Art and Social Progress:  
The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Department of History of Art  
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Abstract

Art and Social Progress: The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950

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Art and Social Progress: The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950 revises appreciation for the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto whose two-decade leadership of a socially-conscious modernist movement of painting has been overlooked in histories of Canadian art. No manifesto or defined membership provides ready definition of this generation's collective effort during two decades of economic and political crisis to advance an art for society's sake in representational painting.

The existence of the Toronto community of painters is posited on the evidence of a self-conscious reworking of motifs and compositions drawn from images of the land as it was lived in and worked by the Canadian people. Bertram Brooker, Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer, Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Paraskeva Clark emerged as the key players in the evolution of this visual exchange with the formation, in 1933, of the Toronto-based Canadian Group of Painters. By the end of the Depression decade, Fred Hagan, Jack Bush, Aba Bayefsky, and Jack Nichols embraced the collective language.

A shared belief in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being lay at the root of this exchange and the accompanying shift away from the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape aesthetic to a new humanist aesthetic in modern Canadian painting. The socially-conscious artist in Toronto, like the social democratic reformer, defined humanist values according to the principles of order, balance and harmony established in antiquity as the building blocks of
western civilization. The Toronto painters expressed these values at the level of design, presented by Canadian-based philosopher of aesthetics Walter Abell as the fundamental human principle of order and pattern made manifest by the abstract elements of composition.

The Toronto community of painters' efforts to position themselves as guides to social progress faltered in the post-war years with widespread suspicion not only of the communist denominators of humanist values, but of an art that approached propagandist social communication. The result, ultimately, was the rise of abstraction as a language capable of circumventing partisan beliefs by restricting aesthetic experience to the materials of painterly expression.
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Introduction

The Canadian consciousness must always, to a peculiar degree, be implicated with nature, seeing that Canada is first and foremost an agricultural and raw materials nation, and, still more important, is everywhere on the frontiers of the wilderness.¹

Writing in 1946, Wyndham Lewis, the British artist and writer best remembered as the founder of Vorticism (1913-1919), described the enduring myth of Canada as a pristine expanse of nature. He had spent nearly five years living in Toronto and Windsor during the Second World War.² Based on his conviction of the pervasive "Ossianic pantheism" that this country inherited from the British Empire, Lewis confidently asserted the "unassimilable mass of 'nature!'" as the determining influence on Canadian culture.³ Not surprisingly, Lewis lauded the Group of Seven as the only example of a true flowering of that artistic opportunity afforded by the Canadian wilds. A.Y. Jackson seemed to be the Group's one surviving exponent. "Only Jackson is left", wrote Lewis. "He had much to do with starting it all: now he stands there alone in Toronto before his easel, in the Studio-building in the Ravine,... the 'grand old man' of Canadian painting."⁴ Lewis forcefully defended the nationalistic landscape aesthetic as the standard of Canadian artistic achievement for the post-war era. His recollection of the Group of Seven and his rigid presentation of their preeminence struck a divisive chord of


partiality. Critical recognition of the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto, of whom Lewis makes no mention, had already begun to falter in the late 1940s, despite their continued leadership of a progressive socially-conscious movement of Canadian painting. This generation, moreover, received little support from their successors who, in the 1950s, established abstraction as the dominant aesthetic.

In a letter to the editor of Canadian Art magazine published in the spring of 1951, Ronald Bloore, an outspoken young graduate of the University of Toronto's department of Art and Archaeology, expressed his frustration with the lack of encouragement for aesthetic experimentation extended by the Toronto art establishment. Bloore's solution was a sweeping rejection of all artistic precedents, including the contribution of the post-Group of Seven generation who, in Bloore's estimation, suffered the desultory effects of "snow-bound" Canadianism engendered by the "mythic" status of the Group of Seven. The late 1940s and early 1950s were years of rapid growth and development in Canadian painting fuelled by a new generation of painters' outspoken rejection of the Group of Seven and their so-called followers, who included the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto. The leaders of this generation, the Toronto community of painters, fell from recognition in histories of Canadian art written since the 1950s.

Art and Social Progress: The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950 attempts to revise appreciation for the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto who, by the early 1930s, focussed their attention on the rural farmlands and small towns of Ontario and Quebec. Images of

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5 Ron Bloore, "Letters on Criticism", Canadian Art 8 (Spring 1951), 143.
Ronald Bloore is best known as a member of the so-called Regina Five group of abstractionists of the early 1960s.
the wilderness transformed by the civilizing force of humanity engendered an optimistic vision of a modern Canada faced with the harsh realities of an international economic depression and World War Two. These images served as the foundation for an anglophone, central-Canadian cultural identity informed by socialism and a democratic ideal of a harmonious and equitable society.

The post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto positioned themselves as a community of like-minded individuals engaged in an international effort to recognize the modern artist's vital role in social reconstruction and reform. A self-effacing insistence on community identity, geared to collective well-being, ultimately compromised the historical recognition of these artists. In the absence of a defined membership or a manifesto, the identification of their collective endeavour has been difficult. By using the term community and, specifically, the Toronto community of painters, their contribution to a socially-conscious modern movement of painting in Canada may now be initiated.

When did a community of socially-conscious painters form in Toronto? In the beginning, that is during the late 1920s when Toronto's Group of Seven opened its annual exhibitions to an increasing number of younger painters, Bertram Brooker, Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer, and Pegi Nicol MacLeod developed collegial bonds. Brooker was the writer among these four key artists. He made his living in advertising and, more than any of his contemporaries, promoted the social influence of visual culture. It was Brooker's idea to publish a 1928-1929 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada. The yearbook served as a compendium of artistic endeavour, and provides the first clear evidence of a closely-knit, younger generation of Toronto painters. Although originally intended to be an annual publication, the next and last yearbook did not appear until 1936. By this point, the Toronto community of painters had evolved into a stable artistic entity. The expansion of the
Toronto community of painters at the end of the Depression decade marks their seniority as leaders of a socially-conscious modern movement of painting in Canada whose example attracted public admiration and critical support.

Comfort, Schaefer, and MacLeod trained as painters, and all three developed close relationships with members of the Group of Seven. They were aware of their aesthetic kinship and shared a common bond of concern for their future as artists and as vital members of Canadian society. In 1931, Paraskeva Clark joined their ranks. A Russian emigrée who trained in St. Petersburg and who had lived in Paris, Clark acted as a catalyst for the progress of socially-conscious Canadian modernism. These five artists formed the nucleus of an extended association of painter friends and colleagues who dominated the Canadian Group of Painters when it formed in Toronto in 1933. All five, moreover, have received art historical attention for their individual contribution to the development of painting following the dissolution of the Group of Seven in 1931.6

The Toronto community of painters embraced a younger following at the end of the Depression decade. Like their older colleagues, who were their mentors, Jack Nichols, Aba Bayefsky, Jack Bush, and Fred Hagan have been the subjects of monographic studies.7 Montreal-born Jack Nichols

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7 See: C.R. Blackstock et al., Hagan: The Mind and the Hand (Grimsby, Ont.: Grimsby Public Library and Art Gallery, 1976); Christine Boyanoski, Jack Bush: Early Work (Toronto: Art Gallery
classically-inspired drawings reasserted the centrality of the figure for empathetic portrayal of the fundamental values of democratic society at the outset of World War Two. Bayefsky, Hagan, and John Hall, all of whom trained in Toronto, similarly found the human form to be the most potent emblem of political tension and social insecurity.

Over two decades of economic and political crisis, from 1933 to 1950, the Toronto painters evolved a collective language of art by reworking motifs and compositions derived from their experience of the land as it was lived in and worked by the Canadian people. This language manifested the spirit of community and utilized a distinct set of social and cultural references to humanist values. The socially-conscious artist in Toronto, like the social democratic reformer, defined humanist values according to those principles of order, balance and harmony established in antiquity as the building blocks of western civilization. The Toronto painters expressed these values at the level of abstract formal design in solidly composed images of the civilized landscape. In so doing, they promised to produce an art for society's sake.

J. Russell Harper only suspected as much when, in 1962, he described Pegi Nicol MacLeod as "a humanist, not only in her relations with others, but it flowed into her canvases...."8 In 1982, Mary MacLachlan similarly described

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Paraskeva Clark as a believer in the humanist purpose of art. These insights, while significant, did not raise awareness of the overarching relevance of humanist values to contemporary Canadian art and society during the decades of economic depression and the Second World War.

Charles Hill's *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* of 1975 was the first study to examine the relationship of art to society during the depression years. Hill stresses the difficulty of surviving in the fine arts at a time when the lack of both private and public collecting precluded artists from living solely on sales of their work. Where artists with established reputations saw drastic reductions in their annual incomes, younger artists, including those considered in this dissertation, struggled with few or no sales. Hill believes the depressed art market had a tremendous impact on the quality of work, primarily because artists necessarily devoted much of their time to teaching or commercial art. The post-Group of Seven generation of painters failed, as a result, to achieve "a definite image in the history of Canadian art." "While the twenties are dominated by the success of the Group of Seven and the forties by the explosive development of the Automatistes, the thirties only raise the names of a few isolated artists." Hill's comprehensive


9 Mary MacLachlan situates Clark as an outsider in Canadian painting of the 1930s and 1940s. "To a certain extent", claims MacLachlan, "she remains a solitary figure in that transitional period between the evolution of a national school of landscape painting in the 1920s and the rise of abstraction in the 1950s." Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), p.29.


survey of painting produced during this decade precluded in-depth discussion of those similarities in style and composition that serve, in this dissertation, to identify a socially-conscious Toronto community of painters. While he recognizes the importance of MacLeod and Clark, along with Bertram Brooker, Charles Comfort, and Carl Schaefer, Hill does not distinguish their images of the Canadian landscape from those of their contemporaries in other centres of artistic activity. Nor does he consider their work to be consistently socially conscious. "In spite of the high degree of political activity among artists," writes Hill, "surprisingly little overt political or social content appears in Canadian painting at this time." 12

How painters in Toronto expressed their social consciousness without documenting the hardships of life in the Depression era is exactly the problem that this dissertation sets out to solve by positing the existence of a collective language of art. Without revised appreciation for the Toronto painters' images of the civilized landscape in the context of a community-minded exchange of motifs and compositions, their contribution of a socially-conscious modernism can not be recognized. We would be left with the prevailing impression that the 1930s were years, generally speaking, of creative inertia when artists failed to break the bonds of representation firmly attached to the Canadian landscape experience by the Group of Seven. Are we to assume that this inertia was relieved only by Montreal's Contemporary Arts Society, formed in 1939, which encouraged separate consideration of the abstract elements of compositional design in aesthetic experience? This is what Hill recommends when he concludes: "The dominant theme of Canadian art in the thirties can be broadly defined as a movement between polarities: from nationalism to internationalism, from the Group of Seven to

12 Charles Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, p.16.
The contemporary arts society, from toronto to montreal.\textsuperscript{13}

The description of a collective language of visual exchange given in chapter three suggests that Toronto community of painters' interest in formal design as the primary carrier of meaning in Canadian painting was as important to the development of abstract expressionism as that of the CAS. According to Walter Abell, the Canadian-based philosopher of aesthetics who published Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art in 1936, formal design could be redefined to describe the shape of associational response simultaneously incurred in representational painting by the subject matter and style.\textsuperscript{14} Recognizable imagery, in other words, ultimately functioned abstractly in aesthetic experience, if albeit dependent upon line, colour, rhythm and balance for clarification. Representational form, as Abell described the mutual play of subject matter and style in aesthetic experience, allowed for the inclusion of representational painting in discussions of modernism. In chapters two and three, I explore the possibility that the Toronto painters' assertion of the primacy of representational form reflected a modernist concern for self-referentiality in the honest presentation of the tools of artistic production on a two-dimensional surface. In abstract painting, these tools may be identified as the paint, brush and canvas. The Toronto painters added the quoted image

\textsuperscript{13} Charles Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties, p.11.

Hill's conclusion recalls Robert Hubbard's argument of a decade earlier that painting in Canada following the Group of Seven "feels the pull of the two opposing forces of nationalism and internationalism", by which he meant representation and abstraction.


\textsuperscript{14} See: Walter Abell, Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).
to this list, and by no means intended to hide the fact that
their works were pastiches of cultural references.

Abell's premise of "representational form" is used in
this dissertation to circumvent the historical evaluation of
representational painting in Toronto of the 1930s as
unprogressive. It is also used to reveal how the Toronto
painters' images of rural farmlands and small towns of Ontario
and Quebec may be understood to be socially-conscious. The
link between art and society promised by representational form
cannot be overemphasized as a pivotal point for understanding
how the Toronto community of painters' language of visual
exchange manifested their belief in the social value of art.
This exchange not only established the civilized landscape as
the predominant theme of painting in Canada during the 1930s,
but imbued the modern movement of painting in Canada with the
fundamental humanist principles of order, harmony and balance
shared between art and society. The significance of this
suggestion is revealed by Barry Lord's 1974 publication The
History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art. Lord,
by contrast to Hill, celebrates the fact that a number of
painters active during the 1930s did indeed portray social
injustice in an overt manner. Lord, a self-proclaimed
Marxist-Leninist, cites Charles Comfort's portrait of Carl
Schaefer in Young Canadian of 1932 as exemplary of "a more
realistic attitude toward the Depression" that typified
socially-conscious painting of the decade. "His [Schaefer's]
hands, emphasized in the foreground", writes Lord, "show that
he is ready to take action." "Schaefer resolutely turned his
restrictions to advantage, and made some memorable paintings
of wheatfields and farm houses around his family home that
catch the spirit of the region."

15 Comfort and Schaefer, however, are the only two post-Group of Seven generation

15 Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a
painters in Toronto mentioned by Lord. Moreover, their work pales in comparison to the polemical images of the Toronto printmaker Leonard Hutchinson or the paintings of Fred Taylor, of Montreal, and Miller Brittain, of Saint John, New Brunswick.¹⁶

Far from suggesting, as I argue in this dissertation, that Comfort and Schaefer were key figures within a community of artists who advanced a socially-conscious Canadian modernism, Lord contests that painters in Toronto refused, in general, "to take a stand in favour of democratic subject matter...."¹⁷ The exhibitions of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP), which formally united the Toronto community of painters, "featured", in Lord's opinion, "endless repetitions of the 'empty landscape' formula, based largely on Group of Seven conventions." This despite the stated purpose of the CGP, quoted by Lord, "to encourage and foster the growth of Art in Canada,... and a wide appreciation of the right of Canadian artists to find beauty and character in all things."¹⁸ In his search for overt social commentary, Lord disregarded the role of formal design as the principal carrier of the humanist values of order, balance and harmony in images of the civilized landscape. Socialist realism proved too confining for the Toronto community of painters who were, as I contend, modernists in their assertion of the primacy of representational form.

As Christine Boyanoski established in her 1984 catalogue The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in Ontario, where Montreal artists surged ahead in adoption of an abstract aesthetic,


¹⁷ Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art, p.182.

¹⁸ Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art, p.182.
those in Toronto edged forward with a gradual loosening up of
technique. Artists in Toronto could not seem to throw off
the thrall of landscape painting. So while Boyanoski can
subtitle her essay "The Artist in Society 1937-1952" to
describe social consciousness and intensified wartime concern
for cultural integration, the paintings themselves remain
elusive, bearing little suggestion of unity or purposeful
direction by comparison to the Group of Seven or Painters 11.
In relation to contemporary representational work produced in
Britain, Mexico and the United States, however, as Boyanoski
ventures to discuss, socially-conscious painters in Toronto
emerge as active participants in an international movement of
artists, as Marshall McLuhan phrased it, from "the ivory tower
to the control tower of society." In two subsequent
catalogues, Permeable Border: Art of Canada and the United
States 1920-1940 of 1989 and The Artists’ Mecca: Canadian Art
and Mexico of 1992, Boyanoski furthered a revised
understanding of representational art in light of
international developments of socially-conscious modernism.

The Mexican muralists, popularized by well-publicized
commissions in the United States, exemplified the potential of
representational painting to communicate the message of social
reform to a wide public. The American Works Progress
Administration, moreover, demonstrated how the Mexican model
of public mural art might be tailored to suit the needs of a
capitalist nation. In Canada, interest in mural painting did
not encourage the same degree of government support it did in
Mexico or the United States. Nevertheless, mural painting

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19 Christine Boyanoski, The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in
Ontario (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1984), p.17

20 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of

21 Both exhibitions originated from the Art Gallery of
Ontario.
constituted a significant component of the Toronto painters' cultivation of a closer relationship between the fine arts and popular culture. Mural painting, moreover, demanded a clarity of compositional design paralleled in commercial art. As both Jack Bush and York Wilson understood, the lessons of commercial art could be applied to easel painting for the revelation of a universal language of art.  

Recognition of the Toronto painters' relationship to international currents of socially-conscious modernism is imperative, for it has long been suggested that the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Canada formed a rear-garde resistance to avant-garde painting. Only with the formation of Les Automatistes in Montreal did Canada apparently become competitive in the mainstream of international modernism. For that matter, the Montreal art milieu seems always to have been more adventurous. In her 1987 catalogue, Jewish Painters and Modernity: Montréal 1930-1945, Esther Trépanier argues that the representational paintings of certain artists of

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23 A recent example of the tendency to downplay the experimental approach of modernist painters in Canada during the 1930s and early 1940s may be found in Ross Fox's 1994 catalogue essay, "The Beginnings of Painters Eleven", for the exhibition *The Canadian Painters Eleven (1953-1960)*. Fox states: "Until this time [1953], and since World War I, Canadian art had developed in relative isolation from the rest of the world. Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven (founded in 1920) originated a distinct national landscape school, a type of National Romanticism, which was prolonged by its successor, the Canadian Group of Painters (founded in 1933). Their art emblematized Canadian chauvinism, which made it more difficult to dislodge, however outmoded it became." Ross Fox, *The Canadian Painters Eleven (1953-1960)*, from *The Robert McLaughlin Gallery* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Amherst College, 1994), p.7.
Montreal's Jewish community signal the first manifestation of cultural modernity in Quebec during the interwar period. No comparable study has been written for Toronto painting of the same period. The 1930s and 1940s have been treated separately as unrelated decades of artistic production, at least until now.

The Canadian war effort, mobilized for the preservation of democracy in 1939, deepened ties struck between artists against the common foe of economic depression of the 1930s. War, in other words, forced the evolution of a community ideal into a conception of world society. Canada's international stature as a Dominion of the British Empire drew the work of Canadian artists involved in the War Art Programme, patterned after the British War Artists' Advisory Commission, into closer comparison with international examples of socially-conscious modernism. Studies of Canadian painting of the Second World War typically isolate work produced under the Canadian War Art Programme from the general course of artistic development of the 1940s. It is here contended that the involvement of the Toronto community of painters in the Canadian War Art Programme intensified interest in symbols, reworked in a language of visual exchange, to communicate the humanist values of order, balance and harmony first made manifest in the Toronto painters' images of the civilized landscape.

The history of modernism in Canadian painting after World War One, from the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes to


the Toronto community of painters' civilized landscapes, parallels the revitalization of landscape painting in Europe during the interwar years. By no means does this indicate that Canadian and European artists' conception of the relationship of art to society was the same. Socially-conscious modernist painting in Canada emerged from a distinct set of beliefs in the social value of art originating, on the one hand, from England and the Arts and Crafts movement, and, on the other, from the United States, where Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal for the arts brought a democratic ideal of art as experience to international attention. Whereas the Depression years found the Toronto painters in close sympathy with the American Scene painters, especially Thomas Hart Benton, Canada's participation in the Second World War coincided with a deepening of interest in the potential of Jungian-derived archetypal symbols, born from the intersection of wartime political propaganda and the grand humanist tradition of western art, to root contemporary art on the bedrock of fundamental human experience.

For the Toronto painters, a discussion of the role of the artist in Canadian democracy held during the 1941 Conference of Canadian Artists at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, revealed the quest for universality to be problematic. Was a definition of universal human experience insensitive to regional difference and was that difference too great in Canada to be superimposed by what was an anglophone, central Canadian vision of unity? The example of the Toronto painters' self-conscious development of a language of visual exchange in representational painting reflected regional identity, comparable to the American Scene painters of the 1930s, albeit with a British-inspired aspiration to universal humanity.

Unwilling to reject that communicative link between art and lived experience served by representation, the Toronto community of painters settled for a compromise. The idea of
unity in cultural democracy exonerated regionalism as an unavoidable product of community-minded representational art. This product, moreover, mirrored the umbrella structure of the Federation of Canadian Artists, formed in 1942, where a national executive served to unite separate regions of cultural activity. The Toronto community of painters dominated the Ontario region. The relationship of the Federation's national executive to the regions repeated, in principle, Canadian political organization into federal and provincial governments.

Virtually every review of the Canadian Group of Painters exhibitions held during the 1930s and 1940s, as well as those of the Canadian Society for Painters in Water Colour and the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts, cites the names of artists associated with the Toronto community of painters. The overlapping of memberships in these three progressive national artists societies, all of which were based in Toronto, formalized ties among artists. Four art critics emerged as the principal supporters of the socially-conscious modernist painters. The writing of Graham McInnes, Robert Ayre, Donald Buchanan and Walter Abell provides insight into the means by which the work of the Toronto community of painters would advance culture for social progress.

McInnes came to Canada from Australia in the early years of the Depression.26 "Toronto the Good" offered him a challenge, for he had to convince a rather staid public of the essential contribution of the avant-garde to Canadian national development, which he envisioned in terms of social democracy.

26 In addition to his work as an art critic for Saturday Night, McInnes wrote fictional novels and two volumes of autobiography: Finding a Father (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967); and Goodbye Melbourne Town (London: Hamilton, 1968). He also published the critical art historical text: A Short History of Canadian Art (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1939); revised and expanded a decade later as Canadian Art (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1950).
The myth of the "true north" captured by the Group of Seven gave way, so McInnes argued, to increasingly personal reflection of the civilized landscape in the work of the Toronto painters. The civilized landscape, as Joanna Dutka assessed in 1987, served as a metaphor "of man's continual attempt to establish a human order in nature...."27 In his history of Canadian art, published in 1939 and revised and expanded in 1950, McInnes established a clear line of development of the modern movement of painting in Canada from the Group of Seven, and the effort to establish a Canadian art, to the Toronto painters, and the belief in the social value of art.

Ayre began publishing regular art columns in Montreal's English newspapers in 1935, the same year McInnes joined the staff of Saturday Night magazine in Toronto. Two years spent in Toronto, from 1932 to 1934, as editor of the Canadian National Railways' Canadian National Magazine, provided Ayre with the opportunity to establish close ties with the Toronto painters. Ayre came to know the work of former members of the Group of Seven, especially Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson, and to develop friendships with the younger generation artists Charles Comfort and Carl Schaefer. Through his membership in the Toronto Arts and Letters Club, Ayre gained first-hand appreciation for an extended circle of support for the visual arts. University of Toronto professors of humanities, Ontario Society of Artists and Royal Canadian Academy of Arts executives, and commercial artists and advertisers rounded out an eclectic Arts and Letters Club membership. Ayre's critical writing demonstrates, as Lois Valliant acknowledges, a generational concern for attracting broader cultural

sympathies.  

Both McInnes and Ayre recognized the potential of artists in Canada to crystallize the experience of contemporary life in the language of art. The example both men cited was the Soviet Union, where communism seemingly favoured a modern movement of representational painting typified by the work of Petrov-Vodkin, Paraskeva Clark's teacher in St. Petersburg. Mexico provided the critics with a second example of what Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen describe as "the dialectical unity of art and revolution that has haunted the modern period."  

"The history of this period", writes David Batchelor, "is to some extent, a history of interest-groups vying over the status and significance of the recent, and not so recent, history of art; over the meaning of modern art; and over the nature of modern life."  

"In a world where reality is perceived very differently by different interest-groups," adds Paul Wood, "where there is a constant process of struggle against hegemonic definitions of what the world is like, 'realism' is always going to reverberate beyond some bare conception of 'styles of art'."

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30 David Batchelor, "This Liberty and This Order": Art in France After the First World War; in Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars, eds. Briony Fer, David Batchelor and Paul Wood (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), p.3.

31 Paul Wood frames the relationship of art and politics engendered internationally in the interwar years around the questionable definition of realism. Paul Wood, "Realism and Realities"; in Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars, eds. Briony Fer, David
Buchanan and Abell, like McInnes and Ayre, were formalists who identified the abstract elements of formal design as the primary carriers of meaning in painting. Buchanan trained in history, but ventured into art history and criticism with his publication in 1936 of *James Wilson Morrice: A Biography*. For Buchanan, Morrice (1865-1924) was the first Canadian painter to demonstrate a modernist concern for design, which, through the promotion of the industrial arts, would eventually bridge the gap between art and life in Canadian society. As Secretary of the National Film Society in 1936 and as Supervisor of radio talks for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation from 1937 to 1940, Buchanan raised public awareness of technology's application to Canadian cultural growth. In 1940 he devoted his time to art criticism, which led to his appointment in 1944 as co-editor with Robert Ayre of *Canadian Art*, Canada's first national magazine of the visual arts.

Abell was an American who came to Canada in 1928 with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to establish a department of art at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. First and foremost, Abell considered himself a philosopher of aesthetics and extended to contemporary art in Canada an American vision of art as experience, most cogently described in the writings of John Dewey. In his 1936 publication cited above, *Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art*, Abell revised the formalist aesthetics of the British writers on art, Clive Bell and Roger Fry, to arrive at a definition of a middle ground of representational form. Abell's middle ground described a point of intersection between compositional design, being the

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subject of "pure art" inherited from academic tradition, and everyday life, conditioned by the social, political and economic order of the day. As it applies to socially-conscious modernism in Canadian painting of the 1930s and 1940s, this middle ground distinguishes the humanist aesthetic of the Toronto community of painters from the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape aesthetic and the abstract expressionist aesthetic of Painters 11. The adjective humanist, furthermore, refers to the Toronto painters' self-conscious appraisal of their position in the history of western civilization, and the roots of social democracy traced from antiquity.

Was Abell a populist as Julia Scalzo suggests in her 1987 article, "Walter Abell, From Maritime Art to Canadian Art"? Certainlv Abell understood the need not only for widespread art education, to which the critic would contribute, but for the banding together of artists across the country for the preservation of humanist values in democracy. Scalzo's appreciation for Abell's significant place in the Canadian art world of the 1930s and early 1940s does not stem from an analysis of his philosophy of aesthetics, however, which she interprets as social realist. Rather, Scalzo praises his initiative of artists' regional organizations, beginning with the formation of the Maritime Art Association (MAA) in 1935. The MAA was the springboard for Abell's establishment of Maritime Art in 1940, the precursor of Canadian Art, launched in 1943, for which he served as first editor.

For Hélène Sicotte, Abell's significance rests on his contribution to Canadian critical discourse on the social integration of art.\(^34\) Exactly how Abell's description of the


psychology of perception founded in representational form blended Dewey's philosophy of art as experience with British formalism remains, in the context of Sicotte's discussion, unclear. More importantly, Sicotte sees Abell as an outsider who failed to appreciate the cultural divisions separating anglophone and francophone perceptions of modernism in Canadian painting.35

Postmodernist critical theorists have, generally speaking, raised interest in smaller centres of artistic production and those painters whose work lies outside the traditional art historical conception of artistic evolution from representation to abstraction in the modern period. Certainly the study of the history of art in Canada benefits from the postmodern concern regarding the relationship of artists to the circumstances, or rather context, in which they worked. What Canadian painting of the 1930s and 1940s reveals of life in a Dominion fast on the rise as an autonomous country dealing with major economic and political upheavals is significant for appreciation of the Toronto painters' images of the civilized landscape as metaphorical expressions of socio-political reality.

As I will argue in chapter one, art historical analysis of the Group of Seven solely in terms of a nationalistic landscape aesthetic ignores these artists' evident social concerns. Their determination to record the Canadian landscape experience encompassed a broad scope of rural and urban subjects in addition to the more celebrated wilderness landscape. The purpose of this record, moreover, quite apart from the expression of nationalistic ambition or even self-aggrandizement, may be seen as the beginnings of a belief in the social value of art that evolved over the next two decades from 1930 to 1950.

Social histories of Canada published since the mid-1970s outline the emergence of labour and leftist movements leading to the establishment of social democracy in Canadian constitutional policy. While historians Michiel Horn, Norman Penner, J.L. Granatstein, John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, among others, delve into the relationship between culture and politics, the task of explaining how an art that does not overtly present social hardships can be called socially conscious has been left to the art historian and to a revised interpretation of formalism in Toronto painting of the 1930s and 1940s. What histories of the Canadian Left do reveal, however, is the popularity of a social democratic ideology embraced by artists, intellectuals and social reformers.36

A re-reading of Canadian art criticism of the 1930s and 1940s reveals widespread support for the advancement of culture in social democratic reform. Little has been written about the critics' role in advancing a dualistic appeal to modernist art and social democratic politics. Esther Trépanier's 1984 article "Modernité et conscience sociale: la critique d'art progressiste des années trente" concludes that art and political involvement were, for the most part, separate spheres of activity.37 The question of how humanist values came to be expressed in painting by the post-Group of Seven generation points, I contend, to the existence of a humanist aesthetic. While arguing for yet another aesthetic


label to describe the work of a generation of Canadian painters might invite criticism from postmodernists opposed to the homogenizing tendency of philosophies of beauty, the Toronto painters clearly invited consideration of their work within the fine arts academic tradition.

The humanist tradition in western art, originating in classical antiquity, reclaimed during the Renaissance, and renewed in the Enlightenment, returned in representational art of the modern period between 1920 and 1950 when it became embroiled in a battle of cultural power and influence waged between the Axis and Allied powers. State-sponsored cultural programs developed under the Nazis, Fascists, and Communists appealed to humanist values of cultural tradition, collective experience, equity, family security, and social stability. The essential nature of these values for humanity, representing timeless universal needs, is exactly what made their exploitation in totalitarian political propaganda so dangerous. Twentieth-century humanism, in other words, easily hardened into dogma. "Stalinism remains a large and embarrassing stain on the twentieth-century socialist project", writes Stuart Sim. "The anti-authoritarian side of post-structuralism and postmodernism is certainly worth preserving...."38 "The impotence of liberal humanism", so Terry Eagleton contends, "is a symptom of its essentially contradictory relationship to modern capitalism."39 Any consideration of humanist values in art as in social policy must, in other words, be approached cautiously.

Because I view Canadian social democracy as an undogmatic ideal of balance between socialist and capitalist interests


engaging a broad spectrum of artists and intellectuals over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, my purpose in describing a humanist aesthetic is to reveal that modernism and socialism could be combined in painting at the level of formal design. By this I mean the design principally of order abstractly conceived in the modernist-minded artist as in the reform-minded social democrat, both of whom were compelled by a universal appeal of structure in art and society. The Toronto painters never lost sight of their autonomy as visual artists. Aesthetic distance from political ideology was crucial to the artists' retention of cultural control, as I consider in chapters four and five.

Just as social democracy emerged as a middle course in Canadian politics, the humanist aesthetic emerged as a middle ground in Canadian art, balancing an appeal to universal humanity (carried by the abstract elements of compositional design) with individual and community identity (retained by the representation of familiar regional subject matter). Modernist art and social democratic politics intersected in the Toronto community of painters' vision of "unity in diversity".

"The philosophical challenge at the present", identified by Andrew Benjamin in 1991, and raised here in support of my argument for the Toronto painters' socially-engaged modernism, "...is to map the interarticulation of the desire for unity with the necessity of differential plurality."40 Benjamin's advice, moreover: "...mimesis must be understood not as a simple showing but as definitional of any relationship (structured in terms of a presentation or showing) that involves the distinction between an inside and an outside, where that which is inside intends to present the outside" would support my supposition that a direct relationship need

not exist between social consciousness and social commentary in modern painting.\textsuperscript{41} It has taken forty years, it seems, for contemporary criticism to regain an appreciation for dialectical relationships between art and society, modernism and socialism, and abstraction and representation. At least this would explain why a humanist aesthetic might now be offered as a tool to reveal a two-decade long development of art as a language of social communication. This is the language of a closely-knit community of self-effacing artists, who saw themselves as a sort of union of cultural workers labouring in tandem with commercial and industrial artists for the progress of art in social democratic reform.

\textsuperscript{41} Andrew Benjamin, \textit{Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde}, p. 201.
CHAPTER ONE: "When We Awake"

But we are not really awake, we are not sensible of national unity and we are not sensible of universal unity. Yet there are signs that both may perhaps blossom into being. These signs, so far, are deducible only from the occasional work of isolated individuals. But the opportunities to build an art here and an audience that may be stirred by it are as great as have ever existed in any nation, if not greater.¹

Bertram Brooker's call for recognition of Canada's untapped cultural wealth introduced a new generation of painters in the 1928-1929 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada. This was the generation who promised to succeed the Group of Seven and champion Canadian cultural development. Chapter one begins with a re-examination of the Group of Seven's legacy as leaders of the modern movement of painting who, in counterpoint to the prevailing view of the 1920s as a nationalistic decade in Canada, encouraged community-minded and socially-conscious artistic production. A British Arts and Crafts sensibility for the integration of art and society merged in images of the wilderness landscape with a theosophic view to spiritual enlightenment. The result, arguably, was the establishment of an art replete with symbolic potential for the expression of unity in national cultural identity.

As Brooker's selection of works for reproduction in the yearbook indicates, expression of the Canadian landscape experience shifted from a highly personal engagement with the wilderness to a fascination with the imprint of human settlement. Brooker and his Toronto colleagues, including Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer, George Pepper, Yvonne McKague, and Gordon Webber, along with the Montreal painters Edwin Holgate, Prudence Heward, and Anne Savage, demonstrated progress beyond the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape

aesthetic in their straightforward inclusion of the human figure. Images of the figure in the landscape highlighted in the yearbook provide compelling evidence of preoccupation with the civilized landscape that defined a nascent humanist aesthetic in Canadian painting.

The advancement of a national culture redolent with the spirit of universal life would redress, so Brooker believed, the linguistic, racial, and economic divisions that fragmented a widely dispersed Canadian population. The socially-conscious artist here blends a socialist concern for collaborative action with an awareness of national identity. Canada's growing maturity as an autonomous Dominion following World War One permitted, as will be argued, nationalism and socialism to play complementary roles. Once Canada fell into economic depression in 1929, socialism gained the leading edge. With the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933, the Toronto community of painters emerged as a closely-knit network of artists who struggled to promote the social value of an art visualizing the order and pattern of collective existence.

Social Consciousness and the Group of Seven

By 1926, the year in which Fred Housser published A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven, the Group's leadership of the modern movement of art in Canada rested solidly on the popular success of their wilderness landscapes, especially those depicting northern Ontario's rugged Precambrian Shield.2 These also were the images that

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2 Housser's book, as Dennis Reid first pointed out, was immensely influential in propagating the ideas of the Group of Seven and in establishing them as the standard by which advanced painting in Canada was to be measured. As a result, the Group of Seven soon found themselves at the height of their popularity. Dennis Reid, The Group of Seven, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1970), pp.196, 198-99.
attracted international attention during the early 1920s. For British critics who reviewed Canada's contribution to the 1924 and 1925 British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley, wilderness landscape as painted by the Group of Seven signalled the emergence of a truly Canadian art. Beginning with Graham McInnes' *A Short History of Canadian Art* of 1939, through to the two current standard survey texts on Canadian art -- J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History* of 1966 (rev. 1977) and Dennis Reid's *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* of 1973 (rev. 1988), and Charles Hill's recent study *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, histories of art in Canada have consistently analyzed the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes in terms of the development of modernism in art and nationalism in Canadian politics. Nothing has been said about the relationship of images of wilderness landscape to the rise of socialism in Canadian politics during the 1920s. The Group of Seven encouraged artists to appreciate their potential influence on society and to take responsibility for the values their art inevitably conveyed. The younger artists invited to the later exhibitions of the Group of Seven held between 1926 and 1931 were those whose work advanced an

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Dennis Reid makes the connection between favourable comments in the British press following the Wembley exhibitions of 1924 and 1925, and the popular acceptance of the Group of Seven as the leaders of a distinctive and modern school of art in Canada. The British critics were especially impressed by the character of the Canadian wilderness in comparison to their own soil and climate. When their reviews were reprinted in the Canadian press, popular attention focussed on this aspect of the Group of Seven's work.

Dennis Reid, *The Group of Seven*, p.172.

understanding of the social import of the wilderness landscape experience, aestheticized in painting, for what Housser described as a spiritually-impoverished society.

The dialogue between humanity and nature that Brooker identified as the primary source of unity in national cultural identity harked directly back to the Group of Seven's claim, stated in May of 1920, "that an Art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people." This well-known quote is usually cited by historians of art in Canada to underscore the nationalist underpinnings of the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes. Brooker's yearbook raises the question of an alternative socialist reading of the Group's original purpose, wherein the reference to the Canadian people suggests an early commitment to the social value of art for the building of a national sense of community. In A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven, Housser identified the spirit of community cultivated within the Group of Seven as the source of social value in Canadian art. By 1926, and the invitation of an unprecedented ten invited contributors to the Group's 1926 annual exhibition, this spirit embraced a younger generation. Housser explained that the Group of Seven offered their art to a society in which a capitalist amassing of individual material wealth had created a "spiritual famine". Intensely critical of the prevailing economic order, Housser advised Canadians "to re-plant our fields so that we may harvest food for our souls as well as for our bodies."

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5 The Group of Seven, "Foreword", Group of Seven: Catalogue Exhibition of Paintings (Toronto: Art Museum of Toronto, May 7 - 27, 1920); reprinted in Dennis Reid, A Reconstruction of the First Exhibition of the Group of Seven, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1970), unpaginated.

communal well-being depended upon the appreciation of "the finer things of life, --love of nature, love of home, love of people as a whole,... and love of beauty for its own sake", above material wealth and national conceit.\(^7\)

The single isolated tree is a central feature of the most celebrated Group of Seven wilderness landscapes. Housser's discussion of these works marks the beginning, as will be seen, of the tree's evolution as a symbol of humanist values inspired by the struggle to build a dynamic and equitable society. The Group of Seven cultivated a socially-conscious basis for interpretation of the tree in their later exhibitions with the invitation of an increasing number of artists from Montreal and Toronto who chose the inhabited landscape as their subject. In these exhibitions, the Group of Seven established a significant opposition of the tree with the figure. By 1929, and Brooker's publication of the 1928-1929 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, the Group of Seven's accent on social consciousness had developed into a clear association of the tree with humanity and an awakening spirit of community in Canadian art and society.

Contrary to this interpretation, the popular success of the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes is usually described in terms of Canada's post-war status as a newly independent Dominion fast on the rise of an economic boom, founded in the aggressive development of Canada's natural resource industry. Paul Walton, for example, contends that the Group of Seven endowed Canada's "treasure-laden" Northland "with aesthetic interest, nationalism, mysticism, faith in progress, and confidence in the inexhaustible wealth of the wilderness."\(^8\) Douglas Cole links the Group of Seven's


interest in the Georgian Bay, Algonquin, Muskoka and Temagami regions with the growth of tourism in Ontario for "the upper and middle income urban elite". Both articles suggest that the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes were self-conscious essays on economic abundance and a new nationalist ethos of the 1920s. Between 1924 and 1929, mining and lumbering of the Precambrian Shield provided a major source of national revenue and assured Canada's entrance into the world marketplace. The coincidence of a surge in the export of natural resources and the selective promotion of wilderness landscapes is compelling. In light of more recent discussions of the 1920s as a decade of social ferment when impoverished and disenfranchised labouring classes first found a voice in socialist organizations, the question now asked is whether the Group of Seven sought personal advancement by picturing what was in essence the wealth of an elite and by promoting that picture through the National Gallery of Canada, an institutional hub of capital and political power. If the Group of Seven were elitist and self-serving, why then did they encourage social consciousness among the younger generation?

Following Canada's involvement in the First World War and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 as an autonomous Dominion, a distinct English-Canadian national identity began to emerge. The growth of national pride and confident optimism during the 1920s was due, argue historians, both to the great economic expansion of primary

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10 This question was raised by Lynda Jessup in "Prospectors, Bushwhackers, Painters: Anti-modernism and the Group of Seven", presented at the Policing the Boundaries of Modernity/ Anti-Modernism and Artistic Experience symposium, Art Gallery of Ontario, 26-28 April, 1996. Publication forthcoming.
industries and Canada's autonomous status in world affairs.¹¹ Less often emphasized is the fact that a concern for the responsibilities of self-government gave rise to fledgling socialist movements during the immediate post-war years of recession. Although the advent of the so-called "New Economic Era" in 1924 may have eased pressure for the creation of a dynamic and equitable society in Canada, the fact remained that this period of economic growth saw no tangible improvement in the lives of ordinary Canadians.¹² Rather, socialism steadily developed under the influence of a buoyant economic climate until the world market crash of 1929, when the failure of capitalism to provide a social safety-net for the Canadian people revived the cause of reform.¹³ Artists' recognition of the need to establish a more human and generous society that accompanied the rise of socialism during the 1920s should be considered in any discussion of the Group of Seven's leadership of the modern movement of painting in Canada. This is to say that the Group's wilderness landscapes are more complex expressions of


¹³ John Herd Thompson contends that interest in social reform lessened gradually following the years of post-war recession in the early 1920s. Government and business ostensibly resisted socialization on the basis of their belief that the exploitation of Canada's natural resources not only promised significant personal gain, but would boost both the economy and national identity by strengthening the country's position within the international marketplace. John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord, pp.76-80.
English Canadian national identity than originally believed. Social consciousness and a concern for the role of culture in serving the Canadian population developed alongside material interests in the exploitation of natural resources and Canada's competitive entrance into the world marketplace. If a link between socialism and capitalist materialism in Canadian politics may be found, Brooker's ideal of national and universal unity may be better understood as a logical outgrowth of the Group of Seven's early conviction in the social value of art for a nation. This link would also clarify Housser's assertion of the wilderness as a source of spiritual wealth, from which the national community might profit.

Social democracy, the main and distinctly Canadian brand of socialism entrenched within the ideological spectrum of Canadian political thought by the end of 1921, advocated a redistribution of capital wealth to achieve economic equity in Canadian society.\textsuperscript{14} Under the banner of "human rights before property rights", the social democratic movement promoted the cause of equitable reform by parliamentary means, rejecting the revolutionary path and dictates of the Communist International.\textsuperscript{15} In addition to the immediate support of those hardest hit by the post-war recession, namely the industrial working class and farmers, social democracy held a


\textsuperscript{15} Penner explains that social democracy emerged as the main and more or less distinctly Canadian ideology of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist opinion in English Canada as a result of the Russian Revolution, and Lenin's definition of Marxism, which split the Canadian socialists along fundamental lines. Revolutionary Socialism, or Communism, became the outlook of one section of the socialist movement; and following the adoption by the British Labour Party of a socialist platform in 1918, social democratic ideals evolved as the doctrine of anti-revolutionary socialist supporters. Norman Penner, \textit{The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis}, p.3.
tremendous appeal for artists and intellectuals who sought a position of influence for the humanities in national development. The inauguration of The Canadian Forum magazine in October of 1920 by a group affiliated with the University of Toronto drew a clear link between national identity and social democratic reform. Margaret Davidson argued this point in 1969, stating that the The Canadian Forum chose to promote only those artists whose work appeared sympathetic to the opinions of outspoken representatives of social democracy in Canada -- including J.S. Woodsworth, Frank Underhill, Frank Scott and Graham Spry. With University of Toronto professor Barker Fairley as its first literary editor, the magazine championed the Group of Seven as an inspirational model of collaborative action among socially-conscious Canadian artists, and promoted what Fairley felt to be the inherent social consciousness of their work.

In his first reviews of the Group of Seven for The Canadian Forum, Fairley focussed on the "human" concerns he found in the urban scenes and figural studies of Lawren Harris.

16 Canadian socialists established close political and organizational links with farmers and labourers. As Penner suggests, it was these links that "ultimately determined the character and ideological outlook of Canadian social democracy." Norman Penner, pp.171-172.

17 As described by J.L Granatstein and Peter Stevens, "No other periodical has regularly published prose and poetry of quality alongside articles of political and social commentary. And no other magazine has so consistently pressed for progressive policies and defended civil liberties, political dissent, and artistic freedom."

and Fred Varley. Between 1921 and 1928, at least one Harris urban scene appeared in every volume of The Canadian Forum, and while the majority of these were decorative pen drawings of Victorian houses in Toronto, two others appeared distinctly socialist in tenor. Slums and Shadows appeared in the September 1921 issue (fig.1), and Glace Bay (fig.2), a pen drawing reproduced in the July 1925 issue, reveal that Harris sought ways in which to express his concern for the welfare of humanity. John Ruskin provided a ready resource, as did William Morris, the leading light of the British Arts and Crafts Movement.

Ruskin and Morris

The writings of both Ruskin and Morris on the role of art in social progress were familiar to members of the Group of Seven. Arthur Lismer and Fred Varley, the two members of the Group of Seven born in Sheffield, England, were well aware of Ruskin's appeal for the place of art in social reform. Michael Tooby argues that the Group of Seven's writings occasionally bear close resemblance to those of Ruskin, including their statement from the first 1920 catalogue, "...the greatness of a country depends upon three things: 'its Words, its Deeds, and its Art'." In addition to Fors

19 Of particular interest to Fairley were Varley's war pictures, which "set down what human beings feel and think about the war in its deepest, least political, least topical aspects." What frustrated Fairley, on the other hand, was the Group's overwhelming interest by the middle of the decade in the wilderness landscape. Davidson notes that Fairley had hoped for clearer reference to "human nature and human society". Margaret Davidson, "A New Approach to the Group of Seven", p.13.

20 Tooby quotes Ruskin's Modern Painters, vol.5, part 4, chapter 9 for comparison with the Group of Seven. Ruskin, records Tooby, stated: "Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts; -- the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy one is the
Clavigera, his monthly personal newsletter addressed to the "workmen and labourers of England", Ruskin promoted the practical application of art through the Guild of St. George, a branch of which was established in Sheffield in 1878. Morris followed Ruskin with a vision of essential unity between art, craft, design and utility with life, politics and the worker's creation of a utopian "Society of Equals". From Ruskin and Morris came the idea of the artist as a creative labourer and natural partner of the skilled worker whose products, seen everywhere in society, manifest the character and spiritual strength of humanity.

Harris arguably found inspiration in Ruskin's description of the bonds of suffering, poverty and decay "nobly endured by unpretending strength of heart" by both artists and workers. As a result, he could see beauty in Slums and Shadows, a scene he discovered in the Ward district of Toronto. Ruskin, arguably, provided Harris with a basis for that "new psychological dimension" identified by Jeremy Adamson in his study of the artist's urban scenes of the early 1920s.


Harris, writes Adamson, "raises moral questions about the human condition; they document his state of mind and the philosophic values he held at the time." The place of empathy in aesthetic experience, stemming from the artist's innate appreciation for the parallel between his craft and that of the worker, is calculated in Glace Bay where Harris exchanged the foreground trees pictured in Slums and Shadows with a mother and her children standing in front of their mining town tenement. The exchange replaces the ominous shadow of life cast by the trees over the otherwise empty slum neighbourhood with a pointed reminder of everyday life for a miner's family.

In the larger oil, Miners' Houses, Glace Bay of c.1925 (fig.3), painted four years after a sketching trip to Nova Scotia in 1921, Harris leaves the foreground open providing an unobstructed view of three neat rows of company-built houses. He raises the centre row along a landscape ridge to create the impression of a mountain range over which filters dramatic rays of light. The setting is reminiscent of a rugged wilderness landscape triumphantly tamed by the worker. The effect parallels Ruskin's description of the sublime in nature. In the presence of a mountainous landscape, Ruskin wrote: "this mountain gloom... weighs so strongly upon the human heart that in all time hitherto, as we have seen..., there also are manifested most clearly the terror of God's wrath, and the inevitableness of His power." Harris finds spiritual omnipotence in the set of Glace Bay's barely civilized wilderness. Social consciousness blends with aesthetic experience in the sublime presence of a labouring


community. The pattern their lives and work imprint on the
landscape is a spiritual revelation of humanity's essential
strength.

Arthur Lismer's Habitant Interior (fig. 4), a pen drawing
reproduced in the December 1925 issue of The Canadian Forum,
gives a candid glimpse of life inside a rural Quebec home.
The scene is a lively family meal in a simple domestic
interior. A window looks out onto a gentle rural landscape
where a small cluster of houses surround a parish church with
its characteristic steeple. Lismer's juxtaposition of the
habitant interior, full of hand-crafted objects of daily use,
and a neatly civilized landscape suggest his admiration for
the artistry of the habitants' sensitive control of
environment. The farming families of rural Quebec, according
to Lismer's presentation, live in harmonious dialogue with
nature and, as the church suggests, pay respect to its
supremacy. The association of art, craft, design and utility
with life that Lismer captures underscores Morris' broader
comparison of the artist with the artisan and labouring
worker. 27

Edwin Holgate, the Montreal painter who joined the Group
of Seven in 1930 on the basis of his achievement of a close
and sympathetic association with the Toronto artists,
introduced the lumberjack into the equation of urban worker,
miner, and habitant as a sculptor of community spirit in the
Canadian landscape. In a woodcut reproduced for the September
1925 issue of The Canadian Forum (fig. 5), Holgate identifies
the lumberjack's skilled interweaving of human order into the
rugged wilderness by highlighting a foreground pattern of

27 The association is implicit within Morris' statement, as
quoted above: "Art is... especially the expression of man's
pleasure in the deeds of the present: in his work."
William Morris, "The Worker's Share of Art" Commonweal (April
1885); as quoted in Nicholas Pearson, "The Unacceptable Morris",
William Morris Today (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts,
1984), p. 87.
The lumberjack, like an artist, is profoundly aware of the beauty and utility of nature. Harris' *Slums and Shadows* and Glace Bay, Lismer's *Habitant Interior* and Holgate's *Lumberjack* are idealistic images of humanity's power to shape the landscape and to live harmoniously within it.

For Group of Seven member J.E.H. MacDonald, Paul Bunyan -- the mythical lumberjack of superhuman strength first described in late nineteenth-century Canadian folklore -- manifests the mystique this power held for the artist as for the worker who laboured in the wilderness landscape. In *Paul Bunyan Takes an Evening Stroll in Algoma*, included in the January 1927 issue of *The Canadian Forum* (fig. 6), MacDonald reveals that his appreciation for the Algoma region of Ontario he painted in *Solemn Land* of 1921 (fig. 7) stemmed from a confident belief in humanity's ability to take control of the landscape and to harvest its resources for the building of material and spiritual community wealth. The idea that artist and labourer worked in unison for the balanced development of Canada's material and spiritual wealth was a primary point of discussion for artists and intellectuals who expressed their views in *The Canadian Forum*.

J.S. Woodsworth, a leader of the Social Gospel Movement, promoted just such a balance in his call for recognition of "the spirit of the new day -- a passion for justice -- a reaching out toward new ideals of brotherhood."  Like the

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28 Ian Thom records that Holgate's *The Lumberjack*, a woodcut of 1924, grew out of his direct observation of the people and landscape of the Laurentians during summers spent at Lac Tremblant Nord. The print was first exhibited in 1924 at the Art Association of Montreal.


29 Penner quotes this excerpt from a series of articles Woodsworth published between 1918 and 1920 to establish the importance of the Social Gospel Movement for the growth of social democracy and a Marxist ideal of equality for all people irrespective of social class and education.
artisan who laboured in the spirit of "brotherhood" for the benefit of the community, the Group of Seven set the example for a "brotherhood" of painters who functioned collaboratively for aesthetic revelation of the character and spiritual strength of humanity. This was the basis of Housser's claim that the story of the Group of Seven was "not so much the story of an art movement as of the dawn of a consciousness of a national environment which to-day, is taking a most definite form in the life of the nation." Housser's contention that the wilderness landscape was most evocative of national spiritual growth derived from his pursuit of theosophical truths with which Harris had also become involved. It was theosophy, furthermore, that led Brooker to an identification of the figure in the landscape as the first sign of national and universal unity in the 1928-1929 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*.

**Theosophy**

Theosophy complemented the demand for the integration of art with social reform espoused in the writings of Ruskin and Morris and introduced by the Group of Seven with their initial claim "that an Art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people." Following the example of the Theosophical Society of the United States, formed in 1875, the Toronto Theosophical Society, of which both Housser and Harris were prominent members, fostered a belief in spiritual brotherhood synthesizing world religions.

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to arrive at a vision of universal "oneness" of being for which nature provided symbolic testimony. Harris' "Revelation of Art in Canada" published in The Canadian Theosophist in 1926, the same year that Housser's A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven appeared, argues for the artist's specialized ability to unveil symbols of spiritual truth in nature, linking this gift to the artisan's liberation of form from the rough materials of the land. For Harris, however, the painter is more spiritually-gifted than the artisan. Under the influence of theosophy, Harris and Housser defended painting as the primary medium not only of "Canadian" art, but of all the arts in the revelation of a harmonious spiritual union with the Divine. Proof came with the Société Anonyme International Exhibition of Modern Art, held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in April of 1927. Out of all the works in the exhibition, Piet Mondrian's Clarification I was chosen for reproduction in the May 1927 issue of The Canadian Forum (fig. 8). Harris unquestionably saw this work

32 Reid records that previous to 1923, when Harris joined the Toronto Theosophical Society, he was a member of the International Theosophical Society. Dennis Reid, Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren S. Harris, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), p.10.


34 The ideal of balance was implicit in the caption that accompanied Mondrian's Clarification I: "The simplicity of this painting is so great that many people fail to realize the beauty of the choices of both black and white, as related to each other.... So delicate is this relationship, and the variations of its lines, that only a master could conceive and render it." Catalogue of the Société Anonyme Exhibition; as quoted in The Canadian Forum 7 (May 1927), p.243.

Dennis Reid points to the relative ease with which Mondrian's painting could be reproduced in black and white for The Canadian Forum by comparison, for example, to a Kandinsky. In the Catalogue of the Exhibition of the International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme, however, (printed
as an exemplary model of the painter's vision of truth in nature reduced to an essential abstract language of form.\textsuperscript{35} The most satisfying of abstract paintings in the Société Anonyme exhibition, as Harris described in his May 1927 article "Modern Art and Aesthetic Reactions" for \textit{The Canadian Forum}, "were directly created from an inner seeing and conveyed a sense of order in a purged, pervading vitality that was positively spiritual."\textsuperscript{36}

If \textit{Clarification I} demonstrated the modern artist's superior insight into spiritual truth in nature why then did Harris not adopt nor encourage abstraction in Canadian painting? Peter Larisey offers a prohibitive view of Harris as an artist dedicated to the creation of a landscape-based nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{37} Although Harris certainly appreciated Mondrian's vital expression of universal "oneness" of being, the 1927 Société Anonyme exhibition did not establish abstraction as the pre-eminent expression of spiritually-

by the Art Gallery of Toronto), Kandinsky's \textit{Gaiety} is reproduced, (page 2), not Mondrian's \textit{Clarification I}, (catalogue no.75). Whatever the reproduction problems, it may be argued that Mondrian's work served especially well as an example of harmonious order and balance witnessed by the clairvoyant modern painter.

\textsuperscript{35} Harris, notes Dennis Reid, was the only Canadian member of the Société Anonyme. "[I]t was only as a result of his efforts that this radical exhibition of international modern art was shown in Toronto." Dennis Reid, \textit{Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren S. Harris}, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), p.15.

\textsuperscript{36} Lawren Harris, "Modern Art and Aesthetic Reactions", \textit{The Canadian Forum} 7 (May 1927), p.240.

\textsuperscript{37} Larisey argues, "This was an aspect of Harris' artistic life not paralleled by the experiences of Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian. Although each of them was involved in a struggle between the avant-garde and the conservatives, they were painting in countries where there were long-standing artistic traditions." Peter Larisey, \textit{Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris's Work and Life -- An Interpretation} (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), p.50.
enlightening art in Canada. According to a review published in The Canadian Forum in May of 1930, abstraction was an "unnatural" form of art expression for this country.\(^\text{38}\) With the notable exception of Bertram Brooker, whose one-man show of abstract paintings opened in January 1927 at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, (Brooker, Housser, Harris, Lismer, Jackson, and MacDonald were all Club members), modern art in Canada tracked the course set by the 1926 Group of Seven exhibition wherein a comprehensive integration of art with social reform and spiritual enlightenment found its richest expression in boldly-handled compositions of distinctively Canadian subjects. The mix of wilderness landscapes, rural and urban views, and figural paintings gathered from an increasing number of invited contributors in the late exhibitions of the Group established representation as the aesthetic language most suited to a national vision of the unifying spirit of community gathering among Toronto painters. The Canadian environment, described by the Group of Seven as "the most potent stimulus to Canadian creative genius" in their introduction to the 1926 exhibition, by definition united images of the wilderness and civilized landscape along the first steps towards a humanist faith in the boundless potential of humanity to share in the collective experience of life.\(^\text{39}\) It was these first steps that ultimately led to the emergence of the humanist aesthetic in Canadian art and to artists' clarification of the association between art, as a medium of spiritual expression, and the circumstance of universal or common experience in everyday life.

In the 1926 exhibition of the Group of Seven, a dualistic


concern for community and spirituality found expression in unlikely pairs of images. Harris' Miners' Houses, Glace Bay and Lake Superior (fig.9), for example, both refer to an ideal union of the individual with the universal symbolized by "the white ray of pure truth" identified by Adamson in his study of the artist's adoption of theosophical beliefs. In Miners' Houses, Glace Bay, the community rises in unity to receive spiritual guidance from enlightening rays of sun. In Lake Superior, a foreground grouping of three trees establishes a theosophical triune of matter, mind, and spirit. Harris aligns house and tree as symbols of community and spirituality essential to the progress of civilization. By his revelation of their association, Harris serves as a social and spiritual guide, benefitting society in the same way as Dr. Salem Bland, a key representative of the Social Gospel Movement in Toronto whose portrait Harris painted in 1925. In composition, Dr. Salem Bland (fig.10) is close to Miners' Houses, Glace Bay and North Shore, Lake Superior (fig.11) in its presentation of a central form rising in a glow of light through the middle of a pictorial field.

Although it was not included in the 1926 exhibition, North Shore, Lake Superior, the last of a series of Lake Superior canvasses Harris produced between 1921 and 1926, is a pivotal work that collapses associations to community and spirituality on the single isolated tree. When Housser argued in 1926 that the wilderness landscapes were not literal depictions of the country, but spiritually-enlightened aesthetic perfections that would free Canadians "from the hypnotic trance of a purely industrial and commercial ideal", he voiced Harris' visual play of house and tree expanded in the larger body of Group of Seven's paintings and graphic

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works. 41

Lismer's Quebec Village in the 1926 Group of Seven exhibition indicated that theosophy provided an immediate link between social consciousness and spiritual enlightenment (fig.12). The aura surrounding the church in Lismer's painting derives from Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater's Thought-Forms, a theosophical text first published in the United States in 1901, demonstrating the clairvoyant's perception of spiritual reality behind the physical matter of earthly existence. 42 Lismer's perception of an aura surrounding the parish church recalls Besant and Leadbeater's illustration of thought-forms produced by music. Plate M from Besant and Leadbeater's Thought-Forms shows a church engulfed in an aura of uplifting spiritual revelation produced by the performance of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words No.9 (fig.13). 43 Like Harris, Lismer saw himself as a guide able to perceive truths about humanity as clearly as the clairvoyant. 44 The truth Lismer witnessed, moreover, was the

41 Fred Housser, A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven, p.156.


43 See: Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, Thought-Forms (London and Banaras: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1905), Plate M.


44 Tooby demonstrates that Lismer's interest in theosophy dates to his early years in Sheffield, where he heard Annie Besant lecture. Theosophy, adds Tooby, found its way into the
intrinsic beauty of humanity coming together in the spirit of community. The church marks a focal point for this spirit that extends over the landscape in the order and pattern of the neatly tilled farmlands.

Quebec Village is close in conception to Habitant Interior with respect to the artist's admiration for the character and spirit of humanity manifest in the artistry of rural labouring life. Lismer sees what Housser described as "An interrupted flow and contact between the artist and his subject...."45 "These pictures...", stated Housser idealistically, "depict old and settled communities of home-loving folk where the strain of life is eased by a simple faith."46 Housser was referring to Jackson, for whom the rural Quebec landscape was a constant subject of aesthetic contemplation, but the idea works equally well for Lismer. According to Housser, circulation of rural Quebec landscapes throughout Canada would prompt national "brotherly feeling". By 1926, spiritual enlightenment, social consciousness and national unity were allied in Canadian art.

Order and Pattern

Housser's description of the "Spread of the Movement" in his Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven together with the Group of Seven's invitation of ten invited contributors to their 1926 exhibition fortified the foundations for a contemporary art geared to coincident discussions and preaching of the Unitarian Church in Sheffield which Lismer attended.

Michael Tooby, Our Home and Native Land: Sheffield's Canadian Artists -- Arthur Lismer, Elizabeth Nutt, Stanley Royle, Frederick Varley and their contemporaries, unpaginated.


cultivation of national and universal unity. What influence did the Group exercise over young painters then gathering in Toronto and in whom they instilled a dualistic concern for community and spirituality? The 1928 Group of Seven exhibition brought together Brooker, Comfort, Schaefer, Lowrie Warrener, Yvonne McKague, (McKague married Fred Housser in 1935), Pegi Nicol, and George Pepper. Exhibiting together for the very first time, this was a strong coterie of artists who promised to rise alongside Holgate, Prudence Heward, Mabel Lockerby, Mabel May and Sarah Robertson of Montreal to become colleagues rather than students of the Group of Seven.47

This was the second Group of Seven exhibition in which Pepper and the lesser-known Toronto painters John Alfsen and Lowrie Warrener participated. Alfsen, a figural painter who moved to Toronto from Michigan in 1915, studied at the Ontario College of Art (OCA) with Warrener, Pepper, and Schaefer during the early 1920s. While Alfsen maintained a steady career as a painter in Toronto, and was hired to teach at the OCA in 1929, Warrener withdrew from the Toronto art scene before the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933. Ties between the four artists were close at mid-decade. During the summers of 1926 and 1927 Schaefer, Pepper, and Warrener travelled to the French and Pickerel Rivers of

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47 Schaefer, Warrener, and Pepper studied formally under Group of Seven members who taught at the Ontario College of Art during the early 1920s. These members included: Lismer (1919-1927), MacDonald (1921-1932), Jackson (1924-1926), and Varley (1925-1926). McKague also studied at the College but by 1920 was an Assistant Instructor, and was promoted to Associate Instructor in 1930. Brooker and Comfort knew the Group through Toronto's Arts and Letters Club. Pegi Nicol, on the other hand, developed ties with the Group of Seven through shared friends and acquaintances, including National Gallery of Canada director Eric Brown.
northern Ontario. The resultant work embodied a quickening of community spirit among the younger generation, recognized by Pepper who submitted portraits of his companions painting in the north country to the 1928 Group of Seven exhibition.

Schaefer's Our Cabin, Mani Hahn's Island, no.19 (fig.14) painted in July of 1926 during the artists' first trip north, (likely the work entitled The Log Cabin in the 1927 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition), clearly owed to Warrener in the heavy use of black outline, simplified form and attention to decorative pattern. Although not altogether successful by comparison to Warrener's Happy Cottage of 1926 (fig.15), The Log Cabin nevertheless reveals that Schaefer was beginning to see his role as a revealer of order harmoniously felt in the presence of a civilized landscape. In Happy Cottage, Warrener conveys a dynamic parallel between the house and tree as vital symbols of spiritual accord between humanity and nature that only the artist could make manifest. Dead Jack Pine (fig.16), one of two works Schaefer submitted to the 1928 Group of Seven exhibition, presents the single isolated tree, notably black outlined.

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48 John Flood records that Pepper, Warrener and Alfsen worked and studied drawing together in Antwerp and Paris following their graduation from the OCA in 1924. Alfsen did not accompany Pepper, Schaefer and Warrener, however, to the French and Pickerel Rivers during the summers of 1926 and 1927, (stopping each time to visit with Emmanuel Hahn, a sculpture instructor at the OCA). John Flood, "Lowrie Warrener", Northward Journal no.25 (1982), pp.11-12.

49 Warrener believed, as John Flood quotes from an interview of 1930: "The aim of the true artist is the uncovering of the aesthetic. This can only be accomplished by those who are not afraid of public opinion, seeking only for beauty and truth", bears the stamp of Harris' alliance of beauty and truth with "the meaning of life" derived from the revelation of theosophical "oneness". Warrener's work, writes Flood, "suggests that he was riding the zeitgeist of sophisticated dogma formulated by Harris and the Theosophists, [although] his inclination was to remain an outsider, not join in." John Flood, "Lowrie Warrener", Northward Journal no.25 (1982), pp.18, 28.
which is an obvious reference to the celebrated wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven and to Tom Thomson whose *Jack Pine* of 1916-17 prefigured the Group's subsequent development of the tree in their art (fig.17). Schaefer's choice of the tree and his exaggeration of the stark pattern it imposes on the landscape may be explained by the fact that for him the tree resonated with associations of social and spiritual consciousness. His *Burnt Island* (*Pickerel River*), a pen drawing reproduced in *The Canadian Forum* in November of 1926 is a comparable image of the tree as a symbol of the spiritual energy of life experienced in the Canadian wilderness (fig.18). The tree in *Burnt Island* rises from the ashes of a destroyed Precambrian landscape to acknowledge the vital cycle of life, death and regrowth. Schaefer applies his skill as an artist to the revelation of this cycle; the water flows with exaggerated linearity, the Precambrian rock is solid and massive, and the tree bends resiliently to the force of nature.

Comfort, in his *Prairie Road* of 1925 (fig.19, labelled *Out West* in the 1928 Group of Seven show), shares with Schaefer and Warrener an interest in the artist's ability to crystallize the fundamental order and pattern of life in nature. The painting depicts a road near Winnipeg, (where


Comfort lived until 1925 when he made a permanent move to Toronto), in a vast prairie landscape with a brilliantly coloured expanse of sky. Evidence of human settlement is meagre, but the rows of fence posts, telegraph poles and distant grain elevators nevertheless introduce rhythmic divisions in a flat panorama of land. The pattern of human settlement seems to follow naturally from the order of nature.

McKague reverses Comfort’s ratio of land to sky in her painting of Cobalt, a mining town in the Precambrian Shield (fig.20). In Cobalt, shown alongside Comfort’s Prairie Road in 1928, only a thin strip of sky relieves a mountain of densely stacked houses. The image recalls Lismer’s lively conception of Copper Mining Town, Ontario from the 1924 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition (fig.21). McKague delights, as did Lismer, in the character of brightly painted houses. Cobalt is closer to Harris in its appeal to the sublime strength of community. By comparison to Miners’ Houses, Glace Bay, however, the sublime in McKague’s is less a matter of omnipotent spirituality than the overwhelming spiritual strength of a community formed in arduous labour of the land. McKague binds the mass of detail together into a mountain of houses by weaving colour, form and line together within a circle of telegraph poles. The poles, moreover, are links in the chain of communication that transform a group of individuals into a closely-knit community.

Comfort and McKague are sensitive to the dialogue between humanity and nature initiated during settlement of a wilderness landscape. Both artists were aware of the need for adaptation, when the essential character of the land is assessed and met with equitable human order and pattern. As artists, they ostensibly had a special ability to reveal the resultant design of civilization this dialogue produced. Comfort, McKague, Schaefer and Warrener did not separate themselves from the skilled labourer who determined the imprint a society made on the land, as it was he and she who
built the house and the community.

Holgate's Lumberjack of 1924 (fig.22) and A.Y. Jackson's Indian Home of 1926 (fig.23), both in the 1928 exhibition of the Group of Seven, reinforce the idea that artists admired of the skill involved in civilizing the wilderness landscape. Holgate emphasizes strength of character. The figure of the lumberjack looks squarely ahead, gripping the staff of his logging pole with grim determination and confidence in his craft. Behind him is that pattern of logs Holgate embellished in his woodcut of 1924. The distinctive order and pattern the lumberjack imposes on the landscape is recast in Jackson's Indian Home as humanity's spiritual communion with nature.

In 1926, Jackson had just returned from a summer sketching trip taken with Holgate and Marius Barbeau, an ethnologist for the National Museum of Canada, to the Skeena River Gitksan villages in the far north-west of British Columbia. Intrigued by Barbeau's study of Tsimsian culture, Jackson developed an appreciation for the totem pole as a spiritual link between humanity and nature. Four totem poles appear to the far right of Indian Home where they bridge the upper and lower areas of the composition. As a bridge, or spiritual link, the totem poles reveal the interrelationship of community and spirituality otherwise felt in the repetition of the peaked roof of the home in the silhouette of a distant mountain.

Brooker seems to have been completely engrossed by the idea that the artist's skill could clarify a spiritual connection between humanity and nature. Sounds Assembling of 1928 (fig.24) in the Group of Seven exhibition is theosophic in its resemblance to a thought-form and in its emphasis upon Brooker's clairvoyant vision of pure experience. This painting was the only abstract in the show and the only work to insist that unity in art as in life bears ultimate comparison to universal "oneness" of being. Then at the height of his interest in theosophy, Brooker approached
compositional design as an exercise in cosmic unity achieved through a synaesthetic perception of extra-physical links between colours, musical tones and the vibrations of the human soul. In its widest application, which Brooker certainly understood from Wassily Kandinsky's Concerning the Spiritual in Art, the affinity of colour, sound, and feeling echoed the essential order and pattern of universal life. Kandinsky explained:

since Nature also plays on the strings of our soul, setting them in vibration... it is up to the artist to visualize the Spiritual in matter with the means at his disposal, by colours and forms that derive their efficacy from being extensions of the higher unity into the material world.

In Sounds Assembling, convergences of line, colour and

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52 Kandinsky's Concerning the Spiritual in Art does not appear in the list of Brooker's personal library. Nevertheless, Brooker undoubtedly knew of it through Harris, who often passed along texts to fellow artists. Brooker's "The Seven Arts", a critical review of artistic trends and concerns written specially for the associated newspapers of The Southam Publishing Company from 1928 to 1930, suggests that Brooker's study of theosophy stemmed primarily from his interest in creative imagination, expressed by the artist in terms of design, and superior in achievement to craft. Among Brooker's surviving theosophical texts are two published in 1920 by the United Lodge of Theosophists in Los Angeles: Mahabharata The Bhagavad-Gita, and Voice of the Silence and Other Chosen Fragments from the Book of Golden Precepts. Related to his theosophical studies are several more general texts on aesthetics, in addition to essays on Goethe, who laid claim to the artist's unique ability to perfect the secret laws of nature in the creation of "Beauty", and Schopenhauer, who described the artist's unbiased communication of archetypal ideas as permanent essential forms of the world and all its phenomena. See: "List of Personal Library of Bertram Brooker" and The Seven Arts clippings, Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box 8 Folder 6, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

form within an infinite network of celestial vanishing points serves the useful purpose of raising awareness of harmony as an essential condition of unity. The implication was that the order and pattern of the Canadian environment must elicit a comparable experience of harmony if the country were to progress towards a dynamic and equitable state of union. Within a year, Brooker began to visualize this union in terms of a dialogue between humanity and nature expressed between the figure and tree. This was the visualization of a dualistic concern for community and spirituality he expounded in the 1928-1929 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada.

The Figure in the Landscape

Prudence Heward's Girl on a Hill (fig. 25) introduces a series of paintings Brooker chose for reproduction in the yearbook. The image marks a pivotal moment in the convergence of landscape and figural painting in Canada for the advancement of a socially conscious modern movement of painting. Heward's Girl on a Hill was awarded the first Willingdon Arts Competition prize in 1929 because it represented a radical departure from the wilderness landscape.¹⁴ The "strength of construction" and "remarkable simplicity" of Heward's figural composition, as noted by an American reviewer, suggested that the modern movement of Canadian painting fostered by the Group of Seven now represented a balance between the two traditional themes -- landscape and figure, and the two major centres -- Toronto and

¹⁴ The Willingdon Arts Competition was instituted in 1928 by the Governor General of Canada, Lord Willingdon "with a view to furthering and encouraging the cultivation of the arts and letters in Canada... The competition was limited to British subjects, resident in Canada. In every class [music, literature, painting, and sculpture] the competitions were "open", that is to say, amateurs, students, and professionals were all eligible." "Results are given -- Willingdon Arts 1929 Competitions" Ottawa Morning Journal (May 3, 1930).
Montreal. 55

Heward's *Girl on a Hill* cast the series of reproductions that followed in supporting roles, carefully gathering together works from the 1926 and 1928 exhibitions of the Group of Seven with previously unrelated images to suggest the all-inclusive significance of the figure and the landscape as a prevailing theme in contemporary painting. The inclusion of Harris' *North Shore, Lake Superior* and Lismer's *Evening Silhouette, Georgian Bay* (fig. 26), (from the 1928 Group of Seven exhibition), confirmed the association of the tree with humanity that issued from the alliance of spiritual enlightenment, social consciousness and national unity. Harris and Lismer's isolation of the tree in the wilderness landscape identifies the struggle of these artists to promote unity in national cultural identity. Heward's juxtaposition of a seated figure with a pair of trees, through which a winding road eases along an endless journey, enlivens the harmonious union of human and natural order and pattern.

Among Harris' *North Shore, Lake Superior*, Jackson's *Indian Home*, and Emily Carr's *Totems, Kitwancool* of 1928 (fig. 27), (exhibited in the 1929 OSA exhibition), a new chord of solidarity for the association of the figure and tree rang clearly through the yearbook reproductions of contemporary Canadian art. Carr's work had come to national attention only in 1927, when Eric Brown and Marius Barbeau organized the exhibition "Canadian West Coast Art" in which the work of selected contemporary artists was shown alongside traditional objects of northwest coast indigenous peoples. The general idea of relating modern and so-called "primitive" art in Canada was to establish the artist as a spiritual and social guide in society. Fascinated by the stylistic correlation

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between modern painting and objects of northwest coast aboriginal cultures, Barbeau ventured to suggest "that the inspiration for both kinds of art expression sprang from the same fundamental background... but [expressed] in terms consonant with their own traditions." 56

Pepper's Totem Poles, Kitwanga of 1929 (fig. 28), painted following a trip to the Skeena River with Warrener the previous summer, conveys the younger generation of Toronto painters' attraction to an ideal of aesthetic dialogue with the environment. 57 The series of five totem poles pictured in Pepper's work guard the village, casting their protective shadows back across the houses. On the sunlit surface of the poles, the carving is richly detailed, radiating the symbolic strength of the animal forms which face across the Skeena to the expanse of landscape beyond. Pepper appears sensitive to the carver's essential role in the Kitwanga village as the bearer of a spiritual knowledge that is crucial to the survival of community. The Kitwanga artisan exemplified an idealistic union of art and life emergent among the young Toronto painters then gathering around the Group of Seven.

The Group of Seven's precedent for raising widespread aesthetic awareness of the Canadian environment encouraged the Toronto painters to consider the combination of modernist formal design and representational motif for aesthetic revelation of community spirit. This was the basis for the inclusion of McKague's Cobalt in the yearbook, where formal elements of design build the characteristic pattern of settlement McKague found in the small mining community of the rugged Precambrian Shield. In Houses by Gordon Webber (fig. 29), the youngest of the Toronto painters represented in


57 Pepper's Totem Poles, Kitwanga and Fred Varley's Vera were both awarded the Willingdon Arts Competition prize of 1930.
the yearbook, a central focus on the grid of streets and yards determines the basic experience of urban existence. By opening the centre of the composition to an abstract pattern of colour and form to evoke the experience of urban order, Webber anticipates the balance of tightly-structured formal design and familiar subject matter subsequently achieved by the Toronto community of painters in their civilized landscapes during the mid-1930s. Webber's mapping of the physical structure of the city with the materials of painterly expression identifies him as an artist concerned with his place in society. As a member of Toronto's Art Students' League, formed in 1927 largely through the urging of Lismer, Webber exemplified the community-minded young painter fostered by the leaders of the modern movement of painting in Toronto. Lismer, Jackson, and Harris, regularly visited the League and offered their advice, as did Brooker and Yvonne McKague.

Out of a fluctuating membership of fifteen or so art students at the Ontario College of Art who joined the Art Students' League, only Gordon Webber and Isabel McLaughlin are remembered for their painting, while a few of the others made their mark as art educators following in the footsteps of Lismer's innovative work at the Art Gallery of Toronto (AGT). All members of the League were encouraged to become instructors in Lismer's Saturday morning children's classes at the AGT, begun in 1928. Lismer also recommended that League members become volunteers in the University Settlement, a house located at the corner of Adelaide and Peter streets, in the heart of one of Toronto's manufacturing districts. The

58 The Art Students' League established a permanent meeting place in the Art Gallery of Toronto's Craft House at 4 Grange Road in September of 1927.

59 The University Settlement was founded by Sir Robert Falconer in 1910. Falconer, who was president of the University of Toronto through the teens and 1920s, actively cultivated
house operated as an "outpost" of the University of Toronto and was run by a small resident staff and corps of student volunteers who distributed aid to the needy and ran a variety of social and educational clubs. The spirit of true co-operation on which the League is founded prepared its members for community involvement and artistic engagement in everyday academic involvement in the postwar reconstruction of Canadian society. His 1920 publication Idealism in National Character was his first major pronouncement on the need for a reform that was independent of Marxist, communist and, especially, social gospel ideals. He urged for a politically neutral but socially active university as an agent of reform. The university, claimed Falconer, was a "stabilizing force in any society". In addition to attracting war veterans to the University of Toronto with interest-free loans, Falconer actively supported the University Settlement.


60 The aim of the University Settlement, repeated with little alteration in the "University of Toronto Students' Handbook" for the years 1929-1930 to 1939-40, was to provide professors, students and volunteers with the opportunity "[to] share their time and ability with those whose environment has largely deprived them of the kind of life for which the University stands... [and] at the same time [to] gain a knowledge at first hand of the way in which our present social and economic system works out in the lives of the great mass of our population -- a knowledge essential in any living system of education."


Cathy James documents the British Arts and Crafts precedent for Toronto's Settlement Houses, (there were six in total by 1914). "By 'settling' or living as neighbours in the city's working class communities," notes James, "the mostly female, middle-class residents and volunteers in these settlement houses aimed to provide practical assistance and an ideal of beauty and service. They hoped their efforts would humanize Anglo-Canadian society as a whole and bring about Morris' ideal world, in which beauty and necessity were in perfect harmony."

life outside the studio.\textsuperscript{61} The League replaced traditional emphasis on studio technique in formal academic training with regular informal meetings of artists and art students for discussion of the "relationship of Art to Life -- the essential idea of Art as being a quality of human consciousness, rather than professionalism, or commercialism."\textsuperscript{62} Their philosophy revived the aim of union in the representation of Canadian life pronounced by the first Toronto Art Students' League formed in 1886, of which J.E.H. MacDonald became a member.\textsuperscript{63}

When Harris reviewed the Art Students' League exhibition of 1929 held at Hart House, he was impressed by the vitality and originality of the work, including Webber's Houses. He did not single out Webber's painting for praise, however, or any other work in the show. "It is as though", wrote Harris:

\begin{quote}
this group of young folks had come together for the purpose of an inspiration only attainable in concert and above personal differences, and being moved by one unifying impulse, had achieved creative vision and recorded it in expressions individual to each... the spirit that has come to life in each of them will be decidedly effective in the land.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

Harris sensed a new basis for unity in contemporary art: artists' collective effort to express their individual experience of contemporary life. Experience took the form of order and pattern in art and, as a result, was decidedly


\textsuperscript{62} Art Students' League, "The Meaning of the Art Students' League", p.28.


\textsuperscript{64} Lawren Harris, "The Art Students League," \textit{The Canadian Forum} 9 (June 1929), p.303.
modern. The image remained representational because the focus was human experience and the imprint of humanity on the landscape. This was fundamentally different from the alternative universality of the mystic or divine. Harris' appraisal of the League exhibition helps explain the fundamental unity Brooker tried to reveal in his selection of reproductions for the yearbook.

The theme of the figure in a landscape set with Heward's Girl on a Hill served as a visual marker for an abstract concept of dialogue between humanity and nature struck by each of the artists. Heward, Harris, Lismer, Jackson, Carr, Pepper, Webber, and McKague, among all the other artists represented, stood as individuals under a universal umbrella of collective experience. Brooker's sense of unity in the artists' diverse expressions of contemporary life guided his selection of works, including his own Fugue (fig.30), one of a series of forty pen drawings. Fugue is appropriate coming from Brooker, who took responsibility for the yearbook's clarification of the larger picture of art in contemporary Canada. The fugue, as defined in music, refers to a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody, (the subject), is introduced by one part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts. As applied to interpretation of the yearbook reproductions, the dynamic of figure and tree was the subject, and contemporary life voiced by many individuals was the development interwoven behind. Altogether, the artists composed a polyphonic choir of many voices urging the progress of the modern movement of painting in Canada forward towards the civilized landscape.

Unity and Economic Depression

By the time of the yearbook's publication in 1929, the value of the artist in society was understood by painters in Toronto to be his or her ability to communicate the character and spiritual strength of humanity. By translating the order
and pattern of community settlement witnessed in the landscape into the formal language of compositional design, art and life began to approach a state of union, at least conceptually. Brooker promised more, however, alluding in the yearbook to the significant social benefit of an art that strengthened the common bond of human experience. Art might override linguistic, racial, economic and geographical barriers that divided a nation and peoples in general. In hindsight, the promise was naïve, but Brooker exuded the same confidence that the Group of Seven brought to their active promotion of art and art education in Canada from 1920.

When economic depression hit in 1929, and the population drew into a state of union against a common economic foe, any questions as to whether spirituality in art referred to anything other than humanity and community-mindedness were resolved. Brooker's dualistic vision of national and universal unity fell away from the twin peaks of the isolated wilderness tree and the rarified intellectual abstract. What remained was a solid middle ground of representation and form fused in the rendering of the civilized landscape.

The Depression functioned as a catalyst for the development of contemporary painting in Toronto towards the civilized landscape. In part, this was economic disaster pushing socialism into the forefront of Canadian politics and putting into question the capitalist overtones of the wilderness landscape as a subject of art. Literary critics writing for The Canadian Forum became increasingly suspicious of a one-dimensional definition of national culture. As early as 1926, warnings of the disastrous effects of nationalist exclusivity had begun to be published. "It is already clear", wrote one reviewer for the magazine, "that individual liberty and the tolerance which springs from humility and sweet reasonableness are rapidly declining in every country that
nourishes nationalism." In 1928, A.J.M. Smith of the new Montreal school of poets, (who included Frank Scott, a founding member of the League for Social Reconstruction), lobbied would-be cultural critics to raise public contempt for "He-man canadia [sic]... seasoned well with allusions to the Canada goose, fir trees, maple leaves, snowshoes, northern lights, etc." For the arts in Canada to become a true expression of national life, Smith believed the artist had to move beyond the narrow focus on the environment -- Canada's position in space -- to a consciousness of its position in time. The solution, in painting, was to focus more directly on humanity.

"Canadian Expressionism" was the term Jehanne Bietry Salinger used to identify figural work as the most advanced Canadian painting shown at the National Gallery of Canada's fifth annual exhibition of Canadian art in January of 1930. Salinger reserved her highest praise for Heward's Rollande of 1929 (fig.31), a work that blended the portrait and rural landscape in a smooth sculptural composition to produce a forceful impression of union between humanity and nature. Firmly rooted in the Group of Seven's earliest evocations of the union of art, craft, utility and design with life, Rollande signalled what Salinger envisaged as the intellectual and emotional crystallization of a national art expression in Canada. Figures stepped into the foreground of the landscape and the vanguard of Canada's established modern movement of painting. It was Holgate, however, exhibiting for the first time in 1930 as a member of the Group of Seven, who caught

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this moment of transition at its most provocative stage.

Holgate's *Nude in a Landscape* of circa 1930 appeared in both the Group of Seven exhibition and National Gallery of Canada *Annual Exhibition of Canadian Art* of that year (fig. 32).  

Humanity's imprint on the landscape latent in the Group of Seven's carefully wrought associations of the house, mountain, tree, figure and totem broke wide open with Holgate's glaring insertion of an academically-rendered nude into a boldly-sculpted wilderness landscape. What was the result? A rejection, so it appeared, of any esoteric reference to theosophy, and a departure from the decorative object-orientated focus of the arts and crafts.

Holgate's suggestion of the parallel structure of the body and the landscape internalizes the dialogue between humanity and nature previously sought in the outward appearance of the Canadian environment. As the Depression deepened its grip on the economy, the search for unity in national cultural identity took a decided step towards the cause of social reform and in so doing altered the context for interpretation of the Group of Seven's unflinching optimism in humanity's ability to shape the environment according to a nationalistic ambition. For the artist to have any impact on the creation of a dynamic and equitable society, it was not enough to place before the public examples of the union between art and life that existed apart from the current course of urban growth and development. A prevailing conviction that aesthetic experience was a positive and ultimately spiritually enlightening prospect precluded any interest in the portrayal of society's disastrous shortcomings. Artists' responsibility for the enlightenment

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68 Catalogue: *The Group of Seven*, (Toronto: Group of Seven, 1930), p. 7, catalogue no. 64. Exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in April of 1930; and *Annual Exhibition of Canadian Art*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1930), p. 10, catalogue no. 86. Unillustrated catalogue.
of society during economic depression redoubled interest in
order and pattern as universal qualities of humanity's imprint
on the landscape. What was now added, however, were
psychological arguments for the exigency of order and pattern
in human thought and emotion.

The Social Value of Art

Human psychology was a burgeoning and broadly influential
discipline in Canada during the 1920s, especially in Toronto
where Wilhelm Blatz and Edward Bott of the University of
Toronto forwarded its application to education. Both
psychologists were admirers of Lismer's children's art classes
begun at the AGT in 1927.69 Under the influence of
psychology, the social value of art and aesthetic experience
began to be understood in terms of the clarification and
pacification of thought and emotion. The suggestion was that
the artist plays a vital role in maintaining a kind of
psychological equilibrium in society, by training the mind to
seek out and to create order and pattern at every opportunity.

In the 1927 issue of the Ontario College of Art students'
annual Tangent, Lismer had written: "Art is like the life of
man, full of struggles, difficulties and suffering, and to

69 Lismer's work with children caught the attention of
University of Toronto psychology professors Wilhelm Blatz and
Edward Bott, who Lismer invited to give public lectures on art
appreciation at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Blatz, the more
famous of the two, founded the nursery school movement in
Canada. His St. George's School, which opened in 1925 as an
adjunct to the Psychology Department of the University of
Toronto, was one of the first of its kind in North America. In
1938, the School was officially recognized as the Institute of
Child Study.
For further reference, see: D.C. Williams, foreword to W.E.
Blatz, Human Security: Some Reflections (Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1966); and Jocelyn Motyer Raymond, The Nursery
World of Dr. Blatz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
shape it he must leave the highway and break new paths."

For Brooker and his friend LeMoine FitzGerald, the Winnipeg artist who was invited to become a member of the Group of Seven in 1932, (just before the Group's dissolution), no other theme captured the contemporary import of Lismer's metaphor better than a harmonious composition of figures in the landscape joined in the order and pattern of nature.

FitzGerald's *At Silver Heights* of 1931 (fig.33) depicts a figure standing in a grove of trees looking onto a pleasant sunny landscape. The trees are cropped in the composition so that only the trunks are visible. FitzGerald exaggerates the corporeality of the trunks by smoothly sculpting their surfaces and by composing their arrangement in a lively rhythm. The figure, a woman, supports herself against one tree in a relaxed pose that echoes the curvature of the trunks. Figure and trees sway to the same rhythm in perfect harmony. Brooker's *Figures in a Landscape* (fig.34), also of 1931, is a remarkably similar conception of harmonious union. The artists were friends and shared their aesthetic interests during the summer of 1930, which FitzGerald spent in Toronto.

Brooker's *Figures in a Landscape* is a composition of torsos, dramatically arranged in a triangular form centred within a boldly contoured wilderness landscape. So compelling is Brooker's rendering of flesh and physical presence that the painting was found to be offensive and removed by the staff of the AGT from the 1931 Ontario Society of Artists' exhibition. By his own admission, Brooker's switch to representation resulted in works which were "perhaps too realistic", at least initially. As he explained to FitzGerald, however, he hoped "to grow out of that to a bigger

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appreciation of form...."^2 Regardless, Brooker's introduction of a social dynamic in his juxtaposition of two figures in a landscape with trees marks a revealing point of comparison with FitzGerald's painting. Brooker's figures enter into a physical dialogue through which he reveals an intuitive appreciation for the community of being felt between individuals in a well-ordered and harmonious society.

Towards a humanist aesthetic

The spark of a new aesthetic left critics of the 1931 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition "with the hope that the few artists who compose the advance guard in Canada will soon rally and stir themselves to a fresh effort, away from the stifling atmosphere of those art societies which no longer represent the creative movement of art in this country."^3 "We can paint Northern Ontario in our sleep...", commented a reviewer for the Toronto weekly Saturday Night, "It is time to find a new subject and a new style which will require effort and reflection on the part of the painter."^4 Despite their continued efforts to broaden the scope of representation for promising young contemporary painters, the Group of Seven had lost their organizational zeal.

Reviews of the Group's 1931 exhibition unanimously declared their weakening artistic leadership as a group. Salinger reserved her strongest criticism for Harris, who "slowly retired to the sanctuary of an aristocratic spirituality where his understanding and aesthetic appreciation of human values suddenly froze... his heart

^2 Brooker to FitzGerald, 28 December 1929; as quoted in Dennis Reid, Bertram Brooker, p.14.


ceased to beat, and his rocks and his trees in their cold blue, green, or white garment did not seem to live any more."\textsuperscript{75} As a whole, commented another reviewer for \textit{The Canadian Forum}, the Group of Seven "lack life that comes from keeping their feet on the ploughed ground and eyes in the face of nature."\textsuperscript{76} Jackson's images of rural Quebec were more popular than ever, however, for these were compelling evocations of the shape of human presence within a distinctly Canadian landscape. Based on his success, the younger generation of painters could feel confident in the eventual ascendancy of their "new forms of expression, new ideas in the process of germination, [and] fresh emotions born from a renewed viewpoint."\textsuperscript{77}

Why did Salinger advise Brooker, Comfort, McKague, Pepper, and Carl Schaefer "to break away and gather together under a new society"?\textsuperscript{78} These were the artists who brought to the modern movement of painting a "feeling for the face of our country" deeply drawn in the early years of economic depression by the exigency of collaborative action for social reform.\textsuperscript{79} Jackson advocated the creation of a new national artists' organization to represent those currents of continuity and change that flowed from the Group of Seven and the Montreal painters to the younger generation of painters in Toronto. Coincidentally, interest in formalizing the ties that bound contemporary artists together in their exploration

\textsuperscript{76} Jehanne Bietry Salinger, "Comment on Art: The Group of Seven," \textit{The Canadian Forum}, 12 (January 1932), pp.142-143.


\textsuperscript{79} T.M., "Decline of the Group of Seven", p.144.
of the order and pattern of Canadian experience corresponded with the establishment of two new social democratic political organizations. In 1932, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) formed in Calgary, and its "brains trust", the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), formed in Toronto.\textsuperscript{80}

The CCF and LSR united various factions of the socialist movement that voiced common concerns across the country and operated in tandem for the realization of "a superior form of human organization which calls for a spirit of greater unselfishness and co-operation than animates the Capitalistic order."\textsuperscript{81} In English-speaking central Canada, the industrial heartland of the country, the LSR led the effort to popularize the socialist cause.\textsuperscript{82} Frank Underhill, a professor of history at the University of Toronto and an outspoken League representative, called readers of The Canadian Forum to action for the "common good", detailing plans for the reconstruction of a more humane and generous society.\textsuperscript{83} The young Toronto painters' pursuit of an art that clarifies and pacifies human thought and emotion through the composition of order and

\textsuperscript{80} In English-speaking central Canada, "the industrial heartland of the country", it was the League for Social Reconstruction, the first organization of social-democratic intellectuals in Canada, that led the effort to popularize the socialist cause. As described by Michiel Horn, "the league was overwhelmingly college-educated, urban, anglophone, and central Canadian."

\textsuperscript{81} Nicholas Ignatieff, "Is the C.C.F. a National Movement?", Canadian Comment, 2 (November 1933), p.5.


pattern experienced in the landscape complemented the humanist values espoused by the CCF and LSR in their plans to establish a new social order and economic pattern in Canada.

Literary critic Paul Kelly considered the parallel existence of order and pattern in art, society and human psychology in his discussion of Marxist criticism for *The Canadian Forum*. "It follows," argued Kelly in 1933, "that art is an expression of the general, or social consciousness", for as Marx claimed,

> It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but on the contrary it is their social existence which determines their consciousness.\(^8^4\)

In Toronto, the modern movement in painting and the social democratic movement in politics followed an analogous course of development toward an ideal balance of national and universal unity. The Group of Seven's post-World War One insistence upon the potential of culture to illuminate the character and spiritual strength of the national collective responded to the same spirit of community and social responsibility ignited in Charles Walter Peterson's 1919 publication *Wake Up, Canada!: Reflections on Vital National Issues*.\(^8^5\)

Peterson asked whether the First World War irrevocably threatened the future of democracy. His answer was no, as

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\(^8^4\) "When the critic applies the Marxian method to a cultural whole," explained Kelly, "its unity becomes at once apparent.... His method is far more inclusive than those generally employed in the explanation of artistic phenomena." Paul Kelly, "Art and Criticism: A Marxian Interpretation," *The Canadian Forum*, 13 (May 1933), p.295.

\(^8^5\) Peterson was active in both business and government; he was president of various printing and engraving companies in western Canada -- chief among them being the Western Printing and Lithographing Co. Ltd. --, he had a keen interest in agriculture, and was the Deputy Dominion Fuel Controller for Canada during the First World War.
long as every Canadian fought for the liberty, fraternity and
equality of the common people. This included artists, who
he viewed as educators working for the moral enlightenment of
the population. Art, suggested Peterson, was like a mirror of
perfected life, well-composed and ordered according to an
ideal of unity. Quoting from the American moralist Samuel
Smiles, Peterson explained:

The art of living deserves a place among the fine arts.
Like literature, it may be ranked among the humanities.
It is not wealth that gives the true zest to life, but
reflection, appreciation, taste, culture. Above all the
seeing eye and the feeling heart are indispensable. With
these, the humblest lot may be blessed....

Lismer lectured and published extensively on the subject of
art appreciation and its place in education for exactly the
same reasons that Peterson included culture in his call for
social democratic reform.

As described by Dennis Reid, Lismer was "a free-thinking
humanist who believed that every individual contains the
potential for creativity and growth." This was where Lismer
and Harris radically differed. In Harris' view, the arts were
symptomatic of civilization to the extent that they sifted
unavoidably into hierarchical divisions. Each class, argued
Harris, must have its art, its music, its literature, its
sport, its social observances, "...and to expect immediate
intelligence of the highest expressions of any activity is to

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86 Peterson observed "If one does not misread all the signs
and tokens, the end of this bloody war is ushering in a new era
all over the civilized world." C.W. Peterson, *Wake Up, Canada!*, (Toronto: The Macmillian

87 Peterson, pp.359-360.

88 Dennis Reid, *Canadian Jungle: The Later Work of Arthur
expect too much." Neither his elitist ideas, nor his gradual shift to abstraction made Harris very popular with Depression audiences. Lismer, on the other hand, became a tremendously influential art educator in the early 1930s primarily because he promoted art:

as a way of life -- or rather a way of thinking about life -- a pathway, a becoming... It is consciousness of environment and understanding of the significance of the beauty and character of things in nature and in the human mind... It is prayer and devotion enriching the spirit of man, shining through all the distress of life like a golden beacon.90

"When we Awake!", Brooker's introductory essay to the 1928-1929 Yearbook in which he posited the necessity of national and universal unity for the advancement of culture in Canada, struck between the extremes of Harris and Lismer to arrive at a humanist conception of art as the community experience of order and pattern. Contemporary philosophers in Toronto described this experience as fundamental to human nature.

George Brett, a philosophy professor at the University of Toronto, who actively contributed to The Canadian Forum during the 1920s, laid the philosophical foundations for identification of a humanist aesthetic in contemporary Canadian painting. Based on the writings of the Oxford historian and philosopher R.G. Collingwood he reviewed for the Forum, Brett argued: "Philosophy should give us a map of life", "a critical view of the chief forms of human

89 Harris continued "...all mankind are not at the same stage of discrimination and what is appropriate to one man will be inappropriate to another." Therefore, "cheap illustration, shoddy advertising, sentimental movies are as essential to the life of those they satisfy as higher expressions are to the life of more discriminating individuals." Lawren Harris, Notebook [1920s], Lawren Harris papers, MG 30 D208, vol.2, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

“experience” including “Art”, being the quest for beauty in society. If, so Brett learned from Collingwood in 1926, beauty depended upon the artist's ability to express his or her interpretation of life as it is experienced within a given time and place, then the form of a work of art implicitly mirrored the structure of the society in which the artist lived. Reid MacCallum, who is remembered as a major contributor to the study of aesthetics in Canada and who was Brett's protegé in the department of philosophy elaborated.

MacCallum became involved in the Toronto art scene through his membership in the Arts and Letters Club, (1928-1930), as a faculty advisor to the Hart House Art Committee at the University of Toronto, as a writer for The Canadian Forum, and as a public lecturer. MacCallum took the idea of a

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92 Brett observed that philosophy had undergone a significant transformation as a result of World War One. "No one any longer desires to solve the secret of the Universe," so Brett argued, "partly because there is not one secret but many, partly because it may be true (as Bertrand Russell maintains) that there is no Universe. The iconoclastic spirit of William James rejoiced in avoiding the word Universe and using in its place multiverse. So be it. Perhaps the profoundest change in human thought occurred when men ceased to think there was one way of being right and many ways of being wrong: to admit that there are more ways than one of being right is to create a new view of life, more subtle, more complex, and more difficult than any hitherto proposed."


94 In his diary for the year 1930-1931, Bertram Brooker recorded that on February 11, 1931, MacCallum spoke on "The Correlation of Emotion and Pattern in Art" at the Toronto Branch of the English Association.

Diaries of Bertram Brooker, Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box
parallel expression of order and pattern in art and society one step further, and applied it to a re-interpretation of the work of the Group of Seven. MacCallum's article "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", published in 1933, was the first serious effort in Canada to formulate a humanist aesthetic theory. As with Brett, MacCallum's philosophical approach had been influenced by contemporary studies in human psychology from which art emerged as an invaluable source of insight into human nature. "An art style", claimed MacCallum, "is a universal spiritual fact, a mode of man's feeling toward his world, and as such is the property of no race or people, but of mankind, originating from and returning to rest in the collective effort of humanity, in the international sense."  

Interpretation of the work of the Group of Seven, argued MacCallum, had to be stripped of any ties to nationalism and examined for the expressive character of artistic style as the manifestation of a particular feeling towards the world, or rather "form-will".

As exemplified by Harris' most celebrated wilderness landscapes, the "form-will" of the Group of Seven appeared to be their ordered presentation of nature. Considering "the most remarkable characteristic of the present age is its renewed interest in order, and what is still more significant, its sense of alternatives, its faith in the fertility of order", the Group of Seven's rhythmically controlled and solidly designed images of the Canadian wilderness illustrated "the specifically human contribution of intelligence."  

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1. Folder 16, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

95 Reid MacCallum, "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", *Queen's Quarterly* XL (May 1933), p.246.

96 As MacCallum explained, the history of art bears witness to "a series of revolutions in art... In each art in turn it was discovered that the reigning postulates of order and laws of form constituted only one of the total set of possible conventions, each of which has just as much right to be
the words of the philosopher E.F. Carritt, whose *What is Beauty?* MacCallum reviewed for the *Forum* in 1932, the order of human intelligence provided for "the expression of human emotion", not raw uncontrolled "animal commotion", but transformed, tranquillized "human emotion", carefully contained within the formal pattern of the work of art.97 The example of "human emotion" given in the Group of Seven's ordered wilderness landscapes:

show us a world of nature which would really be fit to live with,... if we have eyes to see"; "They show us a nature which is not a romantic dream, or an inhuman force, or a superhuman divinity, or a subhuman mechanism, but one which is the precise counterpart, so to speak, of man's ordered and ordering mind...."98

In this "order as felt, [moreover] that is... the pacification [of agitation] through an ordered pattern of forms, the contemporary man is able to experience something which, in its vigour and robustness, he finds precisely apposite to his needs."99 MacCallum's elucidation of the social value of the Group of Seven's well-ordered presentation of the Canadian wilderness clarified the basis for their continued appeal among the younger generation of socially-conscious painters in Toronto. Brooker, Comfort, Schaefer, McKague, Pepper, Webber, developed, and each of which contains radically new possibilities of beauty. This was not a revolt against order, but a widening of the idea of order itself."


98 In their bold compositional design, argued MacCallum, the Group of Seven enhanced nature "only up to the level where it becomes human, namely, something with which we can recognize our essential kinship."

Isabel McLaughlin, and Paraskeva Clark emerged with the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) in 1933 as a tightly-knit community of painters who led the development of the civilized landscape theme for the expression of social order, and the desire for individual and communal well-being that exemplified the pattern of "form-will" of the 1930s.

The Canadian Group of Painters

Very little information remains concerning the Group of Seven's dissolution in 1932 and the formation in Toronto of the CGP in 1933. In a letter to FitzGerald, Brooker recalls only a casual course of events:

You know all about the new Group, of course. We had a very nice evening at Lawren's house to get the thing started, and I really have not seen any of them, except Lismer and Comfort since that evening, and neither of us have discussed the thing very much. Between ourselves, however, I am a little afraid that a strong nationalistic bias, which always gets into the utterances of the old Group, either public or private, is going to continue very strongly in the new Group. Comfort and I were the only ones at the meeting who raised our voices in protest against this rather insular attitude. We both felt, for example, that the very name of the new Group -- Canadian Group of Painters -- puts undue emphasis on the word "Canadian".100

Whatever misgivings the younger Toronto painters harboured were outweighed by the excitement of a new contemporary artists' organization that set out to encourage and foster the growth of an art in Canada imbued with both national and universal ideals of unity. As outlined in the foreword to their first Canadian exhibition held at the AGT in 1933, the CGP sought:

To extend the creative faculty beyond the professional

100 Bertram Brooker, Toronto to LeMoine FitzGerald, Winnipeg, March 15, 1933, Bertram Brooker papers. MSS 16, Box 1, Folder 11, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.
meaning of art and to make of it a more common language of expression is also part of its aim. Hitherto it has been a landscape art, typical of all new movements, but here and there figures and portraits have been slowly added to the subject matter, strengthening and occupying the background of the landscape. Here also more modern ideas of technique and subject have been brought into the scope of Canadian painting, keeping the art in the vanguard of our forward stride as a nation.101

The younger generation of painters in Toronto emerged from the first CGP exhibition as a clearly recognizable community of artists. Their collective representation in the show was the largest, seconded only by those Montreal painters with whom they had exhibited since 1926. "Montreal strikes the most resounding note," observed Montreal critic Robert Ayre in his review of the CGP show, "with Holgate's superbly painted nude; Prudence Heward's coarse, vital bather,... Lillian [sic] Newton's three accomplished portraits; [and] André Biéler's French Canadian characters."102 Montreal was clearly the centre of figural painting, "but it cannot be said", argued Ayre, "that the development of Canadian painting is due to the influence of Montreal... a host of painters has sprung up in Ontario in style and outlook independent of either Montreal or the Group of Seven."103 The Toronto painters promised to secure that shift, latent within the modern movement established by the Group of Seven, away from "extra-human landscape... toward human life." The shift would bring art and society closer together and open many more aspects of contemporary life than had previously been explored

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101 "Foreword", Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings by [the] Canadian Group of Painters (Toronto: Canadian Group of Painters, 1933), unpagedinated. Exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in November of 1933. Illustrated catalogue.


103 Robert Ayre, "Canadian Group of Painters", p.100.
in Canadian art. As an organization dedicated to uniting socially-conscious painters across the country, moreover, the CGP promised to raise artists' status as valued contributors to the progress of a dynamic and equitable Canadian society. "[I]n growing up," concluded Ayre, "we are beginning to show the effects of the profound disturbances in human affairs which have shaken the world."104

MacCallum believed "Artists have always been among the really genuine innovators to whom mankind owes the respect it pays." What began in art "as a new emotional complexion, a novel mode of feeling, inevitably makes its way into moral, political, social, and even -- though this is often not recognized -- into intellectual life." "Further," concluded MacCallum, "at a time like the present, when people are beginning to look about them for something more solid than material goods, it is well to recognize who our true benefactors are, and to reflect upon what they have done for us."105 "Yet", as Ayre lamented, "the fight of the modern period against prejudice is by no means won."106

Young Canadian (fig.35), Comfort's watercolour portrait of Carl Schaefer of 1932 exhibited at the Canadian National Exhibition of 1934, makes the point of an intense sense of purpose felt within a newly recognized community of painters in Toronto frustrated by economic depression and the epidemic disenfranchisement of the Canadian populace. Schaefer is seated in the foreground of a deeply furrowed farmfield where he has set his sketching equipment for a day's work. Comfort catches Schaefer in a moment of reflection, when he pauses to experience his native rural Hanover and stares passively out

105 Reid MacCallum, "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", p.252.
106 Robert Ayre, "Canadian Group of Painters", p.100.
into the viewer's space. The lid of Schaefer's sketchbox is barely visible at his feet, framed by two enormous hands reminding audiences of the artist's unique ability to glean from his environment the essential order and pattern of human character and spiritual strength. This is a two-way mirror wherein the artist's service to society is reflected on the picture plane that serves, in the public sphere, as a window onto the artist's experience of contemporary life. "My painting", explained Comfort late in his career, is symbolic of the futility and discouragement suffered and endured during the Depression by youth of that memorable decade; it is a document recording the hopelessness and despair felt, not particularly by Carl Schaefer, although he bore his share of it, but by a whole generation.... ¹⁰７

The uncertainty faced by the Toronto community of painters in the early 1930s motivated their desire to secure a prominent place for themselves in society. "It inclined the artist to public rather than private, or semi-private communication..." remembered Comfort, "[and] led to the rediscovery of a broader public base for art, and the development of new formal idioms through which a new content might be more broadly understood." ¹⁰⁸ The issue of accessibility proved problematic, however, and by the middle


¹⁰⁸ "1929 marks the end of an important phase in Canadian art", stated Comfort, "Art is obviously not always a direct and simple reflection of society or social events, but no matter how purely aesthetic the result, it remains always a social phenomenon. The depression was a cataclysmic economic event which affected social relationships and, consequently, the relationship of art and society." Charles Comfort, speech: Montreal Arts Club, 50th Anniversary Banquet, May 12, 1962, Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol.2, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
of the Depression decade the Toronto community of painters had to face the prospect of their art becoming propagandist. Their debate over the definition of art for society's sake raised the stakes of aesthetics to outline a humanist aesthetic strictly intended for the fine art of painting.
CHAPTER TWO: Art for Society's Sake

By the middle of the Depression decade, the Toronto community of painters' images of the civilized landscape defined the modern movement of painting in English Canada. This was the result of strong representation provided by the Canadian Group of Painters for the work of Brooker, Comfort, Clark and Schaefer, along with their colleagues who shared a belief in the social value of art. Critical attention burgeoned, as reviews of CGP exhibitions regularly highlighted the Toronto painters' contribution to an impression of the land as it was lived in and worked by the Canadian people.

"Art as experience", the American philosopher John Dewey's celebrated dictum of 1934, summed up the attitude of a new international movement advocating the close association of aesthetic experience with the reality of everyday life. At the root of this association in Canada was design, presented by Canadian-based philosopher of aesthetics Walter Abell as the fundamental human principle of order and pattern made manifest by the abstract elements of composition. Abell's 1936 publication, Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art, gave precedence to formal design over recognizable subject matter in the creation of socially-relevant art. Formal design cultivated sensitivity to balance, which was crucial to the creation of a dynamic and equitable society.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in the summer of 1936, conviction in the abstract presentation of humanist values faltered. Artists in Toronto grappled with the relative inaccessibility of their work compared to political propaganda, then emerging as a powerful weapon for the cultural defence of democracy. What was the answer to Toronto sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood's 1936 question: "Should we turn to our own oppressors -- make cynical statues of the academic
Chapter two identifies the Toronto community of painters' turn to provocative images of the idealized worker with a blurring of the boundaries between the fine and applied arts. The humanist aesthetic would prove flexible.

The Humanist Aesthetic

When Pegi Nicol reviewed Walter Abell's Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art for The Canadian Forum in November of 1936, she felt compelled to ask:

In discussions of aesthetics the artist asks: Is that me? Did I do that? Does the artist know what aesthetics are? Has he recipes? Does he taste as he goes? Does he mean "feel" as the author means "read"?

Sixty years later, there seems little doubt that our appreciation for the work of the Toronto community of painters benefits from Abell's theory of a "middle ground" of representational form, which linked art and society together on the point of a common associational response. Abell was a teacher and philosopher of aesthetics who came to Canada from the United States in 1928 to establish the country's first department of fine arts at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. His definition of representational form published in 1936, by which time he was well-known in Toronto as a sympathetic voice for the social value of art, provides a solid critical basis for identification of the humanist aesthetic in Canadian painting.

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Pegi Nicol married Norman MacLeod in 1936.
Abell's Representation and Form revised the prevailing theory of a separation of abstract form and representational subject matter in painting described by British formalists Clive Bell and Roger Fry. The union of form and content for the creation of compelling works of art derived from a democratic ideal of art as experience. This ideal emerged most forcefully in the United States with John Dewey's 1934 publication Art as Experience, a book that demonstrated a general refinement of humanist and naturalist currents in post-war American thought from the rationalist and empiricist philosophical traditions inherited from Britain. Through the support of the Carnegie Corporation and the Barnes Foundation, (Art as Experience was dedicated to Albert C. Barnes), Dewey's philosophical explication of the interrelation of art and everyday life founded the Carnegie maxim "Art for Society's Sake" on the universal dialogue of humanity and nature. Dewey understood aesthetic experience to be a constant, recurring phenomenon weaving through changing circumstances of social development, and alternatively promoted or suppressed according to the current religious and political system. For Dewey, as for the Carnegie Corporation and the Barnes Foundation, the democratization of aesthetic experience

3 What Abell prescribed as the "middle course" for aesthetics was not a rejection, so he claimed, of Clive Bell's theory, but an expansion of his principle of significant form into "representational form", "...capable of pressing formal beauty to the maximum range and richness attainable in visual art." The seeds for this expansion could be found in Roger Fry's identification of "psychological volumes" in a work of visual art, which invited a closer corollary for the psychological reality of aesthetic experience. Walter Abell, Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp.165, 15-16.

promised by progressive education was endemic to the American way of life promoted under Roosevelt's New Deal.

Dewey intended his book *Art and Experience* to reform the way in which art was viewed, beginning with a criticism of the traditional location of beauty within the object itself -- the building, book, painting, or statue in its existence apart from human experience. By arguing that beauty occurred in the mind and was, therefore, experiential, Dewey hoped "to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience." The segregation of the fine arts in museums proved to be the major obstacle confronting the achievement of continuity. Dewey believed that the "distinctively modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery, which have operated to segregate art... are, among other things, memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism...", in which the power of culture has been used to stratify society according to wealth and status. For the recovery of an intimate correlation between aesthetic experience in art and life one had to "begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment

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5 This isolation of "an art product... from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience... renders almost opaque", argued Dewey, "their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals." John Dewey *Art as Experience* 3d ed. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), p.3.

5 "The growth of capitalism", furthermore, "has been a powerful influence in the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art, and in the promotion of the idea that they are apart from common life." John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p.8.
as he looks and listens.... the sense of immediate living...."7

Aesthetic experience differs from experience in general, so Dewey argued from the standpoint of biology, because it qualifies symbiosis, or rather harmony, in the relationship of an organism to its environment. Dewey deduced, therefore, that aesthetic experience denotes a moment of respite when, after conflict and disruption, "an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment" and enjoys "the stability essential to living...."8 The respite is by no means uneventful, for it is filled with that feeling of "intensest life" bearing "the germs of consummation akin to the esthetic." Dewey's vision of dynamic harmony momentarily felt in nature and filled with the reassurances of life sustained interest in the Toronto painters' civilized landscape as a model circumstance of aesthetic experience recreated in the language of art. The artist's revelation of the ordered relations in life "cannot but be admirable", so Dewey generalized, "in a world constantly threatened with disorder.... In a world like ours, every living creature that attains sensibility welcomes order with a response of harmonious feeling whenever it finds a congruous order about

7 John Dewey, Art as Experience pp.4-6.

8 "Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it -- either through effort or by some happy chance... the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed. If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives. These biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic experience." John Dewey, Art as Experience, pp.14-15.
it."

"Following this clue", stated Dewey, "we can discover how the work of art develops and accentuates what is characteristically valuable in things of everyday enjoyment", and realize that if works of art were placed in "a directly human context in popular esteem, they would have a much wider appeal than they can have when pigeon-hole theories of art win general acceptance."10

The link between art and life located by Dewey in the dialogue between humanity and nature pointed to the principle of balance as the essential feature of any aesthetic experience. Balance fit perfectly with the Toronto painters' existing interest in the order and pattern of humanity's imprint on the landscape. Moreover, Abell's estimation of representational form as an intrinsic expression of balance and, therefore, most likely to communicate aesthetic experience advanced Reid MacCallum's discussion three years earlier of "order as felt" as being perfectly suited to the needs of contemporary society.11 Representational form identified an associatively rich "middle ground" struck between the extremes of abstraction and narrative illustration in painting, which took advantage of psychological habits of mind normally exploited in propaganda. Convinced that "Visually at least, the mind appears to be a representational

9 "The rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union not only persists in man but becomes conscious with him; its conditions are material out of which he forms purposes. Emotion is a conscious sign of a break, actual or impending. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection. Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony. With the realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning."

10 John Dewey, Art as Experience, p.11.

11 Reid MacCallum, "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", Queen's Quarterly XL (May 1933), pp.250-1.
in~trument", Abell advised that all visual stimuli from the most abstract to the illustrative had to be carefully orchestrated within a well-organized compositional whole.\footnote{12} Only then could the multiplicity of interpretations generated by the associative tendency of the human mind be organized for a profound appreciation of the overarching order and pattern of life that determined collective experience. The beauty of a work of art was thus the clarification of balance as an essential feature of all harmonious circumstances and a guide to social progress. Representational form, furthermore, accommodated for social relevance to a given time and place without compromising the painter's claim -- by contrast to the propagandist -- to a universal expression of humanist values. "Meanings arise in life, not in art" argued Abell in reference to painting.\footnote{13} The artist can never sever his work, or himself for that matter, "from the thoughts and feelings dominant in his community". For that reason, his work "is full of ultra-pictorial bonds with current thought and feeling, bonds which we ourselves hardly recognize because they are so intimately a part of life as we accept it."\footnote{14}

\footnote{12} "This self-asserting representational tendency", explained Abell, "which we have met at each of the levels of vision thus far considered, a tendency which manifests itself even in our contemplation of non-representationa objects, suggests a fact important for an understanding of our problem. Visual elements appear to be so inextricably linked in our minds with the objects of the outer world that it is psychologically impossible for us to attend to them long in abstract form. To attempt to do so is to repress a phase of our spontaneous mental functioning which resists repression... and, if it meets resistance, imposes upon us a certain sense of strain and frustration."

\footnote{13} Walter Abell, Representation and Form, p.39.

\footnote{14} "Indeed," explained Abell, "we may remark parenthetically that that phase of modern art which seems furthest from ultra-pictorial concerns, namely that which has experimented with abstract form, will probably impress future observers less by
Although apprehensive of any attempt "to bring into the clear cold light of aesthetics" those extra-formal "intangibles" in contemporary Canadian painting, Toronto art critic Graham McInnes judged Abell had proven his case, "and in doing so had furnished at least one reader with the basis for a somewhat more elastic critical approach." Abell's proposition of representational form resolved what McInnes agreed was the "quite fictitious antagonism between subject matter and form", expressed in Clive Bell's dictum concerning the irrelevancy of subject matter.\(^\text{15}\) If "Meanings arise in life, not in art", as McInnes emphatically repeated, then contemporary Canadian painting overflowed with humanist values requisite to a society edging towards social democratic reform. In "the mutual relationship of representation and form", that is "of subject matter and structural abstraction", McInnes believed humanist values could be brought directly to bear upon the inequitable conditions of economic depression shared by artists and their public.\(^\text{16}\) Robert Ayre was quick to emphasize this point, stating:

\[\ldots\]

its form than by its social expressiveness."
Abell, *Representation and Form*, p.117.

\(^{15}\) Abell's thesis that the compositional whole of a work of art is its "representation form", "which is a compound and delicately balanced entity" made up in varying amounts of subject matter, plastic form, associative form, (an extension of the late Roger Fry's theory of "psychological volumes"), satisfied McInnes' search for a more profound understanding of why "Meanings arise in life, not in art."

\(^{16}\) "The relative significance of subject matter and structural abstraction, of literalism and selective synthesis has since the first days of Post-Impressionism," stated McInnes, "occupied the attention of every critic and aesthetician of substance."
At a time when art -- Russia, Mexico and the big regional movements in the United States probably give the best examples -- is becoming 'social', is drawing closer to the people, this book by Walter Abell, Professor of Art at Acadia University, serves a very useful purpose. It reminds us that there is some importance in subject matter, a fact denied by many modern critics and by painters -- chiefly the abstractionists -- who go to extremes in their reaction away from associations to pure form. Mr Abell goes even further than urging the validity of content: he maintains that without it form cannot achieve completion, cannot give the spectator full satisfaction.17

If the mind functioned as a "representational instrument", then representation remained an inevitable ingredient of any painting and had to be controlled if the painter wished to shape a cohesive and therefore meaningful composition. A humanist aesthetic in contemporary Canadian painting had to deal with the fact, reiterated by Ayre, "Our minds are such networks of experiences and associations... that it is difficult for us to allow even the purest abstraction, even the most conventional design, to be pure. We cannot help reading all sorts of things into them."18 Pegi Nicol maintained that her role as an artist was "at best a search for essential beauty within reality", as it was


18 "Without it," quoted Ayre, "the growth of visual form is arrested at a rudimentary and relatively insignificant level.... The critic who disdains subject-matter misses part of the form of the work he is studying; he is blind to one phase of its potential aesthetic value.... Only in a period of great sophistication and self-consciousness, or one not sure of its artistic aims, or one swayed by scientific experimentation, could it occur to an artist that his work should be exclusively visual; that is to say deliberately severed from the thoughts and feelings dominant in his community." Robert Ayre, "Representation and Form: The Importance of Subject-Matter Urged in a Study of Aesthetic Values," The Gazette, Montreal, (March 13, 1937).
determined by events taking place in the immediate surroundings of everyday life. ¹⁹ When she moved to New York City in 1937, (where she died in 1949), Nicol felt isolated because, as she explained to a friend, "one never sees realism in modern art... when no such thing is found in any gallery... [I] don't have a very satisfying commune with art unless I go to the Met. and see the old boys. This I do and I've never been failed of a terrific moving experience." ²⁰

**Painting and "Human" Emotion**

Nicol must have debated whether she and her Toronto colleagues, with whom she maintained regular contact, were conventional. Abell eased her concern. "I feel happier," wrote Nicol,

> to enjoy the Old Masters without doing so surreptitiously.... This book comes in time to relieve our minds so that we may enjoy the present movements in art springing up around the world. Super-surrealism,... the American interpretation of its own life, even the propaganda painting in countries where the artists are part of the life, are acceptable. ²¹

By raising "out of limbo the long dismissed dispute [over] the value of subject matter in painting", Abell welcomed consideration of the place of contemporary representational painting within the history of western art. The tradition inherited from the Renaissance, so Abell claimed in his historical overview of representational form in painting, was

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¹⁹ Letter from Pegi Nicol MacLeod, New York City, to Madge Smith, Fredericton, October 10, 1942, Madge Smith papers, MC 168, Box 1/172, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton.

²⁰ Letter from Pegi Nicol MacLeod, New York City, to Madge Smith, Fredericton, October 10, 1942, Madge Smith papers, MC 168, Box 1/172, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton.

²¹ Pegi Nicol [MacLeod], "Representation and Form: Walter Abell", pp.30-31.
arguably more generous than a narrowly defined avant-garde. The international counterswing back from abstraction to representation in painting "put reality into abstractions...", as Nicol quoted from Abell, "and in discovering the abstract qualities in all representation... [set] it free from limitations." In place of formal restrictions, there were historical traditions of "Proportion, Passion and Order, the spiritual elemental rules for beauty", of which René Cera, the well-known commercial designer with whom Nicol and many of the Toronto painters worked, constantly reminded his students and assistants.23

What kind of emotion should aesthetic experience generate? Neither Abell nor the critics elaborated. MacCallum had described "order as felt" in 1933. Four years later, in 1937, he recapitulated the imperative union of "form and feeling" for aesthetic experience. "[If] we hold the two terms, form and feeling, apart," argued MacCallum, "nothing remains but composition -- the dull academically correct song with no cry in it."24 Propaganda on the other hand, was all

22 Pegi Nicol [MacLeod], "Representation and Form: Walter Abell", pp.30-31.

23 Cera's statement, given in a lecture for the Interior Decoration class at Toronto's Central Technical School, stemmed from his study of "The Greeks...[the] great admirers of the human form...." "From them", stated Cera, "we have learned the meaning of pure proportions.... Quivering Equilibrium. They have taught us to have a clear, cold spirit permitting the right expression, in simple forms, of a stream of warm passion.... The modern spirit, like the Greek spirit, is direct.... The modern beauty, like the Greek Beauty comes to our heart cleaned of any superfluity."


24 "Pattern and rhythm are the categories or principles of order generating emotional value and emotional objectivity, just as in another dimension of order, space, time, and causation
"cry" and no academicism. The "cry" MacCallum was thinking of, but did not name, was the cry for change shared by socially-conscious individuals during the Depression years. Through representational form, a model of structural balance, the humanist aesthetic struck social consciousness mid-way where compassion, concern, empathy, understanding, and all those feelings identified as uniquely human were found. "The human being is not born emotionally ready equipped," explained MacCallum,

he has to learn to feel humanly, just as much as to think rationally or to act morally; and learning to feel is not the same as learning to think, though it is true that these functions are not exercised separately, and that thinking may have profound bearings upon feeling... but a feeling value... will be embodied not in philosophy or science, but in art.25

MacCallum formulated his theories in close contact with artists, testing his ideas against the visual evidence provided by the Toronto painters and publicly presenting his conclusions. Lismer twice invited MacCallum to speak at the Art Gallery of Toronto (AGT) in the early 1930s. By mid-decade, MacCallum knew the work of the Toronto community of painters well because of their involvement with Hart House in the University of Toronto. From 1933 to 1939, MacCallum was alternately staff advisor and chair of the Hart House Art Committee and had the opportunity to work with Schaefer, (who was the director of the arts classes and arts and crafts room


25 Human emotion, concluded MacCallum, was best expressed through fusion of pattern and commotion. As he explained, "Pattern without commotion is arid; commotion without pattern is turgid. Fused, they reveal some form of human emotion, heighten, enlarge, extend, or clarify the possibilities of feeling." H.R. MacCallum, "Contemporary Aesthetic Theory," pp.493-494.
for most of those years), and the majority of Schaefer's colleagues as they all had shows in the Hart House Gallery, in addition to Jackson and Lismer who came in as advisors. 26

MacCallum took responsibility for sifting through contemporary aesthetic theories to gather together a support structure for advancement of the belief he shared with the artists and critics in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being. He forced the point of difference between the fine and applied arts to emphasize that while a comprehensive view of culture helped broaden the spectrum of appreciation and influence, painting had yet to be understood as a unique medium for enlightenment of "human emotion." "The scandalous confusion of contemporary aesthetic theory", as MacCallum commented,

is not without its honourable side: it rises largely from the stubborn attempt to do justice to all the facts. A carpet, a joke, a triumphal arch, a procession, a gown, a garden, a psalm, an aeroplane, a fairy-tale, as well as a statue, painting, poem, or symphony are proper objects of aesthetic reflection. And how could any theory be stretched to include them all without splitting, or alternatively, becoming harmlessly inane? 27

Abell's Representation and Form therein played an essential role of establishing the humanist aesthetic as an approach specific to and uniquely served by painters.

26 MacCallum acted as chair of the Hart House Art Committee, (known as the Hart House Sketch Committee until 1936), for two years from the Fall of 1937. During his six year tenure with the Committee, MacCallum saw exhibitions of the work of Schaefer, Charles Comfort, Bertram Brooker, Gordon Webber, Isabel McLaughlin, Kathleen Daly, and Charles Goldhamer, as well as Lismer and Jackson among other Toronto and English-speaking Montreal painters known from the annual society shows. Minutes of the Art Committee, vol.2, Hart House, University of Toronto.

Design in Art and Society

Because representational form operated on the principle of balance, the humanist aesthetic linked aesthetic experience to social democracy as both were conceived in terms of a dynamic equilibrium manifested by order and pattern. The humanist aesthetic united art and contemporary life on the surface of the painted canvas by fusing aesthetic experience with social consciousness. This fusion was perceived as "design", as this term easily slipped back and forth from discussion of composition in art to the structure of social democratic reform in society. Lismer, who published extensively on the subject of art and life throughout his career, described design as "a subject", adding "design has life -- and organic unity. A painting is not an imitation of life, but a re-creation -- an equivalent for appearance -- of life." Design depended on the painter's ability "to rearrange his experience into new and more meaningful forms." To clarify his point, Lismer quoted from Dewey, (whom he likely met while in South Africa developing art education programs for the Carnegie Corporation of New York): "Aesthetic life is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normal complete experience." When applied to the larger question of the "design or form of our country", that is the creation of unity and order which he


30 "When we have an experience", echoed Lismer, "we have integration, dynamic unity, line, composition, structure, form and design -- a wholeness -- a stimulus to action -- emotionally satisfying." Arthur Lismer, "Design for Everyday Living," undated, unpaginated manuscript, Arthur Lismer papers, MG30 D184, vol.3, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
considered "the very heart of beauty," Lismer resolved: "It partakes of our own character, its virility is reflected in the appearance, speech, and thought of its people... the setting for our development, firing the imagination, establishing our boundaries." Montreal painter André Biéler, a member of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) known for his rural market scenes, offered a more general interpretation. "In its large outlines," stated Biéler, "the pattern of modern art but repeats the pattern of contemporary life." Biéler was referring to the civilized landscape.

The Civilized Landscape

In 1937, Graham McInnes identified the civilized landscape as the poignant contribution of "a small group" of artists in Toronto. He had in mind Brooker, Comfort, Schaefer, and Clark around whom a community of socially-conscious painters in Toronto gathered. These were the artists who caught the moment of "intensest life" felt, as McInnes described, in "the land as it looks after Canadians have tilled it, lived by it and died in it...." The design of rural farmlands was replete, so Abell revealed, with "those meanings which are felt most deeply by the community of which the artist forms a part and for which, in the first instance, he works." In community life:

the landscape ceases to be detached mass and space and


34 Walter Abell, Representation and Form, p.115.
becomes an aspect of the world we live in, where fields are ploughed and houses inhabited,... So the still-life becomes flowers of a kind we have picked, or pots and pans of a kind that hang in our kitchens... So the shape which has become for us the representation of a human form goes on, as such, to arouse perceptions and responses of a hundred kinds which life has woven for us around humanity.  

Jackson, Lismer, Comfort, Pepper, Brooker and Heward, along with Frank Carmichael and A.J. Casson, (both formerly of the Group of Seven), were the members of the 1936 CGP executive responsible for selecting works for the second exhibition of the new Group held in Toronto in that year. This mix of older and younger generation Toronto painters, along with the Montreal painters, represented those artists who recognized the shift from the wilderness to the civilized landscape as a logical outgrowth of the late exhibitions of the Group of Seven. The 1936 CGP show featured this shift through pointed comparison of past "wilderness", and present "civilized" choices of landscape themes. The most persuasive juxtaposition of works was Harris' Bylot Island (fig.36) and Schaefer's Summer Harvest (fig.37).  

Despite the fact that Harris had left Toronto and abandoned all naturalistic representation by 1936, four of his arctic paintings dating from the early 1930s were chosen for the second CGP exhibition.  

\footnote{Almost the whole range of life, with its suffering and its ecstasy, its quick sensitiveness of nerve and soul, its groping upward and its stumbling back, seems to be accessible to the silent couriers of association sent out by visual stimuli; couriers so swift that their movement is imperceptible, so skilled that their service is unrecognized..." Their meanings, moreover, "when definitely exploited, produce the avowedly representational art which constitutes the most characteristic product of painting and sculpture as it also embraces by far the larger portion of their output". Walter Abell, Representation and Form, pp.63-64.}

\footnote{See: Dennis Reid, Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren Harris (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), p.24.}
the daring simplification of natural forms and rhythms that Harris found so plainly visible in the bleak arctic landscape. Carl Schaefer's Summer Harvest of 1935 responds to Bylot Island stylistically. Harris encouraged Schaefer to make his work big, generous and ordered in response to geometrical forms he found in nature. By contrast, however, Summer Harvest presents quotidian rural Canada. Harris' pure arctic forms were far removed from Schaefer's sculpted wheatfield. For Harris, the enlightened artist unveils the secrets of a cosmic universal "oneness" of being described in Theosophy. For Schaefer, the socially-conscious artist circumscribes the spirit of community in the lived landscape.

"True creation", wrote Schaefer in 1934, springs from fresh interest and deeply rooted attachment to native subjects. The successful result of a work depends largely upon the special interest displayed in the subject matter.... A southern Ontario house may have as much spiritual significance as a great northern headland or a western mountain.

Schaefer was thinking of the Voelzing farmhouse in his hometown of Hanover which is the subject of his 1934 painting Ontario Farmhouse (fig.38), exhibited in 1935 with the Ontario Society of Artists (OSA). In Ontario Farmhouse the house emerges as a locus of social and community spirit comparable in intensity to the transcendental spirit that animates the mountains of Harris' Bylot Island. When seen together, as in the 1936 CGP show, Ontario Farmhouse and Bylot Island recreate the metaphorical association of the house and mountain

37 Interview with Carl Schaefer, Toronto, October 19, 1991.


developed in individual works of the mid-to-late 1920s by the Group of Seven. Exemplary examples of this association are Harris' Miners' Houses, Glace Bay of c.1925 (fig.3) and A.Y.Jackson's Indian Home of 1926 (fig.23), as discussed in the previous chapter. While Schaefer chose to isolate the house and to emphasize the centrality of the human spirit engaged in a dialogue with nature, Ontario Farmhouse nevertheless bears overt references to the Group of Seven and, in particular, to the work of Harris. Schaefer paints the house from a low vantage point and dramatizes the scene with the addition of one of Harris' distinctive rays of light. The Group of Seven's example resonated within the CGP, albeit with greater emphasis on the human and the social.

Bertram Brooker's selection of works reproduced in his 1936 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, the third yearbook to be published in Canada, underscores aspects of continuity between the two generations of painters in Toronto: the Group of Seven and the Toronto community of painters. Charles Comfort's Tadoussac of 1935 (fig.39), chosen from the 1936 CGP exhibition to introduce the series of yearbook reproductions, punctuates the accord felt between the early urban and rural landscapes of the Group of Seven and the younger generation's civilized landscapes. Comfort's Tadoussac recalls the precise style and simplicity of familiar subject matter found in the work of LeMoine Fitzgerald. Brooker chose Fitzgerald's Doc Snyder's House of 1931 (fig.40) from the final exhibition of the Group of Seven for consideration of a generational accord. Both Tadoussac and Doc Snyder's House explore the

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40 The first, compiled by the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, appeared in 1913. The Yearbook of Canadian Art, 1913 was published by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. of Toronto.

41 Fitzgerald was invited to join the Group of Seven following the 1931 exhibition. As this happened to be the final Group of Seven exhibition, before their dissolution to form the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933, Fitzgerald never formally
dialogue between humanity and nature by playing the geometric order of architecture, and of houses in particular, against the rhythm of natural form found in Comfort's rolling Quebec countryside and FitzGerald's pattern of trees.

In the FitzGerald piece the houses resist the flowing movement of trees that enliven an otherwise austere neighbourhood. The human presence appears fixed and in control in FitzGerald's well-kept houses and immaculate yards. Comfort, unlike FitzGerald, chooses a distant vantage point and as a result foregrounds an altogether different and more delicate balance struck in the civilization of a vast landscape. The town of Tadoussac appears vulnerable, indicating society's fragile position within the natural order. Comfort's miniature arrangement of buildings fitting the curve of Tadoussac's bay suggests social interdependence in a careful negotiation of the landscape. Comfort seems to have sensed the broader implications of balance in art to the design of life in society which FitzGerald and the other members of the Group of Seven overlooked. The one exception was Jackson.

There is little doubt that Jackson's rural landscapes inspired a great many painters, especially in Toronto, but as Schaefer reveals, the younger generation tended towards socially-conscious reinterpretations. The yearbook examples of Jackson's Road to Bic of c.1933 (fig.41) and Schaefer's Spring Evening of c.1935 (fig.42), both of which are known only through reproduction, illustrate the artists' mutual sensitivity to the generous rhythms of the rural landscape. In Spring Evening, a deeply-cut rural road, edged by furrowed fields, leads up to a sharply silhouetted farmhouse exhibited as a Group of Seven member.
precariously positioned at the crest of a hill. A barren tree accompanies the house in a not unfamiliar association of house and tree. The scene is reminiscent of Schaefer's Ontario Farmhouse, including the dramatically heavy cloud cover that typically burdens Schaefer's rural views with the reminder of economic depression. Spring Evening is more crisply rendered, however. A sharp linearity of style creates an almost tactile experience of the play between human order and natural rhythm that is, by comparison, absent in Road to Bic. Jackson's houses are engulfed by the sweep of the landscape.

Charles Goldhamer's St. Urbain (fig.43) in the yearbook, exhibited in 1936 with the Canadian Society for Painters in Water Colour, draws upon both Jackson and Lismer. Brooker chose to represent Lismer with Nova Scotia Fishing Village of 1930 (fig.44) to establish a Group of Seven foundation for intimate views of community life. Goldhamer, an art and design instructor at Toronto's Central Technical School, began painting the tranquil communities of the Baie St.Paul and St. Urbain regions of Charlevoix County in 1935. His training in commercial design lends an illustrative quality to St. Urbain.

42 Schaefer's Spring Evening is reproduced as plate 10 in the 1936 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada; and in the Catalogue of the Eighth Annual Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, (Toronto: Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, 1935), p.6, catalogue no. 100. This exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in April of 1935.

43 Jackson's Road to Bic appears as plate 4 in the 1936 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada; and in the Catalogue of the Sixty-Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, (Toronto: Ontario Society of Artists, 1936), p.14, catalogue no.120. This exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in March of 1936.

44 Catalogue of the Ninth Annual Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, (Toronto: Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, 1936), illustrated p.2, catalogue no.63 -- titled Street, St. Urbain, Quebec. Exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in April 1936.
that is similar in lively effect to Schaefer's *Spring Evening*. In the play of sunlight and shadow over a road where children are playing, Goldhamer captures an ordinary moment in the day of one family, like any other, in a rural community. The scene is cheerful, and yet full of empathy for the simplicity and poverty of life in St.Urbain.

Kathleen Daly shared Goldhamer's interest in the people of Charlevoix County, and along with her husband George Pepper, often accompanied Goldhamer on painting trips in the region. Daly and Pepper, who were married in 1929, built a summer studio in Charlevoix County in 1931. In Alphonse L'Abbé (fig.45), exhibited with the companion portrait of Madame L'Abbé in the 1935 OSA and Royal Canadian Academy of Arts shows, Daly achieved the same measures of empathy and spontaneity found in *St. Urbain*.45 Daly's *Alphonse L'Abbé* appears in the yearbook alongside Harris' *Dr. Salem Bland* (fig.10), a work that establishes the Group of Seven precedent for portraiture. The two works are very different in tenor. By contrast to Harris' stiff symbolic preacher, Daly paints an unassuming rural worker caught candidly in a moment of relaxed amusement.

Brooker, Clark and Pegi Nicol MacLeod are grouped together in the yearbook. Reproductions of the work of these artists convey their search for evidence of aesthetic experience in the immediate environment. Brooker's *Growth* (fig.46), included in the inaugural exhibition of the CGP in 1933, Clark's *Still Life* (with Apples and Grapes) of 1935 (fig.47), and Pegi Nicol MacLeod's *Torso and Plants* (later retitled *Self-Portrait with Flowers*) of 1935 (fig.48) extend the civilized landscape theme to include, as Abell suggested, the details of life lived in the enclave of a domestic

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interior.

In *Growth*, Brooker's dynamic composition of an ordinary studio subject reinterprets his innovative abstractions of the late 1920s and early 1930s within the familiar routine of the life of an artist. The painting presents a vase of flowers and fruit in a still life composition, barely discernible amidst the pattern of intermingling auras radiating from each of the objects. Here, as Brooker described in his yearbook essay "Art and Society", universal geometric form radiates with "an awakening of the sense of harmony between man and the universe" commonly missed in the course of daily life.\(^4^6\) Brooker insists upon the artist's unique ability to isolate aesthetic experience from normal, everyday experience.

Clark's *Still Life*, reproduced opposite *Growth*, is very similar in composition, but draws attention to the solidity of the plant and bowl of fruit firmly grounded in perspectively-rendered space. Clark's record of aesthetic experience momentarily felt in the course of any day ignores Brooker's lingering overtones of transcendental spiritual ambition. Clark enjoys the arrangement of three-dimensional objects as pattern on the two-dimensional surface of the canvas.

MacLeod's *Torso and Plants*, pictured above *Still Life* and opposite *Growth*, visualizes the relationship between the artist and still-life object by juxtaposing a torso view self-portrait with a flowering plant. She presents herself as a studio nude and, in so doing, includes the artist among the still life objects arranged for aesthetic contemplation. MacLeod's focus on the relationship of the artist and plant generates a studio re-enactment of the dialogue between humanity and nature. Human order and pattern here again plays against a natural rhythm. The body is ordered and neat,

solidly structured and predictable. The plant is chaotic and super-abundant, weaving a far more intricate pattern and complex rhythm than what is by definition human. Along with Self-Portrait with Begonia included in the 1936 CGP show, Torso and Plants asserts human physiognomy as a determining factor in aesthetic experience. Characterization of the relationship of the individual to the universal, implicated in the dialogue of humanity and nature, generates a satisfying moment of spiritual cognizance where harmony predominates. The idea stems from the figure in the landscape theme. MacLeod's closest reference is Brooker's Figures in a Landscape of 1931 where two torsos are isolated in a dynamic dialogue of humanity and nature. Like Brooker's painting, moreover, where a sheet indicates the nudes are borrowed from a studio life study, MacLeod's painting refers back to the academic tradition of the fine arts. It is this tradition, embracing the essential humanism of aesthetic experience, that is carried forth in contemporary painting.

As art editor of The Canadian Forum, a position she undertook during the latter half of her three-year stay in Toronto (1934-1937), MacLeod defended the painter's discipline as a resource of humanist values for contemporary society. Her views were shared by The Canadian Forum "crowd" in the thirties, being a closely-knit group who shared similar political views. Within The Canadian Forum circle, socialist ideals could be more openly discussed than in any public setting where the risk of rousing suspicion about one's political affiliations was too great.47 The circle also

47 This is the recollection of Bill Graham, who lived with Pegi Nicol before she married MacLeod in 1936. Graham married Eleanor Godfrey, managing editor of The Canadian Forum whose portrait MacLeod painted and submitted, along with Self-Portrait with Begonia, to the 1936 exhibition of the CGP. Graham notes that The Canadian Forum "crowd" eventually included Jack Bush and Caven Atkins. Interview with Bill Graham at his home in Port Perry, Ontario, October 24, 1991.
allowed for dynamic interdisciplinary discussion leading to a comprehensive understanding of the means to instill human values in the general population. In addition to MacLeod, Clark, Schaefer, Comfort, and Will Ogilvie were among the Toronto painters attracted by the leftist ideals promoted in the magazine.

Brooker's final grouping of paintings reproduced in the yearbook deals with the symbolic potential of painting to communicate humanist values to a wide public. Gordon Webber's The Vigil of 1935 (fig.49) and Isabel McLaughlin's Tree of 1936 (fig.50) emerge as the most decisive examples. Webber and McLaughlin test the boundaries of art and propaganda by isolating a single motif drawn from cultural tradition as the embodiment of aesthetic experience. Webber's The Vigil, one of a series of Mexican-inspired paintings shown at Mellors Gallery in Toronto in February of 1936, acknowledges tradition as a factor determining the associative force of an image within a given society. By the mid-1930s, no other country loomed so prominently in the minds of the Toronto painters and their supporters than Mexico, for it was there that government support had enabled a deeply-rooted cultural tradition to inform a modernist and socially-conscious expression of contemporary life.

Webber visited Mexico in 1935, but The Vigil may have been painted before his trip, drawing on the work of French-born Mexican painter Jean Charlot, seen in an AGT exhibition held in May of the same year.48 In his review of Webber's

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48 An exhibition of Jean Charlot's paintings, drawings and lithographs was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in May of 1935. A comparison of Charlot's Le Coiffure with The Vigil reveals a striking similarity in the handling of the seated figure. Webber's borrowing from this Charlot painting seems likely in light of the fact that Le Coiffure was in the private collection of Webber's friend Isabel McLaughlin. Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Lithographs by Jean Charlot, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1935), p.11 -- reproduction of Le Coiffure, catalogue no.266.
show at Mellors Gallery McInnes commented:

Mr. Webber has crystallized in brilliant colors, and sweeping rhythmical forms, the essence of Mexico and her people, in all their sadness and depth, their squalor and beauty, their savagery and gaiety, their movement and sculptural dignity.⁴⁹

The continuity between past and present established by the Mexican muralists in their revival of symbolic images allowed contemporary Mexican art to reach into the collective experience of the people. Webber's effective combination of decorative simplicity and evocative, culturally familiar symbols based on the Mexican example was propitious for Canadian landscape painting. McLaughlin's Tree from the 1936 CGP show engendered pointed comparison with the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven, linking contemporary painting to the Group's modernist tradition in painting.⁵⁰

McLaughlin's Tree pays homage to the Group of Seven and to Tom Thomson's The West Wind of 1917 (fig.51), the definitive model for the single isolated tree as an emblem of the distinctively Canadian experience of the landscape. References to Harris, Lismer, Jackson, Varley, and even to J.E.H. MacDonald, whose The Tangled Garden of 1916 re-emerged in McLaughlin's detailed foreground study of undergrowth, were implicit.⁵¹ McLaughlin's combination of foreground

⁴⁹ G. Campbell McInnes, "World of Art," Saturday Night 51 (February 29, 1936), p.16.

⁵⁰ Graham McInnes dated Canada's modern cultural tradition to the Group of Seven in his yearbook essay. The Group, claimed McInnes, produced the first truly Canadian art. Graham McInnes, "Thoughts on Canadian Art", Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, p.224. Reprinted from Saturday Night, (August 1, 1936), p.11.

⁵¹ The low vantage point of Tree further invites comparison to Emily Carr's Landscape, a close-up study of a tree trunk Brooker included in the yearbook. McLaughlin and her father, Colonel R.S. McLaughlin of Oshawa, began collecting Carr's forest
undergrowth and giant tree may be understood as metaphorical, relating at some level to the transference of artistic leadership from one generation of painters to another. At its extreme, this metaphor refers to the younger generation of Toronto painters' emergence from the roots of an established cultural tradition.

Continuity and Change

Critics and gallery directors welcomed images of the civilized landscape as evidence of younger painters "striving to break away from the old tradition." The National Gallery of Canada's decision to organize a retrospective exhibition of the Group of Seven in 1936 effectively closed a chapter in the history of Canadian art and cleared a path for the rise of the younger generation to the forefront of the modern movement. Of the nearly two hundred paintings included in the interior paintings in 1930, the year Carr first exhibited with the Group of Seven. Old Tree at Dusk c.1936, donated to the McMichael Canadian Collection by Col. MacLaughlin, provided Isabel with a characteristic Carr forest interior of the early 1930s for private study.

New Frontier editor Sophie Livesay, (a former Arts Students League member and an assistant to Lismer's Saturday Morning Classes from 1933), estimated that "human documents" of the "group experience" would emerge from this break. Based on the evidence provided by the 1936 CGP exhibition, moreover, a balance of "the human and artistic experience" promised an art redolent of life in the nation.


This exhibition, which toured to the Art Gallery of Toronto, was the third organized by the NGC as part of their program "of building up the story of Canadian art as completely as possible and at the same time bring into greater prominence the work of those who have made valuable contributions to it." The first exhibition, held in 1932, focussed on the work of James W. Morrice and Tom Thomson, and the second, in 1934, featured Cornelius Krieghoff.

retrospective two-thirds were wilderness landscapes, leaving approximately seventy-five images thematically divisible into rural and urban landscapes, and figure studies.

The accent on diversity struck in the retrospective stressed the individual strengths of Group members. Fred Varley and the Montreal painter Edwin Holgate, emerged as the accomplished figure painters. FitzGerald's main contribution, shared with A.J. Casson and laterally with Franklin Carmichael, was his studies of houses and towns. Of these, Doc Snyder's House repeated a key point of generational accord drawn in the yearbook. Jackson's Winter, Charlevoix County (fig.52), Lismer's Nova Scotia Fishing Village, and Harris' Dr. Salem Bland and Miners' Houses, Glace Bay followed through with the revelation of continuity in the evolution of the modern movement and the rich tradition provided by the old Group. Eric Brown, director of the National Gallery of Canada, confidently concluded:

The effect of the Group of Seven on painting in Canada has been marked and far reaching... If it is true that its emphasis has been more on the sterner aspects of the Canadian scene than upon humanity, it leaves later movements further ground to break in making equally important contributions along more humanistic lines.54

The National Gallery of Canada's Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Painting of 1936, known as the "Southern Dominions exhibition", promoted the shift in contemporary painting from the wilderness to civilized landscape as a decisive step towards humanist values.55 Eric Brown saw this


55 Following the NGC opening on the 15th September 1936, the exhibition toured the southern dominions of the British Empire -- South Africa, Australia, New Zealand -- through funding from the Carnegie Coporation of New York.
step as an encouraging sign of cultural maturity, indicating a collective recognition of responsibility for the international as opposed to the national community. The National Gallery of Canada emphasized the importance of art for generating an international sense of community by touring the show. The idea won the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York which provided financial support. Brown implored the public to re-examine painters' contribution to the cultivation of humanist values. "The fine arts are unique", wrote Brown,

in being one of the major forces for stability in a troubled world. They have no ulterior motives and in proportion as they are nationally free, have no other ends to serve than to broaden the individual horizon and to unite peoples and countries in a common understanding and appreciation of the wonders of creation and the marvellous possibilities of colour, form and design to interpret them.57

Edwin Holgate's Totem Poles, Gitsegpiuklas of 1927 (fig.53), reproduced on the cover of the Southern Dominions exhibition catalogue, was a provocative choice in keeping with the idea of continuity and change spun through the 1936 CGP exhibition, the 1936 yearbook, and the Group of Seven retrospective, also of 1936. The houses and totem poles, symbols of Gitskan community and spirituality, rhythmically punctuate the pattern of landscape forms to create a

56 Brown was instrumental in organizing the show and in raising Carnegie support. The selection jury included H.S. Southam, Chairman of the Board at the NGC; Eric Brown, A.Y. Jackson, Sir Wyly Grier (Pres. RCA), John Alford of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto, and Martin Baldwin curator at the AGT. Letter to Frederick Keppel, New York, from H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, May 27, 1936, "Canadian Art Exhibition in the Southern Dominions", Box 1 (temporary), Grant Files Carnegie Corporation, Columbia University, New York.

sympathetic and now familiar dialogue between humanity and nature. Painted following Holgate's trip to the Skeena River Gitskan villages in the far north-west of British Columbia with Jackson and Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles, Gitseguklas underlined the group's anticipation of the civilized landscape. In 1936, the painting re-emerged full of Holgate's empathetic concern for "the rapid decline of a splendid race of creative and well-organized people".

The work of the Toronto community of painters included in the Southern Dominions exhibition drew Holgate's nostalgic presentation of a distant life of balance closer to home. In Comfort's Quebec Church of c.1935 (fig.54), as in Tadoussac, community and spirituality unite in the parish church around which the town gathers. In rural southern Ontario, as found in Schaefer's Summer Harvest, plowed fields mark the backbone of community. In northern Ontario, telegraph poles bind together the densely packed mining town of Cobalt (fig.55), seen in Yvonne McKague Housser's 1931 reworking of the similarly titled painting of 1928.

The Carnegie Corporation and "Art for Society's Sake"

Historians of Canadian art have not addressed the Carnegie Corporation's encouragement of the direction of culture in Canada along humanist lines during the 1930s. At a time when no comparable Canadian philanthropic organization existed to alleviate the paucity of government support, Carnegie funding for the development of the fine arts in Canada fostered awareness of the international scope of concern for the social value of art.

The Carnegie Corporation were clearly selective in their

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granting of funds. Frederick Keppel, president of the Corporation from 1927-1942, considered only those projects that furthered a democratization of aesthetic experience. In the 1933 American government publication *The Arts in American Life*, Keppel expressed his humanist understanding to art. "Man's attempt", explained Keppel,

> to express himself through what have come to be called the arts is probably as old as the recognizably human race. It may be regarded as part of that immemorial effort to produce order in a seemingly chaotic universe to which science, religion and organized government may also be traced. In all four of these fields man appears as creator, producing new patterns or bringing to light patterns already existing.⁶⁰

Important also was the potential of any project to become self-sustaining. For this reason, the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Toronto, the University of Toronto, and Acadia University were among the primary recipients of fine arts grants.⁶¹

The director of the National Gallery Eric Brown, Art Gallery of Toronto Educational Supervisor Arthur Lismer, John Alford of the Courtauld Institute in London who took the first professorship of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto in

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October of 1934, and Walter Abell of Acadia University were linked by their connections to the Carnegie Corporation and its philosophy of "art for society's sake", a hugely popular concept under Roosevelt's democratic New Deal. Brown's initiation of nationwide public lecture tours, Lismer's establishment of a Children's Art Centre at the AGT, Alford's development of an academic program of study of the fine arts, and Abell's contribution to aesthetics, (Representation and Form was published with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation), were milestones in the advancement of a social democratic ideal of cultural progress during the 1930s. These milestones, moreover, measured up to Carnegie-funded projects in the United States and Commonwealth countries, including Australia and South Africa.

Keppel insisted on the fundamental need for an international cultural exchange. "Art may be a universal language", reasoned Keppel, "but it has many different dialects in different times and places." Through the Corporation, Canadians established international contacts with museum directors, art educators and philosophers of aesthetics, among whom was John Dewey. The Carnegie Corporation financed an enormous body of research into

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62 A professorship of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto had been considered since 1929, and funding was finally secured from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1934. In a letter to University President Canon Cody, Corporation President Frederick Keppel reported that the Trustees agreed to a five-year funding plan, beginning in 1934-1935, to be drawn from the British Dominions and Colonies Fund. Before John Alford was hired in 1934, Keppel had to be convinced that the department of Fine Arts would, under Alford's leadership, foster a democratic ideal of art as experience. Letter to Canon Cody from Frederick Keppel dated October 26, 1934, "Toronto, University of -- Professorship in Fine Arts", Box 2 (temporary), Carnegie Corporation Grant Files, Columbia University, New York.

aesthetics and art education, in addition to funding educational projects and travelling exhibitions. Texts published and widely circulated under the Carnegie name during the 1930s reached museum and university libraries, (many of which were themselves Carnegie projects), across Canada. Dewey and Abell were two of the writers whose influence spread with the Carnegie name. Keppel's goal, echoed in Canada and unquestionably focussed in Toronto, was to find a place for the artist in the creation of "a greater brotherhood of man".

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) initiated under Roosevelt in 1935 was an immensely successful example of "Art for Society's Sake" in action admired by the Toronto painters. Both the WPA and the Carnegie Corporation responded to a sweeping interest in a democratic ideal of art as experience that entertained the same notions of accessibility and immediacy of effect engaged by the civilized landscape theme in contemporary Canadian painting. The similarity of Canadian and American painting during the 1930s, often understood as the influence of American Scene painting and Regionalism on well-meaning Canadian modernists, owed ultimately to a parallel response to economic depression between artists of the two politically- and economically-allied countries. Because the Toronto painters' understanding of nationhood and the progress of culture in social democratic reform was rooted

64 Popular examples of the wave of theoretical investigation into the social value of art to which the Corporation lent its support were Arthur Popes's Art, Artist and Layman: A Study of the Teaching of the Visual Arts of 1937, Norman C. Meier's Studies in the Psychology of Art of 1936 and Art in Human Affairs: An Introduction to the Psychology of Art of 1942, and Robert Morris Ogden's 1938 The Psychology of Art. Among these three authors, all of whom were professors at major American universities, the concept of art as experience was shown to have tremendous import for the design of a democratic society.

65 Frederick Keppel and R.L. Duffus, The Arts in American Life, p.120.
in the Group of Seven's establishment of a distinctively
Canadian modern movement of painting, they remained
confidently aware of their difference from their American
neighbours. Nevertheless, their development of the civilized
landscape theme may be described as the Canadian expression of
the same democratic ideal of art as experience that flourished
in the United States.

Painting and Social Democratic Reform

The preponderance of landscape painting during the 1930s
has confounded historians of Canadian art, just as it did
League for Social Reconstruction (LSR) founding member Frank
Underhill when he reviewed the 1936 Yearbook of the Arts in
Canada for The Canadian Forum. Underhill, a professor of
history at the University of Toronto, was discouraged to
discover "there is not much sign that Canadian artists have
been moved by the phenomenon of a civilization dissolving
before their eyes."\(^6\) Forty years later, Charles Hill
struggled to explain why, "In spite of the high degree of
political activity among artists, surprisingly little overt
political or social content appears in Canadian painting at
this time."\(^7\) Hill posited that the inhibiting factor was the
younger artists' inability "to unite in the expression of one
coherent ideology" independent of the Group of Seven.\(^8\) For
the Toronto community of painters, the Group of Seven set a
positive example of an independent organization of artists
whose cultivation of support from the National Gallery of
Canada and the AGT provided a basis from which to cultivate
integration of art and society. McInnes, after all,

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\(^6\) Frank Underhill, "The Season's New Books: Yearbook of the
Arts in Canada", The Canadian Forum 16 (December 1936), p.28.

\(^7\) Charles Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties, (Ottawa:

\(^8\) Charles Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties, p.18.
considered the Group of Seven the founders of a modern movement of painting "involving human and humanistic values." 69 These values, explained McInnes, "... are factors for national unity stronger than transcontinental railroads, banks and chain stores, stronger than centralized government." 70

When, in 1935, LSR president and McGill University law professor Frank Scott published "The Efficiency of Socialism" in Queen's Quarterly, he acknowledged that the support of leftist-leaning intellectuals was contingent upon their appreciation of socialism as the moral political choice. "[F]rom the point of view of morality on which the socialist works...," argued Scott, "the ethic of capitalism is inadequate." 71 Social Planning For Canada, written by the Research Committee of the LSR, (who included Scott, Frank Underhill, and Graham Spry), and endorsed by CCF president J.S. Woodsworth, appeared in the same year. The book, which was the first comprehensive exposition of the LSR's political agenda, fervently denounced "the inhumanity and social stupidity of exploitation and war" engendered by the free

69 Graham McInnes described himself as a social democrat even before he came to Canada from Australia in 1935 and took up a position as art editor for the Toronto weekly Saturday Night, having supported both British and Australian labour parties. Friendships were immediately forged in Canada with leading members of the CCF and the LSR, including Frank Scott, Frank Underhill, and Graham Spry. Interview with Joan McInnes, Toronto, October 3, 1991.

70 It was only within the framework of social democratic ideology that McInnes could have ventured to state: "conceptions [of culture and national unity] based on ethics and a sense of human values are fundamentally important" Graham McInnes, "Is Canada a Nation?," Queen's Quarterly, 15 (Autumn 1938), pp.342-344, 348.

enterprise system. LSR plans for a parliamentary introduction of a democratic government "by the people and for the people" did not consider, however, the potential contribution of culture to the subtle reorientation of society from material to humanist values. Artists remained independent of political organization, believing that art was an autonomous, yet sympathetic instrument of social democratic reform.

Underhill's comment: "European artists have been compelled to rethink the whole question of the relation of the artist to society, and the finer spirits among them... are deciding one after another that in our troubled generation the artist must be red or dead" sparked an ardent defence of contemporary art in Canada from Elizabeth Wyn Wood. Wood fervently disapproved of Underhill's suggestion: "wouldn't one feel happier about one's country if the note of rustic rumination were not quite so dominant among its artists in this year 1936?" Contemporary artists should rebuff, Wood argued, "a presently fashionable wave, wherein the idea of art as propaganda, serving the party, diarizing current experience... demands the consecration of all talent to the


73 Michiel Horn posits that the LSR's professed belief that social change could be achieved through the introduction of social welfare and labour legislation into the existing electoral and parliamentary machinery of a predominantly capitalist society, (the LSR sought to initiate reform by parliamentary as opposed to revolutionary means), ultimately led to their downfall in 1942. Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p.214.

74 Frank Underhill, "The Season's New Books: Yearbook of the Arts in Canada," p.28

services of a readily recognizable cause." Rather, artists should enable their craft by cultivating a far more general "enrichment of life". Brooker adamantly argued that no true artist would consciously delimit creativity by using the work of art as a platform from which to expound a political ideology. Counter to the demand for what he called the "expected" plus qualities in a work of art, Brooker contended:

No sensitive man -- whether artist or not -- can remain unstirred by suffering on so gigantic a scale as grips the world at present. As a man -- as a citizen -- as a member of the human fraternity -- the artist should be prepared to do something about it. But, as artist, he should not preach about it. The moment he becomes a missionary he ceases to be an artist.

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76 Canadian artists draw their spiritual stimulation from the landscape, observed Wood, "a fact which Mr. Underhill has noted with scorn." "Myself, I have lain on the rock between the sky and the water and I have remembered that thousands of men, in different parts of the world, throughout all ages, have lived in peace, in happiness and in creative energy without knowing the organization we call civilization."


77 "Rarely do artists and public feel that togetherness which is the soil for the growing of great national arts... ", added Wood, "International and social tolerance is the fruit of culture rather than politics."


78 "And the artist is never -- except on his days off -- a propagandist for something commonly held by a mass of people -- for a collective point of view. It is precisely the person who does not see things the way everybody else sees them who becomes an artist. If you find a person who is called an artist working hand in glove with any kind of orthodoxy -- who has closed his own seeing eye and lost the sensitiveness of his own intuitive kind of apprehension, in order to accept somebody else's kind of dogma and work for it -- you may be sure that he can be using only his craft, which is something else altogether -- something we are not discussing in this essay."

"The artist's business is not to do, but to see...", concluded Brooker, "And the artist who turns from seeing to doing... forsakes his real function and withholds the value of the artist's true contribution to society." This contribution, moreover, was, once again, "an awakening of the sense of harmony between man and the universe" felt in aesthetic experience. But perhaps I misinterpret him...," judged Underhill; "I find him more comprehensible when he expresses his mysticism in lines and paint than when he tries to do it in words." "It is pointing to an obvious truth to say that all art is propaganda," countered McInnes, "insofar as it expresses the individual reaction of an artist to his environment, his own particular aspirations, desires and feelings." But surely, as McInnes tried to explain:

The whole essence of art is that it expresses something through purely artistic means... If, for instance, a picture, a piece of sculpture, a textile, a photograph, or a piece of pottery can be fully explained in writing, it is not a work of art, since, if it can be so explained, it has no valid raison d'être.

The propagandist element present in all creative activity must, in other words, be subordinated to "a general aesthetic scheme." "The degree", challenged McInnes, "to which art and

79 "The job of economic stabilization", asserted Brooker, "is not the artist's business. His concern is not with work -- with facts. It is even more certain that he should not be concerned with theories -- especially with theories which become crystallized into dogmas whereby certain sections of the world propose to manage human affairs."


Paraskeva Clark began to consider whether artists' should band more tightly together in order to strengthen their politically independent position in society. In 1937, she turned her attention to expressing the sense of artistic community she felt with her colleagues in Toronto who shared her conviction in the fine arts as a repository, rooted in tradition, of humanist values in society. On the basis of the artists' collective appeal to humanist values McInnes estimated "that a virile communal art is born through the sympathy of the artists with the people, and their ability to see, and above all to feel, significant formal relationships all about them." Clark broached an autonomous language of art facilitating collective social communication by reworking motifs and compositions of the civilized landscape theme newly established by key figures within the Toronto community of painters. Clark's innovation, first seen in the 1937-1938 CGP exhibition in Toronto, derived from her exposure to propagandist art in the Soviet Union, where she trained at the celebrated Free Studios in St. Petersburg during the early years of Lenin's Soviet government. A turning away from the direct and immediate expression of aesthetic experience to the condition of art as a mediator of social progress was the point of Clark's article, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield", published in the new leftist periodical New Frontier. The article responded negatively to Wood's defence, against Underhill's criticism, of the wilderness landscape in contemporary art.

"Art and the function of the artist are subjects very

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difficult to discuss with understanding and simplicity”, reasoned Clark. “It requires a very competent and sensitive critic to present a discussion on art to the public, and arouse their sympathy.” Underhill’s "strident and almost reflex outcry against the complacency and self-satisfied remoteness of the 'Art and Artists of the Pre-Cambrian Shield'”, and Wood's "careless" misconception of "Red art" missed the fundamental point of the collective "struggle towards a better life....” For Clark there was no alternative but to work towards the resolution of this struggle. The artist, after all, was a member of society "... with the added gifts of finer understanding and perception of the realities of life, and the ability to arouse emotions through the creation of forms and images.”

Art as Language of Social Communication

In his foreword to the catalogue of the 1937-1938 CGP exhibition, Robert Ayre described a rejection of the Group of Seven's wilderness landscape. This was a much different presentation of the CGP than Lismer's introduction to the 1936 show, where he acknowledged that the Group of Seven's

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86 Paraskeva Clarke [sic] (as told to G. Campbell McInnes), "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield", New Frontier 1 (April 1937), p.16.

87 Clark felt, nevertheless that Underhill's review was significant as a reminder of the social responsibility of the artist in Canada. Wood, on the other hand, "shows how the exaltation of the individual can blind an artist to the forces which approach to destroy that relative security in which he is permitted to exercise his individuality. Miss Wood's aloofness, and that of others like her, from the real life of their country, make them all oblivious to what is going on around them."

Paraskeva Clarke [sic], "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield", p.16.

88 Paraskeva Clarke [sic], "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," p.16.
adventure into the Canadian northland had "thinned out to a commonplace."\textsuperscript{89} Whereas the Group of Seven advanced a new and dynamic "Canadian way of looking at Canada", the younger generation, argued Ayre, now harboured "a suspicion of what they call the 'pre-Cambrian Shield', even an active hostility to it."\textsuperscript{90} As McInnes contended, the civilized landscape best conveyed a new socially-conscious sensitivity to "the people whom the landscape has conditioned, and who in turn are affecting it."\textsuperscript{91} For Ayre, McInnes, and Ottawa-based critic Donald Buchanan, the one painter whose work best expressed this sensitivity was Carl Schaefer.

Schaefer's \textit{Wheatfield, Hanover} of 1936 (fig.56), in the 1937-1938 CGP exhibition, typified the ideal of balance perceived in the generous rhythms and patterns of the rural landscape. A comparison of this painting with \textit{Summer Harvest} of 1935 reveals Schaefer's deepening appreciation for formal design, strengthened through his simplification of representational detail. \textit{Wheatfield, Hanover} presents a rolling sweep of landscape patterned by regular rows of wheat stooks and enveloped by a generous expanse of sky. Land and

\textsuperscript{89} Lismer maintained that the Group of Seven's example of a "search for pastures new" nevertheless inspired the younger generation. As he argued, "all that any painter can do in any period and any country; [is to] interpret feelings arising out of personal convictions, accept any powerful stimulus -- nature, religion, or even a national urge.... All may express experiences arising from life to-day in Canada." Arthur Lismer, "Foreword", \textit{Catalogue of an exhibition of paintings by the Canadian Group of Painters} (Toronto: Canadian Group of Painters, 1936), p.3. Exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in January of 1936. Illustrated catalogue.

\textsuperscript{90} Robert Ayre, "Foreword", \textit{Canadian Group of Painters} (Toronto: Canadian Group of Painters, 1937), p.3. Exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in November of 1937. Illustrated catalogue.

sky, humanity and nature, here coexist in equal ratio. Schaefer preserves their balance in the horizontal division of the composition into two equal parts. Buchanan was impressed by Schaefer's "aesthetic purpose", a term he coined in 1940 to describe the artist's objective presentation of "what he knows well -- scenes that are part of his background of birth, of upbringing, of work and understanding."92 "In their dryness of form and line," observed Buchanan,

... restrained use of colour,... in their almost obstinate repetition of what might be thought commonplace subjects -- frugal, profit-earning woodlots, broad but not limitless expanses of grain, .... [and] the monotonous roll of field and hillock in a pleasant, but far from spectacular countryside -- you are presented with a realism that is new in contemporary Canadian painting.93

Nowhere was Schaefer's achievement more forcefully acknowledged, however, than by Clark when she chose Wheatfield, Hanover as the quintessential civilized landscape upon which she modelled Wheat Field of 1936 (fig.57). The two landscapes were shown together in the CGP show. Clark's reworking of Schaefer's plain of cultivated landscape, focussing on subtle modulations of form and colour, indicates that she was beginning to reconfigure the dialogue between humanity and nature into a self-consious dialogue between artists who embraced the humanist aesthetic. In Petroushka of 1937 (fig.58), also included in this third CGP exhibition, Clark took the decisive step forward towards a collective advancement of art as a language of social communication.

Petroushka stands out as the innovative work in the CGP show in which Clark experiments with the relationship of art

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92 Donald Buchanan, "Variations in Canadian Landscape Painting," University of Toronto Quarterly 10 (October 1940), p.43.

93 Donald Buchanan, "Variations in Canadian Landscape Painting," p.42.
and propaganda. The painting presents an urban square framed by sharply-angled tenements and crowded by the performers and spectators of a carnival of the arts. At the centre of this square is a large red podium on which is staged a marionette play of Petrushka, the Russian folklore character symbolizing suffering humanity. Petrushka is represented by a fallen industrial labourer, beaten by police, who are themselves controlled by the wealthy politician. Clark was sensitive to the inequities of capitalism, and was shocked by newspaper reports of a bloody confrontation between striking workers and police in Chicago. Labour disputes among miners, mine owners, and political leaders signalled a much larger ideological dispute between socialism, advanced by communist union leaders, and capitalism, exploited in the union of capital and political power. Clark anticipates the reversal of a capitalist economic hierarchy by showing the rage of the working class audience, including Clark herself, against the beaten Petrushka, whose significance is stressed compositionally by his alignment with a tree that strains to grow between the background tenements. The workers raise angry fists which Clark's youngest son, seen with the artist's self-portrait to the left of the podium, echoes as a reminder of an imperiled future.

94 Mary MacLachlan's analysis of Petroushka draws a correspondence between the story of the Russian folklore character symbolizing the suffering of humanity, Clark's active involvement in the Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy organized during the Spanish Civil War, and the newspaper clipping Clark attached to the back of the painting documenting the confrontation between striking workers of the Republic Steel Corporation and the Chicago Police Force. MacLachlan's reference to the Carnival of the Arts, staged by artists in Clark's native city of St. Petersburg just prior to the 1917 Revolution, is here suggested as the setting for this painting. Mary E. MacLachlan, Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings, (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), pp.11 and 26.

95 Clark attached a newspaper clipping of this report to the back of the painting.
As a symbol of the proletariat, rising through the centre of the composition in homage to the worker, the podium recalls examples of Bolshevik propaganda posters with which Clark was familiar. In particular, Petroushka compares to a poster reproduced in the January 1922 edition of The Canadian Forum (fig.59). Here the worker towers heroically over industry and dwarfs the world leaders gathered to take advantage of his labour, including Uncle Sam who is the first to shrink away. 96 Where the Bolshevik poster advocates social revolution, Clark describes social reform achieved through the assistance of the artist as a cultural worker attuned to the basic needs and desires of the working class.

Clark's comprehensive play of associations cued by a dynamically balanced formal design is a lively drama of the socially-conscious artist in society. The hierarchical composition that orders this play engages the viewer's participation in the mass of workers and their families whose collective strength threatens the control of a capitalist elite and the stability of the urban setting, patterned after the Bauhaus painter Lyonel Feininger. Clark's stylistic debt to European modernism of the 1920s, which she studied both in St.Petersburg and Paris, imbued the place of culture in the creation of a vital and equitable society with international significance. 97

Petroushka operates retrospectively, recalling Clark's

96 The composition of this poster, which reads "Labour should be the master of the world", is clearly echoed in Petroushka where the placement of the "Punch and Judy" policeman and capitalist corresponds to the giant worker whose fist and boot are raised against capitalist countries. A Bolshevik Poster - From a collection of Soviet propaganda posters in the British Museum, The Canadian Forum 2 (January 1922), p.499.

97 Clark lived in Paris from 1923 to 1931. Mary E. MacLachlan, Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings, p.48.
past as a means of expressing her present struggle to define her contribution to social democratic reform. Did Petrouchka, as Mary MacLachlan suggests, answer Wood's question: "Should we... make cynical statues of the academic capitalist with his paunch and silk hat?"\footnote{Mary E. MacLachlan, \textit{Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings}, p.26.} Yes and no, for what Clark achieved in revealing the potential of art to serve as a medium of humanist values was a call for collective action among artists in Canada. Collaboration through a reworking of motifs and compositions in a socially-conscious language of visual exchange flourished within the Toronto community of painters during the next two years. The result was a solid alliance of artists as labourers organized for the progress of a dynamic and equitable society.
CHAPTER THREE: Art and Organized Labour

Art is the application of skill, any skill to the manipulation of environment, any environment, in line with meaningful experience.

Charles Comfort's definition of art from 1938 asked that the artist be counted among the working class whose labour drove the progress of society in Canada. Unions, especially those representing the nation's vast natural resource industries, impressed a Depression-weary population with the strength of a collective demand for employment equity and security. The socially-conscious Toronto community of painters envisioned their own form of union as "miners" of the rich vein of aesthetic experience prospected by the Group of Seven.

Between 1937 and 1939, Comfort and his contemporaries found in the worker a symbol of labour for social progress carried between art and industry. In murals and graphic works, these images entered the stream of everyday experience and forced the point of association between art and life at the level of design, where order in the dynamic balance of parts to the whole reigned as the ruling principle of individual and communal well-being. In painting, the worker stood in developmental sequence with the tree and civilized landscape as a mature subject of the humanist aesthetic dealing with the pattern of social communication that had sprung from the raw material of the Canadian landscape.

Chapter three describes the expansion of the Toronto community of painters as more young artists participated in a socially-conscious language of visual exchange based on

1"The artist," moreover, "is an individual who is courageous enough to use initiative, humble enough to respect, and skillful enough to complete a well-minded task, and who forgets self in the comprehension of his contribution."

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techniques learned from advertising and propaganda. An alliance of the fine and applied arts accelerated Canadian cultural engagement with national political and economic life. Such a close association of painting and popular culture would result in a refashioning of the symbolic worker image into that of a champion of the western artistic tradition, fusing socialist and humanist values.

Public Art and Propaganda

To bring art into everyday life is not the duty of the rich connoisseur: it is the task of the industrial corporation, of the advertising agency, of municipalities and provinces. We in Canada have been backward in relating art to utility.²

Ottawa art critic Donald Buchanan took an early lead in the promotion of public patronage of the arts with his 1934 article "Design in Industry" published in the Toronto weekly Saturday Night. The idea was not new, as Buchanan himself points out in reference to the Canadian War Memorials Fund initiated in 1916 by Lords Beaverbrook and Rutherford. A more significant precedent, however, was the collaboration between artists, government and railway companies for over fifty years following the establishment of the country's first "national" railway in 1876.³ As Buchanan must have understood, this collaboration facilitated the popular success of the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape aesthetic. Significant too was the enduring taste for enterprising commercial work instilled in Toronto painters at the Grip Studios -- where Tom Thomson and five future members of the Group of Seven had

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² Donald Buchanan, "Design in Industry", Saturday Night (December 29, 1934), p.11.

gathered before the First World War.⁴ Despite the positive history of artists' ties with business, dependence upon employment as teachers and commercial designers has been considered a major impediment to the progress of art in Canada during the 1930s.⁵ For the Toronto community of painters, however, the obstacle of public disinterest and financial insecurity was precisely what made a partnership with industry


⁵ Isabel McLaughlin, like Lawren Harris, had the fortune to pursue her career without economic restriction. In my interview with McLaughlin, she described such economic freedom as being essential to the survival of an artistic community. For example, McLaughlin was free to take over the presidency of the CGP, a position she held from 1937 to 1944. In so doing, the younger generation of painters in Toronto, who were otherwise occupied teaching and producing commercial work, had one of their own representing their interests instead of a former member of the Group of Seven -- who had hitherto dominated the executive. McLaughlin took this responsibility seriously, and she refused the three design jobs offered her in order that someone in economic need might work. The question may now be asked whether McLaughlin's passion for design -- especially textile design -- might have flourished had she been employed in industry.


Russell Harper and Charles Hill are the two historians of Canadian art who emphasize the economic depression as a hindrance to artistic progress during the 1930s. Both view teaching and especially commercial work as inimical to fine arts production.

The humanist aesthetic, as described in the preceding chapters, operated on a democratic ideal of art as experience that opened the work of art to a play of references to contemporary life. The emergence of the civilized landscape theme in national exhibitions of contemporary art by 1936 ensconced this aesthetic in the modern movement of painting in Canada. When Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Paraskeva Clark opened debate in 1937 over the social relevance of landscape, the worker beckoned as a more relevant subject for socially-conscious contemporary artists. The worker emerged as a corollary to the artist whose skill served a public need for aesthetic experience, and the clarity of vision achieved in communion with the overarching dynamic of humanity and nature, formulated in the Toronto community of painters' images of farmlands, interiors and still-lifes. "Art for society's sake" was destined to remain a powerless shibboleth, however, unless the fine arts were forced into the public domain.

Interest in the relationship of art to propaganda, quickened by Clark, stemmed from a longing felt among artists in Toronto for the same ascendancy of culture enjoyed by socially-conscious artists in Europe, Britain and the United States. While doctrinaire poster campaigns and repeated purges of all but state approved cultural production in the Soviet Union and Germany betrayed the shackles of political propaganda, the lesson of popular appeal and government support could not be overlooked. Britain's advance in industrial design through the support of glass, pottery, cutlery, carpet and textile corporations, and the Treasury Section of Fine Arts and Works Progress Administration (WPA) mural projects in the United States ultimately provided serviceable models, recommended by Buchanan in his 1934 article, for the withdrawal from "painting for painting's
sake" in Canada.6 "[A] hint of what may follow when industry awakens to the vital possibilities of applied art", claimed Buchanan, were "the few instances of the use of original design in both display and poster advertising" shown by Canadian Industries Limited at the Canadian National Exhibition and by Pegi Nicol in her murals for the T.Eaton Company's College Street Store in Toronto, (supervised by René Cera).7

The breakthrough of the decade for the promotion of corporate patronage of the arts came in 1937, when the International Nickel Company of Canada (INCO) commissioned Charles Comfort's mural Romance of Nickel (fig.60) for the Department of Mines exhibit in the Canadian pavilion of the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris.8 Comfort's employment with INCO from 1932 to 1938, while clearly financially necessary, proved how profitable an association with business could be for the advancement of art as a language of social communication. INCO gained a dynamic, socially responsible image, and Comfort got a chance to bring the populist agenda of advertising to the design of aesthetic experience for public consumption.

In 1938, Comfort became head of the newly formed Department of Mural Painting at the Ontario College of Art

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6 Donald Buchanan, "Design in Industry", p.11.
7 Donald Buchanan, "Design in Industry", p.11.
8 Comfort's oil on canvas mural Romance of Nickel, commissioned by INCO, measured 213.5 cm x 610.0 cm and was, notes Rosemary Donegan, one of the showpieces of the Canadian pavilion. It is now in the possession of Energy, Mines and Resources Canada. See: Rosemary Donegan, Industrial Images (Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1987), pp.74-76, 126.
What was Comfort's message to his students? "Today:"
noted Comfort, "Sees mural painting once more
swinging into public favour." Comfort was convinced that
mural painting held enormous potential as an influential
medium of social communication. The foundations for a
mutually beneficial collaboration between artists, architects,
and business were solid in Toronto, judging from the
impressive number of murals commissioned from Arthur Lismer
and J.E.H. MacDonald, Comfort's close friend Will Ogilvie, OCA
Principal Emeritus George Reid, Head of the Department of
Drawing and Painting at OCA J.W. Beatty, and Comfort himself,
who established his reputation as a muralist with his work for
North American Life Insurance Company in 1932 and the Toronto
Stock Exchange in 1937, which he completed virtually
simultaneously with Romance of Nickel. The practical
advantages seemed obvious, with improved employment
opportunities for artists and more thoughtful interior
decoration of buildings. Most important, however, mural
painting afforded an invaluable opening for the realization of
design, defined by Comfort (as by Abell and Lismer) as the
principle of order, balance and rhythm implicated in every

9 The department of Mural Painting was established to
complement Gustav Hahn's Interior Decoration and Applied Design
department, and the longstanding Graphic and Commercial Art
department then headed by former Group of Seven member Franklin
Carmichael.

10 "There are men painting today", continues Comfort, "whom,
without any exaggeration I am sure, the verdict of posterity
will favour as ranking among the great of all time. I need only
mention the Great Mexican School lead [sic] by Rivera and Orosco
[sic]. The American School with Thos. Benton, Curry [,]
Boardman Robinson, Arnold Blance, and a host of younger
contemporaries. The Spaniard, Jose Maria Sert. In England
Stanley Spencer, Wm Lambert, Hugh Thompson, Gerlad Moira, the
Zinkensine sisters."
Charles Comfort, "O.C.A. - Mural Painting, September 1938",
Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol. 5, National Archives of
Canada, Ottawa.
phase of human activity. Design, ostensibly, is equally present in the structure of society and the cooperative working relationships demanded by a mural commission, as in the composition of the mural image itself, and the pattern of associations therein constructed to invoke aesthetic experience amongst the general public. Art and life, in other words, may be conceived comprehensively in terms of design. One had to assume, as Comfort acknowledged:

that there is a fundamental sameness of mental processes in all races and in all cultural forms... based on environment, physiological, psychological, and social factors that bring forth similar cultural processes and

11 "Design is the intellectual comprehension of the laws of order...", noted Comfort, "A conscious ordering -- integration" ultimately dependent on those principles of balance and rhythm essential in life. "Balance is essential for adequate functioning in all life. True in Engineering and Biology. Humans must have emotional balance to be normal beings." Rhythm, moreover, "Is the dynamic. The pattern of life [and] recurring factors such as the appetites -- the seasons." Charles Comfort "Design: Teaching Notes Binder, 1938-1958", Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol.5, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

12 Arthur Lismer argued the point of social communication in his 1933 article on mural painting, the first he wrote specifically on this subject, in which he stressed a general lack of appreciation for the artist as a specialist. A successful mural commission depended upon the client's willingness to become a participant in the process and not a dictator, wrote Lismer, who also had advice for the artist. Contrary to the opinion of too many contemporary artists who regarded muralists "as rather an inferior member of the craft of painting, a sort of workman who wields brushes and paint", Lismer contended that a muralist "must possess a different mental and spiritual equipment, a sense of orchestration and a powerful and fanciful imagination...to project onto the surface of the wall a nobler, grander pattern of life...." Mural painting, concluded Lismer, "is design and not incident or graphic realism", for which a closer union of architect and designer, and the formation of small groups of artists working in the spirit of the ancient guilds would do much in the way of investigation and mutual contacts.

similar manifestations in different parts of the world even back to paleolithic times.  

A mural commission for an international exhibition was Comfort's chance to test this assumption, and to play out the design link between art and life intrinsic to the humanist aesthetic.

Comfort cited utility, materials and aesthetics as the three considerations of a mural painter commissioned to produce an image under controlled circumstances for the edification and enjoyment of the widest possible audience. Clearly, mural painting, explained Comfort, "unlike easel painting, is not entirely free from qualifying conditions. It is, after all part of a wall and as such must be considered an integral part of architecture. The mural painter must work within both limitations of his problem."\(^1\)

Romance of Nickel accents the worker, whose extraction of Canada's natural resources fuelled the progress of Canadian industry. Comfort slices the composition along dramatic diagonals which arch up and out from the bottom corners to embrace a central image of a miner, working the nickel-laden face of an INCO company mine. Smelting, refining, and manufacturing highlight each diagonal division of space, showing their clear dependence upon this central figure, who functions as an heroic symbol of labour. To the bottom right of this figure is a metallurgist, whose gesture completes the cross that marks the solid centre of worker collaboration crucial to industrial growth and more generally to social development. In the top and bottom

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\(^{13}\) "We differ from primitive [cultures]", concluded Comfort, "only in our greater knowledge of the objective world."

triangles of the cross are placed, respectively, a planetary vista featuring Saturn and its satellites, and the scientist's chemical apparatus set up for experimental analysis. The planet Saturn immodestly functions as an intellectual reference to the Roman god, Saturn, whose teaching of the arts of civilization ushered in the Golden Age, when no social divisions existed to differentiate master from slave. Equity refers to the demand, so familiar by 1937, for harmonious interrelations between management and the workforce. Saturday Night critic Graham McInnes lauded Comfort's "vigorous simple statement" expressed in "a strong, rhythmic, well-knit design...."15

Montreal sculptor and architect Emile Brunet modelled the Canadian pavilion for the 1937 International Exhibition on a terminal grain elevator (fig. 61), decorated with bas-relief panels representing fisheries, furs, mines, woods, wheat and fruits, a free-standing buffalo, a totem pole marking the entrance, and a cleanly-cut aluminum label "CANADA" stretched across the façade. This was the popular vision of Canada -- "the breadbasket of the world" as Rosemary Donegan accurately observes.16 "He-man Canadiana [sic]", so sharply criticized a decade earlier in The Canadian Forum, returns in Brunet's design in the form of the worker, whose hard labour depicted in the bas-relief panels holds the Canadian experience to the


16 Donegan records that the pavilion design resulted from the combined efforts of Brunet and the London offices of the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission, Department of Trade and Commerce. Brunet received a Grand Diplome d'Honneur for the exterior architecture and a Grand Prix d'Honneur for the bas-reliefs. Rosemary Donegan, Industrial Images, (Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1987), p.80
landscape.\(^{17}\) From the wealth of this labour comes the terminal itself, an authoritative image of modernization and industrial development and a familiar site in the harbours of major urban centres. Readers of *The Canadian Forum* were presented with an evocative image of the Toronto terminal in Thoreau MacDonald's October 1931 cover design (fig. 62), which established a distinctly social democratic context for its symbolic portent in the Canadian pavilion. Donegan suggests that local town elevators on the Prairies were closely associated with the importance and power of grain companies and early grain cooperatives across western Canada.\(^{18}\) Art, business and labour could, so Comfort and his colleagues hoped, function harmoniously together for the benefit of the individual and the community.

**Social Democracy and Collective Identity**

Did Comfort appreciate the influence his artistic partnership with INCO had for Canadian cultural identity in 1937? Yes, insofar as the Toronto community of painters believed in their ability to harness the power of free enterprise. The humanist aesthetic embraced business as part of that network of communicative links necessary for cultural growth and, ultimately, the achievement of mutual understanding between otherwise distant groups of people. Interaction with business meant access to a wide audience and a chance to introduce humanist concerns into a capitalist system. The promotion of artistic collaboration with business, therefore, could be justified as a defense of social democracy, and recognition of the skills of those who did not hold the purse-strings of the nation. As long as Canada's natural resource workforce remained vulnerable to a depressed


\(^{18}\) Rosemary Donegan, *Industrial Images*, pp. 80, 82.
international market for raw materials, the voice of the "red" trade unionists of the Communist Party of Canada continued to be heard. The extremes of capitalist and socialist interests played openly opposite one another, marking a clear path for the social democratic movement as the middle course of Canadian politics. Likewise, the middle course of Canadian art, introduced by Walter Abell as an associatively rich "middle ground" where formal design and subject matter linked the extremes of abstraction and narrative illustration in painting, opened a place for the worker as a symbol of collaboration between industry and labour, broadly including artists. Local 71 of the Artists' Union, established in Toronto in 1936 to encourage co-operative action for equitable treatment of working artists, completed the picture of alliance drawn between the artist and the labourer. In the Canadian pavilion of the 1937 International Exhibition, the collaboration of art and industry symbolized by Comfort's

19 The label "red" trade unionists was, however, indiscriminately applied to Communists, social democrats, and those who were neither. "Red" trade unionists of the 1930s "were a diverse constituency thinly spread from Nanaimo to Glace Bay." John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, The Canadian Centenary Series), pp.223-224.

20 While the establishment of the Artists' Union in Toronto demonstrates the extent to which artists came to see themselves as "workers", the Toronto community of painters never unionized. A.T. Vivash lamented the lack of solidarity among contemporary artists in his article for New Frontier. "Inevitably, we have run into a number of artists who are unwilling [sic] to join a 'trade-union'. Surprisingly enough, many of these men and women claim to be 'moderns', and talk freely of social improvement and 'class consciousness'.... Such artists fail to realize that the Artists' union is nothing more than the name implies, -- a group of artists united for their common welfare... Sympathy will not lighten our task in any practical manner. We need the co-operation of every artist, we need his opinion and his fellowship in our organization." A.T. Vivash, "Trade Unions For Artists," New Frontier 2 (May 1937), pp.22-3.
monumental miner embraced a social democratic ideal in clear distinction from Nazi, Fascist, and Communist interests then gathering on the world stage.

The silenced, starving citizen illustrated by Montreal graphic artist Harry Mayerovitch for the 1937 article "Blood For Spanish Democracy" (fig.63), published in the Toronto leftist periodical New Frontier, expressed the fear many Canadians shared that the Spanish Falangist and German National Socialist parties were consolidating their powers. Most shocking for artists, however, was Hitler's disposal of creative freedom for the "rebirth of German culture" according to the dictates of the Third Reich. The "Great German Art Exhibition of 1937" stood in patriotic defiance to the "Exhibition of Degenerate Art", situated nearby and containing works of the "fashionable moderns" removed from public galleries all over Germany. In her article for Saturday Night, Naomi Jackson, (A.Y.'s niece), translated directly from Hitler's opening speech for the exhibitions:


22 Joseph McCulley, "Democracy and Education," The Canadian Forum XIV (August 1934), pp.437-438. McCulley, who was Headmaster of Pickering College in Newmarket, compared his social democratic approach to education with that of the New Education Fellowship (NEF), formed in England just after the First World War, with which Arthur Lismer was involved. The NEF advocated educational improvement and reform throughout the world. Their goal was the cultivation of individual responsibility for collective life as a means of averting the prospect of another international war.
Art is once and for all no mere mode. The essential racial character of our people does not change, and our art must lose the transitory character, to be instead in its ever greater creations a symbolically worthy expression of the life and progress of our people.

The terrifying fact, surmised Lawren Harris, was "the nazis realized that the arts are a great humanizing force." So, too, had the Soviets, whose example many Canadians admired, at least initially.

When the Friends of the Soviet Union hosted an exhibition of Soviet art at Henry Morgan & Co. Galleries in Montreal in 1935, art critic Robert Ayre and Montreal members of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) -- including Edwin Holgate, André Biéler, and Prudence Heward -- came forward as individual sponsors. "It was a bad business for prejudice when the Russians failed to send over pictures of capitalists on the spit or the Church defamed", joked Ayre in his review of the show. With the dissolution of the Association of Revolutionary Artists in the Soviet Union, "Communists came to realize that art could not be forced.... With two or three exceptions, the artists reflect the Revolution merely because it happens to be their condition of life." The exhibition, organized by the American Russian Institute for Cultural Relations in Philadelphia, opened at the Art Gallery of

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23 Jackson's translation continues: "Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism and Impressionism have nothing to do with our German people. All these terms are neither old nor modern [sic] but simply the silly concoctions of people to whom God denied the blessing of true artistic talent and to whom he granted instead the gift of loquacity or deception." Naomi Jackson, "Modern Art in Germany", Saturday Night 52 (October 16, 1937), p.2.


Toronto (AGT) in October of 1936. "The Art of Soviet Russia" won acclaim in New Frontier for its apparent freedom from regimentation or enforced uniformity of content. "It may well be", reads the review, "that socialist society, with its wealth of experience, its vitality and freedom, will provide a much better soil for the growth of great art."26 The experience of Germany's "best creative individuals in the arts", while very different, as Harris later observed, from the situation in Russia, where "poets and painters, musicians, dramatists, architects [were employed] to give the people expressions of purpose -- to give meaning to all their activities... Russians [nevertheless] control and direct their workers in the arts whereas in a free society such as ours the artist is relatively free."27 Artists had to maintain their distance from politics.

The abstracting force of modern industrial design, when applied to subjects drawn from deeply-rooted cultural traditions, ostensibly prevented art from being subservient to political ideology and allowed it to enter into the common currency of life. On this premise, Canadian artists admired the Mexican muralists -- especially Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro-Siqueiros. British art critic Eric Newton, well-known to the Toronto painters and their critics, (Newton embarked on a lecture tour of Canada in 1937 by invitation of the National Gallery of Canada, with the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York), proclaimed Rivera's mural paintings to be "the most powerful works of art this century has produced and among the most aesthetically


satisfying." In 1931, Montreal art critic Jean Chauvin explained "The Mexican painters repudiate art for art's sake for the benefit of an art for the people." In Canada, so Chauvin contested, the lack of public interest in mural painting or in the employment of Canadian artists to beautify public life was a serious problem. American support for the exhibition of Mexican public art, on the other hand, had surged since 1930, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York held an exhibition of Mexican arts.

The Metaphorical Worker

When Roosevelt's "New Deal" administration introduced government funded mural art and public sculpture under the Treasury Section of Fine Arts and the Works Progress Administration, a solution to national cultural impoverishment and widespread unemployment of artists seemed to have been

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29 "These murals were executed for the aesthetic, social, and political education of the people", explained Chauvin. "They tell their sufferings and endeavours towards the attainment of liberty." Jean Chauvin, "Mexican Art Today," The Canadian Forum 11 (March 1931), pp.215-216.

30 "Our painters", wrote Chauvin, "lack such large surfaces. Edwin Holgate, Jeffreys, and some others, turned to best account the very few walls intrusted to their care. But what splendid murals these painters and Harris, Lismer, Jackson could paint if only they were asked to decorate our hotels, schools, and public buildings! As in Soviet Russia, the Mexican mural painting is collective. Finally, it is decorative... Essentially decorative also are the works of our modern painters. In that way, at least technically, our painting and theirs meets each other half-way." Jean Chauvin, "Mexican Art Today", p.216.
The image of the muscled worker, so often pictured in New Deal art, functioned as a symbol of American democracy and productivity. The socially-conscious Mexican and American muralists were confident in the powerful union of art and labour, expressed by Rivera in the clenched fists which sprout from the raw wealth of the earth in his Detroit Industry mural cycle of 1932 for the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 64), and by William Gropper in his idealized Construction of the Dam for the Interior Department Building in Washington (fig. 65). The North American model of worker emancipation opposed nazi Germany’s "Muscular might in heroic attitudes" described by Naomi Jackson. Comfort’s Romance of Nickel is a distinctively North American development of the worker as a subject of government-endorsed mural painting. In the context of the 1937 International Exhibition, Comfort’s miner laboured reticently against the dual prospect of Josef Thorak’s classicizing heroes of Kameradschaft (Comradeship) (fig. 66) -- placed at the entrance of the National Socialist German pavilion, and Vera Mukhina’s monumental socialist realist figures The Worker and the Collective Farm Woman (fig. 67),

31 The Treasury Section of Fine Arts, operating from 1934 to 1943, sponsored over one thousand murals and three hundred sculptures for post offices, courthouses and other federal buildings across the United States. By executive order of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal’s Public Buildings Administration reserved one percent of construction budgets for public art commissioned by the Section. The WPA was separate from the Section, paying weekly salaries to artists who qualified for relief in exchange for their work on public projects, (the Section paid a set commission fee for competition winners). Washington received special attention, having the greatest number of federal buildings and the most prestige. See: Barbara Melosh, Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theatre, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 4-6.

32 Naomi Jackson, "Modern Art in Germany", p.2.
that crowned the USSR pavilion.\textsuperscript{33}

In Canadian politics, the year 1935 brought MacKenzie King's reformed Liberal party back into power after five years of Conservative government under R.B. Bennett. Despite Bennett's efforts to promote a Canadian version of Roosevelt's "New Deal", the Liberals won popular confidence as mediators between capitalist business interests and "the rising tide of radicalism" led by Tim Buck and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) that formed in 1921, (the same year Mackenzie King's reformed Liberal party first came to power), but considered an "unlawful association" until 1936.\textsuperscript{34} Bennett's downfall resulted in part from his unsympathetic attitude toward workers, whose demands he spurned as outpourings of communist indoctrination spread through the Workers' Unity League. Buck, one of the "Toronto Eight" Bennett had arrested in 1931 on charges of communist conspiracy to violence, became a hero of workers' rights cheered by a mass rally of supporters at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens upon his release from jail in 1934.\textsuperscript{35} The event affirmed the traditional freedoms of speech.

\textsuperscript{33} For further discussion of German and Soviet art during the 1930s in the context of an international trend towards realism, see: Paul Wood, "Realisms and Realities"; in Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars ed. Briony Fer, David Batchelor and Paul Wood (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), pp.250-332.

\textsuperscript{34} The CPC was defined unlawful by Section 98 of the Criminal Code, added in 1919, which stated that it was "illegal to advocate governmental, industrial or economic change within Canada by the use of force, violence or physical injury to person or property, or by threats of such injury". John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord, p.227.

\textsuperscript{35} Seventeen thousand people attended the rally for Buck, who stood in front of a gigantic portrait of Joseph Stalin. Buck advocated the power of communism to save the worker from the sinking ship of capitalism, visualized on the January 1934 cover of the CPC literary magazine Masses. Each bolt of lightning that stabbed down from a dark, foreboding sky was labelled with the name of a recent WUL-organized strike.
and assembly at the heart of Canadian democracy, as historian John Herd Thompson emphasizes. Without a coherent political program, however, the CPC could not secure its position. Instead, unity and support strengthened for social democracy, and the demand for reform lobbied by the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and its associated League for Social Reconstruction (LSR). That unions were formed at all in Canada, however, may be attributed to the CPC's "red" trade unionists, whose slogan "Fight or Starve" mobilized workers in industrial centres. Two workers' organizations were the result, first the National Unemployed Workers' Association (NUWA), formed in 1930, and second the communist-led and controlled Workers Unity League (WUL), established between 1929 and 1931.\(^36\) Through the WUL, the CPC directed two major strikes during the early 1930s in which workers were killed by police. The most infamous of the two was the 1931 strike of six hundred lignite colliers in Estevan, Saskatchewan where three strikers died. Mine owners presented their case to the popular press as a struggle against Communism and, in so doing, ensured support from politicians and the RCMP for the breakup of the union.\(^37\) Conflict arose wherever miners joined the WUL-affiliated Mine Workers Union of Canada.

Paraskeva Clark's painting *Petrouchka* of 1937 (fig.58) piqued the issue of workers' rights in Canada by incorporating clear references to the Popular Front symbol of the clenched fist, raised in revolt against the violent display of capital and political power pictured at the centre of the composition. Clark's use of this symbol tests the boundaries between art

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\(^{36}\) Few red trade unionists were card-carrying members of the Communist Party, but the Workers' Unity League -- the central core of their movement -- was communist-led and controlled. John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, pp.223-224.

and propaganda, as discussed in the preceding chapter, for the express purpose of stimulating Canadian cultural engagement with national political and economic life. Petroushka proposes a place for the fine artist in the scheme of popular culture. Comfort's mural Romance of Nickel exemplified how the fine artist might retool images drawn from popular culture, namely the heroic worker, in public art. Comfort's worker nods to socialist ideology, while Clark's betrays her more extreme, communist sympathies. Democracy and communism were not necessarily at odds in 1937, however, at least not with respect to a broad spectrum of leftist-leaning individuals who gathered under the progressive embrace of social democracy.

During the Depression, the worker embodied widespread concern for individual and communal well-being, and the fight against fascist aggression begun in 1936 with the Spanish Civil War. Canada's Mackenzie-Papineau Batallion, representing the largest number of volunteer soldiers after France, joined the XVth International Brigade in defence of the communist-supported but democratically-elected Spanish Republic. Liberals, socialists and communists fought together in a struggle for the survival of democracy, and the raised fist pictured by Toronto graphic artist Laurence Hyde for the cover of New Frontier's special February 1937 issue -- "The Tragedy of Spain" -- marked the defiance of Franco's victims, bombed by nazi planes (fig.68). The fist, like the Russian folklore image of Petrushka, recalls suffering humanity. At home, the struggle was taken up by the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, formed through the collaborative efforts of leftist organizations and in which Clark became involved.

The Committee sponsored medical aid to Spain, led by two men: Montreal surgeon Norman Bethune, a declared communist and friend of Clark, and CCF and LSR representative Graham Spry. When the Battalion returned home in 1939, Avrom Yanofsky of the Artists' Branch of the CPC designed a rally banner
(fig.69) in which the raised fist, superimposed over a map of Spain, signalled victory and accompanied the proclamation: "They Died That Democracy Shall Not Perish", "In Defending Spain - They Defend Canada." Clark understood the power of the clenched fist as a multi-faceted reference to unity in action. By including a self-portrait with her two children in Petroushka, Clark acknowledges her personal and artistic responsibility to advance the workers' collective. In 1937, both Clark and Comfort saw themselves as workers labouring to correct social injustice and the poor deal for culture in Canada.

Did Walter Abell ally the artist and the worker as labourers for the progress of society? In "Art and the Industrial Worker", his most politicized piece of writing, published in the Glace Bay Gazette in 1944 and reprinted by the Labor Arts Guild of Vancouver, Abell alleged: "the worker and the artist are natural partners in the struggle of mankind for a better world." In order for this partnership to flourish, however, artists had to develop their interest in industrial themes and identify themselves "with those deeper human aims and democratic social ideals which underlie the labour movement." "Plastic relationships", as the American art critic Thomas Craven established in his widely read text

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39 "The worker through his organized activities, can provide the impulse and the power necessary for social progress", explained Abell. "The artist can provide the skill and vision necessary to translate social progress into a harmonious and satisfying human environment." Walter Abell "Art and the Industrial Worker" (reprinted by Labor Arts Guild 641 Granville Street, Vancouver British Columbia), excerpts from article published in The Gazette Glace Bay, N.S. Labor Day 1944, unpaginated; Fred Taylor papers, MG30 D360, vol.4, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
of 1931 Men of Art, "are determined by human relationships."\textsuperscript{40} Whereas Craven and Abell saw these relationships expressed first in painting, the association of the artist with the "industrious workman, differing from his fellows only in the intensity of his endowments" opened the link between all fine, industrial, and commercial artists whose labour enriched society.\textsuperscript{41} "In the broadest sense," wrote Abell, "art means doing skilfully and beautifully whatever needs to be done."\textsuperscript{42} Conversely, labour should invest in the arts, for:

The masses of the people, by their productive labor, hold the final source of economic power in their hands. If, through their unions and other activities, they begin to employ artists in their work, they can more than replace the patronage given by the church and the aristocracy in earlier days.... Hence the artist has everything to gain by making common cause with the worker.\textsuperscript{43}

Accessibility and collaboration, Abell's two main points, were earmarked for the painter, who ran the highest risk of remaining sequestered in "The Ivory Tower". Abell's argument

\textsuperscript{40} Thomas Craven, Men of Art (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), p.xxi.

\textsuperscript{41} This quote is taken from a promotional pamphlet of Thomas Craven that was designed by William Colston Leigh Incorporated and circulated to museums and universities throughout the United States and Canada. William Colston Leigh was an American agency, (one of several), representing popular intellectuals. Lismer invited Craven to give a public lecture at the Art Gallery of Toronto in October of 1932. Craven did not accept this invitation. Education, A1.1.2, Art Gallery of Ontario Archives, Toronto.

\textsuperscript{42} "It means attractive homes and finely planned communities to live in", added Abell. "It means beautiful public buildings enriched with painting and sculpture expressing the traditions and ideals of the community...." Walter Abell, "Art and the Industrial Worker", unpaginated.

\textsuperscript{43} Walter Abell "Art and the Industrial Worker", unpaginated.
that a new public consciousness would awaken and prepare the way for social progress when painters began to depict the lives of workers, to show them in art exhibitions, and to reproduce them in newspapers and magazines, was proven true, at least at the community level, by the Toronto painters. The borrowing and reworking of motifs and compositions initiated by Comfort and Clark with the worker was the beginning of a self-conscious appreciation for the currency of visual symbols exchanged between fine, commercial and industrial arts. This development of art as a language of social communication centred within the Toronto community of painters advertised the viability of culture in active service for social reform.

Art and Popular Culture

On the stage of the 1937 International Exhibition, the worker in Comfort's Romance of Nickel calls forth unity in action and recognition of the relative strength of a unified people, or class of people, against the aggressions of opposing political forces. It is a positive image for social democracy in Canada, appealing to a collaboration between labour unions and sympathetic businesses to find a place for the artist in the maintenance of harmonious social interrelations. The advertisements Comfort produced for INCO

"Preparation for the investment of labour in art, moreover, had been Lismer's aim (as Educational Supervisor of the Art Gallery of Toronto) when in 1933 he instituted adult art education classes at the AGT. These classes were part of the scheme "to interest and encourage the creative capacity of adult workers" which Lismer developed in association with the Workers' Educational Association and the Welfare Association. Students were primarily unemployed workers "who have the enforced leisure to engage in mutual study in painting, drawing, carving, modelling and other forms of art -- music, folk-dancing, and folk songs, and talks on pictures and architecture and gallery talks in the Art Gallery of Toronto...." Arthur Lismer, "Adult Education in Art" 1934, p.4, A1.2.5, file 1, Art Gallery of Ontario Archives, Toronto.
between 1932 and 1938 are crisp and engaging, as in the 1933 example *Pay Roll* (fig. 70) included in INCO's compendium of company advertisements published in 1947. The significance of Comfort's commercial art emerges only when set in the context of the Toronto community of painters' attraction to symbols of popular culture for communication of humanist values. It is within this context that the worker becomes a meaningful site of associations to art and contemporary life, and a metaphor for the artist who sought a place in the everyday struggle for social progress.

Comfort's career began in commercial art, as did the careers of virtually every other artist in the Toronto community of painters. In 1931 Comfort formed his own commercial art company with partners Will Ogilvie, (with whom he had worked at Brigden's in Toronto), and Harold Ayres. Their commercial studio on Adelaide Street East became a popular meeting place for friends and acquaintances, among whom was Carl Schaefer, who likewise began his career in commercial work. Art critic Robert Ayre visited the studio too, presumably just before he joined Comfort and Schaefer on a sketching trip to Haliburton in October of 1932. When Comfort and Schaefer returned to Haliburton in 1934, they were joined by Harold Ayres.

The need for commercial work, and its importance for the continuance of artistic production during the Depression

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46 Comfort was only thirteen when he took a position in Brigden's Winnipeg Studio in 1913. After his move to Toronto in 1925, Comfort worked again for Brigden's, but four years later transferred to the head office of the Rapid, Grip Co., where he would have met Jack Bush, hired the previous year. See: Margaret Gray, Margaret Rand, Lois Steen *Charles Comfort* (Agincourt, Ont: Gage Publishing, 1976), pp.18,20.
seemed only too obvious to Comfort when he painted Schaefer's portrait *Young Canadian* in 1932 (fig.35) at his Adelaide Street Studio. Economic depression, as quoted from Comfort in the first chapter, "led to the rediscovery of a broader public base for art, and the development of new formal idioms through which a new content might be more broadly understood."\(^47\) Commercial work meant much more than steady wages because it stimulated a proclivity for design in perfect complement to the philosophical underpinnings of the humanist aesthetic, and the conception of art as the experience of order and pattern gathered from John Dewey, Reid MacCallum and Walter Abell.

In the 1928-1929 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*, and again in the 1936 edition, Bertram Brooker assumed that cultural unity in all areas of creative endeavour was imperative to the creation of "an art expression here that is redolent of our own life."\(^48\) Brooker, who joined the staff of J.J. Gibbons Advertising Agency in 1929, was well-known at the Arts and Letters Club, where Comfort and Ogilvie were members, as a specialist in marketing research and promotion. Under the pseudonym Richard Surrey, he published *Layout Technique in Advertising* in 1929 and *Copy Technique in Advertising* in 1930. Both texts were critically acclaimed for their insight into the psychological manipulation of public opinion through


\(^{48}\) Bertram Brooker, "The Seven Arts", 1929, Box 8, Folder 6, MSS 16, Bertram Brooker Collection, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

"The Seven Arts" was a syndicated newspaper column written for *The Evening Citizen* and the Associated Newspapers of The Southam Publishing Company.
product marketing. Clearly this insight served Brooker well in his endeavour to promote the spectre of cultural unity he saw by 1929 in the awakening spirit of community in contemporary art. In no way would Brooker have felt disinclined to sell his vision of Canadian art, for he believed his ultimate goal to be worthy of the common good. In these early years of a burgeoning North American advertising industry, led by huge marketing agencies in the United States, a sense of moral obligation swayed product promotion towards social responsibility. Effective advertising, noted an American colleague to Brooker in 1926, relies on the successful projection of oneself into "the other person's mind.... This is, by the way, an unimpeachable principle to follow in social conduct; it is an ethical

49 "You are writing for people who are thinking about life!", wrote reviewer Leslie Bell for the New York City Tribune, who considered Brooker's emphasis upon the "human side of the business" in Copy Technique in Advertising to have given advertising "a dignity, which those who persist in regarding it merely as salesmanship pressure in print fail to grasp, and he analyses it as part of the rhythm of contemporary life... from the standpoint of sound psychology." "After all," added Bell, "advertising is one of the elements of today's culture, and it is the part of wisdom to see that it is one of the creditable elements and not the reverse." Leslie Bell, "Word Power: Copy Technique in Advertising by Richard Surrey... New York: McGraw Hill Book Co.", Tribune, New York City, (December 7, 1930), clipping, Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box 9, Folder 11, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

50 Arthur Lismer wrote on the commercial value of art in 1921. "What has Art to do with business anyway?", asked Lismer, "if Canada is to be a real home for its peoples, the quality of art consciousness must come into our daily thought and manufacturers and the makers of the common things of daily life, the education of our youth, the artists who would serve as instructors, creators and co-workers must give and take, working together to establish a higher standard of appreciation..." Arthur Lismer, "Art as an Aid in Selling Goods (Not only in Preparation of Advertising But in Manufacture of Commodities -- Beauty a Quality with Dollars and Cents Value)" Business Methods 2 (August 1921), p.14.
imperative that is someday going to put an end to wars.\textsuperscript{51} 
"It is not enough for an exhibit to arouse an emotion or feelings...", advised British advertising expert A.P. 
Braddock, "a tendency to act ought to be set up."\textsuperscript{52} Because 
of advertising's comparable "position of great importance in 
the economic and social life of Canada", the industry had to 
be regulated to prevent abuse.\textsuperscript{53} Nothing, cautioned a 
reviewer for \textit{The Canadian Forum} in 1927, is more detestable 
than an advertiser who sports the guise of a "moral reformer" 
while contributing "widespread and deep demoralization."\textsuperscript{54} 
Under these supervisions, advertising served the Toronto 
painters' ambition, long before the emergence of the worker 
image, to cultivate humanist values through culture.

Advertising and \textbf{Commercial Enterprise} 

For Comfort, Oglivie and Brooker, along with fellow CGP 
members Charles Goldhamer and George Pepper, the Arts and 
Letters Club provided an ideal environment for discussion of a 
comprehensive alliance of the fine and industrial arts for the

\textsuperscript{51} Letter to Richard Surrey (Brooker's advertising 
pseudonym) from C.D. Greenwood of the Advertising Service, San 
Francisco, care of \textit{Printers' Ink} New York, (June 28, 1926), 
Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box 1, Folder 6, University of 
Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

\textsuperscript{52} A. P. Braddock, \textit{Applied Psychology for Advertisers}, 
Braddock's \textit{Applied Psychology for Advertisers} and \textit{Psychology and 
Advertising} formed part of "The Library of Advertising Series". 
Braddock was a lecturer at the University of Birmingham, England.

\textsuperscript{53} Charles T. Pearce, president of the Toronto advertising 
firm A.McKim Limited, where both authors were employed, made 
this statement in the foreword to: 
H.E. Stephenson and Carlton McNaught, \textit{The Story of Advertising in 
Canada: A Chronicle of Fifty Years} (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 
1940), p.v.

\textsuperscript{54} Gilbert Norwood, "Advertising and its Future" \textit{The 
Canadian Forum} VII (March 1927), p.172.
advancement of culture in Canada. Leading representatives of Toronto's commercial art scene were there, including René Cera of Eaton's College Street, (in 1934 Cera spoke to fellow members on the art of advertising), C.A.G. Matthews and J.E. Sampson of the firm Sampson-Matthews, (where A.J. Casson was employed), and J.A. MacLaren of the MacLaren Advertising Co. Ltd. for whom Brooker went to work in 1940. Altogether, it was an eclectic mix of individuals whose interest in the influence of popular culture attracted the membership of three prominent academics from the University of Toronto: a psychologist, a philosopher and an art historian.

Wilhelm Blatz joined the Arts and Letters Club in 1933, no doubt through the prodding of Lismer, who sought his support for the Children's Art Centre at the AGT. At Lismer's invitation, Blatz lectured on "Art from the Psychological Point of View" in 1932. The gist of this lecture, which appears not to have been recorded, must certainly have been Blatz's conviction that social behaviour, and the ability to live well in society, is controlled by environmental stimuli. Popular culture, in other words, although Blatz did not use this term, provided for the creation of a new social order. From a psychological and social point of view, wrote Blatz, "an individual can become what we want him to

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55 Blatz was billed as the Director of St.George's School for Child Study. Education papers, "Lectures, Gallery Talks, Musicals etc - March 1932", A1.1.2., Art Gallery of Ontario Archives, Toronto.

56 Blatz publically expressed his conviction in the power of culture to shape a positive social environment and advocated the inclusion of cultural subjects in public school curricula. "Would Teach Art and Music to Children, Toronto Psychologist Describes New System of Education in Ottawa Lecture", Evening Telegram (May 2, 1935) Wilhelm Blatz papers, MS Coll.134, Box 15, University of Toronto Archives, Toronto.
Reid MacCallum lectured at the AGT in 1932 on "The Artist as Thinker". Although this lecture is unrecorded, MacCallum undoubtedly stressed the artist's responsibility for shaping the way a people see the world through the influence of "form-will", a concept applicable to popular culture. Artists, like advertisers, could set a social perspective by virtue of their cultural influence. MacCallum was a member of the Club for only two years, until 1930, but, as mentioned, kept contact with the Toronto painters through his work as faculty advisor to the Art Committee at Hart House. So did John Alford, for that matter, who joined the Arts and Letters Club soon after arriving in Toronto in 1934.

Alford's special interest was the history of culture and, as he reported to Carnegie Corporation president Frederick Keppel, "the very vital necessity of developing a notion of 'art' which shall entirely transcend the bounds of picture-making and picture-appreciation and be based on the general idea of aesthetic control and judgement of an environment." To this end, Alford invited professors from the departments of archaeology, anthropology, architecture, and philosophy -- including MacCallum, to give courses and guest lectures to fine arts students. Additionally, studio courses were introduced, primarily to focus on the practice and history of design. Peter Haworth, director of art at Central Technical School, and George Pepper, who taught in the commercial art


59 Letter from John Alford, Toronto, to Frederick Keppel, New York, May 14, 1936; "Toronto, University of -- Lectureship in Fine Arts", Carnegie Corporation Grant Files, Box 2 (temporary), Columbia University Archives, New York.
and painting departments at OCA, (where Alford reciprocally lectured), were hired in 1937 as part-time staff. Comfort joined the department in 1938, worked closely with Alford, and was appointed assistant professor in 1939. The Depression decade was closing on a high note for these artists, whose positions teaching mural painting, commercial art and industrial design in the city's three major educational institutions propelled an interrelation of fine and applied arts forward.

When, in 1938, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA) organized the Canadian Industrial Arts Exhibition for the AGT, there was no question that a link between the fine and industrial arts held national appeal. Being the only government-supported artists' society in Canada, and the only society with official ties to the National Gallery of Canada, conferment of RCA support for industrial art stamped the alliance with state approval, and encouraged corporations to take their position as patrons. Fred Haines, vice-president of the RCA and principal of OCA, reassured audiences:

Industrial Art is as natural and logical an expression of this age as was Religious Art of the fifteenth century.... If beautiful things are more profitable to

60 In addition to Wilhelm Blatz and Reid MacCallum, Lismer invited Peter Haworth to speak at the Art Gallery of Toronto in March of 1932. Haworth's lecture "The Artist as Craftsman" must have highlighted his work in stained glass. Education papers, "Lectures, Gallery Talks, Musicals etc - March 1932", A1.1.2., Art Gallery of Ontario Archives, Toronto.

61 Although the constitution of the RCA originally provided for the encouragement of design as applied to the industrial arts, the Canadian Industrial Arts Exhibition marked the first exclusive presentation of a wide range of applications. Furthermore, the "Objects of the Academy" stated that the RCA would encourage "the promotion and support of education leading to the production of beautiful work in manufactures." Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, Constitution and Laws, revised March 6, 1880, p.3, papers of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, MG 28 I 126, vol.4, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
the maker than ugly things, as we believe they are, then we can confidently hope for the artistic betterment of our physical environment.  

Sir Wyly Grier, president of the RCA and prominent Arts and Letters Club member, followed the example of the Royal Academy of Arts and Royal Society of Arts Exhibition of British Industrial Art of 1935 when he arranged for a committee, directed by Fred Haines and operating with subdivisions in Toronto and Montreal, to bring together a wide range of examples from packaging to furniture and textile designs. Commercial firms and freelance artists from the two cities, the largest and most diversified industrial centres, were chosen to endorse industrial arts, "indicative of the growth of a sound artistic basis in the manufacture and design... whose very familiarity and universality make their artistic conceptions and presentation the more desirable."  

62 No author is given for the foreword, but it may be attributed to Fred Haines, who repeats large portions of the text in his presidential address to the RCA, published in the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (December 1939), pp.251-251. "Foreword", Canadian Industrial Arts Exhibition, (Toronto: Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, 1938), unpaginated. Illustrated catalogue.

The exhibition ran from February 4th to March 4th, 1938 at the Art Gallery of Toronto.

63 In Toronto, committee members were, in addition to Fred Haines: Frank Carmichael, A.J. Casson, and W.L. Somerville. In Montreal, they were Robert Pilot, G.S. Bagley, Ernest Barott, Philippe Baudoin, Albert Cloutier, and Edwin Holgate. The exhibition ran from February 4th to March 4th, 1938 at the Art Gallery of Toronto See catalogue: Canadian Industrial Arts Exhibition, (Toronto: Royal Canadian Academy, 1938), unpaginated.

64 Sir Wyly Gier's 1936 statement was made in admiration of the Exhibition of British Industrial Art, which demonstrated the resilience of academic societies at a time when a faltering economy and poor art sales threatened their existence. Gier considered a broader spectrum of influence for the fine arts as a means of revitalizing the RCA, stating: "But pictorial art has
Proof was provided by the inclusion of over fifty commercial artists and designers from Toronto and Montreal. Comfort figured prominently, having been commissioned to produce decorations for the exhibition itself, in addition to his submission of newspaper proofs for INCO advertisements. Jack Bush, who would take over from Comfort at INCO in 1938, included his work for the MacLaren Advertising Co. Limited of Toronto.\textsuperscript{65} Eric Aldwinckle, a member of the Arts and Letters Club from 1935 who joined George Pepper and Carmichael in the department of Commercial and Graphic Art at OCA in 1937, submitted a variety of magazine covers, poster and package designs, as did Casson and the well-known Montreal graphic artist Charles Fainmel. Corporate closure of the gap between artists and their public, advocated by Haines in a lecture of 1939, brought the humanist aesthetic developed in painting into active service for social progress.\textsuperscript{66} Haines' promotion of the universality by no means suffered eclipse, neither has it narrowed its field of endeavour. On the contrary, beyond the confines of the conventional easel picture it has widened its scope and has operated in mural and other forms of painting, in close alliance with architecture; and in black and white mainly, it has done highly imaginative and stimulating works in the formerly despised field of advertising, and in illustration of the literature of science, of history, and, on a larger scale, of magazine fiction...."


\textsuperscript{65} Comfort taught Bush the technique of scratchboard during their year of collaboration at INCO. Scratchboard was then popular in commercial illustration and used for the INCO advertisements. See: Christine Boyanoski, Jack Bush, Early Work (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), p.15.

\textsuperscript{66} "Today business offers the artist an inviting opportunity. He is asked to re-design the products of industry. The only patron who is disposed to pay for that beautification is business. And art supported by business has within itself the seeds of perpetuation."
of design, extending from the fine arts through industry to social structure, followed from John Dewey's premise in *Art as Experience*:

The remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression is not an isolated event confined to the artist and to a person here and there who happens to enjoy the work. In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity.67

"Art makes life -- not the reverse...", commented Brooker, "our view of life will change consciousness and that is life."68 Realization of that "faith in the fertility of order" MacCallum identified at the root of the CGF's formation fell to the Toronto painters, whose predisposition to commercial art and graphic design flourished under the alliance of artist and worker. With *Romance of Nickel* and *Petrouchka*, Comfort and Clark readied their colleagues for a communal reworking of the worker image current in commercial art and graphic design to arrive at a socially-conscious

Fred Haines, "Address Given by Mr. Fred Haines, P.R.C.A.", *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16 (December 1939), p.251.

67 Dewey's conclusions stem from his observations: "The problem of conferring esthetic quality upon all modes of production is a serious problem. But it is a human problem for human solution; not a problem incapable of solution because it is set by some impassable gulf in human nature or in the nature of things. In an imperfect society -- and no society will ever be perfect -- fine art will be to some extent an escape from, or an adventitious decoration of, the main activities of living. But in a better-ordered society than that in which we live, an infinitely greater happiness than is now the case would attend all modes of production."


68 Bertram Brooker, undated notes written in response to Walter Pach's *The Masters of Modern Art* published in 1924 (a book in his personal library), Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, File 11, Box 10, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.
language of visual exchange in the fine art of painting.

A Socially Conscious Language of Visual Exchange

"What is Art?", the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's series of national radio broadcasts organized by Donald Buchanan in 1938, featured Dr. A.F.B. Clark's deliberations on the gulf that separated artists, architects, writers and musicians from one another, and from the Canadian public. "[T]he exasperating thing about beauty", declared Clark, a cultural critic and professor of French literature at the University of British Columbia, "...it seems to demand communication; yet it defies all ordinary means of communication...." 69 A new approach to painting had to evolve wherein it would be seen, together with the fine, commercial and industrial arts, as an ulterior language, articulated through design and crafted to engage an audience in aesthetic experience. Eric Aldwinckle absorbed the deepening interest in an alliance of fine and applied art, to arrive at the claim: "If art is looked upon as a silent language, a new world of realisation opens up, a new world of self development, and a new world of healthy self expression." 70


70 Eric Aldwinckle, "Practical and Impractical Uses of Art", Lecture of the University of Toronto Extension Course: Arts and Crafts, 1947, p.72, Eric Aldwinckle papers, MG30 D234, vol.1, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

In 1947, Aldwinckle had completed his duties as an official war artist and returned to teaching commercial art at the newly formed School of Design at OCA. The School was the name given to the building purchased on Nassau Street in 1945 through a government grant for the creation of veterans retraining programs. No true division of studies actually separated the Grange Park and Nassau Street buildings, as the College
In times of economic need when "the ivory tower" was an unconscionable place for the painter, advertising and illustration seemed a likely prospect for defence against enmity and social division. "At first sight", considered Dr. Clark, this extension of the idea seems impossible....

Yet there is no doubt that words have also, by the subtle associations they evoke, an emotional as well as an intellectual function (take a phrase like "home sweet home"); further, they have a third and still more recondite function which allies them to colour and tone....

As in Mayerovitch's illustration for the New Frontier article "Blood For Spanish Democracy", Hyde's cover illustration of "The Tragedy of Spain", and Comfort's Pay Roll, image and text come together in consummate association when the two languages -- visual and written -- aspire to symbolic effect. Aldwinckle's Home Sweet Home (fig. 71), from the July 1936 issue of New Frontier, takes the all too familiar cliche, heavy with references to a democratic family ideal, and threatens it with the dreary prospect of an aesthetically impoverished society. Through the haze of churning industrial growth, two workers lock in conflict, failed by the empty entreaties to social unity provided by a lackluster popular culture, indicated by the billboard at bottom right. Aldwinckle's Home Sweet Home is reproduced in New Frontier as an illustration to William Lawson's article "Father Coughlin". Aldwinckle's frightening view of social


decay and violence provides a visual counterpart to Lawson's condemnation of the American "Radio Priest's" advocacy of Christian militarism to secure morality. Canada's vulnerability to extremist factions ran as a leitmotif through each issue of New Frontier.

In *Pay Roll*, it is the "army of Canadian workmen" who drive back social inequity and prejudice. The miner represents the foundation of progress whose strength Comfort exaggerates by turning the worker's powerful shoulders to the viewer. In rugged profile, engrossed in the skilled extraction of national wealth, Comfort presaged the protagonist idealized in *Romance of Nickel* for an association of workers and artists as partners in the advancement of culture in social democratic reform. During the five years that separated these two images, Comfort saw the hardened visage of the miner repeatedly drawn in numerous newspaper and magazine accounts of unionization, in the raised fist of workers and soldiers defending democracy, and in the graphic work of an increasing number of his colleagues.

In Mayerovitch's cover for the June 1936 issue of *New Frontier*, "Corbin -- A Company Town Fights For Its Life" (fig.72), the miner pictured in profile represents the character and spiritual strength of humanity associated with Canada's widely-scattered industrial towns and communities. The power of the image is its crystallization of the figure from the civilized landscape and, specifically, from that branch of industrial townscapes reaching back to the Group of Seven's search for the distinctly Canadian experience in the raw material of the landscape. The Corbin miner symbolizes

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the experience of community life pictured in Comfort's Smelter Stacks, Copper Cliff of 1936 (fig.73) and Yvonne McKague's Cobalt of 1928 and 1931 (figs.20,55), Carmichael's The Nickel Belt of 1925 (fig.74), Lawrence Harris' Miners' Houses, Glace Bay of c.1925 (fig.3), and Lismer's Copper Mining Town, Ontario of 1924 (fig.21).74 A new twist in this line of development emerged with Comfort's acclaimed Toronto Stock Exchange (TSE) murals of 1937 (fig.75), the best known of all his public commissions.75

Rosemary Donegan, who provides the most recent interpretation of Comfort's murals, dismisses all his mural projects other than the TSE -- "his most accomplished work" -- as "rather weak and uninspired by comparison."76 Romance of Nickel, for example, is too close to Comfort's INCO advertisements, like Pay Roll, for Donegan to consider it one of his most important murals. Even the TSE murals falter, in Donegan's opinion, on the point of social content, as no obvious reference to economic depression or the failure of

74 Donegan records that Comfort painted Smelter Stacks, Copper Cliff at the same time as Romance of Nickel. The painting depicts the 500-foot INCO smoke stack, completed in 1936.

The architectural firm of George & Moorhouse commissioned Comfort in 1936 to carry out two decorative projects at the newly constructed Toronto Stock Exchange on Bay Street: murals for the interior stock exchange trading floor, and an exterior frieze to run along the Bay Street facade. Comfort also designed the rondel decorations for the brass doors. Each of the eight mural panels measuring 4.8m X 1.2 metres. Comfort was assisted by Harold Ayres and Caven Atkins, who was a young painter and graphic artist from Winnipeg. The stone frieze, depicting an industrial procession measures 22.5 metres long and almost 2 metres high, was cut by stonemason Peter Schoen.

76 Rosemary Donegan, "Mural Roots", p.69.
capitalism appears. Is Donegan right in assuming that the TSE
murals "are an unabashed glorification of commerce... not
concerned with the social or economic effects of
industrialization, the slums, the unemployed or the tedium of
industrial labour..."? Donegan provides a clue to the
opposite, in fact, when she states: "His figures, buildings
and machines operate as symbols that are recognizable and have
meaning and overall intent."77 Comfort's ability to produce
and manipulate symbols caught the attention of Christine
Boyanoski, too, who describes Lake Superior Village (fig.76),
awarded first prize in the 1938 Great Lakes Exhibition, as "an
appropriate symbol" of regionalism that functions "as a piece
of propaganda."78 What Boyanoski defined as Comfort's
"mitigated form of modernism", being the source of symbolic
effect in this painting, might now be identified with that
middle ground of representational form defined in the humanist
aesthetic. Lake Superior Village is a typical example of the
humanist aesthetic at work in the civilized landscape
established by mid decade, with two significant importations
from the graphic medium of advertising: the unprecedented
inclusion of text, seen at middle right with "Nipigon Lumber
Company", (only partially visible), painted on a warehouse
roof; and the heightened tonal contrast creating a glossy
surface finish. By comparison to Comfort's Tadoussac of 1935
(fig.39), Lake Superior Village has a commercial immediacy

77 Rosemary Donegan, "Mural Roots", p.69

78 This may explain, suggests Boyanoski, why Lake Superior
Village won first prize at the 1938 Great Lakes Exhibition,
which brought together one hundred and sixty-five paintings of
American and Canadian artists of the region. Canada was
represented by sixteen painters from Toronto, including Bertram
Brooker, Paraskeva Clark, Yvonne McKague Housser, Isabel
McLaughlin, Will Ogilvie, George Pepper, Carl Schafer and Gordon
Webber.
Christine Boyanoski, "Charles Comfort Lake Superior Village",
Collection in Focus No.6 (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario,
that invokes an association of the fine and industrial arts.

"Mining", the subject of one of the eight canvas panels making up the TSE murals, clearly recalls that "army of workmen" described in the INCO advertisement Pay Roll and defined, in Canadian politics, by the WUL and NUWA unions. Comfort creates the impression of an army by repeating the miner's determined silhouette in a crowd of figures seen in the elevator at centre right and in the rows of marching figures to the left. At the bottom of the composition, two miners appear in dynamic opposition digging and drilling into the ore face. The standing figure, drawn from the 1933 INCO advertisement Pay Roll and repeated in Comfort's Romance of Nickel, is resolved into a symbol of artist and worker.

The worker appears in every panel of the TSE murals, as a reminder of the human dimension of industry emphasized in popular culture. His origins date back to the pioneering lumberjack, depicted in the pulp-and-paper panel in a Holgate-inspired image at top left. Gordon Webber's decorative graphic image of two loggers for the April 1936 issue of New Frontier (fig.77) suggests that the motif was still very current.79 At top right in Comfort's panel is a complementary image of a wilderness forest, carefully patterned in ordered rows recalling the Harris landscapes of the early-1920s. At the base of the composition, two newspaper boys, emblazoned with maple leaves, promote cultural commerce. Their newspapers boldly relate image and text in reference to the Toronto community of painters' cultivation of art as a language of social communication. The axe, placed as a predella to the panel, establishes the pioneer roots of Canadian cultural

79 Webber's image follows the tradition of Thoreau MacDonald's small graphic compositions that enlivened the pages of The Canadian Forum. Like MacDonald's images, moreover, Webber's presentation of two lumberjacks adds aesthetic piquancy to E.A.Beder's article "Basis For a People's Party". See: New Frontier 1 (April 1936), p.7.
development. Like the axe, the plough cutting blade depicted at the bottom of the agriculture panel, traces Canadian cultural growth from the wilderness to the civilized landscape. Above, the worker’s clenched fist in the agriculture panel opens to seed freshly turned cultural soil. The crop is then harvested and housed in the towering grain elevator, pictured at top left, referring to collective wealth. Farming or rather cultivation here serves as a trope for culture, recapitulating Fred Housser’s assessment of the need, stated in his 1926 publication A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven, “to re-plant our fields so that we may harvest food for our souls as well as for our bodies.”

What was significant about the TSE murals was not, argued Graham McInnes, their celebration of Canadian industrial growth or the material wealth of the nation, but their revelation of skill in the fusion of popular culture, through the image of the worker, to a deeply-rooted artistic tradition inherited by the Toronto painters from the Group of Seven.

**Artist, Worker, Farmer: A Cultural Trope**

As a character in popular culture, the farmer emerged as a labourer whose skill, like that of the artist and industrial worker, contributed to what John Alford had described as "aesthetic control and judgement of the environment", aimed at the progress of culture in social democratic reform. Farmers represented a stronghold of support in Canada for social democracy dating back to 1920 when the Progressive Party formed to voice the concerns of United Farmers’ organizations.

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in Ontario and the West in parliament. Between 1935 and 1937, graphic images of the farmer behind a horse-drawn plough regularly appeared in *The Canadian Forum* and *New Frontier*, to establish an association of the farmer's cultivation of order in the land with the balance of order requisite to social democratic reform. In Thoreau MacDonald's small rectangular composition, reprinted in several issues of the Forum, an evening sun highlights a vast expanse of landscape and sharply silhouettes the farmer at work. In the August 1935 example (fig. 78), the image complements the accompanying text, setting a reflective tone for Leo Kennedy's poetic revelation of life's ephemeral profits.

In the December 1936 issue of the magazine, a bare-backed farmer reminiscent of Comfort's *Pay Roll* miner, rises up over his team to take control of the landscape (fig. 79). He is, as the surrounding text suggests, the image of western Canadian

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82 Canadian socialists established close political and organizational links with farmers and labourers. As Penner suggests, these links "ultimately determined the character and ideological outlook of Canadian social democracy."

83 The farmer working a horse-drawn plough, silhouetted by a setting sun, forms part of a larger composition on the cover of the April 1932 issue of *The Canadian Forum* (vol.12). Here an abandoned tractor dominates the deeply furrowed foreground.

84 See: *The Canadian Forum* 15 (August 1935), p.323. Kennedy was one of the new school of Montreal poets who included A.J.M. Smith and LSR representative Frank Scott. MacDonald's farmer provides a visual metaphor for Kennedy's description in the poem *Loser Take All*:
"Thus without caution goes the naked soul
To wring a fruitage from desert waste,
To clasp a spar and dare the swirling shoal,
To fire its bridges with becoming haste --
Whereby asserts the genius of a breed
That gleans fat harvest from ambiguous seed."
solidarity represented by an emergent Social Credit party.\(^8^5\) By September of 1937, the year of one of the worst crops in Canadian agricultural history, the image of the farmer looks out from the cover of the *New Frontier* issue "Drought" to elicit public recognition of his struggle to survive (fig.80).\(^8^6\) The farmer, clearly, was a vital member of society whose skills of cultivation were metaphorically allied to those of the industrial labourer and the artist, who were likewise bound, whether materially or spiritually, to the raw materials of the landscape. The farmer's presence was implicit as a civilizing force in the quintessential farmlands painted by the Toronto community of painters. His example was that of the worker in active and harmonious dialogue with nature.

**Pioneer Survival** (fig.81), as Comfort entitled his 1938 diploma piece for the RCA, describes the farmer's steadfast defence of order and stability in the land. In style, this painting closely resembles *Lake Superior Village*, but replaces the foreground railroad tracks with two enormous tree stumps, exposing the roots of Canada's wilderness to the farmer's pattern of social organization. The reshaping of the materials of the natural environment, wrote John Alford, set "a stage and setting for the drama and art of life."\(^8^7\) In this, the farmer is an artist, as Eric Aldwinckle proposed when he claimed:

> Farming is an art, in a sense. The farmer employs with great craftsmanship the art of even straight furrows in


The image is by J. Olsen, an unknown graphic artist.

\(^8^6\) See: *New Frontier* 2 (September 1937), cover. The drawing is by "Wall", an unknown graphic artist.

ploughing his field.\footnote{98} Schaefer, too, found great aesthetic satisfaction in the turn of each furrow.\footnote{89} Schaefer continued to paint the southern Ontario landscape, reworking \textit{Wheatfield, Hanover} to produce \textit{Storm over the Fields} of 1937, (fig.82).\footnote{90}

Schaefer's "variations on a theme", as he described his Hanover studies to fellow painter David Milne, established this landscape as one of the most memorable of the decade.\footnote{91} Schaefer's distinctive barren tree, first seen in \textit{Ontario Farmhouse} of 1934 (fig.38) as a companion motif with the house, is invoked in \textit{Storm over the Fields} as an intangible presence. The absent tree is charged with the poignant memory of the artist as a witness to the cultivation of human order and pattern in the landscape. While working in the fields, as Comfort painted Schaefer in his 1932 portrait \textit{Young Canadian} (fig.35), the artist engaged the dialogue between humanity and nature established and maintained in the land by the farmer. The barren tree in Schaefer's art functions both as a reference to himself, as a cultural worker responsible for the communication of humanist values, and the farmer, as a worker

\footnote{88}{Eric Aldwinckle, "Practical and Impractical Uses of Art", Lecture of the University of Toronto Extension Course: Arts and Crafts, 1947, p.72, Eric Aldwinckle papers, MG30 D234, vol.1, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.}

\footnote{89}{As related to me by Carl Schaefer's son, Mark Schaefer in an interview at the old family home in Toronto, October 17, 1991.}

\footnote{90}{Despite Chris Varley's contention that Schaefer "was seeking entirely different expressive ends than Comfort", the tonal contrast and dramatic immediacy of \textit{Storm over the Fields} compares directly to Comfort's \textit{Lake Superior Village} of the same year. Christopher Varley, "Introduction", \textit{Carl Schaefer in Hanover}, (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), unpagedinated.}

\footnote{91}{Carl Schaefer, Toronto, to David Milne, Severn Park, October 5, 1938; Carl Schaefer papers, MG30 D171, vol.8, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.}
who inscribes the land with the presence of humanity. In *Summer Harvest*, *Hanover* of 1935 (fig.37), the tree and the cultivated fields are directly allied. In *Storm over Fields*, the tree exists outside the compositional field of view. It rests with the spectator, who brings a familiarity with Schaefer's manipulation of the tree to an interpretation of humanist values in the landscape. Schaefer's work is self-referential, and makes use of repetitions of motifs and compositions to imbue depth of social and aesthetic meaning to the painted southern Ontario landscape.

**The Tree Personified**

In *Petroushka*, Clark acknowledges the significance of Schaefer's barren tree as a symbol of humanist values referring collectively to the artist and the farmer as labourers for the progress of society. Her inclusion of the tree, lifted from Schaefer's rural landscapes and placed in the confined space of the background tenement structures, serves as a visual marker for the fallen Petrushka and the workers' struggle for equity and the creation of a humane and generous society. The tree manifests Clark's sense of artistic community, evoked by her presentation of Petrushka within a Carnival of the Arts and made specific to the Toronto community of painters through her recollection of Schaefer. This, of course, was not Clark's sole visual quotation from Schaefer. *Wheat Field* of 1936 (fig.57) reworked Schaefer's quintessential image of the civilized landscape, *Wheatfield, Hanover* also of 1936 (fig.56), to express an ideal vision of order, harmony and balance. *Petroushka*, in other words, develops a visual exchange within the Toronto community of painters begun in *Wheat Field* and grounded in the aesthetic experience of the lived land. As such, this painting does not indicate Clark's abandonment of landscape painting as Mary MacLachlan suggests, but rather a preoccupation with the language of the humanist aesthetic emerging in contemporary
Canadian painting among artists who shared a sense of responsibility for the progress of culture and society. The tree fights between the dense curtain of tenements to rise above the fallen Petrushka and pay respect, in McInnes' terms, to "the people whom the landscape has conditioned, and who in turn, are affecting it...." Schaefer believed, "art is not for the few privileged to enjoy.... It is for all."

Beginning with Clark's Petrushka, the tree played back to graphic art as a repository of humanist values embraced by the socially-conscious Canadian artist. In Caven Atkins' pen drawing Willowvale Park (fig. 83), reproduced in the March 1939 issue of The Canadian Forum, Schaefer's tree, pictured at the centre of the composition, is dwarfed by a crowded forest of giant trees whose branches form an impenetrable canopy of power and influence. The tree survives, nevertheless,

92 Mary MacLachlan concludes that the year 1937 marks a turning point for Clark, when she "began to paint works in which she fulfills her expressed commitment to an art which serves a social function." For MacLachlan, this fulfillment necessitated Clark's abandonment of landscape painting. Mary MacLachlan, Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), p.26.


95 Atkins' composition of trees developed out of his studies with FitzGerald at the Winnipeg School of Art from 1925 to 1928. Two compositions: Winnipeg Street Scene, a linocut of 1933 and Moonlit Landscape, Toward Infinity, an oil of 1935, show the progression of house and road later combined with Schaefer's
marking a path to progress cut at ground level. Although Atkins clearly felt the division of classes in Toronto, Willowvale Park is less a dour image of oppression than an entertaining reworking of a motif to expand its range of meaningful associations. As a painter and commercial artist who became integrated within the Toronto community of painters immediately after his move from Winnipeg in 1933, Atkins was well-positioned to invest in a community exchange of visual language at the end of the decade. In so doing, judged McInnes, Atkins realized "a fusion of the two approaches": "a spirit of intellectual contemplation... [and] an immediate emotional response." Recognizable subject and abstract design here came together in an amplified version of Abell's middle ground of representational form.

In John Hall's wood engraving Interlude (fig. 84), (also called Lovers on the Dole), reproduced in the May 1939 issue of The Canadian Forum, the tree chaperones a soulful farming couple, who are heroically silhouetted against a dramatic sky

96 Atkins trained as a commercial artist in Winnipeg, where he worked at Brigden's. He took his formal art training with LeMoine FitzGerald at the Winnipeg School of Art. In Toronto, he continued to work commercially both freelance and under Rene Cera. He was Comfort's assistant along with Harold Ayres on the TSE murals, and took over Schaefer's position as the head of art classes and the arts and crafts room at Hart House in 1940. In 1935 he participated in a group show at the AGT with Schaefer and Pegi Nicol (MacLeod), Thoreau MacDonald, John Alfsen and Robert Ross. Douglas Duncan of the Picture Loan Society in Toronto gave him a solo exhibition in 1937. In 1939, he was a director of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour and secretary of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art.

See: Ted Fraser, Caven Atkins: The Winnipeg Years (Windsor: The Art Gallery of Windsor, 1988); and Ted Fraser A Retrospective Exhibition of Selected Works by Caven Atkins Spanning Fifty Years of the Artist's Life (Windsor: Art Gallery of Windsor, 1979).

and an imposing factory shaping their horizon. In this supportive and protective role, the tree recalls Clark's Petroushka. It is Clark's Presents from Madrid (fig.85), however, painted before Petroushka in 1937, that provides a model for Hall's composition. Clark selects and arranges a group of objects for their symbolic impact to compose in the language of art a statement about the progress of culture in social democratic reform. Hall, a commercial artist by profession, selects and arranges objects emblematic of his artistic community to compose a statement about Canadian cultural preservation in the language of art. The tree makes his point by symbolizing the Toronto painters' conviction in the artist's cultivation of a dialogue between humanity, represented by the couple, and nature, threatened by the encroachment of industry.

Schaefer's presence pervades the landscape in Interlude, and is pointedly invited in the foreground harvest of fruits. Hall's Interlude and Schaefer's Apples of 1935 (fig.86) were

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98 The articles composed in Presents from Madrid are: a cap from the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Batallion of the International Brigade, a scarf of the Spanish Popular Front, a Republican magazine defending the Loyalist position, and a traditional Spanish musical score, sent to Clark by Bethune from Spain.

See: Mary MacLachlan, Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings, p.28.

99 John Hall was born in Toronto in 1914 and studied at the Ontario College of Art between 1933 and 1936. Carmichael, Yvonne McKague Housser, John Alfsen and George Pepper were among his most influential teachers at OCA. He worked as an assistant in the Saturday Morning Classes at the Art Gallery of Toronto from 1935 to 1937, missing Lismer who was then away doing Carnegie-sponsored educational work in South Africa, and on a year's leave working at the Teachers' College of Columbia University in New York. Hall's first public exhibition was the 1935 Ontario Society of Artists show.

shown together at the 1939 Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art held at the New York World's Fair. Laurence Hyde's Lovers Sheltering From a Storm (fig. 87), reproduced in the January 1937 issue of New Frontier and referring to the Spanish Civil War, would have been the logical third choice for inclusion in the exhibition. Together, the three images demonstrate an impetus for community in the exchange of visual vocabulary. Hyde reworked Schaefer's characteristic placement of a house on a hill seen in the 1935 painting Spring Evening (fig. 42). To this Hyde added a couple in silent embrace while their civilized landscape is destroyed by a tight formation of three bomber planes. A lush tree shelters the couple, whose peace flies with the dove to the right. In Interlude, Hall splits the couple, reconstructs an industrial landscape, and strips the tree. In so doing he invites the viewer to contemplate the turn of motifs as they relate to the reality of community life in society.

Hall was speaking from the strong sense of artists'  


101 Hyde's scratchboard image Lovers Sheltering From a Storm was shown in the 1937 exhibition of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, courtesy of New Frontier. Catalogue -- Canadian Society of Graphic Art (Toronto: Canadian Society of Graphic Art, 1937), catalogue no. 207. Not illustrated.

102 Thoreau MacDonald was Hyde's first guide in graphic art. In 1932, he began formal training at Central Technical School, where Schaefer taught him the technique of wood engraving. Central Tech, as it was known, was primarily a vocational institution. The art program there, under the direction of Peter Haworth, impressed McInnes for developing some of the best of Canada's young "artists-in-action." See: Patricia Ainslie The Wood Engravings of Laurence Hyde (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1986), pp. 10, 12.
solidarity he shared with his colleagues, and with the small
coterie of younger artists gathered in the Hayden Street or
"Studio Group" formed by Barker Fairley in 1938.\textsuperscript{103} Whereas
McInnes saw this Group as a positive sign that creativity can
happen communally and overcome the economic problem of space
rental, "it may be doubted if artists can give of their best
in this communal manner." Inevitably, observed McInnes,
creativity "suffers from too much rubbing of mental and
emotional elbows."\textsuperscript{104} Such creative intimacy, however,
surely encouraged consideration of the associative language of
art, creatively played through the borrowing and reworking of
motifs and compositions immediately recognizable as references
to a local community of artists. Hall's handling of the
figures suggests a poignant reversal of that intimate union of
humanity and nature expressed by Brooker in \textit{Figures in a
Landscape} of eight years earlier. The reversal marks a moment
of crisis for it demonstrates the exigency of cultural
unification to repair social breakdown. In the context of
Henry Paul's \textit{Canadian Forum} article, "I Am a Transient", which
Hall's \textit{Interlude} illustrates, a direct correlation emerges
between humanity's alienation from the landscape and "The lay-

\textsuperscript{103} Boyanoski describes the Hayden Street Group as a "loosely
knit, informal group whose membership grew to about twenty-four
before its final demise in 1943...." All were "socially
conscious" and shared "a desire to depict human values", but
were brought together more for economic than ideological
reasons. The original members of this group, apart from
Fairley, were John Hall, Warren Luckock (a commercial artist by
training), Isobelle Reid, and Aba Bayefsky.
See: Christine Boyanoski, \textit{The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in

\textsuperscript{104} In his review of the first Hayden Street Group show of
1941, McInnes noted that within this cooperative of twenty-seven
members who were jointly renting studio space, marked
similarities appeared "not only of technique and design, but of
artistic and social outlook."
Graham McInnes, "Art and Artists: A 1941 Yearbook, Despite
Blitz", \textit{Saturday Night} (April 26, 1941), p.28.
off, the road again, futility."105

"And The Answer Is...", New Frontier's compelling
question from the March 1937 issue, asked what could be done
to remedy social injustice. Toronto graphic artist Mann Ward
expressed the urgency of this question with his cover
illustration of an unemployed worker, asleep on a park bench,
haunted by his vision of the tree transformed into a tombstone
(fig.88). City parks became homes for the unemployed in
Toronto during the Depression. George Pepper made note of the
large number of jobless labourers who gathered daily at the
heart of the University Settlement district in Unemployed,
Grange Park, Toronto, of c.1938 (fig.89). In composition and
symbolic effect, Pepper's image recalls the habitant interiors
first explored by Lismer in the graphic medium and developed
into large oil paintings by his wife Kathleen Daly Pepper.
Daly's Une Soirée Canadienne (fig.90), from the 1939 CGP
exhibition, brings the viewer into the lively circle of a
Quebec farming family to experience music, crafts, and
community life lived in harmony with the landscape. These
figures, reaching back into images from the 1920s and early
1930s, represent the original union of the arts and labour in
Canada. Their lives appear rich in comparison to the
unharnessed talent of urban industrial labourers, lounging in
a skilled performance of poses and gestures, indicative of
Pepper's work as a drawing and painting instructor at OCA. A
decade of economic depression, unemployment, and the breakdown
of familial relations at the core of society magnified the
need for artists to promote, in the spirit of community,
humanist values.

In Recluse of 1939 (fig.91), (entitled Derelict in the
1939 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition), Brooker stages a
play about the alienated worker on the urban set of Clark's

105 Henry Paul, "I Am a Transient", The Canadian Forum, 19
Petroushka, now reduced to a simplified arrangement of diagonals. Where Clark positions the tree as companion to the worker, Brooker places a pattern of three telephone poles receding into space. Their function is to signal the absence of beauty in urban life, and, by implication, of harmonious social order. "[U]gly telephone or power poles in a city street", so Buchanan claimed in the interest of industrial design, "may do more to retard a national feeling for the fine arts than any relative inaccessibility to old masters and Grecian sculptures." Like Atkins' Willowvale Park, where the tree signifies the strength of grass roots cultural growth beneath the canopy of class division, Brooker's worker marks the path for cultural influence at street level, in urban planning, architecture, industrial design and commercial art.

Brooker's urban lament found its rural complement in Schaefer's 1939 Farmhouse by the Railway (fig. 92) from the Canadian Group of Painters' exhibition of that year.\(^7\) The pattern of industrial development insensitively cut into the rural landscape of Farmhouse By The Railway circumscribes the enclave of beauty preserved in the garden, and the neat rows of cultivated ground extending from the brightly-painted red house. A telephone pole at the bottom left, and railroad crossing sign at bottom right, frame Schaefer's vision of delicate balance in the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature, marked by the familiar tree. The

\(^{106}\) Buchanan was paraphrasing J.E. Barton, who was well-known for his radio talks on art appreciation for the British Broadcasting Corporation. The National Gallery of Canada invited Barton for a national lecture tour in 1935, (beginning in January of that year), during which time he also gave several radio addresses with the Canadian Radio Commission. Donald Buchanan, "Design in Industry", Saturday Night (December 29, 1934), p.11.

\(^{107}\) Canadian Group of Painters Exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (Toronto: Canadian Group of Painters, 1939), no catalogue number -- Carl Schaefer Farmhouse by the Railway. Unillustrated catalogue.
windswept landscape betrays Schaefer's sense of changing circumstances, echoing Leonard Hutchinson's impression of the factory worker's meagre claim to the land in Canadian Homes and Gardens (fig. 93), a woodcut of c. 1937.108 Farmhouse By The Railway associates the cycle of cultural development with the seasons, caught by Schaefer on an early autumn day on a downward turn. Industrial expansion here concludes a long development of intimate garden views in Canadian painting, beginning with The Tangled Garden of 1916 (fig. 94) by Schaefer's teacher and mentor J. E. H. MacDonald, and maturing with images of "humanity in action" signalled in Yvonne McKague Housser's South Shore Quebec of 1933 (fig. 95), Pegi Nicol MacLeod's School in a Garden of 1934 (fig. 96), and George Pepper's Tobacco Patch, St. Urbain of 1936 (fig. 97).109 It is the memory of these works, and the evaluation of Schaefer's generation of painters invited by the 1938 exhibition A Century of Canadian Art, that expresses Schaefer's deepening sense of cultural anxiety.

A Century of Canadian Art

Where did the Toronto community of painters fit within the National Gallery of Canada's review of one hundred years of Canadian painting? The Tate show, (as A Century of

108 Hamilton artist Leonard Hutchinson was well-known in Toronto as the president of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, and a member of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers. McInnes considered Hutchinson, Laurence Hyde, Nathan Petroff, and Eric Aldwinckle to be the leading contemporary graphic artists of 1937, "not only because it [their work] is good, but because they are all practising artists in action, with access to the magazine and advertising world." Hutchinson was also instrumental in the formation of Hamilton Local 104 of the Artists' Union.


Canadian Art was popularly known), provided an overview of painting and sculpture in Canada dating back to the seventeenth century. This was the first historical retrospective of Canadian art sent overseas. The 1924 and 1925 exhibitions at Wembley, England, and the 1927 exhibition at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris had dealt primarily with contemporary work. The Tate show combined the idea of a cultural exchange broached by these earlier exhibitions with a new appreciation for the collective history of art in Canada.\footnote{110}

Representation of the work of the Toronto painters, however, was insufficient to expose the language of visual exchange that had come to symbolize their community. Significant changes in the careers of these artists were also lost, including Comfort’s popular success, Macleod’s 1937 departure for New York, and the emergence of younger artists like John Hall from art schools where Schaefer and Comfort, along with many of their colleagues, were teachers. The invisibility of the Toronto community of painters in 1938 is significant, for it suggests that their appeal to humanist values remained localized and therefore ineffectual. Failure to achieve a strong presence in the most prestigious of Canadian art exhibitions of the 1930s, moreover, seems paradoxical in light of the observations of Tate Gallery trustee Sir Evan Charteris:

But the art of Canada seems now to be entering on another phase.... Future developments in Canadian art, and the value of its contribution to the spiritual resources of mankind have good reason to excite the deepest interest. In the meantime the policy of interchange of Exhibitions

\footnote{110 In his review of the Tate show for Saturday Night magazine, McInnes revealed that the exhibition drew from the collections of the National Gallery of Canada and Vincent and Alice Massey. Graham McInnes, "A Century of Canadian Art", Saturday Night (November 19, 1938), p.22.}
such as this cannot fail to advance the cause of art, as well as strengthen friendship and mutual understanding between nations.\footnote{9}{111}

John Lyman, founder of the Contemporary Arts Society formed in Montreal in 1939, (the first society to test the dominance of the Toronto-based Canadian Group of Painters), challenged contemporary painters to place greater emphasis on formal design. McInnes, believing that this was precisely what the leading Toronto painters had been doing in their advancement of a middle ground of representational form, central to the humanist aesthetic, was supportive. In fact, McInnes felt so confident in the model of "vitality and direction" extended from the city, where "artists experience their environment no matter where it may be, and put down that experience in sensitive well-organized form", that he titled his 1939 review of the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition "Upswing in Art Has Come?"\footnote{12}{112} As McInnes explained:

Nearly two years ago, John Lyman wrote an article in The Montrealer, in the course of which he said: "This talk of the Canadian Scene has gone sour. The real Canadian scene is in the consciousness of Canadian painters, irrespective of the object of their thoughts." As I see it, this is the nub of the whole position....\footnote{13}{113}

For art to succeed as a language of social communication, explained McInnes in his 1939 publication, \textit{A Short History of}

\footnote{111}{Sir Evan Charteris, (Trustee of the Tate Gallery), "Foreword", \textit{A Century of Canadian Art}, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1938), p. 7.}

\footnote{112}{"The biennial exhibition of work by members of the Canadian Group of Painters", claimed McInnes, "...is a focal point for some of the best contemporary art in the Dominion and it is heir to an unbroken tradition which, though it stretches back a number of years now, has always been a source of vitality." Graham McInnes, "Upswing In Art Has Come?" 4 \textit{Saturday Night} (November 4, 1939), p.6.}

\footnote{113}{Graham McInnes, "Upswing In Art Has Come?", p.6.}
Canadian Art, an artist must demonstrate "a general artistic awareness, an understanding of contemporary life, an intelligent use of the great tradition, and the ability to give the stamp of the universal to what has been inspired by the particular." On all four counts, the work of Comfort, Brooker, Schaefer, and Clark exemplified a general trend in Toronto painting. For Barker Fairley, a champion of social consciousness in Canadian art since the first exhibition of the Group of Seven, artists aspiring to universal significance would be advised to develop the figure as the primary subject of their art. In "Canadian Art: Man vs. Landscape", published in The Canadian Forum in December of 1939, Fairley clearly allied his recommendation to the exigencies of World War Two:

"Canadian painting", answered Robert Ayre, "can get away from the landscape and into humanity without group action, and I think it is beginning to do it." In the early years of World War Two, the answer to the problem of national cultural development and the achievement of a secure and influential position for the artist in national life would be sought through federation. By linking

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116 Robert Ayre, "Force and Direction of Newer Painting Under Criticism, Prof. Fairley's Advice to Canadian Artists is to Turn Attention to Human Subjects," The Montreal Standard (Saturday, January 20, 1940).
distinct arts communities from widespread regions of the country, the Toronto painters and their predecessors in the Group of Seven hoped they could preserve individual identity while advancing national cultural development. The idea was one of democratic union, defending the rights of artists as cultural workers, and appeasing the differences of opinion between cultural leaders across the country in order to guarantee a solid national front.
CHAPTER FOUR: Art Comes to Life

What role should the Canadian artist play in the Second World War? Would war provide the Toronto community of painters with an opportunity to exercise the social value of art for individual and communal well-being at the national level? Chapter four considers the means by which the Toronto painters tried to bring art to life in the service of democracy in crisis. In both the figurative and literal sense, bringing art to life entailed an entrenchment of their art within the humanist tradition of western art.

International chaos and the absence of national representation for the arts in Canada engendered a conservative response within the Toronto community of painters. Conservatism here refers to a reawakening of the established academic tradition of the fine arts, drawn from antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, to bolster the contemporary relevance of the humanist aesthetic. The Toronto painters could assume an enduring cultural influence based on the academic hierarchy of the fine arts, in stark contrast to the ephemeral contribution of the propagandist and commercial designer. Longevity would provide stability and authority for the advancement of culture in post-war social reconstruction.

Interest in Canadian cultural unity soared in wartime. In 1941 artists and cultural workers from across the country gathered in Kingston to consider the place of the visual arts in Canadian national life. Recognition of Canada's regional diversity would be the most significant outcome of the discussion among artists and cultural workers of the exigency of cultural development. How could the humanist aesthetic be effective if it constituted the local language of the Toronto community of painters? Chapter four presents their solution to this problem in the conception of a distinctively Canadian humanist tradition.
Reawakening

When Britain and France declared war on Germany two days after Hitler's attack on Poland on September 1st, 1939, the Toronto painters intensified their appeal to the advancement of culture in social democratic reform for the closure of the gap separating art from everyday life. In an effort to bring humanist values to the forefront of a cultural defence of democracy, these artists made claim to the western humanist tradition. A revival of aesthetic order and clarity of purpose with intellectual humanism and social enlightenment associated with Greco-Roman and Renaissance cultures lent historical legitimacy to contemporary artists' belief in the social value of art. Self-conscious alliance of modern art with conservative tradition characterized a return during the interwar years to representational painting, which Walter Abell described as an international phenomenon. In Canada, as in the United States, these values were closely associated with a democratic ideal of liberal educational and social equity. Within the Toronto community of painters, Brooker was the first to bring a self-conscious reference to the humanist tradition of art into direct association with a modern vision of cultural progress. Brooker's 1940 painting Pygmalion's Miracle (fig.98) shows an antique statue of an idealized female nude transforming into human flesh.¹

The story of Pygmalion in Ovid's Metamorphoses recounts an artist's desire for his creation to come to life and take human form.² In 1913, the English moralist and playwright

¹ Pygmalion's Miracle was shown in the 1940 annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists held from March 1st to 31st at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Illustrated Catalogue, Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists (Toronto: Ontario Society of Artists, 1940), catalogue no.14, not illustrated.

George Bernard Shaw published *Pygmalion*, setting the drama of transformation in contemporary London. When the film adaptation appeared in 1938, (in an Arthur Rank production), *Pygmalion* resurfaced as a modern dilemma of social inequity. For Brooker, who had long been interested in film as a medium of popular culture complementing commercial art and advertising, the idea of the work of art stepping beyond the boundaries of its frame to effect social change was attractive. In *Pygmalion's Miracle*, Brooker aspires to the same idea of cultural influence as he did in *Recluse* of 1939 (fig.91), where he set his sights at street level to repair the absence of beauty in urban life. The composition features the same diagonal lines, which now refer to studio draperies and to the academic practice of working from plaster models of antique sculpture. In this case the model is a pudic Venus type originating with Praxiteles' *Cnidian Aphrodite* of the fourth century B.C., an image of perfected beauty repeatedly

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3 Brooker's list: Books That Have Influenced Me (undated), includes the reference to George Bernard Shaw -- "everything, Back to Methuselah [sic]". *Back to Methuselah*, published in 1921, expounded Shaw's basic philosophy of what he called the Life Force (elan vital). The evolution of this force, wrote Shaw, would lead ultimately to the redemption of humanity from the bondage of the flesh.

Bertram Brooker Papers, MSS 16, Box 10, Folder 9, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

In 1921, expounded Shaw's basic philosophy of what he called the Life Force (elan vital). The evolution of this force, wrote Shaw, would lead ultimately to the redemption of humanity from the bondage of the flesh.

4 Bertram Brooker, writes Thomas Lee, "persuaded that motion pictures were the coming thing", bought a movie theatre in Neepawa, Manitoba with his brother in 1913. He wrote scenarios for the movies, which he sold to Vitagraph. In 1914, he handed the theatre over to his brother to become editor of the *Portage Review*.


copied in the Greco-Roman tradition of western art. In Pygmalion's Miracle, Brooker presents an awakening of this humanist tradition to a cultural defence of democracy in war. Charles Comfort responded in kind with his painting Primavera of 1942 (fig. 99), known only through a reproduction in the 1942 Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) catalogue. This nude supports Brooker's appeal to a revival of artistic tradition in contemporary life.

The recumbent figure in Comfort's Primavera, like the statue in Pygmalion's Miracle, is Venus. The source is now the sixteenth-century Venetian painter Titian, whose Venus of Urbino of 1538 Comfort emulates. The pose of Venus is the same, with the exception of the arms, which appear raised to shield her outward glance from the glare of a bright mediterranean sun. Comfort chose to replace Titian's patrician interior with a Tuscan landscape, convincingly rendered in roughly-textured impasto. The trees are distinctive, and are of a type which reappear in Comfort's Italian landscapes painted as an official war artist between 1943-1948. They are most likely wild olive trees, as the choice of this symbol of peace would warrant association with

5 Primavera was Comfort's one submission to the 1942 exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters, held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in February. Canadian Group of Painters, Exhibitino 1942 (Toronto: CGP, 1942), catalogue no.16, reproduced p.9.

6 Comfort left for Europe on May 12, 1939 from New York, landing in Italy and travelling on to Spain, Switzerland, Paris and Normandy before returning to New York on June 26. Titian's Venus of Urbino would have been on view at the Uffizi in Florence. "Travel Journal (Europe) 1939", Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol.1, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Venus as an image of Humanitas. The title Primavera refers to Botticelli's painting, also in the Uffizi, and evokes Comfort's particular interest in the Italian Renaissance as a model of regeneration of a humanist cultural tradition. His trip to Italy in 1939, likely made in preparation for teaching mural painting and design in the department of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto, encouraged Comfort to present the study of art as "a general education of abilities on a broad humanistic basis." Emphasis on the Renaissance complemented the departmental aim, as set out by John Alford:

> to create or strengthen a belief in essential human values, and to encourage a respect for western culture which is at the very basis of the western democratic way of life.... The great works of art are interpreted not merely as the expression of individual emotions, but as evidence of man's concept of the world in which he lives, of his relation with his fellow men, and of his faith.

"As a humanist," claimed Comfort late in his career, "I have great faith in man's essential capacity to do good." The statement not only reflects the social consciousness of Comfort's generation, but his admiration as an artist working...

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8 This statement would have been written by Comfort in collaboration with John Alford, who left his position as chair of the Department of Fine Arts in 1946 to teach at the Rhode Island School of Design. Peter Brieger took over as chair, but maintained Alford's departmental philosophy in accordance with the continued financial support of the Carnegie Corporation through the end of the decade.

Department of Art and Archaeology, October 20, 1948; "Teaching Notes, University of Toronto, 1946-59", Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol.5, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

9 Department of Art and Archaeology, October 20, 1948; "Teaching Notes, University of Toronto, 1946-59", Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81, vol.5, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

towards the progress of culture in social democratic reform
for historical precedents of political, religious and
intellectual integration of art in society. Comfort remained
acutely aware of the need to overcome the modern artist's
social dislocation. In response to the question "Why I
paint?", asked in 1946, Comfort offered:

[the] artist should be a responsible, integrated human
who is able to apprehend the tempo and rhythms of life
about him and make some significant visual statement
about them... contributing to cultured life of community
with honest sincerity and deep integrity toward his work
and in relation to his generation."  

Comfort does in fact refer to the modern movement of painting
in Canada in Primavera. Prudence Heward's Girl under a Tree
(fig.100) from the final Group of Seven exhibition held in
1931 provided a compositional prototype from the modern
humanist tradition in Canada that would function in tandem
with his reference to the humanist tradition of the Italian
Renaissance.

Heward, as discussed in Chapter One, was the first of
Comfort's generation to isolate the significant relationship
between the figure and tree. In his 1928-1929 Yearbook of the
Arts in Canada, Brooker chose Heward's Girl on a Hill to
introduce the interest of the post-Group of Seven generation
of painters in a socially-conscious dialogue between humanity
and nature. Heward's Girl on a Hill precipitates the human
presence as a force of social order in the landscape, a
breakthrough for the humanist aesthetic, which was immediately
followed by the Toronto community of painters' development of
the civilized landscape theme. In Girl under a Tree, the
relationship between the figure and tree is exaggerated. The

11 Charles Comfort, "Why I paint?", part F of a lecture
prepared for the Extension Department of the University of
Toronto, October 15, 1946, and repeated at the Art Gallery of
Toronto October 23, 1946; Charles Comfort papers, MG30 D81,
vol.4, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
opposition of a recumbent nude to the dynamic vertical accent of the tree raises the question of whether Heward was aware of theosophy, if only through Yvonne McKague Housser, her friend and CGP colleague. A theosophical appeal to the progress of humanity through a revelation of the spiritual "oneness" of being is suggested in Heward's symbolic contrast of the female passive and male active elements of fundamental existence. In her 1986 catalogue of the work of Prudence Heward, Natalie Luckjy raises the question of whether the figure is, in fact, Heward's self-portrait. The figure-tree relationship might then refer to the gendered opposition of nature and culture explored by Wassily Kandinsky of the German expressionist group Der Blaue Reiter. Kandinsky's resolution of this opposition, described in his 1912 essay "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", rested on the artist's vision of aesthetic unity between life and art expressed in the balance of naturalistic detail and abstract pattern. If Heward factored herself into Kandinsky's theosophically-derived idealization of the artist as an enlightened individual in society, then Comfort may have identified Girl under a Tree with his own longstanding belief in the social value of art. Comfort must have sensed the appropriateness of Girl under a Tree for expression of artists' collective awakening to the need for active participation in the war effort.

In the role of cultural soldier, an ideal that followed

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Of note, moreover, Heward -- like Comfort -- painted this nude in a landscape after a trip to Italy, where she travelled in 1929. This was her second visit, having travelled there first in 1925.

logically from the late 1930s concept of the artist as cultural worker, Comfort armed himself with the western artistic tradition associated with Renaissance humanism. In contemporary Canadian art, it was made manifest by the inauguration of a dialogue between humanity and nature, defined by Dewey as the governing condition of existence. The message of harmonious relations in art as in life, summoned from Renaissance humanism, required the addition of a contemporary reference to make it relevant. A tie to Comfort's own work and to that of his community of painters emerges from Primavera in the recumbent nude's compositional reminiscence of the plough blade as it appears in his agriculture panel of the Toronto Stock Exchange murals. The nude therein recalls the trope of the artist as a cultivator of the Canadian soil.

The link between the nude and the plough as analogous symbols of culture was latent in the final Group of Seven exhibition where Heward's Girl under a Tree appeared with Anne Savage's The Plough (fig.101).14 Savage's abandoned plough, posits Charles Hill, "spoke of both nostalgia and change" in reference to the Group of Seven's dissolution and the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters.15 The plough gathered symbolic significance, however, only when the Toronto

14 As Charles Hill records, Savage reworked The Plough following the 1931 Group of Seven exhibition before submitting it to the first exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters, held in Atlantic City in 1933. See: Catalogue entry no.178; in Charles Hill, The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada in association with McClelland and Stewart Ltd, Toronto, 1995), p.337.

Anne Savage was Heward's friend and Montreal colleague.

15 Hill adds that the abandoned plough had already appeared in drawings of A.Y. Jackson, J.E.H. MacDonald, Thoreau MacDonald, and in a painting by the American Regionalist Grant Wood. Charles Hill, The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation, p.337.
community of painters incorporated it into a sociallyconscious language of visual exchange played between fine art and popular culture in the late 1930s. Superimposed over the sharply furrowed civilized landscape of Comfort's scratchboard image, Barns and Ploughshares of 1938 (fig.102), the plough blade evolves as a forceful symbol of the artist's creative cultivation of humanist values essential to the achievement of social order. The position of the blade in this work as in the TSE murals matches the curve and position of Primavera. Comfort's parallel development of figure and plough blade cultivates an impression of cultural stability, felt in the continuity of development from Heward's confident departure from the wilderness landscape, through the civilized landscapes of the Toronto community of painters.

The forceful association in Primavera of past and present revivals of humanist values led to distinctively symbolic presentations of the nude and plough in the work of Comfort's students. Roloff Beny's The Soil of 1944 (fig.103) presents the nude, this time a male studio model, huddled against the wheel of an abandoned plough at twilight in an expansive cultivated landscape. As in Comfort's image of the miner

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17 The Soil appeared in the 1944 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition held at the AGT. Illustrated Catalogue, Seventy-Second Annual Spring Exhibition. The Ontario Society of Artists (Toronto: Ontario Society of Artists, 1944), catalogue no.7, not illustrated.

Born in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Beny's first formal training as an artist was at the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1939. In 1941 he moved to Toronto to enter university. At the time of painting The Soil, Beny was an executive of the Fine Arts Club at the University of Toronto, (formed in 1943 and disbanded in 1946), and secretary of the Art Committee at Hart House. He was also training for active duty with the Canadian Officers Training
from his 1933 INCO advertisement, and the graphic images of farmers ploughing illustrated in The Canadian Forum and New Frontier, the figure in Beny's painting turns his back to the viewer to show the physical demand of his labour. For Beny, whose "understanding of psychological values inferred through paint" won him the admiration of Graham McInnes, this labour was in reality the artist's. As Beny claimed in 1945: "let us as enthusiastic spectators endorse the creative artist's search for new designs, fresh patterns and meanings in life as a guide to better and fuller living."

A new humanism

When Thoreau MacDonald added a bomber plane to a reworked version of his 1933 composition of an abandoned plough for the cover of the CGP's travelling exhibition of 1942 (fig.104), he acknowledged a shift from artist as worker in the Canadian cultural landscape, to artist as soldier, called to the front

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lines of a cultural defence of democracy. With a quote from Thomas Mann, one of the most influential humanist thinkers of the day, the CGP sought to bolster public support for the arts during the Second World War as a means "to create confidence and faith in ourselves and our cause...." "Art", reasoned Mann,

is a way of thinking and as a human conception has never been a more inspiring, a more helpful, yes a more salutary function in life than it is to-day.

The problematic definition of the relationship between art and war forced a re-evaluation of the humanist aesthetic, which was only part of a larger crisis in contemporary humanism identified by Mann in 1944. "I believe", Mann stated, "that out of the suffering and struggle of our difficult period of transition a wholly new and more emotional interest in humanity and its fate -- in its exceptional position between the realms of nature and mind, in its mystery and its destiny -- will emerge." For the Toronto community of

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20 Thoreau MacDonald's 1933 image of an abandoned plough appeared as the cover design for West by East and Other Poems by J.E.H. MacDonald, published in 1933 by Ryerson Press in Toronto.


In 1942, Isabel McLaughlin was president, and A.Y. Jackson honorary president. Caven Atkins, Paraskeva Clark, Peter and Bobs Haworth were on the executive.

22 Thomas Mann (1875-1955), as quoted in the catalogue foreword, Canadian Group of Painters (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1942), p.3.


The Humanist was the voice of the American Humanist Association, (formed in 1941), and published a wide range of articles relating to issues of individual and communal well-being and the future of industrialized society. See: Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism 5th ed. rev.
painters, sympathy and duty mixed with a conviction in the strength of a Canadian cultural tradition inherited from the Group of Seven to reintroduce order into the chaos of international conflict. Pathos, argued Mann, would be the new tenor of humanism and the new source of unity between peoples. "This new humanism", projected Mann, "will have a different character, a different color and tone, from the earlier related movements.... Optimism and pessimism are empty words to this humanism. They cancel each other out in the determination to preserve the honor of man...."25 Where Comfort allied contemporary humanism to the heroic period of Italian High Renaissance, Clark, whose Self Portrait with Concert Program (fig.105) was shown alongside Primavera in the 1942 CGP exhibition, presented herself in the uniform of a soldier actively engaged in the cultural defence of humanist

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24 The protection of human values in war expressed by the Toronto painters was a widespread aspiration of humanist organizations during the 1940s, widely disseminated by the American Humanist Association. The Canadian Humanist Group, whose manifesto Man was published in January of 1943, promoted a synthesis of all human knowledge -- which they labelled "Scientific Humanism" -- for the rebuilding of a new social order in post-war society. Toronto art critic Blodwen Davies was secretary of this organization. Canadian Humanist Group, MAN (January 1943), unpaginated.

Of note, a Humanist Club formed at the University of Toronto in 1945 with Professor George Tatham and Reverend William Jenkins as advisors. (The Club disbanded in 1949.) According to the description in the Student Handbook, the Club was a non-political organization emphasizing "the common ground of all faiths and philosophies at the level of social action. Through research into specific problems and by active participation in efforts toward their solution, the Club seeks to provide a vehicle of expression for socially-minded students." University of Toronto Students' Handbook 1946-47, p.49, SAC Students' Handbooks, A-70 - 012/041, University of Toronto Archives, Toronto.

25 Thomas Mann, "This New Humanism," p.86.
values for democracy.

Clark's *Self Portrait with Concert Program* was the third major self-portrait Clark had exhibited since 1933, when she submitted *Myself* (fig. 106) to the first exhibition of the CGP. Typically, Clark presents herself at home, but the peace of this intimate space has been broken by the loss she felt of her Russian culture in war. The image is a reminder to Canadians of the reality of the nazi threat to cultural democracy, poignantly drawn by the collage inclusion of an actual program for the "Salute to Russia" concert held in Toronto in 1942 in aid of the Russian people. In *Self Portrait with Concert Program* Clark records the mix of cultural pride and humanitarian compassion piqued by "Salute to Russia", organized by the Canadian Aid to Russia Fund in which she became actively involved. Clark's young

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26 The second was *Self-Portrait*, a watercolour of 1937 shown in the Canadian Society for Painters in Water Colour exhibition of that year. In his review of the show, which he considered to be the most promising society exhibition of 1937, H.A. Mulligan claimed Clark's *Self-Portrait* to be "A worthy deviation from the mode", and a hopeful sign that the artist in Canada was indeed "more sensitive than others to the life about him."


27 Mary MacLachlan relates *Self Portrait with Concert Program* to Hitler's launching of a massive campaign against the Soviet Union between June and September of 1941. Leningrad, Clark's native city, was one of the cities overtaken by nazi forces. In discussion with Lawrence Sabbath, Clark acknowledged: "I felt very terrifically about Leningrad being besieged, it's my home town, and just by pose and the expression of my face I wanted to point out the seriousness of that great moment with the whole world at war."


28 Clark's active involvement in the Canadian Aid to Russia Fund is documented by her maple leaf-crested uniform. This charitable organization was formed in Toronto in 1942 to send clothing and supplies to Russia during World War Two. The
contemporary Fred Hagan caught the same tenor of emotional upheaval in McBain's Breakfast of 1941 (fig.107), using a similar compositional format. This time, however, Hagan records the working family's experience of war.

Hagan's inspiration for McBain's Breakfast came from his teacher at the Ontario College of Art, John Alfsen, whose War News (fig.108) was shown in the 1941 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition. Hagan reworks Alfsen's overalled

chairman of the organization was J.S. McLean, who Clark knew as a prominent collector of contemporary Canadian art. (As MacLachlan records, moreover, it was McLean who helped finance the Clark's purchase of a house in 1940.) In 1944, the organization became part of the Canadian United Allied Relief Fund. When it disbanded in 1946, it had established 300 branches throughout Canada.

See: Canadian Aid to Russia Fund -- 1942-1947, MG28 165, Finding Aid, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Hagan would have become known in 1941 for his drawings of Toronto back alleys and street scenes reproduced as small graphic illustrations in July and October issues of The Canadian Forum. Hagan's formal training began at Central Technical School in the early 1930s, followed by evening classes at OCA under John Alfsen and Frank Carmichael between 1937 and 1940. From 1941 to 1946, Hagan was resident artist and master at Pickering College in Newmarket. In the Spring of 1946, Hagan studied in George Miller's lithography studio and attended Martin Lewis' print class at the Art Students League of New York. With the post-war rise in enrolment at OCA, Hagan was hired to establish a printmaking section, and continued on to teach drawing, printmaking, and painting until 1983.


Alfsen, known for his figurative drawings and paintings, was hired on the staff of OCA in 1929, having studied at the College himself, (under Beatty, Lismer and Varley), and at the University of Toronto. In 1941, when Alfsen painted War News, he was an associated instructor in Yvonne McGague Housser's foundation year program, J.W. Beatty's Drawing and Painting department, Frank Carmichael's Commercial and Graphic Art department, and an evening course instructor. Hagan regards Alfsen as his "biggest influence". "I was very touched by
labourer, crowded by his co-workers straining to read the latest reports of the war in what appears to be a factory cloakroom. In McBain's Breakfast, the setting is a farmhouse kitchen, with a view through a window of a familiar cultivated landscape. McBain sits across from the viewer and glances in unfocussed reflection at the newspaper headline "20,000 British Lost", referring to casualty lists that began to appear in the daily papers. As in Clark's painting, image and text play complementary roles, adding to the dramatic realization of the enormity of World War Two. The scenario, a moment in the life of a couple Hagan came to know in Muskoka, is engrossing as an incomplete narrative. McBain, remembers Hagan, never recovered from the Depression and reviled the misery caused by unscrupulous business and politics. Unlike Clark, Hagan provides a superabundance of visual clues which bring the setting to life. The same technique appears in Welfare Worker of 1940 (fig.109) by York Wilson, who was close in age to Hagan and a successful

Alfsen's soft, easy, edges and gentle transitions, in drawing as well as painting, so it was some time before bold contrasts entered my work."

31 In Alfsen's War News the newspaper text is illegible.

32 Hagan met McBain at Pinecrest YMCA Boys Camp in Muskoka. Hagan was the Arts and Crafts Instructor and McBain was the groundskeeper. This was the only kind of employment McBain had found since he lost his city job during the Depression. The house was Mrs. McBain's family home, by then degraded into a poor and abandoned farm.
commercial artist. Wilson's approach weighs typically to humour in a sarcastic presentation of an unapproachable upper class matron attempting to counsel the less fortunate. Both artists catch the characters of their sitters in a revealing moment within a well-described context. Their representation of Canadians exhibiting wartime social consciousness was documentary by comparison to the painterly evocations of art coming to life presented by Brooker, Comfort and Clark. An incisive grasp of the events of everyday life, transcribed with an eye for graphic detail denotes the influence of

Wilson trained at Central Technical School at the beginning of the 1920s, and apprenticed at Brigden's Limited in Toronto from 1924 to 1927 under the guidance of Charles Comfort, Will Ogilvie and Fred Finley. Comfort encouraged Wilson to hone his fine art skills through landscape sketching and figure drawing, which became a regular part of Wilson's art practice. Wilson's career as a fine artist, (using his middle name York, reserving Ron for his commercial work), began in earnest with the inclusion of **Burlesque No. 3** in the 1939-1940 CGP exhibition, and **Burlesque No.2** at the 1939 exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists. Both paintings probably depict burlesque shows held at the Casino Theatre, (located at 87-95 Queen Street West), a multi-use vaudeville theatre that opened in 1939. "The Casino" as Lela Wilson (the artist's wife) called it was just on the outskirts of what became Toronto's Theatre Block bound by Shuter Street in the north and Queen Street East in the south; and Yonge Street on the west and Victoria Street on the east. Wilson would return repeatedly to the burlesque subject throughout the 1940s. In 1943, he joined the Arts and Letters Club. After six years as a freelance commercial artist in Toronto, from 1933 to 1939, and another ten as director of his own commercial studio, Wilson gave up commercial art altogether in 1949 to focus on painting.

Interview with Lela Wilson, Toronto, November 12 and 22, 1991.


34 Lela remembers the ironic twist York added to his social commentary in many of his paintings from the 1940s. In *Welfare Worker* this was the comparison of an upper class woman "with perfect nails" to a cactus, seen in the background. The sitter was Christine Connor, a friend of the family.

Interview with Lela Wilson, Toronto, November 12, 1991.
popular culture on the younger artists' early formation.

Wartime Burgeoning of Media

The media industry flourished in wartime to unite an anxious population eagerly anticipating the progress of the Allied offense. The role of popular culture in building morale lent new vitality to the entertainment industry and especially to advertising and poster design, film and theatre as avenues for the release and redirection of social tensions. In advertising, heroic, action-orientated sales pitches were developed by the young Jack Bush, who took over Comfort's account with INCO by the end of 1937. Beginning in 1938,

35 The example of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) may be taken as indicative of a wartime media boom. During the War, the CBC assumed extra responsibilities "which very nearly made it into an arm of government." As stated in the annual report of 1940: "Even in time of peace, national radio has played an increasingly important role in wielding together the diverse elements of our population; in wartime it serves to interpret policy, by bringing the country's leaders in constant contact with listeners, and to sustain morale by means of programs that adequately interpret the will of the whole Canadian people to prosecute the war to a vigorous conclusion by every means in their power." The CBC succeeded in this decade in attracting mass audiences, upsetting for a time the balance struck first by the Canadian Radio-Broadcasting Commission, (formed in 1932) and then by the CBC in 1937 between American commercial broadcasting and British education-minded programming. Ultimately, this balance states Peers, "...not only mirrors Canadian experience, but helps define it."


Bush moved from Montreal, where his father was manager of a branch office of Rapid Grip Company, to Toronto, (where he was born), in 1928 to work at the company's head office. Once settled in Toronto, Bush began evening classes at OCA. Encouraged by the example of the Group of Seven, Bush adopted the practice of outdoor sketching and planned regular trips with Les Wookey, William Winter and York Wilson to the countryside outside Toronto. In 1942, Bush joined Winter and Wookey to create the commercial art firm Wookey, Bush and Winter. By the mid-forties, Bush emerged as an active member of the Toronto-
Bush introduced narrative situations in a series entitled "Gone is the Age of Breakdowns", which substituted Comfort's characteristic bold, simplified designs for illustrative detail.37 "Speeding Empire Production", Bush's campaign launched in 1939, sold the INCO name as "A Staunch Ally Of The Empire Cause". A wartime narrative is implicit in the scratchboard image 20,000 Workers Speed the Supply of Nickel of 1941 (fig.110) from Bush's "Speeding Empire Production" series.38 Here the miner towers over the industrial landscape as a soldier over his troops, wielding the drill like a gun. Industry and government promoted a partnership between the worker and soldier, that is clearly spelled out in Philip Surrey's poster Every Canadian Must Fight (fig.111), commissioned by the Wartime Information Board (WIB). Here the two figures blend as a unit, wherein the industrial labourer arms the soldier for attack. The WIB was a federal agency created in 1942 for the dissemination of information to the 

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37 Even in those advertisements jointly prepared by Comfort and Bush during the year 1937, a more dynamic, action-orientated approach is apparent. See: International Nickel Company of Canada, A Review of Institutional Advertising (Toronto: INCO, 1947), unpaginated.

38 Produced in the second year of World War Two, the caption reads "This ever-increasing output shows what can be accomplished when stout limbs, skilled hands and willing hearts combine in an inspiring cause." International Nickel Company of Canada, A Review of Institutional Advertising 1932-1946, unpaginated.
Canadian public -- primarily pro-Allied and pro-war in sentiment -- and operated in close cooperation with the National Film Board (NFB), founded by British documentary filmmaker John Grierson in 1939.39 Harry Mayerovitch, Surrey's Montreal colleague, designed an aggressive image of the miner in Coal Face (fig.112), one of several posters commissioned for the "Canada Carries On" series of documentary films produced by the NFB during the war.40 Coal Face advertised a film of 1944 on the long suffering Cape Breton coal miners, for whom the wartime industrial boom brought relief. Grierson saw documentary filmmaking, for which Canada became known, as propaganda. By this Grierson meant the forthright promotion of concern regarding ideological oppression, and a warning against the proximity of fervent Canadian nationalism to the prejudices underpinning naziism and fascism. "I have been for a long time interested in propaganda", wrote Grierson in 1940, "and it is as a propagandist I have been from the first interested in films."41

Bush's propagandistic conception of the worker's rise to a heroic status in the 1940s rode the crest of popular culture


40 The "Canada Carries On" series were "shorts" which ran before the main attraction at over 800 movie theatres across the country. McInnes described them as being "about people you know.... This is Canada at war..., the rank and file of democracy." Lorne Greene, then a CBC announcer who did the voice-over commentaries, identified the war series for most moviegoers.


Grierson, a British-born filmmaker, arrived in Canada from the United States in 1939 to found and oversee the National Film Board.
in exploiting wartime promotion of Canada's wealth of labourers united in action against a common foe. The victimized proletariat of Clark's *Petroushka* (fig.58) was rephrased as the victorious industrial soldier. A parallel rephrasing of socialist propaganda occurs in two NFB posters: *This Is Our Strength: Labour and Management (are pooling their strength to give us the means for victory in war... and progress in peace)* (fig.113) by the Montreal commercial artist Charles Fainmel and Eric Aldwinckle's WIB poster *It is Our War* (fig.114), both in circulation from 1939-1945. In Aldwinckle's poster, the fist raised in anger at social oppression during the Depression years now grasps a sledgehammer to assist the Allied effort in the Second World War. This twist on a familiar motif looks back to the work of Aldwinckle's colleague in the Commercial and Graphic Art department at OCA, Franklin Carmichael, whose *Work and Prosper* (fig.115) poster for the 1920 Canadian National Exhibition first presented an idealized youth wielding the hammer for the progress of industry. In the Fainmel design, the worker's fist opens in unison with the suited forearm of management to cradle the industrial landscape. The suggestion is equity and the message is collaboration to harness Canada's labour force for the victory of democracy.

In Bush's *20,000 Workers Speed the Supply of Canadian Nickel*, Canada's labour force appeared ready to replace those twenty thousand casualties reported in Hagan's *McBain's Breakfast*. The mystique of Canadian labour that Bush...

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42 Bush's advertisement twists the 1922 Bolshevik poster "Labour should be the master of the world" in favour of a wartime call to Allied victory at the moment of Germany's invasion of Russia. As a commercial artist, Bush's broad familiarity with propaganda is likely, if he did not know this particular image. Certainly, he was familiar with British war posters. See: "A Bolshevik Poster - From a collection of Soviet propaganda posters in the British Museum", *The Canadian Forum* 2 (January 1922), p.499. (fig.59)
cultivates refers back, as in the Aldwinckle poster, to the Group of Seven's vision of the original Canadian worker labouring in the rugged wilderness landscape. In particular, Bush's towering industrial soldier recalls J.E.H. MacDonald's vision of the superhuman wilderness hero Paul Bunyan, who tames the Canadian wilderness in The Canadian Forum image Paul Bunyan Takes an Evening Stroll in Algoma (fig.6). Advertising encouraged Bush to play on the turn of familiar motifs and compositions shared between fine art and popular culture as a means of harnessing a Canadian artistic tradition established in the modern movement of painting in Canada. For Bush, as Christine Boyanoski considers in her study Jack Bush: Early Work, painting and commercial art "clearly influenced each other." Bush's heroic worker relates to the wartime industrial growth that cleared urban areas of the destitute and disenfranchised labourers of the Depression years.

Social Democracy and Economic Recovery

With the unexpected growth of the Canadian economy in war, a favourable investment climate improved employment and public services and legitimized the state in the eyes of many Canadians." The League for Social Reconstruction collapsed

"Furthermore," adds Boyanoski, "it was through the commercial art world that he [Bush] made many artistic contacts and found supporters of his painting. He was encouraged in the fine art aspect by the example of the Group of Seven, most of whom had worked as commercial artists, as well as by a long line of earlier Toronto artists who continued to paint despite the fact that they worked commercially...." Christine Boyanoski, Jack Bush: Early Work, p.10.

"The two major parties -- especially the Liberals -- were free to adopt new policies to meet the democratic demand for change without recourse to what had come to be known as "the socialist menace". The LSR, argues Horn, completely failed to foresee the expansion of Canada's economy that facilitated public expenditures and services. The welfare state, as it took shape in Canada, did not eliminate economic inequality, nor was it intended to do so, but it did meet the concern of large
in 1942 and support declined for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation with the rise late in 1943 of anti-socialist sentiment. Montreal CCF leader Frank Scott responded with "Make This Your Canada: A Review of CCF History and Policy to persuade readers of the need for a permanent solution to social inequity and unemployment." Nevertheless, a statistical comparison of the years 1932 and 1942 was remarkable. The war brought expectations of a manpower shortage as men and women were "snapped up by a grateful country to become heroes in uniform or overalls." Building "a world democracy" was the message Margaret Fairley promoted in her 1946 publication "Spirit of Canadian Democracy: A Collection of Canadian Writings from the Beginnings to the Present Day," illustrated by John Hall. Only social democratic reform, emphasized Fairley, would prevent the return in peacetime of outcast workers to the Don Valley numbers of voters, making poverty less demeaning. This was achieved primarily through wartime taxation, which facilitated some redistribution of wealth.


"Make This Your Canada" was the first CCF publication since *Democracy Needs Socialism* in 1938, a shortened version of the 1935 publication *Social Planning for Canada*. The book was not a formal party statement, but is the authors’ personal conception of the movement's place and philosophy. Nevertheless, claimed Coldwell, it was a faithful outline of the principles, history and organization of the CCF.


Encampments of the Depression.\textsuperscript{48}

Wartime employment drastically altered the appearance of Grange Park. In George Pepper's *Unemployed, Grange Park* of c.1938 (fig. 89), the park was a gathering place for men without work. Four years later, Pepper's young contemporary Aba Bayefsky found Grange Park deserted. He was just old enough to remark upon the change, which he made the subject of his 1942 painting *Park Bench* (fig. 116).\textsuperscript{49} Bayefsky's isolation of the single bench and tree brings to mind Mann Ward's cover of the March 1937 issue of *New Frontier* (fig. 88), giving the surprise answer of "war" to this issue's leading question "And the Answer Is....", in the sense that war employed these men as soldiers or wartime industrial workers. *Park Bench* thus reworks a familiar theme and was popular primarily because Bayefsky captured in the language of art a revealing moment in wartime Toronto.\textsuperscript{50} Schaefer, Bayefsky's

\textsuperscript{48} Margaret Fairley, "Editorial", *The Canadian Forum* (1931); as quoted in *Spirit of Canadian Democracy: A Collection of Canadian Writings from the beginnings to the Present Day*, p. 153.

\textsuperscript{49} Bayefsky studied at Central Technical School in Toronto from 1937 to 1942 under Peter Haworth (then head of the department), Charles Goldhamer (a full-time instructor), and Carl Schaefer (a part-time instructor). Between 1939 and 1941, he was a member of the "Sixteen League" of promising young art students at the Art Gallery of Toronto. From 1941 to 1943 he was a junior instructor on the staff of the Children's Art Centre. Bayefsky entered active service with the R.C.A.F. in 1943 and was appointed an official war artist in November of 1944. See: Christopher Varley, *Aba Bayefsky Revisited. A Retrospective Exhibition*, (North York, Ont.: The Koffler Gallery, 1989), pp. 8-11; and Margaret E. Hughes, "A Guide to Canadian Painters", *Ontario Library Review* 33 (August 1949), p. 252.

\textsuperscript{50} *Park Bench* and *Portrait of a Rabbi* were shown in the *Painters Under Twenty* exhibition organized by the Art Gallery of Toronto in March of 1943. The AGT purchased *Park Bench*. The painting subsequently appeared in the Yale University Art Gallery survey *Canadian Art, 1760-1943*, held in 1944. Bayefsky did not show with the CGP until 1950. See: Christopher Varley, *Aba Bayefsky Revisited. A Retrospective Exhibition*, p. 11.
teacher at Central Technical School, had taught the young artist to craft the most familiar scene into a subject of socially-conscious aesthetic engagement.51 The park bench, an inanimate object of everyday life replaces the figure in the association of figure and tree to express the pathos of war. It is a documentary image specific to a given time and place that is comparable to Hagan's McBain's Breakfast and Bush's INCO advertisement. Bayefsky, however, brings the medium of paint forward in the heavily worked surface of the canvas, as did Comfort in Primavera and Clark in Self Portrait with Concert Program. In so doing, he makes his own presence felt and fills the void of absent humanity with the artist's clarification of wartime emotional chaos.

Yvonne McKague Housser, who was head of the foundation year program at OCA in 1941, invokes the physical order imposed by war under the War Measures Act of World War Two in her image of Grange Park.52 Housser's Spring in the Park (fig.117), shown with Alfsen's War News in the 1941 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition, presents a view of Grange Park through the branches of a chestnut tree blooming outside her OCA window. These branches form a screen that divides real from pictorial space, and the artist's perception of aesthetic significance in contemporary life from the surfeit of seemingly inconsequential everyday events. Housser's ordering of aesthetic experience is made manifest by the branches, the pattern of which is complemented by the tidy arrangement of

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51 Interview with Aba Bayefsky, Toronto, September 30, 1991.

52 The sweeping emergency powers provided for the federal government by the War Measures Act, first passed in parliament in August of 1914, include the suspension of habeas corpus during war, invasion or insurrection. The Act allowed government to legislate in areas otherwise considered provincial jurisdiction. It was used during both world wars, and most recently during the October Crisis of 1970. David J. Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, Dictionary of Canadian Military History, p.222.
figures who now occupy the park for relaxation. Renewed social and economic vitality burgeons with spring, quite unlike Schaefer's melancholy fall day in the 1939 painting Farmhouse by the Railway (fig.92). "Beauty...", wrote Yvonne Housser, "is balance, order, -- an idea in its purity stripped... -- perfect within itself and because of these things reflecting the universal or God or the One --."53 Revelation of this beauty was her cultural defence against war "[which] like a disease spreads and breaks out in new places."54

**Wartime symbols of humanist values**

Schaefer's practice of painting variations on personal themes throughout the 1930s produced distinctive motifs, primary among which was a barren tree. Once incorporated into an exchange of motifs and compositions, the tree emerged as a symbol of community spirit indicative of the Toronto painters' vision of the progress of culture in social democratic reform during the Depression. With the advent of war in 1939, Schaefer began reworking the farmhouse, which was a recurring subject in his painting from the late 1920s and the central focus of his first major canvas, *Ontario Farmhouse* of 1934 (fig.38). He was the artist whose response to the misfortunes of war emerged as the paradigm for symbolic painting in Toronto during the 1940s.

In *Burned Farmhouse* of 1939 (fig.118), and the pen drawing *Burned Farmhouse, Hanover* (fig.119), both of which are known only through reproduction, Schaefer finds the home, a

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54 Journal entry, April 7, 1942, Yvonne McKague Housser papers, MG 30 D 305, vol.2, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
repository of humanist values for society, in ruins. Schaefer's interest in ruins followed upon a thematic darkening of his paintings begun with Storm Over Fields of 1937 (fig. 82). In that same year, he ventured into new subject areas with Graveyard at Hanover (fig. 120) and Wire Fence (fig. 121), both of which depict markers of the passage of time. Schaefer's cultural anxiety for the survival of the farming community of Hanover, where he developed a strong feeling for the integration of art within a craft-orientated society, became profound. Conflict upset the already fragile balance of that harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature exemplified by Schaefer's farmhouses and wheatfields of the early to mid-1930s. In its ruined state, the house symbolizes spiritual crisis.

Images of ruined houses gained currency during the early 1940s to illustrate the human cost of war. Montreal commercial artist Roger Couillard juxtaposes the ruined house with a destitute woman stranded in a barren landscape in his

55 Schaefer's painting Burned Farmhouse was shown in 1944 at the "Living Canadian Art" exhibition held at Eaton's Fine Art Galleries, College Street, Toronto. The advertisement for the show that ran in the April 8, 1944 edition of the Globe and Mail described a "Collection of Modern Painting for Modern Homes...." Schaefer was one of forty artists represented, along with Brooker, Clark, Housser, McLaughlin, Milne, Peter and Bobs Haworth, John Hall, and newcomer Jack Nichols. Rene Van Valkenburg, director of the galleries, also selected works by artists from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec and New Brunswick.

"Exhibitions: Living Canadian Painting [sic], Eaton's College St., Toronto, 1944", Box 14, folder 35, Isabel McLaughlin papers, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

Schaefer's Burned Farmhouse of 1940 is reproduced in Graham McInnes' article "Art: Signal Honor", Saturday Night (April 27, 1940), p. 5. For the drawing Burned Farmhouse, Hanover see The Canadian Forum 20 (June 1940), p. 81.
Victory Bonds poster (fig.122). Only the chimney remains, to form a tomb-like monument for the death of humanist values buried along with the dead in a nearby grave marked by a makeshift cross. Couillard's message to Canadians reads "...and WE talk about sacrifice", emphasizing the point of empathy upon which the Allied defense depended. Schaefer's opposition of a shattered tree and tree stump with a ruined farmhouse, which he brought to the fore in the drawing Burned Farmhouse, Hanover, reinterpreted the link between house and tree in *Ontario Farmhouse* and *Farmhouse by the Railway* in the context of culture's wartime role as a morale building enterprise. Schaefer interpreted this role primarily in terms of spiritual regrowth and, specifically, of Christianity. The upsurge of religious beliefs in war found the cross, pictured in Couillard's poster as a symbol of compassion, raised by propaganda to oppose the swastika in a cultural battle between democracy and naziism.

In the anonymous poster *Come On Canada! Lick Them over there!* (fig.123), a giant Canadian soldier turns directly to the viewer, straddling the Atlantic ocean to order an attack on Germany. At his right foot, at the bottom left of the

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56 Roger Couillard was a commercial artist and church and theatre decorator in Montreal trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In 1937 he opened his own graphic design studio. In 1943 he joined the RCAF, but was granted periodic leave to work for Ardiel Advertising Agency, a Toronto firm that held an ongoing contract to design publicity campaigns for war bonds. Altogether, Couillard designed six war bonds posters. Marc Choko, *Canadian War Posters 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Meridien, Canada Communication Group, 1994), p.77.


58 *Come On Canada! Lick Them over there!* circulated from 1940-1945. The designer is unrecorded, but it was commissioned by the Bureau of Public Information and is part of the National Archives of Canada Collection in Ottawa. The Bureau, created in September of 1939, was a sub-section of the Department of
composition, is a small Quebec village of a type favoured by the Toronto community of painters and exemplified by Comfort's Tadoussac of 1935 (fig.39). The small white cross at the top of the church steeple appears in direct opposition to the foreboding swastika seen in the distant battle cloud covering Europe, where the soldier places his left foot. Between the cross and swastika is a Union Jack and the guns of Britain towards which a fleet of Canadian warships sail from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. A simple superimposition of a crucifix over a swastika in the poster Je crois... (fig.124) isolated the two most powerful symbols of a cultural battle waged between democracy, associated with ideals of Christian unity and brotherhood, and nazi dictatorship.\footnote{Je crois..., an anonymous lithograph poster design in the Carson Collection, was commissioned by the Bureau of Public Information, Poster Division in 1941-1942. Joseph T. Thorson was the minister in charge of the Bureau at that time and Montreal artist Albert Cloutier was artistic director. Marc Choko, Canadian War Posters 1914-1918, 1939-1945 (Ottawa: Meridien, Canada Communication Group, 1994), p.71, and fig.34.}

Schaefer used the technique of superimposed symbols in Christmas Window, Norwich Vermont of 1940 (fig.125). Here Schaefer's distinctive barren tree appears directly in front of a richly-ornamented Christmas tree seen through the window of a warmly-lit Vermont farmhouse. This is the first instance in which Schaefer frankly admits a Christian association for the barren tree as a symbol of community spirit. The

National Defence. Albert Cloutier was artistic director of the Poster Division and it was through him that the Toronto painters received commissions for poster designs. In September of 1942, the Bureau of Public Information came under the control of the Wartime Information Board. In February of 1943 John Grierson became director of the WIB, in addition to being director of the NFB. Holding these two positions, Grierson was in charge of most government propaganda until his departure in January of 1944. Posters were handled through the WIB's Graphics Division, of which Harry Mayerovitch became artistic director. See: Marc Choko, Canadian War Posters 1914-1918, 1939-1945, p.71, and fig.13.
association stemmed from Schaefer's formative years in Toronto when, during the 1920s, ideals of Christian brotherhood and social democratic reform were tied together by the Social Gospel Movement. The two prominent leaders of the movement were Dr. Salem Bland, of Harris' well-known 1925 portrait, and J.S. Woodsworth, the leader of the CCF.

Schaefer's development of the tree within a broadly humanistic context of Christian "brotherhood" during the early years of war grew from his nostalgia for Hanover. The war, and a move to Vermont in 1940 to carry out a Guggenheim Fellowship, (the first awarded to a Canadian painter), renewed Schaefer's attachment to the small farming town where Christianity guided an awareness of the totality of community life. Farmers and their families laboured in the spirit of "brotherhood" and with aesthetic awareness of a landscape to which Schaefer felt profoundly attached. American Regionalist painter Charles Burchfield, who became a close acquaintance of Schaefer's at this time, empathized with the artist's forced abandonment of Hanover subject matter. "I can appreciate how you feel about leaving the section of country you know and love...," consoled Burchfield, nevertheless:

"...your duty, and every artist's at this time is to work at his art as hard as he can. So I am glad in a way that you are in the one large nation still technically at peace, for I am sure here you will be able to work in peace. It will take you some time to get used to the materials, but I think you should get a great deal out of your experience." 60

60 Their friendship began with Schaefer's trip to Buffalo in 1938, the year of the Great Lakes Exhibition in which they both participated, and led to Burchfield's continued encouragement of Schaefer's attachment to locality. Schaefer visited Burchfield at his suburban Buffalo home at least three times: in 1938, 1941 and, with Caven Atkins, in 1942.
What Schaefer gained by way of a year-long separation from his roots in Hanover and from his colleagues in Toronto was a heightened awareness of the place of a national artistic tradition, rooted in the Group of Seven, in an international alliance of democratic cultures. Stirred by the Second World War, this alliance was most keenly felt among Canada, the United States, and Britain. When Canadian artists, art critics, art historians and museum directors gathered in Kingston in June of 1941 to discuss the role of the artist in a democracy, it was the example of American and British programs of support for national cultural development that served as models for the promotion of artistic tradition in Canada during the war. The first order of the day, however, was to ensure a place for the artist in the war effort.

Aspirations to Cultural Unity

Canada's entrance into war in support of the British Empire challenged Prime Minister Mackenzie King's ability to nurture national unity. Deepened wartime ties to Britain proved problematic for King, who struggled to appease Quebec's francophone majority on the issue of conscription for overseas duty. The Toronto community of painters considered unity to be dependent on the communication of humanist values in the universal language of art. The exigency of united action for the cultivation of these values in wartime drew a wide circle of like-minded artists, critics and cultural workers around the Toronto painters, who represented a nucleus of belief in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being. In June of 1941, over one hundred and fifty artists, museum directors, art historians and interested laypersons from all regions of Canada gathered at the Conference of Canadian Artists held at Queen's University in Kingston to discuss the integral role to be played by the visual arts in
Canadian national life.  

The Kingston Conference marks a watershed in the evolution of Canadian cultural unity based on a democratic ideal of art as experience. The question of how art functioned for the creation and preservation of democracy was, as the Conference organizer André Biéler of Queen's University acknowledged, of widespread concern, not only to painters in Toronto and their supporters, but to socially-conscious painters across the country, and to the Carnegie Corporation of New York who financed the gathering. "The culture of a society is the way that society lives -- all of it," stated the American Regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton in his radio broadcast to open the Conference. "In a democratic society," explained Benton,

61 The question of central government control reached a critical point in 1937 with the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. The Rowell-Sirois Commission, as it was known, examined the distribution of constitutional powers and financial arrangements of the federal system and raised fears that the King government was moving towards more centralized control. Maurice Duplessis, premier of Quebec, and Mitch Hepburn, premier of Ontario, were among the strongest critics of the Commission's centralizing bent with regard to financial control. As it turned out, the war necessitated increased federal power, as did the introduction of unemployment insurance in 1940, to be administered from Ottawa. Opposition to federal power intensified over wartime conscription that flared first in 1942. English and French Canada were starkly divided on the issue, but King nevertheless introduced mandatory service for home duty in 1944, a compromise which succeeded in lessening French Canadian resentment of service for the British Empire. See: Robert Dawson, Canada in World Affairs: Two Years of War, 1939-1941 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp.10-25; John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), pp.292-299, 314-315.

art to be representative and culturally real must itself be democratic. If it is to be effective, it must somehow touch the interests of plain people. Apparently all over America, in Mexico, the United States and now in Canada, there is a realization of the truth of this.\textsuperscript{63}

Benton's approach, observed Toronto art critic Pearl McCarthy, typified "the new movement to connect art and life".\textsuperscript{64} War, so Benton reasoned, would stimulate this connection, and force art out into the open where:

\begin{quote}
... it will become a part of general life and of interest to people in general.... Any ferment that throws the artist out of his studio, out of an ivory-tower world, is going to benefit art.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

The entrance of art into general life was what the Toronto painters sought in their exchange of motifs and compositions between the fine arts and popular culture. Montreal commercial artist and painter Albert Cloutier, then recently appointed artistic director of the Bureau of Public Information's Poster Division, spoke on the point of public accessibility. By definition, established Cloutier, "a poster is a psychological combination of message and design...."\textsuperscript{66}

The result, in essence, was symbolism. In fine art, the Toronto painters' highly-charged images of the worker, house

\textsuperscript{63} "At the conference of Canadian artists now running, of which I am a participant, this is one of the major questions to be discussed." Thomas Hart Benton, Radio Broadcast - June 26, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.4.

\textsuperscript{64} Benton, commented McCarthy, "was as well informed on social ideas of democracy as on how to use tempera or organize a design."

\textsuperscript{65} Thomas Hart Benton, Radio Broadcast - June 26, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.3.

\textsuperscript{66} Albert Cloutier, Opening Session - June 26, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.9.
and tree broached a symbolic language of art in concert with war posters. The humanist aesthetic, defined by the balance of familiar subject matter with tightly-structured compositional design, therein seemed to approach a point of final resolution. Just as poster designers faced the problem of accessibility, however, painters had to consider the means by which symbols could be manipulated to elicit aesthetic experience amongst a diverse and widely-scattered population. A symbolic language of art, more profound and enduring than ephemeral propaganda, depended upon a common aesthetic conception or rather "unity of culture", as Biéler identified it. Only then would the fine arts become integrated into national life. On a practical level, integration could be served by standardization of materials and services facilitating transportation, public exhibition, and durability of works of art. Technical concerns were given special consideration in three sessions on materials and methods held during the Conference. Led by George Holt, co-founder of the Painters' Workshop in Boston, these sessions addressed the loss of "the technical tradition" necessary to re-integrate the artist as a "responsible workman" within society. Holt proposed: "with a renewed and ever-increasing interest in the materials, the methods and the tools which are the means to

67 André Biéler, Opening Session, June 12, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.17.

68 George Holt, Painters' Workshop session, June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, pp.119-121. The "Painters Workshop" sessions were held Friday and Saturday mornings, June 27th and 28th, and Sunday afternoon June 29th. F.W. Sterner and R.J. Gettens joined Holt in offering detailed technical instruction. Frank Sterner was director of the Painters' Workshop in Boston, (which operated from 1937 to 1941), and supervisor of the Paint Testing and Research Laboratory at Harvard University. Gettens, a chemist specializing in conservation, was internationally recognized as an authority on painting materials. Gettens was a staff member of the WPA painting workshop in Boston from 1941-1943.
all our ends, we have a common field, a unifying interest."69 A technical renaissance, in other words, would re-establish bonds between artists broken with the dissipation of medieval guilds and renaissance ateliers. In his presentation on "Art and Democracy", Walter Abell linked the idea of artistic skill, passed between generations of artists, to democracy: "a great tradition in human experience; the same tradition which produced the Iliad and Parthenon." Unity of culture, and a symbolic language of art meaningful to the Canadian public, thus depended upon a democratic employment of "taste and skill... in order to make things which would serve the life of the people as a whole; no particular class, no particular individual, but the whole of society served in the fullest, richest possible way...."70

Communal cultures, dating back to the small-scale societies of prehistory, exemplified in Abell's opinion of democratic integration of art and society. In Canada, models of cultural democracy were found in aboriginal and agricultural communities, which were cited to bolster contemporary claims for the artist's reinstatement as a vital member of society. A.Y. Jackson espoused the need "to realize how much we as artists can contribute to common welfare in a

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69 "For there is no doubt", continued Holt, "that most painters to-day want to know more about techniques and to regain, at least in part, that attitude towards workmanship which the artists of the past possessed. Ever since the Renaissance there has been a steady decline in the feeling for and the knowledge of materials." George Holt, Painters' Workshop, June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.119.

The technical proceedings of the Conference provided a handbook of materials and techniques for Canadian artists.

70 Democracy, added Abell, "is a good deal more than a system of government. It is one of those vitalities of life which makes systems of government possible." Walter Abell, "Art and Democracy", June 29, 1942, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.23.
world that is being disrupted, regimented, and impoverished." Modern Canadian democracy did not afford ready opportunities for artists to exercise their influence. "When we come to the history of states and empires," observed Abell, "both art and life become more complex, and it is not so easy to trace the motif of their harmonious combination." "Motif" here emerged as the operative word to describe the common thread, or "drift" as Abell called it, of social consciousness in contemporary Canadian painting. By extending the roots of this social consciousness back to communal cultures of Canada, (notably Toronto's Group of Seven), and out to the history of western civilization, a humanist tradition of art as experience came into clear view as the driving force for a contemporary advancement of cultural democracy.

Conference participants were unanimous in their call for a permanent federation of artists able to institute government-sponsored public art projects comparable to the WPA in the United States, or the much admired war art programme instituted in Britain at the beginning of World War Two. Government patronage, won by the power of group organization and defended by the example of tradition, seemed compulsory at least until Canada's economic and educational inequities were in some measure relieved to allow a buoyant art market to develop. First on the list of resolutions compiled at the close of the Conference were plans to urge the Dominion government, through the National Gallery of Canada, "to set up machinery for the creation of works of art recording the

71 A.Y. Jackson, Opening Session, June 12, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.18.

various phases of the Dominion's war effort." The achievement in 1942 of a Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) and, in 1943, of a Canadian War Art Programme were, observed Lawren Harris:

in part due to a shift of emphasis from the personal outlook of the artist to a social consciousness, a transformation in which we are all involved. That transformation does not destroy genuine individual values but may even enhance them. The creative artist working in whatever art is peculiarly sensitive to the great transformations in life and may be quite conscious that the service of the arts and artists to human solidarity and enlightenment need involve no loss of essential individuality. On the contrary the clarification and enlargement of his social consciousness can both steady and increase the inner creative flame.74

The Conference, notes Aba Bayefsky retrospectively, bore witness to an unprecedented uprising of community spirit and far-reaching insight into cultural planning, which eventually led to the formation of the Canada Council in 1957.75 Apart from the obvious contribution of the Conference to the development of government sponsorship of the arts and the improvement of artists' representation in Canada, its impact on artistic production according to a democratic ideal of art as experience has been little understood.

The first art historical mention of the Kingston Conference is made in Barry Lord's 1974 publication The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art. Lord briefly cites four major results of the Conference: the call


74 Lawren Harris, Notebook, early 1940s -- The Federation of Canadian Artists, Lawren Harris papers, MG30 D208, vol.3, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

for patronage, "a more central position for the artist in Canadian life", the expansion of Maritime Art magazine into Canadian Art in 1943, and the constitution of a new organization with the FCA.  

Ten years after Lord, Christine Boyanoski pushed discussion of the Conference further to posit that the most tangible outcome, apart from the foundation of the FCA, was a "loosening up" of painting resulting from renewed interest in techniques.  

Boyanoski's study invites further consideration of the artistic ramifications of the Conference, but historians continue to emphasize the significance of the Kingston Conference only within a detailed history of the development of state sponsorship of the arts in Canada. Maria Tippett's Making Culture is a case in point, summarily concluding that the Conference was significant because it generated the FCA, being "the most powerful lobby group" for Canada's visual artists.  

In his detailed study of the 1949 Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, popularly known as the "Massey Commission", Paul Litt at least provides a close analysis of "the first national conference of artists in Canadian history... [that] sowed the seeds of further organization."  

Litt recalls the FCA's original mandate, as stated by the first chairman André Biéler:

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To unite all Canadian artists, critics, and related professional workers for fellowship, for mutual effort in promoting common aims, and for the expression of the artist's point of view as a creative factor in the national life of Canada.  

Canadian artists were "tired of being the have-nots among the educated elites", argues Litt, "and were determined to elbow their way up to the government trough alongside other privileged interest groups."  

In his introduction to the reprinted proceedings of the Conference, Michael Bell compares Canada's ideal of art for society's sake to that of the United States, and suggests that a definite "continentalism" characterized relations between the two countries.  

Because he separates discussion of the artist's relation to society from the technical concerns of the painter, Bell precludes association of the two for analysis of the development of painting in Canada during the 1940s. Discussion of artists' aesthetic response to an overwhelming desire to contribute to "a more humane and generous society" is superseded by details of cultural organization. Primary among these was the FCA's intent to spread cultural development evenly through the country by means of widely distributed community art centres, first proposed by Lawren Harris, through which government funds

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80 The Art Bulletin - a periodical FCA newsletter, ed. Elizabeth Harrison, Art Department of Queen's University, presumably 1942, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Coll.2049, Box 3, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.  


81 Paul Litt, The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission, p.23.  

could be democratically channelled.\textsuperscript{83} 

Hélène Sicotte shares Bell's interest in the relationship between American and Canadian artists cultivated by the Conference insofar as she considers the invitation of Benton, Edward Rowan, (of the Fine Arts Section of the Public Building Administration in Washington who spoke on American mural painting), and representatives of the Painters' Workshop of Boston to be indicative of pro-American sentiment.\textsuperscript{84} Like Bell, furthermore, Sicotte remarks upon the absence of francophone representation at the Conference. At a time when the federal government was "centralist", as Bell comments, Quebec intellectuals maintained an independent stance.\textsuperscript{85} French Quebec, concludes Sicotte, was indifferent to "un courant de pensée humaniste" running through English Canada, the United States, and Britain.\textsuperscript{86} The intellectual divide between anglophones and francophones translated, so Sicotte implies, into decisively different formal concerns in visual art. Aspirations to cultural unity voiced at the Conference were not made manifest by a single universal language of art superseding linguistic and regional barriers. How then could cultural unity be achieved?

\textbf{Universalism versus Regionalism}

For the Toronto community of painters, unity of culture did not suggest uniformity for it was the response of artists to the stimulus of their given environment that should serve

\textsuperscript{83} See: Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada", pp.vii-xxi.


\textsuperscript{85} Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada", p.xvi.

\textsuperscript{86} Hélène Sicotte, "A Kingston, Il y a 50 ans, La Conférence des artistes canadiens", p.30.
as the basis for cultural democracy. This was the gist of Benton's promotion of regionalism, which was certainly not new to Canada, as Schaefer's attachment to Hanover makes obvious. In 1944, the FCA, on behalf of sixteen Canadian arts organizations, proposed a scheme to government for Canadian cultural progress through community centres. The so-called community centres movement would link rural and urban centres across the country in a web of regional cultural programming devoted to the realization of a democratic ideal of art as experience on the national level.

Pegi Nicol MacLeod, who returned from the United States to join her Toronto colleagues in Kingston, demonstrated the flexibility of the humanist aesthetic to respond to any given circumstance in her New York paintings where she employed compositional formats similar to works she had produced in Toronto. As a comparison of *Cold Window* of 1935 (fig.126) and *Airshaft, 88th Street, New York* of c.1942 (fig.127) reveals, aesthetic experience as it was understood by the Toronto painters depended upon an artist's engagement with their given environment. MacLeod's Observatory Art Centre at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton operated on the idea that a democratic ideal of art as experience stimulated collective engagement of art and life, wherever teaching and

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87 Benton began by stating: "...I had in mind propagandizing the important place environmental or local influences have on the making of aesthetic forms. Arrived her [sic] I discover that everybody is in agreement with me -- and so I don't need to do that... My last resort is to deal with the aesthetics of form...." Thomas Hart Benton, Friday Evening Session -- June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.47.

88 The argument for MacLeod's adherence to the humanist aesthetic after her departure from Toronto in 1937 may be extended to the paintings she produced in Fredericton. Every summer from 1940 to 1948 MacLeod returned to teach at the Observatory Art Centre, which she founded in 1940 on the campus of the University of New Brunswick.
exhibiton opportunities were established. MacLeod began planning the Centre in the summer of 1940 as a kind of community cultural facility and when it opened in July of 1942 the program of study covered the practical, technical and theoretical angles of contemporary interest raised at the Kingston Conference. MacLeod extended her community spirit to public art projects, including rug-hooking designs woven by Maritime women. The Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the NFB took interest in these rugs as examples of folk arts and home culture integral to the cultivation of cultural unity. Life and art came together most emphatically, however, in MacLeod's program of painting, sketching, drawing, poster making, composition, lectures in art, and technical instruction suggests that the Conference message of comprehensive training for the artist was influential.

Pegi Nicol MacLeod -- clippings 1940-1964, Madge Smith papers, MG H80, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton.

The Montreal-based Canadian Handicrafts Guild hoped to include examples of the rugs in a representative exhibition of Canadian handicrafts, requested by the federal Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Home-Crafts for the United Nations Section of the 19th Annual Women's International Exposition of Arts and Industries held at Madison Square Gardens, New York in November of 1942.

H.I.Drummond, Secretary-Treasurer of Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal to Madge Smith, Fredericton, October 20, 1942, Madge Smith papers, MG H80, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton.

Grierson was interested in MacLeod's rug designs for a story on Maritime folk arts. Madge Smith, who represented MacLeod's work in her Fredericton gallery, sent sketches to the NFB for reproduction, followed by "story pictures of 'our farmerfolk at Fredericton' to make the mat story complete."

Copy of a letter from Madge Smith, Fredericton to J.D.Ralph, NFB Production Secretary, Ottawa, April 10, 1945, Madge Smith papers, MG H80, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton.
symbolic presentation of hands enriching society through intellectual and manual labour in murals for the entrance hall of Fisher Vocational School in Woodstock, Nova Scotia, painted in 1941 (fig. 128). "Vocational training", explained MacLeod:

is symbolized by hands coming out of a book. They bear the fruits of the earth grown huge from the new treatment. A symbolic boy depicts the Planter; another, the Marketer with baskets. A giant hand pulls out weeds: "superstition", "old methods". The windup, a giant among men, the New farmer, a huge youth in sunny colours holding up a model farm in his hands. The opposite wall is the distaff side with a girl at a loom, a Sewer, and a Weaver.... Hands knead bread and a Mary sits on a knoll with a child and a lamb. 91

MacLeod had discovered the power of symbolism in painting to convey the message of cultural unity in the collective cultivation of the land and its resources. Where a harmonious relationship with the land promised to secure universal accessibility for the humanist aesthetic, MacLeod's use of symbols, and of the hands in particular, raises the question of whether a universal, or at least national, language of art would function to secure unity in cultural democracy. The social value of art for individual and communal well-being depended upon some degree of cultural dialogue between provinces, as between nations, to ensure harmonious relations and mutual understanding.

The Toronto-based CGP, formed to promote collective social consciousness among artists and their public, revealed by the end of the 1930s a certain homogeneity of subject matter and style in images of the civilized landscape between artists from opposite ends of the country. Jack Humphrey of St. John, New Brunswick, considered by Abell to be the "dean of the advance-guard painters of the Maritime Provinces", submitted townscapes that were similar in aesthetic tenor not

only to the Toronto community of painters, but to Jock Macdonald's depictions of west coast native villages. The specificity of the hands, however, and their associated reference to organized labour upon which the Toronto community of painters based their evolution of a language of visual exchange, compromised the universal accessibility of MacLeod's murals.

"Woodstock's Reaction to Murals", recorded by Grace Caughlin for the December 1941 issue of Maritime Art, reveals that MacLeod's decorative programme was enthusiastically received as a testament to Maritime history and, in particular, "to the foresight and the munificence of Mr. L.P. Fisher", who was the founder of the school. The portraits of Fisher and the school's first director, Mr. Maxwell, along with MacLeod's use of local residents as models tied the murals directly to Woodstock. Caughlin caught sight of MacLeod's repetitive use of hands as a motif embodying the idea of vocational training specific to a regional economic dependence on agriculture. "The youth of Carleton County", wrote Caughlin, "is being led to a richer life of the best type of freedom -- the life of the farmer -- a man who's life is one of worth, who's partner with the sky and earth, and who feeds us all." Thus, while Caughlin sensed a poetic correspondence between the hands and a life spent working the

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Both Jack Humphrey, (St.John, New Brunswick), and Jock Macdonald, (Vancouver), participated in the first Toronto exhibition of the CGP held in 1933. Both artists stayed with the CGP through to 1950, with Macdonald exhibiting as an Ontario resident from 1947 when he moved to Toronto to teach at OCA.


soil, the Toronto painters' conception of the artist as a skilled worker labouring for social progress was lost.

The symbolic richness of the hands gathered greatest strength in Toronto as a result of the development of this motif from the early 1930s within the Toronto community of painters. This was the paradox of the humanist aesthetic, for while Abell undoubtedly succeeded in encouraging Maritime audiences to consider the associative force of representational form, both through his teaching at Acadia University and the Maritime Art Association he founded in 1935, symbolic interpretation of motifs inevitably depended on familiarity with a local currency of images. In the context of the Toronto community of painters, the hands evolved within a language of visual exchange that gathered together Comfort's Youna Canadian (fig.35), Clark's Petroushka, and Aldwinckle's poster To Work. It is Our War in a universalizing appeal to a democratic ideal of art as experience. In MacLeod's murals, the hands and scattered groupings of figures engaged in collective labour recall the image of "humanity in action" admired in the artist's 1934 painting School in a Garden (fig.96). The result, like Schaefer's Christmas, Norwich Vermont of 1940, is a self-conscious association of the civilized landscape theme established during the Depression decade, with symbols of wartime collective experience circulated in popular culture.

Neither artists elsewhere in Canada nor their public could be expected to speak the Toronto painters' increasingly symbolic language of art. While geographical isolation and a lack of educational and material support was partly to blame, the fact was not every artist felt compelled to create according to a central Canadian ideal of art as experience, however democratic its precepts. The Kingston Conference

polarized the Toronto-based CGP and the Montreal-based Contemporary Arts Society, (formed by John Lyman in 1939), on the point of the aesthetic articulation of humanist values. Lyman did not attend the conference, nor did Alfred Pellan and Paul-Emile Borduas, who encouraged francophone members of the Contemporary Arts Society to consider their autonomy. As Sicotte suggests, despite invitations to join discussion of the relation of art and society at the Kingston Conference, francophone painters were preoccupied by a culturally distinct set of aesthetic problems. This distinction polemicized discussion of contemporary art in two essays written for the

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Both Borduas and Pellan exhibited with the CGP as invited contributors in the 1942 and 1945 exhibitions. Borduas' work was also included in the National Gallery of Canada's 1944 Travelling Exhibition of the CGP. The two artists refused the invitation of the Hart House Art Committee to exhibit in a three-person show with Jacques de Tonnancour in November-December of 1944. A solo show was therefore arranged for de Tonnancour, who commented: "such cultural exchanges were the best antidote to the stupid chaotic situation created between our two peoples to support political interests of all sorts." Borduas and Pellan did not show again in Toronto until 1951 and 1961 respectively. Hart House Art Committee -- 158th Meeting (November 9, 1944); and 159th Meeting (January 9, 1945), Hart House Art Committee Minutes, vol.2, Hart House, University of Toronto.

"De fait," writes Sicotte, "au moment où les artistes réunis a l'Université Queen s'interrogent sur leur rôle dans la société et dans le conflit en cours, au moment où ils se recommandent de l'expérience américaine et élaborent des résolutions en faveur d'un parrainage gouvernemental des arts, leurs vis-à-vis de langue française sont occupés à de tout autres considérations. On sait, en effet, que le tournant des années quarante coïncide au Québec avec le début d'une importante polémique pour ou contre l'"art vivant"... On sait également que le débat qui s'amorce au Québec dans ces années conduira bientôt à de profondes transformations tant sur le plan du discours théorique que des pratiques picturales. Pour l'instant toutefois, ces interventions, visant à une démocratisation du champ de l'art, n'ont que de lointains rapports avec les discussions qui ont lieu à Kingston en juin 1941."

1942 Andover, Massachusetts exhibition *Aspects of Contemporary Painting in Canada.*

In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Martin Baldwin, curator of the Art Gallery of Toronto, described "The Artist in Canada" as an individual ideally responding to "the spirit of a community" then being cultivated on a national level by the Toronto community of painters. The second essay, "Peintures canadiennes d'aujourd'hui" by the Montreal architect and art patron Marcel Parizeau, isolated the same spirit within Quebec, where artists conceivably demonstrated a distinct assuredness of formal expression. Painting in Quebec, so Parizeau's discussion suggests, manifests "unity in diversity" independently of the rest of Canada. "If art came to reflect an assessment of Quebec's isolation", as David Burnett argues, "it did so in response to the complex concepts of change inherent in society.... And changes in Quebec came about not through agreements but through disputes and anger." Borduas, Pellan, and Lyman emerge from histories of Canadian painting in the 1940s as defenders of individualism and freedom from the enduring presence of the

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98 Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr., of the Addison Gallery of American Art, where the exhibition was held, explained in his foreword that *Aspects of Contemporary Painting in Canada* drew solely from eastern Canadian collections to represent a total of thirty-eight artists, including an unusually strong grouping of francophone painters from Quebec.


100 Marcel Parizeau, "Peintures canadiennes d'aujourd'hui", *Aspects of Contemporary Painting in Canada*, pp.20-5.

Group of Seven, most intensely felt in Toronto. That the Quebec painters' won historical acclaim by virtue of their rejection of a central Canadian humanist aesthetic brings to light a significant point for understanding why painting in Toronto during the 1940s "gave way", as Dennis Reid describes, to the leadership of the French painters in Montreal. For most historians of Canadian art, as Boyanoski reveals, "the years spanning 1939-1952" in Ontario are most easily understood as "years of ferment and transition... from the design-conscious romantic naturalism of the CGP to the abstract expressionism of Painters Eleven...", when Toronto artists seemingly caught up to the francophone avant-garde.

102 "New art in Montreal", argues Burnett, "emerged from an atmosphere of conflict, and the fragmentation of the forces for change within the artistic community was symptomatic of a society in dispute with itself.... In Toronto indifference and antipathy also existed, but there was no parallel to the progressive debates within the avant-garde such as those that split the Contemporary Arts Society or that divided the francophone artists between the Automatistes and the Prisme d'yeux. The contemporary art scene in Toronto was dominated by the Group of Seven and their successors in the Canadian Group of Painters." David Burnett and Marylin Schiff, Contemporary Canadian Art, p.41.

103 Dennis Reid describes the "diminished vitality" of Toronto painting by 1940. "After almost seventy years' dominance of painting activity in Canada, the centre had given way", suggests Reid, to the leadership of the French painters in Montreal. Dennis Reid A Concise History of Canadian Painting, 2d ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.191.

104 In Christine Boyanoski's The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in Ontario, Reid, Burnett and Schiff, and Charles Hill are cited to establish the need for re-evaluation of the Toronto art world of the 1940s. Boyanoski concludes, however, that "while the 1940s may never be regarded as a pinnacle of Canadian art, the decade was crucial to subsequent artistic development...." Christine Boyanoski, The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in Ontario, pp.7-8.
The present study suggests that within the Toronto community of painters, the socially-conscious language of visual exchange began to precipitate symbolism in the early years of war. The call to cultural unity of the Kingston Conference encouraged artists to consider the accessibility of their work to the public. Uniformity and homogenity were not, as history shows, the result of this desire for accessibility, nor should they have been. Regionalism, a fundamental product of a democratic ideal of art as experience, preserved both locality and specificity in the interpretation of visual symbols. If, in the grandest sense, as the Kingston Conference promoted, art would shape a more humane and generous society by representing its constituent communities, then locality and specificity were, ostensibly, a product of a universalizing rather than universal language of art. Popular culture, of great interest to the Toronto painters since the mid 1930s and of even wider interest as a result of wartime propaganda, promised to erase some regional barriers by establishing a fund of national and international images. The war posters were circulated nationally, thereby establishing some degree of universality for symbols, including the burned house and the labouring hands. Where political propaganda necessarily delimited symbolic interpretation, the humanist aesthetic in painting preserved a range of potential readings.

Was there a way to ensure a universal reading of a symbol without compromising, contrary to popular culture, regional significance? For the Toronto community of painters, tradition offered the ultimate solution, for it was through the revival of humanist concerns shared by artists of the past and present, nationally and internationally, that unity in cultural diversity could be expressed. This, it may be argued, was the impact of the Kingston Conference on artistic production in Toronto during the 1940s that marked the final stage of evolution for the humanist aesthetic. Individual sublimation within a collective identity shaped by a fine arts
tradition, and encouraged by the spirit of community which had
given rise to a language of visual exchange, helps to explain
why none of the Toronto painters emerge from the early history
of modernism in Canadian art with the same celebrity as
Borduas or Pellan, or, for that matter, Lismer, Harris and
Jackson.

The war shaped the Toronto community of painters'
collective identity in two ways: it raised self-consciousness
of Canadian nationalism and it encouraged internationalism
through concern for the state of world society. Nationalism
and internationalism, the two dynamic forces for social unity,
became intertwined around the idea of tradition, seen as the
primary source of cultural unity. The Toronto painters
interpreted artistic tradition in the first instance as the
humanist tradition of western art, overtly acknowledged by
Brooker in Pygmalion's Miracle and Comfort in Primavera. The
contemporary significance of this tradition emerged as the
leitmotif of the Kingston Conference, woven through Abell's
recollection of communal cultures of the past and the
democratic union of art and life in Greece, to Alford's
historical survey of the artists' position in society, to
Rowan's description of "The American Renaissance" and Holt's
discussion of historical techniques, and even to Benton's
citation of Aristotle to convince his audience that aesthetic
form functioned according to the principle of "unity in
variety." In the contemporary context, unity in variety
referred to the principle of design, seen as the basis for the
organization of harmonious relations between elements equally
applicable to the composition of a work of art as to the
ordering of society. It also referred to the binding force of
social consciousness directing contemporary artistic
production in Toronto, as in most of English Canada.

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105 Thomas Hart Benton, Friday Evening Session -- June 27,
1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.55.
Symbolism arose from an alliance of social consciousness and design in contemporary art, rarified in the middle ground of representational form of the humanist aesthetic. In the past, as Rowan raised during discussion of Abell's Conference presentation, symbolism grew from religion, which was the first common or "pressure impulse" for cultural unity.106 "As far as I can see", responded Abell:

the religions of the world have been projections of human experience, symbolized in certain things that men felt. We have lost our faith, to a certain extent, in these symbols; but the things that are felt are just as real as ever, and they themselves are the sources of religion. So I take it that the making of human lives happy on this continent is a religion which is enough to inspire our artists to make the sort of effort we want them to make, to produce the kind of paintings they can produce, and everything else pertaining to art.107

Within the Toronto community of painters, the impulse to cultural unity was humanism symbolized by motifs and compositions drawn from the humanist tradition of western art and made current by the artists' collective language of visual exchange. Objects of art, projected Benton, are "symbols of culture."108 Alford added: "...it is in the balancing of relations between that private function of self-expression and

106 "I was hoping", stated Rowan, "that Mr. Abell would discuss what I consider to be the 'pressure impulse' under the cultures in the democracies that he outlined. For instance, the case of Greece it seems to me that the great impulse there was of a religious nature.... I do not believe it can any longer be religion, at least in the United States; we find that the religious impulse is not strong enough to encourage our artists to be creative, as they have been under the same impulse in the past."
Edward Rowan, Discussion -- June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.33.

107 Walter Abell, Discussion -- June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, pp.33-34.

108 Thomas Hart Benton, Friday Evening Session -- June 27, 1941, Conference of Canadian Artists, p.49.
the public function of cultural crystallization that the satisfactory position of the artist arises."¹⁰⁹ Such a balance between the public and private found potent expression in the work of Toronto painters selected for participation in the Canadian War Art Programme authorized in October of 1942 through the efforts of the FCA national executive. The war paintings pushed the symbolic tendencies of contemporary painting in Toronto forward and revitalized the roots of a humanist response to democracy in conflict in the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven.

CHAPTER FIVE: War and Historical Metaphor

An economic revolution, the industrial revolution, has precipitated so many technical innovations and social problems that our heritage from the past has become undependable, our future indeterminable, our present insecure. The mentality of this transition, with all its losses and pains, its consoling discoveries and sustaining hopes, appears to be the tensional centre of our present creative life.¹

This quote, from Walter Abell's 1954 article "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", is fraught with anxiety over the passing of a democratic ideal of art as experience with a generation of Toronto painters whose leadership of a modern movement of painting in Canada had been eclipsed by a new avant-garde. His recollection, ten years after returning to the United States, is coloured by nostalgia for "the collective dream in art" of individual and communal well-being realized in a cultural democracy.² Abell's melancholy betrays the waning not only of his renown as an influential teacher and philosopher of aesthetics in Canada, but of the belief in the social value of art, argued Abell, "is one of the cultural symbols into which society projects existent states of underlying psychic tension... generated by historical experiences involving the entire range of individual and social life, including technological and economic life. As imagery symbolizing underlying and often unconscious psycho-historical depths, works of art function in the mental life of society much as do dreams in the experience of an individual. Thus, we are led to conceive the higher forms of cultural expression in any society as manifestations of a 'collective dream'." In war, explained Abell, the collective dream manifests the realization "that the destruction of their civilization is within the range of possibility."

¹ Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", Canadian Art 11 (Winter 1954), pp.48-49.

art that shaped the humanist aesthetic in modern Canadian painting. The nucleus of the generation whose work the humanist aesthetic so closely defined was, of course, the Toronto community of painters.

Chapter Five examines the Toronto painters' discovery of a potent and accessible source of symbolism for the collective struggle of society at war in the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven. Symbolism, argued Abell, originated with the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven, painted in a bold simplified style replete with optimism for the new and undeveloped. When these landscapes were reviewed as part of a revival of a Canadian humanist tradition, they precipitated archetypal symbols, or as Abell called them, "psycho-historical" symbols. The tree emerged from the Group's wilderness landscapes as the most enduring of these symbols, laden with doubt and the sombre fact of suffering humanity at the hand of political dictatorship. In the Ruskinian sense, the tree became an object of pathetic fallacy for the Toronto community of painters, manifesting their shift in humanist thought from optimism to pathos and incredulity. The humanist aesthetic succeeded in creating a language of art

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3 Psycho-historical symbols, clarifies Abell, are "the forms of imagery characteristic of a given style... [and] since style evolves collectively, like language, and is not the product or property of any single individual... They emerge from history." Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", pp.46-47.

4 Incredulity, in fact, for the pathetic fallacy itself as a basis from which a meaningful and "readable" language of art might develop. "Ruskin knew that states of feeling modify perception in important ways...", contests George Whalley. "Thus the flexible ambiguity of language keeps the perceptual test in the background and confuses it with an ontological test." "Any departure from that contemplative disinterestedness ...", concludes Whalley, "any need to discourse, to paint about rather than to embody -- is a breach of artistic integrity, no matter how subtle." George Whalley, "The Pathetic Fallacy", Queen's Quarterly 57 (Winter 1950-51), pp.523, 528-29.
that spoke deeply to the collective experience of war and post-war transition. In the atomic age, the artists' sense of responsibility for society peaked and found support in the national Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA), and in the international United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), committed to "scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background." The curse of politics, described by the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty in 1947 as the translation of values "into the order of facts" was, as it turned out, also the curse of art. Cold War politics roused suspicion not only of the communist denominators of humanist values, but of an art that approached propagandist social communication. An imbalance between representation and form ensued as the Toronto painters struggled to maintain a vital presence for the aesthetic union of art and contemporary life. The result, ultimately, was the rise of abstraction as a language capable of circumventing partisan beliefs by essentializing aesthetic experience within the materials of painterly expression.

A Canadian War Art Programme

Should the Canadian painter be called upon for active service in the war effort? The national executive of the Federation of Canadian Artists under the presidency of André Biéler lobbied hard for government sponsorship of a war art programme. Artists' participation in a comprehensive war programme

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6 As a phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty studied the structure of human thought and organization. He believed that humanist values could not be instituted for the creation of a new social order. To do so would be to obviate the fundamental humanist tenet of freedom and flexibility. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem, trans. John O'Neill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) p.xxxv.
effort, so the FCA argued, would counter the commercialism of wartime propaganda, "...as if national feeling were a commodity to be sold to the public by the usual methods and channels designed to market industrial products." The artist, by contrast, "sees this as a war in defence of humanity, of Canada, of the freedoms he has inherited." Government sponsorship of a war art program would not only build and sustain morale, but would generate employment and, more significantly, raise the profile of artists as active participants in Canadian national life who documented the war effort on the home and international fronts. Although only thirty-two official war artists were employed during the three years of its active operation from 1943 to 1946, the Canadian War Art Programme represented a major advance towards government sponsorship of the arts in Canada and fulfilled the first resolution of the Kingston Conference in just over a year.

State support for Canadian cultural development would supplement mounting financial slack left by the Carnegie Corporation's redirection of funds toward the sciences beginning in 1943. At the same time, American patronage for

7 Federation of Canadian Artists, War Policy Statement, Supplementary to the National War Effort Petition of the Federation of Canadian Artists, 1942, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Coll. 2049, Box 2, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

8 "Since Keppel's retirement from administration of Carnegie Fdn", explained Montreal artist Fred Taylor, "it has greatly reduced its grants in aid of the arts everywhere and has raised its assistance for science -- shift particularly pronounced in Canada. Mr Lismer deeply concerned on this account -- problem of Lismer having influence in spending of NG's Carnegie Grant, not willing to give over funds to the FCA, unless he directed their spending, although does support progressive aspects of the FCA." Letter to Lawren Harris, Vancouver from Fred Taylor, Montreal, October 1944, FCA General Correspondence: Lawren Harris August 1944 to October 1945, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Box 1, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
the arts, once the envy of the Toronto painters, began to falter with the United States Congress' decision to cut what was left of the Works Progress Administration. Lismer cited the example of the United States to remind Canadian artists of the need to secure a permanent place for themselves in post-war society. The War Art Programme promised to boost artists into public view and to contribute to the integration of the artist in society, goals long since cultivated within the Toronto community of painters and now actively pursued by

The Carnegie Corporation terminated their grants for educational work at the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1938, when Lismer left as Educational Supervisor. Martin Baldwin, director of the Gallery, unsuccessfully pressed for reinstatement of funding for post-war educational development.
Letter to Mr Jessup, President Carnegie Corporation from Martin Baldwin, Director, Art Gallery of Toronto, June 16, 1944, Carnegie Corporation Grant Files, Box 2, Columbia University, New York.

Funding difficulties were compounded by the war. "Present day transport difficulties and individual preoccupation with war time jobs has caused such a decline in attendance in week day events, both in day time and evening, that, with rare exceptions, they have been discontinued."

9 "I hope that in Canada after the war we shall have a Federal Arts Project", wrote Ayre, "which will give the artists the place they deserve -- and that the public deserves of them -- in the reconstruction programme. The Federation of Canadian Artists is working towards this end."
Robert Ayre, "Art and Truth", lecture of 1943, p.18, Robert Ayre papers, Box 2, Coll. 2003a, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

10 In a letter to FCA executive secretary Rik Kettle, Arthur Lismer, who was president of the Quebec Region, stated: "I have been to NY and Washington a few mos. ago and all signs of community efforts: WPA, FPA, American Artists Congress, Artists Interrelations Organizations are all gone... and [the] war is not to blame entirely."
Letter to Rik Kettle, Toronto from Arthur Lismer, Montreal, Sept 22, 1944, André Biéler papers, Box 4, Coll. 2050, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
the FCA. By allowing the artist to work alongside the soldier in small military units, the War Art Programme offered controlled circumstances within which to test a full-fledged integration of the artist in society. That the Canadian War Art Programme came into being at all indicates how powerful humanism as a comprehensive philosophy of social progress had grown in Canada, as in the allied democratic nations of Britain and the United States, and how effectively this philosophy seemed to be served by a democratic ideal of art as experience.11

While Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the arts began to wane, British government support for national cultural development was on the rise. The War Artists' Advisory Commission, acting under the aegis of the Ministry of Information, formed in 1939 to select and direct artists to contribute to a series of pictorial records of war.12 In November of 1941, the first examples of British war art were seen in Toronto in the British War Art exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in aid of the "Wings for Britain" fund. "As these British war documents show," commented McInnes, "examples are not lacking of the artist's strength and appeal in chronicling and inspiring a common effort."13 British artists who worked with

11 An Order in Council was passed by the Cabinet authorizing planning and staffing of a War Art Programme in October of 1942 to be administered by the Historical Sections of the three branches of the Armed Services. The War Art Programme was launched in December 1942, when the two control committees were authorized by the Defence Council: the Canadian War Art Committee in Ottawa and the Canadian War Art Overseas Control Committee in London.


13 "This is a people's war. No time for aesthetes to produce vague meaningless patterns to delight their small circle of friends....", wrote McInnes. In lieu of A.Y. Jackson's radio broadcast calling for the government's action to bring artists
Canadian troops overseas during the three years preceding the establishment of the Canadian War Art Programme completed Canada's cultural record of the war effort with the donation of seventy-four works to the National Gallery of Canada. That culture could and should be advanced under the duress of war was the message sent by the British government to the dominions in 1942 when it extended full financial support for the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), an "arms-length" national cultural body responsible for the promotion and protection of the arts in Britain. Renewed ties to the Empire in war brought the British example of cultural support into clear focus as a model for the cultural communication of humanist values. As the National Gallery of Canada's director Harry McCurry commented as the Chairman of the Canadian War Artists' Committee:

In the present conflict, the Canadian government has, in common with the government of the United Kingdom, recognized the power of art to build up the idealism which unites the democratic people of the world in defence of freedom, and to provide the visual story of

Graham McInnes "War Exhibitions", *New World Illustrated* (November 1942), p.22.


15 Organization of the CEMA began in 1939 with the efforts of Britain's Board of Education to raise public awareness and interest in the arts through the financial support of the Pilgrim Trust. The Trust withdrew its support in 1942, leaving the Council wholly dependent on government funds. The "CEMA's chief success is, perhaps, to be found in its very existence, in the recognition by the Government that the arts deserve financial support in wartime." John Rothenstein, "Arts for the People: The Story of England's CEMA", *Magazine of Art* 36 (November 1943), pp.276-277.
our great cause, peril and triumph.  

Communication of humanist values to the Empire and allied western nations depended, as the Canadians were well aware, upon the establishment of art as a universal language. They believed that only when national barriers to mutual understanding were overcome would ignorance and misunderstanding, the root of international conflict, be eradicated and peace be maintained. This was the prerogative of UNESCO, formed in November of 1945. In defence of UNESCO, and of his conviction of the artist's vital contribution to social democratic reform, McInnes admonished: "If you wish to avoid war, cultivate the basis of peace: common understanding." Where universality would succeed, without impinging upon the democratic premise of "unity in diversity" as advocated by Elizabeth Wyn Wood through the Canadian Arts Council, was in the depiction of the common experience of war. The example of artistic control in Nazi Germany made


17 "There are two ways to stop war:" wrote McInnes in defence of UNESCO's plans for world education, "create machinery to deal with crises as they arise or continuous cultivation of a society in which crises are not likely to occur. The idea of Unesco, formed in November of 1945, is to remove causes of war by promoting an understanding of how one's neighbour lives, and to combat spiritual hunger and mental poverty throughout the world." McInnes, "UNESCO: One World or None," The Peterborough Examiner (January 16, 1947).

18 Wyn Wood was elected to the executive of the CAC upon its formation in 1945 and was invited to write the foreword to the 1947 exhibition Canadian Women Artists by the National Council of Women of Canada, which co-sponsored the exhibition along with the National Council of Women of the United States. "Unlike the United States which has the tradition of being a 'Melting pot', Canada subscribes to a different cultural principle.... The dynamic Canadian slogan is 'Unity in Diversity'.... Our art is rooted in our own soil but has at the same time, we think, some
the point of diversity especially significant for a democratic Canadian cultural identity. McInnes' message was clear on this point: "The essence of great art is freedom of expression, unknown in present-day Germany."[^19] "[H]umanism implies diversity," so Toronto art critic Pearl McCarthy reminded her Toronto audience.[^20] Surely in Canada, considered Robert Ayre, "there is no reason why the state should be a brutal taskmaster."[^21] Lismer emphasized the artist's individual responsibility:

> At the present time when we are considering every avenue of approach to the solution of international misunderstanding, it is part of our social responsibility and duty to revalue the meaning of art and to estimate its power and purpose in this unifying process: of breaking down destructive policies that divide peoples from one another.[^22]

[^19]: Graham McInnes, "Racial Art: Doctor Goebbels' machine forces artists to preach propaganda", *New World Illustrated* (February 1941), p.12.


[^21]: "It can be enlightened enough to let the artist go his own way," continued Ayre, "in the manner of the great private benevolent foundations, like the Guggenheim, which does not call the tune. Or the United States Government, through the Federal Arts Project, which has put hundreds of artists to work on public buildings without dictating to them."


[^19]: "Art has a human and diplomatic mission", continued Lismer. "It aids in the promotion of international goodwill, world-mindedness and a knowledge of racial character and culture."

The British Model

The most successful British war paintings, as the well-known art critic for the Manchester Guardian and B.B.C. lecturer Eric Newton described, struck that familiar balance of representational form identified by Abell. "The war artist's special problem..." explained Newton, "is to combine in equal proportions, three qualities in his picture... 'accuracy', 'intensity' and 'beauty'...fused so completely that there is no possibility of separating them." The most compelling British war artists, (Newton cited Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore), overcame the fundamental descriptive purpose of their task by exaggerating the "intensity" of their subject and de-emphasizing "accuracy" for depth of emotion. Sutherland and Moore succeeded in rendering their personal experience universal, argued Newton, and in so doing rendered the universal and incomprehensible experience of war meaningful to every individual. Sutherland's Devastation 1940: Farmhouse in Wales (fig.129) shares with Schaefer's studies of the destroyed house a corresponding interest in the symbol's comprehensive union of individual and communal experience. The destroyed house fuses the personal, and that range of associations exclusive to the artist's

Arthur Lismer moved to Montreal in November of 1940 to take up the position of Educational Supervisor of the Art Association of Montreal.


response to a given circumstance, with the universal, as a symbol of destruction addressing the decimation caused by war. In so doing the symbol broaches a closer integration of art and society satisfying individual and communal interests. Newton brought his conviction for the artist's integral role in society, outlined in his 1935 publication, The Artist and His Public, to Canadians through a series of BBC broadcasts, "An Approach to Art", published with illustrations the same year. When Newton visited Canada in 1937 for a nationwide lecture tour, his most sympathetic audience was the Toronto community of painters and their supporters, including Alford and McInnes.¹⁴ Once overseas, however, the Canadian war artists -- including Schaefer and Comfort -- profited most from Herbert Read, the British art critic convinced of "the profound inter-relation of artist and community."²⁵

In his 1936 publication Art and Society, which he revised and republished in 1945, Herbert Read distinguished symbols as "mental constructions", as opposed to "direct representations of living objects or natural appearances."²⁶ As such, the symbol "paraphrased reality" and created a situation, exploited by Sutherland and Moore, in which "the spectator merges his vital and sympathetic feelings in the life of the object contemplated."²⁷ The idea paralleled Abell's concept of representational form, in which associations wrought from the design of a composition shaped aesthetic experience. What

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¹⁴ Toronto, recorded Newton, "is definitely the art centre of Canada and Ottawa finds that difficult to forgive." Eric Newton, "American Journey", February 24, 1947, p.74, Eric Newton papers, mfm A943, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.


distinguishes Read's analysis, however, is his emphasis upon the symbol as a finite product of aesthetic experience, expressly intended for the benefit of community. According to Read, this benefit, served uniquely by the symbol, was "the development of human consciousness." In his 1937 review of Read's *Art and Society*, Ayre repeated the claim: "art acquires its full significance only when it is accepted by the community", as this is a necessary condition for its function as "one of the original elements which go to form a society." By 1943, in a lecture on "Art and Truth", Ayre had arrived at the conclusion: "You don't just see a painting as you see a signal: you look at it, you enter into it, you experience it." Art therein becomes a part of life "isolated, and intensified, in form" and most succinctly delivered through the symbol.

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30 "On the basis of this activity", adds Read, "a 'symbolic discourse' becomes possible, and religion, philosophy, and science follow as consequent modes of thought." Herbert Read, *Icon and Idea*, p.18.


33 Ayre quoted from Coleridge on this point: "The artist must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols -- the Naturgeist, or spirit of Nature." Ayre again quoted Coleridge for a definition of beauty, that is of art defined from the standpoint of aesthetic experience. Coleridge defined beauty as "the subjection of matter to spirit so as to be
When, as in war, a singular phenomenon determines collective experience, then the symbol essentializing the experience of life gathers universal significance and promises to bridge the gap between art and society. Wartime propaganda provided structural supports for this bridge during the 1940s, raising public consciousness of images and their associated values through poster designs, advertising, and film. Read interpreted the symbol's superior role in painting as archetypal, operating as vital "social condensers" that "inhabit and invigorate -- inform -- the shapes and colours of spontaneous expression."34 By comparison to its use in popular culture, where its appearance is preconceived to serve a determined political or economic agenda, the symbol in painting ostensibly evokes the painter's unconscious response to common and typical experiences. Read here owed to Jung's description of archetypes "as deep, unconscious predispositions... towards certain modes of expression or symbolization."35 In the "universal and eternal" language of art the archetype freely operates "as a mode of knowledge parallel but distinct from other modes by which man arrives at transformed into a symbol, in and through which the spirit reveals itself." Aesthetic experience, "isolated, and intensified" by the symbol, therefore raised consciousness of life and of the collective spirit of humanity. Robert Ayre, "Art and Truth", p.23.

34 "Archetypes", argues Thistlewood in support of Read's interpretation, were not 'closely circumscribed, static figures' after all, but unconscious inherited tendencies to certain modes of manifestation, determined 'only in principle, never concretely'.... [A]uthentic symbolization was patently a natural activity, it was actually being practised by a minute number of people. Even within the phalanx of the avant-garde the creation of potent archetypal imagery was a relatively rare event." David Thistlewood, *Herbert Read: Formlessness and Form* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.154-155.

an understanding of his environment...." This mode is antithetic to the ephemeral and preconceived conditions of political propaganda and advertising.

Abell pursued a similar line of thinking as Read, developing his idea that communal cultures were models for the democratic integration of art and society into an account of the collective dream. Clearly inspired by Jung, Abell judged: "a new universality of historical vision, embracing the civilizations of all times and places" points to the significance of symbols in contemporary art as products of "the underlying and recurrent patterns of human existence." Abell thought of archetypes in painting as psycho-historical symbols and in 1954, (the year before Read published Icon and Idea), explored the modern movement of painting in Canada to determine their function as precipitators of the experience of contemporary life. To succeed as a device for communicating to a broad spectrum of the population and of essentializing the experience of war, the psycho-historical symbol had to take advantage of clichés without losing a deeper appeal to humanist values and to the individual's experience of contemporary life.

**Autonomy for Painting and the Toronto Tradition**

One of the FCA's foremost concerns as an organization promoting artists' active involvement in society was the preservation of creative freedom. How could the liberty of the humanist aesthetic be upheld if the artist were expected,

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beginning with the War Art Programme, to cultivate support for social democracy and the allied offense overseas. Harris believed the FCA, of which he became national president in 1944, should play an exemplary role as a model of cultural democracy fostering unity in diversity through its umbrella organization and its long-term project of community centres. The FCA, recommended Harris, should keep free from politics and political attachment. This did not suggest that artists were not obliged to influence public thought. Lismer explained that the freedom to create "implies that we recognize the democratic ideal and that it includes the surprising factor that common man -- which includes the artist -- is capable of moulding shaping and maintaining a new order in which Art will find a place and a purpose." 

If the Toronto painters' development of a communal language of visual exchange inevitably tied them to a local as opposed to a national audience, the common circumstances of war inevitably lent universal appeal to their work of the 1940s. The War Art Programme provided the perfect opportunity to unite the local with the universal when a representative grouping of the Toronto community of painters gathered as official war artists overseas. The situation was ideal because the local language of the Toronto painters was then

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39 Harris did suggest, however, "... if there should be a change of Gov't. then let the C.C.F. who know their way around culturally appoint a new director of the National Gallery and give Harry McC. a job suited to his capacity. Either you [Ayre] or Rik would make a grand director." Lawren Harris, Vancouver, to Fred Taylor, Montreal, June 18, 1944, FCA General Correspondence, Federation of Canadian Art papers, Box 1, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

exposed to international events and to parallel efforts in Britain to open the language of art to humanity as a whole. With Jackson, Holgate and Comfort initially co-opted in an advisory capacity to assist the Canadian War Artists’ Committee in their selection of artists, Comfort, Schaefer, Goldhamer, Pepper, Aldwinckle, Bayefsky and newcomer Jack Nichols were among those Toronto painters trained as soldiers to become able members of the military units to which they were assigned.41

Jackson was influential, especially with McCurry at the National Gallery of Canada. Although Jackson inevitably favoured the Toronto painters’ to some extent, being most familiar with their work, he also recognized that the future of Canadian cultural development pointed towards the collective realization of regional identity. This was the democratic basis for the umbrella structure of the FCA, in which a national executive oversaw the five regions of the Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, the West, and British Columbia.42

41 Once the Defence Council approved a War Art Programme for the Second World War, a committee was set up to direct operations. This committee was composed of the Historical Officers of the three services, (army, air force and navy), and was placed under the chairmanship of Harry McCurry as Director of the National Gallery of Canada. The committee oversaw the work of official war artists in Canada. The work of artists selected for duty overseas was directed by the Canadian Overseas Artists Control Committee of which the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada was chairman. Massey ran the overseas committee in close collaboration with the senior officer of the Canadian Military Headquarters in London, the captain commanding Canadian ships and the air officer commander in chief.

42 In 1942, the year the FCA established its National Executive, the Ontario and Quebec regions were formed. Organization of five regional sub-branches of the FCA in 1945 was intended to secure a more equitable representation of the visual arts across the country. The job of raising Canada's cultural profile internationally was given to the Canadian Arts Council, formed out of the FCA the same year. The CAC further represented the interests and concerns of Canadian artists to
Jackson was the first president of the Ontario region, and Lismer, coincidentally, was the first president of the Quebec region. Regionalization responded to Canadian diversity. As Newton commented in 1937, Canada seemed "far too big for 'culture!', at least in a homogenous sense.⁴³ In terms of coordinating nationwide representation for artists, regionalization was also practical. Distinct regional identities had developed by the end of the 1930s in Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes, (Abell founded the Maritime Art Association in 1935).

Strength of community feeling amongst the Toronto painters precipitated discussion in 1939 of the CGP restructuring on a regional basis.⁴⁴ Comfort, together with former Group of Seven members Jackson and Carmichael, formed a committee to study the feasibility of sub-dividing the CGP, with the idea that if Toronto, Montreal, the Middle-West and the Maritimes ran separate executives, the CGP's expanding membership would be better organized according to regional development.⁴⁵ Plans for the restructuring of the CGP as a UNESCO.


⁴⁴ Because the physical extent of the Dominion made communication difficult, the CGP executive considered vesting authority in local and/or regional groups. At the November 1939 meeting of the CGP, the executive enacted a by-law which would permit the organization of such self-administered regional groups or branches. Head office, however, as stated in the Charter would remain in Toronto.
Isabel McLaughlin, (President CGP), Toronto to Edwin Holgate, (Vice-President CGP), Montreal, November 12-15, 1939, Isabel McLaughlin papers, Box 13a, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

⁴⁵ McLaughlin's above-mentioned letter of November 12-15, 1939 to Edwin Holgate, who had just been elected vice-president of the CGP, (McLaughlin was president), commented: "The Regional group is developing... to this extent: whereas the proper function of the C.G.P. is made difficult because of the physical
kind of umbrella artists' organization, (anticipating the FCA), that would accommodate regional distinctions coincided with the formation in Toronto of the Allied Arts Council in 1938 to formalize the relationship between artists of varied disciplines. The Council, as McInnes acknowledged, was "something of a landmark in the contemporary Canadian world of art" that remained for the short period of its duration a Toronto phenomenon indicative of the interdisciplinary ties long since engendered by the Arts and Letters Club.\(^6\)

Toronto's position in the development of a network of local, regional, and national artists' organizations was central, a fact demonstrated by the extent of Toronto painters' presence in the FCA and War Art Programme. Jackson, Jack Nichols, Schaefer, Comfort, Isabel McLaughlin, Lowrie Warrener, Paraskeva Clark, Eric Aldwinckle, Charles Goldhamer, Yvonne McKague Housser, George Pepper, Caven Atkins, Rody Kenny Courtice, and Bobs Coghill Haworth, along with Graham McInnes, John Alford, and Barker Fairley, were formally united in the first committee of the Ontario Region of the FCA.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Based upon the financial hardships faced equally by artists, musicians, writers, and actors across the country, the Council hoped to unite "the artist and his public", by raising the interest of "the public and the official world in what they are doing; to secure their encouragement and support", and to bring to an end "the vague, optimistic verbiage in which so many of these groups [existing artists organizations] get bogged down...."


\(^7\) At the first annual meeting of the FCA, held in the Studio Building in May 1942, Jackson and sculptor Frances Loring raised the question of the Federation's domination by members of the Toronto-based CGP. Apparently, considerable suspicion
Jackson, Harris and Lismer rose to new prominence with the FCA and the surge of wartime cultural ambition as Canada's senior art advisors, poised as the former leaders of the celebrated Group of Seven to focus national attention once again on Toronto, (despite the fact only Jackson remained in the city through the war years), and to the roots of a belief in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being. Those roots lay in the first socially-conscious efforts of the Group of Seven to gather artists together in aesthetic discovery of the Canadian environment. "Their enthusiasm, their liveliness in controversy, their progressive ideas, their willingness to defend and encourage younger painters, their vivid interest in all contemporary art and its relation to the public, gave Canadian art a new direction"; this was McInnes' memory of the Group of Seven recorded in his 1950 publication *Canadian Art*.  

Painting or Historical Sketch  
Painting produced under the War Art Programme is usually relegated to a separate and subordinate position in the history of Canadian art. As a result, comparison has not been invited between works produced prior to or simultaneous with the War Art Programme. In the case of the Toronto community of painters, such a comparison pinpoints the generation of symbols marking the final stage of evolution for the humanist  

existed among other art societies that the FCA was the "baby" of the CGP and, therefore, not a representative body.  
FCA Re: 1st Annual Meeting of Federation of Canadian Artists, (May 1-2, 1942), André Biéler papers, Box 4 Coll. 2050, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.  


aesthetic. Presupposition of the the relative insignificance of the war art dates to the initial guidelines given to official war artists by the Historical Sections of each of the three services. In 1944, the Historical Section of the Canadian Army advised its artists: "...the sketches and paintings are not complete works in themselves but rather fragments which will be studied and developed when their relative importance can be judged." In 1945, when the National Gallery of Canada held the first of two War Art exhibitions, McCurry reiterated: "Their [the Canadian war artists] pictures, created under the stress of service conditions, should not at all be appraised as completed works of art but rather authentic material for such works...." By "such works", McCurry had in mind objects of historical rather than aesthetic value. In 1946, and the second Canadian War Exhibition, Canadian High Commissioner for Great Britain Vincent Massey, chairman of the Canadian Overseas Artists Control Committee, added: "For it must always be remembered that artists in this war were soldiers, sailors and airmen, working often under conditions of hardship and danger."

Told to illustrate "those phases of Canadian operations likely to be of historical significance", the war artists were encouraged to consider their service to the nation above aesthetic concerns, however much those concerns, as in the case of the Toronto painters, addressed the broadest

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implications of art and social progress.\textsuperscript{52}

McInnes categorized the war paintings of Comfort, Schaefer and Nichols included in the 1946 exhibition of the CGP as "reportage", separating what he otherwise considered outstanding work "wrought of the stuff of experience" from the mainstream of progress in the modern movement of painting in Canada then steering towards abstraction.\textsuperscript{53} To Lismer, the mix of reportage and abstract work in the 1946 CGP show exemplified the FCA's ideal of "Freedom to create". The "gifts of stern realism of nations in conflict", as Lismer described the war works, hardly seemed progressive, however.\textsuperscript{54} If the main contribution of the War Art Programme lay less in the progress of the modern movement than in raising public appreciation for Canadian art, "the struggle", in McInnes' opinion, "was [nevertheless] painted with skilled craftsmanship and vision, rather than with any avowed nationalist philosophy...."\textsuperscript{55} McInnes gives the hint here that the significance of the war work lay primarily in the application of the humanist aesthetic, and an interest in

\textsuperscript{52} The only restriction ever given to the war artists came from Vincent Massey. While full of praise for their work in general, Massey "has let it be known that he feels that the theme of the burned out Panther Tank is somewhat outworn, and that an effort might be made to achieve greater variety in the pictorial record of Canadian operations."


\textsuperscript{53} Graham McInnes, "Canadian Group of Painters", \textit{Canadian Art} 3 (February 1946), p.76.

\textsuperscript{54} Arthur Lismer, "Foreword", \textit{Canadian Group of Painters} (Toronto: Canadian Group of Painters, 1945), p.3.

The exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in November of 1945. Illustrated catalogue.

\textsuperscript{55} Graham McInnes, \textit{Canadian Art}, p.86.
resolving experience into universally meaningful images comprehensible to an anxious public. McInnes' dedication of a chapter to "The Artists of the Second World War" in his 1950 publication Canadian Art was the last serious consideration of the subject, until Heather Robertson published A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War in 1977.\(^56\)

Robertson brings together brief histories of the two World Wars with personal recollections of soldiers and representative selections of sketches and paintings. In her examination of the Second World War, Robertson includes works by the Toronto painters assigned as official war artists or individually commissioned by the National Gallery of Canada.\(^57\) Comfort, Schaefer, Nichols, Goldhamer, George Pepper, Aldwinckle, Clark and Atkins appear together, but Robertson does not attempt to describe any correlation between their work or to consider the significance of their community presence in the records produced by Canadian artists of World War Two. A Terrible Beauty does succeed, however, in raising the emotional impact of war as the basis for appreciation of the war work. The works chosen for the book have become the best known paintings of World War Two. They were selected from Robert Wodehouse's Checklist of the War Collections of World War I, 1914-1918 and World War II, 1939-1945 of 1968, a basic catalogue initiated by Charles Comfort during his tenure...

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as director of the National Gallery of Canada. Joan Murray, in her 1981 exhibition, Canadian Artists of the Second World War, considers the portrayal of death to have been the greatest challenge posed by the Programme, which she feels was restrictive despite the liberal guidelines concerning subject matter and style given to the artists. Maria Tippett's 1989 exhibition Lest We Forget covers both world wars, like the Robertson text, but adds a more detailed historical outline of the World War Two War Art Programme, raising the point of the Programme's encouragement of figural work.

Two detailed monographic studies were published shortly after Robertson's book: L.F. Murray's exhibition and catalogue, Charles Fraser Comfort: The War Years of 1979, organized for the Canadian War Museum, (where the bulk of war paintings was transferred from the National Gallery in 1971), and Alex Colville: Diary of a War Artist, compiled by Graham Metson and Cheryl Lean in 1981. Murray provides a detailed account of Comfort's service as a war artist, setting the stage for close discussion of the paintings without venturing into interpretation himself. Comfort began work as an official war artist with the Canadian Army in February of 1943, being one of the first artists assigned to service. His appointment ended in 1946 when all war artists were demobilized and returned to civilian status. Comfort's recently re-issued memoirs, Artist at War, provide a detailed account of his activities as a war artist and his efforts to convey the quality of feelings which characterized the

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60 See: Maria Tippett, Lest We Forget, (London: London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1989), pp.34-36.
soldiers' experience. In his introduction to Metson and Lean's publication on Colville, then curator of War Art at the Canadian War Museum, Hugh Halliday, raises the question of whether the Canadian War Art Programme was a catalyst for Canadian post-war cultural development. For Halliday, the Programme paradoxically brought creativity from the destruction of war. As a collection, the war works "showed a remarkable lack of rhetoric; they neither glorified nor denigrated the war and Canadian participation in it." In 1984, Boyanoski found that many of the artists employed by the War Art Programme "sought to express the emotional, psychological, and spiritual impact of the operations to which they were assigned", an approach she identifies as an adaptation of pre-war concerns. The artists' success, argues Boyanoski, owed to the strong precedent set by their British contemporaries, especially Sutherland and Moore. Did the work of painters in Toronto reflect, as Boyanoski suggests, the influence of Sutherland,


64 Christine Boyanoski, *The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in Ontario*, p.20.

65 There seems to have been very little direct contact between the Canadian and British war artists. Boyanoski notes, however, that a small group of Canadian war artists invited to a symposium on "Modern English Painting" held at the Churchill Club in London in December 1943 would have had the opportunity to meet Sutherland, Moore, John Piper and Paul Nash. See: Christine Boyanoski, *The 1940s: A Decade of Painting in Ontario*, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1984), p.20.
Moore, John Piper and Paul Nash? Artists from both sides of the Atlantic shared an interest in art as a language of social communication. Their coming together in war was fortuitous for the evolution of this language, at least for the Toronto community of painters anxious to see their work brought into the international arena. When the Toronto painters' images of the civilized landscape decimated by war are compared to the socially-conscious British artists' depictions of destroyed houses and shattered cities, the allied nations' defence of democracy appears to have produced universal symbols, or rather archetypes of suffering humanity. The common cultural root of these symbols, shared between Canada and the British Empire, was the humanist tradition of western art.

The Humanist Aesthetic in Crisis

Comfort's Canadian Armour Passing Through Ortona of 1944 (fig.130) conforms to Sutherland's view Devastation 1941: an East End Street (fig.131) where the two artists exploit the shocking effect of familiar scenes recast in unfamiliar and hostile circumstances. Both Comfort and Sutherland show the skeletal remains of structures once part of bustling community life in now abandoned landscapes. These ruins function as props symbolizing cultural destruction within the theatre of war. Sutherland presents an empty stage, leaving the spectator to emphatically respond to the aftermath of destruction. Comfort selects the moment when the Canadians make their entrance to defend civilization, as seen in the line of Sherman tanks of the Calgary regiment entering at bottom left. At bottom right, amidst the rubble and twisted metal left by the retreating German army to impede advancement of allied forces, a statuette of cupid turns to admonish the viewer. The statuette is Comfort's romantic recollection of the Italian Renaissance when artists made a profound contribution to the advancement of humanism in western thought. The image, developing upon his Primavera of 1942, is
invested with Comfort's aspirations for Canadian artists' realization of a contemporary renaissance of humanist values. The path towards cultural democracy, like the mined ruins of Ortona, was treacherous, but Comfort must have felt buoyed by the advancement of artists' representation in Canada secured by the formation of the FCA and the War Art Programme.

The CGP, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, the Arts and Letters Club, the Canadian Society for Painters in Water Colour, the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and Canadian Authors' Association were among the sixteen artists' societies to lend their support for post-war cultural development outlined in the 1944 brief. Leading the FCA at this time was Harris, whose call for realization of the "transforming power" of art in national development revived the enthusiasm of the Group of Seven during the 1920s for a new era of cultural unity. Harris devised a plan for community cultural centres to be widely dispersed across the country, combining theatre, library, workshop and exhibition facilities serviced by the National Gallery of Canada and National Film Board. "The real point is", wrote Harris to Ayre, "that we are in for social changes and in order to play an effective part in whatever new formation occurs, in order that the arts really play a vital part in Canadian life there must be a country wide organization of all artists and interested laymen."

Community centres were the second of three major recommendations outlined in the brief for immediate action by

66 See: Lawren Harris, "Community Centre for the Arts", lecture, Saskatoon -- 1944, pp.2-5, Lawren Harris Papers, MG30 D208, vol.3, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

67 Letter to Robert Ayre, Winnipeg, from Lawren Harris, Vancouver, January 24, 1944, Robert Ayre papers, Box 1, Coll.2003a, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
the government of Canada. Harris maintained the centres would boost cultural development over the hurdles of racial, political and economic differences, class interests and sectional prejudice to a form of social order in which the arts would enter more fully into common life. The first recommendation of the 1944 brief was Elizabeth Wyn Wood's advocacy on behalf of the Ontario region of the FCA, of which Peter Haworth was by then president, of a governmental body for the supervision of all cultural activities, in the form of a Ministry or Commission of Fine Arts. Both community

68 "While admirable in many respects," wrote FCA national executive member Rik Kettle, "Harris, myself and Haworth consider that this kind of brief is not likely to success immediately with Turgeon, terrific battle at every meeting. Have had lots of support from Voaden, the theatre expert who represents the Arts and Letters Club on the Committee, and as you know the Arts and Letters Club and the Federation see eye to eye on the Community Centre idea. As it stands, Voaden and I have succeeded in getting the plans set up in three main sections: governmental body (without specifying a commission or Ministry of the Fine Arts), the Community Centre Plan, [and] the other broader items that Betty [Elizabeth Wyn Wood] wants all grouped in this third section...." Letter to Fred Taylor, Montreal from Rik Kettle, Toronto, May 27, 1944, p.2, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Box 3, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

69 Lawren Harris, Special national Committee of the FCA in the British Columbia Region, "A Plan for the Extension of the National Gallery of Canada", November 1943, p.2, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Box 3, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

70 Walter Herbert, president of The Canadian Committee, was critical of Elizabeth Wyn Wood's proposal of a National Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which she published in Canadian Art. "There is an alternative to the setting up of a national ministry in Canada," suggested Herbert, "and that is the establishment of a Fine Arts Commission... within an existing ministry." Canada could follow the example of Britain or the United States, where government patronage of the Arts is extensive and is handled through subsidiary commissions or bureaux. Walter Herbert "A Ministry of Cultural Affairs: A Contrary View," Canadian Review of Music and Art 3 (April-May 1944), p.16.
centres and an administrative government body would take advantage of the third recommendation, that "The Arts in National Life" cover a wide range of aspects, including public parks, children's playgrounds, botanical gardens, housing and homeplanning, a State Theatre, a National Library, extensions to the National Gallery, the National Archives, the Kings Printer, and the National Film Board.71 In 1945, the Canadian Arts Council (CAC) was established as a separate organization from the FCA with Toronto dramatist Herman Voaden as president and Wyn Wood as chair of the Foreign Relations Committee. The CAC sought to ensure government recognition of the significance of Canada's cultural identity in world affairs.72 "Call it a renaissance... call it a boom", stated Ayre in a 1946 radio address. "Whatever you call it, however you look at it, art was never more alive in Canada than it is today."73

Comfort's dramatization of Canada's cultural defence of

71 FCA Ontario Region: "A Digest of a Brief presented June 21st, 1944, to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in Ottawa, By Sixteen Representatives of Cultural Societies in Canada", Bobs and Peter Haworth papers, Box 5, Coll. 5033, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

72 The Canadian Arts Council began as the Canadian Arts Liaison Committee, formed in 1944 to follow through with recommendations made in the brief presented by the sixteen artists' societies in the House of Commons in June of that year. The CAC was a council representing the sixteen societies. The FCA, on the other hand, was open to individual membership and operated through regions and branches, and was not exclusively professional in membership. The FCA represented the visual arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, graphic art, design, decoration, art instruction, and crafts. The CAC, as a council of national artists' societies, covered all the arts, in addition to those represented by its member society -- the FCA. FCA Bulletin February 1946, pp.1-2. Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Coll. 2049, Box 3, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

73 Robert Ayre, "Art Alive", February 4, 1946, Robert Ayre papers, Box 2, Coll. 2003a, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
democracy in *Canadian Armour Passing Through Ortona* responds to the parallels he saw between Canadian artists' collaboration for the promotion of humanist values and an international history of artists' contribution to the progress of civilization. In *The Hitler Line* of 1944 (fig.132), Comfort explores this parallel in the juxtaposition of a synchronized military unit with a shattered tree. The soldiers, reminiscent of Comfort's miners from his 1937 murals for the Toronto Stock Exchange (fig.75), refer to the collective effort of a society driven by a common desire for the victory of democracy. The tree, as it emerged from the exchange of motifs and compositions of the Toronto community of painters during the late 1930s, refers to the universal suffering of humanity and to the artist as witness to this suffering in the Second World War. The literalness of Comfort's style in *The Hitler Line*, far from detracting from the symbolic portent of the work, facilitates its reading as a play of familiar visual vocabulary. In the context, moreover, of Comfort's maturation as an artist within the Toronto community, the juxtaposition of figure and tree in this work betrays a shift in interpretation of aesthetic experience. The civilized landscape theme, found in Comfort's *Tadoussac* of 1935 (fig.39), epitomized a harmonious dialogue between humanity and nature central, by Dewey's definition, to aesthetic experience. *The Hitler Line*, like *Canadian Armour Passing Through Ortona*, shows the civilized landscape destroyed and with it the dialogue between humanity and nature. Beauty survives, however, in the design of war as a display of human organization and of a unity of spirit for the common good in democracy. The new humanism described by Mann

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74 Comfort did use a camera in the field to supplement his sketches, as did Will Ogilvie. Charles Comfort, "War Diaries -- vol. 1: Monday April 26, 1943", Charles Comfort papers, mfm M-825, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
as "a wholly new and more emotional interest in humanity and its fate" promised to emerge from the War Art Programme.  

Mann's isolation of pathos as the predominant tenor of the new humanism would provide, as he argued, a new source of unity between peoples. Between Jack Nichols, assigned as an official war artist with the Royal Canadian Navy in 1944, and Henry Moore, pathos elicited a comparable expression of compassion. Nichols' *Rescue at Sea* of 1945 (fig. 133), (also called *Taking Survivors on Board*), was one of the paintings singled out by McInnes in the 1945-1946 CGP exhibition as an exceptional example of an artist's crystallization of the war experience. Rising diagonally on the swell of the open Atlantic, a life boat harbours a crew of badly shaken sailors in tenuous safety. Nichols' depiction, like Comfort's images of Canadian soldiers in Italy, recreates an emotionally-charged moment with a realism that is absent from Sutherland and Moore, who isolate their subject from detailed information.


76 Born in Montreal in 1921, Nichols was among the youngest of the official war artists. Formal training was limited to short periods of study with Varley and the Montreal figural artist Louis Muhlstock, from whom Nichols first gathered appreciation for the beauty of compassion. Douglas Duncan of the Toronto Picture Loan Society played an important early role as Nichols' supporter, taking the young artist with him to the Kingston Conference in 1941 and hosting his first solo exhibition in Toronto the same year. Nichols became active in the CGP, Canadian Society of Graphic Arts, Ontario Society of Artists, and, eventually, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. "Art", according to Nichols' definition, "is feeling", which the artist carefully controls through technical control in order to open the eyes of the viewers to themselves so that they may better appreciate the plight of others. Interview with Jack Nichols, Toronto: November 15, 1991 and December 11, 1991.

of time and place. Nichols' composition nevertheless compares to Moore's handling of *Row of Sleepers* (fig.134) where huddled faceless figures are aligned along a diagonal receding from bottom right to upper left. Anchoring Moore's composition is a mother's compassionate embrace of her child. Nichols' rescuer and haunted survivor, also placed at the bottom right of the composition, compare to Moore's mother and child as an expression of basic human interdependence. In *Rescue at Sea*, explained Comfort in a 1946 address on the Canadian War Art Programme, "Object combined happily with idea."77 The idea, as Nichols himself explained, "is the human being in his physical and psychological environment."78 The environment, in this case, was one of collective struggle.

"Nichols is perhaps the finest figure painter among our contemporary artists", wrote McInnes in 1950, "...our leading exponent of the still sad music of humanity."79 Human tragedy, dignity, and pathos, explained McInnes, were the hallmarks of Nichols' art. Boyanoski identifies these qualities with the work of the Mexican muralists, whom Nichols admired, and whose contribution to a socially-conscious modernist aesthetic in painting had been an inspiration to painters in Toronto for over a decade. Boyanoski compares Orozco's *Three Generations* of 1929 (fig.135) and Nichols' *Bus Stop #2* of 1948 (fig.136) to illustrate the artists' comparable handling of monumental figures, rendered in a chiaroscuro effect, and charged with pathos. Orozco's lithograph was one of several works purchased by the Art


79 Graham McInnes, *Canadian Art*, p.85.
Gallery of Toronto from the *Mexican Art Today* exhibition, organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and circulated to the Art Gallery of Toronto in October 1943. The comparison of Orozco and Nichols, as with the comparison of Moore and Nichols, invites consideration of the parallel development of the mother and child image as an archetypal symbol of humanity in countries where artists played an active role in the promotion of culture for social progress. What is different about Nichols' example, however, is his overt Christian reference in the play of the sombrero as a halo on the children in the foreground left and background right. Religious symbolism reaches deeply in the cultural tradition of a people, as Nichols must certainly have felt, and is avoided by Moore and Orozco whose work nevertheless recalls the madonna and child. Like Comfort, Nichols reaches back into the western artistic tradition of biblical subject matter, and combines it with an appreciation for the indigenous tradition of the Mexican peoples. "We must see the originality and value of Mexican art in our day," advised Luis Cardoza y Aragon in his essay for the *Mexican Art Today* catalogue, "without forgetting the bases of indigenous mythology from which it springs, and without forgetting the monumental and geometric foundations which support it."^81

Charles Goldhamer, appointed as an official war artist in September 1944, chose to work in the RCAF Plastic Surgery wing of Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead, England. It was there that Dr. Ross Tilley of the University of Toronto developed a new skin-grafting treatment for the airmen burned in plane crashes. *Burnt Airman with Wig of 1945* (fig.137) is

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one of a series of charcoal and watercolour studies Goldhamer produced recording stages of physical as well as psychological recovery. Goldhamer admired the hospital staff, who provided a protective community for the airmen and gave them confidence to venture back out into everyday life. To an artist, concluded Goldhamer, "...even ugliness can be beautiful...."82 "This picture is not pleasant to look at", countered Comfort. "It portrays with dreadful pathos one of the unseen horrors of war."83 Goldhamer's airmen studies form a record of war's impression on the lives of individuals, and of the communal effort made for their well-being. These studies follow logically upon his Baie St.Paul works of the mid-1930s, in which Goldhamer first demonstrated an interest in the imprint left by life experience on the face of the sitter.84 His rejection of the heroic soldier for the disfigured victim of war pushed theoretical appreciation for the "ugly" to its extreme. Goldhamer thus ventured to cross what Vancouver literary critic A.F.B. Clark described in 1938 as the third bridge of aesthetics, stating: "if you can get across it, your aesthetical battle is half-over."85 Passage across the


85 "This question of 'the ugly' and its relations to Art and Beauty", explained Clark, "is one of the greatest problems of Aesthetics and, if one really wishes to enlarge one's appreciation of beauty, in nature as well as art, it is
bridge, as Clark explained, necessitated a deepening of life experience "to the point where wrinkles, suffering, old age, resignation are not merely part of the dull, meaningless deadweight that our mortal life drags along, but symbols of spiritual discipline, of character-growth." 86

Goldhamer's discovery of beauty in the faces of wounded Canadian servicemen was without comparison in the Canadian War Art Programme. There were, however, several artists who depicted the war dead, including Comfort and Aba Bayefsky. The penultimate model for these works was Fred Varley's World War One painting For What? (fig.138), in which a cart of dead soldiers tips towards the viewer in a decimated Flanders landscape. In his essay for Varley's 1954 retrospective, Jackson recalled this work as the one which brought Varley recognition as a painter. "There is nothing here of sentiment," stated a reviewer in the Daily Telegraph, "nothing indeed of personal passion.... We find a massive objectivity, a sense of all-pervading tragedy -- of human will overpowered by Fate." 87 The same review might be used to describe Bayefsky's Belsen Concentration Camp Pit (fig.139), painted over twenty-five years after Varley's For What?. Bayefsky quotes Goethe on the back of this work: "Man needs but little earth for pleasure, and even less for his repose." 88


88 Photo files, Canadian War Records 1939-1945, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.
Concentration Camp Pit of 1945 comes closest to the contemporary British example of timeless isolation and simplification of forms seen in the work of Sutherland and Moore, and apparent in Bayefsky's 1942 painting Park Bench (fig.116). It is Picasso's Guernica of 1937 (fig.140), however, and not the work of a British artist that provides a telling point of comparison for the Belsen piece. 89 "In Picasso's Guernica", stated Bayefsky's friend and teacher Barker Fairley, "the world crisis is recorded as nowhere else in art or literature." 90

The skeletal figure at the lower right of Bayefsky's composition bears a striking resemblance to Picasso's contorted figures of a mother and child and dead soldier in Guernica, painted on commission from the Spanish Republic for the 1937 International Exposition in Paris. Both works are intensely personal political statements at the same time as being universal in their appeal to suffering humanity. Picasso, who identified strongly with his Spanish origins throughout his life, deals with a brutal bombing in 1937 of the small Basque town and Republican enclave by Nazi forces operating in collusion with Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship for Franco's defeat of the Spanish Republic and its Popular Front government. 91 Bayefsky, who is Jewish, witnessed the Holocaust as an official war artist with 39(R) Wing of the RCAF, stationed in Germany at the end of World War Two. The contorted figure in Guernica, as in Belsen Concentration Camp


90 Barker Fairley, "What is Wrong with Canadian Art?", Canadian Art 6 (August 1948), p.29.

Pit, is at once an easily read image of cruelty and a sophisticated cultural symbol.

Picasso used clichés, stated Read, and was perhaps the only artist able to do so without losing the symbolic vitality of his composition. The key, so Read argued, lay in the fact that these clichés emerged from the artist's unconscious during the spontaneous process of artistic creation. Guernica bears the stamp, therefore, of Surrealist method and socially-conscious message, a combination which Ayre found to be the natural product of war and disillusionment.°° David Thistlewood explains that from Read's perspective Guernica was redeemed by the fact that "every line, every form, every colour had been dominated by the artist's secondary-aesthetic sensibility expressed as 'handling', 'facture' or 'handwriting'".°° Bayefsky redoubles Picasso's creative revitalization of the cliché by introducing the contorted figure into a setting adapted from the celebrated wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven. Bayefsky's allusion to the Group and to Harris' North Shore, Lake Superior of 1926 (fig.11) in particular brings the message of Belsen Concentration Camp Pit home to Canadians, who inevitably saw Canada as a potential target of nazi aggression.

Bayefsky's quotation of the wilderness landscape in Belsen Concentration Camp Pit revives his roots as a second generation artist of the modern movement of painting in

°° Surrealism, wrote Ayre in a review of 1938, "is of our time because it faces life, goes beyond appearances and pierces into the depths, searches us out in our very dreams, exposes us; at once faces the horror of life and recoils from it, running away into fantasy and absurdity and childlikeness. These are a part of life, too, aren't they?"

Robert Ayre, Art News and Reviews: "Surrealism is True and It is Important. It is of Our Time Because it Faces Life", The Standard, Montreal, (September 24, 1938)

Toronto. His method compares to Comfort's revival of the humanist tradition of western art and specifically Italian Renaissance culture in *Canadian Artillery Passing Through Ortona*. Despite the existence of precedents for burnt out buildings in the work of Schaefer, Comfort's intellectual demand on the viewer reduces the accessibility of his work, even though his allusion to historical continuity speaks from a desire for universal communication of humanist values. The problem of restricted access was the same as that encountered with the Toronto community of painters' socially-conscious language of visual exchange. Even when this exchange began to precipitate symbols at a time when wartime propaganda motivated visual communication, the symbols remained regional. Wyn Wood's appeal to "unity in diversity" promoted through the Canadian Arts Council indicated, however, a strong desire for mutual understanding. What bound Canadians together to defend democracy, so Peter Haworth of the Ontario Region of the FCA assessed, was "faith in our common humanity."94 How could this faith be expressed? A cultural affirmation of community life at the local, national and international level could be achieved if the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes yielded the archetypes of Canadian identity.

**Archetypes of Canadian Identity**

North Shore Lake Superior was one of several renowned Group of Seven wilderness landscapes shown in the 1945 *Development of Painting in Canada* exhibition initiated by the Art Gallery of Toronto. Alongside Lismer's *September Gale of 1921* (fig.141), J.E.H. MacDonald's *Mist Phantasy* of 1922 (fig.142), and Tom Thomson's famous pre-Group of Seven painting *The West Wind* of 1917 (fig.51), Harris' *North Shore,*

94 Peter Haworth, "Democracy and the Arts" - Part 1, Peter Haworth Lectures: History of Art (ii), Bobs and Peter Haworth papers, Box 4, Coll. 5033, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
Lake Superior emerged as a vigorous archetype. This would be a landmark exhibition, not only because four institutions -- the Art Gallery of Toronto, Art Association of Montreal, National Gallery of Canada, and Le Musée de la Province de Québec -- collaborated in wartime to put together the largest survey of Canadian art ever organized, but because The Development of Painting in Canada confirmed the central position of the Group of Seven as the leaders of the modern movement of painting.95 The idea that the modern movement turned tightly around the Group of Seven and around Toronto as the locus of their progressive influence had been established by Graham McInnes' A Short History of Canadian Art of 1939 and William Colgate's Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development of 1943, along with several articles examining the history of art in Canada published between 1939 and 1945.96 The historical legitimation of the Group of Seven accompanied the public rise of Harris, Lismer and Jackson as Canadian cultural authorities influencing government and directing artists through the FCA.

When critics took a retrospective look in 1945 at the

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95 According to John Alford's catalogue essay, the modern movement began in Canada with the First World War paintings of Lismer, Harris, Jackson, Fred Varley, and J.E.H. MacDonald. Once the Group of Seven formed, the modern movement, typified by a "tendency to pattern", became "most distinctive and widely influential...."


96 The subsequent publication in 1950 of McInnes' Canadian Art (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1950) and Donald Buchanan's The Growth of Canadian Painting (London,Eng. and Toronto: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1950), along with the organization of retrospectives for Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, A.Y. Jackson, and Fred Varley, (in 1948, 1950, 1953, and 1954 respectively), in addition to the National Film Board's documentary on A.Y. Jackson released in 1942, contributed to the mythologization of these artists within the history of Canadian art.
Group of Seven in the context of Canadian art as a whole, attention turned to the "poster-like" quality of their wilderness landscapes, typified by Harris' *North Shore, Lake Superior*. Vincent Massey's foreword to "The Art of Canada", a special 1945 number of *The Studio* magazine, ascribed this quality to the Group of Seven's enthusiasm for Canada. "[T]he landscape took charge of these artists", commented Massey, "and filled them with the zeal of converts. They worked with vigour and self-confidence, recording the vivid colour, bold contours, and clear atmosphere of their own country. Painting in Canada... developed strong qualities of its own." 97 "[O]ne has to admit", stated McInnes in response to *The Development of Painting in Canada* exhibition, "that the emergent quality of Canadian art is precisely this resemblance to the poster." 98 "Our landscape is exuberant, simple and bold: so is the painting of the Group of Seven", explained McInnes. "Their art is that of the poster worker -- simple, bold and free..." 99 Donald Buchanan agreed, adding that the result was the creation of such key symbols of northern geography, "as towering pines, burnt stumps and rock girt lakes." 100 These were the symbols sent out to Canadian Armed Forces bases in Canada and overseas when the Ontario Region of the FCA, under Jackson's direction, organized the Silk Screen Project in 1942. As Joyce Zemans notes in her article "Establishing the Canon", the Project is widely acknowledged to have played a pivotal role in establishing the Group of Seven's landscape


98 Graham McInnes, "Canadian Painting," *Queen's Quarterly* 52 (Spring 1945), p.1.

99 Graham McInnes, "Canadian Painting," p.3.

painting as the sine qua non of Canadian art. Alford's judgement that contemporary trends in Canadian art were conducive to a popular appeal in the "crystallization of cultural attitudes" proved to be accurate: "the post-impressionist development of symbolic and expressive form and design, at the expense of imitative realism being particularly adapted to the purpose of a public expository art." An inventory of artists represented by the Silk Screen Project in December of 1945 reads like a membership list of the CGP, and includes Comfort, Clark, Housser, McLaughlin, Bobs Coghill Haworth and York Wilson. Artists were asked to paint original pictures which would be reproduced and sent out in groups to Armed Forces camps and hung on the walls of recreation rooms and lounges. McCurry arranged to distribute the silk screens from the National Gallery of Canada, and organized business sponsorship to offset the cost of

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101 Zemans' article does not explore the wartime Silk Screen project, however, but rather its predecessor, a little known project initiated by the National Gallery of Canada in the 1920s. Zemans argues that this earlier project was definitive for the establishment of the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape aesthetic. Her point is well-taken, even if it perpetuates a rather narrow interpretation of the relationship between the National Gallery of Canada and the Group of Seven during the 1920s. See: Joyce Zemans, "Establishing the Canon: Nationhood, Identity and the National Gallery's First Reproduction Programme of Canadian Art", *Journal of Canadian Art History* 16 (1995), pp.6-35.


103 See: "Silk Screen Prints", December 1945, Isabel McLaughlin papers, Box 14, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.
reproduction by the Toronto firm of Sampson-Matthews.  

Jackson and McCurry chose to incorporate reproductions of well-known Canadian paintings in addition to the original designs. These were the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson, represented by: MacDonald's Mist Phantasy, Harris' Maligne Lake, Jackson's Quebec Village, Lismer's Isles of Spruce, and Tom Thomson's Northern River. Their aim, as reported in Saturday Night magazine, "has been to enable our soldiers to get wholesome understandable pictures that they would be most likely to appreciate." The pine tree, mountain and lake were pointed reminders of a Canadian identity. "From a morale standpoint", commented Colonel C.R. Hill, Army Director of Special Services, "these pictures have tremendous value... the display of Canadian scenes will make them conscious of the land and cause for which they are called upon to fight." The Silk Screen Project proved so successful that the FCA planned to continue it, using the Studio Building in Toronto as the distribution centre and marketing the images for home or office decoration. "Talk about a democratic venture in art",  

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107 "The idea is A.Y. Jackson's and in part my own. We have seen the success of the present silk screen venture. It has amazed me.... AYJ and I decided we would undertake the venture, use basement as distributing centre, and I would finance it until it became self-sustaining -- and so we lined the whole thing up and now it is offered to the Federation on the basis of sponsorship.... If the Federation doesn't accept it, it will go ahead just the same, perhaps with the CGP as sponsors. But it will go ahead because it is a bonanza for the artist. An artist could work 3 months out of a year doing designs for silk screen prints and if 6 or 7 were accepted and printed the royalty would
Archetypal Symbol

North Shore, Lake Superior would have been a familiar image for Canadians during the war, inevitably associated with national identity and a Canadian artistic tradition. In Belsen Concentration Camp Pit, Bayefsky replaced Harris' dead tree with a victim of the holocaust. Where Harris' tree rises heroically over the landscape to receive the spiritual energy of the sun, Bayefsky's foreground skeletal figure succumbs to the curvature of the earth to bear the weight of spiritual oppression indicated by a dark heaving landscape that threatens to overtake a thin strip of sullen sky. The figure's knee serves as a visual strut supporting the gentle rise of hills which form a metaphorical burial mound marking the mass grave of concentration camp victims. Harris' tree is the archetypal symbol of Canadian optimism interred by Bayefsky's recognition of a world shocked by humanity's destructive force. Subverting this familiar symbol produces a powerful emotional effect. Belsen Concentration Camp Pit accepts the breakdown of dialogue between humanity and nature that had inspired a decade of development of the humanist aesthetic within the Toronto community of painters. In its place, Bayefsky put pathos and compassion. Aesthetic experience is here contingent upon compassion as this emotion is key to developing the spirit of community. Where Dewey just about afford him a living.... These prints would be superior to anything they have hung in their homes.... If the Federation sponsors the venture it will get 20%.”

Letter to Fred Taylor, Montreal from Lawren Harris, Vancouver, October 13, 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Box 1, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

108 Letter to Fred Taylor, Montreal from Lawren Harris, Vancouver, October 13, 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists papers, Box 1, Coll. 2049, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.
proclaimed the harmony between humanity and nature to be essential to survival, and a source of joyous well-being, the Toronto painters esteemed the exigency of harmonious interdependence for the survival of humanity in war. "The War is deeper than its properties", suspected Ayre in 1940. "It need not show itself in war paintings at all. It will show itself in a changed temper, a different spirit."¹⁰⁹

The Post-War Moment

What was Yesterday? I think we may take the Group of Seven for Yesterday. It was a grand time, a big, dramatic, heroic, if you like extravagant, optimistic time.... Today is not so sure of itself as Yesterday was.... In a sense, it has narrowed down, become intimate and personal. In another sense, it has broadened and deepened, going into humanity instead of into the woods.¹¹⁰

"Yesterday" gave Canadian art a vision of "permanent pattern and stability" manifest by what Alford described as a "static system of symbols".¹¹¹ Order, "the source and bearer of all values", was the adjective Reid MacCallum had chosen in 1933 to describe the Group of Seven's solidly constructed wilderness landscapes.¹¹² According to MacCallum, "faith in the fertility of order" then reigned as "the most remarkable characteristic of the present age...."¹¹³ War shook the


¹¹² Reid MacCallum, "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", Queen's Quarterly XL (1933), p.249.

¹¹³ Reid MacCallum, "The Group of Seven: A Retrospect", p. 249.
foundations of order perceived in the dialogue of humanity and nature, deepening the Toronto community of painters' trust in its renewal through the re-establishment of peace and the reconstruction of a humane and generous society. The Group of Seven's wilderness landscape boosted wartime morale. Comfort admitted in 1948: "If we look back to the painting following World War I, we find in the then-rebellious canvases of the Group of Seven a simple clarity of statement, the romantic humanistic concept of a world filled with wonder and colourful beauty, an ordered world in which one moved with security."\textsuperscript{114}

Schaefer's \textit{Carrion Crow} of 1946 (fig.143) makes the point of yesterday's passing shockingly evident. The archetype of the wilderness tree is here symbolically cut at the roots, and to remove any doubt that this refers to the demise of security and unfettered optimism Schaefer places the twisted form of a dead crow in the foreground. The theme is once again pathos, most profoundly felt through a symbolic reworking of a cultural archetype. Thomas Hart Benton had encouraged participants of the Kingston Conference to revive their cultural roots. "I hear Canada has no artistic tradition", recalled Schaefer in conversation with Benton, "Well, I'll tell you how to get one... by looking back."\textsuperscript{115} Schaefer looked back through his own work to the Group of Seven and discovered the vitality of the tree as a leitmotif of cultural aspiration in the modern movement of painting in Canada. The barren tree of his landscapes of the 1930s invested this motif with humanist values and with the Toronto community of painters' belief in the social value of art for individual and


\textsuperscript{115} Interview with Carl Schaefer, Toronto, October 19, 1991
communal well-being. The stump in Carrion Crow signals crisis for it suggests the destruction of Schaefer's signature barren tree. Such a dramatic twist on the familiar to express the faltering optimism of post-war humanism embodies what Alford identified in 1945 as "the universality of change" shared by artists and their public. "[T]he impact of the war years", so McInnes noted, "has given many of our artists a sense of being at one with their audience."116

Jack Bush, who stayed in Toronto during the war, isolated the concept of change as the subject of his 1947 painting Yesterday (fig.144), exhibited in the Ontario Society of Artists show of that year. Yesterday appeared with Harold Caverhill's poem, written as a companion piece, on the front cover of the May 3, 1947 issue of Saturday Night. "Where dust of generations lies...", wrote Caverhill, "I feel an echoing emptiness...."117 For both artist and poet, the doorway functions as a symbol of transition. In Bush's painting, the viewer is invited to cross the threshold of an open door in an intimate domestic interior, framed by a dresser and swag of drapery. Across the hall appears another open door, through which lies an uncertain future. The second doorway frames a dark cloudy form, a small black circle, and an irregular pattern of light. These are the elements of a new abstract language of expression. Yesterday is contemplative, ruminating the possibilities of this language which would overtake Bush's art by the late 1950s. Seen in Painting with Red of 1957 (fig.145), the cloudy form, circular accent, and rectangular framing device express, as Dennis Reid writes, "a profoundly human statement with simple, uncontrived

116 Graham McInnes, "Canadian Painting", Queen's Quarterly LII (Spring 1945), p.7.

The process of change and personal growth as an artist that led Bush to abstraction resulted from a painful investigation of the limits of representational form. In *Yesterday*, Bush begins to push these limits, raising the tensional accord between highly-charged subject matter, drawn from everyday life, and two-dimensional surface texture, freely explored at the edges of the composition as in the distant room. The humanist aesthetic here approaches its breaking point.

Pathos permeates *Yesterday*, but is not embodied in an archetypal symbol, as in the tree stump of Schaefer's *Carrion Crow*. The doorway is a more subtle and provocative symbol than the clichés, as Herbert Read would have described them, used by Bush two years earlier in *Haunted House* of 1945 (fig.146). In *Yesterday*, the crow, bare light bulb, and uniform application of paint have been abandoned. Nevertheless, Bush's attention to levels of symbolic effect began in *Haunted House*. A comparison of Bush's sketch *Village Funeral* of 1945 (fig.147) with the final work *Village Procession* of 1946 (fig.148) makes the point of increasingly subtle symbolic effect. The sketch of a funeral procession down a country road to a cemetery focusses on a crucifix mounted on the foreground hearse. In the finished painting, the crucifix is moved to a tombstone and reduced in size. The hearse in *Village Procession* shifts almost out of view, creating a more dynamic sense of movement echoed by Bush's exaggeration of the curve in the road linking left and right sides of the composition. At the left is a rural town dominated by a parish church. It is a familiar scene from the Toronto painters' civilized landscapes of the mid-1930s, dramatically contrasted to the rare subject of the cemetery at right. Where the town is blackened under an ominous sky, the

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cemetery is a brilliant green, therein reversing what might be expected to be the centre of life. The procession winding from the town to the cemetery signals a change in planes of existence of life from the physical to spiritual realms. Bush's interest in the life of the spirit develops in Yesterday where the abstract vista of the second room suggests that abstraction may be the language of spiritual communication in art. "The creative artist's job, as I see it," stated Bush in 1946:

is to recreate his human experience in an art form. By this means he communicates his emotions and experiences to others. The creation becomes a living thing in itself. It has its own rules, limitations, its own existence; different from and apart from the existence of the actual subject matter from which it was born. \textsuperscript{119}

**Spiritual Renewal**

For Paraskeva Clark, too, the cast of pathos over the post-war moment of transition effected an unprecedented concern for spiritual renewal. *Essentials of Life* of 1947 (fig.149), shown in the 1947-1948 CGP exhibition, is an atypical example in Clark's oeuvre of a work addressing spiritual as opposed to social disorder. Compared with *Presents from Madrid* of 1937 (fig.85), where Clark composes a still life from contemporary icons of the Spanish Civil War, *Essentials of Life* is an arrangement of vanitas symbols established within the history of art by seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting. The butterflies, extinguished candle, fading flowers and loaf of bread set on a table in a domestic interior pertain to the brevity of physical existence. By contrast, the book that opens coextensively in space to heighten its relevance for the viewer points to the immortality of the life of the spirit exercised through art.

It is not a bible, although this is the first impression Clark creates, rather, it is a copy of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, ostensibly from the artist's personal library, turned to number twenty-six.

Essentials of Life is not the first vanitas image of the Toronto community of painters. Brooker's *Art is Long* of 1934 (fig.150) anticipates Clark's piece in the juxtaposition of the skull and easel referring to the immortal life of the spirit informing artistic tradition.\(^{120}\) Essentials of Life has a closer model, however, in Alfred Pellan's *Nature Morte* (fig.151) included in the 1945 *Development of Painting in Canada* exhibition. Clark angles her table more sharply than her Montreal contemporary and replaces his still life of a bowl of fruit, palette, and pipes with her vanitas symbols.

The most remarkable similarity is Clark's placement of Pound's *Cantos* where Pellan opens a book of Marcel Proust. These literary references are revealing. Proust, the French author who died in 1922, described the waves of emotion and passages of thought intermittently reawakened by memory. "In Proustian thought", explains Georges Poulet, "memory plays the same supernatural role as grace in Christian thought."\(^{121}\) It illuminates and comforts an individual by bridging disorientating lapses of time, and by invoking the present with meaningful vestiges of personal history. Pellan shared with Proust a fascination, inspired in Pellan's case by Surrealism, for psychological phenomena grasped abstractly, but experienced in the midst of everyday life. For Pellan, *Nature Morte* functions as a communicative link between these


two realities.

In Essentials of Life, memory holds an equally significant place, but unlike Pellan, Clark firmly grounds the spiritual in a physical experience of community and environment. Symbols, as the butterflies demonstrate, exist first as physical objects witnessed in nature and secondly as cultural objects around which a body of psychological associations is built, relating to notions of transformation and change. "My eyes fall on some aspect of reality that gives a pictorial idea...", explained Clark in 1944:

I 'store' it in my heart, in my memory (sometimes for years)-- till I have time to come back... to bring to life that particular aspect of reality that once enchanted me.... I want to make clear that these particular aspects of reality, presented in a painting... are 'the emotions of that reality'....

Clark's goal is to share these emotions with the viewer and close the gap of communication between artist and public. Successful communication of the same emotion depends, however, on whether the objects presented elicit virtually the same psychological associations with the viewer as they did for Clark. By using symbols established within an inherited cultural tradition, Clark could be reasonably sure this would be the case. Her inclusion of Pound's Cantos is an intellectual reaffirmation of this assumption.

Clark's reference to Pound, an American expatriate poet who spent over twenty years in Italy and who supported Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship, is confusing on the point of politics. It seems Clark chose to separate his political affiliations from his defence of cultural tradition that constitutes the basic unifying theme of the ninety-five cantos he wrote over the course of his lifetime. Fascist leaders did

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not, at any rate, take Pound or his contemporaries in the arts, including the former futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, seriously. Like Marinetti, Pound believed in the contribution of culture to the creation of a fascist earthly utopia. Unlike Marinetti, who rejected cultural tradition altogether, Pound called for its perpetuation.  

Specifically, Canto XXVI, first published in 1928, is one of thirty cantos in which Pound explored the progress of culture from a timeless mythological beginning to its apogee in the Italian Renaissance, and its decline in 1503. Canto XXVI introduces "the limbos and hells of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" that qualify the modern antithesis to progress.  Since the destruction of World War One and the modern hell of war, the modern artist, so Clark accepted, has had to cling to the tenuous memory of purpose and direction.

Lack of direction, emptiness, and a haunting memory of a past filled with optimism and potential describe the emotional reality of Brooker's 1945 painting Driftwood (fig. 152), shown in the 1945-1946 CGP exhibition alongside Nichols' Rescue at Sea. Victory in war and the tremendous outpouring of collective effort won by democracy was, it seems, anti-climactic, ushering in a creative vacuum of sorts circumscribed by history and tradition. "And then", found Abell, "you have widely shared current sensitivity to the appeal of driftwood: the silent bones of ghost trees."  

Brooker's painting, like Clark's still life, demonstrates what Abell described as a contemporary compulsion for "inanimate

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125 Walter Abell, East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", p.46.
objects on the periphery of life.... all manner of bric-a-brac with a past.... the pots and pans of yester-year....”

Brooker takes an uprooted tree stump, lying on the beach near the family home in Toronto and weathered smooth by the action of waves, as his subject in *Driftwood*. The stump is fastidiously modelled and floats over a banded background representing abstracted layers of beach, water and sky extending into space. Around the stump is a brownish grey haze, softening the linear precision of the wood surface and hard-edged colour bands behind. Functioning secondarily as an aura, in accordance with Brooker's ongoing theosophic concern for the progress of the spirit through art, the haze identifies the stump as a thought-form of loss or passing related to the memory of the tree's transformation from physical object to object of spiritual contemplation independent of space and time. *Driftwood* invites a constant cycle of association from the Group of Seven's vital wilderness landscapes, to Brooker and the Toronto community of painters' preoccupation with the land cleared for cultivation and civilization, and finally to the fracture of the tree in war. These associations intermingle together in the single

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126 Walter Abell, *East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art*, pp.45-46.

127 Brooker was fascinated by the pattern of roots. Letter from Bertram Brooker, Toronto to LeMoine FitzGerald, Winnipeg, September 20, 1945, Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box 1, Folder 11, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.

archetypal symbol of the suspended tree stump. "Certainly he felt that stronger, simpler works made for clarity of message or feeling during the Forties", remembers Brooker's son Victor, "-- Driftwood is a single object, but within it are rich complexities and subtleties...."\textsuperscript{129}

Defined in Brooker's reading of P.D. Ouspensky's 1931 publication \textit{A New Model of the Universe}, Driftwood unites "moments in life, separated by long intervals of time, but linked together by their inner content and by a singular sensation peculiar to them."\textsuperscript{130} In the context of the modern movement of painting in Canada the link that tied these moments together was a belief in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being. "At no other time in history", observed Ouspensky, "have theories had such power and such wide recognition as in our time."\textsuperscript{131} Did the post-war moment herald a loss of faith in this belief, marking the end of the humanist aesthetic in contemporary Canadian painting? Abell claimed that the "ghost" themes indicative of society's tensional state "release the mood by holding up symbols of faded yesterdays or scenes remote from present tensions." Abell labelled these symbols "psycho-historical" because, as he explained:

They blend a nostalgic affection for the past with a recognition of the inevitability of its passing. The old is steadfast company in times of change. It has endured. And whatever it may have lost, it has not lost beauty --

\textsuperscript{129} Letter from Victor Brooker to Dennis Reid, October 11, 1972, Bertram Brooker papers, MSS 16, Box 10, Folder 18, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg.


Brooker's personal library included a copy of Ouspensky's book.

\textsuperscript{131} P.D. Ouspensky, \textit{A New Model of the Universe}, p.511.
as the driftwood shows.\textsuperscript{132}

Pathos and Incredulity

The emergence of the tree as a symbol crystallizing post-war anxiety with the power of an archetype meant that while it became an effective agent of social communion it also became a heavy reminder of social responsibility and cultural duty. Arthur Phelps, vice-president of the Canadian Arts Council, unequivocally told members and invited contributors of the CGP in 1945: "Suddenly there is no more irresponsibility for anybody. What we think and what we do and whether we live or die are all interwoven in a scheme of swift and terrible interaction; we are now in a composite atomic world." Fear of the atomic age convinced Phelps of the exigency of "a more direct human propaganda".\textsuperscript{133} The idea precipitated a kind of cultural claustrophobia inflamed by Phelps' surprising claim: "The Group of Seven raised hell from a Tangled Garden. Since then, I suppose there has been a fallow time.... I don't know really."\textsuperscript{134} The Toronto community of painters were beginning to face their own

\textsuperscript{132} Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", p.49.

\textsuperscript{133} Arthur Phelps, "Art for Humanity and Humanity in Art", Address for the opening of the 1945-1946 CGP exhibition in Toronto -- November 23, 1945, p.5, Isabel McLaughlin papers, Box 13a, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

\textsuperscript{134} Arthur Phelps, "Art for Humanity and Humanity in Art", p.1.

In a letter to Isabel McLaughlin, then president of the CGP, Phelps commented "Maybe Yvonne Housser would like to see one in order to be able to fight with it -- " Evidently Phelps' brash conclusions made the Toronto painters' nervous, especially considering Phelps' access to public opinion through the CBC. Arthur Phelps, Montreal to Isabel McLaughlin, Toronto, 1945, Isabel McLaughlin papers, Box 13a, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.
destiny as an overlooked generation of painters. The tree played its part in the expression of their doubts.

In *Canadian Painting* of 1948 (fig.153) Fred Hagan invokes the creative inertia imposed by the mythologization of the founders of the modern movement of painting in Canada with a reproduction of Tom Thomson's celebrated *West Wind* of 1917 (fig.51). As a young artist within the Toronto community of painters, Hagan felt the Group's revival in the mid-1940s adversely, and struggled under the weight of their legacy. The painting presents a view of Hagan's studio. On the wall to the right of the composition is a shard of mirror reflecting Hagan's determined gaze. Tucked underneath the left side of the mirror is a small reproduction of *West Wind*. Hagan's identity is bound here for comparison to Thomson, who held a mythic status in modern Canadian painting as the pioneering artist whose "capacity for universal thought and feeling" first imbued wilderness landscape forms with archetypal significance.135 Hagan's gaze is introspective. Would he be remembered as an original Canadian artist ushering in a development parallel in impact to the Group of Seven? To the left of his self-portrait is a view to the further reaches of his studio where an easel and empty stool appear ready for creative endeavour. On the easel stands a painting reproducing the entire scene. It is a painting within a painting, with one essential difference -- the canvas on his pictured easel is empty. It is a clean slate readied for a new direction in Canadian art, but what would be its source of inspiration? Hagan felt a deep attachment to the North as

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135 Blodwen Davies, the Toronto art critic and secretary of the Canadian Humanist Group established Thomson's mythic status with her 1935 publication *A Study of Tom Thomson*. According to Davies, Thomson was a "genius" who contributed to the cumulative progress of humanity towards moral enlightenment of "the good, the true and the beautiful." Blodwen Davies, *A Study of Tom Thomson* (Toronto: Discus Press, 1935), p.130.
Thomson painted it. "Stories of 'the North' are part of my early memory....", recalls Hagan. "Here [in Muskoka] I could spin my own kind of stories and meet the legends of the land." He had spent the summer of 1947, as he did every summer, in Muskoka. The object of his attention is the influence this land exacted upon the development of painting in Canada and upon Hagan's status as an inheritor of a landscape-based artistic tradition.

*Canadian Painting* is a critical inquiry into the place of the Toronto artist within the history of Canadian art. Hagan defines his individual identity as a witness to this history, drawn into an aesthetic encounter with the painted landscape, and not the landscape itself. MacCallum clarifies the point in his essay "Imitation and Design", left unpublished at the time of his death in 1949. "But certainly", considered MacCallum, "the most influential, the most prolonged and powerful of the forces affecting the art of painting is the mind's reflection upon the nature and possibility of likeness." It is in the encounter with art that artist and public are united as each individual, whether artist or layperson, is implicated within the collective identity of a nation as it had been stamped by the painted tree. Whereas Matthew Teitelbaum dates the emergence of "the twisting, windswept single tree" as a symbol of "pioneering spirit crystallizing at the edge of an unknown space" to the 1920s, it may be argued that it was not until the 1940s and the rise of interest in the power of symbols to facilitate a universal language of art that the tree as it appeared in the wilderness landscapes of the Group of Seven fully matured into a Canadian

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By their symbolic manipulation of the archetypal tree, the Toronto community of painters unknowingly invested in the myth that led to their subsequent invisibility in the history of Canadian art.

Hagan's empty studio is yet another example of the Toronto community of painters' response to the painful transition to the Cold War era of industrial and economic expansion. His symbolic manipulation of Thomson's archetypal tree refers first to the old and deserted path of Canadian art and secondly, as Abell suspected, to the new and undeveloped opportunities for its progress. MacCallum maintained that progress in art depended upon a continued attachment to nature, arguing that a pressure to admit symbolic value to "thoroughly abstract design" would result in images that were "not symbolic, or not yet, or not fully symbolic." "Living form", as MacCallum described symbols, emerged from "that significant marriage of form and likeness, subjective and objective, active form-giving and passive receptivity..." long since identified as the "middle ground" of


Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", p.45.

MacCallum argued "the human imagination requires a sort of nourishment of natural forms if it is to retain its aesthetic energy."
Reid MacCallum, "Imitation and Design", pp.43,45.

"Honesty, like beauty in painting," continued MacCallum, "is a matter of accepting the humbling limitations of likeness, as well as the challenge of making this likeness speak with fire, and with a vigorous voice never heard in the world before. For these are the conditions of fully expressive, personal sign-giving, or symbolic utterance."
Reid MacCallum, "Imitation and Design", p.48.
representational form defined by Abell.\textsuperscript{141} To believe that abstract design could give total meaning and sense to life was idolatrous, stated MacCallum, for no single artist or work of art could possibly grant total meaning and sense to the cumulative experience of individuals constituting life in a given society. The contribution of art to the clarification of meaning through symbolism extended instead from the artists' collective effort, as in the case of the Toronto community of painters, to crystallize a socially-conscious impression of individual experience. This, ostensibly, was democratic, whereas the imposition of an individual's personal symbols in an abstract language of art on the mass of humanity too closely resembled the imbalance of power so feared in the atomic age. "The menace of idolatry in this sense is no where more evident than in the diffused humanism of the present", wrote MacCallum, "which constantly invites us to overestimate man's powers, his wisdom, or his goodness, and solicits our implicit trust in his ability to take charge of and shape his own destiny.... Artistic idolatry is today something belonging to the same context of fatuous self-worship 'of Man by Man'."\textsuperscript{142} Abell thought otherwise.

Abell remarked that a Canadian and general western trend away from realism toward abstraction during the late 1940s constituted a superficial shift in style, and not a profound change in the subject or purpose of art. The major divergences of contemporary art are "divergences of style", argued Abell: "What seem on the surface to be ways of saying different things, turn out in the depths to be different ways of saying the same thing." The forms of imagery characteristic of abstraction or of any given style of art "are to be regarded as projections of underlying psychic states;

\textsuperscript{141} Reid MacCallum, Imitation and Design, p.44.

\textsuperscript{142} Reid MacCallum, "Imitation and Design", p.51.
and since style evolves collectively, like language, and is not the product or property of any single individual, the states which it projects must be, at least in part, collective psychic states... rising mist-like, from the historical situation being experienced by the given society.\footnote{Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", p.46.}

Whatever the language of expression, the artist's creative mission always begins in sensitivity to the psycho-social climate. That, argued Abell, is the common denominator uniting all forms of contemporary art. Moreover, if abstraction "wipes the slate clean" by withdrawing from the old and inherited forms of art then its stylistically manifest symbolism equalled the iconographic symbolism of representational art.

In spite of his claim that "the 'battle of the styles' is really a mock battle in which individuals or groups may manoeuvre for position, but in which there is no essential conflict", Abell, like MacCallum, favoured representational form as the most fertile ground for a contemporary art resonant with concern for the welfare of society.\footnote{Walter Abell, "East is West -- Thoughts on the Unity and Meaning of Contemporary Art", p.50.} How far could the balance of representation and form be pushed to divulge the full potential of one extreme or the other? Would the demise of the humanist aesthetic be appropriate for the advent of a new society, rebuilt from the ruins of World War Two? In 1951, would McInnes have been able to repeat his casual claim of ten years earlier: "As usual, the balance of richest, most complex art lies somewhere about the middle of the pendulum's swing"?\footnote{Graham McInnes, "Art and Artists: Artistic Vegetarians", Saturday Night (February 1, 1941), p.20.} If he were looking at Jack Bush's \textit{The Old Tree} McInnes' answer might have been yes.
Bush's painting The Old Tree (fig.154) fuses representation and form in the image of the archetypal tree, being the symbol of humanist values in contemporary Canadian painting. The Old Tree releases the tension of Yesterday when Bush was just entering a period of artistic transition to celebrate the vigour and vitality of a symbol given new life by an abstract language of expression. Bush's tree is a heaving angular form surging upwards into a mass of coloured sky with billowing sheets of brightly accented abstract leaves. This tree is alive, unlike the stump in Harris' North Shore, Lake Superior or the barren tree in Schaefer's Carrion Crow. It angles dynamically upward from a low vantage point that dramatically exaggerates scale. The effect harkens back to Isabel McLaughlin's Tree of 1935 (fig.50), which marked a high point in the history of the Toronto community of painters' development of the civilized landscape. Where McLaughlin's inclusion of vigorous undergrowth surging upwards at the base of a dormant tree metaphorically refers to the appearance of a new generation of painters at the vanguard of the modern movement, Bush's massive mature tree implies this generation's imminent passing, having completed its cycle of growth.

Far from being pessimistic, The Old Tree resonates with the potential for growth and change that Bush celebrates in Release (fig.155), shown alongside The Old Tree in the 1951 Ontario Society of Artists exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto. In Release, a buoyant mood rushes forth from a joyous figure dancing in a calm and spacious landscape. The

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Bush's Release appears as catalogue no.11, and is reproduced -- no page number.
Old Order (fig.156), as Bobs Coghill Haworth titled her painting in the exhibition, endured as a powerful reminder of optimism. Here a screen of tree roots, reminiscent of Comfort's Pioneer Survival of 1938 (fig.81), introduces a harmonious rural landscape still cultivated by a horse-drawn plough. In Yvonne McKague Housser's Summer Night, Toronto (fig.157), also in the show, a single tree rises above the dense pattern of rooftops. Lit by the street lamps around it, Housser's urban tree glows and forms a hallowed focal point of urban existence. The tree never looked so resilient. Bush's The Old Tree is succoured by tradition, but branches out in new directions which will lead away from this final moment of balance between representation and form. Bush's balance of representational and abstract elements of expression on the symbolic form is a quintessential example of McInnes' ideal:

the best art of all time lies at the point or points where form, representation, qualities of paint, and overtones of association mingle. To make this plainer: somewhere to the left of Cezanne, art tends to thin out and dissolve into plain geometry; somewhere to the right of Ingres, say, art tends to thicken and muddy into a treacly and slavish copy of nature. Between these nodal points lie Constable, Titian, Renoir, Rembrandt,...

Imbalance and the breakdown of the humanist aesthetic characterized the general shift in contemporary painting in Toronto at the turn of the decade of 1950. Representational form split into its component sources of realism and

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147 Haworth's The Old Order appears as catalogue no.32 in the Seventy-Ninth Annual Spring Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists. The work is reproduced in the catalogue.

148 Housser's Summer Night, Toronto is listed as no.39 in the catalogue of the Seventy-Ninth Annual Spring Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists. The work is reproduced.

149 Graham McInnes, "Art and Artists: Artistic Vegetarians", Saturday Night (February 1, 1941), p.20.
abstraction. Realism flourished as a profitable tool of commercial art and illustration capitalized in a burgeoning world of culturally-astute business. Realism held a particular if short-lived attraction for painters as a style conducive to public appreciation and, therefore, to a union of the individual and the communal embraced in the late humanist aesthetic of the Toronto community of painters. William Winter's Midnight at Charlie's of 1945 (fig.158) and York Wilson's Cocktail Party of 1949 (fig.159) typify the illustrative quality of this realism and its social caricature. Paul Duval, who took McInnes' place as art critic for Saturday Night, applauded the artists' incisiveness. "Self-satirization in Canadian art", wrote Duval, "suggests this nation is finally attaining adulthood." The achievements of thirty years of vigorous and highly decorative landscape painting were, added Duval, remarkable; "they ploughed the ground for the outstanding harvest which we hope, and suspect Canadian art is going to realize within the next few generations."\(^{150}\)

Wilson turned to abstraction by 1950, however, as did the majority of the Toronto painters who began to experiment with expressive possibilities of pure form and colour. Contrary to Duval's anticipation that genre painting would assume a position of real national importance, images of contemporary life paled in comparison to abstract expressionism. By 1951, McInnes concluded "that genre painting in Canada never developed fully as a separate and healthy strain in the broad corpus of our art."\(^{151}\) The idiom remained in a cultural "backwater" contained between the Group of Seven's national

\(^{150}\) Paul Duval, "Self-Satirization in Canadian Art Suggests This Nation Is Finally Attaining Adulthood", Saturday Night (September 27, 1947), p.2.

\(^{151}\) Graham McInnes, "The Decline of Genre", Canadian Art 9 (October 1951), p.11.
landscape art and the progress of abstract and non-objective art. Wilson and Winter's urban characters suffer "the heady wine of American genre", wrote McInnes, that had flowed "into the old bottles of Canadian commerical and illustrative art."\(^{152}\)

Of the Toronto painters who experimented with abstraction -- including Wilson, Gordon Webber, Brooker, McKague Housser, McLaughlin, and even Comfort and Schaefer -- none achieved the success of Jack Bush. He was the only artist of his generation to join Painters 11 and to remain, as a result, in the avant-garde. The fact that Bush's early work and involvement in the Toronto-based art societies is rarely considered by art historians is indicative of this community's fall from critical recognition. Ayre blamed the CGP, arguing that by 1949 this society had spread itself too thinly to give unity and direction to contemporary art. The vitality and adventurous spirit of the Group of Seven, who "stripped it [the landscape] to its essentials, got under its skin, summarized its elemental forces in symbols: I nearly said slogans... to express the country, or that particular aspect of it that excited them", was without comparison in the CGP.\(^{153}\) The CGP was only one of six artists' societies holding regular exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Toronto.\(^{154}\) Gallery director Martin Baldwin found fault with the system of rotating society shows. "Exhibitions of Canadian Art", observed Baldwin in a report of 1943, "are under the auspices of various artists' societies. Apart from mechanical co-

\(^{152}\) Graham McInnes, "The Decline of Genre", p.12.


\(^{154}\) These societies were: the CGP, Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, Canadian Society of Graphic Arts, Ontario Society of Artists, and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.
operation the Gallery has no control -- though for the public generally it is the responsible exhibitor." This situation led to much repetition and "a tendency to sameness which is increased by the fact that a number of artists exhibit their work in more than one or two of the annual exhibitions."  

Andrew Bell, who began to publish reviews in the late 1940s, stated plainly in 1950: "The artistic hey-day in Toronto is now twenty-five years spent." Bell faulted widespread emulation of the Group of Seven's "earlier successes." "Painting in Toronto, speaking generally, is still under the thrall of the Group in that it continues to cleave to emphasis on stylized design and heightened colour", claimed Bell, "... but today this continued seeking after 'typically Canadian' subjects seriously harms disinterested work. Painting and Propaganda... don't mix well." What did Bell mean by disinterested and why did he consider the "pure art" of abstraction its ultimate expression?

For Bell, purpose in art was "the creative expression of a personal truth", a definition not unsuited to the Toronto community of painters. He did not see this community, however, and admitted in 1948, "the local painters are hard to ferret out." Even when Comfort, Schaefer, Clark, McKague Housser, and Aldwinckle caught his attention, Bell's

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The first artists society to be dropped from rotation was the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers in 1943.


157 Andrew Bell, "Yes, Painting might be better in Toronto", p.29.

158 Andrew Bell, "Toronto as an Art Centre", Canadian Art 6 (Christmas 1948), p.75.
admiration lapsed on the point of originality. "[I]f she can free herself... and be herself" and carve out a personal niche -- these were the essential qualities of "personal truth." Abstraction satisfied Bell's demands by rendering the intensely personal universal as a result of focussing attention on the fundamental elements of painterly expression. "The solution of the problem of how men shall understand each other is the big purpose, even artistically, of the fifties", stated Bell. "At parties Toronto painters talk of these matters. Why don't they do so in colour and line?" The Toronto painters' interwoven socially-conscious language of art and the symbols it crystallized were forgotten, being too strongly associated with a past younger artists and critics did not share and which left seemingly little room for individuality and self-defined purpose. Ronald Bloore, then a recent graduate of the University of Toronto's Department of Art and Archeology, appealed in 1951 for a liberation of Canadian art from its past. "Dear Sirs:" wrote Bloore to the editors of Canadian Art magazine from New York City, "...prevalent regional policy, sanctimoniously maintained, of never looking beyond our borders or too often city limits must be abolished.... The reviewing which mentions only 'safe' names, i.e. referring to artists who have been around too long... must be eliminated." Barker Fairley, surprisingly, agreed, citing "coddling" friendships formed

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159 Andrew Bell, "Toronto as an Art Centre", p.75.

160 Andrew Bell, "Yes, Painting might be Better in Toronto", p.29.

161 Ronald Bloore, "Letters on Criticism", Canadian Art 8 (Spring 1951), p.143.

Bloore wrote the letter from New York City, where he was studying at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.
between artists and critics in the past. "We are still self-conscious about Canadianism, but we are growing out of it." Buchanan, finally, placed his hopes in "the newest generation". In their work "one does sense with pleasure the emergence of wider and more universal sympathies." 

The shift in Toronto from representation to abstraction over the course of thirty years from 1920 to 1950 encapsulates the decades during which the Toronto community of painters led the institutionally-supported modern movement of painting in Canada. The break away from their humanist aesthetic to an abstract expressionist aesthetic follows exactly the same path painting took in the United States where Benton's "American Scene" rapidly gave way to Pollock's abstract expressionism. The contrast between teacher and student could not be more striking, and echoes the situation in Toronto where Comfort, Schaefer, Goldhamer, George Pepper and Hagan were among the Toronto community of painters who taught a whole generation of Canadian abstract painters. The case of Benton and Pollock has been understood in the context of cold war politics. Erika Doss sees Pollock's pictures as embodiments of the artist's rejection of faith in human perfectibility that typified Benton's era of "reform", regeneration and even revolution. Postwar politics of consensus, containment, and Cold War played to individualism, writes Doss, and to the

162 Barker Fairley, "What is Wrong with Canadian Art?", Canadian Art 6 (Autumn 1948), p.24.
preservation of individual freedom in a capitalist society. Despite the dramatically different emphasis of socialism and capitalism in the United States, Doss points out that artists of the generations did retain one important link. This, as Serge Guilbault first identified, was their appeal to art as a language of social communication.  

"What remained of their old leftist ideas", explains Guilbault in reference to the American avant-garde, "was the desire and the need to communicate with the public. But now the public was redefined to encompass all mankind." The price of genuine communication with humanity, moreover, was alienation from the visible world as it was only through distance and disinterest in representation that the language of art might rise above partisan association. What happened to Benton and those New Deal painters of the Roosevelt era who maintained politically active careers as representational artists through the end of the 1940s? Ben Shahn's later work, writes Frances Pohl, has been overlooked in part because he is a "victim of linear art historical tradition that allows an artist only one appearance at front-

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168 "Painters were no longer interested in covering their canvases with signs linked to the visible world," argues Guilbault, "because, Rothko said, society always succeeded in twisting the work's original meaning. If the artist wanted to be truly free, then according to the avant-garde he had to be completely alienated.... Alienation was thus a token of liberty." Serge Guilbault, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, pp.158-159.
centre on the stage of art history, the late forties and early fifties being reserved for abstract expressionism. More significant, however, is the unpopularity of Shahn's New Deal era political and cultural ideology -- socially relevant content, recognizable form, and active political engagement -- for Cold War politicians and the new avant-garde who allied social commentary with communism and creative oppression. In Canada, the situation was comparable.

Leftist ideology lost its mass appeal in Canada and artists who actively sought out social influence were subject to suspicion and, at the very least, of narrow propagandist purpose. Suspicion, however, was less a problem than obsolescence for the Toronto community of painters. Their appeal to collective action for the advancement of culture in social democratic reform dissipated with the rise of abstraction in Canadian painting over the course of the 1940s and early 1950s.

The relationship of the Toronto community of painters to young abstractionists differed from the relationship they had maintained with their predecessors in the Group of Seven. Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, and A.Y. Jackson retained seniority as pioneers of Canadian modernism throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. By comparison, the socially-conscious Toronto painters received little recognition for their work following the end of World War Two, in spite of their studied experiments with abstract techniques, usually involving cubist fragmentation of form and collage. Regardless of these later experiments, and notwithstanding their modernist innovation of an associatively rich middle ground of representational form, the Toronto painters appeared conservative, at least to those

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artists Carl Schaefer called "the splash and dribble boys".\(^{171}\)

The succeeding generation of artists in Toronto rebuffed the humanist tradition and the cultural institutions of western civilization in which it was preserved. The demand for social relevance seemed stultifying as any foregone expectation of value, whether social or aesthetic, dampened the novelty of artistic discovery and compromised, ultimately, the goal of cultural progress. Rejection of artistic convention and a waning of interest in the order of social existence ever present in the visible world characterizes abstract expressionist painting in Canada. Montreal's Automatistes and Toronto's Painters 11 were, nonetheless, indebted to the preceding generation's conviction of the primacy of painting as a medium of intellectual and emotional clarification. Painting could carry the spirit of revolt and of ambition for cultural opportunity.

By 1950, the Toronto community of painters had begun to disperse. From this date forward, their vitality as a collective paled by comparison to their contribution as individuals. Comfort, Schaefer, Pepper and Hagan persevered as influential teachers at the University of Toronto, Central Technical School and the Ontario College of Art. Students were taught to take advantage of a more favourable economic and political climate for the support of the visual arts. While the work of Canada's then senior artists might not have appealed to ambitious young painters, their commitment to cultural professionalism endured as the legacy of a Canadian modernist tradition.

The formation of the FCA marks the beginning of the Toronto community of painters' denouement for it signalled a

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shift in responsibility for artists' representation from the artists themselves to administrators, whether in government or in the post-war commercial sector. The 1952 Massey Report, issued in response to the findings of the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, (to which the FCA re-submitted proposals for government arts support first made in 1944), officially sanctioned the essential role of the arts in Canadian national life.172

As outlined in the Massey Report, recommendations for the construction of community cultural centres across the country and the redoubling of government funding for the Ottawa-based National Gallery, National Film Board, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation guaranteed the establishment of long awaited structural links between visual artists and their public. The Report anticipated the creation of a Canada Council for the Arts, Letters, and Sciences in 1957 as a "central clearing house" for cultural information and support that promised to reflect a wide range of demographic and geographic considerations.173 Centralization of cultural administration in Ottawa is the end of a story that began, according to the findings of this dissertation, with the Toronto community of painters' belief in the social value of art for individual and communal well-being.

The passing of leadership of the modern movement of painting in Canada from the Toronto community of painters to a younger generation of abstractionists need not suggest a major


ideological break, as histories of Canadian art usually contend. This may be argued on the basis of the continuance of the democratic ideal of art as experience from its initial manifestation in the Toronto painters' humanist aesthetic to the development of national representation for the visual arts within the National Gallery of Canada and the Canada Council. In its role as primary liaison between visual artists and government, the National Gallery facilitated the realization of the democratic ideal of art as experience. Comfort's appointment as director of the Gallery in 1960 would seem to attest to a concordance, philosophically speaking, of the Toronto painters' humanism and the idealistic post-war expansion of this institution.

By the mid 1950s, the Gallery embraced abstract expressionism as the dominant aesthetic of progressive modernism because this style of painting signified enlightened cultural democracy. The development of the welfare state, coupled with a more favourable economic climate for art sales, seemingly relieved the modern painter in Canada from any duty other than concentrated experimentation with the materials and processes of formal design. Government cultural support produced a situation in which artists were exonerated as social independents and nonconformists. The relationship between art and society, long since engendered in the history of the modern movement in Canadian painting, had therein matured.

A common bond of concern for unity in cultural diversity linked the abstract expressionist's individual parlance of a universal visual language to Canada's post-war autonomy within an incipient global village. For avant-garde painters of the 1950s, government sponsorship signalled unprecedented recognition of their profession as visual artists. For government, the rise of abstract expressionism testified to Canada's resilience after two decades of economic and political crisis. A new period of optimism in material wealth
and concomitant cultural growth surpassed the earnest dedication of the Toronto community of painters' generation to the progress of art in social democratic reform.
Conclusion

Art and Social Progress: The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950 revises appreciation for the post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto whose two-decade leadership of a socially-conscious modernist movement of painting has been overlooked in histories of Canadian art. It contests interpretation of the 1930s and 1940s as decades of creative inertia in Toronto when artists failed to strike a new direction for contemporary painting distinct from the nationalistic landscape aesthetic of the Group of Seven. By setting the artists' shared belief in the social value of art in the context of a broadly influential movement of Canadian social democracy, this dissertation reveals the existence of the humanist aesthetic as the progressive and original contribution of a generation of painters active in Toronto during the two decades of economic and political crisis. The identification of the humanist aesthetic solves the problem, central to a revised appreciation for the post-Group of Seven generation of Toronto painters, of understanding how social consciousness could be expressed without documenting the hardships of life. It also defines a distinct period (1933 to 1950) in the history of the modern movement of painting in Toronto.

As I argue in chapter one, the first clear break with the Group of Seven appeared with the introduction of the figure into contemporary Toronto landscape painting. In the work of Bertram Brooker, Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, and Paraskeva Clark, images of the figure in the landscape evolved into depictions of the rural towns and farmlands of southern Ontario. The civilized landscape subsequently prevailed as the most popular theme of young, socially-conscious painters in Toronto. These painters emerged as a distinct community of artists within the Canadian
Group of Painters, formed in Toronto in 1933 to represent a new generation of painters in Canada.

The Toronto community of painters' civilized landscapes are the first manifestation of their humanist aesthetic. These images were designed according to an ideal of art as experience, defined by the American philosopher John Dewey in terms of the fundamentally humanist principles of order, harmony and balance inherited from antiquity. These principles operated in the Toronto painters' images of the civilized landscape at the level of design. As Walter Abell demonstrated in his 1936 publication, Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art, in 1936, design described the organization of both abstract and representational elements of painterly composition. Abell's "middle ground" of representational form redefined formalism and opened the humanist aesthetic to a play of references between art and contemporary life.

The second stage in the evolution of the humanist aesthetic came in 1937. This was the year, discussed in chapter two, that a socially-conscious language of visual exchange first appeared in the work of the Toronto community of painters. By reworking motifs and compositions borrowed from each other's work, the Toronto community of painters perfected a remarkable expression of their community identity. The socially-conscious language of visual exchange united the painters in a kind of artistic union, from which the worker, as outlined in chapter three, emerged as a powerful metaphor for the socially-engaged artist. Depictions of the worker reflect the Toronto painters' self-effacing commitment to the advancement of culture in social democratic reform. Images of the worker demonstrate their strategic incorporation of symbols current in popular culture and political propaganda. Consideration of their development in the context of increasingly volatile international politics, signalled by the Spanish Civil War, reveals the Toronto community of painters'
astute recognition of the power of culture to influence and control popular opinion.

The third stage in the evolution of the humanist aesthetic, considered in chapter four, came with the advent of World War Two. By this time, the Toronto community of painters had expanded to include the younger Toronto artists Aba Bayefsky, Fred Hagan, Jack Bush and Jack Nichols. The expanded Toronto community of painters were dedicated to recording the emotional impact of war. Their participation in the 1941 Kingston Conference, their involvement in the Canadian war effort - both officially and unofficially - and their contribution to the organization of a national federation of artists (FCA) unequivocally proves how committed these artists were to the cultural defence of Canadian democracy. They saw themselves as cultural soldiers dedicated to the preservation of the humanist tradition of western art that lay, so they were convinced, at the foundation of social democracy. Conspicuous quotations of Classical and Renaissance art in their paintings of the early 1940s indicate how convinced the Toronto community of painters were of the need for a reawakening of this tradition to the chaos of war.

The Toronto community of painters' vision of themselves as guides and protectors of social progress faltered at the end of World War Two. The final stage in their evolution of the humanist aesthetic, outlined in chapter five, came in response to a new humanism, replete with the pathos and incredulity of wartime and suffering, and a suspicion of the political Left. The wilderness tree, cut to its roots, appears as the most powerful archetype of cultural transition in their paintings of the immediate post-war years. It was a harbinger of the creative despondency to which these artists succumbed by the turn of 1950.

The Toronto painters were amazingly successful promoters of a cultural advancement of humanist values. As a community, however, they failed to invite celebrity and created a
cultural impasse broken only when a new generation of painters in Toronto concentrated aesthetic experience within the materials of painterly expression.
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1. Lawren Harris
   
   Slums and Shadows
   Pen drawing.
2. Lawren Harris
   Glace Bay  1921
   Ink drawing.
3. Lawren Harris
Miners' Houses, Glace Bay c.1925
Oil on canvas. 107.3 X 127cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
4. Arthur Lismer
   Habitant Interior
   Pen drawing.
5. Edwin Holgate
Lumberjack
Woodcut. 12.6 X 10cm (image)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
6. J.E.H. MacDonald
Paul Bunyan Takes an Evening Stroll in Algoma
7. J.E.H. MacDonald

Solemn Land
Oil on canvas. 121.9 X 152.4cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
CLARIFICATION I.

AFTER A PICTURE BY MONDRIAN

Showed in the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Toronto Art Gallery.

The simplicity of this painting is so great that many people fail to realize the beauty of the choice of both the black and white, as related to each other, or the thousands of shades one could choose from. So delicate is this relationship, and the variations of its lines, that only a master could conceive and render it—THE CATALOGUE of the SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME EXHIBITION.

8. Piet Mondrian
Clariocation I
Société Anonyme, International Exhibition of Modern Art
(Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, April 1927), catalogue no. 75
9. Lawren Harris
Lake Superior  c.1924
Oil on canvas. 101.6 X 127cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
10. Lawren Harris  
*Dr. Salem Bland* 1925  
Oil on canvas. 103.5 x 91.4cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

11. Lawren Harris  
*North Shore, Lake Superior* 1926  
Oil on canvas. 101.6 x 127cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
12. Arthur Lismer  
*Quebec Village* 1926  
Oil on canvas. 132.7 X 162.6cm  
Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston

13. Plate M "Mendelssohn: Songs without Words No.9"  
Illustration: Besant and Leadbeater *Thought-Forms* (London and Banaras: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1902)
14. Carl Schaefer  
*Our Cabin, Mani Hahn's Island, no.19* 1926  
Oil on board. 29.8 X 35.2cm  
Estate of Carl Schaefer

15. Lowrie Warrener  
*Happy Cottage* 1926  
Oil on canvas. 61 X 61cm  
Gallery Lambton, Sarnia
16. Carl Schaefer  
**Dead Jack Pine** (*Jack Pine, Pickerel River*) 1926  
Oil on board. 28.6 X 33.7cm  
*Sotheby's Important Canadian Art*, November 1989, lot. 123
17. Tom Thomson

The Jack Pine 1916–1917
Oil on canvas. 127.6 X 139.7cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
18. Carl Schaefer
Burnt Island (Pickerel River)
unknown
19. Charles Comfort
Prairie Road (Out West) 1925
Oil on canvas. 116.8 X 86.4 cm
Hart House, University of Toronto
20. Yvonne McKague  
*Cobalt* 1928  
Lost  
Reproduced: *1928-1929 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*

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21. Arthur Lismer  
*Copper Mining Town* 1924  
Oil on canvas. 54.6 X 64.8cm.  
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22. Edwin Holgate
Lumberjack 1924
Oil on canvas. 64.8 X 54.6cm
Gallery Lambton, Sarnia
23. A.Y. Jackson

*Indian Home* 1927

Oil on canvas. 53.8 X 66.5cm

Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
24. Bertram Brooker

*Sounds Assembling* 1928

Oil on canvas. 113 x 91.4 cm

Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
30. Bertram Brooker
Fugue  c.1928
Pen and ink on wove paper. 28.8 X 33.1cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
25. Prudence Heward

Girl on a Hill  1928
Oil on canvas. 101.8 X 94.6cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
26. Arthur Lismer
Evening Silhouette, Georgian Bay 1928
Oil on canvas. 80.3 X 100.8cm
University College, University of Toronto
27. Emily Carr
Totems, Kitwancool
Oil on canvas. 106.7 x 68.6cm
Hart House, University of Toronto
28. George Pepper
*Totem Poles, Kitwanga* c.1929
Oil on canvas. 91.6 X 71cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
29. Gordon Webber
Houses  c.1929
Unknown
31. Prudence Heward
Rollande 1929
Oil on canvas. 139.9 X 101.7cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
33. LeMoine Fitzgerald
At Silver Heights 1931
Oil on canvas on board. 35.8 X 40.2
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
32. Edwin Holgate  
_Nude in a Landscape (Nude)_  1930  
Oil on canvas. 64.8 X 73.7cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
34. Bertram Brooker
*Figures in a Landscape* 1931
Oil on canvas. 60.9 X 76.2cm
Private Collection
35. Charles Comfort
Young Canadian  1932
Watercolour. 91.4 X 106.7cm
Hart House, University of Toronto
36. Lawren Harris  
*Bylot Island* 1931  
Oil on canvas. 108 X 128.3cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
37. Carl Schaefer
Summer Harvest, Hanover  1935
Oil on canvas. 74.9 X 87cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
38. Carl Schaefer
Ontario Farmhouse 1934
Oil on canvas. 106.5 x 125.1cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
39. Charles Comfort

*Tadoussac* 1935

Oil on canvas. 74.9 X 90.2cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
40. LeMoine FitzGerald
Doc Snyder's House 1931
Oil on canvas. 74.9 X 85.1cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
41. A.Y. Jackson  
*Road to Bic* c.1936  
Oil on canvas. 53.3 X 66cm  

42. Carl Schaefer  
*Spring Evening*  c.1935  
Watercolour. 37.5 X 45.7cm  
43. Charles Goldhamer
St. Urbain (Street, St.Urbain, Que.) c.1935
Watercolour. 40.64 X 48.2cm
collection unknown
Reproduced: Catalogue of the Ninth Annual Exhibition
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44. Arthur Lismer
Nova Scotia Fishing Village 1930
Oil on canvas. 91.4 X 106.7cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
45. Kathleen Daly
Alphonse L'Abbé
Oil on board. 91.4 X 78.7cm
Sotheby's Important Canadian Art, May 1994, lot.151
Reproduced: Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1936,
plate 40.
46. Bertram Brooker  
*Growth*  
Reproduced: *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1936*, plate 40.
47. Paraskeva Clark

Still Life (Still Life with Apples and Grapes) 1935
Oil on canvas. 75.5 X 67.5cm
Thomson Gallery, Toronto
48. Pegi Nicol

Torso and Plants (Self-Portrait with Flowers)  c.1935
Oil on canvas. 91.4 X 68.5cm
Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
49. Gordon Webber
   *The Vigil* c.1935
Unknown
Reproduced: *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1936*, plate 66.
50. Isabel McLaughlin

*Tree* 1935

Oil on canvas. 202.0 x 90.4cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
51. Tom Thomson

The West Wind 1917
Oil on canvas. 120.6 X 137.5cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
52. A.Y. Jackson

Winter, Charlevoix County  c.1933
Oil on canvas. 63.5 X 81.3cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
53. Edwin Holgate
*Totem Poles, Gitseguklas* 1927
Oil on canvas. 81.3 X 81.3cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
54. Charles Comfort
Quebec Church  c.1935
Oil on canvas. 61 x 76.2cm
55. Yvonne McKague Housser  
*Cobalt* 1931  
Oil on canvas. 114.8 X 140cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
56. Carl Schaefer  
Wheatfield, Hanover  1936  
Oil on canvas. 68.9 X 94.6cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

57. Paraskeva Clark  
Wheat Field  1936  
Oil on canvas. 63.6 X 76.5cm  
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59. Bolshevik Poster  
British Museum, London  

58. Paraskeva Clark  
*Petroushka* 1937  
Oil on canvas. 122.4 X 81.9cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
60. Charles Comfort
Romance of Nickel  1937
Oil on canvas. 213.5 X 610cm
Energy, Mines and Resources Canada
62. Thoreau MacDonald
Unstitled. (Grain Elevator)
Illustration: The Canadian Forum 12 (October 1931), cover

61. Emile Brunet
Canadian Pavilion 1937
for International Exhibition, Paris, 1937
Brunet was both architect and sculptor
Nazis Find Too Much Food in Garbage

An official decree prohibited advertising agents from arousing yearnings for butter and other fats—of which there is a shortage—by picturing mouth-watering scenes.

"At last we have produced the perfect Aryan."

63. Harry Mayerovitch
"At last we have produced the perfect Aryan"
64. Diego Rivera
Detroit Industry 1932-33
South Wall (top) and North Wall (bottom)
Fresco.
Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit
65. William Gropper
Construction of the Dam 1939
mural
Interior Department Building, Washington, D.C.
66. Josef Thorak
Kameradschaft 1937
Bronze. height 670cm
for National Socialist German pavilion,
International Exhibition, Paris, 1937

67. Vera Mukhina
The Worker and the Collective Farm Woman 1937
Bronze. height c.12m
for the USSR pavilion,
International Exhibition, Paris, 1937
68. Laurence Hyde
Untitled, ("Tragedy in Spain")
Illustration: New Frontier 1 (February 1937), cover
69. Artists' Branch, Communist Party of Canada
Banner and four portrait sketches 1939
rally sponsored by
Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, Toronto
An army of Canadian workers, tunnelling into the ore deposits at Sudbury; smelting and refining in the huge plants at Copper Cliff; producing refined metals at the Electrolytic Refinery at Port Colborne. Over ten million dollars has been paid out in one year by International Nickel for wages to Canadian workmen. These workmen, in spending their wages for food, clothing and housing, for the necessities and luxuries of life, give employment to vast numbers of other Canadians in all occupations. The workers in textile, boot and shoe factories, the thousands who produce lumber and building materials, the fisherman, miner, grocer, druggist, the department store employees — each and every one shares directly or indirectly in the Pay Roll of International Nickel.

The greater use of Nickel and Metal Mardi in Canada, and throughout the world, means a greater measure of Prosperity for Canada... Use these marks wherever you can.

70. Charles Comfort
Pay Roll 1933
Scratchboard. no size
INCO Limited
71. Eric Aldwinckle
Home Sweet Home
72. Harry Mayerovitch
Untitled, (Miner)
Illustration: "Corbin: A Company Town Fights for its Life",
New Frontier 1 (June 1936), cover.
73. Charles Comfort
Smelter Stacks, Copper Cliff 1936
Oil on canvas. 101.6 x 127cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
74. Franklin Carmichael
The Nickel Belt 1928
Oil on canvas. 101.8 X 122cm
Ontario Heritage Foundation, Firestone Art Collection
75. Charles Comfort
Transportation and communications, Mining, Smelting,
Pulp-and-paper
Oil on canvas attached to wall. each panel 4.8 X 1.2m
Trading Floor, Toronto Stock Exchange
see overleaf
Charles Comfort
Refining, Agriculture, Oil, Engineering and construction
Oil on canvas attached to wall. each panel 4.8 X 1.2m
Trading Floor, Toronto Stock Exchange
76. Charles Comfort
Lake Superior Village 1937
Oil on canvas. 108 X 177.8cm
Art Gallery of Ontario
This breath, this body perishable though
It is, too soon dissolved, too quick decayed,
Requires its season and demands its flow,
And sows its tares and thistles undismayed
By weather that comes screaming from the north,
Or blight that settles early on the young.
By ghosts of consequences shadowed forth
In sober precepts of the Latin tongue.

Thus without caution goes the naked soul
To wring a fruitage from the desert waste,
To clasp a spar and dare the swirling shoal,
To fire its bridges with becoming haste—
Whereby asserts the genius of a breed
That gleans fat harvest from ambiguous seed.

LEO KENNEDY.
79. J. Olsen

*Untitled* c.1936

80. "Wal" 
Illustration: "Drought", New Frontier 2 (September 1937), cover.
81. Charles Comfort
Pioneer Survival 1938
Oil on canvas. 102 X 122cm
Royal Canadian Academy of Arts diploma work
National Gallery of Canada
82. Carl Schaefer
*Storm Over Fields* 1937
Oil on canvas. 69.1 X 94cm
Art Gallery of Ontario
83. Caven Atkins

Willowvale Park c.1939
Pen drawing.

84. John Hall
   Interlude 1939
   Wood engraving.

85. Paraskeva Clark
   Presents from Madrid 1937
   Watercolour over graphite on wove paper. 51.5 X 62cm
   National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
96. Carl Schaefer
Apples
Wood engraving.
87. Laurence Hyde
Lovers Sheltering from a Storm
Reproduced: New Frontier 1 (January 1937), p.17
88. Mann Ward

Untitled, ("And the Answer Is...")
Illustration: New Frontier 1 (March 1937), cover.

89. George Pepper

Unemployed, Grange Park
(A Summer Day in the Park)  c.1938
Oil on canvas. 112.4 X 142.2cm
Sotheby's Important Canadian Art,
May 1994, lot 45
90. Kathleen Daly
Une Soirée (Old Time Fiddler) c.1938
Oil on canvas. 147.3 X 199.7cm
Sotheby's Important Canadian Art, May 1994, lot.46
91. Bertram Brooker
Recluse 1939
Oil on canvas. 61 X 45.7cm
Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal
92. Carl Schaefer
Farmhouse by the Railway 1939
Oil on canvas. 87.2 X 116.8cm
Art Gallery of Hamilton

93. Leonard Hutchinson
Canadian Homes and Gardens c.1937
Woodcut. 21.8 X 28.1cm
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. R.A. Hutchinson
94. J.E.H. MacDonald
The Tangled Garden 1916
Oil on canvas. 121.4 X 152.4cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
95. Yvonne MacKague

South Shore, Quebec  1933
Oil on canvas.  61 X 76.2cm
Hart House, University of Toronto
96. Pegi Nicol
School in a Garden 1934
Oil on canvas. 112.4 X 99cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
97. George Pepper

Tobacco Patch (Tobacco Patch, St. Urbain) 1934

Oil on canvas. 63.5 X 73.7cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
98. Bertram Brooker  
*Pygmalion's Miracle*  
Oil on canvas. 97.1 X 53.3cm  
Collection of Ken and Lynn Martens, Calgary
99. Charles Comfort

*Primavera* c.1942

Unknown

100. Prudence Heward  
*Girl under a Tree* 1931  
Oil on canvas. 122.5 X 193.7cm  
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton

101. Anne Savage  
*The Plough* 1931-33  
Oil on canvas. 76.4 X 102.3cm  
Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal
102. Charles Comfort
Barns and Ploughshare  c.1938
unknown
103. Roloff Beny
'The Soil (The Good Earth) 1943
Oil on canvas. 82 X 107.3cm
St. Hilda's College, University of Toronto
Canadian Group of Painters: 1942 Travelling Exhibition

104. Thoreau MacDonald
Untitled, (Plough)  c.1942
Cover design: Catalogue of the Canadian Group of Painters - 1942 Travelling Exhibition, circulated by the National Gallery of Canada
105. Paraskeva Clark
Self-Portrait with Concert Program
Oil on canvas. 76.6 X 69.8cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
106. Paraskeva Clark

Self-Portrait (Myself) 1933
Oil on canvas. 101.6 X 76.2cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
108. John Alfsen
*War News* c.1941

107. Frederick Hagan
*McBain's Breakfast* 1941
Oil on masonite. 91.3 X 76.3cm
Laurentian University Museum and Art Centre, Sudbury
109. York Wilson
Welfare Worker  1940
Oil on canvas. 91.4 X 76.2cm
Private Collection
20,000 WORKERS SPEED THE SUPPLY OF CANADIAN NICKEL

TODAY more Canadian Nickel is being produced than ever before. This ever-increasing output shows what can be accomplished when stout limbs, skilled hands and willing hearts combine in an inspiring cause.

THE INTERNATIONAL NICKEL COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED

110. Jack Bush
2,000 Workers Speed the Supply of Canadian Nickel 1941
Scratchboard. no size
INCO Limited
112. Harry Mayerovitch
Coal Face 1944
National Film Board of Canada
Serigraph poster. 101.6 X 66.5cm
Miners' Museum, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia

111. Philip Surrey
Tout canadien doit combattre 1941-1942
English version: Every Canadian Must Fight
Lithograph.
Issued by Bureau of Public Information, Canada
This is Our Strength

Labour and Management are pooling their strength to give us the means for victory in war and progress in peace.

113. Charles Fainmel
This is Our Strength: Labour and Management 1939-1940
Lithograph. 91 X 60.5cm
National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
115. Franklin Carmichael
Work and Prosper 1920
Canadian National Exhibition poster
McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinberg, Ontario

114. Eric Aldwinckle
A l'oeuvre. C'est notre guerre 1939-1945
English version: To Work, It is Our War
Lithograph. 79 X 53cm
Issued by Bureau of Public Information, Canada
National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
116. Aba Bayefsky  
_Park Bench_ 1942  
Oil on canvas. 74.3 X 61.6cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
117. Yvonne McKague Housser
Spring in the Park 1941
Oil on canvas. 61 X 76.2cm
Private collection.
118. Carl Schaefer
*Burned Farmhouse* 1940
Watercolour. no size
collection unknown
119. Carl Schaefer
Burned Farmhouse, Hanover 1939
Pen drawing. no size
120. Carl Schaefer
Graveyard at Hanover 1937
Watercolour. 39.4 X 57.8cm
Estate of Carl Schaefer

121. Carl Schaefer
Wire Fence (Wire Fence, Hanover) 1937
Oil on canvas. 51.1 X 60.6cm
University College, University of Toronto
122. Roger Couillard

...and WE talk about sacrifice
Buy Victory Bonds 1943
Lithograph.
Issued by Wartime Information Board
National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
123. Anonymous

Lick Them over there! Come On Canada! 1940-1945
Lithograph.
Issued by the Bureau of Public Information, Ottawa
National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
124. Anonymous

Je crois...

1941-1945

Lithograph

Issued by Bureau of Public Information, Ottawa

Carson Collection
125. Carl Schaefer
Christmas Window, Norwich, Vermont 1940
Watercolour. 55.9 X 76.2cm
Estate of Carl Schaefer
126. Pegi Nicol MacLeod
Cold Window 1935
Oil on canvas. 122.3 X 69.2cm
National Gallery of Canada
127. Pegi Nicol MacLeod  
Airshaft, 88th Street, New York  
c.1942  
Oil on canvas. 43.1 X 38.1cm  
Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa

128. Pegi Nicol MacLeod  
murals  1941  
Fisher Vocational School,  
Woodstock, New Brunswick  
Oil on canvas applied to wall.  
Reproduced: Maritime Art 2  
(December 1941), pp.37,39.  
see overleaf

Pegi Nicol MacLeod  
Woodstock murals in progress  
Reproduced: Joan Murray,  
Daffodils in Winter:  
The Art and Life of  
Pegi Nicol MacLeod, p.48.
129. Graham Sutherland
Devastation 1940: Farmhouse in Wales 1940
Oil on canvas. 64.5 x 113.4 cm
Cheltenham Art Gallery, Cheltenham, England
130. Charles Comfort
Canadian Armour Passing Through Ortona 1945
Oil on canvas. 101.6 X 122cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa
131. Graham Sutherland

**Devastation 1941: City -- Twisted Girders** 1941

Ink, charcoal and gouache on paper. 65.5 X 112.5cm
Ferens Art Gallery, City of Kingston-upon-Hull, England
132. Charles Comfort
The Hitler Line 1944
Oil on canvas. 101.6 X 122cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa
133. Jack Nichols

**Rescue at Sea (Taking Survivors on Board)**  1945
Oil on canvas. 122 X 101.5cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.
134. Henry Moore
Row of Sleepers  1941
Pen and ink, chalk, crayon, watercolour. 54.5 x 32cm
The British Council, London
135. José Clemente Orozco
*Three Generations* 1929
Lithograph. 34.2 X 46cm (support)
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
136. Jack Nichols

Bus Stop #2  1948
Lithograph. 51 X 64cm (support)
Art Gallery of Ontario
137. Charles Goldhamer
*Burnt Airman with Wig* 1945
Watercolour. 33.8 X 27.3cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa
138. Frederick Varley
*For What?* 1918
Oil on canvas. 148 X 183.5cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa
139. Aba Bayefsky
Belsen Concentration Camp Pit 1945
Oil on canvas. 91.6 X 121.8cm
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.

140. Pablo Picasso
Guernica 1937
Oil on canvas. 349 X 777cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid
141. Arthur Lismer
_A September Gale, Georgian Bay_ 1921
Oil on canvas. 122.4 X 163cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

142. J.E.H. MacDonald
_Mist Phantasy_ 1922
Oil on canvas. 53.3 X 66cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
143. Carl Schaefer
*Carrion Crow*  1946
Watercolour.  43.2 X 61.6cm
Estate of Carl Schaefer
144. Jack Bush

*Yesterday* 1947

Oil on masonite. 122.2 X 91.5cm

Jack Bush Heritage Corporation, Inc.
145. Jack Bush

*Painting with Red* 1957
Oil on canvas. 121.7 X 152.1cm
Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
146. Jack Bush
Haunted House  1945
Watercolour, inks, graphite and scraping out, on wove paper. 58.5 X 80.4cm
Jack Bush Heritage Corporation, Inc.
147. Jack Bush

*Village Funeral*  1945
Oil on board. 21.5 X 27.9cm
Jack Bush Heritage Corporation, Inc.
148. Jack Bush
Village Procession 1946
Oil on masonite. 61 x 76.5 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
149. Paraskeva Clark

**Essentials of Life**  1947

Oil on canvas.  50.8 X 61cm

Collection unknown

Reproduced: Catalogue Canadian Group of Painters, 1947-1948, unpaginated
150. Bertram Brooker
*Art is Long* 1934
Oil on canvas. 76.2 x 60.9cm
University of Lethbridge
151. Alfred Pellan
Nature Morte  n.d.
Oil on canvas. 53.3 X 78.7cm
Musée de la Province de Québec, Québec

152. Bertram Brooker
Driftwood  1945
Oil on canvas. 66 X 100.3cm
Collection of Victor Brooker, Toronto
153. Frederick Hagan
Canadian Painting 1948
Oil on masonite. 50.8 X 61cm
Art Gallery of Peel, Brampton, Ontario
154. Jack Bush

The Old Tree  1951
Oil on masonite. 43.2 X 55.9cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
155. Jack Bush
Release 1950
Oil on masonite. 61 X 76.2cm
Jack Bush Heritage Corporation, Inc.
156. Bobs Coghill Haworth
The Old Order  c.1950
Mixed technique. unknown
157. Yvonne McKague Housser

*Summer Night* (Summer Night, Toronto) 1949

Oil on masonite. 49.7 X 64.9cm

MacDonald Stewart Art Centre, University of Guelph
158. William Winter
Midnight at Charlie's  1946
Oil on canvas. 50.8 X 61.0cm
Vancouver Art Gallery
159. York Wilson

*Cocktail Party* 1949
Oil on canvas. 101.6 X 76.2cm
Mrs. Lela Wilson, Toronto
Anna Victoria Hudson

EDUCATION

present  PhD in progress, Department of History of Art, University of Toronto
       - specializing in Canadian art
       - thesis title Art and Social Progress: The Toronto community of Painters, 1933-1950
       - completed Major area comprehensive exam in Modern Art and Architecture
       - completed Minor area comprehensive exam in Northern Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture

1987 - 1988  MA, Dept. History of Art, University of Toronto

1985 - 1986  MPhil, Dept. History of Art, University of Glasgow, Scotland
       - thesis title Depictions of the Doctor in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art

1982 - 1985  Honours BFA with distinction, History of Art, Concordia University

1981 - 1982  first year Art History and Criticism, University of Western Ontario

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

1993 - 1994  Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award, University of Toronto Alumni Association

1992 - 1993  University of Toronto Open Fellowship $3400 per term
       University of Toronto Associates Travel Grant $1200
       Lenore V. Kinghorn Scholarship for Travel and Research $900
       T. Glendenning Hamilton Research Grant, University of Manitoba $350

1991 - 1992  Ontario Graduate Scholarship $11859
       Lenore V. Kinghorn Scholarship for Travel and Research $1300
       Harcourt Brown Travel Fellowship, University College, University of Toronto $900
       University of Toronto Open Fellowship $3360 per term

1990 - 1991  University of Toronto Open Fellowship $3200 per term

1989 - 1990  University of Toronto Open Fellowship $2900 per term

1988 - 1989  University of Toronto Open Fellowship $2700 per term

1985 - 1986  University of Glasgow Post-Graduate Scholarship 4300 pounds
       University of Washington Post-Graduate Scholarship and Stipend $15000

1981 - 1982  University of Western Ontario Senate Award $1000
       University of Ottawa Entrance Scholarship $700

MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

present  Curatorial Assistant, Department of Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Ontario
PUBLICATIONS / EXHIBITIONS / PRESENTATIONS

Canada Illustrated I (1778-1929) and II (1930-1959): two exhibitions of Canadian Art drawn from the University of Lethbridge Art Collection, co-curated with Jeffrey Spalding. Installation completed by the Museum Studies students; text panels by my Canadian Art (Art 3240) class. Both exhibitions raised questions of cultural representation.
January / April 1997
Art Gallery, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta

Panel discussion: "Silent Chapters from Canadian History" with Wendy Oberlander, Vancouver Video Artist, and Julie Duschenes, artist and University of Lethbridge studio instructor.
A response to Oberlander’s video presentation Nothing to be Written Here documenting Canada’s incarceration of Jewish refugees during World War Two
April 11, 1997
University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta

Why does the history of Canadian Art exclude the Native perspective?
guest lecture for Native American Indian Art: History and Theory
March 13, 1997
University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta

Picasso’s Guernica: Art and Politics at the Paris International Exhibition, 1937
guest lecture for Arts & Science 3002 - Seminar in the Arts and Sciences
January 13, 1997
University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta

Sketching Traditions of Canadian Landscape Artists, an exhibition of Canadian landscape paintings and sketches drawn from the Glenbow collection, Glenbow Museum and Art Gallery, Calgary, Alberta
August 17, 1996 - October 20, 1996 -- extended to February 1998

Currents of Expression in Contemporary Canadian Painting, two walking tours of the Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art in the University of Toronto, organized by Alumni Affairs at the University of Toronto
Spring Reunion May 30, 1996

"Designing the Experience of War", a series of three gallery talks to accompany the Memories of War, Dreams of Peace exhibition, Glenbow Museum and Art Gallery, Calgary, Alberta
November 18, 25 & December 3, 1995

"Modernism in Canada: Identity in Community", guest lecture
Alberta College of Art and Design, Calgary, Alberta, November 15, 1995

Co-chaired Session Images and Society, and presented paper "The Metaphorical Worker in Depression Toronto" at the 1994 Universities Art Association of Canada Conference, Halifax,
November 4, 1994


The Intimate Vision of David Milne / Defining Canada: The Painted Landscape
January 4 - January 31, 1993
-two exhibitions dealing with early Canadian modernism
-The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto

Determining a sex?: The Hart House Permanent Collection on the 20th Anniversary of Women at Hart House Sept. 8 - Oct. 8, 1992
-a reappraisal of the Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art in light of current debates on gender in the Visual Arts
-The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto

Recent Acquisitions: Hart House Permanent Collection Jan. 9 - Feb. 2, 1992
-trends in the purchasing of works by the Hart House Art Committee over the past five years
-The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto

Big Land and Big Sky: The Geometry of the Canadian Prairies Sept. 3 - Oct. 5, 1991
-on exhibition of contemporary Canadian prairie paintings from the Hart House Permanent Collection and from several Toronto commercial galleries
-The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto

Paintings of Canadian Life in the 1930s and 1940s: A reflection of the Times Sept. 4 - Oct. 4, 1990
-selected works from the Hart House Permanent Collection and the Collection of the University of Toronto.
-The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto

Art Gallery of Ontario, Selected Works 1990
-contributed many of the contemporary Canadian entries and several entries on Modern European painting

Presented MPhil thesis Depictions of the Doctor in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art at the Young Scholars Conference, University of Toronto, April 1987

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1996 - 1997 Term appointment, Department of Art, University of Lethbridge, Alberta

INTRODUCTION TO ART
-An introduction to basic concepts and vocabulary in the practice and theory of art, based primarily on the period from 1800 to the present, that is the move from modernism to post-modernism, including painting, sculpture, architecture, printmaking, drawing and photo arts.
1996 - 1997  Term appointment, Department of Art, University of Lethbridge, Alberta
TWENTIETH CENTURY ART HISTORY TO 1945
-An in-depth discussion of western visual art of the first half of this century. Following along a roughly chronological outline to consider ways in which social, political and aesthetic concerns shape artistic production and interpretation. Modernism will be treated as a problematic term for description of the multiple histories of cultural modernity.
CANADIAN ART: IDENTITIES IN VISUAL CULTURE
-Who are the artists and how have they been inscribed into a paradigm of cultural development? An investigation into histories of Canadian art from pre- to post-Confederation, and modernism to postmodernism.
-students are responsible for contributing text panels for two exhibitions of Canadian art, organized for the purpose of this class and drawing from the University of Lethbridge collection. Exhibitions held in the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery
IDEALS OF CULTURAL PROGRESS, 1920-1950
-A specialized discussion of an international swing in western visual art from abstraction back to representation following the conclusion of World War One. Emphasis will be placed on the centrality of twentieth-century humanism to the creation of communal languages of art in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Britain, France, Spain, Germany and the Soviet Union.

Fall 1995
Lecturer, Alberta College of Art and Design, Calgary
Foundation - PREHISTORY TO THE RENAISSANCE
-An introduction to the “canon” of visual art and architecture that challenges the model of cultural development determined by values inherent to western industrialized society
-two sections

Summer 1994
Lecturer, McGill University, Montreal
Undergraduate course - CANADIAN ART
-Questioning perceptions of the development of painting as the primary expression of visual culture in Canada, and reviewing those divisions and interpretations that have shaped our understanding.

Fall 1993
Lecturer, Concordia University, Montreal
Master's level course - SPECIAL STUDIES IN CANADIAN ART HISTORY
-An investigation of the relationship of art to society in Canada from the First World War and the growth of social consciousness among artists, to the institution of government-sponsored cultural support systems following the Second World War

1991 - 1992  Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
INTRODUCTION TO ART HISTORY
-Issues and perspectives in the study of western art. An examination of images, their varied contexts and means of communication
-responsible for leading weekly smaller discussion groups and for grading
TEACHING EXPERIENCE cont’d

1991 - 1992 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
ART AFTER 1750
-A study of European and North American painting, sculpture and architecture from the period of the American and French Revolution until the present
-responsible for grading

1990 - 1991 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
ARCHITECTURE IN THE WESTERN WORLD SINCE 1750
-An introduction into the history of architecture and town planning in Europe and North America from the age of historicism to post-modernism
-responsible for weekly tutorials and grading

1990 - 1991 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
EUROPEAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE FROM NEO-CLASSICISM TO 1940
-A discussion of the major movements in European art
-responsible for grading

1989 - 1990 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
THE BIRTH OF MODERNISM IN EUROPEAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE
-The emergence in Europe between ca. 1848 and 1907 of "modernist" or anti-traditional attitudes toward painting and sculpture
-responsible for grading

1988 - 1989 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto
EUROPEAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE FROM 1400 TO 1750
-Major forms of expression in the visual arts - architecture, painting, and sculpture - with emphasis on visual analysis, political, religious, and general cultural movements.
-responsible for weekly tutorials and grading

OTHER EXPERIENCE

November 1996 Jury selection committee
Open Call V -- "Leaving", A Public Screening of New Film and Video Works by amateur and professional western Canadian artists
Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta

1992 - 1993 Student Keeper, Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art, University of Toronto

1991 - 1992 Student Keeper, Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art, University of Toronto

1990 - 1991 Student Keeper, Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art, University of Toronto

1989 - 1990 President, Graduate History of Art Students Association, University of Toronto
OTHER EXPERIENCE cont’d

Summer 1989  Curatorial Assistant, Department of Contemporary Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Ontario
-worked with Philip Monk and Barbara Fischer

1988 - 1989  President, Graduate History of Art Students Association, University of Toronto

1987 - 1988  Executive Member, Graduate History of Art Students Association, University of Toronto

Jan-Aug 1987  Assistant Administrator, Centricity Gallery, London, Ontario
-commercial gallery exhibiting contemporary local artists

Fall 1986  Research Assistant (volunteer) to Paddy O'Brien, Chief Curator, London Regional Art
Gallery for John Street is a one-way street - Clark McDougall Retrospective

1984 - 1985  Vice-Pres., Concordia University History of Art Students Association

Summer 1984  Research Assistant to Professor Reesa Greenberg, Concordia University for proposed
course on the London Ontario art scene of the 1960s

LANGUAGES

French / German / Italian