

Artist upset by treatment of work

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upsetting to the artist.

"The way the Town reacted to her was very blunt, very rude and there was no room for dialogue. You just don't talk to anyone like that," said Verraich, the only one among the group who resides in Oakville.

Lack of dialogue is something that baffles McIntyre as well.

She cannot understand why Sanowar-Makhan did not immediately contact her when she was told to pull the piece. McIntyre said that would have been the logical step since OAC arranged the space for the show.

Instead Sanowar-Makhan immediately "launched into action" distributing a well-written press release to the media that, McIntyre said, only strengthens her belief Sanowar-Makhan had hoped to provoke a reaction.

Two artists, who spoke only on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, confirmed that all the artists, including Sanowar-Makhan, had agreed if there were any complaints over any of the pieces, the offending work would be removed immediately and without question.

"It was very clear and it wasn't like we didn't know," said the unnamed artist.

"There is a difference between the type of work you would hang in a gallery space and what you would hang in a public space," added the other. "I wouldn't show some of my pieces to my grandmother as the pieces have to be contextualized."

McIntyre explained that in a place like the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) the curator would be able to give the work context and would juxtapose it in

such a way to help explain it. People would also be on hand to help interpret the piece. Lighting and even the colour of walls would all be designed to create the proper mood and aid in the presentation.

Most importantly, however, the public would be forewarned about any controversial pieces or work containing graphic images.

Currently, for example, the AGO have curtailed off, and issued a caution about, some of the works by Cindy Sherman, one of the world's leading contemporary artists. This gives people the opportunity to decide if they wish to see them or not.

"You allow people to have choices," said McIntyre. "You don't ambush people."

"It is all very well for artists to claim freedom of speech and their rights, but what about respecting the rights of people coming to pay their taxes and register for Parks and Recreation programs and do other business at Town Hall," said McIntyre.

Sanowar-Makhan does not agree and said she finds the comment that people coming into the Town Hall do not expect to be challenged "very ignorant".

"I think it undermines the intelligence and the awareness of people who come to a Town Hall and I think it generalizes the attitudes in the community," said Sanowar-Makhan. "The artist has the right to present their point of view and let the public choose what they want to do in terms of deciding whether they choose to engage in the piece or not."

Other artists participating in the exhibit such as Vicky Vyas are not so sure it is that clear cut.

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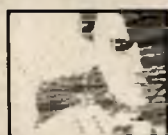
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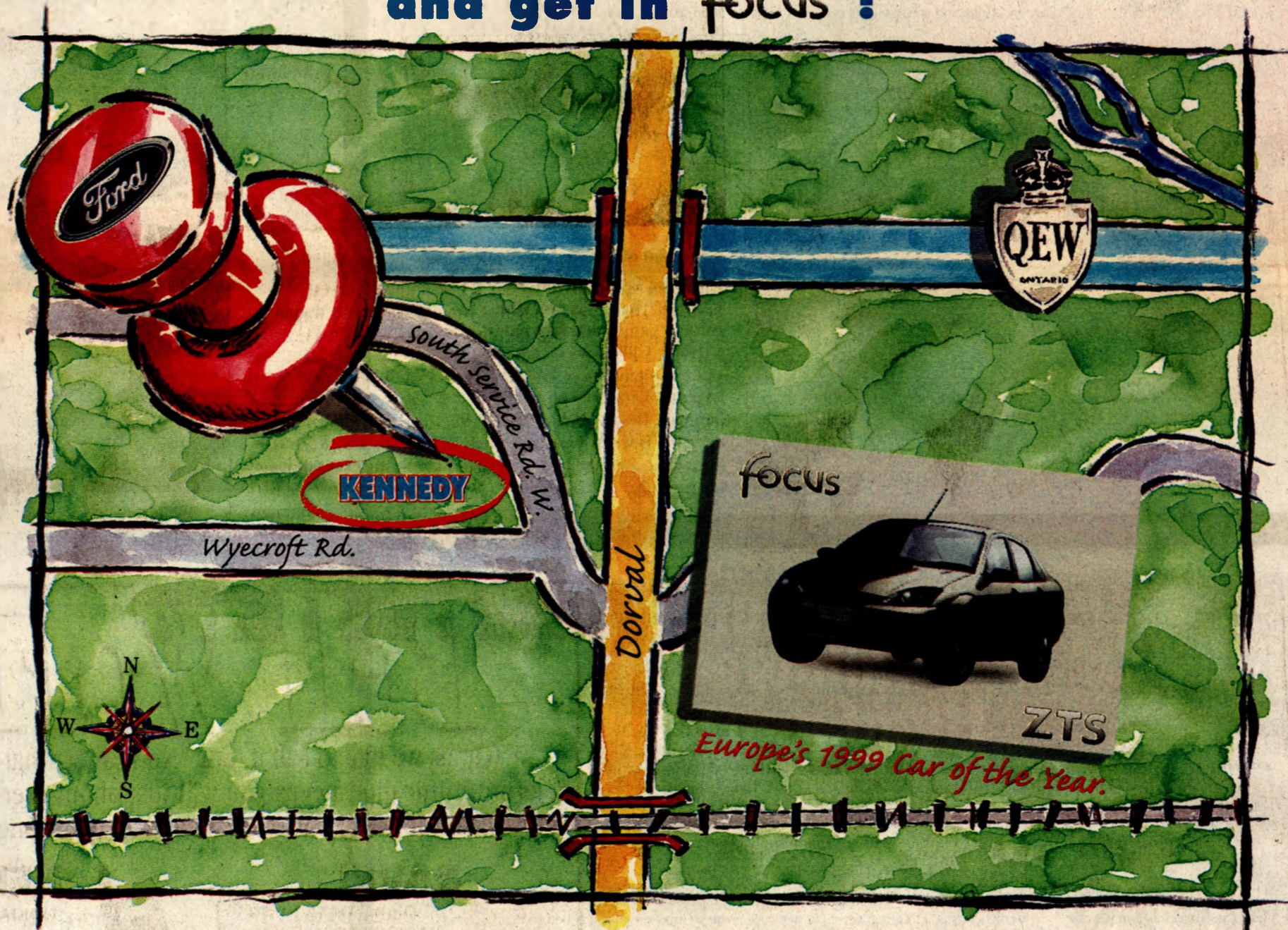
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