

# RAG

MEDIA RELEASE  
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Artists Ingrid Koivukangas and Craig Sibley bring the outdoors into the Gallery for two dynamic exhibitions which explore the interconnectedness of all living things and the balance (or lack of balance) found within those relationships.

The term biophilia, defined by the biologist Edward O. Wilson as “the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life”, informs a new body of work by Vancouver artist Craig Sibley. A visit to Northern BC allowed Sibley to see first-hand the devastation caused to the forest by the Pine Beetle (an infestation problem related to global warming that has killed several million trees in Central and Northern BC). His sculptural works respond to the idea of interconnectedness and that any damage done to the environment has a very real affect on all other living beings.



Craig Sibley *Baleen* detail, 2004  
wood and steel rod 108" x 32" x 16"

For this exhibit, *Biophilia: If Trees had Tears* Sibley constructs metaphoric sculptures from the wood of the Mountain Pine Tree referencing the destruction caused by the Pine Beetle using traditional furniture and boatbuilding methods in the production of the work. This exhibit gives voice to what some consider a silent epidemic as well as an opportunity to reflect on the current environmental situation in BC.

Craig Sibley received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Okanagan University College, Kelowna, BC (through the University of Victoria) in 1995. He has shown in solo and group exhibitions in Canada since 1992 as well as recent exhibitions in New Zealand. His works are held in public and private collections in British Columbia and Alberta.

For this exhibit, *The Finn Slough Project*, environmental artist Ingrid Koivukangas will create an interactive, mixed media installation, that responds to the area of Finn Slough; an eco-sensitive fishing village and heritage site situated along the Fraser River. In addition to the work in the Gallery, Koivukangas will create an ephemeral site-specific piece that can be viewed in Finn Slough during the exhibition or accessed online. Working with Langara College's Biology Department, the artist will look at the area in layers from the cellular level up, ultimately connecting the site to the moon, which controls the tides and affects all living things, and the cosmos, in an exploration of how all things are interconnected pieces of a much larger whole.

Ingrid Koivukangas received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Okanagan University College, Kelowna, BC in 1999 and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Calgary in 2002. Koivukangas teaches New Media and Design at Langara College and is an artist in residence with the Vancouver School Board. She has had solo exhibitions, and taught workshops on environmental art, across Canada, USA, Finland, Spain and Costa Rica (2007), as well as numerous group exhibitions.

The opening reception for both exhibitions is **Thursday, March 8 at 6:30pm**; Ingrid Koivukangas and Craig Sibley will give a brief tour of their work.

Both exhibitions will be on display in the Gallery from Thursday March 9 until April 15. Admission is free.

The annual *Art About Finn Slough* opens in the Cultural Centre Lecture Hall on March 8<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 8:30pm. This three-day exhibition is sponsored by the RAG and organized by the Finn Slough Heritage and Wetlands Society.

The Richmond Art Gallery is located at 180-7700 Minoru Gate in Richmond. Gallery hours are 10:00am to 6:00pm from Monday to Friday and 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday. For more information visit our website at [www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org).

To request images or to arrange an interview please contact us at 604.231.6457 ext 608 or 604.231.6454.

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## Artist Statement: Ingrid Koivukangas

My work is classified as environmental art and encompasses many mediums including site-specific ephemeral & permanent works, interventions, installation, video, sound, web, photography, painting, printmaking, and drawing. I work in response to sites in the natural world. Viewers are encouraged to leave gallery settings with maps to find ephemeral site-specific works or sites that natural materials in the gallery came from. The gallery work itself has ranged from installations bringing site materials to the gallery via video, photography, sound to framed works that combine site photographs with topographic maps, aerial photographs, stereoscopic glasses, GPS readings and natural site materials - that combined, act as a map to the site.

In a world that is constantly changing via incredible leaps in technology and unbelievable strains upon the environment I am constantly questioning our connection to the land and our loss of connection to that land. How do we arrive at a place where a balance has been found between technology and nature?

At what point do we begin to realize that we are not moving through a passive landscape, but through a landscape that is a reflection of our having lost touch with the sacredness of the earth itself. I am interested in issues of identity, especially indigenous cultures including my own, the environment, technology and globalization - questioning how our identities are shaped by the land while also exploring how technology can be integrated into that understanding. Much of my work is an attempt to provide the viewer with a starting point to begin contemplating their own landscape and possibly their part in its preservation. Viewers are encouraged to leave the gallery to visit sites where my work can be found and to interact with the work in a natural setting.

I am never sure what will happen when I begin working in a new area or landscape. Each site that I choose, or perhaps chooses me, is for a different reason. I begin with photography and a visual documentation of a site and then a collection of natural materials. From there the site dictates what type of work will emerge. From a forest fire site shards of burned roots were hung from a ceiling and viewers were encouraged to open jars of burned materials, while the sound of quiet breathing filled the room (Wildfire! 1998). A canyon site involved working across approximately 5 kms, from a viewing station at the east site that invited viewers to travel to the west site to investigate what could be seen glinting on the other side - and in doing so asking them to become involved in the journey, to be aware of where they were physically, to become a part of the land (Viewfinder Project: Kelowna 1997). The weather played a large role in Vancouver with rainwater being collected over three days and then put into 48" long glass microbiology tubes (Rainfall 2001). Archetypal symbols - circles, spirals, lines - have guided and become part of my exploration in the land, and harken back to earlier land artists and beyond. A golden spiral was overlaid on a map of Vancouver and sites chosen wherever land and water met (Nautilus Project 2001). Circles radiating outwards, reminiscent of raindrops on water, begin from CBC TV Vancouver and invite viewers to journey through the land (The 5 Circle Project: Vancouver 2002) - this work now exists online as an interactive work. Outside of Montreal, birch bark rings encircle sixty pine trees, creating a long white line that emphasizes the lay of the land and invites viewers to journey through the land to two other sites (La Ligne du Nord: Sud-Oest/The Line of the North: South-West 2003). In Saskatoon the cliffs along the South Saskatchewan River became the installation site for large stone works honouring animal spirits - Otter, Hawk, Frog and butterfly - that can be seen from the sky, the bridges and from the walking path on the opposite side of the river (South Saskatchewan River Project: Saskatoon -- Meewasin, 2004). Viewers were encouraged to leave the gallery installation, during the Works Festival in Edmonton, to journey to the river to view the site-specific piece that connected the gallery and site (North Saskatchewan River Project: Edmonton, 2004). In Spain a large circle (216' in circumference) made of quartz and piedra muerta (dead stone) is inlaid into the land referencing the moon and its connections to the history of the area (La Luna de Galicia, 2005). Although La Luna de Galicia is visible at all times of day and month, it is meant to be viewed at night, during a full moon, when the quartz outlining the circle will be illuminated by the moon.

## Artist Statement: Craig Sibley

As an artist I build abstract wood sculpture. I consider these forms a personal language which helps me define my world and the way I see things. My sculptures are often ambiguous and do not possess any one explicit meaning or relate to any one specific idea. I prefer them to just be and really that should be enough. However sometimes applying a question of inquiry to the work can help make sense of it, give it more power, substance or credibility.

For the sculpture in this show, I decided to apply one simple question to my work after making four trips into North Central B.C. last year. In this region of our province the Mountain Pine Beetle will kill as much as 85% of the Pine forests. In some places like Vanderhoof for example, the red needles of the dead and dying pine trees stretch through the valley as far as the eye can see. Dead trees count in the 100's of millions even billions in some estimates.

As I stood there overwhelmed by what I observed, I wondered do dying trees shed tears and if they did what would they look like? These sculptures are how I answered that question to myself. They are all made of pine wood either Ponderosa or Mountain Pine.

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Biophilia is the gravity that draws us to nature. That gravitational force we as a species were once closer to, when the natural environment was more to us than just renewable resources or just a place to recreate.