

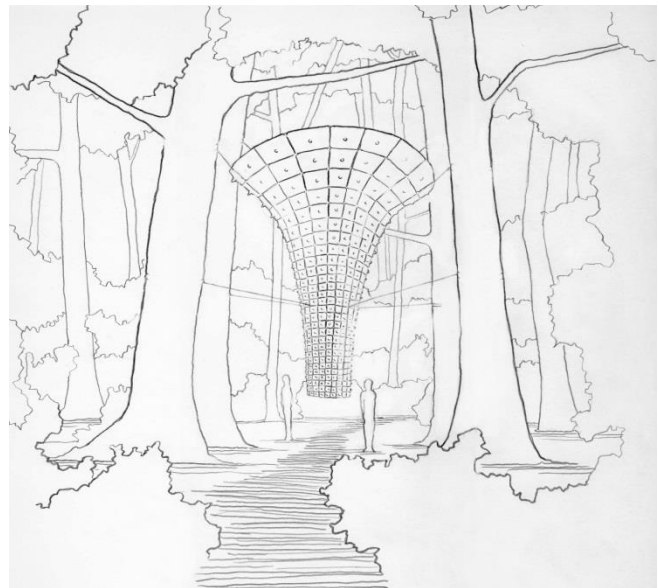
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**THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN'S BETTY AND EDWARD MARCUS
SCULPTURE PARK AT LAGUNA GLORIA WELCOMES NEW, SITE-SPECIFIC
INSTALLATION BY ARTIST JOHN GRADE**

John Grade: *Canopy Tower*
Opens February 14, 2014

JANUARY 26, 2015, AUSTIN, TEXAS – The Contemporary Austin announces the installation of *Canopy Tower*, Seattle artist John Grade's first project in the state of Texas. Commissioned specifically for the museum's Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria, *Canopy Tower* resembles a large-scale inverted tower, carved and assembled from Brazilian Ipe wood and suspended from three trees. The long-term exhibition of the installation begins February 14, 2015.

With work that can be contextualized within the art historical continuum of Land art by figures such as Robert Smithson, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, and Nancy Holt (whose work *Time Span*, 1981, is also on view at Laguna Gloria), John Grade integrates his installations within their situated environments. His practice draws from his own diverse travels—from the Arctic Circle to the American Southwest—with projects that often mirror patterns found in nature, invite viewers into an interactive experience with the work, and raise questions about the human passage through time and space. Seeking to enrich and expand viewers' (and his own) relationships to place, Grade subtly inserts his sculptures into the landscape, combining natural media that have included wood, clay, slate, and goat fur with engineered materials like dissolving corn and potato based resins.



For his commission at The Contemporary Austin, Grade, an avid backcountry hiker and mountaineer, focused on the forested areas off the traveled paths of the grounds of the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park. Taking inspiration from the wind that blows off the lake and through the large, old

trees dotting the site, *Canopy Tower* hangs above the ground among the trees, high enough for a viewer to duck inside, allowing for the piece to be experienced from both inside and outside. The lower half of the hardwood sculpture is stationary, creating a sense of sheltered security, in dynamic contrast to the top half of the piece, which is allowed to flex and shift with the wind. The sculpture is dotted with hundreds of carved, fluted forms that extend out from the panels of wood. These forms—which the artist relates to coccolithophore, a phytoplankton that plays a role in the global carbon cycle—puncture the hardwood surfaces, admitting light in patterns that dance across the interior of the piece as the upper tier moves in the wind. As with much of Grade's work, chance, change, and environment are major elements in the life of *Canopy Tower*, which is expected to evolve or even degrade over the course of the installation as it is exposed to the weather and environment. The artwork "performs" with nature and will rarely be experienced in a static, pure state due to ongoing activation by the elements. As its quiet author, Grade subtly integrates the work into its environment, calling attention to the journey of the art object over time.

JOHN GRADE

John Grade (American, born 1970 in Minneapolis, MN) lives and works in Seattle. Grade creates large-scale sculptures that are exhibited internationally in museums, galleries, and outdoors in nature. His projects are designed to change over time and often involve collaboration with large groups of people to build and install. The artist is the recipient of the 2010 Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Tiffany Foundation Award, an Andy Warhol Foundation Award, two Pollock-Krasner Foundation grants, and the 2011 Arlene Schnitzer Prize from the Portland Art Museum. Past exhibitions include the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Emory University, Atlanta; Bellevue Arts Museum, Washington; and the Seattle Art Museum. Grade's 65-foot sculpture *Wawona* is permanently installed at the Museum of History & Industry, Seattle, where it breaks through the floor and ceiling of the building, bridging the water and sky. The artist is currently working on a three-year project documenting and modeling changing landforms above the Arctic Circle, including sites in northern Iceland, Siberia, Greenland, and arctic Alaska.

RELATED PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

Second Saturdays Are for Families: Tabletop Biospheres

Feb 14 (Sat) 11A-3P

Join us anytime between 11A and 3P for a fun, hands-on art-making workshop where kids ages 2-11 can make their own miniature underwater ecosystem to explore how nature affects art, inspired by John Grade's natural installation near the water at Laguna Gloria. See how long your habitat will last and how your submerged art changes over time.

Art Walk with John Grade

Feb 14 (Sat) 2P

Meet in the Driscoll Villa, Laguna Gloria

Join Seattle-based artist and avid explorer John Grade for a walk through the trees to discover his new commission *Canopy Tower*. Hear how natural patterns, conditions, and materials inspired this monumental, site-specific sculpture.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

John Grade: *Canopy Tower* is organized by guest curator Rachel Adams. Exhibition support comes from the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation and The Contemporary Austin's Vision Fund Leaders and Contributors. Museum support is provided by Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation, Bank of America, Oxford Commercial, Pedernales Cellars, and Vinson & Elkins LLP. This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department, a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts, and by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Art Works.

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

The Contemporary Austin reflects the spectrum of contemporary art through exhibitions, commissions, education, and the collection. The museum has two distinct yet complementary locations, the Jones Center in downtown Austin at 700 Congress Avenue, and Laguna Gloria, a twelve-acre site on Lake Austin at 3809 W. 35th Street, which is home to the Driscoll Villa, the Art School, and the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria.

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IMAGE CREDIT:

John Grade, *Rendering for Canopy Tower*, 2014. Graphite on paper. Courtesy the artist and Cynthia Reeves.