

SPACEWORKS TACOMA

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Transforming advertising pulp into public art



An Elizabeth R. Gahan art installation. Photo courtesy of the artist

With not a flake of snow on the ground you can still take in a winter wonderland by heading down to the Woolworth Windows to see **Elizabeth R. Gahan (elizabethgahan.com)**'s beautiful geometric installation with colorful pinwheels of airborne, origami-like forms.

Gahan is a Seattle-based artist who uses hand-treated ornamental papers to create elegant volumetric forms. Her materials include printed advertising "fractured or replaced entirely with colored vinyl, paper and spray paint, obscuring the commercial content and allowing the beauty of color and graphic design to blossom in a seemingly organic way." If only all throwaway ads could be transformed into such an ingenious and eye-pleasing artist medium! Wisps of words peek subversively through Gahan's geometric patterning, a reminder that literal "wastepaper" underlies such beauty. "My work strives to balance beauty and inspiration with a critical consideration of our growing urban environments," she says.



“Chromatic Crystallization” by Elizabeth Gahan. 20' x 24' x 7'. Corrugated plastic and vinyl. Photo courtesy of the artist

For the artist, “Each project responds to a new location in a unique and interesting way.” An installation such as “Chromatic Crystallization”, above, explores the relationship between art and architecture, public space and private experience. Using corrugated plastic and neon vinyl, crystal-like “synthetic growths” emerge organically from the arch, suggesting a fresh metaphor for the way a city skyline develops. Gahan’s daring is in creating “a variety of unexpected encounters for passing pedestrians; often lyrical or playful, occasionally aggressive and always with an exuberant burst of color.”



“Climbing Crystals” by Elizabeth Gahan. 8’ x 6’ x 6’. Corrugated plastic and found advertising. Photo courtesy of the artist

Some of her installations merge more intimately with nature, as in “Climbing Crystals”, where spiky forms made from corrugated plastic ads wend their way up a living tree. Do the pointy protuberances provide protective armor – or will they ultimately squeeze the life out of it?

In 2014 Gahan was selected and recognized in the Americans for the Arts 2014 Public Art Network Year in Review. Her awards include an Artist Trust GAP Grant, City of Seattle 1% for Arts, Seattle City Artist Project Grant and Seattle Storefronts commission. She currently works from a studio space at Equinox in Georgetown, Seattle. -By Lisa Kinoshita

View Elizabeth R. Gahan’s installation at the Woolworth Windows, S. 11th & Broadway, through March 17, 2016.

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