at the age of 14 and at 15 was invited to attend the Young Artists Program at Tanglewood. "As a teenager, I realized that classical music was not for me," she said. "So I went to Harvard and studied liberal arts."

She soon found herself intrigued with filmmaking under the guidance of filmmaker Ross McElwee, who encouraged her to pursue it as a career. She wrote, directed, and filmed a documentary for her senior project about three generations of women in her family, an interactive film that was selected for funding and inclusion in the permanent collection of the Harvard University Film Archive.

Echelman won an International Rotary Fellowship after graduation to study calligraphy and painting in Hong Kong. Her work was shown at the *Hong Kong University Art Museum*. She soon found herself living and working in Bali, Indonesia, and returning to the U.S. annually to show her work in order to earn money for the next year. "It was an unconventional entrée into the world of being a full-time artist in my twenties," she commented.

A return to Harvard University in the early 1990's found her teaching at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. While there, her home in Bali burned down accidentally. "I decided to stay and build a new life in Boston, rather than attempt to recreate something in Bali that was gone."

She is currently preparing a landmark project for the city of Tampa, Florida, her hometown as well as a number of other projects.

Echelman always assembles a team of engineers and architects for her work. While her monumental sculptures utilize tons of steel for their armatures, she stresses that her "content is more about fluidity." "My work is always changing," she commented. She said that the Hoboken project represents a "new direction in that it addresses a living body of water, the Hudson River, and requires the construction of a freestanding island. The hole cut through the center of the island will focus on changes in the Hudson's tides and wave patterns."

The sculptor never formally studied sculpture. She prefers working within "limitations and parameters." Her

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 55]