

Allan Harding MacKay: Gift of Conscience



'Conscience', Allan Harding MacKay, velvet glove with embroidery, work on paper fragment, 2012.

As a visual artist, Allan Harding MacKay has served as a war artist with the Canadian Department of National Defense on two occasions, first in Somalia in 1993 and again in July 2002 when he was invited by the Department of National Defence to participate in Operation Apollo, a pilot project for the newly minted Canadian Forces Artists Program in Afghanistan. Once on the ground at Kandahar Airfield he had only four days to gather all his support material only being able to travel in the area surrounding Kandahar and its immediate environs.

Works from the Afghanistan assignment, Allan Harding MacKay.



His movements were restricted to this site and except for a short trip to the Tarnac Farm area where friendly fire by American air crews killed and wounded Canadian troops on the ground, the days were spent observing and capturing on video the activities of the airfield and the surrounding environments as well as flying by Hercules aircraft in and out of Camp Mirage in the United Arab Emirates.

This series of works on paper is derived from video stills chosen from the approximate 4.5 hours of video shot by the artist during the Afghanistan assignment. The content for this exhibition focused on interior images shot within the Hercules aircraft, grotesque monuments of wrecked aircraft from previous conflicts and images of two large exterior wall murals depicting what appear to be Russian aircraft.

The production process for this series is one of layering. The initial computer rendering of the images determines palette and quality of line and contrast. Ink jet digital prints on paper are then layered with a