

GROUP OF SEVEN REDUCED TO ONE - LAWREN HARRIS DIES

Lawren S. Harris, who died recently at the age of 85, was a leading member of the Group of Seven, the first distinctively Canadian school of painting, which was founded in 1919. On January 30, the day after his death, he was to have received a medal from the Canadian Royal Academy, with A.Y. Jackson, the only surviving member of the group.

Lawren Harris was born in Brantford, Ontario. As a child who suffered much from illness, he learnt to draw and paint while confined to bed. After spending a year at the University of Toronto, he went to Berlin to study art, and later visited France, Italy and the Far East.

In 1910 Harris opened a studio in Toronto and set about painting old houses in the poorer areas of the city. Many of these early paintings have been reproduced in books on Canadian art. During this period, he met J.E.H. MacDonald, who, like himself, was to become one of the founders of the Group of Seven. The two artists, who became fast friends, made many sketching trips together to such places as Mattawa and Temiskaming, Ontario, and the Laurentian Mountains in Quebec. Harris helped plan and build the Studio Building in Toronto, which was intended to "accommodate Canadian artists who could devote their full attention to painting".

FIRST STEPS IN ALGOMA

In 1918, Harris arranged a sketching party into the rugged bush country of the Algoma region around Hearst, 200 miles north of Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. The party travelled in a boxcar fitted with bunks and a stove, which became their home when they reached a suitable location for the painting they wished to do. This was the first of several such trips, during which Harris produced some notable canvasses. One of these, *North Shore Lake Superior*, which is now the property of the National Gallery in Ottawa, won the artist \$500 at the Pan-American Exhibition of Contemporary Painting.

In his introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Art Museum of Toronto in 1920, Harris wrote: "The group of seven artists whose pictures are here exhibited have, for several years, held a like vision concerning art in Canada. They are all imbued with the idea that an art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people....The artists here represented make no pretence of being the only ones in Canada doing significant work. But they do most emphatically hold that their work is significant and of real value to the country...." The artists whose works were on display on this occasion included all the original members of the Group of Seven - Harris



The late Lawren S. Harris

himself, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer⁽¹⁾, J.E.H. MacDonald, Frank Carmichael, Frank H. Johnston and Frederick H. Varley.⁽²⁾

ARTISTS IN THE ARCTIC

In 1930, Harris and Jackson made a trip to the Arctic aboard the steamer *Beothic*. They made sketches at Godhavn (Greenland), Pim Island and Ellesmere Island, a display of which was held at the National Gallery later the same year. Among the sketches made by Harris during this voyage were such famous works as *Iceberg and Fog*, *Smith Sound*, *Clyde Inlet* and *Baffin Island*.

Harris and his family moved in 1942 to Vancouver, British Columbia, where the artist lectured at the School of Art.

Harris was adept with the pen as well as the brush. Among his writings are a volume of poetry entitled *Contrasts* (1922) and numerous articles interpreting art for Canadians. He was the first president of the Canadian Group of Painters, set up in 1933, and served as president of the Federation of Canadian Artists from 1944 to 1947.

Lawren Harris won many awards, and his work is represented in the Detroit Institute of Art and in many Canadian collections.

(1) See also Volume 24, No. 18, April 30, 1969, P. 5.

(2) See also Volume 24, No. 50, December 10, 1969, P. 3.