

## ***Peter Richards: An elective family tree***

*An elective family tree* is an exhibition of new works by Belfast-based artist Peter Richards, featuring a mix of collaborations and unrequited conversations with mediated references. The exhibition's title points to a revisiting of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, particularly the book's beginning. The model of family as society is transposed, with family being replaced by references, and society by knowledge.

Taking *Corrective Perspective: constructed, framed and in two parts* (2012) as a point of entry, the exhibition moves through ideas of the construct, of framing and of perspective, and in part pays homage to ideas that have simultaneously informed and limited an engagement with family, society and understanding.

The series of collaborative works with Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, *Reference Readings: Art, Text and Trees* (2012), began with Richards inviting Lerm Hayes to select a number of texts before coming to his studio to enact them in front of a pinhole camera. The duration of the reading dictated the exposure time, and the resulting photographs documented this process. The readings were recorded and can be heard as a soundtrack to the finished photographs.

*Cause of context: one and four trees* (2012), for which four trees from the same family were uprooted and removed from their natural environment, relates back to both the idea of family trees and to the visual depiction of thought processes. The multitude of possible meanings is deliberate and encourages viewers to insert their own references to their interpretation.

Richards was born in Cardiff in 1970. He was educated at the University of Wales, Cardiff, (BA Fine Art) before completing his M.Phil. studies, 'Representations of Representations', at the University of Ulster, Belfast (1998). His first solo exhibition, *Corrective Perspective*, was at the Context Gallery, Derry in 1996, and since that time he has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions both locally and internationally, including *Live, Live Art*, Cornerhouse, Manchester; *Dogs Have No Religion*, Czech Museum of Fine Art, Prague; *The Belfast Way*, Herzelyia Museum, Tel Aviv; and *The Nature of Things*, la Biennale di Venezia 51.