Art in Nature
A Celebration of Interpretive Art at the Openlands Lakeshore Preserve

Interpretation at the Openlands Lakeshore Preserve is designed to engage people in affective, experiential ways that connect visitors with the landscape. Artwork will “give voice” to aspects of the natural landscape that may go unnoticed otherwise - inviting visitors to stop and think about their surroundings. The ultimate goal is to get away from the typical “look” of interpretive signage by utilizing local artists and technology to showcase the aesthetic beauty of the Preserve and expand the way nature is perceived and experienced.

Our artworks also address issues such as the growing disconnect between people and nature, the resulting threats posed to the environment by our own behaviors, and the need to stimulate long term action that supports both humans and the earth. The following artworks are displayed in and near Bartlett Ravine at the Preserve:

Reading the Landscape
Designed by Kate Friedman
Iodonized aluminum on existing metal trestle

Using the words of literary greats, Freidman’s artwork plays off of the concept of bridges (both literal and figurative), referencing the physical bridge between the rich historic past of the site and its new life as a public nature preserve, and the metaphysical bridge that connects humans to nature.

Erode
Designed by Vivian Visser
Driftwood affixed to steel elevation posts (3 feet high)

Because of its immediate association with water, Visser used driftwood to evoke the movement of rushing water during rainfall, exaggerating the natural land erosion process within the ravine ecosystem.
Arc of Nature
Designed by the Chicago Public Art Group
Mural composed of acrylic painted surfaces, metal, and mosaic glass tile (32 feet by 50 feet)

The talents of many artists came together in the creation of this stunning mural that inspires and engages visitors as they follow the ravine path towards Lake Michigan. *Arc of Nature* speaks to the ravine ecosystem and its integral components, as well as to Openlands’ ongoing restoration work at the Preserve; the poetic, symbolic, and multi-layered images of the mural suggest real and metaphorical connections between the variety of human experiences with nature.

The Soil is Alive
Designed by Sharon Bladholm
*Sculptural bronze-look relief plaques affixed to a stone wall along the ravine path*

Soil microorganisms are the largest unexplored source of genetic richness and diversity on the planet - the underground heroes of a healthy aboveground environment. Bladholm’s sculptures depict an array of indigenous microorganisms that inhabit the local soil, enriching the Preserve’s lush flora and native beauty.

Lake, Leaf, and Earthbark Prism Series
Designed by Olivia Petrides
*Acrylic polymer paint on aluminum poles (12 feet high)*

Using her experience as a botanical illustrator, Petrides created a series of three color prisms that echo and highlight the subtle, yet amazing, natural hues found in the waters of Lake Michigan, the layering of foliage, and the strata of the land.