

**INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION OF *O OAKS OH!*
DAY OF GATHERING / PUBLIC LEARN IN / RITUAL
by artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles**

August 13, 2009

This August 13, 2009 art event has multiple parts that unfold throughout the day and are enacted at highly different locations around Montalvo Arts Center. All elements are part of the total artwork, including the journey of getting from one place to another. A flow will occur that generates a unique daylong immersion public artwork. This flow affects the entire sequence of activities listed in the Program that follows.

Not only do the artwork activities of the day shift from different location to location at Montalvo, but the relationship between members of the audience and experts changes as well. First thing right off the bat, I aim to create an atmosphere of serious public learning at the highest level of quality. During this component of the *LEARN IN*, there is a clear hierarchical separation between the “experts who teach” and the “audience who receives and asks questions.” Then, this first part of the day is followed by a transformation in the relationships between people: the separation between teachers and receivers is collapsed and morphs into a different kind of non-hierarchical and lateral relationship among all the people. In the next parts of the day, all are invited to become “active participants and witnesses” by enacting a Ritual of Mourning for the Stricken Oaks in Montalvo’s 175-acre forest that have the Sudden Oak Death (SOD) disease that then moves to the Front Lawn to enact a Ritual of Celebrating the Future of the Forest with Healthy Oaks.

Why do I pay so much attention to relationships as part of the art? I have a theory. Hopefully, the artwork generates the opening up of a big new kind of space—an airy space that can exist in people’s minds and also in their souls and hearts—so that a spirit of emotional attachment to the oaks can have room to emerge among all present. I believe this is a necessary step before people will work toward transforming a challenged forest into a healthy public place. Before a large number of people can feel empowered enough to get to a level of commitment to stewardship and devotion to maintenance for this public forest, and before a large number of people can become democratically organized to create effective and realistic action plans for this treasured public legacy, we first need to allow ourselves to open up a space within that offers the highest quality of knowledge, then we need to open up a space within where we are welcome to feel a level of awe, reverence, love and passion for the oaks—a space where these feelings can well up and have a home. That is the purpose of the daylong elements that begin with the *LEARN IN*. That is what the public artwork can do. Then we can be ready to organize for action.

PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

A Day of Gathering / Public Learn In / Ritual The Beginning of O OAKS OH! *a unique daylong immersion public artwork*

10am to 4:15pm

(Exhibits set out on the Veranda for the whole day from 9am to 4:30pm.)*

* We invite presenters to bring a low-tech exhibit to display throughout the course of the day.

PART ONE: Site: Main Hall and then moving to the Veranda for lunch

LEARN / IN:

10:00 am to 10:10 am

Welcome by Montalvo's Executive Director, Angela McConnell; Director of Programs, Kelly Sicat; Curator of AGENCY, Julie Lazar; and Artist, Mierle Laderman Ukeles

10:15 am to 11:15 am

Individual experts give presentations of 15 minutes each (listed alphabetically):

- Matteo Garbelotto
- Joseph McBride
- David Rizzo
- Tedmund Swiecki

11:15 am to 11:25 am

- Break

11:25 am to 11:55 am

- Moderated discussion with above experts, led by Janice Alexander, Coordinator of the California Oak Mortality Task Force. Janice will have the opportunity to present for 5 minutes before discussion begins.

11:55 pm to 12:35 pm

- Q & A from audience moderated by Lindsey Kouvaris, Manager Arts Programs

WORKING BOX LUNCH: Veranda

A Very LOCAL Conversation among Three Stewards

12:35 pm to 1:20 pm

- Local stewards Rosemary Cambra, Tribal Chairwoman of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe; and Betty Peck are invited to take 10 minutes each to share personal stories about creating stewardship and maintenance of Montalvo's wild forest; to discuss details about SOD around Saratoga and at Montalvo; and to address keeping Montalvo's forest a public place and a treasured Saratoga legacy.

NOTE: All individual experts listed above are asked to be Hosts at individual round tables during lunch and to be available to continue discussion with the audience. New Hosts, County officials, Don Rocha and Alicia Earle, will also be available at individual tables as well. These new Hosts will be introduced but they will not present.

1:20 pm to 1:30 pm

ARTIST UKELES: Speaking on the Veranda

- Presentation of the “RITUAL” and description of next steps

1:30 pm to 1:40 pm

- All move to the Garden Theatre

PART TWO: Site: Garden Theatre

1:40pm to 2:10 pm

REHEARSAL FOR ALL TO PREPARE FOR “THE RITUAL,” led by Ukeles and Marcus Young, artist/conductor

Beginning of the transformation of the immersion art experience from a state of separation between experts and audience to all becoming “active participants and witnesses”

PART THREE: Site: Moving together from the Garden Theatre to gathering at the “Edge,” a threshold of Montalvo’s “Wild Forest”, crossing into the Forest together, coming out of the Forest, moving to continue and conclude the Ritual on the Front Lawn

2:10 pm to 3:50 pm

“THE RITUAL OF MOURNING FOR THE STRICKEN OAKS AND OF CELEBRATING THE FUTURE OF THE FOREST WITH HEALTHY OAKS”

Further transformation of all into “active participants and witnesses,” as well as candidates for becoming stewards and maintainers and activists.

UKELES’ OFFERING: The culmination of the Ritual

A Proposal: A Shared Vision for a Public Place: Health and Community Commitment Leading to a “Covenant of Responsibility: Maintaining the Wild Forest at Montalvo”

An invitation to all participants to offer their Covenants and to send them in along with personal stories of “their” tree

PART FOUR: Veranda

3:50 pm to 4:15 pm

CONCLUSION OF THE DAY: RECEPTION: TEA & ACORN COOKIES with ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HANDOUTS

Dec 2, 2009: Concluding event of **O OAKS OH!**

Launching *VIDEOAK*, a video artwork and performance called “The Spirit and the Forest” which will include the acceptance by the Montalvo Arts Center and local stakeholders of the final “Covenant of Responsibility: Maintaining the Wild Forest of Montalvo”

[Reservations handout sheets to sign up for this event passed around.]

Informational Note:

Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Andy Fedak are shooting parts of *VIDEOAK*, a video artwork along with this public event on August 13, 2009. Their video recording of yours and other Experts’ Presentations and all other components in various locations will be shot with two cameras throughout this day. Some supplementary interviews of experts may be requested.

O OAKS OH! is being developed in several stages. It began with a long period of gathering information, since June 2008. Next is this immersion artwork: the daylong *PUBLIC LEARN IN / RITUAL* on August 13, 2009. Then on December 2, 2009, *VIDEOAK*—that will include you—will be launched publicly. We hope this video artwork can be useful afterward through wide distribution in various kinds of venues, besides art venues, including social ecological education and SOD outreach efforts.