

The places that we have known belong now only to the little world of space on which we map them for our own convenience.

None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time. . .

- Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

LUDWIKA OGORZELEC

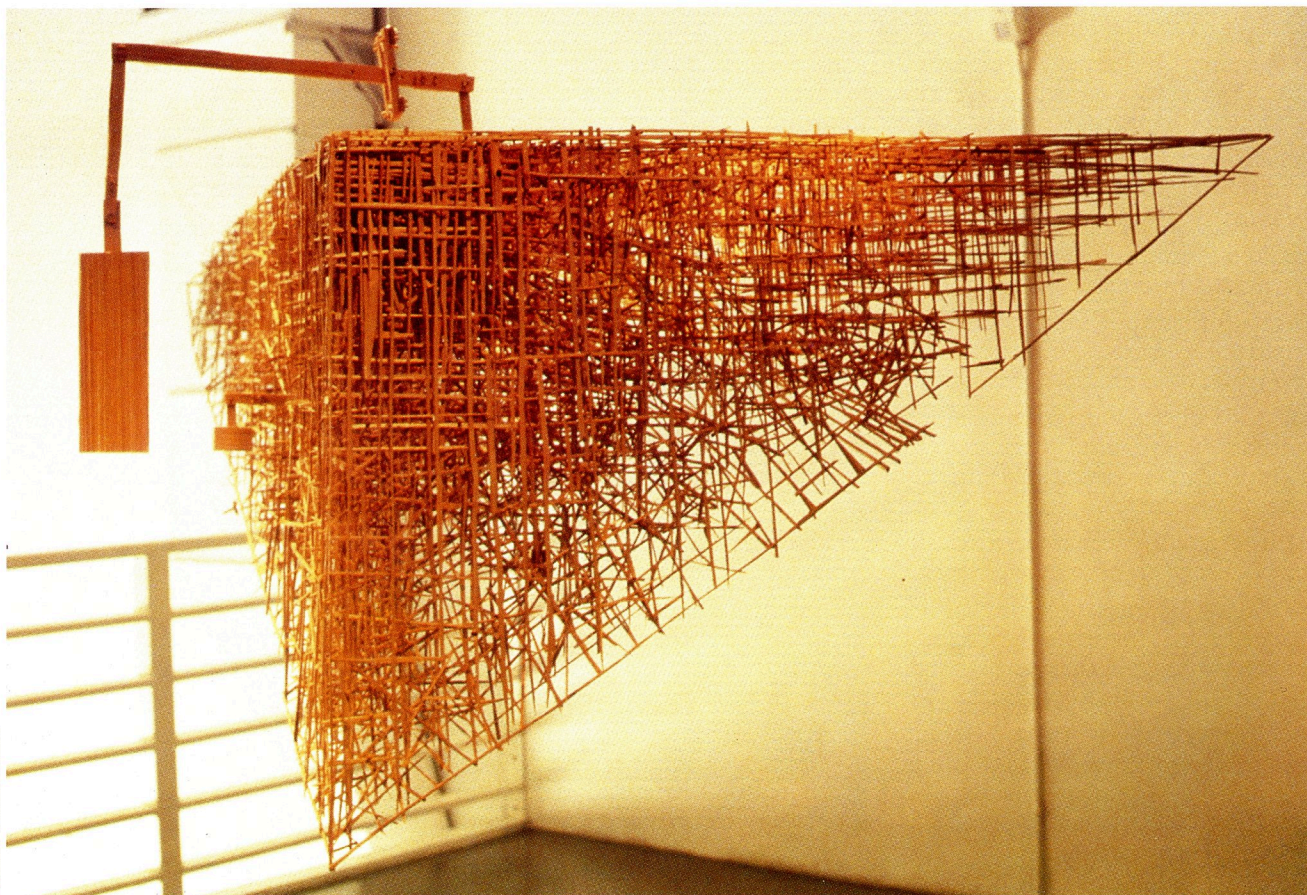
One way that Ludwika Ogorzelec, a fellow at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center, sees her lacy, mobile sculptures, is as symbolic signposts along the road of her peripatetic life. Nature and its properties are crucial, but any sense of specific place comes through them in oblique, often annealing ways.

Born in a small village in Po-

land, Ogorzelec left home at fifteen to fight her way up Poland's intensely competitive higher education system. Every rung of the ladder has meant struggle — moving to a new place, finding an apartment, job, friends, and proving herself a worthy student. It took six years to pass the Warsaw art school entrance exam.

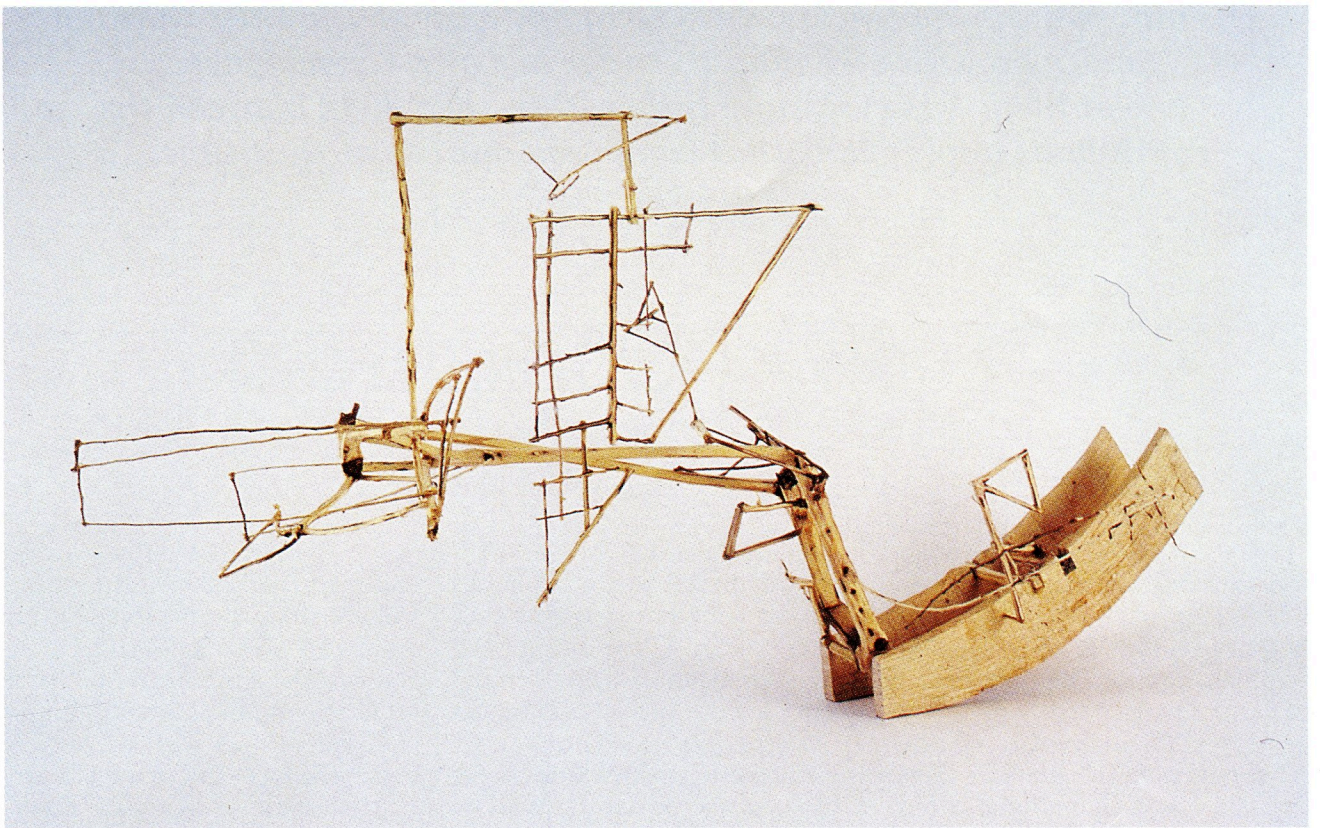
Once out of art school, she found

Poland had been a better place to study art than make it. In school individuality is encouraged, but among Polish working artists, there is strong pressure to make political art in support of Solidarity. While she sympathizes with the movement, the focus of Ogorzelec's art, like her resolve, was already established. She moved once more, to Paris, where culture shock and lan-



PHILIPPE STAIB GALLERY

"Instruments of Equilibrium #3," Wood, 1990, 46" x 103" x 60"



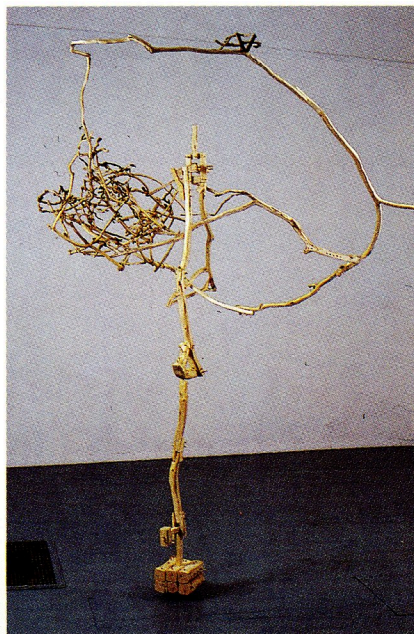
"Instrument of An Equilibrium #1," Wood, 1990, 13 1/4" x 25" x 13 1/3"

guage bias did not keep her from earning another graduate degree.

Now, even though coping with yet another language, she says her months in Provincetown seem like a vacation. People here are friendly and encouraging, and the work center's support a welcome relief. The sculptural "signposts" — or "instruments of equilibrium," as she officially calls them — along this part of her journey indicate a smoother path.

Wild and woody, these fanciful constructions are balancing instruments counterweighed by line and mass, air and matter, organic form and mechanical function. They not only measure Ogorzelec's emotional, spiritual and intellectual balance, but the physical and mechanical nature of balance as well. In her attempt to "... analyze the problem of absurdity and significance," and look "... for the moment of equilibrium," she expands solid compressed forms — sticks of wood, lengths of vine —

into astoundingly intricate and exploded ones, all the while remaining faithful to the natural inclinations of the wood. What anchors the billowing works are her sculptural transitions between



"Instruments of Equilibrium," Wood, 1991, 90" x 56" x 75"

the contoured air and weaving lines, and the blocky mechanical devices that give perfunctory ballast. These neat, but primitive-looking mechanisms — axle hinges, free-swinging geometric counterweights — play off the grace and motion of the total piece and sometimes foil the nest-like riffs of tiny, wrapped, connected twigs.

As far as direct influence of nature upon her work, she does gather her materials on site, and admits to feeling the "very big energy" of the nearby ocean. She anticipates working directly in the landscape, doing perhaps an outdoor installation, after her solo show at the center's gallery. But essentially, her mission here was no different than it had been in Poland or in Paris — implementation has just been easier. Place may play an overt supporting role in furnishing indigenous materials, but to Ogorzelec, its covert role is in how the artist is either supported or challenged.