

The Medium



Blackwood offers an earful of art

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You find yourself huddled around a campfire with friends, singing songs to drown out the mysterious whispers of the surrounding night. That's the feeling that the Blackwood Gallery's latest exhibition, titled "Volume: Hear Here" and curated by **Christof Migone**, evokes in the spectator.

Though visually bare, the exhibition's centrepiece—an igloo made of recycled speakers by artist **Alexis O'Hara**—feels casual, like a child's fort. It invites the spectator to come inside, pick up one of the four hanging microphones, and experiment with sound. With a soft carpet made of diverse patches, the inside of the igloo is cozy, reminiscent of a gathering of friends in a basement or garage for band practice.

Perhaps the best part of the exhibition for those interested in music (or in reconnecting with their inner musician) is that it is interactive, and visitors are welcome to get together and sing together if they so wish. Gallery docent **Lesley Savoie** commented that the interactive nature of the exhibition (which includes a continuous soundtrack called "Whisperfield" by artist **John Oswald**) has led to the great turnout the Blackwood has seen so far.

Along the wall are modified headphones with looped tracks that spectators can listen to, an untitled piece by **Dave Dymet**; they provide an interesting look at the function of a pair of headphones. His other piece, "Nothing", is a power bar with attached electronic pest control devices. This point of the piece seems not to be the power bar itself, as the viewer may think at first glance, but rather the absence of rodents and insects. This piece is perhaps a perfect illustration of the concept that the exhibition is dealing with: presence entwined with absence.

The sound exhibition continues with two more features in the e|gallery, located in the CCT Building. Echoing the presence/absence theme is **Ian Skedd's** "Sign Singing: Love Will Tear Us Apart, Joy Division, 1979, Deaf Choir, 2009", which depicts a choir of deaf people signing the lyrics of **Joy Division's** song "Love Will Tear Us Apart". It is an eye-opening piece for the hearing spectator, giving another perspective on the connection (or perhaps the lack thereof) between sound and music.

Also there in the dark hall is **Darsha Hewitt's** "Electronic Bell Choir" installation, made up of 20 repurposed cathode ray tube TVs and little bell assemblies with strikers. The TVs are turned on and off automatically; when they're turned on, the static from the screens causes the strikers to hit the bells, producing a clear, delicate sound. The overall effect is both a sense of foreshadowing like that in a horror movie at the moment when the lights start to flicker, and the sense of wonder at finding a pirate's treasure in a dark cave at the climax of an adventure film.

"Volume: Hear Here" will continue its run at the Blackwood Gallery until March 10. The other half of the exhibit, featuring both more pieces and more artists, can be found at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery on the St. George campus.