

Reproducing life satisfies our hunger for the past



John Sommer
Ideas and the Arts

My family had a passion for clocks. Grandfather clocks. They stood everywhere, in hallways and over stairlandings, like tall sentries. They boomed out the hours like gongs. One woke up from it in the night with a beating heart. When I was about five years old, I learned that all these presences in the echoing house measured the passage of time. I started to dislike them because they seemed to be either too fast or too slow, according to what one was doing. I discovered, however, that one could make time stop, at least for a while, by repeating a tune over and over again on the gramophone. Simply by lifting the needle on the great ebony box in my father's room, I could listen to the same sweet melody as often as I liked. In my memory the haunting "Tango Nocturno," sung by Pola Negri, competed through those pre-war years with the ponderous sounds of the clocks, whose time keeping brought us ever closer to doom, while nobody paid attention.

Reproduction, it seems, is able to stop the river of time in our minds for a limited period and that fact accounts for the popularity of the many reproduction methods we have invented. Most of our entertainment comes to us reproduced. From sport to film to music to painting, it all reaches us around two or three corners. Our taste for reproduced living joins with our hunger for the past, when, we imagine, life was whole, nurturing and uncomplicated. In painting, this hungry longing of ours has

given us painters that supply us with the images of unspoiled wildlife, illustrations of warm and affectionate family togetherness and nostalgic memories of wholesome country living.

Peter Robson, from Sparta, Ontario, who was at Art Effects in Georgetown last Friday to promote his paintings and the reproductions taken from them, belongs to the last category. He is an attractive, big-bodied man, who knows how to sell himself. He is self-taught and his drawing-ability is limited. You will not find the display of pyrotechnics in a Peter Robson painting that are customary in a Robert Bateman painting, for instance. Instead you get slightly awkward and quaint depictions of rural life, strong in mood and oddly trustworthy. These paintings do not awe you, nor do they tower over you. With some diligence and application you probably could do them yourself. Their appeal rests with the wholeness of the artist's vision. No car nor factory nor developer is in sight in a Peter Robson painting. His world is still waiting to be polluted, its people are upright souls, untempted by the all-mighty buck. Robson paints fantasies we want to believe in.

The "Art Effects Gallery and Framing Centre" on 348 Guelph St. in Georgetown has to offer more than Peter Robson's reproduc-

tions. It is the only gallery in town, as far as I know, that sells antique botanical engravings, handcolored Bartlett lithographs, architectural and historical prints and old maps. All of these are true collectors items. It is to be wished that some discriminating art lovers will make Art Effects their favorite browsing place. The gallery opened this past summer. In its smart quarters it exhibits, besides the antique prints, reproductions by fashionable artists like Robert Bateman, Carl Brenders, John Seery-Lester and Peter Ellenshaw. High quality framing is provided by Barry Bell, who is, in my opinion, that rare thing: a creative framer. Bring him anything and tell him to frame it, give him carte blanche, so to say, and he will do a superb and tasteful job. Most framers are craftspeople, Barry is an artist.

The opening of "Immortal Spirit," the exhibition and sale of paintings by the late Frank C. Black at the gallery of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre on Nov. 1, was an affair full of sentiment and remembrances for the friends and

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family of the artist, that had come together for the occasion. It was also the unveiling of a \$1,500 donation of her husband's artworks by Lillian Black to the Town of Halton Hills. Some of these donated works

are displayed in the gallery, together with the paintings that are for sale. What we now need is an art museum where part of this donation can be on view at all times for the enjoyment of the citizenry.

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VON needs volunteers to work with shut-ins

Volunteers to work with frail, elderly shut-ins are being sought by the Halton Branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses for the Friendly Visitor Program.

Each volunteer is matched with a suitable client and is given counselling in dealing with situations that may arise.

Friendly Visitors perform a number of functions from preparing tea to running simple errands. They take their clients on outings and help them with shopping and as the name implies, they are available to chat and listen.

Husband and wife teams are also encouraged to volunteer as Friendly Visitors.

Twice each year in-service sessions are held for the volunteers at VON Headquarters at Hopedale Mall, Oakville.

To become a VON Friendly Visitor in Oakville or Burlington, contact Ida Currie, Friendly Visitor Coordinator, at 827-8800.

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