

COLOR

Michele Brody's monochromatic "forest," crafted from natural papers stained by the elements, evokes the process of entropy, as well as the loss of green spaces due to over-development and environmental degradation. In contrast, the lurid colors captured overhead of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and toxic algae blooms have inspired an ongoing series of pulp painted works. These are paired with presidential electoral college maps from the new millennium, which punctuate the exhibition as representations of the vivid by-products of human civilization. The colors are produced by blending abaca and cotton paper pulps with natural pigments, while the "Blue" states are made from recycled blue jeans.

Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill, 2025
Pulp painted abaca with rare earth magnets.

Blue & Red 2024

Presidential electoral college map, 2025

Dyed cotton pulp and recycled blue jeans with wheat grass seeds that were planted in the paper while wet and left to sprout. The final product is of the underside where the wheat grass roots attempt to stitch the country back together again.



Parrita in Process

In 2000, Brody was invited to exhibit at the Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporaneo in San José, Costa Rica. While touring the country, she experienced the sensation of a time warp while driving through Parrita, a massive palm oil plantation, made up of acres and acres of dead, dying, growing, and thriving African palm trees. Time stood still in this once Banana Republic, where the trees that grow too tall to reach their seeds have their crowns chopped off, while their deteriorating trunks are left to feed the new young trees replacing them. To capture the otherworldliness of Parrita, Brody came back at dawn to document the life cycles of these trees from birth through life to death and rebirth. She pieced back together the varying plots of trees by stitching them together as a 27.5-foot-long photo essay.



BIO

Michele Brody learned the art of crafting spaces from her father, a third-generation New York builder. From her grandfather, an inventor, she learned to find creative solutions to tricky problems. Growing up in this family of builders inspired her to construct forts from natural materials in the woods of 1970s Staten Island, suggesting a future inspired by nature and the built environment.

In 1994, Brody earned an MFA in Fibers and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, marking the beginning of a 30-year career as an independent installation artist. Grants and artist residencies awarded by respected institutions such as NYFA, NYSCA, LMCC, Pollock/Krasner Foundation, Bronx Council on the Arts, Skowhegan, Headlands Center for the Arts, LMCC, Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program and Wave Hill allowed her to maintain a full-time creative practice as a mixed-media environmental artist outside of traditional gallery markets.

Brody has mounted commissioned installations in France, Costa Rica, Germany, and Taiwan alongside national shows in Chicago, Indiana, Arizona, and Vermont. Collaborations with NYC exhibition venues showcasing her work include LES Tenement Museum, Hudson Guild, Bronx Museum, NY Botanical Gardens, and the artist-run spaces of JVS Project Space and AAA3A. Notable accomplishments include two permanent public artworks for the MTA and DOE in 2006 and winning Best 3-D Entry at the 2011 International Art Prize competition.

Arboreal Ethereal marks the end of Brody's residency at the Bronx River Art Center's Artist Studios Program. To follow Ms. Brody as she moves on to the next phase of her career, go to www.michelebrody.com or Instagram @mbrody16.

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Michele Brody ARBOREAL ETHEREAL

Capturing the Entropy of Nature
July 10 - August 16, 2025



Bronx River Art Center

Artist Studios Program Spotlight Exhibition, 2025

1087 East Tremont Ave, Bronx, NY 10467

NATURE IN ABSENTIA

Michele Brody's practice merges environmental activism with material poetics. Trained in fibers and material studies, she is known for creating mixed-media installations and public works of art that intertwine local flora and community stories to deepen an understanding of the surrounding ecology and history. At its core, her focus is on crafting sustainable site-generated environmental projects that illuminate the subtle beauty of the everyday while grappling with the challenges of globalization, over-development, and climate change. Her exhibition at the Bronx River Art Center features works from her series **Nature in Absentia** and relevant past and ongoing projects.

Nature in Absentia memorializes the disappearance of native ecosystems through three significant bodies of work: **Ghosting**, **A Lost Marshland** and **Monarch Migrations**. These projects emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the temporary slowing of urban life revealed the latent resilience of natural systems. As visitors enter the deep green walls of the gallery, Brody invites us into an ecosystem of her own making — a space haunted by life casts of tree trunks, butchered stumps, and preserved cattails under a canopy of flitting butterflies amongst regenerated flower blossoms and coconut palm leaves.

Ghosting features cast-paper sculptures and wall reliefs of native NY trees like the Silver Birch and American Chestnut. Rendered in translucent sheets of abaca and kozo, these spectral forms evoke absence as presence — a forest of memory. The delicate paper, made from fast-growing, non-native plants without harsh chemicals, reinforces Brody's commitment to sustainability while questioning the binary between invasive and indigenous species. Brody's use of handmade paper is both conceptual and tangible. The pulped fibers, regenerated from natural detritus, embody cycles of transformation — from fragility to resilience, from decay to rebirth. "The material takes on any form," she says, "but can also break down easily and be reconstituted into something new." The artist sees each cast sheet as a vessel of history and place.

Blighted American Chestnut, Southside, 2023

Life cast of American chestnut tree on Governors Island with abaca and kozo papers from Asia.

Monarchs at Rest, 2024

Cast of oak tree stump with abaca paper, butterflies cast with handmade milkweed and unbleached abaca paper pulps with watermark over light fixture.



Fragment from a Lost Marshland, 2023

Paper pulp from invasive Phragmites reeds cast in the form of native Cattails, pigmented cotton pulp, fixed with rabbit skin glue.

Hosta Re-Bloom, 2019

Left over paper pulp from Hosta plants collected from Wave Hill Garden, cast in a conical colander to re-bloom again as sculpture with bamboo armature.



Ghost Palms, 2020 - Handmade paper pulp from recycled coconut shells.

Suspended from the ceiling are two intertwining installations that signify regeneration and a sustainable art practice focusing on the production of handmade paper as a material with meaning and embedded stories.

Monarch Migrations envelops the viewer in a suspended swarm of origami butterflies made from handmade milkweed paper, the host plant for Monarch habitats. Brody collects the plants from along the Bruckner Boulevard and Pelham Parkway before being cut back by DOT. Each butterfly bears a handwritten testimony gathered during community workshops, where participants are invited to write about migration. Set against dynamic footage from the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, the piece draws a poignant parallel between the instinctual flight of the Monarchs and the struggles of human migration across borders.

The second installation, **Ghost Palms**, consists of handmade paper pulp produced from regenerated coconut shells used for mixed drinks that were collected from garbage bins during the 2019 Art on Paper Fair. Brody spent a year breaking down the coconut fibers into paper pulp, which was then molded into the shape of coconut palm leaves. The suspended leaves are lit from below to recreate the essence of the lost trunk of the coconuts' original source.