

SEASON TWO

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

University of Waterloo Art Gallery
East Campus Hall 1239

Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday 12:00–5:00 pm

Driving:

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With Crystal Column and Clear Shrines of Pearl

With Crystal Column and Clear Shrines of Pearl is a continuation of themes that Lauren Hall has been exploring in her sculpture over the last few years. Marked by her use of common materials ranging from silver bubble wrap to pink and blue polystyrene, her forms have tended to evoke the arctic landscape—glacial forms rendered using protective insulating materials. More recently, her work has expanded to incorporate tropical climates, by making use of sand, glycerin and repurposed parabolic louvres.

These unlikely choices are linked to Hall’s interest in extremes. While her use of ordinary materials to activate space suggests a predilection towards minimalism, this runs counter to her affection for idiosyncratic landscapes. Furthermore, her poetic titles suggest an affinity for the Romantic tradition. The title of her current installation is appropriated from the writings of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)—specifically the poem *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude*, first published in 1816. Shelley not only lived the epitome of the Romantic lifestyle but his writings were dense with lyrical allusions aligning the Poet’s body and blood with that of the transcendent landscapes that he experienced in his travels.

With Crystal Column and Clear Shrines of Pearl transforms the gallery space into a cave-like setting evocative of the Shell Grotto in Kent, the Reed Flute Cave in China, or most intriguingly the Galos Cave in Chicago, a franchised “salt cave” located in a strip mall which the artist recently visited.¹ Stalactites and stalagmites are a recurring form in Hall’s work. Cleverly using polystyrene and cellophane to suggest these natural mineral accretions, the installation also incorporates coloured sand, salt pellets and scented glycerin scattered across the floor. Hall’s intent is to mimic a cave covered in crystalline surfaces, to create a space that is both removed from the everyday and yet simultaneously soothing and welcoming. A pseudo-shrine that echoes the bifurcated status of modern caves and grottoes; places of mystery and ritual that have degraded into gaudy attractions, uncomfortably trapped between the metaphor of Plato’s cave and Superman’s fictional Fortress of Solitude.

Influenced by her own travels from Alaska to Florida, Hall’s installations are by no means an attempt to recreate the Romantic sublime. The reference to Shelley is used to induce introspection and invite viewers to consider the work beyond its purely material properties. Her make-believe cave evokes the way in which we now experience the sublime: as a tourist destination. Suggesting both the simulated quality of packaged holiday tours and the manufactured kitsch of retail environments, Hall’s installation illustrates our increasing disconnect from the natural world.

— Ivan Jurakic

1. http://galoscaves.com/_en/index.php.

Artist Biography

Lauren Hall received her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, and is the recipient of grants from the Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council. Reviews of her work have appeared in Canadian Art Online, The Toronto Star, C Magazine and The Globe & Mail. The artist lives in Toronto. Lauren Hall is represented by Peak Gallery, Toronto.
www.lauren-hall.com

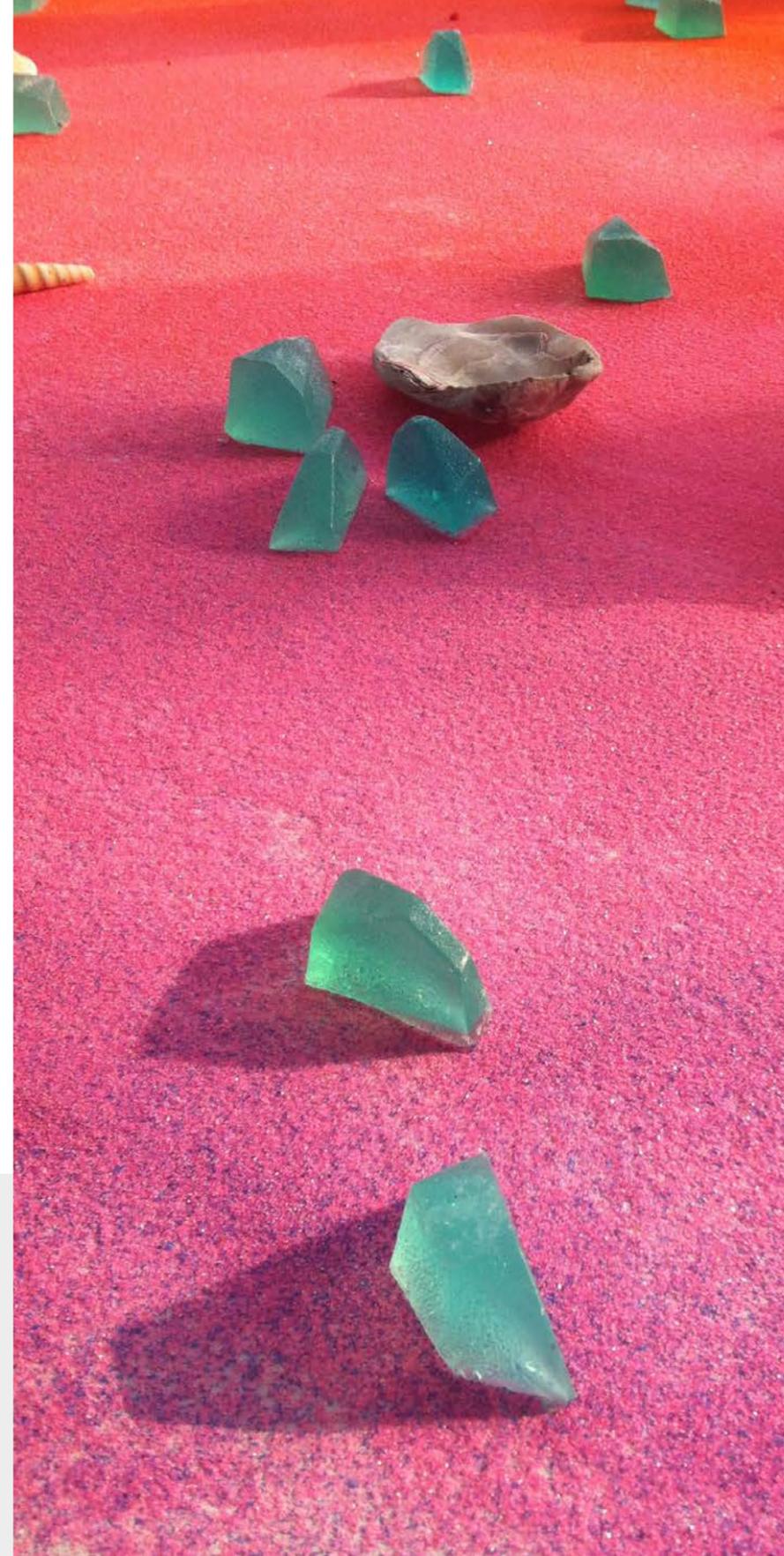
List of Works

With Crystal Column and Clear Shrines of Pearl, 2011
Polystyrene, cellophane, sand, salt, soap, shells
Dimensions variable



The artist wishes to acknowledge the support of the Toronto Arts Council.

Image (Right): *Clear Shrines of Pearl* (detail), 2010.



January 12–March 3, 2012

Gallery One

Steven Laurie, Zeke Moores

Brandon Vickerd

Clutch

Gallery Two

Lauren Hall

With Crystal Column and
Clear Shrines of Pearl



Clutch

Clutch is both a noun and verb. It is the mechanism used to engage and transmit power from a motor to a driveshaft. Alternately, it also refers to a sudden reflexive grasp or a narrow escape from a critical situation. These definitions persuasively articulate the material and thematic concerns found in the sculptural works of Steven Laurie, Brandon Vickard and Zeke Moores. Combining the allure of Princess Auto, NASCAR racing and Survival Research Laboratories, *Clutch* suggests the creative union of custom fabrication, moto-culture and DIY aesthetics.

Steven Laurie's *Donut Machine* is a custom-made motorized sculpture that celebrates the sound and fury of street racing. The machine is a hand-operated contraption that looks like a souped-up rototiller but sports a fat rubber tire powered by a 10 horsepower engine. Despite its absurdity, Laurie has laboured to get the details right: from the stainless steel exhaust to a custom chain guard and a single fender painted Chevy engine block orange. Witnessing the artist wearing his signature T-shirt and ball cap wrestling with the device in the parking lot of a gallery is an integral part of experiencing the work. When revving the engine, the *Donut Machine* roars loudly while belching clouds of blue-grey smoke as the artist burns a circle of thick black rubber into the pavement. The heroic bravado of Laurie's work is self-consciously undercut by the futility of the gesture and the ungainly effort involved in achieving it.¹

Brandon Vickard's work straddles the line between high and low culture.

Chopper #1 and #2 are made using state-of-the-art fabrication technologies. Vickard strips the iconic forms of classic 1960s custom choppers down to their bare essentials: chassis, tailpipes, fenders and gas tank. He reconfigures these remnants, remounts

and translates the individual components into lithe abstract sculptural forms. Vickard appreciates the motorcycle as a quintessential 20th century form and subsequently rebuilds it using the lens of modernist abstraction as a historical guide to arrive at hybrid forms that are equal parts Constantin Brancusi and *Easy Rider*. Painted safety yellow, matte black, and pearlescent white with gold chrome details, these unexpectedly refined forms suggest both sensuality and speed. *Chopper #1* and #2 inhabit an intermediate state between design and dysfunction.

Zeke Moores makes remarkable facsimiles of everyday objects ranging from dumpsters to portable toilets to beer cases. Proficient in all areas of metal fabrication his preferred method of working is usually casting in bronze or aluminum. His steel *SUV&* is a life-size replica of a Lincoln Navigator and the attention to detail is spot on from the license plate down to the tire treads. At first glance the vehicle appears to be a solid mass but as one approaches, the body is revealed to be an armature supported façade. The unpainted steel lends the work a sinister appearance. It is an impressive replica that is evocative because of the familiarity of its underlying symbolism. SUVs are routinely equated with the proliferation of urban sprawl and our dependence upon fossil fuels. Moores' hollowed out *SUV&* is a haunting emblem that echoes the emptiness underlying indiscriminate consumerism.

While these sculptures are certainly terrific to look at they also insinuate a collision of interests. As our society prospers we have become disconnected from the ability to make things. We are increasingly dislocated from the real costs of labour and production while simultaneously benefiting from the proliferation of inexpensive consumer goods. The objects that Moores, Vickard and Laurie make connect to these timely socio-economic

concerns in the same way that *The Toaster Project* does—an effort by a post-graduate design student at the Royal College of Art in London to build a toaster from scratch. The result was a rather crude “toaster” of sorts that cost over £1,100 to make, rather than £3.49 to purchase cheaply at a store.² The project revealed how complex even the most ubiquitous objects in our culture have become and how little we know about the processes involved in making them. As global supply chains supplant local manufacturing there's something critical to be gleaned from people who actually know how to make things.

Laurie, Vickard and Moores make physically demanding, technically challenging sculptures that riff on blue-collar subject matter, but they're not just culture jamming. They wear their working class roots on their collective sleeves. They're into motorcycles and barter with fellow enthusiasts for custom parts and services. They take pride in the fabrication and assembly of their work. They like making stuff. The end results may be ironic, but they are neither detached nor condescending. They're not laughing at people, they're laughing *with* them. Their works can't help but provoke familiarity and affection even as they mirror the paradox of a consumer culture running on empty.

— Ivan Jurakic

1. This description is largely excerpted from an as yet unpublished essay about Steven Laurie's work that will appear in a publication coinciding with a future solo exhibition of the artist's work at Hamilton Artists Inc.
2. Thomas Thwaites, *The Toaster Project: Or A Heroic Attempt To Build A Simple Electric Appliance From Scratch*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2011. <http://www.thetoasterproject.org>.



Artist Biographies

Steven Laurie completed his MFA at the University of Western Ontario and graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design with honours. He has exhibited his work in Canada and the United States, and is the recipient of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council. The artist lives and works in Toronto. www.stevenlaurie.com

Zeke Moores received his MFA from the University of Windsor and his BFA from the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally, and has received numerous grants and awards, and was shortlisted for the 2011 Sobeys Art Award. He teaches at the University of Windsor and lives in Windsor. www.zekemoores.typepad.com

Brandon Vickard received his MFA from the University of Victoria and his BFA from the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design. He has exhibited across Canada and internationally, and has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council. He is a Professor of Visual Arts at York University and lives in Toronto. Brandon Vickard is represented by Art Mûr, Montréal. www.brandonvickard.com

List of Works

Steven Laurie
Donut Machine, 2008–09
Mixed media: steel, engine, tire, fender, etc
183 x 81 x 81 cm

Handheld Rubber Burner, 2005
Mixed media: steel, engine, small tire, exhaust tip, etc
76 x 41 x 51 cm

Wild Thing: Handheld Revvers, 2005
Mixed media: Poulan chainsaw engine and exhaust tip
61 x 28 x 28 cm

Mud Flap Project, 2008–09
Rubber, steel
51 x 61 cm each

Zeke Moores
SUV&, 2008
Steel
549 x 213 x 183 cm

Beer Boxes, 2011
Bronze
Dimensions variable

Brandon Vickard
Chopper #1, 2011
Steel, styrofoam, automotive paint
244 x 208 x 71 cm

Chopper #2, 2011
Steel, styrofoam, automotive paint
132 x 158 x 91 cm

All images courtesy of the artists unless otherwise noted.



Images (Interior left to right): Brandon Vickard, *Chopper #1*, detail, 2011; Zeke Moores, *SUV&*, 2008, Photo by Lucy Howe; Steven Laurie, *Donut Machine*, 2008–09. (Cover) Brandon Vickard, *Chopper #1*, 2011.