

A dark silhouette of a surveyor is positioned on the left side of the cover. The figure is shown in profile, facing right, and is carrying a large bundle of surveying equipment, including what appears to be a tripod and various tools, on their back. The figure is wearing a wide-brimmed hat and heavy boots. The background behind the silhouette is a light, textured grey.

BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR

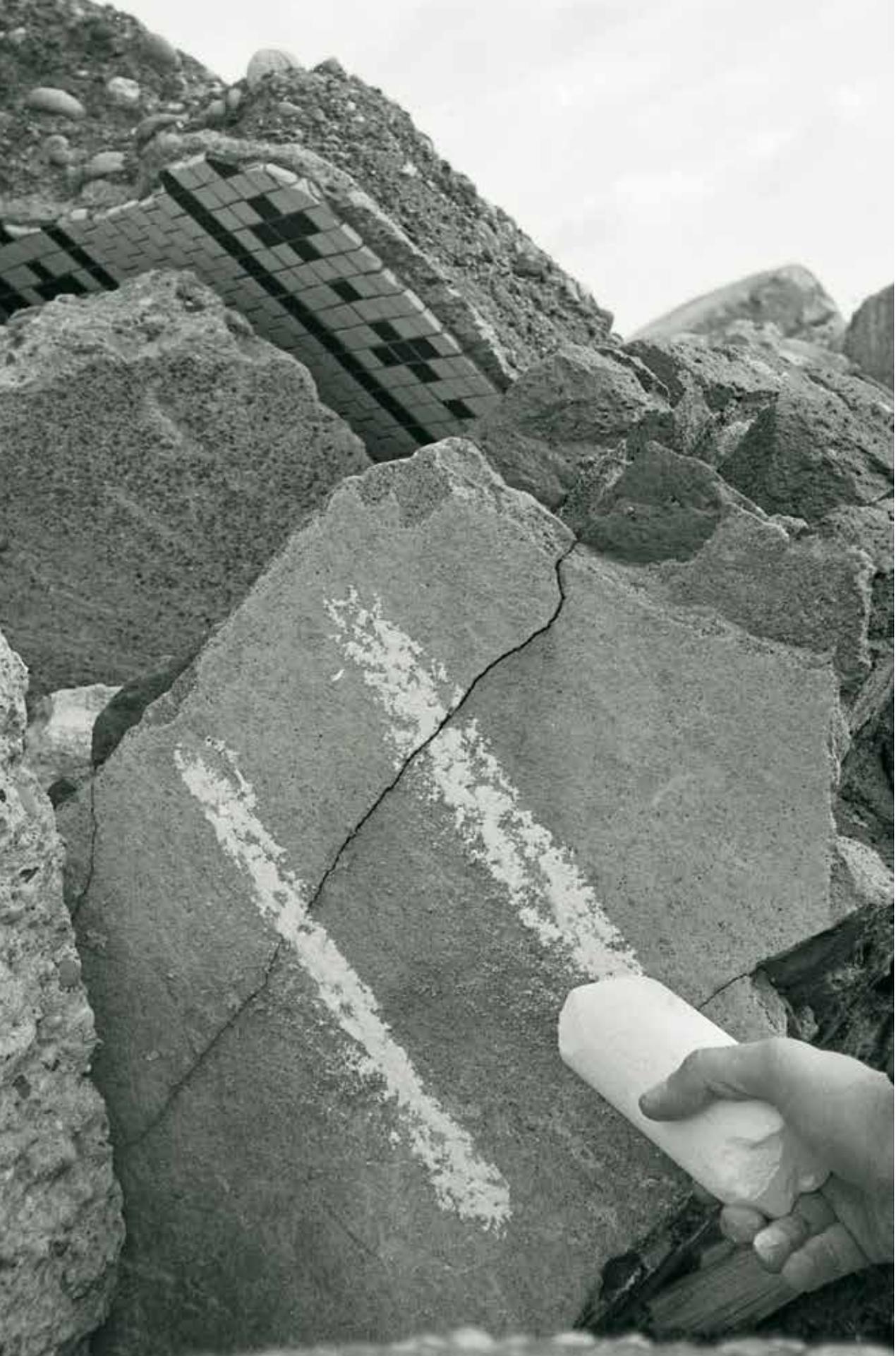
ART AT  
MUSEUM

Paintings, Sculpture, and Drawings

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BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR

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# BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR

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FRYE ART MUSEUM

| 2013 |

EDITED BY SCOTT LAWRIMORE

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FOREWORD





In a letter to Buster Simpson published in this volume, renowned Chinese curator and critic Carol Yinghua Lu asks to what extent his practice is dependent on the ideological and social infrastructure of the city and the society in which he works. Her question from afar ruminates on a lack of similar practice in her own country: Is it because China lacks utopian visions associated with the hippie ethos of mid-twentieth-century America? Is it because a utilitarian mentality pervades the social and political context in China? Lu's meditations on the nature of Buster Simpson's artistic practice go to the heart of our understanding of his work. Is it utopian? Simpson would suggest it is not: his experience at Woodstock "made me realize that working in a more urban context might be more interesting than this utopian, return-to-nature idea" (p. 91).

To understand the nature of Buster Simpson's practice, we need to accompany him to the underbelly of the city where he has lived and worked for forty years. Described in tourist brochures as the Emerald City, Seattle conjures up images of lush, evergreen forests surrounding a metropolis of vibrant neighborhoods that are "eclectic, urban, outdoorsy, artsy, gritty, down-to-earth, or posh."<sup>1</sup> The Seattle that Buster Simpson surveys and measures on our behalf is, however, to be found in its alleyways, neglected spaces, and homeless encampments under freeways that lacerate the city and divide it from itself. Its burial grounds are to be found in "underground Seattle," the subterranean ruins of the city that existed before it was "regraded" more than sixty times at the turn of the last century.<sup>2</sup> "Extreme hills" were slashed by more than one hundred feet; schools, hotels, and houses were demolished; and more than 45 million tons of earth were moved, providing landfill for the city's waterfront.<sup>3</sup>

It is not the utopian ideals that pervaded America in the 1960s that inspires the practice of Buster Simpson, but rather moral outrage at a utilitarian mentality that reengineers natural and human habitats with scant regard for environmental and social consequences. In the ruins of regraded urban spaces Simpson would appear as his alter ego, Woodman, gathering debris and "physically and metaphorically carrying the weight of history and the burden of urban renewal on his back" (p. 45). For over a half century Buster Simpson has never wavered in his commitment to the dignity and value of all that is discarded, broken, and scarred, both natural and human. In desperate situations, he reminds us, "the symbolic value we had given our materials—wood and straw—by transforming them into an art installation was less important than their face value as firewood and bedding. After all, our work was only a temporary intervention in the landscape" (p. 91).

Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker  
Director, Frye Art Museum

1. Seattle Travel Guide, Fodor's Travel Guides, <http://www.fodors.com/world/north-america/usa/washington/seattle/>.
2. Wikipedia, s.v. "Regrading in Seattle," <http://en.wikipedia.org>.
3. Ibid.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Buster Simpson // Surveyor*, the artist's first retrospective exhibition, brings together work from more than forty years of his career. I wish to express my deep appreciation to Buster for creating a rich and diverse path to follow and for his foresight in documenting and archiving this route with such great detail and care. The afternoons we spent examining thousands of images and dozens of hours of video footage and (re)discovering his art in every corner of his studio were among the most rewarding moments of my professional career. The process provided a rare glimpse of what it must have been like to have been with Buster on the streets and at city council negotiating tables in the 1970s and 1980s, and for that I am deeply grateful.

Buster Simpson is known as a community organizer and collaborator, so it is not surprising that the Frye Art Museum owes a debt of gratitude to many willing and steadfast collaborators who contributed to the realization of this exhibition and catalogue. I am grateful for the sage guidance and unflagging encouragement at every turn of Frye Director Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker. Her enthusiasm for the project was equaled by that of the Board of Trustees of the Frye Art Museum: David Buck, president; Douglas Adkins; Jan Hendrickson; Kate Janeway; and the late Frank P. Stagen.

Mounting an exhibition of this scope and with this many moving parts would have been impossible without the support and collaboration of the entire staff of the Frye Art Museum. With more than two hundred objects from more than eighty projects, special mention should be made of Collections Manager/Registrar Cory Gooch and Collections Assistant Jess Atkinson for their rigorous organization and careful documentation of the exhibition. For his expert installation of complicated works in the reflecting pool, on the roof, around trees, and in the café, I am deeply grateful to Exhibition Designer Shane Montgomery and his capable team of preparators. Collaborating with Montgomery on every aspect of the “no new materials!” design was another highlight of the exhibition preparation. Exhibitions and Publications Assistant Amelia Hooning “dumpster dived” into Buster’s trunks and hard drives of archival materials and deserves special recognition for the exacting detail with which she approached all aspects of gathering, producing, and editing content for the exhibition and catalogue. For embracing new ways of conceiving and producing the publication, my thanks goes to the Communications Department led by Jeffrey Hirsch, and especially to Senior Designer Victoria Culver for her patience, impeccable eye for design, and uncanny ability to manifest on the page the complexities of Buster’s art and ideas.

Buster Simpson would like to thank Ryan Maloney of Atlas Networks and Nitze-Stagen for providing the space to pre-stage the exhibition; the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation; Fabrication Specialties LTD; Jack Mackie, Jules Backus, Rich Royal, Walter White, John Turnbull, Anne Carlsberg, Carrell Courtright, Jason De Antonis, and Juilian Epps; past collaborators who also assisted on this exhibition: Starr Sutherland, Chris Jonic, and Kevin Spitzer; his studio crew: Todd Metten, Bruce Myers, Ki Chan

Lee, and Joe Burmeister; and his family: Elizabeth Melching Cole Simpson, Raymond Lester Gardner Simpson and his daughter Hillela, and his wife, Laura Sindell.

The exhibition and catalogue are funded by the Frye Foundation with the support of Frye Art Museum members and donors. Generous sponsorship is provided by The Boeing Company, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, 4Culture, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Washington State Arts Commission, Riddell Williams P.S., Marquand Books, Inc., and Paper Hammer Studios. Seasonal support is provided by ArtsFund. Media sponsorship of the exhibition is by *The Stranger*, KUOW 94.9 FM, and *City Arts*.

I am grateful for the collaboration with Marquand Books and Paper Hammer Studios in the production of this publication. When I approached Ed Marquand with the “no new materials” mandate for the publication, he responded with an ambitious plan to salvage out-of-date textbooks and catalogues for the covers and utilize pallets of raw material in the form of printer’s “book blanks” for the new pages. Marquand generously donated these materials to the cause, and he and his team personally tore apart the blanks, cut the pages to size, and meticulously reassembled each of them to form unique, and uniquely made, catalogues.

Scott Lawrimore  
Deputy Director, Collections and Exhibitions, Frye Art Museum



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TREE HOUSE

1972

Pilchuck Glass School

Dear Buster Simpson,

It is my honor to be introduced to your work through an invitation from the Frye Art Museum and to contribute a text to the publication that accompanies your recent retrospective. I have been in touch with Scott Lawrimore, the curator of this exhibition, to discuss my contribution. Prompted by Scott's openness to the different ways in which I would like to approach your work, and after reading a selection of materials about your practice, I decided to write you this letter.

Despite the difficulty of writing and the anxiety of waiting for the ideas to find expression in words, I am always thrilled to write about an artist's work because, like an exhibition, doing so provides an opportunity to create, a subject to study, an issue to address. But in most of my research, and with such opportunities, I have come to the realization that most artists need no such external incentive. They tend to work naturally. Their motivation is often internal and self-initiated, at times unstoppable.

While researching the many materials about your practice that document your work during a period of four decades, from the late 1960s to the present, and involving many disciplines and forms of artistic engagement, I hoped to trace your works to your earlier training, your exposure to various influences, and the network of people you were associated with at the beginning of your career. I also sought to understand how much of your approach to art is defined by your own subjectivity, something intuitive, and how much of it has been shaped by accidental encounters and experiences in your career. As always, I also tried to ascertain a certain linear logic underlying your practice, making connections between your education at the University of Michigan, your exposure to and contact with the works of artists and artist groups such as Robert Rauschenberg and the ONCE Group in Ann Arbor, and your seminal involvement with Pilchuck Glass School, as well as your later commitment to public art in urban settings.

One can derive a great sense of satisfaction from linking such different moments and aspects of an artist's career, formulating a narrative, and helping the reader make sense of what an artist used to do and what that artist is doing now. But then, how satisfactory is such a story for the artist himself? Is logic the only criterion when it comes to reviewing and detailing one's lifelong practice? Does everything have to fall into a certain place within such a logic? Is our only task as critics to elaborate on and clarify an artist's practice? My worry is that in attempting to offer a logical explanation of an artist's practice

## A LETTER TO BUSTER SIMPSON CAROL YINGHUA LU

and create a story that makes sense based on our limited experience, we sacrifice details and miss the many layers of an artist's way of working. Then yet another article, instead of achieving its goal of clarifying and contextualizing an artist's work, ends up compromising that work's complexity and ruling out those "illogical" details that might exist just outside the author's experience. Do you, as the artist under discussion, desire any further explanation of your work? Or do you secretly feel that any such attempt only scratches the surface of your ideas and lifelong commitment? Can there ever be a fair assessment of your work by anyone other than yourself?

A few words have occurred repeatedly in reviews of your work: "public," "community," "recycling," "environmental." They provide the readers of these commentaries with an immediate understanding of some aspects of your work. But do you ever fear that such descriptions might limit the understanding of it? Do you ever feel that you need to eliminate such label-like terms in order to reveal more intricate and subtle details of your practice? But then, can and should an artist try to control the discussion and reception of his or her work?

One of the burning questions for me in examining your work is how the change of context affects your thinking about and relating to an environment in your artistic practice. You have talked about your shift from a return-to-nature approach to a focus on the urban environment; you have described your experience of being at Woodstock and have said that Pilchuck at its founding was "a bunch of hippies on a tree farm" and "utopian." You became interested in "bringing the ethos of nature into the city and finding some discussion between the systems we see in nature and the systems of the city." This direction led to many interventional projects and public commissions, which often took the form of collaboration with different partners in terms of work and engagement and interaction with the physical and political infrastructure of the city. Is such a shift aesthetic in nature?

I searched zealously but in vain for a parallel to your practice in the Chinese art community, and this revealed a critical issue about such a way of working. To what extent is such a practice, your practice, dependent on the ideological and social infrastructure of the city and the society? Why, in a social and political context like ours, in China, where we confront environmental problems and challenges that threaten our well-being and livelihoods every day, are we completely lacking in such community-conscious and environmentally concerned practices? The hippie ethos and lifestyle, and the utopian vision you related in your earlier works, have not existed in China in its recent history. Rather, a utilitarian mentality prevails on every level. We no longer have any romantic illusion of the rural or the urban. Everywhere we look, it is becoming harder and harder to distinguish the rural from the urban. The rural tries to appear as much like the urban as possible, while on many levels, the consciousness of city dwellers and their urban surroundings are still very rural in many aspects. I see the urgent need for practices such as yours in China but cannot find their manifestation in its art community. What does such an absence reveal? And what does a practice like yours reflect about your social surroundings? Would you ever attribute your practice, at least in part, to the social climate in which you live and work?

Another aspect of your work that interests me tremendously is how you address the aesthetic concerns and utilitarian functions of your works. How does one not turn a public art project into a "community" project? Do you even distinguish between the two? How does one remain mindful of aesthetic

responsibility while at the same time fulfilling a certain social expectation and responsibility? Is it necessary to prioritize one over the other? I wonder.

I keep asking questions, and ultimately it is the fact that I have not seen your work in person that prohibits me from making further claims on any authority when it comes to understanding your practice, much less explaining them. However, I hope that my curiosity about your work and the possibility of learning across distance by writing can start a conversation. I await your responses and illumination with gratitude and excitement.

With warmest regards,  
Carol Yinghua Lu

**BUSTER SIMPSON AND A PHILOSOPHY OF URBAN CONSCIOUSNESS** CHARLES MUDEDE



Definitions are in order. Let's begin with the word *consciousness*. Like *nature* (another important word and concept in this short essay), consciousness is not easy to define. It's a word that means different things to different people. In my case, and in the context of Buster Simpson's art, consciousness is understood to be identical with the meaning of ideology in the essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" by the French structuralist philosopher Louis Althusser. And what exactly does Althusser mean by *ideology*? It is the imaginary relationship between oneself and "the real conditions of existence."<sup>1</sup> But Althusser contributed a new twist to this fairly standard Marxist formulation of ideology, a twist made possible by his appropriation of a key theory by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan: One's relationship with the real conditions of existence is always already imaginary—meaning, there is no such thing as an experience that's not mediated, that is not a fiction, that is not mentally constructed, that's not not immediate. Also, ideology, like consciousness and the brain, which generates conscious states, is malleable. The imaginary relationship between you and the world is not fixed or permanently imprinted in some way. It can always be changed, and so one's distance from what is actual can also change. Your ideology/consciousness can be closer to or further away from the truth. One other thing: Truth, what is actual (for example, climate change or the age of the world), is also not fixed. It too changes. Indeed, the evolutionary function of the plasticity of consciousness might very well have been to better adapt the human animal to a reality that's always changing, becoming, reforming.

Two more definitions before we are properly on our way. One is of *culture*, which in this essay simply means "information capable of affecting individuals' behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission."<sup>2</sup> Culture in this sense is a tool for and molder of human consciousness, and the molding of consciousness results in the molding of human behavior. Often, however, humans see some behavior, which has long hardened into a custom, as the consequence not of cultural transmission and adaptation but of natural or supernatural laws that are eternal and fixed. The history of this confusion has been long and sad. But here is the tricky part, and a part that needs to be grasped if we are to get to the genius of Simpson's art: Behavioral plasticity, which reflects the plasticity of a consciousness molded and remolded by cultural inputs, is not unnatural. Culture is not separate from nature. Indeed, nothing, animate or inanimate, is outside of nature. A thought about God in the mind is as natural as a rock on the ground. But what is nature? This definition is simply drawn from Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*: "the all."<sup>3</sup>

## BUSTER SIMPSON AND A PHILOSOPHY OF URBAN CONSCIOUSNESS CHARLES MUDEDE

Now that we have consciousness, culture, and nature settled, let's turn to Buster Simpson, a Seattle-based artist who specializes in public art and whose work spans four decades. In general, Simpson's leading project has been the dismantling of the old and wholly unreal divide between the human animal and nature. Nor has this been a simple matter of advocating a liberation from artificial culture by embracing what's commonly coded as the wild and authentic forces of Mother Nature, or a call for the return to the rural, to prelapsarian rhythms, or to a more intimate relationship with non-man-made biological communities like a forest or a jungle. Simpson, who was educated at the University of Michigan and got his official start as an artist with a sculpture at the Woodstock Music and Art Festival in 1969 [p. 88] (famously, the sculpture, which was made of wood and hay, was dismantled and used for bedding and firewood), came from the hippie moment but did not reach one of its major conclusions: that nature is something you go to, something you leave the city for, something you arrive at after a long journey from a situation of disconnection. Though hippies were correct to advocate practices and behaviors that promote the health of the environment, to see nature as authentic and the urban as inauthentic resulted in an imaginary that did not in substance break with the old order or coding of things, the order/coding that had a clear inside and outside, the order/coding that precisely led to ecological catastrophes like smog, polluted rivers, and acid rain. Amazingly, Simpson saw what was simply invisible to so many in the then-emerging environmentalist movement: the city is a part of nature.

In the 1970s, this way of seeing the urban (be it on the right, with white flight into the suburbs, or on the left, with hippies going back to nature) was certainly far from conventional. And it is only now, at the dawn of the present century—with trends like the rethinking on urban density (living in dense cities and using public transportation is now believed to be greener than living in the rural areas or in Walden-like isolation) or the new branch of evolutionary biology called “niche construction” (the human animal is by no means the only animal that alters its environment to meet species-specific needs and challenges; there are also beavers, wasps, and even worms; indeed, what is soil but a vermicular city?)—that the rest of the world, a world, by the way, that has more human inhabitants living in rather than outside of urban areas, is finally arriving at a conclusion that Simpson reached forty years ago: whether you are in the city or in the country, you are still inside of nature.

Simpson expressed this understanding of the urban early in his career with the *Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal* (1974) [p. 41]. Before the park was transformed into what it is today—a stretch of land just north of the Olympic Sculpture Park that has some grass, a slim beach, benches, picnic tables, and a winding bike/pedestrian path—it was, to quote Anna Marie Heineman, among other things, a “dumping ground for debris from the Interstate 5 construction project.”<sup>4</sup>

Simpson proposed that instead of getting rid of the rubble, the city should reclaim the park by recycling the debris, by making something new out of what was already there—the slabs of concrete. The park did not need to be cleaned up but in a way preserved and respected; to clean it up was not just the obvious thing to do, it also swept an important part of the site's history conveniently under the rug. Heineman writes: “Simpson recalls that ‘all the big concrete footings and rubble, interesting big pieces of architecture, were just dumped down there. It was a great hangout, families would go and picnic on the big slabs of concrete, the homeless would hang out down there—it was a very in vogue space. [However, others] saw it as unsightly, they didn't see it as an honest gesture. To me, it was a very honest gesture, it was like an un-orchestrated Güell Park.’”<sup>5</sup> For Simpson, what many saw as unnatural was so

natural that it needed to be appreciated much like a massive tree that had died, fallen with a tremendous crash in the woods, and, as it slowly disintegrated, was repurposed, reprocessed, reused by surrounding plant and animal life forms.

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Another thing about the city is water. You cannot have a city without fresh water. Indeed, Jonathan Golob, a journalist and scientist educated at the University of Washington, once said that a city is a massive river. Clean water flows into it, and dirty water flows out. As clouds in the sky are water behaving in one way, water as the medium of life in a city is behaving in another way. But the habit of humans has been to disconnect the form water takes in a city from all its other forms and flows. Water is simply something that comes out of a tap or is flushed down a toilet. We almost never think about where it's coming from or where it's going. Because this kind of bad thinking has without fail produced behaviors and habits that have terrible environmental consequences, Simpson, in project after project, has explored the function, condition, cycles, and even molecular structure of water. In 1983, he initiated a project called *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set* [p. 77], which brought attention to wastewater by placing plates near the point where sewage pours into Elliott Bay, collecting these plates when the tide was low, and firing the plates in a kiln until the human waste on them was changed into something truly strange. Beginning in 1997, he played a key role on the design team for *Growing Vine Street*, a project which, among many other things, brought to the surface of the city “the normal hydrological cycle” (Simpson’s website smartly avoids calling it the “natural hydrological cycle”). With *Growing Vine Street*, the city becomes a part of the normal hydrological cycle by means of unconventional gutters and downspouts that lead rooftop runoff into equally unconventional cisterns (one of which looks like a human hand with fingers reaching toward the wall of an apartment) and runnels. As the water heads to the bay, it is bio-filtered by native vegetation. I like to think of this section of Belltown, the densest neighborhood in Seattle, as Simpson City. Or, closer yet, the fullest expression we have of a city that, in different locations and different scales, appears in Simpson’s art. And the strange thing about Simpson City, which is an urban environment that’s conscious of and plugged into all other environments and flows, is that it’s not a utopian fantasy but draws heavily from our scientific understanding of nature.

In 2011, Simpson completed *Bio Boulevard and Water Molecule*, a sculpture and a long pipe that directs water reclaimed by the Brightwater Treatment Plant. The plant uses a membrane bioreactor, which sends wastewater through microscopic pores that are so tiny, they can filter out a single bacterium. The process perfectly matches Simpson’s urbanism and aesthetics, as it reuses, recycles, and reclaims what is already there, wastewater.

But what is this really all about? Why is it important to bring attention to a city’s water systems? Because when we make a distinction or fix a distance between ourselves and nature, we tend to value the place we inhabit as something and devalue wherever nature is as the great nothingness, the void into which all of our problems, our toxins, our waste can be flushed and forgotten.

Let’s go to another location, the Columbia River at the Hanford site, and another time, 1941, when the Manhattan Project set up a massive industrial complex that produced weapons-grade plutonium. The reason for picking Hanford? Because it had a lot of nature—meaning, it was far away from something,

## BUSTER SIMPSON AND A PHILOSOPHY OF URBAN CONSCIOUSNESS CHARLES MUDEDE

Seattle/Portland/Spokane, and the farther away you are from something, the more nothingness there is. During its forty or so years of operation, the plant dumped millions of tons of radioactive waste into the nothingness of the ground and the nothingness of the river. Of course, it later turned out that this nothingness existed nowhere else but in the heads of humans. There is no nothingness in the biosphere; all the molecules of life move through the massive biogeochemical cycle. The river and the land at Hanford were instead intricately interconnected with what was perceived as something: human society. Likewise, Simpson's work with water and other chemical cycles and life forms, like trees, again and again reveals the total absence of nature's nothingness. Human waste and toxins do not go into the void of Elliott Bay—that bay is something. Nor is there nothing beneath our feet or over our heads. Every single thing in the city is connected to every other thing in ways that are often hard to see and comprehend. And the work of making the fact of our connectedness understandable is the lesson we always find in Simpson's art.

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In Simpson's art master plans—for example, *Growing Vine Street* (Seattle), *Portland South Waterfront Greenway* (Portland), *Southeast False Creek* (Vancouver) [p. 87]—one finds the instructions for a city that does not exist yet: Simpson City. It is a city that leaves nothing out, a city that wastes as little as possible, a city that incorporates even the activity of a beaver into its network. The function of Simpson's art and collaborations with other artists, architects, and scientists is not so much to build this city but to prepare citizens for its coming. In this respect, Simpson recalls the former mayor of Bogotá, Antanas Mockus.

A mathematician and philosopher by training, Mockus ran for mayor in 1993 and surprisingly won. His agenda? To reform the residents of the poor and crime-ridden city not by force but through a creative process. His thinking: Social reconfiguration is a reconfiguration of consciousness, and to change the consciousness of the people is to change their behavior, and to change their behavior is to prepare the city for real change. And what changes consciousness? Culture. And what is the most effective cultural instrument? Art. One of the city's problems was bad drivers, and no amount of force or punishment seemed to affect their behavior. What did Mockus do? He replaced policemen with mimes who performed in front of rude lawbreaking drivers. The tactic worked. Traffic improved. Citizens changed their behavior. During his term, Mockus employed a number of other artistic interventions to improve public health, water consumption, and awareness of the urban environment. When he left office in 1996, the citizens of Bogotá were ready for the next mayor, the master builder Enrique Peñalosa.

“Whenever possible, water sources from buildings and hardscape surface flow as a visible journey to their intended application as a landscape water feature,” writes Simpson in the master plan for Vancouver's False Creek. “The method and expression of conveyance relies on gravity primarily. The related water features along this journey of scupper spill, downspout fall, water pressure fountain expressions, mitigating events, detention cisterns, runnel courses, irrigated landscapes are finally offered into the ‘hinge bog’ for cleaning and scrubbing before entry into False Creek. With the augmentation of gray water to the system during low rainfall, the water features have a consistent presence of water. Gray water that needs some prior scrubbing before entering the system is an art opportunity to reveal systems, which visitors readily take home and apply.”<sup>6</sup>

You do not, like the City Beautiful movement, build and impose the ideal city of the future on citizens; instead you prepare the citizens for the right city. Simpson's art projects are tools for the imaginary (consciousness) of a city we have yet to build. And we cannot make this city happen until we know how to behave in it. One architecture critic has written that a great building makes you want to dance to it. Simpson's art is like learning to dance to a piece of music before the music plays.

And now for the big picture. The city in history looks something like this: The first city was the City of God, a city dominated by temples and priests, that had a sense of itself as the meeting point between humans and the larger cosmic forces that shaped and ordered the universe. Indeed, the name "Babylon" means "Gateway of the Gods." The next was the City of Man, the human city, the city of factories and the office towers that replaced church steeples. The City of Man is now in its twilight; it is unsustainable. If the city is to continue into the future, it must explode the defining codes of the City of Man (humans are something; nature is nothingness) and look like Simpson City—which is a post-human city, a scientific city, a city we see in, say, the sculpture *Brush with Illumination* [p. 111 gatefold]. Completed in 1998 (Simpson upgraded it in 2009) and standing on an inlet, False Creek, in Vancouver, *Illumination* is also a scientific instrument that gathers information about the inlet's water and environmental conditions. What Simpson's art often tells us is that the city of the future must be scientific. Why? Because for the past five hundred years, science has been decentering humans and relocating them to a smaller and smaller part of a larger and larger system that cycles matter through the hills, the forest, the clouds, and the city.

1. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 162–63.
2. Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4–5.
3. Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, in *Prose Works* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1892), paragraph 121, <http://www.bartleby.com/229/>.
4. Anna Marie Heineman, "Nurturing Neighborhoods: Buster Simpson's Eco-Art" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2010), 37, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/513/>.
5. *Ibid.*, 37–38.
6. Buster Simpson, in collaboration with 4Culture, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan" (City of Vancouver, 2007), 13, <http://www.bustersimpson.net/southeastfalsecreek/>.



## PART I: ETHOS

### Preparing for the Demonstration<sup>1</sup>

Before any art was delivered, and before any plinths, riggings, or projectors were placed, Buster's<sup>2</sup> first act<sup>3</sup> was to take an ax to a wall inside the empty galleries of the Museum. This was not provocation, violence, or institutional critique; it was a generous attempt at orientation, of finding and providing bearings. Using the Boy Scout ax of his youth, Buster methodically carved a blaze<sup>4</sup> directly into the drywall—two parallel slashes at the entrance of the exhibition marking the beginning of a trail to be followed [p. 99]. His blaze is the hobo sign for “the sky's the limit” or “anything goes,” indicating that the Museum is a safe place where you won't be hassled and just might find everything you need, from respite or shelter to inspiration or nourishment. With each blow of the ax, Buster exposed dozens of layers of paint from previous exhibitions, revealing the Museum's own history. Like much of his work, when surveyed in depth, this first simple gesture manifests core ethea<sup>5</sup> of his practice: stake your claim, leave your mark, but also try to leave a better place for others; reveal and revel in history but always try to indicate a better path forward; be a trailblazer.

### Being Buster While Surveying Buster

Adjacent to the hobo blaze is a large six-by-four-foot hole cut through the wall that creates a window with a view to another gallery of the exhibition [p. 101]. The removed wall segments were not discarded—one was folded down in place to serve as a support for a sculpture, the others were repurposed as plinths for sculpture in other galleries. Throughout his career, Buster has placed himself at sites of demolition or waste—scenes where the old gives way to, or is tossed out for, the new—not only to properly historicize or articulate the moment but to be the caretaker of the detritus or even to make use of it. The process of making preparations for Buster's exhibition—designing supports, prepping walls, planning signage—was governed by a motto: “No new materials.” While in reality it was necessary to succumb to the rephrased “few new materials,” the overall imperative was to repurpose as much as we could from past exhibitions. We used recycled plywood for “new” plinths and shelves and faced them with salvaged drywall. Leftover drywall shards were used for handwritten wall labels. This gaping hole in the wall, this scene of demolition and seeming site of trauma for the Museum,<sup>6</sup> was therefore our demonstration, our trace<sup>7</sup> of the Museum's attempt to be Buster while surveying Buster.

Buster ethea: try to make do with the materials you have on hand; salvage what you need but honor and respect from whence it came; if the old has to accommodate the new, try to reveal the transaction;

be selective, discerning; pick your materials as carefully as you pick your battles; be an example; leave a trace; be a dumpster diver [p. 20].<sup>8</sup>

**Buster Simpson's Ground<sup>9</sup>**

Buster operated well outside the confines of the traditional art world for much of his career, realizing ephemeral, situation-specific, guerrilla-performance, agitprop, ad hoc, and process-driven art projects on his own terms directly in the streets, overlooked spaces, and abandoned buildings of Seattle.<sup>10</sup> He has also realized dozens of formally commissioned, permanently sited public works around the world. How does a museum begin to think about moving this manifestly *outside* artist *inside*?<sup>11</sup> What kind of curatorial ecology might be necessary?

*The seat of the soul is there where the inner and outer worlds meet.*

*Where they overlap, it is in every point of the overlap.* —Novalis, *Blüthenstaub* (1798)

The word “ecology” originated with the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who coined the term “oekologia” in the nineteenth century to designate a branch of science that studies the relationship of organisms to their environments; its Greek root, *oikos*, means “house, dwelling place, habitation.”<sup>12</sup> A key to understanding much of Buster’s practice is acknowledging his dedication to providing and protecting suitable habitats. Next to the hole in the first gallery’s wall is a video that Buster shot in 1983, *Finial Crow Dance* [p. 101]. In it, we see crows fighting over a single perch—a finial on top of a flagpole—their territorial dance akin to the children’s game King of the Mountain. Crows are significant for Buster, because they have adapted in unique ways to the urban environment as their natural habitat has been replaced with the man-made. Crows are also dumpster divers—great urban foragers, often salvaging cast-off industrial materials for their nests (more on this later).

The monitor for this video has a gold frame applied to it that appears not unlike those surrounding the nineteenth-century works from the Museum’s Founding Collection. The main difference is that Buster has fashioned the frame from over-the-counter faux brass threshold material from Home Depot instead of from gilded, carved wood. Even when considering the ornamental margin,<sup>13</sup> he still wants it to be doing work beyond the aesthetic, to have what he calls “poetic utility.”<sup>14</sup> Here, at the threshold of the museum that is his new, welcoming habitat, Buster frames the issue of scarcity of habitat for others in shimmering gold, highlighting the problem while suggesting that there is a golden threshold of tolerance that needs to be reached between the old and new, between the inner and outer, and between nature and the urban.

Next to the video, gently resting atop the wall section that has folded down from the gaping hole discussed above, Buster presents a solution to the problem of the crows with the sculpture *Double Header Finial* (2013) [p. 101]. If it is a finial of their own the crows need, Simpson gives them as many as possible. Two spun aluminum aircraft nose cones were joined at their widest edges to form a solid ovoid whose surface could house dozens of brushed brass finials, forming a regal, ad hoc community housing project for the birds. No longer is there a single King of the Mountain, but rather Kings. Just as the Museum’s own wall has given itself up to accommodate the sculpture, the sculpture signals accommodation; it provides a suitable, egalitarian habitat.

Buster ethea: identify your habitat and be attentive to dangers to it; be accommodating to change but mark the moment with healthy resistance and a long view of the context and ramifications of your decisions; strive for balance and equality, not only with your fellow man, but with all living things; be an ecologist.

### **Make It Whole**

To curate is to care.<sup>15</sup> To care is to cure.<sup>16</sup> To cure is to heal. To heal is to make whole.<sup>17</sup> Healing, making whole, typically begins with a diagnosis. Buster has spent his career identifying urban maladies—at-risk trees, vestigial architectures, water supply toxicity, anemic public art, chronic habitat loss, myopic development—and his works can be viewed as prescriptions. As with most prescriptions, dosage is key. Instead of hypothetical hypodermics loaded with instant antidotes, Buster prefers the slow-drip method of delivery. In reference to one of his most iconic urban works, *Host Analog* (1991–present) [p. 85], he states that “this is a work of art that won’t be finished for a thousand years.”<sup>18</sup> Beyond patient, Buster is rational, though implacable, about his own efforts. He fully recognizes that he is not going to remediate all the toxicity of city water supplies with his limestone pills from *Antacid Purge* (1983–present) [p. 75], but the treatment has to begin sometime, somewhere, and, paraphrasing Hesiod, if you keep adding a little to a little, it will eventually add up to something.<sup>19</sup> Or, as Buster likes to say, “The revolution is incremental.”<sup>20</sup> Being reminded that we might all have a role in creating, or responsibility for treating, ecological blight is a difficult pill to swallow. Fortunately, Buster also coats his prescriptions with palatable layers of humor that take the edge off what might otherwise be paralyzing dogma or castigation.<sup>21</sup>

Buster ethea: be reasonable, not only in your assessment of an ill, but also in art’s ability to address and counteract it; start the revolution; be patient though persistent in your treatment; a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down; be a healer.

### **One Who Sees**

In aboriginal cultures, the healer was the shaman of the tribe—the “seer,” or “one who knows.”<sup>22</sup> The title of the exhibition, *Surveyor*, identifies the role Buster has played as an artist concerned with urban issues and the manner in which he goes about his work.<sup>23</sup> For more than four decades, he has been the ecological and social conscience for cities undergoing constant transition, development, and renewal, his praxis grounded in a farsighted contract between an artist, where he lives, and how his art might benefit society. As seer for the city, he has realized projects that have carefully surveyed the issues, historicized the context, and established new frames of reference to propose local solutions for global problems. His works are precise triangulations that combine surveys of his findings, calls to action or remembrance, and prototypes for remediation or restoration.

One of the key services a surveyor provides is to make accurate measurements in the field in order to establish boundaries of ownership. In works like *Finial Crow Dance* (1983), *Shared Solar Clothesline* (1978 / 2013) [p. 59], *Woodman* (1974) [p. 45], and *Urban Arboretum* (1978–present) [p. 51], Buster’s work in the expanded field<sup>24</sup> has explored boundaries as an accurate measurement of society’s attitudes about ownership. Every surveyor, literal or figurative, also needs the proper tools, and the exhibition devotes an entire gallery to some of Buster’s [pp. 112–13]: a tool to gauge seawater elevation change (*Captiva Ladder Chair* [2013]); a tool of global positioning (*Glass Bell* [1995]); a tool for balance

(*Lead Toilet Seat Counterweight* [1984]; a tool for staying upright (*Glass Plumb Bob* [1979]); a tool for staying level and balanced (*Level Spirit* [2013]); and a tool for marking boundaries (*Gold Leaf Fence Post* [1984])).

Buster ethea: be accurate in your assessment of the issues and their context; generously share your data; be far-seeing with your proposed plans; always maintain the proper tool chest; be a surveyor.

## PART II: PATHOS

### Melt the Surroundings

Chances are that if you live in or have ever visited Seattle, you have either sat on, drunk from, found shade under, been steadied by, walked over, locked your bike to, smelled, heard, or even eaten a work by Buster and didn't even realize it. His art is so integral—even ingrained—in our experience of the city that his full contribution to the urban infrastructure can often be easily overlooked.<sup>25</sup> To say that Buster's art is radical implies not only that it is an extreme change from, or challenge to, the norm but also that it is so firmly rooted in the urban that it somehow seems original to it.<sup>26</sup> As one critic writes, "Simpson barely sustains his artist-as-urban-guerilla persona of the 1970s and 1980s, having adapted it with some compromise into sidewalks, street and building constructions that tease the viewer into an art experience, one that becomes clear and evident only with repeated viewings. It is as if the most enduring art in a public place is the art that is slowest to impress itself upon the pedestrian."<sup>27</sup>

Buster bristles when his work is referred to as "public art," preferring instead "art in public."<sup>28</sup> It's a subtle but important distinction, but it might, quite humbly, not go far enough in describing his practice. Pressing the issue—with Joseph Beuys's famous dictum "everyone is an artist" and his notion of Social Sculpture in mind—Buster's urban work suggests that there doesn't even need to be a distinction between what we think of as "art" and what we think of as "public."<sup>29</sup> Writing about Robert Smithson, Eugenie Tsai notes that "one of the most important concepts Smithson advanced was that of the 'site,' a place in the world where art is inseparable from its context."<sup>30</sup> Buster's decision to relocate his ecologically minded practice back into the context of the city not only collapsed the distinction between nature and the urban but has meant that to understand his work is to understand the city. Continuing this thread, Allan Kaprow writes, "The place where anything grows up . . . its 'habitat,' gives to it not only a space . . . but an overall atmosphere as well, which penetrates it and whoever experiences it. Habitats have always had this effect, but it is especially important now, when our advanced art approaches a fragile but marvelous life, one that maintains itself by a mere thread, melting the surroundings, the artist, the work, and everyone who comes to it into an elusive, changeable configuration."<sup>31</sup> Like Kaprow's, Buster's career has been a gradual blurring of the line between art and life. His art has grown up in the city, its habitat, and the two are now so inseparable that we need to recognize that his work isn't simply *in* the city; it *is* the city.<sup>32</sup>

### **THUMP thump, THUMP thump . . .**

Having already evoked the specters of Beuys, Kaprow, Matta-Clark, and Smithson in relation to Buster, here, in the heart of the territory we are staking out for him, in a section designated as "Pathos," we can speak from the heart.<sup>33</sup> For too long, Buster's work has been overlooked, undervalued, uncontextualized, and uncanonized, and much of it has been either unknown or unarticulated. Admittedly, this essay,

this catalogue, or even the exhibition are not exhaustive and barely scratch the surface of his full contribution, but like the seeming futility of the *Antacid Purge* series or Woodman's Sisyphean<sup>34</sup> efforts, we have to start the conversation somewhere—seed the river and start pushing the boulder up the hill. This essay, catalogue, and exhibition are not complete rediscoveries or full revelations but calls for radical reassessments of Buster's entire practice with a different set of surveying tools. One reassessment begins by bringing him plumb with his true art-historical predecessors and contemporaries like those mentioned above.<sup>35</sup> Another reassessment measures Buster's effort, intention, and sensitivity for a given project as well as its impact and levels the walls<sup>36</sup> falsely constructed between his permanent public works, ephemeral agitprop performances and street actions, discrete sculptures, site-specific installations, and master plans, proposals, and consultation work. And yet another counterbalances his perceived local relevance with his actual international stature.<sup>37</sup>

If remediation is a major theme in Buster's work, consider this the start of a mediation between what we may have thought his practice is and what it actually is; if reclamation is a through line connecting much of Buster's work, consider this the beginning of reclaiming it for the city for the sake of posterity.

#### **Canon Fodder**

Seattle can be viewed as Buster's ongoing masterpiece. The largest concentration of his work is in the Belltown neighborhood—the roughly fifty city blocks just north of the downtown core—with the *First Avenue Streetscape Project* (1978–present), *Urban Arboretum* (1978–present), *Tree Guards* (1978–present) [p. 57], *Growing Vine Street* (1997–present), and dozens of other amenities such as benches, historical placards, and downspouts, quiet and loud art moments and highly visible public commissions all installed there [see map, p. 133]. *Urban Arboretum* is perhaps his greatest and most lasting legacy. Buster and fellow collaborators played a crucial role in instigating and overseeing a plan for planting nearly every tree over ten blocks on First Avenue, dictating the placement and selecting the species based on the community's needs—plum to designate the bus stops, ginkgo for shade, cedar for local history, and so on—choreographing a rich and useful experience of nature in an urban core. With more than thirty varieties of trees that total well over one hundred in number, this is an urban work of Land Art so impressive in scope, execution, and beauty that it is easy to overlook. When art devotees are planning future pilgrimages to the major works of Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Nancy Holt, Robert Smithson, James Turrell, and others, they should always consider Seattle, Buster's city, a vital stop on their itinerary.

### **PART III: LOGOS**

And so we are left with only the proof.<sup>38</sup>

The exhibition and this publication should suffice as the logos for this text—the persuasive proof of ethos and pathos relating to Buster—but a few more salient<sup>39</sup> examples of his work could be helpful before you jump to any conclusions (or decide to start all over again).

#### **When the Gloves Fit**

There is a pair of gloves in the exhibition. It is one of the few objects left from *Selective Disposal Project* (1973) [p. 33], aside from the original photographs of the performance. In appearance, the gloves are

like any other cloth work gloves, but they have this accumulated historical patina: Buster wore them. He wore them as he cared for, catalogued, and honored waste. As he also remedied neglect, he wore them not only to protect his own hands but also to protect the history of the action, and to be the memory of and witness to the event.

**Good Side In?**

There is a fence post in the exhibition. It stands alone, perfectly upright, covered in gold. *Gold Leaf Fence Post* (1984) [p. 113] marks no real territory—how can it?—but it does stake a claim for questioning the very idea of property. If we can agree that the notion of ownership is the beginning of economic and social inequality, this fence post certainly marks that moment—it embodies in shimmering gold the founding ideals that free market, capitalist societies are founded on—but it also pauses to reflect on that system. While the first post staked signals that the land grab is beginning, here the erection of the full fence has ceased, the process arrested as if the owner was trying to decide on the next move. It is in between starting and completion and therefore recalls the gold threshold at the beginning of the exhibition. The single post exists in the moment between claiming inside from outside, private from public property, and civilization from nature. In this idyllic state, there is no such thing as the fence builders' question: "Good side in?" All sides could be good (if there have to be sides at all).

**Blowed in the Glass**

There is a spirit level in the exhibition. The last object installed in the museum is a twelve-foot-long glass tube originally used to protect a fluorescent light fixture in New York's Lincoln Tunnel. It is now filled with water, save for one small empty space—an air bubble—that rests at dead center when perfect physical equilibrium is reached. For manufactured levels, the straight glass tube has to be mechanically slumped in order to accommodate the bubble. The Lincoln Tunnel tube has slumped naturally over time (as all glass does), its former pragmatic use preparing it for its current poetic utility. Buster calls this precise, amazingly sensitive instrument *Level Spirit* (2013) [p. 113 gatefold], reminding us that, in hobo slang, the term "blowed in the glass" identifies an individual who is "on the level" or "genuine and trustworthy."<sup>40</sup>

**Climax<sup>41</sup>**

There is a ladder in the exhibition [p. 52]. It leans casually against the wall, its gnarled, hand-carved stringers and rungs marred, worn, and stained with use. In 1979, an attempt to save a sixty-year-old fruiting Queen Anne cherry tree in Seattle failed. Not even Buster's occupation of the tree in *The Crow's Nest* [p. 53], which he fashioned from urban detritus, could save it from the developer's chain saw. What is one to do next? If you are Buster, you carve a ladder from the original tree so that you can climb into the next one and try to save it. You fashion tree guards from the original tree's limbs that will protect new saplings. You plant your own trees. The revolution is incremental, and your art won't be finished for a thousand years. You simply keep climbing.

After all, the sky's the limit.

1. “*prepare* (v.): mid-15c., a back formation from *preparation* and in part from Middle French *preparer* (14c.), from Latin *praeparare* ‘make ready beforehand’ (see *preparation*). Related: *Prepared*; *preparing*. *Be prepared* as the Boy Scouts’ motto is attested from 1911.” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>. “*demonstration* (n.): late 14c., ‘proof that something is true,’ from Old French *demonstration* or directly from Latin *demonstrationem* (nominative *demonstratio*), noun of action from past participle stem of *demonstrare* ‘to point out, indicate, demonstrate,’ figuratively, ‘to prove, establish,’ from *de-* ‘entirely’ (see *de-*) + *monstrare* ‘to point out, show,’ from *monstrum* ‘divine omen, wonder’ (see *monster*). Meaning ‘public show of feeling,’ usually with a mass meeting and a procession, is from 1839.” *Ibid*.
2. I will be using the artist’s adopted sobriquet, Buster, throughout this essay instead of his surname, Simpson, or his given name, Lewis.
3. “*act* (n.): late 14c., ‘a thing done,’ from Old French *acte* ‘(official) document,’ and directly from Latin *actus* ‘a doing, a driving, impulse; a part in a play, act,’ and *actum* ‘a thing done,’ originally a legal term, both from *agere* ‘to do, set in motion, drive, urge, chase, stir up,’ from PIE root \**ag-* ‘to drive, draw out or forth, move’ (cf. Greek *agein* ‘to lead, guide, drive, carry off,’ *agon* ‘assembly, contest in the games,’ *agoras* ‘leader’; Sanskrit *ajati* ‘drives,’ *ajirah* ‘moving, active’; Old Norse *aka* ‘to drive’; Middle Irish *ag* ‘battle’). Theatrical (‘part of a play,’ 1510s) and legislative (early 15c.) senses of the word also were in Latin. Meaning ‘display of exaggerated behavior’ is from 1928. *In the act* ‘in the process’ is from 1590s, perhaps originally from the 16c. sense of *the act* as ‘sexual intercourse.’ *Act of God* ‘uncontrollable natural force’ recorded by 1726.” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.
4. “*blaze* (n.2): ‘light-colored mark or spot,’ 1630s, northern English dialect, probably from Old Norse *blesi* ‘white spot on a horse’s face’ (from the same root as *blaze* [n.1]). A Low German cognate of the Norse word also has been suggested as the source. Applied 1660s in American English to marks cut on tree trunks to indicate a track; thus the verb meaning ‘to mark a trail’; first recorded 1750, American English.” *Ibid*.
5. Plural of *ethos*. “*ethos* (n.): revived by Palgrave in 1851 from Greek *ethos* ‘moral character, nature, disposition, habit, custom,’ from suffixed form of PIE root \**s(w)e-*.” *Ibid*.
6. It is important to acknowledge the “Cut” works of Gordon Matta-Clark in this context. See Matta-Clark: “By un-doing a building there are many aspects of the social condition against which I am gesturing: to open a state of enclosure which had been preconditioned not only by physical necessity but by the industry that profligates suburban and urban boxes as a context for insuring a passive, isolated consumer—a virtually captive audience.” Quoted in “Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark,” in Gordon Matta-Clark and Gloria Moure, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings* (Barcelona: Poligrafa, 2006), 250.
7. The Boy Scouts motto “Leave no trace” does not very often apply to artists or exhibitions, but, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us in her translation of Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, “[trace] is the mark of the absence of a presence . . . of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience” (xvii). For more on the trace, see Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
8. Dumpster diving as a form of urban foraging is akin to the practice of gleaning—combing through recently harvested fields for usable residue. Metaphorically applying these terms to the process of selecting works for a retrospective—especially Buster’s—is especially appropriate and recalls Robert Smithson’s closing paragraph in “Cultural Confinement,” “Could it be that certain art exhibitions have become metaphysical junkyards? Categorical miasmas? Intellectual rubbish? Specific intervals of visual desolation? The warden-curators still depend on the wreckage of metaphysical principles and structures because they don’t know any better. The wasted remains of ontology, cosmology, and epistemology still offer a ground for art. Although metaphysics is outmoded and blighted, it is presented as tough principles and solid reasons for installations of art. The museums and parks are graveyards above the ground—congealed memories of the past that act as a pretext for reality. This causes acute anxiety among artists, in so far as they challenge, compete, and fight for the spoiled ideals of lost situations.” Smithson, “Cultural Confinement,” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 156.
9. A reference to Charles Dickens’s short story “Tom Tiddler’s Ground” (1861), another name for the child’s game of King of the Hill. See <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1413>.
10. On the post-studio artist, see Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): “Still, I would contend that the last group of artists to which the productivist argument applies emerged in the late 1960s, constituting what was known as the post-studio movement. In an attempt to counteract those forces which work to alienate artists from their production, post-studio artists either withdrew from the studio-gallery-museum power nexus, which administers the discourse of art in our society, or they attempted to subvert this nexus from within” (260).
11. Seattle art critic Jen Graves recently used the term “outside artist” to describe Buster. Graves, “The Outside Artist: How Buster Simpson Turned His Righteous Anger about Development, the Environment, and Seattle’s Economic Disparity into Art,” *The Stranger*, July 10, 2013. “Outside” here should be read literally as “the outdoors” and should not be confused with the terms “outsider” or “outsider artist.”
12. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “ecology,” <http://etymonline.com>.
13. For more on the ornamental margin, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1951), originally published in 1790; also see Jacques Derrida, “The Parergon,” in *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): “Something is not the most itself at its center but near its edge, near what is not—the essence is found at its boundary” (34).
14. Home Depot’s 2013 tagline “More Saving, More Doing” could also serve as an apropos motto for Buster’s practice.
15. “*curate* (n.): late 14c., ‘spiritual guide,’ from Medieval Latin *curatus* ‘one responsible for the care (of souls),’ from Latin *curatus*, past participle of *curare* ‘to take care of’ (see *cure* [v.]).” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.
16. “*cure* (v.): late 14c., from Old French *curer*, from Latin *curare* ‘take care of,’ hence, in medical language, ‘treat medically, cure’ (see *cure* [n.]). In reference to fish, pork, etc., first recorded 1743. Related: *Cured*; *curing*. Most words for ‘cure, heal’ in European languages originally applied to the person being treated but now can be used with reference to the disease, too. Relatively few show an ancient connection to words for ‘physician’; typically they are connected instead to words for ‘make whole’ or ‘tend to’ or even ‘conjurer.’” *Ibid*.

17. “*heal* (v.): Old English *hælan* ‘cure; save; make whole, sound and well,’ from Proto-Germanic \**hailjan* (cf. Old Saxon *helian*, Old Norse *heila*, Old Frisian *hela*, Dutch *helen*, German *heilen*, Gothic *ga-hailjan* ‘to heal, cure’), literally ‘to make whole’ (see *health*). Related: *Healed*; *healing*.” Ibid.
18. Buster has made this statement on numerous occasions, most recently in Jen Graves, “The Outside Artist,” *The Stranger*, July 10, 2013.
19. Hesiod, “Works and Days,” in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homeric*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb Classical Library, 1914), originally written c. 700 BC: “He who adds to what he has, will keep off bright-eyed hunger; for if you add only a little to a little and do this often, soon that little will become great” (lines 361–62).
20. Buster Simpson, conversation with the author, 2013.
21. On laughter, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Pertinent excerpt: “Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naïveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. Laughter does not permit seriousness to atrophy and to be torn away from the one being, forever incomplete. It restores this ambivalent wholeness. Such is the function of laughter in the historical development of culture and literature” (123).
22. Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices* (New York: Arkana, 1991): “The shaman, a mystical, priestly, and political figure emerging during the Upper Palaeolithic period and perhaps going back to Neanderthal times, can be described not only as a specialist in the human soul but also as a generalist whose sacred and social functions can cover an extraordinarily wide range of activities. Shamans are healers, seers, and visionaries who have mastered death. They are in communication with the world of gods and spirits. Their bodies can be left behind while they fly to unearthly realms. They are poets and singers. They dance and create works of art. They are not only spiritual leaders but also the judges and politicians, sacred and secular. They are familiar with cosmic as well as physical geography; they know the ways of plants and animals, and the elements. They are psychologists, entertainers, and food finders. Above all, however, shamans are technicians of the sacred and masters of ecstasy” (3–4).
23. The title also suggests that the exhibition itself, as a broad treatment of the given subject, is a “survey” of Buster’s work.
24. Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.
25. “*engrain* (v.): late 14c., originally ‘(dye) in grain,’ from French phrase *en graine*, from *graine* ‘seed of a plant,’ also ‘cochineal’ (the source of the dye was thought to be berries), thus ‘fast-dyed.’ Later associated with grain in the sense of ‘the fiber of a thing.’” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.
26. “*radical* (adj.): late 14c., in a medieval philosophical sense, from Late Latin *radicalis* ‘of or having roots,’ from Latin *radix* (genitive *radicis*) ‘root’ (see *radish*). Meaning ‘going to the origin, essential’ is from 1650s. Political sense of ‘reformist’ (via notion of ‘change from the roots’) is first recorded 1802. . . . U.S. youth slang use is from 1983, from 1970s surfer slang meaning ‘at the limits of control.’” Ibid.
27. Matthew Kangas, “Buster Simpson: Green Interventions,” *Sculpture*, December 2003; reprinted in Matthew Kangas, *Epicenter: Essays on North American Art* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004), 146.
28. Buster Simpson, conversation with the author, 2013.
29. “My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture . . . or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture can be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone. THINKING FORMS—how we mold our thoughts or SPOKEN FORMS—how we shape our thoughts into words or SOCIAL SCULPTURE—how we mold and shape the world in which we live: SCULPTURE AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS; EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST.” Joseph Beuys, *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America*, ed. Carin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 19.
30. Eugenie Tsai, “Robert Smithson: Plotting a Line from Passaic, New Jersey, to Amarillo, Texas,” in *Robert Smithson*, exh. cat. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
31. Allan Kaprow, “Happenings in the New York Scene,” in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), originally published in 1961.
32. For more on the city as a work of art, see Jan Verwoert, “World as Medium: On the Work of Stano Filko,” *e-flux journal* 28 (October 2011), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/world-as-medium-on-the-work-of-stano-filko/>. Pertinent passage regarding a work that Stano Filko and Alex Mlynárčik realized in 1965: “HAPPSOC 1 . . . was announced by a simple invitation card to the city-wide artwork, listing among other things the materials used in the work: ‘138036 women, 128727 men, 49991 dogs, 18009 houses, 165236 balconies, 40070 water pipes in homes, 35060 washing machines, 1 castle, 1 Danube in Bratislava, 22 theatres, 6 cemeteries, 1000801 tulips, . . . etc.’ The grand gesture of seizing a whole city with the sublime force of one thought is thus offset by the modest form of its announcement (a small card) and the laconic enumeration of the mundane parts of the whole. The manner in which the grand and small, the sublime and mundane are made to play off of each other in the form of this piece conveys a liberating sense of irony. It shakes off the curse of the Gesamtkunstwerk to which its historical proponent, Richard Wagner, fell prey. Hooked on the furor of the absolute, Wagner had no chance but to inflate his work to ever more ridiculously grandiose dimensions.”
33. “*pathos* (n.): ‘quality that arouses pity or sorrow,’ 1660s, from Greek *pathos* ‘suffering, feeling, emotion, calamity,’ literally ‘what befalls one,’ related to *paskhein* ‘to suffer,’ and *penthos* ‘grief, sorrow’; from PIE root \**kwent(h)-* ‘to suffer, endure’ (cf. Old Irish *cessaim* ‘I suffer,’ Lithuanian *kenčiu* ‘to suffer,’ *pakanta* ‘patience’).” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.
34. Compare Buster’s staged photograph of Woodman [p. 6] with Titian’s painting *Sisyphus* (1548–49), for example.
35. For example, Buster’s early works, such as *Selective Disposal Project* (1973) [p. 33], *Woodman* (1974) [p. 45], and *Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal* (1974) [p. 41], could be discussed with the same gravitas and reverence as Robert Smithson’s *Monuments of Passaic* (1967), *Asphalt Rundown* (1969), and *Partially-Buried Woodshed* (1970), or Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Fake Estates* (1973), *Cuts* (multiple dates), *Bingo* (1974), and *Window Blow-Out* (1976). Matta-Clark’s *Cherry Tree* (1971) could be a starting point for discussing Buster’s *Crow’s Nest* (ca. 1979) [p. 53], *1st Ave, Queen Anne Cherry Ladder* (ca. 1980) [p. 52], *Tree Guards* (1978–present) [p. 57], and *Urban Arboretum* (1978–present) [p. 51]. *Urban Arboretum* could be further contextualized with Alan Sonfist’s *Time Landscape* (1965) or Joseph Beuys’s *7,000 Oaks Project* (1982) for Documenta 7. Buster’s *Woodman* should also be placed in mythical conversation with Kim Jones’s *Mudman* (1976); the gaps between Buster’s *90 Pine Show* (1983) [p. 65], Edward Kienholz’s *Barney’s Beanery* (1965), and

- Allan Kaprow's *Environments* (1956) could be bridged; and Buster's audio performances on half-inch videotape, *Pilchuck Audio Studies* (1971–72) [p. 31], could be placed in the lineage descending from the Dadaists to John Cage and George Maciunas and on through Allan Kaprow and the early absurdities of William Wegman.
36. On the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, *New York Times* critic Nicolai Ouroussoff writes, "The sense of exertion and carefully focused energy brings to mind that marvelous scene in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in which camp laborers race to build a perfectly level wall, driven by their own sense of pride rather than the whip of the camp guard. It is a quasi-mystical experience, as well as an antidote to the cool abstraction of bureaucrats and intellectuals." Ouroussoff, "Timely Lessons from a Rebel, Who Often Created by Destroying," *New York Times*, March 3, 2007.
  37. On the relationship between Buster's *Host Analog* (1991–present) and Mark Dion's *Neukom Vivarium* (2006), see Sheila Farr, "A Critic's-Eye-View of the New Olympic Sculpture Park," *Seattle Times*, January 18, 2007; and Graves, "The Outside Artist" (see n. 11).
  38. I have taken liberties with the usage of Aristotle's rhetorical modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—in the organization and content of this text. Sections were organized this way, but Buster has been substituted for the speaker, and text for the spoken word. From Aristotle: "Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker [ethos]; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [pathos]; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself [logos]." Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Cosimo, 2010), originally published by Oxford University Press, London, 1910.
  39. "*salient* (adj.): 1560s, 'leaping,' a heraldic term, from Latin *salientem* (nominative *saliens*), present participle of *salire* 'to leap,' from PIE root *\*sel-* (4) 'to jump' (cf. Greek *hallesthai* 'to leap,' Middle Irish *saltraim* 'I trample,' and probably Sanskrit *ucchalati* 'rises quickly'). It was used in Middle English as an adjective meaning 'leaping, skipping.' The meaning 'pointing outward' (preserved in military usage) is from 1680s; that of 'prominent, striking' first recorded 1840, from *salient point* (1670s), which refers to the heart of an embryo, which seems to leap, and translates Latin *punctum saliens*, going back to Aristotle's writings. Hence, the 'starting point' of anything." *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.
  40. Writer's Dreamtools Slang Thesaurus, s.v. "honesty," <http://www.writersdreamtools.com/view/guest/slang.asp>; Wikipedia, s.v. "hobo," <http://en.wikipedia.org>.
  41. "*climax* (n.): 1580s, in the rhetorical sense (a chain of reasoning in graduating steps from weaker to stronger), from Late Latin *climax* (genitive *climacis*), from Greek *klimax* 'propositions rising in effectiveness,' literally 'ladder,' from root of *klinein* 'to slope,' from PIE root *\*klei-* 'to lean.'" *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://etymonline.com>.





## PILCHUCK AUDIO STUDIES

1971–72

Buster Simpson came to the Pacific Northwest in the early 1970s as part of the first group of artists who helped to establish Pilchuck Glass School. His early audio studies are among the first works he produced in the region. Simpson's early ad hoc and process-driven art-making ethos is revealed in works as simple as dragging a contact microphone across the forest floor and recording the rhythm of making cedar shakes for Pilchuck buildings or as ambitious as turning an entire field into an "instrument" by playing a wire strung across it. The audio studies also display his influences, which include the performances of the Michigan-based collective the ONCE Group, the Happenings of Allan Kaprow, the environmental works of Robert Smithson, and the experimental, cross-disciplinary practices of artists associated with Black Mountain College such as John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Rauschenberg.

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PILCHUCK AUDIO  
STUDIES

1971–72

Pilchuck Glass School,  
Stanwood, Wash.



*Selected Disposal Project*

SELECTED DISPOSAL PROJECT  
~~ABOVE POETRY~~ FRIEDLANDER GALLERY  
VESLER - SEATTLE, WA. 98104  
89 MU. 2-9235

3rd & 4th floors

Friday 12/14 sunset  
Saturday: ~~final performance~~  
P. project completion

*Garyson  
BMC*

Postcard announcement with first days dust accumulation.



## SELECTIVE DISPOSAL PROJECT

1973

In 1973, after his first two summers at Pilchuck, Simpson moved to downtown Seattle and embarked on an important series of performances, site-specific interventions, and street actions. One of his first pieces in the city, *Selective Disposal Project*, took place in a neglected top-floor loft above the Polly Friedlander Gallery at 89 Yesler Way in Pioneer Square. The poetic act of simply cleaning a space with fellow artist Chris Jonic reveals the core ideals that inform much of Simpson's work to date: showing the process rather than the product as art; collaboration; caring for, documenting, and making work from society's waste; ad hocism; recycling; and reclamation. Beyond the emotive photographs and charged objects (including the gloves used in the cleanup) that comprise a handmade book for the project is a frame made from salvaged architectural moldings that holds what appears to be a shard of concrete with two bullet holes in it. The shard is, in fact, a stack of discarded newspapers that sat for decades under two slow drips from a leaking pipe in the ceiling. This persistent dripping is an apt metaphor for Simpson's dedicated, enduring practice.

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SELECTIVE DISPOSAL  
PROJECT

Above the Polly Friedlander  
Gallery, 89 Yesler Way,  
Pioneer Square, Seattle

1973

Collaboration with  
Chris Jonic



SELECTIVE DISPOSAL PROJECT  
DECEMBER 4th - 19th 1973  
CHRIS JONIC LEWIS SIMPSON

Common labor @ \$2.50 per hour, removing accumulation of remodeling and restoration projects dumped or stored on the 3rd and 4th floors (14,000 sq.ft.) 89 Yesler Way, Seattle, Washington. The debris was presented and recorded. Salvage was offered to visitors and the dregs were destined for a landfill site, the Tulalip Indian Reservation. Paid time consisted of that time when a load was collected and hauled to the dumpster ( four dumpsters were filled), selection time was all other. Occupancy was supported by a hot plate, icebox ( converted industrial cooler ) and burlap and polyethylene blankets. Input consisted of a power line and work lights, jugs of water, food, chain saw, hand tools, metal strapping, cinch and crimper, and cameras. Open 18th and 19th Labor process continues and recovered material offered for the taking. Special thanks Dave Cambell and Clare Conrad.



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SELECTIVE DISPOSAL  
PROJECT

1973

Above the Polly Friedlander  
Gallery, 89 Yesler Way,  
Pioneer Square, Seattle

Collaboration with  
Chris Jonic



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SELECTIVE DISPOSAL  
PROJECT

Above the Polly Friedlander  
Gallery, 89 Yesler Way,  
Pioneer Square, Seattle

1973

Collaboration with  
Chris Jonic

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ice box; fourth leg drip pail





boxed pigeon droppings

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SELECTIVE DISPOSAL  
PROJECT

1973

Above the Polly Friedlander  
Gallery, 89 Yesler Way,  
Pioneer Square, Seattle

Collaboration with  
Chris Jonic





## MYRTLE EDWARDS PARK PROPOSAL

1974

When the path for Interstate 5 was cut through the center of Seattle, the debris from existing streets and demolished buildings was dumped along the waterfront, and the concrete slab heaps and architectural fragments formed the raw and ragged “Elliott Bay Park,” as it was originally known. In 1974, Simpson proposed a project that would redesign the site by reorchestrating the rubble. He wanted the park design to be “honest” about its source material and intended that the site reflect and document the city’s history of progress and renewal. As Seattle’s waterfront is currently undergoing a complete redesign, this unrealized proposal is an important frame of reference and a reminder of Simpson’s prescience, light touch, and long view of history and urban planning. Since the time of this early proposal, the detritus has been plowed under, sod planted, Michael Heizer’s *Adjacent, Against, Upon* (1976)—a piece with some visual similarities to the original rubble—installed, and the park renamed Myrtle Edwards Park. Simpson, meanwhile, has gone on to design projects for waterfronts impacted by freeways in Boston and San Francisco and now, forty years later, has been commissioned for work to be included in the redesign of Seattle’s seawall.

MYRTLE EDWARDS PARK PROPOSAL	1974	Addressed to Seattle City Council and Seattle Parks and Recreation
Proposed for Elliott Bay Park, Seattle	Unrealized	

September 13, 1974

Mr. Bruce Chapman, City Councilman  
Seattle City Council  
1106 Municipal Building  
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Mr. Chapman:

As a local artist, I have become deeply concerned about some very basic premises guiding the development of Elliot Bay Park. If the first phase of the present plan is implemented, I feel we will have lost an exciting possibility to make this park one which reflects the cultural/artistic capacity of our city. The park's important location, its position as a visitor's park and commuter lane for bicycles and the potential of its existing resources, in my opinion, merit more consideration than the proposed "clean and green" program.

At their July meeting, I gave a presentation to the Parks Department expressing an alternative approach to the present plan. Though the presentation was received well, I felt that the Parks Department was apprehensive about the feasibility of my ideas. I believe that my ideas are feasible and could be implemented at a savings to the taxpayer and as a social service to the community.

Following is a brief description of some of those ideas:

- 1) Park development as a learning experience.  
Using the Neighborhood Youth Corp, an inexpensive work force, as the backbone of the project under the leadership/guidance of skilled craftsmen, engineers, architects and artists all working together.
- 2) Development through some "on-the-spot" decisions.  
This outlook could give the park a human element and scale much like the world famous Guell Park in Barcelona built by Gaudi or the uniqueness of the L.A. Watts Tower.
- 3) Creative use of Seattle architectural rubble.  
As much of Seattle's history is torn down, its material, instead of rubble, could become a resource for the park (i.e. Broadway High School cut stone as foundation of jetty).  
*POST NOTE: ART BUILDING IS PUSHING FOR RUBBLE OF PROJECT TO BECOME PART OF PROJECT - CONVERSATION MAY 1975*
- 4) Low Tide-High Tide Walkways  
Preserving the natural Shoreline. Creating Tidal pools which support marine life. Creation of Seawall.
- 5) Old Railroad Car Fence/Facility  
Using decommissioned R.R. cars to block the railroad traffic (instead of a standard fence) with the double function of serving as restrooms, diners, information centers, working facilities, etc.



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MYRTLE EDWARDS  
PARK PROPOSAL

1974

Addressed to Seattle  
City Council and Seattle  
Parks and Recreation

Proposed for Elliott Bay  
Park, Seattle

Unrealized





## WOODMAN

1974

Just as crows were a totemic representation of urban salvaging and adaptation for Simpson, Woodman was his mythic, humanized alter ego. Woodman would epically and episodically appear at sites of demolition or new development and carefully gather the debris, physically and metaphorically carrying the weight of history and the burden of urban renewal on his back. This tragicomic, emblematic figure, when not appearing in the flesh, could often be found in silhouette form accompanied by similar stylized crow imagery in the windows and doorways of buildings slated for demolition or in the heaps of detritus left in its wake. A powerful symbol of reclamation, *Woodman* signaled the need for a radical reconsideration of proposed developments and served as a witness to, and caretaker of, the city's ever-progressing history.

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WOODMAN	1974	
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Seattle



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WOODMAN

1974

Seattle







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WOODMAN

1974

Seattle





## URBAN ARBORETUM

1978–present

Few artists can claim a stretch of ten blocks in the core of a metropolis as their studio, let alone make it a work of art in and of itself, but Simpson and collaborators Ann Hershey, Jack Mackie, Joan Paulson, and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart did just that with the *Urban Arboretum* project, which began in 1978. At that time, Seattle’s Belltown was a dilapidated neighborhood and practically devoid of mature trees. With initial seed money from local business owners and residents, the collaborators embarked on an ambitious series of tree plantings, installed protective guards for existing trees, and placed sandstone bus stop benches, historical markers, and other civic amenities in what they called their “laboratory.” Over the next two decades, the city, recognizing the project’s benefits, finally began to officially fund portions of the work, and the street went from fallow to fruiting under the moniker of *First Avenue Streetscape Project*. Now more than thirty varieties of mature trees line the streets, and the benches, as Simpson likes to say, still “bear the wait” of the neighborhood’s inhabitants. The result of this grassroots-level, DIY approach to urban design and renewal is one of the greatest living legacies Simpson and his collaborators have given to Seattle.

In 1979, the artists associated with *Urban Arboretum* failed to save a sixty-year-old Queen Anne fruiting cherry tree on the site of what was to become the first condo development in the area. Even Simpson’s occupation of the tree in *The Crow’s Nest*, a platform fashioned from rebar and other building materials, proved unsuccessful. Undaunted and committed to redoubling his efforts, Simpson lovingly carved a ladder from that original “witness to history” so that he could climb the next tree in need of preservation. As seen in the related photomontage, when a new fruiting cherry was planted nearby, the artists made sure to tell the story and safeguard the new sapling with protective guards made from the original tree’s limbs.

<p>URBAN ARBORETUM</p> <p>First Avenue (between Virginia and Denny), Belltown, Seattle</p>	<p>1978–present</p> <p>Ongoing streetscape project</p>	<p>Funded in part by Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts</p> <p>Collaboration with Ann Hershey, Jack Mackie, Joan Paulson, and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart</p>
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**URBAN ARBORETUM**

First Avenue (between  
Virginia and Denny),  
Belltown, Seattle

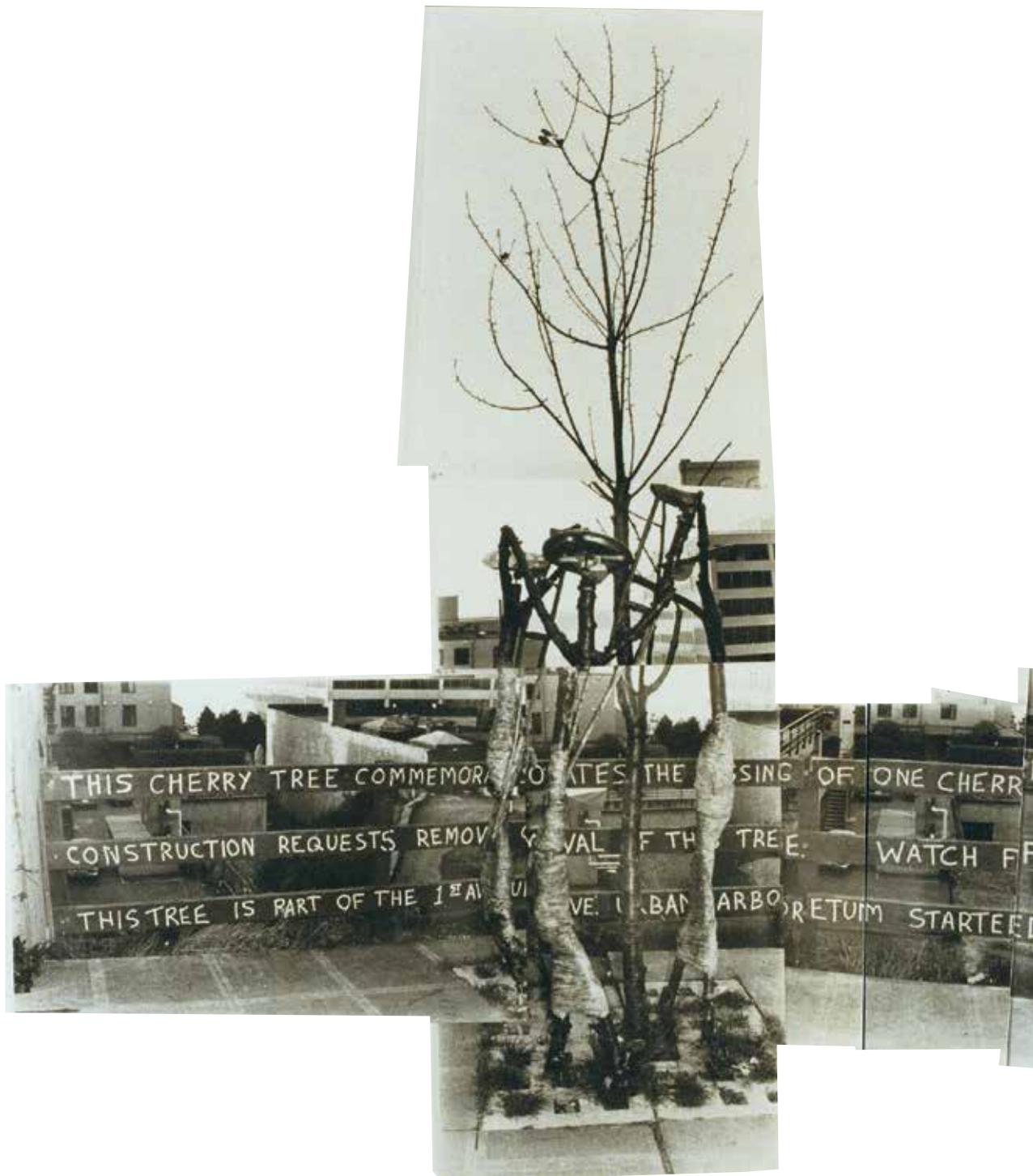
1978–present

Ongoing  
streetscape  
project

Funded in part by Seattle Department of  
Transportation, Seattle Arts Commission,  
and the National Endowment for the Arts

Collaboration with Ann Hershey,  
Jack Mackie, Joan Paulson, and Paul  
and Deborah Rhinehart

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URBAN ARBORETUM

First Avenue (between Virginia and Denny), Belltown, Seattle

1978–present

Ongoing streetscape project

Funded in part by Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts

Collaboration with Ann Hershey, Jack Mackie, Joan Paulson, and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart





## TREE GUARDS

1978–present

It's tough to be a tree in a changing city. In Seattle in the late 1970s, if trees didn't lose out to urban renewal or development projects, they fell victim to the recklessly intoxicated or simply careless. Some young trees suffered easily mended broken limbs, while older trees were unceremoniously uprooted, mostly for aesthetic reasons. Recognizing their plight, Simpson and other artists began a series of plantings and protective acts for their *Urban Arboretum*. To maintain a sense of history of unintended "urban bonsai," as they called it, they used crutches to support broken limbs and chain link or discarded bed frames to serve as protective fences for the new or most vulnerable. Once the utility of *Tree Guards* was embraced and validated by the neighborhood and the city, elements were cast in more durable materials and the ad hocism became standardized.

<p>TREE GUARDS</p> <p>First Avenue (between Virginia and Denny), Belltown, Seattle</p>	<p>1978–present</p> <p>Ongoing streetscape project</p>	<p>Funded in part by Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts</p>
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## SHARED SOLAR CLOTHESLINE

1978 / 2013

The Frye Art Museum extended the reach of Simpson's retrospective by restaging one of his most iconic works in the streets of Seattle on the thirty-fifth anniversary of its original installation. *Shared Solar Clothesline* was originally realized on Solar Day in 1978 in Post Alley between Pine and Virginia streets in an attempt to unite a fixed-income housing project dating back to 1901 and a new condo development—the first structure to be built in the neighborhood in fifty years—with what the artist labeled “banners of urban reoccupation.” Three stories high, with nine lines, *Shared Solar Clothesline* was both a solar clothes dryer and a kinetic, sonic, and social sculpture of common poetic utility. In this dramatization of the resettlement of a downtown neighborhood, Simpson's shared amenity attempts to mend the gap between young, urban professionals new to the area and the growing ranks of displaced artists and low-income workers who once thrived there.

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SHARED SOLAR  
CLOTHESLINE

1978 / 2013

Post Alley at Virginia Street,  
Seattle





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SHARED SOLAR  
CLOTHESLINE

1978 / 2013

Post Alley at Virginia Street,  
Seattle



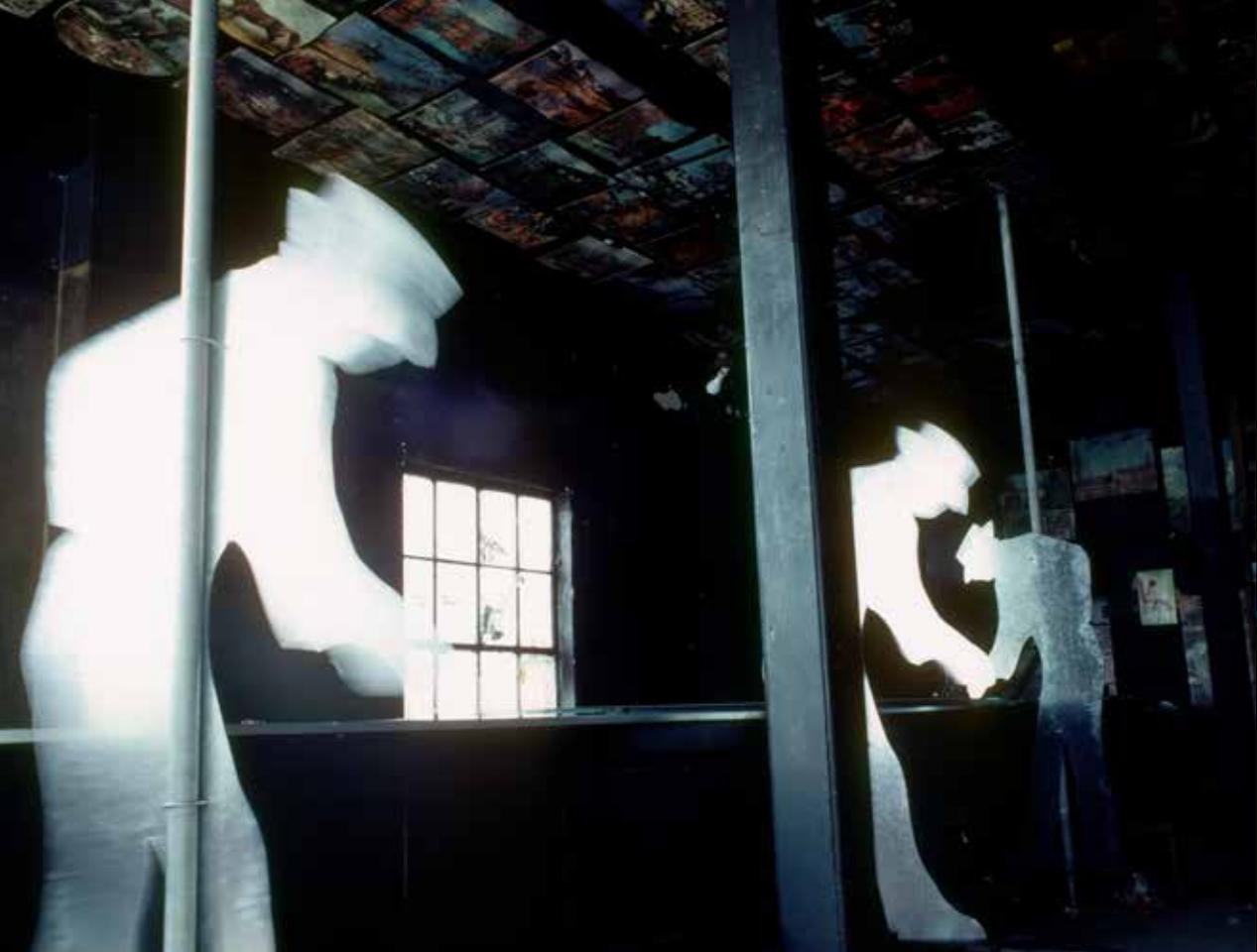


## BELLTOWN PAN

Early 1980s

Artists in New York in the 1940s and 1950s had the Cedar Tavern; artists in Seattle in the 1970s and 1980s had the Belltown Café and Two Bells Tavern. Simpson wrote that the Belltown Café on First Avenue was the “social hearth for the community” in the early 1980s. As work continued on *Urban Arboretum*, the café served as boardroom, laboratory, and clubhouse. In exchange for food, Simpson designed the exterior sign for the café—a large cooking pan in the shape of a bell fabricated from riveted sheet copper lined with tin. A reclaimed copper sauté pan served as its clapper. Every Groundhog Day, the pan was taken down, cleaned, and used to cook a community feast in celebration of the coming of spring. Slices of root pie made with parsnips, beets, carrots, and rutabaga sold for 99 cents—the ingredients signifying the diminishing winter supplies in the root cellar as well as the preferred diet of the groundhog. Although the café has been replaced by a new development, Simpson would like to return the pan to its original site and reinstate the yearly celebration for the community.

<p>BELLTOWN PAN</p> <hr/> <p>Belltown Café, 2309 First Avenue, Seattle</p>	<p>Early 1980s</p> <hr/> <p>Annual event</p>	<p>Sponsored by Belltown Café</p> <hr/> <p>Collaboration with Ben Marks and Walter White</p>
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## 90 PINE SHOW

1983

From 1973 to 1984, Simpson maintained numerous studios in Seattle, along First Avenue and Post Alley in Belltown and in the Pike Place Market area, often secured on a month-to-month basis in underused, abandoned, or soon-to-be-demolished buildings. The Pine Tree Tavern, located at 90 Pine Street near the entrance to the Market, was slated for demolition, but before the wrecking ball came, Simpson spent a year working on *90 Pine Show*, an ambitious, immersive site-specific installation meant to honor and document this overlooked piece of architectural history, bring attention to the site's unique urban and social significance, and highlight the moral, political, and historical "cost" of new development.

Through peepholes strategically placed along the side of the building, passersby could peer inside at the dozens of sculptural and pictorial vignettes continuously being staged by Simpson using found, reclaimed, and recycled materials. At the heart of the installation was *Counterparts*, a set of stooped figures bellied up to a bar filled with hundreds of empty beer bottles. The figures were connected by driveshafts running through the roof to their wind vane counterparts. As the vanes twisted in the breeze, they activated the arms of the stooped figures, which swept bottles off the bar and sent them crashing to the floor. The broken bottles were then collected by Simpson for recycling, and new rounds of "dead soldiers" were staged in this endless Sisyphean exercise. *Counterparts* made manifest the winds of change brought on by development as the old continually had to give way to the new.

Simpson installed another glass recycling work, *Crowbar Bottle Trap*, in the alley behind the Pine Tree Tavern. Recognizing that bottles left by the homeless and late-night revelers littered the neighborhood, he made recycling an arcade game that might encourage responsible waste disposal. Crow silhouettes—Simpson's symbol for urban salvaging—served as targets at the end of the alley. All thrown bottles, whether they hit the target or not, were funneled into a barrel for later processing.

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90 PINE SHOW

1983

Pine Tree Tavern,  
90 Pine Street, Seattle



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90 PINE SHOW

1983

Pine Tree Tavern  
90 Pine Street, Seattle









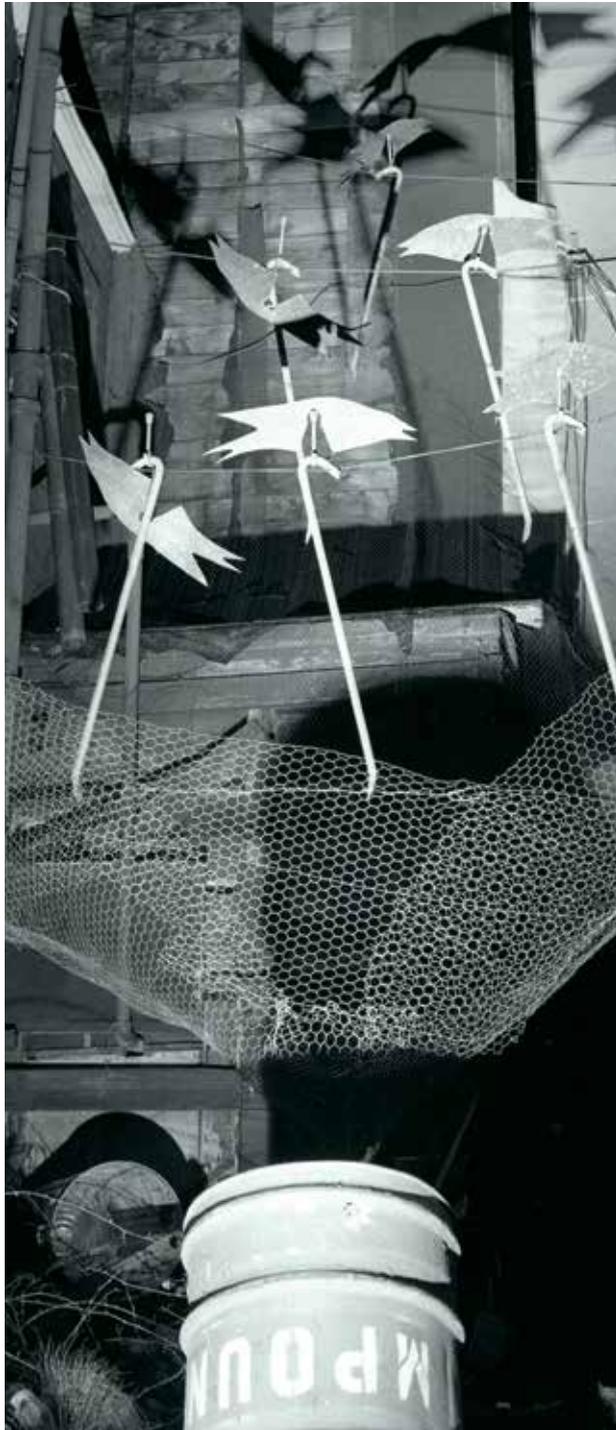


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90 PINE SHOW

1983

Pine Tree Tavern,  
90 Pine Street, Seattle



90 PINE SHOW

1983

Pine Tree Tavern  
90 Pine Street, Seattle







## PROJECTING LIMESTONE PURGE

1983

In this decidedly twentieth-century rendition of the story of David and Goliath, a humble, stripped Simpson projected limestones at the greatest symbol of global commerce—the World Trade Center, its twin towers housing many of the companies most responsible for environmental pollution. This classic example of agitprop was a violent, though benign, attempt to bring attention to ecological issues; each stone carried the word “purge.” Little did Simpson know that eighteen years later, terrorists with radically different agendas would make the felling of the Goliath literal in the tragic events of 9/11.

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PROJECTING  
LIMESTONE PURGE

1983

Lower Manhattan,  
New York





## ANTACID PURGE

1983–present

Simpson has been concerned with the health and sustainability of water supplies for much of his career. The *Antacid Purge* series began in 1983 when he “seeded” the Tolt River watershed—Seattle’s drinking water source—with limestone disks to call attention to water pollution. The 1991 agitprop performance *Hudson River Headwaters Purge* became one of his most publicized and important works on the issue. Identifying the effect of toxic industrial runoff near the headwaters of the Hudson River on wildlife and ecosystems downstream, he prescribed large limestone tablets to illuminate the problem and provide an example of one way to counteract it. The “river Roloids,” as they were called by the press at the time, deacidify and “sweeten” the water through natural filtration. A short video loop of the performance suggests the persistence needed to overcome the futility of the exercise, while shards from one of the disks Simpson cast into the river in 1991 and retrieved ten years later exhibit the consequences of exposure to the polluted waters.

ANTACID PURGE	1983–present	
Hudson River; Tolt River; Esopus Creek; Nisqually River	Ongoing project	





## WHEN THE TIDE IS OUT THE TABLE IS SET

1983–present

As an artist in residence at Artpark in Lewiston, New York, in 1978, Simpson placed eight concrete casts of paper picnic plates under a sewage outfall that emptied into the Niagara River near the Love Canal neighborhood. The resulting stained concrete casts formed *Setting of Eight in Toxic Spillway* (1978), the first in a series of works addressing river pollution by making the toxins manifest as the finished “glaze” of the objects. In 1983, Simpson took the process a step further when he was an artist in residence in the Kohler Arts/Industry program in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The Kohler Company is renowned for vitreous china bathroom and kitchen fixtures, and Simpson used its facility to low-fire 300 ceramic plates that he then deployed in sewage outfalls in the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, the East River in New York City, and Puget Sound in Seattle. After retrieving the plates, he high-fired them, and the natural minerals in human waste and other river toxins created a marvelous array of polychromatic glazes, or, as Simpson notes, “The effluent now becomes the embellishment.” The title *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set* is taken from a Salish saying expressing the idea that a feast of shellfish can be had at low tide, but for Simpson, as this ongoing series finds, the only overabundance is that of pollutants.

<p>WHEN THE TIDE IS OUT THE TABLE IS SET</p> <p>Hudson River; Duwamish River; Cuyahoga River; East River; Puget Sound</p>	<p>1983–present</p> <p>Ongoing project</p>	<p>Plates produced in residence at the Kohler Arts/Industry program</p>
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WHEN THE TIDE IS  
OUT THE TABLE IS SET

Hudson River; Duwamish  
River; Cuyahoga River;  
East River; Puget Sound

1983–present

Ongoing  
project

Plates produced in  
residence at the Kohler  
Arts/Industry program





## PINE STREET JOIST BENCH

1986–present

In the early 1980s, as the old constantly gave way to the new in downtown Seattle, Simpson was compelled to find ways to honor the history that was being lost while still providing poetic utility for the discarded materials of urban progress. The inscription on *Pine Street Joist Bench* eloquently sums up one tactic, “AN OLD HOTEL DEMOLISHED HERE ONLY THIS FLOOR JOIST REMAINS TO BEAR YOUR WAIT.” Simpson secured a certificate of approval in October 1986 to install the bench fashioned from the salvaged wood near its original, context-specific site, but the owner of the new Inn at the Market removed it without permission on the grounds that it encouraged vagrancy and drug use. Recent attempts to reinstall the bench as an extension of Simpson’s retrospective at the Frye Art Museum, using the original and fully legal certificate, have been met with similar objections, roadblocks, and bureaucratic red tape. It is our hope that the bench will one day return to its rightful place in the city.

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PINE STREET JOIST BENCH	1986–present	
Inn at the Market, Pine Street, Seattle	Removed; resiting planned	

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## COMPOSTING COMMODE

1987

Scene: An anonymous Seattle storefront bordering First Avenue circa 1987. Simpson enters right, a can of surveyor's spray paint in hand. After spraying four corners directly on the sidewalk, he pauses. A man carrying a sledgehammer enters right and starts breaking up the concrete that Simpson demarcated. Cut.

So begins a video of the temporary street action *Composting Commode*. Recognizing that "indiscriminate street level defecation" was a growing problem in the Belltown neighborhood, Simpson and other *Urban Arboretum* collaborators created a simple solution that also had the added benefit of fertilizing the soil where a tree could be planted in the future. A retrofitted portable commode placed over the tree pit served as a stoop toilet, and its aeration system expedited composting. Once the pit was full, *Composting Commode* could be moved to the site designated for the next tree in the arboretum. Numerous attempts to obtain proper permitting from the city failed, but the legacy of the work can be found not only in the dialogues it created but also in the thriving dogwood tree at the original site.

COMPOSTING COMMUNE	1987	
First Avenue, Belltown, Seattle	Prototypes tested	





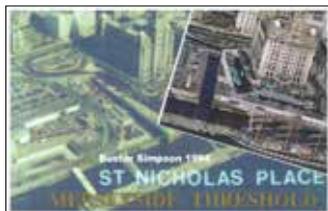
## HOST ANALOG

1991–present

*Host Analog* is a patient public sculpture. Commissioned for the new convention center in Portland, Oregon, it consists of segments of a five-hundred-year-old Douglas fir that fell into the Bull Run watershed, which provides fresh water to the city. The tree was deemed unsuitable for lumber in the 1960s, and Simpson relocated huge, eight-by-eight-foot pieces of the trunk near the entrance of the Convention Center to serve as a “nurse log”—a rotting, though still fecund, fallen timber that provides habitat for new growth. When first installed, *Host Analog* was practically devoid of other plant life. Over the past two decades, it has established itself in this new environment, nursing both plants from the tree’s original location and urban plants that have found purchase on its welcoming surface. Like the convention center itself, the log plays “host” to numerous plant forms, accommodating everything from ground covers such as Oregon grape and salal, mosses, and fungi to seedlings of willow, birch, western red cedar, and hemlock. An ever-evolving, ever-adapting living sculpture, *Host Analog* reminds us to be mindful of the pace of nature when considering urban planning. Simpson put it best when he described *Host Analog* as “a work of art that won’t be finished for a thousand years.”

<p>HOST ANALOG</p> <p>Oregon Convention Center, Portland, Ore.</p>	<p>1991–present</p> <p>Still growing</p>	<p>Funded by Metro Percent for Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and private funds managed by the Regional Arts &amp; Culture Council</p>
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## SELECTED ART MASTER PLANS AND PROPOSALS



**ST. NICHOLAS PLACE  
MERSEYSIDE  
THRESHOLD, 1994**

Proposal for a commission

Liverpool, United Kingdom

Designed for the floating roadway running along the River Mersey in Liverpool, this proposal outlines a plan to create a threshold through which the river can return to its historic shoreline, reclaim its wetlands, and reestablish a tidal marsh. Components of the proposed project include a musical buoy designed as a homage to John Cage and the Beatles and a balustrade dedicated to recognizing the shore's history as a site for immigration.

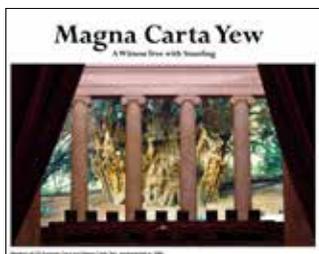


**DIALOG ENTLANG DER  
DONAU (DIALOGUE ALONG  
THE DANUBE), 1994**

Proposal for a commission

Vienna

This proposal describes a plan to make the Danube canal corridor in Vienna a more welcoming retreat for citizens by providing landscaping, a promenade, amenities, and periodic art experiences staged in the water and along the shore. The proposed design utilizes the natural changes in water pressure in the Danube to create choreographed hydrokinetic events without the use of electricity. Sculptural gabions designed to look like classical Venus figures would protect the shoreline, provide pharmaceutical cleansing of the water, and contribute to riparian habitat mitigation.



**MAGNA CARTA YEW:  
A WITNESS TREE WITH  
STANDING, 1996–PRESENT**

Self-generated proposal

Washington, D.C.

This proposal aims to plant a scion of a 3,000-year-old yew tree—the tree under which the Magna Carta was signed—on the front lawn of the United States Supreme Court. The original tree still stands in Runnymede, England, as a witness to the founding of constitutional law. Initial approval for the project was given by the Curator of the Bedgebury National Pinetum in England in 1996 and the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., in 2004. The project was submitted to the Marshall of the Supreme Court in 2005 and again in 2009, but it still awaits approval by the Supreme Court.



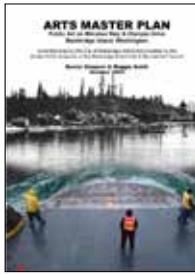
**LEVEE AS ARMATURE:  
TOWARD ART, ECOLOGY,  
AND COMMUNITY, 2002**

Art master plan

Santa Cruz, Calif.

Commissioning agency:  
Santa Cruz Art Commission

This commissioned public art master plan proposes to utilize the ready-made armature of the San Lorenzo levee in Santa Cruz to present visual concepts that signal a healthy river ecosystem, to rejoin the river with the community, and to realize the potential of the levee as a key urban amenity. The plan describes potential collaborative approaches, establishes design guidelines, and provides resources for artists.



**PUBLIC ART ON WINSLOW WAY & OLYMPIC DRIVE, 2003**

Commissioning agency:  
Bainbridge Island Arts & Humanities Council

Art master plan

Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Collaborator:  
Maggie Smith

Created for Bainbridge Island, this master plan aims to develop a vision for public art on two main city streets; to embrace the unique identity of the island; to plan an environment that celebrates arrival to the island; to combine street improvements with opportunities for art; and to provide opportunities for collaboration between disciplines.



**BRIGHTWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM, 2003**

Commissioning agencies:  
King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks and the Cultural Development Authority of King County

Art master plan

Woodinville, Wash.

Collaborators:  
Ellen Scllod and Jann Rosen-Queralt

Taking a philosophical approach, this master plan describes criteria, guiding principles, and opportunities for art at a wastewater treatment plant. It provides guidance and resources for future artists involved in the project and informs the general public about the context for art in the water treatment system.



**SOUTHEAST FALSE CREEK ART MASTER PLAN, 2007**

Commissioning agency:  
City of Vancouver

Art master plan

Vancouver

This commissioned art master plan reenvisioned an industrial waterfront neighborhood as a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable urban village. Taking a holistic approach, the plan aims to unify the transformation of the neighborhood in the face of complicated building schedules and the involvement of multiple developers.



**REDEVELOPMENT OF AL RAYYAN ROAD CORRIDOR, 2008**

Commissioning agency:  
Doha Urban Planning & Development Authority

Commissioned proposal

Doha, Qatar

Collaborator:  
Otak International

Commissioned as part of a streetscape project in Doha, Qatar, this proposal outlines a landscape architecture and art strategy to channel water used for prayer in mosques to newly designed and existing community gardens and parks.

// More art master plans and proposals can be found at [www.bustersimpson.net](http://www.bustersimpson.net).

REARVIEW MIRROR: A CONVERSATION

BUSTER SIMPSON  
AND SCOTT LAWRIMORE



**As you were preparing for *Surveyor*, you were honored with the opportunity to be among the first artists to take part in the new Robert Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida. What was that experience like?**

// First of all, in a residency, your life is unencumbered. Without the distractions of everyday life, you have the opportunity to be the pure philosopher that you had always aimed to be.

I spent a lot of time exploring the site, Captiva Island, and making new context-specific work. At the same time, though, I found myself using Captiva as a lens through which to consider my ongoing work in Seattle, specifically my commission for the Elliott Bay Seawall Project. The residency provided a gracious environment for thinking through what poetic metaphor these two shores might share.

Another of my activities at the residency was printing images from my archive. Image is the teleprompter for a lot of visual artists, myself included, so seeing those iconic images coming off the printer made me reflect on my career. It was an interesting dynamic to be driving forward with new work while also looking in the rearview mirror at significant past moments in my career.

Living collectively with other artists during the residency was another catalyst for reflection. There were visual artists, dancers, writers, musicians—a variety of disciplines coexisting and playing off one another, very much in the spirit of Rauschenberg's history of collaboration. It made me think of Experiments with Art and Technology (EAT) and of the Black Mountain College model of collective, interdisciplinary learning, which were both very influential on the artistic atmosphere of the late 1960s, when I was emerging from art school. The residency took me right back to the interests and concerns of that moment.

**Knowing how important Rauschenberg was to you early in your career, I find it interesting that it was the Rauschenberg Residency that thrust you back into thinking about those early years. Can you talk about the influence Rauschenberg had on you then?**

// When I was in art school at the University of Michigan in the mid-1960s, everyone was aware of Rauschenberg. His iconography was real-time. He was taking imagery from current events, pulled straight off the press or from TV. That appealed to us because it was in step with the politics of the time—particularly in Ann Arbor, where issues were at the forefront and art and politics were mixed. Rauschenberg's work was radical, and radical art was political in a good way. I think Rauschenberg's mode of production was just in the air, so to speak, when I was in art school. We

were all picking up on that in our own work, although I think I was working with imagery more intuitively than my classmates.

In 1966, the art school buzzed over *9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering*, the performances at the Armory in New York City that were the first in the series of projects that became EAT. It appealed to those of us who were interested in new art forms and forums, and it reinforced much of what we had been experiencing with the performances of the ONCE Group in Ann Arbor at that time.

**I'm glad you mentioned the ONCE Group, the avant-garde collective of composers, visual artists, performing artists, architects, and filmmakers based in Ann Arbor. Knowing that you were in art school in Ann Arbor during the mid- to late 1960s, which was the heyday of the ONCE Group, I am curious what contact you had with the ONCE Group and what influence it had on you.**

// The ONCE Group was a vital part of the arts community in Ann Arbor at that time and was very influential. Members put on collaborative performances that were complex, visually stimulating, and intelligent, while maintaining a good Midwest sense of grounding. I appreciated that they did that on their own—without institutional backing—just because they recognized that this needed to be done.

For their performances, they brought a number of important figures to town. In 1965, they brought Rauschenberg and some Judson Dance Theater performers to Ann Arbor as part of ONCE AGAIN, a series of performances that occurred on top of the Maynard Street Garage. In that performance, I saw dance that was concept based and not necessarily choreographed—in which chance was a component. Rauschenberg and Steve Paxton, an experimental dancer and choreographer, did quite an interesting dance. They interlocked with each other and did a kind of “pinwheel” walk. It was a very ambitious piece, and they struggled with it, but it was quite beautiful. After that, Alex Hay performed a piece with a reel-to-reel tape player on his back. The audio seemed to be providing cues to his music. However, unbeknownst to him, the take-up reel was not engaged, so there was this stream of tape trailing behind him. At the time, I assumed this was intentional and found it brilliant.

In the ONCE Group performances, I saw risk taking, playing with chance, learning as you go—modes of operation that I recognize as still being part of my art practice today.

**Your first commissioned piece out of college was a collaborative installation for the Woodstock Music and Art Festival in 1969 [p. 88]. What eventually happened to that work seems to portend, or at least be a fitting metaphor for, your entire career. How did you get the “commission” and what was the fallout?**

// Shortly after graduating, I received a call from a friend who asked if I wanted to join a team of artists to make art in rural New York. It turned out to be the promoters for Woodstock who were providing the budget and honoraria for this project, but at the time, none of us—the ten participating artists—had any idea of the magnitude of that moment. We simply set out to respond to the site we were given. One of the first pieces I created consisted of wrapping large dead elm trees—victims of the Dutch elm disease that ravaged many urban city streetscapes—in reflective foil “space” blankets, which I intended as an environmental memorial. The festival promoters, however, considered this “off message” for the Woodstock frame of mind. Then the festival was evicted from Wallkill, New York, in early July and went to Max Yasgur’s farm, where

there were no standing elms, so we retooled our project to respond to the agrarian culture we found on the farm. We pulled in visual language and materials from the countryside to construct a large log structure that reflected notions of utopia and back-to-the-country simplicity. The structure was basically a plaything for an area where families could find refuge from the music festival below.

Of course, it turned out radically different. The festival became totally overwhelmed. Then it started to rain, and our structure was pillaged by the wet and desperate attendees. For ten young artists fresh out of college, seeing the pillaging of our precious art was horrifying. It felt really personal, because we had put so much effort into making these objects, but it was also a great wake-up call.

**This makes me think about the notion of how shamans have a moment of crisis, a mental or physical breakdown, before identifying their life's path of healing others. I wonder if you had such an experience, a crisis that set your career path. Was Woodstock your crisis?**

// The lesson from Woodstock was that in the desperate situation that ensued, the symbolic value we had given our materials—wood and straw—by transforming them into an art installation was less important than their face value as firewood and bedding. After all, our work was only a temporary intervention in the landscape.

As to whether Woodstock was my “crisis,” I think it was actually a combination of Woodstock and then my experiences as part of the first group of artists at Pilchuck Glass School just a few years later. Pilchuck started from a utopian notion, similar to the Black Mountain College model. We were imagining a self-sustaining, back-to-nature, multimedia art community. But really, during those first summers at Pilchuck, we were just trying to pull something together by the seat of our pants. As Dale Chihuly has put it—I’m paraphrasing—we were just a bunch of hippies on a tree farm.

What Woodstock and Pilchuck had in common is that they both made me realize that working in a more urban context might be more interesting than this utopian, return-to-nature idea. At Woodstock, it was the urban folks who came out and basically trashed the place, pulling out fence posts and leaving their trash all around for the cows to ingest. I started to realize that the city was the place where I should focus my work. Rather than deserting the city to go back to nature, I became interested in bringing the ethos of nature into the city and finding some discussion between the systems we see in nature and the systems of the city.

**Since those first summers, Pilchuck has gone on to single-handedly define an art movement in the region and to become the foremost international glass school. But it sounds like the goals were somewhat humbler in the early days. A moment ago, you mentioned the notion of utopia. I am curious if utopia was something you literally discussed at Pilchuck, or if it was implicit—if it was just naturally understood that you were going off the grid and trying to be sustainable. Was utopia a topic of discussion? And what sort of utopia were you imagining?**

// During those first summers at Pilchuck, we—the participants—were certainly working to establish what it would be, but none of us really knew what we were trying to define. We might have each been thinking about utopia in our own way, but collectively the utopian spirit was more organic.

There was no grand narrative of seeking utopia. History just played out in the direction it was gravitating toward.

In retrospect, I would say that it was an aesthetic utopia that we were after. However, this meant different things to different people. For some of us, food and housing could not be separated from the aesthetic, but there were others who were pure and simple object makers. So we were not all thinking in the same way, and we were working from a variety of priorities.

As time went on, though, Pilchuck moved away from the back-to-nature spirit and became, in a sense, more urban. Infrastructure was built up, and there was more focus on providing amenities rather than leaving participants to provide their own shelter and feed themselves. As the school had more to offer, there was less time to devote to survival. I wonder if, at this point, Pilchuck should have become a weaving school as Anne Gould Hauberg had suggested. Considering the pasture and natural dye sources, it would have made holistic sense for Pilchuck to become a weaving school and for the glass shop, with its roots in industry, to move back to the city.

**After leaving Pilchuck in 1973, you moved to Seattle. You mentioned feeling drawn toward working in an urban setting, but what brought you to Seattle specifically?**

// Clair Colquitt, a friend from the University of Michigan, suggested that I check out Seattle. Then I decided to stay because it felt right. Seattle in 1973 seemed like a good laboratory, because it was still pretty raw. There was a lot of work to be done—maybe like Detroit today, although not as bad. The economic slump was happening then, and there were still a lot of wooden buildings downtown—the big development projects were just about to start.

**Among your early projects in Seattle was *Woodman* (1974) [p. 45], a series of episodic appearances as your alter ego. One of the most heartbreaking and poignant moments in the exhibition is when you, as *Woodman*, are seen struggling to pick up a single piece of wood detritus from a demolition site to add to your already cumbersome load.**

// I think of that moment as a dance that was choreographed by necessity. For that particular appearance as *Woodman*, I had challenged myself to pick up every little piece of scrapped wood along Post Alley. In the video, you can see that I have this incredible load of wood carefully balanced on my back, and then I get too greedy and the equilibrium breaks, causing me to drop some of my load. So then I have to devise a way to retrieve it without dropping the rest. That's the dance—finding the threshold where I'm able to pick up what I have dropped while still maintaining control over my load.

Actually, in that dance, you can see some of the influence of Steve Paxton and other dancers and choreographers that I was exposed to through the ONCE Group. Paxton developed a form of dancing called contact improvisation, which is all about real-time give-and-take and finding thresholds. *Woodman's* dance shares a similar philosophy.

**To me, the *Woodman* action seems Sisyphean. You keep trying to pick up more wood only to drop it again. What did you hope to accomplish with *Woodman's* episodic appearances around Seattle in the early 1970s?**

// In the appearance of Woodman that we were just discussing, a beautiful old wooden building had been demolished, and all these faggots of wood had just been strewn about, discarded as trash. In fact, that wood was old-growth timber that had once played an integral role in a forest ecosystem. Woodman's heroic effort to collect that wood suggests that everything has value and requires respect, even wood scrap. In many ways, the *Woodman* action was futile. Woodman was a lone figure taking on an issue much too great to be solved single-handedly. But that was the point, to show that this issue required a collective response.

The *Woodman* action is in the spirit of being a caretaker of detritus, which is a recurring theme in your work. But throughout your career—even for projects in which waste and detritus are less central concerns—you have been known to dumpster dive for materials. The moment that for me best highlights the importance of dumpster diving in your career is the image you created at the Rauschenberg Residency that combines an image of Woodman dumpster diving in 1974 with a 2013 image of you dumpster diving at the residency. Beyond the necessities of a starving artist, where did this drive to dumpster dive come from?

// When I was a kid, I took out the garbage and always sifted through it with my imagination assigning it its value as treasure or trash. There is always good stuff in dumpsters, particularly at the end of a construction cycle, when the builders throw out all the materials they did not use that would be too expensive to restock. Even if I don't need anything, dumpster diving is a way for me to check on what people are throwing out. It's a kind of barometer for me, an indicator of various social and economic patterns. Dumpsters are very revealing about what we think we are and what we value.

Certainly, the necessities of being a starving artist also had something to do with it. During the lean years, I went dumpster diving not only for materials but for food, too. The trick was to accept dumpster diving as an extension of my philosophy about waste.

Let's talk about that philosophy. You care about waste. You catalogue and document it. Another example of this is the *Selective Disposal Project* (1973) [p. 33], particularly the artifacts that we included in the exhibition like the framed stack of paper perforated with what appear to be two bullet holes.

// The *Selective Disposal Project* was a collaboration I did with Chris Jonic in December of 1973, as soon as I moved to Seattle. Essentially, we took a "live-in job" cleaning an old warehouse floor above the Polly Friedlander Gallery at 89 Yesler. We looked at this as a job for which we should be paid, whereas Friedlander saw it as giving us a show. We were trying to balance doing the work to clean it up—shoveling bird droppings and clearing away building detritus—with putting on an exhibition by orchestrating the objects we found there. She had discarded a lot of things up there, including easels for viewing prints and stacks of paper. Above one of the stacks of paper, there was a leak in the ceiling. The paper had apparently been sitting there quite some time, because this minute drip had slowly worn its way through the paper to create the holes you mentioned. This whole project was about looking at how time had transformed the objects in the space and seeing the value in what time had created. It was archaeology, in a sense.

My *Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal* (1974) [p. 41] came from a similar spirit. I wanted to acknowledge the effects of urban development by leaving intact the piles of architectural rubble

that had been dumped on the waterfront. The idea was to preserve the unplanned landscape that had accumulated over time, rather than burying it to build a new landscape.

**The *Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal* was never realized, but I imagine that going through that process helped pave the way for later public art projects. What did you learn from working on that proposal?**

// I learned that because the proposal dealt with public turf, I needed to articulate a vision that would foster consensus and collaboration among a wide variety of public and community entities. Unfortunately, at the time, the access needed to pursue that collaboration simply was not there. The idea of an artist being part of the design process was a new one, so the groundwork had not yet been laid to make that possible. Sure, there were architects around town who worked with artists occasionally, but artists tended to be brought in as an afterthought rather than as an integral part of the planning process.

Although my vision for Myrtle Edwards Park could not be realized, I am reassured by the thought that the rubble is still intact within the grass-covered mound of the park as it exists today. I like to think that someday when the park is redesigned to create a more habitat-friendly waterfront, the existing “clean and green” layer can simply be peeled back, and the exposed architectural rubble can be reorchestrated to support that purpose.

**Just a few years after *Myrtle Edwards*, you were part of the first group of artists formally commissioned to create a public work in Seattle, the *Viewland/Hoffman Substation Project*, in 1979. What was the transition in your thinking from *Myrtle Edwards* to *Viewland/Hoffman*?**

// I was very interested in the media jump. I was going from thinking about rubble discarded on the water’s edge to thinking about electricity. Right away, I identified as intrinsic to the site a number of opportunities for manipulating pure energy into art. For instance, the substation had these enormous transformers that generated sixty-cycle hums. Because there were three transformers, it was conceivable that they could be manipulated to create a very interesting modulation of sound in the vein of sound artist Max Neuhaus, who used sound architecturally. Seattle City Light needed to insulate that sound anyway, so it seemed to me that the insulation could take the form of an aural piece. Another idea that I proposed—this time in the vein of Nikola Tesla—was to harness the static electricity in the air around the station to light a fluorescent tube that would illuminate the yard. Neither of those pieces was realized.

The formation of the design team was an arranged marriage, so to speak, and there was a period when we tested ideas on each other to determine our aesthetic thresholds and how we would work together. I quickly saw that we were not necessarily going to go in the direction of my initial ideas, so the project became less about physics and more about the collaboration between me and my fellow artists, Andrew Keating and Sherry Markovitz. Beyond learning each other’s thresholds, the three of us had to learn the thresholds of what would be accepted by our client, Seattle City Light, which had entered this collaboration without knowing where it would go. There had to be a lot of push and pull between our vision and the concerns of the client.

Once, during this process, we had nine City Light lawyers at a meeting with us to discuss the whirligigs by folk artist Emil Gehrke that we had proposed installing on the site. They were

debating whether placing the whirligigs in a self-contained, fenced-off area constituted risk management. So you can see how a lot of energy was put into conversation and negotiation around something that today looks benign—a bunch of whirligigs at a substation.

Speaking of that negotiation process, in the exhibition, the *Super 8 Triptych* (1973–1984 / 2013) includes several clips from seemingly boring footage of people in innocuous boardrooms and at bureaucratic roundtables [p. 105 gatefold]. Was that from *Viewland/Hoffman*? Why did you document that experience?

// All that roundtable footage is drawn from *Viewland/Hoffman*. One reason for documenting those meetings was to be able to watch the body language of the participants. More important, though, I realized right away that it was going to be a process-intensive project, and I felt that the process needed to be documented as part of the work. If you are not in those meetings, you are not aware of all the negotiations we had to go through to realize the final work. I wanted to illustrate that aspect of the work for my contemporaries.

That process has now repeated itself dozens and dozens of times in your career. You always work with a sky's-the-limit approach to realizing a project in the public sphere, and through these acts of bureaucracy and roundtables, you have constantly had to refine, discard, or adjust those initial ideas. I have heard you say that in these situations, logic has been on your side more often than not. Can you talk about that?

// One of the greatest assets for a public artist is the ability to quickly assess a situation and then respond to it creatively and appropriately. As a public artist, one has to be aware of the parameters of the project—the client, the budget, the site, and so on. If one's proposed concept responds directly to those parameters, then it is logical. In responding to the parameters, the artist also has the opportunity to represent those who are not at the design table—the ecologist, the poet, the sociologist, and even the economist. A concept that is both logical and poetic is often the most cost-effective in the long run.

That notion is exemplified in my recent commission *Carbon Veil* (2012) [p. 111 gatefold], a gossamer scrim draping two helical parking ramps at Sea-Tac International Airport. An earlier proposal for covering these structures had proved too expensive to fabricate and install, so I was commissioned to design an alternative. My proposal was built around the story of these structures as hexagonal nanotubes sucking up the carbon effluent that the cars were spewing out as they left the facility. I proposed using twisted hexagonal wire mesh of the type used for highway geotechnical applications to cover the structures, which was significantly less expensive, as well as faster and easier to install. The design is very simple. The mesh hangs over the structures, and where openings are needed, it is pulled back theatrically, like curtains. Logic and poetry.

In many ways, *Viewland/Hoffman* was on the cutting edge of public art initiatives worldwide. Of course, one could claim that public art goes back to the birth of civilization, but in terms of the modern sense of public art—bureaucratic, funded from taxes, civic minded—*Viewland/Hoffman* is a significant early example. How did Seattle develop such a successful public art program?

// A bit of semantics here: I prefer the phrase “art in public” to “public art.” The latter wrongly implies that art in public is a discrete subset of art.

There are many different approaches to art in public, and the approach we have developed in Seattle is just one of them. Philadelphia also developed a program for art in public early on, but their approach is different from ours—for example, they lack a robust design team process. East Coast cities often have more bureaucracy, and in many cases, art in public is controlled by parks or athletic departments, rather than curators who are really committed to quality art in public. Programs are most successful when the administrators and commissions serve the artist rather than political expedience.

I do think that Seattle has developed a successful infrastructure for art in public. I attribute this success in part to the level of cooperation and civic-mindedness in Seattle. However, it also owes a lot to support groups like Allied Arts and to the particular cast of characters that has been advocating for art in public here. Cath Brunner, Pat Fuller, Barbara Goldstein, Barbara Luecke, Jack Mackie, Norie Sato—these are all people who have pushed for artist-initiated public work rather than the top-down approach to art in public. They and others have also been outspoken about the need to improve the level of civic discourse about our aesthetic environment, which has been vital to creating a situation conducive to strong art in public.

**I think you are being modest about your own contributions to the development of art in public in Seattle. I think of early projects like *Urban Arboretum* (1978–present) [p. 51], when you and your collaborators saw issues within the city that needed to be addressed and took the initiative to develop ad hoc solutions on your own—before the city became involved and officially embraced them. You paved the way for the official art-in-public program by simply doing what needed to be done. You have also called the city out on certain issues and planted the seeds of new ways of thinking about funding art in public and supporting artists. But beyond advocating for art in public, are there ways that artists can contribute to civic-mindedness in the community through their work?**

// Art in public builds civic-mindedness when it provides tools to the community and when the work, in its very making, is social. One example of this in my practice is when I was commissioned as a consultant for the development of the King’s Cross railway goods yards in London in the mid-1990s. The developers were trying to figure out what to do with this essentially barren land. The only thing on the site was a large pile of architectural rubble that was ground up into aggregate and that was going into a batching plant to make concrete. Examination of the matrix of aggregate revealed generations of concrete conglomerate, unearthing a history of the use and reuse of these materials. I liked the idea of repurposing this historical rubble to build a development for the new millennium, and I proposed revealing the terrazzo, which had naturally formed from these materials over time, by polishing the exposed surfaces. Dealing with concrete—casting and polishing it—is very easy to learn, so my thought was to hire the chronically underemployed people who lived and squatted in the neighborhood to build the components of the new city. The idea was for the work to be social and to take the making out of the studio and into the street.

I see this happening today with Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Gramsci Monument* (2013), a structure currently being built at a housing project in the Bronx. As with my King’s Cross idea, he has gotten residents involved with the project by hiring them to fabricate and staff the structure. He’s

taking advantage of the situation and the available resources and is harnessing them as building blocks toward something constructive.

Closer to home, *Composting Commode* (1987) [p. 83], which I clandestinely installed on First Avenue in Seattle, functioned in a similar way. It was intended to provide the homeless with the most basic amenity of human dignity, and when they saw the commode being removed, they felt their sense of citizenship being removed as well. The commode had been a very basic but empowering tool that allowed them to feel like they were a part of the city and able to contribute to it by fertilizing the soil where a tree could be planted in the future.

**With your art in public, you are talking about providing literal tools to the community. In the exhibition, we focused more on providing metaphorical tools, tools for thinking about your practice as a whole. Toward the end of the exhibition, we dedicated one of our three largest galleries to what we were informally calling “Buster’s Tool Shed” [pp. 112–13]. We wanted not only to frame the “poetic utility” of the individual objects in that room but also to imply that virtually every piece you have created can be viewed as a “tool” in some way. With Wittgenstein’s dictum “the meaning is the use” in mind, the literal use is implied in these works, but can you walk us through some of the metaphorical imperatives of the objects?**

// In 1994, I visited the Wittgenstein House in Vienna and found Wittgenstein’s architecture to be all about use. This visit occurred when I was conducting a site visit for *Dialogue along the Danube* (1994 [p. 86]), a proposal for Vienna. I proposed to install a river-water pipe that would function as a tool to convey. The pipe was designed to produce a fluctuating head of water pressure that would episodically reveal itself through hydrokinetic events to raise awareness about habitat mitigation along the canal.

Wittgenstein’s dictum also seems appropriate in considering the shovel I conceived for the College of Engineering at the University of Maine. Reversing Duchamp’s snow shovel readymade *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915), I proposed that the tool be used as intended. Seniors in the College of Engineering would be presented with a shovel and expected to clear the snow around the hub of the College of Engineering, Cloke Plaza, which I designed. I conceived this task as an example of civic service and a reflection of their degrees.

*Wear/Hone* (2002), the grinding wheel, is a tool for sharpening. The words “hone” and “wear” are carved into either side of the wheel—two sides of the same coin. Literally, when you’re honing something, you’re also wearing portions of it away. Metaphorically, when you’re honing in on something, you’re excluding or wearing away other options. This is related to the band-saw blade, too, whose two sides have been turned into a single-sided Möbius strip. The poetry on the Möbius is cyclical—“carbon and earth builds to decay a cycle renewed back into carbon and earth builds to . . .” It doesn’t talk literally about sustainability; it talks about renewal and the physical processes of life and matter on this planet and how, despite us, those processes will continue.

*Glass Bell* (1995) is also a nice honing device, kind of a vector focusing sound with its bronze parabola. It’s also a homing device, with an “m”; bells like this originally provided orientation and guidance for ships trying to come to port in heavy fog. Viewers’ movements trigger the ringing of the bell, producing a chance composition audible throughout the exhibition.

**REARVIEW MIRROR: A CONVERSATION**    **BUSTER SIMPSON  
AND SCOTT LAWRIMORE**

*Level Spirit* (2013) is made from a twelve-foot Pyrex pipe that had hung in the Lincoln Tunnel for fifty years. Knowing that glass is a liquid, I hoped that it had slumped slightly in the middle, recording its horizontal repose, and could accommodate an air bubble when filled with water. Take this object that had another use, add a little time, and it can be used as a spirit level. It's now an incredibly sensitive device. It's the horizon line—this dynamic high-water mark—and maybe a metaphor for the show and my practice.

**Another significant tool in the exhibition is *Secured Embrace* (2011–present) [pp. 116–17], the concrete tetrapod clutching tree root wads currently stationed in the reflecting pool of the Museum.**

// *Secured Embrace* is a sentinel and welcoming figure at the entry to the Museum. The concrete anthropomorphic pod is an anchor—a tool, if you will—to hold the root wads, the biomass. *Secured Embrace* was designed for the public domain, specifically to be placed in rivers to provide marine habitat enhancement and protect migrating salmon. Placement of root wads with concealed anchors has been a common strategy for creating “natural”-looking habitats. My aesthetic criticism of such initiatives has always been that they are not honest about the fact that this is a man-made intervention to correct earlier man-made environmental damage. My approach with *Secured Embrace* is to reveal the reconstructed landscape by highlighting the man-made materials. Further, the anthropomorphic figure of the pod humanizes the intervention and provides a sculptural play between mass and buoyancy.

In 2011, I proposed installing iterations of *Secured Embrace* at the Army Corps of Engineers' new headquarters on the floodplain of the Duwamish. The idea was that they would first be placed in formation on the grounds in front of the building and later be redeployed down to the water, where they would serve their purpose as habitats. However, this ran into problems because of the General Services Administration's criteria for art that is sited: Can the art be moved after it has been sited? Also, can it be made out of materials that will eventually rot?

For the Frye Art Museum to restage *Secured Embrace* as part of the exhibition gives the project new life and opens up the possibility for it to find its way into future projects.

**I love the notion of the exhibition generating new work. We also included a selection of your unrealized project proposals in the exhibition with the thought that this might help some of them be realized.**

// I think it was important to include the proposals, because that verbal and visual language of the spiral-bound proposal and the presentation board are an essential part of my practice.

One of the proposals represented in the exhibition is *Magna Carta Yew* (1996–present) [p. 86], a proposal to plant a witness tree in front of the Supreme Court that I have been working to realize since 1996. The exhibition has provided the impetus to redouble my efforts to realize this project.

The work never ends.





BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR INSTALLATION VIEWS



BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR INSTALLATION VIEWS





## SUPER 8 TRIPTYCH

ca. 1973–1984 / 2013

These montages of Super 8mm film footage from the years spanning 1973–1984 were created especially for this exhibition and present many never-before-seen clips of Simpson’s seemingly tireless activity in the streets, alleys, waterways, and abandoned or soon-to-be-demolished buildings of Seattle. In them, we see the first appearances of his alter ego, Woodman, and his iconic salmon and crows made from reclaimed, found materials, as well as rare, historical moving images of major site-specific installations such as *Shared Solar Clothesline* (1978) and the ambitious *90 Pine Show* (1983).







BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR INSTALLATION VIEWS









BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR INSTALLATION VIEWS





## VIDEO DOCUMENTATION FROM PROJECTS

1983–2013 / 2013

The vast majority of Simpson's projects exist outside of the traditional gallery or museum framework for display, encompassing ephemeral street actions, time-based work, performances, and major public commissions. Luckily for posterity, Simpson has had the foresight to document many of them in video form. This series of videos brings together a small sample of his practice from 1983 to the present and includes rare footage of *Composting Commode* (1987), *90 Pine Show* (1983), and *Antacid Purge* (1983–present), as well as public works such as *Exchanger Fountain* (1993), *The Monolith* (2005), *Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile* (2008), and the temporary installation *Incidence* at the Museum of Glass (2002–8).

**CROWBAR BOTTLE TRAP**  
1983



**GLASS HOUSE OF CARDS**  
1985



**KETTLES AND CUPS**  
1988



**CISTERN DRUMS**  
1993



**SPRING CORDIALS**  
1994



**INCIDENCE**  
2002-8



**INSTRUMENT IMPLEMENT:  
WALLA WALLA  
CAMPANILE**  
2008



**CARBON VEIL**  
2012



ANTACID PURGE  
1983–present



COMPOSTING  
COMMUNE  
1987



HOST ANALOG  
1991–present



EXCHANGER FOUNTAIN  
1993



BRUSH WITH  
ILLUMINATION  
1998 / 2009



THE MONOLITH  
2005



WHOLE FLOW  
2009



WHEN THE TIDE IS OUT  
THE TABLE IS SET  
(DUWAMISH)  
1983 / 2013











...ON AND ...  
...ILLS TO DECAY ...  
...S TO DECAY A CYCLE ...  
...E ON ...  
...S TO DECAY ...





CARBON AND EARTH  
A CYCLE RENEWED

LEADS TO DECAY A CYCLE RENEWED

BACK INTO CARBON AND EARTH  
A CYCLE RENEWED





BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR INSTALLATION VIEWS





## LIST OF WORKS

All works are collection of the artist unless otherwise noted.

### GROUNDS

*Tree Guards*, 1978–present  
Powder-coated cast iron  
(cast 2013)  
Three: 40 x 55 x 42 in. each

*Secured Embrace*, 2011–present  
Prototype for shoreline  
habitat mitigation  
Cast concrete, tree root wads,  
stainless steel cable  
52 x 168 x 52 in.

*Sweetening the Pond*,  
1991–present  
Chorus of voxel frogs  
Limestone  
Seven: 30 x 36 x 3 in. each

### VESTIBULE

*Pilchuck Audio Studies*,  
1971–2  
Half-inch videotape transferred  
to digital video with audio  
6 minutes

### ROTUNDA

*Gabionne di Marble Venus*, 1993  
Maquette for *Dialog Entlang der  
Donau* (1994)  
Galvanized metal gabion, marble  
28 x 16 x 12 in.  
Private collection, Colorado

### VIEWPOINTS A GALLERY

*//*, 2013  
Hobo symbol for “the sky’s the  
limit” carved into the wall of  
the Museum with an ax as a  
trail blaze mark  
21 x 18 in.

*Double Header Finial*, 2013  
Anodized aluminum, steel,  
geotextile flag  
25 x 51 x 25 in.

*Finial Crow Dance*, 1976  
Super 8mm film transferred to  
video, oval mat, frame of anodized  
aluminum threshold stock  
Video: 8 minutes; frame: 24 x 35 in.

Photograph from *Woodman* (1974)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
42 x 25½ in.

### VIEWPOINTS B GALLERY

*Lichen Self-Portrait*, 2003  
Archival inkjet prints mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
Three: 25 x 18¾ in. each

Video from *Projecting Limestone  
Purge* (1983)  
Super 8mm film transferred to  
digital video  
1 minute, 23 seconds

Recreation of sling and stones from  
*Projecting Limestone Purge* (1983)  
Rubber inner tube, sash cord,  
limestone  
86 x 24 x 8 in.

Video from *Hudson River  
Headwaters Purge* (1991)  
Single-channel video  
3 seconds

Fragments of limestone disk from  
*Hudson River Headwaters Purge*  
(1991) (retrieved in 2000)  
Limestone  
28 x 28 x 2 inches

### VIEWPOINTS C GALLERY

Plaster from site of *Selective  
Disposal Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Plaster mounted to glass  
Two: 6 x 5 x 3 in. each

Photomontage of *Selective Disposal  
Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
8 x 96 in.

Photograph from *Selective Disposal  
Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Vintage gelatin silver print  
20 x 24 in.

Artist book from *Selective Disposal  
Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Black-and-white photographs,  
Polaroid, gloves, porcelain, dust,  
typewritten paper, wood splinter  
mounted to unbound paper  
11 x 8 in.

Framed artifacts from *Selective  
Disposal Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Reclaimed wood architectural  
moldings, glass, paper, glove  
12 x 12 x 1 in.  
Collection of Chris Jonic

Framed artifacts from *Selective  
Disposal Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Reclaimed wood architectural  
moldings, glass, wire, photograph  
11 x 16 x 1 in.  
Collection of Chris Jonic

Framed artifacts from *Selective  
Disposal Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Reclaimed wood architectural  
moldings, glass, nail, gelatin  
silver print  
10 x 10 x 1 in.  
Collection of Chris Jonic

Framed artifact from *Selective  
Disposal Project* (1973)  
Collaboration with Chris Jonic  
Reclaimed wood architectural  
moldings, glass, paper  
12 x 19 x 1 in.

Photographs from *Myrtle Edwards  
Park Proposal* (1974)  
Archival inkjet prints mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
Five: 41½ x 43¾; 13 x 21; 19¾ x  
31¾; 19¾ x 32; 20¼ x 30¾ in.

*Super 8 Triptych*,  
ca. 1973–1984 / 2013  
Super 8mm film transferred to  
digital video (three channels)  
28 minutes

*Bearing Stools*, 2013  
Painted plywood, cathode  
ray tube glass  
Seven: 21 x 12 x 16 in. each

## FRYE C GALLERY

Hat and shoe from  
*Woodman* (1974)  
Reclaimed wood from door, lead  
cast from calk boot  
73 x 15 x 5 in.

Photographs from *Woodman* (1974)  
Archival inkjet prints mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
Sixteen: 40 x 24½; 41 x 26; 12¾  
x 21; 12¾ x 21; 12¾ x 21; 12¾ x  
9½; 12¾ x 29; 17 x 12¾; 20 x 30;  
20 x 32½; 14 x 7½; 12¾ x 20½; 21  
x 13; 12¼ x 18; 12¼ x 7½; 12¼ x  
41¾ in.

Video from *Woodman* (1974)  
Super 8mm film transferred to  
digital video with audio  
51 seconds

*Counterparts*, 1983 / 2013  
Re-creation of elements from *90  
Pine Show* (1983)  
Galvanized steel, metal, wood, glass,  
rubber, beer bottles  
228 x 108 x 132 in.

Photograph from  
*90 Pine Show* (1983)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
41½ x 57½ in.

*Crow Bottle Hanger* (from *90 Pine  
Show*), 1982  
Steel, tar, wood, papier-mâché  
25 x 27 x 4 in.  
Private collection, Seattle

*Crowbar with Electromagnetic  
Recharge*, 1991  
Cut steel, crowbars, wood, glass,  
copper, magnets, Bokay Washington  
Apple Wine bottles  
Three: 44 x 3 x 36 in. each

*Pine Street Joist Bench*,  
1986–present  
Reclaimed wood joist from  
demolished building  
36 x 192 x 15 in.

## FRYE B GALLERY

*1st Ave, Queen Anne Cherry  
Ladder*, ca. 1980  
Carved reclaimed cherry wood  
91½ x 18½ x 3½ in.

Photographic collage from *1st Ave,  
Queen Anne Cherry*, ca. 1985  
Gelatin silver prints  
60 x 96 in.

*Boeing Strut on Cherry  
Branch*, 1980  
Aluminum airplane parts, cherry  
wood from *1st Ave, Queen  
Anne Cherry*  
16½ x 21 x 9½ in.  
Collection of Anne Focke

*On Their Backs*, 1993  
Modular plywood table from an  
installation at Capp Street Project,  
San Francisco; glass from *Incidence*  
(2002–8) at the Museum of Glass,  
Tacoma, Wash.  
30 x 48 x 96 in.

*Stooping Stools*, 1993  
Plywood stools from an installation  
at Capp Street Project, San  
Francisco  
Eight: 15 x 20 x 18 in. each

*When the Tide Is Out the Table Is  
Set*, 1983–present  
Samples from the ongoing project  
Slip-cast vitreous porcelain fired  
after submersion in rivers prone  
to pollution  
Eight: 10 x 11½ x 1¼ in. each

*Bedspring Goblets*, 1983–present  
Repurposed bedsprings, paper cups  
Eight: 8 x 4 x 4 in. each

Candle holders  
Repurposed metal can lids  
Four: 1¼ x 4¾ x 3½ in. each

Coasters  
Printed paper  
Eight: 4 x 4 in. each

*Lunchbox Hibachi*, ca. 1987  
Repurposed metal lunchbox,  
salvaged teakettle  
21 x 9 x 5 in.

*pH Indicator Umbrella*,  
May 26, 2013  
From an ongoing project  
(1998–present)  
Wood, fabric, pH indicator dye  
40 x 40 x 34 in.

Photograph from *Surveyor  
Counterbalanced Crowbar* (1980)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
33¾ x 40 inches

Photograph from *Antler Man* (1980)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
39½ x 42 inches

Video documentation from projects  
1983–2013, 2013  
Single-channel video with audio  
46 minutes, 24 seconds

Photomontage of *Fix-It Shop* (1974)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
12¾ x 60 in.

Photomontage of demolition of  
studio at 2001 First Avenue (1978)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to  
dibond (printed 2013)  
20 x 96 in.

## LIST OF WORKS

- Photomontage of *Urban Arboretum* (1978–present)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
12½ x 82 in.
- Photomontage of *Tree Guards* (1978–present)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
14 x 90 in.
- Photomontage of *1st Ave, Queen Anne Cherry* (ca. 1979–late 1980s)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
12½ x 95½ in.
- Photomontage of *90 Pine Show* (1983)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
8 x 96 in.
- Photomontage of *Crowbar Bottle Trap* (1983)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
20 x 96 in.
- Photomontage of *Surveyor Counterbalanced Crowbar* (1980) and *Seattle George Monument* (1989)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
12¾ x 72 in.
- Photomontage of *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set* (1983–present), *Composting Commode* (1987), and *Water Molecule* (2011)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
8 x 96 in.
- FRYE A GALLERY**  
*Glass Plumb Bob*, 1979  
Hand-blown glass, water  
14 x 12 x 12 in.
- Lead Toilet Seat Counterweight*, 1984  
Cast lead  
20 x 16 x 1½ in.
- Gold Leaf Fence Post*, 1984  
Reclaimed steel fence post, gold leaf  
72½ x 4½ x 1¼ in.
- White Shovel*, 1992  
Painted readymade shovel  
47 x 18 x 4 in.
- Glass Bell*, 1995  
Hand-blown and found glass, metal, magnet, hand-turned wood, brass parabola  
50 x 27 x 41 in.
- Wear/Hone*, 2002  
Carved limestone, galvanized steel, steel, water  
54 x 48 x 48 in.
- University of Maine College of Engineering Shovel*, 2010  
Painted readymade shovel  
57 x 8½ x 5¾ in.
- Carbon and Earth Mobius Saw Blade*, 2013  
Reclaimed steel saw blade, enamel paint mixed with carbon and earth  
Text: “CARBON AND EARTH BUILDS TO DECAY A CYCLE RENEWED BACK INTO CARBON AND EARTH BUILDS TO . . .”  
36 x 192 x 84 in.
- Captiva Ladder Chair*, 2013  
Aluminum, bar code leveling staff  
168 x 20 x 14 in.
- Level Spirit*, 2013  
Reclaimed Pyrex pipe, water, rubber, wood, steel  
141 x 2½ x 2½ in.
- GRAPHICS GALLERY**  
Model for *St. Nicholas Place Merseyside Threshold* (1994)  
Mixed media  
10 x 36 x 13 in.
- Study for Embarcadero Footing* (1996–97)  
Milled aluminum  
12 x 11 x 14 in.
- Study for A Vail Hearth* (1997)  
Mixed media  
11½ x 12½ x 11½ in.
- Study for Brush with Illumination* (1998)  
Mixed media  
16 x 11 x 12 in.
- Material study (origami swan), n.d.  
Folded lead  
13 x 15 x 12 in.
- Material study (tower), n.d.  
Wire mesh  
21 x 7 x 7 in.
- Material study, n.d.  
Silicone  
9 x 5½ x 5½ in.
- I Love Canal*, 1978  
Artist book  
7 x 8½ in.
- Premises for Art: A Foundation for the University of Washington Tacoma Art Plan*, 1992  
Bound master plan  
8½ x 11 in.
- Dialog Entlang der Donau*, 1994  
Bound proposal  
11 x 17 in.
- Union Jack Pallet*, 1996  
Bound proposal  
11 x 17 in.
- A Vail Hearth*, 1997  
Bound proposal  
11 x 17 in.
- Canyon Path*, 2000  
Bound proposal  
11 x 17 in.
- Levee as Armature*, 2002  
Bound master plan  
8½ x 11 in.

*Arts Master Plan: Public Art on Winslow Way and Olympic Drive*, 2003  
Collaboration with Maggie Smith  
Bound master plan  
8½ x 11 in.

*Art Master Plan: Brightwater Treatment System*, 2003  
Collaboration with Ellen Sollod and Jann Rosen-Queralt  
Bound master plan  
11 x 17 in.

*Portland South Waterfront Greenway*, 2004  
Bound master plan  
8½ x 11 in.

*Captiva Tableau*, 2013  
Artist book  
11 x 17 in.

*The Process of Elimination*, after 1994  
Artist book  
8½ x 11 in.

*Field Print: First Ave (Belltown)*, Seattle, WA, 1984  
Collaboration with Jack Mackie and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart  
Blueprints with hand-drawn notes for *First Avenue Streetscape Project*  
Blueprints with ink, grease pencil, graphite  
Six: 42 x 30 in. each

Photo documentation of *Host Analog* (1991–present)  
Archival inkjet prints mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
Two: 20 x 13¼ in. each

*Embarcadero Footing*, ca. 1996  
Documentation from a proposal  
Archival inkjet prints  
Four: 26 x 38 in.

*Magna Carta Yew*, 1996–present  
Documentation from a yet-to-be-realized proposal  
Archival inkjet print  
28 x 24 in.

*Redevelopment of Al Rayyan Road Corridor*, 2008  
Collaboration with Otak International  
Documentation from a proposal  
Archival inkjet print  
28 x 24 in.

*White Tale Hunting at Kohler*, 1984  
Vitreous china, wood, rubber, felt  
25 x 28 x 7 in.

## AUDITORIUM FOYER

*Appropriated Habitat Assessment*, 2008  
Stamped and painted aluminum license plates  
72 x 144 in.

## GALLERY CAFÉ

*Belltown Pan*, ca. 1980  
Pan used in the annual event  
Copper, tin, reclaimed sauté pan  
33½ x 20½ x 6 in.  
Courtesy of Ben Marks, Patricia Tyler, and Phil Messina

Photo documentation of *Belltown Pan* (early 1980s)  
Archival inkjet prints mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
Two: 12¾ x 8½ in. each

Photograph from *90 Pine Show* (1983)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
42 x 96 in.

## COURTYARD

*Wind Vane Lures*, 1978–present  
Salmon can lids, glass-impregnated paint, reflective tape, diffraction grating, forks, mirrors, boots

## EDUCATION WING GALLERY

Photo documentation of *Shared Solar Clothesline* (1978)  
Archival inkjet print mounted to dibond (printed 2013)  
42 x 28 in.

*Global Warming Workshop*, 2002  
Photographic collage following the Nisqually watershed  
Archival inkjet print  
17½ x 109 in.

*Engineered Salmon*, 1984 / 2013  
Color Xerox collage  
48 x 77½ in.

## OFF-CAMPUS

*Shared Solar Clothesline*, 1978 / 2013  
Restaging of the site-specific installation  
Clotheslines, clothespins, pulleys, clothes, linens

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY BUSTER SIMPSON (b. 1942, Saginaw, Michigan)

### EDUCATION

1963–69 Master of Fine Arts / Bachelor of Arts, Sculpture, University of Michigan,  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

### SELECTED PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

- 2013 Elliott Bay Seawall Project, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture in collaboration with the  
Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle
- 2012 *Aerie*, General Services Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters, Seattle  
*Oculus Sol*, Indio, Calif.  
*Carbon Veil*, Sea-Tac International Airport Rental Car Facility, SeaTac, Wash.  
*Dekum Stormwater Art Bike Corral*, Portland, Ore.
- 2011 *Bio Boulevard & Water Molecule*, Brightwater Treatment Plant, Woodinville, Wash.
- 2010 *Flamingo Arroyo Trail*, Las Vegas, Nev.  
*Cloke Plaza*, University of Maine, Orono, Maine
- 2009 *Bucket Brigade*, Portland, Ore.  
*Whole Flow*, Pasadena, Calif.
- 2008 *Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile*, Walla Walla, Wash.  
*Ice Blade*, Richmond, B.C., Canada  
*Parable*, Seattle
- 2007 *Tempe Light Rail Transit Bridge*, Tempe, Ariz.
- 2005 *The Monolith*, Turtle Bay, Redding, Calif.
- 2004 *Rosettarray*, Merck/Rosetta, Seattle  
*Ping Pong Plaza*, Merck/Rosetta, Seattle
- 2003 *Beckoning Cistern*, Vine Street, Seattle
- 2002 *Mobius Band*, IslandWood, Bainbridge Island, Wash.
- 2001 *Portal*, Washington State University, Pullman, Wash.  
*Water Glass & Water Table*, Ellington Condominiums, Seattle
- 2000 *Moment*, Private Commission, Harbor Steps, Seattle
- 1998 *Brush with Illumination*, False Creek, Vancouver
- 1997 *Parapet Relay*, University of Washington Tacoma, Tacoma, Wash.  
*King Street Gardens*, Alexandria, Va.  
*Offering Hat, Drinking Cup, and Illuminated Boat*, Kansas City, Mo.
- 1995 *Anaheim Center Redevelopment Streetscape—Phase II*, Anaheim, Calif.
- 1994 *Moving Over*, Miami-Dade Transit, Miami
- 1993 *Anaheim Center Redevelopment Streetscape—Phase I*, Anaheim, Calif.
- 1991 *Fence Line Artifact*, Denver International Airport, Denver, Colo.  
*Pivot Emblem*, Denver International Airport, Denver, Colo.  
*Host Analog*, Oregon Convention Center, Portland, Ore.
- 1989 *Seattle George Monument*, Washington State Convention Center, Seattle
- 1987 *Situation*, Art on the Line, Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, Boston
- 1986 *Warehouse District Streetscape Project*, Warehouse District, Cleveland, Ohio
- 1978 *Viewland/Hoffman Substation Project*, Seattle City Light and Seattle Arts Commission,  
1% for Art pilot project, Seattle

#### SELECTED INSTALLATIONS AND SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Buster Simpson // Surveyor*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle
- 2007 *Shard Cornice*, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, N.Y.
- 2006 *Instrument Implement*, Sheehan Gallery, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.
- 2004 *A Declaration of Necessity for the Public Good*, Temple Gallery,  
Temple University, Philadelphia
- 2002–8 *Incidence*, Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Wash.
- 2000 *Buster Simpson*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle
- 1993 *Cistern Drums*, Capp Street Project, San Francisco
- 1991 *Effluence of Affluence*, Documents Northwest, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle
- 1989 *Face Plate*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
- 1983 *90 Pine Show*, Pine Tree Tavern, Seattle

#### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Rauschenberg Residency: Fruits of Captiva*, Rauschenberg Project Space, New York
- 2012–13 *M<sub>w</sub> [Moment Magnitude]*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle
- 2011 *Living as Form*, Creative Time, New York
- 2010 *Remediate/Re-Vision*, Wave Hill Gallery, Bronx, N.Y.  
*Critical Messages*, Western Gallery, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Wash.
- 2009 *Art in Public Places: The Archive of the PADT*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds,  
United Kingdom
- 2008 *Mobius Path*, “Art Outside,” Webster’s Woods Art Park, Port Angeles, Wash.
- 2005 *Taking Shape: Pilchuck Glass School in the ’70s*, Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, Wash.
- 2003 *Thinking in Public*, Smith Tower, Seattle  
*Imaging the River*, Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, N.Y.  
*Cydlifiad*, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carnarthenshire, Wales,  
United Kingdom
- 2002 *Ecovention*, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio
- 1999 *Biennial Exhibition of Public Art*, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, N.Y.
- 1997–98 *Hello Again*, traveling show, Oakland Museum, Oakland, Calif.
- 1994 *Natural Dialogue*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York  
*Hello Again*, Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York  
*Reuse Refuse*, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu  
*Public Interventions*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
- 1992 *Fragile Ecologies*, Queens Museum of Art, Queens, N.Y.
- 1988 *Images and Latitude*, Mona Bismarck Foundation, Paris
- 1987 *Out of the Studio: Art with Community*, PS1, Long Island City, N.Y.
- 1985 *Buffalo Bayou Sculpture Show*, Houston Festival, Houston, Tex.  
*From the Crystal Plum*, Portland Center for the Visual Arts, Portland, Ore.
- 1983 *Outside New York: Seattle*, New Museum, New York  
*Oono Home Permanent* (with Steve Paxton), Spaziozero, Rome
- 1982 *Sound Corridor*, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, PS1, Long Island City, N.Y.  
*New Music America ’81 Festival*, San Francisco

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY BUSTER SIMPSON (b. 1942, Saginaw, Michigan)

- Two Schools of Fish*, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles
- 1980–81 *West Coast Art for the Vice President's House*, Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.
- 1980 *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set*, Western Front, Vancouver
- Sculpture 1980*, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.
- 1979 *Keating/Simpson*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle

### SELECTED CONSULTING AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2011 *Atmospheric Analogue*, Edmonton Valley Zoo, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- 2010 Kyle Canyon Campgrounds, U.S. Forest Service, Las Vegas, Nev.
- 2009–11 Systemwide Artist, Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail, Portland, Ore.
- 2007–8 Design Team, Redevelopment of Al Rayyan Road Corridor, Doha, Qatar
- 2007 Consultant, Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan, Vancouver
- 2005–10 Design Team, Scottsdale Road Streetscape Master Plan, Scottsdale, Ariz.
- 2004–8 Consultant/Designer, Valley Metro Light Rail Bridge, Tempe, Ariz.
- 2003–10 Design Team, Brightwater Treatment Plant Art Master Plan, Woodinville, Wash.
- 1998–2000 Design Team, Growing Vine Street, Seattle
- 1998–99 Artist/Consultant, Ellington Condominiums, Intracorp Public Plaza, Seattle
- Artist/Consultant, Amtrak King Street Station, Seattle
- 1997–99 Artist in Residence/Consultant, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle
- 1997–98 Design Team, Downtown Denny Regrade Master Plan, Seattle
- 1996–97 Design Team, Mid-Embarcadero, San Francisco
- 1995 Design Team, San Jose International Airport Terminal, San Jose, Calif.
- 1994–96 Artist/Consultant, King's Cross Railroad Lands, London
- 1994 *St. Nicholas Place Merseyside Threshold* (proposal), Invitational International Competition, Liverpool, United Kingdom
- Dialog Entlang der Donau* (proposal), Invitational International Competition, Vienna
- 1993–96 Design Team, Tacoma Campus Master Plan, University of Washington, Tacoma, Wash.
- 1991–92 Artist/Consultant, Central Artery/Tunnel, Boston
- 1990–91 Artist/Consultant, Denver International Airport, Denver, Colo.
- 1988–92 Artist/Consultant, Redondo Seawall, Federal Way, Wash.
- 1987–88 900-acre park Master Use Plan (in collaboration with Schmidt Copeland Associates), Pontiac, Mich.
- 1984 Artist in Residence, Arts/Industry Program, Kohler Company, Sheboygan, Wisc.
- 1983 Commissioner, Pike Place Market Historical Commission, City of Seattle, Seattle
- First Avenue Bus Stop Design Committee, Seattle
- 1980 Artistic Director, City Fair Arts (funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts), Seattle
- 1978–81 Artist/Consultant/Designer, Post Alley Competition, Pike Place Merchants Association and Pike Place Market Preservation & Development Authority, Seattle
- 1978 Artist in Residence, Artpark, Lewiston, N.Y.
- 1975–80 Board of Directors, and/or, Seattle
- 1969 Co-director, Earthworks projects/workshops, Woodstock Festival, Bethel, N.Y.

## TEACHING

- 2002 Global Warming Workshop, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Ore.  
Charrette, Lewis Center for Environmental Studies, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio
- 2000 Second Annual Detroit Design Charrette, School of Architecture & Urban Planning,  
University of Michigan, Detroit
- 1999 Visiting Artist, Oxbow School, Napa, Calif.  
First Annual Detroit Design Charrette, School of Architecture & Urban Planning,  
University of Michigan, Detroit
- 1998 Visiting Faculty, Deep Springs College, Deep Springs, Calif.
- 1992 Visiting Instructor/Lecturer (spring term), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.
- 1972–73 Co-director (coordinated video/media program), Pilchuck Glass School workshop,  
Stanwood, Wash.
- 1961–66 Instructor/Guide (summer employment), Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, N.Mex.

## SELECTED LECTURES AND PANELS

- 2009 “Poetic Utilities: Artists Re-imagine Water Infrastructure,” 24th Annual WateReuse  
Symposium, Seattle
- 2008 Intermedia MFA Visiting Artist Series, University of Maine, Orono, Maine  
MFA Monday Night Lecture Series, Portland State University, Portland, Ore.
- 2006 Lecturer, Sheehan Gallery, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.  
Oregon ASLA Revolve Evolve Symposium, Portland, Ore.
- 2004 Lecturer, Public Art in the Public Realm Symposium, National Hispanic Cultural Center,  
Albuquerque, N.Mex.
- 2002 Visiting Lecturer, Department of Art, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio  
Visiting Lecturer, Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Berkeley,  
Berkeley, Calif.  
Visiting Lecturer, “Zoom,” Instituto Cervantes at Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago
- 1999 Lecture/Charrette, School of Architecture, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.  
Workshop/Lecture, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y.
- 1998 Lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Mass.  
Lecturer, Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver
- 1996 Guest Lecturer and Panelist, National Association of Local Arts Agencies, Saint Louis, Mo.  
Panelist and Presenter, American Society of Landscape Architects, Cleveland, Ohio  
Guest Lecturer, International Winter Cities Festival, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada  
Keynote Speaker, Eco-Design Arts Conference, Eugene, Ore.  
Visiting Lecturer, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio  
Visiting Lecturer, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio  
Visiting Lecturer, Pitzer College, Claremont, Calif.  
Guest Lecturer, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle
- 1995 Plenary Lecture, Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, Iowa State University,  
Ames, Iowa  
Visiting Artist and Lecturer, University of Brighton, Brighton, United Kingdom

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY BUSTER SIMPSON (b. 1942, Saginaw, Michigan)

- Visiting Artist and Lecturer, University of Kingston, London  
Guest Lecturer and Critic, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.  
Guest Lecturer and Critic, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R.I.  
Guest Lecturer, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Ore.  
Guest Lecturer, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle
- 1994 Visiting Lecturer, Society for Conservation Biology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore.  
Guest Lecturer, College of Architecture and Urban Design, University of Washington, Seattle  
Guest Lecturer and Panelist, International Arts Foundation, Los Angeles  
Guest Lecturer, "Rising out of Our Garbage," Exploratorium, San Francisco  
Guest Lecturer, Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho  
Guest Lecturer, Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver  
Guest Lecturer, University of British Columbia, Vancouver
- 1993 Guest Lecturer, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.  
Guest Speaker, Art in Transportation, Public Art Conference, Leeds, United Kingdom  
Lecturer, School of Architecture, California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco  
Guest Speaker, Public Art Conference, British American Association, London

### SELECTED GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS

- 2012 Mayor's Arts Award, Seattle  
2009 Public Art Network Award, Americans for the Arts, Washington, D.C.  
2004 PONCHO Artist of the Year Award, Seattle  
2002 PONCHO Special Recognition Award, Betty Bowen Award Competition, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle  
2000 Distinguished Alumni Award, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.  
Honorary Membership, AIA Seattle, Seattle  
1999 Flintridge Foundation Visual Artists Award  
1996 Howard S. Wright Award for Outstanding Support of the Arts, Seattle Arts Commission  
1991 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship  
1988 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship  
1984 Special Projects Grant (for *Urban Arboretum*), National Endowment for the Arts and Seattle Arts Commission  
1981 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship  
1980 Special Projects Grant, National Endowment for the Arts

### SELECTED MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

- Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, N.Y.  
Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Wash.

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- Glown, Ron. "Buster Simpson: An Activist Art of Urban Ecology." *Public Art Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 1990): 16.
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- . "Buster Simpson: 90 Pine Street." *Vanguard* (March 1983): 31.
- . "Buster Simpson: Throwaway Glass." *Glass* 47 (Spring 1992): 34–41.
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## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Scott Lawrimore is Deputy Director, Collections and Exhibitions, at the Frye Art Museum. He has spent his professional career in Seattle working as a cultural facilitator, writer, educator, and gallerist. For the Frye Art Museum, Lawrimore has curated *Helmi Juwonen: Dispatches to You (R.S.V.P.)* (2012), *Chamber Music* (2013), *36 Chambers* (2013), *Horizon* (2013), *The Hudson Flows West* (2013), and *Buster Simpson // Surveyor* (2013).

Carol Yinghua Lu lives and works in Beijing. She is a contributing editor at *Frieze*, the Executive Editor-in-Chief of *Yishu* (Chinese edition), and a frequent contributor to many international art journals and magazines. From 2005 to 2007, Lu was the Researcher for China for the Asia Art Archive. In 2011, she was on the jury for the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennale, and in 2012 she was a co-curator of the 9th Gwangju Biennale and of the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale. In 2013, she and Liu Ding are guest curators at Museion in Bolzano, Italy, where they are presenting a research exhibition project, *Little Movements: Self-Practice in Contemporary Art*.

Charles Mudede is a writer, filmmaker, and cultural critic. He writes about film, books, music, art, economics, and urban theory for *The Stranger*. Mudede has made three films, two of which, *Police Beat* and *Zoo*, premiered at Sundance; *Zoo* also screened at Cannes. Mudede has written for *Arcade*, *Ars Electronica*, *Cinema Scope*, *C Theory*, *The New York Times*, *Radical Urban Theory*, and *The Village Voice*. He is also on the editorial board for *The Black Scholar*, which is based at the University of Washington, and has lectured on post-colonial theory at Pacific Lutheran University. Mudede has lived in Seattle since 1989.

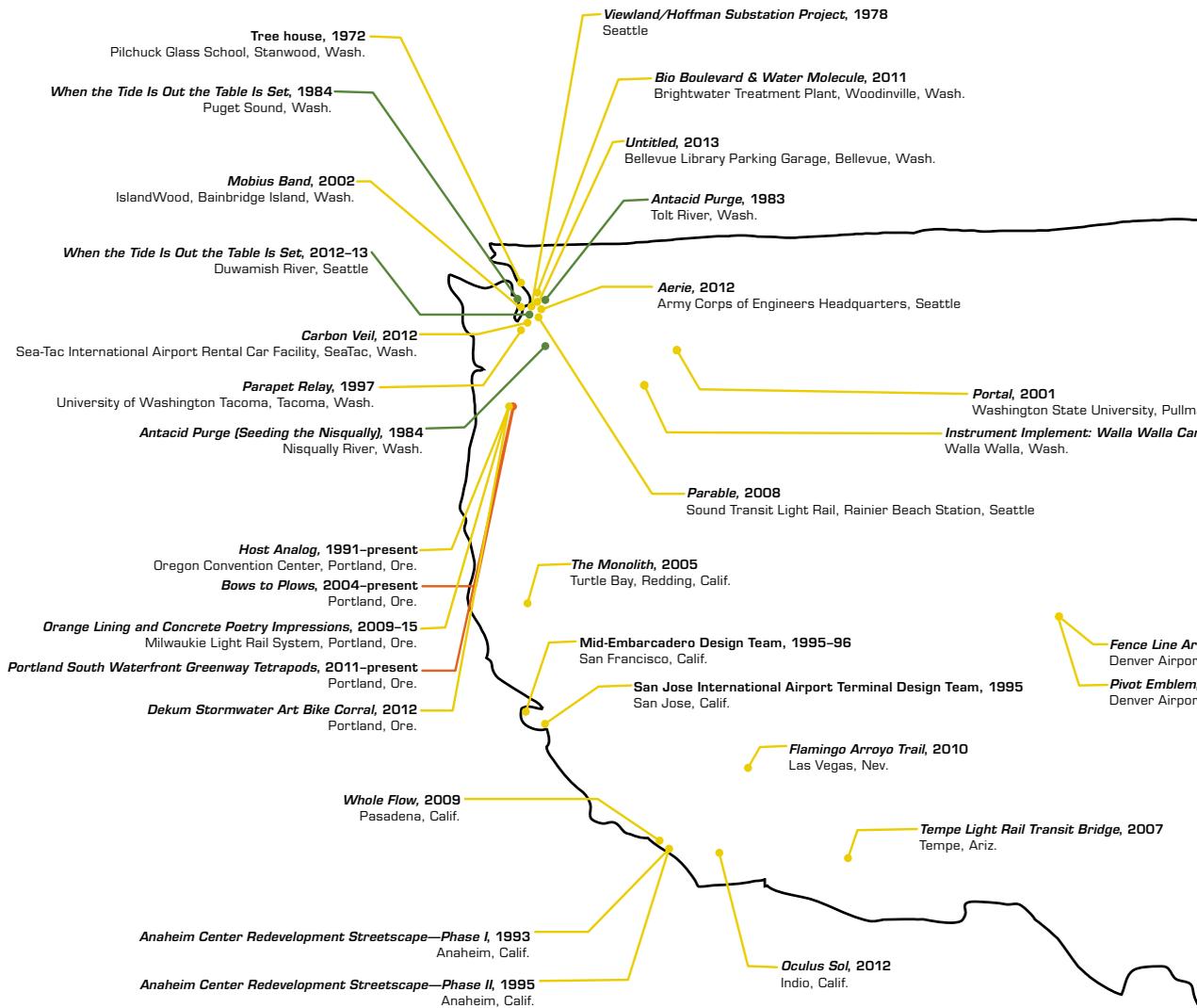
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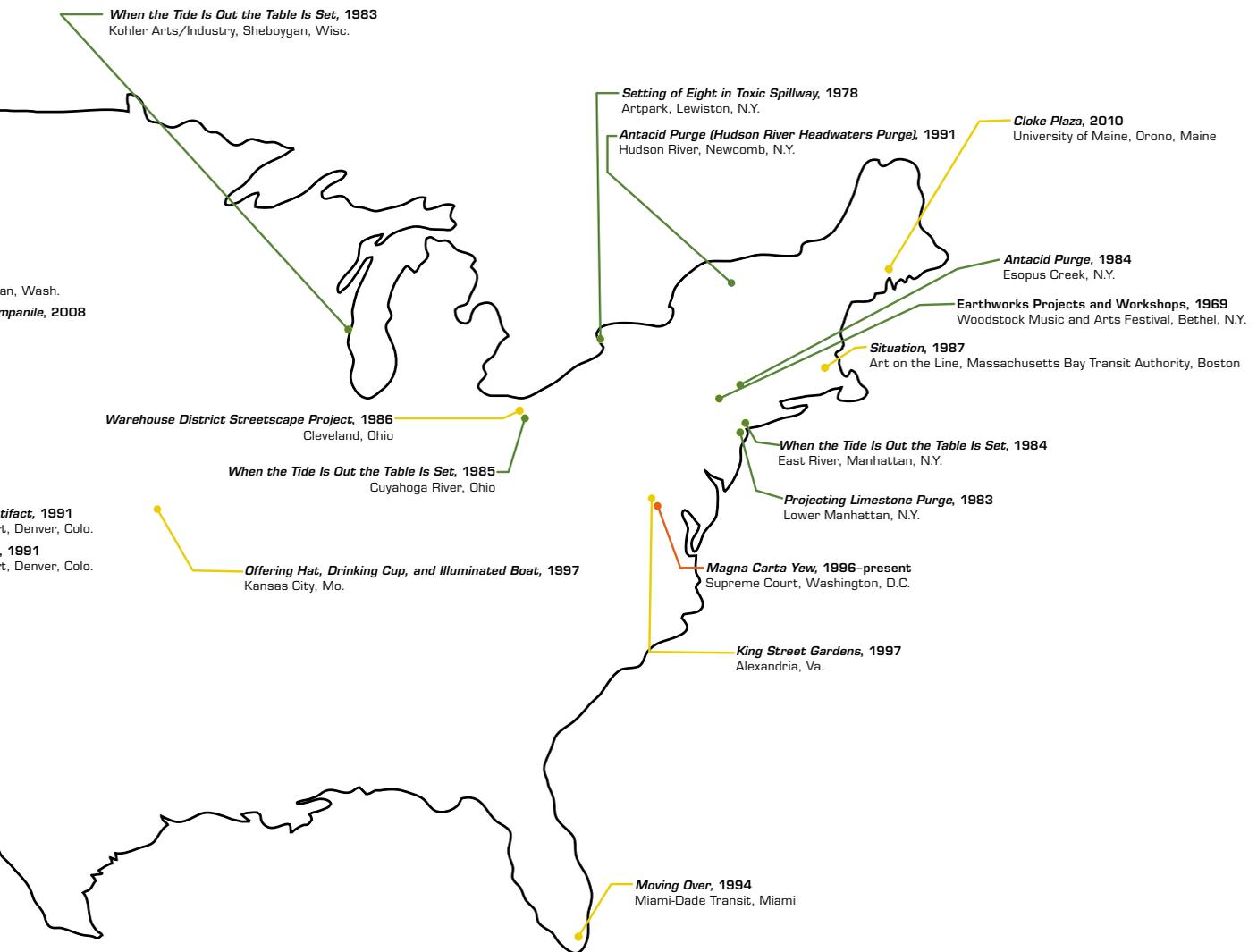


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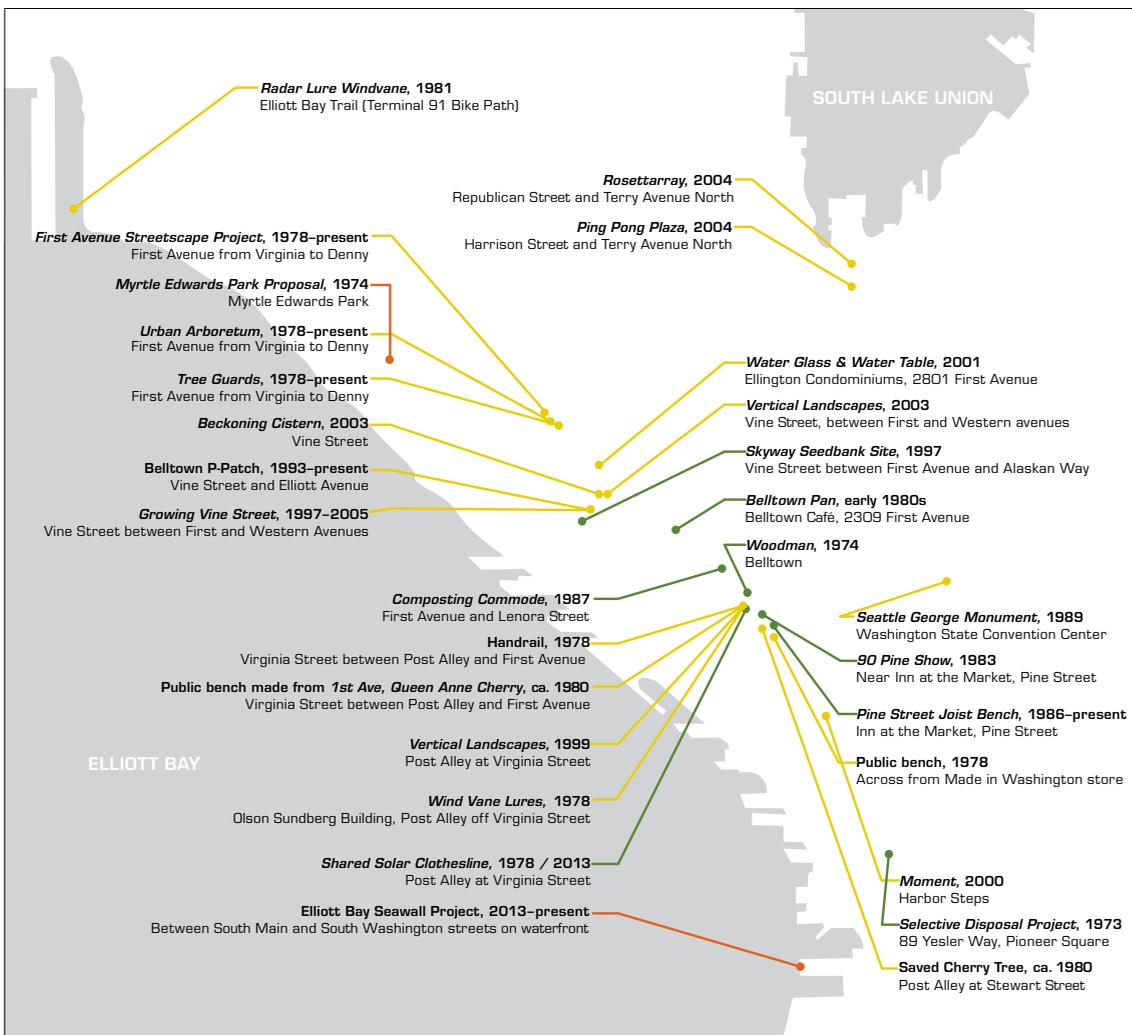
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- **St. Nicholas Place Merseyside Threshold, 1994**  
Invitational International Competition, Liverpool, United Kingdom
- **Brush with Illumination, 1998 / 2009**  
False Creek, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
- **Ice Blade, 2008**  
Richmond, B.C., Canada
- **Redevelopment of Al Rayyan Road Corridor, 2008–present**  
Doha, Qatar
- **Atmospheric Analogue, 2011–present**  
Edmonton Valley Zoo, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- **King's Cross Railroad Lands Consulting Artist, 1994–96**  
London, United Kingdom





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