

Read up on Babel at Koffler Gallery

By ANDREA RAYMOND
Special to *The Mirror*

An enormous spiraling tower of books stands amidst the Koffler Gallery. It winds up to the skylight, giving an illusion of continuation beyond the gallery ceiling. The tower of interlocking books is made up of 7,000 titles with everything from encyclopedias to trashy subway reading material.

Tom Bendtsen's tower of books, titled 'Argument #6', is complimented by the works of Simone Jones. Her works fill the rest of the gallery — two large contraptions, one a pair of wings and the other, a machine that would allow one to walk on water. Accompanying her work is a projection of the artist using her creations.

Both artists examine the idea of transcendence, Bendtsen through knowledge and Jones through inhuman physical abilities. The exhibit is titled "Babel", a reference to the parable of Babel — the attempt at achieving a higher state of being or understanding by virtue of one's own will or ideas, ultimately becomes a self-defeating proposition.

For the last few years, Bendtsen has been making art with thousands of books. His current installation at the Koffler Gallery is held together only by gravity. It is the sixth in a series of site-specific pieces created with books. Previous pieces have included towers, a wall and a home-like structure.

In order to obtain the thousands

of books required, Bendtsen wrote to libraries, universities and other institutions asking for books, which he uses when installing his pieces.

The tower of books at Koffler starts out with a base of reference books, upon which literature takes over, with fluffier books at the top. This is both for the sake of practicality - heavier books make better bases - and to demonstrate a chain of thought.

"Books are our history. They represent ideas that have come before us. Each book's history is built upon or reliant on previous knowledge," Bendtsen said. "We all have access to the same knowledge, but it depends on how we pick it and organize it, how we come to our conclusions. Each of the arguments represents a different portion of history."

The title "Argument #6" refers to the noise of history.

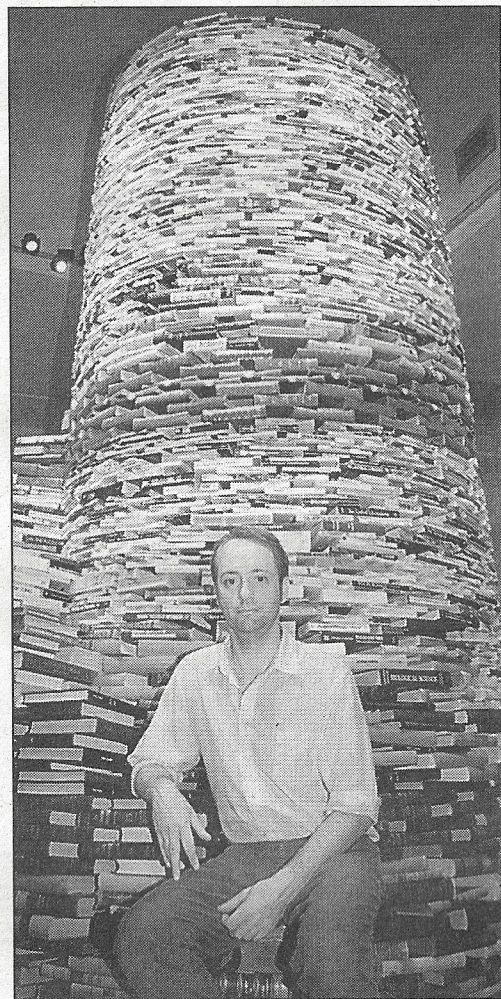
"There is too much information. I'm trying to make sense of history," he said.

"The Tower of Babel had its flaws — thus showing that ideas of transcendence are flawed. The tower [of books] looks solid, but you can't climb it. Just as Simone has created wings that won't actually allow you to fly," Bendtsen said.

"Babel" is on exhibit at the Koffler Gallery through Aug. 19.

The gallery is located in the Bathurst Jewish Community Centre, 4588 Bathurst St.

Gallery hours are Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. For details, call 416-636-1880.



Artist Tom Bendtsen sits among his towering exhibit of books at the Koffler Gallery. The exhibit, entitled Babel, will be on display until Aug. 19

Mirror photo/ANDREW PALAMARCHUK