

September 4 to October 4, 2001
East & West Gallery

Group of Seven

and Contemporaries Revolutionized Art Through Teachings

Toronto, ONTARIO-Paintings by Group of Seven members and their contemporaries will be exhibited from September 4 to October 4 at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Hart House, the University of Toronto. The exhibition - **Canadian Painters as Art Educators** - will feature artists who were among the first to define a distinctly Canadian artistic aesthetic, both on canvas and in the classroom, in the years between 1920 and 1950. Selected from the some 600 art works that make up the Hart House Permanent Collection of Canadian Art, highlights will include Charles Comfort's *Young Canadian* (1932), Arthur Lismer's *Isles of Spruce* (1922), Alfred Pellán's *La fenêtre ouverte* (1936), J.E.H. MacDonald's *October Shower Gleam* (1922) and Anne Savage's *Spruce Swamp* (1922).

Although those works have since come to symbolize aspects of Canadian cultural identity, their rebellious intent initially failed to impress the public as the Seven and their contemporaries sought to establish a unique Canadian cultural grammar. Their determination to replace the accepted European artistic aesthetic of the times with a distinctly Canadian ethos affronted many critics. Yet, ultimately, their artistic vision has prevailed and their current mythical status is testimony to the success of their pedagogical and artistic intentions.

Curator Milena Placentile explains that it was while she was compiling research for the exhibition that she first realized the revolutionary impact the Group of Seven had upon the art community: "I read a thesis entitled *The Prevailing Influence*, written in the 1980s by former Hart House Art Committee member Catherine Siddall, and I became extremely enthusiastic when I discovered that many of these artists were teachers. Further research indicated that the ambition of some of these artists, particularly Lismer, Pellán and Savage, was to expand the public taste for art." Others in the group taught mainly for financial reasons, but their efforts also had a significant impact upon Canadian cultural evolution.

The curator of the exhibition, Milena Placentile, is an art history student at the University of Toronto with an interest in international art and conceptual theory. In addition to her work with the Hart House Art Committee, she is involved in the educational program at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto.

For further information:

Judi Schwartz, 416-978-2453

Gallery Hours:

Monday to Friday: 11:00 am to 7:00 pm

Saturday & Sunday, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

<http://www.utoronto.ca/gallery>

Admission is free