

## Kiff Slemmons

Douglas Dawson

Chicago

Metalsmith and jewelry artist Kiff Slemmons, who has been exhibiting for more than 30 years, is known for her work with fragments of materials and found items like stones, bones, and pencils. Often it seems that the material has dictated the design. In this beguiling show of paper constructions, the reverse seemed to be true—the design pushed the material in unexpected ways.

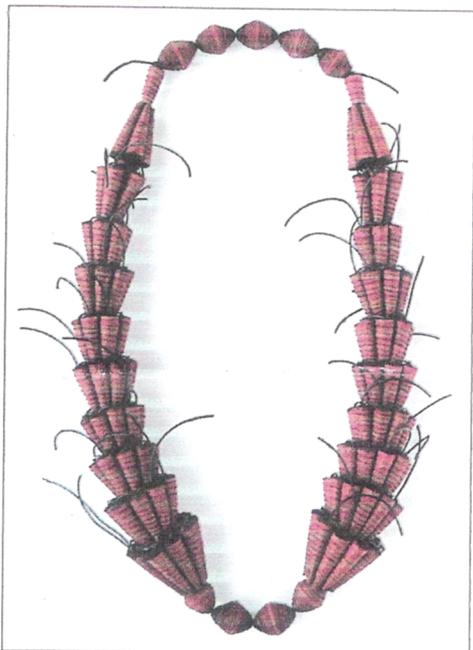
Since 2000, Slemmons has worked with the Arte Papel Oaxaca, a papermaking facility in Mexico founded by artist Francisco Toledo, that uses local fibers and natural dyes. With more than 50 designs made from that paper,

this show was a follow-up to last summer's stunning exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center, "Pride of Paper: Arte Papel Oaxaca & Kiff Slemmons." For this installation, Slemmons arranged vibrantly colored necklaces, thickly cuffed bracelets, and pendants with sprays of oval red or teal beads on eight-foot-long planks of wormholed cypress and unpolished teak. Delicate ropes of paper beads were hung on the wall, along with tubular, ladderlike necklaces.

Some of Slemmons's deceptively simple designs call forth a variety of antecedents. Many of the necklaces are composed of hundreds and hundreds of small, densely packed squares of paper, each individual square slightly rotated so that the corners jut out like tiny points. The effect is reminiscent of the texture and volume of Hawaiian leis. One necklace has interspersed leaves of chartreuse and brown, which add dimension through color.

Necklaces with chunks of dense indigo rectangles alternating with other tightly packed segments present a sleeker look. Four such strands were stacked together in a group, suggesting a kind of cross between tribal ornamentation and Elizabethan ruffs.

—Ruth Lopez



Kiff Slemmons, *Red Cone Necklace*, 2010, handmade paper, ink, and leather, 12" x 12" x 1/2". Douglas Dawson.