

ARTS

Been Up stands convention on its head

VISUAL ARTS

BEEN UP SO LONG IT LOOKS LIKE DOWN TO ME

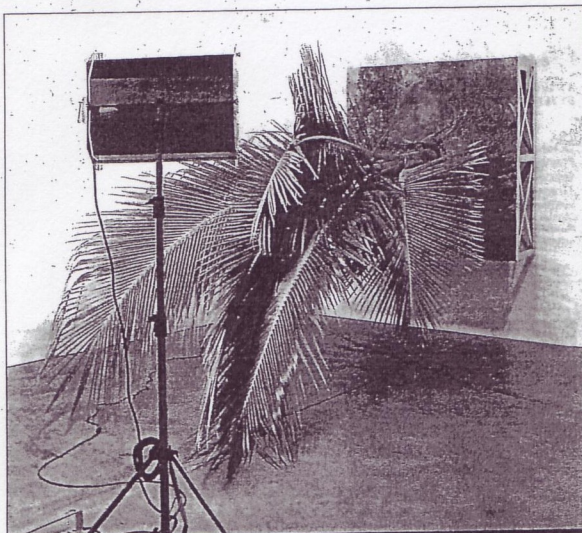
At Presentation House Gallery
until November 4

◆ The world turned upside down is an ancient and persistent metaphor for disorder, disaster, chaos. In the exhibition *Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down to Me*, however, upside-down-ness is seen as a creative and political strategy. The inversion of images is a means of unsettling conventions and awakening us to other possibilities of perception and cognition. Our relationship with the visible world, which is normally projected upside down upon our retinas and miraculously righted by our hard-working brains, is meaningfully discommodated.

Tightly curated by Mark Soo, the show comprises some 22 works by 14 artists, both local and international. Working across photography, sculpture, film, video, performance, painting, installation, and text, they subject the horizon line to a queasy assortment of flips, flops, twists, and turns. Film is run backwards, actions are rotated 90 degrees, words are painted on the ceiling, and downward drips of paint are made to grow upward like plants.

Jonathan Monk's *Constantly Moving Whilst Standing Still* consists of an old black bicycle installed upside down in the middle of the floor, its front and back wheels spinning in different directions and at different speeds. This work, with its suggestions of a simple machine thwarting its own function, upsets ideas about transportation and progress, and even environmental activism. Although its initial appearance is whimsical, Monk's bicycle troubles with its mood of failure and futility.

Henrik Håkansson's *Untitled (Coco Nucifera)* makes an even more unsettling statement. Its central form and



Henrik Håkansson's *Untitled (Coco Nucifera)* puts a queasy sideways twist on our ideals of paradise, and hints at impending environmental crisis.

metaphor, a mature palm tree "growing" sideways out of a wall-mounted patch of dirt and lit by a sodium lamp, alludes to a raft of cultural and environmental issues. As Soo explains in his catalogue essay, these include the social construction of landscape and the fabrication of romantic and insupportable fantasies about a tropical paradise. Global climate change is also called up here, along with the spectre of environmental collapse. One of humankind's most ancient symbols, the Tree of Life, the *axis mundi*, is knocked over, as if by a Category 5 storm.

The plaintive soundtrack to the exhibition originates with William Hunt's performance video *The Impotence of Radicalism in the Face of All These Extreme Positions*. As recorded in 2005 (and to be restaged live at

Presentation House Gallery on October 13, at 7 p.m.), Hunt straps his feet into a winching device and hauls himself upside down to the ceiling. There he hangs, like a big ol' bat, dressed in black, strumming an acoustic guitar and singing a forlorn song of lost love. His hair is disarranged, his forehead is furrowed, and his face and eyes turn deep shades of red. Soo sees vulnerability and also the potential for sedition in Hunt's act. I see the tortured relationship between the bard—the poet-storyteller—and the society to which he delivers his message.

A sense of doom related to bards, pop singers, and the lost ideals of 1960s counterculture also finds its way into Sam Durant's *Mick With Open Mouth*, a grainy, upside-down, black-and-white image of a young Mick Jagger in performance. It is applied to a large

mirror leaning against a wall in the gallery and relates directly to another work by Durant, *Entropy in Reverse (Gimme Shelter Backwards)*. Screened last week at Pacific Cinémathèque as part of the exhibition, the film is exactly what is indicated within the parentheses. Durant has appropriated the last part of *Gimme Shelter*, a rock documentary that includes footage of the out-of-control 1969 concert by the Rolling Stones at Altamont Speedway in California, during which a fan was stabbed to death. He runs the film backwards and then doubles it, projecting it twice, side by side. This strategy focuses us on both the retrospective writing of history and the violence such history records. It's a backward look at looking back—mesmerizing stuff.

> ROBIN LAURENCE

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THE VANCOUVER SUN

SECTION E

FALL ARTS PREVIEW

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

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FALL ARTS PREVIEW

THE VANCOUVER SUN, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

E3

Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit visits VAG



William Hunt performing *The Importance of Radicalism In The Face of All Use Extreme Positions*. He'll remount the work at Presentation House Oct. 6 as part of the group show *Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down To Me*.

Visual arts calendar also features works by Roy Arden and a performance art festival

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN
VANCOUVER SUN

An artist playing a guitar upside down, paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, photographs and videos by Roy Arden and a month-long performance art festival are among the visual arts exhibits and shows taking place in Greater Vancouver during the next several months.

At **Presentation House** in North Vancouver, artist William Hunt gets himself fitted and wired into a contraption that allows him to play a guitar for 10 minutes while singing in *The Importance of Radicalism in the Face of All These Extreme Positions*, one of the exhibits in the group show *Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down To Me*, which features 22 works by 15 artists from around the world. The exhibition runs from Sept. 15 to Nov. 4. Hunt's performance takes place Oct. 13 at 7 p.m. at Presentation House, 333 Chesterfield Avenue.

After the blockbuster Monet to Dali closes at the **Vancouver Art Gallery**, the first solo exhibition of the works of Georgia O'Keeffe in the country in more than 50 years opens Oct. 6. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Nature and Abstraction* is composed of paintings that span her entire career from 1917 to 1977. It also includes photographs of O'Keeffe taken by her husband Alfred Stieglitz, one of the first artists to work in photography. And opening Oct. 20, is Roy Arden, a mid-career overview of the work of an artist who has contributed to the city's repu-

tation as a centre for photo-based art. Throughout October, the **5th Live Canadian and International Performance Art Biennale** takes place at more than a dozen galleries in the Lower Mainland. Previous biennales have featured the performances of more than 140 artists' works. Live 2007's theme is the meaning of Public.

Exhibitions at other galleries include: **Contemporary Art Gallery**, 555 Nelson: *Copy Work* by Chris Gergely continues to Nov. 8. From Oct. 19 to 28, the gallery will be the site for *RSVP*, a series of dinner discussions guest-curated by Germaine Koh for the 2007 Live Performance Art Biennale. An exhibition of the work of Henrik Håkansson runs from Nov. 23 to Jan. 13.

Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Crescent Road and Main Mall, UBC: *Green: UBC Master of Fine Arts Graduate Exhibition* features the work of seven artists, Sept. 14 to Oct. 7.

Belkin Satellite, 555 Hamilton: *Working Back*, found objects rearranged and bricolaged by Gareth Moore, Kerri Reid, and Kara Uzelman runs to Sept. 30.

Surrey Art Gallery, 13750 - 88 Avenue: *Mobile Structures: Dialogues Between Ceramics and Architecture in Canadian Art*, Sept. 15 to Dec. 16.

Catriona Jeffries Gallery: works by Judy Radul continues to Oct. 6, followed by Ian Wallace, Oct. 18 to Nov. 17 and Alex Morrison, Nov. 30 to Dec. 22. Gallery entrance at 274 East First is by the south lane.

Gallery Jones, 1725 West Third



The Blue Pope by Peter Aspell. Gallery Jones will show the B.C. painter's work from Oct. 3 to 27.

Avenue, features the works of B.C. painter Peter Aspell, an artist who explored shades of black in many of his works and admired the two-dimensional art of ancient Egypt. Oct. 3 to Oct. 27.

Elliott Louis Gallery, 1540 West Second: Sept. 11-30, *Doodle Does It: A Journey from Doodles to Bronze* by Mary-Ann Liu and Cyrus Yavneh; Oct. 2-21, *Tania Gleave's Between the Lines*; Oct. 23 to Nov. 11, abstract painter Peter John Voormeij's *Through Dutch Eyes 2*.

Equinox Gallery, 2321 Granville: new paintings and sculptures by Gordon Smith opens today to Oct. 6; works by Gathie Falk Thursday, Oct. 11 to Nov. 10.

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THE GEORGIA Straight

FALL ARTS PREVIEW



Christopher Williams's *Tenebrionidae*, *Asbolus Verrucosus* Death Feigning Beetle offers the "upside down-ness" of *Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down to Me*; *Yellow Leaves* shows Georgia O'Keeffe in the '20s.

Shows frame light, nature, and apocalypse

VISUAL ARTS

CRITICS' PICKS

◆ As in past seasons, postmodern references to books abound in this fall's visual-arts lineup. Two of the most notable are already up: Douglas Coupland's sculpture *Fifty Books I Have Read More Than Once*

and selections from R.B. Kitaj's print series, *In Our Time: Covers for a Small Library After the Life for the Most Part*, at the Simon Fraser University Gallery to October 20. Both allude to the complexities of meaning we derive from—and the multiple interpretations we bring to—our treasured books. They also suggest the pervasive attraction of bookish

subjects for contemporary artists.

At the other side of the spectrum, expect a direct address of global politics, world events, and everyday catastrophes. Ever since Francisco de Goya's 1810–13 series of etchings *Disasters of War* and Pablo Picasso's 1937 painting *Guernica*, modern artists have struggled to express the violence, cruelty, and horror that are part of the human condition. As an example, see Naufús Figueroa's mixed-media installation *Children's Tears Laid Out to Dry*, concerning violence directed toward children during the Guatemalan Civil War, on at grunt gallery until October 10.

This season, galleries and museums also recognize the young, the old, and the recently deceased. For one of the latter, look to the current exhibition at the Burnaby Art Gallery (running until October 21), honouring West Coast printmaker Doug Biden, who died of cancer in March of this year.

BEEN UP SO LONG IT LOOKS LIKE DOWN TO ME (September 15 to November 4 at Presentation House Gallery) The title of this show, an inversion of the 1966 novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* by doomed writer-musician Richard Fariña, is an enticement in itself. Curated by artist Mark Soo, this group of emerging, established, local, and international artists plays on the idea of "upside down-ness" by aiming video, photographic, text, and sculptural works at floors, ceilings, and walls. **The Draw:** We're invited to contemplate how inverting cultural conventions and visual orientation can expand our understanding of the world. Flip out.

guaranteed crowd pleaser, jointly organized by the VAG and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, examines how the famed American artist translated natural forms into her characteristic abstractions. The paintings are supported by two major series of photographs of O'Keeffe, taken early and late in her career. **The Draw:** The VAG says this is the first solo show of O'Keeffe's work in Canada for more than 50 years. For those who can't make it to Santa Fe, New Mexico, downtown Vancouver makes a fine O'Keeffe-pilgrimage destination.

EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS: REMEMBERING IN AMERICA (October 12 to December 1 at grunt gallery) Renowned Cheyenne-Arapaho artist Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds will be showing a suite of his monographs reflecting a recent visit to Chiapas, Mexico. His subject, the Mayan Tree of Life, accords with his ongoing interest in, studies of, and variations upon symbols and ceremonies of tribal peoples, both ancient and modern. **The Draw:** One of the most influential of contemporary American aboriginal artists, Heap of Birds brings power, eloquence, and politics to the multi-disciplinary address of his subjects.

JUAN ZAVALETA (October 19 to November 24 at Access Artist Run Centre) The horror! The horror! Mexican-Canadian artist Juan Zavaleta deploys mixed-media works to examine aspects of his two-year employment in a Manitoba slaughtering plant. The repetitive, gruelling, and dismaying aspects of his job are expressed in his installations, as are the grim personal consequences (mental and physical breakdown) of being part of a production line that butchered 10,000 hogs a

social gathering, as improv theatre, as forum for a wide range of ideas and beliefs, and as set for the collision of public and private, pleasure, and anxiety—what could be niftier?

ON THE BEACH (October 20 to November 24 at Artspeak) In Nevil Shute's best-selling 1957 novel, *On the Beach*, Australians await death by radiation as a result of atomic warfare. Riffing on the idea of the beach as a place of leisure as well as "an edge, a last frontier for an unseen end", Don Colman, Kristan Horton, Jack Lindsay, and Taras Polataiko create mixed-media artworks for a contemporary age of mass denial and impending apocalypse. **The Draw:** It's always good to be reminded about bread and circuses and the fall of the Roman Empire.

LUIS JACOB: A DANCE FOR THOSE OF US WHOSE HEARTS HAVE TURNED TO ICE, AND OTHER WORKS (October 26 to December 2 at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery) Fresh from its summer debut at Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany, Luis Jacob's video installation looks at the relationship between breakthrough works of modernist sculpture and dance, bringing together imagery by Barbara Hepworth and Françoise Sullivan, respectively. The show also features *Album III*, a montage of photo-images appropriated from a wide range of books (yes, books again) and magazines. **The Draw:** With his appearance at Documenta and solo shows everywhere from Helsinki to the Bronx, this Toronto-based artist (who also wears the hats of curator, writer, and educator) is clearly a rising star. Catch him on the way up.

VANCOUVER museum

Women's Fashions of La Belle Époque

1890 - 1914

Sept 13, 07 - Mar 23, 08

Clothing to covet.
Gorgeous garments with
strong silhouettes, richly
decorated with embroidery,
fringes, beadwork and fur.



Rice is Life

May 4, 07 - Jan 1, 08

Explores the agricultural, spiritual and artistic significance of rice, a grain that sustains two-thirds of the world's population.



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