Alan Sonfist

The Value of Environmental Art

It’s part of a network of trying to enlighten people of the importance of nature, what I would call historical nature or contemporary nature, how we see it, and how we can preserve it. My feeling is, art has always been involved in creating an understanding of your own time. If it was Renaissance art, you would be dealing with spiritual values, going back if you were in cave paintings, you were trying to connect to the environment by doing paintings in the cave of animals. So my feeling is at this point we have to create markers of our environment so people will have a clearer understanding of the value of our own environment.

Alan Sonfist
The Selection of the Tree Species

What I am trying to do is create these very monumental leaves of these magnificent trees, and then in front of them I am creating time capsules of the seeds that correspond to the actual tree. The particular species that I have selected were recommended by the Forestry Department at Harvard University and the most pressing issue is the Sugar Maple, which most people feel is a very common species of New England, and in reality it is one of the species that is actually disappearing from this region. And the other species are Burr Oak, American Beech, and the Chestnut, which has been rapidly disappearing from the last century. And each one for different climatic or environmental issues has been affected within our region. What you are observing is the monument, as we have great monuments to war
heroes, my feeling is that we need great monuments to vegetation that exists within our community.

**Alan Sonfist**  
**The Symbolism of the Bald Eagle**

Well the secondary component again is to draw attention to endangered species creating a landscape with indigenous plants inside it. The landscape itself is in the shape of the American bald eagle, which has been endangered. It’s getting off the endangered list, but it is still a rare species that people would see very commonly during the colonial period, but has become a very exotic event. And then the landscape itself which is a silhouette of the actual eagle, the plants that are inside are meant to attract indigenous animals as well as theoretically would attract the animals that would be eaten by the bird, by the bald eagle. So it has a complementary relationship, again the fragility of the plants in relationship to the animal life that exists within our own community because most people don’t realize, we always think of the Amazon, which is obviously endangered, but the reality is that the plants in our own community are endangered, and we have to protect them.