

Major block-printing exhibition to tour Canada

Images of the Land: Canadian Block Prints 1919-1945, the first comprehensive exhibition surveying the Canadian block printing movement of the twentieth century, is scheduled to travel to Toronto, Winnipeg and Victoria in 1985, after it closes at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, February 17. Mounted by Glenbow in 1984, the exhibition will be shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto in April and May, the Winnipeg Art Gallery in June and July and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in August and September.

quires an engraving tool for cutting very fine and delicate lines, is used. Only black and white prints are obtained from this technique.

According to Patricia Ainslie the revival of block printing was "markedly different from the nineteenth century tradition in which a craftsman cut and printed designs from drawings and renderings made by others". The artists of the twentieth century created their own designs, cut the block and produced the final print.

Early Canadian block-print artists were influenced by European artists who were



Karlukwees, British Columbia, 1929, colour woodcut by W.J. Phillips.

Patricia Ainslie, assistant curator of art at the Glenbow Museum, organized the exhibition based on the museum's large collection of Canadian block prints. Of the 179 prints on display, more than 70 are from the museum with the remainder on loan from public institutions and private collections. The exhibition was sponsored by the Canada Council, the Calgary Region Arts Foundation, the province of Alberta, and the city of Calgary.

Block printing techniques

Images of the Land focuses on the resurgence of the woodcut, linocut and wood engraving as an art form that flourished in the country between the two world wars. In block printing the artist works directly with the medium using wood for woodcuts and linoleum for linocuts. Both woodcuts and linocuts were popular among the artists and the materials were suitable for black and white reproduction as well as colour.

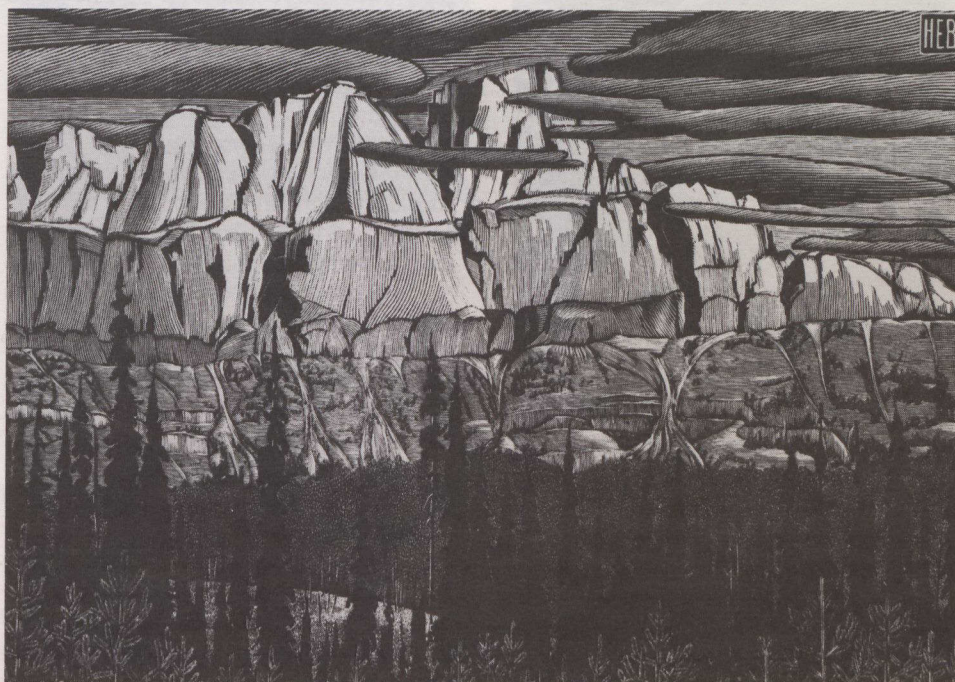
In wood engraving, hardwood that re-



Bridges on Beaver Creek, c. 1937, colour linocut by Edward J. Hughes.

making colour prints after the Japanese style of prints and from the style of *Art Nouveau*. The simplicity, low costs, and the possibility of mass distribution added to the appeal of the medium. The interest in block printing was also a result of the hard economic times, when artists had little access to resources and few of their works were being sold.

The exhibition depicts the initial activity in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg in the 1920s where block printing was mainly practised at the time. By the mid-1920s, the Toronto print societies — The Canadian Society of Graphic Arts and the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers — were holding annual exhibitions which featured prints by a cross-section of Canadian artists. By the 1930s block printing had spread across the prairies and into British Columbia and the exhibition documents the development of



Castle Mountain, 1931, wood engraving by Eric Bergman.