

FALL 2014  
FROM WHAT REMAINS



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DUNLOP  
ART  
GALLERY

# CENTRAL GALLERY

## From What Remains

Jason de Haan, Kerri Reid, and Kara Uzelman  
Curated by Blair Fornwald, Assistant Curator

**SEPTEMBER 19 TO NOVEMBER 13, 2014**

Artists Talk: Friday, September 19, 6:00 pm, RPL Film Theatre  
Opening Reception: Friday, September 19, 7:00 pm

### **To what it is, to what it might be**

by Blair Fornwald, Assistant Curator

The artworks in *From What Remains* investigate the contradictory nature of everyday objects, both banal and magical. Given that most of the works in this exhibition utilize common objects, it may be tempting, though not wholly accurate, to read them through the lens of the Duchampian readymade. The readymade is best understood not as a collection of objects that Marcel Duchamp christened with a title, but as a speech act, expressed in the statement “this is art.” With this statement, Duchamp proved that anything could be art and that the act of making could be reduced to an act of declaration. While Duchamp proved with the readymade that anything *could* be transformed, he only named fifty or so objects as readymades. He noted that finding suitable objects to transform into art objects was not easy, that after spending time with something “it becomes very interesting; you can even like it,”<sup>1</sup> criteria that would render the object

unsuitable. By claiming to eschew aesthetic concerns, Duchamp attempted to safeguard the primacy of the singular concept of the readymade, even as it was embodied in specific objects. The readymade is a self-referential statement: “this” can be anything at all, thus “art” can be anything at all – the readymade object ideally signifying nothing other than the magic operation that transforms the banal to the aesthetic, and the aesthetic to the banal.

Kara Uzelman, Kerri Reid, and Jason de Haan have chosen objects and materials with deliberation. Their selected materials retain their specificities and histories while also being reconfigured, transformed, replicated, and manipulated. These transformations and their presentations mark neither the beginning nor the end of the object’s “life” as ordinary thing or artwork, but rather, points of convergence where the object expresses its past, present and future, its singular and multiple, its physical and metaphysical properties, its rich potentiality and narrative possibility.

Kara Uzelman’s work with found objects is guided by anthropological and archeological processes and informed by research that crosses disciplinary boundaries, incorporating knowledge collected from mythic, folk, and speculative realms. *Dynamics of Psychic Energy*, *Psychic Energy Notes*, and *Alternate Realities: Thoughts, Poems and Speeches* combine materials sourced from in and around Nokomis, Saskatchewan, the small farming community where Uzelman currently lives. They take their titles from files in the Duncan Blewett fonds, housed at the University of Regina. Blewett was Chief Psychologist of the Psychiatric



Services Branch for the province of Saskatchewan, and was heavily involved in controversial LSD research in the 1950s and 60s – in clinical trials, the drug was used to treat psychosis and delirium tremens in patients. His research was also supported by psychic medium Eileen Garrett, and aimed to find a relationship between psychedelics and ESP. Given the file titles and the nature of this research, one can presume that the documents contained within the files blur boundaries between scientific and mystical realms.

Just as we may only infer the nature of Blewett's texts from the file titles (and might presume that their contents are based on subjective experiences that could only be partially described), Uzelman's delicate arrangements of found and altered objects suggest narratives that are not fully legible. Some materials are fashioned into clumsy-looking home décor items, some are haphazardly placed within the space, and others are laid out with the precision of a ritual, or alchemic *mise en place*. A sculptural arrangement of sticks is carefully balanced on a dusty, handmade glass-topped coffee table, propped up by a two litre plastic bottle full of clear liquid, creating the illusion of levitation. A snapshot on the floor documents a speculative reenactment of one of Blewett's experiments. An ambient soundscape from another place quietly plays on an old tape recorder. The work is constructed and displayed in a manner that seems both deliberate and precarious, as if its disparate elements could be returned to their prosaic origins at any moment. Uzelman's arrangements underscore the fluctuating value of these objects as useful things, aesthetic things, artifacts, and narrative devices.

Kerri Reid is a meticulous copyist who invests great care and attention to subjects that are discarded or overlooked. Her ongoing project, *Souvenirs* is currently comprised of dozens of small stones, rocks, and pebbles that Reid has collected from significant places she has been: Iceland, California, Whitehorse, Dawson City, Banff, Vancouver (where she is from), Bruno, Saskatchewan (where she lived), and Sointula, British Columbia (where she now lives). For each rock that Reid removes from the land, a stoneware copy is created, painted with underglazes, acrylic and gouache to obtain near-verisimilitude. The rocks and their surrogates are lined up neatly on tables like geological specimens, but uncannily doubled. Upon returning to a site where a stone has been removed, Reid will replace it, setting the borrowed stone in approximately the same location it was found, keeping the handcrafted copy. A smaller collection of stoneware rock copies paired with photographs of the real stones in situ document this process. It is another gesture that attempts an impossible replication: to return a landscape, imperceptibly altered, to its pre-alteration state is tantamount to time travel.

A similar degree of care for the overlooked is evident in Reid's *The End of the World*, a series of time-lapse videos documenting shadows moving over six broken objects collected while on residence in Dawson City. Reid has removed the objects from the footage frame by frame, so that only the shadows remain. The absent objects are discernable but bodiless, constituted of negative spaces seemingly held aloft by the cast shadows, which have been gifted with the weight,



presence, and prominence associated with bodies.

Another moment of doubling can be found in Jason de Haan's *Spirits Looking at Themselves*. Two large, nearly identical mirrors face each other, creating a *mise-en-abyme*. One of the mirrors, we are assured, is haunted. By imbuing the readymade with an otherworldly presence, de Haan's conceptual gesture is reframed as a conversation between the magical and the banal, vacillating properties that may inhabit the same object.

De Haan's graveyard embossings describe an ambiguity between the singular and the multiple, between beings, bodies, and matter. Each bears the name of a plant or mushroom species found in a particular graveyard, spelled with individual letters gathered from various tombstones. The accustomed notion that a body is a singular and individual entity is discredited upon its death, if not sooner: philosopher Alphonso Lingis reminds us that our bodies contain more microbes and bacterial colonies than they do cells, describing them as "coral reefs full polyps, sponges, gorgonians, and free-swimming macrophages continually stirred by monsoon climates of moist air, blood, and biles."<sup>2</sup> In death, bodies become corpses, objects. And in decomposition, corpses become matter, dispersed as gas and liquid, broken down into their constituent chemicals by beetles, flies, maggots and worms, collectively becoming loamy soil, collectively becoming the individual bodies of flora and fungi. *Free and Easy Wanderer* creates



experience – of a body becoming multiple through a process of diffusion and decay – within the exhibition space. De Haan has placed a found fossilized clam shell on top of a commercially-available humidifier. Sitting upon the clam shell is a plastic bottle, cut off at the top to accommodate its form. The vapour from the humidifier and the condensation collected in the bottle assists the erosion of the fossil, and disperses its particles into the atmosphere. The remains of this once-living being will then be carried away in the lungs of the currently living. Given time, de Haan posits, the entire fossil will slowly disappear, a natural process aided by his intervention.

It is more difficult to anticipate how de Haan's *Future Age* will transform itself over time. Repeating a gesture that has been carried out several times in other cities, the artist has placed a gold ring around a potted, living sapling. The tree, like earlier (and perhaps future) trees, will be planted offsite when the exhibition closes, becoming part of a vast, near-invisible network of living artworks. What will become of the tree and the gold band that encircles it in five, ten, twenty, or a hundred years? A process with too many variables to be considered an experiment, one could think of *Future Age* as a reverse alchemical transmutation, where precious metal is thoroughly integrated into the bodily structure of the tree, becoming one of the many growth rings charting its chronology, becoming wood.

Each of these works implore a rethinking of what constitutes “objecthood.” Is



an assemblage one object or many? What is the relationship between an object and its replica? Is a living body an object? What about a dead body? Is a shadow an object? Is a ghost? And how is an object's meaning constituted, what forces are responsible for its coming-to-be, and what inferences can be made about its past and future from its current configuration? Paraphrasing philosopher Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi asserts that "a thing has as many meanings as there are forces capable of seizing it."<sup>3</sup> The paradigm of the ready made attempts to divest the object of its "ordinary" meanings, supplanting them with the linguistically compact but conceptually far-reaching meaning that "this is art." Becoming art is only one of a multitude of transformative shifts that an object may incur, or produce, during its long lifetime. It is an instance.

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Duchamp, interview, *The Late Show Late Night* Lineup, BBC, June 15, 1968, YouTube video, 14:44-15:28, accessed July 26, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwk7wFdC76Y>.

<sup>2</sup> Alphonso Lingis, "Bestiality," *symplekē* 6.1, 1998, 57-58.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 10.

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## Artist Biographies

Jason de Haan is a multidisciplinary Canadian artist. He is represented in Canada by Clint Roenisch Gallery.

Kerri Reid is a visual artist originally from Vancouver. She lives and works in Sointula, BC, where she and husband Tyler Brett co-direct the Sointula Art Shed, a small artist residency/studio/project space and play music together as The Department.

Kara Uzelman is a visual artist who lives in Nokomis, Saskatchewan and is represented by Sommer & Kohl in Berlin.

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## CREDITS

KERRI REID, *Souvenirs*, 2010-2014, found rocks and ceramic copies of found rocks (with underglazes and gouche)

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

FROM WHAT REMAINS, *Exhibition View*

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

FROM WHAT REMAINS, *Exhibition View*

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

JASON DE HAAN, *Free And Easy Wanderer*, 2014, found clam shell, humidifier, plastic bottle, concrete base

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department



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2311 - 12th Avenue

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*Closed statutory holidays*

## Sherwood Gallery

6121 Rochdale Boulevard

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Thursday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

Friday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

Saturday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm

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2311-12th Avenue

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Monday through Friday

Dunlop Art Gallery researches and presents a diverse range of contemporary artworks, and promotes visual literacy through activities that include exhibitions, programs, publishing and collecting. For more information, please visit our website, [www.dunlopartgallery.org](http://www.dunlopartgallery.org).

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The Dunlop Art Gallery is wheelchair accessible.



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