



University Library

2009

## Back to the future at the Ontario College of Art & Design

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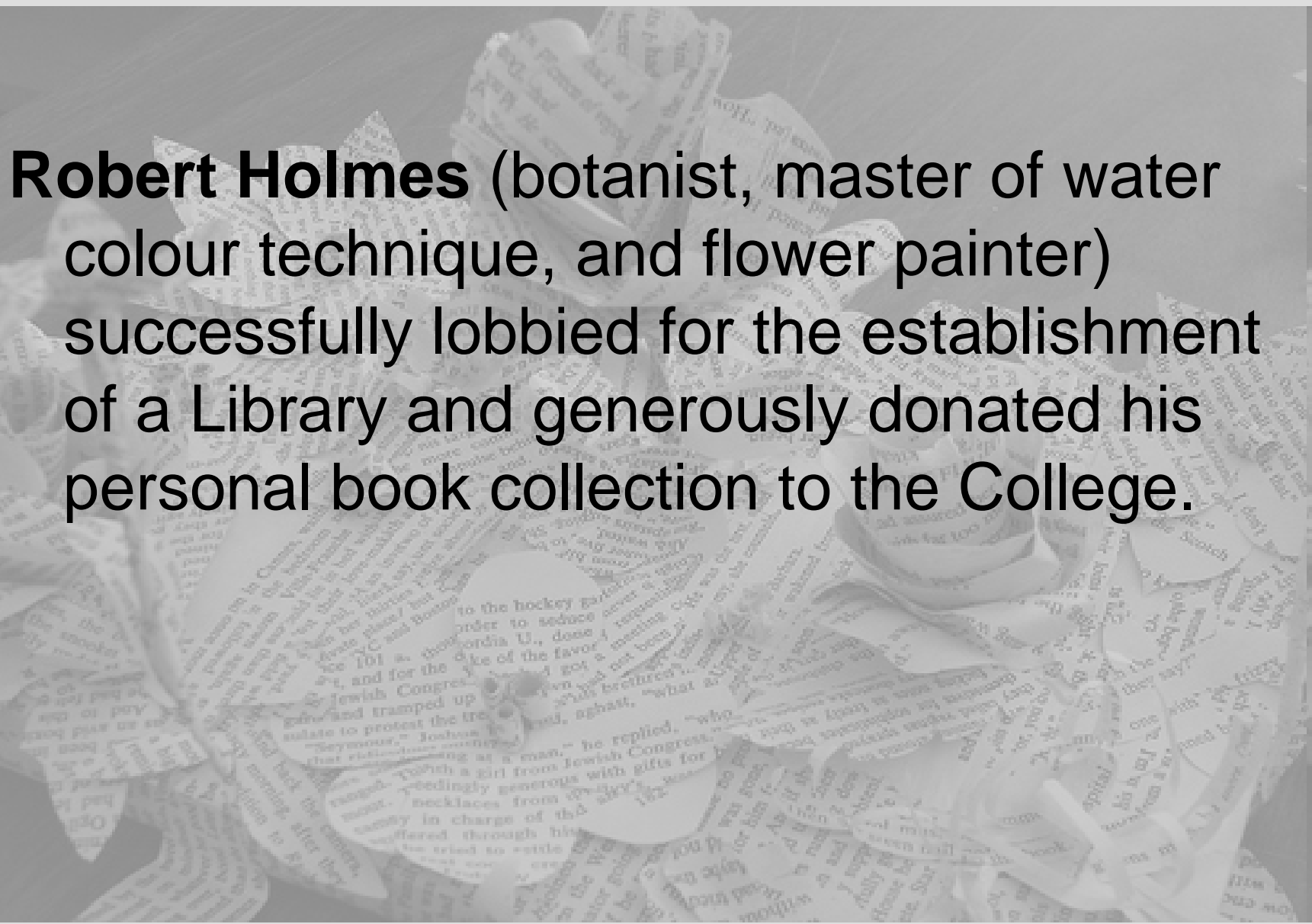
**Back to the Future  
at the Ontario College of Art & Design**

**Jill Patrick, Director – Library Services  
Academic Policy & Planning Committee**

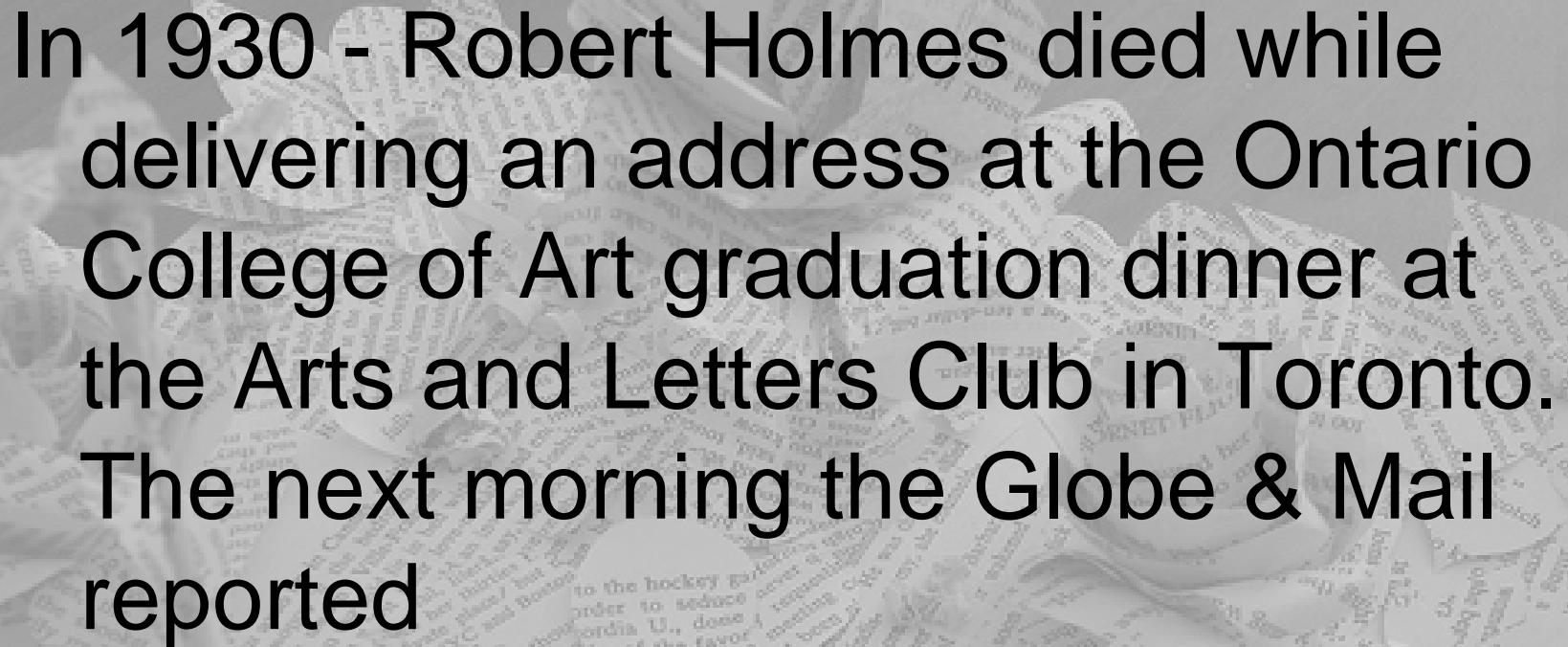
**March 16, 2009**

## Back to the Future.....

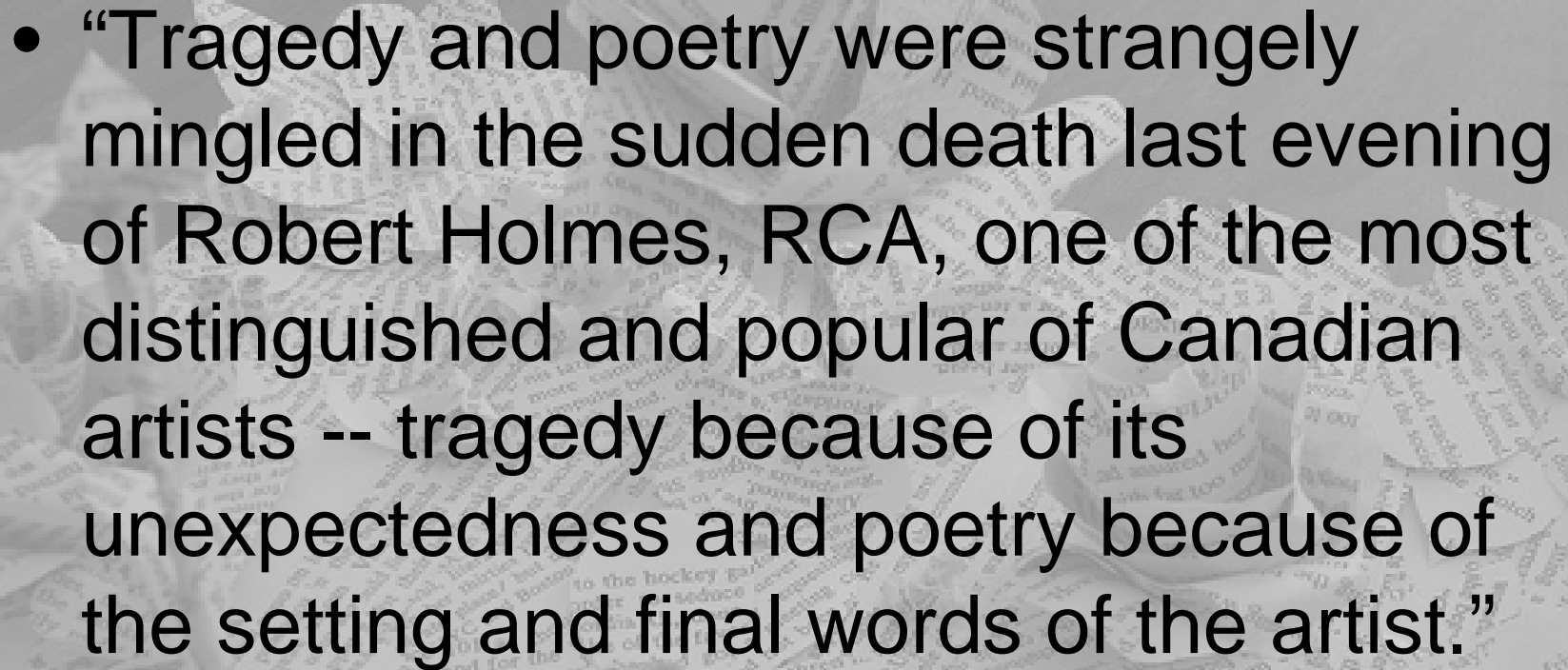
The OCAD Library was formed in 1922 when the College had a staff of 7 instructors, 6 visiting instructors and 3 assistant instructors under the direction of a Principal and Vice-Principal. There were 330 registered students.

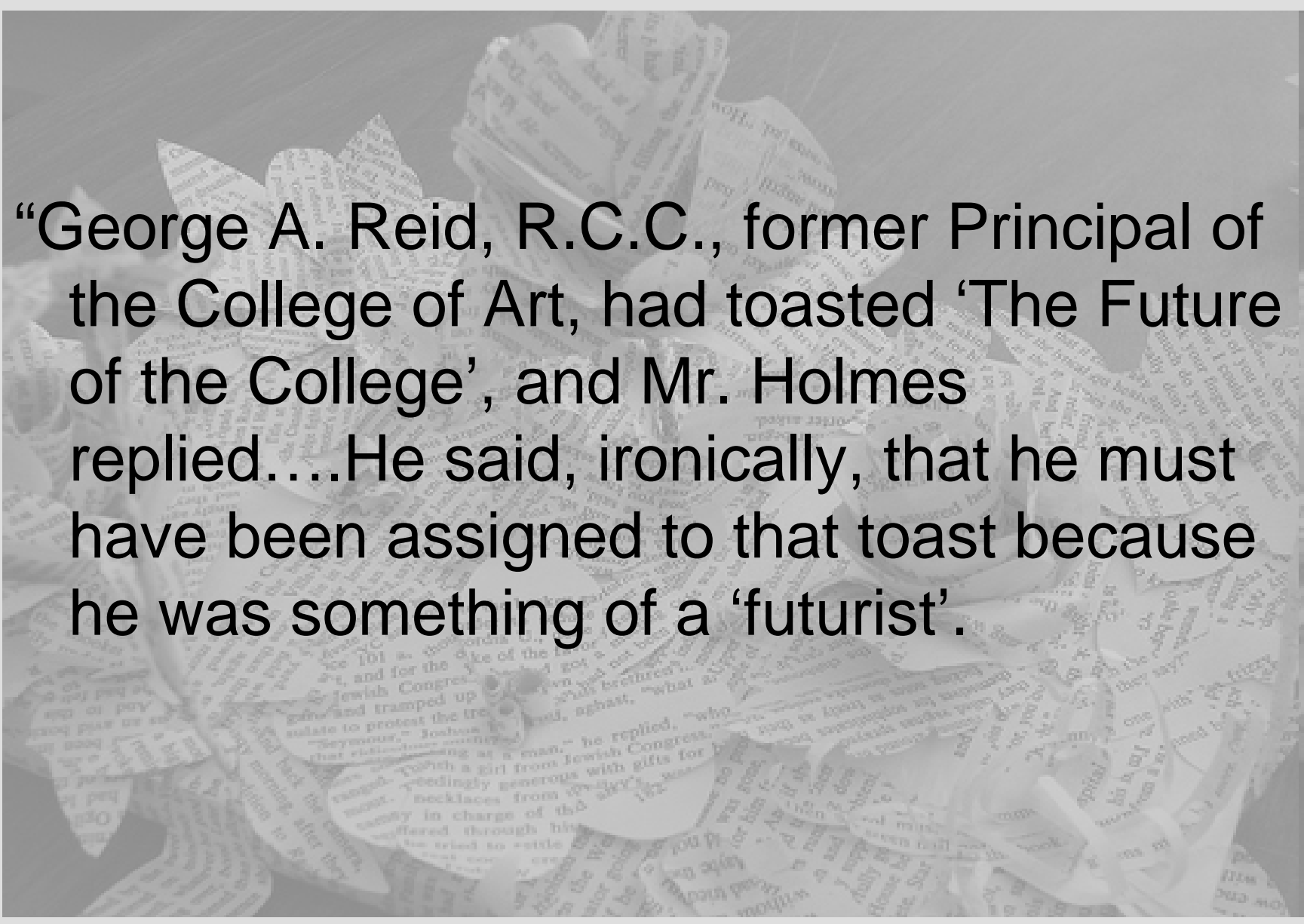


**Robert Holmes** (botanist, master of water colour technique, and flower painter) successfully lobbied for the establishment of a Library and generously donated his personal book collection to the College.

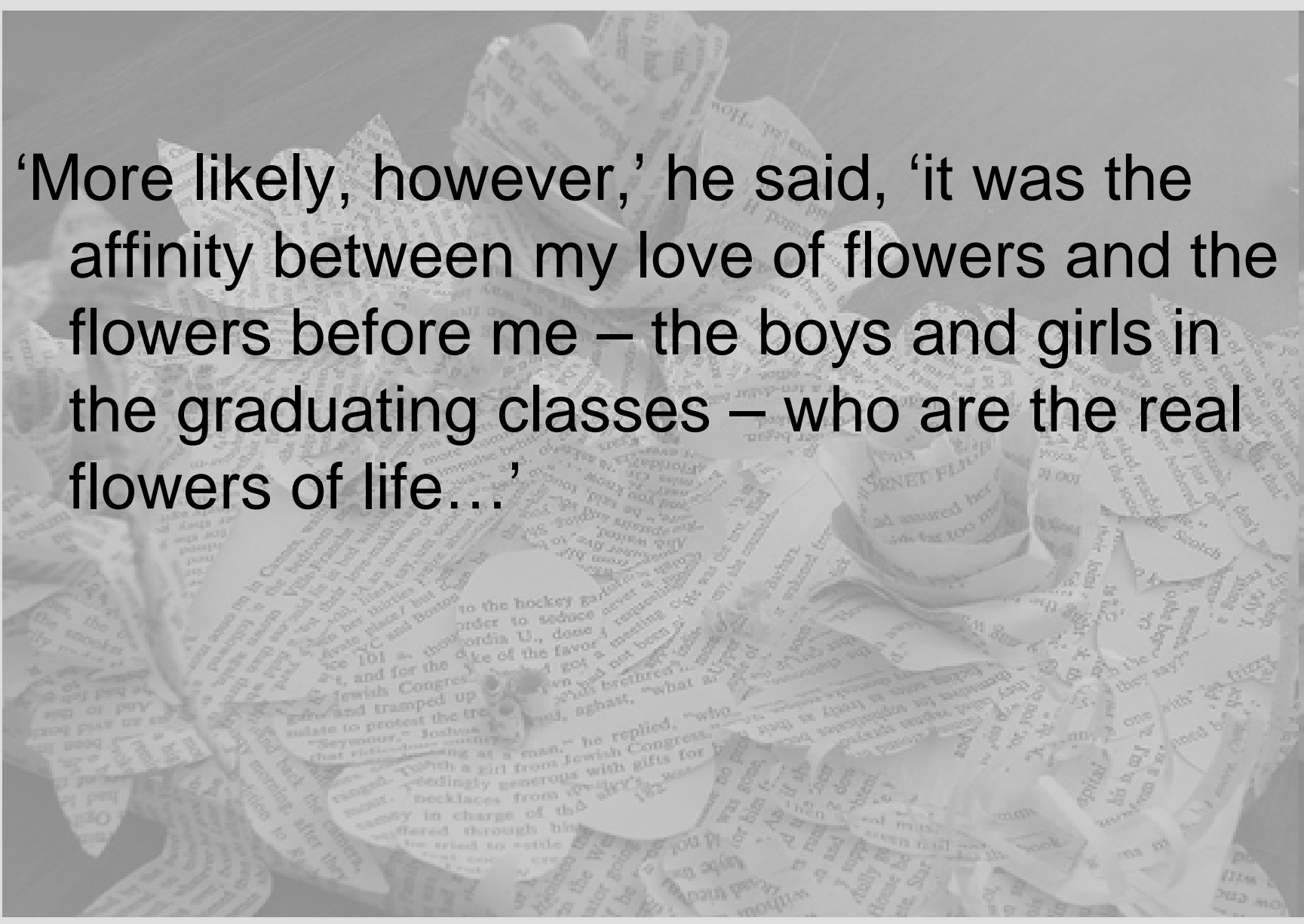


In 1930 - Robert Holmes died while delivering an address at the Ontario College of Art graduation dinner at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto. The next morning the Globe & Mail reported

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- “Tragedy and poetry were strangely mingled in the sudden death last evening of Robert Holmes, RCA, one of the most distinguished and popular of Canadian artists -- tragedy because of its unexpectedness and poetry because of the setting and final words of the artist.”

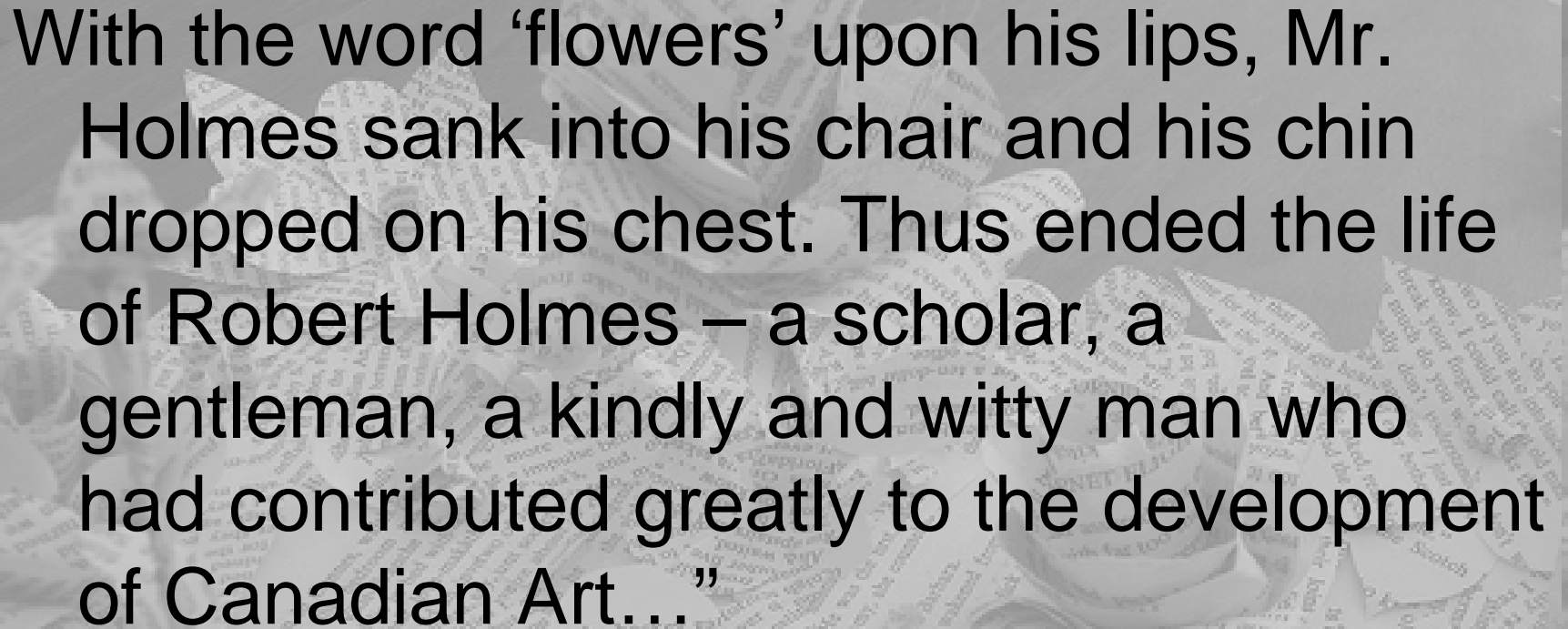


“George A. Reid, R.C.C., former Principal of the College of Art, had toasted ‘The Future of the College’, and Mr. Holmes replied....He said, ironically, that he must have been assigned to that toast because he was something of a ‘futurist’.

The background of the slide is a grayscale image of crumpled newspaper pages. The text on the pages is mostly illegible due to the crumpling, but some words like 'NET FLA', 'ad assured her', and 'to the hockey' are visible. In the center of the crumpled paper, there is a small, white, five-petaled flower with a dark center.

‘More likely, however,’ he said, ‘it was the affinity between my love of flowers and the flowers before me – the boys and girls in the graduating classes – who are the real flowers of life...’





With the word ‘flowers’ upon his lips, Mr. Holmes sank into his chair and his chin dropped on his chest. Thus ended the life of Robert Holmes – a scholar, a gentleman, a kindly and witty man who had contributed greatly to the development of Canadian Art...”

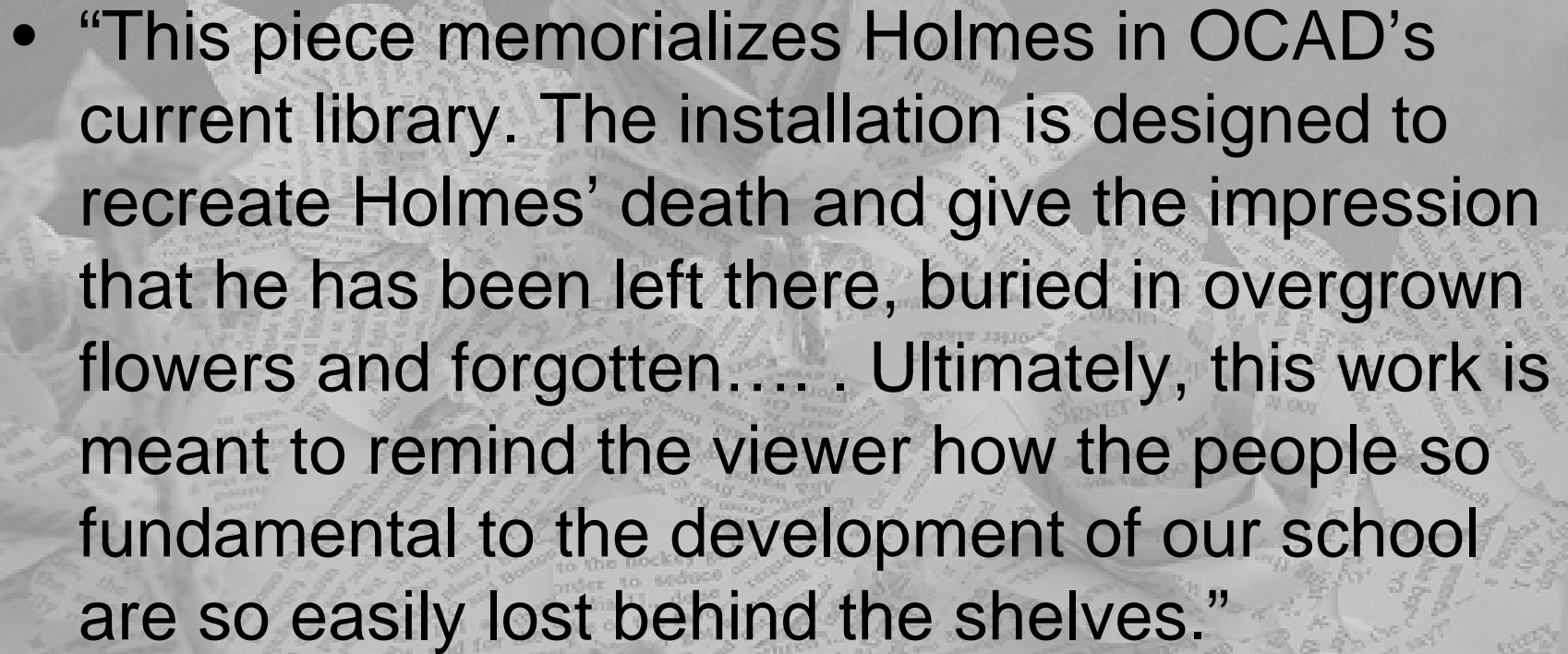
*Globe & Mail, Toronto, May 15, 1930.*

# Memorial to Robert Holmes







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- “This piece memorializes Holmes in OCAD’s current library. The installation is designed to recreate Holmes’ death and give the impression that he has been left there, buried in overgrown flowers and forgotten.... . Ultimately, this work is meant to remind the viewer how the people so fundamental to the development of our school are so easily lost behind the shelves.”

Courtesy - **SuzWrightPhotography’s** photostream on flickr