

WATERSHED

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LORRAINE GILBERT



In 1979, when this picture was made (Tree on William and Lake-wood), I was studying ecology and forestry in Vancouver but I didn't like the way the life of trees was being taught in my courses. A summer program in photography at Banff taught me that scientific objectivity was not the only way to learn about the world and ones' relationship to it.

I didn't set out to photograph trees at night, but their appearance in my negatives was revelatory. The trees I was studying at the university were victims, while trees like this one seemed to want to tell me their secrets. Photographing at night was a way to look beyond appearances, and see what was normally invisible, including the compression of time into a single image.

Twenty-eight years later, I have learned the value of communicating images of the world the way I see it through a lens. It is the cultivation of wonder and openness to the different ways of being, learning and knowing. I have never stopped being attracted to trees and amazed at the complexities involved where culture intersects nature, expressed very differently in various bodies of work. When I recently made scans of the boreal forest floor, this piece of the forest called out to me in its innocent whimsy. It is a boat, an ark, with a few species of very young trees and plants looking for a safe place to take root.

I am still studying trees, but from a point of view well stated by Diana Beresford-Kroeger in her book *Arboretum America*, a Philosophy of the Forest:

"The Bioplan is a blueprint for all connectivity of life in nature. It is victor and victim in a vast cycle of elemental life which is almost beyond our comprehension. It is the quantum mechanic of the green chloroplast without which we would all die. It is the ultraviolet traffic light signaling system in flowers for the insect world. It is the toxin trick offered by plants for the protection of butterflies. It is the mantle of the human being, in life and in death, a personal divine contract, to all who share this planet."



BIOGRAPHY

Lorraine Gilbert's artistic practice combines her interest in landscape and nature with her training in environmental biology and forestry.

From 1995 to 2002, Gilbert was an active member of Boréal Art/Nature, an artist-run centre in the Laurentians, where she helped organize international projects, residencies and publications for artists hosted on her land in La Minerve, Quebec. In the Outaouais, she is vice-president of the Board at the photo and video production center: Daïmon.

In 2003, Gilbert won the City of Ottawa's first Yousuf and Malak Karsh Award for her consistently developed and conceptually innovative photography. In 2006, she was inducted to the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts.

Since 1979, she has shown extensively in Canada as well as in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Iceland, and the United States. Her work can be found in the collections of numerous institutions including the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Polaroid Collection in Amsterdam.

Eighteen works were included in a recent exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery entitled: The Tree, from the Sublime to the Social, which also included works by Jeff Wall, Ed Pien, Jochen Gerz, Lawren Harris, and Emily Carr, among others. At the moment, thirty-six of her night works are on view in another photography festival in Nantes, France.