

of the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River); in the scope of their exhibiting policy; and latterly in an expanded membership (which finally included LeMoine FitzGerald (1890-1956) of Winnipeg and Edwin Holgate (1892-1977) of Montreal, as well as A.J. Casson (b. 1898) of Toronto, who replaced Frank Johnston, the only member to resign). But they were still seen outside Ontario as essentially Toronto artists, as yet another manifestation of the cultural and economic dominance of that city. They held their last exhibition in 1931 (although all but MacDonald were around for a retrospective survey staged by the National Gallery of Canada in 1936), and on that occasion announced the desire to expand into a more truly national organization. The first exhibition of this new Canadian Group of Painters (CGP), as it was called, was held in the summer of 1933.

A statement prepared on that occasion stressed the continuity of the new group with Canada's "national" painters, describing the CGP as an "outgrowth" of the Group of Seven. In fact, the CGP exhibitions — held usually in Toronto, but often in Montreal and sometimes in other cities — contained too many repetitions of tired Group of Seven formulae, and soon became indistinguishable from the annual bland shows of the OSA and the RCA. More positively, a few painters exhibiting with the CGP, such as Carl Schaefer (b. 1903) and Charles Comfort (b. 1900) in Toronto, or some of the younger painters around Fred Varley in Vancouver (he had moved there in 1926), were working with landscape in an expressive way that reflected the intense human struggle demanded by the Great Depression. And later in the 1930s, figurative painters in both Toronto and Montreal posited a new direction. But throughout this period and the 1940s — and despite the presence of the highly talented David Milne (1882-1953) on the scene — the dominant personality in Toronto and within the CGP was A.Y. Jackson, affirming the nationalist goals and the landscape mode of the Group of Seven.

A Montreal alternative

During these years of the growth of the Group of Seven and its subsequent near canonization in the CGP, the seeds of an alternative direction were sown in Montreal. The orientation there was French, owing as much to the influence of one great teacher, William Brymner — who, it may be recalled, received his training in Paris in the late 1870s — as to the language and culture of the majority of the populace. Brymner's students were, in fact, mostly anglophone, but virtually all completed their studies in the ateliers of Paris. The interest in the figure this training imparted is evident in the work of many. The influence of the Group of Seven, however, emphasized by the personal relationship the Montreal-born and Brymner-trained A.Y. Jackson enjoyed with most of the