

# Lewis Knauss

Fellow \ Philadelphia, Pennsylvania \



Drought, 2005



New Mexico Fire, 2004



Another Drought, 2011

“THE ACT OF MAKING HAS ALWAYS been very important,” Lewis Knauss observes. “Sitting quietly, working, tying knots endlessly, working on objects on my own. I feel those objects really record every minute of my life.”

Knauss’ timeline with textiles began in the 1960s while he was studying art education at Kutztown University. An intro-to-crafts course piqued his interest, and a weaving class his senior year solidified his love for the process.

“From the very first moment I picked up a yarn, I just loved the feel of that in my hands. I love the dialogue. Every material in textiles has a different response to a structure, a different response to me as a maker.”

In his art, Knauss calls on deep engagement with nature – its complexity and evolution. It’s a connection he first made after a long-ago trip to the Grand Canyon, he says. A friend asked him what he thought of the vista. “I said, ‘God, it was like looking at a photograph,’” Knauss says. “And she said, ‘You know, it all

takes time, really a lot of time.’ And at that moment, I started taking the same hike every day, beginning to really pay attention to what had changed in the landscape.”

Though he’s modest about his success, his pieces have been shown in major museums across the United States – including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Cooper-Hewitt – and abroad, at the Design Museum in Finland and Musée de Design et d’Arts Appliqués in Switzerland. Then there’s the influence he’s had on others during his decades of teaching, including at Tyler School of Art (where he received his MFA in 1973), Philadelphia University, and, from 1982 to 2010, Moore College of Art and Design.

Now retired from teaching, Knauss continues to create, as focused as ever on the making process and the march of time. “I don’t really even think of this as a career,” he says. “It’s just something that I do and have always been interested in doing since I was about 22 years old.”

## SPIRITUALITY

“There definitely is a spiritual side to making things. To an extent, the processes that I pursue, and the peacefulness with which I pursue them, are very much linked into meditation – just another form of meditation.”

## EYES OPEN

“I was always encouraged to look at everything. And sometimes the work that I find most interesting is work that I just happen upon. It can be very influential over a period of time; it can be very moving. I like that sense of, ‘Oh!’ – and I don’t have that very often.”

Portrait: Chris Crisman / Fire photo: Wendy McEahern / Page 52 and other photos (3): Kyung Y Cho

*"I think lives  
are ruined  
by what-ifs.  
Things that  
seem to be  
disasters turn  
out to be  
fortunate."*

