

Mississauga's Jack Reid

Art - 'balancing the said with the unsaid'



Jack Reid demonstrates his painting technique with watercolor in the basement workshop in his home. Reid, who has only been painting for six years, now has his work shown at the Pollock Galleries in Toronto, one of Canada's most prestigious art galleries. (Staff photo by Fred Loek.)

By ALEXIS SHIELDS

To gaze at one of Jack Reid's watercolor paintings is to become involved.

Given the translucent quality of this Mississaugan's work, there is no escape from the fact the viewer must fill in the spaces — all the information Reid left out as he drew his brush across the surface of his painting medium.

Reid's work is currently featured in the dining room of the Mississauga Hospital. The show is open to the public. Featured are works showing barns slanting in the sunlight, lots of windows and trees and even more snow. By a combination of colors that show excellent use of shadow, Reid makes the snow come alive.

His work is a reflection of the understanding that the creative process is a balancing act between

what is said and what is unsaid.

"Art is mystery," says Reid. "I believe the less said the better. If you say everything you think there is to say about it, it isn't art."

Before he makes a stroke, Reid picks the best quality of art medium he can find in the world — a form of handmade stretched linen made only by a French paper company in business since 1492.

The material will last forever whereas the machine-made pulp, which looks the same, will turn into its usual pulpy color as it ages.

"I give people what I respect regarding materials," he states. "I won't compromise on this quality. I feel strongly that my work should measure up to museum quality standards."

Reid, 52, has been painting only since 1970. Formerly a successful

graphics designer who learned the trade the hard way, teaching himself through asking questions and reading all the materials he could get his hands on, he dropped out of a Toronto school at Grade 7 because he "just wanted to draw".

"I also had help from a power greater than myself," he says, "and this is faith. God gives me direction and resources. Along with God, I have the greatest wife who also paints."

Reid had a hard time gaining acceptance in the art world when he started selling his works to the galleries.

"I was told 'we don't sell that kind of art'," he said.

He held his first showing at the Burlington Mall and gained quick acceptance from the buying public. He also gives credit to Tom Cayle, of the Doon School

of Art, who helped him and gave him a teaching position at the school.

Reid hasn't looked back from this point either from a business or personal standpoint. He was invited to become a member of the Arts and Letters Club, located in downtown Toronto, that originated with the Group of Seven. He is also a director of Visual Arts Canada, funded by the provincial government and offering support and direction for the affairs of the major art societies in Canada.

He has won numerous awards including the Dominion Foundaries and Steel Company Purchase Award in 1972 through the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolor, which is affiliated with the American Water Color Society (this award is selected from among the best water colorists in Canada), and in 1974, he won the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolor, an Anonymous Purchase Award presented by the Honorable Pauline McGibbon, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario.

Some of his one-man shows include a showing at the Imperial Life Assurance Company of Canada, Toronto, 1971; Gustafson Gallery, Brampton, 1971, 1974 and 1976; The Doon School of Fine Arts, Kitchener, 1972; Pollock Galleries, Toronto, 1975.

"I have been going ever since Cayle helped me," he said. "I believe you have to live in the here and now. Everything that is happening is happening now."

"I live one day at a time," he added. "What I am doing right now is the most important thing."

According to Reid's philosophy, life is a do-it-

yourself kit. A person has to share experiences because when a problem is shared, it's cut in half. Alone, your mind can kill you, he says, by enlarging a problem so that it takes you over.

"If there is a God's nature or prayer it must be not what I can achieve today but can I help someone else along the way," he states. "The joy in life comes from trying to do this."

Reid is starting up an informal summer school for artists and would-be artists at Rockwood, near Guelph, over July and August.

"I want people who have always wondered if they could paint and others who want to advance," he says. "I want to surprise those who haven't done this work before."

The classes cost about \$100 per week and he prefers that people take two consecutive weeks. He limits each class to 15 students so he can "get around and give each one personal attention". Anyone interested in attending the school is invited to contact Reid at 785 Eglinton Ave. E., Mississauga for a brochure.

Mixed with his total enthusiasm for his work is a zesty and invigorating set of exercises he performs every day, including 25 sit-ups in the most difficult position he can find and a three-mile jog every day.

His view of including everyone in the human society carries over to his paintings, where the color of one area blends into the shape of another shadow. The use of watercolor for his work is an excellent choice as it allows him to provide a translucent quality where the paper base always shows through, even in the darkest of shadows he paints.

With a myriad of positions to hold his paintbrush, he creates trees, snow drifts, bullrushes, clouds, lakes, reflections, barns and houses with ease, using the delicate Chinese and Japanese styles of painting along with heavier styles when necessary. And always he includes spaces for the viewer to use his or her imaginations to complete the painting.

Reid's work comes from himself and the power he believes is greater than himself. He is a self-taught artist who believes in life and the importance of joy and helping one's fellow man.

One of these ways of helping is through his painting.