



***Adventures in  
Form, Space and Imagination***

*The 1998 Gloria Wilcher Memorial Exhibition*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The encouragement of artists is a primary role of The Currier Gallery of Art. Over the last decade the Currier has presented more than 80 emerging New England artists in a series of five exhibitions generously supported by an endowment gift from the family of Gloria Wilcher (1943-1985). The purpose of these endowed exhibitions is to seek out and recognize the achievements of talented, regional artists in their early or mid-careers. Many artists who have been included in past Wilcher Exhibitions have gone on to gain recognition elsewhere, and some have credited their “Wilcher experience” as a definitive step in their careers.

This year curator Andrew Spahr chose to focus The Gloria Wilcher Memorial Exhibition on a truly contemporary artistic format: site-specific installations. With assistant curator Kurt Sundstrom, Spahr reviewed the work of more than 40 New England artists and commissioned five to create new pieces designed for specific spaces within the Gallery. These challenging installations invite the viewer to walk into carefully crafted environments not only to contemplate the ambiance and content of the pieces, but also to consider, or perhaps reconsider, one’s notions of the expanding boundaries of art.

As a museum worker, I was privileged to watch these five dedicated artists at work and to feel the excitement that filled the galleries as the installations were “under construction.” The high energy, deep concentration and even dynamic tension exuded by the artists working with Currier staff underscored for me the serious purposefulness of the creative process. The Currier salutes all five artists — Beth Galston, Larimer Richards, Harry Umen, Frank Vasello and Kitty Wales — and

we extend our deepest appreciation to them for their extraordinary efforts.

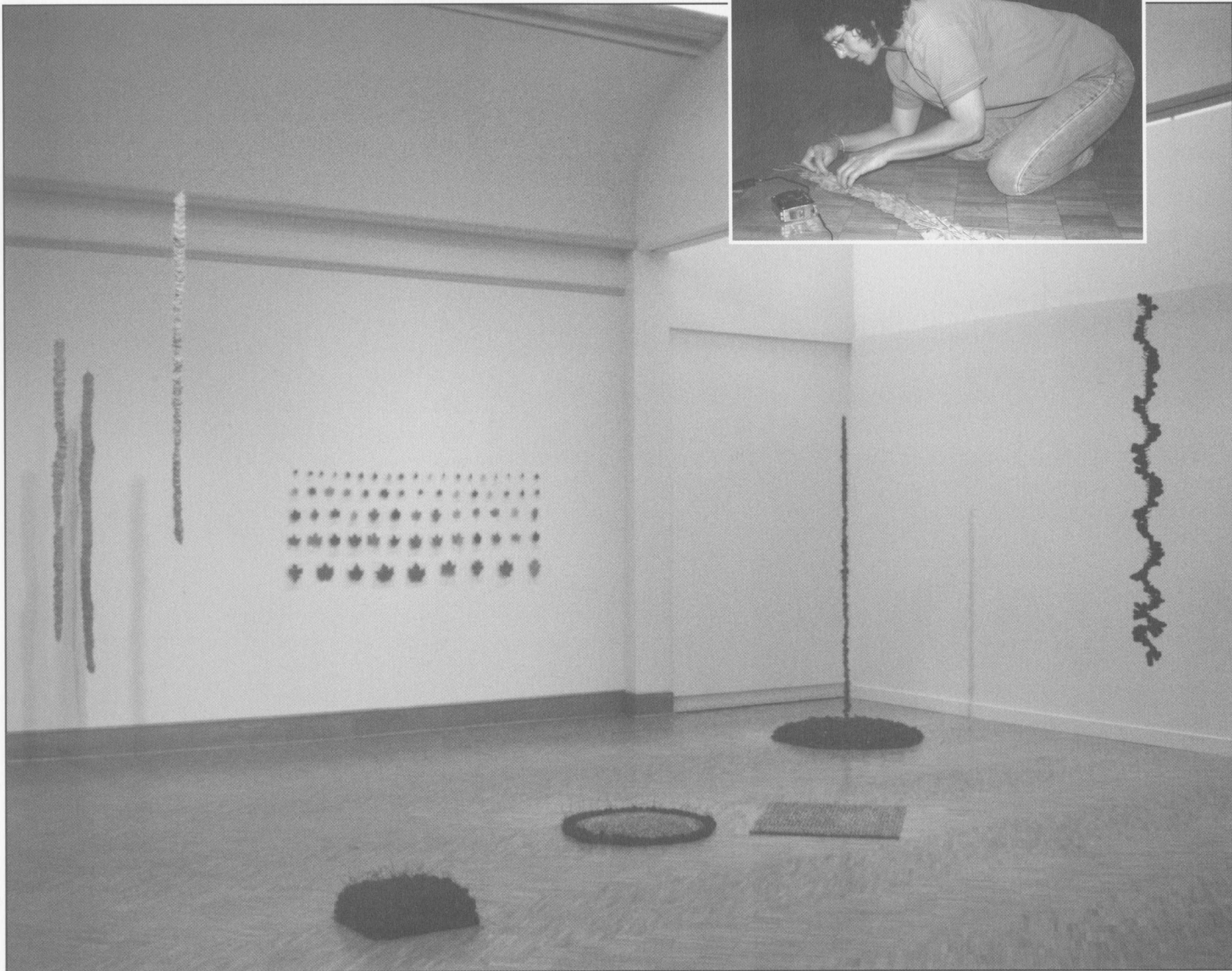
Mounting an exhibition as complex as this one requires the vision, persistence and skill of many staff members. I am proud to recognize curators Andrew Spahr and Kurt Sundstrom; registrar Karen Papineau and preparator Jeff Allen; facilities manager David Grimard and his skilled crew Ron Sklutas, Bob Desrochers, and Ben McGuire. Susan Leidy, Britt Steen-Zuñiga and Kristen Bullock of Public Programs; Tina Andrade and David Juvet in Development and Marketing; and Jane Dixon in Membership and Special Events, all contributed to this project. Thanks also to the Ramada Inn at Amoskeag Falls for providing accommodations for the artists.

The trustees and staff once again thank Abrasha and Lena Wilcher and their daughters Sandra Sheckman and Marilyn Benson for their vision in establishing the Wilcher Fund at the Currier. Through their generosity, they have ensured that the creative spirit of their

daughter and sister Gloria, whose own artistic career was tragically cut short, will be carried forward in a tangible and substantive way. This year we also wish to remember Derek Sheckman, the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Wilcher, to whom the 1998 Gloria Wilcher Memorial Exhibition is dedicated.

Susan Strickler  
Director  
The Currier Gallery of Art

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**B**eth Galston's installations involve non-traditional materials that acknowledge and respond to existing elements such as architecture, natural light and soaring space. Presently, Galston is exploring the complex relationships between nature and our perception of its beauty. Using natural materials reordered in an artificial environment, Galston reconstructs their natural appearance thereby deconstructing our preconceived notions about nature. The resulting presentation encourages the viewer to reevaluate familiar objects with renewed interest.

*Taxonomy* is an ambitious examination of "unnatural" nature and the intervention of the human hand. It is also a celebration of the leaf, the acorn, the seed pod and the flower petal. Each element of the installation has been preserved and recast in an unnatural setting. Some leaves have been laminated and thus preserved at the height of their fall color. The remaining leaves, flower petals, seed pods and acorns were taken out of their natural habitat, dried and thus spared the decaying forces of nature. Seen in a museum and not in their natural environment, acorns, seed pods and leaves take on new meaning. Each is no longer a parcel of nature but an art object displayed for its beauty. The physical beauty of these individual objects is echoed by the beauty of Galston's presentation in which the randomness of nature is replaced by the artfully calculated design of the artist.

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The tangible presence of the natural materials and the intangible quality of light are brought into a harmony that functions in concert thematically, transforming our perception of nature. Reflected light and shadows cast by the natural materials and installation framework subtly but pointedly accent the themes of distinctive beauty inherent in the installation. Her interests in the effects of light and shadow are traceable to earlier installations and her studies at MIT.

Galston earned her BFA in sculpture from the Kansas City Art Institute and her MS in Visual Studies from MIT. This year she was an Artist-in-Residence in Pittsfield and Newburyport, MA, Public Schools and is a frequent visiting artist and instructor at several New England Colleges. Galston has received many awards, including residencies at The MacDowell Colony and Yaddo, a two-year fellowship from the Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College and most recently a Professional Development grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Her installations are included in many publications such as "From Light to Leaf: The Installation Art of Beth Galston," *Sculpture Magazine*, July/August 1997, by Marty Carlock. This is the first time Ms. Galston has been invited to exhibit in New Hampshire.

KJS

# *Taxonomy*