

is Jean Paul Lemieux (b. 1904), the doyen of Quebec painting, whose paintings of the landscape and the people of the province have come to symbolize the life and traditions of rural Quebec.

Painters Eleven

The situation in Toronto during the 1940s and 1950s was similar to Montreal's in the emergence of an active opposition to the *status quo*, but quite different in the approach that opposition took and the art it manifested. The influence on taste and exhibition opportunities held by the Group of Seven, the CGP and the Ontario Society of Artists, was pervasive. Reaction formed around independent exhibitions with the turning point coming in 1953 when William Ronald (b. 1926) organized an exhibition with six other artists at the Robert Simpson Company. They decided to work together on further shows and, adding four more to their number, formed the Painters Eleven in November 1953. The group, which exhibited together between 1954 and 1960, combined established artists like Jock Macdonald and Jack Bush (1909-77) and young painters like Oscar Cahen (1916-56), William Ronald and Harold Town (b. 1924). Their published statements denied a unified theoretical or stylistic direction, "There is no manifesto here for the times...there is little harmony in the noticeable disagreement. But there is a profound regard for the consequences of our complete freedom." (1954).

The very differences within the group, and they were many, probably gave its attack on entrenched conservatism swifter access to attention than if it had asserted a single-minded direction. The interest, particularly among the younger artists, in New York abstract expressionism was evident and the group exhibited with the American Abstract Artists in New York in 1956. The New York contact, however, became a point of dissension within the group and carried significant implications for Toronto art in the 1950s and 1960s. The issue arose in 1957 when Ronald, then living in New York, arranged for the critic, Clement Greenberg, to visit the artists' studios. Harold Town and Walter Yarwood refused to participate, and the impact on the other artists was limited or negligible with the exception of Bush, for whom the meeting was the beginning of a life-long friendship.

The breakthrough made by Painters Eleven collectively and individually, had an inestimable impact on art in Toronto. It was inseparable from the development of a progressive scene and the emergence of a wider and more responsive audience for new art. Although institutional resistance remained, impetus was developed by a number of Toronto private galleries showing contemporary art, notably the Park Gallery, the Gallery of Contemporary Art, the Greenwich Gallery (later the Isaacs Gallery), the Here and Now Gallery