CHATEAU TAKES FIRST PLACE
▲ Chateau Lake Louise is awarded.**B5**

TRAGEDY IN OUR HEARTS
▲ Sadness in high school shooting.**B6**

The Valley

"I got my first gig here when I was 15 years old. I've been playing at the Springs for 76 years..."

...Louis Trono, page B3

Banff artist destroying war pieces

Local painter is tearing one piece of art for every day NATO continues the war with Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic

BY ANGE PARKINSON
STAFF WRITER

Banff artist Allan Harding MacKay is protesting against the Canadian military's involvement in Operation Allied Force by deliberately destroying his own works.

Every day that a war plane drops bombs on Serbian forces in Yugoslavia, MacKay tears up one of his own creations, whether it be a sketch, a collage, or a painting.

Six years ago, MacKay was assigned to capture scenes from the Bosnian war by using a video camera and a 35 millimetre camera. He worked as a war artist with Canadian peace keepers during the Somalia mission in 1993. His works portray Canada's soldiers performing what the artist believes to be their proper, humanitarian role. He began wrecking the collection two weeks ago.

In total, he has 57 mixed-media pieces from his Somalia works that combine drawings, collages, and photos with wax and paint.

In one corner of his tidy Banff Centre studio, MacKay keeps his stack of images under careful surveillance. They're piled neatly on one side of a table, waiting for their turn to be torn in two.

"I'll usually choose a painting or a drawing that best suits my mood for the day and rip it down the middle... Sometimes I'll hang the two pieces of paper on the wall afterward," he said.

MacKay, 55, said he will continue to destroy one painting per day until he is satisfied that the federal government's policy is for Canada to act as peace keepers, not soldiers.

"I won't stop destroying my art until I'm sure the government has had an effective role of delivering humanitarian effort and peacekeeping, not bombs," he said.

MacKay said he'll simply create additional pieces, should he run out of artwork to tear.

"I can't speculate when this will all be over... I'm not destroying anything but the paintings that came out of the Somalia works," he said.

"They're my own feelings put into artwork from when I was over there."

A photograph is taken of MacKay's artwork before he rips it apart. He said at least this way, he'll have some sort of recollection of the image.

"When I'm tearing my art in half, it's hard to explain how I feel. I haven't been able to identify the emotion I'm feeling as I do this," he said.

"I guess in a sense there is a degree of removal from the act itself. I haven't been able to allow myself to get too close to my work because of that."

MacKay titled his work, *Somalia in Yellow*. He said he chose yellow as the primary colour because it's a tone that allows landscape scenes to show the highest and brightest shades of yellows.

"Yellow has become a larger field of colour. One pays more attention to it. And yellow is a graphically pleasing colour," he said.

"It's also a colour of harmony and mediation. In trying to get the Canadian government back on track with mediation, yellow is the perfect colour."

He said he doesn't consider what he's doing an act of art. Rather, it's a social political act from a citizen who's an artist.

MacKay was born in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and said he always had a keen interest in art. He studied art education and painting at the Nova Scotia College of Art where he received an associate diploma in 1967.

Prior to moving to the mountain resort, MacKay worked as an art gallery curator in Halifax, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, and Toronto.

He's had 27 solo exhibitions across Canada and Europe, and has participated in over 20 group exhibitions across the world. He was Canada's last official military artist to have visited a war zone.

While he was working in Somalia, he said the most dominant pictorial theme he saw was the juxtaposition of deserts.

"I took two cameras with me, one for slide photographs and the other for photos, and I took a video camera with me. I gathered my images and then translated them into my drawings," he said.

"My drawings come out of my experience in humanitarian efforts. There have been thousands of men and women who've served in the military.

"This kind of government has basically betrayed the efforts of its tradition. It doesn't mean however, that peace keeping efforts aren't going on," he said.

Flipping through the pile of his works, MacKay takes a moment to look at a sketch of a Canadian flight engineer posed in front of his aircraft.

He takes a moment to remember back to the exact time he took the photo. MacKay glances at a self portrait he took while assisting a pilot load his plane.

A sketch of a Somalian mother crying while cradling a young child is the next creation he studies.

"This is evidence of a potentially significant part of our Canadian heritage," he remarks, while continuing to study his images.

"Taking these images wasn't a pleasant task... the whole war is pleasant.

"These issues are to be taken very seriously in the human dimension."

Somalia in Yellow was a project MacKay worked on last year.

It took him about one year to complete.

His decision to destroy his own artwork was based on his opposition to Canada's involvement in the war.

So far, MacKay said he has received a gratifying response from the public in support of his project.

Pieces of art created from that assignment are currently in the collections of the Canadian War Museum, the Department of National Defence, the National Gallery of Canada, the Glenbow Museum, the University of Lethbridge, and the McLaren Art Centre.

As for his future plans, MacKay said he wants to continue to create images that give him inspiration and hope for a peaceful country. "When this is over, I'll go back to being a regular painter."

Ange Parkinson/The Banff Crag & Canyon

Banff artist Allan Harding MacKay is destroying one piece of his Somalian art collection for every day the Canadian military is involved with Operation Allied Force.