

For Immediate Release

Five Finalists Announced for Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Arts Award

Ron Bourgeois, Chair of the Nova Scotia Masterworks Awards Foundation announced today the short list of five finalists for the prestigious \$25,000 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Arts Award which celebrates outstanding contemporary art in all its forms. The finalists were selected by an arms-length jury of artists from across Nova Scotia.

In making the announcement, Bourgeois noted: “2009 represents the 4th edition of the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia’s Masterworks Arts Awards. In these four years the Award has celebrated the creative excellence of some 20 artists and contributed over \$100, 000 towards artistic expression in this province. We are thrilled to be able to help advance the arts in Nova Scotia and help engage all Nova Scotians in the celebration of artistic excellence.”

The finalists are:

CSDC 3-8 (Compound Spiral Double Cone, No. 3, 8 Sided), a 25-foot long double spiral sculpture turned from red spruce, created by John Macnab. Suspended horizontally, it presents a floating form of lyrical grace and simplicity that belies the complexity of its production and its remarkable cross-disciplinary origins. Macnab combined his wood-turning background and engineering skills to invent a 20-foot vertical lathe capable of turning large-scale sculptures to complicated formulae. With this unique tool, Macnab has been able to re-think the craft tradition and, drawing on his fascination with mathematics, science and the spiral growth of natural forms (from seashells to galaxies), to produce a powerful and elegant work that bridges the gap between industrial precision and creative expression.

God’s Middle Name. A fast-paced series of vignettes that unflinchingly explore a mother’s multiple challenges of living with an autistic child and her intense emotional journey from denial to acceptance, the play was created by Jennifer Overton, Scott Burke, Rejean Cournoyer, Denyse Karn, Michael Doherty and Bruce MacLennan. Based on Jennifer Overton’s book *Snapshots of Autism*, this brave production is the result of six talented and experienced theatre artists working very effectively together. Frank and unsentimental, informative without being didactic, deeply moving yet often playful and funny, the work tackles personal, serious subject-matter in a bold, creative manner. Drawing on a range of theatrical genres, from vaudeville through Jeopardy-style TV programs to crime thrillers, the economical staging blends lighting, music, costumes and set into a seamless, engaging and affirmative production.

Mandible, an innovative, large-scale ceramic sculpture suspended from the gallery ceiling by an integrated tensile system. *Mandible* is the work of Neil Forrest. Its use of lead glazed stoneware on such an impressive scale immediately engages the viewer and challenges traditional boundaries between craft, architecture and fine art. Forrest’s lengthy, sophisticated involvement with ceramic theory and practice and his exploration of biomorphic forms and natural systems of organization (such as rhizomes and hiving activities), has led him to create multi-part projects, of which *Mandible* is the most recent and, arguably, most accomplished: a sculptural installation with a fascinating, unsettling presence, whose surfaces, rich hues and organic references elicit a complex, visceral response from the viewer.

See Below, an immersive experience of the ocean floor, re-enacted through a group of huge black and white painted canvases, created by Susan Feindel. The canvases (based on sonar side-scan imagery) covering the floor of the dimly-lit gallery, were accompanied by small pin-pricked map drawings illuminated from beneath, and an ambient sound-scape recorded with Norwegian marine sediment. Feindel's extensive research for this project includes several guest residencies on oceanographic research vessels. Courageously original in conception and execution, the installation combines science, technology and art, dramatically invoking, for example, the scars of scallop dragging and trawling and the fragility of the deep ocean environment off Canada's eastern continental shelf. In this mature and affecting work Feindel offers a total sensory experience that is both locally and globally significant.

The Colours of Citizen Arar, a powerful, provocative wall painting by Garry Neill Kennedy, occupied the Zwicker Gallery at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia for nine months in 2007/8. Dramatically filling the space with intense vertical bands of colour, the work's more sinister references slowly cohered out of the black shadows of the superimposed text: the colours were named in descriptions of the bruises, humiliations and instruments of torture experienced by Canadian citizen Maher Arar during his infamous interrogation in Syria. Kennedy's large, conceptually challenging wall paintings, all employing the "Superstar Shadow" font, deal with issues of power in culture; however, due to the tension between its initial visual seductiveness and underlying tragic referent, this monumental yet evanescent work is his most overtly political and arguably most poignant.

Her Honour, the Honourable Mayann E, Francis, ONS, DHumL, when advised of the short list, said "I am delighted that this award continues to recognize distinguished artists from all fields. Their contributions enhance the identity and richness of Nova Scotia and Canada, something all citizens can take pride in."

The 2009 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Arts Award will be presented at the Creative Nova Scotia Conference in Yarmouth on Saturday, Oct. 24. The winner receives \$25,000 with the other four finalists each receiving \$1500. The short listed works may be viewed on the Foundation's website: www.nsmasterworks.ca. The Award recognizes the excellence and creation of a particular work of art or performance of art, which has made a significant impact in its public presentation, and contributed to the historical development and contemporary practice of the art form. It is sponsored by The Province of Nova Scotia, The Craig Foundation and The Chronicle Herald.

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For further information:

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Chrystine Chambers, Strategic Arts Management (902) 830-6619

Judy Campbell, Nova Scotia Masterworks Awards Foundation, (902) 429-3788