

of Art became the central Ontario School of Art and Design in 1891 (and the Ontario College of Art in 1912).

This emphasis upon the teaching of art as a highly developed and systematic discipline inevitably led young painters in the late 1870s and 1880s to Paris, a world centre of art with a sophisticated system of education and selection based on academic studios and annual salons. Popular French painting grew directly from this system, with its emphasis on the close and extensive study of the human figure for the creation of large publicly-oriented 'machines' on grand themes. The first Canadians ventured to Paris to study in the mid-Seventies, and a decade later they were back in Canada. One, Robert Harris (1849-1919), who would later paint the famous *Fathers of Confederation*, was in Toronto as early as 1879, teaching the French method of working from the model and building up compositions from elaborate studies of the parts. This turned a whole generation away from the Canadian landscape in favour of large-scale figure painting. Harris, George Reid (1860-1947), who subsequently taught for many years in Toronto, William Brymner (1855-1925) who was a famed teacher at the AAM Schools in Montreal for 30 years, and Paul Peel (1860-92), who stayed in Paris, are the most typical, and probably the best, of this generation of Canadian academic figure painters.

Their students flocked to the French capital in such numbers that, by the mid-1890s, it would appear that every Canadian artist of any seriousness had to spend at least a year or two there. Some stayed longer and, in a few years, were abandoning academic figure painting for impressionist landscape, or Whistler\*-influenced tonalism. The more successful found it difficult to return home and, as the new century dawned, some of the best of the younger artists could not imagine working anywhere other than Paris. Many thought this a sign that Canadian art had come of age. A few others began to think that a truly Canadian art would never be born.

### *The twentieth century*

There have been two major movements in Canadian art in this century. The Group of Seven in Toronto during the 1920s and the *Automatistes* in Montreal during the late 1940s both captured the imagination of a broad public, each in its time and place seeming to embody national aspirations of the grandest sort. They represent two peaks around which virtually all Canadian art has since revolved, and reflect as well what have been the major tensions in modern Canadian cultural life: those between Toronto and Montreal, between francophone and anglophone, between nationalism and internationalism.

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\* James Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903), an American.