

UNCONVENTIONAL ART

When trees speak

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culture editor

When people think of a work of art, they might picture a painting or sketch. But they probably don't think of spreading ink over the top of a tree trunk and laying paper over it. It doesn't involve a paint brush, but this is exactly what Bryan Nash Gill does when he creates his tree relief prints.

A Connecticut-based artist, Nash has turned the natural beauty of trees into art. He brings slabs of tree trunks back to his studio, where he smooths the surface by sanding it down until it is ready for ink. The ink is then rolled across the surface, and paper is placed over top to capture the design.

His work is close and intimate. Gill has to press the paper down on each tree ring in order to have the print show up on paper, so his work takes time and care. You see the life of the tree in his prints and are taken back to when it was just a sapling.

In a lot of artwork, the viewer

must get very close to see facial expressions or little wisps of color, but Gill's prints are the exact size of the tree, and you see all of the fine details in the tree rings.

The trees he has made prints of include hemlock, ash, maple and black locust, and they come from the area around his Connecticut residence.

Gill has been working as an artist since he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1984, but many people are still unaware of his productions.

To many people, these prints may seem unexciting, but they are the history of the trees, their life stories, and not just silly, wobbly circles.

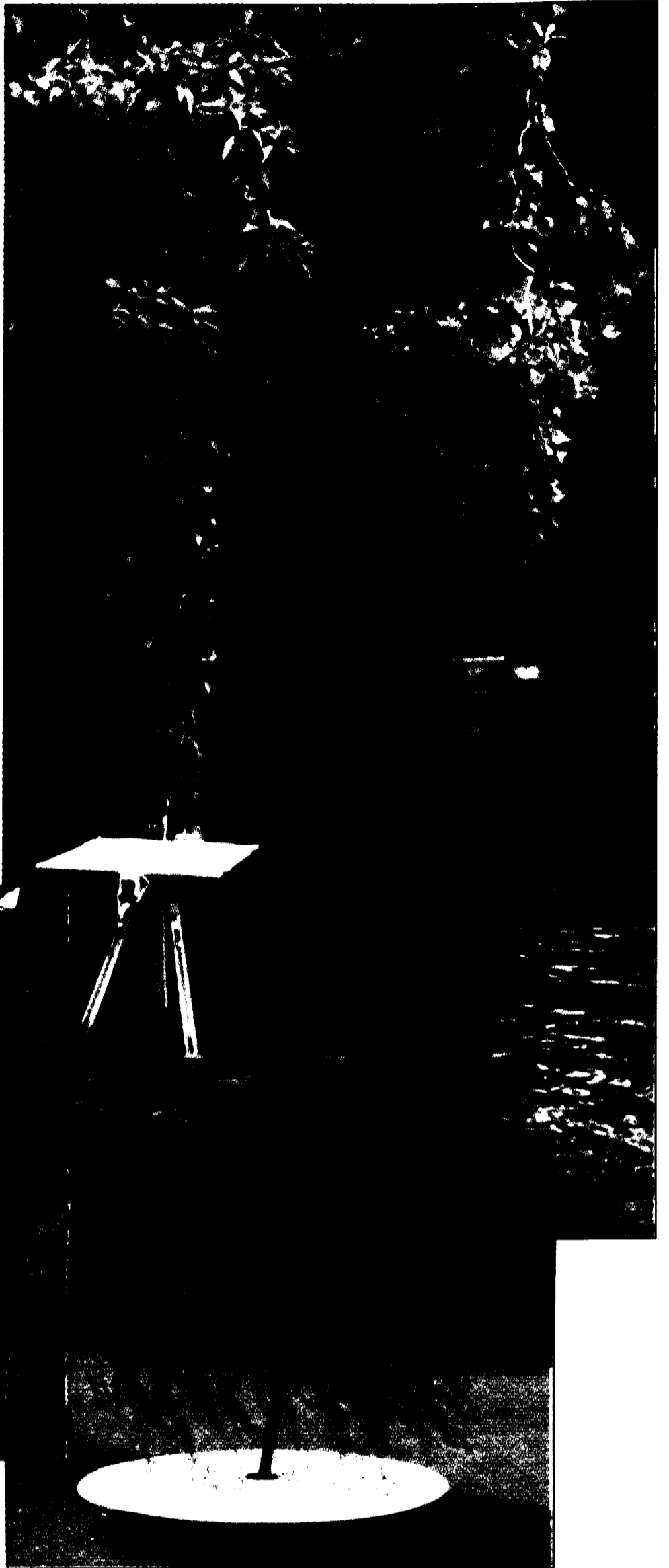
While Gill doesn't solely make tree prints, a lot of his other work does involve trees. He uses tree branches, trunk slabs, pine needles and leaves in his "Installations" and "Bronzes" pieces, featuring them for what they are and not manipulating them in any obscure way.

Trees don't always have to be the

subject of art either. One artist who utilizes trees in a unique way is Tim Knowles. Instead of the tree being the actual work of art, Knowles has the tree create the art. By attaching drawing utensils to the ends of tree branches, Knowles gives the wind creative authority as it moves the branches in whichever way.

In one piece, a weeping willow has 100 pens dangling from its branches with a large circular cardboard beneath it. What results from this unconventional style of artistry is an original masterpiece.

These artists' appreciation for trees is shown through their work. It's interesting that the oldest tree is the Methuselah, a Great Basin bristlecone pine, at 4,841 years old (let that number wrap around your brain), yet people still go about their days never thinking twice about a tree's age or species or cycle. Trees are art, regardless of whether or not an artist uses them as such, and people should pay more attention to the ones around them.



Trees are put to work in Knowles's pieces.

Clockwise from top right: An ivy dangles a drawing utensil over an easel in Cumbria, England; Weeping willow sways above a circular disk; Meadow tree resembling the position of a person is directed by the wind. Visit <http://www.timknowles.co.uk/> to view more of Knowles's art.

<http://www.timknowles.co.uk/Home/tabid/262/Default.aspx>

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