

MICHAEL BELMORE EDIFICE, 2019

“Water and stone have a voice, they speak a language and have a history of conversation that extends well beyond our fleeting human existence.” —Michael Belmore



Michael Belmore. *Édifice*, 2019. River boulders, copper, 485.3 kg. Purchase, with funds by exchange from Professor and Mrs. Wm. O. Fennell, Toronto, in memory of J.H. Birkenshaw, and The J.S. McLean Collection, by Canada Packers Inc., 2019. © Michael Belmore. Photo: Julia Martin 2019/2317



GUIDED OBSERVATION

ELEMENTARY

- How would you describe this work of art? What does it remind you of?
- Based on the photograph of this work, what material do you think the artist has used to create this piece?
- Describe what it might feel like if you could touch this work? What would it smell like if you could get up close to it?

SECONDARY

- What puzzles you about this work?
- Think about *Edifice*, the title of this work. What does the term “edifice” mean? If you were to create your own “edifice”, what would it look like?
- Look carefully at how the artwork is arranged in the space. What if it was more spaced out in the gallery, or piled up high: would this affect your experience? Why or why not?
- What material has the artist used to create this work? What does it remind you of? Where have you seen similar materials?

CONTEXT

Michael Belmore works with a variety of materials and processes to express his feelings about the environment, land, water, and what it means to be Anishinaabe. In particular, he looks at how the North American landscape continues to be shaped both by natural forces and by human intervention.

The following is Belmore’s statement about *Edifice*:

“Materiality and time are central to my practice: my work intervenes into and abstracts elements in a relatively minimal way, thereby activating available associations as a part of overall meaning. Over the course of thousands of years, copper and stone transform beyond and within the realm of human intervention. Stone and copper, once fire, liquid and lucid from the confines of their solid state; ebbed and flowed like water beneath the islands from which we build our lives.

Édifice conveys the human and environmental impacts on the materials, as well as socio-political and cosmological impacts of colonialism and Indigenous resistance. The square patterning of the sculpture gestures to the long relations between Indigenous Nations and what would become Canada. The piece conceptualizes Indigenous and settler relations over the last 500 years through this representation of land. These collections of stones have moved and settled on the land paralleling histories of migration, displacement, erasure, and the resilient ties of communities that connect across space. Carved and lined with copper, they seemingly radiate heat—as the years pass, the glow of the copper fades and turns green, the stones settle and take their place amongst those who have travelled before them.”

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Belmore (Ojibway) was born in 1971, north of Thunder Bay, Ontario. His love of creating started when he was a child. He would craft toys from materials he could find around his house like tape, cardboard, and empty shampoo bottles. Now, Belmore works in a variety of media including plastics, metal, wood, and stone.

A graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD University), Belmore completed his Masters of Fine Art at the University of Ottawa in 2019. He is inspired by “seemingly small things, simple things ... the swing of a hammer, the warmth of a fire, the persistence of waves on a shore.” These subtle phenomena hold larger insights about the environment, particularly land and water, and about Anishinaabe identity. His works have been exhibited nationally and internationally, and is represented in the permanent collections of various institutions and numerous private collections. Belmore’s work was part of the exhibition in 2017 titled *Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood* at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

CREATE YOUR OWN SCULPTURE INSPIRED BY NATURE.

- On your next walk outside, collect natural materials—these could be twigs, leaves, pine needles that have fallen on the ground, or pebbles and rocks you find on the beach.
- Consider the following before you arrange your materials on a suitable spot on the ground: Will you mix the materials that you have found? Or keep similar materials together? Will you stack them up tall, or spread them out?
- Once you are satisfied with your creation, give your work a title.
- Take a picture and share it on #AGOMakes!



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