

# A new sheriff in town

By SANDY MILLAR  
Special

July 27/01 AM

The changing of the guard is now official. Robert Freeman has been appointed curator at the Art Gallery of Mississauga (AGM).

He has actually been on the job since Feb. 1, replacing former curator Stuart Reid, who after eight years moved on to the prestigious Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery in Owen Sound.

Meanwhile, a "Meet the Curator" evening is being planned for sometime in August.

Freeman brings with him over 20 years of experience with public art galleries, including 13 years as director and curator of the Gallery/Stratford, a well-established public gallery in that southwestern Ontario community. He is past president (1993) of the Ontario Association of Art Galleries.

"We sought an individual," said AGM executive director Fred Troughton, "who would bring a broad background of art and gallery experience to the AGM, be able to assist in implementing our new strategic plan, produce more exhibitions from the gallery's own Permanent Collection, develop the local multicultural arts community, work with the established artists and art groups in Mississauga, and eventually move on to the position of executive director."

Freeman has all of these qualities.

"For a gallery as young as the AGM (established in 1987) we've come a long way," said Troughton, "and I expect that Rob will continue to maintain our status. We have developed a significant collection of works, gained a reputation as one of the top five galleries in Ontario, and our publications have received critical acclaim."

Freeman seemed like a natural for the position.

"I have worked freelance with galleries across the region, including the AGM, for the past two years," said Freeman.

He was raised in Georgetown, where his interest in art was first spawned.

"I remember," said Freeman, "always being the one in elementary school to be chosen for specific art projects and being allowed to leave the room for long periods. In high school, it seemed natural to enter the arts and science program. Before graduating, I had heard that civil engineers had designed the Expo '67 buildings, which appealed to me, so I enrolled in the Civil Engineering program at Waterloo University. After two years, I switched to the University of Guelph, where I studied sculpting, drawing, art and art history."

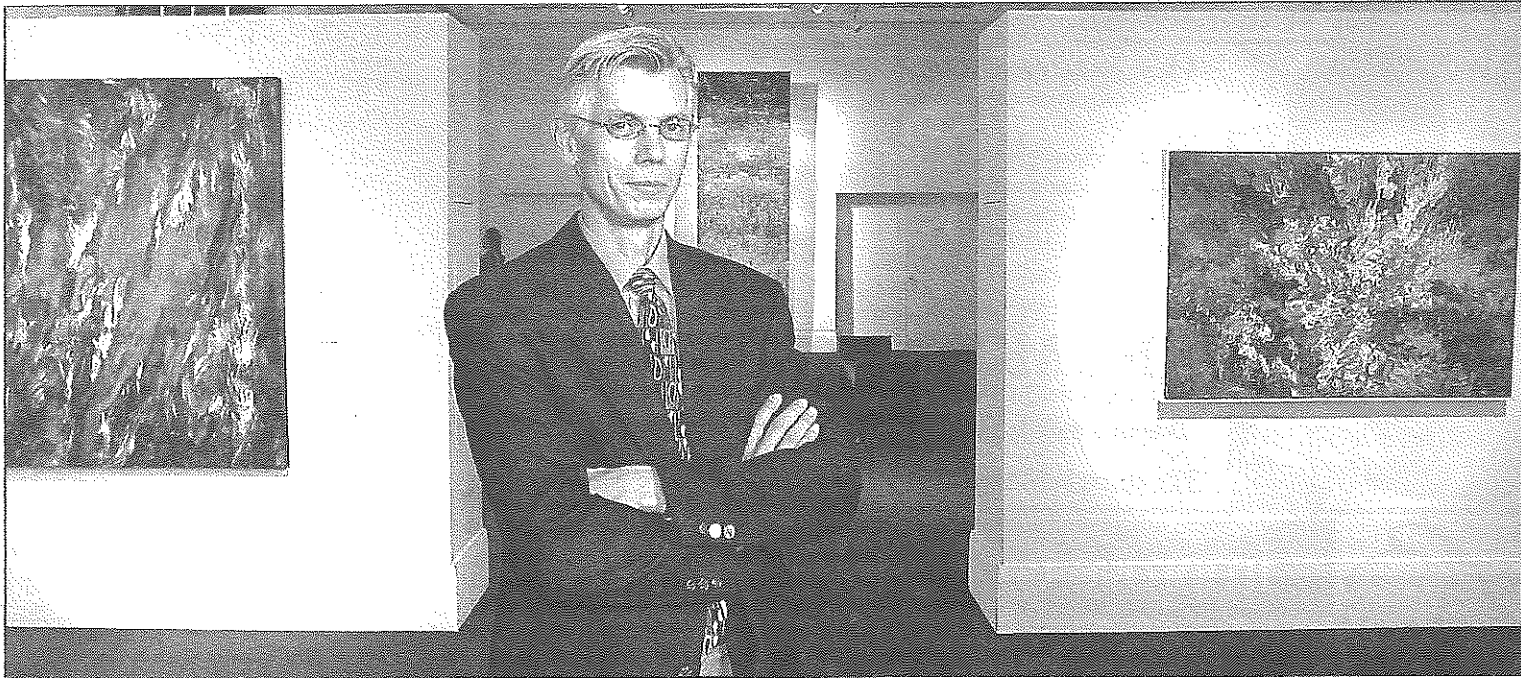
While at Guelph University, a friend exposed Freeman to a whole other side of art.

"It was through my friend," said Freeman, "that I started going to galleries. He told me of a part-time job at the gallery in the university. I got the job and did framing, matting and installations. It gave me exposure to artists and an inside edge on what was out there."

After two years, Freeman worked at the Art Gallery of Ontario as installations officer, followed by a stint as technical co-ordinator at the MacDonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph.

He then became the technical co-ordinator at Guelph University, followed by his appointment in Stratford.





Rob Freeman is the new curator of the Art Gallery of Mississauga at City Hall.