

# Young artists solve problem with own art gallery

By JENNY SHEPPARD

If things aren't the way you would like them, then do something about it. This would seem to be the motto of a group of enthusiastic and enterprising young artists in Hamilton who are opening a new art gallery in the city next week.

The idea began to germinate after a disappointing turnout at a meeting of the Visual Arts Committee of the Hamilton Regional Arts Council in March.

The topic under discussion was to have been ways and means of stimulating and encouraging artists, especially young artists, in this area. Rather than invest time and energy into special one-day shows and weekend festivals of art, one group of artists preferred to tackle the problem of lack of cohesion and inter-action among local artists and between artist and public, on a long-term basis.

A committee was set up and the result of its effort is a co-operative venture which begins its operations next week in newly renovated premises at 143 James St. North.

The venture will be officially launched Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. with an opening celebration at the gallery to which everyone is invited. The work being exhibited at that time will be submitted by the founding members of the Artists Co-Operative.

The new co-operative aims to be very much more than simply a commercial, exhibition gallery. Perhaps the foremost aim of its founders is

to provide a permanent centre to which artists can go as often as they wish to talk, exchange ideas, to seek broader perspectives and stimulation, and to receive considered and constructive criticism of their own work. In other words, the co-operative will work both to penetrate the isolation of the individual

artist in his studio and thus to lessen by sharing them, his privately borne frustrations and difficulties, and to provide a catalytic force, generating and re-generating artistic ideas and creative energy.

On a more tangible level, the group has hopes of obtaining the use of some top floor space on

James St. North, to provide studios for participants in the co-operative, and in fact there is already a room at the back of number 143 which is intended to be used as working space for artists.

The aims of the group, however, are not limited to helping the participating artists alone. There

are plans, tentative as yet, to organize film shows, and music evenings, perhaps poetry and play readings, and workshops, all of which will be designed primarily with the general public in mind.

One ultimate goal shared by the organizing committee is to have studio facilities available so that



Frank Zavarella of the Artists' Co-operative sets up pictures in the new gallery.

members of the public who express an interest in techniques for example, can be taken to on-the-spot studios where such work can be demonstrated to them.

Other sections of the group are interested in children's art, both showing and encouraging it. Flexibility, or rather versatility and universality are the keynotes of the whole venture.

Ultimately, what will determine the success of this enterprise is not the degree of dedication, enthusiasm, determination and willingness to work and pioneering idealism of the young men and women who are undertaking the running of the co-operative centre.

The problem is going to be lack of money.

So far, the cost of rent and renovations has been borne by members of the group out of their own pockets and they are prepared to continue to carry this financial load for the summer months during which they hope to demonstrate that they are a viable, going concern. After this they will need outside help.

A 15 per cent commission will be collected on every sale of work at the gallery, but clearly such a modest charge is hardly likely to provide sufficient funds for a long-term operation. The aim is not, of course, to make a profit, but just to break even so as to ensure continuation. In the months ahead, patrons and generous well-wishers will be anxiously sought. The shortage of money is the only cloud on the horizon.

The first step in the contribution of the Artist's Co-operative towards bridging the gap between artist and artist, and artist and public has already been taken. The centre is open daily between the hours of 12 noon and 8 p.m.

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