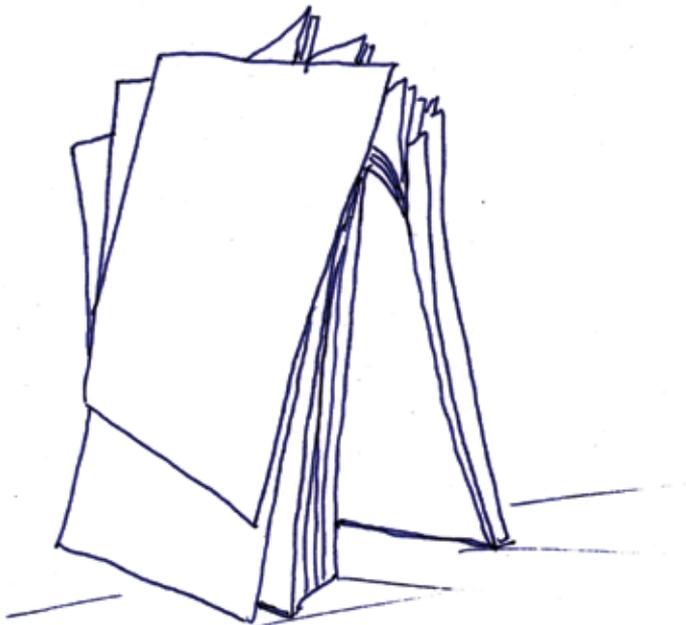


ILAN SANDLER

Public Projects: 2011





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ILAN SANDLER'S *WHAT'S YOUR NAME?*

sits at the south end of the campus of North Toronto Collegiate Institute, angled in relation to the sidewalk of Roehampton Avenue so as to gently deflect the visitor towards the main face of the school building. Over four meters high and made entirely of marine stainless steel, *What's Your Name?* is a passageway formed by two enormous sheaves of paper that rest against one another. The scale here is carefully calibrated: the composition is big enough for one to pass through, and intimate enough that one is compelled to touch the inside faces of both sheaves simultaneously. One becomes immediately aware that the two sides are in dialogue, just as they are mutually sustaining. They are also covered with arrays of names.

The issue of what, in the broadest sense, is a name, has been a recalcitrant problem for linguists and philosophers since Aristotle. There is general agreement that names point to things or people, but what meanings they carry are hard to pin down. We value our names for the way they seem to trace a definitive boundary around the self, defining us as discreet, independent beings. Certainly, too, names are one of the most effective tools for the assimilation of an individual: the roll call, the alphabetical list, and the chronologically arranged archive of names can be instruments of social control, or more benignly, practices through which collectives and communities are constituted. *What's Your Name?* joins other works of contemporary art that list names and draw on their signifying potential. Maya Lin's *Viet Nam Veteran's Memorial*, like Christian Boltanski's catalogues of faces or personal belongings, seeks to recover those potentially subsumed within bigger forces of history. Douglas Gordon's *List of Names* portrays a single person, the artist himself, by means of the names of all those he remembers having encountered. Sandler's piece also lays the stress on the individual, but it grants equal due to shared identity. Its lists invoke the life of North Toronto Collegiate over the years, while also giving form to the multiple signifying powers of names.

One sheaf bears a list of names, while the other is covered with signatures. On both, the names are punched through: the steel and

these present-absent names together speak of the dual nature of memory, of permanence and ephemerality. The list gives the proper names of everyone who attended North Toronto between 1912 and 2010, these dates spanning the life of the school building that previously occupied the site. These 2,053 names begin at the left top of the inside face of the sheaf and conclude at the bottom of the outside. Names appear only once and are placed chronologically, according to when they first appear in the school records (which Sandler and his assistant painstakingly sifted through), but each also potentially refers to one or more later students with the same name. History is indeed shaped in this manner—that is, not simply linearly, but folding in on itself to connect present and past.

The second sheaf resembles its printed counterpart, with names on its inside and outside faces, but these are signatures. Signatures are typically embellished, and these display calligraphic marks of all kinds—wide flourishes, tightly packed loops, multidirectional letters, and so on. We are drawn to their artful singularity in the same way we are to portraits: in each, we perceive the workings of an individual will or intention. These marks nonetheless also summon various associations with collective history. In one way, these pages recall signed yearbooks, those souvenirs of our years and days at school, authenticated by the autographs of others: “you and I were here together.” One can also discern generational differences in the styles of the signatures, given that Sandler gathered them from students who attended North Toronto between the 1930s and 2010. Furthermore, signatures in Korean and Chinese script bear witness to waves of immigration to Toronto over the decades. This history is visible in the proper names on the opposite sheaf, which begin as predominantly Anglo-Saxon, but reflect significantly greater diversity further on.

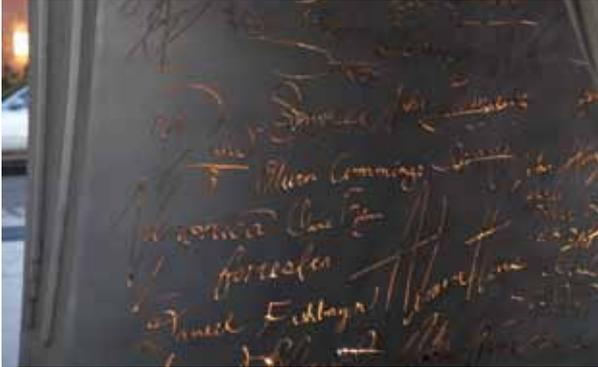
The materiality of *What's Your Name?* in itself makes palpable the potency of names in the creation of identities. The buffed steel offers a complex of impressions that vary according to the time of day and weather. In the flat light of an overcast sky it affirms the heaviness and monumentality that is innate to metal. At twilight, there develops a palimpsest-like effect that underlines the historical dimensions

of the work: the grey steel becomes solid shadow, and the lace-like transparency of the layered sheets of printed and cursive names is especially apparent. Later, in full darkness, when the piece is lit internally, the names come alive, written in light.

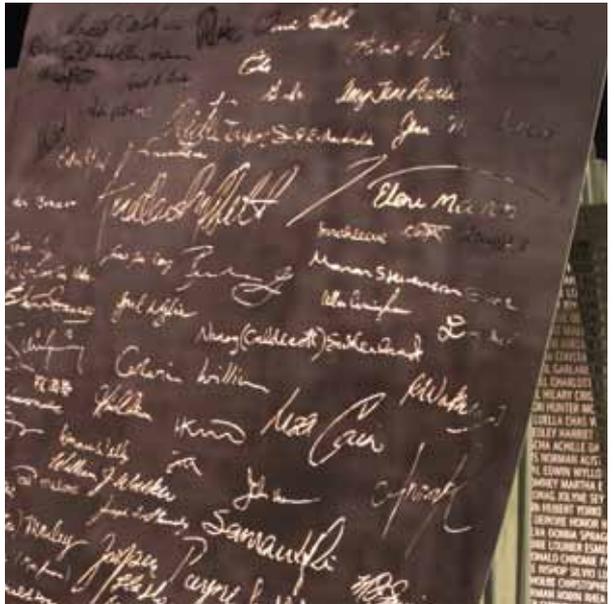
Sandler's pieces often involve enlarging common objects, but unlike, say, Claus Oldenberg's more laconic approach to this conceit, Sandler typically eschews naturalism. There is wit in this, because the result is always a deeper integration of the piece with its site and subject matter. With *What's Your Name?* the sheaves arrange themselves in a fanciful, playful manner that is not entirely physically possible for actual paper. They are animated, as if by a sharp wind blowing across the adjacent school playing field, yet there is also an energy

from within. The sheaf of signatures is curved in the horizontal plane, while on the vertical, it bends out to meet the stack of printed names, which bows towards it. Both are fanning apart at their tops, and individual sheets are skewed, slipping and sliding out of alignment. Sandler's composition is massive and rooted, while also open and dynamic. It affirms the contradictory and yet complementary impulses held within names: if our own names are precious to us as the chief emblems of our self-fashioning, we nonetheless also gladly place them among others, testifying to the desire to partake of something larger.

Bernice Iarocci
Independent Art Historian
2012









What's Your Name? identifies NTCI students past and present by reproducing their proper names and handwritten signatures on the sculpture's stainless steel surfaces. One sheaf shows all the first names of students who have attended the school since 1912, beginning at the top of the inner page. Each name is present only once, and at the moment it first appears in the school record. The chronological list includes new names through to 2010 with a total of 2053 different names. The names of the last students to occupy the original NTCI building appear at the bottom of the outer page. The second sheaf creates imprints of the students' public and private identities by contrasting the names of those who attended

the school over the past century with a selection of signatures from alumni and current students. *What's Your Name?* is often the first question we ask someone, and by answering we announce ourselves to each other and to the world. During adolescence our relationship to proper names tends to change; a name is no longer something given but something made, crafted and personalized through the deliberate art of the signature. Schools, and particularly high schools, are where the proper name and the signature intersect.

Paper and print, which are the core tools of education, become dynamic sculptural forms on which an imprint of students' public and private identities is inscribed. —IS, 2011



URSA MAJOR'S VISIT



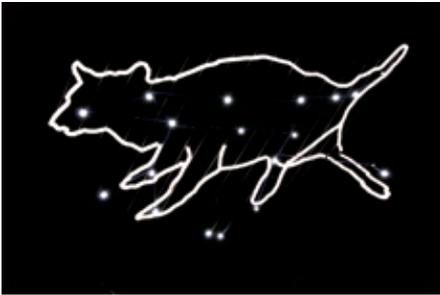
The Halifax
Citadel,
Nocturne Art
at Night

Installation date
October 15,
2011

*Commissioned
by* Parks Canada
and the Halifax
Regional
Municipality

12 m × 5 m
steel cables,
polycarbonate
and LED lighting





On October 15th, 2011 viewers entering the Halifax Citadel's Parade Square saw the glowing outline of a large bear suspended in the east corner of the courtyard. The sculptural form was made from a combination of LEDs marking the star points of the constellation Ursa Major and light-weight polycarbonate acrylic components.

Both western and First Nations cultures identify this constellation as The Great Bear. In the Greek myth, Zeus protects his lover in bear form from a hunter's arrow by placing her in the sky. Here her trials are far from over; in Mi'kmaq and Iroquois stories Ursa Major must contend with a set of hunters in hot pursuit: seven in the spring when the constellation is fully visible in

the night sky, and three by October when four stars have dropped below the horizon.

Many civilizations have projected stories onto the constellation and this installation imagines another. In *Ursa Major's Visit*, the Great Bear peers down at the earth from the northern sky and is intrigued by the unusual star-shaped form of the Citadel. A meeting point of the earthly and the celestial, the Citadel appears to Ursa Major as an invitation to resume her terrestrial form. For this special Nocturne event, she drops one foot into the courtyard. While Ursa Major visits, she may shed some light on the transcultural interpretations of her past.
—IS, 2011

THE VESSEL



Taddle Creek
Park

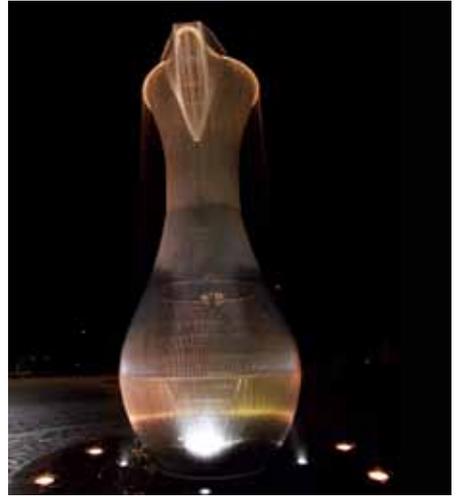
40 Bedford Rd.,
Toronto, ON
Canada

Installation date
May 2011

*Commissioned
by* The City of
Toronto

5.7m high
stainless steel
sculpture with a
water feature





This sculpture of a water-carrying vessel is made from 4 kilometers of stainless steel rod. The rod measures the approximate length of Taddle Creek, which ran from what is now Taddle Creek Park through downtown Toronto to Lake Ontario. The piece reconstitutes a memory of the buried creek by referencing its length through steel rods that function as water-carrying arteries.

The sculpture's surface is porous, allowing one to see light slicing through the stainless steel rods that create its volume. Water flows from the rim of the vessel and over its surface before cascading to the ground, creating sound that drowns out the noise of traffic. The piece is like an over-flowing pitcher, evoking the creek's long history as a source of sustenance.

The piece is like an over-flowing pitcher, evoking the creek's long history as a source of sustenance. Water from *The Vessel* is stored in an underground cistern and used to irrigate the park. Vessels have accompanied all peoples for millennia, and are often seen as a surrogate

for the body. The desire of all civilizations to anthropomorphize water-carrying vessels is evidence of their importance to our survival as a species. The ability to harness the flow of water both for physical and imaginative nourishment has been an inseparable part of the evolution of all societies.

The Anishinaabe Nation or Ojibway-speaking people of the region would have drawn water for sustenance from many sources, including Taddle Creek. They also drew inspiration from water in the development of their creation myths, one of which says, "the rivers that run underground are the veins of Mother Earth and water is her blood, purifying her and bringing her food. Mother Earth implies reproduction, fertility and life."

Although *The Vessel* represents a container, it also acts as a fountain, linking the creek's historical significance as a life-sustaining water source to the future pleasure of the community.
—IS, 2011



ILAN SANDLER

photo: Melissa Dubé



Ilan Sandler has shown his sculptures, installations, and videos internationally and across Canada and has completed public art commissions

in Toronto, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Busan, South Korea. He installed *The Vessel* in Toronto in 2011 and the public sculpture *A Departure* in Lethbridge, Canada in 2009. He also produced a large public art work called *What's Your Name?* for North Toronto Collegiate Institute and is currently producing *The School Chair* for the Halifax Regional Municipality and *Under the Helmet* for the City of Calgary. During the summer of 2011 *Beach Chair* was installed in Aarhus, Denmark for the Sculpture by the Sea exhibition. In 2012 his new series of Urban

Artworks called *Stolen Parts* will be premiered in Stockholm. He has received numerous awards, including grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Culture.

Born in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 1971, Ilan Sandler immigrated with his family to Toronto six years later, in 1977. He studied at the University of Toronto, where he received a BSc in Physics, and at the Ontario College of Art and Design, where he completed an Honours Fine Arts certificate. In 2000 he was awarded an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He then went on to teach at the University of the Arts and Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia, and most recently at NSCAD University, where he held a SSHRC Research/Creation Fellowship until 2011. He is currently running Sandler Studio Inc. in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

For further information or European/UK sales enquiries contact Bicha Gallery.

BICHAGALLERY

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