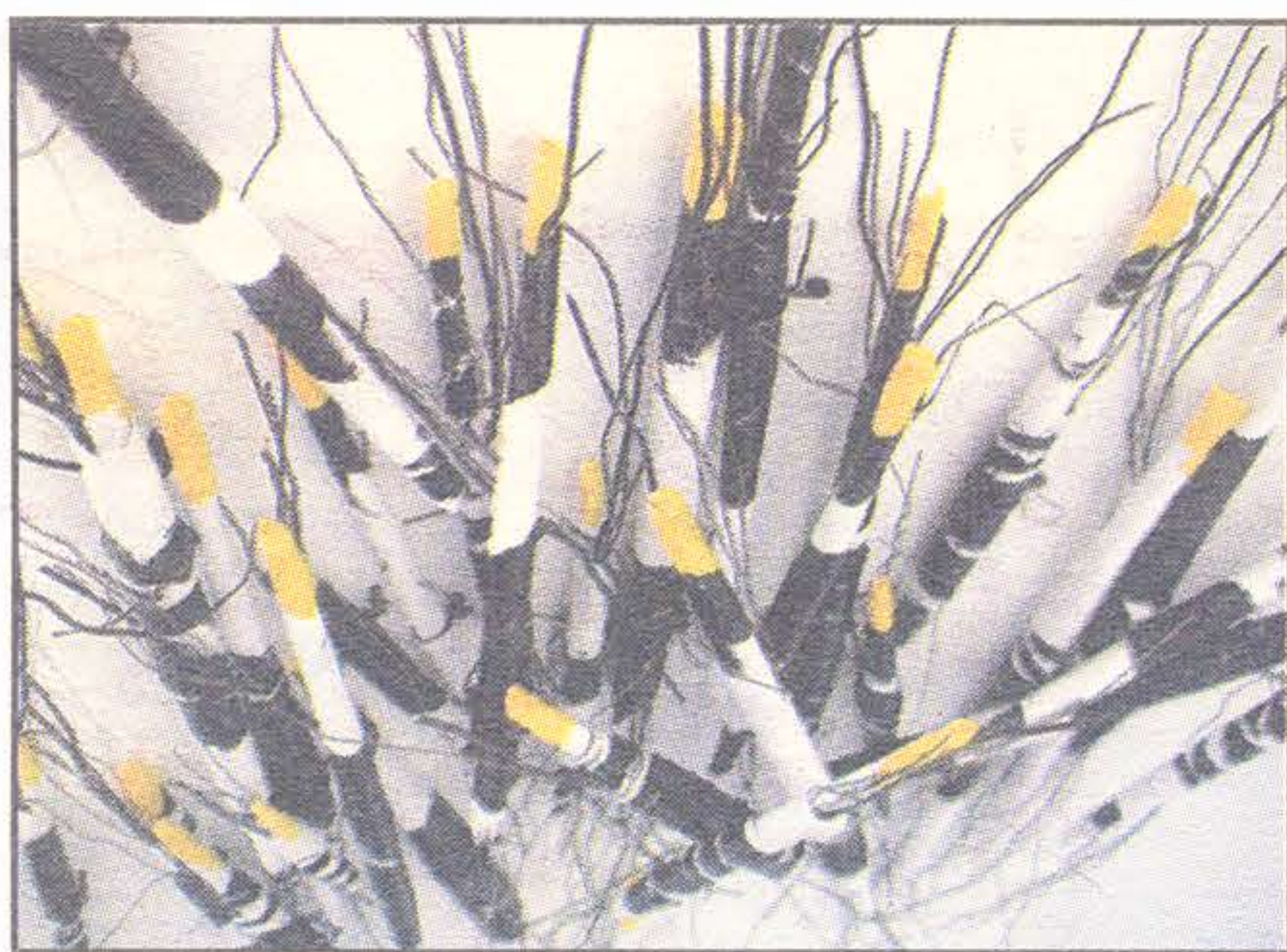


*Snake Fetish (pathway)*; recycled mesh, steel wire, acrylic, paper



*Transference*; recycled billboard paper, steel wire, acrylic paper

# In Search of the Supernatural

## ON EXHIBIT

By Leah Lopez Schmalz  
Special to Living

City Gallery is hosting *Fetish Making-Process and Transition*, a new installation exhibit by Connie Pfeiffer. The title might catch one off guard at first blush, but rest assured in this context it refers to the process of creating modern ritualistic “charms” based on the ancient cultural use of talismans.

Pfeiffer, who is originally from New London, is a trained metal artist who received her MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in New York and a BA from Southern Connecticut State University. While she teaches jewelry and metalsmithing at the New Haven Creative Arts Workshop, she has recently begun to expand her material repertoire, marrying metals with other items like cast glass, stone, or paper.

Her newest show *Fetish Making-Process and Transition* is an excerpt from her earlier 13-piece *Fetish Room*. She states “this installation draws from ancient ideas of fetishes as objects with powerful transformative abilities and places them into a modern day context.”

Upon opening the front door, *Snake Fetish* greets and escorts visitors through a serpentine path along the center of the rectangular room. By hanging the long, tapering mesh triangles slightly off center, Pfeiffer forces guests to pick a path—go right and you pass along the outer edge of the slithering curtain that obscures the rest of the exhibit, go left and you are immediately thrown into the center of the show. Wishing to jump right into the show, I started to go left. Immediately a pang of claustrophobia struck and I switched tracks and veered right.

With completely empty walls on my chosen path, I was forced to focus on the soft undulating veil that unfolded before me. Hammered,



*Fetish Pyre (past, future, present)*; recycled billboard paper, steel wire, acrylic

layered, painted, woven textures melted with filtering light to create a sense of envelopment. The result was surprising, like wrapping oneself in silk sheets, not a minefield of harsh cold metal. As I rounded the corner my gaze dropped to a large winding ball of wire and rods blocking the entrance to the center of the room.

*Fetish Pyre (past, future, present)* was a rolling, twisted, bird's nest of wire structure that supports a layer of pencil-like forms. Her repetitive, ritualistic process of rolling paper and steel creates, according to the artist, “highly organic, textural forms with a primal nature and sense of ambiguity.” Nearby a desk holds steel rods and torn pieces of recycled billboard posters giving visitors a glimpse into the process that moves from basic building blocks to fully executed sculptural form.

In *Transference*, these rolled pencil-like fetishes march in single file along the edges of the wall. Eye-catching for the spots of bright yellow coloring against black and white paper, the grouping resembles a community of swarming insects. Pfeiffer rounds out the exhibit with *Fetish Bundles*. In

this final metamorphosis, the created forms are suspended weightlessly overhead by thin, dangling wire filaments. The evolution is complete—basic components become a weighty, grounded sculpture, which moves to an animated creaturesque hive that then transforms into an airy, soaring gathering of similar structures.

Pfeiffer's installation is a very small show that is worth a glance if you find yourself on State Street with a few minutes to spare.

*Fetish Making* is on display through April 2. City Gallery is open Thursday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. (or by appointment) at 994 State Street in New Haven. For more information, call 203.782.CITY or visit [www.city-gallery.org](http://www.city-gallery.org). Pfeiffer also maintains a studio and gallery space in Chester, which is open to the public on Saturdays; email [clpfeifferstudio@aol.com](mailto:clpfeifferstudio@aol.com).

Leah Lopez Schmalz of Guilford is an environmental attorney with a BA in industrial design and a concentration in visual art and jewelry studies. Email her at [leahlopez@yahoo.com](mailto:leahlopez@yahoo.com).