

## Sports Field Forum NZ Monthly Newsletter Christmas 2008 Vol 12 (3)

And Now For Something Completely Different – Turfgrass Art!



Working in sports turf consultancy is usually fairly predictable in terms of work that comes through the door, but a year or so ago I had an unusual request from Whangaparaoa artist Gill Gatfield wanting to learn more about turfgrass management and in particular couchgrass.

Alongside innovative work with cut glass and magnetic fields, Gill is developing a unique body of live grass artworks that blur the boundaries between performance art, sculpture and painting. Ongoing experiments with different turf bases, artwork substrates, turfgrass management systems, and trials with both warm and cool season turfgrasses, is resulting in artworks that challenge the status quo.

Gill's stitched couchgrass canvas, *Lawn (Greener on the Other Side)*, a finalist in the National Contemporary Art Awards 2006, and exhibited in the Waikato Museum, became probably the first living artwork inside a NZ museum. Despite the dim light, *Lawn* continued to grow during the two month exhibition, with daily curatorial watering and care. Systems were put in place to address concerns that migrating worms and insects might affect historic paintings and taonga!



Other grass works include the abstract ryegrass painting, *Subdivision* in 2007, recently exhibited inside at NZ Sculpture on the Shore 2008, at Fort Takapuna. Gill has developed a unique system of dating her works, using a dash after the year of first exhibition, to signal that they are 'beingmades', ie. an artwork permanently in production.



New live turfgrass works will be included in Gill's next solo exhibition, *En Plein Air*, in Christchurch at the Centre of Contemporary Art, 24 February–14 March 2009. This exhibition coincides with the Christchurch Ellerslie Flower Show. If you're in town, check it out!

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