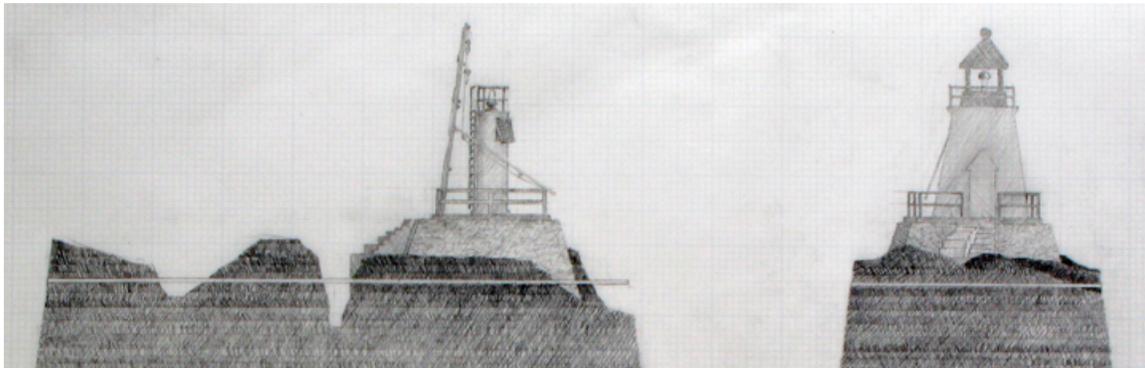


Portable Lighthouse Fiddle Reef Remembered

Fiddle Reef, a mile off Willow's Beach, is a low-lying islet that covers up at high tide except for a cylindrical navigational beacon and its stonework base. The base is the site of the former Fiddle Reef Light Station — 1898 to 1978.

I recall seeing the former lighthouse from the beach shortly after my family had moved to Victoria and a year or two before it was torn down. My recollection is of a small wood-framed tower, white against the background grouping of islands, and appearing in the middle of Oak Bay. The lighthouse was distant, even exotic — a perception coming from my being young at the time but also perhaps from the optical effect induced by it being BC's smallest lighthouse.

Around 1990, having been away from Victoria for a few years, I set out to go to the lighthouse in a folding kayak, an East German Pouch of 1960s vintage, that I had purchased at a garage sale in View Royal. The lighthouse, however, no longer existed and had in fact been absent even during most of my time in Victoria — I hadn't noticed until I went looking for it. More recently, just a couple of years ago, I recalled also that my early experience of Fiddle Reef was likely from a kayak of sorts that I had bought in Victoria's former Yate's Street Goodwill. It was green or blue in colour, crude in its plan and plywood construction.



Fiddle Reef Remembered, elevation views (detail), pencil on vellum, 2009

A first version of this project, *Fiddle Reef Remembered*, emerged during a six week project in The Lab at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (*Witness Marks: Exploring the Exotic Close to Home*, 2006 — with Will Garrett-Petts). There I drew upon an interest in mapping to first study the present-day Fiddle Reef site and to use the Lab as a working — and public — space in which to create a physical model derived

from the careful on-site mapping of the reef's topography at several states of the tide.* This model imagined the lighthouse returned to Fiddle Reef as a simple, façade-like construction. The "model" was not just a representation of Fiddle Reef but also an assemblage of items collected at thrift stores and garage sales throughout the six week duration of the project — the act of collecting those items providing an opportunity to travel throughout the city and not only to the more "exotic" location of the islands. Viewers, participants actually, as the public were invited to contribute their own stories of islands (by way of drawings, maps, and physical artifacts that accumulated in the space), offered many characterizations of my island construction. One such viewer noted that "it looks like a jellyfish" (for the manner in which left over thread ends hung down from its entirely stitched-together components) and another noted that "it looks like a raft."

Such a comment prefigures my present projects — the construction of the full-sized façade of the lighthouse as a floating structure, its collapsible, scaffold structure built onto a salvaged raft. Whether on the raft (reconfigured for enhanced buoyancy and stability) or otherwise towable by kayak this *Portable Lighthouse* will exist as a towable, structure and, potentially, one to be placed back on the Fiddle Reef site.



With my older brother Hamish
Bay of Fundy, 1969



My sister Alysoun's daughter and husband Smith
Drumbeg, Gabriola Island, c. 2002

- Such interests of mapping and public engagement are intrinsic to several interdisciplinary research projects that I have undertaken at Thompson Rivers University in collaboration with colleagues and students in such programs as English, Geography and Sociology. The Fiddle Reef project in fact represents one of the first times that such interdisciplinary research (by way, for example, of engaging the public in activities of mapping personal experience) has impacted my own artistic production in a significant way.