

We may not have found ourselves in a situation where we have been compelled to bear arms in the sense of the title of this exhibition, but we have and do arm ourselves. We may not have been wounded in a physical or emotional sense in a particular theatre of war, but we do bear the scars of harm done to us. Our wounds may be old or new, bandaged or left unattended, they may be visible – or not. Our wounds may be consciously concealed and we may even have wounds only others, but not we ourselves, can see.

By accepting Wiebe's invitation we accompany her through her pilgrimage. We bear witness to her practice and the resulting artworks – these thresholds where two realities can be experienced simultaneously. The gift of her art is a gift of space and time where we will encounter the moment when the bandages of language and discourse are stripped back and the truth of the living wounds is laid bare – the wounds of life in need of healing and simultaneously the wounds that extend life to us. We cannot separate the two. It is through these very wounds that Grace offers itself to us.

Ian McKinnon, November 2014
In memoriam: Sgt. James R. McKinnon, CD 1919 - 1976



recollections. I am trying to understand and convey the survival and coping mechanisms that I have retired to. I am taking the private into a public space, and exposing the healing wounds by de-camouflaging myself.

I cannot state whether making art is cathartic or not. However experiences that I cannot express with words are diffused throughout the works (this is the healing function for me.) It is working the small details with different mediums that I find meditative; the process of creating art has become more important than the finished piece. I would rather create a piece of work that has meaning than for it to be aesthetically pleasing although it is possible for a work to be both. These pieces became a therapeutic activity, but they are art first.

The subject of my practice is that of the world I have experienced. I am a human being living in a universe with many corresponding experiences. I camouflage myself unknowingly with the tone and structure of my words and I am learning to resist letting language become my armour. I am not certain whether the work here communicates to the viewer the realities of war or whether it serves the purpose of a chronicle, gathering together fading memories. This body of work does however represent where I have been and where I am now. It is time to wander beyond/outside the boundaries of war.

For more information on Jessica and her work, please visit jessicalynnwiebe.com



St. Paul's Anglican Church
1749 Argyle Street, Halifax (902) 429-2241 www.stpaulshalifax.org
Jessica Wiebe: Bearing Arms B(e)aring Wounds is the second of a series of exhibitions programmed by Ian McKinnon, Artist-in-Residence at St. Paul's Anglican Church

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

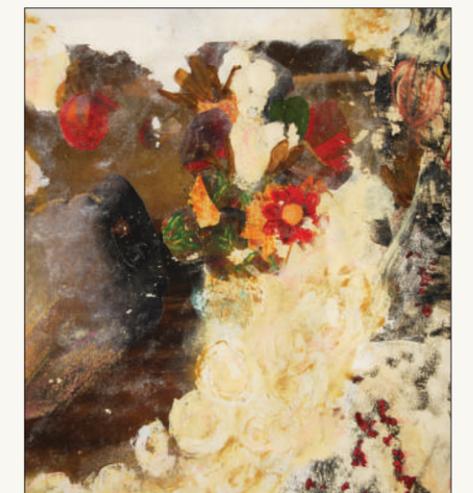
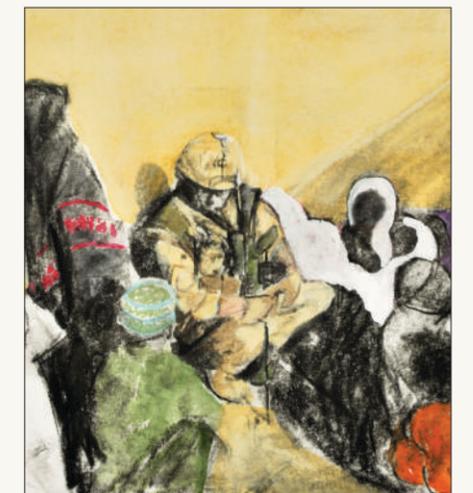
My artwork responds to the world that I have experienced as an artist, soldier and human being. The perspective offered through the work is the one of a gunner, and uniquely that of a woman inside the military. This collection of pieces in the show is imbued with the particular vulnerability experienced in a war zone. It also exposes the general vulnerabilities of being human and confronting the darkness that can enter one's life. Vulnerability, naturally part of the rhythm of life, opens up a space where sounds deeply reverberate. Much of the work is created on a terrain between the truth and the distortions of personal memory. I am probing at the conditions of war and psychological trauma involving personal

JESSICA WIEBE

Bearing Arms B(e)aring Wounds

One woman's witnessing
to the space between
war and healing

St. Paul's Anglican Church
November 8th to 24th, 2014



A REFLECTION ON JESSICA WIEBE'S Bearing Arms B(e)aring Wounds



Bearing Arms, B(e)aring Wounds: One woman's witness to the space between war and healing, the title given to this particular collection of Jessica Wiebe's artworks, may well speak to an often overlooked truth: witnessing requires a space, and space implies time as well. Standing before Wiebe's work we the viewers are invited to bear, to bear witness of our own. Our witness is twofold: the first is in the sense that we are asked to make ourselves vulnerable to Wiebe's desire to heal. Rather than divert our eyes, we understand that by looking we

enter a relationship where we participate in the unwinding of the bandages, the lifting back of that which has both protected wounds, and in the end, having sealed them off from air and light, hindered healing. In an inversion of our modern understanding of how we see, it is not so much that we are enlightened (that Wiebe's work bears light for our eyes) as in our collective witness, our eyes bring light to that which Wiebe has sheltered in the darkness.

Our second witness is to the content of Wiebe's art which is by nature concerned with fragmentation and destruction. We are drawn through the first act of witnessing, to another space where the human condition in its complex entirety of good and evil, peace and war, healing and suffering cannot be turned away from. We are faced with the paradox that the beauty involved in healing is not that of aesthetics; our witness is not to forms of escape or an idyllic terrain to which we can retreat.

One is struck by Wiebe's bodily presence in her work. This in spite of various techniques that could be interpreted as a distancing from that presence: the photograph, technical in nature, the transferring processes of that photographic image – even the choice to exhibit a digital image of an “original” drawing.



Yet, through these permutations Wiebe, body and soul, are ever present. Perhaps no more so than in the mark and line making: lines that further the act of disintegration and fragmentation, but also lines that knit back together a tenuous wholeness (thus a healing). However it is never a restoration of what was before but a new configuration and consummation of image, and memory. The lines are not unlike the demarcations on a map, in many cases not unlike the visible traces of a network of scars.

Entering into relationship with Wiebe's work is to enter into a paradox of sorts. She speaks to the sense of her memories fading and to the gap which is the truth. The truth that is suspended between what is remembered and that which stands as record: the document, the fact, the photograph. Whether through a drawing, or collage, or text or manipulation of colour one is gripped by the process - the tenacity of building up, breaking up, wearing down. For all this neither Wiebe nor the viewer is left with a sense of mere redundancy and futility. The worked surfaces, the pieces assembled and re-assembled become the thinly worn membrane, the liminal. The world liminal comes from the Latin *limen*, which is “threshold.” The thin space where two realities mingle - the space where we can experience two realities simultaneously. The threshold not as the conduit of truth, but truth itself.

We can see how Wiebe, her process and her artwork, are deeply rooted in our understanding of art's importance. It is an understanding inextricably linked to Christianity and the paradox of a God who in the person of Jesus Christ chose to become incarnate and enter the world, to become matter in space and time, and fully enter our human story in all its suffering and all is goodness. Wiebe's work is the stuff of a history of art that bears witness. It is an impulse inextricably imbued with a Christian orientation to complete immersion in this world, in this life – and not to a retreat from it.

Wiebe has joined a long procession of artists that stretches across the centuries past and will move forward holding her within it into the centuries to come. It is a procession of artists whose eyes stare opened and wide out into the world - artists whose faces begin to mingle and merge with those whom we call saints.