

JESSICA MORGAN & CATHERINE WOOD
PRESENT

THE WORLD AS A STAGE

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TRISHA DONNELLY ----- MARKUS SCHINWALD
GEOFFREY FARMER ----- TINO SEHGAL
ANDREA FRASER ----- CATHERINE SULLIVAN
DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER ----- MARIO YBARRA JR

GEOFFREY FARMER

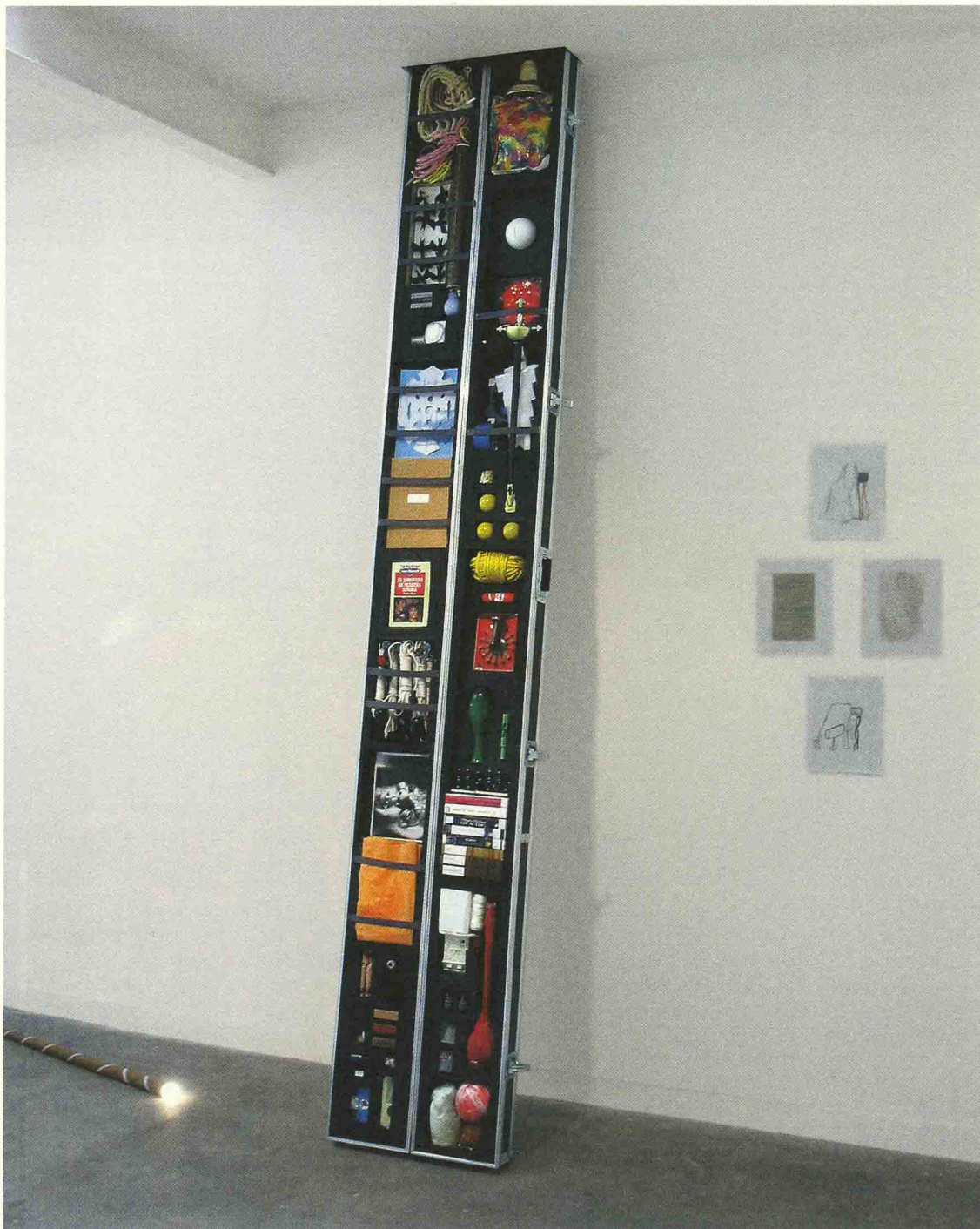
Geoffrey Farmer's research-based practice is broad-ranging and verges on the obsessive. Often site-specific and performative, his work consists of accumulations of material related to a given subject, typically drawing on images and narratives from popular culture and literature. He frequently transforms his installations over the course of his exhibitions by making interventions in the gallery space while it is closed to the public. This may involve adding or removing components, or making videos of private performances in the space, which are then incorporated into the works.

Every surface in some way decorated, altered, or changed forever (except the float) 2004 at the Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver was a large sculptural installation based on a parade float. During the course of the project a wooden float structure was constructed in the centre of the space. Costumes, drawings, texts and decorations were made and gradually introduced, eventually burying the float structure and making the gallery impossible to enter. More recently, Farmer created a similarly metamorphic work, *Airliner Open Studio* 2006, using a section of a commercial airplane, formerly used as a film set, as his visual centrepiece and conceptual starting point. Over the course of the exhibition, he explored the set after hours, documenting his interactions on video and presenting these daily along with his sculptural interventions and drawings. Farmer's light-hearted and spontaneous approach emphasises experimentation and highlights the backstage workings of artistic production and the darkened gallery after closing.

The interactive and transformative tendencies of Farmer's work were perhaps most dramatically realised in *A Pale Fire Freedom Machine* 2005 at the Power Plant in Toronto. This installation included carefully arranged rows of found wooden furniture including desks, bookshelves and chairs surrounding a rotating steel fireplace. Over the course of the exhibition, gallery assistants dismantled the furniture and fed it into the fireplace. The resulting ash was used to produce a text work and an abstract print that visitors could take away.

Farmer's interest in staging and performance is evident in *Room 302* 2005, made in collaboration with Judy Radul. The work consists of video documentation of a sound recording of actors reading from transcripts of real and fictional trials. The actors are located in a once real courtroom that now functions as a set for television and film productions. The video is projected onto the dismantled facade of the courtroom set. The sculptural component of the work shares the scatter aesthetic of Farmer's previous work, apparently haphazard yet deliberately placed. The video element, a literal courtroom drama, explicitly engages with the theatrical. The restaged trial scenes conflate and confuse the performative aspect of the legal process with its dramatic reconstruction.

Farmer's contribution to *The World as a Stage* is his multi-media installation *Hunchback Kit* 2000–07. The kit, which comprises a group of found and constructed objects, props, photographs and texts contained within an eleven foot travelling crate, is conceived as a continual adaptation and interpretation of Victor Hugo's 1831–2 novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Although some of the objects in the kit can be read as props or costumes relating to various characters in the novel, Farmer's work alludes to broader philosophical questions embedded in Hugo's narrative and its subsequent readings. The installation has no set display parameters, but is accompanied by a manual that suggests possible configurations of the disparate components. In essence a new work is produced each time the kit is shown. Reflecting his adaptable methodology, Farmer encourages a flexible approach in the presentation of *Hunchback Kit* that echoes its open-ended allusions. Rachel Taylor



Hunchback Kit 2000

Mixed media

Installation view, Gasworks Gallery 2002

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Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver

Following page:

A Pale Fire Freedom Machine 2005

Installation view, The Power Plant, Toronto

Rennie Collection, Vancouver

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver