

The Somalia Series  
(Abattoir) 1997



# The Somalia Project

In March 1993, the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artist Program commissioned Allan Harding MacKay to document, through works of art, Operation Deliverance and Cordon, humanitarian aid missions carried out by the Canadian Forces under United Nations direction.



Stretching Woman (abattoir)

The focus of the composition is the simple, universal human act of an early-morning stretch, surrounded by the morning activities of animal slaughter in preparation for the village market.

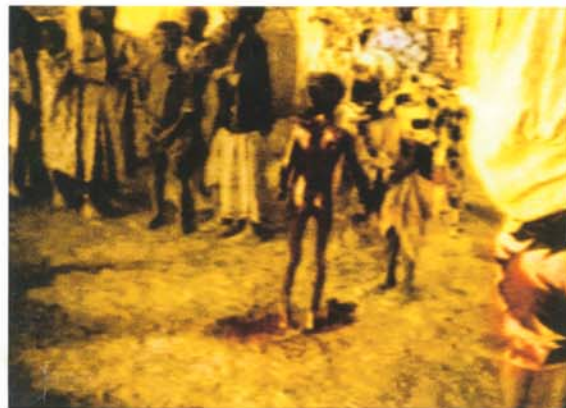
These three images are based on MacKay's observations of activities in an abattoir at dawn in Belet Huen, Somalia.

The artist's work honours the Somali people's survival and continuation as a traditional society in a harsh environment, amid the violence of civil war.



Woman (abattoir)

An intimate portrait  
of a Somali woman,  
framed by the rib  
cage and carcass  
of a freshly  
slaughtered camel.



Blood Bath of Healing (abattoir)

At dawn,  
a sick child  
experiences the  
ancient ritual of  
healing, with a blood  
bath from a freshly  
killed calf.

**The Process**

Photo lithography was chosen to maintain the integrity of the simple moments of Somali life captured in video by MacKay. Photo stills from the original video documentation were computer enhanced and custom printed as lithography, a printing method with a 200-year fine art tradition and history.

Price: \$500 each / suite price \$1,200

Edition Size: 25 prints of each image  
Four-colour photo-based lithography,  
hand printed by master printer Alan Flint,  
Printing Works, Hamilton, Ontario  
Image Size: 16" x 24" each  
Paper Size: 22" x 29" each  
Printed on 300 gram Sommerset Satin

During his travels in Somalia with the Canadian Forces, MacKay's time was spent primarily in the operating environment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. His overall resounding impression is expressed as a motif throughout most of his work: high-tech military machinery juxtaposed against scenes of everyday life in Somalia. The timing of his assignment coincided with the events that led to the Somalia Inquiry, the torture death of a Somali teenager, Shidane Abukar Arone, and the attempted suicide of Master Cpl. Clayton Matchee in the Canadian compound in Belet Huen. In addition to creating images alluding to these unfortunate incidents, MacKay uses a medium that captures the intense struggle for survival against the isolation, the heat and the desolation of East Africa. In many ways his art acknowledges the efforts of the majority of Canadian peace keepers to achieve the goals of their mission despite the extremes of a harsh natural environment combined with the violence of civil war. Allan MacKay is Canada's last official military artist to have visited a war zone.



### The Artist

Allan Harding MacKay has had a long and multifaceted career in the visual arts as a gallery curator/director and as a professional artist. He was founding director of the Southern Alberta Art Gallery and gallery director at Saskatoon's Mendel Art Gallery, and the Power Plant at Toronto Harbourfront, among others. MacKay has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally, and his works have been acquired by public galleries, corporations and private collectors in Canada and Switzerland. He has served as artist in residence at several Canadian universities and art colleges and has been awarded numerous Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council artist grants. Since 1993 the Somalia experience has been featured prominently in his art practice and his "Somalia Yellow" series has produced videos, drawings, collages and prints in addition to a theatre collaboration with the One Yellow Rabbit ensemble and images contributed to Atom Egoyan's opera *Elsewhereless*. In 1996, a CBC documentary on MacKay's Somalian experience, "Changing Perspectives," aired on national television. MacKay bases his professional career in Banff and Toronto, where he has been widely acknowledged in the media for his work. He is currently an artist in residence at The Banff Centre for the Arts.

Velvet Antler Editions is an innovative program of The Banff Centre for the Arts specifically designed for professional, experimental, transdisciplinary print production. Most importantly, this program provides artists with access to new technologies in a multimedia context.

Print, as a medium and as a tool for art practice, has undergone many changes in technology and thinking in the past two decades. Its ability to transform and be used in innovative and transdisciplinary way in contemporary art practices makes it an ideal medium for investigative process for artists' research. Velvet Antler prints will be edited at technically high production values once per year as part of the Media and Visual Arts department's New Works program.