

JOHN SALVEST



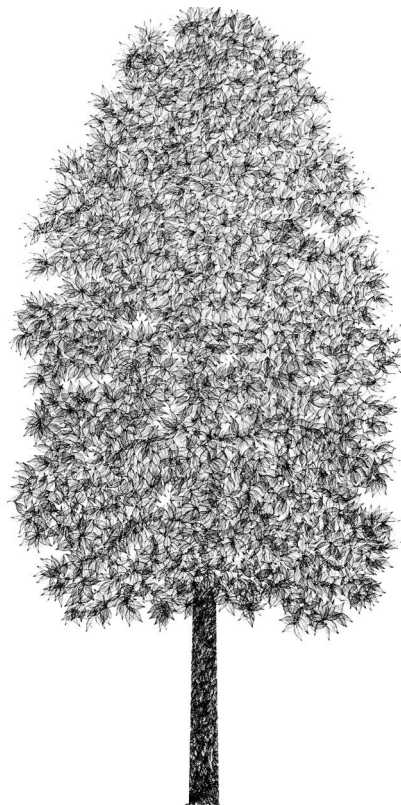
# ARBORETUM

“But only God can make a tree.” - Joyce Kilmer

Rather than a departure, *Arboretum* is an arrival, a synthesis of two seemingly disconnected directions. The project brings together my better-known inclination toward the altered ordinary object with the obsessive, usually text-based, rubber stamp drawings I have quietly produced throughout my career. Several years ago I completed *Tree of Trees* using a vintage rubber stamp holder and some old wooden rubber stamps retired from a bank. Ever a sucker for wordplay, I wanted to exploit the linguistic fact that stands like this, due to their verticality and layering, are often called “trees.” So I replaced the once functional stamps with a collection of homemade leaf stamps – a set of 26 species including elms, maples, chestnuts, etc. – resulting in a hybrid tree of trees.

The idea was to use it as an engine for creating nature-based drawings, but what those drawings might look like escaped me as I worked on more pressing matters. Last fall I finally found some quality time to experiment, and eventually discovered that I could successfully recreate full trees solely from the use of one small handheld tool. But, of course, the mighty oak consists of many humble leaves. This realization provided something I continually long for in my studio practice: a completely self-generated context for intense and highly-focused labor wherein both spontaneity and a freeing mindlessness are reached. If a thing of beauty, whatever that may mean, is the end result, all the better. Nevertheless, deep in the welcomed meditation, as the sumac or the sassafras slowly reveals itself, I am a force of nature, I am an artist.

- John Salvest



BRADBURY ART MUSEUM  
MARCH 9 - APRIL 11, 2017

[BradburyArtMuseum.org](http://BradburyArtMuseum.org)

front: *Tree of Trees*, 2013  
vintage metal stamp rack and rubber stamps  
14 x 10 x 10 inches

back: *Red Hickory*, 2017  
rubber stamp on paper  
50 x 38 inches

