

DOUGHERTY

## Artist discusses frame of sculpture, mind

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developed something and I've kept that as one of my guiding forces, to move through life in a reactive way.

**TG: I can see flexibility as being really important for the lifestyle you have, traveling so much.**

PD: That's exactly right. And the materials I work with are wonky and wayward. One pile of sticks is really not the same as another pile. You have to try to jive that up with what you are trying to think about making and work from there.

**TG: Has your view of art — or the art that you are making — changed over the years?**

PD: The context for any work changes. When I first started working, sticks were seen as arte povera; in other words they were found objects. They had nothing to do with the natural world. Nobody thought of sticks as being environmental. Oftentimes installations were seen as collecting "stuff," and then putting it in a room and organizing it for effect. That was the meat of the way people saw my work. As people have become more intense about the environment, the context for my work has changed. Now people see natural materials in a kind of nostalgic way, connected to farm life or craft-making, or to the "real thing." It is associated with the indigenous, the Neolithic, the first peoples.

It's my contention that people have many imaginative moments with branches, trees, sticks, all of that mess. It turns out, then, that there has been a certain popularity that has developed around this work. It has probably gone along the trajectory of the work being seen first as one thing, and now another, and how with both, people have been able to really connect with it.

**TG: Has the environment always been something you considered?**

PD: It's a concern for me personally. I live in a log house that I built and which is very small. I purposely live with a very small footprint. I am really careful about everything I do.

**TG: I'm sure you've heard by now that the theme of Guilford's year is sustainability. How does your work address that issue?**

PD: What I do is a kind of recycling. The material itself is being drawn from the world around us. Historically people have been able to sustain their family from one tree over years by harvesting just what they need at a given time, or making baskets from the same grove of willows and then letting them grow back. In one sense, this process is kind of indigenous. If you look after the same plants, you can reuse them. Also, it is something that is produced locally. It can be ground up later into fertilizer and has the potential to spark new growth.

**TG: Of all places, why Guilford?**

PD: I'm an artist for hire. People call me and ask if I'd be interested in doing a sculpture on their campus, in their garden, at their house. And I am interested, to the degree that I can fit it into my schedule, I do it. As it turns out, it was completely fortuitous. Not only are the meals good at the cafeteria, but I really like the attitude of the people I have met here. The inclusiveness, the willingness to let the community walk onto the campus and help with the piece. The maturity of students. They seem smart and really capable. We had a big raft of people coming from a sculpture class yesterday. I was really impressed with their willingness to jump into the fray and work hard at it, and they also had a sense of humor and were having a good time. We had the women's lacrosse team and the outdoor club, and they were also great. I've had a little experience with the professors here, and I'm just really impressed.

**TG: It's interesting that your work, which reflects the environment, also comes from you so fully entering into the environment.**

PD: Yes, and many of the very small decisions I make when I am at a place trues that piece up to make it fit better and resonate more. If you are doing it from your armchair you never face the minute-by-minute problems that add up to make a better piece.

**TG: My last question: What is your advice**



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to people, maybe young people or students, who are trying to figure out how to apply their passions and find what their work in the world should be?

PD: You have cues in your life about what is really important to you. It is a matter of getting in touch with your basic instincts. You never get an "aha" moment, so you need to start to trust these little tentative voices that say, "hey, listen to me." Everyone needs guidance, but it is important to look a little bit more inside and less "out there" for direction and inspiration. One of my big guides was trying to make a living at something I loved, and I was willing to settle for a little less cash and a little more satisfaction.



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(This page) Volunteers work with **Patrick Dougherty** off campus to cut, bundle, and load saplings for the sculpture in progress in the Quad. (Clockwise from above) Branches are slung into the back of the truck headed for campus. Junior **Erick Armbrust** heaves a heavy sapling to senior **Kriddie Whitmore** (top right) and **Katie Maloney**, sophomore. The group gangs up to free the stuck truck.

(Next page, clockwise from top) First-year **Zach Larrabee** weaves the crown of the sculpture. Art Gallery Project Assistant **Joseph Szyleyko** (top) and **Terry Hammond**, director and curator of the Art Gallery, ascend the scaffolding. Artists hidden by woven wood work from the inside out. Sophomore **Madison Heltzel** chops down a sapling to add to a growing supply.



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