

A portrait of Doug Alcock, a man with a full grey beard and mustache, wearing a brown cowboy hat and a green button-down shirt with a yellow and black striped neckerchief. He is looking slightly upwards and to the right. The background is solid black.

# DOUG ALCOCK

Steel Sculpture

Forge Ahead



# The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

*Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper*

## **Doug Alcock** **Forge Ahead**

March 20 - April 21, 2012

HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalog: Doug Alcock - Forge Ahead  
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Front and back covers: Doug Alcock photographed by Yuri Akuney

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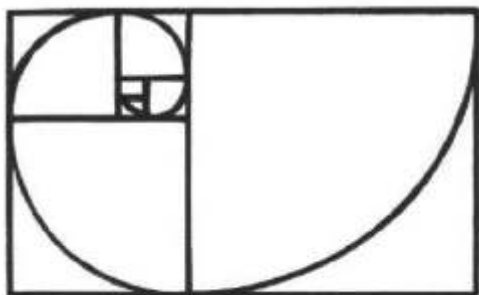
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# **Doug Alcock**

## **Forge Ahead**

Commentary by Julie Oakes





## Doug Alcock Forge Ahead

There is a symbol on many of Alcock's pieces, a spiral. He has used it periodically as a signature. The spiral is the symbol of the Fibonacci series. By definition, the first two numbers in the Fibonacci sequence are 0 and 1, and each subsequent number is the sum of the previous two. The geometrical equivalent is the golden spiral which is found in nature in molluscs, nautilus shells and the arms of spiral galaxies. Spirals are common in nature but not all are perfect logarithmic golden spirals made by connecting the opposite corners of squares. The miracle in this geometry is that it relates the rigid square to the flowing line. Alcock's work turns hard metal into organic shapes. To do so he must submit the steel to fire.

Forged steel is the result of the blacksmith's trade when with hammer and anvil, steel that has been made malleable by fire is shaped. The blacksmith was once a necessary trade when locomotion relied on the horse and tools and hardware were shaped by the blacksmith. As a result, forged steel art pieces have carried either

the stamp of the horsey or celtic cultures. Many forged steel gates and grills use celtic designs in direct or indirect tribute to the Norse God Thor. Thor is the God of Thunder with his hammer and anvil but also symbolic of hallowing, healing and fertility.



At his studio on the commonage, the bellows blow, the forge is stoked and the sound of metal-upon-metal drifts over to his neighbours at Predator Ridge, a high-end golf course and housing development unique with its pioneering use of solar electricity and forged architectural accents. Predator acquired Alcock's large forged sculpture *The Quiver* which called to mind both the native population that once lived upon the commonage (natives and settlers using the area for common grazing of stock) and the golf bag. There is also a wellness center and hotel replete with millions of crystals introducing European and transformative healing techniques on the neighbouring land. Next door to this mega development is the Alcock home, forge, studio and organic farm. Doug Alcock's work bares witness to his situation.

Using an age-old means of shaping metal he has managed to not only comment on but also integrate his ideas with progress.



For many years Alcock has drawn from the cowboy culture bringing blacksmithing from trade to art through his intelligent use of pop culture. His caricatured arrangements of structural elements bring real objects into play alongside of the fabricated, a method employed by the pop movement. Alcock will use a real gun with a forged holster, for instance. He uses spurs,

tools, gears, farm equipment, culverts, domestic objects and industrial items in much the same way as Jim Dine, Robert Rauschenburg or Tom Wesselman used objects.<sup>1</sup> Alcock in *The Quiver* also distorts the proportional relationship between man and the object as did Oldenburg. Alcock uses real objects such as the meat cleavers in conjunction with shaped realistic elements in *Storied Food*. The placement of the cleavers is crucial as the arc of the cut is made visible, describing the slicing motion through air. Because the cleavers are steel, heavy and sharp, there is a dynamic of danger that is more than just the implied gesture.



Alcock speaks of “storied food” and it’s current popularity in advertising (another pop attribute). An example would be the text on a carton of ‘eggs’ in a label that could read “from organic, free range chickens raised in pastoral happiness”. In order to stand out above the many, the product has attached a story to the marketing, the attractive by-line meant to seduce a consumer. Alcock’s art works are storied sculptures but the by-line is implied through the choice of visual elements. They could be termed ‘pop realism’ but the use of forged steel demands an acknowledgement of the material within



the nomenclature hard, solid, rooted, informed, committed and **bolded** pop realism, perhaps.

Recently, Doug Alcock has been working on food for thought. This new body of work began with concerns of food security. Having invested time into developing an organic garden, the controversy around seed saving arose. *Genetically Maudiofied* plays upon the dual definition of the word 'ear'. Reworking an earlier element (the large human ear shape was formed in 1994), the ear of corn lies sheathed in its husk much like a gun in a holster. 'Ear' also is defined as the slang name for a police informant and may also have been an intended reference for Alcock's narrative is a social commentary and the corn industry has been coming under the gun of environmental concerns of late.

The food series brings us back to Thor as the blacksmith god who is also related to hallowing, healing and fertility. Alcock cites the words of Vanadana Shiva as a philosophical reference. His interest and activism are aligned with hers and the recent CBC interview where she addresses "farmers, the seeds they plant and the food we eat" brings to light some of the issues that Doug Alcock has addressed visually. Alcock can be imagined making *Genetically Maudiofied* as Vanadana Shiva spoke of occupying the seed. She questioned "what is the seed?" and answered, "the embodiment of life and the first link in the food chain." She stated that "the seed is disappearing in diversity as the free seed disappears - the open source seed which is



the basis of this diversity."<sup>2</sup> Alcock planted from another open source, his art practice and so firm was he in his commitment to his idea, that it is now pounded and set in steel with a strange larger-than-life-size human ear sprouting from the top of the ear of corn as if listening to the promptings of environmental activism.

He also relates to the moderns with his use of absolute form. *Fem Form* and *Fold Form*, two eight foot sculptures made from

recycled steel, practically illustrate his conscientious concern for the use of resources. Seemingly made of a leather-like malleable substance, *Femform* gracefully cups cut steel floral shapes. *Foldform* is a massive crumpled shape enveloping itself. Alcock used a tool to leverage his task and create the relaxed volumes - a Bobcat.



There is pop inference in the figurative works as well especially in *Nebula* and *Indigenous Knowledge*. These petite figures are as animated as the many space characters that have been born from the movie industry. They are endearing creatures, E.T.-like. *Indigenous Knowledge* is the size of a miniature person or a frail thin child, the head like a shattered egg or a crumbling leaf, the spine exposed, the feet funny as if part flipper. The overall

impression is not one of revulsion but of simpatico and protection as our larger human body relates to the smaller as if to an offspring.

Alcock come to grips with our complex contemporary lifestyle by creating art work from steel. He solidifies his queries into enduring aesthetic accomplishments.

Julie Oakes, 2012

1. The Predator quiver
2. CBC Radio, *Canada Live* interview with Vandana Shiva on Friday March 16, 2012.

(Opposite) Reading Light, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 24"h



Eye of the Storm, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 21w x 13"h



Sharing Borders, 2009  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 17w x 11"h



Planet Jr., 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 11.5w x 26"h





Light Horseman, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 22"h



Drop Shank, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 6w x 17"h





Indigenous Knowledge, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 21w x 48"h



Indigenous Knowledge, 2012

Hunter/Gatherer, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 6w x 56"h





Fort McCleod, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 16w x 36"h



Kootenay, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 32"h



Smith's Colt, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 5w x 34"h





Clan Shield VIII, 2009  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 22w x 17"h





Past Present Future, 2009  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 16w x 21"h

Harrier Landing, 2004  
Forged steel, 24w x 32"h



Buffalo Skull, 2009  
Forged steel, 9w x 13"h



Clan Shield II, 2009  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 16w x 32"h



Stone and Steel, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 36"h





Clan Shield, 2009  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 16"h



Hawkeye, 2007  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 8w x 12"h



Peyto, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 5w x 16"h



Overlander, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 36"h







Maverick, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 14w x 32"h



Métis, 2008  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 36w x 14"h

Genetically Maudified, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 20w x 10"h





Seeds of Diversity #1, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 15w x 25"h



Seeds of Diversity #2, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 13.5w x 26"h





Seeds of Diversity #3, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 14w x 21"h





Seeds of Diversity #4, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 16w x 23"h

Castaway, 2012  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 25"h



Nebula IV, 1999  
Forged steel, 6w x 28"h





Femform, 2011  
Found, forged fabricated steel, 28w x 86"h





Foldform, 2011  
Found, forged fabricated steel, 28w x 72"h



Peace keepers, 1999  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 10w x 96"h





Sacred Spot Marker, 1998  
Forged steel, 6w x 72"h



Shelter from the Wind, 2004  
Forged steel, 10w x 8"h



Carolyn's Urn, 2001  
Forged and fabricated steel, 8w x 12"h





Larger Than Life, 2004  
Found, forged fabricated steel, 28w x 84"h



Leap of Faith, 2001  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 36w x 60"h





Commonage Highlander III, 2003  
Found, forged fabricated steel, 48w x 84"h



Suits, 1994  
Found, forged fabricated steel, 12w x 24"h



Real Glitz, 2001  
Forged steel, 23'h





Legacy, 1992  
Found, forged and fabricated steel, 16w x 8d x 12'h

## DOUG ALCOCK

Born Kelowna, BC. 1955-

### EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 Hammer & Spoon, Doug Alcock and Ortansa Moraru, Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2011 Okanagan Eyes Okanagan Wise Okanagan-ise, Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2010 Members Show, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2009 "Art Of The West" juried show, Kamloops Cowboy Festival, BC
- 2008 "Art Of The West" juried show, Kamloops Cowboy Festival, BC
- 2007 Predator Ridge Community Arts Festival, Vernon, BC  
Western Showcase, Calgary Stampede, Calgary, AB  
Ashpa Naira Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2006 Fugitive Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Art Ark Gallery, Kelowna, BC  
Life and Arts Festival, Kelowna, BC  
Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Cowboy Festival, O'Keefe Ranch, Vernon, BC
- 2005 Predator Ridge Cabin Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Fugitive Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Art Ark Gallery, Kelowna, BC  
Art Walk 2005, Lake Country, BC  
Cowboy Festival, O'Keefe Ranch, Vernon, BC  
Cowboy Country Christmas, Kelowna Community Theater, BC
- 2004 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Fugitive Gallery, group Show, Vernon, BC
- 2003 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Fugitive Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Art Ark, Kelowna, BC  
Predator Ridge Sculpture Walk, Vernon, BC
- 2002 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Predator Ridge Sculpture Walk, Vernon, BC  
Art Walk, Lake Country, BC  
Sculpture Symposium Exhibition
- 2001 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Art Walk Lake Country
- 2000 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Marie Fleming Gallery, Vernon Performing Arts Center Sculpture Show  
Third Annual Peace Arch Park International Sculpture Exhibition, Washington, USA

- 2000 Interior Provincial Exhibition, Armstrong, BC  
Art Walk, Lake Country, BC
- 1999 Three Sculptors (Stone, Wood, Steel), Vernon Art Gallery  
Garden Sculpture, Sculpture Garden, Van Dusen Gardens, Vancouver, BC  
Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Lake Show, Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Vino Show , Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC  
Art Walk, Lake Country, BC
- 1998 Juried Show, Vernon Art Gallery  
Headbones Gallery Group Show, Vernon, BC  
Art Walk, Lake Country, BC
- 1997 Cherryville Festival of the Arts  
Headbones Gallery Group Show, Vernon, BC
- 1996 Juried Show, Kelowna Art Gallery
- 1994 "In Pursuit of Excellence", Group show, Vernon Art Gallery  
"Celebrate Vernon" Art Show, Vernon, BC
- 1993 Show of work with Bryan Ryley at the Charlton Shim Building, Vernon, BC

#### COLLECTIONS

Vernon Art Gallery  
Kelowna Museum  
Holiday Park Resort, Lake Country, BC  
Predator Ridge Golf Resort, Vernon, BC

#### PUBLIC SCULPTURE COMMISSIONS

Raven Art Gallery, Enderby, BC  
Collaboration with Bryan Riley "Legacy", City of Vernon  
"Leap of Faith" Canada Lands, Kelowna, BC  
"Real Glitz" Vernon Performing Arts Center, Vernon, BC  
"Larger than Life" Guishigan Heritage Park, Kelowna, BC  
Eclectic Med, Vernon, BC  
Fresco, Kelowna, BC  
Trowalex, Castlegar, BC  
Predator Ridge Golf Resort, Vernon, BC

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