



Laila Voss

(Just Another Part of) Inside My Head:
Realized and Unrealized Projects



William Busta Gallery
Cleveland Ohio



Laila Voss 2008 ©



Cover:
Site Transfer, 2005
Steel, 12 x 16 ft diameter overall; each tripod 10–12 ft H x 3 ft D. The ancient symbols in this work create message combinations that refer to the site's historical and contemporary characteristics of early clay manufacturing and stone quarries; the current local commercial district and the community's concerns for health and well-being. *Sculpture in the Heights*, 2005–2008, Cleveland Heights, OH.

Opposite:
Hymn to the Mundane (working title), 2013. Proposal for a temporary or permanent outdoor installation, conceived in 2011 as part of a series of works investigating various energy states. Wood, sand, dirt, lichen, audio components. If built, doors would be life-size, 84 in. high; entire installation, 27 ft. diameter.

Above and top:
Hyacinth Park Gardens, 2004–08. Three earth mounds, brick, stone, plants, steel and oak benches; the gardens cover about a 100-foot triangle at one corner of the park. The mounds are in the shape of ancient symbols, creating the message: *working together brings new life*. Photo: Jerry Mann.



Above:
Garden Noir, Jardin du Jour (detail), 2009. Steel, overall 6 x 6 x 25 ft, approx. The symbol in the foreground is for *family* (Middle Ages); the light

green ones in the background are Hopi for *God, the universe and the five mysteries*, and the *Spiral of Life*, a cross-cultural symbol found on several continents.

Hymns to the Mundane: Realized and Unrealized Ideas by Laila Voss



It doesn't matter how prolific an artist has been in the real world. Imaginary galleries and sculpture gardens that bloom in the brain will always be more crowded with art than any actual places. This is particularly true in the case of artists who make public art. Merely aesthetic questions are the easiest of the verbal and tactical battles that take place in the public sphere. Institutional priorities that have nothing to do with art or education—funding parameters dictated by tax considerations, the hullabaloo of egos and hidden agendas—all demand quasi-political talents quite different from any abilities that most artists have or want to develop. It's discouraging, and if the would-be public artist persists in that career path, she soon becomes aware that much of the best public art will inevitably perish in committee.

So it's tough. Nevertheless, great projects get done; artists just have to get going (like everyone else, actually), and in the Cleveland area none is possessed of truer grit than conceptualist, sculptor, educator and activist Laila Voss, who for more than two decades has been one of the region's premier public artists. Writer Indra K. Lacin has commented about this artist's very thoughtful, even meditative method that Voss, "visualizes environments centered on the concept of cycles. Her themes include the urban environment, language, and the ordinary as the alchemical. (Her works) trigger the indeterminacy of meaning, the constant slips and shifts of everyday life." She does this in all kinds of ways and materials, from sound samples to found objects or even chunks of steel. At Asterisk Gallery in 2009, she presented a powerfully succinct video about urban transformation titled *Unbounded*, alternating the sweep of local highways with the violent tearing motion of a wrecking crew's giant mechanical demolition claw. And she was an outstanding part of the extraordinary city-wide *Urban Evidence* exhibit mounted in 1996, simultaneously at SPACES, MOCA Cleveland, and the Cleveland Museum of Art, where her contribution was titled, *A Chaotic Symphony; the Catch-all Net*.

It was also in 1996 that Voss showed an installation that prefigured the current exhibition of unrealized public projects, (*Just a small part of*) *Inside My Head* at Cleveland State University. Yet the primary issue, both here and at that time, may not be so much the question of what can be arranged in the real world, what can or cannot be

made to happen—but rather, the essential tension between the initial stages of an idea's germination, and the formal realization of a work of art. After all, every work exists in many different forms, which of course is a primary thematic preoccupation of contemporary art, and not least that of Laila Voss. Maquettes and models, like her presentation of a maze-like arrangement of little doors in the proposed (but as yet not constructed) *Hymn to the Mundane*, have a special fascination, since they exist just beyond the limits of the purely imaginary, in a more movable dimension that stands in for real space. In a way this is also true of full-scale installations plunked down in parks and city squares, yet it reminds us that every creative act, everything that proceeds from an initial act of ideation and the application of human will, is really part of a realm that has a geography all its own, and can be mapped only with a superimposition, a tracery of spirit.

That's where the sound element in Voss' work comes in. Her doors, scattered in a garden as pure and purely unreal as Eden, open onto a collage of sounds, tiny or loud, sampled from corners of the real world. Arranged in call and response patterns, they include hammering and horses whinnying, the noises of traffic and articulations of sheep, the soft impact of quiet things that happen during morning hours in the woods, rain and fog horns. Together they compose a full-scale landscape-symphony larger by far than any site-specific location. The only world that we know, after all, is in our heads.

—Douglas Max Utter

Laila Voss

Born 1952, Saginaw, MI
Resides in Cleveland, OH

lailavossart.com

Education

1992 MFA, Studio Art, Kent State University, OH
1974 BFA, Ceramics, Ohio University

Solo Exhibitions

2008 *Natural Forces*, Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA
2004 *Chalking (Installation with ongoing action)*, Colonial Marketplace Arcade, Cleveland, OH
2003 *In the Center, Unable to Hear, Unable to Speak; and How can I say what I mean?* performance, FCCA, Prague, Czech Republic
2001 *Fire and Embers*, Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH
Night Scenes and Horizons, Crandall Gallery, Mt. Union College, Alliance, OH
2000 *At the Water's Edge*, Oakland Center for the Arts, Youngstown, OH
1993 *Studio Artifacts*, Sculpture Center, Cleveland, OH
Look.... William Busta Gallery, Cleveland, OH

Selected Group Exhibitions

2013 *Video Fall-Out*, Loren Naji Gallery, Cleveland, OH
2012 *37 Days*, Summit ArtSpace, Akron, OH
Arts Quarter Exhibition, Zygote Press, Cleveland, OH
Six in Studio, Cleveland West Art League at 78th Street Studios, Cleveland, OH
2011 *48 Hours of Making Art*, Lake Erie College, OH
The Sketchbook Project, Brooklyn Art Library, NY
Intersections, Zygote Press and The Lit, Cleveland, OH
2010 *John Ranally and Laila Voss: Sculpture in the Garden One*, ArtsCollinwood, Cleveland, OH
Arts Quarter Exhibition, Zygote Press, Cleveland, OH
repetition/correspondence, Asterisk Gallery, Cleveland, OH
2009 *The Bridge Project*, Ingenuity Festival, Cleveland, OH
Monumental Ideas in the Miniature Book, International traveling exhibition
2008 *Connections: Ohio Artists Abroad*, Riffe Gallery, Columbus, OH
2007 *Massillon Outdoor Sculpture*, Massillon, OH
Mix: 24 Hours of Art, Gallery U Haul, Cleveland + Oberlin, OH
Ninth International Shoebox Exhibition, University of Hawaii, Manoa, HI

Into View, The Sculpture Center, Cleveland, OH
Heights Outdoor Sculpture, Severance Town Center, Cleveland, OH
2004 *Smoke, Mist and Mirror: The Cuyahoga Valley in the Artist's Imagination*, Cleveland Artists Foundation, OH
Site Unseen, Newsense Enterprises Home Gallery, Cleveland, OH
2002 *Quinta Essentia: East and West*, Zygote Press, Cleveland, OH
With/Against Materials, Allegheny College, PA

Selected Public Works

2004–08 *Hyacinth Park Gardens*: Slavic Village Development and the Hyacinth Neighborhood, Cleveland. ParkWorks, Ohio Arts Council, Neighborhood Connections, sponsors
1997–98 *Baltic Children's Park*: Lead artist. Cleveland. Committee for Public Art, City Council.
1996 *Bicentennial Legacy Park*: Cleveland Botanical Gardens & the Committee for Public Art.

Grants and Residencies

2009/10/12 University of Akron, Myers School of Art, Part-Time Faculty Grants.
2008 Headlands Center for the Arts, CA. 3-month residency.
Volunteer of the Year Award, City of Cleveland Annual Neighborhood Summit.
2007 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award.
2005 Ohio Arts Council Artist and Community Project Support
2003 FCCA, Prague, Czech Republic, 2-month residency.
Ohio Arts Council Artist Fellowship
2002 Zygote Press Residency.

Professional Experience

Senior Lecturer University of Akron
Myers School of Art.
SPACES board member, 1999–present.