

***Survivor* – Jacob Gleeson
Transformer – Gareth Moore**

Curated by Anne Elizabeth Low

**Helen Pitt Gallery
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“My spot is behind Chantelle's -- a small patch of ground under the boughs of a cedar tree. My tent is small enough that most of it is covered by branches. Chantelle picks a few sticks off the ground and I pitch the tent. To my right are a pile of wet garbage (mostly cardboard, clothes and food wrappers) and a futon mattress with the stuffing coming out laid down on a couple of pallets. Two books, *How to Cope with Loneliness* by Billy Graham and *Overload* by Arthur Hailey are on the futon. I take *Overload* to read later.”

- Matthew Ramsey, Vancouver Sun reporter, commenting on his night spent in Tent City

In the summer and fall of this year, Vancouver's homeless problem seemed to reach a fevered pitch. Matthew Ramsey, a reporter from the Vancouver Sun, continued in the problematic canon of class tourism in the name of journalism, as he ventured into Vancouver's Tent City for the night. His reportage reinstated all that has become familiar about Tent City and as it becomes more familiar, it ensconces as an unsettling, ubiquitous staple, accepted as part of the Vancouver landscape. Ramsey's description of the domestic landscape of Tent City echoes the thematic basis found in the work of Vancouver artists Jacob Gleeson and Gareth Moore. Using an aesthetic vernacular of the street and everyday life specific to Vancouver, *Transformer* and

Survivor critique our expectations of throw away objects and lifestyles and provide situations of secondary use value through ready made installation and performance.

Gareth Moore's piece, *Transformer*, consists of an extensive body of photographs that document a series of on going performances throughout urban centres both locally and abroad. For this exhibition, we find the performance localized in Vancouver. Each series begins with a photograph of Moore standing in plain clothes in front of his house. As he walks throughout the city, whenever he finds a piece of abandoned clothing, be it a shoe, pants, sock etc, he exchanges it for his own same piece of clothing and moves on. As such, by the end of his walk, he has traded absolutely every item of his clothing for those he has found on the street, in back alleys, and dumpsters. Each photo documents Moore wearing each succeeding piece of clothing he has found. In some of the photographs his ensemble seems very much alike to one prior, indicating a change of clothing under what he is already wearing.

Through this process, he creates a chimerical map navigated via the checkpoints of extremely temporal objects. Similar to the somewhat paranoid survival technique found in children's fairy tales of leaving a trail of bread crumbs in order to find ones way home when entering into unfamiliar territory, Moore is enacting the inverse pattern. He picks up his trail while moving forward, creating an imaginary constellation of objects that extrapolate beyond the unsettling clues regarding the origin and narrative of former wearers. By reusing these pieces of clothing, which one sees more often than not on an everyday basis, especially in Vancouver, they are identified as items that still contain an obvious use value as

Moore fishes them out of their abjection by wearing them as though they were his own. Through his actions his identity is completely transformed, as are the judgments and expectations that go along with particular modes of dress. The first photo documents him as an average individual, who looks comfortably dressed, to the last photo where none of the clothing fits, some of it dirty and wet and completely mismatched. The entire transformation is perceived through each photo in the series, culminating in his own image as something he is not, yet he has come to embody throughout the performance thus creating an unsettling modality that is all too familiar within Vancouver.

While Moore interacts with urban detritus on a phenomenological basis, Jacob Gleeson similarly provides a critique through the excavation and recapitulation of found ready mades and transient dwellings. In his piece *Survivor*, he uses sculpture to provide a secondary representation of lived reality. Over the past few years, Gleeson has been actively observing and documenting a floating home on False Creek. Given the nature of False Creek as somewhat of a zoning anomaly, it has become a mutable space allowing for such living situations to exist. This particular dwelling, which began as a simple half cylinder construction, has now grown to a large "home" currently floating just below the Cambie Street bridge. What Gleeson has recreated in the gallery can be perceived as a mediated sculptural document of the structure as it exists in real life. The raft as a document of non-fiction becomes the locus of the departure from such "real life" temporary architecture into the realm of creative non-fiction. Narrative comes into play as Gleeson places clues and signifiers to the nature of the imaginary individual that could inhabit such a dwelling. By adding such clues,

ranging from specific architectural elements such as a sky light to a rotating tin can beacon offering a pathetic surveillance system, the raft is transformed into a "home". Inside plays a video of a log-burning fireplace, a rueful replacement of the typical warm hearth thus expanding the action of making a fairly dire living situation homey. All the apparent amenities of the traditional "home" become increasingly ironic within the structure they inhabit. Furthermore, with the addition of objects that sidle between found ready made and the artists own sculptures the pathos is amplified. Here the objects such as a sharpened squeegee and splash guard flippers become actual devices of "survival" in the reality suggested by the raft. It becomes a home housed within it's own world, yet within its hominess lies the unsettling paradox of it's complete vulnerability.

As such, both artists tender a condition, or rather create spheres that supplant expectations of abdicated objects and space. While Gleeson literally explores the notion of survival in the context of the contemporary city, Moore cautiously embodies the forgotten, both calling assiduity to the reality of Vancouver's ignored landscape.