FINE WORK AT ROYAL ACADEMY

Best Balanced Show In Recent Years, Is Verdict

EXHIBITION AT MONTREAL

Little New Shown In Field of Sculpture

MONTREAL, Nov. 30. — Accorded the distinction of being the best-balanced show held in Canada in recent years, the 52nd exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy, opened here last night. Widely representative of the work done in practically every province of the Dominion and offering a broad range of styles, it deals with the individual approach of the Canadian artist to his work in all its phases.

The academy was opened in the presence of a large number of artists and guests. Among the artists present from outside Montreal were: Alex. Jackson, the painter, and Miss Florence Wyle, sculptress, of Toronto; Archibald Brown, of Lancaster, Ont., and Miss Elizabeth Nutt, of Halifax. Wybly Grier, president of the academy, and Mrs. Grier welcomed the guests.

In its variety of styles the exhibition shows the Persian-like legend of “Hunting in the 18th Century, in Russia” a gem of imagery by the Russian Valentin Shebalff, of Montreal. Among the notable works were: some respects, Japanese “Old Fisherman,” as well as the wet, muddy, atmospheric country of a “Wallen Winter,” a dramatic landscape by Homer Watson. It includes the modest “My Cactus,” by Eric Berg, of Winnipeg, a study in the achieved craftsmanship of the cactus, of the pot and of the earth in it, as well as in the texture of the draped curtains in the foreground; and it presents the highly-coloured collection of the theatrical, over-spectacular nude, “Figure Standing,” by Randolph Hewton, who is more ably represented in another room with a rich piece of mural decoration, presented between frames and called “Beneficia.”

FINE LANDSCAPES

It offers its academic auspices to the anlytical and very subtly arbitrary description of “Hangars et Elevateur,” by the artist Adrien Herbert, of Montreal, and to the remarkably well-woven and well-composed landscapes of the French-Canadians, Paul Nash and Marc Fortin, also of Montreal. In the same wise it gives its blessing to the good barbarian, “When Summer Ends,” by Paul Earle, of Westmount, Quebec, and to the distinctly English study of Interior, “The Room At Black Rivers,” by Archibald Barnes, of Toronto.

Like a discreet underlying theme, you find, here and there, scattered elements of a new spirit that are as yet not quite clear. E.g. the charm of snow, the heavy rain, with its ominous and oppressive quality, the heavy fall of snow, the heavy fall of rain, the heavy fall of snow, the heavy fall of rain. These are the elements that make up the atmosphere of the Orient, and the Orient is far apart, a note of clarity, freshness and simplicity, a little bit of French-Canadian landscape, that is, a church steeple, towering above grey fields, and you are made to realize the the truth of the remark, that “the art of Canada, as there is in the whole life of the country.”

This French-Canadian note is not only found in the work of the French-Canadian artist, but well in that of the English artist, who have been submerged by their environment in Quebec. An excellent group of pictures by Robert Pilot, of Montreal, offers its note to this underlying theme.

Paul Caron adds his artisan-like colors of sleighs and French-Canadians to the collection. Others who depict Quebec with sympathy and understanding are Hal Ross Ferrigard, of Westmount; John R. Pepper, who describes a street of Quebec, with seeming memories of Italy; Kathleen Morris, who loves her Montreal and her Quebec when it is half buried in snow and do not tire of the white, mellow snow into which houses hide their baseness and ugliness. Edmund Holgate has also been attracted by the charm of snow, but one associates his name with more strength, more aggressiveness. However, his influence keeps on growing and “Wenonah,” a figure composition by Mabel May, is a most happy result of what the work of Holgate has brought to life in other artists’ careers.

DECORATIVE WORK

Although his work does not come in the class which has just been discussed, it would be unfair to remain silent in regard to two decorative landscapes by W. P. Weston, of Vancouver, B.C. His “Peaks of Silence,” with its study of a wild tree in the background, is bracing and most inspiring. Other wild trees are to be found in what one might term the prodigious child of Alexander Jackson, “Autumn, French River.”

It is distinctly not a Jackson. It is an intuitional piece of work which, although it might recall the independent spirit of Duncan Grant, is not to be placed in a group of this painter’s work. Especially when in the same collection, are to be found such suggestive and singing romances as “Les Eboilements. Early Spring” and “The Road to St. Fidele.”

Having looked at the pictures at the Royal Canadian Academy show and turning now to sculpture, one is in the land of well-known works, and the obvious does arise: “Why Canadian sculptors are so sterile? Why do outstanding artists in the field of sculpture create so little? And for two years, sometimes three, the same piece of work is circulated from gallery to gallery and no new stimulus is gained by any of those who are impatiently waiting for these artists to fulfill their promise?”

The School of Fine Arts of Montreal has a distinguished representation in the sculpture section with “The Head of an Indian Chief,” by Dinsie Luterman, who won the Willingdon prize last year with this work and with her very decorative “Fountain For a Garden.”