

# ISACHSEN

***Isachsen*, a multimedia exhibition by aAron Munson  
The Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize Application**

aAron Munson (Lead Artist) - Photographic Prints, VR Installation, Single-channel Video

**Commissioned contributors:**

David Hoffos - Station & Radio Room Video Installations

Dara Humniski - Parka Hood Sculpture

Gary James Joynes - Sound Design

**Funded by:**



**MOTIVATION**

Isachsen, an Arctic weather station in the far reaches of the Canadian North, operated on Ellef Ringnes Island from 1948-1978. In 1974, Doug Munson, a 19-year-old farm boy from Southern Ontario, Canada, was stationed at Isachsen for 12 months as a weather observation technician with Environment Canada. The nearest settlement is over 300 miles south, and the only connection to the outside world was a monthly air-supply drop and the occasional radio transmission. In winter, the sun fails to rise for three months, and the temperature can drop below -50C; Isachsen is a test of endurance.

Diary entry from Doug Munson:

Jan 28/75

Isachsen Weather Station

*This has to be the most boring, lonely & depressing period of time I've ever lived through. I am not living, just existing. Darkness and isolation make it almost unbearable. Farley Mowat mentions a madness that "seeps into the spaces in the brains of lonely men", living up North. How true. I can feel insanity creeping up on me now. It's no wonder that alcoholism & suicide are so popular up here, most people turn to one or the other; the latter has been tempting me for some time and is very difficult to fight off. In short, winter here could be described as a cold HELL. It's like being imprisoned with no way out, no wonder so many people are crazy after living in the Arctic. Right now I have no ambition to do anything, sleep in fits and starts, don't give a damn about living. All I can do is wait, hope & pray that I'll survive this torturous ordeal, & not be a mental case.*

It wasn't until reading his father's diary almost 40 years later, that aAron Munson understood the impact of the experience. The person that left for Isachsen at 19 seemed to be a different person than the one who returned.

In an effort to gain perspective on his father's experience, aAron hauled eight pieces of luggage over four flights to reach the abandoned station, which was decommissioned in 1978. After being dropped off by a chartered Twin Otter ski plane, he and his Inuit guide, Mark Amarualik, set up camp in an old garage to escape the violent Arctic winds. aAron spent the next seven days capturing the frozen state of the ghost station and surrounding area.

## **WORK DESCRIPTION**

The *Isachsen* exhibition consists of several different components. The vision and fund sourcing for the project was directed by aAron Munson, who commissioned three other artists to assist in executing specific portions of the exhibition.

The components of the *Isachsen* exhibition that are to be considered for The Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize are aAron's photographs:

### **Description: 12 Duratrans film LED backlit prints.**

The images are of the station's current state, abandoned for almost 40 years. Every winter, through shattered windows and the smallest of cracks, the blowing snow slowly works its way into the station's structures. The result is a series of frozen textures and sculptures, created as the snow crawls across walls and rotting furniture, and over old equipment. The images of

this slow penetration represent the darkness that worked its way into the mind of aAron's father. The snow and a mind's darkness is a subtle, yet powerful force, that can overwhelm, and ultimately consume.

### **ARTIST STATEMENT - aAron Munson**

*Isachsen* provides a backdrop for a conversation about the effects of isolation and depression. Many people experience isolation in their everyday lives, and can feel as desperate as my father did at Isachsen. Fortunately, he persevered through his experience and has been an inspiration for me in finding new vantage points for my own reality. Creating new perspectives can change how we see ourselves and the world around us. It's important that we remind ourselves of this, and share our experiences; Empathy is a powerful way to connect to each other.

The photographs also speak to humanity's relationship with nature. While taking the photos, I was reminded of how unconcerned nature is with what we create. *Isachsen* is a example of how the elements will quickly erase any record of our existence. For all our efforts, there will only be a few footprints left behind. I find this humbling, and a reminder to be present in the moment.

### **WHY THIS WORK IS BEING NOMINATED - David Candler**

Please see attached document submitted by David Candler of dc3 Art Projects.