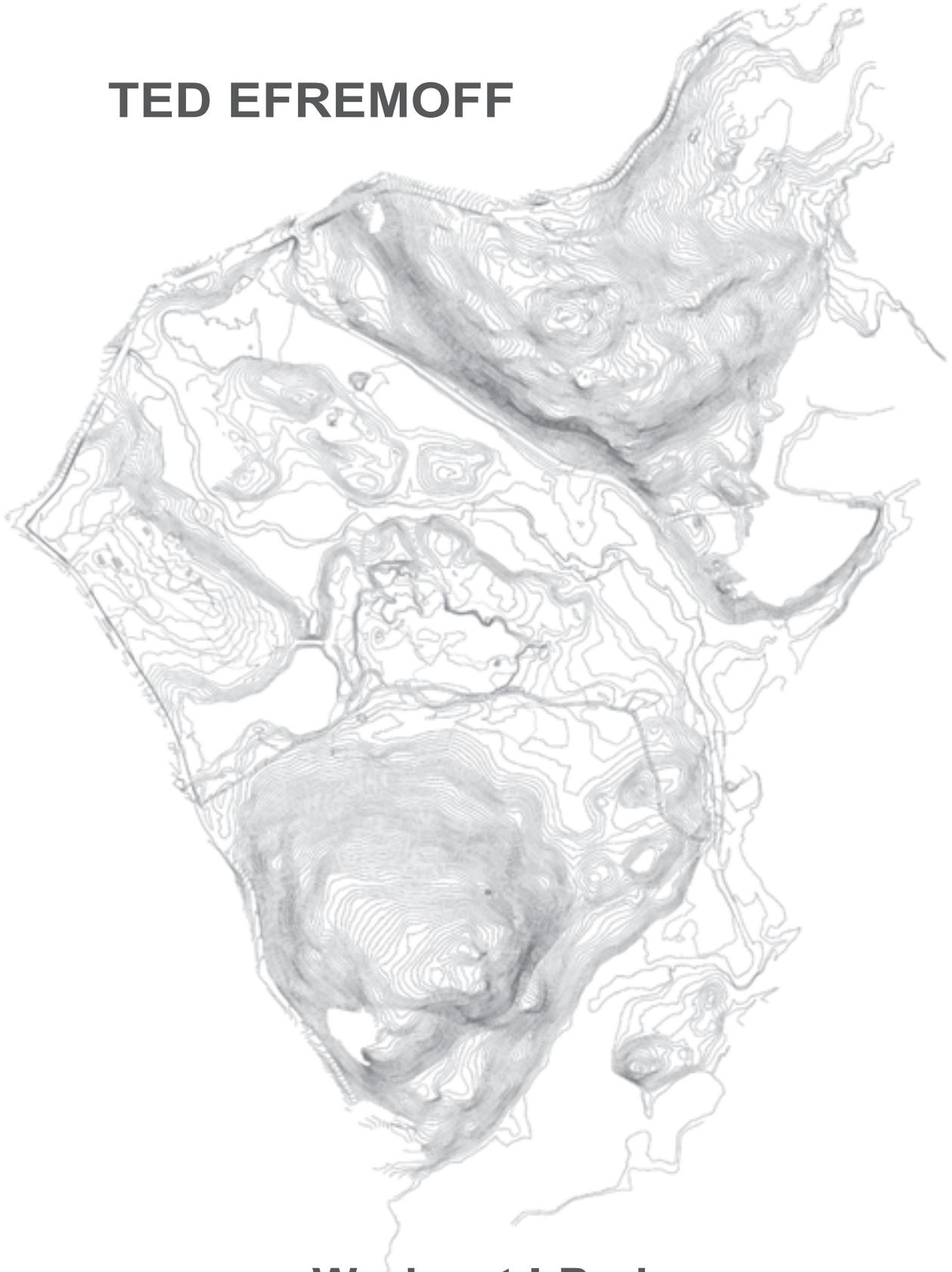


TED EFREMOFF



Works at I-Park

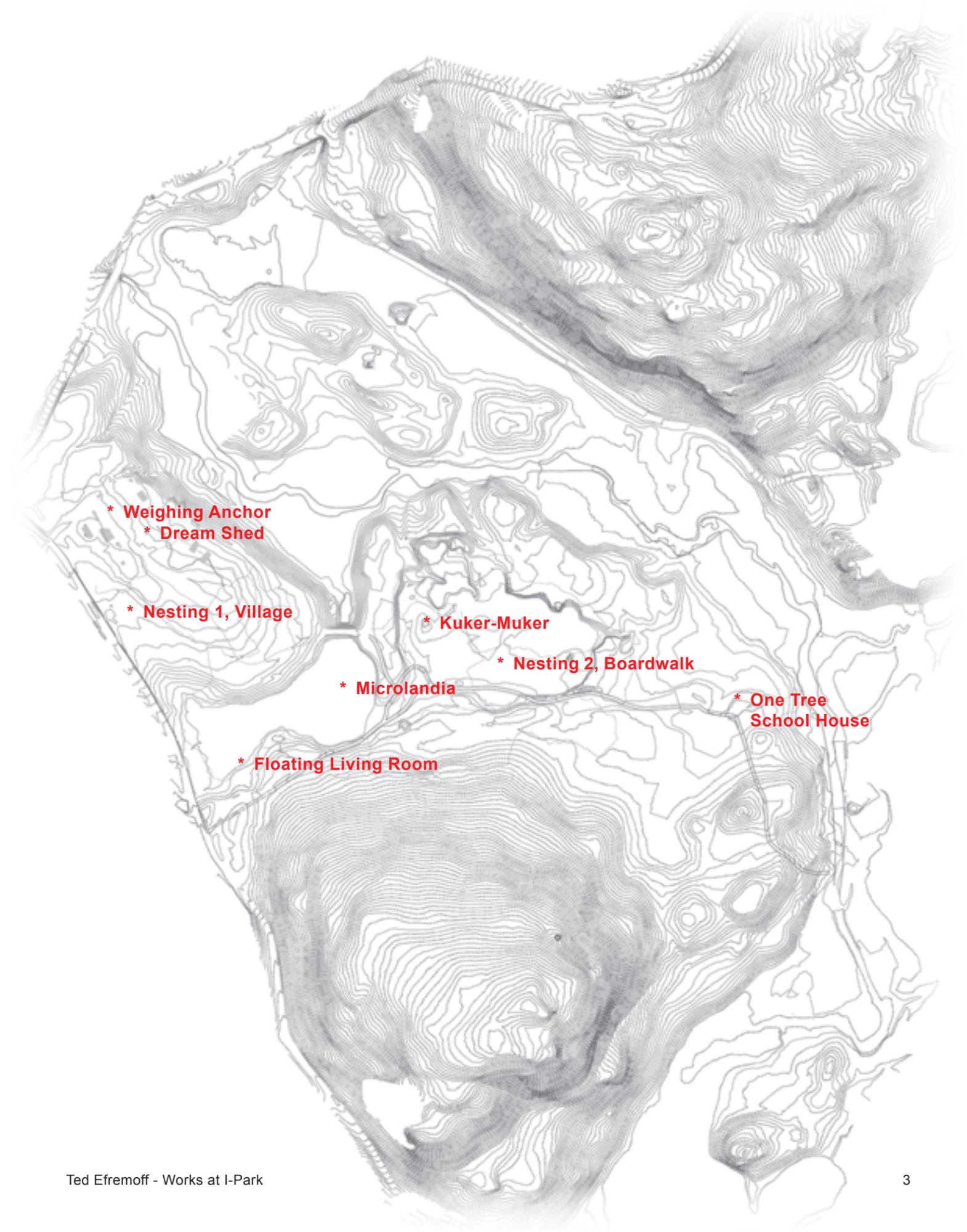
I-Park Foundation, Inc.

International Artists-in-Residence Program

2020

Contents

The I-Park Mission	4
Introduction by Colin McMullan	5
Introduction by Ted Efremoff	6
Bio.....	7
Statement	7
Nesting.....	8
Dream Shed	11
The Floating Living Room	12
One Tree Schoolhouse.....	14
Pulling Together / Legends of Willimantic	16
Weighing Anchor	18
Kuker-Muker	21
Microlandia	22
Fun and Games at I-Park.....	24
Pedagogy.....	26



The I-Park Mission

Nurturing artists and the creative process – in the fine arts and in nature.

I-Park is both an open-air and a private-studio laboratory for individual creative pursuits in the fields of music composition/sound art, the visual arts, architecture, new media/moving image, creative writing and landscape/garden/ecological design. From insights developed in the laboratory setting, it also develops and sponsors specially-themed cross-disciplinary projects of cultural significance – and brings these discoveries to light in the public domain.

I-Park supports these individual and collaborative investigations through its international artists-in-residence program, the aesthetic engagement of its natural and built environments and with on-site exhibitions, performances and collegial exchanges.

Since its founding in 2001, I-Park has sponsored almost a thousand fully-funded artists' residencies.

Introduction by Colin McMullan

Ted Efremoff's years of projects at I-Park display a lasting commitment to this site that is uncommon in the itinerant lives of international artists. He keeps going back to the woods, fields, and waterways of this 400 + acre plot of land in Eastern Connecticut to make art, have adventures, soul search, see old friends, and make new ones (both human and non-human). I-Park is like a second home for this artist, an autonomous zone to work, play, and grapple with the fraught historical landscape of a "New England" settlement on the Mohegan territory. Ted's critical, spatial, and social investigations at this international residency surrounded by rural communities, make up a strand of his broad practice that is grounded in a place: one as complex and resilient as any other place under the sun.

As a close friend and frequent collaborator, I have witnessed Ted's wanderings here over the years. Sometimes watching from a mediated distance. Sometimes calmly walking the woods or drinking tea around a fire. And sometimes, more often than not, in the rush of an idea or a deadline: engineering a solution, taking a long look at forms in space, wrestling with tools and materials, or with the land and water itself.

The boat we built, together with many new friends, back in 2006, found a lasting home here sometime later, under the shade of its pine tree mast. We wrangled that damn, beloved boat up and down waterways and highways across the state. We stubbornly built it fast, working hard, with inadequate expertise, by trial and error, all hands on deck, no idea turned away, drinking lots of coffee, and having so many conversations. We rowed it down the river in the 100-degree sun, singing and laughing. We camped and ate and told stories and shot videos and watched the water go by. At times it nearly broke our backs; at others it supported us.

We installed the boat at I-Park, as part of Thanatopolis, an initiative to design alternative memorials. We were putting the project to bed finally, and saying goodbye to our baby. It was a sober affair, as funerals often are, but not without distinct joys. The camaraderie of fellow artists James Holland and Johnnie Walker brought back a tinge of the boat's riotous creation and pursuant adventures. Ralph's company loaned us an earthmoving machine to dance around, delicately placing boulders and trees where we wanted them. The fire burned nearby, the leaves were falling, and it was time for a change, with new projects on all our horizons.

Ted Efremoff is a good artist to know. He knows when to try hard, and he also knows when to relax. He knows how to take charge, but he also listens when you ask him to let go. He holds everything up to a critical intelligence that remains bemusedly optimistic, in spite of the weary woes of our populous planet. Ted's fascination with history, politics, and landscape, his worldly, experienced, yet approachable demeanor, and his commitment to collaborative social process, all contribute to the relevance of his projects in discourses of historiography, government, identity, migration, and social justice.

In today's culture, those who produce meaning do so in a plurality of forms and spaces both real and virtual, across vast geographies. This artist has chosen over and over to work on this particular piece of land, in this social context, amidst many other far-off projects. The lasting relationship to this situation speaks to an abiding inspiration found here, in the sculpted landscape of these acres. Let us all be so inspired in whatever work we do on Earth.

Colin McMullan

Introduction by Ted Efremoff

At the ripe age of forty-three, a year after completing my MFA, I experienced my first artist residency. Previously ignorant of the concept of residencies, I saw this as an exciting, mysterious, shiny new opportunity to experiment and explore the way to making art as a newly forged contemporary artist. I loaded my car with necessities of the trade: sketchbook, pencils, a camera, and some tools, and set out on the thirty five-minute drive from Willimantic to East Haddam Connecticut. As I traveled, the roads became narrower, darker, and graver as they wound up and down impassable rocky hills past old barns and homes into the deep, dark, mossy, unpaved, and unsettling American past.

Arriving at 428 Hopyard Road to the sunnier space of the I-Park house I met my fellow tick magnets. It was exciting. After the initial tour of the land and orientation, I nosed around trying to understand just how useful our keepers might be to my yet unformed ambitions. Ralph was the mystery and subject of our private dinner conversations. What is his deal? What is the backstory of this place? What are his aims and ambitions? What is he going to do for us?

My first project at I-Park, Nesting, required the use of two fields, recycled wood from a deconstructed old building, tree branches, my fellow residents as subjects of a video and hiring a plane to fly over the land for documentation. I was nervously probing John the groundskeeper, Bill, Steve, and of course Ralph to see if this was at all possible. Ralph's hermetic countenance did not expose his thoughts about my ideas, but within a week through a series of hints and subtle signs I was made to understand that it was a go.

In the twelve years since, I-Park has become the most constant and central space in the creative life of my family and me. It has become a place where play and art are interchangeable and where creating has not been attached to succeeding or performing or winning. My roles at I-Park vary from hanger-on, supporter, reveler, artist, pack mule, documentarian, fellow, advisor, a hand, and a freeloader. It is a place where time, creativity, insanely ambitious parties, failure, camaraderie, and generosity has created a wholesome soup of worthy causes. This soup sustains those who express themselves through art that is permeated with the genius of the land.

The meticulous, persevering, and generous way in which I-Park gives us sustenance is greatly due to its founders, Ralph Crispino Jr. and Joanne Paradise, who treat their guests like family.

Ted Efremoff

Bio

Ted Efremoff, born in Moscow, Russia, is a cross-disciplinary artist and educator engaged with modalities such as environmental art, video, performance, and social practice art. His work explores the environmental, personal, and cultural constraints ingrained within prevailing power structures. The purpose of his work is to generate positive social and environmental change.

Efremoff's work has been presented in the US and internationally. Shows include: The Museum of American Art in Philadelphia; Gongju National Museum in South Korea; Free Speech TV; The National Center of Contemporary Art in Moscow, Russia; The National Palace of Culture in Sofia, Bulgaria. His work is in the collections of the Sound Museum of Rome, The Los Angeles Center for Digital Arts and the Culture House of Bad Sobernheim, Germany.

www.tedefremoff.com

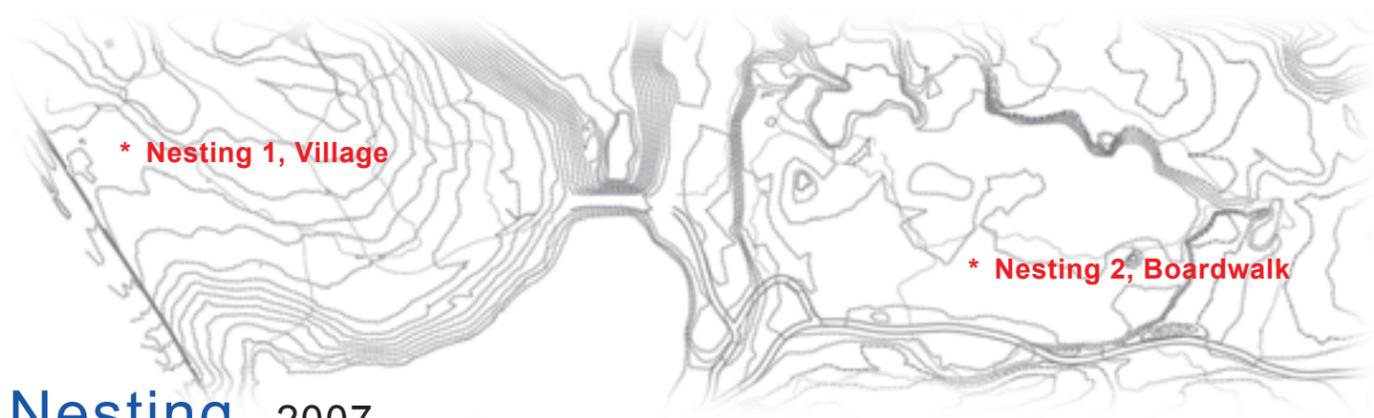


Statement

In the past 15 years my work has almost exclusively dealt with issues of displacement, marginalization, and integration. This work extends beyond explorations of human societies to the influence humans have on nature.

My suspicion is that human creativity is not attached solely to the handle of art, but to ordinary activities that intersect every aspect of our lives. I create islands, build boats, and swim across borders, to facilitate dialogue and engage people in questioning their relationship to the environmental and political status quo. I am interested in the kind of literal and metaphoric travel through space and time that storytelling allows us to experience. The stories I tell focus on the creative solutions people find in living their daily lives.

Spurred by my personal interest in social and environmental justice, I envision collaborative activity as a social instrument that builds critical relationships between people. While the process of creating for (and with) others is a challenge, it provides a stimulus for discovery and discourse.



Nesting, 2007

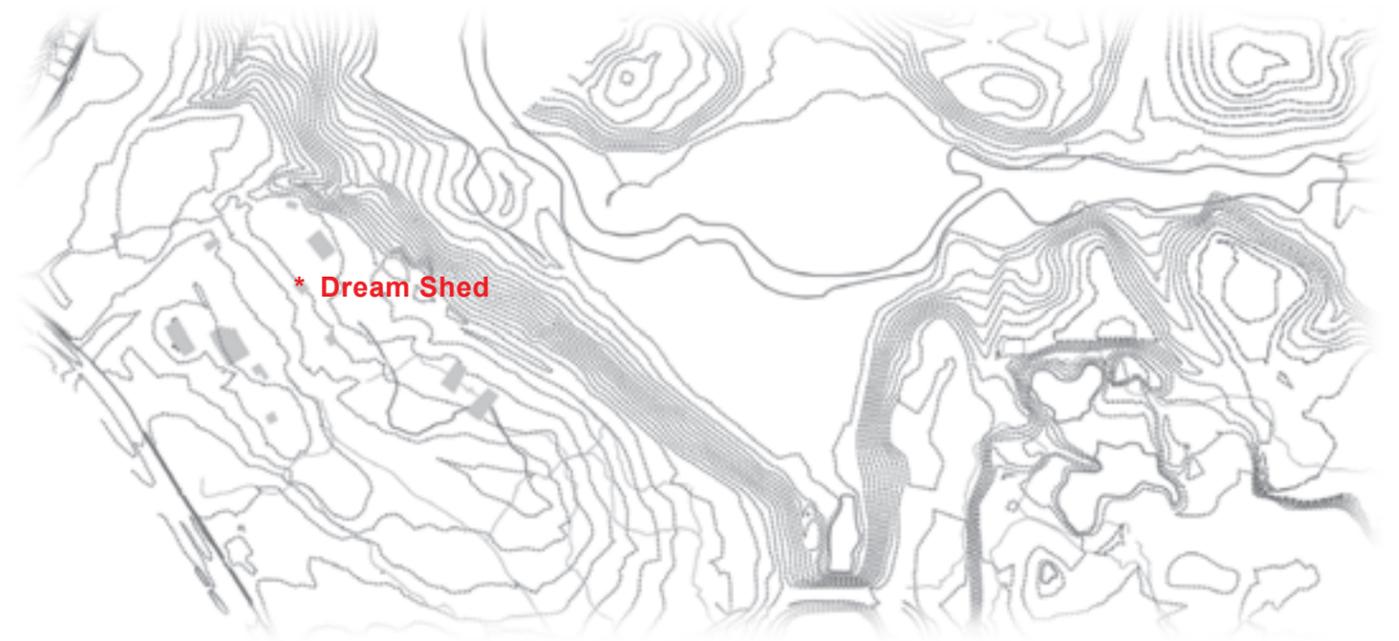
Nesting is a two-part installation created during my first I-Park residency consisting of *The Boardwalk* and *The Village*. Both pieces are made to be experienced from the sky as well as from the ground. Located in an abandoned gravel quarry and a field respectively the pieces explore traces of Native American and early European settlements found on the I-Park site. The installations touch on the transience of humans' marks left on the earth as well as the relatively short time span that we occupy in the continuum of earth's history.

The Boardwalk is a 120-foot long walkway created from boards reclaimed from a dilapidated

building on the property. This piece explores the idea of a shelter as a continuum or life span. It is constructed as a curved line, which at its end radiates in many directions.

The Village is a 50-foot circular structure created from fallen tree branches and is based on an archeological dig of a Mohegan camp. The large 6-foot diameter nests inside the village circle represent birth as well as the Mohegan worship of Eagles as deities who transport souls to the afterlife. In an action staged inside the village nests, resident artists at I-Park share stories of their heritage.





Dream Shed, 2007

Dream Shed was a collaborative project with my mom and my wife (with our daughter on the way) during an event at I-Park in the winter of 2007.

We converted a dilapidated shed into a rustic movie theater by painting the back wall white, adding rough-sawn planks for seating, and installing a projector and speakers. The concession included home-baked cookies and rum tea from the samovar.

The theater featured interviews with guests about meaningful dreams they experienced. We heard stories of playing with lions and engaging the moon in conversation.





The Floating Living Room, 2008 – present

Originally named Glass Bottom Living Room, the *Floating Living Room* got its current name from I-Park staff and residents. Originally built in 2008 it is in its third version most recently re-launched in 2017. Maneuverable by rowing, the *Floating Living Room* is outfitted with books,

guides to northeast aquatic plants & wildlife, binoculars, notebooks for the naturalist, and games for fun. It has been used by I-Park residents as a staging platform for floating artworks, for site performances and video art as well as a space to sunbathe, sightsee and swim.

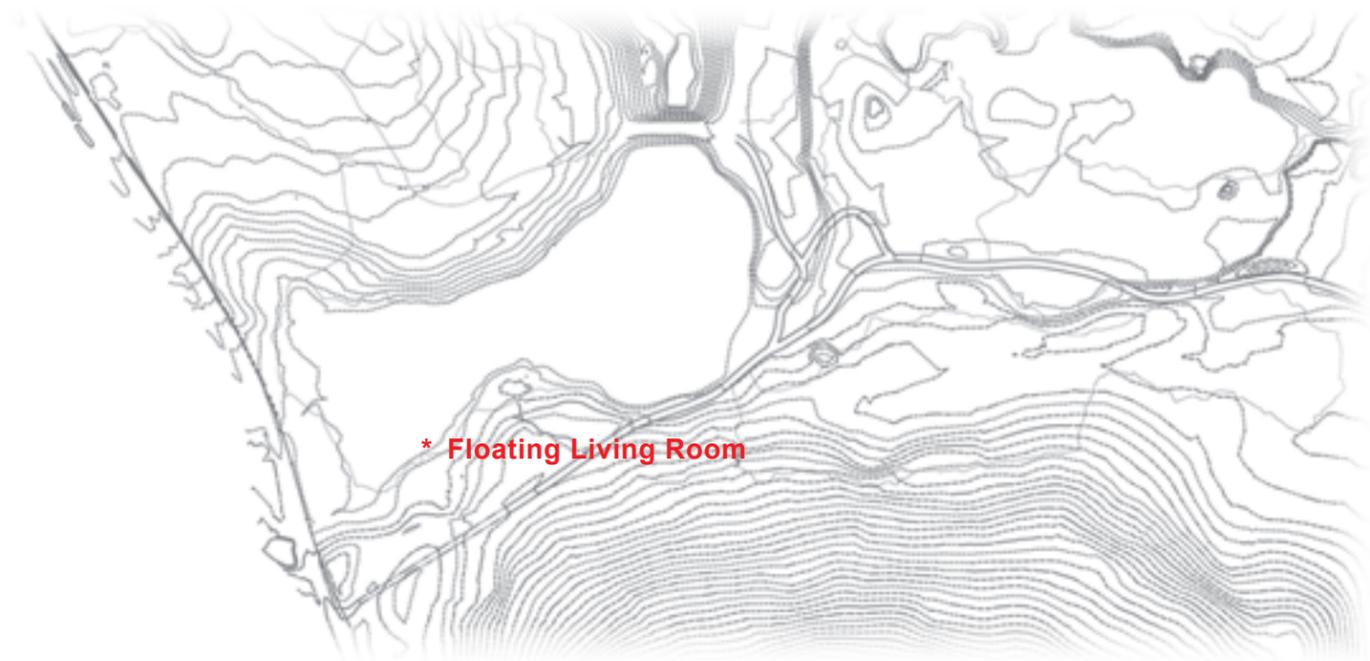


Photo by Steve Blazo

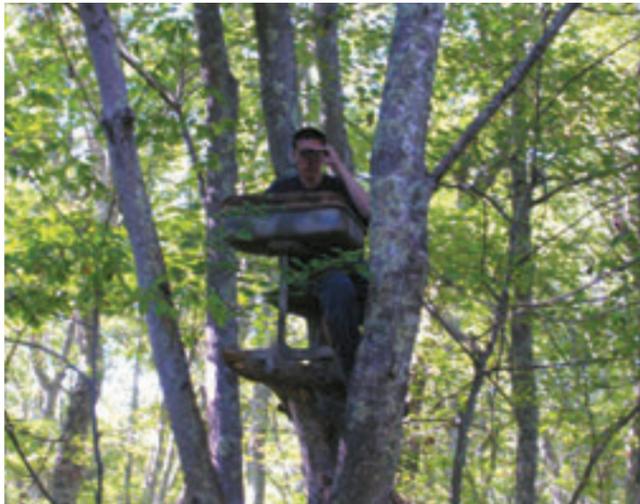




One Tree Schoolhouse, 2008 – 2010

Based on a hunter's blind, the *One Tree Schoolhouse* is a tree-space where nature can be studied serendipitously. It consists of a camouflaged school desk with a convenient seat and a place to store

books, pencils, binoculars, and other learning aids. A book of poetry and many observations, drawings, and paintings were created in the schoolhouse during its operation at I-Park.





(c) Printmaps.net / OSM Contributors

Pulling Together / Legends of Willimantic, 2006 – 2008

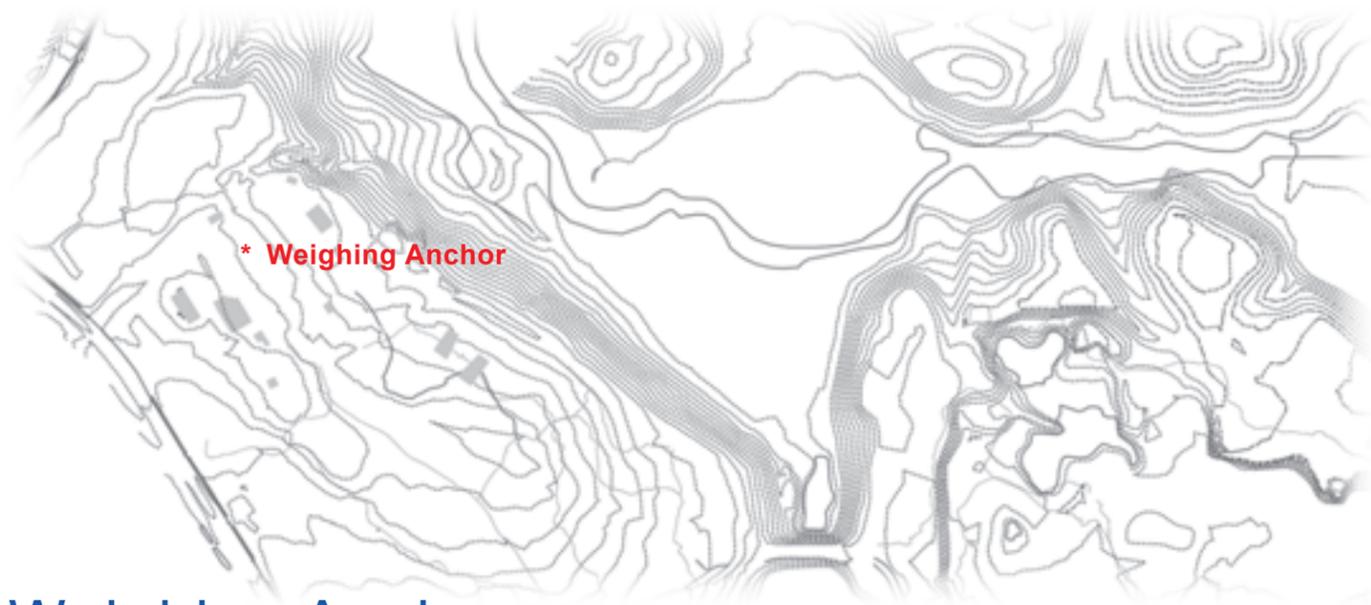
Collaboration with Colin McMullan and citizens of Willimantic, CT.

This collaborative durational public performance project started in 2006 in response to the negative national press directed towards Willimantic, CT. Considering this publicity a form of legend the collaborators set out to tell their own legends and tall tales about Willimantic. In the process, over one hundred like-minded citizens pulled together to build a wooden boat as a symbol of Willimantic's strengths as a vital community.

In June of 2008, the citizen shipwrights took the boat on a tour of the Connecticut River Valley to spread the lore of Willimantic's past and present.

The boat departed Willimantic filled with its stories and dreams and traveled south from Hartford, on the Connecticut River to East Haddam. The boat projected the image and imagination of Willimantic that we discovered through building together. All dreamers, storytellers, and boat people were invited to join the flotilla for the journey.



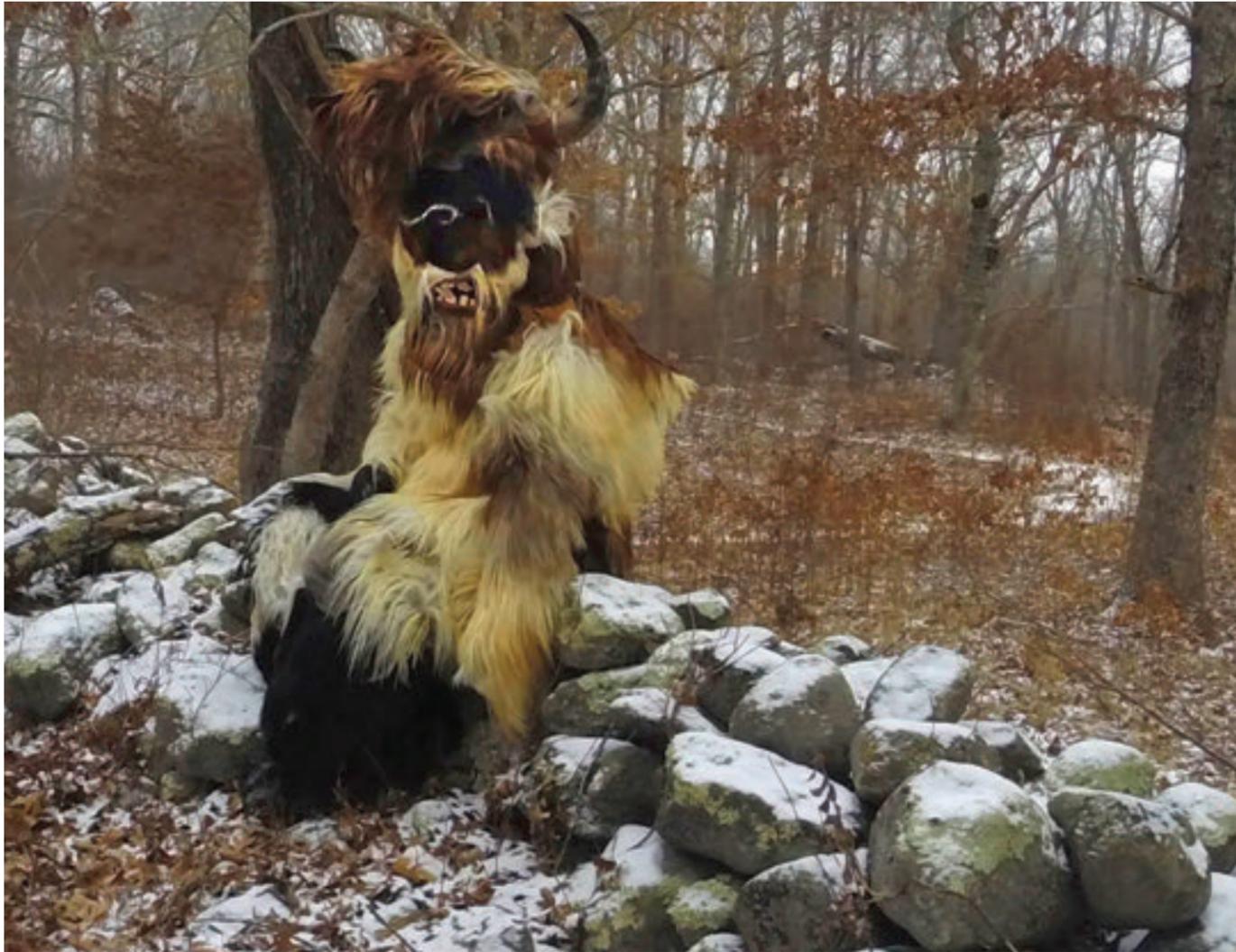


Weighing Anchor, 2013 – present

In the final phase of the Pulling Together project, the boat was installed as a sculpture at I-Park in 2013. Artists Colin McMullan, James Holland, Johnnie Walker, and I worked to brand a text into the sides of the boat, explaining the adventures we'd had with it. Then, we cut away the bottom of the boat, and planted a white pine inside it, to symbolically replace the tree that had been cut and milled for the planking.

Finally, we situated the boat within a stone field and near a fire to make the site inviting as a place to sit and share stories. An invitation to use the space for storytelling was also branded into the side of the boat. The site has been used by residents and visitors as the tree matures and the boat gradually decays back into the landscape.





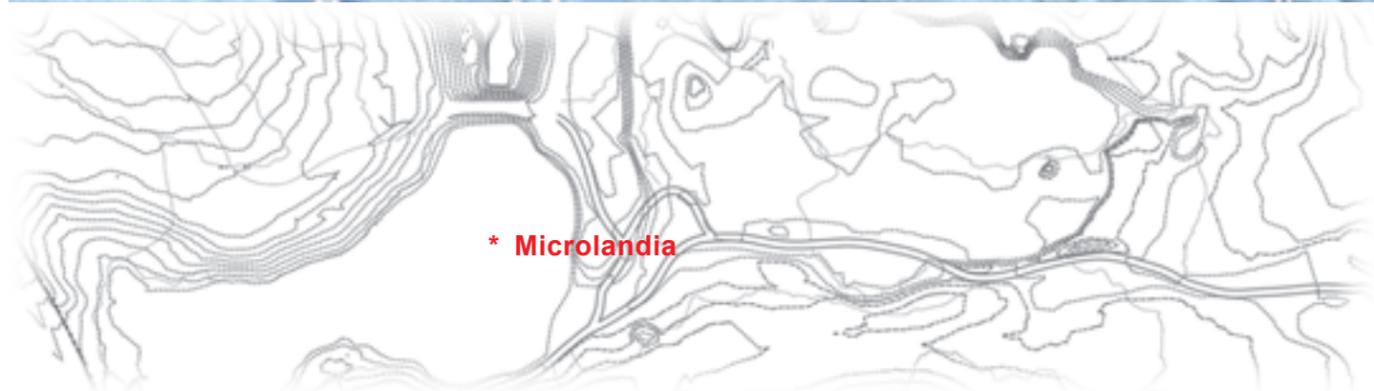
Kukur-Muker, 2014

Action: I-Park, East Haddam, CT /
New Britain, CT / New York, NY

A *Kukur* is a Bulgarian beast who comes out in late winter to chase away evil spirits. No one truly knows how this *Kukur-Muker* wound up on this side of the pond. Researchers into this episode have debated the possibility of transport through some sort of primeval magic. His first sighting

was at I-Park, a retreat for artists in East Haddam, CT, and subsequently he was sighted again in New Britain CT and New York City. Eyewitnesses and Kukur sighting researchers have speculated that his dances around New York City power sites might have been performed as some sort of shamanistic antidote to the ultra-materialistic culture that the United States stands for.





Microlandia, 2019 – present

Microlandia, is a sovereign floating island nation with fifty species of native plants beneficial to its insect and bird citizens. The idea of a sovereign wildlife enclave whose inhabitants have declared independence from human influence appeals to me in this time of environmental predicament.

The island is a kind of collaboration with nature, that nature itself continues to evolve. Since launching the island on April 20, 2019, I have been documenting it monthly and witnessing new plants establishing and new insects and birds using the environment for their benefit. Plants like *Amelanchier canadensis* (Shadblow) bloom white in early spring, yield edible red-purple berries in summer and produce orange-red foliage in autumn.

Microlandia's wetland-to-upland plant succession mimics the broader I-Park biome.

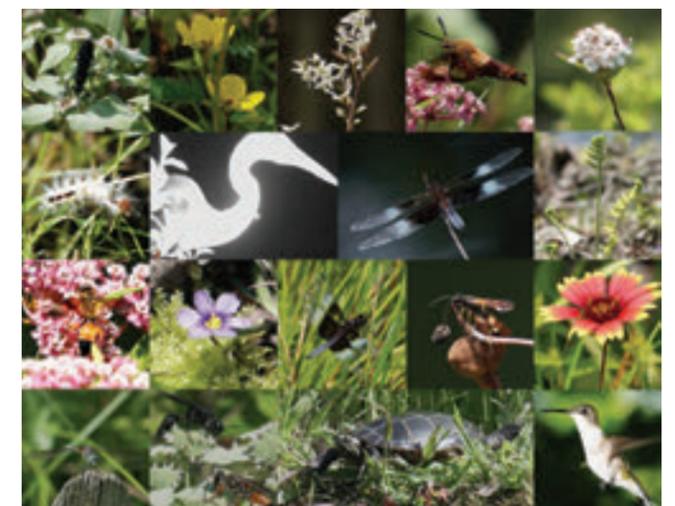
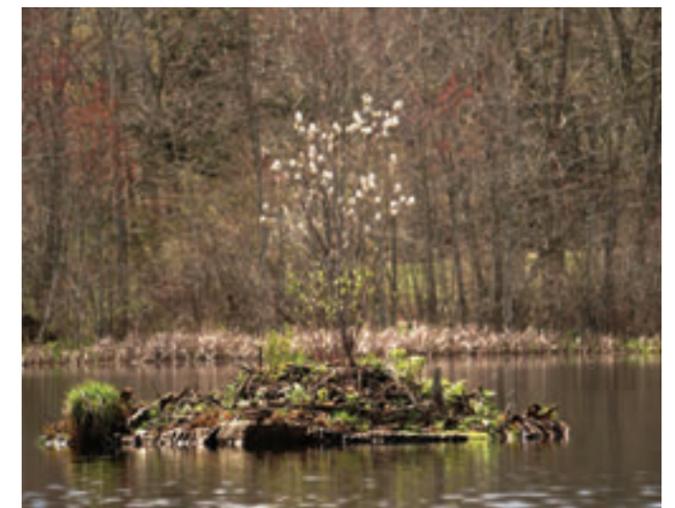
Wildlife and plant protection are the first defense against the loss of biodiversity and *Microlandia* is designed as a kind of insular laboratory, the documentation and study of which can lead to conversations on conservation.

Materials

Salvaged plastic pallets, salvaged plastic crates, salvaged PVC pipe, salvaged burlap, found local wood, local soil. *Microlandia* utilizes 'hügelkultur', a Scandinavian gardening technique that uses wood as a base for a growing bed. As the wood decomposes it turns into rich soil.

Size

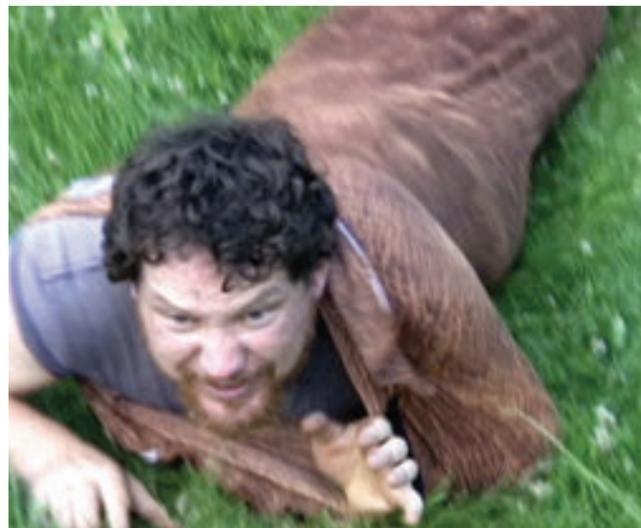
120 square feet





Fun and Games at I-Park

Over the years of visiting I-Park the things I make for fun, and the things I make for art blur. This freedom to play and try anything without the heaviness of "ART" is what makes it so enjoyable.





Pedagogy

I often bring my Central Connecticut State University students here.

One of the highlights of the *Photo I* course I teach is a visit to I-Park. Students hike around the residency grounds and are surprised by the work they see on the trails and roads. Their photographs become a document of the place in its current state as the various sculptures and installations evolve to completion or decomposition.

My Environmental Art course students tend to have a deeper engagement with the place with more time on-site to study artworks, counsel with I-Park fellows, and work produced in nature.





KQ Series Catalog Produced by
the I-Park Foundation, Inc.
428 Hopyard Road, East Haddam, CT 06423
www.i-park.org
June 2020