



Xavier Cortada, "Surrender at Tunnel Brook," ritualistic installation/performance on the washed out portion of Tunnel Brook Road (White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire), 2012.

SURRENDER AT TUNNEL BROOK

BY XAVIER CORTADA

ABOUT SURRENDER AT TUNNEL BROOK

As the 2012 White Mountain National Forest Artist-in-Residence, a residency presented in collaboration with the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire, Xavier Cortada led a participatory art performance entitled *Surrender at Tunnel Brook*, in which the artists and his participants engaged in the futile attempt of rerouting the flow of a brook at White Mountain National Forest to conditions prior to Tropical Storm Irene. Participants also created a ritualistic installation lining up 100 white flags amid boulders along the path where a man-made road ran prior to it being washed away by Irene. The culmination of *Surrender at Tunnel Brook* was an educational discussion about the processes of nature, as well as the effects Tropical Storm Irene had on the Forest. This performance encapsulates anthropocentric desires of changing the natural environment and the overall futility of such a goal, the outcome of which is an acceptance of nature and its ever-changing qualities.

The intention of this performance was to present nature as it is, an unstoppable force that cannot be molded to fit our own desires. This was achieved through the various processes Cortada led his participants through, from moving boulders individually to an attempt at levitation, none of these actions having any effect on rerouting the flow of the brook. The performance culminates in this comprehension, participants placing white flags along the path that previously existed, a universal sign for surrender. The placement and usage of these flags also references the charting of a hurricane, Cortada using this reference as a mediation between what perceive as happening and what we actually have the ability to change. What *Surrender at Tunnel Brook* effectively addresses is this disconnect many have with nature, a misunderstanding of the permanence and futility of the natural environment.



RIGHT: Cortada, with the help of participants, plants 100 white flags along Tunnel Brook Road, surrendering the route back to nature.



TUNNEL BROOK

TUNNEL BROOK ROAD

LEFT: Cortada and participants attempt to reroute the flow of Tunnel Brook to rebuild the road that had been washed away after Hurricane Irene. They struggle with moving a large boulder, finding no success.



[1]



[2]



[3]



[4]



[5]



[6]



[7]



[8]

THE PERFORMANCE

- [1] Cortada addresses participants on the task at hand: redirecting the flow of Tunnel Brook and return the area to it's man-made state before Hurricane Irene.
- [2] Participants form an assembly line and begin their attempt at redirecting the flow stone by stone.
- [3] Cortada leads participants in their futile attempt.
- [4] One participant moves a large stone.
- [5] Cortada, White Mountain National Forest hydrologist Sheela Johnson, and participants struggle with heaving a huge boulder to no avail.

- [6] Instead, Cortada and participants attempt to levitate the huge boulder with their minds, also with no success.
- [7] Participants forfeit their attempt at redirecting Tunnel Brook, realizing the strength and dynamic qualities of nature.
- [8] Sheela Johnson, along with Cortada and the other participants, plant 100 white flags on the route of Tunnel Brook Road, officially surrendering the route to the environment once again.

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"Surrender at Tunnel Brook" was presented by the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire/White Mountain National Forest Artist-in-Residence Program.

IN THE PRESS

Artists-in-residence spend summer in N.H. forest

BY HOLLY RAMER (THE BOSTON GLOBE JULY 11, 2012)

If a tree falls in the White Mountain National Forest this month, it could be seen and heard far beyond New Hampshire.

Artist Xavier Cortada and composer Juan Carlos Espinosa drove from Miami to New Hampshire last week to begin a monthlong artist-in-residence program based in the forest. The program, in its second year, is a collaboration between the forest and the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire.

"It's really about using art to help people understand the forest," said Frumie Selchen, the alliance's executive director.

Cortada and Espinosa plan to hike and camp in the forest, creating individual pieces and collaborations while working with forest scientists, trail crews, and the local community. They will introduce themselves to the public with a free talk Thursday night at the forest headquarters in Campton and will discuss and display their work July 28 at a gallery in Center Sandwich.

The pair have worked together in the past, mostly on projects that highlight environmental concerns. While their plans may change as they explore, Espinosa said he will focus on using the forest's landscape to create what he calls soundscapes, or compositions that start with recording ambient sound from nature.

"I like to absorb as much of that sound as I can; that's the first layer," he said. "The second layer is my own impressions of that location, being someone new to a place and bringing fresh eyes."

The third and final layer is how Espinosa manipulates the recordings using samplings or acoustic instruments. The result will be podcasts he will post online at whitemountaintrailmix.wordpress.com.

"I want to map, with sound, my impressions of the place," he said.

Cortada will create drawings and paintings that will be exhibited at the Center Sandwich gallery, as well as temporary installations in the forest that will be photographed and documented. One will focus on the effects of Tropical Storm Irene last summer and might involve using flags and other items to mark where the storm rerouted a riverbed.

"What I hope the viewer will take away from this is how two artists see and hear this natural place, and hopefully change the way they see it, too," he said. "If we do that alone, we have more than

The artists also benefit, Espinosa said. He still uses material from a residency in Antarctica several years ago.

"One of the incredible things for me is the ripple effect of a residency like this," he said. "I'm still inspired by it, whether it's a chamber symphony I wrote or other stuff I sketched or wrote there. ... It keeps going."

The White Mountain National Forest artist-in-residency program was started in 2011 as part of the celebration marking the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act, which led to the creation of national forests in the Eastern United States.

The law enabled the federal government to purchase heavily cut-over, fire-prone land and turn it into publicly owned national forests, and helped shape the nation's attitude about land conservation. Today, the 800,000-acre White Mountain National Forest attracts millions of visitors a year.

Though best known as a recreation destination, the forest is also managed for other purposes, from sustainable logging and wildlife habitat to maintaining water quality for surrounding communities. Selchen said she hopes the residency program will highlight a less obvious function.

"This notion of how the forest is also a place of contemplation and spiritual renewal, a place for self-expression; that's the piece that artists-in-residence really have a chance to move people toward thinking about," she said.

The first year was so successful that officials scheduled two sessions this summer.

In August, Cortada and Espinosa will be replaced by New Hampshire painter Brian Chu.



“Path dwellers heed:

*Water carves the earth;
Sends the residue downstream and into the sea.
Sun, winds push the waves.*

*The ocean, heated, torments the skies;
Cycles its fury back to the land.
Carving anew.”*



Xavier Cortada is an artist, Professor of Practice at the University of Miami Department of Art and Art History and Artist-in-Residence at Pinecrest Gardens, where his studio, gallery and socially engaged art practice are based. Cortada’s work is intended to generate awareness and action towards issues of global climate change. Using art’s elasticity to engage others, Cortada educates and inspires community members to work and learn together to solve our community’s problems.

The artist has created art installations at the North and South Poles to address environmental concerns at every point in between. He has developed numerous collaborative art projects globally, including peace murals in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, child welfare murals in Bolivia and Panama, AIDS murals in Geneva and South Africa, and eco-art projects in Hawaii, New Hampshire, Taiwan, Holland and Latvia.

Cortada has also been commissioned to create art for the White House, the World Bank, Pinecrest Village Hall, Miami City Hall, Miami-Dade County Hall, Florida Botanical Gardens, Port Everglades, the Florida Turnpike, the University of Miami, the Miami Art Museum, the Museum of Florida History and the Frost Art Museum.

His work is in the permanent collections of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the NSU Museum of Art in Ft. Lauderdale, the Whatcom Museum, the Phillip and Patricia Frost Art Museum, the MDC Museum of Art + Design and the World Bank.

Cortada, born in Albany, NY and raised in Miami, holds undergraduate, graduate and law degrees from the University of Miami.

To learn more, visit www.cortada.com.



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