

Even the washrooms are 'art galleries'

By The Canadian Press

At the Canada Council's art bank the women's washrooms display graphics showing a series of babies' bottoms, a corset complete with lacing and some charcoal sketches of female anatomy.

The men's washroom features a purple, red and blue pornographic graphic.

This "art" and its location are said to represent an attempt at achieving a major goal in the art bank's mandate to make art more of an everyday experience. After all, everyone has to use a washroom.

The art bank was begun five years ago to help support Canadian artists. A grant of \$5 million was to be spent over five years on the acquisition of art and on administrative costs. The acquisitions were to be rented to federal government offices in Canada and abroad at a rate of 12 per cent a year.

The art bank was without a full-time head for almost two years after the first director, Luke Rombout, moved west to head the Vancouver Art Gallery but Christopher Youngs assumed the post last July 1.

Came from Maritimes

A 32-year-old American, Mr. Youngs spent five years as curator of the Owens Art Gallery at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. and as a lecturer in fine arts and Canadian art history. Last year he was interim chairman of the advisory selection committee for the art bank.

He gave up plans to write on Canadian art to become director because he says he believes that the art bank

represents the least elitist approach to art in Canada.

With more than 62 per cent of the bank's 7,000 pieces rented as of Aug. 1, Mr. Youngs says he is starting to feel good about it.

"There are two major problems," he says. "The majority of the work is treated in government offices in this region and it's not in as public a position as I would like it to be."

About 80 per cent of the art is rented in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

Displayed at Stratford

Mr. Youngs says he doesn't object to seeing art in executive offices because a lot of traffic is channelled through there. However, his greatest interest lies in educating the general public. This summer, for instance, 11 sculptures were on display at the Gallery, Stratford, Ont., and

others on the terraces on the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The art bank, in collaboration with the cultural affairs branch of the external affairs department, is sponsoring a three-year world tour of 26 paintings.

But Mr. Youngs says the education program has difficulties. "An educational program as it relates to visual arts takes about 10 years."

"One problem of the art bank to date has been the lack of advertising. People in Saskatchewan are just beginning to hear about it."

"We'd like \$1.2 million next year to operate on," he says.

(WIRE STORY)-

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