

Art Gallery of Ontario takes on a new look

By John Sommer

This past January the vastly enlarged and refurbished Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (AGO for short) was reopened to the public. I went to the very festive members opening and had a wonderful time. If you are even remotely interested in the visual arts and if you are longing for a break in the daily routine of this long and polar winter, I suggest an extensive visit to our largest provincial art museum.

I remember the Art Gallery of Toronto, as it was then called, as far back as 1956. At that time it was a compact beaux arts building, designed before the First World War by the Toronto architect-team Darling and Person and consisting of nine galleries grouped around the central Walker Sculpture Court.

In the 70's the architect John C. Parkin (of Terminal 1 fame) designed several large exhibition spaces on two levels around this old core and added the Henry Moore Centre on the corner of Dundas Street and McCaul to house Henry Moore's large donation of plasters, bronzes and graphics.

Most of the Parkin galleries were cavernous, featureless rooms that had to be redesigned for every exhibition. Only the Moore Centre was totally satisfying as architecture, and has, fortunately, survived the third transformation of the AGO intact.

Other Parkin landmarks, in particular the monotone streetfront, the deep moat between the sidewalk

and the building, and the bridge leading to the main entrance, have been removed. The new building is welcoming and user-friendly from the outside and quite brilliant inside.

Stage 3, as the third transformation of the AGO is called, is the brainchild of the great architect Barton Myers. After the completion of his design in the late 80's he left for Los Angeles and his associates formed a partnership (Kuwabara, Payne, McKenna, Blumberg) that has guided the building through its construction, with Tom Payne as partner-in-charge of the project. The Stage 3 expansion took three years at a cost of \$58 million.

Thirty new galleries have been added and 20 old ones have been renovated. From the gallery's 16,000 piece collection between 1,500 and 2,000 objects can now be displayed at any given time.

At the back of the building a majestic, glass-enclosed atrium affords a direct connection with the historical Grange House, and at the front, a gallery shop selling postcards, catalogues, art books, posters and a host of other items, as well as an art-rental, stretch all along Dundas to Beverley Street. There is an activity centre for children in the basement, and an inexpensive cafeteria.

Upstairs is a restaurant rather more fancy, or if you are a member, or become one, you can relax and have a light lunch in a very smart "members lounge" overlooking the Walker Court.

Ideas & the Arts

Adele Freedman, the architecture critic of the Globe and Mail, calls the new Art Gallery of Ontario "a triumph of knitting and slicing", and it is true. If you know the museum from a long time back, you are amazed how all these seemingly incompatible bits and pieces from different periods have come together to form a very pleasing and beautiful new whole. It's a labyrinth filled with wonders. If you are tired from walking around, sit and rest on one of many comfortable benches and look, long and intensely, at a fine old or new masterpiece, Rembrandt's "Lady with a Lapdog", for instance, or the charming "Yellow Violin" by

Raoul Dufy.

The galleries reserved for the established masters are particularly enjoyable, with walls in bright reds, greens and yellows and rich oriental carpets on the floors. Thanks to a generous collector, a superlative collection of Eskimo carvings is now part of the AGO collection, filling several galleries. The AGO owned some native graphics before but no sculpture.

Something remains to be said about the funding of the AGO and the fact that the museum had to be closed for several months last year for lack of money.

Are our public museums well funded? Are we getting from them our money's worth? By any comparison with other western coun-

tries our museums are sadly underfunded, and if you compare them to other government departments here in Canada (remember \$5.8 billion at the last count for the military to buy helicopters!) our museums are paupers. Yet, with the money available to them, the museums do wonders.

To arrange exhibitions is only one of their tasks. Far more important is the preservation of our cultural inheritance for future generations and that means a daily battle against the ravages time inflicts on fragile objects of historical and artistic significance.

John Sommer has been the director of Gallery House Sol, on Charles St. in Georgetown, since 1962.

Anti-racism committee gathering strength

By Laura Salverda

There is a group gathering strength, in North Halton; a group based on caring, peace and concern. On Tuesday, Feb. 23, the official formation of the North Halton Citizen's Cultural Awareness Committee took place.

The mission statement reads: "To promote cultural and racial harmony and tolerance in North Halton through education and peaceful action."

The committee's media contact person, Tom Kingston, said the executive wants to collaborate with other groups in the region, including school boards, service clubs, and the Faith communities.

"I can give you an example of this. I work out of the St. George Anglican Church and we have an open-door youth program that use our facilities. We may contact the Board and see if they had thought of doing some work on multiculturalism. We may also contact the Scouts and the local hockey organization.

"We can teach these kids how to be good citizens. What it means to be a good citizen in 1993 is a lot different than what it meant in the '50's. In order to be a good citizen now it requires some new training," Kingston said.

"We want the focus to be on edu-

cation. We want our community to understand the fabric of being Canadian. That we all respect the Human Right's Legislation. We are recruiting people to be good Canadians," added Kingston.

The next public meeting will be held on Tues. April 20, at 10 a.m. in the community room at the Georgetown police station. Interested members of the public are invited to attend.

**Halton Hills
This Week
873-2254**

**TAX RETURNS SAME DAY
ELECTRONICALLY FILED**
Associate Tax Consultants
101 Guelph St. Georgetown
877-2217

**T.H. BRIGGS
UPHOLSTERY**
• Specializing in Antiques
• Recovered and Repaired
• Replacement Foam
• Kitchen & Dining Chairs
• Rec. Vehicle Seats
37 Years
877-9312 Quality Service

**Have your
Children's
BIRTHDAY
PARTY**
at ACTON
BOWLING LANES
call 853-0470

**APPLE
Auto Glass**

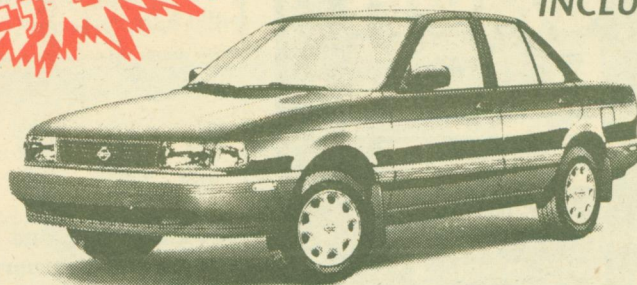
354 Guelph St., Unit 27,
Georgetown, Ont.
(416) 873-1655

What you see is **NOT** all that you get at North End Nissan!

Sale Priced at
\$12,490*

1993
1993 SENTRA GS
5-Speed PLUS... FREE
AIR CONDITIONING
INCLUDED

9.75% Bank
Financing
Available

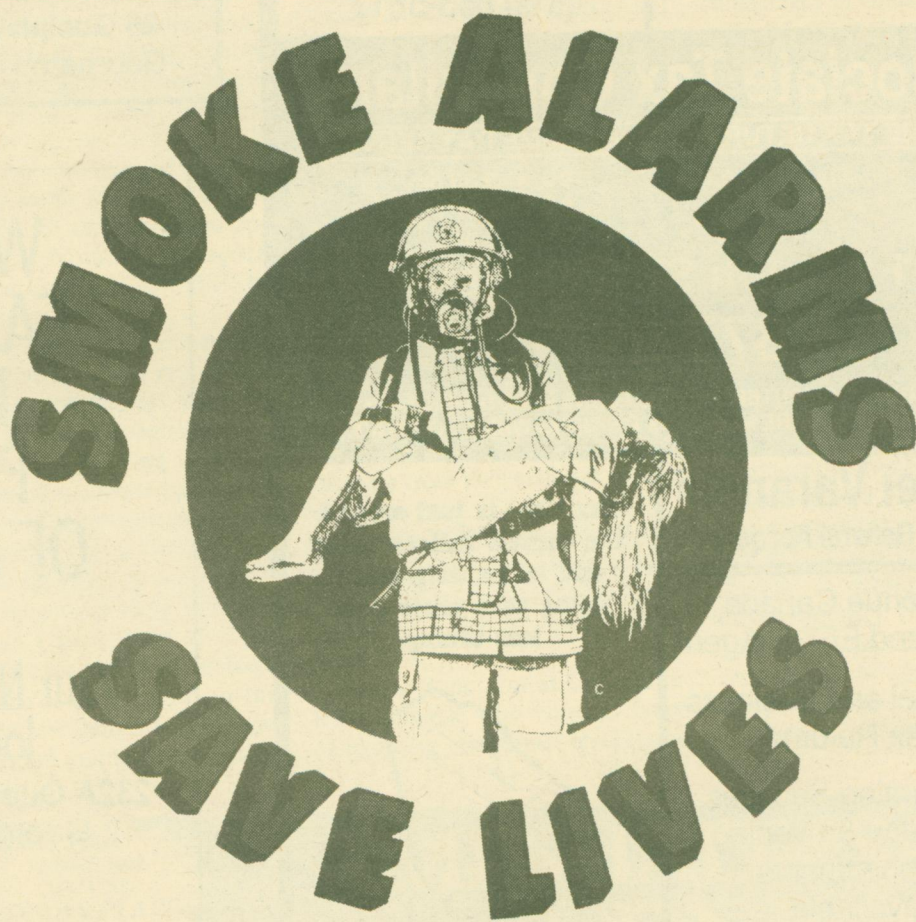
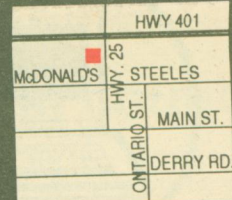


Call our Friendly Sales Staff for warranty details...

- 6 Year Major Component Warranty
- 6 Year Emission Components Warranty
- 6 Year Rust Perforation Warranty
- 3 Year New Vehicle Warranty
- 3 Year Roadside Assistance Services
- 3 Year Travel Planning Service



NORTH END NISSAN
HWY 25 & 401
MILTON 878-4137



A HALTON HILLS THIS WEEK COMMUNITY SERVICE MESSAGE
SPONSORED BY



HALTON HILLS INSURANCE BROKERS ASSOCIATION

DENNY'S INSURANCE
15 MILL ST. W.,
ACTON, ONT.
853-0150



Your Insurance Broker Understands