TREE MUSEUM / CANBERRA ARTIST EXCHANGE AND RESIDENCY PROJECT

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre and the Tree Museum, Muskoka, Ontario, Canada

Canberra partners: Canberra Glassworks, Megalo Print Studio and Gallery, Australian National University School of Art Printmedia and Drawing Workshop, Namadgi National Park, Canberra, Australia

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre (Craft ACT) has developed a project proposal with The Tree Museum to host an international exchange of four artists from Canada and four artists from Australia to travel to each country to experience first hand the distinct environments and to have an opportunity to develop art works that respond to this experience. The aim of the project is to create links between Australia and Canada, offer a unique encounter with landscape, environment and place and promote a diversity of artistic and professional practice.

As the host organisation Craft ACT will deliver this program in partnership with Canberra Glassworks, Megalo Print Studio + Gallery (Megalo), Australian National University (ANU) School of Art Printmedia and Drawing Workshop and the Namadgi National Park (NNP) [Environment ACT]. Each of the partners is a leading cultural and environmental institution which will broaden and extend this residency project.

The project invites the two Tree Museum Curator/Artists Anne O’Callaghan and EJ Lightman together with Penelope Stewart and Jeannie Thib, to travel to Canberra and undertake a period of residency in September and October 2009. The residencies will include a period of time at the NNP Gudgenby Ready Cut cottage residence. Artists Anne O’Callaghan and EJ Lightman will be in residence at the ANU School of Art Printmedia and Drawing Workshop, artist Jeannie Thib will be in residence at Megalo and Penelope Stewart will be artist in residence at the Canberra Glassworks.

In 2010 Canberra artists Bev Hogg, Alison Munro, Patsy Payne and Trish will travel to Canada to undertake a residency at the Tree Museum. At the end of this period an exhibition of works by all artists will be presented at Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre.

The exchange project provides an opportunity for the selected artists to be exposed to the radically different landscapes of Canberra and its surrounding region in Australia and the forests of northern Ontario at the Tree Museum.

Australia and Canada have very similar yet unique stories. Both countries were colonized by the British (and the French in the case of Canada), displacing and threatening indigenous races, cultures and environments. Today, as unique countries in their own right, yet they also share many commonalities.
Both countries are geographically large and cover vast terrains with distinct ecologies and climates. The landscapes found in these countries have had profound impacts on their indigenous and colonized populations alike. This is most evident in cultural practices of visual art, literacy, theatre, music, film etc. Both countries have a colonized history and both countries are working towards reconciliation with their respective indigenous peoples whose long cultural histories are a fundamental and integral element of these lands.

Establishing an international exchange with the Tree Museum Muskoka and Canberra’s remarkable network of arts organisations initiates a cultural dialogue that will touch on ideas of place, environment, climate, identity, memory, cultural intervention and reinvention.

The themes listed above reflect our current and consuming dilemma of how to manage human impact on the environment. Artists are excellent barometers for our societies as they reinterpret human activity, and values, chipping away at commonly held perceptions. The artists selected have demonstrated in their practices questions about our concept of nature and place and explore our understanding by framing new ideas through the language of contemporary craft and art practices.