

Invasive Species

Roy Frank Staab

About the Artist

Roy Frank Staab (b. 1941) attended Layton School of Art and received a BFA from UWM in 1969, extending studying in Europe, settling in Paris. He had first exhibition in 1977. His artworks found place in the collections of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France, Le Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris, France. He began making site-installation art in 1979 in France. In 1980 he moved to New York City [works-on-paper in Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY]. By 1983 he shifted to working entirely in nature, employing natural materials from each site and became a peripatetic artist making his ephemeral outdoor sculpture installations in many places throughout the world. He received grants from the New York Foundations for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Fellowship, Artist-in-Museum Yokohama Museum of Art, Joan Mitchell Foundation award. He has installed works in Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the United States.

Artist's Statement

I learned to question and opened the door to experiment and experience, finding the freedom to make art 'my way' and choose or reject traditional techniques as a means—to create visual experiences that excite me. It took ten years for my art to evolve from painting, to line structure on paper, to installation. I started to make works in/over water—large works, my drawings in space, using only natural materials gathered from near by. I like the idea of working with nature, geometry and physical science to make works that can be considered a meditation on perception and being—with the idea of ephemeral, nothing to hold on to but the visual experience; Art that is and transcends the object. I make art in nature and refer and depend upon nature and natural sciences to work with me on the art.

Artworks



Invasive Species*

[*because of the fish that escaped that were non-native and took over the native species there in Chen-Long, Taiwan]

There is the oyster fishing industry where they grow oysters and then they reuse some of the shell to grow a new stock. I found piles of discarded shells. I came up with the idea of putting them on bamboo, held in place by the tension of a slit. But I learned later, that was the old way they used to grow oysters there. The work is designed to be a long free form like an abstract fish [that I told the children] to fit the land area. I use the oyster shells all facing the sunrise to give the very white glow at that special time. I was told of the high water rainy season and made the work to be magic. The rain did not come in May as predicted, but in the end of July, making my art complete with reflection and isolation in the water.



Suspended between the living and the dead

In Philadelphia—I use the cantenary curve (gravity) and wind for my art to move and swing. The situation is to make a work over the canal in a visible place accessible to people to. I chose a place where trees suspend over the canal. But one tree, an elm, was dead, hence the title **'Suspended between the living and the dead'**. I had to test the branch of the dead tree and make sure it will hold. I put up a measuring line between the trees and then took it down and extended it out along the canal edge. The materials for the lines are collected from the nearby abandoned lands. I did not want the line to stretch out as it did on another work, so I use the Japanese knotweed as the main support and tooth-picked it end to end and then layered the line with other weeds such as goldenrod, mug wart and bundle it using jute cord. Sometimes the wind in the tops of the trees makes the work bounce, other times it moves and sways by the wind in the work. It is held out by bamboo and balanced by stones where needed.



Eau Claire Currents

For the work ***Eau Claire Currents***, made for the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, a suggested idea as to make a work on the sandbar in the river below the walking bridge. But the two times that I came to see the site, the Chippewa River was in flood because

of the heavy rains. I responded to the site, the bridge and my concern that the people walking over the bridge could see something, not just hang down hanging down, but pulled out by the current. I use the bridge railing supports for the placement of the work and the measure between the lines, for the right shape and proportions of the lines. I am concerned with it lasting as long as possible so the junctions had to be above the water, as I know that the natural materials breakdown in a short time in the water and current. Ephemeral art belongs in nature and I have no problem with that. The 'Y' shaped tendrils were made with wild weeds and bundled with jute. I chose to punctuate the ends in the water using torpedo shaped logs. To my surprise when they were tied on, instead of just staying in a straight line of the current [they were not streamlined enough], they move back and forth giving movement to the work that I like. Slowly, piece-by-piece, parts break off and slipped silently down the river. The work is made with all organic materials and will rot as other river detritus does over time.

More info about Roy Staab and his art can be found at
<http://roystaab.blogspot.com>
