

Premier helped him once

★ Top globe-trotting artist settles down in Mississauga

By LINDA REED

Premier Bill Davis had a hand in a large sculpture on Mississauga Rd.

It depicts North American man and shows a rather doll figure in the classical position of The Thinker.

Hand to rough-hewn chin, it faces the whizzing traffic on the busy road and marks the entrance to a vibrant new art gallery at 18 Mississauga Rd. N.

The sculpture was made by artist Heinz Gofforth who has known the Premier since coming to Canada in 1955. When Heinz was working on the sculpture, Mr. Davis picked up a trowel and helped mould the cumbersome figure.

Heinz is shy about telling the story. Mr. Davis and his parents were some of the first admirers and collectors of his work.

The gallery, located in a 50-year-old two-storey house, looks as if it's shared by a variety of artists. But all paintings — which vary tremendously in technique — have been done by Heinz.

His portraits are powerful. During the past 20 years he has built up contacts in Canada and the United States and has many clients in Ottawa. A self-portrait has been circulated in shows throughout the United States.

Abstracts

His abstracts — mostly in tones of green and blue — are extremely popular. He sold one for \$600 at a show in the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts last week. It depicted a group of naked women performing a supernatural rite.

Heinz was into abstracts before anyone when he arrived in Toronto but nobody would buy them. So he switched to paintings of Georgian Bay and realistic styles. He continued in this vein in the sixties when art buyers went crazy over abstracts.

He is influenced by the world around him. The movie Woodstock sparked him to do a large painting of faceless hippies standing around a naked girl.

"I enjoy painting pictures of girls but don't get me wrong, I do paint people with their clothes on, too," he said.

Heinz is angered when people say his Georgian Bay paintings are similar to Group of Seven.

"There's no other way to paint Georgian Bay. That's exactly what it looks like," he said. He enjoys the wild countryside, which is a great contrast to the native Germany where not one tree "dares" to be out of place.

Switched to art

Heinz discovered his love for painting in high school. After studying textile design and textile engineering he switched to art and related subjects at the masterschool in Krefeld, German. This is where he met his wife who was studying art.

At the age of 16, his talent enabled him to enter the Academy of Fine Art in Dusseldorf where he studied with well-known European painters. He studied for two years before the war interrupted his art training.

Between 1946 to 1955 he made painting and studying jaunts to Italy, Austria and Switzerland and exhibited his work in these countries.

When he came to Canada, in 1955, with his wife and sons he had no intention of staying. He had always been a traveler and planned to stay only a few months. But they loved it from the start and found the life-style and country was inspiring for an artist. He has made painting excursions through Canada and the United States and exhibited his paintings in both countries.

An important exhibition in the Museum of Fine Art in Cincinnati, Ohio, brought him in contact with prominent people in the upper strata of society.

He has been commissioned to do many paintings through his contacts there. Doing portraits for multimillionaires has become a way of life.

Beauty salon

Despite his success, Heinz is embarking on a new way of life in Mississauga. He has been freed of the constant worry of earning a steady living.

His wife, also a painter, has set up a beauty salon in one part of the gallery and will bring in enough money to meet living needs of their family.

This frees Heinz to paint whatever and whenever he wants. In future he plans to expand his gallery and invite other artists to exhibit there.

"I wish there was more comradeship among artists here. Life is so tough here that everyone is competing to make a living. It seems as if you have to worry about money more over here."

In addition to painting, the Gofforths have built by hand a 25-foot cabin cruiser which they use in their beloved Georgian Bay.

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Gofforth, Heinz