

sonic overlook

There's something compelling about a cavity carved into the density of the woods. Somewhere between the natural cycle of a tree dying off and leaving a void, and a man who is deeply in tune with that environment carefully shaping it in the wake of the tree's passage, lies a new liminal space.

What does it call for?

Standing in the forest room last spring, I considered a wide range of ideas that would engage the bower artistically. Ultimately I decide to construct something that I hoped would enhance what was already present: a contemplative space where people could appreciate the natural beauty surrounding them. Over some months, stick by stick, I built a small amphitheater, a wooden magnifying glass of sorts. My intention was to reframe the forest, initially in the way one views it, but more importantly regarding its sonic characteristics. The symphony of birdsong is ever present and ever changing, layered with other sounds both natural and man-made. Wind through the leaves is subtle, counterpointed by the staccato of massive pipes clattering as they're being moved a few miles away at the local steel yard. This soundscape in the bower is inescapably a conversation between man and nature. We've attempted to tame the wild by parcelling the countryside, girding it with increasingly complex systems; a modest footpath turns into a wider dirt trail, which becomes a gravel road, leading to a two lane blacktop, graduating to a concrete highway, and eventually merging into a tangled mass transit network that defines the movements of a populace at large. For me it was satisfying to trace that progression in reverse each time I drove from Houston to Splendora, and out into a small remove from the cacophony of city life. As the pathway narrowed, the sounds also dialed down to something placid and pleasant. I suppose it's an irony that I should choose to build something where there was nothing, given that nothing can truly improve on the perfection of nature. Or perhaps it's fitting to create a physical structure to channel the intangible splendor of sound.