

June 18, 2012

Cheryl Siegel

Librarian, Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives

[Introductory remarks presented by Cheryl Siegel on the occasion a reception in honour of IAIN BAXTER& at the North Vancouver City Library, June 18, 2012]

I'm delighted to be here in this beautiful building this evening to see the opening of the exhibition: Information/Location, North Vancouver

We librarians have a reputation as being retentive and a bit wary of sharing our collections – there is a notion that librarians really don't want to lend you that book, because it will interrupt the perfect shelving arrangement, and you'll probably underline something or drop it in the bathtub anyway – that notion has fortunately been replaced by welcoming, libraries, like this one, that let you play computer games and arrange evenings of "read dating" for literate singles.

As the caretaker of a non-circulating collection of many obscure exhibition catalogues and thousands and thousands of bits of artistic ephemera, I was thrilled when the gentlemen of CAUSA, David Bellman and Meirion Evans, came to my library and appreciated many of the unsung gems of my collections. Archival research is a relatively new field of endeavour in contemporary art and they set a high standard, ferreting out the most evocative and informative documents. Seeing how this documentary evidence supports and enhances the art work – it seems, somehow, worth the effort to save, preserve and catalogue all of this artistic flotsam and jetsam. I am so pleased that the Vancouver Art Gallery Library AND Archives could be a part of this exhibition and delighted to see some bits of the ephemera that the library has been judiciously hoarding for many years are now museum objects in themselves, documenting the extraordinary career of the artist that we celebrate here.

http://archives.library.yorku.ca/iain_baxterand_raisonne/

From Artists in Canada, the National Gallery's official list:

Baxter, Iain

a.k.a. Baxter, Joseph Iain Wilson

a.k.a. Baxter, Joseph Wilson Iain

See also: IT

See also: N.E. Baxter Thing Co.

See also: N.E. Thing Co.

See also: NETCO

a.k.a. Baxter&, Iain

As library cataloguing exercise, this man has more cross references than Rembrandt, more a.k.a.'s than anyone on the most wanted list. AND if each of these names represents a facet of his tremendous output of artworks, he would need quite a few more aliases. For Iain Baxter& has been in the art business for more than 50 years. He has worked in every medium imaginable, including quite a few that he devised himself. He embodies the words of that great Canadian philosopher, Wayne Gretzky, who said "keep your eye on where the puck is going, not where it's been" Iain Baxter& has always been one step ahead.

What I find most endearing about Mr. Baxter& is his sense of humour, that frisson of irony that pervades the work and is perhaps the factor that unifies his body of work and delights as well as challenges our perceptions.

We believe that some of his most important work happened right here in North Vancouver and it fitting that his works now enhance four noble North Vancouver institutions.

AND, now, I am very pleased to introduce, the AND man Iain Baxter&