



FOREST (for a thousand years...)

2021

Audio installation: 22 loud speakers mounted in a forest setting, amplifiers, playback computer

Duration: 28-minute loop

© Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, courtesy of the artists and Luhring Augustine, New York

This work contains loud passages including re-enacted sounds of war that may be heard throughout the site.

Janet Cardiff (b. 1957, Brussels, Ontario, Canada)

George Bures Miller (b. 1960, Vegreville, Alberta, Canada)

Both Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller grew up in small towns in rural Canada - Cardiff on a working farm and Miller the son of a country veterinarian. In 1981, Cardiff invited Miller to help her make a film, which became their first date. At the time, Cardiff was majoring in photography and printmaking while Miller was majoring in painting at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. The two married in 1983.

In 1991, Cardiff was in residency at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Alberta, Canada and debuted Forest Walk, her first audio walk utilizing a binaural recording technique. The artists consider their 1995 mixed media, audiovisual installation The Dark Pool, to be their first “mature” work, which “may be as close to a self-portrait as [they] have come” (“Power of Sound,”

New York Times). Cardiff and Miller have created a number of installations throughout 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, though the artists do occasionally work alone.

Definitions

Binaural Recording refers to a method of recording sound that uses two microphones, arranged with the intent to create a 3-D stereo sound sensation for the listener of being in the room with the performers or instruments. It produces a more immersive listening experience than the standard stereo mix by accounting for the space between the ears, which affects the way we hear.

Ambisonic Recording, first developed in the 1970s by the British National Research Development Corporation, is a full-sphere surround sound technique. In addition to the horizontal plane, it covers sound sources above and below the listener using hardware and software to create a full 360-degree representation of sound.

Forest (for a thousand years...), 2012

This site-specific work was first created for dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, Germany in 2012. Glenstone hosts the first permanent installation of the work, installed in August of 2017. The work includes a 28-minute continuous loop with no distinct beginning or end, played over 22 speakers. 21 tree stumps are installed for seating.

The sounds were recorded from numerous parts of the world, ranging from the Estonian Philharmonic Choir performing the piece *Nunc Dimittis* by Arvo Pärt, to the growls of the artists' daughter. The sounds are a combination of re-enacted, or foley, sounds and naturally occurring sounds, many of which were recorded over a three-month period on a small island off the West Coast of Canada, edited in a hut onsite to make sure they worked within the setting. Binaural recording and ambisonic technology were used to create the sculptural sounds.

Regarding the installation of the work at Glenstone, Cardiff said, "Before we sold the piece to them, I went to make sure they had a location that would work. It has to be a forest that is

nice enough to look at, with some older trees and thick enough growth, and it can't be next to a roadway or underneath a flight path. You have to bring a surveyor and mark all the trees in the area, and then George puts that information into a computer program that maps where the speakers should go. We have to create a perfect sphere of sound, so you need subwoofers on the ground for the bass of the planes and some speakers higher up.” (Janet Cardiff, “Who Can Tell a Forest’s Secrets? Janet Cardiff on What It Takes to Create a Truly Epic Work of Sound”, ArtNet)

Reflections

Can sound be a sculpture?

After experiencing FOREST (for a thousand years...) (2012), can you imagine what it would be like to experience the work in a different season, time of day, or city? Would a new context change your interpretation of the artwork?