

Questions to Consider

- Consider your expectations for a Group of Seven exhibition. Do the artworks on display align with your understanding of the Group and their visual style?
- Examine the Lawren Harris work below and locate it in the exhibition space. What does this sketch tell us about the artists' process?
- Do you feel that a sketch, a concept drawing, or a commercial work has as much impact as a traditional oil painting that we might associate with the Group of Seven. Why or why not?



Lawren S. Harris, *Untitled (Study for Lake and Mountains)*, c. 1927, graphite on paper, 20.5 x 25.4 cm.
Gift of Mrs. James H. Knox. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1986.12.3. © Family of Lawren S. Harris.

Thank you for visiting the Gallery today.
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Northern Pine

Watercolours and Drawings by the Group of Seven

from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

October 24, 2020 to March 7, 2021



Franklin Carmichael, *Lake Superior*, 1926, watercolour on paper, 28.5 x 34.2 cm.
Gift of Mrs. R.G. Mastin. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1987.2.3

Looking Closer A free gallery guide to get you started

Introduction

The Group of Seven are best known for their vivid oil sketches and paintings of the Canadian landscape. Each of these men, however, began their artistic careers as draughtsmen or illustrators. Their work in the advertising and design business for firms such as Grip Ltd. and Rous & Mann is actually what brought many of them together.

This exhibition, organized to mark the centenary of the first Group of Seven exhibition in 1920, celebrates a lesser known aspect of their work – drawings and watercolours. Each of these artists is represented by a variety of work, where possible from throughout their careers – commercial art, quick sketches, portrait studies, and watercolour studies which seek to capture the evanescent quality of light in the Canadian landscape. It is now hard to imagine but Canada was not a terribly hospitable place for artists in the early years of the twentieth century. It was the perseverance and efforts of these men that helped change the perception of Canadian art and its place within society.



Arthur Lismer, *I Shall Wander*, c. 1947, ink; gouache on paper, image: 11.4 x 5.5 cm. Gift of Mrs. Marjorie Lismer Bridges. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1981.235

Northern Pine: Watercolours and Drawings by the Group of Seven from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is guest curated by Ian Thom, Curator emeritus of the McMichael. This exhibition is organized by the Kelowna Art Gallery.

Founding Members of the Group of Seven

- Alexander Young (A.Y.) Jackson (1882-1974)
- Arthur Lismer (1885-1969)
- Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945)
- Francis Hans (Frank) Johnston (1888-1949)
- Frederick Horsman (F.H.) Varley (1881-1969)
- James Edward Hervey (J.E.H.) MacDonald (1873-1932)
- Lawren Stewart Harris (1885-1970)

Group of Seven Timeline

1911-1913: A group of painters and commercial artists befriend each other in Toronto at the design firm Grip Ltd. They begin meeting to critique one another's paintings, share ideas, and discuss technique.

1913: J.E.H. MacDonald and Lawren Harris travel to Buffalo, NY to see an exhibition of contemporary Scandinavian paintings and are inspired by the vivid visual style.

1915: The group temporarily split during World War I. During this time A.Y. Jackson and F.H. Varley became official war artists.

July 8, 1917: Tom Thompson dies in Algonquin Park. Though he was never a member of the Group he was profoundly influential and encouraged the other members to paint the landscapes of Northern Ontario.

1920: The Group of Seven is officially founded as a self-proclaimed group of modern artists devoted to creating a distinct new form of Canadian art.

May 7, 1920: The Group holds their first exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario).

1920s: The Group members travel extensively throughout Canada during this decade, seeking inspiration from the landscapes of British Columbia, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Northern Ontario, and the Arctic.

1926: Franz Johnston resigns from the Group and A.J. Casson is made a member.

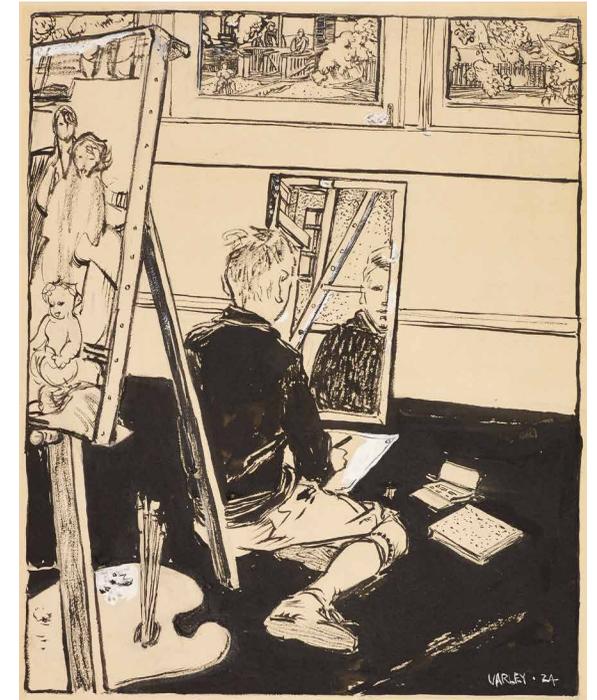
1929: Edwin Holgate joins the Group.

Early 1930s: By the turn of the decade the Group of Seven's influence is widespread, calling into question the long-term viability of the Group.

1931: Eighth and final Group exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto.

1932: J.E.H. MacDonald dies. LeMoine FitzGerald joins the Group.

1933: The Group of Seven disbands.



F.H. Varley, *John in the Studio*, 1924, ink and ballpoint pen over graphite with additions of gouache on paper, 33.4 x 27.7 cm. Gift of the Founders, Robert and Signe McMichael. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1966.16.143