

the bridge

Connecting people, places and ideas across our city from the downtown east

Berkeley House **3**
By Bruce Bell

Waterfront Toronto Ignores Warnings **5**
By Mariana Valverde

Funeral for the Truth **7**
By Ellise Ramos

Pulling Along



Life in Suspense. The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has upended lives, shuttered businesses and ushered in social norms of physical distancing and quarantine. While we faithfully accept new societal measures, life feels it’s being pulled beyond our control. (Reflections page 8) Photo: Tania Correa

Shutting Up The Shop: COVID-19 economic assistance is here – but how long can we hang on?

By Ben Bull

As the coronavirus continues to ravage our community, Toronto business owners are wondering how much longer they can stay afloat in the face of the prolonged economic slowdown. Small businesses are a major engine of Canada’s

economy. As of December 2017, businesses with 1 to 99 employees made up 98% of all employers in Canada. From 2013–2017, small businesses employed 70% of the private work force and were responsible for 67% of employment growth. Government statistics for 2014 show that small businesses contributed approxi-

mately 30% of Canada’s gross domestic product (GDP). Most small businesses are mom-and-pop operations. According to 2017 stats, 54% of small businesses employ one to four people, with 86% employing up to 19 people. It’s not easy for a small business to stay afloat. According to the federal Business and

Industry department, 95,000 small businesses sprung up between 2010 and 2015; however, a whopping 85,000 disappeared over the same period. Over half of small businesses fold within their first ten years. With COVID-19 shuttering storefronts, bars and offices all over our neighbourhood, is help coming?

It is. The federal government has promised to spend up to \$107 billion to ease the crisis, including \$27 billion in direct support for Canadian workers and businesses. Measures to be rolled out include:

Shop continued on pg 6

Connecting people,
places and ideas
across our city from
the downtown east

the bridge

is an independent community newspaper published monthly and distributed by a mix of delivery services to a varying readership. Over 3000 copies are circulated throughout the downtown east - Moss Park, Corktown, The Garden District, Cabbagetown South, the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood - and to community hubs that extend across Toronto.

the bridge strives to source up-to-date activity and diverse interests from heritage, planning, culture, development, arts and opinions that advocate a collaborative level playing field forum.

Publisher: Andre Michael Berman

Copy Editor: Eric Mills

Designer: Patrick Lee

Photographer: Tania Correa

Questions, comments or queries?

thebridgedowntown@gmail.com

260 Adelaide Street East Toronto,
On M5A 1N1 Box 12

From the Publisher

Dear readers,

With the sudden advent of COVID-19 in our community, it is imperative that calm and reason triumph over fear and panic. We must be resolute, in both body and mind, to shoulder the responsibility of making sure our friends, families, loved ones and neighbours remain safe and well.

In this unprecedented time, many of our most cherished places of business remain closed. Some, however, soldier on. As a community we must continue to support the essential small businesses now struggling under the weight of uncertainty. A small purchase or a donation can go a long way.

Human beings are social animals and the transition to a solitary life has been difficult for many. But now that Spring is upon us, a simple stroll down the street has never seemed so vital. We are lucky to have so much history displayed in our very own backyard. Heritage can be a useful tool to remind us how far society has come, and the obstacles previous generations have surmounted.

Throughout our current situation, *the bridge* will continue to supply the com-

munity with local news and developments. I would like to thank all of our regular contributors and small business supporters for keeping this project alive.

Let the bridge connect your community, so your voice can bridge what the neighbourhood values most.

Please write to us - contribute an article, a photo, a thought. We accept letters to the editor.

Stay strong, Toronto!

Andre Michael Berman,
Publisher of the bridge
community newspaper.



Lime Sushi

Mon to Sat 11:30am - 9:30pm

(416) 901-1131

www.LimeSushi.ca

368 Queen St. E., Toronto, ON M5A 1T1

A Real Sushi Chef
Over 30+ Years of Experience



CADIA BOOKS

Est. 1931

Art, Illustrated Books, Literature & More

232 Queen St. East, Toronto

(416) 364-7638



Follow us
@acadia_books



the bridge

Connecting people, places and ideas across our city from the downtown east

Wants your contributions

thebridgedowntown@gmail.com
260 Adelaide Street East, Toronto Ontario M5A 1N1

flux + form

J E W E L L E R Y

wedding + custom + ready-to-wear + re-use



Our Art. Your Story.

116 1/2 Sherbourne St. Toronto | fluxandform.com
(416) 368-9679 | @fluxandform

Tuesday - Saturday 12-6pm

Community Support in the Time of Covid-19

By: Tooba Nasir Vali, Market
Manager, Building Roots

Community organizations like Building Roots are rooted in bringing people together. Community spaces filled with people, laughter and conversations all around, is what our 'normal' looked like. Now, even we must adjust to this new temporary norm and create a safe and healthy space that offers resources for our community members.

We have geared our focus and resources towards tackling food insecurity issues amongst the vulnerable most affected by Covid-19. We are continuing to operate our Moss Park Market, but it's become a take-out model, to practice physical distancing and limit contact. We have also started delivering food hampers for people in the community who are self-isolating and seniors who can't and shouldn't leave their homes.

In an age of technology, we are never too far from our loved ones - virtually. Knowing this, please take time out of your day for a phone call, to check in on your loved ones, your neighbors, and listen to those stories you haven't



Tooba Nasir Vali in front of the Moss Park Market. Photo: Lisa Kates

heard in a while, or ever. Give credence to your own mental health as well, limit your daily news intake, learn a new skill like sewing or gardening, take on a new language, start a puzzle or a DIY home improvement project. Focus on the POSITIVES in your surround-

ings and spread positivity in your community.

This is a time to be selfless, a time to put the safety and wellness of our vulnerable community members as our top priority. Practice physical distancing and take appropriate measures for your and everyone else's health and safety.

Berkeley House



By Bruce Bell, Senior Columnist

In the early 1800's with the Town of York (now Toronto) having a population of about 600, there was once a small bridge crossing Goodwin's Creek at present day Parliament and King.

Though the creek is long buried, there is today a slight dip and a bend to King St as it crosses Parliament etching out the former topography of the area.

The first houses and businesses to spring up in that area were Mrs. Johnson's boarding house on the NW corner of Ontario and King Sts, Jordan's Hotel on the south side and behind that was a public baking oven operated by Paul Martin.

This public bakery was in operation from at least 1804 to well after the Rebellion of 1837 for it is recorded that the bakery supplied bread to the militia forces of Toronto in 1839.

The largest estate in the area was Maryville Lodge, home to D.W. Smith, whose estate took up the block bounded by King, Berkeley, Ontario and Adelaide streets and held up to 20 buildings including a stable with 13 stalls.

Smith left York in 1804 and soon after Maryville lodge was demolished to make way for an expanding town.

On the southwest corner of

Berkeley and King stood the fabled Berkeley House first built in 1794 as a modest home by Mr. John Small the clerk of the Executive Council.

He built his house on Government owned land, which caused a minor scandal but nothing like the scandal that was to come.

Honour was everything back in the day and duels were often fought.

At a government meeting the wife of the Attorney General John White said something to Mrs. Small that was taken as an insult. It could have been something as trivial as "My dear don't tell me your husband bought that gown for you?" Taken to mean some other man might have purchased it for her.

Well all hell broke loose and whatever was said forced the two husbands on January 4th, 1800 to defend the honour of their wives with a duel fought on what was then open ground fronting the lake just south of King on the west side of Parliament street.

Mr. Small won and Mr. White was dead. Mr. Small having killed a member of the ruling class was tried for murder but was later acquitted by the infamous Peter Russell who earlier had a Mr. Humphrey hung for stealing a forged note of one dollar.

The Smalls were banned from society and in a town that had a population of a present day apartment building, banishment was seen as a worse punishment than hanging.

While York's founding fathers were happy to fight duels the second generation, being not so heavily ruled by society niceties, would rather build in-

dustries and have fun.

Charles Small, son of John, inherited his father's modest home on the south west corner of Berkeley and King and built an enormous addition and named the entire estate Berkeley House.

This new and much larger house, an Italian styled villa, became the center of social life in 1820's York.

Horse drawn carriages overflowing with young partygoers all dressed in the latest fashions would pull up nightly to the candle lit house with what promised to be yet another eve-

ning of booze, laughter and political discussion.

Their parents, whose own young lives were dictated to by a book known as 'Rules of Conduct in Upper Canada,' could only just shake their heads in disgust at the goings on.

In 1898 the original albeit modest 1794 house was torn down and the present structure the Reid Brothers building (359 King E) was built.

The Reid Bros. also owned an enormous lumber factory complex at the bottom of Berkeley Street at the Esplanade.

The remaining addition to Berkeley House with its grand parlors, sweeping staircases and Italian Renaissance façade stood until 1926 when it too came crashing down after years of disuse.

Today the famous site is home to a 17-storey office tower and the new address of The Globe and Mail newspaper. During the tower's construction, the original stone foundation of Berkeley House was unearthed after almost two centuries of being buried.



Berkeley House by Owen Staples. Courtesy of the Toronto Public Library



Quinqué Tealight Lamp
And Jacob, Mexico City

Modern goods for your home.

MoY

www.merchantofyork.com
181 Queen Street East
647-343-6405

Another Large, Blocky ‘Data Centre’ Planned Next to Distillery District

By Rosemary Frei

A second very large data centre is in the works for the block just north of the Distillery District. The site of the proposed building also is, not coincidentally, a stone’s throw from ‘Quayside,’ where Google affiliate Sidewalk Labs is poised to create a ‘smart city’ involving a vast amount of data collection.

The huge, mostly windowless ‘TR3’ data centre is planned for the southeast corner of Eastern Avenue and Parliament Street, on the north side of the ‘TR2’ data centre that opened in October 2015.

The new data centre will dwarf Toronto Police 51 Division’s headquarters, which is on the northeast corner of Eastern and Parliament. TR3 also will be taller than TR2.

TR2 is owned by Equinix -- a U.S.-based, internationally operating, company -- as will TR3. Equinix’s website describes the multinational as “the world’s largest data center and co-location provider, enabling fastest application performance, lowest latency and a digital ecosystem for financial, CDM [‘Common Data Model’], enterprise and cloud networks.”

The company keeps a low



TR2 shown behind empty lot that is earmarked for the new TR3 data centre. Photo: Tania Correa

profile: for example, a search for its name on the Globe and Mail’s website yields just three articles, one each in 2007, 2010 and 2015.

The first data centre in Toronto, TR1, is located in the downtown financial district. Toronto so far is the only Canadian city that has Equinix data centres.

TR3 is being designed for Equinix by WZMH Architects,

which presented detailed plans and drawings to the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel on February 26.

TR3 is designed to be a ‘co-location centre.’ Such centres “provide equipment, space, bandwidth, power, cooling and physical security for the server, storage and networking equipment of digital business,” according to the WZMH presentation to Waterfront Toronto.

In addition, the presentation states, such “top-tier data centres in the core will ensure that Toronto continues to attract top tech companies, including those providing services to the financial services industries, AI [artificial intelligence] and IoT [the Internet of Things], and is ready to support new opportunities such as Sidewalk Labs[’s Quayside smart city].”

TR3 will not have any en-

trances on the ground level and will be connected to TR2 with a second-floor bridge.

The building’s roof has a striking design: a rectangular, flat top with very steep, long and straight slopes coming down from each of its four sides. The sloped surfaces descend about three stories to where the outside walls meet the roof.

“This roof form will be especially dangerous along the Front Street sidewalk” because “a large snowfall ... could create a snow slide of epic proportions,” Distillery District resident and architect George Hume wrote in an emailed comment to *the bridge*. “Does the designer live in Southern California?”

Hume, who’s given input on development in the area on behalf of himself and the Gooderham & Worts Neighbourhood Association for many years, also noted that TR3 won’t be attractive from the outside.

In addition, he observed, the building “will not provide much neighbourhood stimulation; there are very few employees in the present building [TR2] and I expect this will be the same [for TR3].”

‘What to do with all this time?’

By Phil E. Roth, columnist

We have all heard people say this: “If I had more time, I would do more exercise, or I would study more.” But now that we have been advised to self-isolate or practice social distancing due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many of us are crawling up the walls because we don’t know what to do with all the time we have.

This free time conundrum is challenging modern humankind to stay occupied while remaining sane and balanced. Do modern occupations rob us of time to be and stay creative? Are we too used to everyday hum-drumming from place to place and staying occupied for most of the day, which disconnects a good majority of people from exercising creative practice and thinking?

Many of us have attended gatherings and parties where the biggest lamentations voiced are about the lack of time in a day. Life/work balance being juggled -- and work getting the better of us -- is often the common denominator of these conversations. So how do we prioritize time and how does it affect our time management?

This is not to diminish the importance of professional oc-

cupations and work. Perhaps our view on managing our free time should be scrutinized more thoroughly? How do we allocate our time after completing our professional engagements? Part of the challenge remains having the same energy and resources to fulfill our spare-time projects with enthusiasm and focus. We have all caught ourselves saying, “I was just too tired to do this ... and that.”

Well, except for meeting our social network face to face online, we are now afforded newly released time in the day that leaves us without excuses. We have the time. We have always had it. But now, procrastination or lack of motivation or mental focus can no longer be hidden behind “I just don’t have the time.”

Now is the time to pursue our curiosities to learn and read about new things, releasing and creating new energies and power to discover what is available to all of us: life-long learning. We are wired to acquire new knowledge, as it helps us navigate through daily challenges. It expands our minds and allows objective critical thinking and decision-making.

A good friend recently made me laugh uncontrollably when



Perhaps our view of managing time should be scrutinized more thoroughly? Photo: Phil E. Roth

he made the following statement, which is the *raison d’être* of this commentary. With health officials appealing for social distancing, “It’s not as if we are asked to make a sacrifice like storming the beaches of Normandy and fighting the Nazi war machine. Watching Netflix for a good part of the day does not even come close.”

If we decide to turn into couch potatoes, please let us not complain about how difficult that is while embracing it with a bored stare into nothingness. As a PBS slogan years back stated, “Learn more. Know more. Be more.” We cannot expect empty calories to give us important nutrients. We must select those foods by

decisive action.

At present, we do not need to commute or run to the gym -- and we cannot use this for a reason to not read or study and learn more. Time discipline and time hygiene remain just as important as the daily face splash in the morning and brushing our teeth.

Waterfront Toronto Ignoring Major Concerns Surrounding Sidewalk Labs' Quayside Plan

By Mariana Valverde

Adapted from a March 18 article by University of Toronto professor Mariana Valverde for the Ryerson Centre for Free Expression's blog

On a sunny day in October 2017 Waterfront Toronto (WT), the tri-governmental agency responsible for administering revitalization projects along the city's waterfront, signed an agreement with Google's urban design division, Sidewalk Labs (SWL), to develop a smart city on a 12 acre lot known as Quayside. But ever since then, the leaders of WT have most often behaved like lobbyists-in-chief for the Google/Alphabet sister company rather than guardians of the public interest.

And while there have been several recent resignations from WT, no whistleblowers have stepped forward.

A striking example of the lopsided dynamics is the Feb. 2020 approval by WT's evaluation committee of all but 16 of SWL's 160 proposals outlined in its Quayside Digital Innovation Appendix (DIA). Many of the untested technologies are tied to a data extraction and motion tracking with little built in oversight.

The evaluation committee was headed by former Ryerson University president Sheldon Levy. Levy is a Special Advisor to the Ontario government on small and medium-sized enterprise, and a strategic consultant to real-estate developer Knightstone Capital Management Inc.

The lack of clarity about



Quayside, image via Sidewalk Labs' Master Innovation and Development Plan.

who is defending the public interest -- is right now the most worrying thing. On February 26, WT's own group of hand-picked data experts from across Canada, the Digital Strategy Advisory Panel (DSAP), issued a report that roundly criticized gadgets praised by WT as promising 'innovations.' It also questioned the corporate-driven and data-centric assumptions of the 'smart city' project. DSAP members instead called for a cautious "digital-restraint" approach involving determining whether collecting data is useful or necessary -- well in ad-

vance of considering doing any such collection via a gaggle of new gadgets.

At the Feb. 29 morning consult, which I attended, the very existence of the expert DSAP wasn't mentioned in any of the lengthy presentations by WT leaders, never mind the panel's brand-new seminal report. Apparently, that scenario also unfolded in the afternoon consult.

Furthermore, the DSAP was mentioned only twice, both times in passing, in the glossy, full-colour, 46-page 'Discussion Guide' given to Feb. 29 meeting attendees.

The first simply names

DSAP, along with WT's Design Review Panel, as the two advisory panels WT was "considering feedback from" in evaluating the 160 "solutions." The second and last mention is: "Waterfront Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel has reviewed the DIA in detail, and their report will also inform Waterfront Toronto's decision-making." That's all.

That leaves acres of questions unanswered. For instance, are WT senior staff negotiating with SWL (either in Toronto or at SWL's New York City headquarters) toward the new June 25 deadline for a final agree-

ment or instead directly with Alphabet? What role if any are City of Toronto staff playing in the negotiations? Is board chair Steve Diamond leading the talks or is it WT staff and, if the latter, which staff?

On February 6 I wrote Mayor John Tory, Councillor Joe Cressy (the only politician on WT's board), and the head of the city's Waterfront Secretariat, David Stonehouse. I suggested a town-hall meeting to inform local citizens about what the city is doing to ensure transparency and to protect the public interest. I'm still waiting to hear back.

In the face of upheaval, our community smiles back!

Photos: Tania Correa



Shop from pg 1

- **Sickness benefits.** For workers in isolation because of COVID-19 who do not have paid sick leave or access to employment insurance (EI), the government is introducing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to provide up to \$2000 a month for up to 4 months.

- **Unemployment benefits.** Benefits will be paid to workers who lose all or part of their income because of COVID-19. This includes workers without access to EI.

- **Wage subsidies.** To encourage employers to keep their staff, the government will subsidize affected workers by paying up to 75% of their wages for three months.

- **Deferred taxes.** Businesses can delay paying income tax until August 31 with no penalties. Tax credits will also be increased for small and medium-sized businesses.

- **Access to credit.** The Business Credit Availability Program will provide more than \$10 billion in additional support to businesses.

Is this enough?

A recent Canadian Federation of Independent Business



It's not easy for small businesses to stay afloat. Picture depicting vacant storefronts along Queen Street East. Photo: Andre Bermon

(CFIB) member survey noted that 42% of small businesses depend on face-to-face contact for all their sales.

CFIB small business owners reported an average revenue loss of \$66,000 as of March 17. A quarter of those surveyed said they would not be able to survive more than a month if their income dropped by half.

CFIB's director of Ontario provincial affairs, Julie Kwieciński, noted that the sectors

most affected by COVID-19 are hospitality, arts and recreation, retail, and personal services. In an interview with the Toronto Sun newspaper, she cited the government of Denmark's decision to cover 75% of affected worker's salaries, a measure the government of Canada has just recently adopted.

"We've also asked the Ontario government to provide relief from penalties and interest

for late remittances of the Employer Health Tax, sales taxes, and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premium payments," she said.

At the municipal level, Toronto Mayor John Tory has launched an Economic Support and Recovery Task Force, which is extending grace periods for property tax and utility bill payments, committing to paying city staff for shifts already scheduled and providing

EI payment assistance.

Like the virus itself, economic assistance measures are evolving. Nobody knows how long the outbreak will last. Health experts have speculated that the current shutdown in Toronto could last up to two months at least. In the meantime, all we can do as a community is pull together, ask for help when we need it, and try our best to hang on.

Pandemics of the Past: Cholera in the Town of York

By Zoé Delguste-Cincotta,
Curator at The Town of York
Historical Society.

The disease arrived by ship in the summer of 1832, and soon the death toll rose. Cholera had landed in the Town of York.

For months the town had been preparing for the arrival of the disease, having heard of its spread across Europe and the devastation that it left in its wake. In anticipation of a new wave of settlers arriving in the country, a quarantine station had been established in February 1832 on Grosse-Île in the St. Lawrence in Lower Canada. But the island was not ready for the arrival of 400 ships with 25,000 passengers. Ope-

rating with limited resources and under enormous pressure, local officials separated visibly ill passengers from the rest and allowed those who appeared healthy to move on. Many made their way to the shores of Lake Ontario, and settled in York.

Cholera was a disease without a known cure. An extremely aggressive and fast-acting malady, it was characterized by violent nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The cause of the disease was water-borne bacteria, but that would not be discovered until the 1880s. In 1832, those in the medical profession thought cholera was transmitted by wind or by fumes. This left

them powerless to its spread. Various miraculous cures were urged upon the public by quack doctors and the press. Funds were needed to provide hospitalization and medical aid to those in need, but public health legislation in York was in its infant stage.

Unsanitary sewage conditions and cholera infected water expedited the spread of the disease. The Town of York had but one public water well (which can still be found on the North end of Market Lane), and it was described as being foul-smelling and the colour of leeks. To avoid this water, many preferred to source their water directly from the lake, which was little better as it was

a repository for animal and human waste.

According to a June 12, 1828 article in the Colonial Advocate, "In front or in rear of houses of many inhabitants of this town, and even on the public streets, individuals are permitted to collect, or throw out and exhibit all sorts of filth and nastiness – puddles of stinking water and offals, noisome and pestiferous, are allowed to exist without complaint." The overcrowded conditions of the town further hastened the spread of cholera. The area known as Stuart's Block, located on the east side of what is now St. James' Park, was a ramshackle shanty neighbourhood which became a breeding

ground for the disease.

Every night bodies were collected by cart to be buried in mass in a swampy corner of St. James cemetery. Over the course of the summer, the people of York suffered at least 200 deaths in a population of approximately 6000 residents. The cholera epidemic of 1832 led to the formulation of the first public health legislations in Upper Canada and gave rise to social welfare organizations to tackle overcrowding and poverty. The first outbreak lasted about three months, but it left the citizens of the town fearful of when it would inevitably return. When it did, hopefully they would be better prepared.



TORONTO'S FIRST POST OFFICE

260 Adelaide Street E.

operated by the Town of York Historical Society

Monday –Saturday: 10am–4pm

CANADA POST OUTLET

MUSEUM

MADE-IN CANADA GIFT SHOP

TownOfYork.com

Town of York
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



TORONTO'S FIRST
Post Office



Funeral for the Truth

By Ellise Ramos

“Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don’t belong.”
N.R. Narayana Murthy

I came from the Philippines at 14, and immediately recognized the abyss that separates my narrative from everyone else’s history.

My history is of salt water and dried fish. Sunny, humid days and afternoons spent with my back on the grass, toes curled, watching the clouds go by.

Yours is of winter, hugging cups of coffee, the initial sweet taste reinvigorating your body for the rest of the day. Coffee, the quencher of all thirsts, the muse of your mornings, the tradition that keeps a family close, one mug at a time.

I was 20 when I walked down the streets of Port Credit, forgetting the place I had in your world. A fuzzy, brown dog came bounding down the steps and pushed his head under my palm. I asked the

owner, “Can I pet him? Is he friendly?” And he said, “Maybe not with the Chinese.”

I was 23 when I noticed, sitting in a restaurant with my friend, an old man, his white son and his son’s Filipino wife staring at us.

I could see from the look of the Filipina’s eyes that something was about to happen -- something she was already desperately trying to apologize for.

The old man wheeled his chair over to my table, put both hands on my shoulder and asked: “You from the Philippines?” I nodded, my fork and spoon in mid-air. “Good. Come with me. I can give you everything. I can even send you back home. I have money.”

His son kept apologizing, but to my friend, not to me. His Filipino wife went down on her knees, put her forehead on mine, and said, “Pasensya ka na. Matanda na eh.”*

What is it about me that makes

people think I am for sale?

As each winter passes, and more snow gathers around me, winter jackets accumulating -- it’s so easy to forget that I used to belong to an island, whose history is marked by 300 years of subjugation --

that the colour of my skin is different from yours,

the language I speak is borrowed

--it is not my first and will never be my own.

Toronto is a multicultural city, and we can be so accepting and open. But denying the existence of the abyss we have to cross to reach each other, is a funeral for the truth.

We are all blinded by the lens that owns us, and bound to pasts we cannot destroy.

*Translates to: “Please have patience for he is old.”

*Ellise Ramos lives with a cat in a box in Toronto where she drowns in countless books and pots of coffee. In her spare time, she volunteers for the Toronto Writers Collective and writes poetry and short fiction. You can find her work at el-liseramos.com. *Funeral For The Truth* was first published as part of the TWC’s Prompt of the Month.*



TORONTO WRITERS COLLECTIVE

www.torontowriterscollective.ca

info@torontowriterscollective.ca

We have begun offering Virtual Workshops!

For more information, please check our website or contact:
info@torontowriterscollective.ca

Encouraging Voice, Empowering the Unheard

f t i @torontowritersc

Do you have a story to tell?

We want to hear you

Explore your creative genius

Free brave expressive writing workshops

Supportive feedback

All are welcome

Amazing Moss Park Art Fair



By Carol Mark

When art mirrors your life, it can be described as heaven on earth. So often, we are out of sync with our beliefs and our life, but Melanie Billark and Michael Sillers truly live theirs through their art.

Melanie’s organic based nature work stops you in your tracks and makes you ponder questions on waste, climate change and, more important, our impact as human beings on the planet. We feel compelled to make changes in our lives to positively impact our experiences on earth.

Michael Sillers, with his eye on the urban landscape, redefines what is “Canadian” in an urban sense. Not the fir trees of the far north that have echoed by the traditional Group of Seven. Michael uses familiar images and transforms them into iconic symbols of urban life in the 21st century.

Melanie Billark is an emerging, Toronto based, multi-disciplinary artist. She obtained an advanced diploma in 2011 from Sheridan College Crafts and Design program, as well as a BFA from OCADU’s Sculpture and Installation program

in 2016. Her body of work includes themes of social and political issues that affect and surround principles of ecology. [Her work strives to create an awareness to certain environmental issues within the public sphere]. Melanie has received a number of awards for her work including The Climate Arts Award in 2019, and the OALA Ground Award in 2017. Melanie’s work has been shown in numerous galleries, shows, and festivals across the GTA and United States.

Realizing that she no longer wanted to contribute more objects to this over-filled world, Melanie’s priorities as an artist drastically shifted. Greenwashing by Melanie Billark found a way to consider what she could do for the environment, allowing her practice to become a form of restoration and a process of healing Mother Earth. www.melaniebillark.com @melanie.billark

Michael Sillers studied drawing, painting and experimental media at the Ontario College of Art, Visual Arts

at the Toronto School of Art and Illustration and Design at George Brown College. He went on to work in the photography industry, designing point of sale marketing signage and developing full window displays for major photographic retailers including the Blacks Photography and Japan Camera chains.

In recent years Sillers’ interest in computer technology led him to explore the combination of traditional visual art techniques with digital photography. The results have been described as “having infused the industrial, urban and rural landscape with an ethereal romanticism”. His work has also been referred to as “having achieved a fusion of historical and traditional sensitivities with contemporary insight and a classical visualization of the world made possible through the versatility of digital and electronic tools”.

His work has been exhibited internationally in Argentina, the United States (California and Texas) and in Canada, most notably in Toronto and across Ontario, as well as in Montreal, Quebec.

Sillers continues to produce artwork that combines the painterly with the digital.

Join the Amazing Moss Park Art Exhibit www.amazingmosspar.ca Art can change the World



Greenwashing by Melanie Billark

The Berkeley Church in Methodist Rome

Stories from *the bridge*

We have all heard Toronto's many nicknames. Hogtown, T-Dot, Queen City, The Big Smoke, Toronto the Good and recently, thanks to the flamboyant efforts of Canadian rap star Drake, The Six. But what about the city as the "Methodist Rome?"

To most Torontonians the Methodist influence remains an obscurity. Once a dominant cultural institution, instilling strict moral and religious doctrines of a puritan society, what remain are the signature bastions of Methodist worship; the church buildings themselves.

Gracing the corner of Queen East and Berkeley Streets is the Berkeley Church, constructed in 1871. Known historically as the Berkeley Street Wesleyan Methodist Church, it was once an important pilgrimage of the eastern religious circuit. Now an event space, the church remains a relic of the enormous Methodist impression and a significant footnote in the development of historic Queen East.

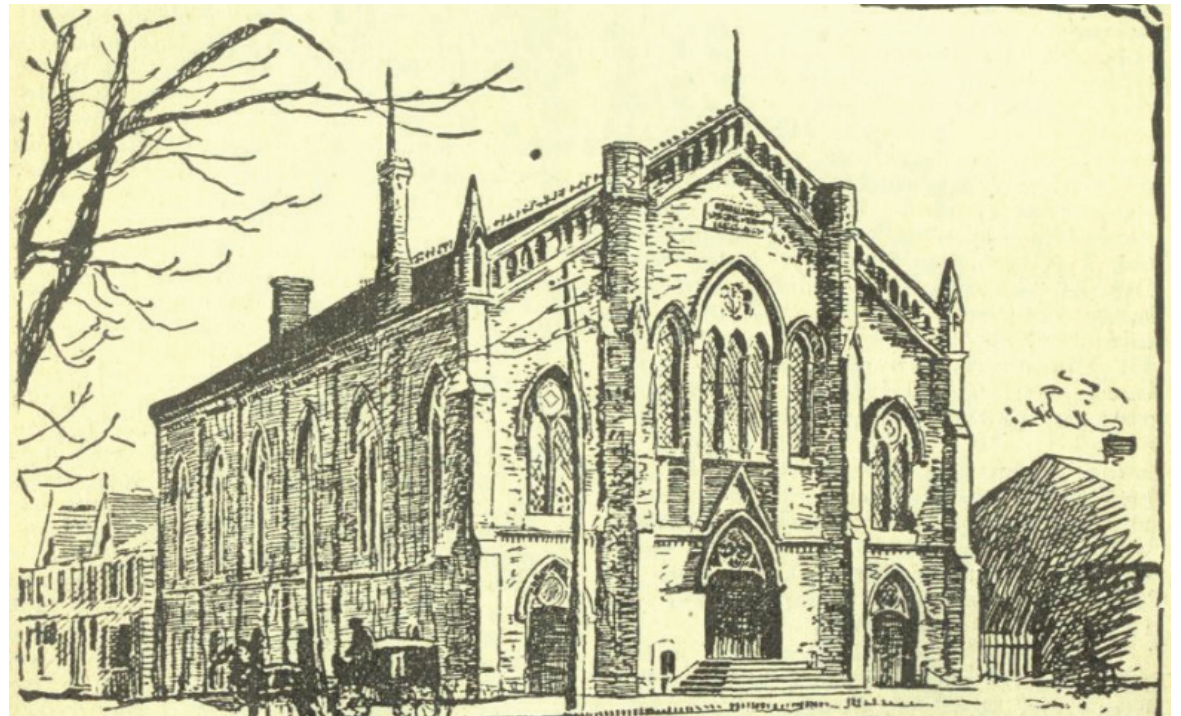
Methodism traces its roots as a revival movement within the Church of England in Britain, led by cleric and theologian John Wesley (1703-91). Worshipers travelling to British North America established a presence in the Atlantic provinces, but later exerted stronger influence in Upper Canada. The first recorded preacher in the Town of York was Rev.

Elijah Woolsey in 1795.

When Toronto incorporated as a city in 1834, Methodism was on the rise. The first church was built in 1818 near present day Jordan Street and later the ancestor to the Metropolitan Church on Adelaide and Toronto Streets in 1832. To convert and train successive generations, Sunday Schools were the means of extending religious authority to the masses. The Berkeley Church began as a small brick structure just two blocks south with an entrance on Duke Street (now Adelaide). Built in 1837 and named the Duke Street Sunday School.

The 1850s would prove to be the start of a decades long boom for Toronto. Seeing the need to incorporate new congregations from the populated eastern suburbs, the Duke Street Sunday School was sold to make way for the Berkeley firehall (a later iteration was retrofitted to form the Alumnæ Theatre Company). A wooden framed chapel was erected on the church's present-day site in 1857 and sat 500 people.

Growth again necessitated the enlargements of churches and this time under the trusteeship of prominent citizens such as James Gooderham, the architectural firm Smith & Gemmell was commissioned to design the current red brick oblong shaped building. Featuring elements of the Gothic-Revival style, the church contained modern arrangements



The Berkeley Church, sketch 1904. Landmarks of Toronto by J. Ross Robertson.

for worship, assemblies and Sunday School studies. Considered a substantial project for the time, the Berkeley Church set the precedent for change on Queen East as commercial and industrial development would soon follow.

Writing in 1904, J. Ross Robertson, the author of the series, Landmarks of Toronto, foretold the future of the Berkeley Church, "It is doomed, as all downtown churches are -sooner or later to be forsaken as the residential portion of the city moves towards the northern ravine." In plainness Robertson describes the phenomena linked to industrial expansion. As wealth fled, homes were converted or demolished.

Only a concentration of urban poor remained.

The effects of a stagnant population pushed the idea to repurpose the church. In 1956, the interior was altered to form a radio, television and film studio for the newly amalgamated United Church of Canada. It functioned as the Berkeley Street Studios until the early 1990s.

The Berkeley Church has a way of reciting Toronto's history. As a Methodist organization in a time of robust urban growth there are parallels between the need for spiritual fulfillment and the formation of a maturing metropolis. The Methodist impression is stamped throughout the city as it

played a major cultural, religious and political role during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of our most cherished institutions have Methodist beginnings.

While Queen East patiently waits for its long overdue renaissance, the Berkeley Church stands out as a shining example of purposeful reuse. Decades of willful neglect have left dozens of old buildings scattered throughout the downtown east. As development permeates, efforts need to be made to preserve our heritage stock and allow antiquity to coexist with future projects.

Lest our next nickname be the Generic City.

Reflections on our Changing World

By Andre Bermon, Publisher

I was eleven years old when the principal of my school wheeled in a television to show the class the horrifying imagery that took place in New York City on September 11th.

Too little to understand that a major paradigm was in the making. The War on Terror had begun.

The collapse of the World Trade Centres marked an upending of life not only in the United States, but around the world.

Populations were subjected to interrogation, imprisonment, mass surveillance, destruction and displacement from war.

All in name of fighting an enemy we couldn't see; rights and freedoms were easily taken away.

With the sudden spread of COVID-19, echoes of the "invisible enemy" are heard once more. A collaborated effort around the world has seen billions of people under lockdown. Some under



A sign of the changing times.

punishment of the law.

To witness how quickly society can be dismantled and put together again with restrictions on commerce, movement and public gatherings, shows how little we are in control of our own lives.

Like the child who pulls the string of a toy, we are subject to sudden jerks and tugs, never able to move freely or stop to

look around.

In the fight against a common threat, collective action is needed which takes coordination and willpower to overcome.

The corona pandemic is a real battle and people have suffered and died. According to provincial health officials, the projection of deaths in April are set to rise between 3,000 and 15,000. Data quantified on

what the experts know now.

If the solution to stopping this virus is quarantine, social distancing, reimagining how we work, live and play; then as citizens we are complying.

But where will this lead us? Are we able to go back?

The answer to the latter is likely no.

Human beings are creatures of habit and the conditioning effects of physical distancing brought on by fear of infection will be long lasting.

Already there are signs of suspicion and mistrust among neighbours. From mid- to late March the city's 311 hotline received over 1,400 complaints about illegal and or irresponsible behavior in public parks, now outlawed from recreational use; as reported by the Toronto Star.

Plexiglass "sneeze guards" have become ubiquitous in front of cashiers and places of exchange. A physical barrier but also a psychological one that weaponizes a fundamental human trait; social interaction.

The economy, the greatest influencer of our lives, is being

remodeled to suit a more virtual world. Consumerism through online portals and entertainment brought to you by streaming services are laying the permanent foundation of a "shut-in" lifestyle.

Keeping in fashion with an already consolidated market, Walmart, Shoppers Drug Mart, Home Depot, Loblaws, and Metro have all become beneficiaries of "essential businesses" across the country. Medium and small businesses who don't qualify remain closed with hopes of reopening all but unassured.

Living in a state of pandemic is a life in suspense. Never knowing when it will all be over has become the de facto state of mind.

When such conditions prevail power can be amassed. Decisions from leaders can resemble dystopian novels and science fiction films.

If this experience teaches us anything, is that we must be ever vigilant. For the heavy curtain of uncertainty can shroud us from the liberties we once enjoyed.