



Franklin Carmichael,
The Nickel Belt, 1928,
oil on canvas

Arctic three times. The painting exhibited is based on a sketch that he did at Lake Rouviere in the western Arctic in 1959. Jackson wanted to show that the Arctic is not just a barren wasteland, but in summer becomes a panorama bathed in rich colours.

Lawren Harris (1885-1970) was the only member of the Group of Seven who was financially independent and could devote his time to art and spiritual beliefs. He became a firm follower of Theosophy, which subscribes to universal brotherhood and Brahmin and Buddhist teachings. Harris faced the dilemma of how to reconcile material with non-material values. He found the answer in Canada's northern lands, a source of inspiration and elation that brought him 'moments of release from transitory bonds'.

Harris's early paintings are landscapes, traditional houses and portraits. His style changed to semi-abstract in the late 1920s and to full abstraction in the early 1930s. In 1934, he painted his first non-figurative work, abandoning any recourse to reality as the initial stimulus to creativity. *Algoma Country II* (1923), exhibited here, is a monumental canvas in which Harris wanted to convey the north country's 'rhythm of light', its 'swift ecstasy' and a 'blessed severity' that raises man's spirits.

Interior of an Island, Georgian Bay (1952) is painted in brilliant colours and relates to one of Arthur Lismer's favourite sketching areas. Based on a sketch, the canvas was completed in his studio. Lismer (1885-1969) came to Canada from England at the age of twenty-six. Within a decade his paintings had shed most of their European influence and had become more Canadian than some of the other works of the Group of Seven.

Lismer had a sarcastic wit and a facile pen. He would draw cartoons at a moment's notice. During his early years he painted large canvases to reflect the grandeur of the country, using colour with daring imagination. In later years he produced smaller works with greater emphasis on detail; they became more tranquil and serene, showing his fondness of nature rather than the awe he had felt in earlier years.

The Nickel Belt (1928) by Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945) is a product of one of his more sombre moods. It reflects the ravages that man can bring to nature, depicting the outskirts of Sudbury in



David Milne, *Red House*
circa 1933, oil on canvas

northern Ontario, the site of Canada's largest nickel smelters.

Carmichael was extremely versatile. He did well as a painter, designer, commercial artist, wood engraver, book illustrator and musician. By the late 1920s he had developed his own distinctive style. Rather than emphasizing what was near at hand - as some other members of the Group were doing - he took a wider view and painted a continuous chain of hills and lakes disappearing into the distance.

As his work evolved, Carmichael's mode of painting became stylized, prompted by decorative motifs. Some of his forest scenes were done in jewel-like colours, with trees and foliage painted in an intricate design, unlike observable reality.

The Internationalists

While the Group of Seven and their followers emphasized in their paintings the ruggedness of the country and the dramatic colouring of its landscape, there were others, the 'internationalists' or 'anti-nationalists' who felt that painting should be removed from national or regional considerations. They include in Ontario David Milne, a unique painter in his way, and later on Kazuo Nakamura, a science-oriented artist; and in Montreal a school of modernists which in the 1930s was led by John Lyman and Goodridge Roberts, later followed by younger men and women like Jacques de Tonnancour, Stanley Cosgrove and Ghitta Caiserman-Roth.

David Milne (1882-1953) was a shy and gentle artist who painted like a poet, sensitively and with a light touch. The style was flat and sparing in fine, suggestive colour. He strove for simplicity and aesthetic quality, and, believing in the principle that less is more, he tried to incorporate in his compositions surface areas that were hardly touched. Milne was an intensely personal painter whose modesty and simplicity is reflected in his work. In the exhibition, *Red House* (circa 1933) depicts a small cluster of farm buildings with fields and trees in the background and a turbulent sky dominating the scenery. The painting is harmonious in colour and the structure is delicate. Important though the sky is in composition, it is far from threatening and is quite different from its portrayal by some of the Group of Seven.

The French Canadians

The work of six French Canadian artists is exhibited, three of whom do fully abstract work (Alfred Pellán, Jean-Paul Riopelle and Marcelle Ferron), two who paint realistic but imaginary landscapes (Jean-Paul Lemieux and Claude Picher) and one who moved from figurative to abstract expression and then back again to realism (Paul Beaulieu).

Alfred Pellán was acclaimed as 'a man of a thousand styles' and as one who has 'liberated' Canadian painting. *Automne* is one of Pellán's *jardin* paintings - a series on the theme gardens, flowers and soil. Heavily pigmented and painted in luminous colours, this is a vibrant picture and radiates vitality, passion and power - all characteristics of Pellán's own personality.

Alfred Pellán, *Automne*,
1959, oil on canvas

