



Photo ©IlanLevy

General view of the complete Library

Exhibition: Shai Zakai *Forest Tunes – The Library* 10 October- 22 November

After a 14 year journey (1995-2009) to record some of the imprint of humankind on the environment with leaves, stories and photographs, the project *Forest Tunes – The Library* is drawing to a close. In its complete form, the Library comprises 167 up-cycled boxes, containing organic material from 19 countries, creating the *black box*.

The project is a visual, yet restrained, warning. It is a place to contemplate human nature, whilst using most of our senses simultaneously – touch, smell, sight and sound. The multi-media installation is an observatory and a collection of largely damaged nature, highlighting the daily effects of global warming set in motion by human beings i.e. loss of biodiversity, deforestation and human indifference.

There are four layers of leaves and boxes on shelves, like geological strata: man-inflicted environmental Damages, Local Global Observations, a Personal Global Diary and The Nari, Simple Charm. Some boxes are marked as *Reserved*. This reading room is metaphorically connected to the Dewey Decimal System used in libraries throughout the world (thus every box starts with 770/...). Texts that do not usually appear together

do so here: scientific texts, Latin names of most of the plants in the Library, documentary narratives and prose or poetry that are not found in scientific libraries.

The uprooting of forests is a significant cause of global warming. The recognition in recent years of the need to take action in order to ameliorate warming effects has led to the need to search outside of science, using a more holistic approach. Trees and forests absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and retain the carbon for their entire lives, storing it in their leaves, roots, trunks and soil – a process called *carbon sequestration*.

Forest fires add carbon to the atmosphere and, along with climatic warming, could cause a global change in the protective forest function. In adding together the leaves, seeds and parts of branches, we can calculate how much carbon they hold. In other words, this exhibition is, actually, a *carbon reservoir*.

Gathering dry leaves, collecting unseen dramas, preserving and categorising them in boxes as an ongoing commitment, might evolve a new way of looking at the unseen. The library of leaves is a metaphor for

Shai Zakai

Forest Tunes –

The Library

the global forest. Looking at the leaves in the exhibition or in the catalogue, out of scientific context, getting to know them in a more intimate environment, may serve as an act of preservation, enabling remembrance and changing perception.

The stories of each box/card intend to awaken our sleeping intuition and allow it to flow again. The projected videos, *Genius Loci* and *Revival*, relate to entities in nature, giving them a face as the creators of the intrinsic value of a place.

The photographs, *Small Happenings*, is a series taken regularly as a vow and as an action, over 14 years, to keep a forest alive through observations and walks. The photographs give light to hidden interconnectedness, between ecological, feminine and life cycle relationships.

Continuing collaborations internationally while working on this project has led us to invite Devon artists and environmentalists to contribute up-cycled boxes containing organic materials inspired by personal memories of the natural environment. The public is invited to leaf through boxes from Korea, Japan, Australia, Cyprus, Kirgizstan, India, Israel,

among others; to read the texts inside each box and/or in the inventory and to ponder on the species that we are destroying unthinkingly. If this irresponsible behavior towards our environment continues, it will be possible to visit the leaf library and be reminded how nature used to look.

Shai Zakai 2009

At CCANW, designer Eran Spitzer and Shai Zakai have created handmade shelves from Haldon trees and recycled pallets for the 50 boxes imported from the Library, connecting Britannia Park (close to the artists' studio) in Israel with Haldon Forest Park in Britain. The installation includes a variety of forest ingredients in their different forms; tree trunks, industrial wood, carton boxes, leaves and seeds, recycled paper.

Exhibition designer – Eran Spitzer.
Botanist – Dr. Yoram Goldring,
Biologist – Yigal Granot.
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