


Midwestern Voices and Visions

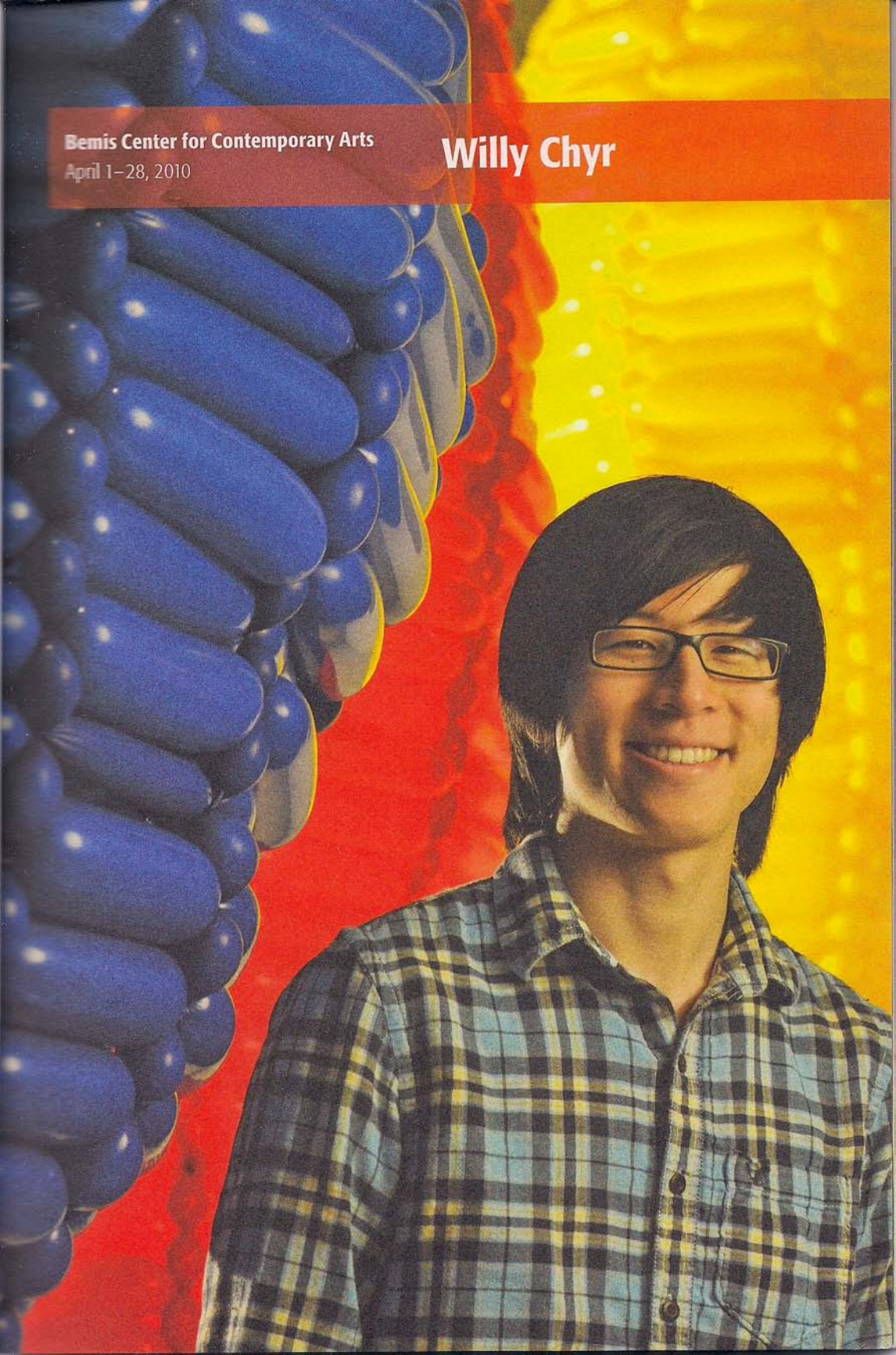


An initiative of the

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Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts
April 1–28, 2010

Willy Chyr



Willy Chyr

Sculpture and Installation Art

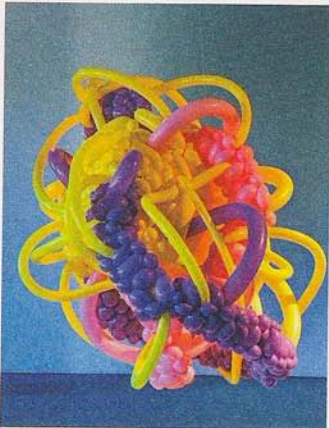
www.willychyr.com

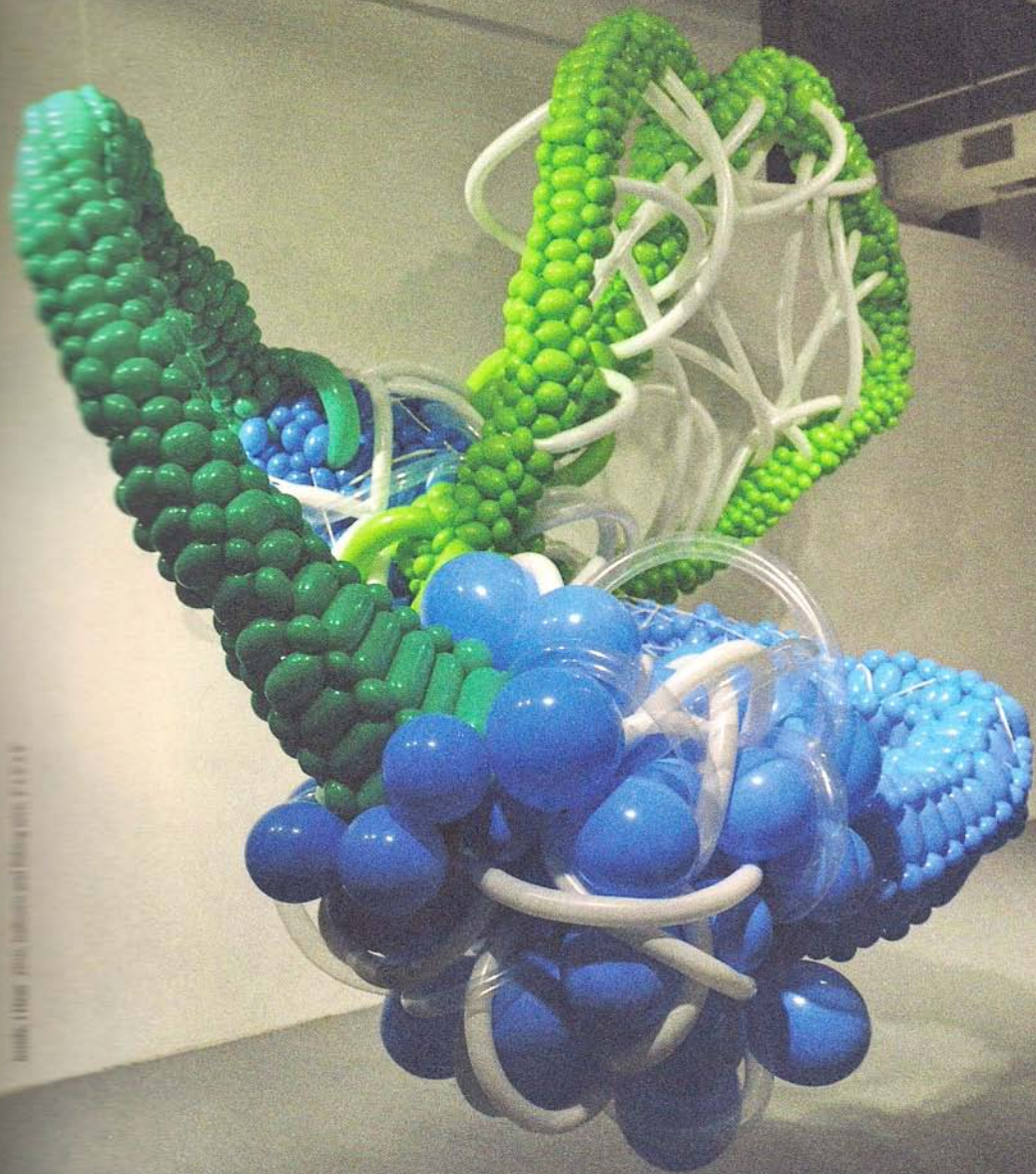
Willy's path to the arts has been a circuitous one. He graduated from the University of Chicago with a double B.A. in Economics and Physics and while at school he worked as a research technician in various science laboratories—including the National Institute of Nuclear Physics in Italy. He also performed as a juggler and a magician with the student-run *Le Vorris and Vox Circus*. It was during his experience with the circus that he learned how to twist balloons, which became the building blocks of his sculptures and installations.

"The potential of balloons to form shapes and structures is an often overlooked source for artistic creation. In my sculptures, I make use of this potential to express the beauty that I see in nature. From bioluminescence to consciousness, the natural world is full of the most incredible and mind-boggling phenomena. Each sculpture stems from the principles behind these phenomena and the enigmatic laws that govern them."

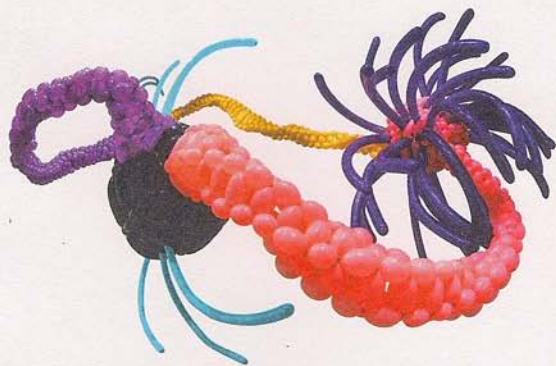
Willy arrived at Bemis Center as a young college graduate unsure of the role that the arts played in his life. His residency not only provided him with a creative outlet, but also gave him time to contemplate his artistic leanings and how they related to his life decisions. "For me, the residency confirmed my desire to work in a creative capacity, or at least have it be an important aspect of my life. As someone who just graduated from college, much of this past year has been spent figuring out what direction I want to take in life. While I had always enjoyed creative work, my time as an artist-in-residence made me realize that it is something I'm truly passionate about, and want to seriously pursue."

Bemis opened new artistic horizons for Willy by introducing him to other artists at various stages in their development. "It was very helpful to meet other resident artists who were much farther along in their career and who were much more familiar with the art scene," recalls Willy. "As an emerging artist, and





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someone who is very new to the art world, it was very enlightening to hear about their experiences and the challenges they've faced and overcome."

"While there were not any mandatory activities to facilitate interactions, the layout of the studios and the events that the Bemis Center organized really encouraged interaction. The resident artists went out a number of times for meals and also got together to socialize after various Bemis events. Additionally, all the artists propped their studio doors open during the day so it was easy to stop by and chat."

Heather Johnson, Bemis' residency program manager, recalls that, in addition to Willy's ambitious studio practice, he also found time to engage with the greater Omaha community. "Willy is an enthusiastic and amiable artist and his past experiences as a performer attributed to his popularity with tour groups and following his Art Talk presentation. Interaction with other Artists-in-Residence was an important aspect of Willy's time. Working next to artists prolific

in animation was particularly influential as Willy was experimenting with time-based media. He took full advantage of the Bemis Center's abundance of open spaces by experimenting with ephemeral site-specific installations and investigations into time and space."

The positive impact of Willy's residency stay will resonate with him for many years to come. It affirmed his artistic impulses and instilled within him a deeper understanding of the artistic process: "A major change to my practice is that now I set aside time every day to simply experiment and explore. Prior to my residency I worked on a project-to-project basis—every time I sat down to create, I was working towards a final result, and not thinking about the creative process itself. At Bemis, I had time to play and experiment without the pressure of having to produce something. I realized that a lot of great ideas and thoughts arise out of this process. I've embraced this procedure and have made it a part of my daily routine."