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Art installation at Laurier explores Canada's wireless history

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University's Robert Langen Art Gallery presents an installation by artists Michael Longford and Robert Prenovault in an exhibition titled *Marconi's Ruins*, running from Sept. 19 to Oct. 27, 2012.

Through *Marconi's Ruins*, Longford and Prenovault explore what remains of the first commercial transatlantic wireless station in Cape Breton. Built by Guglielmo Marconi in 1907, the station is a Canadian landmark in the early history of wireless telegraphy and radio. In its day, the station could be seen and heard for miles around. Today the remaining structures are silent, quietly deteriorating over time.

Through a mix of photography, sculpture and original artifacts, Longford and Prenovault explore what remains and has been lost of the industrial infrastructure – the condenser house, coal-fired generators, towers supporting huge antennae arrays, spark transmitters and banks of vacuum tubes – required to send the pulse of energy translated into the dots and dashes that made up the language invented by Samuel Morse. The station remained in operation to the end of the Second World War.

Longford is the associate dean of Research in the Faculty of Fine Arts at York University. He is a co-director of the Mobile Media Lab, which is made up of an interdisciplinary research team exploring wireless communications, rich media content development for mobile technologies, and locative media practices. He is also a co-editor of *The Wireless Spectrum: The Politics, Practices and Poetics of Mobile Media* (2010), and a co-editor for the *Visual Communication Journal* published by Sage.

Prenovault is an artist and designer whose practice is strongly informed by materials, processes, technologies and the role they play in the interface between human beings, the built environment and the natural world. Over a period of four decades he has exhibited, produced artist books and completed performance and installation work across Canada. As a member of the Mobile Media Lab at York University, his creative practice is currently focused on the integration of traditional techniques with digital technologies.

The Robert Langen Art Gallery has played a vital role at Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo campus since it opened in 1989. As Laurier's visual arts centre, the Robert Langen Art Gallery provides knowledge, stewardship, appreciation and enjoyment of Canadian art and culture to members of the Laurier community and beyond. The gallery's annual programming complements concepts and theories in Laurier's academic curriculum and integrates community outreach initiatives as related to the visual arts.

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