



On the other side of the bridge, to our left, the Maplewood Mudflats, where squatters such as whale researcher Dr. Paul Spong and artist Tom Burrows kept homes during the 1960s. The site was the subject of two documentaries, *Mudflats Living* (1972) and *Living in the Mud* (1972), both portraits of people living on the city's edge—while still participating in it. Here we meet a sixty-something beachcomber named Michael, as well as Vietnam War resisters, artists, musicians, and activists. As enlightened as these people appear, women are still seen performing traditional roles, like cooking and cleaning, a contradiction upheld today by that sexist homophobe his Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

*Living in the Mud* is the more poetic of the two films, and ends with the burning of the squatters' shacks by the District of North Vancouver (to make way for an unrealized supermarket). A photograph of one such shack, built in the intertidal zone, provides the central panel of Ian Wallace's *La Melancholie de la Rue* (1973), a work which Spasm's Dieter Roelstraete, co-curator of MuHKA's 2005 exhibition *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists*, contrasts with Wallace's *At Work* (1983), where the artist appears in a studio that looks more like a study than a place for easels. As Roelstraete writes:

Wallace's *La Melancholie de la Rue*, along with *At Work*, embody the asymptotic poles in between which the recent history of much of Vancouver art practice has been played out symbolically: the opposing paradigms of, on the one hand, intellectual retreat into the artist's own inner (mental) landscape, periodically reenacted in the actual "physical" retreat of the artist and his or her body "into the forest," "back to nature," or "back to the islands" even, and on the other, of the artist's activist engagement with the social, political, and economic issues of the day as they are acted out "on the streets" of countless "cities" around the world—of which Vancouver, finally, is one.<sup>1</sup>