

Gallery Moos: Rock, Paper, Scissors Selected Works from the Estate

In May, 1959, Walter Moos opened Gallery Moos at 169 Avenue Road in Toronto, establishing one of the first internationally-oriented private art galleries in the city, and one of the leading galleries in Canada. He created a premier showcase that brought to Canada the latest in vanguard contemporary art from America and Europe, while equally promoting and strengthening the reputations of outstanding Canadian artists.

In 1962, looking to expand, Moos purchased the two Victorian townhouses at 136-138 Yorkville Avenue and successfully petitioned the Ontario Municipal Board for commercial zoning on the north side of what was then a residential street. The avenue's broad sidewalks favored pedestrian traffic and soon the Yorkville of the Sixties was in full bloom, with the Riverboat Coffee House opening next door to the gallery, and the Penny Farthing Coffee House just east of Hazelton Avenue.



Crowd at Gallery Moos for the opening of the gallery's 30th-anniversary exhibition, May 17, 1989.

Courtesy of Gallery Moos

For the next thirty years, Gallery Moos in Yorkville was a seminal site for the presentation of Canadian visual culture. Moos gathered around his gallery a group of artists who participated in defining modern Canadian identity:

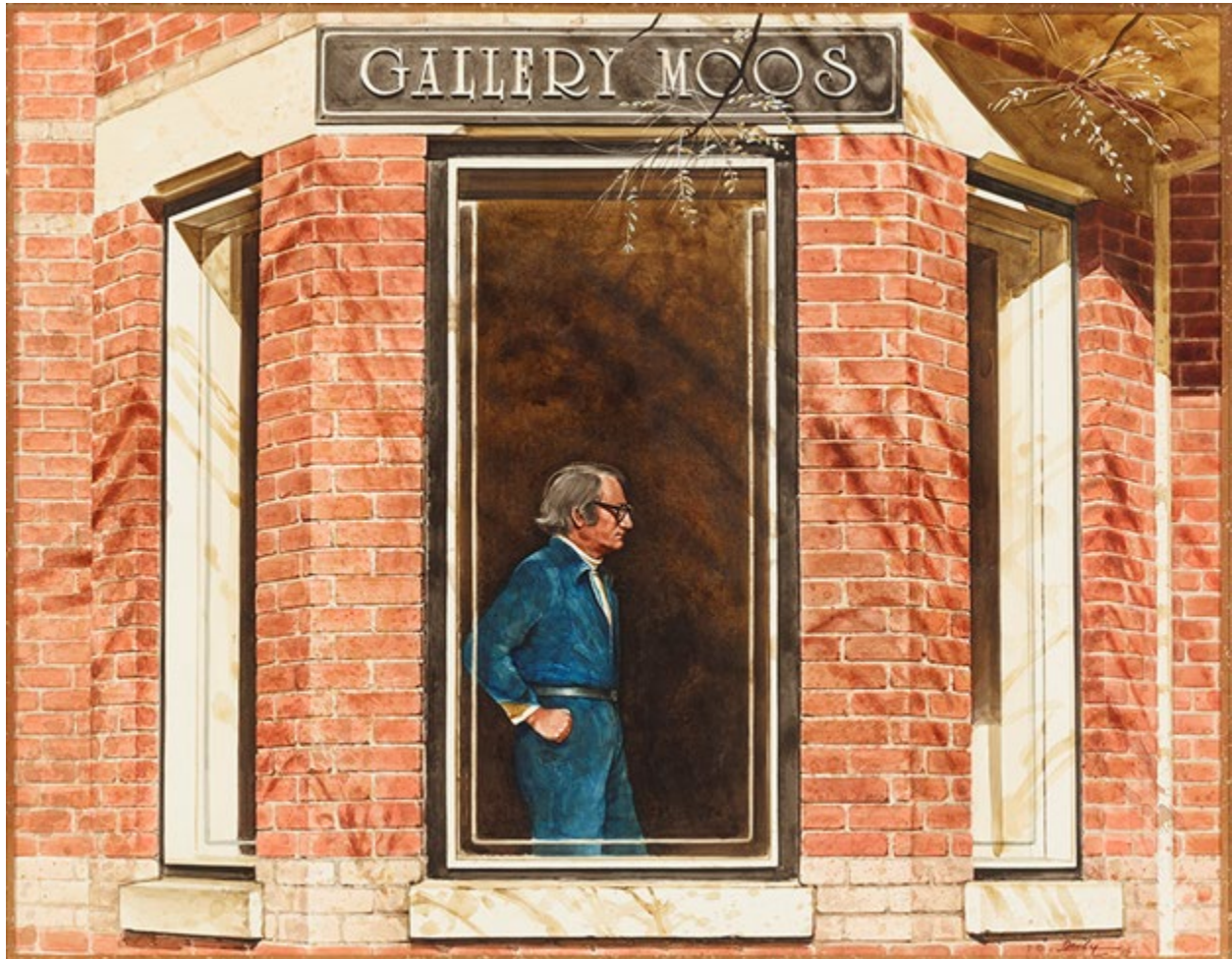
the realist painter Ken Danby; the sculptor Sorel Etrog; the abstract painter Gershon Iskowitz; the hard-edge painter Rita Letendre; the great Automatiste Jean Paul Riopelle, to name but a few. Gallery Moos was a vital crossroads where artists from Ontario (Jack Bush, Greg Curnoe, Jack Reppen), Québec (Yves Gaucher, Jean McEwen, François Thépot, Paul-Émile Borduas), the West (Peter Aspell, Charles Ringness, Robert Scott, Alex Janvier), and the North (Jessie Oonark, Pitseolak Ashoona) exhibited along with distinguished international artists (Karel Appel from



Holland, Jean Dubuffet from France, William Scott from England, Antoni Tàpies from Spain, and Americans Paul Jenkins and Lester Johnson among many others). The interaction between and among these artists forged an atmosphere of ferment that profoundly affected the cultural ecology of the city, raising ambitions within the Canadian art world and, as Moos would put it, increasing the “visual literacy” of Toronto.

In 1986 Moos opened a large gallery in the heart of New York's SoHo district and gave many significant Canadian artists solo exhibitions of defining importance. Here the ideal of championing Canadian art on the world stage found sharpest focus as artists such as Peter Aspell, Ken Danby, Robert Scott, and Michael Thompson mounted major exhibitions that were accompanied by significant catalogues and often led to exhibitions even further afield, bolstering their reputations.

Moos' elegant internationalism and widely recognized stature as an arts leader allowed him to promote Canadian artists and culture abroad. Yet he also worked to enrich and strengthen arts institutions at home through intellectual and financial investments. A founding member of the Art Dealers Association of Canada, Walter served as president from 1973 to 1975, as chairman of the appraisal committee from 1972 to 1989, and subsequently as co-chair of the appraisal committee and on the Board of Directors. He served on the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council from 1972 to 1982, on the Board of Directors of the Koffler Centre of the Arts from 1979 to 1992, and is founder and past trustee of the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation. In addition to his dedication to these diverse organizations, Moos donated important works of art to the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and the McMaster University Art Gallery which have significantly enhanced their collections. In 2002 Walter Moos was honoured by his peers and colleagues with both the Art Toronto Award of Distinction and the Art Dealers Association of Canada Lifetime Achievement Award.



Ken Danby, **Gallery Moos** 1976 watercolour 21 x 27 inches
Courtesy of Gallery Moos

Walter Moos always maintained the conviction that Canadian art is meritorious of wider appreciation and he worked in myriad ways to fulfill this quest. As an immigrant to Canada from war-torn Germany, he founded a gallery that became a meeting place for an emergent contemporary culture. In his galleries artists tested boundaries, collectors engaged passions, students pondered possibilities, critics theorized and the public observed — always invited, always welcome. For two generations Gallery Moos was a fulcrum of the Canadian art community, manifesting in its program the values of creativity and exploration, imparting a new sense of ambition that significantly improved the arts. With leadership and dedication, Walter Moos enriched the lives of Canadians by sharing with them what is essential about their local and national identity — images of the Canadian imagination set within the mosaic of a global vision.



During its fifty-four years, Gallery Moos exhibited the work of over 550 artists, with solo exhibitions of more than 170 different artists. The works in this sale represent a few of the significant signposts in this galvanizing journey of shaping the Canadian art world, and beyond. An invitation from 1960 states: “In keeping with its aim of showing the newest movements in Art, Gallery Moos is pleased to present an exhibition of recent work by some of our foremost contemporary painters as well as the work of young moderns.”