

The Group of Seven, the Great War and the Canadian Landscape

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The Group of Seven is the best-known and most influential group of Canadian artists to have worked in Canada in the twentieth century. Original members F. H. Varley, A. Y. Jackson, Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, J. E. H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer and Frank H. (Franz) Johnston first exhibited as a Group in 1920. LeMoine FitzGerald, Edwin Holgate and A. J. Casson later augmented the Group's membership. The Group ceased exhibiting in 1931.

The First World War experiences of the original Group of Seven influenced the development of their painting styles. While the Group's post-war landscape art is very well known, their war art is not. As a result, the extent to which much of their painting after 1920, in particular their use of dead trees and devastated ground, is indebted to the landscape of the Great War is not widely appreciated. As more and more of their war art becomes available for viewing, whether through exhibition or, as is now possible, on the Internet, it will become clear that, much like the impact of the conflict on the nation itself, Canada's art, too, was forged in the crucible of war.



House of Ypres, A.Y. Jackson, 1917 CWM CN8207

“What to paint was a problem for the war artist... The old heroics, the death and glory stuff, were gone for ever; The impressionist technique I had adopted in painting was now ineffective, for visual impressions were not enough.”

A.Y. Jackson, Canadian First World War artist



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