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“Holotype” Opens at The Leonardo

Large-scale Installation Explores Role of Algae in Ecosystem, Energy Future, Daily Lives

SALT LAKE CITY, Feb. 2, 2012—The Leonardo will celebrate the completion of one of its premier exhibits beginning February 5. *Holotype* is a large-scale sculptural environment that engages visitors in the fascinating, though largely underappreciated organism, algae

Since The Leonardo’s October opening, visitors have observed the evolution of *Holotype* from a bare, metal frame, to its striking, final form. By involving visitors in the installation process, The Leonardo hopes to reinforce the fact that art, science, technology—and humanity—are, and will remain dynamic works in progress.

About Holotype

Commissioned by The Leonardo, *Holotype* was created by artist Amy Caron. The installation covers 4,000 square feet of floor space and climbs 20 vertical feet inside The Leonardo's George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Atrium on the east side of the main exhibit floor. The work is comprised of a steel frame, translucent, heat-formed thermoplastic sheets, water, soil, and original, bio-based theatrical lighting.

In addition to the installation itself, The Leonardo offers supporting programming that allows visitors to discover new aspects of algae—from videos that feature interviews with local biofuel and algae scientists, to a discussion with the artist about her creative process, to hands-on experimentation with alginate. The Leonardo also hosts field trips that utilize the sculpture to support core curriculum topics, as well as critical thinking and creative problem solving skills.

Why Algae?

The Leonardo’s mission is to inspire visitors’ own creativity and innovative spirit using tools from science, technology and art. The new museum chose Energy as a major exhibit topic at opening due to the complexity and urgency of the issue. The Leonardo is focusing on algae and its potential as a source for clean, renewable, domestically sourced energy for several reasons:

Local Connections: The Leonardo has a long-standing partnership with the Utah Science and Technology Research initiative or USTAR, a state-funded investment created to strengthen Utah’s “knowledge economy” and generate high-paying jobs. USTAR researchers at Utah State University have been working with local algae strains found in the Great Salt Lake to explore

new methods of growing and converting algae into biofuel and other high value bioproducts. The exhibit experience includes a short video with interviews and footage of these researchers and their facility. By highlighting local research and energy sources, The Leonardo hopes to bring a very personal perspective to this large, global issue.

Colossal Contributions: Algae plays a major role in the earth's ecosystem and in our daily lives. Algae has is responsible for 70 - 80 percent of the oxygen in the Earth's atmosphere. Petroleum is made largely of fossilized algae. Algae are also in many common products we use every day, from sushi and soda, to toothpaste and fertilizer.

A Multifaceted Organism: Algae is a fascinating organism that breaks all the rules of simple classification or definition. It can take the form of a microscopic, single-celled organism, or giant sea kelp, and comes in just about every color of the rainbow. All algae can create its own energy through photosynthesis, but some strains also eat other plants and animals.

"There is no straight answer to any question about algae and, therefore, there is no straight line found in *Holotype*," said Caron in her artist's statement. "I embraced algae's brilliant elusiveness by working solely with organic forms and designed the work to adapt to its environment, to bulge and swoop, catch corners, hug beams, and spread with wild hunger. The work's size reflects the enormous impact and enduring presence of algae in our ecosystem for the last 3.5 billion years. Throughout *Holotype*, numerous ecological and biological elements of interaction, repetition, equilibrium, rhythm, network, variation, stability, and energy can be discovered from countless angles. Viewers become part of the composition as they circulate within the transformative lens that is *Holotype*. Algae's inscape inspires a new order of thought: one that moves this remarkable organism to the fore of our awareness and illuminates our inherent bond to all life."

Why an Art Installation

One of the defining aspects of The Leonardo is its use of art, specifically installation art, to offer unique learning opportunities for visitors. More traditional science centers present topics and their accompanying facts. "In *Holotype*, visitors encounter an environment designed to evoke a visceral response," said The Leonardo's Executive Director Alexandra Hesse. "The sculpture surrounds visitors on all sides, offering a full, sensory experience. The sounds and colors. The way light and water play in the space. The contrasting textures and materials. We hope that when visitors enter *Holotype*, they will stop and ask, 'What IS this?' Making this shift into a place of wondering puts visitors into a new frame of mind, where questions and curiosity open new possibilities for personal insights, as well as innovative solutions to global challenges."

About the Artist

Amy Caron is a multidisciplinary artist based in Salt Lake City. She grew up in Vermont, and moved to Utah to train with the US Freestyle Ski Team. Amy has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in modern dance from the University of Utah, where she also dabbled in animation and video. She worked for Sundance Film Festival for a number of years, and was an associate instructor in the Fine Arts College at the University of Utah. Her first foray into science-themed projects was

Waves of Mu. This piece was created in collaboration with renowned neuroscientists to produce an experimental understanding of mirror neurons—a recent and monumental discovery that turned the field on its head and spawned new areas of study. *Waves* continues to tour nationally.

The Leonardo

The Leonardo is a new kind of museum that connects science, technology and creativity to inspire curiosity and engagement in big issues, new discoveries and personal potential. The Leonardo offers interactive exhibits, multimedia installations, expert-led workshops and classes, and hands-on and digital making activities. For more information, visit www.theleonardo.org.