



PRESS RELEASE

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**New Exhibit at the Missoula Art Museum Presents Multidisciplinary View of Deforestation
A Photography, Printmaker, Entomologist, and Sculptor Created *Below the Bark***

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The Missoula Art Museum presents *Below the Bark: Artworks of Disturbance Ecology*. This exhibit is on view from October 1, 2021, to February 26, 2022.

Below the Bark exemplifies MAM's commitment to exhibits that combine societal and environmental phenomena with art. Three artists and a local scientist from the University of Montana created this exhibit in response to the bark beetle infestation, deforestation, and climate change. This infestation has commercial, recreational, and environmental impacts within western Montana and the greater North American forest ecosystems. The term "bark beetle" is typically used as a catchall for over 600 species of weevils that bore through the interior bark of trees to feed and reproduce. Tunnels can be "read" like human handwriting and give insight into the lifespan and needs of each individual beetle. This show focuses on pine and spruce bark beetles, which have destroyed millions of acres of forests in recent years. Shifting climate patterns, like milder winters, allow for the proliferation of these beetles to kill off massive swaths of trees.

Dr. Diana Six, professor of forest entomology at the University of Montana and scientific consult for this project, has been studying bark beetles for many years: "Over my 25-year career as an ecologist and entomologist, I have seen, firsthand, massive alterations in forest ecosystems due to climate change. Bark beetles have been at the forefront of these changes. These insects are fascinating, complex organisms that have evolved elaborate adaptations to use wood as a food resource, overcoming the potent defenses of pines. These adaptations allow the tiny beetles to become important engineers of western forest ecosystem structure and function. Climate change has shifted their role as natural disturbance agents that renew the forest to agents of devastation."

This exhibit is a collaboration between artists Jim Frazer, Tim Musso, and Suze Woolf. The works presented are strongly influenced by not only artistic inspiration and practice, but by scientific research and philosophy. This exhibit includes linocut and woodcut prints, photography, handmade books, and climate charts. This exhibit is sponsored by the Holiday Inn Downtown.

The museum will be open for extended hours (5 to 7 p.m.) for First Friday on October 1 to celebrate the opening of this exhibit.

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About MAM: Founded in 1975 and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums since 1987, MAM is emerging as the leading contemporary art museum in the Intermountain West. MAM is situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Séliš (Salish or "Flathead") and Qłispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d'Oreille) peoples. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. Their rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM. MAM is a fully accessible, free public museum boasting eight exhibition spaces, a library, and an education center in the heart of Missoula's historic downtown.

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