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B.C. VISUAL ARTISTS RECEIVE \$10,000 CASH AWARDS

Each Spring, the Vancouver art community eagerly awaits the annual VIVA awards. On **Thursday, April 19** at the Charles H. Scott Gallery on Granville Island, this year's Selection Committee announced that B.C. artists **DANA CLAXTON** and **BRIAN JUNGEN** have been chosen for the prestigious cash awards.

The VIVA Awards were established in 1987 by the Jack and Doris Shadbolt Foundation for the Visual Arts. Annual awards of \$10,000 are given to 2 mid-career artists who have demonstrated strong creative potential and a long-term commitment to their work.

A new jury is appointed each year by VIVA's trustees to conduct a province-wide search for the candidates and to select the winners. The names of each year's selection panel and the recipients are a closely-guarded secret until the last minute. Candidates for these awards must be working with visual arts media. The committee does not accept nominations for applications. Instead, the recipients are selected by a majority vote for their perceived creative potential and accomplishment. Following the selection, there is no criteria or stipulation for how the money may be used by the artists.

The well-known philanthropists and community arts supporters Doris Shadbolt and her late husband Jack Shadbolt have been reluctant to have their names prominently displayed in the title of the foundation. For both, the awards have been a way of giving back to the art community the support they have received. Jack Shadbolt was a significant artist, teacher and arts advocate, while Doris has been equally successful as a writer, historian, curator and critic.

The work of this year's VIVA winners represents the extent to which contemporary B.C. artwork has evolved from Emily Carr's heritage of traditional, landscape-based painting. Over the past 20 years, a new generation of artists has contributed to Canada's international profile with forms of art that are urban, often documentary, and politically-oriented to social issues. Both Dana Claxton and Brian Jungen are artists who work on this edge. They have also emerged from the artistic netherworlds of alternate galleries and public spaces to acclaim in public galleries.

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RECIPIENTS OF THE 2001 VIVA AWARDS

DANA CLAXTON

Dana Claxton is an interdisciplinary artist working in film, video, photography and performance art. Her film and video work investigates colonialism and its relationship to aboriginal cultures in Canada and the United States. Claxton addresses issues of historic and contemporary exploitation and commodification of aboriginal culture by seeking to deconstruct how images, philosophies, communities and cultural iconography of First Nations are located within the mainstream. She is also interested in structures of neo-colonialism and the continued results and reactions to cultural imperialism by First Nations in the context of colonial history and the impact this system had/has on her family and community.

For example, *Buffalo Bone China*, a video installation exhibited at MacKenzie Art Gallery in 2000, comprises two elements both referring to the buffalo. "On the wall is a black-and-white video projection of archival film footage of a seemingly infinite herd of buffalo, sacred to Plains culture, according to Claxton, who is herself of Sioux heritage. Occupying a space on the floor in front of the video projection is a pile of broken pieces of antique china from such factories as Royal Doulton, surrounded by a velvet cordon. The broken china is from the colonial period made from buffalo bones sent to factories in Britain. How and why this happened is the subject of this work, and Claxton uses the buffalo's extermination as a means of comparing two vastly different cultural realities: one nation was making dishes while the other was starving."

— Jack Anderson, *The Leader-Post*

An active member of the arts community, Claxton has participated in panel discussions, juries and advisory committees; curated exhibitions in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Ottawa and co-chairs Imag E Nation – the aboriginal film and video festival in Vancouver. She is also a board member Imag – the indigenous Media Arts Group – a non-profit cultural organization dedicated to the production and dissemination of aboriginal independent film and video. She has directed projects for the CBC, the Canadian Labour Congress, National Film Board of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Her installation work is held in the permanent collections of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Mackenzie Art Gallery and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Claxton was born in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and grew up in Moose Jaw; she has been a resident of Vancouver since the early 1990s.

Visual material, both 35-mm slides and digital, is available upon request.

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BRIAN JUNGEN

Brian Jungen has established a reputation for wit, surprise and subversion. He creates sculptural objects from re-crafted, mass produced commodities such as running shoes and patio chairs. These pieces have a strange tension in their use of traditional indigenous forms and crass commercial products. His series of Northwest Coast-style First Nations masks titled *Prototype for New Understanding* consists of restitched Nike runners exhibited in oak-framed museum-style vitrines. The work *Shapeshifter* takes reconstituted plastic chairs bought in bulk from Canadian Tire to form a whale skeleton suspended from the Gallery ceiling.

"Jungen says that *Shapeshifter* evolved from his many visits to the Vancouver Aquarium, whose policy of keeping killer whales in captivity has become highly controversial. The captive whale was for Jungen a symbol of boredom and passivity, a parallel to the situation of the First Nations individual who is both marginalized and fetishized by mainstream culture. The aura of imminent extinction is something that the aboriginal artist can either exploit or disrupt. Jungen manages to do both." – Sarah Milroy, *The Globe and Mail*

In his series of *Prototype* masks "Jungen offers a re-reading of the tradition of Northwest Coast mask carving rather than a revival. Instead of carving wood, Jungen has constructed his masks from carefully dissected parts of Nike Air Jordan sports shoes. He has exploited the red, white and black colour schemes found in the mask tradition and the Nike designs, as well as reconfiguring the curvilinear forms used to make shoes into approximations of the forms used in painted and carved masks. Jungen presents these masks as possible talismans for young urban natives living between demands to continue traditional ways while surrounded by a predominantly non-native consumer society." – William Wood, *Parachute*

His work is included in the permanent collections of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario. He has had solo exhibitions in Vancouver, Toronto, Regina and Calgary and been included in group exhibitions in Belgium, Canada and Sweden.

Jungen was born of mixed Swiss and Dunne-Za descent in the community of Fort St. John in northern British Columbia. He is a Vancouver resident.

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