

ESSENTIAL

VANCOUVER

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Aboriginal Art: Generation Next

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WHAT'S NEW,
VANCOUVER?

OPUS
HOTEL

boundary BREAKERS

BY BETTINA MATZKUHN

Aboriginal artists are venturing into new territory, using eclectic materials and iconoclastic motifs. Check out these culture-jamming creations by Inuit and First Nations.



Michael Massie: "I'm just a figment of his imagination" teapot of sterling silver, mahogany, caribou bone, horsehair

Michael Massie

Sculptures that seem to dance or teapots that strut like new evolutionary species burst from the artist's imagination. Born in Labrador, he draws inspiration from his mixed background of Welsh, Métis and Inuit. Massie remembers comforting times sharing tea with his grandmother, and he cherishes the teapot as an expressive vehicle. His silver surfaces are often emblazoned with Inuit language and references to fur or the hardy lichens that grow on Arctic boulders. Traditional materials, such as stone, wood and bone, are seamlessly combined with metal. Massie, who studied jewellery at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, borrows from eclectic sources, such as comic books, Pablo Picasso and *Star Trek*. Steeped in tradition as well as pop culture, his art is a strong brew.

At Spirit Wrestler Gallery, 8 Water St. 604-669-8813.
www.spiritwrestler.com

Sabina Hill

Although she is not of aboriginal descent, Sabina Hill has a strong sense of the Northwest Coast as home, and a lifelong appreciation for First Nations art and mythology. Trained as an architect, she works with Native artists to create exquisitely crafted furniture. Her limited-edition pieces include end tables, serving trays and ornaments made of glass and finely cut metals, such as anodized aluminum and stainless steel. Enhancing these are luscious hardwoods or recycled timbers.

Designed with Kwakwaka'wakw artist Steve Smith, Hill's "Glide Coffee Table—Eagles and Raven" casts intricate, winged shadows on the floor. Her motto, "Inspired by the past, creating the future," celebrates the joining of two cultures in creative dialogue.

At Inuit Gallery. 206 Cambie St. 604-688-7323. www.inuit.com
For custom work, contact Sabina Hill at 604-736-3034. www.sabinahill.com

Sabina Hill: "Glide Coffee Table—Eagles and Raven" and candle surrounds (below)



Nick Sikkuark: "Untitled (hunter with spirit)" of whalebone, caribou antler, caribou fur, muskox hair, muskox horn, sinew

Nick Sikkuark

Suspended between the mundane and the fantastic, Sikkuark's sculpture has a magnetic effect. The tangible world of the living body, the land and the weather takes form in materials such as bone, skulls, horns, fur and sinew.

In his cryptic figures, the artist evokes the spiritual realm. Sikkuark followed the Inuit way of life until the death of his parents; he was then raised by Catholic priests in Manitoba. Straddling two cultures, his work explores the role of the shaman in northern culture, as well as a Christian sense of spirituality.

The sculptor's sensitivity to materials is extraordinary. Polished, porous whalebone stands in for the mottled fur of a sealskin parka. Weathered antlers become human limbs. Balancing the frightful with the delightful, Sikkuark reminds us that mythology has roots in the everyday.

At Marion Scott Gallery. 308 Water St. 604-685-1934.
www.marionscottgallery.com



Andy Everson: "Heritage" limited-edition giclée print

Andy Everson

From his roots in the Comox First Nation, Andy Everson understands how closely land and identity are tied. In "Heritage" he depicts the legend of the Comox Glacier, a Vancouver Island landmark that is steadily melting because of global warming. The ancient story involves a chief who must respond to a great flood. In Everson's lifetime, equally momentous events are underway.

The artist embodies a new generation's adventure as the president of a Native-owned public affairs and media production company, which he founded after completing a Master's degree in anthropology from the University of BC.

In his art, Everson adapts traditional forms to the digital age, producing archival-quality, limited-edition works with a computer and a giclée printer. Thus timeless tales are passed on through contemporary media.

At Hill's Native Art, 165 Water St. 604-685-4249. www.hillsnativeart.com
And at www.andyeverson.com

Richard Adkins

Taking a flat sheet of silver and hammering, carving and embellishing it with Haida motifs is just one facet of this Northwest Coast artist's work. Adkins has studied traditional forms since 1971, working extensively with Haida masters

Bill Reid and Robert Davidson. His interests in anatomical drawings and European art history combine with his own culture's sophisticated graphic sense. In contrast to the traditional killer whale form, which arches in mid-air, Adkins' orca is about to break the water's surface. Its tail, body and pectoral fins overlap, giving a sense of realism and depth. Adkins is meticulous about the engraved shading; he uses an oxidation process to create areas of deep black. His silver whale fairly splashes you in the eye.



Richard Adkins: "Killer Whale" pendant of sterling silver

At Douglas Reynolds Gallery, 2335 Granville St.
604-731-9292. www.douglasreynoldsgallery.com

Charles Peter Heit

Carvings by Charles Peter Heit of the Gitksan Nation range from miniature pendants to large-scale wall pieces and totem poles. Heit has been both student and teacher at the renowned Kitanmax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art in northern British Columbia.

Focussing a critical eye on today's convoluted political negotiations, Heit presents an alternate take on the "talking stick." Traditionally, the stick was used by chiefs to assert their power while making important announcements. Heit's version has a two-faced chief sporting a necktie at the top, a governmental bureaucrat at the bottom, and motley figures caught in the twisted relationship between them. Conceptually direct and technically flawless, Heit's carving asserts the power of the artist to claim the floor.

At Coastal Peoples Fine Arts Gallery, 1024 Mainland St.
604-685-9298. www.coastalpeoples.com



Charles Peter Heit: "The Bullshit Stick" of yellow cedar, hair