

FUSE at the Institute

A cherished resource

report by Vera Frenkel

When Sheila Copps, our minister of culture and heritage, opened the first branch of the NIA (The National Institute for the Arts — popularly known as The Institute™) in her hometown of Hamilton, we didn't realize what the national impact would be.

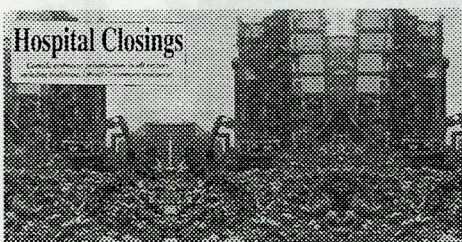
As the first of a coast-to-coast chain of artists' residences destined to occupy former hospitals, the policies and programmes of the flagship Institute™ — Hamilton would understandably be under several kinds of scrutiny.

Many of the initial group of forty residents listed below have national or even international reputations in their respective fields. The Institute™'s Outreach Programme connects their work and thought to creative worlds beyond former hospital walls or provincial boundaries, and The Institute™'s prestigious Visiting Lecturers' Programme (as mentioned in the CBC radio series, *Art on the Web*) permits residents and their guests to hear in person the most gifted artists, brilliant scholars and charismatic speakers of our day. Members of the larger public will soon be able to read the lecture transcripts at their own convenience on Institute™ — Hamilton's dedicated web site, currently under construction.

Among The Institute™'s most attractive features are its facilities. In addition to a dining room that ensures the company of remarkable people at meal time, these include the full range of spaces, equipment and assistance required for each of the many disciplines pursued by the artists in residence at any given time.

As Ms. Copps stressed in her opening speech, the staff at The Institute™ comprises erstwhile cultural bureaucrats who have been carefully retrained to serve the arts in a more personal way, bringing their hard-earned insight and experience to a wide range of in-house tasks.

This potent arrangement is the result of an award-winning Hull-based programme that transforms former Museum Directors, Visual Arts and Music Officers, Arts Council Publicists and other cultural workers into the chefs, librarians, gardeners, nurses and social workers a prestige residence of this kind requires. The retraining programme has received major recognition for its effectiveness in harnessing this force-field of know-how into service occupations of the most sensitive kind, and is a destination of choice for foreign visitors, curious about how things are done in Canada.



One of the main centres of energy at The Institute™ is, of course, the library. Lilly Letourneau, the librarian, has embraced the multidisciplinary of her role and supervises a range of resources and special rooms for study, listening (analog and digital) and screening (all film formats, video, DVD), as well as a New Media Centre where work is continuing on Institute™ – Hamilton's web site and on its future publishing programme.

The reference section of the library is quite impressive, as indeed it must be if it is to reflect the complex visions of those doing research there. Plus there is a growing archive of artists' papers: photos, manuscripts, correspondence and the like, which Lilly is steadily and skilfully augmenting.

(Fair use of copyright remains a vexed question still under discussion at this writing, with The Institute™ claiming rights to whatever is produced under its auspices, and the artists, writers, composers, film makers, choreographers, etc., asserting independent ownership of their own creative work and intellectual property. It is an unresolved issue, in some instances involving anxious family members and their lawyers. Bill Everell, the current CEO, is working with considerable discretion toward private settlements of these disputed claims, but the debate flourishes internally, and is already reflected in the Visiting Lecturers' Programme, which features a presentation by Dr. Joost Smiers [Arts Administrator and Cultural Theorist from Amsterdam] on the abolition of copyright, one of the texts soon to be posted on the web site.)

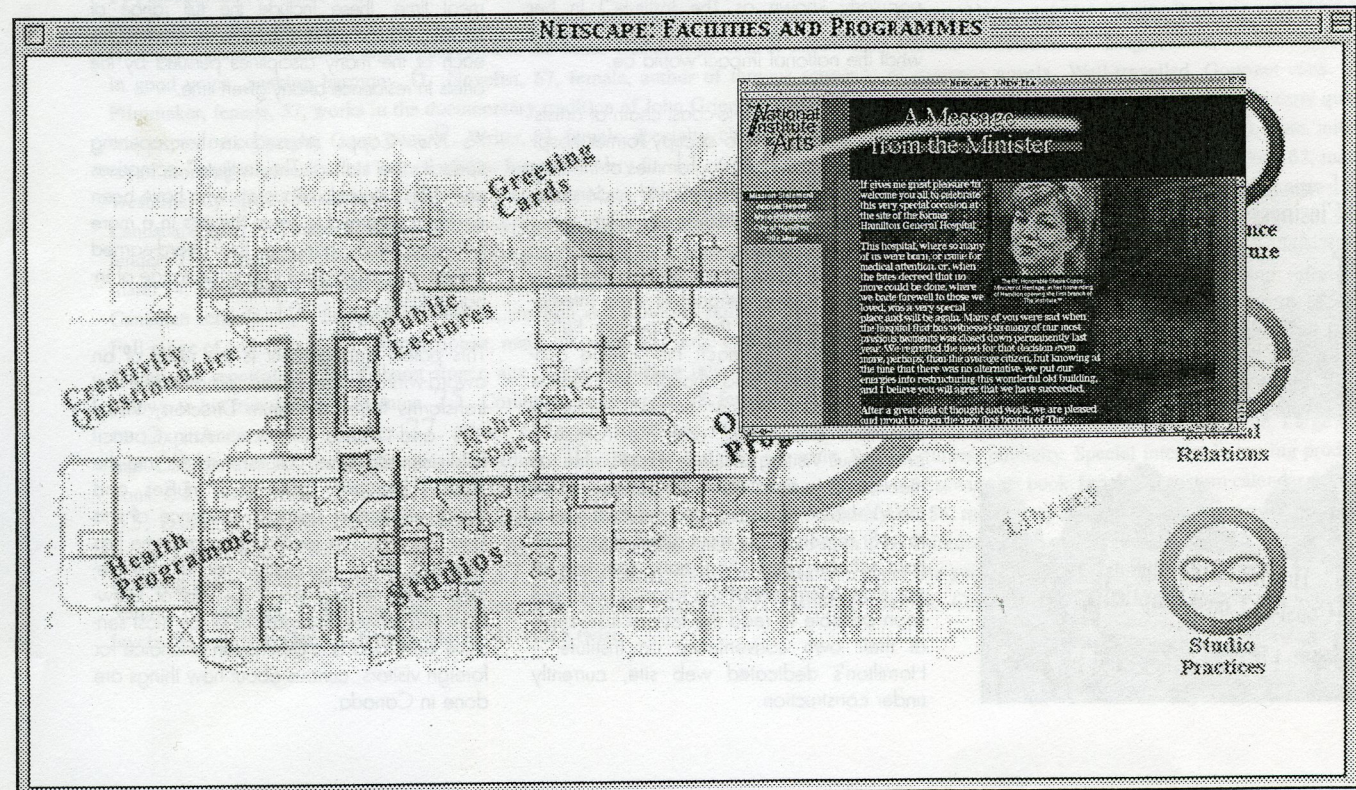
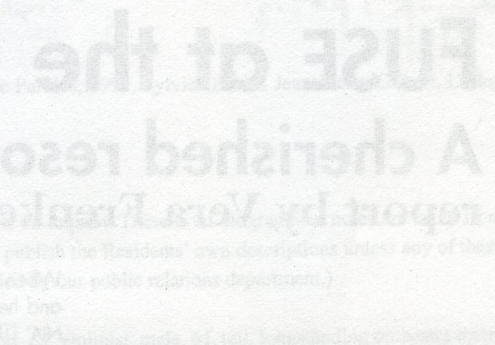
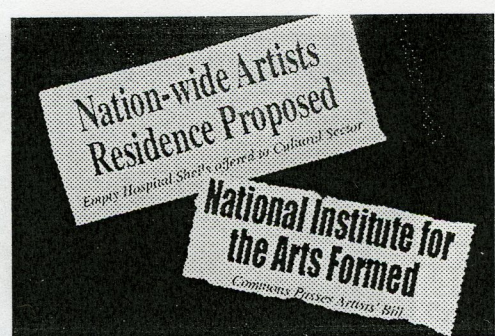
In addition to its new media and viewing facilities, its reference materials in several languages and its multidisciplinary archive, one of the many fine features of the library is a magazine section boasting a highly developed roster of journals, from popular magazines of the day to specialty publications difficult to find elsewhere.

On a recent visit, it pleased me to see — prominently displayed near *Fanfare* (the newsletter for brass performers and instrument makers) and *Fitness after Fifty* (a spa and health club monthly for fiction writers) — the most recent issue of FUSE, one of the country's leading cultural publications.

I was even more impressed when Lilly took me down a long corridor to the archive and showed me the shelves where the full twenty-five year run of FUSE was housed. "The twenty-fifth anniversary issue should be coming off the presses any minute now," she said, "And then we'll have the complete quarter-century set!"

This means that visitors and residents can examine and enjoy the full trajectory of this remarkable publication and gauge its influence over the years on cultural theory and art practice in this country.

Much as I appreciate the access to the Hamilton Branch afforded me as a Board Member, and Ms Letourneau's friendly assistance when I'm there, I look forward to the opening of the planned second branch of The Institute™ in Toronto, which I understand will have its very own FUSE archive. There



are signs already of a longing for access to early and recent issues of FUSE — a need that should be met. (Lilly recommends that we gather all related manuscripts, illustrations and correspondence, whether in the form of hard copy or on disk, so that the archive may be well-supported by original working documents.)

In a related vein, we were also pleased to learn that a group of Torontonians has recently announced its intent to commandeer other unused building sites in the region (the Ford plant in Oakville being one suggested venue), for purposes not dissimilar to those described in The Institute™'s 1998 Charter.² It is heartening to see that the principle of repurposing or adapting obsolete buildings continues to invite imaginative attention.

FUSE, and what it represents, is at the heart of these new developments, having always been a vehicle where social engagement and cultural issues meet. The Institute™ can be described simply as the realization in concrete form of the wisdom emanating from the magazine's pages over the years. It is not surprising, therefore, that ancillary projects of a similar kind are being proposed, and we at The Institute™ commend the Oakville initiative.

FUSE has always supported collective endeavours and collaborative projects, and The Institute™ Board is satisfied to see its influence at work, relishing the prospect that in the present cultural and economic climate,

artists will find havens of one kind or another for their activities in different parts of the country. In this spirit, it would be a fitting celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary if the Hamilton and Toronto branches of The Institute™ could reach out to the sister project in Oakville or other sites in transition and consider together how best to adapt abandoned physical plants to the changing demographics of the digital age.

For The Institute™, Ontario is just the beginning. While FUSE may have come of age in Toronto, there was a strong whiff of Calgary in the early days due to the vision and contribution of artist and writer Clive Robertson, one of the magazine's founding editors. Where there is Calgary, can Banff (suspected by some to be an early model for the Institute™) be far behind? Furthermore, with news of organizing initiatives in Trois-Rivières, Kelowna and St. John's, we can be assured that The Institute™'s national network is forming quite quickly.

In the meantime, it's a comfort to know that at the core of each location will be the full array of FUSEs, up to and including the most recent issue.

Mindful of its contribution and influence, we at The Institute™³ would like to wish FUSE a very happy twenty-fifth anniversary! Thank you FUSE and many happy returns of the day! We look forward with enthusiasm to your thirtieth!

NETSCAPE: INTERNAL RELATIONS

Outreach
Programmes

Expansion
Proposal

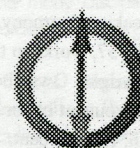
Memos

Residents'
Biographies

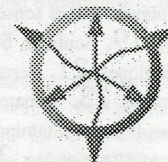
Social
Worker's
Report

Facilitators
Report

Private
Biographies



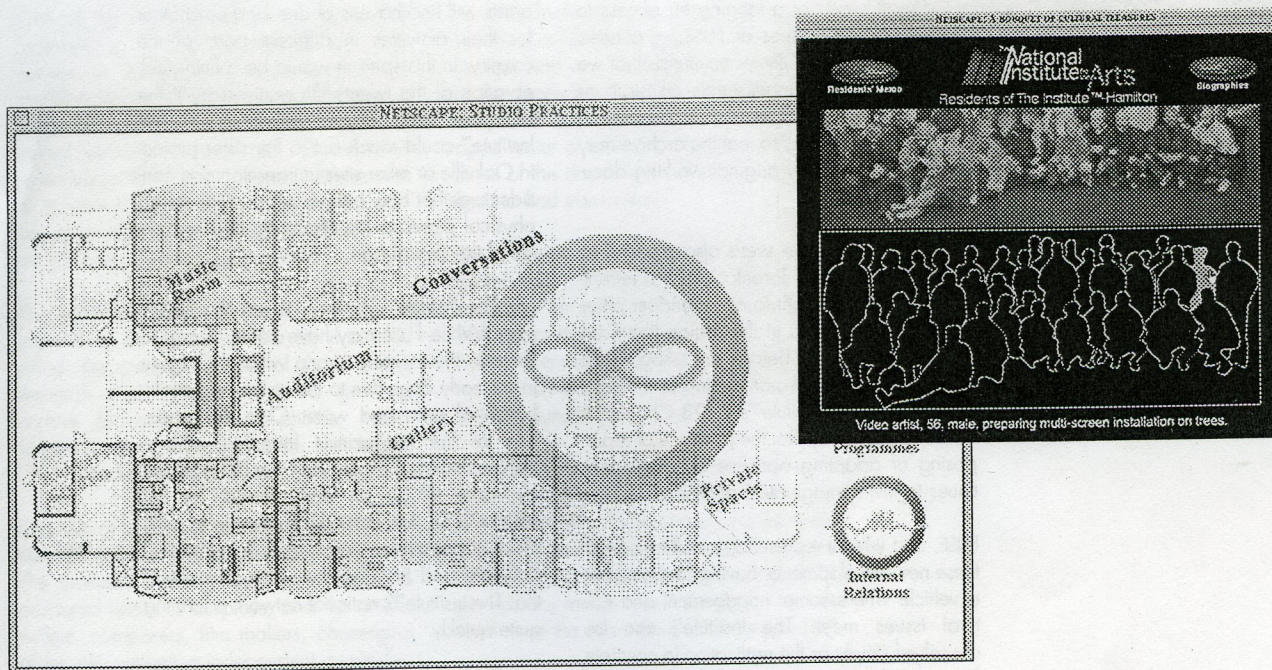
Governance
& Structure



Facilities &
Programmes



Studio
Practices



Endnotes:

1. See <http://cbc.ca/artstoday/artontheweb/frenkel.html>.
2. *n.paradoxa*, London, vol 2, 2001, pp. 39–44; or, *So, To Speak*, Editions Artex/Prendre Paroles, 1999, Sylvie Gilbert, Jean-Pierre Gilbert, Lesley Johnstone, eds., pp. 38–43.
3. Residents at The Institute™– Hamilton.
Hamilton: Resident Biographies:
As the Director has explained elsewhere, The Institute™ protects the privacy of its residents on request. These brief biographical notes are taken from our Annual Report. Their inclusion here is not mandatory. It is The Institute™'s policy to publish the Residents' own descriptions unless any of these are found to be overly modest or exaggerated in some way, in which case they are modified by our public relations department.)
 1. Painter, male, 51 years old, casual dresser, dedicated abstractionist. Prefers gin to scotch.
 2. Violinist, male, 61, tall, longstanding orchestra member, formerly married. Now solo in every sense.
 3. Poet, female, 59, active in the Canadian Writers' Union and PEN Canada. Working on new book.
 4. Choreographer, male, 55, highly respected in the dance world, in process of establishing national association.
 5. Singer, male, 72, bass-baritone in good voice. Seeking harmony.
 6. Novelist, 67, female, author of famous sequence of romance novels. Well-travelled. Gourmet cook.
 7. Filmmaker, female, 57, works in the documentary tradition of John Grierson. Currently on location.
 8. Composer, 60, male, known for early quartets, expert on copyright. Owns boat.
 9. Writer, 63, female, specialty, children's books. Looking for new illustrator.
 10. Dancer, 50, male, initiator of morning workouts at his branch of The Institute™. Very fit.
 11. Conductor, female, 58, should know the score by now.
 12. Poet, 62, male. Westerner by birth. Lyrical bent.
 13. Arts journalist. Male, 70. Distinguished career. Continues to publish. Specialty: the performing arts.
 14. Landscape artist, 59, male. Sculpts earth. Re-designing the access route to The Institute™–Hamilton.
 15. Television writer, 58, male. Licensed bartender.
 16. Choreographer, 67, female, developing project on spatial awareness and interpersonal non-verbal communication.
 17. Playwright, male, 74. Team player. Values sense of humour above all else.
 18. Writer, renowned anthologist, female, 63, committed to curriculum reform in Canadian schools.
 19. Sculptor, 60, female, welding and sautering skills. Public monuments a specialty.
 20. Portrait photographer, 52, female. Full range of techniques.
 21. Percussionist, male, 59, small and large ensemble experience.
 22. Flautist, 53, female. Remarkable breath control. Traditional repertoire.
 23. Cabaret singer, age uncertain. Strong international presence. Several languages.
 24. Fiddler, traditional, 76, male. Known to his friends as Mr. Stamina.
 25. Composer, song-writer, 58, female. Satirist, with a tender heart.
 26. Actor, 55, female. Stratford, Shaw, CBC experience. ACTRA member.
 27. Writer, 62, male. GG winner. Planning autobiography.
 28. Landscape photographer, 66, male. Large format.
 29. Painter, 67, female. Student of Borduas.
 30. Theatre designer, 61, male. Sets, costumes, publicity. Special interest in touring productions.
 31. Visual artist, 58, female, collage favourite medium.
 32. Print designer, 64, male. Prizewinning book, brochure, custom calendar design.
 33. Dancer, 53, female. Career in classical ballet and teaching. Bilingual.
 34. Video artist, 56, male, preparing multi-screen projection onto trees.
 35. Writer, 79, male, deconstructs the family romance, war illusions, blind faith.
 36. Printmaker, 71, male. Lithography preferred medium. Building a new studio. Handles stones well.
 37. Watercolourist, 63, male. Makes own paper and paints. *Plein air* training.
 38. Lyricist, 62, male. Veteran of musicals, TV commercials, greeting cards. Natural rhymers.
 39. Pianist, 64, female. Conservatory certification. Individual tuition, all levels.
 40. Jazz singer, 61, female. Standards with a twist.