

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	4	
ARTSEEN	6	ART AS ENTERTAINMENT Greg Beatty
PAST & PRESENT	10	JACK WISE: A LANDSCAPE IN MIND Gregory Strong
FEATURES	14	KAMDOOPS ART GALLERY Margaret Christie
	20	SOUR WINE IN SILLY BOTTLES Bernard Blum
	26	WAR ZONES: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN HARDING MACKAY
	30	MONEY FOR ART Greg Beatty
	32	CHARITY ART Paula Gaudreau
REVIEWS	34	TARAS POLATAKO: SCOTOMA Greg Beatty
	36	CRYPTIC MESSAGES Jennifer Argen
	40	CATHY DALEY: SELECTED DRAWINGS Paula Gaudreau
	42	DOUGAL GRAHAM & SAIWAN YAWNGIWE: COLLABORATORS Paula Gaudreau
	44	PAUL DE GUZMAN: SUBTRACTED EDITION Paula Gaudreau
	45	CAMBOSE DUCCOTE Paula Gaudreau
	46	EQUUS: DRAMA & ART Patricia Berry
	50	ANDREW BELL: MOTORWERKS 3: SPINSTER REFINEMENTS Laura Burt
	52	ANDRE MARTIN: DARLINGHURST HEROES Paula Gaudreau
BOOK REVIEWS	53	KELLY CLARK
	53	OBJECTS & EXPRESSIONS
	54	TOM THOMSON/THE CREATIVE VOICE
	55	MISCELLANEOUS
SITE SPECIFIC	9	FETCH GIRL Jane Irwin
SHOWCARD	13	RENE DUVAL At Fuel
	33	POSSESSING #'S Corey Holzman

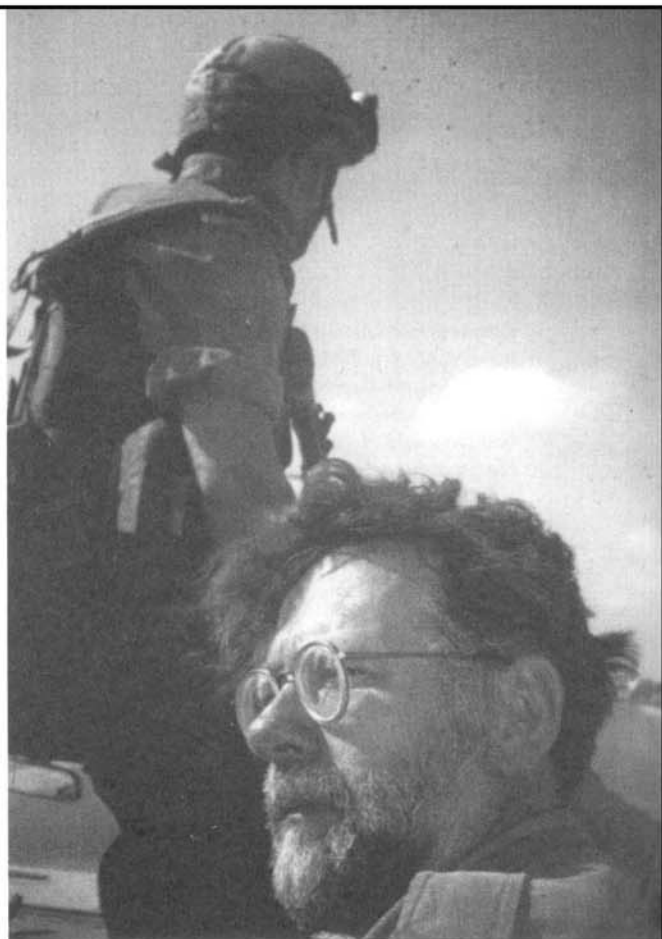
FEATURE

War Zones

AN INTERVIEW WITH
ALLAN HARDING MACKAY

The *War Zones* exhibitions organized by Presentation House Gallery at various venues in Vancouver between April and September, 1999, provided an opportunity to revisit the armed conflicts in Iraq, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Somalia and elsewhere as represented in films, photographs and videos by more than 20 international artists. Among them was Allan Harding MacKay, Canada's last official war artist. In March 1993 MacKay travelled with the Canadian Airborne Regiment carrying out humanitarian aid missions in Somalia. The timing of his assignment coincided with the torture death of Somali teenager Shidane Abukar Arone and the attempted suicide of Master Corporal Clayton Matchee in the Canadian compound at Belet Huen.

In an April 17 interview, MacKay discussed how his work as an artist differed from the roles of photo journalists and war correspondents.



Allan Harding MacKay and peacekeeper, Somalia, 1993.

ARTICHOKE: Film uses visuals and narration to tell a story. Your 19-minute *Somalia Yellow* video is in the *War Zones* exhibition. How do you as an artist tell the story of a war in a way that's different from a photo journalist's version?

MACKAY: When I went to Somalia I took two cameras, a small Sony video camera and a 35mm camera, which I have come to use as an image bank. When I was at NSCAD in 1971 I played around with video a little bit, but I did not consider myself a video artist. The video camera was just a recording device. Basically I consider myself a picture-maker. I use various mediums to create pictures. When I came back to Canada and looked at some of the imagery, [I realized] I had about an hour and a half of useable video footage. *Somalia Yellow* doesn't follow a conventional

narrative. It's not a documentary in the usual sense either. It's very much a poetic and rhythmic response. One can judge whether it's good poetics or not, but it does depict the of rhythm I felt about the experience.

Since that time I've gone back to that source footage and done a series of vignettes. This series took the form of a video installation in the *Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art 1998* and a theatre set used in a theatre performance by One Yellow Rabbit. Recently, I've rearranged some of the vignettes, working with a composer from Los Angeles, Donald Rubinstein, who has responded in terms of his music, so there's been a kind of continuum of projects relating to the Somalia theme. A little more than a year ago The Banff Centre for the Arts commissioned a series of three lithographs where I actually took video stills from the footage, moved it through photoshop to generate the colour separations, and then had lithographs made. A couple of the video images were also used in Atom Egoyan's *Elsewhereless* opera. So the project continues to find different locations.

Also, if I can raise enough money, I will go back into the source footage again with a Somali translator. There are a lot of ambient vocals. Not knowing Somali, I would really like to have somebody listen to it and find out what was being said. There certainly were occasions—people being people wherever they are—[when the Somalis] made comments about what we were up to. It's one more layer inherent in the raw footage.

ARTICHOKE: So each time you re-examine the source material you're able to uncover another layer, another level of the same journey, but not necessarily in a sequential flow?

MACKAY: The way that I've treated the vignettes is as vignettes. In one case there's a vignette that's 36 seconds long. In another it's five minutes or so. All I've done is put them together in a kind of rhythm with yellow dissolves between each one. So the emphasis is on this experience of looking and listening, but not through a conventional narrative format.

ARTICHOKE: Like when you're travelling and you look

out the window for a minute, then go back to talking or reading or whatever.

MACKAY: Right. There's not any direct linear play. And that's what has given me creative freedom, because I am not married to a sequential narrative.

ARTICHOKE: In a way your vignettes are like news broadcasts about the war in Kosovo where we get clips from, say, Serbian television. The images don't make any sense because we don't know the location, the geography or the language, and if there's text it's in Cyrillic.

MACKAY: Maybe that's what gives me permission to do it. I've been so mediated by the media that the vignette format feels very comfortable.

ARTICHOKE: We have learned to decipher images that, in truth, don't make any sense at all. All we have is a news reader's voice, putting some sort of context around it, but not translating it.

MACKAY: I always find it interesting when you see a photograph in a newspaper or magazine and there's a caption underneath describing somebody doing something, which might have little to do with the picture in terms of actual fact. There's still such a strong predisposition to have a recognizable narrative attach itself to the image, even though the image is just a fleeting moment. There's one vignette in a desert oasis where there was a gathering of nomads and their animals. I was filming a woman with her camels, framing on the moving head and body of the camel, when suddenly a bird appears to fly up out of the camel's back. I couldn't see the bird coming, because of my position; however, that's the vignette—a moment, a poetic 36-second moment.

ARTICHOKE: Other artists in *War Zones* use heavy-duty imagery, big political quotations, to present the issues that concern them. How do you give meaning to your work?

MACKAY: I met Willie Dougherty last night and we



talked about his work coming out of Northern Ireland. What he does is important, but significant to me was that he works as an artist. He has very formal concerns, aesthetic concerns, so there are those kind of choices made within his practice all the time, even though the content resonates in a broader social or political arena. Certainly I have been under some criticism that I seem to be more interested in the aesthetics of the content than how the content should resonate. I accept that as an artist I am an observer, a transformer. I am true to my sensibility. That is what I do.

ARTICHOKE: Doesn't that put you in the camp of the voyeur?

MACKAY: It begs the question, is there a particular style that would get it right? That's where I find the question is. We have to accept and live with who we are and the creative results of that reality.

ARTICHOKE: I suppose it's the same dilemma experienced by photo journalists or war correspondents when they are in the thick of war and their heart cries out to help the people around them. That's not their job. Their job is to record the moment. I would think you almost have to turn off caring, stop being a humanitarian.



Top: Video still: Blood bath of healing, abattoir, Belet Huen, Somalia. Photo by Allan Harding MacKay.

Middle: Video still from *Somalia Yellow*, 1994. Photo by Allan Harding MacKay.

Below: Video still: Woman in abattoir, Belet Huen, Somalia. Photo by Allan Harding MacKay.



MACKAY: I examined that question in my own mind when I went to Somalia. Is there a difference between journalistic practice and the terms of what my practice is as an artist? I was part of a small entourage of photo and print journalists. We all had cameras, so in effect the instruments we had were the same, but of course they were concerned with particular kinds of production values. Their agenda was to capture certain moments that are constructed and appear almost predetermined. They're part of a news and image industry. I was wandering around, shooting more randomly, because I knew that whatever the photographic results, I could make something out of it artistically. Historically, their photographs will stand up much better than the ones I got, but six years later I'm still working on my material. They've gone on to other assignments.

ARTICHOKE: So the moral or ethical questions might be the same, but the roles are different?

MACKAY: The relationship to the material is different. In a sense, it's your own. By the nature of the job or occupation, I don't think the material belongs to a journalist in the same way. It wasn't a dilemma for me, but I was trying to figure out the difference between a journalist and an artist, and it seemed to come down to ownership, subjectivity, and devotion over time to the subject and its transformative possibilities.

ARTICHOKE: You're suggesting that in Somalia you were in a non-political role entirely, even though you may have political views that ultimately come out in your work? Doesn't that make you some kind of tourist, parachuting in and imposing yourself on what's there?

MACKAY: There's been the critique made that basically those who follow wars are really enacting the role of tourist, and there's an element of truth to that.

ARTICHOKE: Well, I can't imagine anyone starting a war these days without at least notifying CNN.

MACKAY: I guess the most obvious example of that was when the United States Marines landed in Somalia. The news camera crews were there first. •

Allan Harding MacKay is an artist, curator, and art administrator, currently living in Banff. To date, he has mined drawings, collages, bookworks, prints, videos, and a theatre performance from his Somalia source material.

On April 13, 1999, MacKay announced that he intended to destroy one of his Somalia artworks every day "until he is satisfied that the Canadian government's policy on the use of its military returns to the world [its] respected and effective role of delivering humanitarian effort and peacekeeping, not bombs." His personal collection of works on paper created from his observations in Somalia numbered 58. (The commissioned works from the assignment are in the collections of the Canadian War Museum, the Department of National Defence, The National Gallery of Canada, Glenbow Museum, University of Lethbridge, and the McLaren Art Centre.) Curiously, the depletion of MacKay's inventory coincided exactly with the June 10, 1999, announcement of the cessation of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.