





SOO SUNNY PARK
UNWOVEN LIGHT

Rice Gallery

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11 April - 30 August 2013

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FOREWORD

Soo Sunny Park's *Unwoven Light* rendered Rice Gallery's expansive space a shimmering world of light, shadow, and brilliant color. Suspended from the walls and ceiling, thirty-seven individually sculpted units were arranged in a graceful, twisting flow of abstract form. Visitors were invited to meander through the installation at a leisurely pace, as one might stroll along a river's edge and stop now and then to admire glints of light on the water's surface. Being immersed in *Unwoven Light*, viewers tapped into their own creative thoughts to describe the installation, likening it to "an indoor model of a post-storm sunrise," "childhood bubbles," or the experience of "walking around inside a crystal." One visitor's comment, however, captures perfectly the sense of wonder that the work evoked in everyone who saw it: "that something so utilitarian and 'unlovely' as chain link fencing could be transformed into an ephemeral, constantly changing sculpture."

It was a great thrill for us that *TIME* magazine's 2013 Summer Double Issue introduced its 25 million weekly readers to Rice University Art Gallery and Soo Sunny Park's *Unwoven Light*. San Antonio-based Walley Films created an outstanding video for us, which was selected as a Vimeo Staff Pick and received more than 100,000 views online. *Unwoven Light* appeared on many art and design blogs, and it even earned the top spot on BuzzFeed's list of "22 Dreamy Art Installations You Want To Live In."

We are grateful to the deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, especially Lexi Lee Sullivan, Assistant Curator, who curated Soo Sunny Park's site-specific installation, *Capturing Resonance*, from which materials were incorporated into *Unwoven Light*. Special thanks to Jason H. Hafner, Associate Professor of Physics, Astronomy, and Chemistry at Rice, whose lecture inspired by *Unwoven Light*, "A Physicist Gets Art (For the First Time)," attracted a record number of attendees to our *Professors' Perspectives* series. We thank the students from Rice's Shepherd School of Music who performed a concert, *New Art / New Music: Unwoven Light*, organized by Juan Olivares, that included fellow musicians Jessica Anastasio, Paul Cannon, Dino Georgeton, Nina DeCesare, Coleman Itzkoff, and Micah Ringham.

I thank Soo Sunny Park for channeling her ideas, thought process, research, time, skill and experience as a sculptor, and her work—long hours of work throughout a New Hampshire winter—into *Unwoven Light*, an installation that was both beautiful and revelatory.

Kimberly Davenport
Director



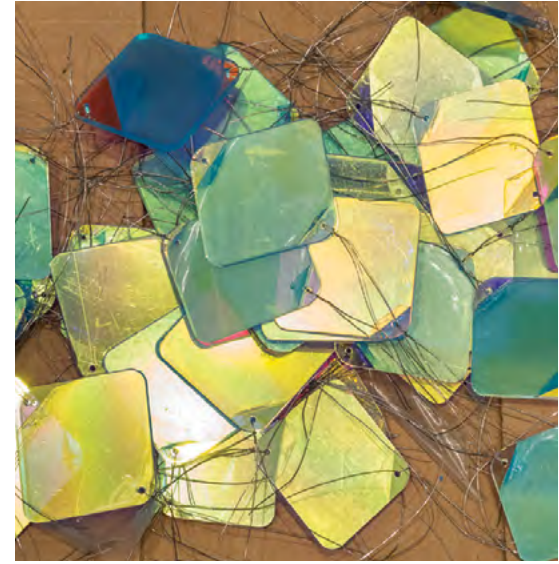
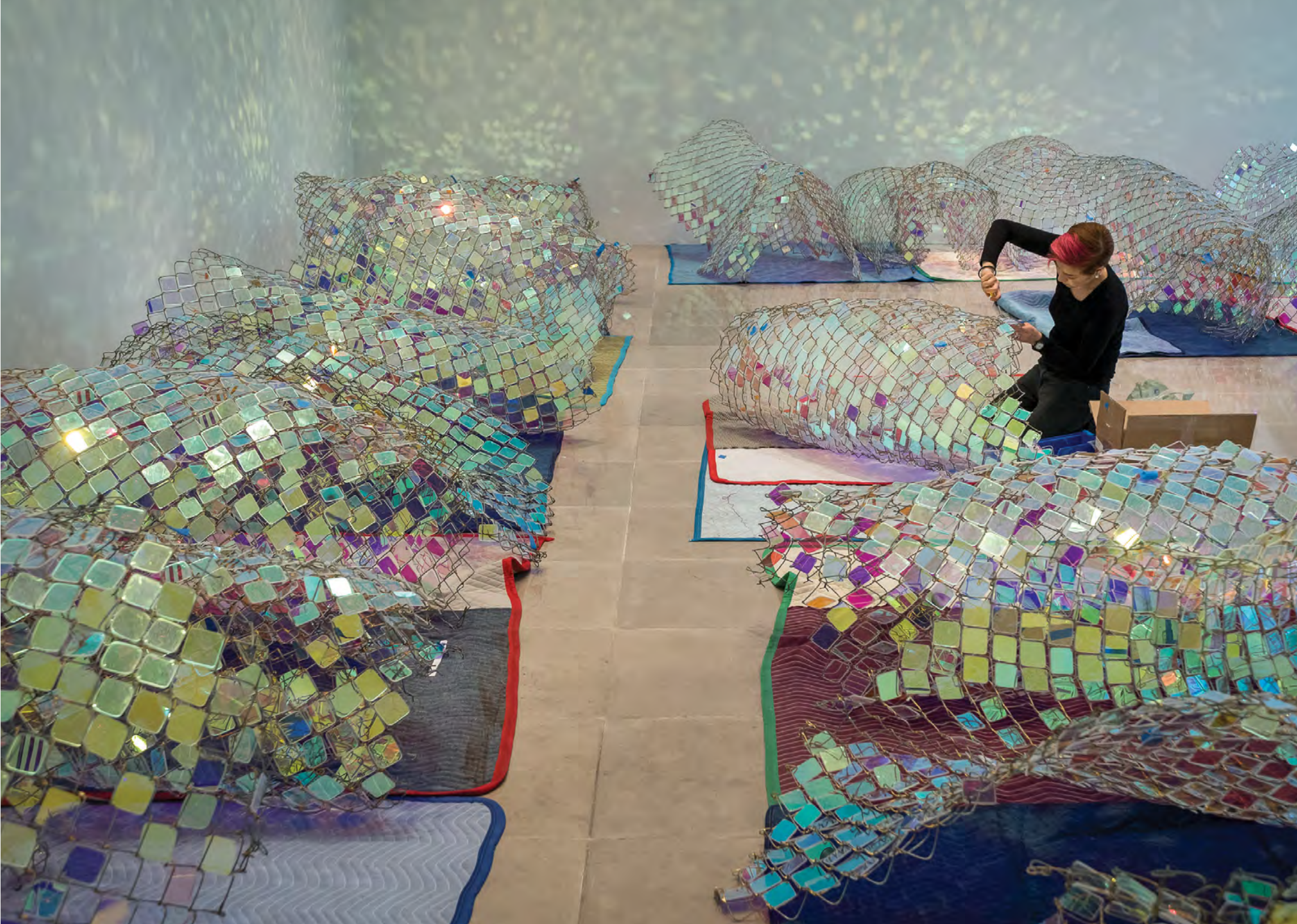


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Soo Sunny Park's installation *Unwoven Light* continued Park's ongoing experimentation with the ephemeral qualities of light and how it affects our perceptions of architectural space. She began thinking about her installation by making a site visit to Rice Gallery in July 2012 to experience the built and the natural elements of the space: its proportions and surfaces, and in particular its lighting conditions. Though immaterial, light is a critical structural element in each of Park's works. At Rice Gallery, she utilized both the gallery's artificial lighting and the natural light that enters through the front glass wall. Park notes, "We don't notice light when looking, so much as we notice the things light allows us to see. *Unwoven Light* captured light and caused it to reveal itself, through colorful reflections and refractions on the installation's surfaces and on the gallery floor and walls."

To "capture" light, Park created the installation out of an unexpected material: chain-link fencing. Seeing a Styrofoam cup stuck on a fence one day, Park noticed chain-link's ability to be both rigid and porous, to act as a boundary while retaining an appearance of openness. In her studio, she began manipulating the material: holding the chain-link in tension, bending it, and then welding each corner to hold it in place. The resulting curvilinear forms became basic building blocks that she would use to create larger forms that would be flexible enough to adapt to specific spaces. To create *Unwoven Light*, Park began with twenty sculptural



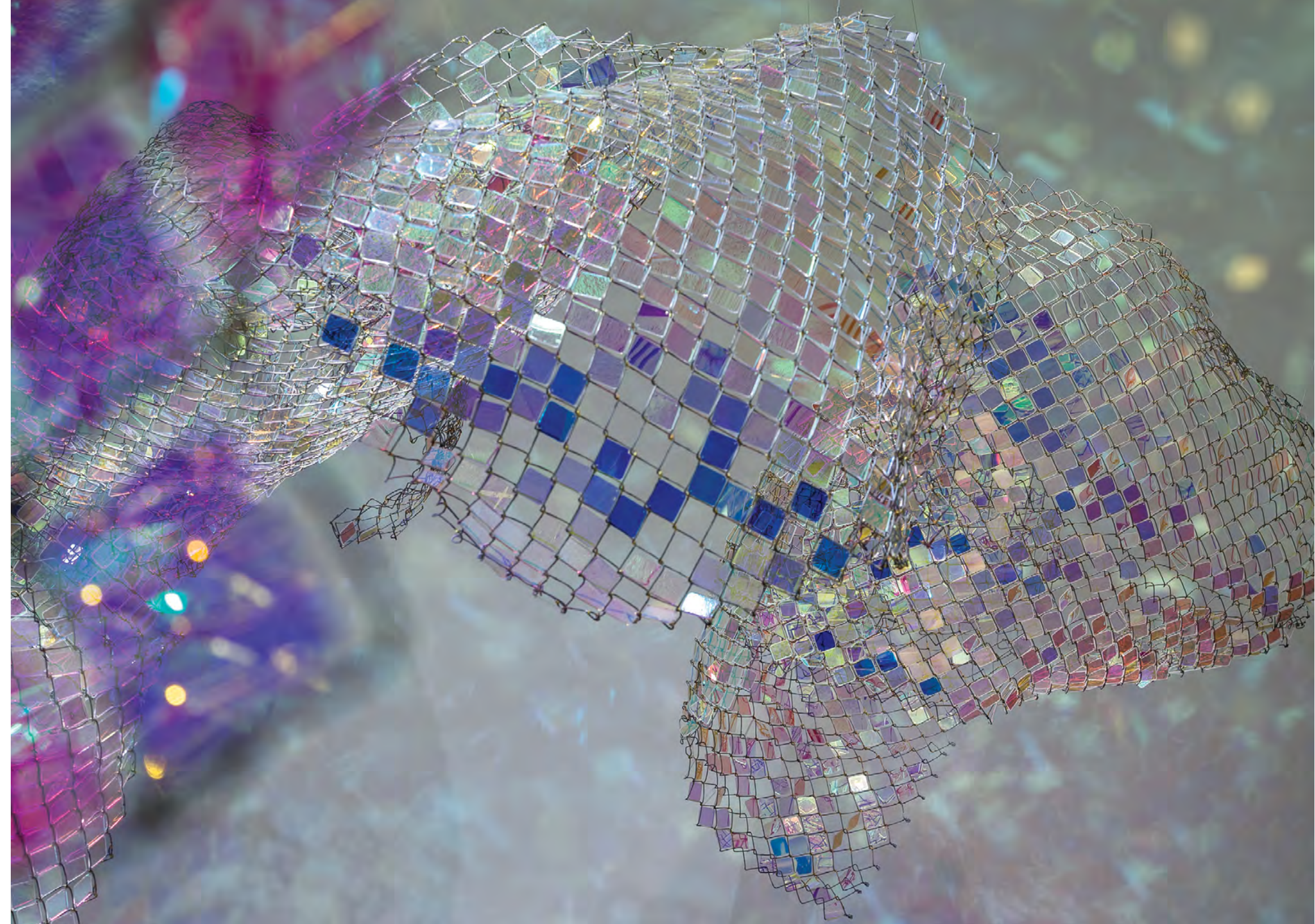


units from a previous installation and built seventeen new ones. Working long days with two assistants in her New Hampshire studio, it took Park two weeks to complete one unit. Each required seven hours of welding to brace the fencing, one-hundred hours of tying the wire that holds each acrylic piece in place, and many more hours of cutting acrylic shapes to fit the chain-link cells.

Wired into each open cell of the chain link was a cut-out shape of acrylic coated with a dichroic film that created an iridescent effect when light passed through it. Iridescence in nature, seen in the sheen of peacock feathers, fish scales, and butterfly wings, occurs when a myriad of colors change in chromatic intensity depending on the viewing angle. In the installation, the iridescent properties of the coated acrylic served to "unweave" light, each

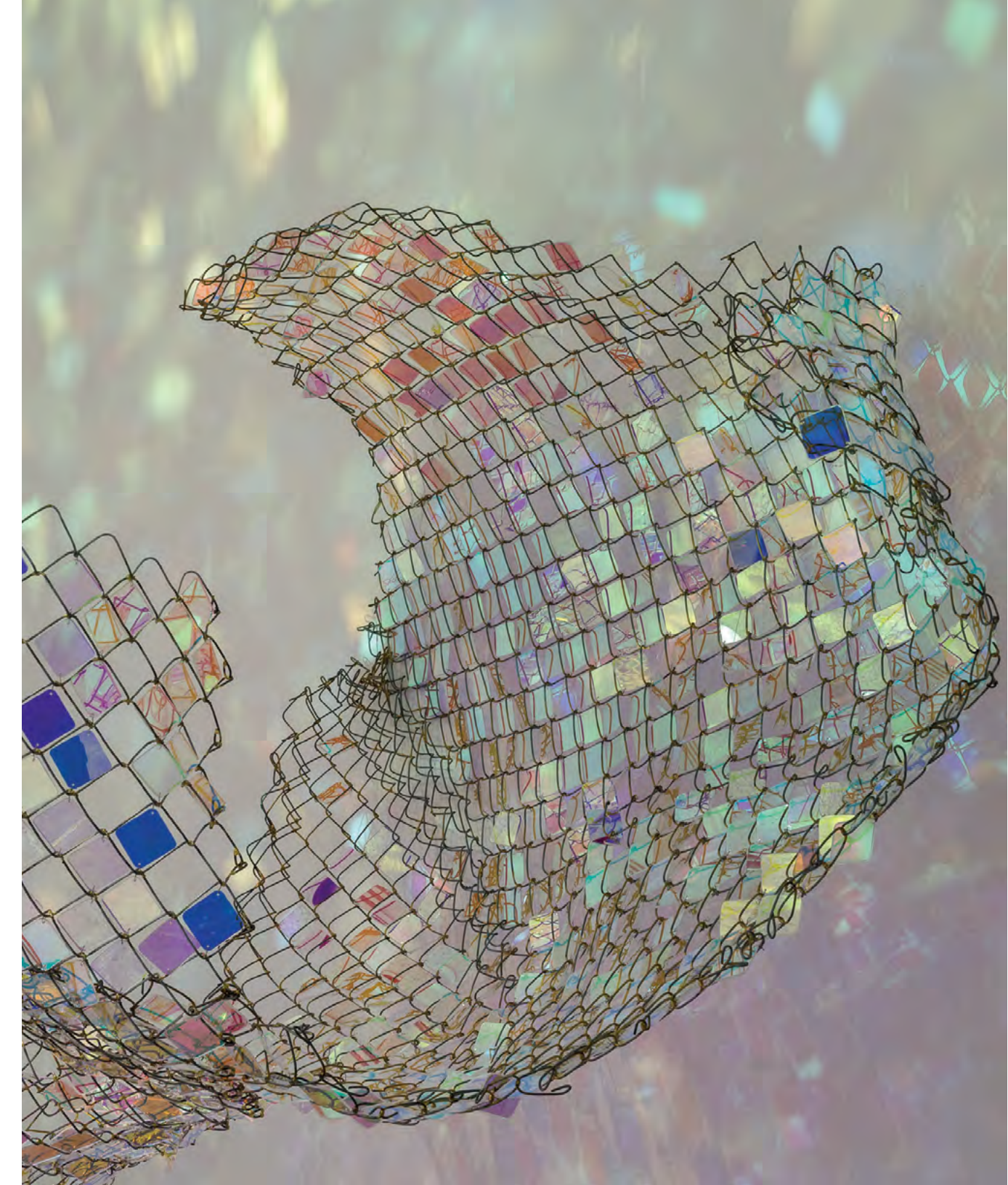
shape changing in appearance from clear to colorful in the presence of different wavelengths of light. "Like a net, the sculpture was a filter that was meant to capture the light that is already there and force it to reveal itself," says Park. "Then we saw it, the light, in purple shadows and yellow-green reflections that both mirrored the shape of the fence and restructured the space they inhabited."

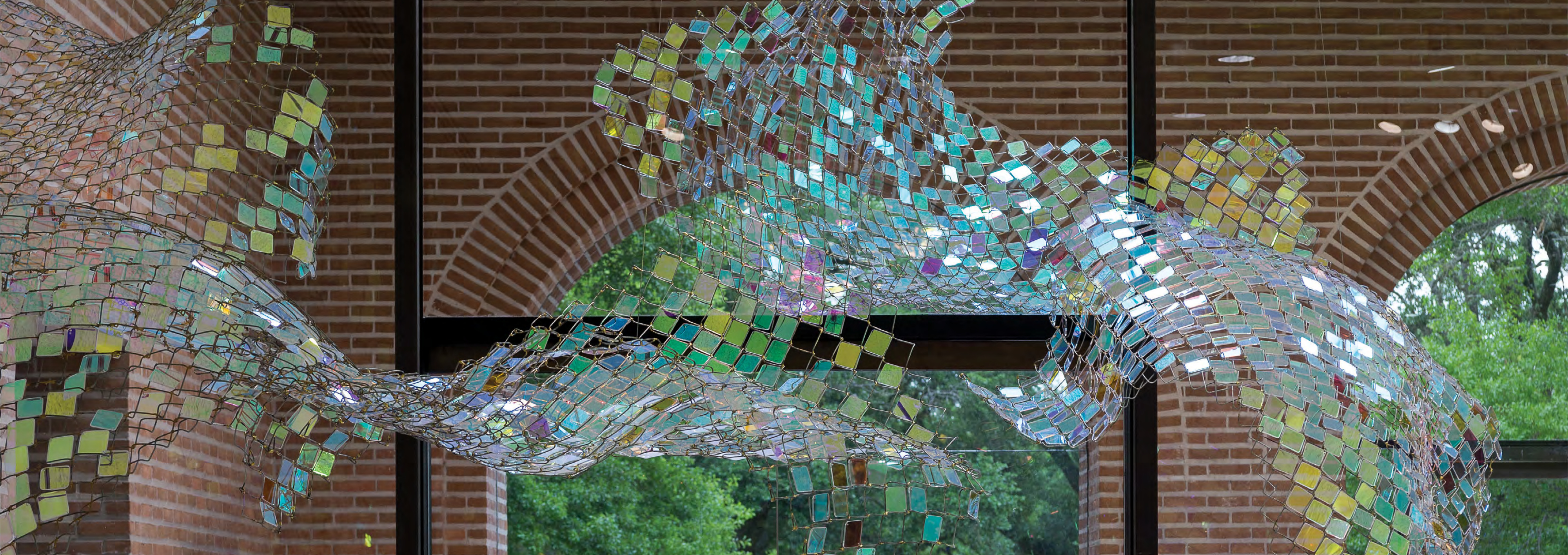
Visitors' experiences of *Unwoven Light* were unique according to their movements and viewing angles throughout the installation, the time of day, changes in the weather, and even the number of people present in the gallery. Though each person's impression could be attributed to these or any number of concrete factors, however, the word most used to describe the installation was "magical." It was Soo Sunny Park's genius to draw our attention to the actual, dynamic presence of light, more magical in its own right than its mere reflection.

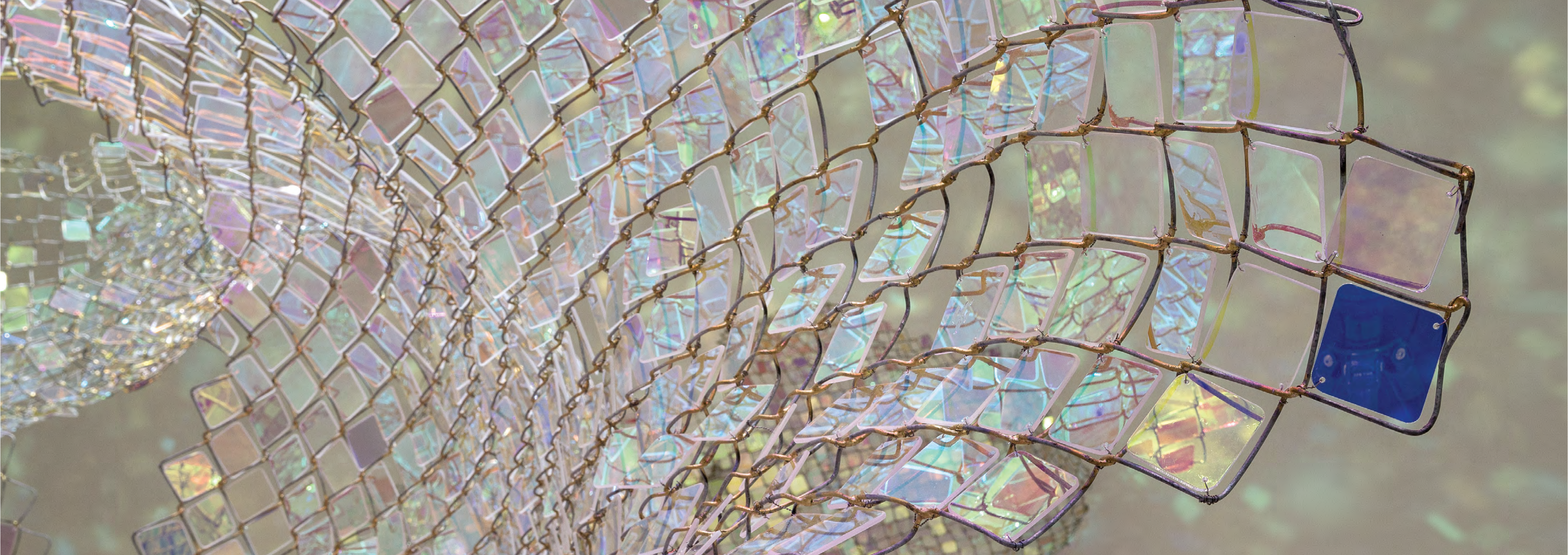








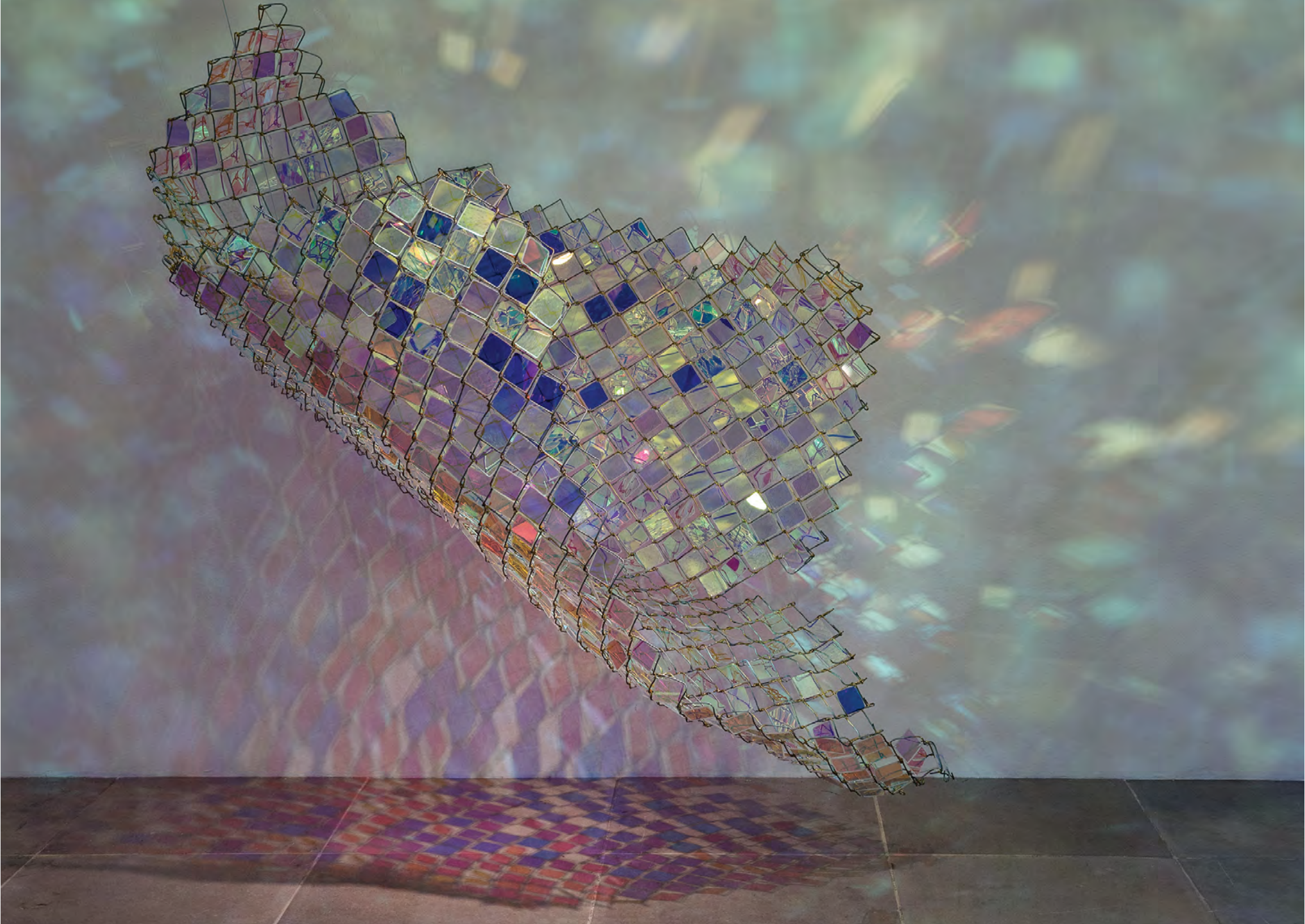












ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Soo Sunny Park holds a BFA in painting and sculpture from Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, Ohio and a MFA in sculpture from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Park's awards include a Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Grant; Grand Prize, 19th Annual Michigan Fine Arts Competition; The Helen Foster Barnett Prize, National Academy Museum, New York, New York; Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture Residency, Skowhegan, Maine; Cité Internationale des Arts Studio Residency, Paris, France; and the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Arts & Literary Arts Residency, Bellagio, Italy. Her most recent solo installations include *Boundary Conditions* (2014), New Britain Museum of Contemporary Art, Connecticut; *Capturing Resonance* (2011-12) with composer Spencer Topel, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts, and *SSVT (South Stafford, Vermont) Vapor Slide* (2013/2007), Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Soo Sunny Park is a professor of Studio Art at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.



Soo Sunny Park, *Unwoven Light*
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11 April – 30 August 2013

Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at ricegallery.org.

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