

# The Canadian Forces Artists Program

## Le Programme d'arts des Forces canadiennes

John MacFarlane

Photography and War  
La photographie et la guerre  
Volume 39, numéro 2, 2014

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1027752ar>  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1027752ar>

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### Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

### ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)  
1981-4778 (numérique)

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### Citer cet article

MacFarlane, J. (2014). The Canadian Forces Artists Program. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 39 (2), 100–109.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1027752ar>

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# The Canadian Forces Artists Program Le Programme d'arts des Forces canadiennes

JOHN MACFARLANE, PROGRAM MANAGER, CFAP

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The Canadian Forces Artists Program (CFAP) is the successor to the First World War Canadian War Memorials Fund, the Second World War Canadian War Records, and the Cold War Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Program. CFAP's creation in 2001 introduced a new program that affords Canadian artists the opportunity to document the daily operations, personnel, and spirit of the Canadian Armed Forces within the country and around the world. The program is open to practitioners of all media—visual arts, music, dance, theatre, and literature among other disciplines—although contributions in the program's early years were dominated by painting and drawing. Artists are transported and escorted according to available resources and operational limitations. Their work is not vetted and they are free to present it as they wish. To date, fifty-nine artists from across Canada have participated. For this special issue, we have selected photo-based work produced under the auspices of the CFAP from 2003 to 2013. All quotations are from artist interviews conducted in 2014 by John MacFarlane and correspondence indexed in the Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, Canadian Forces Artists Program fonds.

Le Programme d'arts des Forces canadiennes (PAFC) est le successeur du Fonds de souvenirs de guerre canadiens créé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, de la Collection d'œuvres commémoratives de la guerre, créée pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et du Programme d'aide des Forces canadiennes aux artistes civils créé pendant la guerre froide. L'établissement du PAFC en 2001 a introduit un nouveau programme qui offre aux artistes canadiens l'occasion de documenter les opérations quotidiennes, le personnel et l'esprit des Forces armées canadiennes au pays et à travers le monde. Le programme est ouvert aux artistes de tous les médias – arts visuels, musique, danse, théâtre et littérature, entre autres disciplines – mais les contributions des premières années du programme ont été majoritairement en peinture et en dessin. Les artistes sont transportés et escortés selon la disponibilité des ressources et les limites opérationnelles. Leur travail n'est pas contrôlé et ils sont libres de le présenter comme ils veulent. À ce jour, cinquante-neuf artistes de tout le Canada ont participé. Pour ce numéro spécial, nous avons sélectionné des œuvres photographiques créées sous les auspices du PAFC entre 2003 et 2013. Toutes les citations sont tirées d'entrevues avec les artistes menées par John MacFarlane en 2014 et de correspondance indexée au Ministère de la défense, à la Direction de l'histoire et du patrimoine, Fonds Programme d'arts des Forces canadiennes.



Dick Avern, *Canadian Airman Duff (MFO North Camp Sinai)*, 2009. Archival Digital Print on Aircraft Grade Aluminum, 24 x 36 in.

## I. Dick Avern

Photographer and writer; lives in Calgary, AB.

Visited the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula with Canadian peacekeepers in August 2009.

Dick Avern has produced a wide variety of exhibitions, conference papers, and public presentations based on his experiences at MFO North Camp, near Egypt's border with Gaza and Israel. He also travelled to Cairo, the West Bank, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem with the Canadian Forces. Avern's non-fiction writing and lens-based media works explore "the politics of national identity," and his creative enquiry addresses "how different nations either enable or disable conflict-related cultural canons." Through his varied projects, Avern has set out to provide benchmarks for "understanding how art and military activity can re-frame the War on Terror."



Allen Ball, *CANCON*, 2012. Polymer resin and digital print on canvas, 72 x 48 in.



Andrew Wright, *Empty Sea King Helicopter Hangar Aboard H.M.C.S. Toronto, North Atlantic, 2005, 2008.*

## 2. Allen Ball

Photographer and painter; lives in Edmonton, AB.

Visited the Canadian Forces Operation Calumet in the Sinai Peninsula in June 2007.

Allen Ball's photographic work from his trip to the Middle East under the CFAP combines his desires to "deeply embrace the importance of public art" and to "witness and reflect on the lives of Canadians serving abroad." Exploring how visual representations enable public engagement with modern warfare, Ball has presented this work at Canadian, American, and international conferences. His Sinai photographs have been exhibited in galleries and institutions across Canada and in the UK. Created using a technique of large-scale "immersive digital photography," Ball's images have also been installed at the University of British Columbia Liu Institute for Global Studies, and, most recently, in commemoration of the First World War, at the ASC Gallery, London, England.

## 3. Andrew Wright

Photographer and videographer; lives in Ottawa, ON.

Visited HMCS *Toronto* in the Atlantic Ocean in April 2005.

Andrew Wright is engaged with multi-tiered enquiries into the nature of perception, the uses of photographic structures and technologies, and the ways we relate to an essentially mediated and primarily visual world. His photography is decidedly non-conventional and inhabits the intersection of traditional and conceptual forms of art making. "My experience aboard HMCS *Toronto* in 2005 offered me uncommon insight into the daily operations of the Navy and into the lives of those who serve. I spent my time taking and offering photographic portraits to the crew in addition to gathering imagery that led to further work and explorations—some of which continue to this day."



Scott Conarro, *Summerside & RHIB Landing, Cape Dyer NU*, 2011.

#### 4. Scott Conarro

Photographer; lives in Keremeos, BC.

Visited the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans with the Royal Canadian Navy in August 2011.

Scott Conarro depicts in photographs his experiences aboard HMCS *Summerside* during Operation Nanook in 2011. “At the time I was working on a photographic study of the coastline of North America. I was and continue to be grateful for the Navy’s willingness to take me into the Arctic Ocean. I made the photograph *Summerside RIB Landing at Cape Dyer, Nunavut* when the Arctic Rangers were brought ashore to do routine maintenance at a DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line site.”



Charles Stankieveh, *The Soniferous Æther of The Land Beyond The Land Beyond*, 2013. 35mm Film Installation with Dolby Sound (Film Still).

## 5. Charles Stankieveh

Videographer and photographer; lives in Dawson City, YK.

Visited Canadian Forces Station *Alert* (Ellesmere Island, Nunavut) in November 2011.

Under the auspices of the CFAP, Charles Stankieveh produced a film and sound installation recorded during his time at CFS *Alert*, “the northernmost settlement on Earth. The installation is part of a series of fieldworks looking at remote outpost architecture, military infrastructure, and the embedded landscape.” The work reproduced here is excerpted from that larger project. Stankieveh documented the station and surrounding landscape using “computer-controlled time-lapse filming strategies to combat the eternal darkness of the polar winter. The eerie images hover somewhere between an abandoned Cold War station and an Outer Space outpost.”



Althea Thauberger, *Kandahar International Airport*, 2009.

## 6. Althea Thauberger

Photographer and multi-media artist; lives in Vancouver, BC.

Visited Kandahar, Afghanistan in March 2009.

Through photography, murals, film, and other media, Thauberger explores “self-expression and difficulties of communication; relationships between the individual and collective within social/political structures; and nature.” During her time in Afghanistan under the auspices of the CFAP, she photographed women serving in Canada’s armed forces at Kandahar Airfield. By presenting them as carefree and smiling, she provides a counter-image to prevailing public perceptions of military service in Afghanistan.





Mary Kavanagh, *Double-Portrait: Chemical Protection Suits*, DRDC, 2013. Video Stills.

## 7. Mary Kavanagh

Visual artist; lives in Lethbridge, AB.

Visited Anchorage, Alaska with North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), August 2013; and Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) in Ottawa and Toronto, July 2013.

Mary Kavanagh has chronicled activities and ephemera at atomic sites including Wendover Air Base, Utah; Trinity, New Mexico; and Hiroshima, Japan. “As part of her ongoing body of work examining cold war and nuclear testing programs,” her participation in the CFAP included “Exercise Vigilant Eagle 2013,” a tri-national (United States, Canada, and Russia) live-fly and simulated terrorist hijacking staged by NORAD and the Russian Federation Air Force out of Anchorage, Alaska, and Anydyr, Russia. Kavanagh also visited DRDC, Ottawa, where she filmed the Radiological Analysis and Defence group engaged in radiation and chemical detection training.



Erin Riley, *Operation Nunaliut, Ellesmere Island*, 2009. Colour photograph.

## 8. Erin Riley

Photographer; lives in Toronto, ON.

Visited Fort Eureka on Ellesmere Island, Nunavut with the Canadian Rangers and Joint Task Force North in March 2009.

Erin Riley's approach to photography is rooted in a documentary tradition. While at Fort Eureka she was confronted by a landscape she described as "so vast, so overwhelming" that the only way she could "exert any sense of control over it, was to photograph it." Photographing the landscape became her "act of sovereignty. It was a way to contain the landscape," a method for her to claim ownership over this space that so many people—military and civilians—have attempted to understand and control.

## 9. Ho Tam

Photographer and multi-media artist; lives in Toronto, ON.

Visited HMCS *Calgary* at Pearl Harbor in March 2005.

Ho Tam works with many media. After a ten-day trip from Pearl Harbor to Esquimalt Naval Base arranged through CFAP, he created *Romances*, a series of works in which he combines drawing, painting, video, and photography. The project, an "exploration of the sea and the Navy that combines fact and fiction," has been exhibited widely. "The romance of the sea has given rise to plenty of myths and imaginings," he believes. "In bringing together the rich symbolism and reference about the sea and the voyage," he seeks to construct a "complex yet open-ended, larger narrative."



Ho Tam, *Untitled (waves)*, 2006. C-print.