

Time warping

ROM takes us back 65 million years to a land far, far away...

By PAUL BENEDETTI
The Spectator

WHEN YOU come face to face with a Tyrannosaurus Rex, you understand why it didn't need powerful arms to kill its prey.

It probably scared it to death.

But then the chances of bumping into the 40-foot-long, 15-foot-high and five-ton ferocious flesh-eating monster is unlikely because no one has seen one in about 65 million years.

Unless you visit the Royal Ontario Museum's newest exhibition — Dinosaurs.

Then you'll come face to face with a huge, roaring T-Rex. It's not alive, but the computer controlled robot moves, rolls its eyes and opens its huge jaws letting out a blood-curdling sound. Even at half life-size, the king of dinosaurs is a bone-chilling sight.

Joined by three other dinosaur robots created by Dinamation International Corp. — a Triceratops, the weird looking Pachycephalosaurus, and a life-size Parasaurolophus — these uncannily life-like creatures create an amazing spectacle.

But then the entire show, on at the ROM from Oct. 20 to Jan. 2, is a fascinating display. Dinosaurs, huge reptiles that ruled the earth for 140 million years and then disappeared about 64 million years ago, have made a comeback.

The huge dragons, which have always been a favorite subject of school kids, have become a hot item everywhere.

Joan Thompson, deputy chairman of the ROM, said one of the most asked questions of visitors to the museum is, "Where are the dinosaurs?"



□ Royal Ontario Museum opens its Dinosaurs exhibit Thursday, and it includes the above, entitled Awakening of Hunger.

Now they're everywhere. The ROM's show has as its centerpiece the travelling Natural History Museum of Los Angeles exhibition, Dinosaurs — Past and Present, the most comprehensive show of dinosaur art ever assembled.

Featuring the work of 28 dinosaur artists, the show includes about 150 paintings, sculptures and illustrations. Forget the clumsy, dull pictures in your grade school textbook. These paintings are magnificent imaginative renderings of the huge beasts.

"We've found out a lot more information," explains Peter May, a palaeontologist with ROM and creator of skeletal mounts of dinosaurs for museums around the world. May

attributes the dinosaur phenomenon to a resurgence of interest in the area in the 1960s. "Many of those kids went on to become paleontologists themselves," he said.

With more research and better information, dinosaurs have become interesting once again, and the market is now flooded with what May

Also, though they worked closely with palaeontologists at the time to ensure authenticity, many of their paintings show anatomical details which are now known to be inaccurate.

May, who has collected bones from digs in Kansas, Alberta and Alaska, says the most turned up of any one creature is about 60 per cent of its skeletal remains. Other digs provide more bones, but the palaeontologist is still forced to fill in the missing portions, and then carefully work to add musculature and other details to re-create the creature.

The modern paintings by artists like John Gurche, Mark Hallett and Doug Henderson, show sleeker, more brightly colored dinosaurs in action.

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refers to as the latest fad: "pop-paleo".

Early oil paintings by turn-of-the-century dinosaur artists like Charles Knight and Benjamin Hawkins, depict noble but lumbering giants.

Their imaginative paintings illustrate the great creatures in battle, moving in herds, or migrating across country.

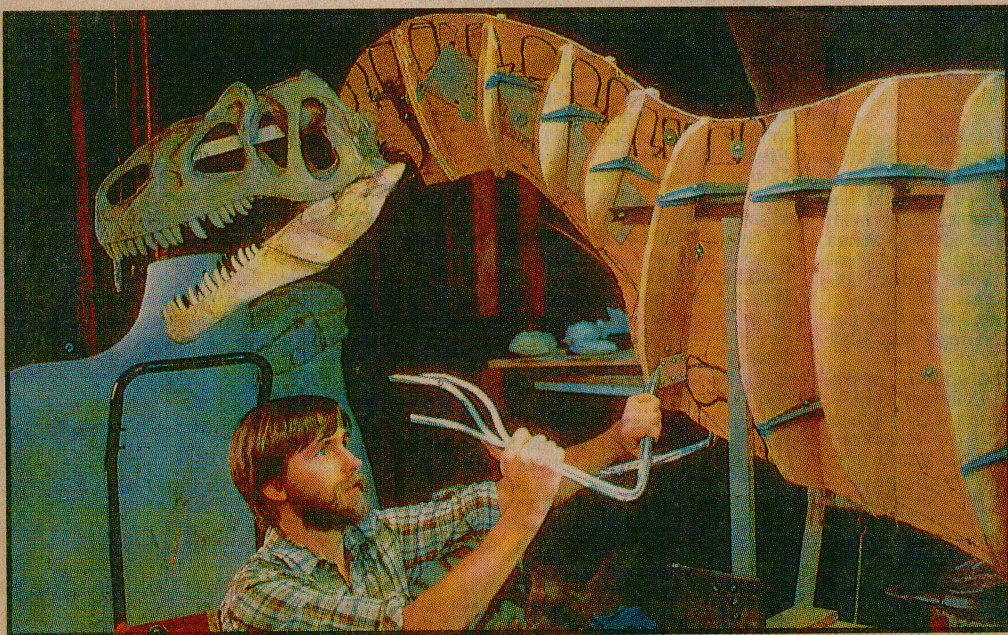
May says much of the work is speculative and may need further refining as more information is discovered. "We may end up pulling back really. I can't see it getting any more exciting."

But the exhibition certainly is exciting. The largest item, a 22-foot-long, 8-foot-high life-size model of an Allosaurus by Stephen Czerkas is incredibly life-like right down to its lunging pose. And it is accurate, says May, including the pebbly reptile hide, which the artist took from fossil impressions of the actual dinosaur skin.

The show includes many highlights: the study for Rudolph Zallinger's prize winning 100-metre mural which depicts 300 million years of reptile evolution; a chilling life-size sculpture by artist Ron Seguin and palaeontologist Dale Russell of what a human-like descendent of the dinosaur might have looked like if they had not become extinct; and the ROM reconstruction of the Dromiceimimus, featuring a full skeletal model and a fleshed out artist's rendering of the ostrich-like dinosaur.

The show also features a lecture series, a film entitled Death Of The Dinosaurs, several demonstrations of dinosaur sculpting and painting, readings, slide shows, and a host of other dinosaur related activities.

Admission to the ROM includes most of the Dinosaur events and tickets are available at the door of the ROM and are \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children, seniors, and students. They are also available at Ticketron outlets by calling 416-872-1212.



□ Working on the Allosaurus armature for the ROM display.



□ A clay model of the Allosaurus, on display at ROM.