

# Big pipe portal essay

Design



In the area of Portland, Oregon, there is a sculpture entitled Big Pipe Portal and it is an installation, positioned on the banks of the Willamette River and is a product of conceptual art focused on the idea of the man-made and natural worlds co-existing. It was created by an architecture and design company known as 'Rhiza A+D' and its context was its placement amongst Portland's man-made home of industry, Swan Island, and it represents the coming together of natural and man-made materials. It appears to be emerging from the ground and the bottom section that would make it a complete circle has been eaten up by the ground – essentially making the Earth the final piece of it lending it a naturalistic essence. Its minimalist appearance is designed to enhance its concept. The design arches over a pathway, meaning that people can walk through it and add to the coming together of the two juxtaposing materials.

Its composition consists of an assembly of pre-cast concrete tunnel lining segments, reinforcing caging and stainless steel and the materials create a further collocation as their varying styles are interwoven, giving the message that differences can live in harmony alongside one another: this is its narrative. The differing materials gives the sculpture a light visual weight due to its paradoxical joining of materials which seem weighted to the ground but light in its greater appearance. The different materials are not in equal proportion with regard to their actual mass but this adds to the idea of the man-made and natural relationship. Its circular mass adds to its iconography too as it represents the never-ending 'circle of life' and the various ideas that come attached to this: the on-going evolution of the human race and the planet, for one – as demonstrated by the man-made

materials intercepting with the Earth itself. On the right-hand side, the curve is extremely defined – the stainless steel is designed to be strong and upstanding – its lines are sturdy in their appearance and are designed to be bold and distinct.

Again, another juxtaposition exists between the straight-lines of the stainless steel alongside the curved ‘messiness’ of the reinforced caging which loops in and over itself, creating a curvy and interesting pattern which is brought back into focus by its curved but defined ‘backbone’ which adjoins it to the strictness of the stainless steel. The concrete tunnel lining is what fixes it all in place – holding it down to the Earth and acting as a ‘go-between’ amid the two opposites. Equally adding to the sculpture’s narrative is its stark, cool-coloured, grey colouring which does not offer any warmth and its monochromatic colouring is again, the opposite of the lush, green grass that anchors it to the ground: its message is clearly one which discusses the relationship between the often cold attitude of man and the warm, nurturing existence of the planet. Its structure has an isometric perspective as from one point of view, it is a two-dimensional circular shape, whereas it is in fact more like a curl in its positioning.

Interestingly, for a sculpture that is so big, it is designed to be almost ‘invisible’ as, with the exception of the concrete, it is not a solid structure anywhere and can be seen through lending it an air of trompe l’oeil in as much as it causes the viewer to query its reality. This porous texture is designed to both create a mass of structure whilst still making it unnoticed – it is designed to simply ‘blend in’ to its surroundings as per its central idea: the coming together of man-made and natural materials. The structure is in <https://assignbuster.com/big-pipe-portal-essay/>

the round and it fits into its environment perfectly – it is the ideal sculpture for the industrial area in which it is placed and it is position to frame the industrial backdrop that it is placed in front of. In this sense, it is naturalistic and it is at one with its environment as it is designed to address the relationship between mankind and our natural surroundings and it does not fail – the sculpture is defined by and yet starkly at odds to nature and as such, it does not fail to fulfil its intentions.

## **References**

- “ Big Pipe Portal.” RhizaAPlusD. com. Rhiza A+D. 2009. Web. 7 August 2011.
- “ Public art project on Swan Island receives award at national conference.” RACC. org. Regional Arts and Culture Council. N. d. Web. 7 August 2011.