



# José Luis Torres

*LANDSCAPE*

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## JOSE LUIS TORRES: LANDSCAPE

I'm sure we've all been there. Eagles perched majestically on the piles of old tires, seagulls and ravens waging a violent rap battle, the scent of freshly burned something or other wafting through the air. Whatever it is that brought us to the landfill doesn't matter so much; maybe you don't even remember why you were there. And then, there it was. Whether you were there looking for it, or you didn't even know you needed it, there it was - the bike/sweater/lego/lumber/woodstove/etc. of your dreams.

That good things end up in dumps will be no news to the inhabitants of Dawson City. The "Free Store" is arguably the main shopping attraction in our small Northern community, one man's trash and all. And while we've all likely found something useful in the discarded raven littered heaps at the Quigley Landfill, it may be hard to recognize the individual bits we of Dawson have discarded in their new arrangement in the ODD Gallery.

In his pieces, José Luis Torres uses everything from the disposable, to the once well loved. Newspapers meld with family heirlooms in pieces ranging in size from small to monolithic. Many objects he finds, some objects people bring to him. In working with everyday items, José Luis comments on the accumulation of objects so common in Western Culture. His work questions whether what we throw away is actually no longer useful, putting thought into our often thoughtless acquiring and discarding of the things that surround us. What really is the difference between the things we buy, the things we keep, and the things we chuck?

Like many of us, José Luis Torres arrived in Dawson without a full idea of what he would be doing here; in his work he lets the place, the materials he finds, and the people he encounters inform the piece. One of his artistic mantras is "make do", an idea that will resonate in Dawson. This piece is less about him and his process than it is about Dawson and its people; this piece is made from the things we once bought, sought, used, and have now left, ditched, and forgotten. And while this could be a radical statement in many places, a re-presentation of a community's trash back to itself as an art installation, this process fits well here in Dawson where the "free store" is arguably one of our hottest attractions.



Dawson has a long history of recycling, of making do. The cold, harsh winter has long taught the people living in this region to make the most of what they catch, hunt, collect and make. The Gold Rush saw ingenuity spring from scarcity and isolation, barrels repurposed as siding, parts machined on site from scrap metal, every piece of errant lumber repurposed as something or other.

We've likely all heard the saying, "one person's trash is another's treasure". And we've found something good, something useful, in another's discards. Maybe we've even seen someone wearing a coat, a shirt, a dress we gave to the thrift store. Does seeing something we gave away in use change how we feel about it? Would seeing something you threw away in an art gallery, reimagined and reorganized as a piece of sculpture, change how you feel about it? José Luis has had people ask for the bits and parts of his work and come pick them up when the show is being taken down.

Perhaps this work will show us something new about ourselves, by reexamining the things in our lives, the ones we hang on to and the things we've trashed and forgotten. In archaeology some of the richest sites are the dumps, the midden piles. It seems one of the best ways to learn about a people, is to look at what they throw away. Maybe what we throw away is a more honest portrait of ourselves, the things we no longer want to surround ourselves with saying more about us than the things we choose and curate to decorate our lives and present the self we want others to see. Hopefully José Luis' work leaves you with some questions about the things in our lives, with some new ideas. And you could even walk away with a new (to you) treasure.

- Rian Lougheed-Smith, 2015  
Dawson City, Yukon



#### ARTIST STATEMENT

In my work, I attempt to stimulate the relationship between location, my pieces and the individual experiencing it. My body of works, which are mainly in the form of sculpture, are essentially motivated by the possibility of diverting the senses and simple manipulation to everyday objects and recycled materials from our domestic environments.

In most cases, my work is made during my movements and travels and not really in the studio, which I regard rather like a receptacle where the sum of all the things I collects is to be found.

The strategies I use when approaching the use of space play an important role in my creative process. My pieces are frequently spontaneous configurations, in the form of site-specific installations and ephemeral interventions with architectural aspects. Throughout the constructions, notions of sculpture and architecture are melded together. Spectators are invited to look, explore and experience the physical work of art which is life sized.

The goal of my constructions, accumulative, viral and invasive, is not the form but rather the action of giving form to a use or a situation. The dialogue established between the location and the piece of work directly influences the configuration of my constructions, which are sometimes created without sketches or plans, the choice of materials and their proportions. Beyond their sometimes-rudimentary aspect, my works touch on the notion of the memories of a location, a building and the inhabitants. Some of my projects also integrate the public in in their production.

"Make do with" is one of my artistic needs as well as being one of the principles of my artistic approach. Each is piece is anchored in a reflection on the phenomenon of coexistence with the elements, each element changing to form different environments and permanent evolution. Progressive constructions and "de-constructions" that explore the ways in which we occupy space. Through focusing on the formal and symbolic value of an object, my projects propose a series of experiences where the specific aspects of the location, architectural, cultural and social, are intrinsically linked.

-José Luis Torres, 2015

#### BIOGRAPHY

José Luis Torres was born in Argentina and has a Bachelor's Degree in visual arts, a Master's Degree in sculpture and training in architecture and integrating art with architecture. He has been living and working in Quebec since 2003.

His work has been showcased in many solo and group exhibitions, in public interventions and artist residencies in Canada, Argentina, the United States, Mexico and Europe.

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