



New public art sculptures, up-cycling 10-tons of fishing “ghost gear” salvaged from the Gulf of Maine, are now on view in a park in Portland, Maine. Created by regional artist Pamela Moulton, with 5,600 community collaborators, “Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea” brings both visual joy and attention to local and international environmental issues.

Project: **Pamela Moulton: *Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea* (2022)**

Presenter: TEMPOart

Location: Payson Park, Portland, Maine ([map](#))

Dates: Installation on view June 2022 through 2023

Contact: TEMPOart: Samantha Butler, samantha@tempoartmaine.org

Media: Red Art Projects/Maureen Sullivan maureen@redartprojects.com, 917.846.4477

(July 31, 2022 Portland, Maine) TEMPOart, the nonprofit organization dedicated to energizing Portland’s public spaces through temporary art installations, is pleased to present *Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea*, 2022, by artist Pamela Moulton at Payson Park, in Portland, Maine, from June 2022 through 2023. *Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea* consists of three larger-than-life free-standing whimsical sculptures that the artist describes as “an underwater arboretum crossed with outer space creatures” created from over 10-tons of “ghost gear” – trawling nets, ropes, buoys, lobster traps, and other fishing debris – salvaged from the Gulf of Maine. Driven by the artist’s community and collaborative based practice, it is public art created for and by the public, with over 5,600 students and collaborators detangling, weaving, painting, and assembling the sculptures while discussing art making and the stories behind the materials. Moulton stated: “These are sensory sculptures and I hope people will touch, crawl, and picnic under them, and marvel that these materials were just recently lost and haunting the bottom of the ocean. I’m happy that many will enjoy the art simply for its beauty and whimsy, and I hope it will additionally inspire some to contemplate, discuss, and get actively involved in the deeper underlying environmental issues.” The project is continually activated by a series of free performances and events throughout the summer. ([Calendar here](#))

“My projects are driven by ideas and issues relevant to our time and community, and living around the vibrant port city of Portland, we are inexorably linked to the sea,” stated Pamela Moulton. According to a CBS TV report¹, around 10% of lobster traps (280,000) and fishing

¹ [CBS Mornings TV “Eye on the Environment” October 27, 2021](#)



equipment are sunk at the bottom of the Gulf of Maine each year, and an estimated 600,000 tons of fishing gear are added to the oceans annually worldwide, harming sea life and the fishing industry in coastal towns. *Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea* reclaims and transforms the abandoned materials to give them a second life.

The extensive process for creating this artwork began with scavenging materials, over 10-tons, for which the artist reached out to the [Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation](#) and [The Center for Coastal Studies](#), who work with the fishing industry to locate, recover, recycle and return to fishers, or properly dispose of the fishing debris discarded on the ocean floor. Laura Ludwig, Marine Debris & Plastics Program Manager for The Center for Coastal Studies Provincetown, wrote to Moulton: “These are all considered responsible disposal options, but my preferred method is to ‘upcycle’ the gear by donating it to an artist: highest and best use of old gear! ... I’m genuinely amazed at the way you transform old, retired, “end-of-life” fishing gear into accessible, colorful, beautiful sculptures!”

After the artist made selections from the excavations, sometimes with the fishermen on their boats, the materials were trucked to a site where she could sort for the right mix of ropes, nets, and mesh that could be shaped and hold paint. Then the laborious preparation process begins of detangling, cutting the massively heavy materials into workable pieces with grinders and chainsaws, and cleaning the nets that are covered in muck from the bottom of the ocean, sometimes with pieces of fish guts and skin clinging to them. In the middle of a Maine winter, the artist drove the frozen block of nets to a car wash.

Moulton then took about a month to familiarize herself with the materials, tame them into a workable state, envision the forms the materials might take, and figure out how to engage participants in an educational and rewarding way with the process. Starting with a basic concept of micro and macro organisms, the artist allowed space for them to continually morph and shift as they were collaboratively dismantled and put back together into the fantastical sculptures now presented in the park. The 12-17 foot sculpture’s skeletons are reinforced with steel armature to withstand wind and winter weather, then covered with the up-cycled art that Portland Press Herald headlined “Eye-Catching’ Portland sculpture draws praise, head turns.”²

Community involvement with public art has been an essential aspect of TEMPOart’s commissions and intrinsic to Moulton’s practice. She has been creating sculptures from found and discarded objects since she was a child, and continually working on community sculptures and performance in France for 25-years, and now in Portland. As a long-time teaching-artist and resident, Moulton had access to a large pool of fellow artists friends, and students, and for this project, she gives credit to 5,600 generous individuals, who in myriad big and small ways were involved in bringing it to fruition. “My work is 100% community-based, and I couldn’t do this work without an army of people,” said Pamela Moulton. “I love working with everyone from children to elders (including teaching a class with elders with dementia who live through their senses) and it’s taught me how to motivate and work collectively. The greatest joy is when you

² Portland Herald Press, July 24, “Eye-catching Portland sculpture draw praise, head turns” by Portland Luca Dufalla



can connect into a community and they feel part of the project, and it becomes as much their project as your project - and they even bring their friends to see it!"

Upcoming Events

"Every Tree Tells a Story" is a summer series of performances and events led by Pamela Moulton in companion with "Beneath the Forest, Beneath the Sea." See the [calendar here](#).

Collaborators

Casco Bay High School, The Cedars, Center for Coastal Studies Marine Debris and Plastics Program, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine, DSO Creative Fabrication, The Ecology School, Evo Rock + Fitness, Flatbread Company, Gerald E. Talbot Community School, Girl Scouts of America, Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, King Middle School, Maine College of Art and Design, Mayo Enterprises LLC, The New School Kennebunk, Presumpscot Elementary School, Ocean Avenue Elementary School, Oceanside High School, Sherwin Williams, Spindleworks, Standard Baking Company, Sterling Rope Company, Tom Moulton, Transformit, and many generous individual volunteers. Special thanks to Pamela's Moulton's team of artist collaborators.

About Pamela Moulton

Pamela Moulton (Franco-American, b.1961, based in Portland, Maine) is an artist and teacher fostering multi-generational collaboration and community in her large-scale sculptures and installations. Her education has included: Ecole Supérieure d'Art d'Aix en Provence, France 2011, Vermont Studio Center & Johnson State, Master's program 1995-1996, and Art Students League, New York City, 1985-1989, Ecole Nationale d'Art Décoratif- Villa Arson, Nice, France 1983-1984, University of Vermont, 1984 BFA & BA.

The artist has shown extensively in France and the U.S., with recent solo exhibitions: Speedwell, Forest Interactive Installation, 2021; Portland Museum of Art, Façade and Sculpture Garden : Textile installation, 2019; Space Gallery, Portland, Maine, 2019 Stanley Whitman American Museum, Farmington, CT, 2019; 2012 Ecole de Beaux Arts, Tours France, 2012; Ecole Supérieure d'Art d'Aix en Provence, France, 2011; and many more.

About TEMPOart

TEMPOart champions and commissions public art in Portland, ME. We envision a public art city fostered by projects and events that energize our collective imagination and instigate conversation; connect communities in Portland and beyond; and are a catalyst for social, racial, environmental, and economic justice. A 501c3 nonprofit, we partner with other educational and cultural institutions, building upon each project to offer inspiring learning opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.