

The Battleground Project

3 NEW EXHIBITIONS AT THE TEXTILE MUSEUM OF CANADA

April 23, 2008 - January 27, 2009
Curated by Max Allen

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NATIONAL POST

Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan

Modern warfare came to Afghanistan with the Soviet invasion of 1979. After Soviet withdrawal in 1989, a decade of brutal civil war kept this area in turmoil. Now, the **global war on terrorism** continues to fill the land and sky of Afghanistan with the machinery of war.

The weavers of Afghanistan depict on their rugs what they see and like television news, rugs report current events. **Flowers have turned into bullets**, landmines and hand grenades. Birds have turned into helicopters and fighter jets. Sheep and horses have turned into tanks. These are the images on a new and electrifying kind of Oriental rug – **the “war rugs” from Afghanistan**. There were never rugs like this anywhere before 1980.

Certain rugs were the work of weavers in refugee camps (Afghan refugees total 4 million, the largest refugee population in the world) but little is known of the makers themselves. Questions also surround the sentiment of the rugs. **Are war rugs pro-war or anti-war?** It is difficult to tell what a rug is supposed to mean when its history is hidden and its maker unknown. What is available are the rugs themselves – **eloquent anonymous documents about life in an ancient land that has exploded**.

The Kandahar Journals of Richard Johnson

Artist Richard Johnson spent two months last summer living with Canadian troops in and around Kandahar, documenting what he saw in words and sketches. His celebrated pictorial reports for the *National Post* are a **record of military life and the relationship between Afghans and Canadians**. *The Kandahar Journals* presents a selection of Richard Johnson's original drawings and diaries from Afghanistan.

Patches: Military Uniform Insignia

Soldiers wear patches on their uniforms to identify their fighting units. These woven and embroidered insignia are often beautifully designed and reflect each unit's specialty and battlefield history. There are also unofficial “off-duty” patches that brag about military prowess or express a loathing for the enemy, offering an **insight into the mindset of soldiers on the ground**.

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For additional information, interviews or visuals:

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Museum Hours

Open 7 days a week 11 am – 5 pm
Wednesdays 11 am – 8 pm



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PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Talk: Richard Johnson

Wednesday May 7, 6:30 pm

National Post artist and journalist Richard Johnson lived alongside Canadian troops in Afghanistan last year, documenting their daily lives in words and sketches for a series entitled, Postings from Afghanistan. A war correspondent who also covered the invasion in Iraq in 2003, Mr. Johnson works to capture humanity in the images and words he sends home.

Members \$10, Non-members \$12, Full-time students Pay-What-You-Can.

Tickets may be purchased at the TMC's front desk. Please arrive early, seating is limited.

Interchange: Horror and Beauty - conflict and identity in the war rugs of Afghanistan

Saturday May 17, 1:00 pm

Join Max Allen and Nigel Lendon for an informative discussion of the symbols and significance of Afghan war rugs. Nigel Lendon is the Associate Head of the School of Art at the Australian National University.

Members \$10, Non-members \$12, Full-time students Pay-What-You-Can.

Tickets may be purchased at the TMC's front desk. Please arrive early, seating is limited.

Curator's Tours

Wednesdays June 18, July 16, August 13, September 24, 6:30 pm

Join Max Allen in the galleries for a discussion of *Battleground*.

Free with admission.

Performance: An Evening of Afghan Music

Wednesday June 25, 6:30 pm

Shamsudeen Masroor is a well-known musician, folkloric singer and composer whose accomplished performance on the *rubab* has been called "entrancing." Enjoy his group's music after sampling delicious Afghan finger foods.

Members \$12, Non-members \$15, Full-time students Pay-What-You-Can.

Please arrive early, seating is limited.

Talk: Dogs in War

Wednesday August 6, 6:30 pm

Cinnamon was a military camp mascot on a US Military Base in Afghanistan. Just a puppy, she had found her way into the hearts of many of the service men and women stationed there. One in particular, LCDR Mark Feffer worried for her future when most of the troops who cared for her were due to rotate out of the region. Who would care for her then? Christine Sullivan founded *New Hope for Animals* with her brother Mark Feffer to raise money for animals in need. She is the author of *44 Days Out Of Kandahar: The Amazing Journey of a Missing Military Puppy and the Desperate Search to Find Her*.

Members \$10, Non-members \$12, Full-time students Pay-What-You-Can.

Tickets may be purchased at the TMC's front desk. Please arrive early, seating is limited.

Textile Seminar: Afghan Rugs from the Collection

Wednesday October 8, 6:30pm

Enjoy a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at artifacts from the TMC's collection with curators Natalia Nekrassova and Roxane Shaughnessy.

Members \$12, Non-members \$15, Full-time students Pay-What-You-Can.

Advance registration is required, class size is limited. To register, call 416-599-5321 x 2221.