

no. 9

Contemporary Art & the Environment

Press Release

No.9 to Bring Contemporary Art to Inner-City Students

Environmentally-themed IAIN BAXTER& installation to visit schoolyards and libraries

(TORONTO – March 22, 2010) No. 9: Contemporary Art and the Environment and The Art Gallery of Ontario are partnering with the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Public Library, and the World Wildlife Fund to bring contemporary art and environmental education to 10,000 inner city elementary students across the GTA.

In collaboration with internationally-recognized Canadian artist IAIN BAXTER&, the **IAIN BAXTER& ECOARTVAN** hits the streets of Toronto from April 1 through May 31, and will visit 25 of the TDSB's Model Schools for Inner Cities and eight local libraries.

The project's mission is to introduce a new generation to the power of contemporary art and its ability to stimulate awareness and positive social and environmental change. The **IAIN BAXTER& ECOARTVAN** is a glassed-in cube van running on biodiesel fuel, which will display a new, No.9-commissioned installation by BAXTER&, who will transform the cube van into a travelling museum featuring artwork inspired by the artist's long-standing interest in the environment.

The **IAIN BAXTER& ECOARTVAN** will park in each school's yard for two days, and will be accompanied by No. 9 Education Program Manager Pearl Van Geest and other educators. Van Geest will lead hands-on workshops with Grade Four student using a special education package designed in collaboration with BAXTER& and focused around the artist's concern for animals and their habitats.

World Wildlife Fund Canada has generously contributed 2500 Adoption Kits, so that each Grade Four student who attends the workshops will receive a kit focused on an animal whose habitat is endangered. These kits enable tactile learning and ensure that the students have an opportunity to continue their engagement in environmental issues once the project concludes.

In addition to the in-school activities provided by No. 9, the AGO and the TDSB have partnered to offer each participating Grade Four class – over 2200 students – a free field trip to the Gallery, where they will participate in a special gallery program called “Going Green: Art & the Environment”.

“Not only is this an extraordinary opportunity for students to experience a work by one of Canada's leading artists, it is an unprecedented extension of AGO programming into the community,” says Kelly McKinley, the AGO's Richard and Elizabeth Currie Director of Education and Public Programming.

On June 9, the students will be invited to attend a free evening celebration at the AGO with IAIN BAXTER&. The students' work will be displayed in Walker Court, and they will have the opportunity to meet with the artist and share their responses to the project.

“It is inspiring to see so many organizations come together for this very important cause,” says No. 9 Executive Director Andrew Davies, the project's initiator. “An entire community will now have the opportunity for a direct encounter with art in a meaningful way, not only in the walls of a gallery, but on their sidewalks and in their schoolyards.”

On weekends, when schools are closed, **IAIN BAXTER& ECOARTVAN** will visit local libraries, giving countless others an opportunity to view the work and learn more about art and the environment. An explanation of the project and Baxter&'s work, written by AGO Curator of Contemporary Art David Moos, will be on view on the back of the van.

No. 9: Contemporary Art and the Environment also received a \$75,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) in November 2009 to help with the program. A leading grant maker in Canada, OTF strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives. An agency of the Government of Ontario, OTF builds healthy and vibrant communities.

ABOUT IAIN BAXTER&

For decades Iain Baxter&' art works have explored the relationship between humanity and nature. His initial studies in zoology and biology provided him with a keen understanding of our natural world, leading to the creation of many celebrated works, including 1999's *Animal Preserve No. 2*, 1996's *Technological Compost*, and 2008's *Zero Emissions*. As one of the world's first conceptual artists, Baxter&'s influence has been internationally recognized. He is a Governor General's Award winner and an Officer of the Order of Canada.

ABOUT No. 9

No.9 is an art organization committed to the belief that contemporary art can stimulate positive social and environmental change. The organization provides artists who address these concerns with the opportunity to make ambitious work in the public realm, using urban public space as a forum for exhilarating creativity and vital discussion.

No.9 provides a wide variety of education programmes and events to expand on the ideas behind our public projects, such as artist talks, film presentations, education programmes, and multi-disciplinary symposia.

ABOUT THE AGO

With a permanent collection of more than 79,000 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. In 2008, with a stunning new design by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, the AGO opened its doors to the public amid international acclaim. Highlights include Galleria Italia, a gleaming showcase made of wood and glass running the length of an entire city block along the Gallery's façade; and the feature staircase, spiraling up through the roof of Walker Court and into the new contemporary galleries above. From the extensive Group of Seven collection to the dramatic new African art gallery; from the cutting-edge works in the Vivian & David Campbell Centre for Contemporary Art to Peter Paul Rubens' masterpiece *The Massacre of The Innocents*, a highlight of the celebrated Thomson Collection, there is truly something for everyone at the AGO.

For more images and more information, contact:

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