

Arts

Kimia Afshar Mehrabi Posted about a month ago

Everyone is obsessed with Toronto's most unique basketball hoops



An interactive art installation in one of Toronto's newest parks is drawing attention and praise for reimagining basketball in an unexpected, whimsical way.

Orange Functional by Cuban-born artist **Alexandre Arrechea** examines the politics of public gathering spaces through multiple sets of basketball hoops that double as a sculpture, turning the beloved sport into an interactive art experience.

The installation is part of the new **Lassonde Art Trail** in Toronto's **Biidaasige Park**, which is pronounced "bee-daw-si-geh" and means "sunlight shining toward us" in Anishinaabemowin. The park is located near Cherry Street on the island of Ookwemin Minising, which translates to "place of the black cherry trees."



The new and free art trail consists of a series of 15 interconnected public art sites spanning over four kilometres of paths that weave through 60 acres of new parkland along the city's waterfront.

Orange Functional transforms basketball hoops into branching, tree-like structures, with bright orange forms extending into multiple rims. As basketballs are shot and miss, they drop from the hoops to the ground below, evoking fruit falling from a tree.



With multiple nets and plenty of ways to "win," the sculpture changes the design of the standard basketball hoop and invites players to reimagine new rules and modes of play.

"This is one of a series of functional basketball sculptures produced by the artist, and he invites everyone to bring their own basketballs and take a shot. As the balls fall to the ground, they evoke the harvest of fruit and remind us of our responsibility to value nature and community experiences," the Lassonde Art Trail (LAT) Foundation writes of the sculpture.



While the sculpture was installed in Toronto only recently, its history dates back over a decade. Originally titled *Orange Tree*, the sculpture was first exhibited at the Icebox Project Space in Philadelphia and later at the Bronx Museum of the Arts.



In 2013, the sculpture **made headlines when it was vandalized** at the Columbus Museum of Art at The Pizzuti. Just a few years later, NBA All-Star Shaquille O'Neal posted a viral photo in front of the metal sculpture, nicknaming it the "broken rim tree" and claiming it featured the rims from the many backboards he shattered during his illustrious basketball career.

Fast forward to 2022, the installation was **redesigned for Art Omi** in Ghent, New York, under the new title *Orange Functional*. The sculpture is also permanently installed at various places across the U.S. and Asia, including the **training facility of the San Antonio Spurs**.



"*Orange Tree* was conceived as a poetic contradiction: a sculpture that visually referenced basketball yet denied its use. The balls rested in place, unreachable, transforming the familiar language of sport into contemplation. It was about desire suspended — standing before the possibility of play but being unable to act," Arrechea writes.

"By introducing real functionality, the work moves from metaphor to activation. The viewer is no longer a witness but a participant. What was once an image of play becomes play itself. Adding functionality did not simply modify the structure—it transformed the concept, shifting the piece from a reflection on potential to a lived, collective experience."



Orange Functional is located at the plaza in front of the Old Fire Hall 30 in Biidaasige Park, and viewers are invited to bring their own basketballs to play. The first phase of the Lassonde Art Trail officially opened on June 4, and the western portion will open in July.

Photos by Fareen Karim

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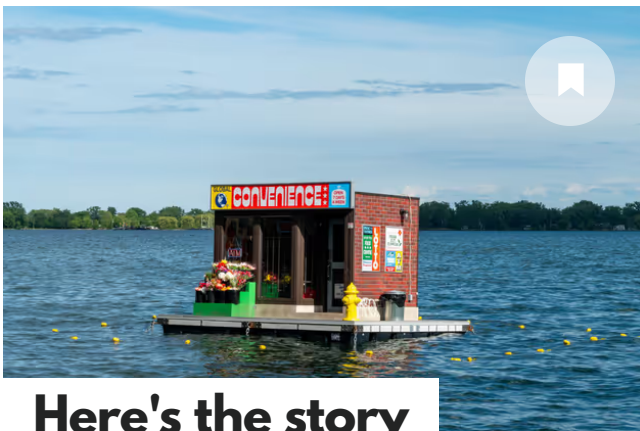
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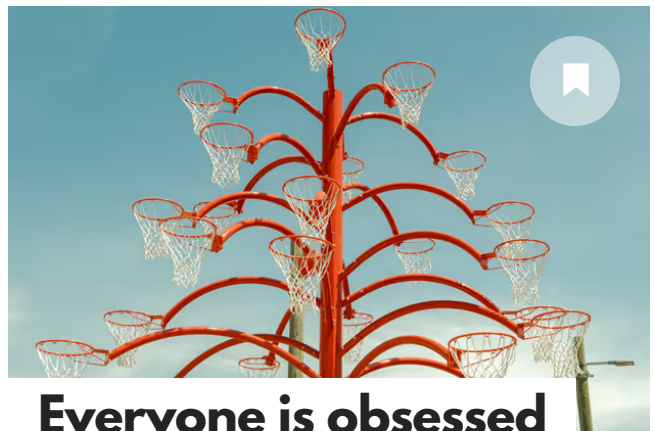
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