Brian Jungen Backgrounder


Brian Jungen, of Dunne-za First Nations and Swiss-Canadian ancestry, is from the small town of Fort St. John in northeast British Columbia. For the past 20 years, he has lived and worked in Vancouver. He received a degree in Visual Art from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 1992 and participated in a self-directed residency at The Banff Centre for the Arts in 1998. He first came to prominence with Prototypes for New Understanding (1998-2005), which fashioned Nike footwear into masks that suggested Northwest Coast iconography. Later works have included a pod of whales made from plastic chairs, totem poles shaped from golf bags and a massive basketball court created from 224 sewing tables.

Jungen’s credits his passion for material and process to Native ingenuity of crafting one object out of another. Jungen grew up watching his Dunne-za relatives deftly recycle everything from “car parts to shoe boxes” to extend their usefulness. “It was a kind of salvaging born out of practical and economic necessity, and it greatly influenced how I see the world as an artist,” said Jungen.


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