

Abstract artwork with a twist

By PAULETTE PEIROL

Scriptures become abstract hieroglyphics framed by expressive form and color in the work of Hannah Sandburg. Her retrospective exhibit at Zacks gallery in Stong College features forty years of developmental abstract painting, extending from her early exterior landscape works to her most recent interpretations of the book Ecclesiastes. For the eighty year old artist, working from a studio in her Downsview home, painting is a full time occupation, demanding both creative spiritual awareness and the perseverance to market her own work. While her exhibit continues in Zacks until October 10, Sandburg is busy publishing a book of her work on Ecclesiastes.

Kirk Stevens, Zacks' gallery monitor, claims that he's never seen such a large audience drawn to the gallery for an individual artist's work. Fellow of Zacks gallery Merlin Homer

attributes the increased viewership partially to the fact that the paintings are framed. In Sandburg's previous exhibit, her work was merely "tacked to the wall," says Homer.

Born in Israel, Sandburg began her artistic career painting abstract landscapes. Although her work traces continuous transformations in style, it has retained its abstract quality. Sandburg gained critical acclaim in New York, where she lived and exhibited her work often in the 1950s and '60s. 1970 however, marked a major change in her life when Professor Virginia Rock, then master of Stong College, invited her and her husband, the late Mordecai Sandburg, to teach to York. Hannah taught Stong tutorials in Visual Art and the Bible, while her husband taught on the musical setting of the Bible.

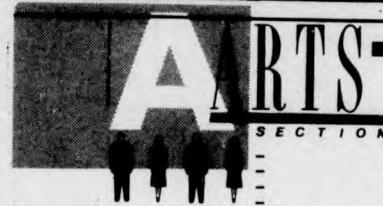
Sandburg's visual interpretations of the Bible began in the 1940s, when she started to include scriptures in her painting. She experimented with different types of languages; English, Chinese, and Hebrew, to determine which visual characters of writing worked best with her painting. Hebrew proved the most applicable, and "was closest to (her) heart." "Each painting," says Sandburg, "is a complete sentence within the work." Since individual sentences in the Bible cannot mean different meanings, the composition of each painting is therefore unique in form, color, and texture. Unlike Michelangelo, Da Vinci, and other historical

painters who have explored the Bible in their work, Sandburg does not attempt to portray an entire book or story in a single painting. In the past forty years, she has interpreted sections from the Book of Ruth, Genesis, the Book of Lamentations, Isaiah, and Ecclesiastes.

Sandburg's early exterior landscapes use muted pastels in such a contradictory way that they appear bright. The central focus in these paintings is a recurring yellow glow emanating from the landscape itself. While color provides an emotional

tional context to these paintings, their form is rather flat and typical.

The 1950s heralded yet another development in Sandburg's work. She had previously been using figures with words in her painting, then began to discard individual words in favor of using purely color and form to evoke their emotional content. Sandburg advises the viewer "not to look for scriptures but to see the picture as a whole," in terms of structure and color. "It's a spiritual work..." she explains, "to give to the people the feeling for and explana-



tion of the text."

Her 1960s work marks a quantum leap in Sandburg's artistic development, both stylistically and contextually. These paintings, such as the "My Image" sequence and "The End of Days" forfeit inner subtlety

continued on p. 19

Cuban photo exhibit focuses on dignity of the worker

By DAVID BYRNES

Contemporary Cuban Photographs, now on at the Norman Bethune Art Gallery is a show about the dignity of ordinary people: musclebound and tool wielding in the factories at the heart of the Cuban economy, and at repose in their everyday life.

The artist is Ivan Canas, who calls the 50 black and whites on display "hand made," and obviously takes the same pride in his work that he finds in his subjects.

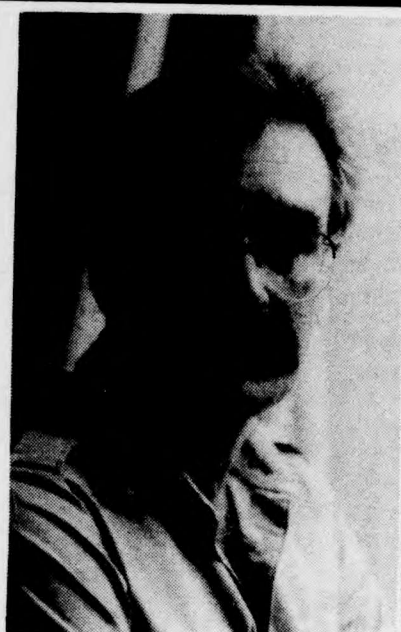
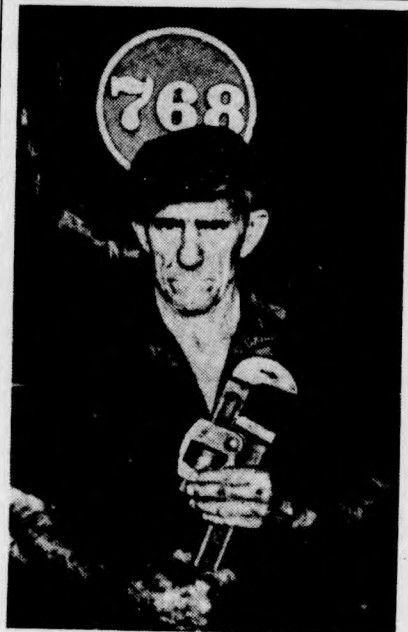
The photographs are arranged in a loose fashion that suggests a progression from death to life, and from the oppression of the Cuban people in the past to their hopes for the future. From a complete absence of life in the first photograph, "Funeral Cars," to the final image of a child carrying a portrait of Jose Marti in an Independence Day parade, this exhibition makes a predictable enough political statement. But when the images are taken separately, as they should be, the message is transcendent.

"The dignity of man is present in each photograph," Canas explains. "As you can see they are from an underdeveloped country, and the poverty sometimes shows, but always the man has dignity. They are not rich men, they are ordinary people. But they have dignity, I am sure of that."

Canas portrays these ordinary people with an appropriately simple

style. Most of the photographs in the exhibit are posed portraits, often with the subject centred in the frame and directly facing the camera. In addition, Canas sometimes first asks his subjects how they would like to pose. The result is a very posed quality, but also a definite projection from the subject to his anticipated spectator, which is always a projection of individual strength or enigmatic dignity.

A fine example of the Canas' skill



Ivan Canas (pictured right) was on hand at Norman Bethune Art Gallery on Monday to open his show. Pictured left, "The Working Class."

GARY BLAKELEY

THE TORONTO SYMPHONY PRESENTS

duMAURIER
EVENING OVERTURES

A Pre-concert Chamber Programme
at ROY THOMSON HALL

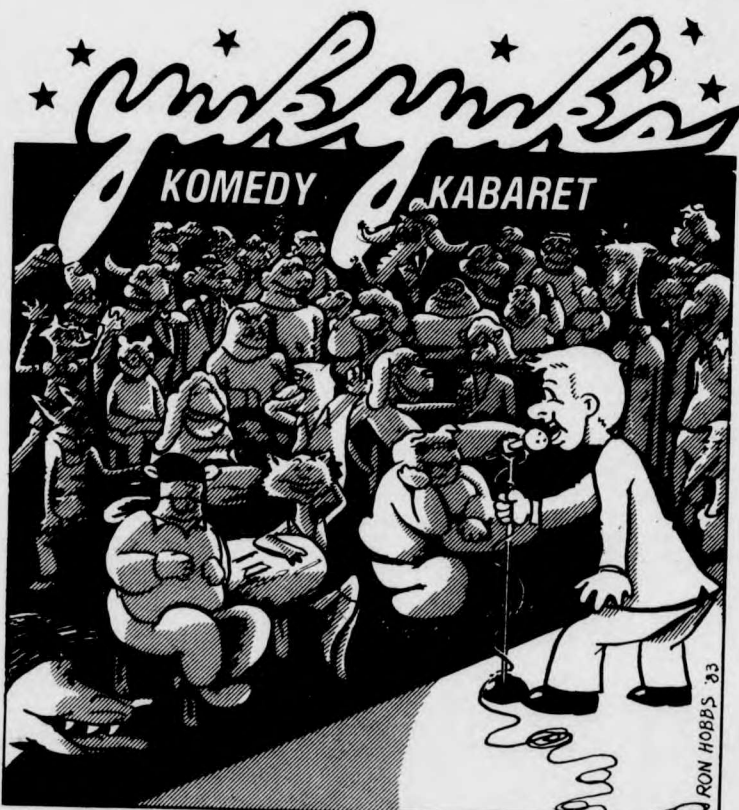
Wed., Thurs. & Sat. October 9, 10 & 12 6:50 p.m.

SHOSTAKOVICH
PIANO QUINTET

ANDREW DAVIS, piano
ARKADY YANIVKER & MARK SKAZINETSKY, violin
KENT TEEPLE, viola; DAVID HETHERINGTON, cello

ALL SEATS \$3.50

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
AT THE BOX OFFICE AND ALL BASS OUTLETS
OR PHONE 872-2233
WHEEL CHAIR ACCESS



EVERY WED. NITE IS CAMPUS NITE!!

\$2.50 ANY WEDNESDAY WITH STUDENT CARD!

1280 BAY

967-6425

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

• PAYROLL • DEDUCTIONS •

SAVING MADE EASY

As an employee of YORK UNIVERSITY you can arrange to have all or a portion of your pay automatically credited to a special savings account, chequing account or R.R.S.P. at UNICOLL — Your Credit Union.

Visit us at our conveniently located branch and we will set it up for you — it will just take a moment.

Discover the credit union difference.



UNICOLL CREDIT UNION*
Curtis Lecture Halls,
Room 112
York University,
Downsview M3J 1P3
667-3239

* UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CREDIT UNION
MEMBER OF ONTARIO SHARE AND DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

