

Marjory Donaldson talks about the Art Centre

by Elizabeth Smith

The Art Centre is located in Memorial Hall, the dark brick building wedged between the Old Arts Building and the old Student Centre. It consists of two galleries and an office-studio. Also housed in Memorial Hall are the rehearsal studios for the resident musicians, the lecture room and office for the art historian, and a small theatre.

The functions of the Art Centre have grown so much in the last few years that this year, for the first time, there is a full-time curator, plus three part-time student assistants, who act as security guards during the hours the center is open.

Marjory Rogers Donaldson has been working part-time (about three-quarters time, she says) as assistant to the director, Bruno Bobak, but this year will work full-time with the new title, curator. The most important function of the Art Centre and the chief responsibility of Mrs. Donaldson is the scheduling and presentation of exhibitions in the two galleries.

Many of the exhibitions are offered at the Art Centre through the Atlantic Provinces Art Circuit of which Mrs. Donaldson is Secretary. The Circuit is comprised of several galleries in the Maritimes, each of which is responsible for arranging at least one major exhibit a year for the circuit. As each gallery pays only the express charges for transporting the collections, the circuit is an inexpensive way of familiarizing people throughout the Maritimes with the works of various artists in various mediums. These exhibitions are at some costs to the artists in preparation although they are given a small honorarium to help cover packing and insurance costs. In the long run the artist usually makes a small profit from the sale of pieces they are exhibiting. The galleries in the Circuit take no commission.

Marjory Donaldson exhibited a collection of paintings and prints on the Atlantic Circuit last year. This collection of twenty-two oil paintings, six prints and three drawings was displayed at St. Mary's University and Memorial University as well as the UNB Art Centre.

Mrs. Donaldson paints mostly figures and flowers, with very few landscapes simply because she "never gets around to them." Many of her figures are female nudes, some



Mrs. Donaldson explains the etching process as she puts the finishing touches on the etching. The dish in the foreground is an acid bath.

photo by De Freitas



An etching by Marjory Rogers Donaldson.

taken from drawing of models she did in London eight years ago while her husband UNB English professor, Alan Donaldson, was on sabbatical leave.

As she talked about the Art Centre in the rather cluttered office-studio, Mrs. Donaldson worked on a couple of etchings of a cat. The cat had been the unexpected but welcome visitor in the Donaldson home for a week during the summer, and Mrs. Donaldson had taken the opportunity to do several drawings. She could remember sketching a cat only once previously.

In etching one makes a design on a metal plate by letting acid eat into it for a controlled amount of time. The finished plate is then put in a press and several prints are made from it.

Starting on September 28th Marjory Donaldson will be teaching an afternoon non-credit course in printmaking open to university students only at a nominal fee. Mrs. Donaldson UNB in the techniques of painting and printmaking for the benefit mainly of history of art students. She thinks students would appreciate what they are studying more if they understood the process which produced it. She also sees a necessity for a new Art Centre building and the creation of a department of Fine Arts in the Arts Faculty.

"I have been here for seventeen years and every two years since I've been here there has been a study on the feasibility of a Fine Arts Department. The first year I was here I was told there would be a new building in five years time, and every year since then we've been told five years. Last year they said ten years, but when we explained the urgency they pushed it back to five years. Now I hear the physics department is going

to get a new building probably," she says, not complaining, but in a matter-of-fact tone. In seventeen years she has become accustomed to this treatment.

She does not foresee UNB in competition with Mount Allison as an art school. As she says, "The province isn't big enough for another art school. Mount A is a school for doers. UNB will be a school for thinkers."

Marjory Rogers Donaldson, as she signs her paintings, is a graduate from Mount Allison University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. She entered the university in science, but switched in her second year to fine arts in which she studied principally with Lawren Harris and Alex Coleville. She also worked with Pegi Nichol Macleod at UNB and at the City and Guilds of London School.

Mrs. Donaldson was commissioned to do portraits from photographs by the Alumni Association for the reunion of the class of '46 held during Encaenia this spring. The paintings, of four famous and perhaps eccentric ex-UNB profs, Catley, Harrison, Fleagen and DeMirten, have become part of the UNB Permanent Collection. The Creative Arts Committee bought several pieces for the Permanent Collection last year. They are "Edgecombe House", a Joseph Plaskett pastel; two drawings by Fred Ross, "Girl with Tuba", and "The Blue Chair"; an acrylic painting, "The Open Door", by Dave McKay; two figure drawings by Lawren Harris; "Tredgedy" a drawing, and "Female Figure", an acrylic painting, both by Robert Percival; and Bruno Bobak's "Kent's Punch", a large oil painting containing several members of the English Department. Mr Bobak also donated an oil painting entitled "Walter's Flowers", to the collection in memory of Prof. Walter Baker, the late chairman of the Creative Arts Committee.

The Board of Governors has granted \$5,000 for the purchase of works of art for the coming year. New purchases may be hung in any public place with security and will be chosen by Bruno Bobak in conjunction with representatives from this campus and UNBSJ.

Mrs. Donaldson is art director of "The Fiddlehead" magazine and has had graphics published in the "Atlantic Advocate" and other magazines.



Marjory Rogers Donaldson is preparing an etching of a cat in the Memorial Hall studio.

photo by De Freitas