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## **Lewis Knauss**

Beginning in the mid '70s, Lewis Knauss exhibited small-scale weavings of concentrated energy yet discreet character that evoke remembrances of landscapes. These include his home region of Pennsylvania, the Saratoga Springs area of upstate New York, where he has spent time, and environments absorbed on travels in Egypt and Israel. The works might be called Minimalist if they weren't both emotive and tactile, because the communication of surface and material is so restrained. The Pennsylvania-inspired works are made of raffia, which suggests bleached and desiccated grasses in winter. Knotted fringes give a depth of up to 2 inches. Some works of the time included modest embellishments such as twigs, nails and carpet tacks, and others use leather or rag elements that Knauss relates to plowed fields, brushy sites or Indian burial mounds.

Layered knotted structure, sequences of added materials, and complex finishing processes were central to this work. The repetition of knotting relates to the excesses of repetition in nature and well as cultural influences. "If I am binding down a surface, the solution automatically comes to me as a mathematical sequence. This has to do with being brought up Pennsylvania Dutch—life was always concerned with saving money, being places on time, being orderly. I can't live with that order but it is in my work," he says.<sup>1</sup> Yet possibly his manipulation is also influenced by his attraction to tribal textiles. He later painted surfaces, making the materials less dominant.

Knauss (b. 1947) earned a B.S. in art education from Kutztown University (1969) and an MFA from Tyler (1973). He has taught at a number of schools in the east. His interest in landscape began with his first teaching job, in Ohio, when he realized he missed his home

ground. The works are meant to convey feelings beyond the literal by using line as a spatial unit and a contemplative device.