

# Toronto artist creates golden human heart to question wealth, inequality

## Brendon McNaughton used MRI scans, 3-D printer to create anatomical sculpture

By Laura Fraser, CBC News Posted: Apr 26, 2016 9:19 AM ET

After months of working in the Australian Outback, in a city famous for its gold mine, Toronto sculptor Brendon McNaughton could not look at gold the same way. The precious metal had become tarnished in his eyes.

The artist cooked for miners in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, men who risked their lives at work each day — and he couldn't shake the fact that they took home an ounce of what investors would collect from their sweat equity. One of his friends nearly died when a piece of metal crashed barely a metre from where he was working, McNaughton said.

"I got to see the working conditions," McNaughton told CBC Radio's *Metro Morning* Tuesday. "Lots of people were injured in these mines and it was quite scary to see."

He wanted others to see the underbelly of the gold industry, the way that jobs in a mining city would evaporate once its natural resources ran dry. And he's hoping his art — a gold-plated anatomically correct human heart — will prompt his audience to ask themselves the same questions about wealth, value, and inequality that he confronted.

McNaughton's latest exhibit, *Nest Egg*, running at Toronto's Corkin Gallery until Sunday, features his piece *Heart of Gold*. MRI scans from an anonymous donor formed the blueprint used by a 3-D printer; the multi-dimensional heart was then cast in bronze.

The 26-year-old artist applied the gold leaf to it himself. It's called Manetti gold, he said — the same metal used in the Palace of Versailles, the opulent court of the Louis XIV.

### Donation to cardiac research

McNaughton said he was inspired by the original reference to having a heart of gold — essentially a pure and noble spirit — in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. That notion, however, has "been divorced" from the industry that mines and profits from the precious metal, he said.

"I want to provide a foundation for people to have dialogues about the relationship between the ultra-wealthy and the wage workers who might be getting injured or are just scraping by in life," McNaughton told host Matt Galloway about his sculpture.

"What [the sculpture is] doing is that it's trying to understand our ideas and our perception of gold."

While the original Heart of Gold stands in his latest exhibit, McNaughton has been commissioned to create another, something he said he'll continue to do for a \$30,000 donation, which will go to York University's cardiology research.

For those who can't afford that, there's still a chance to take part. McNaughton plans to collect stories about people with "true" golden hearts — and may use their anatomical counterparts to create a new piece.