Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Strange Comfort

OCTOBER 16, 2009 – AUGUST 8, 2010

brian jungen
Brian Jungen was born in 1970 in Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada, to a Canadian father and Dunne-za mother. He studied visual art at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, graduating in 1992, and now lives and works in Vancouver.

Jungen has exhibited extensively in Canada and internationally, in venues including the Tate Modern (London), the New Museum (New York), the Biennale of Sydney, the Gwangju Biennial (South Korea), and Secession (Vienna). From 2005 to 2007, he was the subject of a major exhibition organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery which traveled to New York, Montreal, Rotterdam, and Munich. His work is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the National Museum of the American Indian, as well as numerous private collections.
Brian Jungen turns objects inside out. By deconstructing them, he changes not only the things themselves, but the ways we think about what they used to be, and what they’ve become.

He begins with objects that are ordinary, useful, and comforting. When he’s through, they are unique, expensive, and useless. You can’t wear the shoe anymore, and it’s not a mask either. In their previous lives, the white chairs might have seated thousands over the course of many years; now they live in dark rooms until it’s showtime in Brussels or New York or Washington, when people—some with aching feet—stand and look at them. The sculptures—that’s what they are now—are still products you can buy, except not really, because most of them have already been bought, and the ones still available are expensive. Very expensive. Too expensive for me and probably you, but don’t feel bad; there’s strange comfort in knowing that despite his impressive commercial success, not even Brian Jungen can afford Brian Jungen.

In a beautiful scene in Truth or Dare, the vaguely fake 1991 documentary about Madonna on tour, she and her gang are hanging out backstage, engaged in amusing R-rated hijinks, and we’re right there up close, taking it all in. Until, that is, all the racy hanging out turns into a business meeting about money, and the audience—and the film crew—and the audience—are shown the door: Some things, even for Madonna, really are private. The difference between Brian Jungen and Madonna—well, there are several, but the key difference is this: in a conversation about the political economy of celebrity, the Indian artist from British Columbia would sit at the table with you and discuss, among other things, how mass-produced goods influence the peoples of the world. The most famous woman in the world, not so much.

Back to the Jungen Show. The alabaster whale, the carefully trashed shoes, the towering totems (not!) made from golf bags, these marvels and others are on their first proper U.S. tour, performing daily from ten A.M. to half-past five on America’s front yard, the National Mall. It’s a ten-month gig, with only Christmas Day off. Strange Comfort isn’t technically a touring show, but you can think of it that way, because visitors from across the U.S. and all over the world flock to the National Mall. The venue is the Smithsonian’s newest and most controversial museum. This means that Jungen’s work will be surrounded by a building full of historic Indian material. Previous exhibitions have taken place at contemporary art museums, so this is something new. Let’s be honest and admit that Washington spends little time
thinking about either Indians or Canadians, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be a lot to talk about. Nobody knows what will happen.

It’s a bold move, playing the big stone barn on Independence Avenue, but not that surprising for this artist, who’s made a career out of turning up in unexpected places. Brian Jungen operates at the crossroads of two planets that barely acknowledge each other. It’s not much of a crossroads, actually; more like a lonely truck stop, way off the interstate. They’re not really countries, or planets; we usually call them worlds, as in the “international art world” or the “Indian world;” and I think it’s only because we can’t think of anything better. Both are insider terms, and neither means what they say. You might, for instance, think the “international art world” is about artists from across the seven seas, holding hands like in a UNESCO poster. Not true! Actually, this is a very select group of artists (most often from Western countries) who usually have commercial representation, also known as art dealers. Artists who show in places like Chelsea or at the Venice Bien­nale or Kassel or Basel, who are written about in journals like Artforum. Their work is said to be critically acclaimed and commercially successful, or it will be soon. Although nobody quite knows what the rules are—or even if there are any—the international art world is genuinely about art, and also genuinely about money.

What then is the so-called Indian world? Also about art. Also about money. Culture is our biggest business, except for gambling, which is a new thing. But Indian art is complicated. Indian art is complicated because it is extremely important to Indians, because we believe culture and art are all we have, when you get down to it. Many Indians say things like “We have no word for art.” There were no words for art in Indian languages because, say these many Indians, art was part
PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE 2008 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY BY JENNI CARTER, COURTESY CATRIONA JEFFRIES GALLERY, VANCOUVER.
of everything. Personally, I don’t see how that’s here nor there, and who could possibly know all Indian languages anyway? But what I do know is that lots of Indian artists are interested in having their work seen and discussed and purchased, and therefore would like to be part of the “international art world,” because that’s where the biggest and best stages are. It’s simple. If you love football, and you’re really, really good, where you want to play is the NFL.

These two worlds don’t have that much in common, apart from the fact that they share a certain squeamishness about money. This is, I believe, our special bond. Despite the great strides Art World has made lately in overcoming this condition, it still can be rude to talk about the business side of the business. Even Madonna practices this etiquette. Art World slaps grand names on its shows, like the 53rd International Art Exhibition. Sometimes, like Super Bowls, they are granted roman numerals, as in Documenta XIII. Know what the biggest Indian art show is called? Indian Market. That’s it, no Biennale or Gwangju or nothing. Indian World likes to pretend money is of no special concern when it comes to art, but this is a joke, because money is practically the main concern. There is no subterfuge.

And here’s where Brian Jungen’s work comes in, as a kind of bridge between these two imaginary worlds. He might laugh at this, but it’s true. He’s that rare artist whose work is accessible yet unsettling, funny yet infused with loss, both provincial and global. His work can strike up a conversation with anyone, anywhere. While many Native artists, for understandable reasons, relentlessly skewer non-Indian ideas about who we are, Jungen brings them into his exhibitions and practically invites them to tea; after he asked people on the street to draw Native art, he turned their sketches into huge, beautiful vinyl works that shared wall space with his own sculpture.

There’s magic at work here, but it’s a pedestrian, democratic kind of magic. Some artists paw through dumpsters for their art, an interesting and honorable strategy which, incidentally, does a nice job in showing how much more sensitive they are than regular folks, who can’t even see art, or potential art, when it’s right there in their trash. Jungen simply buys what he needs, in the same way and at the same stores that you and I frequent. (Even the trash containers in Carapace were purchased.) True, before long they go under the knife, drill, or table saw, and through this creative destruction they increase in value exponentially, but they all begin as ordinary items on a shopping list.

Golf bags and totem poles have nothing—and everything—to do with the Dunne-za people, who are politically and culturally as distant from Vancouver and the Northwest Coast as they are from Los Angeles. Jungen is not a Northwest Coast Indian. His interest in totems and masks from that region is a comment on what critic Charlotte Townsend-Gault called “wallpapering of habitats: the incorporation of Native imagery into the ‘vast heaving mass of ephemeral and disposable forms’ ” of Western culture.

Visitors are surrounded by NMAI’s historic Indian objects as they make their way to Strange Comfort’s third-floor gallery, where they encounter Jungen’s six towering totems, made from high-end golf bags in hues of red, blue, yellow, gray, and black. Each is named for a year (1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010; all created in 2007), and together they recount a half-century of British Columbian and Canadian history. These six totems speak both to the “real” totem permanently installed in the NMAI (not far from Crux) and also to a sculpture on view in the most
The important Canadian embassy in the world, just a few blocks away. This sculpture, Bill Reid’s *Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, is arguably one of the most celebrated works by any Canadian artist, so famous that it even appears on that country’s twenty-dollar bill. The totems and the Bill Reid sculpture invite discussion about the political dimensions of this “wallpapering” of Native iconography, riffing on the complicated entanglements of Canadian and Native history.

The conversation shifts to the topic of collecting and celebrity with *Prototypes for New Understanding*. Inspired by a visit to the Niketown store in Manhattan a decade ago, Jungen turned athletic shoes into masks the colors and style of those of the Aboriginal Northwest Coast. These were not just any Nike shoes, however; they were Air Jordans, designed and marketed by NBA superstar Michael Jordan. The shoes created a sensation when they were introduced in 1985. Owners were robbed at gunpoint, and Jordan himself paid a $5,000 fine each night he wore them on the court after the NBA declared them illegal. They soon became a cultural icon, and by the time Brian Jungen saw them at the Nike store in New York, they were displayed in elegant, expensive vitrines, as if in a museum rather than a shoe store.

Only twenty-three *Prototypes* exist, a reference to the number on Jordan’s uniform. Jungen has refused to create more despite intense demand, which makes them rare collectibles, just like certain Air Jordan models. Or certain Northwest Coast masks and totems. When the artist named the Nike series *Prototypes for New Understanding*, it was both a description and a kind of hopeful
dare, a challenge to see the globalized world differently in order to more clearly understand our collective histories and present circumstances.

To see these works in a museum setting, particularly this museum, ups this challenge still further: What crazy places museums are. Some call them cemeteries for art, which is probably true. They have amazing outré histories, filled with outsized ambitions and criminality and obsession, yet work so hard to be boring. Why is that? The NMAI is built on ground once occupied by an upscale whorehouse, and it exists because one rich guy from New York fell in love with things that Indians made. He bought as much of them as he could, amassing the biggest single collection of Indian stuff in the world. Not the best, but the most. He’s one of the greatest collectors of all time. It was during the 1980s—the decade of excess that saw the rise and rise of Madonna and Michael Jordan—that it was decided this collection needed a new home. There were three suitors: New York’s American Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian Institution, and Texas billionaire Ross Perot. (Imagine if that guy won: I’d probably be working for him right now in Plano, Texas. Maybe even curating Brian Jungen.) If the Smithsonian hadn’t prevailed, there would be no National Museum of the American Indian, certainly not now, and perhaps not ever. The whole thing is kind of a fluke, really. No collection, no NMAI. And no money; no George Gustav Heye, no collection. Like Michael Douglas said in Wall Street: “It’s about money; everything else is conversation.”

In this conversation, Jungen’s art speaks to all that surrounds the National Museum of the American Indian: the Capitol dome, the stuffed elephant, the Bill Reid sculpture, the warehouse full of rockets and airplanes, the visiting schoolkids clothed by Nike, the dreamcatchers for sale in the NMAI gift shops. It is a meditation on the dangerous beauty and seductive power of objects, on the things Indians make, on the people who seek to possess those things, and on the strange comfort they take from them, when they make them their own.

Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche) is associate curator at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, where his exhibitions include James Luna: Emendatio, Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian, and Brian Jungen: Strange Comfort. He is the author of Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong (2009), and coauthor of Like a Hurricane: the Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee (1996).
Brian Jungen hails from Fort St. John, a small city of fewer than 20,000 people located in the north-eastern part of British Columbia. The only prairie land in the province, the area was once host to the oldest Paleo-Indian civilizations in Canada—records date their occupation back more than 10,500 years—and it remains home to the Athapaskan-speaking Dunne-za people today. It’s a rough town. The bars overflow when oil rig workers are on break from their northern camps, and the subtle tension that exists between the Native and non-Native populations has reached a boiling point on more than a few occasions.

The landscape, however, is breathtaking. Most of the locals call it God’s Country, and it’s easy to see why. This region, specifically the area near the Doig River Indian Reserve about an hour north of the town, has influenced Jungen’s work in a number of ways. Working near the reserve one summer creating “cutlines,” the long narrow swaths in the bush used for seismic lines and hydro poles, Jungen was struck by the impact this act had on the land. It would have resembled a clear-cut, albeit on a minor scale, with tree stumps, branches, roots left in its wake.

It is often the extreme re-working of an object or situation that enables us to see things differently, and Jungen’s sculptures frequently re-work disparate objects and references, exposing their contradictions and radically altering the way each is understood. In some instances these re-workings are speculative and left deliberately open-ended. Some of his recent works continue to draw on the influence of Dunne-za culture and the aesthetics and economies of the North.

In 2008, he took orange plastic gasoline jugs (they are common there, kept on hand to fill up snowmobiles and chainsaws) and made drawings of local poisonous plants and endangered insects on their surface by drilling hundreds of tiny holes. In the end, the drawings took on the characteristics of Dene beadwork.

This idea of cutting an object apart to radically change its characteristics emerges in many of Jungen’s sculptures, such as Arts and Crafts Book Depository/Capp Street Project (2004), a small-scale house, after Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene’s 1908 Arts and Crafts-style Gamble house, which Jungen cut into fourths so that its parts could be reconfigured at will. Prior to Capp Street Project, in one of his best-known works, Jungen took apart expensive Nike Air Jordan sneakers and reassembled them into a series of twenty-three sculptures akin to Northwest Coast Native masks; messy re-stitching, tangles of thread, and scraps of leather are clearly visible on the underside of the works. Shortly thereafter, Jungen cut into ubiquitous white plastic garden chairs and refashioned them into the skeletal remains of gigantic whales, as seen in Shapeshifter (2000), Cetology (2002), and Vienna (2003). In regard to the ersatz masks, Jungen stated that “it was interesting to see how by simply manipulating the Air Jordan shoes you could evoke specific cultural traditions whilst simultaneously amplifying the process of cultural corruption and assimilation.” As these masks, whale skeletons, and architectural models make clear, the objects Jungen creates do not aim for authenticity, but instead bring forward issues of commodification, pointing to how “banal and market-driven cultural traditions have become” in
COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA.

contemporary society. Native cultural traditions, it should be noted, are not immune to this.

Curator Reid Shier has equated Jungen’s material re-workings to the history of the potlatch, particularly how in the late 1800s European goods such as mirrors, pool tables, and motor boats were attributed different use values in this context. In a potlatch, goods are accumulated for the purpose of being given away or, in some instances, destroyed. If contemporary society has elevated certain products—including Nike Air Jordan trainers—into fetish items, thereby highlighting the relationship between pleasure and consumption, the protocols that are a part of potlatch disrupt this exchange. In a potlatch, pleasure is arguably located in the transference of goods and their gifting, a process less about the goods themselves than the elaborate performance of heredity-clan relationships and hierarchies, cultural history, and protocols. As Shier points out, this radical reversal of non-Native conceptions of accumulation and wealth challenged European value systems: by withdrawing wealth from its relationship to productive consumption, the potlatch questioned the very concept of wealth as something attained through labor. While it is interesting to consider alternative economies and “competitive waste” relative to Jungen’s sculptural practice, this was not a pre-determined link. Pointing out the specific histories and functions of the potlatch, particularly in relation to social status and public humiliation, he relays that he is more interested in “the diffusion of meaning of coastal First Nations motifs into the public domain.” Jungen’s reassembled objects then function as “games that mobilize aesthetic and cultural misunderstandings to explore ways to politicize cultural stereotypes in the age of global capitalism.”

It was by combining a signifier of Northwest Coast culture (the mask) with a global commodity and fetish (Nike Air Jordan sneakers) that Jungen made one of the most resonant and revealing statements about Native art in the last decade. In what was likely an unintended but telling gesture, the first mask in Prototypes for New Understanding looks more like an alien than an object with aesthetic origins in the Northwest Coast. When it was first exhibited, the series was paired with painted murals of line drawings collected by the artist in a pseudo “fieldwork” study of non-Native people on the streets of Vancouver. Participants were asked to draw their idea of Native art, and what resulted were the usual depictions of lone braves, drunken Indians, and totem poles, along with a few earnest renderings. These drawings, writer Jeff Derksen has argued, point to the failure of ethnography to generate cross-cultural understanding. Neither the drawings nor
the alien-like first mask attempt to reverse Native stereotypes, nor are they corrective. Instead, Jungen has simply held up a mirror to Western society and returned its Frankensteinian image. In Cuauhtémoc Medina’s words, “If they want masks, why not sell them their own reflection?”

Jungen has said that he is interested in the ubiquity of Native objects and artifacts, specifically the way that they have been “corrupted and applied and assimilated commercially” by the tourist industry, and no other place in Canada has attached itself so strongly to its Native past as British Columbia. Many of the complex ways Native culture is represented and understood there can be found in the Vancouver airport, where objects representative of Northwest Coast Indians are seen on a grand scale. In 1994, the airport commissioned a monumental bronze sculpture by Haida carver Bill Reid called *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii.* The piece, one of his best-known works, consists of a six-and-a-half-meter canoe filled with mythic Haida figures and is cast in bronze with a jade-like patina. (The second version, also in bronze but without a patina, is in Washington, D.C.). Visitors entering Immigration are also greeted by a massive spindle whorl and seventeen-foot-high welcome figures by Coast Salish artist Susan Point, and near the airport exit are totem poles by Earl Muldoe and Walter Harris that date from the 1960s. The airport shops carry the typical tourist items: miniature totems made in factories in China and Taiwan, mass-produced “West Coast style” boxes filled with smoked salmon, and jewelry featuring stylized bears, ravens, killer whales, and the like. A messy hybrid of local aesthetics and global production, the plastic totems that populate the shelves of tourist stores are often modeled from “real” poles to lend them a degree of legitimacy as stand-ins for the real thing. “The local in this instance,” Derksen observes, “emerges from within the new relations of commodity production—in which commodities and culture are produced anew.”

In 2007, in a project that complicates the use and misuse of totem poles, Jungen took a number of high-end golf bags and re-formed them into six objects resembling totem poles. (Titled after decades, the sculptures begin with 1960 and end with 2010.) In the past, the totem poles in British Columbia had been marketed as both a reason to visit the province and objects urgently in need of saving. In the 1920s and earlier, remote Native villages and totem poles were touted as highlights of a boat journey through the Inside Passage. In 1924, thirty Tsimshian poles were restored in-situ through an initiative of the Canadian government and the Canadian National Railroad, as a way of boosting tourism. The initiative was met with resistance by the Gitxsan, who didn’t take kindly to having their territories open to unwelcome visitors, and the Tsimshian, who saw the immediate irony in non-Native people benefiting from a tradition they had previously outlawed in the Indian Act as part of the potlatch bans. In the 1950s, the province branded itself the “Land of Totems,” complete with friendly cartoon-like drawings of the poles on brochures and posters. Major players in the lumber industry sponsored an initiative to preserve a number of poles; the thirty-seven massive carvings they acquired are now held in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. It is only in the last two decades that some of these objects have made their way back to their points of origin in community-based museums and cultural centers. Today, in a particularly complicated twist, the province is now officially branded as “Super-natural British Columbia.” Television and print...
ads present Native dancers in elaborate regalia with giant raven masks, button blankets, and cedar shawls. It seems that Native people have transcended their usual identification with the past and are now beyond the real, existing in the Western imaginary as myth.

In Jungen’s golf-bag sculptures, the material origin is never fully concealed, and this refusal creates a generative oscillation between the object’s material origins and its new form. To call them “totem poles” would be a mistake. Like the “masks” of Prototypes for New Understanding, the pole sculptures borrow from Native forms to enable their reconsideration. These versions loosely replicate the anthropomorphic and animalistic figures on totems, with defined beaks, stylistic ovoids, and the suggested outline of animal and human bodies.

From an anthropological perspective, totem poles are understood as the physical markers of liminal space—they are part of a complex classification system which functions as a means of making sense of the world. From this point of view, the poles are mediators between the physical environment and society. It is through the combination of these materials and references, each weighted with their specific histories and references to local and global economies and cultures, that the possibility for new understanding is found. Akin to the tactical inversions and inverted hierarchies found in Jungen’s sculptures; in totem poles, the most important figure is often on the bottom, serving as the very foundation on which everything else is built, highlighting a worldview based more on interconnectedness rather than on individualism.

Jungen’s material re-workings of the local extend beyond representations of Northwest Coast Native culture to an examination of the vernacular, particularly as it relates to the built environment and to architecture. In one of his early sculptures—influenced in part by his mother’s family’s seasonal camping practices in the North, geodesic domes, and back-to-the-land hippie movements of the 1960s and 1970s—Jungen created his own “escape pod” from plastic lawn chairs and heat-shrunk polyurethane. Entitled Bush Capsule (2000), the sculpture adopted a productivist impulse from utopian architecture, and being light and easily transportable, was intended for use as a temporary dwelling, borrowing from the intentions of Buckminster Fuller; whose geodesic domes attempted to democratize architecture and could be replicated on both individual and mass scales. In 2003 and 2004, Jungen made two more domes, Little Habitat I and Little Habitat II. This time they were small—each only thirty centimeters tall—and they rested on the floor. As diminutive models of architectural space, they had no use-value other than as art. They were created from scored and folded boxes; viewers had to look closely to recognize that the boxes originally held Nike Air Jordan trainers. Refigured in this way, the domes obscured the identity of one of the most branded athletes of our time. During an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery, children frequently mistook the works as toys, unassumingly harkening back to the influence of play on the modernist avant-garde.

In a return to some of the ideas brought forward when the artist reconfigured the parts of lawn chairs into the skeletons of whales, two of Jungen’s most recent works replicate animals on a monumental scale: Carapace (2009) is a remarkably realistic giant turtle shell made from ordinary plastic garbage bins, and Crux (as seen from those who sleep on the surface of the earth under the night sky), first shown at the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, is a mobile which suspends five animals. These animals—a shark, crocodile, emu, sea eagle,
and possum, all native to Australia—are formed out of the parts of suitcases. Both works draw immediate relationships to extinction; some species of turtles, an animal that has survived more than 250 million years, may not live past our lifetimes, and many varieties of the creatures on Jungen’s mobile are threatened.

Jungen found inspiration for Carapace in the writings of French author Jules Verne, famous for his fantastical science fiction novels, which include 20,000 Leagues under the Sea and Around the World in 80 Days. Verne’s imaginings of air, space, and underwater travel—predating submarines and spaceships—were celebrated, but his strong political ideals and dystopian viewpoints were actively edited out of his works. His novel Paris in the 20th Century was particularly controversial and remained unpublished until 1994, almost a hundred years after the author’s death. In it, Verne describes a world remarkably similar to that of the Information Age. The main character is a young man, living amidst “glass skyscrapers, high-speed trains, gas-powered automobiles, calculators, and a worldwide communications network,” who cannot find happiness. The novel was written in 1863.16

In addition to enumerating the trappings of modern life, Verne describes, in 20,000 Leagues under the Sea, giant sea monsters the likes of which could have filled Jungen’s turtle shell. This is not just the stuff of sci-fi. Some 15,000 years ago in the North America of the Pleistocene era lived “a bestiary of giants that strains the imagination.”17 These included the better-known mammoths and mastodons, but also creatures called pampatheres, which looked like armadillos but grew to the size of small buildings. Even the elk, moose, beavers, and bears were enormous. These were all in addition to the giant Bolson turtle, which still exists in Mexico. J. B. MacKinnon points out: “Many of these species still survived as recently as 10,000 years ago, in climes similar to ours. Put another way, lions and sabre tooths lived within the myth time of North America’s First Nations. They lived at a time only as distant from the founding of farming in Europe as that founding is from us today.”18 With this, the idea of the continent of North America being formed on the back of a turtle suddenly doesn’t sound so far-fetched.

For this exhibition at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Jungen has altered his sculpture Carapace to include an upside-down boat, through which the mobile hangs. This boat was central to the making of the piece, used by the artist to haul supplies back and forth to an island in Sydney Harbour where he was working, Cockatoo Island, home of the abandoned factory building where Carapace was made and first shown,
was once home to a penitentiary and a part of the city’s shipbuilding industry; it is also directly under the flight path of the Sydney airport. Jungen’s original idea was to create a work using luggage lost by commercial airlines, although the idea was quickly shelved when a company he contacted, likely realizing that this might not be the best marketing angle, was resistant.

Travel remained a part of the final version of Crux, but in a different way than it was initially conceived, which would have borne more associations with the jet-set lifestyle associated with art biennales. Instead, Jungen spent time researching the history of the region and drew from the cosmologies of Indigenous Australians, people who developed a highly sophisticated navigation system based on an acute understanding of the movements of stars across the sky. Their constellations, centered on animals instead of objects or gods, weren’t formed by connecting the dots between individual stars, but from the “dust clouds” of galaxies. Each animal in Crux is a central figure in these constellations. The mobile then is the skyworld, flipped upside down.

Here again, Jungen’s sculptures serve as mediators, connecting different ideas and different worldviews. It is not the tension created between bringing dissimilar objects together that is important, however, but rather the very potential to transform the relationships between them, and what they stand for, if only temporarily.

Candice Hopkins (Carcross/Tagish First Nation) is the Sobey Curatorial Resident in Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Canada. The former director and curator of exhibitions at the Western Front in Vancouver, she is the co-editor, with Marisa Jahn and Berin Golonu, of the forthcoming book Recipes for an Encounter (2009). Hopkins grew up in Fort St. John, where she first met Brian Jungen.

ENDNOTES

1. Distinct from the high-quality craftsmanship characteristic of the Arts and Crafts period, Jungen’s house was made from low-grade prefab materials, including plywood and casters.
12. For more on this history, see Aldona Jonaitis’s essay “Northwest Coast Totem Poles,” in Unpacking Culture, ed. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steves (Berkeley: UC Press, 1999), 104–21.
13. Although still brief, more information about this project is published on the website of the Museum of Anthropology: “Both MacMillan and his colleague in the lumber industry, Walter C. Koerner, financed the acquisition of totem poles and other monumental carvings collected as part of the BC Totem Pole Preservation project in the 1950s, which brought [the] massive carvings to UBC, which were later transferred to MOA.” http://www.moa.ubc.ca/collections/fn_collections.php, Accessed 3 September 2009.
14. Similar to the way that he understands the totem poles, Jungen has asserted in interviews that his Prototypes for New Understanding cannot rightly be called masks, as they are not intended for use and (unlike traditional Northwest Coast masks) do not serve a ceremonial function. Instead, they build on ideas that are already one step removed from the originary object—representations of masks, and their use as a commodity.
15. This is seen particularly in collectives such as COBRA, active from 1949 and 1952, whose abstract paintings were inspired by the uninhibited works of children, the Surrealists’ explorations of the unconscious, and so-called “primitive” art. Later, members of the Situationist International took play as an inspiration for their understanding and imaginations of the city and the built environment.
18. Ibid.
Works in the Exhibition

Crux (as seen from those who sleep on the surface of the earth under the night sky), 2008
Suspended mobile depicting five animals
Steel, new and used suitcases, wooden rowboat
National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution 26/7253

Shapeshifter, 2000
White polypropylene plastic chairs
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Purchased 2001

Isolated Depictions of the Passage of Time, 2001
Plastic food trays, television, red-cedar pallet
Rennie Collection, Vancouver, Canada

Talking Sticks, 2005
Carved baseball bats
Freybe Collection, West Vancouver, Canada

Skull, 2006–09
Baseballs, softballs
Collection of the artist

Monarch, 2007
Carved five-gallon gasoline jug
Sender Collection

Dragonfly, 2008
Carved five-gallon gasoline jug
Collection of Dr. Reesa Greenberg
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

White Death Camas, 2007
Carved five-gallon gasoline jug
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

People’s Flag, 2006
Recycled textile materials, natural and synthetic fibers
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Purchased 2006, with the support of the Audain Endowment for Contemporary Canadian Art of the National Gallery of Canada Foundation

The Prince, 2006
Baseball gloves, dress form
Sender Collection

Blanket #7, 2008
Professional sports jerseys
Sender Collection

Carapace, 2009
Industrial waste bins
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

1960, 2007
Golf bags, golf balls, painted golf tees
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
Promised gift of Michael and Sonja Koerner

Golf bags, golf balls, painted golf tees
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
Promised gift of Rosamond Ivey

1980, 2007
Golf bags, golf balls, painted golf tees
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
Purchased with the assistance of the David Yuile and Mary Elizabeth Hodgson Fund, 2007

1990, 2007
Golf bags, cardboard tube
Sender Collection

2000, 2007
Golf bags, cardboard tube
Freybe Collection, West Vancouver, Canada

2010, 2007
Golf bags, cardboard tube
Sender Collection

Prototype for New Understanding #1, 1998
Nike Air Jordans
Collection of the artist

Prototype for New Understanding #7, 1999
Nike Air Jordans
Collection of Joe Friday

Prototype for New Understanding #10, 2001
Nike Air Jordans
Rennie Collection, Vancouver, Canada

Prototype for New Understanding #11, 2002
Nike Air Jordans, human hair
Collection of Gilles and Julia Ouellette, Toronto

Prototype for New Understanding #15, 2005
Nike Air Jordans, shoelaces
Private collection, Toronto, Canada

Prototype for New Understanding #23, 2005
Nike Air Jordans
Collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl

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COVER: CRUX (AS SEEN FROM THOSE WHO SLEEP ON THE
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