

## STAGE &amp; ARTS

# 4Ground Midwest Land Art Biennial showcases sustainable art for the land in Upper Midwest



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Two-month-long, multi-state land art biennial raises awareness of environmental and historical issues.

By **Alicia Eler** (<https://www.startribune.com/alicia-eler/6370406/>) Star Tribune

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Four states, various tribal lands in the Upper Midwest and more than 20 community partners have combined to create the inaugural edition of [4Ground](https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar) (<https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar>) — a Midwestern land art biennial conceived by [Franconia Sculpture Park executive director and chief curator Ginger Porcella](https://www.startribune.com/franconia-sculpture-park-s-new-leader-aims-to-go-beyond-big-art/564171442/) (<https://www.startribune.com/franconia-sculpture-park-s-new-leader-aims-to-go-beyond-big-art/564171442/>).

"We did the strategic plan during the pandemic, and we really retooled all of our programming to be more aligned with the new mission, which is the intersection of art and ecology," she said. "We're not doing big art — we are doing site-specific stuff that is more responsive to the land."

The first two-month-long biennial is spread out across the Twin Cities, broader Minnesota and the Upper Midwest region, building on a 10,000-year tradition of Native land art created in the region. The event strives to foster deeper connections between art and the land, through a feminist and Indigenous lens.

Although several of the events were held earlier in June, 4Ground officially kicks off with a [launch party Saturday](https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/4ground-launch-party) (<https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/4ground-launch-party>) from 1-9:30 p.m. at Franconia, in Shafer, Minn. Events that day include a Native land blessing, sound walk with 4Ground emerging artist-in-residence Dann Disciglio, and an ecosex walking tour with Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens, just to name a few.

On Saturday at the opening event, visitors will be invited to plant native trees and shrubs at a new gathering space behind Franconia's artist residency property. The project, "An Invitation," by Ethan Bryson of Natural Urban Forests, Marylee Jones (Yakama) and 4Ground artist Stephanie Lindquist, is on one of the older properties at the park. This is the first event of the opening celebration kickoff party.

"This is our first iteration of the project, and the planting is going to be about 1,600 square feet and we're hoping to expand to around 7,000 square feet," Lindquist said.

Throughout the summer, 4Ground attendees can travel to various locations around the Upper Midwest, from Sauk City, Wis., to Fargo, to catch more events. For those unwilling to take a road trip, there will be plenty to see in Minnesota, like throat-singing at the Rochester Art Center and a workshop at Squirrel Haus Arts in Minneapolis on making a paintbrush using plastic found in the Mississippi River. In July, events pop up in Sandstone, Minn., at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary in St. Paul, Witwen Park in Sauk City, Wis., the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, and many other venues.

Marlena Myles' (Spirit Lake Dakota) project "[Dakota Spirit Walk](https://www.startribune.com/walk-with-spirits-and-connect-with-dakota-history/600159394/)" (<https://www.startribune.com/walk-with-spirits-and-connect-with-dakota-history/600159394/>) takes visitors through an augmented reality installation of Dakota history and culture at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. [On July 17 and 18](https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/dakota-spirit-walk/) (<https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/dakota-spirit-walk/>), as part of 4Ground, she will lead visitors on the walk.

GALLERY

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Gallery: Wang Ping and Joe Lerro's installation "Kinship of Rivers: We Are One Family" opens at Kinstone in Fountain City, Wis., on June 21. It seeks to celebrate connections with land, air, water and communities.

"The land contains Indigenous significances that have been hidden away with the forced removal of Native peoples," she said. "It's important to reveal and honor these stories so that our connections to the Earth are active and dynamic, instead of seeing the land as a resource."

"Art has the ability to show those deeper values and regrounds us to see the land as a relative — the kind of thinking we need to (re)learn in order to avoid extinction at our own hands," Myles added.

#### **A new vision for Franconia**

Porcella, who took over as executive director of Franconia in [September 2019](https://www.startribune.com/franconia-sculpture-park-hires-chicago-native-to-replace-its-fired-founder/512479412/) (<https://www.startribune.com/franconia-sculpture-park-hires-chicago-native-to-replace-its-fired-founder/512479412/>), replaced founding director John Hock, who was fired in October 2018 (<https://www.startribune.com/franconia-park-founder-was-fired-for-inappropriate-conduct-toward-young-woman/494636381/>).

"When I came here it seemed like a lot of organizations were really siloed and that was really off-putting to me," she said. "I wanted an event that brought all these organizations and artists and communities together around a common theme."

Of the many sponsors, including the Graham Foundation, Blandin Foundation, Sculpture Milwaukee and ArtTable, Arts Midwest was one of the first organizations to jump on board as a sponsor to the tune of \$25,000.

"Our executive director, Torrie Allen, really appreciated [Porcella's] bold vision not only for Franconia but for what public art and land art could do for bringing people together," Arts Midwest Community Engagement Manager Michael Johnson said. "The focus on Indigenous and native and rural communities was really important to us."

Porcella, who lived in Tucson ([https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/arts/report/071119\\_moca\\_ed/curator-moca-tucson-leaving-museum-post/](https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/arts/report/071119_moca_ed/curator-moca-tucson-leaving-museum-post/)) before coming to the Twin Cities, is originally from a rural community outside Chicago and has lived all over the place. Naturally, the event got her thinking about her own connections to the land.

"The best I can do is to do things like this, and to really think about Franconia and our relationship to the land and how we can take better care of the land through art that's more sustainable and environmentally friendly rather than destroying the land," Porcella said. "We're all doing our part."

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#### **4Ground: Midwest Land Art Biennial**

**Kickoff party:** Sat., June 4 from 1-9:30 p.m. at Franconia Sculpture Park, 29836 St. Croix Trail N., Shafer, Minn. Free. For list of events, visit <https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/4ground-launch-party> (<https://4groundbiennial.org/events-calendar/4ground-launch-party>)

**When:** June-Aug. 2022.

**Where:** Varied locations, check [4groundbiennial.org](http://4groundbiennial.org) (<http://4groundbiennial.org>) for information.

**Cost:** Free, \$5-\$10, and the VIP tour of 4Ground sites in the St. Croix Valley is \$100.

**Info:** [4groundbiennial.org](http://4groundbiennial.org) (<http://4groundbiennial.org>)

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