

Art in the Arboretum: Environmental Installations—The Show Goes On!

by Linda Lane



August 12, Curator Susana Arias led a small group of friends and art lovers, along with many of the participating artists, through the *Art in the Arboretum: Environmental Installations* exhibition. If you haven't seen these sculptures yet, or for a closer look, now is the time to go. These unique and beautiful art pieces will be taken down and removed from the gardens starting November 18.

The private tour started with a "meet and greet" and a delicious buffet of food and cool beverages under a covered tent...



...then proceeded to the first sculpture in the South African garden, Lucia Bruer's *And Sow it Begins*. She explained the concept for the piece began two years prior with her concern the drought was not being sufficiently dealt with; the piece is a visual reminder of the hope of the harvest cycle, using forged steel and driftwood Bruer gathered after a storm.



The tour then gathered at Sharon Loper's *The Raven and the Wolf*. Loper had brought two bronze wolves from her private collection but all materials for the construction of the raven's nest are from the Arboretum. Arias explained the piece was inspired by the portrayal of these two creatures in mythology as protector and guardian.



Wendy Domster invited everyone to crowd into her gigantic sculpture of a Protea plant, which sits majestically in an empty field. In the center is a spinning steel bowl filled with 30 pounds of the spice turmeric, chosen, she explained, for its healing powers. Domster collected the large arching branches for this piece in Bonny Doon after storms tossed them to the ground, and the mudstone used to counterbalance the redwood branches came from mudslides in the area.



Opposite Domster's giant installation is Larry Worley's sculpture, *Where the Sea and Land Meet*. It is hidden within the branches of a tree, barely noticeable unless you know exactly where to look, a wonderful discovery when you do see it. He demonstrated the technique he used to weave the six foot shell and intersperse it with arching circles of driftwood.



Guests were fascinated by a discussion of art and its important role in education by Jayson Fann, who created the huge woven sculpture *Spirit Nest*. His artistic journey led him from the plains of Nebraska, where as a child his room turned into an ever-expanding nest, complete with parakeets and other creatures, to today guiding art projects for more than 500 "disengaged" children in the Monterey school system. As a musician, Fann always listens to nature when creating his artwork, and hears the "letter" each branch contributes to the language of the entire piece.



Jenni Ward has two diverse pieces in the New Zealand garden. For *Umbel Series*, she created over 230 ceramic mustard “flowers,” all with variations in their brilliant yellow coloring, the number of umbels, and glazing. They are literally outstanding in the field! Her sculptures in *Tree Pools*, in contrast, are cool, calming, and meditative. The blue ceramic cones rest gently in the shade at the base of trees.



Several children in the tour raced to John Hylton’s *Sunwatchers* to climb on the giant limestone rocks that surround his carved wooden figures. The piece was inspired by this particular Arboretum site, Hylton explained, in that these stones immediately sparked his thoughts of an ancient calendar.



Diana Hobson’s *Ubiquitous Seed* offers visitors a 30 foot diameter circle of radiating arcs, echoing the ancient Egyptian symbol for the seed with a “sitting stone” at its center. She explained the piece blossomed from her concern about the loss of our life-giving seeds.



The last sculpture on the tour was 3+7, a gigantic metal eucalyptus branch blown onto a fence, by Jamie Abbott, Barbara Downs, and Roy Holmberg. The three artists described how their unique talents and methods of working allowed for a true collaboration in creating this piece: together they formed the concept of the piece during several visits to the Arboretum, and, as the sculpture took shape, together they fine-tuned each fabricated and forged metal leaf and painted concrete seed pod.

Arias led the group back to the tent to eat, drink, and socialize. It was a perfect day, perfect weather, and all enjoyed this up close and personal look at these amazing sculptures now at the Arboretum. The tour ended with a loud and enthusiastic applause for Arias not only for setting up this educational and fun event but also for her commitment to sharing art and supporting artists.