



Published by the  
DAVID WINTON BELL GALLERY  
AND DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ART  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

In conjunction with the exhibition and  
symposium by the same name  
September 9 – October 22, 2006

from OBJECT to SITE

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*in*TRANSIT



## Sharon Louden

*Fairies*, 2001–06

Black tie-wire, reflective sheeting and mirrors; dimensions variable  
Installation view, Main lawn, List Art Center

Courtesy of Oliver Kamm SBE Gallery, New York, NY, and the artist

According to the Oxford Dictionary, “‘fairies’ are small, imaginary beings with supernatural powers; shapes, beautiful, small, and delicate; voices; footsteps; small lamps or lights of colored glass and for decoration.” Louden’s outdoor installation, *Fairies*, suggests all of the above. Comprised of more than 200,000 feet of black tie-wire, hand-cut and arranged into an organic formation from which hundreds of flickering “lights” shimmer through, *Fairies* creates a magical lighting field.

Exhibited first in Houston in 2001 as an indoor piece, *Fairies* is now re-configured according to the specification of its exterior site—the main lawn in front of the List Art Center. While in the earlier piece the stems of wires topped with “lights” (a combination of small pieces of reflective sheeting and mirrors) were sticking out and catching the artificial interior light, now the “lights” are imbedded in the amassed piles of wire hiding yet still absorbing and reflecting the constantly changing light from its natural surrounding. There is a great sense of playfulness in this piece operating on both aesthetic and conceptual levels. In fact, it is through the aesthetic play of opposites—stillness and motion, density and luminosity, roughness and softness—that the conceptual or psychological play of opposites intrinsic to the piece—protection and risk, safety and danger, closure and exposure—are revealed.

*Fairies* is an intense and elaborative installation that stresses both the physicality of the medium—the harshness of wire and intensity of light—and the artistic process—the bodily and ritualistic approach. Moreover, it bears a strong metamorphic and performative character. Here, the raw quality of industrial wire is softened by the shimmering light of the reflective sheeting and mirrors; much like the geometric structure of the piece, comprised of straight and twisted lines measuring the length of the artist’s outstretched arms, is transformed into an organic and even anthropomorphic site, in which the movements of lines allude to the movement of the artist’s body. Indeed, it is a moving line, exploring the restlessness of the body and the inner self that is at the heart of Louden’s entire art production from drawing and painting to sculpture, installation, and recent video animation. For Louden line is a carrier of feelings and an embodiment of psychic states; and it is inner intensity that she is trying to materialize in visual forms. As with dance or dancing bodies, *Fairies* is in constantly shifting motion; restless and vivacious it performs in and transforms the landscape into body-scape.

