

> INFO PACKET FOR PARTNERS & PUBLIC <

A POEM

OF SUBLIME

PROPORTION



an outdoor / natural-cultural / art installation
using locally-sourced materials & language

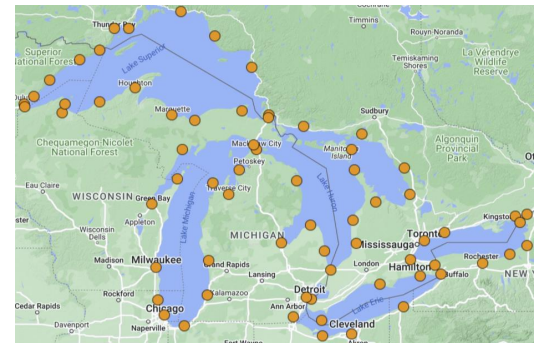
By Great Lakes-centric artist & poet Moheb Soliman, with Grand Marais Art Colony
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THE BIG PICTURE

A poem about Great Lakes nature and culture—20+ lines.

Each line embedded in giant driftwood—20+ sculptures.

Each sculpture installed around the Great Lakes—20+ communities.



- > POEM LINES—site-specific, core words sourced from people in each locale, through art and community organization partners and other efforts.
- > SCULPTURES—each a giant driftwood tree, sourced from local shores in collaboration with authorities and others. Words embedded large into them.
- > LOCATIONS—hamlets to cities; beaches to marinas; national parks to town squares; tourist overlooks to empty lots; places publicly accessible, on the lake.

**A poem of sublime proportion, circling the entire Great Lakes.
One line on one whole driftwood tree in each place. Each place
speaking from its unique corner and perspective about the
region’s nature, culture, and identity.**

Beginning in Grand Marais, MN . . .

IN GRAND MARAIS



During 2024 and 2025, interdisciplinary poet and public arts worker Moheb Soliman will visit Grand Marais to develop, produce, and install the first sculpture of *A Poem of Sublime Proportion*, with funding from MSAB and MRAC and approval from Grand Marais' Creative Enterprise Collective. This project is the ambitious peak of a decade+ of immersive public-facing work in Grand Marais through long-time collaboration with Grand Marais Art Colony and other local spaces and artists. Work will include:

> SOURCING WORDS FROM COMMUNITY VIA PARTNERS

Through in-person activities and online touchpoints, 200+ people from Grand Marais will answer the question: ***“What 4 words capture or describe your corner of the Great Lakes region, to you?”*** The resulting 800+ words will be aggregated, analyzed for most common words, and those incorporated by Moheb into a first line of the poem, to go on the sculpture. Partners include GMAC, the public library, Care Partners, Great Expectations School, North House, and others to come.

> CREATING SCULPTURE WITH LOCAL ARTIST JIM SUNNERUD

Renowned sculptor Jim Sunnerud is a vital creative and logistical collaborator, helping to find driftwood from local contacts and clients; embed words into the sculpture and finish it for enduring outdoor installation; and design and build necessary infrastructure.

> SECURING SCULPTURE SITE WITH PARKS MANAGER DAVE TERSTEEG

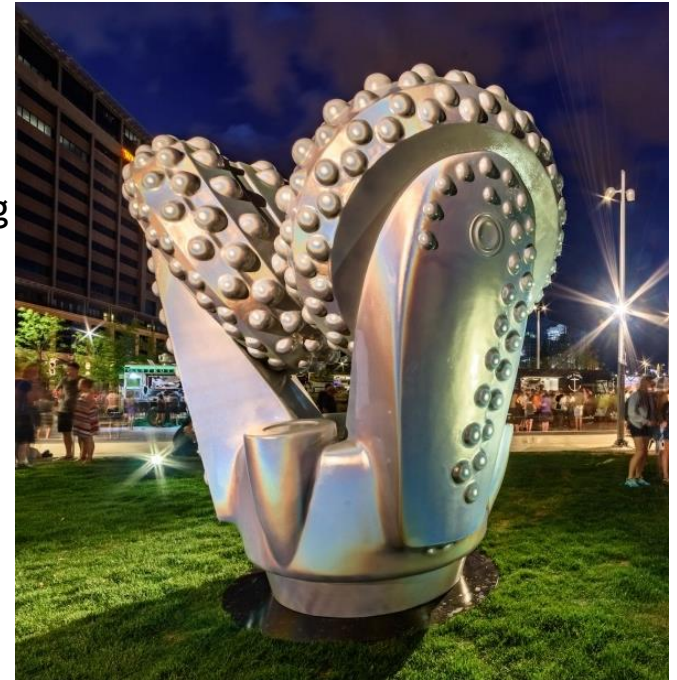
In consultation with Parks Manager Dave Tersteeg and others, Boulder Park has emerged as a most ideal site for this project. Other park or city spaces can otherwise be considered, and privately held property open to public access if need be—but Boulder Park is perfect due to its subtle yet central location, lively public access and straightforward installation access, general city plans, and more.

ARTIST BACKGROUND

> ORGANIZATIONAL PUBLIC ART MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

I've held varied positions that equipped me with skills necessary to realize a project of this scale:

- **Public Art Manager**, City of Minneapolis (Community Planning and Economic Development department)
Facilitating numerous artists' collaborations with the Transportation Planning and Programming, Parks and Rec, and other departments, involving public engagement, proposal development, logistical planning
- **Program Director, Mizna** (Arab American arts organization)
Guiding numerous temporary and permanent large-scale outdoor sculptures and installations for the yearly Northern Spark Festival, from conception to fabrication to installation
- **Project Manager/Arts Consultant**, The Great Northern; NorthernLights.mn; Springboard for the Arts
Overseeing development and installation for indoor sculptures and installations and managing sites and activities at festivals



"Alien Technology II" by Monira Al Qadiri—produced during my time as Program Director with Mizna in 2017 for the Northern Spark Festival; still standing in St. Paul, MN

> INDEPENDENT ARTIST PUBLIC ART EXPERIENCE

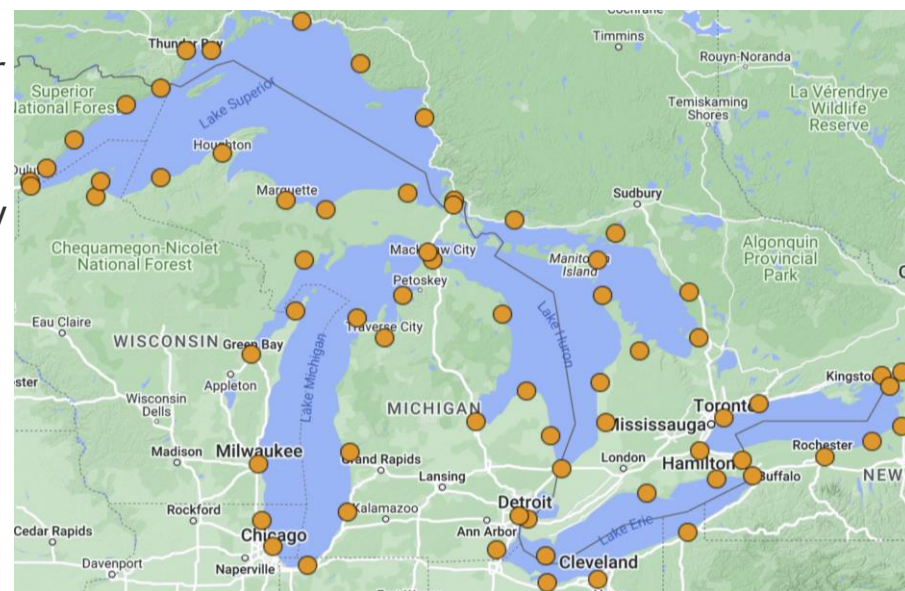
I have created and produced outdoor public art installations with Great Lakes national parks in the US and Canada, multiple art festivals, and other public spaces and events. I've presented installation-based poetry work with the Walker Art Center, Minnesota Museum of American Art, Pillsbury House, The Momentary and Gilcrease museums, and diverse other institutions in MN, the US, and abroad, with support from local, regional, and national foundations such as the George Kaiser Family Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, and others. I've also prototyped *A Poem of Sublime Proportion* as a temporary multi-site work in 50+ locations around the Great Lakes with local organizations and artists through a 2015 Joyce Foundation project grant that also resulted in my first book of poems, *HOMES* (Coffee House Press), a finalist for the Minnesota Book Awards and others.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

A Poem of Sublime Proportion was conceived in 2015 during a four-month immersive experience circling the entire Great Lakes shoreline for another project that also involved poetry, site-specific work, and local partnerships and public connections, through a grant and fellowship with the Joyce Foundation.

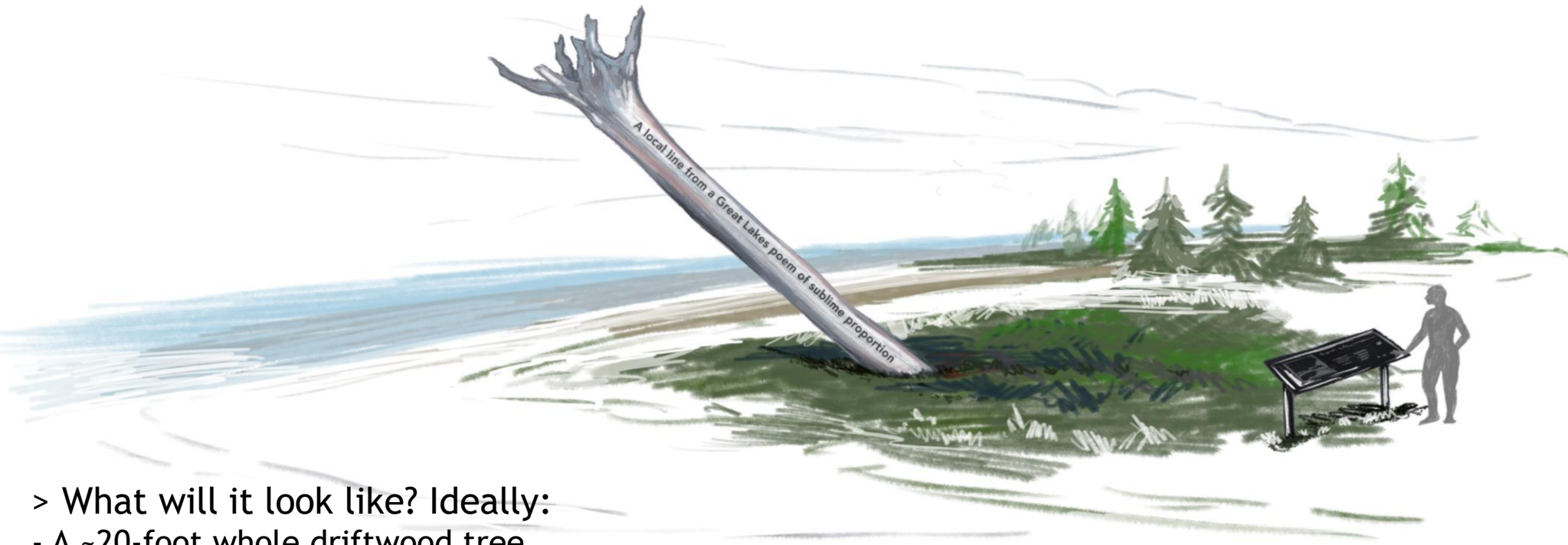
As I traveled, a simple prototype of this project took shape as I engaged in a small “protocol” meant to create some focus, presence, and continuity: everywhere I spent significant time, I was to write a new line of a poem physically and organically into the place I found myself—in sand on a beach; with charcoal on rocks at a campfire; using lake water on a city pier—that was about or inspired by that place in some way, as the poem accumulated to be about the region as a whole. Sometimes, I had a friend or local host or friendly stranger to help me. Each one was documented, and by the end, I felt I had inadvertently seeded a massive life’s work—to turn this practice into a semi-permanent multi-site art installation, with hundreds more writing collaborators in a string of far-flung neighboring places all tied by water.

A Poem of Sublime Proportion is part poetry, part land art/ environmental art, part participatory project. It is a contemporary nature poem about the wild, populous Great Lakes region, utilizing the raw materials, shorelines and voices of each location—giant driftwood; beach or park; keywords from each little world; of the Great Lakes. The poem’s content will address the region, and be about the region, made of its people and parts, and more than the sum of its parts. This project seeks to manifest a visceral, emotional, and collective awareness of the Great Lakes as one place, one bioregion, the largest fresh water body in the world, yet a giant geo-politically divided borderland, containing the longest border in the world. The project seeks to capture this and other regional dichotomies; to play with human and planetary scales—a poem going off page to span a 10,000+ mile circuitous coastline; to make poetry materially real, and the region conceptually alive.



Locations of lines from initial “Poem of Sublime Proportion” protocol project, with temporary site-specific lines embedded in place with local partners—many here are potential sites for this project’s sculptures

SPECS IN BRIEF / IN-PROGRESS



> What will it look like? Ideally:

- A ~20-foot whole driftwood tree
 - sourced with permission from Superior shore/river/TBD
 - set ~5 feet into ground at an angle—as if naturally thrust there from a storm
 - and completely surrounded by grass, rocks, natural site-specific materials
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- A ~15 feet visible sculpture
 - minimally transformed; treated for outdoor wear
 - with a line of a poem carved/emblazoned/embedded in metal/TBD into it
 - and a simple didactic plaque about the project nearby

*Artist's rendering of possible installation—not final
By Allegra Lockstadt*