

## *ENGRAINED: Ode to Trees*

We've always known trees—they grow along with us marking our lives. Perhaps there has been a favorite tree in your life—one that you climbed, picked fruit from or one that defined your property from another or you contemplated outside your classroom window. Trees are special friends because they provide us with so much—shelter, shade, nourishment, beauty, protection, refuge, regeneration and a purifier of our air. The Japanese have an activity they call “bathing in the woods ”—walking among trees to dispel the stress of life and maintain mental health. It is no wonder then that we grieve when a tree(s) goes missing.

I am an outed tree-hugger. I have said hello and good-bye and goodnight to trees. I have thanked them and loved them and I have mourned their loss. In fact it was the loss of my 30-foot high spruce tree, the one that lured me to the property where I now live and work and then died shortly after I moved in, that provided the first physical materials and impetus for this exhibit. Maybe its job was over when it found me but my job had just begun.

Even as I mourned the loss of the spruce I saved slices of the Spruce's trunk that eventually transformed into some of the art forms in this homage to forests, tree canopies, felled trees, reforested trees, the mighty great grandfather trees and the baby sprout. As a multimedia artist I was inspired to use my entire tool chest of videos, sculpture, paintings and prints to tell the story of trees and appeal to as many of the viewer's senses as possible. My reductive art is intended to reach beyond our familiar intellectual understanding to a place where instinct and feelings lie.

There is no ugly tree but there are people that commit ugly acts against trees by not caring for them—starving them—or killing them often with a sad price to pay. E.G; Iceland has a dramatic barren landscape without trees because the early settlers used them for housing and fires. Now the planting of new trees in their volcanic landscape has proven almost impossible. Icelandic people I have spoken with had never grown up with trees but longed for them the way an orphan longs for parents. And, then there is the cutting of forests where greed can overcome our need for preservation.

My hope is that my art will attract the viewer with beauty and invigorate our love and need for trees and propel us to save them for our planet's health, grace and survival for future generations!

Tree

Oh majestic tree  
how safe I feel  
hugging your stable trunk

Although you tower over me  
you protect my soul  
from unbelieving

Marietta Patricia Leis, 2019