Artist Biography

Barbara Hobot holds an MFA from Western University and a BA in Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo. She has exhibited her work internationally and participated in artist residencies in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Upcoming projects include group exhibitions at Idea Exchange, Cambridge, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, and a solo exhibition at Olga Korper Gallery in December of 2016. She is the recipient of several grants from the Ontario Arts Council. The artist lives and works in Kitchener. Barbara Hobot is represented by Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

www.barbarahobot.com

Strong Bonds

Barbara Hobot’s multidisciplinary subjects are found, traced, manipulated, and translated from one medium to another. A drawing might be the basis for a digital collage that becomes a sculpture. By linking spatial and material cues from one work and introducing them to another form or material, her process seeks underlying unity. Each gesture is determined as much by chance as it is by the artist’s speculation about the desires of the inanimate objects she works with. Hobot’s aim is to create a circumstance in which her artworks appear self-generating.

Gaps Full of Potential #3 and #5 are part of an ongoing series that ably illustrates this process. Combining hand-cut tarpaulin, felt, rubber screen, and clay respectively, shapes and materials are overlaid and suspended from the wall. The ‘gaps full of potential’ referred to in the title are the empty or negative spaces between things. Hobot is particularly inspired by chain link fencing and netting, commonly mass-produced materials that are typically used as a means of restraint but allow for the passage of light and air, as well as particulate matter and fluids. Exploring the improvisational possibilities of these gaps or spaces in between holds deep appeal for Hobot.

Although conceived in the studio, the artist’s hand is never obvious in the making of forms such as Blue Double Buck, a relief of finely hanging weathered twine, or a pair of untitled works featuring unified white clay on a custom drying rack, and a digital print on vinyl with louvers slit through its surface. Each is determined, or rather intuited, by a process of accumulation and reduction. Hobot’s process discursively echoes Richard Serra’s Verb List Compilation: Actions to Relate to Oneself (1967–68), and makes use of many of the same actions: to bend, crumple, bundle, arrange, weave, cross, cut, fold, droop, twist, twist, twist, gather, droop, knot, curve, bend, laminate1. As a collective entity, her compositions share an anxious, precariously balanced quality.

Strong bonds evoke intimacy, family and fraternity, but in chemistry the term refers to a covalent or ionic bond. A covalent bond involves the sharing of electron pairs in a stable balance of attractive and repulsive forces between atoms.2 Hobot’s formative process seeks a similar outcome: an elemental union between disparate materials.

— Ivan Jurakic

List of Work

Blue Double Buck, 2015
Acrylic on sliced faux leather vinyl
185 x 40 x 33 cm

Gaps Full of Potential #3, 2015
Air-dry clay, found metal
63 x 25 x 19 cm

Gaps Full of Potential #5, 2015
Hand-cut tarp, felt, rubber screen, found metal
188 x 165 x 28 cm

Rip-cut, 2015
Acrylic on sliced faux leather vinyl, twine spools, found wooden dowel
266 x 260 x 34 cm

Untitled, 2015
Unfired white clay on a custom drying rack
157 x 74 x 50 cm

Untitled, 2015
Digital print on vinyl collage
132 x 86 x 30 cm


Exploration is at the heart of the foundational narratives of both Canada and the United States: the action of traveling through unfamiliar areas in order to learn more about them. A benign definition of exploration has existed for over a century, with a pair of snowshoes constructed out of scavenged cat litter and a whipped walking stick caked in a newfangled mirage. Whidden faces the majestic Rocky Mountains, marking the first steps of her new persona.

The Mountain Man series also marks the first use of the mirror-as-an-emblem. Rear- and side-view mirrors are standard features on automobiles allowing drivers to safely check adjacent lanes for traffic. They function as a precautionary emblem. Rear- and side-view mirrors are standard features on automobiles allowing drivers to safely check adjacent lanes for traffic. They function as a precautionary reminder to automobile owners. Take for example the Ford Explorer, Escape, or Expedition.

2. Correspondence with the artist: December 9, 2016.

Ford EXPLORER series, (2006), involved long-distance walks exploring the urban peripheries of Amherst and Niagara Falls, NY, respectively. Using scavenged objects assembled into utilitarian objects such as a backpack or canoe, these early projects hit upon several principles at the core of Whidden's work: walking as a means of environmental distress. Scratch the surface however, and one quickly uncovers a turbulent history of the land, the catastrophe that occurred, and the pending threat of another.

Considered as a whole, Rearview holds a dystopian mirror up to the last 200 years of progress, a turbid, post-apocalyptic landscape wherein the last vestiges of remembrance and the history of the landscape become a mark of the impending apocalypse.

Head-Smashed-In-Engine-Block-Buffalo-Jump, 2009, Photo: Jessica Abraham. Anonymous Cowboy from Images of the Old West: Roadkill Redux, 2005—titled after the compulsive desire to market their vehicles. Take for example the Ford Explorer, Escape, or Expedition. Each name represents an ideal of the outdoors that has been readily exploited or supplanted. Whidden’s work clearly underscores this deception. Images of the old West, roadkill redux, features Whidden posing for souvenir cabinet cards wearing western regalia while brandishing the same ensnare mirror: a symbolic trophy 4x6 represented by steel buffalo skulls. In homage to anonymous photographers these sepia-toned images are paired with reproductions from the Glenbow Archive that depict massed piles of buffalo skulls photographed in the late 19th-early 20th century. Western expansion at the time was defined by a Manifest Destiny—that Americans in particular had the right to dominate over the land from coast-to-coast—and was further enabled by the expansion of the railways. The massed piles of buffalo skulls depicted in the archival images—a animal sacred to the Ojibwe or “Algonquin” the western plains—evokes the nearly apocalyptic scale of that slaughter. Several images from this body of work are available from the Glenbow Archives.

1. Ford Explorer series, 2009, Photo: Jessica Abraham. (interior from left to right) a. Anonymous Cowboy from Images of the Old West: Roadkill Redux, 2005—titled after the compulsive desire to market their vehicles. Take for example the Ford Explorer, Escape, or Expedition. Each name represents an ideal of the outdoors that has been readily exploited or supplanted. Whidden’s work clearly underscores this deception. Images of the old West, roadkill redux, features Whidden posing for souvenir cabinet cards wearing western regalia while brandishing the same ensnare mirror: a symbolic trophy 4x6 represented by steel buffalo skulls. In homage to anonymous photographers these sepia-toned images are paired with reproductions from the Glenbow Archive that depict massed piles of buffalo skulls photographed in the late 19th-early 20th century. Western expansion at the time was defined by a Manifest Destiny—that Americans in particular had the right to dominate over the land from coast-to-coast—and was further enabled by the expansion of the railways. The massed piles of buffalo skulls depicted in the archival images—a animal sacred to the Ojibwe or “Algonquin” the western plains—evokes the nearly apocalyptic scale of that slaughter. Several images from this body of work are available from the Glenbow Archives.