

Catherine Conrad: NAWA Sisterhood Submission

Details of the Work:

I would like to propose three works, that together, would be exhibited to create one large installation work that mimics a forest. The installation work as a whole is called “**Music of the Forest.**” The measurements are 108 inches (9 feet) long and 48 inches (4 feet) deep. The height of the installation is 84 inches (7 feet).



Please note that this is a representative photo that I took in my garage studio. The work is site-specific and the wood slabs on either side of the center sculpture are currently incomplete.

I do realize that there might not be enough space for such a large installation work. Subsequently, I have divided it into three individual works that can be selected by the curator:

- 1.) “The Song of Trees” (wood plank sculptures)
- 2.) “The Bride of the Forest” (sculpture of found items)
- 3.) “Restoration” (48-inch x 48-inch acrylic painting on wood)

Artist Statement for this Work:

Nature has long been an important fount of inspiration for my work. A dead, fallen tree might find itself home to a luscious carpet of moss. A small trickle of water during the summer might turn into a moving stream come fall. Nature has a way of rejuvenating itself, which mirrors my own health journey as I deal

with autoimmune illnesses. Nature brings me hope that my body might find itself revitalized during a new season.

The purpose of **Music of the Forest** is to inspire others that; wherever they are on their life journey – whether they are healthy or sick; nature can meet them where they are. Even fallen and dead trees are converted into mother hosts of entirely new ecosystems of life and growth: moss, vines, saplings, buds, and insects. Trees provide us humans with unique lessons of how to live our lives throughout the seasons with dignity.

In this installation work, I take trees that have died and fallen – and resurrect them into a new sculptural forest. These sculptures, coupled with one of my acrylic paintings of a hollowed-out tree, captures the unique music of the forest.

Artistic Process:

“Restoration” is a 48-inch by 48-inch acrylic painting that I completed in 2022.

I was referencing a photograph that I took in the woods behind my house. I would go on walks and would collect sticks and vines that spoke to me. I was interested to see how nature responded to the different seasons. I zoomed into the photograph because I was impressed how the colors looked silver and metallic. They were still the colors of nature, but it was interesting to think of nature at the microscopic level.



When I abstract something, my mark-making builds from other marks I have created. As I painted this work, I focused exclusively on the colors. As I painted, I realized that I was actively creating a whole new scene. I was capturing the microscopic nature of a fallen tree. I would see cells repeating over and over again. The more I focused in, the more beautiful it became.

“The Bride of the Forest” is an installation sculpture that I first ideated in 2023.

It uses found objects that I have been collecting for years. There are some objects that have been collected from the forest; others that were discarded by other people; and others that were found in thrift stores. I enjoy collecting items that can become something other than its original purpose.

The main structure was a CD rack that, to me, resembled a spine. The spirit of the bride is represented by a piece of driftwood that is curved in such a way that it imitates a figure dancing. The bride’s heart is represented by an abandoned nest I found, that had once held the hope and possibility of new life. A



Styrofoam head has been painted and speckled with gold foil flecks to resemble bark. Perhaps the most moving part of this work is the silver screen material that encapsulates the head. However, instead of suffocating it, it flies like the spirit of a bird in the forest. These metallic colors represent the beauty that exists around us all of the time – even inside of the least expected place: a dead tree.

“The Song of Trees” is a wood plank sculpture that I first ideated in 2023. It is inherently site-specific, so it has not been completed at the time of the application.

I have drilled the wood into stands, so that they can stand erect in the open. I have also drilled various hooks into the wood slabs, which can hold found objects that I have collected. Some of the photos that I submit will be representative of how these hooks will be used. The found items I choose to utilize will help establish the character of the two individual “trees” in the forest.

I will complete this assemblage component on-site, connecting the wood slabs with gold strings and fabrics. These strings will visually imitate the strings of instruments, showing that the forest has its own unique song.

Connections with NAWA members:

Frances Kornbluth: After reading her Artist Statements from different shows over the years, I realized that I connected deeply with each and every one of them in different ways. A substantial amount of her works were inspired by nature, as are mine. She found hidden meanings that might appear to others as accidental. Similarly, my mark-making process, which may seem random to an outside viewer, is deeply personal and based in deep meaning. She likewise found important life metaphors in landscapes.

Pat Adams: When I was researching her, I was struck by how her role as a mother and a female community member allowed her to add layers of complexity to her art. As I embarked on this work, I attempted to delve into my own feminine identity to capture the complexity of nature: its beauty, but also its hardship. I also liked how she attempted to make something out of nothing; to be inventive in her art. I try to do this through my found objects in this work.

Additional Photos of the Installation:

