

ENTERTAINMENT



MATTHEW SHERWOOD FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Max Streicher's installation "Quadriga," featuring inflatable horses, is in St. Anne's Church this week.

Miracle on Gladstone Ave.

Group of Seven-decorated St. Anne's Church marks 150th birthday with weeklong arts festival

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ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

Mary Catherine Newcomb woke up in the early dawn in July to reap wheat in the tiny town of Palmerston, Ont.

"It was hot and it was hard," she says.

She started with scissors and tried a variety of other implements, including clippers and a scythe. It took her three days to ferry her supplies by car back to her Kitchener home.

This week she sowed: her wheat now adorns the aisles of St. Anne's Church in Toronto's west end as part of a weeklong celebration of the arts to mark the church's 150th anniversary, from Oct. 13 to 19.

"Many of the people coming will never have seen a wheat field," says Newcomb, explaining it refers to the ecclesiastical cycle of the year. "A church is a very urban setting."

Titled "Mirabilia — the Miracle on Gladstone," the event is about "things that make you wonder."

Newcomb is a member of the NetherMind Artists' Collective, a group of eight artists who enlivened the Toronto art scene in the 1990s with innovative exhibitions in vacant factories, and which is participating in the celebration.

Fellow artist Max Streicher has tethered four inflatable horses to the basement. Originally, he had thought they could float up to the dome in the middle of the church, a bit like angels, but then he felt they clashed with the sacred space.

"Jesus rode a donkey," he said, preferring his inflatable organ to be placed near the chancel. Its various arms, which look like tree branches, will apparently play music, and St. Anne's music director Daniel Norman is prepared to tackle this

unusual instrument.

Norman is also assistant conductor to the 100-voice choir of the Pax Christi Chorale, which will be singing in an Oct. 21 concert (with real instruments by an accompanying chamber orchestra). They will be singing Bach as well as a work created for the Feast of St. Anne by Toronto composer Rob Teehan.

Art has always been central to St. Anne's Church, which is the only Anglican church in Canada to boast a Byzantine dome and to be decorated by members of the Group of Seven.

Gary van der Meer, St. Anne's priest-in-charge, is thrilled to be the pastor of the only church whose walls are painted by Canada's best-known art collective.

From its very start, the grand church in the modest neighbourhood was built "for people who had simple lives," he says, adding, "This was beautiful for them."

Art is part of the church's outreach, he says, noting that local artists and community agencies are participating in the anniversary celebrations.

ST. ANNE'S continued on E4



MATTHEW SHERWOOD PHOTOS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Artists Max Stereicher, centre, and Garnet Willis, right, look at their installation, "Tree Organ," with Rev. Gary van der Meer in St. Anne's Church.

Artwork kept church going

ST. ANNE'S from E1

There was a smaller church built in 1862, which now functions as the church hall, when Canon Lawrence Skey took on the building of a new church in 1907 to accommodate the now 1,000-strong parish. J.E.H. MacDonald assembled Canadian artists, including fellow Group of Seven members Fred Varley and Frank Carmichael.

Sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle created medallions and reliefs of the four apostles in the all-Canadian group of artists chosen to add flourishes to the church.

The presence of the artwork has saved the church, whose congregation has dwindled to 100 most Sundays, says van der Meer. The Anglican Foundation has a trust for church restoration, which has enabled the church to fix leaky roofs and preserve the art.

The history of the church, includ-

ing pamphlets, photographs, commemorative plates and other memorabilia, are on display. Archivist Jeryn McKeown points to a newspaper article and says, "What happened at St. Anne's was news."

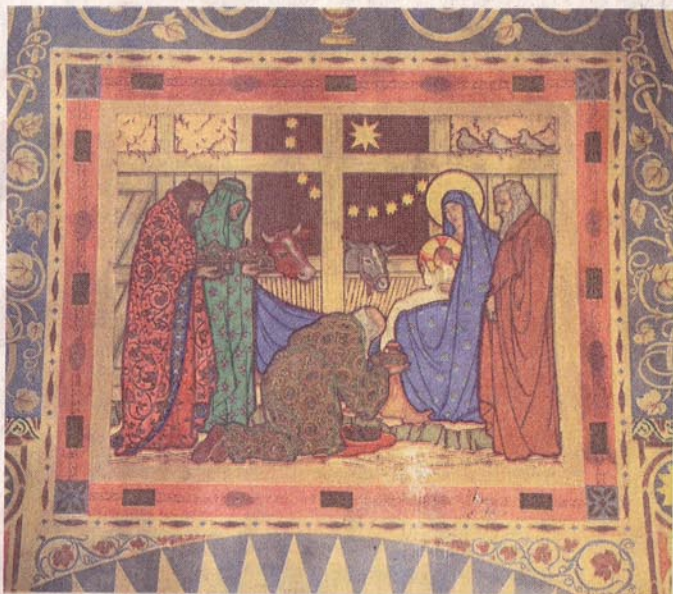
Canon Skey, she says, "was a forward-thinking person, quite remarkable."

For instance, when the new church was consecrated he asked members of other denominations to make addresses. It caused quite a furor, McKeown says.

Van der Meer plans an Oct. 21 sermon to answer the question posed by this celebration: "What has God got to do with art?"

"God is the creator and we are in his image. That means we are creators. What we create is with honour and joy. It is a channel to what God creates."

And speaking of creating things, Newcomb plans to bake bread made from her wheat when the show is over.



The Adoration of Magi by Group of Seven member Franklin Carmichael on the ceiling of St. Anne's Church.