

The Installation of “waabidiziiyan doopwining” at Hart House

Matcom recently undertook a once-in-a-lifetime job at Hart House, at the University of Toronto. Hart House’s Facilities Department contacted Matcom to help with an unusual and difficult job for its 100th year celebration. They needed help moving a unique art piece weighing over 1,500 pounds through tight doors to be hung at 20ft height on a large wall in the building’s iconic Great Hall. Who better to call than Matcom? The company that will undertake any job, we make the impossible possible, and Matcom showed just that with this project.

To give a little background on the artwork: it was created by Rebecca Belmore and Osvaldo Yero and took well over a year to complete. Rebecca Belmore is a multi-disciplinary Anishinaabe Artist from Lac Seul First Nation. Osvaldo Yero is a sculptor and immigrated to Canada in 1997. Both artists work together as a team and currently live in Toronto.

The land that Hart House is built on has for thousands of years been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Yet, for most of its first century as a student centre, Indigenous people and histories were mostly invisible and silenced at Hart House. The commissioning and unveiling of the artwork to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of Hart House was a very intentional decision to begin its second century in a more inclusive way.

The sculpture is titled “**waabidiziiyan doopwining**,” which is in the Anishinaabe language and means “To see yourself at the table.” It is based on the shape and size of the 100-year-old dining tables that are still found in the Great Hall of Hart House today. The waves around the edge of the table suggest a fluttering tablecloth. You maybe be asking, why is it a mirrored surface? The idea is to showcase that Hart House seeks to reflect everyone. The reflection suggests that the history of the House has changed, and that Hart House now seeks to include and welcome everyone into its spaces.

Said John Monahan, Warden of Hart House: “For our 100th Anniversary, we are so honored that the artist team of Rebecca Belmore and Osvaldo Yero has created this original piece of wall sculpture for the ages that has transformed the Great Hall. The artwork disrupts the space by asking everyone who comes into this room, ‘Who is sitting at the table?’ We want that answer to be everybody and anybody. And if someone is *not* at the table, we want to ask ourselves why, and then work with the relevant communities and their members to change that *status quo*.”

So how did Matcom help move this one-of-a-kind and permanent piece into a tight fitting 100-year-old building? Well it took the effort of five hardworking Matcom employees. It took the leadership, insight and vision of John Bernardo, Steve McKenna, Wayne Caicco to have this job turn into a success story. The thanks do not stop there, it also took hard work and skill by both Mark Proctor and Rob Goyeau.

It required intense planning and some impressive skills. The piece was initially crated and then brought into the building through a series of chain falls and rigging. The crate was moved through the entrance way with only one inch to spare, and everything needed to be precise for it to work. Once the piece was inside, scaffolding was set up in order to hoist the piece of artwork onto the wall. Please see the pictures below for the walk through on how the piece was hung.

Matcom thanks Hart House and the University of Toronto for letting us help them with their 100-year celebration. This was a one-of-a-kind project and Matcom was proud to be apart of its success. If you have a difficult, heavy and seemingly impossible job... Matcom is the company you can trust.

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