



## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE AND ART

An interview with Brian Saby: artist and curator of 700 Contemporary Art, the featured venue for discovering art at 700 Dundas Street.

Brian Saby is a seasoned artist with an extensive background in making art and developing spaces to exhibit work. He has been producing art since the 70's; his most recent creations are developed with acrylic paint, collage and gouache. Saby has shown his work in galleries in Toronto and London.

Before opening 700 Contemporary Art in London, he owned and operated a design company in Toronto. His company aided in the development and building of different galleries throughout the Toronto area. Moving back to London in the mid-90s, he found a large support group of friends, family and patrons. This, coupled with low overhead and a dream, he opened up the impressive 700 Contemporary Art with its first show in September of 1999.

To get into the gallery the viewer must ascend a flight of stairs off Dundas Street. Saby's 800-square-foot live-in work studio is adjacent

to the 800-square-foot gallery space. The gallery has large windows facing south that illuminate the walls and high ceilings. The space is sectioned into smaller areas that are constructed partially with glass brick walls that allow the natural light through.

Saby did all the renovations himself except for the lights. Forty gallons of white paint cover the bright high ceilings and walls. The space is aptly suited for showing art of any kind, which it does. 700 Contemporary Art houses group shows and solo exhibitions, and boasts an impressive roster of artists.

Saby had help devising ingenious lighting that can be moved for different exhibitions. Chains suspend wooden doweling that have 150-watt flood lights attached to them. These illuminate the room for nighttime viewing. 700 Contemporary Art is a spacious venue that allows the viewer to digest and interact with the art being exhibited. On average, there are about 40 pieces in the gallery at any given time (not including Saby's impressive personal archives).

Saby is personally interested in cerebral work, more minimal art. As a curator, he shows a great diversity of quality work. 700 Contemporary Art exhibits work that pushes the envelope of art; whether it is pushing the individual artist's personal envelope or exploring possibilities of a particular medium. Saby is interested in artists who show initiative and produce art constantly.

Saby believes art dealers and galleries show artists that hustle themselves, people that will make

art whether or not a dealer is going to represent them. Saby encourages artists to make exhibitions spaces for themselves; find commercial property that is vacant and then contact the realtor to see if the space is available for short-term use. The art department at UWO has done just this on numerous occasions, with impressive results.

700 Contemporary Art hosts approximately four shows a year. The shows are promoted to the public through various avenues. The openings are well attended by a diverse crowd. Attendees enjoy musical stimulants, complimentary food and some of the finest art. The prices of works range drastically; some pieces start at \$50 and go up considerably, depending on who and what is showing.

Contrary to popular ideas, Brian Saby believes that a person can make a living as an artist, maybe not an extravagant living but a living. Saby is living proof that dedication, quality work, support and belief will see you through.

700 Contemporary Art is a spacious venue with impressive work. There is a desire to keep pushing the envelope of art and showcasing quality work. To be part of the experience or to arrange a viewing time, you can contact Brian Saby at 519.858.9585 or [briansaby@rogers.com](mailto:briansaby@rogers.com).

Written and photography by Michael L. Mullan

