

SPECIAL EVENTS

Discover an old-fashioned Christmas

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Special to QMI Agency

Holiday spirits were soaring at the big house at Number One Austin Terrace last week, otherwise known as the Casa Loma. Toronto's landmark castle celebrated 100 years of Christmas as visitors got a chance to experience what life was like for Toronto's high society in the 1920s.

Many Torontonians have fond childhood memories of fairy-tale holiday celebrations in this cherished landmark. Countless couples have celebrated their weddings here.

For the 100-year anniversary of Christmas at the castle, 10 designers from the city have been invited to create Christmas tree installations each depicting a different decade from the last 100 years. The trees will be on display throughout the building for the entire month of December to give visitors some creative tree decorating ideas for the holidays this year.

The Liberty Entertainment Group, led by Nick Di Donato, recently entered into a long-term lease with the City of Toronto for Casa

Loma and have assumed the management of the aging castle. Plans are underway to invest \$3 million to upgrade the interiors, install air conditioning and develop new exhibits, looking to attract Torontonians back to this historic and romantic destination.

The participating designers represent a Who's Who of Toronto's architectural, interior design and decoration industry. The tree in the Oak Room was decorated by Linda Reeves, principle of House and Homes magazine, representing a 1947-look adorned with pearls.

Casa Loma's conservatory was bathed in pink light, its foliage and water fountain like a scene from the enchanted forest. Two trees by Jim Connelly adorned the crystal chamber in an Art Deco theme with hand-painted bottles and jewels representing the style of the day.

The magnificent tree in the Great Hall is over 30 feet tall, designed by Dean and Dan Caton of Dsquared2. Known for their new luxury style, the Catons are internationally acclaimed designers originally from Toronto.

Architectural firm Audax presented a tree inspired by

1960s pop-art and is covered in hundreds of square and rectangular ornaments, meticulously laser-cut from coloured Plexiglas sheets.

"We began thinking about what was happening in the '60s and how to translate this into a themed tree," says Audax principal Gianpiero Pugliese. "We began as architects, looking at things from a different angle. We began seeing these pop-art graphics where you have a white backdrop with these pops of brilliant colours done in patterns or a random way that really highlight the colour palette."

Pugliese says that their tree mirrors the spirit of the times. "It actually went away from tradition, we really wanted to do something nonconventional, a little bit revolutionary."

Casa Loma will feature a variety of programming for the public every weekend and holidays through to December 28. "We'll have a scavenger hunt, we have carolers, we have cookie decorating, it's really going to be a lot of fun. We have the junior choir from Bishop Strachan performing tonight," explains Casa Loma president Catherine Bridgman.

"We also have a school program starting on December 2 for two or three days a week where 750 schoolchildren will be coming in to see a new production of the Snow Queen. The Snow Queen is the original story that Frozen was adapted from," she says.

In what may have been Toronto's very first model home, Sir Henry Pellatt was ahead of his time incorporating forward-looking home accoutrements popular in today's condos and towns.

Sir Henry's private ensuite includes a deep soaker tub of thick white porcelain and the city's very first stand-up shower with elaborate plumbing fixtures, called a needle bath. Popular in 1920s homes, these devices formed a cage of thin tubing with small water jets, resembling today's popular shower panels replete with a wide rain head.



In what may have been Toronto's very first model home, Casa Loma incorporates a number of forward-looking accoutrements now popular in today's condos and homes.



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