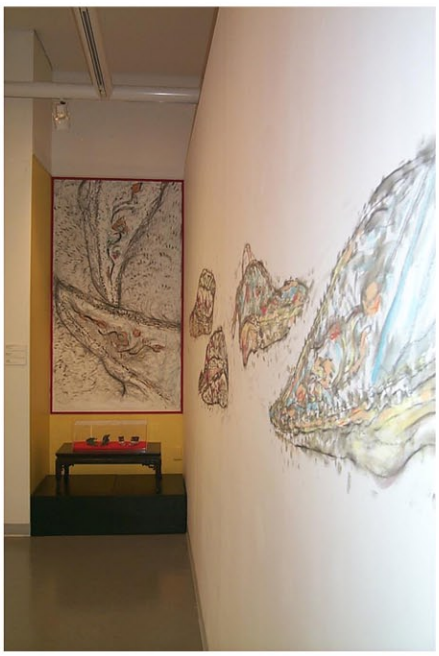
SOURCE/DERIVATIONS VIII

The GOLDEN LOTUS and Alice Unbound

From his *Source / Derivations* series, this work addressed the tension between the beauty of ornate, decorative footwear from the Gallery's permanent collection, and images that depict social and sensuous permission in the life of a contemporary woman.



Installation views: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Artist Statement

By appropriating the "original", MacKay begins the process of uncovering the multiple layers of cultural and art historical associations with an image, and therefore constructs an identity informed by the past which also resonates in personal experience ... through this work we learn that representations and meaning are provisional, elusive and fleeting, never fixed, always predicated on history and experience, time and memory. - Vincent Varga

Source Derivations is a series that responds to a "source" image or objects and creates works - derivations - from this found search. I was very interested in the extensive decorative Asian art collection at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and various possibilities were considered during my research. I recently completed work of three large drawings of acquaintance, Alice Wei, a Canadian medical doctor of Chinese birth. As part of my research into the Asian collection, I discovered a photograph of boots used to cover the bound feet of women in pre-twentieth century China. These artifacts, often called "*Golden Lotus*" pieces, are very beautiful and highly aestheticised but also resonate with a history of cruelty and disfigurement for erotic ends.

It struck me that the images of Alice that I was working on represented an emancipated realm very distant from that imposed on earlier females whose fate was to have their bodies painfully bound and disfigured from an early age in the service of a fetishistic male desire. The juxtaposition of these two realms was reinforced as a result of conversations with Alice relating to my ongoing *The Yellow Woman Harmonizes* series devoted solely to female subjects. In particular, I was interested in the portrayal of confidence displayed by a contemporary female subject and the process of permission which may be granted by the female in responding to and directing the artistic gaze in these works, I am interested in portraying a healthy and consensual exchange directed at the pleasure of observing and of being observed.

It occurred to me that an index of the social and cultural distance travelled between what the *Golden Lotus* represents, and ideals of contemporary female empowerment were somehow embedded in these images of Alice. The project can also be seen as an examination of female agency, which enables an embrace of the sensuous. This in turn may illustrate the cultural shift over time from an imposed cruelty of desire, to the celebration and emancipation of desire. The drawings based on *Golden Lotus* decorations and the drawn images are intended to articulate the counterpoint between power imposed and power assumed.

This project also became an opportunity for me to develop and blend the more personal *The Yellow Woman Harmonizes* series with the institutional *Source Derivations* Series that I initiated in 1988, as a series of visual responses to other art works. In this case, the works chosen from the Art Gallery collection are the *Golden Lotus* artifacts created by anonymous women.

Allan Harding MacKay

Artist's Biography

Allan Harding MacKay has had a long and multifaceted career in the visual arts as a gallery curator/director and as a professional artist He has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally and his works have been acquired by public galleries, corporations and private collectors in Canada and Switzerland. He has served as a visiting artist at several Canadian universities, art colleges and public galleries and has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Since 1988, MacKay has been developing his exhibition series, *Source/Derivations*, based on the art and artifacts of other artists. The artist works on his own art practice and as a curatorial consultant in Kitchener, Ontario.

Allan Harding MacKay would like to acknowledge the support of Lisa Baldissera, Alf Bogusky, Zhe Gu, Lynette Torok and Alice Wei.

List of Works: Chinese, nd, Shoes for Bound Feet, Embroidered Silk, Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Chinese, Qing Dynasty, late 19th Century, Shoes for Bound Feet, Embroidered Silk Gift of Mina Sherman; Chinese, nd, Low Table, Carved Wood, Gift of Harold & Vera Mortimer-Lamb; Allan Harding MacKay, 2002, Alice (Tripych), pastel, oil, wax, damar on paper, Collection of the Artist; Allan Harding MacKay, 2002, Wall Drawing (Based on the Golden Lotus Decorations), charcoal, pastel, installation at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

The LAB 2.1:
Source/Derivations VIII:

The GOLDEN LOTUS
and Alice Unbound

April 5 - May 19, 2002

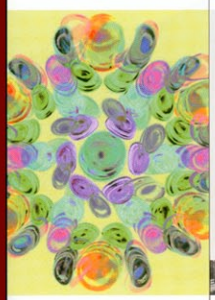
For fourteen years, Ontario artist Allan Harding MacKay has developed a series of collections-based artworks drawn from public gallery collections across the country. This year, MacKay comes to work with our own Asian art collection. MacKay will create responses in painting and drawing to shoes for Lotus Bud feet from our collection. Says MacKay, "I came across a photograph of a boot used to cover a bound foot. A very beautiful artifact however one that \resonates with a history of cruelty and disfigurement of the female for social and erotic ends... " MacKay's work addresses the tension between the beauty of the ornate, decorative footwear and its function, and images that depict social and sensuous permission in the life of a contemporary woman.

Shoes for Bound Feet (Lotus Bud), no date, silk

FRAME

Volume 3 / No.1 / April to June 2002

THE LAB: 2.2
ATOMIKA



snowflakes / laceflowers
Ingrid Mary Percy

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DECADES
ART OF THE 1960S

Here and There
in the Global Village

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DOUBLE VISION

Medrie MacPhee
Landon Mackenzie

Page 4

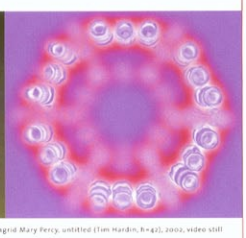
ART GALLERY
OF GREATER VICTORIA

THE LAB

Designed specifically for presenting challenging and dynamic experimental projects, The LAB is a new contemporary art space within the Art Gallery. Last year, The LAB kicked off with *Small Worlds*, an exhibition of miniature work by students and faculty from UVic's Visual Arts Department created in response to miniatures from our collection. This year The LAB has gone one step further, with the construction of a 12' x 20' LAB site. Not simply a new exhibition space, The LAB is a project space, in which proposals are invited to engage with the site itself. During a recent call for proposals, the Gallery invited artists to submit proposals in all forms of media as well as innovative museological projects involving the Gallery's permanent collection.

As well as this spring's exhibitions by Allan Harding MacKay and Ingrid Mary Percy we look forward to the upcoming year's LAB projects by:

Frances Benton
Roy Green
Tyler Hodgins
Daniel Laskerin
Catherine Lewis
Althea Thauberger



Left: Shoes for Bound Feet (Lotus Bud), no date, silk. Right: Ingrid Mary Percy, untitled (Tim Hardin, h=42), 2002, video still

The LAB 2.1: Allan Harding MacKay
Source / Derivations VIII: The Golden Lotus
April 5 - May 19, 2002

For five years, Ontario artist Allan Harding MacKay has developed a series of collections-based artworks drawn from public gallery collections across the country. This year, MacKay comes to work with our own Asian art collection. MacKay will create responses in painting and drawing to shoes for Lotus Bud feet from our collection. Says MacKay, *"I came across a photograph of a boot used to cover a bound foot. A very beautiful artifact however one that resonates with a history of cruelty and disfigurement of the female for social and erotic ends..."* MacKay's work addresses the tension between the beauty of the ornate, decorative footwear and its function, and images that depict social and sensuous permission in the life of a contemporary woman.

The LAB 2.2: Ingrid Mary Percy
ATOMIKA: snowflakes / laceflowers
May 31 - June 7, 2002

Victoria artist Ingrid Mary Percy creates a digital video installation which reconstructs the patterns of molecules and evokes other structures in nature; snowflakes and laceflowers are also the scientific terms used to describe types of molecules with hexagonal symmetry. However, her materials – electronic music, Lite Brite and digital prints – are drawn from contemporary sources. Says Percy, *"These complex and fundamental systems (molecules) that are the basis for all matter in the universe, the stuff that everything is made of, can be explained or imaged using a very simple toy that anyone growing up in North America in the late 20th century is intimately familiar with."* Percy's sensorial project morphs and fuses these images. A limited edition CD will also accompany the exhibition.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

LAB 2.1
Artist Working in Residence
April 1 - 4, 2002

Artist's Talk & Opening Reception
Thursday, April 4
Talk: 7:30pm
Reception: 8:00pm

LAB 2.2
Opening Reception
Thursday, May 30
7:30pm

Artist's Talk
Saturday, June 1
2:00pm

For more information on upcoming LAB projects, visit us online at aggv.bc.ca