

## *Order/Disorder: a sculpture show*

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## order/disorder: a sculpture show

Gil MCELROY

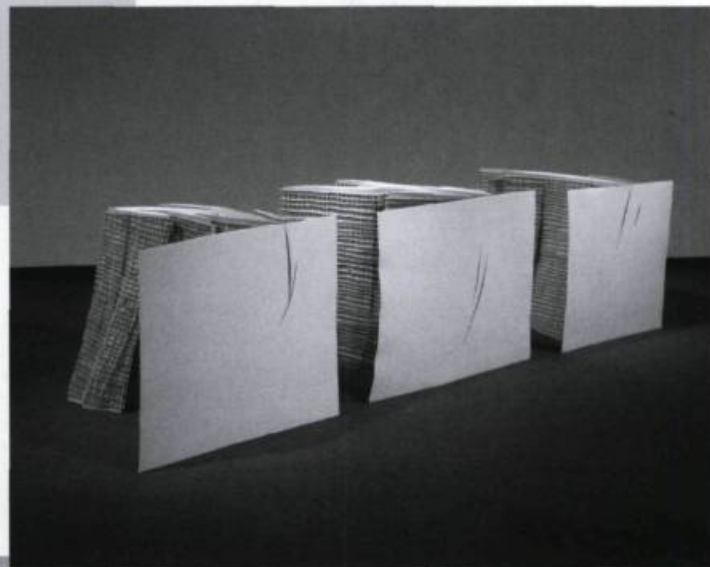
In the field of cosmology, the arguments that make up what is known as "The Anthropic Principle" maintain that our existence as living, breathing, self-conscious entities can only be because the universe exhibits a high degree of order. It's called "fine tuning;" one tiny alteration in something as fundamental as, say, the nuclear forces that binds an electron and proton together in an atom would have led to a universe in which life could never have taken hold—a place where disorder on a cosmological scale would have been prevalent.

For all of that, our mundane, everyday lives here on planet earth are inextricably bound up within the flux of tensions that exist between the oppositions of order and disorder, and as hard as we might try to systematize, structure and generally tidy the world and its things into neat arrangements, the big picture holds that everything will inevitably slide toward a state of maximum disorder. It's called "entropy," and in a nutshell, it means that things fall apart.

Maura Broadhurst and Georgiana Uhlyarik, co-curators of *order/disorder: a sculpture show* at the Latham Gallery, brought together relatively recent work by

Flavio TREVISAN, *The Underneath (parts I-III)*, 2003-2005. Drywall compound and illustration board. Photo: Maura Broadhurst. Courtesy: Latham Gallery.

Cal LANE, *Wheelbarrow*, 2006. Plasma-cut steel. Photo: the artist. Courtesy: Latham Gallery.



five Canadian artists — Michelle Allard, Kristiina Lahde, Cal Lane, Flavio Trevisan and Akira Yoshikawa — so as to address and explicate some of the aesthetically potential ratios that exist between the antithetical extremes of order and disorder in our lives.

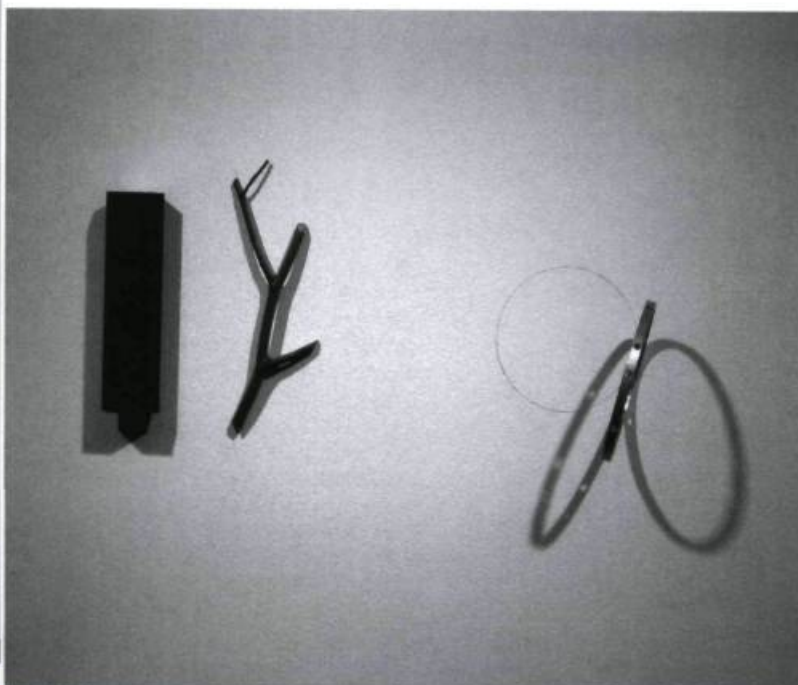
Kristiina Lahde's *Paper Cut* (2007) elucidated perhaps the clearest of those ratios. The work comprises three large balls made up of recycled business envelopes — the kind that bank statements and bills typically come in, with clear inset windows for an address to show through from inside. Lahde's paper balls are each self-supporting things, structurally articulating a form — that of a geodesic sphere — courtesy the simple act of the envelopes having been stapled together in a systematized way. And so Lahde has second-hand matter — detritus, really, disposable envelopes that have been roughly torn open and then discarded — organized so as to articulate the recurring pattern of a mathematically regular shape. In such a simple concept, there is much aesthetic pleasure and clarity.

Cal Lane's *Shovels* (2006) and *Wheelbarrow* (2006) are somewhat more problematic. In an extension of work she's been doing for some time now, Lane has cut lace patterns into the steel blades of two shovels, and the container of an ordinary wheelbarrow. The familiar symmetry of lace — here, two different patterns, one for the shovels that is based on the

shape of a leaf, and flower-based motif for the wheelbarrow — is contrasted by the rough unevenness of the hand cutting Lane has done using a cutting torch. An order/disorder ratio is consequently apparent, but hand-tatted lace exhibits such irregularities in any event, so what we're left with is a contrast between the delicacy connoted by the patterns we culturally associated with lacework, and the utile strength of the working tools that are shovels and a wheelbarrow, and the industrial process used to create the pieces. Lane's work is good — very good — but here it less than adequately illuminates the curatorial theme.

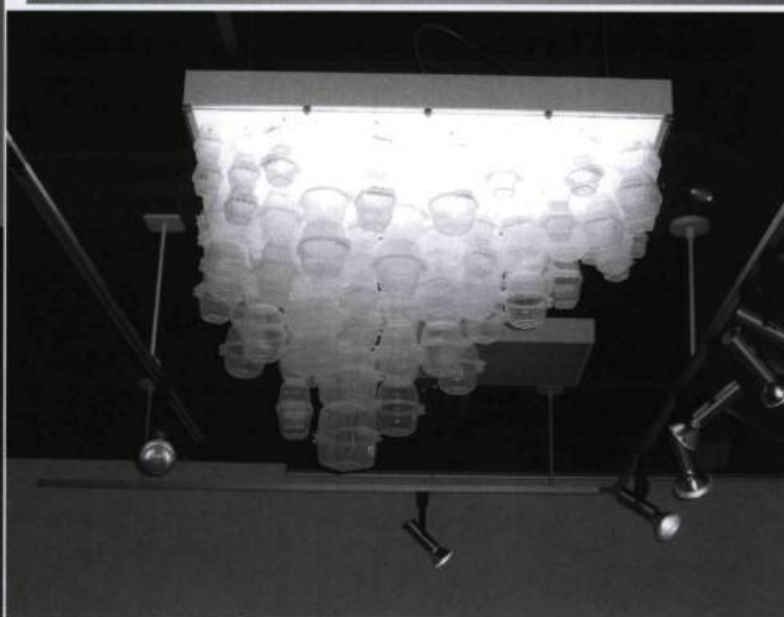
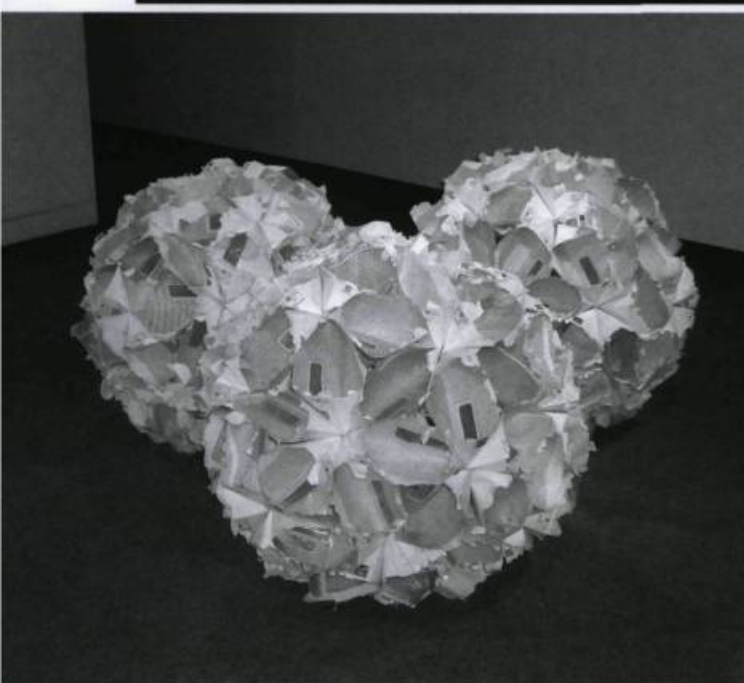
The Latham Gallery's ceiling is dotted with a series of rectangular fluorescent lighting fixtures that predate the installation of gallery lighting, and Michelle Allard chose one of them as the site for her *Untitled (Container Assemblage)* (2007-2008). Mounted directly onto the surface of the fixture, and descending down from it, are vertical stacks of small plastic lidded storage containers — round ones, square ones, rectangular ones — of different dimensional sizes and volumes. The arrangement of the work is somewhat chandelier-like with the individual stacks dropping down to various staggered levels of height, but overall is decidedly asymmetrical. While the shortest containers stacks tend to be set out toward the periphery of the work, the "focal point" of the tallest stack is





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**Cal LANE**, *Shovel*, 2006. Plasma-cut steel. Photo: Maura Broadhurst. Courtesy: Latcham Gallery.

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**Akira YOSHIKAWA**, *Bonding*, 2008. Steel, tree branch, aluminum and graphite. Photo: Maura Broadhurst. Courtesy: Latcham Gallery.



←←  
**Kristiina LAHDE**, *Paper Cut*, 2007. Envelopes and staples. Photo: Maura Broadhurst. Courtesy: Latcham Gallery.

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**Michelle ALLARD**, *Untitled (containers assemblage)*, 2007-2008. Plastic food storage containers and hardware. Photo: Maura Broadhurst. Courtesy: Latcham Gallery.

skewed off-centre, and none of the stacks are neatly arranged within the rectangular space of the lighting fixture. Instead, they seem rather untidily placed and somewhat haphazard appearing. Allard's work enacts a strong sense of microcosmically modeling the arrangements of a typical urban environment where what we see now as haphazard and arbitrary locations for structures is based on what were, way back when, perfectly sensible responses to natural environments. This work, and it works very well indeed.

Flavio Trevisan's *The Underneath (parts I-III)* (2003-2005) comprise three complex floor-mounted pieces that present small, wall-like facades each of which is incised by two

wound-like slashes. These narrow openings lead to narrow interiors that progress back from the front faces of the works and which are hemmed in by what seems like the compression and folding of walls, now virtually at right angles to the fronts. But these interiors are of less aesthetic importance and interest than their exteriors, for here we are given to see a cellular kind of construction behind it all: a gridded architecture of thin wooden ribs giving strength to the forms, a lattice of verticals and horizontals almost organic in the irregularities of its pattern. The sharp angularity to the folded facades lends a geological, even tectonic, quality to these pieces, as if catastrophic forces had been at

play disrupting the cool, geometric planes of the works. Point taken.

Akira Yoshikawa contributed three wall-mounted sculptural works, pieces each comprised of quiet and subtle arrangements of seemingly disparate physical and ideational elements. *Bonding* (2008), for instance, comprises a linear setting of three objects: from left to right a section of steel bar, a piece of tree branch, and an aluminum ring set at right angles to the wall. The ring casts three shadows on the wall: two courtesy the gallery lighting, the other a graphite drawing of a circle that corresponds to the circumference of the ring. The symmetry of the ring and its drawn equivalent is balanced, on the far side of the work, by the section of steel beam that is symmetrically

hexagonal in cross-section. Framed between them is the seemingly asymmetric chunk of tree branch. But it is a symmetry of a different order than the artefactual steel bar and aluminum ring; it is a symmetry of the natural world, of a growing, organic thing evidencing a pattern of Nature. Yoshikawa would aesthetically deny us an undemanding, cartoonish comprehension of the order/disorder duality, prodding us toward some deeper, nuanced understanding of what it is that makes the world work as it does. ←

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Gil McELROY lives in Colborne, Ontario.