



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
San Diego Public Library

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Ceramic Sculptures by Nationally Known Artist Jeff Irwin to Be Featured in Library Exhibition

Environmentally Themed Works are Powerful and Unusual

SAN DIEGO – More than two dozen ceramic sculptures by Jeff Irwin, a brilliant and innovative San Diego artist whose works can be found in major museums and private collections internationally, will be featured in “Nature as Trophy,” a solo exhibition opening Sunday, September 13 at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library. The Pacific Beach Branch Library houses the flagship gallery for the San Diego Public Library system. The exhibition will run through November 22. A reception for Irwin will be held from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on September 13, and he will give an informal lecture about his art on Saturday, October 17 at 1:00 p.m. The exhibition, reception, and talk are free and open to the public. Library and gallery hours are Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:30 to 8 p.m.; Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Fridays, 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; and Sundays, 1 to 5 p.m. For more information the public can call the library at (858) 581-9934.

Throughout his career, Irwin has used art to grapple with political, social, and environmental issues, especially as they relate to his love of nature and the great outdoors. This approach has culminated in powerful, elegant, and ironically humorous ceramic sculptures; ingenious hybridizations of seemingly disparate tree and animal forms. Works from Irwin’s “White Works Series,” for example, are hand-built from white earthenware and finished with a specially formulated satin white glaze. In their pristine whiteness they resemble plaster casts of mutant specimens of taxidermy (especially animal head trophies), and are offered as metaphors and symbols for Man’s uses and abuses of nature. On a deeper level, they comment on contemporary, consumer-driven culture and the psychological factors that motivate our behavior. Eerily devoid of surface imagery, to Irwin the bone-white color of his sculpture symbolizes simplicity, clarity, and spirituality. “They simultaneously look lifelike and deathlike,” observes the artist.

“Nature as Trophy” will feature approximately two dozen wall-mounted and pedestal ceramics from two related series: the aforementioned “White Works Series” (which many regard as his

signature oeuvre) and the “Digital Transfer Tile Series.” Most were created especially for this exhibition. Several of the largest pieces incorporate waist-high, rustically styled pedestals, also executed in white ceramic; a recent development in the artist’s work. Unlike the White Works, Irwin’s “Digital Transfer Tile Series” is based on two-dimensional imagery. The finished works resemble framed drawings or paintings, some subtly infused with color, and hang on the wall. However, instead of being executed on paper or canvas, the images (and the “frames”) are fired onto grids of ceramic tiles. The drawings are created using techniques ranging from traditional mark-making by hand to digital photography and laser toner transfer. Always experimenting by himself or in collaboration with masters of ceramic arts, such as Les Lawrence, Irwin has consistently challenged the perceived limitations of clay and glazes; indeed he has pioneered the development of many of the techniques found in his works.

Seen together in the context of an exhibition, “Nature as Trophy” promises to transform the gallery into a wonderfully absurd Museum of Unnatural History whose collection offers insight into environmental issues in ways that can only be envisioned by an artist.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A representative selection of high quality digital images is available on request from the library curator.

The San Diego Public Library’s Visual Arts Program is a nationally recognized series of exhibitions, lectures, a television program, and other art-related activities. The Jeff Irwin exhibition is the most recent of more than 125 museum-quality contemporary art exhibitions that have been organized by the Visual Arts Program of the San Diego Public Library since 1997. The mission of the Program is to demonstrate the Library’s role as a cultural institution embracing a broad range of disciplines, while assisting San Diego’s mid-career and older professional artists in achieving wider local, regional, and national attention. Visual Arts Program exhibitions are made possible, in part, by contributions from individuals, volunteer efforts, and the Friends of Central Library. For more information about the Visual Arts Program, the public can contact the library curator at (619) 238-6627 or visit the Library’s website at www.sandiegolibrary.org

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library’s Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library’s catalog online at www.sandiegolibrary.org

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