

SESSION TWO: CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Speakers: Debra Daly Hartin, Elizabeth Shambrook, Tannis Koskela

The Canadian Conservation Institute - Debra Daly Hartin

Mandate

Debra outlined the mandate and services offered by the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). The CCI was created in 1972 to promote the proper care and preservation of Canada's cultural heritage and to advance the practice, science and technology of conservation. The Institute has worked with hundreds of museums, art galleries, academic institutions, and heritage organizations, as well as many private clients, to help them better preserve their collections. The CCI also markets its services and products around the world.

Surveying the Condition of Outdoor Murals

At the present time, there is no definitive information regarding the maintenance, preservation and restoration of outdoor murals. Debra hoped that Mural Routes' networking efforts would help to change this. With assistance from Mural Routes' database, the CCI would like to survey the condition of murals across Canada and examine the behaviour of the materials involved. Debra believes that partnerships are essential: Artists, owners, architects, landscape architects, engineers, industrial representatives, fabricators, community groups, and conservators must work together in order to develop effective conservation programs for outdoor murals.

The Role of the Conservator in an Outdoor Mural Program

Conservators can act as troubleshooters:

- 1) During the planning stage by offering site and maintenance advice
- 2) During the execution of the mural
- 3) By participating in routine inspections and maintenance
- 4) By suggesting treatment options and programs

Debra suggested that outdoor murals be inspected about four times a year to prevent minor problems from becoming major problems. The conservator can train people to do this type of inspection. In many communities, outdoor murals are a highly visible focal point and therefore, it is in everyone's best interest to invest a little money and effort to minimize maintenance problems in the future.

Factors Affecting Preservation

- 1) The site - Assess the effect of lawnmowers and snow removal at the site
- 2) Landscaping - Assess the area with regards to drainage, trees, shrubs, shade and sun
- 3) The wall - Investigate the condition of the wall and any related support structures
- 4) Materials and techniques - This area requires more research, particularly with regards to:
 - the stability and light-fastness of paints
 - the long term effects of varnishes and anti-graffiti coatings
- 5) Public awareness - Increasing public awareness of conservation issues can help to identify problems in an early stage.

Conservation Issues Specific to Outdoor Murals - Elizabeth Shambrook

In 1996, Elizabeth surveyed and prepared a report on the condition of Welland's murals. Using slides of these murals, Elizabeth identified and discussed various conservation issues with regards to outdoor murals.

Potential Problems

1. Peeling paint – may be due to either an inferior paint product, or to a delay between the stages of painting which may have allowed a thin layer of dirt to build up on the wall surface
2. Dented surfaces – are particularly a problem on murals which were painted on outdoor insulation products
3. Abrasions – often caused by people walking too close to an unprotected mural
4. Faulty chalking of flashing, and flashing that has pulled away from the wall – this contributes to water damage
5. Vandalism – takes a number of forms: surface dents, graffiti (this is a security issue)
6. Efflorescence – a white powdery substance seen on the surface of some brick walls
7. Vertical cracks – these often rise from the bottom due to inadequate chalking along the base of the wall
8. Mechanical damage – can be caused by cars, trucks, snow removal equipment etc.
9. General water damage – can cause cracks in the wall surface, peeling paint etc.
10. Fading and bleaching of pigments – this is particularly a problem with red pigment

Repairing Outdoor Murals - Tannis Koskela

Tannis has worked as a labourer, archaeological assistant, artist and educator. This varied background has provided her with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully repair some of Welland's damaged murals. Tannis shared some of her experiences and knowledge with the symposium participants.

Mural Repair Suggestions

1. Dents and holes in the wall surface
 - smaller holes can be filled in using cement
 - medium sized holes may require the application of mesh before the cement is applied
 - larger holes may require strapping, foam, cement, then stucco, to match the original surface
2. Primers
 - use a good quality primer
 - make sure the coverage is adequate – do not skimp
3. Paint
 - Tannis uses a paint made from a mixture of acrylic and urethane
 - caulk the wall where necessary to prevent future water damage

SESSION THREE: WALLS THAT SPEAK – THE ROLE OF THE NARRATIVE IN MURAL ART

Presenters: Marylyn Peringer and Lynda Howes

The storyteller and the mural artist share a common goal: to create a work or a "picture" that will engage an audience. The difference between the two is the medium employed. The storyteller uses words to create a picture, and the mural artist (generally) uses paint. During this session, storytellers Lynda and Marylyn displayed their mastery of the spoken word by telling stories that both entertained and inspired the audience. Many participants remarked that the storytelling session helped them to re-assess the way they view and interpret visual and literary images.

Almost all artists would agree that the most important aspect of a work should be its artistic integrity. Although it is not imperative for a mural tell a story, a narrative quality can provide a number of important functions, particularly for a community mural program.

The Role of the Narrative

1. It is an effective means to record and celebrate the history, culture and achievements of a community
2. It can facilitate an aesthetic appreciation of the artwork by engaging the viewer, initially through the story images
3. It can provide a basis of continuity in a mural program which can benefit a community with respect to fundraising, merchandising and tourism

SESSION FOUR: PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Facilitator: Karin Eaton

This session provided some of the artists an opportunity to share mural news.

John Hood will be working on an outdoor mural for the town of Kenora this summer. John also remarked that he was very impressed by the work that Tannis Koskela had done in restoring some of Welland's murals

Lorri McMullen has formed a company, Infinite Mural Magic, which specializes in large murals, both interior and exterior. Her most recent effort was a 7000 square foot mural in New Tecumseth. Her chief assistant on the project was artist **Maureen Bright**. Lorri also reported that BLOOM, the HRDC youth initiative that she oversaw last summer was a great success. It involved hiring fourteen young adults to paint six large outdoor murals with flowers as the general theme.

Jeni Rosenthal, an artist and administrator, reported that the town of Elliot Lake is currently developing a mural program. She was interested in learning about all aspects of a mural program, particularly funding ideas such as the HRDC youth initiative that Lorri spoke about.

Phyllis Walker is an enamellist, educator and storyteller, and the founder the Canadian Enamellist Association. Her large enamelled mural, "Out of Chaos – Order", which hangs in a Toronto library, honours African American Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic signal.

Bruce Westfall, travelled from Glouster, Ohio to attend the symposium. Although Bruce has been primarily involved in graphic design, he was interested in learning more about mural art in order to expand business opportunities.

Collingwood, Kitchener, St. Thomas – Collingwood is currently working on a millennium mural project. Kitchener's Downtown Mural Programme has completed four murals, with another one planned for the summer. The town of St. Thomas has formed an organization called "On Track" to administer its mural projects.

GUIDED TOUR OF WELLAND'S MURALS

Tour Guides: Kim Reep, Sue Morin, Jean-Luc Klin

The coach tour of Welland's murals provided participants with an overview of a variety of mural issues that a community must consider when initiating a mural program:

- artists and artistic styles
- site and type of wall surface
- preparation of the wall surface
- mural subjects and themes
- materials (paint, brick, mosaic tiles etc.)
- landscaping enhancement
- vandalism and security issues
- maintenance, preservation, and conservation

A CD ROM of Welland's murals was distributed at the conclusion of the tour allowing participant's the opportunity to take a "virtual tour" at a later date.

SUNDAY MAY 28, 2000

Facilitator: Karin Eaton

The roundtable discussion allowed participants to report on current and future ventures, and identify areas of interest for future symposia.

Mural Routes Millennium Project

Karin Eaton provided an update on the project.

Mapping the Murals of Canada – Rick Santos and Jackie Eaton are currently working on the website for this part of the project, which will feature a virtual gallery and map of mural art across Canada. They reminded communities and organizations that they can register for the program by contacting Mural Routes

The Photographic Ambassador – Mural Routes board member and photographer John Hands has begun his cross country trip, recording and documenting the murals of Canada. John's travels will be posted on the Mural Routes website.

The Heritage Mural - Due to funding problems, the original proposal was revised. Mural Routes has now received a Canada Millennium Partnership Grant to create a heritage mural with an aboriginal theme by First Nations artist Randy Knott.

Community Celebrations – The celebrations will take place in communities across Canada throughout the spring, summer and fall. In Toronto, along Scarborough's Heritage Trail, the celebrations run from September 23 to October 1, and will include a guided walking/bicycling tour.

Communities and Organizations

Athens – Doris Alguire and Kathryn Hudson represented the Athens Chamber of Commerce. Athens began its mural program 15 years ago. In general, the murals have stood the test of time well, with only minor repairs and some fading of colour. Although the last mural was completed in 1996, Athens is still interested in doing more murals and has raised over \$9,000 through various fundraising ventures to put toward the next project. Athens inquired about insurance issues, and about the possibility of obtaining charitable status to facilitate fundraising. (A group must be incorporated and non-profit to apply for charitable status).

Canadian Conservation Institute – Debra reported that over the next year, she will attempt to contact mural towns across Canada to survey and document the condition of outdoor mural art. She will design and distribute a form to mural communities in order to prepare a “report card” on the condition the murals. With this information, effective conservation strategies could be developed. Debra suggested using the Mural Routes website to distribute information regarding the survey. She would like to present this report card at the next mural symposium.

Essex – Marlene Markham, of the Essex IDE Committee reported that Essex is working on its 13th mural as part of its millennium project. The mural project involves 10 panels, each 8 feet by 4 feet, with the theme “Sports Heroes of Essex”, and will be mounted on the local arena. A great deal of historical research was done for these murals. The historical figures are rendered in black and white, while the recent sports figures are painted in colour. Each panel is separate, and artistically, can stand on its own to permit the re-location of the mural in the future, if necessary.

Minneapolis, Minnesota – Robin Rehm, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was interested in an on-line approach to mural art. She would like to set up a program that would link artists and clients, plus provide resource information on relevant issues such as materials, copyright, and restoration. She has been studying the on-line potential for this idea for about 3 years. Finding the funds required for this idea has been a challenge. Robin would like to make this a commercial venture without compromising artistic integrity.

Mural Routes (Website) – Board member Rick Santos was pleased to hear that a number of participants had learned about the symposium and other Mural Routes programs through the website. He is in the process of re-vamping the website and reported that it would be ready in about a month. Rick outlined some of the functions of the website:

- to serve as an “artistic manual” by providing information on materials, techniques etc.
- to link with other towns across Canada to catalogue mural art and exchange information
- to act as a billboard, posting new mural ventures and opportunities
- to link with other organizations interested in mural art, such as CCI and CARO

A small membership fee allows artists to link their site to Mural Routes’ site.

Toronto – Artist and educator Phyllis Walker represented Arts York. She was interested in the problem of graffiti. Some participants had used the products “Goof Off” and “Swish” to remove graffiti. Debra Daly Hartin advised using caution when trying out these products – apply to a small area to determine if there will be a reaction with the paint. Debra cautioned against using solvents on porous material such as brick and stone and advised knowing the substrate. Debra said that CCI has an information officer who can direct specific questions about graffiti etc. to the appropriate department and person.

Vanier – Councillors Yvon Dube and Raymond Hotte represented Vanier. They explained that Vanier's mural program was inspired by a visit to the city of Lake Placid Florida, which at the time had 28 murals. Vanier decided to develop its own mural program. It has now completed 8 murals with 5 new ones planned for the summer. Vanier recently received an \$86,000 grant from the Federal Millennium Partnership Program. Vanier was also interested in insurance issues.

Welland – Kim Reep reported that Welland presently has 2 businesses interested in having a mural. The city is also in the process of setting up a website for the Welland Festival of Arts, which will include a virtual tour of the murals together with artist biographies.
(www.artsfest.on.ca)

Artists

Bas Degroot – Bas reported that he uses the internet extensively for information on a variety of topics. He is a member of the Copyright Collective, as is Karole Marois.

Mary Faubert – Mary thanked the symposium organizers, saying that she learned a great deal and enjoyed every aspect of the event.

Karole Marois – Karole, who has painted murals for Vanier, Pembroke and Kenora, offered some information on insurance. She suggested an artist insure against the following: damage to the mural while in progress, personal accident, and third party liability. Karole pays about \$600 a year for insurance coverage. Insurance policies are also available for maintenance and conservation.

Zarko Milijasevic – Zarko reminded the group that the most important aspect of a mural is its artistic integrity, and that the narrative aspect should be a secondary consideration. He would like to see towns and organizations give artists the opportunity and freedom to be more creative.

It was decided that the fifth symposium would take place next year in Toronto. Suggested topics were: fundraising, a report on mural conservation from the CCI, building community awareness, and the urban mural.

Karin thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the symposium.