

SOMALIA YELLOW

1994, Video, 19:00 (Colour, Stereo)

By Harding Mackay, Allan

Somalia Yellow is derived from footage shot in March 1993, during the artist's Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists assignment, "Somalia: Operation Deliverance and Cordon". The tape moves through an extraordinary pictorial view of war-ravished Mogadishu, the natural desert formations of Somalia, the Canadian military compound where a Somali youth was murdered and the accused soldier attempted suicide. Finally, a compelling look at an outdoor abattoir in Belet Huen that documents the ancient ritual of healing through a blood bath of a child at dawn. The visuals and sound operate at two levels, one in extended slow motion while the other moves at a more fleeting pace. The tape is unusual in the context of traditional war art in that it has transformed raw documentary footage into a highly personal and poetic response by the artist to the juxtaposition of military intervention to natural and social realities of Somalia.

Allan Harding MacKay
SOMALIA YELLOW, 1994
video



SOMALIA YELLOW VIGNETTES

During March 1993, the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artist Program commissioned Allan MacKay to document Operation Deliverance and Cordon - humanitarian aid missions carried out by the Canadian Forces in Somalia. During his assignment, MacKay stayed in the now notorious military compound Belet Huen where a Somalian youth was tortured and murdered by members of the Canadian Airborne. *Somalia Yellow Vignettes* investigates peoples' intense struggle for survival within East Africa's hot and desolate terrain while commenting on the humanistic and political scandals that have gained much media attention as the Somalia crisis. Included drawings, prints and videos demonstrate MacKay's painterly aesthetic while providing a unique glimpse of everyday life mixed with war. However subtle, the soldiers' presence continuously penetrate the vignettes, but life remains pervasive. The exhibition *Somalia Yellow Vignettes*, will coincide with a related, collaborative performance event that is currently being planned by Allan MacKay and Denise Clarke for the One Yellow Rabbit Theatre's annual High Performance Rodeo event, January 7 - 10, 1998.



Image credit: Allan Harding Mackay
"Women in Abattoir" video clip, 1997

The exhibition will include several large-scale drawings; a series of serigraphs (commissioned by the Banff Centre and to be launched during the exhibition); and a series of video vignettes that will be projected onto a rear-screen which will fill the gallery's storefront window (6'x6'). The vignettes will play continuously, twenty four hours a day and be viewed by heavy passing foot and street traffic on MacLeod Trail North in Calgary. All of the video footage and sketches from which the drawings and prints are made were accumulated by the artist during his brief sojourn in East Africa.

Allan Harding MacKay has exhibited his visual artworks nationally and internationally for almost thirty years. He is known foremost for his large-scale figurative drawings which often depict the figure alone or in landscape. These subtly rendered linear drawings are imbued with colour invoking a diverse range of emotion from the viewer. The work is consistently imbued with sensitivity, humour, historical and political poignancy. Such works have been acquired by many Canadian and Swiss public galleries and private and corporate collectors. He has received awards from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. Allan has also had a long and multi-faceted career in the visual arts, as the curator and/or director of many major Canadian institutions. To name a few, he has worked at the Power Plant, Art Metropole and the Mendel Art Gallery. Most recently he worked as the Project Director for the Institute of Modern and Contemporary Art in Calgary. Allan has also participated in a number of artists' residencies including several Canadian universities, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the Alberta College of Art, the Confederation Art Gallery and Museum and most recently the Banff Centre for the Arts. While in residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts, Allan is finishing drawings, prints and videos for his exhibition at the Stride Gallery, *Somalia Yellow Vignettes*.

SOMALIA YELLOW VIGNETTES

Allan Harding MacKay

Canada, 1998, Betacam SP, coul., 30 min, v.o. anglaise.

16/11/2000 , 16h45
Cinémathèque québécoise -
Salle Fernand-Seguin,
335, de Maisonneuve Est |
Guichet: 514-842-9768

En 1993, le réalisateur a participé à la mission de l'ONU en Somalie. Il accompagnait le contingent canadien à titre d'artiste militaire officiel. Cinq ans plus tard, toujours hanté par les souvenirs de cette expérience, il a réalisé une relecture de son engagement à partir des images vidéo qu'il avait filmées. Si ces images ont des sources militaires, Allan Harding Mackay laisse parler sa conscience bouleversée, sans jamais adopter le traditionnel discours autoglorifiant de l'Armée. Les vignettes, encadrées par des cartons jaunes, sont autant de souvenirs, d'actes remis en question qui révèlent le contraste entre une présence militaire musclée, que Harding Mackay qualifie de «chasse impériale», et les réalités de la vie quotidienne en Somalie.

Allan Harding MacKay

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In 1993, the director traveled to Somalia with the Canadian contingent of the UN mission as an official military artist. Five years later, still haunted by memories of that experience, he used the video images he filmed there to re-examine his participation in the mission. The images have their source in the army operations, but Allan Harding Mackay never adopts the military's traditional self-glorifying position. Instead, he lets his guilty conscience speak. Each vignette, surrounded by yellow cards, is a memory, an act, an event called into question. The film exposes the contrast between a strong-arm military presence, which Harding Mackay denounces as "imperial hunting," and the reality of daily life in Somalia.



Image credit: Allan Harding Mackay
"Women in Abattoir" video clip, 1997

Allan Harding Mackay a aussi tourné,
An Icon for the Independent Spirit (1998),
Pendulum Yellow (1995) et *Somalia
Yellow* (1994)