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An Enchanted Garden—"Threads of Continuity"

Ouch. A drop of crimson blood glistens on the index finger of Margery Amdur's callused hand. Her finger is punctured by a rose she handles. Like a true gardener, she stands up undeterred, stretches her back and continues. Velvety roses, lush foliage, crisp light, and billowing clouds in an expansive sky surround her. A path of fallen petals, leaves, and stems entice passersby to explore the garden.

Yet this is no ordinary garden. "Threads of Continuity: A Right to Passage" is an enchanted garden. Instead of living seeds, plants, and soil, Margery Amdur creates a garden from window screening, wire, and aquarium tubing. Instead of bright greens and reds, or hues of brown, there are only values of gray. The plants aren't right side up or even normal size. Amdur hangs stemmed roses from one to four feet long upside down from the ceiling. Tapestries of foliage made from wire hang freely. Clouds of window screening reach from floor to ceiling. A few narrow spotlight bulbs create an intriguing and mysterious play of light and shadow.

The transformation of

harsh, ordinary, obsessively combined materials into a beautiful garden evokes conflicting responses of fear and desire. Thus, one begins to contemplate this garden's symbolic nature. Amdur's title provides more clues. It suggests a questioning of individual development and the complex nature of contemplating past, present, and future.

Elizabeth Murray said in *Cultivating Sacred Space, Gardening for the Soul*, "Some see the rose as a symbol for each person's soul

development." The creation of an individual and a garden have many symbolic parallels. Each requires hard work, planning, collaboration with others, devotion, and faith. "Threads of Continuity," installed at Saint Mary's College's Moreau Galleries, Notre Dame, Indiana, October 9 to November 19, 1998, evidences those characteristics perfectly.

"Threads of Continuity" is the result of countless hours wrapping, folding, sewing, and bending thousands of feet of screen, aquarium tubing, and wire over the course of an entire year. Amdur's efforts fill 15 enormous cartons delivered a week prior to the opening. In the gallery, a suspended gridwork is constructed of wire to hold hanging panels and hundreds of roses. Gray walls frame huge cloud forms, more roses and foliage. Window screen-

ing covers the floor. Under Amdur's gentle and encouraging guidance, 30 art students scurry about sewing window screening with wire to create more clouds. They also pin previously fashioned leaves and small flowers onto bolts of window screening.

The fruits of Margery Amdur's labor and vision are abundant. And, if the metaphor between garden and individual holds true, "Threads of Continuity" also points to the positive potential of her own soul and her development as an artist.

—K. Johnson Bowles

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Top and bottom: "Threads of Continuity: A Right to Passage" installation at Saint Mary's College Moreau Galleries. Photos: David Sherwin.

