



WALTER MAY LOOK AGAIN



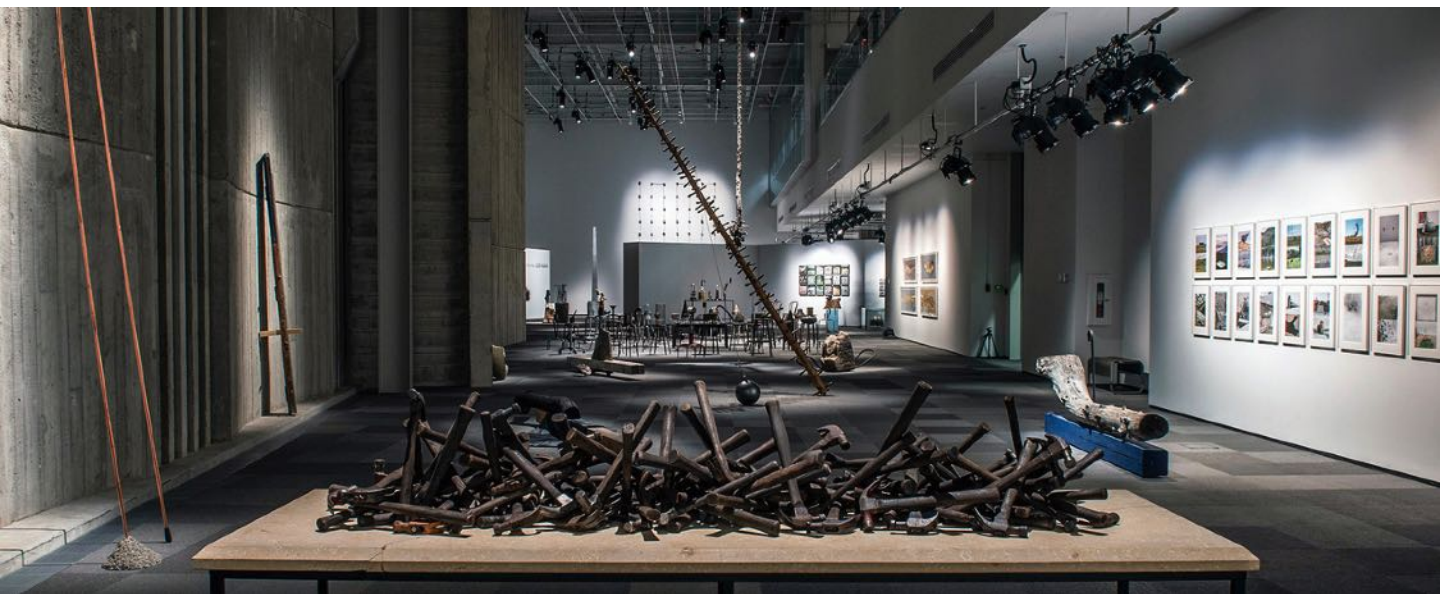
WALTER MAY LOOK AGAIN

Nickle Galleries

1 February – 28 April 2018

Curated by Christine Sowiak

Catalogue Contributions by Lisa Baldissara, Nancy Tousley, Gord Ferguson, Mary-Beth Laviolette, Diana Sherlock, Richard Clements, David Garneau, Katherine Ylitalo, Ron Moppett and Walter May



Walter May: *Look Again* (2018, installation view) *Damaged Goods* (2000) in foreground.

FOREWORD

CHRISTINE SOWIAK

For a time, and mainly to myself, I considered entitling Walter May's retrospective, *Sometimes it's a long wait*. Not because it is particularly clever (although, it becomes evocative when you think about it), nor even because they are my words. They are Walter's, from David Garneau's essay written from an extended email conversation with the artist for his 2002 exhibition at Paul Kuhn Gallery, *Flammable Inflammable*.

Operating procedures?

I try to get around and see things. I travel a bit, I go to the country fairly regularly. I visit museums, galleries, antique stores, pawn shops, second-hand stores, junkyards, the mall, and, on occasion, I see something that strikes me as curious, that captures my attention. It might be because of some quality in its making or material or design; occasionally because I feel that it carries a meaning or can act as a symbol for something that interests me. I obtain these things and take them to studio where they wait. At some later date they may become a part of a piece, perhaps because of a connection to some other objects, or because my awareness catches up to them.

Sometimes it's a long wait.

I like to think of Walter's way of working in these terms, the combination of happenstance and deliberation, his patient observation waiting for connections to form between objects. Without necessarily articulating why, things are brought into the studio, and they live there. He lives with them, until he recognizes what will become of them. May works primarily as a sculptor, although drawing and photography, installation and at times even performance have been part of his practice. To describe his practice could be to state that May works with found objects to create assemblages, new aggregates from those things gathered in his travels. Yet, why does that seem so dry, so inadequate in conveying the resonance of May's work?

Because of the reasons those things follow May to his studio – because what gathers in that rag and bone shop carries their own ideas, wit, poetry and meaning, their integrity. Fallen trees, lost limbs and broken stone, twisted beams and ghost hands on abandoned tools, glass domes and duct work appear not for their utility but perhaps its lack. Resonant memories more than nostalgia, reference and allusion more than exact definition. When May combines these disparate parts into new entities nothing is lost, neither wit nor pathos. They simply enter into new conversations between the opposing forces that seem to fascinate May: human design and nature, use and refuse, fuel and transformation by fire, rebirth and decay, the quiet small occurrences that so often go overlooked.

Not surprisingly, the title Walter chose for this exhibition – *Look Again* – manages to convey a clearer sense of the show and his way of working than any of my attempts (Walter, after all, seems to know just how things are meant to fit together). Another way of saying retrospective, an exhibition of more than forty years of work, "look again" is also a mild directive for us as viewers, to take in the connections afforded by *Look Again*. To see May's early drawings in proximity with his sculptures, and recognize that branches and beams, conduits and pipes are also lyrical lines drawn in space. To walk through, under and around those sculptures, and feel their embodied gestures not as figurative, but somehow human. To connect the hunting and gathering of his studio practice, that combining of disparate elements, with the collecting of images in his photographic projects.



On the Nickel (2013).

The writers who have contributed here guide us in looking again, and as a whole echo Walter's practice, several independent voices brought together to reflect on particular pieces of their choosing. The approach of each remains distinct, episodic, but when aggregated – particularly with Walter's notes on additional works – the reader is given an overview of May's work, the general as seen through the specific.

Diana Sherlock teases out one of May's conceptual ways of working – those objects that attract him and how they operate within his works – by looking at the recurring appearance of chairs, or sometimes stools. For May, she observes, "a chair is more than just a chair; it is a contextually contingent object that embodies and communicates a culture's values ... [it] is a tool." Through the chair form (and in Walter's work, chairs are typically of simple modernist design, mass produced), he touches on the anthropomorphic, the history of art and of technology, the reach of commerce; "May twists us back and forth between object and sculpture, craftsman and artist, and industry and art." No aspect of his chair works – not the designers that created the various models, nor the lyrical shadows they cast when installed by May – are disposable.

When **Lisa Baldissera** encounters one chair installation in particular – *Low Table High Chairs* – she enters into that space through language, recognizing the important role of words and wit at play. This gathering of stools may be anthropomorphized by the objects they bear, but it is through language that they become animate, are able to summon a conversation that draws the viewer in, "... through his own fabrications and poetic (re)arrangements, May's works perform cathartic operations in order to ultimately reveal a conceptual apparatus – thought in perpetual motion." That the chairs perform, act through language, is how they come to life.

Richard Clements looks at May's ideas, his stories, as they are mediated by the environment of the museum. Considering the Vitrine series of works – *Grindstone*, *Blocks*, and *Artifact* – Clements concentrates on the correlation



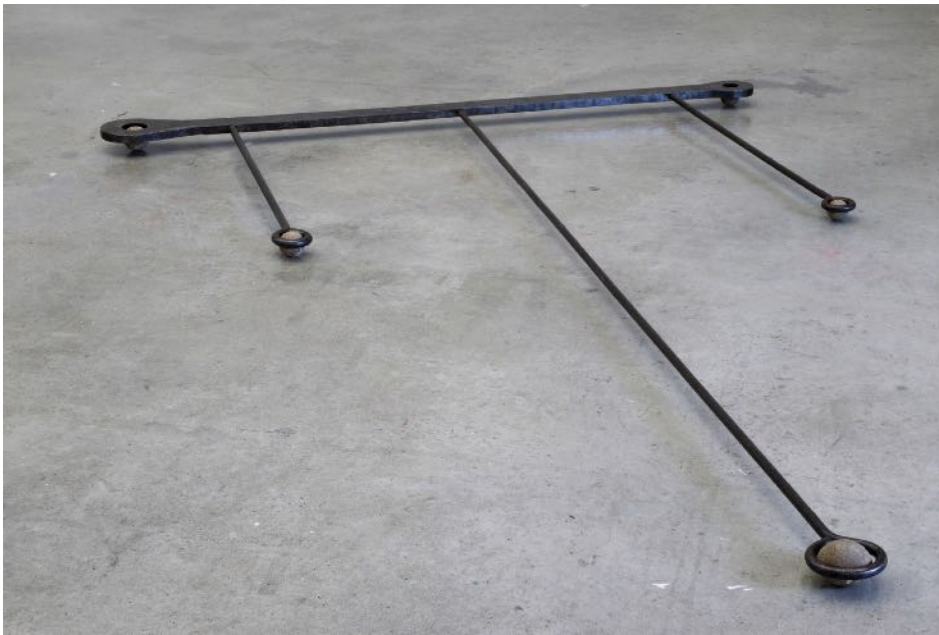
Walter May: Look Again (2018, installation view).

between the obscuring action of the vitrine glass of reducing objects from the specific to the general, and that of the museum, which he sees as institutions that decontextualize and distance objects through display. Clements argues that museum produce a certain counterfeit value, where “common, obsolete objects are imbued with importance, which, in turn, facilitates nostalgia and fabricates desire.” Not surprisingly, of course, the manufacture of such desire is one of Walter’s intentions, as he states, “I have also noticed that the more difficult it is to see the chopping block through the blurred glass, the more one wishes to see it clearly.”

Katherine Ylitalo peers through the same glass differently. Her comments on *Grindstone* are field notes of a sort, an analysis of watching the watchers, noting the actions of viewers of *Grindstone* at its recent public installation in Bow Valley College. It is experiential, becoming a first-person account of the play of light and shadow on the work, a shared stream of thought, puzzling over the piece, not the politics. By her approach, Ylitalo captures the captivation and wonder of encountering the enigmatic *Grindstone*, letting us know what it is to be seduced.

Ron Moppett offers another musing, an account of the experience of viewing, but of his own thoughts – economical, essential, the thoughts of an artist contemplating the work of a colleague over morning coffee. He encounters the work (again, and with an eye to writing), a work acquired through trade. With succinct words, through a single work, we are given a full appreciation of May’s artistic practice, from one artist to another, “As a painter I cycle images to create an object. Curiously, as a sculptor, I think Wally conjures material to create an image.”

Gordon Ferguson observes in *Slicker*, the unsettling edge that May’s work can balance upon, the ambivalence between being one thing, or another. Things look one way, yet could just as easily mean something else. For Ferguson, it is because May’s work “depends upon whether one considers the piece a singular form or a



Iron Hand (1989, studio view, image courtesy of Walter May).

constructed narrative,” carrying the histories and references with each of its constituent parts. *Slicker*, he contends, seems wholesome but also is somewhat crude or disturbing – it leads, as do so many of the works – “to numerous questions but few answers.”

Mary-Beth Laviolette voices what may be so obvious, it is often be overlooked or at the very least not mentioned – especially given that May is “an artist who has a healthy appreciation for the equivocal,” whose work invites the break-down of its parts as a means to understand the whole. Laviolette instead observes that whole, that there is “no end to May’s sense of composition” – that most unequivocally, he is one who knows how to balance, craft, assemble and present anything in three-dimensional form.

Nancy Tousley brings her critical eye and references, long understanding of Walter’s practice and a depth of knowledge. What she sees in a glance, is precisely that which is so familiar in *Still Life With Canes*, but so difficult to articulate. The almost undeniable figurative reference, not in design but in gesture – the subliminal feeling of movement, of an animate creature. For Tousley, the work conjures ancient Greek athletes rendered in near silhouette on the bodies of amphorae. A reference to art history, summoned again when she considers *Plank* and its recollection of funerary steles. Her connections are specific, but not limiting, as Tousley points out “... not to direct influences – the Greek connections for May would be subconscious – but to the rich allusiveness of his work. As artists do, he visits museums, reads books, surfs the Internet, and he knows his art history.”

David Garneau has written more than once of Walter and his work – in 2004, for *Making it Like a Man* exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, following their *Flammable Inflammable* conversation in 2002 for Paul Kuhn Gallery. Garneau positions Walter as a scavenger of sorts, a witty if idiosyncratic collector, a craftsman and a poet. His writing leads to a seeming anomaly in May’s work – the photographs – both in relationship to and contrast with his sculpture. “If May’s sculptures evoke the body, demand touch, these photographs compose a world without people.” Garneau views the photographs as witnesses of a sort, of the only evidence remaining of marks left by people and events, because “perhaps more telling truths can be found in their traces.” And here is the kinship between sculpture and photograph, as Walter says, “Finding and collecting these images is not very different from how I collect the objects that occupy my sculpture.”



Pin Pine (2009).

The voice of Walter May also echoes through the pages of this publication, providing the anecdotes and snippets of thought or research that grow in his studio (and sometimes they wait a long time). He details the sources of objects, when that is of particular import to a work. Through his words, his curiosity is revealed but also the precision with which he creates the dialogue between objects. May recognizes that objects travel with ideas – their histories, uses, and provenance. By May's various accounts, we are able to recognize that these ideas are inherent throughout his practice, presented with a certain exactitude so that none are lost.

On behalf of Walter May and Nickle Galleries, we are indebted to the public and private collections that generously loaned work to Look Again, creating the considerable sweep of this retrospective: Alberta Foundation for the Arts, City of Calgary Civic Art Collection, Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada, Ann and Hugh McKenzie, Wayne Giles, Marica and Blake Senini, Deborah Herringer Kiss, Dorothy Dyker Johnstone, Ron Moppett and Katherine Ylitalo, and Andrew Brooks. For their insight and perspective thanks to the contributors Lisa Baldissera, Richard Clements, Gordon Ferguson, David Garneau, Mary-Beth Laviolette, Ron Moppett, Diana Sherlock, Nancy Tousley, and Katherine Ylitalo.

I have a deep appreciation for Walter May – for his leadership of the collaboration that has been this exhibition and publication, his patience, humour and knowledge. I have admired his work since I first saw Walter give an artist's talk in 1990 at the University of Regina, and this has been an opportunity not only to gain a deeper understanding but to do so with the clarity, precision and balance present in his selection of works and their arrangement in the space of Nickle Galleries. Along the way, I have accused Walter of spending the last 40 years secretly creating work for the sole purpose of showing it in the space of Nickle Galleries – it seems almost to have grown here. Thank you, Walter, for all of this.

Gold Black Magic (1976)

33 x 363 x 38

A warped 2x4 is connected to a twisted 2x12 and coloured with black stain, pearlescent gold lacquer and red over black crackle finish paint.

The earliest sculpture in this exhibition acknowledges the ability of wood to move or warp in response to humidity, dryness or temperature. In this case a substantial 12 foot-long twisted plank* is married to a bowed 2x4. The application of stains, resins and crackle finish paint helps guide the viewer's attention here and there – primarily to the ends of the sculpture.

Much of the early sculpture I produced made use of warped wood with its occasional spectacular ability

to transform from utilitarian building material into something much more in keeping with its previous life. During a studio visit in grad school, the curator Pierre Thérberge commented on a number of my warped wood sculptures. He noted my interest in the “dysfunctionality of material”. To me, this turn of phrase was like finding the light switch in a dimly lit basement.

Walter May

*There are specific terms to describe how wood warps. Wood can twist, bow, crook, cup, or kink.





Gold Black Magic (1976, facing page image courtesy of Walter May).

DRAWINGS

These early drawings are exhibited with the source material included in the composition and feature materials such as string, sticks, stones, feathers, fur, cigars etc. This strategy of including the original subject matter, or of displaying objects and images in pairs or groups is a recurring tendency in my other work. Collection of the artist unless noted otherwise.

The inclusion of the model with a rendering is not to suggest that a viewer should admire how much the image resembles the object, but rather how different these two things are.

Having said that, working out how to situate an object with an image is similar to positioning objects and materials in a sculpture, particularly when the wall is used as a backdrop.

Walter May



Installation view, left to right: *Squirrel Tails* (1978); *Bearclaws* (1978); *Untitled (Feathers)* (1979, collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts); *Untitled (Snake)* (1979, collection of the Canada Council Art Bank); *Enchanté Angle* (1976); *Blue Torpedo* (1976); *Rounded Flat Rocks* (1977); *Border Crossing* (1978); *Pine* (1978).

Bearclaws (1978)

23 x 12.75 x 4

A pencil drawing of a bear claw with the claw attached to the frame.

Squirrel Tails (1978)

39.5 x 12.75 x 5.2

A pencil drawing of a squirrel tail with the tail attached to the frame.

Untitled (Feathers)(1979)

65.5 x 81 x 4

A pencil drawing with a construction made from feathers and bamboo that is attached to the frame.
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

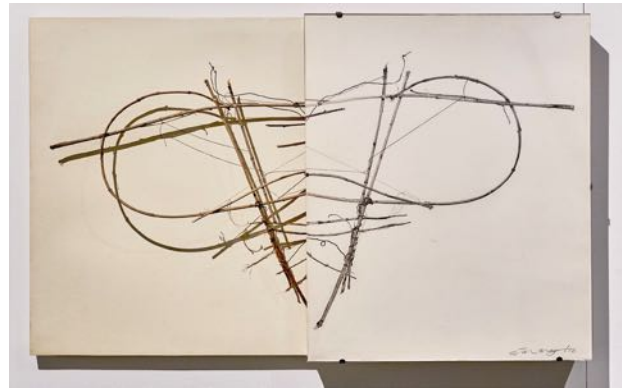


Untitled (Snake)(1979)

65.5 x 81 x 7

A pencil drawing and a construction made from bamboo, feathers, a rubber snake and cord attached to the frame.

Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank /
Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil
des arts du Canada



Enchanté Angle (1976)

57 x 39.5 x 5.5

A pencil drawing of a cigar decorated with a feather and yellow cord.

Blue Torpedo (1976)

57.5 x 40.5 x 5.5

A pencil drawing of a cigar decorated with printed cloth and twine.

Rounded Flat Rocks (1977)

51 x 65.5 x 4

A pencil drawing of flat rocks with rocks.



Top to bottom: *Untitled (Feathers)* (1979, collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts); *Bi-Focal* (1978, collection of the Canada Council Art Bank); *Sinuous Curve and Golden Rectangle* (1978).



Border Crossing (1978)

48.5 x 66 x 4

A pencil drawing of small black stones with small black stones.

Pine (1978)

76.8 x 57.2 x 6.4

A pencil drawing of small branches with branches.

Bi-Focal (1978)

57 x 93 x 7

A mirror image pencil drawing of sticks and string with the original model.

Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank /

Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Sinuous Curve and Golden Rectangle (1978)

57 x 79 x 5.5

Pencil drawing of bamboo stick with bamboo, elastic band and thread construction.



Outlook (aka Arcade) (1987/1997/2017)

434.5 x 66 x 106.5 cm

A wire brushed stainless steel chair is propped against a wall and supported by copper pipe, a burnt wooden handle and a small pile of cement. Outlook was originally constructed in 1987 as part of an installation entitled Arcade (modified in 1997 and again in 2017).

Hoopd (2015)

83.2 x 76.2 x 61

A burnt bentwood chair frame is held in a metal windsock hoop.



Diana Sherlock

In 1965, Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* assembled three industrially produced representations of a wooden folding chair, the object, its image and its dictionary definition. For Kosuth, and for Walter May, a chair is more than just a chair; it is a contextually contingent object that embodies and communicates a culture's values. A chair, or a stool, which is also common to May's practice, is a tool. Basic designs are functional, modified only to satisfy the status and culture of the user.¹ In his sculptures, May uses modernist chair designs with an economy of means, where material and form enable function and work in offices, studios, and industry.

Perhaps recalling Kosuth, May's *Three Attempts at a Deck Chair* (1979, destroyed) was his first sculptural chair construction. Made with badly warped fir one-by-twos, three contorted folding canvas lounge chairs make base leisure look exhausted and precarious to the point of inevitable collapse. *Outlook* (1987 reworked as *Arcade*, 1997) exalts Bauhaus designer Marcel Breuer's experiments with tubular steel that would modernize chair design. In it a long copper tube bends to fit the arched back of a wire brushed tubular stainless steel chair frame that leans high against the wall. Spot lit, intense shadows on the wall directly in front of the frame complete the architecture. Also in the 1920s, American industrial office equipment giant Shaw-Walker mass produced an aluminium office chair, which, in *Ascended* (1997), May thrusts upward into the annals of art history from a hooked aluminium mount high on the wall.



Low Table High Chairs (1990/1991) assembles a collection of found metal industrial factory stools, here converted to pedestals for various sculptural objects made of copper, bronze, tin and aluminium. Vaguely anthropomorphic, each stool seems magnetically attracted to the installation's central figure, a low-slung table-sculpture made from industrial steel I-beams and sheet steel. These stools resonate Marcel Duchamp's altered readymade, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), and Brancusi's "mobile groups," in which materials and tools perform objects, and objects perform sculptures, spatially in the studio.

Returning to these themes more recently, *Hooped* (2015) and *Chairlift* (aka *Bentwood*) (2012) raise twisted charred, stained and polished bentwood chair frames high above our heads. German craftsman Michael Thonet developed bentwood technology circa 1850.² Lauded for its material economy, lightness and strength, bentwood manufacturing marked the transition from workshop to factory production that would later be exploited by the Bauhaus and other modern industrial designers. *Hooped* also subtly references Duchamp's *Porte-chapeaux* (*Hat Rack*) from 1917, which alters the crown of a bentwood hat rack into some otherworldly object with a companion shadow that activates the gallery wall like a dusty charcoal squiggle might a piece of paper. In these recurring loops, May twists us back and forth between object and sculpture, craftsman and artist, and industry and art.

1 Witold Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down: From Klismos to Plastic Chair: A Natural History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016).

2 "Thonet," 2015, <http://www.thonet.com.au/history/>.





Chairlift (2012)

306 cm high

Two bentwood chairs are attached to steel pipes which are supported by separate cast iron bases.

Ascended (1997)

82.55 x 20 x 20

An aluminum office chair patterned after an oak office chair is attached to the wall. The seat and backrest are encrusted with a mixture of dried cracked clay and acrylic binder.

I discovered a hollow lightweight aluminum chair with a small oil-cloth pad on the back rest that impersonated an oak office chair.* I saw this as a curious thing, in that a decision had been made to copy the design of a wooden object in aluminum, rather than to invent a new design that would be more appropriate to manufacture in metal. Was this an attempt to reassure buyers that their purchase was simultaneously progressive due to the use of “modern” material, yet still conventional in that it would mimic more traditional office furniture? Was the status of the office worker who was assigned the new chair improved or diminished as a result?

The chair in *Ascended* has been hung above our heads in a unattainable position, and has had a layer of dried cracked clay or mud placed on the seat and back rest. The elevated position of the chair and title might suggest a position of superiority; the clay brings things back down to earth.

Walter May

* I have since learned that the chair was a product of the Shaw-Walker Co. in the early 1920's. Shaw-Walker was an office equipment maker who revolutionized office procedures with two major innovations, the introduction of the steel filing cabinet and lowering the surface of work tables and desks from a previous standard of 30.5 inches to a more comfortable 29 inches.

Lisa Baldissera

The Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss made their artistic debut in 1981 with a piece called *Suddenly this Overview*, a series of vignettes which focussed on key historical and planetary events, roughly hewn in unfired clay. “The intention was to accumulate various important and unimportant events in the history of mankind, and of the planet – moments in the fields of technology, fairy tales, civilization, film, sports, commerce, education, sex, biblical history, nature and entertainment,”¹ declared Weiss of this work, which when finally completed in 2006, was comprised of 200 tableaux with descriptive titles such as *Herr and Frau Einstein shortly after the conception of their son, the genius Albert, or Brunelleschi Invents Perspective*.

Using everyday materials and processes with an incisive semiotic wit and humour, Walter May’s work, like that of Fischli and Weiss, draws on the histories of Dada, Surrealism, Pop Art and Modernism in order to change our relationship with the objective world. Known for his combinations of readymades or reformed through his own fabrications and poetic (re)arrangements, May’s works perform cathartic operations in order to ultimately reveal a conceptual apparatus – thought in perpetual motion. Entering the installation *Low Table High Chairs* (1990/1991), an anthropomorphic archive of industrial processes and found objects seems to appear, a field that suggests a conversation already in full swing – one in which we can easily participate, if we just remember the weight of things, the feel of this or that surface, the scent and line and form which our bodies so readily access as knowledges through which to navigate the world. Within each of these objects, set as they are in a constellation both with one another, and invisibly, from the production-world in which they were birthed, May’s installation work becomes a

sociological and phenomenological assembly of lived experiences, neither perfectly forming or foreclosing any one opportunity for expression. If it appears that an animated conversation is taking place amongst these forms, it is not only in present time, but across the ages that these emblematic figures and shapes have been in conversation – long before us in the primeval and natural worlds, and long after we are gone, as ruins or traces, or potentially, new life forms that attests to experiences of lives lived, to “the confusion and the swamp and the simultaneity of these things.”²

1 David Weiss, quoted from: <https://cfileonline.org/exhibition-clay-fischli-weiss-venice-biennale/> Accessed January 12, 2018.

2 Peter Fischli, Ibid.



Installation views, *Low Table High Chairs* (1990/1991, facing page top image courtesy of Walter May).



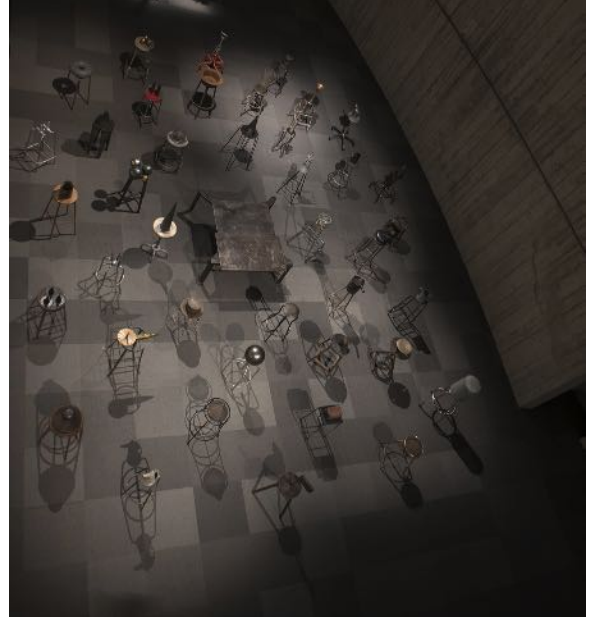
I first encountered the table when moving into a large studio located below rowchild trail bridge that I shared with Blake Senini, Carroll Taylor-Lindoe, and Al Stinson. It had been left behind by previous tenants. For some time, the table was almost the only furniture in the space so it tended to accumulate objects, and since it was strong and stable it was also convenient to work on. Blake tended to use it the most when he was working with plaster, paint and fiberglass. As a result the table developed a surface patina that allowed it to blend in even further with whatever else was going on in the studio. I don't think any of us really looked very hard at that table other than to see it as a useful sawhorse, pedestal or workbench.

As is often the case with studio rentals, the building eventually changed hands and we were out. In an effort to retain our damage deposit we cleared out all of our materials and work with the exception of the table. It stood alone in that large open room and that was probably the first time I really paid attention to some of its odd characteristics – the extended legs, (one which was shorter than all the rest), the unusual and sometimes annoying overlapping top surfaces, and the curious arrangement of flame cut holes which must have served a purpose in some prior circumstance. When it came time for the final inspection, the new owners insisted that we remove the table. I claimed it.

In the new studio the table remained provocative; an object obviously created to enable some kind of work, but resistant to interpretation as to what exactly that work might be. I took it upon myself to clean (or restore) the surface.

I hung three other provocative components beneath the table to amplify the viewer's curiosity.

Walter May



Low Table High Chairs (1990/1991/2017)

table 57 x 126 x 137, configuration of chairs variable

A low steel table is surrounded by a collection of metal stools that support metal objects.

High Chairs from the collections of:

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque

d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Wayne Giles

Marcia and Blake Senini

Deborah Herring Kiss

Dorothy Dyker Johnstone

Walter May

Low Table collection of the artist.



Installation views, *Low Table High Chairs* (1990/1991, this page studio view, image courtesy of Walter May).

Richard Clements

Grindstone (2002) is part of a series alongside *Artifact* (1994), and *Blocks* (1993) that is concerned with the operations of museum display and the museological gaze. The “museum” is seemingly antithetical in nature: it preserves and protects objects by decontextualizing and de-tooling them. It is concurrently the morgue and the surgical theatre – an autopsy on a live patient. In eradicating the cultural utility of objects, the museum then attempts to re-animate and re-contextualize, but this does not resuscitate the objects, rather it produces dead replicas – ones that hollowly declare their vitality whilst simultaneously being saturated with loss. The museum itself desires amnesia of this loss and, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, achieves it by constructing further *distance* between the object and the viewer, one that is defined by socio-political power systems of *accessibility*, be it optical, physical, or intellectual. This distance – much like a locked reliquary box – produces a counterfeit sublime that is defined by the conflation of the professed, but ultimately irretrievable (and now lost), value of the object with the veiled power of the institution. It also, inversely, can produce counterfeit value: common, obsolete objects are imbued with importance, which, in turn, facilitates nostalgia and fabricates *desire*. These counterfeiting methods, in containing conflicting information, produce an arrested, paralytic state where the viewer, purged of agency, unknowingly acquiesces to the museum’s propaganda.

A grindstone, half burnt and half whitewashed, is placed inside a vitrine supported by metal legs. Five sides of the vitrine are made from frosted wire, fire safety glass, while the base of the vitrine is metal mesh. As we approach the vitrine to see the detail of the object both surface and profile of the grindstone become indecipherably refracted: we only see the glass itself. Moving further away, we can just about identify the object as a grindstone, but cannot now see any specificity from wear that details providence, authenticity, and the auratic. Up close we cannot see

Grindstone (2002)

197 x 101.5 x 66

A frosted wire glass vitrine supported by steel legs contains a pedal-powered grindstone supported by a wood trestle. Half of the trestle was burnt, the other half has been painted with whitewash.

Collection of the City of Calgary

Artifact (1994)

71 x 89.8 x 102.4

A pebbled wire glass vitrine contains a steel framework from which an artifact is hung.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Blocks (1993)

71 x 89.8 x 102.4

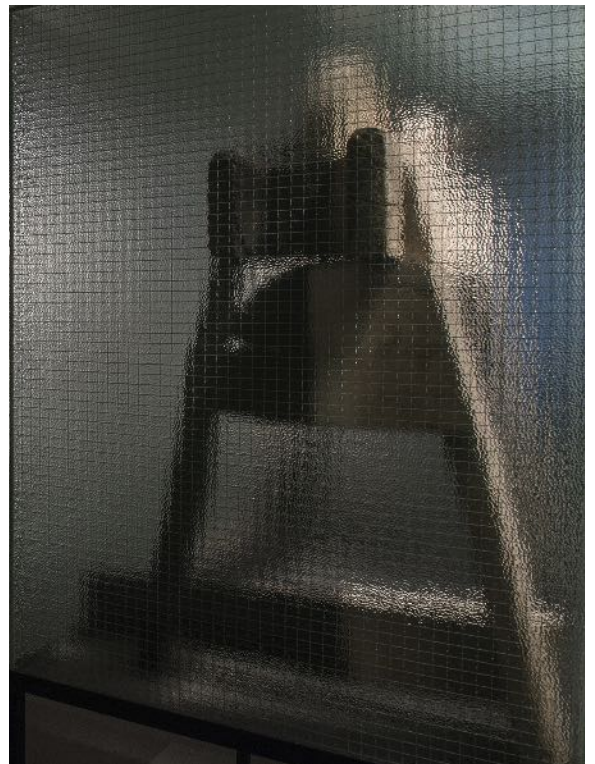
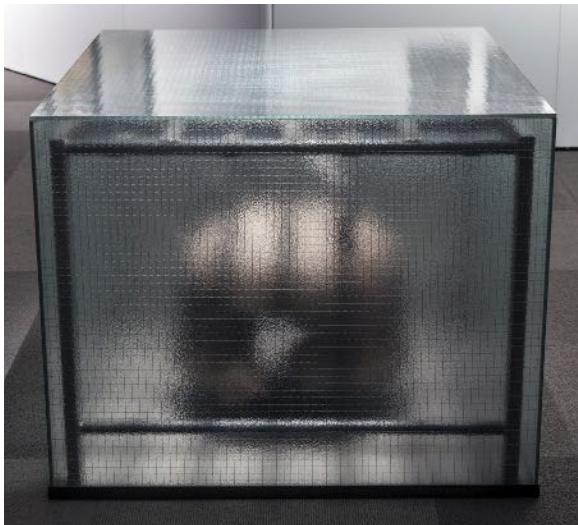
A restored wooden chopping block is encased in a wire glass vitrine.

Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank Bank /
Collection de la Banque d’oeuvres d’art du Conseil
des arts du Canada

the object, and from afar we can only see *an object*. The vitrine reduces the grindstone from a particular object with a specific history to a generalized example. This reduction is furthered by the glass blurring May’s surface treatment of the grindstone, half whitewashed and half burnt now reduced to half black and half white: compressed from vital object to graphic image. This purposeful obfuscation of the surface treatment deceptively hides the entropic forces of the museum: its continual destruction and proverbial whitewashing of the past. The irremediable loss of entropy is acknowledged by the metal grate the grindstone sits upon: in not being hermetically sealed the object is exposed to the elements, open to decay, dust and perhaps most importantly – fire. *Grindstone*’s supposedly fire proof vitrine has become a sealed execution chamber, a dioramic andiron, were we – comfortable in the viewing gallery of the museum – can witness its incineration anonymously and without guilt.



Above and right: *Grindstone* (2002, collection of the City of Calgary); below, *Artifact* (1994, collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts).



Katherine Ylitalo

Bow Valley College has been a good location to see *Grindstone* for the past two years. There, students from 148 countries speak 98 languages. The complexity of translation is recognized as an integral part of communication, and people learn to question assumptions and test conclusions.

Watching people interact with this sculpture reminds me of the story of blind men trying to comprehend an elephant.

In the shifting light of the day, the ability to see the object in the vitrine changes. When it is backlit in the morning, the silhouette the size of a small dog dominates. From the opposite side, the blurry mass through the pebbled glass comes into fuzzy focus only as you back up. Up close, you can discern the texture of wood and the thin application of whitewash through the wire grid in the safety glass. From the other side, the surface of the object looks dark, dense, soft. Is it burned? Four legged – is it a sawhorse? A precise, midline separation between the black and white is visible from both ends. If you bend down to look up through the perforated steel base plate, you get a clear, but partial, view of the underside.

The object in the vitrine is an old-fashioned treadle grindstone, a foot pedaled tool for grinding knives and blades. Probably from East Village, just blocks away from the college, it has been mysteriously transformed, encased in industrial fire retardant materials and given a quasi-museum artifact status.

May's use of material language, history and syntax that permeated the solo exhibition, *Flammable/Inflammable*, at Paul Kuhn Gallery are evident in this work. Wood, steel, glass. Tool, frame, vitrine. Dark/light; fuel/combustion; functional/nonfunctional; tool/product; history/now. The underlying qualities that distinguish his work are also here:

1. Visual intrigue; ultimate balance and visual satisfaction
2. Strong physical presence; you share space and time
3. Material sense; layers of consideration
4. Transformative process
5. Historical interruption; something new to think about.

Right; *Grindstone* (2002, collection of the City of Calgary);
opposite left to right, *Artifact* (1994, collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts), *Grindstone* (2002), *Blocks* (1993,
collection of the Canada Council Art Bank).



A well-used chopping block was disassembled, cleaned, bleached, reassembled and placed inside a wireglass* vitrine. At the time I was thinking that the function of the vitrine in museums simultaneously protects valuable or fragile objects from the viewer, while suggesting that the objects within have achieved an exceptional status. This may indeed be true, however, particularly with ethnographic objects, the opportunity to appreciate the ways in which an object has been made or was used seems diminished when enshrined behind glass.

I have also noticed that the more difficult it is to see the chopping block through the blurred glass, the more one wishes to see it clearly. This also applies to *Artifact* which is very difficult to apprehend, and to *Grindstone*. However *Grindstone*'s elevated base does offer the opportunity to see the object more clearly from below, but only if the viewer is willing to bend down.

Walter May

*A type of fire retardant safety glass reinforced by wire to prevent shattering when exposed to extreme heat. The particular glass I chose for this vitrine, (Georgian cast wire) was also pebbled on one side which further obscures the object within.



Dam Plugs/Our Nature/Meander (1994)

approximately 626 x 395 x 35.5

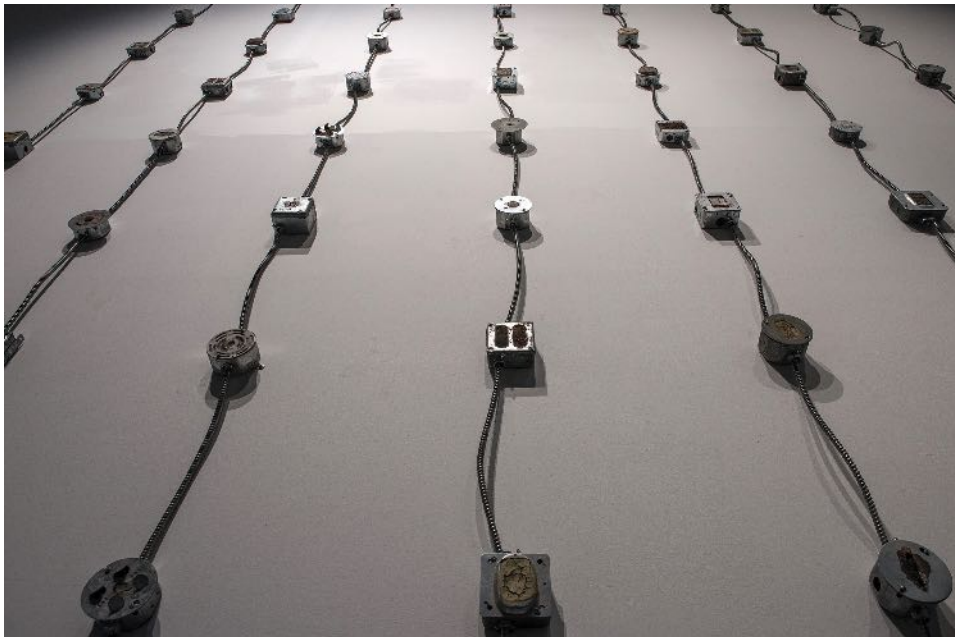
A network of galvanized boxes and cable are arranged to describe a diagram on the wall.

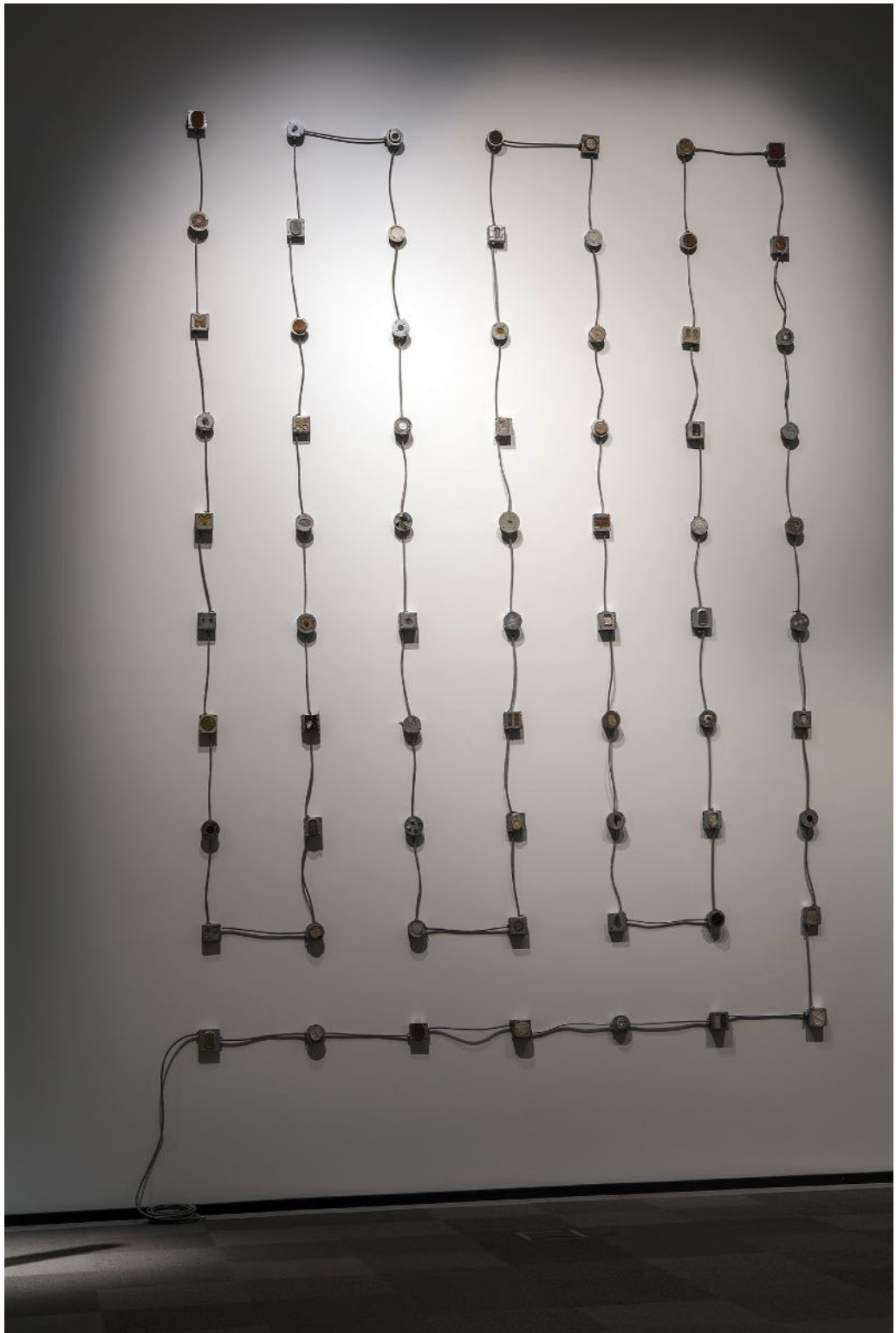
Attached to the wall is a diagram or drawing composed of a variety of common galvanized electrical boxes plugged with dried, cracked clay and joined by shielded electrical cable. This piece was provoked by listening to a radio program that spoke about the ecological consequences of the number of dams* in the Columbia River Watershed. My attempt to visualize the interrupted flow of a river also led to thinking about our societies ever increasing craving for energy and fuel of all kinds, a recurring theme in subsequent works.

Walter May

* In trying to find an accurate figure of how many dams are on the river, I could find no two sources in agreement. Wikipedia, for instance, has a list of 166 dams, reservoirs and diversions while the US Army Corps of Engineers lists 150 hydro-electric projects and 250 reservoirs within the Columbia river basin. Sources do agree that there are 60 major dams on the Columbia river and its main tributaries.

Installation views, *Damn Plugs/Our Nature/Meander* (1994).





The Incinerator (2003)

416.5 x 67 x 246

A circular stack of firewood supports a galvanized metal duct, which in turn supports a scale model of an early twentieth century incinerator building with an enlarged smokestack. A small non-functional object is visible within the model of the building. Collection of Nickle Galleries.



Approaching the Tourist's Museum (1994)

137 x 66 x 246

A scale model of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, is supported by a galvanized duct with a wire mesh cylinder. Inside the cylinder is placed a sheet metal model of a human skull.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Left, *The Incinerator* (2003, collection of Nickle Galleries);
opposite, *Approaching the Tourist's Museum* (1994, collection of
the Alberta Foundation for the Arts).

The *Tourist's Museum* began when a friend suggested that I consider making a piece by using a large and oddly shaped piece of discarded ductwork. That duct became a platform for a small sheet metal model of the Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, a cathedral I had visited the previous summer. My experience of that building as a tourist attraction/museum, which simultaneously maintains its function as a place of worship, raised questions. Was my appreciation of the objects and artifacts within that "sacred" space any different from a similar visit to the Uffizi Gallery, only a short distance away?

Incinerator was made nine years later when an identical duct appeared. At that time I was thinking more about fuel, consumption, and waste. Nonetheless, the urge to provide a companion for the *Tourist Museum* led to the construction of another sheet metal model, this time based on photographs of the Algiers Incinerator in New Orleans* but with an oversized smokestack and a pedestal made of stacked firewood.

Walter May

*The Algiers Incinerator (1916) was the first of several incinerators built to address the problem of garbage disposal in New Orleans. Prior to this time much of the trash was carried by boat to the centre of the Mississippi River and dumped overboard.



Damaged Goods (2000)

81.3 x 241 x 114.2

A cracked travertine tabletop with steel legs displays a pile of burnt claw hammers.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

One hundred charred wooden handled claw hammers are laid out on a cracked travertine tabletop supported by square steel tubing on small casters.

I was offered the travertine slab, broken during shipping, with the suggestion that it might be useful as sculptural material. The slab was originally intended to become a tabletop, and that seemed to be most appropriate thing to build. I manufactured

legs. Once that was completed, the question became what should the table support. Usually when a piece of furniture such as a table is made it becomes complete in and of itself and can exist happily as a functional object. However for this table to become fulfilled, it seemed to require some other object(s) ...

I was working with burnt hammers at the time in preparation for the memorial exhibition *Burn Graceland Burn* at the Art Gallery of Calgary. The conjunction of a large quantity of scorched hammers piled on the cracked tabletop suggested just enough dysfunctionality to complete this work.

Walter May

Below: *Damaged Goods* (2000, collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, photo by M. N. Hutchinson courtesy of Walter May).

Opposite: top, drawing of *Puff* by Ron Moppett (2018); bottom *Puff* (2009, collection of Ron Moppett and Katherine Ylitalo).



Ron Moppett

Walter May has a singular sensitivity to and with materials. An ability that allows him to give form to a poetry of wonder.

The sculpture *PUFF* is, as typically, made of wood and an amalgam of found and repurposed objects. In this case a root and a pipe. A rough, found in the alley, piece of wood and it's finely turned out European cousin. Only the size of a human hand but it bullies a large amount of wall space to present itself smartly. Reminiscent in the way of early work by Joel Shapiro and strategies of Richard Tuttle.

I think that the pipe is actually a 'ladies long wood' and probably maple.

The swan's neck curve of the stem and stummel affords an extraordinary imperative as it kisses the flatness of the wall. It's hard to ascertain the nature of the charcoal coloured burl that rests in the bowl but it's bulbous and blistered form contrasts exquisitely with the tailored primness of the pipe. The decorative toolings at the rim head, shankface and foot mirror the natural craterings on the burl. They are pairs.

A pipe is a burl is smoke. Male and female.

I can only think of one other Canadian artist who affords voice to disparate materials in such a cogent fashion and that is Liz Magor.

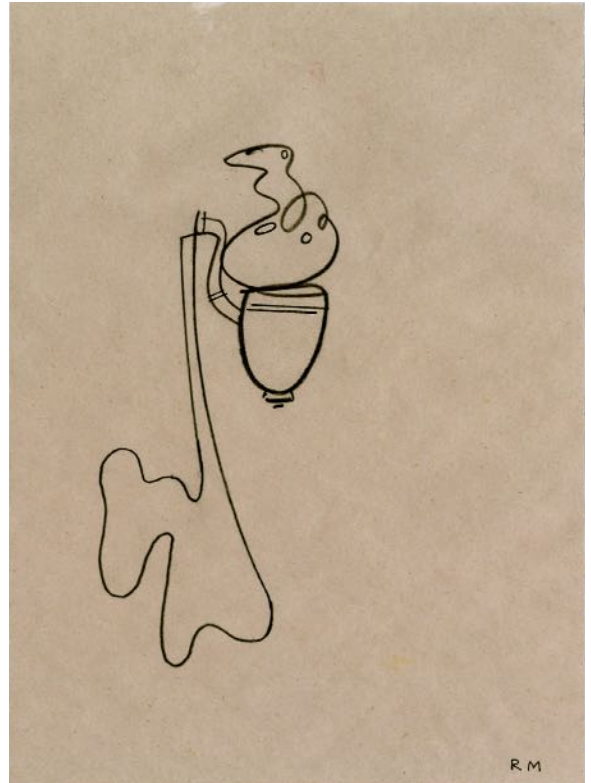
As a painter I cycle images to create an object. Curiously, as a sculptor, I think Wally conjures material to create an image.

Puff (2009)

13 x 7.5 x 15.5

A wooden pipe attached to the wall emits a small burl.

Collection of Ron Moppett and Katherine Ylitalo.



Plugged (2010)

472.44 x 38 x 45.72

A pine tree (trunk and roots) that has been washed by the river is adorned with wood buttons and handles. The tree is hung from the ceiling by a short length of chain.

Collection of the artist

Below: *Plugged* (2010); opposite *Pin Pine* (2009, collection of Nickle Galleries, image courtesy of Walter May).



Pin Pine (2009) (*Plugged in foreground*)

595.36 x 38 diameter (not including float)

Wood tool handles are inserted into the trunk of a jack pine wherever there was a knot. The tree is hoisted at an angle by a steel cable, passed over a support and attached to a plastic float filled with buckshot, thus converting the float into an anchor. Collection of Nickle Galleries.





Above: *Slicker* (2010, installation at Paul Kuhn Gallery, image courtesy of Walter May); opposite, *Slicker* (2010).

Gordon Ferguson

When I first encountered this sculpture it was the stark simplicity and the linking of rubberized fabric to burnt wood that captured my attention.

Now I'm thinking Walter is probably hoping viewers will see some sort of weird fish in this piece; linear form floating above the floor, 2 black fins, curvy body and a forked tail, but much depends upon whether one considers the piece a singular form or a constructed narrative.

The burnt log resembles a large garden slug slowly oozing its way upon the more stoic fir beam. The beam is only partially covered by the rubber rain-

slicker revealing itself lying prone, propped up on small blocks, monotone surface, cracks and knots in full view. They are found snuggling together in a compromising relationship prompting us to determine if this is a usual bundle of friendly items or some sort of crude indulgence.

Although this all-natural piece seems wholesome at first glance, it still manages to create disturbing contrasts, leading to numerous questions but few answers.

Slicker (2010)

36 x 363.2 x 139

A fir beam raised on two small burnt cedar blocks is partially covered by a rubberized rain coat. A burnt arbutus branch is laid on top of the beam.



Below: *Trailer* (2011); opposite, *Beam Bowl Burl* (2015); all installation views Paul Kuhn Gallery; images courtesy of Walter May.

Trailer (2011)

89 x 343 x 86.5

Steel pressure tank stabilized by small wooden wedges is attached to a burnt poplar branch. Collection of the artist.

A sinuous rat-like tail made from a branch trails behind a metal tank used to contain compressed gas. Both the tank and the branch have had their surface coverings stripped away.

These tanks come in many sizes and are ubiquitous in our environment. To me, they always seem a bit menacing.

Walter May



Beam Bowl Burl (2015)

106.5 x 55.8 x 66

Across the top of a reclaimed wood post are laid two burnt canes that support a burl and a small burnt bowl.

Two burnt wooden canes are laid across the top of a painted fir beam. A burl sits atop the canes. A small wooden bowl is placed on the angled top of the burl. This stack appears to be somewhat precarious.

I have used the wooden bowl and the cane in several sculptures.* My interest in these objects is due to their simplicity and longevity as well as the natural and logical correspondences with the material of which they are made.

Walter May

*There are a number of recurring objects in my sculptures that share qualities of simplicity and timelessness; bentwood chairs, galvanized buckets, wooden bowls, umbrellas, trowels, tool handles, pitchforks, etc.



Level Best – Hobble (2013)

68.5x 45.5 diameter

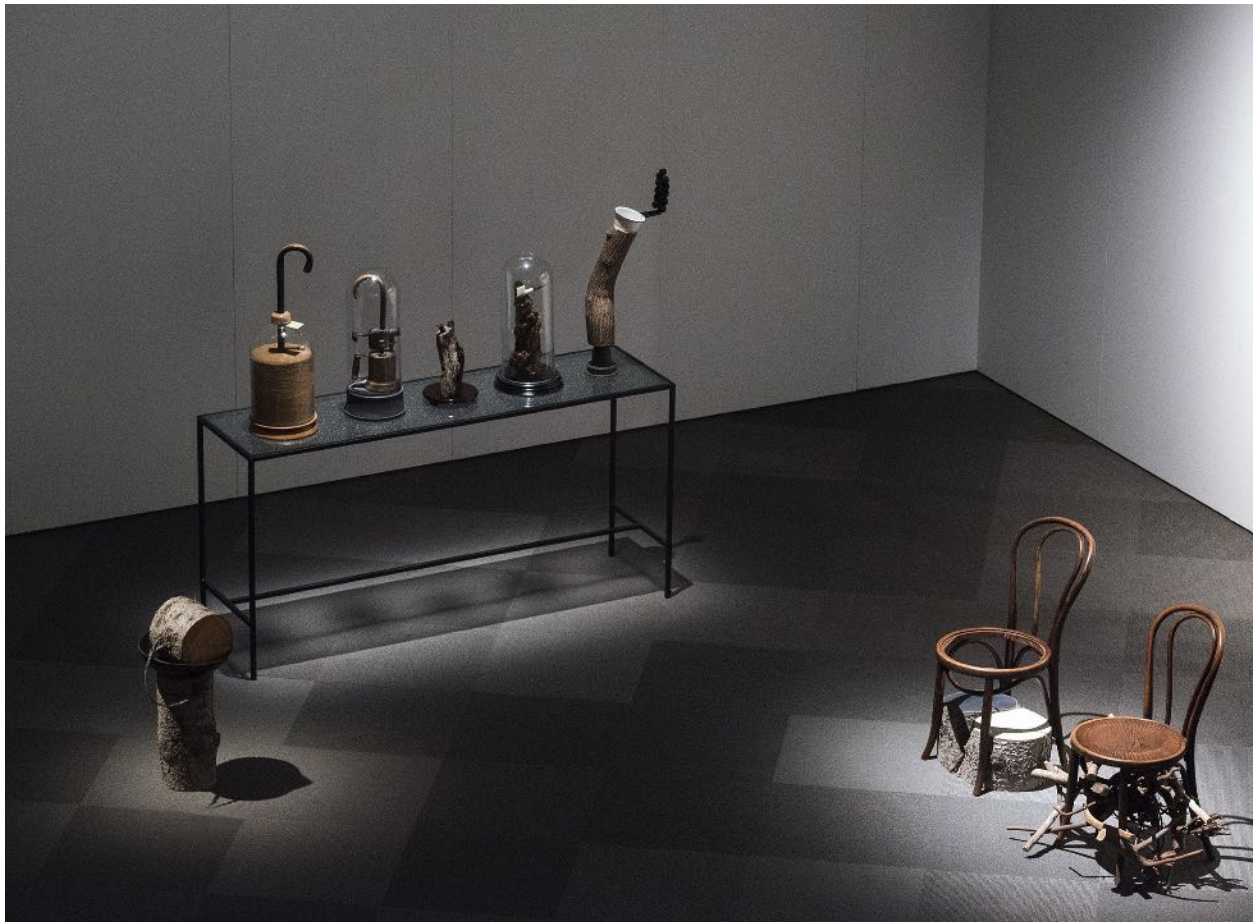
Portions of two tree trunks connected by a steel cable are separated by a split wooden bowl.

A spruce tree grows and develops two leaders near the ground. As the tree grew, the weight of the two halves began to weaken the tree at the divide. Arborists attempt to assist the tree by joining the two trunks together with a galvanized cable. All was well for many years as the tree matured.

In August of 2012 severe winds break one of the leaders, precipitating a decision to remove the tree. In the cleanup the tree was cut into sections and stacked for removal. The two sections of trunk attached by cable re-orientate to become a sculpture. One part of the tree becomes a support for a cracked wooden bowl that offers up the other portion of the tree.

Walter May

Below, left to right: *Level Best – Hobble* (2013), *Torch* (2017), *Twine* (2017), *Spout* (2017), *Pipe* (2017), *Dogleg Saucepan* (2016); opposite, *Level Best – Hobble* (2013, installation view Art Gallery of Calgary, image courtesy of Walter May).







**Good Wood Bad Wood
and a Cane (2015)**

104 x 255.3 x 40

The trunk of a poplar tree with a partially hollowed burnt interior is pinned to a fir beam with a burnt wooden cane.

Mary-Beth Laviolette

The title of this work raises a question. Which is 'good' and which is 'bad'? Given it's a Wally May, an artist who has a healthy appreciation for the equivocal, the answer is not obvious. From the point of view of a carpenter, the likely winner is the attractive blue stained fir beam. But from the point of view of a woodpecker, an owl or a nuthatch, the question is turned on its head. Bird-wise the utilitarian beauty of the poplar trunk is hard to overlook. Wonderfully curved and hollowed, the gnarly trunk is a perfect abode.

On the other hand, the two brutes appear nailed together with a cane: in a relationship of yin and yang. Posed like a question mark: the addition of the cane enhances what can now only be considered a work of art.

Once again, this artist cum collector of the utilitarian and the discarded reaps the pleasure of knowing how to work with three-dimensional forms. Whether you call it sculpture, assemblage or even at times, installation it really doesn't matter. Walter May brings an open-ended approach to his hybrid practice. Creating results that can be oddly elegant and emphatically strange.

Taken from nature or scavenged from industry, there is no end to May's sense of composition, sometimes achieved with only the smallest of fine-tuning. A burnt and blackened cane is not much on its own but as part of a threesome, *Good Wood, Bad Wood and a Cane* it makes a statement and best of all, evokes the presence of Walter May.

Good Wood Bad Wood and a Cane (2015, left, installation view
Paul Kuhn Gallery; below, studio; images courtesy of Walter
May).





This page: above, installation view *Yellow Fish*, *Brown Fish*, *Gold Grey Fish* and *Fossil Fish* (2008 and 2009); lower, *Yellow Fish*, and *Brown Fish* (2008/2009).

Opposite: installation view *Campsite Photographs*, and detail (images courtesy of Walter May).

Yellow Fish (2008/2009)

69.2 x 231.75 x 3.17

A large framed inkjet print of a dried fish with dried fish in a test tube hung adjacent to the frame.

Collection of Andrew Brooks

Brown Fish (2008/2009)

64 x 195 x 3.17

A large framed inkjet print of a dried fish with dried fish in a test tube hung adjacent to the frame.

Collection of the artist.

Gold Grey Fish (2008)/Fossil Fish

68.5 x 196 x 3.5

A high-resolution scan of a fossil of a small fish and a small dried fish are presented as large inkjet prints on archival paper. The original fossil and the dried fish are displayed with the framed prints.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.



Firepits and Campsites (ongoing)

18 campsite photographs, each 42 x 34

Each photo is signed, dated and titled with reference to a location on the back of the image.

This ongoing project began in 1999 when I began to take notice of stone circles and campfire sites during excursions into the eastern slopes of the Rockies near Calgary. I took it upon myself to document these sites, as they offered evidence of how people engage with the natural environment through the simple exercise of constructing a place to build a fire.

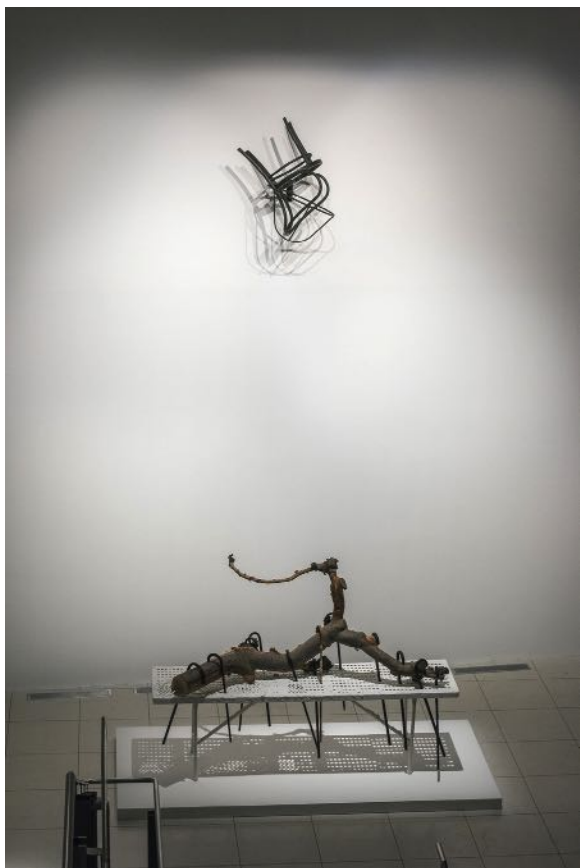
Each site has a particular character. Some involve considerable labour, which can include carefully selecting and placing stones to create a precise arrangement or gathering extremely heavy boulders to contain large fires. Others are obviously hasty, casual, or even careless in placement and concern for the surroundings. Some are constructed for return visits, others are hidden and sheltered, likely never to be reused. One of my favorite discoveries was a very tiny, unused site in which children had built a small circle of pebbles with tiny kindling, in imitation of the adult campfire ring not so far away. Another surprise discovery was an underwater campfire circle, the result of a change in the course of a stream due to spring flooding. All of these sites describe the

ritual of choosing a location and of making the fire, perhaps as a place to prepare a meal, or for warmth, or to create a social space that offers the magnetic attraction of looking into flickering light.

In most of the locations I have documented, the makers endeavor to remove all of the foreign objects and debris that was brought with them when they depart. However the stones are left in place, leaving a more or less permanent mark, a blister or blemish on the ground that will remain indefinitely.

Walter May





Above: left, installation view, *Hooped* (2015) and *Still Life with Canes* (2016); right, *Plank* (2015/2016).
 Opposite page: *Still Life with Canes* (2016).

Nancy Tousley

When I first saw *Still Life with Canes*, I thought immediately of the athletes painted on the side of a Greek, black-figure amphora at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The five, intense foot-racers on the vase (it was a Panathenaic prize) display a forward-straining energy; with their long racer's strides, they seem bent on doing splits in midair. The odd tree in *Still Life with Canes* (2016), disfigured by years of bonsai pruning, suggests a single figure, stripped to the waist and stressed, with his (I read the figure as male) legs spread in a near horizontal split. He also presses forward vigorously yet paradoxically is still. The work's title calls this sculpture a still life; the tree is mounted on a perforated sculptor's plaster table. But this is perhaps May's most figurative work. Unlike the competitive athletes, the tortured tree seems to strain to break free of its restraints – the handles of the 12 walking canes that pin it down – and flee.

Made in the same year, *Plank*, the artist's reworking of a splattered horizontal support from a painter's scaffold, also recalls a figurative art form from ancient Greece. The tall, rectangular verticality of *Plank* is like that of a funerary stele. Made of stone or wood, stele often carried representations of a standing figure in profile, rendered in low relief.

Each of these works, then, can refer both to sculpture and to painting (and to architecture), which is true of much of May's work, to the figure and to other art, as well. This points not to direct influences – the Greek connections for May would be subconscious – but to the rich allusiveness of his work. As artists do, he visits museums, reads books, surfs the Internet, and he knows his art history.



Plank (2015/2016)

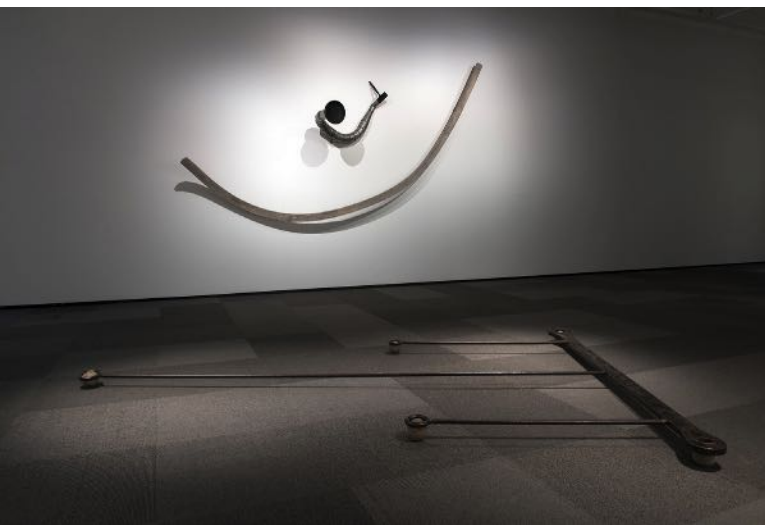
266.7 x 41.3 x 40.6

A used plank has been partially burnt and adorned with several wood bars and handles. Attached to one side of the plank is a handrail made from galvanized pipe.

Still Life with Canes (2016)

198 x 244 x 76.2

The remains of a heavily pruned tree is pinned to a perforated metal table by 12 walking canes. The table surface is covered in plaster and latex paint. All of the canes but one have been burnt.





Return to Totem with Duct (2016)

200 x 380 x 74

A warped 2x4 is bolted to the wall with galvanized iron pipe flanges. Above the 2x4 hangs a handmade galvanized extraction duct plugged by a burnt mallet at one end and a burnt bowl at the other.

Collection of the artist.

This piece originated in 1981 when I came across a radically warped, fifteen foot-long 2x4 hanging on the outside of a shed at Totem Lumber. Its lack of utility had been noticed by someone as the phrase “Return to Beaver” had been written on the board. I negotiated the purchase of the board, which I managed to obtain for a slightly reduced price on the condition that I would not return it. The piece was exhibited a short time later at the IKG simply hung upon the wall in a manner similar to how I originally encountered it.

After this brief appearance in public, the 2x4 went into storage in various locations, eventually spending about fifteen years laid under a wooden deck in my backyard.

In the late 1990s I happened upon a discarded sheet metal construction that had previously been part of a dust extraction system. Impressed by the labor and craftsmanship that went into this short convoluted piece of ductwork, I brought it back to the studio imagining it could easily be incorporated into sculpture I was working on at the time. Despite several attempts the piece remained impervious to manipulation and the duct gravitated to a storage area in my garage.

In 2016, resurfacing the wooden deck and reorganizing material storage led to the rediscovery and coming together of these two objects. Two additional helper objects accompany the duct.

Walter May

Breach (2017)

76 x 243 x 59.5

Stone slabs with concrete, wood, implement and hardware (2 parts).

What does one do with the little bit of cement left over after filling in a post hole?

I made a clamp from two beams to hold up a stone slab that also acts as a backdrop for a bit of cement. The result was heavy and hard to move. I added casters.

It was now top heavy and unbalanced. A possible solution was to add an outrigger and counterweight. I happened to have a chunk of wood that I found washed up along the shore of Kootenay Lake. It had been burnt, perhaps in a campfire, or maybe as the result of a lightning strike, then washed and weathered in the lake. I added that.

This piece now seemed to need a companion. I purchase another stone slab, affixed more cement and a tool with a bent steel handle.

Sometimes working with objects seems like jamming or jazz improvisation. A lull or opening appears in a piece of music, someone steps in with a riff.

Walter May





Breach (2017, facing page image courtesy of Walter May).

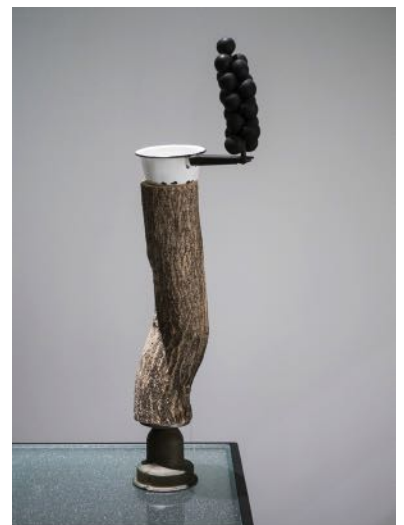
The Glass Domes and their Allies

A glass dome placed over an object offers us clues about how the object inside is to be understood. There is a kind of archaic quality to this method of display with the added notion that the object within the dome is fragile and precious. I associate this dome-space with delicate machinery, dried flowers, large insects, models, dioramas and small creatures who have met a taxidermist. In my work, I am hoping to find objects for the domes with few of those qualities.

As a display device, the dome, like the vitrine, offers a space that is both an enhancement and an impediment. By suppressing the activated area that a sculpture projects, the dome hinders the viewer. This is countered however by the physicality of the dome itself, as well as all of the associations and readings that can be gleaned from the presentation of a contained object.

I like to place some unencumbered pieces with the domes so that we can imagine or compare the effect of containment or freedom, as the case may be.

Walter May





Torch (2017)

58.5 x 24

Blowtorch and part of a wood cane in glass dome with wood base.

Twine (2017)

75 x 27

Baling twine, and part of a wood cane in glass dome with wood base and cap.

Spout (2017)

34 x 21.5

Wood and broken spout from teapot on wood stand.

Pipe (2017)

56 x 28

Wood and pipe in glass dome with wood base.

Dogleg Saucepan (2016)

81.5 x 35.5 x 16.5

A stack of objects including a bunch of burnt wood grapes, a chipped enamel saucepan and a bent branch sits atop a heavy cast iron flange.

Installation view, left to right: *Torch* (2017), *Twine* (2017), *Spout* (2017), *Pipe* (2017), *Dogleg Saucepan* (2016) (images on opposite page courtesy of Walter May).

Duets (2017)

All images are printed in 2017 on Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper, 40.6 x 50.8

A block of photographs featuring incongruous, portentous, futile or unusual situations. Examples of recurring imagery includes falling or fallen objects, black animals, accidental drawings, containers for fuel or fire, the effects of fire and water on the environment, etc.

Highwood Logs Oldman Bonzai
Haystack Night Pool
Tree Fall Burner Door
After Burn Rising Water
Electrical with Cows
Bird Bath Puddle
Black Plume White Plume
Pigeon Wire Waxwing Crash
Waterton Tanks Woodpile
Cold Refinery Campfire
Brazier's Staircase/Group Portrait
Prairie Deadfall Kilarney Pruning
Crows Tank
Tree Fence Windows Fence
Steeple Dog
Yellow Tank Demolition
Frost Constellation
Bird Tracks Hose Track
Feathers Chair
Carcass Crumble

These are digital photographs of things or places that I come across rather than search for. To me they seem incomplete until paired with another image. However it is when the paired images are grouped that connections, themes, or sentiments are most apparent.

Finding and collecting these images is not very different from how I collect the objects that occupy my sculpture.

Walter May

Installation view and details, left to right: *Carcass Crumble*, *Steeple Dog*, *Pigeon Wire Waxwing Crash* (images courtesy of Walter May).



David Garneau

Walter May forages for meaning in the detritus of a society he has fallen into but only reluctantly belongs. He is a witness sifting through refuse for fragments to be cobbled into tactile poetry. Once narratives have been discredited, become confused, or lost, the only reliable thing is the silent testimony of the hand made. May crafts enigmatic hybrids, melancholic comic representatives of the human condition with the sincerity of the last sculptor on earth. He fashions solace for survivors.

Often combining natural and manufactured found objects – repurposed furniture, tools, industrial cast-offs, tree trunks and branches – May's unique forms seem to have a purpose, intent, even an animate being that exceeds the mere real things from which they emerge. *Trailer* (2011) is just a burnt poplar branch attached to a stout steel pressure tank. But the alchemy of the imagination transforms these two disparate things into a singular new being, perhaps a sprouting seed. *Plugged* (2010) and *Pin Pine* (2007/8) return wooden handles to the trees from which they came. The gestures might remind us that our civilization emerges from nature but has become alienated from it. The attempted return and repair is suffused with a comic pathos. The grafts do not mend the rift between nature and culture but embody the suspense that is our human nature.

Like the truth-to-materials generation he succeeds, May generally lets his materials be themselves. He chooses objects not only for their intriguing shapes but also for their natural or worn patinas. When he decorates, it is with fire. While a formalist at heart, his found things resist becoming mere compositional elements and he allows their histories and personalities to murmur. His formalist good taste is leavened by surreal humour.

When an artist tries a new art form they tend to carry from their preferred medium themes, style and sensibility that can shed light on the darker corners of their primary work. *Duets* is a series of paired photographs printed this year but taken at various times over the past fifteen. If May's sculptures evoke the body, demand touch, these photographs compose a world without people. A witness traverses the scene like the recording angels in Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*. The gaze searches for accidental wit, subtle visual pleasures and mute truths. One image shows a bird bath, the next a mud puddle. Two pigeons on a wire; a fallen comrade in the snow in the next image? I saw this. That happened. Isn't this odd, interesting, unexpectedly beautiful? May's photographs filter out people because they are self-deceptive. Perhaps more telling truths can be found in their traces. Perhaps you can learn more about the essence of a person by rooting through their house than by talking with them.

The picture that has lingered in my mind since I saw it in 2002 is *Braziers Staircase/Group Portrait*. At an artist's residency he attend near Reading, England, May asked his colleagues there to lend him their footwear for a few days. Most did. He positioned twenty six pairs on a large, translucent skylight. Participants walking through the building could chance upon the installation. Like much of his work, the gesture is poetic, subtle, and funny, a gentle intervention into the routine world. It is also an ecstatic and melancholic *memento mori*. The artists have ascended in rapture, leaving only their shoes and us behind.

CONTRIBUTORS

Lisa Baldissera has worked in curatorial roles in public art galleries Western Canada and as an independent curator, consultant, and writer for almost 20 years and is currently Senior Curator at Contemporary Calgary. She has produced more than fifty exhibitions of local, Canadian, and international artists and holds MFAs in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia and in Art from the University of Saskatchewan. She is currently a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Richard Clements is a visual artist based in Calgary, Alberta. He has exhibited nationally and internationally with solo exhibitions at Burrard Arts Foundation, Vancouver (2017); CSA Space, Vancouver (2016); and Fold Gallery, London (2010); and Room Galleria, Milan (2009). Clements has a BFA from the Alberta College of Art + Design (2005) and a MFA from Goldsmiths College, London (2007).

Gordon Ferguson is an artist and Professor Emeritus at the Alberta College of Art + Design. He received an MFA degree in Sculpture from the University of Montana in 1981 and has exhibited his work across Canada and in the United States. He has completed a number of public art installations and was the recipient of two Canada Council grants to support his studio research.

David Garneau is Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of Regina.

Mary-Beth Laviolette is an independent art curator and writer specializing in Alberta and western Canadian art. She is also the author of three books about art in Alberta. She can still remember Wally's seminal exhibitions at the Paul Kuhn Art Gallery and Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge) in 1984 and 1985 respectively.

Ron Moppett is an artist and has been a friend and colleague of Walter and Margaret May for over forty years.

Diana Sherlock is a Canadian independent curator, writer and educator whose projects create opportunities for contemporary artists to produce new work in response to specific collections, contexts, histories and cultures of display. She has published over 70 texts in gallery catalogues and contemporary art journals internationally.

Nancy Tousley, winner of a 2011 Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts for outstanding contribution, is a nationally known senior art critic, arts journalist and independent curator.

Katherine Ylitalo is an independent curator, writer, garden historian, horticulturalist and educator with over forty years experience in Canadian museums, galleries and educational institutions. Currently, she is the curator of the Bow Valley College Art Collection.

Walter May

Although primarily known as a sculptor, Walter May's practice has also included drawing, digital photography, installations, and on occasion, performance art. He has an extensive exhibition record with over two dozen solo and collaborative exhibitions or projects and numerous invitational and group exhibitions at the regional and national level including the 1998 and 2010 Alberta Biennials. International activities have included the production and exhibition of work at Château Mathieu in Normandy, Kling and Bang Gallery, Reykjavik, the Lui Haisu Arts Museum of Shanghai, and Galeria Klimy in Warsaw. May has undertaken artist residencies at Prairie North (Grand Prairie, Alberta 2004), the Brazier's International Artists Residency (Oxfordshire, England 2001), and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program (Woodside, California 2010). Commissions have included a four-part sculpture with an associated print portfolio for the 2012 Honens International Piano Competition and a 19 foot-high bronze sculpture for Le Germaine Hotel, Calgary (2017). Walter May's work is represented in public and corporate collections including the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Nickle Galleries at the University of Calgary, Art Gallery of Alberta, Canada Council Art Bank, Glenbow Museum, University of Lethbridge, University of Regina, Honens, and several others. From 1982 to 2013, Walter May was a faculty member at the Alberta College of Art + Design, teaching primarily in the sculpture program. He served three terms as President of ACAD Faculty Association and was the faculty representative to the Alberta College of Art + Design Board of Governors from 1991 through 1993.

WALTER MAY CURRICULUM VITAE

Born in Edmonton, Alberta. Currently resides in Calgary, Alberta.

EDUCATION

Master of Fine Arts, University of Regina, 1977 (Major in sculpture, Minor in drawing)

Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Alberta, 1971

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Canada Council Art Bank, Alberta Culture Jubilee Auditorium Collection, Alberta College of Art + Design, Glenbow Museum, Nickle Galleries, Pan-Canadian Petroleum Collection, Provincial Museum Collection, Toronto Dominion Bank Collection, University of Regina, University of Lethbridge, Trans-Utilities, Grant McEwen Community College, Edmonton Art Gallery, City of Calgary Civic Collection, Le Germaine, Calgary

RESIDENCIES

ACAD Summer Residency, Alberta College of Art + Design (2017); Djerassi Artists Resident Program, SMIP Ranch Woodland California (2010); Chateau Mâthieu Residency Project, Mâthieu, Normandy, France (2009); Prairie North Residency, Guest Artist, Grand Prairie, Alberta (2004); Brazier's International Artists Workshop, Oxfordshire, England (2001)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (* indicates catalogue)

- 2016 * *Walter May: Object Lessons*, Glenbow Museum
- 2015 *One Thing After Another*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2012 *Collected*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2008 *Walter May: Our Nature*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2002 * *Flammable Inflammable*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 1997 *The Museum of Fuel*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 1994 *Our Nature*, Neutral Ground, Regina
Another Network, A.K.A. Artists' Centre, Saskatoon
- 1991 *Furthermore*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- 1990 * *Low Table – High Chairs*, Mercer Union, Toronto
- 1990 * *Walter May*, Edmonton Art Gallery
- 1989 *Walter May : Sculpture*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- 1986 *Walter May : Recent Sculpture*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- 1985 * *Walter May : Recent Sculpture*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge
- 1984 *Walter May : New Sculpture*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- 1982 *Looks Like Real, Feels Like Real*, Optica, Montreal
- 1977 *Walter May, M.F.A. Exhibition*, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina
- 1975 *Walter May, Sculpture*, Alberta College of Art Gallery

- 1987 * *Gang of Three* (Gordon Ferguson, Blake Senini) Plug in Gallery & Ace Gallery, Winnipeg
- 1984 *In Triplicate* (Alan Dunning, Blake Senini) 53 Gallery, Manulife Place, Edmonton
- 1979 *Walter May & Don McVeigh*, Clouds and Water Gallery, Calgary
- Two* (Carroll Moppett), Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff
- 1974 *Statues and Pictures* (Don McVeigh) Latitude 53, Edmonton

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2016 *Five Artists*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2015 *Exposure x 5: Photography*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2014 *Made in Calgary: The 2000s*, Nickle Galleries
Made in Calgary: The 90s, Glenbow Museum and the Art Gallery of Calgary
90x90 Celebrating Art in Alberta: Part One, Art Gallery of Alberta
Folly: Château Mathieu, Nickle Galleries
- 2013 *Made in Calgary: The 80s*, Glenbow Museum
Idea > Object: Conceptual Prints from the U. of L. Art Collection, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery
Made in Calgary: The 70s, Glenbow Museum
Made in Alberta, Part 4, Art Gallery of Calgary
Made in Alberta, Part 2, Paul Kuhn Gallery
Colour Aside, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 2012 *Folly: Château Mathieu*, Esplanade Art Gallery, Medicine Hat
We Tell Ourselves Stories, Nickle Galleries
- 2010 *TimeLand – The 2010 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Art Gallery of Alberta
Take a Seat, The Jensonian Gallery, High River

TWO & THREE PERSON EXHIBITIONS/PROJECTS

- 2005 * *There and Gone*, Warsaw (Laura Vickerson, Peter Von Tiesenhausen), Galeria Klimy, Warsaw, Poland (June)
* *There and Gone*, Calgary, The Nickle Arts Museum (September)
- 1998 *Distant* (Blake Senini) Artweek, Calgary
- 1994 *Squint* (Gordon Ferguson, Laura Vickerson), Artweek, Calgary
- 1989 * *Cutting down on Overhead – Media Blitz 2*, (performance, Gordon Ferguson, Blake Senini) The New Gallery, Calgary

- 2009 *Five Photographers – Edward Burtynsky, Christian Grandjean, Todd Korol, Paul Jackson and Walter May*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
Sleepless Nights, Kling & Bang Gallery, Reykjavik, Iceland
Seven Contemporary Canadian Sculptors from Calgary, Triangle Gallery, Calgary
Tenuous Balance, Our Environment, Exposure Calgary Banff Photography Festival 2009, Gerry Thomas Gallery
- 2008 * *Seven Contemporary Canadian Sculptors from Calgary*, Liu Haisu Arts Museum, Shanghai
The Academy Show 2008, Illingworth Kerr Gallery
- 2006 *Black & White*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
New Acquisitions, Art Gallery of Alberta
- 2005 *Round Table*, Prairie North 2004 Creative Residency Art Gallery travelling exhibition, various venues
Form-Space-Concept-Metaphor, Contemporary Alberta Sculpture, Triangle Gallery
Leave it to Drever, Douglas Udell Gallery
Alberta Artists Seen, National Arts Centre, Mezzanine, Ottawa
- 2004 *Making it like a Man*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina
10X10X10X10, Triangle Gallery
Group Exhibition: Summer 2004, Paul Kuhn Gallery
New Acquisitions, Edmonton Art Gallery
Matchmaker (with Gordon Ferguson), The New Gallery
- 2002 *The Beastiary*, Stride Gallery
- 2001 *Idols and Icons*, The New Gallery
Braziers International Artists Workshop Exhibition, Braziers Park, Oxfordshire, England.
Burn Graceland Burn, Art Gallery of Calgary
Money, performance as part of *Burn Graceland Burn*, Art Gallery of Calgary
Plant Life, Paul Kuhn Gallery
Silver, Illingworth Kerr Gallery, ACAD
Then and Now, Paul Kuhn Gallery
Presence, The Works Visual Arts Festival
- 1999 *Exquisite Corpse* (with Blake Senini, Gordon Ferguson), Stride Gallery
- 1998 * *The Alberta Biennial*, Glenbow Museum and Edmonton Art Gallery
Looks Like..., Edmonton Art Gallery
- 1997 *A Duchampian Look at the Glenbow Collection*, Glenbow Museum
- 1996 *Still Life, a Contemporary View*, Paul Kuhn Gallery
- 1995 *Ark*, Illingworth Kerr Gallery
Basic Tools, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax
- 1994 *Looking Back II: 1981-85*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge
- 1993 *Ten*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
Hockey 100, Truck, Calgary
- 1992 *Alberta Survey, New Landscapes*, Edmonton Art Gallery
- 1990 *Spun Out*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
Sculpture '90: Four Alberta Sculptors, Triangle Gallery
Within Range, travelling exhibition circulated by the Pritchard Art Gallery, University of Idaho
- 1989 *Cutting Down on Overhead*, performance for *Media Blitz*, New Gallery
Bridge, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery
- 1988 * *Contemporary '88*, Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- 1987 *Wall Space*, Glenbow Museum
* *Drawing Out the Form*, The Nickle Arts Museum, University of Calgary
* *Dreaming Before Nature*, Edmonton Art Gallery
The Exchange Show, Off Centre Centre and Centro Lavoro Arte, Milano.
- 1985 * *The First Ten: 1975 – 1985*, Off Centre Centre
Five + Five, Off Centre Centre
* *Alumni MFA Exhibition*, University of Regina Tenth Anniversary Exhibition, Mackenzie Art Gallery
- 1983 *The Un-college Exhibition*, James Ulrich Gallery
Studio Survey: Sculpture, Latitude 53 Gallery
* *Locations National*, outdoor sculpture installation organized by Off Centre Centre in conjunction with ANNPAC
- 1981 *Some Calgary Artists*, Latitude 53 Gallery
* *Furniture as Art*, Alberta College of Art Gallery
- 1980 * *Monuments*, Off Centre Centre
* *Some Drawings by Some Albertans*, Alberta College of Art Gallery
- 1979 *Mostly Smaller Works*, Clouds & Water Gallery
* *Alberta Works in Wood*, Alberta College of Art Gallery
Summer in the City, Clouds & Water Gallery
- 1978 *Paper Tigers*, travelling exhibition circulated by the Dunlop Gallery, Regina
* *Obsessions, Rituals and Controls*, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina
Mostly Smaller Works, Clouds & Water Gallery
- 1977 *Group Exhibition*, Bau-xi Gallery, Toronto
Albertaworks, Alberta College of Art and the University of Calgary Gallery
* *Sculpture on the Prairies*, Winnipeg Art Gallery
Self Portraits, Dandelion Art Gallery
- 1976 *Paper Works*, artist organized touring exhibition, various venues
* *Forum '76*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal
- 1975 *Four Man Art*, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery
Alberta Art, Canadian Consul, Atlanta, Georgia
- 1974 *Manisphere*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
Selections from Manisphere, ACA Gallery
9 out of 10, Hamilton Art Gallery (touring)
14th Annual Calgary Graphics, ACA Gallery
- 1972 *Survey of Canadian Art Now*, Vancouver Art Gallery
- 1971 *11th Annual Calgary Graphics*, ACA Gallery

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- Tousley, Nancy. *Walter May: Object Lessons (One New Work)*, (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 2016).
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- Beatty, Greg. "Making it Like a Man," *Artichoke* (Volume 16, No 3, 2004).
- Laviolette, Mary-Beth. "Finding new meaning in found hardware," *Calgary Herald* (2 November 2002, ES8).
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- Garneau, David. "A Chair is a Chair is a Sculpture," *FFWD* (2-8 October 1997, 20).
- Dawn, Leslie. "Squint: Laura Vickerson, Gordon Ferguson, Walter May," *Artichoke* (Fall/Winter 1994, Volume 6 No 3, 66-69).
- Gogarty, Amy. "Clay Alternatives," *Contact* (Spring 1993, No 92, 29-31).
- Jodoin, Andre. "Walter May," *Espace* (Winter 1990, Volume 6 No 2, 46-47).
- Laviolette, Mary-Beth. "From Line to Form," *Artichoke* (Fall 1989, Volume 1 No 1, 18-19).
- Tousley, Nancy. "Artists Work Shares Propensity for Drawing," *Calgary Herald* (5 March 1987, C2).
- Butler, Sheila. "Gang of Three," *Vanguard* (September/October 1987, 33-34).
- O'Neill, Colleen. "Wall Space," *Vanguard* (November 1987, 35).
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- Laviolette, Mary-Beth. "Walter May, Paul Kuhn," *Vanguard* (November 1984, 35).
- Townsend Gault, Charlotte. "Locations National," *Vanguard* (February 1984, 23-24).
- Tousley, Nancy. "Artworks Link Cities," *Calgary Herald* (29 September 1983).
- "Locations National," *Parallelogram* (December 1983).
- Tousley, Nancy. "Calgary Artists: Three Approaches to Drawing Problems," *Calgary Herald* (28 May 1981).
- Tousley, Nancy. "Alberta Works in Wood," *Calgary Herald* (22 February 1979, A20).
- Cochrane, Bente Roed. "Artists Explore Paper Adventure," *Edmonton Journal* (January 1978).
- Dorsey, Candace Jane. "In Search of Avarice," *Interface* (January 1978, 39).

WEBSITES

- www.waltermayart.com
- Centre for Canadian Contemporary Art, www.ccca.ca
- Paul Kuhn Gallery, <http://www.paulkuhngallery.com/artists/walter-may>

WORKS IN EXHIBITION

all works courtesy of the artist unless noted otherwise
measurements in centimeters, height x width x depth

Gold Black Magic, 1976

33 x 363 x 38

A warped 2x4 is connected to a twisted 2x12 and coloured with black stain, pearlescent gold lacquer and red over black crackle finish paint.

Enchanté Angle, 1976

57 x 39.5 x 5.5

A pencil drawing of a cigar decorated with a feather and yellow cord.

Blue Torpedo, 1976

57.5 x 40.5 x 5.5

A pencil drawing of a cigar decorated with printed cloth and twine.

Rounded Flat Rocks, 1977

51 x 65.5 x 4

A pencil drawing of flat rocks with rocks.

Bearclaws, 1978

23 x 12.75 x 4

A pencil drawing of a bear claw with the claw.

Squirrel Tails, 1978

39.5 x 12.75 x 5.2

A framed pencil drawing of a squirrel tail with the tail.

Border Crossing, 1978

48.5 x 66 x 4

A pencil drawing of small black stones with small black stones.

Pine, 1978

76.8 x 57.2 x 6.4

A pencil drawing of small branches with branches.

Bi-Focal, 1978

57 x 93 x 7

A mirror image pencil drawing of sticks and string with the original model.

Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Sinuous Curve and Golden Rectangle, 1978

57 x 79 x 5.5

Pencil drawing of bamboo stick with bamboo, elastic band and thread construction.

Untitled (Feathers), 1979

65.5 x 81 x 4

A framed pencil drawing with a construction made from feathers and bamboo that is attached to the frame.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Untitled (Snake), 1979

65.5 x 81 x 7

A pencil drawing and a construction made from bamboo, feathers, a rubber snake and cord attached to the frame.

Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Lookout, 1984

287 x 101.5 x 292

A stained veneer hoop, painted conduit and a small branch are attached to a warped 4x4 beam. This is in turn connected to the wall by additional conduit ending in a black rubber hose.

Outlook (aka Arcade), 1987/1997/2017

434.5 x 66 x 106.5

A wire brushed stainless steel chair is propped against a wall and supported by copper pipe, a burnt wooden handle and a small pile of cement. Outlook was originally constructed in 1987 as part of an installation entitled Arcade (modified in 1997 and again in 2017).

Iron Hand, 1989

8.5 x 210 x 288

Three steel rods with circular ends are threaded into a heavy steel push rod. Five round rocks are placed under circular openings in the sculpture.

Collection of the Nickle Galleries

Low Table High Chairs, 1990/1991/2017

table 57 x 126 x 137, configuration of chairs variable

A low steel table is surrounded by a collection of metal stools that support metal objects.

High Chairs from the collections of:

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Wayne Giles

Marcia and Blake Senini

Deborah Herringer Kiss

Dorothy Dyker Johnstone

Walter May

Low Table collection of the artist

Powerboxes (Knob, Light, Alarm), 1993

38 x 23.5 x 24.2; 39 x 22.3 x 34.3; 38.5 x 22.3 x 23
Galvanized metal electric boxes originally designed to contain switches, alarms or lights are filled with a mixture of dried clay and acrylic binder.
Collection of the Nickle Galleries

Blocks, 1993

71 x 89.8 x 102.4
A restored wooden chopping block is encased in a wire glass vitrine.
Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada

Artifact, 1994

71 x 89.8 x 102.4
A pebbled wire glass vitrine contains a steel framework from which an artifact is hung.
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Approaching the Tourist's Museum, 1994

137 x 66 x 246
A scale model of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, is supported by a galvanized duct with a wire mesh cylinder. Inside the cylinder is placed a sheet metal model of a human skull.
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Dam Plugs/Our Nature/Meander, 1994

approximately 626 x 395 x 35.5
A network of galvanized boxes and cable are arranged to describe a diagram on the wall.

Ascended, 1997

82.55 x 20 x 20
An aluminum office chair patterned after an oak office chair is attached to the wall. The seat and backrest are encrusted with a mixture of dried cracked clay and acrylic binder.
Collection of Anne and Hugh McKenzie

Damaged Goods, 2000

81.3 x 241 x 114.2
A cracked travertine tabletop with steel legs displays a pile of burnt claw hammers.
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Grindstone, 2002

197 x 101.5 x 66
A frosted wire glass vitrine supported by steel legs contains a pedal-powered grindstone cradled in a wood trestle. Half of the trestle has been burned, the other half has been painted with whitewash.
City of Calgary Civic Art Collection

The Incinerator, 2003

416.5 x 67 x 246
A circular stack of firewood supports a galvanized metal duct, which in turn supports a scale model of an early twentieth century incinerator building with an enlarged smokestack. A small non-functional object is visible within the model of the building.
Collection of the Nickle Galleries

Yellow Fish, 2008/2009

69.2 x 231.75 x 3.17
A large framed inkjet print of a dried fish with dried fish in a test tube hung adjacent to the frame.
Collection of Andrew Brooks

Brown Fish, 2008/2009

64 x 195 x 3.17
A large framed inkjet print of a dried fish with dried fish in a test tube hung adjacent to the frame.

Gold Grey Fish / Fossil Fish, 2008/2009

68.5 x 196 x 3.5 / 69 x 196 x 3.5
A high-resolution scan of a fossil of a small fish and a small dried fish are presented as large inkjet prints on archival paper. The original fossil and the dried fish are displayed with the framed prints.
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Puff, 2009

13 x 7.5 x 15.5
A wooden pipe attached to the wall emits a small burl.
Collection of Ron Moppet and Katherine Ylitalo

Pin Pine, 2009

595.36 x 38 diameter (not including adjustable float)
Wood tool handles are inserted into the trunk of a jack pine wherever there was a knot. The tree is hoisted at an angle by a steel cable, passed over a support and attached to a plastic float filled with buckshot, thus converting the float into an anchor.
Collection of the Nickle Galleries

Plugged, 2010

472.44 x 38 x 45.72
A pine tree (trunk and roots) that has been washed by the river is adorned with wood buttons and handles. The tree is hung from the ceiling by a short length of chain.

Slicker, 2010

36 x 363.2 x 139
A fir beam raised on two small burnt cedar blocks is partially covered by a rubberized rain coat. A burnt arbutus branch is laid on top of the beam.

Trailer, 2011

89 x 343 x 86.5

A steel pressure tank stabilized by small wooden wedges is attached to a burnt poplar branch.

Looped, 2011

67.3 x 183 x 71

A large walnut burl is placed on two lengths of burnt bentwood.

Chairlift, 2012

306 high (other dimensions variable)

Two bentwood chairs are attached to steel pipes which are supported by separate cast iron bases.

Plume, 2012

128 x 66 x 56

Rawhide goatskin is stretched over a section of tree trunk which is attached to a galvanized sheet metal stovepipe containing a piece of burnt driftwood.

On the Nickel, 2013

343 wide (dimensions of individual components vary)

Nickle and chrome plated objects are partially dipped in tar and suspended from bead chain.

Level Best – Hobble, 2013

68.5 x 45.5

Portions of two tree trunks connected by a steel cable are separated by a split wooden bowl.

Bottoms Up Black Sheep, 2013

148 x 106.5 x 109

A section of tree trunk is adorned with several small objects including part of a burnt bentwood chair. Attached to the top surface of the trunk is an arrangement of painted metal table legs. The construction is placed on a black sheepskin.

Hooped, 2015

83.2 x 76.2 x 61

A burnt bentwood chair frame is held in a metal windsock hoop.

Good Wood Bad Wood and a Cane, 2015

104 x 255.3 x 40

The trunk of a poplar tree with a partially hollowed burnt interior is pinned to a fir beam with a burnt wood cane.

Plank, 2015/2016

266.7 x 41.3 x 40.6

A used plank has been partially burnt and adorned with several wood bars and handles. Attached to one side of the plank is a handrail made from galvanized pipe.

Beam Bowl Burl, 2015

106.5 x 55.8 x 66

Across the top of a reclaimed wood post are laid two burnt canes that support a burl and a small burnt bowl.

Dry as a Bone, 2015

133.5 x 66 x 40.5

Atop a heavy cast iron pedestal is a stack of objects including a bent branch, chipped enameled saucepan and a bunch of burnt wooden grapes.

Blue Moon Underbrush, 2015

Blue Moon: 89.5 x 96.5 x 66

Underbrush: 89.5 x 52 x 6

A pair of bentwood chairs sit atop tree fragments.

Return to Totem with Duct, 2016

200 x 380 x 74

A warped 2 x 4 is bolted to the wall with galvanized iron pipe flanges. Above the 2 x 4 hangs a handmade galvanized extraction duct plugged by a burnt mallet at one end and a burnt bowl at the other.

Still Life with Canes, 2016

198 x 244 x 76.2

The remains of a heavily pruned tree is pinned to a perforated metal table by 12 walking canes. The table surface is covered in plaster and latex paint. All of the canes but one have been burnt.

Dogleg Saucepan, 2016

81.5 x 35.5 x 16.5

A stack of objects including a bunch of burnt wood grapes, a chipped enamel saucepan and a bent branch sits atop a heavy cast iron flange.

Breach, 2017

76 x 243 x 59.5

Stone slabs with concrete, wood, implement and hardware (2 parts).

Torch, 2017

58.5 x 24 diameter

Blowtorch and part of a wood cane in glass dome with wood base.

Twine, 2017

75 x 27 diameter

Baling twine, and part of a wood cane in glass dome with wood base and cap.

Spout, 2017

34 x 21.5 diameter

Wood and broken spout from teapot on wood stand.

Pipe, 2017

56 x 28 diameter

Wood and pipe in glass dome with wood base.

Campsite Photographs

18 campsite photographs, each 42 x 34

This ongoing series of campsite and fire pit photographs has been gathered over the last seventeen years during excursions to natural and wilderness areas located primarily in Alberta and British Columbia. The photos were taken using various digital cameras, have been printed in several sizes and are usually exhibited in blocks or groups, or as part of installations that include other objects.

Each photo is signed, dated and titled with reference to a location on the back of the image.

Small Fireplaces (shelved)

each 15 x 20

A series of black and white photos of fire pits mounted on shelves. Each photo is signed, dated and titled on the back of the image.

Duets

All images are printed in 2017 on Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper, each 40.6 x 50.8

A block of photographs featuring incongruous, portentous, futile or unusual situations. Examples of recurring imagery includes falling or fallen objects, black animals, accidental drawings, containers for fuel or fire, the effects of fire and water on the environment, etc.

Highwood Logs Oldman Bonzai; Haystack Night Pool; Tree Fall Burner Door; After Burn Rising Water; Electrical with Cows; Bird Bath Puddle; Black Plume White Plume; Pigeon Wire Waxwing Crash; Waterton Tanks; Woodpile; Cold Refinery Campfire; Brazier's Staircase/Group Portrait; Prairie Deadfall Kilarney Pruning; Crows Tank; Tree Fence Windows Fence; Steeple Dog; Yellow Tank Demolition; Frost Constellation; Bird Tracks Hose Track; Feathers Chair; Carcass Crumble



Walter May, 2018 (image courtesy of Christine Sowiak)

Nickle Galleries
Libraries and Cultural Resources
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WALTER MAY: LOOK AGAIN

1 February – 28 April 2018

Curated by Christine Sowiak

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Vice Provost Libraries and Cultural Resources
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Kanashiro, Ability Technical Services

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LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION:

Alberta Foundation for the Arts
City of Calgary Civic Art Collection
Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque
d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des arts du Canada
Ann and Hugh McKenzie
Wayne Giles
Marica and Blake Senini
Deborah Herring Kiss
Dorothy Dyker Johnstone
Ron Moppett and Katherine Ylitalo
Andrew Brooks

CATALOGUE CONTRIBUTORS:

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Richard Clements
Gordon Ferguson
David Garneau
Mary-Beth Laviolette
Ron Moppett
Diana Sherlock
Nancy Tousley
Katherine Ylitalo



Nickle Galleries
University of Calgary 2018