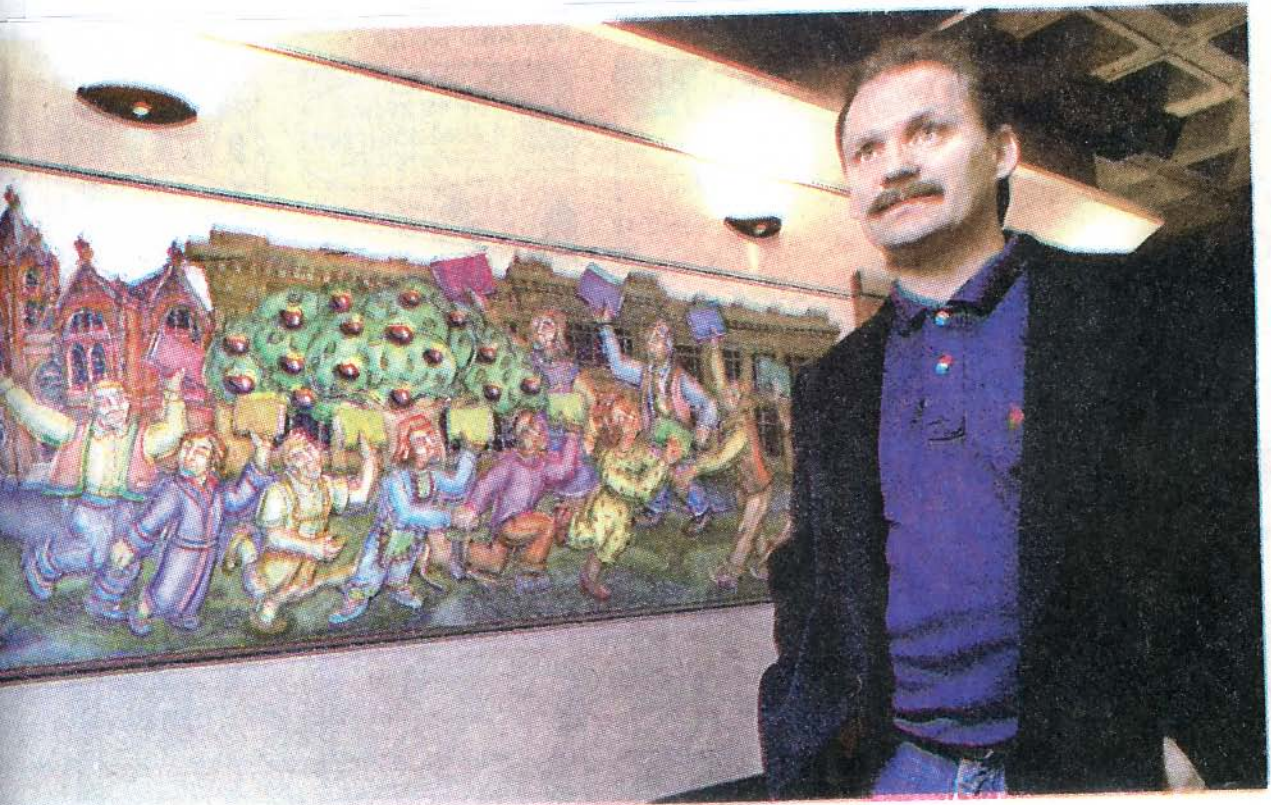


The Spectator

Tuesday, November 7, 1995

NOW Desk 526-3264



Conrad Furey and the library finally get together

Conrad Furey has put his stamp on Hamilton's main library.

His large wood cut-out painting of a chain of people doing a kind of figure eight around a "tree of knowledge" and waving books, has finally been installed in the lobby of the Hamilton Central Library at 55 York Boulevard.

It is a mural-scale project that has been in the works for years, but only now come to fruition.

About six years ago, Furey vied for the commission to create a work of art for one of the walls in the central library lobby. The jury loved the model he submitted for the competition, but felt it wasn't quite right for the space they had in mind. Furey was told that as soon as another space could be found and as soon as the money could be scratched up, the library would be interested in his piece.

Earlier this year he got the green light and started translating his maquette into the large, sprawling tableau that now graces the library entrance. The library piece is full of Furey's characteristic charms - his buoyant, simple figures, his forceful colors, and his collapse of perspective.

In the painting are depicted the library's old location in the present family court building and the original library location, a beautiful old Victorian structure.

The figures in the painting represent a broad cross-section of the community.

"I wanted the people to be multicultural in a sense - I didn't want to be too specific," but rather get it across with different complexions and styles of



Furey's Quartet is one of the works on display at his new studio.

dress, says Furey.

The work is clearly an example of Furey's more mature style. The colors are more fully integrated, more subtly phrased on the surface than in his earlier work (largely thanks to his relatively new technique of suffusing everything in a light blue wash). His figures specifically, and the compositions in general, are less flat, more dimensional, than in the past.

The evolution has been a very subtle one. But when you do compare his new work, such as the library piece, to earlier Furey murals that still help define certain downtown spaces, the difference is unmistakable.

A good vantage point for such a comparison is Furey's new studio/gallery, Gallery 71, which opened in September at 71 Main St. E.

In the space, Furey has a great store of his work, from different periods in his distinguished career as an artist in Hamilton.

What comes across most emphatically in this presentation of his work is Furey's remarkable versatility and material inventiveness.

His pieces are so different, one from

the other, yet distinctively his. He has abstracts, figuratives, straight painting, straight sculpture, and the wood cut-out hybrids for which he is perhaps best known.

Furey has pieces with moving parts and ingenious visual effects. He is on a new tack now, of making cylindrical wooden structures around which he narrates his wonderful, colorful visions.

"I would like to get these put around columns in buildings," says Furey.

"A lot of public buildings have large cement columns. These could really help brighten them up."

But by far the biggest project Furey has on the go right now is a gigantic, 30-foot-long mural for the lobby of the McMaster University Medical Centre, that is being supported, at least in part, by arts philanthropist Irving Zucker.

Stunning

Furey has a model for it, and it is stunning. It has hidden parts and movable elements designed to be played with by children, in amongst a fantasia of painted and sculpted imagery that seems to have inhaled all of life itself.

If things go according to plan, Furey should start work on the actual mural early in the new year.

In Gallery 71, Furey also has work by Katherine Hogg, Birute and Arlene Dubo and sculptures by John Lewis.

And there are the marvelous abstracts of David Magder, who is a real discovery.

Magder produces something he calls ceramic paintings. They are very thick, waxy skins of paint, like epoxy, clenched in tight, beautiful chords of color.

Magder will also be showing this month at Glen Taber's new gallery, called simply "the gallery", opening this month at 386 Wilson Street in Ancaster.

