The Royal Canadian Academy

The twenty-sixth exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy is now open at the O. S. A. Gallery, and on the whole is disappointing. Though some pictures there are excellent, the great majority are mediocre. That which strikes one first after a cursory glance round is the lack of figure subjects. Apart from portraits and single figures, the pictures are all landscapes, seascapes, or interiors. Surely Canadian history is replete with incidents that might, with advantage, be put on canvas; and besides the historical, are there not countless incidents of national life which, if depicted, would add to the interest taken in Canadian art all the world over? Perhaps it is easier to sell landscapes—that would be to so many an excellent and sufficient reason for painting them—but are there not among all the artists in Canada some few to whom the dollar is not so necessary, and who could devote part of their time to painting pictures that, although for the time being may not be so popular, yet in years to come could only add to their renown? Then another thing that strikes one is the preponderance of small canvases, little bits of scenery, that, although excellent for studies, are not worth a place in such an exhibition as the Royal Canadian Academy should have. The present exhibition gives one the impression, save in a few cases, that the word ambition is scarcely known among the younger generation of artists. One can forgive crude colour or faulty technique if big ideas go with them, but while commercialism is in the air, and while so-called patrons of art buy the inferior works of foreign artists, whose reputation generally is the work of the importer, rather than those of their fellow-countrymen, one can look for very little progress in Canadian art.

Two other things should be mentioned: first, the lighting; secondly, the way in which the pictures are hung. The former is particularly bad, while in the latter the lack of wall space and taste in

Wyly Grier has certainly not succeeded this year. His two pictures, John T. Ryan, Esq., and Daughter of the Empire, are really poor in comparison with some of his work. Of the portrait of John T. Ryan, Esq., there is not much to be said, the head alone showing any approach to Mr. Grier’s old form. The rest of the picture is thin, weak, and of rather unpleasing color. Mr. Harris, President R.C.A., sends two portraits which would not be out of place on the tops of candy boxes, but he also sends A Study of a Man’s Head, which shows what he can do, and it is one of the most powerful pictures in the room.

Mr. John Russell has also two portraits which are very promising. They show much virility and many sound qualities, and although the treatment is slightly checky, it is a good fault, and when Mr. Russell finds himself first-class work may be expected. Mr. Patterson has only one portrait that is at all worthy, My Mother in a Garden Hat. Apart from the draughtsmanship, which is not all it should be, it is a distinctly pleasant picture—the sweet face in the dark poke bonnet. The color is delicate, and there is a feeling of poetry that gives a distinction to the picture.

Miss Muntz has only contributed one canvas, Forbidden Fruit, but it is worthy of note. As a painter of children, Miss Muntz is at her best, and in the present case she has succeeded in painting a picture that in most ways cannot be too highly commended. It is a clever painting, clever in technique and composition, full of ideas, and possessing that charm that only sympathy with the subject can inspire. The color is excellent, too, with the possible exception of the smallest child, whose flesh strikes one as being rather unnaturally pink.

Miss Clara Hagarty may some day do good work. Her paintings show signs of cleverness and considerable virility, but they lack life and human understanding. The Lady in Black is rather nicely painted, but it lacks soul.

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The lack of wall space and table in the hanging committee detract considerably from the **tont ensemble**.

Although it is almost impossible to compare pictures, especially those belonging to different schools, yet perhaps Mr. Williamson's **Hungry Piet** is the most masterly work in the room. It is of the Dutch school, and depicts a man eating—a simple subject, but admirably executed; full of life, full of expression, full of knowledge and imagination. It is well balanced, with rich natural coloring, and a great feeling of bigness and atmosphere. Another good piece of work by Mr. Williamson is his **Normandy Interior**, and here again we have the quiet simplicity, the good composition and clever lighting. Mr. Gagnon also has an interior which is one of the good things, the chief charm of which lies in the dexterity with which the lights are treated.

There are also two small pictures by the same artist that are worthy of mention, **Twilight, Luxembourg Gardens, and Outside the Walls of Tangiers**. Both are excellent in color.

Of the portraits, that of Mr. A.E. Boltbee, by Cruikshank, and Professor Pelham Edgar, by G.A. Reid, run each other close for first place. Mr. Cruikshank's work is very good and sound; perhaps it is the most sincere of all the portraits, certainly as far as draughtsmanship and knowledge of form are concerned. In fact, the one drawback is that the treatment is rather academic. On the other hand, Mr. Reid's portrait is more original and shows more individuality; the color scheme is pleasing, and it is evidently a good likeness, yet it is not quite convincing—there is a note of artificiality about it that rather annoys one.

Mr. Atkinson's **Misty Moonlight** is quite charming, possessing, as it does, a poetic delicacy, yet withal strongly and cleverly painted. His study of **Old Houses Near Manchester** is also pleasantly executed, of good color, and is well drawn. Mr. Bell-Smith knows how to paint, and his big picture, **Fraser River, Near Yale, B.C.**, proves it, but well executed as it is, with sound technique, good color, composition, yet it lacks that touch of human interest that would make one want to look at it many times. His **Lakes in the Clouds**, however, possesses that quality to some extent, and there is a certain feeling in this picture that makes it quite delightful.

Homer Watson has contributed seven, but of all that number a small one, perhaps the smallest one, is the gem. As a woodland scene it charms one by its quiet, strong simplicity; as a painting by the rich brown coloring, the power of selection, and the clever technique. Mr. Beatty has three canvases, one of which, **The Harvest Field**, is a study of considerable power. As usual Mr. Beatty's handling of color is good, but the chief charm of his work lies in its vigor. Mr. McGillivray Knowles has succeeded in getting a good deal of atmosphere into his picture, **After the Rain**. The color scheme is good and the composition, although rather ordinary, is effective. Mrs. Reid is to be congratulated on her panel picture, **Moonrise**. Without doubt it is one of the most delicate pictures in the exhibition, delicate both in color and feeling. Another picture of hers, **Spring Evening**, is delightful, but the contrasts in the painting are a little bit too strong.

Mr. Smith shows a lot of knowledge in his seascapes. He has managed to catch the beauty of a stormswep sea and
there is a rugged beauty in his rocks and skies. Mr. John Hammond’s work possesses pleasing qualities, his *Sunrise* being vigorously painted and full of charming atmospheric effects. Mr. Edmund Morris has managed to get a clear, clean effect of sunshine into his *Coast Scene, Lower St. Lawrence*. The three panel decorative picture of Mr. Manly is cleverly treated, and his *New Brunswick* pleases, although the distance is rather hard. Miss Tully’s *Enchanted Forest* is an interesting and imaginative piece of work, and has considerable delicacy, but she really should not have exhibited her portrait of Mrs. John Cawthra. Much might be said of other pictures, but it is of such a character that it were perhaps best left unsaid. It would be well, however, for the powers that be to find a place for their exhibition where the light is not horrible and there is enough wall space to enable the Hanging Committee to hang pictures as they should be hung to make an artistic exhibition.