

Individuals make the decisions in Switzerland's communities

In Switzerland every day might be voting day somewhere. From the smallest village to the large cities the people of voting age who live in these communities will be asked to decide, by referendum, if they want a new school, a wider or a narrower road, a library, a sports arena or an apartment house.

"Anything you can think of that might affect the community for good or for ill, anything that might make the taxes go up or down, is put to a vote."

In May we visited relations in Bruetten, a truly wonderful village, nestled in the verdant countryside near Zurich. There I learned how much the individual householder is able to shape and preserve his or her community.

If you would like to build a house in Bruetten, to give you an example, even the design of your planned house will become part of a discussion and a vote.

There is a certain amount of interference in this procedure that we here in Canada would not stand for, I guess. After all, your new neighbours might refuse to accept your flat-roofed house design, or the very size of your planned home, or anything else that might strike them as "out of place."

The result of this, of course, is an extraordinary coherence in the look of the village.

Seeing Bruetten for the first time, located on a gentle rise, it's many tile-roofed houses gathered around a fine old church, is a joyful experience, because everything about the picture in front of your eyes is so "right." You wouldn't find anywhere in Switzerland a street as lined with architectural horrors as our "Guelph Street Strip" here in Georgetown.

But it was in Basel that I came across the result of the most astounding referendum of them all.

Basel, in Switzerland, is a medium-sized town by North American standards. It has one of the greatest art collections in Europe. The collection is housed in a large but simple museum building, arranged around a courtyard.

During my wanderings from room to room and floor to floor, I came to a gallery filled with works by Picasso. A lengthy note posted on one wall told me an amazing tale.

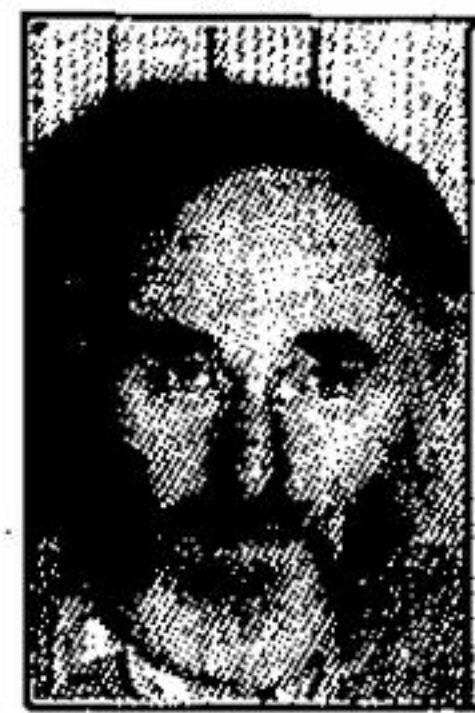
In 1962 the city of Basel asked it's inhabitants, of voting age, if tax money should be used to buy two large paintings by Picasso. The majority of the voters voted Yes. The artist was so moved by the outcome of the vote that he gave to the people of Basel a gift of 22 artworks.

This collection of drawings, water colors and paintings, selected with great care by Picasso to form a unit with the two paintings purchased, is permanently exhibited together to the eternal honor of an extraordinary citizenry.

Could anything like this happen in Canada? Could we overcome our peculiar parochialism that manifested itself so recently in the mocking and shameful behavior of one of our politicians? Could we rise to a grand proposal as the people of Basel did?

I want to believe that we could, if given the chance.

The exhibition sponsored by "The Friends of the Halton Hills Libraries," of works by the



John Sommer
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

Rockwood artist Andreas Drenters, had a memorable start at the Gallery of the Cultural Centre on June 20.

Mayor Russ Miller gave the opening speech and M.P.P. Wall Elliot reminisced about the time when he was a neighbour of the artist in Alton many years ago.

Prof. Chandler Kirwin, from the University of Guelph, gave a brief introduction into the artist's life

and work. He also brought a remarkable gift with him.

A group of anonymous donors purchased a piece of sculpture from Andreas Drenters and presented it to the archives of the Halton Hills Library in Georgetown to become part of the town's future museum collection.

On June 23, Valerie Nichol performed five musical pieces, specially composed by Robert Daigneault for the Drenters exhibition, in the Gallery of the Cultural Centre.

The people who made the effort to come to one of three performances had a stimulating time with the many-layered compositions.

We should have musical performances by Valerie Nichol at the Centre as a regular feature. In particular during the winter season.

The Andreas Drenters exhibition will continue to July 28, 1990.

Stratford Festival announces change

The Stratford Festival's Artistic Director, David William, has announced that Shirley Douglas has replaced Susan Wright in the role of Oenone in the Festival's production of Jean Racine's Phaedra, which opens Friday. Ms. Wright suffered a broken leg in a bicycle accident and is unable to perform the role.

Returning to Stratford for her second season, Shirley Douglas was seen last year as Big Mama in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and Compliant in The Relapse. A widely respected actress, she has worked with most major theatres across the country. Preceding this season she was seen as Hestor in Queen of the Cadillac at Alberta Theatre Projects. Among her extensive list of stage credits are Mrs. Peachum in The Threepenny Opera (Banff Centre and Canadian Stage Company), Madeline #2 in The Real World? (Tarragon Theatre), Martha in

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Lizzie Borden in Blood Relations, and Mother Miriam Ruth in Agnes of God (National Arts Centre).

Her film credits include David Cronenberg's Dead Ringers and Judith Thompson's Turning To Stone for CBC. Ms. Douglas is the recipient of the 1989 ACTRA Best Actress Award for radio.

Susan Wright opened in the title role of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou on Saturday, June 16 and is expected to return to the role of Mistress Quickly in the Merry Wives of Windsor sometime in July. In addition she is presently rehearsing the role of Essie in Ah, Wilderness! which opens August 3.

Library offers business course

The Georgetown Library is offering a four night course called "Starting a Small Business."

Mr. Ian Donnelly of Bridan Management Consultants will be presenting this seminar, on how to plan, finance and organize a small business.

Informative guest speakers and handout material will be included in the \$42 registration fee.

This course will run on consecutive Thursdays at the Georgetown Library: Sept. 6, 13, 20 and 27, from 7 to 9 p.m.

For more information call 873-2681.

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