

# AN ARTIST'S INTERPRETATION

*By Gloria Kelly*

Canadian military history is again being officially recorded on canvas as artists taking part in the CF Artists Program complete their initial works. They depict CF members from the Army, Navy and Air Force deployed in various aspects of Operation APOLLO.

The production of Canadian war art has a long and storied history, officially beginning in 1916 with the creation of the Canadian War Memorials Fund. It was followed in 1942 by the Canadian War Records Program, and the Civilian Artists Program that ran from 1968 until 1995.

Cancellation of the program did not diminish the need for Canada to record the actions of its military and in June 2001 the creation of the current CF Artists Program was announced.

In unveiling the new works by artists Allan MacKay (Army), John Horton (Navy) and Ardell Bourgeois (Air Force), General Ray Henault, Chief of the Defence Staff said it is wonderful to see this project revived and to see the works that have been created.

"It is important that we keep a visual record of the work done by our members and this project provides another opportunity for the Canadian public to put a different face on what CF members are called upon to do," said Gen Henault. "These works usher in a new era in Canadian military art."

Some of these works will become part of the DND/CF permanent collection, adding to the visual record of CF operations from around the world that have accumulated over the years. Each of the new works is very distinctive and features a specific element.

Mr. Horton, who served in the Navy on both HMC ships ALGONQUIN and OTTAWA, said he welcomed the opportunity to spend time with the ships' crews, and to gain an appreciation of the work they do on a modern warship. His works range from a depiction of the operations room during action stations, to a helicopter coming in to land on the deck and to a homecoming with cheering and waving children.

"This project is important in that it keeps alive the tradition of recording wars and conflicts in art," said Mr. Horton. "In years to come these works will provide a record that one might not have been able to achieve with a photograph. These works are the artists' interpretation of what they saw and felt as they travelled with the troops."

Mr. MacKay, who travelled to Afghanistan, was in Somalia with Canadian troops so he had a good idea of the climate and conditions he and the Canadian troops would encounter and have to endure throughout their deployment.



*Artist Allan MacKay talks about his work depicting the Army in Kabul with MGen Marc Caron, acting Chief of the Land Staff.*

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His works depict the starkness of the country and the determination of troops to do their job under trying conditions. "Our work as artists gets done after a great deal of reflection about what we have seen and experienced," he said. "They are images that might otherwise be missed by journalists covering a conflict." For Mr. Bourgeois, an avid painter of anything to do with aviation, the opportunity to visit the Air Force contingent was one not to be missed. "It is hard for those who have not experienced the conditions these men and women worked under to imagine how dedicated they are to getting the job done and keeping those planes in the air to meet commitments." His works are dominated by the aircraft, but are so detailed the people depicted actually draw the eye.

The CF Artists Program has reviewed applications from a number of artists wishing to take part in the program. To date, 21 artists have been accepted and the process of identifying assignments and locations to accommodate as many of them as possible over the next two years is underway. The program is being managed and administered by the Directorate of History and Heritage.