

Conspiracy Case a puzzling scenario

Gaeil Farrar
Tribune Staff Writer

If you enjoy puzzles and are looking for an interesting way to while away an hour or two drop by the upper Station House Gallery.

You will walk into an old-time detective agency with a few modern-day conveniences such as surveillance videos.

The setting is as authentic as Montreal artist Edwin Janzen could make it, right down to the agency certificate hanging on the wall, detective's desk, chairs, old filing cabinets, old TV monitors with surveillance videos running, and bulletin boards.

There is also an in-out box and typewriter in the corner where visitors can sit down and view their own situational

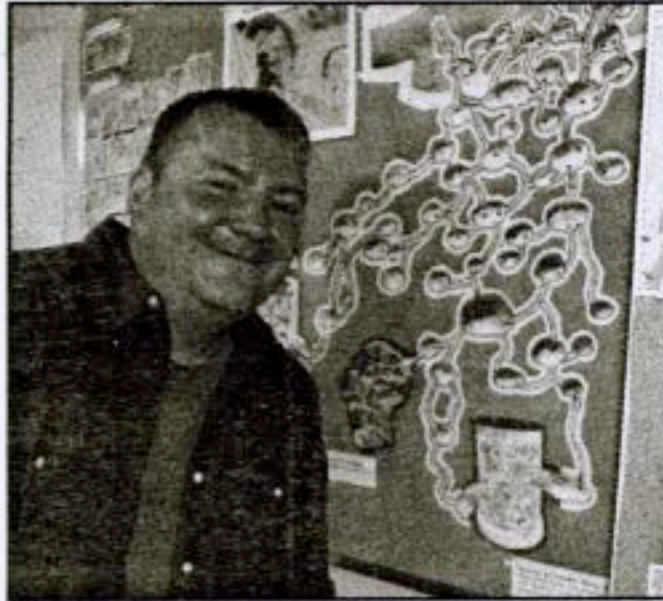
first, carefully he information crime wall.

ables his in-
Conspiracy

Case: A fantasy of total surveillance — and it certainly is.

The subjects of Janzen's investigation are Columbian Ground Squirrels.

Janzen explained at his opening last week that he became interested in ground squirrels while helping to set up



Gaeil Farrar photos

Artist Edwin Janzen and a view of the underground bunkers.



The captains and lower rungs of the crime ring with chief of security, explosive expert and low level dealers, thugs and hangers on.

an international conference on open source computer hardware at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 2009.

He says the exhibit is a political satire on law

enforcement in a post 911 environment.

According to his artist's statement the *Spermophilus Columbianus* (the Columbian Ground Squirrel) is predisposed

to conspiracy, their communal living being the source of this theory.

He spent most of July researching and setting up his show.

Janzen says he couldn't find any Columbian Ground Squirrels near the Station House Gallery and had to look further afield, finally finding a colony to study behind the Overlander/Ramada Inn.

After recording the squirrels' activities and creating his detective's office at the gallery, Janzen used his obviously ample imagination to create a scenario in which the squirrels are part of a nefarious underworld crime ring or terrorist organization, complete with suspicious characters, bunkers, and weapons cache.

He patterned the exhibit after television shows such as *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *The Wire* or *Hill Street Blues* that were just coming into the digital age when created.

Janzen came to do a show in Williams Lake because of his real life connections in the art world. He studied art at Concordia University where he became friends with fellow students Leah Selk, co-ordinator of the Central Cariboo

Arts and Culture Society, and Beth Holden, exhibition co-ordinator for the Station House Gallery.

Janzen holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Concordia University and a Master of Fine Arts from Ottawa University. He is an interdisciplinary artist who works in screen printing, video arts, photography and also does some free-

lance commercial writing to help pay the bills.

Janzen is looking forward to expanding his squirrely concept in new shows in other communities across Canada where the Columbian Ground Squirrels roam.

He says there is always the potential to map out connections between groups of squirrels in other communities, expand squir-

rel surveillance underground with the help of conservation officers and possibly introduce an interactive on-line component, all of which would link back to the start of his research in Williams Lake.

The show runs in the upper gallery until Sept. 1. Janzen notes that no squirrels were harmed in the making of this show.

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