

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Brian Jungen

at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
May 27 to September 4, 2006

Montréal, May 10, 2006. The first sight that meets the eyes: ceremonial Aboriginal masks from Canada's West Coast, and whale skeletons hanging from the ceiling. Has the Musée d'art contemporain turned into a museum of natural history or a museum of civilization? But the whale bones are actually plastic lawn chairs, and the masks are made out of the famous Nike athletic footwear... The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presents **Brian Jungen** from May 27 to September 4, 2006.

This exhibition, the first comprehensive survey of the work of the young Vancouver-based artist, comprises nearly fifty pieces produced in the past decade, from his early drawings to his latest installations. It offers an insight into the main concerns that drive Jungen's art: an uncompromising vision of consumer culture and a critical reading of artistic modernity.

It includes the major series of masks, *Prototype for New Understanding* (1998-2005), which established the artist's reputation. Created from Nike running shoes, each of the twenty-three *Prototypes* presented is a mind-boggling variation on the theme of West Coast First Nations ceremonial masks. With incredible ingenuity, Jungen uses the trademark colours of the legendary Air Jordans (black, red and white), the various materials they are made of and their logos to create new artifacts out of two iconic sources: Nike footwear and Aboriginal masks.

An entire gallery is devoted to three full-scale sculptures of whale skeletons—*Shapeshifter* (2000), *Cetology* (2002) and *Vienna* (2003)—all fabricated from plastic lawn chairs. Oscillating between objects of natural history and critiques of consumer culture, the three "whales" offer a reflection of everyday life at the same time as they call into question museum culture and display strategies.

Some of the works on view suggest a new reading of the minimalism of the 1960s and 1970s. More than mere allusions to the serial art favoured by this movement, Jungen's pieces carry a powerful social and historical charge. A notable example is *Isolated Depiction of the Passage of Time*, which refers to a prison break and highlights the disproportionate representation of Aboriginals in Canada's penal institutions. "Brian Jungen's works question and complicate the meaning of everyday objects," says curator Daina Augaitis. "The exhibition examines his practice of transforming materials, instilling disorder into order and dismantling preconceived ideas of contemporary culture."

A keen observer with a wry sense of humour, Jungen draws upon his ancestral ties to the Dane-zaa Nation of northeastern British Columbia and on contemporary consumer culture. His works prompt us to question the economic, social and cultural values of the Western world and draw us into a dialogue between traditional and world cultures.

Born in 1970 in Fort St. John, in the northeastern B.C. interior, to an Aboriginal mother and a Swiss father, Jungen graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in

Vancouver in 1992. He then moved to New York before returning to Vancouver. In 2002, he was the first winner of the Sobey Art Award, the most prestigious Canadian award for emerging artists. Today, Jungen is one of the country's most gifted and promising artists. He exhibits widely on the international scene, and is currently presenting his latest installation in London, at the invitation of the Tate Modern.

Exhibition organized and circulated by the Vancouver Art Gallery with the support of the Audain Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Daina Augaitis, chief curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, curated the show. Réal Lussier, curator at the Musée d'art contemporain, is responsible for the Montréal presentation.

Brian Jungen was originally presented at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in fall 2005, and then at the Vancouver Art Gallery this past winter. This presentation, the last stop on the exhibition's tour, will afford visitors and tourists a unique opportunity to discover a leading figure in contemporary Canadian art.

Musée d'art contemporain
185 Sainte-Catherine Street West
Tel.: (514) 847-6226
Place-des-Arts metro

Tuesday to Sunday,
from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Summer schedule:
Open daily June 20 to September 10,
from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and
Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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Publications and Boutique

A 162-page full-colour catalogue, entitled *Brian Jungen*, was published by the Vancouver Art Gallery. It contains essays by Daina Augaitis, the Gallery's chief curator and organizer of the exhibition; Trevor Smith, curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Cuauhtemoc Medina, a Mexican curator and critic; Ralph Rugoff, director of the Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; and Kitty Scott, curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada. The catalogue also features a conversation between Brian Jungen and British artist Simon Starling. It may be purchased for \$65 at the museum's Olivieri bookstore.

As well, the Musée Boutique offers visitors a selection of products inspired by the exhibition, including postcards, note cards and wrapping paper.

Meet the Artist

Brian Jungen will meet the public on Friday, May 26, at 5:30 p.m., just before the official opening.

Video

A videotaped conversation between Daina Augaitis and Brian Jungen will be screened continuously throughout the exhibition in the video room next to the galleries (original English-language version with French subtitles, running time: 14 minutes).

Reading Room

A selection of monographs and catalogues on Jungen is at visitors' disposal in the Mariette Clermont Lounge adjoining the galleries. As well, the Media Centre offers visitors and researchers a more comprehensive array of publications on the artist and his work in its reading room, on the second floor of the museum.

Workshops and Day Camp

For the upcoming Montréal Museums Day, Sunday, May 28, the art workshops will offer *Maskers* at 12, 1, 2, 3 and 4 p.m. Taking inspiration from the works in *Prototype for New Understanding* (1999), participants will cut out details of photocopied sneakers and turn them into fun masks. For all, with family or friends. Free all day long!

As well, a digital version of *Maskers* is scheduled for Saturday, June 3 and 10, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Bring in your most colourful sneakers and give them new meaning! Using computer graphics software, you will digitize them to make them look like ceremonial Aboriginal masks. Cost: \$12 per person. Registration: (514) 847-6239.

Finally, the exhibition *Brian Jungen* will be a focal point of the museum's summer day camps. A few spots are still available, for 10 and 11-year-olds in the week of August 7 to 11, and for 12 and 13-year-olds from July 24 to August 4. Registration: (514) 847-6239.