

The Reminiscent Beauty of the Group of Seven

BY ANDREA FOSTER

I have been twice now to visit the Group of Seven exhibit at the Dal Art Gallery. Having always been a fan of the seven Canadian artists' work, I was very impressed by the collection of paintings. My last visit however, was an experience in itself, for it evoked my own memories of great Canadian experiences.

The most moving painting in the collection is A.J. Casson's High Water. The painting, which depicts a dramatic autumn landscape in Ontario, made me homesick for the majestic Haliburton Highlands where I have spent most of my summers. The hypnotic golds and browns and the icy river dividing the forest, reflected a similar scene from my cottage window. The visual affects drew me right into this painting.

Casson was pleased with this work and submitted it to the 77th Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of the Arts in 1949, where the asking price was six hundred dollars.

Another Casson, Little Farmhouse, uses vibrant color and in combination with simplified form create awe-inspiring

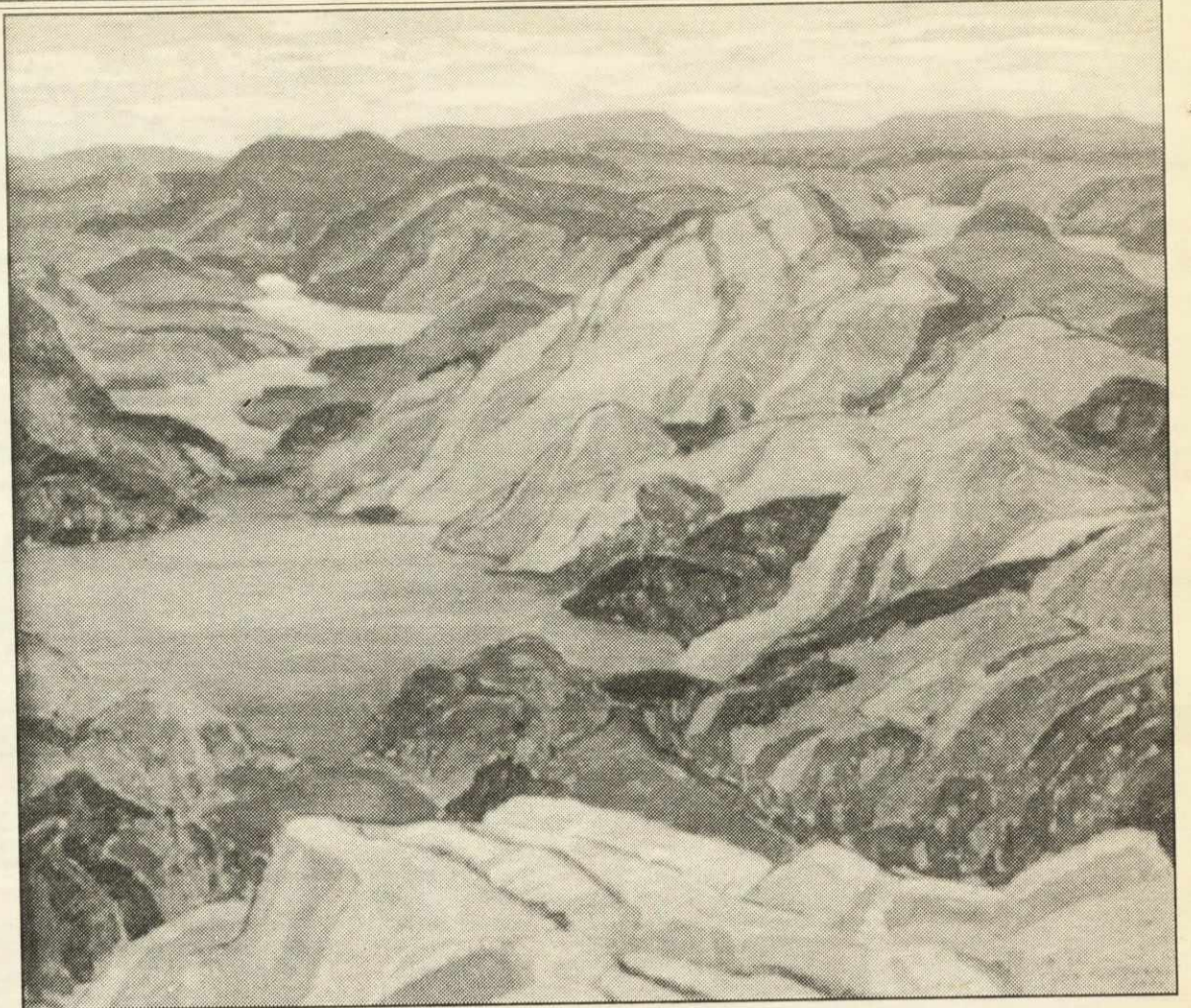
impressions of rural Ontario. This particular painting also reminded me of a scene straight out of Disney's Beauty and the Beast. With its cartoon-like appearance, I half expected Belle to come running out of the forest.

The second artist whose work touched me is A.Y. Jackson. His Northern Landscape, a scene modeled from Great Bear Lake, was completed between August and September 1938 and was painted near the Eldorado mines on Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories.

As curator Charles Hill noted: "the barren lands, ruggedness, and solitude of the North were genuine stimulants" for Jackson.

His painting is a stunning recreation of the typical silhouettes of stunted pines whose fiery color and severe nature pay homage to the untamed wilderness of the North.

Jackson also depicted the bleak landscape of Quebec. Two of his paintings, St. Agnes, Quebec and Quebec village near Les Emboulements, brought back memories of drives through Quebec to reach my favorite ski area in the Laurentians. Jackson displays an intricate talent in portraying small churches and farms that can be seen from the country highways



La Cloche #2, Franklin Carmichael

spanning Quebec.

The final reminiscent painting in the collection is Tom Thompson's Moonlight. This is one of four paintings exhibited by Thompson at the March 1916 Annual Exhibition of Members of the Ontario Society of Arts. Thompson's work illuminated

memories of a white water canoe expedition in the secluded river systems of Northern Ontario. This moody piece of art is a tribute to luminous full moons that reflect off the bountiful lakes and rivers of this region.

These are the paintings which sparked memories of some of my

great Canadian adventures. My exposure to Canada's wilderness is reflected in the works of selected members of the Group of Seven. Their attention to detail combined with their varied talents creates a moving experience for any Canadian who has traveled the wilderness between the coasts.

Irving novel perfect summer read

BY SALLY THOMAS

The time has come to start searching for the first of the great summer reads and I have the perfect suggestion: John Irving's *A Widow For a Year*. It's a thick and juicy book, perfect for breaks at the summer job or car rides out of town or lazy afternoons on the back patio. And it has some jaw dropping moments and weird twists.

Irving's novel is filled with adultery, betrayal, abandonment and death. Oh yeah, and sex, lots of sex. In fact, the opening scene of the book is a sex scene.

The book cannot be summed up in a few paragraphs. It follows a bizarre family of writers starting in

1958. Two sons die, there's a four year old daughter named Ruth, the parents split up, a writer's assistant named Eddie comes to town and woos the mother, and the mother splits at the end of the summer.

Then we meet again in 1990 where Ruth is a writer herself. Eddie is back in the picture and is still madly in love with the mother. Ruth is writing a new book and goes to Amsterdam where she falls into a heap of trouble.

We then meet again in 1995. Through all this Ruth and the writer's assistant keep waiting and hoping for the mother to reappear. It's a hard book to sum up quickly. I would hate to have been the jacket writer.

There are no peripheral

characters in this novel. Everyone we meet has a history and we are told what it is. We know all about Ruth's slutty friend, we know all about Eddie's childhood, we know all about the death of the brothers, we know all about a prostitute Ruth meets for a couple of days. We know everything. Maybe that's why the book is 537 pages long.

This is one of those novels where you are sucked into the character's lives to the point of where you might actually care what will happen next. There are parts of this novel that will leave you with your jaw hanging open. It's long and winding and it will take you more than a week to finish. In other words, the perfect novel for summer.

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