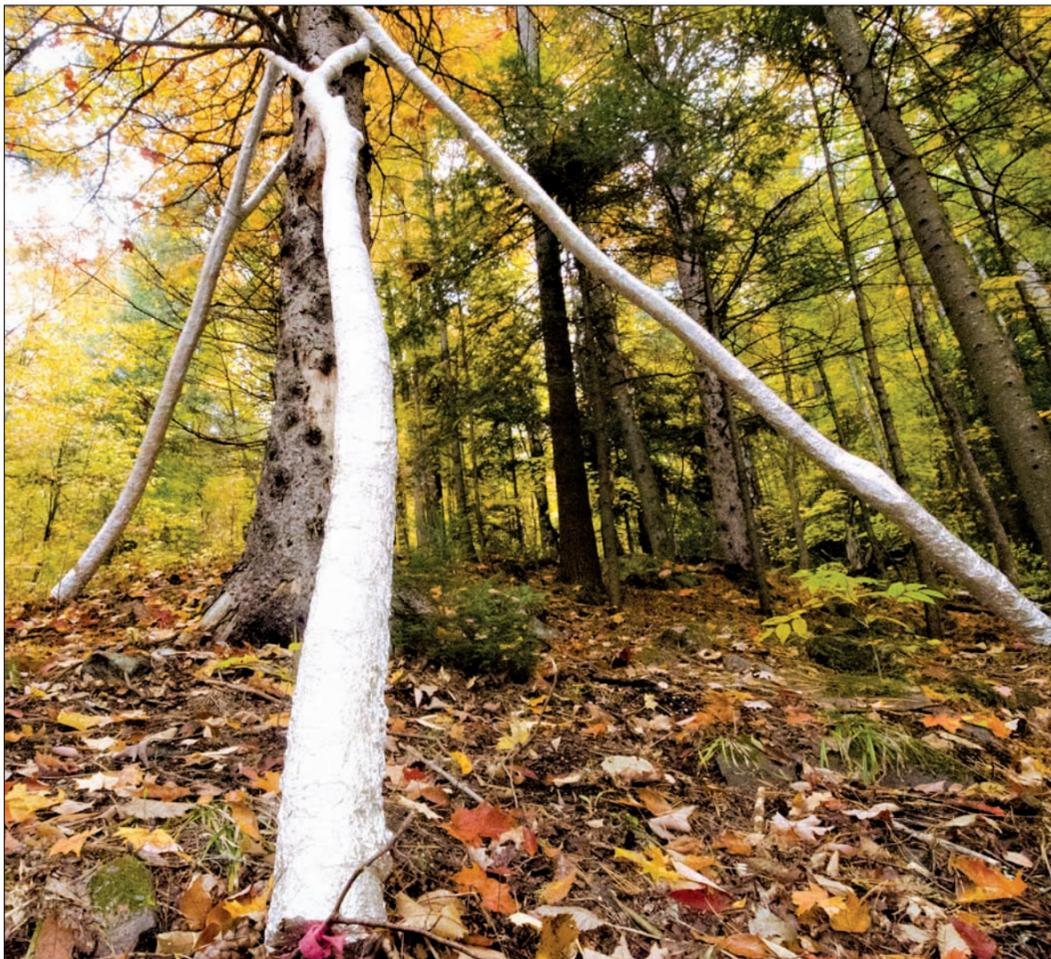


# Land Art Trail leads hikers to deep exploration of self



Wakefield environmental artist Mark Walter and Ottawa artist Karl Ciesluk have their mark all over the new Land Art Trail at the Creative Wheel Centre just outside Edelweiss. Trevor Greenway photo

**Trevor Greenway**

There's a small, winding trail in a wooded forest just outside Wakefield that eventually leads to a higher level of self-awareness – or at least that's where it's supposed to lead.

It sits away from the daily grind and the hustle and bustle of today's fast-paced world. It's removed from the iPhones and tablets that seem to rule our every minute. It's far from the office cubicle and the room without a view.

"We need to get out of all these God damn boxes," says Dominique Larocque, owner of the Creative Wheel Centre, a nature and art retreat centre situated near Edelweiss. "I've never asked a rock a question that was never answered. You just have to wait long enough."

Larocque has been shaping

the land and blazing trails on the 108-acre property since 2004. She created a world-class mountain bike training loop that includes 15 km of highly technical descents and rocky drops and a kilometre-long walking trail intended to give hikers perspective in their lives.

The centre's motto has always been "Nature, Movement, Art," and with the help of Wakefield environmental artist Marc Walter and Ottawa land sculptor Karl Ciesluk, art is now making its big debut at the centre, beginning Oct. 13 with the opening of Merkabah Land Art Trail.

It will lead hikers exploring it to several wooden art pieces fused together into impressive structures that are meant to stimulate the mind. That's the whole point, says Larocque, a gestalt therapist who also has a master's degree in sports psy-

chology. "It's a contemplation trail," she says, showing one of Walter's works, a wooden boat suspended in the trees above the trail. "When people walk in nature, they don't stop and look around, but when they see these art pieces, they will."

The featured artists used only what they found on the land for their creations and will leave the dozen or so structures on the land indefinitely. Larocque wants the trail to become known forever as the Land Art Trail, where people with addictions, stress and anxiety can come to heal themselves.

Merkabah will be open from 1-4 p.m. Oct. 13 and the land trail will remain open through the next day until 4 p.m. Hiking the trail after that can be made on an appointment basis. For more information, visit [www.creativewheel.ca](http://www.creativewheel.ca).



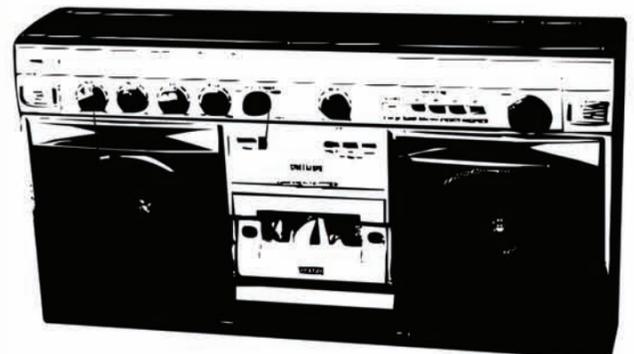
Another one of Walter's land sculptures is meant to have hikers and walkers stop and think about life while on the Land Art Trail. Trevor Greenway photo

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