

Reviewing the ROM

Museum opens doors after giving a new face to the old place

Ian Bailey

When the Royal Ontario Museum re-opens tomorrow morning, the main exhibit will be the renovations that cost sixty million dollars and took twenty months to complete.

The opening will reveal the first two of eight galleries in a new 'cluster' design. The remaining six will be opened in 1984 to coincide with Ontario's bicentennial and Toronto's sesquicentennial celebration.

The Mediterranean World, which wraps a handful of old galleries into the story of civilizations on the shores of the Mediterranean, is one of the galleries to debut tomorrow. The Life Sciences Cluster will contain galleries dealing with evolution, reptiles, arthropods and invertebrates. Also on display will be the Vertebrate Fossils Gallery and two temporary exhibitions on Space Photography and building materials of the Islamic world.

In the new cluster system collections from various departments throughout the museum are integrated into a network of inter-related galleries. "People will see the Museum in a different way," predicts Toshio Yamamoto who is in charge of collections management. "Things are not concentrated. There is an integrated approach to tell a story."

Clusters are a ROM innovation, developed by the complexes' Educational and Communications Task Force. The ROM had the unique opportunity to re-arrange the old building and place related disciplines together.

The ROM's new design is a

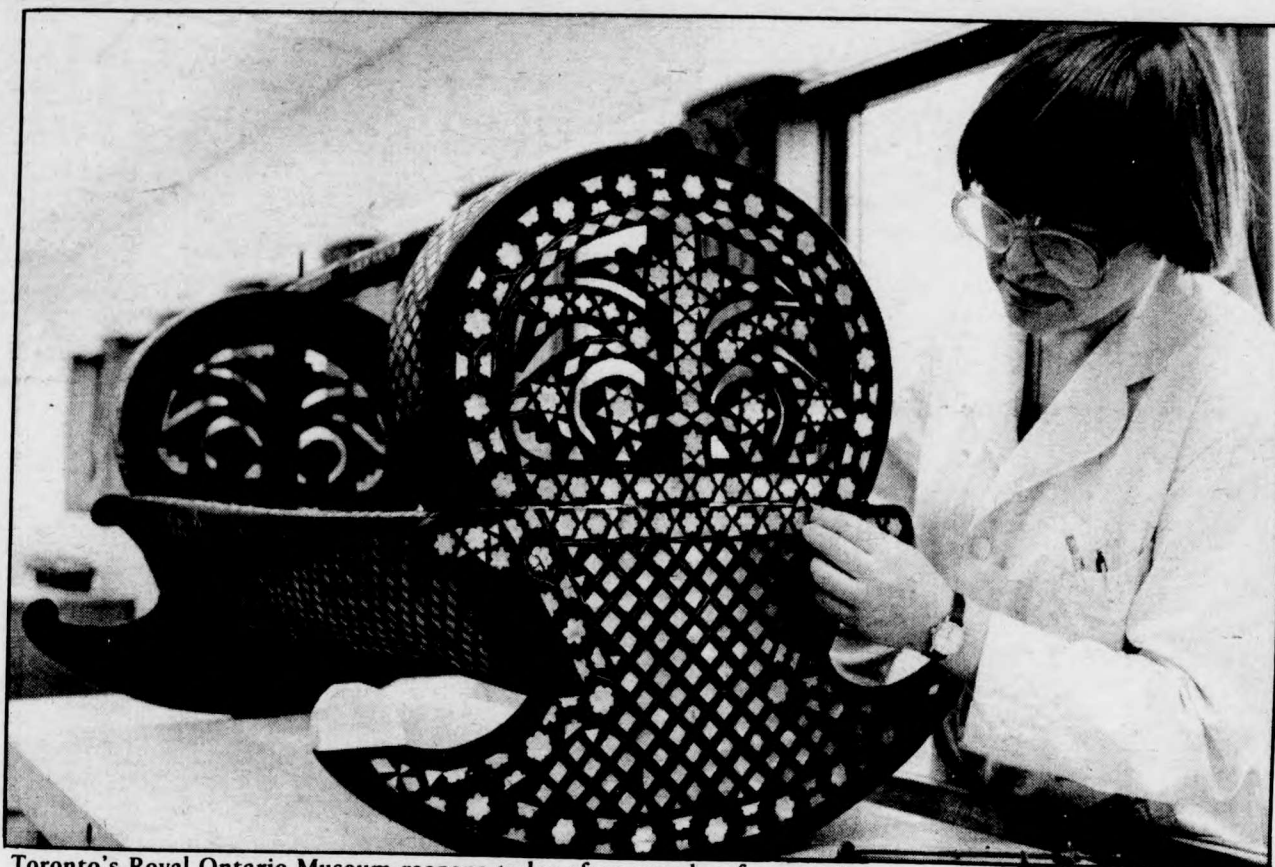
testament to versatility in the face of adversity. With Bloor Street to the north and Avenue Road to the east there was no room to expand outwards around the perimeter of the buildings. The renovators also had to contend with by-laws that prevent new buildings from being higher than existing structures. "We had to put a lot of things into a constrained site," says design architect Gene Kinoshita.

He recalls, "We had to fit a design into two courtyards of the H-shaped museum. We felt that the existing facades were important in a historical sense. We retained them by inserting new buildings and a space."

The space is a series of spectacular atria between the old building facades and two new buildings; the nine-floor curatorial centre fills the southern U-shaped space of the H, and the Terrace Galleries occupy the corresponding space to the north. The cavernous gap, lit by natural light streaming down through a glass roof helps to alleviate what Kinoshita refers to as "museum fatigue."

Spectacular in size, the atria will still be open when the ROM opens its first phases. Kinoshita hopes that in future there will be funds for the addition of more human elements such as banners or tapestries.

Including a human element in the new 700,000 square foot complex proved to be one of the major challenges. With the museum's many disciplines, Kinoshita says one of the challenges in renovating was



Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum reopens today after months of renovation.

to design a facility people were able to move through easily. On his mind throughout were ways to "take the visitors through and give them a sense of orientation between the old and the new."

In spite of skillful architectural design it is in the presentation of history combined with the settings into which it places its artifacts and the impression they leave on visitors that will determine the ROM's acceptance.

There are several memorable areas in the first phase. The Islamic Gallery in the Mediterranean World uses a variety of architectural forms, intentionally aged, to create a simulation of an Arabic townsite.

The focus, according to designer Lisa Golombek, is on the everyday, features of life as opposed to the timeless works of art that remain from Middle Eastern civilization, and the artifacts are the mundane made special by age.

Also striking is the diorama section of the Reptile Gallery in the Life Sciences Cluster.

Yet throughout there is a sense of incompleteness to the ROM that is reinforced by portholes in the Mediterranean World cluster giving a view into the under construction Terrace Galleries which are slated for opening by 1984.

Throughout 1983 the ROM will

have the opportunity to prove itself as a result of a series of exhibitions. In March 1983 'The Search for Alexander', a retrospective of art during the era of Alexander the Great, will be presented. The exhibition will be followed by 'Treasures from the Tower of London; An Exhibition of Arms and Armour', 'Silk Roads/China Ships' will focus on trade between east and west and by 1984 an untitled exhibition to celebrate Ontario's bicentennial and Toronto's sesquicentennial will coincide with the ROM's full opening. The heady crowds searching for the exotica of the past will judge the exotica of the ROM.

NOTICE TO NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS

The following regulation has been issued by the Sales Tax Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Revenue.

University and Boarding School Meal Plans

"Effective June 14, 1982, prepared food products sold at an eating establishment for more than 20¢ are subject to tax at the 7 per cent rate. An exemption, however, has been granted to meal plans purchased by resident or non-resident students of a university or boarding school for a single comprehensive price.

The meal plan must be purchased through a university or boarding school or the establishment providing the catering service for the university or boarding school.

The meal plan may provide a student with a fixed number of meals per day or allow the student to participate in meals on an a-la-carte basis. However, it must apply exclusively to the provision of prepared food products and not to the purchase of other items (i.e. alcoholic beverages or groceries).

Prepared food products purchased on a cash or charge basis by students, faculty and others through university or boarding school cafeterias or other eating establishments remain taxable."

In light of this regulation, the University is pleased to announce the following meal plan for non-residence student available immediately from:

York Campus: Scrip Office, Temporary Office Building (TOB)

Glendon Campus: Accounting Office, C103 York Hall

1. The student must purchase a minimum of \$150.00 worth of scrip for the first term (7 September - 5 January inclusive)

AND/OR

\$150.00 worth of scrip for the second term (6 January - 7 May inclusive).

2. The student must take the full amount of scrip purchase at time of purchase.
3. All sales are final; there will be no returns or refunds.
4. Payment must be certified cheque or cash.

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