

Tell Me What It Is

Latest art gallery exhibition helps sharpen one's critical eye



BIG FOOT

Proving that dinosaurs are still popular creatures for children, Royal Ontario Museum natural sciences teacher Nancy Gahm attracted a good-sized crowd of little ones to each of the three talks she gave at the Georgetown library last Wednesday. Linked inevitably in children's minds with dragons and princesses, the dinosaurs with their enormous size and the romantic aura of ages past stimulate young imaginations. Creating a link with reality rather than with illusion, Ms. Gahm brought along lots of fossils and dinosaur pieces the children could touch and wonder at.



Tickling a stegosaurus toe bone is no mean feat. Dana Ewart, 5, of Georgetown had more fun imagining it than the 150 million year old dinosaur would have had to feel it. The youngster was one of about 60 kids who attended one of the exhibitions and talks on dinosaurs and their world. Royal Ontario Museum natural sciences teacher Nancy Gahm talked to the youngsters crowding the Georgetown library's activity centre floor last Wednesday afternoon. Chum Sara Fenske, 6, of Georgetown waited her turn to hold the bone. (Herald photos by Ani Pederian)

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

The latest exhibit at the Halton Hills art gallery in the library-cultural centre is entitled "Tell Me What It Is" and opened almost unnoted Friday night. But it will be a pity if those with even a remote interest in art miss this interesting selection which forms one of the most important shows of the year.

As its title suggests, the exhibit has an educational purpose as well as aesthetic one. The show which runs to Aug. 28, has been prepared by Gallery House Sol proprietor John Sommer and contains the work of 46 "widely different artists", including Ken

Danby and several other famous Canadians. It explores "media" — the methods in which an artist expresses himself, and while it serves this utilitarian function, it is also delightfully colorful, miscellaneous yet structured. As people stroll through the exhibit, they will not only find favorite artists but also favorite "methods".

Mr. Sommer told The Herald Sunday that he hopes the show will help train the uncritical eye to help draw the fine line between a good painter and true "master".

"Everyone can paint pictures," Mr. Sommer said. "But, I'm always amazed when people paint and

immediately exhibit their work. It shows a total lack of self-criticism."

"People should train their eye a bit in order to detect quality in other people's work and in their own. Striving for quality makes us do better than we're used to doing."

Dedicated to the late Marjorie Nazer, the exhibit examines not only original works done in oils, pastels, charcoal, acrylic, collage and an excellent crayon work by Claudette Boulanger (one of Canada's foremost illustrators of children's books), but also looks at "reproduced" works.

One exciting example in this area Mr. Sommer has selected is Ken Danby's offset lithograph entitled "Summer Girl" and there is, among the serigraphs, photo engravings, wood engravings and photographic prints and a copper engraving by the 15th German painter Albrecht Durer entitled "St. Eustace".

Mr. Sommer makes a critical distinction between "original prints" and reproductions. In one of dozens of cards describing the pictures and the media from which they are formed, he notes that mechanically-reproduced art has its place in "the artbook, but not on the wall".

Original prints are usually made by the artist himself and even limited edition prints have value because of their rarity. But mass-produced prints haven't much value in the world of fine art and one won't find any examples of them on the gallery's walls for this exhibit.

The Durer print is made from the original copper plate etched by the artist, and while it's an expensive reproduction, it wasn't printed by the artist himself or during his lifetime.

If there is a fault to be found with the exhibit, it's in the narrative which accompanies it on cards. As Mr. Sommer himself acknowledged, it's virtually impossible to explain in a few square inches what is difficult to describe in volumes of books.

Some of the ideas are extremely complex and scientific. He refers to one as approaching "mystical" proportions in its technique.

What is clear, even in a quick browse through the exhibit without referring to the cards, is that the medium or media chosen

by the artist is just as important in conveying effect as the subject matter.

The show is above all entertaining which, according to a pamphlet about the exhibit, is the primary aim. There is lots of color and texture here and a walk around the gallery is a roller coaster ride through various moods.

Regardless of how the works were produced, they all have character; none is like its neighbor. Each one is gripping in its own way, forcing the viewer to draw conclusions about the subject matter chosen and the methods used in its delivery to the eye.

"Tell Me What It Is" is one of those refreshing exhibits which, like a number of this summer's movies, demand a return visit.

HALTON HILLS ARTS COUNCIL

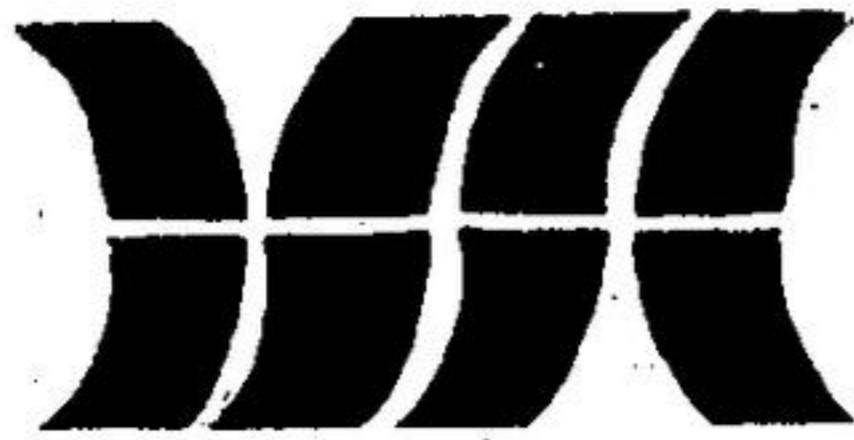
'Pygmalion' delightful at Stratford

By PAT HRETCHKA
Arts Council Columnist

As a staunch supporter of the Stratford Festival, I find myself accused of ignoring that other great Ontario theatre festival, the Shaw. Guilty as charged, mea culpa.

It has not been an intentional oversight. I just happen not to have been to the Shaw since 1966.

At that time there was no festival theatre and all productions were staged at the tiny Courthouse Theatre. The play was "Misalliance" starring Tom Kneebone and Zoe Caldwell. Yes, the same Zoe Caldwell, who won this year's Tony Award for her portrayal of Medea. It was excellent and I would gladly have returned. But somehow I never did.



Until now. Last week I finally made it back. The production was "Pygmalion" and very enjoyable it was. Pygmalion tends to be remembered these days only as the basis for "My Fair Lady", but this production showed that it can stand on its own without the music of Lerner and Lowe. This was not the conventional version a new character has been added, George Bernard Shaw himself is along to comment on the action and help it along. As played by Herb Foster, he was a most welcome addition. Barry MacGregor was an excellent Higgins and Nicola Cavendish was at her best as Eliza, the guttersnipe flower seller. Eliza, the lady created by Henry Higgins gave her a little trouble and did not ring quite as true. All and all it was a fine production.

Visiting the Shaw Festival is not just a trip to the theatre. Niagara on the Lake is a lovely town and it is a pleasure to walk down the tree lined streets and visit the shops and restaurants, that cater to the theatre goers.

The Cultural Centre Gallery - until Aug. 28 - "Tell Me What It Is". An exhibition assembled for the gallery by John Sommer of Gallery House Sol.

Halton Hills Public Libraries - every Thursday until Aug. 26 - Munch to Movies noon to 1 p.m. Bring your own lunch.

COMING SOON:
Halton Hills Public Libraries - Wed. July 28 - A Puppet Workshop - for children 6 years and up - registration required. Tuesday Aug. 3 - Ready, Set, Go - a program for pre-schoolers about to begin kindergarten or nursery school. A four week program Wed. Aug. 4 - Pirate Day - for children 6 years and up.

Tree Trick

To cross the Great St. Bernard Pass through the Alps in 1800, Napoleon's army hollowed out tree trunks, put its heavy guns inside, then harnessed 100 men to each gun, National Geographic says. The crossing took two days.

Something special!

The dramatic Arts Program will be doing something very special during the first week of August. Because there are only four days that week, the program will be focusing all our energies into a special show for the community. Anyone between the ages of seven to 13 years who wants to get involved should register soon. The cost for the shortened week is only twenty dollars. Last Thursday, program participants taped another television program at Halton Cable for Outer Space Week. Our on the spot correspondents interview natives on other planets, and our feature program, "Believe it or Else" includes some absolutely impossible acts such as Magnetic Elaine, Flying Emily, Time Travelling Kevin, and Martians that can walk through one another. For an out of this world show, tune in channel 4 tonight Wednesday at 6:15 p.m. and next Wednesday at the same time.

Night at the 'Pops'

The Barrie-Huron Rotary Club in co-operation with Canadian Talent Unlimited have extended an invitation to Halton Hills residents to join them for "An evening of Pop Symphony Music" Aug. 8. This special event will be held in Barrie's Molson Park and the admission is free. Walter Babiak, a regular guest conductor with the Royal Winnipeg and Stuttgart Ballets will lead 42 musicians in a program of popular symphony music including "Rhapsody in Blue". Guest soloist will be pianist Leslie Kinton, a performer who is rapidly earning international acclaim. Festivities at the Park begin at 4 p.m. and the concert itself starts around 7:30 p.m. Molson Park is located just outside of Barrie. Take Highway 400 to Essa Road, turn right on Essa Road and drive to Fairview Road. Molson Park is about one mile south along Fairview Road.

Halton crops spared

No Halton grain crops have been damaged following erroneous weed control instructions in a ministry of agriculture pamphlet, ministry rep Doug Miller told The Herald Monday.

A report in Saturday's Globe and Mail said that hundreds of acres of hay in Ontario may have been ruined after farmers used the wrong mixture of herbicide MCPA. The report says typographical errors or mistakes in calculating imperial measures to metric may have led some farmers to spread as much as 1,000 times the recommended concentration of the herbicide.

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