



Circulation

Jean-François Cooke and Pierre Sasseville



2015

16855 24 Avenue

Circulation is a monumental two-part deer sculpture outside the Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre. The sculpture facing 168 Street consists of a pair of pipes coming out of the ground that attaches to a faucet. A chromed pipe extends from the faucet in what appears to be a stream of water pooling on the ground. Drinking from the stream of water is an oversized bronze sculpted fawn. This animal, a traditional symbol of childhood and youth, illustrates the building's recreational side.

The sculpture at the entrance of the building from the parking lot appears as a stream of water gushing out of a pipe that rises from the ground. As people approach, however, they will realize that the running water is actually a dynamic assembly of six life-sized chrome deer with their horns entwined. The arrangement of these animals evokes the mirror-like effect of two powerful streams of water confronting one

another, illustrating the spirit of competitions to take place at this Olympic-size pool.

About the Artists

Cooke-Sasseville's artwork is known for their uncommon use of familiar forms through strange but simple visual transformations. Since joining their practices in 2002, they have developed an approach that can be provocative and witty. A notable example of their approach is *Mélangez le Tout (Mix it All, 2011)*, which looks like a giant hand mixer. The artists have described the use of culinary mixers in their practice as a visual substitute for homogenizing forces. They recently completed a public art commission *Le Passe-temps (2013)* for Petite-Rivière-Saint-François and have done commissions for other towns such as Donnacona, L'Ancienne-Lorette, and Thetford Mines in Quebec.



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Cycles of Water, Cycles of Life: *Circulation*

In addition to providing leisure and exercise opportunities to citizens of Surrey, the Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre is home to one of the City's largest works of public art: *Circulation*, a site-specific installation realized by the artist duo Cooke-Sasseville.

Jean-François Cooke and Pierre Sasseville live and work in Quebec City, and have been collaborating since the early 2000s on artworks exhibited both in public and within gallery spaces. They are widely celebrated for their wry, humorous style of artmaking, as well as their imaginative use of symbols and materials. Cooke-Sasseville were selected by a committee of locally-based artists and advisors after an international call for artists was launched in 2013. Their artwork was installed in

2016, and is their first commission outside of Quebec.

Circulation was designed specifically for the Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre, and consists of two sculptural elements found at different locations on the exterior grounds of the building. One element resides on the western side of the building, visible from the intersection of 168 Street and 24 Avenue. This element consists of a large fawn statue, which appears to be drinking water falling from a faucet adjoined to two pipes. These pipes, one painted red, the other blue, rise from the ground adjacent to the fawn, and reach a height of approximately 21 feet above the ground. Upon closer inspection, the water falling from the faucet is actually a third pipe, coated in chrome-like reflective paint.

The second element of *Circulation* can be viewed on the northern side of the Aquatic Centre, adjacent to the entrance and the parking lot. A series of three pipes, painted in red and blue, rise to heights of between 25 and 30 feet. At their zenith, they bend and pass downward to meet another triad of shorter pipes projecting directly from the ground. Water appears to spout from the openings of all six pipes, meeting in the space between them; however, closer inspection reveals that the "water" consists of a group of chromed deer, their interlocking antlers giving the impression of splashing water drops.

Circulation is rife with symbolism, and its meanings derive from multiple layers of interpretation. Superficially, the work alludes to the multi-functional aspects of the Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre: the building contains leisure pools for the enjoyment of families and individuals, along with an Olympic-size pool and adjacent diving board, available for training and competition. These functions are reflected in each element of *Circulation*: the fawn represents youth, playfulness, and tranquility, while the interlocking deer represent maturity, strength, and competition.

These elements do not exclude each other, however. The use of colour (red, blue, and chrome)



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and animal (fawn and deer) suggest that each element is interconnected. Just as a fawn may grow into a deer, so too may an early interest in swimming and watersports inform a later passion for exercise, community involvement, and personal achievement.

Circulation also refers to the interconnection between nature, physiology, and lifestyle. The red and blue piping, along with the title of the work itself, alludes to the conventional symbols for oxygenated and de-oxygenated blood, found in medical textbooks, along with hot and cold water. In both elements of the work, water from each pipe combines with that of the other. This hybridity, between the pipes within each individual sculpture and then between each sculpture within the artwork as a whole, suggests a balance between leisure and work—one cannot exist without the other.

Further, in the first sculpture, a fawn drinks the water; in the second, the deer have become the water. This transformation configures a relationship between patterns of consumption and personal health. More broadly, it represents the continuous transfer of energy between different levels of ecology and their mutual reliance upon each other.

The use of deer within the artwork is itself symbolic. Deer are commonly found throughout British Columbia, and are prevalent within Surrey. They also feature in many First Nations mythologies. By incorporating deer directly into the Grandview site, Cooke-Sasseville make a point of trying to bridge the gap between the perception of a wild or "natural" environment and the urban, developed landscape. As the development of land continues throughout Surrey, progressively less is available for the territory of wildlife. The presence of deer at Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre suggests that it is no longer possible to circumscribe the impact of human activities within the borders of constructed environments.

Circulation also complements the broader ethos of athletic centres and of sport generally, in the sense that the skills and values learnt in the practice of

sport—such as teamwork, discipline, strategy, and self-improvement—are not exclusively the domain of athletes, but are essential for health and success in any path of life. Similarly, although deer are not primarily aquatic creatures, they are reliant upon water, and are capable of adapting to a multitude of other environments. The artwork thereby encourages the implementation of a balanced lifestyle into all areas of life.

