

PRESS RELEASE

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GHOST FOREST TAKES ROOT IN OXFORD

Today (July 8th) a Ghost Forest appeared on the lawn of Oxford University's Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum to the sound of African drums. Ghost Forest, a series of rainforest tree stumps from a commercially logged Tropical forest in Western Africa, is a symbol of threatened forests around the world, and is the brainchild of artist Angela Palmer. She began her mission to bring 'the rainforest to Europe' after learning that a tropical forest the size of a football pitch is destroyed every four seconds. The project turned into a gargantuan task of logistics, rich in adventure and drama.

Ghost Forest will stay in Oxford for one year after high profile appearances in Trafalgar Square and at the UN Climate Change conference in Copenhagen last winter. The Ghost Forest's year in Oxford straddles the UN's International Year of Biodiversity 2010 and the UN International Year of Forests in 2011.

Throughout the trees' epic journey from the Suhuma rainforest in Western Ghana, they have inspired visitors and provoked debate about the future of the world's rainforests. Most have their roots intact 'like the nerve endings of the planet,' says the artist.

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The installation in Oxford has been designed by Arup, the company behind London's 'Gherkin', the 'Bird's Nest' Olympic Stadium in Beijing and masterplanners for the Wanzhuang eco city in China'. The Ghost Forest installation was then built by co-sponsors Brookfield, Keltbray and Byrne Brothers. Brookfield is a major construction company whose current projects include a new 'super hospital' in Glasgow and The Pinnacle, the tallest tower in the City of London. Keltbray is the UK's largest specialist demolition and civil engineering contractor whose projects include St Pancras and the Emirates Stadium. Byrne Bros contracts include the 2012 Olympic Stadium in London; Centre Court and Number 2 court Wimbledon. The trees will lie on sustainable concrete plinths which will be recycled after the exhibition is dismantled next July.

During its 12 months in Oxford, Ghost Forest will become an open-air performance hub for music, dance, theatre and story-telling, as well as a 'field laboratory' for academic research by Oxford professors and students in several departments. On July 10, the Curious Company will re-enact The Mad Hatter's Tea Party around the trees during Alice in Wonderland Day.

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The Ghost Forest project boasts a distinguished list of 'ambassadors' including Sir David King, the former Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government who predicted Climate Change would be a greater threat to mankind than terrorism; Professor Marcus du Sautoy, successor to Richard Dawkins as the Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University; and Saba Douglas Hamilton, the charismatic presenter of *Big Cat Diary* and *The Secret Lives of Elephants*. The installation also coincides with the Oxford University Museum of Natural History 150th anniversary celebrations which includes a keynote lecture by Sir David Attenborough in October.

The artist sourced the tree stumps in Ghana, which over the last 50 years has lost 90 per cent of its primary rainforests. Ghana is now determined to preserve what is left, and is at the vanguard of responsible and sustainable forestry. Its remaining forestry concessions are selectively logged under strict regulations, ensuring the retention of the forest canopy, the natural regeneration of the forest, and a viable and sustainable timber industry for local people. To reflect this, only three of the Ghost Forest trees have been logged, the rest fell in adverse weather. 'This is not yet another message about climate change "doom and gloom"', says the artist, 'It carries a message of hope and optimism for the future'.

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Notes to editors:

- Ghost Forest website is at www.ghostforest.org
- Angela Palmer was educated at The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, and The Royal College of Art in London. Previous exhibitions include 'Breathing In' at the Wellcome Collection in London, which recorded her trip to the most polluted and cleanest places on Earth. She is represented by Waterhouse and Dodd, Cork Street, London.
- The artist considered carefully the carbon footprint which would be incurred in the project, but felt its potential message to millions of people on the impacts of deforestation would outweigh the carbon 'spend'. The carbon cost of 'Ghost Forest' has been calculated since its journey began, and offset on a ClimateCare project which has introduced more energy efficient cooking stoves to Ghana, meaning fewer trees are needed to provide cooking fuel.
- The co-sponsors of the Ghost Forest's year in Oxford are Arup, Brookfield, Byrne Bros and Keltbray. Without their help and financial assistance this project would not have been possible.
- The concrete plinths featured in the installation are made from sustainable concrete which will be recycled after the exhibition is dismantled on July 31, 2011.

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