

Monthly profile of the masters: Canaletto

By MICHAEL WING
Epoch Times Staff

Prior to the advent of photography, scene painting was the way by which society communicated the beautiful and interesting sights of far off lands, perhaps the equivalent of today's vacation slide show. On October 1697, the well known scene painter Giovanni Antonio Canale, known as "Canaletto" was born in Venice. He was likely dubbed "Canaletto", which means the "little Canale", to distinguish him from his father Bernardo Canale, who was a painter of theatrical scenery. Canaletto is well known today for the cityscape views (called vedute in Italian) he painted of Venice, particularly of the Doge's Palace, and the Grand Canal.

As a young professional, Canaletto started his career as an apprentice to his father, painting theatrical scenery for the theatre industry. Such business took the young artist to Rome to work on some opera productions, where he likely came into contact with the paintings of Gian Paolo Pannini, known for his *vedute ideales* or 'idealized views' (as opposed to *vedute esatte* meaning, 'precise views') of the antique ruins and architecture of Rome. Pannini had a strong influence on Canaletto's work, particularly in the way 'idealized' architecture was depicted with such naturalistic precision.

Upon his return to Venice in 1719, Canaletto came to study under the vedutisti (vedute artist), Luca Carle-

varis, and quickly the young student excelled to his master's level. Early in his career, Canaletto is known to have participated in the annual public art exhibitions of Venice, which were a tradition. It was there that people began to take notice of his work. He likely exhibited his painting, *Santi Giovanni e Paolo and the Scuola di San Marco*, which was said to have "made everyone marvel". The innovative qualities of Canaletto's painting were beginning to show themselves.

Canaletto did not always follow the standard practice of painting in the studio, from sketches, but instead he sometimes painted on the scene, outdoors, a practice which seems to have anticipated the practices of more contemporary art movements such as Impressionism. Thus, his scenes have a quality of strong local colour. As one art agent once said as he was recommending Canaletto's work to a customer, "...it is like Carlevaris, but you can see the sun shining in it." The figures in his cityscapes appear to have been painted using a camera obscura, a traditional aid for painters, which involves using a darkroom or box, where a figure or object could be projected through a pin-hole or lens, onto the canvas, traced and then painted.

After his public exhibition, Canaletto received immediate recognition, and this gained him commissions from local patrons such as the merchant Stephano Conti, who commissioned Canaletto to paint four pictures in 1725. At that time, Canaletto's

career in Venice began to bloom, and it continued to prosper onward, through the 1730s. His father and nephew Bernardo Bellotto, whom Canaletto trained, most likely assisted in his studio to keep up with the demand.

Aside from local commissions, it was the British tourist market that kept Canaletto's studio thronged. Very wealthy tourists, often young Englishmen, steadily patroned Venice while on their Grand Tour through Europe. This tour was basically a scholar's pilgrimage through Europe (usually to Rome) for educated, young gentlemen (with almost unlimited funds sometimes). They were in search of "art, culture, and the roots of Western civilization". Along the way, objects of art and culture were often bought and sent home to England. In particular, they sought out scene paintings of the famous Venetian landmark such as the Grand Canal, the Church of the Salute, and the Doge's Palace.

Often times, art agents would introduce such visitors to local artists, or would commission works of art on the visitors' behalf. One such agent, Joseph Smith, a British art collector (later to become the British Consul to Venice in 1744), was perhaps the most important person in Canaletto's career. Not only did Smith locate commissions from British aristocrats, but was also a major collector of Canaletto's work.

The vigor with which the artist's career began slowed in 1741, when the War of the Austrian Succession



SCENE PAINTING: *Entrance to the Grand Canal Looking East*, a work by Canaletto at the peak of his career. Oil on Canvas, 1744, Royal Collection, UK. 4.BP.BLOGSPOT.COM

broke out. Although tourism in Venice had decreased, Smith continued to commission work from Canaletto, particularly, paintings of the ancient ruins of Rome, an example of which is, *Rome: The Arch of Titus*. Yet in the end it was not enough, so in 1746, Canaletto moved to London in order to be close to his market.

The artist stayed in London intermittently for nearly a decade, and produced paintings of London's landmarks, as he had done the landmarks of Venice. Through Smith, Canaletto was able to connect with aristocratic patrons such as the Duke of Richmond who commissioned from the artist several views such as, *London: Whitehall and the Privy Garden from Richmond House*, and, *London: the Thames and the City of London from Richmond House*. These are often con-

sidered among the best of the artist's London works. It is apparent, however, that there was a noticeable decrease in the quality of Canaletto's work during this period, possibly the result of his assistants' work. His paintings had become sometimes repetitious and mechanical, and his reputation suffered as a result.

Canaletto returned to Venice for good in 1755, where he resumed painting for the tourist market. Canaletto received acknowledgement in Venice for the form of *vedute ideale* created. Eventually, he was elected into the Venetian Academy in 1763. For his reception piece, Canaletto submitted *Capriccio of Colonnade and the Courtyard of a Palace*, which was completed nearly two years later. On April 10, 1768, Canaletto died of fever at the age of 71.



A CANALETTO EARLY WORK: *The Piazzetta Looking North*, 1727. Oil on Canvas. Royal Collection, UK. ART RENEWAL CENTRE

Vancouver hip hop summit showcases Asian talent

By BEN TAYLOR
Epoch Times Staff

VANCOUVER—Asian artists and multicultural fans challenged the hip hop stereotype Saturday at the 3rd Annual Vancouver Asian Hip Hop Summit (AHHS). Held at Boss Nightclub, the event showcased some of the brightest rising stars in the Asian hip hop community.

Vancouver's Asian community has embraced the summit along with 27 other cities in North America. The summit has helped boost the careers of Asian hip hop artists such as Jin, Dumbfoundead, and Vancouver artists No Luck Club and Matt Brevner.

Ryan Ventura, AKA RCV, a representative for the AHHS in Vancouver, explained the origins of the summit.

"What started out as a little memorial show to honour the victims of the LA riots has turned into one of North America's premier showcases of Asian talent."

Riots erupted in Los Angeles in 1992 after four LAPD officers, accused of brutally beating African-American Rodney King, were acquitted. Fifty three people died, thousands were injured, and 1,100 buildings were looted,

burned, or otherwise devastated during the six days of rioting.

LA's Koreatown was one of the hardest hit areas. In 2002, on the 10th anniversary of the riots, Koreatown's Seoul International Park in LA gave birth to the Asian hip hop forum.

At this year's AHHS, Vancouver's own promising, fresh MC/producer Matt Brevner shined on Boss's stage, serving up his down to earth B.C. rhymes to far-out and far-east Japanese flavoured futuristic beats from his newly-released album, *Magnum Opus*.

"I'm very proud of my heritage," said Brevner, who was raised in New Westminster. "I'm half Japanese, one quarter Trinidadian, and one quarter German."

He wrote most of the album while traveling in Japan, which gave him inspiration, he said.

"When you are out of your element, out of your comfort zone, and you have no one to rely on, you are forced to realize who you are, so for that reason it made it very easy to draw inspiration for writing this album."

The track "Culture Shock" cleverly depicts his fish-out-of-water experience as a proud Canadian exploring his Asian roots while adapting to modern Japan. The

highly versatile MC plans to shoot the music video in Japan next month.

One of Brevner's strongest talents is his witty use of punch lines and hard-hitting messages that clearly capture the multicultural urban experience of Canada's youth.

Lyrics from the powerfully vivid "Baby Don't Cry" shed poetic light on the dark realities of a female friend from a wealthy family who travels on a path of loneliness, substance abuse, one-night stands, and STDs. "Escaping through alcohol, it's a crutch, slowly through the years losing friendships and trust."

While hip hop aficionados appreciate Brevner's crisp beats and clever rhyming style, his deep, powerful and raw story-telling makes one wonder if his music could serve as an at-risk youth intervention tool.

"Hip hop is at a point right now where heavy metal was in the '80s and early '90s—it's overly saturated and almost exploited," said Brevner.

"I'm sick of plastic media.... I'm just going to make stuff that I'm feeling. I don't want to come off as cliché in any way, and people are either going to love it or hate it."

Although Vancouver is not a hotbed for hip hop, Brevner sees a promising future for local artists. "There is a lot of talent coming out of Vancouver right now and I think we can do good things."

Ottawa streets are made for walkin'

By JULIE BARNES

The process of putting one foot in front of the other has been on my mind a lot lately. I think about it on my walk to work in the morning, on my way to Mags and Fags to buy the newspaper, and as I walk the dog along the Rideau Canal. I think of the extra hour I've freed up since moving to an office downtown only a five minute stroll from my home. I'm fortunate enough to go home for lunch every day. Bus strikes don't stress me out and protests don't slow me down.

Not everyone can live so close to the office. Ever since Henry Ford sold cars in every colour, "so long as it's black," much of North American urban planning has been designed with the car in mind. Cities and towns built before the automobile age, such as Venice, Italy and Fes el Bali, Morocco are often more pedestrian friendly than those built in the last half century.

I wondered just how walkable Ottawa really is; so I went to www.walkscore.com to find out.

Walk Score is a website that allows you to plug in your address and provides you with a walkability rating from 0 to 100 based on your proximity to amenities such as libraries, grocery stores, restaurants, movie theatres, drug stores, and book stores.

I entered my address, which is downtown near Elgin Street. Walk Score rates it a 94 – Walker's Paradise. Any score between 90 and 100 will earn the "Walker's Paradise" rating which is defined as, "most errands can be accomplished on foot and many people get by without owning a car." No surprises here.

After scanning the list of grocery stores near me, I noticed Hartman's was listed three times—with slight variations in the name. The website allows users to fix mistakes such as this through Google Maps. Your favourite restaurant is missing? Simply update Google Maps and once Google accepts the change, Walk Score will up-

date your rating.

I then spent the better part of an hour entering previous addresses in Ottawa, Dublin, Ireland and Nova Scotia—be warned—the site is addictive. I typed in the addresses of friends and family in Ottawa and watched with anticipation as the numbers were tabulated and the score rose as the site accessed data from Google.

The site is far from perfect, but it is clear about its shortcomings. The distance to amenities is measured "as the crow flies" and states, "this means if you live across the lake from a destination, we are assuming you will swim." It also doesn't take into account issues such as topography, climate or crime which can all factor into how pedestrian friendly a neighbourhood is.

Not surprisingly, walkable areas tended to be older neighbourhoods such as the Glebe and New Edinburgh. Newly built subdivisions on the fringes of our ever-expanding city often scored a low grade.

A family member's address in Barrhaven scored an 8 which is summarized as "Car Dependent - Virtually no neighbourhood destinations within walking range. You can walk from your house to your car." This is very true of the area. Even if you wanted to walk the three kilometres to the grocery store, you couldn't, as there are no sidewalks leading from the subdivision to the commercial centre. Neal McCarthy, a New Edinburgh resident was surprised by what he felt was a low rating generated when he entered his postal code—a 62.

"My first reaction was that it was a little low, as I think this is a very walkable neighbourhood. We have two pubs, several restaurants, a Metro grocery store, a pharmacy, a video rental store, a library, a book shop, a hardware store, a service station and a bunch of small service stores (such as hair dressing and dry cleaning) as well as probably five schools within walking distance." A score of 62 is defined as "Somewhat Walkable: Some

stores and amenities are within walking distance, but many everyday trips still require a bike, public transportation, or car."

McCarthy added, "I still use my bike a lot and we do tend to use the car for our groceries."

A new report commissioned by CEOs for Cities entitled, "Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities" revealed that homes in walkable communities were worth more than those located in car dependent neighbourhoods. The study used data from Walk Score to analyze 94,000 real estate transactions in 15 different U.S. markets. The author of the report, Joe Cortright stated, "Even in a turbulent economy, we know that walkability adds value to residential property just as additional square footage, bedrooms, bathrooms and other amenities do."

Before the urbanites give themselves a pat on the back and criticize the McMansion dwellers of suburbia we have to ask ourselves why people live the way they do. Many people would choose a walkable neighbourhood over a car dependent one if they could. At a baby shower I attended recently, a couple of new moms lamented the fact that they had to move from their downtown apartments to a home in the 'burbs to make room for the new addition to their families.

The problem is that demand for homes in walkable neighbourhoods exceeds supply. And just as we learn in Economics 101 – when this happens, prices increase.

Why is it that the older communities of Ottawa such as the Glebe and Westboro are a "Walker's Paradise" and the more recent developments seem to have discarded the basic principals of urban planning? This type of inefficient sprawl is unsustainable and it's an issue that is not going to go away. It's time to start asking for smarter growth – which includes sustainable, vibrant, walkable communities.

Julie Barnes is a freelance journalist in Ottawa.

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