

# “In Time of Change: Boreal Forest Stories” melds art and science



**Kris Capps**  
COMMUNITY  
EDITOR

If you visit the newest art exhibit at the Bear Gallery at Pioneer Park's Centennial Center, you'll never look at the boreal forest the same again.

“In Time of Change: Boreal Forest Stories” debuted as part of Arctic Fest, a new annual festival bringing together art and science to focus on climate change. Science provides factual information while art provides creative interpretation.

“The arts make you feel,” said one of the festival organizers Anne Biberman “Once you feel, you take action.”

The art exhibit is an extraordinary collaboration between art and science, culture and community. Stories of the boreal forest are told through painting, writing, quilting, soundscapes, and other unexpected creative forms. The stories shared through the artwork are so intriguing and engaging that they can't all be absorbed in just one visit.

That is actually the intent: to engage the viewer on intellectual, intuitive and emotional levels, thus strengthening under-



**Artist Theresa Woldstad focused on beading less commonly known flora.** KRIS CAPPS

standing of and appreciation for the environment and ecosystems where we all live.

This is the goal of artists who make up the ITOC (In Time of Change) group, which earlier focused on topics including microbial worlds, trophic cascades, fire and more. This particular project, focusing on the boreal forest, began a year ago.

It started, of course, with a walk in the forest.

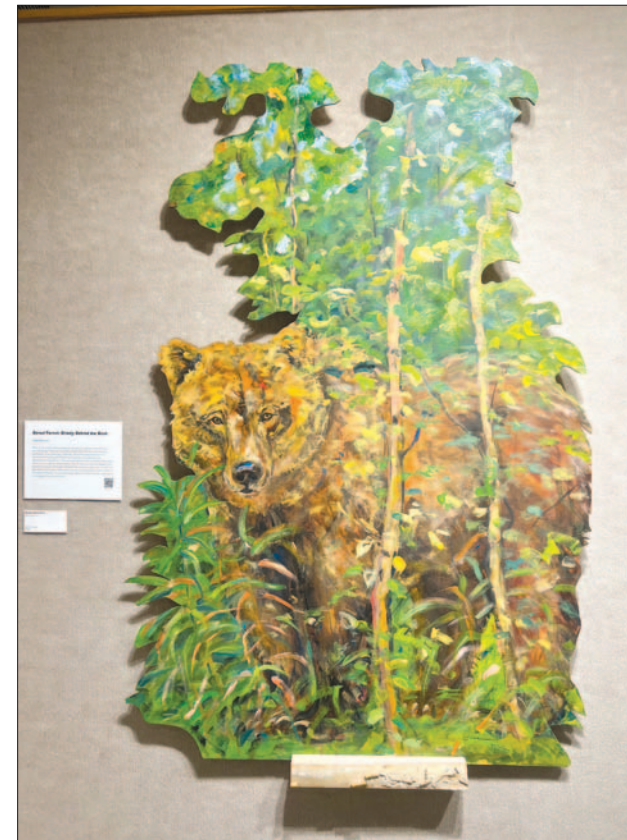
In Time of Change (ITOC) artists, writers, educators and scientists took day trips together to Bonanza Creek Experimental Forest. There, they shared knowledge, perspectives, and place-based inquiry methods through their various disciplines.

Bonanza Creek Experimental Forest is a research site within the Bonanza Creek Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Program. It includes members from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and across the country, who collaboratively investigate the boreal biome of Interior or Alaska.

Before long, the project

grew to include more than 50 talented artists, writers and more. The exhibit, paired with Arctic Fest, included live performance, literary readings, educational workshops, a youth gallery guide, and lots of conversation.

A large number of artists were accepted to this exhibit to expand the impact on participants



**Artist Todd Sherman created this three-dimensional “Grizzly Behind the Birch.”**

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**Artist Jennifer Moss created these Boreal Forest Inspiration Story Cards.** KRIS CAPPS

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Performances at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16 & 17, 2022 Friday and Saturday, 23 & 24 Friday, Sept 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 Three Sunday Matinees at 2:00 p.m. Sept. 18 & 25 and October 2

FDA is supported by a grant from the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts

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**Artists Ree Nancarrow and Charlotte Bird focused on wildland fires and conditions after a fire.** MARY BEE KAUFMAN

and the audience, according to ITOC director Mary Beth Leigh.

“This doesn’t even include the scientists who interact with the group,” she said.

A few partner organizations were also included, like The Folk School, Northwoods Book Arts Guild, North Star Ballet and OneTree Alaska. This expanded the reach of the project so more artists and the public could be involved in ITOC-like experiences, she said.

The live performance on the last day of the festival was especially important for the audience, as a handful of artists shared their work firsthand, explaining their individual creative process and providing personal perspective.

For instance, Artist Margo Klass’ described her series of miniature chair sculptures titled “Come Sit With Me” as an invitation from the boreal forest to participate in its life and legacy. To hear her personal insight of how those chairs became the focus of her piece made it even more compelling. Each tiny chair has a different story to tell.



**Artist Marianne Stoltz shows artwork from students at The Folk School, prints from carved wood cuts. Students first spent time in the field with scientists.** KRIS CAPPS

It wasn’t until a second visit to the gallery that I could even detect the sound of musician Sean Dowgray’s soundscapes, field recordings of sounds in the forest — everything from rain on leaves to

dripping icicles, burning embers and crackling charcoal. Close your eyes and the sounds will transport you to the middle of that forest.

Artist Mary Bee Kaufman has watched

spruce bark beetles decimate the land around her home near Broad Pass in the Alaska Range. For several years, she has sketched, photographed and videotaped these insects in their natural cycle.

To share what she learned, she created an accordion book, to represent a sense of movement. The paper used is a digital print of larvae galleries, the paths the beetles chew through the bark of a tree. Her piece offered a unique perspective on the beetles, which are slowly making their way north, from tree to tree.

Each piece in the exhibit deserves a special mention. So visit the gallery and be sure to pick up a copy of “In A Time of Change: Boreal Forest Stories,” an informative booklet that lists each artist and their contribution to this exhibit. The exhibit will be on display through the month of September.

For more information on the ITOC collaboration, begun in 2007, see [www.itoc.alsa.edu](http://www.itoc.alsa.edu).

Reach columnist/community editor Kris Capps at [kcapps@newsminer.com](mailto:kcapps@newsminer.com). Follow her at [Twitter.com/FDNMKris](https://twitter.com/FDNMKris).



**The exhibit at the Bear Gallery really needs return visits to absorb all the stories told by the artwork.** KRIS CAPPS



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