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A New Sculpture Sprawls in Upstate New York at Storm King

Artist Virginia Overton's 488-Foot Brass Tube is Installed

By **JACKIE BISCHOF**

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Artist Virginia Overton's untitled new piece is installed at Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, N.Y. *Claudio Papapietro for The Wall Street Journal*

When Storm King Art Center commissioned a new work from Virginia Overton, she tapped into her Lebanon, Tenn., upbringing, particularly her farming family's use of topographic maps, which employ contour lines and symbols as a way of surveying land.

Ms. Overton, who now lives in Brooklyn, found a topographic map of the Hudson Valley sculpture park's 500-acre expanse. It depicted Storm King's features in lines, curves and circles and helped her envision a work that could serve as a three-dimensional drawing set against the landscape.

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

The result is an approximately 488-foot brass tube, 4 inches in diameter and perched on top of thin steel rods every 20 or 30 feet. The tube is designed to rise and fall with the undulations of the land—much like a line on a topographic map.

"I wanted to make something that had an impact but spoke to the environment," Ms. Overton said, "something that fit into the landscape."



Virginia Overton with a portion of her work that has its debut May 3 *Claudio Papapietro* for *The Wall Street Journal*

The untitled work, which she and five Storm King workers are completing over a week, involves connecting 12-foot tube pieces and resting them on the rods, which are mounted about four feet above the ground.

"Basing a huge installation on this idea and [hoping] it's going to work," she said, "that's a challenge."

The sculpture has its official debut May 3, along with sculptures and other works by the contemporary artist Zhang Huan, but the brass tube will be viewable by park visitors when it opens to the public on April 2.

Ms. Overton, 42 years old, has been featured in solo exhibitions at Mitchell-Innes & Nash and the Kitchen in New York, and her work has appeared at MoMA PS1 and the High Line. For her

Storm King installation, which is larger in scale than her typical work, she visited the park several times over the past year, exploring the grounds and learning about its history.

One aspect of the property that made an impression was a hay field that has been maintained as farmland for more than a century, according to Storm King's associate curator, Nora Lawrence. Ms. Overton chose that field as the location for her work, where it will be visible from multiple vantage points and change in appearance over time, as the hay grows taller and the brass weathers and deepens in color.

The tube is also intended to be interactive: Visitors can stand on either end and speak to each other, or simply listen to the sounds of the surrounding nature that it will capture and amplify.

"Even though it's a 500-foot-long thing, if you put your ear up to [it], whether hearing wind," Ms. Overton said, "or hearing a friend or someone, it all of a sudden becomes very intimate. It's right there in your ear."

Ms. Lawrence said she appreciated Ms. Overton's sense of familiarity with the history and geography of the places she works in, her process of "thinking about where she is and tailoring work to where she is."

As the installation (she described it as "landscape-size") nears completion, Ms. Lawrence added that she continues to discover new ways of looking at it—for example in the morning, as the sunlight hits the brass tubing.

"It's really so big and so small at the same time," she said. "There's something very elegant and delicate about it."

Ms. Overton, who often works with found and reused materials, is already thinking about the future.

"My joke is," she said with a laugh, "what kind of sculpture am I going to do next with all this brass tube?"