



PRESS RELEASE

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***HUMAN/NATURE: ARTISTS RESPOND TO A CHANGING PLANET* OPENS AUGUST 17, 2008, AT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SAN DIEGO IN DOWNTOWN**

Collaborative exhibition features works by eight contemporary artists created in response to their travels to eight threatened World Heritage sites

San Diego, CA—The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) presents *Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet*, opening August 17, 2008, at the Museum's downtown Joan and Irwin Jacobs Building and 1001 Kettner galleries.

Organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA), in partnership with the international conservation organization Rare, *Human/Nature* is a pioneering artist residency and collaborative exhibition project that, for the first time on this scale, uses contemporary art to investigate the relationships between fragile natural environments and the human communities that depend upon them.

This collaborative multi-year exhibition project sent eight leading artists to eight UNESCO World Heritage sites around the globe to create new work informed and inspired by their experiences in these diverse cultural and natural regions. On view at MCASD through February 1, 2009, the exhibition features new commissioned, site-specific works by **Mark Dion, Ann Hamilton, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Marcos Ramírez ERRE, Rigo 23, Dario Robleto, Diana Thater** and **Xu Bing** created in response to their travels to these threatened sites. *Human/Nature* will also be on view at BAM/PFA from February 25 through June 28, 2009.

MCASD David C. Copley Director Hugh M. Davies remarked, "This dynamic group of groundbreaking contemporary artists continually creates thoughtful works that push the

boundaries of what art is. For *Human/Nature*, the artists are producing engaging works that prompt viewers to question their relationships to the world in which we live.”

The artists each traveled to a World Heritage site of their choice and completed two or more mini-residencies, creating works based on their experiences. Through a wide range of works that cross all media, *Human/Nature* encourages global support for the protection of cultural and biological diversity and provokes new questions regarding conservation, cultural understanding, and artistic inspiration.

“If we are going to effect change, it must be a concerted effort between people in the arts, in the sciences, and people working directly towards a better future for our planet. This is where *Human/Nature* positions itself as a model for change: artists working together with the communities and individuals most concerned with the fate of these World Heritage sites. These collaborations create hope for the future,” stated Jacquelynn Baas, Interim Director of BAM/PFA.

“Some of the world’s most remote developing areas contain the highest levels of natural resources—the forests, species, and waterways that provide global life support and whose loss will impact all of our futures,” said Brett Jenks, President and CEO of Rare. “One of our biggest challenges is bringing the natural and cultural riches of these faraway communities to life for audiences here in the U.S., so we are grateful to the artists in this exhibition and to the museums who are making this possible. I look forward to expanding the dialogue with new audiences on the future of our planet.”

Mark Dion
Komodo National Park, Indonesia

Famous around the world for their aggressive behavior and curious appearance, Komodo dragons, the world’s largest monitor lizards, inhabit the rugged hillsides and dry savanna of this Indonesian World Heritage site. The site also includes a vast marine reserve with one of the richest underwater environments in the world, formed of coral reefs, mangroves, sea grass beds, and semi-enclosed bays. These habitats contain more than 1,000 species of fish, 260 species of reef-building coral, and 70 species of sponges. Dugong, sharks, manta rays, at least 14 species of whales, dolphins, and sea turtles also inhabit the park.

In May 2005, Mark Dion traveled to the Komodo and Rinca Islands, inspired by a childhood fascination with the Komodo dragon. Once at the site, however, the artist’s attention was captured by the park rangers who guided and instructed him. He was impressed with their knowledge, commitment, and their surprising lack of resources. Dion returned to Komodo National Park in 2007 to create a functional work of art: a supply cart for the rangers, consisting of books, flashlights, batteries, maps, and other essential supplies. A replica of the cart will be created for the exhibition.

Ann Hamilton
Galápagos Islands, Ecuador

Situated in the Pacific Ocean some 1,000 kilometers from the South American continent, these 19 Ecuadorian islands and the surrounding marine reserve have been called a “living museum and showcase of evolution.” Ongoing seismic and volcanic activity reminds us of

the processes that formed the Galápagos Islands. These occurrences, together with the extreme isolation of the islands, have resulted in the development of the unusual animal life—such as the giant tortoise, the land iguana, and the many types of finch—that inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution following his visit in 1835.

After visiting the Galápagos in June 2005, Ann Hamilton proposed to create a poetic text that will be performed by local elementary school students and heard in the museum galleries, juxtaposed with footage of a wavering horizon line shot from a camera suspended in water. She will be returning in spring 2008 to realize her project.

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle
El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, Mexico

Both the Whale Sanctuary and the Rock Paintings of the Sierra de San Francisco are located within El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve in central Baja California, the long peninsula that extends south from the California/Mexico western border. From the gulf coast to the Sierra Mountains of the Sonoran Desert, the Reserve encompasses the bays and lagoons of the sea, and the cultural and archeological sites of the mountains. The coastal lagoons of Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio are important breeding and wintering sites for the gray whale, harbor seal, California sea lion, northern elephant-seal, and blue whale. The area is also home to four species of the endangered sea turtle. However, the region's marine resources have been declining due to unsustainable fishing practices and illegal wildlife extraction.

On his visit to El Vizcaíno in February 2005, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle was inspired to create an artwork that both depicts the natural beauty and ecological importance of the place and raises awareness of the industrial development that threatens it. Manglano-Ovalle is creating a multi-sensory installation featuring a film that uses local actors and incorporates iconic images from recent art history. He returned to his site in 2007 to complete the filming for his piece.

Marcos Ramírez ERRE
Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas, China

Northwest Yunnan is the richest area of biodiversity in China and may be the most biologically diverse temperate region on earth. The outstanding topographic and climatic diversity of the site—coupled with its location at the juncture of the East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Tibetan Plateau and its function as a north-south corridor for the movement of plants and animals—marks it as a truly unique landscape, which still retains a high degree of natural character despite thousands of years of human habitation. The region is the last remaining stronghold for many rare and endangered plants and animals, such as the Giant Panda, the Red Panda, and the Yunnan Golden Monkey and is also home to many Chinese ethnic minorities.

ERRE visited this mountainous region in May 2005. A conceptual artist with a background in construction, ERRE worked with local residents to build a wall using traditional, regional building methods and materials on his return trip in 2007. Into this wall, he will place video screens that serve as “windows” into the everyday lives of the residents and the landscape in which they live.

Rigo 23
Atlantic Forest Southeast Reserves, Brazil

The 25 protected areas that make up this site epitomize the biological richness of the few remaining areas of Atlantic forest of southeastern Brazil and are home to a diverse group of communities that depend upon healthy forest ecosystems for their livelihoods and cultural survival—from the indigenous Guarani people to the Quilombolas, descendants of African slaves who escaped from plantations and established villages throughout the region. The Atlantic Forest has exceptionally high numbers of rare and endemic species—including a great diversity of primates and other mammals. From mountains covered by dense forests to wetlands, coastal islands, and dunes, the Atlantic Forest Southeast Reserves are a rich natural environment of great natural beauty and biodiversity.

Rigo 23 first visited the coastal village of Cananéia and the surrounding forested areas of southeastern Brazil in early spring of 2005. From 2006 through early 2008, he took four additional trips to the site, forming strong connections with three local communities. Working in collaboration with the local artisans, Rigo 23 has created two sculptures using their traditional materials and methods. Together, they have built replicas of contemporary weapons of mass destruction—a cluster bomb and a nuclear submarine—and through the process of collaboration have turned the sculptures into celebrations of life instead of death.

Dario Robleto
Glacier-Waterton International Peace Park, U.S. (Montana) and Canada (Alberta)

Straddling the U.S.-Canadian border, Glacier-Waterton was established in 1932 as the world's first International Peace Park. More than a billion years ago, the movement of massive bodies of glacial ice created today's contrast of fields and prairies against rugged, snow-capped peaks. Small alpine glaciers of relatively recent origin dot the mountainous landscape. Noted for its importance to bird and mammal migration, the park is populated by American black bears, mountain goats, elk, Bighorn sheep, and the endangered bald eagle. Once under the control of the Blackfoot confederacy, the region was largely untouched by exploration and development until the 19th century. Perhaps as a result, the area contains the highest density of archaeological sites of any small valley system in the northern Rocky Mountains.

During his site visit in 2005, Dario Robleto spent much of his time with a prominent glaciologist who is monitoring the park's melting glaciers. On his second visit in 2006, Robleto, a conceptual sculptor, participated in a glacier measuring expedition. He will create a series of sculptures that focus on the disappearance of species; the mourning we collectively experience as we witness the changing of the earth; and the ways in which loss can inspire new ways of thinking.

Diana Thater
iSimangaliso Wetland Park (formerly Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park), South Africa

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is one of the most diverse regions in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province. Located on the northeastern coast of the country, stretching from Kozi Bay in the north to Cape St. Lucia in the south, the park was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999.

Spanning more than 280 kilometers of coastline, iSimangaliso's wide variety of pristine natural ecosystems—wetlands, grasslands, forests, lakes, and savanna—provides for an astounding diversity of species in the area, including some 521 bird species. The interplay of the park's environmental heterogeneity with major floods and coastal storms, and a transitional geographic location between sub-tropical and tropical Africa, has resulted in exceptional species diversity and ongoing speciation.

Experienced in capturing footage of animals in the wild, Diana Thater conducted her residency in 2007 filming the many species of wildlife in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. She will create a gallery installation featuring imagery from her filming.

Xu Bing **Mount Kenya National Park, Kenya**

At 5,199 meters, Mount Kenya is the second highest peak in Africa. Twelve remnant glaciers remain on the mountain, all receding rapidly. With its rugged glacier-clad summits and forested middle slopes, Mount Kenya is one of the most dramatic landscapes in East Africa. Its Afro-Alpine flora also provides an outstanding example of ecological evolution.

Xu Bing's initial visit to Mount Kenya National Park occurred in late spring 2005. While there, he spent time with local community members who spoke with him at length about their concerns for the health of the Mount Kenya ecosystem. After a number of discussions with locals about the impact of deforestation in the Mount Kenya area, Xu identified trees as the *raison d'être* and motif for his *Human/Nature* project. Long interested in the visual and metaphorical power of written language, the artist plans to work with Mount Kenyan schoolchildren to develop artworks using the Chinese characters relating to trees (such as the ideograms for "wood," "woods," and "forest.") His project will result in original work created in collaboration with the children as well as individual works created by the children that will be reproduced and available via a specially created Web site; the proceeds from the works will go toward a reforestation project in the park. Xu will return to Kenya in late spring 2008.

Related Materials

In conjunction with the exhibition *Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet*, MCASD and BAM/PFA will produce a **40-page gallery guide**, featuring a joint statement from the organizing institutions; a curatorial statement; images and documentation of the artists' residencies and process of the projects; maps and information on the World Heritage sites visited; and artist commentaries about their projects.

An **exhibition Web site** also will be created to provide visitors with more opportunities to interact with and respond to the exhibition. The site (www.artistsrespond.org), set to launch in late spring 2008, will include a response space for visitors' comments; artist bios and photos; image galleries documenting the artists' residencies and art-making process; interactive maps and information on the World Heritage sites visited; and artist commentaries about their projects.

At MCASD, *Human/Nature* will be complemented by two **interactive spaces** for visitors to further investigate the exhibition's themes, concepts, and artists, as well as share their own thoughts and ideas about the exhibition. One space will be set up at the 1001 Kettner galleries, providing interactive opportunities for visitors to record their responses on a chalkboard wall and create their own work of art in response to the exhibition.

A second space will be set up in the Jacobs Building, providing visitors with resources on the exhibition artists; a wall-sized map with information on the sites visited; resources on art and the environment and environmental conservation; and computer stations for accessing the exhibition Web site.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE (BAM/PFA)

The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) is the visual arts center of the University of California, Berkeley, and one of the largest university museums in the United States, in both size and attendance. BAM/PFA's collections contain more than 15,000 objects and 12,000 films and videos. One of the few art institutions to represent a full range of visual culture, BAM/PFA's diverse exhibition programs are characterized by themes of artistic innovation, intellectual exploration, and social commentary. The museum provides the UC Berkeley and Bay Area communities with over 15 exhibitions and more than 400 film and video screenings each year, exploring international art, both historical and contemporary.

With each major exhibition and film series, BAM/PFA places an emphasis on public education programming. Drawing on the vast academic resources of the University of California, educational programming features artists, historians, curators, and other experts. Artist involvement ranges from a single public lecture to a long-term residency.

BAM/PFA was founded in 1963, and the current facility dedicated in 1970. In September 2004, BAM/PFA launched a strategic planning process to provide a five-year road map for the institution's transition into a new building. The new museum and film archive will be located in the center of downtown Berkeley, acting as a portal to the University, and an anchor to downtown Berkeley's burgeoning Arts District.

bampfa.berkeley.edu

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SAN DIEGO

MCASD is the preeminent contemporary visual arts museum in San Diego County. MCASD serves diverse audiences through the collection, preservation, exhibition, and interpretation of art created since 1950. With a binational constituency in the San Diego/Tijuana region as well as a national and international audience, MCASD functions as a forum for the exploration and understanding of contemporary art and ideas; an art museum preserving, presenting, and interpreting art; and a laboratory for artists to experiment with new forms of visual expression.

MCASD is one museum in two distinct, complementary locations: La Jolla and San Diego. The museum was founded in La Jolla in 1941, and added a second location in downtown San Diego in 1993. In 2007, MCASD again expanded downtown, adding 11,000 s/f of new galleries in a 1915 historic railroad warehouse, redesigned by Richard Gluckman.

MCASD offers an array of educational programming for both adults and children, including a bi-monthly film series, artist talks, curator lectures, and TNT (Thursday Night Thing), which invites the community into the galleries on the first Thursday of every month for interactive art activities, live music performances, and other fun happenings.

www.mcasd.org

RARE

Rare, a U.S.-based conservation organization, works globally to equip people in the world's most threatened natural areas with the tools and motivation they need to care for their natural resources. For the last 30 years, at more than 120 sites, and in more than 40 nations, Rare has focused as much on people as on science—addressing the underlying social and economic factors that create environmental threats.

Rare's signature "Pride campaign" builds grassroots support for environmental protection by training local conservation leaders in the use of commercial marketing tactics to build awareness, influence attitudes, and change behaviors. Pride campaigns produce a groundswell of support that lead to tangible conservation successes, such as new national parks, reform legislation, or reduction of threats from forest fires or over-fishing.

Rare has been recognized by Fast Company magazine as one of the "Top 25 Social Capitalists" for the past four years, and its conservation toolkit has been embraced by many large environmental organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the National Audubon Society.

www.rareconservation.org