

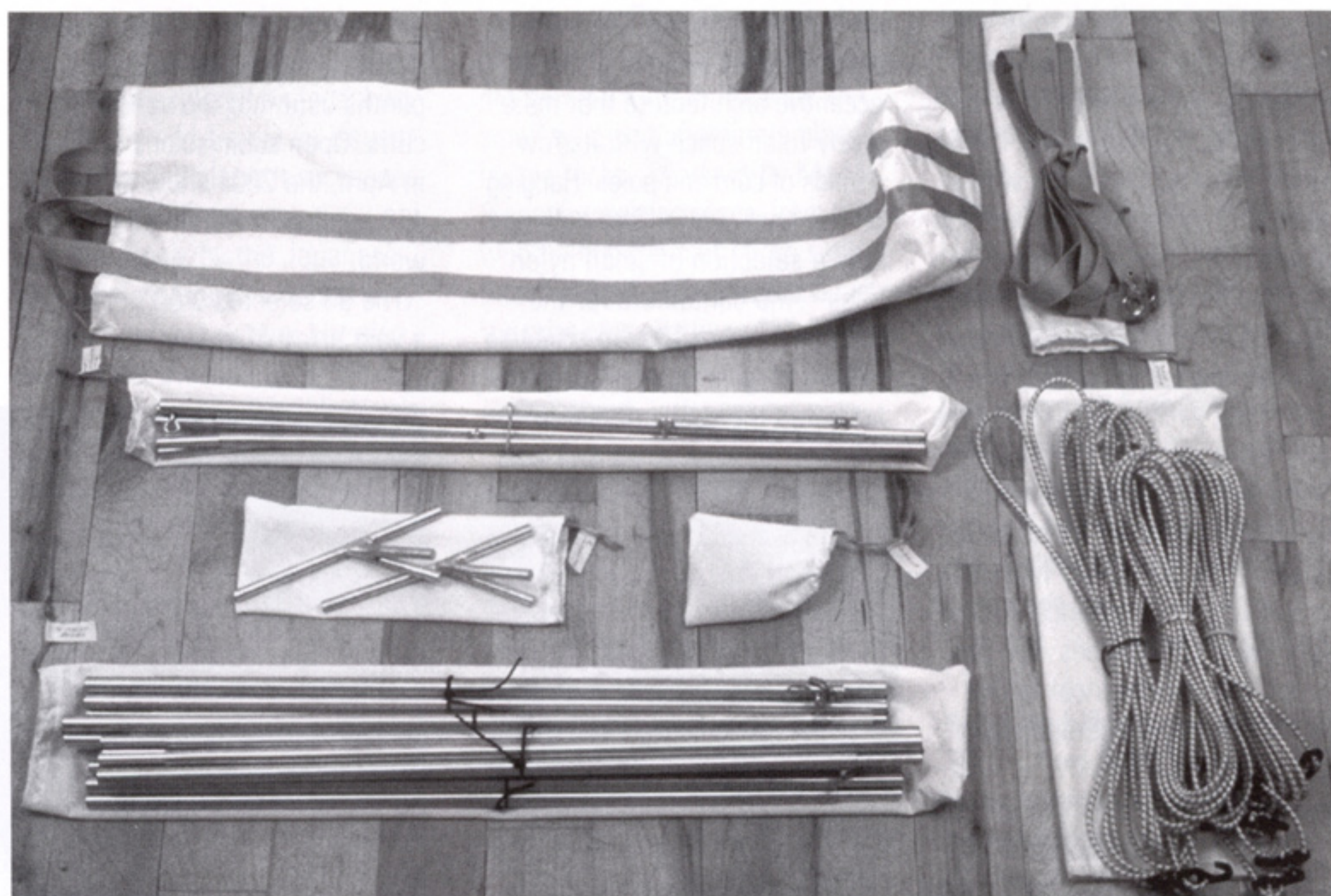
severed in the middle by the white light of an argon tube. Through this overload of visual information, Sonnier reminds us not to forget the power of the news media or perhaps its meaningless quality. Rauschenberg's assemblages of the '60s and '70s are not forgotten here.

In the main gallery, a row of fluted white columns divides the space in half. This architectural feature provided a natural support for *Electric Fence 1999*, made of a wire grid, which sparkles and crackles with electrical flashes that originate from a copper orb on top of one of the columns. *Ceiling Ladder 1997*, a column of two parallel copper pipes that rises eight feet up, becomes a conduit for illuminated electrical energy, which travels up the tubes and disappears at the top. Beginning at the base, flashing light continually flows up the work, tracing an ever-changing pattern of spectacular electrical colors.

Mounted on the opposing wall was a complex series of wires, arranged almost in a fan shape. *Wall Ladder 1997* features an electrical transformer on the floor, attached to a ceramic coil mounted on the wall, with wires extending out to six ceramic insulators. Here again, illuminated electrical impulses traveled up and down these fingers with a compelling and mesmerizing effect.

These flickering images of pulsating electric light suggested more than just illustrations of scientific experiments, hinting at the fragility of life itself. The danger posed by the high voltage wires surprisingly did not threaten, seeming, instead, mysterious and vibrant. This installation brought to mind yet another visionary, Wilhelm Reich, and his Orgone accumulator. Orgone was the name Reich gave to a life force that he discovered to be within and around all living organisms.

—Alastair Noble



#### Fredericton, Canada

##### Lyla Rye

Gallery Connexion

Toronto artist Lyla Rye has been thinking about architecture for a long time. In the early '80s she studied architecture at the University of Waterloo, but after two years she left to study fine arts at York University. She then went to San Francisco where she earned a Masters from the San Francisco Art Institute. While there, she did several pieces with thread, creating works with great spatial impact out of a minimum of materials. In one such piece she used intersecting threads to "weave" a new ceiling in a room, essentially lowering the height of the space with the loose warp and weft of thread.

Once back in Toronto she continued to make installations, most often using architecture as her point of reference. In this new body of work, however, she has decided to make stand-alone objects. In her artist's talk she joked about wanting to have something more to show for an exhibition than some slides and a new entry on her c.v. That desire for relative permanence is ironically fulfilled in her exhibition "Nomadic

Architecture," which took up both galleries in the local artist-run center: the larger gallery home to the four sculptures that comprise the suite also called *Nomadic Architecture*, the smaller space the site of a video installation called *Lapse*.

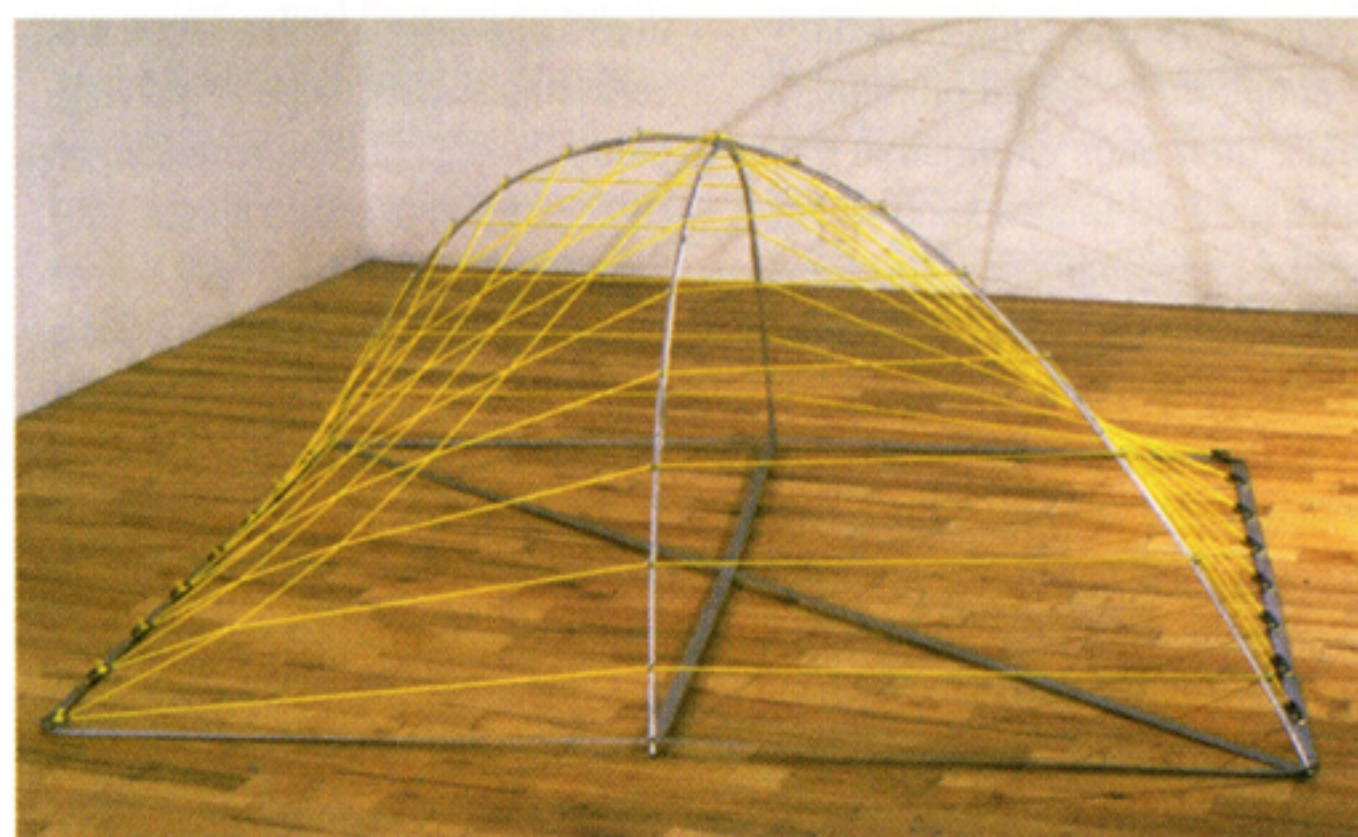
I use the word "ironically," because the last thing that the four works in *Nomadic Architecture* exuded was permanence. Take *Arch*, for instance. This tall, open structure was the first work you saw upon entering the gallery. Four Gothic arches in a squat cruciform, it was the ultimate reduction of Gothic architecture, containing all the basic elements of a cathedral: nave, transepts, and

Above: Lyla Rye, *Sack*, 2002.

Bungee cords, nylon, and mixed media, installation view. Below: Lyla Rye, *Dome*, 2002. Bungee cords, aluminum, and nylon, installation view.

choir. Granted, the nave only had enough room for one person and the other elements were even more abbreviated, but the basic shape was there.

*Arch* was made from aluminum tubes loaded with bungee cords, much like poles for new-style tents. The poles fit onto steel pins at the top and fed into grommets in nylon strapping at the bottom. The curves of the arches were created when the straight poles



were pushed into their slots. The tension of the construction was incredible, even if belied by the lightness of the works. Rye sanded the joints so that there was a subtle shift of the light, just enough to reveal where the poles go together. No illusions, that sanding said, no pretending that these are anything but what they are.

Whereas *Arch* was based on the solid, stone architecture of Europe, *Trellis* was modeled after a yurt, the shelter of choice for nomadic tribes on the steppes of Mongolia. Instead of a hemispherical lattice-work frame of branches, Rye presented a tall, cylindrical lattice made of flat strips of aluminum, held together by brass wing nuts. Two hoops held the lattice at top and bottom, and there was a gap of about 18 inches left so that the viewer could step inside. And it was important to do just that—these works needed to be experienced, not just seen.

*Saddleback*, the largest work in the show, was loosely based on the roofline of a traditional Indonesian home. Wedge-shaped, with a saddle-shaped curve describing its apex, *Saddleback* was held in place by a net of bungee cords, the short ones in the middle pulling down the once-straight center pole into a lazy curve. You could walk through a tunnel described by shiny metal lines and thin elastic cords. This piece also featured judicious sanding to highlight the various joints.

*Dome*, the last and smallest sculpture, was the only one that couldn't physically be entered. A web of yellow bungee cords strapped down two aluminum poles, their ends wrapped in the same gray nylon strapping found in *Arch* and *Saddleback*. The poles crossed over each other and formed the ribs of a dome. The elastic cords ran over the poles through small eyelets attached along the poles. As the cords reached the nylon base they seemed to sag, creating the odd lines of the dome. The piece almost seemed to shift as you looked at it, the result of

all the crisscrossing lines. *Dome* was all about volume, a sort of eccentric architecture that massively filled space with its few pounds of cord and poles. Hanging on the back wall of the gallery was a selection of small nylon bags—the containers for the sculptures when they're traveling.

Rye's elegant objects completely activated the space of the gallery, creating an experience that was physically exhilarating and conceptually challenging. The implications of the cross-cultural architectural forms make for objects that refused to be pinned down—adding to the tension of the show. They may have been fixed in place, but the feeling in the room was of some sort of transformation waiting to happen. With a portability that was both physical and conceptual, the objects were indeed nomads, perfect metaphors for our restless times.

Where *Nomadic Architecture* addressed larger issues of the social environment, *Lapse* pulled the viewer back to the personal. In the small, darkened gallery one found a small white baby's bed. Projected onto it was the oval image of a human stomach, presumably that of a child from the size and context. Yet the soundtrack was the breathing exercise of a woman in labor. Periodically the breathing stopped, and the projection changed to a strobe-like series of black and white images of burners, cupboards, electrical outlets, stairs and so on—all the banal things that become freighted with menace when an infant is introduced into our lives. The piece was very simple, but compelling. What parent hasn't checked on a sleeping child just to make sure it was still breathing?

—Ray Cronin

#### Sydney, Australia

#### Sculpture by the Sea 2001

Sculpture by the Sea is an annual visual arts event held in Sydney every summer. For 11 days each November since 1997, the show is installed on the coastal path

between Bondi and Tamarama, a beautiful linear site with natural plinths built into the sandstone cliffs. Open submissions are held in April, the 2001 show attracting 450 applications from all over the world.

The 98 selected works reflected a vast array of styles, materials,

Alda Sigurdardottir's *Storytellers* was one of these. Stunningly sited on the very tip of a ramp jutting out into the ocean, the monochromatic work sat framed against the vast blueness of the sea—a tranquil calico-covered table set with small vessels containing shells and sand. By com-



Koichi Ishino, *Wind Stone*, 2001. Stainless steel and red granite, 220 x 150 x 40 cm.

and technical abilities. Nineteen foreign artists exhibited, and a showcase of Icelandic art was featured. Many of the works raised issues concerning relation to setting and intervention in the landscape, purporting to relate in some way to the environment. Others were interesting in themselves but appeared to be existing works submitted with little thought for the situation in which they were being placed. A number were highly successful.

binning materials collected from the beaches of Iceland and Tamarama Beach, the work reflected a dialogue between the two countries and explored the symbolic nature of our relationship to the sea as a source of spiritual and nutritional sustenance. There was a delicacy to the work, enhanced by its setting, resulting in an interplay between the grandeur of the sea and the intimacy of the table that reverberated in the mind long afterwards.