

Press Release

The Mackay Creek Series Ron den Daas

Foreword by Dr. Brian Riddell

Essay by Bill Jeffries

Hardcover Edition

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“After looking at the sixty panel paintings of a small waterfall on a North Vancouver stream by Ron den Daas, I asked myself why art about ‘the daily’ is so often focused on the artist, rather than that ‘other’ that we call nature. What Den Daas has done in this series of paintings is to turn his attention outward: in his art he has bypassed humanity’s obsession with ‘the self’. In ‘The Mackay Creek Series’ he asks a question: can an artist focus on small changes in the natural world, rather than depicting oil spills, toxic sludge, clear-cuts or wetland draining, and in this way sensitize viewers to the precarious ecological state that humans have created everywhere?”

In his Mackay Creek series, Den Daas argues that the rhythms of a stream within easy walking distance of his studio can be taken as a meaningful sign of the state of the environment. His everyday images, seemingly of little consequence, forcibly reference much larger global phenomena.

The series started in November of 2008 when Den Daas found returned Coho salmon adults in Upper Mackay Creek; this once-common occurrence in North Vancouver creeks was a rare event in the endangered urban creek ecosystem of 2008. His response to seeing those fish was two-fold: painting onsite, he completed the first of the sixty studies of a pool and small waterfall in the creek. Then, he took on the leadership role in protecting the creek and restoring its salmon runs – a project that continues to this day.

The critical commentary the paintings convey is not directed at their overt subject (salmon, streams) but, rather, at the conditions that undermined the well-being of a particular habitat, synecdochically standing in for ecosystems everywhere.”

Excerpt from Bill Jeffries essay

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