



Pale Blue Dot

Art Gallery of Regina

Griffith Baker

Gerald Beaulieu

Peter Dykhuis

Twyla Exner

David Garneau

Iris Hauser

Marsha Kennedy

Joanne Lyons

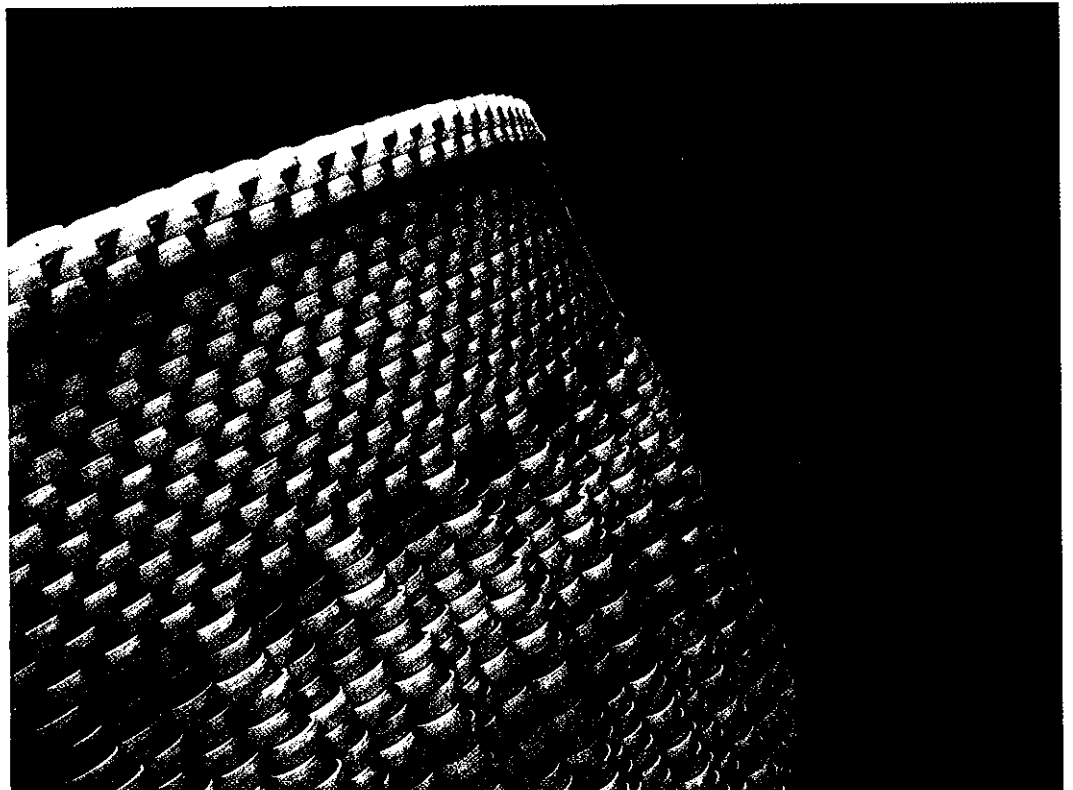
Afshin Matlabi

Joan Scaglione

Cherie Westmoreland

Satellite Bureau (Jen Hamilton, Chris St. Amand, Jen Southern)

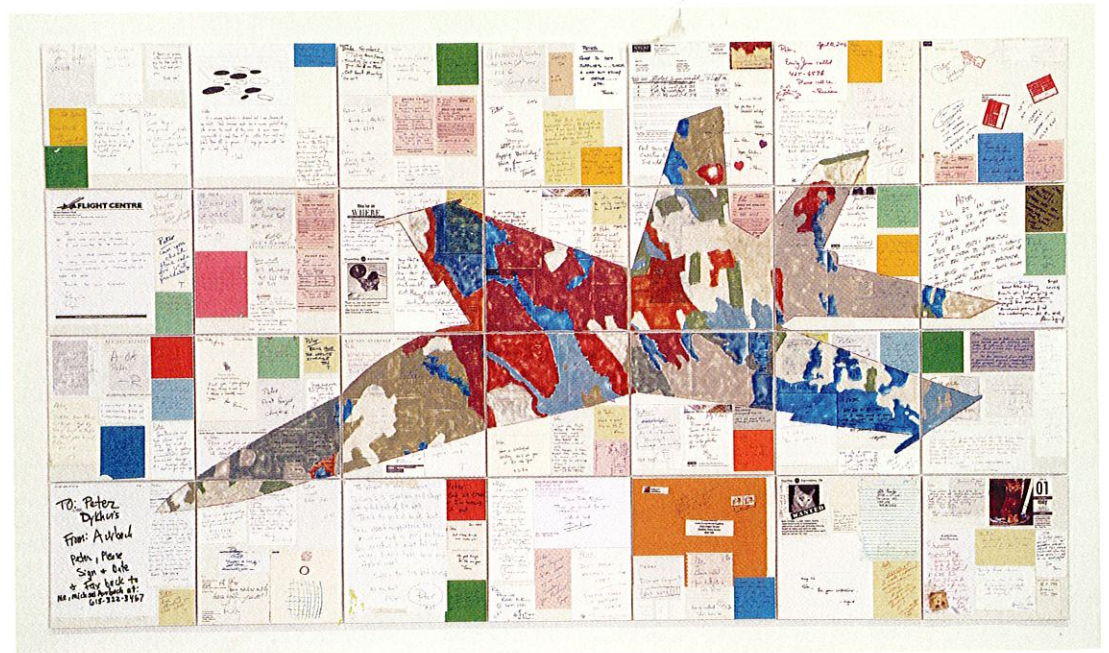
January 23 to March 4, 2008



Griffith Baker, *"Raft of the Doldrums"*, post consumed plastic, 6'x 6'x 6', 2007



Gerald Beaulieu, "Pasture," mixed media, 72"h x 96"l x 24"w, 2007



Peter Dykhuis, "Mixed Messages," encaustic on collaged paper, 4'x7'; 2006



Joan Scaglione, *"Earthdreaming"*, video still, variable dimensions, 2007



David Garneau, *"Abstracted Bird"*, oil & acrylic on canvas, 4' x 5', 2006

Pale Blue Dot

"There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we have ever known."¹

Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, 1994

It is a matter of fit. After all, we have already been placed, located by a dot - a pale blue dot - by NASA's space machine, Voyager 2, in 1990.² Stealthily taken from beyond the orbit of Neptune some 3.7 billion miles away, this highly circulated photograph visualizes for us Earth's distinguishable presence in a cosmic sense. Not only does this image exemplify our frontiersman-like drive, it incites us to respond to the urgent predicament of our ecological situation here at home. We are keenly aware of the role that humans have played in the demise of global health. For instance, rampant chemical usage, rainforest reductions and fossil fuel burning have hastily increased the greenhouse effect, putting global warming on the centre stage of most international agendas. (Incidentally, the greenhouse phenomenon was initially identified through space exploration of lifeless conditions on other planets.)³ We are all looking for answers, or even mere suggestions, as to the reversal of current debilitating processes on our planet.

If we are to improve our relationship with our earth, where do we begin? According to authors William McDonough and Michael Braungart in *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, change begins simply in recognizing our own negligence by, "doing things over and over even though we know it is dangerous, stupid and wrong."⁴ Recognizing how we created our circumstance is crucial. Like the fantastic and enlightening images from outer space, the work of the artists in the exhibition, **Pale Blue Dot**, make our condition more visibly poignant. This exhibition calls for restorative action, urging us to consider better ways to exist within our natural world.

We have become a materialistic and disposable culture, fixated on objects and mass production. Ironically, artists typically work with materials to make objects. Negotiating this contradictory position are artists, Griffith Baker and Twyla Exner (Regina/Montreal). Their work

directly employs objects we consider offensively emblematic of the technological age. Refusing to merely recycle bits of plastic, rubber and wire, Baker and Exner employ a type of "upcycling," by refashioning them into intentional ideas, cultural objects that are equal to or exceed the value of the materials' original functions.⁵

Griffith Baker's *Raft of the Doldrums* is gregariously constructed of thousands of discarded cola bottle caps. He has arranged troops of caps into one singular magnified cap raft caught in a squall; its destination is unknown. Baker recognizes the futility in the cap's path as it travels from the bottle to the landfill, into the natural environment and, inevitably, into the food chain. Ironically, existing recycling programs do not reprocess caps and there is no current method of properly managing these small bits of plastic which clearly do not fit anywhere in the biological world. Through his work Baker considers not only how and what we consume but also the destination of our consumables and their dubious misplacement in our ecology.

In her work, *Clusters* and *Outgrowth from Input*, **Twyla Exner** has wound, woven and obsessively reconfigured electrical wires and extension cords into life-like fecund masses. Her work suggests that the current rate of technological growth is phenomenally relentless and, in a fantastic scenario, is capable of spawning mutant living forms that thrive in our spaces. Exner toggles between the two prevalent driving forces - the technological and the biological - and questions whether the two are mutually exclusive. Through this disparate balance, these objects speak a highly poetic language, urging us to reconsider our communication networks as well as our inter-relationships with the bio-based world.

The agricultural industry is at the forefront of the work of artist **Gerald Beaulieu** (Montague, PEI). His work, *Pasture*, reincarnates packaged cereals like puffed wheat and cornflakes, food that is considered nutritionally and emotionally rich, into immaculate wheat specimens. He critiques the overtly sterile and autonomous engineering involved in the production of what we would otherwise consider to be simple food. Beaulieu's beautifully contrived "laboratory" presents us with a suggestion: perhaps we need to produce our food with more sensitivity to local production and natural metabolisms in order to create sincere relationships with the food we eat. If other design and production models could follow suit, our communities may come to fit their places more profoundly.⁶

Monoculture can be loosely defined as a state in which diverse cultural ideals are pared down to a select few determined globally by the sweeping force of an industrialized nation. Suspect in the trend towards monoculture is the insidious beauty industry. **Joanne Lyons** (Saskatoon) comments on the trivial emphasis we place on fashion, style and romanticized environments. *Villa by the Sea* and *Mountain Stream* are digitally rendered images of rather unfashionably poised mannequins that have been gracelessly cut and pasted into idyllic, kitsch landscapes. Her "beauties" are pathetically shallow, rendering them vulnerable and worthy of our sympathy. Lyons effectively creates a palpable awkwardness between the figures and their diminutive environs, speaking to our alienation within our natural and constructed environments.

Further exploring our association with paradise is artist **Afshin Matlabi** (Montreal). The digital print, *Cuba II: The Fatman*, depicts four men, clones of each other, wading into a perfectly clear sea, but in an apparent state of shame. Is this evidence of an awareness of the costs associated with a life of luxury and privilege?

One of the most outrageous indicators of our human dominance over other creatures can be seen roadside. Scouring the land on a massive level, roads make incredibly successful killing zones. In his *Roadkill* series, **David Garneau** (Regina) exquisitely depicts the mangled animals that he has encountered along prairie roads, including the historic Carleton Trail. Through his painting, *Abstracted Bird*, Garneau does not summon a sentimentalized reaction but rather a reverent consideration of this bird's body in transition. However, we cannot help but question our own complicit involvement with these devastating occurrences. As of yet, we do not know how to negotiate this unease with our highly coveted relationship with machines and speed.

Our first real taste of technology was ignited during the Industrial Revolution when visions of the future relied on the preconception that we had full access to a vast and impervious natural abundance. **Iris Hauser** (Saskatoon) has envisioned a world oddly reminiscent of past futuristic epitomes in her painting, *The Machine Age*. Her version merges a machine with fauna and flora as one unified car like construct. The animals, such as armadillos, tigers, snakes and dolphins, are radically contorted to manifest themselves as an interlocking vehicle at the service of the occupant. Hauser places the human at the helm of this device in a powerful, yet fearful position, dependent on the diversity, strength and coherence of these creatures, as he plunges forth leaving destruction in his wake.

Marsha Kennedy (Regina) reflects upon the impact that specific human action has imposed upon the life within her own locale, the prairie environment. In her series, *Mapping the Land and Body*, Kennedy investigates the historical misuse of the land by political and agricultural forces much to the detriment of indigenous cultures and animal species. *Cougar* portrays a man in contemplative stasis whose bare body is marked by a map defining Saskatchewan's First Nations' Treaties as well as topographical features of the Lumsden, Saskatchewan area. He holds the skull of a cougar, a once highly threatened prairie species. Like Hauser and Garneau, Kennedy grapples with the systemic loss of animals with the implication that humankind, like any other species, will surely follow suit if our priorities are not soon radically altered.

Maps provide visual and spatial models of the location and definition of social, political and economic structures. Beautiful as maps are, they are nevertheless wrought with territorial and colonial histories. **Peter Dykhuis** (Halifax) utilizes the mapping model as a means to collapse territorial systems that he views as culturally and personally repressive. In the work, *Mixed Messages*, Dykhuis has superimposed an image of a F-18 Hornet fighter jet descending upon a ground of notes, memos, and other personal and office messages. The fighter jet is depicted through a camouflage pattern derived, incidentally, from a land-use map of the Halifax Regional Municipality. Using this opposing combination of friendly and combative communication systems, Dykhuis is able to locate himself within a series of networks, some of which are crucial to his sense of belonging while others only threaten his security denoting a feeling of insularity and instability. The besieging icon of the war machine remains at the forefront of this work, which requires us to consider the unbearable role that the war industry has played in the demise of our humanity as well as world ecology.

At present, satellite technology is used as a pivotal communication and tracking tool. Artists in the group **Satellite Bureau**, **Jen Hamilton** (Regina), **Jen Southern** (United Kingdom) and **Christopher St. Amand** (Regina) use this complex technology with magical simplicity. *Wormhole* traces for us a path that Jen Southern has walked in Huddersfield, UK. This route has been recorded on a GPS device, electronically translated into a drawn line, transmitted over the Internet and finally depicted, embedded in a blue dome surface. The ultimate drawing acts as a representation of a real event, a gestured

experience of one individual located many miles away from the gallery space. The drawing appears to lack any actual plan, resembling the process of a beetle larva as it tunnels through the cambium layer of a tree, random yet intentionally searching.

Adjacent to this dome is a video screen of a person flying a kite, being pushed and pulled according to the wind currents paralleling the connections between the globally tracked walker and satellites orbiting Earth. In this installation, Satellite Bureau artists demonstrate a type of wormhole that not only experiments with notions of spacetime but as well references a crucial link with Earth's surface, its centre and the space above it. This work is intent on locating us, evasive as we may be, and affirms a longing to be comfortably bound with our world.

Burrow, submerge, wade, implant, collapse and expand; these are all action imperatives in the work, *Earthdreaming*, by Joan Scaglione (Regina). Due to the cultural distillation of the last millennium, which resulted in lost crucial knowledge of the working orders of our planet, Scaglione searches for authentic and restorative knowledge of these natural systems. Scaglione insists that we must surrender our self-importance, our anthropocentrism, in order to regain insightful compassionate friendships with other natural beings. Here, the bed connotes a place of transcendence where we shed our daily entrapments and can return to an innate state. It is nestled in a set of crumbled bricks implying the collapse of a once stable manufactured construct. Scaglione depicts a primordial swimming figure in a video that is embedded within the pile. This swimming woman performs another form of search, implying renewal and rebirth. The motion of this work mimics a long forgotten sense of ritualism, practices that can reaffirm and restore, where we are brought down deeper to a place where we are not merely on the earth but fully engrossed within it.

No Trespassing is the work of photographer **Cherie Westmoreland** (Regina). Like Kennedy and Dykhuis who investigate the disparate compartmentalization of land, Westmoreland (Regina) surveys the irony in our understanding of what typically constitutes trespassing. Why are we personally violated when someone steps on our property, yet we are free to intrude upon our land's ecology without much consideration? Through her intensely tangible photographs, which play with slight time slippages caught through the layering of multiple exposures, Westmoreland captures the esoteric, ephemeral soul of the Saskatchewan environment. These photographic works are

beacons to us; calling us home, signaling that we must reconfigure our interconnections with our location so that we may experience it with real joy and passion.

The exhibition, **Pale Blue Dot**, indicates that our relationships with the world and with each other need devoted attention. Presented here is an opportunity to embrace our inventiveness, our drive for originality and love for prosperity so that our work will someday "imitate nature's highly effective cradle to cradle system of nutrient flow and metabolism" eliminating waste all together and becoming even beneficial to Earth's biological mass.⁷ Our connection with the world can be more than just sustainable, it can be stimulating, eloquent and emphatic. We need not establish ourselves on other planets, as Carl Sagan had suggested, but take care of our own. We can be like ants, dovetailing in every possible way with Earth's dense abundance.

Guest Curator

Wendy Peart

1 Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of Human Future in Space*, Random House: New York, 1994, p. 9.

2 Carl Sagan, *ibid.* p. 4.

3 Carl Sagan, *ibid.* pp. 222-223.

4 William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. North Point Press: New York, 2002, p. 117.

5 William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *ibid.* p. 72.

6 William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *ibid.* p. 122.

7 William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *ibid.* pp. 103-104.

Pale Blue Dot

List of Works:

Griffith Baker

"Raft of the Doldrums", post consumed plastic, 6'x 6'x 6', 2007

Twyla Exner

"Cluster", telephone wire, variable dimensions, 2007

Gerald Beaulieu

"Pasture", mixed media, 72"h x 96"l x 24"w, 2007

Joanne Lyons

"Mountain Stream", Giclee print on canvas, 19"h x 27"w, 2006

Afshin Matlabi

"Cuba II: The Fatman", digital print, 20"h x 40"w, 2002

David Garneau

"Abstracted Bird", oil & acrylic on canvas, 4' x 5', 2006

Iris Hauser

"The Machine Age", oil and alkyd on canvas, 51"h x 51", 2006

Marsha Kennedy

"Cougar", oil & composition gold leaf on canvas, 7'x 3.4', 2004

Peter Dykhuis

"Mixed Messages", encaustic on collaged paper, 4'x7', 2006

Satellite Bureau (Jen Hamilton, Jen Southern, Chris St.Amand)

"Wormhole", mixed media, variable dimensions, 2007

Joan Scaglione

"Earthdreaming", video still, variable dimensions, 2007

Cherie Westmoreland

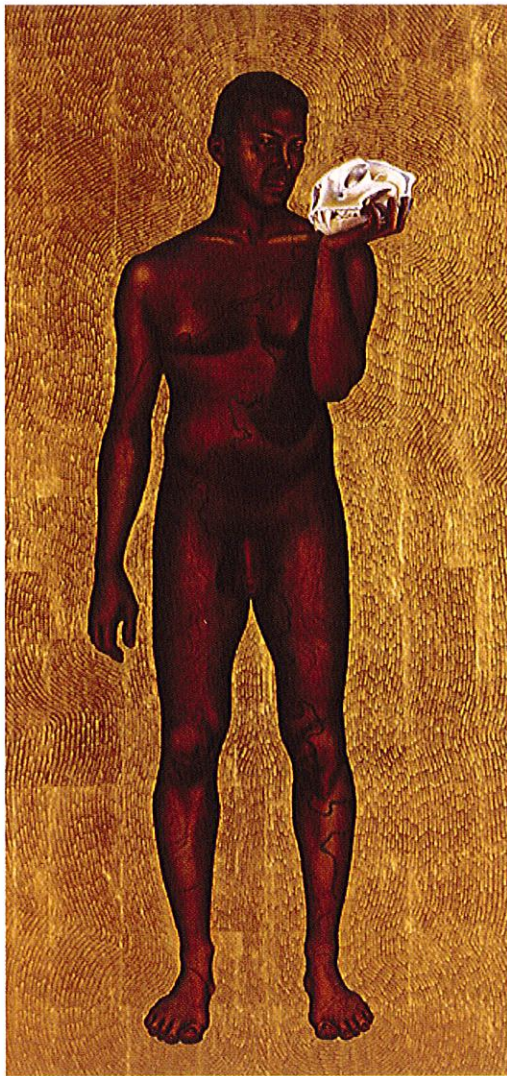
"No Trespassing" detail, 2007



Iris Hauser, *"The Machine Age"*, oil and alkyd on canvas, 51" h x 51" w, 2006



Joanne Lyons, *"Mountain Stream"*, Giclee print on canvas, 19" h x 27" w, 2006



Marsha Kennedy, "Cougar," oil & composition gold leaf on canvas, 7'x 3.4'; 2004



Twyla Exner, "Cluster," telephone wire, variable dimensions, 2007



Afshin Matlabi, "Cuba II: The Fatman," digital print, 20"h x 40"w, 2002



Cherie Westmoreland, "No Trespassing" detail, 2007






Satellite Bureau, "Wormhole," mixed media, variable dimensions, 2007

ART GALLERY OF REGINA

©Art Gallery of Regina Inc.
Neil Balkwill Civic Arts Centre
2420 Elphinstone Street, PO Box 1790,
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3C8

ISBN #978-1-896432-77-9

Gallery Director: Karen Schoonover
Guest Curator: Wendy Peart
Design: Steve McDonnell: Dalek Design @ dalek.ca
Printer: PrintWest

Sponsored by   

The Art Gallery of Regina gratefully acknowledges the support of the Regina Arts Commission, Saskatchewan Arts Board, Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation, SaskCulture, SaskTel, SaskEnergy, Greystone Managed Investments Inc., SaskCentral, TD Canada Trust, and the Cathedral Village Free House.

