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100 Acres: Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park at Indianapolis Museum of Art



A worker walks through "Free Basket", an installation in the Indianapolis Museum of Art's 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park in Indianapolis. The park opened to the public June 20, 2010, on 100 acres that includes woodlands, wetlands, meadows and a 35-acre lake and will be one of the largest museum art parks in the country. AP Photo/Michael Conroy.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN.- The Indianapolis Museum of Art opened 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park on June 20, 2010, with a public grand opening celebration including tours, live music, art-making workshops and a Summer Solstice program. Located on 100 acres of land that includes untamed woodlands, wetlands, a lake and meadows adjacent to the Museum, it is one of the largest museum art parks in the country and the only one to feature the ongoing commission of temporary, site-responsive artworks. The Park opened with eight newly commissioned inaugural works by international artists, a LEED-certified visitor center and numerous walking trails that highlight the indigenous landscape. As with the IMA galleries, admission to the Park is free.

In 2008, the IMA announced the eight inaugural commissions for the Park. Kendall Buster, Los Carpinteros, Jeppe Hein, Alfredo Jaar, Tea Mäkipää, Type A, Atelier Van Lieshout and Andrea Zittel have spent several years working closely with the IMA to develop projects that explore and respond to the varied environments of 100 Acres. The IMA's goal is to present contemporary art projects and exhibitions that provoke a reexamination of humanity's multifaceted relationship with the environment.

"Each of the artists commissioned to create works for 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park will present a new and invigorating perspective on the interaction between art and the

natural environment,” said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA. “They have conceived their projects with great sensitivity to this particular site, while also engaging in broad global questions about the relationship among art, nature and culture. It is tremendously exciting that 100 Acres positions the IMA as a leader in how museums can champion both contemporary artists and the environment.”

The Park is bordered by the White River and runs contiguous to the IMA’s 52-acre campus, more than half of which is composed of historic landscapes and gardens. Commissions for the Park will be ongoing, with additional artists’ projects announced annually. The evolving aesthetic landscape will be characterized by continual renewal just like the natural landscape. Formerly a gravel pit and construction area, the Park has transformed from a disturbed site into a lush and wild natural terrain. The IMA has engaged architect Marlon Blackwell and landscape architect Edward L. Blake to develop a LEED-certified visitors pavilion and related walking trails throughout the site that emphasize native plantings.

“100 Acres offers a new model for sculpture parks in the 21st century,” said Lisa Freiman, Chair of the IMA’s Department of Contemporary Art and Director of 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park. “Unlike most sculpture parks, which emphasize canonical artists and place their works permanently in a fixed environment, 100 Acres will feature ongoing, temporary commissions, often supporting artists who have not yet had the opportunity to work on a grand public scale. We’re promoting vital, open experimentation and providing a platform for international artists to challenge themselves as well as our community by broadening current expectations around contemporary art.”

Concepts for the eight inaugural installations include:

- **Kendall Buster:** Kendall Buster has created a pier overlooking the Park’s 35-acre lake. A path leads from the peninsula meadow through the brush to a series of raised platforms overlooking the lake. The design of the platform suggests a topographical map with stacked layers, behaving like a kind of "extrusion" from the shoreline. The use of terracing and curved edges reference erosion and layered growth. Stratum Pier reflects Buster's interest in the merging of the natural and the built environment.
- **Los Carpinteros:** The artist collective has developed a large-scale installation titled Free Basket that continues their interest in the juxtaposition of the practical and the imaginary. In developing their project, Los Carpinteros chose to draw on the thriving sports culture in the city of Indianapolis. Free Basket realizes their vision of an international basketball court, transforming it into an aesthetically surprising sculpture that also offers a site for the community to engage in recreational play. Their project seeks to bring together art, culture and sports, providing an interactive platform for the larger community that engages them in art.
- **Jeppe Hein:** Jeppe Hein’s work for 100 Acres, titled Bench Around the Lake, is a series of 15 vivid-yellow benches that Hein envisions as one long, serpentine bench surfacing and receding in several locations around the Park’s 35-acre lake. Hein worked with IMA horticulturists and Indianapolis-based landscape architect Eric Fulford to select locations for the benches to interact with specific natural features in the Park. Improvising on the design of a basic park bench, the unconventional forms of Bench Around the Lake provide visitors with opportunities to sit, look, listen, wonder and play in the unique setting. Hein’s installation Distance, a dynamic indoor rollercoaster track for a series of white plastic balls, will be exhibited in the IMA’s Forefront Galleries and is conceived as a counterpart to his installation in 100 Acres.
- **Alfredo Jaar:** Known for his thought-provoking series of Public Interventions that he has staged across the world, Alfredo Jaar has created a poetic new project, Park of the Laments, nestled in the woodland area southeast of the lake in 100 Acres. The form of Jaar’s park is a square within a square, an outside perimeter made of gabion baskets filled with limestone and an interior square made of indigenous trees and shrubs. Visitors will approach the park and descend into a dark, underground tunnel. Moving

toward the light at the end, viewers will find stairs that will lead them above ground into the center of the park. Natural, minimalist wooden benches will be placed around the perimeter of the amphitheater of plants, allowing visitors to sit quietly and meditate within the park, formed of a grass floor, tree walls and a ceiling defined by the sky. Jaar describes the park as a refuge, a silent, meditative place where visitors can lament and purge the global atrocities of the 20th and 21st centuries. Park of the Laments is Jaar's largest permanent Public Intervention in the U.S.

- Tea Mäkipää: Mäkipää has created a sculptural profile of a large, dark ship that emerges from the lake in 100 Acres with the ship's name, Eden II, painted on each side. An unexpected sight in the idyllic natural environment of the Park, the ship is a modern-day ark seemingly filled with human passengers from an unknown homeland. A guard house on the shore nearby will allow visitors to experience views and sounds of the ship's imaginary passengers, conceived as refugees displaced by the ecological impact of climate change. Eden II will function as an anomalous and thought-provoking vision in the Park, a curious and forewarning presence that brings the crises of the wider world to Indianapolis.

- Type A: This two-man collaborative created the sculptural installation Team Building (Align), which consists of two 30-foot-wide metal rings suspended from telephone poles and trees, and oriented so that their two shadows will become one during the annual Summer Solstice. The designated time of alignment as well as the size of the rings was determined by a team of interdepartmental IMA staff members who worked with the artists over a two-year period on a real-time experiential education performance. From philosophical conversations about art to physically rigorous challenge courses, Type A and the IMA team collaborated to develop a sculptural form that could metaphorically convey the spirit and complexity of their shared collaboration. The project also generated photographs, blogs and videos, which can be seen on the IMA Web site.

- Atelier Van Lieshout: Joep Van Lieshout, with his studio Atelier Van Lieshout, created Funky Bones, a group of 20 giant, bone-shaped benches that together form the shape of an enormous, stylized human skeleton. The project grows out of Van Lieshout's interest in pre-history and relics, with bones emerging from the ground like archeologically revealed specimens, symbolizing artifacts and remains from previous occupants. The artist, who encountered visitors sitting on rocks and other natural perches on his visit to Indianapolis, wanted to create benches as sites for resting, climbing and social interaction in the Park. A fantastical apparition, Funky Bones is located at the edge of the Park's central meadow.

- Andrea Zittel: Zittel created a floating island, titled Indianapolis Island, installed in the 35-acre lake, a dominant feature of the Park's landscape. About 20 feet in diameter, the island is fully inhabitable and serves as an experimental living structure that examines the daily needs of contemporary human beings. Beginning June 20, the island will be occupied by students from Herron School of Art & Design in Indianapolis. Michael Runge and Jessica Dunn will live on Indianapolis Island, collaborating with Zittel by adapting and modifying the island's structure according to their needs. They will be outfitted with a row boat and will have access to a handheld PDA that enables them to share pictures, author a blog and Twitter account about their island experience. The Park residents will interact with visitors and present programs throughout the summer, sharing information about the living art experiment and the Park itself. The project blends elements of environmental art, sculpture, design and performance in a unique way, offering a challenging and experimental forum for exploring ideas about individualism and self-sufficiency, which have long-standing connections to the history of modernism.

More Information: [http://artdaily.com/news/38779/100-Acres--Virginia-B--Fairbanks-Art---Nature-Park-at-Indianapolis-Museum-of-Art-#.UgO-MmQa9LI\[/url\]](http://artdaily.com/news/38779/100-Acres--Virginia-B--Fairbanks-Art---Nature-Park-at-Indianapolis-Museum-of-Art-#.UgO-MmQa9LI[/url])

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