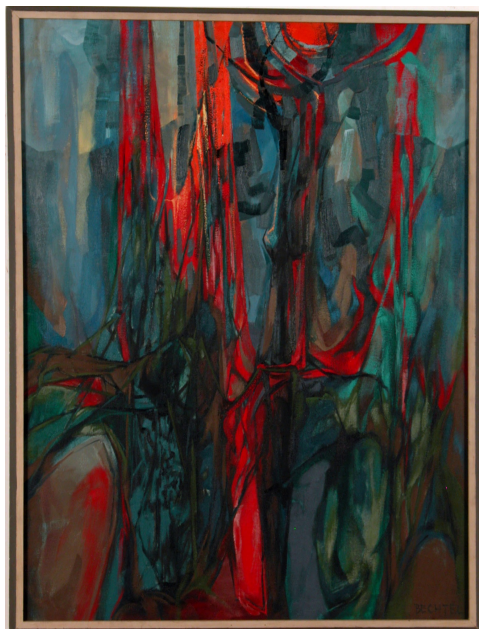




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Tony Urquhart, *Hero!*, 1992, 13/50, ink on paper, 30.2 x 22.6 cm. Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Gift of the artist, 1992.



Jack Bechtel, *Mountain Oracle*, 1961, oil on canvas, 126.3 x 95.5 cm. Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. Bequest of William G. Biggs Estate, 1962.

Being Magnified: Heroes & Villains from KW|AG's Permanent Collection

An Interview with Registrar Cindy Wayvon

Communications Coordinator, Tracy Smith interviewed Cindy Wayvon regarding her ideas behind this exhibition in KW|AG's corridor gallery.

The title of the corridor exhibition is *Being Magnified: Heroes & Villains from KW|AG's Permanent Collection*. Why did you choose this theme that focuses on heroes?

With the Winter Olympics coming up in 2010, I began thinking a lot about sports heroes and how one realizes his or her fullest potential. You often hear athletes (and musicians and filmmakers) say they were "in the zone" during their best performances. They also often say they have always been passionate about their sport, played it since they were kids, they couldn't get enough of it - those kinds of things. I became intrigued with how one gets into 'the zone' and it seemed apparent that the quickest way to access that state of mind, or state of being, was do what you love. We've all had moments like that, but I think people who really excel in their lives find a way to do that consistently. Crystal (Curator of Exhibitions and Collections) and I had a few conversations about this notion, how a hero becomes a hero, and eventually she invited me to curate an exhibition around it.

What inspired you to create this show?

During my search for 'the zone,' I stumbled across comparative mythologist, Joseph Campbell. He coined the phrase 'follow your bliss.' In his book *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, he discusses his thoughts on storytelling from all around the world. He believed that every good story follows a similar path, which he called "The Hero's Journey". Of course, Campbell's theory is much more involved, but simply stated, each story has a central character that faces a challenge. To overcome that challenge, the character must uncover his or her inner strength or wisdom and become, in a sense, heroic. I thought it would be interesting to use Campbell's template to create an exhibition, one that tells the story of how a hero is made.

How did you curate the show to illustrate this process of self-actualization?

I imagined the corridor as a symbolic journey the visitor would take as they engaged in the different works from our Permanent Collection. The exhibition, or journey, begins with Tony Urquhart's [Hero!](#) which to me, is about a person who is not yet a hero, but a questioning and hesitant soul. Following Tony's work, I thought Alexander Calder's *Flamme Interirure* worked well as it represents the flame within, the spark or questioning that sets the hero on the path of self-discovery. Then Stanley Lewis' works *Explorer III* and *Elevation* are about that internal drive, the search for something more, seeking higher inspiration. Technically, the villain should appear at this point on the journey, representing an obstacle or



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Installation image of *Being Magnified*. Photo: Robert McNair.



Jesús Carlos de Vilallonga, *Portrait*, 1970, oil on masonite, 40.1 x 30.5 cm. Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Gift of Dr. Jacques Bellefeuille, 1992.



Installation image of *Being Magnified*. Photo: Robert McNair.

challenge followed by *Rite of Passage* since this is the distinguishing point, the threshold, as the reluctant hero becomes the assured hero.

Really, the works just seemed to flow so effortlessly together when we installed the show. For instance, I liked the vertical red in Jack Bechtel's *Mountain Oracle* and how it is mirrored in Salvador Dali's *Dante's Death Mask* so that, side by side, they flowed aesthetically. The works create connections among themselves and play off one another to create a larger context.

What are some of the literary, spiritual, artistic and political heroes that are included in the art works in the show?

I thought it was important to include heroes from many different realms to emphasize that each individual, when magnified or actualized, takes a different form. We're not all going to be sports heroes. There are spiritual heroes such as *Noah*, *Moses* and *The Prophet*, heroes of Herculean strength like *Samson* and *Warrior's Lament*. Literary and political heroes are represented in the two works portraying death masks – Dante and John F. Kennedy. My favourite is Jesús Carlos de Vilallonga's painting *Portrait* because it really represents, to me, the inspiration coming from within and defining the hero.

How does the large sculpture at the end of the corridor, called *Fury* by Walter Bachinski, fit into one's journey of discovering his/her heroic qualities? Is this what you mean by villain?

The villain, *Fury*, symbolizes any experience or circumstance that causes the hero to evolve. I thought the idea of 'villain' worked well in this situation as a contrast to 'hero'. It brings the idea of hero into sharper focus and magnifies it. The villain is anything we come up against in our lives that helps us to uncover a new understanding of who we are.

What do you hope visitors to the Gallery will take away with them after seeing *Being Magnified*?

Curating this show helped me think through the process of how we can live our best lives. I hope the show will bring to light that we all have the ability to live extraordinary lives if we listen to our impulses and let them lead us towards fulfillment. I hope that by considering these heroes and their journeys, we can learn a little more about the human condition, and what it means to be magnified to our fullest potential.

Being Magnified: Heroes & Villains from KW|AG's Permanent Collection is on view until August 29, 2010.