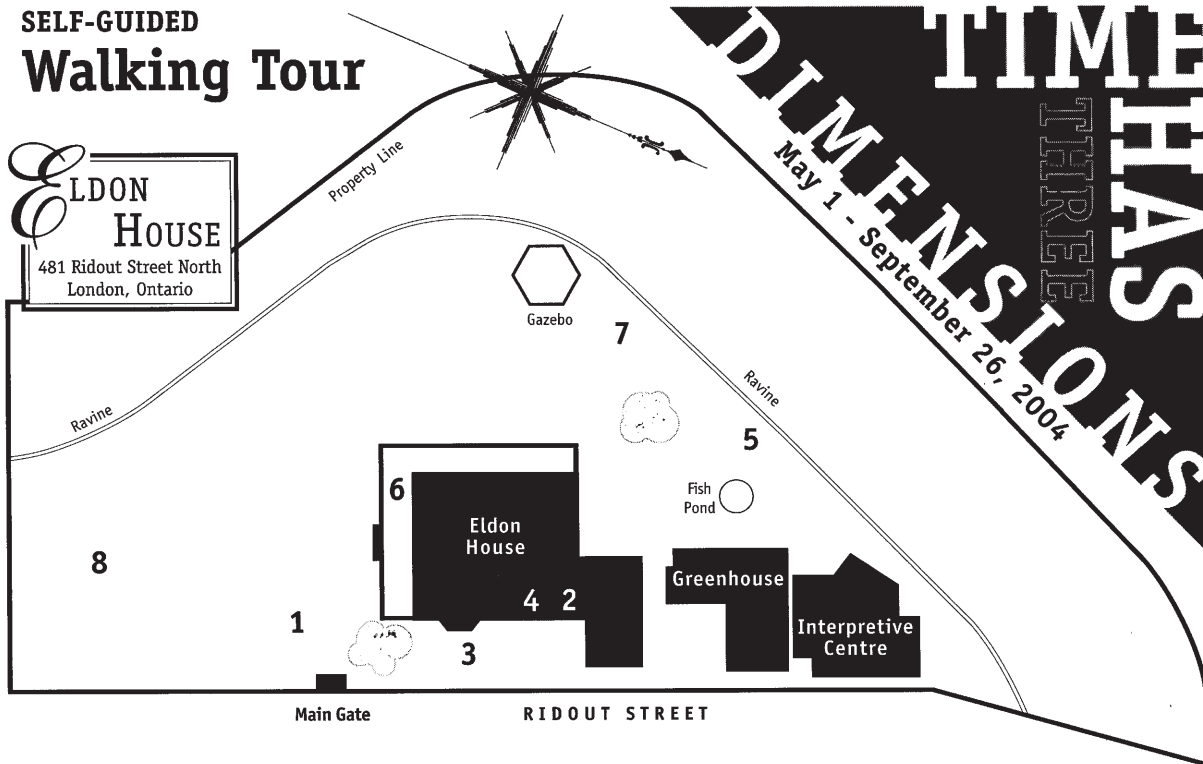


SELF-GUIDED Walking Tour

ELDON HOUSE
481 Ridout Street North
London, Ontario



THE SPARK for *Time has Three Dimensions* was a postcard from the late London arts patron Nancy McNeé describing an exhibition of contemporary art at The Grange, the Art Gallery of Ontario's historic house. Intrigued by the potential for contemporary and historic interplay, I went to Eldon House with this in mind, only to be repelled by the clutter. Not wanting to abandon a percolating idea and remembering vivid encounters with outdoor art installations in England, I pitched the idea for an exhibition of outdoor work on the grounds of Eldon House to Contemporary Curator, Robin Metcalfe, and Curator for Regional History, Mike Baker, both of whom were very receptive.

While canvassing artists for interest in the project, it became apparent that creeping around an old house and using that experience as a springboard to create art isn't everyone's idea of a good time, but that there was a surprisingly strong predisposition to this behaviour among people I was related to, either genetically or by marriage: hence, the preponderance of Jarvises and Gooddens in the list of artists.

Two years after its conception, three dimensional work by eight artists working in a variety of media – sculpture, stained glass, sandblasted marble tile, painting on vintage linoleum - is interwoven throughout the grounds and interior of Eldon House. Each artist has responded in a very individual and often playful way to the history, site or artifacts of London's oldest residence,

built in 1834 and home to four generations of the Harris family. The contributors range in experience from two recent graduates of the Beal art programme through to established artists who have worked for over 25 years in their studios.

You are invited to touch the outdoor sculptures, four of which have moveable parts. Viewer participation is encouraged with the two sculptures which have a sound component. While being designed for interaction, we ask that you please handle all the works with care.

Kirtley Jarvis, Guest Curator



Aerial view of the house and grounds, April, 1966
London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives, D.B. Weldon Library, UWO

*Time has three dimensions
and one positive pitch or direction.
It is therefore not so much like any
river or any sea as like the Sea of
Galilee, which has the Jordan
running through it and giving a
current to the whole.*

Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844-89

1. Kirtley Jarvis

Nine to Five

Sundial

12 marble tiles, sandblasted and painted

Facing the house, stand on the month tile and your shadow will be cast towards the hour tile.

When I began this project, Eldon House appeared frozen in time to me, its artifacts as static as fossils in bedrock. Thinking of a treasure hunt, I chose objects which looked interesting from each of the major rooms to base my sundial motifs on. As I deciphered the identification numbers written in spidery code on each piece, I discovered that Eldon House is a pastiche. Some of the fine antiques from England dating from the 1700s were inherited by Lucy Ronalds, who married into the second generation of Harrises. Others were collected on world travels. When the house was given to the city in 1960, Don Routledge of Routledge & Burton, interior designers for prominent London families, added 63 items to the inventory and played a role in creating a fiction - the "Red Room", the "Pink Room" and so on. Furnishings and objects from Gibbons Lodge, the Museum London Permanent Collection, and private donations round out the tableau. The artifacts became animated as I traced their origins and I came to appreciate their potential to transport us into the past, while informing us about the present and pointing the way to the future.

9am

Artifact: Bed in the Servants' Quarters

Found in the attic at Eldon House, 1996, during the creation of the servant's bedroom

Repelled by the elaborate curves and "detestable ornamentation" of mid-Victorian furniture, Charles Locke Eastlake (1836-1906) advocated a return to sturdy, rectilinear furniture and quality workmanship. The motif on this tile is based on the low relief carving on the modest, well-made furniture in the servants' quarters which is typical of the "Eastlake Style".

10 am

Artifact: Silver Presentation Bowl in the Drawing Room
Harris Family Collection

Inscribed on the bottom of the Art Nouveau bowl decorated with cloisonne peacock feathers is: *George C. Gibbons, Esq. K.C. In appreciation of many services to the Liberal Party, Christmas, 1905.* His daughter Lorna married Ronald Harris, the mining engineer, whose collection of animal trophies and weapons from central Africa fills the halls in Eldon House. In 1927 she and her sisters donated funds to the city for the purchase of 64 acres of land, a 15 minute walk north along the river from Eldon House, to be named Gibbons Park in memory of their parents.

11 am

Artifact: Beaded Footstool in the Blue Bedroom
Harris Family Collection

A Berlin print-seller in the early 1800s revolutionized needlework in Europe and North America by producing very colourful designs on graph paper, each coloured square representing one stitch. Many of these designs known as "Berlin woolwork" were floral with elaborate intertwining flowers and leaves which were worked in cross or tent stitch. The needlework on this footstool is further embellished with white, black and grey beads, a technique called "grisaille".

12 Noon

Artifact: Spindle Chair in the Dressing Room
Donated to the Historic Sites and Museum Committee by the Estate of Helen Gibbons, 1961

In the 17th century each of the trades which included Carpenters, Joiners and Turners were extremely exclusive and proprietorial with strict codes and standards. There were fierce squabbles over rights to use certain processes. Officially a carpenter's furniture was limited to simple nailed boards. Each part of this chair made by a turner had to be turned on a lathe. Reproduction furniture in this style was popular in the mid 1800s and the chair in the dressing room probably dates from that period.

1 pm

Artifact: Sheraton Style Writing Paper Box in the Pink Bedroom
Harris Family Collection

Thomas Sheraton (1751-1806) trained as a journeyman cabinet-maker and was an author and publisher of books about cabinet making. He lived in abject poverty, eking out a living teaching perspective and architectural drawing. His frequent use of oval shapes and marquetry and the light, delicate painting of flowers in wreaths and festoons influenced the design of furniture and pieces such as this writing box.

2 pm

Artifact: Emily Carr Pot in the Back Hall
Harris Family Collection

In her mid-40s and discouraged by the hostile artistic climate, Emily Carr ran a boarding house, hooking rugs, breeding sheepdogs and making pottery from red clay. She notes in *Growing Pains*, "I ornamented my pottery with Indian designs – that was why the tourists bought it. I hated myself for prostituting Indian art; our Indians did not 'pot', their designs were not intended to ornament clay – but I did keep the Indian design pure."

3 pm

Artifact: Delft Fireplace Tiles in the Library
Harris Family Collection

The ancestors of Amelia Ryerse, the original matriarch at Eldon House, came from Holland in the 1700s. Scenes on the fireplace tiles of windmills, dykes and sailing boats would have reminded the Ryerses of their home back in Holland. The tiles and the two large plates, self-portraits of Rembrandt and his mother in the Morning Room, were produced in the Dutch town of Delft which was a major centre for production of tiles in the 17th and 18th centuries.

4 pm

Artifact: McClary Stove in the Kitchen
Permanent Collection, Museum London, from the home of Jessie Robins, 124 Wortley Road

"A McClary stove sells a McClary stove." This London company, started in 1847, was at one time the industrial backbone of London, selling stoves, furnaces and enamelware all over the world. The gas hot plate with three burners such as the one found in Eldon House was refined through the 1920s and 30s and evolved into the type of gas stove we are familiar with today.

5 pm

Artifact: Woven Jacquard Coverlet in the Red Bedroom
Donated to the Historic Sites and Museum Committee by Donald Routledge, 1961

"Rose and Stars" is one of four jacquard patterns used by John Campbell who trained as a weaver in Scotland, emigrating to the United States in 1832. He brought his jacquard hand loom and patterns to Canada in 1859, settling in Komoka where this coverlet was woven. Most weaving patterns at this time originated in the United States and many had American motifs such as this heraldic eagle grasping arrows and an olive branch.

2. Ted Goodden

Seven Sisters

stained glass diptych, painted,
etched with collaged elements

Designing this diptych for "the smoking nook" at Eldon House has given me the opportunity to review my own connections to Victorian life. A reliable part of my studio practice since 1979 has been the repair and restoration of Victorian-era stained glass windows. London, as the birthplace of the Stained Glass Dept. of Hobb's Hardware, has a rich legacy of domestic stained glass. Fundamentally, I agree with the modernists: "Art is a way of thinking, not an illustration of thought." So I cannot say that the eight vertical strips in these panels represent the Harris family matriarchy – Amelia and her seven daughters. But I might say that my choice of materials and colour was informed by the rich, brooding and claustrophobic interior of Eldon House.

3. Ron Milton

Homage to Wenman Wynniatt

steel and aluminium

The bridge structure at the top of the sculpture is reminiscent of Blackfriars Bridge, the oldest bridge on the north branch of the Thames River where the body of Lieutenant Wenman Wynniatt was found. Wynniatt was an officer stationed at the British garrison who was courting Amelia and John Harris's daughter, Sarah. His watch was found on his body, stopped at the precise hour that he had made a late appearance, drenched and silent, at an Eldon House party the night before. The steel frame and pendulum were inspired by the Ryerse clock in the front hall, one of the possessions Amelia brought from her family home in Port Ryerse after marrying John Harris following the War of 1812. Viewers can interact with this sculpture. Once the fish pendulum is set in motion it keeps going, as does the story of Wenman Wynniatt, one of the ghosts at Eldon House.

4. Jack Niven

Nonesuch Bowers

oil on vintage Congoleum flooring; vintage fabric samples

I began the small nest paintings as a way of working with the photographs I have been taking for several years of the magnolia tree in bloom on the back lawn of Eldon House. The rondels of found flooring from about 1930 seemed a natural setting on which to place these tiny bird dwellings. Other elements connect to the collection of small plaques, sculptures, needlepoint by household members, miniature portraits, paintings and photographs of the community and region, as well as the extensive leather-bound volumes of dried flora in the library. Some pieces are more directly related to a fictionalized biography of my own ancestral heritage.

5. David Hind

Almost Remembered

reclaimed steel, beeswax

I am not much of an historian, so my approach to Eldon House was less connected to the house's specific stories' as it was with my own emotional response. Like Emily Goodden, and I'm sure many of the house's visitors, I was instantly attracted to the hunting trophies, simultaneously seduced and repulsed by the animal parts. These trophies, as well as some items in the nursery (specifically the livestock toy figurines) suggested certain connections between the loss of childhood and the loss of that which is wild. Of course, with loss, there is always creation.

6. Emily Goodden

Animalia Project

mixed media

Tucker's Triumph, c. 1994

Totally Playground Princess Pony, c. 1986

Plasma Prince Channel 42, c. 1997

Felixx Woofer III, c. 1989

You are barraged by a bold display of animal trophies as you step into Eldon House. These status symbols reflect wealth and power as well as Ronald Harris's hunting skill during his years working as a mining engineer in central Africa in the early 1900s. New breeds of animals have come to the garden with an updated series of trophies referencing pop culture. When you pull the cord, these interactive sound sculptures suggest what noises these strange creatures might have made.

7. Aston Coles

Map Read from Without

steel and lead

Map Read from Without is a study of space made in steel, derived from the topographical lines of the City Engineer's Office Land Survey Map of Eldon House and its grounds, File #D-027, June 6, 1960. My current work is concerned with the description of phenomena and the multitude of forms assumed by the notion of map, from hand drawn street maps to schematic diagrams, from flow charts to oral directions given to tourists (from not-so reliable sources!). My purpose is to expand the world through the reversal of the traditional map/world relationship (where the map is merely an accurate description of what was already there). By switching the roles, as is done in math as seen in the division/multiplication relationship, the world is made manifest through the very description of it.

8. Bentley Jarvis

Bridge to the Past

galvanized and stainless steel

Bridge to the Past is both a piece of sound sculpture and a musical puzzle. Each pair of tuned cylindrical chimes sounds the first two notes of a piece of music composed in 1834, the year that Eldon House was built. To make the puzzle easier, one of the musical selections is a string quartet written by a woman. The first person to correctly solve the puzzle will win an impressive vegetarian lasagna cooked by the artist. Please fill out an entry form available at the reception desk inside the house. When there is a strong wind, the bells ring on their own, and produce a sound similar to a carillon or bell choir, such as the one at St. Paul's Cathedral, the church regularly attended by the Harris family, at the other end of Fullarton Street.

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