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GEORGIA STRAIGHT

## Or Gallery show provides foil for latest SWARM

BY BRIAN LYNCH

**T**he large sculptures that the Or Gallery has put on display just in time for SWARM 5, this weekend's festival of artist-run culture, are at the same time dire and funny, imposing and fragile. Two full-size aluminum-foil castings of an automobile—a 1989 Ford Escort, to be precise—sit side by side, each one randomly sagging and rumpled, assembly-line products misshapen by chance.

At first glance, these works by Vancouver's Trevor Mahovsky and Rhonda Wepler call up a line of modern art that associates cars with disaster, echoing Andy Warhol's silkscreens of crashes and—closer still in scale and appearance—Charles Ray's 1997 *Unpainted Sculpture*, the life-size (or, rather, death-size) fibreglass reconstruction of an accident-twisted sedan, also rendered in ghostly monochrome. But allusions to catastrophe are soon displaced by the frailty of the materials, and by the gentleness with which the results of the casting process have unravelled.

Mahovsky and Wepler applied six sections of foil to the car to make each casting, then reassembled the strips over an armature placed in the gallery. When the frame was removed, the shells wilted into place, buckling under their own implausibility. They are disordered, colourless masses of detail: bumpers and door locks and mirrors, licence-plate numbers and the lettering on the sidewalls of tires. But they have none of the violence of Ray's work. Instead, they transmit a sense of puncture, of slow collapse. They invoke not so much a car as memories of one, increasingly scrambled by time.

The exhibition (on until October 2) includes a third and much smaller piece entitled *Can (dented)*. This straightforward construct of smooth wooden blocks resembles a container for some household product, gouged on one side to mimic a dent and painted a deep silver. It is included here, apparently, as a sample of the works that Wepler and Mahovsky produce on a more intimate scale: stylized reproductions in resin, plaster, and wood of such commonplace objects as drinking glasses and gift-wrapped boxes, many of which recall the early days of pop art and Jasper Johns's bronze castings of beer cans and light bulbs. Standing alone, however, *Can (dented)* is dwarfed by the slow-motion event taking place nearby, as the aluminum Escorts continue to collapse and settle.

This experiment in entropy should provide as good a place as any for art lovers to wrap up SWARM 5, the latest installment of an annual three-evening celebration of Vancouver's alternative art scene. The Or Gallery will be one of five artist-run venues in Yaletown holding simultaneous openings on Saturday (September 11), the event's final night. Similar clusters of galleries in Mount Pleasant and Gastown will do the same tonight and Friday (September 9 and 10), respectively.

Spokesperson Kirsten May calls SWARM "a great opportunity to see the mind at work" outside art's commercial system. No doubt this circuit, involving everything from painting and photography to sound installations, performance pieces, and video works, will offer the year's best introduction to an innovative community of galleries that is too often overshadowed by the city's glossier venues. Check out [paarc.ca/swarm/](http://paarc.ca/swarm/) for maps and schedules. ■