

## *One Touch of Nature* Environmental Art at Stratford

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## One Touch of Nature

*One Touch of Nature* is the first of an eventual annual event. Inspired by Shakespeare's quote "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," this environmental art-work exhibition is on view on the grounds of the Discovery Centre, the site of the former Normal School, adjacent the Stratford Festival Theatre.

The works provide diverse examples of exploratory relationships between people, nature and art. The artists selected are varied in their mediums and techniques. Each contributing artist is well respected and critically known for their ongoing commitment to the exploration of connections between environment and art. Some artists have created new work for the site, while others adapted previous pieces for this project. Works sometimes directly refer to Stratford, Shakespeare, and history, as well as to the environment. In doing so, they demonstrate that all aspects of life and culture can be interrelated and not separate. These works help us to reclaim that important connection between art, environment, history, and culture.

NAPOLEON BROUSSEAU, one of the founding members of the FAST-WURMS Collective, has created a unique sound sculpture. With speakers placed selectively around the grounds, motion detectors activate recordings of over sixty one-minute clips — recitations of quotes dealing with nature culled from Shakespeare's plays. In creating this work, Brousseau is effectively

bringing both Shakespeare's words and the treed grounds to life. For this project, IAN LAZARUS created a unique earthwork that addresses a multi-faceted concept inspired by the layering of history and erosion over time. The sculpture does not simulate history, but rather reflects trace elements of historical evidence left by time's passage. COLM MACCOOL creates works that have consistently synthesized dichotomous ideas and philosophies. His seemingly innocuous and/or playful installations often become parodies of xenophobia, militarization and consumerism. He deliberately perverts societal "ideals" to reveal the implausibility of fantasies of escape, of freedom from persecution, and of the possibility of beginning anew in the Wilderness. JANET MORTON frequently creates work that transforms something commonplace into something unique and original. In keeping with the theme of theatre and Shakespeare, she creates a covering, or costume, for a large pine tree to disguise it as a birch tree. The resulting work will cause the viewer to question his or her perception. What kind of tree is that? What am I seeing? Is this real?

It also acts as a gentle reminder that much of the natural world has been transformed or disguised by the industrial urban world built upon it. TINA POPLAWSKI is creating a new work for this project. Titled *Cold Comfort*, Poplawski's work draws upon the themes of her earlier exhibition *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep* which dealt with memory and imagination, particularly the preservation of memories of events that were not or could not be spoken of. *Cold Comfort* presents the viewer with a veritable waking dream scene with dozens of frozen pink snowflakes cascading down upon a doll's cradle in the middle of the grounds. ←

*One Touch of Nature*  
Environmental Art at Stratford,  
July 6 to September 29, 2002  
Curated by Virginia MacDonnell  
Presented by Gallery 96,  
Stratford, Ontario



NAPOLEON BROUSSEAU, *Spoken*, 2002. Sound Installation, motion sensor, speaker, CD, twigs. Photo: Elisabeth Feryn

JANET MORTON, *Dark Roots*, 2002. Maple tree, canvas, black paint. Photo: Elisabeth Feryn.

TINA POPLAWSKI, *Cold Comfort*, 2002. Urethane casting resin, flaked mica, toy railway track, wind chimes, white marble stones. Photo: Elisabeth Feryn.