

ICS HOSTS MAJOR JURIED SHOW & AWARD PRESENTATION

“Evidence of things unseen”

On May 23, ICS had the privilege of showing a major Canada-wide juried exhibition representing 50 artists from across the nation. ICS awarded prizes of \$1800.00, \$1300.00, and \$800.00 to artists Bruno Capolongo (1st), Sylvia Bartosik (2nd) and Marurice Collodo (3rd). Honorable mention prizes of \$400.00 each were also awarded to Gerald Folkerts, Ryszard Sliwka and Nathan Vonnahme. Originally to be held at Tyndale College and Seminary, the show was taken over by ICS because 5 pieces chosen for inclusion in the show by the jurors were considered inappropriate by members of Tyndale's administration. Adrienne Chaplin, Senior Member in Aesthetics at ICS addressed this controversy in her opening remarks to a crowd of about 125 patrons and artists.

Opening remarks by **Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin**

I'd like to welcome you all very warmly to this fourth annual Canada-wide juried exhibition and many congratulations to all the artists who have made it to the final selection. Your works have been selected from amongst 460 pieces submitted by 158 artists and together these have led to an exceptionally strong show.

It is a great pleasure for me and for ICS to be able to host this year's exhibition especially since we have a longstanding tradition with, and a great commitment, to the arts. Since its inception in 1967 ICS has been promoting Christian thinking on the arts as is reflected in its aesthetics program which was founded by Calvin Seerveld.

Although Western art has long been inspired and dominated by Christian themes, projects and sponsors, this has not been the case in the last few centuries. As a result, not only did we no longer see familiar Christian subject matter in most mainstream art but many Christians started to withdraw from what was now being conceived as a world of vanity and vice. Ironically, having left the world of art in the hands of unbelievers, Christians then started to complain about the lack of moral values in this realm of life and claimed they were being denied a Christian voice.

Fortunately, however, over the last few decades the tide seems to be turning. More and more Christians are seeking a career in the arts and recognize the immense value of art and the aesthetic for the full flourishing of human life as intended by our Creator. I believe this exhibition is just one example of this spirit of artistic renewal – and a great one for that.

As many of you will now know, there is a particular reason why this exhibition is being shown here at ICS rather than at Tyndale College. In line with the Western tradition of art, several of the pieces selected, including the award winning piece, contain images of the nude human figure. Attitudes to such images and, correspondingly, to the nude body itself, vary greatly from age to age and from culture to culture. And within those, naturally, attitudes depend on context and occasion.

Ours is a complex culture. Although we are supposedly at ease with nudity and images of nudity such as encountered in films and advertising, the

majority of such images are presented in the context of uncommitted sexual relations and seductive commercials. Nudity, so it seems, stands for unbounded sexual freedom and self-gratifying consumerism. Indeed, the conventionally fashionable and flawless bodies on display are explicitly meant to be desired.

I suspect that this pervasive and invasive cultural context has contributed to the concerns underlying Tyndale's reluctance to allow some of the pieces to be exhibited on Tyndale property. This is not a question of Tyndale not being enlightened or, for that matter, ICS not having any scruples. These are real issues which need to be addressed both thoughtfully and sensitively.

However, it is a sad reflection on our society's use

– or rather: 'abuse' – of nudity that we can no longer distinguish between reductive exploitations of the naked body and dignified, rich and suggestive ways of portraying the nude figure – whether attractive, erotic and beautiful, or repulsive, flawed, wounded, ageing, handicapped, vulnerable broken and so on. God created us as embodied



“
Attitudes to such images and, correspondingly, to the nude body itself, vary greatly from age to age and from culture to culture. And within those, naturally, attitudes depend on context and occasion.
”

human beings and in many ways our bodies express who we are.

Here, perhaps, lies a particular challenge for Christians: to re-discover and re-introduce the authentic artistic potential of the nude figure – and to explore anew the endless range of symbolic meanings which can be expressed and suggested by the nude figure – in colors, shapes, sizes, positions, gestures and textures.

There is a long and honored tradition of Christian artists using nude figures in their work, from Rembrandt and Rubens to Rodin and Rouault, to mention just a very few of the very best known. Let us consider how we can learn from these artists as to how we might honor and respect the uncovered human body and how we can educe its dignity in our portrayals.

But before this turns into a lecture, let me stop here and celebrate with you tonight the offerings of these fifty Canadian artists who are already dedicating themselves to these and many other tasks. Let us see and hear from them how they experience “The Evidence of Things Unseen.”