

NEWS RELEASE

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Outdoor Sculpture Invitational—Artists in Dialogue with Landscape—on View through September at Adkins Arboretum

The ten artists in Adkins Arboretum's *Outdoor Sculpture Invitational—Artists in Dialogue with Landscape* share a passion for working in nature. Throughout May, they could be found in the Arboretum's forest and meadows collecting branches, moss, grasses, pinecones and other natural materials and using them to create sculptures.

On view through Sept. 30, this is the ninth biennial *Invitational* show the Arboretum has hosted since 2002. There will be a reception and a guided sculpture walk on Sat., June 23 from 3 to 5 p.m. in conjunction with the reception for Lee D'Zmura's show in the Visitor's Center.

"Nature is my studio. Nature is my teacher," wrote Diane Szczepaniak, an artist from Potomac, Md., whose sculpture "Octagon of Grass, Watching the Grass Grow, Going at the Speed of Nature" is an invitation to slow down and observe and meditate on nature.



Clockwise from left: "Guardians," by Bridgette Guerzon Mills; "Modern-Day Fossils," by Melissa Burley; "Tumble," by Marcia Wolfson Ray.

Szczepaniak installed a low octagon of steel flanked by a simple bench in a mown area beneath tall loblolly pines. The grass inside the octagon will be left to grow and mature throughout the summer, and visitors may come to sit and enjoy the quietude and the slow changes as the sculpture develops.

There's a sense of play and discovery throughout this show. Both Ben Allanoff of Joshua Tree, Calif., and Baltimore artist Eliezer Sollins came to Adkins with no specific plans for their sculptures. Walking the paths through its forest and meadows, they found places and materials that triggered ideas. Sollins collected fallen branches laden with pinecones and armloads of meadow grass for his sculpture, "Haycone," while Allanoff balanced long, slim branches and vines in a small grove of trees in "Pick-up Sticks," a sculpture that visitors can actually enter.

Natural materials are the basis for most of these sculptures, including the swoop of branches framed by a cube (all painted a magical blue) in Washington artist Julia Bloom's "Forest Cache" and Baltimore artist Marcia Wolfson Ray's "Tumble," four rustic boxes made of dried plants angled as if to tumble down into the wetland beside the Visitor's Center. Using a collection of richly colored and textured materials from the forest and meadow, Susan Benarcik, of Wilmington, Del., employed classic geometry to illustrate a universal natural pattern of growth in her sculpture, "The Golden Ratio in Nature."

Several of the artists made sculptures exploring their concerns for the well-being of the earth. Melissa Burley, of Laurel, Md., created "Modern-Day Fossils" in which plastic bugs and leaves encased in glittering balls of amber-colored resin stand in for fossilized plants and animals.

Three of the artists created sculptures about the current severe decline in bee populations. Both Elizabeth Miller McCue of Yardley, Penn., and Bridgette Guerzon Mills of Towson, Md., constructed beehive-shaped sculptures made of many small hexagons. An intricate web of glistening wire, McCue's is a ghostly skeleton of a beehive, long deserted by its denizens. Mills's mixed-medium hive is more colorful, but while some of its hexagons are empty, others are mirrored so that visitors may see their own faces, implicating our human role in the disappearance of the bees but also suggesting that by promoting healthy ecosystems, we can be the agents of restoring their dwindling populations.

That possibility was the impetus for Ashley Kidner's "Pollinator Hexagon V," one of a series of sculptures this Baltimore artist has created in parks and art centers around Maryland. Like his other hexagons, this is a large circular garden filled with hexagonal sections where native pollinator plants are growing. Functioning not only as a work of art, its nine species of flowering plants provide a healthy source of nectar for the Arboretum's bees.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Sept. 30 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

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