



*Western Red Cedar  
and telephone pole*

Part of a display created for  
the National Museum of  
Canada's *Explore Your  
Heritage* contest, 1978

## Models

Donald Lawrence  
Kamloops, British Columbia



I am often bemused when people are not so much drawn to the newer sculptural and photographic works here and there around my office at TRU as they are drawn to a two-foot high model of a cedar tree that I made in grade nine. The tree rests in a glass case, a couple of n-scale loggers on springboards chopping at an immense cavity in the otherwise miniature trunk of the cedar tree. On the one hand, the model tree seems plausible, the small details of its large fluted trunk working together with the overall shape that is typical a Western Red Cedar. On the other hand, the dried ferns that represent the tree's canopy of branches seem too small, too delicate for a Western Red Cedar and out of sync with the dimensions of the trunk, thus introducing an element of implausibility. I am never quite sure whether it is the "plausible" or the "implausible" that draws visitors to the tree, but it is the potential of a model to juggle those two qualities that interests me in making models.



*Torhamvan/Ferryland*,  
installation view,  
Contemporary Art  
Gallery, 2005

A more recent project, my *Torhamvan/Ferryland* installation for Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery, presents a real-scale diorama of a Newfoundland shipwreck site. A folly of sorts, the canvas and wood framed constructions are the actual size of the *Torhamvan*'s boilers up-front and diminish in scale towards the back of the gallery in the manner of a baroque perspectiva. Despite the one-to-one scale relationship between the shipwreck and the diorama the work has the qualities of a model; Vancouver artist Laura Lamb, likened it to the ruin of a small aquarium ornament. Regardless of their actual size a characteristic – and a function – of models is to elicit questions of scale.



“Kamloops Archipelago”  
(an imagining of the  
ocean that existed in  
place of Kamloops  
during the Palæozoic era)  
for *Court House*, a set of  
artist's projects set in  
Kamloops' former Law  
Courts), preparatory  
model (cut-away view),  
2005