

BIRD SONG LISTENING STATION

– A New Artwork at Seattle Center

BY Kari Huhtala, MCIP Photos by Douglas Taylor

Doug Taylor, a well know BC artist, has recently completed a public art installation at the Seattle Center.

Taylor focuses largely on wind and water-powered kinetic works, implementing renewable energy, and exploring the relationship between society, technology, and the environment. His work is installed at sites such as Whistler's World Cup Plaza, Victoria's Selkirk Waterfront and Vancouver's False Creek (George Wainborne Park) and Kitsalano Pool.



A panel of artists, community members and Seattle Centre staff selected Taylor to create an artwork at Seattle Centre, and it is located near

the Fisher Pavilion. The work is kinetic and interactive sculpture that harnesses the renewable energy sources of wind and sunlight for power. As breezes fill the three 15-foot sails and rotate the wind turbine, a small generator supplies power to the sculpture's audio components. Participants standing beneath the listening station's sound dome will hear digital recordings of calling songs from a variety of western finches.



"In the 21st century, we lead extraordinarily busy lives in densely populated areas with high levels of traffic noise," says Taylor. "We tend to not hear the wind in the trees or the bird song coming from our feathered friends high up in the branches. Bird Song Listening Station helps

remind us of sounds which are ever present in the natural world, but often unnoticed."

His kinetic sculptures are an interesting mix of space age materials (like delrin and teflon) combined with old-fashioned pragmatism. Taylor looked to the designs applied to the wind-operated water pumps farmers used for their thirsty cattle. He has his pieces tested in the University of British Columbia's wind tunnel, and then admits that if he'd known more about engineering he probably wouldn't have been able to proceed. But these engaging pieces do work. Taylor's are wind machines tested to withstand gusts as high as 88 kilometres per hour. At this velocity they're designed to turn sideways to the axis of the main piece so that they confound the wind they'd sought out. "The whole prop," Taylor describes, "turns sideways to the axis of the main piece and begins to slow down."

These human-figured whirligigs, Taylor says, "capturing and focussing on endlessly repeating actions are mesmerizing, a meditative form for everyday people." It could be argued that for Doug Taylor, life and art combine to form a moveable feat.

For more information, please contact Doug Taylor at dtaylor@lightspeed.ca