

# Indian art exhibit draws largely positive reactions

By Vicki White  
Expositor Staff *May 12/90*

There is no such thing as "typical" Indian art, says Tom Hill, director of the Woodland Cultural Centre on Mohawk Street.

The First Nations Art '90 exhibit proves his point.

"Some people have preconceived ideas of what Indian art looks like, and I really encourage them to come out and see the diversity of this exhibit," he said.

More than 100 works by 54 Indian artists from across Canada and the United States are presented in the annual show. It includes many styles of paintings, from traditional realism to ab-

stract expressionism, along with etchings, pottery, jewelry, tapestry, pottery and carvings.

Mr. Hill said the art is of a quality and variety that would be found in other galleries, but many of the artists interpret issues from a perspective that is unique to the First Nations.

This is evident in pieces such as *Chief's Chair*, a satire of the role of chiefs elected under Indian Act regulations.

Richard Glazer Danay, a professional artist now living in Los Angeles, used an array of colors to decorate a plastic toy chair with pink and green spotted wheels. A plastic chief is perched on top, painted a gaudy gold color.

The chief has two tomahawks in his hands, held like the scales of justice. A plastic buffalo, representing native culture, sits on the lower of the two tomahawks. The other holds a nickel, representing the easy money of government handouts.

Reactions to the show have been largely positive.

Gift shop manager Linda Jamieson said many visitors think it is one of the museum's best to date.

Not all visitors are so pleased, but Mr. Hill is not concerned.

"If everyone liked all the pieces I'd be worried," he laughed. "I believe art should be disturbing and challenging. This is not art you buy to match your living room drapes."

Mrs. Jamieson was pleased with the artists selected. "It's really good to see a lot of women artists, and artists who have never been in the show before."

Six Nations artist Shelley Niro contributed one of the most stunning pieces. *The Search* is a three-panel mixed media work which stands as tall as the viewer. The first panel shows a stylized life-size face spiralling down from light into an area of darkness, like a leaf in a pool of oil.

As viewers walk around to the next panel they are confronted with the face again, magnified so it fills the canvas. The one eye visible in the wrinkled face seems to catch the viewer in its blank stare.

The third panel is an abrupt change, with an abstract white image set against a black background, and colored figures scattered around.