

## PRESS RELEASE





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Palo Alto Art Center Teams with Junior Museum & Zoo to Launch Innovative STEAM Education Program

Creative Ecology will Engage Artists and the Community in Exploring the Environment through Art and Science

**Palo Alto, CA** – The <u>Palo Alto Art Center</u> and the <u>Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo</u> have formed a landmark partnership with *Creative Ecology: Exploring Our Environment with Art, Science, and the Community,* an innovative art and science residency program that promotes appreciation of the natural world through scientific inquiry and the creative process, engaging artists, art and science educators, and the larger community.

"The Palo Alto Art Center is invested in the power of art to promote discovery, inspiration and learning," said Karen Kienzle, Director of the Palo Alto Art Center. "With our partners, the Junior Museum & Zoo, Creative Ecology will provide an opportunity to showcase the intersections between art and science in fostering creativity and invention. Set against the backdrop of the stunning open space environments in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, this project will also promote the value of environmental stewardship. I look forward to these four outstanding artists—Mari Andrews, Linda Gass, Jenny Odell, David Tomb—engaging the entire community in helping to see the value of art, science, and open space in a whole new way."

This 18-month project, beginning in June, will feature four artists who explore the natural world in their artwork. Each residency will occur in three stages, with the first stage involving the artist working with community members in-the-field to investigate the natural environment around Palo Alto. Artists will explore areas such as Cooley Landing in East Palo Alto, the Baylands Preserve, and Foothills Park. During the next stage, the artist will work onsite at the Palo Alto Art Center to create artwork that will then be presented in a culminating exhibition, the final stage of the residency.

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"This is an important project because it brings together the two disciplines that utilize the ideal learning process," said John Aikin, Director of the Junior Museum & Zoo. "Scientists and artists both use their experiences, observations and active experimentation to acquire, test, and express knowledge, so I am excited to see what comes of this collaboration."

During each exhibition, public programming will focus on the artwork and its scientific and environmental setting, engaging the audience in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) activities. The project will also serve as a model to demonstrate the success of education through effective collaboration between an art museum and a science museum.

A media event to launch the *Creative Ecology* project will be held on Wednesday, May 20, 4-7 p.m., at the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center, 2775 Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto. The kickoff event will feature remarks by local civic leaders, a brief overview of the program, appearances by the participating artists, hands-on art activities presented by the Palo Alto Art Center, and *Sequoia*, the bald eagle from the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo. Any member of the media interested in attending should RSVP to Ken Heiman at <a href="mailto:ken.heiman@cityofpaloalto.org">ken.heiman@cityofpaloalto.org</a>.

The *Creative Ecology* artists are Linda Gass, a winner of the 2012 Fleishhacker Eureka Fellowship Award, who creates art about land use and water issues in California and the American West in textiles; David Tomb, an avid birdwatcher who translates his love for birds into inventive and highly detailed paintings and installations with sound and motion components; Mari Andrews, who employs a wide range of materials found in nature, such as sticks, leaves, and rocks in compelling large-scale installations; and Jenny Odell, who often uses map and satellite imagery to produce her unique digital collages.

Proposed in-the-field projects include the creation of temporary land installations, drawing and watching birds, walking and collecting natural objects for artwork, and water treatment plant tours. Members of the public will be encouraged to participate and all activities will be free.

*Creative Ecology* is made possible by an \$88,000 grant from the <u>Institute of Museum and Library Services</u>. IMLS museum grants support a wide variety of projects that create learning experiences, strengthen communities, care for collections, and provide broad public access.

## **About The Palo Alto Art Center:**

The Palo Alto Art Center is your place to discover art. See, make, and be inspired because everyone is an artist. Created by the community, for the community in 1971, the Palo Alto Art Center provides an accessible and welcoming place to engage with art. We serve approximately 80,000 people every year through a diverse range of programs.

The Palo Alto Art Center is owned and operated by the City of Palo Alto as a program of the Division of Arts and Sciences, Department of Community Services. The Palo Alto Art Center Foundation was founded in 1973 and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides financial support and advocacy to the Art Center through a public/private partnership that allows us to enhance our reach and impact in the community.

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## **About the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo:**

The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo, Division of Arts and Sciences, City of Palo Alto has an 80-year legacy of inspiring a passion for science, an appreciation for nature and a love of exploration. The JMZ experience can change children's lives by introducing them to science and nature at a formative state. We provide enhanced experiences for children, from birth to middle school, offering direct access to nature and science through undirected play and exploration.

The JMZ currently serves as a primary resource for science and environmental learning for 8 of 12 Palo Alto elementary schools and for Willow Oaks School and Brentwood Academy in the Ravenswood School District. By using a trained staff of science educators who provide STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, in-depth hands-on programs reach 16,700 students each year. Educators travel to elementary classrooms in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, San Mateo and throughout the region to provide core science classes that complement school district curriculum.

## **About the Institute of Museum and Library Services:**

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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