

# 'Beethoven' artist nominated for Gov. General's Award

By JOHN STEWART  
Staff

Scott Cameron has never been one to promote himself or to submit his work to the multitude of contests open to illustrators.

Fortunately for him, the 31-year-old born and bred Mississaugan doesn't have to promote himself — his work speaks for itself.

That's why he's one of five Canadian illustrators vying next week for the top recognition in his profession: a Governor General's Literary Award.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that Cameron got a telephone call from out of the blue telling him he'd been nominated in the category

of children's literature for his remarkable work in illustrating author Barbara Nichol's *Beethoven Lives Upstairs*.

"It surprised the hell out of me," said the low-key Cameron in an interview at the Spring Rd. house in Lorne Park where he's lived all his life. "The book was barely even out and I didn't know that Lester (the publishing house) had submitted it" for the prize.

## Unusual project

Beethoven was an unusual project in a number of ways. The story of a boy's musings about the apparently mad composer who lodges in his mother's house, was first pro-

duced as an Emmy-award winning video.

After unsuccessful efforts to transform the video images into book form (they were too blurry) and some failed attempts with other illustrators, Lester turned to Cameron's lush, romantic style, which fit the concept perfectly.

In the publicity material for the Governor General's awards, Cameron's oil paintings are described as "like old masterpieces drawing the viewer into the world of the nineteenth century. These powerful illustrations are enhanced by their warm, rich colors and dramatic lighting."

It took two long months of detailed research on the period and three months of painting to produce the book. Cameron, a huge fan of the work of N.C. Wyeth and Frederic Remington, describes his style as "painterly." The Beethoven work, with its play on light and shadow is "my meat and potatoes," he says.

After graduating from Lorne Park Secondary, Cameron studied four years at the Ontario College of Art. He'd always loved art. After graduating, he took two years off to build a portfolio. Then he began stumping.

He got work right away at Chickadee and Owl Magazines, which led to a Star Week piece, which brought him to the attention of Lester. From there, it's been a steady diet of magazine covers, textbook covers, and now books. Cameron has illustrated 18 covers of a schoolbook series by Pierre Berton, for instance.

Working at home may be the wave of the future for a lot of corporations, but it's old hat to Cameron, who makes his own hours. If he's



Staff photo by Rob Beintema

**Drawing on success** — Lorne Park artist Scott Cameron poses with some of the paintings he created to illustrate *Beethoven Lives Upstairs*, by Barbara Nichol.

working on a deadline, he may be painting 12 hours a day or all night.

But he also has the freedom to go for a walk in the woods or play with the six cats who are his constant companions. "Growing up with the trees and animals had a lot to do with my own development," he says.

While the \$10,000 literary prize

would be wonderful, Cameron says he just hopes the nomination will keep him working steadily and open a few more doors. "I'm thrilled," he says. "It's my first public exposure."

Now that he's got a taste of success, maybe Cameron will even start entering some of those illustrators' contests.