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SYLVA CALEDONIA

Collins and Goto Studio • Gerry Loose and Morven Gregor • Chris Fremantle, ecoartscotland

Summerhall, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2015



SYLVA CALEDONIA

Collins and Goto Studio with Sara Ocklind
Gerry Loose and Morven Gregor
Chris Fremantle, [ecoartscotland](http://ecoartscotland.com)

This exhibition is developed for *How The Light Gets In*, curated by
Edinburgh International Science Festival
ASCUS Art and Science and Summerhall

Presented at Summerhall
Edinburgh, Scotland, 2015

SUMMERHALL

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL
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An introduction to the *Sylva Caledonia* exhibition

The historical Meadows' elms edge their way into *Sylva Caledonia*. One of the city's most prominent recreational areas, the urban park gained world-wide recognition hosting the 1886 International Exhibition on Industry, Science and Art. This now popular open space embodies man's disposition to enjoy the fruits of nature. It was once the site of the Old Town's main water source additionally used for washing animals, and when no one was looking a depository for human waste. In 1722 it was drained, and the area began to evolve, however the public did not gain full access till the mid-19th century.

Framed by the windows of the gallery, and the *Sylva Caledonia* environment, the frill of the Meadows subtly alludes to what the artists - Tim Collins and Reiko Goto, with Sara Ocklind, and Gerry Loose and Morven Gregor, and Chris Fremantle - seek to absorb, share and question. Their enquiries unearth the subject of cultural ecology, addressing our relationship with nature, specifically the woodlands of Scotland. Presented within the Phenotype Genotype Gallery are nurtured responses to man's need to feel and often create nature, whilst attempting to manipulate the evolution and history of a landscape, and the chasm which ensues. *Sylva Caledonia* is anchored by the artists' experiences in these areas where the wild is monitored and managed; vast spaces often out of sight and mind for the populace. It focuses on our relationships with these ancient forests, while also engaging with the all-consuming topic of climate change, and our duty to assume responsibility for sustainability.

The artists' sensitivity brings hope to these testing, murky and encumbering dynamics, presenting a series of works arresting their understandings, within and around the glass cabinets, framing the treescapes much like the windows of the gallery. Achieved through interdisciplinary methodology, their practices are informed through conversations and relationships they have prompted with scientists, foresters, ecologists, land managers as well as poets and other artists. This aesthetic pragmatism towards cultural ecology learns from the past, contextualises the present, and brings optimism to the future.

Holly Knox Yeoman
Summerhall Exhibition Manager

The Caledonian Everyday

Chris Fremantle describes *Sylva Caledonia* as an idea that emerged from a six hour discussion with Collins, Goto, Loose and Gregor about the role of the arts and humanities in the perception of the ancient woodlands of Scotland. He is interested in how the arts & humanities represent something that is remote (either historically or geographically) for an urban audience. He suggests that representation is successful when it brings the subject alive for the audience. This is a particular challenge when trying to bring ancient forests into the heart of the capital city.

During the exhibition Fremantle will open up a civic space for a wider conversation. The discussion centres around three key thoughts. One thought is about the Anthropocene and management and it goes like this, "If we are affecting everything, then we need to think about what it means to manage everything?" Management of forests is no longer restricted to issues of extraction vs biodiversity. If we are managing everything, and management requires information, then we need to learn to be sensitive in new ways.

The second relationship is between the iconic and of the everyday. Where is the Caledonian forest embodied in the central belt? How can the arts and humanities engage with forests, in particular ancient Caledonian forests, and how might that relate to connections with other woodlands, commercial, urban, even degraded motorway edges?

The third question relates to attachment. We know that the arts and humanities can create connections. Do the cultural institutions of Scotland enrich our relationship with ancient Caledonian forests? What are the examples of practices making these connections?

Reflections on these topics resulting from discussions with foresters, artists, curators and funders will be posted on ecoartscotland after the exhibition.



Chris Fremantle, *the ecoartscotland library*. It is available for reading and research through out the exhibition. After the exhibition access can be provided by appointment at the office in Ayreshire.