



Artist Sally Pettus

Title Quantum Leaf

Introduction

"Quantum Leaf," is 15 feet in diameter and 11 feet in height. It looks like an oversized dying leaf with its edges curled. It is placed in a fountain with water pouring from the leaf into a circular pond. It is designed for a park-like setting north of the Downtown YMCA in Des Moines.

Sally Pettus was born in March of 1942. She studied at The Cleveland Institute of Art and Sarah Lawrence College. Quantum Leaf was commissioned by Melva Busksbaum after seeing some of the artists' sculptures. This is Sally Pettus' first large-scale public art work and the artist has stated the piece is an abstract concept about regeneration. "The leaf falls from a tree. It could land on water and die, and then the cycle of life begins again."

Discussion Questions

- What is your first impression of the sculpture? What details do you notice?
- What message do you feel the sculpture communicates?
- When asked about the Quantum Leaf, artist Sally Pettus stated, "The abstract concept is about regeneration. The leaf falls from a tree. It could land on water and die, and then the cycle of life begins again." How does this piece communicate this message?
- Do you think the audience's experience viewing this piece is altered by the change of seasons? If so, how? Likewise, would the experience change at different times of the day?
- What would be your favorite season to view this piece? Why?
- How is this art work different than other pieces you have seen before?
- What questions would you ask the artist about this piece if she were here?
- The Quantum Leaf was commissioned by Melva Busksbaum to be placed on the Principal Riverwalk. If you were to ask an artist to create a piece of public art for your community, what would you be looking for? Do you have an artist you would choose? Why?

Literature

Look What I Did with a Leaf! by Morteza E. Sohi
A young child's guide to using nature's bounty to create art

Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert
Early childhood and elementary aged children will investigate the travels of "Leaf Man", created from actual leaves, as he travels where the wind blows

Sky Tree: Seeing Science Through Art by Candace Christiansen & Thomas Locker

Uncover this lyrical text describing the change of a tree and investigate its path in the discussion questions focused on how art and science are intertwined

Step Lightly: Poems for the Journey by Nancy Willard
This collection of poems has been gathered about one woman's "journey of life" in hopes

Artist Sally Pettus
American, 1942
[Visit artist website](#)

Status On View

Location General Downtown,
Principal Riverwalk

Northeast corner of Grand
& 2nd Avenues (Hansen
Triangle), Des Moines

Credit Permanent Loan to the
Riverwalk Project;; Gift of
Melva Busksbaum, Des
Moines Art Center
Permanent Collection

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American, born
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The educational resources are designed to deepen and enhance the experiences and understanding of public art in Greater Des Moines. These resources are intended for families and educators to adapt to the needs of their individual children and/or classes.

Internet Resources

Sally Pettus Website

Visit the Quantum Leaf's artist website to investigate her other paintings, fountains and bronze sculptures

elementary-high school

Exploring Iowa's Natural Resources

Use this website to investigate the concept of regeneration through a tree's life cycle which includes a variety of literature connections for pre-kindergarten through high school

preschool-middle school

Real Kids 4 Trees

Children will find this site helpful to research trees including lifecycle, types and recycling for art

upper middle school-high school

Ecology in Art Video

Artists explore how our understanding of the natural world becomes deeply cultural

upper middle school-high school

Explore Concept of Environmental Art

Investigate a program working to promote revitalization through arts and the environment

high school

Art Activities

Leaves with Small Hands

Preschool –early elementary children will investigate leaves using paint, 3-D sculpture and drawing from this excerpt from *Art with Anything* by MaryAnn F. Kohl

Art Inspired Environmental Lesson Plans

Elementary –middle school level interdisciplinary lessons to explore art and design to promote a healthy, peaceful and sustainable world

Environmental Art

Elementary through high school lesson plans involving students creating their own environmental art

The J. Paul Getty Museum Sculptural Space Lesson Plans

Sculptural Spaces lesson plans for middle and high school students addressing the planning and problem solving artists use as they create site specific outdoor sculpture

The Metropolitan Museum of Arts Environmental Art Lesson Plans

Follow the theme of art and the environment to find a variety of elementary-high school art activities to investigate the connections between art and the environment