

MICHELLE STITZLEIN

Artist Statement

As a viewer, my work might draw you in as a celebration of lush or abundant vegetation or creatures within our natural environment, but after first glance, further observation will reveal that there is an accumulation of mundane, broken and outdated household detritus, normally destined for a landfill, within each piece. The work is simultaneously an insult and tribute to nature, for its very existence was likely due to the destruction of habitat and extraction of resources needed to manufacture the multiple items I utilize.

Enlarged to be impactful and impressive, the wall-to-wall installations of faux flora or super-sized fauna, the pieces are assembled with hundreds of mass-produced products. The work reveals the waste stream and excesses of the commercially abundant, industrialized and technological world I live in and the use of this debris speaks to my anxiety about climate change and the sustainability of our environment. I enjoy the challenge of creating art with repurposed materials that attempts to engage, surprise or enchant. I hope to encourage questions about what solutions exist for more thoughtful product design, sensitive manufacturing and building within architecture and interior spaces. In other words, if trash can still have meaningful purpose what steps for material resourcing have we missed along the way? Because of this, I have an admiration for clever solutions devised by those with a make-do and boot strap mentality: quilts and hooked rugs from former feed bags and old clothing, furniture mended and patched, tractors jerry-rigged to operate another 20 years.

My work is also inspired by the insects and other creatures observed in my own yard in central OH, as well as the mosses, mushrooms, lichens, and the cacti identified on hikes in state preserves and national parks across the US. The use of nature field guides is a large part of my creative process, to learn and train my eye to find small details and critical differences between species and to also be aware of native species vs. non-native species in my explorations. Another influence, perhaps the furthest afield, is the protea, a tough but beautiful and threatened flowering bush, that grows in the dry and arid fynbos biome of South Africa. All of these plants and fungi are particularly known for their rainfall needs or moisture retaining habits. And since several of my pieces are comprised of many old garden hoses, the work also begins a conversation in regards to water use and depletion.

My work is best when it ties the materials to the client, the cause or the concern. Most of my commissioned works incorporate objects from the field of the client and when possible, I encourage the organization or company to contribute their own specific items. For example, Domino's furnished old signage and pizza delivery car toppers, Promega's life science laboratory supplied graduated cylinders and Erie Insurance donated architectural elements from a historic structure on their campus, towards their respective projects.

Each tiny patch of our planet is unique and precious to specific plants, animals and insects. With eyes on our individual consumption decisions, and knowing that our footprint lands near and far, perhaps we can act more fully towards conservation everywhere.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 Pittsburgh Botanic Garden, Perennially Green, Pittsburgh, PA
- 2022 International Museum of Art & Science, Industrial Nature, McAllen, TX
- 2019 Desert Botanical Garden, New Bloom: Industrial Nature, Phoenix, AZ
- 2018 Saugatuck Center for the Arts, Industrial Nature, Saugatuck, MI
- 2017 Springfield Museum of Art, Industrial Nature, Springfield, OH
- 2015 Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, Industrial Nature, Auburn, NY
- 2014 Appleton Museum of Art, College of Central FL, Industrial Nature, Ocala, FL
- 2013 Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, Industrial Nature, Mt Vernon, IL
- 2012 Mulvane Art Museum, Washburn University, Industrial Nature, Topeka, KS
Warm Springs Gallery, Industrial Nature, Charlottesville, VA
- 2011 Grange Insurance Audubon Center, Selections from Moth Series, Columbus, OH
- 2010 Ohio Art League, Industrial Lichen, Columbus, OH
- 2009 Pomerene Art Center, Bits & Pieces, Coshocton, OH
- 2007 Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, Industrial Nature, Pittsburgh, PA
Franklin Park Conservatory, Blooms & Butterflies, Columbus, OH

Group Exhibitions

- 2024 Mansfield Art Center, Peculiar Beauty: Nature Examined, Mansfield, OH
The Dairy Barn Art Center, OH+5 Contemporary Art of our Region, Athens, OH
- 2023 Greer Museum, Co-Exhibition with Nathaniel Stitzlein, University of Rio Grande, Rio Grande, OH
- 2021 - 2022 Riffe Gallery, Ohio Arts Council, 2021 Biennial Juried Exhibition, Columbus, OH
Medici Museum of Art, 2021 Biennial Juried Exhibition, Warren, OH
- 2020 - 2021 Zanesville Art Museum, 75th Ohio Annual Exhibition (online), Zanesville, OH
- 2020 Dublin Arts Council, Connect: Public Art & Wellness Challenge, Dublin, OH
- 2019 - 2020 Wayne Art Center, CraftForms 2019, Wayne, PA
- 2019 - 2020 Mesa Arts Center, Flora & Fauna | Botanicals & Animals in Contemporary Art, Mesa, AZ
- 2019 IDEA Museum, Junkyard Jungle, Mesa, AZ
- 2018 - 2019 Society for Contemporary Craft, Transformation 10 (catalog), Pittsburgh, PA
- 2015 Riffe Gallery, Ohio Arts Council, Inaugural Juried Exhibition, Columbus, OH
- 2014 Morlan Gallery, Transylvania University, Trashformed, Lexington, KY
- 2013 Dayton Art Institute, Trash? Look Again, Dayton, OH

Honors

- 2024 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, Individual Grant, New York, NY
- 2022 Headlands Center for the Arts, Artist Residency, Sausalito, CA
- 2021 Shenandoah National Park, Artist Residency, Skyland cabin, Luray, VA
- 2020 Greater Columbus Arts Council, Individual Grant, Columbus, OH
- 2019 Wayne Art Center, CraftForms 2019, Best in Show Award, Wayne, PA
- 2019 Environmental Education Council of Ohio, Charley Harper Award, Lancaster, OH
- 2018 Denali National Park, Artist Residency, Upper Toklat cabin - Mile 53, Healy, AK
- 2016 Ohio Arts Council, Individual Excellence Award, Columbus, OH
- 2015 Riffe Gallery, Ohio Arts Council, Inaugural Juried Exhibition, Juror's Award, Columbus, OH
- 2008 Ohio Arts Council, Individual Excellence Award, Columbus, OH
- 2004 Millay Colony for the Arts, Artist Residency, Austerlitz, NY

Collections & Commissions

- 2023 Dayton Metro Library - Huber Heights Branch, 6'x20' commissioned sculpture, Dayton, OH
- 2022 International Museum of Art & Science, two sculptures, McAllen, TX
- 2021 Promega, corporate headquarters, 8'x 21' commissioned sculpture, Madison, WI
- 2020 Julie & Alex Hirsh, private collection, commissioned sculpture, Solon, OH
- 2019 Dayton Metro Library - Main Branch, commissioned 8'x4' sculpture, Dayton, OH
- 2016 Brukner Nature Center, commissioned sculpture, Troy, OH
- 2015 COSI - Center for Science & Industry, ten sculptures, Columbus, OH
- 2014 Domino's Pizza, corporate headquarters, two commissioned sculptures, Ann Arbor, MI
- 2014 Erie Insurance, corporate headquarters, commissioned sculpture, Erie, PA
Gloria & Sonny Kamm, private teapot collection, sculpture, Los Angeles, CA

MICHELLE STITZLEIN

Education

1985 - 1989 Columbus College of Art & Design, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Columbus, OH

Artist in Residence - Schools, Museums, & Festivals

2019 Hilliard City Schools, lecture, home & studio tour, Baltimore, OH

2017 Summit Elementary School, La Crosse, WI
Northwoods Elementary School, La Crosse, WI

2015 Jefferson Elementary, Gahanna, OH
Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, Auburn, NY

2014 Visual Arts Collegiate School, Richmond, VA
Chapelfield Elementary School, Gahanna, OH
New Albany Elementary School, New Albany, OH
Woodside Elementary, Sussex, WI

Edgerton Elementary, Hales Corners, WI
Graham Elementary School, St Paris, OH
North Marion Middle School, Ocala, FL
Marine Discovery Center, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Atlantic Center for the Arts, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Glacier Ridge Elementary, Dublin, OH

2013 Martic Elementary School, Martic, PA
Hans Herr Elementary School, Lampeter, PA
Kennedy Art Museum, Family Day, Athens, OH
Bettendorf Public Library, Family Day, Bettendorf, IA
Mt Vernon Elementary School, Mt. Vernon, IL

2012 Brookfield Elementary School, Brookfield, WI
Dixon Elementary, Brookfield, WI
Eisenhower Middle School, Topeka, KS
St Louis Catholic School, Batesville, IN
Moreland Hills School, Pepper Pike, OH
Warm Springs Gallery Workshop, Charlottesville, VA

Teaching & Lectures - Adults

2022 International Museum of Art & Science, lecture and workshop, McAllen, TX

2021 Shenandoah National Park, workshop, Luray, VA

2020 Dublin Area Art League, lecture, Dublin, OH

2019 Ohio Craft Museum, lecture & workshop, Columbus, OH
Art Quilt Network, lecture, Columbus, OH

2018 Appalachian Green Teachers Conference, lecture, Burr Oak State Park, Glouster, OH

2017 Springfield Museum of Art, lecture, Springfield, OH

2016 Big Brothers Big Sisters, Camp Oty'okwa Benefit, lecture, South Bloomingville, OH

2015 Brukner Nature Center, lecture, Troy, OH
Habitat for Humanity, Re-Store, lecture and demonstration, Lancaster, OH

2014 Decorative Arts Center, lecture and workshop, Lancaster, OH
Habitat for Humanity, Re-Store, lecture, Lancaster, OH
Habitat for Humanity, Re-Store, lecture, Pickerington, OH

2013 Habitat for Humanity, Re-Store, lecture, Davenport, IA
Bettendorf Public Library, Art educators, lecture and workshop, Bettendorf, IA
Hatch Recycling Art Fair, lecture and workshop, Champaign, IL
South Central Ohio, Art educators, lecture and workshop, New Boston, OH

2012 Akron Art Museum, lecture, Akron, OH
OAEA, Summer Institute, Art educators, lecture and workshop, Bellefontaine, OH