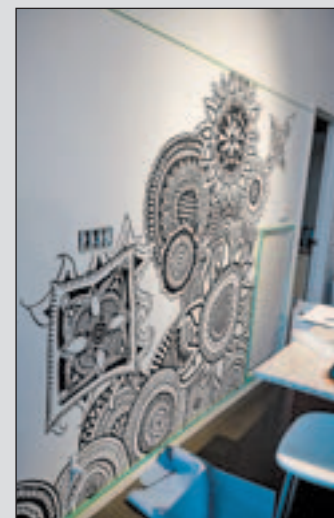
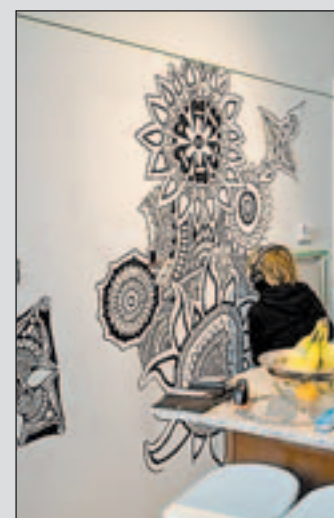




GORDON PINSENT
DRAWS SPECIAL
PRAISE - C2



Sandra Howard touches up a mural she painted at her Kaufman Lofts home in Kitchener. At right (top to bottom): stages in the mural's progress over several days.



Where art hits the wall

By COLIN HUNTER
RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER

Art usually hangs on the wall. Occasionally, art is the wall. Behold the peculiar wall that spans the entire foyer of Sandra Howard's fifth-storey condo in Kitchener's Kaufman Lofts building.

It is a swirling, swooping, loop-de-looping feast for the eyes that spilled from Howard's brain onto the wall in acrylic black paint during a weeklong creative frenzy that ended a few days ago.

"It is (long, thoughtful pause) something," says 23-year-old Howard, admiring her finished masterpiece, which also happens to separate her kitchen from her bedroom. "It just sort of came to me."

Howard can be forgiven for not having a profound artist's statement on the tip of her tongue about the underlying meaning of the abstract mural.

She is not a professional artist. Nor does she aspire to be one. She is an account development representative, whatever that is, who spends her working hours penned-in by the unartistic faux-walls of her cubicle at a software firm.

"I just wasn't fulfilling any creative urge at work," she says.

The creative urge has been percolating inside Howard since childhood and flourished during her high school days in Burlington.

She was one of the top artists at her school but, like many university-



bound teens, she opted for a somewhat more pragmatic course of study — media and communications at Laurier — to avoid the fate of starving artist.

When she and longtime boyfriend Stephen Pell bought a loft in the Kaufman building last fall, though, her inner artist began to stir.

The couple had previously lived in a drab basement apartment with head-high ceilings, so the new loft felt like a beautiful blank canvas.

At first, she and Pell figured the monolithic off-white foyer wall could use some wallpaper to spruce it up, so they found a style they liked and got a price estimate.

That estimate: 450 bucks.

So they bought a tube of black paint instead.

Total cost of materials for the mural: \$2.99, plus tax.

"I had the paintbrush since I was kid, so that was free," Howard says. "And the paint would have cost six bucks but we had a coupon for 50 per cent off."

The mural was originally intended to be a joint effort that Howard and Pell could work on together. But on New Year's Eve those best laid plans went a tad awry.

Their artistic visions clashed — Howard is something of an abstractionist, Pell an illustrator — and by the next day they had completely covered their failed mural in a fresh coat

of off-white paint.

"Version one was a screw-up," Howard says.

The wall was dry enough for an attempt at version 2.0, Howard assumed complete creative control.

It was only fair, since her boyfriend, an interior decorator among other vocations, had made nearly every previous esthetic decision about the look of their loft.

Howard got to work, spending at least six hours a day, sometimes up to 12, swirling and swooping and loop-de-looping with her paintbrush. She lay on a yoga mat to work on the sections near the floor, often with Willow the cat dozing on her hip.

The more one stares at the finished mural, the more Howard's visual inspirations become evident. The polka dots match those on the rug under the kitchen table. The stripes jive with the placemats on the table. The top border of the mural mimics the patterned pillows on the sofa.

"Work with what you've got — that's my motto," Howard says.

She has no delusions of grandeur; no artistic aspirations loftier than her own loft.

If anything, she hopes her mural will inspire a few other people to create something beautiful simply for the sake of creating something beautiful.

With her inner artist now appeased, her inner musician is jockeying for attention.

"Now that the wall is done, I think my next goal is to learn to play the guitar properly."

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'Most human' Terminator rocks with cool precision

Now here's something you don't see on TV every day: a teenage girl getting her head whacked against a wall by a burly man old enough to be her father and big enough to be a world wrestling behemoth.

Whack, whack, whack. If you tune in the middle of Sunday's kickoff episode of **Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles** (8 p.m. tomorrow on FOX, A-Channel) you could be forgiven for thinking you were watching a crass exploitation flick about an abusive parent or that TV censors hired to monitor small screen violence had, perhaps, run off and had lobotomies.

But then you would notice something interesting: instead of bleeding profusely and passing out, the perky adolescent stands up, grabs her imposing attacker by his lapels and makes mincemeat of him with a few deft chops.

Chop, chop, chop. Terminator, which may be the most pro-female action series in history, walks a thin line in its contention that while the future of the free world may rest on the survival of a callow teenage boy named John Connor (Thomas Dekker), if not for the butt-kicking intervention of the two toughest women on the planet, he'd probably wind up as a clerk in big box electronics store.



JOEL RUBINOFF
TELEVISION

"Half an hour, one bag, plus the guns!" his renegade single mom (Lena Headey) tells him as the duo prepare to run for their lives yet again. "I'll make pancakes!"

Shirley Partridge she's not, despite her culinary aspirations, and as she stalks around with a Uzi strapped to one shoulder, blasting bad guys and negotiating with mob hitmen in her quest for a safe haven, it's clear she'll stop at nothing to keep her son out of harm's way.

And she's not alone. In a disturbingly compelling scene I'm still not convinced will make it to air, another ally emerges when John's substitute teacher opens fire on the class ("Class dismissed!" he quips) and the demure cheerleader who rescues him turns out to be the TV reincarnation of one of the big screen's biggest, baddest action dudes.

That, of course, would be Arnold Schwarzenegger, who made his reputation playing a killer cyborg programmed to kill the future leader of the human resistance in the first Terminator flick and was reassigned to protect him in the second and third.

But Arnie's out of the movie business now, busy waging political battles as governor of California, and the decision to replace him with a former ballet dancer who looks like a contestant on America's Next Top Model shows the series producers have the kind of chutzpah to make this show a success on its own merits.

"We're going to make my Terminator the most advanced model so far in her human traits," Summer Glau, who plays the role as a cross between Star Trek's Data and martial arts star Jackie Chan — told me at the recent TV press tour in Los Angeles.

"I want people to be able to relate to her and in some way see themselves. She's gonna be the most human Terminator so far."

She certainly has a sense of humour, as we learn when — after her head bashes through the windshield of a speeding car — she tells the mortified occupants in her flat, uncomprehending monotone, "Please remain calm!" There are a few other witty bon mots buried in this tense, exciting action drama that never sacrifices coherence for special effects grandstanding.

But what I really like about it is the cool precision with which it's executed.

Whether you're a fan of mind-boggling sci-fi fantasy or not, whether you swear by the big screen Arnie flicks or not, it's hard to not be impressed with



JILL GREENBERG/FOX
Sarah Connor (right, played by Lena Headey) and her son John (Thomas Dekker) find themselves in a dangerous new world, with only Cameron (Summer Glau) as a possible ally.

the way creator Josh Friedman has positioned a kick-butt single mom and iron-limbed teenage hellion as the most formidable fighting duo since Batman and Robin.

If not for their dogged perseverance, fearless commitment and ability to alter the fabric of time, the future leader of humanity likely wouldn't make it out of high school.

CHANNEL SURFING

- The tempestuous life of Guelph swimmer Victor Davis, who became an Olympic champ before his tragic death at 25, is profiled in **Victor** (8 p.m. on CBC), described by star Mark Lutz as "Rocky in the pool."

- Not much excitement as the lip-smackingly salacious Golden Globe Awards (9 p.m. on NBC) are replaced — due to the Hollywood writers strike — with a boring news conference announcing the winners. Preceded by a **Dateline** (8 p.m. on NBC) special featuring canned interviews with nominees.

- **Degrassi: The Next Generation** (7:30 p.m. Monday on CTV). The only teen show I know not just tolerated — but eagerly embraced — by an adult audience returns for its seventh season with eight new cast members and its annual promise to push the envelope even further.

Can't wait.
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