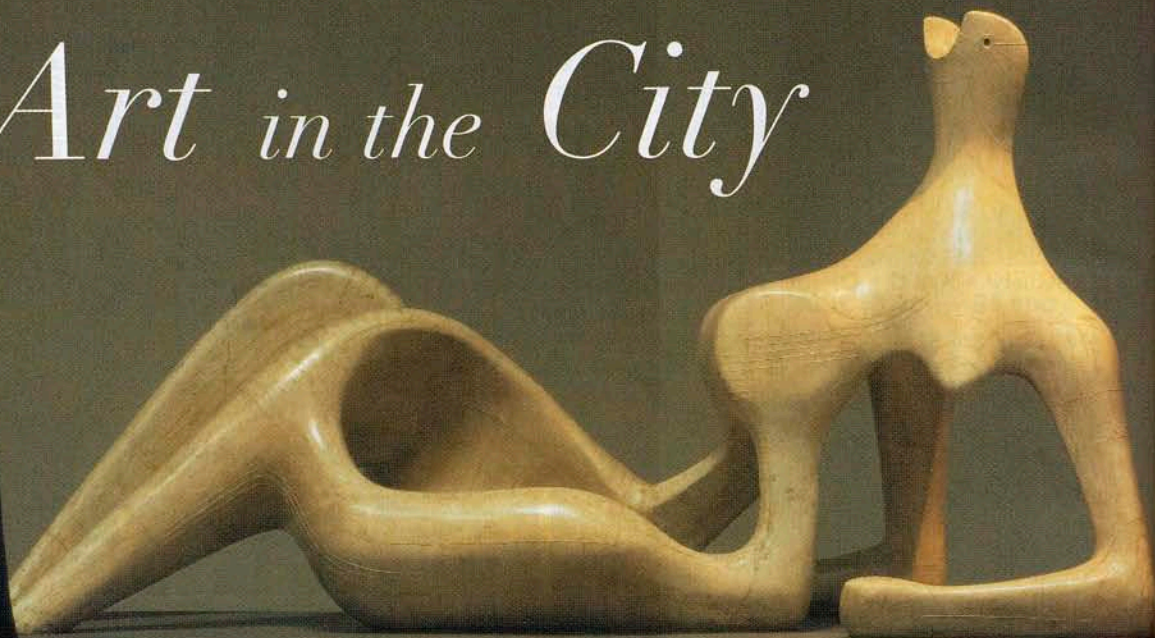


Art in the City



Toronto's Artistic Evolution

From Yorkville's blue chip
collections to Queen West's
avant garde installations

By Gary Michael Dault

THROUGHOUT THE 1970s AND 80s, TWO NEIGHBOURING GALLERIES HELD SWAY OVER THE TORONTO ART SCENE. While they differed in character, they energized one another like the twin poles of a battery. The artists of the Isaacs' gallery included Gordon Rayner, Richard Gorman, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, Tony Urquhart and the remarkable William Kurelek. Just a few doors north of the Isaacs, The Carmen Lamanna Gallery represented a formidable group of artists: twin sculptors Royden and David Rabinowitch, painters Paterson Ewen and John Scott as well as the electrifying oeuvre of the soon-to-be-internationally famous art trio, General Idea.

Two events, the move of Isaacs Gallery to John Street (near Queen Street) in 1986, and the death of Carmen Lamanna in 1991, radically altered the gallery landscape. While a knot of prestigious, venues remained in the chic Yorkville shopping area—The Mira Godard Gallery, Gallery One, The Drabinsky Gallery, Artcore, The Edward Day Gallery and The Sable-Castelli Gallery (the only really edgy, avant-garde gallery among them), Queen Street West was emerging as the new centre for innovative art.

Queen Street West has always had its share of galleries, coffee shops and watering holes frequented by artists, but during the last few years, the importance of the street has doubled, tripled, quadrupled from what it was 10 or 15 years ago. Back then, the Queen Street scene began around Spadina Avenue and moved west, ending somewhere a little west of Bathurst Street. Now, the strip more or less begins at Bathurst Street

(with a prefatory flurry of galleries at Spadina still) and extends all the way west to Dufferin Street, where it is end-stopped by both The Drake and The Gladstone, two refurbished hotels that offer a dizzying multitude of art-related events, exhibitions, concerts, readings, lectures, discussions and film/video events. The Drake and The Gladstone also co-host the Toronto Alternative Art Fair International (TAAFI) every November—a zippy, adventurous counterpoint to the rather more mainstream Toronto International Art Fair that runs at the Toronto Convention Centre at the same time. Together, the two hotels act like two big punctuation marks—a kind of architectural colon—that halt the Queen Street West art scene's inexorable westward progress.

The artery's energy begins with a group of galleries tucked into a complex at 80 Spadina Avenue (The Leo Kamen Gallery, The Moore Gallery, Toronto Photographer's Workshop) and one block further north at 401 Richmond Street West, at Richmond and Spadina (Wynick/Tuck Gallery, YYZ, A Space and The Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art). There are a few more on Richmond at Bathurst (Lehmann + Leskiw, XEXE, Gallery Moos) and on Bathurst Street itself (Tatar Gallery). And then the westward crawl begins: there's the Susan Hobbes Gallery (on Tecumseth, just south of Queen), Edward Day (relocated from Yorkville), The Angell Gallery, the big new Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art (MOCCA), Clint Roenisch, Kabat Wrobel, Propeller, The Stephen Bulger Gallery (which specializes in photography), Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Lennox Contemporary, Katharine Mulherin Fine Art Projects, DeLeon White, Spin Gallery, Engine Gallery, Loop, 64 Steps, and Greener Pastures. And way out at 1313 Queen West, beyond the two hotels—beyond the end of the world, in other words—lies the hard-working Parkdale community gallery space, Gallery 1313, which publishes a Queen Street art journal aptly called *Artery*.

A trip west along the Queen Street strip is a jaunt through the tenor of the times, a concentrated look at a quick graph of what's new, what counts, and what's coming up in the future.

There are a number of outrigger art areas, coagulations of art energy, that lie beyond Queen Street, of course. Out on Morrow Avenue, near the junction of Dundas Street West and Roncesvalles

Avenue, there is a sort of small, graceful, piazza-like courtyard featuring three art galleries of considerable importance: the magisterial Olga Korper Gallery, presided over by the vivacious and dynamic Olga Korper herself, the queen of the Toronto art dealers (Korper represents Susanna Heller, John McEwen, John Brown, and the estate of Paterson Ewen), the Peak Gallery (Sylvia Safdie, John Heward, Melissa Day, Peter MacCallum and Carl Tacon), and the Christopher Cutts Gallery (Richard Gorman, Murray Favro and Ron Martin).

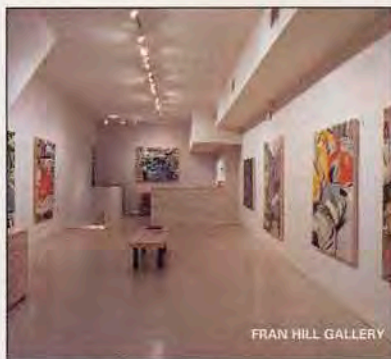
And way out east, at the Distillery District (Parliament and Mill streets)—a sort of cultural theme park housed in the remarkably handsome old stone and brick buildings that once made up the ancient Gooderham and Worts Distillery—find The Monte Clark Gallery (the Toronto wing of an established Vancouver-based gallery), Artcore Gallery (vast, white, and international in its interests), the Sandra Ainsley Gallery (which is entirely devoted to glass art), and the enormous and beautifully designed Corkin Shopland Gallery, which once dealt exclusively with photography and photo-based work, but which has now added works in other media (such as huge mirrored multiples by American superstar Robert Rauschenberg) to its holdings.

A final word needs to be said about The Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation on King Street, west of Bathurst. This remarkable institution, a masterwork of splendidly restrained gallery design, is a private museum—but open to the public. Its purpose is to house the sculptures, installations, photographs and new media works by the important international artists Hendeles regularly acquires for her own collection—Hendeles is accounted as one of the world's top art collectors. Hendeles arranges exhibitions so that they are in themselves essays or theses about the philosophical, ethical, political, psychological and aesthetic issues that particularly interest her: in her discerning hands, the works she collects become the raw material out of which she generates a new art of her own—a sort of meta-commentary and critique of the contemporary art world itself. **■**

Gary Michael Dault writes Gallery Going, the weekly art column for The Globe & Mail, as well as other Canadian publications. An artist himself, Dault has exhibited his works at various galleries in Toronto.



STEPHEN BULGER GALLERY



FRAN HILL GALLERY



HANNUN LYN OF DISTILL GALLERY



FIRE JUGGLER BY KATHLEEN FINLAY OF GALLERY ONE

in Arts and Culture, who carves exclusively for the gallery. Ohito comes from one of the most famous families of artists in Cape Dorset. The gallery has an extensive selection of his carvings or Arctic animals, especially polar bears, along with his intricate spiritual pieces and delicate carvings of women with children, hunters, fishermen, people building inukshuks or igloos.

STEPHEN BULGER GALLERY
1026 QUEEN ST. W., 416-504-0575

Gallery owner/director: Stephen Bulger
Est.: 1995
Gallery focus: Specializes in photography, representing a stable of leading figures in contemporary fine-art photography, newer work from a select group of emerging artists and maintains an inventory of well-known photographs by famous figures in the history of photography. Concentration is on photographs that comment on people, culture and events. The gallery's aim is to highlight the best of Canadian photography to markets around the world and introduce significant photographers from throughout photography's history to a local audience.
What makes the space unique: Nearly 10,000 photographs are housed here, a bookstore is on premise, and is internally attached to CAMERA, the Atom Egoyan owned cinema and licensed lounge.
The most interesting artist ever exhibited? The exhibition of John Max is oft remembered. A Montreal legend, internationally well known for his reclusiveness, it has been his only solo show in a commercial gallery.

FRAN HILL GALLERY
230 QUEEN ST. E., 416-363-1333

Gallery owner/director: Fran Hill
Est.: 2001

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

are in (emerging, mid-career or established); and Quality, which is the most difficult to assess given that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and so lies value in the mind of the buyer. Technique and execution are invaluable components of

quality but can never override conception or originality.

7 Art as an investment. Investing in art is not collecting; they are frequently at odds with one another and clearly remain two

distinct objectives. Do you find yourself talking more about value or aesthetics?

8 Giclees. Be aware of the difference between reproductions and originals. Giclees—a French term meaning

“spray with ink”—are a new method of making high quality reproductions of an original piece. The price of a giclee is determined by the quality of production, but should always be lower than an original piece. Buyers should ask whether

archival ink was used, how many editions were released (limited edition giclees should rarely exceed 50-100 reproductions), and whether the giclee is hand-embellished by the artist with texturing gels or paints.