



Smithsonian
National Portrait Gallery

**PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST
RACHEL SCHMIDT**

Twenty-three year old sculptor Rachel Schmidt, one of the first artists featured in the “Portrait of an Artist” phase of the National Portrait Gallery’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006, uses her art to explore all aspects of life. “I’m a fearful person,” says Schmidt. Spurred by her fear of mortality, however, Schmidt has become a world traveler and says that her art is “motivated by the fact that all people share the human experiences of life and death.”

Schmidt began her art career with drawing and painting. While attending the University of Kansas at Lawrence, she took a three-dimensional art class. “I just exploded,” she says. “Since then, everything I do and think is in spatial dimensions.” Schmidt typically works with wire and fabric because they are two very flexible mediums. However, she tailors her material choices to the work she is doing.

Schmidt’s entry for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006, “I Miss Her Most on Football Sundays” is a portrait of Schmidt’s late grandmother, Mary Jane Schmidt. For this sculpture, Schmidt used wood as well as wire and fabric. “The house and lungs in this piece are made of wood, a once living material connected to the emphysema that turned her house into a respiratory jail and would be the eventual cause of her death,” Schmidt wrote of her entry.

Originally from Topeka, Kan., Schmidt settled in Takoma Park, Md. in December 2004, after living in Ukraine with her husband for a year. While in Ukraine, she was able to witness first-hand the “Orange Revolution,” a peaceful fight for democracy in Ukraine, which propelled Viktor Yushchenko to the Ukrainian presidency.

The message of unity that Ukrainians demonstrated during the “Orange Revolution” is mirrored in Schmidt’s approach to her artwork. “I never want a single person to feel isolated by my work,” she said.

“I Miss Her Most on Football Sundays” is part of a series of Schmidt’s pieces that are “based on direct encounters and emotional attachments with people I have lost.” With her theory of inclusive art, Schmidt hopes the emotions she feels while sculpting will be mirrored in the hearts of those who view her work.

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Media: For more information or to schedule an interview with Rachel Schmidt, please contact Vicki Moeser at (202) 357-2627 Ext. 111 or Shonali Burke at (202) 974-5027 or burkes@ruderfinn.com. For more information on the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006, please visit www.portraitcompetition.si.edu.