



FINE ART

Brian Jungen: Crafting Everyday Objects Into Art

October 17, 2009 · 1:00 PM ET
Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

5-Minute Listen

PLAYLIST



Brian Jungen: 'Strange Comfort'

Artist Brian Jungen says that one of the best ways to get people to look at artwork is to create it out of materials that they recognize. Visitors to Jungen's exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., will recognize plenty of the materials that compose Jungen's work — everything from basketball sneakers to plastic chairs to baseball gloves.

Jungen's exhibit is the first solo show of a living Native American artist at the Museum of the American Indian. He says that much of his work is a response to the hostility and stereotypes that he faced as a person of First Nations ancestry.

"My investigations into my own cultural background happened when I was a late teenager," Jungen explains to NPR's Guy Raz. "I started to do a lot of drawings that were taking advantage of stereotypes that exist of Indian folks."

In what he calls a "reverse ethnographic study," Jungen conducted informal surveys on the street — asking people to sketch their ideas about native art and culture. He then "exploited" these ideas by turning them into satirical drawings and wall paintings — "a way of kind of reclaiming the term 'Indian,'" he says.

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Much of Jungen's work is created out of sports paraphernalia — a suit of armor made of catcher mitts, a skull crafted from baseball skins, blankets woven from jerseys, and totem poles of stacked golf bags. It's a deliberate choice, Jungen says, to make art from materials belonging to an industry that has claimed names such as The Chiefs, Indians, Redskins and Braves.

"I felt that if these professional sports teams felt that they had every right to use this terminology, then I had every right to exploit their materials for my artwork," Jungen says.

Jungen also draws inspiration from the ritual aspect of American sports.

"Professional sports play a role in society that serves like a ritual and ceremony," he says. "Having experienced that within my own family — the dancing and drumming that I participate in — I know how important that is. So I wanted to use that — use things that people would recognize in their everyday world."

Brian Jungen's work will be [on display](#) at the National Museum of the American Indian until Aug. 8, 2010.



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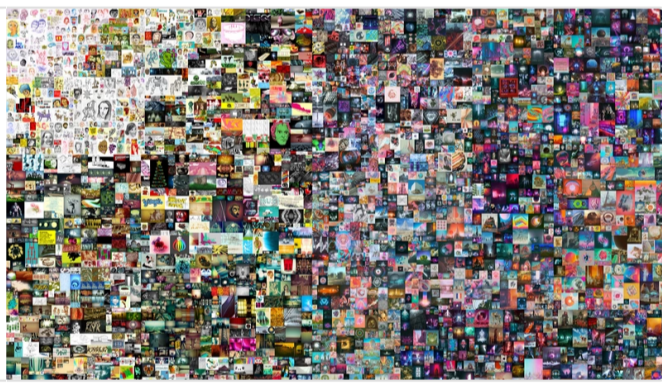
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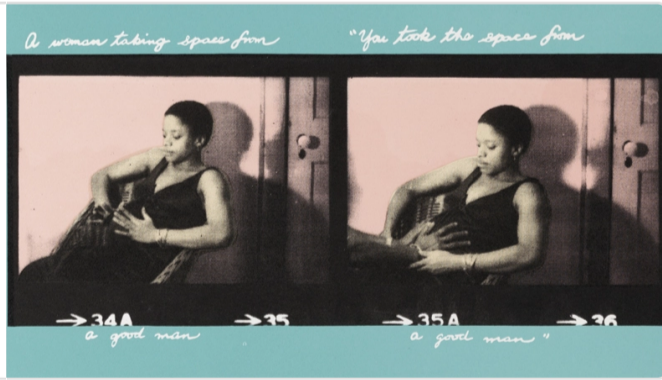
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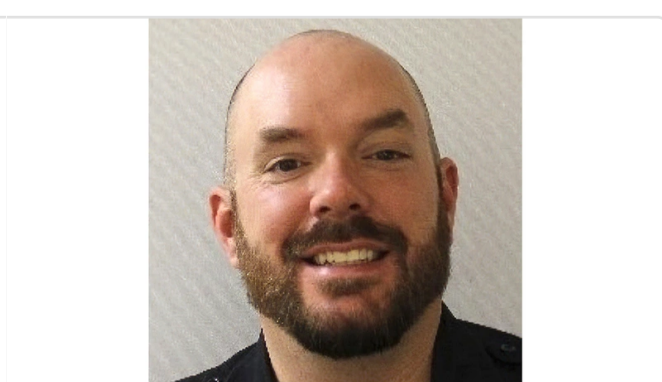
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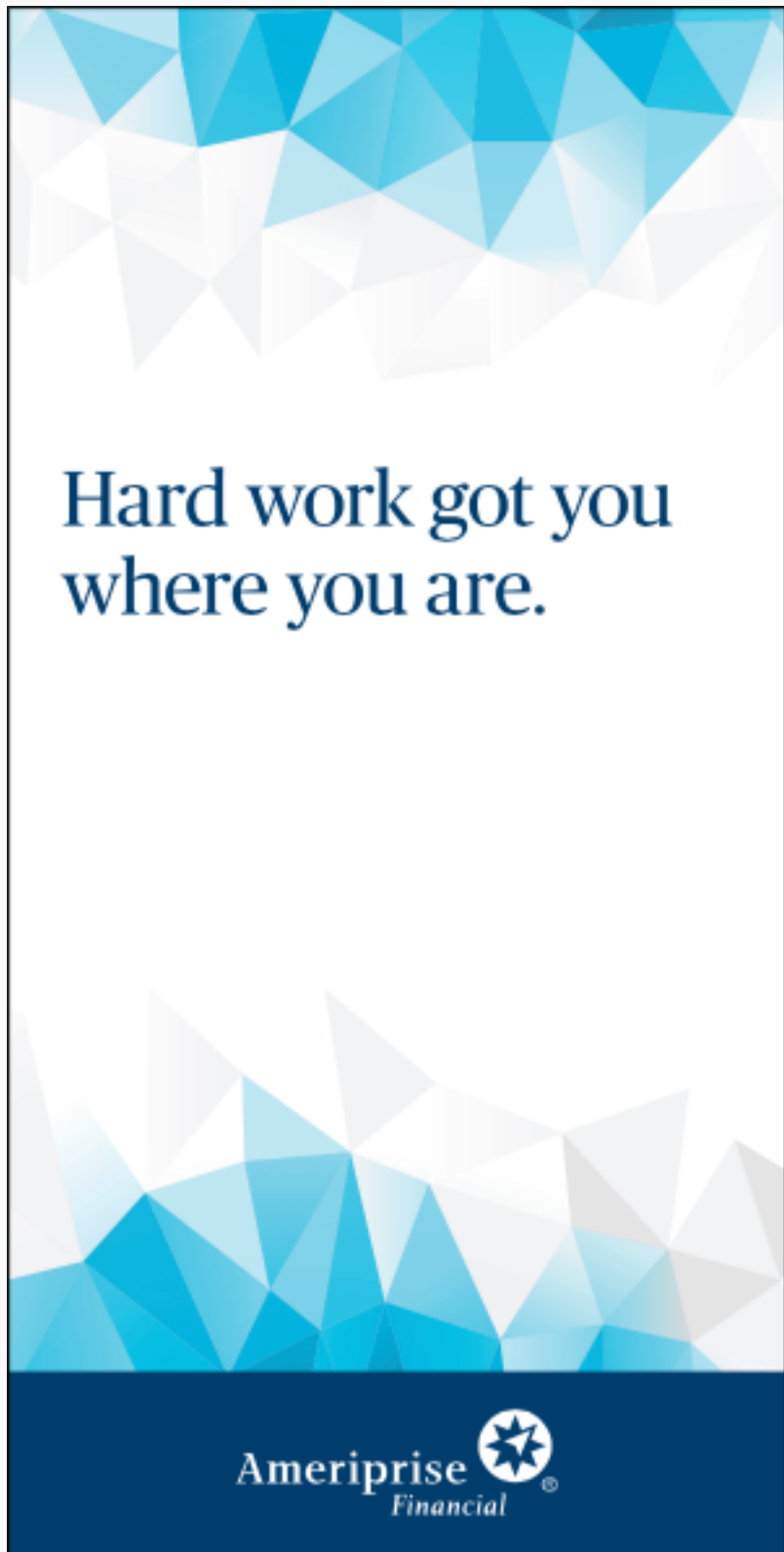
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