

Notes

¹ Not all of these publications, books, monographs, catalogues, and articles are of art-historical relevance, yet they contribute to an awareness of women painters in Canada's art world. A few examples of the literature on Canadian women painters, listed by date of publication: J. MURRAY, *Sparkling Water: Mary Wrinch and her Contemporaries* (Toronto, 1971); D. FARR and N. LUCKYJ, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston, Ont.: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1975); N. TUELE, *Sophia Theresa Pemberton* (Victoria, B.C.: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1978); C. WILKS, *The Magic Box—The Eccentric Genius of Hannah Maynard* (Toronto: Exile Books Ltd., 1980); N. LUCKYJ, *Visions and Victories: 10 Canadian Women Artists 1915-1945* (London, Ont.: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983).

² Albert BOIME, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon, 1971). The Académie Julian was established in 1868 by Rodolphe Julian (1839-1907). This Académie was to become very popular with such Canadian artists as Florence Carlyle and Sophia Pemberton. The Académie Julian opened its doors to women in 1880 and was considered one of the best institutions in France where a woman could receive artistic training.

³ The works cited are all undated.

⁴ Rosalind E. KRAUS, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), approached this subject in her essay entitled "In the Name of Picasso." She refutes Rubin's notion that the changes in Picasso's art were a direct reaction to his personal life, and goes on to substantiate her position against art as autobiography.

⁵ Alexander attributes Jacobson's landscape style to the influences of the Barbizon School. She stresses this relationship unduly and does not consider Jacobson's work on its own merit.

⁶ Retrospective exhibitions in Paris during the early 1900's were numerous: Van Gogh, 1901; Cézanne, 1904, 1905, 1907; Signac, 1904; Gauguin, 1905; Ethnograph, Trocadero, 1906, 1907; Matisse, 1909. These retrospective exhibitions proved to be influential on the up-and-coming younger artists of the avant-garde.

Expressions of Will: The Art of Prudence Heward

Natalie LUCKYJ

Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, and the McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, 1986. 128 pp., 4 colour, 79 b/w illus., paper, \$10.00.

The fact that this exhibition catalogue is the first monograph on Montréal painter Prudence Heward (1896-1947) is sufficient to make it an important work. It is also, however, a solid and competent product by Carleton University instructor Natalie Luckyj, and lays the necessary groundwork for future, more in-depth publications. Two shortcomings do mar this book's general success: a structural problem in the catalogue text and a lack of interpretive writing on the paintings.

Prudence Heward is certainly a fascinating subject. An integral part of the inter-War painting scene in Montréal presided over by John Lyman, she was active in the Beaver Hall Hill group, the Canadian Group of Painters, and the Contemporary Arts Society. But she was also a "lady," born to a wealthy Montréal family, which hindered her somewhat in the art world. Luckyj points out, for example, that during her studies in Paris, Heward felt obliged to stay at a respectable hotel on the Right Bank, rather than joining other art students on the bohemian Left Bank. Heward's subjects and her attitude toward them were unusual. Portraits of women, of nude women, and of nude black women are some of her strongest works, all with a powerful sense of inner personality. But these works remain enigmatic. In her introduction, Luckyj laments the difficulty of researching Prudence Heward's life and thoughts since so many of her colleagues are now

deceased. Luckyj does not state whom among those still living she has consulted, but one feels convinced that surely more work can be done to flesh out our sketchy picture of this artist.

The catalogue text is divided into three sections: "The Artist" (on Heward's life), "The Critics" (a compilation of critical remarks on her paintings), and "The Work" (a chronologically arranged description of her style and subjects). No real justification is made for this tripartite approach. It may have been convenient for the author, but it makes for frustration and boredom for the reader. The three sections would have worked better as one integrated essay with many of the noted criticisms put in footnotes and/or an appendix.

"The Artist" describes Heward's social milieu, upbringing, studies, and few trips. It is almost a truism that most visual artists do not lead interesting lives; instead, everything goes into their work. Heward is no exception, so "The Artist" makes for dull reading. Luckyj runs into difficulties when she is tempted to comment on Heward's art in this biographical section, but has to wait until "The Work." For example, she says about a 1925 study trip to London and Paris: "This academic training, however brief, was a fundamental influence throughout her life." One wonders in what manner, but this point is not discussed further. A distracting element in this section, and throughout the book, is that the artist is always referred to as "Prudence." Perhaps the family would object to her being called "Heward," but the use of her first name seems condescending here.

The section entitled "The Critics" is mostly a recounting of various reviewers' comments on Heward's works seen in group and solo exhibitions. Since, during this period, art criticism (particularly in

Canada) was barely in its infancy, most writers cited were non-professional newspaper reviewers, and their ideas don't seem worth this full treatment. Not much interpretation is made of all of these reviews by Luckyj except for an intriguing comment at the end of this section, where she speculates that some reviewers rejected Heward's work because it threatened traditional values. Which ones, why and how, she does not explain.

Finally the reader comes to the last section, "The Work," in which Luckyj discusses Heward's painting. Although a keen sense of the author's enthusiasm and excitement for her topic is conveyed here, there is also evidence of what seems to have been a nervous reluctance to interpret the paintings. Although this leaves room for future work on the artist, Luckyj could have gone further in discussing Heward's ideas behind her choice of subjects, mood, and so on. To some extent, Luckyj has attempted this in her discussion of *Rollande* (1929), as she describes it as nationalistic and the figure as defiant, but this is still frustratingly vague.

One particular group of paintings which would be fascinating to know more about are those of nude black women done in the mid-thirties. It is a wonderful touch of Luckyj's to have reproduced a work of a nude black woman by Neville Lewis which had been reproduced in *Studio* magazine the same year Heward painted *Dark Girl*—1935. She also reproduces paintings of female black nudes by Dorothy Stevens and Lawren Harris from the same period for visual comparison. It would also have been useful and of great interest to see some of the studies of black women done at this time by Montréal artist Louis Muhlstock, since the melancholic mood and feeling of intimacy evoked in his works are also in Heward's.

Dark Girl (1935), one of these works depicting a nude black woman, is one of Heward's finest paintings. How did she come to select the subject and why did she choose the exotic jungle locale? (Luckyj points out that the main plant featured is actually Canadian sumach!) Is there any social comment intended? What were Heward's views about the blacks' situation in Bermuda when she began to visit Isabel McLaughlin there in 1936? Many such questions remain to be answered, or at least to be speculated upon. One is even left feeling curious about Heward's ill health and death due to asthma. What was the state of medical knowledge on asthma at this time? Also, how did her own ill health and the illness and death of so many in her family colour her view of life and enter into her paintings?

Luckyj's main thrust in this section, "The Work," is to insist on Heward's individuality. While this is understandable, she has done so at the expense of giving a clear sense of Heward's context, both in Montréal and internationally. A more detailed discussion of how her work was similar to, but also differed from, that of her colleagues would have been in order here. I do agree with Luckyj that Heward's strongest quality as a painter was the compelling intensity of feeling, the strong sense of inner conviction conveyed in her works, thus Luckyj's title: *Expressions of Will*.

Technically, the catalogue is a fine piece of work. The book is nicely designed and easy to read. The only lapse in its logic is that the captions and entries for the catalogue are separate from the reproductions. The text is completely bilingual, and an exhibition history of each work has been compiled. Every painting in the show is reproduced, five in full colour, and effective use has been made of old photographs. Despite

all my criticisms, the catalogue is admirable in most ways. The research into criticism on Heward certainly seems exhaustive. Luckyj is to be commended on a successful effort.

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**Further Comments on N. Luckyj's
Publication /
Autres remarques sur la publication de
N. Luckyj**

Probably the kindest thing I can say about this catalogue is that it is an impressive amassing of written and pictorial documents which will serve future writers well. How sad that Luckyj's additive, archaeological accumulations on Heward's life, critical reception, and work read as three boring, disembodied lists that manage to avoid anything approximating an integrated or contextualized presentation of a painter who, we gather, was very much a part of Montreal's avant-garde in the thirties. This artist's life and work raise pertinent questions about difference that Luckyj refuses to address. It is not enough to state and restate that Heward's work differed from that of the Group of Seven in subject matter in that she preferred nudes and portraits to landscape; rather, what matters is *why*. It is not enough to present lengthy formal analyses, nor to document changes in setting or paint application, without examining why these occur.