

'Paradise Found' in Walterson's travels



John Sommer
Ideas and the Arts

Jo Walterson was born in Poland at the beginning of the last war. Her father was killed in that war and she and her mother were taken to Russia. After a long Odyssey through the Soviet Union, Iran and Lebanon, the two made it to England. In the early fifties they came to Winnipeg and later to Thunder Bay. During the first years of her marriage Jo lived in Montreal. In was there that she became an artist. She studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and slowly assembled the skills needed as a painter. When the Waltersons came to Ontario Jo continued her studies at Sheridan College with teachers like Helen Lucas, Don Whiteman and Peter van Giles. In 1973 the Waltersons came to Georgetown and since then she has earned herself a reputation as a master of the monoprint. For many years she has created admirable works in this medium, works that are distinguished by layers of strong color and unfussy, near abstract design. As a painter in watercolor she had less appeal, in my opinion. Her watercolor paintings were pretty, but lacked conviction and structure.

In 1985 CIDA, the Canadian International Development Association, sent Jo Walterson's husband to Kenya and she went with him, eager for new experiences and insights. Kenya was, in many ways, an eye opener for Jo Walterson. She started to paint landscapes, panoramic views of vast stretches of grassland with umbrella-shaped trees here and there, and ever changing skies above. She also painted flowers, not the individual bloom but masses of them bunched together tightly in containers, as one might encounter them at flower markets. She had several exhibitions in Kenya and she sold many paintings there.

A year ago the Waltersons returned to Georgetown and Jo settled into the upstairs studio at the Old Forge in Terra Cotta. Now she exhibits 27 watercolor paintings, landscapes as well as flower pieces, at the gallery of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre in Georgetown to Dec. 10.

The exhibition is entitled "Paradise Found," and the serene landscapes and intense flower paintings speak clearly of contentment and happiness. There is nothing labored about these paintings. The colors flow with ease. As a viewer I had the distinct feeling that the artist had freed herself of many burdens to arrive at this kind of joyful pitch. Some of the paintings are more striking than others but it would be pedantic to single them out at the expense of a few. Together they make a fine show. I hope that many people will go and draw satisfaction from these accomplished works.

The Campbell House Gallery on Main Street in Georgetown had an exhibition of paintings, original prints and constructions by Julius Marosan that amounted to a small retrospective. Julius Marosan, a sculptor and painter, came to Toronto from Hungary in the wake of 1957. Years ago, in a Toronto exhibition, I came across his work in bronze and thought it admirable. To my great surprise I found a whole gallery filled with his work right here in town. I wish I had seen the exhibition earlier and not on its last day. The exhibition was so challenging however, that I have to mention it. The Marosan works at Campbell House, gave an almost encyclopedic view of the artistic pre-occupations of the last 30 years. Abstract expressionism, colorfield painting, construc-

tivism, found objects, to all of these Julius Marosan had something intelligent and, in some instances, funny to say. I hope very much that the Campbell House Gallery will present this artist's work again to us in the future.

The Credit Valley Artisans had their Christmas sale at the cottage in Cedarvale Park on Saturday. My impression was that the Artisans have an excellent group of weavers. The woven pieces I saw and admired were the works of Sally Beck, Norma Clayton, Joanna Dobbins, Eva Middleton, Else Staal Nielsen, Margaret Tost and two ladies who sign their works with their first names only: Roberta and Margaret.

I don't have to do any P.R. work for the Globe production of "Fiddler on the Roof" at the John Elliott Theatre, it's such a resounding success. But I want to say that I thought the stage design very good in its simplicity. It "worked" in every way.

Before you send it, seal it...

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Campbell House Gallery 



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