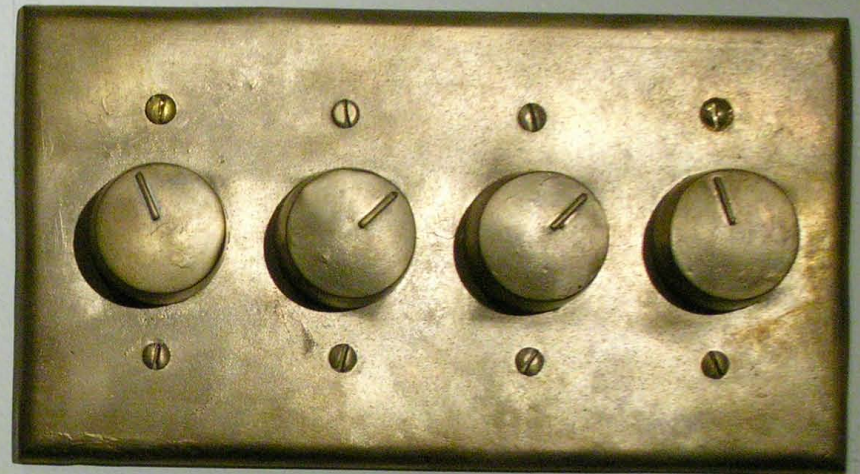




JOSEPH
HUBBARD

YOU
DON'T
KNOW
WHAT
YOU
ARE
SEEING

(ROMANCING
THE GALLERY)



MUSEUM QUAD TRACKLIGHT DIMMERS 2008-09; 4 cast bronzes, numbered; each plate 8" x 4.75" x 1.25" (20 x 12 x 3 cm)

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Director's Foreword

The Art Gallery of Windsor has maintained a long-standing commitment to supporting the development of artists practicing in southwestern Ontario. We have profiled the solo works of many artists including Ron Benner, Jamelie Hassan, David Merritt, Susan Gold, Rod Strickland, IAIN BAXTER&, Cyndra MacDowall and Joseph Hubbard's exhibition joins this legacy of commitment to contemporary art. Hubbard joined the creative community in London after obtaining his formal education in the United States and spent many years teaching there. His commitment to the region as a viable place from which to build an art practice had thus been enduring while also being informed by his larger North American biography.

After visiting the artist's studio in the spring of 2011, it became clear to me that Hubbard's exhibition has evolved to trace an important theme that has continued through his art for more than two decades: that theme is the museum and gallery and its ritual practices including care, handling, display, access and, even, reflection on its architectural structures and functions. This solo show is a departure from other models where a career is reviewed in phases of emergence, mid-practice or retrospect, and also from the model of profiling new work. Looking through the lens of Hubbard's interest in the museum and gallery as social space, this exhibit features a thoughtfully developed body of work within his much more extensive oeuvre. Engagement with museum and gallery practices has been of interest to many artists as the exhibitions

Museums by Artists (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983) and *The Museum as Muse* (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2006) have considered. Hubbard's views on the museum and gallery at once cherish the tradition of meticulously crafted original object rich in surface finishes while also critiquing and responding to the gallery and its collections: for this exhibit Hubbard has responded directly to the AGW's two collections of works by artists Wyndham Lewis and Jose Luis Cuevas to bring new perspectives on the significance and meanings of these collections. Hubbard's practice is also concerned with the important role that perception plays in the viewing experience and the two essays by Peter Schwenger and Ihor Holubizky illuminate Hubbard's journey with these ideas. We thank both authors for their thoughtful insights into this artist's work.

The Art Gallery of Windsor is pleased to realize this project which has been some three years in the making. We thank the artist for his dedication to realizing this show and also former curator James Patten who brought Hubbard's work forward for analysis and public view. We also thank private donors, Flora and Ian Tripp, and the artist's dealer, Jens Thielsen, Arlene Kennedy and Pat Jeflyn for their contributions and donations to this project. They have been important to supporting Hubbard's work in the private and commercial art market in the years leading to this exhibition. We also thank the Gallery's three major public funders whose contributions support our work with living artists: these agencies include the City of Windsor, the Ontario Arts Council and The Canada Council for the Arts.

Catharine Mastin
Director, Art Gallery of Windsor



(The making of) *BLUE LIFT* 2010; stainless steel, transparent cobalt lacquers

Joseph Hubbard: Romancing the Gallery

Imagine the institutional flipside to French artist Maurice Denis's often-cited 1890 proclamation that "before being a battle horse, a nude, an anecdote or whatnot [a painting] is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." Before, a gallery is an organized walk of pictures and objects, a laboratory for visual culture, and a new social space. It is essentially walls and space with infinite possibilities. But once a mission and vision — the four "classic pillars" to collect, conserve, exhibit and educate — and the day-to-day work is embarked upon, the idealism of "a window onto civilization" withers, and realities of resources and competition for the hearts and minds pries open the worm can of accountability (among others things, how to develop an audience). At the same time practical necessities fill new-built gallery spaces with clutter (in that sense, galleries are no different from apartment buildings or subways stations). A classic example is a light switch mounted on a prime gallery wall area because the contractor says "it HAS to be there" — or the piercing red of Exit signs. The clean white cube was never an option.

Joseph Hubbard's eye and mind has moved into transcending this space and condition by making something else of it. There is viral, burrowing doppelganger-ness in this undertaking. An ubiquitous but now archaic tracklight dimmer control unit is transformed from practical yet indifferent plastic to cast bronze — a thing made useless, but eroticised in the process. A security station at the Kunstmuseum

Stockholm — an antique 1932 telephone "updated" by the presence of a security camera (a ready-made anachronism) — provided a compelling visual moment for Hubbard. He reconstructed it, and likewise for a moment observed in the Kunstmuseum in Bergen Norway — an art vault door with a pair of cotton gloves hanging off the wheel-locking mechanism. A beautiful manufactured device in itself, but the sign of human presence is puzzling — why would they be left there? An example of an altered-transformed work is a British Museum hygro-thermograph made with ceramic and iron, the drum reader inscribed with cuneiform, which Hubbard imagined for the Baghdad Museum. It is a commentary on the vulnerability of material culture (the vault door and security station speaks to it in different ways), as well as ethics; the looting of that Museum during the Iraq War in 2003, and in turn, "other looting" — depending on your perspective — such as the on-going controversy of Elgin Marbles that were removed from the Parthenon in the early 19th century.

Other Hubbard delirious improbables and levels of transformation are an elevator door titled *Blue Lift* and a fire control cabinet as a hologram, *You Don't Know What You Are Seeing*. He discusses the latter as invoking the curatorial parlour-game question — what work of art would you [the curator] take out of the burning building — which lead him to a more significant question of perceptual dimensions, and wrote; "the viewer almost automatically adjusts his proximity [to the hologram object-image] to suit his own perception of the advantageous vantage point [yet] can never fully apprehend or define the object of our gaze." The elusive image, as Hubbard noted, represented a critical milestone in his life and work.

Making things is important to Hubbard (pardon the pun, a "mettle detector"), rather than taking a photograph of "moments" that may be read merely as anecdotal irony. As might be expected, the making

of the hologram was a technical challenge, but the simplicity of *BLUE LIFT* (2010) presented an equal challenge — fourteen coats of cobalt blue lacquer and six coats of clear acrylic in order to achieve a manufactured look, needing to be better than any manufactured product. In doing this, as Hubbard wrote (and in similar terms to the hologram experience), the “viewer determines an ideal viewing point of maximum colour intensity and reflectivity by moving to and fro.” In both, you can walk by and mistake it for the “other” not because there is no difference, but a “flaw” in our attention span in this, and other environments.

These inseparable visual and linguistic puns are Duchampian in dimension. Hubbard, however, is not “doing a Duchamp” even though it is now becoming increasingly evident that Marcel Duchamp laid a trail to this door. In a 1971 essay, the Canadian expat literary scholar Hugh Kenner (his teaching career was in the United States) imagined an incident of fairy-tale proportions:

Thus about 1917 a curator, roused by the clangor of his doorbell, might shake the cobwebs from his shoulders and swing wide the portals to discover on his marble steps a Duchamp ready-made, the inverted urinal say, cheekily claiming the right to be admitted.¹

After a back and forth — the curator and the urinal debating merit and value — the urinal claimed that its aesthetics and purpose was no accident:

Your talk of low and high does not confuse me, and if we are to talk of purposes, the Rodin was made exclusively for the never-mentioned purpose of being sold to someone



such as you. And as to the purpose you hint I was made to serve, I no longer mean to serve it, and cheerfully proclaim as much by the fact that I stand before you turned upside down; a procedure, I may add, from which half your collection of sculpture would conceivably benefit.²

If Kenner concluded that the urinal's point has long been conceded, the idea of the intruder at the gate continues. Hubbard imagines a "gift," which he has constructed as a National Gallery of Canada crate retrofitted with "survival" gear, that he describes as a way of smuggling an artist into a gallery — the Trojan horse revisited.³ It's not a National Gallery crate, but one he had made and painted in their characteristic red (and instantly identifiable as such by the inmates of Canadian public galleries).

If Hubbard is a "child of Duchamp," they share the passion for making things, and not leaving the outcome to a "mere" enchantment of the eye; there are other children. One in a legion was Australian Ian Burn (1939–1993), who moved to New York from London England in 1967 and active in the artist collective Art & Language, which published the *Journal of Conceptual Art*. In New York (by happenstance, in the late days of Duchamp), Burn made his *Mirror Piece*, a framed under glass, glass mirror and 13 sheets of text as examination and rumination — the looking and seeing and thinking, but not to deny that this is a mirror and still useful for shaving for example. Burn provided instructions on how to make work; anyone can, but not everyone does. This leads to a critical point — not when is a work of art finished, but why does an artist start it?⁴ By the same token, not finishing a work is not the end of it.⁵ And why not? Society and culture is a work in progress, and certain things are finished — a car for example — for practical reasons before it can be sold and be useful. Then its usefulness,

its life comes to an end. Does art live forever — *ars longa (vita brevis)*? Perhaps, but the usefulness of art can come to an end due to unforeseen factor, and museums around the world has vast collection holdings in deep storage.⁶ In this scenario, the deep storage is more expandable in comparison to exhibition space.

The seen, and the unseen, and the scenes

Hubbard addresses the seen and unseen situation through actions given a visual manifestation — he calls them collaborations or collaborative interventions — with works in the Art Gallery of Windsor's collection (as if a Kenner dialogue on the doorstep, except both are either (a) outside or (b) inside, depending on the perspective). One is done with ten portraits of Assumption College priest-presidents painted by Wyndham Lewis in 1944.⁷ The Canadian born Lewis had moved to England as a child, but returned to spend the war years in Canada. The works are on permanent loan to the Art Gallery of Windsor, but are not easily reconciled in a collection hanging as they were not painted with a "gallery context" in mind, and was indeed something of a "make work" project for Lewis under the patronage of Father Guinan, the Assumption College president.⁸ Hubbard has decided to show nine of the ten on a vault rack brought into the gallery — as he has seen them in the vault — and singled out one work for what he described as the collaboration, to include black cassocks and shoes. Hubbard spoke of the arduous search in finding such period material and what he learned in the process. Their appearance on view is not to transform them into "art" but to speak of life. The other is an intervention (of sorts) with a set of thirty-seven watercolour and text pages by Mexican artist José Luis Cuevas donated to the Art Gallery of Windsor from a private collector in 1979. Hubbard commissioned

a translation of the writing, which are Cuevas's insights and anecdotes about the art world. In other words, life as it is circumscribed by the activity of the art world — not art itself.

A counterpoint to this collaboration and intervention is an interjection, views outside the gallery proper, along the track of knowing where you are; two ten-minute videos, one of the Detroit skyline from Windsor and the Windsor skyline from Detroit (which includes the Art Gallery of Windsor building in view). As Hubbard discovered, the view to Detroit is easy to find on the internet, but not the reverse. Hubbard provides a sense of being there, and here, and there — an essay in real time without editorialising.

Time limits

Exhibitions have a defined and limited life-span, and that's why they're called "temporary." It's not that the exhibition idea is no longer valid, but that the business of galleries is the movement of ideas — which can be good, bad and ugly, concerned or indifferent. What then is the fundamental condition of the gallery, if the objects are not so permanent (nailed to the wall)? Hubbard offers *Patrons at an Exhibition*, which is based on a photograph that I shot, and gave permission to Hubbard to use for the purpose he imagined (trust). The image was shot from behind a group of people attending a curator's talk (I was one of the two, but at that moment, slipping to the back of the bus). The object in question/being discussed is partially visible in the parting of the group, and in the (inadvertent and by circumstance) absence of art, what is evident is the visitor, the client-patronage. The 19th century frame for this 21st century image, to me, harkens to the origin of the museum as we know it — as Tony Bennett wrote, an organized walk.⁹ Here, it is evidence



PATRONS AT AN EXHIBITION 2010–11; digital transparency / LED edge lit display, 19th c. beaux arts period museum frame; 63 3/4" x 53 7/8" x 7 1/2" (162 x 136.7 x 20.3 cm)

of the organized talk, as it relates to one of the four pillars — "to educate." Hubbard's ("romancing the gallery") is a slippery term — a complex mutual interplay, and far more than the gallery as (sometimes described), a social site.¹⁰ A commentary by then British Museum Director David M. Wilson underscores the "romance" for curators:

On my first day in the Museum as a very junior curator I was presented with three tasks; the one in my own speciality was the most difficult (to answer a query as to whether the Vikings ate onions) [and continued] A good museum curator is above all things curious about all objects.¹¹

Hubbard's enterprise and this undertaking is not about curators, it is his curiosity, but like death and taxes, curators are unavoidable for the artist. From an email I wrote to Hubbard 28 May 2010; the subject field was "slippery objects 2" (he didn't respond):

Nothing fails “better” than the attempt to grasp the idea, and the true curatorial melancholy is the exhibition that is smug and authoritative [about] meaning... and abuses the thoughts of better ideas. Or worse, “enlists” the lesser thoughts, so that the curator sits at the top of this heap of things.

Returning to Kenner — as he pondered his work environment at the University of California at Berkeley, a preface to his commentary on art, museums and interlopers:

The State of California...has supplied me with an office in which to meditate, on the explicit understanding that I affix nothing to the walls. It is a totally puritan interior, a plaster cube. The State’s postulate is clear: my usefulness to the brightest 10 percent of its adolescents will not be enhanced by rectangular arrangements of form and color.¹²

The outcome-objective for Hubbard is more than an enhancement of the gallery spaces in conventional ways (but not to say that those conventions are irrelevant) — it is a visual-perceptual essay on a condition, about seeing, what is visible but you don’t see, but never strictly pedagogical. Achieving it will require a “romancing” of the gallery, and the challenge of doing it right have been (has been or will have to be?) discussed over coffee.

Ihor Holubizky

Ihor Holubizky is Senior Curator for the McMaster Museum of Art. He has previously held curatorial positions in public galleries across Canada and in Australia, and has written and guest-lectured internationally on a range of cultural topics.

Endnotes

1. Hugh Kenner, “...The Dead-Letter Office” in *Museums in Crisis*, ed. Brian O’Doherty (New York: George Braziller, 1972) p.168
2. Ibid p.168–169
3. Indeed, Duchamp turned the gesture of the urinal, to test the will of the Society of Independent Artists for the 1917 Armory Exhibition, into a herd — not only the edition of ten produced in the 1960s via Italian dealer Arturo Schwartz, but the 300 miniatures that are included in Duchamp’s *boîte-en-valise*, issued periodically between 1942 and the final posthumously, in 1969.
4. A comment that painter Adolph Gottlieb made during an “intimate” conference in New York in 1950; see *Modern Artists in America* (New York: Wittenborn Schultz Inc., 1951)
5. Again, Duchamp’s *Large Glass* (1915–1923) is an example of a self-confessed incomplete work, and as annotated in his 1963 Pasadena Art Museum exhibition catalogue: “the Large Glass continues to its state of incompleteness.” But this is a curatorial question as well.
6. Years ago I sat on a panel discussion with a prominent collector, lawyer and advocate for the arts, who asked (in a longed-for fashion), ‘where are the eternal values today in art’; in essence, why is art subject to fashion? My response, rather than an answer — don’t blame the tailor for the suit you ordered. If art is “made to order” or “off the rack,” it reflects the attitudes and wants of the time. At the same time, artists who act as social navigators are going against prevailing attitudes and taste. The problem is that those suits don’t fly off the rack.
7. Assumption College was founded in 1857 and affiliated with the University of Western Ontario between 1919 and 1953. It became a university in 1957, and then associated with the foundation of the University of Windsor in 1963, but remaining autonomous.
8. The portraits were included in the 1993 Art Gallery of Windsor exhibition “*The Talented Intruder*” *Wyndham Lewis in Canada 1939–1945*, which travelled to the Glenbow Institute and the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1993.
9. Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum; history, theory, politics* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.186
10. The social site is evidenced well enough in Richard Earlom’s 1772 mezzotint depicting visitors to the 1771 Royal Academy Exhibition in London, but may have its “modern” origin in a Woody Allen routine, why he visits galleries: “accidentally a smattering of culture...creeps into me [and] the kind of girls I like theoretically should show up here.” Woody Allen CBC interview, originally broadcast 19 November 1967: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYaTePzGoQM>
11. David M. Wilson, *The British Museum, Purpose and politics* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1989) p.41
12. Kenner, op.cit. p.162



SENSOR III (FOR THE BAGHDAD MUSEUM) 2007; modified American museum hydrothermograph, ceramic, sintered iron and wall shelf; 18" x 15" x 6.5" (44 x 38 x 17 cm)

The Pleasures of Unknowing

Now you see it, now you don't. Within a framed recess appears a bundled hose on a rack and a fire extinguisher — except their contours shimmer with iridescence and then disappear completely as you approach nearer. The apparatus is actually a hologram, no deeper than an inch. If René Magritte famously inscribed upon his picture of a pipe with the words *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, then Joseph Hubbard might well have titled his delusive work *This is not a fire control cabinet*. In actual fact he titled it *You Don't Know What You Are Seeing*, and has extended that title to the preoccupations of his whole exhibit. Directed squarely at "you", the sentence might sound vaguely insulting — although the insult, if it is one, can be turned around and directed at artists. When looking at works of art, people will sometimes say, "I don't know what that's supposed to mean," in a tone somewhere between resentment and apology. But in fact there is nothing to apologize for. If the artworks were in fact supposed to "mean something," then they could be replaced by an explanation: talking could replace seeing. And though it may seem obvious to say so, seeing is what a gallery offers us. It is not an offer that we usually take up outside the gallery, or at least not fully. Shapes, colors, and textures crowd into our eyes, but only a fraction of all this gets selected, in accordance with our priorities and purposes. Even this fraction is far too readily translated into categories, words, and practical values. An art gallery invites us to see otherwise — beyond the familiar patterns and purposes of



View of Windsor skyline seen from Detroit from *THE VIEW FROM (T)HERE* 2011; two high definition 10-minute continuous looped videos

what we know. So, not to know what we are seeing is to be given the chance to see with new eyes.

Hubbard confuses our habitual modes of knowing in a wide variety of ways. In *The View from (T)here*, for instance, the title already destabilizes our centered situatedness: we literally don't know whether we are coming or going. The work consists of two adjacent panoramas: one of the Detroit skyline as seen from Windsor; one of the Windsor skyline as seen from Detroit. It takes some time to know, to see, that these are not the still images that they first appear to be but high definition videos. The kicker comes when a boat appears simultaneously on either end of the panels and sails into itself. This demonstration of how seeing depends on your bodily situation repeats in another key the lesson of the hologram.

Framing Vision

To see without knowing in advance is to reframe our habitual ways of seeing; and it is to a large degree the material frame around the artwork that encourages this reframing. To frame something, if only by your fingers, is to add by subtraction. The fuzzy-edged and continually shifting field of vision is sharply cut off; a bordered space is cut *out* where forms are immediately given a stronger relationship both to each other and to the space that now contains them. Framing initiates composition, which is to say a mode of seeing that is conscious of how the eye moves within a bordered space. The frame also exemplifies the look-again function of art — whether you are being invited to look at a Campbell's soup can or a splash of paint on a canvas. Of course the frame need not be the traditional kind, the gilt-edged guarantee that what it holds is even more valuable than all that elaborate gold. The unframed canvas can do the job as well; and the gallery, a hushed space removed from ordinary life, has a framing effect on anything that is being exhibited there. Frames tell us what to look at, though there may be some confusion: at regular intervals cartoons appear that show an art patron admiring a ventilator grill or an exit sign.

In this exhibit, Joseph Hubbard reminds us that a gallery includes lots of frames that do not signify art, but could. Even before the fire hose and extinguisher were transformed by the artist, they were framed in their cabinet. Doors too are framed, and Hubbard reworks both frames and doors. *Blue Lift* is perhaps the most uncanny example of this. Here Hubbard turns an elevator door into something transcendent and uplifting, if you will forgive the pun. The frame is the usual stainless steel; but the door has become a work of minimal art. This is due largely to its being blue: no other color would have had quite the same effect. Blue's effect, according

to Kandinsky, is to recede, to take the viewer with it into a contemplative interior (37). William Gass, citing Kandinsky, has written "Because blue contracts, retreats, it is the color of transcendence, leading us away in pursuit of the infinite" (76). Hubbard has maximized the depth of color by applying fourteen coats of cobalt blue lacquer and six coats of clear acrylic. The glowing surface is large enough that at a certain distance it takes up almost the whole visual field. At that point the viewer may experience something of the *ganzfeld* effect. A *ganzfeld* (German: "whole field") is a completely undifferentiated field of vision, such as clear blue sky or total darkness. The brain, seeking to anchor itself with visual stimuli and finding none, creates delusory or hallucinatory forms. In *Blue Lift*, then, it's not just that you don't know whether you are seeing an elevator door or a work of minimal art: you see forms within the color field that may be hallucinations or reflections, but are in any case unstable.

In *Adaptation/ Museum Service Doors* Hubbard destabilizes two kinds of frames by placing them in an overlapping space. A section of gilded frame — which is indeed ornately made up of frame within frame — runs into the space of a purely utilitarian service door, or rather the careful reproduction of one. It obligingly changes direction and turns itself inside out, to become, briefly, the frame of the door. In this process the heavily ornamented frame becomes, paradoxically, an elegant minimalist sculpture.

The Invisible Museum

If seeing is what an art gallery offers us, it is also true that there is much in the gallery that we tacitly agree not to see, or at least not to give the same kind of attentive seeing that we give to the art.

Yet these elements — frames, doors, pedestals, signage, lighting, and even other visitors — are what make up the gallery itself. In a number of pieces Hubbard makes us see just those elements that we have been conditioned not to see. The door to a museum art vault, reproduced from one in a Norwegian museum, is reproduced down to the protective gloves for handling fragile art. From the same museum, he replicates a security station whose rather Dadaist machinery produces a disconcerting effect of *insecurity*. The black Bakelite telephone, the alarm bell like that on a clock — these belong to an earlier era, when they would have been, in effect, invisible. As Marshall McLuhan famously asserted, it is only through a rear-view mirror that we see the media in which we are immersed. The *Museum Quad Tracklight Dimmers*, if they belong to an historical era closer to our own, nevertheless partake of the same effect. Cast in bronze, they also evoke a certain period in the career of Jasper Johns. A pedestal, in Hubbard's hands, becomes not merely support for an art work but something to be investigated in itself. Yet such an investigation, despite the inviting staircase entering and leaving the pedestal, can only be carried out in the imagination. Here as elsewhere in Hubbard's practice, the addition of one disconcerting element is all it takes to move the familiar into the strange. This is also the case with *Sensor III (For the Baghdad Museum)*, based on an apparatus for measuring temperature and humidity in galleries — moreover one that for practical purposes is often elevated on a pedestal as if it were a work of art. Hubbard has replaced the barrel that holds graph paper with a clay cylinder covered by Babylonian cuneiform. In this way an apparatus that is part of this gallery's preservative function is made to recall the

MUSEUM ART VAULT 2008 (MUSEUM FOR KUNST; Bergen, Norway); wood, chromed steel, fiberglass, museum gloves; 34.25" x 89" x 9" (87 x 226 x 23 cm)



destruction of antiquities in another gallery. Also related to the preservative function of galleries is the series of awnings that Hubbard has placed over traditional paintings. These are partly a comment on the precautions that galleries must take to ensure that light doesn't fade the works on display. But because the awnings obscure the paintings themselves, we once again don't know what we are seeing — unless, as we peek under the awning, seeing becomes the consciously undertaken act that galleries have always intended it to be.

Hubbard also comments on what we don't see, and cannot see, behind the scenes of the gallery; for, in Kynaston McShine's words, "a museum constitutes a less visible framework for the more visible art it exists to preserve". So Hubbard satirically constructs a miniature Board of Directors out of parking meters, an apt medium for a group whose main concern is finances. Strategic gilding creates a halo effect around the twelve directors, evoking a perverse Last Supper. Hubbard also incorporates into his exhibit another aspect of the gallery that is seen only at infrequent intervals, and that is its permanent collection. From the archives of the Art Gallery of Windsor, Hubbard has brought out two extraordinary archives of work by José Luis Cuevas and Wyndham Lewis.

The letters from Cuevas implicitly promise to explain the rich illustrations that cover them, offering the same temptation as the labels that are placed beside art works (or indeed catalog essays like this one): that the words will tell us what we are seeing, so that we will know what we are experiencing. Hubbard has removed the barrier that the Spanish words might pose for an English-speaking audience, by having the letters translated into English at his own expense. Yet these images have a power that goes beyond Cuevas's words.

Wyndham Lewis painted the ten portraits of priests while he was teaching in the English department of Assumption College, now the Assumption University of Windsor. Hubbard displays these on metal racks that are the standard storage equipment for galleries, which he has painted black. Also black, ten empty cassocks and pairs of shoes nearby reminding us that all we can really know now about the subjects of these portraits is to be found in paint on canvas; the emptiness can only be filled by our own acts of seeing.

There is another act of seeing that is not generally admitted by visitors to galleries, and that is seeing the other visitors. Temporary exhibits, we create spatial configurations that continually shift, commenting on our relationship both to each other and to the art. Hubbard has captured one such configuration in a digital photograph of *Patrons at an Exhibition* (a twist on Mussorgsky's title) listening to a lecture. Enlarged to the point that it acquires a painterly quality, it is set in an elaborate nineteenth-century frame. Two folding stools of the sort seen in the photograph are set in front of this work, inviting us to enter into the picture or else to bring the picture's composition out of its frame.

Joseph Hubbard is in a sense yet another visitor to the gallery, since his exhibit is destined to move on, rather as his viewers do. "Getting in" to a gallery means something different for an artist, though, as wittily expressed in the *Trojan Gift for a Museum*. The gallery in this case is the National Gallery of Canada; Hubbard has precisely recreated its standard shipping crate. But inside the crate has been elaborately outfitted with all the necessities for survival. This includes art: a nineteenth century painting that has been disconcertingly bent to accommodate the limited space, and in turn accommodates a light switch. As for the "Gift" of the title, "I am the gift," Hubbard

has declared. Remembering what their gift meant for the Trojans when it was fully unwrapped, this is a comment that could be taken in more than one way. Hubbard is clearly wary of the gallery as an institution, which like most institutions dictates what is admissible and what is not. Yet unlike most institutions the gallery has as a fundamental purpose to constantly challenge our habits of vision, and our tendency to substitute a predictable knowing for an unpredictable seeing. Hubbard manifests in this exhibit a kind of tough love for galleries in general, and the Art Gallery of Windsor in particular. Tough it may be, even cutting at times; but as his subtitle indicates, it is a love that is not lacking in romance.

Peter Schwenger

Peter Schwenger is Resident Fellow at the University of Western Ontario's Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism. His most recent book is *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, published by the University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

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JOSÉ LOUIS CUEVAS REVEALED 2011; from 112 merged images by Joseph Hubbard and first time translation texts; translations by Audrey Kay Restorick, PhD, utilizing 39 framed watercolour/letter pages by J. L. Cuevas, ca. 1976-78

55.

...in the meantime. There are also invitations to eat with old friends: the ambassador Manuel Tello, *Hernán (?) Sánchez* and the Argentine painter Rómulo Macció. We will also spend a few hours with the writer Fernando del Paso. Ximena is coming up with the idea and buy about the She, like I, resistance to and on the other my case, dominates I will be if upon Paris I many letters, fasting producing of I am your about the hope that every out and your business forward. It would be market.

Ximena is coming up to go to bookstores many books cinema in English. has a certain the French language hand and this is not English to perfection. celebrating that my return to will find of your since I was from during the days celebration. impatiently awaiting information "Sujo affair". I thing has been sorted with Caracas can continue sad if you were to lose this Cordial hugs from:

José Luis Cuevas

Prostitute from London #3





TROJAN GIFT FOR A MUSEUM (CONTRABAND BOX) 2010–11 (UN CADEAU POUR UN MUSEUM NATIONALE) 2010–11; National Gallery of Canada museum crate, mixed media, survival gear for smuggling artist into a gallery; 53" x 66" x 28" (134.6 x 167.64 x 71 cm)

Artist's Statement

My work frequently engages opposites: comedy and tragedy, banality and sophistication, surface realism and abstraction. This does not render the work impenetrable. Surface realism that has at least one obvious interpretation is largely a hook to engage the viewer. Wit or black humour is intended to produce nervous laughter, which I regard as a kind of entropic verbalization, as valid as analytical insight. The work is often part of a continuing series, which is explored over a period of several years

Over three decades I have revisited the same dozen themes in series, gradually refining each successive interpretation. But the consistent purpose of the work is social criticism and re-examination of contemporary values. The meanings are multi-layered from the obvious to the ambiguous. In works from the series *The Elephant IS the Room*, the process of art-making itself, including "collaborations with dead artists" and museum "interventions", archiving and exhibiting, became the subjects.



INVESTIGATION OF A PEDESTAL (detail) 2005; oak; 49.75" x 12.1" x 12.1" (126 x 31 x 31 cm)

Artist's Biography

I was born in Illinois in 1945, and spent formative years in Peoria and Chicago, but also on both sides of the Mississippi River in Moline, Rock Island and Davenport, Iowa. By the time I was 12 I had read all 28 volumes of Mark Twain's works, whose intelligence and wit left a huge impression that later manifested itself in the black humoured edginess that characterizes my art. The grim literary humour of Orson Welles, George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh also appealed to me. In childhood I never wanted to be anything except an artist and I am the only one in over 1000 years of recorded family history (in spite of parental objections).

My grandfather's dairy farm was expropriated to expand the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana which I later attended. All of my aunts, uncles, and cousins enrolled at the same university. It granted me a BA in Art History in 1967, a BFA in studio art in 1970, and a Master of Arts degree in 1972. The American mid-west and southern California are the crucibles for strong ceramic-based sculpture traditions and I had the good fortune to study with Don Frith, an important ceramicist in the USA. At age 21, I built a large gas-fired kiln for the university faculty. All my early work was clay based, but it was always about content, never about formal design and material, and I never had an interest in making vessels. (The only clay vessels I've made were huge nuclear towers!) I was more interested in contemporary art issues. In graduate school, I studied sculpture with Frank Gallo, a protégé of Giacomo Manzù. I was politically active in both the civil rights and the anti-war movements. While not a draft dodger, I nonetheless rejected many American values at mid-century. I entered Canada in 1972; and acquired Canadian citizenship in 1974. I found Canadian international policies more to my liking, but continued to make socially critical works up to the present.

Teaching, Writing and Politics

While completing my graduate thesis, I taught courses for two years in the art program at the University of Illinois. Canadian job offers followed in Québec and Ontario. I moved to Kingston, and accepted teaching positions as a secondary level art department head in Cornwall and again later in London. In 1980 I accepted an invitation to coordinate the 3-D and art history portions of the art program at Bealart in London. This was a two-year, post grade 13, total immersion art program with a great reputation. Dennis Reid, formerly the Canadian curator for the AGO, once called it the "best place to study art in Canada." It had eight studio areas; with students spending six hours per day for two years in their choice of two disciplines (they often spent twice that much). Accomplished graduates include Ron Martin, Murray Favro, Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe, Robert Fones, Ed Bartram, Jamelie Hassan, Gerard Pas, Ron and Tom Benner, Ed Pien, Lynn Donoghue, Ed Zelenak and hundreds more. Artists who taught there include Patterson Ewen, Don Bonham, Herb Ariss, Walter Redinger, Hugh Mackenzie, Rudolf Bickers and dozens of other distinguished mentors. With the assistance of the Canada Council, many professional artists were also invited in to work with the staff and students (I met many friends whom I have today as artists while teaching there). The intention was to provide a realistic experience for the students who wanted to be professional artists. The main difference between Bealart and other institutions, including the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College, was that many of the most gifted individuals were not "academic material" and had no interest in peripheral college endeavours. Those talented and extraordinary people from all over the country were allowed to focus entirely on what they loved most without dilution. Political pressures and

attrition gradually and inexorably altered the extraordinary environment it had been my privilege to participate in during what I now regard as a “golden period”. In 1990 I took three year hiatus in the studio from making objects to build a 50-foot sailing vessel.

During the years in which I taught, I was seconded by the Ontario Ministry of Education to write provincial art guidelines, taught courses for artists and art instructors for Althouse College, UWO. I got involved in the art politics of the London area and was elected president of Canadian Artists’ Representation at the Forest City Gallery. From 1984 to 1988 I served on the Board of Directors of the London Regional Art Gallery as the artists’ representative.

Despite the passion which I have for teaching, by 2000 I made the decision to quit academia and to concentrate full-time in the studio. The final decision was reached during a 1000 km walk across northern Spain for personal reflection.

My Practice

I now occupy my fourth studio apart from my home in London since 1984. The first was a 19th century cheese factory I shared with Tom Benner, where he made his “endangered species” sculptures. Three of my studios have formerly been occupied by Vernor’s, Orange Crush, and presently what was a Coca-Cola plant. A present ambition is to have a studio with a more distinguished beverage pedigree and closer to home than a half-hour drive away.

The first two decades of work continued the ceramic tradition which I had started with, and during that time I began showing with Tatay and Leo Kamen in Toronto, and with Thielsen Gallery, London, where I still exhibit regularly, and with a private gallery in Montreal. I arranged and participated in reciprocal shows with Quebec

sculptors, and participated in biennales in Canada and France. I have exhibited work many times at the McIntosh Gallery and Museum London, both of which have purchased works.

It has bothered me that Ontarians segregate work by medium. Since my work has always been about ideas rather than material, and because it has always included mixed media, I am not comfortable in an exclusive environment. Nonetheless, in 2007 I was given a 25-year retrospective of the ceramic based pieces at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, *25 Years of Provocative Questions*. By that time less than ten percent of my output was in that medium, but the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery has a peculiarly liberal escape caveat: if silica can be found in any part of an artist’s work, it can be shown there!

Acquaintances in the media and Canadian Art Productions have produced a video which explores that exhibition as a seminal milestone, and a second video which explores other series I have worked on. I like writing and most of my works begin with words or catch phrases which then manifest themselves through visual references. I always loved the work of Ed Ruscha. Early in my career, time was made for reviewing ceramic sculptural symposiums (California and Montreal), and I wrote reviews and articles for *Fusion* magazine. Most recently I wrote a catalogue for Kirtley Jarvis, whose work I admire. She gathers discarded detritus that people have jotted words on, purely as self-reminders. She laboriously reproduces the handwriting and individual words, monumentalizing them in wire, subjecting them to her obsession and plunging them into a new milieu. I once turned over to her 30 years of handwritten correspondence from an American poet friend of mine which evolved into a piece. Oddly enough, my titles are often the first things that occur to me, and I work backwards until the object is

manifested. Ihor Holubizky recognized my Duchampian inclinations and I agree that there is no artist in the 20th century with more influence. Holubizky and Peter Schwenger have also clued in to my preoccupation with the “contemplative *object*”: the notion that an artist can make a *thing* signify so much more than the sum of its parts. As well, within the comfort zone of an elegant presentation can lie profound artistic social inquiry which takes time to discover. That is an anathema in a period of instant gratification, texting, and Twittering.

Influences and Current Work

My oeuvre comprises a dozen themes, revisited and amplified using an eclectic assortment of media to attack social issues. My website is organized that way and I never think that I am repeating myself, merely discovering yet another way to explore social observations and criticism. It is surprising to realize that I have more sociologists as friends than artists. But it is the subject matter that they know best which interests me. Despite having lived and produced for several decades in the home base for “Regionalism”, my body and mind arrived from elsewhere, and I am not a Regionalist. My social concerns are unabashedly international and not locale specific in theme or context.

The longest I have worked on a single piece is 17 years. It was reassuring to attend a Hugh Mackenzie art opening in Toronto and to see a painting he had been reworking since 1992. J.W.M. Turner famously sneaked his palette and brushes under his trench coat into exhibitions to tweak areas of his paintings that he was dissatisfied with. I spent six months collecting contraband from airports, sorted and contemplated it, and ended up by using none of it! My extensive observations about contraband resulted in a piece that

took only an afternoon to make out of completely different materials! A recent (2010) exhibition of mine included two clay objects, fiberglass, braille, glass, photography, mixed media, metals, plastics, mounted insects, wood, found detritus, digital signage, and cast bronze. Artists whom I admire share that spirit of eclecticism, including Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Michael Snow, Robert Gober, Kiki Smith, Bruce Nauman, and Wym Delvoye.

In addition to many individual works, my production in the last decade has engaged two central themes in depth:

I spent from 1999 to 2006 inventing apocalyptic pieces for *WMD's* and *Paranoia* (the uses of language and fear engendered by political enterprise in order to manipulate the public for acquisition of power). During its creation, 9-11 and the second Gulf War happened, John Adams staged his opera *Dr. Atomic* at the Met, (fortunately seen in *Simulcast* with Dr. Ross Woodman, expert on Romanticism and contributor to the *WMD* catalogue) and a generation here and in Europe came to grips with the realization that they had been lied to again about both military ambitions and the perils of economic manipulation. The lessons of the Cold War era of *Dr. Strangelove*, Latin America, and Vietnam have to be re-learned. Life will never be the same.

Before that exhibition finished traveling to five cities, I had moved on to re-explore the idiosyncratic milieu of the artist/museum/consumer system and relationship, beginning with the process of art making itself. I had engaged that theme in the 1980's and it was time to re-visit it.

Allen Kaprow and the Fluxus artists had made some works about the art system in the 1960s and 1970's, and General Idea re-visited the art gallery “pageant” in the 1980's. I was not aware until 2010

that MoMA had produced an important exhibition in 2006 called *The Museum As Muse*. By 2006 I felt strongly that I had some unique and timely expressions based on personal experiences worth devoting several years to consolidating. While the observations and concerns are not mine alone, I believe that this art is provoking viewers to different realizations and perhaps to ask important fresh questions about the role of art, and of the people and places that show and preserve them.

The Object

I intend the works to exist as contemplative visual poetic objects with an elegant, yet critical and disturbing, darkly humoured presence. Familiar objects are recreated in unexpected materials as a way of challenging perceptions about the role of the art, and the illusive and temporary existence of the source. These works often occupy relatively small, intimate spaces in which they can be examined closely. Craftsmanship in the work is not intended to be a technical tour-de-force but rather to build on ambiguities suggested by the media themselves. Ironically, the mimicry possible in different materials subverts reality. Some pieces use lights and/or sound as a “material” that satirizes by appropriating and stylizing only a snippet of experience. There is evidence of objects from non-western cultures used to isolate western source material through contrast.

SECURITY STATION #25 2008 (MUSEUM FOR KÖNST; Stockholm, Sweden); ca. 1932 telephone, security camera, wire, brass switch; 11.75" x 79" x 10" (30 x 201 x 25.4 cm)



LIST OF WORKS

All work is collection of the artist unless otherwise stated
All dimensions are width, height, depth.

BLUE LIFT 2010; stainless steel, transparent cobalt lacquers;
46" x 86" x 7" (116 x 218.5 x 18 cm)

SENSOR III (FOR THE BAGHDAD MUSEUM) 2007; modified British museum
hygrothermograph, ceramic, sintered iron and wall shelf;
18" x 15" x 6.5" (44 x 38 x 17 cm)

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SEEING 2009–10; reflection laser hologram
ed. 2/2, museum fire control cabinet; 32" x 32" x 1" (81 x 81 x 2.5 cm);
Collection of McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario

PATRONS AT AN EXHIBITION 2010–11; digital transparency, LED edge lit display, 19th c.
beaux arts period museum frame; 63.75" x 53.875" x 7.5" (162 x 136.7 x 20.3 cm)

SECURITY STATION #25 2008 (MUSEUM FOR KÖNST; Stockholm, Sweden); ca. 1932
telephone, security camera, wire, brass switch; 11.75" x 79" x 10" (30 x 201 x 25.4 cm)

MUSEUM ART VAULT 2008 (MUSEUM FOR KUNST; Bergen, Norway); wood,
chromed steel, fiberglass, museum gloves; 34.25" x 89" x 9" (87 x 226 x 23 cm)

MUSEUM ARCHIVE SERVICE DOORS 2011; Sintra panels, mixed media, hardware;
70.5" x 84" x 5" (179 x 213 x 12.7 cm)

combined with *ADAPTATION* 1986; modified/mitred 19th c. frame;
52", 76", 18", 14", 9", x 7" (193 x 132 x 17.75 cm)

MUSEUM QUAD TRACKLIGHT DIMMERS 2008–09; 4 numbered cast bronzes;
8" x 4.75" x 1.25" (20 x 12 x 3 cm) each

TROJAN GIFT FOR A MUSEUM (CONTRABAND BOX) 2010–11
(UN CADEAU POUR UN MUSEUM NATIONALE) 2010–11
National Gallery of Canada museum crate, mixed media, survival gear for smuggling
artist into a gallery; 53" x 66" x 28" (134.6 x 167.64 x 71 cm); books include: copy of
the 1st issue of *Blast* by Wyndham Lewis, *Derrida for Dummies*, *Post-Modernism for
Dummies*, *Semiotics for Dummies*, *The Museum As Muse*, J.L. Cuevas suite of drawings

ITALIAN PRIMITIVE FOR AN INSIDE CORNER 1986; (19th c. oil on canvas, light,
switchplate; 21.25" x 12.6" x 7" (54 x 32 x 18 cm)

THE EUDAMONIA OF JOSHUA REYNOLDS 1985; 18th c. oil on canvas, school of Joshua
Reynolds ca. 1770 mixed media awning structure; 15" x 19.25" x 14" (38 x 49.5 x 36 cm)

A BOARD OF DIRECTORS (MONEY, TIME, & SPACE #2) 1984 revised 2000; 12 cast
ceramic parking meters, 24K gold, walnut; 48" x 18" x 18" (122 x 45.7 x 45.7 cm)
INVESTIGATION OF A PEDESTAL 2005; oak; 49.75" x 12.1" x 12.1" (126 x 31 x 31 cm)

Collaborations/interventions with works from the Art Gallery of Windsor Collection

JOSÉ LOUIS CUEVAS REVEALED 2011; 112 merged images by Joseph Hubbard and first
time translation texts; translations by Audrey Kay Restorick, PhD, utilizing 39 framed
watercolour/letter pages by J. L. Cuevas, ca. 1976–78, collection of the AGW;
dimensions variable

COLLABORATION WITH A DEAD ARTIST 2010; model #401 Art Deco style awning,
brass roller mechanism, fabric; 39.75" x 46.75" x 19" (101 x 119 x 48.5 cm); mixed
media, art vault rack, 10 portraits by Wyndham Lewis ca. 1944, collection of the AGW
dimensions variable



TROJAN GIFT FOR A MUSEUM (CONTRABAND BOX) 2010–11 (UN CADEAU POUR UN MUSEUM NATIONALE) with the artist

Joseph Hubbard:

You Don't Know What You Are Seeing (Romancing the Gallery)

October 8 – December 31, 2011

Essays Ihor Holubizky, Peter Schwenger

Editor Srimoyee Mitra

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Cover *YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SEEING* 2009–10;
reflection laser hologram ed. 2/2 museum fire control cabinet; 32" x 32" x 1" (81 x 81 x 2.5 cm)

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