

## ART

# Lostant woman a pioneer in her field

Shafer-Wilson uses wire as thread

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When Suzanne Shafer-Wilson's husband, George Wilson, brought home some old wire, she was excited.

When her mother brought her small animal rib bones, she was inspired.

When she talks about dimensional wire needle lace vessels, made from bone and wire, she's passionate.

Passion is what it takes to be an artist, said Shafer-Wilson of Lostant, and she has it, at least for knotless netting.

Her eyes get big, she talks fast, and she shares knowledge about her craft.

Shafer-Wilson refers to herself as a pioneer, entering the art world where few, if any have gone.

Shafer-Wilson has taken a needle lace technique, which she said the Italians invented, and recreated it, so to speak.

Instead of a thread, she uses copper wire; instead of making a lace tablecloth or doily, she makes three-dimensional vessels of different sizes.

"As far as I know, I'm the only one doing this," said Shafer-Wilson.

Her craft started with small animal bones, and some left over plastic-coated wire. She used the rib bones (a gift from her mother) for the rim of the vessel and used the knotless netting technique with wire for the sides and bottom of the vessel.

She started her craft 15 years ago and hasn't stopped yet.

As she talks, she sits and makes continuous loops and tugs a length of wire. She's relaxed. It looks as easy as sewing on a button. It's not.

Some projects take 50 hours; some take four.

A four-inch copper-wire vessel takes about 24 feet of wire. She measures out eight feet at a time, or two arms' lengths, she said.

She orders the wire. At one time she obtained it from recycling centers, and the telephone company.

"I was like a kid in a candy store" she said.

She also bought door bell wire from the hardware store.

Most of her vessels are round and resemble wire lace pumpkins. But not all do.

A "fish out of water" sits on her table.

As she started the project the oval rim, less than an inch in size, immediately became a fish. The tiny knotless netting pattern resembles fish scales. The fish, about six inches long, is complete with fins and tail. Should the fish shape be knocked on its side, it looks like a fish gasping for breath.

Most often she works with wire but has used things found in nature.



The Times photo/Wanda Micklos

**Knotless netting is normally flat, such as a tablecloth, but Suzanne Shafer-Wilson of Lostant has made it three-dimensional. She works basically with wire, such as the vessels in the front. The large basket in the back is made of newspaper, with the triangular-shaped one made of skin shed by a snake.**

The hide of a deer her husband shot became strips which she used for a basket. The skin shed from a cobra snake was cut, twisted and made into a piece called "Echo Shelter," a three-dimensional triangle shape in which the pattern repeats, like an echo.

Her pieces of three-dimensional art work are displayed at various galleries and shows. Some are in Chicago at Woman Made Gallery; others at the Vail Craft Galley. Closer to home, she has pieces at August Hill Winery in Utica.

She is also proud of a piece she didn't make. An art student of hers, Ross Hawly, won best of show, through the Ottawa Art League, held at Peru Mall.

That he continued with the work means a lot to her and so do some of her pieces.

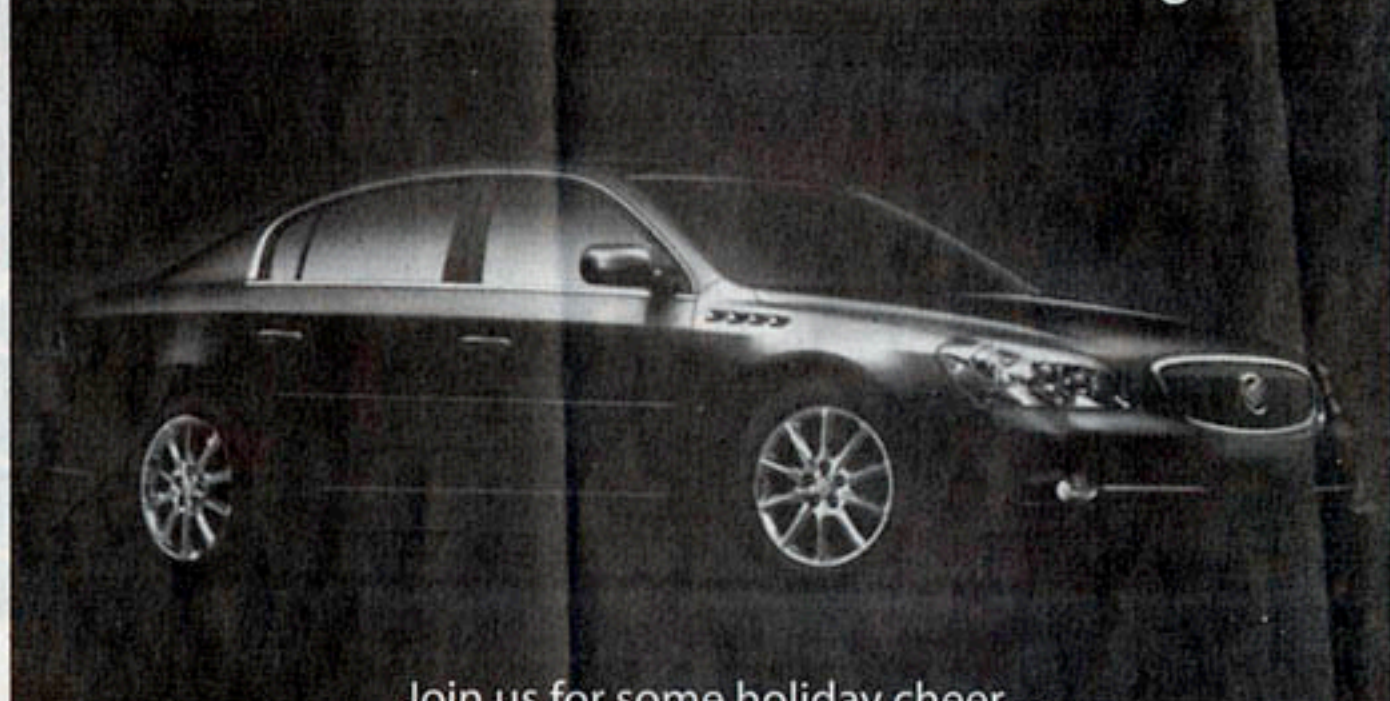
"Certain pieces I'll have forever," because of the hours and labor that went into the piece, Shafer-Wilson said.

"You can't have my baby," she said.



When Suzanne Shafer-Wilson creates a knotless netting vessel, it looks as easy as sewing on a button. It's not. The tension must be just right and there are many hours involved.

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