

pulsating umbrella covering the space, leaning a bit to one side with precarious delicacy. The motors emitted a soft, barely audible sound, the force behind the movement. This friendly, albeit large beast was still intimidating, standing 15 feet tall.

Rath creates a dizzying range of personalities through slight yet profound alternations in movement and stance, while keeping the aesthetics of the engineered mechanics deliberately raw and simple. Black wires, exposed hardware, metal stands, speakers, and fragile-looking connections all come to life with a few wiggles and beeps. The works whimsically illustrate the predisposition of the human brain to search for signs of life in the most inanimate of objects.

—Donna Schumacher

BOSTON

“OccupyING the Present” HarborArts Outdoor Gallery

HarborArts Outdoor Gallery not only features a permanent collection of large-scale sculpture, it also hosts temporary exhibitions at the Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina. Located in East Boston, directly across the harbor from the Institute of Contemporary Art, the 14-acre shipyard offers

its grounds, walls, and roofs to artists with the imagination to re-envision the industrial environment as a home for sculpture.

“OccupyING the Present,” a show of 15 site-responsive installations curated by Elizabeth Michelman, filled the bustling shipyard with carefully orchestrated works that inhabited and complemented the built environment. Many of the sculptures evolved over the duration of their installation, slowly transformed by the harsh harbor weather. Nature was a welcome collaborator, and the theme of our relationship to the natural world echoed throughout the show.

The peak of Peter Lipsitt’s massive, dense pyramid on stilts, *Hell and High Water*, mirrored the tall masts of surrounding boats and the spires of skyscrapers across the harbor. The pyramid, coated with black roofing membrane and textured with organic patterns like cracks in a desert landscape, formed a sepulchral reminder of the irreversibility of death—the death of things that we take for granted in our environment.

A large transparent water cooler bottle, inscribed with the words, “Tell me,” pointed across a narrow inlet to a series of parallel colored

lines that stretched along decaying piers. The lines signaled continuously rising sea levels. Using art as an active conveyor of environmental concerns, Susan Israel, who created *Rising Tides*, invited viewers to place their own “messages in a bottle,” as comments on the changes wrought by global warming.

Catherine Evans frequently uses sea anemones, which can regrow after sustaining damage, as a symbol of regeneration. She situated *Sea Anemone/Boston* at the end of the main pier. Colorful fuchsia, turquoise, and pink plastic fibers nestled into the cores of weathered pilings. Other cores in the same cluster were filled with discarded bottles, starkly illustrating the choices that we make.

Some artists developed a conversation around the waterfront itself. In *Natural Repetition: Boston Harbor Rockweed*, Wendy Wolf made use of several buildings. She collected rockweed growing around the shipyard and used it to generate patterns for the wheat-pasted paper forms that floated over the brick façades. As her “rockweed” began to curl and peel, it seemed to return to its aquatic origins. Nearby, the rhythms of a shipyard symphony—tugs, engines, fog horns, waves, and clanking cables—

reverberated from a narrow, dark space between two structures. *Sounding*, a concealed digital recording by Liz Nofziger, intensified the sounds and spaces of the harbor, exposing a beauty that we often fail to recognize.

John Powell’s *Collected Reflection* came alive in unexpected ways when its painted and mirrored Plexiglas surface reflected the viewer’s body. In an instant of surprise, the distinction between self and environment broke down as we saw ourselves amid the boats, buildings, and harbor. In Nora Valdez’s *Still Waiting/Todavía Esperando*, a diminutive carved limestone figure curled into itself, seemingly imprisoned in a geologically ancient state of perpetual waiting. The question it posed, “What are we waiting for?” could apply to many of the issues raised by “OccupyING the Present,” which challenged us to consider our role in this present moment.

—B. Amore

Below left: Catherine Evans, *Sea Anemone/Boston*, 2013. Repurposed plastic fiber, dimensions variable. Below: Nora Valdez, *Still Waiting/Todavía Esperando*, 2009. Indiana limestone, 17 x 13 x 12 in. Both from “OccupyING.”



LEFT: JOHN EVANS / RIGHT: COURTESY THE ARTIST