



Becker

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Which brings us to the broom cupboard (although it was actually the staircase, apparently, despite the myth). It was the summer of 1999, and that afternoon he had played his last game at Wimbledon, against Pat Rafter. At his hotel that evening he got into a fierce argument with Feltus, who was seven months pregnant at the time. Suffering what she thought were labor pains, she went to hospital. He didn't go with her. He went to Nobu, where Angela Ermakova smiled at him. A few minutes and nine months later, a child was born.

Obviously, he doesn't want to talk about this. But then he does. "It's upsetting, because there is so much more ... I have had an incredible 25 years of public life, and most of it was amazing, but of course [there are] some stories I am not proud of."

Becker stops himself. He is proud of his children. All three of them, he says pointedly. "They're great kids and they're good at school and they're great citizens. I would rather talk much more about this than what happened 10 years ago."

Let's, then. Becker has an apartment in Miami that he uses to visit the boys. He also has the long-term rent on his new place in Wimbledon, for Anna, but he adds: "My main residence is still Switzerland." No doubt the taxman will be interested to hear that. Becker was convicted of tax evasion and fined US\$500,000 in 2002, after admitting that he had lived in Germany while claiming to live in Monte Carlo. "For a foreigner [in tax terms] London is good also."

His sons were instrumental in persuading him to marry again. "When you pass 25 and you've done what I've done, you're more careful. You ask yourself, why? More than once. You don't necessarily want to fall in love again ... but thank God we all have a heart and emotions and they take over."

It is, he says, almost five years since he started dating Kerssenberg. "We had ups and downs and splits and half splits and all that, but my two boys met her and said: 'Take no other women home, we won't accept anybody but her.' My eldest boy and her talk five times a week, to the point where I get jealous."

Kerssenberg arrives, looking effortlessly gorgeous in ripped white jeans, a silver wraparound top and bug-eye dark glasses. As if to prove his point, her phone goes off and it is Noah. She listens. "Noah's going to need a new car." He's on the way to passing his driving theory test, at 15. Becker shakes his head and smiles, realizing why Noah would rather talk to her about this. "We'll find him a Mini."

Afterwards, when he's gone to the toilet, Kerssenberg tells me her plans. "Boris has children by other people. Not by me. I want to have twins, then maybe more. I want that feeling you get when you look in their eyes and say, 'I created life.'"

Then he's back. "Guess where we're going this afternoon," she says. He can't. "You know that thing you said you loved only slightly less than you love me?"

He thinks. "Poker?" Wrong answer. He wasn't kidding, though.

"No. The wedding ring, it's ready to collect." He gives me an exasperated look, but Kerssenberg knows her own mind and Becker gives every impression of loving it. Although perhaps only a little more than poker. He started playing the game seriously when a sponsor paid him to attend a tournament. "My first time, with the 1,000 best players in the world, I made the final table. That's luck, maybe, but it's impossible. It was an unbelievable adrenaline rush." He's good with numbers then? "Yes. That's another stigma athletes have to overcome: you're an athlete but you can't count."

He says, with endearing pride, "I made it onto ESPN *Sports News* because of poker, not because of tennis." Have they got anything in common? "Discipline," he says, nodding. "Concentration. Not the first cards wins but the last card. You study the body language of your opponent; you have to read him, when he plays, when he bluffs. Obviously you sit down all day, so you don't have hurting muscles."

Now he is on the circuit, playing for big money in Vegas and Monte Carlo. "The poker tour is like the tennis tour, traveling from city to city. Very competitive. It reminds me of being 20 again."

As 42 approaches, he is willing to admit how much he struggled after retiring from his first beloved game. "Eight years later, I think I have arrived. I have poker, and businesses that go very well. The challenge was to be known not for a Wimbledon triumph 25 years ago, but for something you've done this year or last."

What is left, then, besides the search for the perfect hand? "I want to work. I want to understand the life of my children. I am happy I have found a partner who shares most of my values," he says. "I want to maintain that, grow and hopefully make more children in the future, and to learn." And to put the world right, about how much he thinks he has changed. "I am sick and tired of hiring lawyers to clear my name of lies. I'd rather show myself."

To that end he has set up Boris Becker TV online, with video diaries about the bits of his life that would otherwise be private, including the wedding. He can't seem to stop sitting in the front window, metaphorically speaking. Who is going to watch?

"There is a good chance my name is more famous than Facebook or Twitter," says Becker. Such awesome confidence is the gift only of champions. "Of course, I needed to ask myself, 'Am I full of myself, do I think that I am more important than I am?'" Becker finishes his third glass of wine and stares, as if demanding a response. Does he really expect me to answer that question, to his face? Not without the umpire's help. New balls, please ...

[ ART JOURNAL ]



Above: Roy Straab poses in front of his sculpture, *Energy Center*.

Left: Stuart Ian Frost's *In Deep Water* uses bamboo poles that turn like prayer wheels.

# Inspired by nature

*Eight artists had just 10 days to create sculptures from bamboo and materials found at Guandu Nature Park*

BY DIANE BAKER  
STAFF REPORTER

The Guandu International Outdoor Sculpture Festival, which began three years ago, was the brainchild of American artist and Taiwan resident Jane Ingram Allen, who has continued to curate shows and serve as its primary cheerleader.

While outdoor sculptures have become increasingly commonplace in Taiwan, thanks to the government's policy of earmarking a portion of the funding for public schools and buildings for artworks, environmentally themed works and shows are still rare.

Establishing the festival at the Guandu Nature Park (關渡自然公園) just outside Taipei, was an inspired choice, given its focus on conservation and environmental education. Thanks to the park's location along the Tamsui River, artists can choose from a variety of wetland, water and land sites for their sculptures, while the park's flora provides much of raw materials used in the works.

The theme of this year's show, which opened last weekend and runs through Sept. 27, is "Land, Water and Culture." Artists submitting proposals were told their pieces should raise awareness about environmental issues such as global warming (also the focus of last year's show) and sustainable growth. Scores of artists from Taiwan and around the world submitted applications to the festival, which provides the winners with airfare to Taipei, accommodation, a fee of US\$1,200 and the promise of a lot of hard work.

This year eight artists were chosen, two Taiwanese — Lee Chao-chang (李朝倉) and Yang Chun-sen (楊春森) — along with Ashish Ghosth from India, Park Bong-gi from South Korea, Norway-based Briton Stuart Ian Frost, Dutchman Merijn Vrij and two Americans, Karen McCoy and Roy Staab.

They had just 10 days to create their works, including collecting reeds, branches and other material from around the park, working together with volunteers, many of whom were young art students from local schools. The arms and legs of some of the artists bore testimony to

the struggle with nature that comes from trying to create art from natural materials, especially in the case of Vrij, whose arms were a mass of scratches from the reeds he worked with.

The eight works are spaced around the park, some on land and some in the water, but most are designed so that the public can walk around them or explore inside. There apparently was some haggling over water sites as more of the artists this year had designed their pieces to be near or in water, but at the press conference last Friday all seemed very pleased with their sites and with their works.

McCoy's piece, *Space for Contemplating Carrying Capacity: The Taiwan Tangle*, however, is not readily accessible to the public. Located in a restricted area, it is only open to view by guided tour on weekends. She didn't seem put out by the isolation, though, noting that her sculpture was designed to evoke contemplation.

"'Carrying capacity' is a term used by environmentalists to describe limits of natural area to carry people so that it is not degraded for future generations. It's [her sculpture] is like a home, it has a roof and supports. The roof is in the shape of Taiwan, and I tried to form the topography with Yushan and other mountains ... The tangle is very important. We are contributing to the problem with everything we do, but we don't know how to change ... I wanted to ask people to do a walking meditation and think of something they can do to help [save the environment]," she said.

As in previous years, one of the things that is so interesting about the sculpture festival is the different artists' interpretation of the

same theme. Where McCoy built a structure that is just a roof and supports, Lee built a more substantial home out of branches, soil and pieces of material, using a kind of adobe technique. His *Flavor of the Wetlands* can hold about four people at a time, though perhaps not comfortably, and reminded me of the "secret forts" my friends and I used to construct as children.

Park also created a small shelter that people can sit in, though his *Breath* is more womb-shaped. He said he designed it so people can look at earth, the sky, water and plants all at one time.

Yang's *Phoenix* takes a completely different tack. He has created a fake fossil site.

"This park is a bird park so I created a bird fossil. Lots of people don't see fossils, at least not in Taiwan. I wanted to make it look like the river had uncovered it," he said.

Yang created the fossil of his phoenix by carbonizing pieces of wood found in the park, a tip of the hat to the burning of forests and carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming.

Birds in flight were a source of inspiration for Vrij's *Flock of Birds*.

"It was inspired by the way huge groups of birds fly in the sky. In Holland we have a lot of flat lands. It's curving to show how the birds flew. You can view [it] from different angles," Vrij said.

He noted that the park's birds had already given their approval to his piece, by perching on it.

While Vrij's work is linear, though a bit curvy, Straab's *Energy Center* is all curves.

# Use my work free? Some artists say 'no' to Google

*Illustrators are rankled that 'exposure' is the only compensation offered by Google for the use of their artwork*

BY ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

When Google representatives recently invited dozens of prominent artists to contribute work to be featured on its new Web browser, the company enthusiastically sold the idea as an opportunity to have artwork shown to millions.

But some, like Gary Taxali, were not impressed. Taxali, an illustrator based in Toronto whose work has appeared in publications like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Fortune*, received a call in April from a member of Google's marketing department. According to Taxali, the Google representative explained that the project will let users customize Google Chrome pages with artist-designed "skins" in their borders.

"The first question I asked," Taxali said in a recent interview, "is 'What's the fee?'"

Taxali said that when he was told Google would pay nothing, he declined.

In the ensuing weeks, a tide of indignation toward Google swelled among illustrators, who stay connected through Drawgr, a Web site.

In a posting to Drawgr on April 28, Taxali bemoaned the Google request — and that some struggling publications were reducing fees to illustrators by nearly half.

"So for you, I give you a special salute that I hope will keep you away because I don't need your work," Taxali wrote, followed by

his own drawing of a hand gesture popular with impatient motorists.

The posting drew more than 200 responses, many from other illustrators who also had rejected Google's offer, including Joe Ciardiello, of New Jersey, whose pen drawings of authors appear frequently on the cover of the *New York Times Book Review*.

"You'd think that if anyone can afford to pay artists and designers it would be a company that is making millions of [US] dollars," Ciardiello said in an interview.

In the first quarter of this year alone, Google reported profits of US\$1.42 billion, an increase of 8 percent over the same period last year.

In a statement responding to questions, Google said that the project was modeled after a similar one last year for iGoogle, a personalized home page, where artists and companies (including Jeff Koons, Bob Dylan and Gucci) contributed images to be used as skins.

"While we don't typically offer monetary compensation for these projects," the statement said, "through the positive feedback that we have heard thus far we believe these projects provide a unique and exciting opportunity for artists to display their work in front of millions of people."

But exposure often is a given for illustrators,



Illustrator Melinda Beck, who has designed cards for Target and animations for Nickelodeon, rejected Google's request for free artwork.

who are rankled that Google is asking them to work for exposure alone.

"I have done gift cards for Target that are in stores nationwide and animations for Nickelodeon that run 24 hours a day worldwide on cable TV," Melinda Beck, an illustrator who is based in Brooklyn, wrote in an e-mail message to Google rejecting its offer. "Both of these jobs were high-profile and gave my work great exposure, but both clients still paid me."

In an interview, Beck estimated it would take her a week to create original artwork to Google's specifications. (A Google spokesman countered that the company was amenable to reusing work from artists' portfolios.)

While some online publications, like Salon and Slate, hire illustrators, many rely on free or cheap stock illustrations, so illustrators are on tenterhooks about making a living online.

The fact that print publications are shrinking or folding also troubles illustrators. "There's a lot of concern that newspapers and all of print is becoming a bit of an endangered species," said Brian Stauffer, an illustrator based in Miami whose work has appeared in publications including *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire* and *Entertainment Weekly*, and who also rejected Google's offer. "When a company like Google comes out very publicly and expects that the market would just give them free artwork, it sets a very dangerous precedent."

Google, though rebuffed by more than a dozen illustrators, said in its statement that it had plenty of takers.

"We don't feel comfortable releasing the names of artists who are participating in the project before it launches," stated the company, which also declined to give a date when artwork from the program would appear on Google Chrome. "However, we are currently working with dozens of artists who are excited about the opportunity to be involved in this project."