

Gloria Massé

Wolves



# Gloria Massé

## There Were Once Wolves At Jericho Beach

*"I listen to a tape of wolves howling while I paint."*

While Massé considers this work a portrait of the reality of wolf life, for me the images also carry a tough and tender mystery couched in simple observation. Hers is nothing short of unqualified admiration. "I'm taken with their freedom," she says, "and I want it for them."

**Wolf: Erect-eared straight-tailed harsh-furred tawny-grey wild gregarious carnivorous quadruped allied to the dog; combines in packs to hunt, abundant in the Northern Hemisphere.**

From anywhere within this huge work, we see an almost eighty-foot long panorama of Nature, visceral and vegetable. Wolf panels depicting the animal painted in various combinations of impossible yet seemingly natural colours are connected by large close-up panels of lupins which bloom

in the millions at Jericho Beach in Vancouver each summer. These thin lupin panels depict the plant in progressive stages of bloom, seeding and decay. They frame the wolves so complementarily that upon viewing, one knows this panorama is supposed to exist: Nothing is arbitrary or even collaged in the pop sense.

*"All animals are mysterious to me. Not mystic, mysterious. I became interested in wolves five years ago while reading books by Lois Chrisler who lived with wolves in Alaska. I came to know how wonderful these animals are. I was never afraid of wolves. I was never afraid of nature. I used to fill my pockets with snakes. Little Red Riding Hood, Peter and the Wolf, and The Three Little Pigs were always a disappointment to me. I knew as a child that these stories had nothing to do with wolves."*

Part fantasia, part explanation, part ideal, framed by voluptuous blooming and dying lupins, these wolves are presented lovingly and with the greatest iconographic respect. It could outrage its first audiences for precisely this reason. Who is Gloria Massé to think that the wolf can reach Olympia? Did she take a love potion? Is she naïve regarding wolves? Seeing the work will open a new world, a kind of secular worshipping attitude to the viewer. This world is beautifully accompanied with intensely coloured lupins, not stifling the wolves, but clearly complimenting them, holding them close to Nature and to us, and therein lies our entry.

*“I feel now that I can paint my vision of reality, and the unity of things, solid and ether. We have learned about the atoms, how everything isn't sharp, how everything*

*flows. In my painting, from the Units of Energy to the Grass and even the Mangos — they are running with juice: there is a conscious integration of foreground and background. All hard lines bother me...mechanical drawing. Wolves are an opportunity to make grass run.”*

Cool-eyed passion from Massé's brush and mind gives us the Simple Idea in overwhelming proportions: Maybe we should embrace the wild things. For here we are facing big concepts like survival, beauty and the harsh reality of Nature. There is even more: a rich contradiction, a necessary contradiction which faces us when coming to terms with Nature. It is at the apex of modern dilemmas residing in disbelief and desperate needs for answers. What is this artist doing? Is it worship? Love? Reality? What?

Some of us carry fear when we think about wolves. Massé tries to put this myth aside and invites us along. Though she does not idealize these animals, she honours them, indeed dignifies them by transformation, aesthetically and culturally transposing them into art. This is similar to and possibly tantamount to worship. For me, this work manifests the artist's (and others'?) struggle against deification in art and life.

And there is another part to the rich contradiction: Massé exposes some ambivalence regarding pantheism. She is an a-mystic yet eco-conscious artist. We see here visceral, emotionally charged, purposefully non-intellectual images. We are seeing impossibly green and red wolves, no stuffed Audobon-style depictions. Massé wants us involved. Notwithstanding the denials of

mystic romanticism, she is clearly drawn to these wolves in non-verbal and ecstatic ways. The viewer sees them clearly as images beyond the norm, more than a documentary by an informed animal conservationist. As with the compelling "Green Mates Red" panel, we are mated to the Simple Idea, the gesture, the compelling howl of Nature, the same call which drives Massé.

*Tom Graff*  
*Vancouver, January 1989*  
Photo: Trevor Mills

Gloria Massé

Wolves

February 25 to March 19, 1989

Opening Saturday, February 25

2:00 to 5:00 pm

Gloria Massé will be present



Diane Farris Gallery  
1565 W. 7th Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada V6J 1S1  
(604) 737-2629

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

# Gloria Massé

1942 Born in Windsor, Ontario

## Education

1979 Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of British Columbia

## Selected Exhibitions

- 1989 **Wolves**, Diane Farris Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1988 **Wind Mangos & Fish**, Solo Exhibition, Diane Farris Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
- A Hundred Odd Ways to Have Fun**, Group Exhibition, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, British Columbia
- 1987 **Moved By Other Cultures**, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, British Columbia
- Solo Exhibition**, Diane Farris Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1985 **West Coast Women Artists**, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia
- 1984 **The Warehouse Show**, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Alexandra Dikeakos and Gloria Massé — Paintings**, Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr College of Art and Design, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Three Vancouver Artists**, Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
- 1983 **Vancouver Island Invitational**, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia
- 1982 **Gloria Massé — Paintings and Drawings**, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, British Columbia
- 1979 **Three Women Painters**, A.M.S. Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Vancouver Fresh — 5 Vancouver Artists**, Kamloops Public Gallery, Kamloops, British Columbia
- B.C. Artists Show**, B.C. Credit Union, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1978 **Class of 7 & 8**, Graduate Exhibition, A.M.S. Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia

## Awards

- 1988 Canada Council, Arts Grant "B"
- 1979 Canada Council, Arts Grant "B"

## Publications

- 1987 **The Province**, June 2, "Works by Massé Focus on Grass" review by Art Perry
- The Vancouver Sun**, November 9, "Artists Find Inspiration in Other Cultures" review by Elizabeth Godley
- 1984 **Alexandra Kikeakos & Gloria Massé Paintings**, The Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr College of Art and Design, October 5 to 28, 1984, Catalogue
- 1984 **The Globe and Mail**, "Three Vancouver Artists," Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, review by John Bentley-Mays
- 1982 **Vanguard**, October, "Gloria Massé — Paintings and Drawings," Surrey Art Gallery, review

## Commissions

- 1985 Portrait of the President, University of British Columbia
- 1979 Mural, Extended Care Unit, University of British Columbia
- 1974 Mural, Vancouver School Board

## Collections

- Permanent Art Collection, Government of British Columbia
- Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
- MacDonald's Corporation
- Worrall Scott & Page
- British Columbia Systems Corporation, Province of British Columbia