

ROM showcase an exciting opportunity: couple

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The exhibit will include more than 250 paperweights from the 19th and 20th centuries.

"The Museum's collection of glass paperweights is one of the most important collections of its type anywhere in the world," said Brian Musselwhite, a ROM curator.

Tony said it's an exciting opportunity.

"This is our one shot. If we can make an impression on these people, we're going to be known," he said.

In the morning lecture, which is limited to 15 participants, the Toccalinos will be part of a show and tell about the paperweights in the museum's collection, some of which are the Toccalinos'.

"We have some of our paperweights in the ROM collection," Tony said, explaining the couple met a curator of the museum a few years ago and the rest is history. "He got really excited because there's really no Canadians making this stuff."

Lecture part of day

The afternoon lecture is the seventh annual Brocklebank Paperweight Lecture and will include a step-by-step explanation of the paperweight-making process. It starts at 2 p.m., and costs \$22 or \$20 on-line.

The entire process takes up to six days. The pair takes colour bars, heats them and pulls them into canes in a delicate and painstaking process. They then take the colourful rods and insert them into crystal, so they're completely encased.

Virginia said she feels her energy is suspended within each piece.

"The substance itself, a kind of primordial, slow-moving liquid, capable of being formed and moulded with the breath of life, inspires in me a well-spring of creative energy," she said in her artist statement. "In the end the glass cools, and what was a dynamic, creative process becomes, in essence, frozen in time."

Venetian-style glass has an interesting history. Tony explained the glass-makers were kept on the island of Murano, in the Venetian Lagoon, so the secret of how they made the intricate glass art wouldn't get out. Kings and queens attempted to lure the artisans off the island, and there was even espionage, Tony said.

It's difficult making pieces that start

at about \$80 for very simple paperweights, because the Toccalinos constantly find themselves competing against mass-produced, cheap glass imports.

"We focus on things that are extremely difficult to make, so we're a hard act to follow," Tony said. "We're

always working toward bigger and better things."

The Toccalinos' customers are generally well educated about Venetian glass and understand their purchase is an investment, he said.

The lectures at the ROM are helping the couple reinforce this notion.

"It's pushing us into the 'future antique' market," Tony said.

For more information on Sunday afternoon's lecture, call (416) 586-5797, or register on-line at www.rom.on.ca/programs.

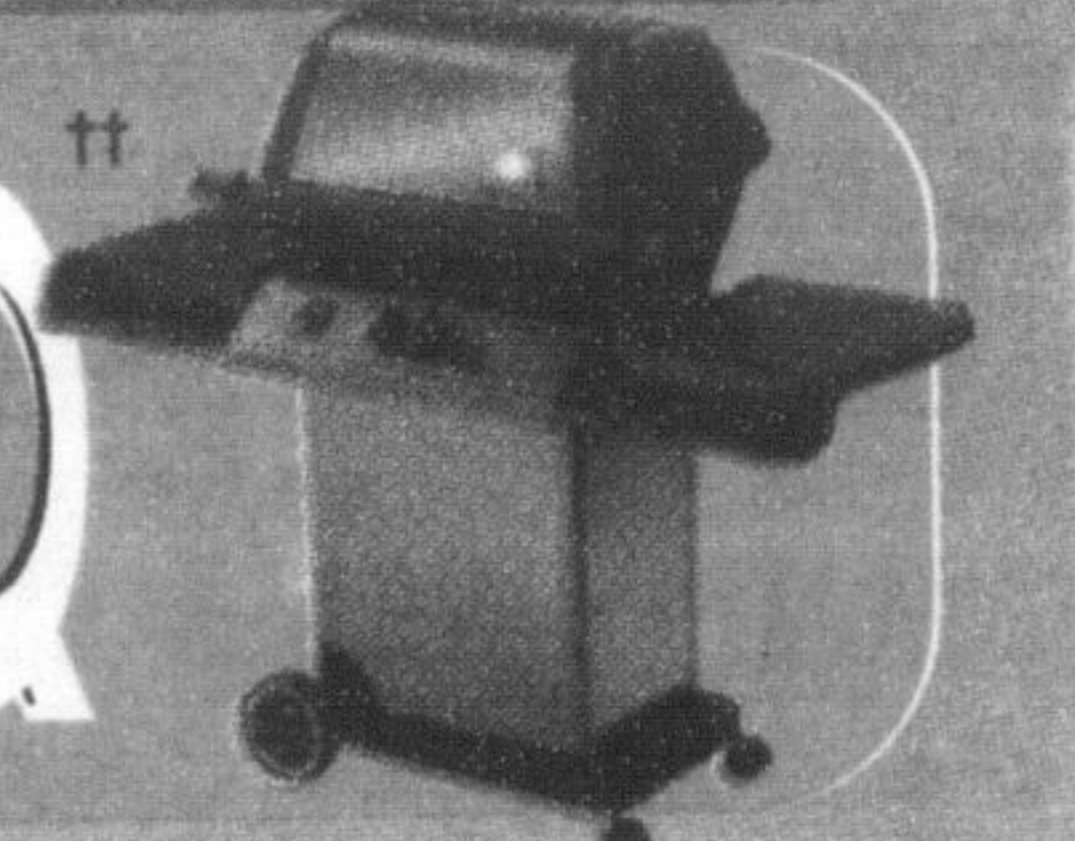
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