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The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and  
Identity in the Twentieth Century

by

LAURA ELIZABETH BRANDON B. A. Hons., M. A.

A thesis submitted to  
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

March 2002

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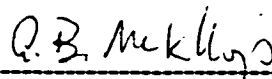
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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*The more actively all cultural work can be related either to the whole organization within which it was expressed, or to the contemporary organization, within which it was used, the more clearly shall we see its true values.*

– Raymond Williams

*“Memory work” is like any other kind of physical or mental labor, embedded in complex class, gender, and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end.*

– John R. Gillis

## Abstract

The Canadian War Museum (CWM) has custody of one of the finest twentieth-century official war art collections in the world. Given this fact, it has until recently received limited attention and is relatively unknown. In the context of recent publications dealing with issues of memory and identity, the ten studies that comprise this dissertation examine some of the reasons why this might have been the case. They explore the worth of the art in the context of its historical and cultural meaning. As well, they examine the outside activity that has surrounded the collections' history beginning with the First World War and ending with the announcement of a new war art initiative by the Department of National Defence (DND) in June 2001.

The overarching theoretical underpinning to this dissertation is largely concerned with the construction of social memory in relation to the creation of identity. Significantly important to the analysis is the corollary of remembering, "forgetting." The Canadian War Museum, as the single largest repository of official war art, provides a particularly fruitful place to explore the place of forgetting in the construction of memory, as the collections remain, with very few exceptions, intact. It is thus possible to examine what was forgotten as well as what now forms the official artistic memory of war in Canada.

The thesis argues that the history of the war art collections in Canada cannot be divorced from the political, institutional, social, and cultural milieu in which the art had its origins. Its ebbs and flows within the Canadian consciousness over time, it is posited, involve both active encouragement and active discouragement.

Specifically, it is suggested that aesthetic considerations as to the worth of war art are secondary by far to its value, or lack of value, to varying interest groups at different times. Furthermore, when aesthetic value is assigned to certain works of art, artists, or styles these come about as a result of contextual pressures and not as a result of intrinsic and inherent quality. These factors, notwithstanding, using the recent successful war art exhibition *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum* as its starting point, this dissertation examines how a show produced by a national public institution can, given a particular set of circumstances – in this case the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1995 – move from being a display of a little-known collection of publicly-owned art to one that can assume a role as a site of memory.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been written without the ongoing support of my employer, the Canadian War Museum. Particular thanks are due its Director and CEO, Joe Geurts, its Deputy Director, Roger Sarty, and its Manager, Historical Research and Archives, Dean Oliver. Appreciation over the years of its gestation is also extended to Daniel Glenney (director, Collections Management and Planning), former director Victor Suthren, and staff historians Cameron Pulsifer and Serge Durlinger. Other colleagues who assisted me greatly in ever-changing capacities include Shelley Keele, Et Van Lingen, Liliane Reid-Lafleur, Helen Holt, and Leslie Redman. Over the years a significant number of dedicated volunteers and contract employees in the museum's art department have sought out information or filed it carefully away. This archive has proved indispensable. I cannot name them all here, but I would like to acknowledge with grateful thanks their often-unheralded contributions.

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My intellectual world expanded as a result and without the new perspectives that were revealed I could not have written this thesis. Particular thanks are due my supervisor, Brian McKillop, for unfailing support and good judgement.

I would also like to thank my family for their support, patience, and pride.



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List of Cited War Artists

## List of Abbreviations

AGGV	Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
AGH	Art Gallery of Hamilton
AGNS	Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
AGO	Art Gallery of Ontario
BP	Beaverbrook Papers
CAFCAAP	Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Programme [ <i>sic</i> ]
CBMC	Canadian Battlefield Memorials Commission
CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CFAO	Canadian Forces Administrative Order
CFAP	Canadian Forces Artist Program
CMC	Canadian Museum of Civilization
CWAC	Canadian Women's Army Corps
CWM	Canadian War Museum
CWMF	Canadian War Memorials Fund
CWR	Canadian War Records
CWRO	Canadian War Records Office
DIS	Directorate of Information Services
DND	Department of National Defence
DSAL	Disposals, Sales, Artifacts, and Loans
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs

<b>DXD</b>	<b>Department of Exhibitions and Display</b>
<b>FCPRC</b>	<b>Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee</b>
<b>HLRO</b>	<b>House of Lords Record Office</b>
<b>HMCS</b>	<b>His Majesty's Canadian Ship</b>
<b>IWGC</b>	<b>Imperial War Graves Commission</b>
<b>IWM</b>	<b>Imperial War Museum, London</b>
<b>MCEM</b>	<b>Military Communications and Electronics Museum</b>
<b>NAC</b>	<b>National Archives of Canada</b>
<b>NDHQ</b>	<b>National Defence Headquarters</b>
<b>NGC</b>	<b>National Gallery of Canada</b>
<b>NGCA</b>	<b>National Gallery of Canada Archives</b>
<b>RAF</b>	<b>Royal Air Force</b>
<b>RCAF</b>	<b>Royal Canadian Air Force</b>
<b>RCNVR</b>	<b>Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve</b>
<b>RIBA</b>	<b>Royal Institute of British Architects</b>
<b>ROM</b>	<b>Royal Ontario Museum</b>
<b>UNB</b>	<b>University of New Brunswick</b>
<b>UTL-FRBC</b>	<b>University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Book Collection</b>
<b>WAAC</b>	<b>War Artists' Advisory Committee</b>
<b>WP</b>	<b>Walker Papers</b>
<b>WRCNS</b>	<b>Women's Royal Canadian Navy (Wrens)</b>



## Introduction

The traditional site of memory for war in western nations is the war memorial. As a result of the increasing interest in the social memory of war in the late twentieth century the literature on war memorials is becoming extensive in many Western countries especially as it pertains to the First World War. To cite three: K. S. Inglis's *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (1998) documents the war memorial phenomenon in Australia, Robert Shipley's *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* (1987) looks at Canada's, while Alex King investigates its role in British First World War commemoration in *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (1998).<sup>1</sup> War art collections, however, have been comparatively little examined as sites of social memory or for their role in forming national identity in any country. Both aspects certainly have received limited attention in Canada, a lack that this dissertation hopes to in part fill.

What I have written has been informed by the fact that I have worked in professional capacity with the subject of war art for ten years as Curator of War Art at the Canadian War Museum (CWM) and have inevitably been part of a collective process that continues to form the changing public view of war art. The issues centring on museums in relation to memory and as sites of interaction between personal recollections and constructed identities are subjects of increasing academic interest. In a

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<sup>1</sup> K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987), and

series of essays included in *Museums and Memory* (2000) the authors address not only the role of curators in shaping institutional presentations of history and memory but also how people relate to these exhibitions.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as a curator I have received information on war art through a variety of non-documentary or non-traditional means – body language, tears, joy, pleasure, desire, anger, sorrow – not just from the sources I have listed or footnoted in this thesis such as books, articles, and catalogues. This intimate exposure to countless non-traditional and conflicting human experiences is one of the great assets granted the public historian and one that enriches the study of history and art history as a whole. Within the confines of the disciplines it is not only a documentary challenge but also an issue of complex dimensions that will not be addressed in any detail in this thesis.

James E. Young asks in *At Memory's Edge, After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (2000), “how well [can] historians . . . represent the past without knowing how the next generation has responded to it in its art . . . without knowing how much history is being mediated for the next generation and why it is deemed so important to remember in the first place.”<sup>3</sup> In making art a handmaiden of history, Young seems to be questioning Peter Paret’s earlier conclusions as to the relationship between art and history. As Paret argues in *Art as History* (1988): “Today

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Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Susan A. Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). Aspects of this issue are also addressed in, Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge, After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 5.

interpretations of the past in art and literature can rarely be characterized as history.”<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, he recognizes that it is difficult to separate scholarly research from its surrounding activities including aesthetics. History, he posits, now includes interpretations of the past that do not originate in traditional historical scholarship. “To a degree, history then becomes art, and art and scholarship combine to interpret the past in ways that neither could alone.”<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the inherent danger of using art as a document of history remains a preoccupation of historians. In *Art in History, History in Art* (1991), Jan de Vries states “images can only address basic emotions and convey simple or ambiguous messages.”<sup>6</sup> In this he is drawing on the work of historian Johan Huizinga, who warned as early as 1919 in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, that visual sources reflected the biases of their time. Art could enlighten, he argued, but it was at the expense of historical understanding.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation looks at the relationship of art and history to the making of the memory of war through the history of the official war art collections of the Canadian War Museum. A study in social memory and identity, it examines a number of examples in which understanding as to the meaning of Canadian twentieth-century war art has been formed and transformed by the selective actions of the many communities that it serves and within which it exists. The central argument presented is that the

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4 Peter Paret, *Art as History: Episodes in the Culture and Politics of Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). 6.

5 Ibid.

6 David Freedberg and Jan de Vries, eds., *Art in History, History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1991), 2.

7 Ibid.

significance and meaning of particular works of war art at different times has had very little to do with what actually was created and a great deal to do with the changing and different values imposed upon it. By examining the relationship of specific selections of war art to various contexts ranging from the political, to the public (including veterans), to the art historical, the dissertation demonstrates how this occurs. Most importantly, it shows that behind this process lie issues of control and that the state, albeit in a variety of manifestations, holds the reins of power.

What is memory? In their introduction to *Images of Memory* (1991), Walter Melion and Susanne Küchler propose that “memory is actively constructed as a social and cultural process” that “promotes and maintains cultural formation in all its fullness and complexity.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore they note that: “Forgetting can be the selective process through which memory achieves social and cultural definition.”<sup>9</sup> Following this train of thought, this dissertation understands the act of remembering to be a directed selective process whose counterpart is an equally directed process of active forgetting. “Common to the acts of forgetting,” writes David Lowenthal in *The Art of Forgetting* (1999) “is the sense, even the insistence, that they are part and parcel of a larger project of remembering.”<sup>10</sup>

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8 Walter Melion and Susanne Küchler, eds., *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 4.

9 *Ibid.*, 7.

10 David Lowenthal, “Preface,” in Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), xii.

Lowenthal probably best explains the paradox that an art not widely seen or ingrained in public memory – Canada’s official war art – can nevertheless exist sufficiently to be forgotten. By remembering, the forgotten is acknowledged. His statement sheds light on the circumstances in which, in the year 2000, the Canadian War Museum was able to present a selection from its war art collections in the exhibition *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum* by promoting the art as being from a hidden collection rather than an unknown one.<sup>11</sup> This subtle sleight-of-hand enabled the public to remember a collection of war art that it had in fact never known.

Art is a powerful agent of memory as shown by the comments visitors wrote upon leaving *Canvas of War* in Hull.<sup>12</sup> It has confirmed the effectiveness of the use of objects as *aides-mémoire* in Western culture. As Adrian Forty writes in the introduction to *The Art of Forgetting* (1999), “the Western tradition of memory since the Renaissance has been founded upon an assumption that material objects, whether natural or artificial, can act as the analogues of human memory.”<sup>13</sup> In this context, the use of Canadian war art to underpin a study of memory and forgetting is a useful one.

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11 *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum* was shown at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull from 11 February 2000–7 January 2001. Its tour includes major galleries and museums in Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal, Regina, Winnipeg, Fredericton, Halifax, and St. John’s. A typical newspaper heading was “The Canadian War Museum mounts an ambitious exhibition of paintings that have not been seen for decades,” Bruce Wallace, *Maclean’s*, 14 February 2000, 22–25.

12 Canadian War Museum (CWM) Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

13 Adrian Forty, “Introduction,” *The Art of Forgetting*, 2.

Centred on a Western tradition that allows an object to stand in as the memory for something that no longer exists, Canada's war art also raises issues as to what is remembered and for whom.

In some respects this dissertation can be seen as a response to David Glassberg's 1996 call for "new scholarly works on memory [that] have incorporated insights from public historians' experiences working in museums."<sup>14</sup> It also heeds the suggestion of Edward T. Linenthal who, in his response to Glassberg, suggested that the one area Glassberg had left out was a study of material history in the context of the construction of memory.<sup>15</sup> Clearly Canada's war art collections constitute a material record of war. They are, after all, housed in a museum.

Nonetheless, in discussing war art in the context of memory it must be emphasized that the field of social memory studies is relatively new. It has developed, in part, out of English Marxist and subsequent postmodern discourse theory. Much of this early work focuses on the construction of identity rather than memory. Historian E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) was the first major study in this area. Thompson argued that England's working class developed its identity not from within but in response to a shared recognition as to what it was not (i.e., middle-class, leisured, and moneyed).<sup>16</sup>

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14 David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian*, vol. 18, no. 2 (spring 1996), 8.

15 Edward T. Linenthal, "Problems and Promise in Public History," *The Public Historian*, vol. 19, no. 2 (spring 1997), 47.

16 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

More recently, however, historians such as Ian McKay, in his landmark publication *The Quest of the Folk* (1994), have pursued the Thompsonian approach slightly differently.<sup>17</sup> McKay argues that Nova Scotia's view of its peoples and society as redolent of the folk culture of Scotland is a constructed view imposed from without that has gradually been accepted as fact. McKay writes that this outlook remains a deliberately selective view with only a limited basis in reality. Indeed, he brings to attention the critical fact that the real identity of Nova Scotians had to be hidden for the constructed one to take root.

McKay's book is significant because it addresses the making of history in the context of a social application – in this case, tourism. There is, as yet, no equivalent Canadian study that takes the same approach to art. And yet Marxists have always been interested in the practical effects of art as opposed to its intrinsic aesthetic value. Indeed, according to the Marxist dialectic the importance of art lies in a social function that involves practitioner and audience and not in its internal content. As Raymond Williams, one of the earliest Marxist writers to comment on culture, put it in "The Analysis of Culture" (1965): "The more actively all cultural work can be related either to the whole organization within which it was expressed, or to the contemporary organization, within which it was used, the more clearly shall we see its true values."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

The application of Marxist theory to war art in this dissertation is epistemological. Intellectual arguments pertaining to class struggle are not at its core; instead, the materialist point of view drives its historical and cultural trajectory. Indeed, in many respects, the exegesis that follows is something of a case study for Williams's concerns regarding control, as expressed in "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (1980).<sup>19</sup> In effect, this thesis deals historically with Williams's concern with what happens to art and the aesthetic when the art is produced and then "housed" within the material and ideological confines of the state, its interests, and its agencies.

Certainly, Marxist epistemology has made it possible to explore notions of nationalism as they bear on the construction of memory. It lies at the heart of the concept that nationalism can be viewed as more than a natural expression of nation; rather that it can also be a constructed field of endeavour powered by social and political expediency. In Canada, the political reality of a nation-building agenda that had public support after the First World War is a viable argument for the influence of politics and culture in defining the nation's memory of war at the time.

In the 1980s, philosophers such as Ernest Gellner interpreted nationalism in terms of its social roots.<sup>20</sup> In Gellner's view, nationalism cannot be imposed fully formed but emerges out of the interaction of already existing cultural trends, specific

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19 Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds., *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (California: University of California, 1991), 407–423.

20 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).



desires, and existing political institutions. In his 1983 study, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, historian Benedict Anderson argues that nations are cultural constructions as much as they are geographic or political entities.<sup>21</sup> Writing of the growth of nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century, he draws attention to the concept of power, noting, significantly, that “nationalisms . . . were *responses* to power-groups – primarily, but not exclusively, dynastic and aristocratic.”<sup>22</sup>

The historian Liah Greenfield focuses on the role of influential social formations in forging identity in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992).<sup>23</sup> She writes in her introduction that, “the adoption of a new, national identity is precipitated by a regrouping within or change in the position of influential social groups.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, she stresses that the “adjustment of the idea of the nation to the situational constraints of the relevant agents involves its conceptualization in terms of indigenous traditions.”<sup>25</sup>

Adrian Hastings’s conclusion in *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (1997) is that some kind of cultural threat is fundamental to the forming of nationalism. “Nationalism is a movement,” he writes, “[that] arises

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21 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

22 *Ibid.*, 102.

23 Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

24 *Ibid.*, 16–17.

25 *Ibid.*

chiefly where and when a particular ethnicity or nation feels itself threatened in regard to its own proper character, extent or importance, either by external attack or by the state system of which it has hitherto formed part."<sup>26</sup>

Recent studies in the field of literature explore the role of politics and social relations in establishing national culture. Sarah M. Corse's 1997 book, *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States*, in particular examines the political dimension to the canon that is American and Canadian literature.<sup>27</sup> Corse identifies three assumptions central to her arguments. First, the forming of a canon is a political process that is socially constructed on the basis of nationalist concerns. Second, the making and maintaining of the canon and its meaning is socially driven within the context of time and audience and can change. Third, the canon both shapes and is shaped by national experience.<sup>28</sup> Her underlying argument is drawn from cultural sociology and indicates that cultural valorization is a political process: one that has nothing to do with quality and more to do with constructing nations.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, she points out that "national literatures [are themselves] instrumental in the creation of nations with distinct identities" and that political process is the legitimizing agency.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

27 Sarah M. Corse, *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 16.

30 Ibid., 11.

The role of nationalism in forming the bedrock of memory can be seen in a specific Canadian example that looks at the art of the Group of Seven through the lens of nationalism. Roald Nasgaard's 1984 book, *The Mystic North*, a study of the influence of Scandinavian art on the Group, demonstrates conclusively that the Group did play down the foreign influences on its art.<sup>31</sup> For political reasons, it "insisted that its work developed directly in accordance with the character of the land," he writes.<sup>32</sup> The Group did this because the "spiritual identification with nature then became inextricably identified with the demands of patriotism."<sup>33</sup> The word "erasure," rather than "forgetting," is perhaps most appropriate here. In the preface to their study on the art of the American West, *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts* (1992), the seven contributors note: "The art of discovery all too often engaged in a willful removal of landscapes, peoples, and pasts that did not conform to the ideological vision of the artistic eye."<sup>34</sup> That there can be, quite clearly, more than one way of visually articulating the Canadian national spirit is also explored in Anne Whitelaw's 1995

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31 Roald Nasgaard, *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

32 Ibid., 202.

33 Ibid., 166.

34 Jules David Prown, ed., *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), vii. See also, Jonathan Bordo, "The Terra Nullius of Wilderness Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada and Australia) and the so-called Claim to American Exception," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (spring 1997), 13–36.

dissertation on the exhibiting of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada.<sup>35</sup> In it she examines how the visual notion of Canada was expressed differently in temporary and permanent exhibitions.

For many cultural historians who draw on Marxist analysis there can be no fixed ground in the study of history. Everything is meaning: a politically mediated process that feeds on public and social interests and understandings, a Marxist position in which nothing exists unless it is given import. What is forgotten is non-existent because meaning has not been inscribed. The eventual ideal in this scenario is to be able to control the ascription of meaning so that that which is not required in the forging of memory and identity can be forgotten by virtue of its lack of meaning. Not surprisingly, this thinking has influenced some of the more recent studies that examine the making of memory, itself a part of identity. These studies tend, however, also to be sensitive to notions of historical change.

Coming from much the same socially driven background as Corse's literary criticism is historian Michael Kammen's substantial volume *Mystic Chords of Memory* published in 1991. A significant contribution to the discussion of memory and identity, its subject is the making of historical memory in the United States from 1870 to the early 1990s. Kammen introduces the dynamic of time and argues that the past is constructed in the present with input from a variety of agencies. "Societies," he writes, "reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind – manipulating the past in order to

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35 Anne Whitelaw, "Exhibiting Canada: Articulations of National Identity at the National Gallery of Canada" (Ph.D. dissertation, Concordia University, 1995).

mold [*sic*] the present.”<sup>36</sup> This past-present relationship, he posits, gives a political importance to memory, suggesting that not only the public but government agencies as well form our understanding of the past.<sup>37</sup> He quotes the British anthropologist Meyer Fortes: “The political and social structure, including the principal political values of a people, directly shapes the notions of time and of history that prevail among them.”<sup>38</sup>

In *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (1992), historian John Bodnar elaborates on the contested relationship of the public and history and concludes that power is the controlling agency. “Public memory,” he writes, “speaks primarily about the structure of power in society because that power is always in question in a world of polarities and contradictions and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of society itself.”<sup>39</sup> He agrees, with Kammen, that public memory helps “a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future.”<sup>40</sup> However, for him the focus of this process is not the past “but serious matters in the

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36 Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 3.

37 *Ibid.*, 5.

38 *Ibid.*, 2.

39 John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15.

40 *Ibid.*

present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty in both official and vernacular cultures.”<sup>41</sup> As he writes:

By the latter part of the twentieth century public memory remains a product of élite manipulation, symbolic interaction, and contested discourse. Leaders continue to use the past to foster patriotism and civic duty and ordinary people continue to accept, reformulate, and ignore such messages.<sup>42</sup>

The role of memorials as visual symbols of power that capture the public imagination is also discussed in Sergiusz Michalski’s 1998 volume, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage*.<sup>43</sup>

While the conclusions may vary, for Kammen and Bodnar, the construction of memory is clearly a dialectical process involving different interest groups whose power and influence waxes and wanes, thus constantly reshaping and restructuring memory. For the historian John R. Gillis the danger lies in the subjectivity of language. In *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (1994), he argues that because “identity and memory are political and historical constructs” they cannot be treated as facts.<sup>44</sup> For him, identity and memory have no “existence outside language . . . As such they have no existence beyond our politics, our social relations, and our histories.”<sup>45</sup>

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41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 20.

43 Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870–1997* (London: Reaktion, 1998).

44 John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

45 Ibid.

Writing of specific memorials in his 1993 book, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, historian James E. Young discounts the role of monuments themselves in formulating memory.<sup>46</sup> He writes that “monuments are of little value” by themselves. “But as part of a nation’s rites or the objects of a people’s national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory.”<sup>47</sup> In his view, a state-sponsored memory is not a concretized memory. “Once created, memorials take on lives of their own, often stubbornly resistant to the state’s original intentions,” he notes.<sup>48</sup> Citing the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs on the nature of collective memory, Young further argues that this process is always socially mandated both on the part of citizens and the state. “For,” as he notes, “a society’s memory cannot exist outside of those people who do the remembering – even if such memory happens to be at the society’s bidding, in its name.”<sup>49</sup>

Young refers to the French writer Pierre Nora, whose seven volumes of collected writings by numerous authors published between 1984 and 1992, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, have been seminal to the study of the subject of memory. Young’s view of the inert memorial is derived from Nora’s thinking. For Nora, according to Young, the monument supplants memory rather than embodying it. As quoted in Young, Nora writes: “Memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstruction. Its new

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46 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2–3.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., xi.

vocation is to record: delegating to the *lieu de mémoire* the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin.”<sup>50</sup>

Young also addresses the issue of art history and memory in connection with Holocaust memorials, concluding (unlike Corse in her approach to literature) that a formal analysis of form and content is not a significant concern in comparison with context.<sup>51</sup> In support of this view, Young cites the 1977 writing of the public historian Marianne Doezema in the context of the role of art appreciation and the art of monuments. Her emphasis is also centred on the human role in making memory rather than that of the artwork itself. “The public monument,” she writes, “has a responsibility apart from its qualities as a work of art. It is not only the private expression of an individual artist, it is also a work of art created for the public, and therefore can and should be evaluated in terms of its capacity to generate human reactions.”<sup>52</sup>

For historian Daniel J. Sherman, memory is ultimately a politicized interaction of individual and group memory with site. In *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (1999), a study of war memorials in post Great War France, he takes

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50 Ibid., 5, quoted from Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): reprinted from Pierre Nora, “Entre mémoire et histoire,” *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, no. 1, *La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xxvi.

51 Ibid., 12–13.

52 Ibid., 13, quoting Marianne Doezema, “The Public Monument in Tradition and Transition.” In Marianne Doezema and June Hargrove, *The Public Monument and Its Audience* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), 9.



Kammen's (1991) viewpoints on power a little further when he writes of commemoration, in particular, as representing a power struggle between differing interests.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, his emphasis on the importance of external forces in providing meaning to the monuments that were constructed in interwar France to enshrine memory, rather than insisting that their value derives from formal aesthetic analysis, is in line with Young's approach.

The broader literature in cultural studies relating to how people form a memory of war, however, can shed different kinds of light on the study of Canadian war art. Historian Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995) reinstates some agency to the object. He contributes one way of understanding how, although relatively little seen over time, the nation's war art remained a shadowy presence in sections of the Canadian consciousness. Although writing from a European point of view, Winter draws attention to the background and nature of the enduring imagery of the First World War.

Eschatology, the science of last things, flourished during and after the Great War. Among its most powerful and lasting forms were painting and sculpture, produced by both soldiers and civilians. Through an examination of the work of a number of artists, we can appreciate the richness and diversity of the search for older forms and images by means of which enduring visions of the Great War were fashioned.<sup>54</sup>

Winter's book suggests that the most powerful and lasting art of the immediate post First World War period drew its imagery from the past, a viewpoint that is at odds

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 8.

with the more commonly held thinking that the art of the First World War found its most effective language in modernism, a view expressed by historian Modris Eksteins in *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989).<sup>55</sup>

A significant Canadian contribution, which draws on Kammen and Bodnar as well as earlier cultural historians Paul Fussell and Samuel Hynes, is historian Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (1997).<sup>56</sup> Vance examines the cultural memory of war in Canada as it was expressed in a variety of media from advertisements to songs and concludes that remembering the First World War was ultimately an exercise of considerable imagination in both the political and public interest. While he is conscious of the contributions of both those in power and those who simply wanted a means to remember in formulating what remains in essence a collective memory, he is also cognizant of the process of change involved. However, his emphasis on the individual and popular role in building and sustaining a memory of the war is a notable and useful addition to the field.

While much of the writing about memory has related to the construction of meaning in relationship to monuments and memorials, its relationship to exhibitions and other forms of memorial (parades, re-enactments, commemorative ceremonies)

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54 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 145.

55 Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989).

56 Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997). See also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) and

dealing with the past is also a fruitful field of study with an expanding literature. A Canadian example is H. V. Nelles's *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (1999), which examines the social context of the 300th anniversary of Champlain's founding of Quebec City, and how the event was forgotten.<sup>57</sup>

A number of public historians view the issues of history as generally issues of power and a number of problematic museum exhibitions in recent years give credence to their position. In Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum's 1989 exhibition about missionary activity in Africa, *Into the Heart of Africa*, remains a prime example.<sup>58</sup> In the United States, the controversy over the Smithsonian's show in 1994 about the bomber aircraft the *Enola Gay* and the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, still strikes fear into the hearts of museum professionals.<sup>59</sup> As historians Roy Rosenzweig

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Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War in English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1987).

57 H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

58 *Into the Heart of Africa* was on display at the Royal Ontario Museum from 16 November 1989–6 August 1990. The curator, Jeanne Cannizo, contributed an article on the controversy to Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds, *Colonialization and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1998).

59 A revised version of the exhibition opened at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in Washington on 8 July 1995. A significant number of the contemporary reports and editorials regarding this controversial exhibition are to be found at [www.afa.org/enolagay/](http://www.afa.org/enolagay/). The US Air Force Association put this material together. Another exhibition, *The Spirit Sings*, which opened at the Glenbow Institute in Calgary on 14 January 1988, represents an even earlier museum controversy. See, for example, Julia D. Harrison, "'The Spirit Sings' and the Future of Anthropology," *Anthropology Today*, vol. 4, no. 6 (December 1988), 6–9 and Bruce Trigger, "Reply to Julia D. Harrison," *ibid.*, 9–10.

and David Thelen write in their 1998 book, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, exhibitions have a tendency to present single viewpoints reflective of the limitations of institutional authority that discourage alternative perspectives and thus can stir up controversy.<sup>60</sup> They note:

The “history wars” of recent years have subverted the development of a healthy, participatory, fundamentally historical culture because they have politicized history as a struggle among claims to authority. In the debate over the National Air and Space Museum’s proposed exhibit on the *Enola Gay*, for example, people were asked to choose between the authenticity of a pilot’s memories of wartime service and the accuracy of written sources recovered by a historian. In a fundamental historical culture, both would be respected and treated for what they are: different uses of the past introducing different perspectives and different individual voices.<sup>61</sup>

Tasslyn Frame analyzes the public voice in this exhibition from the perspective of identity making, using comment cards visitors filled in upon leaving. In her 1999 article “‘Our Nation’s Attic?’ Making American National Identity at the Smithsonian Institution,” she writes that museums are “a place where public and academic historians can clearly see the manifestations of the arguments Americans are having over national identity, cultural meaning, collective meaning and representation

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60 As another example, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documentary *The Valour and the Horror* (1992) could be cited. It caused a controversy almost unprecedented in the history of Canadian television. Canadian veterans, outraged by what they considered an inaccurate and highly biased account of the war, sued Brian and Terrance McKenna, the series directors, for libel. See, for example, David J Bercuson and S. F. Wise. *The Valour and the Horror Revisited* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994).

61 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 190.

in late twentieth-century America.”<sup>62</sup> Aware of the evaluative limitations of the cards, she examines both “the reception of national ideologies in museum visitors as well as how visitor comments suggest the construction of national identity and social memory in the museum.”<sup>63</sup> Her analysis identifies two conclusions. The first is that the construction of American national identity involves collaboration between “museum practitioners and their audiences.” The second is that this construction is a deeply personalised exercise.<sup>64</sup> Frame later notes:

A study of the comment cards allows us to get a glimpse of the public – the audience’s comment – on their participation and representation within national culture and their strong interest in using *their* past to create a personal manifestation of American national identity.<sup>65</sup>

Frame, Rosenzweig, and Thelen generally underestimate the informing authority of the object. The power of artifacts of any kind, especially when heavily imbued with meaning over time, is the subject of a 1997 article on a controversial exhibition of Hitler photographs, “Exhibiting Hitler: Furor over the Führer.”<sup>66</sup> Here, museologist Lynn Kellmanson Matheny draws attention to the agency of the art object and “its ability to usurp curatorial control.”<sup>67</sup> In her article, she examines the thesis

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62 Tasslyn Frame, “‘Our Nation’s Attic?’: Making American National Identity at the Smithsonian Institution,” *Material History Review* 50 (fall 1999), 57.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

65 Frame, “‘Our Nation’s Attic?’” 58.

66 Lynn Kellmanson Matheny, “Furor over the Führer,” *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1997), 39–47.

67 *Ibid.*, 46.

behind an exhibition of photographs of Hitler that was shown in Munich but cancelled for exhibit at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin in 1994. The curator's intention was to show how "the propagandist photograph served as a model of truth."<sup>68</sup> However, in her attempt to deconstruct the images, the curator was unable to overcome the meanings that had become imbedded in the photographs over time. They had developed new, more permanent, and disturbing content as a result of previous discourses, which overwhelmed the curatorial thesis and accounted for Berlin's withdrawal from the tour.

In the context of exhibitions, reception theory provides insight into any exploration of the war art collections and adds complexity to the discussion of an object's agency. Wolfgang Kemp argues in "The Work of Art and its Beholder: The Methodology of the Aesthetic of Reception" (1998), that "It is not only in the power of works of art that an impression can be made on its beholder."<sup>69</sup> Instead, the history of the circumstances and context of its display plays a significant role in how the art is interpreted. To understand the artwork's original meaning, Kemp writes, "reception aesthetics is obliged to reconstruct the original reception situation."<sup>70</sup> In essence, his is a

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68 Ibid. 41.

69 Wolfgang Kemp, "The Work of Art and its Beholder: The Methodology of the Aesthetic of Reception," in Mark A. Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds., *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 184.

70 Ibid., 185. Anne Whitelaw provides another useful insight into the way exhibitions can alter the perception of the material presented when she compares major institutional hangs of Canadian art in, "Museums and the Writing of Canadian Art History," *Association for Canadian Studies Bulletin*, vol. 18, no. 2-3 (summer-fall 1996), 8-9.

pragmatic theoretical approach to the question of reception in that meaning is historically relative.

The field of art history provides one area of research that is important to this study. This concerns the fact that visual images used to substantiate history can be dangerous fictions. As Francis Haskell writes in *History and its Images* (1993), “More disturbing, perhaps, have been many hints by art historians, which have not been widely disseminated, that it may be not so much the past that is a fiction as those very arts to which recourse has been made in an attempt to establish the existence of the past.”<sup>71</sup>

Recently, the art historian Griselda Pollock, ever charting new territory, has introduced a fresh debate into the study of women’s art history that is analogous to those focusing on memory and forgetting, which may prove useful in discussing the content of the war art. In *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (1999), Pollock defines “differencing” as stressing “the active re-reading and reworking of that which is visible and authorized in the spaces of representation in order to articulate that which, while repressed, is always present as its structuring other.”<sup>72</sup> Replace the word “differencing” with the word “forgetting” and one understands how closely linked are those studies that seek out that which is seemingly unknown in order to explain the nature of that which is known.

In conclusion, the literature on social memory makes it clear that fundamental to any notion of national memory is the idea that it is not a fixed phenomenon and can

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71 Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5.

72 Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 8.

both exist and yet be created and recreated at one and the same time. This means that what is made and is understood exists within an often-contested dynamic involving many interests, not the least of which is power. This dynamic gives a shape and meaning to the rituals and objects associated with the memory that is ever-changing. Furthermore, in the context of art, the aesthetic qualities of a work do not ensure its significance in the making of memory as much as the particular meaning which the political and social groups that interact with the piece impose upon it or derive from it. Within this informing context, it is a feasible undertaking to examine the history of Canada's official war art both as a single collection and in relationship to individual compositions and exhibitions. It is also consequently possible to understand how the art has moved in and out of the shadows of history, art history, identity, and memory in a manner beyond the strictly narrative.



## Chapter 1

### A Review of the History and Historiography of Canada's Official War Art Programs

The war art collections housed at the Canadian War Museum consist of the production of three official programs and a collection comprising independent works of art completed by service personnel and civilian artists. The earliest piece dates to 1760 and the most contemporary to 2001. There are close to 13, 000 paintings, works on paper, and three-dimensional compositions in the collections as a whole. The First World War collection of some 1, 000 paintings is known as the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF), the Second World War collection of some 5, 000 works is known as the Canadian War Records (CWR), and the post-Second World War collection consisting of just less than 400 items is called the Canadian Armed Services Civilian Artists Programme [*sic*] (CAFCAP).

The First World War collection was the brainchild of Sir Max Aitken (created Lord Beaverbrook in December 1916), who had no particular association with the pre-war art world.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1879, and raised in New Brunswick, this slight, energetic, and charismatic “son of the manse” made an early fortune in Canada, although his aggressive business methods earned him accolades and suspicion in nearly equal measure. After relocating to Britain, the millionaire moved easily into its highest aristocratic and political circles. In 1911, he became financially involved with the *Daily Express* newspaper and bought it outright five years later, using the respected

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the career of Lord Beaverbrook consult, for example, A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).

paper to expand his influence. Always a Canadian at heart, Beaverbrook's genuine nationalist fervour contributed to his decision in 1916 to initiate and take personal responsibility for a project to record the war from Canada's point of view through the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO).<sup>2</sup> By this time, the First World War had been ongoing for two years. While its losses had been heavy, the Canadian Corps had developed into a competent, professional force.

Aitken's media interests made him ideally suited to the task of documenting the war in film, photograph, and print. His experience with a mass circulation daily paper meant he also knew what engaged people's interests. A single event turned him in another direction, to documenting the war in art: the horrific German gas attack on the Canadians at the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May 1915.<sup>3</sup> For a variety of reasons the event was not photographed, so in November 1916, Aitken commissioned a huge 3.7 x 6 metre painting from the British artist and illustrator Richard Jack (1866–1952) through his new organization, the Canadian War Memorials Fund. (Fig. 3, p. 315) Although the work was subsequently scorned by at least one art historian both for its traditional style and historical inaccuracy, Aitken liked it.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, the success of this venture, combined with the prevailing belief that the lifespan of a

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2 The fullest account of the founding of the CWRO is in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). This was based on her Ph.D. dissertation, "The History of the Canadian War Memorial Scheme as a Study of Patronage and Visual Record of the Great War" (University of London, 1982).

3 The most thorough account of Canadian participation in the First World War is to be found in the official history, G. W. L. Nicholson, *The Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914–1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964).

4 Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 26.

photograph was limited, contributed to his decision to commission more artists to record Canada's war experiences for posterity. His new Fund, after all, sought to provide "suitable Memorials in the form of Tablets, Oil Paintings, etc. to the Canadian Heroes and Heroines of the War."<sup>5</sup>

He and his war art adviser, the Hungarian-born art critic P. G. Konody, worked essentially from two angles. First, they commissioned big pictures from important British artists. Beaverbrook thought initially that the oversize works might contribute to the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament in Ottawa, the original buildings having been largely destroyed by fire in 1916. But he was also responsive to the idea that artists should spend time on the battlefield making sketches of documentary value that, ultimately, might be turned into larger works. The up and coming English society painter Sir Alfred Munnings (1878–1959), for example, was attached to both the Canadian Cavalry Corps and the Canadian Forestry Corps with this in mind.<sup>6</sup>

Although smaller-scale paintings were emerging from the program, it was his special interest in size and impact that brought Beaverbrook into conflict with officials in Ottawa, in particular with the National Gallery of Canada. The main player, Sir Edmund Walker, chairman of the gallery's board of trustees and the author

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5 Records Office, London Guildhall, Application for Registration in the matter of the War Charities Act, 1916, 7 November 1916; registrations granted by the County Purposes Committee of the Corporation of the City of London, 1920, 4, as quoted in Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 26.

6 For an account of Munnings's war commissions, see *Military Munnings: 1917–1918* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1993).

of *Canadian Surveys and Museums* (1900) was an extraordinarily effective man who had risen from bank clerk to president of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. His interests and acquaintances were wide and his dedication to Canada's cultural, intellectual, and business life legendary.<sup>7</sup> Working with him at the gallery was the Englishman Eric Brown, its first director. Brown's affection for his adopted country's wilderness, which manifested itself in regular camping trips, resulted in a strong and deep friendship with the painters of the Group of Seven.<sup>8</sup>

The Canadian War Memorials paintings were thus the product of a group of people with a vested interest in Canadian success – from both a professional and a business point of view. Their goal was a painted record of the conflict in which Canada, despite a high casualty rate, was clearly seen to have been a major contributor to the war's successful outcome. As extant correspondence makes clear, the topics were allocated to the artists selected and painting styles that were too modern were frowned upon.<sup>9</sup> Instead, compositions were required to combine sober reality with

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7 For an account of Sir Edmund Walker's life, see G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *Sir Edmund Walker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). Walker's achievements are much in need of a new critical evaluation.

8 For an account of Eric Brown's life, see F. Maud Brown, *Breaking Barriers: Eric Brown and the National Gallery* (Ottawa: The Society for Art Publications, 1964).

9 See, for example, Lord Beaverbrook to Sir Edmund Walker, 14 December 1917, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41–C, Canadian War Memorials (General), file 1, and Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 229.

traditional values. Nonetheless, several paintings of a distinctly modern tenor did enter the collection.

Ensuring that the war art program truly reflected Canada's role in the conflict was of critical importance to both men. While they appreciated Beaverbrook's extraordinary drive in founding and funding the Canadian war art program, they had different views on what form the record should take. The gallery's interest lay in field study, not grand studio composition. It also worried that the program recommended too many commissions for British artists.<sup>10</sup> Such nationalist sympathies were hardly unique. While Canadians were still British subjects, many craved an identity, in politics and in art, which would be distinct from their associations with the mother country. This was reflected, for example, in the efforts of Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to ensure that the Canadian Corps continued to be recognized as a national army under Canadian control.<sup>11</sup>

Walker corresponded with Beaverbrook concerning the employment of Canadian artists. Beaverbrook was receptive and gradually hired more Canadians.<sup>12</sup> One of the first was A. Y. Jackson (1882–1974), in later years a leading figure in the Group of Seven and in Canadian art generally. Walker was instrumental in ensuring official commissions for several other Canadian artists. F. H. Varley (1881–1969),

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10 Walker to Beaverbrook, 29 December 1917, University of Toronto Library, Fisher Rare Book Collection, Walker Papers (UTL-FRBC, WP) Box 27, as quoted in Tippett, "The History of the Canadian War Memorial Scheme," 89.

11 For a brief account, see Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989), 134–135.

12 Tippett, "The History of the Canadian War Memorial Scheme," 98–100.

eventually an important member of the Group of Seven, was among four painters given the rank of captain and attached to the Canadian Corps.<sup>13</sup> He was with them beginning in August 1918, as they advanced rapidly from Amiens, France to Mons, Belgium in the last Allied offensive of the war, known as “The Hundred Days.” By then, of the over 620, 000 enlisted, more than 60, 000 Canadians had been killed.

Walker and Brown were responsible for including two other aspects of the war in its artistic record: women and the home front. The future Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer (1885–1969) created memorable images of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in wartime, producing vibrant portraits of dazzle-painted ships in the harbour. (Fig. 5, p. 317) In addition, Frank Johnston (1888–1949), in due course another Group of Seven artist, worked for several months documenting pilot training at various bases in Ontario. His watercolours of Curtiss JN–4 aircraft joyously looping-the-loop above the tranquil fall farm landscape uniquely convey the idea of flight and show that, for some, war was not a grim business. (Fig. 6, p. 318)

For the most part, female artists were assigned to represent women at work on behalf of the war effort. During the war the work of women evolved as thousands performed tasks previously performed by men. Montreal artist Henrietta Mabel May (1877–1971), enthusiastically depicted women filling shells in a moving impressionist composition, while Manly MacDonald (1889–1971) composed a colourful composition of girls cheerfully hoeing in a field. (Figs. 7, 8, pp. 319, 320)

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<sup>13</sup> The fullest account of Varley’s war commission is to be found in Christopher Varley, *F. H. Varley: A Centennial Exhibition* (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1981).

As the war drew to a close, Walker's input led to planning for a special building in Ottawa to house the art. Simultaneously, Beaverbrook announced the existence of his own commissioned designs for a monumental war memorial art gallery also to be built in the nation's capital. The building Beaverbrook planned for the paintings was solid and traditional. Designed as a neo-baroque temple that eschewed even a hint of the "modern," it spoke instead to value systems whose roots stretched back to classical times. A decade of lobbying by protagonists of both schemes produced neither building. Instead, Beaverbrook lost interest in the project, feeling generally that his wartime work for Canada had been under-appreciated, and the National Gallery assumed the increasingly onerous burden of custody. Nonetheless, as R. H. Hubbard, the chief curator of the National Gallery in the 1960s observed: "[The paintings] were often called upon as silent advocates in the Trustees' unrelenting campaign to secure a proper Gallery building."<sup>14</sup>

The desire for a building helped to make the First World War art collection initially quite visible. The first major exhibition of war art commissioned by the Canadian War Memorials Fund opened at Burlington House, home of the Royal Academy in London, on 4 January 1919 and subsequently toured. A second touring exhibition followed in 1920. The National Gallery mounted further exhibitions in

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<sup>14</sup> R. H. Hubbard, "Pinacotheca Egregia Custos Admirabilis," *Fourth Annual Review of the National Gallery of Canada 1971-1972* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972), 113.

1923 and 1924. Subsequently, the work was little shown until the years of the Second World War.<sup>15</sup>

As far as the literature is concerned, no all-encompassing surveys have been published on the topic of Canadian war art as a whole. Generally, war art is mentioned in the context of an artist's life, or within the parameters of the official programs, or it is imbedded in cultural history. It is generally limited to a few published books, catalogues, journal and magazine articles, unpublished theses, and a representative sample of newspaper articles. Something is known about this art through other means: television, radio, film, documentary, exhibition, illustration, coins, collector cards and, more recently, the new electronic media. However, while these have made an important contribution to recent public understanding and knowledge of Canada's war art, their effect on the historiography of war art in Canada is beyond the scope of this study.

Changes in the approaches to the study of art and history have, however, had an impact on the kind of writing on war art that has emerged. Canadian historiography has changed over the course of the twentieth century and its agenda has been driven by many different factors. Initially, the earlier political histories and biographies, often influenced by nationalist concerns, gave way to economic theories as a means of clarifying the sense of nation. After the 1960s, the growth in the number of practicing historians, as in all disciplines, narrowed the stage from the nation to the region and

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15 Garry Mainprize, "The National Gallery of Canada: A Hundred Years of Exhibitions," *Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review*, vol. 11, nos. 1-2, 3-78. The catalogues for the two initial exhibitions were entitled *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition* and dated 1919 and 1920.



moved the spotlight from the leading actor to the bit player. History became no longer simple but ever more complex, a tapestry of threads, which viewed as a whole and from a distance seemed to make sense but when examined closely became a more subjective arrangement of available or specifically selected material.

This trend from a history based on considerations of nationalism to one encompassing a variety of theories has been paralleled in the field of Canadian art history. While both disciplines have undoubtedly been affected by similar developments, such as the growth of universities in the second half of the twentieth century, they have matured in different ways. In part it can be argued that this is because most history relies on written documents as its primary resource while art history focuses particularly heavily on visual evidence. It is important, however, to underline at this point that the focus on art historical texts that follows is due to the fact that historians rarely address war art.

In terms of the role of theory in its history, Canadian art history of the twentieth century has been dominated by modernism to an extent far more lasting than any theory in history. Modernism as an art form can be understood as a movement away from representational painting towards a style where the ingredients of a painting as opposed to its subject matter or its symbolism and meaning are the pre-eminent concerns. Modernism also provides a progressive view of art history and, as such, tends to be critical of the past unless it fits into what has been established as the forward-looking narrative. This is exemplified in a passage from the art historian Dennis Reid's 1973 publication, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, where he writes of the Toronto art scene in the 1950s:

There was also in Toronto no informed interest in the European modernist tradition, as had developed around Lyman in Montreal during the later thirties. In fact, after the departure of Lawren Harris, the only sophisticated stimulation derived from Douglas Duncan's Picture Loan Society, and even there the lines ran largely to the past during the forties rather than to the future.<sup>16</sup>

Canadian official war art has, by and large, been a representational art form whose best known works have focused on the figurative, the landscape and, above all, on the heroic act. A First World War painting such as Kenneth Forbes's *Canadian Artillery in Action* (1919), with its emphasis on brawny young males loading shells in the heat of battle, is a typical example. (Fig. 14, p. 326) This subject matter, so often redolent with meaning and symbolism, does not easily fit into the modernist canon with its emphasis on line, colour, form, and structure. It can, therefore, be suggested that because war art is an art form that largely cannot be described as modernist, it has tended to be excluded from the art history of twentieth-century Canada.

All this notwithstanding, the early commemorative and essentially nationalist role of Canadian war art is clearly expressed in the 1919 publication *Art and War*, which includes a seminal essay "On War Memorials" by P. G. Konody.<sup>17</sup> Konody's belief that art has a unique ability to record, commemorate, and memorialize dominates the essay he wrote for the lavishly illustrated book that accompanied the Burlington House exhibition. This essay places the new Canadian war art in a long historical tradition going back to the Assyrians and Egyptians and accentuates its memorial role for

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16 Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), 238.

17 P. G. Konody, "On War Memorials," in *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials* (London: Colour Ltd., c. 1919), 5-16.

Canadians. Similarly, the memorial function of war art in creating a national history is seen in a presentation book that was published in conjunction with a Canadian Legion convention in 1934.<sup>18</sup> The central point made in the foreword by Lt.-Col. R. F. Parkinson is that the Canadian War Memorials forms a record that “[calls] for reverence and proud sorrow” and “must remain an inspiration.”<sup>19</sup>

F. B. Housser devotes a chapter in *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* to the Group’s contribution to the CWWMF that emphasizes its modern approach to the subject matter of war.<sup>20</sup> Relying extensively on the recollections of A. Y. Jackson, he notes that the artists themselves felt that they were given the opportunity to depict the truth of war. “For the first time,” he writes, “war was painted, not in its barbarous glory but as it is, – hateful, bloody, destructive, hideous.”<sup>21</sup> This attitude in turn was reflective of a new and more universal awareness of the true horrors of the innovative, highly mechanized, and damaging warfare that came into being in the twentieth century. This notwithstanding (given that the underlying agenda of his book was to assist in creating the myth of a new, modern, and national school of art), it is not surprising that Housser’s emphasis is ultimately on the artists’ departure from past

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18 Percy F. Godenrath, *Lest We Forget* (Ottawa, 1934).

19 *Ibid.*, 5.

20 F. B. Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926).

21 *Ibid.*, 130.

styles. This context also accounts for his noting Konody's apparent surprise that "colonial painters [were] so closely in touch with all that is vital in modern art."<sup>22</sup>

A growing irrelevance for the First World War paintings is exemplified in the 1950-second edition of *Canadian Art* by Graham McInnes, which refers only briefly to the Canadian War Memorials Fund paintings, as indeed did its earlier 1939 edition.<sup>23</sup> One paragraph, in fact, is all that is accorded the program.<sup>24</sup> Modernity remains at the forefront and McInnes's brief comment relates to Housser's in its avowed intent to celebrate the new in Canadian art and relinquish the past and former deeds. In brief, McInnes's book sets out to provide a chronological account of Canada's art history, "interwoven with our struggle to achieve nationhood."<sup>25</sup> The latter McInnes sees as having come about in response to concerns about imperial ties and fears of American influence. He writes of the Canadian artists who participated in the First World War program:

In general, they were not turned aside by considerations of patriotic fervour, and painted the struggle as they saw it or interpreted it as they felt it. The result was a fine group of paintings, many of which transcend the documentary.<sup>26</sup>

While this lack of detail can partly be attributed to the fact that the works had not been exhibited in any quantity since 1924 and were, for the most part, in

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22 Ibid.

23 Graham McInnes, *A Short History of Canadian Art* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), 78.

24 Graham McInnes, *Canadian Art*, 2d ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1950), 57.

25 Ibid., 111.

26 Ibid.

inaccessible storage and therefore not known to the author, it also underlines the paintings' lack of a role in the Canada of the thirties. The nature of the country was changing; it was shedding its imperial ties to Great Britain. Given that a large proportion of the First World War paintings were by British artists, their place was becoming inevitably marginal too. As well, with the disbanding of the Group of Seven in 1931, nation building through art was not so prevalent a concern among artists and a majority of the younger painters were beginning to associate themselves with European art styles rather than looking to their own country. An early inspiration was the modernist thinking of critics such as Clive Bell and Roger Fry in England (who in turn were looking to avant-garde French painters such as Cézanne and the Post-Impressionists). Canadian artists were also responding to the emerging European abstract art forms, which had gained some prominence in the period of the First World War and were to dominate art for the next fifty years.

Colouring the artists' attitudes as well was the fact that the size of the First World War paintings and their figurative subject matter provided visual links to the kind of art preferred by the leaders of Europe's more repressive regimes. As the well-publicized Munich Degenerate Art exhibition of 1937 had demonstrated, Hitler did not like modern art and therefore the democratic West was inclined to espouse it.<sup>27</sup> The lack of interest in earlier war art was also a reflection, perhaps, of the greater problems facing Canada at the time, such as the Depression. These problems combined with

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<sup>27</sup> The exhibition *Entartete Kunst* opened at the Archäologisches Institut in Munich on 19 July 1937. It closed on 30 November 1937. It subsequently toured to Berlin, Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Salzburg, Hamburg, Stettin, Weimar, Vienna,

some pronounced and not insignificant anti-war sentiments that had found sympathetic expression worldwide in books such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929).<sup>28</sup>

The lack of a role for the Canadian War Memorials paintings in Canadian society undoubtedly contributed to the fact that it was not until 1943 that the Canadian War Records came into being. Even then, this was only after intensive lobbying by an artistic community that included First World War painters such as A. Y Jackson.<sup>29</sup> Canadian artists clearly saw art as part of the contemporary social fabric of society and therefore as having more than a commemorative role to play in wartime. For them this meant that if war was an important expression of society, then they should record it as it happened.<sup>30</sup> A developing sense of national pride undoubtedly contributed as well. Because Canada had entered the Second World War as an independent nation, Canadian artists should record the country's efforts. Their thinking was fuelled in part by the innovative partnerships between art and government that had come about through

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Frankfurt, Chemnitz, Waldenburg, and Halle an der Salle. It finally closed on 20 April 1941.

28 Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1929).

29 Jackson described his First and Second World War experiences in his memoir, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A. Y. Jackson*, memorial edition (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1976).

30 The psychology of Canadian artists in the period is discussed in Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975).

Roosevelt's New Deal policies in the United States. Furthermore, they had had an opportunity to discuss the artist's role in wartime at the 1941 Kingston Conference.<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, the Second World War produced an entirely different Canadian art program and an entirely different public launch. In September 1946, the art of Canada at war was unveiled in the cramped and somewhat dingy premises of the National Gallery of Canada in the Victoria Memorial Building in Ottawa (now the Museum of Nature). Because the program had been seen from the beginning as a distinctly national effort, it was entirely fitting that its first major public showing should be in the nation's capital even if the facilities were not the best.<sup>32</sup>

For most Canadians, the First World War was a human tragedy of vast dimensions scarcely redeemed by the perceived rightness of its cause. The Second World War was different. This conflict was viewed as a good war that had to be fought to preserve freedom and democracy. It was an attitude that survived in the face

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31 André Biéler and Elizabeth Harrison, *The Kingston Conference proceedings* (Kingston, 1941). The Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University reprinted this in 1991 with a useful introduction by Michael Bell.

32 The fullest account of the Second World War art program is found in Fiona Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*], 1942–1946" (M. Litt. thesis, Cambridge University, 1997). This is largely based on primary research completed in the National Archives of Canada (NAC) (see Appendix A), the war art files of the National Gallery of Canada, and the Canadian War Museum's Art Department Archives. These are the main repositories for the records of this program. More material is also to be found in the NAC manuscript archives; the artists involved are listed in Valverde.

of the tremendous loss of human life, the massive dislocation of peoples, and a myriad of previously unimaginable atrocities.<sup>33</sup>

The Second World War art program shared this outlook and a majority of its paintings portray a good war. There are no huge memorial compositions focusing on destruction, tragedy, and misery. Instead, most of the over 5, 000 small paintings housed in the Canadian War Museum record the locations, events, machinery, and personnel of wartime on all fronts in an often depersonalized manner.

Like the First World War art program, the Second World War effort was dependent on the energies of a committed few and, in particular, on a complex network of family connections centred on the Toronto establishment. The most important player was Canada's High Commissioner to Great Britain, Vincent Massey. From the farm-machinery manufacturing company, Massey-Harris, he had always been interested in the arts. Small in stature and given to self-importance, he bought Canadian art. Massey proved critical to the success of the Canadian war art program.<sup>34</sup>

Massey's office was at Canada House on Trafalgar Square, London, and a stone's throw from that of the British National Gallery's director, Kenneth Clark. Massey also collected British art and, in 1941, became a trustee – and in 1943, chairman – of the board of trustees of the National Gallery. By virtue of his position

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33 For a general overview of Canada's role in the Second World War see, J. L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War, 1939–1946* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989).

34 The Massey of this period is described in Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).



and his interests, he moved easily in Clark's circle. He was familiar with Canada's First World War art – he was an early supporter of the war artist David Milne (1882–1953) – and one can imagine that Clark told him of the deep impression the war art had made on him in 1919 at the Burlington House exhibition. Seeing a selection of Canada's First World War art for the first time that evening, he recalled decades later, was the single most important influence on his decision to initiate a Second World War art program for Great Britain.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly, in response to the success of the Canadian First World War program and the subsequent British war art program, Clark was swift to launch a Second World War art program for Britain.<sup>36</sup> Massey wanted to follow suit but Clark had an emotional advantage that Canada could not use: the fact that Britain was the ultimate target for Hitler. Because of this, Clark was able to harness the idea of a need for war art to the requirement for propaganda. War art would help save Britain.

Massey had no such advantage. To most Canadians in 1939, the war posed no immediate threat. It was simply too far away. As well, given their lamentable state of preparedness, the Canadian military services had the greater issues of personnel and material to deal with. Recruitment, training, supplies, logistics, and “doing their bit”

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35 Valverde, “The Canadian War Artists’ Programme [sic], 12. She cites her source as Kenneth Clark, *The Other Half: A Self-Portrait* (London: John Murray, 1977), 22.

36 The most complete account of the British Second World War art program is to be found in Brian Foss, “British Artists of the Second World War” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1991).

for Britain were of paramount importance.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, unlike Massey, most Canadians, including the military, were unfamiliar with the war art of the First World War because most of the works had been kept in storage at the National Gallery of Canada since 1921. The few reproductions issued to schools had been denounced as warmongering and therefore had remained largely uncirculated.<sup>38</sup> The First World War art was already a forgotten collection.

Some of the first works from the British war art program were exhibited at London's National Gallery as early as December 1939. Immediately, Massey suggested Canada follow suit with a program of its own. The response from defence officials in Ottawa was initially one of indifference.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, in Ottawa, H. O. McCurry, Eric Brown's successor as director of the National Gallery of Canada, had commenced his own lobbying effort. Throughout the war, this kind and supportive man ensured that examples of Canada's First World War art hung in a gallery set-aside specifically for that purpose. Given that the NGC was, at the time, sharing premises with two other museums, this was no mean feat. McCurry had the support of the trustees of the gallery, who included in the 1939–1940 report a motion that a Second World War art program be initiated.<sup>40</sup>

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37 One of the most detailed accounts of Canadian participation in the Second World War is to be found in the Army's official history, C. P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955).

38 Tippett, "The History of the Canadian War Memorials Scheme," 297–299.

39 Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 21.

40 "Minutes of the 60th meeting of the trustees of the NGC," 13 December 1939, Ottawa, NGCA, NGC fonds, Board of Trustees, 9.21–B, Board of

Despite Massey and McCurry's initial lack of success in establishing a full-fledged program, they did make progress and Canadians were soon producing war art. A number of artists had enlisted in the armed forces and, inspired by the knowledge that there had been a First World War program, contacted McCurry to suggest they would be more useful as artists in uniform than as foot-soldiers.<sup>41</sup> McCurry in turn passed their offers on to National Defence Headquarters. There, the rigorously formal, yet far-seeing Colonel A. F. Duguid, director of the historical section of the general staff, was able to employ Private E. J. Hughes (b. 1913) and Sapper O. N. Fisher (1911–1999) to depict activities in the army.<sup>42</sup> In England, Massey arranged for trooper W. A. Ogilvie (1901–1989) to be attached to Canadian military headquarters as an artist.<sup>43</sup> Massey knew Ogilvie's work as a result of a commission he had completed for the Massey Foundation in the form of a mural for Hart House, Toronto in 1936.<sup>44</sup>

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Trustees/Minutes of Meetings, 12 May 1932–17 March 1949, as cited in Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 23.

41 McCurry to the deputy minister, Department of National Defence (DND), 24 October 1939, Ottawa, NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41–C, Canadian War Records, Canadian War Artists Committee, file 1.

42 Duguid to McCurry, 8 March 1941, Ottawa, NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42–F, Fisher, Orville N.

43 C. P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1982), 106. This volume is critical to an understanding of Stacey's role in the art program and how he saw it contributing to the history of Canada at war.

44 G. Campbell McInnes, "Mural in Hart House Chapel," *Saturday Night*, 16 September 1936.

With the appointment in late 1940 of Major C. P. Stacey as the Canadian Army's historical officer in London, Massey and McCurry acquired a major ally. One of Stacey's first tasks was to co-ordinate the program of the notable English artist Henry Lamb (1883–1949), who, as part of the British art program, had undertaken an assignment in 1941 to paint the Canadian army in England.<sup>45</sup> Early in 1942, Stacey was also instrumental in formalizing the employment of Hughes, Fisher, and Ogilvie and in obtaining for them commissions as officers with the rank of second lieutenant.<sup>46</sup> A methodical, extraordinarily well-organized individual and, ultimately, one of Canada's most influential military historians, Stacey got the army art program going. Its success, which led the other two services to follow suit, played a significant role in the eventual formation of the Canadian War Records as a number of its official war artists came from the ranks of service artists.

Despite the initiatives of Massey, Duguid, McCurry, and Stacey, not to mention the Canadian art establishment as a whole, the first four years of the war were only minimally recorded. In fact there was a setback. As Stacey recorded in his memoirs, "at the beginning of April 1942 . . . we were told that Fisher, whose imminent dispatch had been announced, would not be coming, no more artists would be sent, and the appointment of Mrs. Liliias Newton (1896-1980), whom Massey had

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45 Lamb's service with the Canadians is described in Brian Foss, "'No Dead Wood': Henry Lamb and the Canadians," *Canadian Military History*, vol. 6, no. 2 (autumn 1997), 62–66.

46 War Diary, Colonel C. P. Stacey, 2 February 1942, Ottawa, NAC, RG 24 17508, as quoted in Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 37.

asked for as a portrait artist, was rejected.”<sup>47</sup> The continued lack of support meant there would be no eyewitness paintings of the fall of Hong Kong in 1941 or of the Dieppe Raid in 1942. Indeed, the bulk of the work produced by Lamb, Hughes, and Ogilvie in this period remains restricted to the depiction of training exercises in Great Britain.

In October 1942, Stacey’s “slightly illegal program” expanded with the addition of Lt. L. P. Harris (1910–1994), the son of the celebrated Group of Seven painter Lawren S. Harris (1885–1970).<sup>48</sup> Harris was related to Massey as their great-grandfather and grandfather respectively had founded the Massey-Harris Company. However, that same month, a less than enthusiastic response from the colour-blind Minister of National Defence, Colonel J. L. Ralston, to the art completed to date did not bode well for the program’s future.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, late in 1942, the indefatigable Massey made another effort to have an official war art program put in place.<sup>50</sup> This time the request made it through the bureaucracy to Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s desk. Perhaps Ralston had not been as lukewarm as Stacey had thought. In an interesting *volte-face* in terms of his circumspect attitude to the art of the First World

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47 Stacey, *A Date with History*, 108.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Massey to Norman Robertson, secretary of state for external affairs, 18 August 1942, Ottawa, NGCA 5.41–C.

War, as manifest in his failure to build it a gallery, King agreed to the foundation of an official program.<sup>51</sup>

Formally set up in January 1943, a committee consisting of McCurry and senior military personnel from the three services ran the program in Canada.<sup>52</sup> In Britain, Massey was the guiding light; senior officers in the services handled the mechanics of the program. Stacey, for example, continued to run the army's official art program. Even a cursory look at program records housed in the National Archives of Canada (NAC) reveals what a huge undertaking it proved to be. There are hundreds of letters from people requesting work as official war artists, hundreds of notes regarding the movements of war artists, and file after file of listings of the war art, records of when it was photographed, and requests for its use.<sup>53</sup>

Those hired as official war artists, ultimately thirty-two officers, were given rank, pay, supplies, and instructions. They were divided approximately evenly between the three services. The army was quicker off the mark and had initially the largest number of artists in the field, followed by the air force. The navy remained the least organized of the three services in terms of producing war art, although it can be argued that it ultimately employed the greater number of innovative painters. Only one woman artist was employed. A. Y. Jackson recommended twenty-three year old Molly Lamb (b. 1922) a junior officer in the Canadian Women's Army Corps

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51 Robertson to Massey, 21 December 1942, Ottawa, NAC, RG 24, 2653.

52 Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 54.

53 See Appendix A.

(CWAC).<sup>54</sup> However, unlike her male colleagues, she was not allowed overseas until after the war in Europe ended in May 1945.<sup>55</sup> All through the war impromptu and formal exhibitions of Canadian war art were organized in Canada, Europe, and in London.<sup>56</sup> The services also organized art classes and art competitions for servicemen and women.<sup>57</sup> Art was popular, and there were increasing numbers of requests for reproductions of official war art.<sup>58</sup>

The instructions the artists received when first appointed suggest they had little room to manoeuvre from an artistic point of view. Their directions specified the size and quantity of their paintings as well as their subjects (see Appendix B). Accuracy was paramount and the degree to which they saw this as important can be seen in the thousands of small sketches completed of equipment, vehicles, uniforms, and machines in the Canadian War Museum's art collections.

The program of work followed by most war artists differed very little from that of their First World War predecessors. They had all been trained in a traditional way of working largely unchanged from the late eighteenth century. Sketchbooks

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54 Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 166.

55 Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 79.

56 *Ibid.*, 131–162.

57 This is an area much in need of further research. In 1995–1996, CWM employed a Carleton University graduate student in a practicum project to explore the 1942 Canadian Armed Forces art exhibition. Andrew Waldron produced an excellent index of the artists and their works for the 1942 show, the Canadian Army art exhibitions of 1944 and 1945, and began research on the 1944 Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) art exhibition. This material is on file as part of the CWM War Artist Files.

58 Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*]," 162–163.

were critical. Those of the official army artist Orville Fisher were unusually innovative. In preparation for the D-Day invasion on 6 June 1944, he made tiny waterproof pads of paper that he strapped to his wrist. This made it possible for him to leap from his landing craft, race up the beach, and, once relatively safe, make rapid, on-the-spot sketches of the actions taking place before him. He never drew the figures accurately; instead he resorted to the use of the simple stick figure knowing that he could develop the figurative element later.<sup>59</sup>

Larger watercolour paintings were done in the field but away from battle. The time, date, location, event, or the names of the units depicted would be carefully noted on the back. Historical officers attached to the same units as the artists would assess these compositions for accuracy and any breach of censorship requirements before the pieces were forwarded to London. Once the war in Europe was over, the artists were sent back to Canada, where they were provided with studio space in order to complete a predetermined number of canvasses based on these watercolours. The finished oil compositions reveal how well they adapted their skills to the requirements of war. In them, creativity and record are combined in images that are generally sensitive to both history and art. It is important to note, however, that by this time a clear process of selecting the visual record of war was already in place. In some cases one can see this process in action as, for example, where the army artist Bruno Bobak (b. 1923)

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<sup>59</sup> "Invasion," *Weekend Magazine*, no. 23 (1964). Copy in CWM War Artist File, Orville Fisher; and Fisher's unrecorded remarks to the author at CWM, summer 1993.



changed the vehicles depicted in an on-the-spot watercolour study to an entirely different type in the finished oil painting. (Figs. 9, 10, pp. 321, 322)

Most artists were responsive to the presence of the dead. One soldier recalled the army artist Charles Comfort (1900–1994) carefully taking a white handkerchief to cover the face of a dead German who lay unburied close to his selected subject matter.<sup>60</sup> The naval artist Harold Beament (1898–1984) painted a burial at sea in a manner respectful of the tragic implications it had for many of his fellow sailors. (Fig. 11, p. 323) Jack Nichols (b. 1921), another naval artist, had no such compunction and, in one of the most wrenching images of the war, depicted a drowning German sailor. (Fig. 12, p. 324) For the most part, however, the war artists were not truly prepared for the subject matter that awaited them. Largely trained in a landscape painting tradition, they were poorly equipped to deal pictorially with the reality of war. Thus Comfort's dramatic painting of Campobasso, Italy, says more about his appreciation for the landscapes of the Renaissance artist Giovanni Bellini than it does for his interest in the Canadian army. (Fig. 13, p. 325)

The home front and the work of women in particular were initially neglected. McCurry recognized this but it was not until 1944 that he hired artists such as Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904–1949) to paint the women's services in Ottawa. MacLeod exemplified the nature of both the artist who wanted to paint the war and the artist who was able to record it in a manner not constrained by the official instructions. Her exuberant watercolours of service women dating from 1944 and 1945 were produced

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<sup>60</sup> Frank Delaney to the author, 30 September 1993, CWM War Artist File, Charles Comfort.

shortly after a symbolic series of paintings of her daughter, Jane, for whose future and that of all other children, MacLeod considered the war was being fought. Several of her paintings combine the elements of child, mother, victory parade, and homecoming to convey what the women left behind felt the war to be about.<sup>61</sup>

While the war art program was an undoubted success, like the First World War art program, once the war was over what to do with the works became an issue. By Cabinet decree, the Canadian War Records were deposited with the National Gallery in 1946.<sup>62</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, the works were rarely exhibited at the gallery but the loans activity was prodigious. The NGC's shipping orders from 1947–1953, for example, chart an intense level of activity across the country to military establishments and senior bureaucrats. On 4 July 1950, Brooke Claxton, the Minister of National Defence, received nine paintings for his office. On 15 September 1950, Lieut-General Guy Simonds was loaned eighteen works of art for the National Defence College in Kingston.<sup>63</sup>

No war artists were appointed to document Canada's involvement in the Korean War (1950–1953). In 1954, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) appointed

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<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, *When Johnnie Comes Marching Home*, n.d., oil on canvas, 122 x 112 cm, Montreal, Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University 964.37, gift of Mrs. Florence Millman in memory of Leo Millman.

<sup>62</sup> E. P. Murphy, Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence to H. O. McCurry, Director, National Gallery of Canada, 26 September 1946, NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41–C, Canadian War Artists Committee, Canadian War Records, file 4.

<sup>63</sup> The NGC shipping orders dating from 1943–1960 in the CWM Art Department Archives are an under-explored archival resource that documents the use of the war art in the period.

former Second World War artist, Robert Hyndman (b. 1917), to depict No. 1 Air Division in Germany.<sup>64</sup> Subsequently, however, as a result of increasing problems with record keeping and cataloguing the National Gallery hired a war art curator in 1960.<sup>65</sup> This appointment was also precipitated by the 1960 move of the gallery to the Lorne Building on Elgin Street and by the fact that the new director of the gallery, Charles Comfort, was himself a former war artist. A gallery in the Lorne Building was allotted to the permanent display of war art and a number of special exhibitions were organized, the majority focusing on the First World War collection and one on Alex Colville (b. 1920) in 1967.<sup>66</sup> However, in 1968, an exhibition of First World War paintings was displayed at the Veterans' Affairs Building in Ottawa and in 1970, an exhibition of Second World War paintings was also shown there.<sup>67</sup>

This activity suggests a narrowing of public interest in the paintings to the military and a concomitant lack of interest in them on the part of the gallery, which seems to have viewed the war art collections as documents, not art. It would also appear that other members of the gallery's staff were concerned that stylistically the paintings looked back to the past more than they indicated that Canada's art was abreast of the modernist canon. In 1971, in part in response to this, the third curator appointed, Major R. F. Wodehouse, supported the transfer of the majority of the paintings (those that

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64 R. F. Wodehouse to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 1 February 1971, NGCA, NGC fonds, War Art (General), 5-9, vol. 4.

65 R. H. Hubbard, "Pinacotheca Egregia Custos Admirabilis, 115.

66 Mainprize, "The National Gallery of Canada."

67 Catalogues exist for these two exhibitions in the CWM Art Department.

were considered “modern” were retained by the gallery), plus his own position, to the Canadian War Museum, thus diminishing the paintings’ role as art objects.

In this connection, it is worth noting that at the time of the 1971 transfer, a book on Alex Colville was about to be published that demonstrated the importance of his war art for his future development.<sup>68</sup> However, given that Colville’s art was so traditional in modernist eyes, it seems unlikely that this carried much weight in a period caught up in the wonders of abstraction. Certainly the 1967 exhibition organized by Wodehouse had not convinced the gallery that he was an artist of national importance.<sup>69</sup>

All this notwithstanding, Wodehouse did much to popularize the collections. First, he documented all the works, a task that resulted in a 1968 publication, *Check List of The War Collections*.<sup>70</sup> That year he also initiated a joint project with the National Gallery and the Department of National Defence to record Canada’s post-war military endeavours. The Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Programme [*sic*] resulted in the commissioning of nearly four hundred works of art that capture the Canadian military experience in bases across Canada and on duty in locations ranging from Cyprus and Israel to Somalia and Croatia. (The program was eliminated

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68 Helen J. Dow, *The Art of Alex Colville* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 52.

69 An interesting footnote to this attitude is that the National Gallery’s 2000 retrospective exhibition on Colville did not include any of his official war art. A small companion exhibition was put on display at the Canadian War Museum instead. The impetus for this was the war museum. CWM Art Department Exhibition File, Colville.

70 R. F. Wodehouse, *Check List of The War Collections* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1968).

in a 1995 budget cut and the works legally transferred to the Canadian War Museum in 2002.)

Wodehouse died in 1972 but his curatorial successors continued the loans activity and, in the absence of a gallery, organized touring exhibits that largely focused on individual artists such as A. Y. Jackson (1973), Charles Comfort (1979), Will Ogilvie (1980), and the perennially popular (at least as far as the War Museum was concerned) Alex Colville (1981 and 1986). Anniversaries were also respected with exhibitions on the Armistice (1978), the Invasion of Normandy (1974), and the Liberation of Holland (1985).<sup>71</sup>

The survey literature of this time, however, charts a slow downgrading of the significance of war art in the second half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, possibly in consequence of his having been involved in the war art lobbying exercise, McInnes was able to do war art justice as far as the Second World War Canadian War Records was concerned. In fact, he devotes a whole chapter of his second edition (1950) to the program. The chapter concludes with a sentence clearly stating that the age of art created in the interests of nationalism is over, even when created in the context of a great national effort such as war. He writes:

If the Canadian War Artists are considered on the basis of their terms of reference, their record is excellent: a permanent and vivid commentary, seen through the eyes of sensitive painters, on a great national effort. But beyond this, they may be considered simply as artists. Here, the development of their own work, and the feeling that the struggle was painted with skilled craftsmanship and vision, rather than with any avowed national philosophy, will perhaps rank as their greatest contribution to the development of our art.<sup>72</sup>

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71 Catalogues exist for these exhibitions in the CWM Art Department.

72 McInnes, *Canadian Art*, 86.

As such, this concluding sentence marks the end of an era in which nation building has been an important consideration as far as the writing of Canadian art history is concerned.

R. H. Hubbard's *The Development of Canadian Art*, published in the early 1960s, integrates the war art into the biographies of the individual artists.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps this too was in keeping with a period that championed the individual. At the time of the 1971 transfer, the war art of Canadian artists remained a brief point of activity in the surveys of individual artists in the histories of Canadian art by both J. Russell Harper (1966) and Dennis Reid (1973).<sup>74</sup> Harper paid limited attention to either of the programs in his volume. In terms of the war art, his text centres on the formal concerns traditionally associated with modernism – F. H. Varley's war paintings are “grey in mood, with rotting greens, mauves and ochres everywhere.”<sup>75</sup>

Barry Lord's 1974 survey, *The History of Painting in Canada*, is a purely Marxist account, which sees the art of Canada as part of a national struggle for liberation from a capitalist-dominated economic and political system. Lord sees war art as part of the people's struggle and, hence, as having a heroic and important dimension. In this time period, only he devotes any space to the Second World War art program as

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<sup>73</sup> R. H. Hubbard, *The Development of Canadian Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, n.d.).

<sup>74</sup> J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 335–336, and Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*. See, for example, 168–69, where Reid discusses the war art of David Milne.

<sup>75</sup> Harper, *Painting in Canada*, 286.

an entity in its own right.<sup>76</sup> He comments on a photograph of artist F. B Taylor's (1906–1987) 1944 exhibition of “heroic portraits of workers,” held in the meeting rooms of Lodge 712 of the International Association of Machinists. “Advancing together in the common struggle of the war,” he writes, “artist and worker here take a long step forward toward a people's art.”<sup>77</sup>

In part because of the political agenda of Lord's thesis, the memorial aspect of war art and its association with the past is not avoided. After all, many of the paintings depict the battlefield and home front labours of working men and women. For the same reasons, promoting modernism is not important to him because modern art could arguably be associated with the capitalist élites. In consequence, he devotes a not insignificant number of pages to the two art programs. Of F. H. Varley's great 1918 work *For What?* (Fig. 15, p. 327), he writes:

Painted as imperialists were arranging the terms of the armistice to their own advantage, this canvas takes the point of view of the soldiers who did the fighting and dying in the mud for four years. It mourns the dead, but also demands reasons for the slaughter. For *What?* was a question many Canadian veterans were to ask as they came back to a Canada of exploitation, repression and unemployment.<sup>78</sup>

Lord's writing clearly shows why a Marxist-derived theoretical approach in general has the potential to reveal something of the role and value of Canadian war

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76 Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974).

77 *Ibid.*, 197. It is interesting to note here that F. B. Taylor was a communist while his brother E. P. Taylor was a prominent and wealthy Canadian businessman.

78 *Ibid.*, 134.

art. Within his chosen framework there is room to discuss the content and meaning of a number of works of war art. In comparison, the other texts, with their modernist and canonical underpinnings, cannot find a place for any such discussion.

Largely as a result of the curatorial activity of the 1960s the art-going public knew of the collections' existence, even if they had only seen parts of it, far better than they had in the inter-war years. In due course, this knowledge was matched to the expansion in university attendance and the increasing number of new approaches to history and art history with the result that the war art became gradually more often the subject of academic and popular research. No longer was its worth attributable only to its role as an expression of national achievement and its failure to be well known simply due to its inability to find a comfortable place in the modernist orthodoxies of the sixties and seventies. The war art could be found to have a new relevance and could be examined both for its contribution to the cultural and intellectual fabric of the country and as pure art.

One can cite, for example, Heather Robertson's lavishly illustrated 1978 compendium of prose and poetry, *A Terrible Beauty*, and Joan Murray's 1981 art historical survey, *Canadian Artists of the Second World War*.<sup>79</sup> Murray's publication was based on a considerable number of interviews she conducted with the war artists, which remain a useful source of contemporary information and opinion on their war experiences. Both of these publications accompanied exhibitions that toured to a

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<sup>79</sup> Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty* (James Lorimer and Company, 1978) and Joan Murray, *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* (Oshawa: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1981).



number of galleries across the country. *A Terrible Beauty* consisted of one hundred paintings and drawings – largely works on paper – from both wars. *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* consisted of the same number of compositions and of a similar media mix and toured widely. Published war artists diaries also raised awareness of the collections, for example Graham Metson and Cheryl Lean's *Alex Colville: Diary of a War Artist* (1981).<sup>80</sup>

Maria Tippett's 1984 book, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, a study in culture and patronage, was published shortly afterwards and admirably documents the First World War program. It also draws attention to the role of the conflict in the art of the Group of Seven.<sup>81</sup> While it is fundamental to any study of war art in Canada, it also identifies a number of areas in need of more extensive research. In 1989, Tippett curated a touring exhibition of war art entitled *Lest We Forget* from CWM collections.<sup>82</sup> Subsequent to this, and in part in consequence of federal government funding cutbacks in the period, there were no major touring exhibitions of Canadian war art until *Canvas of War* in 2000.

Government cutbacks did not, however, have an appreciable effect on academic production. In the area of women's studies, Terresa McIntosh's M. A. thesis, "Other Images of War: Canadian Women War Artists of the First and Second World Wars" (1990), makes a useful contribution to the field by documenting the war art

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80 Graham Metson and Cheryl Lean, *Alex Colville: Diary of a War Artist* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1981).

81 Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 108–9.

82 Maria Tippett, *Lest We Forget* (London: London Regional Art Gallery and Museum, 1989).

production of many of the female painters who participated.<sup>83</sup> New ground is broken in Yves M. Larocque's 1995 M. A. thesis, "La peinture militaire canadienne de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et son aspect surréal," in which he examines what he arguably considers the surrealist element in war art.<sup>84</sup> While excellent in so many other ways, Vance's 1997 study, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, sheds limited new light on the story of the First World War art collection and adds nothing substantial to Tippett's excellent fifteen-year-old analysis of the art program.

The collections also gained some small measure of new relevance for art history when considered in the light of post-modern thinking. This has discredited the purely aesthetic or documentary value of art and has called into question authoritarian notions concerning what is and what is not good art. This has resulted in the social context within which the art was created assuming a renewed importance in determining how it is viewed and assessed. Post-modern approaches have permitted the historical context at the time of creation and the current time of assessment to be factors in assessing art's importance, rather than aesthetic values of an absolute nature. Examined in this light Canada's war art collections have been occasionally re-evaluated.

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83 Teresa McIntosh, "Other Images of War: Canadian Women War Artists of the First and Second World Wars" (M. A. thesis, Carleton University, 1990). Note also Susan Butlin, "Women Making Shells: Marking Women's Presence in Munitions Work, 1914–1918, the Art of Frances Loring, Florence Wyle, Mabel May, and Dorothy Stevens," *Canadian Military History*, vol. 5, no. 1, (spring 1996), 41–48.

84 Yves M. Larocque, "La peinture militaire canadienne de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et son aspect surréal" (M. A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1985).

A 1994 M. A. thesis from Concordia University by Kristina Huneault, “Heroes of a Different Sort: Representations of Women at Work in Canadian Art of the First World War,” addresses gender issues as expressed in the war art of the period.<sup>85</sup> In her discussion of the sculptural work of the Canadian artists Frances Loring (1887–1968) and Florence Wyle (1881–1968) Huneault explores the contrast between historic and contemporary readings of the meaning of these figures. In a similar vein but in the context of the Second World War, the art historian Brian Foss’s essay, “Molly Lamb Bobak: Art and War,” in the exhibition catalogue *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* (1993), addresses issues that also concerned Huneault.<sup>86</sup> However, the life of women in the services and on the home front as depicted in the art of the period remains relatively little studied. Equally, the life of the soldier as depicted in soldiers’ sketchbooks is still unexplored. The further outreaches of postmodernist endeavour, issues of semantics and semiotics in particular, present a completely blank slate as far as war art in Canada is concerned. What the artists themselves, or indeed the public – particularly veterans – had to say about war art has also almost never been studied.

Curiously, however, the art has not been used to any notable extent by military historians in the past, or even recently, except as illustration. With the rare exception, such as Vance (1997), no military historian has explored Canadian war art within his or her own discipline. In general, historians have been content to accept the paintings

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85 Kristina Huneault, “Heroes of a Different Sort: Representations of Women at Work in Canadian Art of the First World War” (M. A. thesis, Concordia University, 1994).

86 Brian Foss, “Molly Lamb Bobak: Art and War,” in *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993).

as documents – particularly those of the Second World War – without questioning the degree of artistic license that might devalue them as historical records while giving them greater credibility as art. Few, if any (as Chapter Ten describes), have used them as a source or questioned their role in military history despite the fact that the Department of National Defence paid for most of them and clearly continues to attach importance to their production. In June 2001, for example, the department announced a new program, the Canadian Forces Artists Program (CFAP), which, nonetheless, has yet to appoint any artists.

In some respects, the writing of Canadian war art history has recently come full circle. In Charles C. Hill's exhibition catalogue *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (1995), nation-building returns to the fore – at least in the title. Reflective of Housser's volume, a chapter is devoted to the Group's war efforts in terms of which artists participated in the war, where they went, and what they did. There is limited exploration of the wider political and social contexts of their endeavours. Indeed, in a review of the catalogue in the *Literary Review of Canada* (1995), Maria Tippett also makes this point.<sup>87</sup> This is, however, it must be noted, a reflection of the nature of the book, which closely and carefully focuses on how their art was received.<sup>88</sup> The most recent academic work in the field is Fiona Valverde's 1997 M. Litt. thesis, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*] 1942–1946," which provides a very useful and detailed narrative

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87 Maria Tippett, "Why Not Eight, or Nine?" *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1995), 3–4.

88 Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

account of the Second World War program that is, however, devoid of any theoretical analysis.<sup>89</sup>

There can be no doubt that the early history of the writing on war art has related quite closely to nationalist agendas at the political level in Canadian affairs. Later writing has, in general, been lacking any concerns other than the formal. Writing on war art has also consistently lost ground in the face of prevailing modernist orthodoxies. It seems clear that it was not until modernism began to be challenged in the 1980s that war art could be explored in any depth once more. By exploring the literature on Canadian war art it becomes apparent that there is a place for different theoretical models in which to assess it. Certainly war art's light shines brighter when it is examined in relationship to social, intellectual, and cultural contexts that focus on the making of social memory, as the following chapters will show.

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89 Fiona Valverde, "The Canadian War Artists' Programme [*sic*], 1942–1946" (M. Litt. thesis, Cambridge University, 1997).

## PART ONE

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR – THE LOSS OF MEMORY

*In the years following the end of the First World War it became clear that Beaverbrook's war art collection was never going to play the commemorative and memorial role he had planned. A number of reasons can be identified to explain this. The unstable domestic political situation coloured by a growing nationalist sentiment in Canada was one, the subject matter of the art itself was another, and the collection's lack of a particular champion was also critical. Particularly significant, however, was the fact that the art was not, for politicians or the public, the preferred instrument of memory.*

*The following five chapters explore the collection's declining role in the formation of Canada's memory of the war. Chapter Two explores the religious subject matter of some of the major paintings and sculptures and the artworks' consequent growing irrelevance to the prevailing modernist orthodoxy in art, which limited their usefulness to newer understandings of war. Chapter Three suggests that, among other factors, a memorial building housing art viewed as glorifying war was at odds with the trend towards pacifist thinking emerging after the conflict, which again reduced the collection's relevance to post-war memory. Chapter Four discusses how three of the main Canadian war memorials that were built after 1919 accommodated traditional religious imagery by secularizing it and thus found a memorial role. Chapter Five examines how the post-war art of the celebrated Group of Seven appropriated a new and different national meaning that distanced its work*

*from the war itself and thus diminished the memory of the war in the nation's developing view of itself. Chapter Six presents two accomplished First World War Canadian artists whose war work was not reconfigured to meet the interests of the new age and remained largely in storage throughout the period in question, lost to memory almost entirely.*

## Chapter 2

### The Curse of Religion

This chapter explores how the iconographic element in war art that made it meaningful to those who suffered bereavement during the First World War – religious subject matter – contributed in the post-war period to an abrupt diminishment of the art’s role in the nation’s memory of that conflict. Until late 1918, the war art that focused on religious subjects such as Christ’s Crucifixion spoke to those who had lost family in battle and provided comfort. In the aftermath of combat, in the face of recession and a fuller understanding of the true nature of the catastrophe, any suggestion that redemption might have resulted from such enormous sacrifice seemed to some degree a mockery. Yet these subjects had been deliberately selected when the paintings were commissioned. An examination of the circumstances surrounding these commissions makes it clear that the history of the war art collections cannot be separated from their use as a tool – a process that is clearly consciously selective.

The history of the more religious of the artworks might not have become one of increasing invisibility, however, if their subject had not been that most terrible, brutal, and devastating of human occupations, war. From time immemorial war has been fundamental to the human condition. Providing conflict with both an acceptable face and the means to continue combat in socially sanctioned ways has been a central occupation of the rulers of society at all levels, in all places, and at all times. From the time of the Assyrians, if not before, art has proved a stalwart handmaiden by ensuring



both a means to glorify the achievements of battle and, in the wake of conflict, a means to guarantee solace for the victims' friends and family.

As such, war art has become an agent of change both within and in opposition to a dominant discourse or organized system of knowledge that has in Canada become concrete in the form of institutions such as Heritage Canada, Veterans' Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, and the Canadian War Museum. The work of these bodies informs individual behaviour and provides a framework for the perception and evaluation of events and organizations that the state approves of by enshrining sanctioned viewpoints through means that include, but are not limited to, programs, rituals, and monuments. By providing (and, it can be argued, continuing to provide) such a structure within which the consequences of war can be understood as noble sacrifice, the state has also ensured a means to continue the bloodshed. Thus those who enlist, support, memorialize, grieve publicly, and continue to promote war and conflict resolution as just causes are operating within a constructed paradigm within which they have little agency. Within a dominant discourse centred on noble sacrifice, war art that makes use of religious symbolism, for millennia an accepted, if not a legal part of the state apparatus of some countries, is a potent tool for maintaining the status quo. When the dominant discourse changes, however, its meanings and messages no longer have a place and have to be reconfigured into a new dominant discourse or, on the other hand, jettisoned.

This process of legitimization is a basic principle of Marxism. In 1845, Marx wrote that: "The class, which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at

its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as Ralph Miliband argues in *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969): “The Churches in advanced capitalist countries have, in this century, provided a useful element of reinforcement to the authority of the state and of its purposes by their emphatic attitude of loyalty towards it.”<sup>2</sup> As well, churches have “[blessed] the state’s enterprises, including its wars [and] preparations for war.”<sup>3</sup>

Miliband continues his argument stating that governments

seek to identify the Churches with the state . . . in the conviction that such identification, and the suffused religiosity which is a common part of official life and official ritual, form a modest but useful contribution to those whose habits of obedience . . . both the state and the Churches seek to foster.”<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, several recent authors in the field of western cultural and intellectual history have argued that traditional values, both in terms of religious and artistic practices, characterized the First World War period, providing an established and comforting frame of reference within which the experiences of the conflict could be handled.<sup>5</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the role those in authority

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1 Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1939), 39, as quoted in, Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969).

2 Ibid., 204.

3 Ibid., 205.

4 Ibid.

5 See, for example, Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997). Articles on

might have played in encouraging this revival.<sup>6</sup> Their reasons for so doing have not been examined in any detail either. Indeed, one author dismisses the idea of social control by élites as denying agency to those ordinary people who participated.<sup>7</sup> That more than one kind of agency could be at play in the period is an important consideration.

The revived religious sensibility was important for both the church and the government. It initially provided a useful and acceptable means for church and state to rationalize a conflict that had undermined many of the fundamental tenets of Christianity and, furthermore, called into question the moral authority of the state. The Reverend G. C. Pidgeon of Toronto's Bloor Street Presbyterian congregation informed his flock that

the death of a soldier on the battlefield and the grief that this caused those at home were comparable to the agony of Christ's crucifixion and the sorrow it brought to his mother. As Christ's crucifixion was part of a larger purpose and ultimately a demonstration of God's love, so too were the sacrifices of wartime.<sup>8</sup>

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the subject include Alan R. Young, "We throw the torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4 (winter 1989–1990) in which he argues, like Winter, that traditional forms of memorial continued to have resonance for the public. See also, Catherine Moriarty, "Christian Iconography and First World War Memorials," *Imperial War Museum Review* 6 (1992).

<sup>6</sup> Church as opposed to government authorities were certainly active. See, for example, J. M. Bliss, "The Methodist Church in World War I," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 49, no. 3 (September 1968), 213–233.

<sup>7</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 266–267.

<sup>8</sup> David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 163.

Pidgeon took a similar message to the front. Throughout the war, the Cross is the most important symbol to convey the idea that the slaughter was not senseless but redemptive. While, in the long term, religious practice was unable to sustain its centrality to social life, the government succeeded in reconfiguring a symbolism centred on the crucified Christ to its own ends. It achieved this by utilizing a secularized and modern version of the traditional religious image. In this scenario, a young Canada found personification as a symbol of sacrifice and resurrection and, in so doing, contributed to the national myth that the twentieth century would be Canada's.

Two current debates contribute to our understanding of this iconographic transformation. One centres on the importance of modernism for twentieth-century art. Does modernism represent a fundamental shift in the course of art history, or is its advent a mere interruption to an ever-dominant traditionalism? The other focuses on the First World War as a time in which religious belief was shaken beyond redemption; a view that has been challenged.<sup>9</sup>

These interpretations come together in an examination of the nature and history of a number of paintings from Canada's First World War art collection: the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF). This collection has a role to play in both arguments as it provides visual evidence of prevailing views. Religious symbolism, a

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<sup>9</sup> In terms of the crisis of faith during the First World War, see for example, Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 157–180. For an alternative view, see Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 259–265.

traditional subject matter in art, is prominent in some of the Fund's paintings. In the decades that followed the conflict, however, the exhibition history of the more religious artworks clearly shows that their image of war did not long survive the Armistice. Modernism's hostility to institutional religion and the spiritual concerns of Christianity clearly played a role in effecting the artworks' disappearance. The religious practices of the period reflect the same pattern. While there was an apparent return to Christianity during the war, this was not sustained in its aftermath.

The decline of religious imagery in modern war art is succinctly argued in historian Peter Paret's 1997 book, *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art*.<sup>10</sup> After the Renaissance, "the reality of war dominates its aesthetic representation," he writes, or

it might be more accurate to say, comes to dominate, because . . . some artists continue to visualize armed men and fighting in terms of Christian belief and thought . . . To a degree, the glorification of the temporal leader and his political system – which had, of course, also been present in medieval art – replaces the Christian faith as a determining interpretative force. But it never achieves similar universality. More and more, artists address war not only as an act of belief and unbelief, but also – and often mainly – as a sequence of events, the concrete reality of which poses the main challenge to their work.<sup>11</sup>

Jay Winter posits in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995), that during the war, "religious images and ideas" did not disappear but were utilized by the cultural community to a previously unacknowledged degree as a means of expressing

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Paret, *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

bereavement and mourning.<sup>12</sup> His views are supported in a Canadian context by Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble* (1997), which details how the Canadian clergy transformed the slaughter of the Great War into a metaphor for Christian redemption and resurrection. Vance does not, however, analyze the role of the Canadian War Memorials paintings in supporting this clerical sleight-of-hand. Doing so might have enabled him to respond in part to an important criticism of his book voiced by Donald Wright in a review in the December 1998 *Literary Review of Canada*.<sup>13</sup> Vance, he argues, viewed the metamorphosis of the First World War killing fields into a noble cause primarily from the point of view of those who experienced it. He writes:

While the promise of noble death no doubt proved both explanatory and compensatory it is not unreasonable to assume that the myth performed other functions as well, that it existed to defend the status quo, buttress existing social relations, mark the limits of permissible discourse, curb dissent and, ultimately, legitimate war as an arbiter of international disputes.<sup>14</sup>

This is an important statement for the argument presented in this chapter. It quite clearly moves the debate onto another level by suggesting that the myth of “noble death” served not only the bereaved but could also be seen as politically motivated with aims that were calculated and undoubtedly chilling. The idea that war and its horrific consequences feed off socially and culturally constructed agendas to ensure legitimacy is likely true. It is one that needs to be explored thoroughly in

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<sup>12</sup> Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Wright, “Myth, Memory, Meaning,” *Literary Review of Canada* (December 1998), 25–27.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Canada, if not elsewhere, beyond the pages of the *Literary Review*, and more importantly, in the face of a growing dominant discourse that thoroughly disguises war's appalling reality as peacemaking.

An examination of the artworks that make up the Canadian War Memorials brings this polarization into sharper focus as far as the First World War is concerned. It allows us to conclude that Christian iconography remained a significant symbolic tool in the art of the Great War even in the few paintings now considered to be modern and secular. Much as the clergy used the still-familiar aspects of the Christian story to put a positive spin on the war, artists were likely to choose traditional Christian-based iconography because of its utility in conveying meanings that were already understood in a Christian context. The lack of public and official interest in the more overtly religious of the paintings after the war underlines the fact that commemorating the war using explicitly Christian imagery was a short-lived phenomenon. An examination of the post-war loans history of these paintings confirms that it was not their use of religious iconography that ensured their fame as war images, but rather their modernity. Those that lacked the label "modern" were doomed to everlasting storage.

Forty of the Canadian War Memorials paintings are substantial in size, at least 2.5 x 3 metres on average.<sup>15</sup> As these paintings were expected to be on permanent public display, the Christian iconography of a number of them will be considered in

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Beaverbrook to Walker, 14 December 1917, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41-C, Canadian War Memorials (General), file 1.

detail. Their fate has been mixed. The National Gallery of Canada retained seven of the more modern works after the 1971 transfer of the majority of all Canada's war art to the Canadian War Museum.<sup>16</sup> A further eight, recently restored, have always hung in the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill.<sup>17</sup> The balance of the works is in the collection of the Canadian War Museum. It is perhaps best to begin with the Senate works, as their selection to hang in the Senate Chamber dates from 1921, and thus the choice best reflects the spirit of the times.

Of the eight paintings on view in the Senate, not one is in a modern style. While the Christian symbolism is hardly overt, traditional imagery common to Christian belief is drawn upon in at least five paintings. Two by the Canadian-born artist James Kerr-Lawson (1865–1939), *The Cloth Hall, Ypres* (c. 1919) and *Arras, the Dead City* (c. 1919), feature churches ruined by bombardment. (Figs. 31, 32, pp. 343, 344) That there should be two such images on view is not exceptional: the ruined church was the most prevalent emblematic image used in First World War Canadian art, carrying with it allusions to the end of civilization as symbolized in the destruction of places of worship. Given the resemblance of the Senate Chamber to the nave of a medieval Gothic church, the selection of large paintings with such religious content was entirely, if not consciously, appropriate.

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Beaverbrook's attached initial list describes the planned subjects of a majority of these huge canvasses.

16 The transfer is discussed in Chapter Seven.

17 Notice of receipt from NGC signed by Ernest J. Chambers, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, 12 February 1921, NGCA, 5.41–C.



Clare Atwood's (1866–1962) *On Leave* (c. 1918) introduces another constant iconic image in the art of the First World War, the lighting of a cigarette as a sign of comfort in a world gone mad. (Fig. 33, p. 345) Its immediate parallel is the lighting of candles as symbols of life in the face of darkness in Christian celebration. In George Clausen's (1852–1944) *Returning to the Reconquered Land*, the central figure in the group of laden peasants returning to their homeland is a young woman with a baby. A scarf covers her head and she is dressed in blue with a white apron, drawing upon familiar images of Mary and the young Jesus Christ. (Fig. 34, p. 346) Beyond that, the grouping of some of the figures calls to mind images of the Expulsion from Eden. Furthermore, in the painting, the sign on the left reading "This is Ablain St. Nazaire" has been defaced to read "This was Ablain St. Nazaire," underlining the fact that these people's former personal Eden is now gone.

The subsequent history of these paintings has been mixed. Following their unveiling in February 1921, efforts to remove them were made suggesting that some individuals in government were seemingly uncomfortable surrounded by war images from the past and sought a more contemporary look. One of the recommendations was to hang portraits of past senators, while another concluded that tapestries of a multicultural nature might be displayed.<sup>18</sup>

Of the seven less traditional works retained by the National Gallery, two make a subtle use of traditional Christian imagery to get their message across, although the

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<sup>18</sup> See for example, "Prefer Murals to Portraits of Senators," *Toronto Telegram*, 10 November 1943, and "Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Clerestory of the Senate Chamber," *Senate Debates*, 8 June 1977, 852–861.

subject itself is not Christian. William Roberts's (1895–1980) *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres* (1918) draws, in many respects, on traditional images of the Last Judgement and, in particular, on Michelangelo's rendition in Rome's Sistine Chapel.<sup>19</sup> The Canadians' first terrible experience of gas warfare in 1915 must have made even the hardest soldier question the notion of an honourable and just war. The imagery of the Last Judgement is redolent with a commonly understood symbolism centred on notions of good and evil and Heaven and Hell. Using it as a visual metaphor for gas warfare makes one of the most horrific weapons of the Great War immediately comprehensible in all its ghastliness.

David Bomberg's (1890–1957) *Sappers at Work: A Canadian Tunnelling Company* (1918) depicts Canadian sappers constructing a tunnel at St. Eloi on the Ypres salient in the spring of 1916.<sup>20</sup> The tunnels were burrowed deep under enemy lines where large mines could be detonated to destroy their defences. It was deadly, dangerous work. The subject of this painting is not Christian but it draws on a Christian iconography that would have been commonly understood to explain the sapper experience. The support structure in the tunnel resembles nothing so much as a veritable forest of Calvary crosses imbued with a symbolism connected to terrible injury, sacrifice, and a painful death often suffered alone. That Bomberg would have used a Christian reference is not surprising. One of his favourite paintings was El

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19 William Roberts, *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres*, 1918, oil on canvas, 304.8 x 365.8 cm, NGC 8729.

20 David Bomberg, *Sappers at Work: A Canadian Tunnelling Company* (Second Version), 1919, oil on canvas, 305 x 244 cm, NGC 8108.

Greco's *Christ Driving the Traders from the Temple*, which, indeed, was one inspiration for the first version of his Canadian composition.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, in the final CWMF version, a commission he found problematic, he depicted himself in the lower right of the canvas carrying a beam in the manner of Christ on the road to Calvary.

These two paintings are among the most notable war paintings in Canada, in part, no doubt, because they were exceptional enough to be retained in the National Gallery's collection after 1971. Their perceived quality rests on their modernity and not because of any references to the Christian message. Indeed, it is in the context of modern art that they are both prominently illustrated and discussed in the British critic Richard Cork's 1994 exhibition catalogue, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War*.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the paintings' albeit brief loan history after 1962, includes a period on exhibit at London's public gallery for modern art, the Tate Gallery, in 1965.<sup>23</sup>

Of the large paintings currently retained by the Canadian War Museum, Charles Sims's (1873–1928) *Sacrifice* (1918) draws most explicitly on Christian imagery to make its point. (Fig. 16, p. 328) The vast painting is split in half by a crucifix on which, seen from behind, hangs the dead body of Christ overlooking the corpses, the dying, and the wounded half buried in the mud and swamp that

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21 Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University, Press, 1994), 229.

22 Ibid., 209–213, 229–230.

23 Canadian War Museum (CWM) Art Department loan cards.

constituted the Western Front. Below the Cross the mourners in the form of mothers, children, and the elderly both grieve and continue their work. Above the arms of the Cross are strung the provincial coats of arms. The theme of sacrifice is even more clearly underlined by the fact that the artist's own son was killed in the war. Current research indicates that this painting has – with the recent exception of its inclusion in *Canvas of War* in 2000 – been hidden from public view since 1924.<sup>24</sup>

The theme of mourning at the foot of the Cross is also implicit in the British artist James Byam Shaw's (1872–1919) *The Flag* (1918). (Fig. 35, p. 347) Here, a young, dead Canadian soldier clutches his country's flag as he lies between the vast paws of a sculpted metal lion (clearly drawn from those surrounding Nelson's Column at Trafalgar Square, London) and is mourned by his family. However, the iconography is different in that the dead Canadian himself is more reminiscent of Christ in the arms of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross, the familiar *pietà* figure. The work was immensely popular in the first exhibitions of the CWMF paintings. The Canadian art critic Hector Charlesworth described it in *Saturday Night* (1919):

Most effective of all, [is] Byam Shaw's classical and symbolical piece, "The Flag." Classical it is in the fullest sense; whether in the simple beauty of line or arrangement; or the manner in which the poignant facts of death, grief and sacrifice are harmonized into an expression of the mystery of Fate. Its very reticence and quietude heightens its emotional spirit.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> It was first exhibited in 1919.

<sup>25</sup> Hector Charlesworth, "Reflections," *Saturday Night*, 13 September 1919, 2.

Nonetheless, its popularity was short-lived. Surviving loans records at the Canadian War Museum indicate that between 1962 and 1998 the painting was never exhibited. Like Sims's work, however, the subject acquired additional poignancy when it was learned that the two sons who served as models in the painting both lost their lives in the Second World War.<sup>26</sup>

The vast triptych entitled *No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital, France* (1918) by the British artist Gerald Moira (1867–1959) is painted from sketches the artist made at the casualty clearing station at Doullens, France. (Fig. 36, p. 348) The centre panel shows a chapel that had been turned into a receiving room for the wounded. Above the nurse who stands in the centre surrounded by wounded patients is a statue of the Virgin and Child. The caring role of the nurse is emphasized by the visually explicit link the artist exploits between her and the Virgin. The artist's choice of the chapel for his central scene, a familiar device in Renaissance and Baroque religious paintings, underlined his awareness that, through references to a commonly understood religious iconography, certain messages are more easily conveyed. In this case, the justness of the war is made clear by the use of the chapel setting. The caring role of nurses is carried through linking them to the image of Mary.

This painting was not exhibited as a complete triptych subsequent to the 1923 exhibition in Ottawa at the National Gallery of Canada until 2000, when it was included in *Canvas of War*. The left-hand section was, however, exhibited in 1984 at the Canadian War Museum as part of an exhibition focusing on women in wartime.<sup>27</sup>

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26 CWM War Artist File, James Byam Shaw.

27 *Women at War*, Canadian War Museum, 10 May 1984–12 September 1987.

Its inclusion in this context, of course, unequivocally demonstrated the role of cultural reconstruction in saving it from oblivion.

One other work from the Canadian War Museum's collection quite clearly problematizes its Christian iconography. When the Canadian War Memorials 1919 exhibition moved to New York, one piece, Derwent Wood's (1871–1926) bronze sculpture *Canada's Golgotha* (1918), was pulled from the display when the Germans protested that the event depicted had never occurred.<sup>28</sup> It is a portrayal of a crucified Canadian soldier surrounded by jeering Germans.<sup>29</sup> It was not exhibited again until 1992, when it was included in a Canadian War Museum exhibition entitled *Peace is the Dream*. In a subsequent CWM exhibition, *Conservation Is?*, the label referred only to its restoration and not to its subject matter. Doug Young, the then Minister of Defence exhibited it in his office in 1996 but the current minister, Art Eggleton, requested its removal. This curious nearly ten-year period of almost continuous exhibition concluded with the sculpture's inclusion in an exhibition on Christianity at the Canadian Museum of Civilization entitled *Under the Sign of the Cross* in 2000.<sup>30</sup> The circumstances that brought such works to considerable public view after lengthy storage at the end of the twentieth century forms part of the history of recovery for war art and will be discussed in Part Two.

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28 Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 81–87.

29 Derwent Wood, *Canada's Golgotha*, 1918, bronze, 83 x 63.5 cm, CWM 8940.

30 *Peace is the Dream* was on view at the CWM from 30 March 1992–8 October 1992, *Conservation Is?* was on view at CWM from 20 December 1992–28 September 1995. The sculpture was at the Department of National Defence

Quite clearly, some of Canada's First World War art played a role in supporting a short-lived but nevertheless widespread interest in religious practice as a means of assuaging grief and understanding death during and just after the war. In this capacity, the war art also provided a means to promote and protect the dominant hegemonic order of the state – the wager of war. At the time, patron, producer, and viewer all got what they wanted out of the more religious of the artworks. After the conflict, framed in a secular context within which modernism was dominant, the pieces had very different roles or none at all.

The very fact that the significance of this war art could change so radically in response to outside circumstances clearly points to the limitations of any aesthetic value they might hold. This in turn plays quite effectively into the Marxist cultural paradigm that maintains that works of art have no existence, beyond the material, outside of context and meaning. It also plays clearly to the more recent post-modern theoretical arguments that posit that the art exists only when it has a role to play in ensuring the dominant discourse. In this scenario, power gives the only meaning, if not existence, to it.

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(DND) from 20 June 1996–2 July 1997, and in *Under the Sign of the Cross* from 5 November 1999–18 March 2001.

## Chapter 3

### The Politics of War Memorials

The following two chapters examine the increasing post-war irrelevance of the First World War art through its failure to become a war memorial in its own right or to be enshrined as a memorial in a dedicated gallery. They also explore the fact that different war memorials were built instead. In so doing, Canada differed little from her allies, none of whom erected war memorial art galleries either. As the previous chapter has shown, some of the war art content was clearly no longer relevant to how Canadians wanted to remember the conflict. That war memorials were not instantly built demonstrates that how the memory of war was going to be permanently constructed was also not obvious in 1919. Ironically, in light of the evidence presented in the previous chapter, religious design elements in the form of angels, for example, remained in all the war memorials discussed but their designated meaning was largely secular.

The Canadian War Memorials were originally turned over to the custody of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) in 1920 following exhibitions in England, the United States, and Canada. The gallery found them something of a burden. Other than the issue of quantity, the size of a number of the works made them difficult to store. As well, the gallery had been temporarily moved out of its home in the Victoria Memorial Building in Ottawa to make way for Parliament, the latter's buildings having been severely damaged by fire in 1916. This notwithstanding the gallery took advantage of its difficult situation to lobby loudly for a purpose-built building over



the course of succeeding decades. With political adeptness, it stated that this building would also house Canada's war art.<sup>1</sup>

Beaverbrook had had something different in mind and unveiled it early in January 1919 at the first exhibition of the Canadian War Memorials paintings in Burlington House, London. On view alongside the paintings were the plans for a building to house them. A brochure was made available shortly after the exhibition came down, which detailed the overall concept of the architect E. A. Rickards's design. The introductory paragraph outlined the role of the building in relation to the significant collection of works of art that recorded Canada's contribution in the Great War. In essence, a neo-baroque gallery was to be built on Nepean Point in Ottawa, overlooking the Ottawa River, on the site where the National Gallery of Canada now sits. It was to be Canada's war memorial.

This war memorial was never built and, indeed, never progressed beyond the pages of the brochure and the designs of Rickards. Furthermore, the three watercolour drawings by the architect never came to Canada; instead they ended up in the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London where two are now missing and the third is torn into three pieces.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The Canadian War Memorials correspondence files in the National Gallery of Canada Archives are extensive with regards to the difficulties the gallery experienced in caring for these works and their lobbying efforts. See National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41-C, Canadian War Memorials.

2 The three watercolours consisting of a perspective view of the interior, a transverse-section through the interior, and a drawing showing the overall design of the exterior are illustrated in colour in Arnold Bennett, H. V. Lanchester, and Amor Fenn, *The Art of E. A. Rickards Comprising a Collection of His*

The architect invited to design the Canadian war memorial, Edwin Alfred Rickards, was born in Chelsea, London, in 1872, and died there at the relatively early age of forty-eight. The commission for the Canadian war memorial art gallery was his last major design. He appears to have been something of a prodigy as he achieved success quite young. His beginnings were humble (his mother kept a drapery shop in Fulham) but by the age of fifteen he had begun the first of a series of jobs working for a succession of London architectural firms to the extent that he suffered a collapse at the age of twenty-one through overwork. Upon his return from convalescence abroad, he became a partner in a new firm named Lanchester, James, Stewart, and Rickards. Of the four partners, H. V. Lanchester was in many ways Rickards's mentor. He was also the more business-like of the two and was able to allow Rickards's undoubted gifts in design and draughtsmanship to flourish over the course of the partnership.

The period of their early practice fell at the end of Victoria's reign and the beginning of Edward VII's. At the time, a great many architectural competitions were being held for the design of public buildings. Following the Queen's Jubilee in 1887, it seemed to many that the British Empire had never been more secure or important. The growing national pride was reflected across the country in a series of commissions for town halls, institutional, and other public buildings in which a certain dominating presence seems to have been the most sought after feature. The firm's first success was the design in 1897 of Cardiff City Hall and Law Courts in Wales. By 1905, they were well-established and won the competition for the

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*Architectural Drawings, Paintings, and Sketches* (New York: George H. Doran, 1920).

Wesleyan Central Convocation Hall in London, close by Westminster Abbey and a site of prime importance in the capital. In this building, as in many of his other designs, Rickards's inspirations seems to have been a combination of Charles Garnier's Opera House in Paris and the rich decorative splendour of Vienna.

In a portrait painted by the British artist Waldo Murray, the architect comes across as self-assured and confident, a bit of an aesthete perhaps.<sup>3</sup> He is recalled by contemporaries as a popular man who moved easily in the cultured and literary circles of Edwardian London. It was from within this circle that he undoubtedly became known to P. G. Konody and, ultimately to Lord Beaverbrook, the central figures in the success of the Fund.

Rickards had designed a number of monuments and memorials before he undertook the design of the Canadian war memorial. These included designs for a Royal Memorial in Parliament Square, London, that was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1912,<sup>4</sup> the King Edward VII Memorial in Bristol,<sup>5</sup> and the 1920 Cardiff War Memorial, which in fact post-dates the Canadian war memorial.<sup>6</sup> None of these designs was on the scale conceived for the Canadian war memorial and certainly none shared any dual function such as was envisaged for the Canadian design (that of art

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3 Waldo Murray, *Portrait of E. A. Rickards*, 1911, oil on canvas, 111.5 x 86 cm, British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), London.

4 This example of his bravura style of drawing was illustrated in *The Builder*, 7 June 1912.

5 Illustrated in *The Builder*, 13 January 1911.

6 Illustrated in *The Builder*, 24 September 1920.

gallery and memorial). It is possible that the choice of Rickards was also influenced by the fact that he had served overseas, albeit briefly, before ill-health resulted in his being invalided back to Britain. Despite ongoing sickness, he had continued to work, supervising the building of an Army Transport Depot in Hull, in northern England and designing the Canadian war memorial. In 1919, he became seriously ill. In his diary, the English novelist Arnold Bennett writes of a visit to the mortally ill architect:

Went down to Bournemouth to see Rickards. Glimpses through Rickards of a vast world of sickness and tragedy – a whole world complete in itself and looking angrily and resentfully at our worlds – all that he so extremely savoured rather than enjoyed.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently when asked if there was anything he wanted, Rickards replied: “Yes, I want the world.”<sup>8</sup> He died in 1920.

Rickards’s designs for the Canadian war memorial were explained in *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, a brochure published in 1919 that described the planned building and its content and was illustrated by the architect’s drawings and plans for it. The design called for a monumental building in a neo-baroque style. The approach was more severe than his earlier creations, in keeping, perhaps, with the building’s memorial role.<sup>9</sup> The brochure outlines the three parts of

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<sup>7</sup> A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1985), 311. I am indebted to this author’s summary of Rickards’s life and career for much of the biographical material provided here.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials* (London, 1919), House of Lords Record Office (HLRO), Beaverbrook Papers (BP). Maria Tippett, “The History of the Canadian War Memorial Scheme as a Study of Patronage and Visual Record of the Great War” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1982), 266, erroneously dates it to 1921.

the building plan and its content: first to have representative art; secondly representative historical subjects; and, thirdly, a building to house the results of the first two elements.

In planning and organizing the great Scheme of the Canadian War Memorials, the [Canadian War Memorials] Committee was guided throughout by three main considerations. The first of these was naturally that the Memorials should constitute as complete a historical-artistic record as possible of Canada's share in the great War. The second, that this record should be thoroughly representative of all the varied and somewhat diametrically opposed tendencies and movements of Western Art at the time of the tremendous armed conflict, so that the collection should not assume a parochial character. The third and equally important aim was, to provide for an impressive and monumental setting, a great War Memorial in itself, planned in relation to the Works of Art to be housed in it, so as to avoid the wearisome monotony of the ordinary picture gallery with its long unbroken rows of architecturally unrelated exhibits.<sup>10</sup>

In its exterior design, the building was to show a similar facade on all four sides and – likely inspired by the Pantheon in Rome – to be surmounted by a great dome whose interior dimension was to be 26 metres across. The exterior height of the dome was to be 47 metres. The outside surfaces of the structure were to use a variety of stone – both flat, dressed, and rusticated – and to alternate between the curved and flat in terms of surface angles. Surrounding the edifice were to be a series of terraces and water gardens viewable from the interior. At the end of the avenue leading up to the main entrance it was hoped to place a classically inspired triumphal arch

surmounted by a group of heroic sculpture that will bear the inscription:– ‘Quot Robusti Enses Canadae Sunt Gloria Belli Gloria Tot Pacis Canadienses Erunt’ which is to say – ‘As many

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<sup>10</sup> *Housing*, 1.

sons of Canada, as kept her honour free, So many and no less shall  
make her glorious in the peace to be.<sup>11</sup>

If, today, one stands on the other side of the Ottawa River, near the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and tries to imagine this building situated a little behind the statue of Champlain, it becomes clear that the architect was not familiar with the site or the existing architecture of the Parliament Buildings, the former archives building (now the Canadian War Museum), and the Royal Canadian Mint that were to surround it. Unlike Rickards's neo-baroque design, these are mainly rectangular stone buildings of a neo-gothic and neo-romanesque style designed to withstand a rigorous climate. Rickards's building would have been unusual for the capital (especially with its water gardens) and this may well have been a contributing factor to the failure to have it built, beyond the fact, among others, that the architect himself passed away within a year of the plans being unveiled.

The interior design was relatively straightforward – basically a cruciform design with rectangular spaces at each end and oval galleries tucked in between the arms of the cross. The four rectangular spaces were 13.6 metres across on the interior, with the interior length and width of the building being 74 metres (85 metres on the exterior). On the principal floor, after passing the rectangles that contained two curators' offices, the visitor could move to the left through an oval gallery of portraits, into a second rectangular space where Sims's painting *Sacrifice* (c. 1918) was to be exhibited. (Fig. 16, p. 328) From there, the visitor could pass into an oval gallery featuring the work of Canadian artists and then into a rectangular space where the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

English artist Augustus John's (1878–1961) immense painting *Canadians opposite Lens* (n.d.) was to be on view, the walls specially positioned to allow an uninterrupted view along the length of the crossarm leading up to its display space.<sup>12</sup> Moving into a third oval gallery containing the works of British artists, the visitor would come upon another rectangular gallery where Richard Jack's two large canvasses *The Second Battle of Ypres* (1917) and *The Taking of Vimy Ridge* (1919) were to be displayed and, finally, into an oval gallery where portraits of Victoria Cross winners were to be hung. (Figs. 3, 17, pp. 315, 329) The published description continued: "Portrait busts and smaller works of sculpture will be placed in the centre of each gallery, allowing for ample space for circulation between them and the walls."<sup>13</sup>

On the ground floor, beginning below the two curators' offices, was the entrance porch. From here, the visitor could move left through an exhibition of prints, followed by a display of the Canadian David Milne's work, and thence to an arrangement of Munnings's Cavalry and Forestry Corps' paintings, and finally to a gallery devoted to photography. Cloakroom and refreshment facilities and other offices were also planned for this floor. In the centre, below the dome, a fountain of some kind was intended, with steps rising up from this area to the principal floor.

The drawing for the cross-section through the building suggests that the interior walls of the cruciform on the principal floor were to be used for the display of

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12 Augustus John, *Canadians opposite Lens*, n.d. oil on canvas, private collection, London. The cartoon for this enormous painting is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Augustus John, *The Canadians opposite Lens*, c. 1917–1918, charcoal on paper, 366 x 1219 cm, NGC 16989.

13 *Housing*, 7.

the forty large decorative or allegorical paintings that had been commissioned, eight of which now hang in the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill. As the brochure explains:

The placing of all these large paintings has been governed by the subject and manner of execution and varied methods, of lighting and dramatic presentation will be provided, ensuring to each work its due effect. They will also be sufficiently separated by the architectural framing of the walls, so that the inherent diversity of technique and subject will not in any way be distracting to the spectator or react among the works themselves.<sup>14</sup>

According to NGC curator R. F. Wodehouse in his posthumously published brief account of the building in the *Journal of the Organization of Military Museums of Canada* (1978):

Natural lighting for the arms of the cross on the main floor was by large areas of glass in barrel vaulted inner ceilings. These in turn were lit by clerestory windows in the outer walls. A large well midway along each arm gave some natural lighting to the ground floor and broke up the large floor space. Natural light for the large oval galleries was by sky lights.<sup>15</sup>

However, the 1919 brochure adds, “in the greater part of the building, artificial lighting will be provided from above, but concealed, so that the effect obtained will hardly differ from that of ordinary daylight exhibition of pictures.”<sup>16</sup>

That there was an awareness that the building might not be entirely suitable to Ottawa is suggested in the final paragraph:

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> R. F. Wodehouse, “Lord Beaverbrook’s Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials,” *Journal of the Organization of Military Museums of Canada*, no. 8 (1978–1979), 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Housing*, 8.



Lieut. Rickards's designs form part of the Canadian War Memorial Committee's gift to the Dominion. Their perfect suitability to their purpose cannot be questioned, though local conditions may make certain modifications advisable. These conditions can only be properly judged by a local architect. To get the ideal War Memorials Building a leading Canadian Architect might well be invited to carry out the building in collaboration with Lieut. E. A. Rickards, whose plan and designs combine so many daringly novel features with a profound respect for all that is best in tradition.<sup>17</sup>

The original inspiration for a building to house the Canadian War Memorials seems to have had its genesis in a 1917 letter from Walker to Beaverbrook.<sup>18</sup> Given Sir Edmund's later correspondence, it was perhaps unfortunate that he ever wrote. In it he outlined previous plans for the enlargement of the archives building and a new National Gallery of Canada building. "One can therefore imagine your material as forming the chief feature of a great historical gallery in connection with the Archives, or, that in the National Gallery, although devoted to the fine arts, rooms to be set apart for works connected with the war, or that a separate gallery be established entirely devoted to that purpose," he noted. It was obviously the last phrase that appealed to Beaverbrook.

He replied to Walker shortly after attending an October 1917 dinner with the war artists. "At the dinner on Monday the question of housing arose. The artists strongly held the view that a special building should be secured," Beaverbrook reported.<sup>19</sup> As ongoing correspondence indicates, however, from the beginning it was clear that from the Canadian perspective the needs of the archives and the National

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Edmund Walker to Beaverbrook, 11 October 1917, NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41-C, Canadian War Memorials.

Gallery were paramount and that the quantity of work that Beaverbrook's committee was commissioning was worrying.<sup>20</sup> Beaverbrook continued to lobby, however. In a memorandum sent to Ottawa dated 10 December 1918, outlining his activities with the Canadian War Records Office, he stated: "This Commission I think should have for its final goal the erection of a suitable building by public subscription in Ottawa."<sup>21</sup> Further related correspondence over the year was to support this view although no clear resolution was achieved in light of the equally strong housing demands of the archives and the National Gallery.

That the design for the Canadian War Memorial would form part of the gift of paintings to Canada is first recorded in a report from the Executive Committee of the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) dated 31 August 1919.<sup>22</sup> It states:

We feel, however, that in any event, this collection will have to be housed in a suitable manner, so that it may be an enduring possession for the people of the Dominion. To this end we commissioned Mr. E. A. Rickards, the architect of the Central Hall, Westminster, to plan a building whose designs conform to the character of the objects it is to hold. These designs will form part of the gift to Canada, and it is hoped that they may be duly considered and carried out in collaboration with their author if the building is to be entrusted to a Canadian architect.

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19 Beaverbrook to Walker, 19 October 1917, *ibid.*

20 Further extensive correspondence on the issue is to be found in NGCA 5.41-C.

21 Memorandum from the Canadian War Record Office (CWRO) dated 10 December 1918, *ibid.*

22 National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 27 11 D 9, vol. 133, Canadian War Records, Official Reports, 1918-1920, File C-27, Canadian War Memorials, Report of Executive Committee, 31 August 1919.

This quite clear statement of purpose notwithstanding, the question had not been settled when the works themselves were handed over to the custody of the National Gallery at the end of 1920. The gallery's *Annual Report* of 1921–1922 recommended that the war art be provided with a special section in a new gallery building. Rickards's plans had seemingly been dismissed.<sup>23</sup> This essentially continued to be the gallery's preferred route for the future. Indeed, although nothing has emerged to confirm this supposition, it would seem logical that the demands on the government's purse for new parliament buildings, an expanded archives building, a new National Gallery, and a war memorial would have made some sort of compromise along the lines advocated by the gallery inevitable. Ironically, by the time they got their purpose-built new building in 1989, the gallery was no longer the custodian of the war memorials collection.

The experience of handing over the CWMF paintings and building plans to Canada seems to have left both Beaverbrook and Konody somewhat bitter. In a letter dated 2 September 1921 to Eric Brown, Konody remarked:

As you know, my Committee has ceased to exist, and I personally see no reason why I should continue to work and waste my time on completing the collection considering that my three years of strenuous and absolutely gratuitous effort have brought me no sort of acknowledgement – not as much as a letter of thanks or appreciation!<sup>24</sup>

Beaverbrook's state of mind is reported in a letter Sir Edmund Walker wrote to the Minister of Public Works, J. H. King, in September 1922:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., National Gallery of Canada *Annual Report*, 1921–1922.

<sup>24</sup> P. G. Konody to Eric Brown, 2 September 1921, NGCA 5.41–C.

At one time he talked vaguely of a building to hold the war paintings to be erected by himself and Lord Rothermere. I do not think that what he had in mind would ever have been possible and I think it is unlikely that he will ever again offer to do this, but, on the other hand I think he is deeply offended at the apparent indifference of the Government to the possession of a collection of paintings, trophies and other records of the war finer than that possessed by any of the nations concerned in the war.<sup>25</sup>

These letters underline one major point: that both Beaverbrook and Konody felt that the Government of Canada did not appreciate their gift. When searching for reasons for this apparent indifference it is difficult not to think that the domestic policy of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, by then in power, was a factor. At the end of the First World War Canada was a nation divided in that the 1917 Conscription crisis had embittered Quebec and turned it once more against the spirit of Confederation. Combined with a long history of anti-British sentiment in the wake of the Seven Years War (1756–1763), Quebec was not a particularly happy participant in the Canadian nationalist adventure initiated by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1867. It would not have been in King's interests to erect a huge war memorial to honour Canada's contribution when a significant number of Canadians had wanted to have nothing to do with it.<sup>26</sup>

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25 Ibid., Walker to Dr. J. H. King, 1 September 1922.

26 Short of volunteers for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1917, Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden introduced the Military Service Act in August. To put it into effect with an election coming up in December, the Wartime Elections Act and the Military Voters Act largely excluded French-speaking Canadians and thus ensured Borden a landslide victory. While, for a variety of reasons, very few conscripts actually went overseas, Borden's manipulating of the election left French-Canada embittered.

Far more significant, however, may be the role of Walker in the whole affair. In his letter of September 1922, he skates over the issue of the war memorial building, dismissing it as an idea that Beaverbrook had once vaguely considered and neglecting to mention that actual plans had been drawn up in the form of Rickards's designs, which he was well aware of.<sup>27</sup> It is important to remember that at the time of writing Walker was chairman of the board of trustees of the National Gallery, who had custody of the paintings; thus it was Walker and not Beaverbrook who controlled the agenda as to their fate. He wanted an art gallery before he wanted a war memorial and it was, quite simply, not in his interests in 1922 to remind the Department of Public Works that a war memorial building had ever been more than an idea.

That Walker's agenda was paramount, and at the expense of Beaverbrook's plans, may have some grain of truth. A copy of a 1928 letter written to Beaverbrook by Mackenzie King, which has only recently come to light, suggests that King, and not only the aforementioned Minister of Public Works, also was kept in the dark.

King writes:

I was glad to learn from your letter of April 28 that you had seen the Hansard containing my much too inadequate reference to your part in securing for Canada the invaluable collection of war paintings which have still to find their fitting accommodation. I would like to have said very much more . . . [but] I had to be brief, apologizing as often as I could for the nation's neglect in the matter of housing your gift.

I only wish that I had been really fully apprized of the scope as well as nature of the collection at the time that we were considering Canada's National War Memorial. I may frankly say that I would have thrown the weight of my influence toward securing as a National War Memorial a National Gallery in the Capital to house the collection. It could have been made a

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<sup>27</sup> Tippett, "The History of the Canadian War Memorials," 292.

marvellous memorial to Canada's service and sacrifice in the Great War. Just imagine a building such as the one designed for the purpose, of which plans were forwarded with the collection! The latter were all unknown to me until a very short time ago. I believe Parliament would have responded handsomely to a suggestion of the kind.<sup>28</sup>

It is hard to believe that Mackenzie King would not have told the truth in this letter, which, in its original form, was typed on his letterhead as Prime Minister of Canada. The issue of King's honesty notwithstanding, the letter stands as a significant record of a certain level of fence-sitting in the politics of the time.

Tippett argues in *Art at the Service of War* (1984), that there were other factors at play. She suggests that the public's active dislike of reminders of war was an important issue along with insufficient public or private funds.<sup>29</sup> However, as she also points out, this same period saw the construction of innumerable small-scale memorials in towns and villages across Canada, and (as will be discussed), the construction of three significant public Canadian memorials to the war. None of these, however, includes a display of war art. Was the art the problem? Certainly a series of reproductions issued to schools in 1926 had been denounced as warmongering. "These pictures glorified war and the heroism of war, throwing that part of history into undeserved relief," thundered the *Albertan*. "The teaching in schools shall be of

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28 Copy of letter from Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King to Lord Beaverbrook, 17 July 1928, House of Lords Record Office, Beaverbrook Papers, BBK A/241, Mackenzie King Correspondence.

29 Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 101–102.

such a nature as to propagate peace,” resolved the Vancouver Parent-Teachers’ Association.<sup>30</sup>

A number of other questions are raised that cannot be satisfactorily answered. One centres on the notion that the power of art to communicate may have been feared because the meaning ascribed to its content could not be entirely controlled.<sup>31</sup> The response to the Derwent Wood sculpture was a case in point, as was the reaction to the reproductions of war art. Was a series of public monuments preferred to a gallery of war art because art – public input aside – is what is seen and interpreted by artists, whereas government committees manage memorials, and therefore more accurately reflect the status quo? If this is so, does this preference provide further evidence of the power of the state to determine and ensure the dominant discourse, as this dissertation, in general terms, argues? And, as a result, given that memorials are also visual artifacts, are they thus powerful art that has been state-approved for public consumption? And, furthermore, in the absence of any outcry, approved with general public approbation? Alternatively, is it quite simply a question that the design for the memorial art gallery was inappropriate?

The failure to build a war memorial art gallery after the First World War underlines the degree to which Canada’s war art became irrelevant to the country’s changing sense of itself in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The initial planning for such an edifice seems to have been governed by more personal

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30 Ibid.

considerations on the part of the main protagonists, Lord Beaverbrook, Sir Edmund Walker, and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. Certainly, the desire of Walker for a national art gallery rather than a war art memorial gallery was part of a deeply felt belief that nations were built “on the values of higher education and the fine arts.”<sup>32</sup> War art, for him, was a subset of the fine arts and in that capacity certainly had a place in a national gallery but not in a building designated for war art only. He was also, as was characteristic of his class in that era, prepared to promote his personal views. Clearly, the dominant discourse, it can be argued, was, in this period, the somewhat privileged domain of some powerful and well-connected individuals who, working within the apparatus of the state, made personal viewpoints those of the state.<sup>33</sup>

Regardless, the future of the war art was in the hands of the National Gallery. Housed in a wing of the Victoria Memorial Building in Ottawa and in the care of an institution committed to building an international collection, the war art was rarely put on view. As the reality of the Great War became history, memory and remembrance in the form of ceremonies at memorials became the more common commemorative practice. Increasingly, this was something that involved the participation of the public,

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31 See, for example, David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989) for a detailed exposition on the authority of the visual.

32 G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *Sir Edmund Walker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), xv.

33 Maria Tippett has written extensively on the important role of the state in creating major arts institutions in *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).



veterans, and the state in a constantly changing and evolving relationship with both the past and the present. The war art played a minor role. Moreover, two of its key figures, Beaverbrook and Walker, were also marginalized. Beaverbrook remained in England and Walker died in 1924.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the state – personified to some extent in the person of King – accommodated itself to the requirements of a growing number of new interests to fashion the remembrance of war.

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<sup>34</sup> Beaverbrook finally had an art gallery in Canada when the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton was opened in 1959. It was not a war art gallery, however.

## Chapter 4

### Remembering in Stone

Given that Lord Beaverbrook's plans for a war art gallery never materialized, what memorials did Canada commission? Monuments were clearly the major means selected. While the memorials themselves cannot be considered part of the Canadian official war art collections, a significant number of the preliminary sculptures for several important public war memorials form part of the war art collections. For this reason, and because of their links to the iconography and time period of the paintings, they must be included in any discussion of Canadian official war art.

The dead were not commemorated as individuals, or even as a group prior to the First World War. "In January 1915 – one can date this remarkable change with a precision not usual in cultural history – a new era of remembrance began: the era of the common soldier's name or its self-conscious and sacralized oblivion," writes Thomas W. Laqueur in his 1994 "Memory and Naming in the Great War."<sup>1</sup> "By 1938," he continues:

When the Imperial War Graves Commission had completed its World War I work, it had overseen the construction of 1, 850 cemeteries . . . By 1930, 557, 520 soldiers of the Empire . . . had been buried in identified, that is, named graves. Another 180, 861 unidentified bodies were put each in a separate grave . . . The names of these men, and of a further 336, 912 whose bodies had simply disappeared, blown into the air or ground into the mud, are inscribed in stone on a monument near the place where they were

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, "Memory and Naming in the Great War," in John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 152.

thought to have died. These are the imposing, major monuments of the western front.<sup>2</sup>

The nations that commemorated their achievements and sacrifices in the First World War with major memorials generally opted for their best artists and sculptors. Britain, for example, asked one of its foremost architects, Edwin Lutyens, to design the memorial at Thiépval in the Somme Valley in France, the location of some of the most significant losses of British life. Canada was no exception. However, the country's Great War memorial at Vimy Ridge was also its artist, Walter Allward's, culminating achievement. Situated on top of the ridge that overlooks the Douai Plain in northeastern France it is easily viewed today from the autoroute that passes below. The memorial is a magnificent testimonial to the notion of Canadian sacrifice during the war.

Canadian losses during the First World War were staggering. On the Western Front, one Canadian in seven who served was killed. Of those, 16, 000 have no known grave. It was the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), established in May 1917, to properly bury the dead, establish permanent cemeteries, and to try to determine how to memorialize the dead and missing. The 1918 Imperial Conference in London, England approved five general principles. The two relating to memorials stipulated that they should be both public and permanent.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Lacqueur, "Memory and Naming," 153–154.

3 *Canadian Battlefields Memorials Commission* (Ottawa: Thomas Mulvey, 1920), 5. Copy in Canadian War Museum (CWM) War Artist File, Walter Allward.

At the end of the war, an IWGC committee awarded Canada eight battle sites – three in France and five in Belgium – on which to construct memorials. In 1920, the newly established Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission (CBMC) organized a competition for a Canadian memorial to be erected on each site. The competition guidelines stated that the monument could incorporate figurative sculpture.<sup>4</sup> In October 1921, the commission announced the winner, Allward, whose design included twenty symbolic figures of virtues associated with war including faith, justice, peace, and hope.<sup>5</sup> These figures formed an integral part of a massive stone platform surmounted by two soaring pylons representing Canada and France.

What seems clear at this juncture is that the competition organizers placed importance on content and that they believed strongly in a detailed narrative role for the memorial that went beyond the symbolism of its location alone. Judging by their choice of winner, it was important to them that the values that they believed stood for the nation and its people should be reinforced by the presence of a complex allegory expressed in a figurative arrangement. Nonetheless, the second-place winner, eventually erected at the site of the 1915 Battle of St. Julien, simply featured the bowed head and torso of a soldier atop a stele and was devoid of Allward's more flamboyant emblematic content. (Fig. 18, p. 330)

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4 Ibid.

5 Jacqueline Hucker, "Lest We Forget: National Memorials to Canada's First World War Dead," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1998), 90.

Allward stated in a 1921 interview that his idea for the memorial was inspired by a wartime dream that he had never forgotten:

When things were at their blackest in France, I went to sleep one night after dwelling on all the muck and misery over there, my spirit was like a thing tormented . . . I dreamed I was in a great battlefield. I saw our men going in by the thousands and being mowed down by the sickles of death . . . Suffering beyond endurance at the sight, I turned my eyes and found myself looking down on an avenue of poplars. Suddenly through the avenue I saw thousands marching to the aid of our armies. They were the dead. They rose in masses, filed silently by and entered the fight to aid the living. So vivid was this impression, that when I awoke it stayed with me for months. Without the dead we were helpless. So I have tried to show this in this monument to Canada's fallen, what we owed them and we will forever owe them.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult not to think that the nature and tone of his dream was influenced by the richly poetic language of the time; what historian Paul Fussell has termed "High Diction."<sup>7</sup> The unspeakable increasingly was written about in the most romantic and almost biblical of forms as the bereaved sought, through language, a means of understanding and remembering the cost of war. This had found its best-known expression in poems such as "In Flanders Fields" by the Canadian Army Medical Corps officer Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae.<sup>8</sup> Indeed Allward made a

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6 Ibid., 91.

7 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Fussell views the specialized use of language in the period as one of the most significant ways in which the horrors of the First World War were both described and made supportable.

8 The poem is reproduced in full in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 198.

direct reference to this poem in his figure of “The Spirit of Sacrifice,” who proudly holds a flaming torch aloft.

Allward was an experienced sculptor and a well-known designer of memorials at the time he won the competition. Born in Toronto in 1875, he trained as a draughtsman. From 1891–1893 he attended sculpture classes at Toronto’s New Technical School and, in 1894, rented his first studio. For the next two years he worked on the figure of “peace” for the Toronto monument honouring the 1885 Northwest Rebellion, the insurrection led by Louis Riel in what is now Saskatchewan. In 1910, he completed another Toronto memorial, this one commemorating Canada’s participation in the South African, or Boer War, of 1899–1902. These commissions secured his reputation and ensured that Allward was fully employed as a sculptor. He mainly created portrait busts and statues of famous Canadians, such as the one of Sir Wilfrid Laurier created in 1901, and memorials, such as that honouring Alexander Graham Bell, unveiled in Brantford, Ontario, in 1917.

Despite his reputation, to this day Allward has never been the subject of a published thesis, an article, a biography, or a retrospective exhibition. Because most Canadian art surveys concentrate on painting, his work is rarely referred to. An exception is McInnes, who in *Canadian Art* (1950), wrote:

Walter Allward, who by the sheer monumentality of his work, ranks high in the achievement of Canadian sculpture. Allward has been an eclectic, borrowing freely from all sources; but his own broadness of vision has enabled him to preserve his integrity. While his work sometimes seems to lack deep imaginative purpose, it has great breadth. This is seen at its best in the Bell memorial at Brantford, Ontario, and in the architectonic masses of the Canadian War Memorial at Vimy Ridge, where can be felt a

sincerity and an understanding of the relation of mass to mass, which command respect.<sup>9</sup>

McInnes's brief entry was followed by an acknowledgment of his contribution to Canadian sculpture in art historian Christine Boyanoski's 1987 catalogue about two celebrated Canadian women sculptors, *Loring and Wyle: Sculptors' Legacy*.<sup>10</sup> "Frances Loring," she writes, "held Allward in high regard, particularly the Vimy Memorial (1922–1936), which she used in her own lectures in later years to illustrate the qualities she considered most essential in sculpture: dignity and repose."<sup>11</sup> Later in her study, Boyanoski relates Allward's work on the Vimy Memorial to art historical precedent, when she notes:

The plucky figures of the Boer War memorials were inadequate to convey the enormity of Canada's loss, and sculptors turned instead to allegorical figures, which were capable of embodying more universal concepts. Walter Allward, in particular, favoured the use of allegory, not only in his colossal Vimy Memorial, but also in the Stratford War Memorial (1922), which has two Rodinesque figures, "Spiritual Triumph" and "Brute Force," and the Peterborough War Memorial (1929), which also has two figures, "Humanity" and "Aggression."<sup>12</sup>

In the summer of 1922, the CBMC selected Vimy Ridge as the preferred site for Allward's winning memorial. The other battle sites, with the exception of St.

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9 Graham McInnes, *Canadian Art*, 2d ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1950), 93–94.

10 Christine Boyanoski, *Loring and Wyle: Sculptors' Legacy* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1987).

11 *Ibid.*, 17–18.

12 *Ibid.*, 31.

Julien, made do with economic, strikingly plain, and allegory-free monuments.<sup>13</sup> Certainly Vimy Ridge's impressive location and vantage point, as much as the battle's military significance, contributed to its selection. While Allward almost immediately began to sculpt the figurative elements in clay in a newly acquired studio in London, clearing the 100-hectare site of the dangerous detritus of war – unexploded bombs, artillery shells, and grenades – took another two and a half years. And it took almost as long to find stone that Allward considered suitable for the memorial. The source, ironically, was a quarry near Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, where, in 1914, the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had precipitated the outbreak of the First World War.

Because unfired clay quickly dries out and cracks, Allward made plaster moulds from the original clay figures very soon after their creation, which were shipped to the Vimy site. The Canadian War Museum (CWM) has custody of seventeen of the twenty plaster figures.<sup>14</sup> The remaining three are on display at the Military Communications and Electronics Museum (MCEM) at the Department of National Defence base at Kingston, Ontario. These plaster statues are particularly interesting because the artist's own hand is clearly present. The recent restoration of the CWM's figures has shown that the sculptor worked these plaster casts afterwards.

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13 An example is the Courcellette Memorial. A simple granite block, it is engraved with the details of the battle. It is illustrated in Herbert Fairlie Wood and John Swettenham, *Silent Witnesses* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 46.

14 CWM has the two groups collectively known as *The Defenders*, and the figures of *Sacrifice*, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, *Hope*, *Faith*, *Knowledge*, *Justice*, *Charity*, *Honour*, *Peace*, and *Truth*. (CWM 19770315).



He applied additional plaster in some cases, or carved the original casting in more detail.<sup>15</sup>

The plaster figures are approximately life-size but the completed stone figures on the actual memorial are twice as large. Italian carvers at the Vimy site copied the plaster figures employing a technique that enabled them to increase the dimensions in stone. Using a pantographic, or copying, device the stone carvers measured the relative depths of different parts of the plaster figures with a measuring rod. By drilling into the stone blocks placed beside the plaster carvings to depths determined by another connected measuring rod, they were able to double the dimensions as they carved. Scattered over the plaster figures are pencil marks and, on occasion, partially buried metal markers. These were the stone carvers' points of depth measurement.

The Christian symbolism of a number of Allward's twenty figures is obvious. The figure *Canada Mourning her Fallen Sons* makes a clear reference to traditional images of the Mater Dolorosa (the Virgin Mary in mourning), while the figure spread-eagled on the altar below the two pylons refers to the intended Sacrifice of Isaac at the hands of Abraham. (Fig. 19, p. 331) This Old Testament story was commonly understood to prefigure Christ's Crucifixion and, as such, could also be interpreted in this setting as redemptive. Behind him stands the figure holding a burning torch. (Fig. 20, p. 332)

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<sup>15</sup> Details of the sculptor's interventions are documented in the treatment reports the conservators prepared following the 1999–2001 conservation program. These are on file at the CWM in the art conservation files.

The figures at the tops of the pylons represent the universal virtues of faith, justice, peace, honour, charity, truth, knowledge, and hope. *Truth* and *Knowledge*, however, are provided with the wings of angels. The traditional link between art and memorial is inferred at the rear of the monument in the reclining figures of the two mourners, patterned on statues by Michelangelo in the Medici Tomb in Florence.

The memorial took ten years to complete. It was not, however, entirely Allward's vision by then. What the organizers had not perhaps initially understood was the contribution that the public, as opposed to the artist, would make. For example, the general public came to identify the site as sacred to the overall memory of all those lost in war, not just in France, and as a place where a sense of nation had been forged, a contribution that did not necessarily rely on the narrative provided by Allward's design. They had undoubtedly responded willingly to the significant efforts Canadian veterans had been making to ensure that the sacrifices of war would never be forgotten.<sup>16</sup> In responding to public concerns, Allward made ongoing adjustments to the monument as construction continued. As historian John Pierce notes in his 1992 article, "Constructing Memory: the Vimy Memorial," "the historical reality of the battle [was] re-worked and reinterpreted with the aid of the sculptor in a conscious attempt to give purpose and meaning to an event which was to symbolize Canada's coming-of-age as a nation."<sup>17</sup> The loss of life involved in the creation of this nation

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16 See, for example, Denise Thomson, "National Sorrow, National Pride: Commemoration of War in Canada, 1918–1945," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4 (winter 1995–1996), 5–27.

17 John Pierce, "Constructing Memory: The Vimy Memorial," *Canadian Military History*, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2 (autumn 1992), 5.

had to be noted. It was for this reason that Allward was persuaded to engrave on the walls of the memorial itself the names of the Canadian dead in France who had no known grave.<sup>18</sup>

However, by the time the over 100, 000 visitors, veterans, and their families attended the memorial's 1936 unveiling, the monument had become not only a focus for remembrance but also for peace. The speeches reflected this. "Major C. G. Power, Minister of Pensions and National Health and a Vimy veteran . . . read the prime minister's message. The message called upon the nations of Europe to avoid war for 'a world at peace.'"<sup>19</sup> Quite clearly, one of the dominant interests of the period – peace – was beginning to take equal place with the requirement to commemorate sacrifice. An understanding of Allward's complex allegorical symbolism, with its origins in Christian iconography, had become relatively unimportant and was certainly little written about. Indeed, by the time the memorial was unveiled public response had ensured that any individual meaning in the statues had been subsumed in the meaning of the whole.

Clearly more secular than the Vimy memorial is the St. Julien memorial of 1921. (Fig. 18, p. 330) Its designer, Frederick Chapman Clemesha (1876–1958), saw no requirement to disguise the need to mourn in Christian form. It could be done directly without an intermediary. A soldier could mourn fallen comrades himself: he did not need Christ to do it for him. That Clemesha's design took second place to

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18 Hucker, "Lest We Forget," 90.

19 David Inglis, "Vimy Ridge, 1917–1992: A Canadian Myth over Seventy-five years" (M. A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1992), 68.

Allward's suggests, perhaps, that the committee (consisting of a French, British, and Canadian architect) that made the decision was still responsive to Christian iconography even when given a secular overlay as at Vimy. Certainly, the Vimy and St. Julien memorials together demonstrate that as early as 1920, in public commissions at least, direct Christian reference was no longer needed for Canadians who wished to mourn and commemorate their dead. The secular figures of their country and a soldier in the act of mourning proved to be enough.

It is clear that the issue of nation building also played a fundamental role in amending the post-war iconography of memorials from one that was clearly Christian to one that was secular. An analysis of several other Canadian national war memorial schemes demonstrates a similar trend. The Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, unveiled by Mackenzie King on 11 November 1928, is one example. Its interior design also confirms the growing secularization of war memorials even if, with its exterior neo-Gothic church tower architecture, its precedents are indubitably Christian. This room houses the Book of Remembrance recording the names of the 66, 651 Canadians who lost their lives during the Great War. Here, the accommodation of a traditional religious imagery with modern iconography results in an architectural space that both honours the past and looks forward to the future. The stained glass hints at a traditional church environment but its decorative program is modern and its imagery often secular. The crucified Christ, for example, appears only as an image on a sword in one section of glass. While some of the iconography supports the wartime myth of noble sacrifice, much of it also

points to a rosier future for Canada with its burgeoning resource-based economy.<sup>20</sup>

The state message of progress and new prosperity is made using the tools and iconographic format of the church.<sup>21</sup>

The National War Memorial in Ottawa is another case in point. Discussions regarding a suitable memorial had begun as early as 1920 but the finalist was not announced until 1926. The winner, the British sculptor Vernon March (1891–1930), designed a memorial in which seventeen military figures move through a granite arch surmounted by allegorical figures representing “Peace” and “Freedom.”<sup>22</sup> At its unveiling in 1939, King George VI stated that “it revealed the soul of the nation.” In referring to the two allegorical figures, he said: “Without freedom there can be no enduring peace, and without peace no enduring freedom.”<sup>23</sup> In a secular society, sacrifice, the noble cause, and the just war were expressions from the past. But visually the memorial harked back to those times: “Peace” and “Freedom” bear the wings of angels and there is more than a hint of the road to Calvary in the figures below the arch. The Christian memorial function had been hijacked by the state.

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20 Shirley Ann Brown, “Remembrance: Stained-glass windows in Ottawa’s Peace Tower are innovative,” *Rotunda* (summer 1998), 12–17.

21 At the time of writing, the unilingual stone texts from this chamber are stored as un-catalogued artifacts in the art collection of the CWM.

22 The complete maquette for this memorial is in the CWM art collection, CWM 19760469–001.

23 Jonathan Vance, “The Great Response: Canada’s long struggle to honour the dead of the Great War,” *The Beaver*, vol. 76, no. 5 (October–November 1996), 28–32.

The war memorial art gallery Lord Beaverbrook had commissioned and the paintings that were to hang within it, do not make the leap forward to Canada's bright future. All the works commemorate the past. None even hint at a time in which Canada – the newly prosperous nation – will be triumphant. For politicians such as Prime Minister Mackenzie King, this was a message that could not be denied, particularly given the domestic difficulties that followed on the 1917 conscription crisis and in light of the nation's wartime debts. Nonetheless, if the evidence of the public memorial commissions is valid, it was recognized that along with celebrating the country's achievements and future, there was also a need to allow for a more traditional memorial element. The achievement of all these post-war memorials is that they both pointed to the traditional past and welcomed the modern future at one and the same time. They also confirmed that commemorating the First World War was now a matter of public policy.

In terms of the debates centring on modernism and traditionalism and whether or not there was a religious revival, the evidence of these commissions suggests that in terms of both arguments there had been a process of accommodation and adaptation rather than outright change. While the twentieth century continued to see a decline in religious commitment, the ceremonies associated with religious practice continued to be important for commemorative purposes. The visual culture associated with religion continued to be an effective bearer of messages as Canada's war memorials confirm. So too do they confirm that there was room for both a traditional and a more modern approach to commemoration. What is interesting, however, is that this process of accommodation and adaptation as far as war memorials were

concerned was government led. Public funds paid for the Vimy Ridge and St. Julien memorials, the National War Memorial, and the Peace Tower. For all Lord Beaverbrook's efforts, neither the government of Canada nor any private individual was prepared to pay for his war memorial art gallery. Certainly by 1921, its art and its message were not what the government wanted to support. It had no place in the future Canada envisaged for itself.

By 1928, the Canadian government was clearly in control of commemoration and the remainder of the twentieth century saw no private schemes for war art on the scale of Lord Beaverbrook's effort. However, control of the medium does not always mean control of the message. Both state and society were to find that they both had a role to play in the forming and shaping of the dominant discourse of commemoration in a way that was both active and reactive. Agency, when it came to war and the remembrance of war, could, indeed, take more than one form. The direction, however, was clear. Canada's memory of war was to be formulated increasingly less as necessary sacrifice but rather as one whose outcome ensured peace.

## Chapter 5

### The Group of Seven's War Art

Giving new meaning to existing iconography was not simply the prerogative of the builders of war memorials. Artists too found themselves reconfiguring the messages inherent in their works of art in response to personal and political interests. Canada's celebrated painters, The Group of Seven, found that their art received public and institutional acclaim when it was understood not only to have been created within and in response to the Canadian wilderness but to have had its stylistic and spiritual genesis there as well. As a result, the indebtedness of the Group's artistic practices to the experience of war itself and to the styles of other war artists was swiftly forgotten. This chapter, therefore, is an exploration of the role of forgetting in the creation of memory.

Both activities, however, are predicated on participation and interaction on the part of various specialized, public, and institutional groups and interests. In Canada, the political reality of a nation-building agenda that had community support after the war provides a viable argument for the influence of politics in defining the country's culture. This phenomenon is clearly manifest in a discussion on the origins of the Group of Seven's best-known art. Participants in various ways in the First World War, and clearly influenced by the experience itself and the artistic styles they encountered, the Group members' careers, however, were subsequently promoted by themselves and others on the basis of their ability to find inspiration in the Canadian North. In the aftermath of the Great War, the requirements of a burgeoning Canadian



rather than imperial nationalism required the downplaying of outside influences and the promotion of the inspiration of home. It was a process in which the Group not only actively participated but also justified and fulfilled.

The Group of Seven is the best-known and most influential group of Canadian artists to have worked in Canada in the twentieth century. The original members, F. H. Varley, A. Y. Jackson, Franklin Carmichael (1890–1945), Lawren S. Harris, J. E. H. MacDonald (1873–1932), Arthur Lismer, and Frank H. (Franz) Johnston, first exhibited as a group in Toronto in 1920. LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956), Edwin Holgate (1892–1977), and A. J. Casson (1898–1992) later augmented the Group's membership. The Group ceased exhibiting collectively in 1931, eleven years after its first exhibition.

Six members of the original Group painted war subjects during the First World War and their work influenced the seventh. Moreover, the Group's successful assimilation of elements of war iconography into its post-war landscape art contributed to the creation of a nationally significant art style. This has rarely been acknowledged in the literature relating to Canadian art history. The main exception is Tippett (1984).<sup>1</sup> Reid (1973) and Hill (1995) do not discuss this influence at all.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 108–109. A very recent independently conceived study covering similar ground and reaching similar conclusions to this chapter is Brian S. Osborne, "Warscapes, Landscapes, Inscapes: France, War, and Canadian National Identity," in Iain S. Black and Robin A. Butlin, eds., *Place, Culture and Identity: Essays in Historical Geography in honour of Alan R. H. Baker* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), 311–333.

Instead, from early on, the Group's elevation to national status as artists is attributed to the inspiration of the land itself. One can cite, for example, a 1927 letter to the editor of the *Vancouver Daily Province* from the West Coast photographer John Vanderpant (1884–1939). "The men of the School of Seven," he writes, "felt that the immensity of Canada could not be truly painted with a European brush . . . so they . . . went for the soul of the land in the ruggedness of form, the rhythm of line and color, by simplicity and directness of stroke and elimination – detracting detail, using freedom to emphasize whether in form or color, what was personally most striking to interpret."<sup>3</sup>

As Mary Vipond explains in her 1974 Ph.D. dissertation, "National Consciousness in English-Speaking Canada in the 1920's: Seven Studies," this was a myth that took on a life of its own almost immediately after the Group's first exhibition. The speed of change is one of the reasons why the war is so little acknowledged in the literature. It was also a widely based mythology, so much so that in the face of institutional, critical, and public support the Group rapidly believed it itself. That there could be other sources of inspiration for its art became lost in a complex and attractive self-perpetuating legend.

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2 Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

3 John Vanderpant, "Art and Criticism," letter to the editor, *Vancouver Daily Province*, 18 August 1927, as quoted in Sheryl Salloum, *Underlying Vibrations: The Photography and Life of John Vanderpant* (Victoria, B. C.: Horsdal and Schubart Publishers Ltd., 1995), 22.

Vipond writes that at the end of the First World War Canada found itself in the middle of a recession that reached a low-point in July 1921.<sup>4</sup> Poor economic conditions in the aftermath of a conflict successfully fought contributed to a renewed national spirit in the country. As it manifested itself particularly strongly in the cultural and intellectual fields she chooses to call its proponents “cultural nationalists.”<sup>5</sup> Vipond makes it clear that the Group of Seven artists viewed the war initially as having had a significant impact on Canadians. “Both MacDonald and Jackson emphasized the effect the war was having on Canadian consciousness,” she writes.<sup>6</sup> “The war experiences stimulated the artists’ feeling for their country.”<sup>7</sup> They also saw the war art styles they had come into contact with as important. In an undated letter to the editor of the *Montreal Star*, Jackson writes: “Why not prepare the public for Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, Paul Nash, and Nevinson who are doing great works for the Canadian government and are extremists compared with most of our native artists.”<sup>8</sup>

The change from a war-inspired “cultural nationalism” to one centred in the country itself is traceable through the Group’s early catalogue essays that Lawren

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4 Mary Vipond, “National Consciousness in English-Speaking Canada in the 1920’s: Seven Studies” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1974), 24.

5 *Ibid.*, 21.

6 *Ibid.*, 472.

7 *Ibid.*, 473.

8 A. Y. Jackson to the Editor, *Montreal Star*, undated and unpublished letter, c. 1918, National Archives of Canada (NAC), J. E. H. MacDonald fonds, MG 30, D 111, vol. 1, A. Y. Jackson correspondence, Miscellaneous 1900–1918.

Harris is believed to have written. The 1920 catalogue states that “an Art must grow and flower in the land.”<sup>9</sup> This comment does not argue that the land must inspire the art but simply that it must flourish there. The Group’s 1921 catalogue essay, however, emphasizes that the art must be painted *in* the land and clearly indicates that this show’s content has been painted in Canada.<sup>10</sup> By the 1922 exhibition, the mythology is complete. Harris writes: “The source of our art then is not in the achievements of other artists in other days and lands, although it has learned a great deal from these. Our art is found on a long and growing love and understanding of the North . . .”<sup>11</sup> Vipond believes that F. B. Housser’s *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (1926), sealed the myth in combination with the influence of the spiritual dimensions of Theosophy, a philosophy to which many of the Group’s friends and associates adhered.<sup>12</sup>

The reconfigured landscape was also a factor in English art after the first World War. There, England was depicted as a beautiful unspoilt land. “Ideas about arcadia and sanctuary were widespread in English painting in this period,” writes Sue

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9 *Group of Seven*, Art Gallery of Toronto, 7–27 May 1920, National Gallery of Canada (NGC) Library.

10 *Exhibition of Paintings by the Group of 7*, Art Gallery of Toronto, 7–29 May 1921, NGC Library.

11 Vipond, “National Consciousness,” 482.

12 *Ibid.*, 504. For a discussion of the philosophical elements in the Group’s art see, Ann Davis, “An Apprehended Vision: The Philosophy of the Group of Seven” (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1973).

Malvern (2001).<sup>13</sup> However, it was an England that had restored the concept of “Et in Arcadia Ego” commonly translated as “Even in Arcadia there I [Death] am.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the post-war period, the idyllic English countryside bore traces of death or *memento mori*. The links between Canada and Great Britain remained strong in this period and it is possible that the developments in the Group of Seven’s art to some degree paralleled those of their former ally.

In the absence of a substantial literature stating otherwise, however, one must turn to the evidence provided by an analysis of the Group’s work to demonstrate the war’s influence on its members’ careers. The answer to the interpretive enigma must be sought in the paintings themselves.

A. Y. Jackson, in many ways the Group’s natural leader, was the first to go overseas. He enlisted as a private in the 60th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in June 1915, went overseas in November, and in June 1916, after being wounded in the hip at Maple Copse near Ypres, Belgium, was invalided back to England. Although he had not painted for nearly two years, in August 1917 the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) appointed him to record Canada’s participation in the war. The first Canadian to be so employed, Jackson produced forty-five works for the CWMF.

In September 1917, Jackson worked for three weeks in the area around Vimy Ridge. He sketched quickly outdoors in pencil and coloured pencil on paper. Then,

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13 Sue Malvern, “War Tourisms: ‘Englishness,’ art, and the First World War,” *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2001), 62.

14 *Ibid.*, 64.

when possible, he made rapid, on-the-spot oil sketches on wooden panels (a method of working he was to follow for the rest of his long career). After returning to his London studio in October he painted full-size canvasses. Jackson had trouble coming to grips with his subject and the somewhat decorative landscape style he had adopted just before the war dominates his early war work. In the spring of 1918, he returned to France for another three weeks of painting battlefields. Two months after the Armistice, in January 1919, Jackson received a brief assignment to paint troopships returning to Halifax, Nova Scotia. He demobilized three months later.

The significant change in Jackson's painting style as a result of his First World War experiences can be discerned from a brief examination of eight paintings dating from 1910 to 1923. In its overall impressionistic effects, *The Edge of the Maple Wood* of 1910 shows the impact of his studies in France from 1907 to 1909.<sup>15</sup> The artist has emphasized the shadows undulating across the pitted ground to enliven an ordinary scene. *Terre Sauvage* of 1913, depicts a more visceral response to the northern Ontario wilderness, evidence that Jackson was looking for a less derivative style to express the nature of his own country.<sup>16</sup> (Tom Thomson, an important artist for the Group who tragically died in a drowning accident in July 1917, joined him in this search.) In *Terre Sauvage*, Jackson stresses the rugged grandeur of the wilderness,

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15 A. Y. Jackson, *The Edge of the Maple Wood*, 1910, oil on canvas, 54.6 x 65.4 cm, NGC 4298. Illustrated in Joan Murray, *Northern Lights: Masterpieces from Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1994), plate 15.

16 A. Y. Jackson, *Terre Sauvage*, 1913, oil on canvas, 128.8 x 154.4 cm, NGC 4351. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 16.

leading one critic to describe the work as “untamed nature, savage and wild.”<sup>17</sup> The same unrestrained quality appears in a 1918 war work, *The Pimple, Evening*. (Fig. 23, p. 335) In this vividly coloured painting, Vimy Ridge stretches behind a trench-riddled landscape across which trudge two small groups of soldiers. Nonetheless, the struggle to find a painterly language to depict the conflict did not end for Jackson until he incorporated the full influence of Paul Nash’s art into his own work. A British war artist, Nash’s significant achievement was to find in the component elements of the shattered landscape of battle, emblems that could represent human loss and destruction.

Jackson was familiar with *Void* (1918), a CWMF painting by Nash, as early as March 1918.<sup>18</sup> The painter’s ability to use form, colour, and the iconography of landscape rather than narrative to express the nature of war impressed him. As the Canadian described it:

*Void* is great painting; line mass and color combined with fierce intensity to express an emotion. The literary prop is superfluous; there is here an intelligible use of means by which many artists are striving to lift art above mere representation.<sup>19</sup>

Its influence can be seen in Jackson’s *A Copse, Evening* (1918), where searchlights silhouette denuded tree trunks in a shell-torn, muddy landscape. (Fig. 4, p. 316) The composition prompted one critic movingly to describe it:

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17 Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 309.

18 Paul Nash, *Void*, 1918, oil on canvas, 71.1 x 91.8 cm, NGC 8650. Jacqueline Adell, “British First World War Art and the Group of Seven” (M. A. research essay, Carleton University, 1984), 29.

19 Adell, “British First World War Art,” 21.

Do the mothers and wives think it hard to know that their men are dead? Let them look at this picture . . . and know that it is lucky for them, but unfortunate for the living world, that they do not know how and with what thoughts their men lived for some time before they escaped from *A Copse, Evening*. It was not death they dreaded. Sometimes that was welcomed. It was the mutilation of the mind.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly after his return to Canada, Jackson began *First Snow, Algoma* (c. 1919–1920).<sup>21</sup> In this work snow flurries drift across a barren landscape of stunted tree trunks, much like clouds of gas across the fields of the Western Front. *October Morning, Algoma (Wartz Lake, Algoma)* of 1920 is an even starker rendition of the Ontario backwoods, the mutilated tree trunks unequivocally reminiscent of those he painted in *A Copse, Evening* (1918).<sup>22</sup> As late as 1923, the Western Front is still a prime influence on Jackson's landscape painting style. The desolate *Algoma Rocks, Autumn* (c. 1923) resembles several of his wartime views of the Souchez valley near Vimy Ridge.<sup>23</sup> As one commentator puts it, Jackson returned from the war not

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20 Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 65.

21 A. Y. Jackson, *First Snow, Algoma*, c. 1919–1920, oil on canvas, 107.1 x 127.7 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, gift in memory of Gertrude Wells Hilborn, 1966.7. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 50.

22 A. Y. Jackson, *October Morning, Algoma (Wartz Lake, Algoma)*, 1920, oil on canvas, 52 x 60 cm, Hart House Collection, University of Toronto, purchased by the House Committee, 1931–1932. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 57.

23 A. Y. Jackson, *Algoma Rocks, Autumn*, c. 1923, oil on canvas, 81.7 x 100.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, bequest of Charles S. Band, 1970. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 83.



satisfied to “paint anything that was serene” but rather “storms and . . . things that had been smashed up.”<sup>24</sup>

F. H. Varley was the other Group of Seven member who painted in Europe during the First World War. In fact, war work launched his career. An English immigrant to Canada, he had been working as a commercial illustrator in Toronto before the war. The War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC) of the CWMF likely recommended him for commission as an official war artist in 1918, in part on the strength of recruiting illustrations he had drawn for the Royal Flying Corps.<sup>25</sup> In early 1918, he painted at Seaford Camp on the south coast of England and in August he travelled to France, following the Canadian Corps into Flanders in the final advance known as “The Hundred Days.” What he saw affected him tremendously. He wrote home:

You in Canada . . . cannot realize at all what war is like. You must see it and live it. You must see the barren deserts war has made of once fertile country . . . see the turned-up graves, see the dead on the field, freshly mutilated – headless, legless, stomachless, a perfect body and a passive face and a broken empty skull – see your own countrymen unidentified, thrown into a cart, their coats over them, boys digging a grave in a land of yellow slimy mud and green pools of water under a weeping sky. You must have heard the screeching shells and have the shrapnel fall around you, whistling by you – Seen the results of it, seen scores of horses, bits of horses lying around, in the open – in the street and soldiers marching by these scenes as if they never knew of their presence – until you’ve lived this . . . you cannot know.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Susan Butlin, “Landscape as Memorial: A. Y. Jackson and the Landscape of the Western Front, 1917–1918,” *Canadian Military History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (autumn 1996), 68.

25 Canadian War Museum (CWM) catalogue nos. 8914–8924.

26 Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 65.

Like Jackson, Varley recorded the war in sketchbooks, painting larger canvasses in his studios in London and later in Canada. Some surviving oil sketches on wooden panels indicate that, like Jackson, he also utilized an on-the-spot method of recording a scene (and continued to do so in his later career.)<sup>27</sup> In April and May 1919, he returned to France to paint but by August he was back in Canada. A short survey of seven works completed between 1910 and 1920 demonstrates how his art changed as a result of his exposure to the grim subject matter of France and Flanders.

*The Hillside*, a 1910 watercolour study on paper, is a decorative and tranquil landscape enlivened by a subtle use of light and dark contrasts.<sup>28</sup> *Some Day the People Will Return* (1918), however, moved Varley into the forefront of Canadian art. (Fig. 24, p. 336) In this war work, based on a tiny sketch, a destroyed village cemetery contains a single symbol of hope in the flower tendril that survived the bombardment. (Fig. 25, p. 337) *For What?* (c. 1918) is a devastating portrayal of burial in the field. (Fig. 15, p. 327) The Canadian critic Barker Fairley, who saw it at the 1919 exhibition of the CWMF paintings in Toronto, wrote:

There is but one painter in the whole group who has succeeded in conveying an intense human emotion concerning warfare in an outright manner that does not break outright with traditional forms of expression. That man is F. H. Varley . . . *For What?* and *Some Day the People Will Return* are a thing apart in the collection . . . They are executed in an impersonal way, neither laboured nor mannered; they are not the product of a passing fashion. They will

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, F. H. Varley, *In Arras*, 1918–1919, oil on wood panel, 29.8 x 40.6 cm, The Faculty Club, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

<sup>28</sup> F. H. Varley, *The Hillside*, c. 1910, watercolour on paper, 44.3 x 32 cm, Rosa and Spencer Clark Collection, Toronto.

never become widely popular, but neither will they ever be appropriated by a clique. As time goes by they will simply be found standing where they now stand – in the forefront of Canadian paintings.<sup>29</sup>

In *German Prisoners* (c. 1919), the artist introduced the motif of the destroyed tree trunk already familiar to Jackson and closely associated with the war paintings, drawings, and prints of Paul Nash. (Fig. 26, p. 338) This shape is the one that, from the 1920s onward, ironically perhaps, was to become for many Canadians emblematic of their weather-scarred and natural-disaster affected landscape. Certainly, on Varley's return to Canada, he selected as his subject the bleaker qualities of the Ontario countryside, epitomized by tree stumps similar to those he had seen on the Western Front. *Georgian Bay Sketch No. 5* of 1920 is no decorative scene, but a rough-hewn composition reflective of the daunting terrain that is its subject.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (c. 1920) centres on a lone pine tree struggling for survival against the odds.<sup>31</sup>

Two members of the Group of Seven, Frank Johnston (after 1921 he changed his name to Franz) and Arthur Lismer painted on the home front. Frank Johnston was working as a commercial artist when the CWMF commissioned him to depict the Royal Flying Corps training program in Ontario. In the late summer and fall of 1918, he flew with training officers in Curtiss JN-4 aircraft and painted at a number of

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<sup>29</sup> Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> F. H. Varley, *Georgian Bay Sketch, No. 5*, 1920, oil on wood panel, 29.2 x 39.7 cm, private collection, London, Ontario.

<sup>31</sup> F. H. Varley, *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay*, c. 1920, oil on canvas, 132.6 x 162.8 cm, NGC 1814. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 61.

bases, including Camp Borden and Beamsville, Ontario. Nearly eighty watercolours and drawings and two canvasses, resulted. These show that his approach changed through personal experience and his exposure to the war art of Jackson and Varley following their return from the front.

Johnston's *The Magic Pool* of 1917 is a decorative and sentimental composition featuring a dancing wood nymph.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, his *School of Aerial Gunnery* (c. 1918), while stylistically related in terms of its use of colour and detail, is an unsentimental rendition of an aircraft in flight. (Fig. 27, p. 339) In 1920, Johnston used almost the same approach in a painting of the Ontario landscape. *The Fire Ranger* (1920) portrays a non-military aircraft flying low over forested hills against a cloud-filled sky.<sup>33</sup> *Serenity, Lake of the Woods* of 1922 uses the same format with the sky dominating the upper four-fifths of the composition – but it lacks an aircraft.<sup>34</sup> In *Fire-Swept, Algoma* of 1920 the impact of the Western Front is fully incorporated into Johnston's composition, although he personally was never there. The influence of Jackson is evident in a desolate foreground countryside covered in a forest of charred and denuded trees that owes much to his colleague's *A Copse, Evening* (1918).<sup>35</sup>

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32 Frank Johnston, *The Magic Pool*, 1917, tempera on board, 30.6 x 50.7 cm, NGC 1500.

33 Frank Johnston, *The Fire Ranger*, 1920, oil on canvas, 123 x 153.2 cm, NGC 1823.

34 Franz Johnston, *Serenity, Lake of the Woods*, 1922, oil on canvas, 102.3 x 128.4 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 71.

35 Frank Johnston, *Fire-Swept, Algoma*, 1920, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 167.5 cm, NGC 1694. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 51.

The CWMF commissioned Arthur Lismer to portray naval activity in the port of Halifax in 1918. He had been living there since 1916, when he had become the principal of the Victoria College of Art in Halifax. Prior to that appointment he had worked as a graphic artist in Toronto as had MacDonald, Varley, and Johnston. Lismer certainly believed at the time that the war experiences of Canadian artists “will have a great deal to do with the development of our art in Canada.”<sup>36</sup> He himself made hundreds of sketches, completed a number of oil studies on board, and finished several major canvasses during 1918 and 1919. The CWMF also commissioned and sold a series of sixteen lithographic prints. Like Johnston, Lismer tried to experience some of the subjects he painted and, in October 1918, sailed from Halifax harbour on a minesweeper. He learned of the war overseas from both Varley and Jackson when they returned to Canada in 1919 and he painted alongside Jackson in Halifax while the latter was completing his own CWMF commissions. The influence of his two colleagues profoundly altered Lismer’s own artistic approach in the immediate postwar period.

*The Guide’s Home, Algonquin* of 1914 is a quasi-impressionistic and decorative work in which the landscape appears benevolent and non-threatening.<sup>37</sup> *Convoy in Bedford Basin* (c. 1918) retains something of the same cheerful style despite its wartime subject matter in that the sun shines, the waves lap, and the dazzle-painted ships look as though they are participating in a regatta. (Fig. 28, p.

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<sup>36</sup> Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Lismer, *The Guide’s Home, Algonquin*, 1914, oil on canvas, 102.6 x 114.4 cm, NGC 1155. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 19.

340) However, *A September Gale, Georgian Bay of 1921* is Varley's *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (c. 1920) reincarnate: the same tree, the same storm-tossed water, and the same wildness of nature.<sup>38</sup> Gone from Lismer's work is the impressionistic palette that characterized his painting before his exposure to the legacy of the Great War in his friends' art.

J. E. H. MacDonald was one of three Group of Seven artists who did not receive a war commission. The early years of the war had seen him in straitened circumstances eking out an existence on \$12.00 a week as commercial contracts dried up. During this time he produced a war painting, *Spirits of Christmas – No Man's Land* (c. 1916), and a poster entitled *Canada and the Call* (c. 1915). (Figs. 29, 30, pp. 341, 342) The possibility of MacDonald obtaining a commission was certainly discussed towards the end of the war with Eric Brown and the Canadian committee of the CWMF. MacDonald seriously considered submitting a work, never painted, based on the groups of veterans who hung around at two Toronto street intersections known as Shrapnel and WhizzBang Corners.<sup>39</sup> The artist also expressed enthusiasm for painting one of the oversize decorative panels for Beaverbrook's proposed memorial war art gallery.

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38 Arthur Lismer, *A September Gale, Georgian Bay*, 1921, oil on canvas, 122.4 x 163 cm, NGC 3360. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 62.

39 J. E. H. MacDonald to Eric Brown, 4 December 1918, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), NGC fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41–C, Canadian War Memorials.

Early paintings, such as *The Sleighing Party*, *Winter Moonlight* of 1911, could be atmospheric and moody.<sup>40</sup> The same quality infuses *Spirits of Christmas – No Man’s Land* (c. 1916). MacDonald’s growing concerns about the war and his poverty found reflection in a wildly atmospheric 1916 painting entitled *The Elements*.<sup>41</sup> This work, like Jackson’s *Terre Sauvage* (1913), suggests that even before the war, members of the nascent Group, including Tom Thomson, sought less picturesque means of depicting their country. In *Leaves in the Brook* of 1919, MacDonald’s approach has become looser and demonstrates a stylistic link to the post-war art of Varley and Jackson.<sup>42</sup>

Lawren S. Harris enlisted in July 1916 as an instructor in musketry at Camp Borden and Toronto. Although he never went overseas, he lost a brother in France. Like the other members of the Group, his work changed markedly in response to the war. That he was responsive to the new British art styles emerging during the conflict is apparent in an undated letter he wrote to MacDonald in about 1918 about his response to Paul Nash’s work. “The stuff seems terribly penetrating and big,” he writes, “crawled along the bottom of the fearful thing and dug up the dregs in a

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40 J. E. H. MacDonald, *The Sleighing Party*, *Winter Moonlight*, c. 1911, oil on canvas, 41.3 x 51 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Claude Laberge, 1984. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 11.

41 J. E. H. MacDonald, *The Elements*, 1916, oil on board, 71.1 x 91.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Dr. Lorne Pierce, Toronto, 1958, in memory of Edith Chown Pierce (1890–1954). Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 31.

42 J. E. H. MacDonald, *Leaves in the Brook*, c. 1919, oil on canvas, 52.7 x 65 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 46.

remarkably simple way.”<sup>43</sup> *Hurdy-Gurdy* of 1913 is an impressionistic treatment in the vein of Lismer’s *The Guide’s House, Algonquin* (1914).<sup>44</sup> *Spruce and Snow, Northern Ontario* of 1916 shows, in its use of thick paint and its almost sculptural quality, a style owing much to the Scandinavian paintings he had seen in 1913 at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo.<sup>45</sup> However, *Above Lake Superior* of 1922 evinces the debt owed to the landscape styles that emerged out of the First World War.<sup>46</sup> In a stark winter setting, bare tree trunks rise from the ground like the trees in Jackson’s *A Copse, Evening* (1918). (Fig. 4, p. 316)

To understand the influence of the Group of Seven on Canadian art one has only to look at the work of their myriad followers who continued to paint landscapes from the point of view of a dramatic face-to-face confrontation with untamed Canadian nature. Artists such as Carl Schaefer (1903–1995), Pegi Nicol MacLeod, and Charles Comfort were all indebted to the Group. Even a photographer such as John Vanderpant, a close friend of Varley, and a man who never experienced war, responded to their art in the form of photographs of burned-over land that evoke the

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43 Lawren Harris to J. E. H. MacDonald, undated letter, c. 1918, NAC, MG 30, D 111, vol. 1, J. E. H. MacDonald fonds, A.Y. Jackson correspondence, photocopied correspondence, 1916–1919.

44 Lawren S. Harris, *Hurdy-Gurdy*, 1913, oil on canvas, 75.8 x 86.6 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of Roy Cole, 1992. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 17.

45 Lawren S. Harris, *Spruce and Snow, Northern Ontario*, 1916, oil on canvas, 102.3 x 114.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Roy G. Cole, Rosseau, Ontario. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 28.

46 Lawren S. Harris, *Above Lake Superior*, c. 1922, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1929. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 79.



imagery of the Western Front. His 1926 photograph, *In the Wake of the Forest Fire*, is one example.<sup>47</sup> A later work by the seventh original member of the Group, Franklin Carmichael, demonstrates the enduring quality of their post-war collective iconography. Carmichael, who was studying in Antwerp, fled back to Canada when war broke out. A. Y. Jackson was an important influence on him as was Tom Thomson. The iconography of the war, however, did not emerge in Carmichael's landscape art until much later. The evidence is clearly seen in a 1929–1930 watercolour entitled *Wabajisik: Drowned Land*.<sup>48</sup> Here, the dead tree trunks that for so many war artists became the icons of the Western Front also speak of a dead Ontario landscape.

It is clear that the Group itself never set out to minimize the role of the war in its own artistic development. At the same time, it did not make the links particularly clear. One can cite, for example, the fact that in the catalogue for its first exhibition in 1920 at the Art Gallery of Toronto it made use of the same quotation that had appeared in the lavish illustrated volume that accompanied the opening exhibition of war art in London in 1919.<sup>49</sup> “Great nations,” as Konody, quoting Ruskin, wrote: “write their autobiographies in three manuscripts:— the book of their deeds, the book

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47 John Vanderpant, *In the Wake of the Forest Fire*, 1926, silver bromide print, 27 x 43.8 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery 90.68.12.

48 Franklin Carmichael, *Wabajisik: Drowned Land*, 1929–1930, watercolour and gouache over charcoal on wove paper, 51.8 x 69.8 cm, NGC 37158. Illustrated in Murray, *Northern Lights*, plate 101.

49 *Group of Seven Catalogue Exhibition of Paintings, May 7th – May 27th, 1920*, NGC Library.

of their words, and the book of their art.”<sup>50</sup> “[T]he greatness of a country,” writes the Group in its catalogue, “depends on three things: ‘its Words, its Deeds and its Art.’”<sup>51</sup> The message that art can play a part in nation-building as much as the deeds of war is clearly understood but is not directly stated.

In 1920, the Group was probably still unaware of how it would contribute to the making of a new vision of nation through cultural means. It was simply fired by a sense of being Canadian and chose the Canadian landscape as its subject. The National Gallery, itself searching for a nationally significant role, was prepared to support it and help transform its vision into a state iconography. It is therefore not surprising that the Group’s work was pre-eminent in the art section of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, London, the Canadian section of which was coordinated by the gallery.<sup>52</sup> “The Canadian fine arts are stirring too,” wrote Eric Brown in the exhibition’s catalogue foreword.<sup>53</sup> The art’s particular Canadian qualities were noted in the London press. “There can be no question that Canada is developing a school of landscape painters who are strongly racy of the soil,” wrote one British critic.<sup>54</sup>

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50 P. G. Konody, “On War Memorials,” *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials* (London: Colour Ltd., 1919), 5.

51 From the *Group of Seven* exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of Toronto, 7–27 May 1920, as quoted in Davis, “An Apprehended Vision,” 106; as quoted in Salloum, *Underlying Vibrations*, 47.

52 Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 142–151.

53 *Ibid.*, 143, quoting p. 3 of the catalogue.

54 *Ibid.*, 144, quoting the *London Times*, 6 May 1924.

But did the Group play a leading role, or was it merely a participant in a political process already underway that strove to transform wartime success into a building block of nation? And was this a process that was understood or was it simply a question of opportunism? Other than Vipond (1974), the art historical literature has little to say directly about the role of nationalism in formulating the art of the Group's members and a lot to say about the role of the land itself in providing inspiration. One example that cites tourism as a factor is Douglas Cole's 1978 article, "Artists, Patrons and Public: An Enquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven," which argues that "As the recreational popularity of the northern landscape increased to national and mass proportion, so was the Group elevated to the status of Canadian cultural heroes and their work enshrined as national icons."<sup>55</sup> Reid (1973) makes the influence of the land clear in his survey of Canadian painting. "The artists who first exhibited together in Toronto as the Group of Seven in May 1920," he writes, "had by that time developed a doctrine and a style of painting based on the idea that Canadian art could find sufficient sustenance in Canada alone."<sup>56</sup> Housser (1926) declares that the Group was, "inspired as a result of direct contact with Nature herself."<sup>57</sup> Hill (1995) attributes this belief to the proselytizing artists themselves. He quotes Lawren S. Harris in 1928:

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55 Douglas Cole, "Artists, Patrons and Public: An Enquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (summer 1978), 77.

56 Reid, *A Concise History*, 135.

57 F. B. Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), 24.

We live on the fringe of the great North across the whole continent, and its spiritual flow, its clarity, its replenishing power passes through us to the teeming people south of us . . . This emphasis on the north in the Canadian character that is born of the spirit of the north and reflects it, has profoundly affected its art, and its art in turn clarifies and enhances the quality of Canadian consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

A 1927 review attributed to the Canadian critic Barker Fairley questions viewpoints such as this. It does not, however, suggest an alternative influence of war art and war experience. Instead, he insists that “it grossly overstates the native independence of these artists, identifying the English-Dutch tradition, from which they broke, with the whole of contemporary Europe and forgetting that it is easy to see, that the new Canadian technique is almost as close to Post-Impressionism as the old technique was to English watercolour.”<sup>59</sup> For many others, the Group’s claims were also exaggerated. That same year, the Canadian artist Ernest Fosbery (1879–1956), who had painted for the CWMF, questioned their mythologizing approach. “The Amateur Myth: the fable that the members of the group were amateurs uncontaminated by European influence . . . The Discovery Myth: the fable that they ‘discovered’ that Canadian landscape was paintable . . . The National School of Painting Myth: the claim that these men are the first and only Canadian painters, in fact that a national school has arrived,” was questionable, he wrote.<sup>60</sup> In 1936, historian Frank Underhill perceptively noted that: “There must have been some subtle

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<sup>58</sup> Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 164.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

flaw in their original vision, for soon they were seeing themselves as their admiring critics saw them, as Men of the North and nothing more.”<sup>61</sup> In 1939, Canadian artist and critic John Lyman, commenting on a Canadian art exhibition in San Francisco, widened the problem to Canadians themselves when he noted that the exhibition “conveys on the whole the impression that Canadian art stopped in its tracks a decade ago. In preparing exhibitions for abroad it might be to the advantage of this country to take into account the fact that the relative importance given the Group of Seven collectively at home, where the work is endowed with the romance of a pioneer saga, is not fully apparent to outsiders who judge painting by itself.”<sup>62</sup>

But the myth survived the passage of time. Harper (1966) writes: “A vast widening of the horizon which enabled them to see and set down the mighty forces of Canada in all their primeval power was the legacy which these ‘young giants’ of the Group of Seven bequeathed to future Canadian artists.”<sup>63</sup> While there is no doubt that the wilderness origin of the Group’s art was common parlance from early on, this landscape link was not a pre-war phenomenon. In a biography of her husband, Eric Brown, Maud Brown dated his response to the Group’s work to after the war when its members were sketching in Algoma in northern Ontario.<sup>64</sup>

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61 Ibid., 288.

62 Ibid.

63 J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: a History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 305.

64 F. Maud Brown, *Breaking Barriers: Eric Brown and the National Gallery* (Ottawa: The Society for Art Publications, 1964), 56.

It is clear from this survey that little academic note was taken of the Group's indebtedness to its war experiences in the making of its art. Thus, the extent to which much of its subjects after 1920, in particular its references to dead trees and devastated ground, are indebted to the landscape of the Great War was not widely understood. One important reason in the immediate post-war period was limited exposure. The failure to build a war memorial art gallery clearly contributed to this amnesia. Moreover, the Canadian government's post-war pursuit of an increasingly independent and nationalist agenda vis à vis Great Britain also had a role to play in hiding the origins of the Group's art. Finally, it was in the Group's commercial interests to espouse the national agenda and support a vision of a Canadian school of art inspired by the countryside itself. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Group's members rarely referred to the wartime roots of their art although, when the Second World War broke out in 1939, A. Y. Jackson worked tirelessly to establish and maintain a Second World War art program.

In the context of the Group of Seven it is clear that canons – whether of art or literature – are made in relationship to the needs of nation at both the political and public level as Corse has argued in *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States* (1997).<sup>65</sup> War brought discomfort: the land, and its enduring stability, brought a kind of cultural comfort. This, too, helps explain the amnesia where the influence of the war is concerned. In this framework, the fact that the Group's inspiration was British art combined with experience in a foreign war

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<sup>65</sup> Sarah M. Corse, *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

fought within the context of British imperialism was something that had to be downplayed. From the perspective of the need for an identity that was clearly understood as Canadian and not British in order to develop a national distinctiveness and unity both in terms of outside perceptions and internal understanding, these external sources of inspiration had to be excised from the canon.

The Group of Seven's landscape art remains the best-known Canadian art both outside and inside the country. It has resulted in a projection of an image of Canada as a spectacular and rugged natural environment. As a result of this conscious nation-building both on the part of institutions and the public we see that as the twenty-first century dawns it remains difficult to project a picture of Canada that does not focus on its natural resources and supposedly pristine environment.

In the context of a more formal art-related analysis, Charles Hill supports this argument when he writes in his catalogue on the Group that

by defining art politically and geographically, the artists of the Group did impede the discussion of art on its own terms – what was actually happening on the surface of the canvas – and ultimately inhibited an appreciation of Canadian art in any but those ways. Judgement came to be based on the “Canadianism” of a painting rather than its inherent pictorial qualities, thus discouraging a wider admiration of artists such as David Milne or Goodridge Roberts, and of the movement towards abstraction.<sup>66</sup>

He might have added that this same defining imperative drove the war inspiration for their art out as well. In this connection, he is correct in his assessment that by focusing on what is “Canadian” about the art and not focusing on what is actually happening on the surface of the canvas, a true appreciation of other kinds of

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<sup>66</sup> Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 288.

art is lost. Certainly, one element that has been lost is an understanding of some non-Canadian inspirations. Studies on the nature of nationalism and the making of canons explain why the Group's specifically Canadian landscape art became well known. It is, however, only through a careful formal analysis of what actually appears on the surface of their paintings that one can at least consider one now forgotten source of the Group's art as being in the detritus of war and Empire. Quite clearly, in order to establish a consensual vision of nation there had to be a process of "forgetting" that hid past histories and influences that did not fit the emerging model.



## Chapter 6

### The Art of Forgetting

The Group of Seven's extraordinary success as producers of an imagery that symbolized Canada was predicated on a successful reception of this meaning by a number of differing interests. According to most reception theorists it was the interpretive activities of the viewers of its imagery that gave the art, and continue to give it, significance and aesthetic value. This was not an attribute innate to the paintings themselves, or a message that the artists themselves initially related. As has been shown, much of their immediate post-war interpretive approach was influenced by the war and not by the Canadian outdoors. Nonetheless, for the original inspiration of the art to be known or for new meaning to be provided by its viewers, it had to be seen. Memories are not created from nothing. The interest groups and social formations that make memory have to be able to view the art works or know them to have been forgotten. Furthermore, if only what is remembered is known, how is it possible to avoid inevitable bias in the visual record of war both of itself and of the interest groups responsible for its selection? And what are the implications for history?

The business of forgetting in the interests of memory does not only encompass the iconographical origins of the Group of Seven's paintings and the religious works completed shortly after the First World War. It also extends to complete bodies of work by known artists and to some artists themselves. In general, when people think of Canadian war art they tend to think only of a few famous war artists such as Alex

Colville, F. H. Varley, or Molly Lamb Bobak. Most do not know any of the other artists who painted or drew the thousands of works of art that are part of the Canadian official patrimony. Nor are most people aware that so many Canadian artists participated in the official war art programs.<sup>1</sup> Their knowledge of war in its artistic expression is clearly limited. Inevitably this problematizes the war art's usefulness as a record of war and as a source and site of memory.

This chapter's artistic voyage through the First World War art of Maurice Cullen (1866–1934) and Gyrth Russell (1892–1970) serves to emphasize the fact that quality, however defined, has had little to do with what is known or unknown. As far as war art is concerned the process of selection following the Great War appears to have been predicated on external forces relating to nationalism, canonization, and the politics of memory. A significant amount of the artwork by Cullen and Russell was rarely seen in public after the conflict. Russell's loan cards, for example, indicate that half of his works were never exhibited prior to about 1985 and half of those were exhibited only once. Following the post-war major exhibition of war art in 1919, selections of Cullen's work were included in the National Gallery's exhibitions in 1923 and 1924. An increase in loans activity followed only on the appointment of a curator of war art at the National Gallery in 1960. Certainly, in this chapter, some sense of what has almost been lost to memory, the collective memory in particular, is very apparent.

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<sup>1</sup> This is borne out in numerous remarks in the comments books of *Canvas of War*. Canadian War Museum (CWM), Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*, Comment Books.

The Newfoundlander Maurice Cullen is a case in point. The Canadian War Museum (CWM) has custody of the largest collection of Cullen's war works. The thirteen major paintings he completed for the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) have, in the past six years, been augmented by twenty oil studies on panel he completed in the field. The National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario each own one painting, while his war drawings are held in the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

In his finished war paintings, Cullen struggled to move beyond a natural affinity with traditional landscape painting and, in particular, beyond his interest in the landscape style of the Impressionists, to speak more deeply of the tragedy of war. Widely acknowledged as the artist largely responsible for introducing Impressionism to Canada and certainly a practitioner of the style, the landscape of battle presented a challenge. None of his drawings or oil studies records his difficulties with the subject directly but in the finished canvasses, his approaches to depicting the terrain of war can be analyzed.

Maurice Cullen was born in St. John's in 1866, the son of James Cullen and Sarah Anne Ward.<sup>2</sup> His family moved to Montreal when he was a small child. He is known to have visited St. John's in 1888 but it was on a visit in 1907 that he met his future wife, Barbara Wakeham Pilot, a widow with one daughter and four sons, whom he married in 1910. The intervening years had been spent studying and exhibiting in Paris and in Montreal, where he also taught. His impressionistic style did not catch on

with Montreal collectors immediately, accustomed as they were to the gloomier productions of the Dutch Hague School. However, by 1907, he was sufficiently well recognized that the Royal Canadian Academy elected him as a member.

Little information exists on his career as a war artist. Correspondence in the archives of the National Gallery of Canada confirms his appointment with the rank of captain and gives the date of his release from military service.<sup>3</sup> The Routine Orders of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada in the National Archives of Canada provide further confirmation of his appointment.<sup>4</sup> No letters have survived indicating his personal response to the war. His reaction is something to which only his paintings and drawings can attest.

Captain Cullen joined the Canadian War Records Office on 25 March 1918, along with fellow Canadian artists F. H. Varley, J. W. Beatty (1868–1941), and C. W. Simpson (1878–1942). Upon his arrival in England in April 1918, Cullen was sent to Seaford training camp on the south coast where he made drawings of the camp. He spent June through early September with the Canadian Corps in France sketching in a variety of locations around Amiens, Cambrai, and Lens. Returning to London in mid-

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2 The most thorough exploration of Cullen's life and career is to be found in Sylvia Antoniou, *Maurice Cullen* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982).

3 Sir Edmund Walker to Eric Brown, 22 December 1919, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42–C, Cullen, Maurice, and Brown to Cullen, 26 March 1920, *ibid.*

4 Copies of various Routine Orders pertaining to Cullen's appointment are to be found in *ibid.*

September, he completed eight works in preparation for the Canadian War Memorials Fund 1919 exhibition in London.

By the time this exhibition opened he was in Europe once more, attached to the Canadian Corps as it advanced into Germany after the 11 November 1918 Armistice. He spent some time in January 1919 at Huy in Belgium before he returned to London in late March 1919 to work on three further paintings. Cullen sailed for Canada in May of that year. Ottawa extended his commission until March 1920 so that he might finish these three and a further two CWMF paintings. The five paintings were eventually handed over to the National Gallery of Canada for custody in May 1920.

His drawing *Wrecked Tank, Cambrai Road* is typical of the work he did during his first visit to the Western Front.<sup>5</sup> Dating from 2 September 1918, it was one of the last studies he completed before returning to London. In this sketch the tank is the predominant image, but in the large painting *The Cambrai Road* (1918) that is based on this small drawing, there is no tank. (Fig. 37, p. 349) Instead, the vast Douai plain – the control of which was the fundamental objective of the Canadian attack on Vimy Ridge in 1917 – is made the focus of the composition. Cullen underlines the Canadian achievement by concentrating on this geographic challenge.

As this painting demonstrates, and as a further study of all his war paintings confirms, it is evident that the artist's aim was to compose finished paintings that conveyed the serious nature of war in a way that his on-the-spot sketches could not.

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Cullen. *Wrecked Tank, Cambrai Road*, graphite on paper, 12.4 x 19.2 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) 55.81.A.

Competent but emotionless oil studies of ruins such as *Hangard* (1918) could not communicate the tragic reality of the battlefield as Cullen experienced it. (Fig. 38, p. 350) For an artist whose traditional style of painting was inspired by the Impressionists, the landscape of battle presented a significant challenge. This becomes clear in an examination of four of the thirteen paintings he completed for the CWMF.

The first, *Dead Horse and Rider in a Trench* (1918), is a 1 x 1.5 metre oil painting on canvas. (Fig. 1, p. 313) Likely based on an oil sketch of a trench entitled *Camblain l'Abbé* (n.d.), it introduces the reality of war into the trench subject matter through the addition of the two figures of the dead horse and soldier. (Fig. 39, p. 351) What began as a landscape sketch becomes in the finished painting a moving study in tragedy. This bleak and profoundly disturbing picture documents his agitation at the sight of death when the smooth brushwork of the landscape elements becomes nervous rough impasto in the area around the horse's head.

The second painting, *Dawn on the Ouse Trench* (1918), a more than 2 x 2 metre canvas, bears a remarkable resemblance, if an inverted one to *Dead Horse and Rider in a Trench*. (Fig. 40, p. 352) The mood, however, is created by the time of day and not by the introduction of the dead. The semi-darkness that accompanies the rising of the sun introduces a note of gloom and of foreboding not present in *Camblain l'Abbé*, the sketch from which the painting was drawn.<sup>6</sup>

Equally shadowy is the third painting of the four, *No Man's Land* (1919), a 2 x 3 metre canvas which may well be another depiction of the Douai plain, a subject that

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<sup>6</sup> Maurice Cullen, *Camblain l'Abbé*, 1919, graphite on paper, 23.3 x 28.9 cm, AGH 55.92.

Cullen evidently found inspirational. (Fig. 41, p. 353) Here, the vast featureless plain is cloaked in a darkness that emphasizes its inhospitality.

The fourth painting, *The Sunken Road, Hangard* (1918), finds its subject matter in the area near Amiens in the Somme, where many Canadians fought and died over the course of the war. (Fig. 42, p. 354) Here, ruins similar to those cheerfully depicted in the Hangard sketch are wrapped in the all-encompassing shade that Cullen found so effective in conveying the seriousness of the conflict.

It was only during his second visit to the battlefields of the Western Front in 1919 that Cullen found a subject to which he could respond using the impressionistic style that was his preferred manner of working. *Huy on the Meuse, on the Road to the Rhine* (c. 1919) is a cheerful winter study of a small Belgian town overlooking a river. (Fig. 2, p. 314) It is reminiscent of his earlier Canadian works such as *Cape Diamond* of 1909 and *Lévis from Quebec* of 1906.<sup>7</sup> The Art Gallery of Hamilton has a number of sketches relating to Huy that Cullen completed in January 1919 (acquired as gifts from his step-son) and the National Gallery of Canada has a painting of the same subject.<sup>8</sup>

What are we to make of Cullen's war art? As documents, his drawings and oil sketches are exceptional visual accounts of areas of the Western Front of importance to Canadians during 1917–1918. The oil studies, in particular, capture the colours of the war-torn landscape in a way that no cumbersome glass colour photographs of the

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7 Maurice Cullen, *Cape Diamond*, 1909, oil on canvas, 144.9 x 174.5 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) 55.56.1; *Lévis from Québec*, oil on canvas, 76.7 x 102.2, Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) 2861.

time ever could. They also document what visitors to the front, such as Cullen, were actually able to see and make of the war. Given that they were not permitted to be near the action, what they saw was unending destruction both of land and buildings, very little drama, tired and weary troops, and certainly no major acts of heroism and courage. From his drawings and sketches of this subject matter (the troops are noticeably lacking in Cullen's work), he was expected to produce canvasses that would capture the nature of the Canadian war experience for Canadians at home. By changing the time of day, by adding figures, and by simplifying his compositions, Cullen hints at the atmosphere that surrounded Canadian soldiers during the four long years of war. Above all, he catches the essence of the undulating landscape of the Western Front in all its vulnerability. That Cullen was able to adjust his painting style to the requirements of a very different subject matter is no small achievement.

But is Cullen known for this contribution to the record of the war? In 1982, his war output formed a chapter of an exhibition catalogue by Sylvia Antoniou entitled *Maurice Cullen*. As for the major art history surveys, neither Harper (1966) or Reid (1973) discusses anything but the contribution of his impressionist style to Canadian art. Tippett (1984) reinforces the impressionist contribution. "*Dead Horse and Rider in a Trench*," she writes, "envelops the landscape in an impressionistic shroud of soft greys and browns, while his *Ruined Village, France*, painted further behind the line, depicts the land in bright crisp dabs."<sup>9</sup> Possibly it was his impressionist style that

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8 Maurice Cullen, *Huy on the Meuse*, oil on canvas, 45 x 56 cm, NGC 3509.

9 Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 60.



secured his oblivion for a public responding to a more powerful emblematic iconography through which to understand and remember war even if that same public quite liked Cullen's output in a different pastoral context.

Gyrth Russell's First World War art is worth examining in a similar context although here it is not just a body of work but the artist himself who is virtually unknown. The Canadian War Museum has custody of eighteen of his somewhat impressionistic depictions of the landscapes and buildings of northern France as they appeared in 1918, the closing year of the First World War. In one example, *The White Chateau, Liévin*, the light-filled composition seems at first a less than serious approach to the subject of the destruction wrought by war. (Fig. 43, p. 355) However, the stretcher-bearers in the lower right convey the reality. Indeed, an examination of all his canvasses reveals a painter who responded no less than his peers to the dark side of human conflict.

Among the thousands of works on paper in the Canadian War Museum vault can be found examples of Russells's six wartime prints. Several are small and delicate dry-points of buildings and airfields. In others, a harsher stroke of the needle produced grimmer images such as *Mine Crater* (n.d.). (Fig. 44, p. 356) Many of the prints are based on the paintings and were made available for sale after 1918 by the Canadian War Memorials Fund.

To date, very little is known in Canada about Russell. Various art gallery archives have produced copies of a few exhibition reviews, some correspondence, a

couple of articles, and details of his artistic training.<sup>10</sup> The war prints appear in limited numbers in some Canadian public collections, as does the occasional painting.<sup>11</sup> Most of the extant material dates to the period immediately after the war and sheds light only on his early career. As if to illustrate this, a touring exhibition and publication from the National Gallery of Canada, entitled *A New Class of Art: The Artist's Print in Canadian Art, 1880–1920* (1996), places Russell clearly among those artists associated with the etching revival in Canada at the turn of the century – the years of his youth, not his maturity.<sup>12</sup> Of the almost fifty years of his life that followed there is almost no record in Canada and very little more has come to light in England, even via the societies of which he was a member.<sup>13</sup>

Until research was undertaken on his career less than a decade ago by the National Gallery and by the Canadian War Museum, the result, for Russell, had been near oblivion in this country. Certainly, the major surveys of Canadian art do not mention him. Undoubtedly, his decision to live overseas combined with an art style at odds with the modernist paradigm that still dominates Canadian art history ensured

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10 The NGCA has the most information on Russell but scattered through a number of files. See, for example, NGCA, NGC fonds, 2.12–T, Toronto, Art Gallery of, Gyrrh Russell (correspondence re), 1.12–R, Royal Canadian Academy Exhibitions, purchased from, Purchased/Canadian, and 5.42–R, Russell, Gyrrh.

11 In Canada, Russell's works of art are to be found in the NGC, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS), AGO, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV), and AGH.

12 Rosemarie L. Tovell, *A New Class of Art: The Artist's Print in Canadian Art, 1877–1920* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996).

13 The author corresponded with The Royal Institute of Oil Painters, The Royal Society of Marine Artists, and The Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours. Russell was an exhibiting member of all these institutions. This research is on file at the CWM, War Artist File, Gyrrh Russell.

that he remained in obscurity. Printmaking, as well, has always held less popular appeal than painting and it was as a printmaker that he was primarily known in Canada.

What is known is that Gyrrh Russell was born in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, on 13 or 30 April 1892, and that he died on 8 December 1970, in Penarth, Glamorgan, Wales. The son of Benjamin Russell (a Justice of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court) and Louise Coleman Russell, he received his early art training at the Victoria School of Art and Design in Halifax from 1908–1910. His teacher was the expatriate American Henry Rosenberg (1858–1947), a former student of the American Frank Duveneck (1848–1919). During the summer of 1880, Duveneck and his pupils befriended the English artist James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) in Venice and all worked together for several months. Rosenberg was principal of the Victoria School until 1910 and assisted with the founding of the Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Art that same year. He seems to have been an influential teacher for Russell, as the Whistlerian art style that he learned himself was clearly passed on to his pupil who utilized it at different times in his career. However, it was Rosenberg's successor as principal, the Canadian Lewis Smith (1871–1926), who stimulated Russell's interest in etching.

In 1911, Russell married Gladys Harman Webster, by whom he had two sons and one daughter. It is likely that she accompanied the artist as he moved on to studies in Boston at the Eric Pape School of Art in 1913 and then in Paris, receiving instruction at both the Academie Julien and Atelier Colarossi from 1913–1914. In this period Russell exhibited mostly prints at the Art Association of Montreal in 1912 and

1913, the Ontario Society of Artists in 1913, and the Nova Scotia Provincial exhibitions in 1911, 1912, and 1913. A few works have survived in public collections from these early years, most notably those held in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, including *Barrington Street, Halifax* (1910) and *The Parade, Halifax* (1912).<sup>14</sup> In July 1914, *The Canadian Magazine* published *The Pontoon*, a print which, when compared with *Bedford Row, Halifax*, published in *The Studio* in January 1915, indicates that the artist's preferred style was rich in contrasts and moody in atmosphere.<sup>15</sup> It is likely that the quasi-impressionist painting style that Russell utilised in his subsequent war paintings derived from his Paris experiences. Russell also illustrated an article entitled "Changing Halifax" in *The Canadian Magazine* in August 1914.<sup>16</sup>

In 1915 and 1916, Russell was living in Rye, East Sussex, a picturesque medieval town on England's south coast and long a mecca for artists and writers. A few prints from this period can be found in Canadian public collections including the delicate *The Rother at Rye* (c. 1915) in the National Gallery of Canada and *Mermaid St., Rye, England* (c. 1915) in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.<sup>17</sup> Russell was

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14 Gyrth Russell, *Barrington Street, Halifax*, 1910, oil on canvas, 54.1 x 63.8 cm, AGNS 1980.9; *The Parade, Halifax*, 1912, etching on paper, 28 x 32 cm, AGNS 1985.8.

15 "The Pontoon," *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. 43, no. 3 (July 1914), 295; Gyrth Russell, *Bedford Row, Halifax (Nova Scotia)*, in Newton MacTavish, "Some Canadian Etchers," *The Studio*, vol. 58, no. 262 (January 1915), 262.

16 Archibald MacMechan, "Changing Halifax," *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. 41, no. 4 (August 1914), 326–336.

17 Gyrth Russell, *The Rother at Rye*, c. 1915, etching on wove paper, 18.8 x 25.3 cm, NGC 1216; *Mermaid St., Rye, England*, c. 1915, oil on wood, 23.2 x 25 cm, AGNS 1919.2.

mentioned favourably in an article entitled “Canadian Etchers” by the critic Newton MacTavish, published in *The Studio* in January 1915. Here, his prints are described as, “original in conception, interesting in treatment, and expressive of a singular personality.”<sup>18</sup>

During this period, and despite the onerous conditions of wartime, Russell exhibited at the Art Museum of Toronto’s regular Etching Exhibitions. In a letter sent to the curator, Edward Greig, on 9 March 1917 regarding the return of some prints, he commented: “I thank you for sending them, and taking the risk of submarines.”<sup>19</sup> One of the prints he exhibited was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada.<sup>20</sup> However, at one point, when the gallery expressed interest in seeing others, Russell was temporarily not making etchings. As he wrote Eric Brown on 13 June 1916, “to ask me for etchings is like trying to get blood out of a stone. I could send you any number of drawings in almost any medium, but of etchings I am absolutely barren. The difficulties, in a country village, with no press within fifteen miles, are too great to make etchings anything but a bug-bear.”<sup>21</sup>

A relationship with the National Gallery was, nonetheless, perceived by Russell as important to the making of his reputation, so he offered works in other media. He was quite prepared, as correspondence preserved at that institution

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18 MacTavish, “Canadian Etchers,” 262.

19 Russell to E. R. Greig, Secretary and Curator, Art Museum of Toronto, 9 March 1917, NGCA, NGC fonds, 2.12–T, Toronto, Art Gallery of, Gyrrh Russell (correspondence re.).

20 Brown to Greig, 4 May 1916, *ibid.*

21 Russell to Brown, 13 June 1916, *ibid.*

indicates, to give them works of art. On 10 July 1916, he wrote: "I do not wish to imply that I am in a position to scatter gifts but if the National Gallery want[s] one of my pastels – really wants it as I want a house boat and a prolonged trip to Spain, I would rather that no monetary consideration should mar the proposition."<sup>22</sup>

It was probably because he was a Canadian, known in Canada at the right time to the right people and resident in England, that Russell was commissioned as a war artist.<sup>23</sup> He was sent to France as a lieutenant in February 1918, completing his service in Canada in 1919, six months after the Armistice. As was the case with many artists, the opportunity to do nothing but paint and draw resulted in a substantial body of work. Russell carried out his work largely in the area around Vimy Ridge. However, the action was largely occurring elsewhere when he was there (the great battle having taken place almost a year earlier), so his subject matter became the devastated landscape and ruined buildings of the area. *The Crest of Vimy Ridge* (1918) resembles a bleak moonscape, a solitary figure providing the focal point. (Fig. 45, p. 357) *Vimy Ridge from Souchez* (n.d.) shows a sunnier aspect but beneath the glow the vision remains bleak. (Fig. 46, p. 358) In *Chateau de la Haie* (n.d.) and *An Estaminet* (n.d.) the impressionist style predominates and Russell's interest in the play of shadows on walls is a pre-eminent feature. (Figs. 47, 48, pp. 359, 360) The dry-point of the same title was taken directly from the painting. (Fig. 49, p. 361) The original drawings for

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22 Russell to Brown, 10 July 1916, *ibid.*

23 According to a typescript found by Mrs. Russell in Gyrth Russell's papers, Beaverbrook had been a pupil of his father. CWM War Artist File, Gyrth Russell.

some of these works were given by Russell to the Imperial War Museum in London, in 1932.<sup>24</sup>

Initial research suggests that Russell did not enjoy more than a moderately successful career after the war, either in Canada or England. (This despite a very positive article on his war art published in *The Canadian Magazine* in November 1918 and a number of well-received exhibitions in the early 1920s.)<sup>25</sup> During this period, Russell was living in Topsham, Devon, but exhibiting both in Canada and England. A favourable review in the *Halifax Echo*, dated 8 November 1923, refers to an exhibition in Halifax of fifty paintings and prints.<sup>26</sup> A review in the *Saint John Telegraph Journal* of 3 December 1923 describes an exhibition of his work in London at the Church of England Institute. The exhibition was heralded as a “matter of pride for all Canadians. Mr. Russell is one of the most talented of the Canadian artists of today.” Reference is made to the fact that he had exhibited earlier at the office of the Agent-General of Nova Scotia in London to effusive praise from the *London Daily Mail*.<sup>27</sup>

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24 In 1932, the artist donated six works on paper in a variety of media to the Imperial War Museum, London (catalogue nos. 4700–4705). The details are listed in *A Concise Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture of the First World War, 1914–1918*, 2d ed. (London: Imperial War Museum, 1963), 263–264.

25 “Northern Lights: A Canadian War Artist,” *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. 52, no. 2 (November 1918), 603–604.

26 “Fine Exhibit of Artist’s Work,” *Halifax Echo*, 8 November 1923.

27 “Fine Artistry in Russell Pictures,” *Saint John Telegraph Journal*, 3 December 1923.

These reviews notwithstanding, in the English art world of the twenties and thirties his style would have been seen as old-fashioned and reactionary – at odds with the new modernity, which espoused the abstract and surreal. In England he competed with Augustus John, Walter Sickert, and William Orpen. In Canada, he was competing with the Group of Seven. His *The Lane in Spring* (c. 1922), which was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada, is a weak work in comparison with the best produced by the Group.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, he made no further sales to the gallery despite a good early start.

During this period, Russell appears to have been occupied in producing etchings of picturesque English towns including Canterbury.<sup>29</sup> Those featuring Oxford were issued one at a time in editions of one hundred and fifty and there were at least eight views in the series.<sup>30</sup> In 1927, he was the illustrator of a book by L. Du Garde Peach entitled *Unknown Devon*.<sup>31</sup> In the early 1930s, Russell was recorded as living in London in S.W.11.<sup>32</sup> This was likely Battersea on the Thames, close to Whistler territory. His marriage with Gladys came to an end in 1933; nine years later he

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28 Gyrth Russell, *The Lane in Spring*, c. 1922, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, NGC 2019.

29 Gyrth Russell, *Doorway of Martyrdom, Canterbury*, n.d., dry-point on paper, 45.4 x 37 cm, AGH 61.276.

30 Ryman and Co., Ltd., to Sir Edmond [sic] Walker, 27 August 1920, NGCA, NGC fonds, file 2.12–T, Toronto, Art Gallery of, Gyrth Russell (correspondence re.).

31 L. Du Garde Peach, *Unknown Devon* (London: John Lane, 1927).

32 Ernest Blaikley to Russell, 26 November 1932, IWM War Artist File, Gyrth Russell.



married Ronagh Alexandra Slee.<sup>33</sup> *Unknown Devon* was to be followed in 1959 with *See and Paint: An Introduction to Oil Painting*.<sup>34</sup> Over the years, Russell made occasional contributions to *The Artist* and *The Studio*.<sup>35</sup>

Painting seems to have taken over from printmaking from the late 1920s onwards and the artist became an exhibiting member of a number of prestigious artists' societies. He first exhibited at the Royal Institute of Oil Painters exhibition in 1928 and thereafter fairly regularly up until 1966.<sup>36</sup> Russell also regularly exhibited with the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours.<sup>37</sup> He was a member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists and the Royal Society of British Artists.<sup>38</sup>

From 1940 to 1943, Russell served in the Royal Navy's Patrol Service and in 1941, he painted a strongly Whistlerian composition of bombing in London during the Second World War entitled *Nocturne, 1941*, now in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.<sup>39</sup> Not only its title but its colouration and paint handling show an obvious indebtedness

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33 Ibid.

34 Gyrth Russell, *See and Paint: An Introduction to Oil Painting* (London: Winsor and Newton, 1959).

35 *Who's Who* (London: A. and C. Black, 1970).

36 Olwen Tarrant, Archivist, Royal Institute of Oil Painters to the author, 14 May 1996, CWM War Artist File, Gyrth Russell.

37 George Large, Archivist, Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, to the author, 2 May 1996, *ibid*.

38 *Who's Who*, 1970.

39 Gyrth Russell, *Nocturne, 1941*, c. 1941, oil on canvas, 51 x 76.4 cm, AGNS 1977.47.

to the earlier master. The influence of Whistler is also apparent in an undated painting at the Art Gallery of Ontario entitled *Moonlight*.<sup>40</sup>

Given the gaps in our knowledge of Gyrth Russell's artistic career, particularly that pertaining to England, it is difficult to assess his importance as a whole. Since he appears not to have exhibited in Canada very often subsequent to the First World War, it would appear that a reputation in Canada became unnecessary to him or else too difficult to achieve. His Canadian career essentially ended with the war commission. Later, perhaps faced with the growing reputation of the Group of Seven and then its followers, the Canadian Group of Painters, he may have felt that the effort to establish any foothold as an expatriate Canadian was not worth it. Only further research can answer these questions.

In 1998, Russell's widow donated three sketches that Russell had made in France in 1918 to the Canadian War Museum at the request of the curator. Everything known of his work from that period is now in a public collection and is the responsibility of the state. The same is the case for Cullen's war work. At the time of writing, no private collections of his war work are known. His record of the war is held in the public trust by the Canadian War Museum on behalf of the government of Canada. The war reputations of both these war artists now rests substantially with the state. The role of this art in formulating the public memory of war is one of dependency. Only when seen has it any independent authority.

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40 Gyrth Russell, *Moonlight*, n.d., oil on board, 40 x 50.8 cm, AGO 70/360.

## PART TWO

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTER – MEMORY REGAINED

*In the years following the Second World War the war art collections began increasingly to be seen and written about. In part this was because they were far larger collections with the addition of the Second World War paintings. They also benefited from curatorial attention with the appointment of a curator of war art at the National Gallery in 1960. When the gallery moved from the Victoria Memorial Building to the Lorne Building on Elgin Street that same year, the collections also gained an exhibition space. The post-war period saw an unprecedented increase in the number of universities and a concomitant expansion in the student body available to study Canadian war art history. In ever increasing numbers, new galleries were built in towns and cities that could provide locations for war art exhibitions. However, despite this activity, for the vast majority of the public, including the veterans' community, the collections remained unknown. This only changed following the upsurge of interest in Canada's military past that followed the commemorative events of 1995 that marked the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War.*

*The following five chapters explore aspects of how the collections regained a role in the memory of war in Canada after the Second World War. Through a discussion of the 1971 transfer of the war art collections from the National Gallery to the Canadian War Museum, Chapter Seven underlines the significant role played by one curator of war art in opening the collections to the possibility of forming a part of*

*the memory of war. Chapter Eight examines the work of two little known Canadian Second World War artists whose war work found new audiences in the wake of the 1995 Anniversary and became, in their own small ways, sites of memory for several groups. Chapter Nine discusses the significance of the 2000 exhibition Canvas of War in drawing wide public and institutional attention to the collections and becoming, in itself, a site of memory. Chapter Ten considers some of the issues of interpretation raised by visitor comments on this exhibition's content and how these relate to the forming of memory. The final chapter, with its emphasis on the bureaucracy behind the existence of war art, demonstrates unequivocally how the romance of memory is formulated in the red tape, paperwork, and power brokering of government departments. At the same time, it reveals how the making of the material of memory is founded on politically directed cultural activity.*

## Chapter 7

### The Curatorial Role

Individuals and their related institutions have quite clearly played important roles in formulating Canada's memory of war. Private citizens such as Lord Beaverbrook and Sir Edmund Walker, working in volunteer capacities within institutional structures, and prime ministers such as Mackenzie King played significant roles in determining what art has become the public visual memory of war. The war art's curators and their employers have also played a part. This chapter focuses on the work of one individual in particular, the war art collections' third curator, Major R. F. Wodehouse. In 1971, Wodehouse's views on what constituted war art and whether it was art or record played a significant role in determining the future of the collections and its place in the public's collective understanding and memory of war.

War art is not always considered art that is worth knowing about. Depending on the political and cultural context of any historical period and the nature of the personalities who are in a position to effect change, war art is either fashionable or disdained. In either case, the process is one of selection. At various times, different and often very subjective tastes have determined which pieces qualify as art. Even more curiously, on occasion, war art by artists who, at other points in their careers are important figures, have not had their war production represented in retrospective exhibitions on their art.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Sandra Paikowsky, *Goodridge Roberts, 1904–1974* (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1998).

Different nations, both in their political and public guises, have seen and used military art very differently at different times. At the basis of their conclusions as to whether war art constitutes art are political and, above all, cultural considerations. Political considerations often determine the practice of collecting, especially in public institutions and, ultimately, this has an effect on the production of art. For example, the British government discouraged the production of grand battle painting at the beginning of the nineteenth century because its archenemy of the time, Napoleon, had so obviously supported this form of art. Large-scale military compositions were not commissioned and consequently were not available for exhibition. In the absence of such work on view, no market developed for it.<sup>2</sup>

There have always been differences between the treatment accorded official war art and that given non-official war art. Where war art of the official kind has been produced, different countries have dealt with its future in diverse ways. In Britain, Sir Kenneth Clark divided up the art of the Second World War between art galleries (which received what was deemed “art”) and the Imperial War Museum (which was given art that was considered “documentary”).<sup>3</sup> The United States’ Second World War art is housed with the different services in often appalling conditions and none

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<sup>2</sup> J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). The lack of heroic battle painting in the early nineteenth century in Britain is explained in Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Brian Foss, “British Artists of the Second World War” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1991).

but the military see it.<sup>4</sup> The Germans have only quite recently repatriated their official Second World War art from the United States and it languishes, barely documented, in a small town in Bavaria.<sup>5</sup> The war art of the Japanese has ended up in the Tokyo Museum of Modern Art while Australia has deposited all of its pictures and sculptures in a splendid purpose-built memorial building.<sup>6</sup> In New Zealand, the war art is in the collection of the National Archives in Wellington.

Like many art institutions, the National Gallery has supported the collecting and display of non-official war art by artists from outside of Canada such as Otto Dix (1891–1969).<sup>7</sup> It has, until recently, also shown limited interest in Canadian official war art and, in 1971, transferred much of the military art produced by Canadian artists under the official war art programs of the two World Wars to the Canadian War Museum. The circumstances surrounding this event shed an interesting light on some of the cultural and artistic concerns at play in the Canadian art world in the post-war

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4 With the exception of the United States Air Force art collection in Dayton, Ohio, the war art of the United States Navy, Army, and Marine Corps is in Washington, D.C.

5 The official German war art of the Second World War is in the custody of the Bavarian Army Museum in Ingolstadt, Germany. It was repatriated in 1986 after President Reagan signed PL 97–155 on 18 March 1982. (Email to the author from Renee Kish, Army Art Curator, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 27 November 2001.)

6 The Australian War Memorial is in Canberra.

7 Goya's print series *The Disasters of War* was acquired in the early 1930s but Otto Dix's prints collectively entitled *War* were acquired in 1993. Both series were displayed at the National Gallery in *The Ravages of War: Print Cycles by Francisco Goya and Otto Dix*, 10 February–22 May 1995.

period. Above all, they determine how important individuals – in this case a curator – can be in the making of culture.

After the Second World War, the National Gallery found itself responsible for six times as much war art as it had looked after before the war. It had to house the collections in an ancillary building and figures such as Sir Kenneth Clark wrote of the difficulties they had in viewing them.<sup>8</sup> The then director of the National Gallery and former official war artist, Charles Comfort, finally appointed a curator of war art in 1960. It was the third holder of the position, Major Wodehouse, who made the greatest impact. Appointed in 1962, he tracked down missing works, improved the storage of the paintings, arranged innumerable loans to the military, and set up an index card record of every painting, which remains a most useful reference source on the collections.<sup>9</sup> When the National Gallery moved from the Victoria Memorial Building to the Lorne Building in 1960, the sixth floor was set aside for war art and it was Wodehouse who arranged regular exhibitions that celebrated military anniversaries and specific war artists. These shows tended to reflect the perceived documentary nature of the collections, an emphasis that, it should be noted, was to have implications for the collections' future.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 112.

9 The record of his activity is in the Canadian War Museum (CWM) Art Department Archives.

10 A complete list of exhibitions curated by Wodehouse is found in Garry Mainprize, "The National Gallery of Canada: A Hundred Years of Exhibitions," *Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review*, vol. 11, nos. 1–2, 3–78.



The war art collections were referred to as, a “unique and important asset” by Jean Sutherland Boggs in 1968. She was then the director of the gallery and the words form part of her first sentence in the Preface to the *Check List of The War Collections* written by Wodehouse and published by the gallery that year. Only three years after these words were written, however, the bulk of the war art collections were transferred to the Canadian War Museum and the unique and important asset was gone from the National Gallery. Wodehouse was also transferred. Without a doubt this transfer was one of the most massive in the history of public collecting in Canada.

While there is no question that space constraints in the Lorne Building had a great deal to do with the transfer, many other factors must be considered in explaining such a move. One is simply that Boggs had clearly set herself the task of rationalizing the gallery’s organizational structure, nature, and scope of work. However, these were also the years of the Vietnam War. While a significant number of U. S. troops had been withdrawn from South East Asia by this time, the American draft was still in place. The war was extremely unpopular worldwide, a sentiment which found expression in Canada in anti-war demonstrations in front of the Parliament Buildings and the American Embassy. To have a whole floor of the National Gallery of Canada given over to the display of war art may, at the time, have been held to be politically somewhat awkward. Accordingly, the gallery sought to emphasize more popularly topical aspects of their collection. The first article in the National Gallery’s *Review for*

1971–1972, for example, which also contains the farewell piece on the war collections at the back, is entitled “The National Gallery and Women.”<sup>11</sup>

But probably more important than this was an intellectual concern – the continuing dominance of modernism in art historical circles in Canada and elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> The ideals of modernism and its commitment to progress set the standards for the period during which evaluations and decisions were made about the fate of the war art collections. The National Gallery was concerned with building its image as an important North American museum and in the period prior to the transfer had begun to acquire a representative collection of American Abstract Expressionist, Pop, and Minimalist works. The Quebec Automatistes and other examples of Canadian modernism were also being added to the gallery’s collection.<sup>13</sup> In terms of its direction, the official war art, with its basis in traditional figurative and landscape approaches, simply did not fit into the emerging canon. The directorship of former war artist Charles Comfort from 1960 to 1965 made no appreciable impact on the gallery’s modernist trajectory. Indeed, Wodehouse was probably the only curator who

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11 *Fourth Annual Review of the National Gallery of Canada 1971–1972* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972), 7–11.

12 For a discussion of similar developments in Britain, see Sue Malvern, “War, Memory and Museums: Art and Artefact in the Imperial War Museum,” *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000), 195.

13 In the same year that the war collections were transferred to the CWM the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) acquired works by the American contemporary artists Charles Close, Arshile Gorky, Brice Marden, and Nancy Graves and the English artist Richard Long. New Canadian acquisitions that year included works by Bertram Brooker, Emily Carr, Jean Dallaire, Claude Breeze, Greg Curnoe, Ron Martin, Ron Moppett, and Tony Urquhart. *Fourth Annual Review of the National Gallery of Canada*.

knew the 6, 000 or so paintings in his care well and one suspects that his intellectual concerns reflected his military interests and therefore tended to discount the value of the collections as art.

The evidence for this leaning towards modernism is nowhere more apparent than in those works that the National Gallery chose not to transfer to the war museum (thus in effect determining what constituted the “art” in the war art collections and devaluing the transferred works as such). From the Canadian War Memorials collection the gallery retained all the British avant-garde paintings by such artists as Paul Nash, C. R. W. Nevinson (1889–1946) and William Roberts and all the paintings completed by David Milne – one of Canada’s pre-eminent early modernists. At this point in time, most of the older Second World War official war artists had yet to be rediscovered and re-evaluated, and artists such as Alex Colville, now established and successful, were not yet so. In addition, very little of the latter’s work could be termed modernist. Thus no official war art from the Second World War program was kept.

This propensity for the modern had its roots, to some degree, in the fact that the Nazi regime in Germany from 1933–1945 was virulently hostile to the avant-garde and instead promoted a more grandiose, neo-classical, and figurative tradition in art. Important modernist paintings by artists such as Otto Dix and Emil Nolde (1867–1956) had been included in the 1937 *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich.<sup>14</sup> If the Nazi regime was associated with a particular art form it was almost inevitable that

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<sup>14</sup> The exhibition *Entartete Kunst* opened at the Archäologisches Institut in Munich on 19 July 1937. It closed on 30 November 1937. It subsequently toured to Berlin, Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Salzburg, Hamburg, Stettin, Weimar, Vienna,

the allied countries would have followed a route that took them as far away as possible from that direction. Indeed, to support modernism could in some ways be seen as support for the forces of anti-fascism. How Abstract Expressionism was particularly successful in this context is explored in Serge Guilbaut's book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (1988).<sup>15</sup>

In a compelling two-part review of three books on Nazi art published in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1994, German art writer and critic Willibald Sauerlaender presents another convincing case to account for the disappearance of Nazi art following the war. After referring to what he observed as a prevailing aversion to the art of the discredited Nazi party, Sauerlaender writes:

But there were aesthetic reasons as well for the disappearance of Nazi art after the war. Nearly all of it was very bad and deemed unworthy of serious art historical interest. Yet one may suspect another, deeper reason for the historians refusal to regard the art of the Third Reich as part of twentieth century art history. As long as the history of modern art was dominated by the idea of continuous progress, all tendencies and achievements outside the avant-garde – and by no means only Nazi art – were dismissed as obsolete.<sup>16</sup>

There is no evidence that Canada saw itself fighting fascism in its collecting of modernist art; it simply kept up with the trends along with the rest of the art world.

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Frankfurt, Chemnitz, Waldenburg, and Halle an der Salle. It finally closed on 20 April 1941.

<sup>15</sup> Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). See, also, the discussion in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Willibald Sauerlaender, "The Nazis' Theatre of Seduction," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 41, no. 8 (21 April 1994), 16.

Wodehouse seems to have accepted the modernist view of the progress of art history. In a memorandum to Boggs on the subject of the proposed transfer he wrote: "The Canadian War Memorials Collection of World War 1 and the Canadian War Records Collection of World War 2 are primarily collections of historical records painted by the best available artists of each period. As such they do not fit comfortably into an art museum whose prime purpose is to collect and display examples of different schools and styles of painting and sculpture through the ages."<sup>17</sup>

Wodehouse, lacking any training as an art historian, saw little or no art historical content to the collections; rather, as a military man, he saw the collections' chief value as an illustration of Canada's military history. This attitude was confirmed when, in 1969, he described the qualifications for the ideal curator of the war collections as possessing a B. A. in History and an M. A. in Military History.<sup>18</sup>

He was not alone in this viewpoint of the value of the collections. As early as the 1951 *Massey Report on the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, the war art collections had been seen as better fitted to a museum of history; more suited to an institution that dealt with the past than to one that looked to the future. Recommendation 'L' of the Report stated: "That when a suitable building is provided for the Historical Museum it takes over the collection of the present Canadian War Museum." Furthermore, it

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17 R. F. Wodehouse, "Future Transfer of the War Collections to the War Museum." Memorandum to the Chief Curator, National Gallery of Canada, 22 August 1968, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Minutes of the first Meeting of the Visiting Committee of the National Gallery of Canada, Appendix B, 11.

18 Bureau of Classification Revision, Identifying Information, Section 10, 20 July 1967, CWM Archives, R. F. Wodehouse papers, Box 57 C2.

urged “the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery [to] transfer to it such of its pictures and portraits as belong more properly to an historical museum than to an art gallery.”<sup>19</sup> In its 1949 submission, however, the gallery had not suggested this. It had merely drawn attention to the inadequacy of its storage and exhibition space and requested three permanent gallery spaces, one for the war art.<sup>20</sup>

The Canadian War Museum certainly wanted the paintings that formed the war art collections. Members of staff from that era have suggested that the director of the museum at that time, Lee Murray, spoke to Boggs about assuming responsibility for the collections and that things moved on from there. Given the huge space problems the gallery was dealing with it must have seemed a rational route to follow. As Dennis Reid, the Canadian art curator of the time, put it, “the gallery cherished parts [of the war art collections] but the whole was a burden.”<sup>21</sup> The transfer ensured that the collections would remain in the nation’s capital but that the responsibility for their care would devolve to another institution. Wodehouse’s detailed memo on the subject to Boggs was clearly supportive of the transfer. He may well have been feeling ambivalent about the gallery at the time, for in 1969 he had grieved his new

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19 *Report of the Government of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1951), 324.

20 “The National Gallery of Canada Submission to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences,” NGCA, NGC fonds, Outside Activities/Organizations, 7-R, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (file 2), c. 1949.

21 Author’s interview with Dennis Reid (Toronto, 30 September 1994).

classification as being too low for the responsibilities he carried.<sup>22</sup> Certainly the position of curator of the war art collections was assigned a significantly lower grade than the other curatorial positions. As well, Wodehouse had been losing space on an ongoing basis and the technical support he had enjoyed in his early days was fast being directed elsewhere.

For the next two decades the war art collections were used to document Canada's military history in exhibitions, commemorative events, and books. The level of activity is in fact impressive.<sup>23</sup> After Wodehouse died in 1972, the position passed on in due course to Hugh Halliday, an air force historian, who held the position until 1988. He curated a number of exhibitions on individual war artists that were shown at the Canadian War Museum and at other venues. His focus, in keeping with the nature of the institution he worked for, was on military history.<sup>24</sup>

The Canadian War art collections undoubtedly also benefitted from the published interest in war art that began in the late 1970s with the work of Heather Robertson (1977), Joan Murray (1981), and Maria Tippett (1984).<sup>25</sup> While the formal

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22 Grievance Presentation, 17 October 1969, R. F. Wodehouse files, CWM Archives, Box 57 C2.

23 For example, the exhibition *Aviation Paintings* was originally intended for exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada prior to the 1971 transfer. Ultimately, it was shown at the Canadian War Museum in 1972. In the Second World War section, the catalogue divided the paintings by aircraft type.

24 Brief catalogues were produced for several of these exhibitions but the most complete source of exhibition information from this period is found in the CWM Art Department Exhibition Files.

25 Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

concerns that characterized modernism predominate in their work, since then a number of revisionist theories regarding the nature of art history have made it possible to examine Canada's creative past from viewpoints that were almost unimaginable in the immediate post-war period and the current literature reflects this.

This increased activity and interest has accounted in some measure for the growth in the number of requests for the war art on the part of art galleries across the country. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the renewed relationship of the National Gallery to the war art collections over the past decade. In a December 1992 letter requesting a loan from the war collections the director of the National Gallery of Canada, Dr. Shirley Thomson, wrote:

It is somewhat ironic that the transfer of the war collections, formerly in the custody of the National Gallery, has left such a major gap in our collection. It is reassuring, however, that we can rely on the generosity of the War Museum to loan sculpture and paintings from the war collections to enable us to show the continuity of Canadian art and the important contribution realized by artists under the official war art programs. We are very pleased to have in our galleries the sculptures of the First World War and the paintings from the Second World War from your museum and hope to be able to initiate further loans the next time we reinstall the galleries.<sup>26</sup>

In 1995, the gallery borrowed more work in order to exhibit it as part of the events celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War. In a letter to a visitor to their exhibition, copied to the CWM, Dr. Thomson wrote:

The Gallery has been a participant in the intergovernmental committee on "Canada Remembers" from the start. The installation you saw selects some works from the permanent collection, but

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<sup>26</sup> Dr. Shirley L. Thomson to Victor Suthren, 3 December 1992, CWM, Institutional Files 66 and 20.



almost all the war art is now with the Canadian War Museum. On view in the Gallery's prints and drawings galleries is a larger show, "The Ravages of War," two suites of prints by Goya and by Dix, "The Disasters of War" and "War", both from the collection and created for the anniversary . . . In the Fall we will present an exhibition of David Milne's drawings and watercolours as a war artist from the First World War, again to honour the anniversary.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, in the absence of a collectively acceptable canon as to what constitutes Canada's artistic past, and as the gallery's activity confirms, the war art collections have begun to be reinstated as "a unique and important asset" in this country. Reinstated, they have been able to play a role in the forming of the memory of war in Canada. It is significant, however, that it was individuals who played a significant role in achieving this. Nonetheless it was also government funded institutions that were the necessary adjuncts and facilitators – whether galleries, departments, or universities.

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<sup>27</sup> Thomson to John Williamson, 19 April 1995, CWM Institutional File 66. It is interesting to note that Milne's war art had been intended for special exhibition in Beaverbrook's memorial gallery.

## Chapter 8

### War Artists Remembered

Canada's Second World War art collection also provides a unique opportunity to study a group of paintings, drawings, and watercolours as a source of contemporary technical, social, and cultural data about war that until the late 1990s was little known. In the wake of the commemorative activities of 1995, the war work of Aba Bayefsky (1923–2001) and Pegi Nicol MacLeod was exhibited in Canada in solo war art exhibitions for the first time, providing a rare opportunity for this art to be seen. The exhibition of Bayefsky's work provided a public site where Canada's role, or lack of a role, in the Holocaust could be reconsidered through one man's personal experience. Women veterans of the Second World War were able to rekindle memories in an exhibition of MacLeod's work. The positive response to these exhibitions was an important factor in the support for *Canvas of War* in the year 2000.

The exhibition of Pegi Nicol MacLeod's war work that toured art galleries in Charlottetown, London, Fredericton, and Ottawa in 1998–1999 was not shown at the Canadian War Museum (CWM). As a result the reviews tend to focus on the artistic content as opposed to the importance of the work as a document of women's wartime experience. "Through attention to detail, gesture and a closer relationship with her subjects, MacLeod has captured that elusive yet crucial element – emotion," wrote Molly Shinhat in *Ottawa X Press*.<sup>1</sup> Lianne McTavish, in *Arts Atlantic*, concluded:

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Amoli K. Shinhat, "Two Views of Women from the Homefront [sic]," *Ottawa X Press*, 27 May 1999, 18.

“This installation . . . will go a long way toward ensuring Pegi Nicol MacLeod a place in the canon of Canadian art.”<sup>2</sup> While the reviews were not numerous the Ottawa showing, in particular, has resulted in increased interest from the local art historical student body.<sup>3</sup>

Pegi Nicol MacLeod is not an unknown Canadian artist but her reputation is not generally associated with her war work. In the wake of the 1970s recovery of women artists she received attention in exhibitions such as *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (1975) and in books such as Joan Murray's edited collection of her letters, *Daffodils in Winter* (1984).<sup>4</sup> In 1992, her self-portraits were the subject of this author's M. A. thesis.<sup>5</sup> Some of her war art was included in an exhibition of early twentieth-century women artists entitled *Visions and Victories* (1983).<sup>6</sup> She was also one of the artists considered in an M. A. thesis on Canadian

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2 Lianne McTavish, “Pegi Nicol MacLeod: Paragraphs in Paint,” *Arts Atlantic* 65 (winter 2000), 4.

3 For example, a December 2001 Carleton University Art History paper from fourth-year student Tania Woloshyn was entitled “Shifting Perceptions: the Second World War Art of Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Molly Lamb Bobak.” CWM War Artist File, Pegi Nicol MacLeod.

4 Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1975) and Joan Murray, ed., *Daffodils in Winter* (Moonbeam: Penumbra Press, 1984).

5 Laura Brandon, “Exploring ‘the Undertheme’: The Self-Portraits of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904–1949” (Kingston: Queen's University, 1992).

6 Natalie Luckyj, *Visions and Victories* (London: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983).

women war artists.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, as part of the rediscovery of Canada's war art after the 1995 anniversary celebrations, her art took on a meaning beyond the limitations of her gender.

Her war art is very different from the majority of her Second World War contemporaries. It is brash and colourful and much of its subject matter centres on Canada's service women cleaning, cooking, washing up, serving, and participating in the drills and parades central to life in the women's services. Hers is the only painted record of any substance that depicts what it was like to be a woman in uniform in Canada in wartime. This record is also paralleled by an attempt to capture the war experience as a whole as it affected her home and professional life. What makes all her war art of special interest is that the record of its creation has come down to us in the form of extensive surviving correspondence and in an article she wrote on the subject of her first National Gallery of Canada (NGC) commission. It is thus possible to understand what it was like to be an artist painting military subjects in a time of world conflict not only by looking at her pictures but by reading what she thought and wrote at the time.

MacLeod was one of a group of artists – largely Ontario-based – that included painters such as Charles Comfort, Will Ogilvie, Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986), and Carl Schaefer, all of whom were born near the beginning of the century and all of whom became war artists. They established their reputations as young painters in the 1920s and 1930s and members of the Group of Seven influenced many of them. They

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<sup>7</sup> Teresa McIntosh, "Other Images of War: Canadian Women War Artists of the First and Second World Wars" (M. A. thesis, Carleton University, 1990).

continued to paint throughout the Depression years, although sales were very poor. When war came, and with it the Canadian War Records art program and the NGC home front commissions, they renewed their vocations with zeal, finding a meaningful role in the nation's art history that had hitherto escaped them. After the war, however, they found their largely traditional painting styles tended to be overlooked by an art establishment hungry for the newer post-war abstract styles, when not enthralled by the Group's early romantic landscapes. Only in the last two decades have there been any attempts by art historians to re-evaluate these artists' works apart from the still-dominant modernist centred canon and in terms of their own goals and intentions.

Pegi Nicol MacLeod's own reputation has been further hampered not only by the fact that she died young in 1949 at the age of forty-five but also by the fact that marriage took her out of Canada to New York for most of the last fifteen years of her life. With the very generous assistance of the National Gallery and through her summer teaching at the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) Art Centre, she was able to continue exhibiting her work in Canada. But even this was achieved under difficult circumstances, as she was very poor for most of the period, had a young child, and a not very satisfactory marriage. As it was for so many of her artist friends, the Canadian war art programs provided her with an opportunity for renewal. Moreover – and this was something many were deeply grateful for – the commissions came with remuneration.

MacLeod received two commissions from the gallery to paint the women's services in Ottawa. One was in the fall of 1944 and the other in the fall of 1945. These

commissions resulted in a total of some 110 works now held by the Canadian War Museum. However, her war art was not limited to these two commissions. She also painted the young naval trainees who were receiving instruction at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton during her own summer teaching sessions. And, after 1941, the war was also a factor in her life in New York, when she found the war parades a particular source of inspiration for her art. Some of her letters suggest also that she saw the many portraits of her young daughter, Jane, as a form of anti-war statement. Given her close friendship with the Canadian poet Frank Scott's wife, Marian (1906–1993), a committed pacifist, this is not an unexpected dimension to her war work.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, MacLeod's multiplicity of war-oriented projects demonstrates the extraordinary effort Canadians from all walks of life put into the cause both practically and emotionally.

MacLeod's involvement in the war effort began with a 1940 letter to H. O. McCurry, the NGC's director, in which she inquired about the possibility of designing an image for a Canadian war poster. Immersed as she was at the time in the care of a young child in New York, it is not surprising that the subject she thought suitable centred on the portrayal of a sleeping child. From Fredericton she wrote in October 1940: "it was at a party . . . that I heard your poster schemes might advance. So here is what I want to say: 1st. I have a number of sketches to show you. 2nd. A poster with a poignantly sleeping child indicating something precious needing protection would be

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<sup>8</sup> Marian Scott's life and work is the subject of a recent exhibition and catalogue, Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000).

appealing as something to work for.”<sup>9</sup> In the same letter she also inquired as to whether any of the works she had submitted to a fund-raising sale for refugees organized by the Red Cross had sold. The ever-supportive McCurry replied: “I shall be very happy to see your sketches and in fact was greatly disappointed to find that you had skipped off without showing me any . . . The Refugee sale was a great success and prices were quite good. We got \$20.00 for two of yours and \$30.00 for another. I enclose a catalogue and clippings.”<sup>10</sup> At this point, however, MacLeod found herself involved in the founding of the University of New Brunswick’s Art Centre and its organization dominates the next few months’ correspondence with McCurry. As a result, the poster project could perhaps be considered to have reached a conclusion as a remark by MacLeod in a January 1941 letter to McCurry confirms: “One of these days will send you a poster design. I’m afraid I’m not much on posters.”<sup>11</sup>

In the summer of 1941, she reported to McCurry that she had an air force man in her summer art class in Fredericton. Rank and file was to feature more and more in her summer teaching as the war went on and to contribute to her ongoing interest in

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9 Pegi Nicol MacLeod to H. O. McCurry, received 22 October 1940, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, correspondence with artists, 7.1–M, MacLeod, Pegi Nicol.

10 McCurry to MacLeod, 23 October 1940, *ibid.* MacLeod obviously continued to contribute art to fund-raising events. In 1945 she wrote to Madge Smith: “I’ve got to be a good painter so I simplify pretty severely. My gratifications come when I am able to contribute watercolours to the Red Cross auctioned for \$450.00 (Ottawa).” MacLeod to Smith, 13 April 1945, in Murray, *Daffodils*, 232.

11 MacLeod to McCurry, received 29 January 1941, NGCA, 7.1–M.

military subjects.<sup>12</sup> However, she was still not producing any war work herself at this point. The situation altered in January 1942, when she was living once more in New York and her daughter started school. This change in domestic circumstances made it possible for the artist to consider taking on some new projects again. In February, she wrote to Kathleen Fenwick, the curator of prints and drawings at the National Gallery: "Now I'm going to enter a Red Cross Competition . . . Wish you were here for a critique."<sup>13</sup> It appears, surprisingly, given her comments on poster design mentioned before, to have been an American war poster competition and is the one referred to in an earlier letter to McCurry:

Down here more is being done than ever to encourage art because as they say "The artists' duty is to stimulate the cultural life of the community as their contribution to the 'Four Freedoms.'" I know you are more than aware of the attitude but it's fun to see itself working out. Our friend Rowan had his poster competition out four days after Pearl harbour [*sic*] and now they are joined with the Red Cross for another. Ten thousand artists in a body have offered their services. I'm trying to take part in some of these affairs. It's hard to find a niche.<sup>14</sup>

The competition is also referred to in another letter to McCurry dated 17 February: "Hurray for war-art. Ed Rowan is going to get some from me. I've been

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12 MacLeod to McCurry, 1 August 1941, Murray, *Daffodils*, 162, and 24 August 1941, 165. See also, MacLeod to Marian Scott, postmarked 13 November 1943, 208.

13 MacLeod to Kathleen Fenwick, n.d., NGCA, Fenwick Papers.

14 MacLeod to McCurry, 2 February 1942, in Murray, *Daffodils*, 178. Ed Rowan was the Assistant to the Director of the Fine Arts Projects under the Works Progress Administration initiated in the United States by President Roosevelt. This program had fascinated the delegates to the 1941 Kingston Conference, one of whom had been MacLeod.



allowed to draw a ladies' knitting class (bad but at least I feel I'm trying)."<sup>15</sup> This work has largely ended up in private hands. But that a poster design did emerge is confirmed in a letter to MacLeod's great Fredericton friend, the arts supporter and crafts store operator, Madge Smith.<sup>16</sup>

MacLeod's subsequent project was to enter a competition to produce designs for crafts for soldiers in hospital, which she won.<sup>17</sup> She was also drawn to a new subject matter in her home street, East 88th Street in Manhattan: "the most maddening subject pulls at me out the window – preparation for raising the service flag – across and back 88th is strung with pennants under which the ordinary life continues."<sup>18</sup> Her determination to do something for the war effort is further confirmed in a letter to Smith: "I want more than ever to do war painting and feel farther from it."<sup>19</sup> And later she wrote: "In the meantime – wartime and I'm on the track of a factory and some portraits."<sup>20</sup>

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15 MacLeod to McCurry, 17 February 1942, *ibid.*, 179.

16 "Wish you could see my Red Cross posters for competition." MacLeod to Smith, undated, *ibid.*, 180.

17 "The Modern Museum has announced a competition – 'Art in Therapy' – asking suggestions for crafts for soldiers in hospitals. I would like to send the design of the little horse and rug to match." MacLeod to Smith, 27 October 1942, Murray, *Daffodils*, 187. Details of her win appear in another letter to Smith on p. 196. See also further correspondence to Smith, 6 November 1942 to February 1943, 188–197.

18 MacLeod to Smith, 21 August 1942, *ibid.*, 183. See also 27 October 1942, 187.

19 MacLeod to Smith, n.d., Murray, *Daffodils*, 185.

20 MacLeod to Smith, 24 November 1942, *ibid.*, 189.

Early in 1943, MacLeod was inspired to design another poster by a photograph of Fredericton's market taken by Smith. "Your photo of market inflamed me. At last I have done a design suitable for silk screen. The Canadian Group [of Painters] asked for one. They are to be printed and distributed to the bare barrack, camps, etc."<sup>21</sup> She also wrote of the possibilities of a new subject matter based on her previous summer in Fredericton: "I saw enough last summer to feel one could achieve some fascinating records of Can. boys [sic] pre-war experience."<sup>22</sup> Later she was to see similar possibilities in the subject matter of repatriated servicemen.<sup>23</sup>

In the summer of 1943, MacLeod was once more teaching at the UNB Art Centre's summer school where she found new war-related subject matter. She wrote to McCurry about it in August and enclosed some of her work: "I'm sending you these sailor boy's drawings to give you an idea of what I did at the Art Centre (U.N.B.) this summer. There were 60 'naval ratings' stationed here for a radio course. Five of them came from 4 to 6 every day for the past month. And enjoyed it."<sup>24</sup> Three Royal Air Force (RAF) airmen also took lessons.<sup>25</sup> A late 1943 letter to Marian Scott

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21 Ibid., 25 March 1943, 197–198.

22 Ibid., 198.

23 MacLeod to McCurry, 23 July 1945, Murray, *Daffodils.*, 236.

24 MacLeod to McCurry, received 1 September 1943, NGCA, 7.1–M. The naval ratings continued to be a presence on the campus as the artist also mentioned in letters to Fenwick in 1944. "I eat at a table watching 75 naval ratings eating." NGCA, 7.1–M. Also, "I sit by 75 naval ratings while eating. Long baronial tables of them." MacLeod to Scott, 21 July 1944, Murray, *Daffodils*, 219. See also to Scott, postmarked 29 September 1943, 202; and to McCurry, 14 July 1944, 217.

25 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 29 September 1943, Murray, *Daffodils*, 202.

indicates that MacLeod was grappling with how to approach the theme of “Canada at War” for a proposed exhibition on the theme:

I’m sure it is a struggle for every painter to paint “Canada at War”. I have turned myself inside out . . . I’m just not equipped . . . What we want to say about Canada now is that we don’t want war at all . . . When I sent all those “sleeping Jane’s” [portraits of her daughter] to Toronto three years ago it meant, no more war, but nobody got it and I felt a terrible propagandist.<sup>26</sup>

A few weeks later, she again wrote to Scott regarding what to submit:

Are you sending to the Canada at War Show? I have worked hard for it and haven’t produced but one decent thing . . . I did a thing of a street dance given for soldiers. I think it’s a lovely theme and I haven’t pulled it off . . . The joke being that the watercolours sketches I did . . . are still better tho hardly good enough to show.<sup>27</sup>

In February, she also applied for design work at the United States Department of War Finance, without success. In a letter to Scott she writes: “I went to the War Finance Dept. yesterday but my ‘painter’s style’ is not much use to them.”<sup>28</sup> However, this did not discourage her in her desire to paint the naval service in New York. A June 1944 letter to the Art Gallery of Toronto provides a detailed description of a work they had just purchased while also outlining her painting practices in the period:

My picture “Navy Canteen” which so kindly purchased was painted in February 1944. The subject is The United Services Canteen on 48th St. near Broadway, N.Y. where I go once a month to do portraits of uniformed men. It is an informal volunteer-run place with lounges, letter-writing rooms, a dance floor, and cafeteria. The food comes from a high school where the navy learns to cook. Five hundred signed-up volunteer hostesses are

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26 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 25 October 1943, *ibid.*, 205–206.

27 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 13 November 1943, *ibid.*, 208.

28 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 16 February 1944, *ibid.*, 212.

there every night. Each girl has to be there three nights of the week. There is an entrance test and no dating allowed. It sounds dull and mostly the boys are just off boats and often fall asleep in the canteen so the hostess has a dull time. The place is very popular.<sup>29</sup>

The 1944 National Gallery commission began with a letter in July from MacLeod to McCurry: "Could you explain the exact situation as to C.W.A.C.s as clearly as possible. I do not make expenses here . . . So that a return trip to Ottawa will be an unnecessary expense to me should I make it." She added that she would be working with CWACs in Fredericton as well: "Now this is what gives: The first day I arrived a deputation of C.W.A.C.s came and requested 2 nights a week of art and creation from me with pay. This I accepted, also free roaming of their quarters."<sup>30</sup>

McCurry swiftly replied:

Now here is what I would like to suggest about the C.W.A.C's, Womens Division, R.C.A.F. and possibly the Wrens; no one has done anything about them yet and the service people in authority do not seem to be greatly interested but the fact is that war records would be most incomplete without some vital stuff on the women's part in the three services. Therefore I am willing to take it on myself to commission you to work for an experimental month here to see what can be done. If the results are successful and we feel we can afford it we could keep you on for a longer period. We could supply your materials besides paying your travelling expenses back to Ottawa. Would a small honorarium of say \$300.00 for a month be beneath your notice? This is tentative, of course, and I would have to have the approval of the Trustees but I think I can secure that.<sup>31</sup>

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29 MacLeod to the Art Gallery of Toronto, received 15 June 1944, Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) Curatorial Files.

30 MacLeod to McCurry, received 14 July 1944, NGCA, 7.1-M. There are further references to her Fredericton work with CWACs in a letter to Fenwick, July 1944, *Daffodils*, 218; and to Scott, 21 July 1944, 219.

31 McCurry to MacLeod, 17 July 1944, NGCA, 7.1-M.

In a letter sent the day after, he added: "I do hope you can turn out some interesting material on the C.W.A.C.'s."<sup>32</sup> And as she had earlier noted in another letter in reference to a lack of canvas to paint on: "I have none [canvas] but I do have C.W.A.C.s!"<sup>33</sup>

She was extremely happy with McCurry's Ottawa proposal, and she wrote in July: "Nothing would please me better than to return to Ottawa to do all you say. I hope to be entirely at your disposal by finding some way of having Jane looked after for one month . . . I'm more than excited about the work. Just one thing – I may start things in the month that I might wish to ponder over later. Could it not be partly material gathering – partly finishing with more to finish later?" And with reference to her Fredericton CWACs she adds: "One of my C.W.A.C.s is a raving beauty – I may go at her."<sup>34</sup> McCurry responded to both plans: "I hope you paint the portrait of the 'raving C.W.A.C.' and bring it up for us to see." He added (optimistically as it turned out): "The war isn't likely to last much longer so whatever we do for the Women's Divisions must be done soon. We will fall in line with almost any arrangements you find it possible to make."<sup>35</sup>

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32 McCurry to MacLeod, 18 July 1944, *ibid.*

33 MacLeod to McCurry, 17 July 1944, *ibid.*

34 MacLeod to McCurry, 25 July 1944, *ibid.* She also commented on this CWAC in a letter to Fenwick, undated, NCCA, 7.1–M: "One of my C.W.A.C.'s is more than beautiful."

35 McCurry to MacLeod, 26 July 1944, NGCA, 7.1–M. See also to Scott, postmarked 28 August 1944, Murray, *Daffodils*, 221; and to Smith, September 1944, 223.

MacLeod enjoyed the work tremendously. In early September 1944 she wrote to Smith: "My lovely C.W.A.C. work moves on to R.C.A.F. and Wrens [WRCN] this week."<sup>36</sup> A few weeks later, she again wrote to Scott: "My work, more than fun. Operating on Wrens now, dear little things!! I work from nine to twelve on the real live creatures. Knock off for sleep – then paint up all the quick sketches. It's good to be used at your best, isn't it?"<sup>37</sup> MacLeod was paid a total of \$600 for her two-month commission.<sup>38</sup> On learning of this fee, the chairman of the gallery's trustees, Hamilton Southam, indicated in a note to McCurry that he thought the fee inadequate.<sup>39</sup> She herself objected to the fact that she was paid as if work had been purchased. In a letter to Scott she writes:

The War-art Committee hired no women to do any women! That is after 2 or 3 years trying, H. O. McC. did not succeed in getting me or anyone else hired . . . We are disappointed. I was paid as if a work of mine had been bought. To me it represented a sort of painting holiday – orgy, sans housework. I hope there will be no regrets of the bargain. Of course it's a year's job or more, not 2 months.<sup>40</sup>

For this fee she had produced, according to a list she provided, thirty-one watercolours and three oils on canvas of CWAC's at Glebe Barracks in August and September. (Glebe Barracks was situated on the corner of Glebe and Percy Streets in

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36 MacLeod to Smith, 5 September 1944, Murray, *Daffodils*, 222.

37 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 21 September 1944, *ibid.*, 223. See also 28 August 1944, 221; and to Smith, September 1944, 223. MacLeod was paid \$2.00 an hour.

38 Two statements of payment by cheque, dated 19 October and 19 November 1944, NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42-M, MacLeod, Pegi Nicol.

39 *Ibid.*

the Glebe, Ottawa). She also handed in five watercolours, three sketches, three oils on canvas, and four oils on board of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Women's Division at the Princess Alice Barracks completed in September. (Princess Alice Barracks, also known as Beaver Barracks, was part of the block bounded by O'Connor, Catherine, and Metcalfe Streets and Argyle Avenue, close to what is now the Museum of Nature in Ottawa). Thirty-one watercolours, four oils on canvas, and twelve oils on board were painted of Women's Royal Canadian Navy (WRCN) personnel, largely at HMCS "Carleton" in October.<sup>41</sup> (HMCS "Carleton" was, and still is, situated on the edge of Dow's Lake in Ottawa). MacLeod's work represents a record of the 17, 000 women who served in the RCAF (WD), the 21, 600 who served in the CWAC's, and the 7, 000 Wrens.

When the commission was finished she had trouble adjusting. In late November 1944, she wrote to McCurry: "I am lost without my job and don't settle down with ease."<sup>42</sup> However, she was soon busy writing an article on her Ottawa experience for the December issue of *Canadian Art*.<sup>43</sup> She commented in a letter to Kathleen Fenwick, after sending it off: "I hope it was decent. I worked hard on it

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40 MacLeod to Scott, 27 October 1944, Murray, *Daffodils*, 224.

41 NGCA, 5.42-M. A subsequent sheet in the same file indicates a discrepancy in some of the titles and notes that one more work than she listed was handed over.

42 MacLeod to McCurry, received 27 November 1944, NGCA, 7.1-M.

43 "Recording the Women's Services" *Canadian Art*, vol. 2, no. 2 (December 1944-January 1945), 48-51.

without feeling flowing like genius out of me.”<sup>44</sup> The article, which includes four black-and-white illustrations of her work (one also features on the cover), is characterized by her very personal and somewhat idiosyncratic writing style. What concerns her is the conjunction between traditional and modern subjects: “The subject matter of women in the services has pattern and colour suited to the needs of moderns. The faces recall Botticelli, or Murillo or even Leonardo and call for realistic treatment.” In her chosen subject matter she finds the colour sense of the Old Masters predominates in some scenes:

When we come to the kitchens and galleys where the foods are prepared for these war-changed girls, we arrive at a group of animated Brueghels. In the C.W.A.C. barracks, the colours were his, golden walls with scarlet trim setting off white aprons, wrapped round husky figures, white coifs and aluminum kettles, and rosy khaki cotton for general duty uniforms.

In other scenes she sees the twentieth-century French painter Raoul Dufy’s touch:

Among painters, only a modern escapist could avoid being stimulated by the sight of a parade of blue Dianas of the Air Force moving behind their leading Diana, she in turn behind a motorcycle policeman clearing a path through the traffic on a merchant street in Ottawa. What a subject for a Dufy painting! I could see Dufy taking a wide impasto of blue on his palette knife and making a broad band of it on his canvas, drawing into it the distinctive details and outlines of the airwomen, with a varying background of sauntering civilians, slightly droopy, like zoot suits.

MacLeod felt strongly, as her New York work was to show, that the role of the women who stayed behind was important. But above all she felt that the role of women in the military deserved a painted record. In the article she words it quite strongly: “It is unfair enough to leave out the mothers of soldiers, the nurses, the

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<sup>44</sup> MacLeod to Fenwick, n.d., NGCA, Fenwick Papers.



factory girls. What an obvious flaw to neglect also the women in the armed services.” As she had written in a letter to Scott, “Only a divorced from life man could say an army of women uninteresting.”<sup>45</sup>

In January 1945, she wrote to McCurry requesting that if any were available she would like some of her “women in uniform” sent to the upcoming exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour. “One I would especially like sent,” she writes, “is of W.R.C.N.’s under a tree waiting for a bus: 2nd. C.W.A.C.’s swinging to school – the Beauty Parlour gal under dryer? if matted.”<sup>46</sup> The three works were duly dispatched.<sup>47</sup> At this time MacLeod was working on another article for *Canadian Art*, comparing the wartime situations for artists in Canada and the United States. It was never published. In two letters she refers to the difficulties she encountered finding out about the American war art programs, which were largely privately sponsored.<sup>48</sup>

In a July 1945 letter, McCurry brought up the subject of the further work on the women’s services that he had expected from MacLeod. He suggested that she submit some compositions to the War Records Committee: “What about war records?”

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45 MacLeod to Scott, envelope postmarked 21 September 1944, Murray, *Daffodils*, 223.

46 MacLeod to McCurry, 10 January 1945, NGCA, 7.1–M.

47 Fenwick to MacLeod, 15 January 1945, *ibid.*

48 MacLeod to Fenwick, undated, NGCA, NGC fonds, Loans etc. to the Maritimes, 5.11–F, Fredericton, N. B., file 1; and to McCurry, 7 January 1945, NGCA, 7.1–M.

Have you done anything that won't horrify the Service members of the Committee."<sup>49</sup>

MacLeod replied: "I have all but completed a huge canvas of the Canadian sailors eating . . . I am keen to do more and may come to Ottawa later. I'd like to do a troop train on return but the thought almost bowls me over."<sup>50</sup> By September, she was indeed back in Ottawa with a new commission from the National Gallery. She wrote Smith: "I do C.W.A.C.'s night and day and I love them though I miss my own," a reference to those she knew in New Brunswick.<sup>51</sup> In another letter she noted: "I am painting Wrens fast and furious and I guess it is my true function! I got to a dance last night – hundreds of them and ratings – their 3rd birthday. My canvasses are all used too."<sup>52</sup> To Scott she wrote more soberly: "I don't know that you would like my W.R.C.N.'s very much but I feel they are for a certain public and it's rather reportage than literature but even so it's not in my best taste. This is the first stages – gathering the material, then of course vistas begin to open."<sup>53</sup>

As before, the National Gallery provided her with materials.<sup>54</sup> A series of notes listing the other materials she required has survived. It also indicates her proposed subject matter, all centred on the Wrens at HMCS "Carleton" in the

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49 McCurry to MacLeod, 11 July 1945, NGCA, 7.1–M.

50 MacLeod to McCurry, received 23 July 1945, NGCA, 5.42–M.

51 MacLeod to Smith, likely Madge Smith papers, New Brunswick Archives.

52 MacLeod to Smith, 4 September 1945, Murray, *Daffodils*, 239.

53 MacLeod to Scott, postmarked 16 September 1945, *ibid.*, 240.

54 A shipping receipt indicates that she picked up two stretched canvasses and one Masonite panel on 1 October 1945, NGCA, 5.42–M.

aftermath of V-J Day. Furthermore, it carries a note in McCurry's hand: "Pegi says \$300 ample for the year's work." A note in McCurry's hand on the list of works submitted states: "Chairman agrees \$300.00 is modest remuneration."<sup>55</sup>

After the war, MacLeod worked hard on an exhibition of her New York paintings of the 1940s entitled *Manhattan Cycle*, which toured Canada beginning in 1947. It represents a remarkable achievement as it was a large show and demonstrates her enormous drive to succeed as an artist. She incorporated two images that had stayed with her after the conflict in two war compositions: the victory parades in the street below her apartment and the pigeons that nested on the fire escape outside her kitchen. In a letter to H. O. McCurry she attached her artist's statement for the exhibition. It describes her intentions in these two works.<sup>56</sup> Of *When Johnnie Comes Marching Home* (n.d.) she writes:

The life of the block does not change much. Families remain for years. Girls marry neighborhood boys [*sic*], take flats across the street or nearby. When Johnnie Comes Marching Home exemplifies this feeling. Though drafted for years into the army, he returns to find everything the same.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> MacLeod to McCurry, 6 November 1947, NGCA, 7.1–M.

<sup>57</sup> Pegi Nicol MacLeod, *When Johnnie Comes Marching Home*, n.d., oil on canvas, 74 x 112 cm, Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 964.37, gift of Mrs. Florence Millman in memory of Leo Millman.

Of *The Peace Bird* (n.d.), her other important war painting, she writes: “This is an after VJ day painting. The bird cannot decide whether to descend into our street or not.”<sup>58</sup>

Pegi Nicol MacLeod’s war art begins with her experiences of a military presence in Fredericton with the naval ratings and the CWAC’s. It moves through her National Gallery commissions, where she experienced military service from the woman’s point of view on a day-to-day basis over a considerable period of time, through to New York where she lived with women who had seen husbands and sons go off to war. She thus saw military service from two points of view, beyond the obvious one of being a woman artist. She saw it from the perspective of the women who were left behind and from that of the female participant. She was thus uniquely placed to contribute valuable insight into a relatively under-appreciated aspect of war service. Of interest, as well, is the light shed on the circumstances of her commission through the existence of her correspondence. Her connection to the bureaucracy of the Works Progress Administration in the United States and to Canadian government programs through her relationship with the National Gallery amply supports a conclusion that the production of war art from the beginning was encompassed by government interests at all levels. Nonetheless, the result of her work is a picture of the war years in North America from a woman’s viewpoint – one that nevertheless remains largely unknown and under-utilized despite some more recent visibility.

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<sup>58</sup> Pegi Nicol MacLeod, *The Peace Bird*, n.d., oil on canvas, 119.7 x 101.5 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 81.9, gift of Mrs. Maud Brown.

Like MacLeod, Aba Bayefsky painted and drew war images both during and after the war. Bayefsky, however, was an official war artist attached to the Royal Canadian Air Force and not on a National Gallery commission when he depicted the Nazi concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Two other official war artists, Alex Colville and Donald Anderson (b. 1920), also visited this German concentration camp shortly after its liberation by the British. Alex Colville's work from Bergen-Belsen is probably the best known of the three.<sup>59</sup> He entered the camp shortly after its liberation and was brought face to face with the mass pits of the dead. *Bodies in a Grave* (1946) is the finished painting which can be associated with a number of related sketches he completed on site.<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 50, p. 362) While the impact of Bergen-Belsen has not manifested itself in his later work as directly as it has in Bayefsky's, some examples of Colville's later paintings still echo his war art. They demonstrate that the exposure to deaths of all kinds, while not necessarily a strong artistic inspiration, remains emotionally haunting. As this author has written elsewhere: "The hanging arm of the woman in Colville's *Diving Board* of 1993 makes a direct reference to the dead arm of the upper figure in *Bodies in a Grave*."<sup>61</sup>

Bayefsky's nine official images of the camp were exhibited together for the first time at the Canadian War Museum in an exhibition entitled *Reflections of the*

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59 In connection with his Bergen-Belsen work, this is referred to in Laura Brandon, "Genesis of a Painting: Alex Colville's War Drawings," *Canadian Military History*, vol. 4, no. 1 (spring 1995), 100–104.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 104.

*Holocaust* in 1998.<sup>62</sup> The opening of the exhibition coincided with the fact that at the time the museum was planning a Holocaust gallery and museum extension and was seeking funding.<sup>63</sup> It was, however, Bayefsky's later artwork that contributed a particular force to the exhibition. He never stopped painting and drawing what he saw and experienced in May and June 1945. Images of death, suffering, and cruelty travelled with him and became a part of him. Over the years they became the source for several paintings and a drawing series, *Epilogue*, which grouped together span a period of forty-five years. Because these works represent developments from Bayefsky's official war art, formed part of a CWM exhibition, and several of the paintings later became part of the war art collections, they are considered in this chapter.

Flight-Lieutenant Aba Bayefsky enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in October 1942. He was nineteen years old. After service in Canada in Quebec City and in Manitoba, he was posted overseas in May 1944 to Skipton-on-Swale Station, Yorkshire, in No. 6 Bomber Group. Appointed an official war artist in December 1944, he completed assignments at Topcliffe Conversion Unit in Yorkshire and 437 (Transport) Squadron, Blakehill Farm, Wiltshire. He was then attached to No. 39

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62 *Reflections of the Holocaust: The Art of Aba Bayefsky*, CWM, 15 January 1998–30 September 1998.

63 This project was ultimately cancelled in the wake of an outcry from the veterans' community that resulted in a 1998 hearing on the part of the Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. Their report was entitled *A Study into the Future, Funding, and Independence of the Canadian War Museum, Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, May 1998.

(Reconnaissance) Wing of the Royal Air Force Second Tactical Air Force, which disbanded in Lüneberg, Germany in August 1945. It was during this period that he visited Bergen-Belsen and painted the war-damaged German towns of Hamburg, Niemunster, and Hanover.<sup>64</sup>

Bayefsky had just turned twenty-two when he visited Bergen-Belsen for the first time on 10 May 1945. For the young Jewish man, the experience was of critical importance to his later career and to his attitude to life. In a 1989 interview he said: "It was the determining factor in everything I have done since."<sup>65</sup> He described what he first saw in a 1995 interview in the *Canadian Jewish News*. "The truck loads of dead inmates were being placed into newly dug pits by captured German soldiers and German civilians who were denying any previous knowledge or connection with the death camp."<sup>66</sup> Three works depict a mass grave. The drawing completed on 10 May shows a jumble of bone-white emaciated bodies, like broken skeletons, piled one upon the other. The dark side of the pit rises up behind them providing a stark tonal contrast, while above the sky is leaden. (Fig. 51, p. 363) The artist revisited Bergen-Belsen a week later and sketched another pit scene. This work shows signs of tension in that the lines of the composition are scratched in an urgent manner and are possessed of an anxious, nervous quality. The bodies are more contorted and the mood is one of agony. There is no sky, just the bleak black walls of the pit with which

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64 CWM War Artist File, Aba Bayefsky.

65 Christopher Varley, *Aba Bayefsky Revisited: A Retrospective Exhibition*, (Toronto: The Koffler Gallery, 1989), 13.

66 "Committing History to Canvas," *The Canadian Jewish News*, 27 April 1995, B 4.

the white forms of the corpses seem to intermingle. (Fig. 52, p. 364) The final work, an oil on canvas, is more like the first drawing. The contorted, nervous lines are gone. Perhaps the agony is over and the victims have found some kind of peace. On the back of the painting is a quotation from Goethe: "Man needs but little earth for pleasure and even less for his final repose." (Fig. 53, p. 365)

On the same day that he sketched a pit for the second time, Bayefsky made a sketch of a starving German Jewish boy who died the next day. He returned to this theme twice more. In each version, the artist strove to capture the pathos, misery, and hopelessness of the boy's situation despite the fact that the camp was now liberated. (Figs. 54–56, pp. 366–368) Echoes of these compositions reappear in two works entitled *Boy with Butterflies* dating from 1948 and 1949 that are based on sketches the artist made in displaced persons camps around Paris and Milan in 1947.<sup>67</sup> On a third visit to Bergen-Belsen on 28 May 1945, Bayefsky sketched one of the slave workers. (Fig. 57, p. 369) As the artist later said in an interview, his reactions to his subjects were coloured by the fact that "for the first time [he had] become aware of man's monstrous capacity for evil."<sup>68</sup> On his 10 June visit Bayefsky sketched one of the typhus victims and returned to the theme in a subsequent work. (Figs. 58, 59, pp. 370, 371)

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67 Aba Bayefsky, *Boy with Butterflies*, 1948, conté crayon on paper, 39.4 x 49.5 cm, Hart House Permanent Collection, University of Toronto; *Boy with Butterflies*, 1949, oil on board, 61 x 43.5 cm, J. Desmond Boggs collection, Ottawa. These are both illustrated in Varley, *Aba Bayefsky Revisited*, 1989, 22 and 32.

68 *Ibid.*, 13.



Bayefsky's experiences in Europe had been disturbing and he found it difficult to settle down in Toronto, finding himself at odds with the artistic establishment. One 1950 painting, *Recruiting Poster*, initiated a theme he was to refer to again and again in the much later *Epilogue* series. It features a grinning skeleton holding a kite with dangling masks strung along its tail. At the foot of the skeleton lie more masks and eyeglasses. While the message, in this instance, does not directly refer to the Holocaust, it does allude to death in the form of the skeletal "grim reaper" and the broken bodies and shows an obvious indebtedness to recent experiences. Furthermore, the imagery implies that evil is often masked. (Fig. 60, p. 372) A 1959 painting whose subject is art critics and is entitled *Viewing the Shows*, also uses the skeleton as its dominant motif and demonstrates once more that the iconography of some aspects of Bayefsky's art, even when not Holocaust related, has its origins in the searing images of Bergen-Belsen's mass graves.<sup>69</sup>

In 1980, Bayefsky painted a self-portrait to commemorate his return to health after an operation. Surrounding the centre of the canvas are the Hebrew words that form the Kaddish – the prayer for the dead.<sup>70</sup> The compositional format used in this painting reappears in his most powerful Holocaust work, *Remembering the Holocaust* (1988). (Fig. 61, p. 373) Surrounding the monochromatic figure of the "grim reaper" and the mutilated bodies that form its crop are the names of the major concentration

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69 Aba Bayefsky, *Viewing the Shows*, 1959, oil on canvas, 127 x 101.5 cm, artist's estate.

70 Aba Bayefsky, *The Kaddish Self-Portrait*, 1980, oil on canvas, 167 x 122 cm, artist's estate.

camps of the Second World War. Flame-like forms rise behind the murderous creature, and the whole scene is convulsed with the kind of frenzy that is also present in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel.

Another work from 1988 is entitled, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. (Fig. 62, p. 374) In it a helmeted and booted skeleton, obviously German since he has an iron cross pinned to his ribcage, tramples on a pile of skeletons against a background of barbed wire. The colours are strong – red for the canvas, green for the skulls, blue for the skeleton. The artist's anger is barely controlled. The fury is rooted in his personal reactions to anti-Semitism, to revisionist historians, and to the obliteration of the facts of the Holocaust. The artist has felt a moral obligation to speak in paint, as it were, for those who cannot speak at all. "Art and social comment go hand in hand," he is quoted as saying. "As examples, Goya dealing with the Inquisition and Picasso's most famous painting of the Spanish Civil War called *Guernica*."<sup>71</sup>

The themes present in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Remembering the Holocaust*, and *Recruiting Poster* form the basis of the forty-one-piece sequence of works on paper collectively entitled *Epilogue*.<sup>72</sup> The earliest drawings dating from 1988 are studies for *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Remembering the Holocaust*. The pencil strokes vigorously outline the skeletal figures, with only the occasional addition of watercolour wash. The forms explode off the paper, which seems hardly

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71 "Committing History to Canvas," B 4.

72 These works on paper – either drawings or watercolours – are all in the collection of the artist's estate or the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance monument at Yad Vashem, Israel.

big enough to contain them. The 1989 drawings show Bayefsky experimenting with less vengeful images as his subjects. In many cases, the skeletal figures are broken or injured and the German soldier now has only one leg and a stick, an image which finds a disturbing parallel to one drawing of a Holocaust victim with a stick from the same year. An argument can be made that there is a relationship between this broken imagery and the fact that the Berlin Wall fell in the same year. However, in 1992 and 1993, the skeletal figure was reinvigorated and dances across the pages. The artist was perhaps again putting in pictorial form a personal reaction to world events, which by then had seen the rise of neo-Nazi movements, especially in Germany. In one drawing, for example, the skeletal figure is successfully struggling to free itself from an entanglement of barbed wire. The 1994 works continue this theme but with a greater use of watercolour wash. In several sketches the skeletal form plays a drum, symbolically beating out a message that the artist wishes the world would heed and undermine. As Bayefsky said in the interview with the *Canadian Jewish News*: "One would think that after such a catastrophic occurrence, anti-Semitism would have disappeared. Instead, we have a regeneration of the animosities that the Jewish people have had to deal with throughout our history."<sup>73</sup>

In returning to the subject of the Holocaust in his later career Bayefsky was producing works of art that had little to do with the original intentions of those he produced for the Canadian War records program; those, nevertheless, formed the starting point. That the images were in the first instance officially required and, in the

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73 "Committing History to Canvas," B 4.

second instance, personally motivated accounts for some of the differences between the wartime and later Holocaust images. Certainly, the intent of the Canadian War Records program was clearly that the artworks produced constitute useful historical documents in reference to the matériel, personalities, and events of that war. Indeed, the Canadian artists invited to become official war artists in the three services were issued with instructions that placed an emphasis on depicting the machinery, people, and events of war accurately. (Appendix B) These stated: "Any instruments, machines, equipment, weapons, or clothing which appeared in the work had to be authentic."<sup>74</sup>

However, a number of the over 5, 000 works of art that comprise the original official Second World War art collection in the Canadian War Museum clearly provide another form of evidence. They record the human emotions experienced in wartime, particularly when servicemen were brought face to face with the terrible sights and conditions that are both frequent and concomitant to the waging of modern war. War artists not only painted the technical aspects of what they saw but also, in several cases, sought to capture the human side of war as expressed in the intangible emotions of fear, joy, pain, and struggle. In such instances, the artist functioned as both participant and viewer and, consequently, was in the unique position of being able to record not only what was observed but also what was felt.

The fact that the Second World War artists had this dual opportunity was due to the circumstances under which they worked. Unlike the artists of the First World

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<sup>74</sup> Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards A People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), 10.

War whose experience at the front was often only a matter of weeks, they were attached to units, ships, or squadrons for several years. As well, official photographs and the recollections of participants often compositionally assisted the paintings of these earlier artists. In contrast, the second group of artists not only had these aids but direct experience to call upon. The Second World War artists became very much part of the working environment of their fellow service personnel and, along with their comrades, were therefore uniquely able to observe and experience the theatres of war in which they found themselves. The division between the artists' reactions and that of their associates is therefore difficult to separate. The experiences of war were shared equally to an unprecedented degree.

Bayefsky's paintings and drawings of Bergen-Belsen in the days after its liberation highlight the value of the first-hand visual document as not only a technical but an emotional document. The stronger feelings apparent in his later Holocaust works have a different source, however. This is arguably attributable to the fact that less was known about the extent of Nazi atrocities in the immediate aftermath of VE-Day than became apparent after. Thus, with greater knowledge, the artist's painted response became more vehemently angry. The increased emotion in the later compositions is also attributable to the growing public interest in and response to the Holocaust that has manifested itself in recent decades.<sup>75</sup>

While the works of 1945 demonstrate very clearly that the evidence of human suffering was Bayefsky's central focus at the time of his visits to Bergen-Belsen and

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

that the politicization of the later work was a function of second-hand knowledge subsequently gained, this does not diminish the importance of the later work. Instead, the more recent compositions underline the fact that by studying particular works of art, revealing information concerning the emotional tenor of a particular period can be gleaned.

Reviews of the CWM's exhibition of Bayefsky's Holocaust art stress the importance of his experiences as a war artist for the balance of his artistic career. They also focus on the quality of the work and that of the war art collections as a whole. "The museum's art collection is outstanding," wrote Nancy Baele in the *Ottawa Citizen*, before describing the exhibition in detail.<sup>76</sup> Robert Everett-Green of the *Globe and Mail* described the exhibition as "powerful" before focusing his review on the relationship of the exhibition to the CWM's travails over its Holocaust gallery plans.<sup>77</sup> When Bayefsky died on 5 May 2001, the focus of the obituaries was on his war art.<sup>78</sup>

Regardless of the reviews the exhibition received and the veterans' concomitant outcry at the thought of a Holocaust gallery at the Canadian War Museum, Bayefsky's exhibition proved particularly meaningful for one community. On 23 April 1998, Holocaust Remembrance Day, thirty-one Grade 10 students from

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76 Nancy Baele, "Bearing silent witness to the brutal art of war," *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 January 1998, H 1.

77 Robert Everett-Green, "The Shoah through Canadian Eyes," *The Globe and Mail*, 9 February 1998.

78 See, for example, Gary Michael Dault, "War shaped Canadian painter's life," *The Globe and Mail*, 11 May 2001.

Yitzhak Rabin High School in Ottawa spent a morning in the exhibition. Their discussions with the curator made it clear that this small display was providing them with a particularly significant location in which to discover, recall, and remember the effects of the Shoah on their people.<sup>79</sup> In a completely different context, MacLeod's exhibition achieved some similar encounters when at both its Charlottetown and Ottawa openings that same year veterans of the women's services were specifically encouraged to attend and did so.<sup>80</sup>

Bayefsky and MacLeod have survived the passage of history to some degree through becoming relevant to recent specialized professional and public interests: in MacLeod's case, to women, and in Bayefsky's, to the Holocaust. Beyond these particular areas of study, however, their war art and, indeed, their oeuvre as a whole, remains little known to the wider public. Without a meaningful role in which their paintings can interact with viewers this has, and continues to be their art's fate. Its quality has no value out of sight and mind. It is also entirely dependent on external forces to bring it to public attention. Since the war museum has been its chief custodian in recent years, this task has fallen to it. Numerically, success can be considered limited. The total number of CWM artworks included in the MacLeod and Bayefsky exhibitions amounted to less than fifty. And the reviews have been local for the most part, resulting in a limited visitorship. Like the war work of their contemporaries, Schaefer, Comfort, Clark, and Ogilvie, MacLeod's and Bayefsky's art exists on the margins of Canadian art history. It is, as well, overshadowed by the

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79 CWM Art Department Exhibition File, Bayefsky.

art of those very few, such as Alex Colville, who have found celebrity. Nevertheless, its cumulative impact was a contributing factor to the existence of a more major exhibition, *Canvas of War*, in which they both have paintings on display. In the process of constructing memory, even the smallest of contributions has a role. Out of small sites of memory are larger ones built.



## Chapter 9

*Canvas of War: The Vimy Sculptures*

Reconstructing the memory of war is a complex endeavour. It requires committed individuals such as Wodehouse, scholars such as Maria Tippett and Joan Murray, veterans such as the supporters of the MacLeod exhibition, and important anniversary events. The event that had the single biggest impact on the fortunes of the war art collections and the Canadian War Museum (CWM) as a whole was the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1995.<sup>1</sup> After 1995, the improving situation for MacLeod and Bayefsky was echoed in the evolving exhibition history of the until recently little-known First World War artists' war work discussed in Part One of this study. Cullen and Russell were included in *Vimy Remembered* (1997) and Cullen in *Battle Lines* (2000), two recent CWM exhibitions. Furthermore, the eight large paintings hanging in the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill were cleaned and restored in 1998. However, that the paintings survived to be restored and rededicated that year had perhaps more to do with the sentimental outpouring that accompanied another anniversary, the 80th anniversary of the Armistice than any considered opinion as to their artistic merit. As the rededication brochure states:

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1 The 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings on 6 June 1994 began a year of commemorations that reached an apogee on the 50th anniversary of VE-Day on 8 May 1995. From 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994, the Canadian War Museum (CWM) received 111, 678 visitors. In the same period for 1994–1995, it received 211, 634 visitors, and in the equivalent time in 1995–1996, it received 216, 720 visitors. In 1996–1997, the visitorship halved again. It is interesting to note that there was also a similar peak during the period of the 70th anniversary of the end

In 1918, it was hoped that World War I would be the war to end all wars. The horror and devastation of that conflict were so great that it seemed inconceivable to many that any country would ever again resort to such a clash of arms. Sadly, it was not to be . . . For any who need to be reminded, the paintings offer silent testimony to the impact of war, from the bravery of soldiers who risk their lives for their country to the plight of refugees displaced from their homes by terrifying bombardments.

The Senate is proud to have these paintings in its Chamber. Their restoration is an important contribution to our national heritage. It guarantees that future generations will be able to enjoy these treasures and to reflect on their meaning – Lest We Forget.<sup>2</sup>

The language centres on heritage and remembrance, words that are increasingly central to the reformulating of the Canadian national memory of war. However, another issue can be raised that centres on a change in the way the works are received or understood by their viewers over time. Commenting on the curious fact that official art can be “read in hindsight as evidence of ‘a bitter truth’ about war,” cultural historian Sue Malvern draws attention to the fact that the meaning of paintings changes over time.<sup>3</sup> A painting such as Sims’s *Sacrifice* can be read as very much supportive of the war mentality in one era, critiqued as hopelessly clichéd in another and, finally, accepted as a fair rendition of the tragedy of war. This kind of change was also critical to the new reception of the war art in the late 1990s.

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of the First World War in 1988–1989. (Audit and Evaluation statistics provided by the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC).)

2 “Programme [*sic*] for War Paintings Rededication Ceremony,” Senate Chamber, Ottawa, 3 November 1998, CWM Art Department Curatorial Files, Senate.

3 Sue Malvern, “Art and War: Truth or Fiction,” *Art History*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1996), 319.

The exhibition that epitomizes the renewal of interest in war art and, in its original design, directly referenced the war art's original memorial function was *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum*, which opened in February 2000 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull. In this exhibition all the artists that have been referred to in this study, with only a few exceptions, had their works showcased as masterpieces. Over 75% of the works on display had been exhibited within living memory or had appeared in past publications. A conscious curatorial decision was made to build on the memory of known works in order to generate interest and respect for the unknown. This same thinking contributed to the inclusion of Walter Allward's working plaster models for the sculptures on the Vimy Memorial. With the inclusion of these statues, *Canvas of War* was able to become a site of memory as well as an art exhibition. Here, sculptures previously regarded as working models associated with a memorial could be viewed as art. And, more significantly, perhaps, unknown art could share in the iconic status of the known.

*Canvas of War* would never have materialized if the then director of the CWM, historian J. L. Granatstein, had not been an avowed and proactive nationalist who wanted to restore pride in and knowledge of Canadian military achievements. Granatstein recognized that the war art had become, as a result of decades of curatorial endeavour for the most part, the most accessible and acceptable means of doing this for a public for whom the hardware of war was problematic. Previous attempts to mount a significant exhibition of the collections had made little progress

prior to his appointment.<sup>4</sup> Hot on the heels of his enormously successful book *Who Killed Canadian History?* (1998) came *Canvas of War*, almost shamelessly playing to the new patriotic fervour developing in Canada in the wake of the 1995 commemorative celebrations.

The exhibition was focused on a central gallery that was surrounded on all four sides by another series of exhibition spaces. In the central gallery visitors were made aware of the depth, size, and richness of Canada's war art holdings while the story of the two world wars was told in the encircling rooms. Within these chronological galleries were two smaller exhibitions that told the story of the two war art programs. Seventy-two works of art were displayed: sixty-nine paintings, two works on paper, and the three Vimy sculptures. The sculptures were situated as they would have been placed on the monument and, along with the matching placement of three of the large paintings commissioned for Beaverbrook's planned war memorial art gallery (the Sims and the two Jacks), provided the commemorative element to the exhibition.<sup>5</sup> There were two main themes to the display: Canada's record in the two world wars and the importance of the art generated by exposure to the conflicts for both art history and history. The main text panels provided information on the course of the two wars and the major events of each while the individual labels supplied an

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4 The initial discussions in 1994–1995 were to co-host an exhibition with the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) at the NGC. CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

5 Attempts were made, without success, to repatriate the Augustus John painting from London or to show its cartoon from the collection of the NGC. CWM War Artist File, Augustus John and CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

historical, art historical, or personal introduction to each work. The exhibition team called the interrelationship between the various art and historical elements a “double helix” approach.<sup>6</sup> The organizing of the tour for *Canvas of War* began with the view that it would be a difficult show to sell.<sup>7</sup> The exhibition concluded, in the face of excellent publicity and a consequent better appreciation of its content, with the realization that it was a best seller. Its final itinerary includes nine Canadian galleries and museums. Requests have been reviewed from overseas including France and Australia.<sup>8</sup>

The exhibition’s award of the Canadian Museums’ Association’s only Award of Excellence for an exhibition in 2000 arose, in part, from its related programming. There was a book and a video of the same title, a product line of a poster, t-shirts, tablemats, mouse pads, posters, and cards, and considerable web site programming.<sup>9</sup> Within the exhibition space there was a year-long program of musical and story-telling events and tours. Theatres and galleries in the capital region contributed their own programming and the National Archives unveiled a new web site of photographs of war artists from their collections. Most telling of all, perhaps, was the special

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6 CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

7 Ibid.

8 The planned itinerary to 2005 includes Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal, Saint John’s, Fredericton, Winnipeg, and Regina.

9 See [www.warmuseum.ca](http://www.warmuseum.ca).

exhibition put on by the National Gallery of Canada in which six of the large modernist paintings it had retained in 1971 were exhibited together.<sup>10</sup>

The history of the transformation of Allward's plaster figures from working models to art works is especially interesting because of the light it sheds on how certain artifacts are valued over time. It is also a history that to different degrees holds true for much of the war art collections. Furthermore, it also provides an example of how memorials and their art components interrelate over time.

Until its 1936 unveiling, the Vimy Memorial was not a visitor destination but an overly long, complex, and expensive government construction project. The Vimy Pilgrimage of 1936, as it came to be known, was an isolated event. France was too far away for many Canadians to repeat the journey. The public need to remember, as Jonathan Vance has so carefully documented in *Death So Noble* (1997), became, as it had been before, a localized affair and Vimy a distant memory: the stuff of souvenirs.

In 1937, the plaster figures were packed in crates and shipped to Canada. In a letter written in March 1937 to J. B. Hunter, the deputy minister of Public Works, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King seemed to support the idea that bronze statues might be cast from them and placed at suitable sites in Ottawa and the provinces.<sup>11</sup> This never happened, however, and the plaster figures disappeared into

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10 The history of the exhibition and its related programs can be found in CWM Art Department Exhibition File, Canvas of War.

11 Mackenzie King to J. B. Hunter, 12 March 1937, transcribed extract from a letter, source unknown, CWM Acquisition File 19770315.

Department of Public Works storage.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that King's earlier reluctance to build the war memorial art gallery in Ottawa after the First World War was being repeated in the fate of Allward's models. In the wake of the success of the Vimy Pilgrimage, however, this one letter suggests he seems to have at least temporarily reconsidered his indifference to war memorials. Nonetheless, what seems to have been his more consistent attitude to war art was certainly made clear later in a broadcast he made on VE-Day on 8 May 1945. From San Francisco he stated: "The nations have seen that monuments of stone or bronze no longer will serve to commemorate, for future generations, the service and sacrifice of war."<sup>13</sup>

While the memorial itself survived the Second World War, it did not remain a place of remembrance for many: the exigencies of old age increasingly reduced the numbers available to honour its purpose. The lack of interest in the memorial itself – it was allowed to fall into disrepair – was reflected in the sad history of the plaster details central to its design. As late as 1994, it was still possible to see the disintegrating remains of the discarded plaster relief models for the remaining decorative elements of the memorial in the monument's basement.<sup>14</sup> They no longer exist.<sup>15</sup>

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12 A copy of a note dated 29 May 1959 from W. M. Dicks, Superintendent, Maintenance, Ottawa Public Buildings, Department of Public Works, Ottawa, *ibid.*, refers to Acquisition no. 59–15 as being the Allward plaster statues.

13 W. L. Mackenzie King, *Canada and the War: Victory, Reconstruction and Peace* (Ottawa: King's Printer, c. 1946), 139.

14 Viewed by the author on a visit to the monument in March 1994.

15 Author's conversation with Parks Canada site researcher, 2000.

The fate of the plaster figures in Canada was a little different and could have been equally tragic. By 1960, the twenty statues were housed in a warehouse that also contained a portion of the collection of the CWM, which requested that they be moved elsewhere in order to accommodate an impending large shipment of artifacts.<sup>16</sup> On 3 May 1960, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which had custody of the models, informed the museum that "the Minister of Veterans' Affairs had agreed that the models may be destroyed" so long as photographs were taken of them first.<sup>17</sup> At the time, this seemed to be an acceptable action because the sculptures were regarded as working models rather than as original works of art.<sup>18</sup> The proposal was "that the Army authorities could assist by accepting delivery of the crates, at the Proving Grounds or some other location where the attention of the public would not be attracted, and where the models could be photographed and then destroyed."<sup>19</sup> However, the Minister of National Defence, George Pearkes, did not agree to the

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16 L. F. Murray, Secretary and Curator, CWM, to Dicks, 10 March 1960, CWM Acquisition File 19770315.

17 R. Bonner, Assistant Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), to Murray, 3 May 1960, *ibid.*

18 C. F. Black, Departmental Secretary, DVA, to Murray, 24 August 1960, *ibid.* This letter stated that the proposed photographs would be useful if "the monument itself is defaced or damaged in order that suitable reconstruction could be made."

19 Bonner to Murray, 3 May 1960, CWM Acquisition File 19770315.



plan.<sup>20</sup> Instead, in September 1960, the sculptures were shipped to Vimy Barracks at Barriefield, Ontario, near Kingston, for storage.<sup>21</sup>

Almost two decades later, in 1977, seventeen of the plaster figures had returned to Public Works storage in Ottawa.<sup>22</sup> The remaining three stayed on display in the Military Communications and Electronics Museum that had opened in 1961. Here, the figure of *Canada Mourning her Fallen Sons* was displayed under a blue light surrounded by a carpet of red poppies and was central to their exhibition space and message. Staff recalled that on special occasions all three sculptures used to be put outside as backdrops to memorial events.<sup>23</sup> In 1977, a small new museum in Elgin, Ontario, which specialized in Canadian sculpture requested permission from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to acquire and display the other Allward sculptures.<sup>24</sup> Lacking proper facilities for storage and exhibition, however, the Elgin gallery was unable either to acquire or present them. Their request, nonetheless, revived interest in the works at the Canadian War Museum.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the

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20 Ibid.

21 Black to Murray, 24 August 1960, *ibid.*

22 L. Hayward to R. Welch, Minister for Cultural and Recreational Affairs, 28 June 1977, *ibid.*

23 Author's conversation with museum staff, 1993.

24 Hayward to J. M. Ruttan, DVA, 26 June 1977, CWM Acquisition File 19770315.

25 Ruttan to Murray, 15 July 1977, *ibid.*

Department transferred them to the museum's custody.<sup>26</sup> Less than two decades after rejecting them, the CWM had them back.

The sculptures were not exhibited until after 1995, when the new audience that unequivocally emerged in the aftermath of the celebrations that marked the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War made such an idea possible. With attendance at the Canadian War Museum more than double that year, it was clear that there was a renewed interest in the country's military past. This set in motion the momentum that led to the financing of the new war museum that will open in 2005. As art, the plaster sculptures had achieved no public recognition before this. Indeed, a 1994 planned exhibition on the work of Allward to be curated by Christine Boyanoski at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which had required that the plaster figures be uncrated for the first time since 1937, was ultimately abandoned.<sup>27</sup> Although this exhibition never materialized, the figures were not re-crated. Instead, in 1999, the delicate, time-consuming, and expensive process of restoration began in association with *Canvas of War*.

Sixty-four years after the completion of the Vimy Memorial, Walter Allward's greatest works became identified with a newly vibrant part of Canada's war heritage as part of this successful exhibition. The three main figure groups exhibited in the show were *The Spirit of Sacrifice* and *Sacrifice*, and the two groups comprising *The*

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26 Tom Cossitt, MP, Leeds to B. Ostry, secretary-general, National Museums of Canada, 4 August 1977, *ibid*.

27 Dennis Reid, Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), to the author, 12 December 1996, CWM Art Department Exhibition File, Allward.

*Defenders*, namely, *The Breaking of the Sword* and *Sympathy for the Helpless*.

(Figs. 19–22, pp. 331–334) The accompanying text panels were minimal and focused on the overarching symbolism inherent in the sculptures, however, and not on their importance as art. The main text read:

The Vimy Memorial commemorates Canada's role in the First World War with stone figures that symbolize the values defended and the sacrifices made.<sup>28</sup>

References were also made in other text panels to the dots scattered across the surface of the figures (the measuring points for the stone carvers). As well, a brief explanation was provided as to who Allward was and the source of his inspiration. The overall focus of the display was in keeping with the commemorative nature of *Canvas of War* as a whole and thus centred on the memorial function of Allward's sculptural program.

A meeting held soon after the planning for *Canvas of War* began was on the subject of developing a commercial product line for the exhibition. At one point, the manufacture of miniatures of Allward's sculptures was discussed.<sup>29</sup> Although these were never produced, it became quite clear at subsequent meetings that visitors to the exhibition would be able to take their memories away with them in a plastic bag in the form of a variety of exhibition-inspired souvenirs.<sup>30</sup> At the time of writing, the Canadian Museum of Civilization is producing a poster of the models. Kammen's conclusion in *Mystic Chords of Memory* (1991), that tourism too has a role in the

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28 Ibid., Exhibition Text.

29 Author's informal discussions with CWM and CMC staff.

30 CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

formulating of historical memory is being confirmed by these developments.<sup>31</sup> The stuff of souvenirs is reconfiguring Allward's discarded plaster models as a purchasable part of Canadian heritage.

Much that was good was achieved with the CWM's careful conservation and subsequent exhibition of the Allward plaster sculptures in 1999–2000. Simply stated, their short-term survival was ensured. Nonetheless, it is a survival that in the future is closely tied to political will and public interest and not to artistic importance. The plasters' role as art objects remains to this day marginal and unexplored despite the recent public attention. As a result, their ideologically complex and somewhat dated symbolism is not well understood. That the sculptures, both in stone and plaster, have a role to play in the public and collective imagination is only because of their more general amenity to being symbols of a tragic and somewhat romantic military past, not necessarily because they are great art. This lack of specificity allows the public to reshape their meaning in their own time, on their own terms, and based on their own knowledge and desires. Allward's vision of some eighty years earlier is not the dominant interpretation of war but a contributing factor.

Various other forces combined to renew attention on the memorial with residual benefit for the previously long-ignored plaster models. In response to the success of the exhibition and the consequent interest in the sculptures the CWM's remaining eight plaster figures designed for the pylons were also conserved during the

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31 Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 13.

course of 2000.<sup>32</sup> In the same time period, two federal government departments, Public Works Canada in association with Veterans' Affairs Canada, announced a multi-million dollar refurbishment project on the actual memorial at Vimy, France.<sup>33</sup> Reacting to the need to keep a high profile for the Canadian War Museum during a period in which construction of a new building would be undertaken, it was decided that all the restored figures would be displayed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization beginning in the spring of 2001.<sup>34</sup> Publication of the noted Canadian author Jane Urquhart's Booker-prize nominated novel *The Stone Carvers* in 2001, which featured the memorial and Allward provided an unexpected opportunity to promote the exhibition of the statues.<sup>35</sup> To its credit, perhaps, the Military Communications and Electronics Museum had already pre-empted them all and used its possession of three of the plaster maquettes as a selling point to obtain a new museum building for itself, which opened in 1996.<sup>36</sup>

A curious recent footnote to these events is the fact that Walter Allward is at the time of writing to be re-designated a person of national historic significance by the

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32 Media response to the restoration of the sculptures was positive. CWM Art Department Exhibition File, Allward and CWM War Artist File, Walter Allward.

33 Dennis Duffy, "Monumental Efforts," *National Post*, 16 November 2000.

34 The exhibition of five of the sculptures opened at the CMC on 3 May 2001. The sculptures were the two groups collectively known as *The Defenders* (Figs. 21 and 22, pp. 333, 334) and *Truth* (CWM 19770315-011) and *Knowledge* (CWM 19770315-010).

35 Jane Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001).

36 G. E. Hales, "The Military Communications and Electronics Museum expected to draw 60, 000 visitors this summer," *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 June 1996 (advertisement).

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Ironically, he had been so designated before for his work on the Vimy Memorial, but had been dropped from the list.<sup>37</sup>

None of these developments has been led by any art historical imperative. They have emerged from a *mélange* that includes a renewed public interest in commemoration and a government desire to do right by its fallen heroes while recognizing that the sacrifices of war now loom large in the public imagination. Extensive newspaper coverage for the exhibition *Canvas of War* and impressive visitor statistics made it clear that the public appreciates learning about the nation's wartime experiences.<sup>38</sup> They also respect being given the opportunity of remembering and, in some cases, mourning those who died. Certainly, unlike the furor that greeted the CWM's plans for a Holocaust gallery, there were no protests from veterans' groups in connection with this show. Indeed, the final visitor survey determined that seven out of ten visitors had a veteran or service person in the family. As a review of the exhibition in the Canadian Museum Association's journal, *Muse*, states:

On viewing these works, any sense of pride provokes the tenderest admonishment. No pride here. This is the land of last resort; never pride, but a sublime, quiet respect and a yearning to forgive, to heal the sacrifice.<sup>39</sup>

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37 Alexandra Mosquin, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Board of Canada, in conversation with the author, summer 2001. See also email dated 19 July 2001 in CWM War Artist File, Walter Allward.

38 The official visitor count for *Canvas of War* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization was 280, 000. CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

39 J. N. Redpath, "Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum," *Muse*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2000), 19.

The last page of this edition of *Muse* features a photograph of *Sympathy for the Helpless* being carved on site at Vimy. Beside the stone figure in the photograph is the plaster model.<sup>40</sup>

This new life for these sculptures, beginning at the end of the twentieth century, is yet another cycle in a history that has seen them utilized, discarded, and utilized again not as works of art but as a means to acknowledge, formulate, and recreate memories of the past. While this history has taken place in the public arena with public input it has also been part of a politically driven process. The Vimy Memorial was commissioned in 1921 as a memorial at a time when such memorials were a national requirement. Nonetheless, while resulting from a political process, it was also a process that recognized and was responding to public need at that time. More recently, similar factors have driven Parks Canada's restoration work at the monument itself and the Canadian War Museum's restoration of the memorial's models. *Canvas of War* has been part of the same process. The First World War paintings were intended as a memorial but this intent was largely lost when they became a part of the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, which had a very different mandate. While their memorial function was perhaps clearer at the Canadian War Museum, due to its lack of gallery space the museum was also limited in what it could achieve with either the war art or the Allward sculptures. *Canvas of War* proved to be a significant breakthrough. It combined Beaverbrook's vision for a memorial art gallery with sculptures designed for a memorial and created a new, if temporary, site of memory for Canadians. The next stage of the story will be to see if it is possible to

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40 Ibid., 68.

reconfigure the art and its meaning into yet another site of memory, the new Canadian War Museum that opens in 2005.



## Chapter 10

### *Canvas of War: Issues of Interpretation*

This dissertation has related a story in which much war art has been forgotten and then remembered to enable different kinds of memory to take precedence. This activity has been facilitated and supported by those who had the power to do so – whether politicians, government bureaucrats, or art historians. The fact that any notion of quality has often had little to do with what is selected for the purposes of constructing memory and the role of the canon in enabling this has been introduced through the works of a number of Canadian artists and collecting institutions. The excellent war work of these artists is not only hardly known but has certainly had little to do with the success or failure of their post-war careers. It has not affected the history of Canadian art. That recent shifts in the intellectual basis for the study of art history have opened doors that allow for a re-evaluation of war art has also been discussed. What has not been discussed in any detail is the role of the public (or publics) in this process, or that of the artist. This chapter explores their respective involvement and concludes that their voices are complex and ever changing. Their voices are strong and can establish meaning and contribute to the making of memory in powerful ways.

Reception history allows the public view of works of art to be reconstructed and given an authority equal to, or more important than, that of the artist, curator, or institution. “Reception history,” writes Martyn P. Thompson in “Reception Theory

and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning,” “pursues the implications of readers as authors.”<sup>1</sup>

*Canvas of War* documented its relationship with the public at its first venue in Hull by providing a place where visitors could write down their comments and responses to what they had seen in the exhibition. Many thousands did, thus providing a unique means of learning more about how the public relates to war art.<sup>2</sup> For a majority, the artists had quite clearly depicted the history of the two world wars. However, a closer analysis of these comments in relationship to the exhibition’s themes shows that the public will repeat what it is told it should know and that visitors will also reconfigure what they have seen in the context of what they already know. Thus both curatorial authority and the personal viewpoint can co-exist in relation to war art.

*Canvas of War* has a strong historical focus. Much effort has gone into ensuring that the label text is factually accurate. There are maps, historical chronologies, and accounts of major battles to be studied. There is far less to be read on the creative process that gave rise to the artworks on view that illustrate the historical narrative. The degree to which this absence of information has provided the art with an unwarranted veneer of factual accuracy is problematic. It seems that, in the absence of other information, the visitor has no means of assessing the veracity of the

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1 Martyn P. Thompson, “Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning,” *History and Theory* 32 (1993), 271.

2 The comments have all been kept. Canadian War Museum (CWM) Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*, Comment Books.

paintings' content. As a result, the compositions can be regarded as being factual historical records.

This comes across in the comments recorded by visitors to the exhibition. The comment book in which they wrote was placed on a table in a small, dimly lit gallery at the end of the exhibition. To encourage visitors to write, each sheet in the book asked the question: "How did you react to seeing the wars through artists' eyes? Please share your memories, thoughts, and feelings with us." While the comments are varied in terms of content, the nationality of the writer, the age of the visitor, and their background, there are certain commonalities across the spectrum of response.

The belief that these paintings need to be seen is an important concern. "It almost had me in tears," wrote one visitor. "We need to see more of this, to show people what it was like. These paintings are a far better teacher than a dry text book account." In the context of the Canadian War Museum's (CWM) widely publicized ongoing campaign for a new facility, comments such as this are not surprising. However, visitors tended not to question the truth and validity of what they saw. There was an intrinsic belief that what was on view, because it was completed at the time, was a true record of what was seen by the artists. The exhibition itself did not consistently encourage questioning this either, although the information provided in connection with the Richard Jack 1917 painting of the Second Battle of Ypres demonstrated that there was more than one way of painting, photographing, or even writing about the same event. (Fig. 3, p. 315)

A significant number of comments show that visitors had had family members who had served in Canada's wars. For these visitors, the memorial function that was

integrated into the exhibition has the most resonance. “For my father and grandfather,” wrote one visitor,” “and all those who gave so much. Thank you.” Others, lacking a specific relative to thank, wrote in more general terms. “They will be remembered,” wrote one, “I am so very, very grateful to all these men and women.” These comments demonstrate that Beaverbrook’s concept of a memorial war art gallery had some validity as an organ of remembrance eighty-two years later. It should be noted, however, that the failure to build such a memorial was the subject of a text panel in the exhibition. Clearly, this contributed, to some degree, to the fact that many people were concerned that the paintings have a good home in the future. “These masterpieces need a home of their own. I hope I live to see that happen,” wrote one.

Given that the exhibition was about war and Canada’s success as a wager of war the response of a great many visitors was to ask for peace.<sup>3</sup> “War should not exist all over the world,” commented one writer. “May these horrors never happen again!” another insisted. Connected to this was a significant desire that children should be able to see the art. “[It is] important for younger generations who have never experienced war to see these magnificent [and] moving paintings,” commented a visitor. A fourteen-year-old provided the reason. “Although some others say it’s courageous and brave, these paintings expressed mostly sorrow and grief. I was not

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<sup>3</sup> This is potentially a logical response. The philosopher William James, for example, in “The Moral Equivalent of War issued by the American Association of International Conciliation in 1910, argued that war and peace were not opposites but ‘simply the gap between the implicit and explicit mode of violent conflict.’” (Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalization of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 15.

one who experienced such tragedies being young myself, and I hope I will never have to. Only when we all agree to get along, will there be peace. We are all one species, one world, yet we are broken up by divisions in our lands. It's awful." There is a certain irony to this conclusion that can be exemplified. Because the First World War so clearly was seen as a loss of innocence, as Sue Malvern points out: "The measure of value became the degree to which the war was condemned, so that a good war painting was invariably anti-war."<sup>4</sup>

The use of visitor comment cards is not unknown in Canada. In the Canadian historical galleries at the Art Gallery of Ontario, "'Share Your Reaction' cards are dispensed in about two dozen locations."<sup>5</sup> In a 1995 article on these cards, the gallery's Canadian art educator Douglas Worts writes: "[The] cards demonstrate to me how powerful and creative personal meaning-making is in the viewing of art. It is something that we institutions have not actively encouraged before – in fact, museums have effectively undercut the public in this regard through their emphasis on objective judgements by staff 'experts'. Yet clearly the public can provide new insights into the art works."<sup>6</sup> "People want to see themselves reflected in their visits to museums," comments Worts.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Sue Malvern, "Memorizing the Great War: Stanley Spencer at Burghclere," *Art History*, vol. 23, no. 2 (June 2000), 182.

5 Douglas Worts, "Extending the Frame: Forging a New Partnership with the Public," in Susan Pearce, ed., *Art in Museums* (London: Athlone, 1995), 169.

6 *Ibid.*, 184–85.

7 *Ibid.*, 170.

The issue of “new insights” versus “the objective judgements by staff ‘experts’” becomes significant in an analysis of the comments made in response to *Canvas of War*. When the exhibition originally opened, one of the first panels visitors encountered made a plea for the need for a new war museum building to house the war art.<sup>8</sup> The first group of comments contained, as a result, an exceptionally large number of calls for a new war museum to display it. When this panel was repositioned so that it was not read by a majority of visitors until they left the exhibition, the number of comments calling for a new facility dropped.<sup>9</sup>

What the visitor comments for *Canvas of War* tell us is that visitors sometimes personalized what they saw based on family or personal memory. At other times, they reiterated something that they had read and made it their own opinion. Furthermore, in response to contemporary concerns experienced elsewhere and in general to do with humanitarian or human rights issues, they reconfigured their personal responses to the exhibition into calls for peace, unknowing that this reconfiguration was not theirs alone. As has been argued consistently in this dissertation, meaning is the product of discourse, with an origin in language, and in this discourse, manipulated though it may be, the public’s role is critically important. As Grele noted in “Whose Public? Whose History?” (1981):

If the “new” social history has taught us anything, it is the basic correctness of the view of Marx that, within limits, people make their own history. Their actions count heavily in the process of

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<sup>8</sup> The panel read, “Canada’s war art has no permanent exhibition space. *Canvas of War* provides a unique opportunity to appreciate works of art that record the nation’s military history, and changed the course of Canadian art.” CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

ongoing change, be it incremental or structural . . . every man [*sic*] can become his own historian . . . [and] relatively ordinary people can seek and find knowledge of the world they have made or that was made for them, and that since history always has a social purpose – explicitly or implicitly – such knowledge shapes the way the present is viewed.<sup>10</sup>

What Grele does not acknowledge is the degree to which this process is controlled. In *Canvas of War* the public had only the works of art within the exhibition to work with, roughly .005% of the war art collections. Even allowing for a degree of independence of thought it is still clear that what they could see was highly selected and that within such a severely edited process their agency was, in reality, limited. Furthermore, while many visitors expressed pleasure at finally seeing the little-known collections, very few grasped that what they were seeing was, in terms of quantity, significantly unrepresentative of the holdings and also not that unknown.

This dichotomy in interpretation becomes clear in an analysis of one particular visitor's response to the exhibition.

I would like to thank the past and current governments of Canada for hiring brilliant artists who depicted [and] captured the essence of two worldwide conflicts that were the First World War and the Second World War. It is exactly what my great grandfather, a World War One veteran told me one day before his death.

In this comment, the writer identifies a major conundrum when referring to the exhibition as both “depicting” and “capturing the essence” of the wars. It raises the issue as to which of these two activities the works of art on view in the exhibition actually do, or do they do both? Furthermore, in terms of curatorial selection, the

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<sup>10</sup> Ronald J. Grele, “Whose public? Whose history? What is the goal of a public historian?” *The Public Historian*, vol. 5 (winter 1981), 47.

remark questions whether it is in the public's interest that in using war art to illustrate the course of military history it should be important that the creative process that generates the works of art be explained as much as the facts of the history to which it refers. (The counter-argument is, of course, that in an art gallery setting the reverse should also be true.)<sup>11</sup> If this is not done, there is a danger that the works of art, which are to varying degrees, works of the imagination – although extraordinarily moving and impressive ones – will be viewed as documentary history. The making of memory will thus be clearly demonstrated to be the creation of fiction.

The implications of this single written comment from a visitor to *Canvas of War* enable a move from a general analysis of the public involvement in making memory in an exhibition scenario to the artist's role in the making of meaning. Through what is in essence, a specific case history – the making and interpretation of a single work of art in the war art collections – it is also possible to highlight the contribution of the military historian to the discourse on war art. An examination of the genesis of Alex Colville's Second World War painting *Infantry, near Nijmegen, Holland* (1946) provides a good example. (Fig. 63, p. 375) As a result of earlier exposure and the fame of the artist it is arguably the best known of the paintings on display in *Canvas of War*. At the same time it is also, in terms of how it was composed, as little known as the majority of the other works on display. Using this

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<sup>11</sup> In the Art Gallery of Ontario showing of *Canvas of War* (12 October 2001–6 January 2002), the installation focused on the art rather than the history. Because the works had been selected initially first to illustrate history, second to draw attention to the extent of the art programs, and only third to showcase the quality of the art as a whole, the gallery's Second World War hanging, which did not



painting as an example, it can be seen that rather than bringing together carefully sketched observations to create a finished work, much as an historian would develop a topic by using documentary evidence, artists were just as likely to rely on imagination, memory, and the creative impulse. This fiction would be given the appearance of authenticity by the careful addition of uniform, accoutrement, and technical details.

To begin with, the date of *Infantry, near Nijmegen, Holland* is telling in that the painting was completed a year after the events ostensibly depicted occurred. Nevertheless, Colville's diary from the time indicates that he had a major composition in mind as early as 1 February 1945. Clearly his intention was not to paint a scene that was actually before him.

On 1 February I envisaged my first big canvas – the subject being infantry marching in single file along a road. That morning I made numerous sketches of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles marching, then a study of a desolate road. The following day . . . I did a pen and wash drawing, *Infantry*, from the previous day's sketches.<sup>12</sup>

*Infantry* shows a group of soldiers trudging wearily away from the viewer along a muddy Dutch road. (Fig. 64, p. 376) It was based on a number of sketches, including one of the road itself and two of the figures. (Figs. 65–67, pp. 377–379) Some months later, back in Ottawa, the artist was facing a large blank canvas. He had had time to think about his subject and wanted to change it. Scribbled on the right of this last sketch is what looks like a compositional change. The style is different, so possibly it is not of the same date as the rest of the sketch. A subsequent sheet of

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order the works historically, drew attention to those paintings that were weaker as art.

12 Graham Metson and Cheryl Lean, *Alex Colville: Diary of a War Artist* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1981), 92.

compositional sketches in the Canadian War Museum supports the idea that the artist rethought the subject he saw in February 1945 at a later date. In several sketches he looks at the arrangement of figures, and in another at the landscape. (Fig. 68, p. 380) Another is a rough sketch that plays with the relationship of the soldiers' heads to one another. (Fig. 69, p. 381) A further study confirms an interest in having the soldiers march towards the viewer in a curved formation. (Fig. 70, p. 382) In what is likely an even later sketch he straightens out the line of soldiers. (Fig. 71, p. 383) On another page of scribbled lines he introduces what becomes the second figure holding a Bren gun. (Fig. 72, p. 384) This is developed in another brief series of pencil lines, although the figure is leading, rather than in second place, as in the finished work. (Fig. 73, p. 385) This figure takes on more detailed form in a delicate pencil drawing. (Fig. 74, p. 386) The uniform and accoutrement details are pencilled in, in another small sketch and the arrangement of helmets is studied in the briefest of drawings. (Figs. 75, 76, pp. 387, 388) The leading figure emerges in a more finished drawing. (Fig. 77, p. 389) The artist provides him with his own hand and his father's face. (Fig. 78, p. 390) The final drawing in the series is squared for transfer to the canvas. (Fig. 79, p. 391) A photograph of the artist surrounded by studies for various works and the finished painting *Infantry, near Nijmegen, Holland* confirms his working methods.<sup>13</sup>

Colville titled the work simply *Infantry*. For him it was no longer the Royal Winnipeg Rifles in Holland but a powerful commentary on courage, adversity, and the exhausting grind of soldiers' lives in wartime. He said that the composition

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 158.

“expressed the terrible life that they had; lack of sleep, food, exposure, constant danger. It’s amazing that people endured. They did, these ordinary young guys.”<sup>14</sup>

However, to convey this he now acknowledges that he may have subconsciously interjected his father’s face – a man who had never served overseas at all and who was not, and never had been, a soldier. In an interview he said:

The corporal was based in a way on my father who was that type of small slight guy with a narrow face . . . I’ve always thought of my father as a kind of heroic figure. I don’t know if I was conscious of that at the time that I was painting that I was making the person look like my father . . . who had been the foreman of a rivet gang who were also doing dangerous work and often got killed.”<sup>15</sup>

The words “near Nijmegen, Holland” were added later, giving the work a specificity that he perhaps did not intend. Wodehouse provided this title in the 1960s when he was preparing his magnum opus, the *Check List of The War Collections*.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, it should be noted that Colville did provide a location and identified the unit as belonging to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division on the back of the canvas. He thereby added a degree of factual authenticity at odds, perhaps, with the artistic process he followed in composing the work.

How has this painting been used over time? Most famously it appears as a detail on the cover of Heather Robertson’s 1977 book, *A Terrible Beauty*.<sup>17</sup> No

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14 Alex Colville interview with Michael Ostroff, September 1999. CWM War Artist File, Alex Colville.

15 Ibid.

16 All the correspondence with Alex Colville prior to the publication of Wodehouse’s catalogue refers to the painting as *Infantry*.

information is provided on the painting other than that comprising the tombstone data of the catalogue entry. It is also used in a similar manner, namely as an illustration on the packaging for the video that was produced to accompany the exhibition *Canvas of War*.<sup>18</sup> In terms of art-oriented productions, only in the 1990 publication *Images of War: The Artist's Vision of World War II* by Ken McCormick and Hamilton Darby Perry is any effort made to account for the genesis of the painting.<sup>19</sup> Even here, however, the authors write that the studies for the painting were done in the field, which suggests a link with events seen. In terms of history books, Colville's father's purported likeness turns up on the bottom of almost every page of the Department of National Defence's 1995 publication, *Liberation: The Canadians in Europe*.<sup>20</sup> The painting is also on the front cover of *Canadian Military History*, a 1993 volume of readings edited by Marc Milner.<sup>21</sup> In 1972, it was the cover illustration for *The Canadian Military: A Profile*, a series of essays edited by Hector J. Massey.<sup>22</sup> In each

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17 Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1977).

18 *Canvas of War: The Art of World War II* (Sound Venture Productions and the Canadian War Museum, 2000).

19 Ken McCormick and Hamilton Darby Perry, *Images of War: The Artist's Vision of World War II* (New York: Orion Books, 1990), 360.

20 Bill McAndrew, Bill Rawling, and Michael Whitby, *Liberation: The Canadians in Europe* (Montreal: Art Global, 1995).

21 Marc Milner, ed., *Canadian Military History: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993).

22 Hector J. Massey, ed., *The Canadian Military: A Profile* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972).

instance, a work whose status as an evocative fiction is never explained is used to represent the subject of Canadian military history itself.

That war art should not feature in publications such as these is not the issue, nor is its use in these publications a matter of vast significance for the study of history. What is at issue is that both history and art may be ill served if more information on the painting itself is not provided. Are we being fair to the artists' intentions if we present their paintings in an historical rather than art historical context that leaves the public thinking they have viewed history rather than a work of the imagination? Without some background on the creation of the work, the average purchaser of *Liberation* or Milner's volume may assume that in the context of a history book, an image of such precision is also historically correct. In terms of the art publications, the average reader, in the absence of information to the contrary, can also question the role of imagination and assume that the art is illustration. This assumption was one reason why the National Gallery transferred the war art collections to the Canadian War Museum in 1971. That artists are predisposed to rework what they have seen cannot necessarily be known unless it is explained. They too have a script to offer. Furthermore, that military historians are reluctant to interpret art puts them out of step with the new directions of history that encompass interdisciplinary approaches. "More and more, historians *interpret* images rather than

use them simplistically to illustrate preconceived ideas,” writes Jules David Prown in *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts* (1992).<sup>23</sup>

How did the idea that Colville’s painting is an historical depiction come to prevail? Again, history is largely responsible. As Sue Malvern has pointed out: “the testimony of those who were participants or soldiers, rather than simply witnesses, was privileged as the most authentic.”<sup>24</sup> It was this conclusion that clearly informed the “instructions” issued to war artists by the Canadian War Artists’ Committee in Ottawa during the Second World War. These were clearly directed towards historical record. (Appendix B) Approved on 2 March 1943, the anonymous two-page typewritten document informed the official war artists what was expected of them and how they should set about accomplishing these goals. “As a war artist appointed to one of the Canadian Services you are charged with the portrayal of significant events, scenes, phases and episodes in the experience of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those which cannot be adequately rendered in any other way.” The “instructions” continue:

You are expected to record and interpret vividly and veraciously, according to your artistic sense, (1) the spirit and character, the appearance and attitude of the men, as individuals or groups, of the Service to which you are attached – (2) the instruments and machines which they employ, and (3) the environment in which they do their work. The intention is that your productions shall be worthy of Canada’s highest cultural traditions, doing justice to History, and as works of art, worthy of exhibition anywhere at any time.

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23 Jules David Prown, “Introduction,” *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), xiv.

24 Sue Malvern, “Memorizing the Great War,” 182.

In section 9, the “instructions” admonish: “Accuracy in delineation and presentation of clothing, equipment, weapons, vehicles and craft is essential. Details of arms, equipment and vehicles, whenever shown, should be checked against contemporary photographs.” This plea for “rivet counting” is softened by a subsequent instruction: “General direction as to subjects and field to be covered will usually be given and suggestions as to medium, treatment and composition may be offered, but the final choice will rest with the artist.”

C. P. Stacey, the army’s official historian, who managed the army’s war artists overseas during the Second World War, worked within the boundaries of these instructions. In his autobiography *A Date with History* (1982), he acknowledged that artists could produce both history and propaganda; nevertheless, he supported the potential of art to be an historical record. “It seemed to me,” he wrote, “that if there were to be army artists they belonged in the business of historical recording rather than in that of publicity.”<sup>25</sup>

It seems clear that both the writers of the “instructions” and the senior officers such as Stacey who managed the artists were hazy on what the artistic process really involved. The extent to which the creation of a painting was led by an artistic rather than an historical imperative was not clearly understood. The extent to which history was not recorded was little comprehended. Furthermore, as Vance notes in *Death So Noble* (1997) in regards to the First World War art program: “When the deputy

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25 C. P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1982), 106.

minister of National Defence prepared a memorandum on the CWMF in 1928, he took pains to stress ‘that the collection contains actual battle scenes historically accurate and the pictures depict the type of warfare, materials and conditions of warfare [sic] and locations very correctly.’”<sup>26</sup> In reality, this is largely not what the collections consist of, as the more avant-garde of the compositions confirm.

This is not to say that alternate views had not provided a different way of appreciating the paintings. Sir Robert Borden, prime minister of Canada in the Great War, for example, viewed the First World War paintings as documents that would relate “the meaning of the war as it was and as it would be understood.”<sup>27</sup> So too did Andrew Bell, in a 1945 article published in *The Studio* entitled “War Art,” which concluded that the role of the Second World War artist was to “‘fill the eye’ with the atmosphere and spiritual shading of the struggle.”<sup>28</sup>

Enough evidence exists to confirm that most war artists themselves were aware that their depictions were not historical documents. Caven Atkins (1907–2000), for example, wrote in a 1943 letter to H. O. McCurry: “Art is not imitation. Life and its actions are used only as inspiration and are points of departure for the creative idea.”<sup>29</sup> What Colville himself said he was doing accords well with Atkins’s view:

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26 Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 102.

27 Ibid.

28 Andrew Bell, “War Art,” *The Studio*, vol. 129, no. 625 (April 1945), 116.

29 Caven Atkins to H. O. McCurry, 7 March 1943, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42–A, Atkins, Caven.



At the same time there was a film and photography unit which was also part of the army. They were shooting footage all the time. The difference of course is a conceptual one. The camera can record, can make extraordinarily good, affecting records, but a painter is more likely to select and reject, to edit, to interpret. You are not a camera, you are doing essentially different things. There is a certain subjectivity, an interpretive function.<sup>30</sup>

The philosopher-historian R. G. Collingwood addressed the tangled topic of art versus history in a 1938 book entitled *The Principles of Art*.<sup>31</sup> For him, works of art were products of the imagination and not history.<sup>32</sup> This conclusion was based on the fact that the making of art does not follow the rules of historical inquiry and proceed from a requirement to present evidence and keep to the facts. Art historian Francis Haskell agrees. In *History and its Images* (1993), he states: "Fruitful cooperation between the historian and art historian can be based only on a full recognition of the necessary differences between their approaches, not, as is so often applied, on the pretence that these approaches are basically the same."<sup>33</sup> In this he is referring to Johan Huizinga's important concerns in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919) that art was a more ambiguous record than the document or chronicle.<sup>34</sup> In *Art in History, History in Art* (1991), Jan de Vries describes the challenge of using art as history as frustrating. For the art historian a work of art cannot be reduced in its

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30 Metson and Lean, *Diary*, 123.

31 R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938).

32 As cited in Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1997), 50.

33 Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 10.

34 *Ibid.*, 494.

entirety to prose while for the historian converting an artwork to an archival document involves recognizing that it is a work of creative and subjective imagination as well as purpose.<sup>35</sup>

In *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1997), Gordon Graham agrees with Collingwood and, unknowingly, with Sir Robert Borden, when he concludes that: “art is most valuable when it serves as a source of understanding.”<sup>36</sup> This thinking echoes that of the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer whose dense and complex writing in *Truth and Method* (1960), explores issues of truth in art concluding that art begins in experiences but transcends these to take on universal significance. In the introduction, he writes that: “through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way.”<sup>37</sup> Graham writes further:

Though there are evident differences between art on the one hand and . . . history on the other, the former, no less than the latter, can be seen to contribute significantly to human understanding. In appreciating how it does this, it is essential to see that works of art do not expound theories, or consist in summaries of facts. They take the form of imaginative creations, which can be brought to everyday experience as a way of ordering and illuminating it.<sup>38</sup>

These are important words, involving a call to explain the creative act and to make clear its purpose in history. It is also a call for a role for art as a means of understanding beyond the function of bearer of facts. It also demands that another voice be heard – one that is free of accumulated meanings and stripped of the

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35 David Freedberg and Jan de Vries, eds., *Art in History, History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1991), 3.

36 Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts*, 62.

37 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), xxii–xxiii.

accretions of time. This involves trying to understand not what a painting means now but what it meant at the time of creation. Because of its focus on death, an event that can be quickly and directly visually understood, Jack Nichols's work is a good entry point for such a discussion.

One of Canada's official naval war artists, Nichols looked death in the face and recorded the emotions of the wounded and dying on paper and on canvas. Today, he is hardly known and lives in obscurity. A photograph of the artist in uniform, his paints, brushes, oil, turpentine, and palette before him, shows him sitting in front of his most powerful painting, *Drowning Sailor* (1946). (Fig. 12, p. 324) In this painting, included in *Canvas of War*, a terrified German mariner clutches uselessly at the water as he is pulled down into its depths. His eyes bulge, his mouth is open in a scream, and his convulsed face is a portrait of abject terror. In the background, behind the artist, are two sketches. One is obviously a study, presumably now lost, that features two heads in the water. The artist himself, in the centre of the photo, holds a piece of driftwood. The dead wood can perhaps be considered emblematic of his tragic subject. It is similar to that which he used in the foreground of his painting *Normandy Scene, Beach in "Gold Area"* (1946), a study of human emotion in the aftermath of battle. (Fig. 80, p. 392) In a likely unintended parallel, the artist's eyes roll up above the sea of paint and sketches, away from the dead wood and twisted tubes of paint, in an unconscious echo of the tragic composition beside him.

None of the seven other naval artists commissioned under the Canadian War Records program chose to depict death or the fear of death so directly. For this reason,

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38 Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts*, 62.

within the limitations outlined in the discussion of Colville's painting *Infantry*, Nichols's work uniquely documents how the average Canadian sailor dealt with it and lived with it.

There were seven other naval artists: Anthony Law (1916–1996), Harold Beament, Leonard Brooks (b. 1911), Michael Forster (b. 1907), Donald Mackay (1906–1979), Rowley Murphy (1891–1975), and Tom Wood (1913–1997). None of them painted death by drowning, preferring to concentrate on scenes of action at sea, ship portraits, and harbour scenes. Why was this? Did they deny that death was a factor in the average sailor's wartime career? Were they simply averse to painting the dying and dead? Harold Beament seems to have felt that he was obliged to present a positive view of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) as he was a serving officer as well as an artist. "Beament's main problem," writes Joan Murray in *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* (1981), "was in separating the officer from the war artist. He wanted to present the ships as sea-worthy from the Navy's point of view – which caused, [he felt] (aesthetic) 'constipation'"<sup>39</sup> Donald Mackay agrees. "Like Beament, he found the necessary accuracy of depiction inhibiting," he told Murray in an interview.<sup>40</sup> Leonard Brooks, too, is recorded as having seen his role as seeking out the positive in the midst of horror. "Brooks felt the war artist had a special role. Like the doctor or priest, he added the constructive human element in the midst of the

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39 Joan Murray, *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1981), 32.

40 *Ibid.*, 78.

horrors of war,” notes Murray.<sup>41</sup> Tom Wood saw sailors drown and was present on the Normandy beaches on D-Day, but preferred not to remember the tragedies and thus not to depict them.<sup>42</sup> Anthony Law was deeply affected by the 1945 destruction of the motor torpedo boat flotilla he had served with. His mourning took the form of a more general change in subject matter from scenes of optimism to scenes of adversity and in a change of palette towards purple and yellow, the colours of Easter and of sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> Actual depictions of death are absent, however, in his oeuvre.

For artists in the other services, death – when referred to at all – tends quite frequently to be symbolized. The army war artist Campbell Tinning (1910–1996) was particularly fond of a work he had painted entitled *Canadian Graves at the Gothic Line* (1944): “the olive tree (the symbol of peace) and the grey sky were there and possibly were fortuitous, but their message comes across,” he stated.<sup>44</sup> (Fig. 81, p. 393) When it came to depicting the enemy there was less reluctance to be graphic. The careful detail of Charles Comfort’s *Dead German on the Hitler Line* (1944) is one example. (Fig. 82, p. 394) On the back of the painting, Comfort noted: “I am not given to painting lugubrious subjects of this kind, but at least one horror picture is not

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41 Ibid., 40.

42 See his account of watching ten British soldiers drown in “Faces of Sailors at Work and Play Placed on Canvas by Ottawa Artist,” source unknown, date unknown, author unknown, NGCA, NGC fonds, *Canadian War Artists*, 5.42–W, Wood, Thomas.

43 See, Laura Brandon, “C. Anthony Law (1916–1996): Official War Artist,” *Canadian Military History*, vol. 6, no. 1 (spring 1997), 97–100.

44 See, Laura Brandon, “George Campbell Tinning: War Artist, 1910–1996,” *Canadian Military History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (autumn 1996), 60.

inapt in this situation.” *Tragic Landscape* (1945) by Alex Colville is another example of a work where the subject is a dead person from the enemy side. (Fig. 83, p. 395)

The issues that constrained many of his colleagues did not complicate Jack Nichols’s interest in the bleaker aspects of people’s lives. The human condition, even in death, was ultimately what interested him and we know this simply by looking at his war work itself. There is no other entry point since the extant correspondence from the war years that has survived and the few published reviews and pieces of critical writing in existence are not particularly enlightening.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, while Nichols himself is interested in what is said about his art, he is not inclined to explain it in great detail. To understand his contribution to the documentary record of the Second World War there is no choice but to go to the works themselves.

He was born in Montreal on 16 March 1921. Largely self-taught, his mentors were Louis Mühlstock (1904–2001), a Montreal artist, and F. H. Varley of the Group of Seven.<sup>46</sup> In 1943, Nichols joined the Merchant Navy and served on ships both on the Great Lakes and in the Caribbean. Later that year, he was commissioned by the National Gallery of Canada to produce some drawings of his Caribbean experiences which led, in turn, to his being appointed an official war artist in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNVR) in February 1944. After training on the East Coast, he sailed for England, arriving just in time to participate in the D-Day landings on 6 June.

Before returning to England, he spent some time in the area around Caen. By August

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<sup>45</sup> The bulk of the research material on Nichols is to be found in NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42–N, Nichols, Jack

<sup>46</sup> Paul Duval, *Forty Years of Jack Nichols, 1941–1981* (Sarnia: Sarnia Public Library and Art Gallery, 1982), 5.

1944, he had returned to sea and was present at the attempted evacuation of Brest where the Canadian destroyer, HMCS *Iroquois*, and several British vessels attacked and destroyed the German convoy attempting to make an escape. At some point during this episode he was injured and he subsequently spent time in England before returning to Canada. He was demobilized in October 1946, having produced an official total of twenty-nine works on paper and nine oils on canvas.

He then applied for, and won, a Guggenheim Fellowship to study in Mexico in 1947. Consistent in his enthusiasms, he noted in his application: "My basic interest and subject matter is people . . . together with their environment."<sup>47</sup> His interest in human tragedy had also been remarked upon and was expressed well in McInnes's *Canadian Art* (1950):

Nichols is perhaps the finest figure painter among our contemporary artists. Working in charcoal, pencil, ink and wash, with thick expressive lines and delicate shadings creating form in the round, his deep sense of humanity has found itself among the slums of Toronto. The same human tragedy, dignity and pathos emerged, in even more striking form, in a wonderful series of studies aboard destroyers and corvettes. Groups of sailors in the sick bay, in their hammocks, in the foetid below-decks atmosphere of a pitching destroyer, or snatching a few brief moments of leisure in the heat and press of convoy duty: all these convey both the sadness and the ultimate serenity of a scene from Dostoevsky.<sup>48</sup>

By the time J. Russell Harper had published *Painting in Canada* in 1966, Nichols had largely retired as a practicing artist. However, Harper did draw attention to an aspect of Nichols's war work other than his humanism, and that was the

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47 NGCA, NGC fonds, Canadian War Artists, 5.42-N, Nichols, Jack.

48 Graham McInnes, *Canadian Art*, 2d ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1950), 85.

religious dimension. “Jack Nichols painted groups of sailors and the huddled pathetic refugees being evacuated from the French beaches,” he noted, “and he saw them with a religious aura.”<sup>49</sup> In Nichols’s war art this is borne out in two drawings in particular: *Ammunition Passer* (c. 1943), which makes reference to the head of Christ carrying the Cross on the road to Calvary and *Head of a Wounded Soldier Crying* (1945), which is reminiscent of traditional depictions of Christ’s mourning family. (Figs. 84, 85, pp. 396, 397)

These two important historians of Canadian art both refer to Nichols’s war commission as being significant. Certainly this commission remains his most known body of work, at least in the art historical community. It constitutes the major legacy of an artist with enormous potential who somehow lost his way, for he did little work of equal force later. While it has undisputed value in terms of its artistic quality, however, and has worth as an important document of wartime emotional experience, what is of interest here is its relative oblivion.

The issue that arises when discussing the evidentiary value of Nichols’s war art that is also applicable to war art in general centres on the fact that a painting or a drawing is not a reproduction of a single scene. Rather, the artist shapes what he sees and thus distorts the evidence of his eyes to create a work of the imagination. In the case of Nichols’s *Drowning Sailor* (1946), the photograph referred to earlier indicates that there once existed a preliminary drawing for the subject that featured two sailors’ heads. Given this fact, one might ask how much literal truth there is in the final

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49 J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 336.



composition of a single figure? Perhaps not much, but that kind of truth may not be the most important. What may be more telling is the question as to whether the depiction of the drowning sailor encapsulates that particular experience of death in a way that is universally as opposed to specifically meaningful. Even more significant, within the context of this dissertation, whose value judgement is it to make?

A recent acquisition by the Canadian War Museum of a tiny graphite drawing by Nichols of a drowning sailor confirms that the artist did work with a single image of a head. The drawing was completed in the aftermath of the action at Brest in 1944, when the artist was on board HMCS *Iroquois*. It is in no way a completed drawing and, despite the fact it is of a single head, should not be considered a study for the larger composition. It is rather an attempt to capture on paper the salient details of a drowning that the artist had recently observed. The connecting element with the painting of the same subject is the portrayal of the emotion felt by the sailor facing death by drowning. (Fig. 86, p. 398) The fact that the two heads do not share any particular likeness is arguably irrelevant. The fact that we know the nationality of the victim as German is also, perhaps, unimportant. The drowning sailor could be Everyman and what the artist may have wanted to express was an abstract emotion – anguish in the face of death. His interest may not have been in portraying a particular person or event.

While in the case of *Drowning Sailor* the details of a death are recorded, Nichols also seems to have been interested in conveying to his viewers the fact that death was a constant fear for any Canadian sailor. In a majority of his RCNVR compositions, his subjects emanate a sense of foreboding. The means he uses to

communicate this sense of imminent doom are varied. To begin with, in his portraits he chooses to reveal something of the skull, skeleton, and flesh beneath the skin's surface. The appearance of naked and unprotected flesh is a powerful visual image. Thus, in the drawing *Troops Moving Forward* (1945) the eyes of the sailor in the foreground seem almost absent, presenting the viewer with what could almost be comprehended as the empty eye sockets of a stone sculpture or a skull. (Fig. 87, p. 399) In *Men Going to Action Stations* (1944) the muscles, ligaments, and bone structure of the sailors are emphasized so that the viewer is aware of the physiology of the subjects and hence their vulnerability. (Fig. 88, p. 400) Nichols's preference for a dark and sombre palette and the generally gloomy or tense expressions on the sailors' faces all enhance the prevailing mood of potential tragedy in these works.

In his search for some kind of universal truth regarding wartime experiences – death included – Nichols appears to have found that as he moved away from the literal he ironically came closer to the truth. This can be demonstrated further by a brief study of his approach to depicting life, rather than death, at sea. In an interview, he once commented that what impressed him greatly was the way in which the crew of a ship could move about silently with no light and without getting lost.<sup>50</sup> The artist was well aware that the restrictions regarding light and noise were related to safety and to survival, so how did he convey this in his work? Essentially what he did, especially in the case of the works on paper, was to remove colour altogether and, in the paintings, to darken the palette so much so that it is sometimes hard to identify

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<sup>50</sup> Author's interview with Jack Nichols in Toronto, 2 November 1995.

details in his compositions. He sacrificed clarity in the interests of a representative record: what it was like to be on board a ship in war conditions. *Loading Gun during Action at Sea* (n.d.) is a good example of a painting completed in this manner. (Fig. 89, p. 401) The figures emerge only partially from an all-encompassing gloom. The information is obscured for the viewer, yet the imagery is compelling. One senses the tension, the fear, and the commitment to the task at hand.

Another compositional route that Nichols appears to have followed was seemingly the opposite – to provide almost too much information. In some works he chooses to fill his scenes with a great many figures so that, at first glance, it is quite difficult to interpret what is actually going on. This was deliberate. Overcrowding is an ever-present factor on board naval vessels and the artist was impressed that within this congestion and seeming confusion, sailors actually knew precisely what they were doing.<sup>51</sup> He took pains to depict this in a number of his RCNVR pictures. *Action on Board HMCS Iroquois* (1944) is a typical example. (Fig. 90, p. 402) The figures are plastered one against the other, all concentrating intensely on the multitude of tasks called for at the moment, the apparent chaos in reality nothing of the kind.

Judging by their existing compositions, most of the other naval artists would likely have treated crowded scenes entirely differently. They would have eliminated figures and the diversity of engagements in the interests of the clarity of the composition. This is traditional artistic practice. In the case of action subjects, they would have been likely to provide much more detail in regards to the type of gun

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

used, the crew's clothing, the position of the gun on deck, and the kind of ammunition used in the action, and to have provided more light. They were, in fact, working in the tradition of naval art that had prevailed for most of the preceding two centuries. Yet, it can be argued that it is Nichols's work, although lacking detail and clarity, which provides the more truthful experience of wartime life at sea. It is through artistic means of his own devising that the artist comes close to the essence of the experience, as opposed to simply describing the elements that comprise it.

In his search for the essential portrayal of war at sea Nichols also made use of the viewer's ability to reference other areas of knowledge as a route to understanding the human emotions associated with the naval experience. His primary tool was Christian iconography. In several compositions, as it was in a number of the First World War canvasses, it can be argued that the viewer's comprehension of the fear and agony of the protagonists is in part derived from their understanding of these emotions as manifested in the visual subject matter of the Christian faith. In *Taking Survivors on Board* (1945), previously titled by the artist *Rescue at Sea*, the scene recalls images of the Descent from the Cross with the wounded Christ figure spread-eagled mid-composition, the mourners, commiserators, and helpers around him. (Fig. 91, p. 403) As a result, the emotions of sorrow, fear, concern, and loss associated with the Christian theme are intensified in the wartime composition through association. It is perhaps, as well, this Christian emphasis that led to the works' near oblivion.

Unanswered questions remain to be explored, however, some relating specifically to issues surrounding the portrayal of masculinity in his work. By showing men crying in the face of death and dying, some of Nichols's work provides

an important alternative to the more traditional portrayals of Canada's Second World War servicemen that conform more closely to familiar masculine military stereotypes. This unconventional view of sailors and servicemen may be another reason for the relative obscurity of his work. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the artist felt that these rather abstract emotions needed to be recorded. That sailors feared death and drowning and that cold, misery, darkness, and claustrophobia are an integral part of shipboard life, is awesomely evoked. A range of human emotions not touched upon by more traditional artists is conveyed in these works of art through solely visual means. As such, the compositions provide an important bank of evidence as to the emotions experienced in the everyday life of Canadian sailors in wartime. In particular, unlike a majority of Canada's Second World War art, they address the issue of death as well as its surrounding emotions. In this connection, Nichols's compositions are invaluable tools in expanding our understanding of the naval serviceman's universe of experience.

The one exhibition of Nichols's work that was curated by the Canadian War Museum and toured in 1997–1998 did perhaps have some impact.<sup>52</sup> The media response to Nichols's exhibition recognized his somewhat bleak view of the world. "Jack Nichols' war art a grim study in humanity," is the *Ottawa Citizen's* headline.<sup>53</sup> The review did not, however, suggest that the work should be better known or more

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<sup>52</sup> *Memento Mori: The War Drawings of Jack Nichols* was exhibited at the CWM, the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery at Concordia University, Montreal, and the W. K. P. Kennedy Gallery, North Bay Arts Centre.

<sup>53</sup> Shannon Rupp, "Dark Memories," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 April 1998, H 1 and 3.

widely exhibited. *Drowning Sailor* also featured prominently in much of the media coverage for *Canvas of War* in Hull including *The Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*.<sup>54</sup> When *Canvas of War* was shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario from 12 October 2001 to 6 January 2002, it included eight recently completed small works on paper by Nichols. Other than demonstrating new and major institutional support for Nichols as an artist, these small paintings showed that the imagery of war had never left him. The subjects include sinking ships and terrified faces.

In conclusion, while many of the war artists' drawings and watercolours from the battlefield do, in some cases, record quite faithfully sights seen and experienced, the finished oil paintings on view in *Canvas of War* are of a different order. The sights and scenes of war have been transformed into something else. Aided by imagination, they are a synthesis not only of what has been viewed but also of emotions felt and observed. These latter elements are particularly intangible qualities that are less than amenable to visual documentation. Their very evanescence makes them difficult to capture in media such as photography and film and more than doubly so in paint or pencil. The particular moment is gone by the time the camera or hand is ready. Invariably, it is the artist's eye that sees and his/her mind's eye that remembers them for future use. But the process of remembering and revisiting is inevitably one of reconstruction and hence involves imagination.

Yes, the reworked painted image conveys a sense of time and of period. But like war films, war art does not function well within the conventions of historical

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54 All the media coverage is on file in CWM War Artist File, Jack Nichols and CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

practice, as expressed by such as Collingwood. While it can add a powerfully emotive dimension to our understanding of history, it can communicate most effectively in subjective and frequently imaginative generalities. To avoid misrepresentation, we must clearly acknowledge war art for the ingenious fiction it so often is. To be fair both to art and to history we need more thoughtful evaluative processes that accommodate both the evidential limitations of war art and the very real fact that its visual imagery can be a powerful instructor. If we do not, we risk making art the equivalent of history rather than something else entirely. The exactitude that the exhibition visitor claimed to have seen in *Canvas of War* should not rest unexplained. If this happens, we must acknowledge the subversive role of the artist in the making of history and, by association, memory. We must acknowledge that visual language is strong and that despite having "instructions," the artist can have the greater authority. But this is only possible if the artwork can be seen. Hidden from view, a painting or sculpture has no authority. To have authority of any kind, those with greater power have to select it. In such ways is memory controlled.

## Chapter 11

### Memory and the Military

If the authority of art can be controlled through selection, under whose auspices is this done? Generally, it involves different interest groups depending on the time period. Since the Second World War especially, the military has played an increasingly active role. In an age of mass communication control of the media (and this can be stretched to art) is a critical asset. Thus, in Canada, from the time of Beaverbrook in the First World War, official war art has always operated in some kind of relationship with the official media and propaganda elements of the era – both military and civilian. The documentation that has resulted from initiating and running the war art programs within these constraints has been immense. The very size and complexity of the paperwork, moreover, conclusively demonstrates the link of war art to state bureaucracy. That pertaining to the third war art program of the twentieth century – the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Programme [*sic*] (CAFCAP) has not been explored before and thus is the subject of this chapter.

Historically, recording and commemorating the past has always been a part of the Department of National Defence's (DND) mandate. These duties currently come under a section known as the Directorate of History and Heritage. The department has also been involved in commissioning war art since the Second World War. However, it has never controlled the process or the product of these programs, something that has proved historically problematic in an organization that depends on effective control mechanisms and operating systems to reach its goals. In studying the history



of DND's relationship to the war art programs it is possible to see this desire for control at work. Here, while rarely stated, what the art represents, who the artists are, and issues of quality are clearly secondary to issues of management. When it comes to remembering war and military history, where art is concerned, the military has traditionally wanted to control its use and production.

The relationship of the Canadian War Museum (CWM) and the Department of National Defence to the post-war art collection is centred on this battle for hegemony. Their continued conflict over control of the collections has repeatedly overwhelmed any alternative valuation of the paintings and works on paper as art. The reasons are several. In general, it has been because their views as to the purpose and use of war art have not always been parallel. The military has traditionally seen war art as another form of photography or journalism; in essence, another means of telling their story. The museums, on the other hand, have felt strongly about the issue of caring for the art as a record of history and ensuring standards of quality, regardless of the specifics of its subject matter. That being said, both have recently become acutely aware of the value the public can place on war art and have sought to harness this appeal to their own particular ends.

The interweaving of the interests of these two institutions – the military and the museological – comes into particularly sharp focus in a study of the history of the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Programme [*sic*] (CAFCAAP). From its inception in 1968, this program involved the co-operation of first the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) and then the CWM with DND in creating something that built on the legacy of the art programs of the two world wars. While CAFCAAP's subject

matter was not always derived from wars in which Canada had involvement, its imagery consistently derived from military situations in which war had been or was going to be a factor. As a program, CAFCAP was designed to enable civilian artists to spend time in Canadian bases and operational theatres gathering material for finished paintings that they would be expected to complete afterwards.

The military's early support for CAFCAP was based on a clearly articulated understanding that art was a medium that could form a useful adjunct to traditional means of recording their work and achievements. In this regard it could play a positive role in shaping public perception. Unfortunately, its demise in 1995 underlined an under-appreciated problem; namely, that for the military to move aggressively into a non-traditional field such as museology – especially in a period of budget cuts – was ill advised. Nonetheless, the loss of CAFCAP in its entirety came as a shock to those within DND who saw some value to the art program and a desire to see it revived remained a constant over the next six years.

This desire was perhaps exacerbated by the fact that DND played virtually no role in Veterans' Affairs Canada's successful 50th Anniversary celebrations in 1995 and the entombment of Canada's unknown soldier on 28 May 2000, or in the success of *Canvas of War* in 2000 and the announcement of public funding for a new War Museum that same year. Indeed, the department has been consistently absent from the remembrance industry in the past six years except, for example, as technical support when aircraft fly-pasts are required. Even its military history publications have been drowned in a veritable sea of books on Canadian military history from other publishers. Instead, over the past ten years, it has dealt with scandals such as the

Somalia debacle in 1993, budget cuts in 1994, and ongoing and difficult demands on its service personnel and its equipment for peacekeeping duties, domestic emergencies, and, very recently, war.

To some extent this onerous recent history explains why the department launched a new war art program on 6 June 2001. More likely, they were recognizing the impact of *Canvas of War* on public perceptions of military activity. According to the media release issued that day it was an issue of military heritage. “Canada has a long history of creating outstanding war art,” said Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) General Maurice Baril. “This new program will carry on that tradition,” he also remarked.<sup>1</sup> Yet its quasi-revival came suddenly, on the eve of Baril’s rumoured retirement and on a significant date. 6 June 2001 was the 57th anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings in France. The announcement of the creation of the Canadian Forces Artists’ Program (CFAP) thus engendered media interest. “Canada has had a long history of military heritage and I think it’s important that the various artistic medias [*sic*] keep recording it,” said Major André Levesque in an interview with the *Ottawa Citizen* published on 8 June 2001.<sup>2</sup> The intention of the new program, Levesque stated, was to provide opportunities for artists from all arts media to experience Canada’s military first-hand both at home and abroad. The artists – to include painters, poets, musicians, and playwrights – would have their travel and living expenses paid for by the military. Unlike the previous programs, however, there

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1 Canadian War Museum (CWM) Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

2 Karina Roman, “Armed Forces recruiting artists for front-line duty,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 June 2001, A 5.

would be no commissions, salaries, or other forms of payment for work produced and no clear mandate to make a collection – although DND was not averse to making acquisitions. Viewed largely as an educational program for artists, Major Levesque made it clear to the *Citizen* that there was no hidden agenda. “We’re not there to edit what they do. We can’t do that,” he said, “Whatever the story is, if it’s good, bad or indifferent, at least the individual will have learned about the kinds of things we do and experience.”

Why did DND revive its commitment to a cultural undertaking in the portrayal of its activities six years after the demise of CAFCAP? Was it only a public relations exercise designed to exploit the recently revived public appeal of war art in an effort to redeem the current less-than-stellar reputation of Canada’s military?<sup>3</sup> Was it possibly a genuine effort to use artistic expression as a means of educating the public about the department’s activities? Can it be argued that by running it themselves, albeit with a committee of advisers from the cultural community (the director of the NGC, for example), DND might finally have hoped to gain some useful control of the production of war art from its dominant custodian, the CWM? A legacy of resentment certainly existed towards the museum based on the fact that, unlike the United States, Canada’s war art was not a service collection at the unfettered disposal of the military. This lack of controlling interest lingered and rankled in some sectors of the department.

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<sup>3</sup> Baril, for example, visited *Canvas of War* on 17 March 2000. CWM Art Department Exhibition File, *Canvas of War*.

To understand DND's complicated commitment to the cultural expression of its activities we can begin with the period immediately following the end of the Second World War. The critical date is 1946, when the Canadian Cabinet decreed that the Second World War art collection should go to the custody of the National Gallery of Canada.<sup>4</sup> A record of its meeting of 17 September 1946 states:

The Cabinet, after discussion approved the recommendation submitted by the Chairman, War Artists Committee, and agreed, further, that the National Gallery, have general responsibility for the pictures of War Artists during the recent war and in the first great war, and that, in this connection, the Gallery should proceed to make an inventory of all such pictures, in order to secure effective control thereof, loans of any such pictures, henceforth to be in the sole discretion of the Gallery.<sup>5</sup>

Part of the reason that the war art went to the gallery is possibly attributable to the fact that DND, which had played a significant role in the implementation of the Canadian War Records (CWR) program, was not museologically oriented. By 1946, after only a few short years in their care, over 150 known works of art completed for the CWR Committee had vanished.<sup>6</sup> Less than a dozen have ever been found again

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4 E. P. Murphy, Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence to H. O. McCurry, Director, National Gallery of Canada, 26 September 1946, National Gallery of Canada Archives (NGCA), National Gallery of Canada (NGC) fonds, Canadian War Art, 5.41-C, Canadian War Artists Committee, Canadian War Records, file 4.

5 Memorandum, Office of the Deputy Minister of National Defence, 17 September 1946, *ibid.*

6 H. Halliday to C. Pulsifer, 19 February 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

and when they do turn up, they are often in poor shape.<sup>7</sup> DND's reputation as a custodian of art continued to suffer when a 1954 RCAF commission to the former official war artist Robert Hyndman to paint No. 1 Air Division in England resulted in the loss of thirty out of sixty-five works. The surviving paintings were given over to the custody of the National Gallery in October 1968.<sup>8</sup> A February 1992 internal CWM memorandum from former war art curator Hugh Halliday contrasts this sorry tale with the fact that after 1946, the gallery continued to loan out war art to the military for the next twenty years without appreciable loss, the paperwork being described as "meticulous."<sup>9</sup>

It seems likely that the combination of the NGC's good management skills, DND's continued interest in war art, and the presence of Wodehouse, a former military officer, as the gallery's curator of war art led to the formation of CAFCAP. It was the third war art program of the twentieth century. The 1968 media release announcing the formation of the scheme states that the project was seen as "an extension of the existing program for coverage of Forces activities by members of the press wherein transportation, accommodation and rations are provided to accredited correspondents through service facilities."<sup>10</sup> Not only did the media release describe

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7 A painting of Canadian Military Headquarters, London, by George Campbell Tinning was returned to CWM by staff of CFB Petawawa on 24 November 1997. It was badly faded. CWM conservation files (CWM 13844).

8 R. F. Wodehouse to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 1 February 1971, NGCA, NGC fonds, War Art (General), 5-9, vol. 4.

9 Halliday to Pulsifer, 19 February 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files.

10 Media Release, DND, Directorate of Information Services, n.d., *ibid.*

the objective of the program as intending “to augment and complement existing photographic coverage,” but also as making “available to the people of Canada a treasured and historic record.” Thus, from the beginning, the program was seen as being both of use to DND internally as a visual record of its activities and also as a series of artistic documents that the Canadian public would value.

Wodehouse initiated the idea for CAFCAP in 1964. The trail of events can be pieced together from former DND documentation, NGC files, and CWM records. Unfortunately, there are still gaps. The first piece of evidence dates from 6 May 1964, when Wodehouse submitted a draft letter to Colonel G. M. C. Sprung of the Army Historical Section for signature by Paul Hellyer, Minister of National Defence. The scheme outlined in this letter involved the utilization of recent graduates from Canada’s art schools to depict the Canadian military. The letter was to go to the directors (two of whom were former official war artists) of the twelve identified Canadian art schools.<sup>11</sup> The covering letter made it clear that Charles Comfort, the director of the National Gallery at the time and a former official war artist, was supportive of the concept of a continued recording of Canada’s military activity at home and abroad.<sup>12</sup> That the proposed program intended using trained artists was also notable.

The letter Wodehouse drafted for Hellyer’s signature is particularly interesting for the light it sheds on what was considered suitable subject matter for depiction in

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<sup>11</sup> Lawren P. Harris and Donald C. Mackay.

<sup>12</sup> Wodehouse to G. M. C. Sprung, 6 May 1964, NGCA, NGC fonds, War Art (General), 5–9, vol. 14.

1964. Well in advance of future prime minister Lester B. Pearson's Nobel Peace Prize, Canada's peacekeeping agenda was clear. "I am writing to solicit your assistance," Hellyer was to write to the art school directors, "in furthering a plan for using artists to paint scenes where Canadian soldiers have served or are serving with United Nations or other peace keeping forces during the last fifteen years." The letter also reflected an interest in traditional art and a belief in its value as document. As Hellyer's draft puts it:

I consider, however, that the expenditure of the time and money would only be worthwhile if the end product were of reasonable artistic merit. That is the works should be painted in a style combining the "personal viewpoint" of the individual artist together with a sufficiently realist approach which would also ensure that the end product will be of archival value. This, I am given to understand, drastically limits the choice of artists owing to the present interest displayed by younger men [*sic*] in the non-objective styles.<sup>13</sup>

Disappointingly, given the National Gallery's Second World War success in ensuring that women would paint the record of women in wartime, the artists sought were to be men only. On the positive side, the choice of artist was to be at the recommendation of the National Gallery.

No evidence exists of a signed version of this letter, which a DND internal memorandum to the then CDS, General J. V. Allard, dated 28 September 1967, may explain. The Secretary, Defence Staff, Commodore F. B. Caldwell authored this memorandum. It indicates that Allard "signed a submission to the previous CDS [Air Marshall F. R. Miller]. In it he proposed "the employment of a small number of

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Hellyer to Boggs, undated draft, *ibid*.



official artists to depict the Canadian Army in certain foreign theatres, and [sought] his approval to forward to the Associate Minister a proposed submission to the Treasury Board.”<sup>14</sup> Caldwell continued:

[T]he Deputy Minister suggested that the proposal be limited to the provision of accommodation and possibly airlift on service flights, with the result that your predecessor . . . did not approve the submission going forward to the Associate Minister and asked that the Deputy Minister’s suggestions be examined.

Caldwell proposed a new program, with the input of the Directorate of History and the Directorate of Information Services (DIS), in which only expenses would be paid for by DND. The balance of the program’s design, however, was as originally envisaged by Wodehouse.

The plan . . . is that the Minister write letters to the presidents or directors of the nine [*sic*] Canadian Art Colleges asking them to propose artists who would be willing to accept such an offer, with the selection of four or five artists to be made by the Director of the National Gallery. Two paintings from the resulting collection would be purchased by the National Gallery and lent to DND; the remainder would first be shown at the National Gallery and then possibly be put on tour to our bases in Canada. All but the two paintings would subsequently be returned to the artists.<sup>15</sup>

Notes on this memorandum indicate that the plan was approved.

On 18 October 1967, in a follow-up memorandum, Caldwell wrote to E. B. Armstrong, the Deputy Minister of Defence, stating that the new proposal was to “adopt the suggestion you [Armstrong] made by memorandum to the previous CDS

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14 F. B Caldwell to J. V. Allard, 28 September 1967, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files, 1251–8.1, History.

15 Ibid.

on 5 May 1964.”<sup>16</sup> It appeared that Armstrong’s no longer extant 1964 memorandum had clearly been less than enthusiastic about paying artists’ fees (the cost of two initial artists having been estimated at \$9, 000) and had recommended that this suggestion be dropped. Caldwell reiterated Wodehouse’s original proposal to go to the art colleges for artist suggestions and indicated that the next stage was to have Wodehouse check the wording of the letters to go to the art college directors, which Armstrong approved.

On 15 November 1968, Caldwell wrote to Wodehouse telling him that the project he had been instrumental in developing in 1964 had been revived.<sup>17</sup> Caldwell reiterated Wodehouse’s original plan in his letter:

I understand that the plan you had suggested was that our Minister write letters to the principals or directors of the art colleges, asking them to propose artists who might be willing to accept such an offer, with the selection of four or five artists to be made by the Director of the National Gallery and lent to DND under the usual arrangements. It has been suggested that the remaining paintings would first be displayed in the National Gallery and then might possibly be sent on a tour of bases in Canada before being returned to the artists.

The ambiguous phrase “usual arrangements” was to prove troublesome in later years.

Jean Sutherland Boggs, the then director of the gallery, responded to this latest proposal on 13 December 1967. In her letter she expressed pleasure that the scheme would go forward but indicated that the National Gallery would not be prepared to purchase works sight unseen. “I have reverted to the original plan,” she wrote,

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<sup>16</sup> Caldwell to E. B. Armstrong, 18 October 1967, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Caldwell to Wodehouse, 15 November 1967, *ibid.*

“whereby we were to be offered a choice of two works to be claimed for deposit.” The possibility of exhibition was also to hinge on “artistic quality.”<sup>18</sup>

It appears that Wodehouse was not confident of Boggs’s support. While it is difficult to be certain what precisely he meant, Wodehouse’s concerns seem apparent in a letter he wrote to the gallery’s chief curator, R. H. Hubbard, on 26 April 1968, when the program was all but completely designed. “Attached is a draft paper setting out the scope of terms of the programme [*sic*],” he wrote. “In view of Miss Boggs’s remarks at the last meeting in her office,” he continued, “I am not sure whether she might like to see it or not. Could I have it back fairly soon with any comments you may have so I can tell Colonel Bourgeois [L. A. Bourgeois, Director of Information Services at DND] that we are not unhappy with any part of it?”<sup>19</sup>

Obviously things went quite well as on 7 May 1968, Wodehouse wrote to Bourgeois stating that he had read the policy statement and the artist’s contract form for CAFCAP and wished to say “that I concur [*sic*] with this project for the National Gallery of Canada.”<sup>20</sup> The contract makes it clear what an artist’s duties would be, the terms of any contract, and what the artist would be expected to produce and in what format by way of artwork. The contract also makes DND’s intentions quite clear.

“[T]he Minister is desirous of obtaining suitable objective art portrayals of Canadian

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18 Boggs to Armstrong, 13 December 1967, CWM Art Department Archives, R. F. Wodehouse files, 57 C2, General, vol. 2.

19 Wodehouse to R. H. Hubbard, 26 April 1968, NGCA, NGC fonds, War Art (General). 5–9, vol. 11.

20 Wodehouse to L. A. Bourgeois, 7 May 1968, *ibid.*

Forces activities in peace time,” it states. “And particularly of such activities being carried out in Europe pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty.” Artists had to agree as well “not to visit a Communist or Communist-dominated country during the contract period.” Clause 16 suggests that only certain kinds of art would be acceptable before a contracted artist was considered to be in breach of his contract. Furthermore:

If, in the opinion of the Minister, the paintings supplied by the Artist for selection by the Minister pursuant to paragraph 4 are not deemed suitable, they will be referred to the Curator of War Art of the National Gallery of Canada and if the Curator is of the opinion that the standard or content of the works is not acceptable the Artist may be considered in default under this agreement and will reimburse to the Minister the cost of rations and quarters supplied to him at public expense under this agreement.

On 21 May 1968, Bourgeois submitted a memorandum to the Minister of National Defence through his Deputy Minister and the CDS seeking formal approval for CAFCAP.<sup>21</sup> The then Minister, Leo Cadieux, approved the document on 27 May 1968. The two formally expressed aims were to continue the legacy of the first two war art programs and to augment DND’s photographic record of its peacetime activities. This memorandum further explained the delay of four years in implementing the program.

In September 1964, a civilian artist program was drawn up by the Canadian Army. It envisaged payment to artists, but it was never implemented because of a misunderstanding on the part of the Army sponsors who were under the mistaken impression that the program had been rejected by a higher authority, when, in fact, the sponsor was merely being asked to consider an alternative plan.

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21 Bourgeois to Leo Cadieux, 21 May 1968, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files, 1251–8.1, History.

Some of the problems that were to mar relations between DND and the CWM in later years first appear in this document. In particular, the memorandum states that the selection of artwork would be “by the Department (DIS) in consultation with the Curator of War Collections, and selected works will be at the disposal of DIS for display, reproduction, loan to units, museums, art galleries, etc.” More specifically, it states: “The National Gallery will have the option of adding to their War Art Collections any or all of the works donated to DND.” The issues derived from the language, which declares that work donated to DND could enter the war art collections but does not make clear that there would be any change in ownership. At the same time, it indicates that the selected works would be at the disposal of DND. The responsibility for their care and upkeep would rest with the National Gallery.

In 1971, the war art collections were transferred to the CWM along with the few CAFCAP works that had been received, including six Cyprus sketches executed by the first artist hired, Richard Barrington Nevitt (b. 1937), which had entered the NGC’s collection in 1969.<sup>22</sup> A year later, Wodehouse passed away. This combination of events meant that the CWM not only inherited a scheme it had not developed but also that the memory of its development vanished into manila files. Nonetheless, for the next fifteen years the CWM continued to accept CAFCAP works into its war art collections. It catalogued and documented them as with any acquisitions.

The quality of the work in the CAFCAP collection is uneven. Less than a handful of the artists have achieved any widespread recognition in Canada. None of

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22 Copy of National Gallery Receipt, 8 August 1969, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

the work comes close to the quality of the First and Second World War programs. It has also consistently been selected to meet DND's image of itself. For example, the Somalia commission of Allan Harding MacKay in 1993 included a portrait of Colonel Serge Labbé who, during the 1994 Somalia Enquiry, was later accused of failing to ensure that all members of Canadian Joint Force Somalia, including, in particular, members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group, were trained, tested on, and understood the Rules of Engagement as issued by the CDS.<sup>23</sup> DND did not accept this portrait into the CAFCAP collection and it was subsequently offered to, and acquired by, the CWM.<sup>24</sup>

Despite its quality, the collection has a significant loans history, albeit almost all to DND offices and military bases.<sup>25</sup> Over the years, DND had formalized its internal red tape in relation to the collections through the institution of an internal policy and procedures document known as CFAO 99-11 (Canadian Forces Administrative Order) to ensure this. Its most contentious component for the CWM was the detailed loans procedures contained in CFAO 99-1. The earliest extant version of CFAO 99-1 is dated April 1977.<sup>26</sup> This document clearly states: "War

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23 On 2 July 1997, Art Eggleton, Minister of National Defence, released the Somalia Inquiry Report.

24 Allan Harding MacKay, *Portrait of Col. Labbé*, 1993, charcoal and chalk pastel on paper, 121 x 151 cm, CWM 19930100-005. Some of MacKay's other work from Somalia was included in a 2000 exhibition and catalogue *War Zones* (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2000), 41-43.

25 This information is included in Eric Fernberg, "The Canadian War Museum's Administration of the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artist Program [*sic*]," 20 July 1994, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

26 CFAO 99-11, April 1977, *ibid*.

artist paintings are the property of the Canadian War Museum.” Furthermore, it states in Annex B that, “all paintings are subject to recall by the Canadian War Museum at any time.”

Yet it seems that things were not so clear after all. On 21 September 1987, Halliday raised an alarm bell. “We have a problem,” he wrote in a memorandum to his supervisor R. K. Malott, “– we possibly do not own the CAFCAP paintings.”<sup>27</sup> He continued: “This situation was stirred recently by the transfer of responsibility of CAFCAP from DIS to DXD [Department of Exhibitions and Displays]. The latter department, inspired by a desire to get CAFCAP restarted (and some goading on our part about lack of communications from them about CAFCAP plans) has stated that CAFCAP paintings are the property of DND.” Halliday continued: “Existing records suggest DND has grounds to make their assertion . . . in September 1974 Captain D. A. Cosette wrote to Fred Azar [then the CWM war art custodian] with an outline of CAFCAP history and procedures. This stated in part that CAFCAP paintings selected by DND/CWM staff ‘become the property of the department and are added to the War Collections.’ There are approximately 90 CAFCAP paintings which are now the property of the department.” A memorandum of 26 November 1987 written by C. S. Scheidl of DND clarified the situation and recommended that “the ownership of all works and their copyrights be transferred to the Canadian War Museum.”<sup>28</sup> It states

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27 Halliday to R. K. Malott, 21 September 1987, *ibid.*

28 G. Hogan (?) from C S. Scheidl, 26 November 1987, *ibid.*

quite clearly that DND was not in the business of running the program. This memorandum was not, however, acted upon.

A dramatic shift of direction occurred shortly after. The origins of this shift date to 1990. At that time the then CWM curator of war art, Rikki Cameron, informed Major R. J. Butt of DXD that all the war art collections belonged to DND.<sup>29</sup> In a November 1990 memorandum Butt suggested that it might be worth DND formally offering to care for the collections. At the time, the Task Force on Military History Museum Collections in Canada had been receiving submissions and the future of the collections at the CWM was an issue.<sup>30</sup> Butt's concern was to avoid a proposed reorganization of the military museums resulting in the art collections leaving the CWM. As he wrote:

The Curator of War Art of the Canadian War Museum and a conservator presently care for this collection. The costs are absorbed by the Canadian War Museum. A current review of museums, however, could see this relationship change, and according to the Curator, the possibility exists that the collection could fall into other hands.

It is well known that the War Museum is not financially well off and part of their costs, of course, are directly associated to our collection. To ensure there is no takeover of this collection . . . it is suggested that DND pay for the care and maintenance of the collection. After all, it is ours . . . An annual contract in the amount of \$135, 000 with CWM would fund the cost of care, maintenance and curatorship by ensuring the continuing employment of the curator and conservator.<sup>31</sup>

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29 R. J. Butt to G. Haswell, 22 October 1990, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files, 1251-8.1, History.

30 It delivered its report on 20 January 1991 with the recommendation that the CWM become a separate national museum. *Task Force on Military History Museum Collections in Canada* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1991), 33.

31 Butt to Haswell, 22 November 1990, *ibid.*



The consequence of this memorandum and the concerns in the air around it was a DND audit of the CAFCAP collection in January 1991, the first since 1983.<sup>32</sup> In short order, a framer, photographer, and conservator were assigned to the collection and worked at the CWM.<sup>33</sup> Their task was to accurately document what DND believed to be theirs. It became abundantly clear to the staff of DXD that the CWM had acquired CAFCAP paintings over the past two decades in the belief that they had come under CWM ownership. Major W. J. Chipchase, whom Butt had appointed to manage CAFCAP, saw the situation as potentially troublesome and swung into action. "I plan to remedy this situation. We will keep you apprised of developments," he noted in a memorandum to Butt.<sup>34</sup> (Chipchase appears to have worked with CAFCAP before. His signature is to be found on a CAFCAP document relating to the selection of works of art by the artist Graham Wragg (b. 1943) dating to 1975.)<sup>35</sup>

In an attempt to understand what was happening with respect to CAFCAP, CWM historian Bernard Pothier prepared a document on the history of all the war art collections in August 1991. His summary concluded that DND did own the CAFCAP

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32 Memorandum, 9 January 1991, *ibid.*

33 Halliday to Pulsifer, 19 February 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

34 Minute Sheet, 22 February 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files, 1251-8.1, History.

35 CAFCAP Artist – Graham Wragg, 1975, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

collection.<sup>36</sup> This made it difficult for the CWM to take any kind of opposing position in regards to Chipchase's plans, which were unfolding rapidly. Chipchase initiated changes in traditional procedures that followed fast and furious. In a letter of 12 November 1991, for example, the CWM questioned their new exclusion from the CAFCAP acquisition process when a number of paintings of dubious merit arrived at their premises for cataloguing and storage. "These works were not painted under the CAFCAP program, the operating procedure of which has been built around mutual consultation between DND on the one hand, the National Gallery (later the Canadian War Museum) on the other," the CWM director Victor Suthren complained. "To be very frank – many of the works are bad art," he continued.<sup>37</sup>

Seemingly indifferent to museological standards, Chipchase continued his reformative mission in a series of pre-emptive strikes that further caught the CWM off-guard. He began by requesting the abrupt removal of three CAFCAP paintings from a CWM exhibition *Peace is the Dream* (1991-1992).<sup>38</sup> Karen Graham, then the CWM Chief, Collections Management and Conservation Services, wrote to Chipchase plaintively on 10 January 1992. She stated: "I have attached for your information the loan form which Major Butt signed in which DXD agreed to loan the paintings to the Canadian War Museum for a specified period of time. We have respected your wishes to remove them from the exhibition before they were due to be

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36 Bernard Pothier, "The War Art Collection of the Canadian War Museum: an inquiry into its origins and ownership," 30 August 1991, *ibid*.

37 V. Suthren to W. J. Chipchase, 12 November 1991, *ibid*.

returned to you. Please note, however, that it is very unusual to return a painting before a loan agreement has expired.”<sup>39</sup>

By January 1992, their research into the origins of CAFCAP had prompted DND to produce an entirely different draft of the loans policy document CFAO 99–1. Now, ownership of artwork was assigned to the Department of National Defence, with the collections merely being “in the custody of the Canadian War Museum.”<sup>40</sup> As for recall, the new CFAO 99–1 states clearly: “Original works of art borrowed from the CAFCAP collection may be recalled by NDHQ [National Defence Headquarters] at any time if required by the Minister.” With the goal of complete control of CAFCAP now in sight Chipchase became more aggressive. He paid only grudging lip service to the historical concept of ongoing cooperation between DND and the CWM over CAFCAP. It was an “old boy” arrangement, he wrote on 25 February 1992 to Suthren, “that requires updating and clarification.”

On 4 May 1992, Chipchase produced a memorandum that outlined his latest action plan.<sup>41</sup> In developing the plan he had been assisted by Jane Douglas, the paintings conservator hired to work on the collection in 1991, who now, in her capacity as CAFCAP coordinator, catalogued and looked after the storage and loan of the CAFCAP works that had not been deposited with the CWM. The memorandum

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38 *Peace is the Dream* was exhibited at the CWM from 10 May 1991–30 March 1992.

39 K. W. Graham to Chipchase, 10 January 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

40 Ibid.

includes a redrafted program procedure, CFAO 99-11, which describes the revamped scheme and the new CAFCAP collection and has as attachments a number of other related redrafted documents. Chipchase noted that, "subject to having an adequately staffed environmental storage system installed at our location, we are moving towards the path of withdrawing the CAFCAP collection from the CWM and maintaining the collection ourselves." Pertinently he noted further, "In short, we either turn over the collection to the CWM (we therefore lose control or we take control)." The revised loans policy document, CFAO 99-11, makes his intent to take control abundantly clear. There is no mention of the CWM as having any role to play. It states:

CAFCAP art may refer to those collections in the custody of the Canadian War Museum (CWM) which were generated through the CAFCAP program and subsequently remain the property of the Department of National Defence and to those collections not in the custody of the CWM which are also owned by DND.

This draft retains the clause giving the immediate right of recall and termination of a loan to DND. It also includes procedures to be followed in borrowing non-CAFCAP war art from the CWM, which includes the official First and Second World War art. Furthermore, it spells out that all DND communication with the CWM in regards to loans had to go through Chipchase's department, DXD. This emerged as a new contentious issue in that it made the assumption that the CWM would also abide by DND internal instructions. The CWM was ultimately not prepared to do so in regards to its own collections, nor was it agreeable to acting as an

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41 Memorandum from Chipchase, 4 May 1992, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP files, 1251-8, History.

enforcement agent for DND internal policies and procedures when loan inquiries came in.<sup>42</sup>

The ensuing controversy reached new heights when Chipchase planned a travelling 25th Anniversary CAFCAP exhibition for 1993 and requested a long list of paintings from the CWM. In a memorandum of 25 September 1992, Graham wrote to Suthren: "I don't advise actioning this, in any case, due to the uncertain future of the collection. I believe that details of responsibility for the collection should be worked out prior to any further obligation by the CWM staff."<sup>43</sup> Suthren concurred in a note on the bottom of the memorandum. Chipchase, meanwhile, had received the confirmation he needed regarding the ownership of CAFCAP. A member of the Judge Advocate General's staff at DND, Captain K. A. Lindstein, had concluded in a DND internal memorandum of 26 October 1992 that DND owned CAFCAP.<sup>44</sup>

On 13 October 1992, the author joined the CWM as its curator of war art and was asked to draft a letter for Suthren's signature regarding the 25th Anniversary of CAFCAP loan request. The loan was turned down but three options for resolving the management situation were proposed: that DND take over the CAFCAP collection, that they transfer it to the CWM, or that they pay for staff to manage it.<sup>45</sup> On 4 February 1993, Chipchase wrote to Suthren: "this matter is now before senior DND

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42 L. Brandon to Graham, 5 January 1994, CWM Art Department Archives, CAFCAP.

43 Graham to Suthren, 25 September 1992, *ibid.*

44 Memorandum from K. A. Lindstein, 26 October 1992, *ibid.*

45 Suthren to Chipchase, 30 October 1992, *ibid.*

management.”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, he moved on softening the internal documentation – perhaps under advisement from his superiors that his aggressive approach was inappropriate. The CFAO 99–1 version of 28 June 1993, for example, retains the description of the CWM as custodian of the collection. Furthermore, the ownership of the collection by DND does not apparently include storage in this version. A phone call from Jane Douglas to the author also prompted a memorandum in which consideration was given as to how the CWM might administer CAFCAP with a budget provided by DND.<sup>47</sup>

That this was not the direction of Chipchase’s choosing is perhaps confirmed by the fact that in October 1993 he made a request to the CWM to allow him access to the 214 works of art now in its custody for the purposes of updating cataloguing and completing condition reports.<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence of a reply, but a CWM memorandum of 5 January 1994 suggests that Chipchase’s proposal was not considered feasible at this time and recommends returning the paintings to DND in the absence of a resolution as to ownership.<sup>49</sup> A meeting was held on 13 January 1994 to discuss the issue and in a follow-up letter to Chipchase, Cameron Pulsifer, the CWM’s Chief of Research, put the case for CWM ownership of the collection.<sup>50</sup>

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46 Chipchase to Suthren, 4 February 1993, *ibid.*

47 Brandon to Graham, 7 June 1993, *ibid.*

48 Chipchase to Suthren, 21 October 1993, *ibid.*

49 Brandon to Graham, 5 January 1994, *ibid.*

50 Pulsifer to Chipchase, 3 February 1994, *ibid.*

At our meeting of January 13th we attempted to make clear our own conviction, based upon a careful re-reading of the available documentation, that . . . the evidence indicates that the CAFCAP collection is the property of the Canadian War Museum . . . [W]e are convinced that a proper legal interpretation of the available documentation would indicate that the CAFCAP works selected by the Curator of War Art for inclusion in the War Art Collections of the CWM are well and truly the property of the Canadian War Museum.

This letter put the issue of ownership onto a higher plain. In his reply of 24 February, Chipchase indicated that DND was now seeking legal counsel to resolve the matter of ownership.<sup>51</sup> On 3 June 1994, Lieutenant-Colonel P. J. McCaffrey of the Judge Advocate General's office at DND concluded in a letter that the Crown owned the artwork rather than individual ministries and that the collection was DND's to administer.<sup>52</sup> A CWM memorandum from Graham concerning this letter states that regardless of ownership the issue of administration still remained unresolved.<sup>53</sup> At this time, the CWM determined to seek legal counsel as well.<sup>54</sup> Chipchase, emboldened by his department's legal opinion, made himself very clear regarding the revisions to CFAO 99-1. In a letter of 5 July 1994 to Pulsifer he included what could be deemed an inflammatory statement when he commented: "The decision to revise the 1977 document is reflective of the increasingly pro-active and possessive

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51 Chipchase to Pulsifer, 24 February 1994, *ibid.*

52 P. J. McCaffrey to Suthren, 3 June 1994, *ibid.*

53 Brandon, undated notes, *ibid.*

54 Graham to Brandon, 13 June 1994, *ibid.*

intentions of DXD as are the revisions it put in. I need hardly remind you that staff of DXD have stated that the War Art Collections by right are owned by DND.”<sup>55</sup>

The CWM legal review, on the other hand, indicated that the legal status of the CAFCAP collection was far from cut-and-dried.<sup>56</sup> In a CWM memorandum of 20 September 1994, tendered with the advice and agreement of the CWM lawyer, the author recommended that Suthren write the appropriate high-level DND staff person outlining the weaknesses in DND’s claim and requesting resolution.<sup>57</sup> On 31 October 1994, Suthren wrote to Robert Fowler, the Deputy Minister at DND, requesting that his department transfer CAFCAP to the CWM.<sup>58</sup> Assistant Deputy Minister Kenneth J. Calder replied on 28 December 1994:

I have asked the Director General Public Affairs to give some priority to reviewing options for the future of the Programme [*sic*] including your recommendation for the administration, control and long term disposition of this extensive art collection.<sup>59</sup>

Calder made it clear that planned budget and personnel cuts at DND were to be part of the equation. On 15 March 1995, CAFCAP was cut. According to a Canadian Press article by Glen Colbourn, “Captain Jane McDonald [the then

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55 Chipchase to Pulsifer 5 July 1994, *ibid*.

56 M. Jolicoeur to D. Loye and C. Paradis, Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, CWM’s parent organization, 6 December 1996. Attached were a series of 1994 memoranda to file dating from October 1994 to March 1995 that summarized Jolicoeur’s legal deliberations, *ibid*.

57 Brandon to Pulsifer, 20 September 1994, *ibid*.

58 Suthren to R. Fowler, 31 October 1994, *ibid*.

59 K. Calder to Suthren 28 December 1994, *ibid*.



coordinator of CAFCAP] recently recommended that the collection of paintings be turned over to the Canadian War Museum unless \$200, 000 a year is found to continue commissioning and maintaining military art.”<sup>60</sup> She continued: “When you look at people struggling on peacekeeping missions because they don’t have the proper equipment . . . there’s no doubt about what you do with art programs.”

On 11 July 1995, McDonald informed the author that the transfer would be completed by 1 September. “However, because of the claim of the Archives on the collection, due legal process has to be followed.”<sup>61</sup> The claim of the National Archives of Canada (NAC) on the CAFCAP collection had surfaced shortly after the announcement was made in March that CAFCAP had been cancelled. Graham had solicited legal opinion that concluded that the NAC had no claim on the works of art already in CWM custody and that NAC’s claim to the balance of the artwork was shaky.<sup>62</sup> DND reached the same conclusion and the works and related files were delivered to the CWM on 5 March 1996.<sup>63</sup> A final letter of transfer was not received until January 2002.<sup>64</sup>

The reason why was made clear in a 28 February 1997 letter from Larry Gordon, Chief, Public Affairs at DND, to Suthren. Gordon stated:

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60 Canadian Press transcript, 15 March 1995, *ibid.*

61 Brandon to D. Glenney, 11 July 1995, *ibid.*

62 Jolicoeur to Graham, 25 May 1995, *ibid.*

63 Email from E. Van Lingen, 4 February 1996 and Glenney to M. Mietzner, 2 April 1996, *ibid.*

64 L. Brazeau to J. Geurts, 18 January 2002, *ibid.*

We have now reached the stage where I am in a position to officially offer the Collection to the CWM by means of an interdepartmental transfer. The sole condition that we wish to discuss is a provision giving DND priority access to the CAFCAP Collection.<sup>65</sup>

On 11 April, Daniel Glenney, the CWM's then Assistant Director, Vimy House replied: "We would certainly agree to giving DND priority access to the limit our resources will allow."<sup>66</sup> Bob Quinn, Director, Internal Communications, Research and Support Services at DND, requested clarification of Glenney's answer regarding "priority access" in a letter dated 15 May 1997.<sup>67</sup> Glenney replied on 20 May 1997 stating that, resources permitting, the CWM "would do everything in our power to honour this agreement."<sup>68</sup> Despite several phone calls no response was forthcoming.<sup>69</sup> On 23 April 1998, Glenney informed the new director of the CWM, J. L. Granatstein, of the unresolved situation.<sup>70</sup> On 9 July 1998, Granatstein reported that Quinn had "signed off on CAFCAP and will re-submit his letter to us."<sup>71</sup> Quinn did indeed write on 15 July 1998, but maintained that he had never received Glenney's letter expanding on the issue of the meaning of "priority access" and that this was "all we

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65 L. Gordon to Suthren, 28 February 1997, *ibid.*

66 Glenney to Gordon, 11 April 1997, *ibid.*

67 R. Quinn to Glenney, 15 May 1997, *ibid.*

68 Glenney to Mietzner, 20 May 1997, *ibid.*

69 Brandon to Glenney, 6 December 1997, *ibid.*

70 Glenney to J. L. Granatstein, 23 April 1998, *ibid.*

71 Granatstein to Brandon, 9 July 1998, *ibid.*

require in order to complete the formal transfer of the CAFCAP collection.”<sup>72</sup>

Granatstein’s response to this letter echoes Glenney’s. “DND,” he wrote, “will continue to have priority access subject only to the CWM’s ability to make specific pieces available at specific times and subject to budgetary and conservation requirements.”<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, Quinn had also told Granatstein that he wished to revive the CAFCAP program. In an 11 September 1998 memorandum to Granatstein, this author informed him that “any new programme [*sic*] would have to restore the criteria of artistic excellence.”<sup>74</sup> At some point in May 2001, Geurts was informed that a new

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72 Quinn to Granatstein, 15 July 1998, *ibid.*

73 Granatstein to Quinn, 27 July 1998, *ibid.* Subsequent correspondence documents a trail of further bureaucracy. The transfer had to go through the Director of Disposals, Sales, Artifacts, and Loans (DSAL) at DND. Furthermore, the associated request for the transfer of the related files required the concurrence of the Legal Branch. This was unusually unproblematic and the files were transferred in January 1999. Things did not go as smoothly with the transfer process for the art. Linda Brazeau, Director of DSAL, had drawn up a draft transfer agreement that contained a number of clauses that were unacceptable to the CWM, that even when amended, were unusually controlling. One states:

CWM shall lend out art from the CAFCAP collection to DND upon request, in priority to any existing loan or subsequent request from another party . . . should the requested art be currently on loan or exhibit, DND shall not exercise the right of priority for one month.

On 3 August 2000, the author emailed Roger Sarty, then the CWM Director of Exhibits and Research, recommending that DND be told “that enough is enough and that if we cannot arrange a transfer without conditions we are not prepared to accept the collection and will send it back.” The new CWM director, Joe Geurts, agreed and requested a meeting be set up by Glenney to resolve the situation. On 25 January 2002, after several discussions, the CWM received a letter from DND that officially transferred the CAFCAP collection to the CWM.

74 Brandon to Granatstein, 11 September 1998, *ibid.*

CAFCAP program was in the offing at the instigation of the CDS General Maurice Baril. The issue of the unresolved transfer was raised and Levesque informed Geurts by email on 25 May 2001 that he would “definitely [*sic*] be briefing Dr. Bernier [Director, History and Heritage, DND] on properly closing the book on the former artists program.”<sup>75</sup> The CWM was given the means to shape the announcement of the new program that was announced on 6 June 2001, to make it more of an opportunity for artists than a revival of previous programs. How it actually will work out remains to be revealed. Whether the CWM will have any serious involvement is unknown. All that is known is that administrative power games apart, there clearly remains a fundamental belief both on the part of the CWM and DND that art programs should be part of how military life and experience are recorded. Who controls the creation and dissemination of the results is not so cut and dried.

The memory of military experience, no less than that of war, is a contested one from its inception in the bureaucratic corridors of power. On an ongoing basis, the nature of government ownership, whether of a facilitating or controlling nature, is internally complex. Nonetheless, as it was for Beaverbrook and Allward in their dealings with government and, for the military no less, the state is a significant factor in forming a nation’s memory.

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75 A. Levesque to Geurts, 25 May 2001, *ibid.*

## Conclusion

Canada's official war art played a role in the making of memory, meaning, and identity throughout the twentieth century. At times its light shone quite brightly. At other times it was considerably dimmed. Such changes in its visibility have been a function of the nature of social memory in determining how the past will be remembered. The literature on the subject of memory is unified in suggesting that memory's creation involves diverse forces that interact together in various ways and at different times. Where different writers place their emphasis may differ and the roles and meanings they assign to sites of memory both human and inert may vary. Nonetheless, all recognize memory as a complex and continually changing phenomenon.

How memory is formulated and reformulated over time is apparent in a study of the history of Canada's official war art. The public, veterans, government, artists, curators, the media, museums and galleries, and the military all have had a role to play. At times, one or other voice has been strong and dominant and at other times, weak and unheard. Furthermore, outside circumstances and events have affected their interrelationship with the result that there has been a constant flux of voices.

The one common factor in this activity has been the state. Indirectly, the state brought the war art collections into existence through Beaverbrook's Canadian War Memorials Fund. More directly, the state took responsibility for the art commissioned by the Fund when it accepted Beaverbrook's gift of the collection in 1920. In 1946,

the state accepted responsibility for the Second World War art collection and in 1968 it initiated the post-war art collection. Thus, Canada's official war art has always been a government collection. Its curators and its artists have always been employees of the state. Through its agencies, policies, programming, and institutions the Government of Canada remains to this day the most influential and powerful facilitator in the future of the war art collections. The manner in which it has used its position has been complex and has encompassed the influence of many outside forces, which have acted both with it and against it in formulating constantly changing but still, ultimately, legitimized views of the art.

Nationalism is a critical factor. As Michael Kammen notes in "Public History and the Uses of Memory," "Nationalism and, to a lesser degree, the nation state *continue* to shape collective memory."<sup>1</sup> However, nationalism can be viewed as politics by another name. In *War Memorials as Political Landscape* (1988), a study of American war memorials, historian James M. Mayo draws attention to the political agenda inherent in war memorials. War art is no less sensitive to his arguments. Mayo concludes that: "to understand how war memorials create and symbolize meaning in American life, they must be seen politically."<sup>2</sup> According to Mayo, wars are political acts and therefore their history is "inextricably linked to how they are remembered."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Michael Kammen, "Public History and the Uses of Memory," *The Public Historian*, vol. 19, no. 2 (spring 1997), 51.

2 James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 268.

3 *Ibid.*, 269.

For him, “war memorials are political memory.”<sup>4</sup> In this context, to see war memorials and the meanings they bear only as expressions of a sacred heritage is naïve. War memorials, no less than war art collections and exhibitions that function as memorials are, as Mayo suggests, examples of how “political history symbolizes and morally justifies the [national] landscape, rightly or wrongly.”<sup>5</sup>

The Canadian government’s attitude towards the encouragement of a national culture has been an ambiguous one. The Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (1992), for example, issued a series of recommendations clearly stating that the arts should be autonomous. Expressions such as “Freedom from ministerial and central government agency,” “exercise of impartial, critical judgment,” and “exempt from political direction” are to be found in Chapter Two entitled “Government and Culture.”<sup>6</sup> That little has resulted from these recommendations in the past twenty years makes it clear that substantial heritage initiatives are unlikely to occur without active government sanction.

This study has also argued that the substance of Canada’s war art is little known. Thus reactions to the war art are predicated on a selected vision of it, a

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 The Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (FCPRC) was created in August 1980 by Francis Fox, Secretary of State and Minister of Communications, to review Canadian cultural institutions and cultural policy. This was the first such commission since the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences of 1949–1951. The FCPRC grew from an Advisory Commission on Cultural Policy which had been established in November 1979 by David MacDonald. The committee held public hearings and developed its own recommendations. Its archive is at Trent University.

situation that is, needless to say, fundamentally limiting. Improving knowledge requires acts of recovery and remembering. These developments, when they occur, have been, to all intents and purposes, legitimized by the state. It is as a public institution that the Canadian War Museum puts the war art collections on its web site, organizes touring war art exhibits nationally and internationally, and provides a budget for the upkeep and research of the collections. The forgotten and unknown collection is as much reliant on the support of the state as the collection that is known and remembered.

Once in the public domain, however, the number of factors affecting how this recovered war art is seen increases exponentially through reaction. What has been recovered takes on new meanings. The metamorphosis of the Vimy plaster sculptures from detritus into works of art and bearers of the memory of the Canadian twentieth-century experience of war is a prime example of this. Nonetheless, not only curators and the public but also artists themselves inscribe such new meanings when their work is seen. In a public forum, works of art have a power that can often override former official and public interpretations. Paintings such as Nichols's *Drowning Sailor* can focus attention on the grimmer aspects of war that government agencies historically prefer to downplay.<sup>7</sup> Yet, even this is subject to change. The couching of death as equivalent to Christ's sacrifice in Crucifixion scenes can be a powerful message of understanding in one era and an unsung relic of that particular past in another. The public is no less changeable in its response to war art than government

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<sup>7</sup> Until recently, the Canadian War Museum had an unwritten policy that images of the dead should not be exhibited.



bodies. Nor, in this changing dynamic, is the agency of the art itself fixed either. Consequently, no study of social memory can determine the limitations of agency, the mechanisms of control, or the power of language that determines the changing authoritative viewpoint collectively accepted as memory.

Nonetheless, in the face of the extraordinary revival of interest in Canada's role in the two world wars that followed on the 50th Anniversary events of its conclusion in 1995, it has been clear that there is a great need in Canada in general to be able to remember war. Personal memories indeed survive, as Vance (1997) has so ably documented and as the crowds of veterans that attend memorial services still attest. Their memories at this moment in time are strong enough to create the current environment in which the war art collections can be re-evaluated in exhibitions such as *Canvas of War*. However, it is also clear from some of the veterans-led actions that there is little consensus as to whose war will be remembered and how. The memory of war, while personally meaningful for many as the comment books from *Canvas of War* reveal, is on the larger scale divisive. Such divisiveness undoubtedly contributed to the failure to build a war memorial art gallery in 1919. Significantly acknowledging the influence of war in the art of its time was another consequence of division. The other "forgettings" associated with the years following the First World War reflect the ongoing difficulties inherent in forming an enduring collective memory of major conflicts that can accommodate only so many disparate recollections.

"Collected memory," a term used by Young in *The Texture of Memory* (1993), is perhaps the better term to explain the significance of "site" for so many veterans. While traditional memorials have been critically important in this role historically, in

an age enamoured of war films, documentaries, and computer games a more complex visual imagery may be required. *Canvas of War* provides a new site of memory that is visual. It accommodates the national story in its presentation, meets patriotic requirements as a public collection, and allows individual memories to be made, shared, and, indeed, collected. It also allows the art and artists to tell their own story without being overwhelmed by institutional authority.

In his essay for the book that accompanied the 1919 exhibition of the Canadian War Memorials paintings, P. G. Konody began with a quotation from the noted British nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin that stated that although its history was important, its art was the only trustworthy autobiographer of a nation.<sup>8</sup> The deconstruction of Ruskin's somewhat hyperbolic conclusion has, in many respects, been what this study has been about. It has sought to foreground the war art collections sometimes hidden presence in the nation's memory of war and show that both by their presence and absence the official war art collections played, and will continue to play, a significant role in how we remember as a nation.

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<sup>8</sup> P. G. Konody, "On War Memorials," in *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials* (London: Colour Ltd., c. 1919), 5. Ruskin's views on art and war are explored in Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalization of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Ruskin believed that "no great art ever yet rose on earth, but among a nation of soldiers." (69)

## **Appendix A**

### **National Archives of Canada**

#### **GOVERNMENT RECORDS SOURCES ON WAR ART AND ARTISTS – SECOND WORLD WAR**

##### **Canadian Military Headquarters, London (CMHQ) RG 24 Series C-2**

War Artists – Policy, Artists	(RG 24, vol. 12,184, file 1/Artists/1)
Historical, 1941–1945	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/1, pts.1–2)
War Office Artists Employed with Canadian Troops, 1941–1944	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/2)
Applications for Employment as War Artists, 1940–1945	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/3)
Pictures by War Artists – Despatch to Canada, 1942–1946	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/4)
Photos of Pictures by Canadian Artists, 1942–1945	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/5, pts.1–3)
War Artists Paintings for Theatres, 1943–1946	(RG 24, vol. 12746, file 24/Artists/6)
Portraits by Canadian War Artists, c. 1942–1946	(RG 24, vol. 12756, file 24/Portraits/1)
Exhibitions – Canadian War Artists, c. 1942–1945	(RG 24, vol. 12751, file 24/Exhibition/1)

##### **1903 Army Central Registry, RG 24 Series C-1-a**

Employment of Artists,	(RG 24, vol. 2173, file 52-27-45-10)
Artists – Offers of Service,	(RG 24, vol. 2174, file 52-27-45-10-1)
Reports of Artists,	(RG 24, vol. 2174, file 52-27-45-10-3)
Publicity – War Art, 1945–46	(RG 24, vol. 173, file 650-92-95)
Publicity – Canadian Army Art Exhibition, 1946	(RG 24, vol. 173, file 650-92-94)

- Despatch of War Artists to Active Military Zones, 1943–1944 (RG 24, reel C5355, file HQS 9082)
- Paintings by War Artists, 1941–1948 (RG 24, reel C8430, file HQS 9082–1)
- Coloured Reproductions of Paintings, 1944–1945 (RG 24, reel C–8430, file HQS 9082–2)
- Photos of War Artists' Paintings, 1943–1949 (RG 24, reel C8430, file HQS 9082–3)

**1950 Army Central Registry, RG 24 Series C–1–c**

- War Art – Paintings and Pictures, 1947–1966 (RG 24, acc. 83–84/167, boxes 4666–4667, file 1975–1, pts.10–19)
- War Artists, 1963–1964 (RG 24, acc. 83–84/167, box 4667, file 1975–2)
- Appointment of Official Artists in UK (RG 24 vol. 5585, file 1–1–59)
- Production of War Pictures by Canadian War Artists, 1942–1944 (RG 24, vol. 5590, file 10–31–11)

**Army Historical Section, Historical Officers' Reports, RG 24 Series C–6–o**

- Representation of the War in Art, 1941 (Historical Report 26) (RG 24, vol. 6917)
- War Artists Program, Canadian Army Overseas, 1942 (Historical Report 64) (RG 24, vol. 6918)
- Further Material on Work of War Artists, 1942 (Historical Report 82) (RG 24, vol. 6918)
- Progress of the War Art Program, 1943 (Historical Report 99) (RG 24, vol. 6918)
- War Artists' Activities – Mediterranean Area, 1944 (Historical Report 114) (RG 24, vol. 6918)

**Directorate of History, Kardex Series, RG 24 Series G-3-1-a**

- List of War Artists Employed by the Three Services 1939-1945 (RG 24, vol. 20,270, file 905.065 (D1))
- Outline of Army War Art Programme [*sic*] 1939-1945 (with highlights of artists' careers) (RG 24, vol. 20,270, file 905.0013 (D1))
- Poster - Canadian War Art Display, Amsterdam, 12-26 July 1945 (RG 24, vol. 20,298, file 937 (D2))
- "War Art" by Andrew Bell, from *Studio*, vol. 29, no. 625, April 1945 (RG 24, vol. 20,298, file 937 (D3))
- Catalogue of Exhibitions of Paintings at Amsterdam, 12-26 July 1945 and Brussels, 18 November to 3 December 1944 and Ottawa, 1945 (RG 24, vol. 20,298, file 937 (D4))
- List of Paintings by War Artists (RG 24, vol. 20,298, file 937.005 (D1))
- Canadian War Artists - List of negative nos. (RG 24, vol. 20,298, file 937.005 (D2))
- War Artists - Weekly progress reports, 1943-1945 (RG 24, vol. 20,299, file 937.013 (D1))

**Canadian Naval Liaison Records, RG 24 Series D-13**

- Canadian War Artists, 1943 (RG 24, vol. 11749, file CS 617)
- Artists (Public Relations file) (RG 24, vol. 11753, f. Artists)

**Records of Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast, RG 24 Series D-10-1**

- Alex Colville's request to board corvette for sketching purposes, 1942. (RG 24, vol. 11044, file 21-3-2)

**Records of Commanding Officer Pacific Command, RG 24 Series D-11-1**

- Historical Matters, 1942-1947 (RG 24, vol. 11,809, file 1440-1)

**Records of First Naval Service Central Registry, RG 24 Series D-1-a**

- Appointment of Official Artists in UK (RG 24 vol. 5585, file 1-1-59)

Production of War Pictures by Canadian War Artists, 1942–1944 (RG 24, vol. 5590, file 10–31–11)

**Records of Third Naval Service Central Registry, RG 24 Series D–1–c**

Art – General, 1944–1964 (RG 24, acc. 83–84/167, box 597, file 1782–1, pts.1–2)

War Paintings by Canadian War Artists, 1944–1966 (RG 24, acc. 83–84/167, boxes 597–598, file 1782–2, pts.1–10)

**Records of RCAF Third File Classification System, RG 24 Series E–1–c**

War Art – Policy, 1943–1965 (RG 24, vol. 17675, file 047–1)

War Art – Works by RCAF War Artists Overseas, 1944–1953 (RG 24, vol. 17675, file 047–3)

War Art – Pictures and Prints on Loan or Charge, 1944–1966 (RG 24, vols. 17675–17676, file 047–4)

Exhibitions of Paintings and Drawings. 1943–1963 (RG 24, vol. 17676, file 047–5)

**Privy Council Office Central Registry, RG 2 Series B–2**

War Artists, 1942–1943 (RG 2, vol. 12, file)

War Artists, 1942–1947 (RG 2, vol. 120, file)

**1940 Department of External Affairs Central Registry, RG 25**

Canadian Artists to Record Activities of the Canadian Armed Forces, 1939–1945 (RG 25, vol. 2653, file 4395–40)

**Appendix B**

Instructions for War Artists issued to Flying Officer C. F. Schaefer, 25 September 1943 (unedited), CWM Archives, Carl Schaefer War Diaries.

**CANADIAN WAR ARTISTS COMMITTEE****INSTRUCTIONS FOR WAR ARTISTS****1. Purposes:**

As a War Artist appointed to one of the Canadian Services you are charged with the portrayal of significant events, scenes, phases and episodes in the experience of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those which cannot be adequately rendered in any other way.

**2. Portrayal**

You are expected to record and interpret vividly and veraciously, according to your artistic sense, (1) the spirit and character, the appearance and attitude of the men, as individuals or groups, of the Service to which you are attached – (2) the instruments and machines which they employ, and (3) the environment in which they do their work. The intention is that your productions shall be worthy of Canada's highest cultural traditions, doing justice to History, and as works of art, worthy of exhibition anywhere at any time,

**3. Methods:**

To help you to carry a full measure of conviction into your work, officers responsible will, whenever possible, arrange for you to share these experiences, particularly in active operations: for you must know and understand the action, the circumstances, the environment, and the participants.

**Projected Uses:**

The uses to which your pictures are to be put are embraced in:

- (i) works for contemporary exhibition,
- (ii) canvases suitable for permanent exhibition in public places, galleries, etc.
- (iii) presentations suitable for development into murals and, architectural decoration,

(iv) cartoons and sketches for the re-creation of atmosphere, topography, and details of arms, vehicles, equipment, clothing, participants and terrain, of aircraft and ships,

Every sketch and picture must be directly related to a Canadian Service at War. Each must be dated, described, and fully annotated according to character and subject.

5. Media:

There are no restrictions as to media – oils, water-colour, paint of any sort, pencil, crayon, metal, stone, clay or any plastic.

6. All work produced by you during tenure of your appointment as War Artist will be the property of the Government of Canada, including the copyright.

7. Production:

The following -production or equivalent is expected during a six months period:

Oil Paintings

2–40” x 49” canvases

2–24” x 30” canvases

Also field sketches

Water Colours

10–22” X 30” works

8. Classification:

The above production may be classified, by subjects, as follows in order of importance:

(a) Action Episodes.

1. Eye Witness Records.

2. Reconstruction

(b) Transportation Aspects. (Ferry Command, Convoy, Rail, etc.)

(c) Personalities. (Portraits to be specific commissions.)

(d) Training Documentaries, including recreation, etc.

(e) Technical Documentaries.

9. Treatment and Procedure:

Except on special commission, portraits will not be painted; but generally, personnel of the forces should appear in pictures, therefore sketches of characteristic types are



very necessary. Whenever possible, participants in the action depicted should pose as models: requests for this or other facilities should be made to the Commanding Officer of the unit concerned who will meet them as far as circumstances may permit.

Accuracy in delineation and presentation of clothing, equipment, weapons, vehicles and craft is essential. Details of arms, equipment and vehicles, whenever shown, should be checked against contemporary photographs.

General direction as to subjects and field to be covered will usually be given and suggestions as to medium, treatment, and composition may be offered, but the final choice will rest with the artist.

Since it is intended that much of the material currently obtained may later be translated into murals, it is desirable that subjects treated broadly should be accompanied by detailed sketches, dated, and with colour notes on the main items portrayed.

The comments and criticism of participants may often be of value whether or not they know anything of art and should be obtained, if possible, when the picture is nearing completion.

#### 10. Control.

War Artists are carried on the establishment of the Historical Section of their Service. While serving overseas they will be attached to Service Headquarters in the United Kingdom for work with the Historical Officer, U. K. as occasion may demand. Employment and field to be covered are regulated and determined jointly by the Canadian War Artists Control Committee.

Approved

March 2nd, 1943

**Appendix C****List of Cited War Artists**

Allward, Walter (1875–1955)  
Anderson, Donald (b. 1920)  
Atkins, Caven (1907–2000)  
Bayefsky, Aba (1923–2001)  
Beament, Harold (1898–1984)  
Bobak, Bruno (b. 1923)  
Bobak, Molly Lamb (b. 1922)  
Bomberg, David (1890–1957)  
Brooks, Leonard (b. 1911)  
Byam Shaw, James (1872–1919)  
Clark, Paraskeva (1898–1986)  
Clemesha, F. Chapman (1876–1958)  
Colville, Alex (b. 1920)  
Comfort, Charles (1900–1994)  
Cullen, Maurice (1866–1934)  
Dix, Otto (1891–1969)  
Fisher, Orville (1911–1999)  
Fosbery, Ernest (1879–1956)  
Forster, Michael (b. 1907)  
Harris, Lawren P. (1910–1994)

Harris, Lawren S. (1885–1970)  
Hughes, E. J. (b. 1913)  
Hyndman, Robert (b. 1915)  
Jack, Richard (1866–1952)  
Jackson, A. Y. (1882–1974)  
John, Augustus (1878–1961)  
Johnston, Frank (Franz) (1888–1949)  
Lamb, Henry (1883–1949)  
Law, Anthony (1916–1996)  
Lismer, Arthur (1885–1969)  
Loring, Frances (1887–1968)  
MacDonald, Manly (1889–1971)  
Mackay, Donald (1906–1979)  
MacLeod, Pegi Nicol (1904–1949)  
May, Henrietta Mabel (1877–1971)  
Milne, David (1882–1953)  
Mühlstock, Louis (1904–2001)  
Munnings, Alfred (1878–1959)  
Murphy, Rowley (1891–1975)  
Nash, Paul (1889–1946)  
Nevinson, C. R. W. (1889–1946)  
Nevitt, Richard Barrington (b. 1937)  
Nolde, Emil (1867–1956)

Ogilvie, Will (1901–1989)

Rickards, E. A. (1872–1920)

Roberts, William (1895–1980)

Russell, Gyrth (1892–1970)

Schaefer, Carl (1903–1995)

Simpson, C. W. (1878–1942)

Sims, Charles (1873–1928)

Taylor, F. B. (1906–1987)

Tinning, George Campbell (1910–1996)

Varley, F. H. (1881–1969)

Wood, Derwent (1871–1926)

Wood, Tom (1913–1997)

Wragg, Graham (b. 1943)

Wyle, Florence (1881–1968)

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Artist Files

CAFCAP Files

Institutional Files

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House of Lords Record Office, London

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Imperial War Museum, London

Artist Files

McMichael Canadian Art Gallery Archive, Kleinburg, Ontario

Artist Files

National Archives of Canada, Ottawa

Artist Manuscript Records (MG 30)

Canadian War Memorials Fund

Canadian War Record Office

Government Records (Appendix A)

National Gallery of Canada Archives, Ottawa

Art Gallery of Toronto, 2.12–T Gyrrh Russell (correspondence re.)

## Artist Files

Board of Trustees 9.21 B–Board of Trustees/Minutes of Meetings

Canadian War Art 5.41

Canadian War Artists 5.42

Correspondence with/re. Artists 7.1

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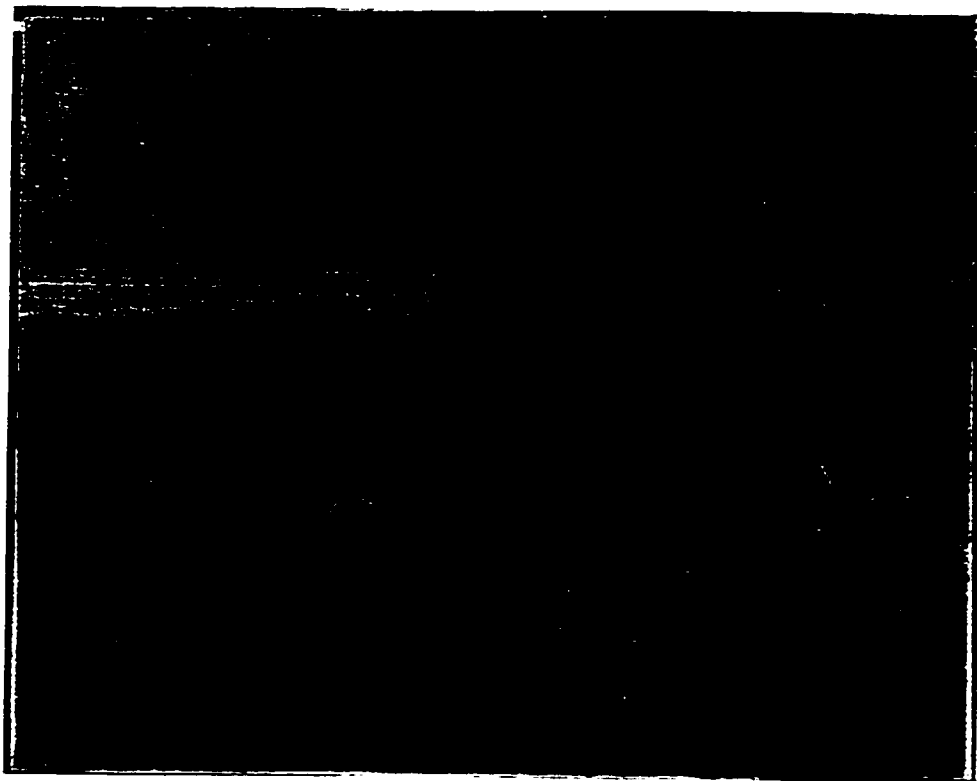


Fig. 1

Maurice Cullen, *Dead Horse and Rider in a Trench*, 1918, oil on canvas, 112 x  
143 cm, CWM 8140

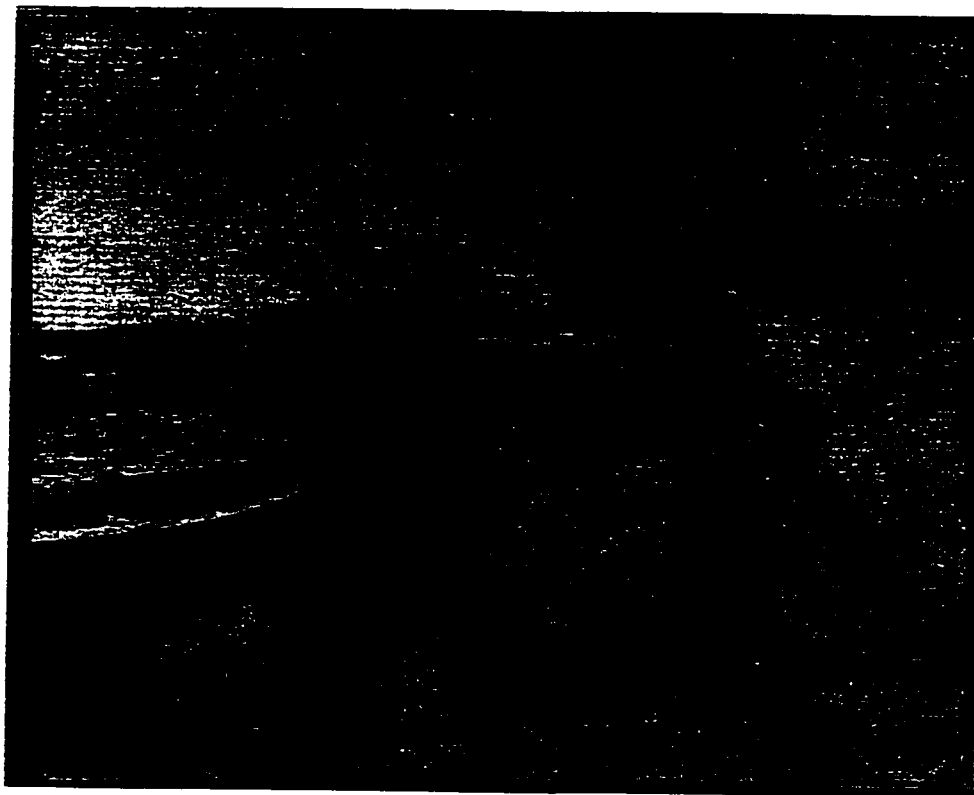


Fig. 2

Maurice Cullen, *Huy on the Meuse, on the Road to the Rhine*, c. 1919, oil on canvas. 143 x 178 cm. CWM 8148

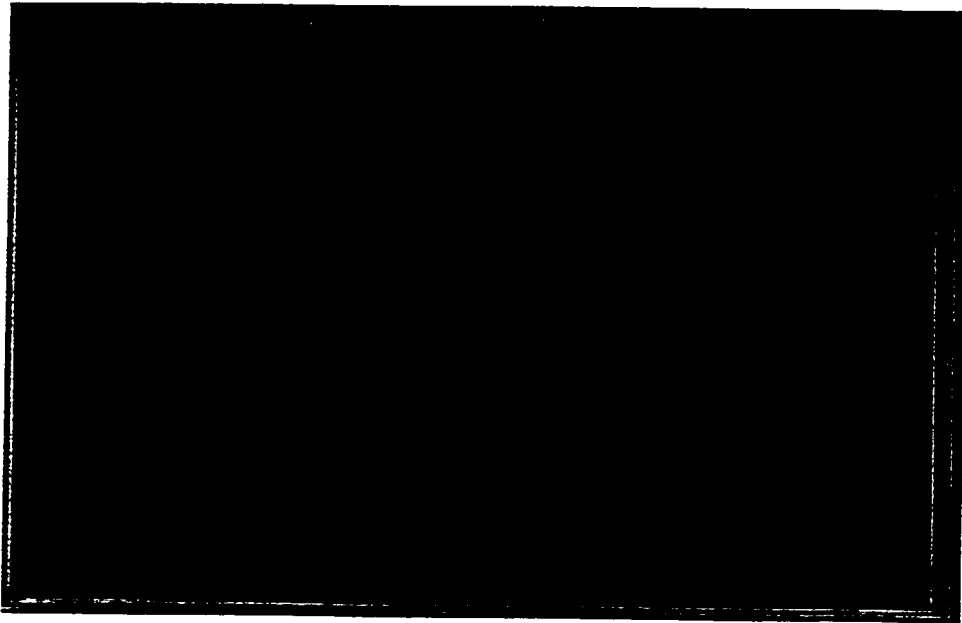


Fig. 3

Richard Jack, *The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May 1915*, 1917, oil on canvas. 371.5 x 589 cm, CWM 8179

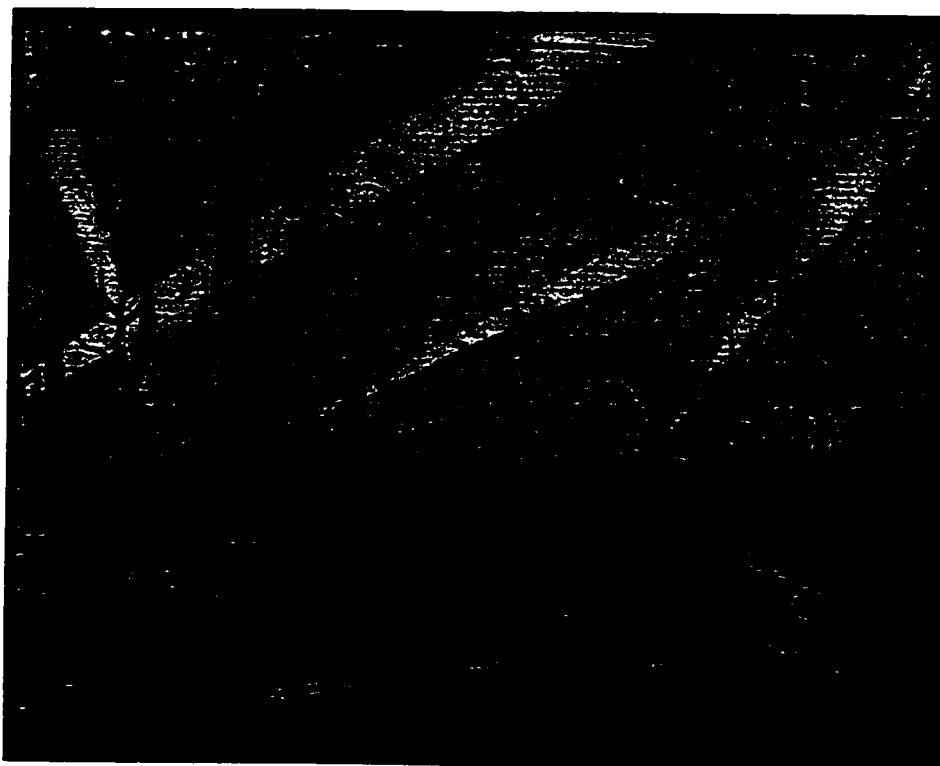


Fig. 4

A. Y. Jackson, *A Copse. Evening*, 1918, oil on canvas, 86.8 x 111.8 cm, CWM

8204



Fig. 5

Arthur Lismer, *Olympic with Returned Soldiers*, 1919, oil on canvas, 123.1 x  
163.1 cm, CWM 8363

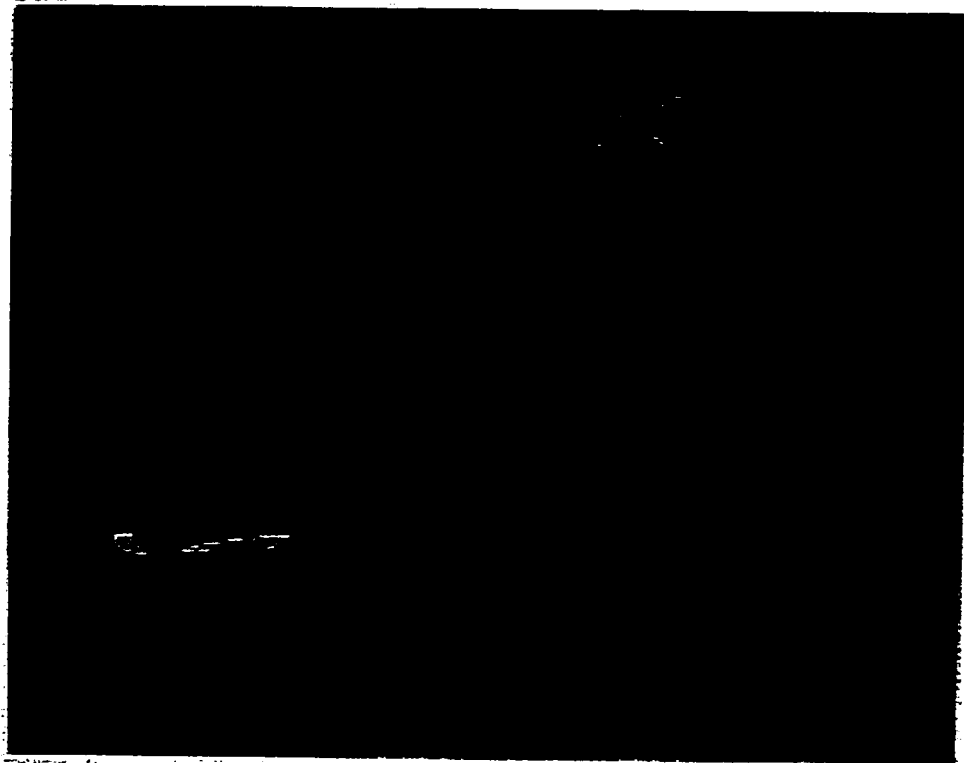


Fig. 6

Frank Johnston, *Looking into the Blue*, 1918, watercolour and gouache on board,

57.5 x 72.1 cm, CWM 8267



Fig. 7

Henrietta Mabei May, *Women Making Shells*, 1919, oil on canvas, 182.7 x 214.9

cm. CWM 8409

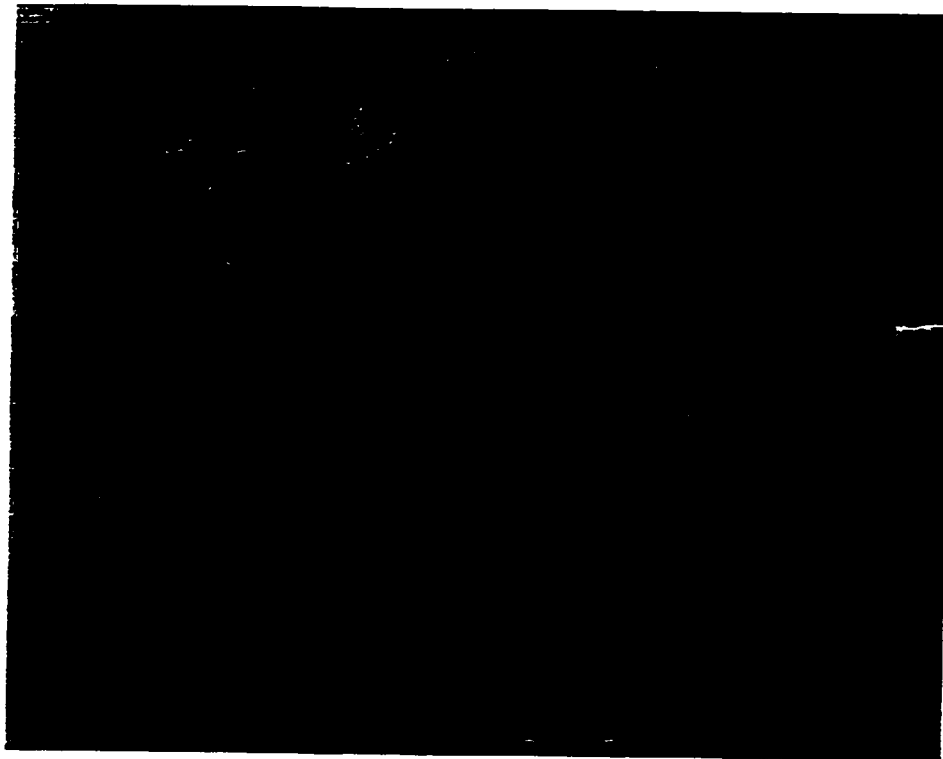


Fig. 8

Manly MacDonald, *Land Girls Hoeing*, c. 1919, oil on canvas, 152.8 x 194 cm.

CWM 8390





Fig. 9

Bruno Bobak, *Area Driving ("Fox" and "Staghound" armoured cars)*, 1944,  
watercolour on paper, 39.9 x 57.5 cm, CWM 11901

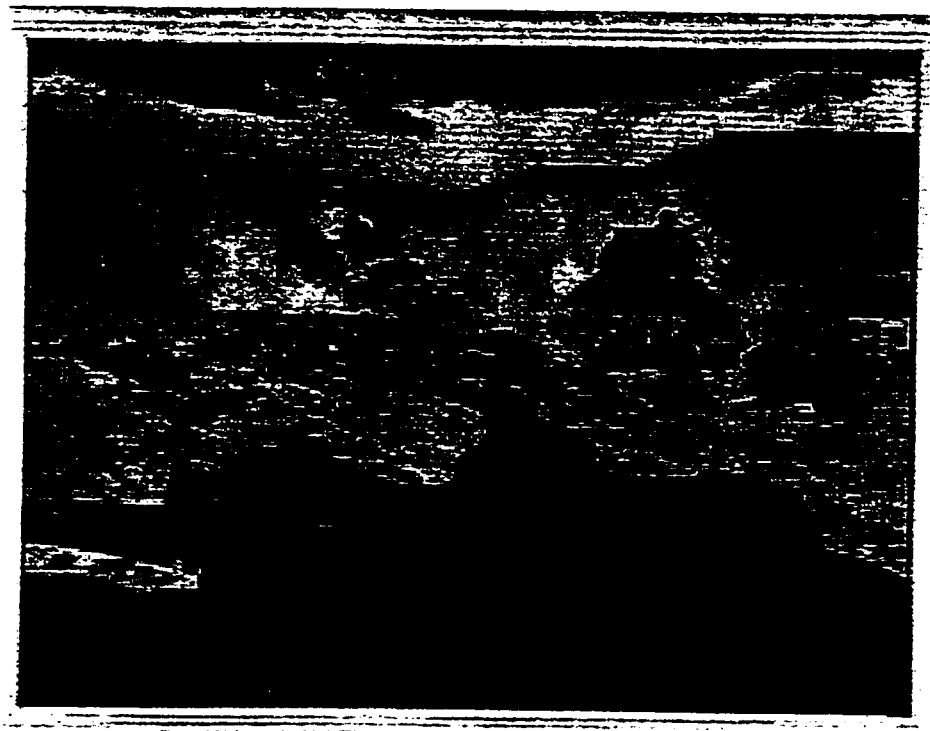


Fig. 10

Bruno Bobak, *Tank Convoy (Ram Tanks)*, 1945, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6 cm.

CWM 11992

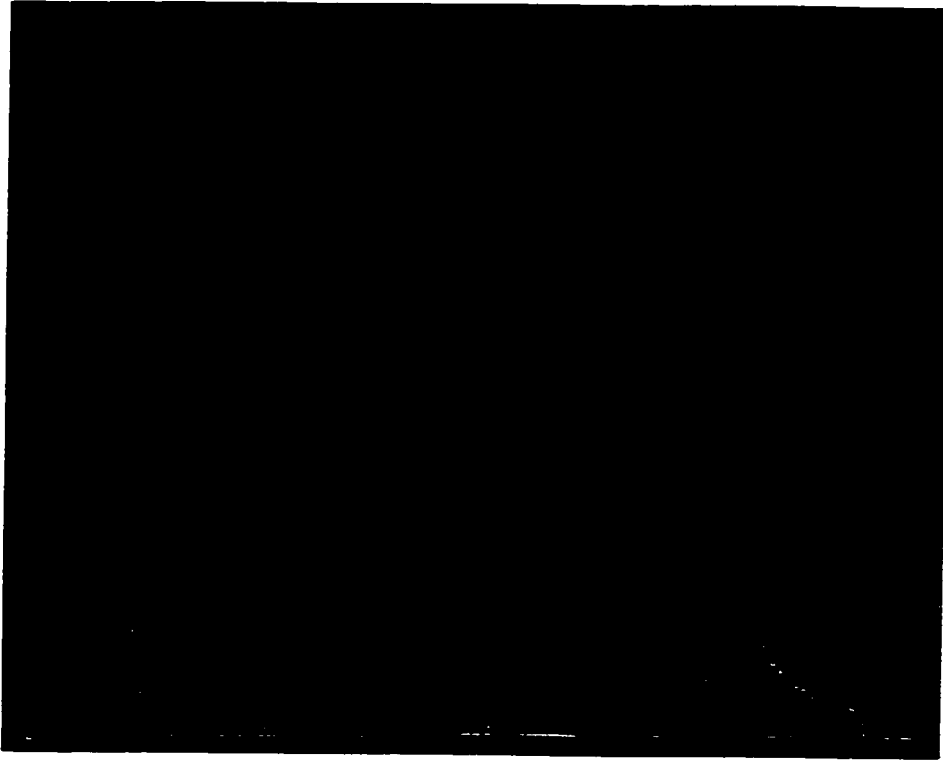


Fig. 11

Harold Beament, *Burial at Sea*, 1944, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 76 cm, CWM 10005

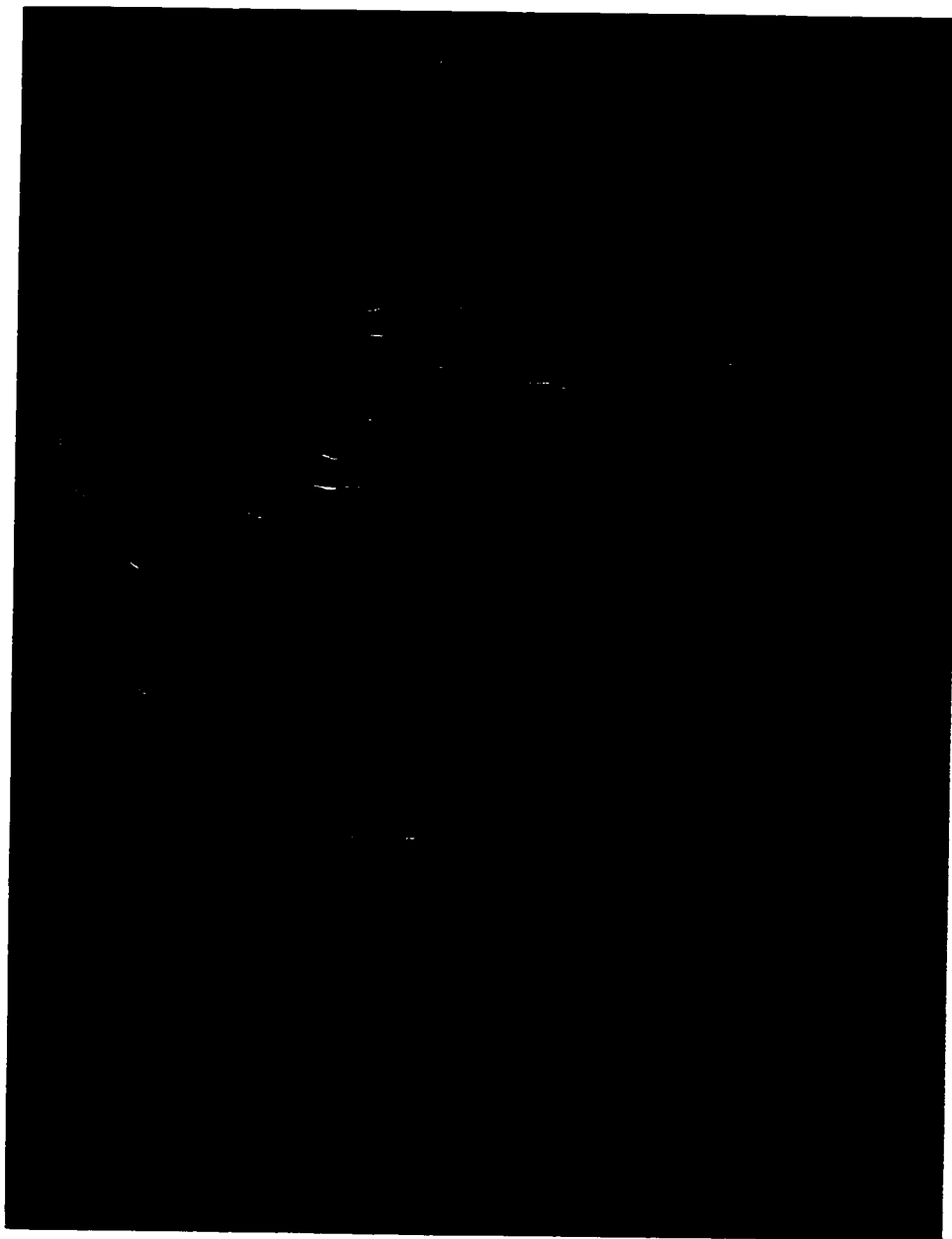


Fig. 12

Jack Nichols, *Drowning Sailor*, 1946, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 61 cm, CWM 10505



Fig. 13

Charles Comfort, *Campobasso*, c. 1945, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 153.2 cm, CWM

12244



Fig. 14

Kenneth Forbes, *Canadian Artillery in Action*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 157.5 x  
245.3 cm, CWM 8158



Fig. 15

F. H. Varley, *For What?* c. 1918, oil on canvas, 147.2 x 182.8 cm, CWM 8911

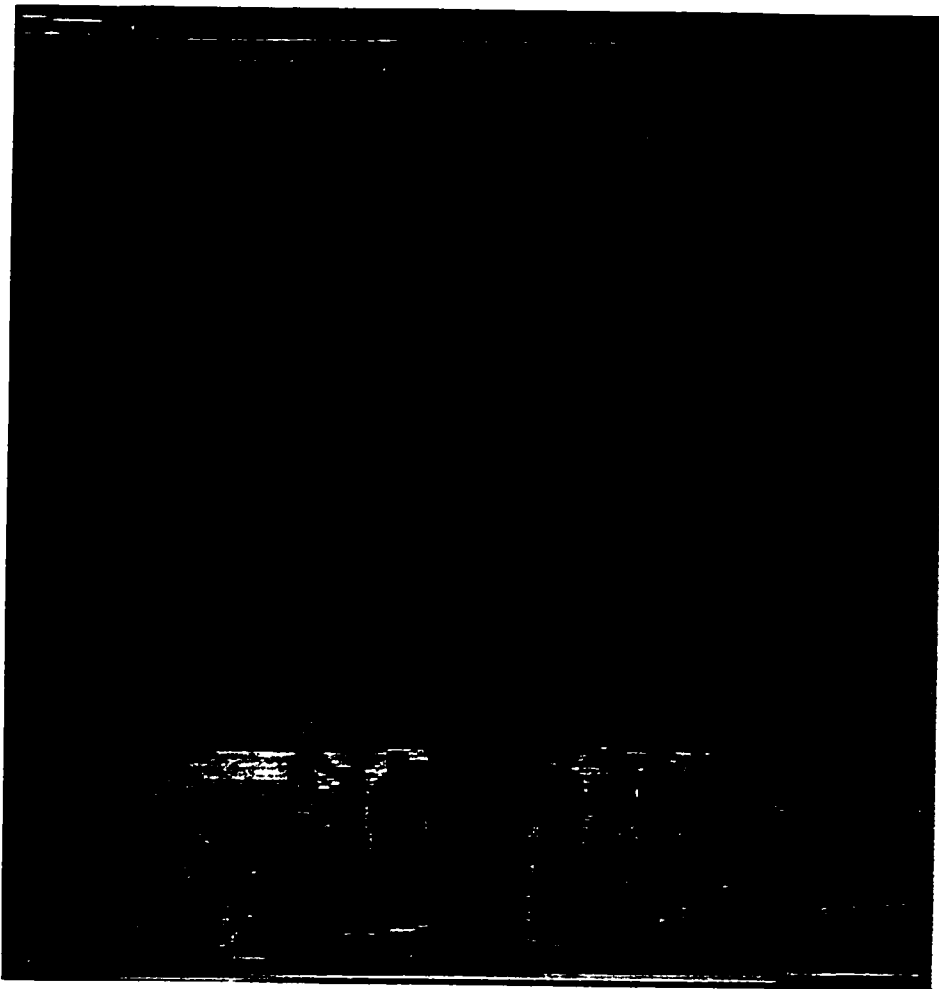


Fig. 16

Charles Sims, *Sacrifice*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 415.2 x 409 cm, CWM 8802





Fig. 17

Richard Jack, *The Taking of Vimy Ridge, Easter Monday 1917*, 1919, oil on canvas, 366.1 x 604.5 cm, CWM 8178

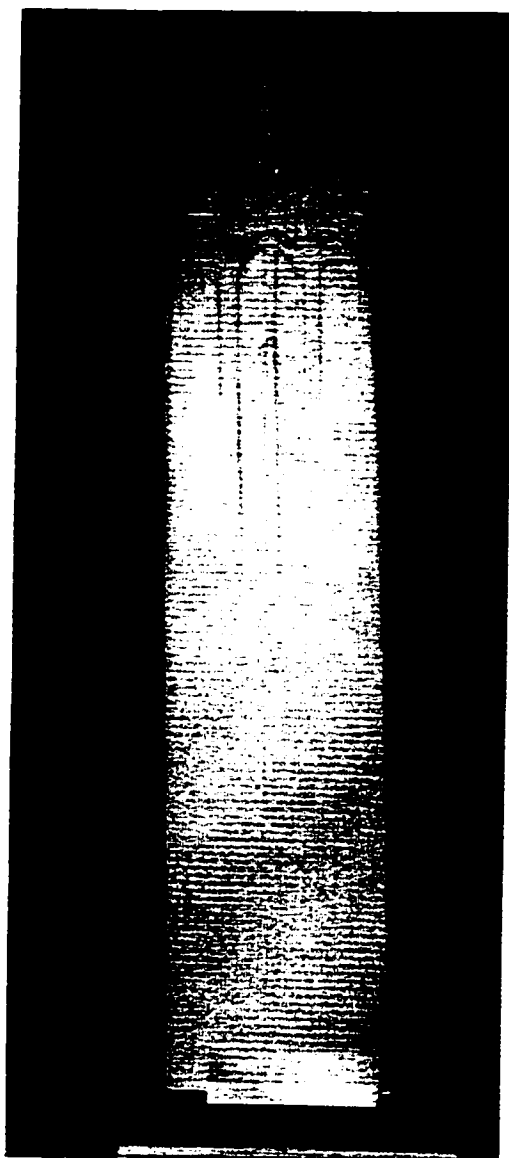


Fig. 18

Frederick Chapman Clemesha, *Model for St. Julien Memorial*, c. 1920, plaster reinforced with plant fibres, 118.5 x 26.5 x 19.7 cm, CWM 19980:16-001

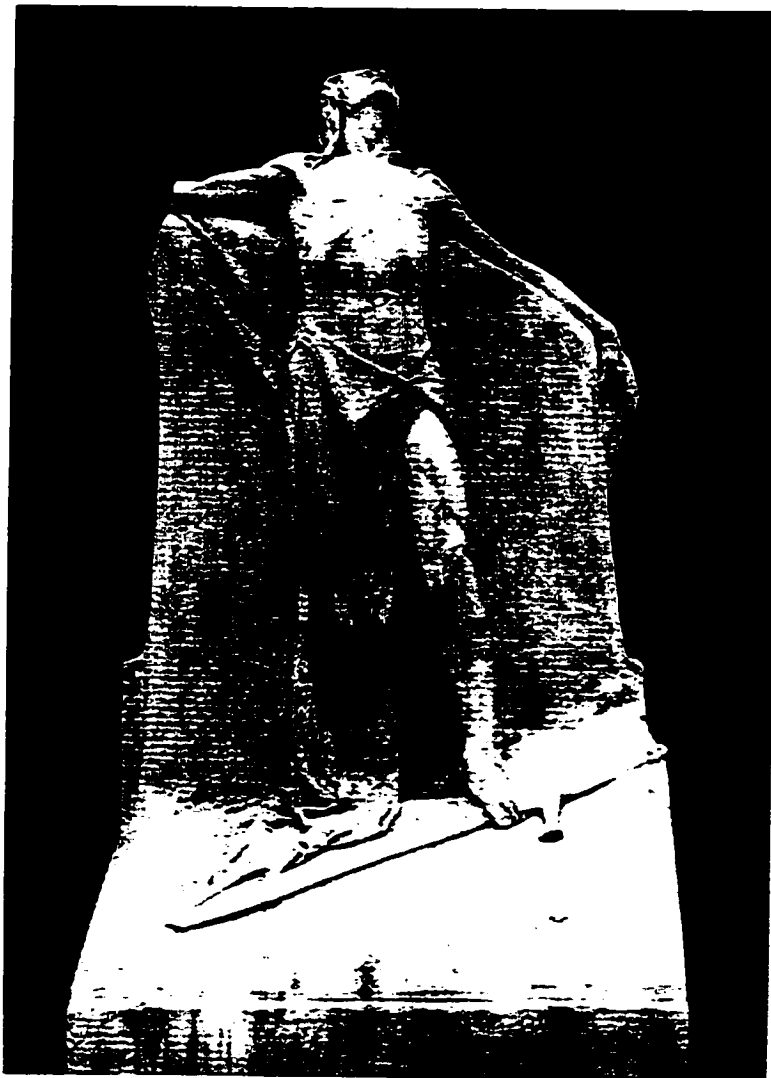


Fig. 19

Walter Allward, *Sacrifice*, c. 1925–1930, plaster, ht. 362 cm, CWM 19770315–

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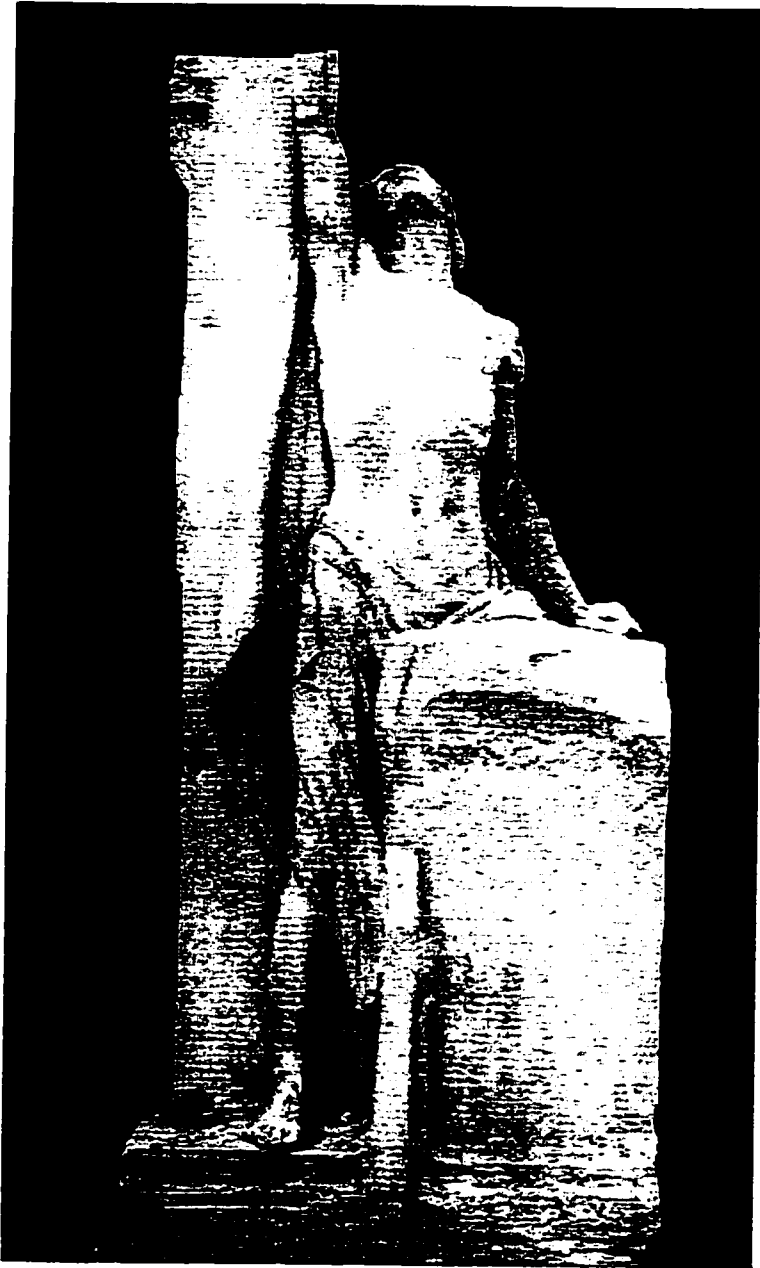


Fig. 20

Walter Allward, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, c. 1925–1930, plaster, ht. 362 cm, CWM

19770315-001



Fig. 21

Walter Allward, *The Breaking of the Sword*, c. 1925–1930, plaster, ht. 220 cm.

CWM 19770315-002



Fig. 22

Walter Allward. *Sympathy for the Helpless*, c. 1925–1930, plaster, ht. 244 cm.,

CWM 19770315-003

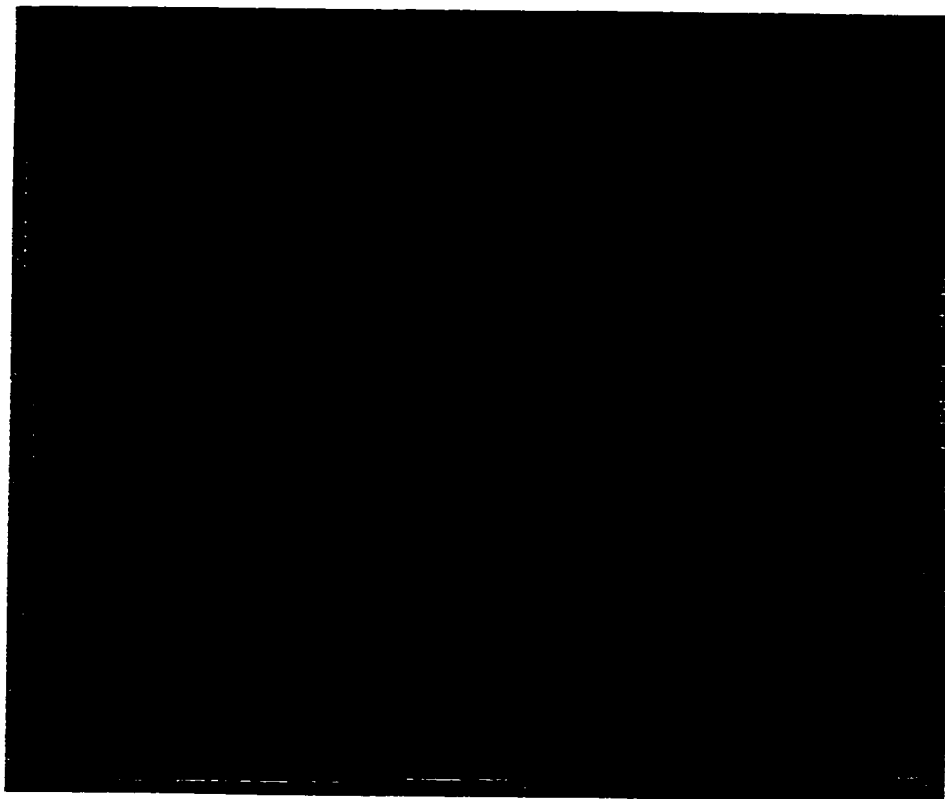


Fig. 23

A. Y. Jackson. *The Pimple, Evening*, 1918, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76 cm, CWM

8216

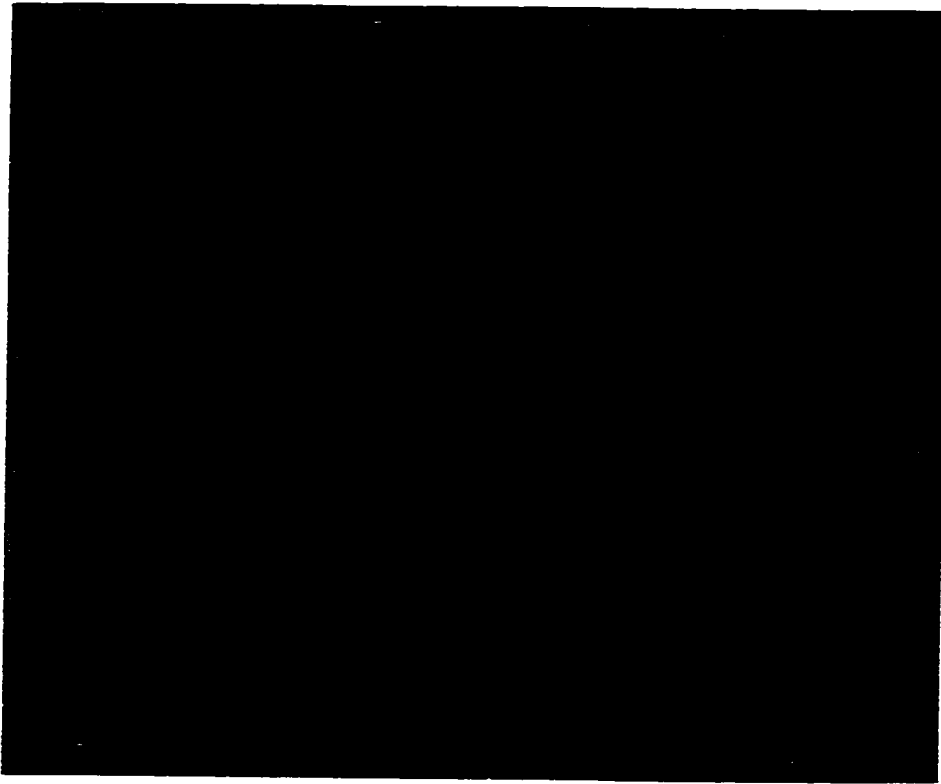


Fig. 24

F. H. Varley, *Some Day the People Will Return*, 1918, oil on canvas, 182.9 x  
228.6 cm. CWM 8910





Fig. 25

F. H. Varley, *Shelled Graveyard*, 1918, carbon pencil and chalk on paper, 17.8 x

24.9 cm, CWM 19930001-001

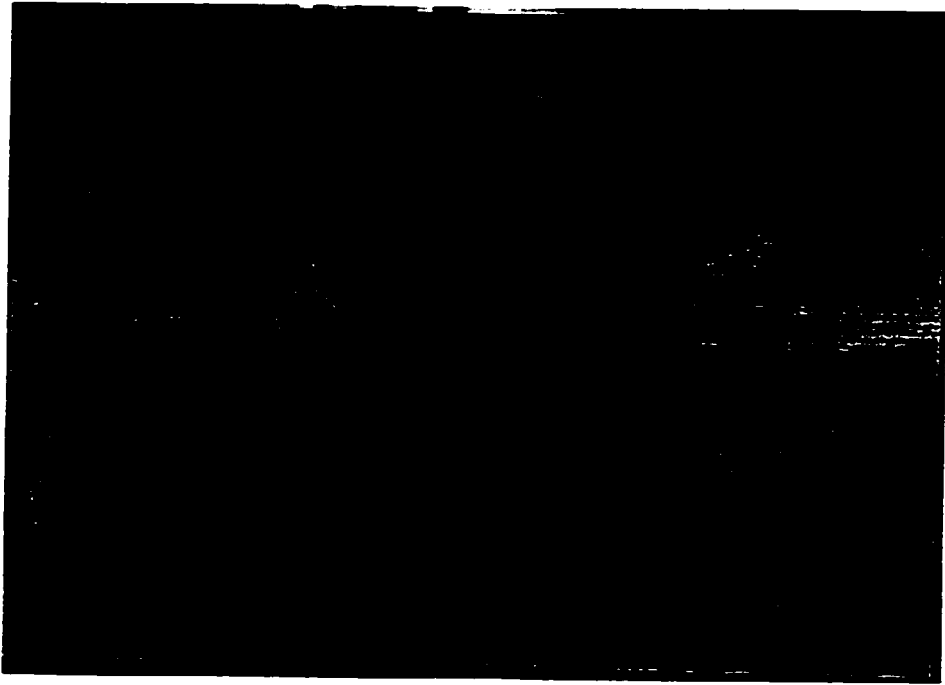


Fig. 26

F. H. Varley, *German Prisoners*, c. 1919, oil on canvas, 127.2 x 183.8 cm, CWM

8961



Fig. 27

Frank Johnston, *School of Aerial Gunnery*, c. 1918, watercolour on paper, 34.3 x  
56.2 cm, CWM 8270

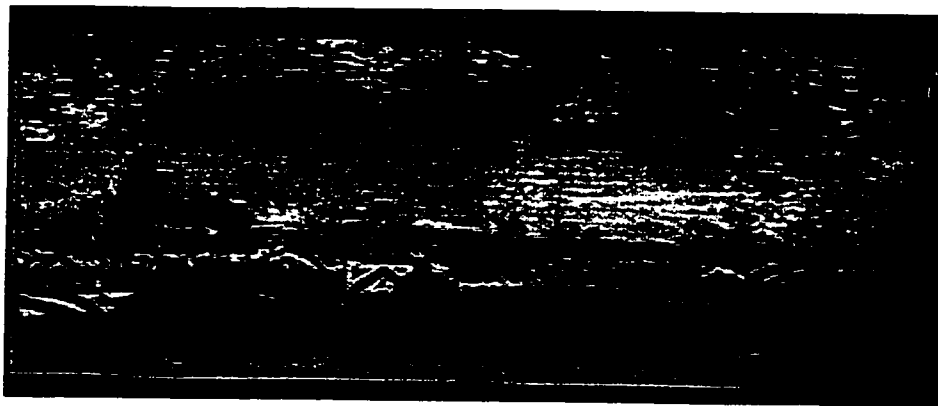


Fig. 28

Arthur Lismer, *Convoy in Bedford Basin*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 91 x 260 cm,

CWM 8364

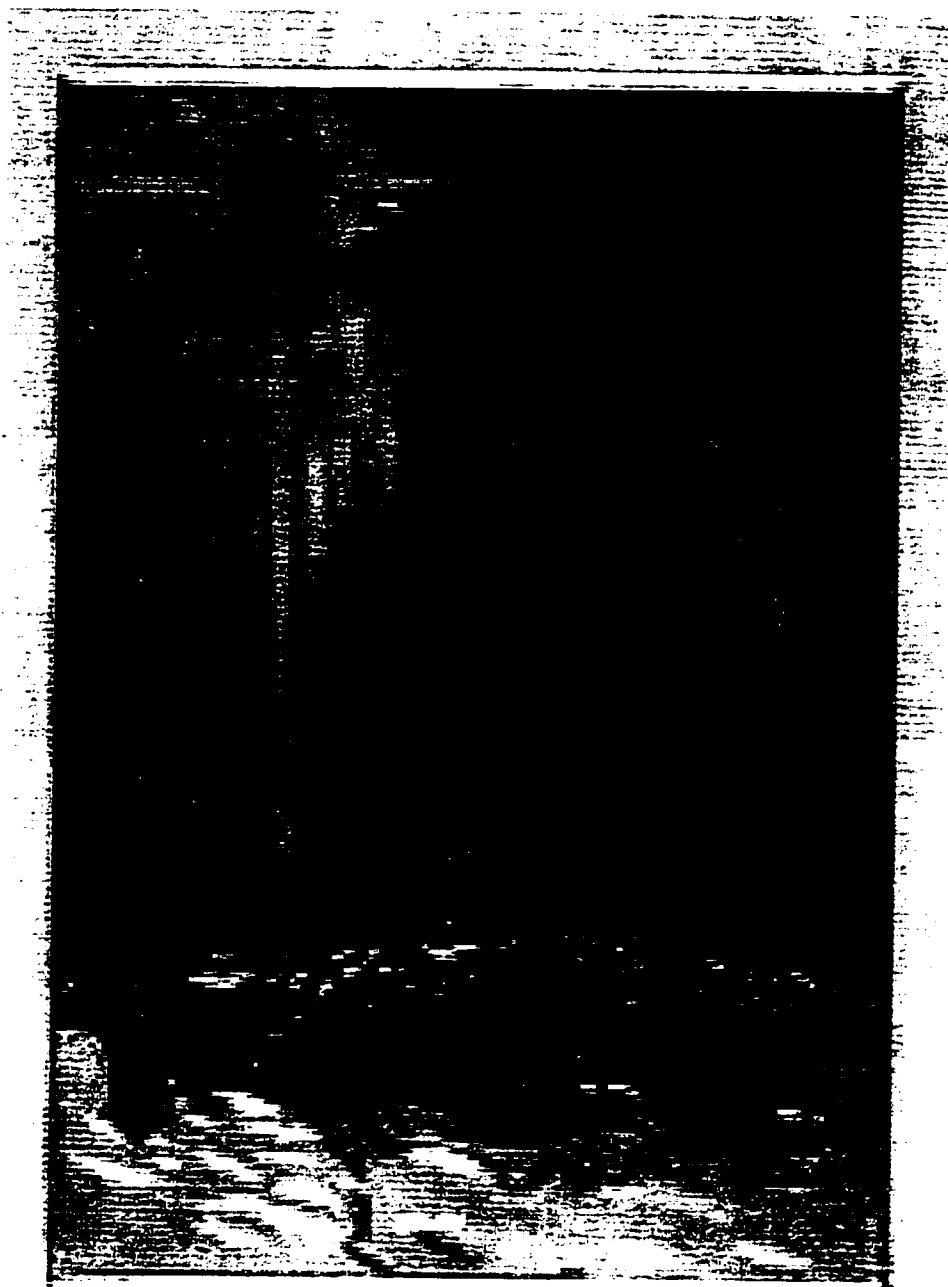


Fig. 29

J. E. H. MacDonald. *Spirits of Christmas - No Man's Land*, c. 1916, oil on laminated paperboard, 75.6 x 53 cm. CWM 19930115-001



Fig. 30

J. E. H. MacDonald, *Canada and the Call 1914: Exhibition of pictures given by Canadian artists in aid of the patriotic fund, under the auspices of the Royal Canadian Academy*, c. 1915, ink on paper, 107.3 x 74.1 cm, CWM 19940018-001

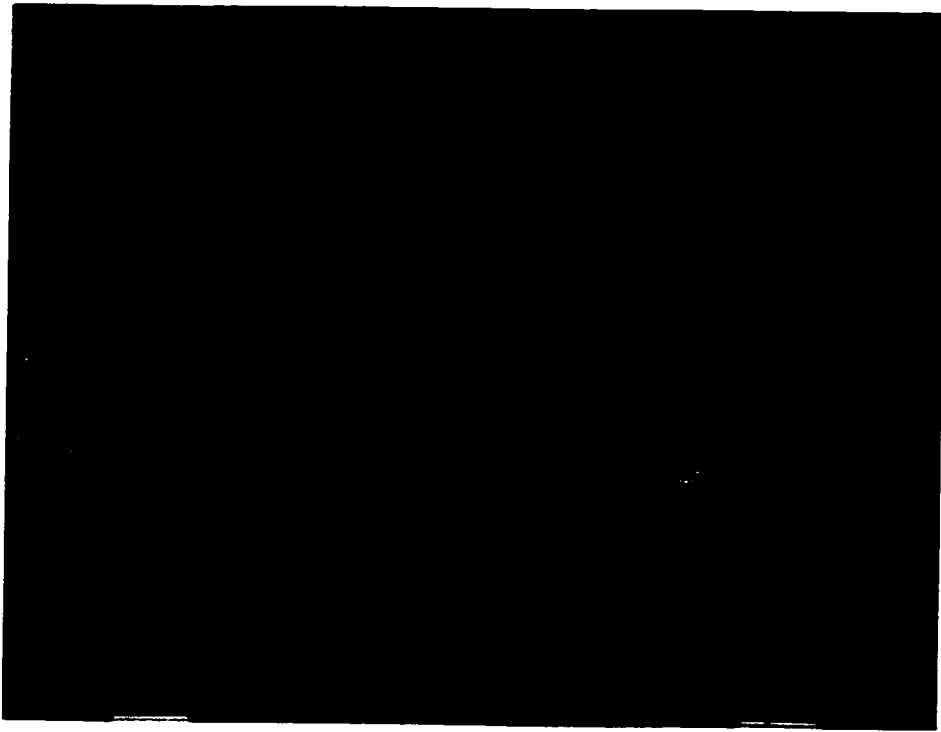


Fig. 31

James Kerr-Lawson, *The Cloth Hall, Ypres*, c. 1919, oil on canvas, 276.8 x 363.2

cm. CWM 8352

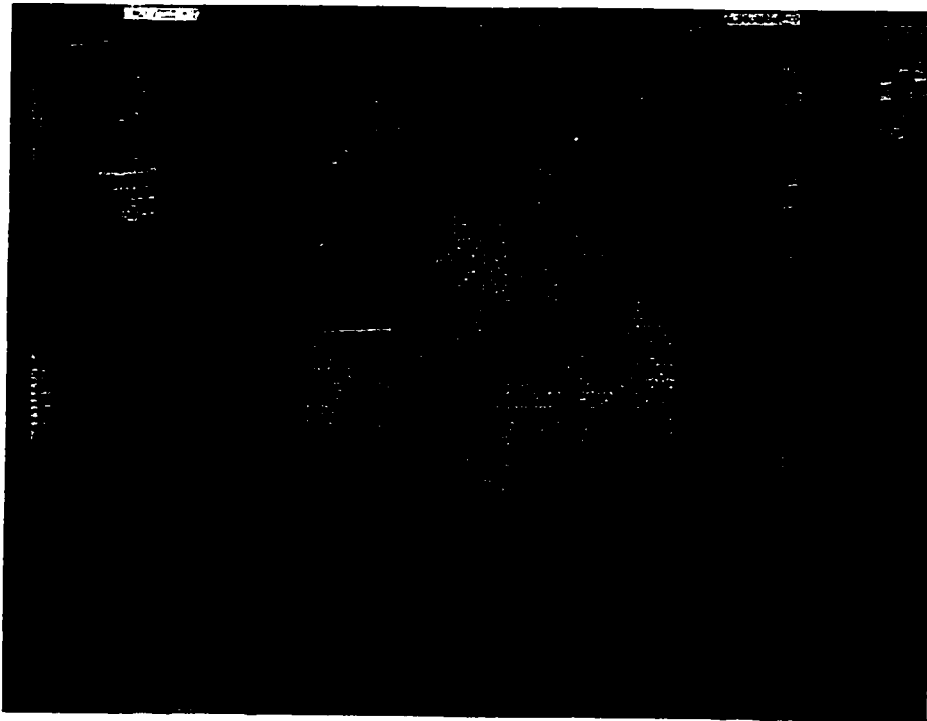


Fig. 32

James Kerr-Lawson, *Arras, the Dead City*, c. 1919, oil on canvas, 276.8 x 368.3

cm. CWM 8353



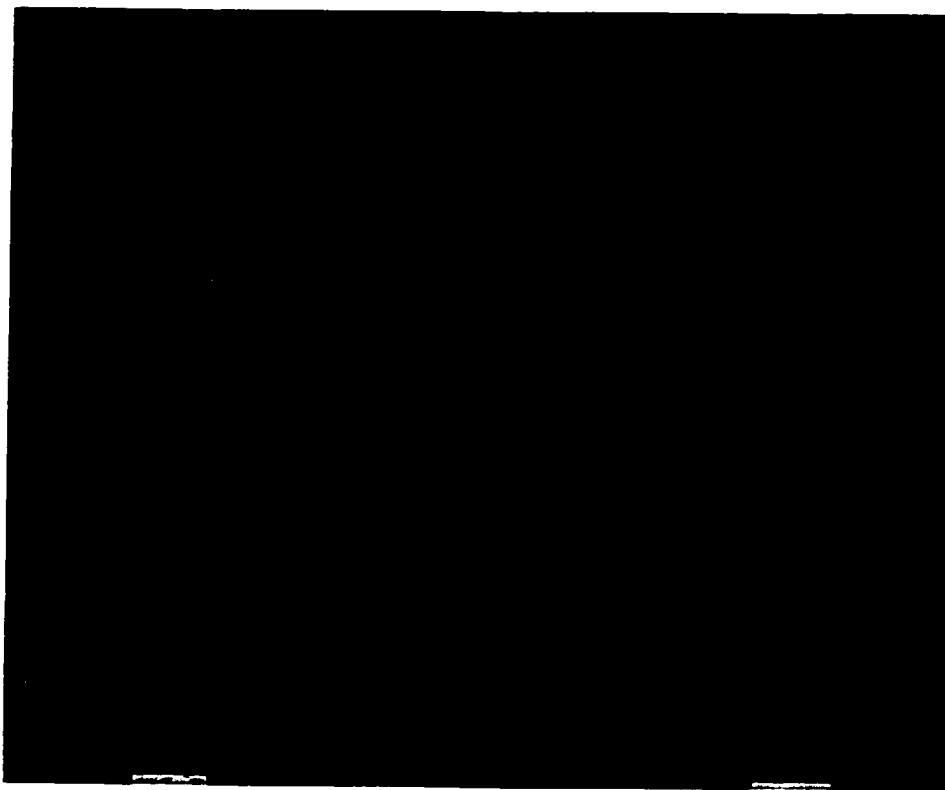


Fig. 33

Clare Atwood, *On Leave*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 305.2 x 365.7 cm, CWM 8019



Fig. 34

Sir George Clausen. *Returning to the Reconquered Land*, 1919, oil on canvas.

391.2 x 270.7 cm, CWM 8135

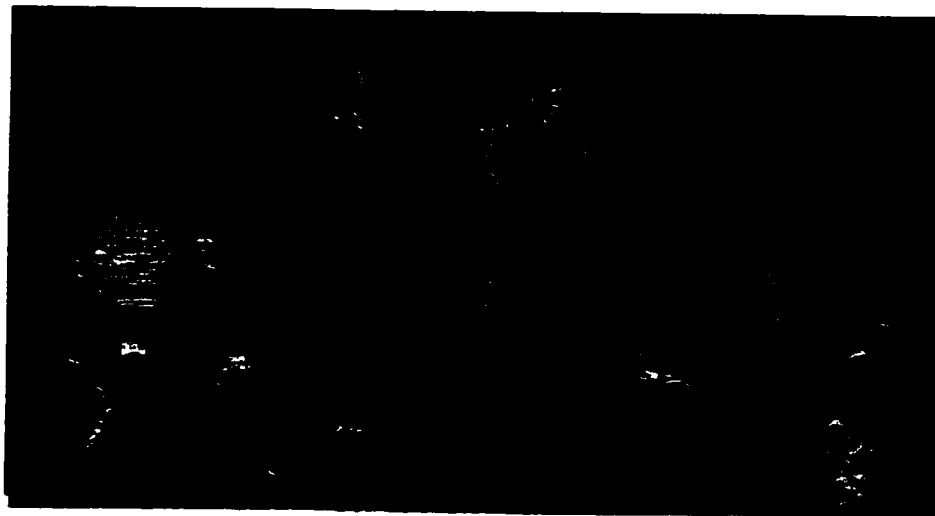


Fig. 35

John Byam Lister Shaw, *The Flag*, 1918, oil on canvas, 198 x 365.5 cm, CWM

8796



Fig. 36

Gerald Edward Moira, *No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Doullens*, 1918, oil  
on canvas, 304.8 x 770.6 cm., CWM 8555, 8556, and 8557

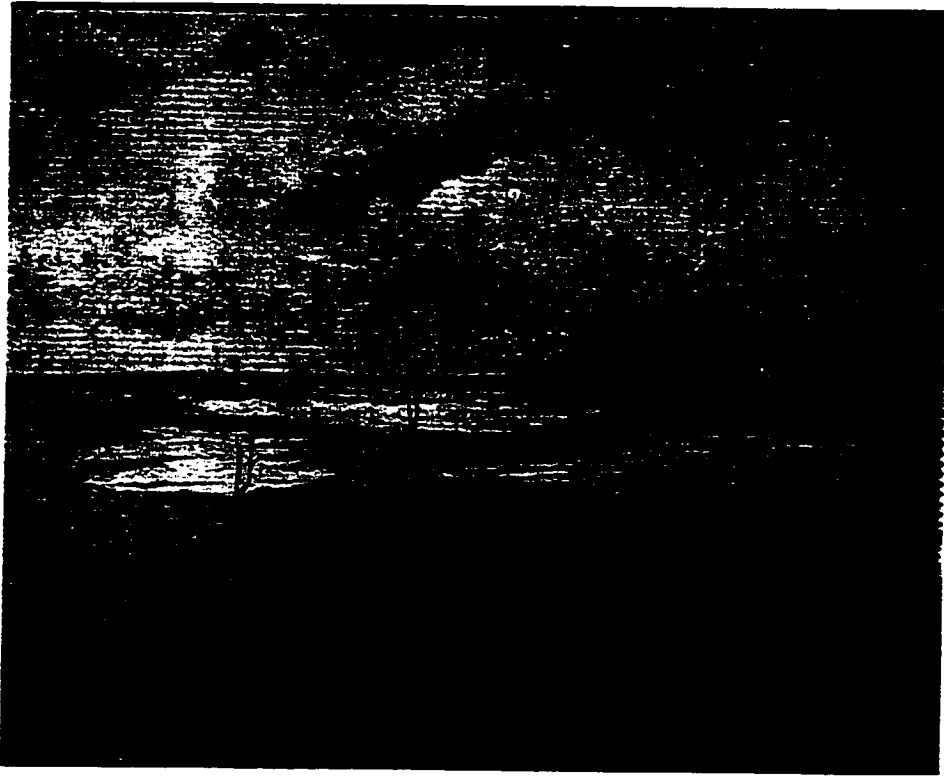


Fig. 37

Maurice Culien, *The Cambrai Road*, 1918, oil on canvas. 183.4 x 228.7 cm.

CWM 8143



Fig. 38

Maurice Cullen, *Hangard*, 1918, oil on panel, 25.4 x 35.4 cm, CWM 19980065-

004



Fig. 39

Maurice Cullen, *Camblain l'Abbé*, n.d. oil on panel, 24.8 x 35.6 cm, CWM

19950104-007

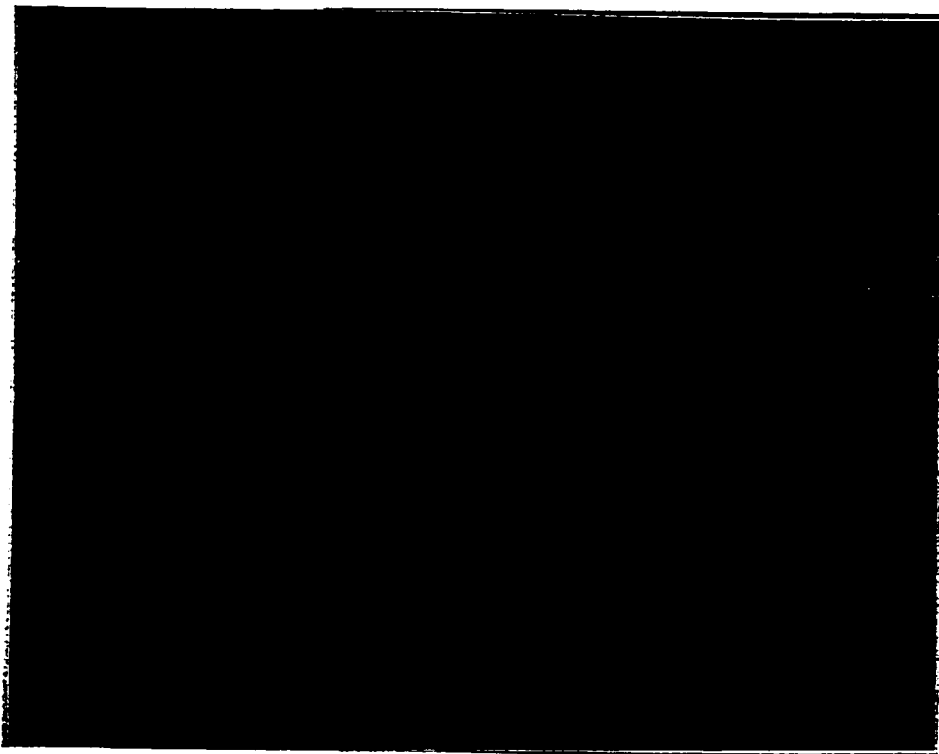


Fig. 40

Maurice Cullen, *Dawn on the Ouse Trench*, 1918, oil on canvas, 183.5 x 228.5

cm. CWM 8145



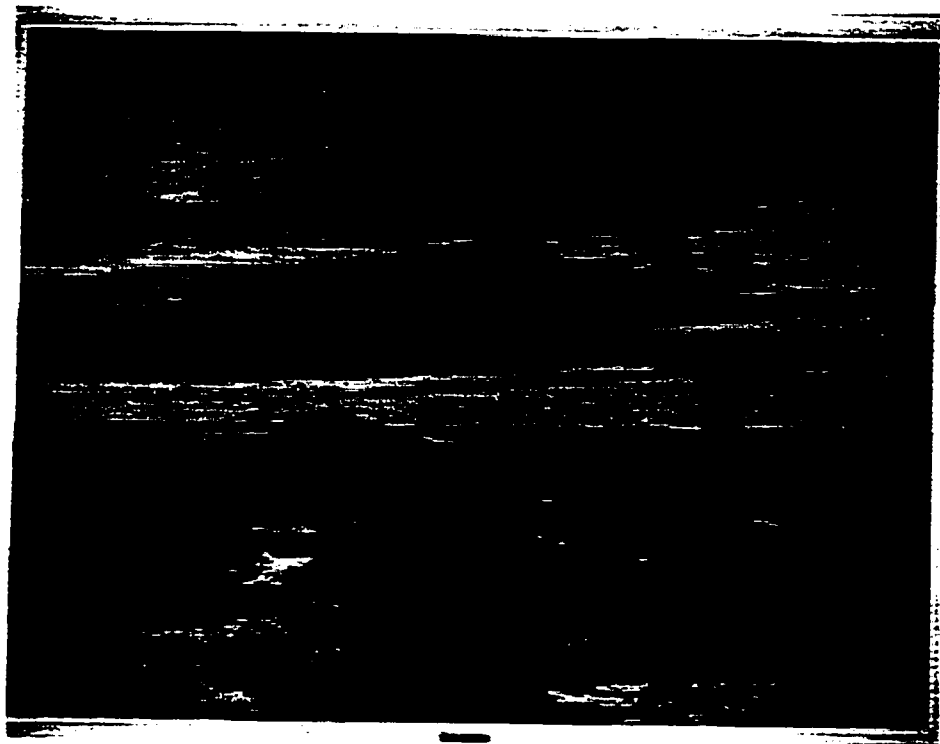


Fig. 41

Maurice Cullen, *No Man's Land*, 1919, oil on canvas, 183.2 x 244.8 cm, CWM

8149

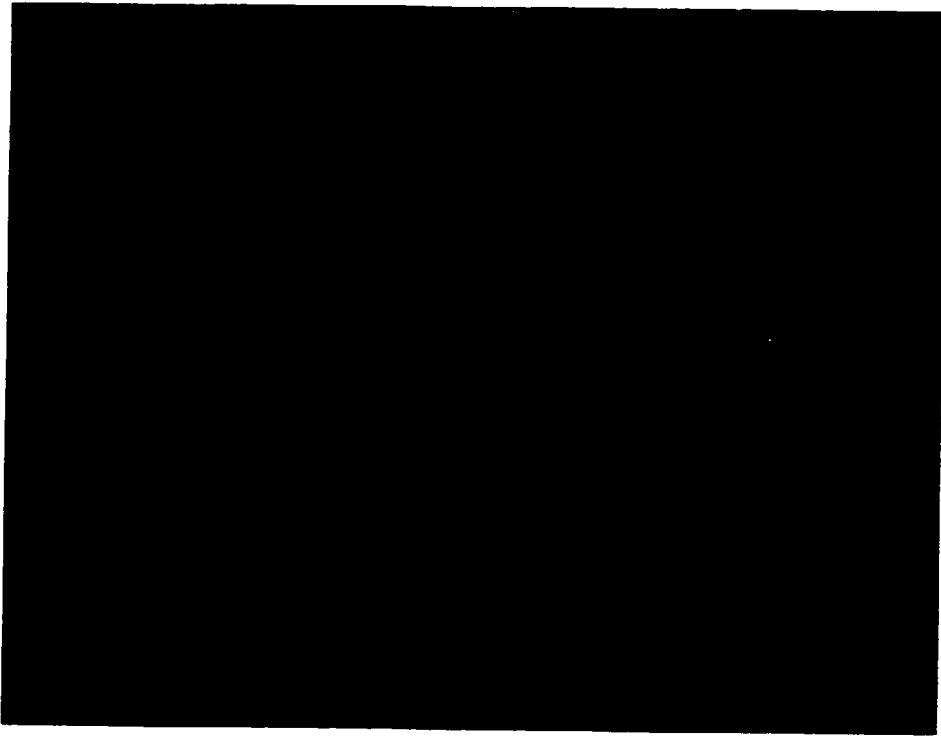


Fig. 42

Maurice Culien, *The Sunken Road. Hangard*, 1918, oil on canvas, 86.3 x 111.9  
cm, CWM 8141



Fig. 43

Gyrth Russell, *The White Chateau, Liévin*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 86.4 x 113.1  
cm, CWM 8762



Fig. 44

Gyrrh Russell, *Mine Crater, Vimy Ridge*, n.d., dry-point on paper, 23.2 x 29.2 cm,

CWM 91060

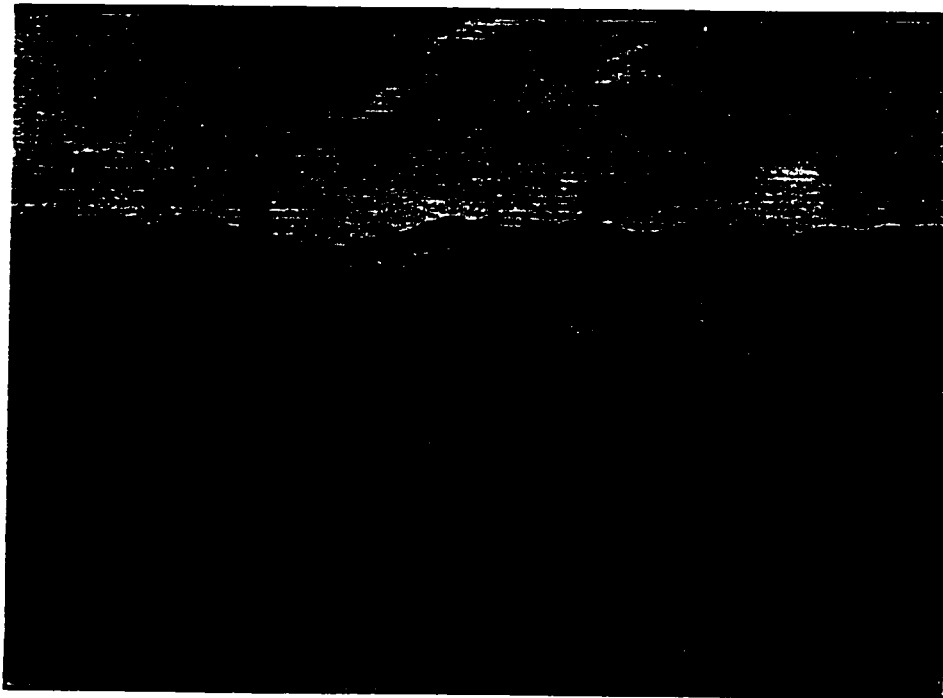


Fig. 45

Gyth Russell, *The Crest of Vimy Ridge*. 1918, oil on canvas, 92 x 127.5 cm.

CWM 8756

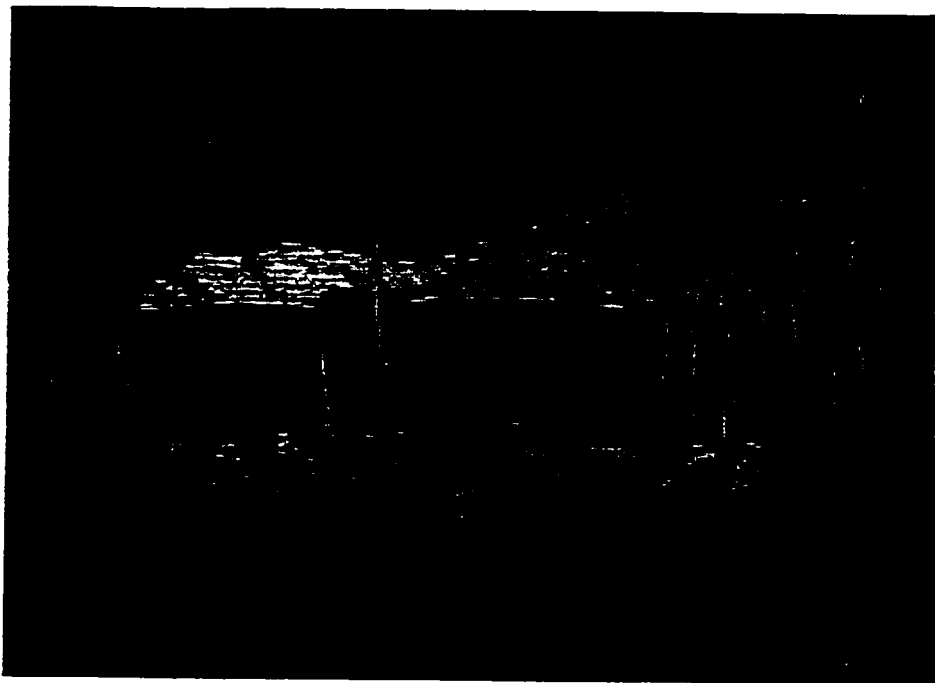


Fig. 46

Gyrth Russell, *Vimy Ridge from Souchez*. n.d., oil on canvas, 92.3 x 128 cm.

CWM 8764

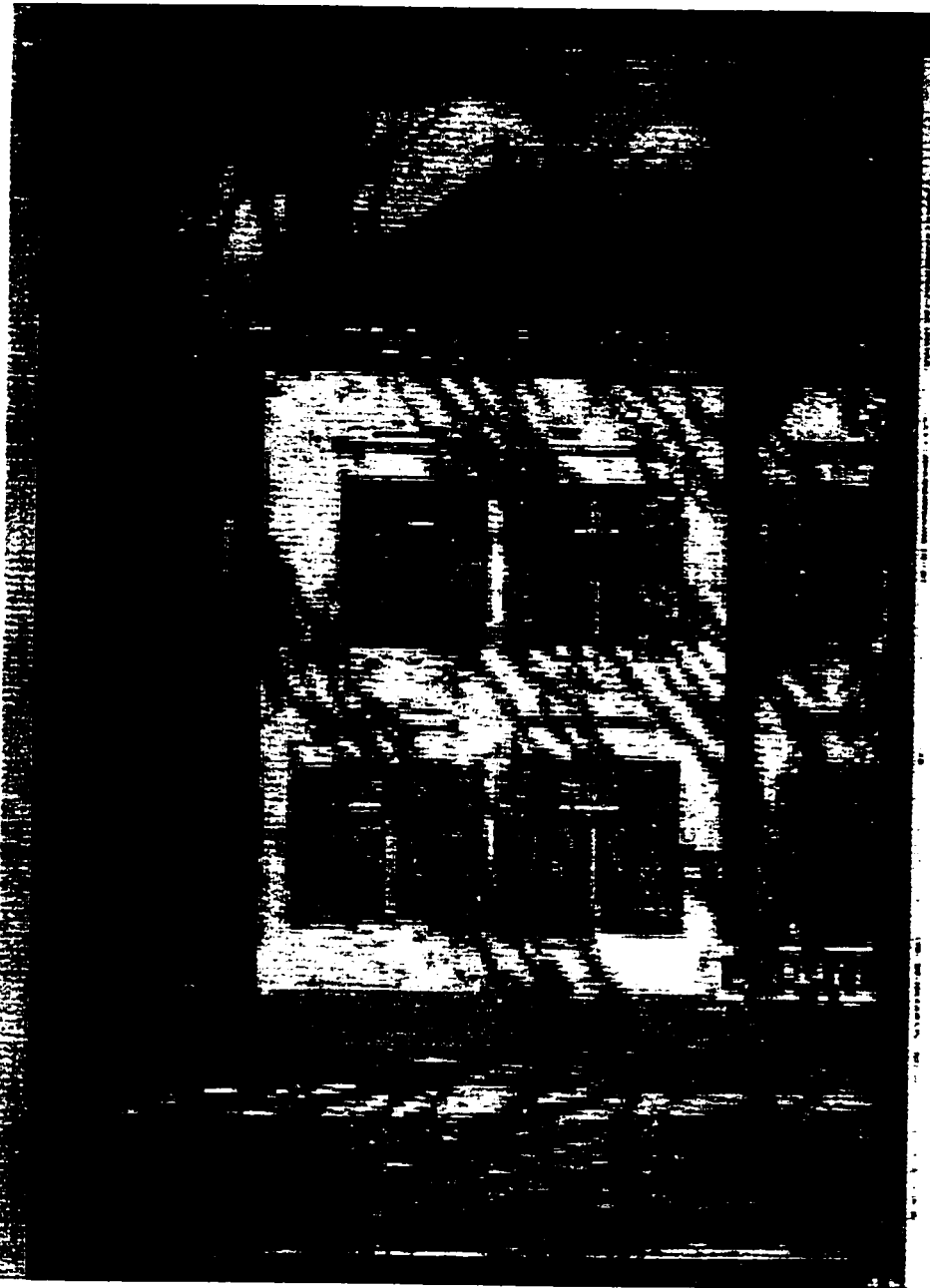


Fig. 47

Gyrth Russell, *Chateau de la Haie*, n.d., oil on canvas, 60.9 x 43.2 cm, CWM

8766

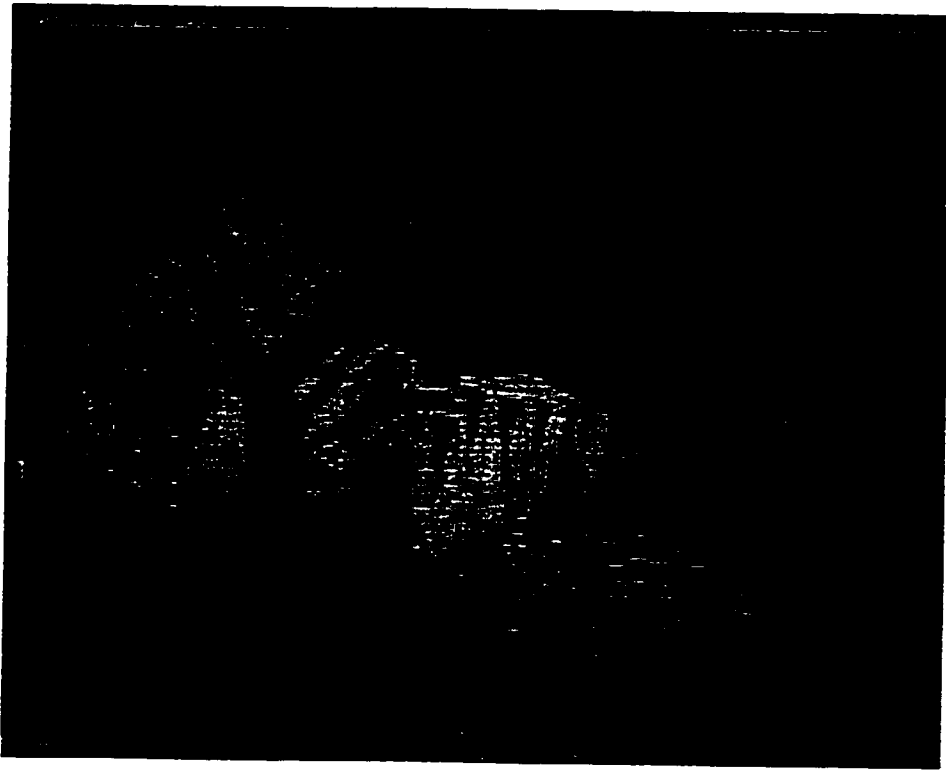


Fig. 48

Gyrf Russell, *An Estaminer*, n.d., oil on canvas, 71.5 x 92 cm, CWM 8769





Fig. 49

Gyrn Russell, *An Estaminet at Cambigneuil, near Camblain l'Abbé*, n.d., dry-point on paper. 25.7 x 35.5 cm. CWM 91055

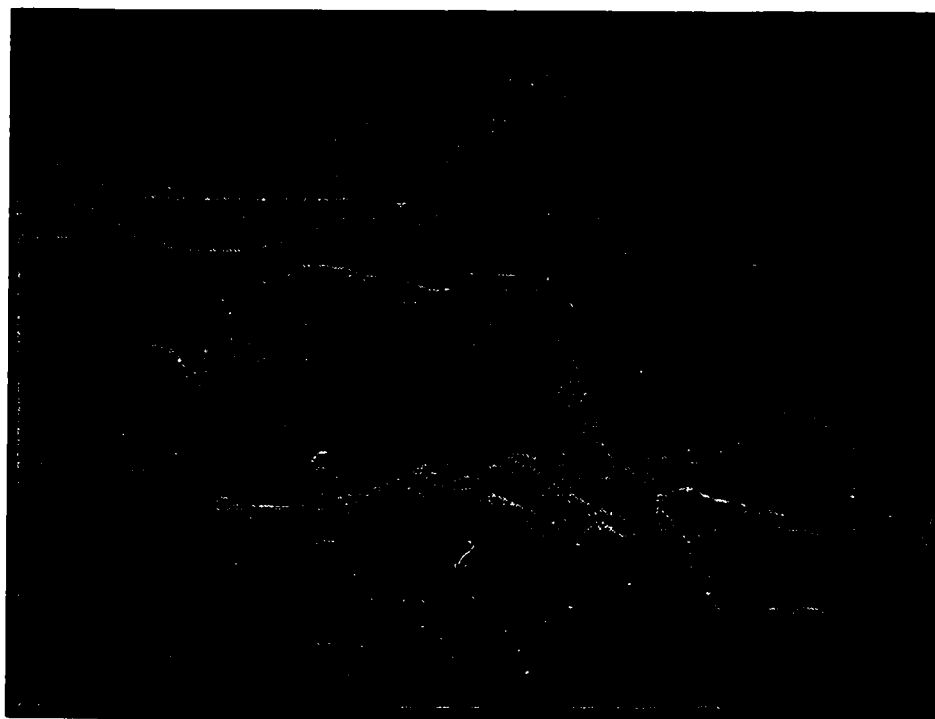


Fig. 50

Alex Colville, *Bodies in a Grave*, oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm, 1946, CWM 12122

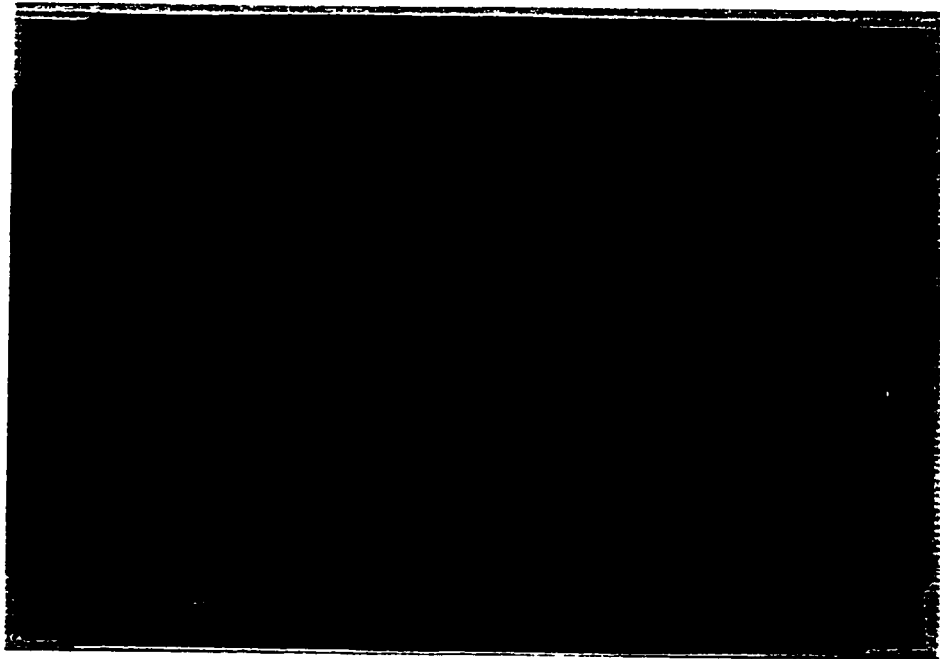


Fig. 51

Aba Bayefsky, *Belsen Concentration Camp – The Pit No. 2*, 1945, watercolour  
and charcoal on paper, 36.1 x 52.4 cm, CWM 10846



Fig. 52

Aba Bayefsky. *Belsen Concentration Camp – The Pit No. 2*, 1945, ink and watercolour on paper. 35.2 x 51.5 cm. CWM 10847

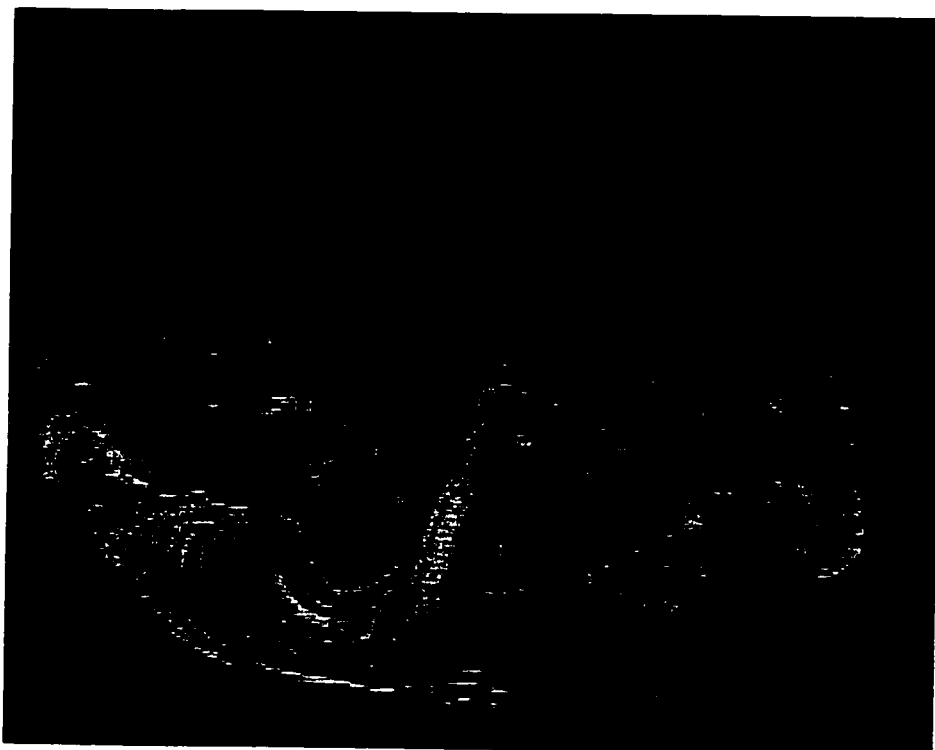


Fig. 53

Aya Bayefsky, *Belsen Concentration Camp Pit*, c. 1945, oil on canvas, 91.6 x

121.8 cm. CWM 10845

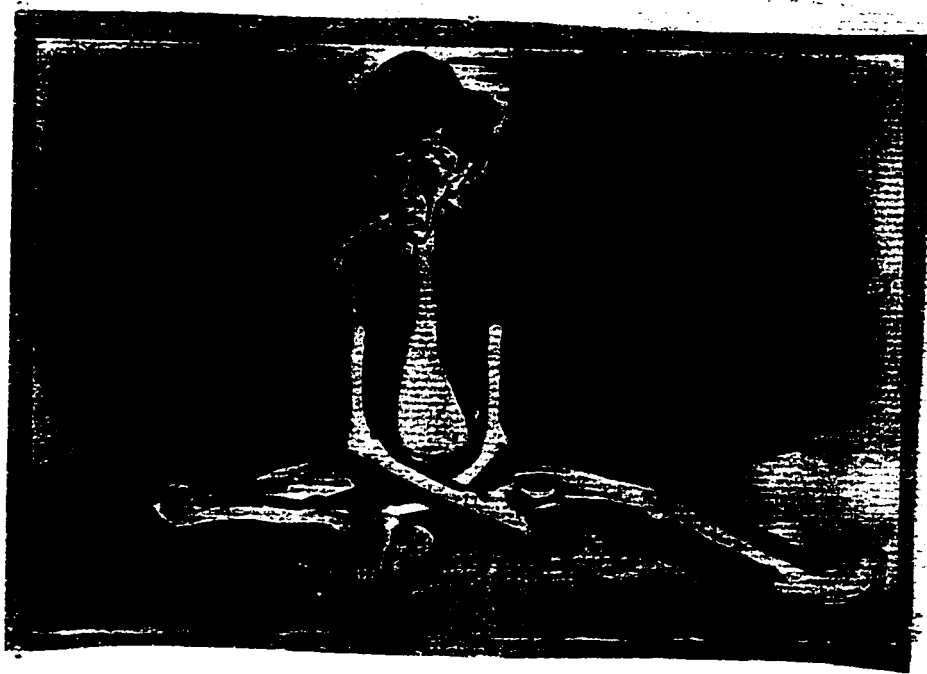


Fig. 54

Aba Bayefsky, *Belsen Concentration Camp – Malnutrition No. 2*, 1945, charcoal  
on paper, 35.2 x 51.9 cm, CWM 10843

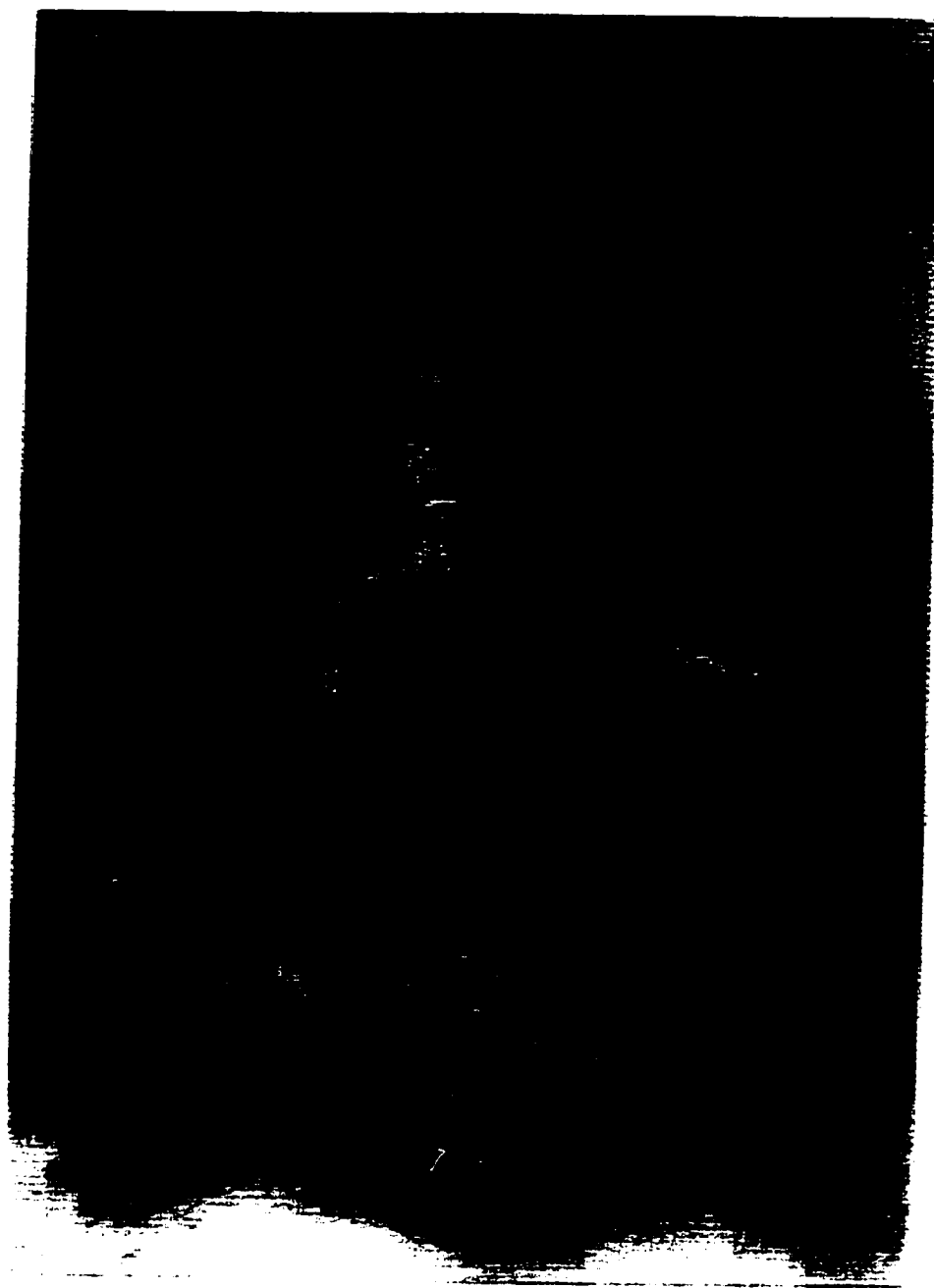


Fig. 55

Aba Bayefsky, *Beisen Concentration Camp - Malnutrition*, 1945, charcoal and  
conté on paper, 47.9 x 34.4 cm, CWM 10842

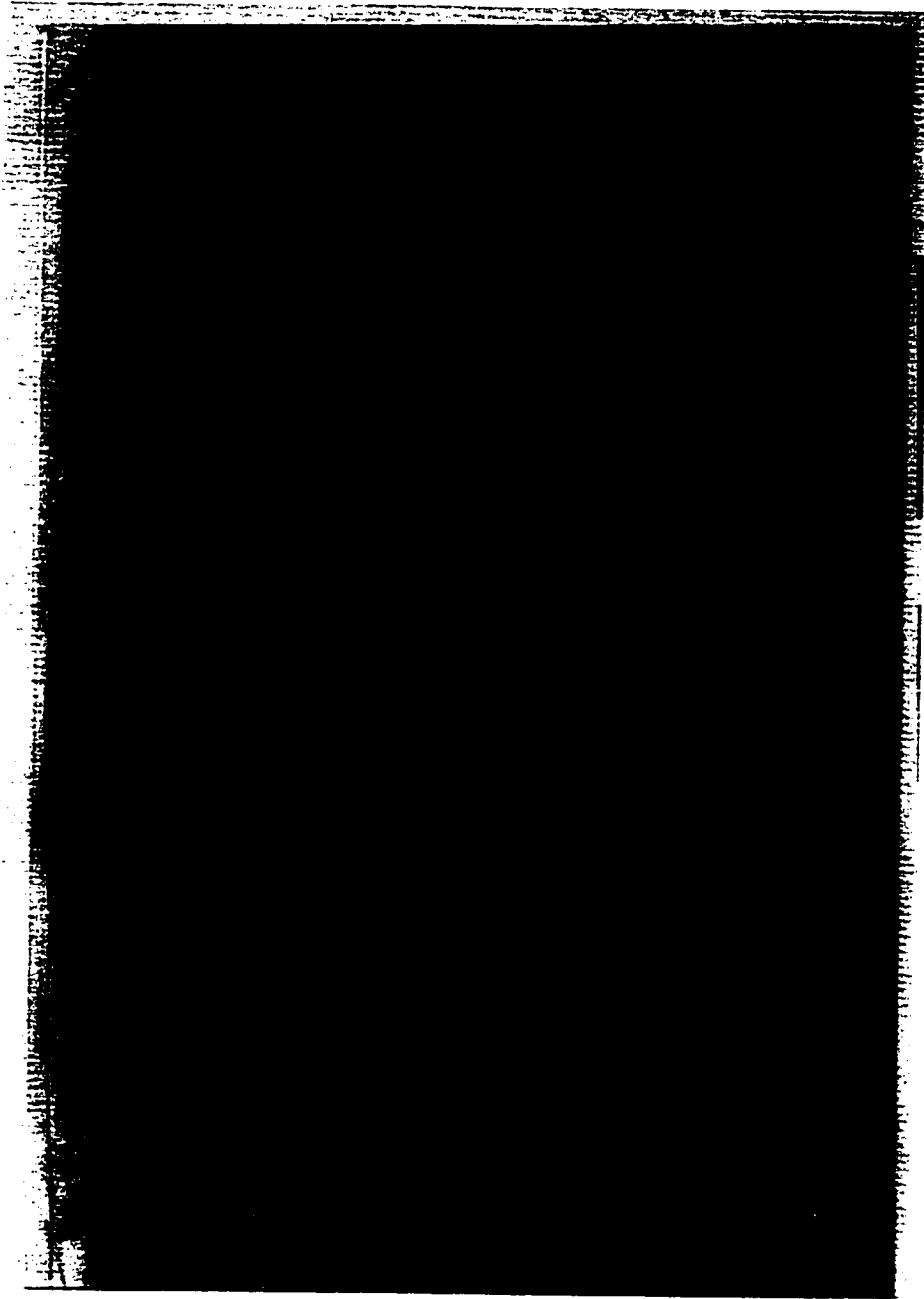


Fig. 56

Aba Bayefsky. *Belsen Concentration Camp – Malnutrition*. 1945, charcoal on art board, 59.2 x 40.7, CWM 10841



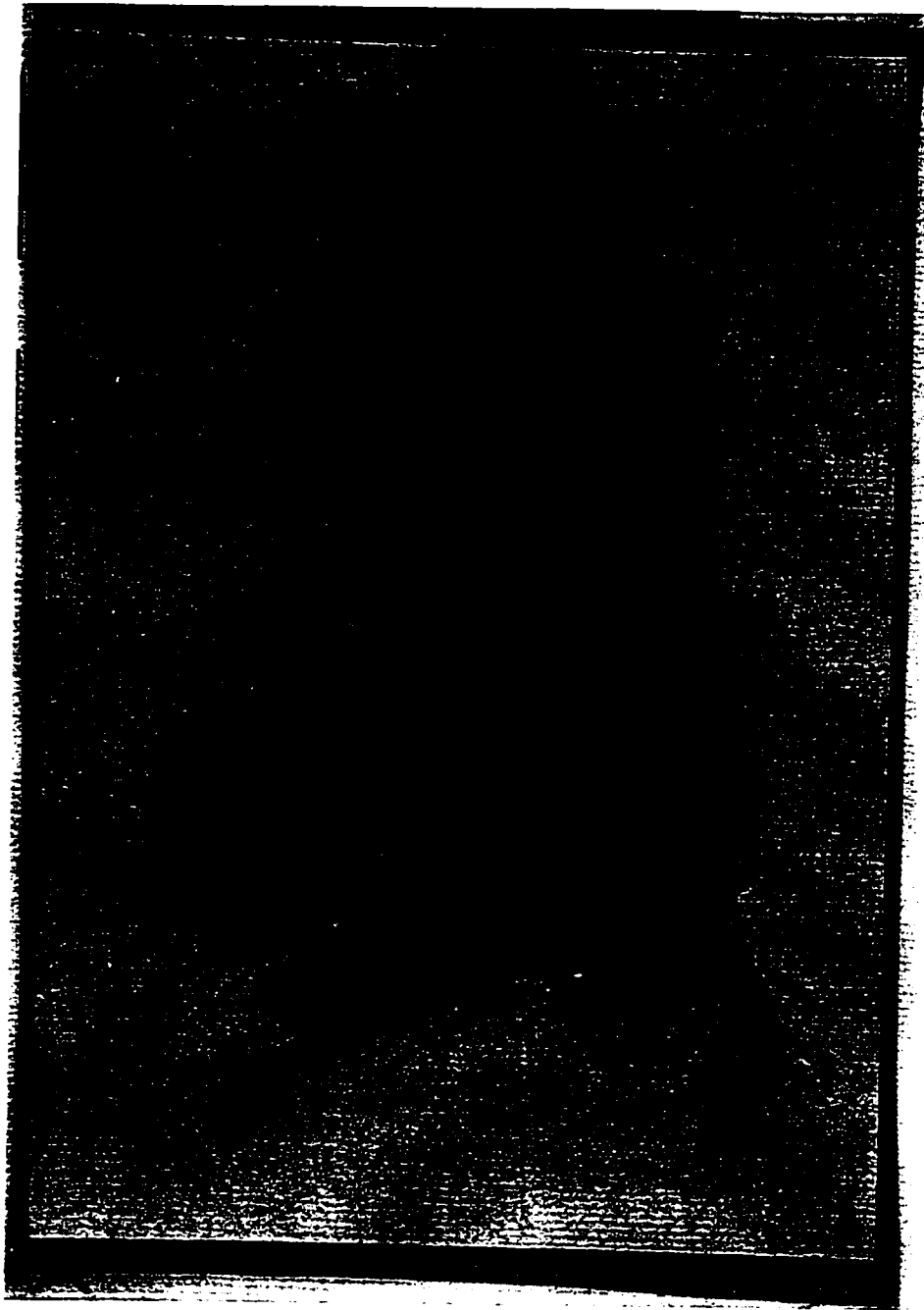


Fig. 57

Aba Bayefsky, *Slave Worker*, 1945, charcoal on paper, 51.6 x 36.3 cm, CWM

10882



Fig. 58

Aba Bayefsky, *Beisen Typhus*, 1945, charcoal on paper, 34 x 50.7 cm, CWM

10848

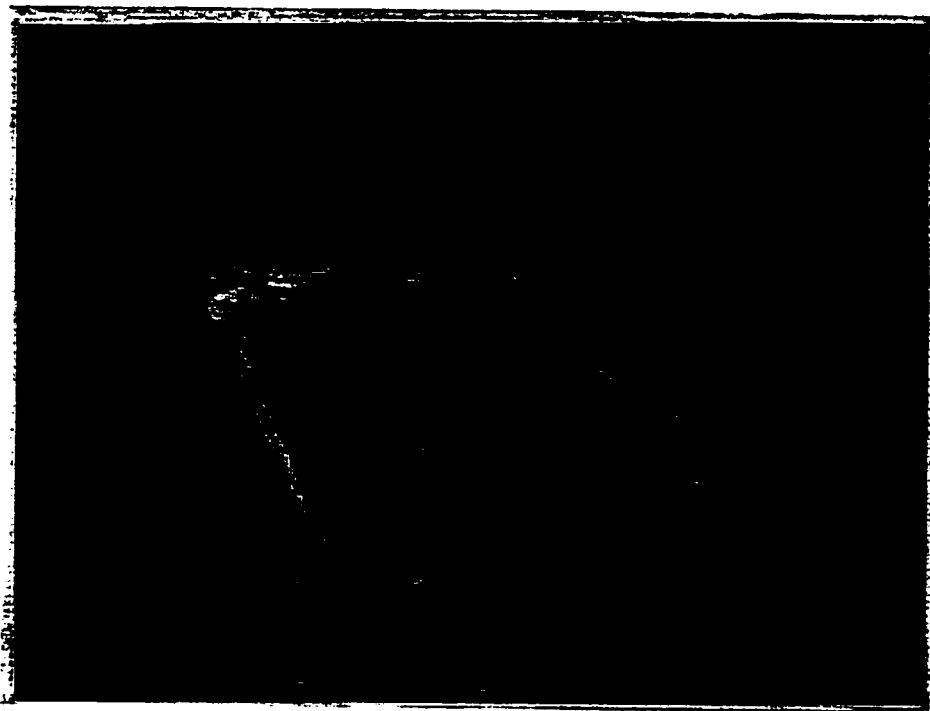


Fig. 59

Aba Bayefsky, *Belsen Concentration Camp, Malnutrition Wards*, 1945, oil on canvas, 69.5 x 91.5 cm., CWM 10844

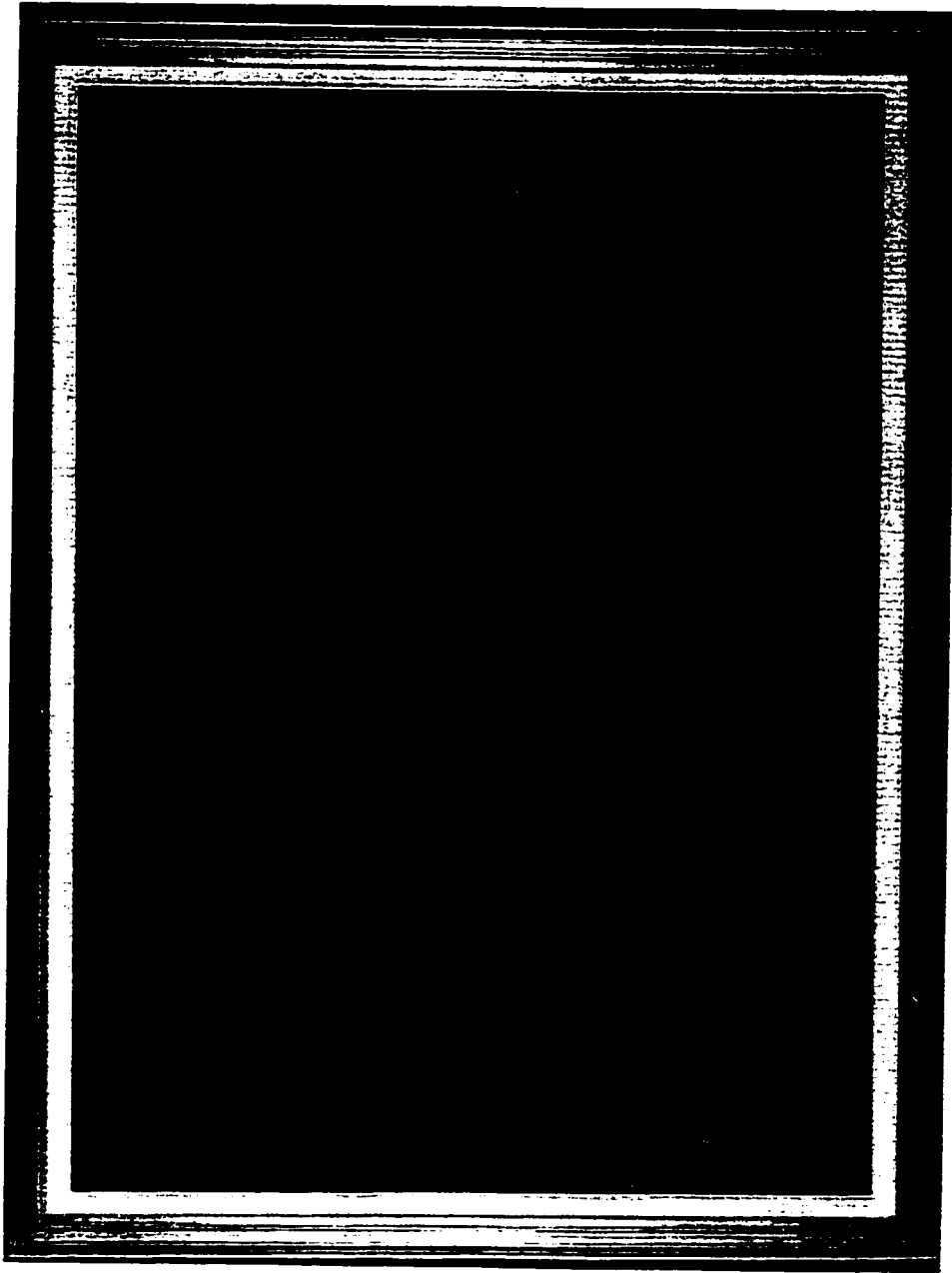


Fig. 60

Aba Bayefsky, *Recruiting Poster*, 1950, oil on canvas, 117.5 x 87.3 cm, CWM

19970112-003

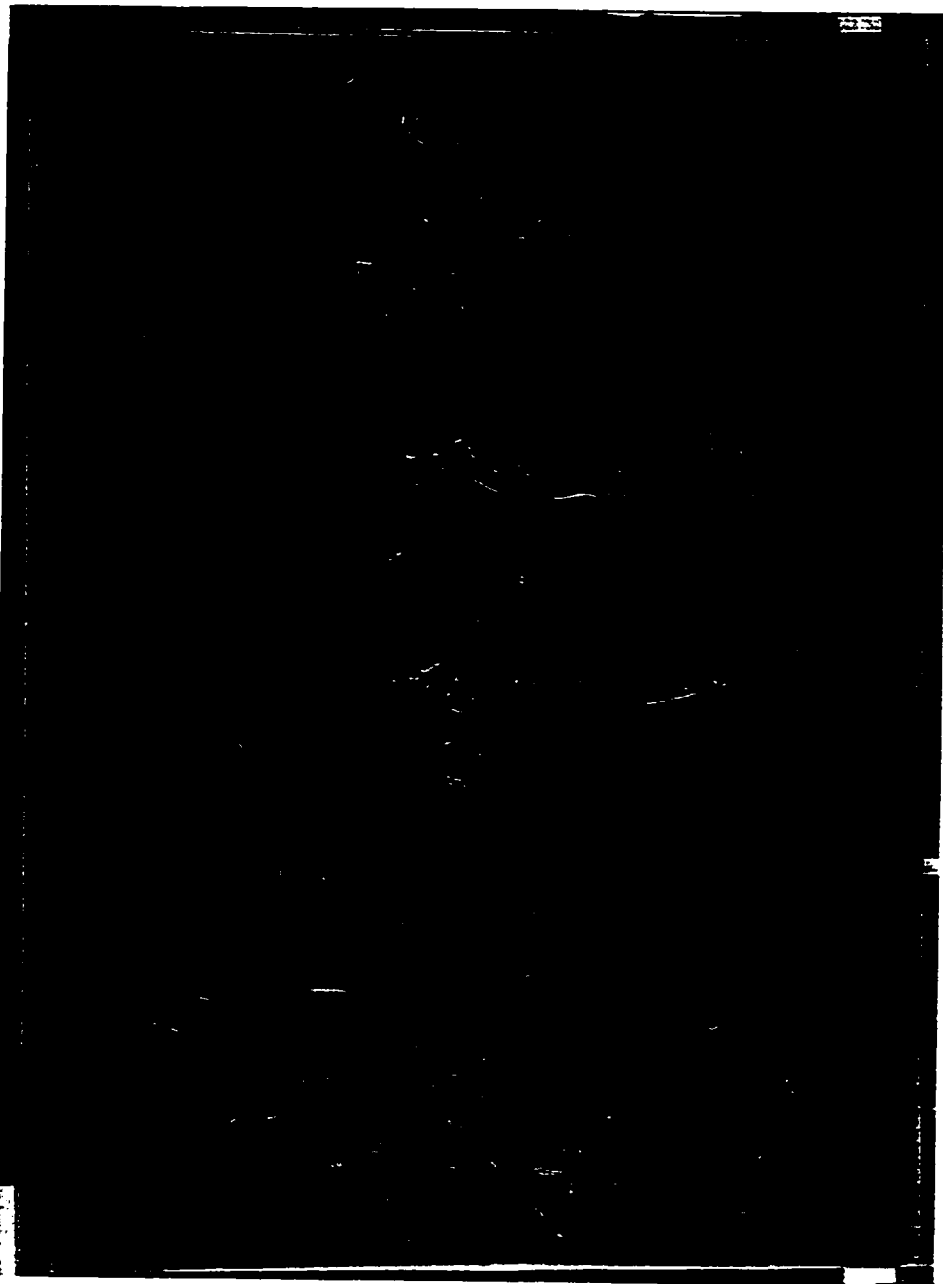


Fig. 61

Aba Bayefsky, *Remembering the Holocaust*, 1988, oil on canvas, 167.7 x 121.7  
cm., CWM 19970112-001

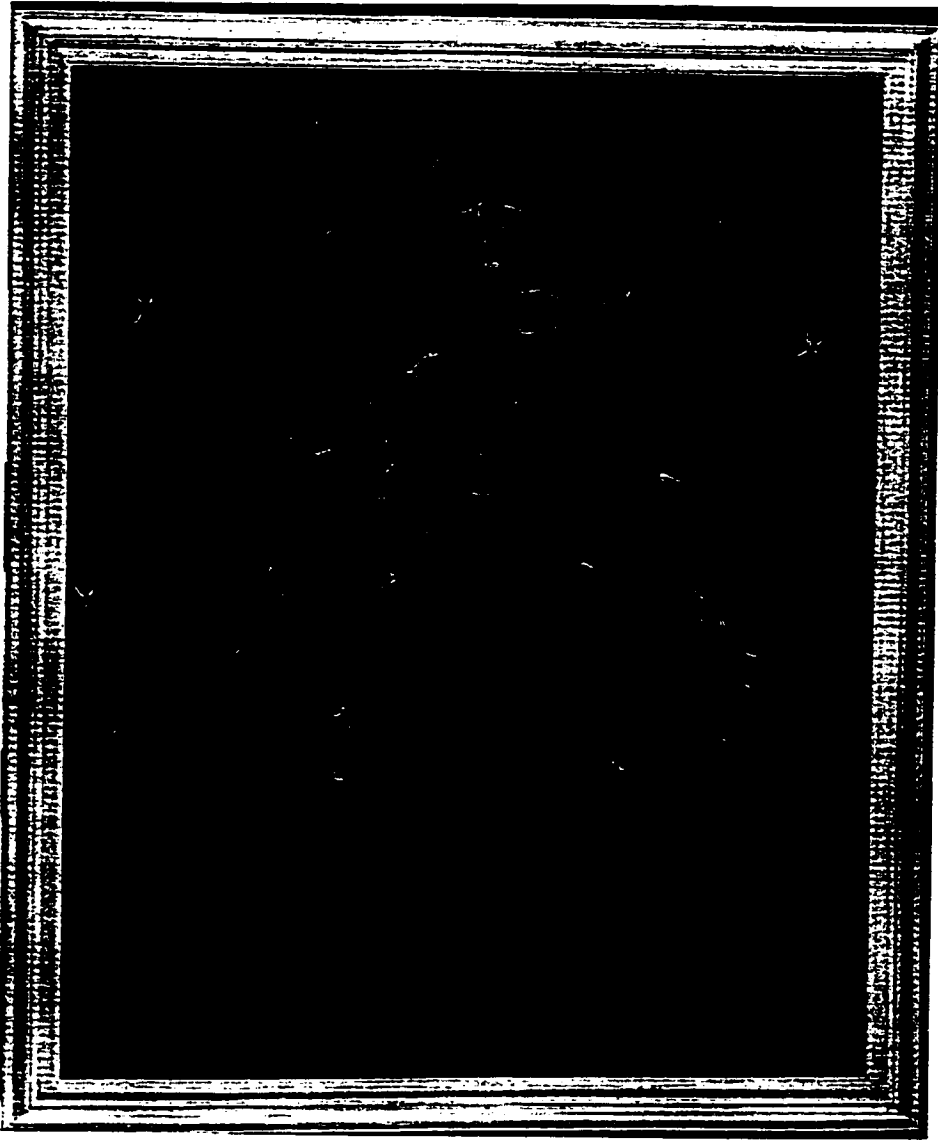


Fig. 62

Aba Bayefsky, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1988, oil on canvas, 127.3 x 101.8  
cm. CWM 19970112-002

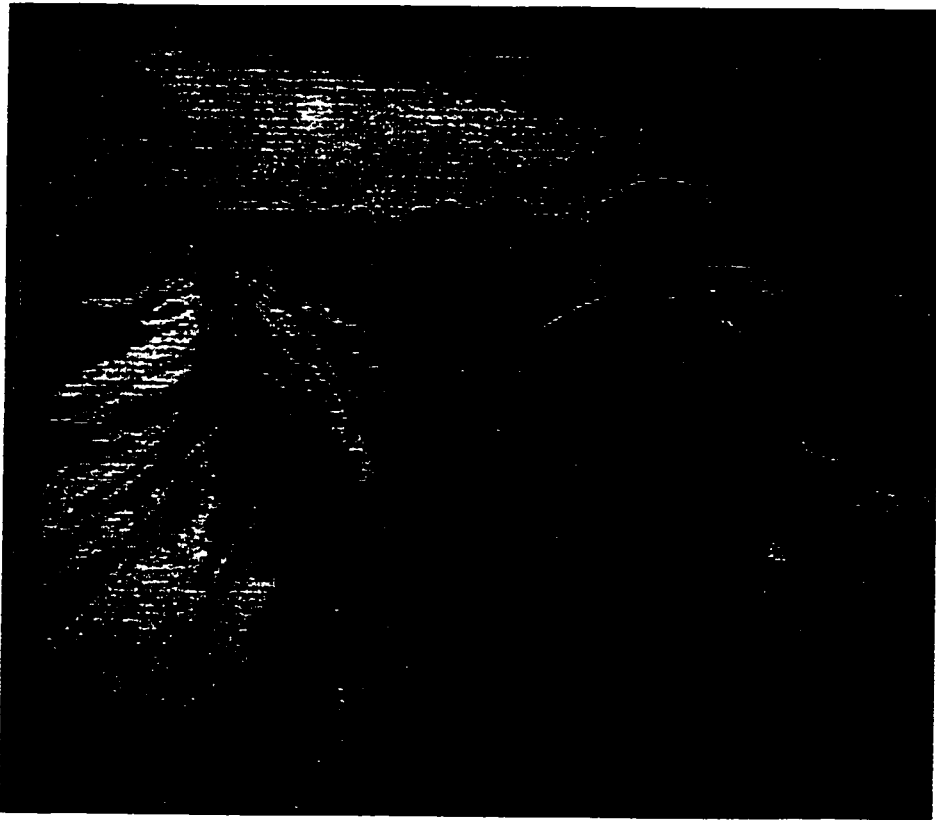


Fig. 63

Alex Colville, *Infantry, near Nijmegen, Holland, 1946*, oil on canvas, 101.6 x

121.9 cm. CWM 12172



Fig. 64

Alex Colville, *Infantry*, 1945. watercolour on paper, 28.7 x 38.7 cm, CWM 12170



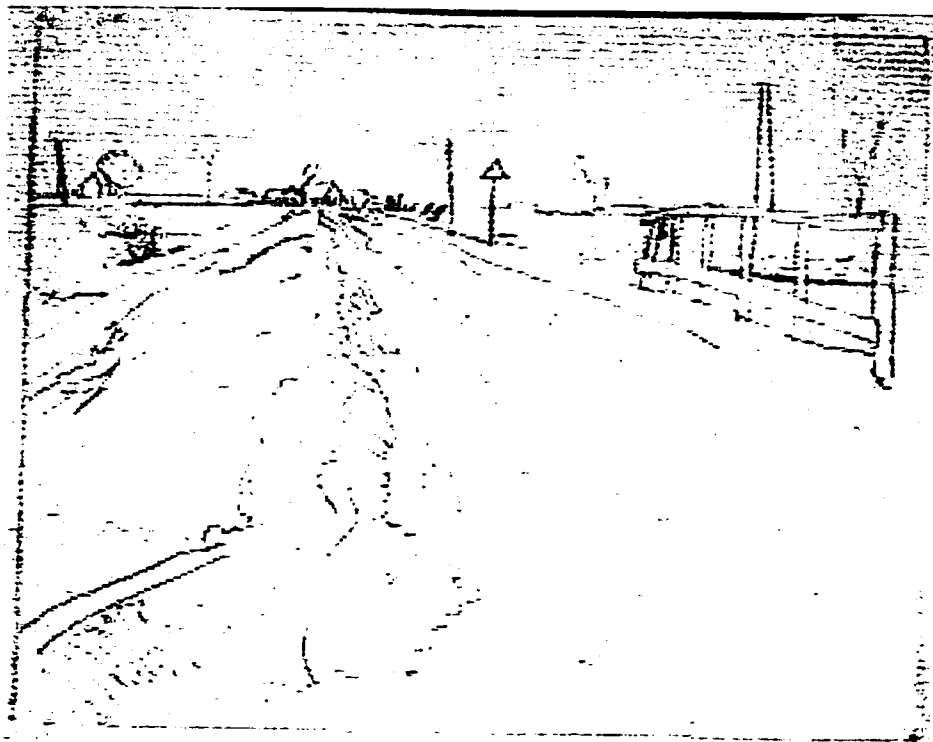


Fig. 65

Alex Colville, *Infantry*, 1945, ink on paper, 21.6 x 27.3 cm, CWM 12145.4



Fig. 66

Alex Coiville. *Infantry*, 1945, watercolour on paper, 17.5 x 21.6 cm, CWM

12145.1

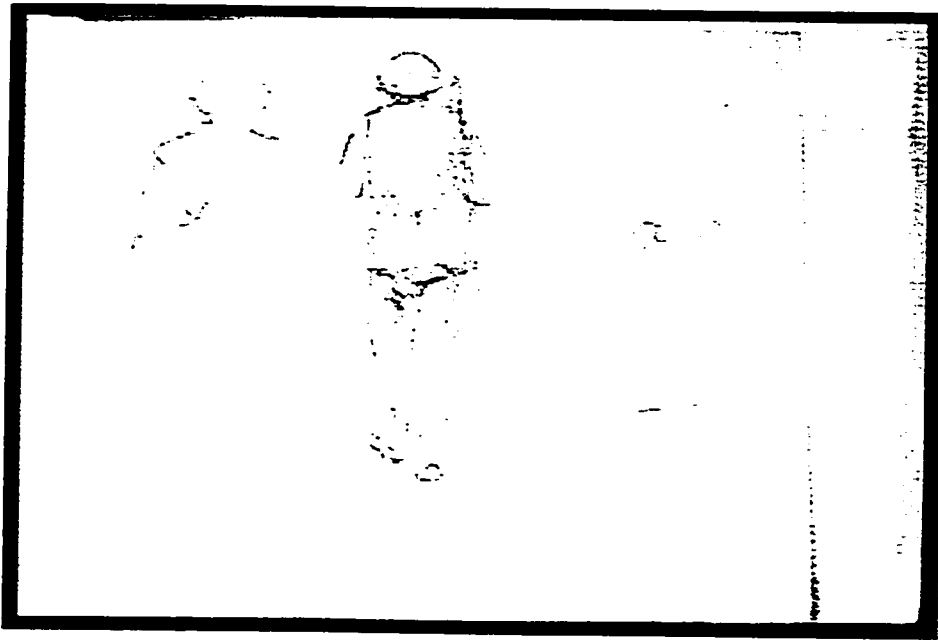


Fig. 67

Alex Colville, *Untitled*, 1945, carbon pencil, ink and wash on paper, 21.3 x 27.3 cm. CWM 12145.2

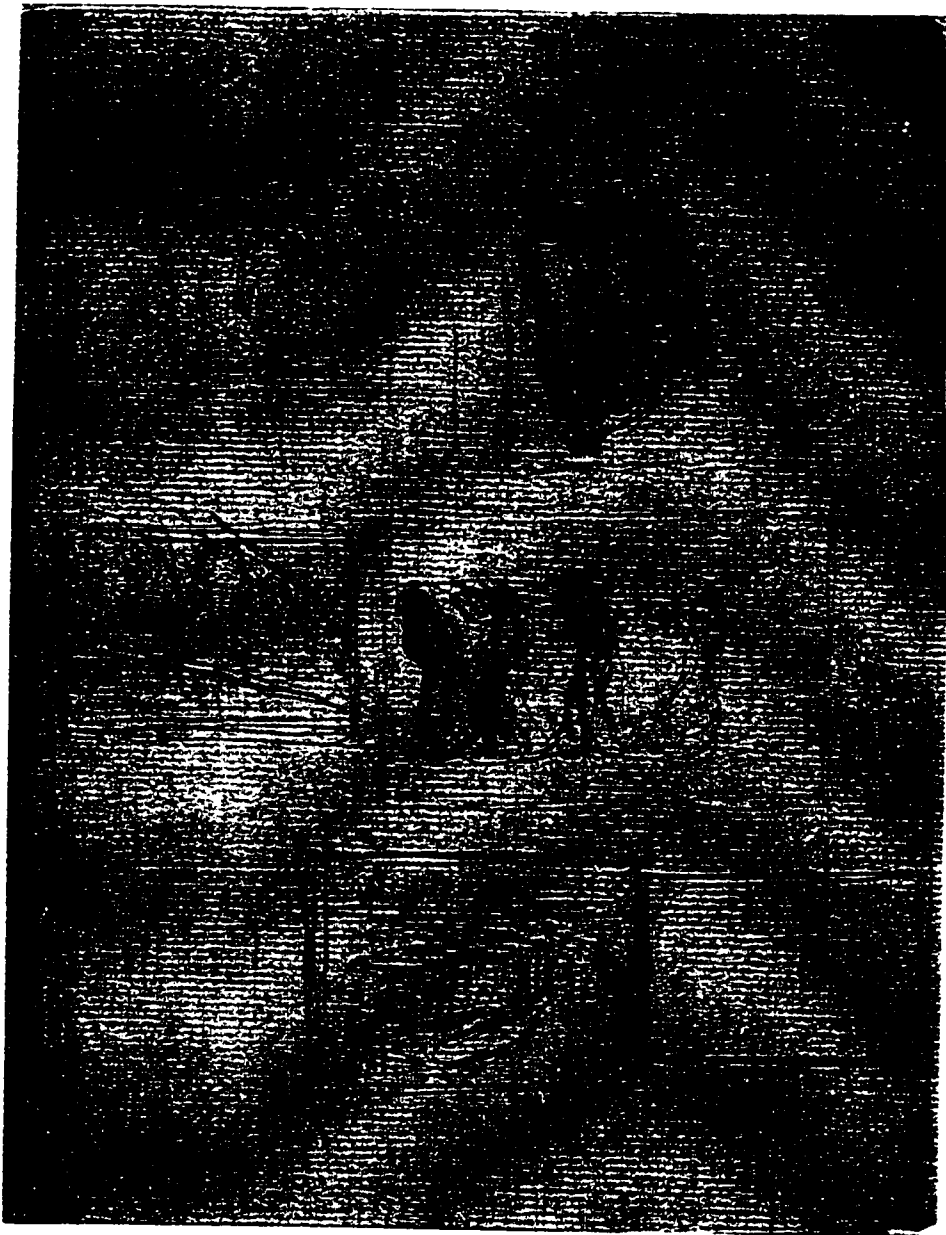


Fig. 68

Alex Colville, *Untitled*, 1945, ink on paper, 25.5 x 19 cm, CWM 82219

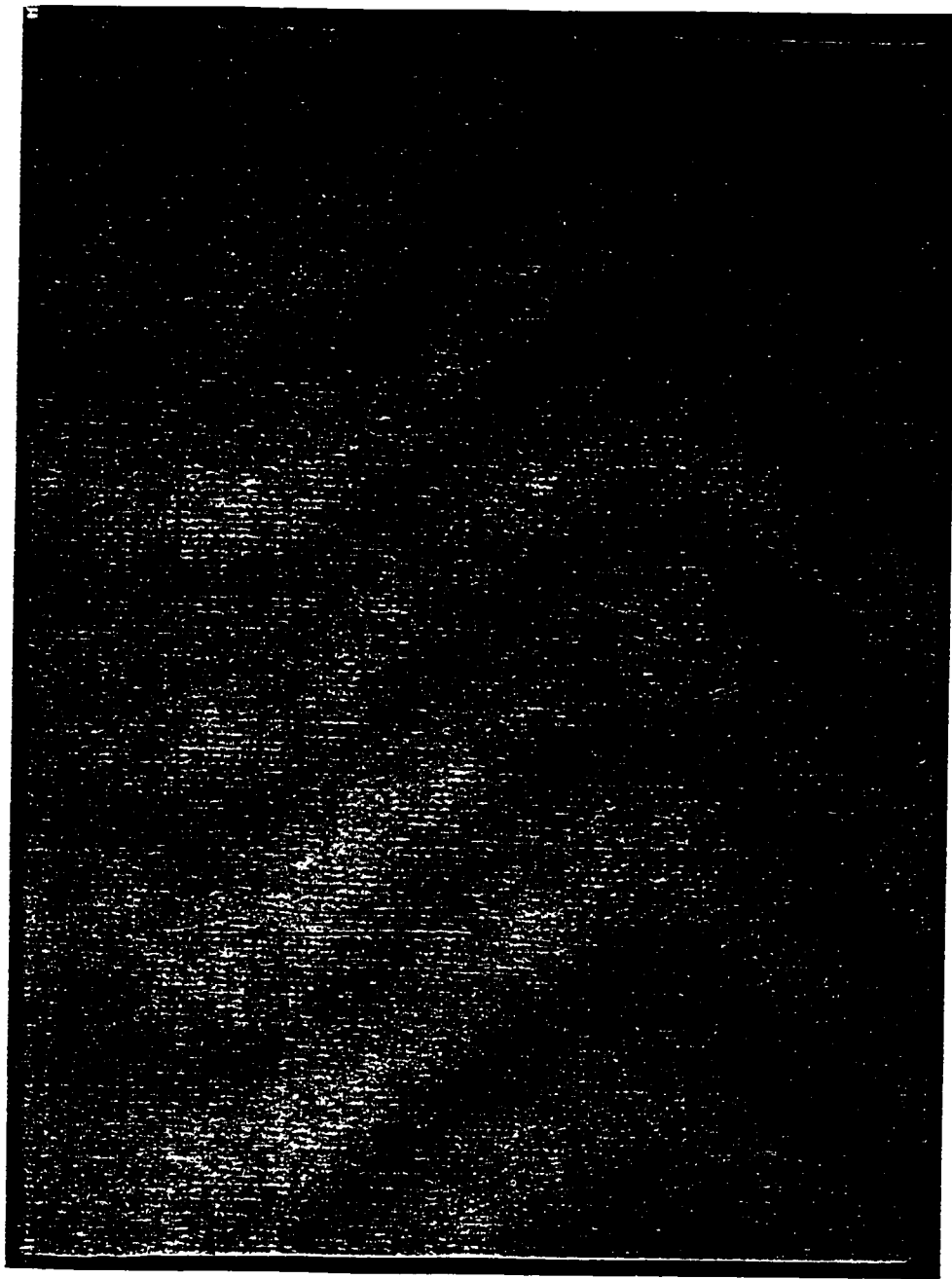


Fig. 69

Alex Colville. *Untitled*, 1945, ink on paper, 25.5 x 19 cm, CWM 82220

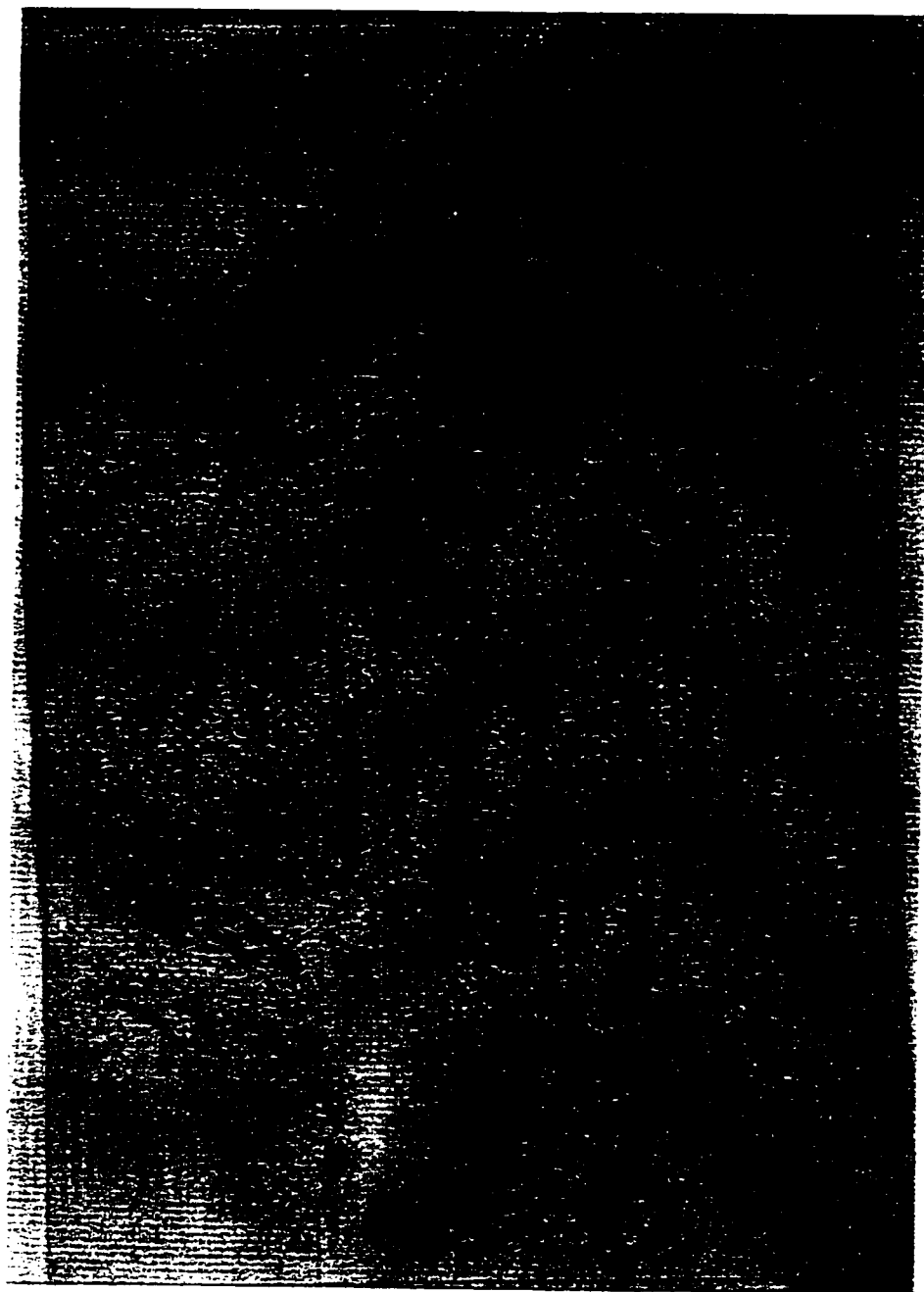


Fig. 70

Alex Colville, *Secondary Sketch of Figures (Infantry, near Nijmegen)*, 1945,  
charcoal on paper, 26 x 17.8 cm, CWM 82205

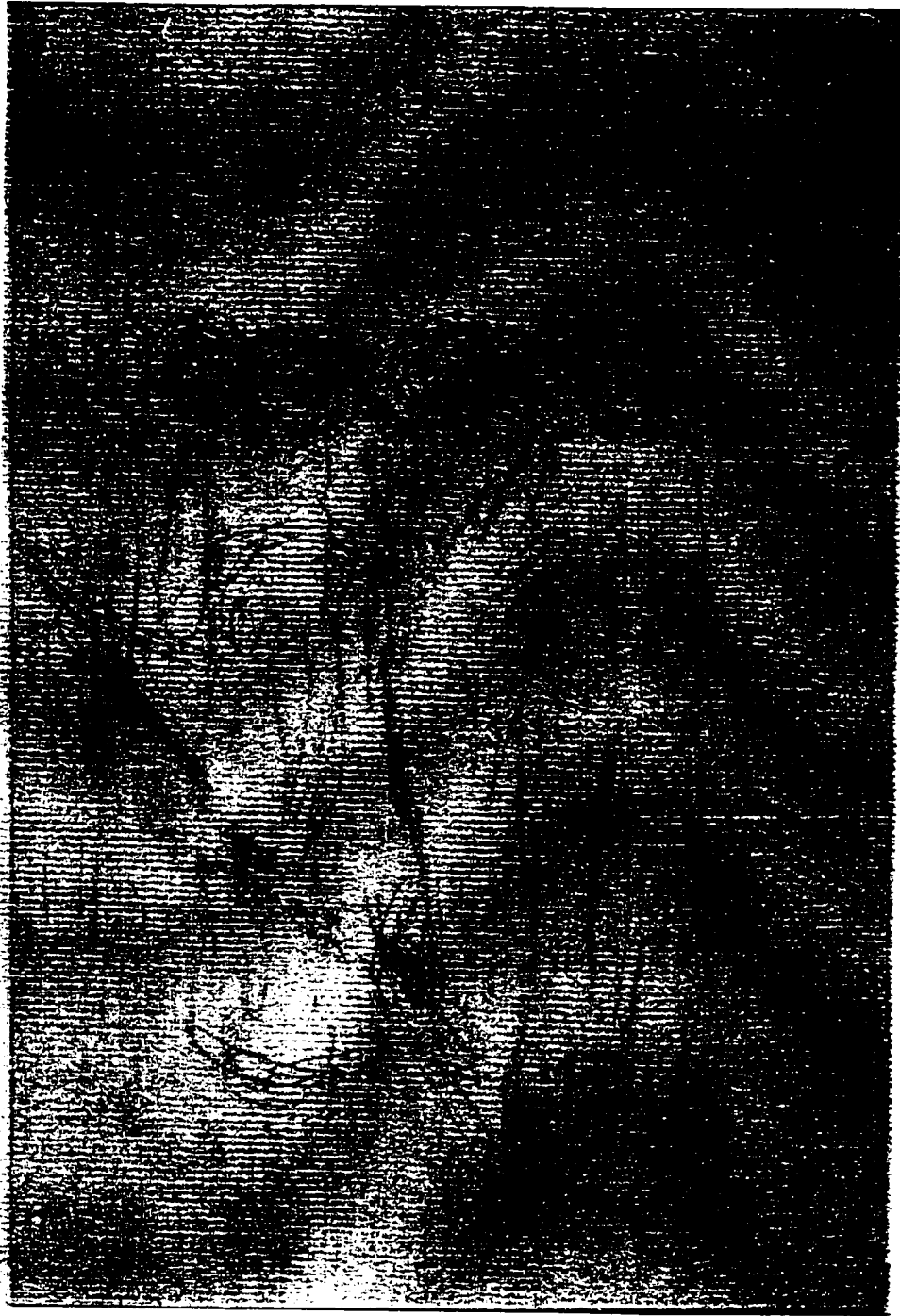


Fig. 71

Alex Colville. *Rough Sketch of Figures (Infantry, near Nijmegen)*, 1945, pencil on paper. 26 x 17.8 cm., CWM 82206

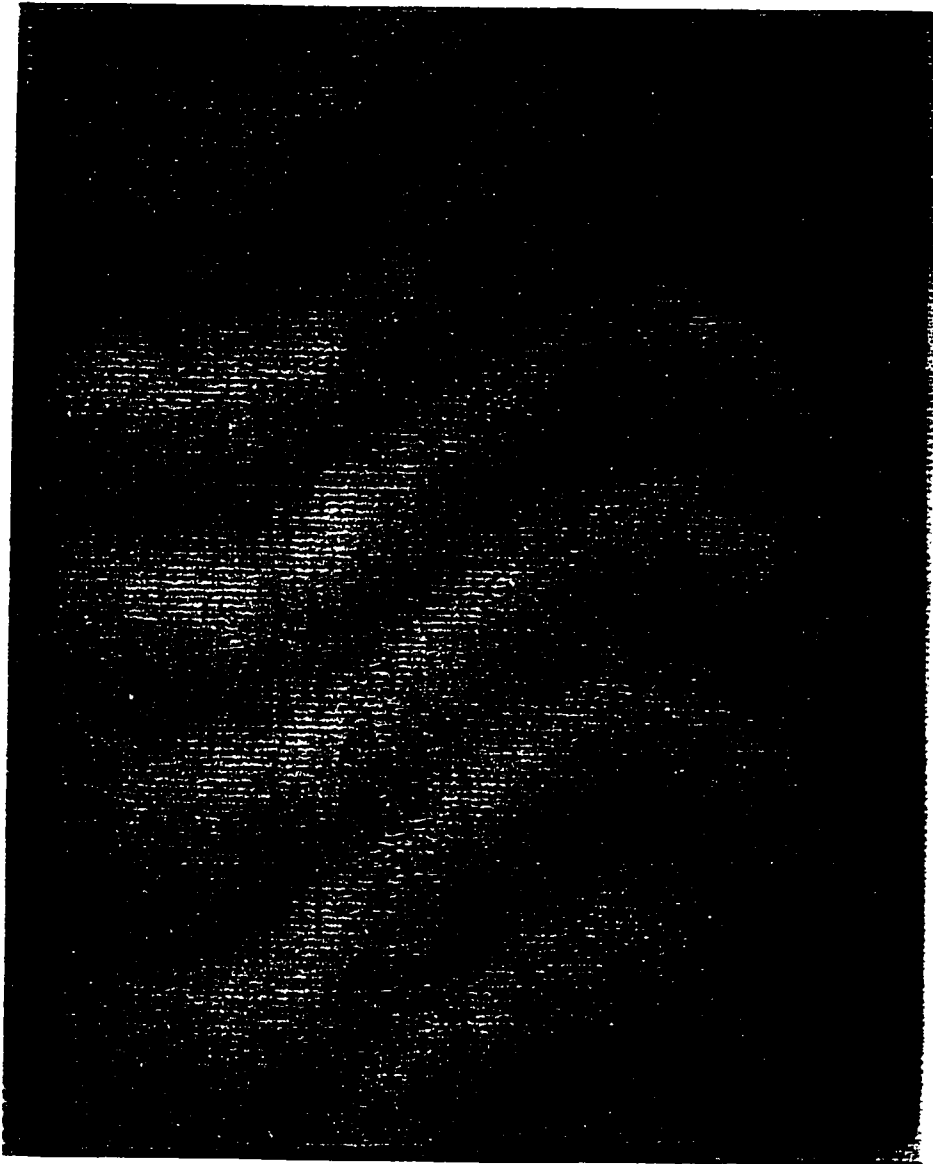


Fig. 72

Alex Colville, *Unidentified Sketches and Notes*, 1945, ink on paper, 25.5 x 19 cm.

CWM 82218





Fig. 73

Alex Colville, *Preliminary Sketch of Figures (Infantry, near Nijmegen)*, 1945,  
charcoal on paper, 26 x 17.8 cm, CWM 82204



Fig. 74

Alex Colville, *Untitled*, 1945, carbon pencil, ink and wash on paper, 22.9 x 18.8 cm, CWM 12145.5



Fig. 75

Alex Colville. *Uniforms Study*, 1945, carbon pencil on paper, 28.0 x 23.0 cm.

CWM 82375

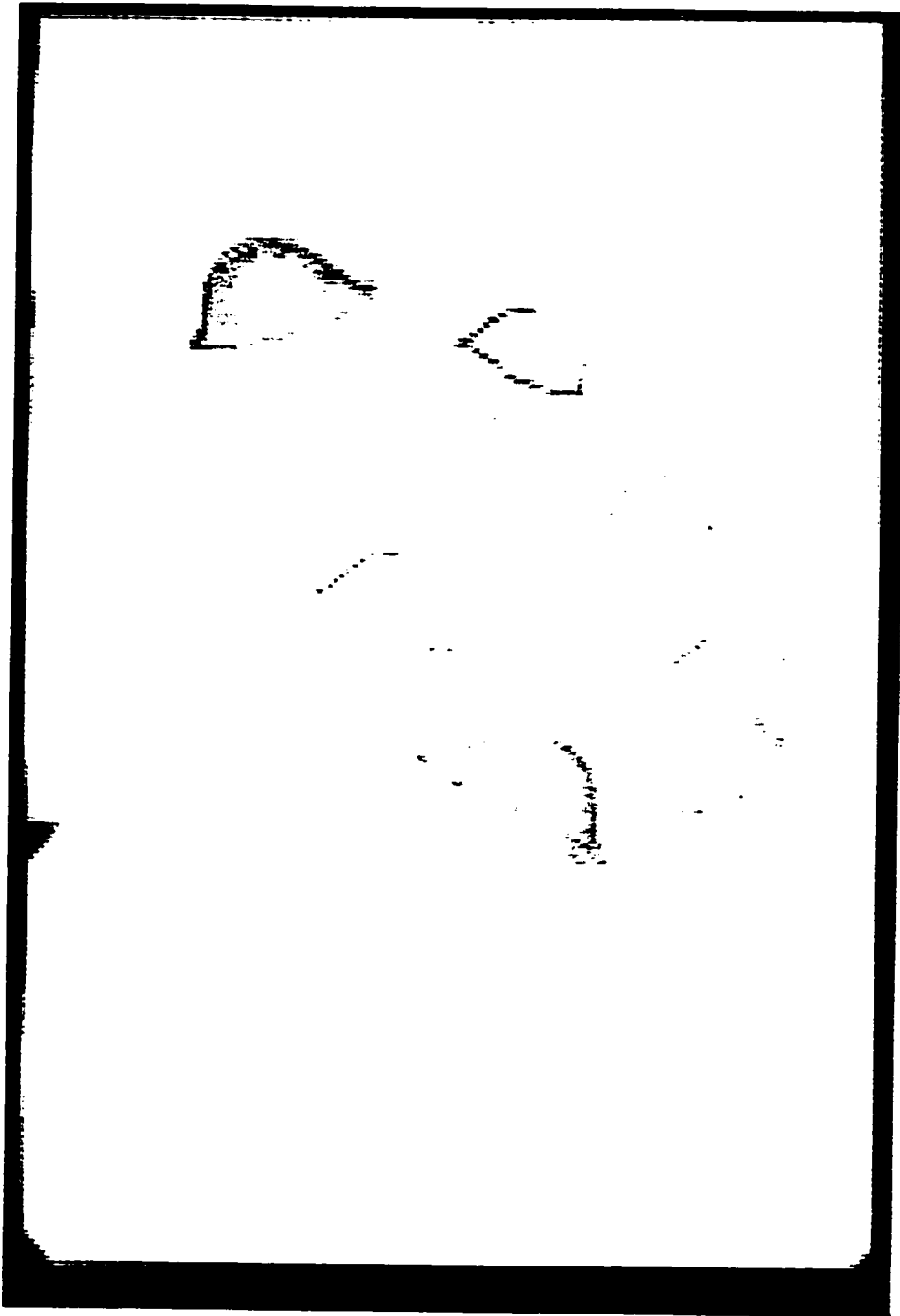


Fig. 76

Alex Colville, *Helms Study*, 1945, carbon pencil on paper, 20.5 x 14.5 cm.

CWM 82298



Fig. 77

Alex Colville. *Untitled*. 1945, carbon pencil, ink and wash on paper, 22.9 x 19.1  
cm, CWM 12145.6



Fig. 78

Alex Colville, *Hand Study*, 1945, carbon pencil on paper, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, CWM

82370



Fig. 79

Alex Colville, *Untitled*, 1945, graphite on paper, 25.4 x 30.5 cm, CWM 12145.3



Fig. 80

Jack Nichols, *Normandy Scene, Beach in "Gold Area,"* 1946, oil on canvas, 123.3

x 137.3 cm, CWM 10523





Fig. 81

George Campbell Tinning, *Canadian Graves at the Gothic Line*, 1944,

watercolour on paper, 56.8 x 39.1 cm., CWM 13843



Fig. 82

Charles Comfort, *Dead German on the Hitler Line*, 1944, watercolour, red chalk, graphite, and black ink on paper, 38.8 x 56.8 cm, CWM 12272



Fig. 83

Alex Colville, *Tragic Landscape*, 1945, oil on linen canvas, 60.9 x 91.6 cm,

CWM 12219

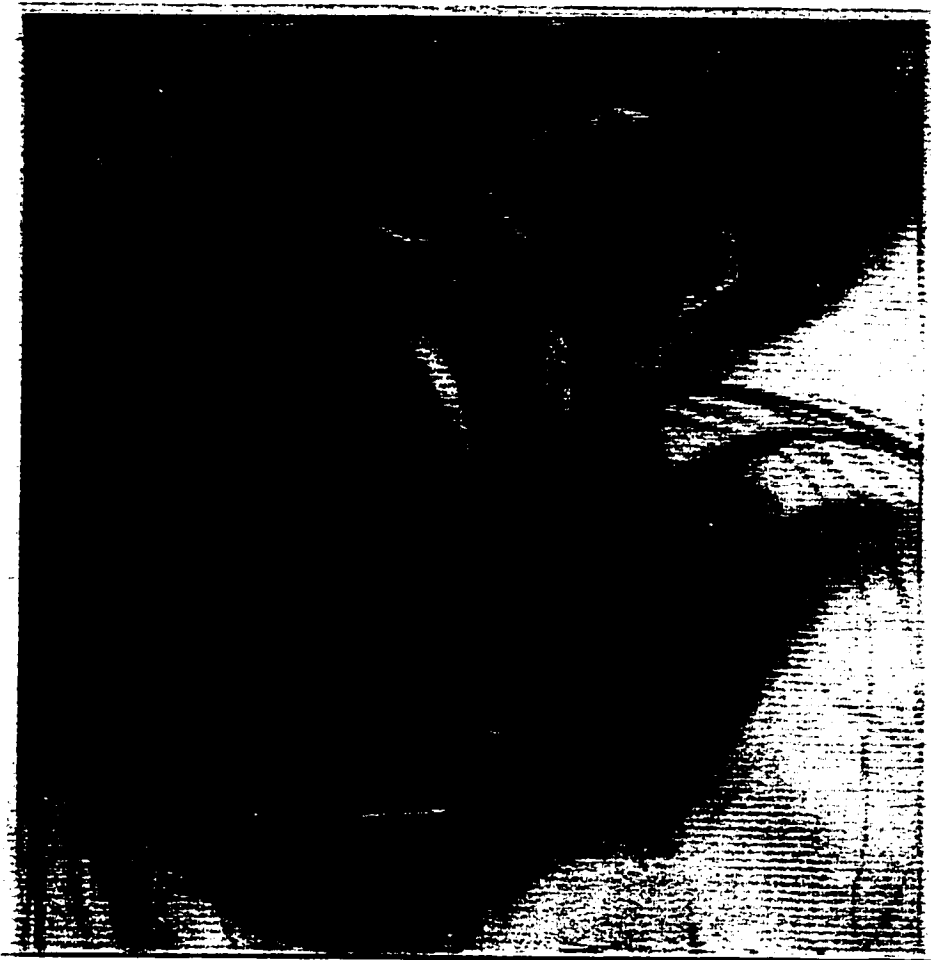


Fig. 84

Jack Nichols, *Ammunition Passer* c. 1943, graphite and oil wash on paper, 35 x 34.5 cm., CWM 10524



Fig. 85

Jack Nichols, *Head of a Wounded Soldier Crying*, 1945, graphite and oil wash on paper, 57.7 x 32.7 cm, CWM 10511



Fig. 86

Jack Nichols, *Study for Drowning Sailor*, c. 1946, graphite on wove paper, 22.7 x  
30.4 cm, CWM 19970042-003



Fig. 87

Jack Nichols, *Troops Moving Forward*, 1945, graphite and oil wash on paper, 57.7 x 32.7 cm. CWM 10531

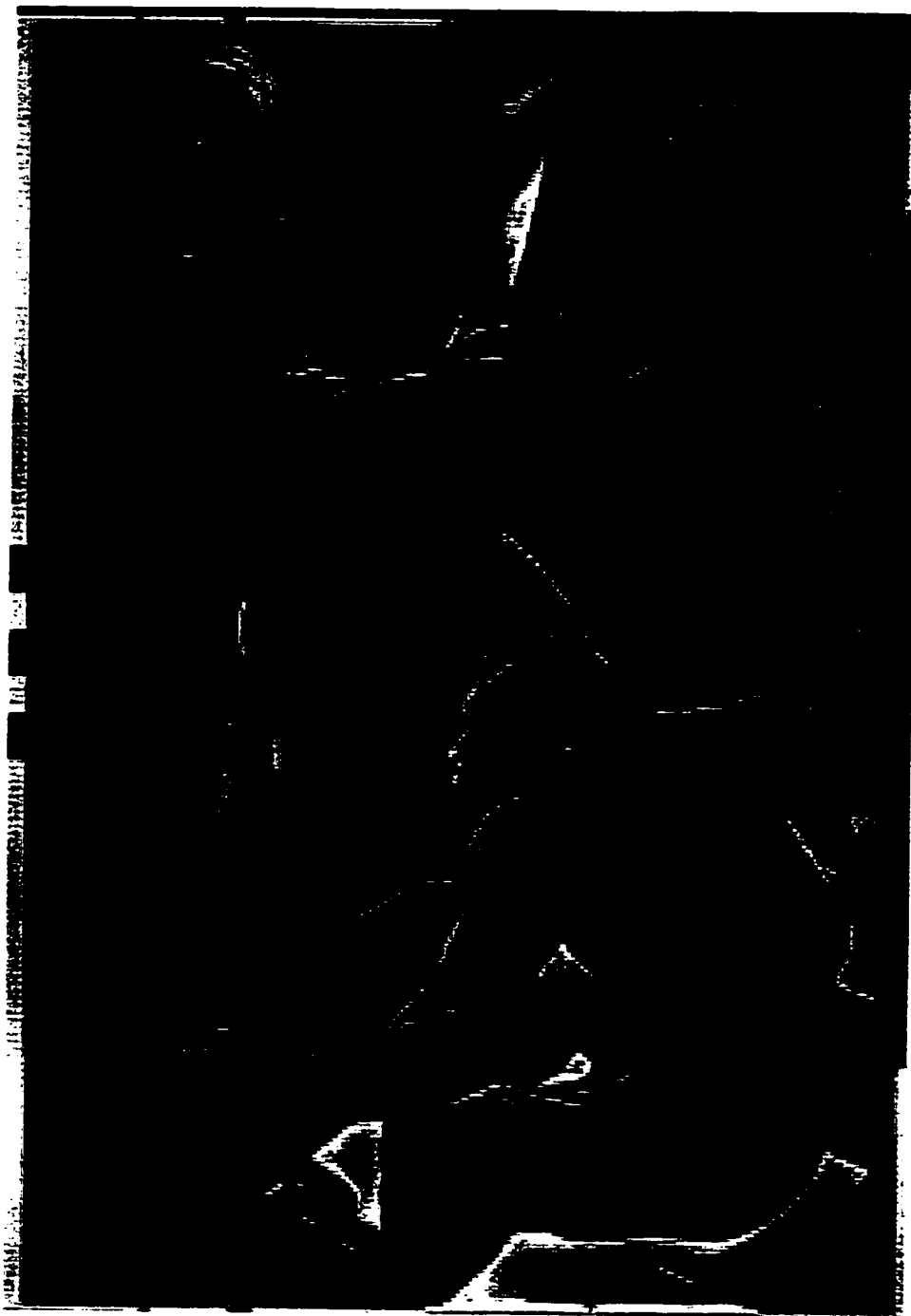


Fig. 88

Jack Nichols, *Men Going to Action Stations*, 1944, oil on canvas, 127.2 x 86.5 cm.

CWM 10515





Fig. 89

Jack Nichols. *Loading Gun during Action at Sea*, n.d., oil on canvas, 60.9 x 45.8

cm., CWM 10514

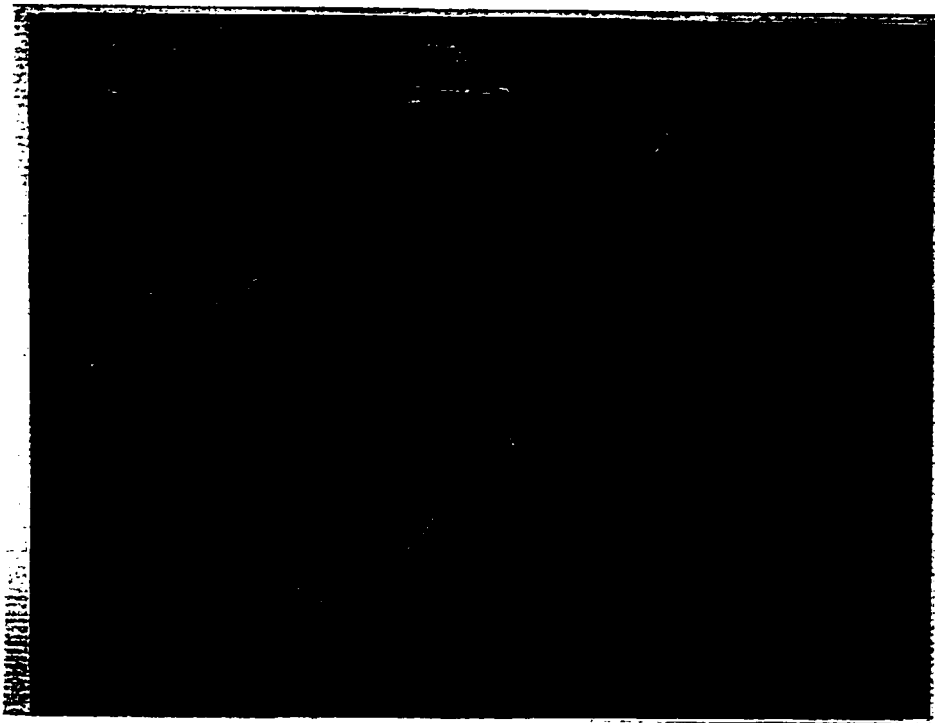


Fig. 90

Jack Nichols, *Action on Board HMCS Iroquois*, 1944, oil on canvas, 59.4 x 73.6

cm. CWM 10500

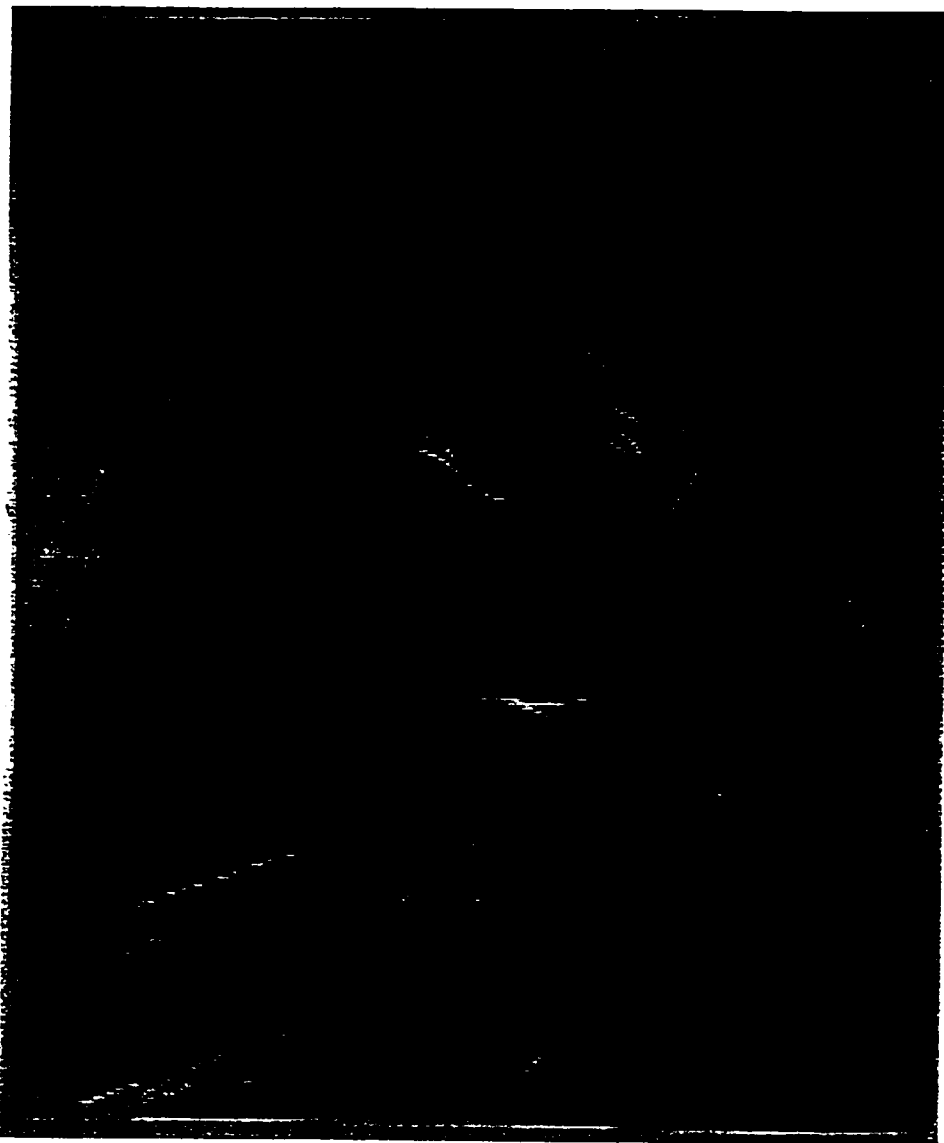


Fig. 9:

Jack Nichols, *Taking Survivors on Board*, 1945, oil on canvas, 122 x 101.5 cm.

CWM 10529