



Heather Rowe
*Beyond The Hedges
(Slivered Gazebo)*

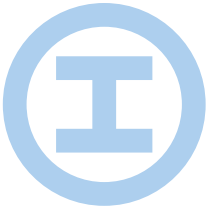
May 12–Aug 4, 2013

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Socrates Sculpture Park
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(*Slivered Gazebo*)
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Introduction

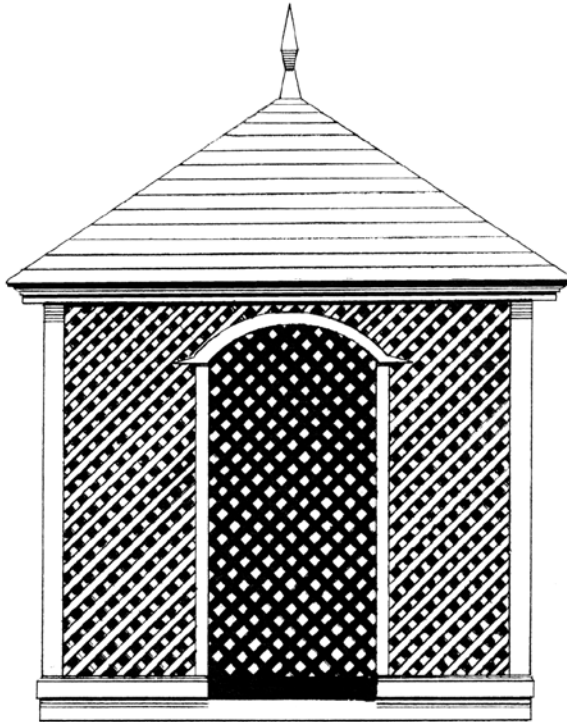
Heather Rowe's *Beyond the Hedges (Slivered Gazebo)* was a large-scale outdoor installation of mirrors, corridors, and spatial slices that explored the transitional space between architecture and sculpture. Creating and installing *Beyond the Hedges* in the expansive physical setting of Socrates Sculpture Park built on Rowe's previous work, which was grounded in creating psychic architectural spaces through formal inversion and material deconstruction.

Beyond the Hedges (Slivered Gazebo) inverted the routine relationships we have with our surroundings by restructuring the familiar and reimagining architectural experiences. While many encounter architecture in a distracted state, *Beyond the Hedges* invited us to look beyond our current space.

Rowe interpreted the traditional gazebo or trellis—structures typically placed within a garden to frame picturesque views—as a sliced and cropped dimensional space that,

sandwiched between pieces of plywood, became the framed view. Inspired by Peter Joel Harrison's illustrated book *Gazebos and Trellises*, these plywood shapes suspended fragile moments of the outdoor pavilion, frozen in precarious states of decay or undoing. Complicating the internal network of lattice-work were mirrored insertions, offering an active relationship to the natural surroundings and park visitors.

Opposite page from Peter Joel Harrison's *Gazebos and Trellises*.



Hopewell, Virginia

Beyond the Hedges (Slivered Gazebo)











































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Heather Rowe

An Interview

by Elissa Goldstone

summer 2013

Elissa Goldstone: Your installations are continuously investigating architectural forms (doors, windows, hallways) and materials (plywood, steel, mirrors) and the viewer’s relationship to the spaces they create. Unlike past works however, *Beyond the Hedges (Slivered Gazebo)* is presented outdoors at Socrates Sculpture Park and not within an enclosed gallery or museum. In fact, this piece is in close proximity to many “real” architectural forms — the Manhattan skyline, local warehouses, shipping containers, etc. Is an outdoor installation a natural progression for your “investigations”? Or was there a formal or conceptual shift with *Beyond the Hedges* since it was always intended to be outdoors?

Heather Rowe: Developing this work felt like a natural progression. I always consider the site, even if my work is not necessarily site-specific. Several installations have been in rooms with

glass walls and the outside had a reflected presence since I use mirrors. In general, I think a lot about how the body interacts with architecture, especially in the city.

EG: You create a lot of tension in this installation. That tension is part of what takes us out of our “distracted state” as you call it. There is the tension between the familiar and unfamiliar in this installation—the trellis is clearly present, but the gazebo form is deconstructed. There is also a tension of stability. These forms can feel so precariously balanced, but in very different ways depending on the perspective of the viewer.

HR: Depending on your mood, buildings can be threatening and within the heaviness of all the concrete, glass, and metal the body can feel fragile — which it is. But specifically, for *Beyond the Hedges*, I was thinking a lot about

how we walk around in states of distraction. Once we become familiar with an environment the foreground and background kind of collapse — we stop noticing details. I wanted to take a familiar outdoor trope (the gazebo) and present it in an unexpected form. And it is important that even though the site is a park, the backdrop of the city cannot be ignored.

EG: Right, we tend to zone out when we move through familiar places and lose track of where we are or why we are there. I'm thinking of when I walk into a room and then wonder why I decided to go there. But there is also a more general unawareness that occurs out in the public realm, a “function and forget it” behavior.

Beyond the Hedges is definitely in a state of change. Do you think of the forms as emerging and coming together, or as exploding and coming undone? Is this creation or decay?

HR: My work is generally an additive process, sort of like I am building a ruin from scratch. Instead of cutting into something, I am constructing the opening of the cut. I tend to see *Beyond the Hedges* as coming together, but coming together in differing levels of parts. The plywood shapes don't really fit together, but the shapes were all determined by standard 4x10 sheets of ply. The gazebo fragments are meant to imply a pavilion, but they would not complete the whole. The in-between spaces are meant to be activated by the viewer entering and experiencing the piece.

If it was thought of as exploding, it could be the point right in the middle of emerging or collapsing—sort of frozen in that moment.

However, being that the outdoors allows for unstable conditions, the plywood sections are definitely in a state of decay, which is becoming a part of the work. It is funny that the part protecting the trellis slices is coming apart

while the slices could probably last outside for a much longer time.

EG: The weather is seeping into what seemed like the most stable part—the hulking plywood slices—and definitely causing a little chaos. And with these changes, the sculpture seems to be taking on new properties and references. And going forward, it is becoming more a part of its environment. The viewer will always discover something new and the installation as whole becomes relational to a broader experience.

Do you think that it's inevitable, or even important, that the work shifts and becomes more enmeshed with its location? And does this bother you? Meaning, is the material's responsiveness to the site a benefit or detriment to the original form and concept?

HR: So I went by the piece yesterday and I really love the changes. At first, the ply just looked like it had water seeping into it and that to me didn't look great. But now it is, as you say, becoming more enmeshed with its environment. The wood is absorbing the elements and taking on a total weathered look, which I think works for the piece. The outside is taking the beating while the trellis fragments are maintaining themselves—continuing with the idea of the plywood. Even when thinking about installations for a gallery I try to allow for new details to be discovered with each viewing, so how the outdoors is affecting the work seems to go along these lines.

As you see the piece and changes daily, are there new readings of the piece that came out for you?

EG: There was definitely a moment when my impression of the work shifted. First it was a

sculptural experience — reacting to the form and the interior installation space. Then, after passing *Beyond the Hedges* so many times on my daily walks through the park, the installation began to read as familiar and, in this sense, more architectural. As with anything that becomes routine, I could pick up on small effects and details without really noticing the more obvious changes. I stopped experiencing the work as a separate entity from the park.

You mention the idea of the plywood frame being the “protection” for the internal fragments – trellis, mirror, grass. It’s an interesting way to phrase the relationship between the materials. It implies that the meat of the idea is in the details, the more sensitive materials, not in the towering plywood forms. I know some of your previous work has a strong relationship to film: do you think of this piece as having a narrative? The word “protection” just seems so sensitive to the wants of the internal materials.

HR: I think of materials in terms of lending insight to a possible narrative, though a very fragmented one. My sculptures can initially be experienced as one complete object and then hopefully the details will start to reveal certain moods and associations. It sometimes is a large effort, such as building the larger plywood shapes to frame what I usually consider to be the essence of the work.

These literal frames, for me, are related to a cinematic space. Maybe if you had a pile of cut up film frames and began removing one layer at a time—the elements would just shift slightly each time. But in the repetitive process new details emerge that you didn't initially realize were there. I aim towards this experience, but in three dimensions.

About

HEATHER ROWE

Heather Rowe is a Brooklyn-based artist, who received her MFA from Columbia University. She has exhibited in numerous museums and galleries including MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana; University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Galerie Zink, Berlin, Germany; D'Amelio Terras, New York; Michael Benevento Gallery, Los Angeles, California; Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, Texas; Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; White Columns, New York; and Artists Space, New York; and in 2008, her work was featured in the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK

Socrates commissioned Heather Rowe as part of its 2013 Exhibition Program, which annually challenges artists to create sculpture for the outdoors and to reconsider scale and public interaction. Founded in 1986, Socrates Sculpture Park is a model of public art production, community activism, and socially inspired place-making. Known for fostering experimental and visionary artworks, the park has exhibited over 1,000 artists on its five waterfront acres, providing resources to create large-scale art works on-site. Open 365 days a year, the park also offers art-making workshops for children, teens, and adults; presents theater, music, and dance; and organizes an outdoor international film series — all free and open to the public. The park's existence is based on the belief that reclamation, revitalization, and creative expression are essential to the survival and improvement of our urban environment.

Thanks

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