

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN ART HISTORY
ANNALES D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART CANADIEN



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fig. 1 Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, *Habitations sur la colline*, 1909, Huile sur toile, 58,4 × 73 cm, Ottawa, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada. (Photo: MbaC)

OMBRES PORTÉES

Notes sur le paysage canadien avant le Groupe des Sept

Mon propos, en isolant un motif donné dans trois tableaux peints entre 1909 et 1912 par trois artistes canadiens¹, est d'attirer l'attention sur un élément récurrent particulièrement significatif pour définir la modernité au Canada et une transition importante dans la conception de l'art du paysage canadien. Ce découpage favorisera, je l'espère, une périodisation plus nette dans l'analyse du paysage et fournira des éléments pour interpréter les transitions dans ce genre entre la fin du XIX^e siècle, tel qu'étudié par Dennis Reid², et les trop célèbres années 1920, marquées par l'omniprésence du Groupe des Sept. En suggérant certaines interprétations, j'assumerai cependant une position symétrique à mon sujet et, en jetant un éclairage particulier sur une question, je créerai d'autres zones d'ombre.

Au plan politique et idéologique, les deux premières décennies du XX^e siècle marquent une évolution dans la définition du Canada. Durant les mandats de Laurier³ et de Borden, les grands projets qui avaient vu naître le pays étaient des réalités auxquelles il fallait s'adapter. La centralisation du pouvoir politique et la mise sur pied d'une économie à l'échelle nationale liée à la construction du chemin de fer firent place à de nouvelles priorités à l'échelle régionale et locale, définies différemment par la présence de néo-canadiens, alors que la participation canadienne à certains débats internationaux allait entraîner un autre type de position. Bien que la plupart des artistes actifs au Canada aient étudié en Europe ou qu'ils en aient été originaires, on assiste, par l'intermédiaire des clubs et des divers regroupements, à la diffusion d'un discours culturel nationaliste qui essaie de se démarquer du contexte colonial.

Depuis la Confédération il y eut de nombreux appels de la part des intellectuels et des critiques aux artistes canadiens, afin qu'ils produisent un art national inspiré par la nature locale et l'histoire du pays. On pensait que le sujet seul pouvait répondre à cette question et que les sites caractéristiques et les moments forts de notre histoire fourniraient une nouvelle forme d'art, sans qu'on ait à se préoccuper des aspects stylistiques et formels. Thomas Turnbull résumait cette pensée lorsqu'il écrivait en 1893 :

Many artists, good, sensible and capable fellows, are wasting their precious time and still more precious talent in the production of cheap landscapes, easily vendible. These men will never paint anything worthy of consideration. Why should not some artist take the text of Canadian History and lay the foundation of a National Art in this direction?... The History of

Canada is filled with grand pages, in which fine patriotism and pure heroism abound, the incidents being Indian, or French, or English; such scenes would, if painted by a master's hand, stir and emulate the very souls of our people. Rather let us have a thousand good engravings of one good picture that is near and dear to the nation, than be tortured with a thousand wretched parodies on «Niagara Falls», «Moonlight Tobogganings», «Alone-in-the-World», «Retired Shopkeepers», etc., such as annually flood our art-galleries and dealers' windows.... There is a grand field of study for artists in the historical school, which is as yet unexplored. Landscape is doomed to be the ubiquitous misrepresentation of nature. Man cannot imitate that which he cannot understand⁴.

Cet appel ne reçut pas l'appui du public ni des institutions canadiennes, et les efforts de quelques personnes n'eurent pas de suite. La constitution de l'identité canadienne s'est faite au moyen du paysage au détriment de la peinture d'histoire. Augustus Bridle dans son compte rendu de l'exposition de l'*Ontario Society of Artists* de 1911 écrivait :

The group may be divided into landscapers and non-landscapers. The ratio is about as ten to one. Here, perhaps, we begin to get the first definite point in a layman's analysis. Canadian painters have been scolded before now for doing landscapes to death. Part of the reason is that Canada up till lately has had a million times more landscapes than anything else to paint. Part of the reason is that cities and streets in Canada are not of such average paintable quality as the fields and the bush and the rocks. Another trouble has been the woeful lack of models. Canadians are too near the prayer-meeting stage for professional models. But a landscape is always ready to pose⁵.

La fascination pour le paysage menait à une quête incessante de nouveaux sujets, et les artistes habitant la ville les cherchèrent dans leur environnement immédiat⁶. Le grand moment d'enthousiasme des années 1880 et 90 pour les voyages vers l'est et vers l'ouest était chose du passé et, comme l'écrivit J. E. H. MacDonald (1873-1932) :

One might reasonably suppose, in listening to the comments of spectators at our art exhibitions, that the boundaries of Canada are the Hamilton mountain, Lake Simcoe, the River Don, and the Toronto Island, with narrower limits in some of the loudest cases. But one has to know where to look to find these places on the spread of a Dominion map, and the artist is by nature an explorer. His interest is in character and beauty, and that is Dominion-wide. The Canadian spirit in Art is just entering in possession of its heritage. It is opening a new world, and the soul of the artist responds with the feeling that it is very good⁷.

Si la réalité canadienne fut en grande partie façonnée par les artistes qui en fournissaient les images mythiques, de la même façon le paysage définissait

les artistes. Ils devinrent partie prenante du sujet, y étant associés et identifiés. L'expérience de la qualité de la lumière, sa brillance, est une des caractéristiques des pays nordiques. Lorsque les artistes travaillèrent en plein air, comme on commence à le faire au tournant du siècle au Canada, ces caractéristiques climatiques les marquèrent et modifièrent la représentation du paysage⁸.

Le motif de l'ombre portée a d'abord retenu mon attention pour ses aspects décoratifs et formels, comme on le remarque par exemple dans les œuvres de Clarence Gagnon, *Winter, Village of Baie St. Paul, Quebec*, 1909-1910 (Power Corporation du Canada) et de Tom Thomson (1877-1917), *In Algonquin Park*, 1914-16 (The McMichael Collection of Art). En cherchant à définir le moment d'émergence de ce motif, on s'aperçoit qu'il appartient en propre aux premières décennies du XX^e siècle. Plutôt que de jouer un rôle secondaire ou de support dans la composition, la projection dans l'espace d'une forme ou d'un objet bien défini devient un des principaux sujets des compositions picturales de plusieurs artistes importants.

Les descriptions topographiques ou les paysages produits antérieurement traitent l'ombre surtout comme un moyen de créer l'illusion de la profondeur, par exemple en faisant alterner les zones de lumière et d'ombre (Thomas Davies, *On the River La Puce*, 1792, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada). L'ombre portée placée au premier plan propose au spectateur une aire de repos, en retrait, loin de l'activité de la couleur et de l'action (Joseph Légaré, *Québec vu de Pointe-Lévis*, v. 1840-42, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal). Ce moyen descriptif et formel valorise le sujet principal et en rehausse le modelé. Pour sa part, le clair-obscur⁹ utilisait l'ombre et l'ombre portée pour des fins subjectives et symboliques. Les qualités du sujet étaient sélectionnées par la façon dont l'ombre les découpait.

Le motif de l'ombre portée ne doit pas être confondu avec celui de la réflexion (William Brymner, *October*, 1906, Mount Royal Club; James Wilson Morrice, *The Beach, St. Malo*, 1905, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal) non plus qu'avec celui de la fumée (J.E.H. MacDonald, *Tracks and Traffic*, 1912, Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario; Suzor-Coté [1869-1937], *Les Fumées, Montreal Harbour*, 1914, Musée du Québec). Réflexion et fumée partagent avec l'ombre portée certaines caractéristiques formelles et symboliques mais, comme elles entretiennent un rapport différent avec la réalité, elles doivent être traitées séparément. La réflexion peut reproduire la réalité par un effet de miroir, les distorsions y sont possibles, et la couleur et l'espace projetés répondent à d'autres critères que ceux de la représentation de l'ombre portée. La fumée émerge d'éléments naturels ou architecturaux comme pour mieux en dissimuler d'autres. Sa présence amplifie des parties de la composition, alors qu'elle en cache certaines. L'ombre portée n'a pas ce pouvoir réducteur en ce qu'elle révèle l'objet qui est projeté et souligne l'espace qui le reçoit¹⁰.

Le choix ou la capacité d'inclure l'ombre portée dans un tableau paraît

être relié à une plus grande conscience de l'acte de peindre, du moins de remarquer les effets de la lumière. À cause de son effet passager, ce motif souligne l'acte d'observer. Cette intégration active et subjective de la part de l'artiste se trouve représentée également par d'autres moyens. Dennis Reid a montré, par exemple, comment le mouvement circulaire créé dans la représentation de Tom Thomson *The Jack Pine*, 1916-17 (Musée des beaux-arts du Canada), suggère l'incarnation de l'artiste dans son activité créatrice, l'acte phénoménologique de percevoir et de voir¹¹. Par son association à un moment précis de la journée, l'ombre accentue la présence des objets dans l'espace et par conséquent celle du peintre.

La présence de la source lumineuse sur la surface du tableau, soulignée par les ombres portées, ne joue pas seulement un rôle formel, comme dans *Pink House Montreal*, 1905-08 (coll. part.) de James Wilson Morrice, où les ombres portées disposées en forme de grille sur la surface de la maison créent un effet unificateur. Selon qu'elle se trouve devant ou derrière le spectateur, la source lumineuse tient aussi un rôle psychologique et symbolique différent. Une source lumineuse située à l'arrière-plan peut éblouir le spectateur, en même temps qu'elle déforme le sujet. L'effet trop brillant a comme rôle de transfigurer, de sacraliser le sujet par cette association directe à la lumière (Horatio Walker, *Ave Maria*, 1906, Art Gallery of Hamilton). Au contraire, une source lumineuse placée derrière l'artiste/spectateur a le pouvoir de l'inclure dans l'espace du tableau comme partie des éléments intégrés sur la surface¹². Cette présence de l'artiste sur la surface du tableau est une étape dans l'avènement d'un art moderne. Elle s'accompagne au Canada, dans les deux premières décennies du XX^e siècle, de l'affirmation des moyens picturaux : le médium, le support et l'application de la matière deviennent de plus en plus importants comme sujets de l'œuvre peinte.

Les paysages étudiés ici plus en détail ont ceci en commun que la source lumineuse projette l'ombre d'un objet qui n'est pas, ou qui n'est que très partiellement situé dans l'espace du tableau. Elle permet d'incorporer l'espace d'un des côtés du tableau dans l'image. Chez Suzor-Coté et MacDonald le bord vertical se trouve inséré, par une ligne qui tombe en diagonale, sur le plan horizontal de l'œuvre, unifiant ainsi les côtés. Le genre d'ombre portée que l'on remarque dans les paysages canadiens est caractéristique de cette expérience; c'est une ombre directe, c'est-à-dire qu'elle tombe sur un plan perpendiculaire à l'objet placé devant la source lumineuse¹³.

La connaissance des composantes de la théorie du signe — par ailleurs contemporaine du corpus des œuvres que nous étudions — est utile pour progresser dans notre compréhension du concept de l'ombre. L'ombre portée peut être comprise comme un indice, ainsi que l'a défini le philosophe Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914), dès 1867, et comme il l'a publié à différentes occasions¹⁴

Peirce a défini l'indice comme «a sign which refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object». En 1901, Peirce précise :

An index is a sign or representation that relates immediately to its subject not through similarity nor analogy with it nor because it is associated with the general characters that this object possesses. But because it is in dynamical (spatial included) connexion both with the individual object, on one hand, and with the sense or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand¹⁵.

Peirce insiste sur le fait que l'indice entretient une relation spatiale avec l'objet auquel il se rapporte et avec la capacité mnémonique de l'artiste et du spectateur. L'ombre portée est l'indice de l'objet auquel elle se rapporte. Elle le remplace, l'évoque, propose des associations par son positionnement et sa forme, sans avoir à montrer l'objet lui-même. De plus, elle peut être interprétée comme une métaphore de l'acte mimétique de peindre. L'ombre entretient une relation dynamique à la réalité, s'y référant tout en créant une forme, une image sur une surface plate.

Un autre élément à mettre en place, pour une meilleure compréhension théorique et idéologique de l'ombre portée sur les tableaux de cette époque, est l'importance de la métaphore de la frontière dans l'image conceptuelle du Canada. Northrop Frye et, plus récemment, Gaile McGregor¹⁶ ont insisté sur le rôle de la frontière et du caractère sauvage de la topographie du Canada dans l'imagination de ses habitants, se repliant sur eux-mêmes dans un pays pourtant illimité, ayant peur de progresser plus avant dans un espace toujours en expansion. Si le Canada a commencé «as an obstacle», selon l'expression de Frye, nous pouvons interpréter l'intérêt pour l'ombre portée comme une première saisie de ce qui est hors du champ visuel immédiat. Elle suggère l'idée d'intégration au pays comme un moyen de s'approprier l'obstacle qui ravit la lumière.

En combinant l'apparition de l'ombre portée dans la peinture canadienne avec l'émergence du thème de la vie urbaine, qui ira grandissant au cours des années 1920, on réalise l'importante transformation idéologique qui a alors cours au Canada dans l'identification et l'acceptation d'une réalité plus complexe. L'intégration de l'espace au-delà de celui qui est représenté dans le tableau pourrait donc être lue, à un niveau culturel et socio-politique, comme une identification et une acceptation des changements qui surviennent grâce à un mouvement des populations rurales vers les villes et à une politique d'immigration et de développement qui encourage l'exploitation de nouvelles terres dans l'est et l'établissement des néo-canadiens dans l'ouest.

Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, un des artistes proches du premier ministre Wilfrid Laurier, a représenté, en 1909, une scène reliée au défrichement dans un paysage intitulé *Habitations sur la colline*¹⁷ (fig. 1). À cette date, après de fréquents et prolongés séjours d'études en Europe, Suzor-Coté est de retour

au Canada. Jean-René Ostiguy, dans son étude sur *Paysage d'hiver* de 1909, écrit :

L'artiste a près de quarante ans lorsqu'il peint ses deux paysages de la collection permanente de la Galerie nationale du Canada, *Paysage d'hiver* et *Habitations sur la colline*. Il vit sans doute une sérieuse période d'introspection, cherchant, deux ans après son retour, à s'adapter à un nouveau milieu et sachant bien que son *Jacques Cartier* n'a pas produit l'effet escompté auprès du ministère des Travaux publics du Québec¹⁸.

Selon Ostiguy, l'échec de ses tentatives de faire accepter la peinture d'histoire au Québec est en partie responsable du retour de Suzor-Coté à la peinture de paysage. Il en a pourtant peint dès 1892, moment où il commence à travailler en plein air. De retour au Canada, c'est le cadre de sa région natale d'Arthabaska, où il s'est construit un studio, qui lui servira d'inspiration. Arthabaska avait été colonisé à partir des années 1860, et plusieurs villages des environs furent fondés dans les dernières décennies du siècle.

Les fermes des colons et la forêt omniprésente ne sont que suggérées dans *Habitations sur la colline* qui reporte les arbres et les maisons sur le pourtour de l'œuvre. Suzor-Coté se place en marge, remplissant le vide par la vibration de l'ombre et de la lumière matérialisées par les épaisses applications du médium posé à la spatule. Autour du tronc d'un arbre placé au centre, l'univers bouge et tourne. Cette lumière vive et rasante suggère un mouvement visuel vers la gauche de la composition puis l'œil est dirigé vers la droite et de nouveau vers l'avant. La force centrifuge est accentuée par le point de vue dominant adopté par l'artiste. Le ciel est à peine représenté bien que la lumière soit le sujet principal de la composition. Son éclat remplit l'arrière-plan et la partie inférieure du tableau; l'avant-plan est couvert d'une ombre vivement colorée. Les cèdres, caractéristiques des terres sablonneuses de la région d'Arthabaska, combinés avec des feuillus, dégarnis en cette saison, occupent le centre droit de la composition. L'ombre représentée est beaucoup plus importante que la taille des arbres que l'on aperçoit et elle évoque ainsi une vaste forêt sur la droite. Cette impression est curieusement renforcée par les grands arbres du centre de la composition qui forment une ombre courte.

Le plan pictural joue le rôle d'un écran sur lequel le sujet hors champ est projeté. Les arbres sont vus comme des traces mouvantes qui s'inscrivent sur la riche surface texturée du sol couvert de neige. La lumière organise l'espace, lui donne une temporalité qui se modifie selon sa vitesse et la perception du peintre¹⁹. L'ombre identifie les deux composantes structurelles de la composition, la verticale (arbre) rabattue sur le sol. Cette façon de rappeler le cadre dans la composition n'est pas ici une façon de la cerner, mais un moyen de la relier à ce qui est hors du cadre du tableau, à déployer les limites circonscrites par l'image fixée sur la toile. L'ombre portée devient le moyen privilégié de faire

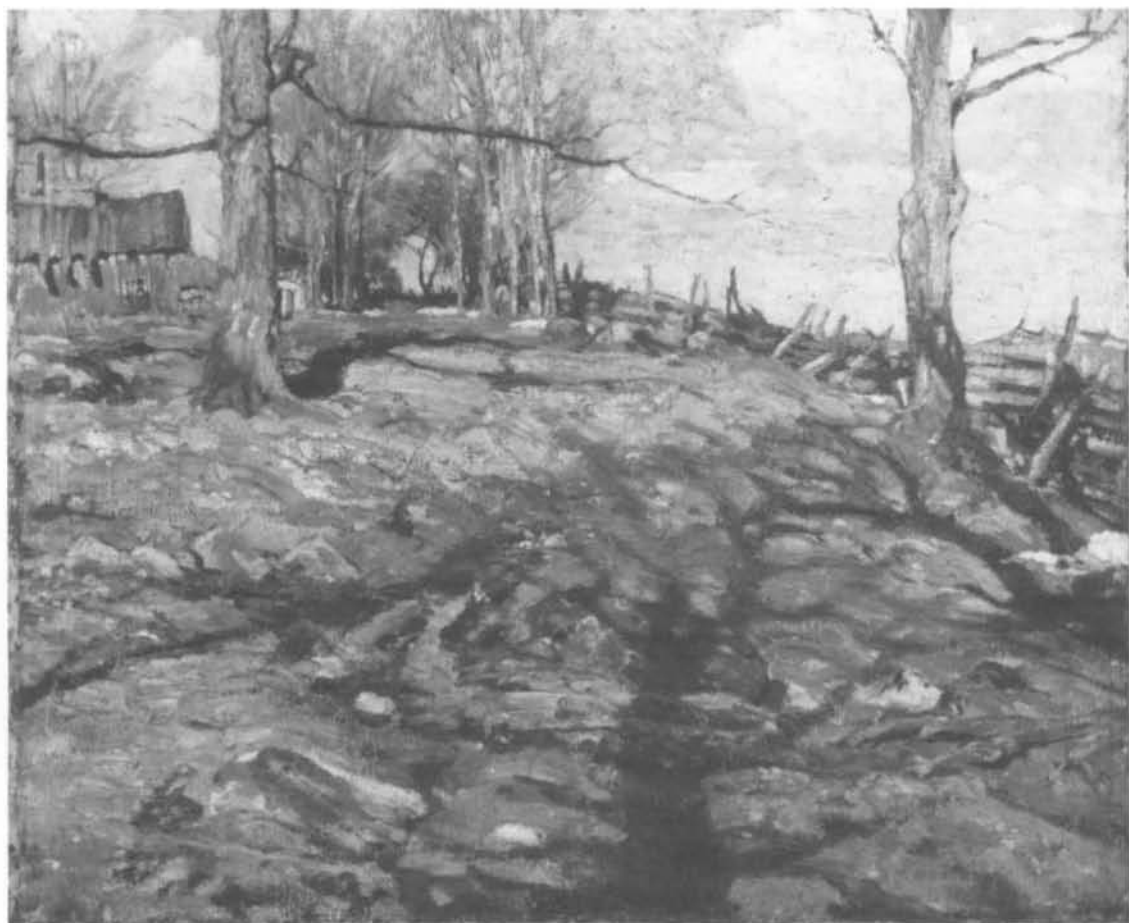


fig. 2 Alexander Y. Jackson, *The Edge of the Maplewood*, 1910, Huile sur toile, 54,6 × 65,4 cm, Ottawa, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada. (Photo: MbaC)

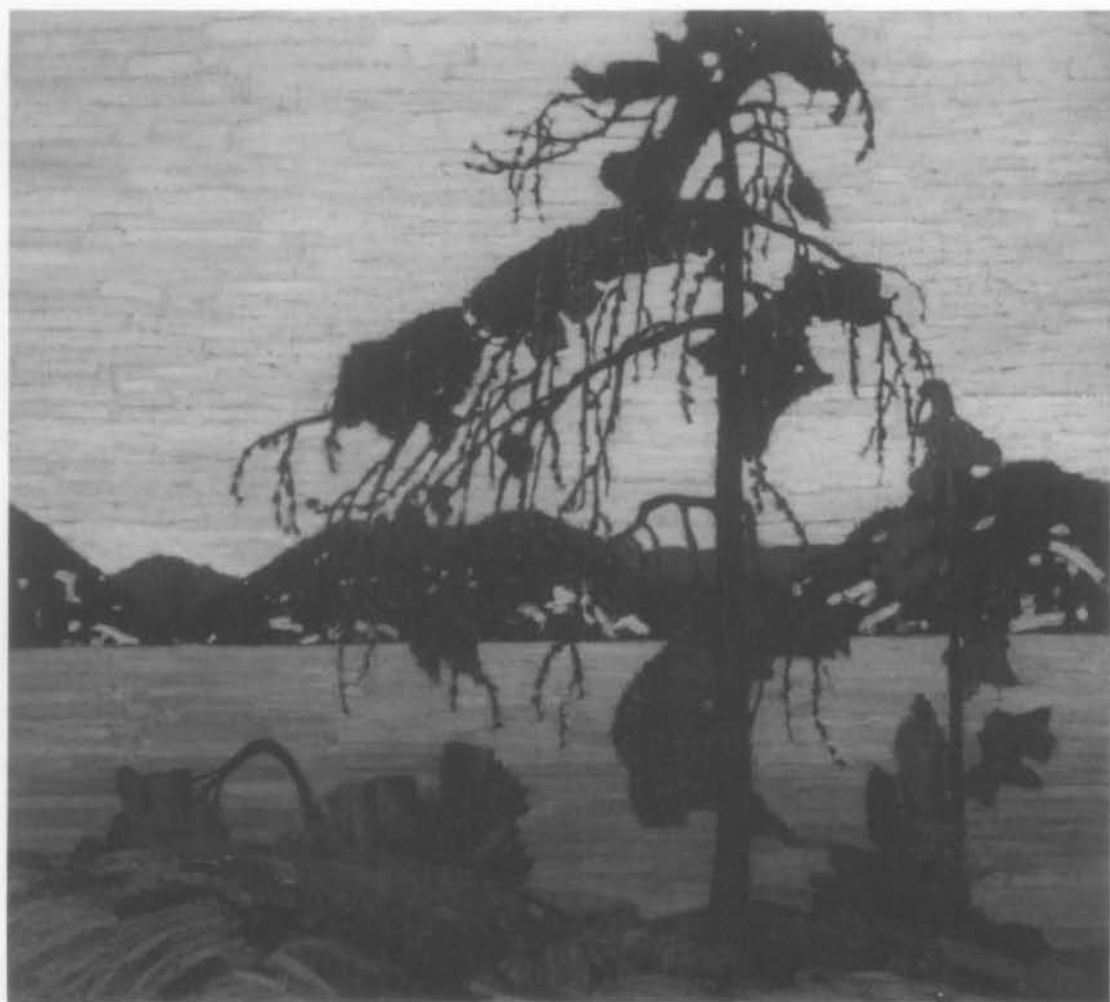


fig. 3 Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916-1917, Huile sur toile, 127,9 × 139,8 cm, Ottawa, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada. (Photo: MbaC)

sentir l'espace quasi infini sur lequel se posent les traces de l'homme dans la nature canadienne.

Tout comme Suzor-Coté, qui a choisi de retourner au paysage, associé à la fois à sa culture et aux souvenirs antérieurs à sa formation européenne, les artistes puisent dans la nature des éléments auxquels s'identifier. Associer les artistes canadiens du début du XX^e siècle à l'image de l'explorateur, comme l'évoquait MacDonald, représente seulement une facette de leur recherche, car cette exploration incessante de la nature démontre avant tout une volonté de se définir. La nouveauté et la beauté de sujets jamais traités ne sont pas une fin en soi, elle sont un moyen de nommer des aspects différents de celui qui les dépeint.

L'œuvre de A. Y. Jackson (1882-1974) *Canal du Loing* (Musée des beaux-arts du Canada)²⁰ est contemporaine de la toile de Suzor-Coté. Elle fut exécutée pendant son premier séjour en Europe. L'ombre portée ferme la composition sur la gauche, tout en l'unifiant. Le rythme de trois ombres s'accroche à la barque ancrée et active la surface du pont. La nature de l'ombre portée me semble passer d'un rôle formel et quasi anecdotique à un rôle symbolique et central dans une de ses premières œuvres majeures, *The Edge of the Maplewood*²¹ de 1910 (fig. 2).

Jackson se sert lui aussi d'un point de vue dominant avec une ligne d'horizon élevée. La cabane à sucre semble distante et difficile d'accès sur ce terrain à forte dénivellation, peu propice à la cueillette de l'eau d'érable. La disposition spatiale de l'érablière est traitée de façon à laisser un vide qui puisse recevoir l'ombre qui est ainsi valorisée et joue le rôle principal dans la composition. La distance entre les arbres représentés, et celui dont l'ombre est projetée au centre est très grande. L'ombre est dirigée vers la partie inférieure du tableau et l'arbre est situé à une distance difficile à évaluer.

Cet arbre, absent mais central, occupe l'emplacement de l'artiste et du spectateur, et ce sont eux qui sont ainsi projetés à l'avant-plan, dans la partie inférieure du tableau. L'ombre, comme nous l'avons vu avec Suzor-Coté, est fugitive; elle est associée aux perceptions, à l'émotion et aux sentiments qui se modifient continuellement. La longueur et l'importance de cette ombre centrale est en opposition avec d'autres qualités, car l'ombre semble ici flotter sur la surface du sol, comme détachée, et de plus elle est incomplète, se poursuivant hors de l'espace du tableau. Si l'ombre condense l'objet du tableau avec son sujet, on peut trouver dans cette présence absente une affirmation en même temps qu'un rejet de cette réalité. Une façon à la fois de distinguer le sujet mais aussi de s'en séparer. Curieusement, le tronc et les branches dépouillées de feuilles évoquent l'image de racines. L'interprétation serait fort complexe. Le tronc absent se substituerait à des racines qui, du moins en surface, se ramifient pour occuper tout l'espace d'une façon encore plus prégnante. L'ombre, inversion de la cime de l'arbre, deviendrait un moyen de faire saisir la force de l'enracinement.

L'identification symbolique des artistes canadiens avec leur sujet de prédilection, le paysage, se cristallisera autour d'un élément iconographique particulier. Le thème de l'arbre solitaire représente à ce moment historique un paradigme de l'artiste canadien dans sa société, il devient un nouvel icône. (A. Y. Jackson, *Red Maple*, 1914, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada). Bien qu'associé plus fréquemment à Tom Thomson, le thème de l'arbre solitaire est à rapprocher de plusieurs autres artistes. Ce rapport extatique et solitaire avec un sujet dans la nature, dont David Milne traitera plus tard²², a surtout été décrit en rapport avec l'expérience picturale dramatique de Thomson²³.

Jean S. Boggs a interprété le traitement du motif de l'arbre solitaire, le *Jack Pine* de Tom Thomson (fig. 3), comme un moyen d'assouvir son désir de mort : «against the dying light and sky the scraggly forms of *The Jack Pine* are most dramatic, its branches struggling to life but dominated by dark-green, tattered, bat-like forms as if the tree were a symbol — beautiful, oriental, but a symbol nevertheless of Thomson's wish for his own death on this spot²⁴».

Si l'arbre de Thomson dissimule un instinct de mort, celui d'Ozias Leduc (1864-1955) semble vivre d'une vie nouvelle, même après sa destruction par l'action combinée de la tempête et de l'éclair. La partie inférieure du tronc de l'arbre dans *Cumulus bleu* de 1913 (fig. 4) reste debout, écorchée, révélant sa riche structure intérieure, semblable aux paysages escarpés de montagnes. Des clôtures divisent clairement l'espace. La forme des branches et la partie supérieure de l'arbre rejoignent le nuage et la lumière pour s'y fondre. L'arbre est compris comme un substitut de la personne composée d'une partie physique dont les contours, pourtant clairement définis, dissimulent un riche substrat, une partie mouvante, spirituelle, en quête d'idéal.

En progressant dans notre interprétation de l'ombre portée, il nous faut reconnaître que l'ombre a été acceptée comme une façon de révéler la nature intérieure des êtres; elle est étroitement associée à l'âme²⁵. Elle suggère la complexité de chacun et trace les frontières souples de l'imaginaire. La psychanalyse, qui s'est développée au tournant du siècle, a reconnu dans les éléments constituant le moi un niveau identifié comme le ça, «das es», concept que Freud a raffiné au début des années 1920²⁶. Le ça est associé avec l'ombre, le chaos, ce que la personnalité consciente refuse d'admettre, mais qu'elle doit aussi assumer. Il représente le pôle pulsionnel, là où l'énergie psychique, la libido, prend sa source, là où les forces créatrices inhibées gagnent leur énergie. Le ça demeure le lieu de l'inexploré.

Mon choix de mots vise à faire resurgir et à associer des images de la terre vierge tout en rappelant la force érotique contenue dans l'acte de créer, dans l'acte de peindre qui, comme le rapporte Pline au livre 35 de son *Historia Naturalis*, a commencé par un désir de saisir la présence de l'être bien-aimé, en transcrivant sa silhouette sur le mur. La représentation de l'ombre est une façon



fig. 4 Ozias Leduc, *Le cumulus bleu*, 1913, Huile sur toile, 92 × 61,6 cm, Fredericton, The Beaverbrook Art Gallery. (Photo: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery)



fig. 5 J.E.H. MacDonald, *Morning Shadows*, 1912, Huile sur toile, 71,8 × 91,4 cm, Toronto, Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario, don du gouvernement de la province de l'Ontario, 1972. (Photo: Larry Ostrom, MbaO)

d'idéaliser, de transformer psychologiquement la réalité, en fournissant un moyen de réaliser l'accomplissement de désirs inconscients par l'identification totale ou partielle avec des aspects, des propriétés, des attributs de l'autre, du modèle choisi et substitué dans cette projection.

Une œuvre de 1912 de James Edward Hervey MacDonald, *Morning Shadows* (fig. 5), est apparue comme une sorte d'énigme lorsqu'elle fut exposée pour la première fois, la même année. Peu de scènes dans la carrière de MacDonald montrent des figures humaines, et ce tableau semble plus conventionnel que d'autres œuvres traitant de sujets urbains. Le paysage montre une colline abrupte en bordure d'une forêt et, selon le titre, au début d'une journée d'hiver, ensoleillée. L'ombre portée remplit la moitié de la composition et frappe la surface de la neige dans une diagonale disharmonique qui crée un angle aigu avec la colline où deux couples avancent. Leur position, un homme derrière une femme suivant un couple enlacé, évoque une interprétation nordique du *Pèlerinage à l'isle de Cythère* de Watteau. Le sujet sera repris et complété en 1914

dans *Edge of Town; Winter Sunset* (Musée des beaux-arts du Canada) où, cette fois, les deux couples, absorbés par l'ombre des arbres au soleil couchant, quittent la forêt pour se diriger vers la ville à l'arrière-plan.

Bien que les arbres aient gardé leurs feuilles (sorte de chêne?), les minces ombres proviennent d'arbres plus jeunes et délicats créant un motif bleuté vibrant et s'agitant sur la surface de la neige. L'ombre longue dans *Morning Shadows* est créée lorsque la source lumineuse est plus basse que le sommet de l'objet reflété. L'objet et la source lumineuse, situés dans un même plan spatial, se confondent. La lumière épouse étroitement la forme de l'objet qui s'épanouit sur la surface de la toile. Le mouvement de l'ombre offre une transcription de la flamme dévorante de l'amour ou du feu de la passion qui accompagne et rejoint les couples alors qu'ils s'éloignent.

Dans le tableau *In the Pine shadows, moonlight*, toujours de 1912 (fig. 6), MacDonald associe encore le thème de la nature avec celui de l'amour. L'ombre pleine et puissante d'un pin abrite et incarne la sexualité, représentée par un couple enlacé qui surgit de la forêt par un soir de pleine lune. C'est par l'ombre portée du pin que s'accomplit cette célébration de la nature, c'est elle qui la contient et l'absorbe, le tronc élançant traversant la forme ronde et touffue du résineux.

En relatant sa visite à l'exposition d'art scandinave à Buffalo en 1913, J. E. H. MacDonald déclarait à l'*Art Gallery of Toronto* le 17 avril 1931 :

Art requires associated ideas in the observer for its appreciation. He must have experiences generally similar to the artist to respond to the art. [...] They [people] don't like mountain pictures or Lake Superior shores, or bright autumn colours, or snow shadows, because they have never seen such things either actually, or with imaginative feeling²⁷.

Si l'expérience de l'œuvre d'art sollicite, comme le souhaite MacDonald, l'imagination du spectateur, le motif de l'ombre portée est sans doute une des formes les plus suggestives dans ce sens. L'utilisation originale et répétée de ce motif, populaire au cours de cette période post-symboliste²⁸, semble être une des caractéristiques de l'art au Canada avant la formation du Groupe des Sept. Si sa représentation est née d'une observation de la nature, elle semble traduire une expérience à la fois individuelle et collective. Parce qu'elle exprime une temporalité, elle est une marque supplémentaire de la présence subjective de l'artiste dans l'œuvre. De plus, sa forme, sa position et son traitement sont porteurs d'associations de nature idéologique et symbolique. L'attention que les artistes portèrent à ce sujet suggère l'intensité de leur rapport avec le paysage, non pas perçu uniquement comme une surface colorée, mais aussi comme évocateur d'émotions et de significations.

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Notes

Cet article présente les résultats d'une recherche en cours et est adapté d'une communication prononcée à l'*Art Gallery of Ontario*, le 9 novembre 1988 dans le cadre de la *McReady Memorial Lecture on Canadian Art*. Je remercie Peter Gale et Dennis Reid qui m'ont alors facilité la tâche en supervisant tous les détails relatifs à cette présentation. Comme me le demandait avec humour Peter Gale lorsque j'ai soumis le sujet de ma conférence, il ne s'agit pas ici de l'ombre projetée par les membres du Groupe des Sept sur l'œuvre de leurs prédécesseurs, mais bien du motif de l'ombre portée. Je désirais souligner un autre aspect qui fonde une réflexion sur le développement de la modernité au Canada. Le paysage est le lieu principal d'expression de la modernité chez les peintres canadiens d'origine anglo-saxonne et chez les francophones qui aspirent au même marché et participent à la même conception du Canada, structurée autour du noyau Ontario-Québec. Même sans relevés statistiques, la présence de l'ombre portée d'éléments situés hors de l'espace représenté dans le tableau m'apparaît particulièrement significative de la production picturale des années 1900-1920 au Canada. Je m'attarde à quelques exemples qui m'apparaissent particulièrement représentatifs, mais les analyses pourraient être développées dans le cas de nombreux autres artistes, tels James Wilson Morrice, Maurice Cullen, Clarence Gagnon, F. W. Hutchinson.

1 Il s'agit des œuvres de Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, *Habitations sur la colline*, 1909, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, d'Alexander Y. Jackson, *Edge of the Maplewood*, 1910, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada et de J. E. H. MacDonald, *Morning Shadows*, 1912, Art Gallery of Ontario.

2 Dennis REID, *Notre patrie le Canada. Mémoires sur les aspirations nationales des principaux paysagistes de Montréal et de Toronto 1860-1890*, Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1979, 453 p.

3 - Robert J. LAMB, ed., *The Arts in Canada during the Age of Laurier*, Edmonton, University of Alberta and Edmonton Art Gallery, 1988, n.p.

4 *Arcadia*, March 1st 1893.

5 *Canadian Courier*, April 22 1911.

6 Les exemples sont trop nombreux pour être cités. Que l'on pense par exemple à Maurice Cullen, *The Blizzard, Craig Street*, 1912, Musée du Québec ou à Arthur Lismer, *Afternoon sunshine, Thornhill*, 1916, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

7 J. E. H. MacDONALD, «The Canadian Spirit in Art», *The Statesman*, vol. II, n° 35 (1919), pp. 6-7.

8 A. Y. JACKSON écrit en rapport avec le tableau *Edge of the Maplewood*: «After the soft atmosphere of France, the clear crisp air and sharp shadows of my native country in the spring were exciting.» *A Painter's Country The Biography of A. Y. Jackson*, Toronto, Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1958, p.16.

9 René VERBRAEKEN, *Clair-obscur — histoire d'un mot*, Nogent-le-Roi, Librairie des Arts et Métiers, 1979, 315 p.

10 Je ne traiterai pas des ombres créées par les nuages ou celles qui proviennent d'objets non clairement identifiés ou des formes indistinctes (J. E. H. MacDonald, *Spring breeze High Park*, 1912, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada; Maurice Cullen, *Ice Harvest, Longueuil*, v. 1916, coll. part.). Ce qui m'intéresse ce sont les ombres portées d'objets et de formes qui, tout en étant hors de l'espace pictural, en sont une extension (James W. Morrice, *Ste. Anne de Beaupré*, 1897, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; William Brymner, *Harvest Field*, 1907, Power Corporation du Canada).

11 Dennis REID, *Tom Thomson. Le pin*, Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1975, pp. 30-31.

12 Des exemples antérieurs montrent que la photographie a pu jouer un rôle dans l'acceptation de la présence/substitution de l'artiste/spectateur physiquement projeté dans l'espace de l'œuvre par un éclairage placé en face de la composition. Voir par exemple, William Notman, *Bow Valley from Upper Hot Springs, Banff*, 1887, Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne.

- 13 Voir l'article «Ombre» dans le *Dictionnaire technique et critique du dessin* de André BÉGUIN, Bruxelles, Oyez, 1978, pp. 398-404.
- 14 Peirce a défini, rappelons-le, trois catégories de signes : l'icône, l'indice et le symbole.
- 15 Charles S. PEIRCE, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, vol. 1, 1901.
- 16 Northrop FRYE, *The Bush Garden : Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, Toronto, Anansi, 1971 et Gaile MCGREGOR, *The Wacousta Syndrome Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985.
- 17 Ce tableau a d'abord été exposé à Ottawa en 1909 dans la présentation annuelle de la Royal Canadian Academy. En 1910, Suzor-Coté est invité à participer à l'exposition annuelle de l'*Ontario Society of Artists*; en 1913, il deviendra membre du prestigieux *Canadian Art Club*, fondé à Toronto en 1907.
- 18 Jean-René OSTIGUY, *Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté Paysage d'hiver*, Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1978, pp. 10, 12.
- 19 La technique libre de Suzor-Coté semble suggérer que l'ombre n'apporte que des changements superficiels comme, par exemple, dans *Passing shadows* de 1918 (Edmonton Art Gallery). Elle est à l'opposé de l'œuvre de David Milne dont le traitement de l'ombre, à l'instigation du cubisme, modifie profondément la nature du sujet représenté.
- 20 Pour une évaluation de l'importance de ce tableau dans l'œuvre de Jackson, voir Rosemarie L. TOVELL, «A.Y. Jackson en France, en Belgique et en Hollande: carnet de croquis de 1909», *Bulletin annuel 2*, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1979, pp. 42-47.
- 21 L'œuvre fut remarquée dès ses premières expositions en 1910 et 1911 à Londres, Montréal et Toronto et fut acquise par Lawren Harris.
- 22 Ce texte de 1932 est cité par John O'BRIAN, *David Milne and The Modern Tradition of Painting*, Toronto, The Coach House Press, 1983, pp. 90 et ss.
- 23 Lawren Harris rapporte que lors d'un voyage en forêt en 1916 : «We were in an old clearing at the south end of the Cauchon Lakes when a dramatic thunderstorm came up... Tom and I took shelter in an abandoned lumber shack. Then Tom looked out, became excited by the drama of the scene, grabbed his sketch box, ran out into the gale, squatted behind a big stump, and commenced to paint in a fury. He was one with the storm's fury, save that his activity, while keyed at a high pitch, was nonetheless controlled.» REID, *Tom Thomson*, p.18.
- 24 Jean Sutherland BOGGS, *The National Gallery of Canada*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.124.
- 25 Jean CHEVALIER, Alain GHEERBRANT, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, Paris, Robert Laffont/Jupiter, 1982, pp. 700-702.
- 26 Jean LAPLANCHE et J.-B. PONTALIS, *Vocabulaire de psychanalyse*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1967, pp. 56-58.
- 27 J. E. H. MacDONALD, «Scandinavian Art», *Northward Journal*, n°s 18-19 (1980), p.9.
- 28 Edvard Munch déclara, en 1913, au sujet de l'ombre et non de l'ombre portée : «Des thèmes, on découvre toujours de nouveaux thèmes. Aujourd'hui, ce sont les ombres qui sont à la mode. Pour les réalistes, c'était la façade. Pour les impressionnistes, le caractère. Aujourd'hui ce sont les ombres et les mouvements... Les ombres qui se déploient comme des éventails, puis se regroupent,... se plient et se séparent.» Cité par J. C. Ebbinge WUBBEN dans la notice de l'œuvre *Clair de lune* (1893, Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet), *Le symbolisme en Europe*, Paris, Éditions des Musées nationaux, 1976, pp. 148-149.



fig. 6 J.E.H. MacDonald, *In the Pine Shadows, Moonlight*,
v. 1912, Huile sur toile, 81,9 × 70,9 cm, Ottawa,
Musée des beaux-arts du Canada. (Photo: MbaC)

CAST SHADOWS

Remarks on Canadian Landscape Painting Before the Group of Seven

The motif of the cast shadow seems particularly popular in Canadian painting between 1900 and 1920, and it can be interpreted solely in its decorative and formal terms. The appearance and frequency of this theme, however, lead me to propose a more fundamental reading that works on a number of different levels. Three specific paintings may be addressed in this context: Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté's *Settlement on the Hillside* (1909, National Gallery of Canada); A.Y. Jackson's *Edge of the Maplewood* (1910, National Gallery of Canada); J. E. H. MacDonald's *Morning Shadows* (1912, Art Gallery of Ontario). My interpretations of the motif are predicated on socio-political and psychological considerations, and employ elements borrowed from the analysis of cultural discourse, semiology and psychoanalysis.

In particular, the manner in which shadow is cast by objects outside of the interior space of the painting should be considered significant. The cast shadows can disclose the ideological space defined by both the politics of the development and the colonization of Canada, but meaning also lies in the integration of the pictorial space with the personality of the artist.

By references to the space beyond the pictorial surface, it appears to me that the motif of the cast shadow reflects theories of expansionism and land settlement, the basic elements in Canadian politics. Those developments in colonial politics that favoured immigration and the populating of new territories provide a political context for the production of art works using this motif. On another level, the shadow accentuates the physical limitations of the painting by the inclusion and reduction of the space occupied by the artist and the spectator. The cast shadow can, as well, be perceived as a sign of the formalist concerns of modern art.

Two concepts developed in the social sciences during the same period, the index in linguistics and the id in psychoanalysis, may also be considered in relation to this pictorial motif. The shadow cast from an exterior space onto the painting is presented like an index of the act of painting, the trace of coloured forms on a flat surface. Such shadows are evocative forms – forms inspired by an image situated in proximity to the depicted subject, yet beyond it. This approach also reflects the personality of the painter. The representation of the shadow can then be perceived perhaps as an introspective exercise providing the artist with the means to experiment and to disclose his identity.

Furthermore, the cast shadow is often associated with the motif of the solitary tree, a theme common to painting in Canada in the decade from 1910 to 1920. The shadow could be seen as a projection, like a negative image, of the artist's psychological portrait. The feeling of isolation and alienation inherent

within a wilderness environment and an unsympathetic cultural milieu (the content of several paintings and a subject on which there has been some commentary) is reinforced by this transposition; not of the tree but of the trace.

The motif of the cast shadow may be interpreted in the works of several Canadian landscape painters in the early twentieth century as a sign of ideological, symbolic and formal preoccupations. An examination of this motif encourages other iconographical and formal questions, as well as a re-evaluation of the historical context within which landscape painting evolved in Canada. Such an investigation could also turn our attention to those aspects which would permit an interpretation of pictorial production, not only in terms of subject matter but also in the study of aesthetic motivations, in a manner more vigorous and perhaps more fundamental to the artist and the art work.

Translation: Jeffrey Moore and Editorial Staff

PATERSON EWEN

The Turn from Non-Figurative to Figurative Painting

I got thoroughly tired of the discipline of keeping the paintings clean and neat — I did two breakthrough paintings where I used felt. I gessoed one fairly large canvas and then picked out a particular blue and dipped a piece of felt into the paint and daubed it onto another spare piece of canvas until I got more or less a nice dot. Then I ran a dotted line without tape across the canvas... then I did a second one on gessoed canvas with black dots. I was convinced at that point that they were a kind of phenomena and not abstract paintings.¹

P aterson Ewen turned from “abstract” or non-figurative painting to figurative painting in 1970. After over 20 years of modernist non-figurative painting he acknowledged and found valuable the presence of subject-matter which, in Montréal during the 1950’s and 1960’s, had been condemned as traditional, illusory, sentimental and regressive. To stress the formal drama of Ewen’s “turn,” however, is to overlook the most important aspect of his new figurative paintings: a change in attitude from one of denial and exclusion to one of acceptance and tolerance. Ewen had resisted the idea of abstraction, the gradual erosion of all subjects other than the absolute freedom of form, as a matter of degree, throughout most of his career in non-figurative painting. But by 1970 he fully accepted abstraction as a matter of kind: an approach to painting in which the subject and the object were perceived as not only indivisible but also unquantifiable. Ewen’s “turn” cannot be seen as a shocking avant-garde revolution of form nor as a return to his early figurative work of 1949-54. In his figurative and non-figurative work before 1970, Ewen believed that freedom in painting required the domination of the object over subject-matter. In his “turn,” Ewen implicitly criticized this belief integral to the concept of style and the avant-garde mentality.²

In Montréal during the mid-1950’s through the 1960’s, art critics and artists continued the awareness of art history as a means of establishing credibility for Québécois artists. This idea had been proposed by Borduas and Pellán. The concept of style used in establishing a history of art in Montréal was taken to extremes, not only in the judging, but also in the making of art. Briefly, the creation of styles and sub-styles required a scientific objectivity and the suppression of the historian’s subjective impressions in the observation of

concrete form. Observable form, the object, was to be trusted while iconography and hermeneutics, which involved subjective response, were relegated to a separate and secondary investigation. Svetlana Alpers, in her 1977 essay "Style Is What You Make It," was critical of this concept of style in the analysis of art. Absolute stylistic categories were created "in the interest of externality and objectivity freeing the observer from any responsibility for them. The presumably objective categories of large historical classifications are then (silently) treated as aesthetic properties of each object."³

This approach to style was supported by humanist values of "freedom" and "rationality." Freedom in art was demonstrated by its discovery in original form, but, ironically, such "discoveries" conformed to a predetermined notion of the inevitability of history — a history of western art chosen from work which represented artists' ability to conquer their limitations and to progress. Human limitations or artistic failures, represented by art or qualities in art which appeared regressive or repetitious or which did not fit their period styles, were devalued or suppressed to preserve the linearity of stylistic change. In the developing history of art in Montréal during the 1950's and 1960's, Ewen's "failures" were seen as his inability to eliminate referential subject-matter from his paintings and his reluctance to evolve towards what Montréal activist and painter Fernand Leduc called, in 1954, "la plus haute présence formelle."⁴ Ewen's reputation for lagging behind the Montréal avant-garde and for being inconsistent within his own oeuvre was created and perpetuated by critics, historians and artists who relied too heavily on the concept of style; and by Ewen himself. In this article I will chart the changes in Ewen's attitude towards this concept in painting from his initial enthusiasm to his angry and ultimate criticism of this position as implied by his turn to figurative painting in 1970.

In Montréal during the 1940's and 1950's, the polarity of avant-garde and traditional forces supported the development of art history as a progressive evolution of style through the "discovery" of original form, running like an old movie of the good guys versus the bad guys. This simple but no less powerful theory of change in art seemingly distinguished such artists as Ewen's teacher at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts' School of Art and Design, Arthur Lismer, from the radical Automatiste, Paul-Émile Borduas. In 1972, Montréal artist André Jasmin wrote that, during the 1940's, Lismer represented the institutionalized and traditional figurative painting of an "anglo-saxon bourgeoisie" and Borduas represented the spirit of French non-figurative painting martyred in the cause of progress.⁵ However, these artists' reputations were both built on the humanist value of freedom. Lismer's belief that "where there is revolt, there is life"⁶ reflected an attitude no less "avant-garde" than that of Borduas who enjoyed "splendid anarchy."⁷ As well, both Lismer and Borduas believed that the formal elements of painting were more significant than subject-matter. In

regards to representation in painting, Lismer believed that form in art (the object not the subject) could speak of universal freedom: “Art is not a matter of skill and exclusive ability, but a universal gift possessed by all in some degree. This universality is the basis of modern teaching in the arts. It postulates the belief that representation is secondary to the idea of art as a social function, which is the concern of every person. It is not bound by fixed rules and formulae.”⁸

In *Refus global* (1948), Borduas criticized the use of subject-matter in paintings by Dali and Tanguy: “because memory is involved, interest focuses more on the subject treated (idea, analogy, image, unexpected association of objects, mental connection) than on the real subject (the plastic object, appropriate to the sensual properties of the material used).”⁹ This somewhat ambiguous dialectic of avant-garde non-figurative and traditional figurative painting sustained the belief that modernism in painting was a matter of degree, not a matter of abstraction. The more painting was perceived to be removed from nature or from any subject-matter other than freedom of form, the more modern and better it became.

When Ewen visited Borduas in St-Hilaire in the early 1950’s, he learned that the words “freedom,” “revolution” and “progress” were necessary parts of the avant-garde vocabulary. However, in 1986, Ewen recalled that these modernist qualities were not represented by Borduas’ paintings:

I got very upset the first time I went and sat [in Borduas’ studio]. I knew enough by then, even though my own paintings were not avant-garde by any means, to know that you don’t put hardly formed objects in the middle of space and then have a ground behind them. ... Borduas was supposed to be an automatic painter, yet he said that he got a lot of his forms from looking down into the Richelieu River. That’s what is in a lot of his paintings — underground flora floating in front of a background. ... what were supposed to be very avant-garde paintings by Borduas in Quebec were really behind the times.¹⁰

Despite his skepticism about Borduas’ ability to achieve his goals in painting, Ewen believed in and sought freedom through a reliance on form and the suppression of “sentimental,” inauthentic subject-matter.¹¹ Ewen described his evolution from figurative to non-figurative painting in an article by the influential art critic, Rodolphe de Repentigny in January, 1955:

“Depuis neuf ans que je fais de la peinture, j’ai travaillé à l’abstraction pendant cinq ans, et ce n’est que l’an dernier que je suis parvenu à déboucher véritablement, à laisser tomber le sujet entièrement.” Le sujet lui était devenu tellement rébarbatif qu’il s’arrêta de peindre pendant un an pour en sortir.

... “Un effort intellectuel doit être fait pour comprendre la peinture et l’étude des qualités formelles est indispensable.” Mais alors pour être peintre il ne



fig. 1 Paterson Ewen, *Untitled*, 1954, Oil on canvas, 78.6 × 97.2 cm, Montréal, Mr. & Mrs. H. Arnold Steinberg. (Photo: The Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon)

s'agirait que d'avoir un bagage de connaissance? Non. "Le peintre doit à un moment prendre tout cela pour de l'acquis, de purs réflexes, et poursuivre inquiet, son chemin." Toujours selon Ewen, "Cette démarche est le seul moyen d'éviter l'académisme."¹²

In 1986, Ewen compared his experiments with style during the 1950's to the experience of "climbing a greasy pole."¹³ If his goal was to destroy the subject, figure-ground illusion, and to develop a greater freedom of gesture, then his climb back up the pole was a rapid one. A comparison of two works from 1954 reflects Ewen's growing confidence in spontaneity or "pur réflexes" in painting. In *Untitled* (fig. 1) patches of earthy colour joined by black lines, float slowly from right to left on a dirty white ground. Form and ground begin to merge in *Untitled* (fig. 2) through a confident use of black lines which slash emphatically from left to right across a boldly horizontal canvas. Black striations of oil which seep into areas of unsized canvas create boundaries for the riotous colour: green, blue, brown, red and yellow. Although Ewen attempted to

reduce “un bagage de connaissances” in his work, he was uncomfortable with the large gesture of automatic painting. Ewen explained both his attraction to avant-garde painting and his discomfort with formal extremes in painting to de Repentigny: “Je suis convaincu qu’un artiste a besoin de discipline, et cependant par tempérament je suis facilement romantique. Mes premiers efforts abstraits étaient très romantiques, et j’étais inquieté par le surréalisme, mais depuis lors je me suis ressaisi, et j’accorde une extrême importance à l’ordre des formes et des couleurs.”¹⁴

By 1955, a style of solid colour and hard-edged forms for many artists assumed the position of avant-garde painting, making Borduas’ automatisme appear more traditional. This perception was announced by the artists who



fig. 2 Paterson Ewen, *Untitled*, 1954, Oil on linen, 47.7 × 152.4 cm, Montréal, Robert Asselin. (Photo: The London Regional Art and Historical Museums, London, Ont.)

participated in two exhibitions, *Les Plasticiens* and *Espace '55*. Ewen took part in the latter. Borduas accused the young painters in *Espace '55* of “archaïsme” and Fernand Leduc, an acknowledged leader of the new style, retaliated by denouncing the “colonialisme de Borduas.”¹⁵ This new shift from automatisme to first generation “Plasticien” painting, in which the object was perceived as the dominant subject-matter, was encouraged by an increasing awareness of art history as expressed in the writings and paintings of leading critics and artists in Montréal. Fernand Leduc reviewed the decade since the automatiste “revolution” in an unpublished article “Art de refus... art d’acceptation” (Oct. – Nov., 1954). According to Leduc, the “démarche automatique” began with Borduas’ 1942 gouaches and found its apogee in *Refus global* (1948). The “démarche surrationalnelle,” again initiated by Borduas with his “peintures surrationalnelles,” led to the “démarche cosmique” which began after *La Matière chante* (April 21 – May 4, 1954), the last Automatiste exhibition. In this logical evolution, according to Leduc, non-figurative painting relied increasingly on pure form.

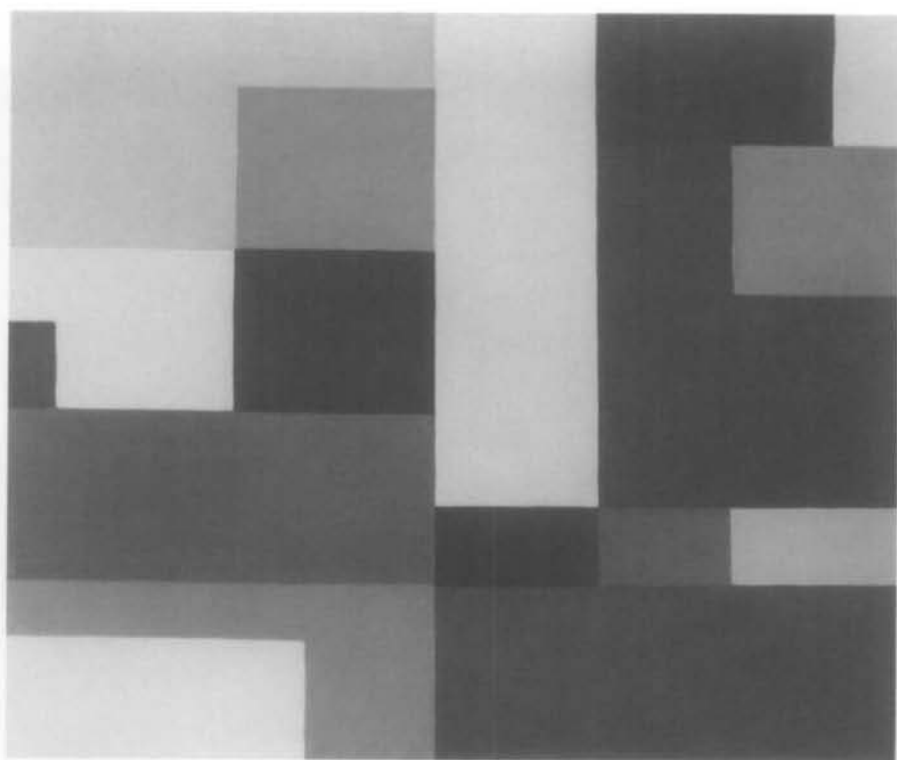


fig. 3 Fernand Leduc, *Imbrication*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 60.8 × 70.9 cm, Montréal, Musée d'art contemporain. (Photo: MAC)

Leduc concluded that the goal of “la plus haute présence formelle” may be attained through the elimination of all subjects other than the absolute freedom of form. Yet, ironically, that freedom was based on a logical, predetermined historical pattern. Paintings such as Leduc’s *Imbrication* (fig. 3) represented a step towards his goal. Ewen found them “hard to take.”¹⁶

Ewen remained skeptical of the goal of absolute freedom through original form. In 1986, he recalled his favorite quote by Matisse: “Originality is a monster.”¹⁷ However, he distinguished originality from individuality. Quoted in a 1956 article, he defined originality in painting as “personal”: “I’m trying to use the knowledge I’ve acquired to create a painting as original — as personal — as possible that will express a point of view in terms of plastic discovery and will have artistic order. I’ve chosen this direction because I feel the basic values of all painting are non-figurative.”¹⁸ For Ewen independence became an avoidance of extremes in style and ideology through a balance of gesture and formal structure in his art. Ewen’s colleagues saw his formal decisions in such

paintings as *Untitled* (fig. 2), exhibited in *Espace '55* as a compromise between automatisme and “Plasticien” painting. Gilles Corbeil, author of the *Espace '55* catalogue essay, echoed Leduc’s logical, evolutionary approach to painting in Montréal by placing the work of the exhibitors, Leduc, Ewen, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Pierre Gauvreau, Guido Molinari and six others between poles of “psychic accident” and “plastic values.”¹⁹ Ewen and Molinari, whose works contained calligraphic lines and suggestions of space, differed from Leduc, Gauvreau and Mousseau in that “while undergoing this evolution [they] retain some of their surrealist qualities.” In light of Leduc’s summary of Montréal’s history of painting in which contemporary painting had superseded the “démarche surrationalnelle,” Corbeil’s description of Ewen and Molinari could be interpreted as the suggestion that they were a step behind the three other painters. Ewen must have agreed with this perception of his work, if not the category because he did the English translation of the original French *Espace '55* text.

The inaugural exhibition of *Les Plasticiens* occurred at the same time as *Espace '55*. Like Leduc, the exhibitors in *Les Plasticiens* were conscious of history and they supported the dominance of the object over the subject. In their manifesto these artists wrote:

Les Plasticiens s’attachent avant tout, dans leur travail, aux faits plastiques: ton, texture, formes, lignes, unité finale qu’est le tableau, et les rapports entre ces éléments. Éléments assumés comme fins. La Renaissance avait libéré les arts de la servitude à un rituel spirituel. Les divers grands mouvements du XIX^e siècle et finalement le Dadaïsme, le surréalisme et l’Automatisme les ont libérés de la servitude à un rituel matérialiste. Mondrian a permis de réduire l’ultime aliénation de l’œuvre peinte, l’extériorisation de la concentration sur soi-même.²⁰

Rodolphe de Repentigny, who was also a Plasticien painter (using the pseudonym Jauran), believed that logical aesthetic direction was crucial to the strength of Canada’s reputation in art. For this reason he was highly critical of *Painters 11*. De Repentigny felt that, without a manifesto, all that held these anglophones together was technique.²¹ He compared *Painters 11* to the Montréal artists who

laissant comprendre qu’ils ont à peu près simultanément évolué dans de nouvelles directions... par contre pour ce qui est des peintres torontois, je crains que leur manière actuelle ne gagne de plus en plus de terrain, académiquement, dans les années à venir. Non que je n’admire pas le travail d’artistes comme Town, Ronald et autres, mais j’ai l’impression que leur ‘style’ va être pris comme critère artistique par les officiels de l’art canadien, tout comme le fut la peinture du Groupe des Sept pendant plusieurs années.²²

Ewen was caught between a belief in progressive abstraction, “la plus haute présence formelle,” and his skepticism about ideals. His reputation for being a step behind the avant-garde by retaining “surrealistic” qualities in his art, was perpetuated by his continued resistance to *Plasticien* painting. Artists and friends noted Ewen’s “problem,” his restless exploration of paint through gesture, and gave him the nickname of “the prospector.”²³ Ewen’s difficulty in adhering to a progressive liberation of form concerned Rodolphe de Repentigny in his 1958 review of painting in Montréal: “Ewen s’est montré très variable dans son exposition: ce jeune peintre depuis plusieurs années livre à notre admiration des toiles individuelles d’un grand intérêt d’une écriture parfaitement au point, mais ses expositions d’ensemble laissent toujours perplexe.”²⁴ In 1958, Ewen acceded to the call for a conscious direction in painting without losing his sense of independence. Ewen demonstrated control of his explorations in gestural and *Plasticien* painting through the use of themes and the claim to direct aesthetic influences.

Ewen claimed that his use of rhythmic patterns in such paintings as *Nuit d’été* (fig. 4) was influenced by a little known Italian painter, Giuseppe Capogrossi (b. 1900).²⁵ The similarities of patterned surfaces in their work is secondary to the resistance both artists held for extremes of *Plasticien* or “informel” art. In a lengthy article by Cesare Vivaldi in *Art Aujourd’hui* (Jan., 1959), Capogrossi and “la nouvelle avant-garde italienne” were described as a “transitional” group faced with “une période où, de tous côtés, l’on assiste à la transformation des styles en procédés commerciaux, l’‘informel’ lui-même et, avec lui, l’‘Action Painting’, risque de tourner rapidement au ‘Kitsch’ et se trouve actuellement au stade de l’académisme, de la fausse avant-garde.”²⁶ This new avant-garde’s desire to maintain a combination of action and “informel” painting resulted in a style which Vivaldi called “informel-naturalisme.” In their attempt to redefine and thus legitimize the inference of subject-matter through the gesture, they claimed to have avoided academism by involving all the senses, not just the eye. Vivaldi had serious reservations about this group’s ability to produce a progressive art in the face of modernist tenets:

on cru [sic] possible de proposer à nouveau le problème de la “nature” comme une conquête actuelle, la présentant en termes au “continuum” matériel. Mais, en réalité, nous est mons [sic] que ce problème non seulement ne constitue rien de nouveau, mais qu’il n’a même pas la consistance d’un véritable problème dans l’art moderne. La continuité de la matière et son identité voilà bien des questions peu récentes! Courbet en eut une perception assez exacte et, à sa manière, Cézanne lui-même qui, par son indifférence vis-à-vis du sujet, mettait délibérément sur le même plan une “pomme et un homme, une colline ou la mer”, en des termes opposés. ... La génération italienne de transition comme la française, n’a certainement pas contredit ces postulats. ...²⁷



fig. 4 Paterson Ewen, *Nuit d'été*, 1958, Oil on canvas,
77.1 × 92.4 cm, Montréal, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: M.M.F.A.)

Despite his doubts about these painters' ability to avoid being labelled regressive, Vivaldi heralded their attempts as "la nouvelle figuration." Through his claim to direct aesthetic influence, Ewen acceded to the Montréal critics and artists' demand for control of aesthetic direction. Yet Ewen was able to maintain his independence through his choice of influence, identifying perhaps with Capogrossi's mediation of styles and his resistance to the absolutes of *Plasticien* or "informel" painting.

Ewen carried Capogrossi's formal influence into his first thematically grouped paintings, *The Stream of Life* (1958-59). This theme, which brought greater control to his experiments, was inspired by a second formal influence. In 1958, Ewen was impressed by the painted designs on a Haida war canoe: "It [*The Stream of Life*] is a landscape, but it is stylized to the point of being almost symbolic. When you put it altogether it flows. It is about life in the most basic sense — mountains, rivers, boulders.... I wasn't too conscious of it at the time except that I suspected.... that the Haida Indians took their motif from the basic things in Nature which connects with geology and water — you know, water,

earth, air and fire.”²⁸ *The Stream of Life* (fig. 5) was a metaphor of universal character which compared human endurance to the strength of nature. This metaphor, a tool which Ewen used to give direction to his experiments of the late 1950’s, will be discussed later when it reappears and gains greater significance in his work of the late 1960’s.

Ewen’s use of metaphor forces us to question his attitude towards modernist non-figurative painting in Montréal. However, the obviously figurative elements in such works as his 1960 painting *Night Regatta* (fig. 6) should not be overemphasized. His use of metaphor and his attraction to Capogrossi’s “nouvelle figuration” may be seen more as a defence against “logical” change, the loss of gesture in painting and his desire for independence than as a rejection of the concept of style. Ewen still believed that subject-matter was regressive. When asked about his goal in painting, he replied to a critic in 1961: “Je veux continuer de m’engager résolument dans ma direction actuelle afin d’être de plus en plus abstrait même contre la Nature visuelle pour tenter de toucher les profonds sentiments humains de l’homme qui sont sa Nature aussi, mais sa Nature intérieure.”²⁹

Ewen’s need to suppress subject-matter continued to conflict with his use of gesture. In his determination to maintain a mediation of styles in painting, he invited three painters, Ray Mead, Henriette Fauteux-Masse and Virginia de Vera, to form the “Formal Lyricists” in 1960. This short-lived group claimed that they were “in search of an equilibrium between lyricism and formalism enriched by all these years of complete plastic freedom. . . . We are not as geometric as the plasticiens and not as free as the automatistes.”³⁰

The consensus of critics, historians and artists preoccupied with logical change in style in the creation of a history of art in Montréal, was that there *was* a “School of Montreal.” This “fact” was announced when the art historian Jean Cathelin was invited to lead a conference on the “school” at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in December, 1960.³¹ The desire for the creation of a school to define the development of painting in Montréal was inspired by the growing number of artists in the city and the renewed interest in art collecting. Historian, Yves Robillard, observed in a 1985 article, “L’histoire des Galeries Denyse Delrue,” that increased market activity during the late 1950’s and 1960’s inspired the MMFA director, Evan Turner, to begin a series of exhibitions on collecting, upon his arrival in Montréal in 1960 and annually until his departure in 1964.³² Robillard also commented that the early 1960’s in Montréal were characterized by “une véritable obsession des artistes québécois à vouloir exposer à l’étranger et faire partie du ‘grand réseau international’.”³³

Ewen was included in the first international group exhibition of Québec artists to be organized by the province. Thirty artists participated in the Festival

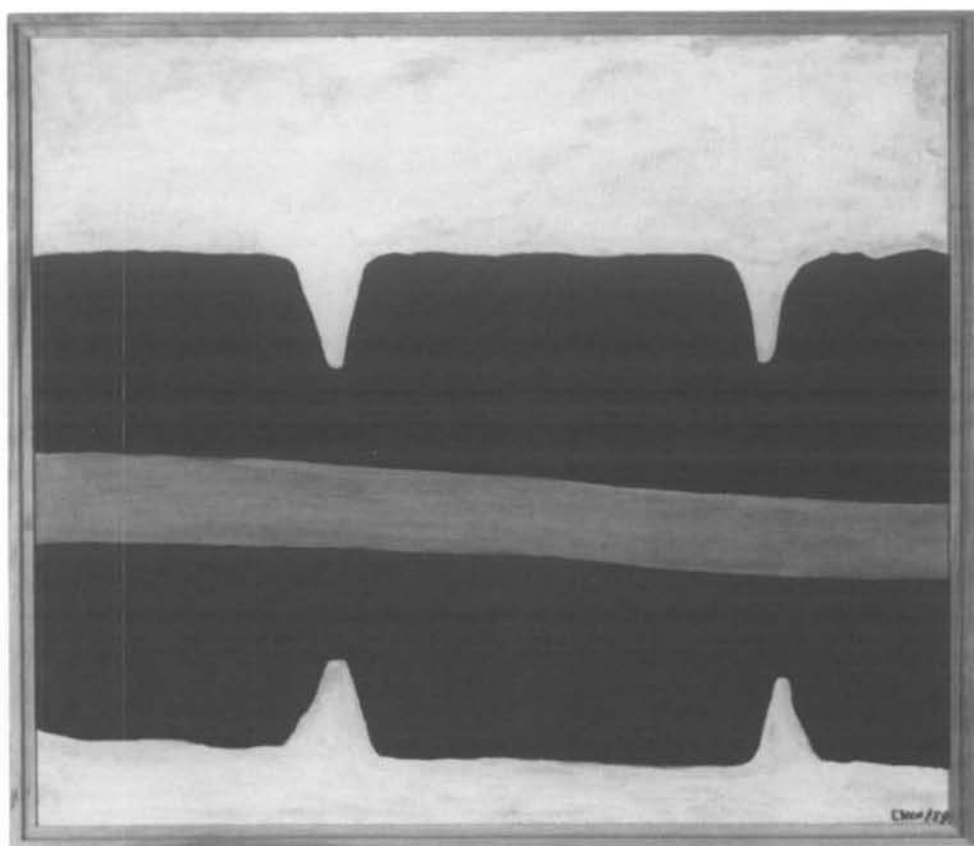


fig. 5 Paterson Ewen, *The Stream of Life*, 1959, Oil on canvas, 126.8 × 152.5 cm, Montréal, Musée d'art contemporain. (Photo: Denis Farley, MAC)

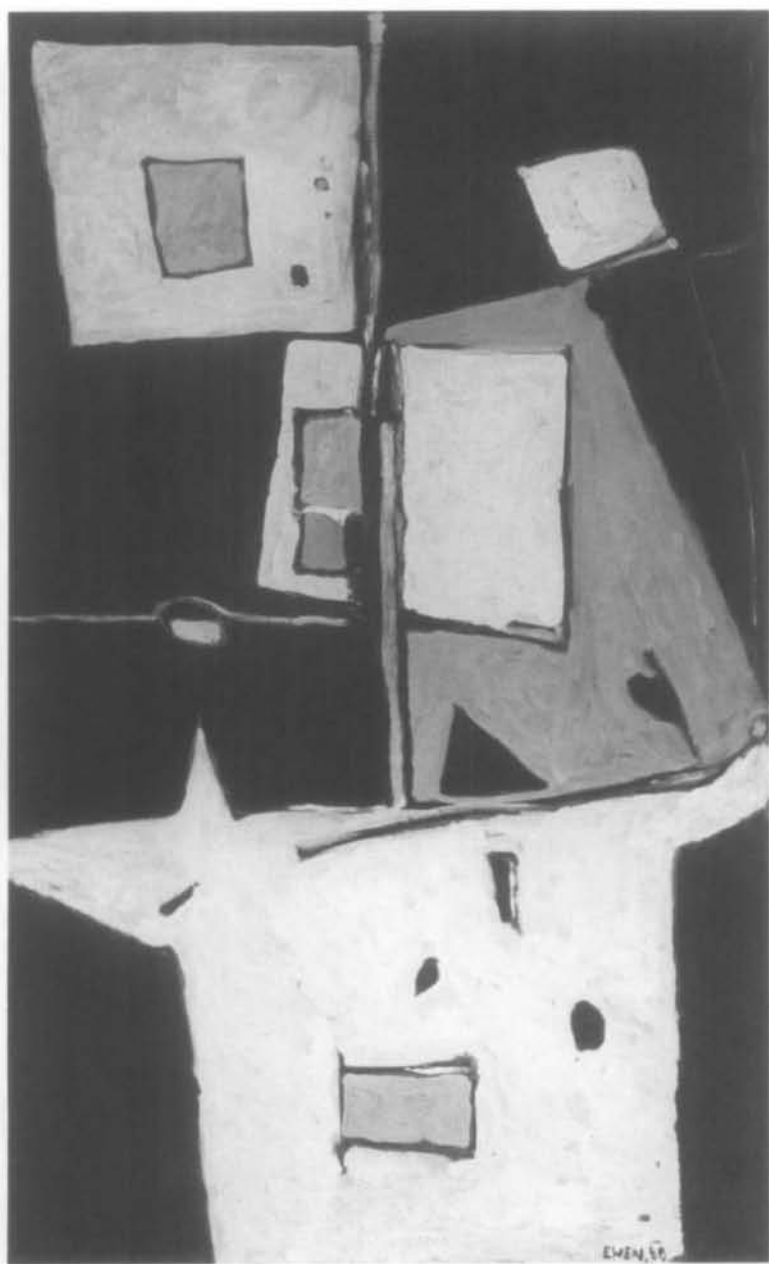


fig. 6 Paterson Ewen, *Night Regatta*, 1960, Oil on canvas,
152.4 × 92.7 cm, St-Lambert, Madeleine Lavallée Ferron.
(Photo: The London Regional Art and Historical Museums, London, Ont.)

of *Two Worlds*, Spoleto, Italy, in 1962. The exhibition catalogue *La Peinture Canadienne Moderne: Vingt-cinq années de peinture au Canada-français* defined Québec painting in the following categories: les pionniers; le post-automatiste; le mouvement plasticien; la tendance surréalisante; nouvelles recherches. In this evolution of French-Canadian painting, Ewen was classified as a “post-automatiste”: “Pat Ewen occupe une phase unique dans le mouvement continu de l’Automatisme: il fait entendre un message troublant, kafkaïen.”³⁴ Ewen’s “démarche vers l’abstrait” was seen as hampered by Kafkaesque emotion and the result was a “combat pictural” rather than a distinct avant-garde or plasticien style.

In the mid-1960’s, Ewen adopted the techniques of second generation Plasticien painting. In 1964 he shared a studio with Molinari and Claude Tousignant and from them he learned to apply tape and acrylic paint to create clean edges and flat shapes. Molinari, the acknowledged leader of the hard-edge painters in Montréal when Leduc left for Paris in 1959, wrote in 1966 that pop, colour painting and optical painting were three reactions against action painting. Unlike hard-edge painting, however, these reactions were regressive:

Ces trois tendances représentent un mouvement en arrière dans l’évolution de la peinture abstraite car elles réintroduisent dans le tableau la recherche d’un espace illusionniste.

Les peintres “hard-edge” ne sont préoccupés d’aucune façon par la troisième dimension, les notions de figure et de fond et l’espace qu’ils créent est [sic] le résultat de l’interaction dynamique de la couleur. ... Ce qui est demeuré essentiel dans la peinture contemporaine après les définitions de Malevitch, c’est la nécessité de détruire non seulement l’objet, mais aussi les allusions à l’objet qui réintroduisent, dans le tableau, le dynamisme propre à l’objet naturel. C’est dans la mesure où la peinture élaborera des structures qui ne reposent pas sur celles du monde extérieur qu’elle pourra devenir expressive de la réalité émotionnelle du monde intérieur.³⁵

In his paintings, Molinari emphasized the purity of the object, planes of colour in dynamic juxtapositions and freedom from subject-matter. From among the possibilities presented to Ewen, his only alternative to the historical determinism of the concept of style was skepticism. He found Molinari’s planned perfection in painting extreme and he asserted his independence from it:

Tousignant was doing targets and Molinari was doing vertical stripes and I was doing neither of those things. But sharing a studio with both of them and then sharing a studio with Molinari [in 1966-67], I picked up techniques — both of how to lay on paint and how to get a perfect line. Molinari was fanatic about that. He confessed to me once: “Sometimes I go home and I can’t sleep because I keep thinking this isn’t perfect.” If even one of those tiny little spots on the edges was noticeable, his work really wouldn’t

work. ... My work wasn't ever that accurate or detailed in technique but then it wasn't really supposed to be.³⁶

While using hard-edge techniques, Ewen resisted their ideological implications in his paintings through the use of layered colours and forms and gestural lines. In light of Molinari's attitudes, such lines which, in Ewen's thematically titled *Diagram of the Multiple Personality* (1966) paintings (which suggested trees through latticed windows to one critic), would have seemed regressive.³⁷ While the use of theme and gesture in *The Diagram of the Multiple Personality* (fig. 7) suggested subject-matter, the subject continued to play a secondary role. The work was titled after its completion when Ewen's son, Vincent, noticed the work's similarity to a diagram, "the general picture of man" (fig. 8), in Lecture One of P.D. Ouspensky's *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. Ouspensky described his diagram: "there is no oneness in man and there is no controlling centre, no permanent 'I' or Ego....When man says 'I' it sounds as if he meant the whole of himself, but really even when he himself thinks that he meant 'I', it is only a passing thought. In an hours time he may have completely forgotten it, and with the same conviction express an opposite opinion."³⁸ Ewen's dislike of absolutes is reflected in his attraction to Ouspensky's view of human inconsistency. In fact, he felt that his paintings more clearly described human nature including, perhaps, his own: "I won't say it [the painting] was more accurate, but in a sense it was more real than his [Ouspensky's diagram] because he simply put the pronoun 'I' in each square. In the painting sometimes we're barely in the picture and sometimes we're stabilizing.... the middle one — it's a stabilizing factor."³⁹

Critics found these paintings repetitious and the artist, once again, was seen to be lagging behind the avant-garde. Laurent Lamy reviewed Ewen's last show at the Galerie du Siècle (called Galerie Denyse Delrue until 1962) in June, 1966: "Peinture pas tout à fait 'op', pas tout à fait géométriste, Pat Ewen réussit à faire la jonction des deux tendances. Il a profité des expériences précédentes et prolonge un mouvement qui chez Barbeau, par exemple, n'était resté qu'amorcé. Ewen ne fait pas figure de novateur. Il est celui qui continue et qui porte plus loin une idée déjà lancée."⁴⁰

1965 and 1966 were years of personal strain for Ewen. Throughout his career as a painter he had held a full-time job but between April 1965 and September 1966 he experienced four changes of employment.⁴¹ In 1966 he separated from his family. These factors plus criticisms of his lack of innovation may have contributed to his decision not to exhibit in 1965 and only once in 1966 at Galerie du Siècle. However, in the midst of misfortune, incentive to paint came in 1967 when Yael and Ben Dunkelman offered him a retrospective exhibition (March 12, 1968) at their Toronto gallery. Possibly this opportunity to review his entire painting career at a moment of personal strain brought

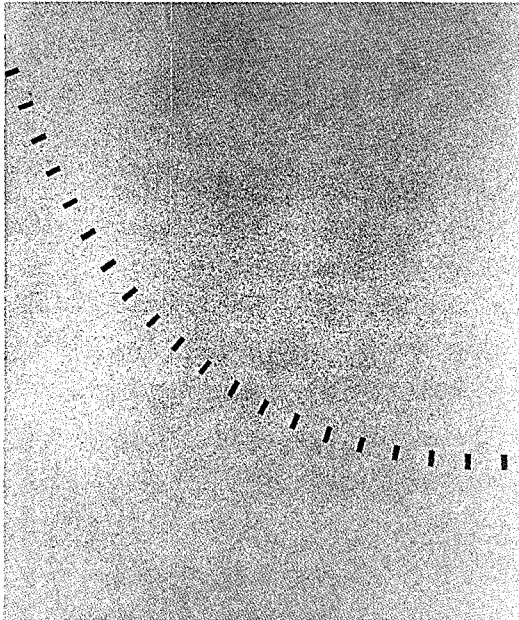
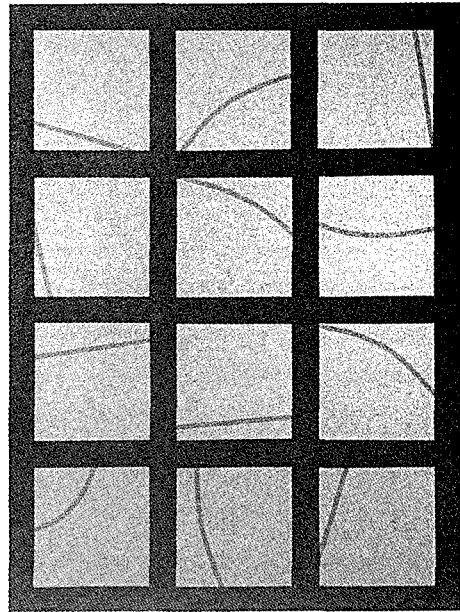
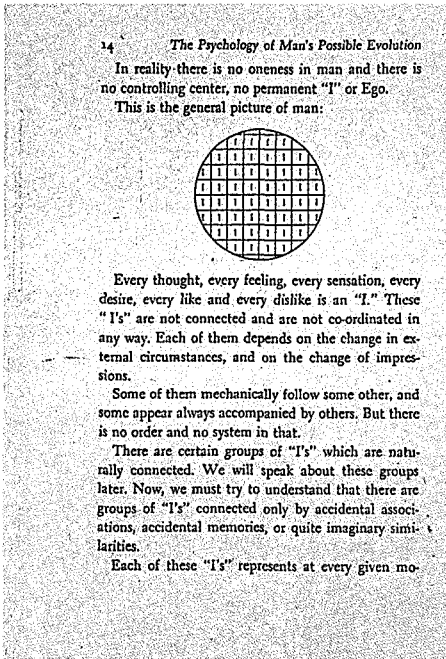


fig. 7 Paterson Ewen, *Diagram of the Multiple Personality No 1*, 1966, Acrylic on canvas, 229.2 × 170.4 cm, Montréal, Musée d'art contemporain. (Photo: MAC)

fig. 8 "The general picture of man." (Photo: from P.D. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* [New York: Knopf, 1954], 14)

fig. 9 Paterson Ewen, *Lifestream With Time Intervals*, 1968, Acrylic on canvas, 152.4 × 127 cm, Toronto, Carmen Lamanna Gallery. (Photo: Hank Visser, C.L.G.)

about the revival in 1967 of his 1958 theme, *The Stream of Life*. In *Lifestream With Time Intervals* (fig. 9), Ewen's 1958 metaphor for human endurance became a symbol, perhaps of his persistent need for independence. Personal rhythms, represented by irregular distances between stripes of flat colour running from the top left to the bottom right of the canvas, were created through a highly physical process combining gesture with the dominant avant-garde style of the late 1960's:

If you look closely, not a single one of those lines is equidistant from the other. What I was trying to do... was to marry minimal art with gesture, this was the main point of these... What I did — I would actually run up to the painting and zip tape along and then a certain length away from the tape I would zip another tape along... and I would rip off a piece of tape and put it across. So I would end up with all these little elongated rectangles. But that was all done in a gesture.⁴²

After a series of bouts with ill health in 1968, during which time he moved from Montréal to his sister's home in Kitchener, Ontario, Ewen ended up in a London, Ontario, hospital. When he was discharged and had settled in London, Ewen continued with great energy to create his *Lifestream* paintings. With this same energy, he became involved in the London art community. In 1969, he took part in six shows, one of which, a three man exhibition with Royden and David Rabinowitch at the London Public Library and Art Museum (September 3 – 30, 1969), was reviewed by Lenore Crawford in the *London Free Press*. In this review, Ewen discussed the significance of the lifestream: "This whole conception of the paintings is the idea of a lifestream that goes through everyone's life and universal life — and I've picked a little bit of it for each painting. I feel that there is a life force going on somewhere... it relates to electronic waves."⁴³ Ewen reduced his "electronic waves" to a single continuous stream dipping and running through a large field of colour in 1969. At his retrospective exhibition in London's artist-run space, the 20/20 Gallery in January 1970, he explained the process by which he arrived at the continuous stream, giving added significance to such works as *Lifestream* (fig. 10, 1970). He proclaimed that the stream had become his "freedom shape... trying to break out of the square or rectangle"⁴⁴ and that anger had inspired these paintings: "One day I got angry — I usually chose the colour carefully but I just put this colour on and was crazy about it right away. ... It sat around for a couple of days. I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Seized by an irrational anger about something one day, I decided to use it."⁴⁵

Contributing to Ewen's anger and feelings of constraint were his lack of sales and his soured relationship with the Dunkelman Gallery. When Ewen accused Ben Dunkelman of hiding his work from the public and of inflating his prices and then threatened to sever their relationship, Dunkelman took legal

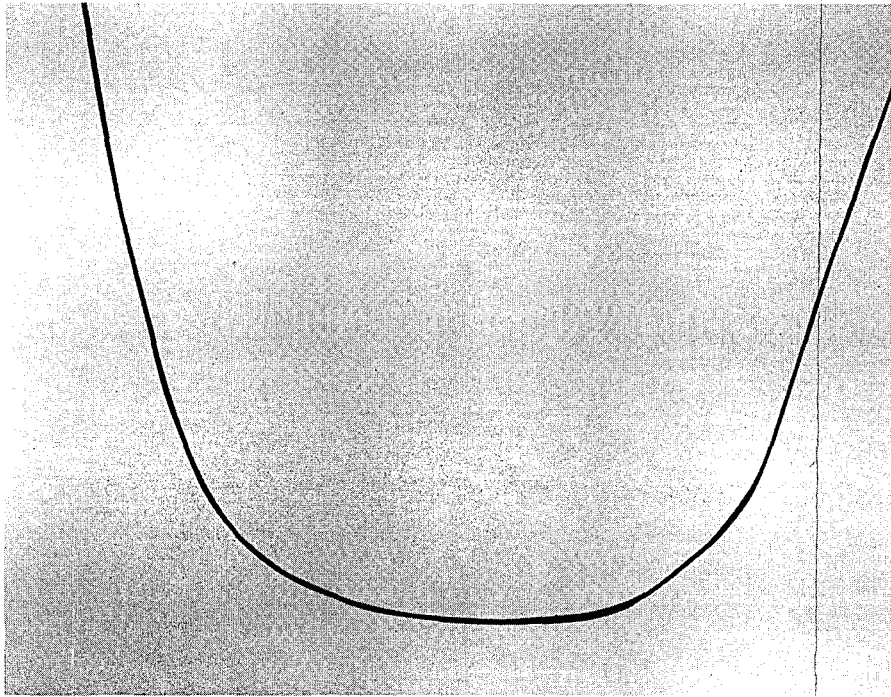


fig. 10 Paterson Ewen, *Lifestream*, 1969, Acrylic on canvas,
241.3 × 304.8 cm, Toronto, Carmen Lamanna Gallery. (Photo: C.L.G.)

action against the artist demanding the return of \$1,313.63 in advances and the choice of Ewen's most recent work.⁴⁶ For Ewen, this experience could only have recalled similar situations with the Parma Gallery in New York and Galerie Denyse Delrue/du Siècle where he exhibited from 1956 to 1958 and 1957 to 1966 respectively. Both galleries went bankrupt and kept many of Ewen's paintings.

Ewen's suspicions of galleries and the anger which he directed at the canvas, may have reflected the growing tensions within the art "system." Montréal painter Alfred Pellán made some astute observations on the art system in an article by Gilles Hénault in 1960:

Pellán attribue cette espèce d'effervescence, cette pullulation d'écoles et de genres au fait que la bourgeoisie a accepté soudainement la peinture moderne après la guerre. "Cela a créé des débouchés énormes, et chacun a tenté de préparer son produit à sa propre sauce. Comme le public achetait de plus en plus, il fallait produire de plus en plus vite. Résultat trop de facilité... Cela ne durera pas indéfiniment. D'ici quelques années, on arrivera au point de saturation".⁴⁷

The growing number of artists, galleries and concomittant increase in competition and appetite for novelty saw the avant-garde almost turn into tradition overnight. William Seitz, guest curator of the 1968 Seventh Biennial Exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in which Ewen was chosen to take part, observed that due to the "multiform and copious nature of Canadian art" this exhibition may be "the last time that the major medium of painting can be comprehensively presented."⁴⁸

The acceptance of a plurality of styles in Canadian painting was encouraged by national self-awareness as the Canadian Centennial approached. By the late 1960's in London, regionalism had begun to replace original form in the concept of style as a definition of excellence and authenticity in painting. Competition between regions was stimulated by the Canada Council through its democratic distribution of funds to artists and by the Toronto-based periodical, *Artscanada*.⁴⁹ In the 1960's *Artscanada* began to reflect a bias for regionalist art. London Regionalism, coming to the forefront of the new authenticity in painting, was featured regularly in *Artscanada* when Anne Brodsky, former education officer at the London Art Museum was appointed editor of the periodical. Nancy Poole, in her book *The Art of London*, observed that: "This was a great boon for several London artists who were all well known to her. Now they received a great deal of attention nationally. Almost every edition had at least one article on either a London artist or what was going on in the area."⁵⁰

The leader of London Regionalism, Greg Curnoe, was critical of the idea of original form and its paradoxical relationship to the predetermination of style. By associating original form in art with an artist's immediate environment or region, he redefined the meaning of originality and coined the term "oregionalism." London writer, Chris Dewdney, explained this term in a 1984 article:

The first reading was ironic, that originality represented an ideal state unobtainable in reality a sort of chimera, the commodification of "newness" presented as it were a quality (see *The Demon of Progress in the Arts* by Wyndham Lewis), which acknowledged its ironic essence as mythical; ie., that total originality was a naive concept. The second and contradictory meaning, and the one which proceeds the furthest towards what was or is oregionalism, was non-ironic. That originality was the measure of significant art and that originality proceeded naturally from region, itself posited as a kind of engine of differentiation which generated all native and truly original minds. Region was implicit in this meaning of original because it became the final arbiter of originality. To be true to one's region was of necessity to be intrinsically different from all other regions.⁵¹

The same anti-style sentiment appeared in *S/W 17*, an exhibition of 17 London artists in which Ewen took part. The exhibition's "editor," Nancy Poole, attempted to characterize London's art and artists in the catalogue essay:



fig. 11 Paterson Ewen, *Landscape, Near Ospringe, Ontario (July 17, 1969)*, 1969, Oil on board, 20.3 × 25.4 cm, Toronto, Anne and David Skene-Melvin. (Photo: Heather Fraser, Hamilton)

"There is no 'London School' but there is a London atmosphere — and right now the air of London is electric with artistic expectation and excitement. No one can quite explain what has happened but none of us doubts that LONDON IS WHERE IT'S HAPPENING."⁵² Clearly, stylistic categories or schools of art created through the "discovery" of original form, had lost significance for many London artists.

During the panel discussion for the 1970 retrospective opening at the 20/20 Gallery, Ewen focussed his critique of the art system on the concept of style and the avant-garde mentality: "As objects my paintings fit into a category which I reject. ... no matter how hard you try to free yourself, you will become elitist anyway." He expounded further on his distrust of the system in Lenore Crawford's review of the retrospective: "Because of the persons who bought my paintings I have determined never to paint another canvas. ... I don't know what I'll do. But I'm determined it won't be this sort of thing."⁵³ In early 1969, Ewen had given a presentation to the students of London's Beal Secondary School during which he was asked to describe the role of the artist.⁵⁴ He replied that an

artist must act as a model of freedom. Yet, how had Ewen defined freedom? By maintaining gesture in his paintings of the late 1950's and 1960's, he had shown his skepticism of the goal of freedom through progressive abstraction and ever original form. Under the predetermination of the concept of style in Montréal, Ewen's attempt to gain freedom through independence had only resulted in his reputation for lagging behind the avant-garde.

As if to demonstrate that he could paint whatever he wished, Ewen painted two small oil landscapes while on a camping trip in 1969.⁵⁵ On a second expedition that same summer to visit friends north of London, he painted at least one more landscape (fig. 11).⁵⁶ However, these works were not realized outside of a belief in the domination of the object over subject-matter — an approach to art rooted in denial and exclusion that was fundamental to the concept of style in Montréal. Ewen was able to consider freedom as something other than the skepticism of progressive abstraction only when he acknowledged the value of his own limitations in this approach to painting:

I really felt like just playing instead and I thought I was making an anti-art gesture in the formal sense with those last paintings. Daubing rows of dots on plain canvas with felt. But then somehow this turned out feeling more like traces of things moving through space and this is what first suggested the idea of phenomena. ... I began reading. I got all kinds of amateur books and old textbooks about phenomena. How rain falls and how lightning works, clouds, eclipses and waves. I began to get the feeling as I read that what we usually call the more simple things are immensely complicated so I just accepted my limitations and put down the part of these happenings that were for me fun to do.⁵⁷

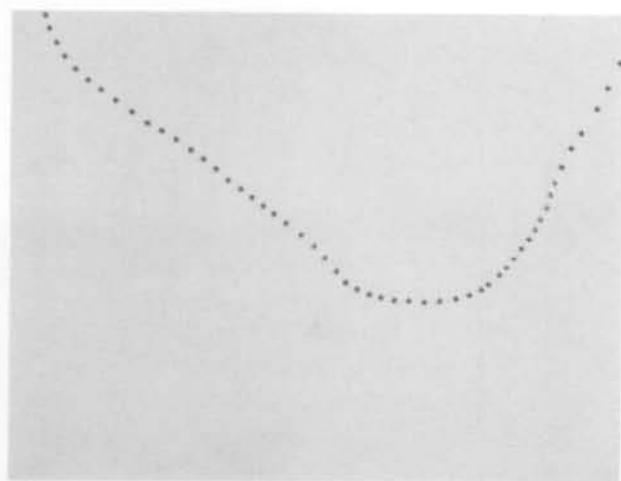


fig. 12 Paterson Ewen, *Traces Through Space*, 1970, Acrylic on canvas, 144.8 × 213.4 cm, Collection of the artist. (Photo: Stephen Perry, Hamilton)



fig. 13 "Drop of water in a hot frying pan." (Photo: from Duncan C. Blanchard, *From Raindrops to Volcanoes* [New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967], 142)

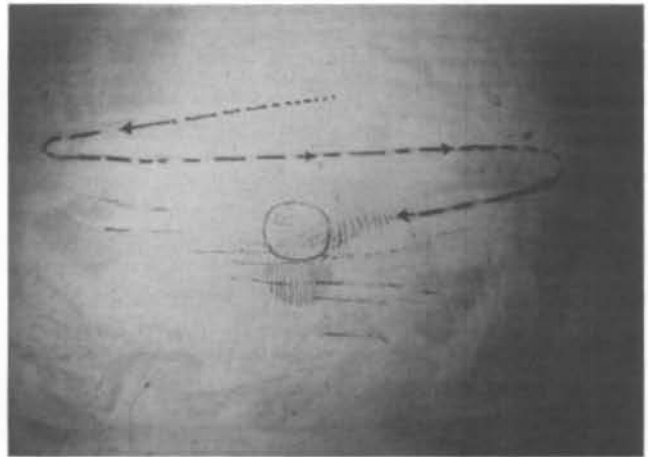


fig. 14 Paterson Ewen, *Drop of Water on a Hot Surface*, 1970, Acrylic on canvas, 304.8 × 365.8 cm, destroyed. (Photo: Stephen Perry, Hamilton)

After painting one of his "daubed" paintings *Traces Through Space*, (fig. 12), Ewen began to explore a life-long interest in science. He picked up a 95¢ paperback book on popular science, Duncan C. Blanchard's *From Raindrops to Volcanoes* (1967) and copied at least two diagrams from it, "The thunderstorm is a generator" and "Drop of water in a hot frying pan." Both of these were executed in acrylics (compare figs. 13 and 14). The latter work which Ewen called *Drop of Water on a Hot Surface*, was the recreation of the third drop in Blanchard's diagram which sizzled and sped over a hot surface for minutes before evaporating. This image which Ewen painted over one of his large *Lifestream* paintings, reflects both the strength and ephemerality implicit in his theme of endurance in the "stream" paintings.⁵⁸ Significantly, in Ewen's new approach to painting, the subject did not dominate the object. In other words, the quantifiability and divisibility of the object and the subject were irrelevant. In taking images from science books he chose those that were "not so scientific that I couldn't understand them. So I went to early books about rain. Some of the ones about rain are not that old. I think they are pretty sound scientifically. Not that I cared much. It was just like still-life as far as subject-matter went."⁵⁹ Ewen strung *Drop of Water on a Hot Surface* with grommets and ropes across a wall in his London studio where it remained for several years as perhaps it served as a reminder of his turning point.⁶⁰

Philip Monk, in his *Paterson Ewen, Phenomena Paintings, 1971-1987* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1987), presents a satisfying approach to Ewen's break. In developing his thesis on Ewen's turn as one from mimesis to semiosis, Monk's discussion of the work is appropriate to what he has identified as significant. Limiting his study to the material practices within a single "structure," the "phenomascapes," and forgoing the idea of the artist as a creative "demiurge," he focusses on "something else of significance" which "rests within the direct act of making and the decisions of that process." A problem arises, however, when Monk must go beyond the "great series from 1973 to 1974." Ewen's self-portraits, his appropriations of imagery by other artists (Hokusai and Pinkham-Ryder) and in general, the paintings of the 1980's cannot be fully discussed through a semiological approach. They require the identification of another structure or code. Such works move out of the single structure of the phenomascapes.⁶¹

However, Matthew Teitelbaum, in his catalogue, *Paterson Ewen: The Montreal Years* (Saskatoon, The Mendel Art Gallery, 1987), suggests that Ewen's evolution into the hard-edge style was full of "stops and starts." As well, Teitelbaum claims that the artist was unable to eliminate landscape elements from his work. For Teitelbaum, these two characteristics which focus primarily on Ewen's lack of formal innovation explain the artist's "return" to figurative painting in 1970. In fact, Ewen had never truly given up the landscape. This assessment is not unreasonable, given the long held reliance on the evolutionary concept of style in Montréal painting and the domination of the object over the subject. However, Teitelbaum's concept poses difficulties considering the complexity of Ewen's attitude towards predetermined style and his desire to escape classifications in which he was always found to be weak.

Either much of recent art is not art at all or the standards we have inherited are no longer valid. To reject the message of contemporary art is to state that what is art is determined by historians and critics rather than by artists which has always been a ridiculous proposition.⁶²

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, Ewen believed that the painted object should dominate the subject-matter. Thus, suggestions of subject-matter, primarily through his use of gesture, may be seen as the skepticism of the absolutes of a paradoxical demand — freedom of form through predetermined order — and a desire for independence. When Ewen allowed the subject to emerge from the object as not only undeniable but also valuable, he rendered obsolete the concept of style which had trapped his thoughts and paintings between stylistic poles of good and bad formal innovation, avant-garde freedom and traditional stasis. Ewen's figurative paintings after 1970 do not signify a "return" to his early figurative work of 1969 to 1954; there was a change in his attitude towards painting from one of exclusion and denial to one of tolerance

and acceptance. His acceptance of the value of human limitations led to the perception that abstraction was a matter of kind where questions of the divisibility and quantifiability of the object and subject, so vital to the idealist pursuit of absolute freedom in the concept of style, were irrelevant. Indeed, there is irony in the fact that Ewen's implicit criticism of the concept of style has gone unnoticed and, seventeen years after his "turn," it has come back to haunt his non-figurative paintings of the 1950's and 1960's.

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Notes

- 1 Paterson Ewen in a taped interview by Robert McKaskell, "Paterson Ewen and Robert McKaskell, Interview for Retrospective, 1976: 1954 – c.1967," London, Ontario.
- 2 The avant-garde mentality which may be thought of as a sociological phenomenon rather than aesthetic fact, was a mechanism for change in the arts in Montréal. This mentality belonged to non-figurative and figurative painters alike and incorporated a fundamental belief that a dialectical discourse between the old and the new was a means to progress. The notion that a dialectic existed between progressive avant-garde and static traditional painters was contradicted by at least two factors: the avant-garde commitment to the traditional value of freedom; and the increasing reliance of historians critics and artists, on the authority of art history to determine the path of stylistic change in painting. The self-conscious integration of this mechanism and the avant-garde mentality with all its contradictions in Montréal painting during the 1950's and 1960's, resulted in a hierarchy of artists based on the perceived degree of subject-matter explicit in their work.
- 3 Svetlana ALPERS, "Style Is What You Make It" (1977), *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 138.
- 4 Fernand LEDUC, "Art de refus...art d'acceptation" (1954), *Fernand Leduc, Vers les îles de lumière, Écrits (1942-1980)*, ed. André Beaudet (Ville LaSalle: Éditions Hurtubise, 1981), 147.
- 5 André JASMIN, "Le climat du milieu artistique dans les années 40," *Peinture canadienne-française (débat)* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1971), 9.
- 6 Ken JOHNSTON, "The Professor is a Rebel," *New Liberty* (1951): 44.
- 7 Paul-Émile BORDUAS, *Refus global* (1948), trans. Ray Ellenwood (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1985), 41.
- 8 Arthur LISMER, "The Value, Meaning and Place of Art in Education," *The Dalhousie Review* (Oct., 1927): 378-389.
- 9 BORDUAS, *Refus global*, 46.
- 10 Paterson Ewen, transcript of taped interviews by Matthew Teitelbaum, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, summer 1986, 149-150 (referred to as Teitelbaum interview in subsequent notes). Ewen was introduced to Borduas and the other Automatiste artists by Françoise Sullivan whom he married in 1950. The impact of this significant Montréal artist on Ewen's work is an important topic which provides opportunity for a separate investigation.

- 11 Paterson Ewen in a taped conversation with Greg Curnoe, "Greg Curnoe and Paterson Ewen, Tues., March 18, 1969, 3 p.m., London, Ontario."
- 12 Rodolphe DE REPENTIGNY, "Comment le peintre Pat Ewen passa du paysage lyrique à l'abstraction," *La Presse*, January, 1955.
- 13 Teitelbaum interview, 202.
- 14 DE REPENTIGNY, "Comment le peintre Pat Ewen."
- 15 Fernand Leduc quoted in Pierre THÉBERGE, *Guido Molinari: Écrits sur l'art (1954 – 1976)* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976), 15.
- 16 Teitelbaum interview, 195.
- 17 Teitelbaum interview, 100, 157, 188, 272.
- 18 Jacqueline MOORE and Louis JAQUES, "Their Objective is Non-Objective," *Weekend Magazine*, Vol. 67, no. 36 (September 8, 1956): 12.
- 19 Gilles CORBEIL, *Espace '55* (Montréal: M.M.F.A., February 11 – 28, 1955).
- 20 Alain PARENT, *Les Premiers Plasticiens* (Montréal: Musée d'art contemporain, 1977), n.p.
- 21 DE REPENTIGNY, "Le groupe des onze," *Vie des arts*, 12 (Fall, 1958): 27-32.
- 22 DE REPENTIGNY, "Expositions: Nos expositions ne sont pas routinières," *Vie des arts*, 8 (Fall, 1957): 27.
- 23 Paterson Ewen, artist's statement for his March 12, 1968 solo exhibition at the Dunkelmann Gallery, Toronto. MG 28 III 110 Vol. 2, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
- 24 DE REPENTIGNY, "Les premières expositions de 1958," *Vie des arts*, 10 (1958): 42.
- 25 Jacqueline VAN DYK, *Paterson Ewen in the University Art Collection* (London, Ont.: University of Western Ontario, McIntosh Gallery, April, 1986). Also mentioned in conversation with the author, February 21, 1988.
- 26 Cesare VIVALDI, "Libres opinions sur l'art italien contemporain: La nouvelle avant-garde italienne," *Art Aujourd'hui*, 21 (January, 1959): 9.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 10-11.
- 28 Teitelbaum interview, 126.
- 29 Anon, "Peinture abstraite et péril atomique," *La Patrie* (November 26, 1961).
- 30 "Formal Lyricists', New Group to Seek Recognition in the Arts," *Montreal Gazette*, January 6, 1960.
- 31 An excerpt from his talk entitled "L'école de Montréal existe" was published in Jean CATHELIN, "L'école de Montréal existe," *Vie des arts*, 23 (Summer, 1961): 14-20.
- 32 Canada Collects, 1860-1960 (1960); Doctors and Art (1961); La Collection CIL (1962); La Collection Horner (1963); La Collection Hirschorn and La Collection Bronfman (1964). Yves ROBILLARD, "L'histoire des Galeries Denyse Delrue," *Cahiers*, Vol. 7, no. 27 (Winter, 1985-86): 8.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 34 [Charles DELLOYE], *La Peinture Canadienne Moderne: Vingt-cinq années de peinture au Canada-français*. 5o festival dei due monde (Spoleto, Italy, June 26 – August 23, 1962), 95.
- 35 Guido MOLINARI in "Ten Artists in Search of Canadian Art," *Artscanada*, XXII, no. 1 (January, 1966): 63-4.

- 36 Teitelbaum interview, 196.
- 37 Laurent LAMY, "Paterson Ewen à la Galerie du Siècle," *Le Devoir*, June 4, 1966.
- 38 P.D. OUSPENSKY, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 14.
- 39 Teitelbaum interview, 248.
- 40 LAMY, "Paterson Ewen à la Galerie du Siècle."
- 41 Paterson Ewen's résumé, 1968. MG 28 III 110 Vol. 2, Public Archives of Canada.
- 42 Teitelbaum interview, 296.
- 43 Lenore CRAWFORD, "Ewen Art Works Lauded," *The London Free Press*, January 7, 1970.
- 44 Paterson Ewen in a taped panel discussion, "Paterson Ewen, Robert Millet, Barry Lord, Royden Rabinowitch, Greg Curnoe, etc., Jan. 6, 1970, 20/20 Gallery, King St., London, Ontario."
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Dunkelmann Gallery correspondence. MG 28 III 110 Vol. 2, Public Archives of Canada.
- 47 Gilles HÉNAULT, "Pellán dénonce les 'trucs' en peinture," *Le Devoir*, April, 1960.
- 48 William SEITZ, *The Seventh Biennial of Canadian Painting* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, May, 1968), 9.
- 49 ROBILLARD, "Galeries Denyse Delrue," 9.
- 50 Nancy Geddes POOLE, *The Art of London, 1830-1980* (London, Ontario: Blackpool Press, 1984), 141.
- 51 Chris DEWDNEY, "Oregionalism: Geocentricism and the Notion of Originality," *Provincial Essays*, 1 (1984): 4.
- 52 Nancy POOLE, *S/W 17* (Rothman's Art Gallery of Stratford, September 20 – November 1, 1969).
- 53 CRAWFORD, "Ewen Art Works Lauded."
- 54 Don Bonham, taped conversation with author, March 31, 1988, Toronto, Ontario.
- 55 Doreen Curry, conversation with author, January 23, 1988, London, Ontario.
- 56 David Skene-Melvin, conversation with author, June, 1988, The Arts and Letters Club, Toronto, Ontario.
- 57 Nick JOHNSON, "Paterson Ewen, Rain," *Artscanada*, 196/197 (March, 1975): 41.
- 58 Dave Gordon, taped conversation with author, March 25, 1988, Kingston, Ontario."
- 59 Teitelbaum interview, 307.
- 60 *Drop of water on a hot surface* (1970) was destroyed after Ewen left his 19 King St. studio, London, Ontario, in the spring of 1971. When he returned, subtenants had taken the work down and folded it. It was so badly damaged that, after 1973, Ewen discarded it.
- 61 One criticism of Monk's approach may be found in Greg CURNOE, "Monk's Dream," *Parachute* 55 (July-Sept. 1989): 61-63.
- 62 James S. ACKERMAN, "Interpretation, Response: Suggestions for a Theory of Art Criticism," *Theories of Criticism* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1984), 43.

UN TOURNANT DANS L'ART DE PATERSON EWEN: DU NON-FIGURATIF AU FIGURATIF

En 1970, Paterson Ewen délaisse l'art abstrait, ou non-figuratif, pour se tourner vers le figuratif. Après avoir utilisé pendant plus de vingt ans le vocabulaire pictural du modernisme non-figuratif, il reconnaît la présence du sujet et en apprécie la valeur. À Montréal, au cours des années 50 et 60, l'art figuratif avait été décrié comme traditionnel, illusoire, sentimental et régressif. Toutefois, insister sur l'élément dramatique de ce tournant dans la carrière d'Ewen serait oublier l'aspect le plus important de ses nouvelles œuvres figuratives : le passage d'une attitude de refus et d'exclusion à une attitude d'ouverture et d'acceptation. Durant la plus grande partie de sa carrière comme peintre non-figuratif, il avait résisté à l'idée de l'abstraction, la disparition graduelle de tout sujet au profit de l'absolue liberté de forme, comme terme de référence. Après son changement de direction, il accepte pleinement l'abstraction en tant que genre — une approche de la peinture où le sujet du tableau et l'objet représenté sont perçus comme étant non seulement indissociables mais aussi non quantifiables.

À compter du milieu des années 50 et jusque dans les années 60, les critiques d'art et les artistes montréalais se fondent sur une histoire de l'art qui réunit les concepts de style et d'avant-garde pour établir la crédibilité des artistes québécois. Le concept de style selon lequel, ainsi que Svetlana Alpers l'a fait remarquer en 1977, les caractéristiques propres à de grandes divisions historiques étaient considérées comme éléments esthétiques des œuvres d'art avait été poussé à l'extrême dans la critique aussi bien que dans la pratique de l'art à Montréal. La liberté, valeur humaniste à la base de ce concept, se manifestait dans les arts visuels par la "découverte" de la forme originelle. Curieusement, ces découvertes se conformaient à une idée prédéterminée de l'histoire — une histoire de l'art occidental à partir d'œuvres qui représentaient la capacité de l'homme à aller au-delà de ses limites et à progresser. Dans le contexte d'une communauté artistique qui privilégiait cette approche de la critique et de la création, les limites d'Ewen étaient évidentes. Ses pairs y voyaient l'incapacité d'éliminer le sujet de ses tableaux et d'évoluer avec les peintres d'avant-garde vers ce que le peintre et activiste montréalais Fernand Leduc appelait, en 1954, «la plus haute présence formelle». La réputation qu'on lui fit d'être déphasé par rapport à l'avant-garde de Montréal et de manquer de cohérence fut créée et maintenue par les critiques, les historiens de l'art et les artistes qui s'appuyaient fortement sur le concept du style. Ewen lui-même n'offrait aucun démenti à cette position.

Nous retraçons, dans cet article, les étapes du changement d'attitude d'Ewen à l'égard du concept de style qui est à la base de la production et de la perception de l'art à Montréal dans les années 1950 et 1960, depuis l'enthousiasme initial jusqu'à la colère et l'ultime rejet. Ce changement d'attitude ne peut être vu comme une audacieuse révolution dans la forme ni comme un retour à ses tableaux figuratifs des années 1949-54. Dans son œuvre, aussi bien figurative que non-figurative, d'avant 1970, Ewen croyait que la liberté en peinture s'obtenait par la domination de l'objet sur le sujet. En 1970, il critique implicitement ce dogme inhérent au concept de style et à la mentalité d'avant-garde.

Bien qu'il croie à la liberté par la forme et qu'il la recherche en supprimant les sujets «sentimentaux» et factices, il devient sceptique quant au but de la liberté absolue par le moyen de l'originalité de la forme; il fait sienne la maxime de Matisse que l'originalité est un monstre. Il établit une nette distinction entre originalité et indépendance. Pour lui, l'indépendance c'est éviter les extrêmes dans le style et l'idéologie par l'équilibre, dans son art, du geste et de la structure formelle. Et pourtant, les artistes et les critiques conscients de la réalité historique, tels Fernand Leduc et les Plasticiens, soutiennent que c'est par une progression logique de la forme, dans laquelle l'objet en vient à dominer de plus en plus le sujet, que le Canada peut asseoir solidement sa réputation en art.

Ewen trouve «difficile à accepter» le style de la nouvelle avant-garde montréalaise avec ses formes aux lignes dures; il résiste en conservant le geste dans sa peinture. Lorsqu'il expose ses premiers tableaux non-figuratifs à *Espace '55*, son utilisation du geste fait problème. Le catalogue de l'exposition le décrit comme étant moins avancé que Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau et Pierre Gauvreau, parce que son œuvre a conservé des qualités «surréalistes». Dans un article de 1954, Leduc, chef de file reconnu du nouveau style, avait déjà écrit que la «démarche cosmique» avait surpassé la «démarche surrationnelle» de Borduas. En 1958, Rodolphe de Repentigny, éminent critique d'art et membre du groupe des Plasticiens, sous le pseudonyme de Jauran, écrit dans *Vie des Arts* que, bien que les tableaux de Ewen lui plaisent, son œuvre dans son ensemble le laisse «perplexe». Lorsque Ewen est invité à participer à la première exposition collective d'artistes québécois à l'extérieur du Canada, au Festival des Deux Mondes à Spoleto, Italie, en 1962, il est classé, dans le catalogue de l'exposition, comme post-automatiste et, là encore, en dehors du mouvement de l'avant-garde ou du style plasticien de deuxième génération.

Dans sa série de tableaux *Stream of Life* (1958-59), Ewen atteint l'étape de la direction esthétique consciente. Il organise ses tableaux en utilisant des thèmes, plutôt que des formes de plus en plus épurées. *Stream of Life* est une métaphore de caractère universel, où l'endurance de l'homme se mesure à la force de la nature. Bien que l'inclusion d'un élément figuratif, un ruisseau, présente sous un jour équivoque son attitude à l'égard de la peinture moderne non-figurative, à Montréal, il est évident que Ewen continue à considérer le sujet comme un élément régressif. Dans un article sur son exposition de 1961 à la galerie Denise Delrue, il dit: «Je veux continuer de m'engager résolument dans ma direction actuelle afin d'être de plus en plus abstrait même contre la Nature visuelle pour tenter de toucher les profonds sentiments humains de l'homme...» (*La Patrie*, 1961). Ce besoin de supprimer le sujet entrain constamment en conflit avec le désir, exprimé par l'emploi du geste, d'éviter les extrêmes. Même quand il adopte les techniques des contours aux lignes dures, l'emploi de ruban et les formes géométriques plates en acrylique, on critique son manque d'originalité. Lorsqu'il expose ses groupes de tableaux à thèmes, *Diagram of the Multiple Personality*, à la galerie du Siècle, en juin 1966, Laurent Lamy écrit dans *Le Devoir*: «Il est celui qui continue et qui porte plus loin une idée déjà lancée.»

Le thème de *Stream of Life*, qu'il reprend en 1967 dans *Lifestream* et qu'il conservera après son départ pour London, Ontario, en 1968 et jusqu'en 1970, a pour Ewen une signification particulière. Par ce groupe de tableaux, où se développe

une série de rectangles allongés sur fond monochrome jusqu'à l'effet dramatique d'un mince ruisseau qui court à travers les toiles de 10' × 12', Ewen exprime sa colère pour la façon dont il est traité à l'intérieur du système artistique. Nous devons à William Seitz, conservateur invité de la septième exposition biennale de la Galerie Nationale, en 1968, qui avait choisi Ewen pour en faire partie, quelques remarques pénétrantes sur le système artistique au Canada. Dans le catalogue de l'exposition, il fait remarquer que, à cause de la «nature multiforme et abondante de l'art canadien», cette exposition pourrait bien être «la dernière où le mode d'expression de premier plan qu'est la peinture puisse être présenté de façon globale». Le concept du style, comme mécanisme du changement et de la compréhension du changement dans l'art pour les historiens, les critiques et les artistes, avait perdu de son importance.

Le rejet graduel de la notion d'originalité en tant que «découverte» de l'innovation formelle se produisit avec la naissance d'une nouvelle vision de l'authenticité en art — le régionalisme. Le régionaliste Greg Curnoe, de London, inventa le terme «orégionalisme» pour indiquer que l'originalité, ce qui différencie une chose d'une autre, est solidement enracinée dans l'environnement immédiat de l'artiste. Au cours de la rétrospective de ses œuvres, à la galerie 20/20 de London, en janvier 1970, Ewen exprime, lui aussi, son scepticisme à l'égard du concept de style: «En tant qu'objets, mes tableaux entrent dans une catégorie que je rejette... peu importent les efforts que vous mettrez à vous libérer, vous deviendrez élitiste de toute manière». Dans le *London Free Press* de janvier 1970, il précise: «... j'ai décidé de ne plus peindre une seule autre toile...»

Durant ses années à Montréal, sa recherche de la liberté par l'indépendance lui avait valu la réputation de traîner derrière l'avant-garde. Il n'a pu considérer la liberté autrement que comme une forme de scepticisme à l'endroit de l'abstraction progressive qu'à partir du moment où il a reconnu la valeur de ses propres limites vis-à-vis une approche de la peinture fondée sur l'absolue originalité de la forme. Il a vu dans son tableau de 1970, *Traces through Space*, un geste «anti-art» qui lui a fait comprendre qu'il ne créait plus d'œuvres abstraites, mais plutôt une sorte de phénomène. *Drop of Water on a Hot Surface*, image prise dans un populaire ouvrage de vulgarisation scientifique, marque une nouvelle définition de la liberté dans laquelle la possibilité de quantifier ou de diviser l'objet et le sujet n'a plus de raison d'être. Alors que, dans ses œuvres des années 1950 et 1960, l'objet était perçu comme dominant le sujet, dans les décennies qui suivent le sujet ne l'emporte pas sur l'objet. Ewen nous rappelle, en 1986, que sa nouvelle imagerie «est tout comme une nature morte pour ce qui est du sujet». Pendant plusieurs années, *Drop of Water on a Hot Surface* est resté accroché au mur de son atelier de London, au moyen d'anneaux et de cordes, comme un rappel de ce point tournant.

Traduction: Élise Bonnette

J.W. BEATTY AT ROSEDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL

In 1908 the Canadian painter J.W. Beatty (1869-1941) was commissioned by the Rosedale League for School Art to produce a mural for the kindergarten/assembly room of Rosedale Public School in Toronto (fig.1).¹ Completed in 1910, the room was described a few years later by the Toronto Star as "the most beautiful schoolroom in Canada."² The mural is composed of three panels presenting school children in a number of clearly pleasant seasonal activities within landscape settings. In *Spring* (fig. 2) children and a teacher attend the annual picnic in the nearby Don Valley; in *Summer* (fig. 3) children and adults take a rest during the harvesting of the grain. *Autumn* shows a young girl walking with an older woman between pumpkins and sheaves of corn (fig. 4), while to the right a boy of the same age offers a bouquet of fall flowers to two senior members of his community (fig. 5).

The production of such a mural in Toronto in 1908 is not remarkable in itself, given the strong interest in such decoration there at this time.³ However, the patronage and subject matter of this particular mural merit further discussion, since they clearly exhibit the influence of an idealistic social development,

fig. 1 J.W. Beatty, R.C.A., Mural Decorations in Rosedale Public School, *List of Reproductions of Works of Art* (Department of Education, Ontario), Educational Pamphlets, No. 5, Toronto, 1914, p.8. (Photo: Marilyn McKay)

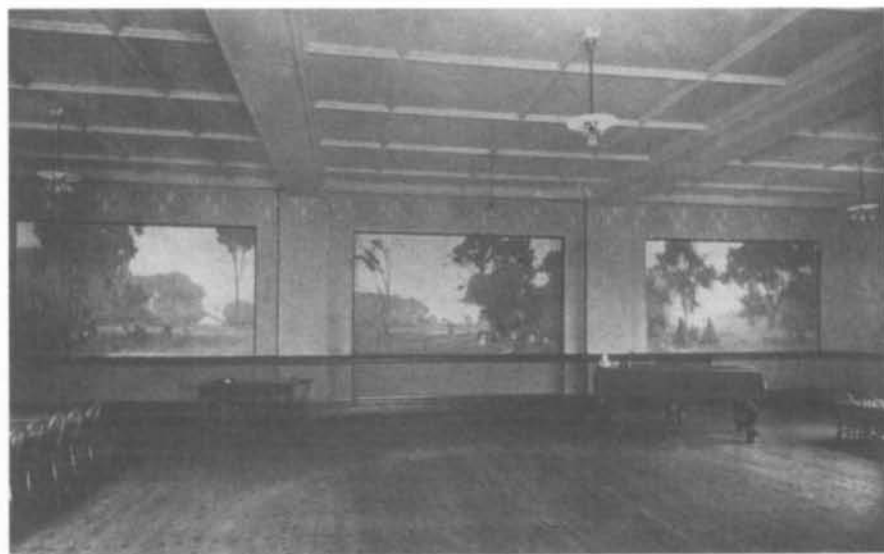




fig. 2 J.W. Beatty, Detail of Spring, 1908-1910, Oil on panel, 226 × 360 cm, Toronto, Records, Archives and Museums Toronto Board of Education. (Photo: Tom Hill)



fig. 3 J.W. Beatty, Detail of Summer, 1908-1910, Oil on panel, 226 × 360 cm, Toronto, Records, Archives and Museums Toronto Board of Education. (Photo: Tom Hill)

commonly referred to as “the school beautiful movement.” This *movement* arose in Great Britain under the leadership of John Ruskin (1819-1900) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ruskin maintained that the physical surroundings of the classroom had a strong unconscious effect on the student.⁴ At the same time, he believed that artists should act as God’s spokesmen or prophets, directing the viewer toward the delight and wonder of God’s creations.⁵ Thus a closer relationship would be established between God and man, and concomitantly, a closer understanding of the Christian morality that God would have man uphold. Consequently, if images of nature were placed in schools attended by children from all socio-economic classes, the moral standards of the nation could be raised. For Ruskin, “Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know,” but rather, “[it] means teaching them to behave as they do not behave.”⁶ To this end, educators should avoid representations of both the machinery and commercial enterprises associated with Britain’s recently arrived industrial age (which Ruskin saw as destructive to nature) as well as scenes which expressed “coarse delight in mere pain and crisis of danger.”⁷ In Ruskin’s scheme, children would look at images of God’s creations “depicted in a realistic style without unnecessary ornament.”⁸

Ruskin’s ideas quickly led to the formation of societies in England whose purpose was to introduce art and nature into the classroom. Octavia Hill, a



fig. 4 J.W. Beatty, *Detail of Autumn*, 1908-1910, Oil on panel, 226 × 360 cm, Toronto, Records, Archives and Museums Toronto Board of Education. (Photo: Tom Hill)



fig. 5 J.W. Beatty, *Detail of Autumn*, 1908-1910, Oil on panel, 226 × 360 cm, Toronto, Records, Archives and Museums Toronto Board of Education. (Photo: Tom Hill)

pupil and friend of Ruskin, formed the Kyrle Society in 1877, while Mary Christie founded the Art for Schools Association in 1883 with Ruskin as President.⁹ Almost simultaneously Ruskin's theories were taken up by American educators. By 1892 the Boston Public School Art League was founded to assist in the installation of art in schoolrooms; by 1914 there were at least forty such organizations throughout the United States.¹⁰ Many books on the subject soon appeared, including Walter Gilman Page's *Interior Decoration of Schoolhouses*,¹¹ and journals such as *The School Review* which frequently published articles on the educational function of nature images in the classroom. In 1899 the American educators, S. Burrage and H.T. Bailey, wrote that "Life is painful enough at first hand without reflecting its sorrows and sufferings from school-room walls. We want our children ... to live just as long as possible with the sunshine and the flowers, with the birds and the cherubs."¹² F.B. Dressler, in the United States Bureau of Education's *Bulletin* of 1910, stressed that "the assembly room is the place in the school where artistic and even lavish decoration [should be] the rule, for the assembly room has retained some of the religious atmosphere of those [churches of] bygone days."¹³

In Canada, Ruskin's reputation was well established by 1880. Excerpts from *Modern Painters*, a text in which Ruskin clearly sets out the relationship between artistic representations of nature, Christian morality, and the viewer,

had been published in Toronto in 1879. It prompted a local reviewer to describe its author as “the most captivating of modern writers” who has taken “the artistic and critical world by storm.”¹⁴ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Canadians in a variety of fields promoted Ruskin’s philosophy. For example, in *The Methodist Magazine and Review* of September 1899 the Reverend Hillis expounded on Ruskin’s belief “that there is some power in nature that will transform a seed into a golden sheaf and a babe into a sage or seer.”¹⁵

Ruskin’s more specific views on the role of nature in education may have influenced Canadian educators as early as 1867. In that year a Halifax teaching guide echoed Ruskin’s thought when it stated: “What constitutes the beautiful in any object is the evidence it furnishes of the perfection and excellence of the Great Creator. . . . The [pupil’s] mind. . . must be taught to observe and study the beautiful in nature and in art.”¹⁶ In an article entitled “Pretty Schoolrooms” in *The Canada School Journal* of December 1878, readers were told that: “little ones. . . speak out the longing for the beautiful when they gather from their gardens the morning bouquet for teacher’s desk.”¹⁷

Canadian educators soon openly adopted Ruskin’s views. In 1891 A.H. Morrison outlined the relationship between morals and Ruskin’s art in *The Canada Educational Monthly and School Magazine*.¹⁸ At the Dominion Educational Association Convention of 1904, held in Winnipeg, Miss E.E. Rankin of Regina stated that: “Our first and chief aim [as teachers] is to lead to an appreciation of Beauty in observing order and harmony in the material world. From nature and art [the pupil] receives new inspiration and has a deeper reverence for the God of nature. Vice becomes more and more repellent because of its ugliness. ‘In true art,’ Ruskin says, ‘the hand, the head and the heart of man go together.’”¹⁹ Eight years later Ida Hillman wrote in *The School*, a Toronto educational journal: “a child’s mental health and spiritual happiness [are] more dependent on the atmosphere in which he lives than on the material digested from books. The primary object of school decoration is the creation of a congenial atmosphere for the unfolding of every faculty — and especially for the development of taste — which Ruskin takes as the measure of the status of man.”²⁰ In the same journal Philip Ortiz mirrored Ruskin’s thoughts when he wrote: “It is an undeniable fact that the classroom itself has a considerable part in [the pupil’s] education; it affects his conduct; it gives him a standard by which he continues to be influenced long after he has left school; for culture is often due more to surroundings than to books. Art should supply the student with an antidote, as it were, against the poisonous influences of the materialistic tendencies of the present day.”²¹

Texts published for newly formed nature study courses quoted Ruskin when they pointed out that the study of nature should be as concerned with morality as it was with science. “The Moral aspects of Science Teaching,” published in 1889 in Toronto’s *The Educational Journal*, stated that: “Ruskin is nothing if not emphatic. Rightly pursued, the study of Natural History, as it is found in field and wood, in plant and flower, in insect and animal life . . .

points directly to Nature's God."²² In *The Nature Study Course* published in Toronto in 1905 for use in Toronto schools, John Dearness wrote, "According to Ruskin all other efforts in education are futile till you have taught your people to love fields, birds, and flowers."²³ The *Ontario Teacher's Nature Study Manual*, published by the Ministry of Education for Ontario in 1915, declared: "Nor is it a mistake to cultivate the more sentimental love of nature [over the scientific one] which belongs to the artist and the poet. John Ruskin emphasizes this value."²⁴

By 1896 the Ontario Department of Education had become officially involved in the installation of nature images in classrooms. That year James L. Hughes (1846-1935), Inspector of Toronto Schools, encouraged the teachers and the mothers of students at Rosedale Public School to form a League for School Art.²⁵ By 1916 there were nine such "clubs" in Toronto schools.²⁶ Their position had been given official sanction within the provincial government's educational system in 1898 when Hughes formed the Central School Art League. As well, the Ontario Department of Education established an advisory board, composed of members of the Ontario Society of Artists, which school art leagues could approach for advice on art purchases for the classroom. The following year the board published *School Art Leagues*. Using Ruskin's language it clearly stated that art in the classroom, and in particular mural decoration, would cultivate not only the powers of observation of the eye, but also of the mind.²⁷

Writing in *Schoolroom Decoration* of 1900, published by the Ontario Department of Education, J.G. Hodgins stated: "Only the best pictures – as Ruskin says – should be given a place." The publication seriously suggested that the monotony of undecorated classrooms was an important factor in the school drop-out rate. Students might have completed their education, it was proposed, if the school room walls had not been "bare of anything that would create an active desire for the beautiful, or artistic, or which would produce a refining and elevating influence upon the minds of the young."²⁸ By 1914 the Department of Education in Ontario had produced a pamphlet for use in its schools in which reproductions of well-known works of art were suggested as appropriate viewing material for schoolchildren. Those considered particularly suitable for kindergarten rooms were sunny landscapes in which children and/or animals took part in familiar, pastoral or rural activities.²⁹

In 1908 the Ontario Department of Education's advisory board was approached by the Rosedale League for School Art for assistance in the furnishing of its kindergarten room with a mural. The League's decision to award the commission to Beatty could be accounted for quite simply: Beatty was a well-known Toronto painter with a declared interest in mural decoration; he had been a member of the Ontario Society of Artists since 1901; and he was also a close friend and former pupil of George Agnew Reid, who, in 1908, was chairman of the advisory board.³⁰ However, another factor should be considered which may account more specifically for Beatty's presence at Rosedale. Toronto muralists, including Beatty, aspired to the production of historical

murals. While most of the artists worked in figural representation, Beatty did not. His work before 1908 was involved with the landscape; moreover, he adopted the bright colours of an impressionist's palette and the decorative linearity of art nouveau.³¹ Thus both Beatty's style and subject matter would have strongly appealed to a patron steeped in Ruskin.

There is little doubt that the Rosedale League was just such a patron. By this time its teacher members probably had had wide exposure to Ruskin's views through educational journals and conference lectures, as outlined above. In addition, by 1908 the Rosedale kindergarten teacher would have been trained specifically in the philosophy of another educator, Friedrich Froebel (1782-1810), who, although he made no comments on school decoration, formulated theories on the uplifting function of nature which were identical to those of Ruskin. Froebel revolutionized educational thinking in his development of the kindergarten in early nineteenth-century Germany.³²

In 1882 James L. Hughes, Inspector of Toronto Schools *and* organizer of the Toronto School Art Leagues, having observed the Froebel system at work in Boston and in St. Louis, became Canada's leading exponent of Froebelism.³³ In his published text on the Froebel method he wrote: "The business of the school is to reveal to the child the harmony in all of life, and to bring the child to God."³⁴ By 1888 the Froebel kindergarten had become a regular part of the Toronto educational system, and by 1908 all teacher training schools in Ontario required kindergarten teachers to be trained and examined in the Froebel method.³⁵ Throughout this period Canadian educational journals published many articles on the benefits of the Froebel methods, often stressing the importance of nature study to the moral development of the child.

Froebel regarded the school as "a garden of children," each pupil as a plant, the teacher as the gardener, and the aim of the educational process as the demonstration to the pupil of the harmonious relationship that existed between God and the natural world. Thus Froebel boldly supplanted the classical and time-honored educational system of his own culture, which previously placed the highest value on the absorption of quantities of knowledge. His method gave greater regard to the moral development of the individual pupil, a philosophy of education which clearly parallels Ruskin's. Moral development could be achieved in Froebel's system by a variety of "gardening methods," but one of the most important was the observation of beauty in nature. It was the duty of the gardener/teacher to steer the children away from "grotesque or horrible" images. Again, the parallel with Ruskinian thought is clear.

In their employment of the Froebel method, educators in both England and Canada openly acknowledged the relationship between its philosophy and Ruskin's "school beautiful movement." For example, J.A. Hobson, in an 1899 discussion of Ruskin's social reforms, favourably compared Ruskin's emphasis on an education which stresses "the union of head and hand" with Froebel's views.³⁶ In 1882, a Miss Hart, Inspector of Toronto kindergarten, speaking at the Dominion Educational Association's conference in Montréal, explained that as Froebel recognized the primary importance of developing "the divine

spirit” in the kindergarten child through observation of beauty, so did Ruskin understand the necessity of taking measures to preserve “Art intellect” for the nation.³⁷

One can now return to J.W. Beatty’s Rosedale mural with the awareness of the high regard in which contemporary Toronto educators held Ruskin’s “school beautiful” movement. As well and because of the support lent to that movement by the government-sanctioned Froebel method of education, it is no longer possible to read Beatty’s three landscapes as neutral images of school children participating in pleasant seasonal activities. Rather, the viewer should consider that landscape art, like any art, is an ideological practice, maintained by power structures and institutions which support artists and art forms that favour a desired social system. Thus, Beatty’s mural has to be seen as an effort on the part of the Ontario Department of Education to instill in the pupils of Rosedale Public School a Christian morality by means of exposure to what the Department believed to be images of God’s creations.

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Notes

1 See “How We Decorated Our School. I. Rosedale Public School.” *The School*, No. 1 (September 1912): 323-327; *The Link*, vol. 14, No. 3 (1958): 1; D. FARR, *J.W. Beatty 1869-1941*, Exhibition Catalogue (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1981), 22-23; figs. 7-9. The murals were moved in 1957 to a hall in the newly constructed Rosedale School building on the same site.

2 *The Toronto Star*, 17 March 1917.

3 The Society of Mural Decorators was formed in Toronto in 1894. See G.A. Reid, W. Cruikshank, and W. Grier to E.J. Lennox, Toronto, March 27, 1895, 3 page typescript in George Agnew Reid Papers, Scrapbook A, 99, Art Gallery of Ontario. For contemporary discussions of Toronto Artists’ involvement in mural decoration, see G.A. REID, “Mural Decoration,” *The Canadian Magazine* (April 1898): 501-508; J.W. BEATTY, “A Canadian Painter and his Work,” *The Canadian Magazine* (April 1906): 546-551.

4 J. EVANS (ed.), *The Lamp of Beauty. Writings on Art by John Ruskin* (London: Phaidon Press, 1959), 316-322.

5 EVANS, 317, n. 4.

6 J. RUSKIN, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1890), 142.

7 R.L. HERBERT (ed.), *Art Criticism of John Ruskin* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1969), 421-423.

8 EVANS, 23, n. 4.

9 E.T. COOK, *The Life of John Ruskin* (London: G. Allen, 1912), 368-369.

10 The response of Boston educators to Ruskin is described in *School Art Leagues* (Toronto: Education Department of Ontario, 1899), 7-9.

11 W.G. PAGE, *Interior Decoration of School-houses*, prepared for U.S. Bureau of Education (Boston, 1896).

- 12 S. BURRAGE and H.T. BAILEY, *School Sanitation and Decoration* (Boston/New York/Chicago: D.C. Heath & Co., 1899), 100-107.
- 13 F.B. DRESSLAR, *American Schoolhouses*, prepared for U.S. Bureau of Education (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), Bulletin No. 5, 35.
- 14 *Ruskin on Painting* (Toronto: Hart & Rawlinson, 1879); reviewed in *Rose Belford's Monthly and National Review*, No. 3 (July 1879): 106-107.
- 15 Rev. N.D. HILLIS, "John Ruskin's Message to the Twentieth Century," *Methodist Magazine and Review* (Sept. 1899): 227-231.
- 16 Rev. Alexander FORRESTER, *The Teacher's Text Book* (Halifax: A. & W. Mackinlay, 1867), 168.
- 17 "Pretty Schoolrooms," *The Canada School Journal*, Vol. III, No. 19 (Dec. 1878): 148.
- 18 A. H. MORRISON, "The Morals of Ruskin's Art," *The Canada Educational Monthly and School Magazine*, XIII (Aug.-Sept. 1891): 245-251.
- 19 E.E. RANKIN, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Dominion Educational Association. Winnipeg 1904* (Toronto: Dominion Education Association, 1905), 272.
- 20 Ida HILLMAN, "The Art of School Decoration," *The School* (Sept. 1912): 22-27.
- 21 P. ORTIZ, "School Room Decoration," *The School* (Dec. 1913): 211.
- 22 "The Moral Aspects of Science Teaching," *The Educational Journal*, Vol. III, No. 6 (July 1, 1889): n.p.
- 23 J. DEARNESS, *The Nature Study Course* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1905), 4.
- 24 *Nature Study: Ontario Teachers' Manuals* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1915), 26.
- 25 *School Art Leagues*, 3; G.A. REID, "School Decoration and Picture Study," *The School* (April, 1914): 479-482.
- 26 L. BURGOYNE, *A History of the Home and School Movement in Ontario* (Toronto: Charters Publishing Co., n.d.), 3.
- 27 *School Art Leagues*, 7.
- 28 J.G. HODGINS, *School Room Decoration*, prepared for the Education Department of Ontario (Toronto: Warwick Brothers and Rutter, 1900), 5.
- 29 *List of Reproductions of Works of Art*, prepared for the Education Department of Ontario (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1914), Educational Pamphlet 5.
- 30 For Beatty's career, see FARR, above, n. 1. For membership of the advisory board, see M.M. MINER, G.A. REID: *Canadian Artist* (Toronto, 1946), 94.
- 31 For examples of landscapes painted by Beatty by 1908, see FARR, above, n. 1.
- 32 Froebel's theories and a history of his influence on education in the United States and Canada are outlined in B.E. CORBETT, *The Public School Kindergarten in Ontario 1883-1967* (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1968).
- 33 CORBETT, 96 and 211.
- 34 Quoted in CORBETT, 119.
- 35 *Syllabus of Studies and Regulations for the Normal Schools at Hamilton, Ottawa, Peterborough, Stratford and Toronto*, prepared for the Education Department of Ontario (Toronto: The King's Printer, 1908), Circular 23, 19.
- 36 J.A. HOBSON, *John Ruskin: Social Reformer* (London: J. Nisbet, 1899), 233.
- 37 C.C. HART, *Addresses and Proceedings of the Dominion Educational Association, Montreal, 1882* (Toronto: Dominion Education Association, 1883), 278.

THE MONTREAL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS

Une galerie d'art contemporain à Montréal en 1847

En 1960, Evan H. Turner, alors directeur du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, écrivait, dans l'avant-propos du catalogue de deux cents œuvres choisies de la collection du musée, que l'*Art Association of Montreal* avait été fondée en 1860 «succédant à un organisme encore plus ancien appelé *The Montreal Society of Artists* qui remontait, lui, à 1847¹». En 1977, David G. Carter, alors directeur du musée, écrivait à son tour dans la préface du guide du musée que «l'histoire du musée remonte à l'année 1847 qui vit la naissance de la *Montreal Society of Artists*, précurseur de l'*Art Association of Montreal* formée en 1860²».

Lors de l'inauguration d'une nouvelle aile du musée, en 1976, les communiqués de presse sur l'histoire du musée³ — largement diffusés — avaient établi cette histoire «officielle» du musée à une échelle internationale⁴. Cette interprétation des origines du Musée des beaux-arts, qui permet d'ajouter treize ans à son histoire et de la raccrocher à un groupe d'artistes qui lui donnent ses lettres de noblesse, persiste encore jusqu'à nos jours⁵.

Les origines de cette interprétation remontent probablement à l'utilisation, comme source première, d'un article publié le 15 février 1908 dans *The Montreal Daily Star* et intitulé «The Montreal Art Gallery». Cet article est conservé dans les cahiers de coupures de presse des Archives du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal et il a souvent servi à ceux qui ont tenté jusqu'ici d'établir l'histoire du musée⁶. La confusion vient du paragraphe suivant :

The Montreal Art Association is now a power that makes itself widely felt, but its beginnings were small, another verification of the proverb that «great oaks from little acorns grow.» In 1847 the first exhibition of pictures was held by the Montreal Society of Artists, and it was from this society that in course of time the Art Association of to-day evolved⁷.

Le lien très étroit établi ici entre la *Montreal Society of Artists* et l'*Art Association of Montreal* ne résiste pas à un examen attentif des sources. D'une part, un récit manuscrit des origines de l'*Art Association of Montreal* datant de 1865 retrace les origines de cette association en ne faisant aucune mention de la *Montreal Society of Artists* :

In the beginning of the year 1860 a number of the lovers of the fine arts in Montreal, believing that the time had arrived when much good might be done by a combined effort to promote a taste for those arts among the people of Montreal, called a public meeting at which the subject was discussed and a Committee appointed to draft a Constitution and regulations for a Society having that object in view⁸.

D'autre part, aucun des sept artistes faisant partie de la *Montreal Society of Artists*, en 1847, n'était présent lors de la réunion du 11 janvier 1860 qui eut lieu chez le photographe William Notman et qui donna lieu à la fondation de l'*Art Association of Montreal*. Seul le nom de James Duncan se retrouve sur la liste des premiers membres en règle de l'*Art Association*⁹.

Jusqu'à ce jour peu de choses étaient connues de la *Montreal Society of Artists*¹⁰. Si aucune source manuscrite ne nous est encore connue, un dépouille-

ment systématique des journaux de Montréal pour les années 1846 et 1847 et le repérage du catalogue de l'exposition de 1847¹¹, reproduit in extenso en annexe, nous permettent maintenant d'en savoir un peu plus long et d'émettre quelques hypothèses.

Grâce aux recherches de Carol D. Lowrey, on sait maintenant que le premier regroupement d'artistes au Canada, *The Society of Artists and Amateurs*, eût lieu à Toronto en 1834¹². Présidée par un capitaine des Royal Engineers, Richard Bonnycastle (1791-1847), peintre amateur, elle comprenait dix-sept membres et présenta une exposition de 196 œuvres (accompagnée d'un catalogue) en juillet 1834, dans l'aile est du Parlement. Cette association avait pour modèle des associations locales d'Angleterre qui avaient pour but d'organiser des expositions annuelles et de distribuer des prix et récompenses sur une base permanente¹³. Des difficultés financières ne permirent pas à cette association de survivre à sa première exposition. Il fallut attendre en avril 1847 pour qu'une nouvelle exposition (386 œuvres) soit organisée à Toronto, du 12 avril au 1^{er} mai, par une nouvelle association, *The Toronto Society of Arts*, qui poursuivait des buts similaires et qui ne survécut pas à sa deuxième exposition (383 œuvres) en 1848¹⁴.

D'autre part, à Québec, en novembre 1833, le peintre Joseph Légaré (1795-1855) avait invité le public à visiter sa collection de tableaux et de gravures installée dans sa maison nouvellement construite, rue Sainte-Angèle¹⁵, et avait ouvert, en 1838, La Galerie de Peinture de Québec qui fut accueillie dans le public comme un «temple des beaux-arts» où se donnaient des cours de dessin et de peinture et des concerts¹⁶. Mais il s'agissait là d'une initiative individuelle du peintre et collectionneur plutôt que de celle d'un regroupement d'artistes.

La *Montreal Society of Artists* fut fondée à la fin de 1846, puisque l'annonce de sa première exposition fut publiée dans la *Montreal Gazette* à partir du 24 décembre de cette année-là. Le seul document qui nous permet de savoir qui en faisait partie est le catalogue de l'exposition publié en 1847¹⁷. Le président de l'association était le peintre d'origine écossaise Andrew Morris, dont on sait qu'il était à Montréal en 1844 et qu'on retrouve à New York en 1848¹⁸. Son trésorier était le peintre d'origine irlandaise James Duncan (1805-1881) établi à Montréal en 1830¹⁹. Son secrétaire était le peintre Robert T. Howden, dont on sait très peu de choses sinon qu'il fut actif à Montréal de 1839 à 1847²⁰. En plus de ces trois officiers, l'association comprenait quatre membres: le peintre Cornelius Kriehoff (1815-1872), né à Amsterdam²¹, le peintre d'origine anglaise William F. Wilson, établi à Montréal en 1842 et qu'on retrouve à Québec en 1847²², le peintre d'origine anglaise Martin Somerville (1796 ou 1797-1856) établi à Montréal depuis 1839²³ et, finalement, le peintre William Sawyer (Montréal, 1820 – Kingston, 1889), seul artiste du groupe à être né au Canada²⁴.

Le catalogue de l'exposition mentionne de plus deux membres honoraires de la *Montreal Society of Artists*. L'un est le chirurgien de l'armée britannique, A. A. Staunton, en garnison à Montréal depuis 1845, qui apparaît dans le tableau de Kriehoff n° 103 au catalogue de l'exposition (*An Officer's Room in Montreal*, maintenant au Royal Ontario Museum de Toronto sous le titre *Officer's Trophy Room*)²⁵ (fig. 1). Il n'est pas impossible que Staunton ait été



fig. 1 C. Krieghoff, *The Officer's Trophy Room*, 1843, Huile sur toile, 44,5 × 63,5 cm, Toronto, Canadian Decorative Arts Collection, Royal Ontario Museum. (Photo: R.O.M.)

artiste à ses heures puisque les numéros 39, 40, 108, 144 et 145 du catalogue sont des œuvres exécutées d'après ses esquisses. L'autre membre honoraire est Henry Samuel Davis, officier de l'armée britannique dont on sait qu'il était aussi peintre topographe²⁶ et qui est vraisemblablement l'amateur identifié sous les initiales H. S. D. au catalogue de l'exposition (20 œuvres).

À ces deux membres honoraires, il faut en ajouter un troisième en janvier 1847, l'éditeur du journal *The Morning Courier* qui est probablement à ce moment-là imprimé et publié par Thomas Finney, rue Saint-François-Xavier. «Of all the communications and criticisms, there is none which is more correct and impartial than that of the Editor of the Courier, of which one is well satisfied by the thanks of the artists, expressed by his unanimous election as honorary member of their society», peut-on lire dans une critique de l'exposition du 29 janvier 1847²⁷. Malheureusement, l'année 1847 du *Courier* reste introuvable jusqu'à ce jour...

La *Montreal Society of Artists* est donc composée de sept artistes liés au milieu anglophone de Montréal dont un seul est né au Canada. Depuis 1844 Montréal est la capitale du pays et, en 1847, c'est une ville en pleine expansion

qui compte près de 50,000 habitants dont plus de 40% sont d'origine française. Lorsque *L'Aurore des Canadas* signale, à l'été 1846, le retour d'Italie du peintre Théophile Hamel²⁸, il mentionne qu'on le sollicite pour qu'il vienne s'établir à Montréal plutôt qu'à Québec, sa ville natale, et ajoute: «pour nous, nous ferons des vœux sincères, pour que Montréal puisse le posséder comme nous aurions voulu y voir venir aussi M. Plamondon». Mais la clientèle des peintres francophones, bourgeoise et surtout religieuse, se trouve à Québec²⁹, tandis qu'il leur est difficile de vivre de leur art à Montréal.

Nous ne connaissons qu'un seul article en français qui mentionne l'initiative de la *Montreal Society of Artists*, celui de *La Minerve* du 18 janvier 1847:

GALERIE DE TABLEAUX – L'on a ouvert cette année une galerie de tableaux à Montréal. On peut voir dans la Grande rue St. Jacques, une magnifique collection des meilleurs ouvrages de nos artistes canadiens. Les plus remarquables de ces artistes sont MM. Kraieghoff, Morris, Wilson, Sommerville, Sawyer, Duncan, etc. L'exposition en question fait honneur à la province. La peinture dans ce pays, n'a pas été encouragée jusqu'aujourd'hui, et quoique nous puissions nous glorifier de posséder plusieurs bons artistes, on peut dire qu'ils sont pour la plupart inconnus. La démarche que l'on vient d'adopter fera faire un pas à cet art trop négligé parmi nous, et fera aussi connaître le mérite.

Cet article nous donne un des objectifs du regroupement d'artistes, soit tout simplement de se faire connaître pour créer un intérêt pour les arts à Montréal, et, par le fait même, une clientèle permettant aux artistes de subsister de leur art. Ce but est confirmé dans l'introduction du catalogue où l'on peut lire «the Artists throw themselves trustingly upon the public for encouragement, and hope that the patronage they shall receive on this occasion will stimulate them to greater exertions previous to their next appearance before the public³⁰».

Dans une longue critique de l'exposition parue le 29 janvier 1847, l'auteur, un médecin aux initiales H. N., situe bien le contexte montréalais en ce qui concerne les arts:

[...] None, I am persuaded, who has visited the exhibitions in Europe or in the United States, could pass a better spent hour than in examining the collection of paintings opened to public inspection in Great St. James street, and admiring the efforts which our native artists have made to create a desire among our population for the cultivation of fine arts. [...]

[...] The contributors have, by one unanimous effort, endeavoured to raise the fine arts from their dormant state, which to our shame be it said, have not received the twentieth part of the attention which they merit, and which is bestowed on them in Europe and in the United States. We now see what they have done – we can infer what they can do. Montreal, by its noble harbor, the splendour and elegance of its public institutions and private buildings, the Capital of British North America, ranks far below the second and third rate cities in the neighbouring Republic, from the want of encouragement of the fine arts & sciences in general. This is but too well shown, from the very limited number of portraits in the exhibition, and

from the few calls which painters have to furnish representations of scenes which in any country but this, would be valued almost beyond price. Art and talent have never been countenanced, the want of which is, that it has fallen to its now low condition. The only way of retrieving her hand, is by the formation of an Art Union Society, a National School of Design, on a scale commensurable with the daily increase of this country. Let it be based on the plan of the schools of Design in Europe, supported and countenanced by Government. Some of the sums of the civil list which are yearly granted pro forma, from which the country derives not the least advantage, might be more fitly applied to the purchase of casts, drawings, &c. &c. There are gentlemen plenty enough to instruct in the different studies of painting, landscapes, portrait, architectural and ornamental. What has not this branch been subservient to in its application to the arts and the household means? The grossest ill fashioned ornaments of a saloon have disappeared before the elegant, chaste and light productions of painting and manufacture united. Let any one read the description and examine the representations of the articles in the Manchester exhibition, and then he will see what art has done in all the branches of domestic manufacture.

We trust that the Artists for their interest in particular, and the advantage of the public in general, will exert all their influence with their friends, in this a people's common tribute to Art – that of making painting what it should be; that of placing it upon a footing parallel with its progress in the United States, if not in Europe. It would have the beneficial effect of developing talent among our countrymen, which by a proper course of training, might rival with any painter of the age. There are many endowed by nature, with a special tact for the fine arts, who are forced to resort to other avocations, from the want of means necessary to enable them to travel and spend some months in the European schools, who would gladly become pupils of such an institution of their leisure hours. The benefits accruing to the community at large are too evident to a reflecting mind to dwell upon them. [...] ³¹

On comprend mieux maintenant l'importance d'un regroupement d'artistes dans cette capitale qui, pour son encouragement aux beaux-arts et aux sciences, se classerait bien au-dessous des villes de deuxième ou de troisième ordre des États-Unis et où il n'existe aucune infrastructure ou institution officielle pour l'enseignement ou la diffusion des arts. Ce regroupement, qui se voulait à long terme, sera d'ailleurs éphémère, ne réussissant, malgré ses bonnes intentions, à subsister que quelques mois.

Pour atteindre ses objectifs, la *Montreal Society of Artists* se dote d'un lieu d'exposition, la *Montreal Gallery of Pictures* ou *Montreal Gallery of Paintings*, dans des locaux situés au-dessus de chez Monsieur Fraser (et probablement loués à celui-ci) au 25 Grande rue St-Jacques (Great St-James Street). Elle organise une exposition d'œuvres pour les artistes et amateurs résidant au Canada, forme un comité de sélection des œuvres et publie une annonce dans la *Montreal Gazette* qui a été rédigée le 22 décembre 1846 et sera publiée plusieurs fois du 24 décembre 1846 au 15 janvier 1847.

MONTREAL GALLERY OF PAINTINGS

THE FIRST EXHIBITION Of the WORKS of ARTISTS and AMATEURS resident in Canada, will be OPENED under the direction of the MONTREAL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, at Mr. FRASER'S ROOMS, No 25, Great St. James'-street, commencing upon MONDAY, the 11th of JANUARY next, and will continue open until further notice. All Artists and Amateurs desirous of exhibiting their Works will please to forward them to the Rooms on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th days of January next, betwixt the hours of 11 and 9 o'clock, for the approval of the Committee.

No Pictures will be received without frames.

The price of admission to the Exhibition, is 1s 3d each. Season Tickets for one person, 2s 6d,-Do. do. for two persons, 5s. Children half price.

Tickets will be obtained at the Rooms, the principal Book and Music Stores, and Hotels in the city.

Catalogues to be had at the Rooms, price 7½.
Dec. 22³².

L'exposition («Exhibition the First», comme il est dit sur la première page du catalogue) doit donc commencer le lundi onze janvier 1847 et la date de fermeture n'est pas spécifiée (fig. 2). Les tableaux soumis au comité, qui siègera du 2 au 4 janvier, doivent être encadrés. Les prix d'entrée sont fixés, de même que les lieux où on peut se procurer les billets et le coût du catalogue qui sera publié. Ce catalogue spécifie même que les visiteurs «carrying sticks, umbrellas & c., are requested to leave them in the Ante-Room upon entrance». Il spécifie aussi que ceux qui le souhaitent peuvent être autorisés à faire des copies des tableaux. Les tableaux à vendre sont indiqués par un astérisque au catalogue et la liste des prix est disponible auprès du gardien. L'organisation de cette exposition est, comme on le voit, hautement professionnelle.

S'il n'est pas possible de savoir comment étaient accrochées les œuvres, nous savons qu'elles ne suivaient pas l'ordre du catalogue: «The catalogue of the Exhibition are numbered from 1 to 179, but they are placed indiscriminately in the rooms³³». Le catalogue n'indique pas les dimensions des œuvres, mais il semble que la plupart d'entre elles n'aient pas été des œuvres de grand format: «There are a great variety of smaller pictures, most of them painted with great care, and very highly finished; but we will particularise no more, as we before observed³⁴». L'exposition comprend deux moulages (n^{os} 178 et 179) et les autres œuvres sont des huiles sur toile, des aquarelles, des esquisses, des miniatures sur ivoire, des pastels, pour autant que l'on se fie aux indices que nous fournit le catalogue.

Tous les membres de la *Montreal Society of Artists* sont représentés dans l'exposition. En terme de nombres, par ordre décroissant, ils sont ainsi représentés: 48 œuvres de Krieghoff (de loin le mieux représenté dans l'exposition), 21 œuvres de Somerville, 21 œuvres de Morris, 16 œuvres de Sawyer, 13 œuvres de Duncan, 7 œuvres de Wilson et 2 œuvres de Howden, soit 127 des 179 œuvres exposées.

Parmi les autres exposants, «H. S. D.», peut-être le major Henry Samuel Davis, domine nettement avec 20 œuvres. «Mr. Hope», peut-être James Hope dont on sait qu'il était portraitiste à Montréal de 1844 à 1846³⁵, est représenté par quatre œuvres. «Mr. Shanley», peut-être le peintre topographe C. Dawson Shanley dont on sait qu'il était à Montréal en 1846³⁶, est représenté par deux ou trois (no 108 non identifié) œuvres d'après les esquisses de Staunton. On trouve ensuite «Mr. Hartley» (une œuvre), «S.» (trois œuvres), «B. de Rottenburg» (deux œuvres) et «Mr. Drew» (deux œuvres). On peut aussi identifier avec certitude trois femmes: «Miss Deming» (sept œuvres, dont cinq sont peintes sur ivoire), «Miss Dunkin» (quatre œuvres) et «a Lady» (trois œuvres). Au total, 17 artistes et amateurs exposent leurs œuvres.

Il est intéressant de constater que seulement 27 des 179 œuvres sont en vente, c'est-à-dire précédées d'astérisques au catalogue et que, par ce fait même, l'exposition n'a apparemment pas pour but premier la vente des œuvres. Parmi les membres de la *Montreal Society of Artists*, Morris et Sawyer ont chacun six œuvres en vente, Krieghoff quatre œuvres seulement, Duncan et Wilson trois œuvres chacun et Somerville une œuvre. Hope, le seul des non-membres, met en vente les quatre œuvres qu'il présente.

Parmi les œuvres présentées on peut en relever (ce qui n'est pas toujours facile d'après les titres) un peu plus de 35 dont les sujets semblent être typiquement canadiens, et ce sont surtout des œuvres de Krieghoff, Morris et Duncan. Krieghoff, par exemple, présente cinq tableaux intitulés *Canadian Interior*, tandis que Morris en présente un. Nous en avons relevé à peu près le même nombre exécutés «d'après» d'autres œuvres, donc des copies. Ceux de Krieghoff sont particulièrement intéressants en ce sens que certaines des notices du catalogue nous permettent de savoir où les originaux sont conservés et ont probablement été copiés: le Musée du Luxembourg (nos 10-26-32-121) et le Musée du Louvre (nos 118-119-120-147).

À part la critique de l'exposition faite par l'éditeur du journal *The Morning Courier* que nous n'avons pu retracer, trois autres critiques nous sont connues. Elles sont publiées respectivement dans les journaux *Montreal Gazette* le 15 janvier 1847, *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce* le 29 janvier 1847 (signée «H. N., M. D.») et *Montreal Transcript and Commercial Advertiser* le 11 février 1847. En général, l'exposition est bien accueillie :

[...] There is no great variety of artists or of subjects, but still, as a beginning, it is commendable, and the rooms are well filled and produce a pleasing effect. To enter into minute criticism would be altogether out of place in an exhibition of the kind. [...] (*Montreal Gazette*)

SIR, – Allow me, through the medium of your widely circulated journal, to add my mite to the general praise bestowed on the exhibition of the Montreal Gallery of Paintings, by several editorial and anonymous communications in the different papers of this city. Every visitor must have been agreeably disappointed [?] at seeing so many paintings, the productions of a very limited number of artists, executed and collected in so short a time. [...]

By referring to the catalogue, we find that a great number of the paintings are copies. We are not in the least astonished, that in so short a time some of the artists and amateurs were not fully prepared to furnish originals; notwithstanding that, there is a number far more than sufficient to serve as criterions of the merits of the contributors. [...] (*The Pilot and Journal of Commerce*)

All our contemporaries have been before us in the notice they have taken of the above exhibition. We, however, paid a visit to the rooms on Saturday last; and although we had been prepared by the favorable remarks we had heard made respecting it, we willingly confess that the Exhibition was very far superior to what we expected to find it. [...]

[...] We trust, therefore, that if we express an opinion contrary to the general rules of art, we shall be forgiven, as our only object in making these remarks is that our readers, who may not yet have paid a visit to the Exhibition, may be tempted to do so, and we can assure them that in so doing both their time and money will be well expended. We have seen none of the public Galleries of Paintings in England excepting the National Gallery in London, and of course to compare the two would be absurd; but we have been assured by persons of judgement and undoubted veracity, that the newly opened Picture Gallery of Montreal already surpasses many of those, even in some of the largest Provincial towns in Great Britain. [...]

[...] The Exhibition is well worth a visit from our readers, to judge for themselves; and the citizens of Montreal have reason to be proud that they possess among them artists of such starling merit. (*Montreal Transcript and Commercial Advertiser*)

Le critique du journal *Montreal Gazette* divise son texte entre les artistes et les amateurs. Chez les artistes, il choisit de commenter généreusement les œuvres de Krieghoff et Morris et de mentionner Duncan, Wilson ainsi que Somerville, tandis que chez les amateurs, après avoir mentionné Miss Dunkin, sa faveur va à l'officier en garnison «H. S. D.» auquel il voue un texte admiratif. Il ne fait pas mention du catalogue qui n'est peut-être pas encore disponible car l'exposition s'est ouverte le lundi 11 janvier et sa critique paraît le vendredi 15 janvier.

[...] In his numerous specimens, Mr. Kreighoff shows very good taste in colouring, and perspective and drawing generally correct, and signs of originality which, under favourable auspices, would develop themselves. There is a great deal of merit in his interiors, particularly one of «an officer's apartment,» (we think it is called,) in which there is much skillful and characteristic grouping of inanimate objects, and great soundness and transparency of colouring, which, indeed, seems to be his leading characteristic. But it is unreasonable to expect all the merits of an original picture in a place where no one seems to have any notion of the great bodily and intellectual labour, and the adequate remuneration for it, required in producing such a work. This remark also applies to Mr. Morris, who cultivates so many branches of the pictorial art as to do injustice to himself. The walls are ornamented with many of his portraits, landscapes, groupes,

and other compositions. His portraits he endeavours, not unsuccessfully, not to make mere portraits, but to give them poetical and artistical feeling. We were much pleased with a number of sketches from the neighbourhood of Bytown, of which one of the Chaudieres is worked up in another place into a finished picture, faithful as a likeness, and highly respectable as a work of art, reminding us much of the style of Danby. Mr. Duncan's view of Quebec, Mr. Wilson's portrait of Colonel Wetherhall, and one or two drawings by Mr. Somerville, struck us as very meritorious. Of the amateurs, Miss Dunkin furnishes two effective and characteristic copies after Joseph Vernet; and a nameless gentleman, an officer of the garrison, we believe, who rejoices in the initials of H. S. D., but whose incognito we are not at liberty to violate contributes a great number of drawings in water-colours, being principally original sketches made on the spot, in Ireland and the West Indies; the subjects of all sorts, from the gloomy grandeur of the Chapel of the Kings at Cashel to the laughing luxuriance of tropical vegetation. These are all very clever, far above the ordinary level of mere amateur efforts, and there is one picture of a scene in the Island of St. Vincent, the bay and distant mountain in front, the middle ground a deep ravine dimly relieved by the foam of the torrent, the whole seen through a rich foliage pierced by a natural arch, which is positively Martinique, both in conception and treatment.

Le médecin aux initiales H. N. qui publie sa longue critique dans *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce* du vendredi 29 janvier passe en revue les œuvres de 14 des exposants. Il mentionne à peine Rottenburg, Hope, Shanley et Drew, élabore longuement sans complaisance sur Morris et Krieghoff, se montre sévère pour Duncan et Wilson et ne tarit pas d'éloges pour H. S. D.. Son approche des œuvres démontre sa culture visuelle, tout comme sa description de la situation des beaux-arts à Montréal démontre l'étendue de sa culture générale.

MORRIS. – This gentleman has contributed 22 pieces. His Scottish pieces are very finely coloured, and in good keeping. The only thing which may be considered as a fault is the large size of the left hand of the Lairs. The Fisher's Tryst is coloured in a remarkably harmonious manner; the Pony is all but the real thing, «alive and kicking.» La Chaudière at Bytown; – the good light and shade thrown in the composition of this piece renders it rather a pleasing picture, but the yellow of the moon and the purple of the clouds are not true to nature under similar circumstances. If this artist would substitute the fine gray of the Flemish school for the predominant purple of many of his paintings, they would present an appearance much more pleasing to the close admirer of nature. His Cathedral is a very meticulous piece, by its finish; but we must admit, with others, that there is an apparent want of perspective, – the result of which is the disproportionate size of the towers. The perspective of Notre Dame Street is also incorrect.

KREIGHOFF-48 pieces. – Many of the numerous contributions of this artist are copies; but for their faithful delineation and correct execution, he has secured for himself the highest praise of the connoisseurs. Among his original compositions we must mention Nos. 50, 54, 55, 62, 63 and 84, in which are the truest representations of home scenes in the room, apart of their happy grouping and well-kept colouring. The Canadian Habitant

possesses more or less the merit of characteristic expressions which amends somewhat for the hurried execution of many of his small pictures. No. 23 is a very pleasing production; composition correct, colouring harmonious. No. 26 too crude in colour; the artist has not done himself as much justice in this as in the other copies. Nos. 89 and 90, both subjects taken from Sir Walter Scott's «Abbott». The general composition of both these pictures is in admirable good keeping; the dramatis personæ are introduced without confusion, and the apparent coldness and want of vigor in the shades is to be attributed, as we were informed by the attendant, to their unfinished state, the artist having merely placed them in the exhibition for the purpose of offering as much variety of subjects as possible. Nevertheless they are admired by all, and are a credit to the painter's originality. The best picture in the room is, without doubt, the View near the Boulogne – though the choice of the Editor of the Courier is Remus and Romulus. This artist is now engaged completing a picture of Queen Victoria, intended for the Legislative Assembly, and which, we trust, will be placed along with his other paintings for some few days in the exhibition.

SAWYER-15 – His own Portrait, St. Cecilia and Happy as a King, are very well drawn; and with the exception of Somewhat brownish tints in the shade, are well coloured. His Portrait of Lord Mansfield is a very faithful copy of the original by Reynolds.

SOMERVILLE-21 – This gentleman has contributed several water paintings, and sketches. His Parthenon, though rather cool for the glaring sun of Athens, finely executed; the ruins as well as the skies masterly. His pencil sketches of trees after Harding, rival with the originals. His flower paintings are remarkably fine and true to life.

H.S.D. (Amateur) – The compositions in water colours by this gentleman, would do honour and credit to any exhibition. He has amply improved the opportunities his profession and travels have presented him, by his happy talent of placing the reds and the greens, he sets off the perspective of his pictures to so much advantage – throwing afar the back ground, middle distance. His productions would establish the fame of any Artist of the English Water Colour School.

DUNCAN-13 – The view from Quebec by this Gentleman is too cold – the sky a far distance, good middle distance, too purple, – the foreground would present a far more pleasing effect, had the Artist introduced some of the large trees of this country, and carrying the foliage so as to break upon the sky, thereby increasing the distance, and adding very much to the general effect of the picture.

S. (Amateur)-4 – We regret that this accomplished gentleman has not favoured the Montreal public with more of the numerous sketches and drawings he has collected in his extensive travels in the East. He possesses the happy and ready facility of transferring to paper with the precision and taste of an old Artist, scenes rendered celebrated by historical tradition.

R. ROTTENBURON (Amateur)-2 – Boldly touched off and airy.

HOPE-4 – His Head of Burns, denotes much improvement.

MISS DENNING-7 – This lady, well known to the Montreal public,

has contributed several pieces, mostly miniatures – her works speak for themselves.

MISS DUNKIN-4 – This lady possesses talents of a very high order, which with a little more cultivation from original subjects, will place her high in the rank of landscape painters.

WILSON-7 – Portrait of Col. Wetherhall, the lower part of the red uniform, ought to have been thrown into a shade, and the light cast upon the shoulders; the red curtain and reddish grey of the back grounds are most injudiciously introduced; the head, though an excellent likeness, is without dignity. The several other pieces of this artist denote fine talents and good taste, and though a very promising portrait painter, we would advise Mr. Wilson to study «Burnet on Painting.»

SAMPLEY-9 – Faithful copies of sketching made by the Amateur Artist «S».

DREW-9 – Promising copies of landscape.

La dernière des critiques connues est publiée le 11 février, un mois après l'ouverture de l'exposition, dans le journal *Montreal Transcript and Commercial Advertiser*. Son auteur représente probablement le «visiteur moyen» de cette époque: «To attempt», écrit-il pour se protéger, «criticism on a subject of this kind requires not only a correct taste, but a perfect knowledge of the art in question. Therefore, as we do not pretend to possess that knowledge, the paintings we most admire may not be those possessing most merit, excepting in our opinion.» Il aborde les œuvres par catégories plutôt que par artistes.

[...] We commence with the portraits, and as the largest on the list is that of Thorwaldsen, the great Danish sculptor, we will first observe of this picture that it is magnificent in appearance; it is considerably larger than life, and most accurately finished. The countenance is intellectual, and decidedly Danish, both in complexion and in character. It is a copy after Bowman, by Kreighoff.

The other portraits that we particularly noticed, are Lord Mansfield, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, by Mr. Sawyer.

Study of a Head – we suppose a portrait; «very superior,» also by Sawyer.

A portrait of Colonel Wetherhall, by Mr. Wilson, a most correct likeness.

Of the Landscapes – La Chaudière, at Bytown, by Mr. Morris, is, in our opinion, beautiful, as indeed are all the Sketches of Waterfalls in the room.

The View of Quebec from Point Levey, is very correct, although we think that the foreground is rather too vivid. This picture is by Mr. Duncan.

The Winter Scenes – chiefly by Kreighoff, are all excellently painted, and very true to nature – so true, as almost to make one shiver to look at them.

The Piazza San Marco, a Venetian Scene, is perfectly after the Italian School, and very elaborately and beautifully painted.

This picture is also by Kreighoff.

Of the Scenes taken from Scott's Novel, of the «Abbot,» we object to the attitude of the Page, which is, in our opinion, too violently depicted. In our imagination, he should rather be stealing the keys gently from the table than thus rudely snatching them, if he hoped to elude the vigilance of the lady warder. These pictures are likewise by Kreighoff.

Romulus and Remus, by the same artist, is a copy from Champmar, in the

Museum of the Luxembourg, at Paris, and is a splendid painting. The countenances of the two infants are remarkably beautiful.

L'initiative de la *Montreal Society of Artists* reçoit donc beaucoup d'attention de la part des journaux en s'attirant quatre critiques qui toutes saluent positivement cette initiative. L'une de ces critiques, celle du *Morning Courier* ou *Montreal Courier* publiée le jeudi 14 janvier 1847 (celle que nous n'avons pu retracer)³⁷, suscite une controverse intéressante. Le mercredi 13 janvier, deux jours après l'ouverture de l'exposition de la *Montreal Gallery of Pictures* et à deux pas de ses locaux, au 10 Grande rue St-Jacques, les marchands R & C Chalmers annoncent dans la *Montreal Gazette* qu'ils viennent d'ouvrir, au-dessus de leur magasin, une exposition de gravures (en vente à bas prix) dont l'entrée est gratuite, «a splendid collection of the best English Engravings, in elegant Frames; also a great variety of French and English Lithographs, plain and coloured³⁸».

Cette exposition soulève l'ire du critique du *Morning Courier* et une longue réplique des marchands R & C Chalmers qui paraît le lendemain, vendredi 15 janvier, dans la *Montreal Gazette*. Ils parlent de «a most extraordinary and unjustifiable attack upon ourselves», citent le texte en question et s'expliquent :

Your correspondent, in speaking of the «great hunkering some people have after Engravings,» &c., says – «While on the subject, I would make a few observations on the exhibition of engravings belonging to Messrs. Chalmers, which they advertise as being open gratis to the public, and offer for sale at low prices; this has evidently been done by them as a catch to the public, either to cause them to subscribe to some intended lottery, or from a fear that the exhibition of the Artists should enable them to make a little money as well as themselves. But if the public do right they will show these gentlemen that they are not to be gulled in that way, and that they will patronize that exhibition which has a higher object in view than more personal pecuniary gains.» It is impossible to peruse these remarks of this liberal-minded patron of the Fine Arts, without seeing his object, – the malicious nature of the whole paragraph is too glaring to deceive the meanest capacity, and we feel perfectly satisfied such is the light in which the public generally will view it. Indeed, were it not that our silence might, by some, be misconstrued, we should have considered the affair too contemptible to notice.

The fact simply is, that having, as is well known, a large stock of Engravings, and our store being at present too small for showing them to advantage, it has been our intention, ever since last summer, to have the large room above fitted up for that purpose, on the same plan as similar, though larger, establishments in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. From various causes, however, we found it necessary to postpone our intention till the new year, and it is only now that we have been able to accomplish it.

Mr. Kreighoff, the Artist, (who has permitted us to use his name), and others have been all along aware of our intention, so that we can and do confidently disclaim all thought of interfering with the Artists' Exhibition of Paintings; – nor can we conceive how such interference could have

benefited us, had we even entertained the idea; but, on the contrary, it is our belief that it will rather operate favourably than otherwise on the Artists' Exhibition, (and we should be the last to wish it should do otherwise), both having a similar tendency.

Cette controverse révèle un des problèmes de l'art contemporain de l'époque qui doit, pour s'affirmer, survivre et trouver une clientèle, concurrencer auprès des collectionneurs l'engouement pour les gravures et lithographies anglaises et françaises qui sont importées et vendues en grande quantité et dont les sujets³⁹ retiennent plus l'attention des collectionneurs que les sujets «locaux». R. Chalmers était aussi le représentant officiel à Montréal de l'*Art Union* de Londres, dont un abonnement à l'*Art Union Journal* donnait la possibilité de recevoir annuellement une gravure et une chance de gagner une œuvre d'art tirée au sort chaque année⁴⁰. L'exposition de gravures des marchands Chalmers, qui était accompagnée d'un catalogue, se termina le 20 avril 1847⁴¹.

Il n'est pas possible de savoir quand se termina l'exposition de la *Montreal Society of Artists*, ni précisément quand et pourquoi en 1847 ce regroupement prit fin. Malgré le succès de visibilité de l'exposition dans le milieu anglophone de Montréal, elle ne connut probablement pas un succès de foule suffisant pour amortir ses frais de location et de gardiennage des locaux. Le 10 février 1847, les artistes annoncent la tenue d'un bal, le lundi 15 février suivant, pour recueillir des fonds :

GRAND SOIRÉE

in the aid of
THE FINE ARTS

A select soiree will take place on Monday, the 15th February, in the Room now occupied as the GALLERY OF PAINTINGS, No. 25, Great St. James-street.

Refreshments will be provided during the course of the evening, and a Band of Music will be in attendance.

LADY PATRONESSES:

MRS. MOFFAT,
MRS. DR. ROBERTSON,
MRS. CHAS LINDSAY.

Dancing to commence at 8 o'clock. Gentlemen's Tickets 7s. 6d. each
Ladies' do 2s. 6d. do

To be had at the Music Stores of Messrs. Mead and Herbert; at Mr. John Keiller's, and at the Gallery.

The number of Tickets is limited.

Feb. 10⁴².

L'organisation de bals ou soirées musicales pour faire des levées de fonds était alors chose courante. Dans la même édition de la *Montreal Gazette* du 10 février, on retrouve, par exemple, des annonces pour un concert bénéfice le 13 février sous le patronage du gouverneur-général pour «The Relief of The Famishing Poor of Montreal», et une soirée dansante de charité, le 11 février,

pour l'hôpital universitaire. L'organisation de la «grande soirée» de la *Montreal Society of Artists* est soulignée à deux reprises par la *Montreal Gazette* :

It will be seen that a splendid Soiree is about to be given shortly for the aid of the Montreal Society of Artists. From the programme we have seen, it would appear that great things may be expected; and as we imagine the pictures even if removed from the room, will be to be inspected on that evening, they will greatly enhance the pleasures of the soiree, and should draw a full attendance. Such Societies as this, are deserving of public patronage⁴³.

Those ladies and gentlemen who have tickets for the Soiree to be held at the Gallery of Paintings, in Great St. James-street, are reminded that it takes place this evening. The Tickets to this Soiree are limited in number on account of the size of the rooms; the object is to introduce Pictures to more general notice, and not to increase the funds of the Society; the price has therefore been limited to just sufficient to cover the expenses⁴⁴.

On ne retrouve plus de mentions dans les journaux de la *Montreal Society of Artists* ou de son exposition après le 15 février 1847. Des difficultés financières en vinrent-elles à bout? Il est possible aussi que quelques-uns des artistes qui faisaient partie du regroupement n'aient pas trouvé à Montréal la clientèle nécessaire pour continuer à y vivre: Andrew Morris était à New York en 1848, de même que William Sawyer en 1851. William F. Wilson était à Québec en 1847 ainsi que Krieghoff au début des années 1850.

Il est possible enfin qu'il y ait eu une autre raison pour la cessation des activités de la *Montreal Society of Artists*. L'arrivée du printemps 1847 à Montréal marque aussi l'arrivée de centaines d'immigrants irlandais entassés sur des bateaux dans des conditions innommables et atteints de typhus. On tente de les isoler dans des baraquements à Pointe-Saint-Charles, mais l'épidémie se répand à Montréal et fait plus de 2000 morts⁴⁵. C'est peut-être au cours de cette épidémie que mourut le docteur A. A. Staunton, membre honoraire de la *Montreal Society of Artists*⁴⁶.

Les journaux d'avril 1847 sont remplis de ventes à l'encan de Montréalais qui songent sans doute à fuir l'épidémie. L'une de ces ventes concerne le marchand et collectionneur Benaiah Gibb (1798-1877) qui met en vente, le 12 avril, par l'entremise de l'encanteur John Jones, tout le contenu de sa maison rue Notre-Dame ainsi que «a small Collection of Oil Paintings, several by Italian Masters⁴⁷». Un autre collectionneur, par l'entremise de l'encanteur John Leeming, met en vente le 13 avril une collection de peintures et gravures qui attire l'attention de l'éditeur de la *Montreal Gazette* :

We would direct the attention of our readers to the magnificent collection of Oil Paintings and Engravings on view this day, Monday, in the large front room of the Montreal Insurance Company, Great St. James-street. These Paintings have been selected with great care in Europe, and were not intended for public competition here – the proprietor, however, has now submitted the whole for sale, by auction, on Tuesday, at 11 o'clock, by Mr. John Leeming. We understand there are nearly eighty different works – many of them choice specimens of art, and elegantly framed. We looked in on Saturday, and took a cursory glance at those of them which were in a

position to be viewed. Some of the landscapes struck us as remarkably beautiful. Many of the paintings, we find, are by the first masters of the foreign schools of painting, among whom we may mention Carlo Dolce, Velasquez, Guercino, Spagnoletti, Sebastian Ricci, and others of equal note. The admirers of beautiful and valuable pictures will have an excellent opportunity of adding to their collections these gems of art⁴⁸.

L'encanteur, dans son annonce de la vente, décrit la collection :

The Paintings were selected with great care in Europe, and were not intended for public competition here. The Proprietor, however, preferring an unreserved Sale of the whole by Auction, to allowing a partial selection at private sale, submits the entire Collection, with a determination to have them Sold.

There are nearly 80 different Works – many of them really choice, and elegantly Framed: amongst the Collection are –

Head of Christ – Carlo Dolci
St. Charles Borromea – P. da Cortona
Cupid playing with Arms – N. Coypel
Death of Adonis – Larcasse [?]
Landscape – S. Ruysdael
Monk Asleep – Spagnoletti
Landscape – Velasquez
Head of Luther – Frank Hals
Flower Piece – Rachel Ruysch
Concert of Birds – 1673
Forest Scene and Bears – Bresch
Deliverance of St. Peter – Guercino
Full Length Magdalen – Sebastian Ricci
&c. &c. &c. &c.

ALSO

A magnificent Collection of ENGRAVINGS, by eminent Artists, consisting of 106 Lots, amongst which are –

Knights of the Bath and Garter
St. Francis and Cecilia
Chartres Cathedral
The Royal Hounds
Death of Thomas A' Becket
View of Montserrat
Hotel du Ville, at Louvaine
Palais de Justice, at Rouen
Jacob's Dream
Rebecca and Flora Macdonald.

A Catalogue of the whole will be published, and the whole on view, as above, two days before the Sale.

sale at eleven o'clock

John Leeming

March 31⁴⁹.

Il y avait à Montréal en 1847, dans le milieu anglophone, des collectionneurs et amateurs d'art qui ne se trouvaient pas uniquement parmi les officiers de la garnison anglaise. Leur intérêt principal allait cependant à des œuvres, peintures et gravures, d'origine européenne. Les artistes établis ou qui tentaient de s'établir à Montréal et de peindre des sujets canadiens semblent avoir trouvé une clientèle plutôt du côté de la garnison que des riches marchands. En ce sens, le déplacement de Krieghoff vers la ville de Québec, où la garnison était plus nombreuse, est significatif.

La *Montreal Society of Artists* était un regroupement à long terme visant à développer le goût du public pour des œuvres d'artistes locaux. La *Montreal Gallery of Pictures* devait présenter plusieurs expositions: elle ne réussit à en organiser qu'une seule. Le milieu culturel, en ce qui concerne les beaux-arts, était encore trop attaché à l'Europe et l'enseignement des arts, à part quelques écoles privées, n'existait pas. La plupart des artistes devaient se déplacer là où la clientèle leur était le plus favorable. Et il n'y avait à Montréal aucun musée ou galerie publique où les artistes auraient pu faire connaître leurs productions.

En ce sens, la *Montreal Gallery of Pictures* peut être considérée comme la première tentative d'établir à Montréal un lieu permanent d'exposition pour l'art contemporain.

JEAN TRUDEL
Université de Montréal

Notes

Les recherches concernant la *Montreal Society of Artists* ont été faites en 1989 dans le cadre de recherches plus larges concernant l'histoire du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. Depuis l'été 1990, l'auteur bénéficie, en tant que chercheur principal, d'une subvention du Conseil de Recherche en Sciences Humaines pour un projet intitulé: «L'idée de musée au Québec 1824-1988: la collection».

Les citations des sources originales sont reproduites sans corrections.

- 1 *Le Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal*, Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1960.
- 2 *Guide*, Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1977, p.4.
- 3 «In North American terms, Montreal's organized interest in art goes back a remarkably long time. The Montreal Society of Artists was formed as early as 1847. Andrew Morris was president; James Duncan, treasurer, and R.T. Howden, secretary. The artist-members included the one genuine 'Old Master', Cornelius Krieghoff. But the Society had no building of its own, with the result that it had to use rented quarters – Bonaventure Hall and the Mercantile Library Association were two of the usual sites – to present loan exhibitions. Thirteen years later, however, the Society, with 80 members, was to constitute the nucleus for a more broadly-based group, the Art Association of Montreal – one of the first recorded marriages in America between artists and businessmen». Archives du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

- 4 Denys SUTTON, «A tradition of collecting», *Apollo*, vol. CIII, n° 171 (mai 1976).
- 5 Rosalind M. PEPALL, *Construction d'un musée des Beaux-Arts. Montréal 1912*, Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1986, p.19; Guy PINARD, «Montréal, son histoire, son architecture», Montréal, *La Presse*, tome 3 (1989), pp. 176-177; Jean TRUDEL, «Les musées au Québec: un point de vue», *En vue du 21^e siècle*, Leslie H. TEPPER éditeur, Hull, Musée canadien des civilisations, collection Mercure, série Bureau du directeur, n° 5, 1989, p.142; Janet M. BROOKE, *Le goût de l'art. Les collectionneurs montréalais 1880-1920*, Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1989, p.11: Janet M. Brooke se réfère ici à un article manuscrit de Jean TRUDEL, «La fondation du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal en 1860», complété en décembre 1988 (à paraître dans *Amphion* à Paris) qui affirme clairement qu'il n'y a pas de liens directs entre la *Montreal Society of Artists* et l'*Art Association of Montreal*. ...La rédaction du texte «Les musées au Québec: un point de vue» avait été complétée en avril 1988.
- 6 Voir Pierre LEDUC, *Les origines et le développement de L'Art Association de Montréal*, Montréal, Université de Montréal, thèse de maîtrise, 1963, p.8.
- 7 *The Montreal Daily Star*, 15 février 1908, p.8.
- 8 *Report. General Meeting, 1865*, Archives du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, document manuscrit, 6 pages.
- 9 TRUDEL, «La fondation du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal en 1860».
- 10 Voir Dennis REID, *Notre patrie le Canada*, Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1979, p.100; J. Russel HARPER, *Krieghoff*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979, p.20.
- 11 L'auteur remercie Messieurs Charles C. Hill, conservateur de l'art canadien au Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, et Michael Bell, conservateur associé à l'Agnes Etherington Art Centre, pour le dépistage d'un exemplaire original de ce catalogue.
- 12 Carol D. LOWREY, «The Society of Artists and Amateurs, 1834: Toronto's First Art Exhibition and Its Antecedents», *RACAR* (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review), vol. VIII, n° 2 (1981), pp. 99-118.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.101.
- 14 Carol D. LOWREY, «The Toronto Society of Arts, 1847-1848: Patriotism and the Pursuit of Culture in Canada West», *RACAR* (Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review), vol. XII, n° 1 (1985), pp. 3-34.
- 15 John R. PORTER, *Joseph Légaré 1795-1855. L'œuvre*, Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada, 1978, p.14.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p.14.
- 17 *Catalogue For The Montreal Gallery Of Pictures, 1847. Exhibition The First*, Montréal, Lovell and Gibson imprimeurs, 1847, p.3.
- 18 J. Russell HARPER, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1970, p.230.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98; Patricia A. TODD, «Duncan, James D.», *Dictionnaire Biographique du Canada*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, vol. XI, 1982, pp. 313-314.
- 20 HARPER, *Early Painters...*, p.165.
- 21 HARPER, *Krieghoff*.
- 22 HARPER, *Early Painters...*, p.336.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p.294.
- 24 Michael BELL, «Sawyer, William», *Dictionnaire Biographique du Canada*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, vol. XI, 1982, pp. 889-890.
- 25 HARPER, *Krieghoff*, pp. 20-21. Voir aussi Jean TRUDEL, «Le Musée des traces d'Irene

F. Whittome. L'imaginaire comme objet de curiosité», *Parachute*, n° 57 (janvier, février, mars 1990), pp. 6-7.

26 HARPER, *Early Painters...*, p.85.

27 *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce*, vol. III, n° 411, 29 janvier 1847.

28 *L'Aurore des Canadas*, vendredi 11 août 1846.

29 HARPER, *Krieghoff*, p.20.

30 *Catalogue...*, p.4.

31 *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce*. Voir à ce sujet l'article de John R. PORTER, «La société québécoise et l'«encouragement» aux artistes de 1825 à 1850», *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, vol. IV, n° 1 (1977), pp. 13-24.

32 *Montreal Gazette*, 11 janvier 1847.

33 *Montreal Transcript and Commercial Advertiser*, 11 février 1847.

34 *Ibid.*

35 HARPER, *Early Painters...*, p.162.

36 *Ibid.*, p.285.

37 Voir au sujet de ce journal André BEAULIEU et Jean HAMELIN, *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, Tome premier 1764-1859, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973, pp. 83-84.

38 *Montreal Gazette*, mercredi 13 janvier 1847.

39 Pour les sujets des gravures, voir la *Montreal Gazette*, 1^{er} mars 1847: «The Waterloo Heroes, Knight; The Return from Hawking, Landseer; Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time, do; The Challenge, do; The Sanctuary, do; The Chelsea Pensioners, Wilkie; The Greenwich Pensioners, Burnett; Prince Charles Edward and the Highlanders entering Edinburgh, Duncan; The Highlanders Return, Wilkie; Highland Hospitality, Lewis; Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Hayter; The Queen and Children, Landseer; H. R. H. Prince Albert (Full Length), Falten; The Dying Camel in the Desert, Warren; Army and Navy – Portraits of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Nelson; Portrait of the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon, Sir R. Peel &c. &c.».

40 Voir à ce sujet la *Montreal Gazette*; 24 février 1847; 8 mars 1847; 12 avril 1847; 5 juillet 1847.

41 *Ibid.*, 12 avril 1847.

42 *Ibid.*, 10 février 1847 et 12 février 1847.

43 *Ibid.*, 11 février 1847.

44 *Ibid.*, 15 février 1847.

45 Robert RUMILLY, *Histoire de Montréal*, Tome II, 1761-1867, Montréal, Fides, 1970, pp. 310-311.

46 Selon J. Russel Harper, il serait mort peu après l'exécution du tableau *Officer's Trophy Room* en 1846. Voir *Krieghoff*, p.20.

47 *Montreal Gazette*, 12 avril 1847.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*



fig. 2 Catalogue for the Montreal Gallery of Pictures, 1847, Exhibition The First, Montréal, Lovell and Gibson, St. Nicholas Street. (Photo: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston)

C A T A L O G U E
FOR THE
MONTREAL
GALLERY OF PICTURES.
1847.

EXHIBITION THE FIRST.

"Useful Arts pave the way to Fine Arts. Men upon whom the former had bestowed every convenience turned their thoughts to the latter. Beauty was studied in objects of sight, and men of taste attached themselves to the Fine Arts, which multiplied their enjoyments and improved their benevolence."—HAZLITT.

OPEN EVERY DAY, FROM 11, A. M. TILL 4, P. M.

☞ Visitors carrying sticks, umbrellas, &c., are requested to leave them in the Ante-Room upon entrance.

PRICE, SEVEN PENCE HALFPENNY.

Montreal:

PRINTED BY LOVELL AND GIBSON, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

1847.

Those Pictures only that are marked with an asterisk
are for Sale.

Persons desirous of having Duplicates of Pictures that are
permitted to be copied, will please apply to the Clerk in
attendance or to the respective Artists. A list of the
prices will be found with the Clerk.

Montreal Society of Artists.

ANDREW MORRIS,.....*President.*
JAMES DUNCAN,.....*Treasurer.*
R. T. HOWDEN,.....*Secretary.*

Members.

CORNELIUS KRIEGHOFF, | M. SOMERVILLE,
W. F. WILSON, | W. SAWYER.

Honorary Members.

DR. STAUNTON, R. A.
MAJOR H. S. DAVIS, 52d Regt.

INTRODUCTION.

IN opening the present Exhibition, the Montreal Artists are aware that their efforts must appear to great disadvantage, from the short time they have had to prepare a sufficient variety of Works, or time to execute Pictures of sufficient elaboration to come before the "public tribunal;"—they trust, at the same time, that what may be considered a deficiency in QUANTITY will be atoned for by the *quality* of their productions, as they have carefully selected their best, and have strictly excluded those of their Works which might be deemed common-place or offensive to taste. Emboldened by the necessity and novelty of the present "Essai," the Artists throw themselves trustingly upon the public for encouragement, and hope that the patronage they shall receive on this occasion will stimulate them to greater exertions previous to their next appearance before the public.

The Montreal Artists have to express their grateful thanks to those gentlemen who have so kindly loaned their Pictures to the Society for exhibition, and trust that this liberal spirit will increase and be continued to them in future.

CATALOGUE

FOR THE

Montreal Gallery of Pictures.

1. The Laird and the Guid Wife, by *Mr. Morris.*
2. Portrait of Thorwaldsen, the celebrated Danish Sculptor. Copy after Bowman, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
3. Portrait, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, by
Mr. Sawyer.
4. View of the City of Montreal from the Mountain, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
5. The Ruins of the Temple of the Parthenon, at Athens, by.....*Mr. Somerville.*
6. Harlech Castle, N. Wales, by.....*H. S. D.*
7. The Fisher's Tryst. Scene near Edinburgh, by
Mr. Morris.
8. View of Quebec from a rising ground back from the Heights above Point Levy, by *Mr. Duncan.*
9. Moonlight ; Composition, by.....*H. S. D.*

- 10. *Romulus and Remus*. Copy from the Original, by Champmartin, in the Museum of the Luxembourg, Paris, by..... *Mr. Krieghoff.*
- 11. *Winter Scene*, by..... " *Hartley.*
- 12. *Canadian Interior*, by..... " *Morris*
- 13. *Our Ain Fireside*, by..... " *Morris.*
- 14. *Head of Saint Peter, painted on Glass*, by
Mr. Somerville.
- 15. *The Itinerant Bagpiper*, by..... " *Krieghoff.*
- 16. *Canadian Interior*, by..... " *Krieghoff.*
- 17. *The Tipplers*, by..... " *Somerville.*
- 18. *St. Cecilia; after Guercino*, by... " *Sawyer.*
- 19. *Portrait in Crayon*, by..... " *Krieghoff.*
- 20. *Ianthe. Head, in Pencil*, by..... " *Somerville.*
- 21. *Portrait*, by..... " *Morris.*
- 22. *Portrait*, by..... " *Morris.*
- 23. *Italian Contadina. Gathering Grapes*, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
- 24. *Portrait*, by..... " *Morris.*
- 25. *Scene in the Commandant's Garden, St. Vincents*, by..... *H. S. D.*
- 26. *Strolling Actors preparing to play in a Country place, from the Original, by Biard, in the Luxembourg Museum*, by..... *Mr. Krieghoff.*
- 27. "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," by
Mr. Morris.
- 28. *Sketch on the Rhine*, by..... " *Sawyer.*

- 29. *Landscape Study*, by..... *Mr. Sawyer.*
 - 30. *The Chief's Daughter*, by..... " *Somerville.*
 - 31. *La Chaudière at Bytown—moonlight*. by
Mr. Morris.
- The broad column which rolls on, and shows
 More like the fountain of an infant sea,
 Torn from the womb of mountains by the throes
 Of a new world, than only thus to be
 Parent of rivers, which flow gushing,
 With many windings, thro' the vale :— Look back!
 Lo! where it comes, like an eternity,
 As if to sweep all things in its track :—
 Charming the eye with dread—a matchless cataract."
- 32. *German Winter Scene; a Prussian Forester talking to children in a Sleigh. From the Original by Wickenberg; in the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris*, by..... *Mr. Krieghoff.*
 - 33. } Studies of Flower.—Geranium and Fucia,
 - 34. } from nature; Tulip, after Andrews, by
 - 35. } *Mr. Somerville.*
 - 36. *Study of a Head*, by..... *Mr. Sawyer.*
 - 37. *Sketch of an attack of Bedouins in the Desert of Sinzam*, by..... *S.*
 - 38. *Sketch of a Bivouac in Persia, during a Night Storm*, by..... *S.*
 - 39. *Portrait of Sheikh Ibrahim, Chief of Whaba-bees; from an original Sketch taken by Dr. Staunton, R. A.*, by..... *Mr. Krieghoff.*

40. Portrait of Doaub, Chief of the Anazi Bedouins; from an original Sketch by Dr. Staunton, R. A., by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*.
41. Caravanserai in Mesopotamia: from an original Sketch. by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*.
42. The Plains of Babylon; from a Sketch, by
Mr. Krieghoff.

Studies of Trees.

43. Oak.
44. Ash.
45. Beech.
46. Elm.
47. Pine.
48. Lime, by.....*Mr. Somerville*.
49. Alpine Scenery, after Bartlett, by *Mr. Sawyer*.
50. The Alchemist, after Eugène Isabey. (French School,) by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*.
51. The Last Ray, by.....*Mr. Sawyer*.
52. "Happy as King;" after Collins, by " *Sawyer*.
53. Flower Piece, by..... " *Somerville*.
- * 54. The Artist's Studio, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*.
55. The Astrologer, by..... " *Krieghoff*.
56. Sketch in Berbice, B. Guiana, by *H. S. D.*
- * 57. Canadian Deer Hunters, by.....*Mr. Duncan*.
- * 58. Do. do. by..... " *Duncan*.
- * 59. Sleighing in Canada, Sunset, by...*Mr. Krieghoff*.
60. Landscape after Topham, by.....*B. de Rottenburg*.

61. Sketch of the Entrance into Corfu, by *S.*
62. Canadian Interior, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*
63. Do. by..... " *Krieghoff*.
64. Memento Mori. Study in Chalk, by
H. S. D.
65. Two Studies. Figure and Furniture.
H. S. D.
66. View taken near Boulogne, from Nature, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
67. Tobin's Cottage, Montreal Mountain, by
Mr. Morris.
68. Road Scene, near Montreal, by..... " *Morris*.
- * 69. St. Cecilia, on Ivory, by.....*Mr. Somerville*
- * 70. The Parkside, after Collins,.....*Mr. Sawyer*.
- * 71. Robert Burns, by.....*Mr. Hope*.
72. Miniature on Ivory, by.....*Miss Deming*.
- * 73. Approaching Storm, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff*.
74. Scotch Terrier, by.....,..... " *Krieghoff*.
75. Cattle. Imitation of Cuyp, by...*H. S. D.*
- * 76. Young Highlander, by.....*Mr. Hope*.
77. Colored Chalk Drawing, Specimen, by
Miss Deming.
78. German Forester, lighting his pipe, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
79. La Fête de Dieu, Montreal, by... " *Duncan*.
- * 80. Female Head, after Sully, by..... " *Sawyer*.
- * 81. Child, Innocence, by..... " *Hope*.

82. Fort Charlotte, St. Vincents, by....*M. H. S. D.*
- * 83. Sketch from Milton's Paradise lost, by
Mr. Morris.
84. The Antiquarian, by..... " *Krieghoff.*
85. Commandant's House, Island of St. Vincent,
by.....*H. S. D.*
86. Guitar Player, after Teniers, by...*Mr. Krieghoff.*
87. Madona, after Correggio, on Ivory, by
Miss Deming.
88. Chalk Drawing; Shepherd boy, after Sir Joshua
Reynolds, by.....*Miss Deming.*
89. Scene from Walter Scott's Abbot: Queen
Mary's Escape from Lochleven, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
- " The keys had been presented to Lady Lochleven; she stood with her back to the casement, which commanded a view of Kinross. With her back to the casement, then, and her face to the table, on which the keys lay, for an instant, while she tasted the various dishes which were placed there, stood the lady of Lochleven, more provokingly intent than usual—so at least it seemed to the prisoners—upon the bunch of keys, the implements of their restraint; just when having finished her ceremony as taster of the Queen's Table, she was about to take up the keys, the Page looked sidewise to the Churchyard near Kinross, and exclaimed, he saw corpse-candles in the vault. The Lady of Lochleven was not without a touch, though a slight one, of the superstitions of her time. The fate of her sons made her alive to omens, and a corpse-light, as it was called, in the family burial

ground, boded death. She turned her head towards the casement, saw a distant glimmering, forgot her charge for one second, and in that second were lost the whole fruits of her former vigilance. The Page held the forged keys under his cloak, and with great dexterity, exchanged them for the real ones. "Who touches the keys?" said the lady, and while the Page answered that his cloak had stirred them, she looked round, possessed herself of the keys, and again turned to gaze at the supposed corpse-candles. "I hold these gleams to come, not from the Churchyard, but from the old gardener, Blinkhoolie; I wonder what thrift that churl drives, that of late he hath ever had light in the house till the night grew deep; if he turns resetter of idle companions, the place must be rid of him."—SIR WALTER SCOTT'S ABBOT.

90. Pendant to No. 89.

Queen Mary threatened by Lord Lindsay, to be thrown into the Lake of Lochleven, in order to procure the Queen's signature to the deed of Abdication:

"'Beware, Madam,' said Lindsay, and snatching hold of the Queen's arm, with his gauntleted hand, he pressed it in the rudeness of his passion, more closely, perhaps, than he was himself aware of: 'beware how you contend with those who have the mastery of your fate!' He held his grasp on her arm, until Melville cried shame, and Douglas had made a stride as if to interfere."

Painted from Walter Scott's Abbott, by *Mr. Krieghoff.*

- * 91. Waterfalls near Lorette, by..... " *Duncan.*
92. Commandant's House, Island of Grenada, by
H. S. D.
93. Sheep, after Morland, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*

- 86
94. Portrait by.....*Mr. Sawyer.*
- * 95. The Last of the Crew—saved, perhaps in vain,
by.....*Mr. Morris.*
96. Portrait, by..... “ *Sawyer.*
97. Landscape, by.....*B. de Rottenburg.*
98. Portrait of Lord Mansfield, after Sir Joshua
Reynolds, by.....*Mr. Sawyer.*
- * 99. Portrait of Eaton, the Pedestrian, by
Mr. Hope.
100. Country Girl. Sketch, in Water Colour, by
a Lady.
- * 101. Italian Peasant Girl, after Julien, by
Mr. Sawyer.
102. Study of a Habitant, by..... “ *Krieghoff.*
103. An Officer's Room in Montreal, by “ *Krieghoff.*
104. Morning Landscape, after Joseph Vernet, by
Miss Dunkin.
105. Evening Landscape, after Joseph Vernet, by
Miss Dunkin.
106. In the Island of St. Vincents, West Indies, by
H. S. D.
107. Armagh Cathedral, by.....*H. S. D.*
108. Cottage near Gretna Green, after a Sketch by
Dr. Staunton, R. A., by..... ———
- * 109. Bandits. Effect of Moonlight and Fire, by
Mr. Sawyer.
110. Courting. Scene in Canada, by “ *Krieghoff.*

111. Sketches in Oil, by.....*Mr. Morris.*
112. Sketches in Oil, by..... “ *Morris.*
- * 113. Bytown Scenery, from Nature, by “ *Morris.*
114. View on the Rivière du Loup, by *Miss Dunkin.*
115. View of the Falls of Niagara, by *Miss Dunkin.*
116. Negro Cottage, Berbice, B. Guiana, by
H. S. D.
117. Interiors, by.....*H. S. D.*
118. Flower and Fruit-piece. Composition from
Several Paintings in the Louvre, by Van Huy-
sum, Van Spanendonk, De Heem, Mignon, and
and from Nature, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
119. Lot's Daughters ; from the Original Paint-
ing, by Peter Paul Rubens, in the Louvre,
Paris, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
120. Approaching Storm ; from the Original, in
the Louvre, by Ruysdael, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
121. Marine View—Moonlight ; from the Original,
by Grolig, in the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris,
by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
122. Canadian Interior ; a Friday's Surprise, by
Mr. Krieghoff.
123. Miniature, on Ivory, by.....*Miss Deming.*
- 124 and 125. Miniatures, on Ivory, by *Miss Deming.*
126. St. John, by..... “ *Krieghoff.*
127. Ruins of a Norman Chapel on Holy Island,
Lough Derg, Ireland, by.....*H. S. D.*

128. Canadian Winter Scene—Sunset ; after *Coke Smythe*, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
129. Canadian Sleighing Scene..... “ *Krieghoff.*
130. Christ on the Mount, from the Painting by *Correggio*, in the National Gallery, London, by.....*Mr. Morris.*
131. Children playing with a Dog, Portraits, “ *Morris.*
132. The Cathedral, Square, and Notre Dame Street, Montreal, by *Mr. Morris.*
133. The Dairy Woman, by..... “ *Somerville.*
134. Military Scene in Canada, by... “ *Krieghoff.*
135. View of Venice, Piazza San Marco, after *Pritchett*, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
136. Portrait in Crayons, by..... “ *Krieghoff.*
137. Canadian Pilgrims, on the *Chemin du Croix*, *Belœil* Mountain, by.....*Mr. Morris.*
138. Sketches in *Berbice*, by.....*H. S. D.*
139. Lord *Surrey* and the Fair *Geraldine*, after *Cattermole*, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
- “ According to the old tradition repeated by all *Surrey's* Biographers, he visited on his travels the famous Necromancer, *Cornelius Agrippa*, who, in a magic mirror, revealed to him the fair figure of *Lis Geraldine*, lying dishevelled on a couch, and by the light of a taper, reading one of his tenderest Sonnets.”—*LOVES OF THE POETS.*
- 140 and 141. Views in *Devonshire*, by a *Lady.*

142. Scene from the Gentle Shepherd, by
Mr. Morris.
“ What gars ye plague your wooer wi' disdain,
What ails ye at him? troth atween us twa:
He's wordy you the best day e'er you saw.”
143. Portrait of Col. *Wetherall*, by.....*Mr. Wilson.*
144. Scene in *Armenia*, after a Sketch by *Dr. Staunton, R. A.*, by.....*Mr. Shanley.*
145. Scene in the *Koordistan*, after a Sketch by *Dr. Staunton, R. A.*, by.....*Mr. Shanley.*
146. Family Group, by..... “ *Duncan.*
147. The Harvesters of the *Roman Marshes*; after the original by *Robert* in the *Louvre*, in *Paris*, by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
148. The *Winetasters*; after *Hastanclever*. (*Dusseldorf* School,) by.....*Mr. Krieghoff.*
149. Portrait of a Child and Dogs, by.... “ *Krieghoff.*
150. Canadian Interior, by..... “ *Krieghoff.*
- 151 and 152. Landscapes, by..... “ *Drew.*
- *153. The Falls of *Montmorency*; from *Nature*, by
Mr. Wilson.
- *154. A Landscape, near *Quebec*, by..... “ *Wilson.*
- *155. Pirate Chief, by..... “ *Wilson.*
156. Portrait of a Child, by..... “ *Wilson.*
157. Portrait, by..... “ *Morris.*
158. Landscape on the *Rhine*, by..... “ *Somerville.*
159. Portrait of *Anne Bolcyn*, by..... “ *Wilson.*

160. Viaduct on the road to *Washington*, by *Mr. Somerville.*
161. Troops Embarking at *Montreal*; 89th Regt.
by.....*Mr. Duncan.*
162. Group of Boys; Winter Scene, by.... “ *Duncan.*
163. Interior of *Cormac's Chapel, Cashel*, by *H. S. D.*
164. In *Gibraltar*, looking across the Straits, by *H. S. D.*
165. Portrait, *Rev. D. B. Parther*, by.....*Mr. Duncan.*
166. Family Group, by..... “ *Duncan.*
167. Falls of *Shawinegam*, by... “ *Duncan.*
168. *St. Géneviève*, near *Montreal*, by..... “ *Duncan.*
169. Crayon Painting, by.....*R. T. Howden.*
170. Military Band Boys at practice, by....*H. S. D.*
171. Crayon Painting, by.....*R. T. Howden.*
172. *Rebecca* going to the Well, by.....*Mr. Somerville.*
173. *Marianne*, Female Head, by..... “ *Somerville.*
174. Fruit in *Gibraltar Market*, by.....*H. S. D.*
175. Child and Dog, (water colour,) by....*Mr. Duncan.*
176. *Barskimming, Ayshire*, by..... “ *Wilson.*
177. *Italian Flower Girl*, by..... “ *Krieghoff.*

CASTS.

178. Cast of *Bailey's Eve* at the Fountain.
179. Dancing Girl, *Canova.*

VIVAT REGINA.

Discerning Taste:

Montreal Collectors 1880-1920

Janet M. BROOKE

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1989

254 pp., 16 col., 82 b/w illus., \$45.00

Janet Brooke's catalogue presents a valuable and original contribution to art historical studies of nineteenth – and early twentieth-century art, and more specifically to the study of patronage in Montréal at the turn of the century. However, the installation and arrangement of the exhibition left high expectations unfulfilled. In fact, the layout of the "Montreal Collectors" exhibition created a kind of confusion that made the catalogue an indispensable item. Some minor works, such as the Doré landscape, were given ample space in the largest room of the exhibition. Some of the more extraordinary pictures such as those by Degas, Whistler and Turner were hung in cramped quarters in one of the smaller rooms off the main stairway. Conversely, at the "Ernest Cormier et l'Université de Montréal" exhibition at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the visitor was visually introduced to the architect's work, not only his university buildings and working methods, but also his atelier, and private life. Along with plans, elevations and drawings, his drafting instruments and a portion of his library were on display, all in an ample setting which helped establish the idea that this was a show of considerable importance.

At the Montreal Museum, landscape and marine paintings, covering a wide range of periods, from the English romantics down through the Barbizon group to the Impressionists, made a clear statement about the uniqueness of Montréal collections between 1880 and 1920. It was, for example, extraordinary to find that at the turn of the century there were no less than four major J.M.W. Turner paintings in Montréal collections.



On the whole, the catalogue entries for Turner's *Mercury and Argus*, the *Dogana and Madonna della Salute, Venice*, *Port Ruysdael* and *Helvoetsluys: The "City of Utrecht," 4*, *Going to Sea* are improvements over the entries found in the revised edition of the Turner catalogue raisonné by Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll.¹ It would have been preferable, however, to cite this revised and improved edition, rather than that of 1977. Some of the most useful enhancements to Butlin and Joll are Janet Brooke's listings of the prices paid for the Montréal Turners at various times in the past. The Montréal collectors bought these paintings in the 1880's and '90's, at what must have seemed to be considerably high prices. Nevertheless, when these works were sold in the first decades of this century, there were again substantial price increases.² It is intriguing that the price of Turner's paintings continued their unabated climb through the periods associated with mid-century realism and the high points of the development of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, or, more correctly, throughout the long and

ubiquitous developments of High Victorian art in England.³

The *Montreal Collectors* catalogue offers other valuable additions to the bibliographic entries found in Butlin and Joll. These include the listings of local newspaper articles from the *Gazette*, the *Star* and the *Herald*, covering the 1901, 1912 and 1915 exhibitions of the Turners at the *Art Association of Montreal*, as well as critical coverage of exhibitions of these works in New York and Ottawa. The additions to the bibliographic entries, however, are not limited to new citations from Montréal newspapers. For example, in the literature for *Port Ruysdael*, Janet Brooke includes new citations of an article by Kenyon Cox from *Burlington Magazine* (XVI, 306, 1909-10) and a piece by Andrew Taylor from *The Times* (30 July, 1927). Unfortunately, however, the *Montreal Collectors* bibliography for *Port Ruysdael* excludes A. M. Hind's *Turner's Golden Visions* (London, 1925, p. 217). In the *Montreal Collectors* bibliography for *Helvoetsluys*, recent references that could not have been cited in Butlin and Joll are included: Andrew Wilton, *J.M.W. Turner: His Life and Art* (New York, 1979, no. P345), and John Walker, *Joseph Mallord William Turner* (New York, 1983, pl. 21).

Janet Brooke's catalogue has also added items, not found in Butlin and Joll, to the "provenance" and exhibition history of Turner's *Mercury and Argus*. The painting was passed on to Margaret Charlotte Smith, Baroness Strathcona in 1914 (by descent), from the collection of Sir Donald Alexander Smith, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal, and thence, in 1927 (by descent) to Donald Sterling Palmer, 3rd Baron Strathcona, in London. *Mercury and Argus* seems to have remained in London until 1951, when it went to the National Gallery of Canada.

When Turner's *Mercury and Argus* was exhibited at the Montreal Art Association in 1888, Ruskin's discussion of the painting in *Modern Painters* was "published almost in its

entirety" in the *Montréal Daily Witness*. This wonderfully innocent and naive piece states that *Mercury and Argus* was "the greatest and most instructive work [in the exhibition]" and marked "Turner's genius at its culminating point." The Montréal critic was certain the "conscientious student" could "sit down before" the painting "with the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* in his hand... and learn things not before possible to be learned in this city." The writer seemed to have considered both Turner's paintings and Ruskin's *Modern Painters* as contemporary works. It is especially refreshing to find that both are valued in this very direct and appreciative manner. News and particularly new ideas about art traveled slowly in nineteenth-century North America.⁴ While the interest in Ruskin in Montréal in 1888 might be seen as provincial and backward today, the thoroughness of this spirit of inquiry was free of many of the whims, fads and fashions associated with each new decade since World War II.

In the exhibition there was a combination of works that clearly related to the art-historical developments of the nineteenth century, while others appeared to be somehow outside the mainstream developments. Among the paintings in this latter group were the landscapes of Jacob and Matthijs Maris, Léon Augustin Lhermitte, and Alexandre Gabriel Decamps.

Matthijs Maris, a relatively minor Hague School painter, and "an embittered, solitary individual who on the one hand deplored his financial dependence on the market place and yet on the other seems to have coveted the popular and critical success enjoyed by others, including his brother, who, ... helped support him throughout much of his life," receives more attention than Delacroix in the *Montreal Collectors* catalogue. It is interesting that "before 1920, no fewer than fourteen paintings by Matthijs Maris, as well as several of his watercolours, were owned by Montreal collectors." The English and Scottish collectors who

bought his work seem to have been devotees of the aesthetic movement and were attracted to his dream-like, Pre-Raphaelisque subjects. The fact that "before the end of World War I many major collectors in Great Britain, Canada and the United States considered [Matthijs] Maris one of Europe's greatest living painters" raises the question as to why "major collectors" were deceived, if in fact they were, in their evaluation of his work. Could it have been that the price of his contemporary pictures, compared with that of the other principal Barbizon (Millet) or Symbolist (Carrière) painters of the period, played an important role in this evaluation?

If the size rather than the overall quality of the collection, was an important factor, and the money available for buying art would permit only one or two examples of the more highly prized works of Millet, Breton or Carrière, would it have been customary to fill it out with the more readily available and less expensive works of minor Barbizon or Symbolist painters? Did the knowledgeable collector consider Matthijs Maris's pictures celebrating the virtues of peasant life, to be equal to those of Millet or the more sentimental Jules Breton? How would such a collector rank Matthijs's nebulous views, such as *The Enchanted Castle*, or his portraits of young women in pseudo-medieval costume in relation to Eugène Carrière's mysterious and misty views of Venice, or the dreamy medievalized female subjects of Burne-Jones?

Other questions are raised by Léon Lhermitte's *The Ruins of Château-Thierry*. At first it might appear to be another Barbizon School work. Is this rustic landscape, with the ruined castle of the counts of Champagne, a pastoral idealization of this largely agricultural region between Rheims and Paris, or is it a nostalgic tribute to a place associated with dramatic events in the history of France? It was in Champagne that the struggles of Joan of Arc

took place which led to the crowning of Charles VIII at Rheims, and the consequent banishment of the English from France. Lhermitte's *The Ruins of Château-Thierry* is a strange and fascinating picture which seems to have few direct connections with the central figures of the Barbizon School. The painting does not have the tonal contrasts of Théodore Rousseau, nor the muted and limpid shimmer of Daubigny. Corot executed a number of views of Château-Thierry between 1855 and 1865, but he tended to concentrate on the picturesque topography of the town.⁵

Lhermitte, on the other hand, focuses on the ruined chateau in his 1872-73 painting. While Lhermitte's work cannot be easily related to any of the Barbizon artists, the treatment of the subject indicates a development in the 1860's and '70's that leads to Symbolism or Post-Impressionism. This kind of late Barbizon School painting is slightly confusing. It retains some of the characteristics of the style associated with the landscape artists who painted the Forest of Fontainebleau in the 1840's, but it has nothing of the brightness and other plein-air qualities of the later developments of Impressionism. It seems to have missed a step in the evolutionary process of nineteenth-century landscape painting, and is more closely linked with the types of subjective themes that are usually thought to have followed Impressionism.

Such landscapes appear to be chronologically out of place, leaving Janet Brooke unable to relate Lhermitte to "any particular school or group." At the same time she rightfully dismisses the idea put forth in the Cleveland Museum of Art catalogue (*The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900*) that the artist might, like other "Barbizon and Naturalist painters," be linked with the "realist tradition." The notion that Lhermitte's "style was more firmly under the sway of ... Nicolas Poussin" when he painted *The*

Ruins of Château-Thierry is not clearly demonstrated by the picture. Stylistically, I would place Lhermitte's painting closer to Corot than to Poussin. Perhaps this idea concerning the direct influence of Poussin comes from a nineteenth-century source. Before the advent of Impressionist aesthetics, with its emphasis on the unheroic and commonplace, any landscape of merit, particularly in France, was considered to be in the great landscape tradition of Claude or Poussin.

In the casual composition and sombre tonalities of Lhermitte's *The Ruins of Château-Thierry* there is little of Poussin's geometrical organization of architectural and landscape forms, nor his bright, even light and prevailing clarity of construction. While the composition with the peasant woman walking along the road leading directly into the middle foreground, and the centrally located ruin in the middle ground is faintly reminiscent of Poussin, it appears to be more directly related to such classical works of Corot as *View Near Volterra* (1838, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). The "clear division of the landscape into foreground, middle ground, and panoramic distances" and the "distinct horizon line punctuated in the far distance by a looming ruin" may be a "Poussinist device," but it is Poussin transformed by Corot in the 1850's and '60's. At this time, while still painting very tangible subjects in the Barbizon manner, Corot begins to introduce elements of the more theatrical and dream-like landscapes of his late period. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of the wispy silhouettes of the stately trees and the solidly painted bridge and architecture in the 1850-60 picture, *Grez-sur-Long, Bridge and Church*, formerly in the Montréal collection of W. R. Elmenhorst. In Corot's painting of *La Rochelle*, formerly in the Greenshields collection, a lone figure, wrapped in a shawl and using a walking stick, makes her way along a road toward the distant

town. In contrast to *Grez-sur-Long* and other works painted in the 1850's, this more lyrical picture does not have the firm brush work, nor the thick solid masses of paint that help render a sense of physical presence to the natural scenery and architectural features.

The only clear line of development that can be seen in the collected works exhibited begins with the naturalism of Constable, which is inherited by Daubigny and the Barbizon School, and then reaches its fullest maturity in the landscapes of Monet and the Impressionists. To this line of development one can add Delacroix's *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* and Cezanne's *Roadway in Provence*, both from the Van Horne collection.

There are always problems in finding a proper place for the quasi-visionary landscapes of artists like Lhermitte and Corot, because they are seldom seen as early indications of modern art's retreat from reality. In the 1860's and '70's there was never a unified and well organized rejection of the realist principles of Courbet or the naturalist developments of Impressionism. This place of honour is usually reserved for van Gogh, Gauguin and the generation of Post-Impressionist artists. On the whole, the late nineteenth-century Montréal collectors, like other North American collectors of this period, did not purchase, and most likely did not know, the work of the Post-Impressionists. Nevertheless, in addition to the Romantic, Realist and Impressionist works collected in Montréal, there are a few of those seemingly unclassifiable late romantic subjects that point the way to the early developments of Symbolist art and the Aesthetic movement in England. Certain members of the Aesthetic movement are readily identifiable, such as Albert Moore and George Fredrick Watts. But other English "modernists" collected in Montréal, such as Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederic Lord Leighton have been associated with the later developments of

academic neo-classicism, or what has been defined as a peculiarly English “pseudo-Hellenistic Classicism.” Along with this strange segment of late Victorian English art, there are the late Pre-Raphaelites or post-Pre-Raphaelites such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Sir Edward Burne-Jones. It is unfortunate that these pictures, discussed and reproduced in the catalogue, could not be seen in the exhibition.

Among the catalogue entries of the paintings from England and the United States that could not be brought to Montréal, were Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Pandora* and Sir Edward Burne-Jones’s *Day and Night*, those mysterious works clearly associated with the Aesthetic movement and the development of Symbolist art in France. I wondered if these pictures might have given a much clearer idea of what was considered to be “modern art” by these late nineteenth-century collectors, than the seemingly old-fashioned and somewhat perplexing landscape, *Saint Martin’s Summer* by Sir John Everett Millais. The catalogue raises other questions. Is *Saint Martin’s Summer* important because it is the only work by a Pre-Raphaelite in the exhibition, and does it occupy a place of importance in the overall development of Millais’s landscape subjects? *Chill October* (1870) was his “first major landscape” and *Saint Martin’s Summer* his fourth. Since his first pure landscapes were painted during the period associated with the development of Impressionism in France, do they relate to the Impressionist development, or are they closely allied to Millais’s earlier Pre-Raphaelite works?

To the uninitiated, *Saint Martin’s Summer*, which is praised in the *Montreal Collectors* catalogue as “one of the most important of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings to come to Montreal,” might appear to be nothing more than an uninspired English interpretation of the French Barbizon manner. The picture’s “minutely painted detail” supposedly “shows that in his late work, Millais painted simul-

taneously in two distinct styles, one reserved for his more ‘public’ paintings, the other for pure landscape.” In the latter landscape style “his aesthetic is virtually unchanged from his Pre-Raphaelite youth.”

It is true that Millais’s pure landscapes of the 1870’s seem to be in a class of their own when compared to the portraits of society ladies and anecdotal historical subjects of the same period. I would not go so far as Allen Staley, who believes that the landscapes Millais painted from 1870 until the end of his life “have nothing to do with Pre-Raphaelitism, but belong to the sphere of late Victorian popular and sentimental painting.”⁶ Among the pictures completed after 1870 there is at least one that shows Millais successfully reverting to his earlier method of masterfully combining the figure and the landscape: the 1873 *Winter Fuel*. It combines a breadth of vision with an attention to detail, and has something of the emotional power and extraordinary technique that is found in Millais’s earlier painting.

Even though Ruskin considered Millais as Turner’s direct descendant, the Pre-Raphaelite painter’s principal contributions were made with his figural and narrative works and not with his later landscapes. In fact, it may have been Ruskin’s insistence on this connection with Turner that caused Millais to resist treating pure landscape subjects early in his career. When Millais does return to landscape painting in the 1870’s, Ruskin again expresses dissatisfaction over the artist’s wasted talent. Ruskin believed Millais could have occupied “the attention of that part of the French and English public whose fancy is at present caught only by Gustave Doré.” This was paralleled, interestingly enough, at the *Montreal Collectors* exhibition where Doré’s *Scene in Ross-Shire* [c.1879] was hung almost directly opposite Millais’s *Saint Martin’s Summer*.⁷

The nineteenth-century critics and art public had much stronger opinions about the

perceived quality of a work of art than is the case today. It is quite shocking to read, for instance, what was said about the now famous paintings by Turner and Whistler. Many times these criticisms were quite biased and incorrect. Nevertheless, these artists prevailed, and their work was collected and valued, in spite of the adverse criticism in the journals and newspapers of the day. Understanding the taste and contribution of important collectors of the past is indeed a complex affair. Many times they made significant decisions about the quality of an artist's work which did not correspond to public taste, as defined by art critics writing for newspapers and periodicals. At other times the decisions of enlightened collectors seem to have been entirely wrong. Occasional lapses into bad taste, or a desire to obtain the equivalents of modern masters at a reduced price, make them all the more human. Today, only a few important private collections have remained intact. It is a pleasure to visit these collections, for unlike the great state museums where seemingly only the best examples of the most important artists are perfunctorily assembled, something very personal is reflected in the collections of private museums.

Considering the importance of the former Montréal collections, it is strange that none treated in the exhibition would immortalize themselves with their own private museum. The Wallace Collection in London, the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. offer some interesting insights into the taste of collectors at the turn of the century. Fortunately this benevolent tradition has not completely bypassed Montréal. The building, acquisitions and direction of the Canadian Centre for Architecture exhibit the kind of discerning and individual taste that one associates with the great philanthropists and private collectors of the past.

The *Discerning Tastes: Montreal Collectors 1880-1920* catalogue is well written and all the entries are flawlessly researched. It clearly indicates an ambitious undertaking not fully realized. I look forward to Janet Brooke's next exhibition, in which, hopefully, she will have the necessary support to make the show as comprehensive and meaningful as the catalogue.

HARDY GEORGE
Concordia University

Notes

1 Martin BUTLIN and Evelyn JOLL, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner* (New Haven & London, 1984).

2 For example, the *Dogana and Madonna della Salute, Venice* sold at Christie's in 1870 for £2,560. In 1927 the estate of the Montréal collector James Ross sold it at the same London auction house for 30,000 gns. Janet BROOKE, *Discerning Tastes: Montreal Collectors 1880-1920*, (Montréal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1989), Plate 57, 156.

3 The painting of *Port Ruysdael*, in the Sir George Drummond collection from c.1901 to 1919, sold at Christie, Manson & Woods in 1863 for £1,995 and just before it entered the Drummond collection, in 1899, it was auctioned again at Christie's for £5,040. When the Drummond estate sold it at Christie's in 1919 it went for £6,720. *Montreal Collectors*, Plate 58, 157.

4 By 1888, the date of this article, the Symbolist movement in France was well underway, sounding the depths of the modern psyche. This new movement struck a resounding blow to the moral and anecdotal art associated with Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and late Victorian painting in general.

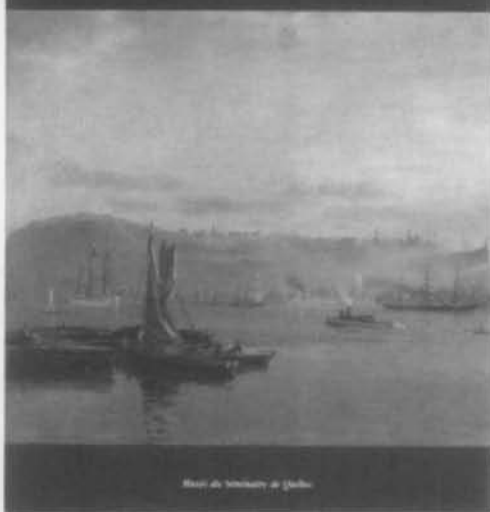
5 Corot's *Vue de Château-Thierry* (c.1856-63), Robaut 1020, and *Château Thierry*, Robaut 1287, both general views of the town from different vantage points, are reproduced in Julius MEIER-GRAEFE, *Corot*, (Berlin: B. Cassirer und Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1930), plates LXXIX and XCV.

6 Allen STALEY, *The Pre-Raphaelite Landscape* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 57.

7 John RUSKIN, *Works*, XXIX (London: Allen, 1903-12), 161.

*Les Maîtres canadiens de la collection
Power Corporation du Canada*

1850-1950



Musée du Séminaire de Québec

**Les Maîtres de la collection
Power Corporation du Canada 1850-1950**
texte de Laurier LACROIX
notes de Didier PRIOUL et
Joanne CHAGNON
Musée du Séminaire de Québec, 1989
114 pp., 73 ill. couleur, 13 n/b, 19.95 \$

On connaît l'importance toujours grandissante de l'investissement que les entreprises canadiennes et québécoises consacrent à la culture. L'art devient dans bien des cas un «étendard». Plusieurs collections d'art ont acquis une certaine visibilité en s'associant à des institutions culturelles. Ces dernières cautionnent ainsi la valeur de la collection et participent à la réputation de «connaisseurs» des entreprises concernées.

Heureusement, ces collections, pour beaucoup, font l'objet d'un intérêt qui n'est pas que financier. Elles se développent en raison du goût de ceux qui la gèrent. Chaque entreprise

qui collectionne pose ses critères et définit ses limites. Les collections sont des regroupements d'objets dont l'unité devient, en quelque sorte, l'image de leur propriétaire.

Il est heureux de constater que cette énergie déployée par nos financiers et nos industriels l'est souvent pour l'art d'ici. Les entreprises trouvent certainement dans l'art canadien une identité et une différence à partager.

La Power Corporation du Canada ne fait pas exception. Sa collection possédait déjà une grande réputation, bien que ce soit la première fois qu'elle fasse l'objet d'une exposition. Comme beaucoup d'autres au pays, elle se compose essentiellement d'œuvres d'artistes canadiens ayant produit surtout avant la seconde moitié du XX^e siècle. Disons-le tout de suite, la collection de la Power Corporation du Canada n'est pas de celles qui étonnent par leur audace. Le conservatisme y règne et les valeurs sûres de notre patrimoine s'y retrouvent abondamment: Krieghoff, Clarence Gagnon, le Groupe des Sept, etc.

Dans le cadre de «Symphonie Visuelle¹», le Musée du Séminaire propose de montrer au public des œuvres appartenant à des collections d'entreprises. Après Lavalin et Alcan, le Musée nous propose de jeter un regard sur une autre grande collection québécoise. Cette nouvelle exposition s'intitule *Les Maîtres de la collection Power Corporation du Canada 1850-1950* et un catalogue documente l'événement.

L'exposition et le catalogue ont le mérite de présenter aux amateurs d'art un ensemble d'œuvres sélectionnées, produites entre 1850 et 1950, qui ne sont que rarement accessibles au grand public. Ils veulent aussi, comme on l'indique à plusieurs reprises dans la publication, rendre hommage à M. Paul Desmarais, maître d'œuvre de ce riche ensemble. Malheureusement, les choses ne se présentent pas comme on l'aurait souhaité. Il est indéniable que le mérite de cette collection revient à M. Desmarais dont l'intérêt pour l'art est bien

connu. Le catalogue n'est pas inutile à celui qui cherche quelques informations d'ordre historique. Toutefois, celui qui y cherche un historique de la collection, une analyse sérieuse de ce qui la constitue, ou encore une réflexion sur ce qui semble se présenter comme une collection d'entreprise exemplaire ne manquera pas d'être quelque peu perplexe.

Un texte fait office de critique historique et d'introduction. Il est signé Laurier Lacroix. L'entrée en matière se lit ainsi : «Ne disposant pas de toutes les informations nécessaires pour traiter de la question la plus pertinente ici, qui serait de savoir comment ces tableaux réalisés par des dizaines d'artistes [...] aident à constituer une partie de l'identité de la personne morale qui les a réunis, je voudrais explorer un autre aspect...²».

Cet autre aspect, c'est celui du paysage, comme l'indique le titre de son texte : «Le lieu de la peinture de paysage au Canada». Ce titre est bien choisi car, comme l'explique l'auteur : «La collection dont il est question dans ce catalogue regroupe principalement des tableaux. Parmi les soixante-huit toiles et dessins sélectionnés, on retrouve trois natures mortes, six tableaux représentant des personnages et deux abstractions. Les cinquante-sept autres œuvres ont comme sujet principal le paysage³».

La question que pose M. Lacroix sur la place du paysage dans l'art canadien est évidemment fort pertinente dans le contexte de l'exposition, de même que dans celui de notre histoire. Mais si elle interroge un corpus particulier à partir de paramètres généraux, elle délaisse trop rapidement l'intérêt que le lecteur pourrait porter à l'histoire singulière et distincte de la collection elle-même, ou de celui qui l'a constituée. L'auteur réserve un seul paragraphe à l'histoire et à l'aventure d'une telle collection.

Malgré cette «petite» déception, le lecteur trouvera dans le texte de Laurier Lacroix une réflexion intéressante autour des questions suivantes : à quels signes peut-on reconnaître

un paysage canadien ? Qu'est-ce qui a pu inciter tant d'artistes à vouloir s'identifier ainsi à leur environnement naturel ou construit ? Le grand intérêt de ce texte n'est pas de donner une réponse définitive, ni de situer la peinture de paysage dans un contexte socio-historique immuable. Il est plutôt d'avoir inscrit le paysage au cœur d'une question générale sur une certaine pratique de la peinture au Canada, comme si sa place, bien que visiblement importante, se percevait davantage dans la réalité historique complexe qui n'a rien de définitif ni de fixe. Le paysage se révèle être une donnée qui se déplace et qui traverse, avec l'histoire et à travers les œuvres, des conditions sémantiques et esthétiques qui facilitent plus ou moins ce déplacement. La réflexion de M. Lacroix se poursuit donc jusqu'à nous et va jusqu'à questionner ce type de représentation dans les conditions actuelles de production artistique. Il termine ainsi : «L'œuvre d'art ne cherche plus à intégrer le paysage mais plutôt à s'y insérer, nous amenant à repenser notre rapport avec la nature dans son état actuel⁴».

Après cette réflexion, le regard porté sur les œuvres n'est plus celui de l'amateur curieux qui cherche à savoir où et comment M. Desmarais a constitué sa collection. Le visiteur, comme le lecteur, regarde alors les œuvres comme des objets autonomes dont la parenté de sujet indique davantage une problématique autour de l'objet de la représentation. Ceci nous éloigne à la fois des conditions socio-économiques qui ont permis la constitution de la collection de la Power Corporation de même que des considérations purement subjectives de celui qui en est le maître.

Le catalogue reproduit chacune des œuvres présentées lors de l'exposition ; toutes font l'objet d'un commentaire et d'un historique, parfois un peu court compte tenu de l'âge des tableaux. Une œuvre de James Wilson Morrice (*Effet de neige, Montréal* de 1906), non exposée, est également reproduite en couleurs. La qualité des reproductions est plutôt satisfai-

sante, remarquons-le. Didier Prioul a rédigé les notes concernant les peintures et les dessins alors que Joanne Chagnon s'est chargée de la section sculpture.

Si l'historique est court et peut laisser sur sa faim celui ou celle qui s'intéresse davantage aux détails, le commentaire n'est souvent pas beaucoup plus étoffé. Prenons par exemple ce curieux tableau de Pellan daté de 1941 et intitulé *Maisons de Charlevoix* (cat. n° 50). Bien que ce tableau puisse trouver sa place dans une telle collection, son caractère plutôt conventionnel étonne. À ce propos, Guy Robert écrivait que «certains en ont voulu à Pellan de ces portraits et paysages de 1941, ramenés de longues vacances dans le comté de Charlevoix⁵». Ce «missing link», comme le nomme Robert, fait l'objet d'une bien petite notice pour une œuvre aussi singulière, d'autant plus qu'une autre peinture de Pellan, datée de 1940 et beaucoup plus caractéristique du modernisme qu'on lui connaît, est également incluse dans l'exposition. Pellan est donc représenté ici par deux œuvres très différentes dont la seconde, *Fruits sur draperie bleue* (cat. n° 49), est antérieure à la première et apparaît pourtant plus audacieuse. Qu'est-ce donc qui explique cette «différence»? La curiosité nous poussera à chercher ailleurs une réponse ou à nous contenter de l'explication de l'artiste qui voulait ainsi montrer «...aux gens qu'il [lui] était également possible de faire de la peinture réaliste, opérer une sorte de rapprochement...⁶». On devra peut-être accuser le manque de temps pour justifier cette recherche qui aurait avantage à être reprise «dans des conditions plus scientifiques» pour reprendre l'expression de M. Prioul⁷.

Quant au choix des artistes et des œuvres, il ne peut que nous confronter au titre de l'exposition. Il n'est pas surprenant de retrouver sous le vocable de «maîtres» quelques grands noms de l'art canadien comme Morrice, Borduas, Pellan ou encore Cullen et les artistes du Groupe des Sept. Mais que dire de

Robert Wakeham Pilot, Albert Henry Robinson ou Adolph Vogt? Il y a quelques inclusions ici qui nous laissent deviner une liberté d'utilisation du terme «maîtres», ce qui a peut-être l'avantage de nous présenter un aperçu plus varié d'œuvres tirées de la collection, mais qui a aussi pour effet d'élever pompeusement quelques artistes à un rang qu'ils n'ont jamais occupé.

Nous avons indirectement trouvé quelques réponses aux questions qui nous ont poussé à nous pencher sur ce catalogue, comme le souhaitait M. Lacroix⁸, mais d'autres restent ouvertes. Celles surtout qui concernent l'association, intéressée disons-le, entre corporations et institutions culturelles. M. Jean-Marie Poitras, président de la Société du Musée du Séminaire de Québec, écrit dans son avant-propos :

Si elles [des œuvres peu connues de grandes entreprises canadiennes] s'inscrivent comme des événements majeurs dans le domaine artistique, elles servent aussi à établir une collaboration entre les institutions culturelles et les compagnies privées, souvent sollicitées pour leur concours financier. Ces interventions fournissent d'ailleurs au milieu culturel l'appui indispensable à la réalisation de ses objectifs⁹.

Avons-nous affaire ici à un échange de services? Est-il nécessaire de monter une exposition dont l'objectif semble être davantage la glorification de la collection Power Corporation plutôt qu'une interrogation sur un corpus particulier? Si M. Lacroix relève la question du paysage, c'est qu'il n'était pas possible d'élaborer sur l'intérêt premier d'une telle collection, soit la personne morale qui a réuni les œuvres¹⁰. Et rappelons que la problématique du paysage s'ouvrait ici à l'art canadien dans son ensemble et délaissait quelque peu les œuvres exposées. Les financiers n'ont-ils d'autre intérêt ici que de redorer leur blason en montrant leur richesse et leur bon goût? Les musées sont-ils si dépendants des corporations privées et de leur soutien qu'ils n'osent pas

garder de distance critique par rapport à un corpus d'œuvres qu'on leur offre «généreusement» d'exposer? N'est-il pas trop simple, pour une institution muséale, de faire un choix d'œuvres, de les placer sous un titre racoleur et de cautionner la valeur (qui augmentera) de ces œuvres? Et le public n'a-t-il d'autre intérêt dans l'art que d'admirer des tableaux rarement exposés, sans trop se poser de questions? Voilà quelques idées qui restent à débattre après avoir vu cette exposition. Les priorités des différents intervenants du milieu artistique (musées, commanditaires, amateurs) ne sont visiblement pas les mêmes. Malheureusement, il ressort de cette présentation qu'un manque de temps, de ressources et de moyens ont hypothéqué la recherche au profit d'un joli catalogue couleur sur papier glacé, document qui restera pour faire foi de l'importance de l'événement. Mais, si la collection et le catalogue qui l'illustre font preuve de traditionalisme, disons que c'est dans le sens où l'entendait Maurice Gagnon: «est traditionnel celui qui se souvient, aime et respecte le passé...¹¹».

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Notes

- 1 «Symphonie Visuelle» faisait partie de la campagne annuelle de financement de 1987 à 1989 et présentait la collection d'un des principaux commanditaires privés. Ce programme a été abandonné et seule Power Corporation a eu droit à un catalogue
- 2 Laurier LACROIX, Didier PRIOUL et Joanne CHAGNON, *Les Maîtres canadiens de la collection Power Corporation du Canada 1850-1950*, Québec, Musée du Québec, 1989, p.XXI.
- 3 *ibid.*, p.XXI.
- 4 *ibid.*, p.XXVII.
- 5 Guy ROBERT, *Pellan, sa vie son œuvre*, Montréal, Édition du centre de psychologie et de pédagogie, 1963, p.38.
- 6 LACROIX, *Les Maîtres de la collection...*, p.75.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.4.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.XXI.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.XII.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.XXI.
- 11 Maurice GAGNON, *Peinture canadienne*, Montréal, Société des Éditions Pascal, 1945, p.70.

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p.200, YOUNG, Carolyn Ann :
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