THE annual Spring Salon of the Art Association of Montreal, while both overcrowded and badly hung, is catholic in outlook, light and bright in general effect, and contains a number of fine works. It should be noted, however, that these are confined exclusively to the painting and graphic arts sections; the sculpture is undistinguished, and the architectural exhibits, with the exception of those of Fetherstonhaugh and Durnford, and Perry and Luke, are unenterprising in the extreme.

What strikes one most is that, among the best work, landscape does not predominate. Personally, I regard this as a heartening sign, for during the last few years, the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of pure landscape. And there is a compensating tendency to portray contemporary city environment, notable examples being Jack Beder’s “After the Rain,” Albert Goodstone’s sombre “Lachine Canal,” Ronald Kerr’s little pastels, and Meyer Ryspan’s quite good little genre scenes. Marc Fortin, who here offers four enormous canvases, is not seen at his absolute best. There is no mistaking the energy and the awareness, but his nervous expressionism and his raw colors fare better in water-color, in which medium his best work has been done. Judging, too, from the excellent work of Sam Borenstein and Warren Luckock, it would seem that, unless one is past master of the oil medium, true expressionism, with its nervous energy, its realism and its quick, startling effects, shows to greater advantage in water color.

There are a number of sensitively felt and well-composed landscapes, among which those of Mabel May, Kathleen Morris, Sarah Robertson, Albert Robinson, Anne Sayage, Ethel Seath and Harold Beament stand out. André Bieler’s “Rivière du Nord” is a successful personal translation of the general manner, and Marian Scott’s two small studies hold, beneath their tight painting and carefully arranged forms, a deep expression of restrained feelings. Aleksandre Bercovitch—one of our really fine painters—has a lovely still life, and an unusually interesting tempera study. Avery Shaw’s smooth, contemplative still lifes are well felt out. The most outstanding portrait in the showing is Lillias Torrance-Newton’s study of Louisa Muhlstock; it is vigorous, sensitive, dignified and richly painted.

The paintings of an architect have a special interest, due to his exacting training, with its insistence on order, neatness and craftsmanship, and its “professional” touch. But unless he be a very remarkable man, the architect must confine himself to the exploitation of line, to the exclusion of form and color, while the bogey of a rigid conventionality is always round the corner. Mr. Hugh Robertson of Hamilton, whose water colors are on view at the Roberta Galleries on Grenville Street, while his work appears to me to lack the savor of profound experience, has avoided this bogey. Light in color, his work has an easy pleasantness, while his training has aided him to the production of competent flat designs. By contrast, the work of Tom Stone, at the Eaton Galleries on College Street, has solidity; but I have yet to be convinced that Mr. Stone’s formula—unvarying for the past two years—does either himself or the Canadian landscape justice.

The Women’s Art Association, and Miss Florence Wyle (who I understand was responsible for the idea and its carrying out), are to be congratulated on the portrait exhibition at present on the walls of the Association’s gallery at 23 Prince Arthur Avenue. Contrary to the general and often justifiable belief, portraiture need not necessarily be either dull or venial; and this showing proves it. All portraiture represents a certain compromise between artist and sitter, but the exhibitors here have preserved their integrity admirably. The work of F. H. Varley and Paraskeva Clark stands out from a showing whose level is quite unusually high.

The annual exhibition by students of the Central Technical School is now on view, and is well worth a visit by anyone who wants to see art in action. A sturdy technical competence, combined with youthful enthusiasm and a zeal for experiment, makes each department—graphic art, ceramics, poster design, weaving and textiles, painting and sculpture—an object lesson in art serving the needs of the people. Meanwhile Maruru, the cooperative group on Hayter Street, has preparations under way for a spring showing.