

## Arts & Ideas

# Discovering a treasure-trove from the past

Last fall I got a letter from a lady in East Germany. She wrote me that her father had spirited away, and kept hidden for 45 years, a part of my family's archives, consisting of photographs, letters, and assorted documents.

This was a total surprise to me, since I believe these things to be lost. During the past winter, the remains of a once fairly large archive collection arrived here in Canada in several parcels, and I have been sorting the unsuspected treasures ever since.

One of the items in the collection is an exercise book filled with school essays written by my favorite grandmother, when she went to school in Vienna. When I knew her, in the early 30's, she was a wonderful old lady and great story-teller.

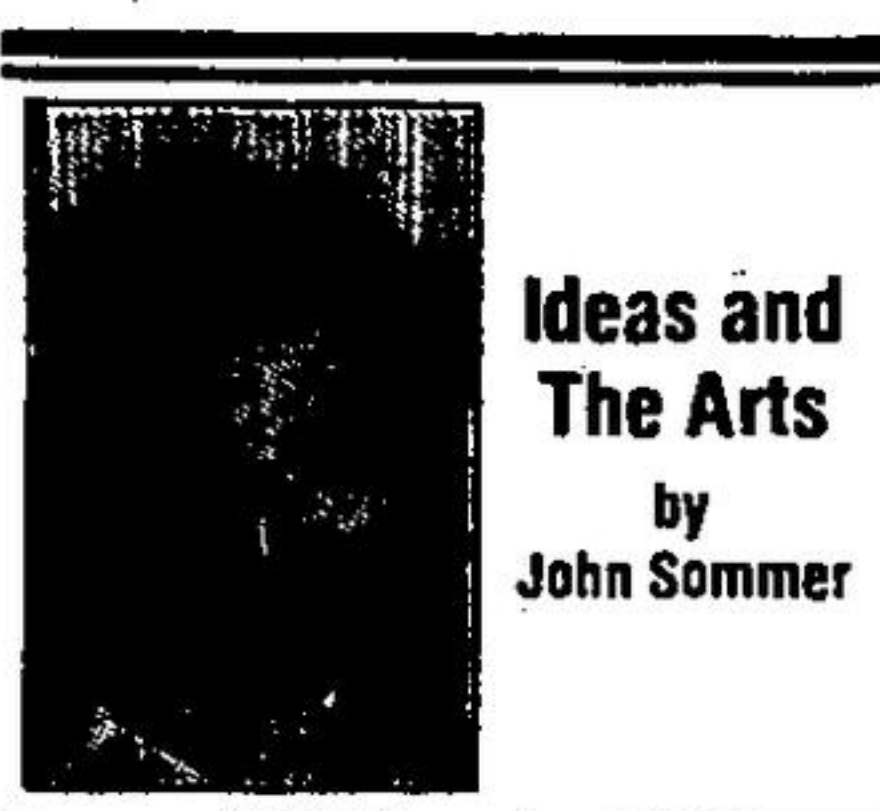
Our relationship was pure gold, and her death, in 1934, was the first great heartbreak in my life. Here is the translation of a charming school essay/fairy tale,

my 13-year-old grandmother wrote in the spring of 1871. The title of the story is "Sunshine - Springwinds."

"The white blanket of snow was almost gone, and the warm rays of the sun forced the ice to retreat. No flowers had made their appearance yet. They did not trust the early warmth of the sun, because they knew that hostile winter had not been defeated. Every night, when the sun travelled to the other side of the earth, winter returned. The flowers loved their sweet slumber.

Only at noon, when the sun shone warmest, did a violet, maybe, open its purple eyes for a moment, to close them fast again when winter's icy breath blew against them.

Another spring day dawned with dear mother sun doing her best. A little violet woke and moved with pleasure, touching the primula that slept close by. Oh



Ideas and  
The Arts  
by  
John Sommer

dear, thought the violet, I hope I didn't wake primula. She will start to talk and that will be the end of sleep. It's much too early, the frost will kill us, I must close my eyes quick, primula must not know that I was awake. And back to sleep violet went.

Primula, however, had been stirred, and half-dreaming, half-waking, felt the caress of the sun. Warm, lovely sun, primula murmured, you wake me, because

you want me to leave this dark bed of earth, to follow you to the surface, where a blue, friendly sky beckons. I have slept so long, now I want to enjoy myself.

Primula stretched and looked at violet. Did I not feel violet moving, through primula? I must have been wrong. Wake up, called primula, how you sleep! You do not even hear me.

Good gracious, grumbled the mole, who had woken up instead. What a noise you make, go back to sleep, it is much too early. Too early? How can that be, responded primula, how can you say that, when I feel the long-awaited warmth of the sun deep down here. I will go and say hello to the sun.

Wait, said the mole, you know that I am your friend, do not go yet, it is still much too cold for you. Yes, the sun is warm during the day, but at night frost is still attacking, without mercy, all life that dares to challenge frost's dominion. Well, mole, said

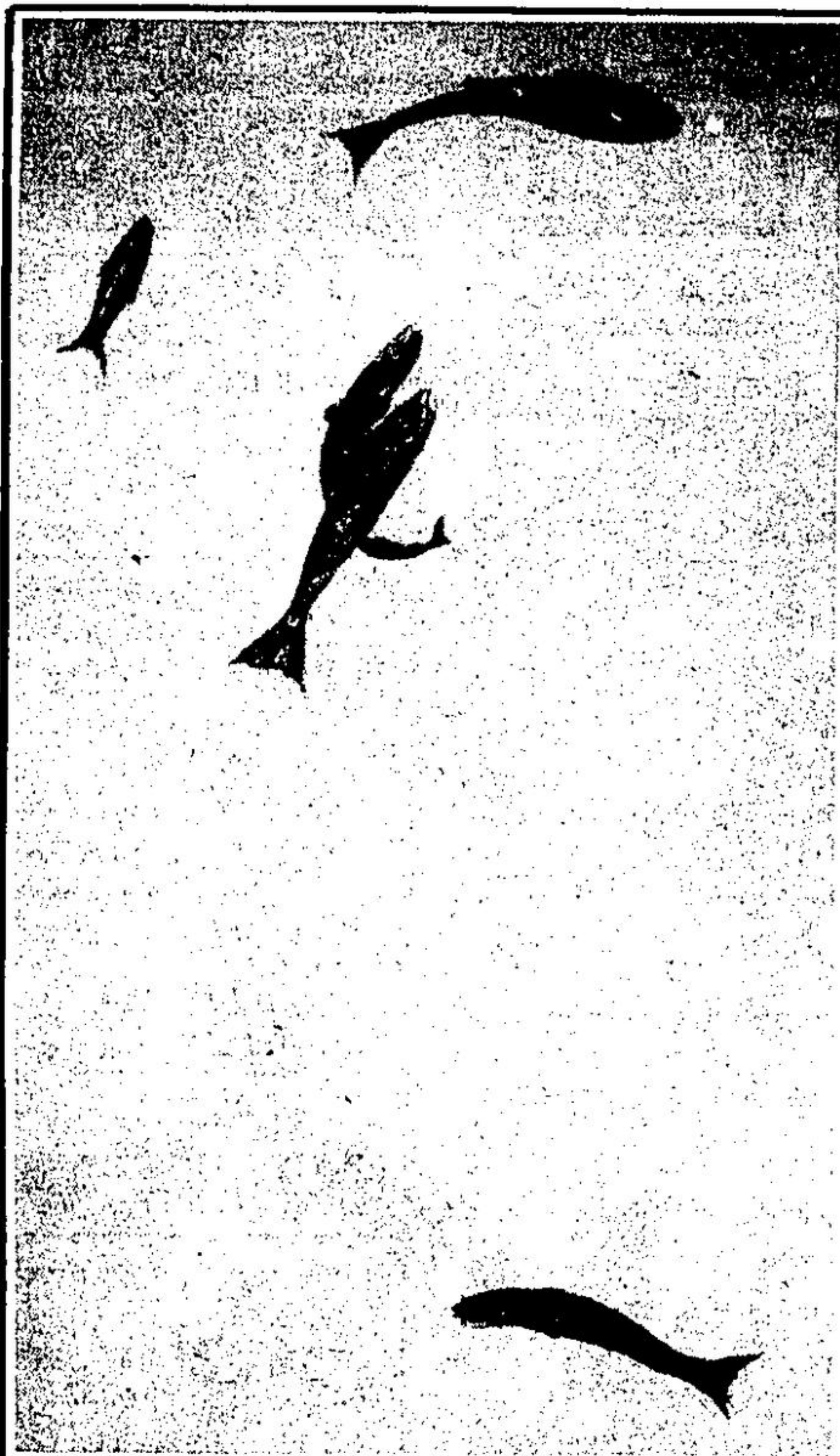
primula, you are a sorrowful old fellow, without a spark or a sense for adventure. You always hide from the sun, in your burrow deep in the ground. No, I will not listen to you, I know what to do.

Dear primula, said the mole, I hope you will not regret it. It would make me so sad to see you hurt, because you are sweet and I like you. But primula did not pay any more attention to him and the poor mole crawled away into the earth. Out in the open was primula, happily bathing in the sun.

The beautiful day ended. The sun left and night came. The stars and the moon shone coldly, and a merciless wind blew across the land. How very cold it is, sighed primula, as the frost embraced the helpless, little creature.

When morning came and the sun returned from her long voyage, primula was dead, and no sun would have been warm enough to return the keen, little flower to life.

My grandmother's tale had to journey a long distance over time and space to finally reach me, 120 years after it was written. Beloved ancestress, I greet you, wherever you are.



Flying fish by Janice Gittings



Porcelain work by Monica Johnston

### Environments - 3 Women - 3 Views

Environments - 3 Women - 3 Views, with Monica Johnston, Janice Gittings and Carol-Ann Michaelson.

This exhibition will be on view at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre, 9 Church Street, Georgetown, from March 27th to April 22nd.

Monica's nationally exhibited work expresses her fascination with lines, birds, plant life and geometric patterning. Vibrant colours in combination with subtle variations of smoke firing enhance the beauty and decorative quality of her carved pieces.

Since graduating from O.C.A. Janice has shown a remarkable ability to apply her vision of col-

our, design and perspective commercially as a wallpaper designer - colourist, costume jewellery designer, and also through her paintings. From her home in Glen Williams, Janice offers visions of... fish.

Carol-Ann works from her Glen Williams studio creating both functional and one-of-a-kind vessels. The works presented in this show are bold sculptural forms with hidden interior spaces which invite the viewer to contemplate the environment created by each piece.

Opening reception will be on March 27th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

For more information please contact Carol-Ann Michaelson at 873-2147.

## The Quilt as Art featured

Seventeen quilts, which bridge the gap between craft and art, form the McMichael Canadian Art Collection's Redefined: The Quilt as Art. The exhibition showcases artists and quilt-makers from across Canada and was organized and circulated by the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff. The quilts will be on display from March 31 - June 16, 1991 at the Kleinburg gallery.

The works to be shown incorporate a wide range of materials and techniques which challenge the basic premises of traditional quilt-making. Vinyl, natural materials, electric lights, oil on canvas, photography, paper, metal, flannel and denim are just a few of the materials utilized.

From the traditional to the modern, Redefined: The Quilt as Art displays a variety of political and social issues. The intent of the exhibition is threefold; to explore the range of possibilities being examined by contemporary Canadian quilt-makers and quilt artists; to promote the development of the art quilt in Canada; and to provoke thought within the contemporary Canadian quilting community.

Themes explored in the quilts range from the serious to the humorous. Violence against women, the breaking of social conventions, the changing roles of women, the security of children are some examples of the quilt themes. Environmental, ecological and Canadian subjects are other issues depicted in the

quilts. In the exhibition catalogue, Wendy Lewington Coulter, one of the artists in the show, states "...quilts have been a medium for the development of a powerful visual language created and

codified by women. Whether it be grief, joy, love, friendship, religious beliefs, or political conviction, quilts have provided a place where women could express many aspects of themselves..."



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