

**Exhibition Considering Artists' Relationship with the Environment
Opens at Bowdoin Museum December 2018**

From a Fayum mummy portrait and a medieval manuscript to the 19th century landscapes of Albert Bierstadt and Mary Blood Mellen, to contemporary works by Mel Chin, Leonardo Drew, and Agnes Denes, Material Resources will probe 2,000 years of artists' engagement with the natural world

Brunswick, Maine, October 17, 2018 — In December, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) will open *Material Resources: Intersections of Art and the Environment*, a global consideration of the ways artists have engaged with and understood the environment. On view December 6, 2018 through June 2, 2019, *Material Resources* will bring together over 80 objects from the BCMA's encyclopedic collection to explore this fundamental relationship across cultures and over 2,000 years of history, ranging from a Fayum mummy portrait and medieval manuscript to seminal landscapes by Albert Bierstadt, Mary Blood Mellen, and Carleton Watkins, and contemporary works by Barry Dana, Christo, Mel Chin, Leonardo Drew, and Agnes Denes. Highlighting artists' historic dependence on Earth's material resources, the exhibition will question how the production of art objects reveals interconnected ecologies—cultural, political, and social.

Arranged in three sections—Extraction, Conservation, and Development—each term reflecting a different mode of artistic engagement with the environment, *Material Resources* will explore the intertwined narratives of both the natural resources that facilitate artistic production and art itself as a resource for understanding the environment.

“Extraction” will highlight the historic and global use of natural resources—fibers, earth, wood, and minerals—in the production of material objects. In conversation with a nineteenth-century New Ireland fiber mask, Pre-Columbian ceramics, and a Fayum mummy portrait, “Extraction” will feature Mel Chin's *Caged Corn* (1992-2014), an ear of corn grown by the artist to absorb heavy metals from soil and organically de-contaminate the earth in his landmark collaborative project *Revival Field*. *Caged Corn* simultaneously illustrates the extensive history of pollution at the field site in the toxins it now contains and the potential of artistic activism to inform environmental stewardship. Chin's work is one of several objects in *Material Resources* that is part of the Archival Collection of the Marion Boulton Stroud and Acadia Summer Arts Program, Mt. Desert, Maine, a transformational gift of nearly 350 contemporary works recently donated to the BCMA by the Marion Boulton “Kippy” Stroud Foundation.

“Conservation” will focus on the nineteenth-century artistic impetus to harness the American landscape as an important resource. Encompassing westward expansion, the development of the National Park system, and Native American displacement, this section will feature a contemporary birchbark basket by Barry Dana, former Chief of the Penobscot Nation, that integrates Edward S. Curtis's early-twentieth-century ethnographic study of the American Indian as source material, reclaiming and transforming this imagery. “Development” will explore the twentieth-century development of the built, human-made structures of civilization within the natural environment. In tandem with works by Le Corbusier, Marilyn Bridges, and Yvonne Jacquette, this section will include the work of pioneering environmental artist Agnes Denes, whose 1994 print, *The Pyramids as They Were*, demonstrates her career-long fascination with pyramidal forms and her consistent use of the mathematical and philosophical construction as a symbol of society's structure.

“*Material Resources* will present an environmental thread that runs through the BCMA’s collection, linking artists, objects, and cultures in innovative and often unexpected ways,” said exhibition curator Honor Wilkinson, BCMA curatorial assistant and manager of student programs. “At a moment when environmental changes are becoming increasingly visible in our daily lives, we have an obligation as scholars and students to examine art-making’s engagement with, and documentation of, the natural world and the built environment, as well as art’s historic role in constructing society’s perceptions of the environment. Arranged through case studies in the complex relationships between art and the environment, the exhibition offers frameworks for understanding these connections thematically and in a forward-looking perspective.”

“We are delighted to present *Material Resources* this fall,” said Anne Collins Goodyear, co-director of the BCMA. “In highlighting many of the myriad intersections between art and the environment, this exhibition allows us to consider how artists have, over many centuries, framed and contributed to what has become one of the most pressing issues of our era: how we steward the natural resources for future generations. Artists add a critical perspective not only in drawing attention to environmental challenges, but in suggesting how we might address these issues.”

Co-director Frank Goodyear continued, “Utilizing the Bowdoin College Museum of Art’s extensive encyclopedic holdings, *Material Resources* reflects the College’s dedication to training students to think critically and expansively about environmental issues. We are proud to be a part of conversations happening throughout the liberal arts curriculum at the College and have been privileged to engage faculty across campus in framing the terms of this exhibition.”

The show will be accompanied by a publication featuring an essay by exhibition curator Honor Wilkinson and short reflections by Bowdoin faculty members on the role of BCMA objects in teaching environmental studies.

Material Resources will open just two months after the October 12, 2018 debut of the [Roux Center for the Environment](#) at Bowdoin College, a landmark interdisciplinary institute to further support collaboration and creativity in the teaching and scholarship in this area.

About the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the United States. Collecting commenced over 200 years ago with a major gift from the College’s founder James Bowdoin III and his family that included Gilbert Stuart’s magnificent portraits of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The Museum is housed in the landmark Walker Art Building, designed in 1894 by Charles Follen McKim. Located on the historic quadrangle of Bowdoin College, the building is graced by murals by John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Elihu Vedder, and Abbott Thayer. A \$20.8-million renovation and expansion in 2007 provided a stunning setting for objects as diverse as monumental Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud, Iraq; European Old Master paintings; and works by American modernists. The Museum is the centerpiece of Bowdoin’s vibrant arts and culture community and offers a wealth of academic and educational programs. The Museum is also a prominent summer venue for major exhibitions such as *Edward Hopper’s Maine* (2011); *William Wegman: Hello Nature* (2012); *Maurice Prendergast: By the Sea* (2013); *Richard Tuttle: A Print Retrospective* (2014); *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860 – 1960* (2015); *This Is a Portrait If I Say So: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today* (2016); *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality*

in Renaissance Europe (2017) and *Winslow Homer and the Camera: Photography and the Art of Painting* (2018).

Fully accessible, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art is open to the public free of charge from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday; 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday; and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

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