

Michael Singer Studio

Grand Rapids Riverwalk Floodwall

Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988-1995

The city of Grand Rapids invited Michael Singer to propose a public artwork in a site of his choice within the city. Singer chose 600 feet of riverbank between the Pedestrian Bridge and Fulton Street as an alternative to an Army Corps of Engineers' proposal for a sheer concrete floodwall and destruction of the old cottonwood trees along the bank. With the aid of Varusian Hagopian, Sasaki Associates' Civil Engineer, and the City Planner, Steve Pierpoint, Singer was able to realize a reclamation, preservation and sculptural project that focuses citizen attention on a natural and historic place central to Grand Rapids. A 300-foot granite sculptural element functions as a flood wall and fully accessible walkway to the river's edge. The sculptural flood wall is reminiscent of stone foundations from an earlier time, emerging through the steep side of the riverbank. Indigenous plantings as well as the patina of the stone encourage associations with the past. The Riverwalk Floodwall became the precedent for further development of the river's edge and walkways in Grand Rapids.

