

The Marion McCain Atlantic Art Exhibition

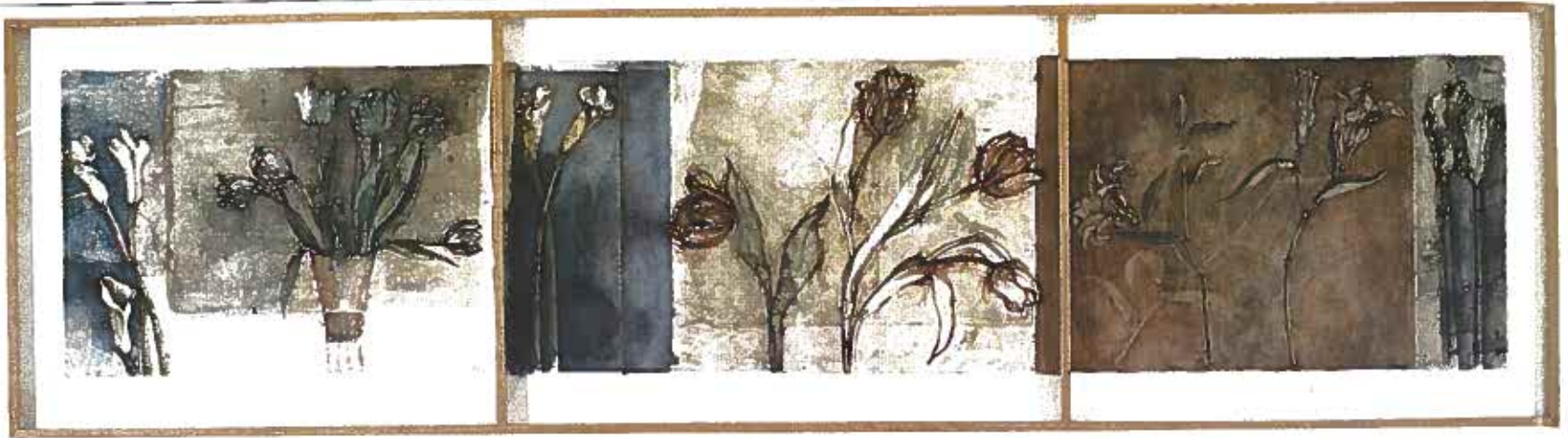
L'Exposition d'art atlantique Marion McCain

2000

ARTISTS  
in a floating world

des ARTISTES  
dans un monde flottant

TOM SMART Curator / Conservateur



SUSAN WOOD  
*Tulip and Lily Frieze, 1999*

gargantuan form. In the end there is a blunt force to the objects, which make definitive assertions of their presence.

On the other hand, the paintings of Jane Mothersell contain a kinetic potential that is the opposite of the images of Livingston. She intends that her object lesson be read; its moral is to beware of the latent menace lurking within groups. *Crowd #7* (41) is a collective portrait of sailors whose individual distinctiveness dissolves as one approaches the surface of the painting. Through her images she warns us of the potential for things going wrong in a mob. Outside the margins of her paintings there is a tension between the apparently sanitary genre of group portraiture and the latent violence of a pack mentality that can instantly manifest itself with unpredictable results. In contrast, Edward Huner describes the effects of harm or surgery on the body. His *Woundings and Martyrs #3* (72) comprises a disturbing image which compels and rebuffs, not only for what it shows, but for the intrusiveness it suggests.

Matthew Reichertz's large-format paintings comprising figures in indeterminate fields of grey reconstruct a narrative of loss and longing in a mind addled by the violence of the past and betrayed by a neurological disorder in the present. His paintings are metaphors of memory itself, of consciousness given an ambiguous form, of dreams and elegies of a past remembered with pain. The organizing structure of Reichertz's work (42) is that of a story within a story. The artist recalls the summer he spent caring for an elderly man named Tadeuz who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Through his paintings the artist describes fragments of Tadeuz's biography involving his life in Poland before and during the Nazi occupation — the story of Tadeuz's arrest by the Nazis at Gdansk and of his subsequent separation from his wife and child for six years. The painting that is included in this exhibition is part of the *necessary man* series and relates to the episode in Tadeuz's story in which he is reunited with his wife and child. The imagery is built up from an expressive gestural drawing onto which is laid a succession of grey washes comprising the ground for the figures. Reichertz's purpose is to convey an emotional truth, even though the veracity of the facts of the Tadeuz story may be compromised owing to the narrator's illness. The images on the field relate to an imprecise memory. A similar theme is treated in the work of Barbara Hill-Taylor in her installation *Fabrica* (74). This piece is a metaphor of the manner in which the mind constructs a notion

Opposite / À la page droite  
 JANE MOTHERSELL  
*Crowd #7, 1996*



MATHEW REICHERTZ  
*necessary man*, (detail / détail), 1999

of the self. In an effort to reconstruct her own biography, lost to amnesia, this piece is the lamination of several personalities on each other to create a single, cohesive identity.

Margot Metcalfe's *MacDonald House Series* (43) interprets the skeleton of a house in the course of its demolition, exposing the lattice-work and wood. Her work, like that of her Halifax colleague Carl Zimmerman (75), suggests an absence of an identity. In Metcalfe's photographs it appears as if, in symbolic terms, a body and a mind were flayed of memory itself, leaving a clean slate, an inert casement, a void into which one might pour the meta-narrative of a bio-

graphy. The work of Reichertz, Hill-Taylor, Metcalfe and Zimmerman are all elaborate meditations on lost identities in entirely different poetic forms and media.

Several other Halifax artists represent the province as an enchanted place, one that is both inhabited and transcended. The paintings of Tom Forrestall are about a labyrinthine quest to transcend this world. In the manner that he constructs the illusion of space in paintings such as *The Boundary Line Tree* (77) we are able to follow the surfaces and contours of his forms in strangely lit landscapes. Beyond the orderly surfaces we are taken through a landscape of clear transcendent light and absolute tactility. Forrestall's painting is a gentle act of redemption, atonement, quiet compassion, and meditative simplicity.

The transformation of lived reality and the representation of poetic reality informs the paintings of Melinda Spooner and Sheila Provazza. Both artists involve us in the re-creation of the possible meanings of their images. Spooner's *Selkie* (76) refers to a mythical people of the ocean who, by spinning until they lose consciousness, metamorphose into seals and live in the water as well as on land. Provazza's *Search for Orfeo* (44) describes a landscape of elements that might allude to an industrial wasteland. The apparently innocent landscape of bizarre forms and things, of cat-like creatures and other animalia of a weird bestiary constitutes the upside-down world of Peter Kirby. His painting *Where Alex last saw his cat* (44) is a grotesque menagerie, virtually a book of beasts almost come to life. Similarly, Peter MacWhirter's *Wrapped Fish* (76) conveys a vague sense of a hostile environment in which fish are caught. Amid a jangle of shapes, images, and forms, the artist spells a tragic demise of innocence.

If Spooner deals with the state of metamorphosis, and Provazza industrial images, Irena Schön tests the limits of her medium to represent transformations that are possible in dreams and the unconscious. Veils figure prominently in her work as symbols of oppression, celebration, and formality. As symbolic devices they encourage viewers to participate in constructing their meanings as either



MARGOT  
*MacDonald House No.*