

Creative Living

Co Abalt editor/644-1100



Thursday, January 8, 1987 O&E

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Rural Ontario gallery makes pleasant trip

By Marion McIlgeard
special writer

One of Ontario's best-kept secrets, at least this side of the border, is the charming village of Kleinburg, about 40 miles north of Toronto, home of the impressive McMichael Collection.

Housed in a rambling log and fieldstone building, the museum is uniquely Canadian, with vast picture windows providing breathtaking views of wild park land. Inside the spacious and well-lit galleries are several important works by Canada's "Group of Seven," and a large collection of Inuit, Woodland and West Coast Indian art.

The Group was formed more than 50 years ago, when some revolutionary young artists banded together, determined to challenge the precepts of painting favored by the Royal Canadian Art Academy and by the public in general.

Vivid, blazing with color and vitality and utilizing all manner of media — abstract, impressionist, surrealist and cubist — their paintings eschewed the stuffy, conventional styles that were both endemic and popular during that era.

These artists, Lawren Harris, J.E.H. MacDonald, Alexander Young Jackson, Arthur Lismer, Fred Varley, Frank Carmichael and Alfred Casson (affiliated with writer and painter Emily Carr and artist Tom Thomson), might rightly be called the pioneers of modern Canadian art.

All of them were barraged with savage reviews from the press, although in 1925 the Toronto Star described their work as "hideous, marvelous, terrible and also magnificent."

Many were influenced by the Impressionists. Perhaps the most "iconoclastic" was Lawren Harris,

whose awesome, lonely mountain lakes and iceberg compositions are reminiscent of Norwegian artist Edvard Munch's dense forms, symbols and images.

MacDonald's once highly criticized "The Tangled Garden" resembles one of Monet's untamed gardens, until it's noticed that the plants and flowers are northern species. And Lismer's "Canadian Jungle" is an almost Amazonian perception of Canada's forests.

They were all highly conscious of their native landscapes. Carmichael's "October Gold" has a russet, green and brown, undefined background, with one almost bare silver birch painted in detail, dominating the foreground. Likewise, Jackson's "Houses St. Urbaine" is a vibrant, primitive oil of stunted wooden houses, snow and a brilliant blue sky.

Among the group of Canadian Indian artists represented, Daphne Odjig has an international reputation. Her "Hoop Dancer" is a cubist painting — strikingly similar to the hoopla games that used to be popular with children in England and America.

The McMichael Collection, which includes more than 2,500 paintings, prints and sculptures, has been exhibited with a traveling exhibition of 44 paintings in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, London, Hamburg, Bonn, Munich, Oslo, Dublin, Leningrad, Kiev and Moscow.

For visitors to Toronto, a 100-trip is well worth the effort, combined with a look at the village of Kleinburg itself.

The McMichael Collection is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Sunday, May 1 to Oct. 31.

Admission: adults \$2.50, students \$1, seniors (free on Wednesdays) \$1.50. Children under 5 free, families \$6.



As she showed her portfolio of etchings, the most significant of the past seven years, Lynn Shaler said she is using more color than before. Her two years of study and work in Europe have led to a broader palette and wider subject matter.

Bright future
Printmaker refines skills in ParisBy Corinne Abalt
staff writer

Lynn Shaler brought a portfolio of her best etchings with her when she came from Paris to spend Christmas with her family in Birmingham. The quality of her new work coupled with her enthusiasm about her career and her growing recognition as an artist both here and in Europe portends an increasingly bright future for this 1973 graduate of Seaholm High School.

She has a bachelor's degree in fine arts from University of Michigan and a master's from Pratt Institute of Brooklyn.

Shaler has been in Paris on and off for the past two years, going initially on a Fulbright scholarship to study with Stanley Hayter, one of the world leaders in the field of viscosity etching.

"It's been great working over there," she said. "I dearly love France. I speak French, I studied the language for years."

HER WORK has been in about 40 national shows in the last 10 years. In Paris she is represented by Madalini Gallery where she will have a one-artist show in November. Her work has been accepted for the Yugoslavian Biennale, an international exhibition that runs from June to Sep-

tember and will be in a major show in Taipei, Taiwan.

Her etchings are in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum of London, the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, the Library of Congress, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum as well as others both public and private.

As she went through the portfolio, giving some background on each piece, the challenges, reasons for the particular colors and description of the process, she said, "I was in Venice three times to do watercolors and drawings."

She came to the profile of a woman. "I love Italian profiles. This took a year to do. The face is all dots. I used a sewing needle and a magnifying glass."

"The main difference in my work in the past two years is that I'm using much more color."

IN HER EARLY years as a printmaker, she had worked almost exclusively in black and white, achieving dramatic effects as she concentrated on architectural detail.

Now that she's dealing with a much broader range of subject matter, the color is a natural addition to her work — interiors of rooms, a still

Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky

life of her favorite cafe in Paris, doorways, country scenes, sides of old buildings, stacks of plates and clocks.

There's often an element of mystery, a surrealistic touch or one image seemingly superimposed over another in her work. The stacks of plates, for instance, which she saw in a Chinese restaurant and sketched immediately, are at once abstract and realistic.

She used Hayter's viscosity technique for these and the mysterious shaded tones heighten the original concept.

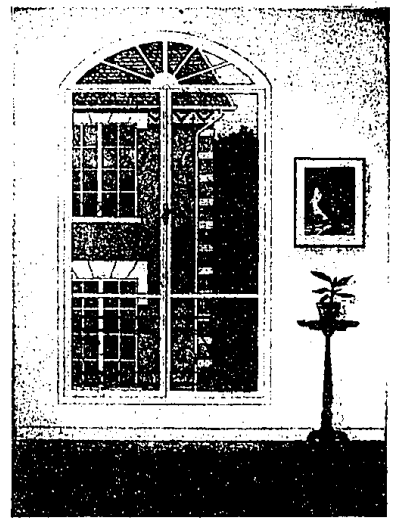
She may work for months on a plate before she's ready to pull the first artist's proof. She does small editions and many have already sold out.

SHE SAID the viscosity etching process, done completely by hand with a 20 pound roller, is so difficult that one print is all she can make.

"My latest series," she said, "is based on an old warehouse in New York. I love buildings that are mysterious and old."



Color etching of Lynn Shaler's favorite cafe in the Latin Quarter of Paris is done in rich tones of russet brown, tan and cream.



"Qual Aux Fleurs" is a window in Paris that Lynn Shaler sketched at the apartment of a friend in Paris. She added her own favorite little antique table and put one of her own etchings on the wall.



"Hoop dancer," a painting by Canadian artist Daphne Odjig, is one of many she has done based on Indian legend and culture. Her work is exhibited throughout the world. "Mountains and Lake," below, is by Lawren Harris, a member of the Group of Seven. His work, like that of the others in the Group, was a dramatic departure from the Canadian tradition of the 1920s.

