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WHAT MAKES A SPACE A PLACE?

To explore this question, the Lexington Art League Exhibit takes art outside the gallery in the five-venue, multi-media installation series INTERSTRUCT.

BY CHUCK CLENNEY
PHOTOS BY EMILY MOSELEY



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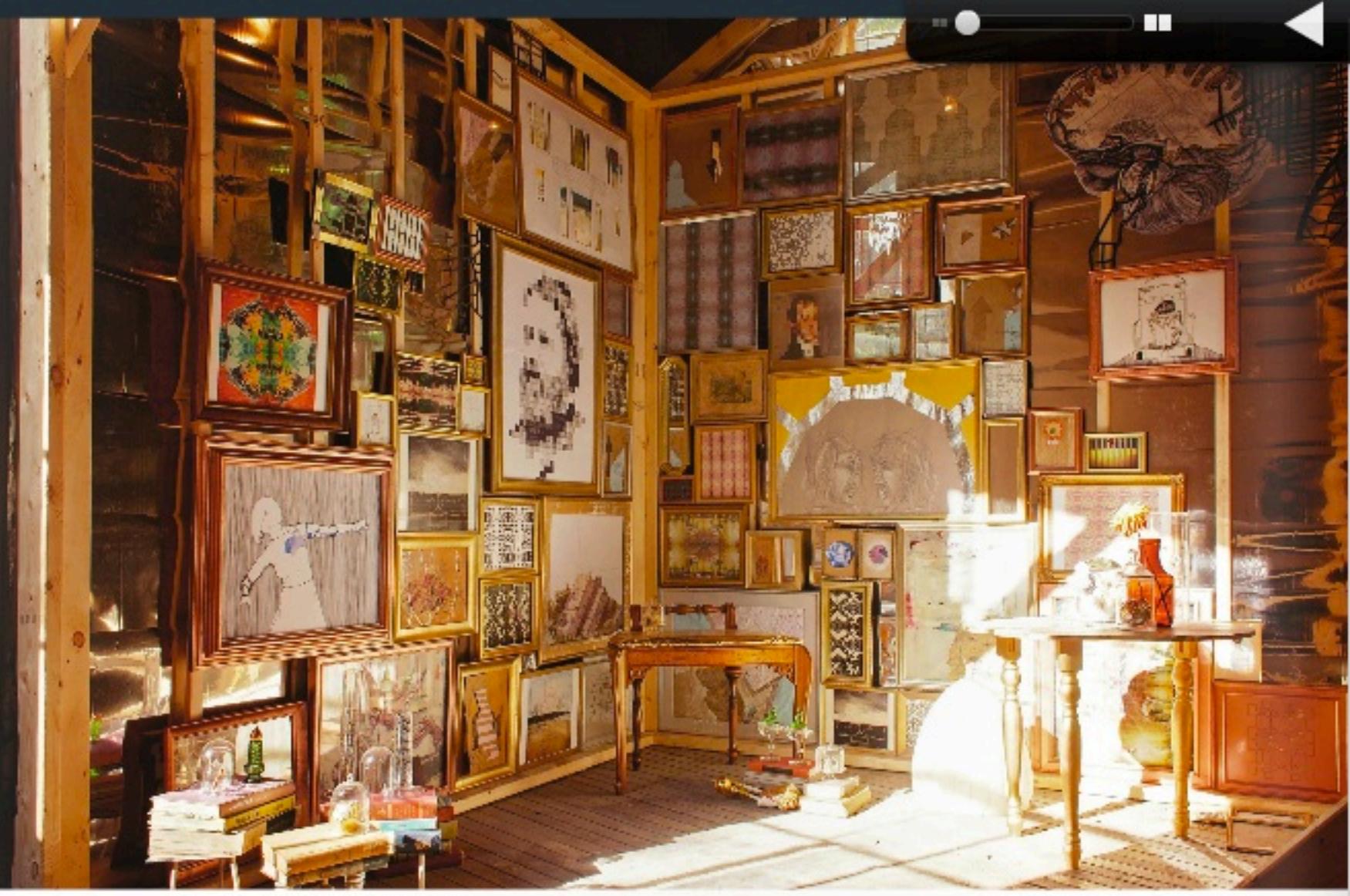
As part of an ongoing effort to make contemporary art available and accessible to as many people as possible, the Lexington Art League has increasingly put a focus on presenting high visibility art exhibits in spaces outside the walls of its Castlewood Drive home base, the Loudoun House. To that end, the impetus for the organization's current project INTERSTRUCT, an ambitious, five-venue series of multi-media installations in "non-art spaces," has been in place for a while, says LAL curator Becky Alley.

For this exhibit, "we wanted to see what happens when we put something different in a different space," Alley said. For the project, which started last month and will extend through early December, LAL will work with a total of 18 artists from 10 different states and three different countries, who will redefine and transform several Lexington spaces while responding to each location's history, geography, architecture and any other contextual information available. Using houses and an old bourbon distillery as primary mediums, Alley described the exhibit as "not a typical experience with art – no clean white box, no gallery lighting."

The first installation of the exhibit, titled "If the walls could talk," took place at Grosvenor Avenue's historic Pope Villa, the best surviving domestic design by seminal architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, built in 1811. LAL worked in conjunction with The Bluegrass Trust (the current owners of the house) to bring in 10 members of Irish-American artist collective Expanded Draught to reflect upon and transform the space, which is currently in a very fragile state from a crippling 1987 fire. It was the hope of LAL's communications director, Candace Cheneay, that the exhibit, which was on display for two weeks in October, would "raise awareness that the Pope Villa exists and launch more of a public dialogue about the future uses of the building itself."

For the first phase of INTERSTRUCT, ten artists from the Irish-American artist collective Expanded Draught collaborated on the multi-media installation "If the walls could talk," which was on exhibit in October in Lexington's historic Pope Villa home, below. Four more installations at various locations will follow this month as the project continues.





For that exhibit, the artists channeled some of Latrobe's design motifs (control of light, linear pathways and spatial flow) and used sounds, mirrors, projected video and multi-media sculptures to tell the history, not just of the Pope Villa itself, but also of the mentality and imagination of its creator. To get the house ready for the show, the BGT installed stairs and elevated flooring so visitors could avoid the more hazardous areas of the villa. Fire codes, which limited the capacity to 40 people in the house at one time, indirectly resulted in an opportunity for attendees to intimately experience the installations: a gigantic circular-chandelier in the very auspiciously hidden second-floor domed rotunda, fabric-work based on the house's original wallpaper, tables shaped like brains and cubist portraits of Latrobe, all juxtaposed beautifully against the disheveled backdrop of burnt aristocratic urban decay.

The artistic team worked with The Bluegrass Trust to pull documents, past wallpaper samples, etc., to better understand the character of the house and also to figure out what limitations they were dealing with by installing within such a fragile, historical structure. As Irish artist and member of Expanded Draught, Dave Callan, explained about the exhibit, "We're looking at the house as kind of this whole essence of Henry Latrobe - a cerebral portrait of him - as if this house is his mind, or his psyche."

For the second installment, which takes place this month, LAL will venture over to the North Limestone neighborhood for two separate installations surrounding the November's Noli Night Market, a monthly outdoor community event featuring live music and area food and retail vendors, which takes place Nov. 7.

Detail shots of October's "if the walls could talk" exhibit at Pope Villa. The artists researched the original plans for and details of the home by architect Henry Benjamin Latrobe when planning the installation.



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For one installation, Chicago-based Rebecca Hamlin Green's exhibit, "This Remains to Be Seen," will take over a single-family-home on York Street. The exhibit will respond to her research on the Noli neighborhood's social issues using a variety of creative media, including ceramic installations, silhouettes, rooms-within-rooms and sculpture within the house. Green, who aims to explore themes of home, nostalgia and memory, hopes that contrasting an empty rundown house with precious objects will create a sense of house and home, allowing visitors to "explore the domestic space and interact through time and space, reflecting on their sense of self and home."

A second installation in conjunction with the Night Market, opening concurrently and within walking distance to the Night Market and the York Street exhibit, is the structural creation of Tennessee artists Juan Rojo and Cedar Nordbye. In their installation, Partnership House, the two University of Memphis faculty members will question the institutions of marriage and homeownership, centering on the questions "What does it mean to have a home?" and "Is the white wedding aesthetic disempowering women?"

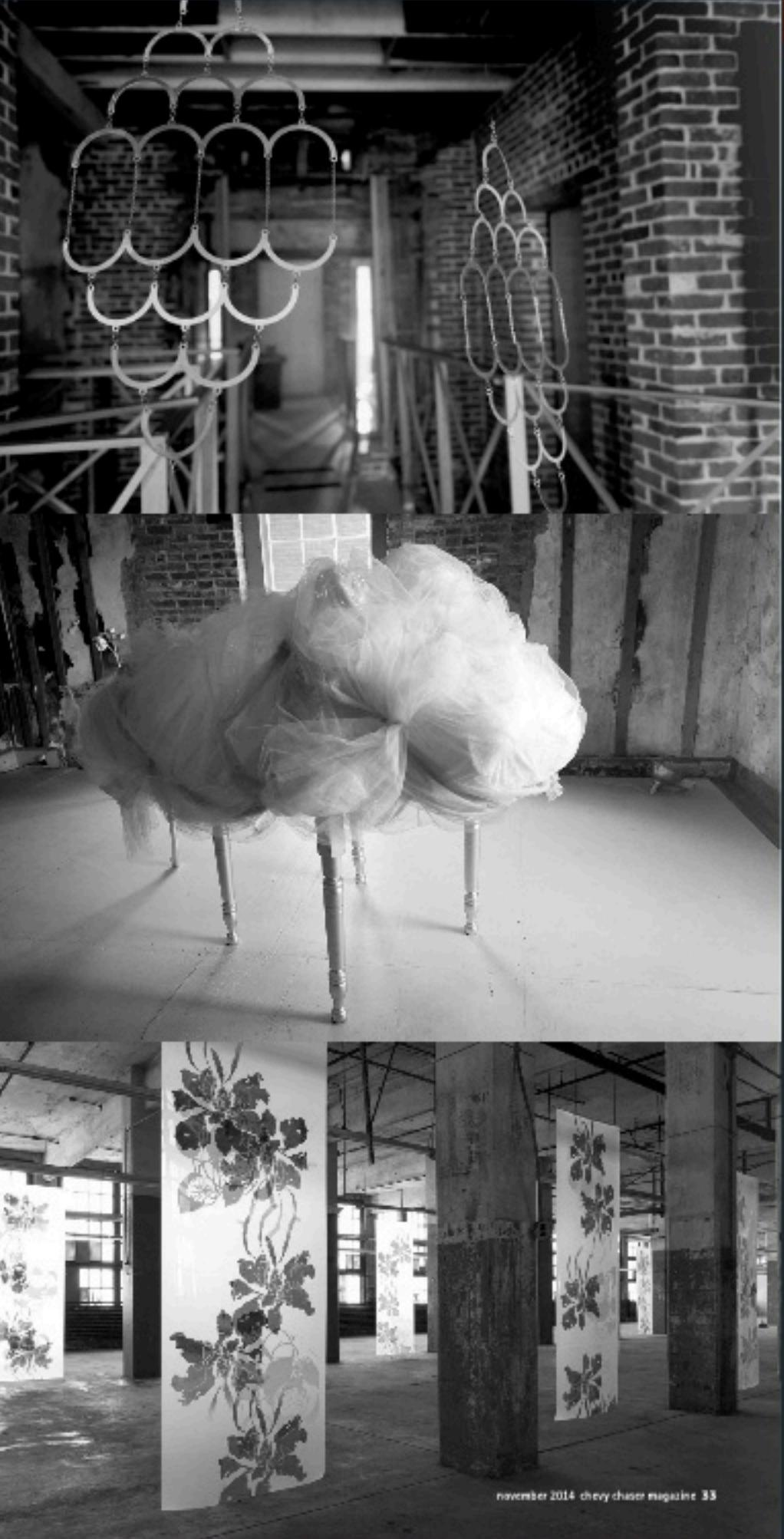
The duo will silkscreen and spray paint wood at the Loudon House before University of Kentucky, Transylvania, and EKU students help them raise a chapel in an abandoned North Limestone lot.

"It will be like an Amish barn raising," said Nordbye. The duo will print on Tyvek, allowing this imagery to flow throughout the structure. Rojo, who lived in Lexington for a year, has previously worked with the LAL and came to the United States from Spain 10 years ago. He generally works with themes of marriage and community, while Nordbye deals with "construction and the metaphor of construction"; hence, construction of a chapel makes sense.

After the installation is disassembled in December, all of the wood will be donated to Habitat for Humanity, for construction of an actual home, extending the metaphor.

The final installments – Ohio-based artist Taryn McMahon's "Raised from the Seeds Sown in Spring" and Knoxville-based artist Jason Sheridan Brown's "Lost Mountain" – will open during 2014's final Gallery Hop (Nov. 21) inside the historic Pepper Distillery campus on Manchester Street.

Detail shots from last month's "If these walls could talk" exhibit at Pope Villa.



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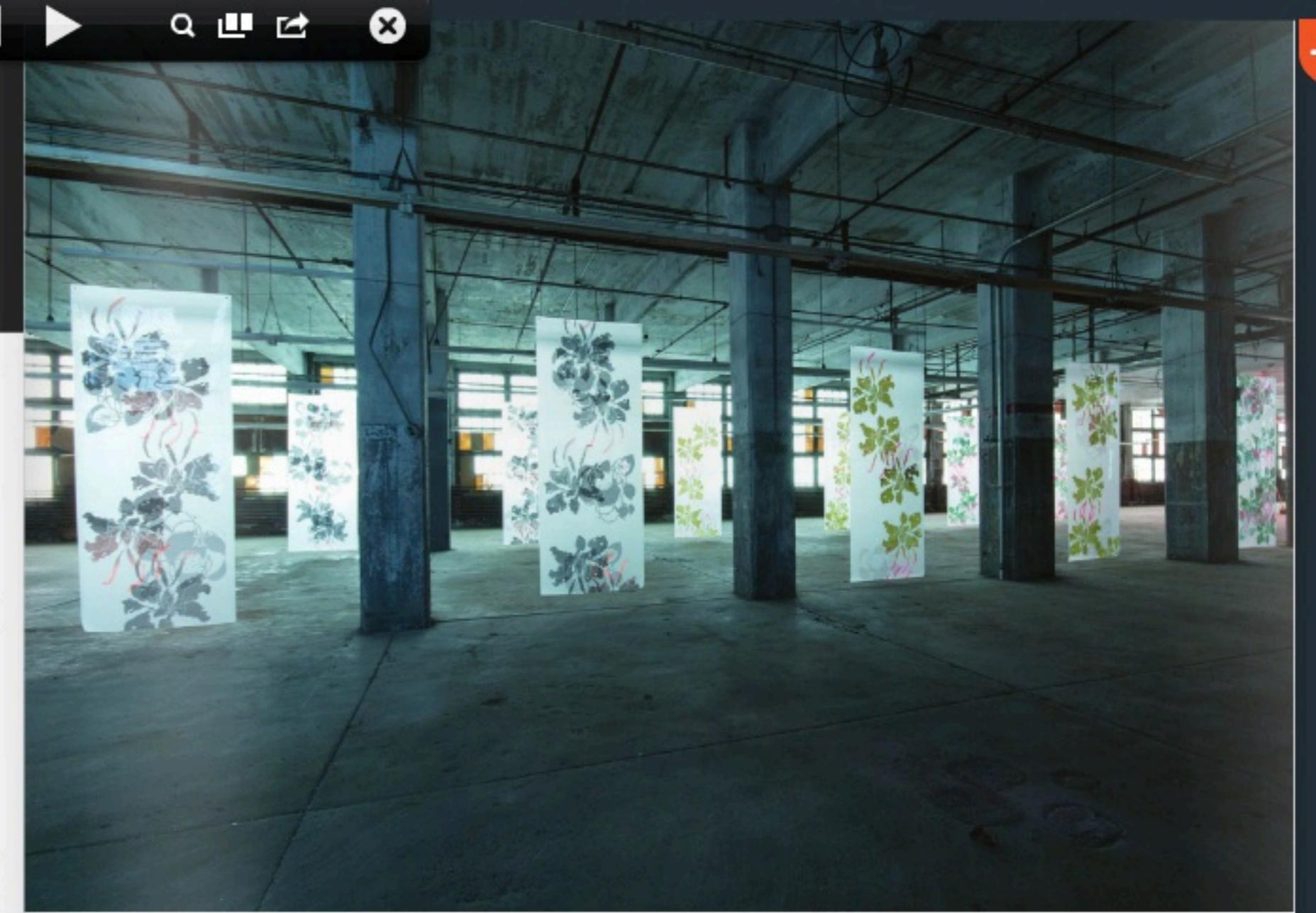
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Taryn McMahon will install translucent banners (similar to those pictured here) that feature silk-screened images of rye, corn, barley and oak – all plants used in bourbon production – for her exhibit at the Old Pepper Distillery campus, which opens Nov. 21.

At 1170 Manchester, McMahon, a Kent State print-making professor, will explore the history of bourbon in Kentucky by silk-screening botanical rubbing patterns of rye, corn, wheat, barley, and oak – all plants used in bourbon production – onto 8-foot, translucent banners suspended between the Pepper Distillery's structural columns, which will guide viewers through the exhibition. McMahon initially wanted to explore tobacco in Kentucky, but after Alley suggested the Pepper Distillery space, she was inspired and switched to the history of bourbon; more specifically, of bourbon production at the 1930's era Pepper Dis-

tillery. McMahon explained, "I want people to think about the site and history of the building in a way that they haven't thought of before." McMahon will begin installing the project on Nov. 14 and is looking forward to "responding to what I see and what I find when I'm there."

At 1228 Manchester, University of Tennessee professor Jason Brown's "Lost Mountain" exhibit focuses on the layers of impact that coal has had on the state. The inspiration for his installation comes from UK English professor Erik Reece's book of the same name. In an old industrial machine room within the Pepper Dis-

Planning for INTERSTRUCT began more than a year ago when Alley and LAL wanted to do a project outside of the Loudoun House to showcase its unique exterior character. This motivation to get art out of the gallery and to as many people as possible is the crux of LAL's "Art for Everyone" initiative – an egalitarian and down-to-earth approach fully embodied in the INTERSTRUCT projects.

For more information on the INTERSTRUCT installations and other Lexington Art League events, visit their website at www.lexingtonartleague.org.

IF YOU GO...

INTERSTRUCT at Night Market

INTERSTORY: Bright Market
(North Limestone neighborhood installations)
Nov. 7-21. Exhibition hours by appointment.

Lexington Art League will venture over to the North Limestone neighborhood for two separate installations opening in conjunction with the November NoLi Night Market, a monthly pop-up market featuring food, beverage and retail vendors at the intersection of N. Limestone Street and Bryan and Loudoun Avenues. The opening reception for both exhibits will take place Nov. 7 from 7-11 p.m.

This Remains to Be Seen. 128 York St. Chicago-based artist Rebecca Hamlin Green's exhibit will take over a single-family-home using ceramic installations, silhouettes, rooms-within-rooms and sculpture to explore themes of home, nostalgia and memory.

Partnership House, 740 N. Limestone St. Using wood and Tyvek that has been spray painted and silk-screened, Tennessee artists Juan Rojo and Cedar Nordby will create a pop-up chapel in an abandoned lot that calls into question the institutions of marriage and home-ownership.



Sketches for
Taryn McMahon's
forthcoming
installation for
INTERSTRUCT.
"Raised From the
Seeds Sown In
Spring."

IMAGE
SUPPLIED BY

INTERSTRUCT at Gallery Hop

(Distillery District installations)

The third and final *INTERSTRUCT* installments will open during 2014's final gallery hep-en (Nov. 21, 5-8 p.m.), both inside at the historic Peppermill Distillery campus.

Raised from the Seeds Sown in Spring, 1170 Manchester St. Ohio-based artist Taryn McMahon will explore the rich history of bourbon in Kentucky (and particularly in the Pepper Distillery) with cascading translucent paper curtains hand-printed with images of rye, corn, wheat, barley and oak – all plants used in the production of bourbon.

Lost Mountain. 1228 Manchester St. Knoxville-based artist Jason Sheridan Brown will create a homage to the Perry County mountain and the 2007 book by Erik Reece of the same name using mirrored Mylar, incandescent light fixtures, eastern Kentucky coal and plywood silhouettes of mountaintops, exploring the complex relationships among coal, the railroad, and Kentucky industry. **65**

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