

WEEKEND

The Gazette

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CULTURE

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artslife@montrealgazette.com

Art in the woods

Event includes poetry,
artist meetings, tours and
musical **performances**



BETSABÉE ROMERO

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JOHN POHL
GAZETTE VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

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If you go out in the woods near Val David today, you're in for a big surprise – art is lurking among the rocks and trees. And while the teddy bears won't be picnicking, you can break out your own sandwiches and slice up a watermelon at a table at the entrance to the annual International Symposium of In Situ Art at the Jardins du précambrien.

Montreal artist Emmanuel Galland curated the art part of the event, which also includes poetry, meetings with artists and musical performances each Saturday until Labour Day and guided tours on Sundays.

Galland asked 10 artists to address the theme of "legacy" as chosen by artistic director René Derouin, head of the foundation that manages the site and runs the event. The resulting eight art installations – by seven solo artists and one three-person collective, Montreal's BGL – will remain on display until the end of 2012. Derouin builds new paths for every two-year show, but leaves the old paths for visitors to explore, looking for what remains from previous years. Some are gone, marked only by plaques, but others still stand tall, like Rêve Haut, an eight-level tree house built in 2007 by Jérôme Fortin.

On July 1, Galland gathered his artists for a two-week residency for creating their pieces. They'd already chosen their sites, based on photographs and were offered assistants: local people with technical skills and previous experience at the site.

Pascale Girardin, a Montreal ceramist who designs architectural pieces for restaurant interiors, requested eight assistants to help her make 2,200 ceramic disks to create Ceci n'est pas un arbre. Her genealogy chart is no family tree; the disks are wired together and draped over a boulder as a circular genealogy grid. What would resemble a ring from above is a glistening web at eye level, fuller at the bottom as descendants accumulate.

Cal Lane rejected assistance in installing Oil Tank, even though some of the metal pieces were large, Galland said. Lane, a Nova Scotian now based in New York, uses a welding torch to transform oil drums and barrels into delicate ornamental objects that look like they're made out of lace. Oil Tank lies on the ground like a fall-

en tree with its top, branches and roots cut off.

Nobody could have worked harder than Jean-Denis Boudreau, a New Brunswick artist who spent 10 days with his assistant breaking rocks in a quarry. For Home Made, he built a clothesline system to deliver pails of the resulting gravel to its site 15 metres into the woods and down a slope. There lies a perfect, but inaccessible, driveway – with trees growing through the gravel.

Boudreau is a Carl André for the third millennium, Galland said. Minimalism plus performance.

Plus humour: The mailbox at the end of the driveway is superfluous, but adds fun.

Like Girardin, Betsabée Romero from Mexico City drapes her piece over a boulder. Romero is known for making pieces with cars and tires, but here she works small. In Rush Hour, a line of trucks recycles itself, emerging from the forest floor to climb a boulder, cross it and return to the earth. Her "enhanced readymades" are wooden trucks made by Mexican craftspeople, painted and loaded with moss, tree cones and twigs.

Other pieces include an exploded view of a house – its parts scattered in the woods – by Argentina's José Luis Torres, a performance piece by Terrance Houle of Calgary and an enigmatic campsite by the Montreal collective BGL (Jasmin Bilodeau, Sébastien Giguère and Nicolas Laverdière). Flag bunting like that used by car dealers flies over the camp, but two trees have fallen side by side and golf clubs are lodged in logs. The fireplace is blazing, but nobody is around. What has happened?

You might spend the most time trying to work out the phrases in Jean-Jules Soucy's JJS ♥ D (his initials, plus the heart sign pronounced "aime" or as the letter M, meaning Jean-Jules Soucy loves Marcel Duchamp).

Soucy pays homage to Duchamp's wordplay with his own

concoctions set on 83 trees. Words are created by speaking the letters aloud. NRG becomes "energie" and CD becomes "cédez (le passage)," but many of the sets of letters are much longer. CD might also refer to Soucy's monument to his hometown, La Baie, for its recovery from the 1996 floods along the Saguenay River. The Pyramide des Ha! Ha! is made of 3,200 red and white yield signs.

Galland has pulled off a most interesting exhibition in a very walkable nature preserve, and there's an added incentive to making the trip to Val David. It is to visit 1001 Pots, the village's annual show and sale of functional and sculptural ceramic objects. About 90 exhibitors have brought their wares to the site, which includes an airy garden enclosed by metal fencing, sections of which are stuffed with pottery.

Legacy: The International Symposium of In Situ Art continues daily until Sept. 5 and on weekends until Oct. 10 at the Jardins du précambrien, 1301 Montée Gagnon in Val David. This weekend's program includes a meeting with Pascale Girardin Saturday at 2 p.m. and a guided tour Sunday at 2 p.m. For more information: jardinsduprecambrien.com

1001 Pots continues until Aug. 14, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, at 2435 De l'Église St. in Val David. For information on the event, its workshops, demonstrations and other activities: 1001pots.com

The caption for the photo of a hat made by Pina Macku that ran with last Saturday's column described one of Macku's sculptures instead of the hat shown. Macku is one of the artists opening their studios to visitors during the Eastern Townships Tour des Arts, which concludes on Sunday. For information, go to tourdesarts.com.

john.o.pohl@gmail.com