

## *Re-Material Wall*

### Inspiration:

The copper nugget was found on Isle Royale; I had never seen one before. It looked like sea glass. Like a stone worn from a copper pipe.

I first visited Socrates Sculpture Park in 1998. The exhibit, *All That Is Solid*, stands out in my mind to this day. At the time, any understanding of a potential work of art was restricted to the amount of guttural curiosity the thing inspired in my seven-year-old mind. The odd shapes and colors of the humungous wood, metal, and plastic objects by artists like Laurent Baude, John Bjeklie, Alberto Cacalieri, Rena Juliera Hanono, and all in this particular show, were more like boulders and play structures, or exposed roots and armatures than the architecture behind the river or what I saw in museums and high on marble pedestals. They all embodied an esthetic cross between the sharp lines of the city and the natural forms of earth. Some even pushed a categorical break down of what is considered organic versus inorganic material. Laurent Baude's piece *Echosphere 1*, in particular, presented technologically produced artifacts compressed in landfill like fashion until their conglomerate became definitively natural. These many years later I have gained a new appreciation for this originally curious visit, almost 20 years ago.

The perceived border between the city and the trees, the natural and the unnatural, the industrial and the biologically grown, is becoming ever more complex and nuanced in our hyper-materialist times. A growing awareness of diminishing global resource, while widely accepted, still fails to challenge habits of raw earth-to-product linear process. Despite a surge in the popularity of recycling and a plethora of experimental proposed clean up endeavors, waste is mostly still just trash. As suggested by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing in her literary investigation *The Mushroom at the End of The World, on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*, the Anthropocene, treated as a distinctly human problem, is more the physical shadow of capitalist progress than a reflection of a human inability to care. By blurring the categorical border of what is and isn't natural, I believe our inherited conscience of guilt can find reverence in a world not filled with waste, but with material to be explored and considered, just like in *Echosphere 1*.

The piece I propose to install for the 2018 Socrates Annual deeply considers these thoughts. It functions to reverse the process of raw material into industrial product in reaction to the personal reality that struck me on Isle Royale. I found I associated copper as a material more readily to industry than earth.

### Function and feasibility:

*Re-Material Wall* will use energy from the sun to slowly decay copper piping, growing it into crystalline, coral-like forms. It is a more realized version of *This Sculpture Will Change*, installed at Salem Art Works indefinitely and included in this application. This new iteration will grow forty forms (rather than the one in *This Sculpture Will Change*) and juxtapose the growth and decay of the copper with the simultaneous growth of pink morning glories that climb up the armature of the piece.

The sculpture, standing nine feet tall, ten feet long, and tapering in width up from a two-foot-wide base, will at first glance look like a large outdoor book shelf. A mild steel frame will support five thick-pine shelves that nestle forty jars. Each jar will contain a copper plating solution of copper sulfate and water. Also in each vessel, a cathode wire will suspend a copper object while an anode wire resting at the bottom will collect the copper molecules that are carried by the electrical current passing through the

solution. The current will be supplied by a forty-watt solar panel at the top of the unit that will divide its total wattage evenly amongst the jars. The process is very slow and only functions at this very low wattage; just one volt per jar, less than the output of a watch battery. As electricity travels in the same fractal path life uses to expand, the accumulated molecules tracing this path will look uncannily like biological growth. At the base the sculpture, a planter box will localize a patch of morning glories, a common weed that grows very fast and climbs anything its vicinity.

Over the past three months since *This Sculpture Will Change* was originally constructed, the suspended copper pipe has decayed and transferred into a growth only two square inches in size. As noted, the process is very slow. The work is now fully frozen, effectively paused until the spring thaw. Also included in the proposal is an image of a corral grown with a direct current regulator running twenty-four hours a day for two months. This corral stands roughly three inches. Over the six-month long duration of the Socrates Annual, I expect each jar will contain a coral between three and five inches in height while the pipe itself will have decayed into a thin holed ghost of its prior form.

In following in the theme of growth and decay, the pine will be left to crack and silver while the metal is left to rust.

The opportunity to participate in the Socrates Annual in this twenty-year reunion to my first visit is very exciting. Thank you for reviewing my application and specially for providing opportunities to emerging artists like myself.

Yours,  
Leander Knust