



DOROTHY GILL BARNES

My teaching time at Haystack has always been in early summer—the best time for my classes to harvest materials from the woods, when the sap is flowing and bark can be peeled back easily. The staff have always helped to carefully select trees from construction sites or other areas on campus that need to be opened up, to let sunlight into the dining hall, for instance.

New Works is a September gathering that is a wonderful opportunity for artists to come to Haystack to do their own work and enjoy collaboration. September, though, presents a challenge to me because so much of my work is inspired by the harvest earlier in the year. On a couple of occasions, I have figured out some exciting alternative materials. Once, I discovered the almost rotted branches from the forest floor there at Haystack—the strong joints that had held the tree together when it was alive. Sometimes called riverteeth, they are the last part of the tree to survive decay.

On my most recent September visit, I brought materials from home—my two pieces of luggage were one suitcase, and one large chunk of intricately spalted maple from a tree that we cut down in our yard. I hated to evict the raccoons living there, but the tree was no longer safe to have next to our house, so it has become a piece of artwork, made at Haystack with input from artists in several other studios. Rather than spending my time outdoors, as I do in summer, I spent most of my time there in the furniture makers' studio learning more about power tools, and I talked with textile and book artists about how best to assemble my maple slices, and finally the blacksmiths and I created a peg to hold the whole thing together. With hints from all, I came home with a finished piece. What a pleasure to exchange ideas in such a beautiful place.