

Art for the Environment

Burnt Trees, Trapped Inside 'Greenheart' and Recycled Art on Show in Nairobi



Nairobi/San Francisco, 31 March 2006 --- The Natural World Museum (NWM) is joining forces with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to launch the Art for the Environment initiative. On Friday 31 March, NWM and UNEP will celebrate the launch of the initiative with the opening of the first exhibition at United Nations Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

A series of international exhibitions will be produced to highlight regional environmental issues through the universal language of art, educating and motivating the public to take personal action in local and global conservation efforts. The launch of the initiative also marks the end of Klaus Toepfer's eight-year tenure as UNEP's Executive Director, and will be part of his farewell reception.

The exhibition, in Nairobi, will also include *Arbres Brûlés*, an installation of 45 burnt trees turned into sculpture by Philippe Pastor, an artist based in Monaco. "I saw the fire burning down the mountain. I cannot resign myself to such destruction and I don't want to forget. Looking at such mutilated nature, I am horrified and feel a deep feeling of rebellion towards the authors of this disfigurement... This scene of desolation is nothing but a mirror of our society," said Philippe Pastor about what inspired him in this work.

The sculptures were created from the calcified trunks of trees of the forest of Garde Freinet (Var, southern France), which were devastated during the summer of 2003 by arson. By turning them into art, these large trees, some of which are more than a century old, are given new life. Through his work, the artist expresses his anger at this wanton destruction and wishes to sensitize the world to the damage caused by forest fires and to the need to preserve our natural resources.

"Art is the cornerstone of conservation and the emblem of civilization," said Mia Hanak, Executive Director of NWM. "NWM's exhibits are exciting in what they showcase, but they are also important as a focal point where the public can interact and be part of an environmental community."

"Seeing this art will generate significant public awareness of environmental issues globally," said Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

In the words of Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General: "Art opens new doors for learning, understanding, and peace among people and nations."

As part of the ceremony, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Professor Wangari Maathai will show her support for Art for the Environment by speaking about how the three art installations are related to trees and deforestation.

Notes for editors:

Pictures of the current exhibit are available to download at <http://www.unep.org>.

All the participants in Art for the Environment global exhibits will be considered for the Green Leaf Award, honouring five artists for their creative excellence.

For information on the Natural World Museum, these and other initiatives, as well as information for artists' submissions, please contact Mia Hanak, Executive Director, Natural World Museum; Tel: +1 - 415- 378-6497; e-mail info@naturalworldmuseum.org.

You can also visit the website: www.philippe-pastor.com

For more information, please contact:

Eric Falt, UNEP Director, Division of Communications and Public Information; Tel: +254 20 762 3292; Mobile: 254 733 682 656; e-mail: eric.falt@unep.org

Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, Office of the Executive Director; Tel: +254 20 762 3084; Mobile: +254 733 632 755; e-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org

If there is no prompt response, please contact Elisabeth Waechter, UNEP Associate Media Officer, on Tel: + 254 20 762 3088, Mobile: +254 720 173968, E-mail: elisabeth.waechter@unep.org.