



Santa Fe Art Institute

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Contact:
Linda Milanesi
lindam505@earthlink.net
505.992.3321

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Internationally Renowned Artists, Helen and Newton Harrison, Explore Relationship Between Ecology and Art in Exhibition Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place

December 11, 2004 – January 22, 2005

**Opening Lecture with artists Helen and Newton Harrison:
December 11, 3 p.m., Tipton Hall, College of Santa Fe
\$5.00/\$2.50 seniors and students**

**Member's Preview:
December 11, 2 - 3pm, Santa Fe Art Institute**

**Public Opening:
December 11, 4 – 7 p.m., Santa Fe Art Institute**

SANTA FE—"...Bit by bit we are led to see that in order to restore the flow of water, it is first necessary to heal the earth." So reads an excerpt from the artists' statement that accompanies a new exhibition at the Santa Fe Art Institute titled *Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place*. The exhibition, conceived and created by artists Helen and Newton Harrison, opens on December 11, 2004 from 5 – 7 p.m., and is on view through January 22, 2005.

For more than 30 years, the Harrisons have created major works throughout the world that address the multi-layered relationship between art and ecology. *Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place*, a public art project instigated by the Santa Fe Art Institute, is a collaborative effort that presents a complex set of works, which address the dire conditions of the Santa Fe River, and proposes a self-renewing process that involves history, community engagement, public facilities, and a vibrant new life for the river. The Harrisons' work uses audio, visual, mechanical, and biological materials to create a narrative about place, its ecological and social realities, and to encourage community discourse and involvement.

Helen and Newton Harrison, world reknown environmental artists, have accepted our invitation to do a 'consideration' for the Santa Fe River. The project (imaginative enough to challenge expectations but realistic enough to be buildable) demonstrates the formidable power of the artist to overcome longstanding social obstacles by engaging the creative and innovative aspects of art to bridge differences, propose new ideas and present new solutions. The Harrisons gather community already at work, making their expertise and passion an essential part of the process of developing a compelling powerful art form to make the Santa Fe River once again an integral part of the urban fabric. Working with specialists and groups of young people, the project hopes to engage the youth of Santa Fe to foster a sense of ownership and develop stewardship in the next generation. – Diane Karp, Director SFAI

The culmination of over two years of research and work on ways to weave the Santa Fe River back into the urban fabric of the community, and bring it back to life, the exhibition at SFAI stimulates opinion and discussion about the final proposal for the river. The exhibition presents large-scale maps of the past, present, and future terrain of the river, video, photographic images, cultural narratives, and personal recollections.

“As artists, we believe that the cultural landscape is formed by a complex narrative...and that every place is telling the story of its own becoming,” explained the Harrisons. “...We see ourselves joining this story of place as part of a long tradition of story tellers using verbal and visual metaphors to create the images, diverse proposals, videos and models in this installation, which together are designed to create images of the possible future landscape of the Santa Fe Watershed.”

Northern New Mexico has long been the subject of culturally diverse concerns about water and land usage. The fabric of this ambitious project weaves together many aspects that have already been developed by landscape architects, ecologists, hydrologists, granting agencies and scientists. A fresh look and a more holistic vision emerge from bringing together these specialists and community members in a dialogue about the future of the river.

Water is key to our future. Unfortunately, our urban water budgets are frequently broken into disconnected pieces that focus on single solutions instead of an integrated system that mimics and cooperates with the world's most successful engineer—Nature. What the Harrisons have co-created in tandem with others is a forum for reclamation of the river, and a stimulus for cultural work within the community. *Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place* brings together diverse populations in a massive public art proposal that provides a new synthesis and points to ways in which art can offer a new vision and pathway for thinking about the environment, the city and its people.

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Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place expands upon Santa Fe Art Institute's mission to explore the intersections of art and society by using artistic imagination to delve into issues, expand discourse, and enhance understanding of the role of the arts in contemporary society. SFAI is dedicated to the presentation of substantive programs that give unprecedented access to the ideas of contemporary thinkers in the arts, humanities, and sciences.

For more information please visit SFAI's website at www.sfai.org or call 505-424-5050. Santa Fe Art Institute is located at 1600 St. Michael's Drive, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505.

Santa Fe Watershed: Lessons from the Genius of Place is funded with support from The Burnett Foundation, City of Santa Fe Arts Commission Community Arts Development Program, Lannan Foundation, McCune Charitable Foundation, Santa Fe Rotary Foundation, and Santa Fe Art Institute's Board of Trustees.