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CANADIAN ARTIST/WRITER EXAMINES HOMOSOCIAL ELEMENTS IN MILITARY SOCIETY WITH ILLUSTRATED MEMOIR

Former Canadian infantryman, Scott Waters, exhibits paintings in Montréal during launch of his *The Hero Book*.

With Canada at war and in active combat in Afghanistan, scrutiny of the Canadian military is on the rise. So is the number of dead soldiers who return home in flag-draped coffins. Cumulus Press launches Scott Waters' illustrated memoir which considers how the infantry operates as a social system, how soldiers interact with each other and how the specifics of this system constitutes a separate society—one that operates, at least partially, in exclusion from civilian society.

Hard Core Logo author, Michael Turner writes that Waters' matter-of-fact prose contrasts to his "meticulously painted images, many of them set against that mass-produced, knots-and-all surface known as 'plywood',—an accurate metaphor for what we in the civilian world call 'military training'."

Master of Fine Arts (York U., 2004), Scott Waters, is interested "in notions of the utopic, how the military, with its own rules and priorities attempts to create an ideal society, one which though unachievable, still seeks its own form of perfection. That it is a perfection of violence is secondary to the attempt to create something which doesn't take the accepted (civilian) order for granted."

The 64-page book includes 24 full-colour pages with 32 images of the artist's work, which offer comical criticism to the otherwise serious spectacle of infantry life and war preparedness. Waters' work combines portraits of soldiers fiddling with automatic weapons with written anecdotes of infantry life while on and off duty. A black eye on an infantry private matches his bruised ego with a caption from a letter sent home: "*Dear Mom, It snowed today. Bullshit, that is!*" Drinking, a hierarchy of violence, and a comfortable contempt of a regimented life is not lost on the reader as Waters remembers three years of his youth given to the Canadian Forces.

Scott Waters spent three weeks in August 2006 observing and sketching soldiers being trained for a tour in Aghanistan, all within the Canadian Forces Artist Program, which selects artists every two years to develop a body of work which will "allow Canadian artists the opportunity to record Canada's soldiers in Canada and around the world."

Scott Waters comes to Montréal from Toronto for the launch, where he will exhibit some of the book's original paintings (32" x 48" oil on plywood) among others smaller works for one night only: **Saturday, Nov. 4, 7-10pm @ Au Contre-Temps, 4435 St-Hubert** (metro Mont-Royal).

Publisher, Cumulus Press, will be showing off its new office on the venue's ground floor. A \$2 entrance includes a free drink with proceeds going to local youth homeless shelter, **Le Refuge des Jeunes**.

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