

# ARTS

## Significant William Hayley exhibition encapsulates an era

by Dave Cox

Last Sunday, Professor Victor Chan of the University's Art History department introduced a new show at the Edmonton, Art Gallery on "William Hayley and his Circle". The show will be on display at the gallery until October 1, and is well worth seeing.

Hayley and those he influenced (most notably William Blake, George Romney and John Flaxman) were among the most progressive English artists of the late 18th century.

A need was felt at that time to develop history painting in England; to demonstrate "national pride and as an artistic declaration of independence". The "cult of Sensibility", of which Romney was a part, aimed to arouse strong emotional responses — its subjects were "tear-jerking, almost like soap-operas".

This sentimental feeling was quite prevalent in the late 18th century. Emphasis on the values of morality and loyalty later grew into the spirit of a revolutionary age.

Also associated with Hayley was Henry Fuseli and his "cult of eroticism", as well as the more celestial "cult of religious revival". The latter expressed traditional themes of virtues; the allegory of charity, for example. The show includes Fragonard's allegorical drawing for Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

A third important group were called the "cult of sublimity", who valued terrifying subjects, "the sublime, and the picturesque". All three met in Fuseli's marvelous painting of Belinda's dream based on Pope's "Rape of the Lock", a painting full of involved symbolism.

Hayley also encouraged the revival of Classicism in England by suggesting classical themes to Romney and his other followers. A classical scholar, Hayley was one of the earliest translators of Dante's *Divine Comedy* into English.

In Hayley's own words, he was: "the person who devoted so much of his time and labour to render all the justice in his power to the talents and the virtues of several among the most deserving of his contemporaries."

To this end he sponsored the justly renowned William Blake. Blake hoped that Hayley would prove the ideal patron — give him both money and complete artistic freedom — but Hayley kept suggesting artistic advice to Blake. Blake later wrote "For friendship's sake, do be my enemy".

The show would be worth seeing for

the Blake alone — it includes a title page (relief etching and watercolor) and other plates from "Songs of Experience". Blake showed there some of his disenchantment with the course of the French Revolution.

Highlighting the show is Romney's series on the prison reformer John Howard, as he visits the prisoners. Howard is virtually turned into a modern hero.

The Hayley show should be of interest to anyone curious about late 18th century culture, and its lasting impact. Visiting the exhibition is time well spent.

Next Sunday at the Art Gallery at 3:00 Christopher Varley, Head Curator and Curator of Canadian Art talks about the Historical Canadian Collection (1939-71).

## Workshop play a superb effort

The Unveiling by Leonard Angel  
A Workshop West Production  
Citadel Rice Theatre Sept. 9-19

by Valerie Gislason

The Unveiling is superb.

Director Dorothy-Ann Haug uses the limited acting space available in the Rice to create an intimate emotional atmosphere.

The play itself magnificently portrays the characters and conflicts of a Jewish family that meet for the unveiling of Esther Hirsch's tombstone.

An unveiling is a Jewish ceremony to remove the covering from a tombstone. It is held one year after the funeral and signals the end of mourning. It is a time for the family to pay their respects and say together the Kaddish, a memorial prayer to the dead.

The play is set in a graveyard. The ground is strewn with amber and red leaves. A tombstone covers centre stage. Amer and red leaves clad branches overhanging the stage.

As the first members of the Hirsch family arrived on stage, leaves flutter to the ground. The audience is immediately drawn into the Hirsch family by Judith (Jean Marie Ferraro) and her bobo (Jewish grandmother) Ada (Barbara Reese).

Of the eight non-jewish actors who appear in *The Unveiling*, Barbara Reese is the only one to adopt a stereotypically Jewish speech pattern. She does so without exaggeration and presents a totally believable, and lovable, bobo figure.



Fuseli's *Dream of Belinda*, part of the Hayley show at the Art Gallery

Using a series of interrupted conversation, arguments and accusations, playwright Angel develops an astonishingly detailed family portrait.

The director and cast make potentially stereotypic Jewish characters into unique and real people.

The story revolves around Esther's youngest son Lenny — a patanoid schizophrenic — and the family's efforts to deal with him.

Patrick McGuigan shines in the role of Lenny. The audience feels the confusion, anger and despair of an overprotected youngest son who loses his mother but continues to hear her voice.

Francis Damberger portrays the older son Jay; a lawyer who has moved out west and "lost touch with the family. His latest achievement is the purchase of a new home. He speaks glowingly of "counter space". Jay is horrified to discover his brother's mental condition. He tries to

offer aid but finds himself too weak to do so.

Wally McSween appears as Bernard Hirsch, the late Esther's husband. Bernard desperately avoids the truth. Speaking of Lenny he repeatedly states "Find him a job, and apartment, a girlfriend — everything will be fine."

The role of Bernard's daughter Susan is played by Susan Sneath.

Audrey Webb acts as Judith's cynical divorced mother Deborah. Her script contains many cryptic one liners. At one point Susan exclaims "You're horrible!" and Deborah replies "That's motherhood."

The rabbi, portrayed by Doug Kier, tactfully deals with Lenny's refusal to say Kaddish when Lenny's father could not. The Unveiling aroused deep emotion and compassion in its audience. It was a superb portrayal of human relationships and constituted a very special experience for those lucky enough to view it.



Decameron production promises to be intriguing and racy

## Shocking comedy starts tonight

Starting tonight at SUB Theatre, Alexander Hausvater's production of Boccaccio's *Decameron* promises something different from the usual theatrical fare.

A black comedy, or as Hausvater puts it "comedy with a gun to the head," it promises to be enjoyable and stimulating.

The stories of Boccaccio are raunchy and comic; they were a bit of light relief in otherwise depressing and morbid thirteenth-century Venice.

Hausvater changes the locale to a

concentration camp in Italy during World War Two, and throws in a theatre troupe incarcerated for "alleged Communist activities."

The incident is true: the troupe, called La Compagnie Cavalle, met their doom in Mussolini's gas chambers.

Their response to an order by their guards to perform is a broad and funny *commedia dell'arte*-style *Decameron*.

The play promises to be challenging and probably controversial. It will show through Saturday the 25th at SUB.



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