



Western Front Exhibitions
303 East 8th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5T 1S1 Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Architecture & Disaster

SABINE BITTER & HELMUT WEBER,
TACITA DEAN, ADRIANA KUIPER, and
GEOFFREY PYKE'S H.M.S. HABBUKUK

September 8 - October 14, 2006

Opening: Thursday September 7, 8pm

Artists' Talk: Saturday, September 9, 3pm



Ballon des Aérostiers de Campagne, from
The Russian Ending, 2001 Tacita Dean
Courtesy The Western Bridge

*Group exhibition exploring relationships
between architecture and disaster.*

The Western Front Society is pleased to announce a group exhibition titled *Architecture & Disaster*. Works in this exhibition explore invention and failure, the fetishization of fear and disaster through the built environment, and tragedy and catharsis.

In a work entitled *The Russian Ending*, Tacita Dean creates fictional endings to historical photographs. Written over the images are their potential finales – possible tragedies, failures, and disasters. Her endings make reference to the early days of film screening in Russia: it is said that Russian audiences only enjoyed tragedy forcing studios to craft new, sad conclusions for each of their films.

Adriana Kuiper takes plans from contemporary underground storm shelters as a starting point for her work. The shelters, reminiscent of those built in the 1950s and 1960s to shield from potential nuclear disaster, are also marketed as a safe haven from terrorism. Constructed to protect from the unknown, the structures that Kuiper references become underground monuments for a hollow promise of safety. In a poetic response to the idea of bunkers as devices for hiding and security, Kuiper reconfigures the shelter plans into kites – objects evocative of lightness, freedom, and play.

A decade earlier, in 1942, near the end of the Second World War a British inventor, Geoffrey Pyke, presented the British military's Chief of Combined Operations with an invention.

In a gesture similar to Kuiper's sculptures, Pyke proposed another kind of architecture built in reaction to potential war and disaster: a floating island made of ice. Pyke intended to use the island as an airfield that could be built larger than conventional aircraft carriers at that time, enabling it to hold fighting planes like spitfires and possibly even larger bombers. The project was abandoned after the first prototype was built in Patricia Lake, near Jasper, Alberta. The *H.M.S. Habbakuk*, as it was named, took nearly a year to thaw.

Accompanying the exhibition is a print edition on the theme of architecture and disaster by Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber featuring text by Clint Burnham. This edition is commissioned by the Western Front Exhibitions Program as part of its ongoing series of artists projects in print.

The Western Front gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the BC Arts Council through the Government of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver, and our members and volunteers. The Western Front is a member of the Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres (PAARC).

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Tuesday - Saturday 12 - 5pm