



Untitled

Date

1996

Primary Maker

Tony Feher

Medium

Plastic bottles, water, food dye, wire and rope

Description

Tony Feher was born in New Mexico, grew up in Corpus Christi, Texas, and attended the University of Texas at Austin, graduating in 1978. He sometimes referred to himself as an archaeologist of his own life, retaining what others would have thrown out over the course of a normal day. Banal and mass-produced objects—plastic bottles, milk crates, Styrofoam cups—were his primary medium, and his structured arrangements elevated such objects from trash to abstract conveyors of color and form. For this untitled sculpture, Feher filled twelve plastic bottles of the kind that once held spring water or soda with varying amounts of colored water and suspended them from a rope in a cluster. As time passes, atmospheric conditions affect the fluid and air inside the bottles, leading to a buildup of condensation and some evaporation, while the bottles and their contents subtly refract light and cast colored

shadows. Tightly sealed, each recyclable container is, in fact, a microcosm of the earth's atmosphere, constantly enacting the hydrologic cycle—something that the artist found “both comical . . . and profound on the greatest poetic level.” The artist's attentiveness to a process that is transient yet cyclical, occurring within a vessel that could be compared to—in addition to the earth's atmosphere—the human body, is poignant in light of his diagnosis in 1989 first with a rare genetic condition and then with HIV/AIDS. The sculpture is one of nineteen works of contemporary art given to the Wellin Museum by Edward M. “Pete” Bakwin, Class of 1950, on the occasion of its opening in 2012. Bakwin and his sister, Charter Trustee Patricia Bakwin Selch—both supporters of the arts at Hamilton College—were raised by parents who collected Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art while maintaining careers as pediatricians. Feher's work, too, melds art and science. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) Tony Feher referred to himself as an archaeologist of his own life, retaining what others throw out over the course of a normal day. He used banal and mass-produced objects as his primary medium. His structured arrangements of plastic bottles, milk crates, marbles, and styrofoam cups elevated them from trash to abstract conveyors of color and shape. Here, Feher reused plastic disposable water bottles and filled them to varying levels with water colored by food dye before suspending them. As time passes, atmospheric conditions affect the water in the bottles, leading to a subtle refraction of color and light, the buildup of condensation, and the potential evaporation of its contents. Tightly sealed, each recyclable bottle is in fact a microcosm of the atmosphere, constantly enacting the hydrologic cycle. “That the same system running the atmosphere was contained in a bottle,” Feher wrote, “was profound and ridiculous at the same time.” (SOURCE: Wellin Museum permanent collection label, Summer 2016).

Dimensions

Dimensions variable