

HAMILTON ARTISTS' CO-OP

On March 24, the Visual Arts Committee of The Hamilton and Region Arts Council held an open meeting at Myler Hall, at which it hoped Hamilton area artists would appear and voice their opinions about the state of the art scene in Hamilton and suggest ways to stimulate it. The poor turn-out at the meeting accentuated the reticence or the unnatural shyness, perhaps, of our artists towards adopting a serious attitude to their own working and living environment. The Visual Arts Committee understandably appeared confused about its direction and has had little recourse but to follow its own impulses in trying to promote the visual arts to the public. Their activities have been in the past and will be again, in the form of art festivals and special exhibits. As entertaining as such a programme may be, to artists and non-artists alike, we recognize the tentativeness of these proposed events. In the long run they accomplish nothing which will help establish a sustained relationship between artists and the community.

Our suggestion was that an artists' centre be set up in the nature of a co-operative, where artists could exhibit, meet and talk. This aspect of the co-op's function would give artists who are working alone and dealing with their separate frustrations some degree of moral sustenance. Possibly, in association with others who are experiencing similar difficulties, they could work practically and more effectively to relieve some of the anxieties of being an artist and particularly of an artist who chooses to live in Hamilton. Also, and perhaps most important, they could be in contact with working artists and be encouraged, inspired by their visual experiments, thereby aiding themselves develop with greater perspective and at a faster rate.

With the folding of the Hess Gallery and the uncertain future of Ten Mile House in Hamilton, there are few outlets for art. The Co-op has the promise to partially fill this void as well.

At present some artists who have shown an interest in attaining these goals have co-operatively rented and made presentable a small store front at 143 James St. North. From this group, a co-ordinating committee has been named to locate artists, organize shows and get-togethers. Others are in the process of scheduling a summer programme of film, music, poetry reading evenings.

It was decided that a 15% commission be taken on works sold in the Co-op to help defray the expenses of rent, hydro and water rate. Obviously, the organization is operating on a non-profit basis and outside support must be sought if the Co-op is to continue.

It should be emphasized that this aggregation of artists is represented by a heterogeneous mixture of media, styles and artistic pursuits, therefore no one need feel inhibited about dropping by.

The starting of the Co-op has been encouraged by Glen Cumming, director of Hamilton Art Gallery and by Claudette Marko of Hamilton and Region Arts Council, from whom we anticipate continuing good-will and support.

CO-OP hours: Tues. - Friday 12 noon to 6
Saturday 10 a.m. to 4
Sunday Open House from 2 p.m.

The CO-OP would like to have your interest, advice and input.

143 JAMES STREET, NORTH. HAMILTON, ONTARIO.



143 james street n.
hamilton, ontario
postal code L8h2k8

Hamilton can boast one of the most ambitious building programmes in Canada. This includes "Hamilton Place" for the performing arts and the new Art Gallery, currently under construction. It is clear, however, that public awareness and appreciation of the arts is not commensurate with the zeal City Council has displayed in its municipal building programme. This is especially true in the area of the visual arts.

In spring, 1975, some Hamilton artists, deeply concerned about the artistic climate of the city where they lived and worked, decided that some sort of art centre would positively contribute to the interaction, encouragement, individual growth and well-being of artists, as well as provide an impetus through which visual art of a contemporary spirit could be explored and creatively presented to the general public. At that time, the necessity for immediate, consolidated action was realized by everyone involved. Thus, rather than risk dissipating energy into the possibility of obtaining grants, total effort was directed to locating and renting a space, renovating it, and then organizing programmes. It seemed paramount that the "Co-operative" get off the ground as soon as possible. A constitution was composed and signed by the founding members and committees were struck to undertake the tasks of general administration, financing, publicity, programming. During the initial months, the Co-operative was financed solely by the members themselves. In the fall, application was made to the Canada Council for a major grant, which received tentative approval until the government cut-backs occurred. We received no funds from Canada Council. An application for assistance was sent to the Ontario Arts Council which generously responded with \$1200. This amount plus \$100 from the City of Hamilton and \$290 from Wintario (to help finance "The Lunch Bucket Show") was the total financial participation from outside sources during our first year. A substantial portion of our expenses was met by the members who also contributed considerable time and energy with no remuneration. The imaginativeness, quality and scope of our programme during the past year surely indicates the depth of involvement of the members. The upshot of this preamble is that on minimal funding the Hamilton Artists' Co-operative has evolved from a good idea into a vital entity which has benefited the development of individual artists and which has offered a richly diversified calendar of events to the community. The "Co-op" is Hamilton's first viable alternative to the public gallery and the commercial galleries. It is recognized provincially and nationally as a dynamic, cogent element in the overall environment of Hamilton. It represents the most creative artists in this area.



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to OAC.

July 30 /76.

In spring, 1975, some Hamilton artists, deeply concerned about the artistic climate of the city in which they lived and worked, decided that some sort of artists' centre would positively contribute to the interaction and individual growth and well being of artists as well as provide an impetus through which the visual arts could be creatively explored, presented and promoted to the general public. At that time the necessity for immediate, consolidated action was realized by everyone who was involved. Thus, rather than dissipate energy and enthusiasm into the possibility of obtaining grants, total effort was directed to locating and renting a space, renovating it, and then organizing programmes. It seemed paramount that the Co-operative get off the ground as soon as possible. (We assumed the name "Co-operative because it best seemed to describe the nature of our endeavour.) A constitution was composed and signed by the founding members and committees were struck to undertake the tasks of general administration, financing, publicity, programming.

During those first months, the Co-operative was financed solely by the members themselves. Again, we felt that it would be premature, if not presumptuous to ask for assistance until we had established credibility through our accomplishments. In the fall, the Co-operative made application for a major grant to the Canada Council and received tentative approval until the government cut-backs occurred. The Co-operative received no funds from the Canada Council. An application for assistance was then made to the Ontario Arts Council which generously contributed \$1,200. This amount plus \$100 from the City of Hamilton and \$290 from Wintario (to help finance the "The Lunch Bucket Show"), was the total financial participation from outside sources. Clearly, a substantial portion of our expenses have been covered by the members who have also contributed considerable time and energy with no remuneration. The imaginativeness, quality and quantity of our programme during the past year surely indicates the depth of involvement of the members.

The upshot of this preamble is this: on minimal funding the Hamilton Artists' Co-operative has evolved from a good idea into a very real and vital entity which has benefited the development of individual



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artists in their careers and which has offered a richly diversified programme of events to the community. We feel strongly that we have built the viability and credibility of the Co-operative to our satisfaction and to the satisfaction, hopefully, of anyone else. Therefore, at this time, we do not think ourselves immodest in requesting greater financial participation from the Ontario Arts Council.

In order to continue its programming on a scale comparable to last year's and to further realize our potential, the Co-operative must operate on a larger budget which will include payment to artist members for administrative work, services rendered and exhibition fees. Presently, no one is paid for administrative work or for services. And only minimal fees are paid for exhibitions. (In January, the Co-operative made it policy that 10% of any government money received would be set aside to pay exhibition fees to artists.)

We realize that in deciding to considerably increase our operating budget, we will be responsible for raising a percentage of it through our own initiative. This, admittedly, is an area in which we will have to devote more effort than in the past year but we have already galvanized a fund raising programme for the new budget which includes raffles for works of art (one is in progress), sponsorship of Co-operative exhibitions by local industries, ~~Winnipeg~~, sale of art work in Eastgate Mall, sale of Lunch Bucket post-cards and miniature Lunch Buckets.

The Hamilton Artists' Co-operative is Hamilton's first viable alternative to the public gallery and the commercial galleries. It is recognized as a dynamic, unique force in the art scene and in the overall environment of the city. It represents the most creative artists in the area.

Any advice which you may have to assist us will be very gratefully received.