

FORGOTTEN! SCOTT, BRANDTNER, EVELEIGH, WEBBER: REVISITING MONTREAL ABSTRACTION OF THE 1940S

Four artists who are today relatively or almost entirely unknown – one woman and three men – played a part in the aesthetic upheavals that led in 1940s Montreal toward abstraction. Very active in the art milieu throughout the decade, Marian Dale Scott, Fritz Brandtner, Henry Eveleigh and Gordon Webber captured the attention of critics of the time, who employed the term “abstract art” to describe both non-objective works and bold formal explorations that retained some reference to visible reality.

These artists’ works reflected their openness to international contemporary art trends of the period – French, German, British and American. However, the stylistic unity displayed by the Automatistes, led by Paul-Émile Borduas, furthered the ascendancy of this group’s view of abstraction as a kind of unplanned visual writing arising from the spontaneous impulse of an initial gesture. Combined with the revolutionary tone of their 1948 manifesto *Refus global*, this established the Automatistes as Quebec’s abstract avant-garde, with the result that other approaches to abstraction being pursued at the time were relegated to the background.

The aim of this exhibition is to reinstate the oeuvres of these forgotten protagonists in the narrative of abstract art and to illustrate how their practices were inspired by diverse sources and encompassed a variety of themes: emotion, science, human experience in the broadest sense, but also the violence that marked their era.

A word must be said about the works on view. An artwork is composed of materials – canvas, paper, paint – that alter over time. Some works survive relatively unchanged, but others age less well and can pose conservation problems: flaking or loss of material, damage to the support, lifting of the paint layer, changes to the surface. Such works require restoration, which is costly, and unfortunately the museums, institutions and individuals concerned do not always have access to the necessary funds. Mounting an exhibition of artists long neglected can be particularly challenging: since they are less well known, their works have often not undergone needed conservation treatments. But the goal of such an exhibition is to bring them into public view, so inevitably certain works in less than ideal condition will hang alongside others that have been expertly restored. Finally, several pieces are either too fragile to travel or cannot be moved, such as public murals. In a few cases, these are represented in the exhibition by a photograph.

Esther Trépanier, curator

Marian Mildred Dale Scott

Montreal 1906 – Westmount, 1993

Artistic Education

Between 1917 and 1920, while still a child, Marian Mildred Dale took classes at the school run by the Art Association of Montreal. In 1923 she travelled in Europe for several months with a friend before becoming one of the first women to enrol at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, where she remained until 1926. The following year she went to London to complete her training at the Slade School of Fine Art.

Artistic Career

In 1939 she became a founding member of the Contemporary Arts Society, with which she exhibited regularly. For over seven decades she presented works at the annual exhibitions of the Art Association, the Royal Canadian Academy of Art and the Canadian Group of Painters, as well as participating in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Canada and abroad. She also executed two public murals.

Despite the demands of her role as a mother and the wife of prominent jurist, poet and member of Canada's left-wing social democratic movement Francis Reginald (Frank) Scott, she pursued her art practice until the end of her life. Her constantly evolving work was the fruit of both formal experimentation and philosophical reflection.

Teaching

Like Brandtner and Bethune, Scott was deeply involved in the realms of both art and progressive politics. Following Norman Bethune's departure for Spain in the fall of 1936, Marian Dale Scott began assisting Fritz Brandtner in teaching art to disadvantaged youth at the Children's Creative Art Centre. During the 1940s she taught at St. George's School of Montreal and, from 1949 to 1952, at the School of Art and Design of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Marian Dale Scott, 1940s

Photo: Studio Adolphe

Library and Archives Canada, PA-200631

Friedrich Wilhelm (Fritz) Brandtner

Danzig (now Gdańsk) 1896 – Montreal 1969

Artistic Education

Called up at the age of eighteen, the German-born Brandtner saw active combat before being made a prisoner of war in France. After being liberated in March 1920, he returned to Danzig and trained in art and art history, largely as an autodidact. In 1928 he immigrated to Winnipeg, where he worked on various projects as a commercial designer and developed ties within the art milieu.

Artistic Career

In 1934 he moved to Montreal, where he soon became part of the art scene. Appointed secretary of the Contemporary Arts Society in 1939 (he quit the group the following year), he also served as vice president of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art (from 1938 to 1940), of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour (from 1941 to 1943), and of the Canadian Group of Painters (from 1944 to 1948 and again in 1953). He participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad. He also executed a number of murals and decorative works for public buildings. In his view, the practice of art should arouse new creative energies, and until the end of his life he continued to produce works simultaneously in Expressionist, Cubist and purely abstract styles.

Teaching

In the spring of 1936 he and his friend Dr. Norman Bethune founded the Children's Creative Art Centre for disadvantaged children, whose classes were held in Bethune's apartment at 1154 Beaver Hall Square. During the 1940s Brandtner taught children at various community centres in impoverished neighbourhoods. From 1944 to 1966 he earned his living teaching at Miss Edgar and Miss Cramp's School, while continuing to promote his progressive vision of art among students at McGill University's School of Social Work, where he taught from 1947 to 1956.

Fritz Brandtner in His Studio, 1455 Fort Street, Montreal, about 1935

Photo: Walter Abell

National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Collection of Mrs. Fritz Brandtner

Henry Rowland Eveleigh

Shanghai 1909 – Montreal 1999

Artistic Education

Henry Eveleigh, whose father was British, was born in his mother's native city of Shanghai. He received his art education at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, where he graduated in 1934. After sojourns in Europe and Shanghai, he immigrated to Canada in 1938. Following a brief stay in Vancouver, he moved that same year to Montreal. Eveleigh was also trained in graphic design and worked regularly in this field from the 1930s on.

Artistic Career

In 1939 Eveleigh became one of the founding members of the Contemporary Arts Society. During the 1940s he exhibited at the Art Association of Montreal (now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), with the Contemporary Arts Society and in various group shows, both in Canada and internationally. The Surrealist, Cubist and abstract aspects of his approach drew the attention of critics, but in the early 1950s he stopped painting to devote himself to his career as a graphic designer. During the war he designed propaganda posters for the Department of National War Services. In 1947, in partnership with the graphic designer Carl Dair, Eveleigh founded an advertising and commercial art firm called the Eveleigh-Dair Studio, which remained in operation until 1951. From 1955 to 1962 he ran his own company, Eveleigh Design.

Teaching

In 1947 Henry Eveleigh won first prize in the first annual poster contest sponsored by the United Nations, which prompted the director of the École des beaux-arts de Montréal to hire him to set up the school's new department of graphic art and design. Eveleigh also served as one of the first directors of the graphic design program at the Université du Québec à Montréal. He taught there until his retirement in 1980, after which he returned to painting.

Henry Eveleigh, 1950s

Photo: Dory

Estate of Henry Eveleigh

Gordon McKinley Webber

Sault Ste. Marie 1909 – Montreal 1965

Artistic Education

Gordon Webber received his initial art education at the Ontario College of Art between 1924 and 1927 and at the Toronto Art Students' League from 1928 to 1930. During the 1930s he exhibited his work and taught, notably at the Children's Art Centre run by Arthur Lismer. Interested in mural art, Webber travelled to Mexico in 1935. In 1937, on the advice of Lismer, who was friendly with László Moholy-Nagy, he enrolled at the New Bauhaus (the Chicago School of Design), where he remained until 1942. Moholy-Nagy was among his teachers at the school.

Artistic Career

In 1948 Webber became one of the signatories of the manifesto put out by Alfred Pellán's group *Prisme d'yeux*. He was also a member of the Canadian Group of Painters and the Non-Figurative Artists' Association of Montréal, founded in 1956. Over the course of his career he participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions. A member of the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers, Webber executed a number of murals and decorative design projects. In the spirit of the Bauhaus, he experimented with space, materials and light in relation to different mediums – painting, drawing, photography and film. Also interested in music, set design and the integration of art into contemporary architecture, Webber expressed his multidisciplinary vision in every facet of his work.

Teaching

During the 1930s, in Toronto, he taught in various contexts, including at the Workers Educational Association. While he was in Chicago, Moholy-Nagy assigned him the task of teaching the Saturday morning children's art classes. It would be in Montreal, however, that Webber would make his mark as a teacher. In 1943, on the recommendation of Arthur Lismer, John Bland hired him to teach design at McGill University's School of Architecture. Lismer was then director of the Art Association of Montreal's School of Art and Design, where Webber also taught part-time from 1943 to 1954. Webber would have a powerful impact on his students, both at the Art Association and at McGill.

Gordon Webber, n.d.

Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University Library, Montreal. Photo: Digital Initiatives, McGill University Library

FORGOTTEN! SCOTT, BRANDTNER, EVELEIGH, WEBBER: REVISITING MONTREAL ABSTRACTION OF THE 1940S

SECTION 1

Works number 1 to 17

A UNIQUE ERA: THE WAR

The Second World War and its aftermath dominated the 1940s. From the start of the 1930s, the effects of the Depression and the rise of fascism had been preoccupying artists concerned with the social function of art. Some became involved in left-wing organizations, such as the Canadian League Against War and Fascism and various committees aimed at providing aid to war victims. Fascism was rightly seen as threatening not only democratic but also artistic freedom. Although the political or social commitment of several artists – for the most part anglophone – would not necessarily be reflected in their art practices, a few would create works that made direct reference to the war. These included government commissions, often for propaganda posters whose realistic, unambiguous style was very different from the far more innovative approaches adopted generally by their creators. However, certain artists – in particular Fritz Brandtner and Henry Eveleigh – produced personal works that illustrate how war can be evoked in highly original ways. This section highlights the striking contrast that can exist between these two types of artwork: created on commission or by personal choice.

1. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

War Commentary, about 1938–1939

Oil on canvas, 69 x 56.3 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase,

Joy Sedgewick Shannon Memorial Fund

This work juxtaposes three distinct spaces. The central part, structured like a collage of simultaneously Cubist and Surrealist inspiration, includes

various motifs: geometrically shaped areas of colour, a newspaper cutting, a bomb, a human profile, a menacingly ghost-like figure hovering behind a white mannequin, a half-ruined wall. At the bottom of the image, a huge and apparently unattached arm lies on the ground. Finally, to the rear, a more realistic section shows the sky being traversed by a Japanese bomber, identifiable by the red circles on its wings. Eveleigh may possibly have been in Shanghai in 1937, when the Imperial Japanese Navy bombarded the city.

2. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Let's Go! Your Savings Help Canada Get on With the Job!, about 1941-1945

[Fundraising poster]

Ink on paper, 75 x 50.5 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

3. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Let's Go ... Canada!, about 1941-1942

[Wartime recruiting poster]

Ink on paper, 92.5 x 62.2 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

Propaganda posters were produced in both official languages, and there are several variants of this recruiting poster kept at the War Museum. In one of the English versions the slogan "Let's Go Canada!" is followed by the words "Enlist Now." This direct appeal to citizens to join the armed forces was met with some opposition by the majority of French Canadians, who were against conscription.

4. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Let's Go! Your Savings Help Canada Get on With the Job!, about 1941-1945

[Fundraising poster]

Ink on paper, 75 x 50.5 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

While some posters were designed to encourage men to join up, others, aimed at the general population, focused on different themes, including

raising money for the war effort. Henry Eveleigh, who had also trained in graphic art, produced several – in a style quite different from his usual aesthetic approach – that reveal his talents as a designer.

5. FRITZ BRANDTNER

***Workers (Shaping Block)*, 1943**

Mixed media on paper, 44 x 59 cm

Private collection, Montreal

During the war, the “industrial front” constituted another battleground, featuring different heroes – working-class heroes. The Quebec chapter of the Federation of Canadian Artists attempted to persuade government and industry to allow its members access to war factories so they could portray the workers in action. The project got under way in 1943, and Brandtner was among those who immortalized this facet of the war effort. Since the works were not commissioned, the artists portrayed their subjects in their usual manner.

6. FRITZ BRANDTNER

***Shaping Block*, 1943**

Pen and black ink with watercolour over graphite on wove paper,
35.4 x 52.2 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

“But the key to Brandtner’s success in the best examples is in the underlying and overlying structure of their semi-abstract design. Lines, colours, spaces, interplay dynamically with each other and become a visual embodiment of the forces and tensions, the piston thrusts and hammer blows, of modern industry. The industrial world in its essence is one of abstract forces and geometrical forms. Hence it lends itself perfectly to the prismatic vision in terms of which Brandtner sees it.”

W. A. [Walter Abell], “War Industry Drawings by Muhlstocck and Brandtner,”
Canadian Art, vol. 1, no. 1, October-November 1943, p. 24.

7. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Night Shift, 1943

Pen and black ink with watercolour over graphite on wove paper,
31.5 x 38.8 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The Exhibition *This Is Our Strength/Notre force, la voilà*

These posters were produced in both official languages by the National Film Board for the exhibition *This Is Our Strength/Notre force, la voilà*, which was presented at the National Gallery of Canada from March 21 to April 5, 1944, prior to a nationwide tour. The exhibition was organized by the Wartime Information Board under the curatorship of its artistic director, the painter, architect and caricaturist Harry Mayerovitch, who invited a number of artists, including Fritz Brandtner, Henry Eveleigh and Marian Dale Scott, to take part.

8. FRITZ BRANDTNER

This Is Our Strength: Agriculture, 1944

Ink on paper, 91 x 60.2 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

9. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

This Is Our Strength: Electric Power, 1944

Ink on paper, 91 x 60.2 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

A convinced pacifist since her earliest youth, Marian Dale Scott refused all commissions that would require her to portray military action. But she accepted Harry Mayerovitch's invitation, since his exhibition focused not on Canada's armed forces but on its economic strengths. Here again, it is evident that the artists employed a style for these commissioned posters that was very different from their usual approach.

10. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

This Is Our Strength: Our Forests, about 1944

Ink on paper, 92 x 61.5 cm

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

The posters, produced in both official languages, each bore a short text. The following paragraph appears on the English version of this one: "Our forests, one third of whose products are sent abroad, are making a growing contribution to the United Nations' drive to victory. In the first year of war alone, Canada's vast timber industry increased production by more than one billion board feet, despite the large number of men it sent into the services and war plants. The Mosquito Bomber and plywood tubing are dramatic examples of new uses of wood which will be extended for the building of a more stable post-war world."

11. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

United Nations, 1947

Offset, 60.7 x 45.5 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
gift of Suzan Eveleigh for the Estate of Henry Eveleigh

In 1947 this poster earned Eveleigh first prize in the first international poster competition organized by the United Nations. The little green leaf emerging from the devastated landscape in the painting *Moscow, Dec. 5th, 1941* symbolizes the hope inspired by Germany's first real defeat. Here, the tree of peace is flourishing once more, and each leaf represents one of the United Nations member countries.

12. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Moscow, Dec. 5th, 1941, about 1942

Oil on canvas, 48 x 67 cm

Marc Bellemare Collection, Quebec City

On June 22, 1941, Germany embarked on Operation Barbarossa – its invasion of the USSR. The Soviet counteroffensive, launched on December 5, 1941, blocked Hitler's troops just thirty kilometres short of Moscow. When, on January 22, 1942, General Georgy Zhukov won the Battle of Moscow, it was the first significant victory of the Allied forces over the Third Reich and the first

major defeat for Hitler. In Eveleigh's picture, the hope inspired by success in the struggle that began in December 1941 is represented by the small green shoot emerging from a devastated landscape.

13. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Abstract Composition, about 1940

[Christmas card]

Woodcut (or linocut), 20.9 x 26.4 cm (open)

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Cynthia Moore

Artists sometimes made their own holiday greeting cards. Although this example does not refer directly to war, it seems to allude to the subject. While the red-green-white palette is a clear evocation of the festive season, the fragmented composition can be read as a shattered Christmas tree.

14. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Angel Conquering the Devil, 1941

[Christmas card]

Linocut, 21.6 x 14 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,
gift of Marc Régnier and Claudette Picard

15. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Preparatory Sketch for War, 1942

Ink over traces of graphite, 30.4 x 23.1 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Jean-Pierre Valentin

The German-born Brandtner had served as a soldier during the First World War, before being captured and imprisoned. He was therefore familiar with the horrors of modern warfare: gas attacks, the destruction of cities, the massacre of civilians. These images, executed during the Second World War, revive by means of a powerfully Expressionist vocabulary his memories of the disasters arising from armed conflict.

16. FRITZ BRANDTNER

City Burning, 1940

Gouache, coloured pencil, ink, 38.2 x 39.5 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,
gift of Marc Régnier and Claudette Picard

17. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Men of 1939, 1939

Black and coloured ink on paper-backed wood veneer, 34 x 24.7 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

SECTION 2

Works number 18 to 45

THE 1940S: THE MULTIPLE FACES OF ABSTRACTION

The birth of abstraction in Quebec is often identified with Automatism.

But this view overlooks two significant facts: that when Alfred Pellán returned from Europe in 1940 he brought with him a large number of abstract works, and that during the 1930s Fritz Brandtner introduced the publics of both Winnipeg and Montreal to abstraction. During the 1940s Henry Eveleigh and Fritz Brandtner exhibited experiments inspired by Cubism, Surrealism and Expressionism, while also showing entirely non-objective works.

Gordon Webber, pursuing a Bauhaus-influenced path, produced geometric abstractions that focused on the dynamic interplay between line, colour and design. Marian Dale Scott's practice was nourished by a reflection on the sources of life and humanity's legacy, resulting in images that borrowed motifs from the cellular and biomorphic realms. The work of each of these anglophone artists, which critics of the time did not hesitate to describe as abstract, enriched the art scene with allusions to international trends that went beyond the influence of Paris.

18. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Design No. 1, Vermont, 1946

Tempera and ink on board, 50.8 x 73.6 cm

Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection,
McGill University Library, Montreal

19. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Construction, about 1938

Oil on hardboard, 53.2 x 66.2 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Gendron Beauchemin

Brandtner saw art as an adventure open to all kinds of exploration. So it is understandable that he created works in distinctly Expressionist, Cubist and abstract styles during the same period. A number of non-objective works from the early 1930s – some gestural, some constructive – establish him as one of the pioneers of abstract art in this country.

20. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Emotion No. 2, about 1942

Oil on wood, 30.5 x 40.7 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

21. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Untitled, about 1942

Oil on plywood, 30.5 x 40.7 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, anonymous gift

22. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Odalisque, 1938

Oil on panel, 30.4 x 40.7 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

23. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Study for Mother and Child, n.d.

Gouache on cardboard, 38.3 x 29 cm

Henry Eveleigh Estate

The Exhibition of 1942

The exhibition *Paintings by Louis Muhlstock and Henry Eveleigh* was held at the Art Association of Montreal in November 1942. Among the twenty or so works by Eveleigh on view was the painting *Mother and Child*, the study for which can be seen here. The artist also showed portraits, including *The Fortune Teller* and *Kit Shaw*, still lifes, nudes (the *Odalisques*), Surrealist compositions and works on the subject of war. He included as well a number of non-objective paintings, either in a gestural style, like *Emotion No. 2*, or in the geometric spirit of *Stage Door*, which resembles the *Abstract Composition* reproduced in the November 7, 1942 issue of *La Presse*. Several critics responded enthusiastically to the exhibition, among them Jean-Charles Harvey, who in the November 14 issue of *Le Jour* wrote: "Like all the painters of the so-called revolutionary school, he [Eveleigh] destroys all the conventional frameworks, all the forms of nature, all academicisms. In this, he aligns himself with Borduas and Pellán, to the horror of the conformists."

24. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Stage Door, 1936

Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 40.6 cm

Estate of Henry Eveleigh

25. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

The Fortune Teller, 1939

Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 50.8 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, A. Sidney Dawes Fund

26. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Portrait of Kit Shaw, reproduced in Maurice Gagnon, *Peinture canadienne*, Montreal, Société des Éditions Pascal, 1945, plate X, p. 97

This *Portrait of Kit Shaw* was shown in the exhibition *Art of Our Day in Canada*, organized by the Contemporary Arts Society in 1940. It was also included in the 1942 show *Paintings by Louis Muhlstock and Henry Eveleigh*.

27. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Design No. X, 1948-1949

Gouache on paper, 71.1 x 95.8 cm

McGill University Visual Arts Collection, Montreal,
gift of Bruce Anderson, B.Arch. '64

A number of Webber's abstract works revolve around the tension between linear networks, pure geometric forms and a background whose variations of texture and light create a sense of depth or atmospheric space. During the 1940s critics were occasionally disconcerted by Webber's non-figurative approach. Although some admired the originality and graphic virtuosity of his work, others found it cold and calculated, accusing the artist of being a "slave to the slide rule and the set square." Such comments reflect the perplexity often inspired by this form of abstraction, still relatively unknown in Canada.

28. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Interpretation of "Bolero" by Ravel, 1930

Oil on board, 38.7 x 43.7 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase,
Margaret Jean Ross Bequest, and donation of her son, Colin Ross

Maurice Ravel composed his ballet *Bolero* in the summer of 1928, and the premiere took place a few months later on November 22, at the Opéra de Paris. That same year, the composer embarked on a North American tour that included recitals at the Margaret Eaton Hall in Toronto and the Théâtre Saint-Denis in Montreal. Webber could well have attended one of these events. Whatever the case, *Bolero* served as the inspiration for this painting, whose rhythm and repetitions of movement and form convey all the qualities of a musical tempo.

29. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Music, 1942

Photomontage with coloured inks and gouache, 40.6 x 50.8 cm
Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection,
McGill University Library, Montreal

The pictorial surface of this work is traversed by several series of dynamic lines, mostly diagonal, resulting in abstract forms that can be read variously as sound waves, spotlights or musical staves. The image in the centre shows Marian Anderson during her famous performance in front of the Lincoln Memorial, on April 9, 1939. A crowd of 75,000 people gathered to hear the internationally acclaimed contralto, who had been barred from performing at Washington's Constitution Hall because she was Black. Her interpretation that day of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," a patriotic song glorifying freedom, prefigured the civil rights movements to come.

30. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Abstract Composition (Design No. 1), 1944

Ink applied with pen, airbrush and probably stencil, and white gouache on cardboard, 37.5 x 51 cm
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, Robert Lindsay Fund

31. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Design No. 1, Vermont, 1947

Tempera on board, 48.7 x 72.7 cm
Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Volunteer Committee

This work once belonged to Marian Dale Scott, with whom Gordon Webber exhibited in 1949, at the Galerie XII of the Art Association of Montreal (whose name would be changed to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts later that year). Both then teaching at its School of Art and Design, the two artists counted Guido Molinari and Claude Tousignant among their students. Molinari spoke often of his admiration for Scott, while Webber had a particular impact on Tousignant.

32. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Untitled, 1948

Paint on film stock

Rare Books and Special Collections, Gordon Webber fonds,
John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection of McGill University
Library, Montreal

Film restored by the Cinémathèque québécoise, with the collaboration
of Vision Globale

Architect Bruce Anderson, a former student of Webber's, recalls that this film was shown to his class during a drawing exercise. Excited by the discovery of this unknown and highly personal film, which is reminiscent of the early films of Norman McLaren – who apparently introduced Webber to his technique – the Cinémathèque's animated film team restored the original version, which was in very poor condition.

33. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Fossils, 1946

Oil on fibreboard, 50.6 x 60.9 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

34. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Variations on a Theme: Cell and Fossil, No. 6, 1946

Oil on canvas, 71.5 x 61.3 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In the introduction to her 1954 solo show at the Dominion Gallery, Scott discussed her series *Variations on a Theme: Cell and Fossil*. It shows, she wrote, the “past-present becoming the future ... The fossil that the figure holds in her hand evokes feelings about time and a creative evolution that she is part of.”

35. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

***Stone and Protoplasm*, 1948**

Oil on fibreboard, 61 x 56 cm

Art Gallery of Windsor, gift of the Art Gallery of Windsor Volunteer Committee

In 1945, alongside the cellular forms, new motifs began appearing in Scott's images, such as crystals, fossils and human figures. Toward the end of the decade, her reflections expanded to encompass the origins not only of life, but also of culture. Cellular forms were henceforth juxtaposed with elements related to Indigenous cultures, such as prehistoric clay figurines or figures inspired by cave or tribal art.

36. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

***Anthurium*, between 1945 and 1948**

Oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cm

Private collection, Ottawa

During the 1930s, concurrently with her pictures of the city, Marian Dale Scott also executed a number of paintings of flowers and plants, and it was a theme she would return to occasionally in the decades to come. *Anthurium* is an interesting example: it combines a floral motif and a series of cell-like forms in a composition whose superimpositions and transparencies link it directly to the works from this period inspired by the biological realm.

The Mural *Endocrinology*

In the fall of 1941, Hans Selye, then an assistant professor of histology at McGill University, asked Marian Scott to execute a mural for his department of the medical school. The artist began researching the subject of endocrinology. Her mural, unveiled on June 26, 1943, portrays not only the important role played by the endocrine system in human reproduction, but also the negative effects of its dysfunction, such as dwarfism, gigantism and rickets. The artist arranged the various motifs in a great spiral, at the centre of which lies the steroid nucleus from which hormonal activity arises. The male figure stretching a hand up toward the heart of the research is an allegorical representation of the scientist.

In her article “Science as an Inspiration to Art,” published in the fall 1943 issue of *Canadian Art*, Scott spoke of the desire of many artists to quit their “ivory tower” in order to take part in the great enterprise of the time: the building of a new world. In essence, she maintained that science is one of the forces that can open new pathways to humanity, that artists and scientists share a common quest for meaning, and that science pushes our understanding of reality beyond the realm of the senses – in addition to revealing a world of strangely beautiful forms and colours.

37. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Endocrinology, 1943

Mural, Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, McGill University
Oil on plaster, 369 x 494 cm
McGill University Visual Arts Collection, Montreal, commissioned by Dr. Hans Selye. Photo: Brian Merrett

38. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Atom, Bone and Embryo, 1943

Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 101.6 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

The mural *Endocrinology* marked the start of a new phase in Scott’s oeuvre. Abandoning the rigidly geometric shapes she had used in earlier works to represent the urban world, she began exploring the wealth of more fluid, transparent forms offered by the cellular realm. Henceforth, her search for significance would be guided by a meditation on the principles of growth and evolution, resulting in works that critics would generally describe as abstract.

39. FRITZ BRANDTNER

City, 1948

Oil on canvas, 127 x 100.6 cm
Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

Brandtner and the City

The city often inspired Fritz Brandtner, and this selection of works illustrates the diverse styles he employed to represent it. They include Expressionism, as witness the astonishing *Bathing* from 1937, which depicts both nude bathers and a clothed female figure against the backdrop of a harbour scene. He also took a Cubist approach, sometimes timidly, as in the 1938 painting *The Montreal Harbour*, where fragmentation is limited to the shafts of light, or more assertively, as in *Untitled (City Abstract)* from about 1947. He came closer to pure abstraction in *City from a Night Train, No. 2* and the 1948 painting *City*, where the black silhouette of a church steeple is the only clue to the context of the image's powerfully vertical geometric forms.

40. FRITZ BRANDTNER

City from a Night Train, No. 2, about 1947

Oil on canvas, 103.5 x 99.5 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Critic Robert Ayre illustrated this painting in his review of a Canadian Group of Painters show published in the spring 1949 issue of *Canadian Art*. He described the work as “massive, intense, bursting with life, yet held within the bounds of a rigid scheme.”

41. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Untitled (City Abstract), about 1947

Ink, watercolour and gouache on paper, 29 x 37 cm

Art Gallery of Windsor, gift of Mrs. C. J. Grimwood

in memory of her husband, Carroll J. Grimwood

42. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Bathing, 1937

Gouache on paper, 25.5 x 35.5 cm

Private collection, Montreal

43. FRITZ BRANDTNER

The Montreal Harbour, 1938

Oil on canvas, 97 x 122.5 cm

Power Corporation of Canada Collection, Montreal

In 1939 Brandtner showed a work with the Contemporary Arts Society that depicted the city's harbour. Although it was not the painting on view here, a description given by the critic Reynald in *La Presse* on December 23, 1939 suggests several similarities: "Fritz Brandtner has pictured 'The Montreal Harbour' as it has never been seen before – as a cluster of cubes and blocks in solid colours over which the light of the sky splinters into a violent prism. Vehemence of expression, heaviness of colouration and texture, painting by concrete masses. But everything portrayed with an intense, original energy."

44. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Abstraction, 1930

Watercolour on paper, 44.2 x 58 cm

Musée d'art de Joliette, Morisset Family Donation

45. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Abstract Composition, 1940

Oil on wood, 92 x 40 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,
gift of Marc Régnier and Claudette Picard

SECTION 3

Works number 46 to 59

46. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Mural, 1958

Industrial brick, 480 x 1480 cm

Saint-Bernardin School [architect Louis J. Lapierre], 7900 8e avenue, Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension, Montreal

Photo: Alain Laforest

Trained in the multidisciplinary approach promoted at Chicago's New Bauhaus, Webber was interested in the integration of art and architecture, and he executed a number of murals and decorative works in collaboration with different architects. For example, on the invitation of architect Louis J. Lapierre, a former student of his, Webber executed an exterior mural for the Saint-Bernardin School. His abstract geometric design is composed of industrial brick, reflecting the Bauhaus doctrine of experimentation with techniques and ordinary materials. Since budgets of the time did not allow for the integration of artworks into architectural projects, the mural was included in the general costs and the architect paid the artist's fee out of his own pocket.

47. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Sculpture, about 1962

Painted aluminum (manufactured by Hunter Douglas),

Hunter Douglas Company Office [architect George F. Eber],
Pointe-Claire Industrial Park

Photo: Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture
Collection, McGill University Library, Montreal

In 1962 the Hunter Douglas company, maker of aluminum blinds since 1949, embarked on the construction in the Pointe-Claire industrial park of new buildings to house its factory and offices. Gordon Webber was commissioned to create a sculpture to be suspended in the lobby of the office building. In executing the work, the artist made use of the strips of painted aluminum manufactured by the company.

48. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Rendition of Ceramic Tile Mural

with a Clock, about 1950

Tempera on artboard, 33.2 x 38.1 cm

Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection,
McGill University Library, Montreal

Webber made many preparatory sketches for murals that were not necessarily executed. There are four studies for this project kept in the Gordon Webber fonds at McGill University. In the postwar period, mosaic became increasingly popular as a material for murals.

49. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Lines and Rectangles (Design for a Ceramic Wall Mosaic), 1957

Gouache and graphite, 25 x 36.3 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Gilles Gagnon

Photo: MMFA, Christine Guest

Photographic reproduction of the original

Since the original is too fragile to travel, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has allowed it to be represented here by a photograph. The work's acquisition report mentions the presence of an inscription on the verso of the sheet indicating that it was a study for a ceramic mural destined for an unidentified Catholic girls' school in Montreal. It is almost certain that this work was not the preparatory sketch for the mural but rather one of many studies Webber would have executed.

Murals

The economic and social situation created by the Depression and the war strengthened the desire of a number of artists to quit the "ivory tower" of the studio. They saw the execution of public murals as an effective way of contributing toward the democratization of art. Their models were often the great Mexican muralists, such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, as well as the murals created in the United States as part of Roosevelt's New Deal. But the Canadian government remained deaf to their demands that it adopt similar programs, and during the 1940s and 1950s most mural

commissions came from the private sector. Far from exhaustive, this section aims simply to highlight a few of the murals executed during the same period as Marian Dale Scott's work *Endocrinology*, seen earlier.

50. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Mercury, 1943

Stone high relief, north façade, Montreal Central Station

Photo: Brian Merrett

51. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Neptune, 1943

Stone high relief, north façade, Montreal Central Station

Photo: Brian Merrett

52. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Photograph of *Canada*, 1945

Mural for the CNR ticket office, Boston, reproduced in Helen Duffy and Frances K. Smith, *The Brave New World of Fritz Brandtner/ Le meilleur des mondes de Fritz Brandtner* (exhib. cat.), Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982, fig. 14, n.p.

Photo: Brian Merrett

This mural on the theme of “Canada, land of outdoor activities” was commissioned by Canadian National Railways to adorn its Boston ticket office. Traversed by a series of divisions that give it a Cubist feel, the work juxtaposes stylized motifs evoking Canada's many tourist attractions – its landscapes, forests and picturesque villages, its rich fauna and the opportunities it offers for hunting, fishing, hiking, sailing and horseback riding – along with several references to Indigenous cultures of the West Coast.

53. ISSUE OF *CANADIAN ART*

Illustration of the carved linoleum mural created by Fritz Brandtner for the ballroom of the Newfoundland Hotel in St. John's, in Donald W. Buchanan, "New Murals in Canada," *Canadian Art*, vol. 10, no. 2, winter 1953, pp. 64-65

54. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Studies for the high reliefs at Montreal Central Station, about 1943

From left to right:

Sketch for Mercury, mixed media, 16.5 x 24.5 cm

Sketch for Prometheus, mixed media, 16.5 x 35.6 cm

Sketch for Neptune, mixed media, 16.5 x 26.4 cm

Brian Merrett Collection, Montreal

Fritz Brandtner would undertake several contracts for Canadian National Railways (CNR). During construction of Montreal's Central Station, inaugurated in 1943, the station's decorative program and the design of its main concourse were overseen by the Montreal architect John Campbell Merrett. He commissioned Brandtner to create three stone high reliefs for the north exterior wall. The Art Deco-style works feature three gods of Roman mythology – Mercury, Prometheus and Neptune. Symbolizing speed, fire and water, they evoke the vital importance of Canada's system of rail and sea transport.

55. FRITZ BRANDTNER

***Clowns and Harlequins*, about 1951-1952**

Mixed media on paper, 11.4 x 42.7 cm

Estate of Paul Kastel Collection

Brandtner would also complete a number of decorative projects for CNR hotels across Canada. In 1952 he executed a mural in carved linoleum on a masquerade and carnival theme for the ballroom of the Newfoundland Hotel in St. John's. This preparatory sketch offers an enticing glimpse of the chromatic brilliance of the mural, illustrated in black and white in an article that appeared in *Canadian Art* in 1953.

56. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Trans-Canada Suite, about 1945–1950

Ink, gouache, graphite and varnish on cardboard, 9.5 x 61.5 cm
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,
gift of Marc Régnier and Claudette Picard

Though more abstract, this work displays several iconographic similarities to the mural executed for CNR's Boston ticket office. The sketch can also be related to a commission Brandtner received in 1944 from Trans-Canada Air Lines for a mural in carved linoleum representing the company's various trans-Canadian routes.

57. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Mountain Lake, n.d.

Mixed media on paper, 9.5 x 31 cm
Private collection, Montreal

Some of the brightly coloured motifs in this small horizontal painting, which conjures a scene in cottage country, are reminiscent of Matisse's paper cut-outs.

58. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

The Tree of Life, 1956

Mural, non-denominational chapel, Montreal General Hospital
Photograph of the mural taken in 1998
Photo: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman

The theme of this mural combines references to the Tree of Jesse and the Burning Bush. Undated pages from the artist's diary for 1955 and 1956 indicate that these two concepts crystallized for her the essence of an experience both spiritual and existential: an intermingled flowering of pain, sorrows and joys – an affirmation of faith, but also an acceptance of loss, grief and loneliness perceived as integral parts of life.

59. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Iconic, 1955

Oil on fibreboard, 45.8 x 40.9 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

SECTION 4

Works number 60 to 81

PERSPECTIVES: THE 1950S

Among Montreal's francophone artists, the 1950s would see the consolidation of the Automatiste and post-Automatiste avant-garde movements and the emergence of the Plasticiens, whose manifesto appeared in 1955. But for the anglophone artists who concern us, this decade would be one of continuity or transition. Fritz Brandtner, although much occupied with teaching, would persist with a practice open to wide-ranging experimentation. Gordon Webber, while teaching design at McGill University's School of Architecture, would pursue a personal approach that encompassed painting and photography, but also the creation of choreographies, murals and stage sets. Henry Eveleigh would abandon painting in order to devote himself full time to teaching graphic art and running his own commercial and graphic design firm. Finally, Marian Dale Scott would handle her themes – now drawn from culture and a meditation on human interrelations – with growing freedom before adopting, at the end of the decade, an entirely non-figurative approach that she would retain until the end of her life.

60. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Abstract Composition, 1952

Tempera (or gouache), sand and glue over traces of graphite, on cardboard, 37.4 x 52.3 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Gilles Gagnon

61. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Incident, Michigan, 1957-1959

Oil and resin on canvas board, 40.4 x 50.5 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Gilles Gagnon

62. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Design No. 14, Berkshires, 1952

Tempera, gum arabic and sand on artboard, 38.1 x 53.3 cm

Gordon Webber fonds, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection,
McGill University Library, Montreal

The incidents

Throughout the 1950s Webber pursued his explorations of abstraction. Toward the end of the decade he produced a series of works whose title, *Incident*, would be accompanied by a geographical location – as with *Incident, Michigan* and *Incident, Washington*. In the latter painting the artist has abandoned the atmospheric ground of shifting light and dark areas overlaid with geometric forms, lines and decorative motifs. Instead, the entire surface is covered with juxtaposed dabs of colour that delineate powerful criss-crossing diagonals and fill each resulting triangle with richly textured tones.

63. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Abstract Composition, 1954

Tempera and sand on cardboard mounted on a rigid support,
38.2 x 50.8 cm

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, gift of Gilles Gagnon

64. GORDON MCKINLEY WEBBER

Incident, Washington, 1959

Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 50 x 60 cm

Galerie Éric Devlin Collection, Montreal

Advertising Brochures by Henry Eveleigh

In 1981 Eveleigh wrote: “By 1950, to all intent and purpose, I no longer expressed myself through painting. I had become wholly engrossed with my efforts to establish Design as a practical philosophy and attitude in a somewhat hostile milieu inhabited by the advertising fraternity.”

This small selection of advertising brochures designed by Henry Eveleigh shows some interesting effects of contrast between black and vivid colour. The leaflets for Chiriotto Lodge and Whitehouse Industries Limited both employ a simple graphic style reminiscent of children’s art. Like naïve art, children’s art inspired a whole generation of modern artists, who were drawn to its spontaneity, authenticity and lack of formal perspective.

To avoid the over-exposure of these rather fragile brochures, which have already been exhibited several times, they are reproduced here with permission from the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec in the form of photographic reproductions.

65. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

Henry Eveleigh design firm leaflet, about 1955

Offset, 20.5 x 13.5 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
gift of Suzan Eveleigh for the Estate of Henry Eveleigh

Photo: Denis Legendre

Photographic reproduction of the original

66. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

“Modulite” leaflet, 1955

Offset, 13.3 x 10.2 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
gift of Suzan Eveleigh for the Estate of Henry Eveleigh

Photo: Denis Legendre

Photographic reproduction of the original

67. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

“Chiriotto Lodge, Ste-Adèle” leaflet, about 1950

Offset, 16.5 x 16.5 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
gift of Suzan Eveleigh for the Estate of Henry Eveleigh

Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Photographic reproduction of the original

68. HENRY ROWLAND EVELEIGH

“Whitehouse Industries” brochure, 1954

Offset, 21.7 x 28 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
gift of Suzan Eveleigh for the Estate of Henry Eveleigh

Photo: Denis Legendre

Photographic reproduction of the original

69. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Design No. 6, n.d.

Oil on wood, 13.4 x 17.2 cm

Private collection, Montreal

70. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Window, n.d.

Oil on fibreboard, 30 x 26 cm

Art Gallery of Windsor, purchased with funds donated by Mrs. Carroll J. Grimwood in memory of her father, Edward Regis

71. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Road to Gaspé, n.d.

Gouache, ink, graphite and varnish on paper mounted on cardboard, 13.2 x 21 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Marc Régnier and Claudette Picard

72. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Cosmos VI, between 1958 and 1962

Ink on paper, 28 x 43 cm

Musée d'art de Joliette, gift of Jacqueline Brien

The drawings in the *Cosmos* series, though undated, were undoubtedly executed during the late 1950s or early 1960s. In each case, the surface is covered by a dynamically complex linear network within which are embedded a variety of motifs representing planets, the movement of electrons and other circular or cellular forms. Various types of aircraft also traverse these realms, which simultaneously evoke scientific research and the conquest of space that fascinated so many in the postwar period.

73. FRITZ BRANDTNER

Cosmos VII, between 1958 and 1962

Ink on paper, 28 x 43 cm

Musée d'art de Joliette, gift of Jacqueline Brien

74. FRITZ BRANDTNER

St. Lawrence at Night, Matane, about 1959

Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 76.2 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Brandtner practiced the landscape genre regularly throughout his career. In some cases, he would divide the pictorial space into a network of expressive lines that frame and overlay areas of vivid colour. In others, like *St. Lawrence at Night, Matane*, he opted for more geometric forms that increase the impression of abstraction while nonetheless remaining highly expressive.

75. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Out of the Night No. 2, about 1959

Oil on fibreboard, 40.5 x 50.8 cm

Private collection

76. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Translation (Iconic) No. 1, 1955

Oil on cardboard, 91 x 68.4 cm

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal,
gift of the Max and Iris Stern Foundation

In the fall of 1956, Scott showed forty-seven works at the Dominion Gallery, which included *Translation (Iconic) No. 1*. In a review published in *La Presse* on October 8, the critic Rodolphe de Repentigny wrote: "The exhibition actually shows proof of far greater audacity than we are used to seeing from our painters. There is quite a distance between the Mooresque drawings in earth colours and black of the 'Façades' and the dazzling 'Translations,' whose blues and vivid reds unfurl across brilliant whites ... It is hard to avoid seeing here a more or less direct influence of American painting gradually replacing a more British romanticism."

77. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Figure No. 2, about 1957

Oil on canvas, 91 x 101 cm

McGill University Visual Arts Collection, Montreal,

gift of Patrick McGillicuddy Stoker in memory of F.R. Scott

78. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Out of the Night, about 1959

Oil on fibreboard, 63.5 x 76 cm

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,

gift of Mr. and Mrs. G. Everett Wilson

In an interview published in the article “Creative Montrealers: Painter Marian Scott” that appeared in *The Montrealer* in June 1958, the artist declared that as she got older she felt a growing desire to allow her paintings to “speak for themselves.” Between 1958 and 1961, her highly gestural approach was powerfully influenced by American Abstract Expressionism. This period, which Scott described as “transitional,” would lead to a more geometric form of abstraction.

79. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Façade No. 6, about 1955

Oil on canvas board, 60.7 x 51.8 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Compared to Scott’s earlier production, the paintings from the 1950s display greater gestural freedom and a more marked preoccupation with effects of texture. She also began drawing on new sources, including Christian art: icons, stained-glass windows and the robed statues that adorn the façades of Gothic cathedrals would be recurring motifs in the *Façades*, *Apostles* and *Iconics* series. But as the artist explained several times in writing, this evocation of religious tradition was part of a meditation on the complexity of human interrelations.

80. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Group No. 10, 1952

Oil on fibreboard, 61 x 56 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City,
Marian Scott Bequest

After seeing an exhibition of illustrations by Henry Moore at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1952, Scott was inspired to create her *Groups* series, which critics Robert Ayre and Rodolphe de Repentigny both responded to positively. Speaking of *Groups* in the introductory notes to her first solo exhibition, held at the Dominion Gallery in 1954, the artist wrote: "Precarious integration. Individual figures but part of a larger whole: separate but interrelated. Impressions of inner as well as of outer structure. The new growing out of the old; in growing there is also dying."

81. MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Façade No. 2, 1954

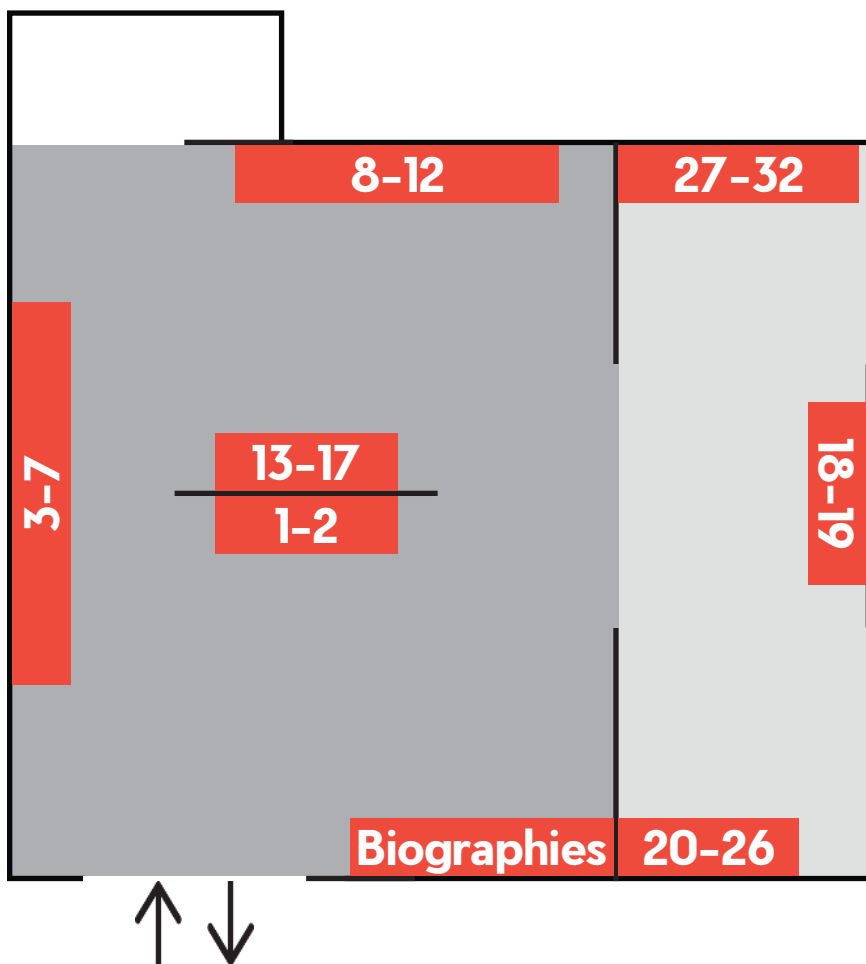
Oil on canvas, 76.3 x 61.3 cm

Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Canadian National
Exhibition Association

FLOOR PLAN

1st floor

Salle Després-Liard



- SECTION 1
A UNIQUE ERA: THE WAR
- SECTION 2
THE 1940S: THE MULTIPLE FACES OF ABSTRACTION
- SECTION 3
MURALS
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PERSPECTIVES: THE 1950S

