

JOURNAL

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PRESIDENT A. J. HAZELGROVE (F)

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JOURNAL R. A. I. C. JANUARY 1950

AT this time of year, the Chairman of the Editorial Board is expected to have something worthwhile to say on the Editorial Page of the *Journal*. We suspect that somewhere there is undercover strategy in this move. Perhaps it is intended that in his ornamental capacity, he can with true modesty make remarks concerning the *Journal* which if made by the Editor or the Publisher, might be construed as being entirely immodest. At any rate, that is the channel which we intend to pursue in the writing of these few words.

DURING recent years, we have all witnessed with considerable satisfaction, the continued growth of our *Journal*. We have noted its increase in size, the general improvement of its subject matter, the upswing in its financial return, and its ever increasing potentiality as an advertising medium. Much appreciation is due to those in the profession, who, together with the leaders in the allied Arts, have so generously contributed to this great march of progress. At the beginning of this new year it is the firm resolve of the Editorial Board that this progress shall continue.

IT would be mere folly to presume that the production of a publication such as the *Journal* is accomplished from month to month without attendant difficulties and obstacles. To many, the publisher's deadline is a date too often discounted. Dependent to a large extent upon the voluntary contributions of busy individuals, one can readily see that it requires all the skill of an ingenious editor, and all the patience of a tireless publisher to ensure the delivery of your *Journal* at the appointed time.

IT can easily be appreciated that to supply our *Journal* with material each month requires an endless flow of subject matter. So much so, that it has always remained impossible to build up a surplus stock. For many years your Board has cherished the fond hope that the day might soon arrive when such a reservoir would be established. An accomplishment such as this would enable your editor and publisher to set up, say, the May or June number, in January or February and so on. It would also provide time to secure selective advertising on a larger scale for the various numbers.

THERE probably never was a time when so much unpublished material existed in this country. We rely on our Editorial Board members to bring it to our attention by snapshot or finished photograph. For general issues a stockpile of buildings from cottages to factories would greatly facilitate the work of the Board. If in any given month emphasis seems to be made on Ontario, or even the environs of Toronto, it is because the level of the reservoir of material has become low. Our aim at all times is to cover the work of Canadian architects and not the work of a few or the work done in an area. We appeal, therefore, to every Editorial Board member.

THIS month the annual Art issue is being presented under the capable direction of Mr. A. J. Casson, P.R.C.A., O.S.A. Our sincere thanks go to him for his splendid effort. The admission of the architects of Newfoundland into the R.A.I.C. heralds a coming number honoring our newest Province. Another number which will prove of tremendous interest will be one on the contemporary architecture of Holland which has been prepared by Mr. Allert Warners of that country. During the coming year a series of articles dealing with the legal aspect of our profession and prepared by Mr. Arthur L. Fleming, K.C., of Toronto will appear at regular intervals in the *Journal*. During the past year Mr. Earle C. Morgan has been collecting drawings and photographs of detailed parts of Canadian buildings of all types, a sheet of which will soon be making its appearance each month. He will welcome any material which might prove of interest for this purpose.

IN conclusion, may I ask all members, particularly Board members, to give thought to the *Journal* for 1950-51. The opportunity for constructive suggestions will be the Annual Meeting in Winnipeg. If you cannot be present yourself, but have something to offer, I shall be happy to have it in writing, and can promise it serious consideration.

Arthur H. Eadie,
Chairman, Editorial Board

FIFTY YEARS OF COLLECTING

THE programme of the Art Gallery of Toronto, its exhibitions, its educational work, its public relations and its finances, are all based on the fundamental idea of a collection of works of art which are constantly available for study and familiar enjoyment: A collection, however, which never moves from the wall or from its pedestals and is never subject to new comparisons only retains the interest of the most devoted student and, as the Gallery is dedicated to the general public, the importance of its collection has been somewhat overshadowed by its other activities.

There are art institutions which make no effort to form their own collections but these have the characteristic of being devoted to a comparatively restricted field and therefore to a restricted public. Our case is different — specifically our task is "to promote and further art interests in Ontario" — which implies a general field. Every general museum of consequence is convinced of the necessity of its own collection as a foundation on which to base its activities and these, in turn, are related to the size and quality of the collection itself.

The Gallery was incorporated in 1900 and was the result of the efforts of a committee which itself was formed to examine ways and means to bring into being one of the cardinal clauses in the constitution of the Ontario Society of Artists — the foundation of an Art

Museum. The president of the Ontario Society of Artists at this time was George A. Reid who brought together a committee made up of professional and business men, educators and artists. Under the chairmanship of Sir Edmund Walker, who became the Gallery's first president, their joint contributions resulted in a sound constitution and a pertinacious concentration on the problems subsequently involved.

Activities began in the form of exhibitions in the gallery of the Ontario Society of Artists on King Street, which has since been demolished to make way for the extension of University Avenue, and later in the Reference Library at College and St. George Streets. Our first picture was bought by subscription in 1906 from our first exhibition "Pictures by Glasgow Painters" — "The Captive Butterfly" by E. A. Hornel for \$610.00, for which there were thirty-one subscribers.

The foundation of the collection began in 1911 when an arrangement was made with the Canadian National Exhibition Association to receive, on long term loan, works of art acquired by that association. Over 350 works (including paintings, sculpture, prints and drawings) are included in this portion of the collection.

The Gallery's early development was slow for a reason that is not known to many. At the outset, it had no home, but sometime within the first three years Sir

Edmund Walker was approached by Mr. and Mrs. Goldwin Smith who asked his advice as to the ultimate disposition of their unique residence, "The Grange", which has a great architectural charm. It was still at that time used as a residence and it stood in its fine park in the heart of the city. It was the sole survivor of an age of elegance and grace that even in 1900 had disappeared in Toronto.

Sir Edmund suggested that The Grange should become the home of the newly incorporated Art Gallery and the Goldwin Smiths adopted this suggestion. At that time the Dundas Street frontage (St. Patrick Street as it was then known) did not belong to the Goldwin Smiths and it was realized that in order to preserve the beauty of the park and the facade of The Grange, the galleries to be ultimately erected would have to be on the north side which, of course, necessitated the acquisition of the Dundas Street frontage.

Sir Edmund knew the value of a good lawyer and had as his personal friend and close adviser one of the ablest corporation counsel the profession has ever known, the late Z. A. Lash. The two of them did not let the grass grow under their feet but prepared for the day when The Grange would become the property of The Art Gallery by persuading the government of Ontario to pass a Special Act of Parliament which was assented to on 22nd May, 1903. This Act gives the Gallery a right to expropriate land in the broadest terms.

This careful preparation could not be made use of for some eight years. Mrs. Goldwin Smith lived on until 1909 and by her Will left the property to her husband for his life and after his death to the Gallery. He died the following year and in January 1911, the Gallery and the City of Toronto entered into an agreement which made the lands surrounding The Grange a public park maintained by the City. In exchange for this the City paid the cost of expropriating or otherwise acquiring the Dundas Street frontage and agreed to make a small annual payment to the Gallery for its maintenance and upkeep.

We took possession of The Grange in 1912 and received with it a number of the Goldwin Smith pictures. These paintings were of two kinds: watercolours reminiscent of Goldwin Smith's life in England, and the dark brown school of old masters which for a short time raised high hopes in our Council's breast. These hopes, as the correspondence proves, were destined to disappointment. The paintings for the most part failed to live up to the high sounding names on the labels.

In 1916 we received our second important gift of a group of paintings from Mr. C. D. Massey from the collection of pictures owned by Mrs. Massey Treble.

The first building operation — the three south galleries — was completed in 1918 and its opening was marked by a joint exhibition under the auspices of the Ontario Society of Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

The new buildings were themselves an invitation to greater effort by Canadian artists and the fact that Toronto is the headquarters of most Canadian artist societies can be attributed to this building's existence. This was the battleground of the early days of the Group of Seven.

But the Gallery was still without funds to lay the foundation of its collection. Sir Edmund Walker's death in 1924 was the occasion for his general recognition as a great Canadian figure and under the presidency of Colonel R. Y. Eaton funds were raised by private subscription and from the City Council to enlarge the buildings to provide the new entrance on Dundas Street, the Walker Sculpture Court and the two sets of flanking galleries: one set being presented by Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Fudger as a memorial to their son, Richard Barry, whose portrait by Orpen was part of the gift.

The inaugural exhibition brought in over 100,000 people in a month and a number of paintings which graced it have since become our property. In addition the catalogue of this exhibition lists the names of fifty-five donors of works of art to the Gallery and includes twenty-three pictures, mostly of the French Barbizon School, together with furniture presented by the late Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Cox, as well as a selection of the prints and paintings bequeathed by the late Sir Edmund Walker. At the same time we received a gift of a number of paintings from the Trustees of the Ludwig Mond Estate. This, then, was the nucleus of our collection.

Now for the first time the Council of the Gallery found itself in a position when it felt safe to begin on its own account the acquisition of important works of art, and we received our first gift of a fund of \$10,000 from the late Reuben Wells and Mrs. Leonard for the express purpose of purchasing Canadian works.

In 1933 the Gallery received the Leonard Bequest in addition and it is from this source that most of our French Impressionist paintings were acquired. But not all — lacking resources sufficient to set up an endowment fund of which only the income need be used, our collection continued to be built up through the generosity of our friends by the purchase of works which were later presented to the Gallery, or by subscription to cover the cost of an individual work. Such paintings as the Hals, the Gainsborough, the Van Orley and many others came to us in this way. Tom Thomson's "West Wind" was presented by the Canadian Club in 1926, and was the centre of a lively controversy among its membership at that time.

Mr. A. H. Robson, who was vice-president from 1927 until his death in 1939, became the leading spirit in the quest for funds for acquisitions and it was due to him that the Friends of Canadian Art Fund was set up. In addition it was largely through his enthusiasm that a group of devoted members backed him up by their subscriptions and interest in the acquisition of some of the most important works in our collection. These men

have always demanded strict anonymity as the price of their support, therefore, much as we regret it, we cannot do more than express our gratitude to them in these general terms. Following his death a subscription was opened which resulted in the establishment of the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund of \$10,000, which has since been applied to the purchase of works by contemporary Canadian artists.

In 1948 The T. Eaton Co. Limited presented a fund of \$3,000 per year for five years for the purchase of works by Canadian artists.

In 1949 the Gallery received a bequest of forty-two paintings, chiefly French and Dutch 19th century works, from the late F. W. G. Fitzgerald.

This recital of our benefactors is not given for the purpose of record but because the slow building of any collection cannot be understood unless some light is shed on the resources which are available for the purpose.

Toronto as a city was not seventy years old when the Gallery was founded and in consequence we are less fortunate than some of our colleague institutions in Canada and the United States which are placed in settings far richer than ours in private collections. Great progress has been made, chiefly in the Canadian field, in the last three decades and the Gallery's policy has always been to stand aside in favor of private purchases. This is for two reasons: first because the private possession of a work of art is its natural destiny and secondly because of the knowledge that the great collections, both in Europe and in North America, are largely the result of private benefactions — largely, but never entirely — for no matter how rich a private collection may be it is always limited by its owner's personal taste. However fine his discrimination may be as an individual he is as free to select as he is to dispose of his treasures.

A public museum, however, while it must discriminate for quality, cannot discriminate on any other grounds within its field for — if it is to play an important part in both general and special education by giving the people of its community an opportunity to raise their own standards of quality by comparing them with examples not only of contemporary work, but with those of other times — it must be catholic in its collection. It follows that no matter how much present taste may deplore or praise any one development it should be shown in all fairness provided it carries importance and quality. Everyone outside Germany was shocked when Hitler arbitrarily banished certain schools of painting from the public museums.

A collection should therefore be acquired with a view to its value to the public and the student. Its primary value to the student, whatever his age, whether he be craftsman or scholar, lies in the opportunity of leisurely and thorough examination and research. Its secondary value lies in its historical, stylistic and social content and brings it into the whole field of general education.

Only a small section of the general public displays a similar close interest. We believe, however, that it is our duty to stimulate this interest and for this reason the presentation of the collection or parts of it in the new and varying contexts of specially organized exhibitions has become an ever increasing part of our exhibition policy. Thus the idea of the collection as a storehouse from which we can draw works appropriate to various exhibitions suggests the motive behind our acquisition policy and, as our collection grows, an inevitable modification of the exhibition programme itself into new and hitherto inaccessible fields.

This is perhaps the chief reason why institutions such as ours deplore the gift or bequest with strings attached to it. A collection should never be visualized from the acquisition side only. As it increases in importance its custodians should feel free to discard works which as a matter of experience have outlived their usefulness to the Gallery. A work which, because of later and more important acquisitions in the same field, is no longer in active use can be put out on long term loan to less well equipped organizations or it can be disposed of. This latter, however, is a difficult business for if the work has a donor's name attached to it — and most of ours have — it would be a grave injustice to him or to his memory if the record should vanish with the gift. No satisfactory solution to this pressing problem has yet been reached.

The basis on which any collection is built up is under continual revision and perhaps the only unchanging factor is insistence on quality; but even here there is the problem of "the best and only the best" or "the best we can afford". Generally speaking the former is the better guide but there are times when the latter principle can come into good use.

The purpose underlying a collection could be framed as this: To present to public and student alike the best of contemporary work either at home or abroad and, with it, as a background, such work of the past which carries an influence and vital message today. For the Art Gallery, whose collections are limited to painting, sculpture, drawings and prints, and which serves the same people as the Royal Ontario Museum, our field seems naturally to define itself as European Art from the end of the middle ages and its extension into North America.

For example, modern art in Europe was affected by the discovery of the native arts of primitive people notably in Africa and Australasia, and that influence has been in evidence both in Canada and the United States. It would be proper for us to show this by European examples, but, as the Royal Ontario Museum has a collection of these primitive objects, it would be folly to compete with them.

European art reflects its own civilization in its progress as a series of greater or smaller climaxes linked to what has gone before and influencing what is to follow, together with a larger number of smaller trends whose

influence is debatable and this is equally true of art in Canada.

It seems logical therefore in our Canadian collection to keep abreast of current trends and new developments; to round out our representation of earlier work which has had some bearing on today's, and to do this in some detail even at the cost of quality, especially in the time of the early settlements. A painting or drawing, even if it has a poor claim to being a work of art, can nevertheless express, however inadequately, a valid statement of idea and fact.

Our whole scheme of civilization stems from that of Europe and even today a sizeable proportion of our artists were trained in Europe or the United States and a greater number came to Canada in their youth. It follows logically that we should trace this relationship and its historic development in our collection in order to give the visitor an intelligible picture of the factors which underlie our own contemporary work. Our interest in European and other outside influences cannot be as detailed as it can and should be for Canada because the field is so much greater in time and extent and so much more costly in acquisition. We therefore in general principle wish to bring together a collection which will present a logical sequence of the main variations and developments in the European tradition without losing sight of our secondary interest in less important but nonetheless interesting fields.

We can now suggest a sort of formula as a series of questions which can be applied to objects proposed for acquisition:

1. Is the development, of which the work is a part, of sufficient significance — in relation to our present standards of necessity — to be added to the collection?
2. Is the artist of sufficient importance in his period to have had some influence on it?
3. Is the work itself sufficiently high in quality to represent 1 and 2 well or adequately?
4. Is this aspect of the field already represented in the collection and if so is this a better illustration?

There should be no question of liking the object or not . . . only the recognition of quality and importance in a term of reference which has been determined long ago by the artist himself in his society.

Very few of us would like the implications of the Portrait by Reynolds of Townshend . . . it has been said of it that it explains the American Revolution . . . but it is a characteristic example of an important point of view in a society of importance, done by an artist who was recognized in his time and ever since as one of the two leading painters of his day in his own country and is a revealing example of his insight and capacity as well as of his weaknesses.

A collection built on these lines begins perhaps in the 13th century in Italy and continues there until the 18th century. It covers the Flemish, French and German

fields of the 15th and 16th centuries and concentrates on France, Flanders, Holland and perhaps England in the 17th; moves to England and France in the late 17th and 18th centuries and continues through the 19th in England and France. In the 20th century England, France, Germany, Mexico and the United States became significant.

This is the background against which our progress can be surveyed; the first substantial step in the formation of the collection really took place in 1926 and in the twenty-four succeeding years we have laid a foundation of which we can well be proud. It is true that some of our earlier acquisitions are giving place to later ones: that is only the result of our beginnings. In the Canadian field the National Gallery is ahead of us prior to 1926; since that time we have kept pace with them and are slowly recovering our lost ground. This is said as a comparison not in competition, for we are far enough apart geographically for our collections to be independent. As the illustrations indicate, we are the proud possessors of many fine things in this field.

This is true too in the European part of our collection. We have a sufficient number of first class things to make it forever impossible to load the collection with works of indifferent merit without the fact becoming glaringly apparent.

These works are sufficiently varied in their provenance to encourage us to refuse suggestions — so often made — that we should restrict our field to the visible horizon. All our experience points against it. The future of many a struggling gallery has been changed overnight by some sudden and unexpected generosity and it is quite possible that one fine day we may find ourselves adequately furnished with funds to begin a steady accumulation of works of the most varied schools and of the highest order — and no longer as we are now, bound down by mounting financial difficulties — for unlike many of our more fortunate colleagues, we have no secure endowment on which to base our acquisitions. That happy day will free us from many anxieties but will load us and our successors with no less heavy responsibilities.

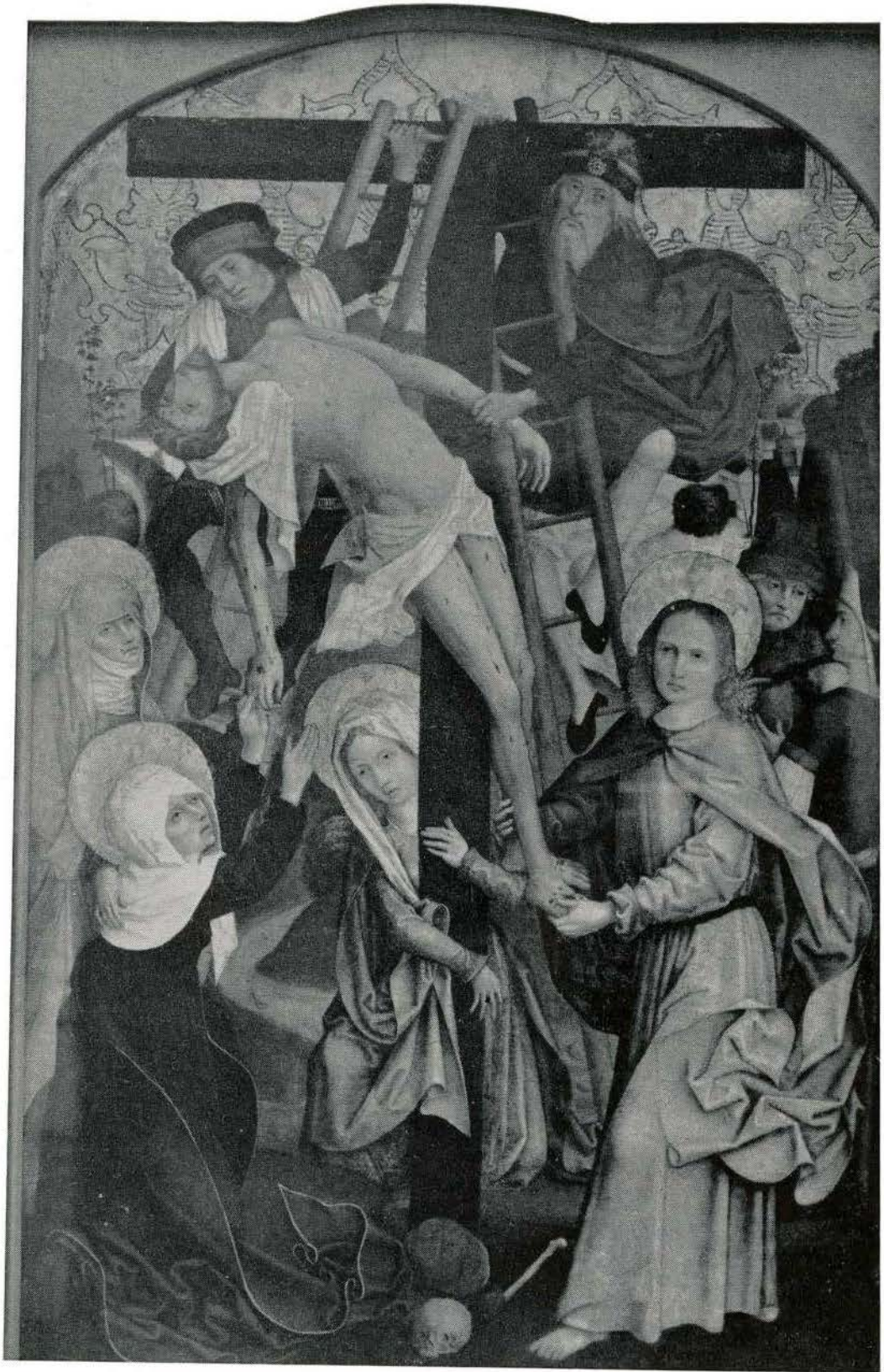
The collection today amounts to nearly three thousand items, the majority of which are prints. The question of illustrating it with less than fifty cuts in consequence posed several very difficult problems. In the event, the selection is based on the idea that we should illustrate the best of our collection, giving particular emphasis to the paintings, chiefly at the expense of the prints and drawings, and it may be fairly said that the process of selection of the illustrations is based on the principles set out above as desirable factors in the formation of the collection itself.

Harold C. Walker, President

A. J. Casson, Chairman, Exhibition Committee

Martin Baldwin, Director

Sydney J. Key, Curator



DESCENT FROM THE CROSS
UNKNOWN SOUTH GERMAN (SWABIAN)

Late 15th Century

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Miss L. Aileen Larkin, November, 1945



REST ON THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT
BERNARD VAN ORLEY c. 1491-1542
Flemish

Painted about 1518

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by subscription, January, 1938



PORTRAIT OF A LADY OF THE VAVASOUR FAMILY
BARTEL BRUYN (the Younger) c. 1530-1610
German
Painted about 1570
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, December, 1937

SPRING
FRANCESCO DA PONTI DI BASSANO 1549-1592
Venetian
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, April, 1936





PORTRAIT OF A MAN
FRANZ HALS 1580-1666
Dutch

Signed F. H. and dated 1648

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by The T. Eaton Co. Limited and Colonel R. Y. Eaton, December, 1939

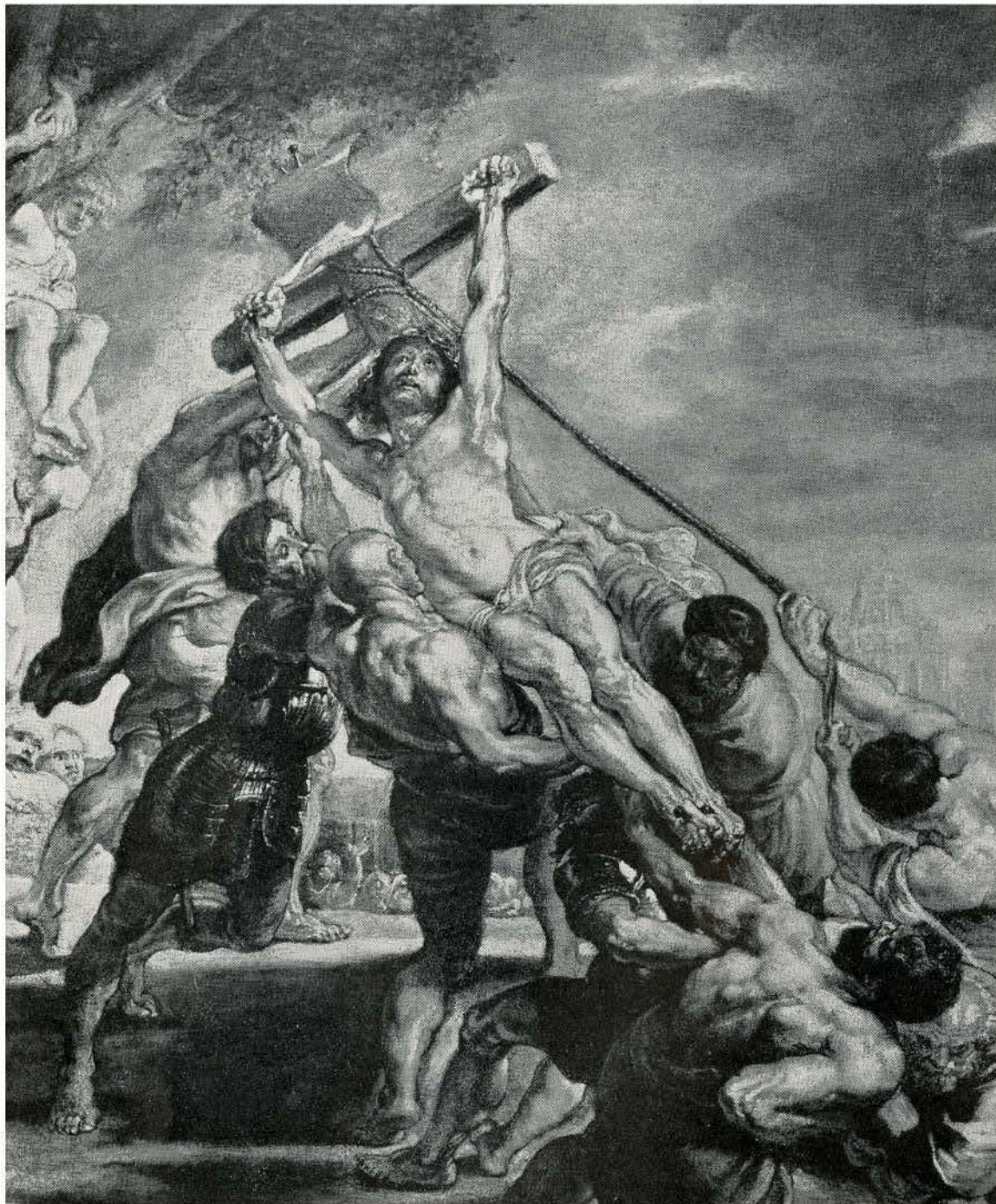
DAEDALUS AND ICARUS
SIR ANTHONY VAN DYCKE 1599-1641

Flemish

Painted about 1620

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Wood, December, 1940





THE ELEVATION OF THE CROSS (*Right, Above, and Detail, Above*)
PETER PAUL RUBENS 1577-1640
Flemish

Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, May, 1928

PASTORAL LANDSCAPE
CLAUDE GELLEE (LE LORRAIN) 1600-1692
French

Purchased by the Reuben Wells Leonard Memorial Fund, November, 1939





VENUS, MOTHER OF AENEAS, PRESENTING HIM WITH ARMS FORGED BY VULCAN
NICOLAS POUSSIN 1594-1665

French

Painted circa 1635

Purchased by the Reuben Wells Leonard Memorial Fund, September, 1948

THE HARVEST WAGON
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A. 1727-1788

English

Signed T. G. Painted circa 1784

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Wood, December, 1941





FIELD MARSHAL GEORGE, FIRST MARQUESS TOWNSHEND
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS 1723-1792

English

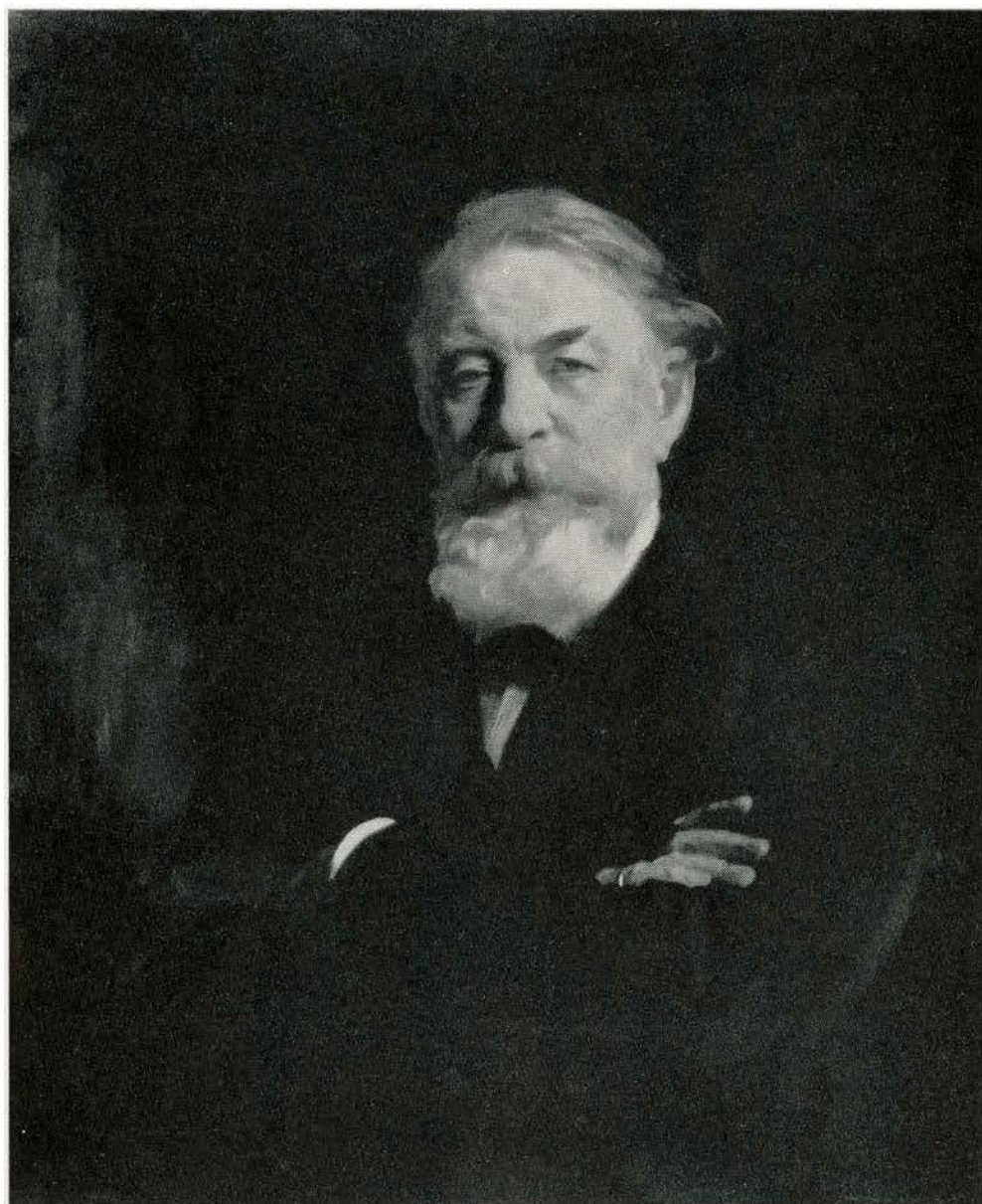
Purchased by the Reuben Wells Leonard Memorial Fund, September, 1948

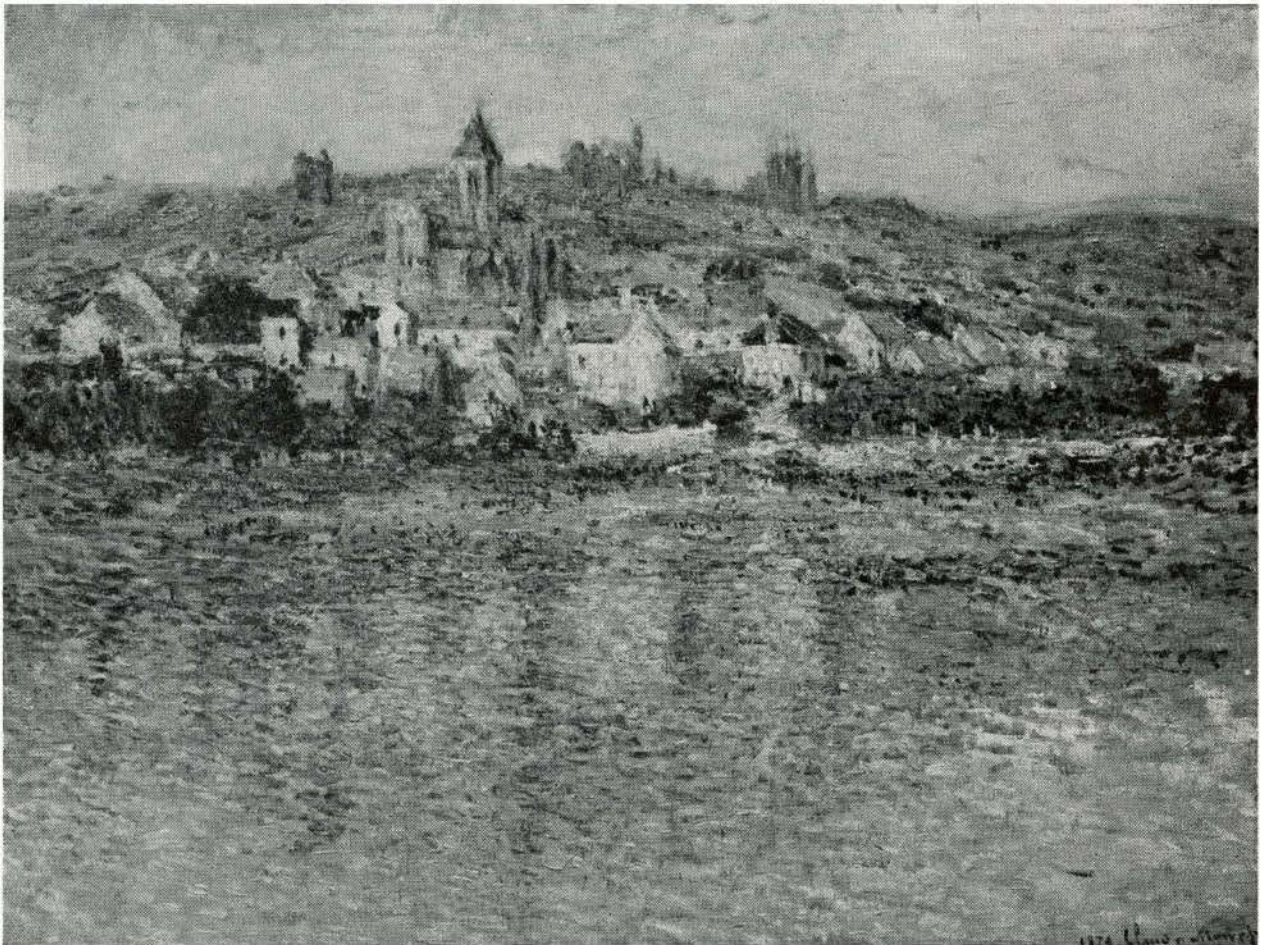
PORTRAIT OF DR. JOSEPH JOACHIM, Violinist
JOHN SINGER SARGENT, R.A. 1856-1925

Anglo-American

Signed John S. Sargent

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Wood, March, 1928





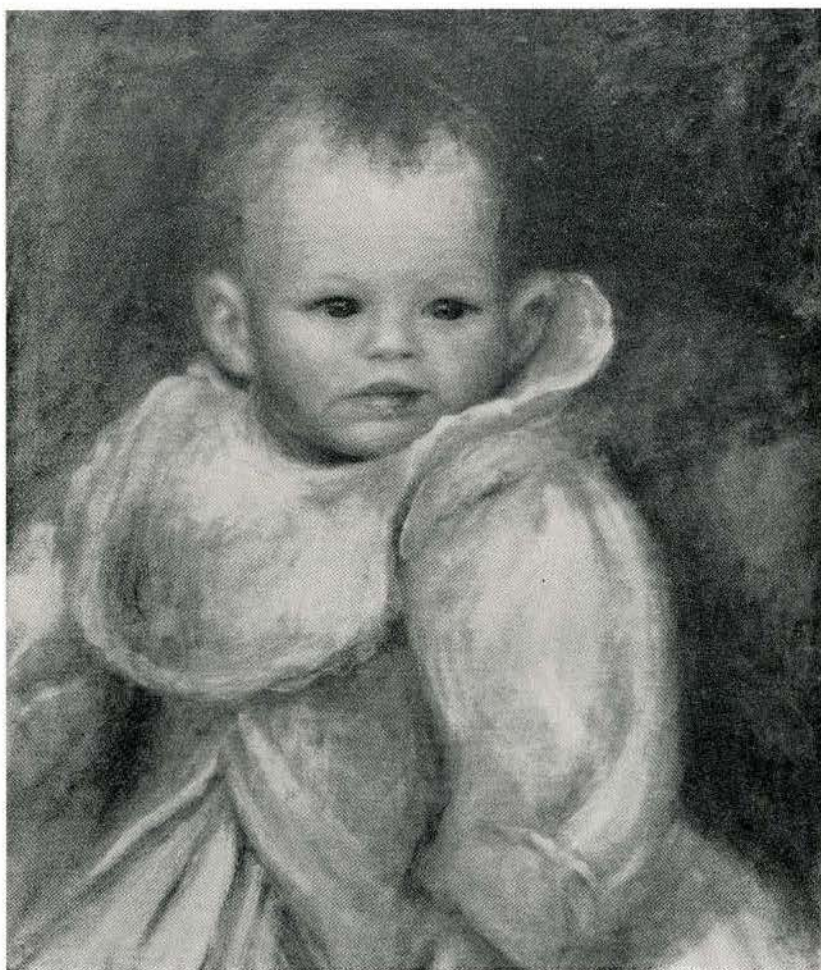


LA CONVERSATION (Above, Left)
EDOUARD VUILLARD 1868-1940
French
Signed E. Vuillard. Painted about 1915
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, April, 1937

VÉTHEUIL EN ETÉ (Left)
CLAUDE MONET 1840-1926
French
Dated 1879
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, December, 1929

THE ORCHARD (Above)
CAMILLE PISSARO 1830-1903
French
Signed and dated 1895
Bequeathed to the Art Gallery of Toronto by the late
F. W. G. Fitzgerald, Esq., May, 1949

PORTRAIT DE CLAUDE (Right)
AUGUSTE RENOIR 1841-1919
French
Signed Renoir. Painted about 1903
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, January, 1935





THE MARQUESA CASATI
AUGUSTUS JOHN, R.A. 1877-
English

Painted probably 1918-1919

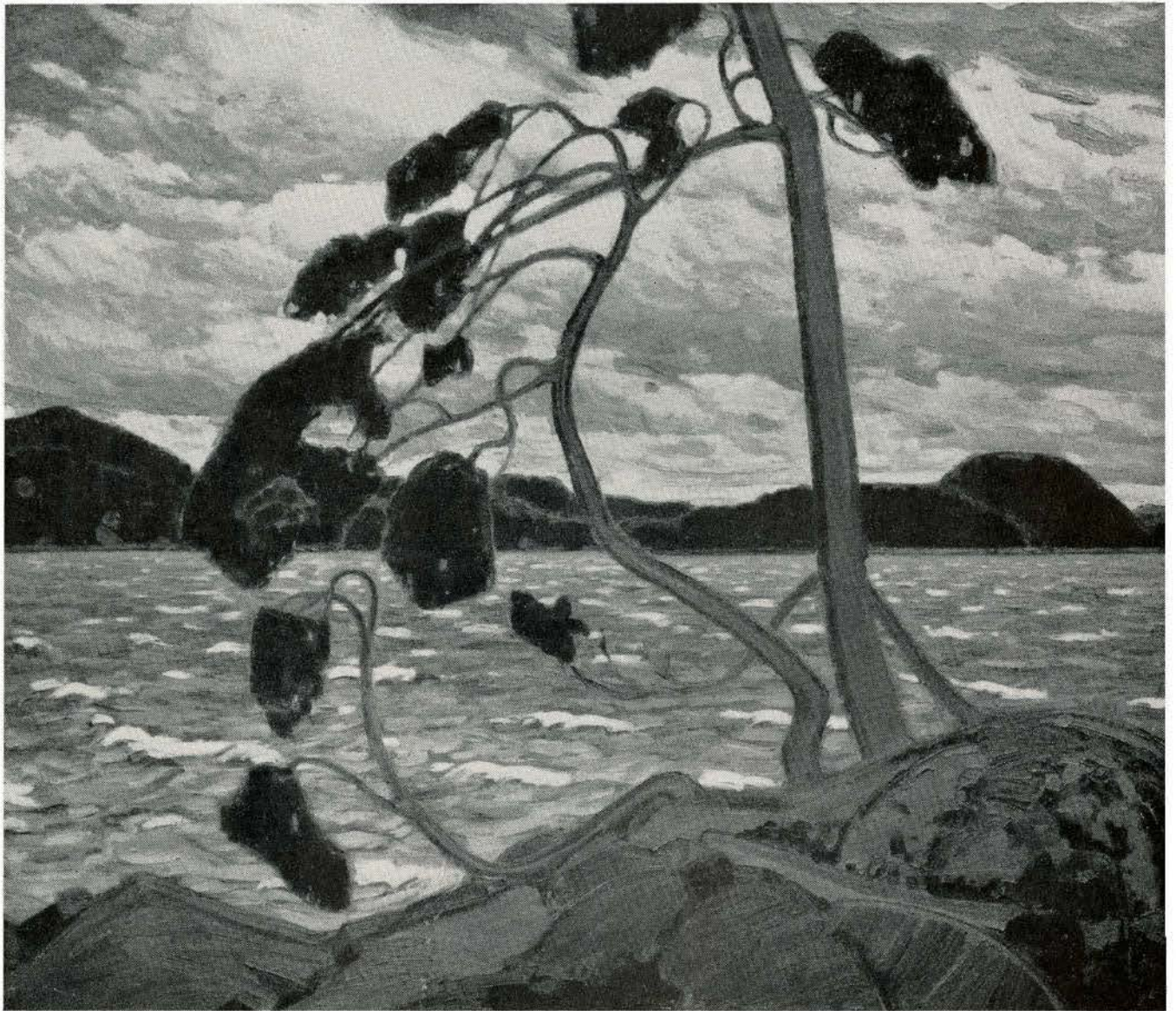
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, April, 1934

CHASSE AUX TOURTES
A. PLAMONDON 1804-1895
Canada (Quebec)
Signed A. Plamondon. Dated 1853
Purchased by the Albert H. Robson
Memorial Subscription Fund, July, 1943



SETTLER'S LOG HOUSE
CORNELIUS KRIEGHOFF
1812-15-1872
Canadian
Signed C. Krieghoff, Quebec. Dated
1856
Purchased by the Reuben Wells
Leonard Memorial Fund, April, 1937





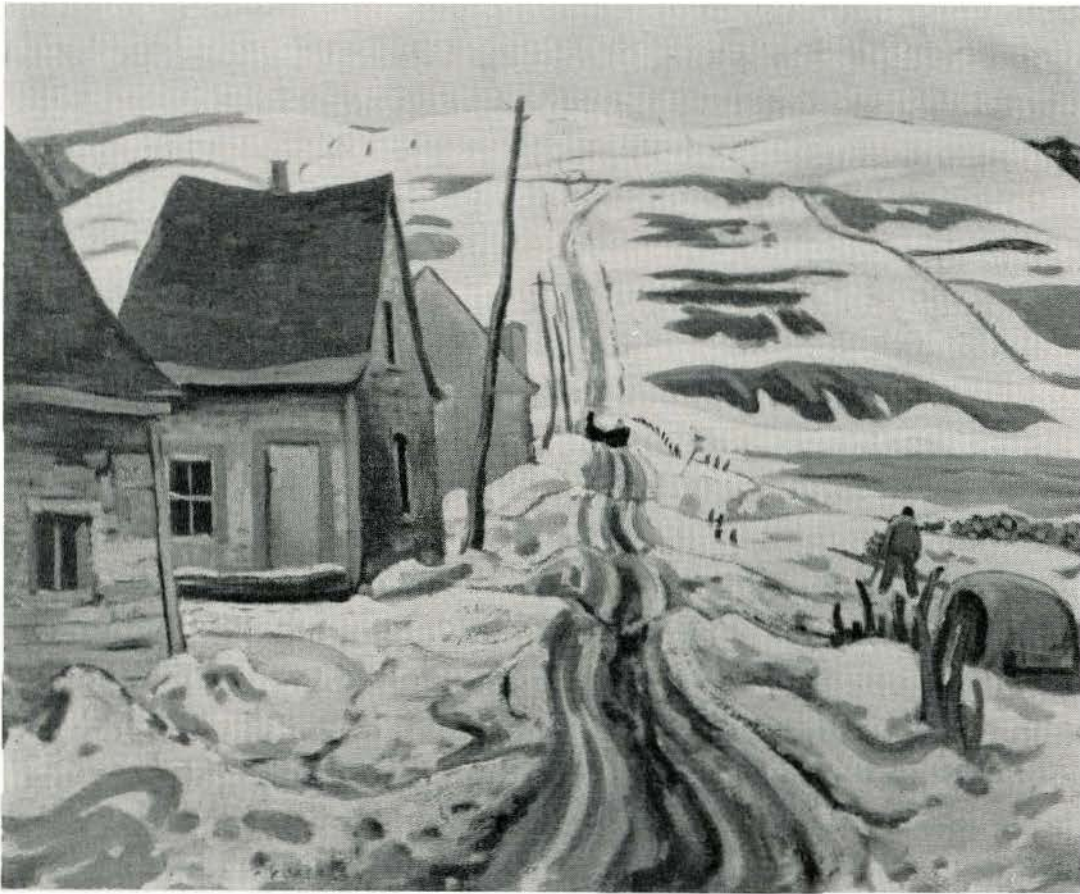
THE WEST WIND
TOM THOMSON 1877-1917
Canadian

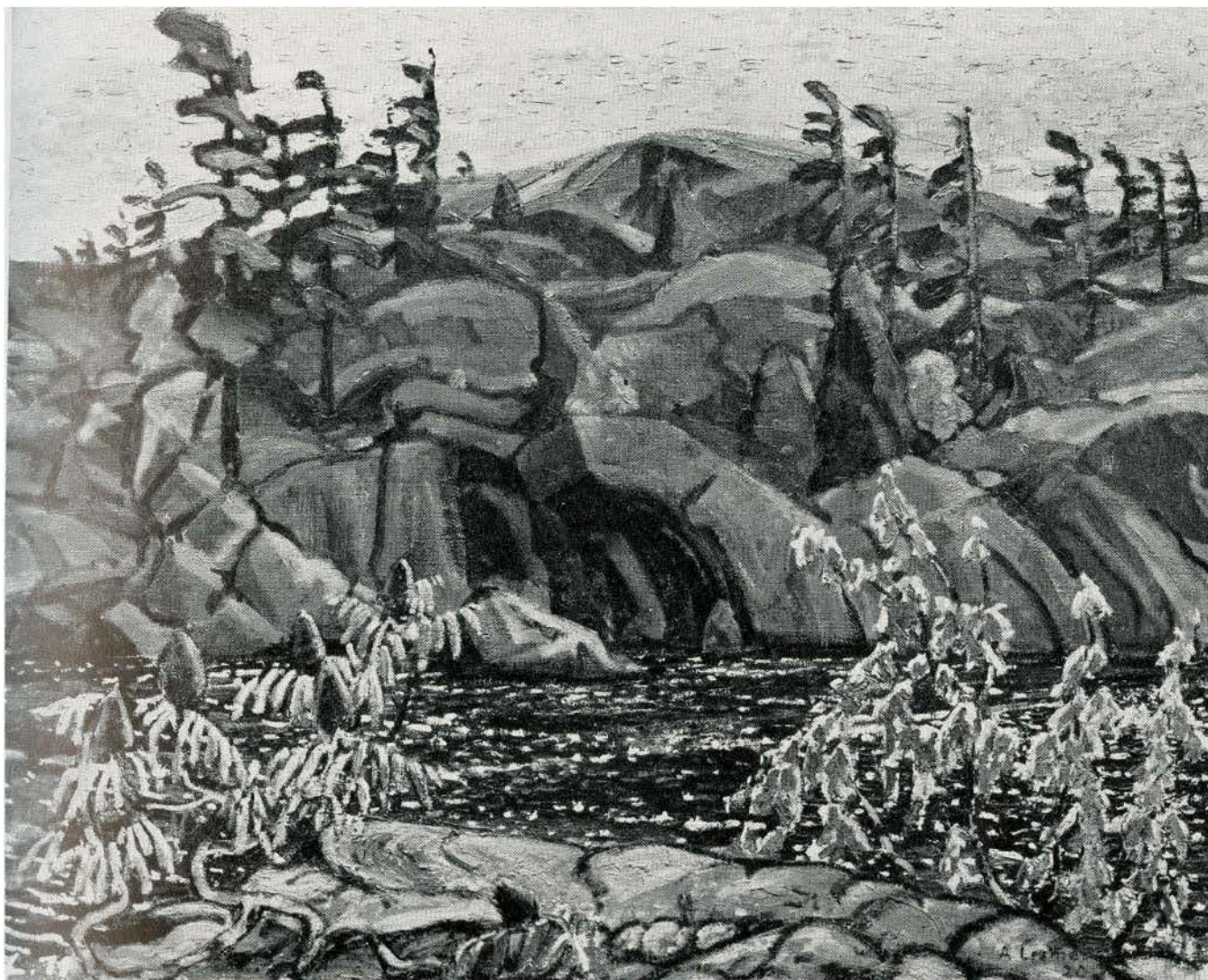
Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by The Canadian Club of Toronto, February, 1926



ABOVE LAKE SUPERIOR
LAWREN HARRIS 1885-
Dated c. 1931

Purchased by the Reuben Wells Leonard Gift, February, 1929





EARLY SPRING IN QUEBEC (Left, Above)

A. Y. JACKSON 1882-

Canadian. Painted ca. 1926

On permanent loan to the Art Gallery of Toronto from the Canadian National Exhibition Association

MIST FANTASY (Left)

J. E. H. MACDONALD 1873-1932

Canadian. Signed and dated 1922

Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Mrs. S. J. Williams in memory of F. Elinor Williams, November, 1927



ROCK, PINE AND SUNLIGHT (Above)

ARTHUR LISMER 1885-

Canadian. Dated 1920

Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, February, 1929

LANDSCAPE, TRINIDAD (Right)

JAMES WILSON MORRICE 1865-1924

Canadian. Signed Morrice. Painted ca. 1921

Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, April, 1937



INSIDE A FOREST
EMILY CARR 1871-1945
Canadian. Signed

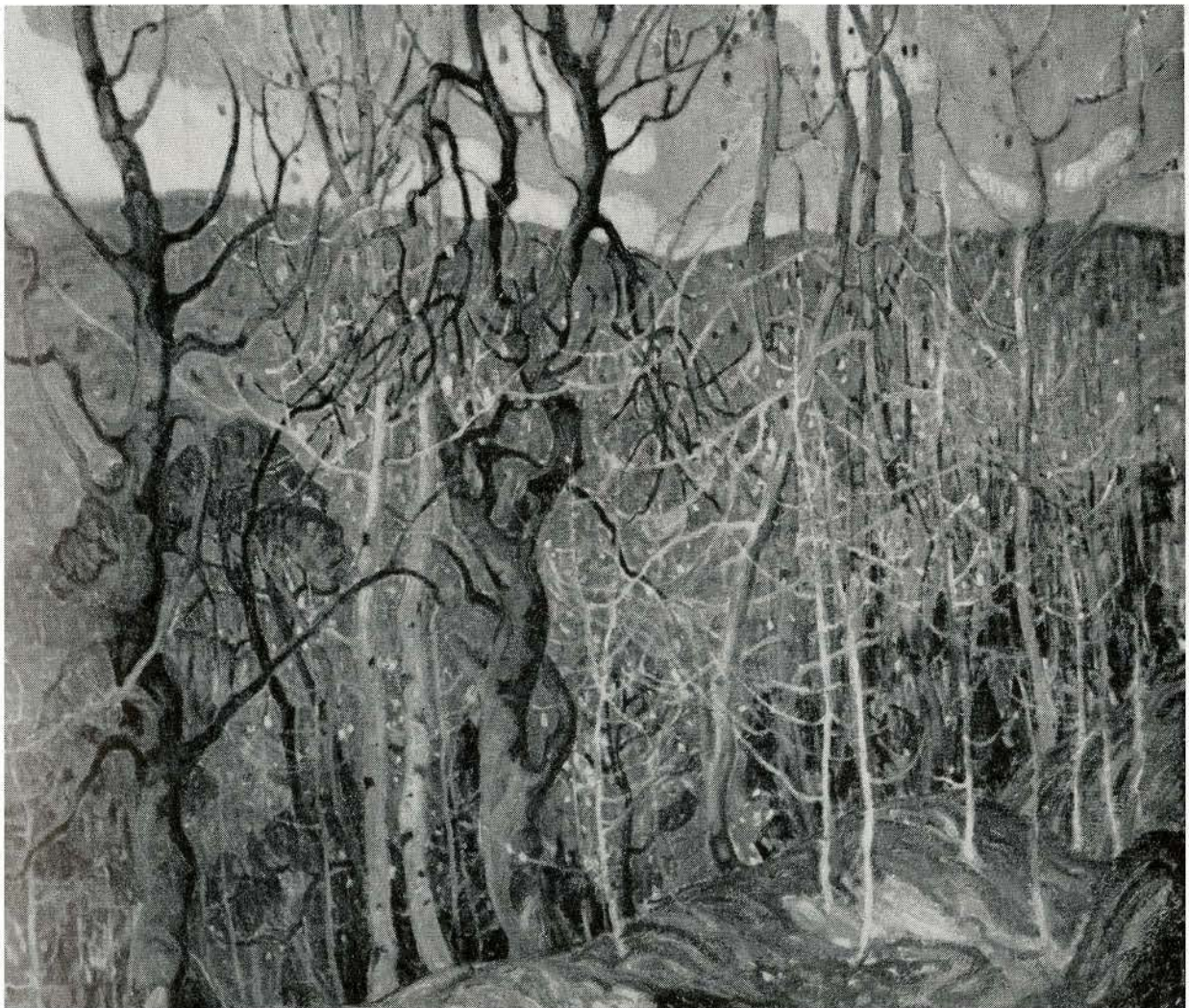
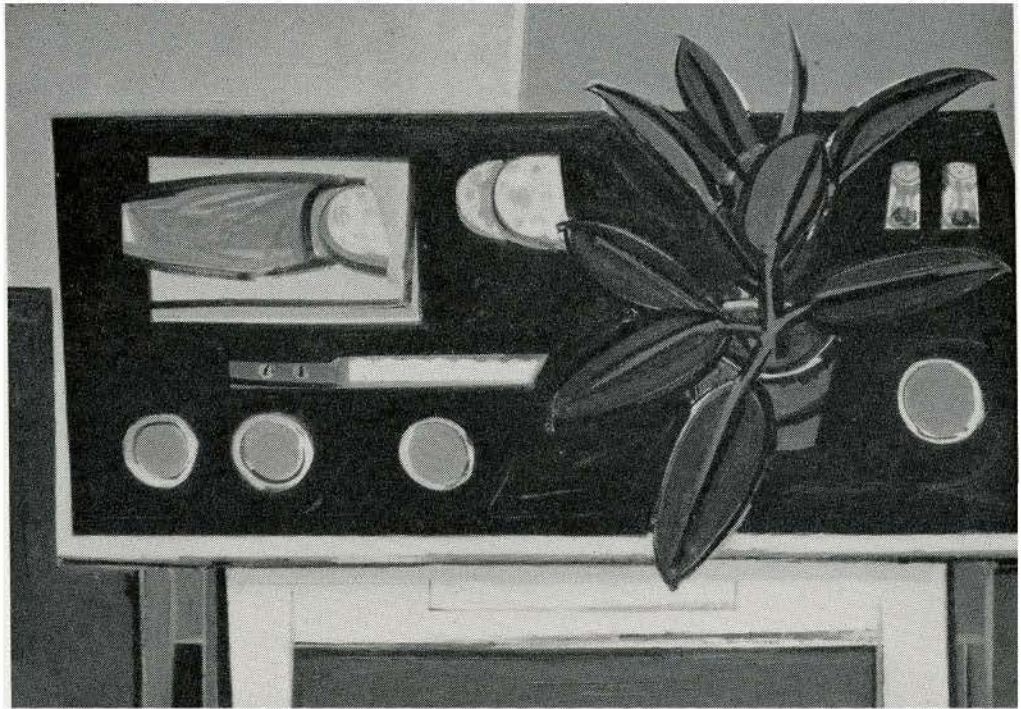
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, April, 1946

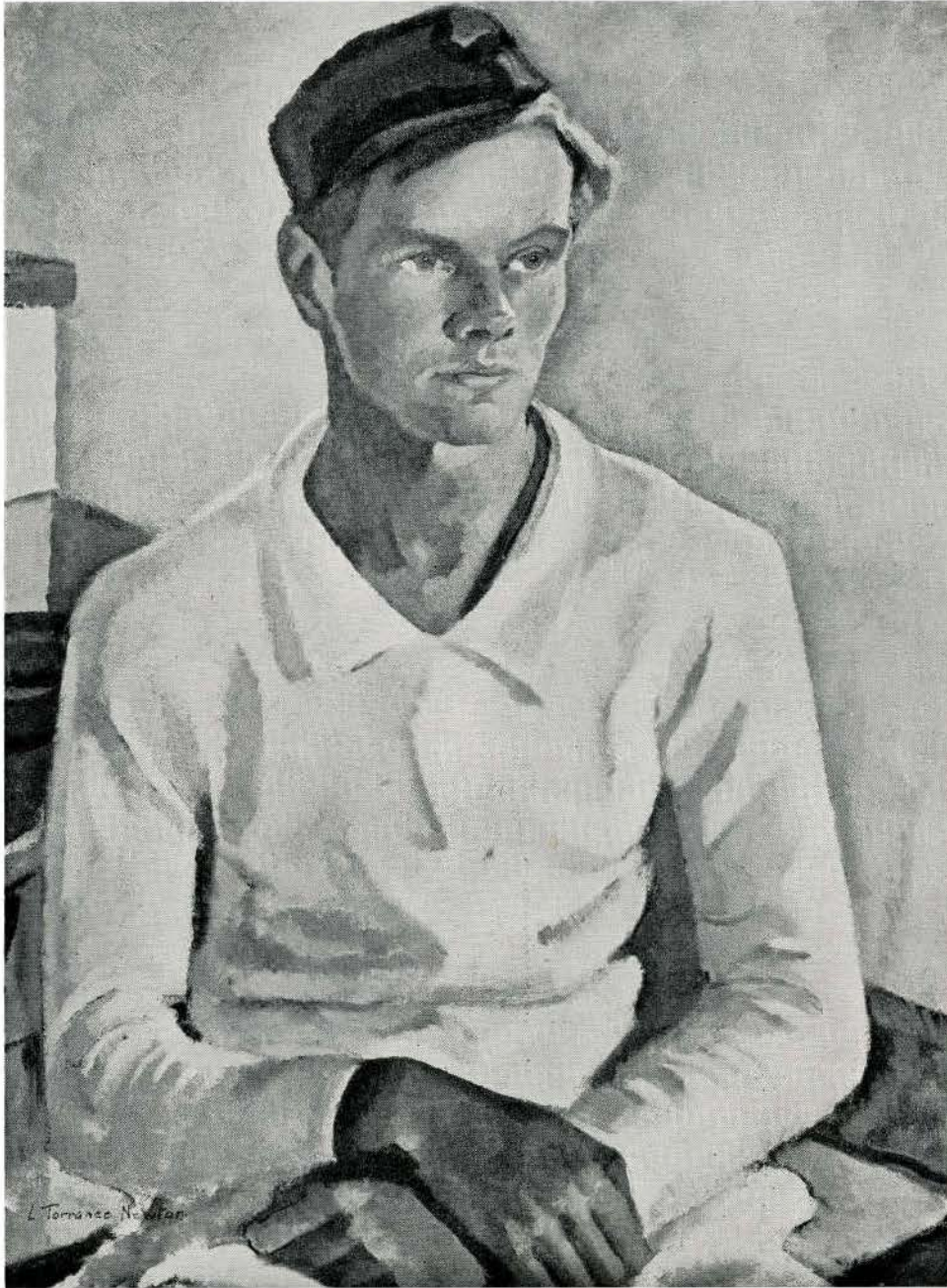
BLACK TABLE AND RUBBER PLANT
JACQUES G. DE TONNANCOUR 1917-
Canadian. Signed and dated 1948

Purchased by the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, March, 1949

SILVERY TANGLE
FRANKLIN H. CARMICHAEL 1890-1945
Canadian. Signed and dated 1921

Purchased by the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, March, 1947





MY SON
LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON 1896-
Canadian

Signed. Painted August, 1941

Purchased by the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, May, 1942

ORCHIS AND ARUM
DAVID MILNE 1882-
Canadian

Signed and dated 1947

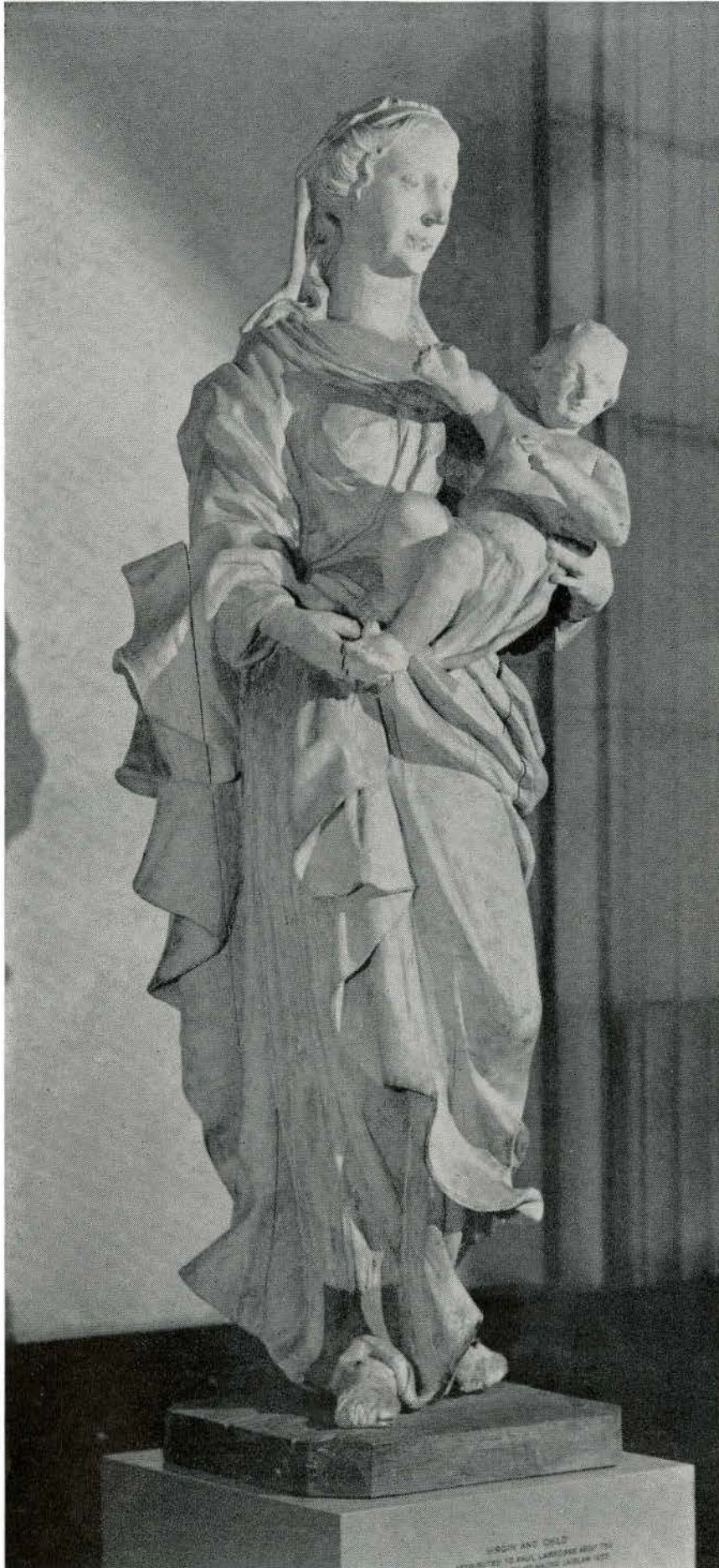
Purchased by The Fund of The T. Eaton Co. Limited for Canadian Works of Art, February, 1928

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CARL SCHAEFER, R.C.A.F.
CHARLES F. COMFORT 1900-
Canadian

Painted April, 1948

Purchased by The Fund of The T. Eaton Co. Limited for Canadian Works of Art, October, 1948





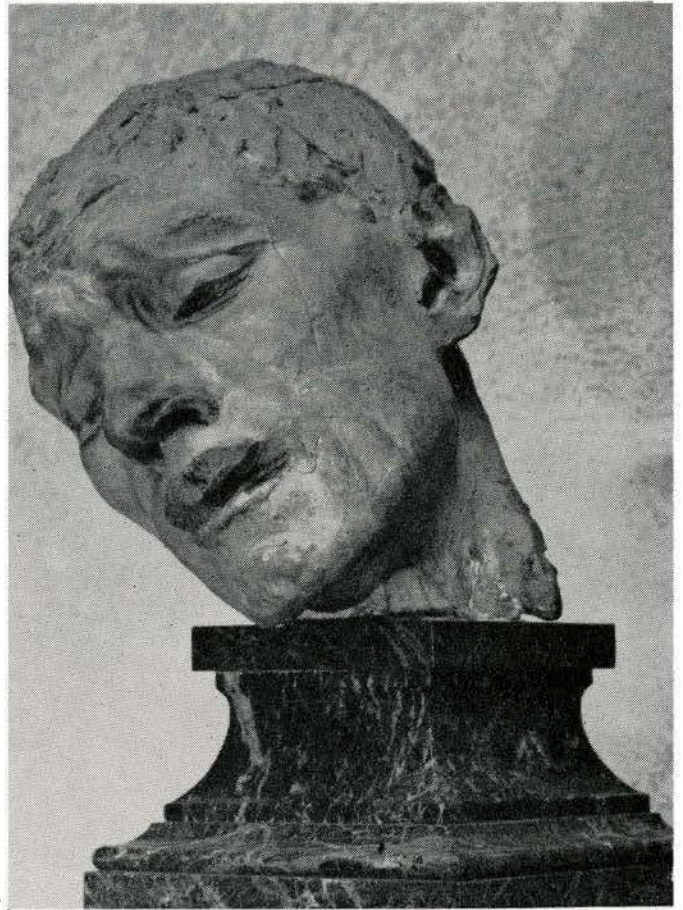
VIRGIN AND CHILD
PAUL LABROSSE (ATTRIBUTED)

Canadian

Wood Carving. About 1750

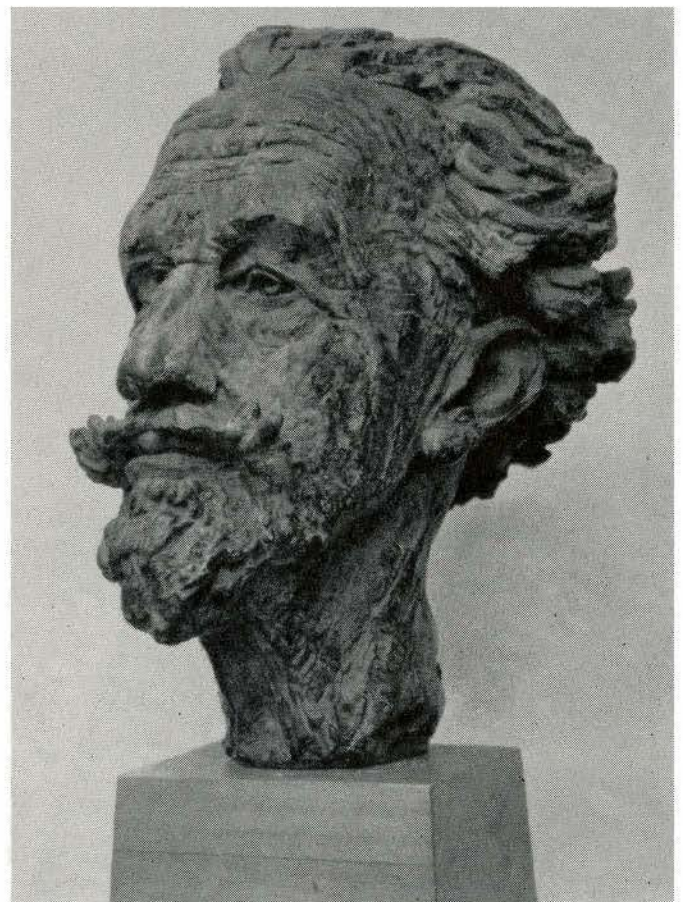
Presented to the Art Gallery of Toronto by Walter
Laidlaw, Esq., January, 1935

HEAD OF "JEAN D'AIRE" (Right)
ONE OF "THE BURGHERS OF CALAIS"
AUGUSTE RODIN 1840-1919
French
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, March, 1928



BUST OF SIR FREDERICK BANTING (Below)
FRANCES LORING 1887
Canadian
Purchased by The Fund of The T. Eaton Co. Limited for Canadian
Works of Art, April, 1949

HEAD OF R. B. CUNNINGHAM GRAHAME
JACOB EPSTEIN 1880- (Below, Right)
British
Purchased by the Art Gallery of Toronto, September, 1928



RANDOM OBSERVATIONS ON THE GRÉBER PLAN

By KENT BARKER

THE National Capital Plan is a monumental work, in more ways than one. Those who have read the excellent account in the December *Journal* will appreciate the magnitude of the task which was presented to M. Jacques Gréber and his associates. The Preliminary Report covers every aspect of the problem, and the reader cannot fail to be impressed by its scope and complexity. There is of course no purpose to be served in reviewing here facts so thoroughly covered in the previous issue. There is no doubt that the Final Report, when published, will be an historic document of considerable significance.

On the basis of the Preliminary Report and the maps which accompany the text, we can evaluate or criticize only in general terms. Many important elements in the city plan have not yet been studied in detail. Such examples as we mention below are selected, because of their implications, in establishing the character of the Plan as a whole. We must confess that this assignment was undertaken with some misgivings. A proper analysis of the Plan would require a great deal more time than that at our disposal; and, we dare say, a higher degree of analytical skill as well. We realize that lack of complete data, and possible misinterpretation of the maps may have led us into error. Certain of our comments may therefore be not completely justified.

We find much to admire in the Plan. Nevertheless we believe that a project of such importance demands critical analysis from every quarter. The architectural profession in Canada will be negligent in its duty if the National Capital Plan is not discussed and criticized in every Province of the Dominion. The following remarks are offered in the hope that others will follow suit, in support or rebuttal of our own contentions. (On several points I find myself in agreement with Professor Harold Spence-Sales of the McGill School of Architecture, who has written elsewhere on the same subject.*)

M. Gréber obviously possesses technical ability of a high standard, a vigorous imagination, and wisdom born of long experience. His approach to planning is that of a gifted designer schooled in the Beaux-Arts tradition of the "Grand Plan". No one can deny that the National Capital Planning Service, under his direction, has done a magnificent job in accordance with these standards.

The Plan is classical in philosophy, monumental in character, and European in flavor. These characteristics we believe to be an accurate reflection of the master planner. The basic concept of the Plan was surely

determined upon the day of M. Gréber's appointment. The presence of Canadian architects on his staff does not appear to have modified this philosophy to any appreciable extent. For many years the New World has looked to Europe for cultural and artistic leadership. This continuing dependance upon foreign inspiration we interpret as proof of cultural immaturity. An inferiority complex in the national sub-conscious.

Structural Concept: Neighbourhoods and Traffic

The National Capital Plan paints an exciting picture of the Ottawa of the future, replete with stately Government buildings, and splendid vistas of great scale and spatial qualities. Did Ottawa exist *to-day* as visualized in the Plan, it would surely be a city of which Canada might well be proud, and the world envious.

But this is not the criterion by which we must judge a city planner's work. Forty or fifty years, in the ordinary course of events, must elapse before the Master Plan can reach its full development. Of course it would be unrealistic to speak of "completion" for no plan of urban development can ever be considered "complete". Nevertheless we must attempt to weigh the merits of the Plan against its proper frame of reference. That frame of reference is Canada in the year 2000.

By the very nature of his work, a planner is in some degree a prophet. He must attempt to predict, at least in broad general terms, social, economic and technical developments of far-reaching implications. Concerning the physical shape of things to come, he can do no more than hazard an intelligent guess. But every long-range plan must anticipate unforeseeable changes in urban structure, and provide some means of adapting itself to such demands as the future may bring forth. It follows that *flexibility* is the prime essential. At the present time it would seem that the "nuclear" or cellular system of urbanization offers a satisfactory degree of flexibility. At the same time it preserves the human scale, and establishes a living environment within which the individual can maintain his personal dignity, however large the metropolitan area may become.

On this score, it is disappointing to find that the Gréber Plan does not carry out the cellular principle with any degree of conviction. True, the Report states that the City is to be organized in communities of neighbourhood units. In this, as well as in other respects, the Report is more convincing than the Plan. The cellular organization is not clearly presented in the Plan itself. Open green areas separating the communities are in many cases ill-defined and inadequate in size. Moreover, arterial

* "The Preliminary Report on the Plan for the National Capital of Canada" — *Layout for Living*, No. 26, June-July, 1949, published by the Community Planning Association of Canada.

makes certain recommendations regarding one-way streets and parking garages to ameliorate traffic difficulties. New secondary arteries are designed to channel through traffic away from the downtown area. These measures would effect considerable improvement, in relation to existing conditions. But it seems that very little attention has been given to the opportunity for *replanning* this very important part of the city. It does not seem reasonable to assume that business will remain more or less static while the region increases to a population of 500,000.

We expected a much bolder approach to this aspect of the problem. Perhaps the planners did not find much to interest them in the mundane business of trade and commerce.

This omission lends weight to an argument voiced by several critics — that the Gréber Plan emphasizes the function of Ottawa as a Capital City, and neglects to some extent the everyday function of Ottawa as a place to live, work, play — and shop.

Implementation

The first phase of the National Capital Plan has now been completed. If the Plan receives official approval, and it is almost certain to do so, then immediate action should be taken to promote its effective implementation. It is obvious that implementation of the Plan will require a high degree of co-operation among Federal, Provincial, and municipal authorities. This is true in every metropolitan region. Here the problem is complicated still further by the existence of two Provincial Governments, with widely differing laws and established procedures.

Moreover, our existing planning legislation is deficient and cumbersome, as the Preliminary Report takes pains to point out. Effective implementation will call for major legislative action, preceded by intensive study of the legal and administrative questions involved. A long time is likely to elapse before all the authorities concerned are properly co-ordinated and equipped with adequate powers to play their part in the comprehensive scheme.

Meanwhile, the integrity of the Plan must be protected against speculation, and against uncontrolled private development at variance with its objectives. For every day lost means additional difficulties thrown in the path of realization. Even as we write, substantial projects are under way, which are quite out of line with the basic structure of the Plan. This must not be permitted to continue. If necessary, the Government must step in and provide interim measures to control the entire Region, pending completion of zoning and building by-laws. Administration of the Plan cannot be effective except under strong, centralized control. The exact form which this authority may assume has not yet been determined. M. Gréber has not suggested a specific solution, nor was it properly his responsibility to do so.

The creation of a Federal District might offer the best solution. This is the means adopted in Washington and

a number of other capital cities. Apparently such a step is not contemplated in the case of Ottawa. In any event the Federal Government will play a dominant role, for it will be directly responsible for the actual construction of key elements in the Plan, and will bear a great part of the financial burden.

We may assume that the Dominion and the Provinces will not wish to usurp the rights of local municipalities. Certainly in the case of Ontario, the Department of Planning and Development exercises great care to avoid treading on the toes of the local citizenry. At the same time it should be realized that *Ottawa is a unique case*. For Ottawa is the capital of the whole of Canada. The development of our capital city is the concern of all Canadians, not merely that small proportion actually living within the boundaries of the Capital Region. It would be a *negation of real democracy* if the National Capital Plan were to be injured or seriously retarded by the selfish interests of a small minority.

In spite of our critical attitude toward many features of the Gréber Plan, we sincerely hope that it will receive approval of the Federal Government at an early date. We assume, of course, that the National Capital Planning Service will continue to function as the technical co-ordinating authority, and that suitable provision will be made for expanding its facilities in proportion to the work it will be required to do.

Several years will elapse before even a small part of its recommendations can be realized. The work of the Planning Service will never be finished; continuous study of the Master Plan is the only means of assuring its survival as a dynamic, living force. In the fullness of time we may even hope to see some modification of the Plan toward a greater emphasis upon function, and less upon static magnificence.

Architecture

The Preliminary Report lays great stress, and rightly so, upon the need for careful integration of planning, architecture, and landscape design. M. Gréber's sensitivity to massing, scale and proportion is very evident in the exhibition now on tour across Canada. The splendid models demonstrate in a striking manner the three-dimensional quality of his work. M. Gréber appreciates, and he is anxious that others should appreciate, the full implication of civic design.

We must agree, however, with Professor Spence-Sales, that dignity and monumentality have been bestowed upon the city with a too liberal hand. A profusion of architectural elements in the grand manner tends to satiate, like marmalade spread too thickly on a piece of bread. *Contrast*, that essential quality of composition, is weakened by repetition of similar effects in too many places.

M. Gréber appears to assume that all Government offices and public buildings should partake of a monu-

mental character. Actually there are *two distinct functions of government*. The legislative function, with its attendant pomp and circumstance, requires adequate expression in architectural forms of sober dignity. So also does the Supreme Court and other buildings of serious purpose. But the great bulk of government business is carried on by an army of civil servants whose day-to-day routine differs little from the routine of office work in any other large corporation. It would be appropriate to house such functions in clean, efficient office buildings, which need not compete with the grandeur of Parliament Hill. (Avoiding such monstrosities, for example, as the ludicrous Confederation Building, described in an official publication as "one of the largest and most *modern* of Federal departmental buildings!) The civil servant deserves something better than the dirty "temporary" barracks put up during the war. But there is no need for an income tax clerk or a livestock inspector to carry on his work behind Gothic embrasures or a neo-classic facade.

If this distinction of function were recognized in the design of government buildings, it would go a long way toward establishing a healthy contrast and modifying the overall effect, which in its present form we find a trifle pompous.

The vexatious question of architectural control is a matter in which our profession is vitally concerned. M. Gréber is fully aware of the difficulties involved in establishing suitable criteria, and the delicacy of the administrative operations.

The Preliminary Report recommends the creation of a "Committee on Aesthetics", to exercise control over all buildings, public or private, within the Capital Region. The very principle of aesthetic censorship is open to question, but we are inclined to agree with M. Gréber that some form of control is necessary. Not only to prevent architectural vulgarities, but to assist, in a positive way, the gradual development of the city in harmony with objectives of the Master Plan.

An aesthetic committee, like a dictatorship, can be a curse or a blessing. It is essential that the right people

be appointed to membership. We would like to see a Committee composed of young men – not necessarily young in years, but young in spirit. There is not much probability that this will ever be the case. "Eminent architects" are suggested as suitable candidates. If this principle is followed, the selection may be good, but chances are about even that it will be bad. We know some "eminent architects" who seem to have no aesthetic convictions whatever.

If such a Committee is in fact appointed, its first task might well consist of an educational campaign directed at the Government itself. Private interests have built cheaper buildings, but they have seldom built worse buildings, than some erected by the Department of Public Works. This condition is not peculiar to Canada. With a few notable exceptions, government buildings in all parts of the world are typically sterile and unimaginative. Our own record of "official taste" is not a happy one.

Although the Preliminary Report recommends that no *pre-determined style* be imposed, the models quite clearly anticipate a neo-classical type of architecture which the majority of Canadian architects will consider static and reactionary.

Perhaps we anticipate a bit, in using the word "majority". The architectural profession does not present a united front on questions of design. We are divided roughly into two camps. An impartial observer might conclude that the Christians and the Saracens had more in common. In any other profession such a schism would be unthinkable. Architecture, strangely enough, seems to hang together fairly well in spite of it. In time the situation will resolve itself.

There is not the remotest possibility that the National Capital will ever reach maturity in the stylistic art-forms envisioned by the Master Plan. Long before this, the older generation of Canadian architects will have retired from active practice. None of the younger architects is capable of designing in historic styles, even if he wished to do so.

With this comforting thought we bring our remarks to a close.