

For Immediate Release

The Kitchen presents
PearlDamour + Shawn Hall: *How to Build a Forest*
June 17—19 and 24—26

In eight-hour immersive performances, a team of artists will build, then dismantle and remove, a forest inside The Kitchen’s black box

New York, NY, April 25, 2011—Known for transforming narrative into something richer, stranger, and ineluctably feminine, OBIE Award-winning **PearlDamour** joins New Orleans-based visual artist **Shawn Hall** to create *How to Build a Forest*. In each eight-hour performance, director Katie Pearl and playwright Lisa D’Amour, along with Hall and a four-person crew, will work obsessively to construct, dismantle and remove an elaborate fabricated forest. Audience members are encouraged to enter the evolving installation throughout the process to get a closer look.

How to Build a Forest will be open **Friday-Sunday, June 17—19 and June 24—26, 2:00 P.M.—10:00 P.M.** at **The Kitchen** (512 West 19th Street). Admission is free. Audiences are welcome to come and go at any time during the performance.

How to Build a Forest is a hybrid project: part visual art installation, part theater performance that unfolds over an extended interval. Beginning on an empty stage, the forest comes together in ways that range from surprisingly intimate to large-scale and spectacular; ultimately, it will fill the Kitchen’s black box from wall to wall and floor to ceiling (30’x 40’ x 20’). The work features sound design by composers and sound artists **Brendan Connelly** and **Christopher DeLaurenti** and lighting design by **Bruce Steinberg**.

Hall’s intricate installation emphasizes weightlessness, translucence and transformation; the environment will feel like an old growth forest at one moment and a deep-sea landscape the next. Her primary materials are fabric, wire, small-gauge steel, and repurposed found objects. To be sure, sheer grandeur is a considerable part of the work’s appeal, but there is also striking beauty in its small details, such as a grove of delicate fabric trees featuring exquisite hand-sewn detail that can only be seen from inside the installation.

The construction process demands constant activity and unrelenting focus from the artists and workers. For the mere 30 minutes the forest is complete, they make an inevitably futile effort to animate it. When they fail, they take the installation down.

While the choreography of the build is the core of the performance, other events punctuate and expand it. The audience can choose to take a self-guided tour that leads them through the installation and out on to the High Line. Once each day, **Todd Shalom** of the conceptual walks organization **Elastic City** will lead a small group through the forest. These walks will be approximately forty-five minutes each and occur daily at a different, to-be-determined time. Furthermore, new short texts by Lisa D’Amour weave through each hour of the build. An extensive “source guide” tracks the lineage of every material used to build the forest: where it came from in

the earth, where it will go once the artists are finished using it. Together, these elements invite contemplation about the audience's relationship with the natural world: How they live in it, rely on it, use it, and use it up.

How to Build a Forest is being developed, designed and built in New Orleans, where D'Amour, Hall and the build team are based. The work is inspired in part by 100 trees that were uprooted during Hurricane Katrina on a property owned by D'Amour's family and has been further informed by the BP oil spill.

For several of the artists and builders, life in post-Katrina New Orleans was a crash course in gutting, demolition, mold remediation, rebuilding and the specifics of the natural world. The artists became acutely aware of the otherwise invisible human-driven processes that had been making New Orleans more vulnerable to hurricanes for years. Likewise, in *How to Build a Forest*, Pearl, D'Amour and Hall make their creative and destructive processes visible and accessible, sharing their heightened consciousness of how our lives are intimately tied to the fragile natural world no matter where we live. The eight-hour performance also suggests how long it takes for something to be created and how quickly it can be ended—whether that be a natural ecosystem, an installation, or the landscape of an entire city.

How to Build a Forest is meant to take place in urban environments, and is in part designed for city-dwellers who may feel cut off from the natural world. Part of the artists' challenge is to compel an audience of tech-savvy New Yorkers, who stay connected to their world each day through the internet and 4G networks, to slow down and bring into focus the appearance and disappearance of a tangible ecosystem. The artists are intentionally not releasing a public schedule of what will happen over the eight hours; instead they challenge audience members to drop in and see what is occurring the moment they arrive.

About PearlDamour

Katie Pearl and **Lisa D'Amour** have a 14-year history of creating performance work for theaters and non-traditional sites in New York, Austin, Minneapolis, Chicago and New Orleans as **PearlDamour**. Ranging from intimate (15 people in a Manhattan basement) to large-scale (a 24-hour performance at Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis for over 1,000), the duo is known for mysterious and often interactive work that combines theater with installation and is attentive to the performer-audience relationship. Their process is deeply collaborative and continually evolving, with a different writer/director/performer partner for each project. In 2003, they received an OBIE for *Nita & Zita*, which was created with Kathy Randels of ArtSpot Productions. Commissions include *Terrible Things* (PS 122), *LIMO* (Whitney Museum's Performance on 42nd Series) and *Bird Eye Blue Print* (Brookfield Properties @ WTF).

Their work has been produced and presented by HERE Arts Center (NYC), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), FuseBox Festival (Austin), ArtSpot Productions/Contemporary Arts Center (New Orleans), Brown University (Providence) and more. *How to Build a Forest* was developed through residencies at The Mitchell Center for the Arts (Houston), Appalachian State University and Hampshire College. They are currently developing a performance for the meadow at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA with designer Mimi Lien. PearlDamour are 3-time winners of the Rockefeller MAP Fund grant, and are 2009 recipients of a Creative Capital Award for the research, development and production of *How to Build a Forest*

Lisa D'Amour is a playwright and interdisciplinary artist whose plays have been commissioned and produced by theaters including The Women's Project, Playwrights' Horizons, Clubbed Thumb and New Georges in NYC, Children's Theater Company (Minneapolis) and Steppenwolf Theater Company (Chicago). Steppenwolf's production of D'Amour's play *Detroit*, directed by Austin

Pendleton, will transfer to Broadway in the 2011/12 theater season. *Detroit* was a finalist for the 2011 Susan Smith Blackburn prize and a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

In 2008, D'Amour wrote and directed a performance for SWOON's *Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea*, a flotilla of six boats created from salvaged materials that navigated the Hudson River in August 2009. As a playwright, D'Amour has received fellowships from the Jerome and McKnight Foundations, an independent artist commission from NYSCA (*Stanley 2006*, with her brother Todd D'Amour) and an NEA/TCG Playwrights' Residency (*HIDE TOWN*, with Infernal Bridegroom Productions). D'Amour was awarded the 2008 CalArts/Alpert Award for the Arts. She received her M.F.A. in playwriting from the University of Texas at Austin, and is a core member of the Playwrights' Center and an alumna of New Dramatists. D'Amour splits her time between New York and her hometown of New Orleans.

Katie Pearl is a collaborative theater director who develops new plays and site-specific performance with writers, musicians and visual artists throughout the country. This has led to significant collaborations with Ellen Maddow of The Talking Band (*Panic! Euphoria! Blackout* at HERE Arts Center), Kirk Lynn of the Rude Mechs (*The Wrestling Patient @ Speakeasy Stage*, Boston), and Steve Moore of Physical Plant Theater in Austin (*NIGHTSWIM, THE WHIMSY, FATIGUE*). Pearl has also developed projects with New Dramatists (NYC), the Playwright's Center (Minneapolis), PlayPenn (Philadelphia), Clubbed Thumb Summerworks, Ko Theater Festival and St. Ann's Warehouse Puppet Lab.

Upcoming projects include the direction of *Why We Have A Body* by Claire Chaffee, which will open the Magic Theater's 2011/12 season (San Francisco). Pearl is a Drama League Directing Fellow, a Roothbert Fellow, a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Union, and a graduate of the University of Washington. She works frequently as a guest faculty member/director at University of Texas at Austin, Montclair University and Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

About Shawn Hall

Shawn Hall is a visual artist, primarily a painter, who also works in performance art, video, photography, installation and, most recently, costume and set design and assemblage, including PearlDamour's OBIE Award-winning *Nita & Zita*. Recent painting work reference Rorschach's, slide stains under a microscope and acts of chance, presented in large grids of smaller pieces. Hall describes her work as a kind of Manifest Biology, quietly refuting the ruinous concept of Manifest Destiny. *BIO logy*, Hall's large scale 28 painting grid, became part of the Ogden Museum of Art's permanent collection in 2009, and was shown previously at the Contemporary Art Center (CAC) in 2008 as well as in New York City during the TOAST Open Studios in 2006, where it was made.

Hall received her MFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art where she was a Patricia Harris Fellow. She has been in residence at School 33 in Baltimore, LMCC in New York City and the 18th Street Art Center in Los Angeles. Exhibitions include the CAC, Isaac Delgado Gallery, Barrister's, Bassetti, and Antenna in New Orleans, Wolfson Gallery at Miami Dade, N.A.M.E. and Christopher Stokes in Chicago, The Hewitt Gallery and Bronx River Art Center in NYC, Van Brunt Gallery in Beacon, NY, Wagner-Sousa in Galveston, TX, and Chateau de La Napoule, in Mandelieu, France. Her work has been reviewed nationally in Art Papers, New Art Examiner, and dialogue. She is a part of the permanent collection of The Ogden, Linklater Corporate collection in NYC, and private collections throughout the United States and Europe.

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About The Kitchen

The Kitchen is one of New York City's oldest nonprofit performance and exhibition spaces, showing experimental work by innovative artists, both emerging and established. Programs range from dance, music, and theatrical performances to video and media arts exhibitions to literary events, film screenings, and artists' talks. Since its inception in 1971, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

Box Office Information:
212.255.5793 ext. 11
Tue-Sat, 2-6pm

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