



YVONNE LAMMERICH
IAN CARR-HARRIS
Writing to You

PUBLIC
ART
vancouver



About the Work

“Writing to you is like caressing you with words — words have no distance.”

Major Lloyd Augustus of the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught’s Own) and his wife Mary Augustus exchanged over 800 letters during the Second World War, while Lloyd was stationed overseas. They wrote to each other every day. Their story is a classic one, fit for the pages of any epic novel. This extraordinary testament of personal commitment is the inspiration for a collaborative public artwork, *Writing to You*, by Canadian artists Yvonne Lammerich and Ian Carr-Harris. *Writing to You* is a public site, a commemorative sculpture, a historical marker and a poignant love story; a record of the words exchanged between two people separated by war.

The artwork is composed of two cast bronze sculptures sited on either end of the pedestrian mews adjacent to the British Columbia Regiment’s Beatty Street Drill Hall. On one side of the long expanse of grass stands a table — perhaps a kitchen table — on tiled ground. A letter lies on its surface, with several pages left out. On the other side of the site rests a military trunk on broken ground. There is a corresponding letter

on its surface, left out for passersby to read, as intrepid voyeurs into the personal lives of these two correspondents. The letters, which comprise only a glimpse into what was written, are filled with words of hope and longing, quotidian anecdotes, and the memories that make up a shared, lived history. Together the letters form a bond that invisibly connects the two sculptures.

Similar to the artists’ past projects, a strong concept or narrative forms the basis of the work; in this case, the shared letters, of which text is integrated directly. The work is modest and simple in form — a table, a trunk, a light source — but complex in its varied meanings and connotations. The shattered ground beneath the trunk and the stable floor under the table represents the contrast between domestic life and the battlefield. No less important is the distance that separates the sculptures, signifying the enormous physical and psychological expanse between the battlefield and the home. To walk from one letter to the other is to metaphorically experience the separation of these two individuals, the melancholy and the strength of their connection. Light is also integrated throughout the work. In the evenings, the table is lit from beneath by ground lights, while the trunk is lit by a searchlight on nearby ground. Likewise, the cursive text of the letters is illuminated from behind, giving the heavy material an unexpected levity and functioning as a metaphor for hope such words connote.

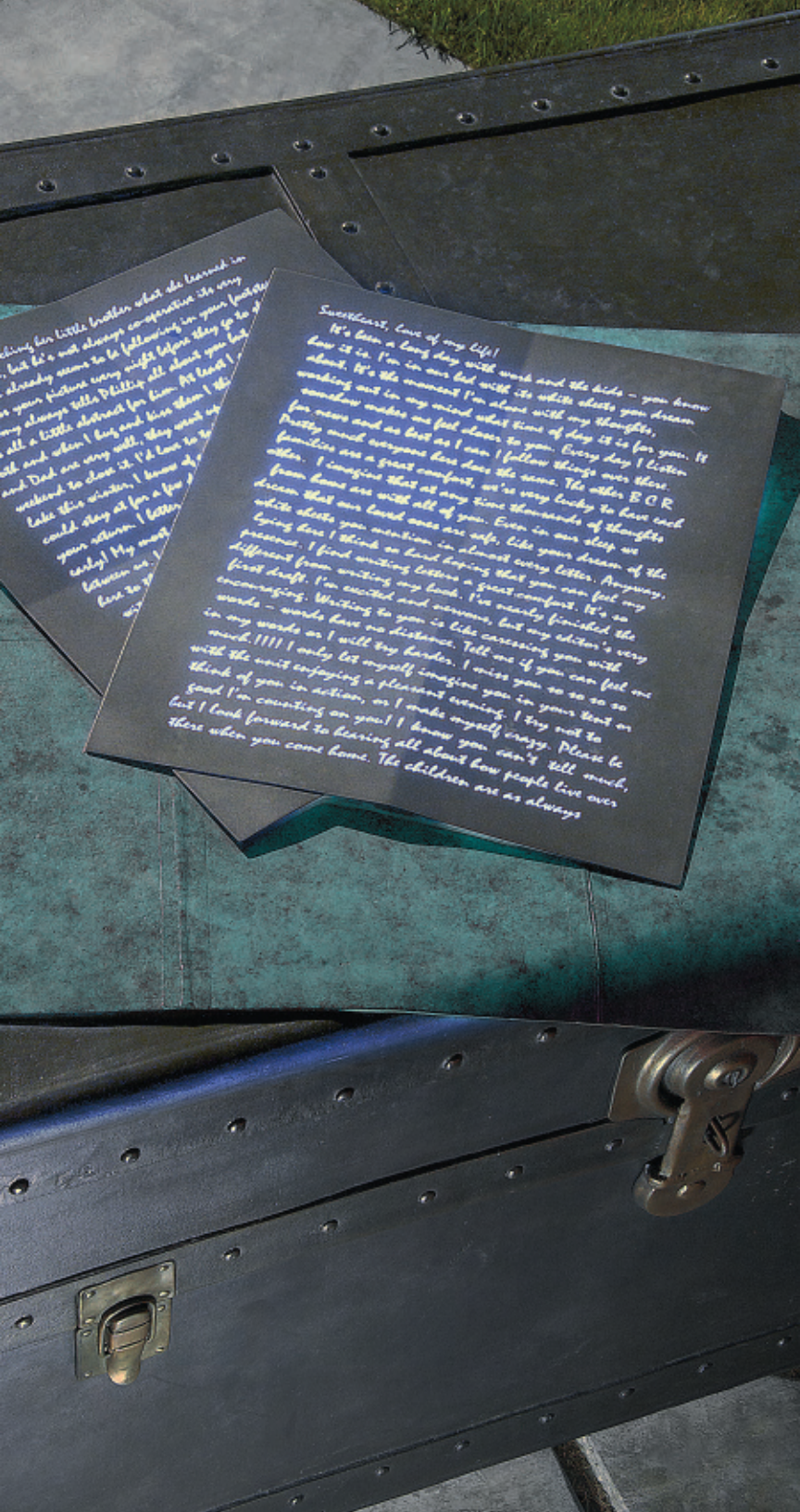
The work has an important relationship to the site. The Drill Hall is a historical landmark, the home of the British Columbia Regiment (DCO), a volunteer reserve originally formed in 1883. The other markers on the site — armoured tanks and old canons — stand as traditional monuments in comparison, and favour a more conventional retelling of history; that war is about victory and loss, grand battles, victims and heroes. Yet the artists turn our attention to a history of war less often valorized but equally important: the impact of war on the everyday lives of individuals, of women, families and communities.

— Kathleen Ritter

Kathleen Ritter is an artist and a writer based in Vancouver.

Opposite Trunk and letter detail, *Writing to You*, August 2008. Photo: Henri Robideau

Above Table and letter detail, *Writing to You*, August 2008. Photo: Henri Robideau

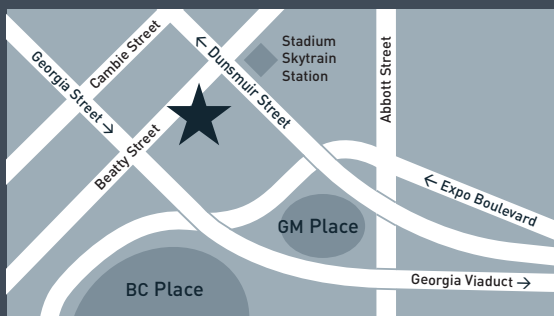


About the Artists

Yvonne Lammerich and Ian Carr-Harris are Toronto-based artists. Their individual practices reflect shared interests in formal relationships between objects, history and language. Both are also accomplished writers and have published widely on the subject of art. Lammerich's work has been exhibited throughout Canada and Europe, and extensively in Québec where she resided for many years. Her work explores the multisensorial experience of lived and virtual space through painting and installation. She received the Canada Council midcareer prize in 1996 and has also written for national and international catalogues and journals. She holds a doctorate in Art History from the Université du Québec à Montréal. Carr-Harris' work, exhibited nationally and internationally since 1971, includes sculpture, site-specific installation, photography and language. He began his career studying history and library science — subjects that are reflected in his art practice to this day. Carr-Harris was educated at Queen's University, the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Art and Design, where he continues to teach. In 2007, Carr-Harris received a Governor-General's Award in the Visual and Media Arts.

Above Yvonne Lammerich and Ian Carr-Harris. Photo: Andrew Beeton

The City of Vancouver's Public Art Program incorporates contemporary art practices into city planning and development processes. The program supports excellence in art making of many kinds—by emerging and established artists, in new and traditional media, from stand-alone commissions to artist collaborations. The program aims to encourage a conversation between artists and the city by providing for the creation of art that expresses the spirit, diverse visions, and poetry of place that collectively define Vancouver. The program is part of the Cultural Services Division and oversees the development of public art opportunities throughout the city. Projects at civic buildings, greenways, parks and other public spaces are funded through annual civic capital budgets. Private-sector projects are funded by developments in the rezoning process. Learn more about this and other public artworks in the Public Art Registry at www.vancouver.ca/publicart; subscribe to the Public Art Listserv at the same site to be notified of upcoming artist opportunities.



Writing to You was commissioned by Concord Pacific Group Inc. as part of their participation in the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program for Private Development.

Coverpage Installation view of *Writing to You*, August 2008, St. Julien Square, Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Henri Robideau

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