



artscorp..

A Newfoundland Outport Stage for the Arts

***Fogo Island Arts Corporation launches arts programs
with opening of spectacular new studio***

Fogo Island, NL, June 1, 2010 – On June 2, the Fogo Island Arts Corporation celebrates the opening of a stunning new studio, and officially launches an artist Residency Program designed to attract some of the world's top contemporary artists to Fogo Island.

Located in Joe Batt's Arm, the Long Studio – the first of a series of buildings being built for the program – offers an inspiring work space for creative thinkers and innovators from around the globe. The program's first visiting artist, New Delhi-based designer and photographer Siddhartha Das, will be present at the grand opening of the studio on June 2.

Bringing together the best of the contemporary arts scene and local communities

Through her former work in Northern Europe, Elísabet Gunnarsdóttir has seen first-hand the powerful effects of highlighting the arts in rural communities.

Now director of the Fogo Island Arts Corporation, Gunnarsdóttir says, “Great art can not only exist in large urban centres. It can be connected with other types of communities as well. As a result of globalization, we have grown accustomed to travelling the world – without putting down roots anywhere. That is a real contrast to life in a place like Fogo Island, where you feel such a strong connection to the natural world and close bonds with the people who share this little piece of the planet.”

She adds, “I hope to help bring together the best of what is happening out there in the world with the very local traditions and arts found here. These two belong together – and together we can draw from the past and the present to create something new and unique for the future.”

A studio space that innovates while respecting tradition

The 120-square-metre Long Studio symbolizes the marriage of innovation and tradition. The structure is built on stilts – a design inspired by the fishing stages (wooden buildings traditionally used to land and process fish) that dot the shores of Fogo Island's outports. Architect Todd Saunders is originally from Newfoundland, but has worked in Norway for the last decade, gaining a reputation as one of the world's top architects under age 40.

The Long Studio is a bold geometric structure that stands out in the landscape while complementing it. Large windows allow visiting artists to fully experience the surrounding environment through all four seasons. The building is also designed to meet high environmental standards, built off the grid and with minimal impact on its site.

“We are at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, and there is a strong need to rethink the way we have been doing things in the arts as well as in other fields. We want to create a new epicenter in a very specific place, away from the metropolis,” Gunnarsdóttir said.

The Long Studio will eventually be joined by other studio spaces for visiting visual artists, performing artists, filmmakers and writers. In addition, the Shorefast Foundation, which supports the Fogo Island Arts Corporation, has purchased several heritage homes and decommissioned churches on Fogo Island and is refurbishing them for use by Arts Corporation projects. This decentralized structure will allow visiting artists to live in outports throughout the islands and to become part of the communities they live in.

Two distinct but complementary programs

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is running two distinct, but complementary arts programs. The Residency Program, for which Siddhartha Das is the first visiting artist, and the Production Program.

During its first year, participation in the Residency Program is by invitation only. However, the Arts Corporation is putting out an open call to visual artists, curators, filmmakers and writers interested in taking part in the program for 2011. Applications can be found at www.artscorpfogoisland.ca.

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation also runs a Production Program, bringing together artists with local communities to create contemporary work that is rooted in the region. The program organizes workshops, art projects, seminars, exhibitions and other events in cooperation with artists and partners of diverse professional backgrounds.

“All our projects are about capturing the essence of this place, building on what was created by those who have come before,” says Gunnarsdóttir. “We don't want to dwell in the past, but we want to respect it and work with it.”

The first publication from the Production Program – 4 dimensional mapping – is an exploration into the relationship between people and place. It is being published June 2, in conjunction with the opening of the Long studio.

An advisory board made up of some of the world's top curators in the fields of contemporary art, architecture and design will work closely with the director to identify artists who would benefit most from a period of residency on the islands – and who would contribute the most to the community during their stay.

Is New Delhi all that far from Fogo Island? Siddhartha Das: first resident artist

The first international resident artist to enjoy a sojourn on Fogo Island is Siddhartha Das, who will be working out of the Long Studio starting in July.

Das describes himself as “a designer who works on projects that impact on societies at large – urban and rural – in India and elsewhere.” He has designed building concepts, museum exhibitions, design systems, spaces, publications and products, as well as working as a photographer. His work has progressed from design into projects that use a variety of media and cross the lines between the fields of art, design, architecture and crafts.

Das won the British Council's Young Design Entrepreneur Award in 2008 for his work in creating an enterprise linking traditional craft communities to urban markets. The business was cited for its modern design and for a business model that provides a sustainable livelihood.

More information on his projects is available at <www.siddharthadas.com>.

About the Fogo Island Arts Corporation

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is a contemporary art venue on Fogo Island and Change Islands. The Arts Corporation seeks to attract the world's finest contemporary artists and thinkers, and to give the islands international visibility through the arts. The Corporation aims to bring leading contemporary artists – in fields including visual arts, new media, design, music, dance, writing and film – to residencies on the islands, and to bring together artists and local community members for workshops, art projects, seminars, exhibitions and other events. All Arts Corporation activities focus on locally rooted and site-specific themes inspired by Fogo Island's and Change Islands' unique place and people - and reach out to the international contemporary art scene at the same time. The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is supported by the Shorefast Foundation. For more information on the Arts Corporation, including backgrounders, please visit <www.artscorpfogoisland.ca>.

The Shorefast Foundation is a registered Canadian charity using entrepreneurial methods to help secure prosperity for the region of Fogo Island and Change Islands.
<www.shorefast.org>

The following are available for interviews:

Zita Cobb, President of the Shorefast Foundation

Elísabet Gunnarsdóttir, director of the Fogo Island Arts Corporation

Siddhartha Das, designer and first visiting artist

Todd Saunders, architect, designer of the Long Studio

Kitty Scott and Joseph Grima, members of the Fogo Island Arts Corporation Advisory Board.

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