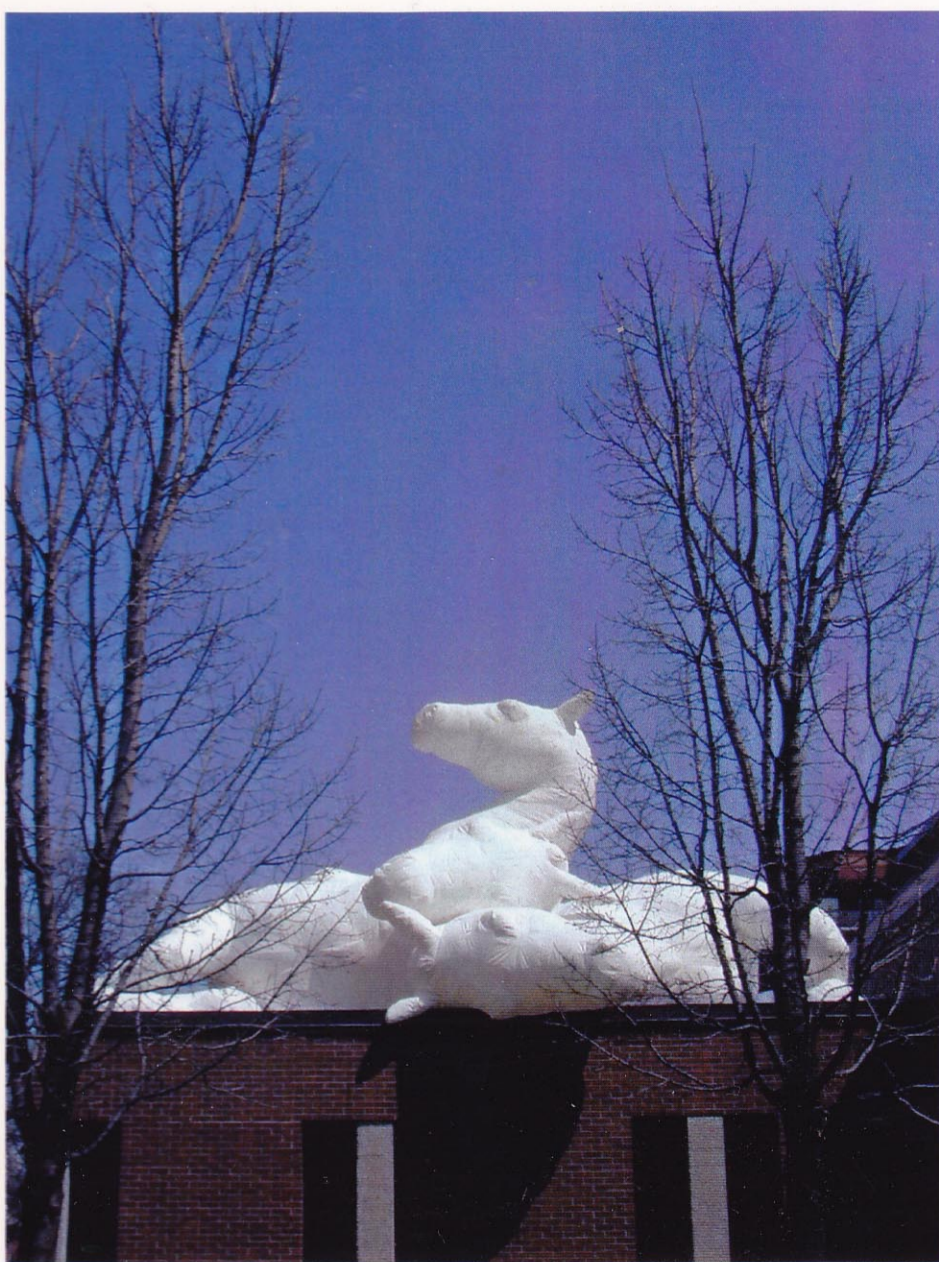


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singularly significant series

KITCHENER - WATERLOO
ART GALLERY

Max Streicher



APR 20 ~ AUG 3, 2003

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery
101 Queen Street North
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



Artist's Statement

Inflatables are so over-used as an advertising and entertainment medium that they cannot help be over-determined in our imagination. The challenge in making inflatables and calling them art is the assumption that they can only be funny and art-lite, or ironic and postmodern. It's an optimistic medium in a pessimistic time.

When I was trying to find a title for the installation of four larger than life vinyl horses on the roof of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, I came across the film, *A Time for Drunken Horses*, about a group of Kurdish children and their efforts to survive in extreme conditions. To help their horses endure their burdens, the children fed them alcohol. That's how I imagined my horses - struggling and disoriented. More importantly, it said something to me about the problem of the inflatable medium. We expect it to intoxicate. Generally in the commercial medium, inflatables do not carry a great deal of information. They tend to be simple and cliché. They are about forgetfulness. In my works, I invite intoxication. My inflatables are more about elemental recollection - physical empathy. Empathy is the opposite of forgetfulness

Inflatables are the medium of enchantment, fantasy and optimism, but things do go wrong. Take the Hindenberg, for example. Macy's Parade balloon characters occasionally crash into the crowd. In my work the distress behind the whimsy takes different forms. Scale is one factor. The horses are too big. Whipped by the wind, they spill off the roof. In contrast to similar commercial counterparts they are out of control, dangerous and vulnerable at the same time. The horses appear to struggle, but why and to what end? Whatever sense of disruption a work

like this has depends on what the individual brings to the work. Gasping for breath, struggling to get up can be an image of playfulness or birth, or of destruction and death. Both cases involve physical empathy, a bodily recognition of the elemental - powerful and tenuous - forces that animate us all.

Max Streicher
April 2003



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*The **Singularly Significant Series** showcases concise projects by high profile artists, demonstrating significant historical and contemporary trends.*

Organized by KW|AG

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Cover Images: Roof top installation at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, 2003, photo by Zhe Gu
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