

Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies
Banff, Alberta

Court Painter & The Political Elite
Allan Harding MacKay, RCA (1944 -, Canadian)
October 23, 2015 – January 18, 2016

8 min Video and 48 digital graphic panels

A self-proclaimed political junkie, artist Allan Harding MacKay creatively digitizes his satirical views about the recurring political buffoonery in Canada. The cast featured in his caricatures either occupy the national political electoral centre stage or strategically manipulate it from the wings. Contingent on current political circumstances, images of the players are plucked from the Internet and inserted into various staged settings. Begun in mid-2013, and emailed for fun to friends, these creations give MacKay a platform to humorously exercise his opinion and sardonically view the daily news he avidly reads and views online.

MacKay's close friend John Will plays the part of Court Painter. A practicing artist and retired professor at the University of Calgary, Will's real-life persona is equally theatrical. In each image, MacKay animates the Court Painter with telling facial expressions, various outfits and a purposeful deportment adding to the overall wit. The role of Court Painter references the historical role that the artist often played in documenting the activities and vanities of the ruling and political class of the day.

During the time of Confederation in Canada, Jean-Baptiste Côté (1832-1907) and John Wilson Bengough (1851-1925) ridiculed politicians through caricature. Each generated a unique record of the period by poking at regional peculiarities as well as at the conduct and character of public officials. Through the publication *La Scie*, Côté lampooned supporters of Confederation while Bengough used

allegations from the 1873 Pacific Scandal to underscore Sir John A. Macdonald's complicity. By the mid-19th century, cartoons were being specifically designed to express the publisher's political opinion. Hyperbole and satire combined with the artist's ability to express current events in a comical manner, offered the reader a less-threatening morning read. Sadly, yet not surprising, much of that commentary mirrors events today.

Through his caricatures, MacKay continues the artistic tradition of targeting the government's ruling party. Political symbols and varied stage settings re-appear. 24/SEVEN references the Conservative Government's tax-funded YouTube channel; the ever-present ACME smoking bomb is borrowed from the Wile. E. Coyote Road Runner cartoons; the Trojan horse is compared with the stealth invasion of Troy by the Greek army and the Conservative government's arbitrary Omnibus Bills; Canada Day hints at the Conservative Party's nationalism and patriotism; and Bill C-51 foreshadows vast security implications. Embedded throughout the collages are references to movies, TV, historical paintings and settings, artist studios, children's books, and political events. And finally, the Court Painter, with smoke wafting from his ever-present cigarette, works tirelessly on his creations.

MacKay's wry sense of the ludicrous, combined with his resourcefulness, results in a series of cleverly constructed cartoons that arouse quiet laughter and a knowing nod.









Resume Includes
Tobacco
Alcohol
Fracking
LOBBYIST

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POLITICAL
ARTS
&
DOG WHISTLE
POLITICS

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