

*"Ars enim operatur materia, quam natura ministrat."*¹

Natura Naturans

September 2- October 22, 2005

The Portland Art Center presents *Natura Naturans*, an ephemeral installation and works on paper by James Jack. Utilizing natural materials from our environment, Jack draws singular elements from nature, precisely arranging them into circles. The artist explores humans' relationship with the environment and its universal awe. Themes of humanity's fascination with manipulating nature, and the meditative state created by the wonder of nature's power and beauty, dominate Jack's work.

Jack draws inspiration from Eastern aesthetic traditions that he studied first-hand: Tibetan Sand Mandalas in India and Japanese Calligraphy in Kyoto. Educated at Sarah Lawrence College, Jack has recently participated in residencies at the Vermont Studio Center, Anderson Arts Ranch, Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, and Kamiyama AIR program. Building on the conceptual work of other artists like Wolfgang Laib and Richard Long, Jack transcends the conventions of both Eastern tradition and Western modernity.

For *Natura Naturans*, James Jack has created a work of profound beauty with a luminescence and quiet hue that evokes a sense of harmony with the nature of the Northwest. Resting on a black surface, a mesmerizing circular form, 20 feet in diameter, made entirely of a single ochre pigment, dominates the gallery. The pigment was collected from Beverly Beach, where the Mooloch Creek meets the Pacific Ocean, on the Oregon Coast. This, like all of Jack's work, is entirely handmade; the pigment has been ground and filtered directly onto the floor of the gallery in a meditative and labor-intensive process. His works on paper use handmade inks derived from fresh Alder bark, aged Butternut and Black Walnut husks, as well as mountain sediments.

Natura Naturans, which can be translated to mean "nature naturing" or "nature creating," grows from that place in the landscape where an artist can internalize and discover the aesthetics that call to him. James Jack is such an artist: one who is a traveler, wandering and searching with all of his being and intuition to bring together his own vocabulary of abstract form, reality and spirituality. Gathering materials from a specific site, Jack explores the relationship between nature and people in the simplest way.

Gavin Shettler, director
Rhoda London, curator

¹ "Art operates upon the material which nature provides." St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*.