

# Handle with Care by Michael Bartalos

## Artist Statement

Over the weeks leading up to Earth Day, I'll be cutting, stacking, and gluing used cardboard to create *Handle With Care*, a unique sculptural project in the Piazza of the California Academy of Sciences. The piece will take the shape of a 16-foot tall tree with a menagerie of animals in its branches, produced with contributions from the museum's visitors and the help of assistants. In this collaborative way, we'll explore paper's re-usability, recyclability, sources, conservation, and of course, its creative potential.

As the title suggests, the project's main objective is to communicate the importance of protecting forested ecosystems worldwide, which fits well with the Academy's mission to explore, explain, and protect the natural world. My animal figures will represent endangered species from two locations affected by the pulp industry: temperate and boreal forests in North America, and the rain forests of Sumatra, Indonesia. The tree shape too will draw from an amalgam of affected habitats rather than any specific one.

I'm excited to be putting the creative process on display and engaging visitors at every stage of the project. Guests are invited to bring their cereal and shoe boxes to make the leaves, which will provide textures and colors for the tree and animals. For some participants, this will be their first contribution to a collective art effort or an environmentally-driven one. I hope that the experience inspires them to further investigate and respond to environmental and sustainability issues.

*Handle With Care* will be my largest paper piece to date. The process will be challenging and surprising. I'll be improvising and learning. It will be an adventure, as my favorite projects tend to be. Above all, I look forward to the opportunity to observe, discover, and innovate at the crossroads of art and science with as many others as possible. I hope you join in.

**Join us for the unveiling of *Handle with Care* and Q&A with the artist during the Academy's Earth Day Celebration April 21-23.**

For more information about the artist, visit [www.bartalos.com](http://www.bartalos.com)

