



Backgrounder: The Fogo Island Arts Corporation

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is a new venue for contemporary art on Fogo Island and Change Islands, which are located approximately 15 kilometres off the northeast coast of Newfoundland.

The Corporation seeks to bring the finest contemporary artists and thinkers from around the world to the islands. The aim is to introduce international artists to local communities and practices, and to increase the international visibility of the islands through the arts.

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation runs two distinct yet complementary programs: the Residency Program and the Production Program. Both programs focus on locally rooted and site-specific themes inspired by the unique geography, cultures and people of Fogo Island and Change Islands.

The Residency Program aims to bring contemporary artists of international caliber to live and work on Fogo Island and Change Islands. The program encourages the participation of artists working in a wide range of disciplines, including – but not limited to – visual arts, new media, design, music, dance, writing and film.

Our mission to bring together local communities and the international art scene is reflected in the accommodations and work space provided to Residency Program participants. Striking new studios – designed by architect Todd Saunders, one of the world's top architects under 40 – are being built at locations across the island, with artist living spaces provided in refurbished traditional homes located in remote communities throughout the region.

The Production Program organizes workshops, art projects, seminars, exhibitions and other events in cooperation with a wide range of partners. One of the goals of the program is to bring together artists and local communities in order to create contemporary work rooted in the region. “All our projects are about capturing the essence of this place, building on what was created by those who have come before,” says Fogo Island Arts Corporation’s director Elisabet Gunnarsdóttir. “We don't want to dwell in the past, but we want to respect it and work with it.”

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is supported by the Shorefast Foundation (www.shorefast.org).

Vision

Art and creativity: powerful means of change!

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is a contemporary art venue on Fogo Island & Change Islands that offers programs for Canadian and international artists. The programs operate in close relationship with the people of Fogo Island and Change Islands, while also reaching out to the national and international art scene. The Corporation encourages innovative research processes across a wide range of disciplines.

Mission

Our aim is to give **visibility to Fogo Island and Change Islands through the arts.**

We will do this by creating a **contemporary art venue of international significance** and providing recognized and emerging artists with a unique cultural and physical environment to work in.

We will invite **artists of various disciplines** to live among the islands' communities in traditional dwellings and provide them with studios of high-quality contemporary design.

We will **encourage dialogue** so that visiting artists and local people can share experiences and perceptions, thereby enriching the lives of both groups.

We will **provide an arena for creative thinkers, curators and scientists** to interact with artists through various projects and critical research processes.

We will engage in **promoting projects and works** created by artists in residence to local and international audiences.

We value **equitable global citizenship**; through our program we will encourage entrepreneurship, sustainability and resilience, and seek to explore the impact of increased **geo-tourism** on the local community and its economy.

The Programs

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation runs two programs: the Residency Program and the Production Program. The two are distinct, but complementary.

The Residency Program

The Residency Program aims to bring contemporary artists of international caliber to live and work on Fogo Island and Change Islands. The program encourages the participation of artists working in a wide range of disciplines, including – but not limited to – visual arts, new media, design, music, dance, writing and film. The first visiting artist to participate in the program is designer and photographer Siddhartha Das, who is based in New Delhi.

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation's mission to bring together local communities and the international art scene is reflected in the accommodations and work space provided to

Residency Program participants. Striking new studios (with broadband access) are being built at locations across the island. They are designed by acclaimed architect Todd Saunders. The first of these studios – the Long Studio, located in Joe Batt's Arm – opens in June 2010.

Resident artists are provided with accommodations in refurbished traditional homes located in remote communities throughout the region. The Corporation is also in the process of renovating several de-commissioned churches, which can be used as multi-purpose venues for screenings, lectures, workshops, or as other project spaces.

For the first year of the program, residencies are offered by invitation only. Application guidelines and forms for residencies in 2011 are available on the Fogo Island Arts Corporation's website www.artscorpfogoisland.ca. An advisory board made up of some of the world's top curators helps select applicants for the Residency Program.

The Production Program

The Production Program brings together artists with local communities to create contemporary work that is rooted in the region. "All our projects are about capturing the essence of this place, building on what was created by those who have come before. We don't want to dwell in the past, but we want to respect it and work with it."

Through workshops, interviews, lectures and other events, these projects foster a rich interaction between contemporary artistic practice and local tradition and work.

The Production Program launched in 2009 with two projects. **4-Dimensional Mapping** brings together visual arts, oral traditions and local geography to identify key underwater landmarks and tell the stories of the views from the windows of long-time residents. **Breezing Medical Outfits** attempted to help revive a garment factory with new designs for medical wear that reflect local design aesthetics.

The most recent project in the Production Program is a 16-day workshop on aesthetics of outpost interiors, **Exploring the Aesthetics of Outpost Interiors**. It brought together artists, designers and local craftspeople as the starting point for the creation of high-end furniture and interior accessories based on traditional designs.

Here is an overview of projects undertaken so far.



Breezing Medical Outfits

Breezing Medical Outfits was the first production project run by the Fogo Island Arts Corporation. It attempted to bring together the aesthetic and utilitarian – and to create jobs in the process.

Fogo Island is home to a hospital (the Fogo Island Health Centre), while nearby Change Islands is the site of the now-defunct Mediwear garment factory. Working with the startup Seabreeze Sewing Solutions, the **Breezing Medical Outfits** project attempted to revive the factory and facilitate the creation of new, locally rooted designs for ergonomically superior medical wear.

The past would prove to weigh heavily on the project, as the hospital and garment factory shared surprisingly troubled histories. Undaunted, the visiting artists held meetings with hospital employees to determine their needs and requirements for medical wear. Then they photographed distinctive sites on the islands to help provide a local inspiration for the patterns and designs that would adorn the uniforms.

The idea was to bring together the aesthetic and the utilitarian: to create more durable, comfortable uniforms and at the same time to boast local designs that would resonate with both staff and patients. Despite the disappointments that surrounded the founding of the hospital and the prior failure of Mediwear, the artists found themselves tapping into tremendous optimism and hope for the future.



4-Dimensional Mapping

Maps encode and organize reality. But most maps create only a misleading, static view of place. In contrast, **4-Dimensional Mapping** adds new dimensions to the traditional map – incorporating hidden seascapes, oral tradition, local recipes, and dissemination of local

traditions through original art postcards, and investigating the connections between people and place.

4-Dimensional Mapping, which ran during 2009, involved hours of interviews with local residents, many of them current or former participants in the fishery. For fishermen in the days before sonar, knowledge of the local seascape was essential to survival: placement of peaks, shoals and troughs were key to both economic and physical survival. The project team went out on the water with fishermen, recording this traditional knowledge.

They also spent hours looking out living room windows with residents, learning the local landmarks and the various stories associated with the views. The project went inside as well, with recipes and notes on traditional Fogo Island foods and how they have been influenced by geography and demographics.

Finally, project artists shared knowledge of local landmarks and traditions with a select mailing list, sending them daily postcards featuring original art and related stories (for instance, a drawing of a fishing stage with an accompanying text about the white dots or stars traditionally painted on their doors).

The results of the **4-Dimensional Mapping** project were published June 2 in a book that brings together local lore and geographic knowledge with photographs, recipes and postcards.



Exploring the Aesthetics of Outport Interiors

Exploring the aesthetics of outport interiors is an experimental art/design project developing contemporary furniture and interior furnishings inspired by traditional outport homes.

Fogo Island Arts Corporation director Elísabet Gunnarsdóttir explains, “Traditional outport furniture pieces have a lot of character. They are often made locally from memories of furniture found in Ireland, or from pictures in catalogues – but with unique decorations and forms added by the cabinetmakers. So they really are special.”

One of the goals of the project is to be open to these traditional crafts as an influence, but without copying them.

The first stage in the project was an intensive workshop, held in February 2010, bringing together artists and local craftspeople. They worked together for 16 days, in four-day cycles.

Three days were spent working in groups on developing new designs and prototypes, with the fourth day of each cycle given over to feedback.

The workshop resulted in exciting ideas and prototypes for furniture, mats, lights and other interior furnishings, as well as colour schemes.

The Shorefast Foundation is soon beginning construction on the world class Fogo Island Inn, and is in the process of building artist studios and renovating a deconsecrated church. The plan is to have furniture and interiors for these buildings produced locally, with designs coming out of this project.

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