



How Long Has This Been Going On?

A Column about Culture

... by Michael Sobota

Thunder Bay Art Gallery (TBAG) has a triple-treat available right now.

In the large main gallery and the middle one right next to it you will find *For Better or for Worse - The Comic Art of Lynn Johnston*. It is an exhibition assembled by *The Art Gallery of Sudbury* showcasing the life and work of Canada's most famous cartoon artist. I had the humble opportunity to talk with Lynn when she came to Thunder Bay for the opening of the show.

Born in Collingwood, Ontario in 1947, Lynn was doodling and drawing since she was a little girl. It would take marriage, starting a family and the passage of some thirty years before the official launch of *For Better or Worse* as a daily cartoon strip began appearing in our newspapers. It would last for more than another thirty years, appearing every day, including week-ends. Lynn talks about the hard work of producing a daily strip that had to be created six weeks in advance of publishing. She drew every day - and if she wanted to take a vacation, she had to draw more strips in advance of that six week lead to be able to take any time off. For those of you who followed *For Better or For Worse*, all of the best story lines are included in this wonderful exhibition. Each storyline has a summary introduction, followed by beautifully matted and framed original strips. You can revisit the evolution of the Patterson family, John, Elly and their children Michael, Elizabeth and the much later birth of April. You will see the pets joining the family - a rabbit and the famous sheep dog, Farley.

Lynn retired from the daily grind of producing the strip in 2008, but continues to contribute to its publishing. It still appears in about 2,000 newspapers in Canada, the United States and some 20 other countries. Lynn has also continued her output in new directions, creating fabric designs, original paintings and some writing. In my discussion with her, I remarked that her life story is a book. She demurred, saying "writing a book is too hard". And in the next sentence, admitting that she has created an outline. Here's hoping that becomes one of her next projects.


For Better or For Worse - The Comic Art of Lynn Johnston is an engaging, accessible and ultimately deeply moving exhibition. The show will move on to Fredericton, New Brunswick and then to North Bay. I hope it moves across all of Canada. I congratulate *The Art Gallery of Sudbury* for curating the exhibition and *TBAG* for bringing it here. It will run through March 6.

In conjunction with Lynn Johnston's work, *TBAG* is also featuring *Unconstrained: The Comic Art of Five Emerging Artists*. In a third gallery, we see the work of *Callen Banning, Andrew Garratt Dorland, Kyle Lees, Merk and Boy Roland*. Bold, vivid and diverse, this is some of the finest cartoon art being created in Thunder Bay. There is colour, dramatic differences in scale and content and even one animation. I spoke briefly with Callen Banning - who describes herself not as a cartoonist by rather as "a serial artist" and Kyle Lees, who describes his work as "celebrating having a bad time". Each of them told me they remember drawing by the age of eight. Lees likes to self deprecate, but his work is more sardonic than cynical. It has layers of wisdom and wit, tempered by sadness, which connects easily with viewers. All of the *Unconstrained Emerging Artists* will be speaking at the gallery in a moderated panel discussion on Thursday, February 4, at 7:30 pm.

Finally, in the remaining gallery, there is an amazing exhibition called *Garments of Everyday Life*, curated by the Gallery's own Nadia Kurd, drawn from *TBAG's* extensive collection.

Take some time to visit *TBAG* in February. You will be well rewarded.

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CONTENT ADVISORY: Contains mature subject matter, patron discretion is advised

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Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay Public Library: "On the Shelf"



...by Barb Philp

Well, we made it through the long and often cold month of January. After all the buildup and excitement of Christmas, January can always be such a letdown - particularly when the Christmas bills arrive! If you like the outdoors, the crisp sunny days of January can be wonderful, but for many, January is the worst month and February travel to warmer climes is the only way to get through.

If you are one of the lucky ones who can get "away", you may also be one of the ones who like to read while you travel. In years past, paperbacks and sometimes books on tapes (if hitting the road was in your travel plans) were just the ticket: light-weight and portable. But technology-- and the airlines with their weight restrictions and luggage fees - has changed all that. E-books, whether print or audio, are wonderful formats for any traveler: Easily accessible and no added weight. And the best thing is that you can borrow more from wherever you are as long as you have internet access - TBPL can go right along with you.

So now that I have convinced you of the travel merits of the e-book format, the next question is do you have a "portable device"? Unlike print format where you only need to know how to read in the language that the book is written, e-books have a learning curve all their own. You need to know how to operate the "device" you are using. Dedicated E-book readers are declining in popularity at almost the same rate as the smart phone market is increasing. Why have multiple devices - camera, music player, phone - when you can have it all in one? Once you have your chosen device, do you know how to use it? and how to use the "platform" from which you will be borrowing your e-book? Again, the library's got you covered.

If you need help with learning how to use your device to access library resources, you can book a one-on-one appointment with library staff - Contact Margaret at mdemillo@tbpl.ca or 345-8275 x7251.

She can help you navigate your device and how to use "Overdrive" the main electronic platform from which the library e-books are borrowed.

Once you have the device, know how to use it and know how to access the library platform, you are set to go. You will find thousands and thousands of titles both in print and audio format. You will never have to worry about running out of reading materials while you are away and you will have more room in your luggage for your beach gear! Happy traveling!

Program Alert -

February 20 2 pm Mary J L Black Library. LU in Conversation: *What is the future of Forestry in Northwestern Ontario with Dr. Mathew Leitch.*

Free Public Legal Education programs at the Waverley Library and presented by Ontario Bar Association member Rene Larson. Register by contacting 285-7777

March 1st-7 pm *Preparing Last Will and Testament and Powers of Attorney*

March 5th- 2 pm *Duties of an Executor to Administer an Estate.*

"Sharing oft leaves less.
But with love the more we share,
the fuller our hearts."

... J. Benson, Haiku to Live Buy