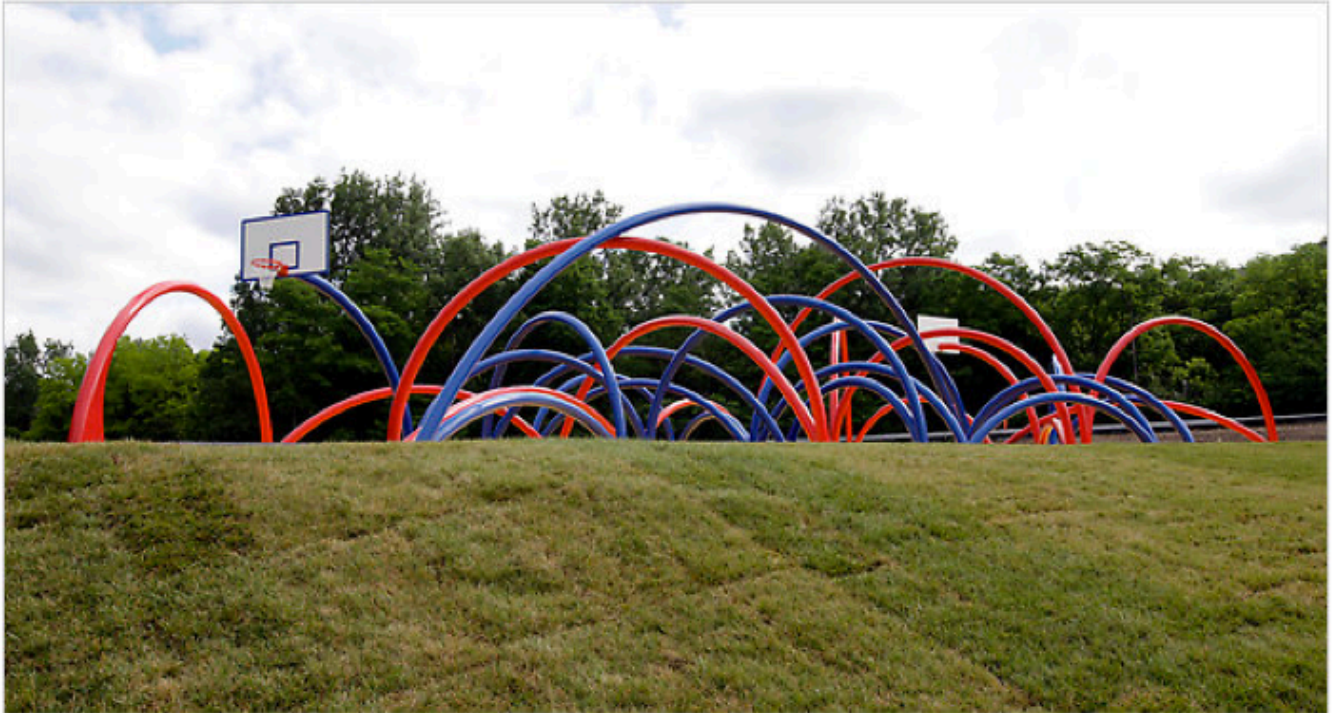


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100 Acres to Roam, No Restrictions



A.J. Mast for The New York Times

WHEN 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park opens to the public next weekend in the backyard of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, there will be no signs or guards admonishing visitors not to touch the art. Quite the contrary.

Twenty bone-shaped benches by the Dutch artist and designer Joep van Lieshout sprawl across a meadow, forming a huge human skeleton; the piece, "Funky Bones," is meant both to evoke the remains and artifacts of the American Indians who once lived in the region and to offer a place to picnic and lounge. A terraced pier overlooking the park's 35-acre lake and resembling a topographical map was designed by the sculptor Kendall Buster of Richmond, Va., as a perch for fishing or reading, except when the lake floods every year. All eight of the artists' installations, which dot the park's unruly woodlands, wetlands, meadows and lake, were conceived to handle wear and tear from people as well as nature.

"We didn't want it to be a precious thing," said Lisa Freiman, the museum's curator of contemporary art and director of the park. "There are no restrictions. Whether you create them or not, people will touch and climb on the sculpture anyway."

The new art park is one of the largest in the United States and rare in its focus on temporary, site-specific commission. "We're resisting this tendency in the last few decades to collect giant sculptures and then try to keep them forever outside," Ms. Freiman said. "These things have lives to live and at a certain point will be retired."

Ms. Freiman is behind the interactive ethos of the park, which will be free and open around the clock, as well as its mission of giving less-established artists, in addition to well-known ones, the opportunity to experiment. Type A, for instance — the New York team of Adam Ames and Andrew Bordwin, whose work explores the nature of competition and collaboration — has suspended two giant aluminum rings horizontally, one above the other at heights of 12 and 25 feet, from trees and former telephone poles, so that the rings' shadows will align perfectly during the summer solstice. It is a meditation on the way relationships move in and out of sync that was inspired by two years of team-building exercises Type A conducted with the museum's staff.

Tea Makipaa, a Finnish-born artist living in Germany, has placed an almost 50-foot-long ship called the "Eden II" out on the lake. In the lakeside shack nearby, visitors can call up sound and video about the supposed passengers, refugees from an ecological disaster. While the lifespan of the installations will vary, the museum's director, Maxwell Anderson, anticipates the water-related pieces will succumb to the elements faster.

"We can imagine leaving Tea's piece to become a shipwreck," Mr. Anderson said. "Why not just let it do what it needs to do?"

LOS CARPINTEROS A fantastical basketball court fuses this two-man collective's interest in surrealistic architecture and Indiana's love of the sport.

The full-size court with two hoops is filled with a maze of bright red and blue arches - as high as 19 feet and as wide as 51 feet - that represents the imagined trajectory of a bouncing ball changing possession between two teams. Perhaps not coincidentally, the palette also brings to mind Indiana's history of shifting between Republican and Democratic allegiances.

"It's an endless game, with all the connotations you can take from that situation," said Dagoberto Rodríguez Sánchez, one-half of this collective from Havana. "With every bounce the geography of the game changes."

His collaborator, Marco Antonio Castillo Valdés, added, "No one wins."

But all can play.

The artists imagine the court will be a paradise for skaters and those interested in extreme sports. "This place can be used for anything except basketball," Mr. Rodríguez Sánchez said with a laugh.

Mr. Castillo Valdés said, "It would have to be creative basketball."

ANDREA ZITTEL As part of her series of experimental living structures that examine what is really necessary in daily life, this California artist has created an inhabitable floating island in the shape of an igloo and installed it in the lake.

It is intended to be used and customized by a series of residents; the first, who will live in it through the summer, are Jessica Dunn and Mike Runge, students at the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis. They have built a bicycle generator for energy, planted a garden in self-watering containers that bob in the lake and created an onshore note-writing station where visitors can write messages that will be floated to the students in small igloo-shaped vessels.

When a flag is flying on the island, park visitors can ring a bell onshore, and Ms. Dunn and Mr. Runge will pick them up in a rowboat for a tour of the island. All guests are being encouraged to take an object from the igloo and leave another in exchange. "Our possessions will be more fluid than we're used to having them," Mr. Runge said. Ms. Dunn added: "Andrea Zittel is handing this island over to us to interpret into our art piece. In return we want to let the public make its mark as well."

JEPPE HEIN In "Bench Around the Lake" Mr. Hein's bright yellow benches take fanciful swoops and turns before appearing to tunnel down into the ground and emerge again dozens of feet away, near (or in a few cases far from) the lake's edge.

"Once you start to experience them sequentially, you'll feel that connection between them," he said. Over the last decade, this Danish-born artist has explored the social and political dimensions of placing his benches in public spaces. Here he was interested in baiting visitors to walk around the lake in search of the next one, and in fostering interaction at the different resting spots.

"They are a tool for communication, and create a kind of social playroom," Mr. Hein said.

All 15 benches are functional, though some are more roller coaster or slide than stable platform, putting guests in close proximity to friends or strangers. The one that Mr. Hein refers to as "kissing bench" is small and dips in the middle. "When two people are sitting on it," he said, "they slide in together, wanted or not."

ALFREDO JAAR This Chilean-born artist based in New York is known for his meditative architectural spaces and has built a large square within a square in the park's woodlands using stacked gabion baskets filled with limestone rocks and sprouting grass. The only way to penetrate the eight-foot-high outer wall is through a dark tunnel with a beacon of natural light at the far end.

"There will be a lot of trepidation and suspense because people don't know what will be at the end," Mr. Jaar said.

Visitors will emerge into a grassy minimalist cube garden with wooden benches that form a square in the center and a wall of trees lining the perimeter of gabion baskets.

"My work has dealt with a lot of tragedies around the world, and I was looking for a space of lamentation, of healing," said Mr. Jaar, who views the more than two million stones in the gabion baskets both as a symbol of man-made destruction and a source of refuge.

They also dampen exterior noise. "I wanted to offer a place to be with yourself, to be with someone else, to be without distractions," he said.