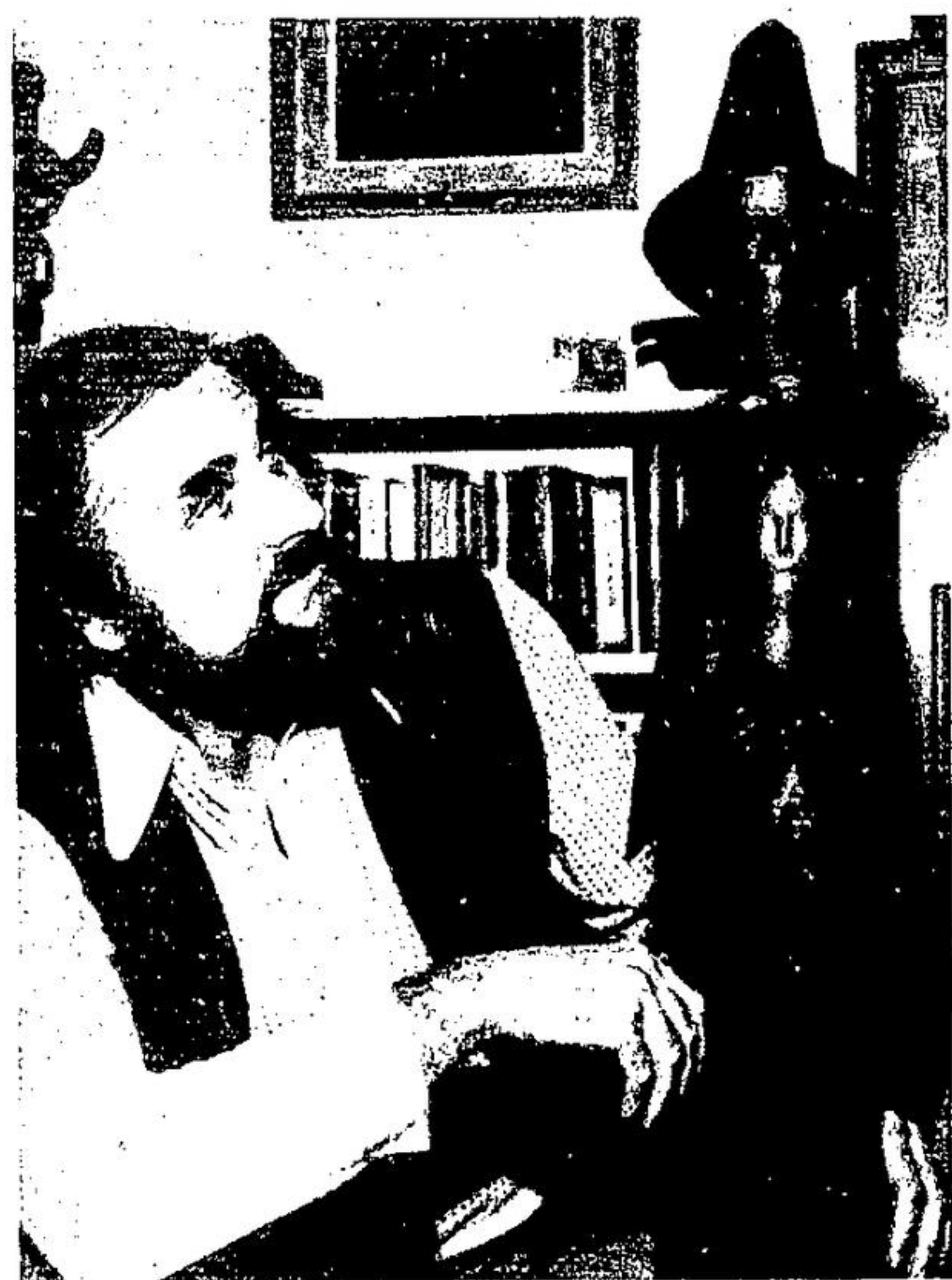


Arts scene brightened when 'Sol' opened



John Sommer and his wife Gisela arrived in Canada from West Germany in 1951 and worked around Canada before settling into the Charles Street, Georgetown, home which soon became Gallery House Sol, the community's premiere showcase for the fine arts. The gallery's first show in 1962 included work by Hockwood sculptor Josef Drenters, whose "Mother and Child", seen here, is still part of the Sommers' permanent collection.

The Halton Hills Arts Council was formed three years ago by representatives of a dozen local groups and organizations who shared the belief that the town's arts community can benefit from solidarity and a united voice. Accommodating the needs of a growing population, the Arts Council evolved as an umbrella organization designed to promote individual visual and performing arts as an alternative form of recreation. Through Summerfest, an annual celebration of the arts, the forthcoming "Musical Trillight" concert series and many other undertakings, the Arts Council has taken great strides toward meeting its mandate. For more information about the Arts Council, phone president Gretchen Day at 877-8800 or publicity director Gail Finlayson at 877-0357.

Its uniqueness established by its residential setting, Gallery House Sol - Georgetown's "Sonnenhaus" - has been an integral part of the area's arts community now for 18 years, consistently serving its owners' ambition to share stimulating artwork within the context of a "private home".

John and Gisela Sommer moved into the 45 Charles St. residence in 1962 and gave their new home its gallery name in August of that year.

"Our aim was, and still is, to make visitors feel they have come into a private house whose owners care for and enjoy the visual arts of our time," Mr. Sommer explained recently. "We wanted to share the finest and most stimulating creations we could find with more than just a handful of friends."

"And of course, we hoped that some of our visitors would be tempted to buy."

House Sol's first exhibition was a group show which, fittingly enough, featured the paintings and sketches of Georgetown's Frank Black, long the community's single most dynamic artistic force, as well as works by Georgetown librarian and artist Marjorie Nazer, Hockwood sculptor Josef Drenters and others.

"Eighteen years ago (when

House Sol opened), art was still an infant in this country, and in some respect, this is still the case," Mr. Sommer commented. "But appearances have changed, at least: Toronto had only six commercial galleries devoted to quality art! Outside Toronto, no galleries existed. A small-town gallery with big-city standards was an unheard-of thing. We felt like pioneers."

Ironically, when the Georgetown gallery finally gained substantial recognition, it came mainly from Toronto. Only recently has word begun to spread locally about the kind of sophisticated artwork on view at House Sol and about the gallery's attractive and complementary setting.

Today, House Sol offers about ten exhibitions a year, arranging five in the spring and five in the fall. Its first show of the current season opened Saturday (see separate story, this page).

"Until 1967, we exhibited the 'fine arts' only, but since then, we've been a showcase for the 'applied arts' (crafts), too. Finely crafted pieces of glass, ceramic or silver are shown alongside paintings, sculpture or any of the original print media, such as etching, engraving, lithography, woodcuts and serigraphy."

Mr. and Mrs. Sommer stress that the calibre of the artists and the quality of their work is the "backbone" of any gallery, and point out that House Sol's reputation has gained much through the contributions and visits of some 200 artists and artisans.

Among the gallery's best-known Canadian exhibitors are Sandra Altwerger, William Armstrong, Barbara Astman, Jack Bush, Rudolf Bickers, Charlotte Brainerd, Frank Black, Claudette Boulanger, Gerry Brender, a Brandis, Judith Almond Best, Tom Coulter, Sybil Calverley, Daniel Crichton, Liz and Peter Coviello, Josef Drenters, Andreas Drenters, Robert Downing, Ken Danby, Barker Fairley, Frances Gage, Nicholas Hornyansky, Carl Heywood, Robert Ield, George Hawken, Leonard Hutchinson, Katja Jacobs, Maria Jennings, Francine Kuyper, Lise Levinsohn, Ken McCauley, Sharon Merkur, Ingeborg Mohr, Marjorie Nazer, Frieda Nelson, Jack Nichols, Leonard Oesterle, Agnes Olive, Reeva and Alan Perkins, Jo Manning-Rothfels, and Lyn Wiggins.

enormous, unified impact.

In the large print, "28 Prospect St.", Mr. Bickers places floating images - a pair of isolated eyes, a cracked eggshell - in front of a lightly-toned backdrop featuring a realistic painting of his house-workshop on London's Prospect Street. The effect is entirely three-dimensional and, although nearly as "pop"-oriented as some of the whimsical "Icon" series, absorbing for its serious tone and expressiveness.

In all, the Bickers exhibition - the first of Gallery Sol's new season - is a modestly-disturbing, invariably exciting show, one which provides evidence of House Sol's own growing stature as a gallery devoted to quality artwork which transcends the more popular but infinitely more mundane work of so many small-town exhibitors.

Renowned international artists whose work has similarly graced Gallery Sol's walls include Otnar Ali, Piero Dorazio, Asger Torn, Johnny Friedlaender, Robert Indiana, Horst Janssen, Rolf Meyn, Peter Sedgley, Morwenna Thistlethwaite and Victor Vasarely.

Highlighting House Sol's own contributions to the Canadian arts community have been several graphic portfolios published by the gallery in numbered editions. "Printers 14" began the series in 1965, incorporating single, original prints executed by 14 different artists. It was followed three years later by "Quotations from Huang Po", which offered seven etchings by Charlotte Brainerd.

SIX RELIEFS
The same year, House Sol published "Ecliptic Six", featuring six relief prints by Sylvia Singer. In 1970, "White" presented five embossings in portfolio form by Katja Jacobs.

Mr. and Mrs. Sommer are keen supporters of the new arts complex being constructed on nearby Market Street. Their shared belief that any community needs such a public gallery facility has prompted them to organize several non-commercial exhibitions over the years, beginning in 1967 with "One Man's Choice", a collection of graphics from the Kitchener collection of J.H. Smythe.

The artwork that appears in some Georgetown homes was gathered for the House Sol's 1972 survey, while the sun, self-portraits, Georgetown's history and the male and female genders have provided unifying themes for other such exhibitions held since then.

The aforementioned Marjorie Nazer, now retired from library work but very much active in the fine and applied arts, returns to House Sol Nov. 8 for a large exhibition of her work alongside some ceramics by Toronto's Oz Parsons.

The show will be followed Nov. 29 by the gallery's annual Christmas sale, an ideal opportunity to purchase some beautiful and classy gifts. The first show of the new year will feature 70 botanical watercolors by John Revell, each one an original as depicted in the newly-published Toronto University Press book "And Some Brought Flowers".



Using rough averages, Georgetown's Gallery House Sol - a member of the Halton Hills Arts Council - has placed upwards of 10,000 pieces of artwork before the public since its opening 18 years ago. The Charles Street gallery has about ten shows a year, each one featuring an average of 50 paintings, drawings, prints or three dimensional works.



Making her own "cookie sculptures" while headcast by Leonard Oesterle looks on approvingly, Gisela Sommer and husband John have never themselves taken palatibuch to canvas, but brought their deep-rooted love for art with them from Germany 28 years ago. They've been an integral and active part of the local arts community since settling in Georgetown in 1962.

Master printer's gallery show startling in its imagery

By PAUL DORSEY
Herald Editor

A master printmaker of ever-increasing stature, whose talents are much in demand among many international artists, visited Georgetown Saturday to open a dazzling show of his work from the past few years at Gallery House Sol.

Rudolf Bickers, the precocious Dutch immigrant who founded the already-renowned Editions Canada printmaking workshop in London, Ontario, only five years ago, was on hand to greet gallery owners John and Gisela Sommer and their guests and patrons on the first day of his one-man show, which runs until Nov. 6.

Mr. Bickers' handcolored etchings and paintings embody much of the artist's own dynamic vitality, drawing on a number of common themes and motifs and em-

ploying a generally surrealistic rendering to produce some startling images.

It is in printmaking, however, that Mr. Bickers seems to shine the brightest, a characteristic that has caught the eye of many of this continent's top artists, each one seeking to turn his own private vision into stirring, colorful pictures through the technical processes of the printshop.

"He is a master printer to many because he's so unique," Mr. Sommer says. "He's a fine artist in his own right, but he has such an incredible feeling for the work of others that I can't help feeling his own work may soon take second place."

Mr. Sommer refers to Mr. Bickers "that rare combination of businessman and artist" by virtue of his successful print workshop in

London, which recently prepared a series of prints for internationally-known artist Karel Appel.

The master printer's own work is sometimes reminiscent of Albrecht Durer, sometimes linked to more recent graphics by M.C. Escher. In his "Icon" series, Mr. Bickers has painted a series of original, surrealistic designs on top of identical etched backgrounds using minute brushstrokes in acrylic and egg tempera. Scissors float into the picture to clip in half one of the soft, round balls which recur throughout the series, some bearing eyes, some simply grinning.

In the "Concerto" series, five separate classical music pieces have inspired Mr. Bickers to create a similar group of prints using original geometrically-based designs and varying, muted colors. Each is breathtaking; combined, the series carries an



Acton resident Del Howse has been making these "lace-draped" figurines for six years. She exhibited and sold her creations at the 28th annual Arts and Crafts sale and exhibit held Saturday at the North Halton Golf and Country Club. Craftwork

done by members of Acton Arts and Crafts will be on sale at the group's annual sale Saturday at St. Alban's Hall in Acton from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Herald photo)

Acton Arts and Crafts EXHIBITION
St. Alban's Hall, Acton
10-4 Saturday



This figurine is called "Rebecca", and is a sample of the porcelain figurines created by Del Howse, one of the members of Acton Arts and Crafts.



One of the founders of Acton Arts and Crafts, Jean Denny, is shown here with samples of her handwork. All the members of the group work at several different crafts, and gather to talk while they work. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month in the basement at the Acton Public Library. (Herald photo)

Sharing time, hobbies key to their success

The Acton Arts and Crafts group has resurrected the pioneer tradition of gathering to work on their handicrafts and socialize while working.

The group was formed in 1969 by three women, Jean Denny, Florence Wilkin and Laura Dietrich. They felt they might be more motivated to work at their various crafts if they had someone to talk to while they worked.

When the group first started, they met once a week as a working group in members' homes. Now the group meets

once a month in the meeting room at the Acton Library. Group member Del Howse says there is plenty of room for more members to work, and the group would welcome new members.

The group holds an exhibition and sale each year, this year being the 11th annual sale. The sale will be held this Saturday at St. Alban's Parish Hall in Acton from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Membership in the group currently stands at eight, and each member will have samples of her work at the

sale. Each of the members is involved in more than one handicraft. Mrs. Howse makes porcelain figurines, lace-draped porcelain and ceramic items.

Other crafts which the group works with include hand-weaving, leather work, wood burning, batik, painting, knitting, crochet, crewel, macrame, quilting, greeting cards and basketry.

Admission to Saturday's sale is free, and there will be a lucky draw.