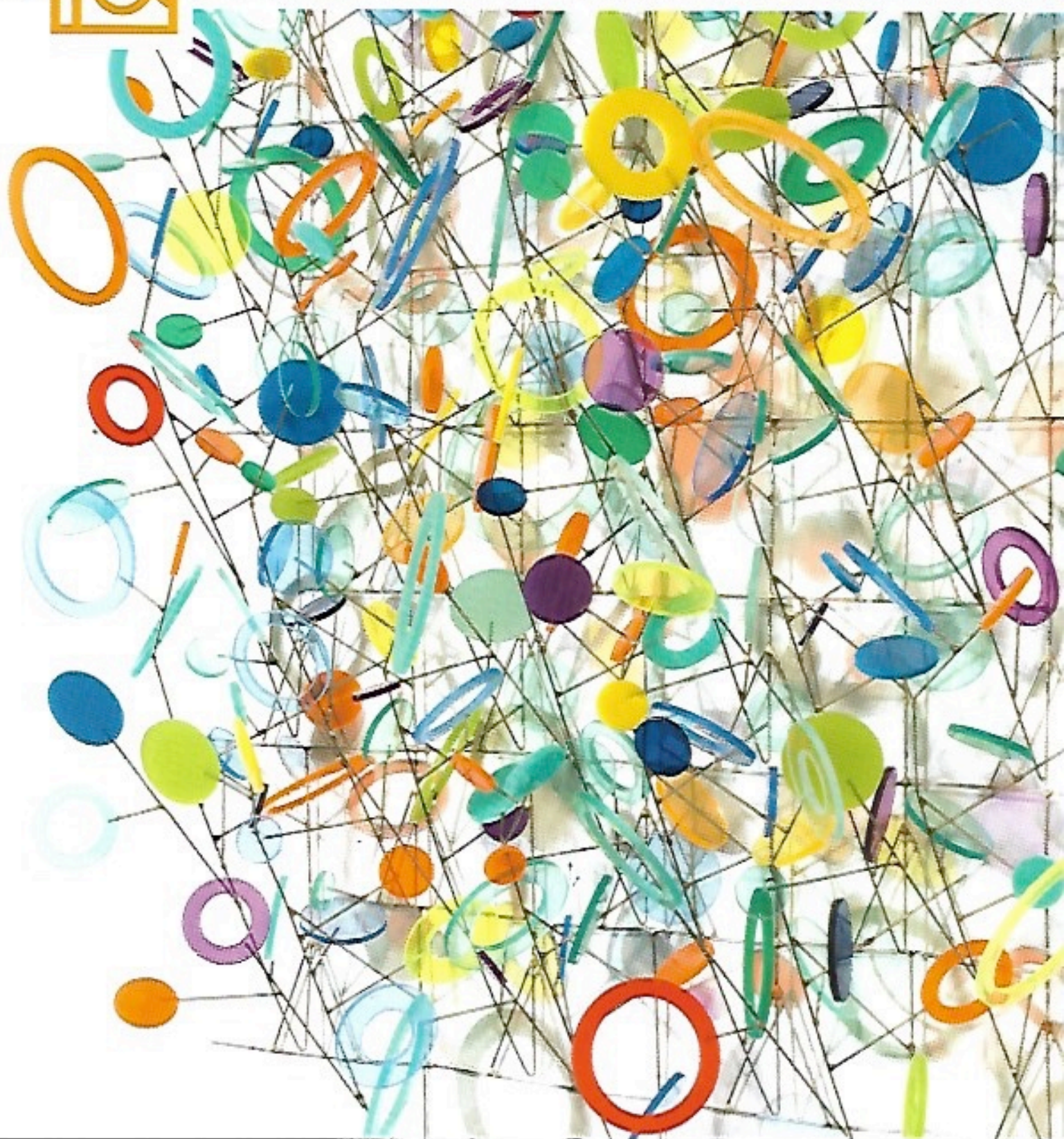


# CRAFT QUARTERLY



James Renwick Alliance

SUMMER 2020





# REBECCA HUTCHINSON

## HUMBLE MATERIALS, EXQUISITE SCULPTURAL FORMS

**By Rebecca Ravenal**

*Chair of the Distinguished Artist Series and ACC Award*

Rebecca Hutchinson spoke on November 16 and 17, 2019, as part of the JRA's Distinguished Artist Series. Her long history as an educator (currently, she's a professor at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth), was evident in her fluid and informative presentation style. In a Saturday workshop and a Sunday lecture, she revealed her techniques and reviewed her long and distinguished career.

Hutchinson's complex paper clay pieces evoke the natural world by creating patterns and repetitions often found there. Walking into one of her installations is like walking into a fairy tale, as if you've been slipped a magic potion and shrunk to the size of a dormouse. You're enveloped by a giant field of strange botanical shapes suspended from the ceiling or growing up the walls, by elongated pods, or dangling hives, or colossal cocoons creating a delirious, disorienting environment.

With these objects, Hutchinson does not strive to replicate nature, but to celebrate the "complexity of engineering" and the inexorable force for survival in the natural world.

Using materials such as fired and unfired porcelain, old clothing, branches, and industrial surplus, she combines her solid skills in papermaking and ceramics to create things that exceed the limitations of one medium alone, especially in the large scale that's possible in her work. For each site specific installation, she forms thousands of small parts which can be combined and







attached to an underlying structure to make the overgrown organic forms such as dense floral fields or intricate twisting vines strung throughout the room.

Because paperclay is an adaptable, malleable material, Hutchinson is able to use a wide array of techniques from the fiber and clay world, experimenting freely by cutting, dipping, pouring, molding, and modeling to create any form she imagines. She becomes like the busy bee or industrious bird, collecting bits and pieces to weave into wondrous shapes, "up-cycling humble materials into exquisite sculptural forms." Hutchinson's hybrid works, part paper/part clay, immerse us in her intensely imaginative world, prompting viewers to ask questions about environment, structure, sustainability, and beauty.

Distinguished Artist Series photos

Pg 36: Tom Loeser, *The Stoop Project* (2013), Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. Tom Loeser demonstrating at the Distinguished Artist Series workshop.

Pg 17 Top: Tom Loeser, *Folding Chairs* (1989)

Pg 17 Bottom: Tom Loeser, *Concentration* (1994)

Pg 18: Rebecca Hutchinson, *Night Bloom* (2012), Racine Museum Installation.

Pg 19: Rebecca Hutchinson Distinguished Artist Series demonstration at District Clay.