

2011

NATIONAL GALLERY *of* CANADA
LIBRARY *and* ARCHIVES

THE LIBRARY
----- *of* -----
J. RUSSELL HARPER



11 MAY *to* 26 AUGUST



J. Russell Harper, 1973
Photo: Duncan Cameron
© Library and Archives Canada/
Acc. 1970-015

A DISTINGUISHED ART HISTORIAN, J. RUSSELL HARPER (1914–1983) SERVED AS CURATOR OF CANADIAN ART AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA FROM 1959 TO 1963. HIS PIONEERING RESEARCH AND LANDMARK PUBLICATIONS HELPED TO DEFINE THE HISTORY OF CANADIAN ART AS A NEW ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE. HE WAS LATER INSTRUMENTAL IN FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CANADA’S FIRST MASTERS LEVEL GRADUATE PROGRAM IN CANADIAN ART HISTORY AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL.¹

John Russell Harper was born in Caledonia, Ontario. He studied at the Ontario College of Art, Toronto, then served with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Following the Second World War, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Art and Archaeology from the University of Toronto. Harper held positions at Hart House (University of Toronto), the Royal Ontario Museum, New Brunswick Museum, Lord Beaverbrook Art Collection, National Gallery of Canada, McCord Museum (McGill University) and Concordia University. Among numerous honours, he was the recipient of a Royal Society of Canada

¹ Francess G. Halpenny, “Harper, J. Russell,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, canadianencyclopedia.com (accessed 9 September 2010); Art History, Program Objectives. *Concordia University, School of Graduate Studies*, graduatetestudies.concordia.ca (accessed 12 January 2011).

Fellowship for Research in Paris and honorary degrees from the University of Guelph and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He became a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Officer of the Order of Canada.²

Between 1950 and 1983 Harper authored more than 100 books, exhibition catalogues, journal articles and other texts.³ *The West Coast Speaks* (1952) – an early, handmade book, written, illustrated and published by Harper – combines his training at the art college and interest in indigenous art. A brief text is followed by twenty-one original linocuts inspired by objects in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum. Published in a limited edition of 100 copies, the book appeared in the same year that Harper exhibited *Indian Mask No. 1 (The Lynx Man)* in the annual exhibition of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers. His experiments with block printing were also applied to bookplates [1–3].

The bibliography of Harper's publications reflects his personal research interests as well as his vocational progress. *Canadian Paintings in Hart House* (1955) is a scholarly publication from the beginning of his curatorial career in Toronto. His New Brunswick period is marked by important archaeological and historical studies. During his tenure at the National Gallery of Canada, he wrote the widely disseminated catalogue *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855–1936: Paintings and Drawings* (1963) and coordinated the travelling exhibition, which circulated to six venues from Vancouver to Fredericton.

In landmark publications that followed, Harper drew upon his professional expertise, acknowledged and built upon the work of previous scholars, then forged ahead with new research. *Painting in Canada: A History* (1966; revised edition 1977) was a Canadian centennial project of the Canada Council in cooperation with the University of Toronto Press and Les Presses de l'Université Laval. It was the most comprehensive national survey to date, covering artists and movements in Canada from the seventeenth century to the 1960s, presented in relation to French and English cultural traditions. *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (1970), the first comprehensive dictionary of Canadian artists, has not been superseded in forty years. More than 4,000 entries are based on fifteen years of research in archives, museums, art galleries and private collections, evident in Harper's working manuscript. *Paul Kane's Frontier* (1971) clearly displays Harper's systematic research methodology. It presents a catalogue raisonné of the artist's work, reprints the 1859 edition of Kane's autobiography, *Wanderings of an Artist*, and correlates Kane's sketches and paintings with his text through elaborate cross references.

2 Halpenny, "Harper, J. Russell;" *Canadian Who's Who*, vol. XVII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 454.

3 Brian Foss and Loren Singer, "J. Russell Harper, 1914–1983: Bibliography / Bibliographie." *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, vol. VII, no. 2 (1984), pp. 106–112.

In two simultaneous publications, *People's Art: Naïve Art in Canada* (1973) and *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial and Folk Painting in Canada* (1974), Harper applied his scholarly consideration to a subject inspired by early ex-voto paintings of Quebec, but largely neglected elsewhere in Canada.⁴ In *Krieghoff* (1979) he presented an authoritative account of Cornelius Krieghoff's life accompanied by preliminary notes for a catalogue raisonné of the artist's oeuvre. These monumental works charted a course for future studies in the history of Canadian art [4–13].

During a long and distinguished career, Harper assembled a working library of some 3,000 volumes, donated to the National Gallery of Canada by his widow, Mary Elizabeth Harper Ogilvie (1915–1991), and their daughter, Jennifer Harper (1946–1997). The library reflects Harper's scholarly interests and contains a multitude of materials he used in research for his own publications. He collected hundreds of books and exhibition catalogues that survey the visual arts in Canada and abroad from pre-history to the twentieth century. His library is remarkable, not only for this extensive core collection, but also for its broad subject scope beyond painting and sculpture. The collection encompasses architecture, graphic and decorative arts, photography, archaeology, ethnology, literature, history and subjects related to cultural development. It is especially rich in local histories of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, as well as thoughtfully selected examples of historical Canadiana [14–17].

More than 200 volumes in the Harper library were published before 1900. The era of exploration and discovery is represented with classic accounts of new world travel and Arctic expeditions. In keeping with Harper's commitment to teaching, he collected early publications on art instruction and technique. His interest in historical Canadiana is evident in a myriad of elusive publications such as early exhibition catalogues and collection guides; reports of societies, religious orders and archival repositories; and programs from agricultural fairs and community events. These documents were valuable sources for primary research, often recording the names of artists [18–27].

Harper's bookshelves contained his own writings, those of his contemporaries, works by scholars who preceded him and important studies by the generation that followed. Through his personal library Harper reflected on the development of Canadian art history and discovered directions for future research [28–36].

Jo Nordley Beglo, *Bibliographer*

4 J. Russell Harper, *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial, and Folk Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 6.

CHECKLIST

All works, unless stated otherwise, are from
the library of J. Russell Harper.

- 1 *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, 1792–6.* Notes and biography by J. Ross Robertson. Toronto: The Ontario Publishing Co., 1934. Bookplate stamp, green linocut: “Ex Libris J.R. Harper.”
- 2 J. Russell Harper. *The West Coast Speaks: A Picture Book Inspired by Indian Art of the Pacific Coast.* Toronto: J. Russell Harper, 1952. 1st ed., limited to 100 copies of which this a trial copy. Illustrated with linocuts inspired by objects in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. Signed and numbered by the author.
- 3 *Catalogue of the 36th Annual Exhibition / Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers.* Toronto: Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers, 1952.
- 4 *Canadian Paintings in Hart House.* Foreword by Vincent Massey. Selected and arranged, with notes, by J. Russell Harper. Toronto: Art Committee of Hart House, University of Toronto, 1955. From the library of Carl Schaefer.
- 5 *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855–1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins.* Essay by J. Russell Harper. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963.
- 6 J. Russell Harper. *Painting in Canada: A History.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966. From the library of Carl Schaefer.
- 7 J. Russell Harper. *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. From the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.
- 8 J. Russell Harper. *Early Artists in Canada: Dictionary of Painters, Sculptors, Wood Carvers and Engravers Born Before 1867 Who Worked in Canada: Preliminary Draft.* 5 vol. Manuscript and research work for *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada.* Gift of John L. Russell.
- 9 Paul Kane. *Paul Kane’s Frontier: Including Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America.* Edited with a biographical introduction and a catalogue raisonné by J. Russell Harper. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971; published for the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Limited edition 5/250, inscribed by the author. From the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.
- 10 Paul Kane. *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America: From Canada to Vancouver’s Island and Oregon through the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Territory and Back Again.* Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1968. Annotated.
- 11 J. Russell Harper. *People’s Art: Naïve Art in Canada / L’art populaire : l’art naïf au Canada.* Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1973. From the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.
- 12 J. Russell Harper. *A People’s Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial, and Folk Painting in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974. From the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.
- 13 J. Russell Harper. *Krieghoff.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.
- 14 William T. Baird. *Seventy Years of New Brunswick Life: Autobiographical Sketches.* St. John, N.B.: Press of Geo. E. Day, 1890.
- 15 Georges Bouchard. *Vieilles choses, vieilles gens.* 5th ed. Preface by Rodolphe Lemieux. Woodcut decorations by Edwin H. Holgate. Montreal: Librairie Granger Frères, 1943.

- 16 *Third Annual Report of the Regents of the University, on the Condition of the State Cabinet of Natural History, and the Historical and Antiquarian Collection, Annexed Thereto.* Rev. ed. Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons & Company, Public Printers, 1850.
- 17 The Marquis of Lorne. *Canadian Pictures: Drawn with Pen and Pencil. With Numerous Illustrations from Objects and Photographs in the Possession of and Sketches by the Marquis of Lorne, Sydney Hall; Engraved by Edward Whymper.* London: The Religious Tract Society, 1884.
- 18 R.P.F.-J. Bressany. *Relation abrégée de quelques missions des pères de la Compagnie de Jésus dans la Nouvelle-France, par le R.P.F.-J. Bressany, de la même compagnie. Traduit de l'italien et augmenté d'un avant-propos, de la biographie de l'auteur et d'un grand nombre de notes et de gravures par le R.P.F. Martin.* Montreal: Des presses à vapeur de John Lovell, 1852.
- 19 P. De Charlevoix. *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale; adressé à Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiguières. Par le P. De Charlevoix.* Paris: Rollin Fils, 1744.
- 20 Thomas McKeever. *A Voyage to Hudson's Bay, during the Summer of 1812: Containing a Particular Account of the Icebergs and other Phenomena which Present Themselves in those Regions; also, a Description of the Esquimaux and North American Indians; their Manners, Customs, Dress, Language.* London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1819.
- 21 A. Hervé and F. De Lanoye. *Voyages dans les glaces du pôle arctique.* 5th ed. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878.
- 22 *The Popular Art Instructor, Embracing Plain Directions on the Latest Decorative Arts by Special Artists, also Valuable Suggestions on Kindred Subjects that Tend to Educate and Elevate, by Prominent Writers. Profusely Illustrated with Numerous Engravings and Colored Plates.* Windsor and Toronto: J.B. Young & Co., 1887.
- 23 *Manuel de dessin industriel : à l'usage des maîtres d'écoles primaires : d'après la méthode de Walter Smith : accompagné de cartes-modèles à l'usage des élèves. Adopté par le Conseil des arts et manufactures et par le Conseil de l'Instruction publique.* Montreal: Duvernay Frères & Dansereau, 1877.
- 24 *Report of the Ontario Commissioner to the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.* Toronto: Ontario Department of Agriculture, 1894.
- 25 *Official Programme of the Montreal Citizens' Dominion Exhibition Committee: Entertainments to Take Place from 14th to 24th September, Inclusive, 1880.* Montreal: John Lovell & Son, 1880.
- 26 *The Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London. 1886: Official Catalogue of the Canadian Section. Published under the Authority of the Hon. Sir Charles Tupper ... the Executive Commissioner.* 2nd ed. London: McCorquodale & Co., 1886.
- 27 *Catalogue of the Annual Spring Exhibition of Works by Canadian Artists.* Montreal: Art Association of Montreal, 1886.
- 28 Albert H. Robson. *Paul Kane.* (Canadian Artists Series). Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938.
- 29 Marius Barbeau. *Painters of Quebec.* (Canadian Art Series). Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946.
- 30 Gérard Morisset. *La peinture traditionnelle au Canada français.* (L'Encyclopédie du Canada français, vol. 2). Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960.
- 31 Donald W. Buchanan. *The Growth of Canadian Painting.* Foreword by Eric Newton. London: Collins, 1950. Annotated: "2nd copy / Keep at all costs."
- 32 Graham McInnes. *Canadian Art.* Toronto: Macmillan, 1950.
- 33 R.H. Hubbard, ed. *An Anthology of Canadian Art.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960. Inscribed by the author.
- 34 Dennis Reid. *A Concise History of Canadian Painting.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973. Annotated.
- 35 Michael Bird and Terry Kobayashi. *A Splendid Harvest: Germanic Folk and Decorative Arts in Canada.* Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981. Inscribed by the authors.
- 36 Charles C. Hill. *Canadian Painting in the Thirties.* Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975.

LIBRARY *and* ARCHIVES
EXHIBITION NO. 38

38

ISSN 1481-2061

© National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2011



National Gallery
of Canada

Musée des beaux-arts
du Canada

PRINTED IN CANADA

380 Sussex Drive, P.O. Box 427, Station A
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 9N4

Canada