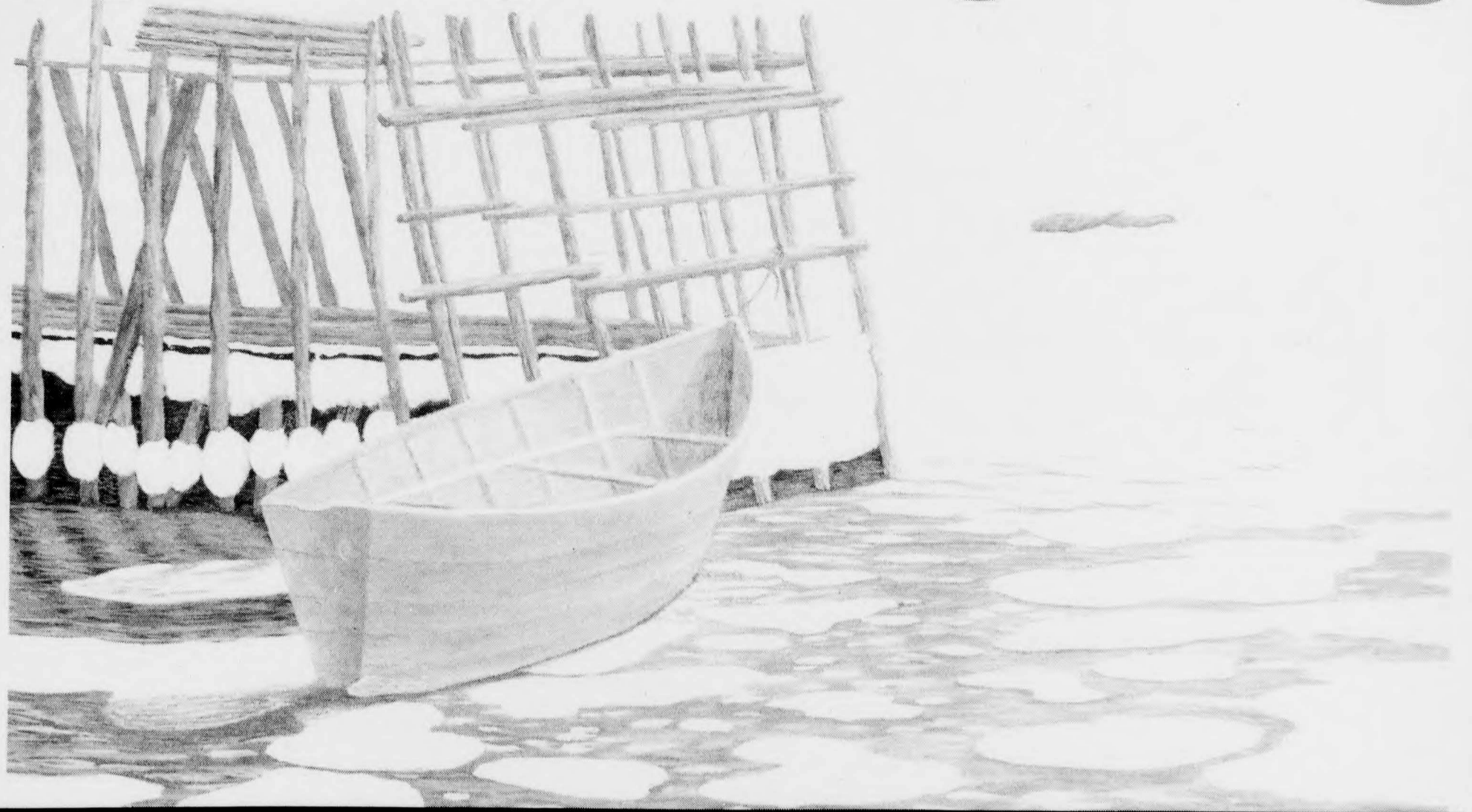


A r t s



gallery enables artists

by Tania Hewett

The road for an artist is difficult and, up until now, even more difficult for the disabled artist. But the opportunities previously denied to artists with disabilities are now provided with the help of The Able Disabled Art Centre which opened its doors in May 1988.

The gallery, a project of the centre, was founded by director Bruno Kuemin who suffered a stroke 13 years ago. His dream to provide a forum for the work of disabled artists took four years to accomplish.

The centre is a bridge between the art community and disabled

artists. It provides services beyond gallery space for artists' work. The centre also provides unique and vital services which involve education and peer support, as well as personal outreach as a way to bring other artists to the centre.

In addition to a director, the centre also has administrator Judy Boswell, who graduated from York with a fine arts degree. Boswell believes her study at York, particularly in an art administration course, adequately prepared her for the job because, "It helped give me a good understanding of how to run a non-profit organization. The course

also helped me deal with the problems that cropped up more effectively."

Unfortunately, there are many problems these artists face. According to Boswell, one problem is, "The work of the disabled artist is not taken seriously, it is seen as a craft. The toughest thing to fight is the perception that the work of disabled artists is not of the same calibre as so-called 'normal artists.'"

Now there are 16 artists associated with the centre. This organization is non-profit, taking only a 20 per cent donation from the sale of the artist's work. Currently, the

artist that is featured is a paraplegic from Newfoundland named Lindsay Collins. The focus of his work is the beauty of the East coast, specifically places he saw as a child growing up in Newfoundland. Collins wanted to give people a sense of what life is like in Newfoundland, and the hidden beauty of the Maritime region.

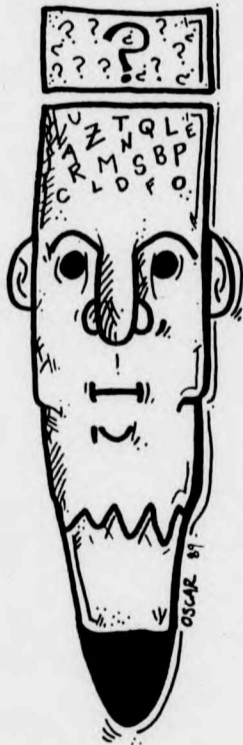
Collins is a talented artist, but without the centre he would not have had the chance to get his work displayed. Boswell points out, "These artists don't have the networking or connections that a normal artist has."

Boswell sees the gallery as a

springboard, and hopes that one day there will no longer be a need for the centre because that would mean the artists are accepted in the art world and have easy public access to their work. The centre is committed to breaking the stereotypical perception of disabled artists by showing how capable they are. The work being done at the centre is not only important to the art community but to society as well.

The Disabled Art Centre is located at 49 McCaul Street, Village By the Grange. The hours are Tuesday to Friday 11-4 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m.

writer's block



Ira Nayman is a York student with vast experience as a writer. Ira has written numerous newspaper columns as well as dabbling with CBC television and radio.

by Ira Nayman

Aristotle gave comedy a bum rap.

In *The Poetics*, Aristotle claimed tragedy was a superior form of art because it strove to show man aspiring to perfection. That he didn't achieve it, owing to a "fatal flaw" in his character, was what made the work a tragedy, y'unnerstand?

Comedy, on the other hand, was inferior because it reflected man's failings, his baser instincts (in the time of the Greeks, almost always physical—lust, gluttony, etc.).

Aristotle's assertion naturally developed from the ideas extant in Greek society. You may have noticed, for instance, that women actors were not given leading roles in either comedy or drama; that could be the subject of a column in itself. In regard to the present subject, however, it is interesting to note that the Greeks first developed the mind/body schism; thus drama, embodying the noblest aspirations of mind and emotions, was superior to comedy, which represented the sins of the flesh. Ordinarily, I wouldn't pick a

fight with somebody who has been dead over 2,000 years; there isn't much opportunity for a rigorous exchange of view.

Still, there is a general belief that comedy is necessarily a less legitimate art form than drama; people have a visceral feeling that only drama can aspire to greatness, that comedy will always be merely "entertainment."

The best comedy has as much legitimacy as the best drama (the rest, we don't talk about). Both represent reality, albeit from different perspectives. Both may pretend to have social significance (in fact, satire cannot be written without making a moral judgement—satirists, like cynics, cannot entirely smother their belief in right and wrong).

If you need convincing, compare a comedy and a drama on the same subject. Is *Dr. Strangelove's* anti-nuke message any less powerful than that of the dramas *Fail-Safe* or *On The Beach*? Do the films *M+A+S+H* or *Catch 22* really suffer in comparison to *Platoon* or any other recent anti-war drama? Does *Waiting for Godot* or *Rhinoceros* offer less profound observations on modern alienation than the

original *Breathless* or *The Draughtsman's Contract*? (What would Aristotle have made of theatre of the absurd, I wonder?).

In fact, the line between comedy and drama is blurring more and more these days. Of course, comic relief in drama has been around since William Shakespeare first put quill to folio, and comedies have been known to come to dramatic conclusions (think Capra). But, more recently, we've seen works of art where comedy and tragedy are mixed evenly, sometimes indistinguishably. The novels of John Irving (*The World According to Garp*), and John Nicholl (*The Milagro Beanfield War*), Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Hill Street Blues*, *L.A. Law* and the current rash of television "dramadies" are examples of works which freely mix the two forms.

Ultimately, comedy and drama must be recognized as two sides of the same coin, (a mask with half of a frown and half of a smile rather than two separate masks). Both, where executed properly, encourage the participant to experience catharsis (emotional purgation). Few people realize

laughter is as powerful a relief of emotion as tears (if you've ever wondered why people laugh at funerals or other serious events, wonder no more). In this light, to claim that one is superior to another seems ridiculous.

(On a practical level, comedy is harder to write well than drama. Think about it: comedy demands an immediate, usually frequently recurring response, laughter: while drama's effects are more subtle, more diffuse. At the risk of alienating theatre students, drama is simply easier to fake: in the absence of laughter, an audience member knows that she or he is not being entertained; there is no corresponding signal for drama. Many famous actors have claimed that comedy is more difficult to perform well than drama, which supports this claim.)

Criticism, like art, is a product of its time: the same aesthetic values that go into the production of the latter invariably are used in the former. (That is why, of course, critical opinions of art change over time.)

Isn't it time we stopped judging comedy by 2,000 year-old standards?