

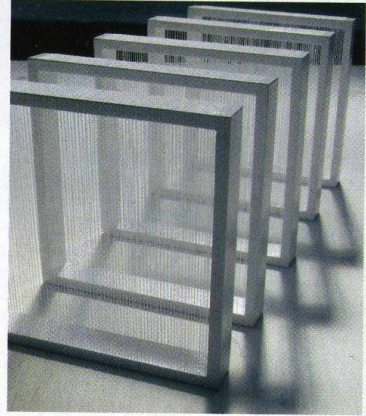
RIGHT NOW WHO

Words LETA KEENS



Higher mesh

Perth-based artist Britt Salt cites origami, architecture and the viewer's movement as inspiration behind her tactile sculptures.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Britt Salt with an as yet unnamed work; Britt, *Surface Warp* (2006), detail of *Form Fold 1* (2006); *Form Fold IV* (2006) from the *Fold* series.



BRITT SALT moves between studios to do her work. In one there's the loom, all ready for action. In another, a long flat surface where she can spread enormous lengths of paper "to draw a line continuously, walking it down the table". In a third is steel mesh and flyscreen, cotton thread, paint and metalworking equipment. "I tend to do everything from welding to weaving," says the 21-year-old Perth-based artist. In doing so, Salt is exploring what interests her most: what happens when you fold something, what do you see when lines intersect and overlap, what's the difference between interior and exterior.

She tries to answer those questions in a low-tech but subtly complex way. Everyday materials such as flyscreen are transformed into mesmerisingly beautiful three-dimensional sculptural forms which, once installed into a space, take on a life of their own. "I like to work with materials and not against them," she says. "I'm interested in industrial materials, which may have quite functional uses but actually have quite inherent and unexpected qualities of their own."

How the viewer interacts with her work, she says, is important to her art practice as a whole. "The work is never the same for two people – it depends where you are in relation to it – there's always a continual flux of moiré lines as the lines interact and weave in with each other." For emphasis and to play with visual perception, she often screen-prints or paints onto the surface of the mesh. "It really gets people to question what they're looking at," she says.

Salt, who graduated with honours from WA's Curtin University of Technology in 2005, has already made an impression on the Australian art world: Sotheby's Australia managing director Mark Fraser nominated her for Australian Art Collector magazine's annual feature 50 Most Collectable Artists.

She's inspired by "architecture and, to some degree, by fashion with artists such as [British fashion designer] Hussein Chalayan". There's a merging of the two as she explores the similarities between architecture and textiles. "With a traditional textile, you'd start with a warp of threads and then a weft would be added; in architecture there's a fantastic weaving of metal as trusses link and interlock and create a structure of strength," she says. One of her biggest influences is Japanese architect Toyo Ito: "[He] makes incredible buildings where there's a blurring between what's interior and what's exterior, and between structure and surface. That's where I use metal meshes and metal threads, cotton threads and drawn line as well to create that interaction."

She traces her interest in such topics back to her childhood, growing up with draftsman parents. "I'd spend a lot of time with them, playing with pens and looking at maps." She also loved origami and even her two-dimensional drawings become 3D as "they sit out from the wall or float off the floor, or are scrunched into corners – I find I enjoy that surprise in a work".

Britt Salt's first solo exhibition runs May 2-24, at Harrison Galleries, 294 Glenmore Road, Paddington, NSW 2021, (02) 9380 7100; harrisingalleries.com.au