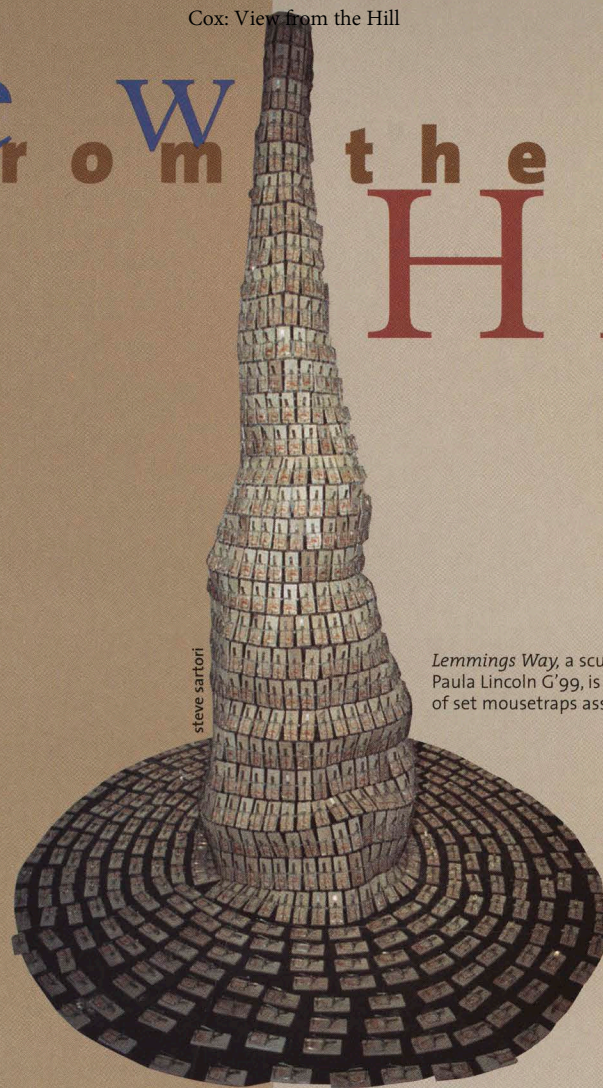


# View from the Hill



steve sartori

*Lemmings Way*, a sculpture created by Paula Lincoln G'99, is made of hundreds of set mousetraps assembled in levels.

## Making the Most Out of Mousetraps

Paula Lincoln G'99 revels in transforming bulk-shopping adventures into art. Just look at what she's gathered in mass quantities for her sculpture work: belts, old shoes, wooden spoons, rawhide dog treats, corn kernels, and mousetraps. "I really enjoy finding items that are normally overlooked and collecting them," says Lincoln, who earned an M.F.A. in sculpture from the College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA). "I go everywhere—flea markets, junk stores, you name it; that's part of the fun for me."

Then comes the really fun part. Lincoln takes the objects and, through exhausting repetition, creates a structure that often reflects humor and playfulness, mixed with themes that pay homage to family and working the land. "I love the idea of manipulating a store-bought item and changing it from the way it's normally seen," she says.

That was evident in her works at the *Master of Fine Arts Exhibition* for graduating VPA School of Art and Design artists and designers at the Lowe Art Gallery earlier this year: *Constriction(s)*—second-hand belts induce bulges like overfed bellies in cotton-stuffed columns; *966,000 Miles*—dozens of worn shoe soles become a dignified monument to labor; *Stir*—nearly 500 wooden spoons flow together in celebration of her family's cooking traditions; *Thin-Skinned*—translucent rawhide, intended for canine chomping, is shaped like silo tops in tribute to the farms in her native southern Missouri. Beneath the domed rawhide are scattered corn kernels. "I like the idea of a product from a cow containing something the cow would normally eat," she says with a laugh.

And then there were the mousetraps—close to 800, Lincoln estimates. The tiny mouse image stamped on each trap first caught Lincoln's eye. Viewed together, all the mice looked like they were running in a pack. This reminded her of lemmings, so she named the piece *Lemmings Way*. Each trap was set (with a dab of epoxy to prevent snapping) and, ultimately, a precarious looking sculpture—29 levels of traps climbing more than 6 feet high—was created. She also envisions a person fitting inside the tower. "There's a frantic movement in the piece," she says. "It's not very stable looking and you don't know if it's going to collapse."

When Lincoln arrived at SU three years ago, she wrestled with installation art, but shifted her focus to single structures last year to simplify her work. As sculpture professor Rodger Mack points out, "she makes the kind of work that you come back to and keep mulling over in your mind." Lincoln credits Mack and colleagues Lawson Smith and Jude Lewis as being influential to her development. "Their encouragement was crucial," she says. "They allow just enough freedom to experiment."

Mack calls Lincoln's work unique—a reflection of her sharp mind and ability to conceptualize, instill humor, and use ordinary materials in extraordinary ways. "She can take a common object and run with it," he says. "It really gets you to do a double take." —JAY COX