

THE CULTURAL FABRIC

In its formative years Canada was too busy rolling back the frontier to develop consciously, in any great measure, a distinctive culture. Thus, many of the arts have been largely derivative, reflecting already established trends in Europe and the United States.

Between the First and Second World Wars a change came about, especially in painting and literature, which was stimulated by a sense of wonder about the people and the land. Canadians turned inwards and a feeling of deliberate self-examination is apparent in the arts of the period.

Since the Second World War a new trend has started; the feeling of excitement about the country still persists but, side by side with this, a new approach to aesthetic expression can be detected in art, literature, music and drama. Canada has become more self-assured and articulate and this is reflected in the arts. New maturity can be seen everywhere in the astonishing growth of interest in things cultural.

A milestone was reached on March 28, 1957, when an Act of Parliament provided for the establishment of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The objects of the Council are "to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts, humanities and social sciences". In

this act, the expression "the arts" includes architecture, the arts of the theatre, literature, music, painting, sculpture, the graphic arts and other similar creative and interpretive activities. Although the act does not define humanities or social sciences, it is generally understood that the former includes all broadly cultural subjects which are covered in a university curriculum, not only the classics, but also philosophy, history, logic, literature, rhetoric, mathematics and languages, while the latter may be taken to include economics, psychology, sociology, political science, geography and law.

Shortly after its establishment, the Council announced a substantial scholarship programme and awarded grants to a number of organizations and individuals engaged in the fields which are its concern. One of the Council's early activities was to establish a Canadian National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Painting

In the 1920s, seven landscape artists labelling themselves the Group of Seven broke sharply with the European tradition that had influenced early local painters such as Cornelius Krieghoff, Paul Kane and Homer Watson, and set out to paint the Canadian outdoors in a highly personal style. These men, some of whom are still alive and painting, trekked across Canada from the Barren Grounds to the Atlantic Coast, capturing the rugged beauty of the Canadian Shield, and cold glaciers of the Arctic islands, the needle-sharp peaks of the Rockies,

the windswept pines and flaming maples of northern Ontario.

The Group was influenced by Tom Thomson, a woodsman and guide, whose great canvas "The West Wind" is one of the best known of all Canadian paintings. Attacked as daubers and modernists in their early years, the Group had won recognition long before they disbanded in 1933. It was succeeded by the Canadian Group of Painters comprising more than 40 artists. The Group's influence is still felt strongly in the treatment of landscape, especially in the paintings of British Columbia's forest scenes by Emily Carr, artist, essayist and recluse, whose work has received international recognition since her death in 1945.

Just as the Group of Seven reacted against the traditional style of painting, so a variety of new movements in Canada represents a revolt against their romanticism. The expressionism of Jack Shadbolt and the gay geometric forms of B.C. Binning on the West Coast are good examples of this trend. So is the

work of a new Toronto group, Painters Eleven, and of a rising school of Quebec artists influenced by the non-objective paintings of Alfred Pellan and Paul-Emile Borduas.

Today more and more Canadians are becoming familiar with their artists' work, seeing it through travelling exhibitions sponsored by the National Gallery, through low-cost reproductions, and through special documentary films.

Sculpture

It was in French-speaking Canada that the first sculptors worked, largely under religious influence. Family studios, which handed their craft down through the generations, carved in wood to provide interior decoration for the churches.

In English Canada, sculpture did not make its debut until the nineteenth century, and it then took the form of stone monuments and heroic statues. In more recent years, however, a breaking away from earlier

