

Night turns to day at the Tree Museum Saturday

by Darren Lum

The wilderness of Gravenhurst will be lit with a new perspective from four distinct artists under the cloak of night this coming Saturday.

This weekend, the Tree Museum is kicking off its Wayfinding show with a one-night unique experience.

Surrounded by the shroud of night, video art installations of the day created by well-known Canadian artist Dave Rokeby, up-and-comer Alison Kobayashi of Toronto, Darlene Naponse from Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Sebastian Burdach of Germany will bring the woods alive with picture and sound.

The art can be found along the museum pathway from 7 to 9 p.m.

Exhibition curator Orest Tataryn, with a background as a light artist, is excited about the show and believes visitors will have an enlightening experience by the night journey.

Tataryn said the show adheres to the native culture perspective that precludes any notion of ever being lost in the woods.

"For natives you're not lost. You're home. . . . It's the idea of being comfortable in the wilderness and being able to ponder it without all the maps and the tools to tell you you're not lost," Tataryn said. "In a way, there is no such thing as wilderness."

He added everyone who attends can expect to begin the experience with a sense of unease, walking into the dark. A reward for the senses, however, will follow.

"It's about wilderness in the wilderness," he said. "You're enlightened by light that is thrown at nighttime about images . . . in the wilderness," he said.

Based on the artist representation of the four compass points, North, East, West and South, as well as the four colour races red, yellow, white and black, the show will provide a diverse collection of perspectives.

The first video installation has visitors come to Zu zelten, zu baden, Feuer zu machen by Sebastian Burdach. Lasting seven minutes, the video shows wilderness paths that used to be developed areas with a running narrative announcing the "reclamation act," enacted in Germany. This act has taken complete control from people to return the wilderness to nature. It will be rear-projected on a screen 12 feet by nine feet along a path.

The next installation is by Naponse and will be projected on an eight foot by eight foot screen, which can virtually be seen on the beaver pond it stands near. Waiting for the Ice to Melt shows the scene of a lake from when it is frozen in late winter until it melts in early spring. The scenes are accompanied by the sound of a guitar playing with Naponse's written poetry projected over the images. It lasts five minutes and 15 seconds.

Rokeby, the most senior of the artists, expresses his artistic perspective using technology. Rokeby will be projecting daytime images showing them surrounded by the night.

He is famous for his elaborate interactive installations and will be installing his work in the day.

Toronto artist Kobayashi is the youngest artist, and is showing her five-minute video Women of the Future. The video depicts a post-apocalyptic world and shows what would happen if women "ruled the world in a tongue-and-cheek way." Her video is five minutes long.

"This is my territorial approach to take their work to put it into the context of the wilderness. The wilderness is what turns the whole thing into an installation," Tataryn said.

Except for Rokeby's work, the videos will be run on loops, continuously playing for the duration of the evening showcase. It is unknown how Rokeby's will be played.

With the exception of Burdach, all of the artists will be in attendance at the event.

Admission is by donation and Tataryn encourages visitors to wear appropriate footwear such as hiking boots, and to bring a flashlight. Although organizers discourage any children and pets from attending the event, none of the video installations are graphic or inappropriate in nature.

In addition to the four artists, there will be site-specific work by Lisa Neighbour, Tataryn and Walter Willem.

Neighbour's pieces will be the farthest off the pathway in geography and visual impact. Follow the patio lights, leading from the path to an unworldly rock, glowing fluorescent and lit by four spotlights, throwing black light on it.

"It's this amazing rock that they found. And it looks like it just doesn't fit. It looks like it is from Mars or something," Tataryn said.

Visitors will be encouraged to mark the glowing rock with black light pens.

The following day at the museum will be the second part of the show when a reception will be held from noon until 5 p.m.

Located in Gravenhurst off Highway 11 on Doe Lake Road (Muskoka Road 6), the museum will have volunteers, wearing glow sticks, helping visitors during the rain or shine event, but the tour will be self-led. The parking lot will be lit and the path will have a LED light every 30 feet or so.

Tataryn said he will be easily identified for anyone interested in asking questions.

For additional information check the website www.thetreeuseum.ca.

