

Startling images in native art show

By David Lang
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VANCOUVER — Fluid trickles down through a series of liquor bottles and drains into the gaping jaw of a plastic human skull laid out on a platform with native garb.

It's one of the startling pieces in a new exhibit of modern Canadian native art called *Beyond History*. The show at the Vancouver Art Gallery runs to July 17.

There are no totem poles or stylized animal paintings on view here. Instead, the collection by 10 artists features collages, sculptures, video images and models that are alternately disturbing and amusing.

There is the liquor-bottle piece, titled *Lubicon*, by Ron Noganosh of Ottawa. A work by Bob Boyer of Regina includes a plastic teepee containing a pouch of Red Man tobacco and tacky souvenirs of a native headdress and tomahawk.

Even pieces that appear more familiar as native art hold a surprise. A series of animal skulls by Edward Poitras of Regina reveal bits of electronic circuitry inside on close inspection.

The exhibit was assembled by Tom Hill, museum director of the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ont., and Karen Duffek, research associate at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology.

Hill said the show is aimed at giving audiences a fresh view of native artistic expression.

"They (the native artists) were pulling from their traditional experience and they were bringing it together with their contemporary ex-

perience creating a new kind of mythology," Hill said in an interview.

"Not only do you get a sort of political point of view . . . you get a new spiritual aspect, a new mythological root and general insight into what's taking place in today's world."

Modern white technological society and traditional native life meet in *Zero Hour*, a piece by Robert Houle of Toronto featuring four paintings of a nuclear mushroom cloud balanced by a native sand painting.

He said his work is directed at "people that are concerned with the nuclearization of space, the fragile nature of our environment and the importance of the land as a healing thing."

Jane Ash Poitras of Edmonton has three collage-paintings on display depicting the struggle of native people for ancestral rights and lands and the wisdom of Indian shamans.

"I'm saying to the people they've got to look back to their culture . . . and have a rebirth and revival of their mythology," Poitras said. "It's a universal piece, it applies to anyone and everyone."

Hill said the exhibit was being staged in Vancouver because the gallery had expressed the most interest and had mounted native exhibitions in the past.

Other artists in the show are: Joane Cardinal-Schubert of Calgary, Mike MacDonald of Terrace, Pierre Sioui of Montreal, Domingo Cisneros of La Macaza, Que., and Carl Beam of Peterborough, Ont.