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NEW ART EXHIBITION AT THE FIELD MUSEUM EXPLORES CONNECTION BETWEEN CONSERVING NATURE AND QUALITY OF HUMAN LIFE

NATURE'S TOOLBOX: BIODIVERSITY, ART, AND INVENTION RUNS MAY 22 THROUGH DEC. 2, 2012

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, March 9, 2012 - "Nature's Toolbox: Biodiversity, Art, and Invention," a new traveling contemporary art exhibition, opens at Chicago's Field Museum May 22. Harnessing technology and inspired by nature's amazing design concepts, the show's innovative, eye-capturing art helps visitors understand and appreciate the life-or-death interdependence between the 10-20 million species on earth — including humans — and the quality of the environment we share.

"Many people still don't realize how much our very lives depend on the biodiversity of plants, animals, and everything else," says Randy Jayne Rosenberg, Curator of the show and Executive Director of Art Works For Change, which developed and manages the exhibition. Indeed, some ecologists predict that half of all mammals and birds could be extinct within the next century, with similar losses in plants, marine life, and other species — entire ecosystems, in fact. Each loss carries with it lost benefits to human well-being because of the key roles these species play in providing such things as clean air and water, pollination, and climate regulation.



The purpose of the exhibition is to show that humans aren't just part of the problem but also the solution: by harnessing nature's most brilliant ideas, we can improve the quality of human life while living in harmony with nature.

In "Nature's Toolbox", which features artworks from artists around the world across a wide range of media, Rosenberg asked artists to use nature's wisdom as the inspiration for new artworks. "They explored its genius and found opportunities for invention by employing the lessons nature offers," she says. "We learn, for example, how by mimicking nature we can harness energy from algae, create fabric with the strength of a spider's web, self-medicate like a chimp, create amphibian cities with the structure of a lily pad, and build walls made from sugar."

The show brings viewers a fresh perspective on the relationship between everyday activities and biodiversity, such as Donna Ozawa's *Waribashi Project*, an impressive display constructed of 90,000 *waribashi*, or disposable chopsticks. Every year hundreds of billions of *waribashi* are thrown away after just a single use, contributing to deforestation, one of the largest contributors to the loss of species.

Unique works such as *Green Porno*, a series of short films by actress Isabella Rossellini on animal sexual behaviors, offer fascinating scientific insight along with a big dose of humor. The exhibition also features Charles Lee's *Dissipative System*, a wall of touchable tiles that change color in response to heat — mimicking the color, humidity, and temperature changes in the exoskeleton of a Hercules beetle.

Awareness is the first critical step in changing our individual and collective outlook from one that exploits nature to one that nurtures it, points out Rosenberg. Art builds awareness by helping us visualize our complex relationship to the natural world. “Science provides facts while art tells stories,” she says, adding. “The need for environmental stories has never been greater — people are hungry for positive images of the future. The stories at the heart of ‘Nature’s Toolbox’ offer fresh solutions, making it clear that humanity is itself an essential piece of this system. By understanding the relationships, not only can we save nature, we can save ourselves, too.”

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Entrance to “Nature’s Toolbox” is free with basic admission to The Field Museum. For further information, visit fieldmuseum.org or www.artworksforchange.org.

Art Works for Change produces traveling contemporary art exhibitions that address social and environmental issues. It applies the transformative power of art to promote awareness, inspire action and provoke dialogue. The exhibitions serve as catalyst and crucible where artists, museums, advocacy organizations, and the local community can unite in common cause. Art Works for Change is a 501c3 charitable corporation.

For a show prospectus, digital images and artist interviews, please contact Amy Logan at 510-451-6610 or Press@artworksforchange.org

NATURE’S TOOLBOX ARTISTS

Allora & Calzadilla • Suzanne Anker • Brandon Ballengee • Antonio Briceno • Vincent Callebaut • Rob Carter • Catherine Chalmers • Ri Crawford • E.V.Day • Anthony Discenza • Chris Drury • Aganetha Dyck and Richard Dyck • Don and Era Farnsworth • Cao Fei • Hall & Moline • Joyce Hsu • Chris Jordan • Kahn & Selesnick • Christian Kerrigan • Isabella Kirkland • Charles Lee • Katja Loher • Lori Nix • Lucy & Jorge Orta • Neri Oxman • Donna Keiko Ozawa • Sven Pahlsson • Susan Plum • Michael Rakowitz • Ken Rinaldo • Isabella Rossellini • Tomas Saraceno • Yuriko Yamaguchi • Xu Zhen • Marina Zurkow