THE ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY

VARIETY of theme and a more mature point of view were both revealed in the fifty-third exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy, held this year in the Art Gallery of Toronto. It is doubtful, indeed, if such a comprehensive collection of contemporary Canadian art has ever before been assembled under one roof. The diversity of talent and the breadth of interest demonstrated in the 1932 Academy would seem a happy augury for the future of artistic development in this country, and certainly a proof of the full-blooded growth and steady enrichment of our native resources. Landscape, marines, portraiture and still life, sculpture and even architecture are admirably represented, and if one were asked to sum up the exhibition in a word, one would be inclined to say that freshness of approach, in each department, distinguishes this year's show. One sees less of the "school" and more of the individual. The Group of Seven, which served a definite, interesting purpose during the post-war years, is no longer a concentrated power; its influence has become diffuse, and one feels that Canadian art has gained immeasurably because of the scattering of the particles.

Speaking of the Sevenists, one must utter a genuine regret that Mr. Lawren Harris was not among the exhibitors this time. His starkly beautiful studies are invariably one of the high spots of any Canadian show, and their absence from this year's Academy was keenly felt.

Certainly it is invidious to say that any one artist "stole the show," but one can at least offer a guarded opinion that Randolph S. Hewton, of Montreal, came dangerously close to it. His heroic figure in Benedecta is one of the finest things contributed to Canadian art in many moons; the painting is superb, the inspiration sure and the composition minus any trace of fumbling. Mr. Hewton has shown other canvases of a similar nature from time to time, but one feels that this is the satisfactory climax of a long and intelligent course of experimentation. One is grateful for Benedecta. A portrait of Miss Ethel Williams, a landscape and a nude were also sent to the Academy by this artist, and revealed his diversity of interest. The intellectual values of Benedecta might well be contrasted with the piquant humor of his Nude, a pert little figure bent double, with mischief in her eyes and mouth and an elfish face. The artist's composition is interesting in itself for the subtle repetition of curving lines in background and figure. It might be far-fetched to say that the Hewton Landscape borrows something of the heroic feeling of the Hewton Benedecta, yet one can hardly help remarking the family resemblance in the large canvas, showing a clustering village about the church, the snow piled high about the fences, the stretch of river and the distant billowing hills. Mr. Hewton's work possesses a human appeal that sets it apart; his message, whether couched in symbolic figures or in a dramatically simple scene from French Canada, is clear and direct so that all who run may read; he imposes no terrible mental struggle upon his audience.

The Province of Quebec has an inexhaustible attraction for the Canadian artist. The scalloped sky-lines of the Laurentian country, the quiet fishing villages of the Gaspé coast, the old streets of Montreal and Quebec offer a challenge that can hardly be denied. Maurice Cullen's picture, The

Benedecta, by Randolph S. Hewton, A.R.C.A., exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy, in the Art Gallery of Toronto, November

Broken Ice, by Charles W. Simpson, R.C.A., of Montreal, exhibited at the 1932 Academy
OUR CANADIAN ART PASSES IN REVIEW

In Canadian Wilds, one of Arthur Heming's well-known studies of the north woods and its denizens

Cache River, has a good deal of the Quebec backwoods locale; it is at once smooth and powerful, a study of the spring break-up in subdued tones. Something of the same theme but quite differently handled is found in Suzor-Côté's Thaw in March, Arthabaska, which, like most of this well-known artist's work, is marked by depth and strength while eschewing mere brilliance.

Gordon E. Pfeiffer, of Quebec City, sent an interesting canvas, Le Four Abandonné, with the ancient beehive bakes-oven at the left centre and the rolling hill masses and puffs of clouds beyond and above. Active habitant life is depicted in Berthe des Clayes' Woodsmen, full of cheerful color and animation. Kathleen M. Morris, one of the few women Associates of the Academy, shows her delight in the Quebec scene and her skill in interpreting it, by way of several fresh studies, among them Sunday Morning, a winter scene with blanket ed horses and cutters grouped outside the church during la messe. There are quaint humor and a genuine homespun atmosphere in Fin de la Visite, by Frank Hennessy, of Ottawa, who makes a lively composition of figures, farmhouse, woodpile and waiting horse and cutter. Adrien Hebert catches a memorable glimpse of old and new in Montreal, in Château Ramey.

In spite of the lure of Quebec, other parts of Canada came in for a fair share of attention in the Academy collection. One hastens to admit, however, that the peasant motive is lacking (sadly enough, from the artist's point of view) elsewhere in Canada, and whenever the painter seeks to place it against backgrounds other than the French-Canadian the result is apt to be disturbing. The Maritimes, Ontario, and the West, try as they might, have never been able to produce a picturesque peasantry; their farmers, fishermen, lumbermen, miners are inclined to be rather grim groups of individuals. For that reason, one senses an artificiality in Harry Britton's Nova Scotian and Her Goats, an otherwise beautiful piece of work. Surely that stooped and hooded figure is out of Brittany or Provence, surely, too, that clear azure sky had to pay a tariff to get into Canada! Mr. Britton's Italian Women Washing, on the other hand, is completely credible and convincing, with its Mediterranean blue background and sun-drenched villas, and its figures bent over the public wash-tub.

F. S. Challener, whose work has not been seen frequently enough of late, made a favorable impression with three new canvases; his brush manner is quite distinctive, and he has a genuine talent for impregnating his colors with sunshine qualities. The Road to Mattawa is an entirely satisfying picture; anyone who has ever seen that junction of the rivers and succumbed to the fascination of that twin-spired
grey church on the cliff above the churning Ottawa will
greet this Challenger canvas. *Making the Trans-Canada
Highway*, by the same artist, is perhaps a more ambitious
work, but somehow not quite so happy; horses, stone-boats
and men seem to fall indistinctly into the background pattern
of the woods, and one does not feel that the artist has seized
upon the full stimulus of the situation.

Fred S. Haines' *Winter* and *Autumn* are agreeable studies
of the seasons; Joachim Gauthier's *March*, in water colors,
possesses drama and would be entirely satisfying were it not
for the inexplicable architecture of the farmhouse in the
rear. Lawrence Smith achieves originality with his full-
length portrait of a girl in casual outdoor costume, standing
on a rock and silhouetted against layers of grey rain clouds;
the title—*Portrait; Georgian Bay*.

Homerville Watson, the Laird of Doon, was represented by
three canvases, one of them, *Ice Break in March*,
notable for the silvery luminosity of rushing water in the
moonlight. One prefers Mr. Watson's kind of moonlight to
the monotonous sparkle of Choutse's snow scenes; incidentally,
several of the snow-by-night studies in the Academy
this year look like illegitimate offspring of that dazzling
Russian's brush—but let that pass.

Dorothy Stevens' *Colored Nude* reveals this Toronto
artist's gifts in brilliant fashion. The skillful handling of the
pose, the high quality of draughtsmanship, the rich chocolate
color and its varying tones in light and shadow, and the
exotic background in dull greens, combine to elevate this
work to a position of first importance. *Xosa Women Wash ing*,
by Will Ogilvie, has a lavish exotic feeling, also—a "rumba"
rhythm, surely, in the red-dressed figures bent over their
work with the paradoxically ungainly grace of their kind.

Mountain forms came in for a goodly share of attention,
even though their chief exploiter, Lawren Harris, was not
represented. J. E. H. MacDonald showed three studies
from the Rockies, restrained and delicate in coloring, yet
having a sense of underlying strength in composition.
*The Black Task*, by J. W. G. MacDonald, approaches the
subject from a fresh angle and profits thereby. W. P. Weston,
another Vancouverite, was responsible for a large piece with
mountain range and glacier, admirably done, and a close-up
study of evergreens heavy with snow.

Right here, one must mention an interesting feature of
the 1932 Academy—the reappearance of T. Mower Martin,
that veteran artist, who, it is claimed, can paint a pine tree
better than any Canadian artist, living or gone before.
Mr. Martin has been putting Canada on canvas since the
'Sixties; he was one of the founders of the Ontario Society
of Artists and, so far as one can discover, the only living
member of the first group of Academicians. His large picture,
*Where the Fraser River Comes From*, painted in 1906, might
appear old-fashioned among the strong colors and vivid
interpretations by the younger men and women, but one
welcomed it as a link with other days and ways in Canadian
art.

Homerville Russell's marines have a lasting magnificence,
and one's eyes rested a long time on his masterly study
of surf and rocks from the New Brunswick shore-line.
George Fox sent two excellent marines, especially *Morning
Light, Grand Manan*, in which he does himself proud with
translucent pale greens and curling foam.

Frederick G. Cross, of Brooks, Alberta, sent two water
colors, *The Bad Lands* and a study of Shorthorns, interesting
and expertly done, but somehow just missing the tantalizing
subtlety of the work which this newcomer showed last year.
From the other end of Canada came a group from the
Nova Scotia College of Art, conspicuous in the show for
their peculiarly meticulous style. This group was composed
of two canvases by Elizabeth S. Nutt, two by Stanley Royle
and one by Jean Royle.

In portraiture the fifty-third Academy was particularly
fortunate, being able to include such...
genuinely fine works as E. Wyly Grier's portraits of Lt.-Col. W. C. Michell and of Prof. N. C. James, Allan Barr's study of Mr. Gordon Tamblyn, Kenneth Forbes' compelling Polo Player, and Ernest Fosbery's portrait of Mr. P. D. Ross, this last a thoroughly arresting piece of work.

Photographs of some sixty-five buildings were hung in the gallery given over to the architectural exhibition, in conjunction with the Academy. The slackness in building activities during the past few years probably accounts for the small exhibit, but quality was apparent where quantity was not. The gold medal, awarded for the third time by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, was won by Messrs. Barott and Blackader, the well-known firm of architects in Montreal, for the front view of the Bank of Montreal, Ottawa, recently completed. First awards in the various groups were: Public Buildings—Bank of Montreal, Ottawa; by Barott and Blackader, Montreal. Ecclesiastical Buildings—Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, Montreal; by H. I. Fetherstonhaugh, Montreal. Educational Buildings—St. Joseph Novitiate, St. Genevieve de Pierre Fonds, Quebec; by Lucien Parent, Montreal. Residential Buildings—Residence, 1418 Pine Avenue West, Montreal; by Ernest Cormier, Montreal.