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celebrate Swedish Heritage.

# Flaggan

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## Art and Ancestors: Scott MacLeod's Journey

Why do we search for our roots? What do the customs and cultures of our ancestors mean to us? What does our heritage teach us about ourselves?

Canadian artist Scott MacLeod offers a provocative and personal exploration of these questions in his exhibit *Ancestral Homes: Viking Heritage from Scandinavia to Scotland*, at the museum from June 13 to August 25. The exhibit contains approximately 50 paintings inspired by MacLeod's travels to Northern Scotland and Scandinavia in search of his own ethnic roots.

Funded by the William Blair Bruce Fine Arts European Travel Scholarship, MacLeod traveled to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Outer Hebrides, and the Shetland and Orkney Islands. He used Ancient Bronze Age sites on the isle of Gotland in Sweden, Viking burial sites, ancient Christian manuscripts and the shapes and styles of Viking ships as subject matter for his paintings.

At first MacLeod created straightforward watercolor and ink illustrations of these sites and artifacts. But his project progressed into a series of paintings that combined the information gained in his research with a unique art style and abstract motifs.

His compositions often involve a Viking ship married to some more nebulous element - a suggestion of water or air, or a striking abstract use of color. Depicting ancient ships with a modern sensibility invites the viewer to think about the relationship of the past to the present. These paintings not only document history, they convey a sense of the search for history and the longing for origins and home.

In 1800, MacLeod's ancestors came to Cape Breton in Canada from the Outer Hebrides in Northern Scotland. He can trace his Scottish ancestors to Scandinavia during the Viking era. Several paintings explore the similarities of Scandinavian and Scottish archetypes and symbols, evidence of the overlapping of cultures.

By creating these sorts of parallels in his work,



The Gokstad Ship, Spirit Ship, by Scott MacLeod

MacLeod emphasizes that his ancestral home is complex and dynamic. We tend to contrast the multicultural world of today with our idea of the old world in which nations were comprised of a single ethnicity. But even as far back as the Viking era, nations and cultures were intermingling. The nomadic Vikings especially demonstrate that the notion of pure races that lived in isolation from each other never really existed.

Throughout his career, MacLeod has been interested in cross-cultural communication. He has participated in a series of exchanges with artists in Mexico, and exhibited in Ireland as a benefit for Amnesty International. He has also studied and participated in the cultures of the Squamish Nation and the Plains Cree, two Native Canadian tribes.

For eight years, MacLeod was a member of a Canadian artists' collective called La Raza. The four artists - MacLeod, Francis Caprani, Gerald Pedros, and Daniel Glassman - exhibited in alternative spaces and donated the proceeds to charity. These

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