

DO NOT RELEASE BEFORE APRIL 10

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RECIPIENTS OF THE 2003 VIVA AWARDS

B.C. ARTISTS RECEIVE \$10,000 CASH AWARDS

Each Spring, the Vancouver art community eagerly awaits the announcement of the annual VIVA awards for achievement in the visual arts. This year's selection committee will announce that B.C. artists **GEOFFREY FARMER** and **KELLY WOOD** have been chosen for the prestigious cash awards on Thursday, April 10 at 8pm at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design.

The VIVA Awards were established in 1987 by the Jack and Doris Shadbolt Foundation for the Visual Arts. Annual awards of \$10,000 are given to two mid-career artists who have demonstrated strong creative potential and a long-term commitment to their work.

A new jury is appointed each year by The Shadbolt Foundation's trustees to conduct a province-wide search for the candidates and to select the winners. The names of each year's selection panel and the recipients are a closely-guarded secret until the last minute. The committee does not accept nominations for applications. Instead, the recipients are selected by a majority vote for their perceived creative potential and accomplishment. Unlike Canada Council grants, there are no criteria or stipulation for how the money may be used by the artists.

For the well-known philanthropists and community arts supporters Doris Shadbolt and her late husband Jack Shadbolt, the awards have been a way of giving back to the visual art community the support they have received. Jack Shadbolt was a significant artist, teacher and arts advocate, while Doris has been equally successful as a writer, historian, curator and critic.

The work of this year's VIVA winners represents the extent to which contemporary B.C. artwork has evolved from Emily Carr's heritage of traditional, landscape-based painting. Over the past 22 years, a new generation of artists has contributed to Canada's international profile with forms of art that are urban, often documentary, and politically-oriented to social issues. Both Geoffrey Farmer and Kelly Wood are artists who work on this edge.

Digital images of the artists' work are available, also interviews with the artists can be arranged.

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GEOFFREY FARMER

Geoffrey Farmer's projects incorporate a wide array of media over an extended period of time. The works may combine video elements, found objects, costumes, custom packaging, paper cut-outs, popular film references and Styrofoam shavings.

The artist's archival bent combined with his research methods reveals a process that is less about the need to critique or find conclusive meaning, but looks to the possibilities inherent in reconstructing and reinterpreting narratives. Conspiracy theory, loss, missing time, and paranormal events are some of the subjects of Farmer's installation, *The Haunted Cottage 3.5 (From Hanging Rock to Cooper's Creek to Gallipoli also includes Poltergeist)* (1999) created for the Melbourne International Biennial. His *Hunchback Kit* (2000) includes a narrow shipping container, similar to the crates that the film industry uses to store camera equipment. The kit houses both cultural documentation such as videotapes relating to theatre, and a teacher's guide to screening the 1996 Disney version of the Hunchback, as well as, seemingly insignificant items including a cut-out snowflake, a light bulb and pieces of rope.

Farmer explores issues of art and artifice, reality and representation. His work reflects an interest in research, collection, archiving, display and practical instruction while developing almost contradictory methods of accessioning and dispersing these interests. It is a process of accumulation and divestment that bridges spaces between conflicting systems while enrolling others in the responsibility for the craft and growth of his pieces. For instance, some works continue to have items added or replaced as the installation changes venue. Farmer has developed a method of exposing the structure of museum curation and display, while engendering ongoing relationships with the institutions, galleries, curators and markets that he works with and which frame him.

Geoffrey Farmer has attended the San Francisco Art institute and the Emily Carr College of Art and Design. He has had solo exhibitions in Vancouver and Toronto and participated in group exhibitions including at the Mead Gallery, London, England; The Winnipeg Art Gallery; The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland; Villa de Ile Rose, Bologna, Italy; and the Konstakuten, Stockholm, Sweden. There have been a number of articles written about his installations, as well as three catalogues. His work is included in the permanent collections of both the National Gallery of Canada and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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KELLY WOOD

Kelly Wood's photographic work has been influenced by the conceptual art of the late sixties as well as by the work of Vancouver photo-conceptual artists such as Ian Wallace and Jeff Wall. She can be viewed as an intermediary between this established generation of Vancouver artists who are rooted in photography, and a newer generation of artists who use photography as a medium but are not defined by it.

Her work is perhaps best exemplified by her largest undertaking to date, the *Continuous Garbage Project 1998-2003*. In 1998 Wood began a five-year documentary project, photographing her own garbage before it was put out for collection. The project, which was completed at the end of March contains 275 photographs of ordinary garbage bags. In an early statement about the project, Wood wrote: "I am interested in documenting the volume of waste generated by an average urban inhabitant and making this totality visible via an artistic process". Her work embraces conceptual, aesthetic, diaristic, social, political, and environmental aspects as well as elements of performance. Wood is concerned with the photographic object and it's ability to convey "a serial conceptual document reflective of current pressing issues: staged waste management and all that we do not see".

Kelly Wood studied at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver and later received an M.F.A. at the University of British Columbia in 1996. She has had a number of solo exhibitions in Vancouver, St. Gallen, Switzerland, Toronto, Milwaukee, Montreal and San Francisco. Her photographic work has been included in group exhibitions at The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography in Ottawa, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., the Fotoinstituut in Rotterdam, Netherlands and the Fotomuseum in Wintertur, Switzerland. Wood has written about the work of other artists such as Mike Kelley and Michelle Normoyle and has collaborated on artist projects. Her work is included in private collections as well as the public art collection of The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, North York, Ontario; The Art Gallery of Ontario; The Canada Council Art Bank; The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography and the Vancouver Art Gallery.