

WHAT REMAINS: WOODEN QUILT SCULPTURES OF LAURA PETROVICH-CHENEY

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"My art is all about second chances," says New Jersey sculptor Laura Petrovich-Cheney, who creates wall art based on traditional and contemporary quilt patterns, using recycled wood that conjures up connections to the past. "Material has memory," she says.

Her five quilts at the Fuller are hauntingly lovely. Nail holes and chipped paint evoke the wood's history. Time has muted the colors. Like heirlooms, they memorialize a loss. In *What Remains*, the loss is from Hurricane Sandy. Petrovich-Cheney salvaged the wood from the wreckage and fastened them into arresting and poignant sculptures.

Eva Hesse, the Jewish German-born American sculptor who crafted found industrial objects into art, inspires Petrovich-Cheney. When the New Jersey artist found two damaged wooden boats the sea had dumped on Asbury Beach, she dismantled them and took them home. She didn't know how she'd use them,

but the colors—blue and orange—were irresistible.

Later, flipping through a magazine, she saw an article on decorating with quilts.

One was blue and orange.

Her wooden quilts "were birthed right there," she says.

In her studio, the artist cleans and sorts the wood by color. She doesn't paint it, but leaves it natural. She paints the backing board a bright color. "I begin to piece together this salvaged wood into something meaningful and orderly." The process is similar to making the fabric quilts she's sewn for years, except for power tools, which she first used at Moore College of Art



Laura Petrovich-Cheney, *Big Deal*, 2015, salvaged wood from hurricane Sandy, 48 x 48 x 1". Image courtesy of the artist.

and Design, where she earned her MFA in Studio Arts. Since then Petrovich-Cheney has exhibited nationally and her work can be found in both private and public collections. She has won many awards, including most recently the 2017 Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in Sculpture.

In October 2012, after Hurricane Sandy devastated the east coast, Petrovich-Cheney rescued wood from the debris—a purple dresser decorated with nail polish and a young girl's signature; shattered furniture; a smashed police barricade; broken business signs. A homeowner thanked her, comforted that the gray shingles from her family's 100-year-old home would be preserved in Petrovich-Cheney's art. —**Shirley Moskow**