ENTERTAINMENT

### York profiles: Aba Bayevsky

### Artist seeks society's essence in myth, legends

#### **By BRENDA WEEKS**

An unexpectedly bright and expansive studio at the top of a tacky one hundred year old building in congested downtown Toronto, provides the 'stable' art quarters for distinguished artist, Aba Bayevsky. A fellow at Stong College, Bayevsky discussed the state of affairs in the art world today with Excalibur.

"I dug ditches once in order to do my art," Bayevsky said. This in reference to the fact of his determination not to sell out to the

do many things I wouldn't have wanted to do in order to pursue my art as I wanted it," he continued.

As a young war artist after the Second World War, he associated with many older and established artists and gained confidence in knowing that he was doing the right thing in this respect.

Bayevsky also talked about the prominence that art has gained today. "When I came back after the war, there were only three or

The Legend of Fred and Bernie

dealers with big money. "I had to four galleries in all of Toronto," he said, "and now there is a great proliferation of them throughout the city, both public and private. This is a very positive sign of the progress being made. "In the old days we worked like

hell to get the Massey Commission in order to see some research. made on art and the need for its financing in the country," Bayevsky said. "And as soon as money became available, after all the surveys were taken, certain people who had not been involved

at all in the commission, appeared on the scene large as life.

"Where were they when we were working on the Canada Council?" Bayevsky exclaimed in disgust. "They don't know the first bloody thing about art," he continued.

In this same vein, Bayevsky made short work of the private art dealers who wield too much influence, in his opinion. "These men should never have any say whatsoever on the use of public funds, and it is unfortunate that they do," he said. "The arts are far too fragile to be at the mercy of these opportunists," Bayevsky lamented, "and they wield a most destructive force on the Canadian art scene today."

It is the 'trickie-dickies' in the art world who are calling the shots in regards to what is 'big' this year, according to Bayevsky. "They're talking fashion, I'm talking art," he said.

"They have no understanding that those things that are basic in art are as important today as they ever were. The continuum is as relevant today as it was in the past," Bayevsky said. "They do not see the universal understanding of human nature that remains the same."

Bayevsky is known for his concentration on a theme in a series of efforts. He was particularly enthusiastic about his prints of Indian legends which he found 'enormously interesting'. Heretofore he has concentrated on Icelandic legends, Hebrew legend, and the legend of the Canadian hero, Paul Bunyan.

"Legend and mythology is the essence of what our society is," Bayevsky said. "They show the aspirations of people, especially in terms of the Indian legend, where you find spirits of the sky, the rain, thunder, lightning, the fall, and even crops.

"I have spent a great deal of time working in this area." Bayevsky's handsome arrangement of the Indian legend prints mounted on the walls in his studio testify to the fact.

Bayevsky's latest achievement has been a series of watercolours, the subject of which is the Kensington and St. Lawrence market places. A native of Toronto, Bayevsky grew up in the Ken-sington market area.

It has been a regular hang-out for him since he was a lad, and he is very happy going down on a regular basis, and capturing action sketches on a sketch pad. This latest series of paintings, a constant endeavour over the last two years, will be exhibited in the near future.

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