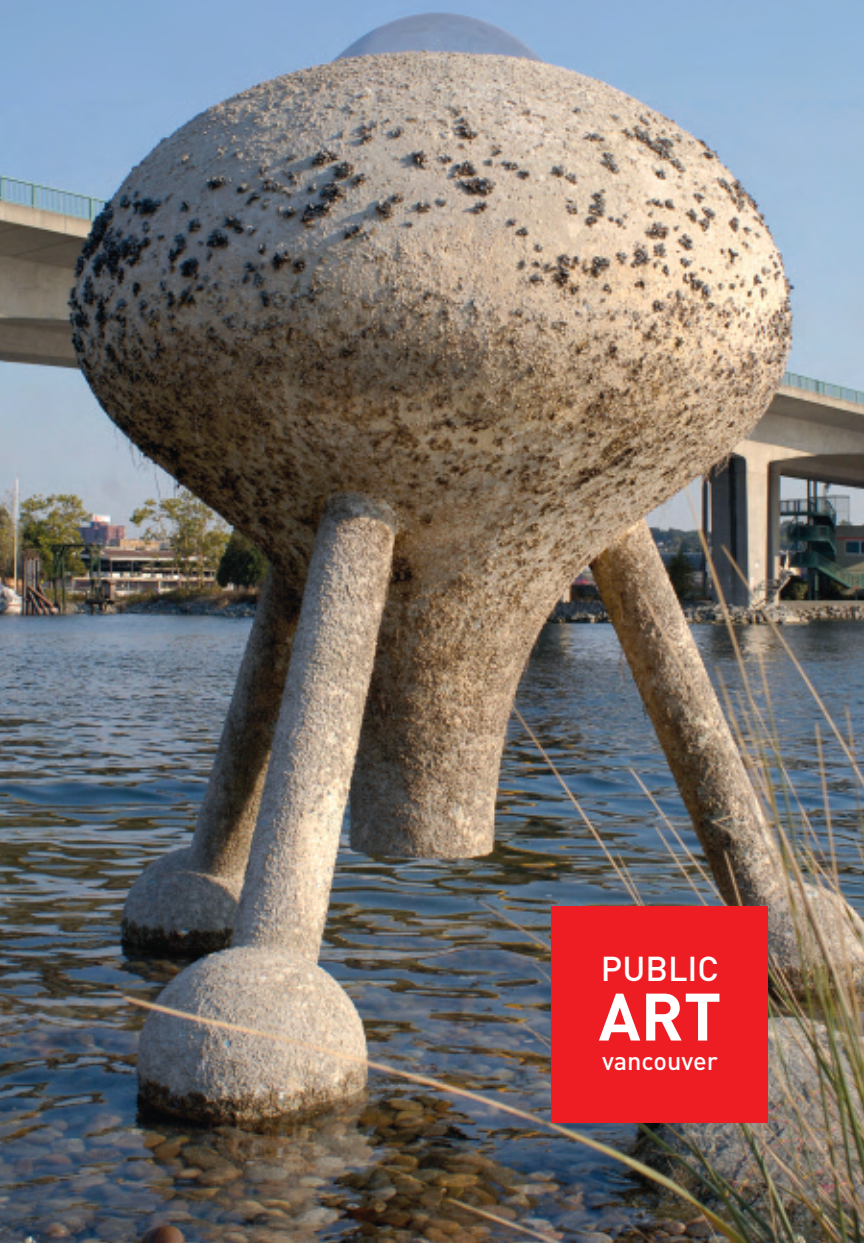


# JERRY PETHICK

## Time Top Project



PUBLIC  
**ART**  
vancouver



## About the Work

"In 1942 I lived in a house with an arch between the living room and the dining room; in this arched connecting wall was a small hole, also arched and holding some household items. A vivid memory of this opening lingers with me. It separated the present from another time, through its gateway my imagination could soar, like Brick Bradford's *Time Top*." — Jerry Pethick

The evocative idea of the "time top" — a rapidly spinning vessel transporting passengers through space and time into the past or future — was a powerful influence for Canadian artist Jerry Pethick. It became the motif and title for his last work: a large, bulbous, three-legged form resting on an intertidal shoal of False Creek's north shore in Vancouver, just west of the Cambie Bridge. Almost thirteen feet tall and made of marine-grade bronze, this curious object attracts passersby of all ages. There is something friendly and familiar about it yet also other-worldly, its rough-surfaced roundness unembellished and capped by a transparent eye/dome. Where did it come from? What is its function? Iconic yet playful, this sculpture evokes a world of wonder and possibility — a world most familiar to the child and the inventor.

Above from the *Time Top* comic strip by William Ritt and Clarence Gray, c.1935

The earlier time top, a marvel and inspiration for Pethick, appeared in the Brick Bradford comic strips created by writer William Ritt and cartoonist Clarence Gray, circa 1935. The Bradford character was a fearless adventurer who inadvertently happened upon a "chronosphere," a time-travelling invention of a scientist who wished "to unravel the secrets of the past and probe the mysteries of the future." For Pethick, the time top was "a symbol of intelligent technology, an imaginary device inducing wonderment" that related to his life-long study of the materialization of space.

In his revision of the tale, Pethick imagined the time top accelerating across the Pacific Ocean and dropping down into the waters of British Columbia. In fact, the posthumous production of Pethick's *Time Top*, which followed careful instructions prepared by the artist, involved a two-year time and space journey of its own. In 2004, the Harmon Foundry in Sechelt was commissioned to fabricate the artist's concept in bronze. The sculpture was then transported to a marina slip in Gibsons and submerged in the ocean for two years. There, connected to and charged by an electrical current that attracted small mollusks and mineral deposits (a process called accretion), it accumulated a hard crust. *Time Top* was then barged, with appropriate ceremony, to its current location on False Creek in Vancouver. Accompanying the sculpture on the seawall are four granite capstones inscribed with original *Time Top* comic-strip images and text.

— Karen Love

**Karen Love** was Director/Curator of Presentation House Gallery from 1983 to 2001, an independent curator for six years and currently works at the Vancouver Art Gallery. A resident of Vancouver, she is a member of Doryphore Independent Curators and a co-founder of CABINET: Interdisciplinary Collaborations.

For more information on Jerry Pethick and the *Time Top Project* please visit [www.vancouver.ca/publicart](http://www.vancouver.ca/publicart) or [www.biorock.net/timetop](http://www.biorock.net/timetop). An explanation of the accretion process is available at [www.biorock.net](http://www.biorock.net).

Opposite *Time Top* submerged at Gibsons Marina, July 2006. Photo: Neil McDaniel

“If I was an artist / And I am / ...  
I would make / Nothing but the buzzing  
of wings / And the spilling of air.”

— Jerry Pethick

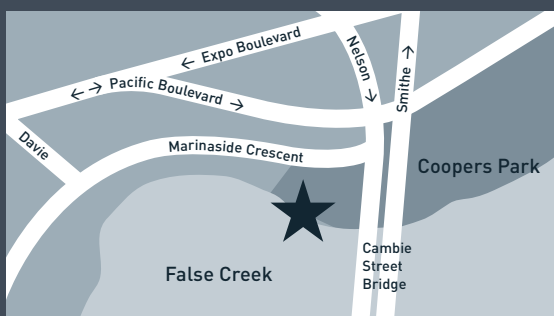


### About the Artist

Jerry Pethick (1935–2003) was a multimedia artist who investigated space, optical phenomena, and perception to create innovative, often witty artworks and installations that are not easily categorized. He was an inventor himself, utilizing “low” technology and calling upon unlikely domestic objects as the raw material for his sculptures. He was deeply committed to the research of historic moments of creative and scientific innovation and this led to his interest in transformative phenomena such as the history of flight, the invention of bicycles, gas and electric light. Pethick’s inquiry into optical research introduced him to Gabriel Lippman’s work on stereo vision and the multilensed eye of the fly, circa 1908. This work influenced Pethick’s best-known artworks, “array” constructions that allowed the viewer to experience a seemingly magical, 3-D representation of the photographic image. Jerry Pethick was co-founder of the School for Holography (San Francisco 1971), recipient of the Claudia de Heuck Fellowship for Arts and Science (1999) and in 2003 he achieved a patent for his *apparatus for stereoscopically viewing scenes and objects*.

Above from the *Time Top Project* comic book, 2006. Illustration: Neil Wedman

The City of Vancouver's Public Art Program incorporates contemporary art practices into city planning and development processes. The program supports excellence in art making of many kinds—by emerging and established artists, in new and traditional media, from stand-alone commissions to artist collaborations. The program aims to encourage a conversation between artists and the city by providing for the creation of art that expresses the spirit, diverse visions, and poetry of place that collectively define Vancouver. The program is part of the Cultural Services Division and oversees the development of public art opportunities throughout the city. Projects at civic buildings, greenways, parks and other public spaces are funded through annual civic capital budgets. Private-sector projects are funded by developments in the rezoning process. Learn more about this and other public artworks in the Public Art Registry at [www.vancouver.ca/publicart](http://www.vancouver.ca/publicart); subscribe to the Public Art Listserv at the same site to be notified of upcoming artist opportunities.



**Time Top** was commissioned by Concord Pacific Group Inc. as part of their participation in the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program for Private Development. *Time Top* is accompanied by a comic book conceived by the artist and a fully illustrated catalogue available through the Belkin Art Gallery, Contemporary Art Gallery and Charles H. Scott Gallery in Vancouver.

**Coverpage** Jerry Pethick, *Time Top*, October 2006. Photo: Trevor Mills

**CONCORD**  
PACIFIC

 CITY OF  
**VANCOUVER**

# JERRY PETHICK

## Time Top Project



**PUBLIC  
ART**  
vancouver