

Ewan McNeil : Pendulum Gallery : July 4 – July 23

Ewan McNeil studied painting, sculpture and collage at the Vancouver school of art in the 1970's. For the next 30 years, most of his time was taken up with travelling, holding down a full time job at the Vancouver Art Gallery, playing in a rock band, raising a family and running Art Rescue, a company that assists in the construction of artist's projects. Over that last 10 years, however, he has returned to his art in a dedicated and enthusiastic way, making up for lost time producing paintings and sculptures of outstanding quality and inventiveness.

The exhibition at the Pendulum Gallery will bring together two recent bodies of works : high-realist, photography-based acrylic paintings in black & white; and small, whimsical, seemingly incidental sculptures constructed with wood, cardboard, old maps, scraps of metal and paint.

The paintings, quoting from the semantics of 1970's photo-realism, and 'realistic' in a visual sense, nonetheless remove us from the reality they depict. Drained of colour, the B&W images achieve a general sense of nostalgia, even though their subject matter is often contemporary engineering and architectural structures. Lacking any people or overt contemporary identifiers, they float in time, seemingly abandoned; the civilization that created them suddenly vanished.

The sculptures achieve immediacy opposite to the distancing effect of the paintings. You can see how they are made, the way the parts fit together, the materiality of the pieces. Although they are quickly done, they are not studies. They suggest a constructed logic that is particular to each sculpture, logic not related to functionality. Contrast this with the overt functionality of the structures represented in the paintings. These kinds of collage assemblages come out of a long tradition in contemporary art. Picasso used wood assemblages to explore elements of cubism in around 1915 and this technique has been with us in one form or another ever since. McNeil makes the approach feel new, achieving an efficient sparseness that reduces the parts to their essential form, using boat shapes and map elements to refer to a personal history.

Although the paintings and sculptures may seem unrelated, in them both are McNeil's interest in built form, and how we experience and invent visual pleasure. Taken together, the works point to McNeil's interest and engagement with the physical world, and the ways in which existing forms can be reinterpreted and new forms created.

Chris Keatley, May 2011

Pendulum Gallery
HSBC Building
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www.pendulumgallery.bc.ca



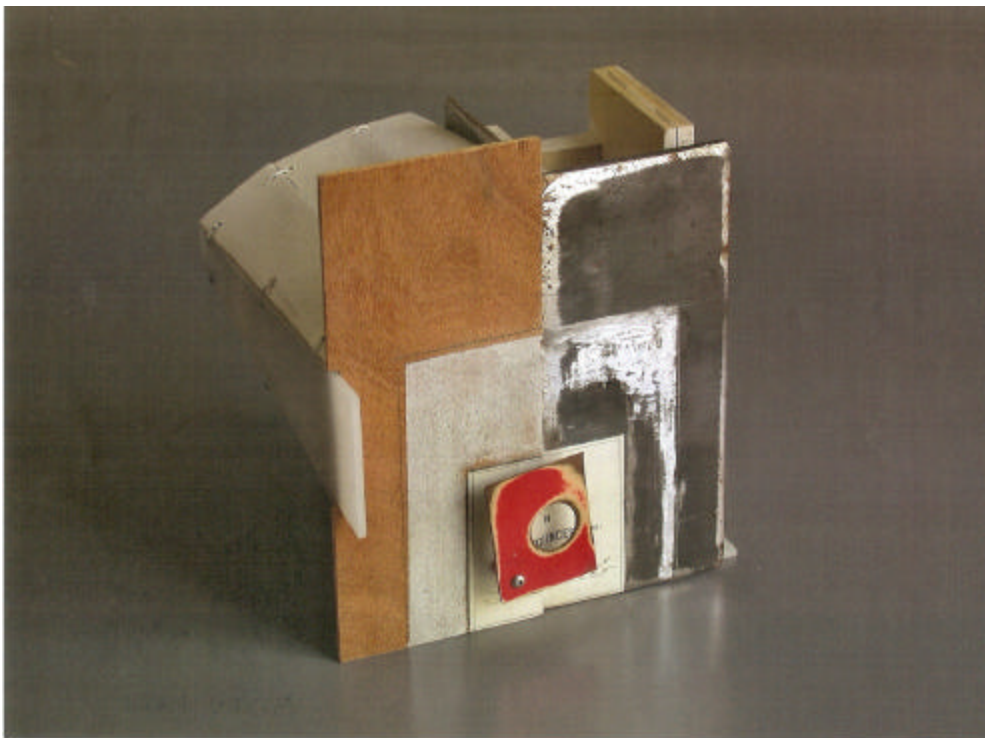
Bright and Shiny Future, 2008



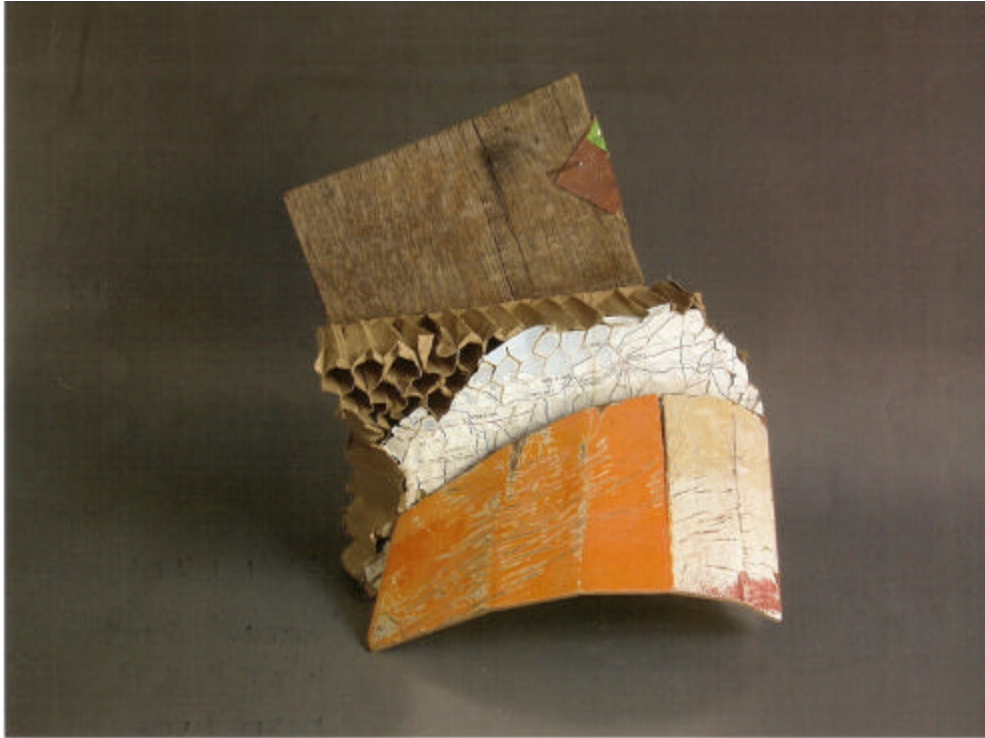
Ramp, 2009



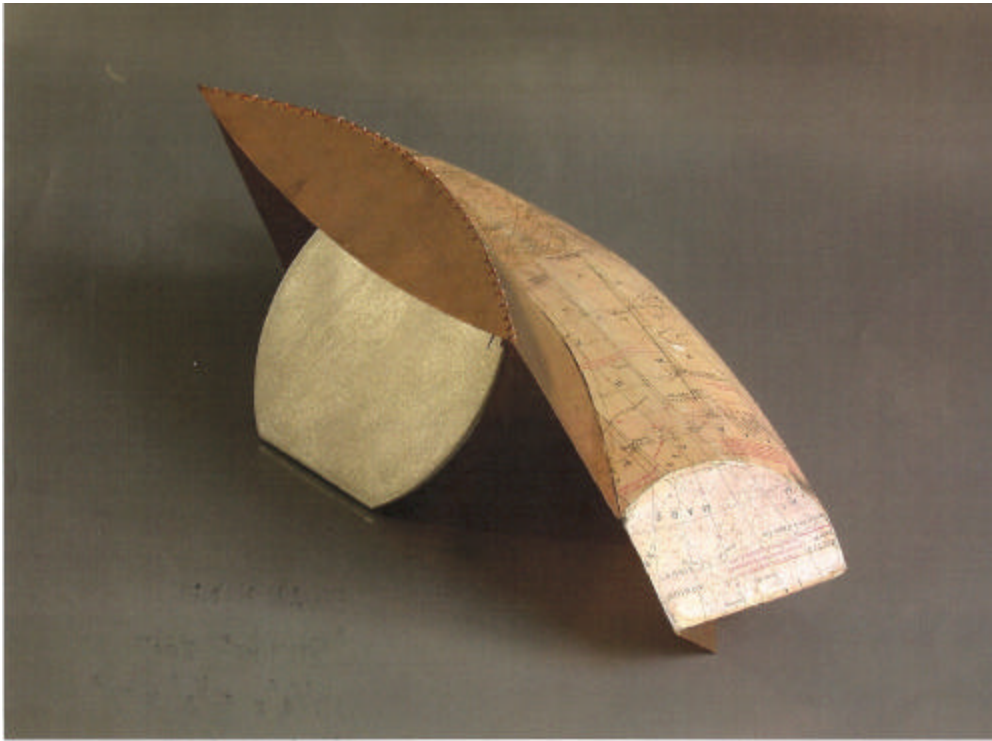
Mango, 2005



Japan, 2009



Katrina, 2009



Stitch, 2008