

CHAZEN MUSEUM OF ART
University of Wisconsin–Madison
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PRESS RELEASE
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Silver Wings and Golden Scales: An Installation by Jennifer Angus and Alistair MacDonald

Exhibition: April 7–June 24, 2007

Reception and Lecture: April 20, 2007

The Chazen Museum's Mayer Gallery will be home to a thought-provoking visual and sonic experience from April 7 through June 24, 2007. In *Silver Wings and Golden Scales*, Jennifer Angus will cover the gallery walls with exotic insect specimens pinned in a wave-like pattern that gradually grows denser and then fades out. As the viewer walks the length of the installation, Alistair MacDonald's composition of insect-like sonorities will also swell and then fade. Horizontal lines created by adjoining wings will suggest lines of a musical score, and circular arrangements of brightly colored insect bodies will imply the notes themselves; Angus will use only insects that produce audible sound in life, like cicadas, katydids, and grasshoppers. MacDonald's sound component will include recordings of Malaysian jungle insects, and his transformed insect (and other) sounds will play with the continuum between the abstract and the recognizable. The combined experience of sight and sound repetition will suggest a life cycle—birth, life, and death—and encourage viewers to consider the natural world and their place within it.

Angus's exhibitions of colorful wall patterns refer to wallpaper or textiles and are designed using dried insects collected largely from Southeast Asia. None of the insects are endangered; they are obtained through reputable dealers and collected by local residents, who become invested in preserving the habitats that provide their livelihood. Her work explores the interplay between science and art, incorporating elements of cultural anthropology, ecology, sociology, and domesticity. During early training in textile design Angus became fascinated with the nature and uses of pattern and repetition, and while studying tribal dress in Southeast Asia she discovered that many groups would adorn their garments and baskets with insect bodies. In the United States, insects are associated with dirt and disease, but Angus's work shows their beauty and challenges perceptions of them as unhealthy pests.

MacDonald's work draws on a wide range of influences and reflects an interest in improvisation, transformation of sound, spatial location, and behavior. He frequently collaborates with artists working in various media and explores sonic environments beyond the concert hall, often using interactive technology. Together the artists use pattern as an auditory and visual device in this exhibition in order to explore its potential for communicating ideas.

Jennifer Angus is an associate professor in the art department and School of Human Ecology at UW–Madison. She received her M.F.A. in 1991 from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago after earning her B.F.A. from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1984. She has exhibited her work internationally and received numerous awards, including Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council grants. Three of her pieces are in the permanent collection of the Canadian Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. (Please see www.jenniferangus.com for a statement by the artist on her artistic principles, as well as additional information on her work and past exhibitions.)

Alistair MacDonald is a composer and performer of electroacoustic music. His work has won a Creative Scotland Award, and it is performed and broadcast throughout the United Kingdom and abroad. He teaches composition and regularly directs workshops in schools, colleges, and arts centers. He is also the director of the Electroacoustic Studios at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. (Past compositions and a list of works can be found at www.alistairmacdonald.co.uk.)

Reception

The public is invited to attend a lecture by Jennifer Angus and a free reception on April 20. The lecture begins at 5:30 p.m. in room L140, to be followed by the reception at 6:30 p.m. in Brittingham Gallery III.

Funding

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This exhibition continues a tradition of installations at the Chazen Museum of Art that feature unique materials and challenging designs by contemporary artists. In 2004–2005, a site-specific installation by artist Xu Bing entitled *The Glassy Surface of a Lake* featured 6,000 nine-inch-high cast aluminum letters connected by wire that spelled out a 1,000 word text from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and was visible 40 feet above the floor of the museum's central interior court. Other major installations have included *Spiral* by Gillian Jagger (2002–2003), *If I Had a Boat* (2000–2001) by Judy Pfaff, *Labyrinth* by Patrick Ireland (1992–1993), and *Fireflies and Ferris Wheels* by Sam Gilliam (1990).

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