

PUBLICATION NOTICE / NOTE DE LECTURE

Arthur Lismer: Nova Scotia, 1916-1919

Gemey KELLY

Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, 1982

68 pp., 2 colour, 87 b/w illus., \$7.95

There has recently been a strong revival of interest in Arthur Lismer, particularly in his post-Group of Seven period paintings which tended to be neglected during the artist's lifetime. The lurid, intestinal and claustrophobic qualities of many of them were not to contemporary taste and have only gained attention as our view of Canadian art has relaxed and expanded. Lismer was more of a *painter* than most of the Group. As if in reaction to the polished niceties of aesthetes, he laid pigment down with deliberate coarseness. However heavy and unsatisfactory the results sometimes were, they were always frank and, in the post-Group works in particular, seemed to develop from a form of deep, personal expressionism.

Arthur Lismer: Nova Scotia, 1916-1919 deals with the prints and paintings that Lismer produced in the years immediately preceding the formation of the Group, when he was working in isolation from his Toronto contemporaries as Principal of the Victoria School of Art and Design in Halifax (now the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design). But the emphasis of the catalogue accompanying the exhibition is on Lismer's teaching and energetic promotion of the visual arts in Nova Scotia. The catalogue is well-produced and Gemey Kelly's essay is carefully researched and beautifully written. Although she benefitted from selecting an artist whose life has already been fairly well documented, I never had the feeling that she was simply repeating second-hand information. Her text is fresh and thoughtful through-

out. My only regret is that she did not say more about Lismer's art of the period, although she did make the important connection with John Constable. This might have helped to establish the paintings of the period in the broader context of Lismer's total *oeuvre*.

Christopher Varley

Head Curator/Curator of Canadian Art

The Edmonton Art Gallery

Edmonton, Alta.