In the Presence of Trees

JUNE 30 – SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

UCROSS FOUNDATION ART GALLERY
ABOUT THE UCROSS FOUNDATION

Founded in 1981, the Ucross Foundation is an internationally known retreat for visual artists, writers and composers working in all creative disciplines. It provides living accommodations, studio space, uninterrupted time, and the experience of the extraordinary High Plains landscape to competitively selected individuals, who are awarded residencies of two to eight weeks at Ucross. The Foundation looks for individuals whose work reflects innovative thinking, a depth of creative exploration and the potential for significant future accomplishments. A number of residents have gone on to win the Pulitzer Prize, the Tony Award, the National Book Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the MacArthur Fellowship and many other honors.

A recipient of the 2005 Wyoming Governor's Arts Award for Excellence in the Arts, Ucross has hosted over 1,600 artists-in-residence from across the United States and the world. The Foundation is honored to participate in long-term collaborations with other arts organizations who share our vision. These include the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, the Alley Theatre, the Alpert Award in the Arts (administered by CalArts and supported by the Herb Alpert Foundation), the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the University of Wyoming MFA in Creative Writing Program and the Ernest Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for First Fiction.

Located on an historic 20,000-acre working cattle ranch in northern Wyoming, Ucross introduces individuals to the land, people, and ethos of the northern High Plains and Rocky Mountain region. Through its Residency Program, art gallery, and associated activities, Ucross actively seeks to support an appreciation for vibrant human creativity and aims to cast a reflection into the future from the cultural mirror of our lives and times.

The Foundation has also supported numerous conservation initiatives including the placement of a conservation easement on over 12,000 acres of the ranch with the Wyoming Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.
In the Presence of Trees

Ciel Bergman
Prilla Smith Brackett
Avy Claire
Joellyn Duesberry
Michael Flecky
Barbara Foster
Christine Joy
Mayme Kratz
Tracy Linder
Andrew Millner
Susan Moldenhauer
Jerry Monteith
Chris Richter
Edward Riddell
Lee Carlman Riddell
Nancy Silvia
Ilene Sunshine
Amy Talluto
Emma Tapley
Joel Tauber
Sandy Walker
Jenny Glenn Wuerker

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UCROSS FOUNDATION ART GALLERY
Welcome to our leafy art gallery, where we are pleased to feature twenty-two visual artists whose work has been inspired by trees in distinctive, varied ways. In the Presence of Trees includes fifteen artists who have been residents at the Ucross Foundation; the other seven are clearly kindred spirits. Respect for art and the natural world have always been intertwined at Ucross — together they have helped the organization grow deep roots in Wyoming, and stretch our branches across the world.

Ucross marks its 30th anniversary this year and we are honored to have supported over 1,600 visual artists, writers and composers. In April, the Arbor Day Foundation recognized Raymond Plank and the Ucross Foundation with a 2011 Good Steward Award. More than 17,000 trees and shrubs have been planted — some by enthusiastic artists-in-residence — on the Ucross campus and cattle ranch in recent years. Our latest initiative is the creation of a new park, with a small stone chapel nearing completion, and plans for the Raymond Plank Library and Museum are taking shape. We are grateful to the many people who have supported the Park at Ucross, both in our local communities and beyond. (For someone like myself, who grew up in Detroit on a street named Parkland, the new park has a special resonance.)

You might call us leafwhelmed, to borrow a word from poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. What we have found as we've talked with artists, writers and other colleagues is how many people have a deep affinity for trees. Photographer Michael Flecky says, “I have often and routinely recognized trees as my graceful companions.” Sculptor Jerry Monteith notes that the starting point of his work is “my fascination with the natural form of injured trees.” Joel Tauber’s “love affair” with a beleaguered tree in a Los Angeles parking lot inspired his award-winning film. Ciel Bergman’s series of drawings and paintings is titled How Trees Feel. Barbara Foster’s Great Tree Project began taking shape after her residency at Ucross. “Look through the eyes of a tree and you will find me,” says painter Chris Richter.

Perhaps it shouldn’t come as a surprise that artists care so deeply about trees. Making a work of art and planting a tree are both creative gifts to the world. They are forms of labor that transcend the individual lifetimes of the artist and planter — with results that provide a sense of awe and inspiration for years to come.

We are grateful to the twenty-two artists for participating in this exhibition, and to the Arbor Day Foundation for this year’s award. Thanks to Andria Friesen and the Friesen Gallery for their inspiring exhibition and book, Speak to the Trees, which was a creative catalyst for In the Presence of Trees. The Nicolaysen Art Museum also provided a creative spark. We are grateful to writer Irene Borger and her arborist father Lawrence Borger, for their collaborative work on the exhibition essay. Thanks to the Ucross Board of Trustees for their ongoing support, to the hardworking Ucross staff, and to all the Ucross donors whose contributions have kept the Foundation thriving and growing. Above all, thanks to Raymond Plank, Founder and Chairman, whose lifelong dedication to trees and to artists has had such a lasting, positive impact on Ucross, and the world.

Sharon Dynak
President, Ucross Foundation

*From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Worship Without Words
When “Lawrence J. Borger, Arborcultural Consultant”* goes out on a job, he'll stand with feet wide apart, hands on hips, narrow his eyes, and, more often than not, pull out his hand lens to study a bug, or his binoculars to view a high branch. “What you see when you look at a tree,” he says, “depends how far away you are.”

At 96, passion unabated, he measures the sensory phenomena before him against the encyclopedic knowledge in his head. Sharon Dynak and I — his daughter — wondered what would happen if the “tree doctor” eyeballed the reproductions of paintings and sculptures by artists in this exhibition, and told us what he saw.

As people accrue bodies of knowledge, they develop patterns of seeing. Still, I was surprised that as my art loving father looked at pictures, he moved rapidly past aesthetics to commenting on the sorts of things that, well, an arborcultural consultant is trained to see.

“That looks like a weeping cherry with its cascading delicate limbs; you know, shape is usually the first thing you identify when you look at a tree from a distance...”

“You can't start diagnosing until you learn the species, variety, diversity, the physiology, and habitat of a tree,” the tree doctor explains. “I’m challenged by every tree and anxious to know what species it is, because then I know more about what problems it could have, if it's at its best, if it's healthy or ailing.”

Examine the word diagnosis (exactly what arborists do when they encounter trees), and you will find that it comes from the Latin gnarus which turns into knowing, notice, noble, recognize, and narrate. It's as if examining something closely is an invitation to put the object of that desire into words. At least for a writer, or an arborist.

Walk through the woods with my father, and, repeatedly, he will stop to examine a leaf, caress a bark, scrutinize branches, and then, inevitably, pleasurably, announce the tree's common and Latin names, another way to frame experience.

\* As people accrue bodies of knowledge, they develop patterns of seeing. Still, I was surprised that as my art loving father looked at pictures, he moved rapidly past aesthetics to commenting on the sorts of things that, well, an arborcultural consultant is trained to see.

“Look at those massive trunks with their root systems above ground...”

“Hmm, sunlight streaming through a wonderful hemlock forest. Are you aware that hemlock was logged not for its wood but for its bark which was valuable for tanning leather?”

An Arborist’s View
Weren't the Impressionists known to walk through a landscape with picture frames so as to see where "the picture" might be? (And isn't the word landscape itself an aestheticized frame for viewing nature?)

Looking at the images together, I tried to corral my father back to reflecting on the pictorial elements and "beauty."

"Aesthetics may not be the most important element to an arborist. We're concerned primarily with the health and safety of trees. Perhaps you could say that a healthy, vigorous tree is a beautiful tree and vice versa."

What about symmetry and asymmetry, I asked him, dimly remembering a study on how sophisticated art makers tended to make more asymmetrical works.

"While a tree that grows in the open by itself will tend to be more symmetrical and typical of the species, many trees, affected by their neighbors, environment and habitat, by levels of sun and shade, are asymmetrical. Most trees don't naturally grow symmetrically - or aesthetically. It's man who comes in and trims them to his or her liking both for reasons of growth, and - just the way an artist might make choices about shape and light - to create a handsomer appearance. Artists have the liberty to create things not seen in nature, with magnificent color palettes, and shapes they've devised, and sometimes they paint, as I see here, idealized trees, trees they've dreamed of, recalled or imagined. It can be wonderful to encounter an artwork made with an active relationship to a memorable experience that surpasses plain representation."

A few years back, my father and I spent a couple of nights at the San Francisco Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm, where he offered to prune some trees in their extensive garden. After several hours of working (which included that kind of dramatic standing back, the way the artist-in-beret-in-the-movies might do with a canvas), it was time to clean up the piles and head in to dinner. The next morning, as we walked through the garden on the way to the beach, he froze in front of the tree he'd last worked on, horrified that someone would notice some failure I couldn't detect at all. He insisted on getting the pruning shears so he could remove the offending twigs and branchlets and correct the balance. Wasn't this master of pruning making - at least in part - an aesthetic decision?

And why does this arborcultural consultant think that people like to look at representations of nature?

"Perhaps we're drawn to these paintings and sculptures because most of us don't live in natural settings. They provide access to places that ease and focus us and create a contemplative state. In doctors' offices, I find that most of the paintings and prints on the wall are of nature, perhaps because they create a wonderful feeling and transport you and take your mind off why you're there."

After having studied all the images, he concluded, "Artists see things that an arborist may or may not see, subtle things which are not obvious until you start looking closely. Let's appreciate this..."

Irene Borger is a writer and is director of the Alpert Award in the Arts. During her Ucross residency in 2007 she attempted to listen to the wind without naming the sounds. A profile of Larry Borger, A Skyline That Sways in the Breeze, written by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Jim Dwyer, was published in The New York Times on March 5, 2008.

* The words, in dark green letters, on his business card; a 94th birthday present from Margaret Borger, my sister.
Ciel Bergman

How Trees Feel #8, 2011
Oil on canvas, 29x18"

Prilla Smith Brackett

Places of the Heart #21, 2009
Oil, acrylic, pen on panel, 30x40"
Avy Claire  
LaForesta 11-05.26, 2011  
Acrylic on panel, 24x24”

Joellyn Duesberry  
Creek Bottoms, Wyoming, 2007  
Oil on linen, 40x60”
Michael Flecky

Betty's Creek, Rabun Co. GA, 2011
Digital inkjet print, 12x4”

Barbara Foster

The Great Tree Project II, 2010
Sumi ink (brush and pen) on Okawara paper, 24x52”
Christine Joy

Lily, 2002
Red osier, beeswax, and damar resin finish, 43x28x16"

Mayme Kratz

Heart of the Tree #2, 2011
Resin, cottonwood leaves, cotton from seeds, wasp nest on panel, 48x48"
Tracy Linder

Yvonne (Sacrificial Limbs Series), 2008
Tree branch, leather, artificial sinew, 23x8x15”

Andrew Millner

38.36°, 50.8’N  90.15’, 25.7”W (Shaw’s Magnolia), 2006
Lightjet print mounted to plexi, 48x72”
Susan Moldenhauer

The Trees of Ucross and Shady Lane, #17, 2009
Archival pigment inks on Inkpress WT Photo Rag, 18x12"

Jerry Monteith

Ruby Bulbs, 2010
Dyed/varnished wood, 46x36x5"
Chris Richter

Jade, 2011
Oil on panel, 15.5 x 15”

Edward Riddell

Ancient Redwood, California Coast, 2004
Archival pigment print, 24 x 20”
September Day, 2010
Oil on linen, 8x10”

Pink Cascade, 2003
Pastel, 42x47”
New Vein #71, 2011
Leaf, gesso, plastic bag, Flashe paint, thread on paper, 12x9"

Hermaphrodite, 2006
Oil on canvas, 68x46"
Emma Tapley

Inverted Landscape II, 2009
Oil on clay panel, 8x6x2”

Joel Tauber

August 16, 2006: The tree looks hot with those earrings!, 2006
Lightjet print mounted on aluminum, 20x30”
Sandy Walker

Forest Ground 5, 2004
Ink on paper, 42x42”

Jenny Glenn Wuerker

Cottonwood, 2010
Oil on canvas, 18x24”
Born in Berkeley, California, Ciel Bergman was initially trained as an R.N. in psychiatry before moving to Europe during the late 1950s, when she began painting full-time. After returning to California in 1964, she earned an MFA in painting at the San Francisco Art Institute. Bergman has exhibited nationally and internationally, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Brussels and London. Her work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Santa Barbara Museum and the Orange County Museum of Art.

Born in New Orleans, Prilla Smith Brackett has social science degrees from Sarah Lawrence College and the University of California/Berkeley, and an MFA in drawing and painting from the University of Nebraska/Lincoln. Her work has been exhibited throughout the country at venues including the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, the Portland Museum of Art, the Asheville Art Museum, and the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. It is in the collections of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard, the DeCordova Museum, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Her numerous awards include a fellowship in painting at the Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College. She was a Ucross Fellow in 1998.

Avy Claire is involved in a variety of projects related to trees, from indoor and outdoor installations to paintings. She is currently working on an ongoing site-specific forest installation as part of the Artist-in-Residence program at Waterfall Arts in Belfast, Maine. Claire has a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and has exhibited her work throughout the country. LaForesta is an ongoing series of paintings that began in 2005. Claire was a Ucross Fellow in 2000.
CHRISTINE JOY
Bozeman, Montana

Born in Ithaca, New York, Christine Joy graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with a BFA in Printmaking. In 1980, after completing a master's program in art therapy at Vermont College, she moved west. “I didn’t set out to become a basket maker,” she says. “I was working full time with the elderly in an extended care unit as a recreation/art therapist. My backyard was full of potential basket making material and so I began not knowing it would be the start of a long journey and lifetime passion.” She was a Ucross Fellow in 1994.

MAYME KRATZ
Phoenix, Arizona
www.maymekratz.com

Mayme Kratz is a self-taught artist whose work has been exhibited in galleries and museums around the U.S., including the Lisa Sette Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ, the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, the Anne Reed Gallery in Ketchum, ID, the Tucson Museum of Art, the Elliott Brown Gallery in Seattle, Blue Star Art in San Antonio, the Phoenix Art Museum and Museum of Glass: International Center for Contemporary Art, Tacoma, WA. It has also been shown in exhibitions in Barcelona, Spain, and Sofia, Bulgaria. Kratz was a Ucross Fellow in 2010.

TRACY LINDER
Molt, Montana
www.tracylinder.com

Tracy Linder grew up on a family farm and now lives on the vast prairie of south central Montana. Her sculptures and installations have been exhibited in New York, St. Louis, Indianapolis and throughout Montana, Colorado and North Dakota. In 2009-2010, seven institutions presented solo exhibitions of Linder’s work and she was chosen as the first Artist-in-Residence at the Yellowstone Art Museum’s Visible Vault. She is a participant in the inaugural Montana Invitational Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit at the new Bozeman Sculpture Park and in 2012 the Nicolaysen Art Museum in Casper, WY will present a major solo exhibit of her work. She was a Ucross Fellow in 2007.

ANDREW MILLNER
St. Louis, Missouri
www.andrewmillner.com

Andrew Millner’s work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the Miller Block Gallery in Boston, Tria Gallery in New York, William Shearburn Gallery in St. Louis, Richard Levy Gallery in Albuquerque, and many others, as well as in Singapore and Florence, Italy. He has a BFA in Painting and Sculpture from the University of Michigan. “For several years, I have been ‘collecting’ trees and plants by drawing their contours directly into the computer,” he says. “How changes in technology change our relationship with the natural world is germane to my artistic explorations.” He was a Ucross Fellow in 1999.

SUSAN MOLDENHAUER
Laramie, Wyoming
www.pipelineartproject.com

Susan Moldenhauer has a BFA in Printmaking/Drawing from Northern Illinois University and an MFA in Photography from Penn State University. Her work has been exhibited at Brayhem Contemporary Art in Toronto, Canada, Kehler Liddell Gallery in New Haven, CT, and New Image Gallery, James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, among other venues. She is a Founding Member of the Pipeline Artists Project, “pumping art from the energy state of Wyoming USA.” In 2009 she worked collaboratively at Ucross with dancer Margaret Wilson and pastel artist Wendy Bredehoft. Their project, Sequencing Through Time and Place: Ucross, London, Fort Laramie, was exhibited in Laramie at Gallery 211. Moldenhauer is also Director of the University of Wyoming Art Museum.

JERRY MONTEITH
Carbondale, Illinois

An artist and Professor of Art at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Jerry Monteith has a BFA in Sculpture from the University of North Carolina and an MFA in Sculpture from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Commissions and exhibitions of his work include the Metropolitan Gallery in St. Louis, Dallas Contemporary, and I2I Gallery in San Antonio, among many others. He says, “While anecdotal details of personal experience play a large part in driving the visual structure of the work, the starting point is my fascination with the natural form of injured trees.” He was a Ucross Fellow in 2005.
CHRIS RICHTER
Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.chrisrichterart.com

Chris Richter has been working full time as a painter since 2003, after a formidable career in advertising, graphic design and illustration. “My work continually explores the humanity found in nature,” he says. “Several years ago, during an early autumn snowstorm, the characteristic eyes of the aspen trees pulled me from my world into their world... Look through the eyes of a tree and you will find me.”

EDWARD RIDDELL
Wilson, Wyoming
www.edwardriddell.com

Edward Riddell has been taking pictures for more than forty-four years. He started as editor of his high school yearbook, and later became head photographer of the Stanford yearbook, when he became obsessed with the work of Ansel Adams. In 1976 Riddell moved to Jackson Hole, where he met his wife, artist Lee Riddell. He has spent a lifetime making landscape photographs of the dramatic landscapes in Grand Teton National Park and the nearby Wind River Mountains. He is currently working on a new project of large format, black and white images featuring the landscape, people and architecture of Tuscany, Italy.

LEE CARLMAN RIDDELL
Wilson, Wyoming
www.leeriddell.com

Lee Carlman Riddell’s work has been included in the National Museum of Wildlife Art’s Western Visions Miniatures Show, as well as several Out of the Box auctions. She has participated in the Yellowstone Art Museum’s 42nd and 43rd Art Auctions, and the Art Association of Jackson Hole’s Watercolor Mysteries and Whodunnit exhibits. She is represented by Trio Fine Art in Jackson. “I paint outside because that is where I want to be,” she says. “Being a painter, for me, is like coming home... I’ve gone from an adventurer to a person who is content to breathe fresh air and watch a hummingbird raise two chicks in a nest outside my studio window. I’ve discovered magic everywhere, every day.”

NANCY SILVIA
Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.nancysilvia.com

Growing up near the ocean in Connecticut, Nancy Silvia claims one of her earliest visual memories is of the horizon line, and earliest influence as an artist the marine paintings of New England. She earned a BFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Yale University. Her work has been exhibited for over twenty-five years in galleries and museums across the U.S. and the world; recent shows include Gallery Tokyo Eizo in Tokyo and the Coryell Gallery in Lambertville, New Jersey. She was a Ucross Fellow in 1994.

ILENE SUNSHINE
New York, New York

Ilene Sunshine’s work explores the nature/culture interface and ranges from large-scale site projects to intimate works on paper. Her distinctive material choices - from discarded Christmas trees to plastic bags - are a defining aspect of her process. Her work has been exhibited widely and is in the permanent collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), Fidelity Investments (Boston), as well as in many private collections in the U.S. and Europe. She was a Ucross Fellow in 2001.

AMY TALLUTO
Hurley, New York
www.amytalluto.com

Born in New Orleans, Amy Talluto has a BFA from Washington University in St. Louis and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been held at the Black & White Gallery in Brooklyn, Packer Schopf Gallery in Chicago, and PS 122 Gallery in New York, along with numerous group exhibitions around the country. “Making my work, I am interested in exploring the in-between states of painting,” she says. “Individual works describe scenes that are sometimes bright, lush and flower- ing, or sometimes dissonant, murky and foreboding.” She was a Ucross Fellow in 2007.
Solo exhibitions of Emma Tapley’s work have taken place at Hemphill Fine Arts in Washington, D.C., Fischbach Gallery in New York, Village Zendo in New York, and Sykes Gallery at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. Group exhibits include the Armory Show in New York, the Cathedral Gallery in Washington, D.C., and MA Doran Gallery in Tulsa, among many others. She was the co-curator with Paul Caranicas of Real Time Focus: Redefining the Painted Landscape, at the Bernaducci Meisel Gallery in New York. She was a Ucross Fellow in 2009.

Joel Tauber
Los Angeles, California
www.sickamour.com

Joel Tauber received his MFA in art from Art Center College of Design and his BA in art history and sculpture from Yale University. Tauber recently joined Wake Forest University to develop their video art program. His work has been shown throughout the world, including Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects in LA and Galerie Adamski in Berlin. He has been included in numerous group art exhibitions including the 2004 and 2008 California Biennials at the Orange County Museum of Art; the De Appel Centre For Contemporary Art in Amsterdam; and the California Museum of Photography. Sick-Amour was awarded Best Green Film at the 2010 Downtown Film Festival – Los Angeles. He was an Alpert/Ucross Fellow in 2009.

Sandy Walker
Oakland, California
www.sandywalker.com

Born in Washington, D.C., Sandy Walker studied art history at Harvard and received an MFA in painting from Columbia University. His first major exhibition was at the Grace Borgenicht Gallery in New York in 1977. Major exhibitions of his work have been held at the Riverside Art Museum, the Nicolaysen Art Museum, the San Jose Museum of Art, and the Fresno Art Museum, among many others, as well as a 2-year traveling exhibition of his woodblock prints organized by the List Art Center at M.I.T. Walker was a Ucross Fellow in 1993.

Jenny Glenn Wuerker
Buffalo, Wyoming
www.wuerkerfineart.com

Jenny Wuerker has been painting the Wyoming landscape since 1993. She studied art at Yale University (BA, 87) and the American University (MFA, 92). She has taught art at the Taft School, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Connecticut Community College system. Her work is in private collections across the U.S. and has been exhibited at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, the Bradford Brinton Museum in Big Horn, WY, the Nicolaysen Art Museum in Casper, and numerous other venues.

“Just outside my studio and on the roads going to and from, it was the smallest of sounds, the seemingly ordinary in a remarkable landscape, the changes both subtle and extreme, that marked the development and growth of my work.”

Barbara Foster, December 2010