

ENTERTAINMENT

York profiles: Ronald Bloore

Artist delves into whiter shades of pale

By TED MUMFORD

Being a cold environment, a construction of concrete, terrazzo and glass at the top of Toronto, York is not an easy place to feel at home. There is only one building that has lived-in feeling that the passing of many years creates - it's fitting that it should house the studio of the friendly and brilliant painter Ronald Bloore.

Stong House is a sturdy old farmhouse on Steeles Avenue, set off from the rest of the campus by a healthy walk. Here I discovered the hypnotic beauty of the work of Ronald Bloore, a painter, sculptor, critic and York professor who is acknowledged across the country as one of the major figures in Canadian art.

Since the early sixties Bloore has worked almost exclusively with one colour: white. "But I don't see my paintings as being

white... 'White' is an abstraction - a name on a tube of paint." In fact, Bloore uses soft greys and the lighter hues of many colours; for one mural he used twenty different "whites".

Bloore works on his paintings in series - when I visited him he was working on 27 pieces in the Byzantine Lights series. Some of these will never leave the studio, however, for Bloore's self-scrutiny is merciless.

Bloore begins a painting by brushing or spraying a relief level of paint on a masonite panel. After drying, a second layer is applied with knives, spraycan, brush or by hand. Bloore may glaze the painting by rubbing in several layers of paint, and he sands the surface to obtain a smooth finish. Finally the work is washed, and the back is painted and signed. Most of the paintings are simply given the

title Painting, distinguished only by a number or date.

The end product is a serene and timeless work of art that suggests an ancient mantra, a brilliant sunburst or a delicate seashell. Many of Bloore's paintings are now on display in a travelling exhibition called "Ronald Bloore: 16 Years." The show also includes some of Bloore's fascinating "sploores". Made of wooden spoons and dowelling, these sculptures are no less unique than Bloore's paintings.

Bloore was born in Brampton in 1925 and he decided to be a painter at the age of four. After a wartime stint in the army, he enrolled in art and archaeology at U. of T. "My first day at university I decided to be a professor," says Bloore, and indeed, he was been drawn to the academe all his life. After graduating from U. of T. in 1949, Bloore studied at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, St. Louis's Washington University and in Europe. From 1953 to 1958 he taught at the University of London's Courtauld Institute, Washington University and U. of T.

In 1958 Bloore's career took off. He began painting his famous all-white works, and he was appointed director of the University of Saskatchewan's Norman Mackenzie Gallery.

"I ran the gallery first for myself, secondly for artists within the gallery's sphere of influence, thirdly as an educational extension of Regina College, and finally for the community. Some people say I had my priorities backwards." Whether Bloore had his priorities straight or not, he was probably one of the most energetic gallery directors this country has ever seen. He exposed Regina to art from the rest of Canada, and gave Regina artists national exposure.

Bloore is probably best known as the organizer of an exhibition of five Regina artists that would eventually tour the country and establish each of the artists nationally. Ted Godwin, Ken Lochhead, Arthur MacKay, Doug Morton (now a professor at York) and Bloore became known as the Regina Five, a label Bloore is quick to reject.

"Canadian art critics tend to paint by numbers... We never considered ourselves a group." The Regina Five dispersed shortly af-



Artist Ronald Bloore mixing his whites.

ter the exhibition.

In 1962 Bloore received a Canada Council Fellowship to travel and paint in Europe. Bloore's obsessive interest in ancient ruins took him to Greece, Spain, Turkey and Egypt. Of this trip, Bloore has said, "When I saw that magnificent antique art, my

own stuff seemed puny, esoteric and inconsequential."

On his return in 1963 Bloore destroyed 200 of his drawings and 30 paintings because of his dissatisfaction with his own work. "It's nothing unusual. Lots of guys have done it." Bloore has since worked exclusively in white.

Peaches & Poisoned Cream Labours without focus

By BOB POMERANZ

How a lone girl stays alive in a tough world full of poverty and misery is the question posed in *Peaches and Poisoned Cream*, the season opener at the Factory Lab Theatre.

The play's major fault is that the question is neither resolved nor even dealt with effectively, perhaps because it lacks a central focus. As a result, the audience is met by a variety of events which lack cohesion and appear more as separate incidents than a part of one central story.

Granted, the incidents are not without interest. Scenes range from a girl shaking her father to death to a man achieving erection by having his entire body cranked off his bed via a pulley-like device. Such scenes are off-beat, and possess a certain amount of humour, but the audience reacts with a mild form of curiosity, rather than with howls of laughter.

This is due not only to seemingly unrelated episodes, but a rather dull set which seems to consist of piles of rocks, strewn around assorted piles of junk. The costumes, though imaginative, appear to be incomprehensible to the

audience. One intriguing costume consists of a multitude of rags, to which are attached hands, ears, and other assorted appendages.

Peaches and Poisoned Cream is described as "A frothy comic musical, with serious undertones." The lyrics were written by playwright-director Jackie Crossland, who has produced some erratic, but interesting work in the past.

The surrealistic music is the most effective element of the production. When the players sing, their raspy voices carry with them the eerie tones of the piano. One song repeatedly sung by the Queen, is possibly the one cohesive element of the play.

On speaking with Jackie Crossland, it is apparent that some of her ideas concerning the lack of warmth in human relationships and her views on sexual freedom are present within the play. Her characters are searching for love, but regretfully, none of Crossland's thoughts are clearly delineated. Instead of "a frothy comic musical with serious undertones," we have a limp disarray of episodes, with little comedy, and less continuity.



Abigail Wright, John Peter Linton experiment with the old pulley.

Holy letters, Indian myth, Stong group show strong

By BILL GLADSTONE

The Stong Fellows Group Show opened last week in the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery, and according to Rick Gold, the director of the gallery, the opening was a success.

"We've brought together the art of five Stong Fellows for the showing," says Gold. "Each of these artists has a distinctive style. It took some manoeuvring to arrange the pieces," says Gold. Indeed, the works show traces of such diverse elements as Hebrew calligraphy and Indian mythology. But Gold is happy with the effect of his arrangement, which allows each work to highlight the others near it.

Approaching Hannah Sandberg's work is like drawing near to a truth, large and simple. She has painted, in the original Hebrew lettering, a number of commands and blessings from the Old Testament.

"I feel that the letters of the

Bible speak to me," says Sandberg. "I take a verse and through the letters I capture the spirit, the essence, the meaning."

In Aba Bayefsky's paintings, especially the later ones, the influence that Indian mythology had on him is quite evident. His works, leaning heavily towards abstractions, nonetheless keep in focus the human themes and subjects he is treating, which remain predominant on the canvas.

Tamara Jaworski's two tapestries are overpoweringly large and dynamic. *Planet In Red*, and *Planet In Brown* (as they are called), seem as slow-moving as actual planets, and as visually fascinating as the mysterious manner by which planets actually move. It is as if Jaworski has brought the undefinable mechanics of the universe to her work.

Her use of colour and texture are unique - she uses everything from natural Merino wool to horsehair in her weavings.

Diane McGibbon's crewel works cleverly unite a variety of visual themes with a number of intellectual ones. Her pieces are decorative and seem to display the enthusiasm and enjoyment that went into their making. She handles her themes with a light and optimistic touch, which is paralleled by the cleanliness and precision of her designs.

"Leonhard Oesterle's sculptures give an impression of birds about to lift off from the ground," says Rick Gold. Oesterle's earlier works have echoes of Henry Moore.

"Interestingly enough, his latest works combine the cubist qualities with the sensuous curves of Moore," says Gold. The pieces that result are well defined, and nicely streamlined - indeed, almost bird-like.

The showing presents a good opportunity to see what sort of art the Stong College Fellow Artists are producing. The show will be together in the Zacks Gallery until November 18.

Ovations for Winds

By SHELLEY RABINOVITCH
and EVAN LEIBOVITCH

The York Winds appear to have finally made a name for themselves even on York ground: the hall was fairly well filled last Thursday night with over a hundred quiet spectators even before the group made its entrance. The Quintet, gave its first performance since it has become a full-time professional woodwind quintet, the only one of its kind in Canada.

The music varied from Haydn's *Divertimento in D major* to John Weinzweig's avant garde untitled piece, and led through the treacherous, difficult passages of the late John Barrows, demanding a high level of technical virtuosity. Textures varied throughout the concert, the focus centering on now the flute, now the oboe and from time to time on the full quintet.

The group was a little slow starting after intermission, and their timing was off a bit on the first piece, *Partita* by Irving Fine. They soon regained their pace, however, and redeemed themselves with outstanding performances on the next and final two items. Franz Danzi's *Quintet in G Minor* (Op. 56, No. 2) was one that flowed along and carried the audience with it.

After some five minutes ovation, the *Winds* encore was a short, superbly executed piece, simply entitled *Ancient Hungarian Dances*. Another ovation, longer this time, and the York Winds concert was over, a complete success.

The audience was satisfied, and not a bad comment would be heard outside, as some already looked forward to the *Winds*' next concert to be held November 27 at Glendon's Old Dining Hall.