

*Nothing is as it appears in dual gallery show*  
*Contemporary Art Gallery, 555 Nelson Street*  
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The material quality of things- that is, the stuff things are made from – is always the ambassador, the first and formal impression. We value gold by its karat, a scarf by its knot, or a face by the story in the skin. Everywhere, the material of a thing rushes to the fore – demanding our initial attention.

It's easy to stop there, because the material of a thing is often its most concrete aspect. We are trained to believe that a thing's material is also a thing's truth. What happens, though, when materials lie to us? When plants are plastic and faces are made of powders and creams? Perhaps we call those disruptions "art". Then again, for clever conceptual people like James Carl or Lucy Pullen, maybe the whole material kit and caboodle needs to be shaken up. At Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery (or 'the CAG' if you're at a champagne brunch) two sets of new work by these artists have been installed and are currently taking to task the ways that materials bind us together and render us asunder. Located conveniently close to the boutiques of Yaletown, the show's thorough critique of materialism might also set the rebel in you on a mini-shopping spree. On entering the airy building, you will immediately be confronted with a decision – left gallery or right? James Carl or Lucy Pullen? A takeout food container will sit unassumingly at your feet, about as helpful as a guide as Dorothy's scarecrow. You stare at the takeout container, blink, look up at the receptionist desperately.

The kind receptionist will point out to you that this is indeed not a piece of garbage left over from lunch, but a part of James Carl's show, in the room of the left. And it isn't made of Styrofoam after all, but gorgeous white marble. Styrofoam takeout container ... made of marble. ... See? Materials! All is in question! What fun! Let's go in. Say you head into Carl's gallery first (so amused were you by the Styrofoam-cum-marble joke.) Carl's work will present itself as a bit of a puzzle. An epic-scale wall of plywood looms over a series of workshop saws and a pile of boxes for file folders. Confusion and despair set in. But, upon close inspection, it becomes clear that nothing is as it appears. The wall is a computer graphic of wood; the saws meant for cutting wood are made of coroplast and foam-core; even the boxes painted with a wooden grain are laboriously falsified. The materials are false. It is as though the president of Ikea had forayed into the fine arts. Once the cold but humorous *Plot* has been adequately enjoyed, one might drift over to the gallery on the right.

This is Pullen's premiere solo exhibition in Vancouver. In some ways, Pullen's exhibit – comprised of fastidious drawings, a wild sculpture and a single photo – is well paired with Carl's examination of deceptive materials. But her single photo changes everything. The photo depicts the artist herself wearing a luminescent material that glows white under the camera's flash. This material is then used again in the sculptural work and in the drawings on the wall. Those drawings at first appear to be computer-generated designs, but reveal themselves to be meticulously rendered by hand and drawn on a similar material to the glowing dress, confirming the artist's presence. What appeared

removed at first is made bizarrely intimate. And the core is a material one. It's the same game that Carl was playing, but perhaps Pullen is on the other team.