

Landon

Mackenzie

Landon Mackenzie: The Animals in the Landscape, by R. Bella Rabinovitch, Abstract of MA Thesis for Concordia University, Montreal, 1991

The present thesis examines the figurative work executed between 1981 and 1985 by Canadian painter Landon Mackenzie (b. 1954). During this period Mackenzie produced five series of paintings employing landscape and animal imagery: *Lost River*, *Gestation*, *Cluny*, *Winter 1984* and *Crossing*. In Chapter I, an account of Mackenzie's biography shows that these animal images function as disguised symbols for her own identity and its relationship to both her human and natural environment.

Critics have argued that the revival of figurative painting in the 1980s is a further manifestation of the voyage of self-discovery embodied by the 'Northern Romantic Tradition'. The validity of this claim is considered in Chapter II, and three subsequent chapters examine the significance of such a strategy for a Canadian woman artist.

Consequently, it is argued that the paintings should be viewed as encompassing a positive progression through three stages. In *Lost River*, the subject is primarily Mackenzie's personal history, depicted through arcane animal imagery that inhabit a northern environment. *Gestation* and *Cluny* represent an intermediary stage where the emphasis shifts to the underlying bonds enjoining humans and their animal counterparts. Finally, in *Winter 1984* and *Crossing* the journey is completed and the natural world itself, as mediated by Mackenzie's personal history, becomes the primary subject of exploration and concern.