

WILL MACLEAN: POINTS OF DEPARTURE**A Retrospective Exhibition. 4 June 2 October 2022****City Art Centre, Edinburgh.**

Spanning fifty years of work, this rich visual feast of 150 items celebrates Will Maclean's position as one of the outstanding artists of his generation, still at the height of his powers. The Retrospective Exhibition, knowledgeably curated by David Patterson, CAC Director, is presented as part of the Edinburgh Festival 2022 and runs until 2 October.

Maclean's work is anchored in the history, the archaeology and the literature of the Scottish Highlands and the Highland people, including members of his own family. The exquisite, poetic nature of his box constructions, drawings and sculpture often alludes to Surrealist orthodoxies of assemblage, and of flotsam and jetsam found on beaches and transformed in the studio; yet they also focus on wide-ranging themes relating to the sea. His narratives are at once personal and universal. On occasion the strongly felt, deeply considered memorials he creates, stand for those individuals and communities who might otherwise never have them. His art eloquently brings the past into an immediately felt present, igniting fresh interest and renewed, dynamic connections for viewers of all ages.

Maclean respects legacy, he delves into history, and the stories, songs and poetry of those who brought him and us with him, into our contemporary culture. The wit, the 'symbols of survival', the occasional tragedy referenced in his subject matter, are delivered with a honed brevity and a reflective, tactile beauty that is always a tribute to the real. Like a good poem, 'often it cut[s] straight to the bone', as R F Foster wrote recently of Seamus Heaney's poetry. (Maclean and Heaney were both participants of *The Great Book of Gaelic/An Leabhar Mor*, 2002, a collaboration between Irish and Scottish poets and artists which became a world touring exhibition.)

One particular section of the CAC exhibition focuses on his early study of the ring-net fisheries (examples were selected from over 400 drawings, purchased in 1978 by the National Galleries of Scotland). In the exhibition catalogue, Duncan Macmillan's inspired introductory essay highlights their significance:

"The result was a body of work that is astonishing in its comprehensive detail, but also often very beautiful. It also turned out to be a precious record of a technology and way of life that were created by the dispossessed people of the Highlands, but which then vanished almost as he completed his study. This historical coincidence gave poetic resonance to something that set out simply to be documentary and in a way his work has kept that character. It is often pinned, if only by its title but nevertheless quite specifically, to people, places and events, like *A Candle for Lübeck* (2014), for example, which commemorates the tragic death of concentration camp survivors under allied bombing, but then the work opens out to invite wider poetic reflection. "

To read more about Maclean's exhibition history, the publications about his work, the public collections where his work is held, the great stone monuments on the Isle of Lewis which he oversaw between 1994 – 2018, visit the Art First website: www.artfirst.co.uk

If you are interested in acquiring work from this exhibition, please contact Clare Cooper: clare@artfirst.co.uk for a price list or arrange to see other works in London.