



LAURA BARING-GOULD

Artist Statement

As a site-specific sculptor, I am deeply committed to making resolved and beautiful objects that, in combination with particular places, create environments of introspection and wonder. This work has taken many forms: Viking ships illuminated and suspended above eleven tons of rock salt; a copper-clad meeting house on a barge in the Boston Harbor; a museum gallery filled with lines of thin white pine that travel and move through space. These site-specific works often describe liminal forms of passage, preservation or dwelling. The installations are ephemeral and fleeting – not unlike a rare astral event – and are rooted in re-discovery of perception and sensory experience. For nearly 20 years I have pursued this work, and am deeply moved by the agency that temporary sculptural installations have to evoke deep and still-buoyant mythological questions.

In the last decade my attention has evolved to include large-scaled community-based projects and public sculptures, some of which will remain permanently for generations yet to come. These projects draw on different skills and endurance: one required a seven-year effort to create meaningful public artwork in a traffic-dominated intersection that was once fertile farmland and orchards. The resulting monument, a 12' bronze pear and ten accompanying smaller still-life sculptures drawn from local history, has become a catalyst for a community reinvestment in this neighborhood. This has been an example of the essential potential that art and art making have to fuel individual and collective purpose.

All my work - museum, gallery or public space - shares a common process. I begin with a simple observation or premise, followed by cross-disciplinary research, intense physical labor and extensive community collaboration. Elemental materials such as wood, copper, bronze, steel, beeswax and salt are employed with archetypal forms to transform what is, or was, familiar. In placing salt underfoot or resurrecting a horn in a time of great cultural cacophony, historical antecedence is fused with the immediacy of phenomenological experiences of smell, touch, and perception.

The final sculptures, manifest as objects or environmental experiences, synthesize cognitive understanding and experiential wonder. They reward those who think slowly and absorb carefully, but also satisfy an ineffable human need for immediate awe. The work confirms that opposite ideas can congruently exist, and positions the possibility that we are fortunate for such encounters.