

The Museum Explosion

CANADA is in the midst of a boom — a museum boom.

Once upon a time Canada was short of them. In 1903, there were only 37 museums stretched across the vast land. Fifty years later they'd inched up to 185. Now there are over 1,100. Every organization worth its salt, every country with any pride in itself, is busy putting together an object here, an artefact there, with dreams of opening a museum.

Basically, thus, a museum is an institution which collects, authenticates, preserves and interprets objects of nature and artefacts of man, primarily in the public interest, not for profit. It must entertain in an educational way; it must also provide adequate resources for research by scholars. Or, as Mr. Archie F. Key, former Director of the Canadian Museums Association, puts it, it must combine both "education and showbiz."

The common view of a museum is a dank temple paying homage to a musty past where exhibits never change; nor do the "do-not-touch" signs. In recent years, museums have striven to change all that, to let people inside, have fun, feel welcome. The unfriendly "do-not-touch" signs have largely been removed; in fact, many museums in Canada now welcome touching as part of the learning experience.

"Today, they know they have to take a calculated risk," explains Mr. Key.

A museum, for instance, can be a whole village, and Canada has several. At Hazelton (British Columbia), the most popular museum is an authentic Indian village called Ksan, from the word Gitaksan, meaning people of the Skeena. Inside are a treasure house, the replica of a native community house, feast house from potlatch days, totem poles, canoes, native symbols and implements—all making possible the recreation of rituals and symbolic festivals.

Parts of cities can also serve as a museum — and the most ambitious of them all is the Fortress of Louisbourg, 23 miles south of Sydney,

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Seen against the painting "Portrait of a Lady" by Bartolomeo Veneto, a recent acquisition of the Gallery.

JEAN SUTHERLAND BOGGS

Canada's "First Lady" of Culture

Jean Sutherland Boggs is the only woman in the world to head a national art gallery. She has been the director of the National Gallery of Canada since 1966 — the fifth director since the gallery was founded in 1880, largely due to the efforts of another woman, Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria and wife of Canada's third Governor-General.

As the effective "first lady" of Canada's cultural hierarchy, it is inevitable that during this International Women's Year Jean Boggs should have a busy schedule of speeches about the role of women in the arts. And in them, she maintains that "Canada is almost a haven for women in the arts — there are numerous women in prominent positions across Canada."

Born in Peru, where her father was an oil geologist, Jean Boggs grew up in Ontario. She began to study art history at 16 and completed a fine arts honours course at 20. Upon graduation, she "took a wild gamble" and went to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to work with Arthur Lismer. The perilous, though exciting, existence of the arts community prompted her to resume studies, this time at Harvard, where she took the famous museum training course taught by Paul Sachs. Work on a thesis in Paris and travel in Europe were made possible by a Harvard fellowship, which also led to teaching positions in American colleges and universities.

By the time she returned to Canada in 1962, to become cura-

tor of the Art Gallery of Ontario, she was well on her way to gaining international reputation as an author, art historian (a specialist on Degas and Picasso), and administrator. She says she reached her present position on the basis of experience, training, "and a certain amount of luck."

What she calls her greatest stroke of luck seems particularly relevant in the International Woman's Year. It occurred when Judy LaMarsh, as Secretary of State, appointed her to the directorship of the National Gallery, "It is possible that, as a woman, she was more ready to appoint a woman to a senior position," states Boggs.

Public appearances are part of Dr. Boggs' many responsibilities as director of the National Gallery and, "because there is a lot happening in art museums across Canada," she carries out what she considers "the delightful obligation" of travelling all over Canada, often delivering lectures about the gallery. She does a fair amount of lecturing as well on the other fields in which she is an expert and says, "It's an escape — a refreshment... and I do it to remind myself that I'm an art historian and that I should be thinking sometimes of other things besides the gallery."

The relationship between museums and the community remains one of Boggs' favourite crusades. "It is very important that the museum be based upon the interests and character of the community," she says. "It is more important to dev-