

**Media Contact**

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**Groundbreaking Conference Explores the Intersection of Art, Environmentalism and Education**

**The Schuylkill Center Presents: *Beyond the Surface: Environmental Art in Action*, May 31, 2013**

PHILADELPHIA (April 29, 2013) A groundbreaking conference will bring environmental artists and arts professionals from around the country to Philadelphia to discuss ways in which art can create environmental awareness and restore ecological systems. The daylong conference, *Beyond the Surface: Environmental Art in Action*, will be held at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education on May 31, 2013.

Funded in part by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage and The National Endowment of the Arts, the conference will provide a forum for professionals and students from arts and culture, design, environmental education, and the environmental sciences to discuss how environmental art can engage both the audience and the environment to increase environmental awareness and literacy.

The Schuylkill Center's environmental art program has brought artists to its 340-acre site since 2001. "Now we are moving forward into new territory," said conference organizer Jenny Laden, director of environmental art at the Center. "We are examining how art intersects with other disciplines to create fresh innovations and exciting experiences for the public. We believe art can help to repair a broken relationship between humans and nature, while simultaneously transforming audiences from passive observers to active participants in ecosystems."

The artists presenting at the conference have been working with these ideas for much of their careers. To call attention to climate change, for example, New York City-based artist Eve Mosher (<http://www.evemoshers.com/>) chalked a high-water line across Manhattan, giving people an immediate and visual understanding of what would happen if the sea level rises according to current projections. Artist and environmental activist Lillian Ball (<http://www.lillianball.com/index.html>) projected a shifting, multicolored map of the Arctic circle onto a sphere of ice, the ice melting even as the projected image showed a vanishing Arctic.



Also presenting at the conference are Sam Bower, executive director of greenmuseum.org (<http://greenmuseum.org/>); Amy Lipton, co-director of ecoartspace (<http://ecoartspace.org/index.html>); Frances Whitehead, a professor of sculpture at the School of Art Institute of Chicago (<http://www.atelieraetopia.net/>) and sculptor Stacy Levy, known locally for her Rain Wall & Garden for Springside Chestnut Hill Academy (<http://stacylevy.com/>).

Levy is currently working on a new permanent artwork for the Schuylkill Center, a rain garden to remediate storm water runoff, with interactive interpretive elements to engage and educate visitors. Conference attendees can preview the artwork, *Rain Yard*, at an outdoor evening reception at the close of the conference.

Deenah Loeb, Executive Director of the City Parks Association and a Schuylkill Center trustee, will introduce the conference. “I am excited to be a part of this project,” said Loeb. “The Schuylkill Center’s art program is one of a kind, inviting the creative and ecological processes into the same room to have a conversation that can inform new ways of thinking about and looking at our natural environment.”

For a conference schedule and more details, visit <http://www.schuylkillcenter.org/departments/art/events-and-classes.html>.

**What:** *Beyond the Surface: Environmental Art in Action*

**When:** Friday, May 31, 9:00 am - 4:45 pm followed by outdoor reception, 5:00 – 6:00 pm

**Cost:** Standard registration fee is \$80.00; discounts available for students, members

**Where:** Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education

8480 Hagy's Mill Road

Philadelphia, PA 19128

### **About the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education**

The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE) was founded in 1965 as the nation’s first urban environmental education organization. Its 365-acre sanctuary serves as a living laboratory to foster appreciation, deepen understanding, and encourage stewardship of the environment. SCEE reaches over 15,000 Philadelphia-area residents each year with an array of educational programs, including standards-based programs for schoolchildren, continuing education for teachers, and a full calendar of events for the public. SCEE is also home to a wildlife rehabilitation clinic, an innovative environmental art program and a native plant nursery. In 2010 SCEE signed conservation easements with Natural Lands Trust, protecting in perpetuity the largest privately-owned piece of land within the Philadelphia city limits. To learn more, visit [schuylkillcenter.org](http://schuylkillcenter.org).

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Image credits: Environmental art installations by (L-R) Stacy Levy, Eve Mosher.