

# The Boston Globe

OUTDOORS

## Pop-up sculpture garden provides ‘momentary jump’ on the Riverway

By Karen Campbell Globe Correspondent, Updated May 28, 2021, 1:58 p.m.



The 2021 iteration of Studios Without Walls features 17 site-specific works, most of them very hopeful like Jamaal Eversley’s “One Door Closes Another Door Opens.” LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Imagine setting off on your morning jog along the Muddy River or crossing the footbridge from the Longwood Medical Area into Riverway Park after a long hospital shift to discover a giant multicolored dragonfly and flock of origami cranes hanging from the trees. That’ll stop you in your tracks.

And that's the point. For more than two decades, the Brookline-based professional artist collective Studios Without Walls (SWW) has transformed public places into fertile oases of creativity. This year's free family-friendly exhibit, open through Sept. 6, features 17 new site-specific multimedia works transforming the paths just north of the Longwood T stop into a vibrant outdoor sculpture garden.



Barbara Fletcher's "Lumen" is part of Studios Without Walls' 2021 outdoor exhibit. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

"It's so exciting, because you can just happen upon it, it's unanticipated," says SWW founder Bette Ann Libby. "All of a sudden you're in an art exhibit. What could be more fabulous? It's not intimidating, you didn't have to plan it or go inside a museum, you just are there. It gives people a safe place to step away from their normal stress."

But the artists' signage also invites deep engagement, with contexts ranging from the playful to the scientific to the philosophical — this year's theme is "The Light Gets In." QR codes and maps for self-guided tours feature clues to an art treasure hunt that Libby hopes will encourage people to "think about things in different perspectives."

Over the years, more than 75 artists have participated in the collaborative venture. “What a great opportunity to display work in a magical location, full of hidden pockets, overhead arching branches, embankments leading up to buried railways or the river,” says participant Madeleine Lord. “As an artist I am glad to see how folks react, how art works to wake them up, enrich their daily pattern, provide a momentary jump from their personal sphere into a fantasy.”



A detail from Gail Jerauld Bos's "Dance with Delight until Night." LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Longtime SWW artist Janet Kawada adds, “The path goes through the Longwood area where patients, family, medical professionals walk over that bridge and see the art and it’s inspiring to them. We’ve had really touching notes from people in response to this.”

Studios Without Walls is supported by a number of organizations, including Brookline Parks & Open Space, Brookline Community Foundation, Brookline Commission for the Arts, and Mass Cultural Council. That support, Libby says, is crucial to being able to pay each artist a modest honorarium toward costs of material, fabrication, installation, not to mention creative labor. “People don’t always realize — this is [our] heart and soul,” Libby says. “It’s a struggle, but we are so passionate to express ourselves and make an impact with our work.”

Planning by a small core group begins each fall. After proposals are selected, participants meet (via Zoom this year) to discuss their artistic and pragmatic ideas, like how to install pieces to withstand the unintended consequences of site-specific art — rain, wind, vandalism. “It’s a great intellectual exercise,” says Libby, “a great exchange of knowledge and information, and you develop great friendships among a group of like-minded people.”

After the isolation of the pandemic, most artists responded to the theme with hope — as well as clever upcycling of materials normally headed toward landfills, says Libby. She painted her double-sided “Roll into Day/Roll into Night” on recycled vinyl banners with returned house paint. Jamaal Eversley’s brightly painted found door highlights the adage “One Door Closes Another Door Opens.”



Bette Ann Libby’s “Roll into Day/Roll into Night.”LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Many of the installations are reflective — literally in the case of Jennifer Fuchel’s mirrored keys. Gail Jerauld Bos’s fanciful figures evoke different sources of light to inspire conversation about change, and the trees in Allen M. Spivack’s steel orchard bear the fruit of truth, souls, and secrets. Barbara Fletcher’s shimmering dragonfly represents “transformation, adaptability, and self-realization to bring light into our world,” she says. Liz Helfer’s flock of birds is a metaphor for the release many of us now feel after the long dark months of 2020.

Some works, like Maria Ritz's "No Walking on the Grass" and Marnie Sinclair's scientifically researched "Dinoflagellates: Life That Gives Light" respond to the pressing climate crisis. Others, like Anne Eder's phosphorescent "Lambent" and the illuminated cranes of Kawada's "A Wing and a Prayer," use solar lighting to draw viewers at night. "I think our art this year really reflects how we emanate positivity and light," says Kawada.

Lord's "Ring Them Bells," constructed of iron pipes, metal scraps, and wires, is irresistibly interactive, inviting viewers to pick up a striker and "play a percussion song of joy." "All the artists I know have been grasping for opportunities to get engaged in their art," says Libby. "It's such a solitary endeavor. But these people are very strong-minded and determined, and that's what's needed to get through a crisis, looking at positive things and letting the light get in. That's what it's all about."

**STUDIO WITHOUT WALLS: The Light Gets In**, through Sept. 6. Riverway Park, Brookline. [www.studioswithoutwalls.org](http://www.studioswithoutwalls.org)

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