



fig.4 National Gallery of Canada, *Judging the Fourth International Salon of Photographic Art*, 1937. (Photo: NGC, EX0265)

THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA (1934-1960)

Through the efforts of Director Jean Sutherland Boggs and James Borcoman, Acting Curator of the Collection of Photographs, the National Gallery of Canada began acquiring photographs as an artistic medium in 1967.¹ Although this was a significant moment in the institution's history, the medium had a presence within the Gallery prior to that date. This article investigates the histories of photography exhibitions at the National Gallery from the *Canadian International Salons of Photographic Art* of the 1930s to *The Family of Man* show in 1957 and particular attention is paid to how the institution incorporated changing notions of creativity, aesthetics and the photographer as artist. As I discuss, the six salons that took place from 1934 to 1939 accentuated the high aesthetic principles of photography, whereas in the early 1940s, the Gallery supported the display of propaganda themes as part of the war effort. In the post-war economy viewers were regarded as consumers and this led to another shift in emphasis. In particular, through the highly popular *The Family of Man* exhibition, photography was understood to affirm larger cultural ideals that emphasized the "universality" of white, middle-class American and, by extension, Canadian values.

In 1934, in the opening section of the catalogue for the *First Canadian International Salon of Photographic Art*, the National Gallery's director, Eric Brown, wrote, "No form of artistic expression has made greater advances in recent years than photography. The pictorialist, after a long sojourn in the wilderness of complete subservience to his medium, has at last wakened up to the fact that he is master...he can draw from nature's visible storehouse such abundant wealth of design, form and character as will supply most of his artistic needs, and the result is modern photography."²

Pictorialism was the predominant aesthetic in photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Generally speaking, pictorialists sought recognition of photography as an art form, with considerable attention being paid to the choice of subject matter, composition, tonal balance and technique. Photographers such as Americans, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and Paul Strand, and Canadians, Sidney Carter and John Vanderpant, believed the medium could convey even higher, more spiritual and metaphysical ideals, although most photography enthusiasts would hesitate to describe their work in such a lofty manner. However, it was widely believed that photography was the



fig.1 Unknown, **Fishing Boat near the Percé Rock**, 1932.
(Photo: Clifford M. Johnston, Library and Archives Canada, PA-056660)

equal of other visual arts such as painting and as such, deserved recognition from the art museum. Nevertheless, in much pictorial photography the visual lexicon was limited; the particular and local were erased, cropped out or blurred and the work often expressed the clichéd and anecdotal. In Canada, such imagery perpetuated longstanding stereotypes of the nation, especially the Maritimes and Québec, as pre-industrial, rural, pastoral and thus exotic in nature (fig.1). This worldview was reinforced by the work of Royal Canadian Academy painters who used easily understood themes taken from everyday life: flower and portrait studies, landscape scenes, rural life, and ethnic and racial types. Such tendencies accorded with the conservative tenor of much Canadian art of this period.

Prior to the period discussed in this text, the advancement of photography was fostered in Canada and elsewhere through the agency of the camera club; although the support of public institutions such as the National Gallery further confirmed and promoted photography's artistic capacities. Through the Gallery's extensive touring exhibition program, photographs by camera club members could be seen at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Edmonton Museum of Fine Arts, as well as other venues. Clifford M.

Johnston, leader of the Ottawa Camera Club, clearly understood the advantages of allowing the National Gallery to cover the prohibitive costs of touring and producing catalogues: "the Gallery, with its prestige and no entry fee, can attract a much wider band of workers and give a better Salon at a trifling cost to ourselves."³ Although its first photographic *Salon* was produced in partnership with the Ottawa Camera Club, the National Gallery soon assumed much of the financial and administrative burden for these shows. In addition to producing the handsome small illustrated handout listing participants and their work, the Gallery was also responsible for mounting, packing and insuring prints, along with maintaining correspondence with the photographers. Even though the Ottawa Camera Club assisted the Gallery to some extent, Johnston regarded the project as "distinctly a National Gallery of Canada Salon" and further commented that "The Gallery has already created a prestige with exhibitors, and a goodly number of the world's best known workers contribute."⁴

Prior to the involvement of the Gallery, major camera clubs in Canada sought public support of photography by organizing annual salons. The clubs emulated art-institution practices to promote photography as a creative activity: photographs were framed, matted and hung in a manner that encouraged contemplative viewing. Both camera clubs and art galleries also validated the image's inherent aesthetic quality through the notion of "quality" works created by "masters" of the medium. The appropriation of the term "salon," which had originally been applied to European fine art exhibitions, denoted a highly structured organization with strict rules governing such activities as jury formation, judging of prints, notification of participants, installation of work and return of prints.⁵ Since 1919, the Toronto Camera Club had organized a major show at the Canadian National Exhibition, the extremely popular fair held annually in Toronto. Displayed in the Graphic Arts Building, the TCC *Salons* were major events; between 350 and 500 works were displayed, selected from over 1500 submissions. One writer estimated that if only one-tenth of the visitors to the CNE went to see the 1921 exhibition, attendance would have easily reached 125,000.⁶

In addition to the international interest in photography salons, the medium was represented in established art journals. From 1931 to 1942/43, the widely-read English arts magazine, *The Studio*, published an annual volume on photography. Featuring the work of leading international photographers, it also paid tribute to the diversity of this medium: as a means of artistic expression, for documentation and in advertising. Both Eric Brown and the National Gallery's assistant director H.O. McCurry knew the magazine and were aware that its sympathetic and supportive attitude would advance their own plans for photography exhibitions in Canada.

Certain members of the Canadian art community were longstanding supporters of photography and in some cases, they also wrote on photography. For example, M.O. Hammond, a well-known art critic and historian, was also a pictorialist photographer. A founding member of the Arts and Letters Club, he was active in the Toronto art community and was also a close friend of the painter Horatio Walker, often visiting him for photographic excursions on Île d'Orléans.⁷ Harold Mortimer-Lamb was another important proponent. A photographer, painter, and art critic, he wrote regular art reviews for the *Montreal Star* and acted as Canadian correspondent for *The Studio*. He was also an ongoing contributor to the particularly important international publication on photography, *Photograms of the Year*.⁸ The artist Bertram Brooker was similarly supportive of photography; in 1936 he dedicated the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* to the medium, illustrating work by John Vanderpant, Yousuf Karsh and J.H. Mackay. Throughout the 1920s, the Canadian journalist and art critic Newton MacTavish, who like Hammond was a pictorial photographer, included images by American pictorialist Edith S. Watson in several issues of the *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*.⁹

Saturday Night magazine also published articles on photography by camera buff and enthusiast "Jay" (Thomas George Jaycocks) and reproduced the work of such Canadian photographers as Harold Kells (Ottawa), Wallace R. MacAskill (Halifax), and Frank Halliday (Calgary), as well as a variety of international artists. In addition, "Jay" exhibited eighty of his own photographs in 1934 at the Art Gallery of Toronto.¹⁰ His book *Camera Conversations*, published two years later, also illustrated his work, which ranged from standard descriptions to more formal aesthetic studies.¹¹

Despite such support by the public realm, recognition of the medium by established art institutions was minimal. The Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo was the first North American institution to purchase photographs in 1910 and the Museum of Modern Art only began to acquire the medium in 1930, forming its Department of Photography ten years later. In Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery held an exhibition of the photography of John Vanderpant in its lecture hall in 1932. In this context, the support photography received from the National Gallery in the 1930s was highly unusual and of vital importance.

The National Gallery's commitment to photography between the wars must be seen in conjunction with other changes affecting the institution. The late 1920s and 1930s were marked by numerous developments in the visual arts that challenged the Gallery's perception of what it believed to be its central role in the country. The Group of Seven, closely associated with the Gallery, was losing force, finally disbanding in 1933. Other groups including the Manitoba Society of Artists (1925), the Sculptors' Society of Canada (1928), the Women Painters of Western Canada (1931), the Alberta Society of Artists (1931), the

Canadian Group of Painters (1933), the Maritime Art Association (1935) and the Contemporary Arts Society (1939) were now reconfiguring the art community. As a result, the National Gallery was challenged in its conviction that it could represent the aesthetic interests of all Canadians. This dilemma became particularly evident with the NGC annual exhibitions of Canadian art. First organized in 1926, the shows soon became a political nightmare for Eric Brown; the West was especially annoyed about its lack of representation¹² and this underscored the Gallery's centralist bias. With rising criticism and a national petition demanding Brown's resignation, the last *Annual* was held in 1933. Hostilities towards the Gallery were also fueled by ongoing battles with the Royal Canadian Academy over the NGC's authority to represent the interests of Canadian art and artists.¹³ The last straw was the fact that the Gallery's budget dropped substantially from \$130,000 in 1929-30 to \$25,000 in 1934-35.¹⁴

Under these circumstances, the idea of photographic salons may have been most appealing to Brown; they were a novelty and therefore without the factional history of presenting the more established fine arts. Photography exhibitions were also less expensive to assemble and tour, a definite budgetary advantage in 1934 when the salons were initiated. The medium could also be used to demonstrate basic principles of art, as well as those of a more "radical" nature seen in recent art. Canadian painting, exemplified by the work of James Wilson Morrice, John Lyman and many members of the Canadian Group of Painters, pursued a modernist approach with relatively moderate experiments in colour and design. However, camera clubs had little interest in the type of experimentation occurring in Europe: photomontage and collage, vorticism, photograms and the use of visual distortion. In Canada, such radical approaches to imagery were rarely pursued; in other words, the adage "nothing in excess" accurately described both painting and photography of this period (fig.2).¹⁵

As such, pictorial photography with its easily recognizable subject matter was a perfect choice for the NGC.¹⁶ Brown, in a 1936 letter to C.M. Johnston, noted the medium's didactic capabilities in terms of teaching art principles: "I think the Canadian International Salon, which has developed so largely through the efforts of the Ottawa Camera Club, is an important contribution to the educational work of the Gallery."¹⁷ As H.O. McCurry put it in 1939, "Good photography appeals to everyone and is a valuable link in interesting people in painting and drawing."¹⁸ The West Coast photographer John Vanderpant was in agreement, stating in an earlier letter to Brown that, "Somehow photography is easier understood and for many the door by which they enter the realm of art."¹⁹

The credibility of photography as a creative medium was further substantiated through the NGC's lecture series; Eric Brown insisted that the speakers must be people of "unquestioning authority."²⁰ In 1935, after completing jury duties on the second photographic *Salon*, Vanderpant was hired to speak about



fig.2 John Vanderpant,
Urge, 1937, National
Gallery of Canada, shown
in the *Fourth Salon*.
(Photo: John Vanderpant, ©
National Gallery of Canada)

photography to groups in Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, New York and Winnipeg. In 1936 Nicholas Ház, a well-known American photographer, writer, and critic of artistic photography was also engaged by the NGC to lecture in Ottawa on the medium.²¹ Ház's cosmopolitanism was extremely appealing to the local audience; as one writer commented, "His deep knowledge, rich living experience and smiling ease of utterance are virtues that will impress everyone who hears him."²² Ház combined his knowledge of art and photography with moderation in speech, thought and comportment to produce erudite "good taste," a quality that affirmed the beliefs of both lecturer and audience and of course, the National Gallery of Canada. The juries for the salons included established photographers and respected individuals of the photographic and art communities. Most judges were Canadian and were comprised of such established pictorialists as Vanderpant, Johnston, Bruce Metcalfe (Toronto) and Johan Helders (Ottawa) (fig.4). The jury for the second photographic *Salon* also included Frank Fraprie (Boston). As editor of the *American Annual of Photography* and with controlling interest in *American Photography*, Fraprie tirelessly promoted American pictorialism for over twenty-five years. The sixth and final NGC *Salon* jury was comprised of McCurry, Hamilton printmaker Leonard Hutchinson and the American pictorialist Edward Alenius (Jamaica, NY).

The opportunity to exhibit in the salons attracted photographers from around the world, some of whom had highly respected credentials. For example, the *First Salon* of 1934 included work by the celebrated photojournalist and commercial photographer Margaret Bourke-White, the renowned British society photographer Dorothy Wilding and Marcus Adams, a famous British photographer of children. Other notable practitioners included Alenius and Fraprie, as well as Grete Popper (Prague), Ernő Vadas (Budapest), Chin-San Long (Shanghai) and Dr. Max Thorek (Chicago), a prominent surgeon who later published several books on photography. The work of Canadians such as Vanderpant, Helders, Minna Keene (Oakville), Harold Kells (Ottawa), Karsh and Arthur Lomax (Hamilton) was thus positioned within a solid international context. In addition, the great interest generated by these exhibitions as they travelled across the country, prompted some local artists and art groups to hold their own lectures on photography. In 1935, at the opening of the *First Salon* in Kingston, the painter Goodridge Roberts compared photographs to drawings and emphasized how good design ensured success in both media²³. In conjunction with the London exhibition of the *Fifth Salon* in 1938, Fred Coates, president of the London Camera Club, delivered a lantern slide lecture on photography to an eager public.²⁴ Most importantly, newspaper articles from across Canada effused over the *Salons'* high standard of work and credited the National Gallery with the foresight to prepare and circulate these popular exhibitions.

Nonetheless, the salons had their detractors; camera club members were engaged in constant battles over fair judging processes and what was regarded as the detrimental influences of "modernist" impulses. The American photographer William Howard Gardiner had an extreme dislike of John Vanderpant, calling him "narrow, dogmatic and erratic." In a letter to Johnston, Gardiner opined that Vanderpant's "modernistic stuff, far from being the last word in pictorial photography, has had its day, has made its contribution, and is virtually dead among those of seasoned culture."²⁵ Johnston was more diplomatic, but for the most part agreed: "I cannot see personally his ideas, I have an admiration for his technique and from my very short acquaintance I have liked his personality, aside from his exposition on photography."²⁶

The Gallery and the Ottawa Camera Club made efforts to be careful in their choice of judges but, nevertheless, complaints over jury selection were voiced.²⁷ At the 1935 *Salon*, William Gardiner was again especially critical of Vanderpant, accusing him of imposing his views on his two fellow judges, Bruce Metcalf and Fraprie and thus usurping the selection process. In reply, Johnston emphasized that even though the judges were at one point at "loggerheads," the judging "at no time...assume[d] the air of violence or sudden death that one or two reports we have received, seem to have suggested."²⁸ Johnston again had to smooth ruffled feathers when the Australian photographer Dr. Julian Smith

wrote to Eric Brown in 1935 to complain about the selection methods, the acceptance of photogravure as a photographic process, the recognition or not of certain technical processes and the definition of “experimental photography.” Brown simply passed the letter to Johnston for response.²⁹ For the most part, however, the Gallery did not concern itself with the politics of the photographic societies, which left Johnston to deal with his community. From his point of view, the Gallery was a means to an end; a way for camera clubs to receive more serious attention nationwide. As a result, Johnston downplayed the internal squabbling of the clubs, arguing that the role of the National Gallery was one of education and that as “a government institution, it had a policy of fostering interest in all the Arts.”³⁰

However, there was also enthusiastic support for the photographic salons as a representation of a modern outlook, indicating that the Gallery had moved beyond supporting only painting and sculpture. As Johnston wrote in a 1935 letter to Fraprie, “There was some doubt at first as to the reception of a Pictorial Photography exhibit in such a staid institution as the country’s premier Gallery of painting and the older arts, but the public response was so overwhelming that the Gallery officials have been outspoken in their appreciation of its value.”³¹ An article in the *Toronto Telegram* criticized the Art Gallery of Toronto for not exhibiting the *First Salon*: “Perhaps the city is not yet able to accept the fact that modern art is photography and not the atavistic drawing and painting of many of its so-called ‘modern painters’.”³²

While the salons made the NGC known internationally to the pictorialist community and increased the public’s awareness of photographers from around the world, this put both Canadian photographers and the Gallery in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, the popularity of the salons united the country in an unprecedented manner³³ as they received critical attention from media across Canada. Photographers whose work had been selected were a source of local pride; but on the other hand, the salons also disclosed whether or not a local camera club was represented in the show, thus putting its members under scrutiny. The low proportion of Canadians represented in the salons was also cause for concern but Canadian pictorialists were not as prodigious as some of their foreign, especially American, counterparts.³⁴

Furthermore, photography was a double-edged sword in terms of defining nationalism; the medium could either consolidate or fragment ideas of national identity depending on how it was viewed. As the draft text, most likely written by Brown as a potential foreword to the 1938 *Salon’s* catalogue stated:

The Fifth Canadian International Salon once more demonstrates the possibilities of Photography from a pictorial standpoint but at the same time makes one regret that photographers the world over are not developing a technique typical of their environment. Very few seem to approach their

subjects with any particular interpretation in mind and so with the possible exception of the Japanese and Indian work, the photographs all appear much alike. This lack of a definite national characteristic is very noticeable in the work done in Canada, where in spite of the unparalleled opportunity afforded by our rugged landscapes, brilliant atmosphere and the sharp divisions of our seasons, so successfully interpreted by Canadian artists, most of our photographers are content to portray household pets, still-life and genre subjects.³⁵

While this text was not published, it reveals the Gallery's preoccupation with supporting what it understood to be a national art and its skepticism that photography could express that vision.

Nonetheless, the NGC's interest in photography extended in several directions. In 1936 McCurry assisted Vanderpant in reproducing his work in *The Studio's* annual publication, *Modern Photography*. Brown was in touch with the editors and asked both Vanderpant and Bruce Metcalfe to send him prints that he would forward to them. As a result, Vanderpant's work *Pride of Matter*, exhibited in the *Third Salon* as *Spirit and Matter*, was included in its 1936/37 issue. In 1934 Brown had earlier informed Vanderpant that: "We are building up a library of written lectures with slides on all art subjects and they are in continuous circulation. We should like to add one on modern art photography and dwell principally on its possibilities as an art form and it should be illustrated with about forty slides."³⁶ McCurry later approached Vanderpant again on this same topic, noting that the American Federation of the Arts had in circulation a lecture on contemporary photography written by the American Florence Seville Berryman, and that he wanted to do the same with a Vanderpant text. McCurry also appeared interested in displaying a history of the medium in the Gallery; in a handwritten note at the bottom of the letter he asked Vanderpant if he had materials for an exhibition of early photography that would run at the same time as the *Second Salon*, but the show did not take place.³⁷

The National Gallery also promoted the idea of creating a national photographic society because the salons were demanding in terms of time and resources for the NGC. In 1936 a proposed constitution of a Federation of Canadian Camera Clubs was drawn up. The Federation would be dedicated to the promotion of the art and science of photography, the organization of photographic salons and the encouragement of photography in schools, colleges, and universities; but such a national support system never materialized. As Brown stated in a letter to the Calgary photographer Frank Halliday, "We had hoped that the salon would have resulted in the formation of a national society of photography which could have taken over the exhibition [Salon], but this has not happened, although we still hope it may. Anything that can be done towards this end will be most valuable."³⁸

In addition to exhibiting and touring photography, the Gallery was slowly developing an interest in collecting photographs and creating a permanent exhibition space. In 1949, Anna K. Ackroyd, one of Vanderpant's daughters, approached the Gallery with the proposal that it should acquire a collection of her father's work. She also wanted the prints to be on permanent exhibition, but McCurry replied that such an acquisition was impossible due to lack of space. Concerning their display, he stated that, "They could be shown at times and held for the establishment of a proper photographic section, which we have contemplated for years, either in this building or in the projected new National Gallery building."³⁹ The Gallery did not accept the Vanderpant work, or that of any other photographer. Both the collection and regular display of photographs at the NGC would have to wait until the establishment of a photographs department in the 1960s.

Despite their success and the regular increase in the number of exhibited photographs and presentation venues, the last photographic *Salon* took place in 1939. The on-coming war was cited as a major reason for the subsequent cancellation of the series. As McCurry stated in a letter to C.H. Weaver, president of the Ottawa Camera Club, the international basis of the *Salon* created difficulties because it was almost impossible to contact participants.⁴⁰ The production of photographs in Britain and many European countries was also hampered by the severe paper shortage due to the war.⁴¹ But as McCurry wrote in a 1941 letter to John Fleetwood-Marrow (president of the Toronto Camera Club in 1940-41), "I sometimes wonder if we were well advised in discontinuing this interesting exhibition during the war. So many sources of good prints were cut off that we thought we would be unable to carry on."⁴²

Despite McCurry's regrets but perhaps closer to the truth, the photography salons had proven to be too great a burden on the Gallery. In the case of shows of more traditional media, nationally organized art societies increasingly undertook the brunt of the work required to assemble their exhibitions for circulation by Ottawa. For example, at the time of the *Sixth Salon* the NGC was touring fourteen shows, including those organized by the RCA, the Society of Artists Print-Makers, the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, and the Canadian Society of Graphic Art. In contrast, there was no such external support system for the salons and the responsibilities of sending out a call for work, assembling a jury, and mounting, framing, insuring and returning prints rested with the Gallery. Thus, the NGC may simply have withdrawn its support of the salons because of the inability of the camera club to similarly formalize their activities on a national level.

The foreword to the catalogue accompanying the *Fourth Salon* in 1937 (fig.3) clearly indicates that the Gallery was experiencing difficulties even before the onset of the Second World War: "the great popularity of the National



fig.3 Installation shot of the *Fourth International Photographic Salon* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1937. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada, EX0265)

Gallery's Salon and the consequent length of its tours in visiting the principal Canadian art centres, may result in its change to a biennial event, which would tend to strengthen the representation and illustrate concrete progress without lessening the interest." This proposal caused great consternation, especially in Calgary where the *Salon* was one of the best attended attractions of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. Frank Halliday expressed his deep regret about the decision, noting that the salons were the only opportunity for people in the West to see the work of international photographers.⁴³ However, the difficulties associated with mounting the annual salons were amplified by the death of Eric Brown in 1939. H.O. McCurry, who had done a great deal of the administrative work for the salons, was now occupied with directorial duties and the energy that had propelled the Gallery's interest in the salons was severely dissipated.

The demise of the photography shows assembled by the NGC was largely a product of circumstances specific to time and place. However, pictorialist photography was also losing favour internationally. Throughout the forties, the Museum of Modern Art and photographers, curators and critics such as Ansel Adams, Beaumont Newhall and Nancy Newhall developed new ideas about

photographic aesthetics. Pictorialism was viewed as a vernacular form of visual communication and was deemed unsuitable for the display of higher metaphysical issues. However, pictorialist visual strategies can reduce complex issues to a simple means of presentation and this would prove valuable in the use and display of photography in the art museum throughout the Second World War and for a decade thereafter. From approximately 1940 to 1960, photography maintained a presence in the NGC, not as an aesthetic, self-contained object, but as a form of mass communication.

The belief that a photograph could be used to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings was an important aspect of its aesthetic value and was also applied to the photograph's documentary use. But importantly, it was believed that the photograph itself could not convey specific meaning and that the viewer needed guidance in order to appreciate the image's context. One strategy was to supplement the image with text; another entailed grouping photographs together under a central idea or theme. Nevertheless, the clear and uncomplicated manner of conveying subject matter that had developed through pictorialism was also used for a variety of purposes by the mass media and in advertising. The photostory found in magazines such as *Life* and *Look*, provided readers with entertaining narratives on a wide range of topics; at the same time, photography became a pivotal player in sustaining a consumer economy. These ideas of the medium – as art, propaganda, entertainment and advertisement – entered the art gallery in a number of exhibitions. The belief that the photograph could be understood solely as a unique aesthetic expression, now competed with popular uses of the medium.

In 1940 the National Gallery was involved in two early examples of Canadian photography exhibitions that focused on propaganda: *War for Freedom* (fig.5) and *Somewhere in France*. The shows, inaugurated by the London Passenger Transportation Board and Britain's Ministry of Information respectively, had been exhibited at Charing Cross underground station. Both exhibitions had a strict display sequence and used extended captions to ensure the optimum delivery of propaganda. *Somewhere in France* recounted events of a soldier's life in the army and comprised seventy-six images drawn from such agencies as the *Associated Press*, *Planet News* and *Wide World Photo*. *War for Freedom* contained a similar number of press photographs shown in eleven sections to illustrate "in popular form, events leading up to the War."⁴⁴ Its display used photographs and text in a highly didactic manner. For example, accompanying an image of Hitler in a raincoat was the caption, "The German people never wanted, never understood democracy. They gladly followed the first leader who offered them discipline instead." McCurry was reluctant to show or circulate the British exhibitions, informing O.D. Skelton, Canada's Undersecretary of State for External Affairs that, "Exhibitions of this kind are



fig.5 Installation shot of *War for Freedom*, shown at Charing Cross, London, England, 1940. (Photo: NGC, EX0330)

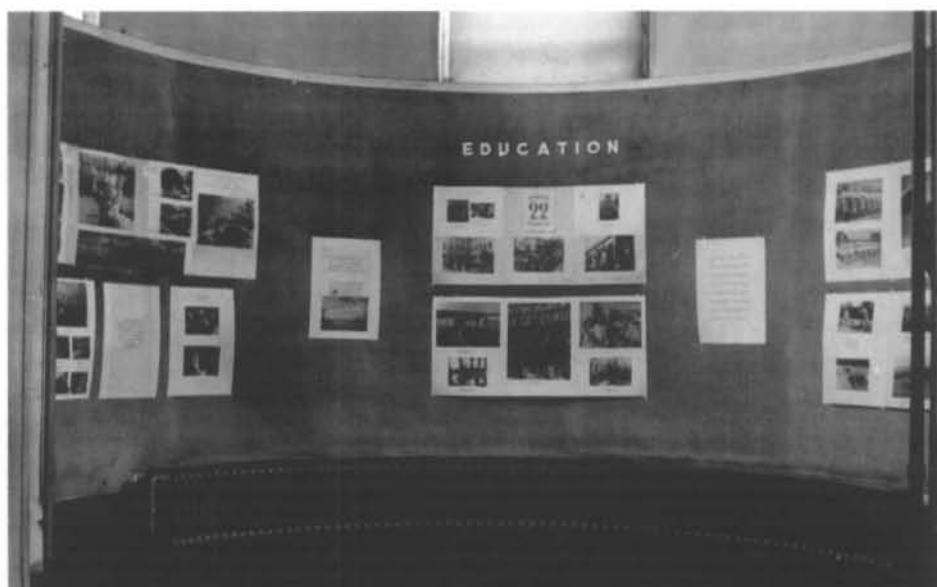


fig.6 Installation shot of *Twenty-five Years of the Soviet Union* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1943. (Photo: NGC, EX0377)

rather outside the province of the National Gallery and its cooperating organizations throughout the country.”⁴⁵ He suggested, however, that the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railway companies display the works in their hotels, which were located in every major Canadian city and were easily accessible to the public. Both *Somewhere in France* and *War for Freedom* were shown at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa in the autumn of 1940 with the technical assistance of the NGC.

Nevertheless, the Gallery could not ignore its role in both presenting and circulating wartime images in various media and exhibited a number of shows in its own space, including *Exhibition of British War Posters* (1941), *Britain at War* (1941), *Walls Have Ears* (1943) and *Artists for Victory* (1944). In addition, three exhibitions of war art from Britain, Canada, and Australia were displayed in the first half of 1945. In such exhibitions as *Twenty-five Years of the Soviet Union* (fig.6) and *Great Britain and Her People* (1944), photography again served an informative role, presenting the land, peoples, and cultures of allied countries. The exhibition on the Soviet Union included panels with cartoons, posters and photographs and the overall visual effect resembled a magazine layout. Text often accompanied the images and the panels were grouped under thematic headings such as “Industry,” “Science,” “Education,” and “War.” *Great Britain and Her People*, organized by the British Council, contained one-hundred and seventy photographs depicting the wartime lives of people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Gallery toured both exhibitions extensively throughout Canada.

Another example of photography as propaganda was *This Is Our Strength* (figs.7 and 8), a two-part exhibition shown at the NGC in 1944 and 1945, the first section of which was circulated to galleries nation-wide. Assembled by the Wartime Information Board (WIB), the first part paid homage to the home-front effort, while the second demonstrated the move to a post-war economy. Photographs chosen from the National Film Board (NFB) and commercial stocks were enlarged, cropped and framed to highlight their pointed messages. The two *This is Our Strength* exhibitions delivered their message with pointed use of text. The first part consisted of seventy-four photographs that were large for the time, from 51 x 41 cm to 76 x 102 cm and expertly mounted. The quality of the photographs and their manner of presentation did not go unnoticed. Alex Musgrove, curator at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, remarked that visitors appreciated the high standard.⁴⁶ R.W. Hedley, director of the Edmonton Museum of Arts, also praised *This is Our Strength* for the exceptional quality of the photographs and their presentation.⁴⁷

The images in *This is Our Strength* were also manipulated for dramatic effect. For example, four large blow-ups of photographs were cut out and given the subtitle “Our Strength Behind the Forces.” The two central



fig.7 Installation shot of *This is Our Strength I* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1945. (Photo: NGC, EX0403)



fig.8 Installation shot of *This is Our Strength I* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1945. (Photo: NGC, EX0403)



fig.9 Installation shot of *This is Our Strength II* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1945. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada, PA-206909)

images, depicting a smiling man and woman, were flanked by cut-out photographs of an older couple. "Our strength," therefore, was to be found in the wisdom of the older generation and the energy and exuberance of the younger one, both groups representing the unpretentious and easily accessible labour of the working classes. The efforts on the home front were divided into such categories as "Food from the Soil," "They Produce Steel" and "Men of the Forest." In each section, the photographers employed various techniques to create dynamic images. For example, in "A Nation of Shipbuilders," striking vantage points were exploited by unknown photographers in images that show the launching of the cargo ship *Fort Esperance* and the positioning of a propeller in the repair of a freighter.⁴⁸ Other images were carefully staged, taking advantage of lighting and interplay of subject matter; this is exemplified in the view of two men braiding a massive cord of rope, which was also taken by an unknown photographer.⁴⁹

The second part of *This is Our Strength* (figs.9 and 10) focused on preparing the public for the movement from a war economy to that of peacetime. Twenty groups of photographs provided inspiring views, among them "Women in War," "Farmer's Achievement," and "Canada's Achievement in War and her Potentialities for Peace." The gallery space was used in a dramatic fashion:

photographs were placed on free-standing structures, hung on stretched wire, overlapped and positioned salon style to impart maximum visual effect. However, the pictorialist idea that the photograph was intrinsically and irrefutably linked to the circumstances of its taking was of little importance; what mattered was the effectiveness of the image within a larger didactic display. For example, the Harry Rowed photograph of a man and child listening intently to a radio that appeared under the title *As the Child Grows, So is the Nation Formed* was originally captioned *Canadian Village at War, Port Daniel, Québec, November 1941*. However, neither the photographer's name nor the caption was important in this exhibition. The use and manipulation of imagery was most clear about its message: it was propaganda, intended to reassure viewers about their roles and the role of their country within the larger theatre of war.

The visual dynamics and the politics of persuasion demonstrated in these exhibitions had other applications as the country entered the post-war economy. Similar tactics were particularly important in the display of photographs in the numerous design shows that were presented at the NGC, although the Museum of Modern Art had assembled most of these shows. *The Wooden House in America* (1944), *Elements of Design* (1946), *If You Want to Build a House* (1946), *Modern Buildings for Schools and Colleges, I & II* (1948), *Three Post-War Houses* (1948) and *The Story of Modern Chair Design and Useful Objects of Fine Design* (1949), to



fig.10 Installation shot of *This is Our Strength II* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1945, NGC. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada, Mikan No. 3951045)

name a few, were shown in Ottawa and circulated nationally to educate viewers about the latest and most tasteful consumer products to hit the market.⁵⁰ One influential exhibition eventually led to the establishment of the National Industrial Design Committee (1948-1960); *Design for Use: A Survey of Design in Canada of Manufactured Goods for the Home and Office, for Sports and Outdoors* was assembled in 1945/46 by the NGC, the NFB and the Department of Reconstruction. Images such as those by the Ottawa photographer Malak showing the forestry industry (fig.11), were re-used as design elements in an exhibition dedicated to informing the public about new products for the home, office and cottage.

The importation of avant-garde display ideas from the 1920s and 30s had other consequences for photography, evidenced most notably in *The Family of Man* exhibition assembled by Edward Steichen for the MoMA in 1955 and held at the NGC from 1st to 22nd February 1957. The exhibition's design was influenced by radical new approaches to gallery space; these strategies had already been explored in wartime propaganda and information exhibitions and were also reflected in the use of photographic imagery in popular magazines. Photographs could be drawn from the massive image banks that had been created in both the United States and Canada; images were categorized and cross-referenced under various subject headings and thus could be used for any number of projects. The application of such tactics in the gallery space, combined with propagandist use of text and image, resulted in highly popular exhibitions. In *The Family of Man*, Steichen mixed words and pictures to communicate simple, but pointed ideas.⁵¹ The exhibition did not promote a specific national ideology but it expressed the theme that humankind was unified through certain universal activities and experiences. The exhibition consisted of five-hundred and three photographs by two-hundred and seventy-three amateur and professional photographers from sixty-eight countries including Robert Capa, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Works were grouped on the wall or hung at various levels from the ceiling to create a dynamic viewing experience. At certain points, isolated images served to underscore various themes. Lines of poetry by Carl Sandburg and William Blake and quotations from Bertrand Russell, Sophocles and the Bible were used to accentuate the visual experience. Paul Rudolph, the head designer of the exhibition at the MoMA, based his format on their highly popular *Good Design* exhibitions, which had presented viewers with examples of tasteful consumer objects.⁵² However, in *The Family of Man* this visual and physical arrangement did not position the audience as consumers of household objects, but of cold war ideology as conveyed through photographs.

In the exhibition's original version shown at the MoMA from 24 January to 8 May 1955, photographs and panels were positioned to create a labyrinth. The images at the start of the exhibition were printed on scrims and Lucite,



fig. 11 Installation shot of *Design in Industry* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1945/46. (Photo: NGC, EX0476)

allowing the viewer to see through and beyond to the family portraits. As was usual with photographs drawn from image banks, the original idea behind the taking of the photograph mattered little and, because the original format of the photograph was considered unimportant, images were cropped to suit the show's overall design. For Steichen, the treatment of the imagery – cropping, enlargement and placement – was a means to an end: declaring the unity of humanity.

When the MoMA first approached the National Gallery of Canada in March 1955, McCurry responded regretfully that the Trustees would most likely not approve the five thousand dollar fee for this exhibition.⁵³ Later that year, the MoMA offered a version that was one-third the size of the original exhibition. The one thousand dollar fee also made it more affordable. Photographers in the community such as Rosemary Gilliat and Richard Harrington, who was one of the few Canadians in the show (Reva Brooks and Ronny Jaques being the others), encouraged the NGC to accept the exhibition. Finally, in November 1955, Donald Buchanan, Associate Director, booked *The Family of Man* for February 1957.⁵⁴ The exhibition had different configurations depending on available space. The version shown at the NGC was one that

Steichen had developed to accommodate smaller venues.⁵⁵ Keeping the original number of photographs, he made smaller prints and grouped them on panels to reduce the amount of display space required. The exhibition came to Ottawa with full instructions for its assembly, precluding the necessity of a curator or trained technician travelling with the show.

For viewers in Ottawa and elsewhere, the message was clear and uplifting. Some writers felt that the show was proof that photography was a vital medium of both artistic expression and communication. "Not long ago," wrote one commentator, "the exhibition would have been generally abstruse – or even unintelligible – for most of the people who comprehend it immediately today. Its use of photographs, and of a museum's space to present them, follows and preresquires an expanding familiarity with the terms and grammar of a complex pictorial language."⁵⁶ The writer believed that the show was easily "read" and thus was both a testament to the talent of its organizers and to the visual literacy of its audience. For the thousands of people who saw the show, it represented the best application and exhibition of photography in the gallery.

Throughout the fifties, photographs maintained a continued presence in the NGC. Most of these shows were didactic, for example: *Britain, 1921-1951: A Photographic Survey* (organized in London by *The Times*, and circulated by that city's Art Exhibitions Bureau in 1951), *The Art of France* (a photographic survey organized by the American Federation of the Arts in New York in 1955) and *Bridges are Beautiful* (also circulated by AFA the same year). It was not until later in the decade that photography was exhibited at the Gallery in its own right, beginning with *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Decisive Moment: Photographs, 1930-1957* (1958), circulated by the American Federation of the Arts, and followed by *A Not Always Reverent Journey: Photographs by Donald W. Buchanan* (1959). The majority of photography exhibitions at the NGC would now follow art historical models; as conveyors of aesthetic concerns, photographs were considered unique, individual objects, framed, matted, and covered with protective glass.

This new approach coincided with the appointment of Alan Jarvis as director in 1955, and Donald Buchanan as associate director. Both Jarvis and Buchanan believed that the photographic medium could help individuals to perceive the world with a "heightened" eye and that it was a means of bringing order to the perceived chaos and fragmentation of reality that, for many, defined modern existence. Buchanan was an accomplished photographer whose work reflected a cultivated lifestyle. He published three books of photography: *A Nostalgic View of Canada* (1962), *To Have Seen the Sky* (1962) and *Sausages and Roses: Casual Photographs from Three Continents* (1963). In his publications, photographs and text were combined to anchor experience and consolidate memory; image and text worked together to present an ordered account of perceptions, observations, and emotions. As well, his photographs shaped an experience of the modern and new. Buchanan's understanding of photography may



fig.12 Installation shot of *A Not Always Reverent Journey* at the National Gallery of Canada, 1961. (Photo: NGC, EX0921)

have been influenced by his work for the National Film Board – specifically the institution’s use of imagery to inculcate nationalist sentiments within the Canadian populace.⁵⁷ The ideas of photographic display he developed through his time with the NFB and WIB also maintained an understated presence in his exhibition *A Not Always Reverent Journey* (fig.12) that was circulated by the NGC from 1959 to 1961. Photographs were displayed with a strong design element in mind; images either stood alone, filling the entire frame or they were grouped with other photographs against a white background and some also included text. In order to encourage the viewer to connect visually and emotionally with the photographs, images were varied in size and arranged across the wall so as to create a rhythmic effect that was poetic and evocative.

Jarvis shared Buchanan’s sense of the relationship between art and life. In 1947 he wrote the introductory volume for the British Thames and Hudson series *The Things We See: Indoors and Out*. It not only included Jarvis’s text on art and photography, but writings on cars, radios, pottery, furniture, and gardens to encourage people “to look at the objects of everyday life with fresh and critical eyes.” In many respects, his ideas on photography stemmed from the post-war industrial climate in which ordinary individuals have the means to make what are felt to be improvements in their life, but are overwhelmed by too many choices. For Jarvis, photography had the capacity to enhance vision: “The great contribution of the camera is in helping us to see.”⁵⁸ He believed that beauty is

inherent in the world but one must develop what he termed “the camera eye” in order to appreciate the harmony of forms and the play of pattern, shape and texture that exist everywhere. In 1957 Jarvis took his ideas to television in his series *The Things We See*. In the first broadcast, he used a camera to differentiate between seeing and looking, describing the latter as a more general condition of sight, a way of surveying one’s surroundings. Seeing, however, involves concentration and deliberation. He demonstrated with the camera that the act of seeing allows an object or person to emerge as a distinct entity out of the flux of existence. Thus, the camera provided a means to frame the world and its lens brought the world into sharp focus. Photography was a readily available means to hone vision and, by further opening up one’s eyes to the beauty of existence, a greater appreciation of art could be achieved.⁵⁹ However, Jarvis’ direct involvement in selecting shows for the National Gallery appears limited.⁶⁰ But he demonstrated his support of photography when in 1959 he granted Buchanan a leave of absence from the Gallery to undertake a six-month photographic excursion in Europe. When he returned, Jarvis selected sixty prints for Buchanan’s 1959 exhibition *A Not Always Reverent Journey* that toured nationally.

Jarvis and Buchanan shared a paradoxical understanding of photography: they described it as a “democratic” medium, but also as one through which individuals could demonstrate their heightened sensibility. This view of photography accorded with liberal, humanist ideas of art that emphasized the spiritual, moral and intellectual development of society. For both men, the medium was a means to integrate art and life through the cultivation of the aesthetic eye. They were committed to demonstrating the different ways photography could be used and understood and to emphasize the capacity of the medium to shape experience and ideas of identity.

From the 1930s to the late 1950s, photography exhibitions held at the National Gallery of Canada represented one method of constructing meaningful statements that reflected or supported the institution’s ideas and beliefs on the relation of art to society. Larger cultural processes such as the war effort, post-war reconstruction and, as was seen in the case of *The Family of Man*, humanist ideals, also shaped the presentation of these beliefs. For the most part, Gallery directors and staff such as Eric Brown, H.O. McCurry, Alan Jarvis and Donald Buchanan promoted ideas of culture that emphasized a harmonious state of existence; exhibitions reflected this ideal through the display of what was considered appropriate subject matter, carefully arranged on the gallery walls. In the ensuing years, the Gallery believed that the organization of aesthetic objects within its space not only confirmed the cultural achievements of the nation, but also provided an example of a well-integrated world that could be reproduced in daily lives. Such ideas in turn confirmed their belief that the National Gallery represented the highest aesthetic standards. Although such

ideals were thought to be best demonstrated through painting, photography could also play a role as the medium was more accessible to the general public. The camera “concentrated seeing” and by extension, encouraged intellectual and aesthetic engagement with the world.

Within the highly constructed environment of the art museum, photographs in an exhibition communicate specific types of knowledge; they may be displayed as works of art or as a component in the transmission of information and ideas. Its ability to be variously positioned has made this medium a valuable means of supporting the National Gallery of Canada’s mandates and confirming the institution’s significance to Canadian society.

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Notes

1 This article is drawn from Andrea KUNARD, “Promoting Culture Through Photography in the National Gallery of Canada and the Still Photography Division of the National Film Board of Canada,” Ph.D. thesis. Queens University, Kingston, 2004.

2 Eric BROWN, “Canadian International Salon of Photographic Art,” *Canadian International Salon of Photographic Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1934), n.p.

3 C.M. Johnston to Fred Coates (London Camera Club), 2 Oct. 1937, “Photographic Art—Fourth Canadian International Salon of” (1937), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 1, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

4 Ibid.

5 Ulrich F. KELLER, “The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis,” *History of Photography* 9 (January-March 1984): 252.

6 J. Addison REID, “The Toronto Exhibition,” *The Photographic Journal of America* 58, no.10 (October 1921): 416.

7 For more on Hammond’s views on the relationship between art and photography, see Janet DEWAN, “M.O. Hammond of Toronto: Canadians, Colonials and Public Taste,” *History of Photography* 18, no.1 (Spring 1996): 64-77.

8 In 1906 Mortimer-Lamb formed a partnership with Sidney Carter and they established a photography gallery in Montreal; see David STRONG, "Photography into Art: Sidney Carter's Contribution to Pictorialism," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* XVII, no.2 (1996): 6-27. Both Hammond and Mortimer-Lamb espoused the conservative and genteel tastes prevalent in Canadian art at the time.

9 Edith S. Watson, and her partner Victoria Hayward, a writer, made regular excursions to Canada throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. They were drawn to pre-industrial areas and lifestyles, especially suited to the soft-focus pictorial style that connoted a nostalgic view of the world. In 1922, they published *Romantic Canada*, a book of photographs and writings that depicted the country as quaint, charming and pastoral and as a place of refuge for Americans disenchanted with the industrialization of their country. See Francis ROONEY, *Working Light: The Wandering Life of Photographer Edith S. Watson* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995), and Anna Maria CARLEVARIS, "Edith S. Watson and Romantic Canada (1922)," *History of Photography* 20, no.2 (Summer 1996): 163-65.

10 The managing editor of *Saturday Night*, Bernard K. Sandwell, tried unsuccessfully to interest the Gallery in the exhibition. Sandwell to McCurry, 4 Apr. 1934, "Jay Photographic Exhibition-Proposed" (1934), NGC 5.5J, file 14, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

11 Jaycocks asked Eric Brown to write on art in photography for the publication, but he refused. Jaycocks to Brown 6 Jan. 1936; Brown to Jaycocks, 16 Jan. 1936, "Jay Photographic Exhibition-Proposed" (1934), NGC 5.5J, file 14, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives. Also, Thomas George JAYCOCKS, *Camera Conversation* (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1936), with a foreword by B.K. Sandwell.

12 Charles HILL, "Collecting Canadian Art at the National Gallery of Canada, 1880-1980," *Canadian Art*, eds. Charles Hill and Pierre Landry (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988), xvi.

13 Brown's personality also added ammunition to the attacks. George Henderson, a lawyer and an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees for the RCA, accused Brown of being constantly irascible and moody, and obsessed with modern art especially that of the Group of Seven. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC), MG30, D186, vol. 2, file "National Gallery of Canada 1934." McCurry, writing to Norman Mackenzie, agreed that such behaviour put Brown in a vulnerable position: "I have been wondering just how Eric Brown should be told about the desirability if not the necessity of overcoming the temperamental disabilities which were discussed at our meeting and which we all agreed were a considerable handicap to him as Director of the Gallery." McCurry to Mackenzie, 3 Mar. 1934, LAC, MG30, D186, vol. 2, file "National Gallery of Canada 1934." Other RCA artists, such as Wylie Grier and Arthur Heming, accused Brown of being too dictatorial. Edmond DYONNET, *History of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts* (Montréal: T.A. Dickson, 1934), 7.5; and Charles HILL, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 21-23. McCurry interpreted newspaper articles that questioned Brown's suitability as director as being "a pretext for an attack on the real work of the National Gallery." McCurry to Mackenzie, 21 Mar. 1934, LAC, MG30, D186, vol. 2, file "National Gallery of Canada 1934."

14 HILL, *Canadian Art*, xvii and HILL, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 14.

15 For more on Canadian photographic modernism, see Ann THOMAS, "Between a Hard Edge and a Soft Curve," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* XXI, nos.1-2 (2000): 74-95.

16 As Johnston optimistically wrote to John Vanderpant on 29 Mar. 1935, concerning the Gallery's interest in continuing the photographic salons, "This is rather indefinite at the moment, but we might say that as a result of our last year's salon and the effort in this

direction the Gallery Officials are pretty well sold on Pictorial Photography as a popular medium to the public and feel that they are fully justified in giving this its place as one of the Arts." Johnston to John Vanderpant, 29 Mar. 1935, "Canadian International Salon of Photographic Art," LAC, MG30, D373, vol. 1, file 4, part 1 of 2.

17 Brown to Johnston, 9 Jan. 1936, LAC, MG30 D165, vol. 1, file 3, part 2 of 2.

18 "International Salon of Photographic Art Opens," *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 Oct. 1939.

19 Vanderpant to Brown, 30 Jan. 1935, "Correspondence 1935," LAC, MG 30 D373, vol. 1, file I-23.

20 On 10 Jan. 1934, Brown wrote, "The National Gallery is practically forced by public opinion to employ only those who appeal to the average person...." He suggests the Gallery would support a lecture series if Vanderpant found art associations to accept the lectures. Brown to ?, 10 Jan. 1934, "Correspondence 1934," LAC, MG30 D373, vol. 1, file 1-22.

21 Karsh to McCurry, 19 June 1936, "Photographic Art-Third Canadian International Salon of" (1936) NGC 5.5P, file 6, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

22 P.W., "Canada's Third International Salon of Photographic Art is Now Open," *Evening Citizen* (Ottawa), 24 Oct. 1936.

23 "Exhibition of Photos on Display in City," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 24 Jan. 1935.

24 "International photo salon opens here," *The London Free Press*, 24 Jan. 1938.

25 Gardiner to Johnston, 17 Oct. 1935, LAC, MG30 D165, vol. 1, file 5, 2 of 2.

26 Johnston to Gardiner, 5 Nov. 1935, *ibid.*

27 For more on the various factors influencing the makeup of juries see Christian PETERSON, *After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography, 1910-1955* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 142-43. Eric Brown also attempted to engage well-known artists as judges in order to add more credibility to the Salon and the jurying process. For example, Edwin Holgate was approached for the fourth show but declined as he had just arrived at his painting shack in the Laurentians and was not eager to return to Ottawa. Holgate to Brown, 6 Sept. 1937, "Photographic Art-Fourth Canadian International Salon of" (1937), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 1, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

28 Johnston to Gardiner, 5 Nov. 1935, LAC, MG30 D165, vol. 1, file 5, 2 of 2.

29 Brown to Johnston, 12 Sept. 1935, *ibid.*

30 Johnston to Brown, 16 Sept. 1935, *ibid.*

31 Johnston to Fraprie, 8 Mar. 1935, *ibid.*, part 1 of 2.

32 "Untitled," *Toronto Telegram*, 8 June 1935. Geoffrey Malcolm, of the Toronto Camera Club, wrote to T.H. Hawkins, secretary of the Ottawa Camera Club, that the TCC had lobbied the Art Gallery of Toronto to take the 1934 Salon, but was refused on the grounds of a conflict of dates. However, Johnston had also noted a certain "apathy" on the part of the AGT towards the exhibition. Malcolm to Hawkins, 4 Nov. 1935 and Johnston to Malcolm, 12 Nov. 1935, LAC, MG30 D165, vol. 1, file 5, 2 of 2.

33 To ensure that the work could be seen in both large cities and small communities, the Salon could be sponsored by a local camera club, an art association or an art gallery.

34 In 1934, 26% of the participants were from Canada, 12% in 1935, 15% in 1936, and 23% in 1937. LAC, MG 30 D165, 1937, vol. 1, file 11. In 1930, an all-Canadian photography exhibition was held at the CNE, an event that was repeated nine years later. In 1934, the Hamilton Camera Club held the *First Annual Canadian Salon of Photography*. The

emphasis on Canadian work was welcomed by some and bemoaned by others because it was felt that there were not enough pictorialists in the country doing quality work. See Joan SCHWARTZ, "Salon Crescendo/1930-1940," in *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada (1839-1940)*, ed. Lilly Kolton (Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), 97-101.

35 Holgate to Brown, 6 Sept. 1937, "Photographic Art-Fifth Canadian International Salon of" (1938), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 1, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

36 Brown to Vanderpant, 10 Jan. 1934, "Correspondence 1934," LAC, MG 30 D373, vol. 1, file I-22.

37 McCurry to Vanderpant, 28 Oct. 1935, "Correspondence 1935," LAC, MG 30 D373, vol. 1, file I-23.

38 Brown to Halliday, 29 Nov. 1937, "Photographic Art-Fourth Canadian International Salon of" (1937), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 1, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

39 McCurry to Ackroyd, 21 July 1949, "Vanderpant, John," (Correspondence with/re Artists), NGC 7.1 V, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

40 McCurry to Weaver, 14 Nov. 1946, "Photographic Art-Seventh Canadian International Salon of (proposed)" (1939-1947), NGC 5.5P, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

41 McCurry to Gordon M. Tranter, secretary, Calgary Photographic Society, 22 Feb. 1946, "Photographic Art-Seventh Canadian International Salon of (proposed)" (1939-1947), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P; D.H. Baker to McCurry, "NGC Memorandum" 21 Feb. 1946, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

42 McCurry to Fleetwood-Morrow, 28 Oct. 1941, "Photographic Art-Sixth Canadian International Salon of" (1939), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 2, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

43 Halliday to Brown, 15 Nov. 1937, "Photographic Art-Fourth Canadian International Salon of" (1937), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5P, file 1, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

44 W.C. Hankinson, senior secretary of the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ottawa to Lauren Beaudry, Assistant Undersecretary for the Department of External Affairs, 24 Jan. 1940, "War Photographs Exhibitions" (1940), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5W, file 8, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

45 McCurry to Skelton, 2 July 1940, "War Photographs Exhibitions," *ibid.*

46 Musgrove to McCurry, 10 May 1944, "This is Our Strength Exhibition 1 and 2" (1944-1945), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5T, file 8, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

47 Hedley to McCurry, 18 Sept. 1944, "This is Our Strength Exhibition 1 and 2," *ibid.*

48 The original caption for the boat launching was "The 10,000 ton cargo ship S.S. Fort Esperance slides down the ways during her launch ceremony at the United Shipyards Ltd." The photograph was taken in September 1943 in Montreal when a record twelve ships were launched on the same day; see LAC, MIKAN No. 3196929. The original caption for the propeller photograph was "Workman guides a crane lifting a propeller to be used in repairing a Yugoslavian freighter," taken in July 1943 in the Maritimes; see LAC, MIKAN No. 3196731.

49 For the most part, NFB photographers used medium to large format cameras that discouraged spontaneous images.

50 A direct link between the Gallery and local commercial interests is seen in shows such as *Useful Gifts of Good Design Under \$6.00 From Ottawa Stores* (1951), and *Useful Gifts of Good Design Under \$15.00 From Ottawa Stores* (1953 and 1954), both of which took place in December. These exhibitions were most likely based on MoMA's *Useful Household Objects* shows that were an annual event from 1938 to 1950; see Mary Anne STANISZEWSKI, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1998), 161-67.

51 Critical writing on the exhibition includes Roland BARTHES, "The Great Family of Man," *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 100-102; Lili Corbus BEZNER, "Subtle Subterfuge: The Flawed Nobility of Edward Steichen's Family of Man," in *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal to the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 121-174; Louis KAPLAN, "Photoglobe: The Family of Man and the Global Rhetoric of Photography," in *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 55-79, 207-211; and the entire issue of the *History of Photography* 29, no.4 (Winter 2005).

52 STANISZEWSKI, *The Power of Display*, 173-90.

53 McCurry to Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications, MoMA, 10 Mar. 1955, "Family of Man Exhibition" (1957), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5-F, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

54 Buchanan to Antoinette Irving, Scheduling Manager, MoMA, 30 Nov. 1955, "Family of Man Exhibition," *ibid.* Although not toured by the NGC, the exhibition also went to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Public Library and Art Museum, London, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

55 STANISZEWSKI, *The Power of Display*, n.70, page 334-35 regarding the different versions of the exhibition. Although it is not entirely clear, it appears that the MoMA toured the original exhibition to eight US institutions. Two smaller versions were circulated by the museum, and four smaller ones travelled both nationally and internationally under the auspices of the United States Intelligence Agency. At the NGC, all correspondence is directed to the MoMA's Circulating Exhibitions Department with no mention of USIA involvement.

56 Martin S. DWORKIN, "Steichen's Great Exhibition, The Family of Man," *Canadian Commentator* 1, no.7 (July 1957): 14-15. Dworkin was a celebrated American film critic.

57 In 1941, while employed by the NFB as Supervisor of Rural Circuits, Buchanan established a broad distribution network to ensure that information films were available in the remotest areas of Canada. Buchanan also developed an extensive traveling display program for both the Wartime Information Board and the NFB. In 1944, he edited *This is Canada*, a pictorial essay featuring NFB photographers Nick Morant, Harry Rowed, Ronny Jaques, Jean Palardy and Frank Tyrell. After the war, as part of the post-war reconstruction plan, Buchanan organized the Industrial Design Exhibition that later led to his establishing the National Industrial Design Committee at the National Gallery.

58 Alan JARVIS, *The Things We See: Indoors and Out* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1947), 9.

59 Jarvis also expresses this view in a speech he wrote for Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent, for the opening of *The Family of Man* exhibition in Montreal on 8 March 1957. The text notes that the exhibition proves that photography is an art form and, "it also proves that art is not so much a way of doing or making, but a way of *seeing with fresh eyes*. It is the mark

of genius that the artist, whether he is a painter, photographer, or sculptor, reveals to us new ways of seeing the world; he shows us aspects of beauty to which we had hitherto been blind, and he discovers beauty in unexpected, even in unlikely places." *Family of Man Exhibition* (1957), (Exhibitions in Gallery), NGC 5.5-F, NGC Fonds, NGC Library and Archives.

60 The files provide little information on the curatorial decisions and administrative processes surrounding the selection and creation of photograph exhibitions at this time. In the case of *The Family of Man*, the letter from the Museum of Modern Art proposing the exhibition was passed around, with various people signing their support in the margins. In terms of Jarvis' involvement with exhibitions, Andrew Horrall believes that Jarvis was slightly removed from such concerns. When Jarvis was hired, it was recognized that he lacked administrative experience and Buchanan was named assistant director and put in charge of running the institution on a daily basis. His administrative expertise freed Jarvis to fulfill the role for which he had been hired: to publicize the Gallery and Canadian art throughout the country. From his arrival in May 1955 until about the end of 1956, he was on the road constantly. Jarvis thus managed the Gallery by putting his full trust in his senior staff and if Buchanan wanted to mount photography exhibitions, Jarvis would have most likely supported him. Email correspondence, Andrew Horrall to Andrea Kunard, 4 Mar. 2009; see also Andrew HORRALL, *Bringing Art to Life: A Biography of Alan Jarvis* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

LE RÔLE DES EXPOSITIONS DE PHOTOGRAPHIES À LA GALERIE NATIONALE DU CANADA (1934-1960)

Le présent article explore l'histoire diversifiée des expositions de photographies à la Galerie nationale du Canada (maintenant Musée des beaux-arts du Canada) avant l'acquisition de photographies comme médium artistique en 1967. Ainsi que je le soutiens, la photographie était clairement liée à la manière dont l'institution comprenait sa fonction en tant qu'établissement artistique national, bien que sa présentation d'expositions de photographies ait été motivée, à certains moments spécifiques, par différentes raisons. L'organisation et les tournées de Salons internationaux canadiens de photographie de 1934 à 1939, conjointement avec des clubs photo, coïncidaient avec la manière dont la Galerie comprenait son rôle pédagogique en diffusant parmi un large public ce qu'elle voyait comme étant les grands principes esthétiques du médium. Dans les années 1940, la Galerie soutenait la diffusion de thèmes de propagande en faveur de l'effort de guerre. Puis l'accent se porta sur la vision des spectateurs comme consommateurs dans une économie d'après-guerre. À travers la très populaire exposition *The Family of Man*, présentée à la Galerie en 1957, on comprenait que la photographie affirmait des idéaux culturels plus étendus qui soulignaient l'« universalité » de l'Américain blanc ordinaire et, par extension, les valeurs canadiennes.

Dans les années 1930, la Galerie faisait la promotion de l'esthétique photographique picturaliste dans ses très populaires Salons de photographie qui montraient les oeuvres d'importants photographes internationaux et canadiens. Le mouvement picturaliste était complexe et les photographes picturalistes choisissaient avec soin le sujet, la composition, l'équilibre des tons et la technique. Les picturalistes croyaient que leur travail se comparait aux autres arts visuels, comme la peinture, et méritait d'être reconnu par le musée. Eric Brown, directeur de la Galerie nationale, soutenait le picturalisme à cause de son attrait de masse; il le jugeait utile comme « introduction » esthétique aux arts plus nobles. Les Salons étaient aussi destinés à refléter la vision de plus en plus moderne de la Galerie, bien qu'ils aient joué un rôle ambivalent au regard des préoccupations de l'institution d'appuyer ce qu'elle considérait comme un art national. À la fin des

années trente, la Galerie retira son appui aux Salons, qui étaient devenus un fardeau pour le musée à cause des difficultés occasionnées par la guerre et du soutien insuffisant des clubs photo qui n'avaient pas réussi à structurer leurs activités au plan national.

Vers 1940 et jusqu'en 1960, la photographie continua d'être présente, non comme objet esthétique indépendant, mais comme une sorte de communication de masse. Durant toute la durée de la guerre, les photographies entrèrent au musée en tant que matériel éducatif et outil de propagande. Les photographies de *Twenty-five Years of the Soviet Union* (1943) et *Great Britain and Her People* (1944) montraient la terre, les peuples et les cultures de nations alliées. Des expositions comme *War for Freedom* et *Somewhere in France*, montrées en 1940, suivaient un ordre strict et utilisaient des légendes explicatives étendues pour assurer une diffusion optimale de la propagande. La quintessence de l'utilisation du médium à des fins de propagande a été atteinte dans *This Is Our Strength*, exposition en deux parties montrées à la Galerie nationale en 1944 et 1945, dont la première a circulé dans les musées à travers le pays. Réalisée par le Wartime Information Board, l'exposition montrait le travail sur le front domestique pendant la guerre. L'exposition avait un aspect théâtral pour l'époque. La photographie documentaire se combinait à des techniques visuelles dynamiques comme l'agrandissement, le recadrage et un éclairage dramatique. L'accent était mis sur l'efficacité de l'image à l'intérieur d'une présentation didactique. L'utilisation et la manipulation de l'imagerie étaient des plus claires quant au message : rassurer les spectateurs sur leur rôle et sur le rôle de leur pays sur le plus vaste théâtre de la guerre.

La dynamique visuelle et la politique de persuasion de ces expositions ont été également utilisées lors de l'entrée du pays dans une économie d'après-guerre. Des stratégies visuelles semblables étaient particulièrement importantes pour la présentation de photographies lors des nombreuses expositions de design à la Galerie nationale, comme *The Wooden House in America* (1944), *Elements of Design* (1946), *If You Want to Build a House* (1946) qui étaient réalisées, pour la plupart, par le Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) de New York. L'influente exposition, *Design for Use: A Survey of Design in Canada of Manufactured Goods for the Home and Office, for Sports and Outdoors* a été réalisée en 1945 par la Galerie nationale, l'Office national du Film et le ministère de la Reconstruction. Les photographies ainsi présentées servaient principalement d'illustrations et de guides pour les valeurs créées par le nouveau culte du consumérisme.

La transformation de la Galerie en spectacle visuel était évidente dans l'exposition du MoMA *The Family of Man* organisée par Edward Steichen, où les spectateurs étaient visuellement et physiquement mis en situation de

consommateurs de l'idéologie de la guerre froide. Bien que la version d'Ottawa n'ait comporté que le tiers de l'exposition originale, les photographies étaient regroupées sur le mur ou suspendues au plafond à différents niveaux pour créer une expérience visuelle dynamique. Pour des milliers de spectateurs, à Ottawa et ailleurs, l'exposition envoyait un message clair et édifiant tout en démontrant que la photographie était un médium vital d'expression artistique et de communication. *The Family of Man* obtint un très vif succès car, pour les spectateurs, elle représentait la meilleure façon d'utiliser et d'exposer les photographies de la Galerie.

Tout au long des années cinquante, le médium est demeuré présent à la Galerie à travers des emprunts d'expositions. De plus, la décision de présenter ces expositions dépendait le plus souvent des intérêts personnels du directeur, Alan Jarvis, et du directeur adjoint Donald Buchanan. Tous deux voyaient dans la photographie un moyen d'intégrer l'art et la vie, car le médium aidait le spectateur à percevoir le monde d'un point de vue plus « élevé ». La photographie montrait aussi comment mettre de l'ordre dans ce qui était perçu comme le chaos et la fragmentation de la réalité qui, pour plusieurs, définissaient l'existence moderne.

Depuis les années trente jusqu'à la fin des années cinquante, les expositions de photographies tenues à la Galerie nationale du Canada étaient un moyen de formuler des énoncés qui reflétaient ou appuyaient les conceptions de l'institution concernant les relations de l'art à la société. À l'intérieur de l'environnement très construit d'un musée des beaux-arts, les photographies exposées communiquent des modèles spécifiques de savoir; elles peuvent être montrées comme des œuvres d'art ou comme une composante dans la transmission d'informations et d'idées. Cette étude des expositions de photographies à la Galerie nationale du Canada durant cette période révèle comment elle a répondu aux événements historiques et aux forces culturelles. La possibilité de disposer les photographies de différentes manières a fait du médium un moyen précieux de justifier le mandat de la Galerie nationale du Canada et de confirmer son importance pour le pays.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette