

DartmoorARTS

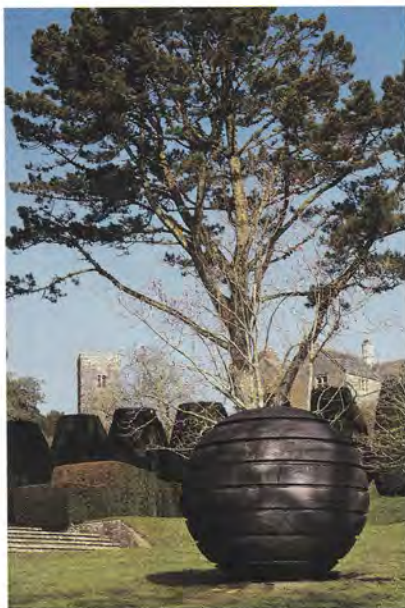
News and reviews with Susanne Haines

Tree Culture at CCANW

Easter marked the 5th Anniversary of the opening of the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World's Project Space in Haldon Forest Park. It also marked the start of CCANW's 2011/12 programme, Tree Culture, with a series of exhibitions and activities celebrating the UN International Year of Forests. It explores the cultural and environmental importance of trees through sculpture with an exhibition of the work of David Nash; of social networks with the 'University of the Trees'; and of digital technologies with 'A Conversation Between Trees'.

David Nash: Sculpture and Drawings

The work for this major exhibition was selected from David Nash's large retrospective exhibition earlier in the year at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Nash is one of Britain's most important sculptors in wood who has worked internationally for over 40 years from his studio base in North Wales. The exhibition includes a large work, *Three Humps*, which fronts the CCANW building and a major sculpture, *Black Sphere*, which is sited in the grounds of Dartington Hall.



Black Sphere, 2004, sited at Dartington Hall

The exhibition touches on the main areas of Nash's production: sculpture, drawings, films and studies. These range from the series of sculptures largely 'quarried' from fallen trees left to crack and warp, others grown from saplings and fletched into domes and other shapes, and films such as *Wooden Boulder* which documents the 32-year-long journey of an immense oak boulder along streams and rivers to the sea. The exhibition is accompanied by a special stencil edition of *Charred Cross Egg* made by Nash.

Mostly he tries to work with storm-torn trees, or those made available through other natural causes. He says, 'I go to a lot of trouble to make sure that the wood I'm being offered is being made available by legitimate means... so that it's ecologically correct. That to me is very important.'

At the heart of Nash's work is a profound knowledge of trees:

The word 'tree' is near to being a verb with a sense of increase, growing, spreading, doing and being; working with plant instinct, transforming raw materials, engaging light, moisture and warmth. There is a presence of evolved wisdom in the success of a tree's life. When the tree dies or is cut down, the 'tree' ceases as an activity leaving only its fibrous body material.

Alive, all parts of a tree are in fluid relationship from root hair to bud. When



David Nash at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

PHOTOGRAPH JONTY WILDE

no longer a tree each body part contains an imprint of that fluid whole, an echo that gives a sense of origin and nature. Wood can be worked to retain that echo.

While natural branch and twig shapes are beautiful in themselves, reminiscent of nature, it is transformation that creates meaning. The objects I make are vessels for the presence of the human being, aware and surrendering to the realities of nature. Realities that are the fundamental base to our survival. (Nash, 1986)

Several of the works have involved a process of charring in their making. Nash's use of fire in the shaping and finishing of sculptures is an effective way of shaping blocks of wood and adds a different dimension to the surface of the work. The charring often gives an



Three Humps, 2006, outside CCANW's project space

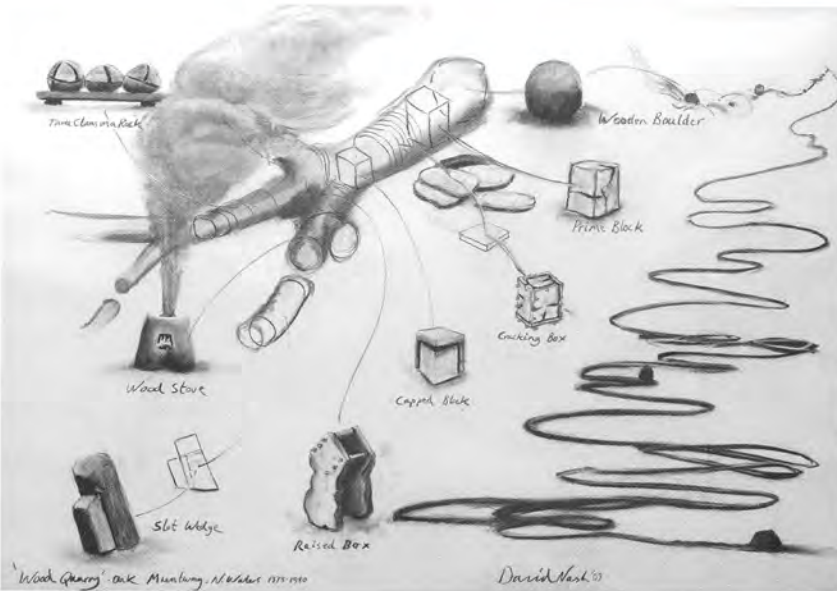
PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS LEWIS



PHOTOGRAPH JONTY WILDE

University of the Trees

This long-term participatory project is being developed by CCANW with Shelley Sacks, Director of the Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University. It takes forward the social sculpture strategies of Joseph Beuys' 'expanded conception of art'. A kit has been developed by Shelley that she describes as 'instruments of consciousness' which will be used in workshops during Tree Culture. The project encourages new ways of perceiving and acting that emerge from a closer exploration of our relationship with trees, forests and the natural world (see www.universityofthetrees.org).



PHOTOGRAPH JONTY WILDE

evocative and haunting atmosphere to the pieces as they retain the smell of the process for a long time.

Events and activities connected with the Tree Culture programme during the summer include: University of the Trees Open Day on 5 June (World Environment Day); a talk: University of the Trees and ecological citizenship on 11 June; and Drawing Trees Workshops on 5 August (with artist Daniel Holmes-Adams and forest ranger Ian Parsons) and on 18 August with Lesley Kerman.

The exhibition of work by David Nash at CCANW in Haldon Forest continues until 25 September. Visit www.ccanw.co.uk for further information and

opening hours. David Nash's sculpture *Black Sphere* will be on show in the grounds of Dartington Hall until 25 September as part of CCANW's exhibition (see www.dartington.org). CCANW wish to thank The Henry Moore Foundation for support of the exhibition. ■

TOP Ash Dome
 ABOVE LEFT *Wood Quarry*, 2009, drawing (6)
 ABOVE RIGHT *Platter and Bowl*, 1988

A Conversation between Trees

A new digital work by Nottingham-based artist group Active Ingredient will be installed in CCANW's gallery and in the forest in October as part of the Tree Culture programme. The artwork connects trees in different environments in Brazil and the UK, using environmental sensors technologies to interpret the data as an interactive installation. During the spring and summer Active Ingredient will be running workshops in the lead-up to their residency and the exhibition (see www.i-am-ai.net).

Wild wild wood

Britain's foremost wood sculptor's exhibition at Haldon Forest Park has become a sensation, writes SARAH FEELEY



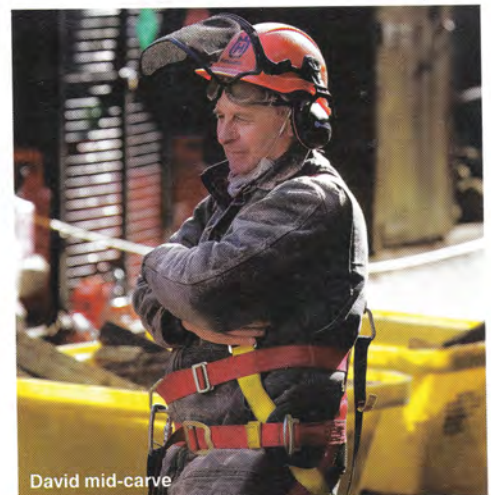
Trees are deeply symbolic for David Nash. And after working with wood for more than four decades, he's become one of Britain's most important wood sculptors.

Selected works from his acclaimed retrospective exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park are now on show as part of the Centre For Contemporary Art And The Natural World's year-long *Tree Culture* programme celebrating the value and beauty of trees. These include the mysterious and imposing *Black Sphere* in the grounds of Dartington Hall and the large sculpture *Three Humps* fronting the Centre For Contemporary Art And The

Natural World's building in Haldon Forest Park just outside Exeter.

David not only carves wood, largely from fallen trees, with chain and milling saws – skills he has perfected over the years – but he also creates sculptures from growing plants, cutting and training them into domes or ladders. His famous *Ash Dome*, planted as saplings in 1977, is now a mature dome centred on a plot of woodland in North Wales, his 'laboratory' for growing works and a place for thinking.

Explaining his approach to his sculptures, he said: "The word 'tree' is near to being a verb with a sense of increase, growing, spreading, doing and being; working with plant instinct, transforming



David mid-carve



Black Sphere in the grounds of Dartington Hall



David pruning his living sculpture Ash Dome

“Objects I make are vessels for the presence of the human being”

and surrendering to the realities of nature, realities that are the fundamental base to our survival.

“The best apples are those that have only been briefly cooked so they preserve their crispness and freshness. Similarly, a sculpture should be crisp and fresh, showing the mark of the tool that has just left it.”

The Centre For Contemporary Art And The Natural World's fifth anniversary programme *Tree Culture* coincides with the United Nations' International Year Of Forests which aims to raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of forests.

The David Nash exhibition runs until late September and will be followed by interactive digital installation *A Conversation Between Trees* (October to January 2012) which will make links with a rainforest in Brazil. www.ccanw.co.uk



David with Cuts Horizontal, Cuts Vertical, Diagonal (photo by Chris Lewis)

raw materials, engaging light, moisture and warmth. There is a presence of evolved wisdom in the success of a tree's life. When the tree dies or is cut down, the 'tree' ceases as an activity, leaving only its fibrous body material.

“Alive, all parts of a tree are in fluid relationship from root hair to bud. When no longer a tree, each body part contains an imprint of that fluid whole, an echo that gives a sense of origin and nature. Wood can be worked to retain that echo.

“While natural branch and twig shapes are beautiful in themselves, reminiscent of nature, it is transformation that creates meaning. The objects I make are vessels for the presence of the human being, aware

Centre For Contemporary Art And The Natural World,
Haldon Forest Park,
Exeter EX6 7XR
tel. 01392 832277
www.ccanw.co.uk



Cracking Box

Woodman

Don't miss this important exhibition of wood sculptures by David Nash

David Nash is one of Britain's most important sculptors in wood, a material in which he has worked from his base in North Wales for over 40 years, and at the heart of his work is a profound knowledge of trees. This exhibition is selected from his large retrospective exhibition, just ended at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and it includes a major sculpture, 'Black Sphere' which will be sited in the grounds of Dartington Hall (near Totnes).

Although modest in scale, this exhibition touches on the main areas of David's production: from the series of

sculptures 'quarried' largely from fallen trees and then left to crack and warp, others grown from saplings and fletched into domes and other shapes, and works such as 'Wooden Boulder', where he documents the 32-year journey of an immense oak boulder along streams and rivers to the sea.

CCANW is grateful to the Henry Moore Foundation for the grant that made this exhibition possible, to the Artist, Arts Council Collection, Museums Sheffield and Pete Telfer for their loans, and to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Dartmoor Arts and Dartington Arts for their collaboration.



This picture Black Sphere
Above Charred Cross Egg



PHOTOS: JOHTY WILDE



PHOTO: COLLECTION OF MUSEUMS SHEFFIELD



Far left
Cracked Box
Left Platter and Bowl

Above Ash Dome, a living sculpture in Wales

Below Wood Quarry, 2009 drawing

David Nash:
Sculpture and Drawings
22 April – 25 September.

Admission free

Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, Haldon Forest Park, Exeter, EX6 7XR.

01392 832277, ccanw.co.uk

Exhibition launch: all welcome!

Good Friday 22 April, 11am-12.30am.

Dartington Hall, near Totnes, to view 'Black Sphere' and screening of 'Wooden Boulder', with David's commentary.

From 2pm-4pm: at CCANW to view the main exhibition with David. Refreshments.

Tina Clavin

