

Opposing forces create a primitive energy

By Judy Birke

NEW HAVEN — “Connie Pfeiffer: The Fetish Room” is a contemplative installation that focuses on a single theme: fetishes — age-old inanimate objects believed to be imbued with certain protective powers.

The presentation, on view at Pfeiffer’s City Gallery through Aug. 7, has a cumulative effect and needs to be considered as a complete entity in order to succeed.

By turning the gallery into a single world of related visual connections, Pfeiffer aims to translate the ancient idea into a contemporary context. Utilizing materials reminiscent of the ancients, and by crafting them in a ritualistic manner, Pfeiffer addresses a parallel need for protection in today’s world.

By juxtaposing forms and materials in space, by balancing the external with the internal, the handmade with the natural, the substantive with the ephemeral, Pfeiffer draws one into a self-contained landscape of process and discovery, in which individual pieces work together to evoke an overall sense of primitive energy.

“Snake Fetish,” the most prominent part of the installation, is a series of multiple pieces suspended from the ceiling. Made of variously painted strips of

steel mesh, wire and painted pod-like forms with wooden twig-like tendril extensions, it winds its way around the gallery area in a serpentine movement.

By intermingling materials reminiscent of industrial products with those that suggest natural organic

properties, by manipulating texture, surface and color, Pfeiffer crafts a blend of opposing forces, allowing for a new metamorphosis in which familiar materials shed their original identities to evoke a more meditative spiritual dimension.

In “Fetish Nest,” a work that rests on the floor, delicately configured swirls of copper wiring emerge from a base of rocks. A bunch of those pod-like fetish forms, dotted with a myriad of brightly colored dots, are placed in the center of the nest.

The glitter of the copper against the roughness of the stone, the cluster of the rolled pods adorned with their twig-like antennae, form a contemplative arrangement of objects that, rather than exploiting their differences, respect their mutual inclusivity, once again offering the potential for an integrated power between the ephemeral and the material.

ART REVIEW

■ **Title:** “Connie Pfeiffer: The Fetish Room”

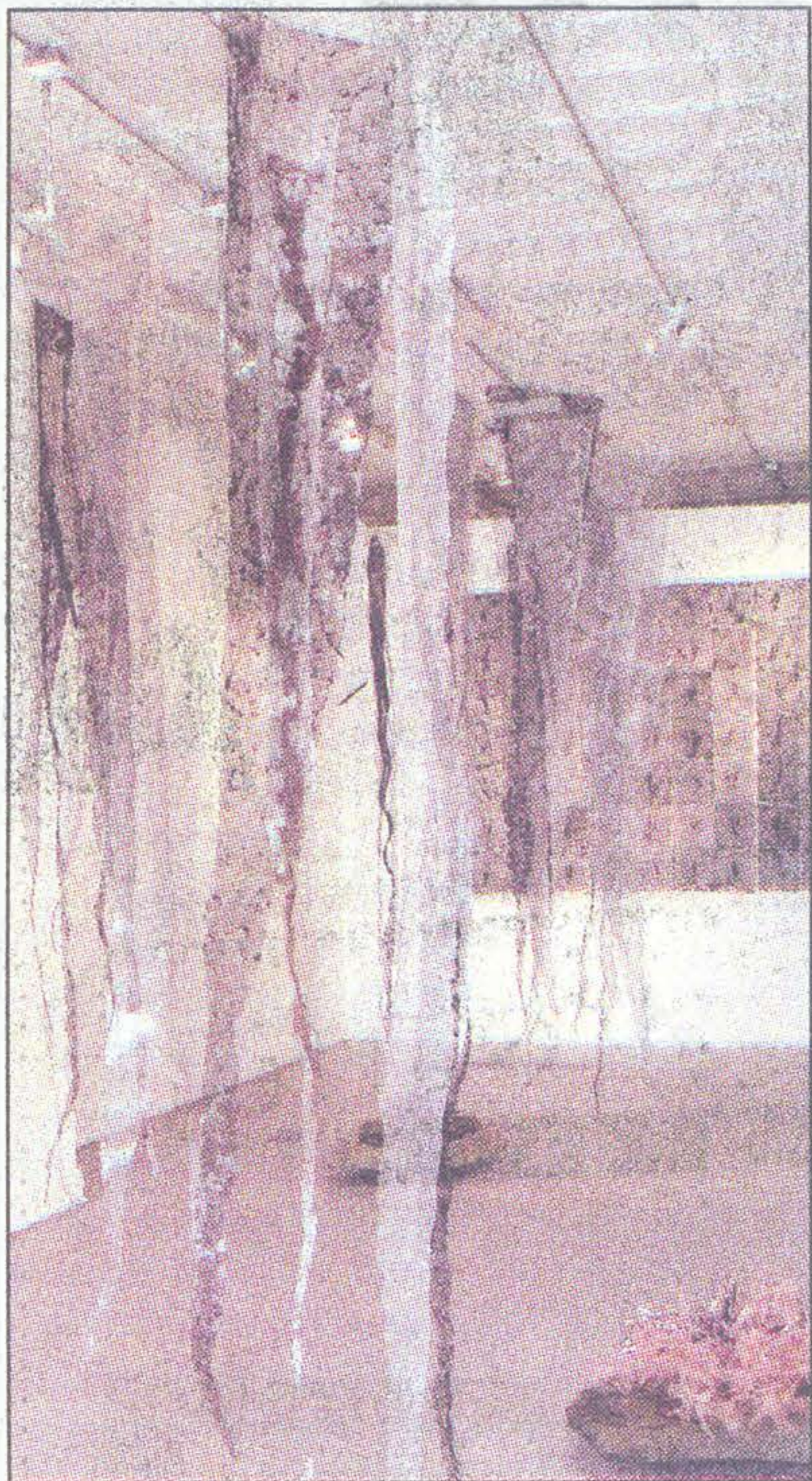
■ **Where:** City Gallery, 994 State St., New Haven

■ **When:** Through Aug. 7; 1-4 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, and by appointment

■ **Admission:** Free

■ **Info:** (203) 782-2489

Judy Birke of New Haven is a freelance writer and art consultant.



Meg Bloom

Pfeiffer’s “Snake Fetish” mixed media installation.