
1. Formation of the Canadian Group of Painters

Canadian art of the twenties is dominated by the rise and growth of the Group of Seven. It is the story of a struggle to develop an art inspired by the Canadian landscape, of a brotherhood, united by the mystical number seven, working to open up the creative channels of Canadian art. By 1930 the Group of Seven was Canada's 'National School,' dominating the image of Canadian art abroad, either through shows the members organized themselves,¹ or through their inclusion as Canadian representation in international exhibitions.² Articles in foreign art journals³ also confirmed the impression that the only living Canadian art was that of the Group of Seven and its followers.

Opposition had always played an important rôle in the Group's development;⁴ however this opposition had temporarily lost credibility. The dangers of widespread acceptance soon became apparent, and were commented upon by Bertram Brooker, a close friend of the Group:

So long as the Group of Seven operated to release young Canadian painters from the stuffy ties of Victorian atmosphericism, and encouraged them to find new ways of seeing and expressing the Canadian scene as honestly as they could and as 'individually' as possible, their influence . . . can only be regarded as a healthy and helpful one. But already - although the Canadian public has by no means accepted the Seven - the influence of their work shows signs of hardening into a formula which a good many painters are adopting as being, so to speak, the 'fashionable' native school of painting.⁵ Reviewing the Group's exhibition in 1930,⁶ Brooker pinpointed some of the problems:

The present show at Toronto rings the deathknell of the Group of Seven as a unified and dominant influence in Canadian painting . . . They have themselves ceased to experiment. Moreover, they are much less productive . . . MacDonald and Varley have been too much engaged in teaching, and Lismer in educational work at the gallery [The Art Gallery of Toronto], to spare much time for painting. Casson and Carmichael have a roomful of watercolours - extremely capable things but not experimental - and no oils. Jackson and Harris, the only two of the Group who have much time for painting, are represented mostly by smaller paintings than usual, all landscapes, and of a type that one has learned to expect from them. The experimentation is over, the old aggressiveness has declined.⁷

Generous sponsorship of younger artists accentuated the crisis the Group was undergoing. The exhibition of 1931 included eighty-five works by twenty-six invited contributors to the sixty-three works by the Group members.⁸ Varley was not represented at all. The uneven quality of the newer work caused one observer to comment, 'If the

Group intends to be a nursery for incompetent painters, then all right, but if they aim to raise the standard of painting in Canada and to increase the love and understanding of our country, then something different must be done.'⁹

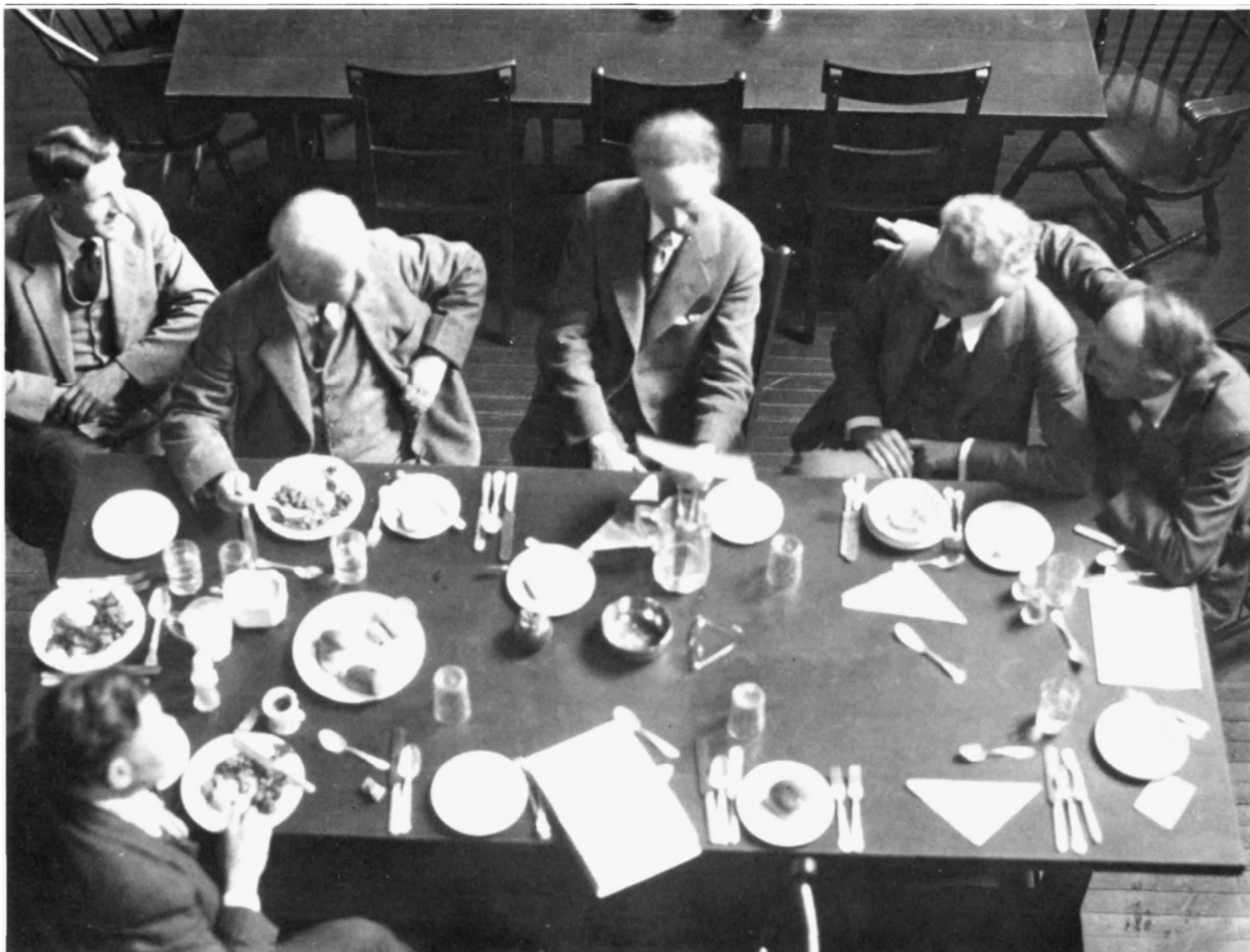
Finally, at a party at Lawren Harris's house after the opening of the exhibition of 1931, A.Y. Jackson announced, 'The interest in a freer form of art expression in Canada has become so general that we believe the time has arrived when the Group of Seven should expand, and the original members become the members of a larger group of artists, with no officials or constitution, but held together by common intention of doing original and sincere work.'¹⁰ However, as Brooker noted, 'The announcement was very intangible. No name was suggested . . .'¹¹

It appears, in fact, that the Group was at an impasse. The members were not willing to give up their control, partly, perhaps, for reasons of prestige but also recognizing that there were no other artists of their stature or ability in Toronto to take over. It also appears that there was disagreement as to how the Group should expand and who should be brought into a new organization.¹² Edwin Holgate had become a member in 1930,¹³ expanding the Group's geographic range to Montreal; and in May 1932, to reach westward, LeMoine FitzGerald (from Winnipeg) was invited to join,¹⁴ an invitation he accepted gladly.¹⁵ He was told to prepare works for a Group exhibition for the following winter.¹⁶ However, other events intervened.

Certain members of the Royal Canadian Academy had never accepted defeat after the Wembley exhibition conflict over the control of The National Gallery and Canadian representation in international exhibitions.¹⁷ Criticisms of The National Gallery's rôle and, by consequence, of the Group of Seven, were voiced at the time of the Philadelphia Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition in 1926¹⁸ and the Canadian exhibition in Paris in 1927. This latter attack included denunciations of Eric Brown, the Gallery's Director, to Government Ministers,¹⁹ newspaper attacks and counter-attacks and petitions from artists in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa in support of Eric Brown.²⁰

In January 1932 Franz Johnston, ex-Group of Seven member, wrote to the Prime Minister, R.B. Bennett, complaining of discrimination in his representation in National Gallery exhibitions.²¹ This was followed in March by a letter from Arthur Heming²² who also brought in the issues of control of the Gallery by the Royal Canadian Academy, the composition of juries for international exhibitions, favouritism to the Group in Gallery purchases and annual exhibitions, and supposed gross errors in the purchase of 'Old Master' works. In the meantime, Academicians and their supporters were circulating a

1. In the Arts and Letters Club, Toronto, 1929.
Clockwise from lower left: Merrill Denison, Bertram
Brooker, A.Y. Jackson, J.E.H. MacDonald, Lawren
Harris, Arthur Lismer.



petition criticizing The National Gallery for 'extreme and flagrant' partisanship.²³ First rumours of the petition with sixty-five signatures²⁴ emerged in the press in May and June,²⁵ but the issue climaxed in December when one hundred and eighteen petitioners stated they were going to boycott all National Gallery exhibitions and demanded a government investigation.²⁶

While the Royal Canadian Academy never actually took an official stand on the issue, it was obvious that it was an attack directed by the senior Academicians. A.Y. Jackson felt he could no longer support the Academy and resigned, accusing the petitioners of trying to control other artists not in accord with them and trying to influence National Gallery purchases, which he felt would result in 'patronage and politics.'²⁷ The next three months saw Canadian papers full of articles and letters for and against The National Gallery. In the meantime, a Toronto group consisting of Frances Loring, Louise Comfort, and Elizabeth Wyn Wood circulated a counter-petition across Canada in support of Eric Brown; it was signed by two hundred and eighty-two artists and sent to the Gallery at the end of January.²⁸ The press debate died out by the spring, though meetings with government ministers and lawyers for the anti-Gallery petitioners continued until December 1934.²⁹ Eric Brown retained his directorship and the Academy attacks ceased. It was a decided victory for the Toronto artists; however there were casualties. Eric Brown had little to do with Canadian art after this debacle, and The National Gallery's annual exhibition of Canadian art was discontinued. Some of the artists' societies had been badly split. Lawren Harris resigned from the Ontario Society of Artists,³⁰ as did all the sculptor members.³¹ It was against this background that the Canadian Group of Painters was formed.

A small Group of Seven exhibition was being organized for Hart House at the University of Toronto³² when J.E.H. MacDonald died.³³ Ten days later news of the boycott hit the press and A.Y. Jackson resigned from the Academy. MacDonald's death affected the artists greatly, for with him died the Group of Seven. There was no going back. Circumstances had forced the Group to act. The threat of Academy control of The National Gallery would mean the younger, more progressive artists would be left out in the cold. Lawren Harris quickly wrote to FitzGerald: 'We feel it is essential to form a society of the so-called modern painters in the country, secure a charter and make ourselves felt as a country-wide influence in terms of the creative spirit. We propose to call the society "The Canadian Group of Painters."'³⁴

Before publicly announcing the formation of the new organization, the Group of Seven, for the first time, issued

a manifesto refuting the criticism the Group was receiving in the National Gallery controversy, and with the future Canadian Group in mind:

The group of seven has always believed in an art inspired by the country, and that the one way in which a people will find its own individual expression in art is for its artists to stand on their own feet, and by direct experience of the country itself . . . to produce works of its own time and place . . . The group has always . . . maintained for themselves and others the right to freedom of expression, believing that only in diversity of outlook will there ever be a widespread interest in the arts of this country. While it believes that faction is a healthy sign, it has no quarrel with any individual artist, critic or society of artists. Its members are a group of serious workers imbued with a creative idea and seeking to practice it.³⁵

In late February, after the height of the controversy had passed, formation of the Canadian Group was announced.³⁶ The original Group of Seven never actually disbanded but was absorbed instead into the larger society whose twenty-eight members included most of the progressive English-speaking artists from across Canada.³⁷

With Lawren Harris as president and Fred Houser as secretary it was evident the new group would follow a nationalistic path, a direction not accepted by all the new members. Brooker wrote to FitzGerald:

I am a little afraid that a strong nationalistic bias, which always gets into the utterances of the old Group, either public or private, is going to continue very strongly in the new Group. Comfort and I were the only ones at the meeting who raised our voices in protest against this rather insular attitude. We both felt, for example, that the very name of the new Group - Canadian Group of Painters - puts undue emphasis on the word 'Canadian.'³⁸

However, the majority of the new members felt a great debt to the Group for supporting them and were honoured to be invited as members.

The first exhibition was being prepared for November³⁹ when the new group was invited to exhibit at the Heinz Art Salon in Atlantic City.⁴⁰ The Group of Seven had always put great stress on foreign exhibitions to project their particular image. It did not seem incongruous, apparently, that a new nationalistic Canadian group should have its first exhibition outside of Canada.

The Atlantic City exhibition⁴¹ was limited solely to members of the Canadian Group of Painters - with two works by J.E.H. MacDonald⁴² as a tribute to that deceased member of the Group of Seven. The foreword to the catalogue pointed out that 'Modernism in Canada has almost

no relation to the modernism in Europe . . . in Canada, the main concerns have been with landscape moods and rhythms Their work is strongly redolent of the Canadian soil and has a distinctly national flavor.' Some reviewers appreciated this aspect of the art,⁴³ while others did not. The American critic Carlyle Burrows, for example, commented: 'In spite of the full-flavored quality of their work, the Canadians are seldom painters of robust and telling vitality. Too much seems dependent upon a decorative formula which is repeated rather obviously by most of the painters in the exhibition.'⁴⁴

The first exhibition to be held in Canada opened in November at The Art Gallery of Toronto. The scope of the Group's aims was expanded in the Foreword to the catalogue: 'Hitherto it has been a landscape art . . . but here and there figures and portraits have been slowly added to the subject matter, strengthening and occupying the background of landscape. Here also more modern ideas of technique and subject have been brought into the scope of Canadian painting'⁴⁵ Paintings by twenty-five invited contributors supplemented the works of the 'group of twenty-eight.'⁴⁶

The exhibition was met with some good-natured bantering (fig. 2).⁴⁷ Augustus Bridle, a leading Toronto journalist and early friend of the Group of Seven, pointed out, 'this is the third phase in Group psychology. The first, in 1919, was Whoopee. The second, about 1925, was Family Compact, with occasional associates. This is New Democracy.'⁴⁸ Robert Ayre made the most intelligent comments on the exhibition:

The Seven are not interested in imitators; it is the spirit they recognize, what they gave these new members was support and stimulus; the newer bearers of the revolutionary spirit have not had to fight alone against prejudice The canvases of the original members of the Group are not the most interesting part of the show. The younger men and women have brought a new energy and a new vision. Not only are we moving toward human life, away from landscape . . . but in growing up we are beginning to show the effects of the profound disturbances in human affairs which have shaken the world⁴⁹

Another exhibition was not to be held until 1936.

The early history of the Canadian Group is dominated by the figures of Arthur Lismer, A.Y. Jackson, and Lawren Harris. Lismer left the Ontario College of Art in 1927 and became supervisor of art education at The Art Gallery of Toronto,⁵⁰ a job that took up an increasing amount of his time. Yet during the early years of the decade his painting continued at a steady pace, mostly resulting from holiday sketching trips or reworkings of earlier sketches. *Baie*

Saint-Paul, Quebec (1931, cat. no. 1) was painted from a sketch done on a trip to the north shore of the Saint Lawrence in 1925. The earlier version, *Quebec Uplands* in The National Gallery,⁵¹ is more reticent and controlled than the exuberant, later work, with its billowing clouds, rolling rhythms, and summer colours.

More characteristic of Lismer's work of the thirties are the wind-blown, Georgian Bay pines. In *Pine Wrack* (1933, cat. no. 2) the cubist-derived, planar structure of the rocks and the light shaft contrasts with the more impressionist treatment of the clouds, yet is united to it by the complex design of the twisted pines. A more successful integration of the elements is found in *Bright Morning* (1935, cat. no. 3) where the jungle-like growth covering the rocks is the primary focus, and the larger pines become subordinate elements marking the rhythm across the canvas. Lismer's work between the mid-twenties and the forties shows an increasing interest in complex structure and design. It develops logically and surely from panoramic landscapes to dramatic silhouettes, from tangled growth to still-life studies of dock-litter in the early forties.

Yet as Lismer became more involved in education he had – as Brooker had noted – less time to paint. He taught all winter at The Art Gallery of Toronto and in 1933 organized the Children's Art Centre.⁵² At the same time he was writing two monthly art columns (in *Twentieth Century* and *Canadian Comment*) in which he affirmed his continuing belief in human creativity and in the necessity of art in all facets of life.⁵³ Familiar with world progressive educationalists and a leader in his own field, Arthur Lismer attended the New Educational Fellowship Conference in South Africa in 1934.⁵⁴ This visit resulted in an invitation to return there to set up children's art programmes. By this time Lismer was fed up with battling Gallery administrators who weren't interested in his work⁵⁵ and was willing to leave. Financed by the Carnegie Corporation Lismer left Canada in May 1936,⁵⁶ spent a year in South Africa, and returned via Australia and New Zealand.⁵⁷

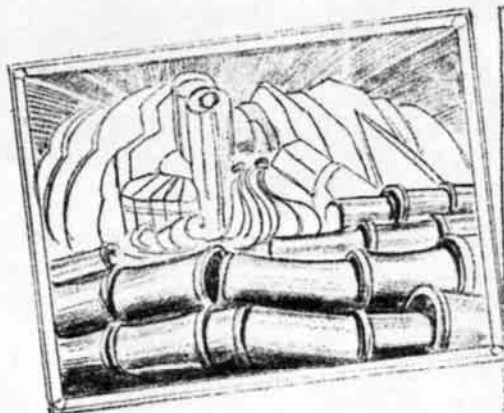
The South African stay resulted in certain changes in Lismer's work. For the first time he started painting seriously in watercolour.⁵⁸ While his first efforts were fairly hesitant, at times they reached a marvellously expressive quality verging on caricature.⁵⁹ In oils he was painting figures and scenes of African village life which, however, lack the dramatic strength of his Canadian works.

On his return to Canada he spent one more year at The Art Gallery of Toronto; but when Carnegie funds were cut off and no support was forthcoming in Toronto for his many years of educational work, he left for New York. He taught one year at Teachers' College, Columbia University at the same time laying plans for a national children's art

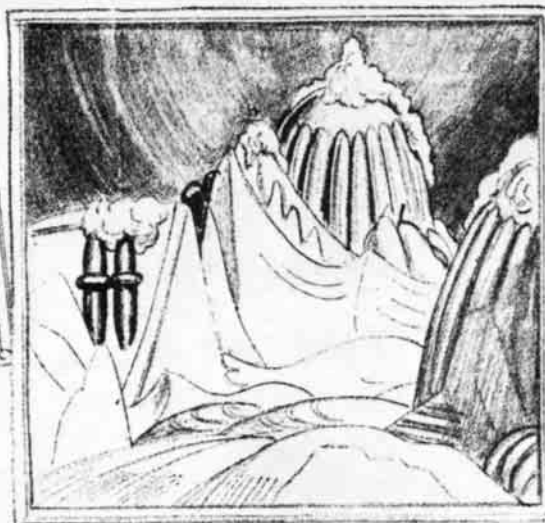
2. An Artist Draws His Impressions of 'Expressionist' Art, *The Toronto Telegram*, 25 November 1933. The works caricatured are, upper row left to right: *Sea and Rocks, Nova Scotia* by George Pepper; *Mountains in Snow* by

Lawren Harris; and *Decoration* by Sarah Robertson. Lower row left to right: *The Bather* by Prudence Heward; *Island, Georgian Bay* by Lawren Harris; and (?) *Cul-de-sac* by F. Forester.

An Artist Draws His Impressions of "Expressionist" Art!



Up at the Art Gallery they have a label on it. "Sea and Rocks." When a Telegram artist looked at it he saw gas pipes, cheese, straws and crackers. Just an impression of expressionism!



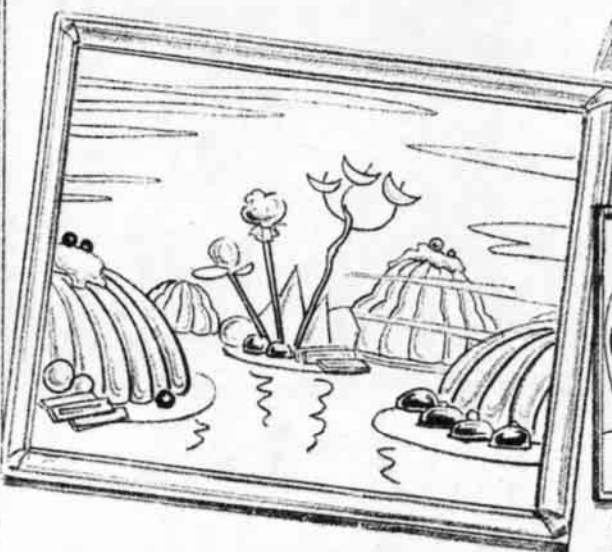
Our gastronomic Rockies! Our artist was ready to digest the mound of jelly and whipped-cream peaks—but what to do with a couple of broken chair legs!



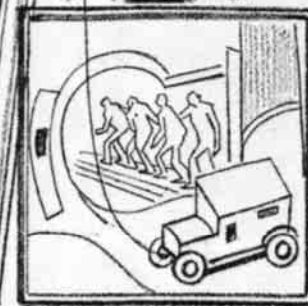
"Flowers" they call this, but the art critic is sure they don't call them that in smart women's magazines!



Even "The Bather" made the artist hungry. He thought it was a cook watching a salad sprout with forks, spoons and all!



"Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" Wouldn't even the three little pigs have a swell time if this impression of "Georgian Bay Islands" were really real!



Take this one seriously! It shows labor slaving for the capitalist. But our artist thinks Santa will pinch that armored car for some kid's sock!

3. A.Y. Jackson (1882 – 1974)
Grey Day, Laurentians c. 1930
Oil on canvas, 25 x 32 in. (63.5 x 81.3 cm)

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Purchased with the
A. Sidney Dawes and Dr F.J. Shepherd Funds, 1945)
(45.944)



centre which brought him to Ottawa in the fall of 1939. However, Eric Brown, with whom he had organized the art centre, had died in April⁶⁰ and the War cut off all funding. After a year of frustration in Ottawa, Lismer was happy to take up the educational programme at the Art Association of Montreal in January 1941.⁶¹

Of all the members of the Group, A. Y. Jackson typifies their popular image: robust, adventurous, a man of the soil, and a democrat. Lawren Harris was more aristocratic and intellectual, and his painting more austere and difficult of access. Arthur Lismer turned to education, and painting became secondary to his work in that field. But A.Y. remained a painter full time, making annual trips to different parts of Canada, returning each time with his quota of sketches to be painted up into canvases. His imagery remained constant and his logical stylistic developments placed little demand upon his public. The cry for an 'art of the soil' that had been a heresy fifteen years earlier had now become orthodoxy. This very consistency and reliability were both his strength and limitation.

Jackson's favorite sketching grounds remained the shores of the lower Saint Lawrence with their rolling hills, sagging barns nestling on the crest of a hillock, and curving, furrowed fields. Making annual visits, alternately to the north and south shores, he made this country his own.

The sketch for *A Quebec Farm* (1930, cat. no. 4) was probably painted around St.-Hilarion in the spring of 1930,⁶² as was the sketch for *Winter, Charlevoix County* (c. 1933, cat. no. 5) two years later.⁶³ The lush spring earth of the earlier work contrasts with his usual predilection for the snowy expanses of late winter, just before the approach of spring. In both works he paints the landscape in rolling, linear rhythms. The meandering road, or furrows, leading from the foreground to a central motif and closed off by the hills behind is a compositional device derived from the Quebec works of James Wilson Morrice and seen in Jackson's paintings from the early twenties.⁶⁴ *Winter, Charlevoix County* is actually a reworking of *Grey Day, Laurentians* (fig. 3) painted about 1930 and now in The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, where the broader treatment gives it a more 'Christmas card' appearance. In the later work, the more detailed rendering, complex patterns and sparkling colour create a sensuous yet solid effect.

The same impressionist colouring in pinks, yellows, and blues appears in *Iceberg* (1930, cat. no. 6) painted from a sketch⁶⁵ made on his trip to the Arctic with Lawren Harris in 1930.⁶⁶ Unlike Harris, Jackson was interested in the summer shores where the brown earth contrasts with the

ice floes and the rocks and Inuit tents are set against the barren hill, or in panoramic views of the rolling Labrador mountains. Even in such a work as *Iceberg* the Inuit families contrast with the immensity of the ice. Instead of accentuating the austerity of the icebergs, as Harris did, Jackson glories in the shimmering colours and anecdotal detail. For Jackson, the forces of nature are a stimulating and demanding adversary but never overwhelming. They are reduced to the human level.

It was the changing seasons that attracted A.Y., not the bright green of summer, nor the blank whiteness of winter, but the flow of winter to spring or the blaring up of summer into autumn. In *Algoma, November* (1935, cat. no. 7) the rich oranges and blacks are highlighted by the white of the first winter snows. A dramatic burst of sunshine rises above the heavy, snow-filled clouds broadly painted in dynamic rhythms. How very different from the panoramic Algoma views of the early twenties.

In the summer of 1936, A.Y. joined his niece, Naomi Jackson, and the Lismeres on a trip to Europe - visiting France for a reunion of his First World War battalion, then going on to Belgium, Germany, and England.⁶⁷ He found the political climate in Europe unpleasant and was re-affirmed in his belief that modern French art was highly overrated.⁶⁸ Jackson had for several years been fighting a rearguard battle against what he felt to be a 'diluted internationalism' and the influence of contemporary French art. In the United States, in the late twenties, American nationalists and such regionalist artists as Thomas Benton had reacted strongly against what they felt to be the swamping of the American art market by French art and art dealers and the lack of support for American artists. While A.Y. could comment ironically on the lack of 'menace' offered by modern French art to a Canadian public ignorant of contemporary developments,⁶⁹ at the same time he disapproved of anti-nationalist sentiments among the younger Toronto artists:

... there has been a lot of persistent effort to establish painting which has no reflection of the Canadian background. The international outlook is the thing and from that standpoint it is of very little importance. There has at the same time been an effort to belittle the Canadian movement by people who have no feeling for the country and it has resulted in a kind of sneer when the north country is mentioned. With all the young people here there is no longer any desire to go north. They do still life and back yards and when you try to arrange an international show it is almost impossible to find a dozen canvases of any distinction.⁷⁰

The late thirties were a difficult time for A.Y. Jackson. His constant repetition of the need for an art created by

artists with their feet in the soil was being ignored and even fought. Of the original Group of Seven, he and Carmichael were the only two left in Toronto. J.E.H. MacDonald had died, Varley was alternating between Ottawa and Vancouver, Lismer was in South Africa and New York, and Lawren Harris was in the States. At the same time Jackson recognized he was repeating himself. He tried to break out of the lethargy he felt in Toronto by exploring new areas of Canada but even when he went to the prairies in 1937⁷¹ the same formula emerged. In *Blood Indian Reserve, Alberta* (1937, cat. no. 8), the fields might be flatter and the road straighter, but it remains the same composition derived from Morrice.

In 1938 for the first time A.Y. didn't visit Quebec in the spring. He wrote Sarah Robertson, 'It seems funny to be in town at this season. I have not missed going to Quebec since 1925 the year I taught in the art school but it had become almost too much of a habit and I want to leave the snow alone for awhile.'⁷²

That autumn A.Y. went north again to visit the radium mines being developed by a friend, Gilbert Labine.⁷³ The barren lands, the ruggedness, and the solitude of the north were genuine stimulants for A.Y. Just as in his previous trip to Great Slave Lake in 1928, in *Northern Landscape* (1939, cat. no. 9) he turned to the silhouettes of the twisting stunted pines whose blazing colour, severity, and almost Expressionist crudeness best characterize Wyndham Lewis's view of A.Y.: 'His vision is as austere as his subject matter, which is precisely the hard puritanic land, in which he always has lived: with no frills, with all its dismal solitary grandeur and bleak beauty, its bad side deliberately selected rather than its chilly relentings . . . There is something of Ahab in him; the long white contours of the Laurentian Mountains in mid-winter are his elusive leviathan.'⁷⁴

While Lismer was the educator, Jackson the organizer, Lawren Harris was the enthusiast, the visionary. Even though the Group of Seven never had an official structure, Harris had often been seen as its leader, stimulating the artists into new ventures, the erection of the Studio Building, the formation of the Group of Seven and its expansion into the Canadian Group of Painters.

Like others connected with the Group of Seven, Lawren Harris was a keen student of theosophy,⁷⁵ and it was through these studies that he evolved his concepts of art and nationalism. He saw art as an initiator, 'a clarifying and objectifying process'⁷⁶ through which one could arrive at an individual experience of 'the essential order, the dynamic harmony [and] the ultimate beauty'⁷⁷ of all existence. To varying degrees art reflected this universal spirit, yet at the same time was defined by 'its own particular atti-

tude which depends upon the interplay of its time, its place on earth and its capacity'⁷⁸ - that is, the temporal, the national, and the personal. The artist could achieve an expression of universal harmony only through concentration on these particulars.

Theosophy also taught that America was to be the principal scene of the next phase of mankind's evolution.⁷⁹ 'Europe [had] dehumanized Art by making it a thing apart from Life . . . [had] debased Religion by professionalizing it and . . . [had] perverted the idea of National Consciousness by making it stand for Political Consciousness.'⁸⁰ America was the land of optimism, faith, and spiritual growth; and the Rocky Mountains, the 'sacred and occult centres of the earth,'⁸¹ and the North, were its spiritual centres. Harris wrote, 'We are on the fringe of the great North and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answer, its cleansing rhythms. It seems that the top of the continent is a source of spiritual flow that will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America.'⁸²

The necessity of the creative attitude which stressed the clarifying rôle of the arts and the rôle of the northern half of the American continent in the spiritual evolution of mankind formed the basis of Lawren Harris's art. For A.Y. Jackson, exploration was seen in terms of human adventure and geography, and more concrete national identity. But for Harris it was also a spiritual journey.

On the Arctic trip with A.Y. Jackson he was struck by the loneliness of the north, its silence, and its massive forms. Continuing the direction of the later mountain canvases, his arctic works progress from a more descriptive rendering to a generalized and symbolic representation. *Icebergs, Davis Strait* (1930, cat. no. 10), while monumental in size, appears less awesome due to the shimmering water and naturalistic sky. In *Grounded Icebergs* (c. 1931, cat. no. 11), the eerie, trapped stillness of the arctic night is magnificently portrayed while in *Icebergs and Mountains, Greenland* (c. 1932, cat. no. 12) the geometricization of the elements is carried to its extreme. The enclosed forms of the clouds reappear in his later abstractions. The blues and yellows of his arctic works, dramatically differentiated into light and shadow reflect the spiritual polarities of theosophic teachings.

While the northern voyage resulted in an impressive output of large canvases soon after his return, it soon came to a halt and for the next three years Lawren Harris painted little. Brooker commented, 'Lawren has done no painting for six months and very little for over a year. All of his things - mostly of the Arctic, I had seen at his studio often. The general impression, freely voiced seems to be that he is repeating himself and has got to the end of a

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

phase, at least.⁸³ The formation of the Canadian Group preoccupied him for a while. He would, as well, bring out old canvases and rework parts of them,⁸⁴ but, more important, it appears he was concentrating more and more on his theosophic studies,⁸⁵ recognizing he was about to make certain crucial, personal decisions. The direction of his life and studies was separating him from his wife. Finally in the summer of 1934 Lawren Harris and Bess Houser (the wife of another associate of the Group), who shared his theosophic interests, obtained divorces and were married.⁸⁶ Fred Houser married Yvonne McKague a year later;⁸⁷ however, the divorces created a great conflict of loyalties among certain intimate friends, and the HARRISES felt it necessary to leave Toronto, moving to Hanover, New Hampshire.⁸⁸ The break from Toronto gave Harris the freedom to set off on his own path.

While the members of the Group of Seven dispersed, they guaranteed, through the Toronto Art Students' League and the Canadian Group of Painters, that a younger generation of followers would continue the Group tradition. Started in the fall of 1926 as an informal discussion and sketching group, the Art Students' League was formally organized in 1927 by a group of dissident students from the Ontario College of Art.⁸⁹ Stressing individual work, and outdoor sketching, they also visited artists' studios and received criticisms from Arthur Lismer, A.Y. Jackson, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Lawren Harris.

One of the artists associated with the League was Yvonne McKague. A graduate of the Ontario College of Art, she studied in the Paris academies and returned to Toronto to assist Arthur Lismer and Fred Varley at the College. Through Lismer she became interested in the teaching of the progressive educationalist Franz Cizek and spent a summer at the University of Vienna.⁹⁰

Following the example of the Group, Yvonne McKague sketched in the Rocky Mountains and Quebec, however her favorite region remained the barren mining country of northern Ontario. The town of Cobalt had passed its peak by the early thirties, most of the mines abandoned and the houses in disrepair. In McKague's painting *Cobalt* (1931, cat. no. 13) the mining shafts accentuate the verticality of the houses as they lean this way and that.⁹¹ The houses, the figures along the road, and the fence leading in at the left are all reminiscent of Lawren Harris's town paintings; yet the restrained, muted colouring is very much her own. Most of the Group's followers in Toronto were never able to develop beyond superficial copying; however Yvonne McKague, absorbed in the atmosphere of the Group as intimately as she was, could create works which were directly in the Group tradition and at the same time strong and individual expressions of the Canadian landscape.

1. Buffalo, The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 14 September – 14 October 1928, *Exhibition of Paintings by Canadian Artists*; New York, International Art Center of Roerich Museum, 5 March – 5 April 1932, *Exhibition of Paintings by Contemporary Canadian Artists*.
2. Paris, Musée du Jeu de Paume, 11 April – 11 May 1927, *Exposition d'art canadien. An Exhibition of Paintings by Contemporary Canadian Artists under the Auspices of the American Federation of Arts*; This exhibition toured opening at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C., 9 – 30 March 1930. Its organizer, Eugene Savage, was an uncle of Anne Savage. Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art, 15 January – 28 February 1931, *First Baltimore Pan American Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings*. College Art Association, *International 1933*, a touring exhibition which opened at the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester (Mass.), January 1933.
3. 'Canadian Art Foundations of a National School,' *Apollo*, vol. 14 (December 1931), pp. 326 – 327; Blodwen Davies, 'The Canadian Group of Seven,' *The American Magazine of Art*, vol. xxv, no. 1 (July 1932), pp. 13 – 22; Eric Brown, 'Canada's National Painters,' *The Studio*, vol. ciii (June 1932), pp. 311 – 323; Stewart Dick, 'Canadian Landscape of Today,' *Apollo*, vol. 15 (June 1932), pp. 279 – 282; 'Moderne Malerei in Kanada,' *Die Kunst für Alle*, vol. 48, no. 11 (August 1933), pp. 343 – 347.
4. This opposition is as natural as the native movement, and is incited into activity by the movement itself. It is part of a clarifying and stimulating process whereby any art movement is helped in its direction and evolution.' Lawren S. Harris, 'Different Idioms in Creative Art,' *Canadian Comment*, vol. ii, no. 12 (December 1933), p. 5.
5. Bertram Brooker, 'The Seven Arts,' Ottawa *The Citizen* (29 December 1928).
6. Toronto, The Art Gallery of Toronto, April 1930, *An Exhibition of the Group of Seven*.
7. Bertram Brooker, 'The Seven Arts,' Ottawa *The Citizen* (19 April 1930).
8. Toronto, The Art Gallery of Toronto, December 1931, *An Exhibition By the Group of Seven*. The sixty-three works included twelve sketches by J.E.H. MacDonald.
9. T.M. [Thoreau MacDonald?], 'Decline of the Group of Seven,' *The Canadian Forum*, vol. xii, no. 136 (January 1932), p. 144.
10. Jehanne Biétry Salinger, 'Group of Seven Begins Expansion,' *Toronto Mail and Empire* (7 December 1931).
11. Bertram Brooker, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 10 January 1932; private property.
12. 'The Group of Seven retains directing control – definitely invites cooperation with those painters who have been associated with them in various exhibitions.' Arthur Lismer, 'The Canadian Theme in Painting,' *Canadian Comment*, vol. i, no. 2 (February 1932), p. 25.
13. *An Exhibition of the Group of Seven* (exhibition catalogue) (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1930), p. 3.
14. Arthur Lismer, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 24 May 1932; private property.
15. L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, to Arthur Lismer, Toronto, 2 June 1932; in The McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg.
16. Arthur Lismer, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 24 May 1932; private property.
17. For an account of the Wembley conflict see Maude Brown, *Breaking Barriers* (Ottawa: Society for Art Publications, 1964), pp. 69 – 75; Peter Mellen, *The Group of Seven* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), pp. 104 – 105; and Dennis Reid, *The Group of Seven* (exhibition catalogue) (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1970), pp. 170 – 173.

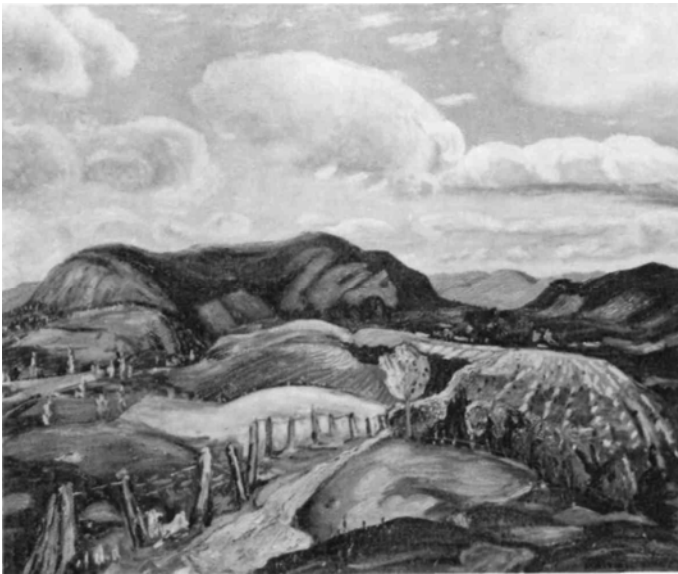
18. 'Painters Demand the Head of Art Dictator of Canada,' *Toronto Daily Star* (20 November 1926); 'Criticism of Art Director Is Effectively Disposed Of,' *Toronto Daily Star* (1 December 1926).
19. John Hammond, R.C.A. and Ernest Fosbery, R.C.A., Ottawa, to Hon. J.C. Elliott, M.P., Minister of Public Works, Ottawa, 7 March 1927; copy in The National Gallery of Canada.
20. Letters from eight Montreal artists to Dr Shepherd, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, The National Gallery of Canada, 7 March 1927; from fifteen Toronto artists and laymen, 23 March 1927; from ten Ottawa artists, 31 March 1927; all in The National Gallery of Canada.
21. Franz Johnston, A.R.C.A., O.S.A., Toronto, to Right Hon. R.B. Bennett, Ottawa, 25 January 1932; copy in The National Gallery of Canada. The letter begins, 'For generations my family has supported the Conservative party'
22. Arthur Heming, Toronto, to Right Hon. R.B. Bennett, Ottawa, 1 March 1932; copy in The National Gallery of Canada.
23. This document may have been circulating as early as spring 1931 as Louis Muhlstock signed the petition in Paris as a favour to his former teacher Edmond Dyonnet. Muhlstock returned from Paris in the summer of 1931. (Interview with Louis Muhlstock, Montreal, 15 September 1973.)
24. T.W. Mitchell, Toronto, to Right Hon. R.B. Bennett, Ottawa, 27 April 1932; copy in The National Gallery of Canada. Signatories included Wylie Grier, President of the Royal Canadian Academy, George Reid, Franz Johnston, Homer Watson, Horatio Walker, Maurice Cullen, Robert Pilot, and Edmond Dyonnet.
25. 'National Art Show Abuses Protested,' *Vancouver Sun* (31 May 1932); 'Rumored Criticism of National Gallery,' *Ottawa The Citizen* (22 June 1932).
26. 'Artists Boycott National Gallery Until Radical Reform Takes Place,' *The Ottawa Journal* (8 December 1932).
27. A.Y. Jackson, Toronto, to Edmond Dyonnet, Secretary, Royal Canadian Academy, Montreal (14 December 1932); copy in The National Gallery of Canada.
28. Telegram from H.S. Southam, Chairman, Board of Trustees, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, to Emmanuel Hahn, Toronto, 27 January 1933, thanking him for the list of signatures. This document of support is in The National Gallery of Canada.
29. H.S. Southam, Ottawa, to Sir George Perley, Ottawa, 31 December 1934; copy in The National Gallery of Canada.
30. Monthly Meeting of the Ontario Society of Artists (7 March 1933). 'Ontario Society of Artists Minutes'; in the Ontario Archives, Toronto.
31. E.W. Wood, Toronto, to H.O. McCurry, Assistant Director of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 20 February 1933; in The National Gallery of Canada.
32. Lawren S. Harris, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 28 November 1932; private property. This exhibition did take place. See Frank Brien, Secretary Hart House Sketch Committee, Toronto, to Arthur Lismer, Toronto, 6 February 1933; in the Art Gallery of Ontario.
33. J.E.H. MacDonald, Art College Head, Dies After Illness,' *Toronto Globe* (28 November 1932).
34. Lawren S. Harris, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 1 January 1933; private property.
35. *Statement by the Group of Seven*. Mimeographed sheet. This was published in its entirety in 'Group of Seven Issues Statement Defending Aims,' *Montreal Gazette* (31 January 1933).
36. 'Canadian Artists Form New Group,' *Montreal Gazette* (21 February 1933). The Canadian Group of Painters was not incorporated until 1936. (*Canada Gazette*, 4 April 1936, p. 2397.) The incorporating members were A.Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, Frank Carmichael, A.J. Casson, Fred Varley, Edwin Holgate, and L.L. FitzGerald – all members of the Group of Seven.
37. The original members of the Canadian Group of Painters were Bertram Brooker, Frank Carmichael, Emily Carr, A.J. Casson, Charles Comfort, L.L. FitzGerald, Lawren S. Harris, Prudence Heward, Randolph Hewton, Edwin Holgate, Bess Housser, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, Thoreau MacDonald, J.W.G. Macdonald, Yvonne McKague, Isabel McLaughlin, Mabel May, Liliat T. Newton, Will Ogilvie, George Pepper, Sarah Robertson, Albert Robinson, Anne Savage, Charles Scott, Fred Varley, W.P. Weston, and W.J. Wood.
38. Bertram Brooker, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 20 March 1933; private property.
39. Lawren S. Harris, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 18 March 1933; private property.
40. Bertram Brooker's employer, J.J. Gibbons Ltd., had the Heinz advertising account (Bertram Brooker, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 10 January 1932; private property), and it was through this connection that the Canadian Group of Painters was invited to exhibit at Atlantic City. (Confirmed in interview with Charles Comfort, Hull [Quebec], 3 October 1973.)
41. Atlantic City, Heinz Ocean Pier, Heinz Art Salon, Annual Art Exhibition, [Summer 1933], *Paintings by the Canadian Group of Painters*.
42. The foreword to the catalogue mentions twenty-nine members, apparently including J.E.H. MacDonald as a member.
43. *Philadelphia Record* and *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* quoted in Frank Bagnall, 'Canadian Artists' Show,' *Saturday Night*, vol. XLVIII, no. 50 (21 October 1933), p. 16.
44. Carlyle Burrows, 'Canadian Art at Atlantic City,' *New York Herald Tribune* (4 June 1933), quoted in 'Painting and Pickles,' *The Canadian Forum*, vol. XIII, no. 154 (July 1933), p. 366.
45. *Catalogue of an Exhibition by Canadian Group of Painters* (exhibition catalogue) (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1933), Foreword.
46. J.W.G. Macdonald was the only member who had no works in this exhibition.
47. 'The Artist Draws His Impressions of Expressionist Art,' *The Toronto Telegram* (25 November 1933).
48. Augustus Bridle, 'New Democracy Seen In Latest Paintings,' *Toronto Daily Star* (3 November 1933).
49. Robert Ayre, 'Canadian Group of Painters,' *The Canadian Forum*, vol. XIV, no. 159 (December 1933), pp. 98 – 99.
50. John A.B. McLeish, *September Gale* (Toronto, Vancouver: J.M. Dent & Sons [Canada] Limited, 1955), p. 120.
51. Reproduced in Robert H. Hubbard, ed., *The National Gallery of Canada. Catalogue. Paintings and Sculpture. Volume III: Canadian School* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 178.
52. Arthur Lismer, 'The Children's Art Centre,' *Canadian Comment*, vol. V, no. 7 (July 1936), pp. 28 – 29.
53. For partial listings of these articles see Dennis Reid, *A Bibliography of the Group of Seven* (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1971), pp. 32 – 34.
54. Arthur Lismer, 'South African Impressions,' *Canadian Comment*, vol III, no. 10 (October 1934), pp. 15 – 16. Lismer had attended a previous Fellowship Conference in Nice in 1932. See A. Lismer, 'The World of Art, The Artist Abroad,' *Canadian Comment*,

- vol. I, no. 9 (September 1932), pp. 25 – 26; vol. I, no. 10 (October 1932), p. 24.
55. Arthur Lismer, McGregor Bay, to H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, [summer 1935]; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 56. Arthur Lismer, Toronto, to H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, 26 May 1936; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 57. Arthur Lismer, Toronto, to H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, 16 October 1937; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 58. Arthur Lismer, Johannesburg, to H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, 21 October 1936; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 59. Especially in *The Three Graces* (1938, watercolour on paper; 14 x 21-1/2 in., 35.6 x 54.6 cm). Present whereabouts unknown. Reproduced in Graham C. McInnes, 'Canadians versus Americans,' *Saturday Night*, vol. LV, no. 15 (10 February 1940), p. 9.
 60. 'Canadian Art Loses Leader, Gallery Head,' *Toronto Telegram* (6 April 1939).
 61. *Art Association of Montreal, Seventy-Ninth Annual Report 1940*, p. 9.
 62. A.Y. Jackson, St.-Joachim, to Thoreau MacDonald, [Toronto?], 20 March [1930]; in The McCord Museum, McGill University.
 63. A.Y. Jackson, St.-Hilarion, to Thoreau MacDonald, [Toronto?], [25 April 1932]; in The McCord Museum, McGill University.
 64. One of the earlier examples of this composition in Jackson's work is *Winter Road, Quebec* (1921, oil on canvas; 21 x 25 in., 53.3 x 63.5 cm) in the collection of Mrs Charles S. Band, Toronto. Reproduced in Dennis Reid, *The Group of Seven*, p. 175.
 65. The sketch is in The McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg. See Paul Duval, *A Vision of Canada* (Toronto, Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1973), p. 157 repr.
 66. For an account of this voyage see A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1967), pp. 105 – 113, and Lawren S. Harris, 'The Group of Seven in Canadian History,' *The Canadian Historical Association: Report of the Annual Meeting held at Victoria and Vancouver June 16 – 19, 1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), p. 36.
 67. Conversation with Naomi Jackson Groves, Ottawa, 21 January 1974. See also A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, pp. 121 – 122.
 68. A.Y. Jackson, Paris, to Sarah Robertson, Montreal, 10 June [1936]; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 69. A.Y. Jackson, 'Modern Art No "Menace,"' *Saturday Night*, vol. XLVIII, no. 6 (17 December 1932), p. 3.
 70. A.Y. Jackson, Toronto, to H.O. McCurry, Ottawa, 9 June [1938]; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 71. A.Y. Jackson, Spring Coulee, Alberta, to Arthur Lismer, Toronto, 11 October 1937; in The McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg. See also A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, pp. 123 – 125.
 72. A.Y. Jackson, Toronto, to Sarah Robertson, Montreal, 31 March 1938; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 73. A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, p. 126.
 74. Wyndham Lewis, 'Canadian Nature and Its Painters,' *The Listener* (29 August 1946), reprinted in Walter Michael and C.J. Fox, eds, *Wyndham Lewis on Art. Collected Writings 1913 – 1956* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p. 429.
 75. It was probably Roy Mitchell, member of the Arts and Letters Club and of the Toronto Theosophical Society and later stage designer for the Hart House Theatre, who originally introduced Lawren Harris to theosophy during the First World War. See William Hart, 'Theory and Practice of Abstract Art,' in *Lawren Harris Retrospective Exhibition, 1963* (exhibition catalogue) (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1963), p. 32.
 76. Lawren S. Harris, 'Revelation of Art in Canada,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. VIII, no. 5 (15 July 1926), p. 86.
 77. Lawren S. Harris, 'Theosophy and Art,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. XIV, no. 5 (15 July 1933), p. 129.
 78. Lawren S. Harris, 'Creative Art and Canada,' Supplement to the *McGill News* (December 1928), p. 2. Reprinted in Bertram Brooker, ed., *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928 – 1929* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1929), pp. 179 – 186.
 79. Fred Housser, 'Theosophy and America,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. X, no. 5 (15 July 1929), p. 130.
 80. Fred Housser, 'Some Thoughts on National Consciousness,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. VIII, no. 5 (15 July 1927), p. 81.
 81. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 82. Lawren S. Harris, 'Revelation of Art in Canada,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. VII, no. 5 (15 July 1926), pp. 85 – 86.
 83. Bertram Brooker, Toronto, to L.L. FitzGerald, Winnipeg, 10 January 1932; private property.
 84. Interview with Yvonne McKague Housser, Toronto, 18 October 1973. Harris continued to rework canvases throughout his life. See Lawren S. Harris, Vancouver, to Martin Baldwin, Toronto, 3 February 1948; in the Art Gallery of Ontario.
 85. A series of speeches and articles were published in *The Canadian Theosophist* and other publications. In addition to those in Dennis Reid, *A Bibliography of the Group of Seven*, p. 17, there were also Lawren S. Harris, 'Science and the Soul,' *The Canadian Theosophist*, vol. XII, no. 10 (15 December 1931), pp. 298 – 300; and Lawren S. Harris, 'Different Idioms in Creative Art,' *Canadian Comment*, vol. II, no. 12 (December 1933), pp. 5 – 6, 32.
 86. Frances Loring, Toronto, to Eric Brown, Ottawa, [July 1934]; in The National Gallery of Canada.
 87. Fred Housser married Yvonne McKague on 28 June 1935 and died on 28 December 1936. See 'F.B. Housser Dies Suddenly,' *Toronto Daily Star* (28 December 1936).
 88. Bess Harris, Hanover (N.H.), to Doris Mills, [Toronto?], 14 November [1934]; property of Doris Spiers. Lawren Harris's uncle, with whom he had stayed in Berlin in 1904, was head of the German Department at Dartmouth College in Hanover.
 89. For an account of the history of the Art Students' League, see Paul T. Breithaupt, 'History of the Art Students' League,' *Etcetera*, vol. I, no. 1 (September 1930), pp. 28 – 30; vol. I, no. 2 (October 1930), pp. 28 – 30; vol. I, no. 3 (November 1930), pp. 30 – 33. Students and associate members included Norah McCullough, Audrey Taylor, Isabel McLaughlin, and Gordon Webber.
 90. Interview with Yvonne McKague Housser, Toronto, 18 October 1973.
 91. An article praising this work – 'The Best Old Town I Know,' *Gold Magazine* (December 1933) – was severely criticized by a resident of Cobalt because of the painting's untruthfulness and its application of 'modern European technique' to depict the Canadian scene. See Edward Buckman, 'Cobalt and the Artists,' *Gold Magazine* (April 1934).

*1.
ARTHUR LISMER
Baie Saint-Paul, Quebec 1931
NOT IN EXHIBITION

2.
ARTHUR LISMER
Pine Wrack 1933

*3.
ARTHUR LISMER
Bright Morning 1935



4.
A.Y. JACKSON
A Quebec Farm 1930



*5.
A.Y. JACKSON
Winter, Charlevoix County c. 1933



*6.
A.Y. JACKSON
Iceberg 1930



7.
A.Y. JACKSON
Algoma, November 1935



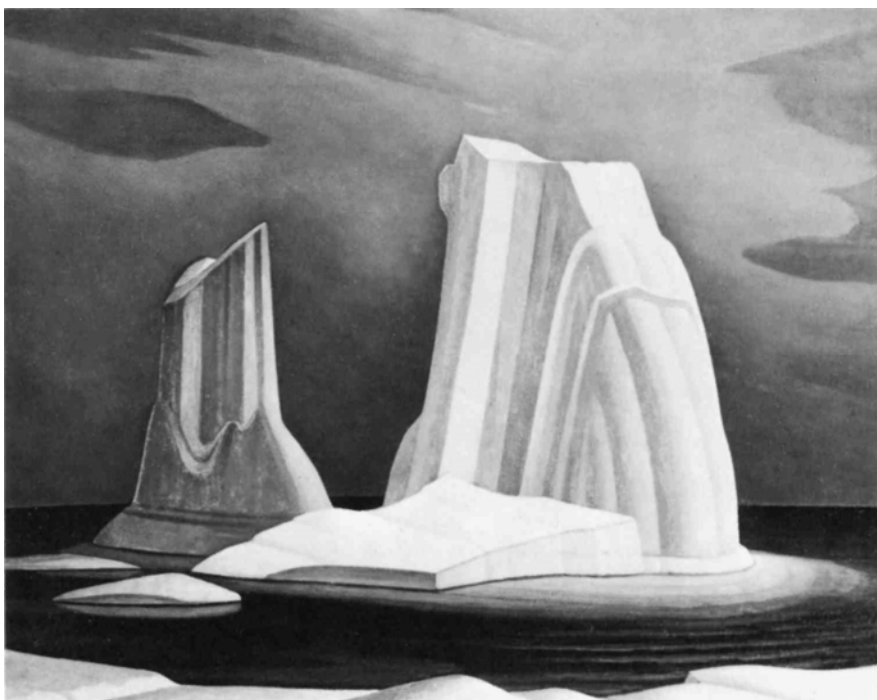
*8.
A.Y. JACKSON
Blood Indian Reserve, Alberta 1937



*9.
A.Y. JACKSON
Northern Landscape 1939



*10.
LAWREN S. HARRIS
Icebergs, Davis Strait 1930



*11.
LAWREN S. HARRIS
Grounded Icebergs c. 1931

12.
LAWREN S. HARRIS
Icebergs and Mountains, Greenland c. 1932

*13.
YVONNE McKAGUE HOUSSER
Cobalt 1931

