Two Emerging Artists to Create Large-Scale, Site-Specific Sculptures at deCordova

Visitors invited to watch installation process April 4-8, 11-15

Lincoln, MA, February 13, 2018—This spring, deCordova presents Sculpting with Air: Ian McMahon and Jong Oh, featuring site-specific installations by two contemporary sculptors who use different methods and materials to engage with the intangible material: air. The public will have an unprecedented opportunity to observe and talk to the artists as they create the sculptures in the galleries. The finished works will be on view April 20–September 30, 2018.

Ian McMahon creates voluminous, pillow-like forms using an innovative technique of sprayed plaster. Jong Oh fashions almost imperceptible structures with string, wire, and Plexiglas. While McMahon emphasizes materiality, solidity, and containment, Oh focuses on transparency, lightness, and expansiveness. Despite their contrasts, the two sculptors’ work is complementary. Both reshape space by exploring tension, balance, and force. They challenge our perceptions of gravity and perspective by creating forms that expand in the galleries.

“In Sculpting with Air we’re bringing two boundary-pushing artists together to ask the question: What happens when sculptors choose emptiness, transparency, and weightlessness instead of solidity, density, or weight?” says Martina Tanga, deCordova’s Koch Curatorial Fellow. “We’re excited to see the result once the process-driven, site-specific, and temporary sculptures are installed in our galleries.”

Ian McMahon

Exploring volume, materiality, and tension, McMahon has invented an entirely new way of sculpting with air and plaster. His process involves inflating paper-thin plastic molds into which he sprays gypsum plaster, creating enormous, seemingly soft, pillow-like forms contained within a metal corral (pictured above). Air is an essential material for McMahon’s method, as it determines the shape of his sculptures, propels the plaster particles onto the molds, and acts as a drying agent for the plaster.
Resulting forms confound the viewer’s expectations; the oversize cushions appear plush and full, but are actually hard and hollow, like an egg shell.

This site-specific work, created specifically for deCordova, is called Tether, relating to the physical connection the artwork has to the space; it can only be made on site and cannot be moved without being destroyed. Additionally, the title accounts for how the materials behave towards each other as the metal pipes restrain and pinch the air-filled, bulging plaster forms. Over 65 feet long and 25 feet wide, this is McMahon’s largest and most complex sculpture to date. While it towers over the viewer in certain places, there are also curves and nooks to the structure for more intimate encounters. The work’s enormous size cannot be grasped as a whole at once, but can be discovered slowly, as the viewer walks around it.

Jong Oh

Since 2012, Jong Oh has been creating geometric sculptures suspended in space. Hanging from the ceiling or extending from the walls, his delicate structures delineate and cut through the air in a gravity-defying feat (pictured right). He configures simple materials—fishing wire, Plexiglas, wooden and metal rods, painted threads—using a system of weights and anchors held in a carefully orchestrated balance. Responding to the architecture of the room, Oh’s compositions are conceived and crafted on site, making each work unique. Experience of the piece involves slow looking, giving our senses time to perceive the subtle shapes. Seen from different vantage points, forms will shift, appearing full from one angle and barely visible from another.

At deCordova, Oh’s installation will weave between two adjoining galleries, extending from one room into the other.

Behind-the-Scenes Viewing Days and Artist Talks

McMahon and Oh emphasize process in their work, and often make their installations at specific locations rather than in their studios. At deCordova, they will create original, temporary sculptures that respond to the Museum’s unique gallery spaces. Sharing the creative process with visitors, the Museum will be open to the public while the two artists install their work April 4–8 and 11–15 during normal Museum hours. Visitors are invited to observe the artists working in the gallery and attend daily artist talks (1 pm with McMahon and 2 pm with Oh).

“We’re thrilled to be able to offer this special, unprecedented opportunity for the public to go behind-the-scenes of an exhibition installation at deCordova,” says Tanga. “Visitors will be able to have a front-row seat to the artists’ creative process and will even be able to chat with the artists about their work. Each day will be a unique chance to see the sculptures as they change and transform into completed works of art right in the galleries.”

Videos and Interactive Displays

In addition to the behind-the-scenes installation viewing days, artist talks, and completed sculptures on view, there will be other opportunities for visitors to engage with and learn about the artworks.
• **Time lapse videos:** In a seating area outside the exhibition spaces, visitors can watch time-lapse videos documenting the creation of McMahon’s and Oh’s site-specific installations in the deCordova galleries.

• **Plaster casts:** McMahon’s plaster, pillow-like sculptures appear soft and warm to the touch, but are in fact hard and cold. To allow visitors to touch and interact with the unique art forms, there will be several plaster models created by the artist that can be picked up for a tactile experience.

• **Process drawings and videos:** Because McMahon’s installations emphasize process, there will be drawings and videos on view to show both the pre-installation and demolition phases of his work. The drawings provide a glimpse into the artist’s planning process, while the videos let visitors see previous sculptures being demolished on site—a step that McMahon sees as an inherent component of the work.

**Related Programs**

**Art for April Vacation Week**  
Wednesday–Friday, April 18–20, 1–3 pm (drop-in)  
Free with admission or membership  
Join us as we create exciting and unexpected air and architectural sculpture experiences in the Park inspired by *Sculpting with Air and Lived Space: Humans and Architecture*. Designed for families with children ages 5–12, but all are welcome.

**Sculpting with Air Lecture by Koch Curatorial Fellow Martina Tanga**  
Thursday, April 26, 6:30–7:30 pm  
Free  
Martina Tanga offers a historical look at the relationship between sculpture and air—from Marcel Duchamp’s 1919 artwork *Paris Air* to the large-scale installations by contemporary artists Ian McMahon and Jong Oh on view in *Sculpting with Air*.

**Kokedama: Living Sculpture**  
Thursday, May 24, 6–8 pm  
$35 members, $45 nonmembers  
Kokedama is a form of Japanese garden art in which the roots of a plant are encased in mud, then wrapped in a hanging ball of soft green moss. Invite a friend, enjoy a glass of wine, and create a Park-worthy sculpture for your home!

**Conversation with the Artists: Ian McMahon and Jong Oh**  
Thursday, June 7, 6:30–8 pm  
Free  
Despite the enormous contrasts in their work, Ian McMahon and Jong Oh both reshape space by sculpting with an intangible material: air. Join us for a conversation with the artists to learn how they challenge our perceptions of gravity and perspective by creating forms that expand into deCordova’s galleries.

**Forest Bathing: A Workshop with Nadine Mazzola**  
Saturday, June 9, 9:30 am–12 pm  
$20 members, $30 nonmembers  
Slow down and immerse yourself in the healing power of nature in the Sculpture Park with shinrin-yoku, or Forest Bathing.

**The Lab: Air**
Open during Museum hours on the 4th floor
Be uplifted in the Museum’s newest interactive space as we examine air, the invisible force that permeates our everyday lives. Immerse yourself in a field of hovering balloons, conduct experiments with weight and wind, and learn how artists and nature harness this life-giving element.

Image Captions (top to bottom)

Jong Oh, *Compo-site #15*, 2016, Plexiglas, string, metal rod, weight, paint, 100 x 32 x 37 inches, Image courtesy of the Artist

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About deCordova
Established in 1950 and located just twenty miles west of Boston, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum is dedicated to fostering the creation and exploration of contemporary sculpture and art through a dynamic slate of rotating exhibitions, innovative learning opportunities, a constantly changing thirty-acre landscape of large-scale, outdoor, modern and contemporary sculpture, and site-specific installations.

General Information
DeCordova’s summer hours (Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend) are every day, Monday–Sunday, 10 am–5 pm. DeCordova’s winter hours (beginning after Columbus Day weekend) are Wednesday–Friday, from 10 am–4 pm, and Saturday and Sunday, 10 am–5 pm. Admission: $14 for adults, $12 for seniors, $10 for students (ages 13 and up), and free for children 12 and under. Members, cyclists, Lincoln residents, and active duty military personnel and their families are admitted free of charge with proper ID. Visit [decordova.org](http://decordova.org) or call 781.259.8355 for further information.

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