

United States

100 Acres: the Virginia Fairbanks Art & Nature Park Indianapolis Museum of Art

www.imamuseum.org

The Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) has, since 1970, owned a plot of land adjacent to its 52-acre campus northwest of the city centre. Plans to develop the site as a sculpture park have been in the air for some time, but it was only with the arrival of Maxwell Anderson as the museum's director in 2006 that the project got off the ground. On 20 June, "100 Acres", the Virginia Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, opened with its ambitious programme of commissioned work.

The eight artists to inaugurate 100 Acres—Atelier Van Lieshout, Kendall Buster, Alfredo Jaar, Jeppe Hein, Los Carpinteros, Tea Mäkipää, Type A and Andrea Zittel—were commissioned to create works in response to the natural setting. Situated on a bend of the White River, with meadows, woodlands, wetlands and a 35-acre lake, the park's varied landscape offered ample opportunities for the artists. Zittel, for example, has created a floating island for the lake. Buster's *Stratum Pier*, a 50-foot-long elevated platform of steel and fibreglass, refers to aspects of coastal erosion.

Lisa Freiman, the curator of contemporary art and park director, has thought carefully about what the park could be

the early autumn of 2009, the park moved from design to construction, and workers were introduced to the visionary world of artists, and artists to the practical world of builders. "We often came to a fork in the road where concept and buildability would go in different directions," said Hunt. Ultimately, everyone found practical ways to support the main ideas.

In essence, 100 Acres is a mixture of art, engineering and nature. While construction started a year ago, Chad Franer, IMA's horticulture manager, has been clearing out invasive species for about ten years (including 30 acres of honeysuckle).

Then he introduced 70 new types of plants and more than 600 trees, all native to Indiana, in an effort to improve the ecosystem. As Franer pointed out, the park was hardly a wilderness. "The land had been manipulated by man time and time again, first for agriculture, then for gravel mining," he said.

Franer worked closely with Alfredo Jaar, whose monumental *Park of the Lamentis*—a 150-foot-wide by 150-foot-deep park-within-a-park—is contained within massive gabions filled with limestone to dampen the background traffic noise. Jaar had no specific plants in mind, but he knew what he wanted his park to look like—

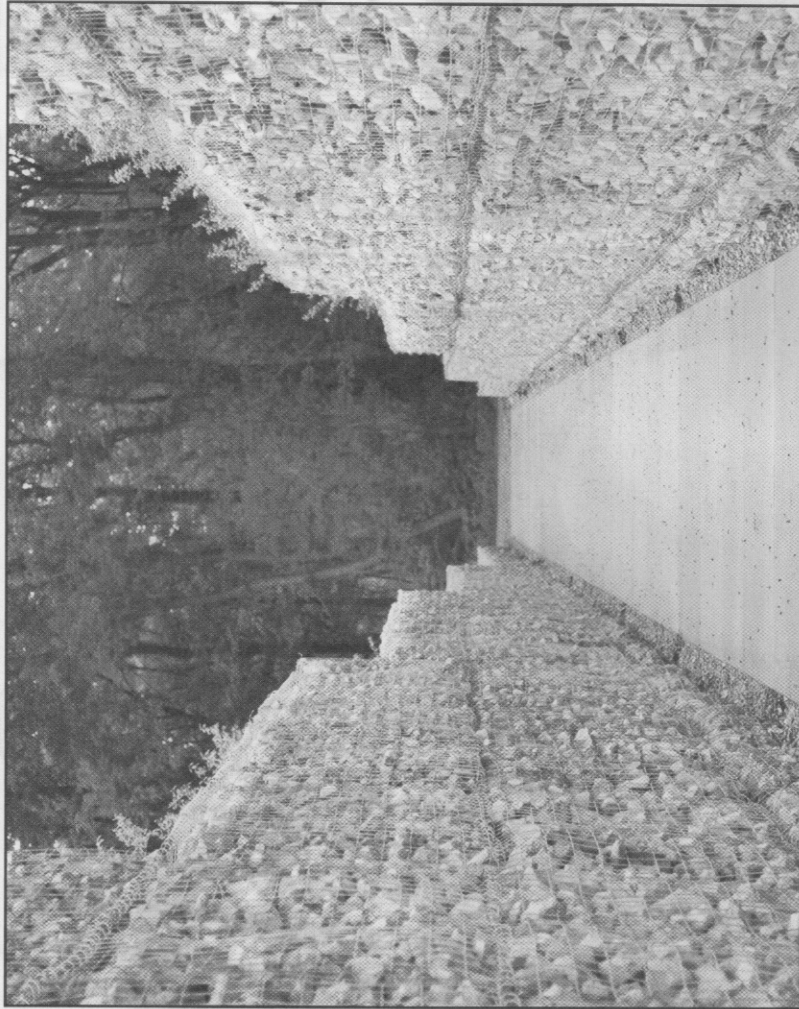
secluded and overgrown. "In the next two years, it is really going to develop into what he is looking for," said Franer. By then the walls, which surround a lush, green lawn, will have completely disappeared under a tangle of wisteria and trumpet vines.

Jaar, who tackles serious subjects in his work—genocide, political corruption and famine—came with no specific project in mind. "Basically, I was looking for a space that would give me beauty and I am not afraid of that word. I am not afraid of beauty," he said. While he has created a place to mourn, Jaar says his intention is that the park will also be a place for contemplation. The entrance, through a long, stone corridor, may inspire hope. "Physically, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

The sculptural installation *Team Building (Align)*, by Type A, the art duo of Adam Ames and Andrew Bordwin, was additionally a collaborative effort involving the museum staff. The elegantly simple work—two 30-foot-wide metal rings suspended, one above the other, from telephone poles hidden among trees, and projecting shadows that become one during the summer solstice (the day on which the park opened)—was created as a result of a lengthy process of meetings, including two-day team building exercises.

As well being a pilgrimage site for the contemporary art world, 100 Acres may also succeed in becoming a new landmark for the city, displacing Robert Indiana's *Love* sculpture. Visible from the main highway is *Free Basket* by the Havana-based collective Los Carpinteros—a full-size basketball court on which multiple steel arcs refer to the physics of a bouncing ball. If that does not at least pull in the Indiana Pacers fans, nothing will.

Ruth Lopez



Wisteria Lane: Alfredo Jaar's *Park of the Lamentis* will let nature take its course inside 100 Acres

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Blackwell's ecological visitor's pavilion was reduced by a third in size. The 3,000 sq ft indoor space, deck and canopy of slatted ipe wood seems to float in the surrounding woodland.

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since her appointment to IMA in 2002. As big museums tend to not take chances on temporary projects, Freiman felt that by presenting new work annually more, and repeat, visitors would be attracted. "We're not trying just to accumulate a roster of star artists that everyone will agree with," she said. "We needed to reinvent the sculpture park for the 21st century." The goal for 100 Acres is to commission at least one new work each year and to provide a place

for younger artists to do important work. One month before completion, the museum had raised nearly \$24m for the park, one million short of its ultimate goal.

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