

## Andy Goldsworthy winds his way through the Presidio

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By Cindy Beckman



Andy Goldsworthy directs the precise positioning of the logs for *Wood Line* with the help of Nathan Sammons, Jacob Ehrenberg, Brad Wright, and Josh Mead.  
Photo: Amy Deck, Presidio Trust

Though plans for the construction of a modern art museum within the Presidio were abandoned two years ago, art itself is thriving within our neighboring national park. *Wood Line*, the newest outdoor installation by British artist Andy Goldsworthy, is proof of that.

*Wood Line* is Goldsworthy's second piece within the Presidio and follows the theme of his popular *Spire*, which was completed in October 2008. Both pieces are constructed of cast-off natural materials and are intended to celebrate the historic Presidio forest.

The forest was planted by the U.S. Army over a relatively short period of time in the 1880s. The eucalyptus trees continue to thrive and regenerate, but the pines and Monterey cypress are in decline due to their advancing age. The Presidio is in the eighth year of a sixty-year effort to renew these groves. By staggering the reforestation projects over a longer timeframe and by replanting smaller plots, the forest will age in a more random and natural pattern in the future.

Those reforestation projects have netted a large pile of trimmed branches and felled trees, which were an inspiration for Goldsworthy on his first visit to the Presidio in 2006. His 95-foot-tall *Spire* was constructed in 2008 from felled, mature Monterey cypress and rises from a plot of replanted saplings. The underground engineering required to keep this narrow tower standing makes this an unusual piece for Goldsworthy, who is best known for his intricate but ephemeral installations in natural outdoor settings. But as the saplings mature around it, *Spire* will

eventually disappear into its surroundings, much like his less permanent pieces are washed away by rising waters or covered by falling leaves.

While *Spire* is a distinctly vertical piece, the newer *Wood Line* is the opposite. Located on the forest floor, it follows a natural opening between the eucalyptus trees where a row of Monterey cypress died out. Goldsworthy likes to create his art from the materials found near the installation site, and this piece is constructed from eucalyptus trunks collected as debris from the Doyle Drive reconstruction, environmental remediation projects, and habitat restoration. Each section of log was carefully selected for its natural shape, stripped of its bark, and laid end-to-end to create a continuous, sinewy line through the landscape.

The art piece appears out of the hillside just below West Pacific Avenue, and disappears again into the dirt after winding 1,000 feet along the slope between Lovers Lane and Presidio Boulevard, in the southeast corner of the park. Goldsworthy states that it “draws the place.”

It is also drawing admirers. Visitors can be seen at all hours walking the curving line, many balancing atop the “fallen” logs. From the top, you are not sure how far it runs. At the bottom, you are sorry to see it end. It feels like a completely natural part of the landscape – and like the landscape, it will continue to change over time.

Work began on *Wood Line* in the summer of 2010 and was completed last month. The piece was always conceived as a temporary sculpture and will be allowed to decompose naturally – similar projects by the artist have lasted from five to twenty years.

Andy Goldsworthy was born in Britain and lives in Scotland. He is a sculptor and photographer, but is best known for his site-specific environmental art. His open-air works have been made in places as diverse as the North Pole and the Australian Outback.

*Spire* and *Wood Line* are the third and fourth installations in the Bay Area from this world-renowned artist. The first was *Stone River* at Stanford University, which is made from rubble leftover from the 1906 earthquake. The second is *Drawn Stone*, which inhabits the entrance courtyard of the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park.

The *Wood Line* installation was organized by FOR-SITE in partnership with the Presidio Trust. The FOR-SITE Foundation is a San Francisco-based nonprofit dedicated to the creation, understanding and exhibition of art about place. The group is also responsible for the *Presidio Habitats* exhibition at the Presidio, which runs through the end September 2011.