



MEDIA RELEASE

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Real-time performance will celebrate mountains and monarchy

The thrill of Everest's first ascent, the memorable moments of the Queen's coronation, and the drama of the 1996 Everest disaster will be portrayed simultaneously during a real-time re-enactment of these events as part of a special 34-hour presentation at The Banff Centre beginning Wednesday, May 28.

British artist Ben Coode-Adams, and Kris Cohen, an American now working in London, will present "Is someone coming to get me?" to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest (May 29, 1953) by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (June 2, 1953), and the 1996 Everest disaster (May 10, 1996).

The project features two wooden 1:240 scale models of the summit ridge of Mount Everest and a space representing Westminster Abbey. Every 15 minutes, the pair - who met at a Banff Centre conference last year - will move wooden blocks that represent the climbers and the royal guests through the spaces and read first-person accounts of the events. The artists will document their preparations and post the event live at www.issomeonecomingtogetme.blogspot.com

The assembly of the models will begin at about 6 p.m. on May 28 in the Centre's Main Dining Room. The 1996 climbers will begin their ascent of the mountain at 11:30 p.m. The next morning, high on the South East Ridge, Hillary and Tenzing will leave their bivouac at 6:30 a.m., reaching the summit at 11:30 a.m. on May 29. As they ascend the final ridge, the crown will descend on the head of Elizabeth. The 1996 climbers will begin to summit at 1:07 p.m. from which point disaster unfolds until dawn on May 30 - re-enacting a tragedy that resulted in the death of nine of the 32 climbers on the mountain at the time.

This project was developed from an earlier performance devised for and supported by the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, U.K. and is a current collaboration between Mountain Culture and the Banff New Media Institute at The Banff Centre.

"After 29 hours, despite being well fed and hydrated, we were both completely exhausted," Coode-Adams says of the U.K. performance. "We could only guess at the state of the climbers, who had been not only awake for that period of time, but hypoxic and hypothermic, having taken little food or water, and in a constant state of extreme physical exertion. Our approach to the presentation was almost clinical, yet both we and the audience were affected by the extreme pathos of the story."

Ben Coode-Adams is an artist whose work spans traditional sculpture, video installation, performance and curating. His work is based on developing innovative means of delivering complex and often esoteric ideas and information in an engaging and accessible way. Kris Cohen is a research fellow in the University of Surrey's Department of Sociology. He is working on performance and re-enactment as modes of inquiry and foils to traditional research. He has a Masters Degree from the University of Chicago in Art History.

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