

Only Canadian Appearance

Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection for ten weeks only

November 3, 2012 to January 6, 2013

This special exhibition, featuring the works of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, makes its triumphant return to Canada following a very successful European tour

September 27, 2012, Kleinburg, ON – The McMichael Canadian Art Collection in conjunction with London's Dulwich Picture Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) are pleased to announce the most impressive exhibition dedicated to Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven ever to travel to Great Britain and Europe will return to Canada for an exclusive engagement at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, from November 3, 2012 to January 6, 2013.

Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven is organized by the National Gallery of Canada and Dulwich Picture Gallery, in collaboration with the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, and the Groninger Museum, the Netherlands, with the generous support of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and other lenders. The Canadian galleries are lending some of the country's most iconic paintings, and a significant number of rarely seen works are coming from private collections.

Dr. Victoria Dickenson, McMichael Executive Director & CEO, said, "It is a great privilege to be able to exhibit *Painting Canada* at the McMichael. The art of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven is at the core of the McMichael's collection, and this outstanding exhibition lets us appreciate the artists' mastery and vision from a fresh perspective, thanks to curator Ian Dejardin's unique insights. We are also very grateful to all the lenders, public and private, whose generous loans have made this exhibition possible."

"RBC Wealth Management is honoured to continue as the presenting sponsor of ***Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven***, upon the exhibition's successful return to Canada," said George Lewis, Group Head of RBC Wealth Management. "The exhibition was enthusiastically received while in Europe, a testament to the relevance and influence of these iconic works on the world stage."

The presentation of this outstanding exhibition in Canada would not be possible without the generous financial support of our sponsors, patrons and funding agencies. They have been tremendously supportive of this project and in fact, RBC Wealth Management and AIMIA helped to make the European tour a reality and we are thrilled they are continuing their invaluable financial support with the presentation of the exhibition at the McMichael. As well, the McMichael is grateful to have the support of its Exhibition Patron, the A.K. Prakash Foundation.

"The Trustees of the A.K. Prakash Foundation are pleased to provide support for this exhibition at the McMichael. The Foundation is committed to promoting the critical role of historical Canadian art in defining who we are as a society and expressing Canadian identity in an increasingly global context," said Ash Prakash, Chairman of the A.K. Prakash Foundation.

Ian Dejardin, Director at Dulwich Picture Gallery, said, "These artists produced some of the most vibrant and beautiful landscapes of the 20th century. The Canadians have kept this particular light under a bushel for far too long – I am proud, and frankly amazed, that this is to be the very first major exhibition of their work to be held in this country since the sensation of their first showing here in 1924. As for Tom

Thomson – what he achieved in his tragically short career (just five years) is extraordinary. He is Canada's very own Van Gogh. We were thrilled with the public response to this exhibition and in fact, the exhibition broke records for the largest single day attendance in our history.”

“We are delighted that a British admirer of the Group of Seven, Ian Dejardin, chose to mount an exhibition of Canadian art to mark the Bi-centenary of the Dulwich Picture Gallery,” said NGC Director, Marc Mayer. “Not only did this exhibition break records for attendance and gift shop sales in Dulwich, but it was widely praised in both the British mainstream and art press alike and went on to delight audiences in Norway and the Netherlands.”

Painting Canada features some of Canada's most famous landscape paintings. These bold and exciting works were first celebrated not in Canada, but in London, at the British Empire exhibitions at Wembley in 1924 and 1925. Since then, despite becoming greatly revered in Canada, the work of Thomson and the Group of Seven has remained virtually unknown on the international stage. This major exhibition of Canadian art was the largest in history to travel to Europe featuring an astonishing 122 paintings, as well as Tom Thomson's sketch box.

The beginnings of a new art movement

Tom Thomson and J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Frederick Varley, Frank Johnston and Franklin Carmichael met as employees of the design firm Grip Ltd. in Toronto. The other two members of the Group were A.Y. (Alexander Young) Jackson from Montreal, and Lawren Harris, effectively the Group's leader. They often met at the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto to discuss their opinions and share their art.

The artists, sometimes known as the 'Algonquin School' at this stage, received indirect monetary support from Harris (heir to the Massey-Harris farm machinery fortune) and direct support from Dr. James MacCallum, a Toronto ophthalmologist and collector. Harris and MacCallum collaborated to build a studio building that opened in 1914 to serve as a meeting and working place for the proposed new Canadian art movement.

The progress of this informal group of artists was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War and a further severe blow came in 1917 when Thomson died while canoeing in Algonquin Park. The circumstances of his death and subsequent burial have remained mysterious, a source of myriad conspiracy theories to this day.

From mixed reviews to critical acclaim

Thomson's seven artist friends reunited after the war. They continued to travel throughout Canada, sketching the landscape and developing techniques to interpret this wild and diverse terrain. In 1920 they finally came together as the Group of Seven and held their first exhibition under that name. Prior to this, the art establishment's view of the northern Canadian landscape was that it was either unpaintable or too wild and uncouth to be worthy of being painted. Reviews for the 1920 exhibition were mixed, but as the decade progressed the Group came to be recognized as pioneers of a new, Canadian, school of art. Today, every schoolchild is familiar with masterpieces such as Thomson's *The Jack Pine*, arguably one of the most famous and beloved paintings in Canada.

The Canadian landscape and its painters

Painting Canada has been planned as a journey across Canada, from East to West, framed by Tom Thomson's electrifying sketches and paintings of Algonquin Park and Lawren Harris's other-worldly paintings of the Arctic and the Rocky Mountains. Between these two 'poles,' a selection of the best work by Thomson and the Group of Seven will be on display. A special feature of the show will be the juxtaposition, wherever possible, of the initial sketch with the finished canvas.

Exhibition curators

The three-person curatorial team for *Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven* includes Ian Dejardin, with partners Dr. Anna Hudson and Katerina Atanassova. Katerina Atanassova is Chief Curator at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. She has curated numerous exhibitions and has written various publications including the award-winning publication and exhibition entitled *F.H. Varley: Portraits into the Light*.

Ian Dejardin has spent twenty-five years working in museums, spending a year with English Heritage before starting as curatorial assistant at the Royal Academy in 1987. Between 1990 and 1998 he was back with English Heritage, as Senior Curator and Head of the Historic Team (London Region) before accepting the post of Curator at Dulwich Picture Gallery. He became the Gallery's Director in April, 2005. He has organized countless exhibitions over the years.

Dr. Anna Hudson is Associate Professor of Canadian Art History at York University, Toronto. She has curated important exhibitions, including *The Nude in Modern Canadian Art, 1920-1950*, which was co-curated with Michèle Grandbois and received the 2011 Canadian Museums Association Award of Outstanding Achievement in Research.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated 216-page catalogue produced by Dulwich Picture Gallery and published by Philip Wilson Publishers. The catalogue tells of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven's collective quest to depict Canada in paint. It recounts their beginnings, the challenges they faced, and the remarkable and often extreme journeys they undertook in search of new subject matter. Essays by curator Ian Dejardin and co-curators Katerina Atanassova and Anna Hudson explore various aspects of the Group of Seven's practice, consider the artists' relationship with the Arctic north, and analyse Thomson's art through the prism of the prevalent scientific theories of the day. A fresh, European perspective on the Canadians' work is offered in essays exploring their links with Scandinavian art and European expressionism.

Available in paperback at a cost of \$45 and hard cover at a cost of \$75. It is on sale in the McMichael Gallery Shop (905.893.1121 or toll free 1.888.213.1121, ext. 2237, or the e-shop at www.mcmichael.com).

Exhibition tour schedule

- Dulwich Picture Gallery, London UK: October 19, 2011 – January 8, 2012
- National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway: January 29 – May 13, 2012
- The Groninger Museum, Groningen, the Netherlands: June 3 – October 28, 2012
- McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario: November 3, 2012 – January 6, 2013

Canadian funding support and media collaboration

The funding for this exhibition is generously provided by Presenting Sponsor RBC Wealth Management, Exhibition Patron A.K. Prakash Foundation, and Supporting Sponsor AIMIA. This exhibition has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation. Media Partners are The Globe and Mail, CTV and CP24. The *Canadian Friends of Dulwich Picture Gallery*, chaired by David Silcox, a noted specialist on the Group of Seven, have also made the exhibition possible through their considerable generosity and charitable donation towards the show.



National Gallery of Canada Musée des beaux-arts du Canada



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About the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an agency of the Government of Ontario and acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. It is the foremost venue in the country showcasing the Group of Seven and their contemporaries. In addition to touring exhibitions, its permanent collection consists of almost 6,000 artworks by Canadian artists, including paintings by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists. The gallery is located at 10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. For more information: www.mcmichael.com.

About the Dulwich Picture Gallery

The Dulwich Picture Gallery is England's very first purpose-built public art gallery: it was founded in 1811 when Sir Francis Bourgeois RA bequeathed his collection of old masters "for the inspection of the public." The Gallery houses one of the country's finest collections of Old Masters, especially rich in French, Italian and Spanish Baroque paintings and British portraits from Tudor times to the 19th century. Famous works include those by Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Poussin, Watteau, Canaletto, Rubens, Veronese, and Murillo. The Gallery also hosts a yearly programme of world class temporary exhibitions. The Gallery's mission is to house and preserve its international collection "for the inspection of the public," in the belief that active engagement with art can change lives for the better. For more information: www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

About the National Gallery of Canada

The National Gallery of Canada is home to the most important collections of historical and contemporary Canadian art, including the extensive collection of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. The Gallery also maintains Canada's premier collection of European Art from the 14th to the 21st century, as well as important works of American, Asian and Indigenous Art and renowned international collections of prints, drawings and photographs. Created in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada has played a key role in Canadian culture for well over a century. Among its principal missions is to increase access to excellent works of art for all Canadians. To do so, it maintains the largest touring art exhibition programme in the world. For more information: www.gallery.ca

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