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ART

Seed of an idea grew into 'Multi-librium'

By Molly Glentzer

Orna Feinstein hasn't spent as much time in her Bellaire yard as she'd like in the four years since she earned a degree in sculpture from the University of Houston. Every spare moment has gone toward cultivating a garden of recycled art-gallery invitations — about 10,000 of them, sewn into organic shapes and combined so they mimic flowers, leaves, trees and even a fountain.

"Multi-librium" is in full bloom now at Box 13 ArtSpace in Houston's East End.

The seed for Feinstein's site-specific installation sprouted after her first solo show at the Museum of Printing History was postponed by Hurricane Ike in 2008. The invitations already were printed, and 2,000 of them sat in boxes, ready for the trash.

Feinstein, a practical woman who is married to a tech inventor and has two grown children, didn't want such pretty material to go to waste. She taped a few of the invitations together in shapes she loves, naturalistic forms that balance the organic and the geometric, and displayed them on the floor of her show, when it finally opened, in a work that was about 4 by 8 feet.

But the seed of that idea grew, and she collected unused invitations from galleries and museums. They're typically large postcards, colorful on one side, with black and white type on the back.

"I always knew I wanted to do something big with them but the materials weren't suitable for commercial galleries," Feinstein said this week, giving a tour. (She exhibits through Anya Tish Gallery; and a show

of her monoprints, some of which are 3-D on Plexiglas forms, is on view at Williams Tower Gallery through July 27.)

At Box 13, a space run by artists, she got a gallery 50 by 23 feet.

Feinstein said she doesn't sew in the traditional sense, but she bought a sewing machine so she could stitch the ends of the invitations together to form each petal or leaf. Serendipitously, the thread added a new material: She leaves the ends long so they dangle a bit, suggesting the small spider webs one might find in the grass on a dewy morning.

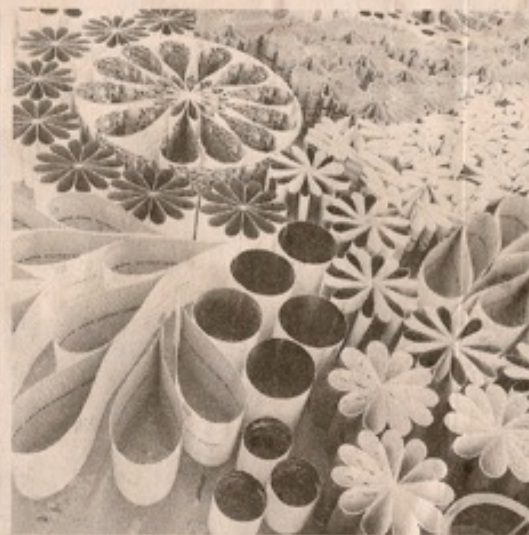
The swirling forms of the installation, viewed from above, also mimic images you might see of plant cells under a microscope. "There's duality here," Feinstein suggested.

It doesn't jump at you, but she also designed the

installation to balance straight lines with curves. The "garden" ebbs and flows around a path that provides negative space for visitors to walk, but its edges hug the straight lines of the walls. "That was deliberate," Feinstein said. "I could have pulled it away from the wall."

She left other pathways so visitors could get to Box 13's other galleries. "I'm not like Richard Serra, who would have put a wall here for you to go around," she said. "I want to balance everything."

"Do you want to know the biggest challenge?" she asked, quickly answering herself. "It was determining how many forms to make. It took a week to install. I did calculations and architectural drawings, but, boy, when I came here, this space swallowed up the pieces like a hungry bear. I finally finished it at 8 p.m. the



Orna Feinstein

Orna Feinstein's site-specific installation "Multi-librium" is on view at Box 13 ArtSpace.

night before the opening."

"Multi-librium" is on view through Aug. 18 at Box 13 ArtSpace, 6700 Harrisburg; 713-533-8692; www.box13artspace.com. Also on view: installations

by Joshua Goode, Julia Barbosa Landois and Kate Kendall. Open 1-5 p.m. Saturdays or by appointment.

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