

# News of the arts

## Close-up of early Canadian portraits

Portraits of famous, and not so famous citizens of Canada's developing years are shown in an entertaining exhibition titled *Early Canadian Faces* at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, which opened on April 7. The 80 paintings, from the Atlantic provinces, Lower and Upper Canada, span the years from 1780 to 1870; several from private collections are on public view for the first time.

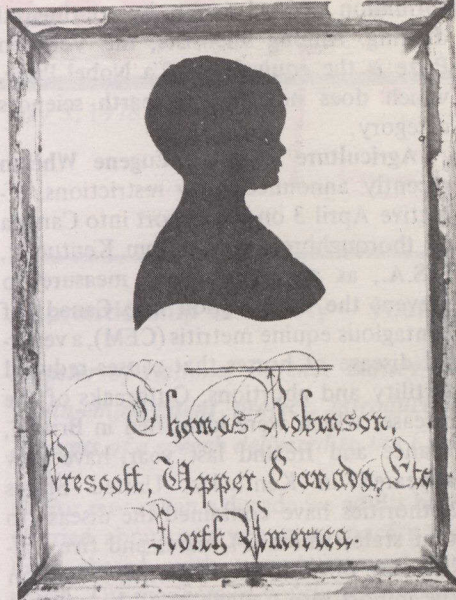
A sampling of the types of portrait available at the time can be seen in the



Abbé Féré-Duburon of Varennes — artist unknown, circa 1790. This strongly-toned portrait of the abbé in his robes, with the bread and wine of the communion service, is not only the study of an individual priest of character, it also conveys an idea of the importance of the church in the everyday life of French Canada at that time.

exhibition, including cut-out and painted silhouettes, watercolours and pastels, miniatures on ivory or paper, and the more formal oils on canvas. The artists of the day, the accomplished Europeans who brought their talents to the new land, contrast with native artists who, largely self-taught, developed their own expressive styles. Many of the itinerant local artists began their careers as sign- or house-painters, some of whom, to the frustration of art historians, never signed their names to their work.

The clergy is represented with a strong character study of Abbé Féré-Duburon, and the politically influential with por-



Thomas Robinson, Prescott, Upper Canada, Etc., North America — artist unknown. Fancy lettering identifies this portrait of a young boy, whose silhouette is hollow-cut in white paper that has a black silk backing. Thomas Robinson owned a stagecoach inn in Prescott, Ontario, in the 1850s.



Angelique de Lotbinière (1806-1818) — Louise Amélie Panet, circa 1818. This was painted from memory of the artist's young friend, Angelique, who died at the age of 12 in 1818. An inscription on the back of the picture identifies the subject as the daughter of L'Honorable Chartier de Lotbinière and Charlotte Munro, and says that it was painted to console her parents after their daughter's death. Louise Amélie Panet was born in Quebec in 1789 and educated in Montreal.

traits of Charles Fothergill, editor of the *Upper Canada Gazette*, and Robert Isaac Dey Gray, the young Solicitor General. Merchants, manufacturers, military heroes, families active in the 1837 Rebellion, members of staunch Loyalist stock and secure young matrons are all included in the exhibition.

Everyone who could afford the expense would have his likeness portrayed — either a "just resemblance" in a silhouette at as low as 25 cents, or a full-scale portrait in oil at prices up to \$300.

By the 1860s the more speedily produced and cheaper photograph had largely replaced the portrait in popularity. With their intriguing stories, the portraits at the ROM exhibition recall a gentler, less-hurried time.

## Canadian art tours Australia



The Newcastle Region Art Gallery in Newcastle, Australia recently featured 21 works from the Canada Council Art Bank, representing seven Canadian artists: Claude Breeze, Paterson Ewen, Charles Gagnon, Gershon Iskowitz, Ron Martin, John Meredith and Guido Molinari. The month-long exhibition, entitled *Canadian Contemporary Painters*, drew some 3,078 visitors before moving to Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, Sydney, and Darwin. The Department of External Affairs is sponsoring the exhibition, which will later visit Japan and France. (Above) John Buckley, Director, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (left), and Andrew J. Fergusson, Director, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, view *Canadian Atlas: Sunset* by Claude Breeze at the opening.