

# **STORM KING ART CENTER**

## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

MAYA LIN

June 22, 2018

Interviewed by Sarah Dzedzic  
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Thank you!

**Interview with Maya Lin**  
**Conducted by Sarah Dzedzic**  
**June 22, 2018**

**Maya Lin Studio, New York, NY**  
**1 audio file + video files**  
**Open for research use**

## **Audio File 1**

### **[Side conversation]**

**Dzedzic:** Today is June 22, 2018, and this is Sarah Dzedzic interviewing Maya Lin for the Storm King Oral History Program. So, first, I wanted to ask you how you were introduced to Storm King and some of the first ideas you were interested in doing there.

**Lin:** My first introduction to Storm King might have been in the '80s, I think. I recall that it was a bit of an evolution as I would then visit, when I first was officially brought in, as to the transitioning of Storm King to a much more natural landscape. I think it would [00:01:00] play into how I would then relate to Storm King in order to make a piece. My first official invite probably would have been around 1997, '98. I can gauge between—the first time I came up to Storm King I was pregnant with our second child. India was born in '97, Rachel in '99, so '98 would have made India about a year old. And then, I was pregnant with Rachel, so the next time I would have gone up both kids were playing in Noguchi's peach (*Momo Taro*, 1977–78), so, you know, you basically begin to gauge what you're doing at what point in your life by [00:02:00] how old your kids are. So my first introduction to Storm King probably would have been with David Collens inviting me up. I think we had iced tea at the Sterns' front porch, and we started talking about the possibility of me creating a work for Storm King.

**Dzedzic:** So what was the process like of developing ideas?

**Lin:** My process was long. It was protracted. Now, that being said, the very first day we drove around Storm King in the golf carts—David, I think, Peter Stern, and I—I saw the gravel pit, which was right past Goldsworthy's wall (*Storm King Wall*, 1997–98), which was a few years old. And I instantly knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to do an earthwork. I wanted to do a work that really [00:03:00] reclaimed that unsightly pit. It wasn't really a pit anymore. They had hidden the pit by creating a big earth berm, and I think the initial reaction from Storm King was, "Well, it's temporarily capped. The state New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has given that, and it might take a lot of bureaucracy to open up the reclamation site to redo it." So I was like, "Okay, let me rethink it."

And then, every year, every other year, for the next eight years David would dutifully call me up and say, "Hi, Maya, just checking in. Had any thoughts?" I had come up a few times, and that's when I would come

up with the kids as they were growing up. [00:04:00] Probably, it has taken me the absolute longest time for any work from a first site visit to when I had what I wanted to do because, ironically, I had what I wanted to do on day one. And then, it was like everyone was really afraid of what the state DEC would do. So flash-forward to—you can remind me. When was the date where I actually went and proposed a completely different piece? It was eight years after 1998—

**Dziedzic:** I was thinking it was 2006.

**Lin:** Two thousand six. I had been experimenting with—not an object-oriented piece, but a smaller, more discrete piece that could go somewhere else, not at the gravel pit. And it was called *Playground*, and it would be the way you would make a child playground with that recycled rubber and create a little wavefield. I was very interested, and I still am interested, in executing that [00:05:00]. So I had made them a CAD [computer-aided design]. I had studied it. I had brought it in. I was presenting it. The board was very receptive, and I think I didn't even get home before I had called David and said, "I can't do this piece. I really want to do the wavefield. I want to end my wavefield series with the largest of the wavefields," tripling, yet again, what I had started with the Michigan wavefield, which was 10,000 square feet. When I got to Miami, the GSA Courthouse, it was 30,000. So 90,000 square feet, so I could explore the different sort of mathematical scale changes.

It had been literally what I had wanted to do day one, but I think everyone was—including me, we were all thinking, "Oh, my God. To call up the state DEC and have [00:06:00] them reopen this brownfield site might be a very long, protracted ordeal." And it wasn't until I had come up with a plan B that I realized how much I was emotionally wedded to and really stuck on that initial instinct as to what I wanted to do. David was absolutely lovely about it. He said, "Let me call the board up and say, 'Maya, even though she just presented this, her first commitment has been to the original idea of the wavefield.'" And the board was, I think, very accepting of it, which meant calling up the state DEC. It turns out that the state DEC and the Regional Mined Land Reclamation Specialist, Halina Duda, was lovely—was really excited that we would take a brownfield site and turn it into an artwork.

But in the [00:07:00] process of those eight years, I would say that I think Storm King was evolving its landscaping, so it was becoming much more naturalistic in the grasses it was using. They had brought in a grass expert, Darrel Morrison, so it made it a wonderful way for me to then bring in not just someone I liked to work with, Edwina von Gal, but also Darrel Morrison. So eight years later, we were able to really create a work that would invite a lot of native grasses. Also, Darrel came up with a fairly interesting seed mix that would—certain grasses, because we seeded the whole site—that would hold the ground first, but then they'd be replaced by other seeds, which were more longer-term grasses. He also designed the seed mix so that what [00:08:00] would happen on the ridges, which would dry out before the valleys—he

had different types of seeds, some that would thrive in the wetter environment and others that would thrive in a drier environment. So the whole thing has become a very complex grass mix that was built on a premise that it would keep the spirit of this move to natural grasses, less maintenance grasses, and creating almost biological ecosystems within each ridge.

That's sort of the evolution of the timeframe of the piece from, basically, 2006. We finished the piece (*Storm King Wavefield*, 2007–08) in 2008, but then, again, because it was seeded we didn't want anyone to walk on the grass, to let the roots go down. And it's still an experiment, how do we mow it, how do we maintain it, [00:09:00] trying to experiment. And sometimes it looks very scruffy. Other times it looks great. It really depends on the season, and it's all part of the piece.

**Dziedzic:** Can you talk about how it fits into the series of wavefields?

**Lin:** Yes. As an artist, I have gone through many different series of works partly because I think my work ranges more material-wise and in scale. And with the wavefields, I started the idea of creating these waves that very much are related to a naturally occurring water wave. The first one is at the University of Michigan. It's 100' x 100'. It's contained and framed by a building site. The scale of each wave is three to five feet. It's human-scale, so you could sit in a wave quite literally and read a book. It's on the University of Michigan North Campus, and [00:10:00] the second in the series went to 30,000 square feet. It's at the federal courthouse in Miami, and with that one there was a security issue. Nobody wanted the waves to go high for security reasons and sight lines. So, instead, with that piece I chose not so much a water wave, but when a wave action is about to hit the shore it causes certain ripples in the sand below the surface of the water. So that allowed me to do a wave pattern—it's called *Flutter*—where the waves actually go no higher than one to two feet. And they create this kind of parallel, curvilinear wave formation.

For the last one, what I wanted to explore was, "Well, what if we could make those waves go above your head?" And there are stories of people being—say, crossing the Atlantic in a boat, [00:11:00] and waves going 20 feet, 40 feet, 50 feet high. So literally, I wanted to make it at Storm King so that you would get lost within a wave. You would see it—because of the way Storm King is situated with the higher embankment, and lower as you drive into it, we could get two very distinct ways to see it. From above, you get to see the entire piece. From down below, your view is pretty much framed by each continuous sort of wavefield. There are seven rows. The only difference is, with the *Storm King Wavefield*, as we were building it, I started out with 12-foot-high waves. I realized to own the site and not be dwarfed within that area we ended up going from 12 to 18 feet, which meant every [00:12:00] single row had to shift and get larger.

**[Side conversation]**

**Lin:** Basically, the original way, if we had done it to 90,000 square feet—there's always a mathematical play going on—it would have been around four acres. It just didn't hold the space, so I wanted to make a piece that felt nested by the frame of the site and in dialogue with the surrounding hills. So it ended up growing—I can't even remember the scale—but it basically sets up within the 11 acres, and the height of the waves went to about 18 feet. The row had to expand, so even though we had just finished the whole piece, it was early October, working with a great landscaping bulldozer operator, Frank Tantillo Construction. He was such a good sport, [00:14:00] because I literally was telling him, "This looks great, but we now have to change the entire piece." That put us into almost a very late fall season as far as finishing it. I would drive up almost on an every-other-day basis. I brought up one of my assistants, Katie Commodore. We'd go up every morning, and I'd just be out there finessing, fine-grading, working with his team. Frank's team was amazing and very sympathetic, very—I want to say a very good sport.

Storm King was incredibly supportive of letting me do this piece, and I think with living sculptures it doesn't even end. Your job doesn't end. The other half of making the work begins once you've finished sculpting it. We covered it all [00:15:00] in a burlap to hold it, and then we seeded it. And two of the rows, the back two rows, have underground streams or water going under it. We were able to take all the rocks and create natural drainage. This is something that Edwina von Gal is very committed to—she's got a foundation called Perfect Earth—to sustainable, nontoxic solutions and maintenance. So we didn't put in drain tiles. We didn't put in sprinkler systems, so literally the rocks became the underground drainage. There are two back rows that have this extra moisture, so you can tell in the spring, especially, those are actually damper. And there are butterflies and insects, so when the state DEC Regional Mined Land Reclamation Specialist would come up she was [00:16:00] so excited because she knew that there were different microclimates forming within the different rows, which—again, these pieces begin to take a life of their own.

What we didn't account for was that the woodchucks loved the piece, so Storm King uses Havahart traps, because after it was put up there must have been these massive holes, because they loved the vantage point. They could see everything. They felt safe, and it looked a little like someone had taken a bazooka to part of the piece. So we kind of had to use Havahart to trap them and relocate them.

**Dziedzic:** Can you talk about the difference between using earth and grasses as an art material compared to something more static?

**Lin:** You know, I have used, in more urban areas, I had set up the water tables, so I have used stone. But for the most part, my outdoor environmental works [00:17:00] have cut into the earth and sculpted the

earth from my very first work. Granted, that one has polished black granite, the Vietnam Memorial, but in a way I kept those panels very thin, razor-thin, because I actually saw even that work as being an idea of slicing the earth and polishing the earth like a geode. So my works, I have for the most part used impermanent materials.

One of the exceptions to the outdoor, large-scale works would be the Wexner Center for the Arts, broken glass. But it, too, changes, and they actually have to repaint and reshape the piece. I think I have been drawn in my outdoor works to works that have a level of [00:18:00] transmutability to them, whether they're using natural earth and living materials or the broken car glass. They tend to not become static in that sense, though I would say that the water tables have used just stone and water. I almost put them in my in between phase. They're in between what I do in architecture and what I do in art. They have a serious function to them. They're on very urban campuses or urban areas, whereas for my artworks they all tend to be almost using earth as my plastic material, and I'm sculpting the earth.

I think that definitely comes from my background, which—my father was a ceramicist, and my whole childhood was spent playing in his clay studio, in the pottery studio. So I sculpt most of these forms first in [00:19:00] plasticine here in my studio, and then these models grow and grow and grow until you can't get them out of the door. And then, I'm up there in full view, and then I'm actually sculpting it yet again. I think the other key with the transmutability is the maquette is a clue, but it's like making a painting or a sculpture. I actually have to sculpt these in actual scale, so it's a little unnerving because you're basically making these things for the first time when you're out there in the field. And that's why, you know, you look at it, and you go, "Oh, 12 feet isn't going to take it here," and then you take another month and a half or a month to reshape the entire piece.

**Dziedzic:** Can you talk about the element of time that then gets involved?

**Lin:** Right. [00:20:00] From the minute I have an idea, I think it takes usually one to two years of making these larger and larger and larger models. Then, I go out, we stake it. We usually put in the whole pattern. I make adjustments at that point, and then, with all these study models literally out there in the field on sawhorses, we start shaping the piece. And I am closely following the piece as it goes, and that's when I start making—at the basic scale, it keeps evolving until the piece is done. I'm working right now at Princeton, and I'm going to go out there on Monday again where literally every single scale, every single layer of different soil mix ends up getting sculpted a different way. And then, once the piece is done, whether it's sodded [00:21:00] or seeded, you literally—if it's been seeded, you take about a year to not let anyone walk on it. You really need the roots of the grasses to begin to grow in. You maintain it fairly carefully in the first couple of years, and then usually the person who builds it maintains it. And then, it gets adopted by the institution.

Frank Tantillo was actually hired to maintain *Storm King Wavefield* for the first couple of years because he was so familiar with the piece. And by then, everyone has learned a little bit more about, “Well, what does the grass like here? How do we mow it?” yet I go up there every year at some point in the fall or spring or every other year to really see how it’s doing and see what else needs to get done. Part of the idea is—people are very afraid of a living sculpture, yet, for anyone growing up in southeastern Ohio [00:22:00] to St. Louis, we’ve been surrounded by these ancient Indian burial mounds of the Hopewell and Adena tribes, the mound builders. And these have been around, and people are still living around them, farmers. You can come to someone’s field, and there’s this mysterious mound. So these have been around for 1,000 years, 700 years. If you’re from the Midwest you’re much less worried about erosion, because the forms are going to stay pretty notable, pretty visible, pretty—I don’t want to say “static,” but they’re lasting in that sense. It’s just a different idea of how do you maintain it. And you kind of enjoy how they grow, literally how they grow. It becomes a part of the piece.

**Dziedzic:** Can you talk about that specifically—[00:23:00] I think it’s important for our records—about the peaks of the waves?

**Lin:** Well, the other key is how are people going to walk on it and how are people going to use it, and I think—yes, I think with Storm King people love walking the ridge line, so you put up signs. I think it’s like “No walking on the ridges” or “Give these two rows a break.” You just have to evolve how people use it.

I have this fantasy—I think I haven’t told David yet—that we get old golf cleats donated, and we paint them a funny color, and we literally invite people to go on the *Wavefield* in the fall as long as they wear the cleats so they can help aerate the piece, because you kind of want people to understand that that would actually be really helpful to the piece, to aerate naturally—and then what seeds are put in so that the soil gets really healthy. I think I still want to introduce more trees. [00:24:00] I think at the time we put the piece in we calculated the amount of carbon we expended driving up, back and forth, and we counted the number of trees we would need to plant that would offset the entire artwork’s carbon footprint. And I’m still very committed to that, so I think I have to get back in with the team and say, “Okay, I can’t remember how many trees we said we’d need to plant, but I’d really love to be a part of that.”

**Dziedzic:** Two hundred and seventy.

**Lin:** We’re going to do it. [laughter]

**Dziedzic:** I wanted to ask specifically about the grasses. The tall grasses that the piece was originally seeded with—did those ever get to grow? And, visually and aesthetically, what is the effect now that there's shorter grass?

**Lin:** I mean, to me, it was always [00:25:00] about keeping it not mowed short but not mowed too long. The piece isn't big enough to allow it to go to the field, so I think whether it was the gamma, the bluestem, or the switchgrasses—I actually don't recall the exact seed mix—there were grasses that were put in that he knew would fade out and be taken over. The mix was done to match and be easy to maintain. It was not with an understanding that we'd allow some to grow really tall. We always knew it was going to get mowed a few times during the season, and it really depends on the amount of rain you get, as to how quickly it grows. It had to be more [00:26:00] of a field that does get mowed. Otherwise, what would have happened is you get no transition between the surrounding field and the piece. I needed to create something that flowed out to its sort of surrounding area.

**Dziedzic:** And it was a grass mix that was maintained by mowing rather than burning, right?

**Lin:** Yes, though I fantasized we could get sheep. We have talked about renting sheep. I would love it. I think that's still on the table, because a couple of my pieces have sheep that come in, and it's great. You just have to monitor them and fence them and move them around, but what you need is to find the shepherd who comes in. It's basically you rent the flock, and then they come in. [00:27:00] Another thing on my to-do list, which I would absolutely adore. And I think people at Storm King would get a kick out of it. It's a different way of thinking about how do you maintain and how do you mow one of these.

**Dziedzic:** Sheep and golf cleats, okay. [laughs]

**Lin:** Yes, and trees, more trees.

**Dziedzic:** I wanted to ask also—are you happy with the ways in which Storm King has been working with visitors to balance—

**Lin:** Yes. I think they've been really good about telling people you can't go—I mean, I think what would be great is the sign would say, "Due to heavy traffic, this week is going to—" and maybe put it somewhere on the web. My attitude is that you should always let people go through [00:28:00] a couple of the rows. The only time they pretty much say, "Stay off completely," is if there has been a lot of rain, because then it's just really not great for the piece. Other than that, I think they've been pretty good about alternating rows, but it's funny—everybody likes to walk just along the ridge. And as long as they walk transverse to the waves, it's fine. But, of course, that requires a little bit of extra effort on your part to go up and down, so

everyone just cheats and says, “I’m going to climb to the ridge,” and that kills the ridge. It just—it cannot take that kind of cowpath going along.

**Dziedzic:** And that’s the opposite of the way it is in water.

**Lin:** I know. I know. It’s really funny, but—

**Dziedzic:** Maybe that’s why.

**Lin:** —they love it. [laughter] It’s, like, a perfect vantage. It’s also easy, because they can flatten it out that way, [00:29:00] but it’s literally not quite how it’s supposed to be walked.

**Dziedzic:** I wanted to ask what you recalled of the opening of the piece and also the exhibition that went along with it, *Bodies of Water* (2009)?

**Lin:** Oh, yes, *Bodies of Water*. It was great. For me, it’s hard to do, and I don’t get the opportunity to create one of these large-scale works, so they’re kind of few and far between. They’re all over, actually, the country, and some are out of the country. So it was 2009, we were about to leave the country for a year and go on a sabbatical, and this was the last event, and it was amazing. The number of people that came out—and I think Storm King has said since then that that was a [00:30:00] turning point in Storm King’s attendance. I don’t know—it wasn’t my piece, I can’t believe it was that, but something just clicked in that year, and it was just so full of people and kids. I just recall all the children, and my kids must have been in fifth and sixth grade, and all their classmates were coming out. It was joyous. It was just a really fun, beautiful fall day, and it was amazing. It was extremely memorable.

David and I had talked, so I had also created a show inside. One room was devoted to all the models, all the drawings, the building of the piece, and then the rest really focused on—[00:31:00] when I come indoors, I have been very obsessed with water and rivers, and I had the Hudson River. I had other drawings of rivers, and I had a smaller sculpture called *Flow*, which was made out of two-by-fours. So, yeah, when I come inside, though I try to keep my works still environmental and spatial, then they become more permanent, like wood, stone, glass, recycled silver. But when I go outside, I definitely try to work with the earth.

**Dziedzic:** How did you first get interested in waves as a form, and what did you do to research this?

**Lin:** The very first one was for Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the building was an aerospace engineering building. And I do [00:32:00] tend to—I like to say I’m site-specific, but my site isn’t just the physical site.

It's the cultural context. So I talked to all the professors who were teaching flight, fluid dynamics, aviation, and one of the professors handed me this obscure little book called Van Dyke's *Album of Fluid Motion*. And I turned to this one page, and it has this black-and-white picture of a naturally occurring wave that looks completely geometrically symmetrical. It's called a Stokes wave, and I knew the minute I saw it that the Michigan wavefield would be that piece. And I'll never forget the head of the FXB [François-Xavier Bagnoud] [00:33:00] Aerospace Engineering Building said, "Well, doesn't that belong over in naval engineering?" [laughs] And from that point on, whenever I talk to scientists I always start with, "I'm going to ask a lot of questions. I kind of go fishing. I probably won't use anything of what you're going to show me, and if I do it will not be taken literally," because it was sort of kind of cute. He was taking it very literally, and this was fluid dynamics—but to me it's like, if you read about flight, you need resistance in order to fly, and it just led to this idea of the wave motion, and the piece just took on a life of its own. And that was the very first of the real earthworks, and it got me thinking of creating a series. [00:34:00] So it really depends on what site I'm given.

I saw the site at Storm King, and I just knew it would be—because it was almost perfectly framed. And then, the funny thing is, with a lot of my earthworks, I utilize the discarded fill because someone just built a lake or someone just built a building, so I try to use as much of the soil that they're trying to get rid of and incorporate it into the piece. So with the *Storm King Wavefield*, right past Goldsworthy's wall was this fairly large berm, because Storm King has so much property that they kind of put this barrier up visually because they didn't really want you to go past it. And they didn't quite know what to do with this old gravel pit, so they kind of hid it behind this berm. And I think 75 percent or 80 percent of our material was [00:35:00] taken from the berm that used to hide the unsightly gravel pit. So everything about the piece wanted to be as low-maintenance and as much from the earth—we saved the topsoil that was there, though it wasn't very high-grade. So we did bring in mountains of organic topsoil, and I'll never forget when my kids came up with some of their friends one weekend. And they were having a blast playing in the organic topsoil until they realized what "organic topsoil" meant. [laughs] And they were, like, horrified, and I'm like, "It's okay. It's okay. It's been cleaned." But it was funny, because a lot of that soil is kind of—the fertilizer is slightly baked, I think, so you're not getting as much invasives in it. But, anyway, that was sort of the beginning [00:36:00] of the piece, so the whole piece was done, again, in the spirit of trying to be sustainable.

**Dziedzic:** Has working on that piece and completing it allowed you to, I guess, experiment with other sorts of forms or—

**Lin:** Well, I think what happened is—again, I work in series, and I loved the idea that this would be the culmination, almost a recreation of a water wave. Sometimes I do five. Sometimes I do three. A few series

have gone to seven, and this Storm King piece was, in scale and in breadth, it just seemed like a great way to close that series.

I have then gone on to create pieces now. I'm on what will become the second in *Flow*, which started at Storm King—the inside piece, the two-by-four landscape called *Flow*—which is as if you [00:37:00] took a piece of paper and just rolled it. So it's much more like a mathematical wave, like a wave pattern, a sine wave, a cosine wave, a sound wave, because it's much more in parallel. The first of that was at the Gibbs Estate in New Zealand. The second in that series is going to be for a new federal building partnering with MIT in Cambridge, Mass. We just presented that. And then, I'll probably continue that series. I do tend to explore a certain amount of changes in scale, changes in materiality a little bit, in form, and it just allows me to really kind of go in depth on one specific shape and then move on to another one.

**Dziedzic:** There was something else indoors [00:38:00] that, I think, premiered at Storm King that you then used for the What Is Missing? Foundation. Is that right?

**Lin:** Right. Yes. As an artist, when I'm asked in, I will often ask for a room to be dedicated to—I set up a not-for-profit foundation called the What Is Missing? Foundation dedicated to raising awareness about species loss. But linking the fact that habitat loss is one of the main drivers for species loss, habitat loss, and degradation, it also is one of the largest components of what is causing climate change, from agriculture to forestry to ranching practices to wetland loss, at which point I came up with the phrase, “We can save two birds with one tree.” We can actually save three. I'll get into that. And it's dedicated to not just making you aware of what we're losing in terms of species and [00:39:00] why but giving you the fact that we can reduce climate change emissions by over 50 percent and bring back biodiversity by restoring our grasslands, our wetlands, reforming our agriculture, reforming our ranching, and reforming our forestry practices. So, in a way, these grass pieces—again, you cannot use the fertilizer. You have to go low-impact.

I've got a piece (*The Secret Life of Grasses*, 2018) right now at Storm King as part of the *Indicators (Artists on Climate Change, 2018)* show where we literally brought three living tallgrass grasses and put them on display in these see-through PVC tubes. The roots structures for these roots go 10 feet if you let them. In those roots and in the way the roots [00:40:00] work with the soil matrix, that's where you have an amazing fixing of carbon into the soil. So every time you till agricultural lands, you're releasing that carbon. That is why farming causes so much greenhouse gas emissions to be emitted. Ranching is, again, degradation, leads to soil loss, leads to emissions through the soil but also with the methane from the cows.

I think everything has come a bit full circle, and, in a way, bringing back the healthy life of the soil begins to really help mend the earth and reduce climate emissions. It's something I'm very, very caught up in, so Missing is—again, I work in series—so the fifth [00:41:00] and last of the memorials I started on in 2006, 2007. The first permanent piece is at the California Academy of Sciences, but then it's like water. It flows freely wherever it's invited in. It's completely a volunteer project for me, and if I'm invited in as an artist, I then ask for room to share with people what is missing. I also ask you to give us a memory. So what we did at Storm King was one of the temporary installations. It's called *The Empty Room*. You're given a piece of Plexiglas—it's actually optic Lexan—and you catch an image, and you hear the image. We've created over 75 one- to two-minute videos of things that we're losing, not just species but places, issues. All that film was donated by [00:42:00] Nat Geo, BBC, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and many smaller groups. And we try to bring attention to what all these groups are doing.

**Dziedzic:** Does memory play a role in your earthworks?

**Lin:** Not really. I think the memorials are, again, their own series, and I think I'm a little bit unusual in that I have my architectural work, the memorials, and then my work as a sculptor. And I've chosen to keep the three as distinct branches of my work. They are all informed, I think, by my love and concern for the environment, but I like each discipline for their differences. And for me, the memorials are a bit of a hybrid. They also allow me to get quite literally into teaching you the deeper cultural history of a place, [00:43:00] whereas I would say the sculptures are coming from me as an artist exploring how I relate to the natural world and how do I get you to think about aspects of the natural world that you might not be thinking of. They are political in that sense. They are proactively trying to help get you much more connected to the natural world, but they're also adding a very quiet—maybe not so quiet to some—manmade order to the natural world. And that's really where I would say the earthworks are coming from.

There is a little bit more literal series, the earth drawings, where I'm exploring the character and identity of a simple line drawing. I started [00:44:00] with something that was in that sense a little bit about memory. It was prehistoric, almost, in quality—very much related to the Serpent Mound. I did that one for the Wanås Foundation in Sweden. I'm getting much, much more abstracted in that line formation, but I'm also playing with lines that would at times be ambiguous whether it's language or drawing.

**Dziedzic:** You talked about wanting to create a kind of total immersion situation at the *Storm King Wavefield*, and that strikes me as being related to what you're talking about now in terms of people's relationship or awareness of the natural world. I'm wondering if I'm reading that right.

**Lin:** Not really, no. I think what the water waves are about—I love in my artwork to use technology. I would say that [00:45:00] the differences between early landscape painters are their only way of looking

at the world around us was just through their eyes. We, anyone in the twenty-first century, the ways in which we can see our world have expanded completely, whether it's microscope, sonar mappings of the ocean floor, high-res data imagery from space. We just have many different tools that allow us to slice, cut, dissect, analyze, and interpret what our world is. So I love using science, and, in a way, the wavefields [00:46:00] take photography and give you that stop-frame motion of freezing water. And what I love is, though it might look like it's moving, if you look at a water wave in reality you can't see it. It's blending. If you want to understand it as a frozen form, you take a photograph of it, so it's sort of that connection between what we think we know a water wave is and how we understand a water wave by taking a photograph of it. And that difference between immersing yourself in it, which—literally, the only way to do it is with film—and then that secondary understanding, which is through the lens of a fast camera, is probably where I'm playing with that idea [00:47:00] of what perception is.

The second thing is that you get very fascinated by aspects of the world that you kind of can't see, so whether it's understanding when you're a little kid that the Earth isn't flat, it's round—but can you ever perceive the curvature of the earth? Or when you hear that when you're in the middle of the Atlantic these waves can go 90 feet high and how I would absolutely never want to be in a situation to witness that. But it just got me thinking about, "Okay, what if I could pull these waves up over your head so that you're actually lost within a wave flow?" So to me, these works, and maybe all my works, tend to try to dialogue with you on a very empathetic, [00:48:00] physical, physiological level so that it's literally: forget about anything you might know or want to connect to and just be within it and kind of connect one-on-one to the piece.

**Dziedzic:** What's your attitude, I guess, about providing visitors with a kind of explanation of the artwork?

**Lin:** For these, I don't think they need much. Like any museum, it's always nice to go by and see what this artist does, but for me it's such a self-evident work, and people just relate to the water waves. Some of my works, when I come inside, they're fairly complex mappings, and I actually like having them connect to an actual map to set you up with, "Oh, this is the Arctic circle cut and exposing the entire terrain," [00:49:00] because people get really caught up in, "Oh, my God. This is why it's so shallow where the Bering Strait is. This is literally where people came over." So I think with those I like having more of a connection to where it's from. Most of the works that I do you don't need it, but if it's a map, I do like to ground you in it.

### **[Side conversation]**

**Dziedzic:** I wondered if you could talk about the role of this piece in your work as a whole, and the role of Storm King [00:50:00].

**Lin:** It was a landmark piece for me, the scale of it and to be this close to New York City. My work is all kind of around the world, so to have people have it so close to where I am is just a really nice connection, and I think it's home territory. To be able to have an 11-acre work this close to New York City is pretty special.

I think there are not many places like Storm King. They're few and far between, and I think working with everyone at Storm King and my continued relationship with Storm King has been really a great experience, continues to be. I think [00:51:00] there is a rare sort of—it's just a very, very sympathetic connection. If you look at when Storm King got started, it was much more lawn, and look at where they are today and look at where they're evolving. Especially now with climate change, I think the necessity, the need, the importance to have a place and to have a spirit that is very committed to being very sensitive to the out-of-doors, to connect people to the out-of-doors, and just knowing how the number of people that are now coming through Storm King—it's really heartening for me to be a part of that.

**[End of interview]**