

## Art Centre

by Anne Hodgson

The UNB Art Centre is presently drawing another one of their major exhibitions of this year. Displayed in the gallery are the serigraphs or silkscreens of the well-known Canadian artist, Alex Colville. The exhibition includes the complete series of Colville's silkscreens, as well as eight preliminary works of his latest serigraph sunrise.

Alex Colville considers himself, 'of Sackville'. He feels the Maritimes has influenced much of his work. We can see this influence in the figures and the country-side shown in the silkscreens displayed. He was born 51 years ago in Toronto and spent his younger life in Toronto and St. Catherines, Ontario. When he was nineteen he moved to Amherst, Nova Scotia, where he took his first art lessons in Amherst secondary school under Sarah A. Hart. He studied at the school of Applied and Fine Arts at Mt. Allison University in Sackville from 1938 to 1942. During these years, he spent his summer painting landscapes at Prospect, Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia and Woodstock, New Brunswick. In May 1942 he obtained his Bachelor of Fine Arts.

That same year he enlisted in the Canadian Army and married Rhoda Wright of Kentville, Nova Scotia. As an artist, he was quite an important figure in the forces. He served as artist at the headquarters in London, England, in 1944, and for the Royal Canadian Navy during their landings in the south of France. On November 30, 1944, he was officially appointed 'war artist', painting in Belgium, Holland and was promoted to the rank of Captain. In 1946, he was discharged from the army and was back in Canada. It is interesting to note that 126 of his works were kept and are now in the war collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

In 1946 he was appointed Assistant Professor of paintings at Mt. Allison University. His major exhibitions were provincial, national and ever international. His works were displayed at Exposition Internationale Universelle de Bruxelles, Canadian Pavillion, 1958; the VI Biental de Suo Paulo, Museu de Arte Moderna, 1961; at the Dunn International Exhibition, Beaverbrook art gallery 1963, at the XXXIII Biennale di Benezia, Giardini Pubblici, 1966; at National Gallery of Canada Biennials, 1955, 57, 59, 63, 68; and at the Second Atlantic Provinces Art Circuit Biennial, 1971.

Colville retired from teaching in 1963, and during the following years he has kept very busy and has received much acclaim for all that he has done. During 1966, Colville designed the specially minted coin for Canada's centennial year. He has been a member of the Canadian Council administration Board since 1966 and has been awarded a Doctorate of Literature from Trent University in 1967 and a doctorate of law from Mount Allison in 1968 and from Dalhousie in 1969. From 1967 to 1968 he was artist-in-residence at the University of California in Santa Cruz. Since last year he has been a member of the board of governors and academic senate at Mt. Allison. He was artist-in-residence in West Berlin from June to December 1971.

Alex Colville has had 12 one man exhibitions, has taken part in 60 group exhibitions in Canada and over 20 abroad. He has had two National Film Board films and four CBC television broadcasts. Colville has been responsible for 70 paintings, 12 serigraphs and two murals.

Colville's serigraphs are unique in their presentation of figuration. His works show men, women, children, adolescents, houses, fields, machines and the sea. He conveys to the viewer his interpretation of these, not only through perision of details and solidarity of composition, but through direct feelings; feelings that are brought about from personal experience and special vision. Reality is important to Colville and he feels it must be received, not only externally by the eyes and through daily experiences, but also by the spirit, internally through interpretation of daily life. He feels that the outside world provides the material date and the reality must be transformed by the artist through individual perception and interpretation. Thus, Colville's work achieves a certain very deep and personal quality unlike his other contemporaries, and is easily recognizable.

The viewer must not only look but must perceive each work to gain the symbolism and spiritualism that may be hidden behind the commonplace scenes and 'typical' people. One must look beyond his simple design and attractive subjects, for it is the interpretation Colville is stressing, not just the mere instances. He paints things as they are. His settings and subjects are pleasing to the viewers, as a result, for they combine the country charm and the vestiges of a past era - country scenes, farmers, working, teenagers in a field, a village store, old abandoned barns, antique furniture and rusty tools. However, if one looks closer he will see the even deeper reality that Colville is trying to express. His images are intense and his subjects are arranged in dramatic settings. He lightens figures to the point where they almost appear ethereal, and a domestic scene may be a

meaningful epic.

We see this intense realism in the 12 silkscreens that are being displayed. Their complexity varies from the use of three screens to thirteen. They are all done in colour and present such familiar subjects and settings as the Sandy Maritime beaches, the surrounding countryside and even the New Brunswick Highway Department snowplow.

When you first look at this collection of Colville silkscreens, they seem to simply show something. For example; a cat on a fence, a man and a woman, or a pet dog. High Diver shows some boys on vacation and Snowplow shows a NB snowplow cleaning snow. But after looking at them for a while you realize that they go even deeper than that. They suggest ways of behavior; each figure or setting symbolizes something. They may represent a drama or existential situation. For example; the solitude of the animal, the complexity of the couple, or the peacefulness of the swimmers. One characteristic of Colville's work that is particularly striking is his minute details. We see his deft ability to draw the fur of the animals or the boat and waves in Boat And Marker, or the letters on the snowplow. This too, adds to the sense of realism. Colville has the ability to take the most minute object and through his detailing make it appear real, and at the same time turn it into something colossal and symbolically, very important.

An interesting part of the exhibition is Colville studies for his last serigraph Sunrise. It is quite surprising to see all the work and planning that the artist puts into just one silkscreen. Displayed are a number of sketches and enlargements of details done in various different medias, and finally the entire composition done in acrylic paints and red ink. The subject is a woman in a canoe and the setting is a river surrounded by a stone cliff. Three sets of preliminary drawings are done of it in brown fibre pen and pencil, just pencil and ink wash. The stone cliff is done in detail, as well as the woman, the canoe and the latter two combined. We see the different components of the painting and finally we see it all put together in the final composition.

The whole exhibition is definitely one to see. The twelve serigraphs are each different in their own way and all equally creditable. I urge people to go and see Alex Colville's exhibit at the UNB Art Centre. The silkscreens will be on display until February 22nd. Along with the silkscreens is an exhibition of sculpture by Peter Wolcott, with twenty-seven works done in bronze, clay, steel, and copper wire. Wolcott is originally from New York, but he and his wife are now living in New Brunswick. Both these exhibitions are well worth your while to see.

surrealistic nor abstract in his approach, but rather more traditional to match the subject matter.

The exhibition at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery commences on February 4 and should be an interesting contrast to some of the multi-media efforts of contemporary Canadian artists.

## Duncan Collection at Beaverbrook

The late Douglas Duncan's gift to the Maritimes consists of a collection of paintings primarily executed by David Milne and L.L. Fitzgerald, who were among the artists he assisted in their earlier days. It had been Duncan's wish that ultimately his collection should be given, as part of Canada's national heritage to institutions large and small. Douglas Duncan (1902-1968) not only collected works of art for himself, but in 1936 he founded the Toronto based Picture Loan Society, which he operated on a non-profit basis.

Assembled in the collection which is being circulated among the five major galleries of the Maritimes are oils, water-colours, drawings and prints which are unified in the sense that they are all Canadian. The mood of the collection seems to be gentle. Evoking a greater appreciation of the subtlety of the things around us, the majority of the pictures are either rural landscapes or still life paintings. Milne, as particularly exemplified in "Waterfall", is concerned with patterns and shapes—he is neither



Photo by Ken De Freitas

"Waterfall" by David Milne

## Film Festival at Beaverbrook

During the month of February the Beaverbrook Art Gallery will be presenting an Animated and Experimental Film Festival. The Festival began February 7th with humorous films. On February 14th, the general theme will be movement; on February 21th, geometric forms; and on February 28th, social comment. Each showing consists of eight films or more with an average length of eight minutes, and will be held in the exhibition gallery at 8:00 pm, no admission charge.