



## DAMIAN MOPPETT

### >> Vancouver

In a series of photographs by Vancouver artist Damian Moppett, six different goats—the really matted, dirty, furry kind straight out of a 17th century pastoral scene, twisted horns and all—are documented in what amount to matter-of-fact portraits. Captured lushly in a green meadow, these pictures are cautiously ironic and strangely beautiful. They are the first Moppett has made that in some oblique way link him to the landscape-based, largely

photographic imagery that has held sway in Vancouver—the work of such well-known artists as Jeff Wall and Rodney Graham.

Born in Calgary, Moppett, 33, is part of an emerging generation of Vancouver artists involved in something altogether different from their teachers. Though initially a painter, he is primarily a maker of photography, constructing banal still-life pictures of sculptural messes he makes himself and the occasional photographic homage, like this self-portrait as Hollis Frampton, the late American filmmaker and photographer. Moppett has moved on to room-size installations that incorporate a range of media, including sculpture, drawings and video. His activities as lead guitarist in his own band are also creeping into his work. And he has made several series of still-life pictures of detritus—everyday trash—carefully arranged in a way that somehow highlights its subtly

erotic or gendered nature. The raw materials have included Lego pieces and flaccid balloons, and, more recently, formless blobs of plaster culled by the artist and casually shaped into something like sculpture. On some level, Moppett's whole enterprise evolves an ongoing critique of masculinity and its accoutrements, which include modernist buildings, cigarette butts and guitars, not to mention billy goats. In a recent Toronto exhibition, Moppett's most ambitious project to date juxtaposed a sculpture cum skateboard ramp and a series of beautifully crafted drawings modeled after 17th century Dutch kermis-landscape paintings. Like some of his talented peers in this emerging generation, Moppett succinctly mines the slippage between a 21st century pastime and a personal preoccupation with art about art.

—Connie Butler