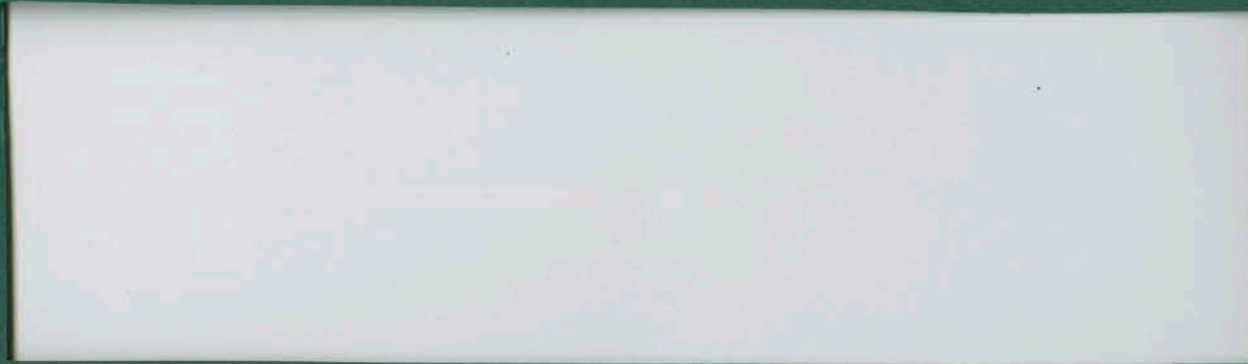
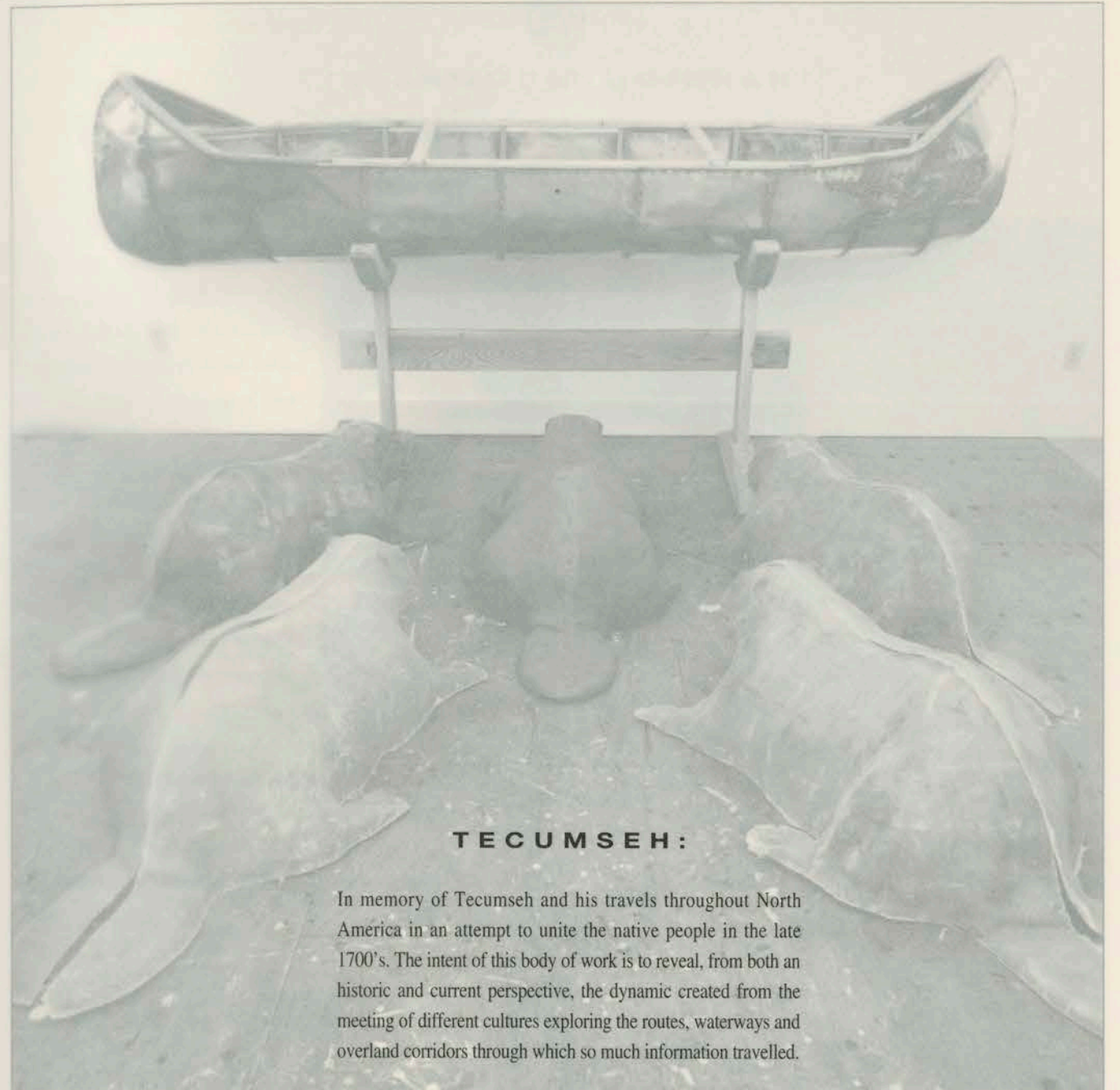


TOM BENNETT



TECUMSEH MOUNTAIN

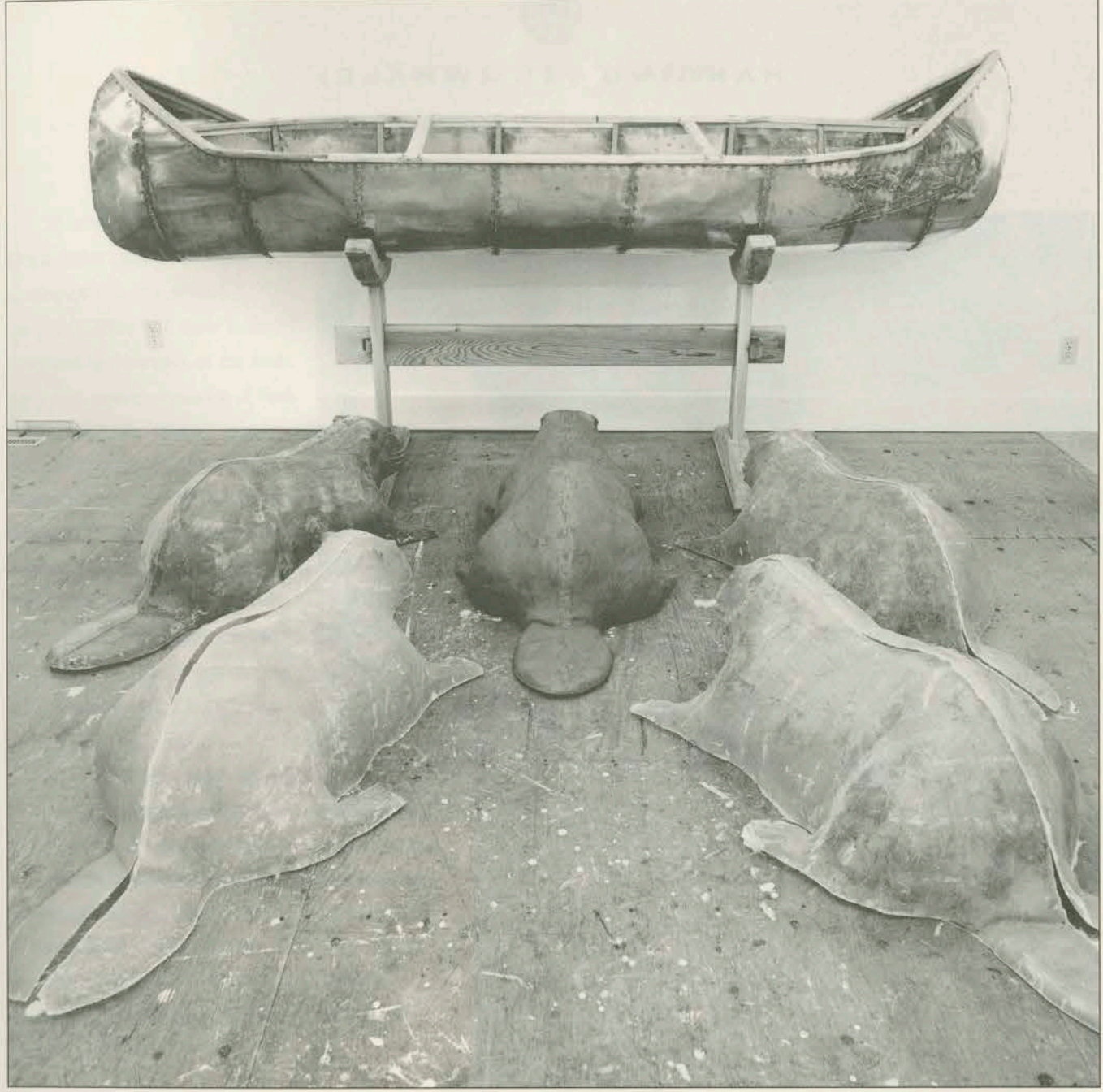


TECUMSEH:

In memory of Tecumseh and his travels throughout North America in an attempt to unite the native people in the late 1700's. The intent of this body of work is to reveal, from both an historic and current perspective, the dynamic created from the meeting of different cultures exploring the routes, waterways and overland corridors through which so much information travelled.

TEGUMSEH:

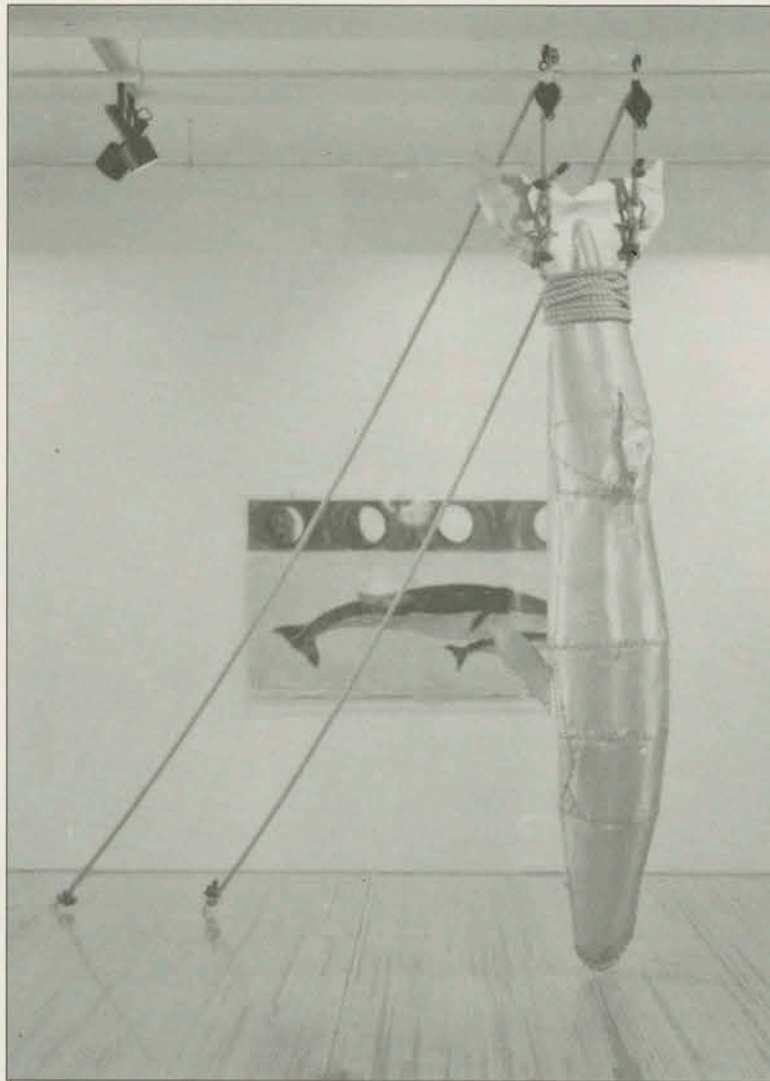
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HANGING FIN (WHALE)

1983 - (cold rolled metal and hardware) 2' x 2' x 14'. Collection of the artist.



Hanging Fin (whale) recounts the killing of a newborn fin whale by a Norwegian whaling ship in 1961. The ship received radio instructions to acquire one quart of fin whale milk for the Dairy Institute of England at Reading. Although the legality of such an action was in question at the time, a lactating mother and infant were found. The mother was harpooned and brought onto the ship. The offspring circled the ship in search of her and drowned, unable to support itself in its immaturity. The milk was not obtained.

The image of the act brought me to create this piece in memory of this defenseless soul. I feel that the slaughter, of one of the most intelligent creatures to grace this planet, forces us to question our own intelligence as humans.

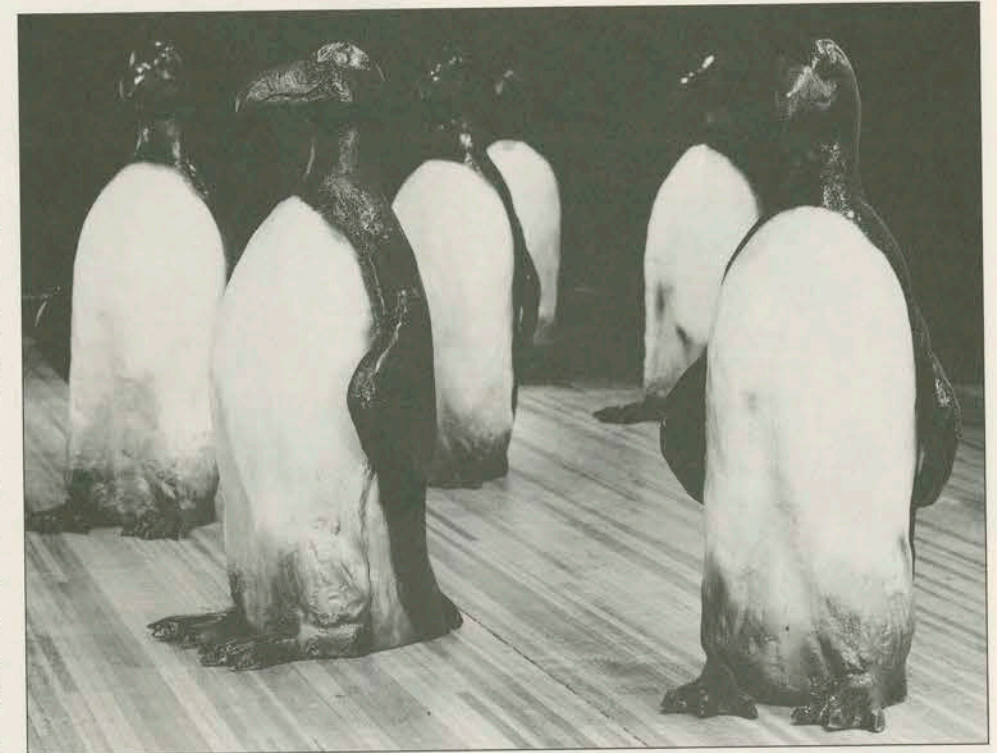


THE GREAT AUK

1983 - (molded fiberglass) 3' x 3' x 4'. Private collections.

Breeding grounds: the Funk and Geirfiglasker Islands; the Great Auks numbered into the million. 1534: Jacques Cartier and crew boast of slaughtering thousands of the birds. Early 19th century population of Funk Island totally devastated, attention turned to the nesting grounds of Geirfiglasker. Here, the carnage was repeated. In 1880, this volcanic island erupted and slipped into the sea. The surviving auks made their way to nearby Eldey Island, their home. Men followed and the slaughter was complete. 1844: Vilhialmur Haknarssen, responding to a cash offer for pelts from the British Museum, found and killed the last mated pair.

After a great deal of reading about the senseless slaughter of these gregarious birds, I felt there was a need to recreate seven of their once-numerous species. Excepting the dolphin, these were the most adept creatures in the marine world, having no threatening natural predators except humankind.



Extinct (one of the most misused words given to such carnage): 'not existing now, that which has ended or died out, no longer in use, obsolete, extinguished, gone, vanished; see "dead".'

Exterminate (the more appropriate term): 'insane; to get rid of by destroying; destroy totally; extirpate, eradicate, abolish, annihilate, eliminate; see "madness".'

- Oxford English Dictionary



**PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES
SHOULD NOT THROW STONES**

1984 - (wood, plexiglass, fiberglass and fauna) 4' x 5' x 7'. Collection of the artist.

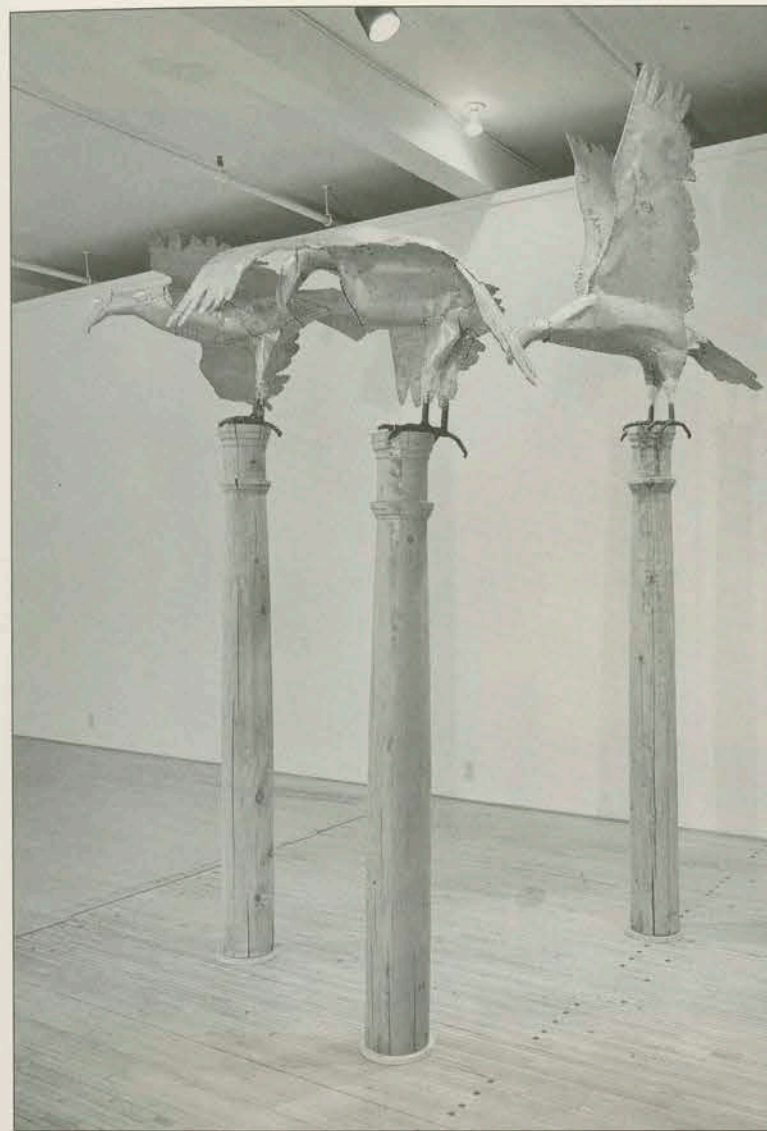


Derived from extensive visits to ancient archaeological sites in Mexico and middle North America, this work speaks of our own culture's precarious situation in time and, perhaps, a re-evaluation of our place in history.



TURKEY VULTURES

1983 - (cold rolled metal, wooden columns) 3 at 4' x 7' x 12', D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario. Permanent Installation.



These magnificent birds brought back my memories, as a young man, of priming tobacco in Southwestern Ontario. During the green times, in harvest season, the locals' idea of sport was to shoot at the vultures as they soared over idle fields in search of food.

After hours of observation and numerous photographs, I began the prolonged task of capturing the vultures in metal as they alight upon wooden pedestals. Many find the appearance of a member of the vulture family repulsive. The vultures observe us always from a very great height.

My purpose was to bring a very shy and reclusive inhabitant of the skies down for closer observation; a movement towards a greater understanding of its unobtrusive beauty.



HOMAGE TO THE WHITE PINE

1984 - (cold rolled metal) 3' x 3' x 14'. Collection of the Artist.

This work is dedicated to all of the mature specimens of its kind hewn down by strip-logging in Ontario. These leviathans of the boreal world, many measuring seven to eleven feet in girth and 150 to 200 feet tall, left us between 1750 and 1870. In Southwestern Ontario, great examples of the white pine once stood. A book, published by the women of Southwold Township, recounted memories of the arrival of their grandmothers in the area. The pine groves were described in these accounts as 'cathedrals'.

The whole of Algonquin Park was thick with these giants. Upon first viewing, the timber merchants, dealing with the British Navy, were said to have remarked that there was 'enough timber for 700 years'. It lasted only 70 years, due to waste and the square timbering methods of that era.

Here in Ontario, this beauty has left us. It is my hope that the legacy which still remains on the West Coast will survive due to the efforts of the native peoples and their supporters.



A MURDER OF CROWS

1983 - (ceramic & wood). Art Bank of Canada.

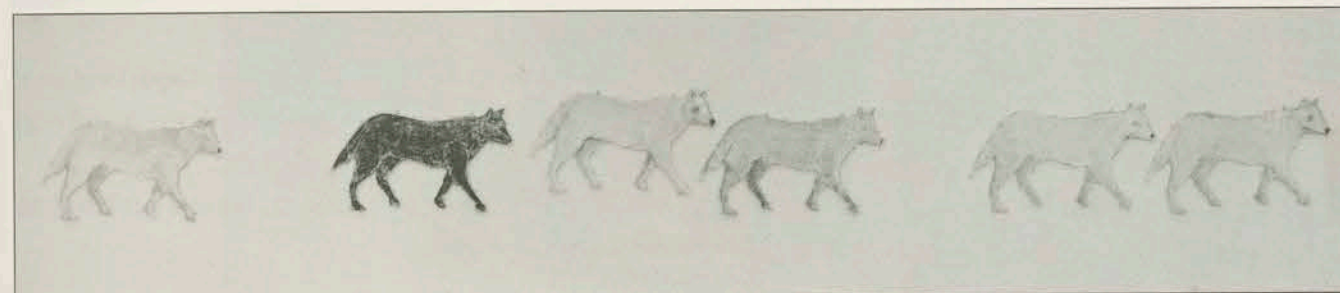
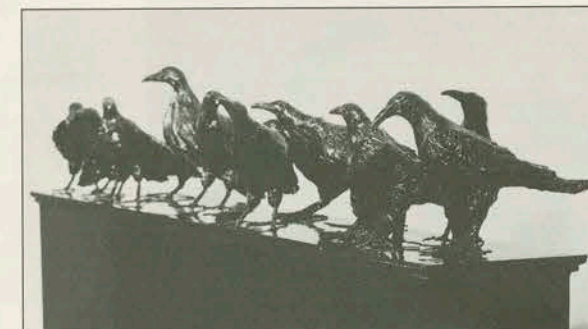
TIMBER WOLVES

1983 - (lino cut prints in plexiglass) 3' x 5'. Collection of the artist.

The works, *A Murder of Crows* and *Timber Wolves*, were completed in succession and are shown in close proximity, as they appear in the wild. The crow, the comedian of the bird world, is revered by the native civilizations. Western standards have meant that more than two crows congregating should be termed a 'murder'.

When wolves hunt, ravens assist in finding the weakest of the caribou herd. Once the wolves have killed and eaten their fill, the birds partake of the leavings. Then they proceed to peck at and to agitate their gorged fellow tundra-dwellers.

Theirs is a timeless image; the loss of either would forever silence the landscape.



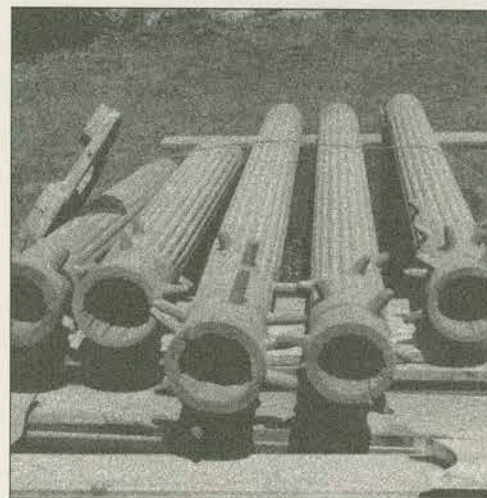


A ROOKERY OF HERONS

1986 - (carved cedar, steel) 5 pcs. 2' x 2' x 19'. Lynnwood Arts Centre. Permanent Installation.



This work, now installed permanently in Simcoe, Ontario, was inspired by a move to a new house. Our house backs onto an oxbow of the Thames River, a slow-moving connection of seven ponds in which four or five pairs of these herons nested. Also, we have seen green herons, night herons, kingfishers, Canada geese, swans, many kinds of ducks, snapping and painted turtles, yellow perch, catfish, bass and many more species.



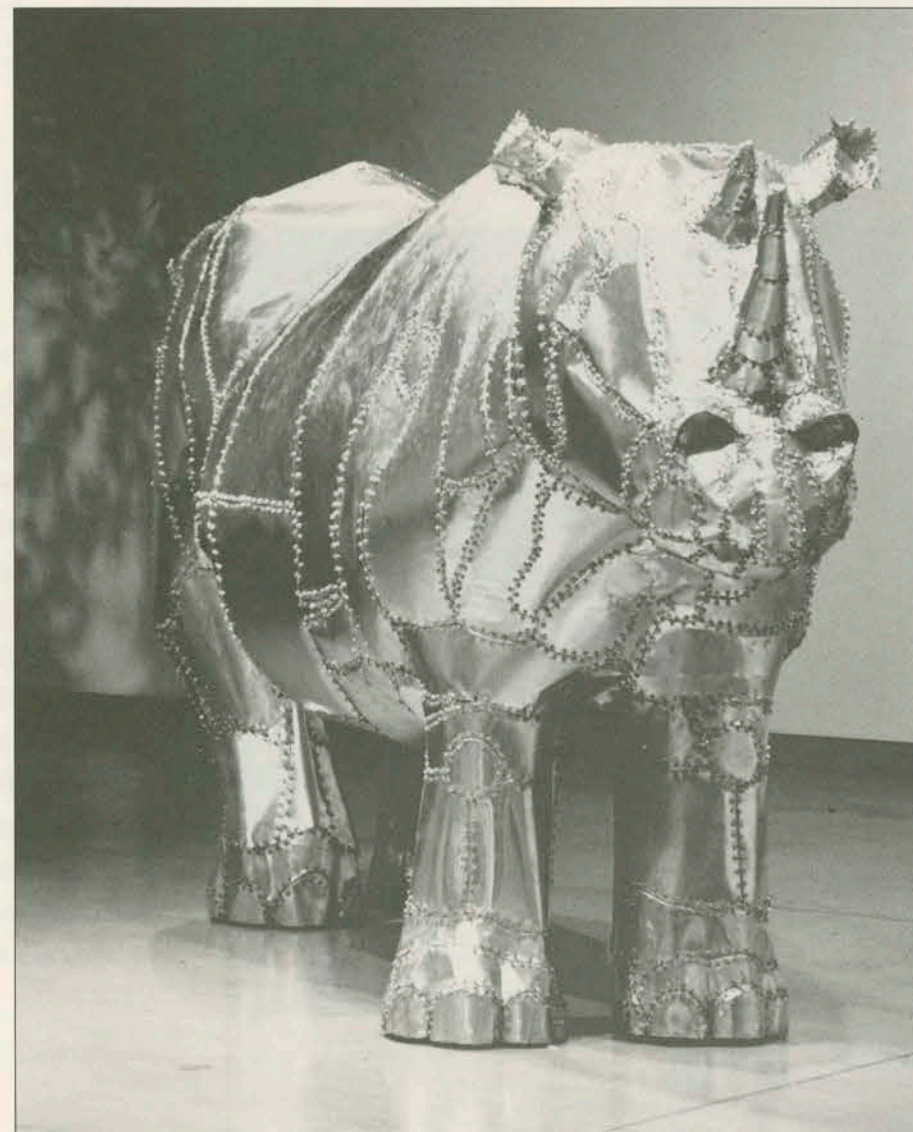
The *Hérons* grew as a work from my observations. The Grecian columns transform at the top into a tree, the site of the herons' nests, a seemingly chaotic and crazy mass of twigs and other bits of findings.

I am currently researching a piece which deals solely with this cove area behind my home, a small wildlife refuge in an urban setting.



WHITE RHINO

1986 - (aluminum) 4' x 6' x 11'. Collection of the London Regional Art Gallery.

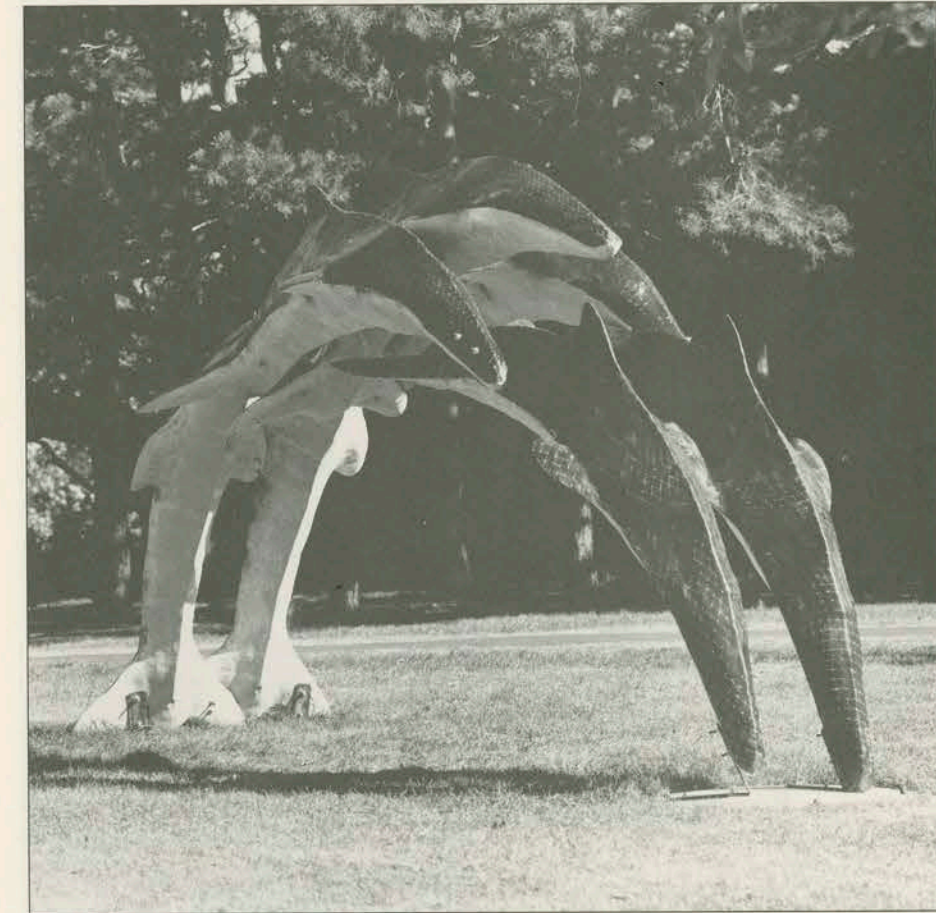


Built
in
1986
for
all
peoples'
fascination
with
these
beautiful
beings.



HARBOR DOLPHINS

1991 - (molded fiberglass) 6' x 6' x 28'. Collection of the artist.



Harbor Dolphins is an homage to insensitivity. I guess I would call it a lack of conscience on man's part.

The *Dolphins* have shadows of nets on their bodies, to symbolize the deaths many suffer as they are caught in the tuna nets of Japanese and Portuguese fishermen in the mid-Atlantic.

Harbor Dolphins is the final piece in a body of works I have been working on for the last eight years.

If my art does not speak, then it is not working. It has to be on a level everyone understands and can relate to.



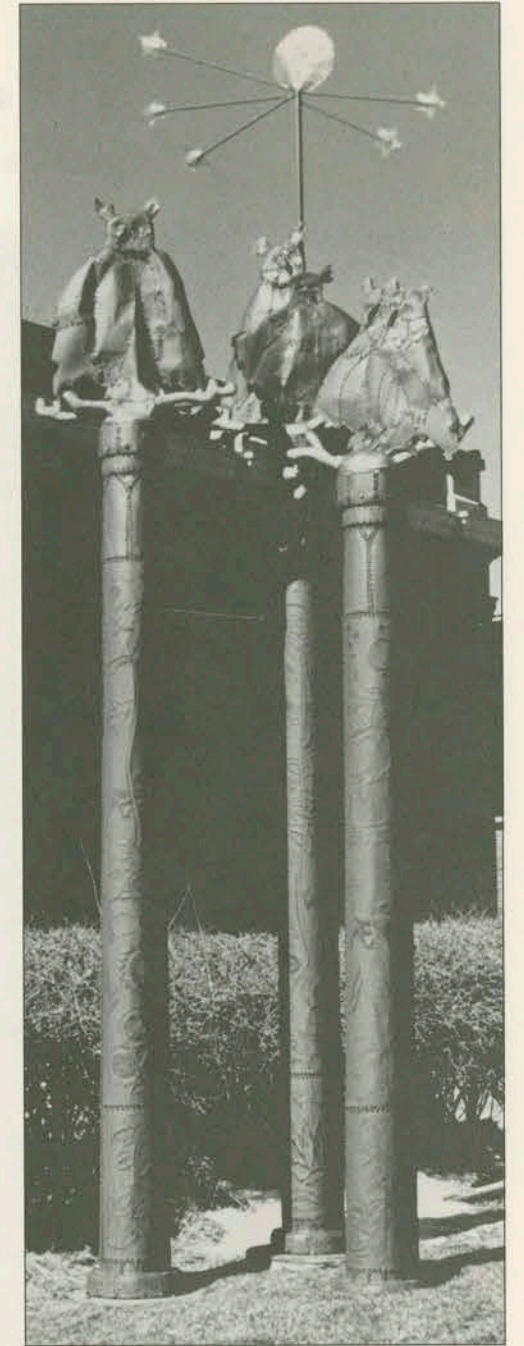
THE ANCIENT ONES

1989 - (copper, wood, steel) 3 at 2' x 2' x 23'.
Commissioned by the Woodstock Art Gallery.

The Ancient Ones is a work that resulted from my research into the trade between the ancient Copper Culture of Ontario and the Anasazi people of New Mexico, approximately 1,500 years ago. This sculpture, made entirely of copper, consists of three columns.

Story boards, telling how this trade was conducted, have been sandblasted into the surface of each column. In this trade between the two distant cultures, copper, travelled south; agricultural products, knowledge of medicines and astronomy, and traditions of central government, came north.

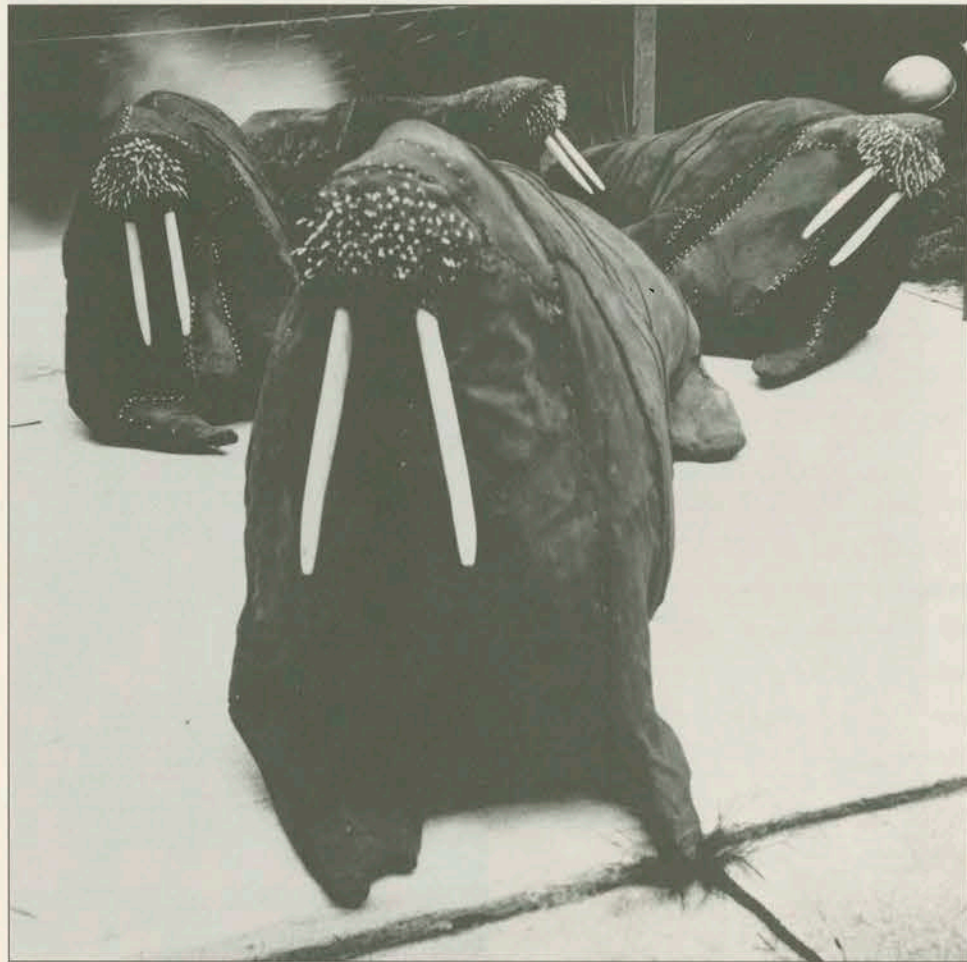
The columns are topped with a family of great horned owls, which both cultures thought of as the traveller's protector. Above them are the moon and the Northern Crown constellation, symbols of navigation and time.





A POD OF WALRUSES

1986 - (leather, wood, fiberglass) 4 at 4' x 5' x 10'. Collection of the Artist.



The piece, finished in the summer of 1987, is dedicated to these ocean ancients. Until 1700, they would haul themselves up onto Sable Island and onto islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence until wholesale slaughter drove them to ice floes, away from man.

A story from an Inuit hunter and his son:

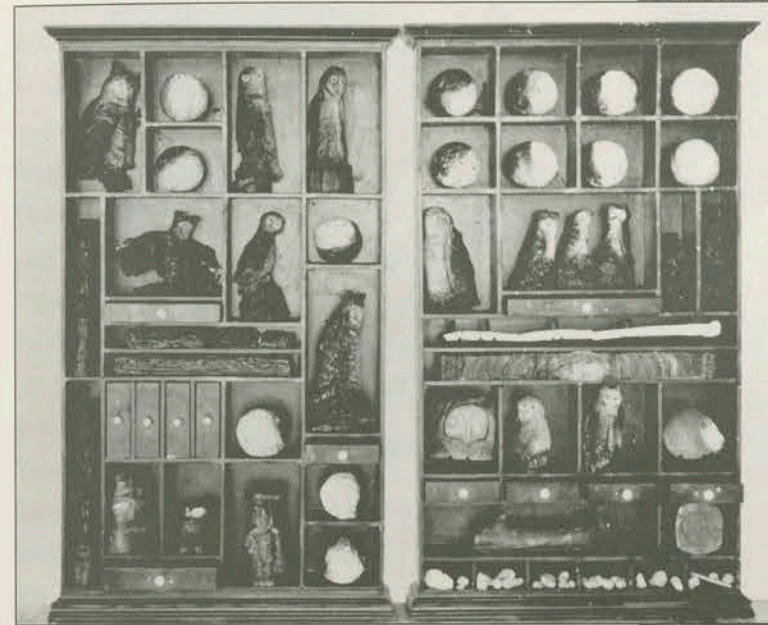
We were stalking a full grown male white bear. Upon a closer look we found he was also on the hunt. His prey was a family of walruses - a mother, a newborn and two young ones; but large, with full tusks. The bear, thinking them a safe kill, made his move and missed, and attempted his escape. From behind, on a small ice ridge, drew up a fully mature male walrus.

The bear looked first at the male, then at the female and the adolescents, then back to the open sea at his back. In a shrug of frustration and recognition of his own imminent death, the bear took to the open water, followed by the raging male. The bear was pulled under immediately and seconds later was propelled from the water, with two wounds on his chest, totally lifeless.



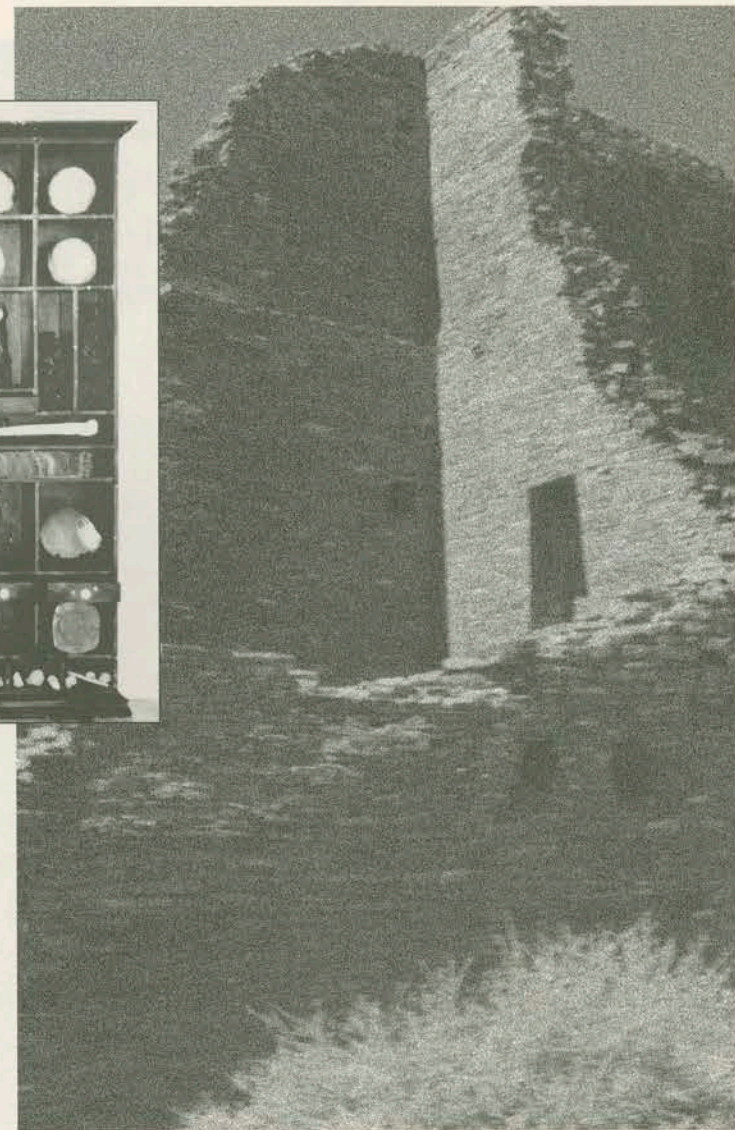
HOMAGE TO THE OWLS

1986 - (ceramic, wooden cabinets) 2' x 8' x 8'. Collection of the artist



Owls have always been a source of fascination for me. I have seen in my life only three: a snowy, a barn and, I think, a small horned owl. These experiences were always eerie.

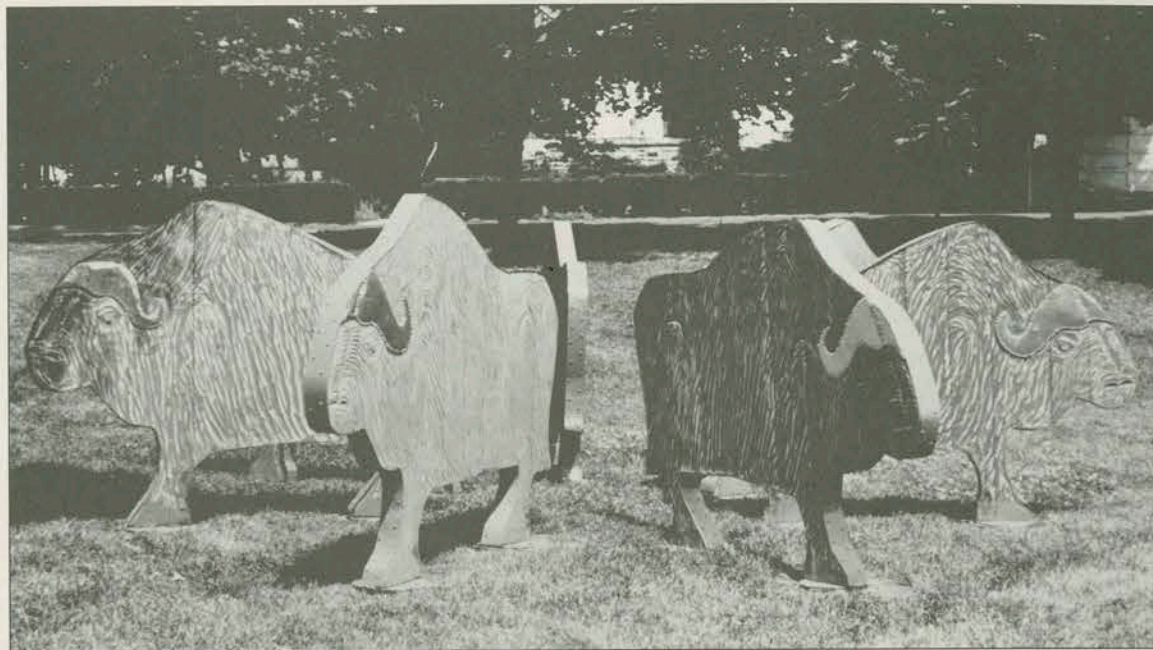
The work on these sentinels of life was a wonderful read, full of many images and rewarding finds. My piece houses the twelve types of owls found in Canada, along with artifacts and imagery of owls found throughout the world: Egyptian, Mayan, Chinese, Guatemalan, Huron, Iroquois, Haida, Sioux and Greek. Always, the image of the owl takes people to the great beyond.





THE BEARDED ONES

1985 - (steel, wood and aluminum) 7 at 5' x 7'. Collection of the artist.



The Bearded Ones, as the Inuit call them, are not oxen, but rather ancestral goats. This piece is perhaps the most enigmatic of my current series dealing with animal imagery. The musk-ox is an animal seen by only a few and understood by even fewer.

The musk-ox is a survivor; depicted in the piece in its circular defense formation, a timeless image. It is a part of our heritage which should not be squandered, but observed and reflected upon to further our education.



TRIBUTE TO NAHNEEBAHWEEQUAY

1988 - (Inlaid copper & aluminum) 3' x 3' x 8'. Collection of the artist.

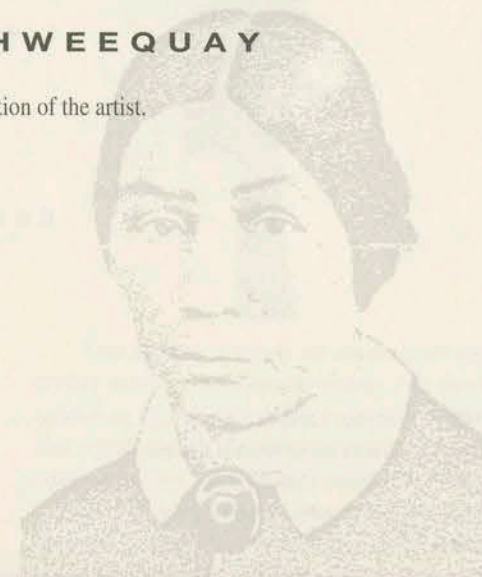
Nahneebahweequay was born in 1833. In 1842, her father, Chief Senegal, moved her tribe to the Owen Sound area to escape the influx of white settlers. She stayed behind with an uncle.

She did travel to England to study. After her return to Canada she married an Englishman and, in 1844, they moved to Owen Sound. During her absence, the Peter Jones Treaty saw her people moved from their ancestral summer homes to Cape Croker. The Band gave the couple 600 acres of property, a mile or two south of Presqu'île. The white community was split over this action. The government, then seated at Quebec and the Assembly in Toronto, voted it down.

In 1859, Nahneebahweequay, then 26 and the mother of two, decided to take her cause to Queen Victoria herself. Funds were raised both in Canada and the United States by natives and whites. In 1860, she sailed to England. Nahneebahweequay was received by Queen Victoria in June, after bearing her third child while waiting for the audience.

Although promises were made by the Queen, nothing was resolved. Prince Albert, saying he would be in Canada for a military review, promised to visit the area and try to back her cause. Nahneebahweequay, however, died in 1865.

I built this piece in her memory, and as a tribute to her cause and the present situation of all native people in the country.





TOM BENNER

Born January 5, 1950 • London, Ontario

EDUCATION

H. B. Beal Secondary School, Art Program, 1964 - 1968.
Graduated, Special Arts Diploma, 1969.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

(selected)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1992 Theatre London London, Ont. | 1984 Chatham Cultural Centre Chatham, Ont. |
| 1991 University of Western Ontario London, Ont. | White Water Gallery North Bay, Ont. |
| 1990 Embassy Cultural House London, Ont. | 1983 Forest City Gallery London, Ont. |
| 1990 Brampton Public Art Gallery Brampton, Ont. | 1982 London Regional Art Gallery London, Ont. |
| 1989 Gallery Lambton Sarnia, Ont. | 1981 Harbourfront Toronto, Ont. |
| MacDonald Stewart Art Centre University of Guelph, Guelph | 1980 Art Gallery of Hamilton Hamilton, Ont. |
| 1988 Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery Owen Sound, Ont. | 1979,78,77 Forest City Gallery London, Ont. |
| 1987 K.A.A.I. Gallery Kingston, Ont. | 1976 Sir George Williams Art Gallery Montreal, Que. |
| Woodstock Art Gallery Woodstock, Ont. | Art Gallery of Ontario Toronto, Ont. |
| Optica Gallery Montreal, Que. | Concordia University Montreal, Que. |
| 1986 S.T.R.U.T.S. Gallery Sackville, N.B. | McIntosh Gallery - University of Western Ontario London, Ont. |
| Lynnwood Arts Centre Simcoe, Ont. | 1973 Aggregation Gallery Toronto, Ont. |
| London Regional Art Gallery London, Ont. | Trajectory Gallery London, Ont. |
| Blyth Festival. Blythe, Ont. | 1971 McIntosh Gallery - University of Western Ontario London, Ont. |
| 1985 Niagara Area Artists' Co - Op St. Catherines, Ont. | |

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

(selected)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1992 World Exposition Seville, Spain | The Edmonton Art Gallery, Alberta; |
| 1988 Pisces Art Gallery of Algoma Sault St. Marie, Ont. | The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Manitoba; |
| 1984 College Park Toronto, Ont. | Glenbow Museum, Calgary; |
| 1979 A Space Gallery Toronto, Ont. | Burnaby Art Gallery, British Columbia; |
| <i>Forest City Gallery / A Space Exchange</i> | Simon Fraser University Art Gallery, Vancouver; |
| 1976 Art Gallery of Ontario - Circulating Exhibition 1976 - 1977: | London Public Art Gallery and Art Museum; |
| Art Gallery of Windsor; | <i>Changing Visions - The Canadian Landscape</i> |
| Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montreal; | 1976 London Art Gallery - <i>Selected Sculpture</i> London, Ont. |
| De Cordova and Dana Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts; | Rutgers University - <i>Invitational Exhibition</i> . New Brunswick, N.J. |

ARTIST - IN - RESIDENCE, TEACHING AND WORKSHOPS

- 1993 Stratford Art Gallery - Visiting artist, Perth County Board of Education
- 1988 Artist in residence - Woodstock Art Gallery
- 1986 Visiting artist - Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B.
- 1982-88 Guest lecturer, workshops - Artists with Their Works Program, Art Gallery of Ontario
- 1982-85 Teaching assistant, technician - Visual Arts Dept., University of Western Ontario
- 1977-78 President, Forest City Artists' Association - Forest City Gallery

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- 1972, 1973, 1975, 1986, 1988 Canada Council Awards
- 1983, 1987, 1989 Ontario Arts Council Awards

OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS

- White Rhino London Regional Art Gallery
- Rookery of Herons Lynnwood Arts Centre
- The Ancient Ones Woodstock Art Gallery
- Turkey Vultures D.B. Weldon Library - University of Western Ontario

INSTALLATION EXHIBITIONS

- The Bearded Ones Queen's University Campus - Summer 1987, Kingston, Ont.
- Art Gallery of Haliburton - Summer 1988, Haliburton, Ont.
- Tribute to Nahneebahweequay Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery - Summer 1988, Owen Sound, Ont.
- Gallery Lambton - Summer 1989, Sarnia, Ont.

COLLECTIONS

- Art Gallery of Ontario London Regional Art Gallery
- Canada Council Art Bank Ontario Arts Council
- University of Western Ontario The Blackburn Group Inc.

FILM AND PUBLICATIONS (selected)

- 1988 CBC / National Film Board - *Whale Song*
- 1988 Descant (periodical) Feature Artist Vanguard Magazine
- 1984 Tom Benner, Forest City Gallery

Written by Tom Benner
Photo credits - John Tamblin



Tom Benner is surely an anomaly among artists working in Canada today. His work refuses to fit into any of the currently important trends yet in its own way is every bit as contemporary and effective. Much of the freshness of his sculpture comes from seeing it as Benner sees the animals he works from, innocent of the load of history, information and opinion that surrounds them. It is also for the most part a more truly Canadian art than that of his peers in the images it evokes and the way of life it describes.

Benner's work, taken as a whole, speaks of a Paradise Lost, flora on paper, fauna 'museumized' and people preserved in glass cases. It speaks of nature's balance and beauty, man's imperfection and power over her, and ultimately, and against common sense, of the artist's conviction that she will endure.

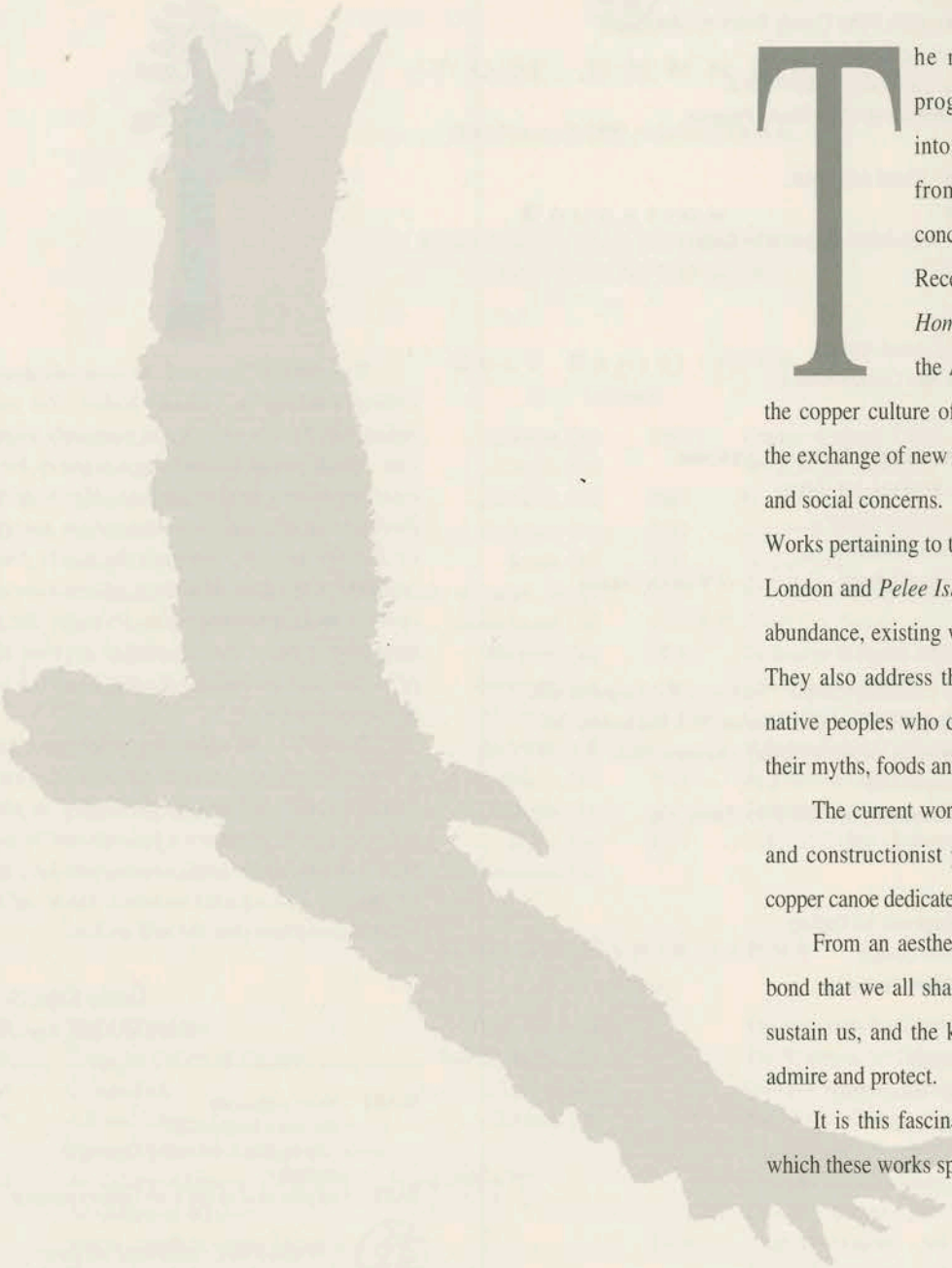
- Goldie Rans; No.2,
VANGUARD, Apr.1984

- WABI - rustic simplicity
- sincerity, humbleness
- plea or prayer for mercy (apology)
- solitude

SABI - acquire skill in one's art from experience



WABI-SABI - intentional irregularity
- perfection in imperfection



The recent body of works I have in progress draw from ongoing research into ancient North American histories, from both geographic and humanistic concerns.

Recent sculptures, *The Ancient Ones* and *Homage To The Owls*, recount trading of the Anasazi peoples of New Mexico and the copper culture of Ontario. These works reflect upon the exchange of new ideas integrating artistic, agricultural and social concerns.

Works pertaining to the area in which I live, *The Coves* in London and *Pelee Island* on Lake Erie, view nature in its abundance, existing within our culture's urban landscape. They also address the presence of the neutral group of native peoples who dwelt here, and show appreciation of their myths, foods and perspective on human existence.

The current works are a fresh collection of sculptures and constructionist paintings. The initial sculpture is a copper canoe dedicated to Tecumseh.

From an aesthetic level they reveal an ever-present bond that we all share between the natural elements that sustain us, and the kinship needed by us collectively to admire and protect.

It is this fascination with central North America of which these works speak.

ART GALLERY OF ALGOMA
10 East Street, Sault St. Marie, Ontario
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1994

THUNDER BAY ART GALLERY
A National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art
FEBRUARY - MARCH 1994

111 GALLERY
Winnipeg, Manitoba
MARCH - APRIL 1994

ART GALLERY OF MISSISSAUGA
300 City Centre Drive, Mississauga, Ontario
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1994

With assistance from the
"ARTIST WITH THEIR WORKS" PROGRAMME,
ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO.

THE CANADA COUNCIL

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