

High Curios

Cuauhtémoc Medina

1. OFFER AND DEMAND

At the end of the 1530s, the Spanish conquerors' effort to enforce Christianity and extirpate the "idolatry of the Indians" in central Mexico reached a feverish state. In their effort to "rescue" the "Indians" from their "satanic" worshipping, Franciscan friars—the new civil authorities and, at times, overzealous colonizers—went through hundreds of towns to uncover and burn all kinds of "idols" and "demonic" books that were hidden in small domestic altars, or buried under the town squares or in remote mountain caves. Although chronicles from the time attest to the Spaniards' apparent success in turning the Aboriginal towns to Christianity—a conversion fuelled by the fear left by the conquest and the epidemics that had recently decimated the Aboriginal populations—they also obsessively describe the hundred and one ways in which the "Indians" refused to abandon their cult objects. To the outrage of the Catholic priests, the Aboriginals paid lip service to the new faith and at the same time dared to conceal their "devils," even under the carved stone crosses and churches being erected all through the friars' new kingdom.

Western iconoclasm created an unequal but nonetheless complex space of violence and negotiation revolving around the value (and lack of value) of the so-called idol. The zeal of the Spaniards had a dual effect, for instead of merely desacralizing the "Indian" objects and turning them into meaningless materials, the targeting of them as "demonic things" frequently reinforced their reputation as powerful objects.¹ At times, in fact, the Spaniards contributed to the perpetuation of idol making in the most paradoxical ways. According to Friar Toribio de Benavente Motolinia, around 1539 and 1540 some Spaniards, "thinking they were

OPPOSITE:
Prototype for New Understanding #23, 2005
(detail)
Nike Air Jordans
47 x 52 x 15 cm (18 1/2" x 20 1/2" x 5 7/8")
Collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl,
Miami Beach, Florida
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan
Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery



doing something,” went beyond unearthing corpses and statues to “offer a reward to those that would hand them idols.” Some Natives decided to comply and again started producing images of their deities, not for worshipping but to provide them to the new rulers, who enjoyed smashing them:

And in some places the Indians were rewarded and pestered this way, so they searched all the idols that were forgotten or rotting under the earth to surrender them. And some of the Indians were so molested that in fact they made idols again, and gave them so that they [Spanish priests and soldiers] would stop bothering them.²

In the same way that art today may go straight from the artist’s studio into the museum collection, the Natives of central Mexico created objects that went directly from the workshop of their maker into the bonfire of the inquisitor despite not having been involved in any religious or magical ceremony. Their only function was to fulfill a paranoid colonial expectation, and they were, in fact, among the first Amerindian objects produced solely for European consumption.

In hindsight, those makers of “idols”—by all appearances of Nahuatl³ descent—invented a new strategy of colonial resistance. By effectively producing counterfeit versions of their ritual objects (the first “pre-Columbian fakes”), they reflected to the priests and soldiers exactly what the colonizers expected to see. In this strategy of over-representation, if the metropolitan subject expects the colonia to attest to his culture’s preconceptions, trying to theorize an ambiguous position towards the predicament of westernization will not necessarily build a platform of understanding. In other words, sometimes it is better to use misunderstanding in one’s favour by projecting towards the other the myth of the “authentic” First Nations artist, to enact their nightmare and accept the role of the idolatrous anthropophagic monster. If they want masks, why not sell them their own reflection?

Let me add in passing that this anecdote ought to be seen as detailing the true origins of art in the Americas: the production of objective mirages that mediate the interethnic imaginary of both individuals and communities on the North and South American continents. As skewed and convoluted as this “tradition” is by distrust, violent conflict and social struggle, the colonial process turned the making of symbolically charged images and artifacts into a field of negotiation of ethnic imaginaries. From the substitute sacralization of Christian saints in the native tailoring of cults like the Virgin of Guadalupe to the “shamanism” of Jackson Pollock’s painting, from Wilfredo Lam’s Afro-Cuban recapturing of cubism’s primitivism to the vindication of *antropofagia* by Brazilian *modernismo*, not to mention Emily Carr’s fauvist “communion” with the First Nations of the Pacific Northwest Coast, art in the Americas is traversed by the predicament of objects mediating colonial subjects. Sometimes, in fact, their efficacy seems to correlate to their inauthenticity. It may be that instead of representing indigenous history and lived experience, artists in the Americas have

Video stills from artist’s documentation of First Nations carving
Photos: Brian Jungen



been particularly cunning at performing cultural distortions, for these are better able to play a mediating role between communities. Framed by a history of violence and betrayal, these images are more significant for their capacity to activate fear and distrust than as means of reconciliation.

My purpose in beginning this discussion of Brian Jungen's *Prototypes* (1998-2005) with this anecdote is to show that his art unfolds against a global context of colonial stereotyping. Jungen's work registers the art of his Northwest Coast First Nations ancestors as exoticized and commercialized, and also attends to the argument that this perception may have helped First Nations artists to circumvent the brutal prohibition of the potlatch in Canada from 1884 to 1951 and actually allowed Aboriginal art to survive.⁴ I introduce this comparison with the Mexican context to consider his work as an allegory for an entire series of historical transactions between ethnic groups in which colonial categories such as "idolatry," "fetish," "Indian art" or "mask" can be effectively redirected to the colonizer, who, after all, is their original instigator. Brian Jungen's art can be seen as an example of how to use cultural stereotypes as a means of critical engagement. His works are games that mobilize aesthetic and cultural misunderstandings to explore ways to politicize cultural stereotypes in the age of global capitalism.

Production of *Prototypes*
for *New Understanding*
in artist's studio
Photo: Brian Jungen

2. AT THE CROSSROADS OF PREJUDICE AND MISUNDERSTANDING

When they were first shown at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in Vancouver in 1999, Brian Jungen's *Prototypes for New Understanding* were deliberately inscribed in a structure of cultural *refraction*, that is, a structure in which an image is distorted by viewing it through an artistic medium.⁵ Jungen offered the viewer an extraordinary example of contemporary bricolage: a set of what were purported to be Northwest Coast Indian masks⁶ that, instead of being carved and painted, had been produced by slicing and reassembling red, black and white leather from Nike Air Jordan trainers. A *tour de force* of hybridization, these masks were bound to become Jungen's signature work. By displaying his pieces inside vitrines like reputed "masterworks" in museums of anthropology, Jungen subjected the masks to a certain neutralization⁷ and suggested the emergence of a new kind of critique (but, as Jungen has emphasized, not "a censorious critique" that would naively assume a utopian pre-capitalist stage of purity⁸).

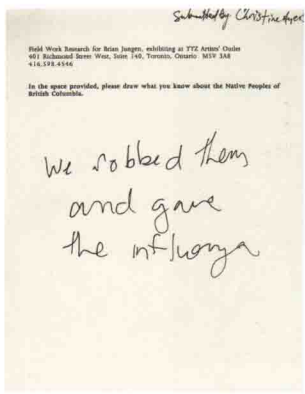
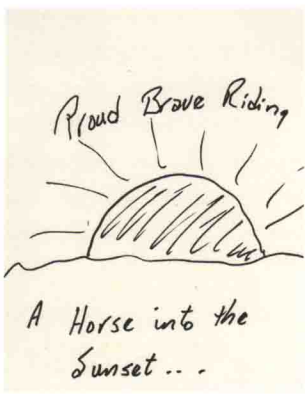
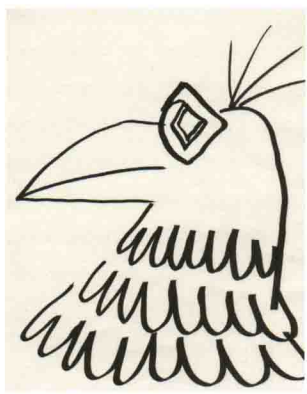
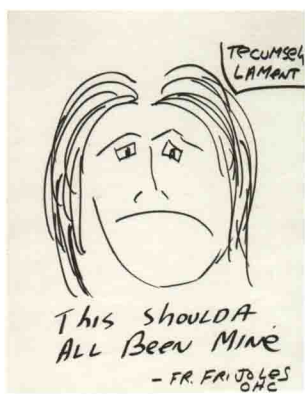
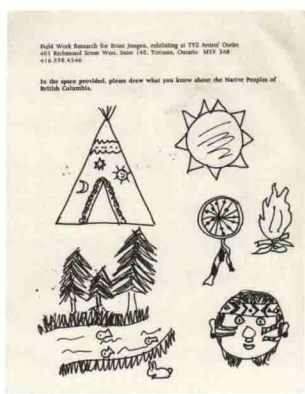
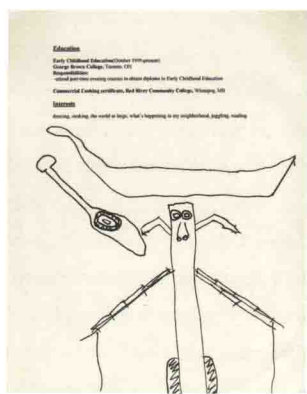
Not by chance, those reassembled trainers caught the audience's critical attention: they seemed to epitomize a contemporary practice that would use non-Western cultural tactics to focus as much on the powers of the commodity as on the way globalization has enticed non-Western subjects to commodify their cultural identities. These were works located at the crossroads of two kinds of distorted gaze, the first involving the racial preconceptions about "traditional cults," the second dealing with the extreme pleasure of acquiring goods, a psychological state related to the identification of the subject that Sigmund Freud described as the attempt to conform to an "ideal ego."⁹ Jungen's strategy was to fuse these two fields to show their internal bond. As curator Reid Shier pointed out, this transformation of fanciful trainers into Aboriginal curios suggested a peculiar form of potlatch, in which fashion would be sacrificed for "the illicit satisfaction of witnessing the evisceration of a bunch of two-hundred-dollar trainers."¹⁰

Jungen's own discussion of his work underlines how a consumer icon such as Nike Air Jordan trainers, which are based on the exploitation of sweatshop workers all the way from Mexico to Thailand, becomes a fetish item at the same time that it comments on how banal and market-driven cultural traditions have become in the contemporary world:

I was interested in the ubiquitousness of native motifs, especially in Vancouver, and how they have been corrupted and applied and assimilated commercially, e.g., in the tourist industry. It was interesting to see how by simply manipulating the Air Jordan shoes you could evoke specific cultural traditions whilst simultaneously amplifying the process of cultural corruption and assimilation. The Nike "mask" sculptures seemed to articulate a paradoxical relationship between a consumerist artifact and an "authentic" native artifact.¹¹



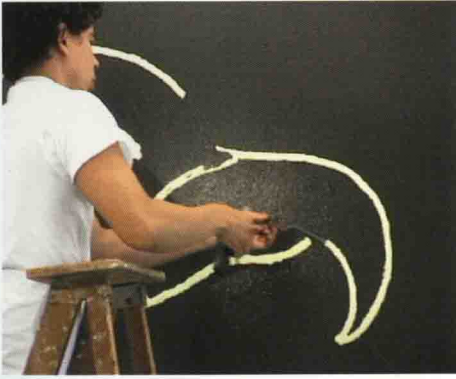
Production of *Prototypes for New Understanding* in artist's studio
Photos: Brian Jungen



By comparing Western material fantasies and First Nations mythic characters, Jungen's trainers seem to debunk any pretence of Western superiority. No longer the (ephemeral) signifier of "cool," Nike trainers become, as one reviewer wrote, "ceremonial gear for the tribe of urban hipsters."¹² In avant-garde fashion, the montage-based beauty of Jungen's masks seems to signal the possibility that the allure of commodities can be defeated with a superior form of visual practice, a "sacrilegious" dissection of the "iconic" object.¹³ They project back onto Western society all the suggestions of primitive delusion formerly attributed to so-called "totemic" societies, picturing capitalism as a variant of idolatry. In doing so, they symbolically retaliate against the way Aboriginal identities have been transformed into some sort of commercial lifestyle. Jungen's works position "ethnic" as a category of the service economy at a time when the market is booming with "exotic" therapeutic or spiritual practices that are ready-made to cater to postmodern anxieties, from ecological nostalgia and the preference for "natural remedies" to the search for metaphysical energies.

These masks and their associated meanings were nonetheless only one part of the original exhibition. On the walls of the Charles H. Scott Gallery, where *Prototypes for New Understanding* was first shown in Vancouver, Jungen also exhibited a handful of colourful vinyl mural drawings, which despite their cheerful appearance were in fact a concentration of ethnic prejudices. At a certain moment, Jungen had been practising a peculiar form of visual

Sketches solicited for wall drawings at Truck, Calgary, 1997, and at Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver, 1999
Photos: Courtesy of Brian Jungen



ethnography: soliciting passersby to draw for him images of their idea of “Indian art.” The result was a collection of rather schematic and at times childish depictions of the usual clichés, “Indian” reduced to an almost cartoon-like simplicity: a smiling sun, a series of decorative whales, Aboriginal totem poles made of ridiculous primitive faces—which Jungen later transferred into “cheerful colour-fields.” As the artist said in an interview, “it wasn’t polite Indian art.”¹⁴ In fact, this was a collection derived to a great extent from images of Canadian ethnic stereotypes, ideologically driven and hammered down by advertising. With characteristic irony (the tool of choice of postcolonial critique at the end of the twentieth century¹⁵), Jungen focussed on “Indianness” as a social construction.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the relative control First Nations have claimed over their art and images and how they are circulated, Jungen shows that an Indian stereotype still exists. He also suggests that alongside the politics of self-representation, Aboriginal identity is always a cross-cultural construct and that it is used to market Canadian identity, which has absorbed First Nations mythology in creating its national ethos.¹⁷ The imaginary of “Indian art,” as recorded by Jungen’s research, remains firmly defined by abjection and parody because the image of “the primitive” or Aboriginal continues to be part of the self-definition of modern national cultures.

Jungen addressed a visual culture that was traversed by political struggles for the recognition of Aboriginal treaties and rights during the 1990s in Canada. At the same time that First Nations struggles became increasingly politicized, “Indian” imagery was being used in airports and tourist shops, and there were even attempts to print First Nations designs on disposable napkins and cups.¹⁸ The topic of Jungen’s wall drawings, as curator Scott Watson has rightly argued, then, was “the identity of the viewer as much as that identity is perceived to be not ‘Indian.’”¹⁹ In effect, these drawings summarize the stereotyping of First Nations subjects as “the other” of mainstream Canadian society, and they show how consumer demand for Aboriginal objects and images constantly confirms and validates a clear-cut definition of ethnicity that is always infused with parody, mimicry and fear.

In that context, Jungen’s wall drawings provide a frame of reference for his *Prototypes* very much as quaint museum murals do with archaeological and ethnographic evidence.²⁰ Although Jungen’s masks are, by definition, movable artifacts that can migrate to a number of different locations and contexts,²¹ murals can provide them with a critical context, ensuring that they are considered both as part of, and as a response to, the stereotyping of “Indian” art and culture as it happens in contemporary market society. If Jungen’s *Prototypes* effectively suggest a new intercultural understanding, it is precisely because they are located at the crossroads of a number of racial and cultural mirages in what art history professor Charlotte Townsend-Gault has described as the “wallpapering” of habitus: the incorporation of “native” imagery into “the vast heaving mass of ephemeral and disposable forms” of the society of spectacle.²² Rather than merely repudiating that process, Jungen amplifies the marketing and stereotyping of Indian culture that allows First Nations peoples to participate in

Brian Jungen installing wall drawings at Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver, 1999
Photos: Courtesy of Brian Jungen

the current economy and symbolic landscape and to transform their heritage into a form of capital.

If Jungen's masks are effectively *prototypes*,²³ it is because they project a futuristic product: a utopia in which street kids around the world will daydream about becoming Aboriginal dancers with the same gravitas with which they now "become" Michael Jordan when wearing Nike Air Jordan trainers. That is, Jungen's masks confront his mural drawings almost as if they were a market analysis of the very consumers who have been dutifully surveyed in the street to define their interests and desires. Essentially, after decoding what "people expect from Indian art," Jungen set out to design a new commodity that would capture these stereotypical expectations of Aboriginality. His *Prototypes* are a market fantasy like any other fashion product, a mixture of well-tested formulas (Nike trainers + Aboriginal curios) and the pretence of "the new." In other words, they are clearly recognizable as merchandise kept safely within the boundaries of the "Aboriginal culture" brand but with an inbuilt semblance of radicalism that is essential to capture the desires of the street-fashion victim. Instead of opposing the stereotype, Jungen fulfills and exceeds the expectations of the neo-ethnic market in a single go. The extraordinary success of the *Prototypes*²⁴ attests to the feasibility of the entire operation—consumers badly want their fetishes.



3. SHOE ME YOUR FETISH

I defy any lover of modern art to adore a painting as a
fetishist adores a shoe.

—Georges Bataille, 1930²⁵

Quite consistently, when speaking about making his *Prototypes*, Brian Jungen suggests that he considered them to be like bodies or corpses subjected to the sacrilegious intervention of the pathologist and/or taxidermist: "I went to a sports store and purchased a number of pairs of Air Jordan sneakers and began to dissect them, which in itself was interesting—in that it was almost a sacrilegious act: cutting up and 'destroying' these iconic, collectible (and expensive) shoes."²⁶ This new Dr. Frankenstein *dissects* those corpses to give life to new beings: this sole vocabulary suggests to what extent Jungen understood that he was working with objects whose importance for the contemporary consumer lies precisely in the fact that they are not perceived as inert matter but as quasi-living power objects.

There must be powerful reasons why modernity invested feet and shoes with an extraordinary sexual and aesthetic meaning. From the very moment nineteenth-century French psychiatry defined sexual deviation—the claim that the goal of normal desire and procreation could be "fixated" by the "erotomania" of a dangerous substitute²⁷—feet and shoes have been central in our representation of modern fetishism. In the first renditions of psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud gave them a particularly significant role in his discussion of the substitutes of the sexual object, claiming that feet are an archaic sexual symbol whereas shoes

Installation at Charles H. Scott
Gallery, Vancouver, 1999
Photo: Brian Jungen



usually stand in for female genitalia,²⁸ a symbolism frequently mirrored in surrealist objects from Salvador Dali to Meret Oppenheim and in the early writings of Georges Bataille, who claims that the seductiveness of feet goes hand in hand with their “ignoble life,” their relation with dirt and debasement.²⁹

Aside from this theoretical genealogy, Jungen chose trainers for very specific historical reasons. Implicit in his *Prototypes* is a crucial sociological observation: shoes (and particularly designer trainers) are the contemporary consumer’s mask, a tool for the Western ritual of impersonation that—as Jungen says in passing—involves “functional or ceremonial purposes.”³⁰ That shoes are a shamanic tool of sorts can be easily attested to by advertisements, which usually portray them as quasi-magically transforming their user, fusing the phantasm of the sport’s idol with the consumer. When we buy trainers, we are sold the idea that they transmogrify (us) nerds into suburban superheroes, bridging the divide between our pathetic daily lives and television mythology. Some years after Jungen produced his *Prototypes*, artist Carlos Amorales reached a similar conclusion about his own *Flames Maquiladora* (2002):

Production of *Prototypes*
for *New Understanding* in
artist’s studio
Photo: Brian Jungen

Leading brands like Nike, Reebok or Puma specialise in designing shoes for the practice of different mainstream sports such as Baseball, Football or Basketball. These are the brands used by top-class multimillionaire athletes and, simultaneously, by the underdog, amateur and wannabe sportsmen. In a sort of Cinderella effect, wearing such brands provides the wider young population with the illusion of coming closer to stardom, in order to achieve the high-score democratic dream of economic mobility and success.³¹

Like jewels and watches, shoes are meant to be objects of contemplation as much for their wearers as for others. They are, in fact, vessels of desire and fantasy: objects that seem to have a life of their own at the same time that they operate as mirrors of our identity. It is this role of Nike shoes as mediators between the individual and an ideal ego that Jungen disturbs by turning the mirror into an Aboriginal artifact: Michael Jordan is replaced by an undefined “totemic” deity. Now we can see why Jungen’s willingness to play with stereotypes of “Indianhood” is so productive. In dissecting expensive shoes to produce pseudo-Aboriginal masks, in assembling plastic lawn chairs to emulate the skeleton of a whale (*Shapeshifter*, 2000) and in overtly devoting an excessive amount of artistry to the production of a pile of ten industrial-style pallets (*Untitled*, 2001), the artist aims to confuse economic and cultural values and to subject the viewer to the alienating experience of being unable to assess the status of objects. It is this disorientation that, seen in perspective, has had a major role in the critical thinking of capitalism.

4. THE SAVAGE’S VIEWPOINT

As writer and scholar William Pietz has shown, “fetish” is a word deeply rooted in the history of complex transcultural transactions provoked by colonialism. Born out of the cross-cultural interaction on the West African coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *fetisso*—a neologism probably derived from *feitico*, a mediaeval Portuguese word that meant “witchcraft” or “magical practice,” which came from the Latin *facticius*, or “manufactured,”³²—served European merchants and colonizers by describing those religions that did not exactly match their classical notion of idolatry but were believed to contribute to the Africans’ different economic valuation of material objects.³³ Beginning with the Enlightenment, “fetish” became the category of choice for discussing the way individuals or cultures attributed social or personal values to material objects beyond their “natural” value as instruments,³⁴ either because an object was eroticized to the point of obstructing “normal” sexual behaviour or because utility and rationality did not seem to rule economic exchanges.

Jungen’s transformation of an object of mystical identification—the Nike Air Jordan shoe—to the simulation of a “primitive” religious object—a First Nations mask—is, uncanny as it might seem, similar to the development of Karl Marx’s theory of “commodity fetishism.” According to Marx, in capitalist societies



From artist’s video document of Niketown, Los Angeles
Photos: Courtesy of Brian Jungen



Northwest Coast First Nations masks displayed in Visible Storage at the Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver
 Photo: Monika Szewczyk, Courtesy of Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver

commodities take on an apparently magical quality that has consumers attributing to them an inherent value that is independent of their origin in human labour and entirely based on what they can receive in exchange. In the first edition of *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx spoke mostly of the “mystic character” of the commodity to explain the way in which social relationships were made manifest in the modern subject by attaching a price (an abstract rate of exchange) to objects. However, by the second edition (1872) Marx decided to present merchandise as a modern “fetish,” where the products of labour were construed as things that were simultaneously “perceptible and imperceptible by the senses,” sensuous and supersensuous.³⁵ In doing so, Marx firmly rooted our critiques of the commodity in questions of how the exchange of money and objects mediates our social relations. By aligning modern economic behaviour with a primitivist stereotype, Marx showed that the commodity works as an effective object of power, as a material *and* as a supernatural agent that can be treated as if it has sacred qualities and magical powers worthy of daily worship. In presenting economics as a religion of everyday life, Marx wanted to suggest that our devotion to capital cannot be simply exorcised by thought, for it constitutes both the materiality and spectrality³⁶ of our social practice, traversed by the continuous impression that we deal with superior and invisible powers.

In any event, for Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud or the surrealists who once displayed French Catholic images as “fétiches européens,”³⁷ the best way to expose the workings of modern subjects was to apply to them their own representation of savages and primitives. As William Pietz has eloquently argued, this process produces an effect akin to an anamorphism, that is, a distorted spatial projection appears normal when viewed from a particular angle or through a suitable mirror. In Marx’s writings, it is only from a “savage” point of view that it is possible to feign a new understanding of our own culture. If the notion of fetishism is pregnant with all kinds of Western misconceptions about the “primitive mentality,” when projected onto modernity this mentality in turn lifts the veil of rationality that covers standard practices:

In Marx’s writing... the bourgeois capitalist is perceived as himself a fetishist, one whose fetish, capital, is believed by its deluded cultists to embody (*super*)*natural causal powers of value formation*, but which is recognized by the savage... and worker... as having no real power outside its *social power to command* the labor activity of real individuals... Marx evoked the “savage” subject of religious fetishism as a (potentially theoretical) viewpoint *outside* capitalism...³⁸

Thus, if the notion of the fetish was somehow ethnographic delirium coined by European colonizers to describe West African societies, it became an accurate social category once it was redirected to study the “civilized man” who devised it. Similarly, by deciding to reshape cultural *stereotypes* into the prototypes of a new understanding, Brian Jungen has reinvested his materials with the sacred quality

of ceremonial objects, thereby repoliticizing a primitivist icon, the First Nations mask, and making it more than a mere curio that can be bought and sold.

Jungen's *Prototypes* may be seen as an attempt to rescue these objects from becoming commodities. If capitalism needs to capture non-Western power objects, it is in part because they remain dangerous to the extent that they bear witness to the prior existence of other forms of social agency, that is, other ways of understanding motivations, causes, affects and effects—all of which we dismissively call sorcery. Brian Jungen reactivates these alternative social modalities through a continual process of transformation rendered, as the title *Shapeshifter* suggests, by sculptures "in a kind of flux,"³⁹ by objects that swing between inertia and fantasy, banality and metaphysics. This ambivalence constitutes their power: rather than attempting to fuse different cultural traditions, they suggest an unstable world in which the complexity of economic cycles and the dilemmas of the postcolonial condition prevent ontological stability.

Variant I (2002), a square conflux of several Nike sneakers sewn together to produce a crystal-like surface, is an example of this flux. Itself a variation on the *Prototypes*, *Variant I* may reference the overall pictorial field of a work by Jackson Pollock or the accumulative logic of neo-Dada assemblages, but above all it is a mandala of the global economy opening to the four corners of the earth. It also epitomizes the way Jungen's works keep viewers off balance, subjecting objects and concepts to an anamorphic process. *Variant I* oscillates from artifact to sculpture to consumer object, showing the viewer a glimpse of a different material world. This, to be sure, is not the world as seen from an Aboriginal viewpoint, nor a synthesis of the views of the West and the rest. No possible perspective, no rational order, is able to accommodate those viewpoints. However, because it is always shifting as if driven by some sort of cultural cubism, because it is more than a view of the commodity world, *Variant I* compels viewers to consider how their world view passes through a hallucinatory filter that yields multifarious, almost paranoid views, as if they were seeing through the very "eyes" of the commodity.

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NOTES

1. See Serge Gruzinski, *La guerra de las imágenes: De Cristóbal Colón a "Blade Runner" (1492-2019)* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), 51-53.
2. Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, *Memoriales*, ed. Nancy Joe Dyer (México: El Colegio de México, 1996), 228. See also Gruzinski, 67.
3. Motolinía does not indicate the location of these events, but it is likely that they pertain to the Nahua Indians who made up most of the population in the central highlands of today's Mexico.
4. In this respect, see the testimony of Robert Joseph, "Behind the mask" in Peter Macnair, Robert Joseph and Bruce Grenville, *Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 26.
5. See definition in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2004), also available online at www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=refraction&x=15&y=15.
6. "I do not call them masks, because they have never been used for ceremonial purposes (Native or basketball)." Jens Hoffmann, "Brian Jungen," *Flash Art* 36, no. 231 (July-September 2003): 86.
7. "The vitrines reference the hermetic displays of traditional masks in anthropologic collections. I wanted the 'prototypes' to have the same institutional 'authenticity.' When I first exhibited the series in Vancouver, there were a few iconoclastic accusations, but most people understood my secular position." (Hoffmann, 86.)
8. "I am both dismayed and impressed by how the information technology arm of globalization has opened up possibilities for remote native reserves like mine. My band has discovered the marketability of its location and cultural heritage. Such ventures might confuse autonomy and community pride with profit margins but puts the individual behind the wheel of his or her own cultural exploitation. I think this kind of relationship is preferable to developing positive identities, especially considering the disparaging alternative: welfare." (Hoffmann, 88.)
9. See Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" in *Civilization, Society and Religion* (London: Penguin, 1985), 134-40.
10. Reid Shier, "Cheap" in *Brian Jungen* (Vancouver: Charles H. Scott Gallery, 2000), 3.
11. Matthew Higgs, "Brian Jungen in conversation with Matthew Higgs" in *Brian Jungen* (Vienna: Secession, 2003), 25.
12. Beverly Cramp, "Contemporary Mask-Makers Carve a New Niche," *Georgia Straight*, June 17-24, 1999: 102.
13. Higgs, 24.
14. *Ibid.*, 22-23.
15. In this respect, see Jungen's candid statement to writer Michael Turner: "The wall drawings developed after I began to exhaust the rounds of abject stereotypes I was creating in a period of drawing I did a few years ago. These drawings could represent an ironic strategy adopted by many artists working with identity politics in the late eighties to the mid-nineties." Michael Turner, "Prototypes + Petroglyphs + Pop," *Mix* 26, no. 3 (Winter 2001): 31.
16. Higgs, 24.
17. Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 186-88.
18. For a remarkable analysis of the current situation of First Nations imagery in Canada at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, see Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Circulating Aboriginality," *Journal of Material Culture* 9 (2): 183-211.
19. Scott Watson, "Shapeshifter" in *Brian Jungen* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2001), 16.
20. The ethnographic methodology of Jungen's research was entirely self-conscious: "I wanted to try to extract those images (abject or earnest) out of the imagination of the public consciousness and reproduce them as colour compositions arranged within the framework of classical ethnographic research." (Turner, 31.)
21. As a matter of fact, this writer saw them first in Helsinki as part of the *ARS 07* exhibition at the Kiasma Museum in 2001.
22. Townsend-Gault, 192-97.
23. The artist, in fact, insists that because they "don't function as masks, only mimic them," he prefers to call them "prototypes." (Hoffmann, 86.)
24. Michael Turner's statement in his interview with Jungen is in this sense symptomatic.
25. Georges Bataille, "L'Esprit moderne et le jeu des transpositions," *Documents*, 2nd year, no. 8, (1930): 49. Reproduced in [Georges Bataille] *Documents. Doctrines. Archéologie. Beaux-Arts. Ethnographie*. Préface de Denis Hollier, 2 vols. (Paris: Jean Michel Place, 1991). Quoted by Dawn Ades, "Surrealism: Fetishism's Job" in Anthony Shelton, ed., *Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire* (London: The South Bank Centre-Lund Humphries, 1995), 68.
26. Higgs, 24.
27. Robert A. Nye, "The Medical Origins of Sexual Fetishism" in Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds., *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 18.
28. Sigmund Freud, *Tres ensayos de teoría sexual* (1905), vol. VII, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1978), 141.
29. See Georges Bataille, "The Big Toe" in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 20-23.
30. Higgs, 25.
31. See Amorales's statement in *SLG 5* (London: South London Gallery, 2002), a newspaper produced for the exhibition *20 million Mexicans can't be wrong*. Amorales's *Flames Maquiladora* transformed the gallery into a sweatshop where the audience provided free labour for the production of red-leather wrestling trainers, which were to be sold for the economic benefit of the artist. It is interesting how different the operations of these two artists were, considering the similarity of their premises.
32. William Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, I," *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (Spring 1985): 5.
33. William Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, II," *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (Spring 1987): 39-41.
34. *Ibid.*, 45.
35. In developing this argument, I have referred to a Spanish edition of *Das Kapital* that includes the different versions of Marx's chapter on the commodity: Karl Marx, *El capital: Crítica de la Economía Política*, ed. Pedro Scaron (México: Siglo XXI editores, 1975), vol. I-1, 87-102, and vol. I-3, 1006-16. I have also used an online English edition, based on the translation of Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling and published by Progress Publishers, Moscow, which is available at: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/.
36. On this issue, see Jacques Derrida, *The Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994).
37. See Dawn Ades's discussion of the exhibition the surrealists organized to counter the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931. (Ades, 68.)
38. William Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx," in Apter and Pietz, *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, 141, 143 (italics in original text).
39. Higgs, 28.

OPPOSITE:

Variant I, 2002
 Nike athletic footwear
 132.1 x 114.3 cm (52" x 45")
 Collection of Michael J. Audain and
 Yoshiko Karasawa, Vancouver
 Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery