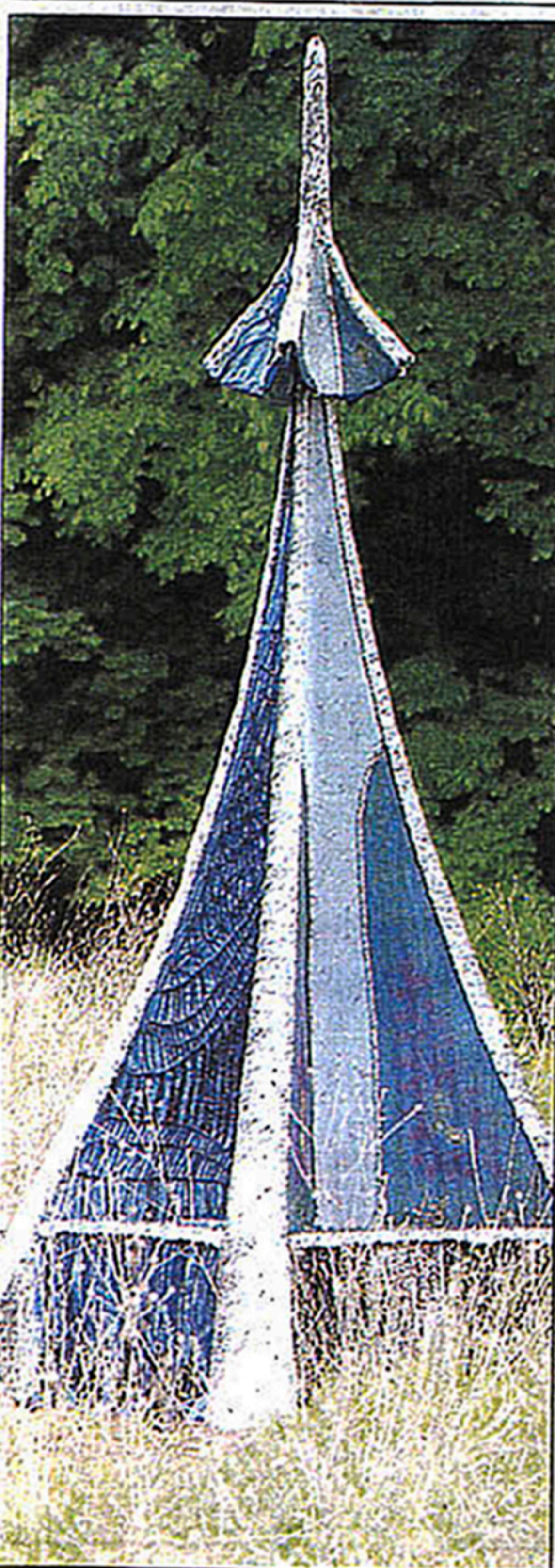


"Liquid Heart" by Barbara Neijna, at the "Neuberger Museum of Art 2001 Biennial Exhibition of Public Art" at Purchase College.

Photos by Mark Vergari/The Journal News

Avant garden

Purchase College's Neuberger Museum presents a campuswide canvas of contemporary art



Georgette Gouveia
The Journal News

Deep in the lush groves that dot the grounds of Purchase College, a tennis match is in progress. You can hear it as you approach the thicket — the thwack of a ball ricocheting from racket to grass to racket again, the commanding cry of "Fault!" the polite and perhaps sincerely meant "Good game." The sounds of the sport — of activity, of life — tantalize, urging you on.

But when you arrive on the scene, no one's there — or rather, there's nothing but the outline of a tennis court and the spectral sounds of the game filling the raw spring air.

This ghostly experience is brought to you courtesy of "Play Back," an installation by Mags Harries and Lajos Héder that is part of the "Neuberger Museum of Art 2001 Biennial Exhibition of Public Art," on view on the Purchase College campus through Oct. 7.

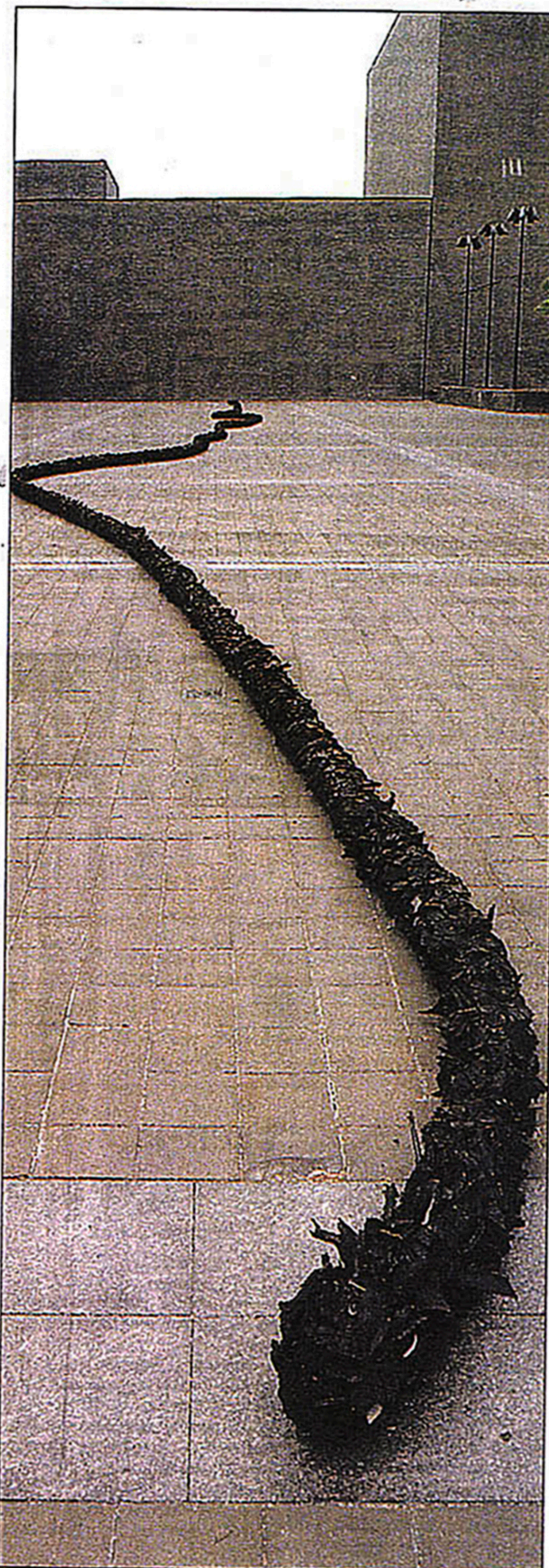
This is the third biennial on the 500-acre site. First presented in 1997 by Judy Collischan, then associate director of curatorial affairs at the Neuberger, and organized this year by Jacqueline Shilkoff, the museum's assistant curator, the biennial is a national, juried show designed to showcase contemporary art created for temporary display on the campus. (In each instance, however, one work has been selected for permanent display.)

Since the first biennial, a number of changes have taken place. The number of works has been reduced from 27 to 17. Intrepid art lovers — who in the past found themselves battling the elements off the beaten path, all in the name of aesthetics — will be happy to know that this biennial's offerings are closer to the museum and one another. (Still, some works, such as "Play Back" are situated to provide viewers with an eerie sense of adventure.)

Please see BIENNIAL, 2E



Right, "Carbon String" by Steven Siegel. Left, the sculpture "Pied à Terre" by Niki Ketchman and a detail of one of the piece's flared legs.



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Neuberger fills campus with contemporary art

BIENNIAL, from 1E

Perhaps the greatest change, however, is in the tone of the exhibit. In the previous biennials, many of the works seemed to dominate the college landscape, which combines greenery with fortress-like, brown-brick buildings. There were catapults, giant roses that dared you to pop out of them and provocative signs capable of stopping traffic.

The current crop of works seems somewhat cowed by the college's architectural style, which might be called "70s prison." The monochromatic sculptures and installations tend to hug the complex or blend into it. (Maybe artists have just become more demure.)

Mei-ling Hom's limestone and concrete "Dwarfed Landscape," which stands near a staircase leading to the Performing Arts Center, looks like a Japanese rock garden. It's spare, elegant, restful — and apt to be overlooked, situated as it is. Its placement reminds viewers that the success of art, particularly outdoor sculpture, depends in part on its context.

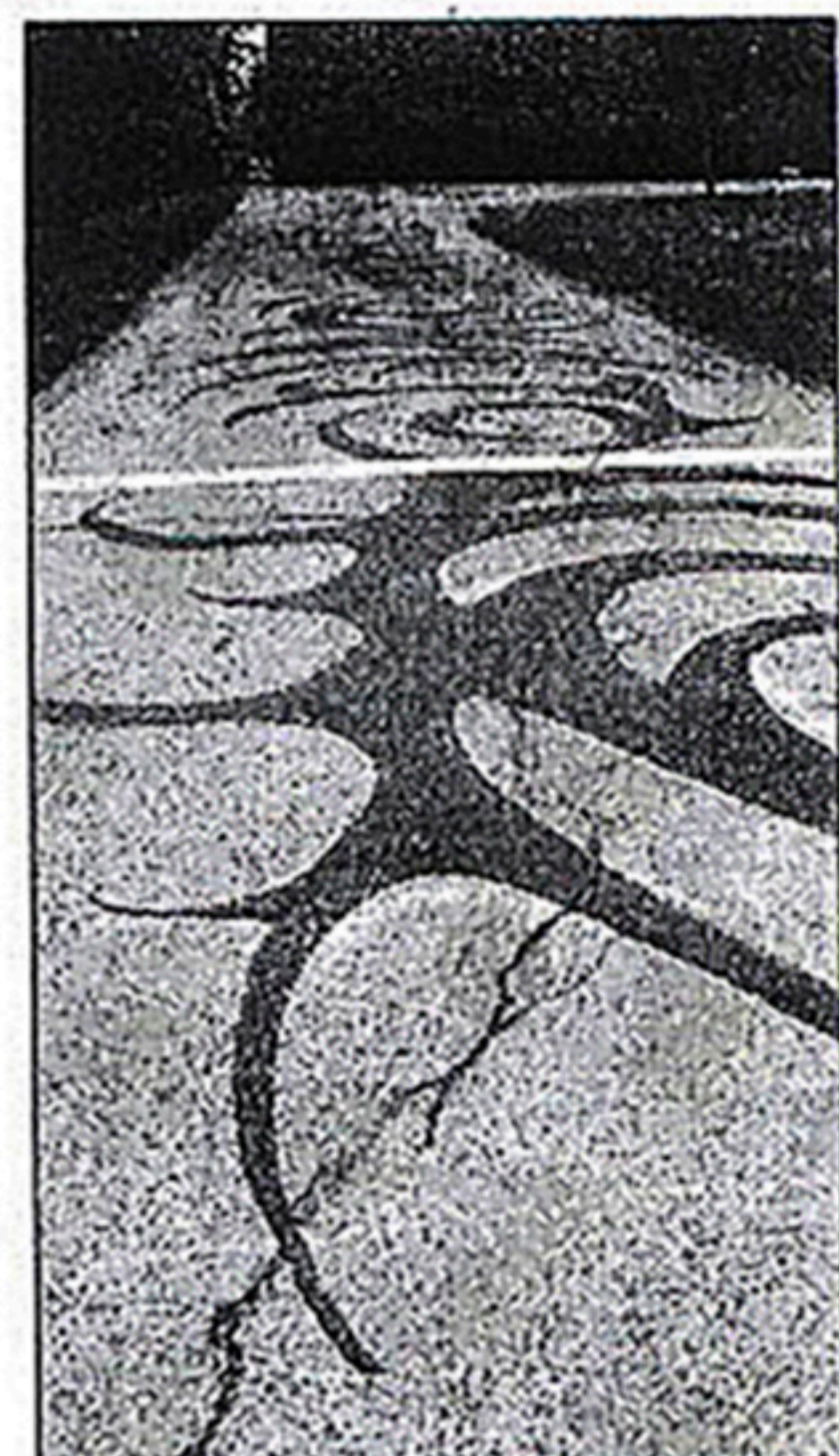
Steven Siegel's "Carbon String" — 200 feet of shredded rubber tires, plywood and plastic drain-pipe, 9 inches in diameter — snakes along the plaza outside the college's Conservatory of Dance and Conservatory of Music. (Maybe Ford can make a deal with Siegel for some of their recalled Firestone tires.)

Robert Chambers' "Zen-Volt," a 12-by-15-foot fiberglass concoction with electrical components, stands outside the Neuberger like a giant light bulb, or a little flying saucer, ready to pick up the vibrations of passing voices or airplanes thundering overhead.

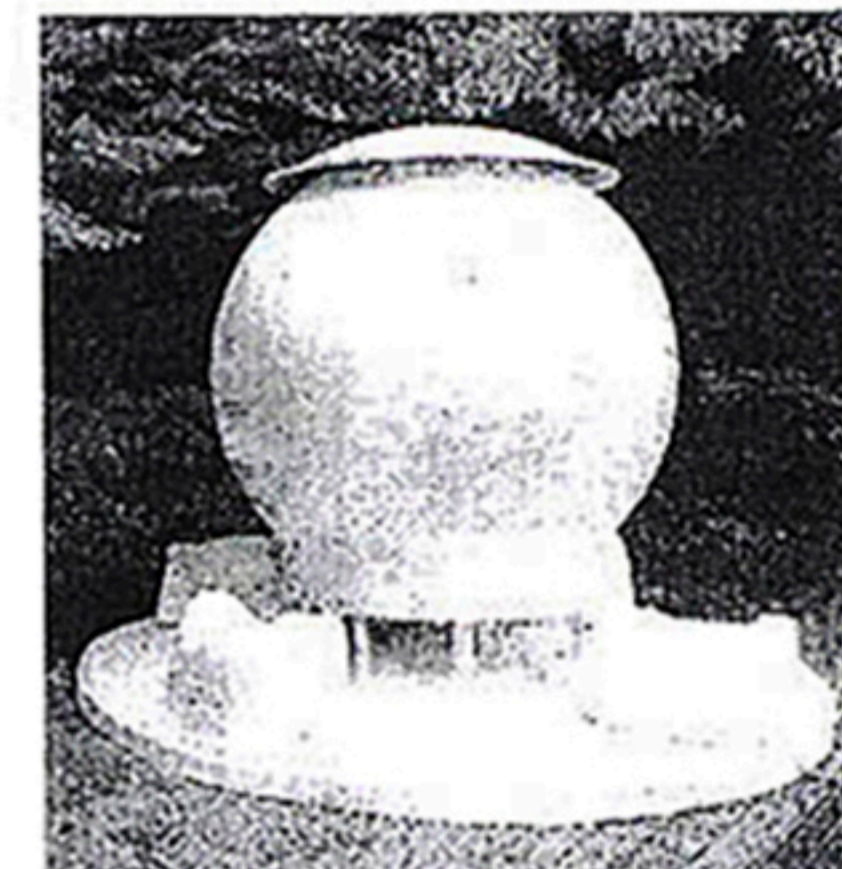
The best works in the show, however, impose the artists' viewpoints on the visitor while also using the landscape. Laura Anderson Barbata's "Nuestra Historia no se Encuentra en un Libro (Our History is Not Found in a Book)" turns the area in front of the museum into a sea of red hammocks, ribbons and mulch. It's an exhilarating sight that makes you think at once "fiesta" and "siesta."

Meanwhile, "Tom's Round" by Steed Taylor transforms the asphalt road behind the museum into a bold, beautiful vine-like design of black gloss paint that sneaks under the thick white line of the crosswalk. And Barbara Neijna's "Liquid Heart," made of a pipe (6-by-19 $\frac{1}{2}$ -by-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet), violet-blue neon lighting and an audio, glows and groans in the thicket near "Play Back."

The award for the creepiest work in the show goes to Gregory Lee Pickard's "Sanctuary," a swing set wrapped in 1,000 feet of coiled penitentiary-type security wire and surrounded by a fence. It's ironic and forbidding, of course. But at least it has the in-your-face quality that character-



Mark Vergari/The Journal News
"Tom's Round" by Steed Taylor, black gloss paint on asphalt road.



Mark Vergari/The Journal News
"Zen-Volt" by Robert Chambers, on display at the Neuberger Museum of Art 2001 biennial exhibition.

ized the previous biennials and that is lacking in many of the works here.

The best-in-show award could easily go to Niki Ketchman's "Pied à Terre," which strikes a delightful balance between self-assertion and self-effacement. Picture if you will a fairly tall (11 $\frac{1}{2}$ -by-7-by-7 feet) four-seat structure made of aluminum and steel in blue, gold and silver and topped by a turret. Now picture it out in a field of wildflowers.

The work and its situation conjure castles, medieval jousts, the psychedelic '60s and scarecrows. That's quite a range, but then, real art always lets you free-associate.

Because the biennial is outdoors, you can view it at any time of the day, and you don't have to pay museum admission. Brochures by Marc Zaref Design of Norwalk, Conn., located outside the museum, provide viewers with clear-cut maps of the exhibit.

Purchase College is at 735 Anderson Hill Road (between Purchase and King streets). 914-251-6100.