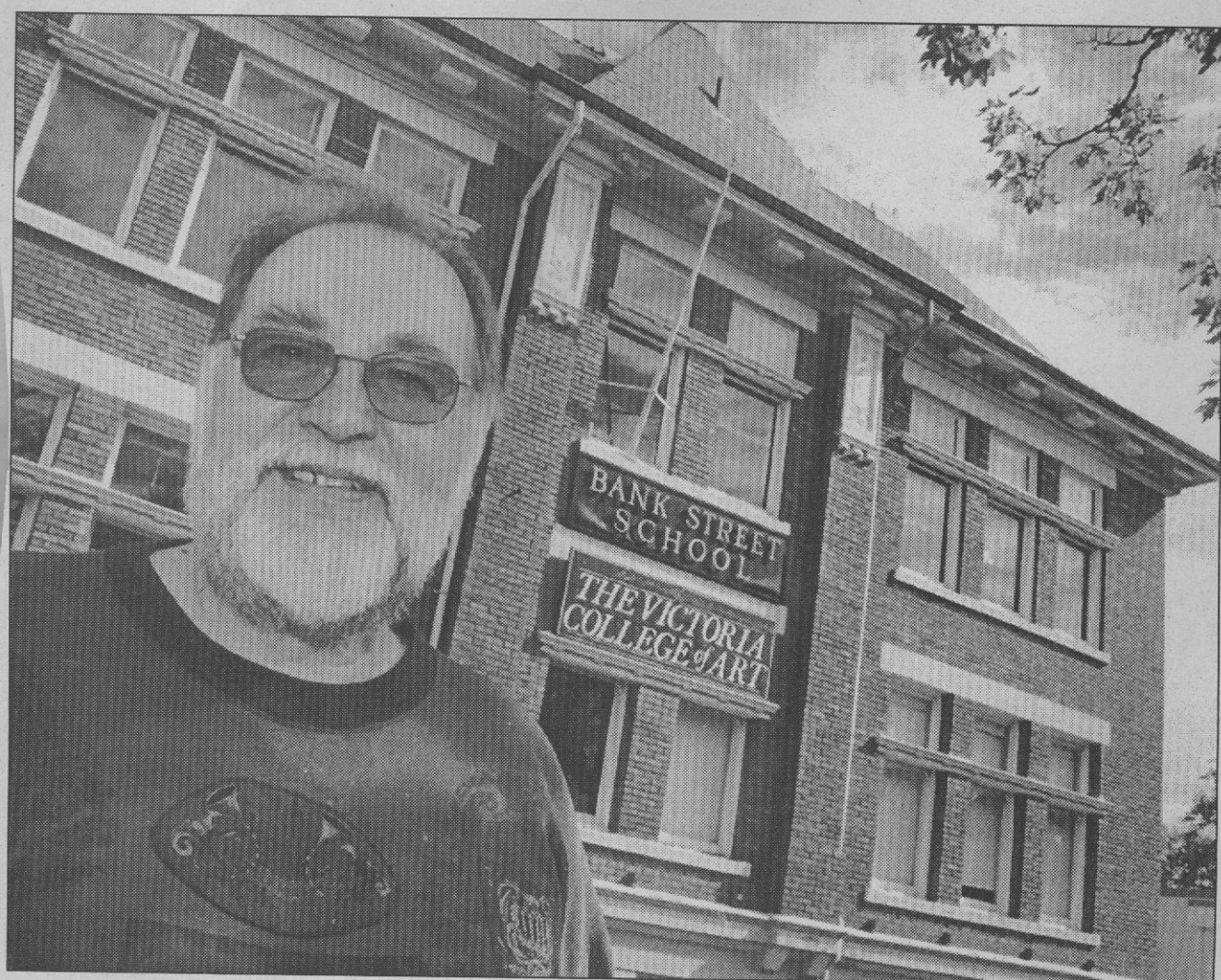


Capital PORTRAIT



JESSICA KERR/NEWS GROUP STAFF

Artist-administrator Robin Young figures his days are numbered as director of the Victoria College of Art on Bank Street

Young at heart

Jeanine Soodeen
News Group staff

Robin Young has travelled across the continent and in his wake left art schools full of inspired students and faculty fit to carry on his artistic principles and ideals.

The roving artist, who currently lives in Brentwood Bay, has been director of the Victoria College of Art the past seven years.

While his dedication to the small Bank Street institution is unconditional, he knows it won't last forever.

"I have this belief nobody should be head of any institution for more than 10 years. They start repeating themselves, don't see things freshly. I have to leave to be true to what I believe in."

But, don't panic yet. Young says much work is to be done before he leaves the art school.

"I came here intending to stay maybe four years, and I've been here for seven. I'm teaching, I'm doing some painting. We're looking at the possibility of new space in the not too distant future," Young says. He adds that he also hopes to someday establish a library, student studios, Internet and access to multimedia art programs and the College's own gallery.

Young has taken on the precarious responsibility of improving the Victoria College of Art's facilities without changing its atmosphere, the nature of its teachings, or increasing fees. He believes the college is a good size and there is an existing ideal learning atmosphere.

"An art school is about idiosyncratic people. This is a small enough school... the students and faculty, their needs come before institutional or

program needs.

"Intimacy is what the training of art is about. You have to personalize things."

The students learn from a diverse range of 18 faculty members who are working artists. Young believes that people can't teach art unless they are involved in making it themselves.

Young's work has exhibited and is included in numerous collections and galleries across North America.

Dressed casually in a comfortable pants and sweater, Young doesn't look the part of

assumed.

"I'd done art. It was something I did well, something I'd always enjoyed doing, but was never encouraged that this was the way people lived."

Young furthered his studies in France before travelling to the West Indies.

In 1962, he was invited to Western Washington University as a visiting artist for a year. He stayed for five years. He moved from there to Atlanta, Ga., where his reputation as an arts educator earned him a federal grant to create art departments at three colleges.

Afterwards, he spent some time at Bradley University in Illinois, where he served as Dean of Arts. During his summers off he would head to Nova Scotia where he would paint and work on a small

farm.

In 1972, Young was appointed to the Vancouver School of Art, a department of Vancouver Community College which would become Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design.

Accomplished Victoria artist, Pat Martin-Bates, has known Young since his Vancouver days. She recalls the two also sat on the board of the Canadian Conference of Arts.

"He's the one who changed the Vancouver College of Art to the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. He moved the college to Granville Island. He fought very hard for that to be moved there. This was a major breakthrough for art and artists," says Martin-Bates.

Robert Evermon, a former colleague at Emily Carr, said Young has much to offer as a teacher.

"Robin is the golden voice in the visual arts. I always went to the graduation just so I could listen to Robin speak about the visual arts and get the goose bumps," Evermon says.

Young was recently nominated for the Governor General's Award for outstanding contribution to arts education in Canada.

"He certainly deserves it. He has done so much for education," says Martin-Bates, one of two people who nominated him.

Although some days at Victoria College of Art can be long — Young spends 12 hours at the college on a typical Wednesday — he does have time to spend in the studio at home which overlooks the ocean.

"I believe in painting. I believe it's a humanizing thing in an increasingly dehumanizing environment. Art can allow human beings who have never met to be intimate. A world without intimacy is a world without humanity."

"He has done so much for education."

— Pat Martin-Bates

a "director" of an institution. That's probably because he doesn't get carried away with titles. He's only at the college to do what he does best.

"I believe I have the capacity to bring the best out in people. I've got a damn good eye for art. Being able to explain what makes something work or not work is important."

Young's decision to study art as a young man actually began in veterinary school. "I had intended to be a veterinarian, was at the Royal College of Veterinarian Surgery (London, England) and discovered that is not where I wanted to be."

He then enrolled in the St. Martin's School of Art, a major shift in emphasis, philosophy and ideals, considering his veterinarian stepfather had expected Young would follow in his footsteps.

Young, born in 1937 just north of London, grew up at a time when the expectations of others was important and pursuit of a practical occupation

ford 25 min. from Victoria

CE