

# Artist profile

## Christopher Pratt – Artist

Today, Christopher Pratt is one of this province's best-known visual artists. However, as a teenager, Christopher showed more interest in fishing, hiking, and camping than in art. This changed when he was hospitalized to have his appendix removed, and his grandfather gave him a book on how to paint with watercolours. This marked the beginning of Christopher's painting. Although his early work showed talent, it would be a while before he decided to pursue art full time.

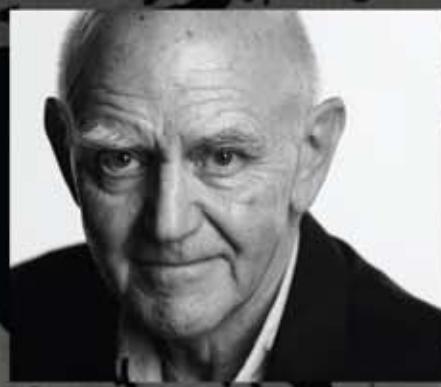
Christopher, who was born and grew up in St. John's, first enrolled at Memorial University as an engineering student, then transferred to Mount Allison in New Brunswick to study pre-med. Although the head of Mount Allison's Fine Arts Department urged Christopher to enroll in the

school's Fine Arts program, Christopher wasn't ready to do that. Instead, after a year at Mount Allison, he returned to St. John's where he painted on his own, selling his watercolours for \$35 to \$75 a piece.

*“... Anyone who looked was going to see young Christopher being serious, pursuing art as a grave and noble purpose, not an easy, carefree life.”*



**Fig. 2 Christopher Pratt**  
*Benoit's Cove: Sheds In Winter* (1998)  
oil on board



Ned Pratt Photo

**Fig. 1 Christopher Pratt**



Fig. 3 Christopher Pratt  
*Cape St. Mary's* (1975)  
Serigraph

In 1957 Christopher married his Mount Allison classmate, Mary West, and enrolled in the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. He found that Glasgow offered discipline and exacting standards that forced him to grow as an artist. Students at Glasgow were required to draw for three hours every morning, first from wooden geometric shapes and then plaster casts, before being allowed to draw from live models. After Christopher completed the two-year foundation program, the Pratts returned to Mount Allison School of Fine Arts, where both earned a Bachelor of Fine Art degree.

In 1961, Christopher accepted a position as a Specialist in Art at Memorial University. He served as a curator at the University gallery and taught art classes to adults in the evenings. But he was unhappy with how much time his salaried work was taking from his artwork. In 1963, after the birth of the third of their four children, Christopher resigned from his job at Memorial and the Pratts moved their family to a summer cottage on the Salmonier River. For the next seven years, Christopher painted and entered exhibitions.

*“... My art ... is not about art; it may not seem to be about life either, but it originates there. I am preoccupied with the fact of existence. I depend on the redemption of light. Light is life.”*

## MINIMALISTS, ABSTRACT ARTISTS, AND PRECISIONISTS

With the invention of the camera in the nineteenth century, artists wondered if photographs had replaced painting. Abstract artists decided that art was not a window on the world, through which the viewer looked. Instead they painted pictures that, while sometimes representing reality, were more about the elements of art such as colour, dot, line, shape, space, texture and value.

At the same time as the Abstract Expressionism movement was starting, a group of artists began the American Precisionist movement. Their art was a technically challenging form of high realism. Precisionists painted objects removed from any emotional context as a way to portray the art elements.

Like abstract painters, another group of artists, minimalists, rebelled from realistic pictures, and, like precisionists, they rebelled from the expressionism of abstract art. Minimalists focused on highlighting art elements and minimizing everything else. A line, a dot, or a texture could be the single element featured in one large canvas.

Christopher Pratt's work has been labelled as high realism, precisionism, and minimalism, but he rejects these labels. He once wrote, “The subject matter is important to me. I am not immersed in the world of philosophies of art ... My art ... is not about art; it may not seem to be about life either, but it originates there. I am preoccupied with the fact of existence. I depend on the redemption of light. Light is life.”



Fig. 4 Christopher Pratt  
*American Monument: Radio Room, Argentia* ca. 1999 (Argentia Series) (2005)  
oil on paper



A turning point for Christopher occurred when he met art dealer Mira Godard in 1969. The next year, Christopher Pratt had his first show at her commercial art gallery in Montreal. Although Christopher admits he was very lucky to meet an eminent art dealer early in his career, he also notes that he and his former wife, artist Mary Pratt, had taken significant risks, and that he had developed a strong body of work. In his memoir, *Ordinary Things: A Different Kind of Voyage*, Christopher wrote: "When I quit university and later my job at Extension Service, and decided not to go into my father's business, I was adamant that no one would accuse me of being too lazy to be responsible. Anyone who looked was going to see young Christopher being serious, pursuing art as a grave and noble purpose, not an easy, carefree life."

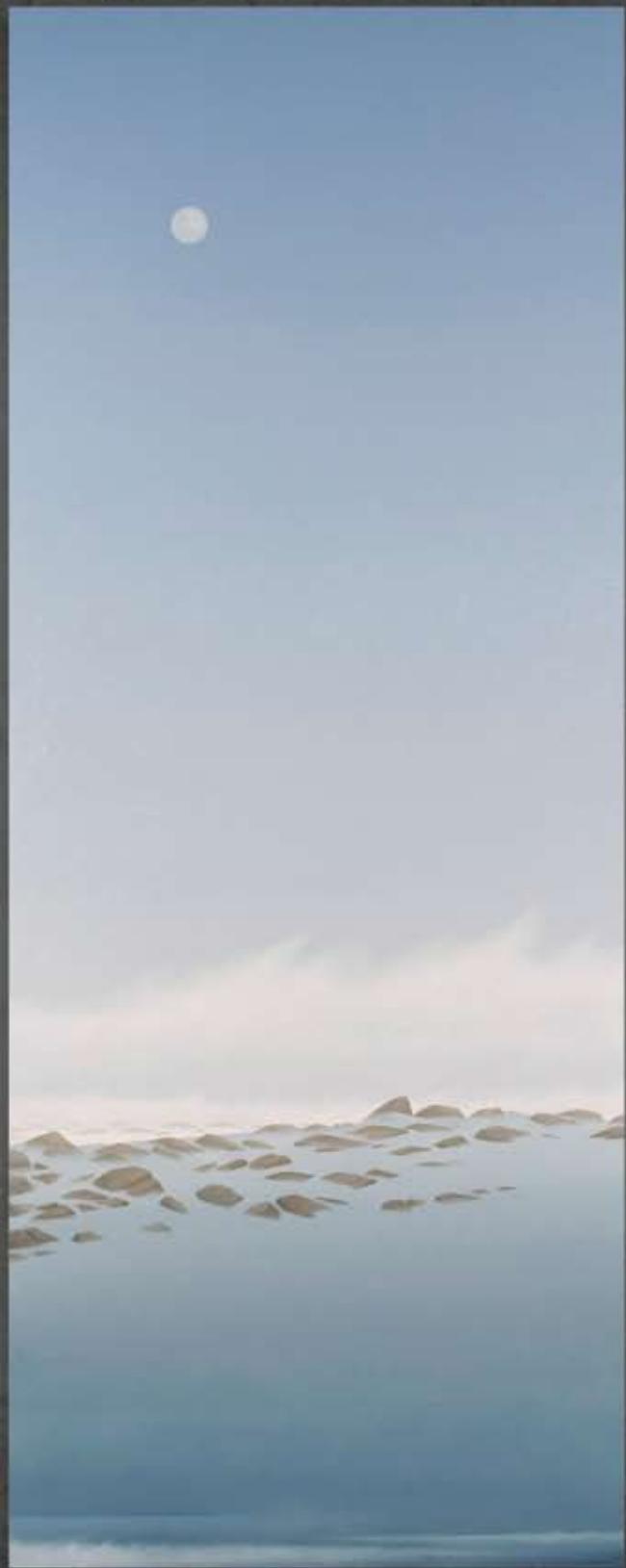
It is noteworthy that Christopher began his career as a realist painter at a time when much of the art world had fallen in love with abstract work. However, Christopher's work is not realist in the sense that the viewer can recognize specific landscapes. Some reviewers have called it "magic realism" because his work is removed from the messiness of real life. His buildings have a pristine quality, his grass grows straight, and his waves are symmetrical. Some who have analyzed Christopher's work have even labelled it as abstract or minimalist as the real focus in Christopher's art is line, shape, and colour.

Christopher's art is distinctly about Newfoundland and Labrador. He has always painted the things he is interested in – such as imaginary landscapes, buildings, boats, roads he has travelled, and the horizon on the Northern Peninsula where he drives several times a year.

**Fig. 5 Christopher Pratt**  
***Trout River Hills 2: Blizzard at***  
***Winterhouse Brook (1999)***  
oil on masonite

In 2005, the National Gallery of Canada organized the second retrospective of Christopher's work. (The first was 20 years earlier and organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery.) The show opened in Ottawa and toured Halifax, St. John's, Winnipeg, and Quebec City. As 2005 was also Christopher's 70th year, he was very aware that he was looking at the product of a lifetime of art. At one point during the show, he wrote the following in his diary:

*“The bottom line is that I want to keep my eye on the prize: to savour and celebrate my existence, and to guard and maintain whatever quality I am capable of bringing to my work. Through this retrospective, as in 1985, I have had the opportunity to determine what is strong and what is weak, what is worthwhile and what is a waste of time in my work ... At seventy-one, a twenty-year plan seems overly optimistic. The danger is of thinking of it as a ‘wrap,’ but I will not.”*



**Fig. 6 Christopher Pratt**  
*Trout River Hills 5: Winterhouse Summit with Moon by Day* (2000)  
oil on masonite

## Try it...

Many of Christopher Pratt's pieces focus on a simple part of a larger scene (for example, a section of a building). Select a part of the room you are in and try sketching it in style similar to the artwork shown in this profile

## Reflect...

How would you describe Christopher Pratt's artwork? Is he a realist, a minimalist, or a precisionist? In what way is his art different from all these movements?

# Artist profile

Fig. 1 Statue of a Beothuk woman by artist Gerald Squires



## Recording Artists – Windows into the Past

Some works of art are less interpretive or conceptual and are more literal – capturing events and practices in a style known as realism. The works of realist artists are especially important when the viewer seeks to have a deeper understanding of the past before the invention of the camera. In fact, these works often serve as a carefully preserved “window” into the past, providing us with an understanding that goes beyond a written description. Here are three artists who have done just that.

### Shanawdithit

In the fall of 1828, William Cormack presented Shanawdithit, the last known Beothuk, with paper and black and red lead pencils. Shanawdithit, who was in her late 20s, was staying with Cormack after having been captured six years earlier by some fur trappers. Despite having no prior experience using these art materials, Shanawdithit immediately adapted and created many drawings.

Some of Shanawdithit’s sketches show artifacts, mentifacts, and sociofacts from her culture. Others illustrate specific events that she witnessed and capture the topography of the land where Beothuk lived. Her drawings were in response to Cormack’s questions about Beothuk lifestyle. The written descriptions of the pictures are in Cormack’s handwriting. Today Shanawdithit’s drawings are a valuable record of a culture that no longer exists.

Cormack was the president of the Beothuk (Beothuk) Institution of St. John's.

If you could draw only three or four things to represent your culture, what would you choose?

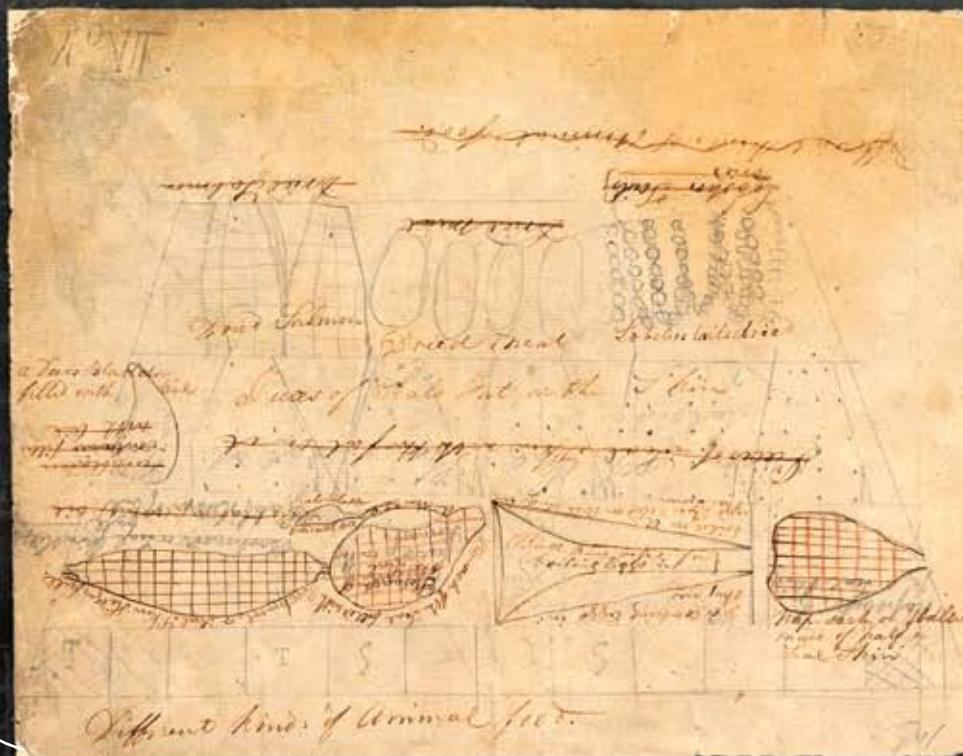


Fig. 2 **Shanawdithit's Sketch VII.** This shows different kinds of animal products eaten or used by Beothuk. On the top row, Shanawdithit has shown dried salmon, dried meat, and dried lobster tails. Underneath this is a deer bladder filled with oil and pieces of seal fat on the skin. The bottom row shows a seal skin, bladder, and fillet; a birch vessel for boiling eggs; and a knapsack made of seal skin.

*"The Beothuk, the aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland, were hunters, gatherers, and fishers who moved seasonally between the coast and the interior. With the influx of European settlements and fisheries in the 1700s the Beothuk found their territory increasingly reduced and conflict between the two groups escalated. The Beothuk declined steadily in numbers and by the early 1800s they had ceased to exist as a viable cultural group. Shanawdithit, the last of her people, died in 1829."*

*-A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, Ingeborg Marshall*



Fig. 3



Fig. 4 William Hind



Fig. 5 *The Start*

Engraving. George Pearson, engraver, wood engraving, vignette, 5 x 9.2 cm (image) Explorations I, 6

## William Hind

In 1861, artist William Hind was invited by his geologist brother Henry to join 11 men on an expedition to explore the Labrador interior. Like the scientists on the trip, William was primarily an observer and recorder of everything he saw, including the environment, First Nations and Inuit he encountered during the expedition, and the rigours of travelling throughout the region.

It is likely that William used a Camera Lucida on this trip, as his sketches have a traced quality. A Camera Lucida, a device used by many artists at the time to speed their drawing and increase accuracy, was a series of lenses that made it easier for the artist to “trace” what he or she saw onto a sketchbook. However, few admitted to owning one as their use was considered “cheating.”

When William returned to Toronto, and then to England, he created studio paintings and pen and ink drawings from his sketches. Commercial artists converted his pen

and ink drawings into wood engravings, like the one shown in Fig. 5. These wood engravings were printed with raised type to illustrate Henry’s two-volume book *Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula: The Country of the Montagnais and Nasquapee Indians*.\* Other commercial artists copied William’s paintings onto lithography stones, and printed colour illustrations separately, to be added to the black and white text and engravings. Today wood engravers and lithographers are considered artists in their own right. But in the nineteenth century they were anonymous craftspeople.

Henry Hind may have considered his brother’s art to be less important than the scientific work he was doing as a geologist. However, William put a lot of artistic energy into his paintings. The lithograph shown in Fig. 6, based on his painting *Resting on the Portage Path*, is very expressive and has merit as a work of art in its own right.



Fig. 6 *Resting on the Portage Path*

Lithograph, William L. Walton (lithographic draftsman) colour lithograph, 11.2 x 18.5 cm (image) Explorations I, facing 43

\*These are terms that were once used to refer to Inuit living in Labrador.



Fig. 7 Rhoda Dawson

Fig. 8 Rhoda Dawson  
*Dr. Old's medical clinic  
in Twillingate*



## Rhoda Dawson

In 1930 another young artist in search of adventure arrived in Labrador from England. Rhoda Dawson was an employee in the Grenfell Mission's Industrial Department. She was one of a number of artists who designed mats and oversaw the creation of crafts for sale in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Coming from a home where both parents were artists, and with her degree in art, Rhoda invested her own

artistic sensibilities into her work. She created hooked rugs, drew with charcoal, and painted in watercolour. In 1934 Rhoda taught school in Payne's Cove, where she may have made the watercolour sketch *Fish Flakes in an Outport* (see Fig. 9). In 1936, before returning home to England, Rhoda visited Dr. Old's medical clinic in Twillingate, where she probably created the charcoal and watercolour sketch shown in Fig. 8.



Typically the word "sketch" implies something that is a preliminary work and created quickly. But Rhoda's works on paper are filled with the energy of the places they record and the vigour of the artist. Sometimes, as in the work of William Hind, sketches are clearly a step between the subject matter and the artist's final artwork. However often these original drawings capture a spontaneity that is lost in studio-created painting. Today many value the artistic merit of sketches as a raw and honest statement of the artist's world.

Fig. 9 Rhoda Dawson  
*Fish Flakes in an Outport*  
watercolour sketch

## Try it... it

Today some visual artists continue to make sketches of their subjects and then use the sketches to help them create a painting or drawing. It is also becoming increasingly common for an artist to work from photographs of his or her subject.

Make a photograph of a subject and use the photograph to help you create a work of visual art in a medium that may be new to you, such as charcoal or pastel. Work quickly, allowing perhaps no more than 30 minutes to create your image. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of using a photograph in this way.

## Reflect... Reflect

Which of the works presented in this section do you find most engaging? Have the works changed how you think about that time period? How does viewing the work of these artists help?

# Artist profile

## William B. Ritchie – Artist



Fig. 1 William Ritchie

*In 1976, when William Ritchie was 21, the Ontario-born graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design travelled to Nain for what was supposed to be a two-month visit. He stayed there six years. Because of his interest in learning about the region, William was taught how to hunt, make his own clothes, and survive in the north by an Inuit friend.*

His friend was artist Gilbert Hay, (see page 108 for an example of Hay's work). In return for Gilbert teaching him his traditional skills, William taught Gilbert how to print lithographs. The two men formed a partnership and created a series of illustrations for a book of Inuit legends, which is still unpublished. Although William moved to a cabin on the southern

shore of the Avalon Peninsula in 1992, his time spent in remote parts of Canada and his friendship with Gilbert and Gilbert's family, continue to shape his practice.

Currently William spends five months of every year managing a printmaking studio in Cape Dorset which

Fig. 2 William Ritchie  
*Ookpik the Believer* (1985), Lithograph Ed. A/P



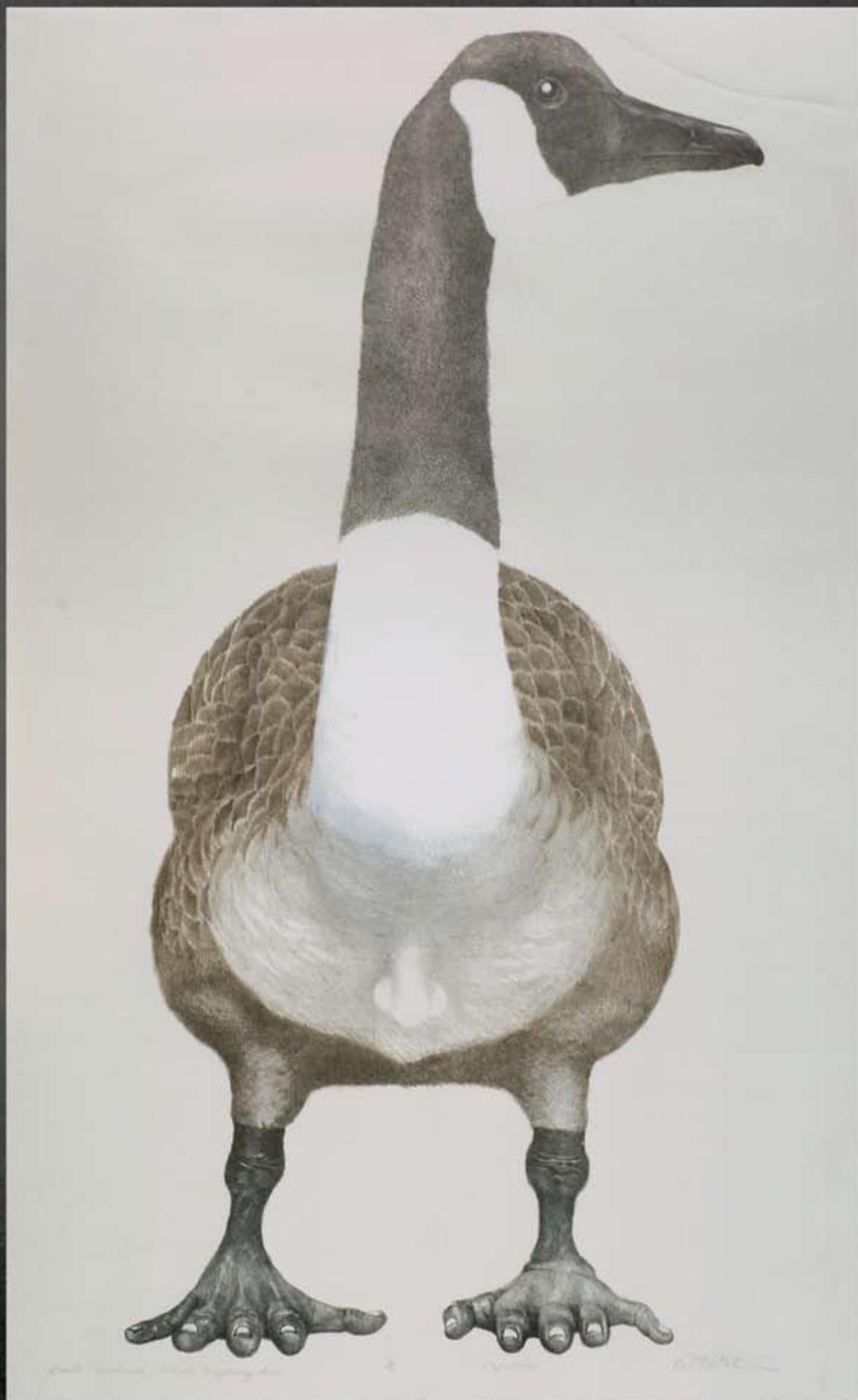


Fig. 3 William Ritchie  
*Labrador Mythology Series: Branta Canadensis* (1983), Lithograph Ed. 6/15

is the working space for several famous Inuit artists. Several of William's paintings of Aboriginal peoples from Newfoundland and Labrador's past are used in this text book. He based the faces of these people on Innu and Inuit people he knows, since he assumes that they are related to Maritime Archaic and Beothuk peoples.

William's art is heavily influenced by the attitude that Labrador's Aboriginal peoples have towards nature. "Some people study art history," says William, "and some people study specific artists, and they become their visual clues. I live among nature and I look to it for my clues. I'm always watching for beautiful colour combinations, and texture. That's what informs me ... I think that's what drew me to Aboriginal people, the way they draw from the land for their clues to live."

For William, an art project is something that follows from

an intense experience in nature, a canoeing trip, or a hike in a blizzard. He has often found himself reflecting on this experience in a cabin or shelter in the wilderness, before beginning to paint or draw. Then William floods his paper with a thin wash of watercolour. When the wash dries, William starts looking for images in the wash. With a pencil, he draws the animals, birds, fish, leaves, rocks, and water that are suggested there. William's art reflects his interest in animals. His animals are always transforming, like Inuit shamans, into human figures or other animals.

It is the transformation of nature, from season to season, that inspires William's images. Nature is not a single entity that stands still for the artist to capture it. Instead, William records the journey he has taken through nature and the shifting essence of his constantly changing subject.

*"My first encounters with a place – the smells in the air, the sounds of the birds, the unusual vegetation, the land I can't recognize – are precious moments."*

– William Ritchie

**Fig. 4 William Ritchie**  
*Labrador Mythology Series: Luma* (1981), Lithograph Ed. 2/10





**Fig. 5 William Ritchie**  
*Labrador Mythology Series: Trout (1983)*, Lithograph Ed. 4/20

## Try it...

Take a hike, go canoeing, or sit by the shore. Look at the natural world around you. Quickly sketch what you see. Don't worry about the arrangement of subjects on your paper – simply allow your lines to flow from one subject to another. Fill your paper.

## Reflect...

What is the most peaceful place that you have visited in nature? What was it about the experience that you found relaxing? Describe the experience in a few brief phrases.

# Artist profile

## Rug Hooking

*In the not too distant past, people in Newfoundland and Labrador did a much better job at recycling than we do today. Objects were seldom thrown away. For example, adult-sized hand-me-downs were ripped apart at the seams and made over into children's clothing. When those clothes were too worn to wear they went into a rag bag along with other saved materials, such as the burlap bags that food came in. Sometimes these fabric scraps found new life as part of a floor mat – an item of necessity, but also a form of cultural expression.*

The making of these rugs often started during the stormy months of February and March. A man in the family might make a wooden frame and stretch a piece of cut burlap (or brin, as it was called) over it. Another family member would then use a charcoal stick from the fire to draw a design. Next, a woman would cut her rags into strips about a centimetre wide and, with the help of a bent nail in a wooden handle, hook the strips in loops through the holes in the brin. Each strip was tied on the back and then trimmed. This continued

until the brin was covered. The completed mat was then placed in the appropriate area of the house.

Traditional mat designs were often geometric and very colourful. The designers created their dyes from onion skins, berries, and bark. Mat designs were passed on, modified, and innovated. Some rug hookers also used quilting designs or borrowed floral patterns from items such as teacups. Sometimes mats commemorated events like a local marriage or a royal visit, or even pictured a family pet.

*The beige parts of this mat  
were made with recycled  
silk stockings!*



**Fig. 2 A hooked mat**  
From Newfoundland and Labrador, mid-1900s



**Fig. 1**

The tradition of creating hooked mats for one's own household use evolved into a cottage industry in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1900s thanks to Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, who ran the Grenfell medical mission in northern Newfoundland and the southern Labrador coast. In 1906, Dr. Grenfell met Jessie Luther, an occupational therapist who was using arts and crafts as part of a recovery treatment for sanitorium patients in the United States. Grenfell invited Luther to teach the women at his mission how to weave – both as occupational therapy for patients and to provide cash supplements to fishing families dependent on credit. A few years later, Luther suggested that Grenfell add hooked mats to the crafts the women were producing. He agreed.



**Fig. 3 A couple next to some hooked rugs and a spinning wheel, west coast 1935**  
When strips were hooked randomly in lines, the pattern was called "hit or miss" or "scrappie" and the rug would be relegated to the hallway or the kitchen.

*Hooked mats, once created to fulfill a functional need and later as items for sale, are in modern times seen as an art form.*

**Fig. 4 Example of Grenfell hooked mat**





**Fig. 5** Grenfell hooked mat: *Dog Team with Shadows*. Burlap base, hooked with dyed stocking and cotton. Prototype design c. 1939 by Stephen Hamilton.

Scenes of polar bears, Inuit dog sleds, and fishing villages were very popular with the Grenfell Institute's English, Canadian, and American customers. Different artists from the United States and Great Britain who came to work at the Institute added their designs over time. Dr. Grenfell also created some designs for the mats.

**Fig. 6** A Grenfell hooked mat produced 1930-1950.



Kits with stamped Grenfell patterns, donated silk stockings dyed in subtle vegetable dyes, and suggested colour samples pinned to burlap, were distributed among craftswomen. When an individual completed a mat, it was returned to the Grenfell mission and then sold. Initially the individual who had hooked the mat was paid in the form of goods, such as clothing or food. Later they were paid in cash. Women who produced Grenfell mats were very proud of their craftsmanship and of their ability to contribute to their family income.

Today, the story of rug hooking continues in Newfoundland and Labrador. Hooked mats, once created to fulfill a functional need and later as items for sale, are in modern times seen as an art form. Many contemporary artists have chosen hooked mats as their form of artistic expression. At the same time, they have a symbolic cultural connection to the thousands of women who worked to sustain their families and way of life.



**Fig. 7** Modern artists like Helen Murphy, Barbara O'Keefe, and Frances Ennis use this art form much as they would use paint and canvas to create art work which will be hung on the wall and to tell a story. This rug, *Women Of Vision*, was created by the three artists to commemorate their friend, Sister Marie Ryan, who died in 2008. They note: "It celebrates her life and the Presentation Sisters 175th Anniversary in Newfoundland and Labrador. It also captures a little of the voyage of the first four Sisters ... who set sail from Ireland in 1833 to live out their vision of a society where girls and young women would have access to education."



**Fig. 8** Sometimes one form of cultural expression can influence another. This piece, *The Boat from Bacon Cove* (1990), by Kathleen Knowling is inspired by the designs of hooked mats crafted by outport women, but is actually oilstick and coloured pencil on watercolour paper that has been coated with black acrylic paint.

## Try it... it

Think about a rug you might like to hook. Will you use a traditional design or make up your own? Present your choice to your class, explaining your choice of design. If possible, hook your rug. See if there are individuals in your community with experience with rug hooking who can teach you how to hook a rug. Once you complete your rug, how will you use it?

## Reflect...lect

Look around your home and community for other examples of individuals who have created works of art that are also used as functional items in their daily life. Photograph what you observe and add it to your portfolio.

# Artist profile

## Ted Russell – Storyteller

*Ted Russell had many jobs\* throughout his lifetime – but he is most famous as a writer and master storyteller. His career as a “professional” storyteller began one night when he was sitting with friends telling stories. One of the people in the room was a CBC Radio producer, who asked Ted to come into the studio and record some of his stories.*



Fig. 1 Ted Russell



So was born *The Chronicles of Uncle Mose*, whose narrator was a retired fisherman from Fortune Bay, living in the fictitious community of Pigeon Inlet. Uncle Mose spoke with Ted's warm voice and had the slow drawl of Ted's home community, Coley's Point.

From 1953 to 1961, without interruption, Ted told over 500 six-minute stories, sometimes twice a week, to a devoted radio audience listening to him on the CBC Radio's *Fishermen's Broadcast*. Ted also wrote several radio plays for the CBC during that time.

“The aim I had in mind, I suppose, was just to tell stories – stories I knew were basically true – not factual, but true – about Newfoundland people,” Ted once said.

His stories reflected the life he knew in rural Newfoundland. He knew what it was like to grow up as the son of a fisherman and he drew on his experiences from his past jobs – including his time as a magistrate. Ted hadn't always enjoyed the duties of this job, describing the time as “the hungriest years of the hungry thirties.” However, one of his funniest stories was of a rural magistrate, who had to make a most difficult decision – how to deal with “Uncle Sol Noddy (who) stole ... two holes from Skipper Lige Bartle.”

\*Ted's career included being a teacher, a magistrate, and Director of Co-operatives for the Commission of Government. He was also Minister of Natural Resources under Smallwood for a short time and a university professor.

Fig. 2 Ted Russell and his wife, Dora (nee Oake)

Fig. 3 Ted Russell



It was Ted's uncanny ability to portray the personality quirks of his characters and his descriptions of a rural lifestyle that was already disappearing that attracted a loyal audience. He also immortalized the Newfoundland and Labrador tall tale in his poem, *The Smokeroom on the Kyle* (see page 104). His play, *The Holdin' Ground*, was the first Newfoundland and Labrador drama to be performed on television. But it is his tales of idyllic life in the town of Pigeon Inlet that remain Ted Russell's most enduring legacy.

*“The unique trait of [Ted Russell’s] monologues was the use of folk talk ... incorporating vernacular language, conventionalized topics of conversation, traditional oral genres (beliefs, sayings, gossip, narrative) that people of the region think of as their own and give residents a sense of place.”*

– Dr. Peter Narváez, Memorial University of Newfoundland

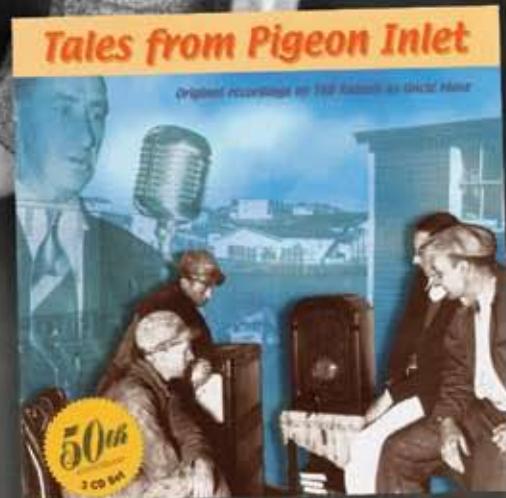


Fig. 4 *Tales from Pigeon Inlet*  
Fifty years later, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still enjoying Ted Russell's stories.



# Stealin' the Holes

*A Pigeon Inlet Story by Ted Russell* Copyright : The Estate of Ted Russell

In all the years that Skipper Bob Killick was Magistrate along this shore, the shrewdest piece of courtwork he had to handle was the time when Uncle Sol Noddy stole the two holes from Skipper Lige Bartle.

Now what good, you might say, is two holes? Not much nowadays since most people give up keeping dogs. But years ago, well how else can a man set a herring net under the ice? You cut two holes, eight or ten feet apart, tie a rope to one end of a flake longer, poke it down through one hole and hook it up through the other with a hand gaff. Oh yes, if you want to set a bigger net, you cut three holes, or even four.

But two holes was enough to serve Skipper Lige Bartle's purpose that evening he was coming home down the Arm on dogteam from his rabbit slips. He chopped his two holes, then hurried home to get his net and a flake longer so as to have it set and home

again before night overtook him. He didn't even stop for a bite to eat. Just grabbed a pair of dry cuffs and was off again, a spry man.

But spry as he was, Uncle Sol Noddy was spryer. Uncle Sol was already there and had just finished setting his net in Lige's holes. Well, Lige ordered Sol to take that net out of his holes. Sol said they was his 'cause he'd found them. Lige said they was his 'cause he chopped them. Well, Sol said, be that as it might, he owned them now 'cause possession was nine points of the law.

Skipper Lige was a younger man than Uncle Sol, and a bigger man. And if he hadn't been a church going man besides, he said after as how he'd a tied Uncle Sol to his own rope and reeved him down one hole and up through the other. As it was, he went home and he wired Skipper Bob Killick, the Magistrate, to come immediately, or a bit quicker than that if 'twas

possible. Skipper Bob wired back that he'd come and have courtwork in May, when navigation opened.

Public opinion was one-sided. Skipper Lige was a respectable man whereas Uncle Sol was the worse miserable hangashore on the coast. And to make matters worse, Uncle Sol was doing real well with the herring and even offered Skipper Lige a meal for his Good Friday dinner. I can't repeat Skipper Lige's answer but it made him feel so low that he didn't have the face to go to church on Easter Sunday.

Well, Pigeon Inlet School was packed for courtwork when Skipper Bob Killick come on his rounds in May and he read out the charge how Uncle Sol had stolen the property of Skipper Lige: namely and to wit, two holes.

Then Uncle Sol, instead of having the common decency to confess what he done and take what was coming, had the impudence to look the Magistrate right square in the face and say he didn't know whether he was guilty or not, and what he would like to know was, "What was the law concerning holes?" Well, Skipper Bob was took right aback for a minute and he said he allowed the law concerning holes was like the law concerning anything else: you mustn't steal them. Then Uncle Sol, brazener than ever, asked, "How could you steal a hole anyway?" And when Skipper Bob said what did he mean how could you steal a hole, Uncle Sol said 'cause a hole, well a hole was nothing, only a hole.

All this time poor Skipper Lige was sitting there saying nothing but swelling up like a gurnet, ready to bust. Then he said as how a hole might be nothing to the hangashore that stole it but 'twas something to the man that had to chop it. But Skipper Bob called him to order so Lige kept quiet but he swelled bigger, if that was possible, until Skipper Bob ruled that on his first point, Uncle Sol had lost out and a hole was something.

"Alright then," said Uncle Sol, "I only borrowed the use of his holes, never intending to keep them, and now he can have them back again." Skipper Lige said the holes was drove out the Bay when the ice went out,

but Sol maintained that holes was only fresh air and water and they were still up there in the Arm and Lige could have them and ten thousand welcomes.

Well, Skipper Bob had to call a fifteen minute recess on that, but after it was over he come back and he ruled as how Uncle Sol was wrong on account of how, in what he called the common law, a hole couldn't be a hole unless there was an edge around it.

Then Uncle Sol tried his last dodge. He said as how a man couldn't steal anything without shifting it from where he'd found it in the first place and that he hadn't shifted these holes an inch. Skipper Lige said no, Sol hadn't shifted 'em, not 'cause he wouldn't but 'cause he couldn't and if he could've he'd a slung the two holes over his back quick enough and gone off with them. Sol said be that as it might, the fact was he hadn't shifted them and on that point, Skipper Bob Killick the Magistrate had to agree with him.

He give his verdict that, although Uncle Sol hadn't actually stolen the holes, he had trespassed on them and he asked Uncle Sol what he had to say before sentence was passed. Well, Uncle Sol said, right cheerful-like, that if all he'd done was trespass against Skipper Lige, then no doubt Skipper Lige, as a churchgoing man, would be only too ready to forgive those, including Uncle Sol, who had trespassed against him. And Skipper Lige bust right out then for sure and he said he'd forgive Uncle Sol when Uncle Sol give him back his holes, edges and all, and with that, Skipper Bob delivered his judgement.

He ordered Uncle Sol to cut two holes the following winter, in the same place, for Skipper Lige to set his herring net in and that was the end of it as far as the law was concerned. Of course, Uncle Sol got the best of it in the long run but that's another story, and like Skipper Bob his own self said the following summer, after he'd heard the outcome, he doubted very much if even the Supreme Court could do much to cure a hangashore like Uncle Sol Noddy, 'cause he was one miserable hangashore if ever there was one.

## Try it... if

Create a brief monologue based on your own life experience – feel free to use fictional content, exaggeration and hyperbole as you craft you story.

## Reflect... if

Think back on the various experiences you have had in your lifetime. What memories stand out? Why? Which stories from your childhood and youth will you want to pass on to your children?

# Artist profile



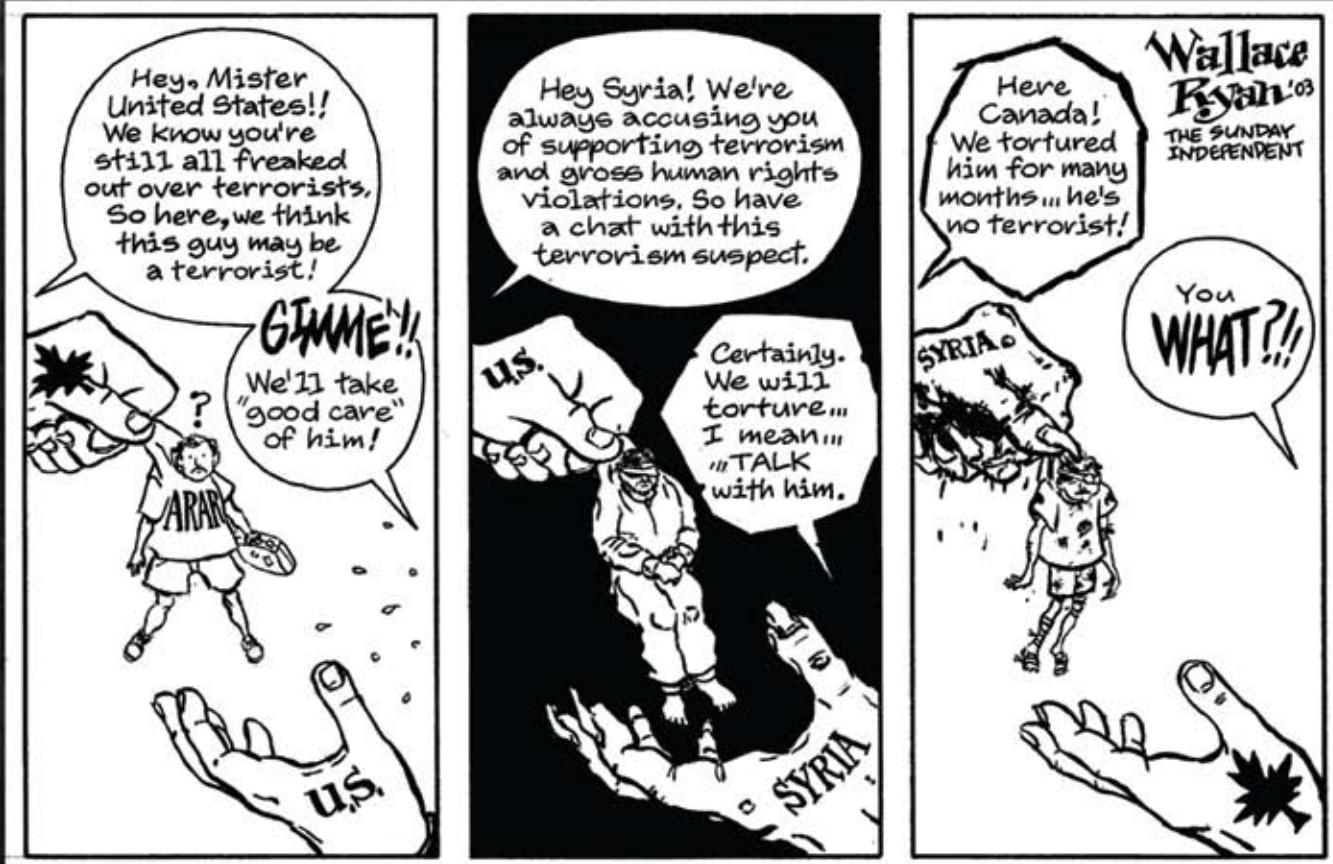
Fig. 1 Wallace Ryan

## Wallace Ryan – Comix Artist

Wallace Ryan thinks he must have been three years old when he first developed a fascination with comics. He loved the colourful superheroes.

*“I used to make little comics when I was a kid and sell them to my dad. But superheroes only go so far. It was something about the art and the storytelling elements combined.”*

Fig. 2



Wallace was really impressed when the magazine *Heavy Metal* came out and showed him the potential of comic books. In 1978, when Wallace was a teenager, he and a friend, Gerry Porter, created *Zeitgeist*, probably the first comic book to be produced in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Wallace would become one of the first Newfoundland and Labrador comic book artists. But his best-known work of art started as a poster that he pasted up in

downtown St. John's in 1981. Fourteen years later, when the Living Planet Company started, Wallace sold his poster design to the owner. Now "Free Newfoundland" T-shirts are one of the store's best selling products.

Wallace's career as a comic strip artist started after graduating from the Ontario College of Art, when he began working with Memorial University's student newspaper, *The Muse*.

# What is Art?

A graphic essay by Wallace Ryan

Ah yes... the age old question posed again. I could give you the standard dictionary definition of art been...blah, blah... whatever!



Instead, I'd like to tell you what ART is to me! Art to me, was at the age of 3, pickin' up a Bic pen and fillin' doodle pads with my fevered scribblings.



I remember those old doodle pads made up of four different colors.. they were so cool! They were my canvas.



one.

...Anyway, I soon discovered that by folding an 8½ x 11" sheet of paper in half... you got four pages like a book.. a COMIC book!!



So, I made little comic books... stacks of them! I soon found that if I put a 5¢ sticker on them, that my Dad would buy them!!



But I jacked the price up to 25¢ and my Dad stopped buying them. That didn't stop me. Even then, art to me, was a compulsion.



As a teenager, my art consumed all my time. I had a close friend with whom I spent a lot of time drawing comics and drinking tea.



two.

I learned how to use a crowquill and a brush. I fell in love with brushes! A brush feels like it's part of my hand.



Then at art college, I discovered figure drawing. It was like my mind would cloud over and my world emerged at the end of a piece of conte.



Expressing myself is easiest through my pencil and brush, Easy as breathing... That is what my art is to me. It is who I am and is something without which...



Where do my ideas and images come from? I'm not sure.. it seems to me that it's what happens around me that drives my creativity!



The people I meet, the stories I hear and the things I do; all help me to express an idea in a creative manner.



three.

...I would not be a whole person.



THE END.

four.

# Real Heroes

Fig. 4

Wallace  
Ryan

If you read or watch the news long enough, you'll see life imitate art sooner or later. In early 2004, I found a trio of stories of real life superheroes!



The first was about two mystery men posing as Batman and Robin in Reading, England. On Easter Sunday this year they were seen chasing streakers off the field at the Jack Taylor TRS Trophy football final.



Later that day, Michelle Kirby of Whitley was rescued by the dynamic duo when her car ran out of gas. She told the press that Batman and Robin pushed her car to a nearby gas station. They then disappeared down a street on foot.



The Reading Evening Post has set up a "Bat-phone" for people to report sightings of the pair. An anonymous caller claimed the heroes confronted somebody who was "intimidating" him. As of late April, they have yet to be identified.

I kinda' like it that way.



Jack Kirby was an American comic book artist, writer, and editor. He created the superhero Captain America and co-created several comic characters such as the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, and the Hulk.

In the 1990s Wallace worked in advertising, created editorial cartoons for *The Telegram*, released two comic books called *Toxic* with a colleague, and ran a store in St. John's where he bought and sold comic books. Wallace remembers that at the end of four years his brother sat him down and said, "You haven't lost any money, but you haven't made any either!" He decided his best option was to close his shop.

While continuing to pursue his career as a freelance graphic designer, Wallace started creating a graphic novel about his grandfather's experiences in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the First World War. He says he has been influenced by the storytelling skills of Jack Kirby, the "King of Comics," and writers like comic book journalist Joe Sacco, who created the prize-winning graphic novel *Palestine*.

Wallace says his life fell apart on July 4, 2005 when his wife passed away. "We had been married for eight

years," he says, "and we were very much in love." Wallace moved to New York to work in advertising, but he turned to his art to cope with his grief. In December 2005 he started keeping a diary. Wallace pulled from diary entries and e-mails to friends to create a book called *The Mad Widower (or How I Lost My Wife and Almost Lost My Mind)*.

Currently (2010), Wallace is continuing his work on the Royal Newfoundland Regiment graphic novel and fine-tuning *The Mad Widower*, which needs to be pared down from its original 60 000 words. "Most people argue about what's more important in comics – the words or the art," he says. "But I would argue it's both of them. It's a combination of the two to create what we call storytelling."

*"Comic book art is not being an artist or a writer," Wallace says.  
"It's being a storyteller."*

## Try it... if

Think of a significant experience in your life or that of a family member or close friend. Produce a journal entry about this experience using comic art as your medium. While it is not necessary to share this work with your classmates, keep it as part of your portfolio.

## Reflect... if

Why might comic art and other visual works be more effective than text alone when telling a personal story?

*“Of course, we must have artists:  
but what are we as artists contributing?  
If we know what the ‘wrongs’ are in society,  
we must decide whether our art  
is sufficient to right them ... ”*

— Rae Perlin, Artist