

February 9, 2016



Leo Osborne *Still Not Listening* (Valdez Oil Spill) | 1989, Maple Burlwood and Vinyl Caulking, 21 x 24 x 8 inches © Leo Osborne | Currently on display in [Environmental Impact](#)

The Year Leo Osborne

STILL NOT LISTENING

*mating dance
spring ritual
plundered by
technologies intrusion*

*dance of the dead ensued
echoing 20 years
our cries are still not heard*

*listen to me
your canary
in the coal mine*

*listen to me
it's time to
let your light shine*

The year, 1989 and the occurrence, the Valdez Oil Spill in the Prince William Sound, Alaska. I, Leo E. Osborne, was living on the Maine Coast hearing daily reports from fishermen who were in touch with folks involved in Alaska. The horrors of their stories touched my heart and caused me to rethink the sculpture that I was presently making. The sculpture's story being carved in maple burlwood, was of 3 shorebirds readying for their springtime mating rituals.

Instead, they were caught in an oil slick. Though two birds were already sculpted, the third bird was to be on its back with crude oil stuck to its body, holding it fast in a death grip. The finished work was shown at the International Bird Carving Event in Ocean City Maryland through the Ward Museum Foundation. It was viewed by master carver, Mr. Haru of Japan. He wept, and said in Japanese, "We must listen to the bird songs." –he did not know that my title for the piece was *Still Not Listening*. This was a moment where

art transcended all borders and language. We held each other and wept together for what we were seeing done to our planet, to our wildlife on earth.



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The sculpture toured Japan, was placed in the foyer of The Boston Museum of Science, and then remained in my Milkwood Studio on Guemes Island, Washington until 2010 when the horrific Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill occurred in the Gulf of Mexico.

21 years had gone by and now we were facing another terrible oil spill disaster. This found me in my studio, pondering over a sculpture that had been done for some time, but still had not completely spoken to me. It was a wooden work of a Killdeer feigning a broken wing which it does to lure an intruder away from its nest site. It came to me then to use my own foot print and burn it into the stunning maple burlwood which was pristine, like the beaches upon which crude oil was washing into and again imprisoning the beautiful birds and wildlife of that area. *The Ploy*, found its place in completion.

THE PLOY

*Feigning my
wing broken
to lure
intruders away*

*They come,
greedily,
stumbling foolishly,
or
unseen,
unknown,
but there,
a dark presence
leaving their
careless footprint
on our Earth*



Leo E. Osborne *The Ploy*) | 2006, Maple Burlwood , 19x19x7 © Leo E. Osborne | Currently on display in [Environmental Impact](#)

Viewing my own work, with pain in my heart, I called an old friend and museum curator David J. Wagner and we lamented on the situation and talked about *Still Not Listening* and other works done during the Valdez Oil Spill by our friends, painter [Robert Bateman](#) and sculptor Kent Ullberg. During that phone conversation David made the decision to contact Bob and Kent and to begin the work on co-creating the touring exhibition [Environmental Impact](#).

That fortuitous moment brought together international artists of renown and with strong statements about what man and technologies through corporations have been doing to our planet. This museum exhibition has been greatly received by its audiences and has toured the United States since September 1st, 2013.

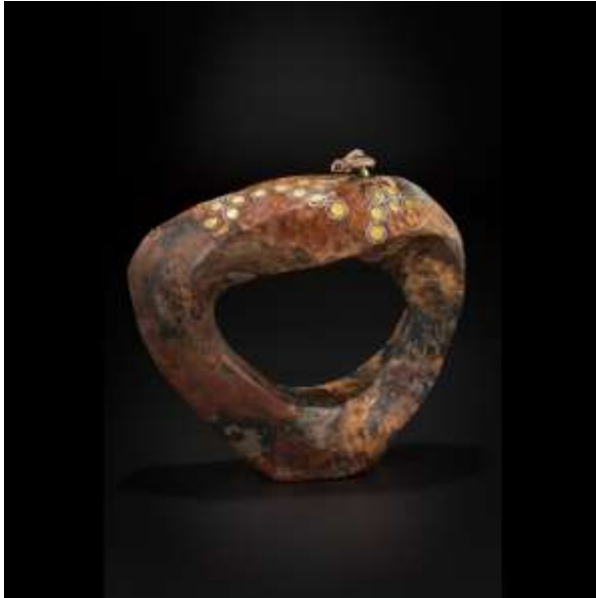
And so I found myself, in my studio considering the creation of a new work for the upcoming opening of [Environmental Impact](#). My desire as an artist is to bring beauty into the view of my audience. There is so much negativity and warring and disaster in the world. I do not want to always be focusing on that and in so creating environmental statement works that bring the horror right up into our faces.

MO-BEE-US

*A Mobius strip
An unending story to tell
Forever with bees
May all of us dwell*

*Resisting man's foolishness
Gmo-pollution-disease
Our request for life,
Mo' bees for us please*

I desire beauty and peace and I wanted to emphasize that with the next work. I have always had a great admiration and love of the bees and I am so sadly aware of their decline—do we not know that they are the needed pollinator of much of our grown food? I have also had a passion for the form of the infinity symbol and that of the Mobius strip. I have worked the two forms together to represent the cycle of bees and their infinite space in the continuum of our life cycles and productivity and beauty.



Leo Osborne *MO-BEE-US* | 2013, Maple Burl Wood, Epoxy and Gold Leaf, 14 x 14 x 6 inches © Leo Osborne | Currently on display in [Environmental Impact](#)

Always one who loved being in nature even as a kid in the marshlands of Massachusetts and the beaches of Cape Cod, I have found my places of belonging to be rich in the beauty of natural surroundings. My early mentor was David M. Carroll who with his passion for turtles became a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, or “Genius Grant”. His wonderful books connected me to the lives of the turtles, trout and trees of New England that we encountered on our woodland and beach walks along the shores of Big Sandy Pond in my hometown of Pembroke, MA. Unsurprisingly, as I attended art school this starting point pushed me towards the natural world shown to me by David in book and exploration.

I believe that the wildlife and naturalist artists of our time will be honored as some of the most influential and passionate artists of history. Our mindset in creativity and our concerns for our planet and its wildlife runs deeply within us and we hold a special place for its future and that of humankind.

To let it flow through me...the mind and spirit goes and the tool walks alone, I become the simple vehicle within which the creative source conveys its sacred, inner being. To be in the constant flow and rhythm of the dance is my true ambition and desire.....

The works by Leo Osborne published in this post are currently on national tour in the traveling museum exhibition, [Environmental Impact](#).

[Leo Osborne](#) currently lives in Washington, where he continues to explore the natural beauty that surrounds him through sculpture, painting, and poetry. Recipient of numerous honors and among America’s foremost sculptors, Leo constantly redefines his work, experimenting with material and form.

This post marks the launch of the [MAHB's Arts Community space](#) –an open space for MAHB members to share, discuss, and connect with artwork processes and products pushing for change. Please visit the [MAHB Arts Community](#) to share and reflect on how art can promote critical changes in behavior and systems. [Contact Erika](#) with any questions or suggestions you have regarding the new space.

MAHB-UTS Blogs are a joint venture between the University of Technology Sydney and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to joan@mahbonline.org

MAHB Blog: <http://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/the-year/>