

Luminous Garden (Aerial)

Beth Galston, Artist

2009, Boston Sculptors Gallery, Boston, MA

Materials: Urethane resin, steel and copper wires, monofilament, electronics

Dimensions: 8'6" H x 12'6" W x 12'6" L

Luminous Garden (Aerial), a glowing walk-through installation, creates a magical world inspired by nature and its processes. Using a simple repertoire of materials—colored LEDs, cast resin acorn caps, and tangles of electrical wire—the piece creates a multi-layered environment which viewers can move through and explore.

This is the sixth in the *Luminous Garden* series. While previous gardens were set in the ground and “planted,” suggesting a cultivated place, this garden is a wilder community of organisms breaking loose from the ground and undergoing a transformation. Loosely tethered to the ground, they seem to hover in the air and suggest the possibility of movement.

This installation was inspired by a trip to the Galapagos in 2007. In this extraordinary place—a world set apart—I experienced first hand ideas of origins and metamorphosis. Something about profusion and transformation made its way into this sculpture—the idea of a self-contained community of creatures operating according to their own rules.

One thing in particular inspired me during my visit: I had the opportunity to go snorkeling in an area where there were many brightly colored fish, sea turtles and rays visible in layers from the surface down to the depths. I am not a brave swimmer, but in my wet suit and surrounded by fellow divers I gained some confidence. Soon, I was moving along with the currents and surrounded by many miraculous creatures, sometimes nose to nose. I felt I was part of this world, one creature amongst many—not just a viewer.

We are used to the hard ground beneath our feet, but in water boundaries disappear. We are freed of gravity, suspended. The environment I created is a response to this sensation of suspension. I called the piece “Aerial,” but the medium could be water as well as air. Some viewers have commented that the organisms remind them of jellyfish or sea anemones. Others have said there is a movement upward, a feeling of ascension.

In this piece, I wanted to bring the floating world of the Galapagos from underwater up above ground, so viewers can experience its wonders.