

Designs are interactive illusions

By **Steven Uhles**

Staff Writer

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There are no tangles in the webs that North Carolina artist Andi Steele weaves, nor is there a desire to deceive.

Instead, Ms. Steele hopes her site-specific works, such as the one on display in the third-floor gallery of the Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art, urge viewers to look at the environments with honest eyes.

Using only screws and monofilament - fishing line - Ms. Steele fills rooms with elaborate patterns designed to please and confuse.

"When I first started doing this, my main focus was on dividing spaces that people use a lot, to change the way they look at it and interact with it," she said. "But now it has become more of a balance, a balance between those ideas and the design in general."

The Gertrude Herbert installation features sets of Cajun-red strands stretching across empty space. Although they are all in straight lines, the thin strands seem to bend and bow as they traverse the space. Ms. Steele said part of the pleasure of these installations has been learning how stringing line in a certain way can fool the eye and produce unexpected results.

"The more I do this, the more I appreciate what I can do with the line and still achieve the basic concept," she said. "I have a sculpture and graphic design background and this is what comes of that."

Working through the nearly transparent labyrinth, the viewer is greeted at each turn with variances in pattern, with unexpected collisions of line.

Although Ms. Steele carefully maps each installation using a computer-aided design program, she said those moments are often just as surprising to her.

"That's one of the things I love," she said, pointing toward a doorway where a large window was framed by intricate intersecting lines. "You can go to different places in the room and find these things that are very different. Not only does it allow visitors to move around, it encourages it."

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ON DISPLAY

WHAT: Andi Steele installation

WHERE: Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art, 506 Telfair St.

WHEN: Friday through Feb. 16. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday by appointment.

COST: Free; call (706) 722-5495 or see ghia.org