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Redshift: Witnessing Landscape Change

JUNE 9, 2008 CALGARY, ALBERTA – On Friday, July 4, 2008, The Art Gallery of Calgary opens a new exhibition featuring the work of Marcia Harris and Erik Olson. The exhibition titled Redshift: Witnessing Landscape Change portrays the recent mountain pine beetle infestations in British Columbia and Alberta.

Due to warmer winters and a favourable distribution of even aged Lodgepole Pine, the mountain pine beetle population has soared. Over the past two years Harris and Olson have independently focused their artistic practices on this devastating subject. The result is a compelling experiment in documentary painting: a series of paintings, drawings and one installation that revisit the red attack from different perspectives. Each work, punctuated by red brushstrokes that overrun the forest space, attempts to express a problem that can seem beyond comprehension.

Harris describes her work as contemporary landscape. The content portrays the distinctive transitional colours of the pine, but Harris also draws attention to the relationship between man and nature. In her work Harris challenges the concept of how this disaster has affected us and how we can choose to deal with it. Harris was born in Gaspé, Quebec. She graduated with distinction from the UBCO – University of British Columbia, Okanagan from the fine arts program with a major in painting and a minor in drawing, screen-printing and photography in 2004. Now based in Calgary, Harris has shown extensively across Western Canada. Her work can be found in private and corporate collections across Canada, the United States, England and the Grand Cayman Islands.

Olson's work is distinguished by a lively, loose use of paint, and broad strokes of fresh, plastic colour. Forming constellations of planar forms, these brush strokes collectively weave the industrial and the natural together as a single, interdependent system. This project is part of a larger commitment to exploring human perception and behavior through the process of painting. Raised in cities including Calgary, Winnipeg, Nairobi, and Boston, Erik Olson is a trained artist and graphic designer who graduated from Emily Carr with a Bachelor of Design in 2005. He has cultivated a distinct visual art practice informed by his experience of art, design and international travel. Olson followed up on his studies with a series of painting projects that led him to Honduras, Italy, London, England, Toronto, and New York City. He has recently returned to his native city of Calgary to explore his experience of diverse urban and rural locations through painting and has just opened IDEAL, a new contemporary art space in downtown Calgary.

The Art Gallery of Calgary is a spectacular, inspiring space – a perfect place in which to discover and celebrate contemporary art, a voice and venue for art and ideas that offers Calgarians and visitors a fresh, modern and insightful take on contemporary art.

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