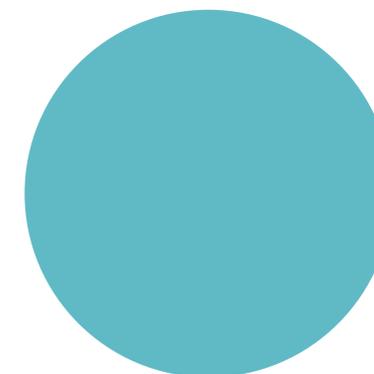


Bottle Tree

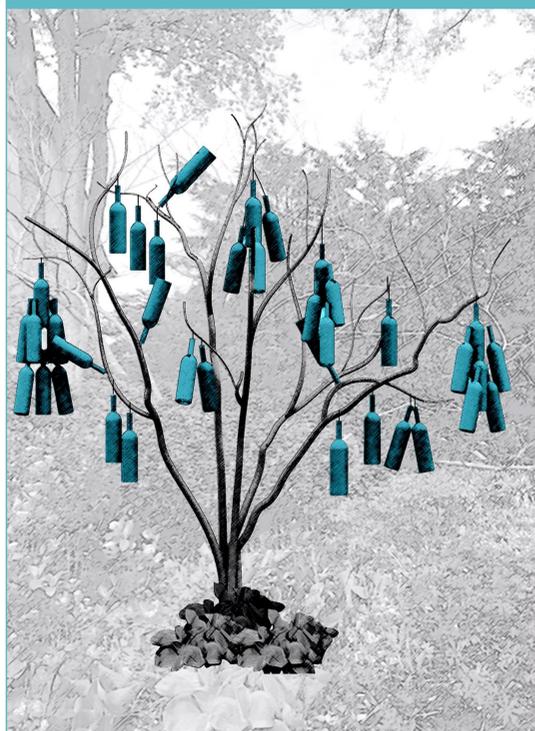
Ava Hager, Glenn Williams
 Peck School of Arts



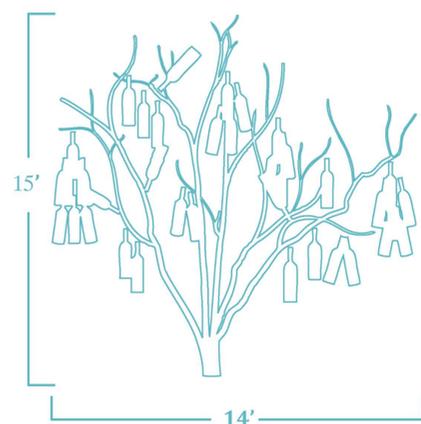
Project Description:

Bottle Tree is a collaborative sculpture and performance project being produced for Lynden Sculpture Garden. The project is a re-examination of the bottle tree as a reference to African American cultural identity rooted in the traditions carried forth by Africans from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. The sculptural tree is intended to be a reflection over the lore associated with the various traditions that have fueled modern interpretations of the bottle tree. The objective of the work is to examine the power of tradition as a psychological mechanism to sustain one's cultural distinctiveness.

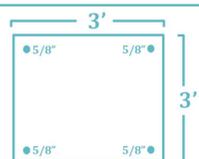
Concept Rendering



Bottle Tree Project Specs.
 Materials: 304 Stainless Steel and Powder Coated Aluminum
 Dimensions: 15'H x 14'W x 14'D



Installation:
 The sculpture will be welded to a 1/4" stainless steel base plate. The sculpture will then be bolted to a concrete footing using 1/2" stainless steel anchors.



History:

The origins of the American "Bottle Tree" tradition stems from the Congo and Angola ritual practice of adorning trees with bottles, plates and the personal artifacts of deceased relatives to either protect the property from evil spirits or to serve as a form of commemoration. The practice migrated with the African diaspora to Europe and the Americas. Over the course of several centuries the lore of the bottle tree has been adapted, due to cultural appropriation and assimilation, resulting in various interpretations of the practice. In the most common reading of the ritual, it is believed that the roaming night spirits are attracted to the colorful glass bottles and are drawn to the interior where they are trapped. At day-break the rising sun vanquishes the trapped spirits in the bottle.



Ndoli Jowei

In response to the sculpture a ritual performance, related to the Sande and Gullah Geechee female right of passage and seeking ceremonies, will be orchestrated by Portia Cobb. Portia will don the Sowei mask and transform herself into the physical manifestation of the Ndoli Jowei. Portia Cobbs' performance will take place in three acts:

- Act 1: Meditation under the bottle tree
- Act 2: Reading of seeking experience stories
- Act 3: Right of Passage Masquerade



Ritual Artifact:

Sowei Masks are specific to the region of Sierra Leone. High-ranking female members of Sande Society wear the symbolic masks during rite-of-passage ceremonies. The masks are intended to represent the ideals of female beauty. During the masquerade performances the mask is worn by the Ndoli Jowei (Sowei Dancer) who serves a prominent role in initiating the young women into adulthood through the performance of dance.

