

## Case History of a Sculpture - Siting : WIND INTERVALS at Roosevelt Island



January 1977

In July of '76, I got an urgent call from my fabricator--they had a large rush order and needed all their space. Could I take delivery of my monumental abstract sculpture, "Wind Intervals"?

A good question. The work needed to be painted, and all estimates were too high. I intended to do the job myself, but couldn't get the sections into my loft elevator. So I needed a street-level workspace immediately, and a site that filled my requirements: open to wind, grass and trees, near a community, part of an active daily environment, yet somewhat protected from the blight of urban vandalism.

Through Dorothea Silverman, an art consultant interested in public areas, my work had already been presented to Mary Enright, Community Affairs Director of Roosevelt Island. Mary responded with great enthusiasm, and we had tramped the Island together looking at possible sites. There were several wonderful ones, but funds, as with most NYC projects, had dried up, and a long delay seemed inevitable.

Now I went back to Mary Enright with a new proposal. If they could provide me with a suitable work space to prepare and paint in, I would move the sculpture to the Island. I would keep an open door in the studio, so residents could ask questions, lend a hand, or simply watch the work in process. Then, if they prepared the site, I would assemble the work there, and leave it for an extended loan.

Mary suggested one of the large unrented stores, if I didn't mind work in a fishbowl, and proposed that the project be presented to the Island school, for inclusion in a program sponsored by the Guggenheim Museum, "Learning Through the Arts." I narrowed my choices down to four sites, and Dorothea Silverman took to riding the tram to see if they were visible from Manhattan. (The Statue of Liberty is the only sculpture visible beyond Manhattan's shore, and she intended mine to be the second. Because of summer foliage, however, it's clearly visible only six months of the year.)

Time was getting short. I wanted to be finished before the cold weather, but there was nothing I could do to rush things. The Community Affairs Director had to guide the proposal through the corporate hierarchy, no small feat in August--vacation time. Just as I had decid-

ed I was back on square one, I had a jubilant phone call from Mary. The final OK had come through. A store near my site was available; level footings would be prepared for the work; I could move in immediately; and Ms. O'Brian, the Guggenheim Curator on loan to the Island, would meet with me September 14.

September 4: I typed up statements for the workshop window on why contemporary art in public areas is important. "...new contexts for art in daily life...frequent encounter with the same work of art brings a heightened awareness of and pleasure in the visual environment...a lifetime enrichment..."

September 16: I outlined my class projects for Ms. O'Brian. "...to give the students some insight into the creative process by having them work directly with the artist in the final painting of a sculpture...three weeks of talks and work, culminating in the installation..."

September 18: Six crates of sculpture arrived. We moved all 2000 pounds by hand dolly--no power lift! No electricity in store yet either.

September 28: Fifth graders today--wowed over, plowed. Forgot how active kids are. Felt like Siva, all arms, no time to think. Praises to J.B., my studio assistant, heroine of the Fifth Grade Advance.

I never did get power in the studio. I hand-sanded and roller-painted innumerable coats. The kids brought their parents to meet me on weekends. Others came with advice, questions, and assistance. By the time we were finished, and the truck with power rig lifted the sculpture over the trees and into place, with an audience of open-mouthed kids watching, I felt I knew almost the entire community.

Now, a month and a Halloween later, there hasn't been one incident of vandalism. But there have been countless expressions of pleasure in the sculpture from people living and working on the Island, and a plan is afoot to buy it for permanent installation. Meanwhile, "Wind Intervals" carries on a running dialog with nature. When the wind blows, it moves; snow or rain reflect in its surface; and the colors brighten on a sun-filled day.

--Phyllis Mark