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## Ron Bloore: the images flow for artist in a pin-striped suit

By Lydia Pawlenko

Ronald Bloore's 'White-On-White' series of paintings remain a mystery. His modern-day polished and classic hieroglyphics stump us; in much the same manner archeologists are mystified at the discovery of some ancient 'cravings for the infinite.'

It was somewhat bewildering to find the artist-intellectual dressed in a pin-striped suit, cheerfully enjoying a coffee in his office at Vanier College, at an ungodly early hour.

One mistakenly could have connected his paintings — their silent language composed of geometric forms — to a monastic figure.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Professor Ronald Bloore juggles a full schedule of lecturing in York's humanities and visual arts departments, somehow managing to fit in some painting at his studio in the old farmhouse, "the only decent architecture on campus."

How does an artist survive at the university, do you discipline yourself for a certain amount of painting each day?

"No, although I tried it for a while. There are times when images flow out of the hand. It comes in cycles, and it's a disaster if it comes during the school year," he explained.

Bloore, 54, is one of the most important Canadian painters. Before coming to York in 1966, he had been director of the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, and one of the strongest motivators of the School of Saskatchewan Painting, from which the Regina Five evolved.

Interpretations of his decade-long ongoing affair with white have ranged from, "a smoothed out clump of vanilla ice cream with some ridges on it," to "work with



Bryon Johnson

"...I destroyed my paintings. I call it 'The Great Elimination'"

energy and literary allusion... having a relationship to something universal and enduring."

One cannot deny that Ronald Bloore's paintings are beautiful. They lead into another world of limitless space, of endless time.

"It's not my problem to interpret my work," he asserted. By analyzing his own work, Bloore believes he would be putting limitations on people.

"I have been painting since I was four and a half years old," he said, suggesting there are some things an artist cannot explain. The visions, the images that appear in his mind are personal. They have nothing to do with anyone else.

"I once went to Greece for a year, to paint. It became cold where we were, so I hitchhiked through Egypt with my wife and son. When I came back to Greece, I destroyed my paintings. I call it 'the great elimination.'"

Impressed by the antique art he saw in Egypt, Bloore accordingly burned 200 drawings and 30

paintings in three days.

"It was great to watch the smoke billowing out. I think the neighbours got a little worried," he laughed.

How sad. Didn't anyone try to stop you?

"No, why should they?" he shrugged, "It's my life. I don't regard it as negative at all, because the majority of artists do it."

Is there some kind of vision or destiny involved when you start to paint a series?

"For a while, I painted my Byzantine Lights series. I would think I produced about seventy paintings. Now I couldn't paint one. It was something that started and ended," he explained, with a puzzled look.

The subject of nationalism, particularly the importance of the Canadian search for an identity, brought a strong reaction from Ronald Bloore, "It is everyone's problem, not just the artists'. I wish that politicians and art bureaucrats, who I call 'the artocracy', would not assume that artists should carry the burden."

Although not yet certain of how great the Canada Council cutbacks have been, Bloore has in the past had a considerable amount of grants, and feels the program has been important.

"I am more concerned with the modes of nationalistic thinking of the Council because of citizenship. Most Canadians don't realize that three of the Group of Seven painters were born in England. Limitations on citizenship are exceedingly dangerous," he warned.

However, Bloore believes no matter what, those who need to paint and sculpt, will continue to do so, with or without a market, "I wish most painters would just shut up and just paint...Cutbacks should never affect the quality of the work. If it does, the so-called artist is dishonest."

Anyone who declares himself an artist will be in a difficult situation, "most of the painters of this country have to earn their living some other way."

Despite the frustrations shown about the teaching role that Canada has enforced on its artists, Professor Bloore's eyes lit up as he described his roles as an educator, "I hope to teach a love of painting, a passion. I like the attitudes of students here at York, they just want to learn, without any ulterior motive. It is damn difficult to survive. Very few survive. Learning about painting is a great analytical and aesthetic experience."

Do you ever get tired of painting in white?

"No, I am using a variety of colors. Actually I have 26 different kinds of whites. They range from grayish to creme to a rosy type of white. White is an abstraction....."

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