



For the Record: Memory and the Second World War Paintings of Carl Schaefer, RCAF [

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT For the Record: Memory and the Second World War Paintings of Carl Schaefer, RCAF Rob Coles Although the Second World War ended over sixty five years ago, veteran's memories of the conflict continue to shift in focus with the passing of time. During the war Carl Schaefer (1903-1995) served with the RCAF as an official war artist attached to bomber, fighter, and coastal commands in Europe. This thesis compares Schaefer's war diary and letters written during the war with two interviews conducted with the artist many years after the war. The comparison yielded some interesting discrepancies in Schaefer's memory of his role as an official war artist. During the war, Schaefer emphasized in his diary and letters the main goal of the war art program: accurate images of Canada's involvement in the war for the historical record. In the two post-war interviews, however, Schaefer's memory of his role had shifted when he mentioned that he considered his war-time work as art, rather than historical records. The reasons for the shift in Schaefer's memory are complex and varied. In order to understand the process by which his memory of the war altered over time, I have consulted theories written by several oral historians. The key reason for the shift in memory is that Schaefer, like other war veterans, sought to establish meaning for his role in the war that would give him a feeling of composure, thus helping him feel good about his life. The shift in Schaefer's memory also offers clues regarding the context of the interviews conducted after the war

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