

Houstoun's work large, luminous

For 30 years the name Mackay Houstoun has meant to me large and luminous, near-abstract canvasses, filled with what I would like to call symbols of abundance. I saw these paintings at exhibitions of the Ontario Society of Artists, the Royal Canadian Academy and, later, at the Roberts Gallery on Yonge Street in Toronto. I never had the privilege of meeting the man who painted them. Last winter a friend told me that Mackay Houstoun is now living in Georgetown, and a few weeks ago I visited him and his wife in their house on Edith Street. The visit was lively and animated. Both the Houstouns are great talkers and what their memories brought forth was Canadian art history of the most fascinating kind. Lovingly polished old Canadian pine furniture and large paintings of flowers, blooming orchards, ripe seedpods and shimmering skies by the master of the house and by artist friends of the couple made something rich and wonderfully festive out of a standard bungalow livingroom. Mackay Houstoun is a lean, bearded gentleman with a ready smile and an easily provoked laugh. Violet Houstoun is the muse, the partisan companion, every artist dreams of but seldom finds.

Mackay Houstoun was born in 1916 in Niagara Falls-Fort Erie. He is of Scottish descent, his ancestors were farmers and trades people. His parents moved with their children to Toronto when Mackay was 10 years old. After leaving public school in 1932 he went to the famous Western Technical and Commerce School in Toronto, because a commercial artist in the neighborhood talked him into taking the art course there. One of his teachers at Western was L.A.C. Panton, and two of the many pupils of that school that have left their mark on Canadian art are Walter Yarwood and Harold Town. He graduated from Western in 1935 and started a long march through various design agencies of that time. For five years he did mostly lettering at Rabjohn Advertising, followed by 1½ years at the studio of



John Sommer
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

Clement Salla, for one year, to a commercial studio started by Walter Yarwood, Michael Mitchell and Bud Feheley. For three years he worked for Brigden's, a large printing and catalogue house. Eventually he went to Rapid, Crip and Batten, which had the reputation of the cream of the cream in those days.

In 1950 he started, with some partners, the Art and Design Studio Ltd. on Merton Street in Toronto. It grew, in the expansive economical climate after the war, to 90 employees! In 1970, as a showcase for the Art and Design Studio Ltd., the Merton Gallery was inaugurated. Mackay Houstoun was the guiding spirit of the gallery for five years. The very able curator of the gallery was Jean Johnson.

All through the late thirties, forties, fifties and sixties Mackay Houstoun painted whenever his design work left him time for it. He exhibited his paintings with the Ontario Society of Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy. The OSA made him a member in 1946. From 1962 to 1965 he served as the president of the OSA. He also served as the president of the Society of Painters in Watercolor from 1963 to 1966. In 1967 the ultimate honor within the art society network was bestowed on him: He was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy.

For a while, in the late fifties, Bud Feheley operated the Park

Gallery on Avenue Road just north of Bloor Street and Mackay Houstoun had a one-man show there in 1958. In 1968 the Roberts Gallery asked him to join their stable of artists and Mackay has been there ever since with eight one-man shows to his credit. His next exhibition at that gallery will take place this November.

Mackay Houstoun married Violet Scott in 1939 and they raised two children together. Only since 1975 has Mackay been a full time painter. At that time the Houstouns bought an old schoolhouse in Elora and turned it, with some additions, into a showplace. To simplify their lives they moved into a comfortable bungalow in Georgetown a year ago. I say hello and good luck to a wonderful couple.

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Open Door

Annual meeting May 12

The annual meeting of the Open Door Youth Centre will be held on Saturday, May 12 at St. George's Anglican Church, 60 Guelph Street, at 9:00 a.m.

Anyone interested in learning about both the Teen Drop-In and the Young Parents Program may attend.

The Teen Drop-In is held in St. George's on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

The Young Parents Program is held at St. Andrew's United

Church at 89 Mountainview Road on Mondays and Tuesdays. It provides young moms and those about to be, between the ages of 18-24, with a warm, caring environment in which to share common concerns.

Vanessa Bell-Smith and her assistants, Kathy Taylor and Tim Eccles, are leaders in both programs. For further information please contact Vanessa at 873-2966.

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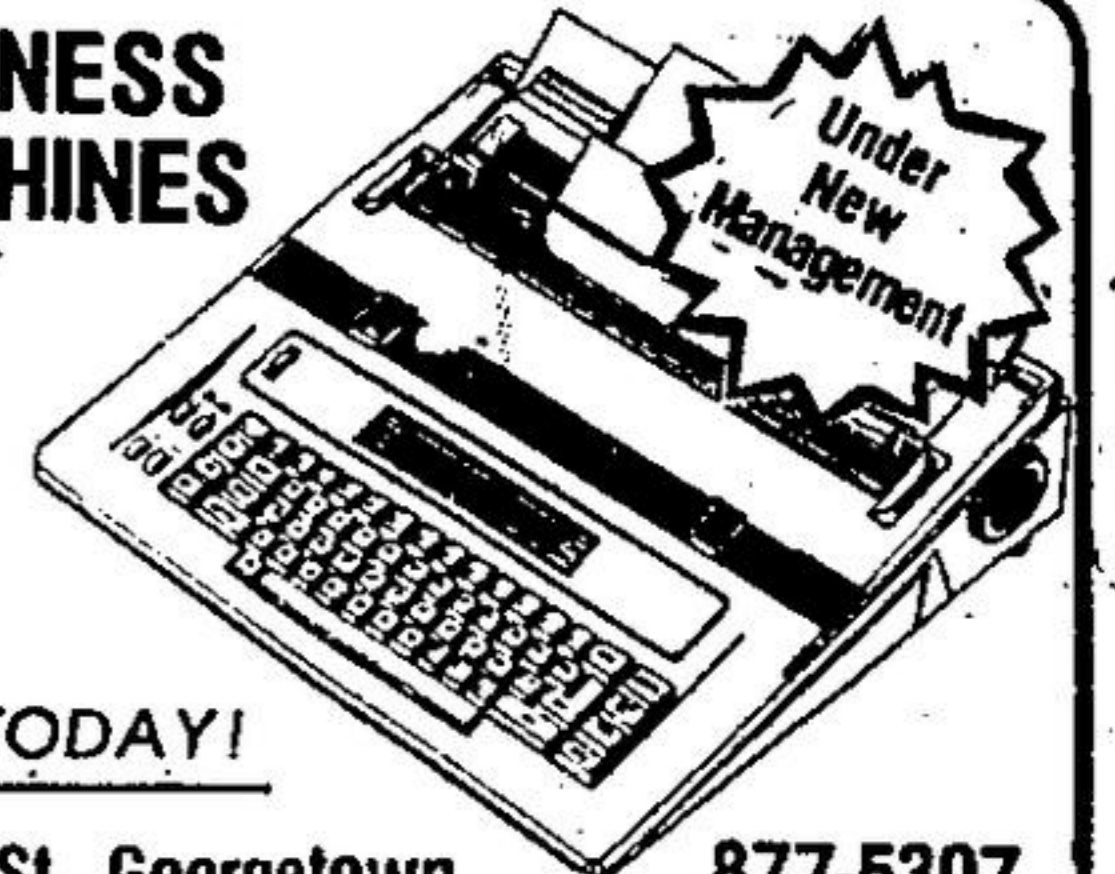
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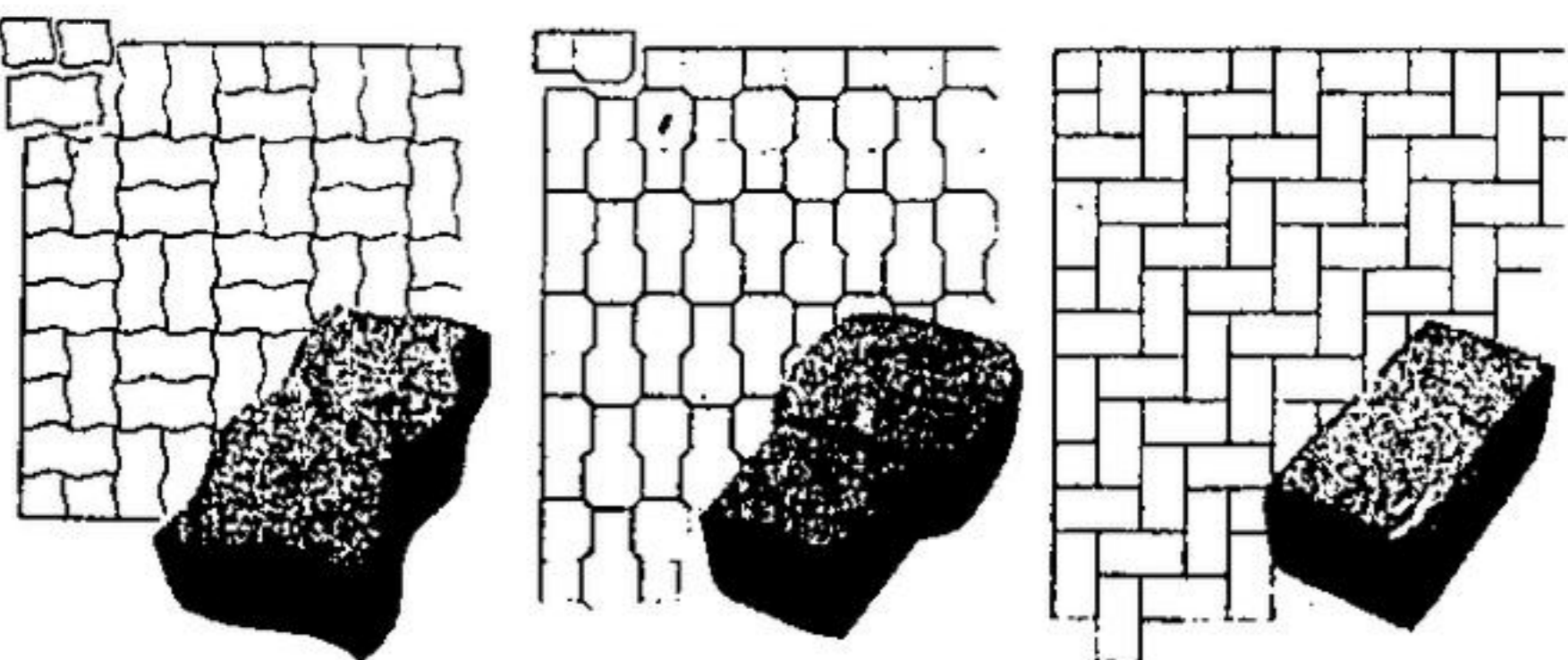
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