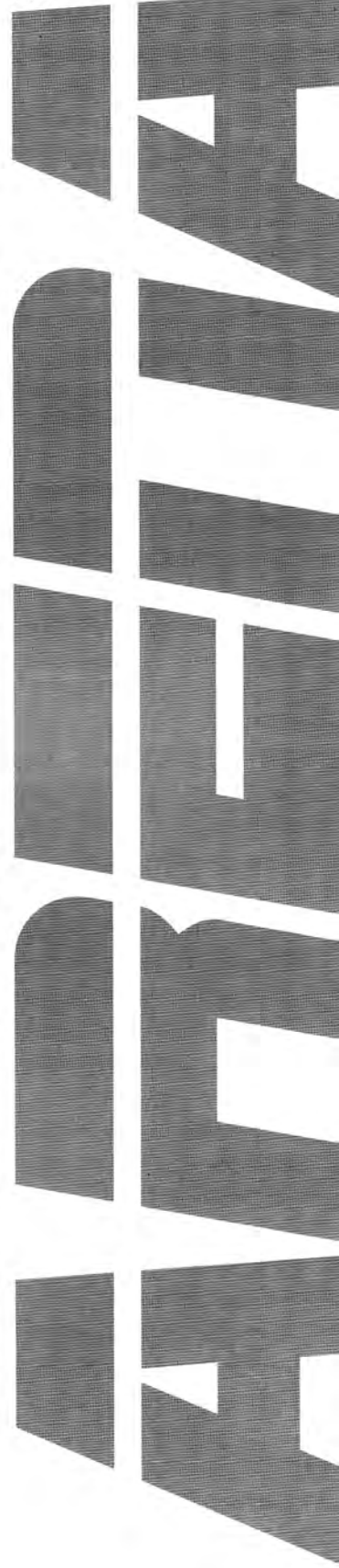


THE ART OF HOCKEY

Pierre Ayot
David Bierk
Beth Biggs
Lisa Birke
Mark Bovey
Bob Bozak
Roderick Buchanan
Nathalie Bujold
Geoff Butler
Paul Butler
Suzanne Caines
James Carl
Scott Conarroe
Ken Danby
Michael Davey
Thierry Delva
Siobhan Doherty
Jennifer Dörner
Charles Doucette
Aganetha Dyck
Joe Fafard
FASTWÜRMS
Greg Forrest
Tom Forrestall
Jean-Pierre Gauthier
Chris Hanson and
Hendrika Sonnenberg
Larry Humber
Andrew Hunter
Matt James
Anthony Jenkins
Brian Jungen
Stephen Kelly
Davida Kidd
Wanda Koop
Annika Larsson
Craig Le Blanc
Tim Lee
Serge Lemoyne
Lisa Lipton
Kenneth Lochhead
Jim Logan
Landon Mackenzie
Jason McLean
Laura Millard
Leah Modigliani
Luke Naylor
Charles Pachter
Graeme Patterson
Tony Scherman
Kent Sénécal
Kristian Simolin
P. Roch Smith
Ron Terada
David Thauberger
Robyn Thomas
Diana Thorneycroft
Andy Warhol
John Will
Craig Willms
Colleen Wolstenholme



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A MATTER OF STYLE — RAY CRONIN

Does hockey have a style? Of course. There's the classic look of players on game day — suits and mullets, or suits and spiky hair with blond streaks. Then there is the play-off beard. And the gap-toothed grin of a player missing "chiclets." There are the team nicknames and logos, the uniforms and equipment. There is a style of music, either the familiar organ or the more recently familiar blasts of rock and roll from the Jumbotron. Perhaps the most iconic element of what could be called "hockey style" is the painted goalie mask. The painted goalie mask dates from the 1970s, with Bruins goalie Gerry Cheevers usually credited for this innovation. He drew stitches on his mask whenever he was hit in the face. Another iconic mask of the 1970s was that of Ken Dryden of the Montreal Canadiens — his masks often featured a stylized version of the Canadiens' "CH" logo. Modern goalie masks are much more intricate, with detailed narratives created by professional airbrush artists. *Arena* features two works inspired by masks, and one that is a mask itself. Serge Lemoyne's *Dryden* is a classic of Quebec abstraction, an expressive tour-de-force that has become an icon in its own right. Brian Jungen's goalie mask is an updated version of the classic face shield, a modern mask painted with a motif designed by the artist. Made up of the phrase "human nature," Jungen's design pairs each letter and uses the colours red and white, long associated with Northwest Coast art and with his earlier series of "masks," *Prototypes for a New Understanding*, made from Nike sneakers. His goalie mask also uses silver, a colour that has become very common in team motifs in the NHL. Wanda Koop's series of five large paintings called *Hockey Heads* plays on two types of masks — goalie masks circa the 1970s, and Japanese Noh theatre masks. These massive heads — each one is eight feet tall — loom over the viewer, imparting a sense of theatrical presence and authority to each figure. Not painted with individual motifs, these plain white masks are nevertheless possessed of a singularity and a distinct individuality, a sense that we can recognize, in each wearer, a particular personality.

Watching hockey recently, my nine-year old daughter asked why only the goalies get to decorate their helmets. She thought it would look great if all the players could do so. I tried to explain why that wouldn't work but it was plain I wasn't convincing her. And why would I? She had a point.

It's not quite decoration, but Aganetha Dyck and her honey bee collaborators have worked a transformation on several pieces of hockey equipment included in *Arena*. Covered in beeswax, the honeycombs both enhance and obscure the base shape of stick, skates and helmet.

The decorating of goalie masks may not have sparked other forms of individual decoration in hockey itself, but that doesn't stop artists from imagining some: Jason McLean's *What Goes Up Must Come Down* and *Gump* are pieces of hockey equipment covered with intricate, almost obsessive decoration. It's reminiscent of the sort of doodling teenagers often do in class — on denim jackets, binders, textbooks, desks... whatever comes to hand, really. Transferred to hockey equipment there is an element of transgression that is hard to explain. The title in the first instance refers to the ethics of the hockey fight — if your gloves go up, they must come off for the fight. In the second case — a sculpture made from three goalie pads — the title refers to the late great Montreal Canadiens' goalie Lorne "Gump" Worsley, who was renowned for his toughness. "My face is my mask," he is famously reported as saying.

Perhaps the most notable article of hockey style, aside from the equipment itself to which I'll return, is the team logo. As I stated earlier, Serge Lemoyne's *Dryden* features the Montreal Canadiens logo front and centre as the motif on Ken Dryden's mask. More tongue-in-cheek, however, is Charles Pachter's *Blue Leaf Nation*, which combines two logos — Canada's flag and Toronto's maple leaf — into a flag for Leafs fans, appropriately fluttering from a hockey stick. Paul Butler's print, *Winnipeg Without the Jets*



Aganetha Dyck, *The Helmet*, (detail), 2000, Hockey helmet covered in beeswax, wooden beehives, 43 x 74 x 50.8 cm

appropriates the logo of the now-defunct NHL team the Winnipeg Jets (who were moved to Phoenix to become the Coyotes: see Craig Willms on why he hates Gary Bettman). Butler has re-imagined the old Jets logo as a new logo for the city — in a round field, the name of the city of Winnipeg shrinks to the bottom while a red ball bounces away. Kent Senécal uses the Chicago Blackhawks logo in combination with an image based on a cowboy image by the American artist Frederic Remington. His *Diptych* (comprised of the paintings *Blackhawk* and *Pink Remington*), evokes the childhood game of cowboys and indians, combining two stereotypes into a critical look at the production — and appropriation — of identities.



Paul Butler, *Winnipeg Without the Jets*, Original sketch (Pacific Studio), v. 1, 2005, Mixed media on card, 27.9 x 21.6 cm

Where Paul Butler's new logo for Winnipeg evokes loss, Colleen Wolstenholme's paintings are more about excess. Part of a series of ongoing paintings dealing with camouflage, *Slap Shot* combines the team logos of three NHL teams: the Ottawa Senators, the Nashville Predators and the New York Rangers. More obliquely still, Wolstenholme uses the "third jersey" logo for one of the teams (the Rangers), first introduced in a blatant marketing ploy to sell more product to fans. The "third jersey" features a stylized bust of the Statue of Liberty, while the Senators' jersey features a three-quarters profile of a stern Roman Centurion. The Predators' logo is a side profile of a snarling saber-toothed tiger. The combination of a symbol of imperial power, American mythology, and unbridled consumerism makes for a camouflage that, like all of Wolstenholme's paintings in the series, reveals much more than it conceals. Flanked by camouflage paintings based on logos from the worlds of NASCAR and the NFL, *Slap Shot* continues Wolstenholme's project of closely examining the visual cues provided by mass-culture, particularly in terms of what they have to say about how that culture shapes us.

The rink itself is also a form of hockey style — it provides the architecture of the game. And whether it is a frozen pond, a "grand old barn" from small town Canada, or a corporate entertainment zone à la NHL, the rink is the field upon which hockey dreams are played. Jennifer Dorner's *Aircraft Carrier* shares an interest with Larsson and Wolstenholme in the construction of identity, and in examining the conflation of games and power. In her work, a massive aircraft carrier, the ultimate symbol of military power for the 20th century, is adorned with a hockey rink on the flight deck. Is it, perhaps, the Canadian contribution to a NATO mission? One only has to watch any CBC *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcast to see the way



Laura Millard, *Away*, 2006, Oil on colour photograph, 102 x 152 cm, photography by Cheryl O'Brien

hockey is tied to the politics of the current Canadian mission in Afghanistan. Hockey is tied to a certain political stance, and in a way has become an extension of the military. Is it a tool in the arsenal? Perhaps, if the target is public opinion.

The rink is a more benign presence in Laura Millard's photographs of marks made by skates on ice. Though these large-scale works initially may read as lacking imagery, they are created by the artist commissioning skaters to perform moves from ice sports such as figure skating and hockey on pristine ice surfaces. Millard then photographs the resulting "drawings." There's an element



Memorabilia 2, (detail), 2008, Mixed media,
121.9 x 61 cm

of the documentary in Millard's work, though at a level of detail so precise that the works become abstracted. These photographs are detailed and specific even as they appear to be non-objective — a fine balance, such as that of the edge of a steel blade on the ice.

The rink is also the subject of Craig Leblanc's large sculpture *Form Study #4*. This is an instance of the rink as secular monument. Made from formed plastic, the shape of a regulation rink raises in tiers, starting from the size of a table-top hockey game, and ending up a fraction of that size. It is topped by a diagram of the rink markings and a sheet of protective glass. *Form Study #4* is a work that both invites you to come closer and rebuffs you with its pyramid structure. You can only lean in towards this rink; you're shut out from actually participating.

For Landon Mackenzie, the rink is the field within which her painting unfolds. Sharing with Millard an interest in the mark-making possibilities of skates on ice, her painting *She Cruises... (Hockey Rink, Regina)* creates a map of a moment, managing to imply the sense of freedom of being the lone skater on an ice sheet. For Charles Doucette, the hockey rink becomes the playing ground upon which ideas of sovereignty and identity are hashed out. His rink is also a Canadian flag, the maple leaf in the centre made from a pile of real leaves, painted red. The use of red ochre harkens back to Mi'kmaq tradition, reminding us that our national passion is being played out on territory to which we don't have clear title.

From architecture we return to equipment — for in any discussion of hockey's style one keeps coming back to helmets, gloves, skates, pads, and, especially, sticks. Lisa Lipton's knitted equipment has a remarkable presence in its own right, functioning, in a way, as do the objects of an artist like Matthew Barney — props and sculptures at once. Nathalie Bujold's "tights," also knitted, become hockey sticks in a neat conflation of childhood clichés — the title, *L'hiver sera long*, evokes a sentiment all too familiar to Canadians.

For the Toronto/Creemore-based collaborative duo FASTWÜRMS, hockey becomes a vehicle to create a new mythology — one based in a very old one. The works in the *Hockey Witch* series trade cliché for cliché: a cauldron is filled with pucks, broomsticks become hockey sticks, and a witch's hat stands in for a helmet. Hockey is full of superstition of course, something that the works in *Hockey Witch* acknowledge. Who, after all, hasn't hoped for a miracle while watching a game?

Perhaps the most famous miracle, for Canadians anyway, was the 2002 double Olympic gold medal wins (men and women) at Salt Lake City. One of the talismans of that series was the "lucky loonie" buried under the ice by the Canadian ice-maker for each and every Canadian game. That coin is now in the Hockey Hall of Fame. Thierry Delva, in his own bid for luck, has buried his own version of the "lucky loonie" beneath what passes for ice in *Arena* — the cement floor of Gallery 1. Dating from 2003, this talisman commemorates the year Delva became a Canadian citizen.



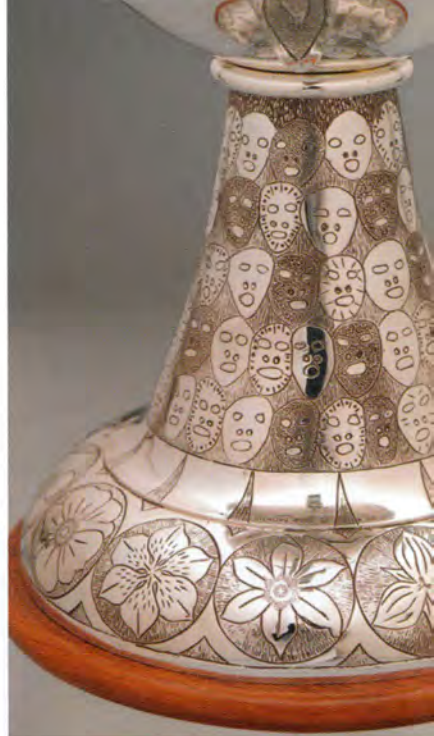
FASTWÜRMS, *Hat and Brooms*, 1995, Cast resin witches hat with embedded resin stick blades, pucks and painted canvas hat, 53.3 x 58.4 cm

Pierre Ayot's large print, "Sherwood 748," *Louisville 520*, "Ultralite," combines silkscreen and actual hockey sticks to create a version of the stick rack at a rink — the images and the objects blend into a single cohesive form, a printed tour-de-force. Mark Bovey's lithographic self-portrait, 1922 "The Primitive," is another virtuoso print — where hockey is the ostensible subject, though the medium is as much the content as is the image of the artist as a young hockey player.

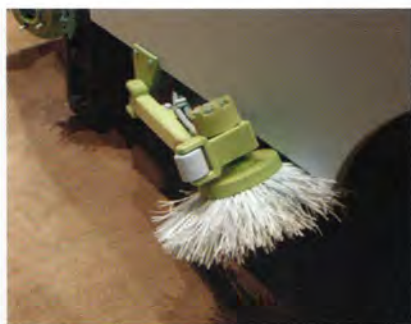
James Carl's sculpture, *The Original Six*, plays with the sculptural trope of monumentality, starting with the hockey icon of the Stanley Cup. His version is made from Coroplast, a corrugated plastic that comes in sheets and in a wide range of colours. The Cup is made from a silvery gray plastic and is flanked by six sculptures of cigarette lighters, each in the colour of one of the original six NHL hockey teams (Montreal, Boston, Chicago, New York Rangers, Detroit and Toronto). Before cell phones had illuminated screens (who am I kidding — before cell phones) and before the adoption of anti-smoking laws, people used to hold up lighters at concerts and sports events as a way of celebrating. The original six era predates the NHL's expansion in the late-60s, a purported golden-age that Carl gently satirizes with his sculpture.

Hockey's style includes more than its equipment and architecture of course: there are also its symbols, and most notably, its trophies. *Arena* features two versions of the most famous of hockey's trophies, the Stanley Cup, one each by Greg Forrest and the aforementioned work by James Carl. Such trophies rarely stand alone as art, although the 2004 World Cup of Hockey trophy, designed by Frank Gehry, comes close. Two other exceptions are Joe Fafard's *Saskatchewan Cup* and Beth Biggs' *Clarkson Cup*, the latter designed and made to be the challenge cup for the highest level of women's professional hockey.

Hanson and Sonnenberg's *Zamboni*, a full-size sculpture of the ubiquitous and iconic ice-clearing machine, constructed from high-density foam, monumentalizes one of the iconic features of any arena. Their penchant for combining great skill with humble materials, and their play on the contentious value of work, is on full display here. The contrast of the distinctly non-precious material and the staggering amount of work and skill in evidence in the piece makes clear that, for these artists, work is personal — it's not about adding value to the object, but about adding value to living. Hard work is a given, this work asserts — it's not a necessity in itself, but a choice that the artists have made. Transformed by the artists' labour, *Zamboni* becomes a monument to fascination and passion — not only for hockey and problem-solving, but most of all, for the very act of making things. *Hockey Fights and Fruit Bowls* also by Hanson and Sonnenberg, are photographs that combine images of fruit and plaster-covered objects in compositions that just barely cohere. Though they seem almost products of chance, they do, in fact, hold together (despite our own doubts) with compositions taken from videos of fights during hockey games. The colours of the jerseys, the lines created by flailing arms and fists, the equipment scattering, the officials and other players, these battles, too, devolve under Hanson and Sonnenberg's scrutiny, becoming tamed still-lives.

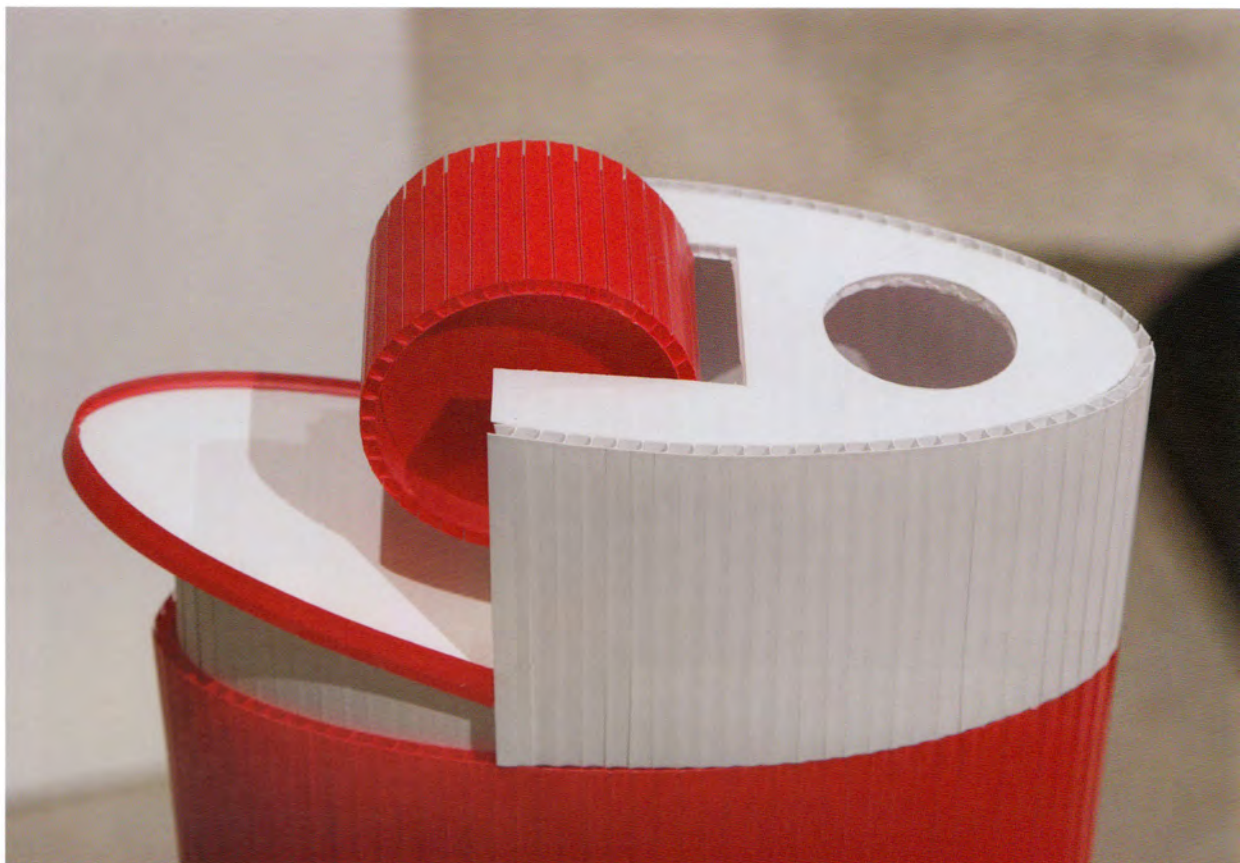


Beth Biggs, *The Clarkson Cup*, (detail), 2006, Contributing Artists: Oka Pitseolak, Pootoogook Qiatsuk, Therese Ukaliannuk, Sterling silver, rai spun, and chased; turned cherry wood plinth, 35 x 32 x 16 cm, photo by Brian Boyle with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM



Chris Hanson and Hendrika Sonnenberg, *Zamboni*, (detail), 2005, Polystyrene, 72 x 118 x 75 cm, photography by Amy Batchelor

James Carl



James Carl, *The Original Six*, (detail), 1998, Corrugated plastic, 61 x 20.3 x 12.7 cm (each)

Scott Conarroe



Scott Conarroe, *Shinny Rink*, 2004/2006, Chromogenic print mounted on archival board, 6/10, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, photograph provided by artist

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