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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRIAN JUNGEN

OPENING: THURSDAY, MARCH 20TH 6 – 8PM
EXHIBITION DATES: MARCH 20 – APRIL 26, 2008
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY 10 – 6PM
EXTENDED HOURS: THURSDAY, MARCH 27TH 6 – 8PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of acclaimed Canadian artist, Brian Jungen. A member of the Dane-Zaa (pronounced “dan-ney-za”) Nation of Northern British Columbia, Jungen has temporarily relocated from his home in Vancouver to live and work with his family on the Doig River Indian reserve. Close to his birthplace of Fort St. John, the reserve is located on the Western edge of the oil and gas territories that stretch across Northern Alberta and Northeastern British Columbia. Inspired by his recent experiences, Jungen presents a new body of work that continues to explore cultural symbols of corruption, and question the developing political and geographical landscape of Canada.

Jungen’s works often begin as highly recognizable, fetishized consumables associated with capitalism and Western culture: such as professional sports paraphernalia, mass-produced domestic commodities, and expensive leather goods. Chosen because of their color, material, and intended use, the objects are deconstructed by hand, and then re-crafted into transformations that imply cross-cultural, social, and political relationships. This metamorphosis recalls Jungen’s own observations of life on reserves, where certain discarded objects are often converted or recycled into other usable forms due to a lack of commercial and financial resources.

In this exhibition, the artist uses standard five-gallon, red plastic gasoline cans as the basis of his sculptures. A necessary and ubiquitous object, the “jerrycan” litters the landscape of Northern Canada; land that is rich in petroleum fields, yet lacks an adequate number of fueling stations. Presented on a pedestal, the singular tank stands alone at the entrance to the gallery, just inside the plate glass façade, where sunlight can shine through the thousands of tiny holes drilled in its skin. Based on Jungen’s observations of family members beading designs onto animal hides, Jungen has meticulously created patterns of the natural world onto the “non-green”, petroleum-based plastic jugs. In further exploration of this irony, the artist has converted a group of these same red tanks to create a second sculpture - the skeleton of a full-grown tortoise. The tortoise (or turtle) is symbolic of “mother earth” in many cultures, and First Nations stories state that Canada, and the Americas are lands created from a turtle’s back that rose to support the first human life.

A second series of artworks are initially inspired by the First Nation’s traditional, communal practice of constructing garments for ceremonial rituals. Cutting into strips various professional sports jerseys from the NFL and NBA, Jungen weaves a series of artworks that are reminiscent of stereotypical, Native American trade blankets. With the identities of the jerseys and the brands of the teams literally stripped, the blankets merge ceremonial histories, and re-contextualize the fetishization of American sports gear. Hanging on the wall under the guise of a traditional museological or ethnographic display, these works embody a hybrid aesthetic that allegorically represents the present-day globalization of culture.

In 2008, the artist will participate in a number of group exhibitions including: “Hard Targets: Sport and Contemporary American Masculinity,” at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; “NeoHooDoo: Art For a Forgotten Faith,” The Menil Collection, traveling from Houston, TX to PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY; and “Revolutions – Forms that Turn,” the 16th Biennial of Sydney, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bikargeiv, in Australia. In 2005 – 2007, Brian Jungen’s survey exhibition traveled to the Museum Villa Stuck, München; the Witte de With, Rotterdam; the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal; the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. Other recent solo exhibitions include the Tate Modern, London in 2006.

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NEXT GALLERY EXHIBITION: LIAM GILLICK, MAY 8 – JUNE 14, 2008

HENNING BOHL, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, PAMELA FRASER, ANNA GASKELL, LIAM GILLICK, ANNKA VON HAUSWOLFF, CARSTEN HÖLLER, BRIAN JUNGEN, JONATHAN MONK, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER