

MO'JO  
JOE FAFARD



HEADBONES GALLERY

# MO'JO

## JOE FAFARD

FEBRUARY 11 - MARCH 26, 2016



HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalog: MO'JO - Joe Fafard  
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This catalog was created for the exhibition *MO'JO - Joe Fafard* at Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC, Canada February 11 - March 26, 2016. Includes five paintings from the exhibition *Homage Hens - Megan Mansbridge* in the Drawer's Gallery.

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Front Cover:  
Joe Fafard, *Le Renard Malgré Lui* - 2014  
Bronze and patina, 12"W x 7"D x 38"H

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Micro Publishing

# MO'JO

## JOE FAFARD



COMMENTARY BY JULIE OAKES



Headbones Gallery - 2016



## MO'JO

When the mojo's working, there's a whole lot going on and Joe Fafard's got it happening.

Born in Saskatchewan, Joe Fafard entered into the farm life at an early age but from an artistic perspective rather than working the land. His mother, a folk artist, encouraged him. He tells a story of his first teacher, when he was six, asking him to draw a picture on the blackboard. He pulled a chair over and stood upon it and drew- a horse, pretty well life size.

Fafard has drawn, painted, printed and sculpted using the farm as subject matter over the breadth of a lifetime. His often-life-size sculptures of horses and cows are seen in public spaces in grand cities and cherished in private collections, a heritage to pass on to future generations. Fafard revolutionized sculpture by turning his attention to family, community and animals, creating works that edify a quotidian country life style.

Joe graduated from the University of Manitoba when there were only 17 students in the Fine Arts program. The next year there were 125 and that growth curve hasn't stopped as well. He went on to do his MA at Penn State and then was hired by the University of Regina to teach ceramic sculpture. At a time when profiling the individual was the domain of abstraction, Fafard turned it around as he sculpted individuals – neighbours, shopkeepers, his father and mother, the local art scene and farm animals, most notably cows and horses. He also looked to art history and sculpted artists- Picasso, Van Gogh, Manet, Renoir, Egon Schiele. He made a ceramic relief that consisted of Van Gogh's self-portraits.

The line between common and eminent became forever blurred under Fafard's hand as he made equitable the ground between species and statuses, depiction and concept. He did it all with what has become Fafard's recognizable aesthetic- imagery that blended naturalism, pop, play, idea and technical perfection. He has taken the technical rigour of sculpture into a bright new age.

Fafard has expanded the notion of artistic output far beyond the boundaries of a solitary studio without abandoning his personal artistic practice. Joe Fafard first came to national eminence with his ceramic figures and animals and then turned to making bronzes. Bronze work is often farmed out to a working foundry but Fafard built his own with a logic to his progression that is as rooted as his imagery. The foundry is a family affair.

The foundry is located in Pense, Saskatchewan, a small town off the highway near Regina, where the winter wind sweeps drifts up against the snow fences and the summer sun beats on the dry straight roads as grasshoppers cavort. The Fafard foundry began in a farm building, once used to store equipment, and now has been expanded to house various studios necessary to the fabrication of bronze sculpture. A complicated process that moves from the original, hand built model to a silicone mould, to a wax casting, to a ceramic shell into which is poured the red hot bronze; the Fafard foundry, has cast hundreds of Fafard's works and also a select number of works by other artists.

In the first building waxes are made from the moulds; the older ones made firm in plaster casings which are heavy to manipulate, the newer supported by fibreglass casings, a substance lighter to manipulate. There is a room for making the ceramic shells with two vats of different grade slurries, the first two layers using a fine ceramic powder in order to register detail and the next six dips are in a rougher ceramic grain for strength. In this room, a massive wolf's head, four paws and body parts were drying on shelves in the process of becoming a public art piece for Prince Albert, SK.

When first building the foundry, with his hands-on approach, Fafard drew on his original ceramics discipline to devise a kiln to bake the large ceramic mould shells and also to melt out the wax before pouring the bronze. Large crucibles of bronze are lowered into a submerged furnace where the bronze is melted to be poured, red hot, into the ceramic moulds. It takes two men to support the pouring vessels, one with a two handled end to control the angle of the pour and the other to support the weight from the other side.

After the bronze has cooled and become solid within the shell, a vise applies pressure to the shell, banging and shivering off the ceramic which cracks off into pieces to be recycled into landfills. Whatever ceramic residue remains is sandblasted in a room designated for this purpose and this also provides a consistent surface with a slight texture to the bronze to which the finishing patina can be adhered.

Scale is a challenge that Fafard has conquered from both ends with attention to small detail to magnificent size. Fafard has done monumental bronzes with many pieces welded together and then blended and sand blasted to form the consistent whole. In the foyer of the Moose Jaw Art Gallery during his 2016 exhibition, *Retaille*, there was a larger than life size, leggy colt. The only hint that it was not flesh and bone was the absolute perfection of the silent poise. Cold hard bronze, powder-coated in the semblance of the organic nuance of the animal's coat, the colt was still rather than stiff.

At the foundry, there is a life size bull awaiting a finish. The large pieces necessitate moving from station to station within the bronzing process so throughout the buildings there are pulleys, lifts and forklifts. Fafard has done horses and cows the size of a dog, wolves the size of a horse, full human figures as miniature as a doll and heads the size of a standing man. He has done tiny bronze cows that can be held in the palm of a child's hand, wall mounted pieces that could graze or rest on a vertical surface. Each piece has an attention to detail in proportion to the size. He has made bronze furniture- a chair with a chicken resting on the rungs, another with monkeys swinging, table bases where animals perch, a railing that supports a herd of small horses.

A bronze patina is a chemical reaction, often activated through heat, which colours the surface of the bronze. Fafard is the master of patinas reproducing animal fur, hen's feathers, human hair and skin, clothes, shoes, glasses, furniture, pots and pans. Using textures created on his original oil-based clay surfaces to set up



the material and then brushing and airbrushing a combination of patinas, he shades, layers and adds ambient reflections so that the surfaces are lively. On some he has painted in acrylics over a white gesso to bring in pink, purple, mauve, lemon, lime, carmine and milky hues that cannot be accomplished through patinas.

In the recent bronzes he is powder coating but as this is not a realized process for bronzes, Fafard is again negotiating new territory. For the colt he began with a white overall matt as the magnetic powder was adhered to the magnetized bronze surface. Some flesh colouring was applied in pertinent places and then black powder completed the rendering as Fafard brushed and moved the powder around to add shading, dappled body hair, mane and tail. The surface appears soft as a result.

Fafard's surfaces range from realistic renderings of fur, feather and face to gestural, smeared, pushed and pulled textures that retain evidence of the creation process. Although he now works in oil-based clay in preparation for his bronzes, he has also made moulds and cast from earlier ceramic pieces. The large wolf model has not yet been disassembled so that the bronze as it is welded back into place will have the exact stance and position of his original. He had modelled rough, drawn strokes of fur much like the matted coat of the physical rangy mammal.

Always, the anatomy of the creature appears correct. Fafard doesn't study animal anatomy other than through observation and common sense. This gift of 'getting it right' is especially impressive in the new small felted animals – a lamb, dog and of course cows and horses. The bodies feel solid as if supported by skeletons



but are just masses of felt. A reversal of the softening of the bronze and ceramic surfaces, these appear to have hard inner frames.

Fafard has worked in laser-cut steel sculptures, reliefs and two dimensional cut-outs. 'Retailles' is the process of cutting away, often feeding the cutaways back into the final piece, a process usually applied to fabric works. As an opening piece at the Moose Jaw exhibition, a rooster held state- a bright, shiny, welded-feathered king of the henhouse. There was a herd of small horses galloping across the far end of the gallery, silhouettes with the interior bodies 'coloured in' with cut-outs. Within the body of the horse are chickens, cow heads, feathers, organic and architectural shapes as if the DNA of the horse has retained the impressions of a farmyard environment. Rather than a filled-in outline, two steel horses with a wider profile, made from small flat pieces of steel, welded to become the silhouetted forms of the horses stand solid as if rusted or corroded to lush sienna, dung gray, umber, ochre and taupe. In contrast, a blue black transparent powder coating on a dark steel raven has silver highlights scratched on its feathers.

Fafard explains the process he used for a large cut-steel wall commission. He used an etching press to create on paper an embossed surface image on which to work out the colouring. Although he doesn't need to draw a three dimensional piece before making it, he may draw to work out ideas in the initial stages. Fafard also does unique drawings and print editions with areas designated in his studio for the drawing board, etching press and flat files holding many pieces. Here too he has pushed the boundaries such as the new embossed print retaining the impressions of a wire relief self-portrait, white on white- simple, gestural and elegant – titled "Wired".

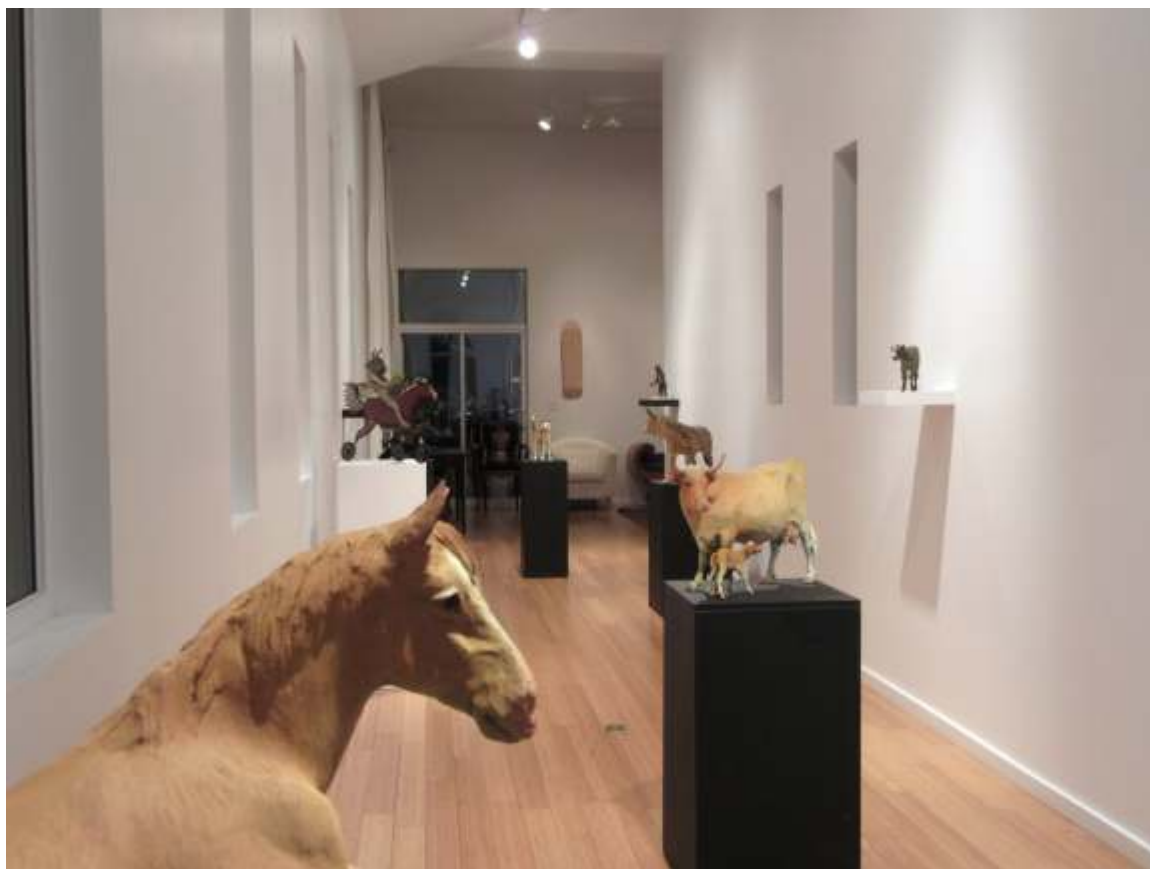
Fafard looks and Fafard makes. He is an artist who lives from eye to hand and the detour through the brain that the impulse takes adds the method, sometimes using a practiced means and at others inventing new techniques but always resulting in an art piece that is confident with an inherent right to its being-ness. Fafard's philosophy was summed up by Terrance Heath, a writer who has witnessed, documented and translated Fafard's work over the years, when he said that Fafard's work embodied 'now-ness'.

"Now-ness" he said, "Is the present that contains the past and yet is also the hope of the future."

Each Fafard piece has an objective determined place and that security of place exists because it is within a very large and informed body of work. The term 'oeuvre' as it applies to an artist's work denotes a visual span that has running through it a consistency, a 'look'. It defines the objects as clearly as the signature of the artist. This 'look' can be 'written' over and over again in a variety of applications but always with the same hand. The signature matures over time, building upon the intrinsic characteristic and then changing, flaring, slanting, leaping out as the artist progresses. The objects stand in, as does the signature, for the artist. Fafard has gained his place in the annals of art history through a prodigious body of work. Excellence is present in each piece that bears his signature.

But Joe Fafard didn't stop at excellence. His Mojo's working. The latest cut steel piece, "Everything is Under Control" is an image addressing our time. As oil prices plunge and the Canadian dollar follows, Fafard brings forth a Minotaur riding a horse on wheels, speeding along, bound for somewhere – or perhaps nowhere. With hands firmly gripping the steering wheel as if he is struggling to stay on the road, he careens into the future displaying all of the attributes of 'A Fafard' – beautifully executed in powder coated, cut steel with a sense of humour at the fore front.

Family had been an element to the Fafard story that can't be ignored for it has shaped his art figuratively, literally and physically. Four of the bronze fabricators in the foundry are Fafard's nephews. They are on "Joe's team", an extension of his art practice, much like another arm, having worked with Joe for thirty years.



Headbones Gallery is pleased to present MO'JO including "Everything is Under Control" with thirteen bronzes that have never been shown in the Okanagan. Having driven to Regina to pick up the works and visiting both the foundry and the studio, Headbones is presenting pieces that possess appeal, mastery and as always with Fafard, a great take on life.

Julie Oakes, Vernon, BC- 2016

**Joe Fafard**

*Réverie* - 2014

Bronze & patina, 23"L x 8.5"W x 22"H

Edition 1/7



**Joe Fafard**

*E-Frink* - 2014

Bronze & patina, 28"L x 14"W x 12"H

Edition 3/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Everything Is Under Control* - 2015

Powder-coated laser-cut welded steel, 22"L x 4"W x 20"H

Edition 3/10





**Joe Fafard**

*Julien* - 2010

Bronze & patina, 6.5"W x 4"D x 21"H

Edition 1/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Piccolo* - 2014

Bronze & patina, 9.5"L x 3.5"D x 7"H

Edition 12/12



**Joe Fafard**

*Buttons & Bows - 2014*

Bronze & patina, 22"L x 8"D x 14.5"H

Edition 3/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Buttons* - 2014

Bronze & patina, 6.5"L x 3.5"W x 5.5"H

Edition 9/10





**Joe Fafard**

*Long Black Veil* - 2010

Bronze & patina, 25"L x 9"W x 11.5"H

Edition 2/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Little walking Boss* - 2013

Bronze & patina, 6"W x 4"D x 10"H

Edition 1/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Dominugues* - 2005

Bronze & patina, 22"L x 12"W x 17"H

Edition A.P. 1



**Joe Fafard**

*Bryce* - 2015

Bronze & patina, 7.5"L x 15"D x 19.5"H

Edition 3/7





**Joe Fafard**

*Sorry* - 2010

Bronze & patina, 10"L x 5"W x 7"H

Edition A.P. 1



**Joe Fafard**

*Abigail* - 2015

Bronze & patina, 7"L x 13"D x 17"H

Edition 5/7



**Joe Fafard**

*Salut* - 2010

Bronze & patina, 7"L x 4"D x 12"H

Edition 9/9





# HOMAGE HENS

## MEGAN MANSBRIDGE



In the Drawer's Gallery, Headbones is presenting five works - a hen house of clucky moxie - by Megan Mansbridge. Five paintings of hens, each named after a prominent female artist and each showing attitude, make for a vivacious atmosphere.

Megan Mansbridge has tapped into an age old relationship – that between man and chicken. Although we are not a farm based community any longer, the kooky looks on the faces of hens sparks recognition and metaphors abound. There is an element of imperviousness in the eyes of the birds and yet the startled expressions of indignation, befuddle-ness, curiosity or just a firm no-nonsense glare (Emily) strikes a chord.

With solid draftsmanship backing up a tendency towards caricature, Mansbridge brings the barnyard up. Her background in illustration for children's books (in 2010 she was awarded the silver medal from the Children's Moonbeam Book Awards) lends an interpretive freshness to her imagery while a natural ability to render enlivens the subjects as the formality of portraiture lifts the hens onto the elevated stage occupied by fine arts.



**Megan Mansbridge**  
*Harriet* - 2014  
Oil on canvas, 30"x 30"



**Megan Mansbridge**  
*Emily* - 2014  
Oil on canvas, 30" x 30"



**Megan Mansbridge**  
*Frida* - 2014  
Oil on canvas, 24" x 18"



**Megan Mansbridge**  
*Louisa* - 2014  
Oil on canvas, 16" x 16"





**Megan Mansbridge**  
*Amelia* - 2014  
Oil on canvas, 24" x 12"





A photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a plaid shirt, playing a mandolin. He is smiling and looking towards the right. The background shows a body of water and a cloudy sky at dusk or dawn.

HEADBONES GALLERY

*Presents*

JOËL FAFARD  
HOUSE CONCERT

FEBRUARY 20, 2016

**Tickets \$20**

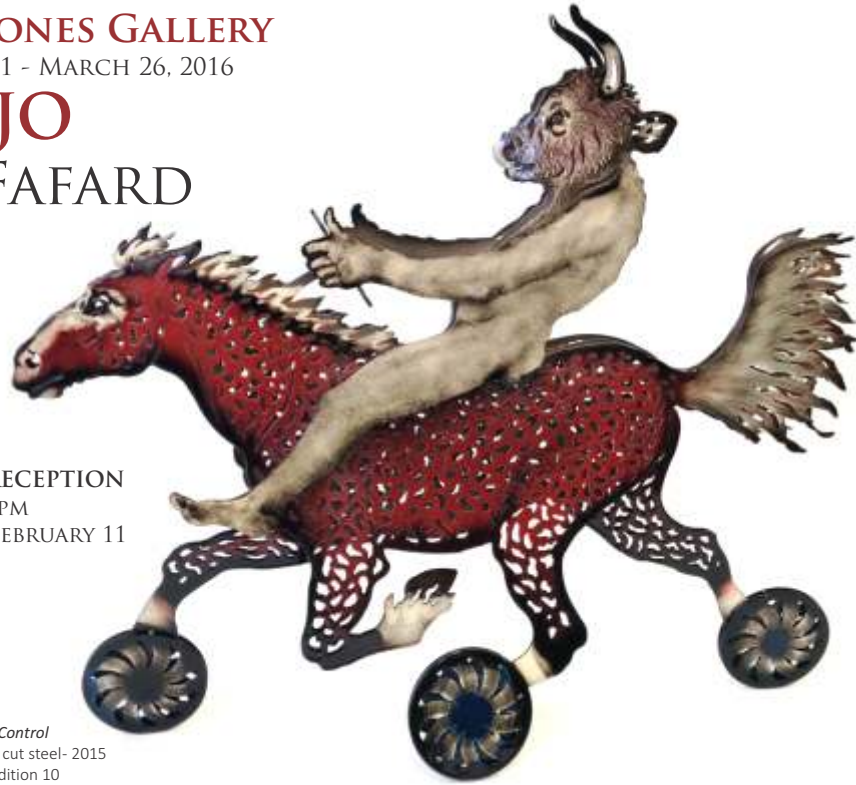
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FEBRUARY 11 - MARCH 26, 2016

MO'JO

JOE FAFARD



OPENING RECEPTION  
6-8 PM  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

*Everything is Under Control*  
Powder coated laser cut steel- 2015  
20"h x 22"w x 3"d, Edition 10

HEADBONES GALLERY