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## Artists bring the noise at Tree Museum exhibition

### New works for 2011 show play with ideas about outdoor sound at Gravenhurst-area gallery

GRAVENHURST – Grey Owl is back in the woods. And for Toronto-based artist E.C. Woodley, that only seems natural.

Woodley is among the artists with new installations at The Tree Museum, located east of Gravenhurst off Doe Lake Road. His installation consists of an antique radio set within the confines of a prospector tent.

Grey Owl's voice plays intermittently over the radio.

"It felt like he was appropriate to bring back in this setting," Woodley said. "I think of Grey Owl as this distant light. His voice can still reach us in the moment."

Grey Owl, born Archibald Stansfeld Belaney, was an Englishman who moved to Canada and claimed to be native. He spent his adult life living in Temagami, originally as a trapper.

After meeting a Mohawk woman named Gertrude Bernard, he gave up trapping and focused his efforts on conservation, becoming a popular lecturer.

Despite the controversy surrounding his fabricated origins, Woodley believes Grey Owl was well ahead of his time in the causes he advocated for.

"He was the only one really talking about it," Woodley said.

Woodley hopes his installation takes visitors into a "contemplative mode."



Photo by Jon Spratt



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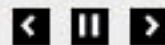
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"He was the only one really talking about it," Woodley said.

Woodley hopes his installation takes visitors into a "contemplative mode."

"Here, I'm working outside, but built an enclosure," he said. "I hope to get people to think about what they're hearing, but retreat into thought... the enclosed aspect mimics that interior nature of thought."

The Tree Museum recently opened its 2011 exhibition, titled *Items May Shift*.

The new installations all have sound elements to them. Electrical components on all pieces are solar-powered.

"The idea is that it may slightly shift the reality of the forest, but it's going to leave it untouched," said Earl Miller, curator of this year's exhibition. "And the solar power fits that theme nicely."

Ken Gregory's work, *Sun suckers*, is another installation that's among the highlights this year.

The piece involves several tubes rising out of the ground. Run by a microcontroller that Gregory developed, each unit takes solar input and outputs sounds based on changes in light and temperature.

"Interaction with the environment is a huge part of it," Gregory said. "I wanted to respond to the environment... this form seems to work because of the visual elements."

The tubes spit out a constantly-changing array of bleeps and bloops, all powered by the technology's reaction to the elements.

Tree Museum co-founder Anne O'Callaghan raved about Gregory's work.

"I really love this piece," she said. "It's very simple and very complex."

Gregory is interested by the idea of 'bio-mimicry' – essentially, his installation functions as a sort of artificial plant life.

In that regard, he's interested to see how the tubes will hold up after the leaves change and snow begins to fall.

"I'll probably leave them here over winter," Gregory said. "It will be a nice challenge to have them look after themselves."

Other artists with new installations at The Tree Museum include Sarah Peebles, Anitra Hamilton, Mike Hansen and Gordon Monahan.

Opened in 1997, the Tree Museum is located on a 200-acre woodlot and currently boasts 27 outdoor installations. Admission is free and the site is open year-round.

Curators Anne O'Callaghan and EJ Lightman will be leading a guided tour of the Tree Museum during Ontario's Cultural Days on October 1 and 2.

Visitors are advised to bring a good pair of walking shoes and weather-appropriate clothing, as it's a one-kilometre walk in to the first exhibit. The terrain is unsuitable for people with mobility issues.