

Exhibition brochure for
Suzanne Cameron
2001
Halifax, Nova Scotia

36 Halifax Corner Grocery Stores

28 Years later

A Photographic Project by Suzanne Cameron

In May of 1972 Allan Harding MacKay, then Director of the Anna Leonowens Gallery, initiated the project 36 Halifax Comer Grocery Stores working with Lionel Simmons as his photographer. Building on the lexicon of conceptually oriented 'documentary' photographic strategies of the early 1970s, MacKay's project recorded, in the most dead-pan of fashions, the facades of thirty-six neighbourhood corner grocery stores in Halifax. The completed project was installed in the Anna Leonowens Gallery in December of the same year along with a small catalogue of images and the list of locations.

MacKay's original strategy reflected conceptualist interests of the 1970s where photography was used as a recording tool, not an instrument of 'expression.' Drama, textures, and unique points of view were subservient to the act of photographically collecting layered data based on cultural and social observation. Images were 'cool,' detached, and analytical in their framing and presentation.

Suzanne Cameron found MacKay/Simmons' original publication in the College's library in February of 2000. Fascinated with the scope of the original project and curious about how these sites looked twenty-eight years later, Cameron proceeded to update each of MacKay/Simmons' sites with a photograph of her own adding a dimension to the original project that was never intended -- the passage of time. By following the original index of the catalogue, Cameron discovered that ten of the buildings were still used as corner stores, eleven evolved into other businesses, eleven converted to residential use, and four have been demolished.

This exhibition features a reinstallation of copies of MacKay/Simmons' original images with those of Cameron. What is revealed is a fascinating array of documentary insights that crisscross through urban geography, sociology, product design, commercial signage and building technologies embedded in the passage of time.

Peter Dykhuis
Administrative Director

