

A showcase for his work — and his soul

by TINA IVANY

Heinz Gofforth has class.

It's not the type of class associated with sterling silver water goblets or leather-bound volumes of Shakespeare. Rather it's the class that emanates from taking pride in a good work of art — namely, his own.

Such pride has enabled the German-born painter to transform his 50-year old home on Mississauga Road into a unique showplace for his work. No matter where you turn in the two-storey house, you are confronted with paintings.

Scenes of the pastorale countryside in Germany, of Mississauga's yesteryear, of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe and of the Canadian winter bring his basement to life.

But the fact they are "relegated" to the basement might indicate just how Heinz feels about most of those particular paintings.

"A lot of them are what I would call "bread and butter" work," he says. "They are the ones that people like to buy."

Such an attitude does not mean he doesn't care about those works. Quite the contrary. Whatever Heinz puts his signature on, it has been earned.

As an example, he brings out a recent work of a sailboat, a painting he was commissioned to do for a couple who have a special feeling for their nautical craft. The colors are vibrant, the freedom of the waves and wind-blown sails more than pleasant. For the couple, it represents just what they wanted. For Heinz, it is but another job. A good job, mind you, but it's not really painted from the heart.

THE HEART

To see what he paints from the heart and from the mind, climb the 10 steps up to his "gallery" and have a good look at what he has produced this year.

There's not a landscape to be found. Instead there are touching interpretations of the human condition — not ugly scenes of the have-nots, but personal renditions of human interaction. Most of them border on the abstract, many of them use the nude human form to convey his message.

A lot of the works are lined with a border, painted as an extension of the work itself, not as a separate entity, a border which highlights the content of the painting.

Such expression, using the human body, represents a development in his 20 year Canadian career. Heinz is not certain how such works will be accepted.

"In Europe," his wife Christine explains, "people have been traditionally accustomed to seeing the human body nude. The Madonnas were not pornographic.

"But here, per' because we have not the historical background, some people are shocked by some of Heinz's works."

In reality, there is nothing shocking. Heinz has not depicted the female form with realism. Rather, many are painted in the classic poses. Rubens perhaps . . . Such an inference would make Heinz very angry.

GOOD

It is in this gallery which Heinz hopes to exhibit the works of some of Mississauga's good artists. The word good is emphasized.

"There are a lot of people here," he says, not without modesty, "who call themselves artists, but who are not artists at all. They are simply not good."

"Good" may be a state of mind but Christine blames many of the art college educators for duping their students into believing they are "good".

"Those without talent should be told the facts," she says, "It is unfair to fool them for four years in school and let them out to a world in which they cannot hope to make a living in art."

Christine, who dabbles in art herself, has helped to supplement the family income by managing a small hairdressing salon, also in her home. The business freed Heinz to concentrate of his work, both the portraits which he is commissioned to do and those impressions from the world around him which he must capture on canvas.

His work has achieved international recognition. He has been asked to participate in international exhibitions and has been commissioned by governments and prominent individuals alike.

But he remains unaffected by the recognition. No silver water goblet for him. His brown sweater needs a button. His self-portrait, which has been circulated in shows throughout the United States, shows a man, not quite at peace with himself, not quite satisfied with the state of things, reaching for that elusive reality.

COMRADESHIP

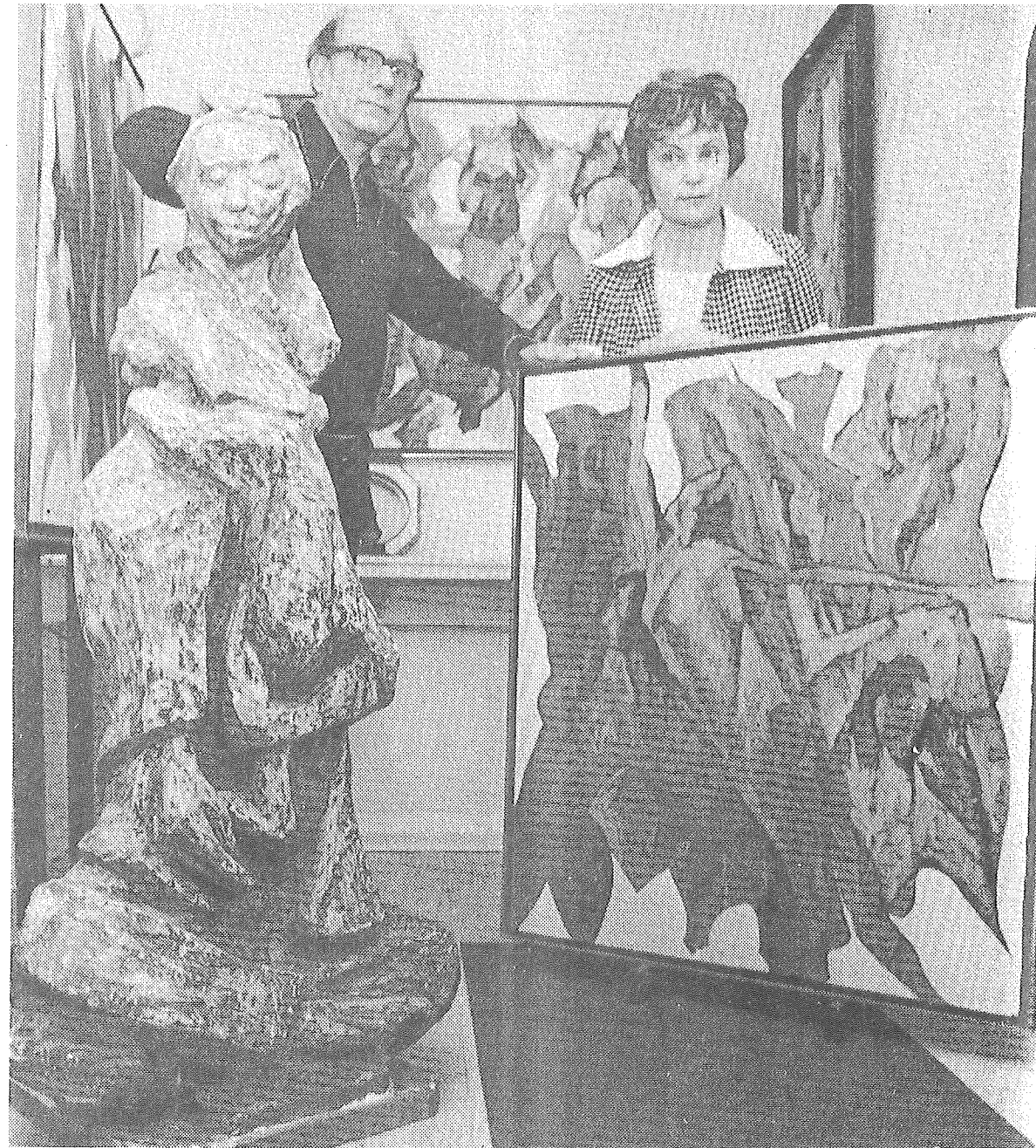
Both Heinz and wife mourn the fact that Mississauga lacks what they term "comradeship among artists". He would love to see a little corner of Mississauga develop into an artists' colony, populated by "good" artists.

"The talent," he says, "is here. But it is fast leaving our city. There is little offered here for artists. The visual arts as well as the performing arts need more recognition, more incentive to remain here."

He's trying to offer some of the impetus with his small gallery. The oddsmakers wouldn't pin his idea with much credence. The betting would not be heavy.

But then Heinz has never really gone with the odds. A little non-conformist (before it became popular to be so), he'll do what he feels is honest.

And promoting good works of art is honest, he says. "More important," answers Christine as she hands him another cup of coffee, "so are you. Now that's class."



Heinz Gofforth has turned his Mississauga Rd. home into a showplace for his art, and which he takes pride in. With him is his wife, Christine.