

For Immediate Release

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Exhibition Highlighting Seven Artists Exploring Material in Sculpture at UM's The Art Gallery January 26 – March 9, 2012
Celebrating the creative process transforming mundane materials into art.

COLLEGE PARK, Md. – The Art Gallery and the Department of Art at the University of Maryland present *Wood, Paper, & Fiber*, a transformative exhibition of regional, national and international contemporary artists working with some of art's most basic materials to create sculptural objects that transcend their elements and captivate the viewer. The exhibition features sculptural works of art by artists **Ben Butler, Chris Gilmour, Drew Goerlitz, Brian Lee, Pilar Ovale, Aeneas Wilder**, and **Millicent Young**. *Wood, Paper, & Fiber* curator, artist and Department of Art Professor **Foon Sham**, states his goal is to recognize common materials and how artists "skillfully transform these materials into art of great beauty and deep resonance."

Sculpture artist **Ben Butler** starts with large blocks of wood and transforms each piece into light, almost cloud-like structures via a technique of repetitive patterning. By continuously repeating and layering these forms onto the wood, he creates complex structures and textures. As sharp edges dissolve and straight lines are rounded, his finished works appear as one unified form, yet surprisingly have no hardware or other fixtures to explain their large size or curved finishes. Butler currently lives in Tennessee and is an Assistant Professor of Art at Rhodes College located in Memphis.

Chris Gilmour recreates images, objects or statues most people can identify, yet makes them from something most humans do not associate as an "art" supply. Gilmour twists, bends, and folds cardboard and cardstock of various thicknesses to create highly detailed sculptures of bikes, cars, wheelchairs, and other ordinary objects. He then adds his signature of minute cracks and creases usually only seen on world globes of the highest quality and detail, razor-thin strips representing musical instrument strings, or life-sized statues of Julius Caesar.

Drew Goerlitz's sculptures are created entirely of sheets of paper and steel. His unusual combinations of these opposing materials create a complex relationship in which the two fight yet coexist. Goerlitz's describes the delicious tension between these industrial polar opposites by stating "[My sculpture] remains simplistic, although there is a complexity, not in its appearance, but contained within the struggle of weight and balance." This combination evokes a feeling of tension and suggests utility. Drew is an alumnus of the Masters of Fine Arts program at the University of Maryland. He completed his degree in Sculpture in 2003.

Japanese furniture maker and artist **Brian Lee** enjoys toying with the idea of what can be considered "functional art". His sleek ash wood chair apply titled *Chubby Brother's Sister* is indeed a functional chair, but upon closer examination the viewer will notice how low the back and wide the seat proportions are when compared to traditionally styled chairs. With seating slats that bend when the chair is used, Lee's works humorously take on a personality that only comes with familiarity.

Sculptor and installation artist **Pilar Ovale** utilizes the skills she learned from shipwrights in her native homeland of Chile to aid her in the difficult process of bending and twisting wood. Her works curve, bend, and seemingly meld into the wood she prefers to work with. She continues this theme of remembering the past in even the sort of wood she selects for her art. They are both ecological as well as memorial. Though her finished works can vary in sizes, the intricacy and delicateness persist.

Aeneas Wilder will create, design, and finally deconstruct a new work exclusively for *Wood, Paper, & Fiber*. The Scottish sculptor uses relatively simple stacking techniques to create a massive towering structure that looks far more complex upon completion. Wilder is best known for then collapsing the structure he worked so meticulously to build. In fact, the deconstruction of Wilder's works has become an event in its own right as well as an internet sensation.

Millicent Young ties much of her work to the materials she uses. Seeking symbolism in the wood and fibers she gathers from her home in Virginia, Young creates stunning sculpture and installations about "polishing the beauty of the mundane and the manifestation of change." In her suspended large sculpture Vessel, Young creates a piece that looms over the viewer, its canoe-shaped body portending a journey that may be, literally, over the viewers head. The delicate fibers of horse hair that rain down from the suspended structure however, imply a comfort, a sense of patient ease, to the journey ahead if willing to embark. Her ability to portray the gentleness of such structures underlines the versatility of the raw materials featured in *Wood, Paper, & Fiber*.

The public opening reception for the exhibition will be held on Thursday, January 26 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Refreshments courtesy of Roots Market located in Olney, Maryland. *Wood, Paper, & Fiber* will be open to the public through Friday, March 9, 2012. An exhibition catalog is available for purchase. A symposium with curator Foon Sham and the artists featured in *Wood, Paper, & Fiber* will be held on Friday, January 27 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m in the Ulrich Recital Hall located in Tawes Hall. Light refreshments will be served at noon. The Art Gallery is located at 2202 Art-Sociology Building on the University of Maryland College Park campus. Please visit www.artgallery.umd.edu or call 301-405-2763 for more information.