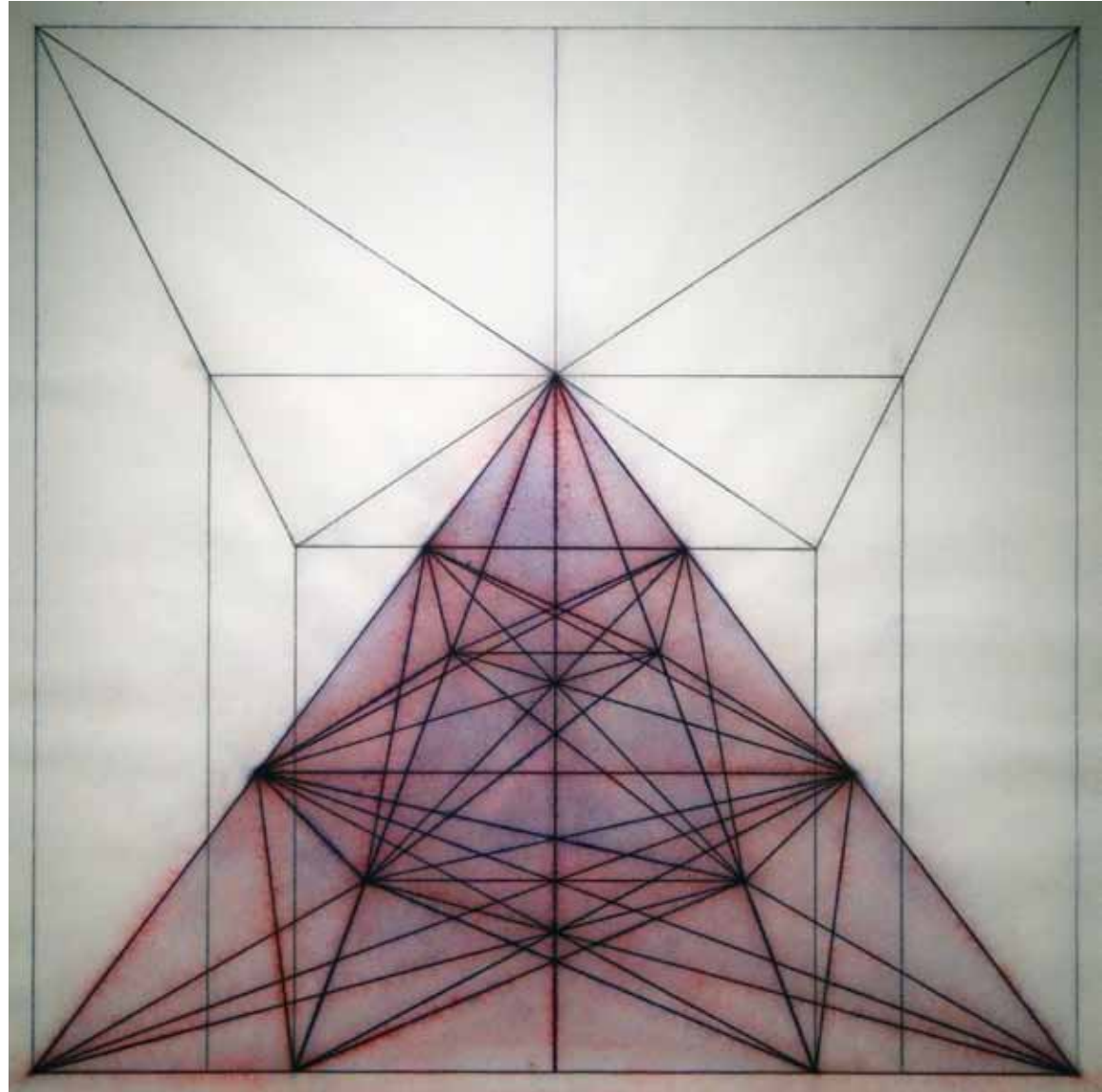


ROY STAAB



FOUR SEASONS / FOUR CORNERS



ROY STAAB

Institute of Visual Arts
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
July 10-September 27, 2009

with contributions by
Suzaan Boettger
Nicholas Frank
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2 Port-Vendres, France, 1979

X MARKS THE STAAB

Anyone who knows Roy Staab has experienced the discrepancy between his personality and his artwork. His temporary environmental site installations are the embodiment of calm, humility and silence. In person he is talkative, curious and always in motion. Yet the opposites at play in Staab's life and work are actually a finely balanced suspension, like water in the atmosphere: clouds are sometimes gently floating puffs of white, sometimes ominously dark and looming. Asked directly about the polarity between his art and personality, Staab answered, "It's a yin/yang thing." Understanding this might be the key to seeing the full complexity of Staab's lifelong project.

Even at his most voluble, Staab means well. So does most of humanity, as it collectively pursues order amidst the chaos of burgeoning life. The cost of our failure to perceive the fragility and subtlety of nature's inter-connectedness is no longer completely lost on us. Lately, we struggle to fix the messes we've made while contemplating how to refine our approaches to manipulating the physical world. I imagine that over his lifetime, Staab's artistic process has worked in much the same way.

Starting out in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Staab experimented with a confluence of orderly geometry and disruptive natural forces. His early sprayed watercolors evince a desire to coax beauty out of water's staining properties and its corrupting effects on paper. Later, in the face of trends that moved the center of contemporary artmaking away from Minimalism back toward effusive expressionism, Staab wiped all color from his palette to embark on a long period of highly refined geometric drawing. Staab saw in the systemic approach of Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and other Minimalists an opportunity for continued research on the single artwork as interrelated system of objects. Yet throughout, an apperception of natural processes remains in the background, even in this purely black-and-white line work. In a broad sense, Staab seems to be asking what a forest, seen as a set of parallel lines, becomes if a single line is removed, shifted, angled or altered, and then a second line, and a third, and so on. The stark geometric drawing of the late 1970s and 1980s is a direct precursor of the geometrically based



3 Dennis Oppenheim
Cancelled Crop, 1969
Finsterwolde, Holland
Courtesy of the artist.

The route from Finsterwolde (location of wheat field) to Nieuwe Schans (location of storage silo) was reduced by a factor of 6x and plotted on a 154 x 267 meter field. The field was then seeded following this line. In September the field was harvested in the form of an X. The grain was isolated in its raw state, further processing was withheld.

but flowing, circular and airy natural-material outdoor sculpture that occupies him today. He has traded drawing on paper for drawing on the earth.

Staab's play of opposing forces is clearly visible in a motif that pervades much of his early work on paper, and his first excursions bringing large-scale drawing out into the world: the X. This common and symbolic figure appears in many forms throughout the oeuvre including in his customary blue chalk line on the tanned back of a companion, playfully marking his time in Paris, c. 1979 (fig. 2). An X is itself a pictogram of a perpendicular agenda, it is a cross-out, a cancellation and, at the same time, a mark of claimancy, an instantiation of place-as-being. An X says "this is the spot." Staab's play with the X-figure began as a response to a Dennis Oppenheim x-ed out wheatfield (fig. 3). Staab's approach was based not on the conceptual aspects of Oppenheim's piece, "cancelling" out the product-purpose of the wheat, but on the pure geometry of the figure.

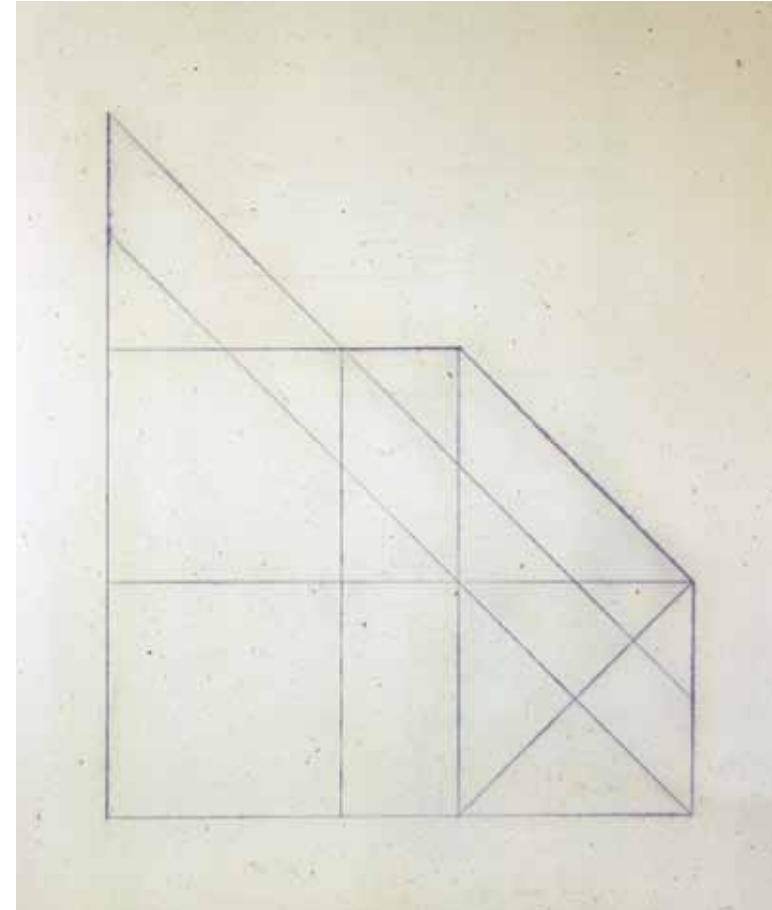
The X remains a shadow figure in Staab's outdoor work, as he "marks the spot" on which they are placed, at least for as long as these temporary pieces exist. This territory-marking impulse suggests the complicated relationship of humanity to nature: inattentive, controlling, arrogant, territorial and destructive; qualities countered by impulses to commune with nature, to respect its vicissitudes, to be meek in the face of its vastness and wildness, and to ultimately submit to its eternal presence. While a Staab site installation exists, it announces itself, but because the natural materials give way to the constancy of change that animates nature, when it's gone, it's gone. The artist is content to make his gestures, then let them fade back into the disorganized state from which they have sprung, a clear and humble response to mortality and the scale of a lone life in the universe.

So let Roy be outspoken while he's here. Let him call out all the powers that be to support artists and to make culture a vital component of the American condition. As with his work, he ultimately means to do good. Though, aside from the drawings, only evidentiary documents of his major works will remain, the art is what will ultimately be the lasting effect of his life. With this retrospective, Inova aims to present a complete picture of the artist.

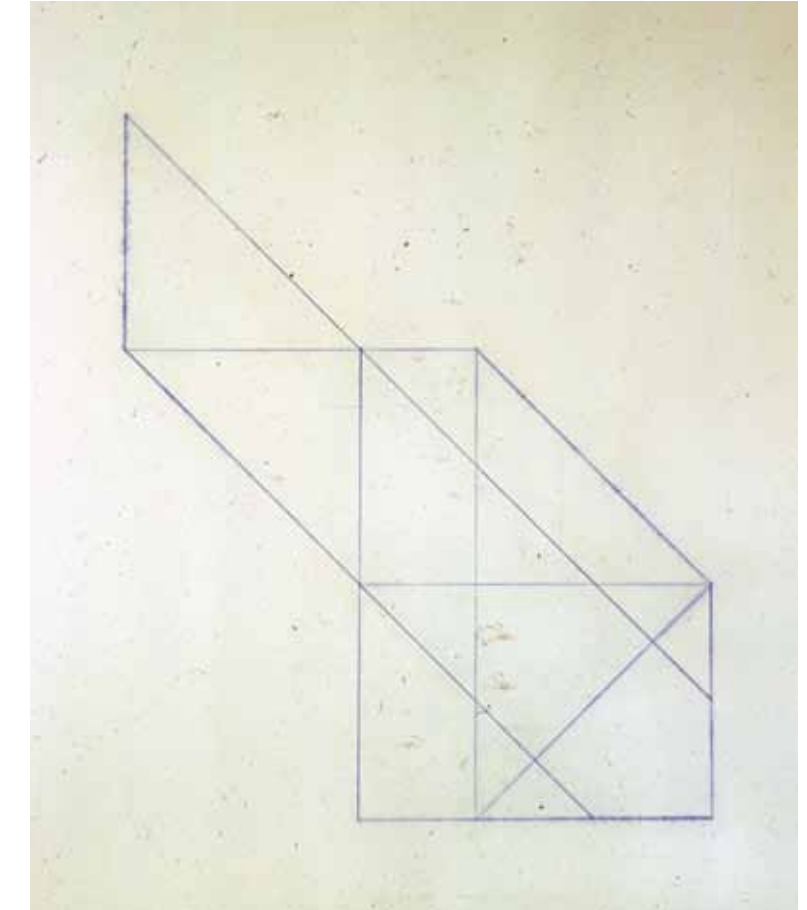
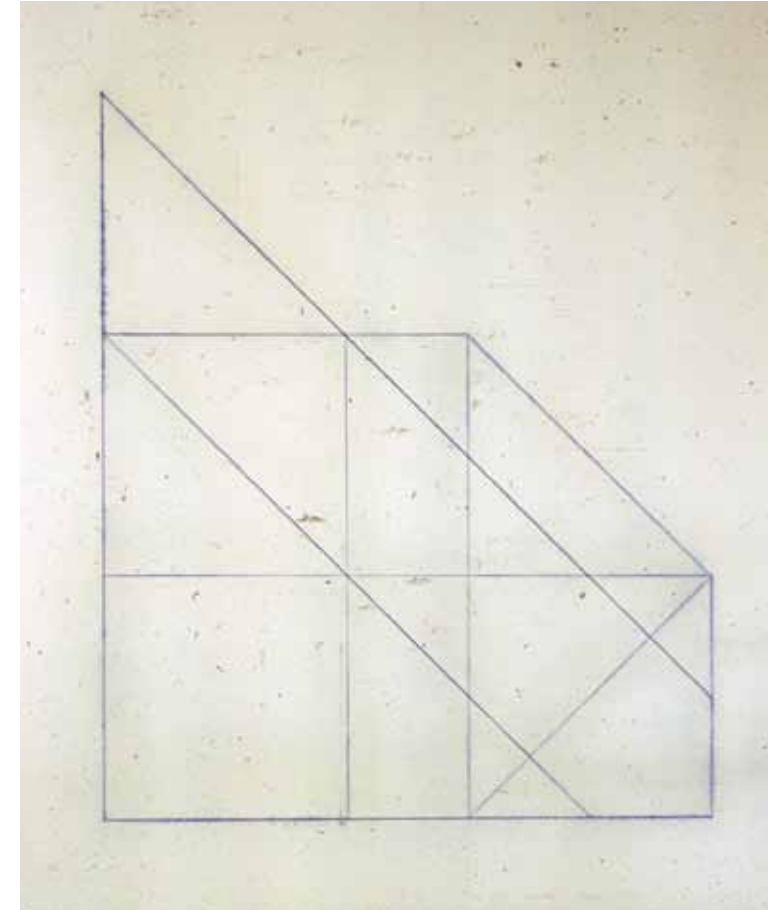
Special thanks are due to Inova Director Bruce Knackert and Peck School of the Arts Director of Communications Polly Morris, for their perseverance and dedication to the exhibition and catalogue. Thanks also to assistants Neil Gasparka, Kevin Giese and Kate Brandt, for foraging through reedy marshes and reams of video material; and to the Urban Ecology Center's staff and teen leaders. I would like to acknowledge the collectors, sponsors and supporters of Roy's work throughout the years. And finally, a thank you to Roy, for his generosity, patience, hard work and vision.

Nicholas Frank

July 2009



4-6 *Evolutions Alternatives*, 1979



NICHOLAS FRANK INTERVIEWS ROY STAAB

PART I: ART

NF: Let's start with the general and move toward the specific. Is humanity in conflict with nature?

RS: (*laughs*) That's a two-sided question. There's Gaia, where nature and man are one. That's an established answer already. Overpopulation is in conflict with nature. But since people don't use nature very well, they want to take it over and make it all city. I have to go farther and farther away to find my open spaces to work. But then, they abandon parts of the city, and I go back there to work, so it's always renewing.

NF: Do you consider yourself an advocate for nature?

RS: The hunters and gatherers are the advocates. I'm making art. I'm a gatherer but not a hunter, particularly. So I believe in passive experience. People coming upon the site, and not being forced to come. I hope to mesmerize them.

NF: The outdoor site installations are usually only seen by a handful of people, right? And then they disappear, with documentary photographs and videos as the only evidence of their existence. In that context, who do you feel you're making the artwork for?

RS: First I have to satisfy myself, if I can't then how can I give it away to somebody? But I'm working for an audience. If the audience isn't there, then I'm only working for myself. I want to work in a receptive place.

NF: In some cases, is it only you that sees the work?

RS: If you bring a thousand people to a real natural site, they'll destroy the nature. So I tell a few people, announce it in the local newspaper, because I want people to come and experience it. They come with all the city baggage and noise in their head. I want them to really be in tune. I want them to get out of the city and feel what life is all about. I'm talking about life and art. Break those old patterns. Sometimes you do actually have to get your feet wet to see a piece when it's in water. That's part of my rebellion though, you

know. I threw away the paint brushes, the pencils, looking for new ways to express something. Spray watercolors, cut the line, cut the paper. I didn't do it like Lucio Fontana does, that's too aggressive of a gesture. I look for efficiency and a fast line, an efficient line.

NF: Is your project, like the work of other artists, unconstrained by the indoors-model of art production (Hamish Fulton, Maya Lin, Mary Miss, Alice Aycock), revolutionary? A political act?

RS: Resistance—that's a dangerous question to ask in America. I'm using weeds and waste in the midst of a commodity system. Art is not a commodity to sell, it's an idea. I work sometimes on the level of failure. And to be an artist you have to succeed in that failure, but if you push it that far there's always a chance to fail. I want to do things I don't know, explore the unknown and then meet that challenge. This piece here, the *Inova Dragon* (fig. 34, p. 33), I never made a piece like this, with all these curvy lines. The materials also helped me. I didn't know how I could do it until I got in here and started working.

NF: You want to learn something from each new piece?

RS: Exactly. Otherwise I'm bored. I use reeds a lot, but then I have a new challenge with elements that interrelate with each other. Here [at Inova] the walls are a new element. Every piece should be the last piece, because artists only make one piece in their lifetime.

NF: Your work has worldwide appeal. You've made environmental site installations in New York, Japan, Finland, Korea, Italy, and Milwaukee—all very different cultures. Is this because you employ universal symbols, like the star, the circle, and pictogram-like forms such as the bird shape in *Flight* (fig. 14, p. 14)? Or do you consider geometry to be a universal language?

RS: Geometry is the answer. Many people think my work is figurative, and the titles sometimes suggest that. But for me, *Flight* is a group of eight circles. The design is based on the undulating wall structure of the Gothic cathedral [Cathédrale Ste-Cécile of Albi] in southern France. People look

at the clouds and see a face, a figure, a body. When I'm looking at the clouds I see the clouds—I look at the patterns, the rhythms. I see that in my geometry as well. You interpret it as you want, but I'm not doing a narrative.

NF: But your forms aren't simple geometry—as I mentioned, the bird-like figure in *Flight*, also pendulums, boat-shapes in *Voyage* (fig. 7). What is the relationship of geometry to allegory?

RS: For me those weren't boat shapes. I used traditional volume, up and down and around. The reflection is important—on land there is no reflection, but on the water you get those additional lines. I borrowed a little motif in the corner of a 19th-century building in the nearby town, Sackville. It was a rondel, a round form. For me it was just a geometry shape. I came there with no idea but I'm looking for an idea that relates to where I am. For me, I'm drawing. I want people to read my structures and forms clean and clear. When I first did my sculptures in 1983, I took the tops off the reeds. I didn't want them to be decorative, or craft. Now I leave the tops on. At a certain point you have to be pure to your materials and leave them be.

NF: Do you see allegorical qualities in your overall project? For instance, the work's conditions of temporariness, movement, placement in nature, are these part of its meaning? I see a clear relationship between the condition of being human and the making and eventual fate of your artworks.

RS: People read that into it but I don't think so. I work in *now*. I'm just resolving the project, making it work, then I go on to the next one. With this work, you don't have time to live with it for very long. The geometry is a kind of logic. I don't know why I feel it works in a site in nature. I can't see something figurative really working in nature. If I would see a bunch of boat-like forms, I would reject it. Geometry is something higher than figurative art. Abstract is a funny word, but my work is more abstract than that. These are basic building blocks of composition. Like Giotto's triangles, I'm playing with those forms, with the basic building blocks. That's all that's needed for me. I reduce it down to line, in most cases. Line, structure, form. Then there's variation and proportion. I hope someone is perceptive enough to see that I work in series, one to the next, if you can read that you can read my work.

NF: In describing your work, you sometimes use musical terms.

RS: I don't sight-read music very well, but when I listen to music I see blocks of shape and form. Sometimes I assemble shapes together in a grouping, for example as you might read a diptych, that's the figure of the whole, made of multiple elements. That structure defines the work. When it's in nature, the limitations are in space and size, the pieces become closed objects. They touch the sky, integrate with the sky. The periphery of the visual landscape is important to your perception of where you are, and to your being, relating to your body—mind and nature.

NF: You've made hundreds of drawings over the years, from the early sprayed watercolors to the fine-line ink drawings of the 1980s and the later chalk line drawings. How does that work relate to your current site installations?

RS: I had a transition period of doing both at the same time. Now that I'm older, I focus more on outdoor installations, but those opportunities do not arrive so frequently. Sometimes I want to go back to other materials. Paper, painting. But not yet. I'm not ready for that now. I do worry about my

7 *Voyage*, 2008, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada



physical body breaking down, I have to make this work myself. The artist has to make the work for himself, not have someone else make it for him.

NF: Where does your art come from?

RS: That's a real difficult question. It comes from my *self*. I believe art is cultural, a collective learning. So I've learned from the tradition, that's why I studied in school, and then built upon that. And things I fancy, or build upon—once I make something they can take it away, it's theirs. Others have a right to use it, and I have a right to go onward. It's out there.

NF: How do you begin a new piece?

RS: The exact moment I'm there. I don't want to carry baggage. I really press myself, meditate to the site, be there and observe it for a while, especially in nature. Observe the tides, watch the sea. See where the sun goes. It's about site observation, a moment of meditation. It's not religious, just to be very quiet where you are. When I came here to the gallery I had an idea of what I wanted to do, but when you asked what I'm going to do I was really shocked by that question, because I didn't know. In that moment

8 Roy Staab working on *Inova Dragon*, July 2009



I'm working and creating—creating is a funny word—but I'm using all my experience and thoughts and mind to do it.

NF: Tell me about the *Inova Dragon*.

RS: This was really a drawing project. But really in the air. One line affected the other. Move it a little bit, adjust it a little bit, lower, higher... I'm very much satisfied with it. The night before the opening I had to decide to use the large oval, or not use it. I was wishy-washy. But I had to look at it and really make the judgment. I would not use the last oval in Japan. It would be more simplified. But in this culture, this culture needs more rather than less. I'm trying to be aware of where I am in cultures.

PART II: LIFE

NF: You've described yourself as "lost" in your youth. Have you found your way?

RS: Hm. (*Pause*) I'm lost in society. But I know my way in my art. But I also rely upon reinforcement from society to continue. So I need that collector, I need that exhibition. I need support. And it's very hard working always alone.

NF: What was your experience like learning art at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee?

RS: First came the Layton School of Art, in 1961. Night school at first. Layton threw away the crafts, and I took a painting major—I thought painting gave you more information. At UWM they taught crafts, I could learn techniques, metal, tie-dye, weaving, ceramics. Tie-dying was liberating and freeing for me. I was permitted to do a graphic image without having to use a paintbrush, which is uptight, rigid and stiff. I want to be free. That's why I like drawing only with a stick in the sand, footprints in the mud, not relying on any tools to say something or make something else out of it. I'm not making an object any more, just making basic lines, or line-objects. I had a graphics background, a painting background. I was into exploration of techniques, for me going to art school was learning about techniques. How I tore the paper, blew paint on it, those are all things I would explore. I learned what

it takes to be an artist after I finished with school. I try to be interested in what I'm doing. I'm not interested in coming back to the traditional way, I'm always interested in finding another new way to express a line or make a new volume or surface. Those early paper pieces have dimension. Susan Rothenberg was working flat on flat—I was doing it almost at the same time, but with geometry rather than horses.

NF: Did learning tie-dying have a direct relationship to those early works on paper, the spray watercolors and folded paper drawings?

RS: That's a different manipulation. With paper I did the folds to collect the paint in those valleys. Toulouse-Lautrec would spray with an atomizer, similar to what I used. I also studied 19th-century lithography.

NF: How do you see yourself continuing the traditions of your immediate predecessors—like Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson—and how do you see yourself differing from them?

RS: I did see Minimalism coming out of Canada when I was in France. I saw Sol LeWitt in New York City, I liked some of it—his chalk line drawings at the Museum of Modern Art were wonderful. I liked Frank Stella's early line works, but I only use some of those parallel lines now. I don't call myself a Minimalist. I work in reductive geometry and simplicity. When I was first developing my forms, there were one or two pieces overdone. The reflections, especially. I discovered how to work the minor and major structure. If it became too busy and you couldn't read it, I knew I had to simplify it, which equals reductive geometry and simple forms.

NF: How do you see yourself in relation to your colleagues and contemporaries, like Dennis Oppenheim, Agnes Denes, Alice Aycock?

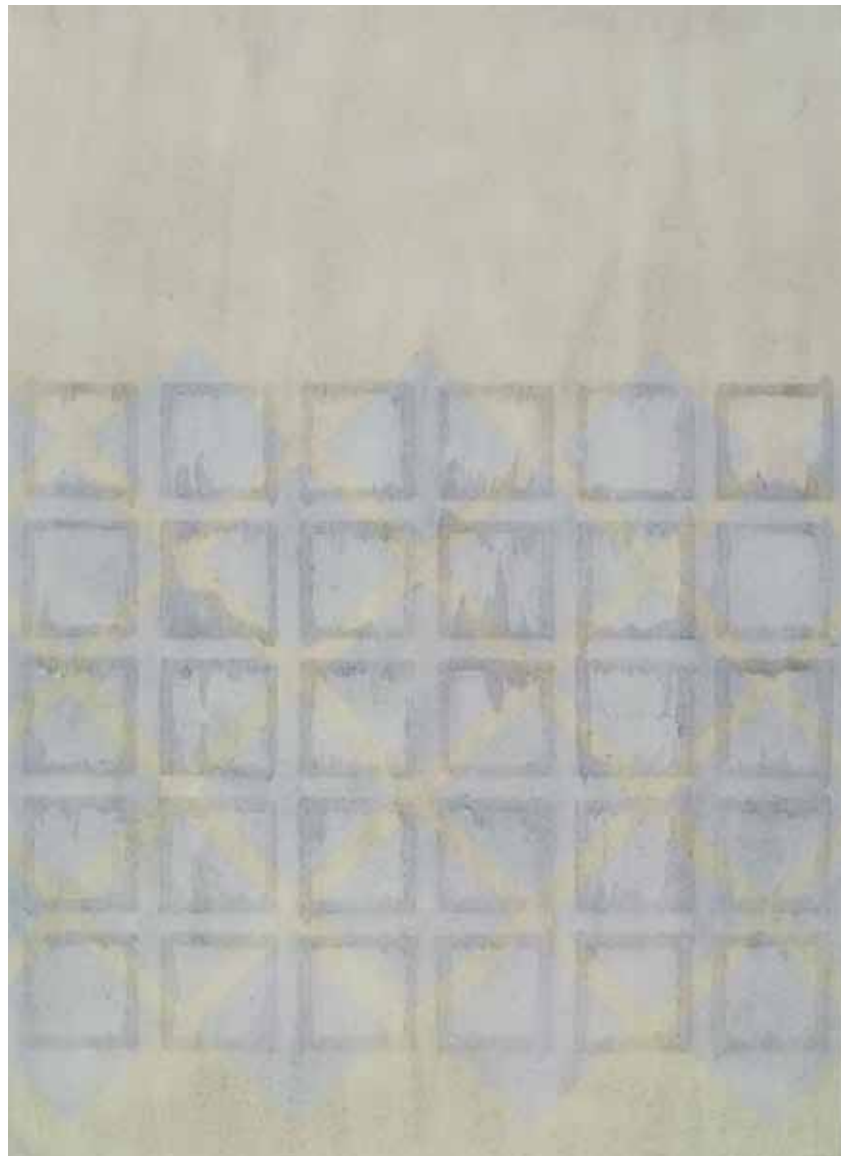
RS: Dennis Oppenheim's simple forms in fields, the irregular X, that was interesting to me. Agnes Denes. But Josef Albers had these great little drawings, not his boring squares, you have to research his work from the 1940s, some of his line work was really wonderful. I discovered this as I was working with the relation of 3:4. It's simple, though, just a simple equation. If you look at my series of drawings of pyramids, they develop inside volumes. All painting was flat, and then we learned perspective. Add these two things together, the geometry of flatness and perspective, and it's just a simple

equation to give that illusion. Illusion and perception are very difficult but they cross very tightly. When you come to my sculpture, how much do you perceive until you are inside it? Ad Reinhardt said, "My work is to be seen and not to be photographed." My work has to be seen to do it justice.

July 13, 2009

9 Roy Staab working on billboard, 1979, near Port-Vendres, France

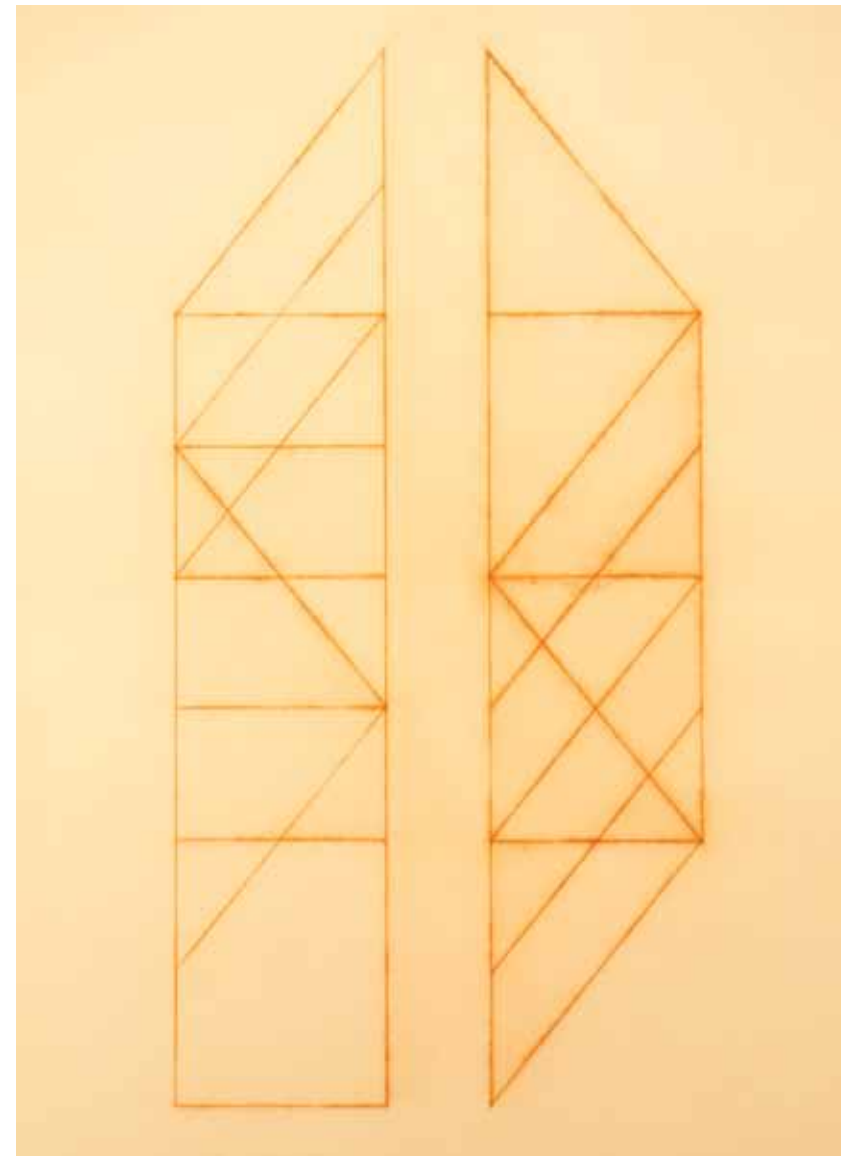




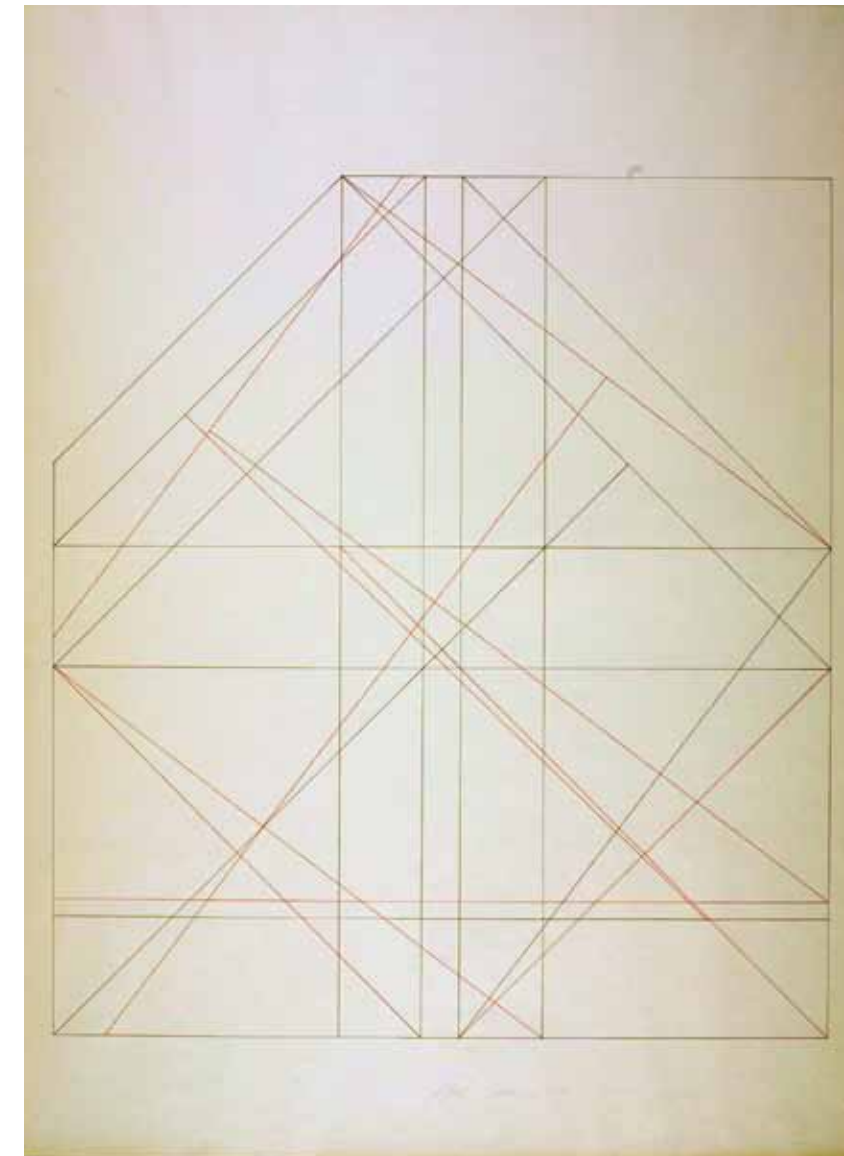
10 Torn Grid of Squares through Diagonal Blue/Gray Squares over Gold, 1977



11 Nine Pastel Pale Mountain, 1977



12 Towers, 1980



13 Fine Line Structures, 1980



14 *Flight*, 2002, Provincetown, MA

FOR BEING AND NONBEING SUZAN BOETTGER

4

For being and nonbeing
arise together;
hard and easy
complete each other;
high and low
depend on each other;
note and voice
make the music together;
before and after
follow each other.

—Lao Tzu

Lao Tzu's ancient wisdom applies to a central aspect of Roy Staab's art—its profound dialecticism. Staab's work is the sum of myriad dualities: juxtapositions of lines and space; materials that are rough amidst fluidity; historical modes merged with current ideas; locally responsive designs produced by nomadic artistic practice; transient structural grace recorded in enduring photographic images. Together they manifest an engaged artist grappling with society's complicated, evolving relationship to art and to nature.

The Milwaukee native and returned resident—a “Milwaukee institution”—is well-known from Southampton to Sapporo for his sculptural networks of natural rope-like matter harvested and woven on site, most often reeds situated in wetlands. Also appreciated are his ensuing photographs of these works, depicting them as spare, elegant structures in milieus of lustrous hues of light, terrain, and water. As a retrospective exhibition, *Four Seasons/Four Corners* offers the opportunity to understand Staab's major sculptures by stepping away from them to first contemplate his less familiar

works on paper. Aside from the recognition bestowed on decades of work, a longitudinal exposition bears an explanatory force. Observing a span of historical development reveals—to the artist as much as his audience—what Staab has called “the seed to the next.”¹

Studying Staab's early works on paper shows that the most direct visual duality underpinning his environmental work, the interplay of structure and space, was present like a signature in early work. The glowing orbs and loosely applied areas of green and ochre in *Gold Organic* (fig. 15) might call up something like the ambiguous otherworldly realms evoked in Roberto Matta's (1911-2002) early *Inscapes* (outer space? deep sea? Surrealist automatist fantasy?). Over these luminous blobs, Staab laid repeated dark brown bars projecting horizontally and vertically from the periphery. They extend toward the middle, becoming a grate that separates us from the oceanic effusions below.

15 *Gold Organic*, 1968



By the mid-1970s, consistent with New York artists' influential rejection of Abstract Expressionist gestural pliancy in favor of Minimalist geometric rigidity and investigations of depersonalized processes of fabrication, the grid had become dominant in Staab's work. *Tom Grid of Squares through Diagonal Blue/Gray Squares over Gold* (fig. 10, p. 12) combined two askew layers of the checkerboard format with a Process art act of tearing to create the squares. But he softened the grid by placing it on a background wash of gold and running over it an amorphous wash in blue/grey. The interaction of signs of order and receptive indeterminacy continued, reversed in prominence.

Coursing through these stylistically abstract compositions is an underground theme referencing nature, and particularly landscape. In 1977, over a square that's almost a plaid of faint jewel-tone squares, Staab superimposed a white right angle. Called *Nine Pastel Pale Mountain* (fig. 11, p. 12), the upward thrust recalls the ancient veneration of mountains as strong spiritualized forces and home of the gods.

Among the next groups of drawings, in *Towers – 15-30 Mars 1980* (fig. 12, p. 13), an architectural draftsman's precision of line delineates tall columns like flat views of skyscrapers bound by horizontal and diagonal lines made with chalk-covered string. The slight indistinctness of the mark caused by the chalk's softness enriches the simple tight geometry of these structures, just as the feathery fronds will add flourishes to his future reed structures. His *Fine Line Structures – October 2-16, 1980* (fig. 13, p. 13) sometimes turn the geometric abstraction 45 degrees into networks of intersecting diagonals, reminiscent of Theo van Doesburg's transgressive diagonal blocks of saturated colors from the 1920s. Staab's sensibility, by contrast, is more Asian in its restrained simplicity, or even Puritan, making do with a precise grey pencil line grid on bright white paper, the energy provided by the angles. With the *Pyramid Spaces* (cover) chalk line drawings from 1988, a density of distinct dark lines suggests a crystalline network overlaying softly blurred, faintly colored space, as if sheer fabric were stretched over an intricate frame.

The earlier two-dimensional, right-angle mountain now takes form as

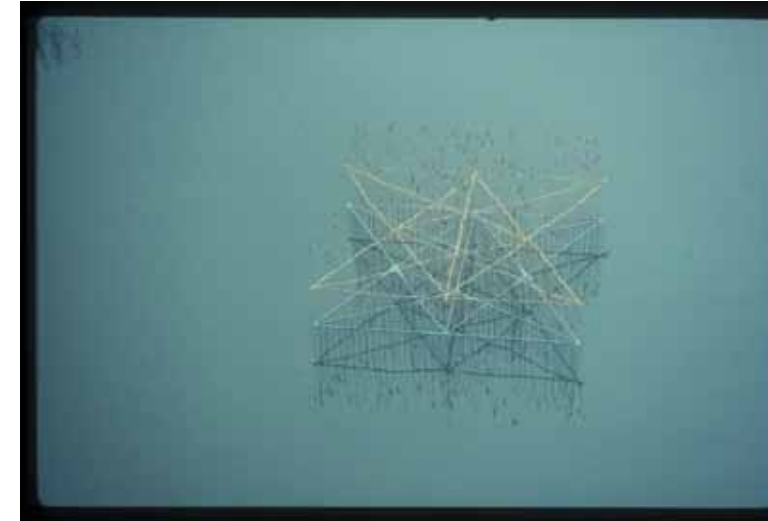
a suggestively modeled cone, tent, or pyramid-like form. In the context of prior spare drawings, the greater volume intimates that Staab's work was swelling or filling out from within.

Indeed, the greater sense of volume reflected Staab's expanded artistic practice. In 1979 at Port-Vendres, France, he had initiated his outdoor work by expanding his fine linear chalk drawings to the walls of the port. In 1983, at Ocracoke, North Carolina and then in East Hampton, Staab freed the lines from the paper or architectural surface and began to construct forms made from lengths of reeds.

Soon Staab's primary artistic material became the tall grasses known as *phragmites australis*, the common reed, with occasional use of other pliable cord-like botanical matter such as salt marsh grass, bamboo, rice straw or, on the sand, seaweed. Manipulating these long flexible stalks like fibers woven or rope looped over terrain or water, Staab's transition from linear drawing incorporating negative space to open linear sculpture recalls Julio Gonzalez's signature 1932 announcement that the "new art" was "to draw in space." The sculptor was describing the work of his fellow expatriate in Paris, Pablo Picasso, for whom, as Rosalind Krauss has described, Gonzalez had helped "translate a group of latticelike drawings into small three-dimensional models constructed of iron wire." But as Krauss points out, while Picasso's welded metal sculpture developed as assemblage, it was Gonzalez himself who went on to make abstract metal versions of his figural drawings, such as *Woman Combing Her Hair* (fig. 16).²



16 Julio Gonzalez (1876-1942) *Woman Combing Her Hair*, 1936
Wrought iron, 52 x 23 1/2 x 24 5/8"
Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund (16.1953)
© 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York/ADAGP, Paris.



17 *Golden Triangles*, 1987, Central Park, New York, NY

Staab's own transition from "latticelike drawings" to linear sculpture initially continued geometricized angularity and precision in three dimensions, as in the double layers of intersecting *Golden Triangles* (fig. 17; fig. 35, p.36), a shimmering vision in bound reeds that hovered over New York City's Central Park Pond in the summer of 1987. Within a few years, the straight lines and angles—as if a transcription of an architectural drawing—bowed to the characteristics of botanical matter—the stems are not rigid, and material degrades over time—and the design of his constructions became curvilinear. By 2002, in Provincetown, the suggestion of spread airplane wings in *Golden Triangles* became, in *Flight* (fig. 14, p. 14), a more avian evocation. No longer renditions of preliminary drawings transferred to three-dimensional space, the sculptures became found shapes discovered on site and in relation to the particular configuration of earth/water/sky. Precisely predetermined in an on-site sketch, perhaps by scratching into sand or earth, they were still abstract. The lines were simple and clean, but now curved and rhythmic. *Flight* exemplifies the sense of flow, visually and methodologically, with its generous lobe-like "wings" bracketing an arcing



18 Piet Mondrian *Bosch (Woods); Woods near Oele*, 1908
© 2009 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International Warrenton VA.

torso and circular "head." The graceful symmetry of the form complements the delicacy of the materials, even though the horizontal perimeter is of the sturdiest reeds. The slender vertical stalks along the outline appear as if they would flutter in the breeze like tarmac wind socks or wings. Overall, *Flight* exudes an organic wholeness, a sense of harmony of materials, form, and place, and a pastoral pleasure.

A revealing aspect of Staab's path as a late twentieth-century artist is that, like Piet Mondrian, he seeks to integrate abstraction and nature through lines and space, but their artistic approaches evolved in opposite directions. The Dutch artist began with Symbolist landscapes and over a twenty-year period synthesized Cubism and Theosophy's occult East/West metaphysics to successively flatten picture space and purify compositions into rectangles of primary colors and white, bound by black bars. The strong horizontal and vertical lines and faint primary hues in Mondrian's *Woods Near Oele* (fig. 18) exemplifies his abstract "seed" within the sylvan landscape. Conversely, Staab's art was born under the sign of Minimalism, and gradually expanded

its aesthetic austerity into use of organic materials, form, transience—and in ways implying an almost reverential being-with-nature. Fundamental to this process is his participation in an artistic dialogue in recent decades about art-as-environment.

Staab's sculptures are of their environment materially, and they are also spatially environmental: not a discrete object that we stand in front of or even circumambulate, they are lateral in orientation, like a landscape rather than a standing figure or a building. The scale of sculpture-plus-setting in relation to human size is large, and configured in relation to that specific space. Perception of such environments demands direct experiential immersion in the place—the participatory aspect begins with travel to the site—and movement within it.

These are qualities of Earthworks, the earliest form of contemporary land art first undertaken in the late 1960s by adventurous sculptors such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Dennis Oppenheim. Huge in human scale as art if not in relation to their vast terrains, located in remote western deserts or northern snow-covered grounds that were wilderness or close to it, made of unprocessed earth and rock, they were structurally unreinforced so eventually disappeared, eroded, or substantially altered in appearance. Staab's environmental sculpture is also of natural elements, unreinforced by manufactured materials except the jute that binds the reeds, and materially ephemeral, but there the similarity ends. More characteristic of the subsequent Land art, Staab's sites are closer to cities, in parks or nearby countryside, and are not blunt, harsh forms but mediated, constructed ones. Staab's sculptures do not display the individualistic cowboy bravado characteristic of Earthworkers, nor are they institutionally funded constructions such as Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* (1974-77) or James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (1974-ongoing). Rather, like the temporary assemblages of rocks by Richard Long, or botanical matter or ice by Andy Goldsworthy, or branches by Herman Prigann, or sticks and stones by Nils Udo, they make a light touch upon the earth. These artists' works, and Staab's, are informed by a social environmentalist sensibility; among them, Staab's work is distinct for his merging of strong abstract structures and a gentle litheness.

The crucial importance of direct experience of environmental works such as Staab's is paradoxically demonstrated by his photographs of sculpture and setting. In the clarity of their centered compositions, deep color, and slight moodiness from twilight radiances, Staab's photographs of his outdoor constructions are gorgeous. But they are only related to the sculptures by virtue of subject matter—the photographs are a separate expressive body of work, not a substitute for experiencing the sculptures. As two-dimensional images, they can be more substantially comprehended through vision, whereas the outdoor constructions, as intrinsically environmental, are best known directly, corporeally, in time and place. Three photographic views of *Moor's Monitor* in the exhibition—with tide in (fig. 19), tide out, and including pink blossoms in the foreground (fig. 20)—show that not only perception on site, but also over time and tides, provides the richest resonance.

And then the work is gone, buffeted by the wind or desiccated and disintegrated. Fundamental to experiencing Staab's constructions is the recognition that they are ephemeral. The unmaterialist sensibility invoked in his sparse use of available natural matter and his constructions' fairly rapid deterioration have been interpreted in an insightful essay by Johann Reusch as "critical commentary on the marketing and institutionalization of art." It is that, but only implicitly, as Staab's attitudes do not suggest criticism of the art market per se (for himself, quite the contrary, but all in balance). More pertinently, the work "...also aims to address and counteract the progressive human alienation from nature."³ And since that was written in 1992, the need for public response to deteriorating nature has become urgent.

Common wisdom states that things come to one at the "right" time. Staab has been making ephemeral environmental sculptures for more than 25 years, receiving increasing appreciation around the world, but the great wheel of fortune has brought this more substantial attention to his art just when the spirit of the times coincides with his sensibility. Staab's use of botanical matter and pastoral locales stimulates viewers' simultaneous attention to aesthetics and nature. His humility regarding both materials and methods speaks to the increasingly anti-consumerist, pro-recycling public mood brought on by the purgation of our drastic economic recession. Along

with the daily announcements of deaths due to both political strife and an aging population, there is more recognition that "things pass away." And Staab's incorporation of transience insinuates continual rehearsal of loss, prompting the necessity of fully absorbing the moment, and the presence of beauty.

To bear and not to own;
to act and not lay claim;
to do the work and let it go:
for just letting it go
is what makes it stay.



19 *Moor's Monitor (tide in)*, 1998, Provincetown, MA

20 *Moor's Monitor (flowers)*, 1998, Provincetown, MA





21 *Möbius Maniac*, 2003, Manic Pond, Domaine Saint-Bernard, Mont-Tremblant, Québec, Canada

THEATRE OF NATURE JOHN K. GRANDE

Change is part of an endless cycle of life. Roy Staab's art reaffirms the ontological process by engaging with nature, where forms are given a shape, live for a while, then decompose. His nature installations investigate qualities of light, of geometry, and space, and do so in the outdoor environment. His use of materials found on site references the origins of form, as well as the artist's conscious experience of inhabiting a specific place.

Staab believes that each work he creates belongs to the site in which it was created. He responds to nature's own art forms, and to the procreative, cyclical processes of birth, life, death and decay that endlessly reproduce themselves. The geometries Staab makes by twining—effectively weaving—the branches and elements of nature into his art, and in direct relation with the experience of place where he works, reflect a bioregional perspective on art. Elements are small, beautiful, and connected to local ecology. The use of indigenous materials is fundamental to Staab's practice, though he will occasionally use rope or metal twine or wire to contain or join components. Decomposition, too, is an essential part of the cyclical process, a process that takes art out of the modernist paradigm and engages in a dialogue with eternity. Eternity has a broader cosmology.

Like geometry and a sense of scale in the landscape, organic processes are central to Staab's art—not only the organisms of nature but equally Staab's own body. As Roy commented while producing one of his curving arcs of twined branches (fig. 22) in a forest at Arte Sella in Italy, "I approach art as a challenge to my mind and as large as my body will allow."¹ This natural extension of the body into the landscape has been a major force in defining the direction of Staab's art. There is a basic respect in the way Staab works, a respect for the evolving and entropic processes of nature, and also for the artist's persona, which intervenes to leave traces in nature.

Staab's process is less about collage or assemblage than it is about integration in a given environment. As the *Four Seasons/Four Corners* exhibition demonstrates, there has been a natural evolution from two-

dimensional artworks toward site sensitive installation in the artist's practice. We see this as readily in the abstract grid-like forms made on paper as in the structural compositions in Staab's outdoor work. As structures, these works evolve, maintain, and incorporate the effects of weather, erosion, and the physics of place. Their structural character derives, in part, from early design studies with a student of the Bauhaus painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy. As Staab commented when creating *Möbius Maniac* (fig. 21) at Domaine Saint-Bernard in the Laurentians near Mont Tremblant in 2003, "My work is structural and Bauhaus is also about structure. Structure is strength and reason and logic. I try to be in total control of what I am making which is why I use mathematics."² The practical and the spiritual meet in Staab's geometries, just as they do in the sacred spaces Staab visited at the Chaco Canyon ruins in New Mexico in 1989. There, architecture, structure, art, and landscape topography converge, just as they do in Staab's *in situ* sculptural work.

22 *Grasp of Space*, 2000, Arte Sella, Borgo Valsugana, Italy





23 *Storm King*, 1989, Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY

Staab has identified two early influences on his work: his discovery, as a student, of weaving, and his travels in Europe. While an art student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1966 and 1967, Staab enrolled in the Introduction to Craft course and was “elated” to discover weaving, or the craft of “putting things together,” as he refers to it. While in Europe in 1974 he was given an Afghani woven work by an artist from Zagreb. The geometric patterns were at once abstract and humanistic. This Afghan weaving, like the geometries inherent in the so-called craft art forms that he had discovered as a student, left an indelible impression on the young Staab, shaping his own language as an artist.

Staab’s travels in France, Spain and Germany also informed his artmaking practice. According to Staab, who sang professionally, he would “visit the art museums and galleries and go to the opera when possible.”³ The repeating cobblestone patterns he observed in the older regional roads in France in 1972 and 1973 led to a *Street Graphics* series enacted first in Cuenca, Spain and then in Giessen, Germany and Paris, France (1973-4).



24 *Hopscotch for Giants*, 1989, Brooklyn, NY

Staab would place paper on a road, and as cars passed by they effectively made the graphics for the print work, in concert with other road elements—manhole covers, stones and roadwork details. For Staab, the action of removing the paper was a conscious decision. At what specific moment should the artist intervene? Hesitate too long, and the traffic would destroy the “street graphic” and obliterate the initial relation between space and the chance events introduced into the artwork.

An exhibition in Paris at Galerie Bel Espoir in 1977 brought Staab’s paintings and works on paper to public attention. The following year, the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and France’s National Fund for Contemporary Art acquired works for their permanent collections. By the summer of 1979, Staab was creating ephemeral chalk line works in nature at Port-Vendres along the Spanish border. His outdoor art practice continued in an urban environment when he moved to Brooklyn, New York, and in 1983 he made his first installation of natural materials over water in Ocracoke, North Carolina.



25 *Growth Rings*, 1997, Hiroshima, Japan

Some of the outdoor works are more dramatic in their compositional aggregation, and build contrasts between vertical and horizontal (nature) elements within an environment, while others involve suspended lines of composition that extend across the forest’s aerial space. The latter works include *Gods Above* (1997), made of rice straw wrapped with handmade rice straw rope at the Osaka College of Art in Japan; *Yves Croix-Six* (2000), projected across a stream in Vosgelade, Vence, France; and *Berceau Boréal*, made in Lac Labelle, Québec, Canada (fig. 36, p. 37).

The largest of Staab’s Earth art interventions was created below and across the river from Storm King Art Center in New York (fig. 23). Made entirely from reeds, the piece measured some 70 by 120 feet, with the vertical reeds standing 12 feet tall. The work embraced the magnitude of the landscape, yet reflected the scale of the human body and its role in Staab’s process.

In 1991, at Point Reyes, California, Staab made oval outlines (fig. 27, p. 24) in wet sand at low tide using a bamboo pole as a “stylus” and extension of his



26 *Sapporo Star*, 2002, Sapporo, Japan

Staab created *Growth Rings* (fig. 25) for the Green Festival in Hiroshima. He worked almost exclusively with two sizes of bamboo, the larger of which was fresh cut from nearby mountains. Illuminated at night, the vertical culms offset by the swirling, curving forms within, *Growth Rings* evoked a beautiful flowing sensation in the viewer. As a composition, the piece, 28 feet high and 23 feet in diameter, had a musical, rhythmic, but unselfconscious character. Another Japanese work, *Sapporo Star* (fig. 26), was made on the Toyohira River using Japanese knotweed. As early as the 1880s the star had become a symbol for Sapporo and is likewise associated with the world-renowned Japanese beer. Staab made a star-shaped sculpture in the middle of the river at a place below the bridge where people could see it as they passed by. “They had never seen this before; it was a phenomenon outside their culture,” noted the artist.⁵

As Constructivist sculptor Naum Gabo proclaimed in a lecture at the National Gallery of Art in 1959, “I hold that Art has a supreme vitality, second only to the supremacy of life itself, and that it therefore reigns over man’s creations....I denominate by the word Art the specific and

body. Staab was building a design in the landscape: “Every cove told me where I had to make the ovals, and how large” Staab explained.⁴ More recently, in 2008, Staab made another ephemeral “body marking” at low tide in the coastal mud in southwest Denmark (fig. 1, p. 3; figs. 39, 40, pp. 42-43). The work involved the integration of the mind with the eye—a visual space was created that referenced the artist’s conscious presence there and established a relation to the mutable nature of this coastal environment.



27 *Roman Mosaic*, 1991, Point Reyes, CA

exclusive faculty of man's consciousness to conceive and represent the world external to him (or her) and within him (or her) in form by means of artfully constructed images—conceptions.”⁶ This projection of a conscious visuality into a specific site, as in *River Surface* (fig. 28), where the rhythmic flow of branch forms echoes the flow of water or waves, is at the center of Staab's work. In conversation with the artist recently, he described how he could project a concept for an outdoor work while looking at the site he was considering. Transposing a vision into a permacultural context, Staab's art engages us with its comprehensive integration of materials. Composing and constructing, sensitive to the specifics of each environment he inhabits, Staab's aesthetic epitomizes the interplay between consciousness and conception Gabo described, but in a new era where that timeless, eternal changeability of nature becomes the actual scenario for an art that involves life. Staab's is a living Process art enacted in environments we are a part of—the theatre of nature.



28 *River Surface*, 2003, Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY



29 *Delta II*, 1999, Little Stony Point, Cold Spring-on-Hudson, NY

THE EPHEMERAL ART EXPERIENCE AMY LIPTON

Time and the forces of nature are always constraints in Roy Staab's outdoor artworks. I first met Roy in the summer of 1999 when he had just finished making an ephemeral sculpture in the Hudson River and invited me to see it (figs. 29, 30). I hurried over while the weather was calm and was awestruck by the work, as I continue to be each time I encounter one of his pieces in person. Walking in and around the sculpture, seeing it sway in the breeze, catch the sunlight, and ripple with the river tide was altogether different from what one experiences in the museum, the gallery, or in front of the typical public artwork.

Beautiful though they are, Roy's documentation photographs cannot compare with direct interaction. Staab's works are site responsive. They are in and of their natural environment, as opposed to being about site or space. His method is to collaborate with the surroundings, and the outcome is almost inseparable yet subtly distinct from those surroundings. Spending time with a Staab sculpture is to feel oneself alive inside a living artwork where there is no horizon line, no field and ground, no separation of time and space, no detachment.

Staab has created sculptures on four continents over the past three decades. He treads lightly on the land, using natural materials found on site. Upon arriving in a new place, he spends as much time as possible determining the specific location for his work. Getting to know local people, their culture and the intricacies of the terrain are important parts of his process, but ultimately he chooses settings for their ability to evoke contemplation. He sits quietly, watches, listens, experiences the site in its totality, then sets about making his work.

Staab strives to build a perfect geometric line drawing in space and will remake an element if it does not meet his high standards. His linear structures are made of grasses, saplings or bamboo—whatever is local. Most often he uses the reeds found in wetland areas. First, he harvests the reeds, searching out dry, year-old growth. He then painstakingly lays

out the material to form lines, binding the plants together with natural jute that will eventually biodegrade with the work. Staab works quickly but with accuracy and precision, using good weather and sunlight to his advantage. His pieces take several days or even a few weeks to complete. If strong winds and rain come along, he has to wait out the storm and do some repairs in the aftermath. When the piece is finished, Staab studies the sculpture from all angles and at different times of day to monitor the effects of light. He watches the movement of the reeds in wind and water, discovering patterns, waves, and reflections. The convergence of these patterns is where the magic begins. Staab then sets up his camera and tries to capture all of this in a perfect shot.

A few years ago, Roy asked me for some assistance with a new sculpture he was constructing at Little Stony Point Beach near Storm King Mountain along the Hudson (fig. 31, p. 28). Trekking to the spot and wading out

30 Aerial view of *Delta II*





31 *Outward Smile*, 2004, Little Stony Point, Cold Spring-on-Hudson, NY

onto the river's mucky bottom, I quickly learned that making a Roy Staab sculpture is something of an endurance test. Staab executes his work with an intuitive guiding sense, a passion for perfection of form, and a painstaking craftsmanship of tedious repetition. Add to this the conditions of the site, weather, insects, and sharp, invasive water chestnuts on the river bottom and you get a sense of what goes into his dance of creation. To call Staab's work sculpture is somewhat misleading—instead, it falls into the realm of performance or ritual. Nature is his stage set, he is the actor, and his elaborate performance lasts until the dark of night or the first strong storm.

Staab continues to create these ephemeral pieces year after year, knowing that his works will last weeks at best in their perfect form. The destruction of the work is an intrinsic part of Staab's ultimate intention. As with everything in nature, the work exists as part of a cycle, and the experience of that cycle brings us closer to understanding the meaning of life. The work's fleeting existence serves as a reminder of life's fragile and transitory nature. Without irony, cynicism, elaborate staging, or showmanship, Roy Staab provides us with a simple and spiritual vision of the complexity of life, death, time, and decay, and for a brief moment we are no longer alienated from the natural world.



32 *Spiral Infinity*, 1993, Provincetown, MA

NOTES

Suzaan Boettger

For Being and Nonbeing

Epigraph: The stanzas at the beginning and end of this essay are Chinese mystical sayings by many unknown Taoist spiritual leaders compiled in the fourth century BCE and collectively attributed to Lao Tzu (“Old Master”). They are from “Soul Food,” in *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, A Book About the Way and the Power of the Way*, English version by Ursula K. Le Guin, in collaboration with J. P. Seaton (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1997), 4-5.

1. Kat Murrell, “VIDEO: An interview with Roy Staab,” *Third Coast Digest*, July 6, 2009, <http://thirdcoastdigest.com/2009/07/video-an-interview-with-roy-staab/>. Murrell referred to him as a “Milwaukee institution.”
2. Rosalind Krauss, “This New Art: To Draw in Space,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 120-123.
3. Johann J.K. Reusch, *Roy Staab: Prairie Ring and Other Site Sculptures* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Patrick & Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, 1992), 4.

John K. Grande

Theatre of Nature

1. *Arte Sella 2000 - Incontri Internazionali Arte Natura* (Sella di Borgo, Valsugana, Italy: Arte Sella), 62.
2. *Dialogues in Diversity: Art from Marginal to Mainstream* (Grosetto, Italy: Pari Publishing, 2007), 69.
3. Roy Staab, “Bio..Roy Staab 1960 to.....,” June 2009.
4. Roy Staab in conversation with John Grande, June 2009.
5. *Dialogues in Diversity*, 75.
6. Naum Gabo, *Of Divers Arts*, Bollingen Series, Vol. 35; A.W. Mellon Series No. 8 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), 28. Gabo delivered the A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. in 1959.

CONTRIBUTORS

Suzaan Boettger, an art historian and critic in New York City, and a professor at Bergen Community College, Paramus, New Jersey, is the author of *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (University of California Press, 2003) and other publications.

Nicholas Frank is curator at the Institute of Visual Arts (Inova) and a co-founder of the Milwaukee International. He ran the Hermetic Gallery in Milwaukee from 1993-2001.

John Grande is the author of *Balance: Art and Nature* (Black Rose Books, 1994 & 2004), *Intertwining: Landscape, Technology, Issues, Artists* (Black Rose Books, 1998), *Art Nature Dialogues: Interviews with Environmental Artists* (SUNY Press, 2004) and *Dialogues in Diversity: Art from Marginal to Mainstream* (Pari Publishing, 2007). He is curator emeritus of Earth Art at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Ontario, Canada. John Grande’s website is www.grandescritique.com.

Amy Lipton is the co-director of ecoartspace, a bicoastal non-profit organization that creates opportunities for addressing environmental issues through the arts. She owned and directed Amy Lipton Gallery in New York City from 1986 to 1996. Lipton has curated numerous exhibitions and written for books and publications. She organizes and participates on panel discussions, and lectures frequently on art and the environment.



33 Installation view of *Inova Dragon*, 2009



34 *Inova Dragon*, 2009, Inova, Milwaukee, WI

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Commissioned Works

Inova Dragon
July 10, 2009
reeds, jute rope
12 feet high x 70 feet long
x 14 ½ feet wide

A second work to be completed
in August 2009 in Riverside Park,
Milwaukee, WI

Works on Paper

Farther than Turner, 1967
watercolor on paper
13 ½ x 20 inches

Gold Organic, 1968
watercolor on paper
17 x 23 inches

Light Gossamer, 1969
watercolor on rice paper
24 x 18 inches

Giessen Green Rainbow Windmill,
1975
watercolor on paper
47 x 33 ½ inches

Giessen Spray Fold in Three Bands,
1975
watercolor on paper
47 x 33 ½ inches

*March, Dry White Squares, Red Green
Water*, 1975
watercolor on paper
47 x 31 ½ inches

*Giessen Checkerboard 'X' Pale Red
and Green*, 1975
watercolor on paper
47 x 31 ½ inches

Untitled (subtle grid surface), 1976
watercolor on paper
15 x 15 inches

Untitled (diamond within the nine),
1976
watercolor on paper
15 x 15 inches

Kaleidoscope Porthole X Cross,
May 28, 1976
watercolor on paper
16 ½ x 16 ½ inches

'X' cross in Blue on Gray,
March 7, 1977
watercolor on paper
21 5/8 x 28 ¼ inches

Incised Diamonds,
March 8, 1977
watercolor on paper
22 ½ x 25 ¼ inches

Nine Pastel Pale Mountain,
September 25/26, 1977
watercolor on paper
33 ¾ x 24 inches

*Torn Grid of Squares through Diagonal
Blue/Gray Squares over Gold*, 1977
watercolor on paper
34 x 23 ½ inches

Grid of Five, 1977
watercolor and pencil on paper
16 ¼ x 16 ½ inches

Cut & Fold Diagonal,
January 9, 1979
fine ink on cut paper
30 x 40 inches

Towers
All works brown chalk line on paper,
43 ½ x 29 ½ inches
15 Mars 1980
17 Mars 1980
18 Mars 1980
19 Mars 1980
20 Mars 1980
21 Mars 1980
27 Mars 1980
28 Mars 1980
28 Mars 1980 - two
30 Mars 1980

Fine Line Structures
All works fine ink on paper,
39 3/8 x 29 ½ inches
October 2, 1980
October 3, 1980
October 10, 1980
Untitled, 1980
October 16, 1980

Department ARTA computer works
(page 2 on top of page 1), 1982
ink print on vellum
11 x 17 inches

Pyramid Spaces
All works red and blue chalk line
on paper, 44 ¾ x 43 ¾ inches
unless otherwise indicated
Pyramid Space 1 - August 3, 1988
Pyramid Space 2 - August 4, 1988
Pyramid Space 3 - August 5, 1988
Pyramid Space 4 - August 10, 1988
Pyramid Space 5 - August 13, 1988,
blue chalk line on paper,
32 x 36 ¾ inches
Pyramid Space 6 - August 17, 1988
Pyramid Space 7 - August 24, 1988
Pyramid Space 8 - August 29, 1988
Pyramid Space 9 - (undated), 1988

Books

*Moving Picture Book - Two Horizontal
to Three Vertical*, 1978
fine ink on paper
14 ½ x 14 ½ inches

Evolutions Alternatives,
November 1979
fine ink on paper
9 x 8 ¾ inches

*Expanding Space - Two Vertical to
Four Below*, April/May 1987
fine ink on paper
14 ½ x 14 ½ inches

Photo Documentation of Outdoor Works

Moor's Monitor (flowers), July 22, 1998
Provincetown, MA
37 x 33 feet with 10-foot-high reeds
C-print, 19 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Moor's Monitor (tide out),
July 22, 1998
Provincetown, MA
37 x 33 feet with 10-foot-high reeds
C-print, 19 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Moor's Monitor (tide in), July 22, 1998
Provincetown, MA
37 x 33 feet with 10-foot-high reeds
C-print, 19 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Skog Ring, May 19, 2002
Bjorklunden, Baileys Harbor, WI
22 feet in diameter
Digital print, 43 ½ x 43 ½ inches,
ed. 1/15

Flight, September 10, 2002
Provincetown, MA
49 x 41 feet with 10-foot-high reeds
Digital print, 43 ½ x 43 ½ inches,
ed. 1/15

Snow Needle, April 8, 2003
The artist's backyard, West Allis, WI
26 x 52 feet
Digital print, 43 ½ x 43 ½ inches,
ed. 1/15

River Surface, October 16, 2003
Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY
34 x 35 feet
Digital print, 43 ½ x 43 ½ inches,
ed. 1/15

Spectacle, 2005
Northwest Landing Beach,
East Hampton, NY
66 x 66 feet
Digital print, 40 x 60 inches

Sacatar Mandala, 2007
Itaparica, Bahia, Brazil
36 x 34 feet
Digital print, 40 x 60 inches

Zen Round, August 18, 2008
Marbaek Beach near
Esbjerg, Denmark
18 feet in diameter
C-print, 19 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Kite, August 18, 2008
Marbaek Beach near
Esbjerg, Denmark
44 x 44 feet
Digital print, 17 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Fluke, August 19, 2008
Marbaek Beach near
Esbjerg, Denmark
28 x 42 feet
Digital print, 17 ½ x 23 ½ inches

Video Documentation of Outdoor Works

Video program, looped.
A presentation of short, edited
video clips of the artist's temporary
environmental site installations
arranged by year, 1999-2008.

Emergence (Moor's Monitor), 1998
Provincetown, MA

White Fish Ring, 1999
White Fish Lake, Three Lakes, WI

In The Flow, 2002
Pamet Harbor, Truro, MA

Pamet Tsunami, 2002
Pamet Harbor Beach, Truro, MA

Topanga Cockscornb, 2004
Topanga Canyon, CA

Cantalano Triangle, 2004
West Allis, WI

ARCAS, 2005
Provincetown, MA

Berceau Boréal, 2005
Lac Labelle, Québec, Canada

Katsura Passage, 2005
Abington Art Center, Jenkintown, PA

Spectacle, 2005
Northwest Landing Beach,
East Hampton, NY

Crossing, 2006
Hotcakes Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

Folded Swallow, 2006
Gongju, South Korea

Fountain in the Sky, 2006
West Allis City Hall, West Allis, WI

Nature Belle, 2006
Hank Aaron Trail, Milwaukee, WI

Nature Belle (two years old), 2008
West Allis, WI

Newburgh Prow, 2006
Hudson River, Newburgh, NY

Miami Arch, 2007
125th Street Miami Beach, Miami, FL

Big Round, 2008
Marbaek Beach, Esbjerg, Denmark

Flowing Reflection, 2008
Royal Botanical Gardens,
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Golden Galleon, 2008
Fields Sculpture Park,
OMI International Arts Center,
Ghent, NY

OMI Triangle, 2008
Fields Sculpture Park,
OMI International Arts Center,
Ghent, NY

Voyage, 2008
Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada



35 Aerial view of *Golden Triangles*



36 *Berceau Boréal*, 2005, Boréal Art/Nature, Lac Labelle, Québec, Canada

ROY STAAB

Chronology

1941	Born Milwaukee, Wisconsin		Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI
1965	Layton School of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1994	<i>Photographs of Site Installations; Transformation</i> [in-gallery installation], DNA Gallery, Provincetown, MA
1966	Milwaukee Institute of Technology, Milwaukee, Wisconsin		<i>Photographs & Site Specific Installations</i> , Chestnut Hill Mall, Boston, MA
1969	BFA, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee		
1987	New York Foundation for the Arts Award (sculpture)		
1988	MacDowell Colony Fellowship	1996	<i>Photographs of Site Installations Made in Japan</i> , Osaka Art University, Osaka, Japan
1989	New York State Council on the Arts Grant (Hudson River Project)		<i>Photographs of Site Installations Made in Japan</i> , Mssohkan Gallery, Kobe, Japan
1992	Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant		
1996	National Endowment for the Arts (U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program)	1997	<i>What Site Installations Are</i> , Osaka College of Art, Osaka, Japan
1997	Green Festival of Hiroshima (commission)		<i>Growth Rings</i> [site installation], Green Festival of Hiroshima, Hiroshima, Japan
2000	Gottlieb Foundation Award		<i>Swan's Tale</i> [site installation], LongHouse, East Hampton, NY
2005	Artist-in-Museum, Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan		<i>The Golden Ring</i> [site installation], Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL
2006	Nature Art Prize, Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, Gongju, Korea		
2007	Joan Mitchell Foundation Award	1998	<i>In the Realm of the Gods</i> , Cortland Jessup Gallery, Provincetown, MA

Selected Exhibitions

1976	<i>Accrochage d'été</i> , Galerie Stevenson & Palluel, Paris, France	2000	<i>Arte Sella 2000: Incontri Internazionali Arte Natura</i> , Borgo Valsugana, Trento, Italy
1977	<i>One Man Show</i> , Galerie Bel Espoir, Paris, France		
1978	<i>First International Exhibition of Books by Artists</i> , Galerie NRA, Paris, France	2001	<i>Similar Geometric Movements in Trees & Water</i> , KM art, Milwaukee, WI
1980	<i>Actualités du Dessin</i> , Maison de la Culture, Grenoble, France	2002	<i>Water, Land and Air</i> , ecoartspace, Garrison, NY
1983	<i>Projects International</i> , Galerie Articule, Montreal, Canada		<i>Botanica</i> (site installation), Cape Cod Museum of Art, Dennis, MA
	<i>Eanworks</i> , Grommet Gallery [Emily Harvey Gallery], New York, NY		<i>Four-leaf Clover</i> (site installation), Otofuke Culture Center, Otofuke, Japan
1987	<i>Site Installations of the Summer of 1987 and Documentary Photographs of Reed Sculptures</i> , Twining Gallery, New York, NY		<i>Big Shimenawa in Small Mountains</i> (exhibition and site installation), Free Space Praha, Sapporo, Japan
1988	<i>Off the Wall & New Generation</i> , Elaine Benson Gallery, Bridgehampton, NY		<i>Spring Ring</i> (site installation), Charles Allis Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
1989	<i>Photographs of Hudson River Site Installation</i> , Kleiner Arts Center, Woodstock, NY		<i>Celestial Rings</i> (site installation and photographs), Un-natural Landscape, FLATFILE galleries, Chicago, IL
1990	<i>Jyväskylä Opus</i> (site installation), Jyväskylä Arts Festival, Jyväskylä, Finland	2003	<i>ecoart=radical approaches to restoring the earth</i> , ecoartspace, Beacon, NY
	<i>Photographs of Reed Sculptures</i> , Gallery Fotokram, Jyväskylä, Finland		<i>Imaging the River; River Surface</i> (site installation), Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY
1992	<i>Prairie Ring</i> (exhibition with commissioned work of the same name),		

	<i>Festival d'art contemporain des Laurentides; Möbius Maniac</i> (site installation), Mont-Tremblant, Québec, Canada
2004	<i>Immaculate Conception</i> , KM art, Milwaukee, WI
	<i>Terminal Show</i> , Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo, Japan
2005	<i>Berceau Boréal</i> (site installation), Boréal Art/Nature, Lac Labelle, Laurentides, Québec, Canada
2006	<i>Folded Swallow</i> (site installation), Geumgang Nature Art Biennale 2006, Gongju, South Korea
	<i>Crossing</i> (site installation), Hotcakes Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
	<i>Nature Belle</i> (site installation), Hank Aaron Trail, Milwaukee, WI
2007	<i>Alien Beauty</i> (site installation and photographs), Teaneck Creek Conservancy, Teaneck, NJ
	<i>Symbiotic</i> (site installation), Wisconsin Triennial, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
2008	<i>Footprints Along a Coastline</i> , Wadden Art, Denmark
	<i>Earth Art</i> , Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
2009	<i>Energy Center 2009</i> (site installation), Guandu International Outdoor Sculpture Festival, Taipei, Taiwan
	<i>Roy Staab: Four Seasons/Four Corners</i> , Inova, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Museum Collections

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France
 Le Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris, France
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
 Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
 Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

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37 *Spectacle*, 2005, Northwest Landing Beach, East Hampton, NY



38 *Sacatar Mandala*, 2007, Sacatar Foundation, Itaparica, Bahia, Brazil



39 *Kite*, 2008, Marbaek Beach near Esbjerg, Denmark



40 *Zen Round*, 2008, Marbaek Beach near Esbjerg, Denmark

Institute Of Visual Arts

Since 1996, the Institute of Visual Arts (Inova) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has established an international reputation as a contemporary art research center. The mission of the Institute of Visual Arts is to engage the general and university publics with contemporary art from around the world through exhibitions and programs. The Institute is recognized for the high quality of its programs and for the opportunity it offers artists to experiment in the creation of new work, and it is committed to educating audiences by presenting artists who are shaping our visual culture in the present and for the future.

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