

Deep in Estonia's woods, Mother Nature gets a megaphone

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Design students in Estonia have strategically placed three massive loudspeakers in the heart of a remote woodland in southern Estonia to help nature lovers enjoy the subtle sounds of their country's vast and cherished forests

Design students in Estonia have come up with a novel way to help nature lovers enjoy the sights and subtle sounds of their country's vast and cherished forests.

The group strategically placed three massive loudspeakers in the heart of a remote woodland in late September to amplify its murmurs, and hikers are both awestruck and inspired.

"It was tricky to find them, but once we did they were quite impressive," says hiker Sten Weidebaum, who brought his kids along to enjoy the site at the Pahnri Nature Centre that skirts the border with Latvia.

"Their light wood in the dark green forest at first looked like a UFO landing spot," he added.

"It reminded us to listen to the sounds of the forest and to pay attention to all other senses as well," he told AFP, adding that "they also seem to work as a megaphone for one's own thoughts."

Asked by university supervisors to create a "forest library", the team of [design students](#) including Birgit Oigus put on their thinking caps.

"I got the idea to create an audio library," said the 21-year-old Tallinn native who dreamt up the woodland loudspeakers.

"It's a place that reminds us to listen to the sounds of the forest and take away peace and fresh thoughts," she told AFP.

According to Hannes Praks, a professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts who oversaw the project, the installation's design creates "a unique merged surround-sound effect".



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"We placed the three megaphones at such a distance and at a suitable angle, so at the centre of the installation, sound feeds from all three directions," he told AFP of the whopping megaphones, measuring three metres (yards) in diameter.

Culture rooted in nature

Forests blanket 51 percent of Estonia, a tiny Baltic state of 1.3 million people that is renowned for its IT savvy after giving the world Skype, e-voting, e-residency and, most recently, TransferWise.

Surveys suggest that Estonia is one of the world's least religious countries—a 2005 Eurobarometer poll found just 16 percent believe in God—but many here profess a deep and abiding love of nature, particularly forests.

Estonian author Valdur Mikita describes the project as a "slightly exaggerated meeting of nature and culture."

The Estonian Art Academy's design quest for a "forest library" was originally inspired by his book entitled "The Linguistic Forest".

An Estonian bestseller, it explores in an ecstatic and playful way the deep connection of nature and culture by revealing how the Estonian language is rooted in nature.

"I have a theory that the exceptional number of talented composers in Estonia is the result of the special sense of hearing that originates from living in the forest," he told AFP, evoking artists like Arvo Part, the world's most performed living composer.

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