

Tom Bendtsen, *Argument #5*, 2000, photo: Don Gill



*Tom Bendtsen
Simone Jones*

Babe

The Koffler Gallery

June 21 - August 19, 2001
Curator: Carolyn Bell Farrell

OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, June 21, 7 - 9 pm

ARTIST TALKS

Thursday, June 21, 6 pm

GALLERY HOURS

Monday to Friday 10 am - 4 pm

Sunday 12 - 4 pm

Closed Saturday

Closed July 1, 2, Aug 6

Admission is free

Koffler Centre of the Arts

at the Bathurst Jewish

Community Centre

4588 Bathurst Street

Toronto Ontario

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Babel

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Building on archetypal images, Tom Bendtsen and Simone Jones illustrate the nature, and folly, of our aspirations to transcend the limitations of the human condition. Summoning the myth of Icarus, Simone Jones has fashioned an enormous pair of mechanical wings. A complex device with multiple leather straps fits over the artist's torso, equipped with a tube which allows her breath to propel flight. A second invention, which resembles a catamaran, enables the artist to "walk" or pedal across the surface of water. As manifestations of desire, Jones' "mobility machines" are designed to extend the physical capabilities of the human body, investing it with the power to negotiate different realms and modalities.

Similarly, the thematics of ascent inform Bendtsen's *Argument #6*. In the adjacent space, his monumental stepped tower, comprised of 7000 books, spirals upwards into the gallery sky-light well, its configuration symbolizing progress or evolution: a striving for completion, for perfection. Bendtsen's ambitious project visually represents a value system predicated on the acquisition of knowledge and the power and authority of language. Adopting an architectural vocabulary, he utilizes each book as a composite "brick" of information. Organized into fixed relationships, they describe specific points of view, further articulated by the interrelationship of titles. A complex system of thought emerges, literally enveloping the facade of his free-standing architectural structure.

The installations by Jones and Bendtsen humorously underscore our reliance on discourse and technological innovation as vehicles of transcendence. Within the gallery context, Jones' machines are stationary objects, mute instruments of transformation. Donning these contraptions, she attempts to navigate dimensional crossings. Her performances as documented in

the accompanying videos are seamless. Recorded in slow motion, the grace of her gestures is accentuated, as is the ease of her manoeuvres. In reality, her "mobility machines" are cumbersome. Substituting one form of bondage for another, they ironically reinforce our inability to escape the gravity of the physical body. Hampered by the sheer magnitude of her winged aid, Jones' *Mobility Machine: Air* is as much a grounding device as a mechanism for flight. Despite its imposing scale, Bendtsen's fortress of knowledge is precarious; the gaps between his books destabilize its apparent solidity. Given the fissures in his constructs, the demise of his self-made "tower to heaven" is imminent. As in the parable of Babel, achieving a higher state of being or level of understanding by virtue of one's own will or ideas becomes, in the end, a self-defeating proposition.

Tom Bendtsen was born in Denmark, and raised in British Columbia. After attending Camosun College in Victoria, he moved to Toronto in 1986 and completed a diploma at OCAD. Since 1991, Bendtsen has participated in the several exhibitions in Toronto and Montreal, including *Meat #1* (1999); *Meat #2* (2000); *Canadian Shield* (1998); *Crosseyed* (1998); *Drug Show* (1998); *C1997*; *Sex Show* (1997); *Systems of Exchange* (1994); and *Diverse City* (1992). His work has also been featured in recent solo shows at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge, Bus Gallery in Toronto, and Hamilton Artist Inc. Tom Bendtsen is represented by The Red Head Gallery, Toronto.

Simone Jones graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1989 with a concentration in Experimental Art, and in 1996 received her MFA in Sculpture Installation from York University in Toronto. Jones has exhibited in Canada, the United States, Mexico and Sweden since 1993. She recently received an Arts Toronto Protégé Award and has been the recipient of numerous Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council grants for her electronic media work. Simone Jones is currently the Jill Kraus Visiting Assistant Professor of Art at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh with a joint application in the School of Art and Robotics.