

Carleton Univ.: The Charlottan  
Ottawa, ON  
Feb. 21, 1975

### Canadian Painting in the Thirties National Gallery of Canada Until March 2

by Roslyn Nudell

Canadian Painting in the Thirties, a National Gallery exhibition of 109 Works that trace the development of painting in Canada in the 1930's, is the result of hard work and efficiency on the part of devoted Gallery employees.

Assistant Curator of Post-Confederation Art Charles C. Hill, who organized the exhibition, began working on the project two years ago. Tackling a decade was unusual in the sense that most exhibitions deal with individual painters or groups of painters. As Hill says, "A decade is an abstract thing." The first step was to figure out what approach to take and to try and gauge the general trends of the 30's.

To do this, Mr. Hill developed a questionnaire that asked about art societies, attitudes and influences on the artists of the period. A different set of questions was developed for each area of the country and in fall of '73 Hill set out across Canada to interview artists, friends of artists, and art critics of the thirties. Between September and November he travelled from Halifax to Victoria, coming home to roost in Ottawa occasionally. The results of these interviews helped him to make selections of paintings for the exhibition.

Hill made the loan requests in March of 1974 and they were confirmed by July, with only one refusal. According to Hill, many of the private contributors were friends of the artists and were anxious to have the works recognized. The exhibition became for those involved, a "personal thing" which he found "very gratifying" In fact, owners of one painting, which was described by him as "very cracked and dirty" had the necessary work done in Toronto, leading him to conclude that, "People were very generous."

Even while he was preparing the exhibition, Hill was hard at work on the catalogue for the show, which he considers is history of the period

from an artistic perspective. By July '74, the Manuscript, 458 doublespaced, typed pages, was finished and handed over to the publications department, which also handled the posters for the show and the invitations for the opening. Since the catalogue is a double publication, published in both official languages, the manuscript, written in English, was translated into French. Hill worked with both editors on every stage of the publication, from manuscript to gallery to proof to the end result. The catalogue arrived at the Gallery bookstore on January 30, 1975, the opening night of Canadian Painting in the Thirties.

Another department of the National Gallery that was hard at work preparing for Canadian Painting in the Thirties was Education Services, headed by Michael Pantazzi. Courses, films, trours and talks are offered to the general public to help with its appreciation of the show. According to Pantazzi. Education Services tried "as much as possible to get people involved in show to talk about it." The result of this was a talk on Art in the Thirties: The Montreal Scene given by Phillip Survey, an artist featured in the show. Jack Shadbolt, a well know painter who knew Emily Carr quite well has a talk scheduled for February 23 on The West Coast Ambience of Canadian art in the thirties.

According to Pantazzi, the films that were chosen in conjunction with Canadian Painting in the Thirties fell into three categories. First there are the films that focus on the lives and work of various artists in the exhibition. The World of David Milne and "Varley" are two of these types of films. Then there are the films that document the period, a series called "Between the Two War's. Third, there are films of the period. There are not many Canadian ones available since the National Film Board was not created yet. "Convicted" made by a U.S. company and starring Rita Hayworth, was screened at the Gallery February 9, since it was filmed in Victoria in the 30's.

Mr. Pantazzi believes the two films "Bethune" and "Spanish Earth", which are to be shown February 22 are important contributions in understanding "Canadian Painting in the Thirties". The former is a biography of Dr. Norman Bethune, and some of the artists who have contributed to the show, such as Paraskeva Clark, are featured in the film. "Spanish Earth", with commentary by Ernest Hemingway, deals with the Spanish Civil War, an event that had direct influence on the artists of the thirties.

30

