

or two pages of the relevant textual passages. An index would also have been appreciated in a catalogue as comprehensive and lengthy as this one, and the very short bibliography is a disappointment in such an important book. There is included a most complete chronology of the artist's life, a listing of principal exhibitions, and a listing of all the art works included in the exhibition, with appropriate documentation. There are, of course, the inevitable errors of a large text, the most serious being the dating of John Vanderpant's death as having occurred in 1938 instead of 1939.⁶ Comparatively minor problems, however, must not blind the reader to the tremendous value of Professor Zemans' catalogue. It is a *magnificent* work of scholarship, and will stand as the dominant authority on Macdonald for many years to come.

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Notes

- 1 Joyce ZEMANS, *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape/A Retrospective Exhibition* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), p. 229.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 3 *Ibid.*,
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- 5 Charles C. HILL, *John Vanderpant Photographs*. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976), p. 28.
- 6 Zemans, p. 96.
Hill, p. 32.

Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape/A Retrospective Exhibition

A comprehensive retrospective exhibition of the work of J.W.G. (Jock) Macdonald (1897-1960), a founding member of Painters Eleven in Toronto, is certainly overdue. Dennis Reid and Ann Pollock's small but estimable 1970 exhibition of Macdonald's work at the National Gallery was the first since the artist's death, but still was not based on a great deal of original research. This current exhibition, organized by Joyce Zemans, Associate Professor in art history at York University, includes 157 works and reflects several years of research and study on her part.

Both the exhibition and catalogue are divided into thirteen time periods, providing a useful breakdown of a rather complex and varied *oeuvre*. To Zemans' credit, she has managed to convey a good idea of Macdonald's social milieu during his years in Vancouver (1926-47); his musical evenings with the Vanderpant, for example, and his relationships with Lawren Harris and F.H. Varley are well documented. Much of this cultural/social history has been recorded in published form concerning Montréal and Toronto artists but Zemans' research makes one aware that this sort of work should be undertaken on other cities in Canada in order to shed light on artistic production in smaller centres.

Her work on British Surrealism and its influence on Macdonald's art (largely via the bizarre Grace Pailthorpe) was a huge undertaking in itself, the British movement being more or less an offshoot or backwater to the European one. As Zemans describes the role of British Surrealism in Macdonald's work, one begins to see it as an intriguing foil to the exploration of French Surrealism by francophone artists in Québec such as Pellán, Borduas and their followers. Zemans brings out the fact that Macdonald felt Borduas and his students to be rivals to English-Canadian abstractionists for the limelight of having introduced abstract art to Canada.

She lays to rest a long-held misconception often referred to of Mac-

donald's training under, and debt to, Hans Hofmann. In fact, Macdonald was over fifty, and a fully developed artist, when he went to Provincetown for a few weeks in the summers of 1948 and 1949. Although Hofmann's role in the development of Macdonald's work was minimal then, his advice was identical to that which Varley gave Macdonald in the 1930's and which Dubuffet was to offer in 1955. Macdonald had to become more fluid and less tight and linear in his use of paint. Doubtless this problem was caused by Macdonald's early training and years of work as a commercial artist, a relationship Zemans does not explore. Indeed, the advice seems to be that heeded by several of Canada's commercial artists/painters who struggled to become more painterly. Both Tom Thomson and Jack Bush come to mind as outstanding examples.

Zemans' main weakness in this essay is her failure to give the reader a convincing portrait of Macdonald, both as an artist and a man, and to set him in an artistic/intellectual context. Her writing tends to be brittle and reads as though she is holding both Macdonald and his work at arm's length. Her approach is more one of analysis than an emotionally involved investigation. Despite her commendable and competent interviewing, research and marshalling of material, Zemans stops short of interpretation at various points. Granted, the task of making sense of Macdonald's work would not be an easy one; the artist was something of an anomaly and drew from eclectic sources. But in this work, both Macdonald and his art end up floating in a nether world in which, for example, Kandinsky and Mondrian are given the same credence as Ouspensky.

Zemans' removed and analytical mode is perhaps most inappropriate in her descriptions of Macdonald's late works. These are the culminating canvases of his career and as spiritual expressions are nothing short of magnificent. The brushstrokes mediate between personal expressive gestures and anonymous "found" daubs or shapes in nature. Thus, the works have the feeling they have naturally evolved and were not contrived or forced. Yet,

as abstract paintings, Macdonald's late works are not modernist, in Clement Greenberg's sense of the term, and do have a dated look to them. Zemans does make the astute observation that Macdonald remained an *easel painter* and never moved into the large scale of gesture and canvas of the Abstract Expressionists in New York. In fact, Macdonald and his pupils, for example, William Ronald and John Meredith, could almost be seen as the flip side to the coin of modernist painting in English Canada (if things were ever so simple) with Jack Bush and the artists he influenced on the other and more prominent face.

Any such context for Macdonald's work is what is needed in order to view his paintings with some sense of their place. Zemans opens up many areas for further research or thinking on Macdonald as well as this one. His precise ideas on spirituality, on nature, and on such notions as Ouspensky's fourth dimension need more definite articulation, particularly as they relate to the content and style of his work. Also, the relatively unexplored era/area of transcendentalism and fascination with the spiritual world on the part of many North American artists between the two World Wars is of vital interest and importance to the study of art history of the period.

Macdonald leaves us many direct clues to the meaning of his work, particularly in his 1940 manuscript on "Art in Relation to Nature", which Zemans reproduces as an Appendix. All things considered, Zemans, with her well-organized research, has created a successful book, one which can only serve to stimulate interest and further writing on Jack Macdonald.

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