

Tree with Moons

Catherine Cullen

Abstract

The sculpture began with wanting to process grief. One of my brothers passed away in his sleep (unrelated to Covid) in 2020 after pandemic travel restrictions made it impossible to gather for a funeral. Over the course of my making, which is process-based – an intuitive approach to materials and methods – the form evolved into a tree with three moons. The tree is a cross-cultural symbol of loss and renewal. Each month we can observe, too, the moon appearing and disappearing from view, a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of existence.

The mind struggles to accept the notion of death as inevitable, coming to all. The Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, has written that when we are alive, we are part of the sky, the earth, the clouds. When we pass, we continue to be part of everything. I look up into the trees and the sky and know the spirit of my mother, my father, and my brother continue.

Poetry has always been an informing influence in my studio production. In the process of welding Tree with Moons, installed in Maker Park, Staten Island on October, 2021 (through April 2022), I communed with the poetry of Joy Harjo, Emily Dickinson, and Anne Waldman among others.

Maker Park is an abandoned lot at the corner of Front and Thompson Streets that has been transformed from an abandoned lot strewn with burnt-out cars into a sculpture and community park that hosts poetry readings, yoga, raku workshops, Maker Park Radio, Shakespeare theater and a small apiary of beehives in addition to a yearly sculpture exhibition supported in part by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.



Tree with Moons Roots, 2021, photo by the artist. Welded steel, ox-horn, primer. Sited in Maker Park, Staten Island through May 2022.



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About the artist

Catherine Cullen is a sculptor whose works have been exhibited in various public spaces. Although she received her MA from the New School for Social Research in Experimental Film and Video, Catherine also worked on sketches and ceramic. To view more of Catherine's art: <http://www.catherinecullen.net/>