

Lone artist builds natural monument

By Helen Zucker
special writer

Behind the environmental artist's desire to work with natural and found elements lies a desperate need to remind us to look closely at what we have, to keep the beautiful alive.

Douglas Hoagg, an artist who grew up on Bates in Birmingham, is one of this breed. He graduated from Center for Creative Studies in 1981 and shares a studio with Jim Poole of Royal Oak.

He usually does acrylics and watercolors on masonite, but a structure he built on high ground above the Rouge River may be closer to what he enjoys doing.

Because his father was a designer for General Motors, as a youngster Hoagg grew up tinkering, designing and drawing. Most of his paintings are based on topography and he seems to have been searching — with pencil, acrylic washes and wooden strips — for what he really wanted to say in his "Rouge River Structure."

ALL OF Hoagg's memories of growing up in Birmingham influenced his feelings about the structure which draws children who climb on it as if it were a treehouse or a large bed for leaves.

He recalled breaking his wrist while sledding on Devil's Hill, raking leaves

for Helen Holm and other residents, collecting the leaves into bags, dragging them to compost heaps, examining knots, nails and wood markings in old trees and running freely in areas where blue herons still appear.

When not making art, Hoagg works as a house painter and carpenter to keep himself in supplies to "graph out" his ideas for paintings.

A trip to Tanner's Ridge, his father's retirement land in the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia seems to have been the trigger for what eventually became the "Rouge River Structure."

He said he used the real shape of the property to figure out where the structure should stand and what size it was to be.

HE SAID he wanted it to be part of the landscape and that's what it is — a human element that doesn't intrude, but rather adds to the untouched park in which it stands.

Early last spring ice dripping through the structure turned into wonderful amber icicles.

Although Hoagg said, "I don't care if it only stands for one day. I wanted to see it done right," it was built to last and if it is still up this summer, it will become almost invisible.

Hoagg made seven-foot post holes at one end and nine-foot ones at the other.

"It's all up to code," he said soberly.



This is how Douglas Hoagg's "Rouge River Structure" looked shortly after it was completed. All of his restlessness, training and boyhood memories went into the creation. Completed last December, it is his monument to Birmingham.

Symphony Orchestra gives special concert

Detroit Symphony Orchestra will give a special performance at Meadow Brook at 8 p.m. June 28 as a thank you to current contributors and subscribers to the orchestra.

Admission to the free concert is by special invitation only.

Gunther Herbig will conduct the orchestra in a performance of Beethoven's Egmont Overture, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488 and Brahms's Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68.

Jutta Czapski, pianist and Herbig's wife, will make her first appearance with the orchestra as soloist in the Mozart Concerto.

Herbig began his career as a conductor at the Deutsche Nationaltheater at Weimar and left to become music director of the Potsdam Symphony Orchestra and in 1972 became chief conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra.

He became general music director of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra in 1977 and from 1978 to 1980 was principal guest conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. He has toured extensively in North and South America.

Czapski began her musical studies at the Franz Liszt Academy at Weimar.

Since her debut she has won a number of prizes in her native Germany and abroad.

She has appeared with the Dresden Philharmonic and the Berlin Symphony Orchestras in Germany and the Philharmonia and BBC Symphony Orchestras in Great Britain.



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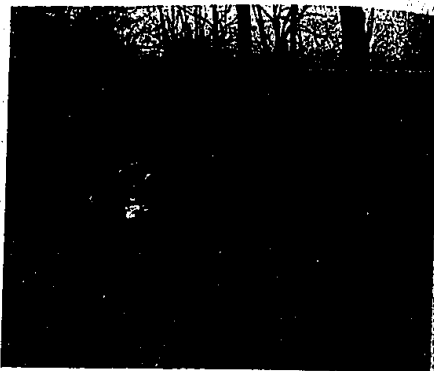
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Artist Douglas Hoagg plans to repair his environmental sculpture. This photograph shows the effects of damage. However, even damaged, it has a strong presence in its natural setting.

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