Geoffrey Farmer is a contemporary Canadian artist with an established international reputation whose work spans the realms of sculpture, photography, and multi-media installations. Based in Vancouver, he attended the San Francisco Art Institute (1991–1992) and later graduated from Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1993. His recent solo exhibitions have been held at the Mondegreen (with Jeremy Millar), Project Arts Centre, Dublin (2011); Casey Kaplan, New York (2011); Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff (2010); Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver (2010); Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina (2010); Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City (2010); Western Bridge, Seattle (2010); Witte de With, Rotterdam (2008); Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (2008); The Last Two Million Years, The Drawing Room, London, UK and Spacex, Exeter, UK (2007); Airliner Open Studio, Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver (2006); A Pale Fire Freedom Machine, The Power Plant, Toronto (2005); The Blacking Factory, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2002); Catriona Jeffries Catriona, Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver (2001); and Hunchback Kit, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2000). He will also have a solo exhibition in 2013 at the Vancouver Art Gallery. His work has been shown extensively in group exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, most recently in dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel (2012); Children’s Films, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; International Project Space, Birmingham, Bielefelder Kunstverein (2011-12); Stage Presence, SFMOMA, San Francisco (2012); Freedom of Assembly, Oakville Galleries, Ontario; Tools for Conviviality, Power Plant, Toronto (2012); Beyond, Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia (2011); Le chant de la carpe, Centre d’art contemporain du Parc Saint Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux, France (28 June – 23 August 2009); Nuit Blanche, Toronto, October 3, 2009, Nomads, National Gallery of Canada (2009) and in 2008 he participated in The Human Arc, Tramway, Glasgow, Scotland; The Brussels Biennial I, Brussels; Caught in the Act: The Viewer as Performer, National Gallery of Canada; I am Never at Home, Jochen + Schottle, Cologne and Jochen Gallery, Berlin, Germany; The Sydney Biennale, Sydney; pleinairism, i8, Reykjavik, Iceland; Storytellers, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Toronto and Master Humphrey’s Clock, Het Gebouw, by de Appel’s Curatorial Programme, Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht. Other selected groups exhibitions include The World as a Stage, Tate Modern, London UK (2007); Crack the Sky, Biennale de Montréal (2007); Make Believe, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton (2006); Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists, Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium (2005); The Beachcombers, Mead Art Gallery, University of Warwick, Coventry, England (2003); Gasworks, London, UK (2002); Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Middlesbrough, UK (2002); MosaiCanada: Sign and Sound, Seoul Museum of Art, co-organized by The Power Plant, Seoul Museum of Art, and the Canadian Embassy in Korea, Seoul, Korea (2003); Hammertown, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, UK (2003) and Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland (2002); Promises, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2001); and The Melbourne International Biennial, Melbourne (1999). His works are held in the collections of Tate Modern, London, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
Geoffrey Farmer is interested in processes of theatricality – of storytelling, staging, improvisation, and the fabrication of reality. Living and working in Vancouver, Farmer was influenced early on by the ubiquity of the film industry in that city and his resulting works exist between prop and art object. He has developed an increasingly research- and process-based approach to art making, creating elaborate sculptures and installations that revolve around a narrative scripted by the artist and that subsequently transform and activate both the gallery space and its visitors. Consistently in a state of flux or becoming, Farmer’s works often find their basis in a found object, memory or dream and blur the lines between experience and imagination. He draws on narratives, forms and images from modernism, popular culture, literature and the everyday.

Farmer’s work embraces transformation, which manifests itself as continually altering projects that recognize their own instability and fragility of meaning. They evoke a sense of poetic improvisation and theatricality in which the viewers find themselves interpreting found objects, sounds, props and text to create narratives that seem to play on the slippage between objective truths and the perception of reality. In 2009 Geoffrey Farmer participated in the exhibition Nomads presented at the National Gallery of Canada for which he produced the ambitious work The Surgeon and the Photographer. The large installation was made up of cut-out figures from a variety of magazines that were transformed into three-dimensional puppets, with individual wooden mounts, set on low tables as well as two life-size black hooded characters that stood in for puppeteers. The piece was described by the artist as a crowd of puppets in which the viewer could get lost. He wrote: “What I would really like to focus on is this kind of inward journey, a physiological trip, and nomadism of thought, displacement and the strangeness of the perception of something new, of something different, the experience of being an individual reflecting on the social body. I think I would like to have one room with as many puppets as there are days in the year (…) a kind of puppet calendar, where the days observe the year; the observed and the observer.”

The Surgeon and the Photographer which is now in the collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery can be related to a previous work by Farmer, The Last Two Million Years (Tate Modern collection) where he cut out figures and various representations of objects and artifacts from an encyclopedia of the same title, published by Reader’s Digest. In The Last Two Million Years the artist arranged these cut-outs to create vignettes on an imposing labyrinthine system of plinths which became a theatrical stage and a diorama.

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