



Hanging around: There's 1 million feet of nylon fibre in this \$44,000 sculpture, hanging in the foyer of the Metro Toronto Library's headquarters on Yonge St., by artist and set designer Aiko Suzuki. She spent eight months building it and estimates she walked 250 miles up and down her studio while trying to work out the concept and the design of the massive sculpture.

The ceiling's the limit for fibre art

By Lisa Balfour Brown

The largest fibre sculptures ever commissioned in Canada will be unveiled tonight in the foyer of the Metro Toronto Library's Yonge St. headquarters.

The huge fabric sculpture, which cost \$44,000 and contains one million feet of nylon fibre, is the dramatic creation of 43-year-old artist, Aiko Suzuki.

Vancouver-born Suzuki landed the commission after winning a competition judged by a panel of two Metro Library officials and Anne Trueblood Brodsky, artscanada magazine editor.

Although Suzuki executed her winning maquette two-and-a-half years ago, the project foundered for lack of funds until last June. And she maintains it took her a full eight months from then to complete her organic 45 by 23 foot sculpture. She also figures she walked over 250 miles in her studio while she "worked the sculpture out".

Last month, however, Suzuki took only three days to install the finished product in the library's foyer. Titled Lyra, (after the Greek goddess of the harp) this expansive hanging contains 2000 feet of finely-honed wooden booms to help shape and suspend it from 146 points in the library's open

louvered ceiling

Although much of the sculpture consists of dangling snow-white strands resembling icicles or stalactites it also includes swoops and swirls of fabric.

Originally, Suzuki bought 800 pounds of earth coloured strands for her sculpture. "But in the end", she says, "I decided to use only five pounds of these specially dyed fibres to provide nuance."

Suzuki's fire-proofed fibre creation hangs over the library's pool and waterfall area and reflects the water. It also relates to and is reflected in the mosaic mirror on the east side of the foyer.

Some of the reported 3000 people who pass through this foyer everyday have already reacted positively to the sculpture. Others maintain it is "a bit strange - like being in a cave."

Unfortunately, the sculpture does tend to clutter up or close in a formerly pleasant and natural open space, accented by the sound of falling water and the sight of potted plants reflected in the mosaic mirror.

However, a sculpture of this type was always envisioned by architect Raymond Moriyama, who completed the block-long building at 789 Yonge St. for a total of \$27.5 million in 1977.

Moriyama intended the library foyer - with its low ceiling and waterfall area - to act as a "transition from the business of Yonge St. to a quiet working atmosphere" and his plans called for a sculpture which would resemble a "gently rising mist" above the water.

The sculpture was also meant to "create a filtering quality" and a baffle to help obscure the utilitarian spectacle of the elevators located dead-centre in the library's main Yonge St. entrance.

To raise the \$44,000 required for such a sculpture, a fund raising campaign obtained half the money from 47 corporations and private individuals and the rest from a matching Wintario grant.

Among the corporations contributing more than \$1,000 tax deductible donations were: Famous Players Ltd., Rothmans of Pall Mall Ltd., CFRB, Bell Canada, McDonalds Restaurants, CN Tower Ltd., and Harlequin Enterprises.

As for the maintenance of the largest fibre sculpture in Canada, Suzuki says it can easily be taken down and dry cleaned. The artist also claims, with a grin, that "management will be well equipped with five Afro combs - to keep it groomed."