

# Arts & LEISURE

Muskoka Arts & Crafts Inc.

## EYE OF THE MAKER

KELLY HOLINSHEAD, SUSAN HIGGINS & CATHERINE O'MARA

Three artists, three media, three visions

Exhibition continues until September 17

Chapel Gallery - 15 King Street in Bracebridge  
Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-1pm & 2pm-5pm  
www.muskokaartsandcrafts.com - 705-645-5501

THE CHAPEL GALLERY IS OPEN DURING THE ROAD RECONSTRUCTION

MUSKOKA - A DESIGNATED ARTS COMMUNITY



KELLY HOLINSHEAD

THE MUSKOKAN Second Section THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2010

## New works for an old landscape

*This year's opening at The Tree Museum looks at how Canadians and Australians view this region*

BY ANDREW WAGNER-CHAZALON

First-time visitors to Muskoka often comment on the hard edges, the rock landscape that shapes and defines this region. Not Bev Hogg.

"It's very soft, green and quiet," she said, pausing in her work to point out the carpet of moss and white pine needles that cover the rocks around her.

It's an enormous contrast to the dry landscape of her native Australia. A walk in the bush around Canberra is noisy, as dry leaves and branches crack and snap underfoot.

The difference is the moisture. "All this softness is about water," said Hogg.

That realization has inspired two pieces she has crafted for The Tree Museum, an outdoor museum and exhibition space on Doe Lake Road in Gravenhurst.

Hogg is one of four artists showing new work at The Tree Museum this year. The official opening of this year's work takes place September 5.

This year's showing — titled afterLandscape — is a multi-year project, a collaboration between The Tree Museum and several Australian organizations, includ-

ing the Australia National University School of Art and Namadgi National Park. Anne O'Callaghan and EJ Lightman, co-curators of The Tree Museum, travelled to Australia last year along with fellow artists Penelope Stewart and Jeannie Thib. They studied, worked and taught there, exploring the Australian physical and artistic landscape.

The second component of the project involved Australian artists Bev Hogg and Trish Roan coming to Canada. Hogg, Roan, Stewart and Thib have all been creating works to show at The Tree Museum.

Hogg's work is heavily influenced by the disorientation she has felt in the Canadian woods.

"It's about being in a really



CROSS-CULTURAL. Australian Bev Hogg (above) and Canadian Jeannie Thib (left) are among the artists who have been taking part in an international project. Some of the resulting artwork is being displayed at The Tree Museum. The Gravenhurst-area outdoor gallery is holding its annual opening this weekend.

Photos by Andrew Wagner-Chazalon

foreign landscape," she said. "In Australia I can read my land. I can read that landscape very easily." In Canada, she said, there is novelty in nearly everything, from squirrels and chipmunks to bird calls and weather patterns. And above all, there's the ever-present water.

Artists at The Tree Museum are invited to explore the 200-acre property and select where they would like to install their pieces. Hogg chose two sites: one on the edge of a beaver pond, and another beside a moss-rich clearing.

At the beaver pond she has crafted a large circle of birch

twigs. Visitors can stand on one side of it and use the circle to frame the view of the pond, or they can pass through it and enter a circular clearing at the pond's edge.

The work evokes images of a Zen garden, where circular gates are used to express ideas of perfection, as well as transitioning from one space to another. The circle is also in marked contrast to the dominant themes of the surrounding woods, which is defined primarily by strong vertical and horizontal lines of tree trunks and branches. Circles are

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### Jason Blaine

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### "The Award" Murder Mystery - Dinner Theatre

Presented by The Muskoka Touring Company  
October 8th, Doors 5:30 p.m., Appetizers 6 p.m., Show 6:30 p.m.  
Entrée 7 p.m., Act 2 7:45 p.m., Tickets \$40

### "One Dark Weird Night"

### Dinner Theatre

October 30th, Doors 5:30 p.m., Appetizers 6 p.m., Show 6:30 p.m., Entrée 7 p.m., Act 2 7:45 p.m., Tickets \$40



# Pieces play with notions of artificial and natural landscapes

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

present, though — the clearing is round, and if you look up you can see the circle of sky.

Hogg's other piece also frames a landscape but in a different way, using a grid of beaver-chewed sticks that viewers are invited to peer through. "When I was walking along I kept finding these beaver sticks," Hogg said. They reminded her of message sticks, small sticks etched with lines and dots that were used by aboriginal Australians to communicate over distances.

If Hogg's work is about learning to see a foreign landscape, Canadian Jeannie Thib's is about seeing any landscape as a series of stylized symbols, and building on the way previous artists have used those symbols.

The inspiration for one of Thib's pieces came from a collection of 19th century illustrated newspapers in the Australian national library. Thib was struck by the way clouds were drawn — not so much as individual clouds but as stylized representations of a generic cloud. The same thing was done by engravers in Canada: despite the differences in the landscape, that same stylized cloud could be found in early century papers here.

The image of the cloud became part of the work Thib created in Australia, and remained with her on her return to Canada. Now it has appeared in a large panel she's installing at The Tree Museum.



**MAKING THE SMALL LARGE.** Penelope Stewart's piece, *Cloche*, features an image of a Victorian bell jar blown up to the size of a greenhouse. Among other things, the piece addresses the way greenhouses and zoos have become the last refuge for some threatened species. Photo by Andrew Wagner-Chazalon

Rather than being printed on newspaper, though, it's been drawn on a panel covered with birchbark, the artificial depicted on

the natural.

The panel is mounted on a large boulder. "As soon as I saw that rock, that lovely erratic, I thought 'it's a plinth. This is a museum, and I want to put something on it,'" Thib said.

Many of the 50 or so artists who have created work for The Tree Museum have thought the same thing, and have asked to carve, paint or bolt works to that particular boulder because of its lovely shape and setting. All have been refused. "I had to convince [Lightman and O'Callaghan] that I wouldn't do anything to it," Thib said.

Her other work sits in front of the boulder. A marble disc mounted on a lichen-encrusted stone slab, it is a representation of the moon in the starry sky. It is also a reference to the work of earlier photographers.

The use of marble is deliberate: not only does it have a moon-like look, it also seems fitting that a work in The Tree Museum should use a material often associated with grand old museums.

While the works are meant to be viewed separately, they share common themes. "Both the clouds and the moon are romantic images that have been depicted in landscapes for generations," Thib said.

"Art is often sequential, with artists responding to another artist's work."

Australian artist Trish Roan is fascinated by natural phenomena. In particular, she enjoys processes that go on, often unobserved or unremarked.

Her piece at The Tree Museum draws attention to one of those: the rotation of the earth.

It consists of a series of mirrors mounted to trees, all aimed at a rock face. As the sun rises in the sky, the mirrors reflect the sunlight onto the rock, the reflections growing closer together as the sun gets higher. At the moment the sun is directly overhead (currently around 1:15 p.m.) the reflections come together in a perfect circle on the rock face.

The effect only lasts for a moment, and then the circle begins to break apart.

"I've always been interested in this idea of wholeness, but a very fragile sense of wholeness," said Roan.

"It's a very fleeting thing, because everything's constantly changing and in flux. There are just moments when everything comes together, and then it's gone."

At the same time, she said, the wholeness is enduring: that moment will return again the next day, and the day after. And it will continue regardless of whether people are there to observe it or not.

This year's exhibit officially opens on Sunday, Sept. 5 from noon to 5 p.m. The entrance is located on Doe Lake Road, 7 kilometres east of Hwy 11.

The museum is open year-round, and admission is free. Walking shoes are advisable: the parking lot is located 1 km from the nearest works, and 2.2 km from the farthest ones. There are no facilities on-site.

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