

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEXT
Jason McLean: The Sky is Falling
May 28, 2005 to December, 2005



Individual drawings from Jason McLean's *The Sky is Falling*, acrylic ink on paper, each of 162 drawings: 22" x 30". Courtesy of the artist and Tracey Lawrence Gallery, Vancouver, With generous support provided by The Associates

Vancouver, BC – A new work by Vancouver artist Jason McLean, commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery, opened to the public on May 28, 2005 and will be celebrated at the summer exhibitions opening night on June 24, 2005. As part of the Gallery's unique series *NEXT: a series on emerging artists from the Pacific Rim*, Jason McLean has fashioned a drawing installation entitled *The Sky is Falling*, created exclusively for the ceiling of the Vancouver Art Gallery lobby. Although the work may be "site specific," it speaks most clearly to a location several city blocks northeast of the Gallery.

Living in Vancouver's downtown eastside, McLean is a constant witness to scenes of prostitution, drug trafficking, street fights and other desperate acts. His drawings register these harsh conditions, but are also heavily punctuated by humour, self-reflexive slogans and constant references to the mundane but specific details of everyday life. The head-spinning medley of anecdotes and inside jokes, irreverent portraits of friends and family, images of foods and pharmaceuticals, diagrams of rumours and news reports heard on late night radio comprise a metaphoric map of the comings and goings at the edge of Vancouver's downtown eastside.

It took four weeks of sustained and intensive work to complete the 162 ink drawings on display. *The Sky is Falling* connects visitors to the daily, durational activities of listening and walking. Dispersed across an entire section of the lobby ceiling, the drawings introduce an almost delirious dimension to the experience of entering the Gallery. The drawings also mark and transform a border between two other proverbial neighbourhoods: on one side, the exhibitions inside the Gallery, and on the other side, the daily life outside its doors.

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Jason McLean was recently chosen by *Maclean's* magazine as one of the top ten visual artists to watch for in Canada. McLean was born in 1971 in London, Ontario and moved to Vancouver to attend the Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design in the early 1990s. Since graduating in 1997, he has exhibited internationally. Over the past few years, McLean's diverse practice has included drawing, soft sculpture, sound works, zines, book works, mixed-media installations, correspondence art, puppets, performance, curating and graphic design.

Much of his work contains collaborative elements, including projects with Marc Bell, Owen Plummer, Ed Pien and members of the Winnipeg-based collective Royal Art Lodge. As an illustrator, he has worked with *Adbusters* and *Bananafish* magazine and is currently working on the book *Design Anarchy* with *Adbusters*, as well as a book for United Bamboo in Tokyo, designed by Vito Acconci.

Jason McLean is the fourth artist presented in *NEXT: a series on emerging artists from the Pacific Rim*, which focuses on previously unseen work in Vancouver and engages various art practices of the Pacific Rim. The *NEXT* space is a laboratory for new art and ideas in a wide array of media. The project allows the Vancouver Art Gallery to focus and highlight the work of emerging artists while presenting innovative exhibitions that activate the Gallery's program and its commitment to the community.

NEXT: Jason McLean, The Sky is Falling, is curated by Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator/Associate Director and will be on display until January 2006.

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