

Recasting Nature: Selected Sculptures, 1998-2016

Beth Galston, Artist

2016, Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA

Materials: Leaves, seedpods, urethane resin, LEDs, electronics

Dimensions: Variable

Twenty years ago, when preparing for an exhibition, I became fascinated with a large magnolia tree that had dropped its leaves in an abundant pile on the ground outside the gallery. I was struck by their beautiful shape and reminded of the yearly process of growth and decay they are part of. I began collecting the leaves, brought them indoors and laid them out on the floor of my studio, rescuing them from this natural process — in effect, stopping time. By collecting, preserving, and transforming them in various ways, I gave them new sculptural life. This moment was the beginning of a journey and was the catalyst for the sculptural works in *Recasting Nature: Selected Sculptures by Beth Galston, 1998-2016*.

I think of certain natural forms — leaf, acorn, acorn cap, seedpod, branch — as basic building blocks, like cells. Through repetition and improvisation, I build new structures with them that explore the relationship between natural and manmade. Although I also incorporate industrial materials, I strive to create a feeling of naturalness in my sculptures and installations, as if the pieces might have made themselves.

The title *Recasting Nature* can be thought of in two ways. Literally, it refers to my process of casting using urethane resin, a translucent plastic. I embed natural materials within blocks of resin, like insects in amber, or transform their shapes into crystalline objects. Recently I have cast chains of acorn caps in bronze to make them permanent. The word recasting also means, “to cast again or anew.” By taking something familiar, such as an acorn or rose stem, I can transform them, so that the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Within the parameters of using elements and principles found in nature I have discovered a lifetime of themes to explore. Ideas have circled around, and re-emerged in new forms and materials. My hope is to provide viewers with an experience that will allow them to see the world with fresh eyes.