THE FIFTY-SIXTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS

BY H. POYNTER BELL

This year's exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy not only is, by general consent, more lively and inspiring than others given by the Academy in Montreal in recent years, but is more truly an academy exhibition than many which have preceded it in the galleries of the Art Association of Montreal. It is evident that one of the chief functions of these exhibitions is to let the public see the work which is being done by the members of the Academy, and this year all but a very few of the members have sent work to be shown. Another fact to be noted is that a large proportion of the better or more interesting pictures are by members of the Academy, although those members are less than one-third of all the exhibitors of pictures.

Portraiture holds a more distinguished place in this than in some previous exhibitions, and two outstanding portraits are by the two newly elected Academicians, Archibald Barnes and Edwin Holgate. Mr. Barnes' portrait of Braheen Urban in a stage costume is a fine piece of painting with much character in the face, and the very simple and sure treatment of the lights and shadows in the costume is remarkable. Mr. Holgate, in his larger portrait, has painted the scarlet and yellow of a doctor's gown in their full brilliance and has given them a good contrast in a dark blue background; what is more, he has achieved the feat of putting a man inside this obtrusive gown. Alphonse Jongers' only picture in this exhibition is a portrait of a Knight Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George in full dress and, rather incidentally, of Lord Bessborough. Another gown, but blue, not red, gives a good note of colour to the strongest of Sir Wylie Grier's three portraits—of Dr. Hendry—and a similar blue gown is used to good effect in G. A. Reid's rather severe portrait of Prof. C. T. Currely. Mrs. Torrance Newton's two portraits, of the Hon. Vincent and Mrs. Massey, are fine pictures; that of Mrs. Massey is a portrait of a real person, but Mr. Massey seems a little overwhelmed by his diplomatic uniform. The intense blue-green of the backgrounds of these two pictures
is, no doubt, suited to the place where they are to hang, but is rather discordant with their present surroundings. Kenneth Forbes has two vivid portraits, painted in his rather hard manner; Adam Sherriff Scott, one of the new associates, shows his striking picture of the sculptor, Alfred Laliberte, and a portrait of Mrs. Ross Clarkson, which is a finely painted picture, with a good arrangement of colour, but a little rigid in the pose of the figure. There is a more easy naturalness in Sir Wyly Grier’s portrait of Mrs. Munro Grier, and still more in Oscar de Lall’s pleasant picture of Miss Jacqueline de Rouen. Randolph Hewton’s “Marie” is a good picture, with a better scheme of colour than Mr.

Figure pictures are few; the best of them is F. S. Coburn’s small nude study. In Dorothy Stevens’ larger and conspicuous “Nude in Sunlight” good drawing and painting are offset by the unfortunate purple tones in the flesh. A small nude by Agnes Lefort is a good study but of no great interest as a picture.

Three of the Academy’s senior members have sent in landscapes, and Homer Watson’s autumn foliage, Archibald Browne’s purple hills and John Hammond’s green and grey distances seem to be essential to an Academy exhibition. Among the landscapes the most striking are two by a new associate, A. C. Leighton, each of them painted

Hewton has always been able to get, and everything in it, even the seagulls flying in the background makes part of a formal design—a little too formal for the figure to be quite alive. Ernest Fosbery’s schoolmasterly portrait of Dr. J. H. Putnam has an uncomfortable and rather aggressive pink background. The painting of the blue dress is the most successful part of Manly MacDonald’s “Sally”; Marion Long’s portrait of Evan MacDonald is good as a picture but seems hardly strong enough to be a good portrait. Kathleen Daly’s two pictures of Alphonse L’Abbe and Madame L’Abbe are almost caricatures but have strength in their ugliness.

almost in one colour. The green one—a view from a height, with houses almost in ground plan, is a little too eccentric to be quite a good picture, but the other, of a mountain in the Rockies, in buff and grey, is very true as well as a very decorative picture. There are many good landscapes in the exhibition, but few that are outstanding. J. W. Beatty has made an effective composition of distant sunlight seen between dark trees in his “Wood Interior”, and a similar idea is well used in Fred. S. Haines’ view of a distance through a foreground of birch trunks. Paul B. Earle’s “Clearing Weather” has a fine spaciousness, and there is a cheerful contrast of blues and greens in
his "Gaspe Coast"; the same good contrast is differently used by Edwin Holgate in his "Quebec Coast Line". "Showers" by Frank Carmichael is a rather good formal composition of mountains, but heavy in colour; there is strong and pleasant colour in Harold Beamant's somewhat formal "Hillside Harvest". Arthur Lismer has several small landscapes, one of which, of the veldt in Basutoland, is the best picture that he has shown in Montreal in recent years. There is a gay sugges-

tion of space and atmosphere in Charles Simpson's sketchy "On the Beach". Frank Hennessey's pastel of "Summer Evening" makes a happy and peaceful impression with very good colour; Stanley Royle is still faithful to the rocks of the Nova Scotian coast, and has painted them as well as ever; Mary E. Wrinch's "Sparkling Water" is a simple and rather striking decoration in blue and white; Henrietta Britton's "Evergreens" has clever painting of broken snow, with a belt of trees, on a hillside; Edytha N. Harding's "Autumn" is a

good sketch of trees by a lake. Peter Sheppard has some slightly formal but effective pictures of shore scenes in the Maritime Provinces, and Rowley Murphy shows a good little picture of a group of yachts in harbour. The pictures of F. W. Hutchison and George Thomson are interesting but not of their best.

Flower pictures are this year not quite so many but quite as good as usual. Among the best of them are: an excellent little one of roses by F. S.

NUDE STUDY
By F. S. Coburn, R.C.A.

Coburn; four by Clara Hagarty, of which "Trilliums" and "The Green Jar" are specially good; Marion Long's very decorative "White and Green"; Mrs. K. S. Brydone-Jack's gay pastel of Zinnias, and Ruth M. Dingle's "Summer Flowers". Pictures of imagination are shown by Arthur Heming, whose well painted "Voyageurs" has a clever design of light and shade and colour; his "On the Alaskan Border", of a bear among ice pillars, is the better of his other two, the "Northern Morning" is a little too fantastic. John F. Clymer,
the fourth of the new Associates, has in “Thunder Mountain” a composition of an Indian in a bird head-dress and a distant mountain, which seems as if it might have some hidden meaning.

The progress of water colour painting has been one of the best features of Canadian art in recent years, but it is not shown to very good advantage in this exhibition; there are however some very successful drawings in the comparatively small collection which is shown. Henry J. Simpkins shows two large drawings; the treatment of light and shade in “The Camp” is very good, but he has made better drawings than either of these. The big drawing of horses on the prairie, with a big expanse of sky, by Frederick G. Cross, is cleverly painted and has a fine, open airiness; there is no beauty but much cleverness in James E. Beckwith’s drawing of a group of surgeons muffled in white. There is an admirable effect of distance and atmosphere in Hugh D. Robertson’s “Fog at New Harbour”, and a very pleasant sort of eighteenth century precision in a good picture of the village of Kamouraska by John Humphries, one of two good drawings by him. A cheerful and clever drawing of “Rue sous le Cap, Quebec” is by Andre Morency; brightness of lighting makes Mrs. D. Mary Bagley’s “November, Sault au Recollet” the better of her two drawings. Andre Lapine has put good, warm sunshine into his “Hillside” and “Stacking Oats”, but some of the light and shadows in “The Old Barn” and “Stormcloud” seem improbable. Clean painting and warm colour make a good picture of P. R. Wilson’s “Baths of Caracalla”; strong blue shadows on snow make an interesting effect in D. H. MacFarlane’s “Afterglow”.

Prints and drawings are always, rather literally, thrown into the shade in these exhibitions in the Montreal galleries and only few of those in this exhibition are of much importance. Herbert Raine shows some of his excellent dry points of places on the lower St. Lawrence and there are some good etchings—one of a bridge by Woodruff K. Aiykroyd, two by John J. Barry, one of them of Martigues and one of a yacht in almost empty space, a happy view of Verona by P. R. Wilson, and one of an Ontario farm under a wide sky by S. H. Maw. Some of the best of the woodcuts are two by W. F. G. Godfrey, particularly “The Deserted Sawmill”, which is well composed, and two by Grace Fugler, particularly the dark one of “The Hitching Post”. Two colour prints of “Howe Sound” and “Gerrans Bay” by W. J. Phillips are happily designed; in “Gimli, No. 2,” simplicity has been carried rather too far; there is a good effect of silhouette in his wood engraving of “Hanging Rock Island”. A fine arrangement of colour makes “The Road to Niagara” much the better of the two prints by Leonard Hutchinson.

There are also a number of well designed bookplates by A. Scott Carter.

The lot of Canadian sculptors is a sad one; their work is not generally appreciated and difficulties of transportation over long distances make it hard for them to show even their smaller works in exhibitions. The quantity of sculpture in this year’s Academy is as small as usual, but it is distinctly better than usual, and there are a few quite large pieces. One of the largest and most striking is a finely designed and modelled horse’s head by Emanuel Hahn. Allan Cameron’s big group of a mother and child has an almost archaic simplicity and must look much better in its proper place on a fountain at Orillia than it can in a gallery; there is delightful humour in Mr. Cameron’s little figure, or group, which he calls “Batting Scene”, of a large and smiling woman carrying a small and crying child. There is some humour, too, in Florence Wyle’s two chubby babies, excellent little figures which are intended to be garden or fountain ornaments. “Black Cavalry” by Jacobine Jones has a sort of massiveness and dignity in spite of its small size. John Sloan’s figure of “Salome” is ambitious and rather successful; Katherine Wallis has a nice little terracotta group of Japanese children. Elizabeth Wyn Wood’s “Reef and Rainbow” is an interesting and decorative arrangement of curves in white metal.

There are, as usual, a number of portrait busts. Frances Loring’s bust of heroic size, of Sis. Frederick Banting is rather impressive. Of the busts of life size some of the best are Mrs. Pauline Johnson’s Chinese girl, Ernst Neumann’s head of a girl, Henri Hebert’s “Madame F. R.”, Sylvia Daoust’s strong and rather roughly modelled head of a guide, Mrs. de Montigny Lafontaine’s quarter length of an old man, called “Vieux Philosophe”, Alberta Cleland’s lively head of a little boy, and the wood carving of two heads by A. Zucca.

The architectural section of the Academy’s exhibition is now almost entirely replaced by the separate collection, made by the Royal Architectural Institute, of photographs, which convey far more to most of the general public than the renderings which used to be shown. The photographs are of finished works and are sent in competition for the Institute’s medal. Building construction has, notoriously, been very scarce in the past few years, but more than thirty new buildings are represented in this exhibition and, while the majority are, as usual, residences, there are some large and important buildings among them.

The Institute’s medal has not been awarded this year and only one First Award has been made. This goes to Mackenzie Waters for a view of the north elevation of a residence at Toronto—a composition of plain masses; there is the same kind of simplicity of masses, without ornament, in the
exterior of a distillery at New Toronto, for which Mr. Waters receives honourable mention. There is nothing of what could be called extreme modernism in any of the buildings that are shown, but a certain simplicity and serviceableness are features of most of the designs. The houses look, as houses should, as if they would be good to live in and would fit their surroundings; some of the Montreal houses follow the general lines of older buildings of the province of Quebec. Honourable mention is given for domestic exteriors to Gordon S. Adamson for a house at Orangeville, Ont., and to A. T. Galt Durnford for a house at St. Sauveur des Monts, P.Q. In the class of domestic interiors H. J. Burden receives honourable mention for the plain and very restful design of a bedroom in a Toronto house. Maxwell and Pitts are given honourable mention for the comfortable furniture and decoration of a sunroom in a house at Westmount.

In the designs of buildings other than residences plainness, relieved by occasional ornamental details, prevails. Some hospital buildings, an armoury, a college and an observatory all show the purpose for which they are built. The same quality is to be found in the churches which are shown. The simplicity of its Gothic design makes Henri S. Labelle's cathedral at Valleyfield spacious and dignified and he has been given honourable mention for the interior. Another honourable mention in this class goes to Sproatt and Rolph for the plain and well proportioned Gothic of the chancel of Knox Church, Ottawa.