



# Happenings

## Connecting the Dots to EcoArts

by Jane Crayton  
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photo by Jane Crayton

Natasha Jugl, granddaughter of Peter Berkeland, is mesmerized by the large eco bear.

Ecoarts opened last Friday at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Arts (BMOCA) bringing science to a public dialogue through arts. The program features artists and scientists working on important global and local ecology issues as well as exhibits, performances, tours, gatherings and talks. The event takes place in additional venues in Boulder, such as The Dairy Center for Arts, NOAA and Boulder Public Library.

The Polar Bear at BMOCA entertained the children as their parents and grandparents interacted with the art and artists on a global dialogue on climate change. Natasha Jugl, 3, was delighted to play with the 8' Polar bear. Her grandparents, Peter and Sue Birkeland, brought her to the event because it was the opening of a project Peter had worked on in conjunction with several other scientists and artists for Ecoarts.

Peter Berkeland, of Boulder and Eldora, a retired University of Colorado/ Boulder professor in Geological Sciences, was contacted to get involved in this project by Shiela Murphy of USGS. Peter was asked to work with her and artist Mary Miss of New York. Mary Miss, originally from Colorado Springs, wanted to mark the level of the water for her large scale installation project for the 500 year flood. Work-

ing with Berkeland and Murphy, they planned a project where they could mark the 500 year flood water levels along Boulder Creek Path from the Library to BMOCA.

Miss had a hard time convincing people to allow her to put up the blue dots. Banks, private businesses and public spaces are all within the flood plane and they did not want to bring attention to it. They were reluctant to allow her to publicly display the potential flood level. Eventually, though, they allowed them to

place the dots and mark the flood levels. As you walk along the bike path and through parts of Boulder now, you see how the impact of this flood could be devastating.

The 500 year flood is a potential hazard Boulder has been learning to deal with since the Big Thompson Flood in 1976. That flood killed 145 people and sent a wall of water over 19 feet deep destroying everything in its path. Since that time, Front Range communities have implemented several flood emergency operations, and

regular testing of the emergency flood siren on the first Monday of the month at 10 a.m. in Boulder during flood season. Every year we have a 1/500 chance of having a flood which is currently marked in Boulder by blue dots.

Berkeland participated in this project because he wanted to make people more aware of the hazards associated with rivers. He explained to us how the huge boulders between the Justice Center and Eben G Fine park were deposited when a likely 500 year flood happened to move them to their current locations.

Berkeland thinks it's super that the art community has questioned us to think about this issue. As it describes in the project outline on marymiss.com, the major threats to Boulder of a 500 year flood include high rainfall over a short period of time, forest fires, Barker Dam failure, and combined events (spring snowmelt plus thunderstorms).

These events also affect Nederland because the canyon is our major transportation gateway and playground. It is important that we participate in these public dialogues, and art is a way to reach people and get their attention. The Ecoarts event is a great way to get public awareness, and stir participation and involvement. You can find a complete list of events and program highlights online at [www.ecoartsonline.org](http://www.ecoartsonline.org).

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