

## RESERVATIONS. 1991

The work *Reservations* (Figure 13, 14), examines the initial implementation of reservations and their current impact on Aboriginal communities. The purpose of reservations in North America in the mid-1700s, was to localize and control Aboriginal people and their lands. The government could tend to the 'Indian problem' through containment and isolation away from the public eye. Traditional practises were interrupted, such as travelling to camps throughout the year to collect food, which led to impoverished communities that relied on Indian agents for minimal food. Even though the Indian agents are gone and Aboriginals no longer have to receive a permit to go on and off reserve, the legacy of this impact remains visible today in Aboriginal communities. Isolation has led to high unemployment rates resulting in a ripple effect of poverty, addictions, suicide, violence, low retention in schools and various health problems. In 2005, the Canadian government addressed the problem of poverty in reserve communities that has been described as disgraceful Third World conditions. One hopes that this government recognition will translate into a concrete action plan that will assist economic development in reservation communities. As destructive as the reservations have been to Aboriginal communities, they have had one positive impact in that ironically the isolation provided a central place for the continuance of cultural and linguistic practises.



Figure 13, 14. *Reservations*.  
1991 Body filler, cage, wood.  
153 x 31 x 31 cm

*Reservations*, primary form is comprised of a pillar representing the governing bodies Canada and the United States that implemented reserves. The design at the top of the pillar are dominant architectural features of the White House, while the bottom are architectural details of the Ottawa parliament buildings, with medieval-style designs found in the foyer as well as exterior references of the praying monks that peer down from the peak of the building. The golden pillar alludes to systems of power that profited from the implementation of reserves. The rusty bird cage symbolizes the reservation, with a tree inside that represents the people. The rusty bird cage has weathered boards inlayed in the floor, referencing the poverty and small perimeters which at one time confined the people, though now

the door remains open. This tree stands with its roots splayed across the floor boards, overgrowing its perimeters, the leaves dying and falling to the floor. Currently the aboriginal population is growing at a rate of 70% faster than the rest of the Canadian population, which will ultimately lead to land shortages on reservations.