

\*Litt, Steven. "Artists seek to instruct public even outside science center." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 25, 2006.



CLEVELAND PUBLIC ART

**Ellen and Allan Wexler of New York created the design for the "WindWorks" public art installation at the Great Lakes Science Center, to be finished next spring.**

## Artists seek to instruct public even outside science center

**A**fter a national competition with 49 entries, Cleveland Public Art selected New York artists Allan and Ellen Wexler to create a large-scale sculpture to enliven the lawn surrounding the new electricity-generating windmill at the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland.

The \$126,000 installation, paid for by sources that include private foundations and the Cuyahoga County Arts and Culture as Economic Development, is called "WindWorks." It consists of a central plaza with two radiating concrete pathways, which describe the shadows cast by the windmill at 1:19 p.m. during the spring and fall equinoxes and exactly two hours and 11 minutes later.

The permanent installation, which will be finished next spring, will include a series of benches made of concrete molded to resemble 18 cartons containing 36 light bulbs each.

Allan Wexler, who was in town recently to inspect the work in process, discussed the work and its design.

**Q:** *What's this all about?*

**A:** The concrete shadows act as a dynamic reference to the sun, which is the source of all energy. It's also about the specificity of the site. This feels to me like a charcoal drawing on the landscape. When the grass grows up around it, it will work like a beautiful gestural drawing defined not by the artist, but by nature.

**Q:** *Why did you pick the particular shadows you've described on the ground with concrete?*

**A:** The shadow at 1:19 p.m.

represents solar noon during the equinox; it's the highest angle the sun reaches that day. At that point, the shadow runs true north, not magnetic north. It's like a compass. The later shadow points toward the front door of the science center. Originally, the shadow was three hours later, but it went into the street, and we didn't want to mess with the street.

**Q:** *And what about the light-bulb pieces?*

**A:** We wanted to make people aware of energy and electricity, so my wife and I decided to use a standard light bulb as a symbol of electric usage in the country. There are 18 packages with 36 100-watt bulbs each. If we left this (many) light bulbs on for 24 hours, it would be the equivalent of the average American family's annual electricity usage, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

**Q:** *So you wanted to teach some lessons with the piece?*

**A:** Yes. The light-bulb cartons basically become sitable sculptures. The piece as a whole becomes an extension of the museum, because it's almost like a classroom. I like the connection between the sculpture and the museum itself.

**Q:** *So where does this leave the windmill tower?*

**A:** What we wanted to do was to make the wind turbine the sculpture. That's the important issue. The sculpture is the wind turbine. It's a really beautiful thing.

— Steven Litt