

A fitting setting for nine-ton steel sculpture

BY KAY KRITZWISER

HAMILTON — From the mayor's suite in City Hall, the rose-tinted brick south wall of Hamilton's new art gallery stands across the plaza without an indent or a bulge to mark its three-story surface.

That's why it should be such a co-operative setting for the 24-foot-high steel sculpture to be erected there by Toronto sculptor Kosso Eloul.

The new \$5.6-million art gallery is expected to be opened in October, but the \$35,000 sculpture will be installed by the end of July.

Kosso—his sculpture signature—was one of three finalists in a competition organized by Glen Cumming, director of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, last December. From 228 submissions, the sculpture committee chose maquettes by Kosso, Robert Arn of Toronto and Otto Rogers of Saskatoon. In the end, Kosso's steel sculpture maquette was chosen.

To pay for the sculpture, the gallery's building committee raised \$25,000 and the province

of Ontario, through Wintario, provided \$10,000. Of that amount, \$5,000 was to cover the sculpture's installation in the plaza. Each finalist was allotted \$500 for the costs of his maquette and each becomes the property of the sculptor.

The winning maquette, nicknamed Steely for want of a more appropriate name, gives a clear idea of how its monumentality will dominate the unadorned wall behind it.

One vertical steel column will rise 24 feet directly from the concrete base of the plaza. Joined to it on one end edge, in what appears to be a breathtaking defiance of balance, a second column makes its own way skyward.

Director Cumming described the sculpture as "a nice kind of marriage," promising a unity with the imaginative building designed by Hamilton architect Trevor P. Garwood-Jones to complement his Hamilton Place, a brick's throw distant.

"Its great shape will loom overhead," Cumming said. "We'll be able to see its delicate balance by walking beneath the sculpture. Its

planes should blend beautifully with the gallery and its metallic, reddish brown color will be in harmony with the gallery walls."

The color of the sculpture, which will be made of Stelcalloy steel, produced by the Steel Company of Canada, particularly delights the Toronto sculptor.

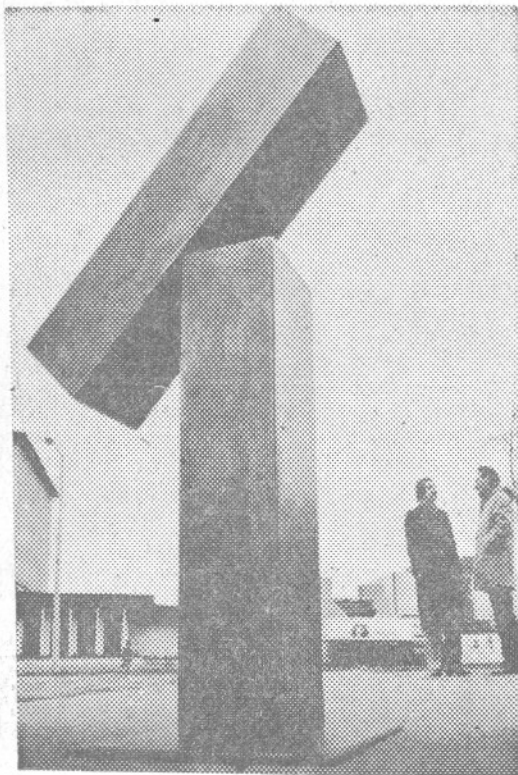
"Stelco has advanced in nine months a color which would have taken nature 9 years," Kosso said. "It's a self-weathering steel developed during the Second World War, particularly for use in bridge-building. It has unusual strength and it needs no maintenance. The strength of the material is so important to this sculpture because the weight is suspended up in the air."

Kosso regards his sculpture as particularly appropriate in Canada's Steel City. "Can you think of what our civilization would be like minus steel?" he asks. "We'd be back to an era of sticks and stones. I know there'll be some fantastic engineering problems involved with

this one—weight, for one thing. The sculpture will weigh nine tons but because the plaza stretches over the parking garage beneath, there has to be a limit on the weight allowable."

Kosso's sculpture is a continuation of a theme which has tantalized him for years: how to arrest in a sculpture the relationships possible between form and shape. "I like to see the union of two ideas, of two entities touching—in this case the one the solid vertical, the other that dynamic thrust, with a relationship affecting each other."

Kosso's sculpture will have a sense of renewal about it, for it will be lit up by night, and by day the sun will make it cast a 40-foot shadow on the gallery wall. As well, the different light of summer and winter will constantly change the appearance of its surfaces. "It's a very exciting building with fantastic spaces inside," said Kosso. "A sculpture which doesn't relate to its environment loses a lot."



Cumming and Kosso with model of sculpture.

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