

Drawing is just too big. MAY BE WORK'S FIRST and LAST SHOWING

HALIFAX (CP)

Toronto artist Allan Harding MacKay has finally found an art gallery that will show his two-year labor of love. It's not that the drawing isn't worth showing. It's just too big.

The drawing - charcoal, pastel and graphite on packing paper - is a 164-metre-long, 11/4 metre-high portrait of the who's who of the contemporary Canadian art scene.

The display, which opened at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, may be the first and last exhibition for the work. Only three-quarters of the portrait takes up all of the gallery's temporary exhibition space. "They were the first ones that dared to show it," said MacKay tongue-in-cheek. "It took a lot of convincing. My mom had to get on the phone and everything." The work is titled *Some Critical Countenances: An Extended Drawing*. The artist said it's meant to "unfold some fabric of the art community across the country."

The work includes portraits of artists, critics and curators from Vancouver to Halifax. It begins with artist Michael Snow, known for his lifelike sculptures of geese at Toronto's Eaton Centre, and includes individuals such as John Bentley Mays, art critic for the Toronto Globe and Mail.

There's even a self-portrait of MacKay with a hairline that's receded to the back of his head and a beard several centimetres longer than the one he now wears.

IS A SPOOF

"It's actually more of a spoof than a portrait," said MacKay, squinting at the caricature of himself. He actually lost track of the number of people he drew but said there are about 160 images and 100 individuals included. "The project became a trace of my own connections, of some of the people I know in the arts community," said MacKay. All of the subjects are alive and active in the arts community except one Saskatoon painter who died recently, he said. Not all of them know they are in the show, said MacKay, explaining that he drew many of the images from photographs.

MacKay, 44, has a wide range of administrative experience that should have taught him about the problems of getting work out of the studio and onto a gallery wall. A Charlottetown native, he graduated in 1967 from the College of Art in Halifax, where he specialized in painting. He then worked as a scene designer for the CBC and as a display artist at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton.

MacKay served as director at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon and director at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge, Alta. He became the director of an artist-run space in Toronto called Art Metropole last summer.

Three years ago, he started *Some Critical Countenances*, which is showing until April 2. In the beginning it was only going to be a drawing of the faces of Canadian art critics, but later he decided to add other members of the art community.

