

bounce

Brian Jungen

Myfanwy MacLeod

Damian Moppett

curated by Philip Monk

bad seed

In all genres of the serio-comical, to be sure, there is a strong rhetorical element, but in the atmosphere of joyful relativity characteristic of a carnival sense of the world this element is fundamentally changed: there is a weakening of its one-sided rhetorical seriousness, its rationality, its singular meaning, its dogmatism.

– Mikhail Bakhtin

— Philip Monk

Fathers and sons and daughters. It was inevitable that the successful discourse Vancouver crafted around its art practice — the so-called Vancouver School — would end in generational rivalry. Once transmission had run its course in a generation or two, we could expect deviation and resistance (if not outright rebellion) to its clearly defined programme. Yet, what if it were the art works themselves, not the discourse around them, that embodied resistance? What if such works created a new order while surreptitiously waving good-bye to the one out of which they developed? Such questions could be put to the works gathered in this exhibition — even against their acknowledged intentions.

Vancouver in the 1980s caught the attention of the nation and world with artists such as Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham, Stan Douglas, Ian Wallace and Ken Lum. Their photo-conceptual art was soon labelled the Vancouver School because of, on the one hand, the consistency of medium and reference (the urban landscape of Vancouver) and, on the other, their influence on an immediately succeeding generation of young artists. But with the next, current generation, a division appears to have taken place — some artists following and others deviating from this dominating tradition. Bounce presents three of the most prominent younger artists working today in Vancouver — Brian Jungen, Myfanwy MacLeod and Damian Moppett — who have boldly branched out in new directions.

The aim of this exhibition is not to register a polemic — read as Oedipal — or, indeed, to reward the bad seed simply for its deviation. Rather, it attempts to foreground — in the most dramatic way possible — a difference in practice within Vancouver and a reopening of dialogue with art outside the city. To this end, the predominately sculptural dimension of the artists' practice is emphasized, although other non-photographic media are included. To fully underscore the nature of a change, one underlying premise of the exhibition was to say no to photography.

Of course, the oppositions I set up here are almost purely rhetorical. The pretense of generational rivalry is used to get the ball rolling while being, at the same time, a bit wicked. Some might see this as “Vancouver envy” — evidence of a rivalry between the art communities of Toronto and Vancouver, rather than of any generational one. Yet, from my position in Toronto, I concede and applaud their artists' success: Vancouver rules. But, I

also recognize that a powerful rhetoric has built up around the Vancouver School, much of the artists' own making, produced through their own lucid writings, which not so subtly cross-referenced its select participants. Through this writing, we were persuaded that this terminal city on the edge of empire was world historical. Such is the triumphant tactic of an argument from below that makes the weaker one stronger. A successful rhetoric then, it not only directed our interpretations of the art it justified, but also seemed to determine what work could be made in Vancouver.

Jungen, MacLeod and Moppett participate in a rhetoric as well. But blinded by the prevailing one, would we know it? This rhetoric does not stage itself in the same way as its predecessor, nor does it pose itself in opposition to it (despite the occasional snipe from below). But, there is a cheekiness in the work of this group of artists that would, if they did belong to the Vancouver School, see them expelled for lack of a melancholic skepticism steeped in the rigorous theory of the Frankfurt School. And in fact, the initial reception of their works was partly negative – with epithets of juvenility, triviality and banality applied to the range of cultural references that so obviously departed from the logic and curriculum of the Vancouver School. Scott Watson's exhibition 6: New Vancouver Modern, the first institutional endorsement of a new Vancouver zeitgeist connected to artists elsewhere (MacLeod and Moppett were included), was the recipient of such comments. In his Canadian Art review of the exhibition, even the sagacious and supportive artist and teacher Ken Lum was ambivalent – attributing the glibness of the technically refined art works to the proliferation of art schools. Though perhaps it was only an issue of attendance at the wrong schools – where insemination had not taken.

At issue here is the possibility for a new language to appear and be recognized when it differs from the prevailing discourse and when it is obscured by submersion within other cultural codes. With the work in this exhibition, the Vancouver-specificity of the earlier photo-conceptualists has given way to more broadly shared cultural references that stem, in part, from popular entertainment and youth culture. Common to these artists' work is their playful, if at times perverse, handling of the ready-made materials of mass culture, whether objects or images. Other commentators, such as Kitty Scott, have already noted

the movie industry having replaced the Vancouver milieu as subject matter for younger artists there. Like Toronto, Vancouver is the disguised backdrop for many Hollywood productions. This simulacral inversion — Vancouver School in denial — is perhaps the reason why younger artists seem less interested in filmic representation than in the margins of the movie business — the products and services that Vancouver now supplies. This displacement to behind-the-scenes attunes their work to that of fathers they might seek out elsewhere, such as installation and performance artists Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, who likewise work off the margins of the movie industry, though at its source in Los Angeles. Does this make our artists' work mere brat-pack play among the debased detritus of commercial culture? Or is there a logic operating within their works?

Whatever logic there is functions within the familiar terrain of everyday culture by recycling the high and low images society routinely produces. Conversing critically with all aspects of culture — popular, commercial and institutional — through its own images, the artists make works that are more rhetorical than abstract and more dialogical, than logical. Jungen, MacLeod and Moppett do not reproduce the systems to which they refer as much as they re-code our potential use of them. They talk back in languages that are impure, comic and hybrid.

Damian Moppett

To operate with efficiency, profit or effective communication, a system protects its internal structural purity from the predations or noise of outside contamination. Yet, in reality, the "outside" is already inside, expressed as a hierarchy of high and low — though the latter is repressed. An intentionally impure system, by contrast, recognizes this contradictory inhabitation and promotes the unsmooth working (or unworking) of its apparatus. It incorporates a mechanism and a space to unbalance itself or to upset its own power relations. Sometimes this is just canny good sense, a precaution against social unrest; at other times, it reflects a consensual recourse to the disorder necessary for the redistribution of affects and property, as in ritual and potlatch.

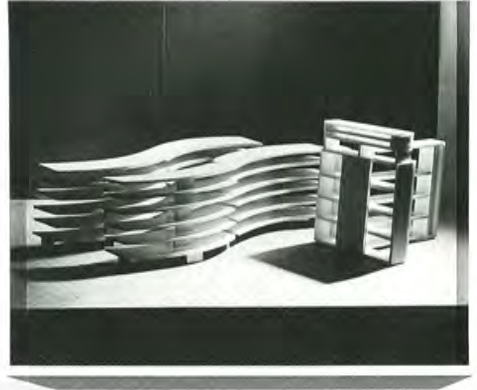
Having already called one of his photographic series Impure Systems (1999–2000),

Damian Moppett — [Vein/Artery in Studio, 1999-2000](#)

[The Four Seasons and the Three Graces \[Spring\], 1998-1999](#)

[The Four Seasons and the Three Graces \[Aglaia \[Splendor\]\], 1998-1999](#)



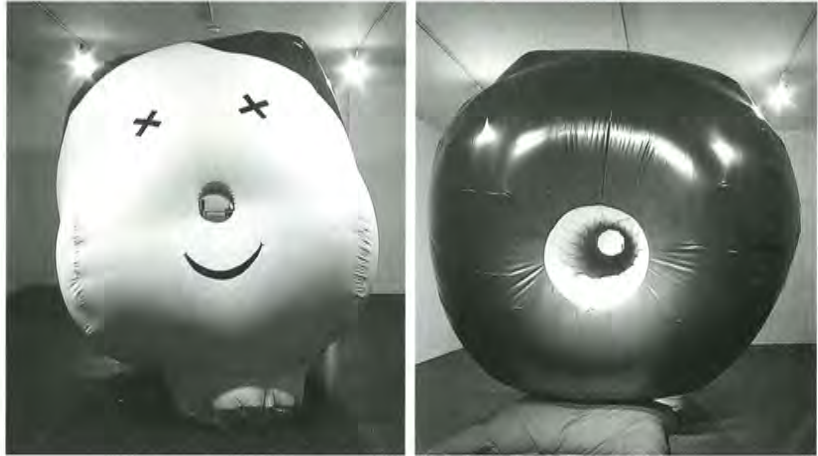


Damian Moppett has displayed an interest in such power dynamics. In the new work exhibited at The Power Plant, Moppett has sought examples of the impulses toward disorder that are repressed within capitalism and has returned for inspiration to their riotous expression in the pre-capitalist past. Thus, he has copied Peter Paul Rubens' [The Kermis](#) (c. 1631), a painting that depicts a Northern European peasant festival. The Kermis, or peasant festival, was one of the widespread annual celebrations that, since the Middle Ages, temporarily and symbolically overturned social hierarchies — for instance, the fool would be crowned king. What is unique about Rubens' depiction is that it is posed from the peasants' view of things not, as was typical, from the overbearing heights of their tolerant lords or landowners — those to whose possession the paintings would be destined. Moppett's [The Kermis \(After Rubens\)](#) — like his complementary [Drunken Silenus \(After Rubens\)](#), [The Triumph of Bacchus \(After Rubens\)](#), [The Fall of the Damned \(After Rubens\)](#), [The Garden of Love \(After Rubens\)](#) (all 2002) — is not a comic travesty of Rubens' painting, but a masterful copy. Earlier

(in 1998–99) Moppett had created another series that upset aesthetic hierarchies by pairing copies after François Boucher's rococo paintings of nobility's sylvan fantasies with juvenile monster drawings of intestines à la Basil Wolverton or Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. Collectively entitled The Four Seasons and the Three Graces, the pairing placed both aesthetic genres—one upper class, the other lower—on a scale of kitsch. Moppett attempts no such rudeness towards Rubens. Instead, he seeks a contemporary complement to the elder artist's peasant festival and elaborates it in part through a fantasized projection.

Moppett finds his parallel to the peasant festival in the socially unsanctioned antics of skateboarders who commandeer public spaces rather than use the parks allocated to them. He then attempts to "institutionalize" this antagonism to authority by designing anarchic non-conformity into his own fantastical skateboard park constructed in maquette. Less utopian than subterranean, the two levels of Endless Rustic Skateboard Park (Bacchic Peasant Version) (2002) replicate and conflate the cross-sections of a city's underground and the body's dermal structure. The upper level is a labyrinth of tubes (sewer systems/arteries and veins); the lower level is a collection of biomorphic skate bowls and ramps (the earth's caverns/the body's fleshy tissue).

The maquette is absent of figures corresponding to those joyous peasants who animate the Baroque spatiality of Rubens' painting. Consequently, we have to imagine the useless activity of the skateboarders' spatial doodlings as a spontaneous taking possession of place. This temporary assertion of right within public or corporate space may seem a pale complement to the celebration of Rubens' peasants. Yet, both groups act up within a powerful, dominating



conformity that only temporarily, and under controlled circumstances, tolerates upended hierarchies. “Youth culture” is one such managed situation.

Myfanwy MacLeod

Myfanwy MacLeod’s work is always double-edged. Beneath its cute surface is a subversive undertow. If it had a personality, you could say it was passive-aggressive, as if it were the revenge fantasy of a service worker. MacLeod’s exhibition [A Brief Overview of Personology](#) (2000) posed the artist herself within this subservient role; but the work also presents a somewhat abject and apologetic presence — seeming to combine the self-abrogation of slapstick, such of that of Buster Keaton, with the self-defeating, short-fused reactions of hapless cartoon characters, like Sylvester or Wylie Coyote. In the end, though, she pulls the rug under our feet. The comic element in her work takes the edge off even while putting its potential referents on it.

Double readings are inherent to her work. These readings may correspond to the two

Myfanwy MacLeod — [The Mascot](#), 1999

[Mystery Train](#) (from [Miss Moonshine](#)), 2001

[Bad As I Wanna Be](#) (from [Miss Moonshine](#)), 2001



sides of the sculpture, which often have a front and a back, like [My Idea of Fun](#) (1997). The front of this giant inflatable is a loopy, drunken happy face; the unguarded rear is a rude anal sex toy large enough for the insertion of one's whole body. Meaning flashes between the two, much as in the slapstick conceptualism of Bruce Nauman's 1972 [Run from Fear](#), [Fun from Rear](#), which switches in neon from one phrase to another, on and off, radically altering interpretation.

MacLeod's sculptures inhabit the gallery as if they were unruly refugees from their source-worlds of cartoons and films. When they enter stage right or left though, they are captured and fixed, as if startled out of context in our gaze. Embodied in three dimensions, they still function as signs but, now ungrounded from their original situations, their references are multivalent with meaning dependent on their new art contexts.

Another context of realization for MacLeod's figurative sculpture is the architectural folly. Take the work at The Power Plant. Three separate elements — [The Tiny Kingdom](#), [Wood for The People](#) and [A Shady Place](#) — combine to create a bawdy and tempestuous hillbilly

theme park. Hillbillies are the stereotypical slacker culture — abject losers in incestuous backwoods enclaves who, at the same time, manifest elaborate craft skills in their music and illicit moonshine. MacLeod's ornately rustic outhouse of The Tiny Kingdom (2001) comically answers the fierce outlaw independence expressed in the homily "a man's home is his castle." This architectural claptrap, however, is derived from Disney's 1968 movie Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Its kitsch pseudo-Edwardian foppish elegance serves the mock imperialism of the title, while its rude placement in a gallery uncrowns another authority. However, juxtaposed here to the woodpile of Wood for the People (2002) and the upended, vandalized picnic table of A Shady Place (2002), backwoods adventure narratives come into play that the watercolour drawings of Miss Moonshine (2001) have already crystallized in an inventory of hillbilly clichés. Some of these are derived from films like the 1972 Deliverance, which express suppressed (masculine) fears: run from fear because it will not be fun from rear. The idyllic woods, in which these architectural follies are sited, are traps for the unwary to fall victim to the irrational violence of hillbilly folk.

MacLeod's titles are, thus, deceptively alluring. The tiny kingdom is a shit-heap. A shady place is a hang-out for lowlife carnies. The woodpile of Wood for the People is a lure — but also a barricade. Behind its simulated surfaces is a menace. For the artist, the woodpile evokes the Appalachian feuds of the McCoys and the Hatfields. From its rear side expect pot shots. Who's to say what or who is the target? Depending on the city of their exhibition, the works' connotations shift. In Vancouver, the hillbilly incest theme of this work coyly critiques (as the artist admits) the perception of photo-conceptualism as a closed-shop boys' club. In Toronto, Wood for the

People provokingly acknowledges the simmering rivalry between the artists of Vancouver and Toronto. Comic art is nothing if not timely and impertinent.

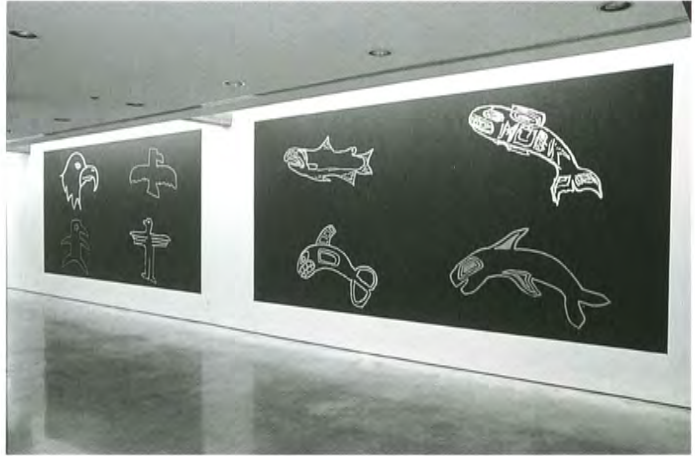
Brian Jungen

In Brian Jungen's work hybridity is the norm. On a material level, his sculptures transform common store-bought commodities into evocative objects, like Nike trainers into Northwest Coast masks in the series Prototype for New Understanding (1998–99). At first glance, mimicry is not complete, however, without the context of presentation making it illusional, without a spotlight making it theatrical. So Jungen's masks are exhibited in museum-like vitrines. But the mechanisms of illusionism do not hide themselves when the spotlight shines back on itself and when the objects, supposedly secure within the muffle of the museum, "talk back" to us.

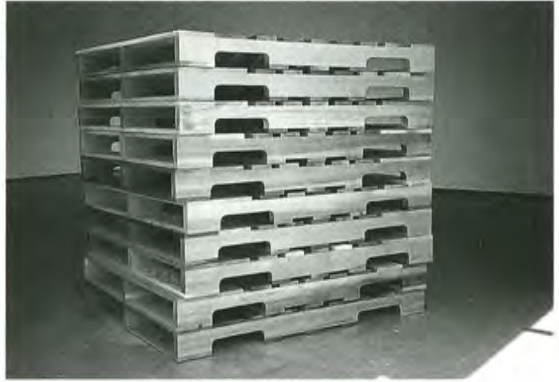
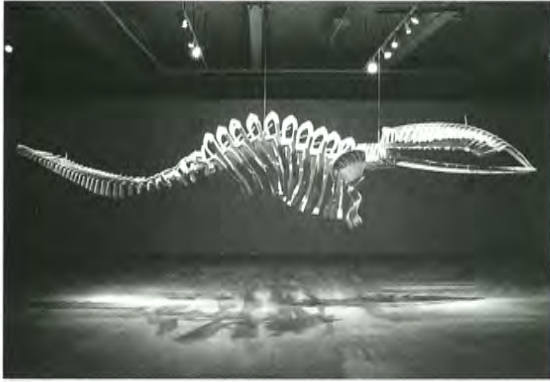
C-clamps and Coleman coolers make up Void (2002), but it is a spotlight — not a campfire — that projects the shadowed glyphs of a freestanding figure made from the C-clamps onto the encampment barricade of coolers. Culture returns to nature, but in the mediated form of camping gear and with barely submerged fears that technocracy cannot quite repress (hence, the appeal of horror films). But the light here shines as a remembrance perhaps of campfires more archaic and this association stakes other claims than those of presentation, ones of original settlement.

The staking of claims to redress history extends to objects themselves and especially to the place of presentation that purports to ascribe their meaning — the museum itself. Jungen forces object and occluded context into a new relation. His object is already hybrid: the native mask is made from a popular consumer product. Its construction is materially exposed, but so too is the context of presentation through the artist's use of museum-like vitrines. Removed from their original context, the objects are divested of meaning but then reinvested in a fashion that denies any transparent ideological whole by forcing material and presentation into a dialogue that addresses the whole as a contested form of representation. Jungen's work mimics the histories of other objects entrained to museological collections, whether ethnographic or aesthetic, first in his own personal potlatch —

Brian Jungen — [Prototype for New Understanding #4, 1999](#)
[Untitled, 1999](#)



Brian Jungen — [Shapeshifter](#), 2000
[Untitled](#), 2001



transforming (thus wasting) expensive consumer goods — and then by presenting them as elevated art works in vitrines. Except now the object looks back at the institution and shines a light back at us.

Dialogue might at first seem one-sided — that is, some viewers might be blind to it taking place. Jungen's works intercede, therefore, not only in their context; they force out the underlying social conditions and reveal the responder's prior assumptions and prejudices. Such was the case with the work that accompanied the first presentation of [Prototypes](#) at

the Charles H. Scott Gallery in Vancouver in 1999. In a parody of ethnographic field surveys, Jungen sent non-native volunteers into the streets of Vancouver to collect samples in the form of drawings from non-natives of their notions of native art and culture. This yielded images which he then enlarged and transferred to wall paintings. The two representations faced each other: the wall paintings, spectators to the masks; the masks, interrogators of their observers.

We should not forget this mutual conditionality when we confront the spectacle of Cetology (Bowhead) (2002), a twelve meter long whale skeleton in this exhibition. Like its predecessor, the seven meter Shapeshifter (2000), the new work is made from sectioned, cheap, white-plastic, stacking patio-chairs. Fake as they are, both works have the transcendent aura of museum displays. Momentarily in awe of their grandeur, we may forget that the vitrine is now the gallery itself, which physically includes us. The experiential envelope, which the change of scale defines, shifts the status of the work. We are tourists as much as museum-goers demanding entertainment as much as enlightenment from institutions equally divided between scientific research and entertaining display.

By changing the context, the artist redirects our attention to the use of these artifacts as effective emblems of commerce. (Already a commodity attraction, we could purchase the experience, as well, in miniature form as a model whale skeleton kit from the gallery shop.) Jungen uses common products as his raw material – patio chairs, coolers – that are purchasable anywhere. Their shapeshifting transformation in his work points to their own double function as serviceable things and profitable commodities that trail a history of exploitation with their purchase. Such third-world labour shadows forth anew in Prototypes. A trace of the global network of commodities also persists in the pallet put to another use as a plinth in Void. Made in one locale, pallets end in another, foreign place as forgotten residue of the production and delivery process. Overlooked because common, the pallet achieves monumental apotheosis in Jungen's Untitled (2001), a sculpture composed of a stack of ten handcrafted and pegged red cedar pallets. First Nations and Third Worlds, global economies and art worlds intersect in Jungen's sculptures as hybrid conjunctions and unexpected dialogues.



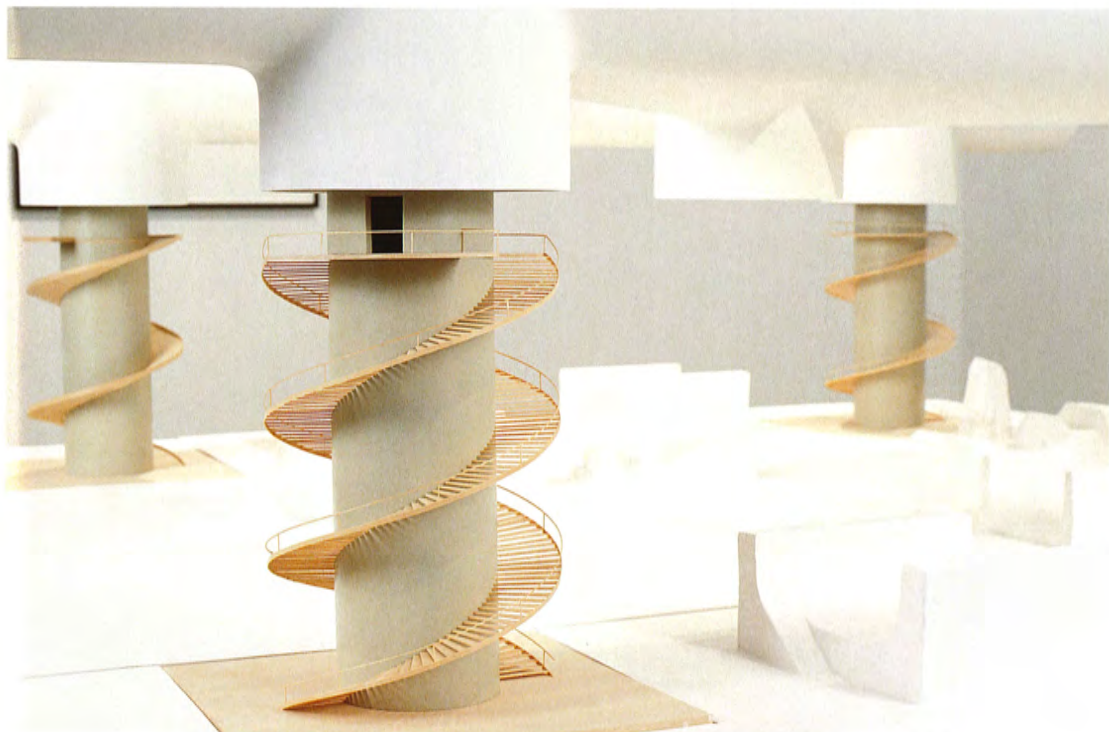
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Damian Moppett — [Endless Rustic Skateboard Park \[Bacchic Peasant Version\], 2002](#) (detail)
[The Kermis \[After Rubens\], 2002](#)







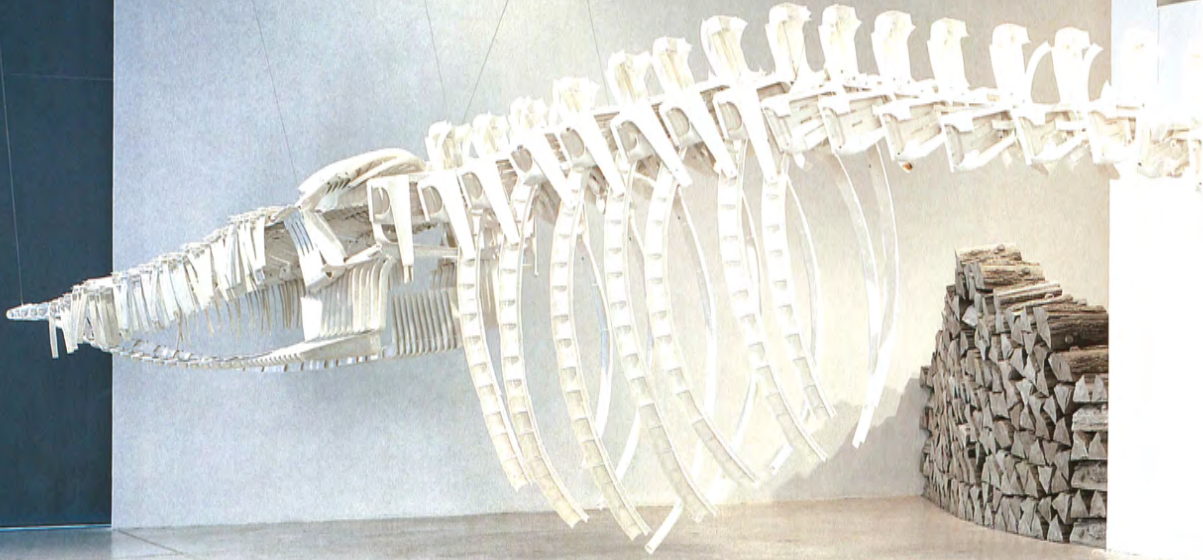


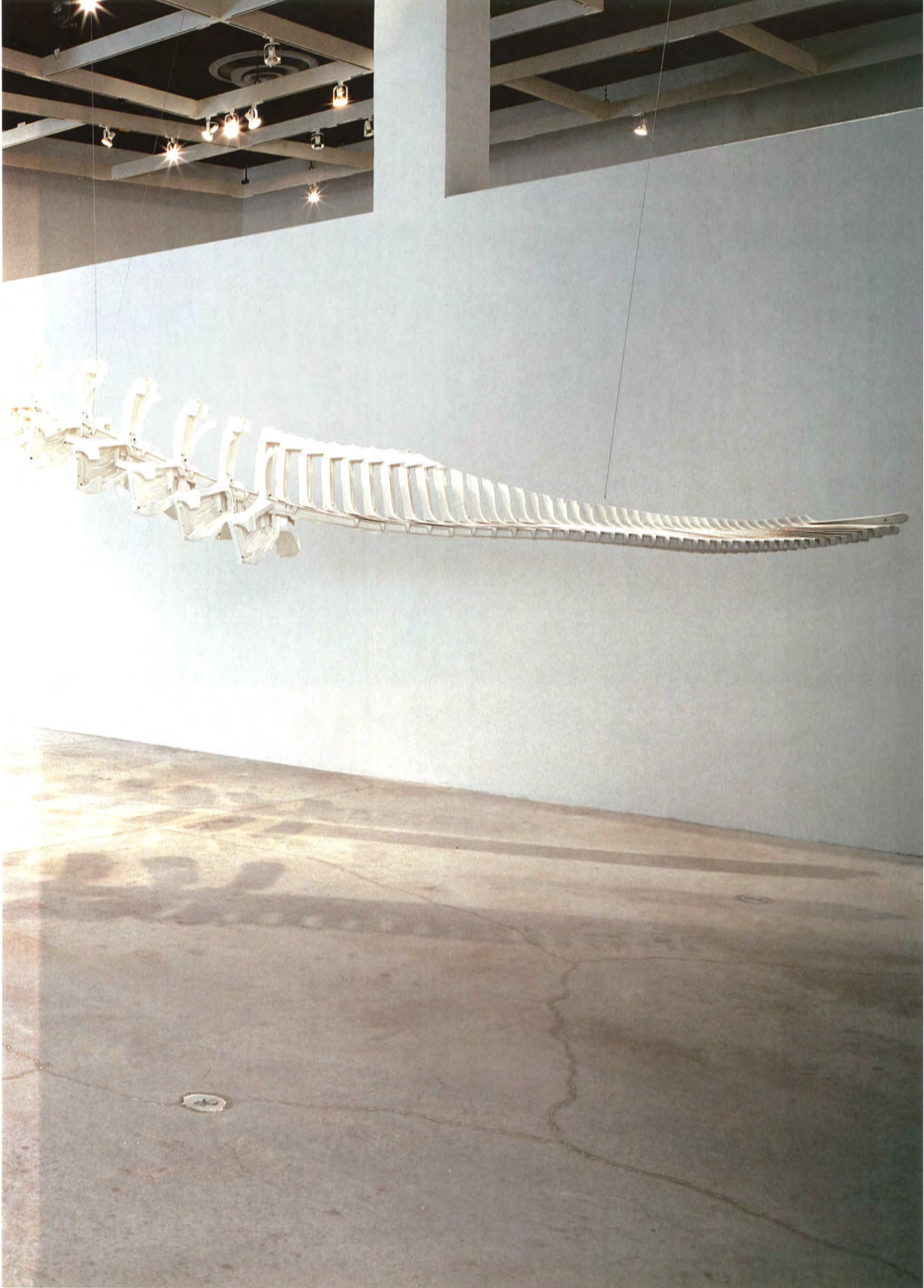
Myfanwy MacLeod — *The Tiny Kingdom*, 2001



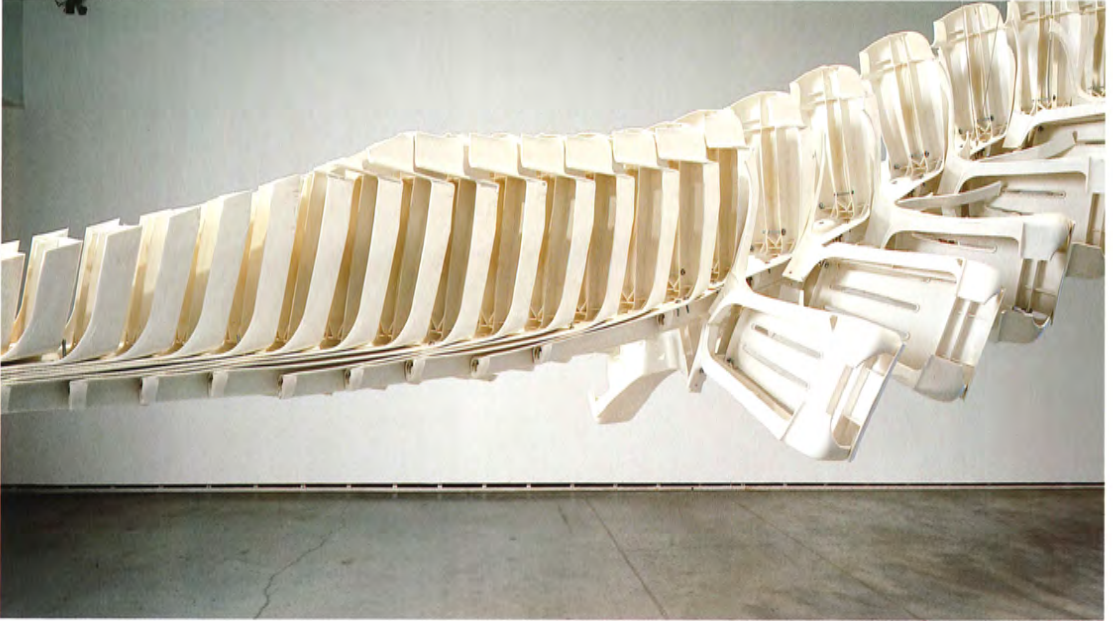


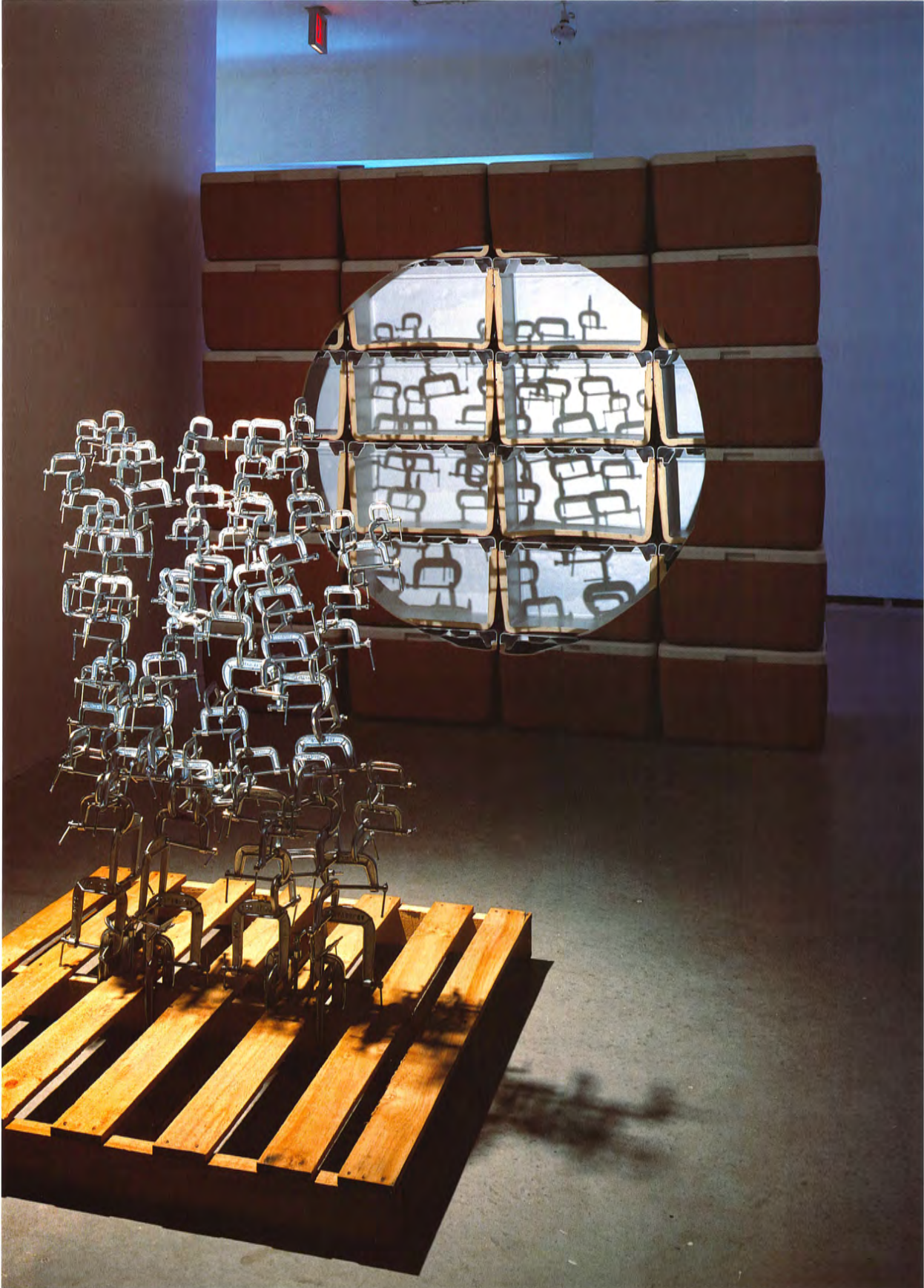
Brian Jungen — Cetology [Bowhead], 2002





Brian Jungen — Cetology [Bowhead], 2002 [detail]
Yoldi, 2002





biographies

Brian Jungen (b. 1970, Fort St. John, British Columbia) lives and works in Vancouver. He has had solo exhibitions at Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver (2002), Art Gallery of Calgary (2001), Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2001), YYZ Artist's Outlet, Toronto (2000), Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver (1999) and Truck Gallery, Calgary (1997). Selected group exhibitions include [Beachcombers](#), Gasworks, London (2002), [Relic: New Art from the West Coast](#), Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2002), [ARS 01](#), Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2001), [Museopathy](#), Agnes Etherington Gallery (2001) and [Present Compose](#), Ottawa Art Gallery (2001). The Charles H. Scott Gallery published the catalogue [Brian Jungen](#) in 1999 and the Contemporary Art Gallery published [Brian Jungen](#) in 2002. He is represented by the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver.

Myfanwy MacLeod (b. 1961, London, Ontario) lives and works in Vancouver. Her recent solo exhibitions include [The Tiny Kingdom](#), Or Gallery, Vancouver (2001), [Miss Moonshine](#), Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver (2001), [A Brief Overview of Personology](#), Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver (2000), [How Not to be Seen](#), VTO Gallery, London, UK (2000), and [My Idea of Fun](#), Or Gallery (1997). Group exhibitions include [Beachcombers](#), Gasworks, London (2002), [Relic: New Art from the West Coast](#), Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2002), [These Days](#), Vancouver Art Gallery (2001), [Universal Pictures 3.1](#), Plug In - ICA, Winnipeg (2001), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, The Melbourne International Biennial (1999) and [6: New Vancouver Modern](#), Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver (1998). A catalogue of her work, [Myfanwy MacLeod: A Brief Overview of Personology](#) was published by Charles H. Scott Gallery in 2000. She is represented by the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver.

Damian Moppett (b. 1969, Calgary, Alberta) lives and works in Vancouver. Recent solo exhibitions include [Impure Systems](#), Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver (2000) and [Trépanier Baer Gallery](#), Calgary (1997). Selected group exhibitions include [Provisional Worlds](#), Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2002), [Relic: New Art from the West Coast](#), Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2002), [These Days](#), Vancouver Art Gallery (2001), [Image and Light, History and Influence: Film and Photographic Works](#), C.H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver (2000) and [6: New Vancouver Modern](#), Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver (1998). He is represented by the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver and the Trépanier Baer Gallery, Calgary.

works in the exhibition

Brian Jungen

[Void](#), 2002
Coleman coolers, wooden pallet, light, metal clamps
221 x 244 x 69 cm
Collection of Bob Rennie, Vancouver

[Catalogy \(Bowhead\)](#), 2002
plastic chairs
3 x 12 x 12 m
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

Myfanwy MacLeod

[The Tiny Kingdom](#), 2001
wood and mixed media
411.5 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

[Wood for the People](#), 2002
cast concrete
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[A Shady Place](#), 2002
wood
49 x 120 x 184 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

Damian Moppett

[The Kermis \(After Rubens\)](#), 2002
oil on paper
225 x 131.1 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[The Garden of Love \(After Rubens\)](#), 2002
oil on paper
78.1 x 98.3 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[The Fall of the Damned \(After Rubens\)](#), 2002
oil on paper
87 x 83.3 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[The Triumph of Bacchus \(After Rubens\)](#), 2002
oil on paper
77 x 91.3 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[Drunken Silenus \(After Rubens\)](#), 2002
oil on paper
87.5 x 91.4 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

[Endless Rustic Skateboard Park \(Bacchic Peasant Version\)](#), 2002
abs plastic pipe, plaster, wood
180 x 183 x 183 cm
Courtesy of the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver