

Press Release 8/28/2009

Interactive Mural uses Augmented Reality to Educate Festival Participants about the Upper Tuolumne Watershed

The Upper Tuolumne River Watershed serves up fresh drinking water to 2.4 million residents of the San Francisco bay area. The pristine waters are protected by Yosemite National Park and the surrounding forest.

Symbiosis Gathering 2009 will be held at the historic Camp Mather, located several miles from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, a part of the Upper Tuolumne River Watershed September 17th through 21st. Because of the nature of a watershed, activities that occur close to the source are magnified and transmitted throughout the system. This puts festival attendees in a unique role as environmental stewards responsible for the quality of life for their friends and families in the bay area, in a directly connected manner.

For Symbiosis Gathering 2009, three artists, Gabe Shaughnessy, Dan Cohen and Travis McCann will create an interactive mural that explores the ecology of the Upper Tuolumne River Watershed. The setting at Symbiosis provides an opportunity to reach a broad, inquisitive audience with a playful setting that encourages education and conversation. The mural is one of 20 eco art installations, intended to be creative, inspiring, physically and visually with interactive educational pieces designed to engage each attendee's own interpretation and learning experience. Ecological practices are strongly encouraged as the installations are part of the overall environmental education and sustainability initiatives led by Katrina Zavalney and Karen KoChen.

At the base level, the mural will be a stylized landscape of an area that has inspired countless artists, from Ansel Adams to Maynard Dixon. It will be an illustrated map of the flow of water from Yosemite Park snow melt to the bay area, populated with native trees, flowers and animals.

The interactive element comes in at night, when digital projection is added to the mix. A custom built control surface allows participants to push buttons and turn dials which effect various animations projected onto the surface of the mural, a technique known as Augmented Reality. Augmented Reality is an emerging field in art and technology where real-world experiences are modified or enhanced with a layer of digital information. In this particular instance, a digital projection will be seamlessly mapped to the tangible painting, creating the illusion of the painting coming to life.

The mural will address potential impacts on the watershed, both hypothetical and real threats to the pristine nature of the area. For example, should

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government legislation allow logging or motorized water sports near the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, or if traffic on nearby roads were to increase, or even if a non-native species were introduced to the mountain streams, the effects would be magnified and carried throughout the entire watershed. The mural will reflect these potential activities and more, including natural disasters, global warming, farming, and recreational activities.

The ultimate goal of the mural is to give festival participants a sense of their role in the larger picture, a feeling that even their smallest choices, like picking up a piece of litter, can have a great impact on the quality of life further downstream. The mural accomplishes this with an interactive and playful blend of the real world with the world of the imagination.

Symbiosis Greening Initiatives:

Dish Washing Station:

Reusable Dishes will be used to save those extra trees. Water will be used responsibly...

Eco-Educational Art Installations:

Learn to think like a watershed, nourish our lands like soil, filter water like gravel, and grow a micro garden like a forest.

A No Trash Event... Because there is no "Away":

Recycling, reusing, composting, cleaning up after ourselves, and tending our common, shared spaces... what a concept!

Nature Walks:

Learn about local and native tribes, herbs, animals, shrubs, trees and more on our self-guided and human-guided tours.

Eco-Arting for the Crafty:

Participate in transforming natural materials into beautiful creations of spirit.

Local Resources:

Meet the stewards of Yosemite Valley and the Sierra Woodlands and learn about new and existing land practices in California.

Eco Academy of Sciences!

Learn how to bake organic cookies in the sun, make the best compost tea for your garden, tend bees, and save seeds.

All-Star Organic Food Vendors:

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Drink an organic chai, nourish yourself with a smoothie made with care, or have an organic, balanced, and tasty meal by the lake!

Ecological Business Practices:

Whether they are selling sustainable products, powered by solar energy, giving away heirloom seeds, or setting up community-based practices, these vendors are creating a new buzz in the marketplace...

The artists websites are:

<http://gabesimagination.com>

<http://dc-creativelabs.com>

<http://pleasuretek.com>

The Symbiosis website is:

<http://www.symbiosisevents.com/>

