

Local Artist Celebrates Life Through Living, Breathing Memorials

NORTHAMPTON, MASS (May 13, 2016) – From a carefully molded gourd to grafted tree art, Dan Ladd creates permanent art installations that celebrate the life and beauty of nature. Now, the artist-in-residence at Smith College has another goal: to help families develop living memorials for their loved ones – either at a natural burial or remembrance site. “I want to offer a more natural approach to the traditional burial process,” Ladd said. “Whether it’s a special marker, a tree or a bench, I’ll work with each family to create a special place where they can visit and reflect.”

After launching Living Memorials this spring, Ladd intends to work with individuals and families around the country who are looking to design a burial or remembrance location of their own. This could be a small reflection spot in someone’s backyard, a planting for a beloved pet or a natural burial site. “Regardless of the location, the process begins with a detailed conversation about what they’re looking for in the site,” Ladd said. “Part of this conversation is also the amount of time they’re willing to invest in caring for it. With that in mind, I try to keep my designs as simple as possible.”

The simplicity of these designs is a stark contrast to some of Ladd’s other work, which have been featured nationally at locations such as the Smith College Botanical Garden and the San Diego Art Gallery. These permanent installations often take years to create, as the trees, plants and roots must be slowly manipulated until the desired shape is achieved. The result may be a grafted arch, frame, lattice or molded gourd. “Through this process, I’m able to create nature in forms that it has never been seen before,” Ladd said.

To view Ladd’s work, or to learn more about Living Memorials, visit him online at www.livingmemorialtrees.com