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Now settled back in Toronto, 1967, York was preparing his exhibition for the Agnes Lefort Gallery (Mira Goddard) in Montreal in March. The paintings were related to the year's trip around the world, a majority of small works with a few larger ones. Mira would have liked more large works, but the difficulty was the geometric had completely monopolized York's thinking. He did send her a few of the geometric serigraphs which he had completed in Paris. Overall she did quite well on sales and the reviews were good. Yves Robillard, Les Beaux-Arts did a good review and said York Wilson has a definite, effective personal style. Robert Ayre did a thoughtful review covering his first exhibition in Montreal through succeeding exhibitions, conscious of his growth and intentions as an artist. He found the exhibition:

...a fresh and lively show that shares with us a stimulating sense of renewal and discovery.

After analyzing the various periods he says: ...but he disciplined himself and imposed design on them and become more and more abstract. The break with representation occurred one day when—almost like Kandinsky's revelation—he became acutely aware of the shapes and colors of walls and roofs and their relationship with each other and the sky, and he painted them for their own sake, leaving out all other considerations... The thing is, the places give the painter somewhere to jump off, into an adventure of composition, and this is what it's all about. The painting is the thing... Don't miss the two silkscreen

prints... They indicate a new found interest... York Wilson is 60 this year. It is good to see him still developing.

It's envious that Montreal has knowledgeable art critics who give their readers something constructive while pure venom flows from the mouthings of Toronto's Fulfords.

The Spring Exhibition opened in April at The Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario, reports:

The juror for this year's exhibition is YORK WILSON, internationally known artist... He brings to his task considerable experience on juries in all parts of Canada.

Works were requested from artists for an Art Auction and Sale for an Israel Emergency Fund and York contributed a painting. The Arts and Letter Club held a Wilson retrospective exhibition in October. York was honoured with Canada's Centennial Medal in 1967. The Ontario Society of Artists and the Art Gallery of Ontario combined to present the 95th Annual Open Exhibition of the OSA, York sent King Christophe, and the Centennial OSA Special Section presented "Portraits of Sir John A. MacDonald." Wilson's gouache, collage portrait of Sir John A. was donated to the Canadiana Fund in 1994 for hanging in one of Canada's official residences in Ottawa. The OSA toured to The Sarnia Art Gallery.

The AIO which toured Ontario Arts Centres showing OSA members work had been doing an excellent job for several years in getting "Art" to the people in the capable hands of John Bennett. The AGO took over the AIO and its funding which finished John Bennett's steady devotion to this task. The combined exhibition of the AGO and the OSA also finished the

exposure of OSA exhibitions at the AGO. This seemed strange as the OSA members had founded the AGO and the feeling among artists was tense. The RCA and the CGP had been ousted earlier and from then on the Art Societies had to scramble to find annual exhibition space. If the Art Gallery of Ontario's main purpose isn't to support and show Canadian Art one wonders what its purpose is. Its growth partly represents the devoted work of many artists and their wives. The artists boosted attendance and membership, interest through teaching, demonstrations, discussion panels, lectures and the lending of their works. The wives helped form a women's committee, devising ingenious ways of raising funds. I myself worked on various committees and eventually started the showing of Canadian Crafts from across Canada for sale in a newly designed gift shop, display window at the entrance as well as one in the Park Plaza Hotel. We took over the Sculpture Court for large Christmas sales and we made a lot of money. I devoted full time to the project, first finding the crafts people as there was no Guild at that time, collecting their works, serving in the shop, designing the display windows regularly and a myriad of other duties. We covered ceramics, jewellery, silverware, weaving and original paintings on table mats and decorative coffee table match boxes.

York continued experimenting with the geometric direction for a year or so and now the house and studio were covered with large geometric paintings, living with them and evaluating them daily. Most were based on the Paris sketches, the first larger one was Labyrinth which he showed with the OSA, Fiesta with the RCA and Cybernetics with the CGP. He also did a series "Cities" seven serigraphs, Cairo - Kuching -

Isfahan - Kuala Lumpur - Jaipur - Marrakesh and Srinagar. When the sketches were complete he called me into the studio where he had set them up in a row. He had told me nothing about this idea and explained: “These are plans for a series of seven serigraphs related to Cities of the World, the only clue is that you have been in all these cities, see if you can name the cities!” I sat in front of them for some time studying colour and form, sensing to which city each related. Finally I named them with 100% accuracy, except I mixed Jaipur and Marrakesh, the two red (pink) cities. This proves with sufficient study one can ‘read’ abstract art. When York finished the serigraphs with editions of 60, they were indeed a handsome set, one set made its way as far away as the Birla Museum in Calcutta. Now instead of fighting the dreams, we both felt so fortunate that they had happened, teaching us so much about colour and form.

During the year of evaluation of the “Geometrics,” York had painted nothing else, so when Sam Zacks phoned to say the New York Dealer Rose Fried was in town and he would like to bring her over to the studio. York said (not thinking of his new work): “But I have nothing to show her.” Sam said, “Well, we will drop in for a visit anyway.” They came and from the front door to the studio there was nothing but large, geometric canvases. Rose said nothing, just looked and when she surveyed the studio walls, she turned around on the stairs landing and said: “When can I have an exhibition?” It was arranged for the fall of 1968.

The Zacks Collection with York’s magnificent painting of Rome started a tour in March 1967 to Waterloo University - O’Keefe Centre - Scarborough College (University

of Toronto) - McMaster University - University of Western Ontario - Queens University - Ontario College of Art - Montreal Museum of Fine Art.

The Arts and Letters Club of Toronto had a Wilson retrospective in October and reported:

...enthusiasm your exhibition of master works created... indebted to you... aesthetic milestone... turning point, the Great Hall became a serious gallery...

The two tapestries arrived from Paris, made by the Atelier du Marais from the two designs that York had left with them. They were beautiful in the geometric direction, New York and Bleues.

Toronto had an International Sculpture Symposium in 1967, inviting sculptors from other countries to come to Toronto (expenses and materials paid) and make a sculpture for our beautiful High Park, to be placed somewhere on the grounds. Many came, the Art patron, Al Latner of Greenwin Construction had just finished an apartment building near High Park and offered accommodation to all the sculptors. The Art Gallery of Ontario delegated certain people as hosts for the various sculptors and we were to look after the Jason Seleys. Jason was head of the sculpture department at Cornell University at Ithaca, New York. This was his phase of using old car bumpers, good usable material. It seemed his work turned out so well it was purloined by Ottawa for the banks of the Rideau Canal. The Seleys were interesting people and we had a most enjoyable time with them.

The Art Gallery of Sarnia acquired York's Three Women in Blue Rebozos, two of the new series of serigraphs, Marra-

kesh and Srinagar. Our Christmas card that year was a reproduction of the sketch for the painting Longevity which is now in the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa. The sketch was bought by a Japanese professor in California.

It seems the OSA missed having an annual exhibition in 1968 since their rejection by the AGO but the O'Keefe Centre did show 30 OSA members' works. RCA's '67 exhibition toured to The Mendel A.G. in Saskatoon and the A.G. of Greater Victoria in B.C. which included Wilson's Fiesta. In '68 they opened at the A.G. of Hamilton to which York sent Post Odyssey. The CGP toured to The Norman McKenzie Gallery at Regina with Wilson's Cybernetics.

The Government of Ontario, Queen's Park, MacDonald Building was under construction with 7% of the cost allowed for art in the building, some 30 artists are represented with murals and sculptures. Jury of selection was Cleeve Horne, an outstanding portrait painter and experienced art advisor to business; Clare Bice, artist and the London A.G.'s very active and efficient Art Director and Peter Haworth, artist painter and stained glass window expert, retired Director of Art at Central Technical School. All three were some of Canada's most experienced jurors with a broad appreciation of art. But it's a no-win game, jealousies broke out all over with such venom the government withdrew many of its plans for the opening, afraid of criticism. It's too bad, but Torontonians and tourists are most fortunate it is there; it's one of the best places to see Canadian art of the sixties and the John B. Aird Gallery to boot with its ongoing, changing exhibitions of today. York Wilson's offer, a mural, in his important geometric era 8 feet 7 inches by 18-1/2 feet in the medium he introduced and tested,

vinyl acetate. The catalogue relates:

Wilson's comments on this vinyl acetate on canvas mural are enlightening: "Ontario has innumerable lakes, rivers and waterfalls. More than 60% of Ontario is forested. Gold, silver, cobalt, radium, nickel, lead and zinc are all mined in Ontario; mainly in the pre-Cambrian Shield area. With thoughts of Ontario's resources in mind, the mural was designed. It is completely non-figurative, but it does relate to the general contour and form of Ontario."

Of course the Press fished around for complaints and came out with a sensational headline: "Has Queen's Park thrown away \$330,000 on bad art?" Toronto is rich in art; regular tours should be arranged for tourists and locals to see its many murals, sculptures and concentrations of art like the MacDonald building.

Two four-man exhibitions took place, one at Roberts Gallery with Casson - Franck - Ogilvie and Wilson who showed his new serigraphs. The other at the London A.G. with Arbuckle - Franck - Comfort and Wilson who showed two walls of his geometrics.

The Zacks gave over 100 works of Canadian art to the Etherington Gallery at Queens University which included three of Wilson's works, Venus, a large drawing, one of the studies for the O'Keefe Centre mural which the Zacks had loaned to the CNE exhibition, '68, "Tribute to Women" - Totem, a 24 x 18 inch gouache and Reflexion, an oil on canvas which had represented Canada in L'Art au Canada, at Bordeaux, France in '62. York's painting Ydra (Winnipeg Art Gallery) was reproduced in the art magazine Lalit Kala, India.

The winter of '67-'68 we spent in Mexico with York paint-

ing for his New York exhibition at the Rose Fried Gallery in November. We returned by way of Florida to visit my retired Methodist Minister Uncle at Wesley Manor Retirement Home who had married the previous year at age 90 to another senior at Wesley Manor. We took a taxi from the Jacksonville Airport and it was a long drive to the Manor. En route I mentioned who I was visiting to the taxi driver who said: "I know him, the marriage was mentioned in all the papers here and I took him to the Airport last year when he was going to Canada to visit his niece." I said, "I am the niece." I had written many days earlier to advise our date of arrival as my Uncle was going to arrange a room for us at the Manor. It was now late, about 8 p.m., and the driver said, "Let me check your Uncle as he may have gone to bed at this hour." He came back to say my Uncle was in bed but would appear in a couple of minutes but he hadn't received my letter and it was too late to arrange accommodation, the driver would take us to a place nearby, returning the next morning to take us to the Manor. We explained we didn't have enough American money to pay at the other place and the driver said, "I will lend you the money." This is American trust and generosity at its best! All worked out as planned and we had a delightful two day visit, met my new Aunt, went on long walks through the beautiful surrounding woods, played shuffleboard and talked and talked, it was to be my last visit. The driver picked us up, my Uncle accompanied us to Jacksonville and we went to the bank to cash a traveller's cheque. The bank was difficult, they wouldn't cash it unless we had an account there. My Uncle came in, showed his credentials but since he didn't have an account there, they were still difficult. We eventually cashed it and paid off our

debt but I don't remember how at this point, maybe we went to another bank. Wesley Manor was on the bend of the river, beautiful country and a well-appointed retirement home. Each cabin was equipped with a small kitchen, one could cook or walk/ride (covered area) to the main dining room or have meals sent to the cabin. A small garden which one could attend or have attended to. There were classes in painting, sculpture and crafts.

From Jacksonville we went directly to our New York studio with a huge roll of canvases in early April, 1968. York would never ship his canvases from Mexico but would roll them with a plain canvas cover, carry them on the plane with him, the Steward would find a place to stand them upright though sometimes 8 feet tall. He carried them through customs, this time he was quickly cleared but I was stopped; seeing this York disappeared before anyone could change their mind about his canvases, also knowing there was no reason for stopping me. I guess I looked too innocent but a policeman stepped forward, asked me to open my purse, he put his big hands in, examining everything, this was a rare experience. I asked if they were looking for drugs, or what? He said, "No, money!" I suppose it was just routine, every certain number???

We settled in the studio and had a long hard-working session of stretching canvases, nailing black strips of wood (which we painted) to the stretchers then the long, 1-1/2 inch wide brown-stained, finished strip of wood framing with the front edge in dull gold leaf which projected well ahead of the black wood, giving the canvas a floating effect with the canvas edges painted black and the whole projecting slightly ahead of the

painted surface as protection against rubbing.

Our New York loft was very comfortable, now no longer evidence of living in as Luc Peire during his occupancy had cut a hole the size of a bed into the wall of the storage and half the bed slid into the cupboard on the other side, leaving only a couch with cushions on the studio side. However no inspector ever arrived to check, I think it was a law that was never enforced as all artists seemed to live in their “lofts.” The Bowery area had become less safe; no problem with the “winos” but drugs had entered the scene and we had to take more precaution especially at night. We had many trips back and forth that summer and fall preparing for the exhibition and several notices began appearing in the Canadian Press about the forthcoming exhibition.

Finally the day of the opening arrived, a beautiful catalogue had been prepared with three large reproductions, biographical data and an appreciation by Dr. Theodore Allen Heinrich, well-known art historian. Many telegrams arrived from friends, most notable from the Canadian Under Secretary of State, Jules Leger: “Wish you every success, sorry not to be with you. A bientôt.” There were 18 large geometric canvases and the seven “Cities” series of serigraphs in the exhibition. The Canadian Consul General in New York, G. Carrington Smith presided over the opening and gave a reception at his home later as many friends had come from afar. Some sales were immediate, Dr. Alexander Best and Joanne Mazzoleni had come from Toronto to buy, Dr. Best, personal and Joanne for her newly-formed collection which she gave to The Royal Conservatory of Music in honour of her departed husband, Ettore Mazzoleni, former Principal of the Conserva-

tory and Opera Conductor. A large canvas, Guerrero and portfolio of the seven prints went to the Birla Academy of Art in Calcutta, India, selected by the brilliant art historian Laxmi Sihare. The publisher of Harper's Magazine, Wm. Blair selected October, the Knox Albright Museum in Buffalo requested a portfolio of prints, the Hirshorn Museum wanted a canvas but offered a fraction of the cost so Rose Fried declined without consulting York and the President of Arts Magazine acquired the largest canvas.

A letter from Evan Turner, Director of the Philadelphia Museum:

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART • FAIRMOUNT
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PARKWAY AT TWENTY-SIXTH STREET • P.O. BOX 7646 PHILA.
19101

November 15, 1968

Dear York,

I was delighted to receive the notice of your having an exhibition at the Rose Fried Gallery. What a great satisfaction it must be since the gallery is so very reputable.

I shall make a particular point of seeing the exhibition. I find I get to New York all too rarely for an evening. The great disadvantage of living in Philadelphia is that one can so easily go for a lunch or an afternoon but then one comes quickly back. Living in Montreal I got to New York far more often for an extended period of time.

However, we shall get in touch with you when we find a night or two in New York. Because it would be a very great pleasure indeed to have a real talk.

Again, my congratulations on the exhibition. I shall anticipate it with great joy.

Sincerely yours,

Evan H. Turner, Director

The exhibition was well publicized on the outside back cover of Arts Magazine with a 1/2 page reproduction of Teotihuacan and in Art News, Art International with two reproductions, Artforum with reproduction, American Art, France-Amerique in French, New York Times and again in Art News and a Report from Paris.

Globe and Mail, Zena Cherry: Toronto Artist York Wilson is having a successful show at the Rose Fried Gallery, N.Y. Brisk sales and good reviews as witness the New York Times—"Wilson, a Canadian, is capable of consistently distinguished work. His canvases can be looked at repeatedly with undiminished satisfaction..." Wall Street Journal: "...exhibition extended another month and was an unheard of success for a first. Wilson is a Canadian. Several large canvases went to good collections plus a few portfolios of the seven new prints. A large canvas and seven prints went to the Birla Academy in Calcutta. They will travel in India as a teaching medium... The Mexican Government has asked for a Wilson exhibition in its International Salon in Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Museum) Mexico City. It will take place in 1969. It is the third country to request an exhibition. The first was Spain in 1952, then France in 1963."

Rose Fried had great plans for the work of York Wilson but she died within the year. She wasn't well during the exhibition and summoned us one night to witness her will. Martha Jackson and Bertha Schaeffer (two other top New York Galleries) were in touch to handle York's work but he made little effort to oblige. It almost seemed that his goal was to prove his work with the best and he was now satisfied to immerse himself in it. He had little desire to become wealthy, just enough to live comfortably and buy the materials he needed;

feeling wealth and fame were a waste of time, keeping an artist from his work.

A unique Christmas tree complete with decorations was devised by the Women's Committee of the AGO as a fundraising scheme for renovation of Grange House. Artists were asked to make decorations for the tree which would be encased in a plastic sphere. It was titled "The Rothman Collection of Christmas Ornaments" and would be purchased by them. York's contribution was one of his colourful prints, rolled, making a slender tube-like shape. The exhibition was available to travel later.

In March 1969 York exhibited his geometric paintings at Roberts Gallery, Toronto, but Toronto was not New York. He was ahead of his time and there was little interest except among an excited few, like the George Benjamins who bought two large canvases. Unfortunately there was more bashing which now included the Roberts Gallery simply because they were successful. A so-called art critic, Jared Sable writes against York Wilson, Grant Macdonald and Wm. Winter. With Wilson he says:

...York Wilson who possesses just enough panache to disguise his very pedestrian abstracts with a high-gloss veneer. His buyers actually believe that they are getting very advanced art for their money. They're not...

Fortunately the Globe and Mail had a real art critic with no axes to grind, Kay Kritzweiser who had some understanding of York's work and wrote intelligently and favourably about the exhibition.

Graeme Wilson's translations of the Japanese poet Hagiwara Sakutarō were published by Tuttle of Japan which

included seven paintings by York Wilson. The title “Faces at the Bottom of the World.” The book won a Unesco award. It was distributed in many countries and we had the surprise of being presented with a copy by the Director of Bellas Artes, Sergio Galindo, Mexico. The Canadian distributor was Hurtig Publishing in Edmonton, but with little promotion it made hardly a ripple. So Canadian!

The staff of Tuttle Publishing in Japan were dubious that a westerner could illustrate a Japanese poet’s work but were completely won over on seeing the paintings. Graeme Wilson, the British poet and translator (with tongue in cheek) complained that York’s paintings were attracting more attention than his poetry!

“Japan In”: ...Fine Tribute... Faces at the Bottom... the whole book is most tastefully done, York Wilson’s ink paintings... deftly catch the spirit...

Shipping Trade News, July 9/69: ...Hagiwara poetry “Face at the...” York Wilson’s paintings... we feel that Hagiwara, had he lived... would have approved... F.J.C.

York lectured to the College Heights Women’s Educational Club at the Granite Club on March 12 on the new trends in art. Mayor Wm. Dennison honoured York with a medal of the new City Hall as recognition for chairing the Art Advisory Committee on decorations for the new city hall.

The Canadian artist, Leonard Brooks, living in Mexico, had his book “Painters Workshop” published by Reinhold, N.Y. and reproduced three of York’s paintings, Kabuki in colour on the cover and inside - The Ontario Government mural at Queen’s Park, Toronto, Canada (both the geometric period) and one of the paintings for “Face at the Bottom of the World” by Graeme Wilson of Hong Kong.