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COVER IMAGE; Noel Harding’s "Elevated Wetlands" is an ecological plastic-based functional artwork that sustains nature in an urban setting. First established in 1998, this work continues to purify water and air while making a socio-cultural statement. With a distinguished history in video art, kinetic sculpture and conceptual art, Harding who works in both Canada and the Netherlands, has constructed a meta-ecosystem. Inside each of his mammoth eco-sculptures is a layered “soil” composed of shredded automobile tires, recycled plastic resin pellets, automobile shredder residue, and re-cycled plastic bottles. The outer hulls of the containing structures are expanded polystyrene coated with acrylic stucco for strength and weather resistance. The plants growing on top are native to the region and integral to this solar-power-augmented water purification system. Harding has built a cluster of these eco-sculptures that both literally and symbolically do battle against the toxic chemical damage along the Don River which runs parallel to the Don Valley Parkway, one of the busiest automobile thoroughfares in the city of Toronto. Created in conjunction with the Canadian Plastics Industry Association, these works siphon water from the Don River into the elevated gardens so that the plants and the re-cycled plastic components can filter the river-water through phytomediation -- a mechanical and natural cleansing process that removes hydrocarbons and other pollutants. Harding’s “Elevated Wetlands” as an art-form, goes beyond mere imitation of nature and, instead, unites art with the natural environment.

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INDEX

"Figura Octogesimquarta" by Robert Moorehead p. 2
   Editorial p. 3
   David Antin Interview by Manuel Brito p. 4
   "Vortex" by Theo Breuer p. 10
   "The Creatures of Her Kiss" by Michael Basinski p. 11
   "Possibles" by Lawrence Upton p. 14
   Profile on Fernando Aguiar p. 16
   "Reality Check" by Steven Venright p. 18
   Two Works by Nobuo Kubota p. 20
   Commentary: Christopher Dewdney/Photo by Eldon Garnet p. 23
   Song of Lilith: Profile on Joy Kogawa p. 24
   "This Is Your Messiah Speaking": Video by Vera Frenkel p. 26
      From H by Philippe Sollers/Translation Elaine Corts p. 28
   bpNichol Interview by Geoff Hancock p. 30
   "Nine Commandments plus Commentary" by Sorel Etrog p. 37
   "Word Count" by Paul Dutton p. 38
   Jaap Blonk Interview by Bryan Sentes p. 40
   "Pathologies: 'Music'" by Stan Fogel p. 44
   "Earth: Fifth Element" by Karl Jirgens p. 46
   "Trash and Vaudeville" by Reid Diamond p. 47
   Grapheme by Serge Segay p. 47
   "Psycho Lingo" by Philip Monk p. 48
   "The General" by Brian Edwards p. 50
   Two Poems by Rolland Nadjiwon p. 51
   Four Poems by Jeanette Lynes p. 52
   "Growing Uncertainty" by Norman Lock p. 54
   "Dangerous Proportions" by W. M. Sutherland p. 56
   "A Night in Père Lachaise" by Alan Lord p. 56
   "Theoretical Promulgations" by Sean Lefebvre p. 56
   "Allelochemy" by Louise Bak p. 57
   Grapheme by Hartmut Andryczuk p. 57
   "Edjumakashun" by June Mills p. 58
   "Love Reverse" by Meredith L. Ramsey-Kakapshe p. 58
   "In the Company of Your Dreams" by William S. Eldridge p. 58
   Grapheme by Rea Nikonova p. 58
   "Sandstone & Sheep Trails" by Rachel Yellowman p. 59
   "Uncle" by Richard Frankland p. 59
   "Abolish Death Penalty" by Clemente Padin p. 59
   "Standing in for Fritz Scholder & Yoko Ono" by Geary Hobson p. 60
   Grapheme by César Figueredo p. 64
   "A Random Moment in Order" by Bill Cowen p. 65
   Cartography by Carol Stetser p. 65
   "Toast" by Burke Paterson p. 66
      From Bread and Stone by Alan Weiss p. 67
   Grapheme by Vittore Baroni & Joel Cohen p. 69
      Mini Reviews p. 70
   Grapheme by Christian Burgaud p. 72