



GVSU ArtPrize project: Profile of Alois Kronschlaeger

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By **The Grand Rapids Press**



Alois Kronschlaeger, of Austria, climbs inside "Spire," his 65 foot tall ArtPrize sculpture made with wood, aluminum mesh and poured paint. The 32 foot wide creation occupies all three floors of Site:Lab at 2 East Fulton Street.

Editor's note: A journalism class taught by Prof. Brian Bowe is partnering with The Grand Rapids Press to produce ArtPrize stories.

By Michelle Thomas

When Alois Kronschlaeger first toured the crumbling commercial building at 2 East Fulton St. in Grand Rapids, he could have dwelled on the familiar or historic. This was an old building, after all, left abandoned in the bustling downtown district and taken over by the non-profit, SiTE:LAB to exhibit artworks. Instead, he saw potential for a new existence in the building and challenged his own artistic direction in the undertaking of his ArtPrize submission, "Spire."

"My last site-specific installation had a horizontal spread, and I considered doing something similar," said Kronschlaeger. "But when I became more familiar with the space – the levels; the elevator shaft – I knew I would do a vertical piece that united the whole building and gave it new life."

Born in Grieskirchen, Austria, Kronschlaeger has lived the past 20 years in his Brooklyn, New York home. He received his Master of Fine Arts from The School of Visual Arts in New York where he now lectures frequently. And while the big city has played host to most of his gallery shows and installments, "Spire" is his largest and most-publicized installment to date. "This piece took me and the volunteers six weeks working 12 hours per day to complete. It was exhausting and exuberating."

And Kronschlaeger is not short on exuberance. He is passionate when describing his work and process, and enjoys the end result of seeing people's reactions. "The best part is when the parents are explaining 'Spire' to their children. Some parents spend a long time with them on it, and that is gratifying," he said.

He also created a blog that documents his process. The blog has been helpful to ArtPrize goers looking to find out more about Kronschlaeger and "Spire," but it was not intended as a vote-getting technique. "My family back in Austria and friends in New York knew I was taking on this big project and how exciting it was

for me, and they wanted to see updates. So I made the blog for them and anyone else who wants to see more.”

While ArtPrize is only a two-week event, SiTE:LAB has agreed to keep “Spire” up well after this contest is over. Kronschlaeger plans to stay until the end. “I’m excited to see ‘Spire’ in the first snow flurry,” he said. “It’s been a fantastic journey, watching this piece transform each day through rain, sun, and grey skies. I’m very grateful to the SiTE:LAB crew, building owner, and volunteers for being so accommodating. They were essential to the project’s success. ‘Spire’ is really living in Grand Rapids now.”

Visit <http://www.aloiskronschlaeger.com/> for more information about Kronschlaeger, his works, and his background.

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