



FORM ASSOCIATES

Northala Fields

London

Four grass-covered conical mounds built from displaced soil and other construction detritus form the focal point of *Northala Fields*, a new multi-use community park in outer London. Designed by a team from FoRM Associates led by artist Peter Fink and architect Igor Marko, this creative solution to waste disposal cost local citizens nothing while providing them with open space, recreational facilities, and an engaging bit of environmental art. The Borough of Ealing, which commissioned the project, acquired the neglected land in 1997 but lacked sufficient funds for its redevelopment. Fink and Marko, in collaboration with ecologist Peter Neal, were selected after a competition in 2000—their dynamic proposal, as Fink describes, addressed the borough’s “Land Art aspirations,” had elements of “social participation, biodiversity, [and] cultivation,” and, most crucially, incorporated 1.5 million cubic meters of construction refuse, which provided \$10.5 million—enough to fund the entire project.

The process was complex: construction companies brought detritus from major sites like Heathrow’s Terminal 5 and the Wembley Stadium reconstruction, paying to dump at *Northala Fields* just as they would at a regular landfill. Using this material saved landfill space elsewhere and shortened hauling time, saving resources and “contribut[ing] to shrinking the ecological footprint of London,” Fink says. Local politics briefly threatened the process (when the borough government changed hands, the newly elected party had different plans for the revenue), but residents advocated for their park and ultimately prevailed.

Sited along the A40 highway, the mounds at *Northala Fields* range from 60 to 100 feet high. The tallest supports a spiraling pathway that leads to its summit where an observation platform

Left and detail: FoRM Associates, *Northala Fields*, 2003–09. Clean demolition spoil, plantings, and water, approximately 2,000 x 1,500 x 105 ft.

provides views of London. Other features of the 18.5-hectare park include playgrounds, fishing ponds, bicycling and walking paths, and a boating pond. FoRM’s successful land intervention, realized through local involvement and creative planning, serves an appreciative London community and offers a lesson in environmentally responsible public art.

DEAN CHATWIN

Propagate

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Dean Chatwin’s concept for *Propagate* reflects his interest in life cycles, interdependence, and waste. Sited in Hobart’s Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, the ephemeral work was formally simple: fallen leaves from 16 oak trees were raked into a series of rings around each tree. As Chatwin emphasizes, “No material was added or subtracted, only rearranged.” Red-brown leaves formed concentric patterns on the lawn, the outer bands around an individual tree eventually colliding with those of its neighbors: “This interference represents how different elements within an ecosystem interact.” Chatwin was initially invited to create the work for a sustainability festival, but RTBG commissioners asked him to make it separately. Chatwin says, “The concept developed from the site, in particular, the relative positions of the trees within the space...I began to see the trees as being analogous to rocks thrown into water.”

He “wanted to do a sculpture with deciduous leaves...because they are such a powerful symbol of seasonal change and [visibly] represent the flow of energy through the natural environment.” Since deciduous trees are not native to Tasmania, the RTBG’s



Left: Dean Chatwin, *Propagate*, 2009. Fallen oak leaves, approximately 18,000 sq. ft. Below: Steven Siegel, *Two of 'em*, 2009. Bamboo, recycled cans and bottles, wire, wood, plastic sheeting, and rubber hose, 2 elements, 10 ft. diameter each.

large collection worked perfectly: “The site was located adjacent to a main path within the oak collection...[where] visitors came across the works unexpectedly...This element of surprise was an added bonus.”

Although fallen leaves are often treated as waste, Chatwin is “acutely aware of [their] importance...within an ecosystem... [as food for] animals at the bottom of the food chain which process the leaves, enabling plants to access nutrients.” The process of creating the work—raking leaves within an 18,000-square-foot area—was “meditative,” he says. “It was therefore not surprising, though initially unintentional, that the completed form resembled a Zen gravel garden” or “a tree’s growth rings.” Chatwin finished *Propagate* in June 2009 and watched as foraging birds and the wind gradually blurred and displaced the patterning: “After about five weeks, *Propagate* succumbed to the elements, and only small portions of the pattern remained, reminding me somewhat of artifacts of a lost civilization.”

STEVEN SIEGEL

Two of 'em

Reading, PA

Leading a team of 16 volunteers for four days, Steven Siegel recently created *Two of 'em*, a pair of outdoor sculptures made of bamboo and recyclables on the campus of Penn State Berks. Siegel, whose work is often fabricated from natural materials and waste products, approached the project without a precise concept, more interested in negotiating the constraints of materials, volunteer help, and time available to him on campus. Marilyn Fox, the

school administrator who coordinated the project, assisted Siegel by locating materials (the bamboo comes from a grove at the school) and choosing the centrally located site, adjacent to a walking path through the campus. She also recruited a group of very enthusiastic volunteers: “As our college campus does not have an art program, it was interesting to see that students in engineering, business, world studies, and other programs were eager to work with us.” The students assisted Siegel in building wooden frames, bundling the recyclables inside, and encapsulating the bales in bamboo.

The two cylindrical sculptures, which rest on their sides to reveal their contents, demonstrate Siegel’s interest in container forms—each unit is a container filled with additional aluminum and plastic containers. A layer of bamboo wraps around each form, exposing the recyclables only at the ends. The colorful cans and bottles—some were generated on campus and some were borrowed, to be returned when the work is taken down—contrast with the rough, leafy texture of the bamboo. Placed at an irregular angle in relation to each other, from certain perspectives, the sculptures seem to be having a tête-à-tête. Siegel describes his work, which is on view indefinitely, as an intermission in the solid waste stream—an arrested snapshot of what people produce, consume, throw away, and grow.

—Elizabeth Lynch



Juries are convened each month to select works for Commissions. Information on recently completed commissions, along with quality 35mm slides/transparencies or high-resolution digital images (300 dpi at 4 x 5 in. minimum) and an SASE for return of slides, should be sent to: Commissions, Sculpture, 1633 Connecticut Avenue NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20009.