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Lieux
Places
Number 89, Fall 2011

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/65165ac

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Cite this review
From February 18 to May 15, 2011
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

**Wanda Koop**

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invited to experience Koop's newest en-
gically arranged sections and offers a sam-
ing from eight of the artist's many series.

The first two rooms display a selection of
er iconic large-scale acrylic-on-wood
paintings from the series Flying to the Moon
(1984–87), followed by a choice from In Your Eyes
(1997–2001), Sightlines (1999–2001), and
Green Zone (2003–09). Viewers are then invited to experience Koop's newest en-
davour, The Hybrid Human Project (2010),

an affective installation that builds on the
now-familiar large-scale works on plywood
and adds projected video and sound, media
with which she has been experimenting
for some time.

Finally, we enter a re-creation of the
artist's studio, a problematic museological
trope that curiously, in the case of Koop's
work, seems to make sense because we are
able to see her image-centred meditative
process. Viewing her many sketches; which
come in the form of Post-it Notes drawings,
small-scale acrylics, sketchbook pages,
photographs, written notes, and films, we
can see her research process. As childhood
paintings are included as a part of this in-
trospection of the artist's creative process,
a linear progression emerges with regard
to her oeuvre. Themes can be traced throu-
ghout her career – particularly the evolution
of the image from static to dynamic.

Much like Rothko, Koop pairs colours
carefully. While Koop's work is representa-
tional and Rothko's decidedly not, both
treat colour similarly and make demands
on the viewer's concentration. When asked
to explain how her works evolve from pencil
sketches to acrylic paintings, Koop respond-
ed, "When I make the notes I am already
thinking in terms of colour. Colour is the
vehicle for me. So, it may be a small short-
hand note, but I'm thinking in colour."

This embryonic consideration of colour
– which acts like a highlighter on a page
of text, drawing out what is important –
isolates the image that we are being asked
to contemplate. Again, as in Rothko's paint-
ing, in Koop's work colour sets the images
into motion on the picture plane. The repre-
sentational nature of Koop's work grounds
it in the material – mundane images made
unique through their transformation and
isolation, another theme that is persistent
throughout her oeuvre.

The selection of work from the 1980s
highlights Koop's focus on the representa-
tion of physical objects – the image. The
monochrome background on which it is
carefully painted creates an effect of rever-
beration – the image is brought into motion,
brought to life through its isolation. As Mary
Reid explains in the accompanying cata-
logue, the images, "lacking any surrounding
'clues' allow one to concentrate solely on
the 'sign,' provoking an almost meditative
state of looking." Through this meditation,
the sign is transformed from an impression
of the world – such as a still photograph –
into a reflection on it – a living image. The
photographic basis for her later work is
better understood in this context.

Koop's work from the 1990s and 2000s
invites our contemplation of the image in
much the same way as do her earlier paint-
ings; however, the nature of the image has
shifted. This collection of work is inspired by
personal travel and current events: a family
pilgrimage to Russia (whence Koop's family
had fled prior to her birth in Vancouver,
British Columbia, in 1951), and global
conflict. Based on both memory and the
instantaneous flashes of televised images
of modern warfare, Koop paints from the
other side of what W. J. T. Mitchell termed
"the pictorial turn," in which images replace
text as our central mode of experience. Her
expression and understanding are pictorial,
but they are slow and carefully contem-
plated. The starting point for the series
Green Zone was televised images of the war
in Iraq. The saturation of front-line video
imagery clearly made an impression on the
artist, who sat in front of the television
screen sketching frames on Post-its. These
notes became the initial studies for the se-
ries. Koop's incorporation of video into her
newest project, then, is not unprecedented.

The Human Hybrid Project, installed in the
final gallery, physically brings the
viewer into the image. The use of multiple
technologies – the incorporation of video,
music, and paintings on plywood – makes
this installation a truly immersive experi-
ence. Silhouettes of human bodies are paint-
ed and dancers projected onto abstracted
landscapes. The music being played unites
viewers with the dancers until the moment
that they are caught in the light of the
projector and their own silhouette enters
the picture-plane. In that instant, they
experience something of an epiphany: you
were never not implicated in these images;
through your careful contemplation of the
images, the lines between image and "real"
have been blurred.

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**Sheena Ellison** is a Ph.D. student in cultural
mediations at Carleton University in Ottawa.
Her research focuses on modern and contempo-
rary Canadian art, particularly the impact of the
legacy of the Group of Seven on Contemporary
First Nations art. An article on Huron-Wendat
material culture will appear in a special issue of
Cahiers métiers d’art ::: Craft Journal this fall.

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"Wanda Koop: On the Edge of Experience" is a major attraction of the Prairie Scene fes-
tival, the fifth presentation of this biannual event organized by the National Arts Centre in
Ottawa to showcase Canadian regional art scenes. Koop's show, a mid-career retro-
spective of sorts, consists of four chronolo-
gically arranged sections and offers a sam-
ing from eight of the artist's many series.

The first two rooms display a selection of
her iconic large-scale acrylic-on-wood
paintings from the series Flying to the Moon
(1984–87), paired with No Words (1987–89),
followed by a choice from In Your Eyes
(1997–2001), Sightlines (1999–2001), and
Green Zone (2003–09). Viewers are then invited to experience Koop's newest en-
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