



BROOMFIELD PUBLIC ART BENCH PROJECT 2006

ARTIST INTERVIEW: Robert Ellison

BENCH: Sprouting Seed

WEBSITE: www.robertellison.com

Tell us about yourself.

I grew up in Dearborn, Michigan, very near Detroit. I went to Michigan State University for both my undergraduate and graduate studies in art. In 1975, I moved to California. For several years, I commuted from my home and studio in San Francisco to my teaching job at the College of Marin. About 20 years ago, I bought my property in Sonoma County. My home and my studio sit on top of a mountain and I live and work among the animals and the beautiful views. I don't teach anymore. Instead, I focus on my artwork.

Tell us a little about your background as an artist.

I started at MSU on a physics scholarship. I ended my time there with a Masters in Fine Art, with an emphasis on Sculpting and Painting. In graduate school, I created a piece for the university. The company that I worked with, to provide the materials, liked it so much that they gave me more materials as payment. I used those to create more sculpture, and that was the beginning of my career.

I have given more than 50 lectures on steel sculptures and sculptural ceramics, as well as taught at Michigan State University, Lansing Community College, College of Marin and the San Francisco Academy of Art College. Most of my work is done in steel, and I and my assistants are certified welders. After the San Francisco earthquake, we helped rebuild the area around the marina. My studio contains technical metalworking machines that can do wonderful things to bring a piece of art to life. I am able to use techniques designed for industry to make my artwork withstand the elements.

My career has spanned over 30 years. I have received several awards and recognitions for my artwork.

Where can we see more of your work?

I have pieces from Alaska to Florida, California to Rhode Island, and in Europe. My first piece still stands at the MSU campus in Lansing, Michigan. I have a piece going in at the Senior Center in Aurora, and am bidding for some other projects in Aurora. You might recognize my piece, "Roll Play," in Fort Collins. It is a giant "O" with kids playing on it. My website has a gallery of photos: www.robertellison.com.