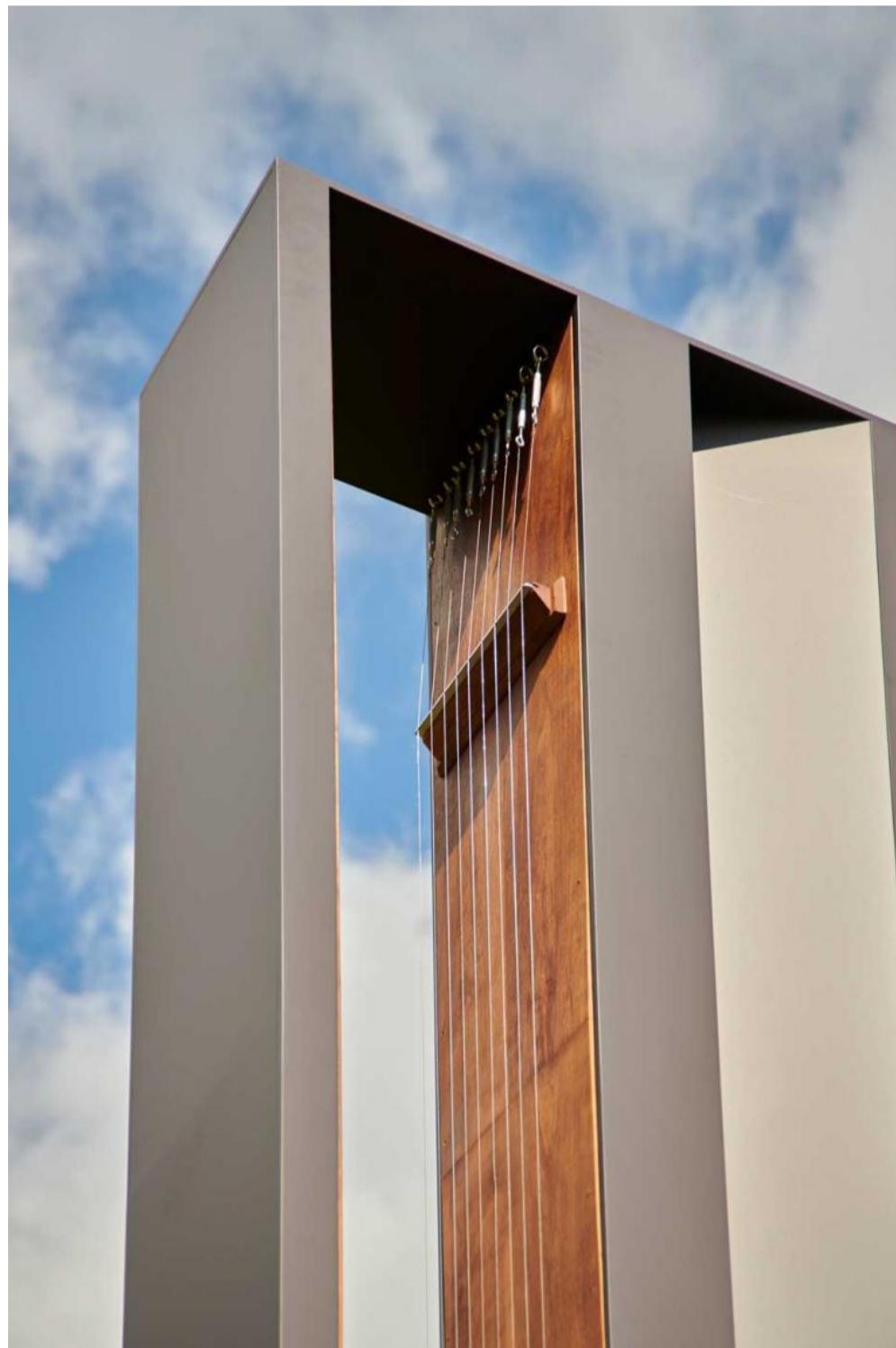


Natural high: escape to the Clark Art Institute's first-ever outdoor exhibition

Titled 'Ground/work', the Institute's first outdoor exhibition sees sculptures by Nairy Baghramian, Eva LeWitt and Kelly Akashi set against the bucolic landscape of the Berkshires in Massachusetts



Jennie C. Jones, *These (Mournful) Shores*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and PATRON Gallery, Chicago, and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

With indoor activities largely restricted in the United States, what better way to make the most of sprawling grounds than to stage an exhibition of outdoor art? For the Clark Art Institute, located amidst the bucolic landscape of the Berkshires in Massachusetts, the timing coincided with a larger ambition to extend the museum's presence beyond its physical walls. Its inaugural outdoor show entitled 'Ground/work' is guest curated by Molly Epstein, institute's 140-acre site.

While many may know the Clark's memorable setting for its iconic Tadao Ando-designed building and courtyard garden, the fact that its surrounding woodland trails, rolling hills and open meadows are publically accessible is a bit of a local secret. Now forming the backdrop for its first official exhibition, the institute's incredible grounds offer newfound space to expand its curatorial vision.



Jennie C. Jones, *These (Mournful) Shores*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and PATRON Gallery, Chicago, and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

'The Clark has a unique and varied natural setting – woodland trails, open meadows, expansive vistas, cloistered areas for contemplation— that is open to the public day and night throughout the seasons without fee or mitigation: a highly rare offering to accompany a renowned permanent collection and research institution,' share curators Epstein and Goodman. 'Olivier Meslay, director of the Clark, approached us in 2017 about his vision for the first-ever outdoor exhibition to take place at the Institute, which was motivated by a desire to further activate and engage the 140-acre campus which surrounds the museum buildings. With the landscape as our prompt, we spent time researching, travelling and visiting artists in their studios.

We then invited this group of six makers to visit the Clark, so that each could identify a site, and consider the possibilities for a new site-responsive commission for the exhibition.'

offering a novel expression of themes of duration, transformation and interconnectivity.

As Meslay says, 'For Ground/work, our meadows and woodlands serve as a kind of natural 'gallery' offering visitors the opportunity to venture beyond our institutional walls and contemplate vibrant and inspiring contemporary works set amid the remarkable natural beauty that surrounds them.'

The artists featured in the show include Kelly Akashi, Nairy Baghramian, Jennie C. Jones, Eva LeWitt, Analia Saban, and Haegue Yang, and each artist's work responds to its surroundings, the environment and even the museum's permanent collection in an individualised way. In Saban's tongue-in-cheek adaptation of a length of split-rail fence, cows who pasture in the Clark's fields are invited to consider the art viewing experience in *Teaching a Cow How to Draw*. Nairy Baghramian's sculptures *Knee and Elbow* abstractly portray these primary joints in the human body in marble and steel, while set in a particularly meditative patch of the grounds' Stone Hill pasture.

'The siting of each project is grounded in the specificity of the artists' unique visions, and we were lucky that it came into being rather organically', say Epstein and Goodman. 'The result is a show that unfolds through wandering - there is no prescriptive order or hierarchical process of making one's way through the landscape, and we hope that this freedom translates for visitors as a new awareness of the possibilities that both art and nature provide.' *