

The art of creating the new from the old

Heath McCoy – Calgary Herald – March 10th, 2012



Installation View, *James Carl: Jalousie and Other Works*, TrepanierBaer Gallery

James Carl's *Jalousie and Other Works* is on view through to the end of March at TrepanierBaer.

James Carl first made his mark in the Canadian art world in the mid-1990s with a series of works in which he sculpted replicas of household consumer goods - such as washing machines, stoves and fridges - out of cardboard.

Nearly 20 years later, the Toronto-based artist continues to shape what might appear to be the unshapable with his current exhibition - Carl's first in Calgary - *Jalousie and Other Works*, on view to the end of the month at TrepanierBaer Gallery.

At the centre of the exhibition are five sculptures of oddly amorphous geometric shapes fashioned from the slats of venetian blinds, which are also referred to as *jalousie*.

Meticulously crafted over about five years - "They take forever" Carl says. "I gave up calculating when it got to 300 hours" - these sculptures are woven in the manner of baskets.

Carl is loath to talk about the nature or inspirations for his art, stubbornly stating: "My position is if the work doesn't speak for itself, than I've failed."

But he doesn't disagree with the assertion of gallery co-owner Yves Trepanier, who says, "Making something that's kind of a throwaway object is an interesting activity that has value and limit-less possibilities. . . . I think he wants people to take away that notion."

Trepanier adds: "This is an artist who has a strong attachment to, and belief in, the value of craft and the power of the hand to make things that have a currency."

Carl concedes: "These things are laborious in their making. What it means to me is that I'm not getting paid very much by the hour."

But Carl is quick to point out that, in creating sculptures out of unconventional materials, he's following in a long artistic tradition.

Trepanier cites the likes of Marcel Duchamp and Constantin Brancusi as clear influences on Carl's work.

"I'm not alone. There's a hundred-year history of people making art out of things you might not expect them to make art out of," Carl says.



James Carl, *jalousie* (a false sense of well being), 2010

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