FOLLY 2013

a project in partnership with The Architectural League of New York
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“Folly” is a design/build competition co-sponsored by the Architectural League and Socrates Sculpture Park, which invites emerging architects and designers to propose contemporary interpretations of the architectural folly, traditionally a fanciful, small-scale building or pavilion sited in a garden or landscape to frame a view or serve as a conversation piece.

This year’s “Folly” winner is Toshihiro Oki architect p.c. with team members Toshihiro Oki, Jared Diganci, and Jen Wood, for their project tree wood. As winners, they receive a grant and a two-month residency in Socrates Sculpture Park’s outdoor studio in addition to the opportunity to build the full-scale project for exhibition in the Park.

“Folly” was established in 2011 by Socrates, in partnership with the League, to explore the intersections between architecture and sculpture and the increasing overlaps in
references, materials, and building techniques between the two disciplines.

Socrates consistently exhibits structures and sculptures that blur lines and definitions, eliciting bewilderment, consternation, aesthetic pleasure, and site-specific physical engagement. *tree* wood performs all of these feats by interweaving our built environment with nature’s chaos, setting in motion a dialogue, argument, and narrative about the organic and the domestic. The permeability of *tree* wood is a magic trick of extraordinary elegance and simplicity that allows it to be considered as architecture and sculpture at the same time.

The League continues to be actively involved in the “Folly” project, from its original conception, to the composition of the Jury, to the creation of original text.

The installation was unveiled on May 12th, 2013 and is on view through March 2014.
tree
wood
The 2013 “Folly” winner is tree wood by Toshihiro Oki architect p.c. with team members Toshihiro Oki, Jen Wood, and Jared Diganci.

*tree* wood is a rigid yet airy geometrical wooden structure placed within a grove of trees—a lush and dense area at Socrates Sculpture Park. A formal, ornate chandelier is suspended inside the structure, which visitors peer through from floor beams. The installation creates poetry between built structures and natural systems—the irregular and organic. This architectural folly is about the ideals of Nature and Man-made coexisting in our increasingly crowded world. This simple structure is composed entirely of 2×4 studs and nails, bought from local hardware stores. The trees fill the structure. A single chandelier hangs among the leaves and chimes in the gentle winds.
“Embodied in different forms, the same material will occupy the same spatial dimension. Each is enmeshed yet uninterrupted by the other. One is the source and one is the end product”
—Toshihiro Oki architect p.c.

(project proposal excerpt)

Toshihiro Oki established his office in New York after working for several years at the Japanese architectural office of SANAA / Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa (Pritzker Prize 2010) to build the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City and the Toledo Museum of Art Glass Pavilion in Ohio. Since 2009, he has been working on his own independent projects. Oki is licensed to practice architecture in New York and has taught architecture studio at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Princeton University Graduate School of Architecture.
In 2012, Jen Wood and Jared Diganci joined the office after graduating from Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture. Wood worked previously for several Australian firms on projects ranging from residential to urban development. Diganci worked previously in Los Angeles with a focus on materials and custom fabrication.
Folly Interview
Wednesday, May 22

Participants:
Jared Diganci (JD)
Elissa Goldstone (EG)
Jerome Haferd (JH)
Brandt Knapp (BK)
Toshihiro Oki (TO)
Ian Veidenheimer (IV)
**tree wood**

**BK:** Tell us about the initial conception of the project. What is the significance of the title, tree wood?

**TO:** We had started to develop a number of different schemes, but the one thing we kept coming back to is the idea that the folly needed to engage the park and the landscape. The growth of trees in the middle of the park has always felt like a very essential part of Socrates. Our office is in the neighborhood, and I’ve lived in Astoria since 1998, so I’ve visited many times, in all seasons, and I always loved those trees. It’s one of those places that always has shade, so people gravitate there naturally, especially in the summertime. I guess there was a preconceived desire to somehow engage those trees, and that’s where it all started. We thought we might be able to capture part of the trees, part of the leaves, and somehow frame them.
BK: You have spoken about the relationship between those trees and your choice of materials [wood 2×4s] as: “One is the source, and one is the end product.” Allowing those two elements to exist in the same space moves beyond simply an act of framing. What dialogue between the two do you think takes place?

JD: It’s mutual transformation. While the structure we’ve made does not change physically, the trees obviously do, and through their transformation, our structure is in turn transformed. The relationship is catalytic. In our proposal, two of the first images we show are of the summertime and springtime. It’s supposed to be very evident that it’s the same structure in each view, but it’s a completely different experience. That was the best part about building the project. At the very beginning, there wasn’t any green on the trees. Just a few days ago, the birch trees were
growing in and the larger trees had completely covered it.

**JH:** I respond most strongly to your piece as a visual transformation of its setting in the way you described, but there is also a strong statement about physical habitation in the way you have enclosed nature and opened these holes at the bottom where a visitor is encouraged to enter.

**TO:** That's interesting because I remember finding your folly (*Curtain*, “Folly” 2012, by Haferd and Knapp) compelling, even though I had no idea it was part of this architectural folly program. I remember thinking, “What's that? That artist is very architectural!”

**JH:** What made you think that?

**TO:** Precisely because of the way your folly
engaged people on such a haptic level. A lot of the sculptures in the park are more art objects. *Curtain* (“Folly” 2012) seemed to encourage people to get very actively involved. Kids were playing inside of it. I remember thinking that whoever made it must think like an architect. It’s special to have something in the park that people can physically interact with and inhabit, rather than simply look at or think about abstractly. That interactive aspect definitely carried through your project. We tried
to incorporate that as well with ours. But the initial concept was to try to capture the trees spatially, to embrace them.

**JH:** To physically enclose them in a space.

**TO:** The landscape was always a critical aspect of the design. But how do you capture something so dynamic? That is where the wood cage idea came from: wood is an inexpensive material, and naturally porous, so the trees can grow through it. That's when it all started to congeal.

**JH:** The 2×4 studs you’ve used are intended for boundary making, but they are actually doing the exact opposite here; letting you in, and nature out.

**BK:** That’s very true. They also lend an ambiguity about the structure's completeness,
since they evoke more the language of building and construction than they do a finished architecture.

JD: It’s amazing how many people have asked us, “Is it done?”

TO: Yes, or, “Where are the walls?” People seem to have some difficulty reading the structure.

JH: Initially, I thought that it was a cube. It was only as I watched you guys erect it that I realized it’s a rectangle.

BK: Tell us about that shape, that rectangle. What is the size of it, why is it positioned where it’s positioned?

TO: We started off with 2"×4"×14' studs.
JD: A standardized size to leave the least amount of waste. We angled it in order to control the approach, and also to get different gradients of the interior space. We wanted one corner purely untouched, just stud framing, and one corner that shows the meshing of the branches and 2×4s weaving densely.

TO: We looked into using 2" × 4" × 16' studs. But the logistics were difficult. How do you get a 16-foot stud up into the trees? So, we went with the next size down. All along we knew we would have to negotiate the trees. John and Elissa told us, “Look, the trees are all over. You’re not going to hit your spacing.” Our response was that it actually wasn’t that important. We just laid it out according to how the branches went. We allowed for that kind of flexibility, to cut things as we went, to let the branches decide.
JH: It transformed through the construction process. Your folly essentially collides with nature in both a visual and experiential way. Is that something at work in your practice, or part of your attitude towards architecture in general?

TO: Letting events determine what you do is just a part of life! Plans never work the way you think they will. So, we definitely try to go with the flow and embrace roadblocks as they occur, and incorporate them. At the end of the day, you can’t fight Mother Nature. You learn a lot, too.

EG: The chandelier is different, almost non-architectural.

JD: It’s a symbol of a civilized space. We kept going with man-made versus nature, but the chandelier brings it a step further, to the point of being excessive: it’s over-the-
top man-made, something very precious. It’s something that you associate with finely detailed spaces or well-made architecture.

**TO:** There wasn’t a very heavy, theoretical reason behind it. It was more intuitive. I think that when we were doing the structure in the tree, it felt like it needed something odd, to draw people in, to make them think they can inhabit this if they go underneath it.

**JH:** It’s an artful domestic object that is very much on a line between architecture and sculpture/art. It agitates the line between the two.

**BK:** It has a grand sensibility, like a Beaux-Arts grand chandelier. As a sign, it indicated for me something that is fanciful, which is very folly-esque. Does that affect tree wood’s status as a piece of architecture in a sculpture park?
TO: I don’t believe we ever saw it explicitly as art or architecture. The project was just driven by an impulse to capture the trees and we just went with it. It’s hard to define what the difference between art and architecture is, but maybe one definition could be that people are intended to interact physically with architecture. That was very much a thought process that influenced us. Again, seeing the kids play in your folly was something that stuck in my mind. But nobody that I spoke with seemed concerned about the question of art versus architecture. The questions I encountered were much more basic, like “What is that?”

EG: That’s a common question in the park. Our audience is desensitized enough to accept the “weird,” but when they see things that look like architecture, like a maintenance facility, they want to know its function. Who lives there? What do you do in there? Can I go in
there? They ask different sorts of questions when they see architecture.

**JD:** When people ask, “Is it finished?” that, to me, is an inherently architectural question, having to do with utility and function.

**BK:** Tell us about the process and history of your practice, which is relatively new. How long have you been working together, how did the firm come about, and what’s your design process?
TO: I met Jared and Jen through Columbia because I teach there. They were teaching assistants. Academia creates so many collisions; you come across a lot of different groups of people. I had employed someone from my studio who is very good friends with them. She went back to school again and recommended Jen and Jared. I got an office space and brought them on. That's how we came together. It's been about a year now.

JH: So, introducing these new team members was exponentially growth inducing. Did you change the whole structure, or did you want to add two or three more hands into what you were already doing?

TO: Our main goal was the capacity to grow.

JH: The first step is starting to hire people. That's what a lot of people in our age range
wonder. What happens when you make that step?

**TO:** Yes, because then you have to provide a steady paycheck and pay a steady rent. You begin thinking more about money. Before, you didn’t have to think about it so much. It becomes a very different animal.

**BK:** So, you started your collaboration with Jen and Jared a year ago; that means that you probably didn’t start working on this until November or December. Is this the first conceptual project that you were all able to work on together?

**JD:** Yes, we were looking at smaller competitions for ideas, for exploration, as an outlet to develop an identity.

**BK:** Was this meant to be an opportunity
for you guys to put your heads together in a loose way, rather than very conceptually or academically? Or was this a chance to work on a practical, get-things-done, logistical process?

**JD:** Both sides of the spectrum helped energize the other. Designing, going into the field and seeing the project come up, and then being back in the office and figuring out the more finicky details.

**TO:** It was a good project for us to work on together. It's small; it's manageable. To see it get built so quickly condenses the process of working through a whole project together. That's educational for us as a young firm.

**JH:** How did working on the competition together affect your approach to representation? Your proposal was beautiful. Brandt and I
responded strongly to your drawings; they are very abstract, almost in a painterly, picturesque language. What was your approach to representation of the project?

**TO:** The sketch is where you find the spirit, the energy of the idea. We try not to lose that. By keeping it abstract and free form, and developing as we go along, we were able to keep that energy as opposed to getting too precise, too architectural. The drawing process was a way to help us keep the idea central and not get too bogged down into what the nailing pattern was going to be.

**BK:** And yet, even though it is loose, there is a lyrical precision. One of the jurors [Granger Moorhead] remarked that your approach is poetic. I think that is right, it’s poetry comprised of calculated moves. Even though it goes through this evolution, it feels calculated,
thorough, and rigorous. It’s as though you have thought carefully about all the words and decided this is the one.

**TO:** You have to have a very clear idea, and you have to work at it many, many times to clarify that idea. We went through a lot of renderings, and we threw out a lot of work. You have to do that to understand what that final product should be.
THE JURY
The 2013 “Folly” winner, tree wood was selected from over 150 submissions by a jury of esteemed architects and artists, including:

**Michael Arad**, Architect, Partner, Handel Architects
http://handelarch.com/

**Orly Genger**, Visual Artist
http://www.larissagoldston.com/artists/

**John Hatfield**, Socrates Sculpture Park
http://socratessculpturepark.org/

**Granger Moorhead**, Architect, Principal, Moorhead & Moorhead
http://moorheadandmoorhead.com/

**Billie Tsien**, Architect, Principal, Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects
http://twbta.com/
THE FINALISTS
Of the 162 entries received, the jury recognized four finalists for their overall quality. While each of these projects explores different themes and perspectives, they are all notable for their clear relationship between intent and form, and for their demonstrated understanding of Socrates Sculpture Park’s context and underlying philosophy. All of the text and imagery below is excerpted from the original proposals and compiled and edited by The Architectural League of New York. Here we present the finalists, in no particular order:
PIER by Keefe Butler
At the edge of the park and toward the waterfront, a simple wooden pier is anchored to the top of a massive 10'-high block of what appears to be excavated earthen landfill. This pier is held as it extends by wood pilings with concrete footings; there is riprap on the ground trailing sparsely from the water, as though this geological section was sliced from the shoreline and dragged to its site. The pilings carry overhead a thin, glossy, transparent plane 16' by 30', holding a shallow sheet of water. The visitor stands beside the pilings, beneath the pier and transparent plane. Through the ripples of this “projected waterline,” the sunlight shimmers and clouds pass beyond, while simultaneously a ghostly image of the river and city is mirrored in the underside of the elevated surface, as past and future are submerged in the present moment of existential and phenomenological reflection.
ELENCHUS by Julien Leyssene

ELENCHUS casts felled branches collected from New York City park trees into two opposing concrete shells to create an enigmatic landscape element. From an initial approach, its amorphous form crouches low in the landscape; its phalanx of branches nestling an extraordinary secret. Moving around the form, the viewer discovers a seam between the two shells, revealing a pristine polished concrete interior. The branches, snarled and chaotic on the shells’ exteriors, penetrate the thick concrete walls, and their ringed limbs are seamlessly polished into the surface of the concrete suspending them in place. Running her hands along the walls, the viewer realizes that this glasslike surface is comprised of the very same materials that ruggedly cage the exterior. Following the contours of the walls, the viewer is finally presented with a magnificent view across the East River.
CURTAIN SPOLIA
by Georg Rafailidis & Stephanie Davidson

Using the [2012] folly, Curtain, as a material quarry, our design offers a radical, new interpretation of its building materials: Curtain Spolia. Chains have a tradition of being the form-finding tool in the making of catenary structures. We propose to re-use the wood members of the existing folly as a framework from which a catenary vault made of the plastic chain link could be hung. Coating the resulting hanging structure with two layers of structural epoxy resin would make it rigid and allow the structure to be flipped upside-down. The resulting vaulted form reinforces the theme of transformation that happens throughout the construction process. Not only is Curtain translated into a surprising new form, the transformation from a hanging structure to a compressive vault that suddenly is able to support itself emphasizes the surreal change from tension to compression.
FINALISTS: CURTAIN SPOLIA
GUESTHOUSE BELVÉDÈRE 3.0
by Marc Maurer & Nicole Maurer-Lemmens

Employing a simple, five-pronged layout for a wooden structure, the piece resembles a five-cornered star from above. With open ended arms, the visitors can walk through the spaces, while their expectations are confused by a subtle use of perspective. Approaching the structure, our eyes perceive the angle between the star’s arms as a right angle, concealing the fact that you are walking into a five-armed building and not a four-armed one. In addition, details within the structure are worked out meticulously. All joints and joists are connected at right angles, including doubling of ceiling joists and adjusted connections between them, conceal any traces of metal screws and leave the visual impression of the interior completely wooden.
FINALISTS: GUESTHOUSE BELVÉDÈRE 3.0
THEMES FROM THE APPLICATIONS
During their review, the “Folly” jury, along with Socrates and League staff, identified some dominant themes in the application pool. *Assemble, Frame, Make, Play,* and *Wander* were chosen as terms flexible and generous enough to encompass these five organizing principles.

A selection of entries best exemplifying the themes is represented here. These groupings are not meant to be deterministic or reductive; rather, they attempt to identify and contextualize the dominant aspects of each submission.
ASSEMBLE

Drawing viewers into a concentrated core, these spaces generate opportunities for being together and collective reflection.

Unfolly Letícia Wouk Almino & Beom Jun Kim
Strawpography/ Ikyu Choe, Michael Chaveriat, & Myung Kweon Park
Warning Circle Josep Muñoz i Pérez
FRAME

New perspectives are revealed, juxtaposed, and augmented through re-contextualized sight lines. The activity and purpose of observation takes many different forms: from passive recreation, to curious evaluation, and social critique.

APERTURE William Alfonso Arbizu & Clive Murphy
Clockwise from top left:

*Smoke-Cage* Xing Xiong & Xiaoxuan Lu


*inside* out Bill Simpson
MAKE
These projects explore and subvert the tectonics and process of structure and making.

(h)over Andrea Desideri & Silvia Guzzini
Clockwise from top left:
kireji Trattie Davies, Fred Tang, Jonathan Toews, Kyu Young Huh, & Amy Chang
Elusive Form Sky Milner & Sarah Kantrowitz
Brickscape Dominique Cheng & Ryan Love
PLAY
A space for play, these follies provide an active landscape of feature that encourages engagement with a welcoming—or risky—public interaction.

Chat With a Cloud Martin Safar & Hosung Kim
Clockwise from top left:
People Paul Preissner
Warp-o-Whirl (WoW) J. Arthur Liu & Kate Meagher
Folly:C Douglas Gauthier
WANDER
Random and non-linear movement is encouraged through open forms, reflective surfaces, and shifting perspectives.

Spaceroom Benjamin Pollak
Above: *Over the Line* Benjamin Cadena; Below: *boardwalk* Christina Draghi & Andrew Kao;
Above: Overthrowing bow Matteo Baldassari & Tiziano Derme; Below: Field Folly Leo Henke & Neda Mostafavi
The Architectural League
The Architectural League of New York nurtures excellence in architecture, design, and urbanism, and stimulates thinking and debate about the critical design and building issues of our time. As a vital, independent forum for architecture and its allied disciplines, the League helps create a more beautiful, vibrant, innovative, and sustainable future.

http://archleague.org/
Socrates Sculpture Park

Socrates Sculpture Park was an abandoned riverside landfill and illegal dumpsite until 1986 when a coalition of artists and community members, under the leadership of sculptor Mark di Suvero, transformed it into an open studio and exhibition space for artists and a neighborhood park for local residents. Today it is an internationally renowned outdoor museum and artist residency program that also serves as a vital New York City park offering a wide variety of free public programs. Socrates Sculpture Park is the only site in the New York Metropolitan area specifically dedicated to providing artists with opportunities to create and exhibit large-scale sculpture and multi-media installations in a unique outdoor environment that encourages strong interaction between artists, artworks and the public. The Park’s existence is based on the belief that reclamation, revitalization
and creative expression are essential to the survival, humanity and improvement of our urban environment.

http://socratessculpturepark.org/
SUPPORT & THANKS
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“Folly” is directed jointly by Elissa Goldstone, Exhibition Program Manager, Socrates Sculpture Park, working with Anne Rieselbach, Program Director and Ian Veidenheimer, Program Associate, the Architectural League of New York.

Gregory Wessner, the League’s former Special Projects Director, organized the initial phase of the competition.

The inaugural “Folly” program (2011-2012) was made possible by a generous grant from the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

tree wood was completed during a residency at Socrates over several months during the spring of 2013. tree wood will be on view at Socrates through March 2014.