

Art rooms with a view come in early spring hue

It was a full-blown, wintry scene in the streets outside the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts. Snowbanks engulfed the lines of parking meters at curbside. The sky was opaque and gray.

But inside the institute, spring or something suggesting it filled the air. That's by reason of two environmental installations evoking gardens: "Winkers," by Sharon Loudon of New York; and "Reverie," by Beth Reitmeyer of Chicago.



ROGER GREEN
ON ART

Each of the installations dispels winter dreariness and biting cold. Both remain at the institute through Jan. 26.

Loudon's "Winkers" consists of 15 bouquet-like elements, arrayed individually and in groups on the floor of a large exhibition space.

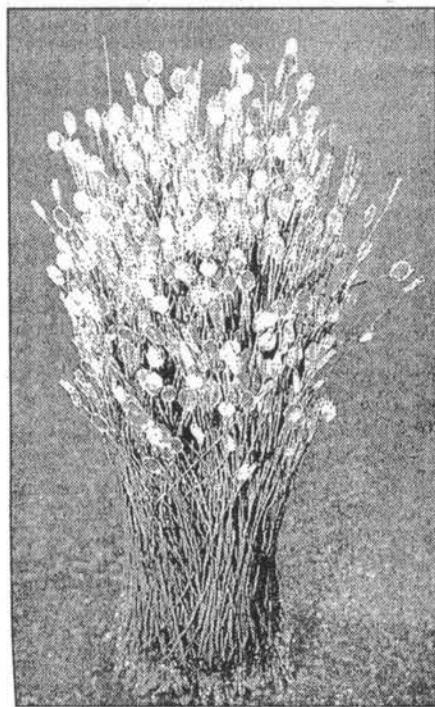
The individual "flowers" in the bouquets are constructed of industrial materials — wire for stems, small oval mirrors for blossoms. Six theatrical spotlights illuminate the bouquets, causing the eye-shaped mirrors, when viewed from changing perspectives, to seem to wink.

In her artist's statement, Loudon writes, "My mission is to take simple materials and transform them into things that are gestural and come alive as individual, humorous, elegant entities unto themselves." In the past, Loudon has constructed indoor and outdoor installations from antenna wire, cotton dental rolls, latex and rubber tubing.

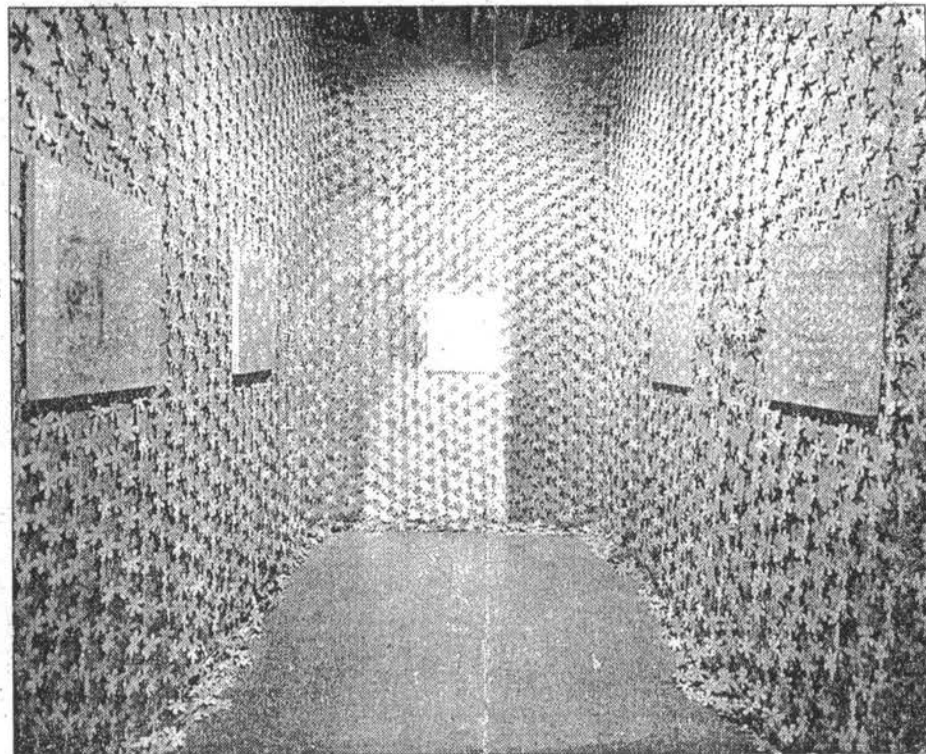
"Winkers" continues in that vein, combining unglamorous, industrial elements to make magic. Viewers strolling the installation will be delighted by the winking mirrors and the polka-dot shadows they cast on the floor. Loudon's efforts breathing life into the installation suggest those of a gifted alchemist.

Reitmeyer's "Reverie" occupies a more contained space: a small, high-ceilinged room. Covering its walls is a hanging network of flowers, consisting of flat, six-pronged, foam-rubber elements, stitched together and suggesting a coat of mail. Overlaying the network are five acrylic paintings of flowers, repeating the six-pronged design.

In her statement Reitmeyer writes, "... my work reflects a world with variety within order ... There is freedom within structure, thus my emphasis on patterns



A detail from current "Winkers" installation by Sharon Loudon.



"Reverie" is an art installation by Beth Reitmeyer that is running through Jan. 26 at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts.

AT THE UICA

"WINKERS" and "REVERIE," exhibitions through Jan. 26 at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, 41 Sheldon Blvd. SE. Open 11 a.m. through 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Call the UICA at 454-7000.

and colors." Certainly, "Reverie" depends for effect on dazzling pattern and color (Reitmeyer draws inspiration from Islamic decorative art). Yet while the installation stresses repetition, it also incorporates change.

The regularly repeated flowers in the network are thoughtfully colored for dramatic effect. Alternately red and blue, the flowers float against walls painted khaki green. The red flowers seem to pop out of the blue/green network, creating an impression of animation.

Reitmeyer introduces change in the untitled paintings overlaying the floral

Thoughtfully executed art installations "Reverie" and "Winkers" help the viewer think spring.

network. Some of the paintings exactly repeat the network's overall pattern. However, in one painting the flowers coalesce, creating a different pattern from the one on the walls. In another painting, the flowers are of different sizes, interspersed with blue dots.

Like "Winkers," "Reverie" is a product of considerable sensitivity and thought. Viewers will appreciate the efforts underlaying the installations, and the temporary respite their artistry offers from winter gloom.