

CHRISTINE BOURDETTE

Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides

CHRISTINE BOURDETTE

Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides

The Art Gym
Marylhurst University
Marylhurst, Oregon



Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides

Copyright © 2008

The Art Gym

Marylhurst University

17600 Pacific Highway

Marylhurst, Oregon 97036

www.marylhurst.edu

ISBN 0-914435-52-3

This catalogue, *Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides*, is being published on the occasion of the exhibition **Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides** in The Art Gym at Marylhurst University, September 7 – October 22, 2008. Terri M. Hopkins, director and curator, The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, organized the exhibition.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the publisher, except in the context of reviews.

Photography:

Bill Bachhuber | Pages 8 (Tête à Tête), 25, 31, 35, 49 (Real or Imagined?), 50–51, 67

David Browne | Pages 6 (Lasso), 16–19, 21, 22 (Punch and Comma), 40–46, 71

Brian Foulkes | Page 62

Jerome Hart | Pages 12, 14–15

Stewart Harvey | Pages 7, 65

Rebekah Johnson | Pages 4, 8 (Clutch), 22 (Bonnet), 27–29, 47, 52, 54, 64 (Cluster I), 72

Greg Kozawa | Pages 3, 26, 30, 32–33, 52–53 (Daedalus), 55–61, 63, 64 (Muss), 65, 70

Jeff Lee | Page 68

Jim Lommasson | Page 39

Ness-Pace Photography | Page 38

Harold Wood | Pages 6 (Alter Egos: Angelcakes), 48, 49 (Alter Egos: Domino)

Design: Meris Brown, www.FancypantsDesign.com, Portland, Oregon

Editing: Mary Catherine Lamb, copy editor; Judy McNally, Tesner essay editor

Printed by Hing Yip Printing Company, Ltd.

The Art Gym is a program of the Marylhurst University Department of Art and Interior Design. Exhibitions and publications are made possible in part by grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, Oregon Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, and enlightened individuals and businesses.



Escape, 2001
Steel wire, wood, mattress ticking, tacks, and wax | 25 x 94 x 14 in.
Collection of Joanne Rollins



Glad-hand, 1994
Pastel and graphite on paper | 29 x 23 in.
Collection of Jeffrey Smith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface Terri M. Hopkins	6
Acknowledgements Terri M. Hopkins	9
Artifacts of the Human Experience Linda Brady Tesner	11
Plates	37
Exhibition Checklist	66
Curriculum Vitae	68

PREFACE



Lasso, 1993
Pastel on paper | 36 x 48 in.

Opposite:
Asides, 2004–2007
Leather, wood, cardboard, pigment, and wax | 44 x 13 x 11 in. each (approximate)

In 1981, Christine Bourdette was one of four artists in the exhibition *4 Constructions* at a new college gallery called The Art Gym located in the Portland metropolitan area. The Art Gym at Marylhurst College (now Marylhurst University) had opened its doors just a few months earlier and was hoping to position itself as an adventurous program of exhibitions and publications that took the art of the Pacific Northwest seriously. Bourdette had begun to make a name for herself and had recently completed two major installations, *Garden State* at the Portland Art Museum and *Standing Target* at the Contemporary Crafts Gallery. It was a year when both the artist and the gallery were emerging, although the artist (as is only right) was a few strides ahead. For The Art Gym, Bourdette created *Fleet Suite* and installed its sail-like forms high in the gallery's metal roof trusses. She then took off for Chicago.

Chicago was good to Bourdette. It had a burgeoning art scene, and Bourdette jumped right in. She had a tiny studio near Wrigley Field, which cramped the potential scale of her studio work, so she sought out opportunities to work large and in public spaces. The Randolph Street Gallery, a well-known alternative space, invited her to participate in *The Loop Show*, a 1981 exhibition of twenty artists in architect Louis Sullivan's Fisher Building. She also began a decadelong relationship with the Klein Gallery.

In 1983 Bourdette returned to Portland, where she has continued to live and maintain studio and public art practices. In 1985 The Art Gym participated in a national tour of the exhibition *Rites of Passage*. The show featured many small-scale works, often inspired by folk art and frequently featuring flat figures in silhouette. Accompanied by a color catalogue, the show originated at the Alexandria Museum in Alexandria, Louisiana, and traveled to Ohio University, Milliken University, and the Klein Gallery.

Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides picks up shortly after *Rites of Passage* left off and follows the artist's course as she developed a fully three-dimensional vocabulary and a mastery of materials. The show includes more than fifty sculptures and six drawings from 1987 to the present and is the most comprehensive exhibition of Bourdette's work to date. Bourdette makes art that comments on social, political, and simply human predicaments. Her commentary is often indirect and laced with humor that appears to grow out of both affection and frustration with the foibles of our kind. Linda Brady Tesner, curator of the Hoffman Gallery at Lewis & College, has written an essay for this book that beautifully tracks and elucidates Bourdette's themes and formal explorations since 1987. In an effort to provide readers with a fuller understanding of the scope of Bourdette's work, we have chosen to include illustrations not only of works in the exhibition but also of those that we were not able to include due to space limitations.

Over the past three decades Christine Bourdette has become one of the Northwest's most accomplished sculptors. Bourdette's artworks are included in many private and public collections, including those of the Portland Art Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, Boise Art Museum, and Reed College. Her public commissions can be experienced in numerous cities, including Portland, Seattle, and Phoenix. She is also known for her collaborations with other artists such as choreographers Mary Oslund, Minh Tran, and Kristy Edmunds, and filmmakers Jim Blashfield and Joanna Priestley. In 1992, Christine Bourdette became the first recipient of the Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award, and, in 2000, the Regional Arts & Culture Council honored her with a Visual Artist Fellowship. These have been decades filled with formal, intellectual, and collaborative investigations beyond the scope possible in an exhibition or book, and we hope our efforts will encourage viewers and readers to explore her work further.

Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides joins more than fifty exhibition catalogues published by The Art Gym at Marylhurst University over the last twenty-eight years and becomes the most recent volume in our ongoing effort to expand public understanding of the art of the Pacific Northwest. It is a region fortunate in its artists and consequently rich in art.

Terri M. Hopkins





Tête à Tête, 1996
Muslin, rubber, and wood | 21 x 4.5 x 4.5 in; 22 x 4 x 4 in.

Right:
Clutch, 1996
Oil stick and watercolor on paper | 40 x 26 in.
Collection of Allen Tooke and Marcia Truman



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past two years as we have worked on the **Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides** exhibition and book, many people and organizations have been generous with their time and resources.

The Regional Arts & Culture Council awarded The Art Gym a project grant, which provided seed money once again for a major exhibition and publication on the work of an Oregon artist. The Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts continued to recognize and support The Art Gym program. These public investments provide economic support and encouragement for our efforts to add to the community's understanding of the art of our region.

We are also sincerely grateful to the many individuals who have recognized the importance of this exhibition on the work of Christine Bourdette. We offer special thanks to our major sponsors Lindley Morton and Corinne Oishi, Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle, the Elizabeth Leach Gallery, and Joan and John Shipley. We greatly appreciate the generosity of friends of the artist and The Art Gym who understood the merits of this book, including Ricardo Lovett, Martha Banyas and Michael Hoeye, Elaine and Warren Bourdette, Carol Edelman, Teresa Jordan and Hal Cannon, Betty Lovett, Sally Lovett, Don Merkt and Melissa Stewart, Marilyn Murdoch, Traci Parker, Joanna Priestley, Fernanda D'Agostino, Trude Parkinson, and Mark Teppola.

Collectors, both private and public, are the stewards of art. We thank the Portland Art Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, Reed College, and Regional Arts & Culture Council for allowing us to present works from their collections in **Christine Bourdette: Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides**. Private collectors play a critical and essential role in the ability of artists to make a living, continue to live in our community, and contribute to its cultural life. This exhibition would not have been possible without their generosity, and we thank them all.

We also acknowledge Elizabeth Leach, Daniel Peabody, and Nathan Bowser of the Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland, Oregon, for their assistance and advice as plans for the exhibition progressed; and Kate Bonansinga, director of the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts at the University of Texas at El Paso, for her help in facilitating contact with collectors.

This spring, The Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation and Linda Hutchins and John Montague helped The Art Gym launch The Art Gym Publications Fund. This new fund provides a much-needed base of support for this and future publications. We thank these Publications Fund donors for their recognition of the importance of documenting the art of the Pacific Northwest and our role in that endeavor.

The design of this book owes everything to the talents and insights of Meris Brown of Fancypants Design in Portland, Oregon. This is the fourth publication Brown has designed for The Art Gym. Her exceptional ability to understand the nuances of the art at hand and create a book that delights as it unfolds has been a pleasure to witness, and we thank her.

I also wish to acknowledge the work and support of my colleagues at Marylhurst University. Paul Sutinen, co-chair of the Department of Art and Interior Design, has been a trusted sounding board for thirty years. Staff Assistant Kim Heinrich has provided ten years of invaluable behind-the-scenes management and clerical assistance. And Peter Qualliotine, The Art Gym preparator, provides inventive problem-solving and respect for the art and artists for each installation. I am fortunate to work with them all.

Finally, I have had the privilege of organizing this exhibition in collaboration with Christine Bourdette. I thank her for the many hours she has devoted to preparations for the exhibition and publication, and for making all the hard work fun. Most important, on behalf of Marylhurst University and the larger community, I thank her for the art.

Terri M. Hopkins
Director and Curator
The Art Gym

Artifacts of the Human Experience

Linda Brady Tesner



Totem, 1986–87
Found wood, plaster, sheet metal, and paint | Dimensions variable, approximately 72.5 x 90 x 15 in.

A survey of sculptures by Christine Bourdette might remind the viewer of the imaginary encyclopedias of Jorge Luis Borges, or tales by Italo Calvino. Or perhaps they could be taken for examples of arcane fauna and contraptions found in Luigi Serafini's *Codex Seraphinianus*,¹ so much do Bourdette's works reimagine the flotsam and jetsam of civilized life. The artist, now in midcareer, has for more than two decades been giving her audience creatures and contrivances that gently remind us of what it means to be human.

Bourdette studied painting at Lewis & Clark College, but as an emerging artist in the 1980s she turned her attention to installation and sculpture. In recent years her oeuvre has broadened to include public art installations and stage design for choreographers Judy Patton, Minh Tran, and Mary Oslund. Much has been made of Bourdette's coming of age during the height of minimalism; this certainly had an impact on her work. But her formative years also coincided with a burgeoning awareness of folk art.²

Bourdette's Early Works: The Human Figure

The earliest artwork in this exhibition is *Totem* (1986–87), a grouping of seven skeletal figures in roughly human scale. Made from found wood, sheet metal, plaster, and cement, these appear to be hastily jerry-rigged, as if the artist quickly sketched in space. The figures, attenuated and tottering, are animated toward one another and to the viewer: One figure is holding its hands to its ears as if in disbelief, another has its arms folded across its chest, the smallest (a child?) is gazing up at a taller figure. *Totem* addresses a theme to which Bourdette has returned time after time: beings in community.

Around this time, Bourdette learned about the Guanajuato mummies from an artist friend who had seen them and was developing a series of prints based on them. This collection of accidentally mummified bodies was discovered in a cemetery in Guanajuato, a city northwest of Mexico City, where a kind of grave tax had been imposed on the families of those buried. Between 1896 and 1958, the corpses for which families were not available or were unable to bear the tax were disinterred and placed on display in Guanajuato's Museo de las Momias. The notion of human beings collected in death as a visual documentary of a community, the idea of them as memento mori, and the frozen expressions and gestures of the mummies intrigued Bourdette and led to the making of *Totem*, the title of which refers to the emblem or symbol of a family or clan. In this work, the "symbol" is the same as the grouping.

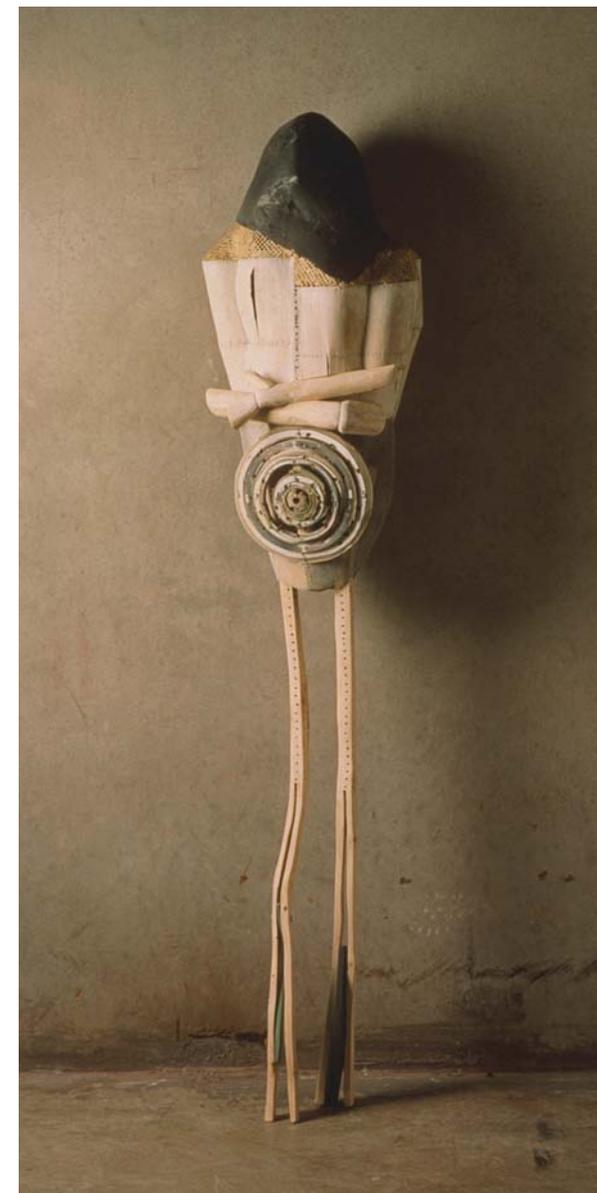
14

Scapegoat (1987), another early object, has roots in folk art aesthetics; it feels like the edgier cousin to a wooden animal image carved in Oaxaca. The sculpture was Bourdette's response to AIDS, made at an early stage in public awareness of the pandemic. The artist empathized with those she knew who, having been diagnosed with the disease, had to deal not only with the overwhelming medical and emotional burdens brought on by AIDS, but also with being stigmatized for their illness as well as for being homosexual. *Scapegoat* is a decidedly anthropomorphic figure, nearly six feet high, teetering on spindly legs, each leg split high as if cloven. The figure's arms are akimbo across a truncated body; a paper target shields its pelvis. Its head is cloaked, as if in preparation for a hanging; only a beaklike

nose can be seen under the hood. The image is of uncertainty and fear, but also ambivalence and fragility. As the title implies, someone has become a scapegoat, a target for blame.

In 1987, Bourdette completed a pivotal installation of life-size figures she called *Squatting Melissas* (named for her studio model).³ Here the artist reinvented the theme of humans in community, which she had begun to explore in *Totem*. The primeval *Squatting Melissas* have arms and legs of wood and bodies and heads of wire mesh and plaster, stained to look as if wrought from stone. In contrast to the figures in *Totem*, the *Melissas* are more fleshed-out than skeletal, but they are archaic enough to inspire one writer to compare them with humans ossified for eternity in Pompeii.⁴ The artist had experimented with other squatting figures, beings with human hands and feet but animal heads that recalled Egyptian canopic jars. In a 1986 performance at the Portland Art Museum called *Common Nature*, Bourdette had arranged these earlier creatures in a reimagined, surreal Garden of Eden.

In all, Bourdette positioned six *Squatting Melissas* in a circle, as if she had captured them in candid moments of daily life: in contemplation, in conversation, drawing in the dust, giving birth. The artist was inspired by her travels in Asia, where she observed Third World people doing much of their daily business in this hunkered posture. In the rich experience of travel, Bourdette especially appreciates the opportunity to reflect on her own culture in relation to other cultures. In this instance, she was struck by how little space Third World people require



Scapegoat, 1987
Found wood, birch veneer, paper target, wire mesh, and plaster | 70 x 16 x 15 in.
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle



Squatting Melissas, 1987
Wood, wire mesh, plaster, and paint | Life size, dimensions variable
Multiple collections, including the Portland Art Museum and Tacoma Art Museum



From left to right:

Cosmonaut, 1988
Wire mesh, pigmented plaster, comics | 63 x 28 x 33 .in
Collection of Betty Thomas

Falling Angels, 1989
Wire mesh, plaster, paint, and wax | 55 x 22 x 18 .in
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle

Calling Home, 1988
Wire mesh, gauze, plaster, and paint | 70 x 24 x 13 in.
Collection of Donna Drummond



compared to the bulky accoutrements we surround ourselves with in Western culture (cars, lawn chairs, baby carriages, and so on). While Bourdette's *Melissas* are slightly dark and eerie, their gestures are animated and alive with implied movement. Though they are distanced from the real-life experience of most contemporary viewers, they also strike an elemental chord of recognition that ties one culture or era to another.

Bourdette continued to investigate the figure, with gestures and implied meaning, in human-scale works such as *Calling Home* (1988), *Cosmonaut* (1988), and *Falling Angels* (1989). *Cosmonaut*, in particular, sports a direct reference to contemporary culture: The figure's thigh-high hip boots are papered with comics. Gazing down at his legs, he appears befuddled at having waded into the cosmos of pop culture.

In these three works, Bourdette's skill with the human figure is evident, as is her deft suggestion of expression, but the figures are enigmatic. Form, here, is subjugated to latent emotion. The absence of specific facial features and the tactility of each figure's surface remind one of Manuel Neri's figure studies. But Bourdette is not investigating human form per se, unless one considers the body a vessel, its thin skin shaped by the elusive and incorporeal volume it contains. By focusing on the human body as both the generator and the recipient of emotions and thoughts, she taps into the immediacy and accessibility of figuration: Inhabiting a body is at once the most authentic and universal experience of being human. Bourdette is also interested in another aspect of the human experience: ambiguity, a theme she frequently invokes in her work. The figure in *Calling Home* cradles her uterus with one hand; is this a female figure owning her femininity as the seat of her power? Is the figure in *Falling Angels* beseeching heaven? For what? Rain? Falling angels? What is revealed coexists with what is concealed.

Pay Dirt, 1990
Wood, sheet metal, wire mesh, pigments, and soil | 42 x 23 x 44 in.
Collection of Ronald and Maxine Linde



From Figure to Form

In the 1990s, Bourdette's work moved away from her earlier, relatively naturalistic views of the human body. Her *Pay Dirt* (1990) combines a humanoid figure made of found sheet metal, posed on hands and knees atop a wooden, wheeled trolley, the bed of which is a drawer opened just enough to reveal its contents: soil. Here Bourdette is experimenting with the formal issues involved in combining the human form with something else — a tool or device, in this case one meant to augment human mobility. The title speaks to the human impulse to claim turf and to tote our stuff with us, an ironic contemporary twist on the traditional memento mori (and in conceptual contrast to the pared-down

figures of *Squatting Melissas*). Although the scale of *Pay Dirt* is, again, human, the metal figure on wheels conjures a child's toy, a trifling image for the vain attempts humans make to clutch at possession. The piece is a visual pun, but, as with a good joke, the punch line is equal measures humor and calamity.

Another work from this period is *Bulb* (1991), an imaginary contraption mounted onto a single, rudimentary wheel. The main body of the piece is a swollen, tubular form with an opening at the top — it brings to mind a debris chute from a demolition job, or the drum of a cement mixer, and the scruffy surface of



Bulb, 1991
Plywood, wire mesh, cardboard, and sheet metal | 53 x 23 x 35 in.

the piece recalls construction materials. But the form is also the same shape as a rhizome and is therefore seductively fecund with the potential for new creation. It raises the hope that one might be able to insert something mundane into the snout and see the item appear below, magically transmuted. This suggestion — the potential for transformation or transmutation — is another leitmotiv of Bourdette's work. Often this artist's objects feel as though they are one thing melding into another — here, an abstracted body verging to the form of a vehicle. But Bourdette refuses to provide too many clues for her viewers, preferring to allow us to form our own conclusions.

The *Mother Molds* (1991–92) were originally a trio of objects that Bourdette assembled as a convocation, although, unlike the *Squatting Melissas*, the *Mother Molds* are not figurative. Rather, she has gathered three barrel-shaped forms, each crafted from interior wooden hoops clad with vertical lath staves. The slats are spaced so that one can easily peer inside and observe that what seems like a skeleton for each form is simultaneously skin, a visual metaphor for the Hermetic concept “as within, so without.” Do these objects allude to the human condition of motherhood? Again, Bourdette does not make this clear, although each of the *Molds* asserts a personality of sorts. One seems to bodily angle forward, as if bending down toward a child; another is cocked off-axis, as if a hip were jutting out. But the sentimentally charged concept of “mother” seems too loaded for a sculptor as cool and elegant as Bourdette. *Mother Molds* might just as likely refer to a more practical definition of “mold” — a form or framework that creates or imparts a shape to a thing. Even more specifically, “mother mold” is a technical term used in casting three-dimensional objects. When a mold requires an outer structure to hold its parts together, the protective outer shell is called the “mother mold” — paradoxically, a function that could also apply to the mother-child relationship. The irony here is that these structures cannot contain anything, so pervious is their sheathing; like the body/receptacle, the interior life is worn on the exterior. Perhaps, instead, these are molds to accommodate the fluidity of thoughts or feelings, known to thrive best when the free-flowing exchange of ideas is encouraged.



Mother Molds, 1991–92
Plywood, shellac, and wood Venetian blind slats | 48 x 32 x 32 in. each (approximate)



Punch and Comma, 1992
Found sheet metal and wood | 20 x 11 x 13 in. and 23 x 10 x 13 in.
Collection of Marc Labadie and Susan Feldman



Bonnet, 1994
Pastel on paper | 16.5 x 14 in.

Visual Puns and Attributes

Bourdette's curiosity is broad and far-reaching; she is intrigued by all sorts of human experience, physical sensations as well as emotional states. *Echoes* (1992) has its impetuses in sound and the involuntary act of hearing; *Punch and Comma* (1992) references writing, and therefore language, which implies speech. *Echoes* is a series of six wall-mounted elements, each made of found sheet metal. Each form is an ovoid surrounded by a collar, and each has a gaping void at the center, an orifice. Dimensionally popping off the wall, they seem like some sort of ears. They also mimic the form one makes when cupping one's mouth with both hands and calling into a canyon, expecting to hear one's own voice boomerang off the chasm's walls. In their repetitive sequence, each element is a visual echo of another.

Punch and Comma evokes a more subtle, potential aspect of sound, specifically, inflection. The elements of this work look like gigantic punctuation marks, symbols to imitate patterns of speech: One is in the shape of a comma, the other might be the stem of a cartoony exclamation point, minus the dot — the "punch" at the end of a proclamation. Together they suggest both ends of quotation marks, brackets, or even quirky thought bubbles. In writing, punctuation serves to disambiguate the

meaning of a sentence (as in the classic "Woman without her man is nothing" versus "Woman, without her, man is nothing"), but here the meaning of Bourdette's shapes is purposefully unclear. Taken out of the context of a written sentence, the elements in *Punch and Comma* remain visual symbols, but of ambiguous ideas.⁵

Like any artist, Bourdette has developed a vocabulary of visual themes that recur in her work. In 1994, she began to explore iconic images she called "bunnyheads."⁶ In Bourdette's hands, the bunnyhead image is a stripped-down caricature of a rabbit's head: a dome shape with two elliptical ears jutting up, erect and alert. Bourdette explored this theme in drawings; in fact, her sketches are an intrinsic part of her creative process. A number of bunnyhead sketches are quite amusing and clever: *Bonnet* (1994) is an illustration of a hat with loopy ears, which might allow a wearer to assume her own bunnyhead. Another drawing, *Glad Hand* (1994), looks like a bowling pin surmounted with bunny ears, but a rod sticks out of its back, making it resemble a rattle or a gavel. "I make a lot of drawings as a way of working towards a sculpture," Bourdette says. "I've learned that drawing really enriches the sculptural process. It gives me a sense of where it's all going."⁷

Domino (1994) is just one of several bunnyhead sculptures that incorporate this campy-but-not-cute figure. Here, in wood, the bunny's head is encased in a sort of cage, as if ensnared — or is it wearing a mask? The ears poke defiantly free of the muzzle, but the entire head is mounted on top of a stick. It looks like a weapon, a club. The bunnyhead reappears in other sculptures from this period, *Comparing Apples and Oranges* (1994) and *Real or Imagined?* (1995), among others. Aside from a darkly comical presence, what can one make of the bunnyheads? Bourdette says they are sexual metaphors, but even that statement is rife with possible interpretations: The bunnyhead could be a symbol of innocence compromised or a stand-in for hypersexuality (like a Playboy bunny), or represent the coyness of sexual innuendo. For Bourdette, the bunny serves as a sort of alter ego, like Rigoletto's court jester puppet, or Venetian masks during Carnavale, concealing a secret identity.

Another form that Bourdette has explored in several works is an attenuated funnel, or cyclone shape; *Strapless*, *Pilot*, and *Tattler*

(all 1992) are among these. A later example is *Reliance* (1996), a narrow skeletal form made of wire netting and lined with a soft muslin bag. Perhaps this piece gets its name from its reliance on a delicate framework to give the inner muslin core its definition. The piece is wall-mounted, with its tail draping and trailing onto the floor. *Reliance* is another vessel, and Bourdette's viewers have already come to understand that, for her, the vessel is a simulacrum for the human form, as a body is a container for thoughts, emotions, and experiences. But *Reliance* is hardly reliable as a vessel, for it could not contain much within its slim margins and permeable walls.

Crib (1998) is yet another container, this one literally a corn crib, since it harbors a cache of dried corn on the cob. The structure is imposing — a full six feet high — and is made of wooden hoops and staves, like an oversized basket. This work, perhaps more than any other in Bourdette's oeuvre, references certain works of Martin Puryear, a sculptor Bourdette greatly admires. The form of *Crib* also reminds one of the bunnyheads, although



Crib, 1998
Wood, dried corn cobs, and beeswax | 72 x 30 x 27 in.

here, with just one protruding element, the entire construction resembles a bowling pin, or the “ear” seems like a turret, a spire, or some other architectural device signifying the importance of this repository. The corn, of course, might symbolize abundance and sustenance — the sense of security in a full larder — but *Crib* reminds one, too, of *Pay Dirt* and the ultimate futility that is the underbelly of hoarding.

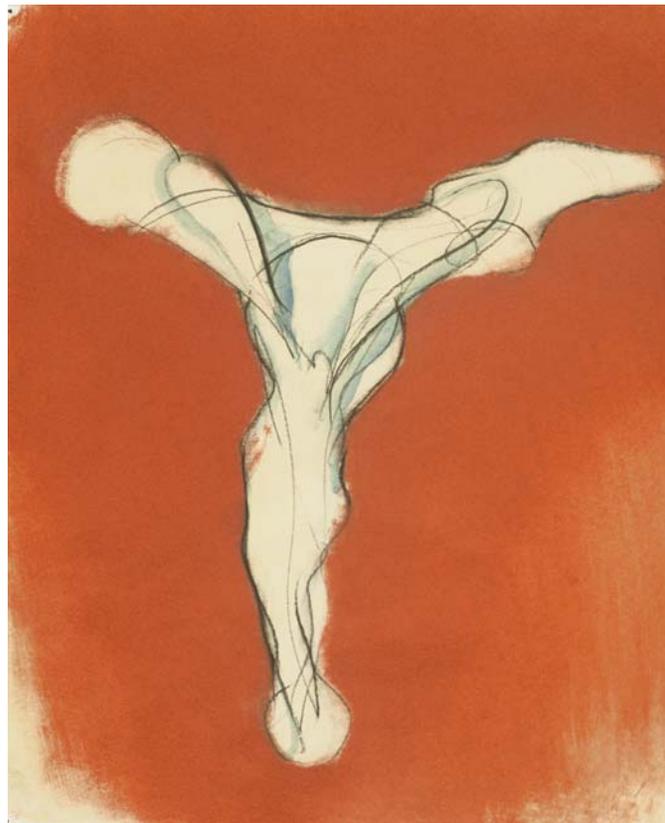
Hamper (1999) was shown publicly at the same time as *Crib*, an ironic and unlikely counterpoint. The titles of these two works illustrate that Bourdette can be a masterful trickster with language. As nouns, “crib” and “hamper” are receptacles, and both sculptures are forms appropriate to their titles. But, as verbs, “crib” can imply deception or masking of the truth and “hamper” means to hinder or impede — both conceits that Bourdette interweaves throughout her investigation of the human experience.



Bourdette also has a fascination with the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, the iconic *Nike* of Hellenistic Greece, a theme she has explored in drawings such as *Winged Victory Variation* (1997). A visit to Bourdette's studio reveals her collection of *Winged Victory* reproductions scattered about. This is clearly a form/gesture that has potent meaning for the artist. Bourdette says that *Hamper* is a riff on the *Winged Victory*, and, true enough, the form suggests a figure with a mannered protuberance at about shoulder height. (Bourdette also says that her use of the bunny-head shape is yet another, more idiosyncratic improvisation on the *Nike*.) Here the form is a relaxed volume woven out of strips of cargo blankets, a vaguely domestic material that is anything but cozy or comforting. The trailing strips at the sculpture's right edge and base seem almost like seductive plumage, recalling the dangling tail of *Reliance*; there is a sense that either this vessel is unfinished or it is unraveling. *Hamper* is both vessel-form and anthropomorphic body.

During this same period, Bourdette crafted two other works rooted in Greek mythology, *Daedalus* (1998) and *Icarus* (1999). How fitting for the artist to investigate the Greek character Daedalus, whose very name means "cunning worker" and who was so skillful at constructing artifice that he was said to have invented images. For this pair of sculptures, Bourdette draws on the Greek myth that finds Daedalus and his son, Icarus, exiled and imprisoned on Crete. To escape the island, Daedalus fashions wings of wax and feathers for himself and his son, but before they take off, he warns Icarus not to venture too close to the sun, for its warmth will surely melt the wax. Overcome with the exhilaration of flying, Icarus does fly too close to the sun; his wings melt and he plunges into the sea. Bourdette's tributes to Daedalus and Icarus recall the Renaissance in the use of at-

tributes to identify these mythological figures, which are formed by long, clublike wing-shapes, made in the artist's now familiar hallmark wood framework. (The wings might remind one of vintage wooden airplane wings, those that were covered in fabric.) The wings of *Icarus* are crossed, like a big "X" propped against the wall, an airplane propeller, or a sacrificial cross. The wings themselves seem yet another permutation of the bunny ear form, but here they are sadly charred — "too close to the sun" — the wreckage of callow youth.⁸



Winged Victory, 1997
Pastel on paper | 17 x 14.5 in.
Collection of Elizabeth Leach

Opposite:
Icarus, 1999
Charred wood and cloth | 75 x 42 x 10 in.
Collection of Jeffrey Smith

Too Much, Not Enough, Too Much, Not Enough ..., 2000
Pastel, oil stick, and graphite on paper | 36 x 24 in.

Opposite:
Fragile Circus, 2002
Charcoal on paper | 38.5 x 25 in.
Collection of Jonathan Arlook and Judith Arcana



A Return to Community

In Bourdette's next body of work, she returned to her abiding subtext, issues surrounding community, in the series *Fragile Circus* (2001), which relies on animals or animal hybrids rather than human figures. With a dramatic shift in scale, the artist started to craft exquisite bird forms in cheesecloth, string, wax, and leather. Returning to ideas she investigated in the *Squatting Melissas*, now she used birds, in flocks, to suggest the dynamics between individuals in community. In *Audience* and *Waiting in the Wings* (both 2001), the birds are assembled into a ring, each individually bound, and yoked together by string or a steel rod. In *Audience*, eight birds are gathered into a circle; the head of one is shrouded by an elephant-head mask.⁹ Is this the leader? There is a quirky pun here as well — “Birds of a feather flock together” — but what is the viewer to make of the bird-figure posing as another animal? Could this be a political statement? Bourdette has also explored elephants in her drawings, such as *Fragile Circus* (2002). Elephants provide an apt subject for her, as they are at once enormous, powerful animals, but also tender, vulnerable, and oddly communicative with humans.

In *Waiting in the Wings*, all ten of the birds are frighteningly masked with white, KKK-style hoods that resemble the cloaked head of *Scapegoat* from fourteen years earlier; they also resemble the hoods used in the sport of falconry. What are these creatures waiting for, annihilation? Here are creatures silenced and blinded, bound, and facing outward, thus denied the psychological security one might expect from a huddle. It is worth noting that *Audience* and *Waiting in the Wings*, having been made in late 2001, might reflect the collective anxiety experienced in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy.



Nostalgia, 2002

Leather, rubber, wax, and steel | 13.5 x 19 x 10.5 in.
Collection of Susan McKinney and Michael de Forest

Opposite:

Plain English, 2002

Wood, leather, paper, and rubber | 41 x 60 x 9 in.
Collection of Craig Hartzman and Jim John



Plain English (2002) is a wall-mounted grid installation that incorporates bird forms but combines them with an equal number of hand gestures. Made of wood, leather, paper, and rubber, the birds bob and perch while the hands are animated, as if signing a language. *Plain English* is a metaphor for the exasperating futility of communicating in two different tongues, a clash of cultures and the concurrent inability to understand one another. The hand gesticulations are curious — the viewer is not sure what is being said — but Bourdette is a master of the visual pun. The hands hold small, white, ping-pong-ball-sized spheres. They are not reaching out to pet or feed the birds; there is a now-you-see-them-now-you-don't quality to the gestures. This seems to be a visual sleight of hand, as if human involvement is wittingly or unwittingly engaged in tricking nature.

The trick might very well be revealed in Bourdette's 2002 work, *Nostalgia*, in which three birds, elegantly wrought in leather, are poised in regard to a bunch of black (inedible?) bananas. Is this another commentary on humankind's devastation of the natural





world? Does the title suggest that the sweet taste of the fruit is only a memory? The message is not overt. In the most formal sense, *Nostalgia* is yet another good-natured visual pun. The perching bird shapes mimic the gently curved bananas.

Bourdette revels in gesture; in *Modest Exaggeration* (2002), two overly elongated arms are dismembered from any human body as they reach out to the viewer. One hand is open, vulnerable; the other is clutching a bunch of velvety, red bananas — but it also looks as if it is exploding into some mutation of an inflamed hand. Here, as elsewhere, Bourdette is engaged in a sort of “canting arms,” a technique in heraldry where a visual image stands in for a family name. *Modest Exaggeration* is emblematic of a pervasive and familiar experience, that of embellishing or enlarging a story with every retelling, the truth remaining slippery and ultimately unknowable.

Bourdette’s gentle sense of humor is always sympathetic to her viewer; she never stoops to mockery, but she is not self-effacing, either. “I am not interested in telling my story,” she says. “I’m more interested in the human story, the story of other people.” *Fellow Travelers* (2005) at first seems downright silly — Lilliputian human figures striding and riding atop potatoes, cast in bronze (the material of monuments, of all things!) and exhibited en masse, as if these figures were engaged in a frivolous outdoor game such as a sack race. The fancifulness of *Fellow Travelers* belies the seriousness with which Bourdette regards human beings in concert with one another. Bourdette has used the image of the humble potato quite a bit in her work (especially in her studio discipline, to explore themes in drawings) because it is such a modest and elemental object (from the soil, the sustenance

of peasants). It might not surprise one to learn that Bourdette was inspired by the paintings of Pieter Brueghel the Elder, in this work. The figures astride the potatoes are pared down; they are not wearing clothes, they are both sexless and devoid of facial features. Their scale is that of a real potato, so the works are similar to toys or trinkets.

Scale is also of the utmost importance to Bourdette’s installation of humanoid figures, the *Asides* (2004–07). These are among Bourdette’s most poignant and powerful groupings; they recall the profound *Squatting Melissas* in their re-creation of community. They might remind one of similar arrangements by George Segal, except for the critical difference that Bourdette’s figures are about three-quarters of life size. These are not children, nor are they childlike, but they are child-size so as to nullify any possibility of confronting the viewer too directly. These figures are made of fine-grain leather, seamed and stretched across forms made of cardboard, cotton batting, gauze, and wax. They are not too neatly tailored, either; tabs and raw edges remain visible. Where arms should be, there is just the drape of leather, so the figures are both mutilated and debilitated. Like the *Fellow Travelers*, they have no facial features, but these figures are masculine and feminine and, unlike the *Travelers*, which are traveling together but are not interacting, the *Asides* are poised in relation to one another, as if they are in conversation or at least in communication. These are figures upon which viewers might project their own stories, as Bourdette has done nothing to draw narrative out of this grouping except through their enigmatic body language. There is a dynamic here, but not any single telling of the story.



Modest Exaggeration, 2002
Rubber, wood, and dry pigment | 55 x 17 x 11 in.
Collection of Debra Enneking

Opposite:
Fellow Travelers, 2005
Cast bronze with ferric acid and silver nitrate patina | 5.5 x 4 x 5.5 in. each
Multiple collections including those of Martha Banyas and Michael Hoeye, Carol Edelman, Mary Ellen Hockensmith and Michael McCulloch, and John and Joan Shipley

Materials and Influences

Any essay on Bourdette must comment on this artist's facile use of materials and her consummate dedication to craft. It is a rare artist who is this adroit and skilled at using a range of media: wood, leather, rawhide, rubber, plaster, fabric, metals, and all sorts of found and salvaged objects. Whether conscripting cut strips of cargo blankets, milling raw wood into basketry, or coaxing leather into the shape of a bird or a person, Bourdette never shies from materials; instead, she enlists whatever materials best fit her concepts. In this, Bourdette joins a number of contemporary object makers who fearlessly collaborate with their materials in developing an idea.

As previously mentioned, the work of Martin Puryear has been a major influence on Bourdette, and clearly his works in which cagelike shapes and wood joinery dominate find resonance in Bourdette's work. Puryear's *Desire* (1981) and *Vessel* (1997–2002, which encompasses a monumental ampersand, a parallel to Bourdette's *Punch and Comma*) have much in common with formal qualities explored by Bourdette, although without the obsessive finesse of craftsmanship that is so much a hallmark of Puryear's work. Bourdette also cites British sculptors Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Bill Woodrow, and Richard Wentworth as influences on her work — perhaps Wentworth most of all, for his adeptness at assembling found elements into his works.

It is with other women sculptors that Bourdette shares most in the tradition of three-dimensional work. Eva Hesse, with her experimental use of materials, found objects, and tongue-in-cheek titles, is a precursor to Bourdette, but so are Louise Bourgeois and Lee Bontecou. Bourgeois is deeply absorbed by human relationships; indeed, her seminal work *One and Others* (1955) is a grouping of anthropomorphic figures that could easily be considered antecedents to Bourdette's *Totem*.¹⁰ But, by contrast,

Bourgeois openly mines her own life experiences (born of an unhappy childhood), while Bourdette is equally strident about keeping her own personal narrative at a distant remove. Bontecou, on the other hand, uses figurative, organic, and mechanistic elements to reference states of transformation between the natural and human-made, but Bontecou's early works, in which she stretched canvas over framework forms, employed an additive process much like the one Bourdette used in *Asides*. Finally, Bourdette's expansive drawing oeuvre owes much to Susan Rothenburg, who shares with Bourdette a vigorous, almost painterly style of draftsmanship.

"Form is the many faces of the legend — bardic, epic, sculptural, musical, pictorial, architectural; it is the infinite images of religion; it is the expression and the remnant of self. Form is the very shape of content," writes Ben Shahn,¹¹ alluding to the artist's fundamental role. Bourdette, with the mind of an archaeologist and the technical skill of Daedalus, absorbs the present human condition with an eye for irony, wry humor, patience with ambiguity, and, ultimately, the ability to distill the pertinent. Then she sets to work in her studio. Her works — creatures, vehicles, vessels — become artifacts of the collective experience.

Linda Brady Tesner is the director of the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College.



Reliance, 1996

Muslin, steel, and wire | 114 x 16 x 18 in.

- 1 The is a fantastic “encyclopedia” (written in an imaginary and undecipherable language) designed by Italian artist, architect, and designer Luigi Serafini (b. 1949); the was originally published by Franco Maria Ricci in Milan in 1981. Other interesting parallels to Bourdette’s work include Serafini’s artist book called , based on the Neapolitan masked figure Pulcinella (see Bourdette’s bunnyhead sculptures), and Serafini’s collaboration with dance companies and filmmakers. The is generally available through interlibrary loan programs.
- 2 Bourdette’s first dealer in Portland was the much-loved William Jamison, whose gallery exhibited folk art before it evolved into the city’s premier venue for contemporary art in the 1980s and early ‘90s.
- 3 The model was Melissa Marsland, partner of filmmaker Jim Blashfield.
- 4 Barry Johnson, , in the magazine supplement to the Sunday , March 5, 1989, pp. 12–14.
- 5 Bourdette’s interest in language, the written word, and narrative content led her to envision an installation called . . . , first presented at the Bush Barn Art Center in Salem in 1990, then reinstalled at the Jamison Thomas Gallery in Portland in 1991. Bourdette was inspired to retell the Little Red Riding Hood story in a dioramalike setting, using only limited and semi-unfamiliar language coupled with interpretive visual cues. In this fairytale-based installation, Bourdette shares a theme with sculptor Kiki Smith, but whereas Smith used the Little Red Riding Hood story to set up points of identification for herself and her viewers, Bourdette was intrigued by the experiment of communicating narrative with spare or ambiguous clues.
- 6 The term “bunnyheads” was coined by Jim Blashfield, who was inspired by this body of Bourdette’s work to make the animated short film called in 2007.
- 7 D. K. Row, “What Are You Working On? Christine Bourdette: Drawing for a start,” , June 18, 2000, section E, p. 2.
- 8 Bourdette cites British artist David Nash as an influence on her work, and Nash’s practice of burned wood as a medium in his sculpture bears a similarity to the charred wings of . Also, Bourdette experienced a tremendous loss of artwork when her Chicago gallery, Klein Gallery, burned to the ground in 1989. Although the fire predates by ten years, the aesthetic presence of charred material remained of interest to the artist.
- 9 Bourdette made an Elephant Man skeleton puppet for Jim Blashfield, who used it in his animated video for Michael Jackson’s (1989). The puppet was in reference to Jackson’s obsession with acquiring the skeleton of the Elephant Man, an interesting parallel to Bourdette’s investigations of human frailty, irony, and acquisitiveness.
- 10 Louise Bourgeois’ work (1984) includes an eleven-inch-high bronze figure of a woman wrapped in a spiral, which is not unrelated to Bourdette’s .
- 11 Ben Shahn, , 1957, Harvard University Press, p. 53.



Riddle Ace, 1987

Wood, found wood, wire mesh, plaster, and paint | 46 x 24 x 12 in.
Collection of Jan Jacobsen and Paul Hart



Foresight, 1987
Plywood, leather, plaster, and shredded wood | 20.5 x 70 x 20 in.
Collection of Terry Pancoast and Pamela Erickson





Opposite (left to right):

Vehicle 1, 1990

Plywood, wire mesh, paint, shellac, and found sheet metal | 48 x 33 x 17 in.

Vehicle 2, 1990

Plywood, wire mesh, paint, shellac, and canvas | 51 x 26 x 19 in.

Brake, 1990

Plywood, paint, and found sheet metal | 39 x 30 x 43 in.

This page (left to right):

Vehicle 1

Vehicle 2



Stride, 1991
Plywood, lath, cardboard, tin, paint, putty, and shellac | 47 x 22 x 35 in.



Echoes, 1992

Found sheet metal | Six objects, each 19 x 11 x 8 in., overall dimensions variable
Multnomah County Portable Works Collection, Percent for Art direct purchase

Left:

Bully Pulpit, 1992

Found sheet metal, painted wood, leather, and casters | 83.5 x 12 x 17 in.



Strapless, 1992
Oak veneer and poplar | 68 x 18 x 17 in.
Collection of Joan and John Shipley



Tattler, 1992
Found sheet metal, shellac, and wood | 62 x 16 x 24 in.



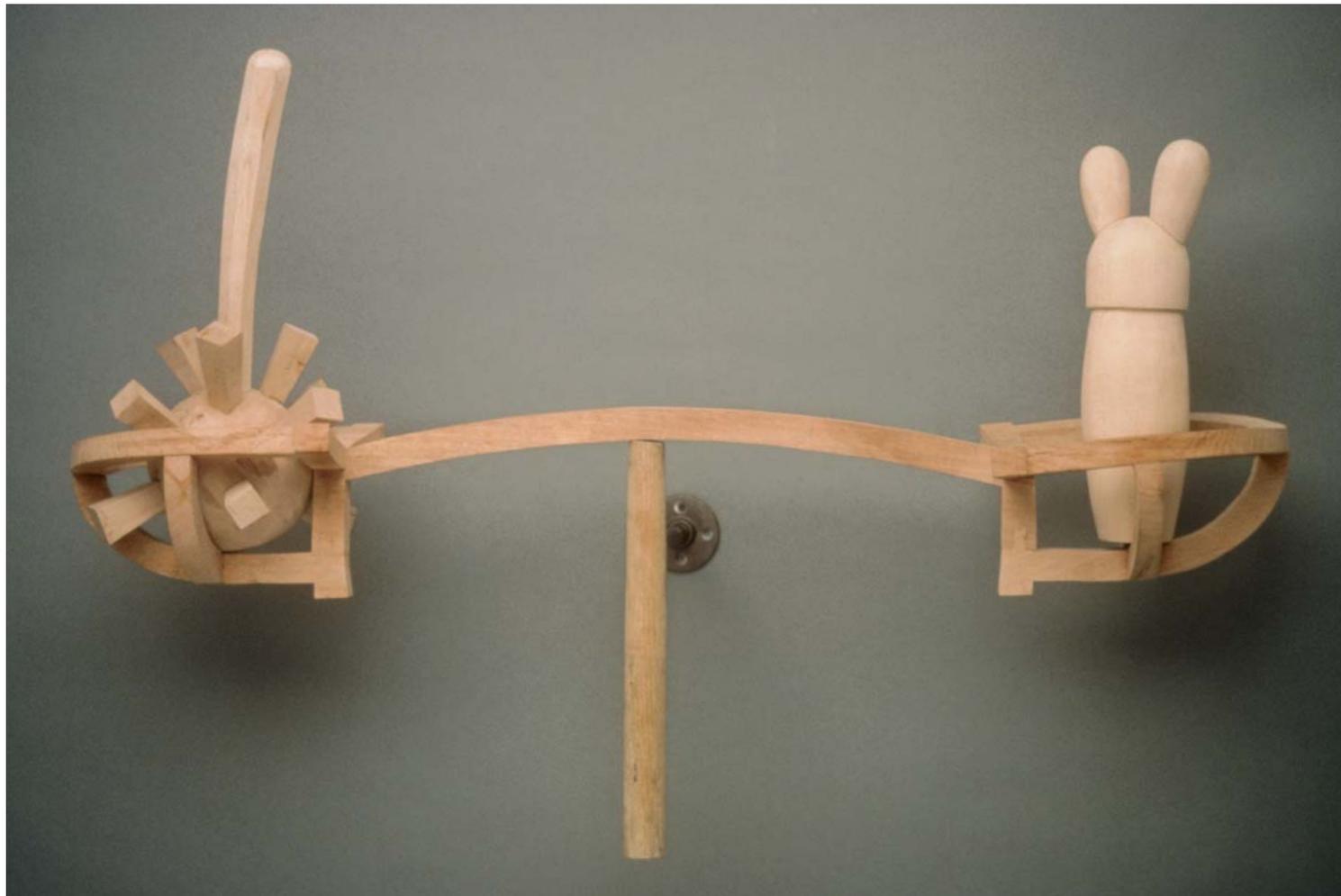
Pilot, 1992
Found sheet metal and wood | 66 x 21 x 17 in.



Confession, 1992
Poplar, found plywood, and paint | 74 x 19 x 16 in.



Catch, 1994
Pastel on paper | 26 x 59.75 in.
Collection of Don Merkt and Melissa Stewart



Comparing Apples and Oranges, 1994
Wood 1 28 x 42 x 14 in.
Collection of Lucinda Parker and Stephen McCarthy



Real or Imagined? 1995
Rawhide and wood | 20 x 27 x 10 in.
Collection of Carol I. Bennett



Alter Egos: Domino, 1994
Wood | 32 x 8 x 11 in.
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College



Selective Memory, 1996
Crinoline, steel, and wood | 44 x 32 x 12 in.



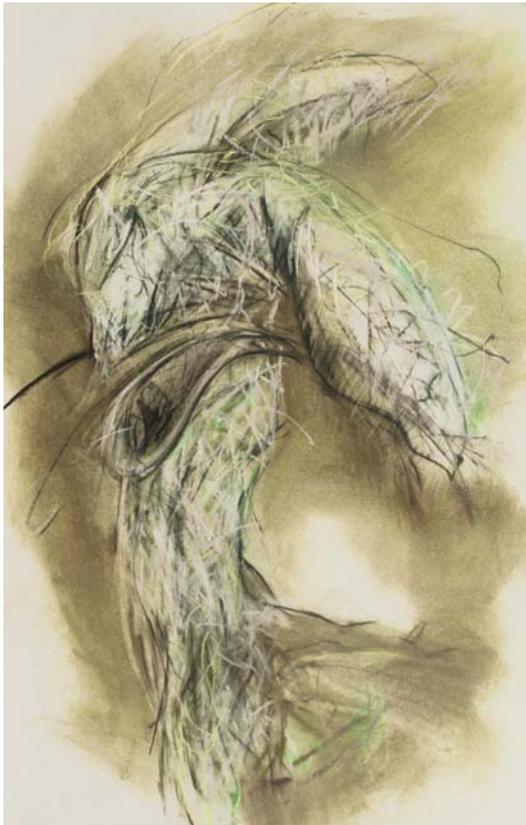
Confirmation and Denial, 1996
Steel, tulle, wood, and wax | 47 x 27 x 17 in.
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle



Table of Contents, 1996
Watercolor and charcoal on paper | 69 x 63 in.



Flim Flam, 1996
Wood and muslin | 9 x 34 x 9 in.



New Outfit, 1997
Pastel on paper | 27 x 18 in.



Daedalus, 1998
Found wood from Indonesian carvings | 21 x 89 x 12 in.
Collection of Craig Hartzman and Jim John





Impasse, 1998
Pastel and charcoal on paper | 48 x 39 in.

Hamper, 1999
Quilted blanket strips | 69 x 44 x 14 in.





Understudies, 2001
Cotton twill tape and hair | 60 x 45 x 11.5 in.



Voracious, 2001
Cast bronze | goose size





Murmur, 2001
Wax, cheesecloth, and string | 14 x 39 x 5 in.
Collection of the Boise Art Museum



Waiting in the Wings, 2001
Steel, cheesecloth, string, wax, and leather | 7 x 14 in. (diameter)
Collection of Dorie Vollum



Audience, 2001
Steel, cheesecloth, string, wax, and leather | 12 x 14 (diameter) in.
Collection of Julie Mancini

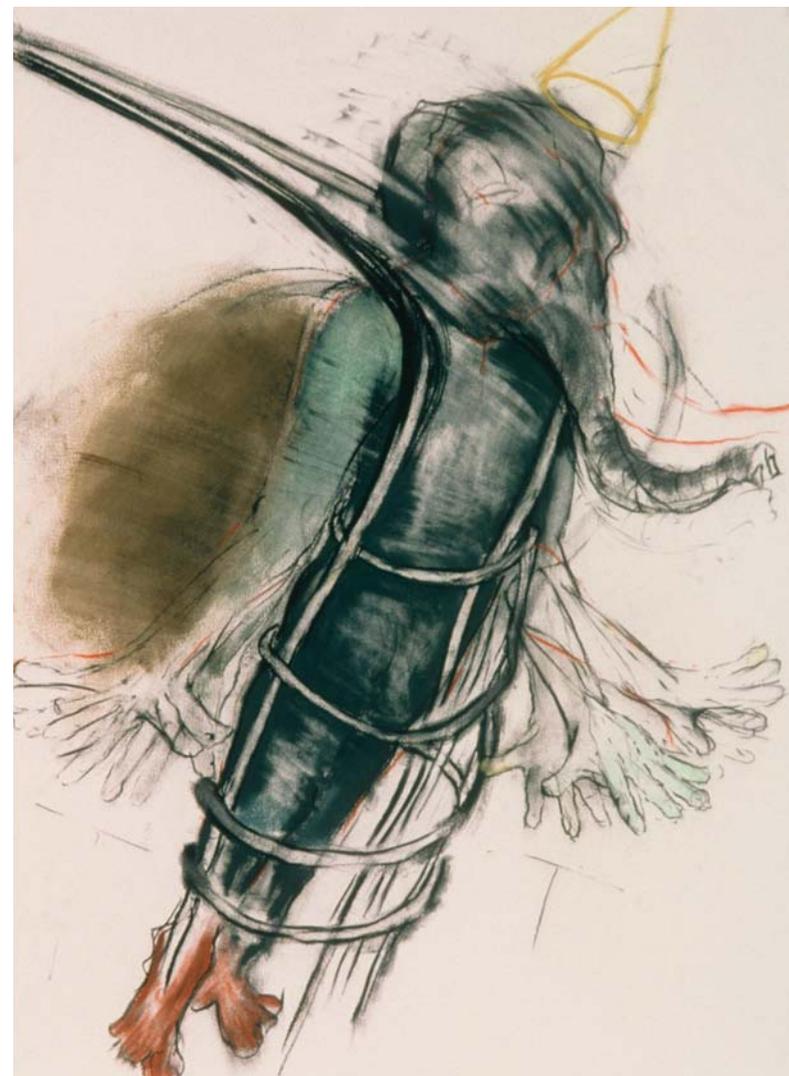


Emcee, 2001

Wood, charred wood, and sheet music | 75.5 x 20 x 20 in.



Leviathan, 2001
Gauze, string, wax, and steel | 8 x 18 x 8 in.
Collection of John David Forsgren



Spirit Thirst, 2002
Pastel on paper | 30 x 22 in.
Collection of Kathy Scanlan



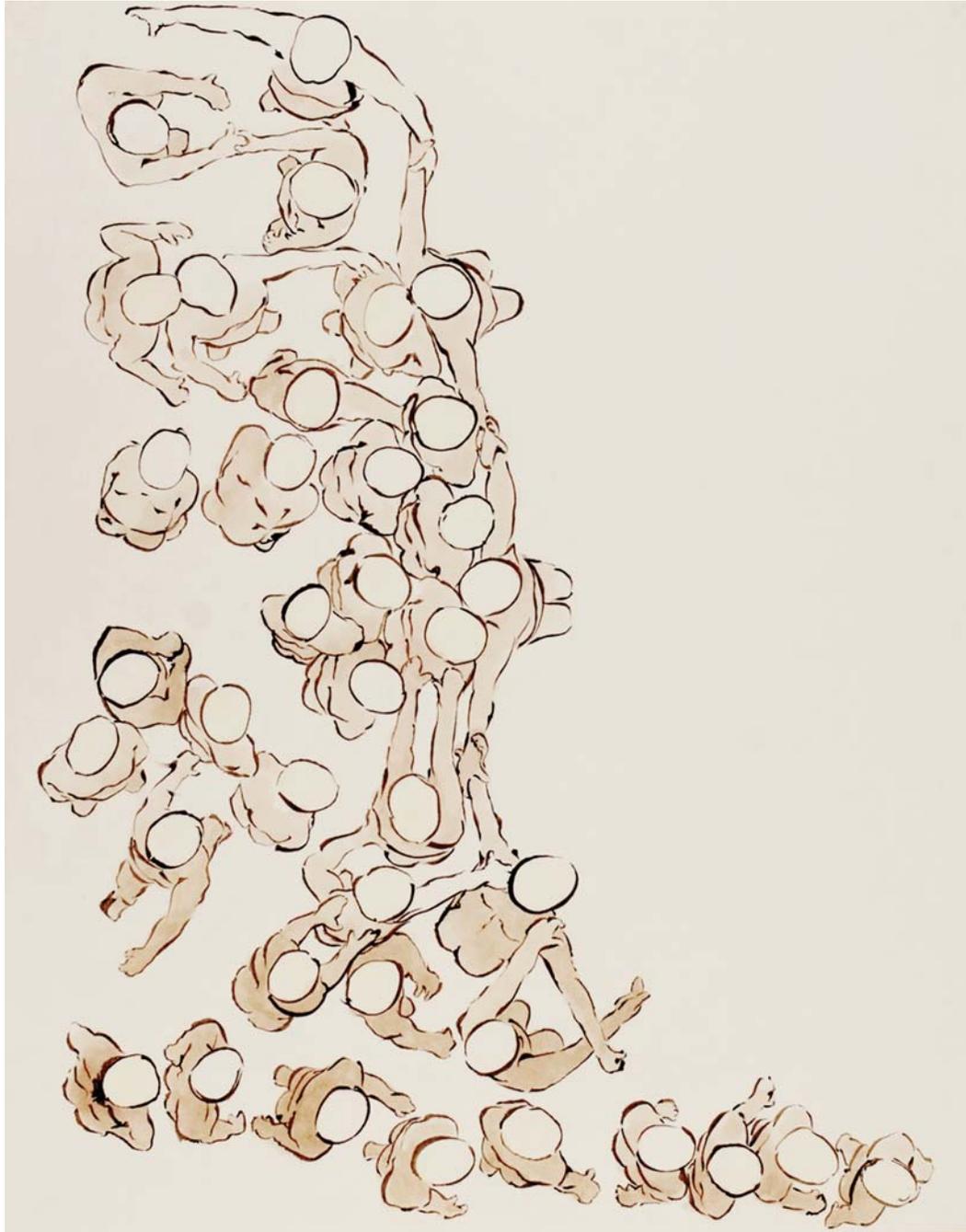
Mistaken Identity, 2006
Pastel, charcoal, ink, and watercolor on paper | 30 x 44 in.



Beloved World, Shrinking World, 2002
Wood, cloth, leather, and dry pigment | 18.5 x 10 x 8 in.
Collection of Martha Banyas and Michael Hoeye



Kingpins, 2002
Wood, paper, and gesso | 27.5 x 20 x 10.5 in.
Miller Meigs Collection



Cluster I, 2007
Ink on paper | 28 x 22 in.

Opposite:
Asides, 2004–07
Leather, wood, cardboard, pigment, and wax | 44 x 13 x 11 in. each (approximate)



Muss, 2002, 2005
Wood, cotton twill tape, paint, and artificial and human hair | 19 x 8 x 8 in.



EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

*Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Leach Gallery, except where noted.
Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width precedes depth.*

Totem, 1986–87
Found wood, plaster, sheet metal, and paint | Dimensions variable, approximately 72.5 x 90 x 15

Scapegoat, 1987
Found wood, birch veneer, paper target, wire mesh, and plaster | 70 x 16 x 15
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle

Riddle Ace, 1987
Wood, found wood, wire mesh, plaster, and paint | 46 x 24 x 12
Collection of Jan Jacobsen and Paul Hart

Squatting Melissa: Blind, 1987
Wood, wire mesh, plaster, and paint | Life size
Collection of the Tacoma Art Museum
Gift of Steven and Nancy Oliver

Squatting Melissa: Delivery, 1987
Wood, wire mesh, plaster, and paint | Life size
Collection of the Portland Art Museum

Foresight, 1987
Plywood, leather, plaster, and shredded wood | 20.5 x 70 x 20
Collection of Terry Pancoast and Pamela Erickson

Calling Home, 1988
Wire mesh, gauze, plaster, and paint | 70 x 24 x 13
Collection of Donna Drummond

Dance Lesson VI, 1988
Ink on paper | 52 x 36
Murdoch Collection

Falling Angels, 1989
Wire mesh, plaster, paint, and wax | 55 x 22 x 18
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle

Vehicle 1, 1990
Plywood, wire mesh, paint, shellac, and found sheet metal | 48 x 33 x 17

Vehicle 2, 1990
Plywood, wire mesh, paint, shellac, and canvas | 51 x 26 x 19

Pay Dirt, 1990
Wood, sheet metal, wire mesh, pigments, and soil | 42 x 23 x 44
Collection of Ronald and Maxine Linde

Stride, 1991
Plywood, lath, cardboard, tin, paint, putty, and shellac | 47 x 22 x 35

Bulb, 1991
Plywood, wire mesh, cardboard, and sheet metal | 53 x 23 x 35

Mother Mold, 1991–92
Plywood, shellac, and wood Venetian blind slats | 48 x 32.5 x 32.5

Echoes, 1992
Found sheet metal | Six objects, each 19 x 11 x 8, overall dimensions variable
Multnomah County Portable Works Collection, Percent for Art direct purchase

Confession, 1992
Poplar, found plywood, and paint | 74 x 19 x 16

Punch and Comma, 1992
Found sheet metal and wood | 20 x 11 x 13 and 23 x 10 x 13
Collection of Marc Labadie and Susan Feldman

Strapless, 1992
Oak veneer and poplar | 68 x 18 x 17
Collection of Joan and John Shipley

Pilot, 1992
Found sheet metal and wood | 66 x 21 x 17

Tattler, 1992
Found sheet metal, shellac, and wood | 62 x 16 x 24

Bully Pulpit, 1992
Found sheet metal, painted wood, leather, and casters | 83.5 x 12 x 17

Rotunda, 1993
Pastel on paper | 36 x 48

Lasso, 1993
Pastel on paper | 36 x 48

Comparing Apples and Oranges, 1994
Wood | 28 x 42 x 14
Collection of Lucinda Parker and Stephen McCarthy

Alter Egos: Domino, 1994
Wood | 32 x 8 x 11
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College

Alter Egos: Near a State of Nature, 1994
Wood and leather | 32 x 8 x 10
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College

Alter Egos: Loose Lips, 1994
Wood, leather, rubber, and rawhide | 31 x 8 x 8
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College

Alter Egos: Blunt, 1994
Wood, leather, rubber, and rawhide | 27 x 10 x 10
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College

Alter Egos: Angelcakes, 1994
Wood, leather, rubber, and rawhide | 33.5 x 8 x 10.5
The Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College

Real or Imagined? 1995

Rawhide and wood | 20 x 27 x 10
Collection of Carol I. Bennett

Flim Flam, 1996

Wood and muslin | 9 x 34 x 9

Reliance, 1996

Muslin, steel, and wire | 114 x 16 x 18

Tête à Tête, 1996

Muslin, rubber, and wood | 21 x 4.5 x 4.5; 22 x 4 x 4

Confirmation and Denial, 1996

Steel, tulle, wood, and wax | 47 x 27 x 17
Collection of Larry Kirkland and Brendan Doyle

Selective Memory, 1996

Crinoline, steel, and wood | 44 x 32 x 12

Tap I, 1997

Pastel on paper | 26 x 20

Tap IV, 1997

Pastel on paper | 26 x 20
Collection of Cynthia and Steven Addams

Crib, 1998

Wood, dried corn cobs, and beeswax | 72 x 30 x 27

Daedalus, 1998

Found wood from Indonesian carvings | 21 x 89 x 12
Collection of Craig Hartzman and Jim John

Impasse, 1998

Pastel and charcoal on paper | 48 x 39

Icarus, 1999

Charred wood and cloth | 75 x 42 x 10
Collection of Jeffrey Smith

Hamper, 1999

Quilted blanket strips | 69 x 44 x 14

Audience, 2001

Steel, cheesecloth, string, wax, and leather | 12 x 14 (diameter)
Collection of Julie Mancini

Understudies, 2001

Cotton twill tape and hair | 60 x 45 x 11.5

Escape, 2001

Steel wire, wood, mattress ticking, tacks, and wax | 25 x 94 x 14
Collection of Joanne Rollins

Leviathan, 2001

Gauze, string, wax, and steel | 8 x 18 x 8
Collection of John David Forsgren

Voracious, 2001

Cast bronze | goose size

Emcee, 2001

Wood, charred wood, and sheet music | 75.5 x 20 x 20

Waiting in the Wings, 2001

Steel, cheesecloth, string, wax, and leather | 7 x 14 (diameter)
Collection of Dorie Vollum

Modest Exaggeration, 2002

Rubber, wood, and dry pigment | 55 x 17 x 11
Collection of Debra Enneking

Reach, 2002

Leather, wood, wax, and antler | 82 x 7.5 x 5.5

Kingpins, 2002

Wood, paper, and gesso | 27.5 x 20 x 10.5
Miller Meigs Collection

Beloved World, Shrinking World, 2002

Wood, cloth, leather, and dry pigment | 18.5 x 10 x 8
Collection of Martha Banyas and Michael Hoeye

Nostalgia, 2002

Leather, rubber, wax, and steel | 13.5 x 19 x 10.5
Collection of Susan McKinney and Michael de Forest

Muss, 2002, 2005

Wood, cotton twill tape, paint, and artificial and human hair | 19 x 8 x 8

Asides, 2004–07

Leather, wood, cardboard, pigment, and wax | 44 x 13 x 11 each (approximate)

Fellow Travelers, 2005

Cast bronze with ferric acid and silver nitrate patina | 5.5 x 4 x 5.5 each
Collections of Martha Banyas and Michael Hoeye, Carol Edelman, Mary Ellen Hockensmith and Michael McCulloch, and John and Joan Shipley

Mistaken Identity, 2006

Pastel, charcoal, ink and watercolor on paper | 30 x 44



Reach, 2002

Leather, wood, wax, and antler | 82 x 7.5 x 5.5 in.

CHRISTINE BOURDETTE



1952 Born Fresno, California; lives and works in Portland, Oregon

EDUCATION

1974 Lewis & Clark College, B.A. in art, Portland, Oregon

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

1992 Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award (first recipient), Portland, Oregon

1993 *Monomania*, Monotype printmaking residency, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, Oregon

2000 Individual artist fellowship award, Regional Arts & Culture Council, Portland, Oregon

2007 Caldera, artist residency, Sisters, Oregon

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1976 *Artists of Oregon: Paperworks*, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; Roy DeForest, curator

1977 *Artists of Oregon Annual*, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Construction Zone: The Pleasures of Building, Pence Gallery, Davis, California

1978 *Legs Akimbo*, Mayer Gallery, Marylhurst College (now Marylhurst University), Marylhurst, Oregon

1979 The Evergreen State College Art Gallery, installation, Olympia, Washington
Mixed Media Constructions, Wentz Gallery, Museum Art School, Portland, Oregon

1980 *Garden State*, installation, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Standing Target installation, Contemporary Crafts Gallery, Portland, Oregon

1981 *Express: Fast and Furious*, outdoor installation, Northwest Artists Workshop, Portland, Oregon

1982 *Ex Post Presto*, window installations, sponsored by the Artemisia Gallery at the Franklin Building, Chicago, Illinois
Olive's Garden, installation, Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

1984 *Great Expectations and Little Wrinkles*, installation, Herron Gallery, Herron School of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana
Installation and Small Works, Traver Sutton Gallery, Seattle, Washington
Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

1984–85 *Rites of Passage*, traveling exhibition, Alexandria Museum, Alexandria, Louisiana; Trisolini Gallery, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio; Kirkland Gallery, Milliken University, Decatur, Illinois; The Art Gym, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon; Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

- 1986** *Common Nature*, installation and collaborative performance with Dave Storrs, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
- 1987** *Common Nature/New Constructions*, Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
Créatures, Galerie l'Aire du Verseau, Paris, France
Poltergeist III: We're Back . . ., exhibition used in film, Metro Goldwyn Mayer Productions
- 1988** Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
Northwest Viewpoints, Wentz Gallery, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; John S. Weber, curator
- 1989** Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
- 1990** *. . . a thousand words*, installation, Bush Barn Art Center, Salem, Oregon, and Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1991** *Vehicles*, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1993** *Capacity*, installation, Hoffman Gallery, Oregon School of Arts and Crafts (now Oregon College of Art and Craft), Portland, Oregon
Monotypes, Wentz Gallery, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, Oregon
Sequences and Assemblies, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1994** *Devices*, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon, and Kittredge Gallery, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington
- 1995** *Devices, doohickeys and thingumajigs*, Tyler Museum of Art, Tyler, Texas, and Klein Art Works, Chicago, Illinois
- 1996** *Sculpture and Related Studies*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1997** *Landscape of Desire*, installation, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1998** *Drawing and Sculpture*, Fairbanks Gallery, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon
- 1999** *Sustenance*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2001** *Fragile Circus*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2002** *New Work*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2005** *Small Universes*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2008** Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Riddles, Bunnyheads, and Asides, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1977** *Erected Sets*, Northview Gallery, Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon
- 1978** Northwest Artists Workshop, Portland, Oregon
- 1979** Arts Place, Portland, Oregon
The Open Gallery, Eugene, Oregon

- 1980** Fairbanks Gallery, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon
Mountain High II, sponsored by Contemporary Crafts Gallery at Timberline Lodge, Mount Hood, Oregon
- 1981** *Four Constructions*, The Art Gym, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon
The Loop Show, sponsored by Randolph Street Gallery at the Fisher Building, Chicago, Illinois
- 1982** *Olive's Garden*, installation, Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
- 1983** *Chicago Sculpture International: Mile 2*, Art Expo '83, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois
Habitats, Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
- 1983** *American Book Art Now*, Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin
Anxious Interiors, Laguna Beach Museum of Art, Laguna Beach, California; Elaine Dines, curator
Oregon Biennial, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Works in Paper, USA TODAY Building, Arlington, Virginia
- 1984** *Small but Hot!* Burpee Art Museum, Rockford, Illinois; Robert McCauley, curator
Time and Space, Visual Arts Center of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska
- 1985** *Artists from the Klein Gallery*, Illinois Wesleyan University, Peoria, Illinois
Sculpture Overview 1985, Evanston Art Center, Evanston, Illinois
- 1986** *Fetish Art: Obsessive Expressions*, Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, Illinois
Now and Then . . ., Northwest Artists Workshop, Portland, Oregon
Painting and Sculpture Today, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana
- 1987** *Christine Bourdette, Jim Clausnitzer and Ann Gardner*, The Art Gym, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon
The Figure, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Kunst Rai 87 art fair, with Galerie l'Aire du Verseau (Paris), Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1988** *Endangered Species*, Klein Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
A Midsummer Night's Dream, Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon; Joel Weinstein, curator
Urban Concerns, Evanston Art Center, Evanston, Illinois
- 1990** *Contemporary West Coast Sculpture*, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Faces, Figures, Gestures and Signs, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; John S. Weber, curator
PDX-CVO, Fairbanks Gallery, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon
- 1991** *As the War Ended*, The Art Gym, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon
- 1992** *Sculpture in the Landscape*, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon
Sign of the Cross, Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Spirit of the West, A Celebration of the Arts, West One Bank traveling exhibition; Kristin Poole, curator
- 1993** *Crosscut* (Oregon Biennial), Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; John S. Weber and Kristy Edmunds, curators
Volume: No Noise, Klein Art Works, Chicago, Illinois

- 1996** *Fifteenth Anniversary Show*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
The Tool Show, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, Oregon; Paul Arensmeyer, curator
Wentz Gallery, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, Oregon
- 1997** *Oregon Biennial*, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; Kathryn Kanjo, curator
Portland — Black and White, Froelick Adelhart Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1997** *Drawing Invitational*, Campbell Hall Gallery, Western Oregon State College, Monmouth, Oregon
- 1998** Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Northwest Contemporaries: Self-Examination, Vita Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 1999** *Frozen Moments: Contemporary Still Life in the Northwest*, Bush Barn Art Center, Salem, Oregon
- 2000** *Wonder Women*, The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Portland, Oregon
- 2002** *Stitch by Stitch*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2003** *Core Sample: Later*, sponsored by Marylhurst University at Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, Oregon; Nan Curtis, curator
Drawing, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2004** *23+ on 9th*, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- 2005** *Drawing(s)*, The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon
War Drawings, Visual Arts Gallery, Mount Hood Community College, Gresham, Oregon
- 2006** *Gender Studies Symposium Exhibition*, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

- 1983** *Flocking to the Temple and We're Gonna Get Harried*, temporary outdoor installation, Artquake festival, Portland, Oregon
- 1985** *Great Leap Forward*, site-specific sculpture for high school, Kettle Falls, Washington
- 1988** *Terrestrials*, temporary outdoor installation, Artquake festival, Portland, Oregon
- 1991** *Consumer Reliquaries*, site-specific sculpture for Lloyd Center mall, Portland, Oregon
- 1997** *Beside Ourselves*, site-specific works for Juvenile Justice Center Portland, Oregon
- 1996–98** *Gathering Rail/Gathering In*, site-specific works for light-rail station, Hillsboro, Oregon
- 1998** *Show and Tell*, bronze sculpture series for Baptist/Nemours Children's Hospital, in collaboration with Larry Kirkland, Jacksonville, Florida
- 1998–2001** *Time Flies*, enamel wall panels for airport light-rail station, Portland, Oregon
- 2003–07** *Circulations*, sequence of eight sculptures along pedestrian walkway, Kirkland, Washington



Prevaricators, 2004
Pastel and charcoal on paper | 24 x 36 in.

Opposite:
Dance Lesson VI, 1988
Ink on paper | 52 x 36 in.
Murdoch Collection

- 2003–08 *Points of View*, site-specific sculptures for four light-rail stations, Tempe, Arizona
- 2005 *Bloom Cycle*, site-specific lobby sculpture for Bank of America Tower, Seattle, Washington
- 2006 *Tree of Life*, bronze doors for hospital chapel, Mercy Medical Center, Roseburg, Oregon
- 2007–09 *Cairns*, site-specific stone markers for three light-rail stations, Portland, Oregon
- 2007–09 Site-specific works in progress, Cooper Mountain Natural Area, Oregon

SELECTED COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

- 1986 *Common Nature*, installation and performance, music by Dave Storrs and Mike Curtis, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
- 1989 *Elephant Man*, animated sculpture for *Leave Me Alone*, Michael Jackson music video, Jim Blashfield Studio, Portland, Oregon; Jim Blashfield, director
- 1990 *You Can't Tell Me from One Another*, stage design with Mark Loring, Oregon Stage Company, Portland, Oregon; Victoria Parker and Melissa Marsland, directors
- 1991 *Moving Around and Telling It Still*, stage design and narrative collaboration with Ursula K. Le Guin and Judy Patton, Artquake festival, Portland, Oregon
- 1992 Film property for *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, New Line Cinema; Gus Van Sant, director
Stage property for *Partito*, Portland, Oregon; Kristy Edmunds, director
- 1993 *New Work: A Performance Collaboration*, stage design and performance with Judy Patton and Zoa Smith, Portland, Oregon
- 1995 Animation for *Hand Held* (animated short film), Priestley Motion Pictures, Portland, Oregon; Joanna Priestley, director
- 1996–2007 Consultant, collaborator, and muse for *Bunnyheads* (animated short film), Jim Blashfield Studio, Portland, Oregon; Jim Blashfield, director
- 1997 Animation for *Utopia Parkway* (animated short film), Priestley Motion Pictures, Portland, Oregon; Joanna Priestley, director
- 1998–2001 Design team, Tri-Met Airport MAX light rail, with artist Vicki Scuri, ZGF Architects (now Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects LLP), Bechtel and Port of Portland, Portland, Oregon
- 1999 Design team, Multnomah County Building, with artist Whitney Nye and architects Fletcher Farr Ayotte
Stage design for dance, *Five by Four with Twelve*, Minh Tran Dance Company, Portland, Oregon
- 2001 Design team, intermodal mall with Otak architects, Portland, Oregon, and Corvallis, Oregon
- 2003 Stage design for dance, *Nocturnal Path*, Minh Tran Dance Company, Portland, Oregon

- 2003–07 Design team, Sound Transit and Totem Lake HOV Access Project with David Evans Associates and Washington State Department of Transportation, Seattle, Washington
- 2005 Stage design for dance, *Forgotten Memories*, Minh Tran Dance Company, Portland, Oregon
- 2007 Stage design for dance, *SKY*, Oslund+Co. Dance, Portland, Oregon
- 2007–09 Cooper Mountain Natural Area design team with Vigil-Agrimis Inc., Portland, Oregon

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Boise Art Museum, Boise Idaho
 Bonnie Bronson Collection, Reed College, Portland, Oregon
 Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit), Seattle, Washington
 City of Portland, Oregon (portable works collection and public sculpture)
 Equity Office Properties, Bank of America Tower, Seattle, Washington
 Lloyd Center, Portland, Oregon
 Milliken University, Decatur, Illinois
 Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland, Oregon
 Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
 Racine Art Museum, Racine, Wisconsin
 Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington
 TriMet Transportation Authority, Portland, Oregon
 University of Iowa Art Museum, Iowa City, Iowa
 Valley Metro Rail, Phoenix, Arizona
 Washington State Schools Art Collection, Kettle Falls, Washington

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allan, Lois, "Christine Bourdette," *Contemporary Art in the Northwest*, New South Wales, Australia: Craftsman House with G & B Arts International, 1995

— "Christine Bourdette," *Visions Quarterly*, Summer 1993

— "Instinctively Anthropological," *Artweek*, April 10, 1991

Artner, Alan G., "Installations Open Windows on Art," *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1982

Barden, Renardo, "Feminist Inventiveness," *Willamette Week*, Nov. 19–25, 1987

— "WW Art Choice," *Willamette Week*, June 1–7, 1989

— "WW Art Choice," *Willamette Week*, June 21–27, 1990

Bataillon, Françoise, "Mark Alsterlind, Christine Bourdette, Harvey Goldman, Michelle Stone Galerie l'Aire du Verseau," *Art Press*, No. 114, May 1987

"Bestiaire en Délire," *Vogue*, French Edition, No. 674, March 1987

Bonansinga, Kate, *Capacity*, exhibition brochure, Portland, Oregon: Oregon School of Arts and Crafts, 1993

— "Christine Bourdette at Jamison Thomas," *Art in America*, March 1995

Bonesteel, Michael, "Art Facts: Artists Run Rampant, All Bets Off," *The Reader*, July 10, 1981

Bowie, Chas, "Stitch by Stitch," *Portland Mercury*, December 26, 2002

Bryant, Elizabeth, "Christine Bourdette at Jamison Thomas Gallery," *Reflex Magazine*, July/August 1990

Cowan, Ron, "A Thousand Words: Cryptic Show Opens in Salem," *Statesman Journal*, January 11, 1990

Ellison, Victoria, "Sculptors' Works Only Semisolid," *The Oregonian*, September 20, 1996

Glown, Ron, "Spatial Challenges," *Artweek*, December 13, 1980

Gragg, Randy, "Landscape of Objects," *The Oregonian*, May 30, 1998

— "Make Art, Not War," *The Oregonian*, April 14, 1991

— "Portland Sculptor Wins New Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award," *The Oregonian*, January 22, 1992



— "Room with a View," *The Oregonian*, October 15, 1993

Griffin, Rachel, "Spatial Exercises: For One Appearance Only," *The Oregonian*, December 21, 1980

Hopkins, Terri, *Sculpture in the Landscape*, exhibition brochure, Marylhurst, Oregon: The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, September 1992

Hull, Roger, "Lively Creations Paper Museum," *The Oregonian*, March 14, 1976

Johnson, Barry, "Conceptual Artists Take Outside Inside Portland Art Museum," *The Oregonian*, July 25, 1986

— "Critic's Choice," *The Oregonian*, November 20, 1987

— "The Pull of the Primitive," *Northwest Magazine*, *The Oregonian*, March 5, 1989

Kanjo, Kathryn, *Oregon Biennial*, exhibition catalog, Portland, Oregon: Portland Art Museum, 1997

Lafo, Rachel Rosenfield, *Spatial Exercises*, exhibition brochure, Portland, Oregon: Portland Art Museum, 1980

Larson, Jon M., "Artists' Works Show True Response to War," *Lake Oswego Review*, April 1991

Lautman, Victoria, "They're Baaaaa-ack from the Movies," *Chicago Tribune*, June 12, 1988

Lowry, M., "Christine Bourdette," *Northwest Originals: Oregon Women and Their Art*, Ellen Nichols, editor, Portland, Oregon: InUNISON Publications, 1989

Lundy, Larry, *Christine Bourdette*, exhibition catalog, Chicago, Illinois: Klein Gallery, 1982

Lyon, Christopher, "Site-Oriented Installations at Klein Gallery," *The Reader*, April 2, 1981

McMorran, Megan, "Art Gym Show Delights," *The Business Journal Magazine*, January 28, 1985

— "Later," *Core Sample: Portland Art Now*, Astoria, Oregon: Clear Cut Press, 2004

— *Since Olive's Garden: Rites of Passage*, exhibition catalog, Alexandria, Louisiana: Alexandria Museum; and Chicago, Illinois: Klein Gallery, 1984

Mississippi Mud, Untitled drawing, Joel Weinstein, editor and publisher, No. 36, 1991

Mississippi Mud, A pen and ink drawing, Joel Weinstein, editor and publisher, No. 37, 1994

Moore, Dick, "Christine Bourdette," *NW Art Journal*, September/October 1990

Moore, Iris, "Illusions of Narrative," *Reflex Magazine*, November/December 1993

Roberts, Prudence, "Christine Bourdette and Mark Smith at Elizabeth Leach Gallery," *Artweek*, November 2005

Rocchia, Andy, "Local Artists Explore Space with Construction Works," *Oregon Journal*, November 20, 1980

Row, D.K., "Christine Bourdette: Drawing for a Start," *The Oregonian*, June 18, 2000

— "Skin Deep," *Willamette Week*, September 18, 1996

— "Through a Trial by Fire," *The Oregonian*, March 26, 1998

Séguin, Jean-Paul, "Créatures," *Kanal*, No. 2930, June/July 1987

Small but Hot! exhibition catalog, Rockford, Illinois: Burpee Art Museum, 1984

Stirling, Cassandra Kelly, "Artist at Work," *The Downtowner*, January 13, 1992

Sutinen, Paul, "A Room with a View," *Willamette Week*, December 9–15, 1980

— "Christine Bourdette at Jamison Thomas Gallery," *Visions Quarterly*, Fall 1990

— "Indoor Artwork," *Willamette Week*, July 1–7, 1980

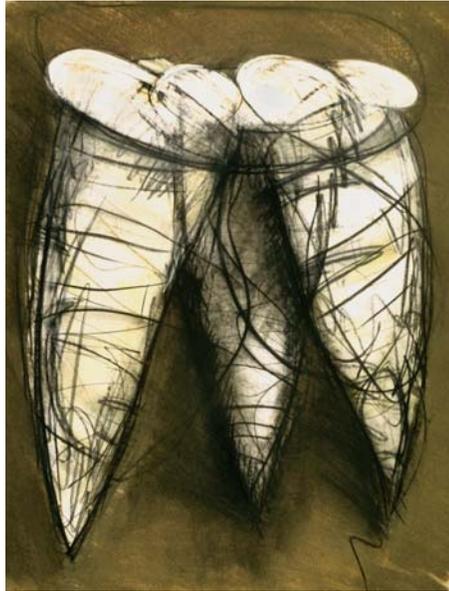
Swaim, Bob, "Les Créatures Diaboliques de Bob Swaim: Le Loup-Garou de Christine Bourdette," *7 à Paris*, April 8–14, 1987

Weber, John S., *Christine Bourdette: Sculpture and Drawings*, exhibition catalog, Portland, Oregon: Portland Art Museum, 1988

— *Recent Creatures and Permutations*, exhibition catalog, Chicago, Illinois: Klein Gallery, 1986

Weinstein, Joel, "Sculpture Shows: Bodies of Art," *The Oregonian*, February 17, 1995

Whittemore, L.J., "Wild Ride," *The Oregonian*, April 26, 1991



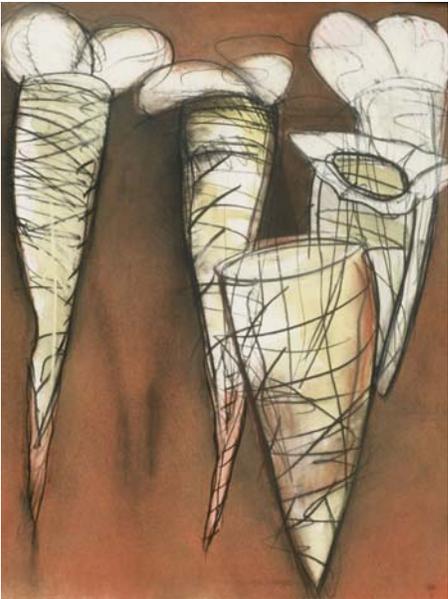
Tap I, 1997
 Pastel and graphite on paper | 26 x 20 in.



Tap II, 1997
 Pastel and graphite on paper | 26 x 20 in.
 Collection of Teresa Jordan and Hal Cannon



Tap III, 1997
 Pastel and graphite on paper | 26 x 20 in.
 Collection of Cynthia and Steven Addams



Tap IV, 1997
 Pastel and graphite on paper | 26 x 20 in.
 Collection of Cynthia and Steven Addams

The Art Gym
Marylhurst University