



February 1, 2019

To the Jury,

RE: 2019 Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Art Prize

aAron Munson - Isachsen

I am submitting, for the consideration of the 2019 Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Art Prize jury, aAron Munson's exhibition *Isachsen* as presented at dc3 Art Projects January and February 2018. Munson created *Isachsen* over several years and thousands of miles, travelling to one of the northernmost points in Canada's arctic to revisit a profoundly affecting period of his father's life.

After uncovering diary entries made by his Father while on a six month tour at the far north weather station, Munson sought to understand the impact of place on the 19 year old man. Relating this uncovered description of a tortured mind to his own experiences, aAron was driven to see and feel the land so important in his Father's formative development. The exhibition can be seen as a metaphor for the isolation and loneliness of mental illness.

aAron Munson travelled to the abandoned northern outpost with a guide, a tent and 8 cases of cameras and gear. He created his photo/video/virtual reality work from documentation of his journey, and produced the complete *Isachsen* exhibition. He commissioned three Alberta artists (two from Edmonton) to create elements in support of his own and brought the viewer an all encompassing experience of Canada's Far North.

Passing through a portal, literally into the mind of Munson's father Doug, the viewer was surrounded by stunning backlit photographic images of the effects of time and nature on man and the manmade. These full colour images appeared as black and white because of Munson's masterful use of Arctic natural light, and the extreme nature of the environment. Together this still photo and time based work created a multidirectional narrative - between Father and son, past and present, north and south. The backlit photos glowed with both story and pathos, simultaneously eerie melancholic and lusciously beautiful. A commissioned soundscape brought the gale force Arctic winds to shake the gallery and a central structure held the 360 degree experience of standing in the centre of the remains of *Isachsen* with cold air billowing at the viewers face. Munson's VR experience, along with a tension filled single channel video and several of the backlit photos on transparency brought a lone figure into that harsh world. A holographic installation reiterating the loneliness and isolation of the figure and the station, now long abandoned.

Munson presented a sensory experience that was engulfing, engaging, and provocative. His images struck deeply into the psyche of many viewers and was, for some, a glimpse into their own past and present. Through the exhibition Munson created a new dialogue about mental health, using visual strategies rather than written or verbal, through local print, radio, and television media. This conversation positioned the setting of the far north as similar to the nature of some of contemporary habits and communication strategies; isolation in the digital realm can be as affecting as physical isolation yet mimics more traditional ways of connecting with others.

With his extensive experience in filmmaking, a necessarily collaborative discipline, Munson was keen to produce an exhibition utilizing experts in other realms - sound, textile and sculpture, and analog visual projection - to enhance his concept. His generous interaction with, and guidance of these elements' production supported the exquisite work he had created.

Aron Munson's *Isachsen* was a work in itself, comprised of multiple elements all under his direction and influence. The photo and video/VR elements within *Isachsen* provided a foundation from which the entire exhibition took life; they were also the basis for a photobook of the series produced by Munson. The work and concept at the core of this exhibition are of rare calibre anywhere in the visual art world. *Isachsen* would be worthy of the highest accolade in any visual arts community and should be recognized with the 2019 Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Art Prize.

Submitted respectfully and without reservation,

David Candler

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David Candler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Founder/Director
dc3 Art Projects
Edmonton, Canada

