

Daniel McCormick & Mary O'Brien: Watershed Sculptures
Collection CAE1309

Introduction/Abstract

Artists Daniel McCormick and Mary O'Brien create artworks as ecological interventions, adding aesthetics to ecological restoration. The sculptures they create eventually disappear, becoming part of the land and waters they serve to improve. Materials include models, drawings, correspondence, plans, maps, press and other ephemera.

Biographical Note: Daniel McCormick

Daniel McCormick is an interdisciplinary artist and design professional with integrated skills in the fields of sculptural installation, environmental design and ecological restoration. McCormick earned a degree in environmental design from UC Berkeley, and has studied with James Turrell and Helen and Newton Harrison. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including an Artist Grant from the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, an Invitational Bridge Residency Award from the Headlands Center for the Arts, a creative development grant from the Blumenthal Foundation, a Creative Capital Award and an Urban Landscape Award from the Friends of the Urban Forest. McCormick's work has been featured in exhibitions at the Oakland Museum of California, Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Bolinas Art Museum, Headlands Center for the Arts, Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, CA and the McColl Center for Visual Art.

Biographical Note: Mary O'Brien

Artist and curator Mary O'Brien studied art at Marquette University and Environmental Design and Communication at the University of Minnesota, and has worked in public art since 1998. She has won numerous awards for screenwriting film production. She has worked on eco-art projects with Daniel McCormick since 2000.

Scope and Content

In the early 1990s Daniel McCormick began to go beyond witnessing and documenting environmental damage to create artworks as ecological interventions, adding aesthetics to ecological restoration. His sculptures, most of which are located on public lands and in open spaces, work to restore the equilibrium of watersheds and other ecosystems adversely impacted by rural and urban communities. Using elements from the environments where he works, such as cuttings from willows and other flora, McCormick weaves natural materials into large basket forms that he and his partner, Mary O'Brien, then live stake onto the site. The sculptures, as they grow into silt traps, erosion control implements, fish habitat, and other ecological enhancements, eventually disappear, becoming part of the land and waters they serve to improve. Their projects often become community projects involving and managers, water quality agencies, schools, and local nonprofits.

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This archive is currently in process.