

in the exhibition, *Early Works* (drawings from 1952-1962), Town moves from imaginative subjects such as *Renaissance Sculptor Working by Candlelight* to interpretations of famous historical figures, as in *Queen Elizabeth I*.

Works in the next series, *Single Autographic Prints*, were all printed on an old lithographic press using a Bavarian limestone measuring about 16 by 20 inches. Town started with simple forms and textures and limited colours, then moved on to multiple colours and layers of ink, sometimes drawing directly, sometimes from the reverse of the paper and occasionally adding collage elements. His subjects range from his immediate surroundings to ancient civilisations, and the style sometimes evokes Japanese woodblock prints.

These prints, numbering into the thousands, brought Town into the international arena. They were included in the 1956 Venice Biennale, at Sao Paulo the following year and at five successive Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, print biennials.

Drawings ordered removed

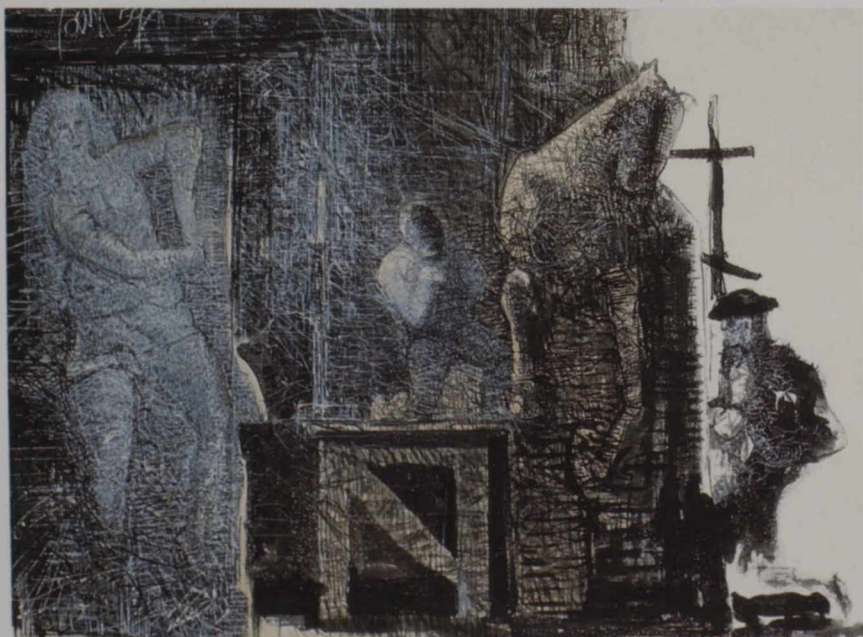
Town, never short on opinions, has described *The Enigmas*, the third series, as 'the political cartoon on my private editorial page.' The bitter social commentary of this group of satirical drawings Town made between 1964 and 1972 was not lost on his viewers. While ten of the drawings were on display in Vienna, an Italian cardinal found two of them offensive and ordered them removed.

Town's comment at the time matched the acidity of his drawings. 'It's such an honour being banned in Italy, the mother of sensuality. It's like being asked to straighten your tie in a bordello.'

In *French Postcards*, the fourth series, and *The Famous*, the eighth series, Town moves from satire to photographs. Where the *French Postcards*, done in the 1970s, gently mock 'peeping Tom' photographs, *The Famous*, a series Town began in 1984, are portraits based on photographs of well-known people.

One of the Toy Horse series

Renaissance Sculptor Working by Candlelight
1959
Pen, ink, brush,
watercolour and gouache
on Ingres Arches paper



Town's black pencil lines on a white surface move from an old and anxious Queen Victoria surrounded by sartorial trappings to a rigidly posed Piet Mondrian, his facial features curiously indistinct.

Like the *French Postcards*, the next two series, *Vale Variations* and *Toy Horses*, were mainly done in the 1970s. The inspiration for the *Vales* was a small pen-and-ink erotic fantasy drawn by Toronto artist Florence Vale. Town's variations explore the relations among the seven figures in Vale's drawing: five joyful, uninhibited females, one anxious male and an angel seated with its back to the viewer.



A toy horse that Town bought at a Toronto antique store inspired the series of the same name. Second only to the *Single Autographic Prints* in number, *Toy Horses* presents in image, the horse (mostly in side view) in an astonishing variety of playful and witty interpretations, somewhat the way children create imaginary new worlds around a single, treasured object.

Herd instinct for disaster

Town stays with the animal kingdom but returns to satire in the seventh series, *Bug Walk*. His bug actors, although individual in colour and form, have a herd instinct for disaster. The agents of their demise are all man-made contrivances, guns, bridges, slot machines, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which Town cunningly disguises in black ink and pen.

Town is still working on the final theme, *The Stages*, which he began late last year. Although the works are quite small, viewers can perceive different images depending on how far away they are. From a distance, the strong colours and patterns are prevalent, but moving closer you can see new ranges of graphic detail and relationships of colour.

Town has said, 'If I could do only one thing, I would draw.' That he approaches drawing with such skill, virtuosity and invention presents not only a challenge to viewers and critics, but an opportunity to take great pleasure in the creative expressions of a gifted artist.