



# BERTRAM BROOKER

Life & Work

By James King

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A black and white portrait of Bertram Brooker, a man with light-colored hair, wearing a light-colored shirt. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The word "BIOGRAPHY" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

# BIOGRAPHY

**Bertram Brooker (1888–1955) was one of Canada's first abstract painters. A self-taught polymath, in addition to being a visual artist, Brooker was a Governor General's Award-winning novelist, as well as a poet, screenwriter, playwright, essayist, copywriter, graphic designer, and advertising executive. Despite Brooker's lack of formal art training, he painted in a wide variety of styles, creating cutting-edge modernist pictures.**

## EARLY LIFE

Bertram Brooker was born in 1888 in the London, England, suburb of Croydon to working-class parents. His father, Richard, was a railway ticket collector; his mother, Mary Ann (née Skinner), was a homemaker. Bertram had three older siblings, Harry (who died in infancy), Ellen Edith (called Nell), and Ann (who died in infancy); his brother George Cecil (called Cecil) was a year younger. Brooker left school at the age of twelve to work as a domestic servant and then at Fuller's Dairy in nearby Upper Ashridge to support his family. Despite the brevity of his schooling, he was a self-starter, with an inner drive to teach himself. For example, as a youth, he was an ardent reader (even saving his lunch money to purchase books) and so he remained for the rest of his life.



LEFT: A photograph of Bertram Brooker taken in England just prior to his family's departure for Canada in 1905, photograph by Proctor & Co., Croydon. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker with his parents and siblings in England, 1890s. *From left:* Bertram, Mary Ann, Nell, Richard, and Cecil Brooker, photographer unknown.

As a youngster, Brooker was deeply troubled by his brother's severe asthma. He witnessed the domestic gloom in which his family existed as a result of Cecil's illness and he began to speculate on issues such as injustice and the existence of God. He undertook a "soul-search" for "reality, truth, God, Christ, proof of the existence of an immortal soul." For a time, he became intrigued by the cause of gravity and, in general, tried to "square religion with science."<sup>1</sup>



In “The Unknown Caller,” an early, unpublished autobiographical novel (it is not known when Brooker wrote this), Brooker’s protagonist, Bernard, takes such pleasure in colouring that his mother predicts he will become an artist; this character writes stories and believes angels are telling him what to inscribe.<sup>2</sup>

A watercolour done in 1899 is Brooker’s first surviving work of art. Painted when he was ten or eleven years old, it features an exultant Christ figure and illustrates the line “Simply to Thy cross I cling” from the celebrated “Rock of Ages” hymn published in 1763.



LEFT: Early twentieth-century postcard picturing St. James Anglican Church, Croydon, where the Brooker family worshipped.  
RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, illustration for the line “Simply to Thy cross I cling” (from the 1763 hymn “Rock of Ages”), 1899, watercolour on paper, dimensions unknown, private collection.

Young Brooker was drawn to music: at the age of twelve he was a choirboy at St. James Anglican Church in Croydon. He most likely read music, but he did not play an instrument or compose—singing was his main outlet for expressing himself in this sphere.

In early 1905, when Brooker was seventeen, the family immigrated to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. They picked an exciting time to arrive in the Canadian West. There was a booming economy and a huge influx of immigrants from England and elsewhere in Europe wanting to better their lives. In Portage la Prairie, Brooker worked with his father at the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in a menial capacity. He attended night school and was, as a result, given clerical work at the railway.



### SEARCH FOR A VISION

At some point between 1910 and 1912, when he was in his early twenties, Brooker briefly travelled back to England and then to New York City.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the trip was to “catch up with drama and literature and art happening.”<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, no details survive about what art he saw or music he heard.<sup>5</sup> During these trips, he probably encountered modern theatre and likely became instilled with a passion for contemporary art. In London the landmark first Post-Impressionist exhibition, organized by Roger Fry (1866–1934), was on display in 1910, the second in 1912. Works by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Édouard Manet (1832–1883), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), and Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) were featured in both. Had Brooker seen the work of the Ashcan School in New York, it would have been decidedly old-fashioned in comparison. At the same time, 291, the New York gallery of Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), was showing progressive work by the Dadaists, Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957).



LEFT: Bertram Brooker on a trip to England, c.1910–12, photographer unknown.  
RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, age twenty-five, Portage la Prairie, 1913, photography by Bender & Lewis, Croydon.



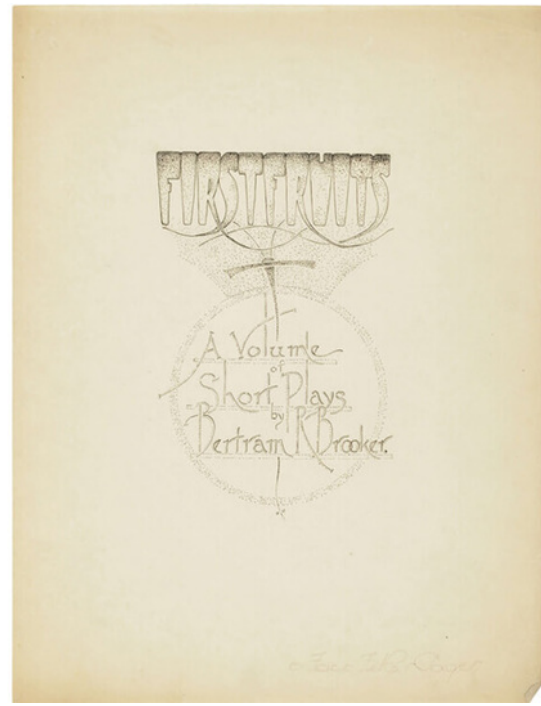
Brooker derived much of his knowledge of the plastic arts and music from books and periodicals. He was intrigued by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who scorned materialist values and promoted spiritual ones, and around the time that Brooker was travelling (circa 1912), he developed his own theories, in response to his reading of Nietzsche.

Around 1912–13, soon after his return to Portage la Prairie, Brooker made the first drawings and watercolours of his that survive (apart from the childhood watercolour of 1899).<sup>6</sup> *Ultrahomo*, c.1912–13, is one such pencil drawing that depicts a version of Nietzsche’s Superman (a heroic figure signalling a new spiritual order). Its sinuous lines show indebtedness to Art Nouveau.

### A LOVE FOR THEATRE

No evidence remains of Brooker’s involvement with drawing or painting following the making of *Ultrahomo*, c.1912–13, until 1920. But he had found other means of artistic expression. In 1912 he and his brother, Cecil, moved to Neepawa, a small town northeast of Brandon, Manitoba. According to one source, the brothers were “persuaded that motion pictures were the coming thing” and therefore opened a cinema in the building called the Neepawa

Opera House.<sup>7</sup> When Brooker complained to the Vitagraph Company of America, a Brooklyn-based studio and the largest film producer of that time, that they were sending him unworthy films to screen, they invited him to write his own scripts. Rising to the challenge, Brooker wrote and sold several detective scenarios about a Sherlock Holmes-like character, Lambert Chace. A number of his films were made and three survive.<sup>8</sup>



LEFT: Bertram Brooker (back right) and actors in an early theatrical production, Arts and Letters Club, Toronto, date unknown, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, cover illustration for "First Fruits: A Volume of Short Plays by Bertram R. Brooker," c.1913-15, ink on paper, 28 x 21.5 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa.

From 1911 to 1914, Brooker was active in local theatre productions in Portage and Neepawa. He directed a play called *Much Ado About Something* at the Portage Opera House, and he seems to have acted in a number of local productions. A newspaper notice read: "Mr. Brooker is an amateur actor of considerable ability. The characters he has sustained in several amateur productions in Portage have always been a feature of the play. As a play rite [sic] he has also some claim to distinction, his plays being eagerly sought by several moving picture producers."<sup>9</sup>

Later, in the mid-1930s, Brooker would collaborate with the avant-garde playwright and director Herman Voaden (1903-1991), who staged plays by Brooker. In theatre and cinema, Brooker saw how ideas and concepts could be brought to life.

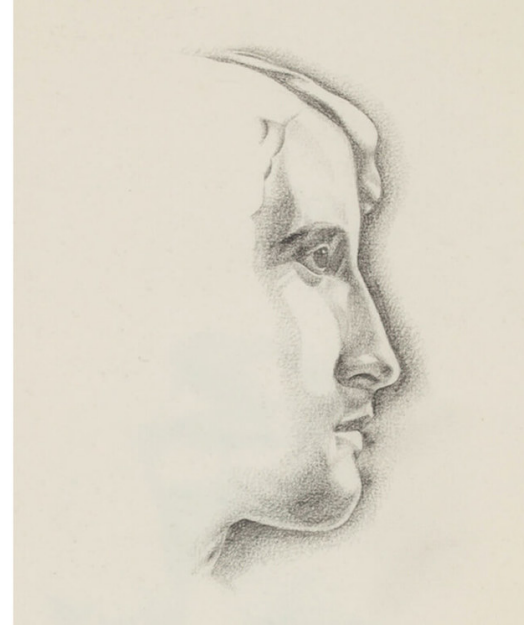
### A NEWSPAPER MAN

Brooker's success at writing for films and local theatre inspired him to pursue journalism and newspaper layout design in Neepawa and then back in Portage la Prairie, where he returned in 1914. He became editor of the *Portage Review*, a local newspaper funded by the Conservative Party.

In 1913 he married Mary Aurilla ("Rill") Porter, whom he had met when both were members of the St. Mary's Anglican choir in Portage. Rill would later come to develop an extremely good knowledge and appreciation of her husband's paintings and drawings.<sup>10</sup> In 1915,

with the First World War raging, the Brookers settled in Winnipeg, where he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Engineers, although he never went overseas. His son, Victor, was born there in 1917, and his daughter Doreen two years later. (Their youngest child, Phyllis, was born in Toronto in 1924, after the Brookers had moved there.)

Between 1919 and 1921, Brooker worked for several newspapers, first in Winnipeg (the *Tribune*), then in Regina (the *Leader-Post*), then back in Winnipeg (the *Free Press*). Winnipeg was one of the most prosperous cities in Canada at that time and thus an excellent place to test his growing skills in writing and design. At the *Free Press* he was employed in a variety of roles: promotion director, music editor, drama editor, and automobile editor. In addition, he submitted illustrations and drawings to magazines such as *Collier's*.



LEFT: Photograph of Rill Porter and Bertram Brooker on their wedding day, July 3, 1913, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Artist's Wife #1*, 1934, pencil on paper, 35.6 x 25.4 cm, MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie.



In 1919 during the Winnipeg General Strike, one of the most confrontational events in Canadian labour history, Brooker served with the Special Constables, or “Specials”—citizens who were given the right to “disrupt” (rough up) the strikers.<sup>11</sup> No evidence survives explaining why Brooker joined this group. His employer at the time, the *Free Press*, was firmly antagonistic to the strike, and it is possible that he was pressured at work to become a “Special.” Regardless—and contrary to the intent of the influential bankers, politicians, and the top city newspapers who had organized the Special Constables—Brooker saw his role as that of a peacemaker and he was sympathetic to those on the picket lines.<sup>12</sup> His first surviving oil painting—*The Miners*, 1922—shows workers on the way to the pit, Brooker possessed a strong sense of empathy for the underclass.



Bertram Brooker, *The Miners*, 1922, oil on canvas, 15.2 x 20.3 cm, the Estate of Bertram Brooker.

### ADVERTISING AND A RETURN TO ART

In 1921 Brooker and his family moved to Toronto in order for him to work at the *Globe* newspaper and at *Marketing*, the trade journal of the Canadian advertising industry. In 1924 he purchased *Marketing* magazine and became the periodical's publisher and editor. In 1927 he sold *Marketing* back to its original owner and accepted a position at A. McKim & Co., beginning a long career in the advertising business. Two years later, he joined J.J. Gibbons advertising agency as head of the first media research and development unit in Canada. He held this post until 1936, when he moved to MacLaren Advertising, where he remained until 1955, when he retired as vice-president.

At all three firms, he spent much of his time writing advertising copy, attending management meetings, and supervising subordinates. He also began research on the psychology of advertising, investigating how a successful advertising campaign persuades consumers to buy a certain product, and he published three manuals concerned with his profession: *Subconscious Selling* (1923), *Layout Technique in Advertising* (1929) under the name Richard Surrey, and *Copy Technique in Advertising* (1930). During the 1920s he wrote, under fourteen different pseudonyms, seventy-seven articles on various aspects of advertising.



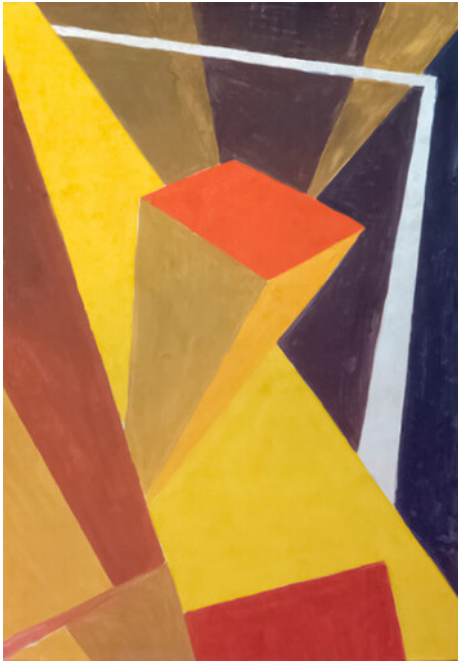
LEFT: Bertram Brooker, cover design for *Layout Technique in Advertising*, 1929, black ink on paper, 32 x 24.5 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa. RIGHT: The Brookers' three children in front of the family home, 107 Glenview Avenue, Toronto, 1930s, photographer unknown.



All the while, art also remained central. In his social life he sought out like-minded persons with a passion for art and music. The Brookers' modest Glenview Avenue house in the middle-class neighbourhood of Lawrence Park became a meeting place for creative individuals, including the conductor Ernest MacMillan and the artists Charles Comfort (1900–1994), Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986), and Kathleen Munn (1887–1974). The University of Toronto's Hart House String Quartet played at his home on at least one occasion.

Around 1922 to 1924 Brooker began working on a series of non-objective paintings, including various versions of *Oozles*. His return to visual art after what appears to be a decade of inactivity in this genre arose because of a profound mystical experience. Since the childhood soul searching that led him to paint a scene depicting the hymn "Rock of Ages," Brooker had been intrigued by such mystical events.<sup>13</sup> In 1923, during a visit to the Presbyterian church in Dwight at the Lake of Bays in Ontario, the thirty-five-year-old Brooker experienced a much more profound moment of awakening. His attention fixated on a grove near a brook and, not completely aware of what he was doing, he abandoned the church and made his way to the water. There, as he writes in his unpublished autobiographical novel, "everything became one; everything in the universe, in the world was one."<sup>14</sup> Following the experience, he coined the term "unitude" to describe this state of stillness (quietude) conjoined to a strong sense of purpose (unity).<sup>15</sup> Brooker believed that the artist in society was obligated to instruct others on how to get in touch with their inner spiritual values. This mystical experience reinforced his spiritualism and motivated him to attempt to render the mystical in art.





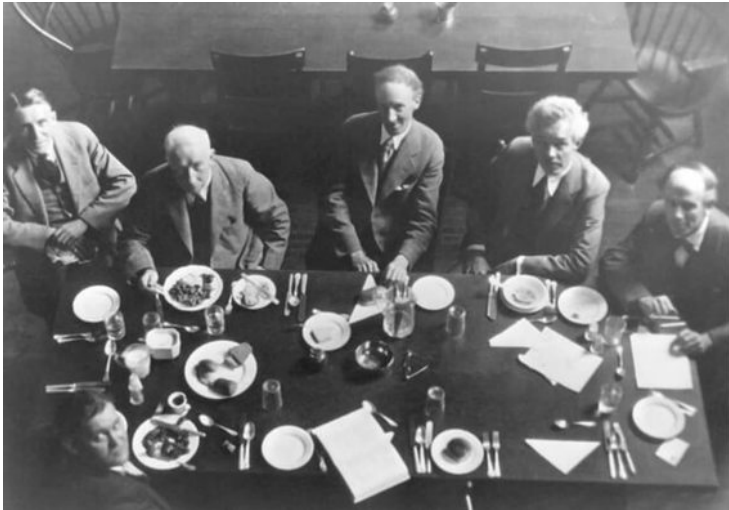
LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Noise of a Fish*, c.1922-24, tempera and graphite on paper, 21.3 x 16.5 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa. RIGHT: David Bomberg, *The Mud Bath*, 1914, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 224.2 cm, Tate, London.

Infused with this new sense of “cosmic consciousness,”<sup>16</sup> Brooker began *Oozles* and *Noise of a Fish*, both c.1922-24, and other nonfigurative paintings in tempera that were indebted to the Vorticists, a group of English artists—inspired by Italian Futurists such as Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), David Bomberg (1890-1957), and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944)—who used abstract shapes to suggest violence and movement (see, for example, Bomberg’s *The Mud Bath*, 1914). Brooker adapted the style because he felt that it allowed him to express visually the mystical speculations with which he was grappling. These small works of his are extremely colourful and vivid but crudely rendered. Brooker was obviously teaching himself how to paint.

#### LAWREN HARRIS AND THE GROUP OF SEVEN

In 1923 Brooker became a member of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and he was admitted to the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, where he met Lawren Harris (1885-1970) and other members of the Group of Seven. The Group had come into being in 1920 in response to what its members considered the stultifying academic painting practices of the time. Harris, Arthur Lismer (1885-1969), J.E.H. MacDonald (1873-1932), Frederick Varley (1881-1969), Frank Johnston (1888-1949), Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945), and A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974) sought ways of capturing the distinctiveness of the Canadian landscape. They travelled to various spots in northern Ontario, as Varley put it, “to knock out of us all the preconceived ideas, emptying ourselves of everything except that nature is here in all its greatness.”<sup>17</sup> Brooker was sympathetic to the Group’s nationalist agenda, but he felt that their emphasis on the wilderness was too limited and that there were many other ways of creating distinctively Canadian art.





LEFT: Bertram Brooker and members of the Group of Seven at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, 1929, photograph by John Vanderpant. *Clockwise from top left:* Bertram Brooker, A.Y. Jackson, J.E.H. MacDonald, Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, and Merrill Denison. RIGHT: Arthur Lismer, *Bert's Life Class*, April 25, 1937, conté on paper, 22.9 x 30.4 cm, Arts and Letters Club, Toronto.

Brooker most closely associated with Lawren Harris. The two artists had not only an interest in spiritual values but also a willingness to experiment with infusing those principles into painting. Although Brooker never joined the Theosophical Society, like Harris he shared some of the doctrine's ideas. In a key passage in *A Canadian Art Movement*, Frederick Housser states, "Harris paints the Lake Superior landscape out of a devotion to the life and soul and makes it feel like the country of the soul."<sup>18</sup> Although Brooker did not object fundamentally to such a claim, he felt that as long as the influence of the Group of Seven released young Canadian painters from the stuffy ties of Victorianism, its purpose was fulfilled. However, he did not consider their paintings genuinely modern. They did not incorporate contemporary trends in European art such as can be seen in the work of Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and other avant-garde artists.



LEFT: Lawren Harris, *Lake Superior*, c.1924, oil on canvas, 101.7 x 127.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *The St. Lawrence*, 1931, oil on canvas, 76.9 x 101.9 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

## ABSTRACT EIPHANIES

By the beginning of 1927, Brooker had moved far beyond the early abstracts of 1923 into an artistic realm that would surprise and puzzle his contemporaries. Without fanfare he had been working on a remarkable series of canvases, unlike anything previously produced by a Canadian artist—such as *Sounds Assembling*, 1928, with its movement and penetrating energy enhanced by geometric exactness. In large, bold, majestic abstract compositions Brooker forced his viewers to confront the possibility of a spiritual reality.

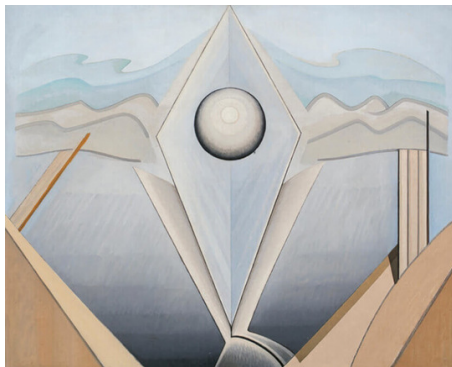
Some of these works, such as *Abstraction, Music* and *The Way*, both of 1927, demonstrate clearly how Brooker's imagination fed off music. At this time, Brooker's images aspired to the condition of music as manifested by some of the great composers. His taste was all-encompassing, but he favoured choral works, such as by Handel, and composers such as Beethoven and Wagner, who in large-scale compositions sought to explore humanity's relationship with the spiritual world.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Abstraction, Music*, 1927, oil on canvas, 43 x 61 cm, Museum London. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *The Way*, 1927, oil on canvas, 60.8 x 76.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

In January 1927 a selection of Brooker's most recent abstracts were given a modest show at the Arts and Letters Club, sponsored by Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer and widely hailed as the first solo exhibit of non-objective work in Canada. Nothing Harris had painted by then approached the level of abstraction these canvases displayed. In fact, it can be argued that Harris's subsequent move into greater abstraction was influenced by Brooker,<sup>19</sup> who told the *Toronto Star* that these paintings "were expressions of musical feeling."<sup>20</sup>

Gloomily, Brooker described the reaction of those who attended the show: "There was a curious silence about the place, relieved only by the whisperings of groups who would not come up and discuss [the work] with me openly."<sup>21</sup> Clearly, these radical canvases did not resonate. Worse, his work was severely criticized by J.E.H. MacDonald, who later offered a backhanded apology: "I cannot understand your process of working."<sup>22</sup> A very hurt Brooker resented the fact that his friends did not defend him: "I could not help feeling let down and rather deserted by Lismer and Lawren running away without any kind of announcement, or even notice as to whose pictures they were and what they intended to convey."<sup>23</sup>



LEFT: Lawren Harris, *Abstract Painting #98*, c.1937-38, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 91.4 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Installation view of *Bertram Brooker Abstractions* at Hart House, University of Toronto, March 14-30, 1931, photographer unknown.



Despite his disappointment, Brooker continued to paint. In 1928, 1930, and 1931 he participated in Group of Seven exhibitions, because the Group obviously recognized his compatibility of conviction with their aims. However, he showed only one abstract, *Sounds Assembling*, in 1928 and none in 1930 or 1931. *The St. Lawrence*, 1931, was shown in the 1931 Group of Seven exhibition. In March 1931, when eight of his abstract canvases, including *Sounds Assembling* and *Alleluiah*, 1929, were shown in a solo exhibit at Hart House in Toronto, Brooker finally felt vindicated, stating the show was "the first time I have ever seen seven or eight of my abstract paintings on a well-lighted wall together, and I got quite a thrill from it. They looked better there than I have ever seen them."<sup>24</sup>



Bertram Brooker, *Resolution*, c.1929, oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

His nonfigurative paintings from 1927 to 1931 each contain a portion of the artist's vision. As such, they can be seen as programmatic, emphasizing an aspect of the artist's view of life's possibilities. Like the symphonies of Beethoven, these works, including *Resolution* and *Ascending Forms*, both c.1929, offer the artist's philosophy of life: they are images of hope and redemption; they are also about questing for truth and about the transition between material and spiritual spheres of existence.<sup>25</sup> As a unit, they remain a daring, monumental achievement.

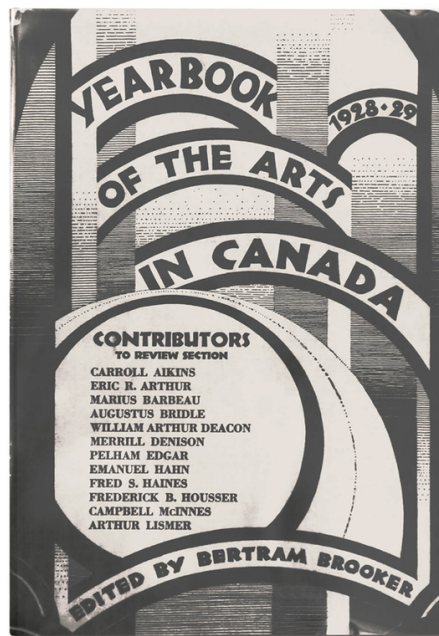


## A TURN TOWARD REPRESENTATION

Despite his artistic accomplishments, painting remained an avocation for Brooker. He tended to think of himself—and was better known—as a writer rather than as an artist: the printed heading on his personal stationery from 1930 reads “Bertram R. Brooker \* Writer \* 107 Glenview Avenue, Toronto, Canada.” He earned a comfortable living in the advertising world and he never depended upon selling his art as a means of support. His wife, Rill, who devoted herself to child rearing and managing the household, protected her husband’s time in his studio on the top floor of their home.

Supplementing his advertising income with work as a freelance writer, from 1928 to 1930 Brooker wrote “The Seven Arts,” a syndicated column that appeared in newspapers, including the *Calgary Herald* and the *Ottawa Citizen*, in the powerful Southam newspaper chain. In 1929 he edited an anthology devoted to artistic developments across Canada: *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (there was only one further volume, in 1936, because of economic restraints caused by the Great Depression). In the 1929 volume he proclaimed, “There is a spirit here [in Canada], a response to the new, the natural, the open, the massive—as contrasted with the old, artificial, enclosed littleness of Europe—that should eventually, when we rely on it less timidly, become actively creative.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, from 1929 Brooker investigated the possibility of publishing his ink drawings illustrating the Bible and other literary texts, but he quickly discovered that the market for such work had disappeared. Only his illustrations for *Elijah*, (1929), made their way into print.

In both yearbooks and especially his “Seven Arts” columns, Brooker wrote about a wide variety of literary and artistic figures. Among the canonical writers were Keats, Goethe, Shakespeare, and Yeats; contemporary ones included Ernest Hemingway and Aldous Huxley. The artists, among many others, included Marcel Duchamp, Constantin Brancusi, and Henri Matisse. Writing, especially writing a syndicated newspaper column, allowed him to reach a wide audience.



LEFT: Cover of *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, edited by Bertram Brooker.  
RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, cover of *Elijah*, with illustrative drawings (1929).



But Brooker continued to paint, and in the summer of 1929, he experienced a new epiphany when he met Winnipeg artist Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956), who worked in a representational mode. His response to FitzGerald's work was immediate and profound. For the first time in his career, he embraced a new way of painting. He continued to produce his great abstract canvases, and would do so for two more years, but various forms of representation now became his primary mode. This change in direction may have been motivated in part by the hostile reactions that had greeted his nonfigurative paintings, but the alteration is more fundamental than that. By the summer of 1929, he had taken what he wanted from the various nonfigurative European and American modernisms and was ready for something new.



LEFT: Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, *Doc Snyder's House*, 1931, oil on canvas, 74.9 x 85.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.  
RIGHT: Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, *From an Upstairs Window, Winter*, c.1950-51, oil on canvas, 61 x 45.7 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Unlike Brooker's relationship with Lawren Harris, his friendship with FitzGerald was straightforward. FitzGerald's landscapes and still lifes, as in *Doc Snyder's House*, 1931, and *From an Upstairs Window, Winter*, c.1950-51, were drawn from his immediate surroundings. FitzGerald was always careful to depict the essence of what he saw in nature. He used close observation to extract what could be labelled the kernel of the subject. He wanted to capture the living form of an object, the truth lying beneath an object's outward form—he pared down his landscapes to essentials and in this way introduced elements of abstraction into his work.



This synthesis of abstract and representational elements is what Brooker immediately recognized in FitzGerald, and a deep empathy developed between them. Brooker saw FitzGerald's approach as a way of expanding his own previous stylistic repertoire without betraying his bedrock artistic principles. On December 28, 1929, soon after meeting FitzGerald, Brooker wrote to him to say that, under his influence, his art had moved in a dramatically new direction. This change can be readily seen in *Manitoba Willows*, c.1929-31, and *Snow Fugue*, 1930.

For the remainder of his artistic career, Brooker experimented with various approaches: some abstract work, some representational but most combining the two modes.<sup>27</sup> The loosening of his ties to abstract art must have motivated him to try his hand in a number of traditional genres, such as the nude and, later, still lifes and portraits—and even sculpture.

In March 1931, the Ontario Society of Artists accepted Brooker's *Figures in a Landscape*, 1931, for its annual exhibition. The painting shows back views of two female nudes in an outdoor setting. Officials from the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario), where the exhibition was held, removed it from the show and from the catalogue. The stated reason: impropriety. An indignant Brooker responded with the essay "Nudes and Prudes." In it, he argued that the prudery in response to images of the nude arose in large part because elders in society did not wish the young to be corrupted by public displays of nakedness.

In November 1931, Brooker attended the 30th International Exhibition of Paintings at the Carnegie Institute (now Carnegie Museums) in Pittsburgh. There he was amazed by "the tremendous preponderance of figure painting in all of the countries represented."<sup>28</sup> Doubtless, he came to the conclusion that his recent move toward representation was one that followed contemporary trends.



Bertram Brooker, *Lone Tree*, n.d., oil on board, 38.1 x 29.2 cm, Gallery Gevik, Toronto.



Bertram Brooker, *First Snow*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 38.1 x 27.9 cm, private collection.

In addition to FitzGerald, Brooker's friend Kathleen Munn supported his art during the 1930s. This fellow Toronto artist also experimented with mixing modes of expression, in her case combining Cubism and figuration. As early as 1916, Munn had incorporated abstract elements into her representational compositions. Brooker exhibited such paintings before she did, although it is possible that her practice enhanced his rather than the other way around.<sup>29</sup> Brooker especially liked the musicality he discerned in her work and purchased *Composition (Horses)*, c.1927, and *Composition (Reclining Nude)*, c.1926-28.



Kathleen Munn, *Composition (Horses)*, c.1927, oil on canvas, 51 x 60.7 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton.



Kathleen Munn, *Composition (Reclining Nude)*, c.1926-28, oil on canvas, 45.5 x 53.3 cm, Collection of Lynn and Ken Martens.

### A MAN OF MANY PARTS

By the early 1930s, Brooker was well connected with other members of the Canadian art scene, most notably as one of the founding members of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP). The CGP was formed in 1933 and in many ways extended and refined the nationalist agenda of the Group of Seven, which had disbanded the same year the CGP was formed. The CGP believed that Canadian artists had the potential to show how disparate individuals could join together to make a strong, cohesive whole. Brooker embraced this notion of community and became the apologist for this initiative by publicizing it in his writings. Four years before the formation of the CGP, Brooker had written about this topic in his essay "When We Awake!" in the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*. There, he tried to define what Canadian art had established and what work remained to be done:



But we are not really awake, we are not sensible of national unity and we are not sensible of universal unity. Yet there are signs that both may perhaps blossom into being. These signs, so far, are deducible only from the occasional work of isolated individuals. But the opportunities to build an art here and an audience that may be stirred by it are as great as have ever existed in any nation, if not greater.<sup>30</sup>



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Dentonia Park*, 1931, oil on canvas, 37.9 x 28.5 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Morley Callaghan*, 1932, oil on fabric, 76.7 x 61.1 x 2.1 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Despite his prominence in art circles, Brooker never actively promoted his own work to museums, dealers, and collectors, nor was he represented by a dealer, and during his lifetime much of his work remained unsold. The few paintings he did sell included *Dentonia Park*, 1931, to Harry and Ruth Tovell, and a 1932 portrait of Morley Callaghan to the sitter. From the 1930s to the end of his life, Brooker continued his painterly experiments of combining abstract and representational elements, as in *Pharaoh's Daughter*, 1950. In this painting, the countenance of the woman is discernible, but she is awash in a sea of abstract shapes.

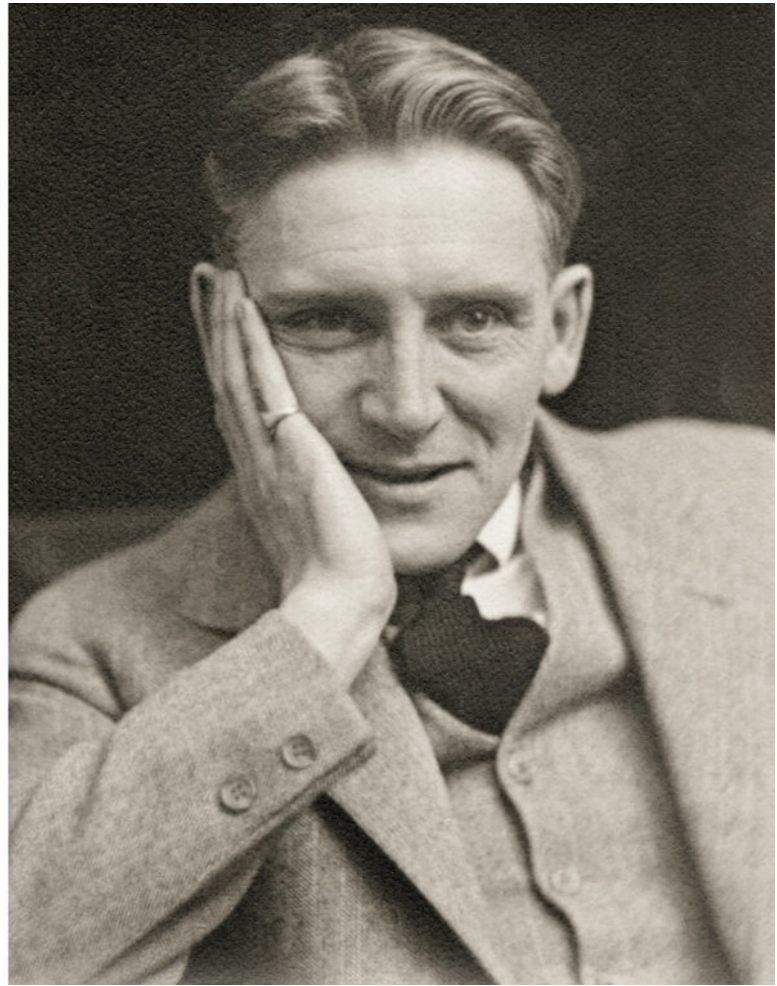
Brooker, in middle age, dedicated considerable creative energy to literature as well as to visual art and advertising. In 1936 he published the novel *Think of the Earth*,<sup>31</sup> which won the first Lord Tweedsmuir Award (renamed the Governor General's Award in 1957) for fiction. Under the pseudonym of Huxley Herne he published another novel, *The Tangled Miracle, a Mystery*, in 1936, and a third, *The Robber*, under his own name, in 1949. The manuscripts of other, unpublished novels exist; there are more than sixty extant short stories, complete or in various states of completion; he also wrote many poems unpublished in his lifetime.<sup>32</sup>



# BERTRAM BROOKER

Life & Work by James King

Sometime in 1954, Brooker's health declined. A few months before he passed away, Brooker retired from his job in advertising. He died on March 22, 1955. He was a prodigiously talented man of indomitable energy who worked on his art and on his writing almost to the very end of his life. His creativity took him in many directions—those of playwright, screenwriter, actor, copywriter, artist, short story writer, novelist, essayist—as he strove to communicate his spiritual vision.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Pharaoh's Daughter*, 1950, oil on canvas, 99 x 66 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Portrait of Bertram Brooker, c.1928, photographer unknown.



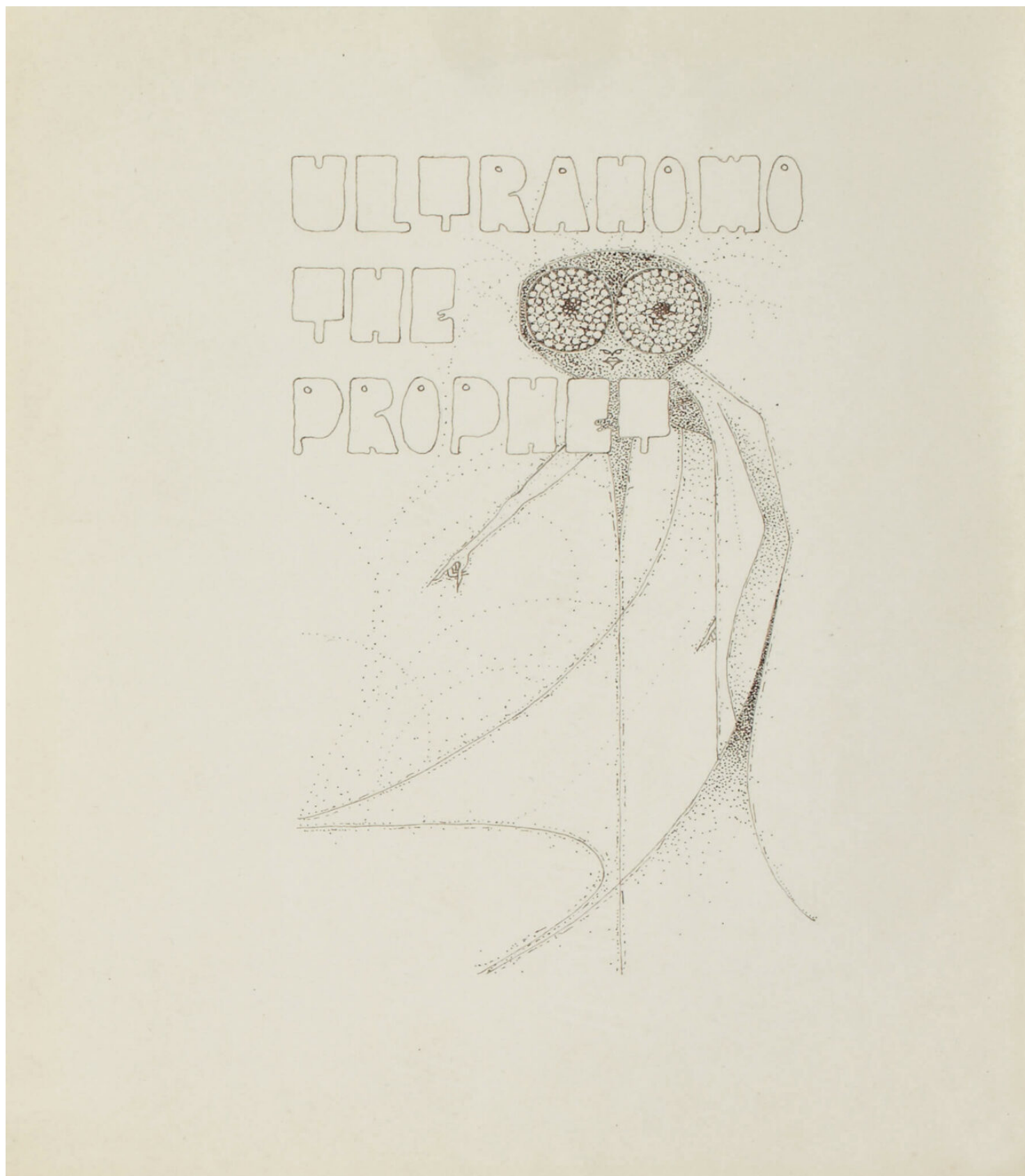


# KEY WORKS

The following selection shows Bertram Brooker's range of expression: beginning with abstraction, he moved into representation and then constructed various blends of the two. Brooker's non-representational abstract paintings from 1927 to 1931 are among the most important bodies of work in Canadian art. In a manner reminiscent of the works of William Blake (1757–1827), they are a stirring testimony to Brooker's belief in the existence of a spiritual realm.



## ULTRAHOMO C.1912-13



Bertram Brooker, *Ultrahomo*, c.1912-13  
Pencil drawing, 20 x 17.8 cm  
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa



This early drawing is indebted to the sinuous lines of Art Nouveau as practised by Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898) and was created around the time that Brooker developed his concept of Ultimatism, a theory devoted to unleashing the ultimately spiritual nature of humans. It shows a curious, extraterrestrial-like creature peering at the viewer. The face of Ultrahomo is clearly defined, but his arms and the rest of his body have little substance. This figure participates in a world separate from that of ordinary human existence.<sup>1</sup> Adam Lauder has suggested a possible source for this image: “the embryonic features of Ultrahomo—his blastoderm-like eyes—document Brooker’s precocious interest in contemporary developments in biology as well as philosophical debates sparked by evolutionary theory.”<sup>2</sup>

Ultrahomo was Brooker’s name for a figure conceived by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), the Superman, who had to be many things: a “seer, a purposer, a creator, a future itself, and a bridge to the future.”<sup>3</sup> Ultrahomo is not so much heroic as he is otherworldly, and this may be precisely what Brooker intended with this representation. Like Nietzsche’s Superman figure, Ultrahomo resides in a world far removed from ordinary human experience. He rejects materialist values and points the way to the spiritual realm of existence.

The depiction of Ultrahomo as a quasi-monstrous, almost comic figure may signify Brooker’s discontent with Nietzsche’s notion of the Superman. The atheism and advocacy of violence in Nietzsche’s writings did not appeal to the Canadian artist. Here Brooker is highlighting the shortcomings of a thinker to whom he was nevertheless heavily indebted.



LEFT: Aubrey Beardsley, *The Peacock Skirt*, 1893, black ink and graphite on white wove paper, 23 x 16.8 cm, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, cover design for *The Peg: A Magazine of Merry Mien Devoted to the Stage and Screen*, c.1915–21, ink on paper, 32.7 x 25.5 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa.





## OOZLES C. 1922-24



Bertram Brooker, *Oozles*, c.1922-24  
Tempera on paper, 22.9 x 17.7 cm  
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa



Brooker created several tempera paintings called *Oozles*, and this is one of the earliest surviving pieces by that name. A gap of approximately a decade separates *Ultrahomo*, c.1912–13, and *Oozles*. Brooker probably turned to making abstract art as a result of his profound mystical experience at Dwight, Ontario, in 1923. Abstraction became the appropriate way for him to represent his spiritual transformation. This image displays the artist's fascination with colourful geometric forms. Compared with his future work, Brooker's small, early abstracts (among them *Noise of a Fish*, c.1922–24) are somewhat raw and have a hurried, unfinished look. In these works, it seems, he was teaching himself how to paint.

In its reliance on strong, sharp verticals and horizontals and bright, contrasting colours, *Oozles* appears Vorticist in style. That short-lived British group used violent zigzags and brilliant colours to establish a modernism in revolt against past traditions. Brooker likely encountered Vorticist works in reproduction in books or periodicals.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "ooze" means to trickle or move slowly. Brooker's title is ironic, since all elements in the painting seem to be moving at breakneck speed.<sup>1</sup> *Noise of a Fish* is likewise a whimsical title: according to Brooker's son, Victor, it was inspired by the pattern created by the light in a hallway at night, seen around the corner of a bedroom door.<sup>2</sup> Brooker's abstracts also emphasize what he called "dimensionality," which refers to his attempt to establish a new concept in rendering space. As such, the early tempera abstracts, which mark a distinct period in his career as a visual artist (one that lasted from 1922 to 1924), are the artist's first attempts to access the fourth dimension: "a new and puzzling illusion of space that is foreign to normal visual experience,"<sup>3</sup> an arena in which his goals as an Ultimatist could be reached.

According to Ann Davis the small temperas from 1922 to 1924 can be seen as "preparatory pieces" for larger canvases, such as *Sounds Assembling*, 1928.<sup>4</sup> *Oozles* is an apprentice piece and a forerunner of Brooker's work five or six years later. It and *Noise of a Fish* are Brooker's first attempts to make abstracts. He likely appropriated Vorticist techniques because he thought that this form of abstraction would assist him in creating the appropriate illusionistic space. Later, he would try to enter this realm without directly referencing the work of any contemporary movement.



David Bomberg, *The Mud Bath*, 1914, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 224.2 cm, Tate, London.

## SOUNDS ASSEMBLING 1928



Bertram Brooker, *Sounds Assembling*, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 112.3 x 91.7 cm  
Winnipeg Art Gallery



*Sounds Assembling* is often considered Brooker's most accomplished work because of the majestic and intricate way it takes the viewer into a mysterious realm. It comes near the beginning of the extraordinarily productive period in his artmaking, from 1927 to 1931, when he painted a series of masterful abstract canvases unlike anything previously produced by a Canadian artist. Brooker, in part, may have been motivated to begin this series of paintings by his contacts within the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, especially Lawren Harris (1885–1970). These large canvases mark the artist's second foray into abstraction.

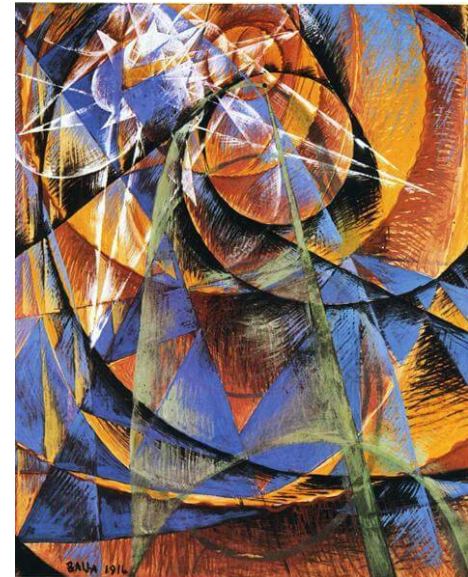
Here the composition gives the viewer a sense of movement and penetrating energy that is enhanced by the geometric exactness of the lines intruding into the four circular shapes that form the background. This meticulously and precisely painted work shows that Brooker's self-assurance in painting had advanced rapidly since the period when he made *Oozles*, c.1922–24. *Sounds Assembling* shows some marked similarities to the work of Futurist Giacomo Balla (1871–1958), although the Italian was interested in capturing flashing, dynamic movement, as can be seen in *Mercury Passing Before the Sun*, 1914.

As *Sounds Assembling* demonstrates, Brooker was also trying to find a correlative of musical form in visual form. In this work the various contrasting sounds have reached a moment of accord, although their individual differences are preserved.

In his essay "Painting Verbs," Brooker explains how a canvas such as *Sounds Assembling* came into being:

I shamelessly used a ruler and compass, trying to compose on the canvas some sort of replica of the colour, the volume and rhythm I experienced when listening to music. . . . Most of the shapes were floating areas of colour—they were verbs, representing action and movement—and when, in some cases, they came close to recognition as objects, such as spheres or rods or peaks, these were only intended as the oath or climax or culmination of a movement, not its finish.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible the word "assembling" has a spiritual connotation: the convergence of the various colours may be like a congregation gathering for worship. As such, it can be said that this painting is spiritually as well as musically inspired.



Giacomo Balla, *Mercury Passing Before the Sun*, 1914, tempera on paper lined with canvas, 120 x 100 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.



## ALLELUIAH 1929



Bertram Brooker, *Alleluiah*, 1929  
Oil on canvas, 122.2 x 121.9 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa





Here, against green, purple, and grey mountains and a medium-blue sky, a confrontation takes place between what looks like scaffolding—the sharply defined silver-grey, metal-looking poles—and the deliberately less-distinct white ectoplasm-like substance accompanied by three moon-like circular objects. The interaction between these two kinds of forms—and the fact they find a common meeting ground—originates from Brooker’s attempt to “recreate the intricate polyphony of the Hallelujah Chorus in Handel’s *Messiah*.”<sup>1</sup> Created in response to a specific musical source, this is the most programmatic of Brooker’s large abstracts. It is also the work in which his reliance on a specific musical analogy is most clearly stated.

*Alleluiah* is not as overtly dramatic as *Sounds Assembling*, 1928; its gentle terrain allows the viewer to enter into and experience a quieter realm. Brooker has replaced the dramatic music of the Hallelujah Chorus with a quiet praising of God. The painting seeks to take its viewer into the landscape of intuition and imagination, a sphere that exists beyond the material world and that transcends ordinary space and time.

Here Brooker visually represents his theory of Ultimatism, which posited a realm beyond ordinary human comprehension, and a response to the concept of duration by French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941).<sup>2</sup> According to Bergson, there are two kinds of time: actual physical time as measured scientifically and objectively (for example, by Greenwich Mean Time) and time as experienced subjectively, which speeds up or slows down depending on an individual’s experience. Bergson, in his work, proposes time as duration in a non-quantitative way. As the painting pulls the viewer’s gaze from its jutting, industrial cylinders in the foreground to the ethereal, organic shapes that appear to almost float behind them, *Alleluiah* inspires viewers to perceive a time and place beyond the mundane.

## ELIJAH 1929



Bertram Brooker, *Elijah*, 1929

Print book with illustrative drawings

Limited edition of five hundred copies, 27.1 x 20.3 cm

Various collections

Pictured above: Bertram Brooker, *Fed by the Ravens (Elijah Series)*, 1923, pen and ink on paper, 38 x 25.4 cm, MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie.



In 1929 Brooker's *Elijah*, with illustrative drawings, was published in New York by William Edwin Rudge. This twenty-six-page book contained a title dust jacket and (identical) cover drawn and designed by Brooker, brief excerpts from the Old Testament, and eleven full-page representational illustrations (nine shown here).<sup>1</sup> Brooker hoped that this project would lead other publishers to offer commissions, but the Great Depression put an end to these expectations.



First row, from left: Bertram Brooker, *Ahab's Death*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, 38 x 25.4 cm, MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie; Bertram Brooker, *The Rain*, 1927, pen and ink on illustration board, 38 x 25.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Bertram Brooker, *The Angel*, 1927, pen and ink on illustration board, 38 x 25.3 cm, private collection; Bertram Brooker, *The Earthquake*, 1926, pen and ink on illustration board, 38 x 25.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Second row, from left: Bertram Brooker, *The Fire*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, 38.2 x 25.5 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery; Bertram Brooker, *The Still Small Voice*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, 38 x 25.3 cm, private collection; Bertram Brooker, *Ahab Worshipped Idols*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, 38 x 25.4 cm, British Museum, London; Bertram Brooker, *The Whirlwind*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, private collection.

Brooker was an outstanding, self-taught graphic designer and artist. In *Elijah* the influence of the American graphic artist Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) seems evident. Although the American usually worked in woodcuts, both men use forceful, direct-but-contained lines and examine and emphasize the spiritual import of the text. The illustrations in Kent's *North by East* (1930) demonstrate that he and Brooker shared many ideas about the divine in nature.



The Old Testament's Elijah heroically defended the worship of Yahweh over that of the Canaanite god, Baal. He raised the dead, brought fire down from the sky and was finally taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. In Brooker's depictions of Elijah, decidedly small, insignificant human figures are placed in opposition to the majestic grandeur of a landscape. The English artist John Martin (1789–1854) employed similar juxtapositions, and Brooker may have been imitating him in this set of illustrations.

In addition to *Elijah*, drawings by Brooker exist for editions of the poetry of Walt Whitman, for the Book of Job, for Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, for Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, for William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and for Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Of these, the sixteen pen-and-ink drawings for *Crime and Punishment* are a particularly dazzling display of his talents as a draftsman.



## MANITOBA WILLOWS C.1929–31



Bertram Brooker, *Manitoba Willows*, c.1929–31  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 38 cm  
Private collection

*Manitoba Willows* marks a turning point in Brooker's career. By 1929, the year he met the painter Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956), he had moved well beyond Lawren Harris (1885–1970) in his use of abstraction. Following FitzGerald's lead, Brooker here, and for the first time, fully fuses abstract and representational elements. Art historian Joyce Zemans suggests a reason for this shift: "Brooker came to realize that most people could not respond to his abstract 'world and spirit paintings' and turned from his early experiments in abstraction."<sup>1</sup>

The influence of FitzGerald on Brooker can be seen in the careful balance between representation and abstraction. The trees are obviously trees, but they are devoid of excess detail, reduced to essentials, and ultimately symbolic. Although Brooker's branches are viewed against a more radiant landscape than are FitzGerald's in *Poplar Woods (Poplars)*, 1929, for example, when compared, the two works reveal the synchronicity between the two artists.



LEFT: Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, *Poplar Woods (Poplars)*, 1929, oil on canvas, 71.8 x 91.5 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Snow Fugue*, 1930, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 101.6 cm, private collection.



This new turning in Brooker's art can also be seen in *Snow Fugue*, 1930, where the contrast between the snow clinging to the branches and the tree trunk is startling. The snow is meticulously painted—especially in the interactions between the blues, whites, and greys. Here Brooker renders nature with masterful scientific precision. The artist's use of the musical term "fugue," in which two (or more) voices are in contrapuntal opposition to each other, calls the viewer's attention to the complex shapes of the snow as opposed to the relative simplicity of the tree trunk.

From this point forward Brooker's career would be devoted increasingly to finding various ways to mix abstraction and representation, although he continued to paint abstracts through to 1931 and would occasionally return to abstraction during the rest of his career.





## STRIVING C.1930



Bertram Brooker, *Striving*, c.1930  
Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 60.9 cm  
Private collection

This incredibly vivid canvas is far removed from companion pieces made by Brooker during the same period, as in *Sounds Assembling*, 1928, and *Alleluiah*, 1929, because of the presence of the semi-human figure that hurls itself across the canvas in a robotic way, embodying the notion of striving, and demanding the viewer's attention.

Placed in the foreground of the image, the humanoid has a ghostly presence. Its softer, circular forms contrast with the much more solid horizontal passages behind it.<sup>1</sup> The result, like the earlier *The Dawn of Man*, 1927 (Brooker's first use of a humanoid figure) dramatizes the struggle of a human being to achieve completeness. Dennis Reid has demonstrated that the figure in *The Dawn of Man* was influenced by the French sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876–1918).<sup>2</sup> He also points out that Brooker visited New York City regularly after he had settled in Toronto and that in January 1929 he visited the memorial exhibition of Duchamp-Villon at the Brummer Gallery there. Brooker's friends Harold and Ruth Tovell owned a terracotta version of Duchamp-Villon's *Head of Baudelaire*, 1911, which was clearly a model for the figure in *Dawn*. However the figure in *Striving* is substantially more vigorous and visually interesting than the placid one in the earlier painting.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *The Dawn of Man*, 1927, oil on canvas, 113 x 81.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Raymond Duchamp-Villon, *Head of Baudelaire*, 1911, terracotta, 39.1 x 21.3 x 25.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The insertion of human-like figures into *Striving* and *The Dawn of Man* was a departure from earlier content, and not an entirely successful one. Roald Nasgaard even claims that these two canvases are not really very abstract at all: he characterizes them as showing "[in the] foreground streamlined humanoid figures bound in some rapt spiritualized relation to simplified landscapes that lay beyond."<sup>3</sup> Certainly in *Striving* the (somewhat) representational device is not perfectly integrated into what is primarily an abstract painting: the two styles seem discordant. In later work, the artist would meld the two modes of depicting reality more successfully.



## THE ST. LAWRENCE 1931



Bertram Brooker, *The St. Lawrence*, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 76.9 x 101.9 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The precise geometric lines of this canvas create what Brooker would later term “an awakening of the sense of harmony between man and the universe.”<sup>1</sup> Its inspiration was a mystical moment that Brooker wrote about in his poem “silence”:

he stands still  
in the shadow of three silver birches  
looking out over the perfectly placid bay  
  
out to the smooth meeting of the hills  
at the other side of the whitening water  
and the dim massed shell-pink hummocks of cloud.<sup>2</sup>

The poem was written after visiting the Murray Bay (now La Malbaie) region of Quebec in the summer of 1931 at the urging of Lawren Harris (1885–1970) and A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974). Brooker made the sketch that is the basis for this painting while on this journey.<sup>3</sup> The starkly simple landscape, in which the sky, trees, river, mountains, and foreground are rendered in such a geometric, quasi-abstract manner, resembles Lawren Harris's Lake Superior and Rockies images of this period, as in *Lake Superior*, c.1924, and *Afternoon Sun, North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1924. On seeing the painting, Harris told Brooker that he did not like the trees.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Harris thought that *The St. Lawrence* too obviously imitated and possibly parodied him. By 1931 Harris had become fixated on moving toward abstraction, a mode of expression in which Brooker had already been very successful. Now he saw Brooker seemingly retreating to the form of expression of which he was trying to purge himself.

In *The St. Lawrence* sky, water, mountains, and trees are clearly representational, but Brooker reduces them to essentials and, in the process, bestows upon them an otherworldly look. Brooker demonstrates that he can employ the representational tradition and infuse it with spiritual meaning. In so doing he created a work that very much fits within the Group of Seven tradition, and it was exhibited in the Group's exhibition in 1931.



Lawren Harris, *Afternoon Sun, North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1924, oil on canvas, 101.7 x 127.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



## FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE 1931



Bertram Brooker, *Figures in a Landscape*, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 60.9 x 76.2 cm  
Unlocated

In the foreground of this painting, the nude torsos of two women block the view of the landscape in the background. The work presents a particularly interesting combination of the genre of the nude with the landscape tradition of the Group of Seven. In merging the two traditions, this canvas displays how the earlier wilderness renderings of the Group could be adapted to the new sensibility of the Canadian Group of Painters. The most controversial work in Brooker's oeuvre, *Figures in a Landscape* was removed from a 1931 show of the Ontario Society of Artists at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario), as certain viewers felt it might be inappropriate viewing for children. Moreover, it could be argued that Brooker might have been privileging the genre of the nude over the tried-and-true Canadian landscape tradition.

Although *Figures in a Landscape* may be Brooker's most widely known nude because of the scandal associated with it, his most accomplished and daring nude is *Torso*, 1937. This work derives its power from its deliberately clinical and confrontational depiction of the nude body. There is no attempt to show the model as beautiful; here, the painter asserts, is a real body with all its blemishes. The woman's torso pushes out of the canvas as if about to fall into the viewer's own space. Brooker renders the warm flesh tones of the breast, stomach, and legs of his subject as if they were part of a landscape. The viewer is left impressed, but at a considerable distance. Later, this type of nude found its way into the paintings of Stanley Spencer (1891–1959), Lucian Freud (1922–2011), and Philip Pearlstein (b.1924). In *Torso*, Brooker shows himself to be a master of anatomical detail.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Torso*, 1937, oil on canvas, 61.4 x 45.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Philip Pearlstein, *Female Model Reclining on Red and Black American Bedspread*, 1976, watercolour on paper, 74.9 x 104.1 cm, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.



For the nudes he painted, Brooker hired professional models, and he may have seen such works as exercises in another area of picture-making. He became convinced his work was becoming too realistic because he realized it was form that obsessed him. The nude was a fundamental part of the Western art tradition, yet Brooker made this traditional subject very much his own.



## STILL LIFE WITH LEMONS C.1936

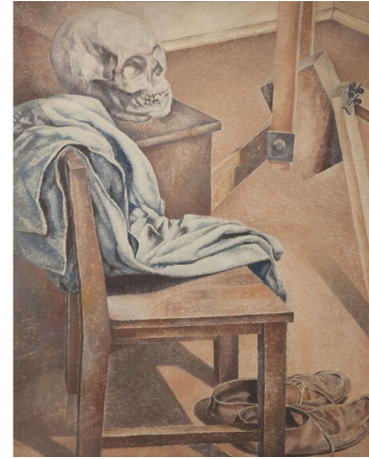


Bertram Brooker, *Still Life with Lemons*, c.1936  
Oil on canvas, 27.8 x 35.9 cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

*Still Life with Lemons* reveals Brooker's masterful combination of representational and abstract modes in another major genre: the still life. This painting demonstrates an excellent working knowledge of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), but it also shows Brooker's ability to add his own unique take to the well-established conventions of this genre.

The two lemons, the squash, and the dining table cloth have an almost palpable texture; yet the bowl, its shadow, and the background are rendered with precise abstract lines that seem to remove these elements from the reality of the others in the composition. Thus the viewer is forced to question what is being viewed. Where, precisely, is the line between the material and the immaterial?

In his still lifes, Brooker sometimes jokingly and somewhat mischievously constructed facial features out of the tablecloths on which his subjects were placed, as in *Still Life with Bag #3*, c.1933. In another still life, *Art is Long*, 1934, Brooker creates a haunting memento mori. This is an exceptionally dexterous composition in which the whites of the skull and cloak are rendered in stark contrast to the browns in the remainder of the picture area—the artist's studio. The painting implies that an artist who has died survives in the studio in which he once painted. In *Still Life with Lemons*, as with other of Brooker's works in this genre, the artist demonstrates his response to an important category in artistic practice. He had looked carefully at Cézanne, but these examples show his ability to poke fun at and, in the instance of *Art is Long*, to comment on the mortality of the artist and the immortality of what he leaves behind.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Still Life with Bag #3*, c.1933, oil on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Art is Long*, 1934, oil on canvas, 74.9 x 61 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.



## THE RECLUSE 1939



Bertram Brooker, *The Recluse*, 1939  
Oil on canvas, 61 x 45.7 cm  
Private collection



This is a painting that evokes Brooker's social concerns, specifically his compassion for individuals who have been marginalized: the subject is a solitary, unwelcome member of society. As is now customary for Brooker, the representational elements are combined with abstraction. The deeply haunted face of the man turning to stare at the viewer is in sharp contrast to the quasi-geometrical shapes behind him. In addition, as Anna Hudson notes, the three telephone poles recede into space: "Their function is to signal the absence of beauty in urban life, and, by implication, of harmonious social order."<sup>1</sup>

Brooker's first surviving oil painting—*The Miners*, 1922—shows on the way to the pit, and suggests that Brooker possessed a strong sense of empathy for the underclass. *The Insulted and Injured*, 1934–35 (with a title taken from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel of 1861), supports this claim: it is a harrowing indictment of the ghastly settings in which members of the underclass exist. *The Recluse* also underscores an important principle for Brooker concerning the relationship between social action and artistic practice:

No sensitive man—whether artist or not—can remain unstirred by suffering on so gigantic scale as grips the world at present. As a man—as a citizen—as a member of the human fraternity—the artist should be prepared to do something about it. But, as artist, he should not preach about it. The moment he becomes a missionary he ceases to be an artist.<sup>2</sup>

It is not known on whom Brooker based the figure in *The Recluse*. In some of his abstract works from 1927 to 1931, he had introduced human-like figures. And he became a superb portraitist. In *Phyllis (Piano! Piano!)*, 1934, he poses his daughter seated sideways to the piano. A curious tension exists between the girl with her anxiety-ridden face and careworn hands and the piano behind her. Phyllis stares into space, almost as if pondering the power of the music she has just played—or is about to play. Her cheeks are flushed, but her eyes suggest that she has been in touch with some strong, outward force. In Brooker's 1932 portrait of the novelist Morley Callaghan, the subject seems about to move forward in space; the suggestion is that Callaghan is a dynamic person, uncomfortable simply sitting still. Brooker's portraits were not commissioned, and they are few in number; many were done as favours for friends.



Bertram Brooker, *Phyllis (Piano! Piano!)*, 1934, oil on canvas, 101.9 x 76.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



## KNEELING FIGURE 1940

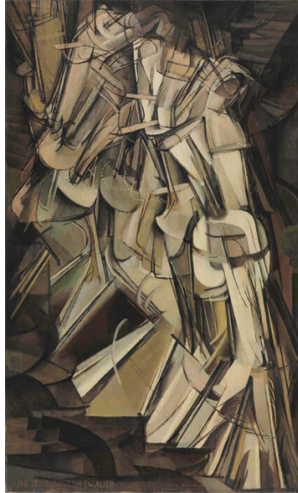


Bertram Brooker, *Kneeling Figure*, 1940  
Oil on canvas, 60.9 x 45.7 cm  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



This painting successfully mixes representation and abstraction, as do many of Brooker's later works. The female figure and a portion of the background behind her are segmented into quasi-abstract geometries. The figure is both an assemblage of shapes and a nude female in a crouching position. She inhabits two worlds simultaneously.

At first, the female figure seems to be positioned on a runner's block, but the shapes from which she is constructed give the illusion that she is moving forward. Thus, she is represented in both present time (about to run) and future time: the present time is moving toward future time. The woman is rendered realistically (this is objective time) whereas the quasi-abstract shapes remind the viewer that time is really a subjective entity (which recalls the concept of "duration" by Henri Bergson [1859-1941]).



LEFT: Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, oil on canvas, 89.2 x 47 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art. RIGHT: Kathleen Munn, *Untitled (Crucifixion)*, c.1927-28, oil on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm, private collection.

Brooker's composition here resembles Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, which caused a sensation at the 1913 Armory Show. Another earlier work by Brooker's friend Kathleen Munn (1887-1974) may have influenced him in his rendering of *Kneeling Figure*, her *Untitled (Crucifixion)*, c.1927-28. Like Brooker she combines representational elements with abstract shapes to demonstrate different concepts of how time can be seen and imagined.



## THE CLOUD C.1942



Bertram Brooker, *The Cloud*, c.1942

Oil on canvas, 61.3 x 76.2 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In a canvas of great assurance Brooker allows a huge white cloud to linger in the middle of a relatively peaceful landscape. But all is not what it first seems to be. The cloud divides the picture in two, and its bright intensity interrupts the greens and blues above and below it. Without the cloud, the carefully modulated pastoral scene would be unduly commonplace for Brooker. The cloud represents a kind of mysterious, divine imposition into the world of humanity, and that is precisely Brooker's point: there is another realm of reality (or "cosmic consciousness") to which the eyes of most people remain closed.

Here Brooker, working very much in the mode of Lawren Harris (1885–1970) in the early 1930s, produces an exceptionally compelling naturalist landscape. However, an important distinction can be made between this landscape and those of members of the Group of Seven or even of Brooker's earlier *The St. Lawrence*, 1931. This is not a wilderness

landscape. It is a pastoral depiction of an inhabited, agricultural terrain.

*The St. Lawrence*, it can be argued, is parodic of Harris. *The Cloud* is a landscape painting that embraces ideas of domesticity and thus eschews notions of the northern wilderness as representative of Canadian nationalism. As such, this canvas fits into the broader agenda of the Canadian Group of Painters: to increase the public's awareness of art being made in Canada by embodying ideas of social progress.

*The Cloud* bears a striking resemblance to *Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico / Out Back of Marie's II*, 1930, by Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) but in 1934 Brooker claimed he was not influenced by the American artist.



LEFT: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico / Out Back of Marie's II*, 1930, oil on canvas, 61.6 x 91.4 cm, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe.



RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *North Shore*, c.1942, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, private collection.



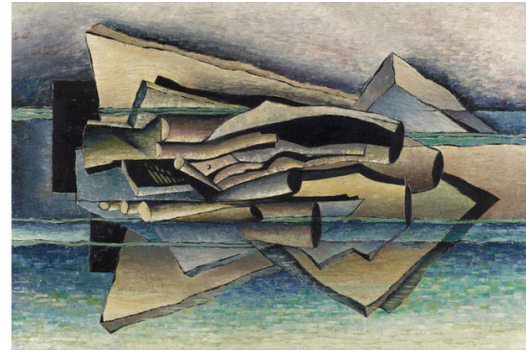
## SYMPHONIC FORMS 1947



Bertram Brooker, *Symphonic Forms*, 1947  
Oil on canvas mounted on Masonite, 68.7 x 91.2 cm  
Art Gallery of Hamilton

*Symphonic Forms* belongs to a third and final group of abstracts painted by Brooker and is the finest in that small body of work. Much more than Brooker's early experimental temperas (as in *Oozles*, c.1922-24) and the large colourful abstracts of 1927 to 1931 (as in *Sounds Assembling*, 1928), this picture resembles a sculpture. The colours are muted and the shapes are precisely arranged. There is a sharp, visual conflict between the ball-like sphere (and its shadow) and the two organic shapes near which it floats. This interaction is placed in front of what looks like an elaborate stage set. There is also a strong vertical downward movement in the middle of the background. In contrast to his previous abstracts, the composition of this work is much more relaxed and peaceful.

Brooker's abstractions from 1927 to 1931 had been deliberately confrontational and complex in the juxtaposition of shapes; this canvas has a much gentler, more reticent air, which is enhanced by the cool colours. The composition can be seen as "symphonic" in the sense that it seems to be segmented into various parts, or movements. The musical inspiration must have been a tranquil one. *Symphonic Forms* was one of Brooker's last stabs at creating a pure abstraction. Although a later work, *Progression*, 1948, is composed of assorted layers of horizontal forms, it is recognizably a landscape constructed of abstract shapes.



LEFT: Lawren Harris, *Poise (Composition 4)*, 1936, oil on canvas, 76 x 91.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Progression*, 1948, oil on canvas, 66.2 x 99.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

*Symphonic Forms* owes a great deal to the type of streamlined Art Deco design that had been popular in the 1930s. In general, Canadian artists did not respond to the abstract qualities that could be extracted from Art Deco, although Lawren Harris (1885–1970) had painted *Poise (Composition 4)*, 1936, the lone abstract in his canon that appropriates similar design elements. As a movement, Art Deco design incorporated the idea of a new, optimistic world order. Brooker may have appropriated it here to suggest the same about the visual symphony he has created.



## SWING OF TIME 1954



Bertram Brooker, *Swing of Time*, 1954  
Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 60.9 cm  
The Estate of Bertram Brooker



In this canvas, completed the year before his death, the artist, in bad health, may well have been providing himself with a memento mori. The sundial, the metronome, the bell, and the hourglass are placed on top of a flesh-coloured clock face, perhaps suggesting a contrast between “objective time,” which can be measured, and “duration” à la Henri Bergson (1859–1941), which escapes easy classification.<sup>1</sup> The two profiles in the upper portion of the composition are rendered on what appears to be graph paper (another form of measuring); they may well represent historical individuals.

This canvas is more philosophically dense than most of Brooker’s paintings. The viewer is being asked to put the various pieces of a surrealistically inspired jigsaw into place. How exactly do they fit together? The entire composition calls into question the nature of time and our place in it. Do human beings simply exist in time as material entities? Or is there the possibility we can be liberated from traditional concepts of time? Is there another dimension to existence? This painting crystallizes the questions Brooker asked during his entire career as an artist.

Painted at the end of his life, *Swing of Time* is a fitting conclusion to Brooker’s career as an artist. Once again, he returns to the ideas about time of his spiritual mentor Bergson and, in a highly original blend of the abstract with a surrealist form of representation, he asks the viewer to enter a spiritual terrain linked to but ultimately separate from ordinary material existence.



An abstract painting featuring large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue, beige, and orange. The composition is dynamic, with sharp angles and soft curves creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors are muted and earthy, typical of early modernist abstract art.

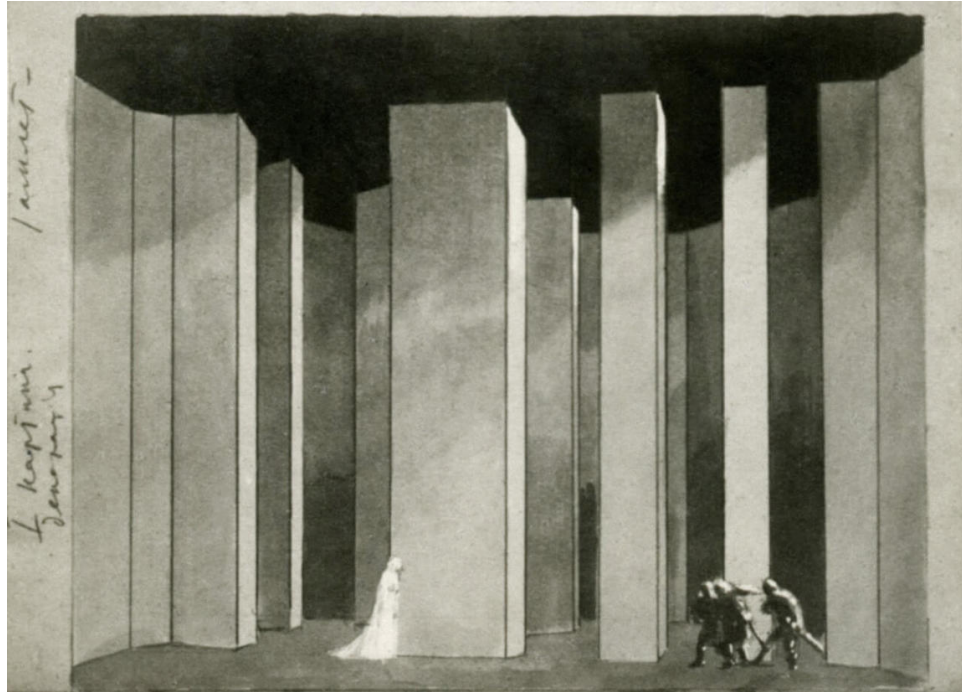
# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

**As an abstract painter, Bertram Brooker aligned in his own compositions his belief in his philosophy of Ultimatism and spiritualism, knowledge of contemporary cutting-edge art, and interest in music. Through his involvement with artist groups and as a journalist and editor, he forwarded modernist principles in Canadian art. Brooker's relentless exploration of new ways of seeing and painting situates him among this country's most accomplished early modernist painters.**

## PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALITY

Intrigued by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Brooker includes in his early drawings (c.1912–13) a rendition of a character he called “Ultrahomo the Prophet.” Ultrahomo was his name for Nietzsche’s heroic Superman, or overman (the *Übermensch*).

Brooker may have admired the Superman but as a Christian, he was skeptical of Nietzsche’s atheism and promotion of violence to achieve a new spiritual order.<sup>1</sup> Around 1912, Brooker developed his doctrine of Ultimatism, which can be linked to the German philosopher’s thinking but also significantly differs from it. According to Brooker, an Ultimatis was one of a very select group of people with the power to unshackle humanity’s reliance on materialism and, thus, liberate humankind’s essentially spiritual nature. The Ultimatis—through the power of art—could show humanity the way forward. Like Nietzsche’s Superman, the Ultimatis searched for that which was “mystical, holistic, and quite self-consciously anti-utilitarian and anti-rationalist.”<sup>2</sup> But in contradistinction to Nietzsche’s idealized human, they believed in a spiritual existence beyond the material.



A stage design by theatre designer Gordon Craig.

According to Brooker, there were only three Ultimatis—himself and two celebrities he had never met nor seems to have been in contact with: experimental English stage designer Gordon Craig (1872–1966) and South African writer Olive Schreiner (1855–1920). Ultimatism was never a movement; it was the creation of Brooker’s imagination.<sup>3</sup> He believed that he, Craig, and Schreiner had the power to develop a workable synthesis between materialism and spirituality.<sup>4</sup> His continuing belief in Ultimatism underlies much of his later work, as in *Resolution*, c.1929, a painting about the quest to become united with the divine.<sup>5</sup>

Brooker was intrigued by the spiritual world, which he believed to be hovering on the edge of the material one. As an artist he sought to convey something beyond the tangible. Adam Lauder argues that too much attention has been directed at Brooker’s spiritualism: His “awareness of contemporary developments in the biological sciences contradicts characterizations of [Brooker] as a ‘mystic.’”<sup>6</sup> Lauder proposes that Brooker’s knowledge of and interest in science negates his spiritualism, as might be seen in such works as *Ovaescence*, c.1954. However, Brooker regarded the two as separate but not mutually exclusive—though the foundation of his beliefs was his adherence to



spiritual values. Another way of understanding Brooker is as an artist with visionary and mystical inclinations, very much in the tradition of William Blake (1757–1827). Joyce Zemans has observed that like Blake, Brooker “saw artistic endeavours in all media as evidence of the artist/prophet’s responsibility to offer leadership and to seek truth through creative art.”<sup>7</sup>

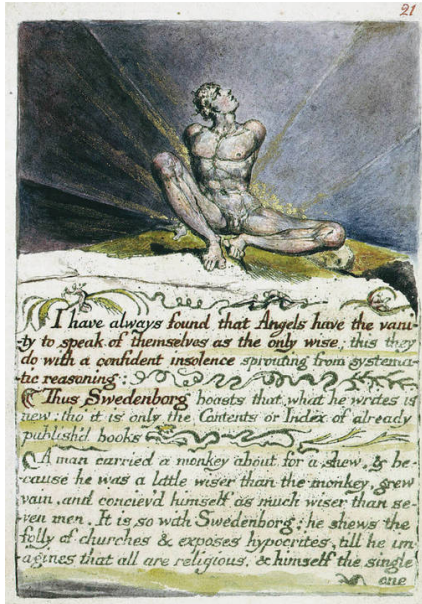


LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Ovalescence*, c.1954, watercolour on paper, 39 x 21 cm, Art Gallery of Windsor. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker painting outdoors, Valpoy, Manitoba, 1927, photographer unknown.

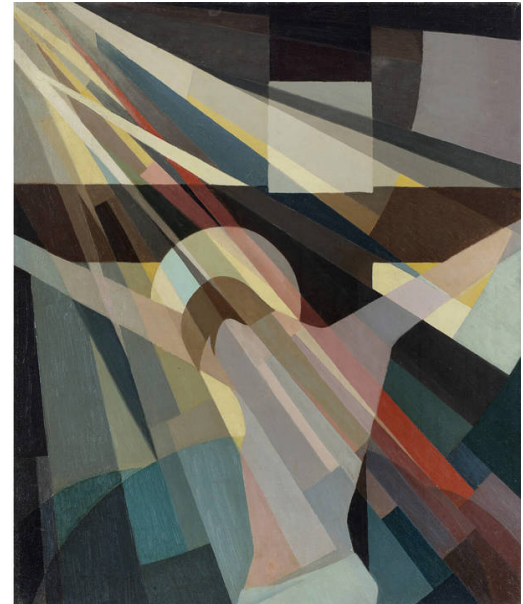
However, as David Arnason has suggested, Brooker’s spiritual values were very much of the nineteenth century, when traditional religious values were being challenged by scientific data collected by the likes of Charles Darwin.<sup>8</sup> Brooker’s spiritualism arose, in part, because of his abhorrence of pure materialism. Brooker displays a strong conservative side by adhering to traditional Christian values and well-established transcendent doctrines. However, he sought to meld the old with the new. For instance, he was fascinated by electricity and other new technologies, as can be seen in *Crucifixion*, 1927–28.

Brooker's spiritualism coexisted with conventional Christian beliefs. Nevertheless, he does not resort to Christian theology or terminology in his writings and there is almost no Christian iconography in his paintings. In a diary entry of August 25, 1925, two years after a life-changing epiphany at a Presbyterian church, he wrote about "unitude," or cosmic consciousness, expressing the bedrock of his religious belief:

Stronger today than anytime has come the feeling of all being One. What I mean is that although I have felt as full of divine energy before, and experienced a sort of Oneness, I have never felt kinship with every dead and living thing. . . . The sense, in short of the whole being of God working out his destiny, and I a part, not less nor more than the rest.<sup>9</sup>



LEFT: William Blake, interior page of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790).



RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Crucifixion*, 1927-28, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61 cm, the Estate of Bertram Brooker.

While Brooker's mystical leanings may be characterized as old-fashioned, he used twentieth-century means to realize his vision. In his critical writings he espoused many traditional values, but he always judged the works of other artists on their ability to encapsulate their ideas in modernist ways. For him, a modernist sought to find new formalist techniques to encompass contemporary ideas. Just as Blake's mystical leanings were inspired by a host of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, Brooker's spiritually charged illuminated books about the transcendent, such as *Elijah* (1929), were experimental and trail-blazing. From about 1929 Brooker's work evolved from abstraction toward representation. His hybrid style, however, does not mean that he abandoned his spiritualist ideas; it merely indicates that he found other modernist ways of expressing them, as can be seen in *Entombment*, 1937, and *Quebec Impression*, 1942.





LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Entombment*, 1937, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 101.6 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Quebec Impression*, 1942, oil on canvas, 76.6 x 61.2 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.

### PROMOTING CANADIAN ART

From 1923 Brooker was actively involved in helping to build the Canadian art scene, although he did so according to his beliefs, which did not always concur with those of his contemporaries. He forged alliances within the Group of Seven. In 1933 he became a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) and took part in planning its exhibition schedule and in judging submissions.<sup>10</sup> He also published art criticism, and in his nationally syndicated "Seven Arts" columns and in two editions of the book *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929* and 1936 he promoted many kinds of artists in Canada.



Bertram Brooker, *Endless Dawn*, 1927, oil over graphite on pressboard, 43 x 61 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound.



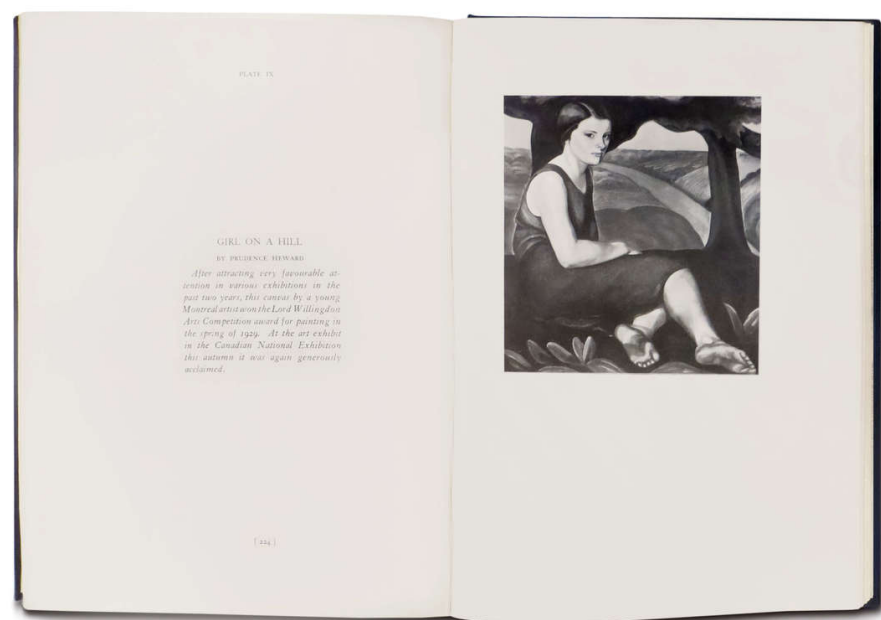
Lawren Harris, *Mountain Form IV (Rocky Mountain Painting XIV)*, 1927, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm, private collection.

Brooker's relationship with the Group of Seven was complicated and conflicted. He was drawn to Lawren Harris (1885–1970), in particular, for his belief in the spiritual in art, but did not fully ascribe to the Group's goals. In October 1929 Brooker publicly questioned the Group's political agenda. He wrote that: they "are modern only in the sense of being contemporary: they are not 'modern' in the generally accepted sense of belonging to the special tendency in painting that stems from Cézanne."<sup>11</sup> Brooker almost certainly saw himself as part of this "special tendency." For him, the modernist elements in the works of members of the Group were not truly avant-garde. They may have been superb colourists, but they were not what he considered cutting-edge, as perhaps can be seen in comparing *Endless Dawn*, 1927, by Brooker, with *Mountain Form IV (Rocky Mountain Painting XIV)*, 1927, by Harris.

Brooker's differences with the Group are made evident by the work he selected to reproduce in the 1928–29 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (for example, Prudence Heward's *Girl on a Hill*, 1928, and Kathleen Munn's *Composition [Horses]*, c.1927) where, as Anna Hudson argues, he shifts "expression of the Canadian landscape . . . from a highly personal engagement with the wilderness to a fascination with the imprint of human settlement."<sup>12</sup> This new concept of national culture "would redress, so Brooker believed, the linguistic, racial, and economic divisions that fragmented a widely dispersed Canadian population."<sup>13</sup> From its outset, the CGP had advocated the notion of a national consciousness that found its expression in community, and Brooker placed great emphasis on this idea.<sup>14</sup> The CGP comprised Canadian nationalists but they worked in a much wider variety of genres than the Group of Seven, whose wilderness landscapes remain its greatest accomplishment.

Beyond Brooker's involvement with the CGP was the outstanding job he did in promoting the works of many of his fellow artists in the two editions of *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*. As Anna Hudson states,

It was Brooker's idea to publish a 1928–1929 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*. The yearbook served as a compendium of a closely knit, younger generation of Toronto painters [and others across Canada]. Although originally intended to be an annual publication, the next and last yearbook did not appear until 1936. By this point, the Toronto community of painters had evolved into a stable artistic community.<sup>15</sup>



Prudence Heward, *Girl on a Hill*, 1928, reproduced in black and white in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928–1929*, edited by Bertram Brooker.



Brooker's efforts as an essayist, notably in his "Seven Arts" columns, and as an editor were crucial in promoting the work of Canadian artists and in establishing a critical foundation for their appreciation.

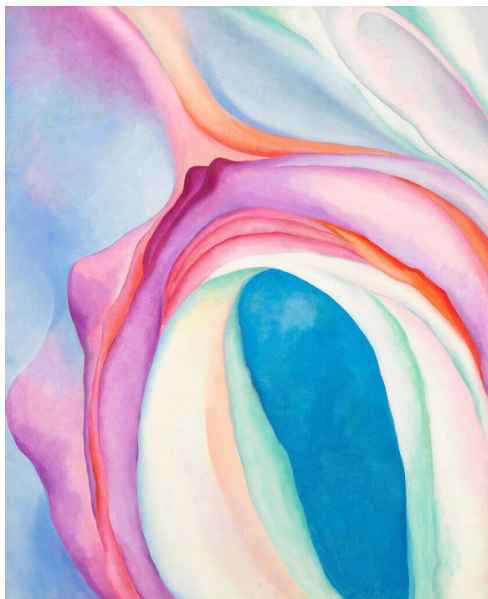
The American critic and scholar Walter Abell (1897–1956), during his sixteen years in Canada (from 1928 to 1944), argued that art should serve democracy and that, in order to do so, "art" had to be thought of in wider terms than just fine arts; it had to embrace architecture, town planning, and the industrial arts. Brooker's rigid separation of art and politics was at odds with Abell. More in keeping with Brooker's point of view are essays by Northrop Frye (1912–1991), such as "David Milne: An Appreciation" (1948) and his introduction to the book *Lawren Harris* (1969), in which Frye applied an archetypal criticism to visual art. Brooker, Abell, and Frye turned their attention to Canadian art as a topic worthy of serious attention and, in so doing, helped to form a cultural climate in which it could be more fully understood and appreciated and studied.

## COLOUR AND MUSIC

Well before Brooker, art critic Walter Pater (1839–1894) had proclaimed that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music,"<sup>16</sup> and Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) had written, "A painter who finds no satisfaction in mere representation, however artistic, in his longing to express his internal life, cannot but envy the ease with which music, the least materialistic of the arts today, achieves this end."<sup>17</sup> Also influenced by Kandinsky, Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) began "painting music" in 1918 (for example, in *Music, Pink and Blue No. 2*, 1918).

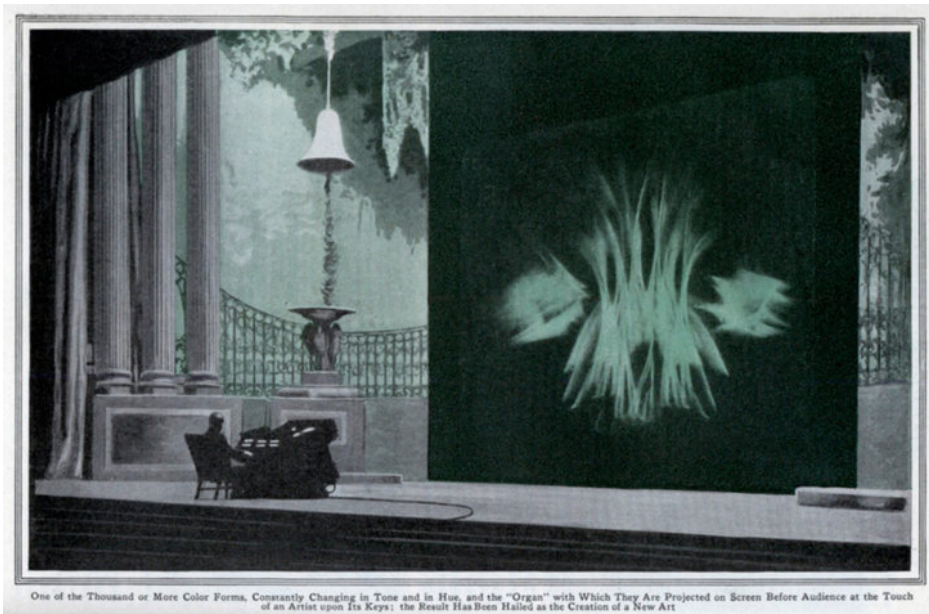
At about the same time, Paul Klee (1879–1940), a trained musician, experimented with conjoining music and painting. Brooker was well aware of Kandinsky's sentiments—and undoubtedly was inspired by them.

For Brooker the intense enjoyment of music was in direct proportion to the ability of the hearer to divorce himself from physical reality. Music became a means that transported him from the world of everyday to the world of aesthetic exaltation, as in *Abstraction, Music*, 1927 and "*Chorale*" (Bach), c.1927. In addition, music provided the central means of creative expression that would allow the visual artist to enter the fourth dimension, a spiritual realm from which contemporary man had excluded himself.



LEFT: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Music, Pink and Blue No. 2*, 1918, oil on canvas, 88.9 x 76 cm, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, "*Chorale*" (Bach), c.1927, oil on canvas, 61 x 43.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

On February 25, 1929, Brooker experienced a very specific instance of how music and nonfigurative visual art could be melded. On a trip to New York, he and his wife “had dinner with Thomas Wilfred, the inventor of the Clavilux [light played by key] known as the ‘colour organ’ which projects moving forms and colours on a lighted screen.”<sup>18</sup> It is clear Brooker attended a performance during the trip, but it is likely that he had read about Wilfred four or five years earlier.

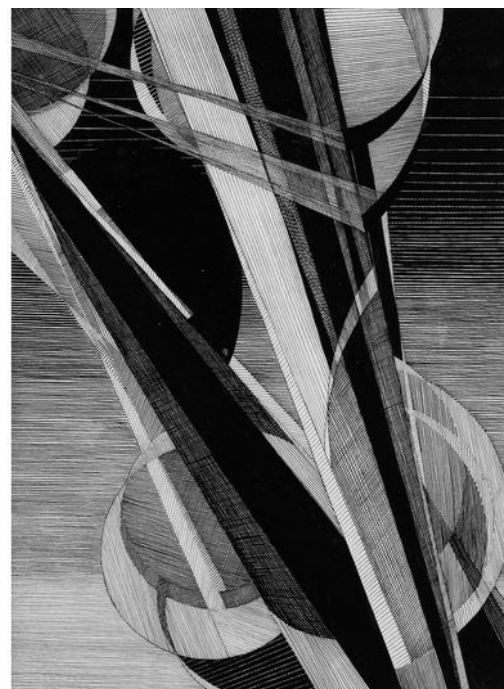
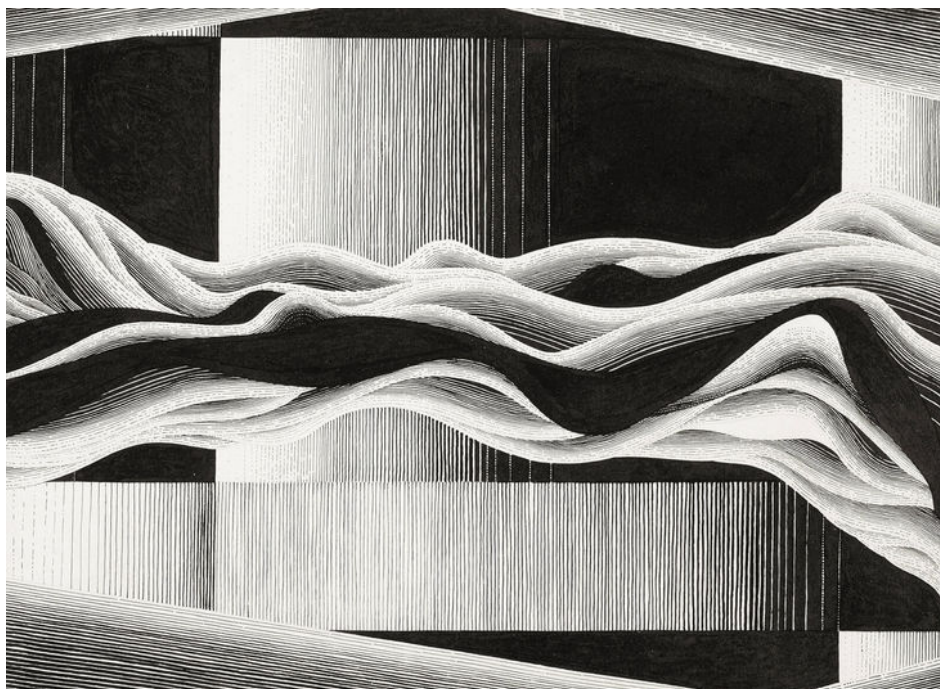


LEFT: Thomas Wilfred seated at the Clavilux during a public performance, c.1920s, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Evolution*, 1929, oil on canvas, 76.4 x 61.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In a canvas such as *Evolution*, 1929, Brooker creates a stolid pedestal-like foundation at the bottom, but most of the picture area is dominated by a wide variety of shapes: on the extreme right, some tubular forms mount upwards; in the centre is a quiet-looking ovoid shape, while various shards move downwards from the left, intersecting with several triangles. Each of these forms is coloured somberly but differently. The composition of this picture, and of other musically inspired abstracts, such as the pen-and-ink drawings *Fugue* and *Symphonic Movement No. 1*, both c.1928-29, might be Brooker’s attempt to find a way to capture one of Wilfred’s performances.

Throughout his life as an artist, Brooker remained remarkably consistent in his attempts to align visual forms with musical ones. In Wilfred, he saw a methodology that he could adapt for his own purposes.





LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Fugue*, c.1928-29, pen and ink on wove paper, 28.8 x 33.1 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Symphonic Movement No. 1*, c.1928-29, pen and ink on paper, 38.1 x 25.5 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

### DIMENSIONALITY AND TIME

Brooker wanted to create works of art in which duration, or time, could be "seen." All Brooker's abstracts from 1927 to 1931—for example, *Alleluiah*, 1929, and *Resolution*, c.1929—were likely influenced by the theory of time conceived by Henri Bergson (1859-1941). They depict abstract landscapes meant to inhabit the fourth dimension (where the laws of "duration" are suspended) and provide glimpses of a terrain not seen by most human beings. He also approached the concept of time in representational works, such as his nude *Pygmalion's Miracle*, c.1941, in which a sculpted figure resides. The figure represents the past but she exists in a terrain beyond ordinary time, and her metamorphosis into flesh may represent Bergsonian duration.

Brooker's children remembered that he often encouraged them to "imagine perceiving three-dimensional objects in a two-dimensional world to stress the validity of the fourth dimension."<sup>19</sup> Brooker's early and later abstracts, such as *Creation*, 1925, and *Machine World*, 1950, emphasize "dimensionality," which he also referred to the fourth dimension, and which he defined as creating "instead of the usual space perspective that makes a painting three-dimensional, a new and puzzling illusion of space that



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Creation*, 1925, oil on board, 61 x 43.2 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Machine World*, 1950, oil on canvas, 45 x 36 cm, private collection.

is foreign to normal visual experience.”<sup>20</sup> Joyce Zemans observes that for Brooker and other abstract artists, “the concept of higher dimensions of space seemed also to offer the visual artist the opportunity to capture a truer reality than that offered by representation or even symbolism.”<sup>21</sup>



Bertram Brooker painting *Machine World* in his studio, c.1950, photographer unknown.

Brooker uses “fourth dimension” loosely. In mathematical theory, the term refers to adding another spatial dimension to one-, two-, and three-dimensional space (length, area, and volume). Brooker believed that the fourth dimension was best captured in “the mathematical and the musical.” He asserted that in the fourth dimension it is possible to come into contact with “the intellectual re-arrangement of facts and concepts in new patterns.”<sup>22</sup> Brooker means that the existence of the fourth dimension points to a level of reality from which most—except those who have obtained cosmic consciousness—are excluded.<sup>22</sup>

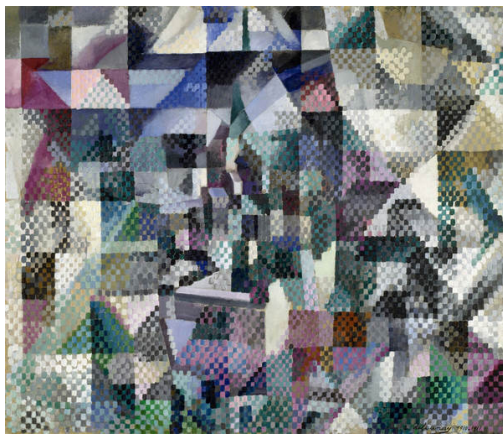


By entering the fourth dimension, the artist takes himself out of time in any conventional understanding of the term. In this regard, Bergson's concept of "duration" became central to Brooker's thinking and can be seen in paintings such as *Abstraction, Music*, 1927. The French philosopher had rejected a materialist interpretation of time and substituted one that allowed entry into a different realm of existence.<sup>23</sup>

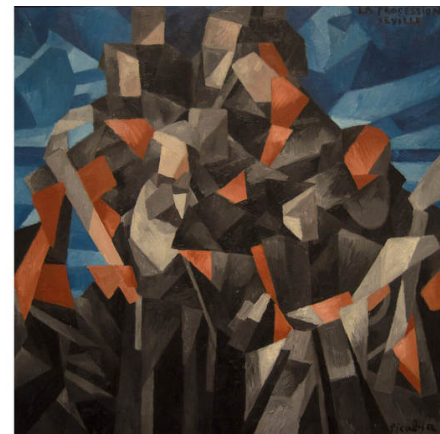
## ABSTRACT ART

Although there are instances of abstract art well before the twentieth century, compositions that depart from the various modes of representation in Western art came to the fore in the early twentieth century. Artists began to feel that the "modern" world needed a truly modernist modality to capture its essence. Such pursuits led in various directions, but one important strand was influenced by, among others, Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), George Gurdjieff (1866–1949), and P.D. Ouspensky (1878–1947), who wrote about the connection between the material and spiritual worlds. Such writings especially influenced Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), and Wassily Kandinsky.

A forerunner of abstract art in Canada, Brooker was well aware of the work shown in 1913 at the Armory Show, and his early drawings are mainly copies of works that were exhibited there, which he likely saw in reproduction. Many new ways of making art were on display, including major pieces of Cubism, but there were some bold attempts at abstraction, including *Window on the City, No. 3* (*La fenêtre sur la ville n° 3*), 1911–12, by Robert

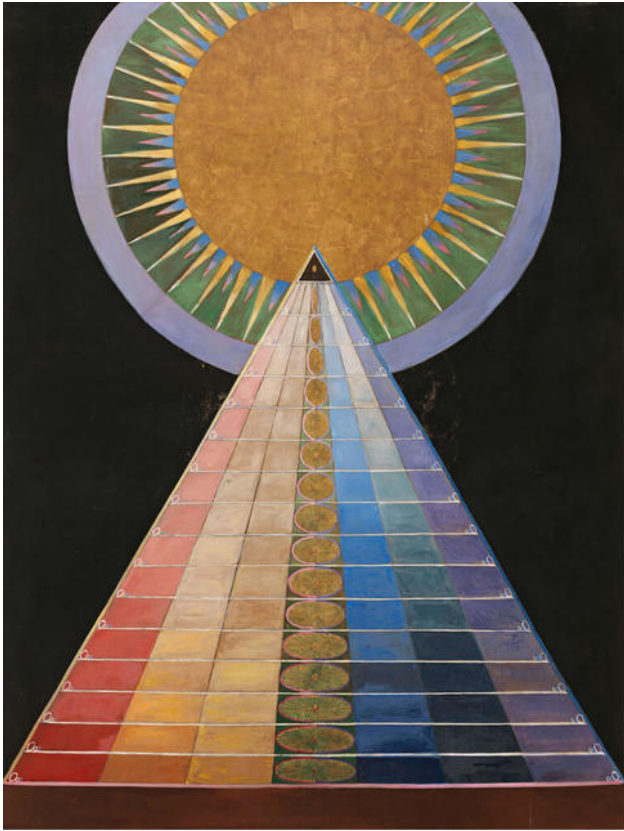


LEFT: Robert Delaunay, *Window on the City, No. 3*, 1911–12, oil on canvas, 113.7 x 130.8 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. RIGHT: Francis Picabia, *The Procession, Seville*, 1912, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 121.9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Delaunay (1885–1941); *The Procession, Seville*, 1912, by Francis Picabia (1879–1953); and *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)*, 1912, by Kandinsky. Each of these abstract canvases bears only a superficial resemblance to one another. In the same way, some of Brooker's abstracts have similarities to the work of the Italian Futurist Giacomo Balla (1871–1958), as can be seen in comparing Brooker's *Sounds Assembling*, 1928, with Balla's *Abstract Speed + Sound*, 1913–14.

What links Brooker to af Klint and Kandinsky is that all three share a commitment to displaying the spiritual world that is closed off from the material one. Their works differ because each has a distinct take on the spiritual world. For example, af Klint employs a colour scheme not unlike Brooker's, but her *Altarpiece, No. 1, Group X, Altpieces*, 1907, is much more static—and diagrammatic—than Brooker's comparable excursions into the spiritual world, as seen in *The Three Powers*, 1929. In contrast, Brooker's abstracts lack the strong lyrical feelings expressed by Kandinsky.



LEFT: Hilma af Klint, *Altarpiece, No. 1, Group X, Altarpieces*, 1907, oil and metal leaf on canvas, 238 x 180 cm, Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *The Three Powers*, 1929, oil on canvas, 61 x 76.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

For Brooker, pure abstraction, as he conceived it, was the gateway to depicting the spiritual world, and from about 1922 to 1931, he sought ways in which he could capture that elusive reality. In so doing, he became the first Canadian artist to employ pure abstraction.

### THE NUDE AND PRUDERY

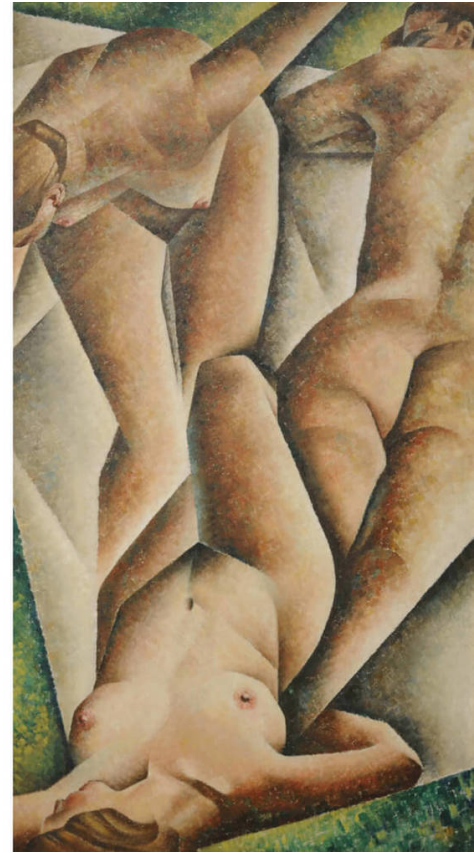
Despite the fact that the nude is a major, legitimate genre dating back to antiquity, a distinction is sometimes made between representing a nude body and displaying a naked one, a differentiation Brooker found puritanical. Although his *Figures in a Landscape*, 1931, was accepted for a 1931 exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists (OSA) at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario), it was not hung because it was felt it might negatively affect the sensibilities of children. Brooker did not expect to be censored when he submitted the work. A year before, Edwin Holgate (1892-1977) had shown his *Nude in a Landscape*, c.1930, in the annual exhibition of Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada without consequence.



LEFT: Edwin Holgate, *Nude in a Landscape*, c.1930, oil on canvas, 73.1 x 92.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Randolph Hewton, *Sleeping Woman*, c.1929, oil on canvas, 102 x 153 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



*Figures in a Landscape* had been accepted by the OSA's exhibition jury and listed in the catalogue. Before the exhibition opened, the local board of education expressed concern that the painting might offend; under the board's auspices, hundreds of children visited the gallery each week. The president of the OSA and the head curator of the gallery asked the jury to withdraw the canvas. When reporters asked why the painting had not been hung, the response was that the gallery was overcrowded. This obvious mendacity led to intense media scrutiny and stories on the front pages of some newspapers.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Pygmalion's Miracle*, c.1941, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 53.3 cm, Collection of Lynn and Ken Martens. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Three Figures*, 1937, oil on canvas, 96 x 53.3 cm, Museum London.

An indignant Brooker responded with the essay "Nudes and Prudes," in a collection of essays called

*Open Door* published in 1931 in Ottawa. He argued that the prudery in response to images of the nude arose in large part because elders in society presumed that the young would be corrupted by public displays of nakedness. He hit out against his opponents vigorously: "Nobody pretends . . . that nude paintings or books which deal frankly with sex are dangerous to the morals of grown men and women. . . . In any case . . . the questions of nudity and [lewdness] become 'questions' only because of the young."<sup>24</sup> And the young, he proclaims, become the victims of educators whose eyes are firmly shut to the realms of the imagination. The result is catastrophic because children are made to feel guilt whereas "art is one method of acquainting children with the organs and functions of the body in an atmosphere of candour and beauty."<sup>25</sup>

This issue sometimes had a nationalist bias. When *Sleeping Woman*, c.1929, by Randolph Hewton (1888-1960) was shown in 1930, as Michèle Grandbois points out, "A.Y. Jackson confessed at the time to being troubled by the disparity between this work and what was expected of a true Canadian form of expression, best embodied in the landscape genre. So, even as Canadian art was asserting its modernity, it refused to identify with the nude."<sup>26</sup> *Nude*, 1933, by Liliias Torrance Newton (1896-1980) was removed from the 1933 Canadian Group of Painters exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto in part, as the critic Donald Buchanan put it, because the model was "a naked lady, not a nude, for she wore green slippers."<sup>27</sup>

For Brooker, the nude was a genre that fully liberated his imagination. He could allow his models to block a view, as in *Figures in a Landscape*, render them in precise, clinical ways, as in *Torso*, 1937, or place them in a classical context with a playful edge, as in *Pygmalion's Miracle*, c.1941. As Anna Hudson has pointed out, he could in *Seated Figure*, 1935, create a monumental studio nude "whose humanity is profoundly felt in the fleshiness of the model's abdomen. . . . This ordinary woman is the object of extraordinary intimacy, which in life is fleeting and in art enduring."<sup>28</sup>



Bertram Brooker, *Seated Figure*, 1935, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 101.6 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

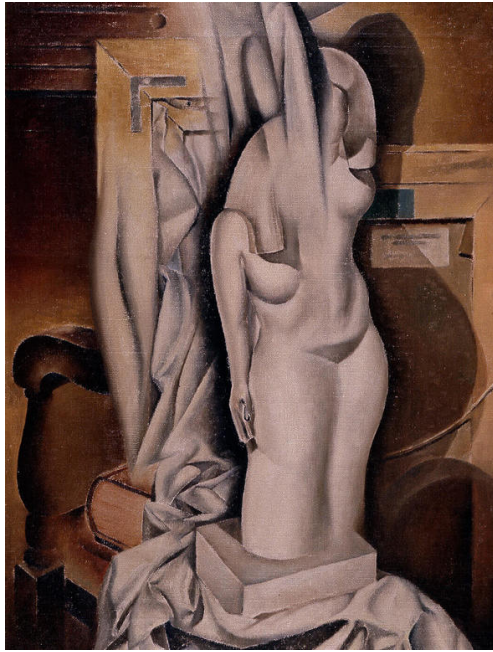


### A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST

In whatever genre he worked—in both visual art and writing—Brooker advanced the same ideas: the material must bow to the spiritual; human life should be a process of embracing the otherworldly; Canada must produce its own distinctive art. In addition to his paintings in oil and watercolour and his pen-and-ink drawings, Brooker was adventurous in other forms of visual art—sculpture and stage design. Only two pieces of sculpture by him are known to exist. The best is *Triptych*, c.1935; the other is *Egyptian Lady*, c.1939. Cast in bronze, *Triptych* is difficult to locate in the history of sculpture, but its antecedent is clearly

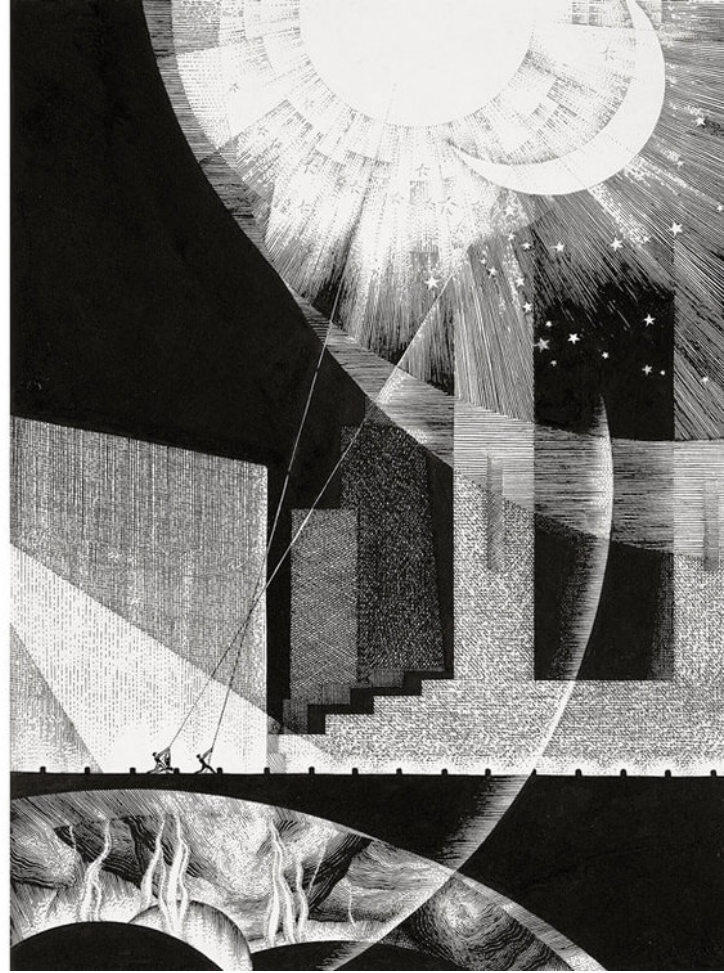
Brooker's own *Evolution*, 1929. In both the painting and sculpture, jagged horizontal linear forms on the left ascend steeply in a strong vertical thrust to the right. The movement in both pieces dramatizes the concept of evolution in spiritual terms: the soul of man, as it awakens, moves upwards in a transcendental gesture. As can be seen in *Green Movement*, c.1927, and *Egyptian Woman*, 1940, Brooker liked to depict sculptures or sculpture-like forms in his paintings.

As a young man, Brooker had written film scripts as well as acted and performed in plays. In Toronto he found a kindred spirit in Herman Voaden (1903-1991), who in 1932 called for a Canadian "Art of the Theatre" that would be "an expression of the atmosphere and character of our land as definite as our native-born painting and sculpture." Drawings such as *All the World's a Stage*, 1929, already reflected Brooker's interest in the theatre. At Voaden's Workshop at Central High School of Commerce he produced two of Brooker's plays, *Within: A Drama of the Mind in Revolt* (1935) and *The Dragon* (1936).<sup>29</sup> These are expressionistic works in which many of Brooker's key tenets are advanced. The former is a one-act play set within the interior of an individual's brain, and the stage design (of which there are two extant) is by Brooker. In the latter, against a series of giant discs, human figures are shown striving between instinct and reason. This drawing, in placing the actors against a stark backdrop, indicates that Brooker relied on revolutionary methodology in stage design of the modernist theatre practitioner Gordon Craig (1872-1966).



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Egyptian Woman*, 1940, oil on canvas, 61.4 x 46.2 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Triptych*, c.1935, bronze, 68.5 x 11.5 x 23.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Very little is known about the actual production of *Within*, but Lawrence Mason in the *Globe* applauded “the choral speaking, masked groups, sculptural poses, shadow effects, contrasting voice-timbres” that left the audience “quite spellbound.”<sup>30</sup>



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Green Movement*, c.1927, oil on paperboard, 58.8 x 43.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *All the World's a Stage*, 1929, pen and ink on paper, 27.9 x 20.3 cm, private collection.



An abstract painting featuring a composition of geometric shapes and a rich color palette. A prominent vertical green stripe runs along the left side. The central and right portions are dominated by horizontal bands of earthy brown and orange, intersected by dark, curved shapes in black and deep purple. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century abstract art, with visible brushstrokes and a textured surface.

# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Brooker's style was very much his own. Although he looked carefully at contemporary art, few of his paintings exhibit distinct stylistic influences. He was more obviously affected by listening to music and by reading widely. Contrary to trends in Canadian art at his time, he was a forerunner of abstract art in Canada and turned to realist representation in his mid- and late-career work. His artistic endeavours relate closely to his work as an advertising creative and as a literary writer.

### A SELF-TAUGHT TALENT

Brooker's major paintings are in oil, but he made a substantial number of tempera paintings, watercolours, and drawings. In stylistic terms, he is an anomaly. He was a self-taught artist who learned a great deal from observing, among other sources, Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956), Kathleen Munn (1887–1974), and Rockwell Kent (1882–1971).

Brooker derived much of his wide knowledge of the plastic arts and music from books and periodicals. For example, although he missed the landmark 1913 Armory Show in New York City, he would have read newspaper reports of this event.<sup>1</sup>

The show included major works by exemplars of the early European avant-garde, for instance, those by Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968)—whose *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, was one of the many works reviled in the press—Francis Picabia (1879–1953), Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), and Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957). Brooker made title designs and illustrations based on items on display at the Armory Show that were reproduced in the press, which had published copies of work by Duchamp, Brancusi, Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and Henri Matisse (1869–1954), among others.

Brooker's own sinuous line drawings of around 1912–13, for example, *Ultrahomo*, are not especially daring or innovative. They show the influence of the celebrated black-ink Art Nouveau drawings of Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898). The ideas behind Brooker's early compositions, as in *Symbolic Man III*, 1913, are more interesting than their execution, however. They reveal a young man intrigued by Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of the Superman, a heroic figure of a new spiritual order.<sup>2</sup>



Installation view of the Cubist room of the International Exhibition of Modern Art (the Armory Show), Gallery 53, Art Institute of Chicago, March 24–April 16, 1913, photographer unknown.





LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Fawn Bay*, 1936, oil on canvas, 61.6 x 76.2 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Cabbage and Pepper*, c.1937, oil on canvas, 40.6 x 50.8 cm, Confederation Centre of the Arts, Charlottetown.

Though Brooker never attended art school, his canvases from 1927 to 1931 and after are remarkably well turned. The brush strokes in his oils—for example, *Fawn Bay*, 1936, *Ski Poles (Ski Boots)*, 1936, and *Cabbage and Pepper*, c.1937—are carefully and precisely executed; he was also a skilled draftsman with an exacting hand in sketching. As can be seen in his many graphic illustrations, his technique in pen-and-ink drawing—his dexterity in creating fine lines, his contrasts between light and dark spaces, and his ability to balance white values against black values—renders compositions both vivid and striking.

By the 1930s Brooker was sufficiently confident of his technique that he took great pleasure in lecturing as yet another way that he could communicate his passion for art. As a public speaker, Brooker fervently espoused his commitment to “cosmic consciousness”; he was a mesmerizing performer who also talked with assuredness about the technical aspects of images. David Milne (1881–1953) heard Brooker speak on El Greco (c.1541–1614) at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) on February 28, 1930, and was deeply moved.



Bertram Brooker, *Ski Poles (Ski Boots)*, 1936, oil on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm, private collection.



### INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Brooker's first set of abstracts, from 1922 to 1924, and later works such as *Ascending Forms*, c.1929, appear to be inspired by the Vorticist paintings of Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), David Bomberg (1890-1957), William Roberts (1895-1980) (for example, *Two-step II*, study for the lost painting *Two-step*, c.1915), and Helen Saunders (1885-1963) (for example, *Dance*, c.1915). The art of this group, particularly that of Lewis, used abstraction in sharp-edged lines to denote movement in a violent, slashing way. Brooker's first abstracts are influenced by the English group's use of precisely defined geometrical forms in aggressive contortions and highly saturated hues.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Ascending Forms*, c.1929, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 61.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Roberts, *Two-step II*, study for the lost painting *Two-step*, c.1915, pencil, watercolour, and gouache on paper, 30.2 x 22.8 cm, British Museum, London.

Closely related to Vorticism was Futurism, which began in Italy in around 1909. Like Vorticism, it was concerned with speed and violence and was politically right wing. Brooker would have seen examples of Futurist work, and he might have been attracted to its stylistic mixture of Cubism and other kinds of abstraction. The swirling, abstract shapes of paintings such as *Abstract Speed + Sound*, 1913-14, by Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) may have inspired Brooker's attempts to portray movement in such works as *Sounds Assembling*, 1928.



Brooker imitated Vorticist and Futurist forms, but he was not a proponent of the politics of those movements. The artists from these two groups sought to eradicate the past through violence and a strident rebellion against the rigid standards of traditional ways of painting. Brooker was more interested in exploring the dynamic tranquility of the spiritual world (for example, in the 1927 painting *Hope*) and soon abandoned Vorticist form. His nonfigurative works from 1927 to 1931, such as *Alleluiah*, 1929, emphasize harmony.



Giacomo Balla, *Abstract Speed + Sound*, 1913-14, oil on unvarnished millboard in artist's painted frame, 54.5 x 76.5 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

Brooker would have agreed with Lawren Harris (1885-1970) when the latter wrote in 1926 that the artist,

because of his constant habit of awareness and his discipline in expression, is perhaps more understanding of [Canada's] moods than others are. He is thus better equipped to interpret it to others, and then, to create living works in their own right by using forms, colour, rhythms and moods, to make a harmonious home for the imaginative and spiritual meanings it has evoked in him.<sup>3</sup>

This way of thinking would not have been new to Brooker, who was well aware of Harris's primary source: Wassily Kandinsky's book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), which had been translated into English in 1914. Some of Brooker's abstracts from 1927 to 1931, as in *Still Life Variation IV*, c.1929, resemble Kandinsky's in their vivid use of colour, but his work lacks the jagged, sprightly, and lyrical edge achieved by the Russian artist and theorist.



LEFT: Cover of Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (first published in English in 1914; originally published in Russian in 1911). RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Still Life Variation IV*, c.1929, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, private collection.

For Brooker and Harris, Kandinsky's book was a manual that explained how the artist could and should instill his work with spiritual values. Specifically, Kandinsky argues that the abstract elements of music could be infused into nonfigurative painting by allowing various abstract motifs to exist simultaneously in the same work of art. He was fascinated by the way music could elicit an emotional response without being tied to recognizable subject matter. Painting, Kandinsky believed, should aspire to be as abstract as music, with groups of colours in a picture relating to one another in a manner analogous to sequences of chords in music. As can be seen, for example, in *The Finite Wrestling with the Infinite*, 1925, Brooker adapted Kandinsky's principles in his own image making, in part because he believed they allowed him to gain entry into the fourth dimension, which he defined as possessing "instead of the usual space perspective that makes a painting three-dimensional, a new and puzzling illusion of space that is foreign to normal visual experience."<sup>4</sup>





LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *The Finite Wrestling with the Infinite*, 1925, oil on board, 61 x 43.2 cm, Gallery Gevik, Toronto. RIGHT: Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)*, 1912, oil on canvas, 120.3 x 140.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

### ABSTRACT TO REPRESENTATIONAL INFLUENCES

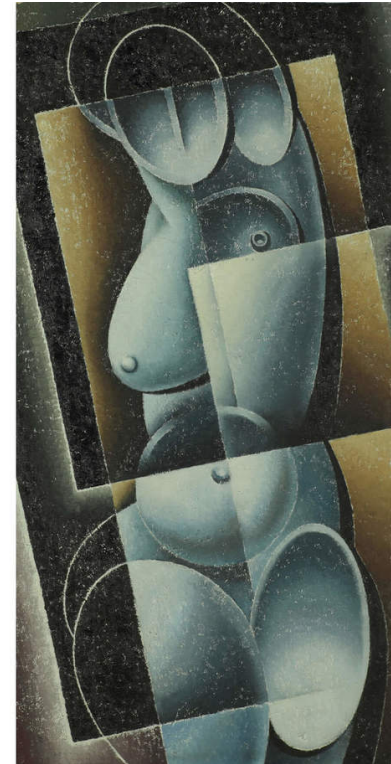
The Société Anonyme International Exhibition of Modern Art was held in Toronto in 1927, and at it Brooker would have seen many abstracts and other examples of advanced contemporary art. However, by 1927 Brooker was well on his way to creating paintings, such as *Sounds Assembling*, 1928, *Alleluiah*, 1929, *Resolution*, c.1929, and *Striving*, c.1930, that show no obvious indebtedness to international abstraction. In 1924 Brooker purchased a Cubist work, *Seated Nude*, 1919, by A.S. Baylinson (1882–1950);<sup>5</sup> yet Brooker's work from 1927 onwards displays no overt Cubist features—nothing that recalls the works of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Georges Braque (1882–1963), Juan Gris (1887–1927), or Fernand Léger (1881–1955). Nowhere do we find even a hint of Russian Constructivism; and most puzzling of all, there is no discernible trace of Wassily Kandinsky, though it could be argued that the sense of dynamic movement and incorporation of musical forms in Kandinsky's abstracts served as an inspiration for Brooker's 1927 to 1931 abstracts.

Ann Davis, who has thoroughly investigated all Brooker's possible influences, concludes that his abstracts must be explained in terms of the mystical traditions to which he adhered. If she is correct, Brooker sidestepped obvious visual influences to create his abstracts according to his spiritual credo. This would explain in part why these paintings do not look like Kandinsky's.



LEFT: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Blue and Green Music*, 1919/21, oil on canvas, 58.4 x 48.3 cm, Art Institute of Chicago. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Abstraction, Music*, 1927, oil on canvas, 43 x 61 cm, Museum London.

Brooker did not like to think of himself as having been influenced by other artists. In February 1934, while in New York City, he visited an exhibition of forty-four oils by Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), "some of which looked awfully like my early abstract things," he noted, "and I didn't like them, perhaps for that very reason."<sup>6</sup> It is likely that Brooker made a connection between *Abstraction, Music*, 1927, and an O'Keeffe canvas such as *Blue and Green Music*, 1919/21. Like Brooker, the American artist was intrigued by the relationship between music and painting. He clearly hated the possibility that he could be accused of imitation and, if we believe his statement above, we must conclude that he never consciously copied another artist, with the possible exception of Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Muskoka Lake*, c.1936, oil on canvas, 99.1 x 71.1 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Blue Nude*, c.1936, oil on canvas, 102 x 51 cm, Art Gallery of Windsor.

After meeting FitzGerald in 1929, Brooker undertook a major stylistic change, in accordance with his new friend's practice, and began to mingle naturalist and abstract elements in his work, as in *Manitoba Willows*, c.1929-31. The willows in this work are obviously trees, but they are rendered in a highly stylized way that suggests abstraction. Although he sometimes returned to pure abstraction and sometimes ventured into paintings that were essentially representational, as in *Muskoka Lake*, and *Blue Nude*, both c.1936, much of his work from 1930 until the end of his life was a playful mixture of these two modes. The conjoining of two styles became the mark of his work after 1930.

## ADVERTISING

As a writer of advertising copy, Brooker drew upon many of the philosophical concerns that dominated his work as an artist. Just as he used music as the inspiring force for his great non-objective paintings, he attempted to incorporate sound and motion in his advertising copy. As Adam Lauder has pointed out, Brooker's methodology—and his contribution to his calling—was to insist that "eliciting a corporeal response from the spectator" could enliven advertising material.<sup>7</sup>



Brooker's advertising copy was influenced by ideas from Jay Hambidge (1867–1924) in *The Elements of Dynamic Symmetry* (1920). Asserting the notion that human beings and plants develop according to the Greek concept of the golden ratio, Hambidge argues that the proper use of proportion, as seen in root rectangles, can be beneficial in all kinds of activity. According to Brooker, "The best way for me to get my thoughts [about advertising] into any sort of order was to think of the whole advertising process in terms of

*motion*. Ideas in advertising, I said to myself, should move."<sup>8</sup> Just as he tried to establish visual analogues to music in his paintings, the ideas of motion and proportion became a means of creating a successful piece of advertising, as is well demonstrated in an ad by Brooker featured in a 1929 issue of *The Globe*.

Brooker's theory of advertising was ahead of its time. He rebelled against the behaviourist approach in which simple-minded demographics were used as the basis for marketing products. In its place, he substituted what he called "humanics," which elicited the sensory responses of readers. He believed that a sense of synesthesia could be established in advertising copy to construct a bridge between the product and a prospective consumer. For him, as for Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) decades later, the medium became the message. In Brooker's time this was a very radical idea.

There are correspondences, as Adam Lauder has observed, between Brooker's abstract art and his commercial designs, as in a 1928 advertising for Reliance Engravers. In his "V (for Variety)" ad for the T. Eaton Company Limited, he created "dynamic space divisions into which smaller units can be placed." The repetition of the letter gives a pleasing, almost abstract feel to the resulting layout.<sup>9</sup> In one of his books on advertising he wrote, "the problems of Layout must usually be solved by another type of man—the artistic, rather than the merchandising type."<sup>10</sup>



LEFT: Bertram Brooker (middle) and colleagues in his office at J.J. Gibbons advertising agency in Toronto, January 1934, photograph by J.J. Gibbons. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, advertisement for *The Globe*, "The Conductor," published in Brooker, *Layout Technique in Advertising* (1929).



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Benday*, 1928, colour offset flyer for Reliance Engravers, each page: 27.5 x 19.7 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, advertisement for T. Eaton Company Limited, "V (for Variety)," published in Brooker, *Layout Technique in Advertising* (1929).



Ultimately, in his writings about advertising and his practice of it, Brooker advocated a kind of copywriting that demanded the would-be purchaser interact with the product being sold. In such a scheme, a product was never matter-of-factly presented with all its advantages listed. Rather, the idea was to lure a potential buyer into a relationship with the product.

## GRAPHIC ART

Brooker's experience as an illustrator of advertising copy influenced his career as a book illustrator. His advertising commissions gave him the opportunity to work in black and white and to discover the most effective way of telling a story within the constraints imposed by limited space.

His unpublished black-ink illustrations (c.1930) for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), by the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), provide excellent examples of his storytelling skill. The mariner, who is guilt-ridden because he has shot an albatross, wanders the earth seeking to expiate his sin. The poem inspired Brooker to create some daring landscapes, including an illustration for the following passage:

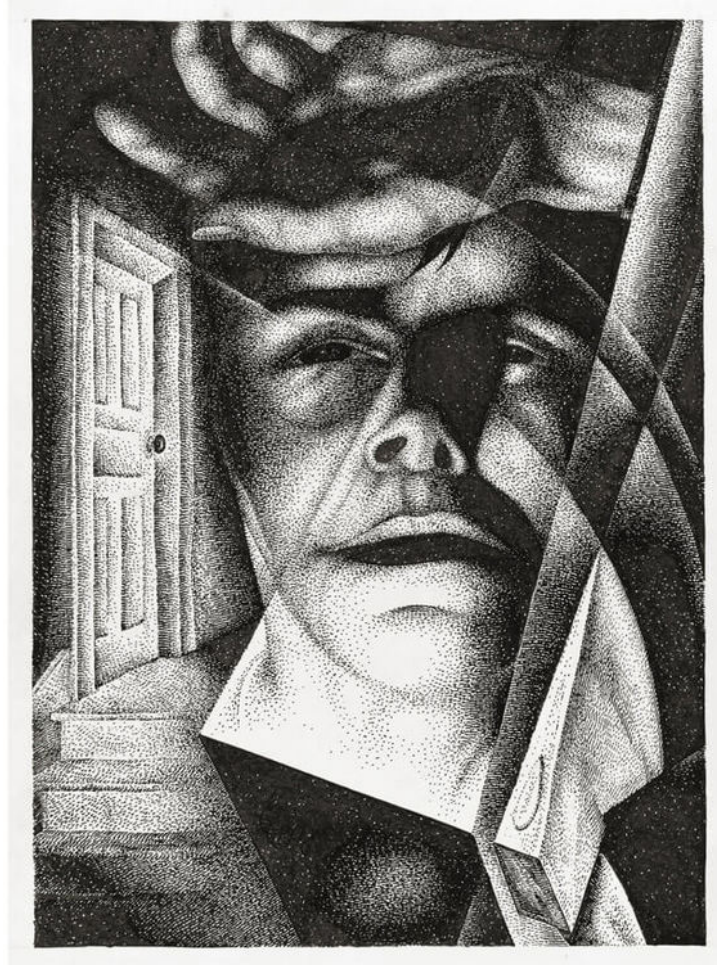
The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,  
That stands above the rock:  
The moonlight steeped in silentness  
The steady weathercock.  
And the bay was white with silent light . . .

Brooker uses black lines to depict the rock and the ship and then shows the convergence of the translucent moonlight and the dark rock. Upon the latter, he imposes two white triangular shapes. The oppositions between white and black in this drawing are masterful, very similar in their dexterity to the work of Rockwell Kent. Here Brooker harnesses his technical skills in black-ink drawing to create an image that in its controlled austerity resembles the backgrounds in his abstract canvases from 1927 to 1931.



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *The Ancient Mariner*, c.1930, ink on paper, 24.1 x 18.4 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Interiors Within Interiors (Whitman Series)*, 1931, pen and ink on paper, 36.7 x 25.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

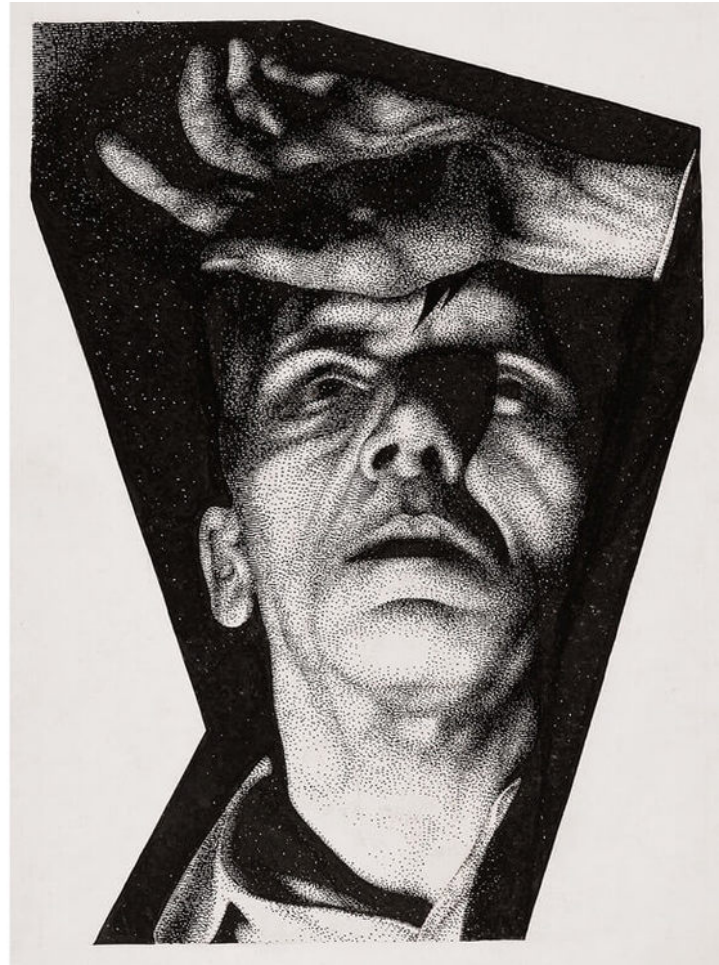




LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Les Misérables* #2 (*Wagon Wheel*), 1936, pen and ink on paper, 27.9 x 20.3 cm, private collection.  
RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Realization* (*Crime and Punishment* Series), 1930–34, pen and ink on paper, 38.1 x 27.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

In addition to those for “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and the published book *Elijah*, with illustrative drawings (1929), Brooker drawings exist for editions of poetry by Walt Whitman, the Book of Job, William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603), Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* (1862), and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Of these, the sixteen pen-and-ink drawings for *Crime and Punishment* are a particularly dazzling display of his talents as a draftsman.





LEFT: Bertram Brooker, *Face and Breasts* (*Crime and Punishment Series*), 1930-34, ink on paper, 27.9 x 20.3 cm, University Club of Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, book jacket design for *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1937, pen, brush, and black ink over graphite on illustration board, 38.2 x 27.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The Dostoevsky drawings seem to be heavily influenced by the conventions of silent cinema, where close-ups were a key element in storytelling. In one of the illustrations, *Face and Breasts*, 1930-34, women's torsos are superimposed on a likeness of cinema icon Greta Garbo. To the left of Garbo's face, her eye stares out at the viewer. By using an image from popular culture to illustrate a nineteenth-century classic, Brooker was reminding viewers that the truths of the human condition revealed by *Crime and Punishment* were still relevant.

Brooker told Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald that the Dostoevsky drawings were unlike anything he had previously attempted: "more realistic in one way, and yet quite abstract in another. They are more contrasty than ever, with terrific black areas, and very large faces, mostly in deep shadow." The artist wanted to emphasize "the mood or emotion of the main characters during the various crises through which they pass."<sup>11</sup>



## ART AND LITERATURE

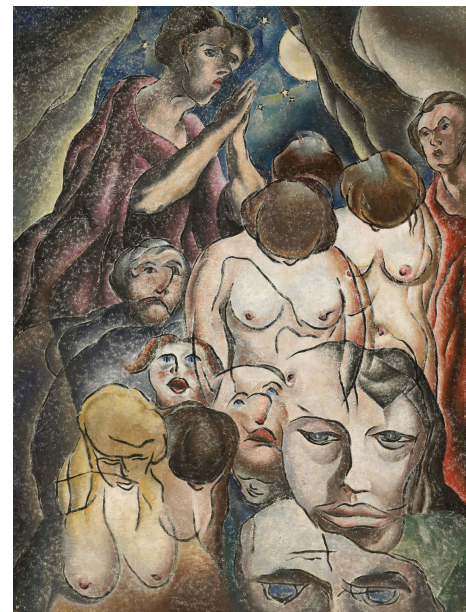
Brooker was a talented writer as well as being an accomplished artist. In each area, he exercised different realms of his imagination to articulate his theory of Ultimatism. Regarding writing, he states,

In a word, we may say that literature on the grand scale is never contemporary. It gathers its energies from the heroic exemplars of a past time and leaps forward. . . . Its essential grandeur is in this tremendous arc from past to future which swings over the dwarfed concerns of the "present" of each generation that catches up to it.<sup>12</sup>

In his novels and short stories Brooker expressed "this tremendous arc" with highly symbolic narratives in which his characters dramatize conflicts between the material and the spiritual worlds. In his short stories, he talks openly about the disparity between society's "haves" and "have-nots." In his art—except in *The Recluse*, 1939—the depiction of the plight of the underclass is largely absent.

The plot of Brooker's 1936 novel, *Think of the Earth*, places the outsider Tavistock in opposition to the inhabitants of Poplar Plains (based on Portage la Prairie). In contrast to the down-to-earth residents of the town, the protagonist is an intellectual and mystic. As the novel unfolds, Tavistock learns that his mystical inclinations have to be tempered by day-to-day reality and thus grounded. He has to "think of the earth." In this narrative, Brooker critiques the values of the town and of his protagonist. He questions both sides of the equation, and he does not reconcile these two points of view. For Brooker, writing offered a way of discussing the conflict between materialism and spiritualism in a much more nuanced way than was possible in art.

Obviously less ambitious than *Think of the Earth*, the short stories, as Gregory Betts argues, highlight "the social and economic implications of the ideological shifts in the world during [Brooker's] lifetime...The movement in his own life, from labouring villager to urban artist, exemplifies the dramatic social transition from pre-modern settlement to the modern urban phase of Canadian history that is documented in these texts."<sup>13</sup>



Bertram Brooker, *The Insulted and Injured*, 1934-35, oil on canvas, 122 x 91.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



# BERTRAM BROOKER

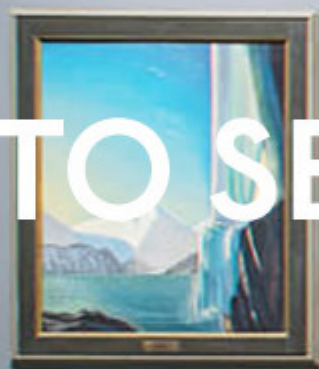
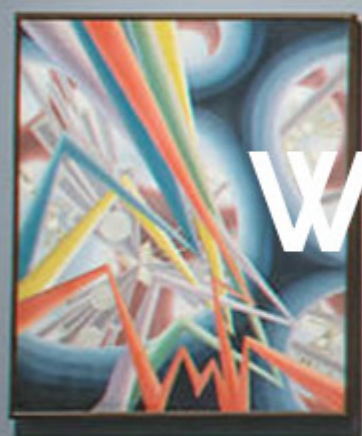
Life & Work by James King

Brooker's prose fiction is about the possibility of the individual achieving spiritual transcendence, but he often shows how difficult it is to reach that state. In contrast, in his drawings and paintings, he often provides glimpses of that hidden, mystical world, as can be seen in *Untitled*, n.d., and *White Movement*, 1936.



Bertram Brooker, *Untitled*, n.d., oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, private collection.





# WHERE TO SEE

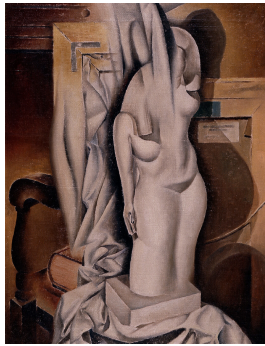
The works of Bertram Brooker are held in public and private collections internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view. This list contains only the works held in public collections discussed and illustrated in this book; many other works by Brooker may be found in public collections across Canada.



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## ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

2 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
780-425-5379  
youraga.ca



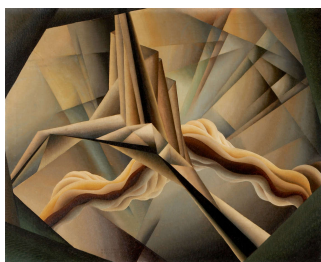
**Bertram Brooker, *Egyptian Woman*, 1940**

Oil on canvas  
61.4 x 46.2 cm

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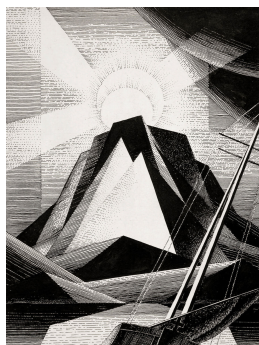
## ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

123 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-527-6610  
artgalleryofhamilton.com



**Bertram Brooker, *Resolution*, c.1929**

Oil on canvas  
60 x 75 cm



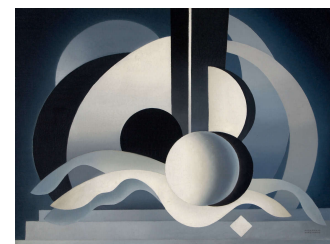
**Bertram Brooker, *The Ancient Mariner*, c.1930**

Pen and ink on paper  
24.1 x 18.4 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Seated Figure*, 1935**

Oil on canvas  
101.6 x 101.6 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Symphonic Forms*, 1947**

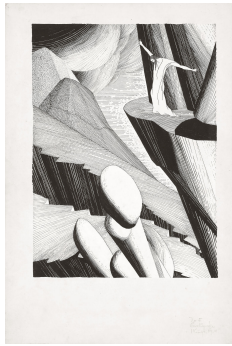
Oil on canvas mounted  
on Masonite  
68.7 x 91.2 cm



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**ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO**

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648  
ago.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *The Earthquake (Elijah Series)*, 1926**

Pen and ink on  
illustration board  
38 x 25.3 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *The Rain (Elijah Series)*, 1927**

Pen and ink on  
illustration board  
38 x 25.3 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *'Chorale' (Bach)*, c.1927**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 43.7 cm



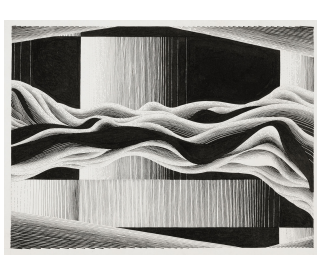
**Bertram Brooker, *Green Movement*, c.1927**

Oil on paperboard  
58.8 x 43.2 cm



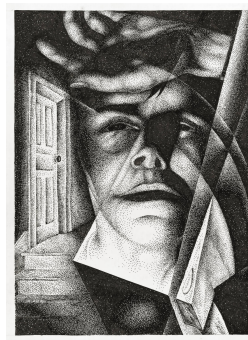
**Bertram Brooker, *The Three Powers*, 1929**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 76.3 cm



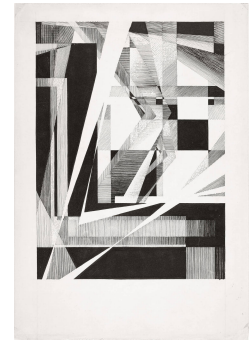
**Bertram Brooker, *Fugue*, c.1930**

Pen and ink on wove  
paper  
28.8 x 33.1 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Realization (Crime and Punishment Series)*, 1930-34**

Pen and ink on paper  
38.1 x 27.6 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Interiors Within Interiors (Whitman Series)*, 1931**

Pen and ink on paper  
36.7 x 25.4 cm



# BERTRAM BROOKER

Life & Work by James King



**Bertram Brooker, *Phyllis (Piano! Piano!)*, 1934**

Oil on canvas  
101.9 x 76.5 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Still Life with Lemons*, c.1936**

Oil on canvas  
27.8 x 35.9 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Progression*, 1948**

Oil on canvas  
66.2 x 99.7 cm

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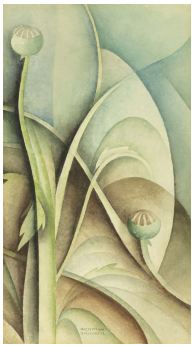
## ART GALLERY OF WINDSOR

401 Riverside Drive West  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
519-977-0013  
agw.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *Blue Nude*, c.1936**

Oil on canvas  
102.0 x 51.0 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Ovalescence*, c.1954**

Watercolour on paper  
39 x 21 cm

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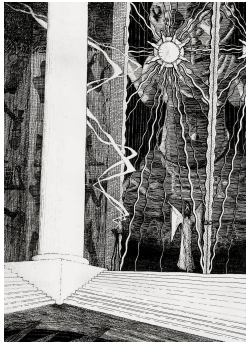




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## BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell Street  
Bloomsbury, London, United Kingdom  
+44 20 7323 8000  
britishmuseum.org



**Bertram Brooker, *Ahab  
Worshipped Idols (Elijah Series)*,  
1929**

Pen and ink on paper  
38 x 25.4 cm

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## CONFEDERATION CENTRE ART GALLERY

145 Richmond Street  
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada  
902-628-6142  
confederationcentre.com



**Bertram Brooker, *Cabbage and  
Pepper*, c.1937**

Oil on canvas  
40.6 x 50.8 cm

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## MACLAREN ART CENTRE

37 Mulcaster Street  
Barrie, Ontario, Canada  
705-721-9696  
maclarenart.com



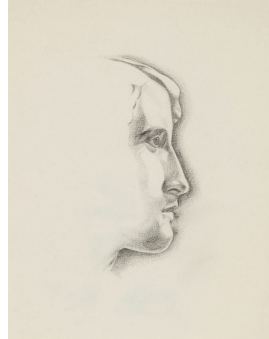
**Bertram Brooker, *Fed by the Ravens (Elijah Series)*, 1923**

Pen and ink on paper  
38 x 25.4 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Ahab's Death (Elijah Series)*, 1929**

Pen and ink on paper  
38 x 25.4 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Artist's Wife #1*, 1934**

Pencil on paper  
35.6 x 25.4 cm

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## MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

10365 Islington Avenue  
Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada  
905-893-1121  
mcmichael.com



**Bertram Brooker, *Quebec Impression*, 1942**

Oil on canvas  
76.6 x 61.2 cm





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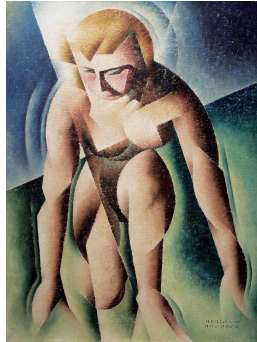
## MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-285-2000  
[mbam.qc.ca/en](http://mbam.qc.ca/en)



**Bertram Brooker, *The Recluse*, 1939**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 45.7 cm



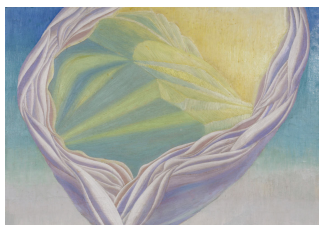
**Bertram Brooker, *Kneeling Figure*, 1940**

Oil on canvas  
60.9 x 45.7 cm

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## MUSEUM LONDON

421 Ridout Street North  
London, Ontario, Canada  
519-661-0333  
[museumlondon.ca](http://museumlondon.ca)



**Bertram Brooker, *Abstraction, Music*, 1927**

Oil on canvas  
43 x 61 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Three Figures*, 1940**

Oil on canvas  
96 x 53.3 cm

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
gallery.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *The Dawn of Man*, 1927**  
Oil on canvas  
113 x 81.3 cm

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**Bertram Brooker, *Alleluiah*, 1929**  
Oil on canvas  
122.2 x 121.9 cm

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**Bertram Brooker, *Evolution*, 1929**  
Oil on canvas  
76.4 x 61.5 cm

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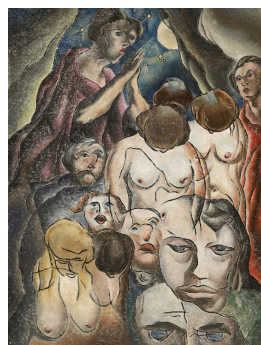
**Bertram Brooker, *Ascending Forms*, c.1929**  
Oil on canvas  
76.2 x 61.6 cm

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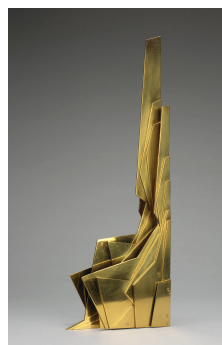
**Bertram Brooker, *The St. Lawrence*, 1931**  
Oil on canvas  
76.9 x 101.9 cm

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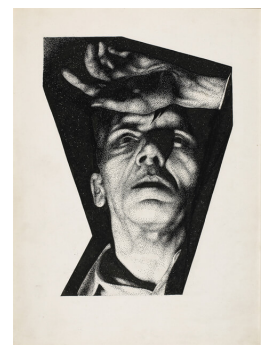
**Bertram Brooker, *The Insulted and Injured*, 1934-35**  
Oil on canvas  
122 x 91.1 cm

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**Bertram Brooker, *Triptych*, c.1935**  
Bronze  
68.5 x 11.5 x 23.5 cm

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**Bertram Brooker, book jacket design for *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1937**  
Pen, brush, and black ink over graphite on illustration board  
38.2 x 27.8 cm

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# BERTRAM BROOKER

Life & Work by James King



**Bertram Brooker, *Torso*, 1937**

Oil on canvas  
61.4 x 45.4 cm



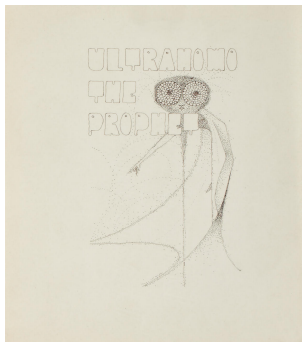
**Bertram Brooker, *The Cloud*,  
c.1942**

Oil on canvas  
61.3 x 76.2 cm

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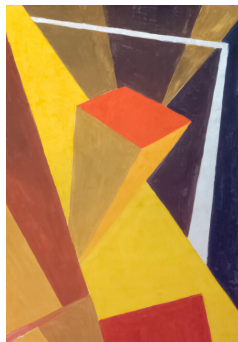
## THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

72 Queen Street  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
905-576-3000  
rmg.on.ca



**Bertram Brooker,  
*Ultrahomo*, c.1912-13**

Pencil drawing  
20 x 17.8 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Noise  
of a Fish*, c.1922-24**

Tempera and graphite  
on paper  
21.3 x 16.5 cm



**Bertram Brooker,  
*Oozles*, c.1922-24**

Tempera on paper  
22.9 x 17.7 cm



**Bertram Brooker,  
*Symphonic Movement  
No. 1*, 1931**

Pen and ink on paper  
38.1 x 25.5 cm



## TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY

841 1st Avenue West  
Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada  
519-376-1932  
owensound.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *Endless Dawn*,  
1927**

Oil over graphite on pressboard  
43 x 61 cm

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## UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE ART GALLERY

4401 University Drive  
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada  
403-329-2666  
uleth.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *Art is Long*,  
1934**

Oil on canvas  
74.9 x 61 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *Muskoka Lake*,  
c.1936**

Oil on canvas  
99.1 x 71.1 cm





VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

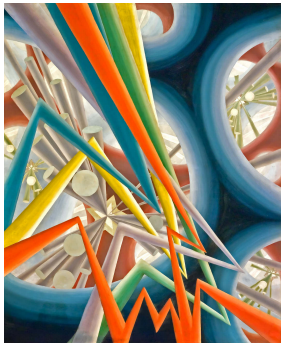
750 Hornby Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-662-4719  
vanartgallery.bc.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *The Way*, 1927**  
Oil on canvas  
60.8 x 76.5 cm

WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
204-786-6641  
wag.ca



**Bertram Brooker, *Sounds Assembling*, 1928**  
Oil on canvas  
112.3 x 91.7 cm



**Bertram Brooker, *The Fire (Elijah Series)*, 1929**  
Pen and ink on paper  
38.2 x 25.5 cm



## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. Bertram Brooker, "The World and I—A Voyage of Self-Exploration," November 1953, box 6, folder 2, Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (henceforth referred to as BBF, UMASC).
2. Joyce Zemans, "First Fruits: The Paintings," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Jennifer Oille Sinclair, vol. 7 (Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989), 20.
3. Bertram Brooker, *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays of Bertram Brooker*, ed. Gregory Betts (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), xv.
4. Victor Brooker to Dennis Reid, November 11, 1972, BBF, UMASC.
5. However, there is a family photograph of Brooker, most likely taken during his stay in England, standing in front of what looks like a crude attempt at a modernist sculpture.
6. At about this time, he also drew cartoons and sketches for local newspapers.
7. Thomas R. Lee, "Bertram Brooker, 1888-1955," *Canadian Art* 13 (Spring 1956): 286.
8. *The Adventure of the Italian Model* (1912), *The Adventure of a Thumb Print* (1912), and *The Mystery of the Seven Jewels* (1913) were directed by Van Dyke Brooke. Lambert Chace was played by Maurice Costello. See *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 679; and Adam Lauder, "It's Alive!: Bertram Brooker and Vitalism," in *The Logic of Nature, the Romance of Space: Elements of Canadian Modernist Painting*, ed. Cassandra Getty (Windsor, ON; Oshawa, ON: Art Gallery of Windsor; The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2010), 104n93.
9. Personal file, weddings and obituaries, box 1, folder 15, BBF, UMASC. For a description of Brooker's theatrical activities as an actor and as a playwright, see Anton Wagner, "God Crucified Upside Down: The Plays," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Jennifer Oille Sinclair, vol. 7 (Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989), 39.
10. For example, she dated and provided titles for her husband's first set of abstracts.
11. One description of the event notes: "Winnipeg's police force voted to join the Winnipeg General Strike, but stayed on the job when the Strike leaders asked them to do so. The City gave the police 24 hours to sign a contract that prohibited union membership. When they refused, they were dismissed, and the anti-strike Committee of 1,000 recruited 2,000 untrained 'Special Constables' to patrol the streets, wearing special badges and armbands and carrying Billy clubs." See <https://humanrights.ca/blog/material-culture-winnipeg-general-strike>.
12. John Brooker was given this information by his father, Victor.





13. Zemans, "First Fruits," 20.

14. From Bertram Brooker, "A Candle in the Sunshine," an unpublished novel, box 6, folder 5, BBF, UMASC. Gregory Betts has uncovered evidence that Brooker's profound moment of illumination might have occurred in 1921 as a result of reading Richard Maurice Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (New York: Dutton, 1901). See Gregory Betts, *Avant-Garde Canadian Literature: The Early Manifestations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 118.

15. Brooker derived the word "unitude" from the work of English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).

16. The term "cosmic consciousness" came into use in 1901 when the psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke (1837–1902), who was based in London, Ontario, published *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901). According to Bucke, there were three states of consciousness: simple—possessed by humans and animals; self—as could be seen in humanity's intellectual capabilities; and cosmic—a state realized by only a few. This latter state of being, in contradistinction to Nietzsche's Superman doctrine but in accordance with Brooker's Ultimatism (see Significance & Critical Issues), is realized only through mystical illumination.

17. Fred Varley to Ethel Varley, May 14, 1914. As quoted in Dennis Reid, *The Group of Seven* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1970), 66.

18. Frederick Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), 187.

19. By 1926, Harris was moving in the direction of abstraction, but his art was not advanced at that time in its movement toward total abstraction. Only in about 1936 was he able to make that transition and, at that point, Brooker may have influenced him. For example, Harris's *Composition (Abstraction No. 99)*, c.1938, shows strong similarities to Brooker's *Evolution*, 1929, in its use of the strong vertical descent from the left side of the canvas. Harris's incorporation of the two anthropomorphic shapes is quite similar to Brooker's abstractions from 1928 to 1930.

20. "New Young Toronto Artist Paints Subjective Group," *Toronto Star*, February 5, 1927.

21. BBF, UMASC.

22. J.E.H. MacDonald to Bertram Brooker, January 28, 1927. Cited in Joyce Zemans, "The Art and Weltanschauung of Bertram Brooker," *artscanada* 20 (February/March 1973).

23. Letter dated January 24, 1927, box 1, folder 16 (diary excerpts, 1927), BBF, UMASC.



24. Bertram Brooker to Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, March 26, 1931, BBF, UMASC.
25. Victoria Evans, "Bertram Brooker's Theory of Art as Evinced in His 'The Seven Arts Columns' and Early Abstracts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 9, no. 1 (1986): 28-44.
26. Brooker, *The Wrong World*, ed. Betts, 205.
27. The artistic interaction between the two worked both ways. In the 1940s and 1950s, obviously influenced by Brooker, FitzGerald painted a number of abstracts, such as *Abstract*, 1952, and *Abstract, Green and Gold*, 1954.
28. Brooker to FitzGerald, November 27, 1931, box 1, folder 11, BBF, UMASC.
29. See Cassandra Getty, "Kathleen Munn and Lowrie Warrender: The Logic of Nature, the Romance of Space," in Cassandra Getty et al., *The Logic of Nature, the Romance of Space: Elements of Canadian Modernist Painting* (Windsor and Oshawa: Art Gallery of Windsor and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2010), 14-53.
30. Bertram Brooker, "When We Awake: A General Introduction," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, ed. Bertram Booker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), 3-17.
31. According to Gregory Betts, the protagonist of *Think of the Earth* "has many loose resemblances to [Lawren] Harris. The character is a mystic who looks to the mountains, the Canadian mountains, as the icon of northern spiritual intensity and purity, as a metaphor for the spiritual impulses in his mind." From Gregory Betts, *Lawren Harris in the Ward: His Urban Poetry and Paintings* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 2007), 86.
32. In *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays of Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), Gregory Betts published one of Brooker's novels, *The Wrong World*, for the first time. There are also seven short stories in this volume.

### KEY WORKS: ULTRAHOMO

1. In an unpublished play ("Cassandra: A Tragedy in Four Acts," box 2, folder 6, Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections), Brooker's protagonist is to write a play called "The Next Beyond" in which Ultrahomo is characterized as an "unsexed and fleshless soul."
2. Adam Lauder, "Bertram Brooker," June 7, 2012, [https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B\\_Brooker\\_08062012.pdf?sequence=3](https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B_Brooker_08062012.pdf?sequence=3).
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Tudor, 1974).





### KEY WORKS: OOZLES

1. Roald Nasgaard provides this description: it looks "something like a cel [celluloid] from an animated science-fiction movie, with a green planet-like orb and some geometric skyscraper-like projectiles hurling out at the viewer." Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada* (Vancouver and Halifax: Douglas & McIntyre and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007), 22.
2. Joyce Zemans, "First Fruits: The Paintings," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Jennifer Oille Sinclair, vol. 7 (Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989), 26.
3. Bertram Brooker, "The Poetry of E. E. Cummings," *The Canadian Forum* 10, no. 118 (July 1930): 370-71. In recent years, Rudolf Rucker and Chris McMullen have written books on the fourth dimension.
4. Ann Davis, *The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 154-55.

### KEY WORKS: SOUNDS ASSEMBLING

1. Bertram Brooker, "Painting Verbs," in *Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker*, ed. Birk Sproxtton (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1980), 35.

### KEY WORKS: ALLELUIAH

1. Glenn Williams, "Translating Music into Visual Form: The Influence of Music in the Work of Bertram Brooker," *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 27, nos. 1/2 (2000): 119.
2. Adam Lauder, "Bertram Brooker," (June 7, 2012), 9:  
[https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B\\_Brooker\\_08062012.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B_Brooker_08062012.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)

### KEY WORKS: ELIJAH

1. Additional illustrations exist that were inspired by the story of Elijah but were not featured in the book.

### KEY WORKS: MANITOBA WILLOWS

1. Joyce Zemans, "First Fruits: The Paintings," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Jennifer Oille Sinclair, vol. 7 (Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989), 31.

### KEY WORKS: STRIVING

1. Carol Luff states, "In the centre of Brooker's painting, *Striving*, is a figure which closely resembles Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, bronze sculpture, 1913." However, the similarity is not sufficiently close to claim that Boccioni influenced Brooker. Carol Luff, "Progress Passing Through the Spirit: The Modernist Vision of Bertram Brooker and Lionel LeMoine Fitzgerald as Redemptive Art," master's thesis (Carleton University, 1991), 58.
2. Dennis Reid, *Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa: The National Gallery, 1979), 10.
3. Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada* (Vancouver and Halifax: Douglas & McIntyre and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007), 23.



### KEY WORKS: THE ST. LAWRENCE

1. Bertram Brooker, "Art and Society: A General Introduction," in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, ed. Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936), xxviii.
2. Bertram Brooker, in *Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker*, ed. Birk Sproxton (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1980), 52.
3. Dennis Reid, *Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa: The National Gallery, 1979), 16.
4. Bertram Brooker to Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, January 10, 1932, box 1, folder 11, Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections. "Lawren didn't like the trees in it, but was willing to hang it."

### KEY WORKS: THE RECLUSE

1. Anna Hudson, "Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters (1933-1950)," doctoral thesis (University of Toronto, 1997), 171.
2. Bertram Brooker, *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, ed. Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936), xxii.

### KEY WORKS: SWING OF TIME

1. Adam Lauder has connected Bergson's theory of duration with Brooker's concept of time, especially in *Swing of Time*: see "Bertram Brooker," (June 7, 2012), 12, 18: [https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B\\_Brooker\\_08062012.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/15499/Lauder-B_Brooker_08062012.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)

### SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Christian beliefs remained a part of Brooker's existence. He had married in the Anglican church and sometimes attended its services. In an unpublished manuscript, "Plan of Life," there is a diary entry dated February 29, 1924, that makes it clear that he believed in the Trinity; on March 2, 1924, he took communion at the Anglican Church of the Trinity in Toronto; on August 24, 1925, he made this note about a character in a short story: "Today, too, I felt the quietness and simplicity of Jesus, and knew that Jevon's must be like that, rather than as I had him before." (Box 1, folder 16, Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, henceforth referred to as BBF, UMASC.) Brooker's Christian beliefs would obviously have precluded him from becoming a Theosophist. For him, Christianity and cosmic consciousness did not exclude each other.
2. Sherill Grace, "'The Living Soul of Man': Bertram Brooker and Expressionist Theatre," *Theatre History in Canada* (Spring 1985): 2.
3. Gordon Craig emphasized the theatrical experience as one in which colour and light are intertwined; his stage sets sometimes used abstract elements to emphasize symbolic meaning. In *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Olive Schreiner's anti-colonial and proto-feminist agenda was blazingly rendered.
4. These claims can be found in "The Measure of Man," a sixteen-page manuscript written by Brooker in 1912, BBF, UMASC. Gordon Craig and Olive Schreiner were also devoted to reconciling science with religion.





5. Victoria Evans, "Bertram Brooker's Theory of Art as Evincing in His 'The Seven Arts Columns' and Early Abstracts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 9, no. 1 (1986): 35.
6. Adam Lauder, "It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism," in Cassandra Getty et al., *The Logic of Nature, the Romance of Space: Elements of Canadian Modernist Painting* (Windsor and Oshawa: Art Gallery of Windsor and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2010), 95.
7. Joyce Zemans, "First Fruits: The Paintings," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Jennifer Oille Sinclair, vol. 7 (Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989), 21.
8. David Arnason, "Reluctant Modernist," in *Provincial Essays*, 76.
9. Box 1, folder 16, BBF, UMASC.
10. For example, he was a member of the 1936 CGP executive that selected works for the group's second exhibition held that year in Toronto.
11. Bertram Brooker, "Seven Arts," December 29, 1928.
12. Anna Hudson, "Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters (1933-1950)," doctoral thesis (University of Toronto, 1997), 25.
13. Hudson, "Art and Social Progress," 26.
14. Hudson, "Art and Social Progress," 95.
15. Hudson, "Art and Social Progress," 3.
16. Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," *Fortnightly Review* (1877).
17. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover, 1974), 40.
18. Brooker, "Seven Arts," February 23, 1929.
19. Zemans, "First Fruits," 29.
20. Bertram Brooker, "The Poetry of E.E. Cummings," *The Canadian Forum* 10, no. 118 (July 1930): 370-71. In recent years, Rudolf Rucker and Chris McMullen have written books on the fourth dimension.
21. Zemans, "First Fruits," 28.
22. Brooker, "The Poetry of E.E. Cummings," 370-71.
23. The architect and stage designer Claude Fayette Bragdon (1866-1946), who influenced a number of artists, including Kathleen Munn, may have been one of the sources for Brooker's information on this topic.



24. Bergson argued that the instant one attempts to measure a moment it is gone because time is mobile and incomplete. For him, time was ineffable and could only be shown indirectly through images that, of necessity, could never reveal a complete truth. According to this thesis, time could only be grasped through intuition and, thus, the imagination.
25. Bertram Brooker, "Nudes and Prudes," in *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays*, ed. Gregory Betts (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), 183.
26. Brooker, "Nudes and Prudes," 187.
27. Michèle Grandbois, "The Challenge of the Nude," in Michèle Grandbois, Anna Hudson, and Esther Trépanier, *The Nude in Modern Canadian Art 1920–1950* (Montreal: Somogy and Musée national des beaux-arts, 2009), 21.
28. Donald Buchanan, "Naked Ladies," *Canadian Forum* 15, no. 175 (April 1935): 273.
29. Anna Hudson, "Disarming Conventions of Nudity in Canadian Art," in Grandbois, Hudson, and Trépanier, *The Nude in Modern Canadian Art*, 103.
30. Herman Voaden also produced other plays by Brooker. See Anton Wagner, "God Crucified Upside Down: The Plays," in *Provincial Essays*, ed. Sinclair, vol. 7, 38–51.
31. Lawrence Mason, "The Play Workshop," *Globe*, March 30, 1935.

### STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. This exhibition travelled to Chicago and Boston, but there is no evidence that Brooker went to either city to see it.
2. The scholarship on Nietzsche is extensive. Among the recent scholarship two books are particularly helpful: Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Matthew Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
3. Lawren Harris, "Revelation of Art in Canada," *The Canadian Theosophist* 6, no. 5 (July 1926): 86.
4. Bertram Brooker, "The Poetry of E.E. Cummings," *The Canadian Forum* 10, no. 118 (July 1930): 370–71. In recent years, Rudolf Rucker and Chris McMullen have written books on the fourth dimension.
5. A.S. Baylinson to Bertram Brooker, January 25, 1929, Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (henceforth referred to as BBF, UMASC).
6. Bertram Brooker to Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, March 15, 1934, box 1, folder 11, BBF, UMASC.





7. Adam Lauder, "It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism," in Cassandra Getty et al., *The Logic of Nature, the Romance of Space: Elements of Canadian Modernist Painting* (Windsor and Oshawa: Art Gallery of Windsor and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2010), 82.
8. Richard Surrey [Bertram Brooker], *Copy Technique in Advertising, Including a System of Copy Synthesis: A Classification of Copy Sources, and a Section on Copy Construction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1930), 7.
9. Surrey [Brooker], *Copy Technique*, 5.
10. Richard Surrey [Bertram Brooker], *Layout Technique in Advertising* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1929), 1.
11. Brooker to FitzGerald, n.d., but April or May 1931, box 1, folder 11, BBF, UMASC.
12. Bertram Brooker, *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays by Bertram Brooker*, ed. Gregory Betts (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), xxxii.
13. Brooker, *The Wrong Word*, ed. Betts, xxix.



## GLOSSARY

### **Abell, Walter (American, 1897–1956)**

An art historian and critic who was, from 1928 to 1943, the first professor of Fine Arts at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Abell was a proponent of cultural democracy and the founder of the Maritime Art Association, which supported art programming and exhibitions throughout the region. He was a founding executive of the Federation of Canadian Artists, and his work helped establish a critical discourse around Canadian art.

### **abstract art**

Visual art that uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely. Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art.

### **af Klint, Hilma (Swedish, 1862–1944)**

An abstract painter, spiritualist, and occultist, af Klint was the leader of The Five (*De Fem*), a group of Swedish female artists who believed their work to be dictated by spirits of a different realm. Her purely abstract paintings predate those by Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian. Af Klint stipulated that her work not be displayed until twenty years after her death; it was first shown publicly in Los Angeles in 1986.

### **Armory Show**

Presented in New York, Chicago, and Boston in 1913, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, or the Armory Show, marked a seminal moment in the American modern art movement. Introducing progressive American artists and the European avant-garde for the first time to a wide U.S. audience, the exhibition featured the works of hundreds of artists, many of which were considered shocking at the time.

### **Art Deco**

A decorative style of the early twentieth century, first exhibited in Paris in 1925 at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. The style had several influences, including Egyptian and Asian motifs, modernist fine art movements, and its design predecessor, Art Nouveau.

### **Art Nouveau**

Thriving in Europe and the United States from the late nineteenth century until the First World War, this decorative style, characterized by flowing organic shapes and serpentine lines, had an impact on architecture and on graphic and decorative arts in particular, though its influence is also reflected in painting and sculpture.

### **Arts and Letters Club of Toronto**

A Toronto-based club established in 1908 to promote culture, it provided a space in which artists, architects, writers, musicians, and art patrons could practice and perform their art as well as engage in discussion in a convivial atmosphere. Founding members of the Group of Seven frequently met there to relax, exhibit, and promote their work. The club, which still operates today, was





originally male-only; however, on February 19, 1985, female members began to be admitted.

### **Ashcan School**

A group of New York–based American painters—principally George Bellows, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Edward Hopper, George Luks, Everett Shinn, and John French Sloan—active from around 1908 to the First World War, interested in depicting scenes of daily urban life, including slum life and marginalized populations.

### **Balla, Giacomo (Italian, 1871–1958)**

Primarily a painter and sculptor, Balla was a prominent member of the Italian Futurist movement, signing its second manifesto, on painting, in 1910 and exhibiting with the group in 1913. Interested in the nature of speed and movement and influenced by the motion photography of Étienne-Jules Marey, Balla's paintings depicted what he called "dynamic sequences": depictions of moving bodies that pushed their subjects into abstraction to capture motion.

### **Baylinson, A.S. (American, 1882–1950)**

Born in Russia and having emigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century, Baylinson was a Cubist painter in New York City in the 1910s and 1920s. His paintings became more representational after a studio fire destroyed most of his earlier work in 1931. From 1918 to 1934 he served as secretary of the Society of Independent Artists in New York, during which time he caused a public controversy over his decision to show the painting *Father, Forgive Them for They Know Not What They Do*, by Swiss artist Jean-François Kaufman, at a Society exhibition.

### **Beardsley, Aubrey (British, 1872–1898)**

A writer, draftsman, and illustrator, and a major figure in the late nineteenth-century movements of Art Nouveau and Symbolism. Beardsley produced a remarkable body of work in his short life; among his most famous drawings are those he made for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1894).

### **Bergson, Henri (French, 1859–1941)**

A French philosopher interested in the differences between mechanical time and lived time (*duré*; in English, "duration") and their ramifications for change, evolution, and consciousness. He is also well known for his theorization of multiplicity. An influential figure for late twentieth-century philosophers including Gilles Deleuze, Bergson won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927.

### **Blake, William (British, 1757–1827)**

A poet, visual artist, and mystical philosopher, considered a seminal figure of the Romantic period. Deeply religious and unconventional, Blake was fervently anti-rationalist and anti-materialist. Among his small circle of admirers were the Ancients (a group of English artists) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

### **Blavatsky, Helena (Russian, 1831–1891)**

A spiritualist and the prolific author of books on ancient wisdom traditions, the occult, and esoteric religions, Madame Blavatsky was a co-founder of the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875.



### **Bomberg, David (British, 1880–1957)**

Born in London's East End and educated at the Slade School of Fine Art, Bomberg was a member of the early-twentieth-century British avant-garde and associated with the Vorticists and with the group of Anglo-Jewish writers and artists later known as the Whitechapel Boys. His angular, abstract paintings were included in the first Vorticist exhibition in London in 1915, though he had not signed the group's earlier manifesto. After the First World War he began painting in a more naturalistic style.

### **Brancusi, Constantin (Romanian, 1876–1957)**

An abstract sculptor, whose unique focus on expressing natural forms as simply as possible influenced later sculptors, including Amedeo Modigliani and Carl Andre. Active for most of his life in Paris, Brancusi became known in America following his inclusion in the Armory Show, the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art.

### **Braque, Georges (French, 1882–1963)**

A seminal figure in the history of modern art. Working alongside Picasso from 1908 to 1914, Braque developed the principles of major phases of Analytic and Synthetic Cubism and, along with the latter, the use of collage. After the First World War he pursued a personal style of Cubism admired for its compositional and colouristic subtleties.

### **Canadian Group of Painters**

Founded in 1933 after the disbanding of the Group of Seven by former members and their associates, the Canadian Group of Painters championed modernist painting styles against the entrenched traditionalism of the Royal Canadian Academy. It provided a platform for artists across Canada who were pursuing a variety of new concerns, from the formal experimentation of Bertram Brooker to the modern-figure subjects of Prudence Heward and Pegi Nicol MacLeod and the expressive landscapes of Emily Carr.

### **Carmichael, Franklin (Canadian, 1890–1945)**

An original member of the Group of Seven, Carmichael created landscapes in watercolour as well as in oil. He was a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters and the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour. Like so many of his colleagues, he earned his living primarily as a commercial artist and, in 1932, he became head of the Graphic Design and Commercial Art Department at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), Toronto.

### **Cézanne, Paul (French, 1839–1906)**

A painter of arguably unparalleled influence on the development of modern art, associated with the Post-Impressionist school and known for his technical experiments with colour and form and his interest in multiple-point perspective. In his maturity Cézanne had several preferred subjects, including his wife, still life, and Provençal landscapes.

### **Clark, Paraskeva (Russian/Canadian, 1898–1986)**

An outspoken painter who advocated for the social role of the artist and Canadian and Russian cultural ties, Clark arrived in Toronto via Paris in 1931. Her





subjects were still lifes, self-portraits, landscapes, and memories of her Russia home. Clark supported fundraising efforts for Spanish refugees during the Spanish Civil War and for the Canadian Aid to Russia Fund in 1942. (See *Paraskeva Clark: Life & Work* by Christine Boyanoski.)

### **Clavilux**

Invented by the artist Thomas Wilfred in 1919, the Clavilux was a kind of organ that allowed a performer to use a keyboard to project light through a system of lenses and coloured screens onto a dark background in order to “play” Wilfred’s light compositions (lumia). Originally designed for cinematic performances, later models were intended for home use and included a smaller, boxed screen to display the lumia.

### **Comfort, Charles (Canadian, 1900–1994)**

A major figure in twentieth-century Canadian art, who began his career as a commercial artist. He took up painting in his twenties, and became a member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour and the Canadian Group of Painters. Comfort served as director of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, from 1959 to 1965.

### **Constructivism**

Emerging in Russia in the early 1920s, Constructivism was an artistic trend that championed a materialist, non-emotional, utilitarian approach to art and linked art to design, industry, and social usefulness. The term continues to be used generally to describe abstract art that employs lines, planes, and other visual elements in composing abstract geometric images of a precise and impersonal nature.

### **Craig, Gordon (British, 1872–1966)**

An innovative theatre designer and theorist, Craig emphasized movement and lighting in his designs. He created stage sets that used movable parts and abstract forms, evoking the audience’s emotional response through atmosphere rather than representation and verisimilitude. Craig’s writing influenced the non-naturalistic movement in modern theatre.

### **Cubism**

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

### **Dada**

A multi-disciplinary movement that arose in Europe in response to the horrors of the First World War, whose adherents aimed to deconstruct and demolish traditional societal values and institutions. Artworks, often collages and readymades, typically scorned fine materials and craftsmanship. Chief Dadaists include Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, and Hans Arp.



### **Delaunay, Robert (French, 1885–1941)**

The first truly abstract painter in France. Delaunay's interest in colour theory—including how colours interact and relate to music and movement—is manifest in almost all of his work. Dubbed Orphism by Guillaume Apollinaire, his style influenced numerous artists and artistic movements, including German Expressionism, Futurism, and Synchronism.

### **Duchamp, Marcel (French/American, 1887–1968)**

One of the most significant artist-thinkers of the twentieth century, Duchamp influenced Conceptual, Pop, and Minimal art. Best known for the sensational painting *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, he is also recognized for his ready-made sculptures, among them the urinal *Fountain*, 1917, and his “desecrated” *Mona Lisa* print, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919.

### **Duchamp-Villon, Raymond (French, 1876–1918)**

A sculptor and the brother of artist Marcel Duchamp, he was an early and instrumental promoter of the Cubists as a jury member of the Salon d'Automne. Duchamp-Villon began creating Cubist sculptures in 1910, gradually moving toward the more energetic and mechanistic style visible in his last work, *Le cheval (Horse)*, 1914.

### **El Greco (Greek, c. 1541–1614)**

Painter, sculptor, and architect considered the first master of the Spanish School. Born Doménikos Theotokópoulos in Crete, El Greco settled in Toledo, Spain, in 1576, where he executed major commissions throughout his career, including the prized altarpieces *Espolio*, 1577–79, and *Burial of Count Orgaz*, 1586–88.

### **FitzGerald, Lionel LeMoine (Canadian, 1890–1956)**

A Winnipeg-born painter and printmaker, FitzGerald was a member of the Group of Seven from 1932 to 1933. He favoured depictions of prairie landscapes and houses, which he executed in pointillist, precisionist, and abstract styles. (See *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: Life & Work* by Michael-Parke Taylor.)

### **formalism**

The study of art by analyzing a work's form and style to determine its meaning and quality. It emphasizes colour, texture, composition, and line over narrative, concept, or social and political context. In the 1960s the American critic Clement Greenberg strongly championed formalism. By the end of the 1960s postmodernism and conceptual art began to challenge formalism as a system of critique.

### **Freud, Lucian (German/British, 1922–2011)**

A figurative painter equally influenced by Surrealism, New Objectivity, and Ingres's variety of French classicism, Freud nonetheless remained apart from any contemporary art movement. A grandson of Sigmund Freud, he produced an intensely personal body of work, with his models selected from his own family and immediate circle. Similarities can be drawn between his work and that of painter Francis Bacon.





### **Fry, Roger (British, 1866–1934)**

The art critic who coined the term “Post-Impressionism” to describe the work of the Parisian avant-garde painters of the early twentieth century, Fry was a British painter, writer, and member of the influential Bloomsbury group. Beginning his career specializing in the Old Masters, in 1906 he was appointed to the position of curator of European paintings at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. After his return to England in 1910, his work on developing the formalist theory of art criticism, as well as promoting Post-Impressionism, had a major influence on the artistic tastes of the Anglophone world.

### **Frye, Northrop (Canadian, 1912–1991)**

A literary critic and professor of English. Frye’s ideas about literature’s symbolic underpinnings influenced a generation of critics and writers include Harold Bloom and Margaret Atwood. His focus on myth and archetypes as the basis of a literary universe of the imagination was best articulated in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

### **Futurism**

Founded in 1909, this Italian movement in modern art and literature embraced elements of Cubism and Neo-Impressionism. The Futurist aesthetic idealized technological advances, war, dynamism, and the energy of modern life. Among the most renowned Futurist artists are Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo.

### **Gauguin, Paul (French, 1848–1903)**

A member—with Vincent van Gogh, Georges Seurat, and Paul Cézanne—of the group of painters now considered the Post-Impressionists, Gauguin is known for his use of colour and symbolism and for his daring compositions. The paintings he made in Tahiti, representing an idealized “primitive” culture, are among his most famous.

### **golden section**

A mathematical concept applied to proportion, in which a straight line or rectangle is divided into two unequal parts: the smaller portion relates to the larger portion by the same ratio that the larger portion relates to the whole.

### **Gris, Juan (Spanish, 1887–1927)**

A Cubist painter associated with Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque known for his clear, geometric style of Synthetic Cubism and for his still lifes. Part of the Paris art scene of the early twentieth century, his friends included artists Henri Matisse and Fernand Léger and the poet Guillaume Apollinaire. Gris is credited with helping to systemize and theorize the stylistic developments of Picasso and Braque.

### **Group of Seven**

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group’s first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

**Gurdjieff, George (Russian/Armenian, 1866–1949)**

The developer of The Fourth Way, a spiritual movement and system for self-development based in Eastern esoteric philosophy. Gurdjieff and his followers left Russia following the 1917 revolution, eventually establishing an institute near Paris in 1922. Prominent disciples included the writers P.L. Travers and Katherine Mansfield and the esoteric mathematician P.D. Ouspensky.

**Hambidge, Jay (Canadian/American, 1867–1924)**

A Canadian-born artist, mathematician, and student of classical art, Hambidge was a pupil of William Merritt Chase at the Art Students League of New York. He is best known for conceiving and promulgating the principles of “dynamic symmetry,” a design theory in which mathematical formulas are the foundation of classical architecture and various natural structures. Dynamic symmetry had a profound influence on both abstract and representational painters during the 1920s and 1930s.

**Harris, Lawren (Canadian, 1885–1970)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1920, Harris was widely considered its unofficial leader. Unlike other members of the Group, Harris moved away from painting representational landscapes, first to abstracted landscapes and then to pure abstraction. The Group of Seven broke up in 1933, and when the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1933, Harris was elected its first president.

**Hewton, Randolph (Canadian, 1888–1960)**

A founding member of the Beaver Hall Group and the Canadian Group of Painters, Hewton painted landscapes, figures, and portraits. He was one of William Brymner’s many students at the School of the Art Association of Montreal, and later studied at the Académie Julien in Paris. From 1921 to 1924 he was the director of the School of the AAM, where he encouraged his students to experiment with the bright, assertive colours and decorative compositions that he favoured in his own art.

**Holgate, Edwin (Canadian, 1892–1977)**

A painter, draftsman, and educator, best known for his portraits and for his woodcuts of figures set in landscapes. Holgate was a founding member of the Beaver Hall Group, a member of the Group of Seven, and a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters.

**Jackson, A.Y. (Canadian, 1882–1974)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven and an important voice in the formation of a distinctively Canadian artistic tradition. A Montreal native, Jackson studied painting in Paris before moving to Toronto in 1913; his northern landscapes are characterized by the bold brushstrokes and vivid colours of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences.

**Johnston, Frank H. (Canadian, 1888–1949)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven. In 1921, he became principal of the Winnipeg School of Art and later taught at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), Toronto. He formally severed his ties with the group in 1924,



preferring to paint in a realistic style less controversial at the time than his earlier decorative work.

**Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)**

An artist, teacher, and philosopher who settled in Germany and later in France, Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in the relationships between colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), his famous treatise on abstraction, draws on mysticism and theories of divinity.

**Kent, Rockwell (American, 1882–1971)**

An illustrator as well as a landscape painter specializing in remote and stark environments including the New England coast, Alaska, and Greenland, Kent was also a labour-rights activist. His woodcut illustrations for periodicals and books, including two editions of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, recall the style of English Romantics like William Hogarth and William Blake.

**Klee, Paul (Swiss-German, 1879–1940)**

Primarily known as a painter of prodigious energy and imagination—his output comprises an estimated nine thousand artworks—Klee was also a printmaker, art writer, and beloved teacher, first at the Bauhaus and later at the Düsseldorf Academy.

**Klimt, Gustav (Austrian, 1862–1918)**

A Viennese painter best known for the decorative patterns that surround his figures and for his use of gold leaf in Byzantine-influenced paintings like *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, 1907, and *The Kiss*, 1907–8. Klimt was the first president of the Vienna Secession, a splinter group of artists who broke from Vienna's conservative *Künstlerhaus Genossenschaft* (Artists House Union), rejecting the academic historical style in favour of an avant-garde approach.

**Léger, Fernand (French, 1881–1955)**

A leading figure of the Paris avant-garde, whose ideas about modern art, spread through his writing and teaching as well as his own artistic output, would guide a generation of artists. Prolific in media from paint to ceramics to film, Léger was appreciated for his diverse styles, which ranged from Cubist abstraction in the 1910s to realist imagery in the 1950s.

**Lewis, Wyndham (British, 1882–1957)**

A painter, writer, cultural critic, and co-founder of the Vorticist movement, which sought to relate art to the abstract geometric forms of industry. After studying in Paris, Lewis became influenced by Cubism and Expressionism. He was an editor of the journal *Blast*, which harshly attacked Victorian values in the years just prior to the First World War. He is also known for his writing and controversial support of fascism after the war.

**Lisner, Arthur (British/Canadian, 1885–1969)**

A landscape painter and founding member of the Group of Seven, Lisner immigrated to Canada from England in 1911. He was also an influential educator of adults and children, and he created children's art schools at both



the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (1933) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1946).

### **MacDonald, J.E.H. (British/Canadian, 1873–1932)**

A painter, printmaker, calligrapher, teacher, poet, and designer, and a founding member of the Group of Seven. His sensitive treatment of the Canadian landscape was influenced by Walt Whitman's poetry and Henry David Thoreau's views on nature.

### **Manet, Édouard (French, 1832–1883)**

Considered a forerunner of the modernist movement in painting, Manet eschewed traditional subject matter for depictions of contemporary urban life that incorporated references to classic works. Although his work was critically dismissed, his unconventional painting style influenced the Impressionists.

### **Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso (Italian, 1876–1944)**

A poet and theorist and the founder of the Italian Futurist movement. In addition to the "Manifesto of Futurism" (1909), Marinetti wrote plays, poems, and essays in French and Italian that were infused with the Futurist values of mechanical energy, speed, violence, and the destruction of the past. He was a vocal, prominent supporter of Benito Mussolini and one of the authors of the "Fascist Manifesto" (1919).

### **Martin, John (British, 1789–1854)**

A painter of apocalyptic scenes of Biblical history and natural disasters who achieved popular success but not critical acclaim during his lifetime. Martin's work drew on Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime, but was less subtle and technically accomplished than that of contemporaries like John Constable and J.M.W. Turner. However, his sensational scenes of catastrophe attracted large crowds of viewers and influenced the design of later cinematic epics.

### **Matisse, Henri (French, 1869–1954)**

A painter, sculptor, printmaker, draftsman, and designer, aligned at different times with the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists. By the 1920s he was, with Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous painters of his generation, known for his remarkable use of colour and line.

### **McLuhan, Marshall (Canadian, 1911–1980)**

A media theorist and public intellectual who became an international star with his 1964 book *Understanding Media* and who garnered a committed following within the 1960s counterculture. His phrase "the medium is the message" has reached the status of popular aphorism. He developed and directed the Centre for Culture and Technology (now the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology) at the University of Toronto.

### **Milne, David (Canadian, 1881–1953)**

A painter, printmaker, and illustrator whose work—principally landscapes—displays the tonal brilliance and concern with process of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences. Milne lived in New York early in his career, where he trained at the Art Students League and participated in the Armory Show in 1913.





### **modernism**

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

### **Mondrian, Piet (Dutch, 1872–1944)**

A leading figure in abstract art, known for his geometric "grid" paintings of straight black lines and brightly coloured squares, whose influence on contemporary visual culture has been called the most far-reaching of any artist. Mondrian saw his highly restrictive and rigorous style, dubbed Neo-Plasticism, as expressive of universal truths.

### **Munn, Kathleen (Canadian, 1887–1974)**

A modernist painter of landscapes, figures, religious subjects, and still lifes in a style influenced by Cubism, Post-Impressionism, and dynamic symmetry. Munn studied at the Art Students League of New York in 1912, where she was exposed to the American avant-garde. In the mid-1920s, Munn befriended artist Bertram Brooker, who became an important connection for her to the Group of Seven and key collectors. It was only after the artist's death that her work became more recognized, owing largely to a recovery process led in the mid-1980s by Joyce Zemans at York University. (See *Kathleen Munn: Life & Work* by Georgiana Uhlyarik.)

### **naturalism**

Naturalism was a development within the realist art of the nineteenth century that sought to show the forces and effects of nature in human life, rejecting the idealized classical subjects preferred by the academy. Naturalism favoured an accurate documentation of the real life of people in the streets and at work or at leisure, showing even the ugly, painful sides of existence.

### **Newton, Lillias Torrance (Canadian, 1896–1980)**

A member of the Beaver Hall Group and the Canadian Group of Painters, Newton was among the most important portraitists of her time in Canada. Rideau Hall commissioned her for official portraits of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. She was the third woman to be elected as a full member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

### **Nietzsche, Friedrich (German, 1844–1900)**

A philosopher and cultural critic who attacked traditional values and received knowledge, exposing the collapse of European Christian morality in an increasingly secular world. Nietzsche saw his time as essentially nihilistic and pursued a psychological investigation of the self and of society. Central to this investigation was the idea of the Superman, a human ideal free from imposed values and capable of shifting the course of humanity through qualities that did not exclude violence and superiority.



### **O’Keeffe, Georgia (American, 1887–1986)**

A critical figure in American modernism, O’Keeffe was encouraged as a young artist by the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924. Her expressive and often nearly abstract paintings were inspired by natural forms such as landscapes, flowers, and bones. After Stieglitz’s death she settled permanently in northern New Mexico.

### **Ontario Society of Artists (OSA)**

Canada’s oldest extant professional artists’ association, formed in 1872 by seven artists from various disciplines. Its first annual exhibition was held in 1873. The OSA eventually played an important role in the founding of OCAD University and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

### **Ouspensky, P.D. (Russian, 1878–1947)**

A mathematician and philosopher who was also an influential figure in London literary circles and the Russian avant-garde during the 1920s and 1930s. Today Ouspensky is primarily associated with the mystic George Gurdjieff, whose ideas he helped spread through publications and lectures after their first meeting in 1915. His books were very influential among artists for their understanding of metaphysics.

### **Pearlstein, Philip (American, b. 1924)**

A figurative painter known for his use of nude models rendered objectively and in oblique perspective as part of complex interior scenes that include various props. Pearlstein studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in the 1940s and began painting from life in the 1960s. His models often appear disinterested and take ungainly poses that emphasize the way the painter renders their bodies as form rather than flesh.

### **Picabia, Francis (French, 1879–1953)**

A painter, poet, and leader of the anti-rationalist and antiwar Dada movement in Europe that arose in protest against the art establishment and the First World War. Picabia’s artistic production was so diverse as to remain unclassifiable; beginning as a Post-Impressionist, he experimented with Fauvism, Cubism, Orphism, and Futurism.

### **Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)**

One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les demoiselles d’Avignon*, 1906–7, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

### **Post-Impressionism**

A term coined by the British art critic Roger Fry in 1910 to describe painting produced originally in France between about 1880 and 1905 in response to Impressionism’s artistic advances and limitations. Central figures include Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent van Gogh.



**representational**

A term used to describe art that is derived from references to real objects and images that are recognizable as depictions of what exists in the real world. A representational work may not be entirely realistic.

**Roberts, William (British, 1895–1980)**

A Vorticist painter who was also associated with the post-Vorticist Group X in the early 1920s. Roberts abandoned the movement along with his early angular, geometric abstraction for figurative work following the First World War, during which he served as an Official War Artist for the British and Canadian governments. His painting *The Vorticists at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel: Spring, 1915*, 1961–62, depicts the group at the restaurant where they convened.

**root rectangles**

Also called “dynamic rectangles,” any rectangle for which the ratio of the length of the longer to the shorter sides is the square root of an integer (e.g.,  $1:\sqrt{2}$ ,  $1:\sqrt{3}$ ,  $1:\sqrt{4}$ , etc.). Any root rectangle  $1:\sqrt{n}$  can be divided into  $n$  equal rectangles. Root rectangles feature in the geometric principles of Jay Hambidge’s dynamic symmetry.

**Saunders, Helen (British, 1885–1963)**

A Vorticist painter, one of two women depicted in William Roberts’s 1961–62 painting of the group. Saunders was one of the original signatories of the Vorticist manifesto in 1914 and contributed to the group’s journal *Blast* as well as showing in both Vorticist exhibitions. Only twenty-two of Saunders’s works are known to have survived.

**Schreiner, Olive (South African, 1855–1920)**

A white South African writer whose 1883 novel *The Story of an African Farm* was the first from that country to garner international success. Schreiner moved to England in 1881, where she was known as a writer and activist. She was opposed to British colonialism in Africa and active in the women’s suffrage movement.

**Société Anonyme**

An organization initiated in New York in 1920 by Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray to promote the appreciation and practice of modern art in the United States. It organized exhibitions, lectures, public programs, and publications and collected actively. The collection is now held at Yale University. Lawren Harris was instrumental in arranging for the Société’s International Exhibition of Modern Art to be mounted at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) in 1927, creating enormous controversy.

**Spencer, Stanley (British, 1891–1959)**

A painter of expressive portraits and multi-figure scenes. His complex compositions often evoke his Christian faith in a style reminiscent of both Neo-Raphaelitism and Cubism. Spencer lived most of his life in the English village of Cookham; his reputation soared following a posthumous retrospective at the Royal Academy in 1980.



### **Stieglitz, Alfred (American, 1864–1946)**

Educated in Germany, Stieglitz began his career as a photographer in the Pictorialist style. He was also a critic, the editor and publisher of the periodical *Camera Work*, and a gallerist whose influence shaped the development of photography as a fine art in the United States in the twentieth century. In 1917 his work turned toward an attempt to transparently capture the shifting, fast-paced reality of modernity. His serial portrait of his wife, the painter Georgia O'Keefe, exemplifies this late style.

### **Surrealism**

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris. Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.

### **synesthesia**

A neurological condition in which sensory input, such as vision, is simultaneously experienced through one or more additional sense. Synesthesia also occurs when cognition of an abstract concept, such as letters or numbers, triggers a sensory perception, such as of hearing or taste.

### **van Gogh, Vincent (Dutch, 1853–1890)**

Among the most recognizable and beloved of modernist painters, van Gogh is the creator of *Starry Night* and *Vase with Sunflowers*, both from 1889. He is a nearly mythological figure in Western culture, the archetypal “tortured artist” who achieves posthumous fame after a lifetime of struggle and neglect.

### **Varley, F.H. (Frederick Horsman) (British/Canadian, 1881–1969)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven, known for his contributions to Canadian portraiture as well as landscape painting. Originally from Sheffield, England, Varley moved to Toronto in 1912 at the encouragement of his friend Arthur Lismer. From 1926 to 1936 he taught at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

### **Voaden, Herman (Canadian, 1903–1991)**

Born in London, Ontario, Voaden was a playwright known in the 1930s for multimedia stage productions in a style he termed “symphonic expressionism.” Drawing on the modernist lighting design of Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia and the spiritually inflected nationalism of the Group of Seven, Voaden’s work offered an alternative to the realism prevalent in Canadian theatre at the time. After the Second World War he was primarily a senior administrator in national arts organizations.

### **Vorticism**

A British avant-garde art and literary movement led by Wyndham Lewis and active from around 1912 to 1917. The first abstract modernist group in Britain, the Vorticists adopted a style influenced by Cubism and Futurism and that featured angular, geometric abstract forms. Those associated with the movement included Ezra Pound, David Bomberg, Helen Saunders, and William





Roberts. Officially created with the publication of the Vorticist manifesto in 1914, the movement did not survive the First World War.

**Wilfred, Thomas (American, 1889–1968)**

The first artist known to have worked exclusively in light as his preferred medium. Beginning in 1919 with his invention of the Clavilux light organ, Wilfred composed sequences of light forms designed to be played on the machine and projected on a dark screen. Called lumia, his compositions resemble the aurora borealis and are durational, lasting from 5 minutes and 15 seconds to 9 years, 127 days, and 18 hours.

**woodcut**

A relief method of printing that involves carving a design into a block of wood, which is then inked and printed, using either a press or simple hand pressure. This technique was invented in China and spread to the West in the thirteenth century.



# SOURCES & RESOURCES

There is a paucity of archival material about Brooker's career as an artist. A large collection of documents is in the Bertram Brooker fonds at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (BBF, UMASC), but this holding mainly concerns his life as a writer. It does contain a few documents autobiographical in nature. Even when Brooker wrote what are labelled "diaries," he gave a fictional name to the author. Brooker's reflections on art are best expressed in the thirty-two extant letters he wrote to Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (in the BBF, UMASC).





Installation view of *It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism*, Art Gallery of Windsor, January 10–March 8, 2009, photograph by the Art Gallery of Windsor.

## KEY EXHIBITIONS

### 1927

January, *Bertram Brooker*, the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto.

March, two Brooker paintings, including *Endless Dawn*, were on display at the Ontario Society of Artists, Toronto.

April 9–23, two Brooker paintings, including *The Way*, were on display at Simpson Galleries, a unjuried exhibition by Toronto artists.

### 1928

February, two Brooker paintings, including *Sounds Assembling*, were exhibited with works by the Group of Seven. Brooker also showed with the Group in 1930 and 1931. In 1930, 1931, and 1936 he exhibited with the Royal Canadian Academy and in 1931 at the spring show of the Art Association of Montreal.

### 1929

March, annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario). Brooker showed three paintings: *Alleluiah*, *Prelude*, and *Resolution*. A supplementary exhibition, *Drawings by Bertram Brooker*, consisted of forty items. In addition to the Elijah series, there were items from the Isaiah series, Blake series, and Whitman series. A numbered checklist to these was published with an introduction by Lawren Harris: "Mr. Brooker's pen drawings are ancient and remote in spirit, as much as they are modern. Like the best of modern art, they seem to embody a



reverberation which comes from the spiritual resonance that informs all that is best in the ages."

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| <b>1931</b> | March 14-30, <i>Bertram Brooker Abstractions</i> , Hart House Art Gallery, University of Toronto. The eight canvases on display included <i>Evolution</i> , <i>Sounds Assembling</i> , <i>Striving</i> , <i>The Finite Wrestling with the Infinite</i> , <i>Crucifixion</i> , <i>Ascending Forms</i> , and <i>Resolution</i> . The whereabouts and title of the eighth canvas are unknown. |
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|-------------|--|
| <b>1935</b> | May 18-June 1, <i>An Exhibition of Drawings by Kathleen Munn, LeMoine Fitzgerald, Bertram Brooker</i> , Galleries of J. Merritt Malloney, Toronto. |
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| <b>1937</b> | April, <i>Bertram Brooker</i> , Picture Loan Society, Toronto. |
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|-------------|---|
| <b>1942</b> | January, <i>Bertram Brooker</i> , Hart House Art Gallery, University of Toronto |
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| <b>1947</b> | September, <i>Bertram Brooker</i> , the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. |
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| <b>1949</b> | From November 7, <i>Bertram Brooker</i> , Hart House Art Gallery, University of Toronto. |
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| <b>1956</b> | February 17-March 18, <i>Bertram Brooker, O.S.A. (1885 [sic]-1955)</i> , Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. |
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| <b>1971</b> | October 23-November 6, <i>Bertram Brooker, 1888-1955</i> , The Morris Gallery, Toronto. |
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| <b>1972-73</b> | <i>Bertram Brooker: A Retrospective Exhibition</i> , National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (travelled to the Sarnia Public Library and Art Gallery; London Public Library and Art Museum, Ontario; Sir George Williams University, Montreal; Confederation Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown; Winnipeg Art Gallery; Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Regina Public Library; and Hart House Art Gallery, University of Toronto). |
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|-------------|---|
| <b>1975</b> | January 31-April 13, <i>L.L. FitzGerald and Bertram Brooker: Their Drawings</i> , Winnipeg Art Gallery. |
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| <b>1990</b> | March 10-April 22, <i>The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920-1940</i> (group exhibition), London Regional Art and Historical Museums (travelled to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Edmonton Art Gallery; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton; and Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax). |
|-------------|--|
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|-------------|---|
| <b>2009</b> | January 10-March 8, <i>It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism</i> , Art Gallery of Windsor (travelled to the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, and Museum London, Ontario). |
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## UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

"Biography of a Mind," 1930. Short story. Box 7, folder 1, BBF, UMASC.

"A Candle in Sunshine." N.d. Novel. Box 6, folder 1, BBF, UMASC.

"Diary." 1905. Box 1, folder 16, BBF, UMASC.

"The Measure of Gordon Craig." N.d. Box 2, folder 1, BBF, UMASC.

"Self-portrait, an Experiment in Autobiography." 1937. Essay (two drafts). Box 8, folder 3, BBF, UMASC.

"Shorts about Bernard." 1938. Short story. Box 7, folder 1, BBF, UMASC.

"The World and I—A Voyage of Self-Exploration." 1934, 1953. Novel. Box 6, folder 2, BBF, UMASC.

## BOOKS AND ARTICLES

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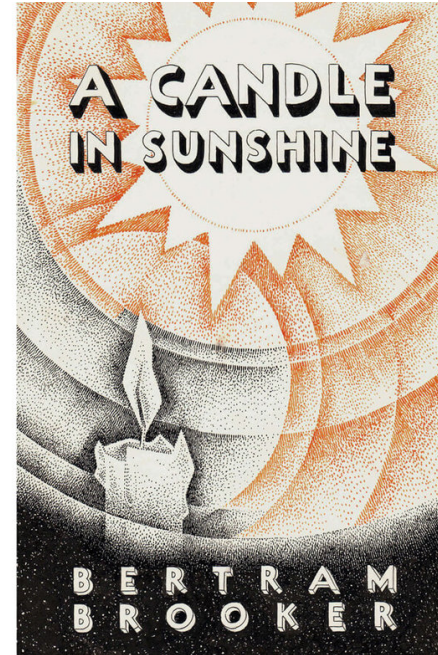
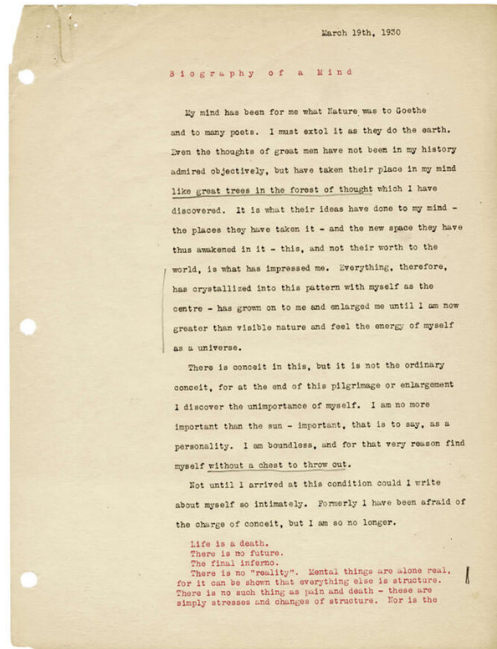
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*Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*. Editor. Toronto: Macmillan, 1929.

*Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*. Editor. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936. (And in particular his essay "Art and Society: A General Introduction," pp. xiii-xxviii).



LEFT: Bertram Brooker, page from "Biography of a Mind" (1930), Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg. RIGHT: *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, edited by Bertram Brooker, photograph by David Mason Books, Toronto.

## FICTION

*The Robber*. Duell, 1949.

*The Tangled Miracle: A Mortimer Hood Mystery*. Published under the name Huxley Herne. T. Nelson, 1936.

*Think of the Earth*. 1936.

## BOOKS ON ADVERTISING

In addition to these books, all published under the pseudonym Richard Surrey, Brooker wrote a column for *Printer's Ink*, a U.S. trade publication.

*Copy Technique in Advertising, Including a System of Copy Synthesis: A Classification of Copy Sources, and a Section on Copy Construction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1930.

*Layout Technique in Advertising*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1929.

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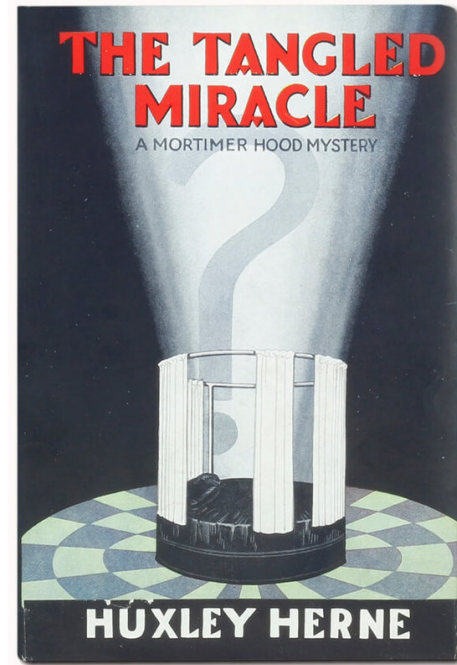
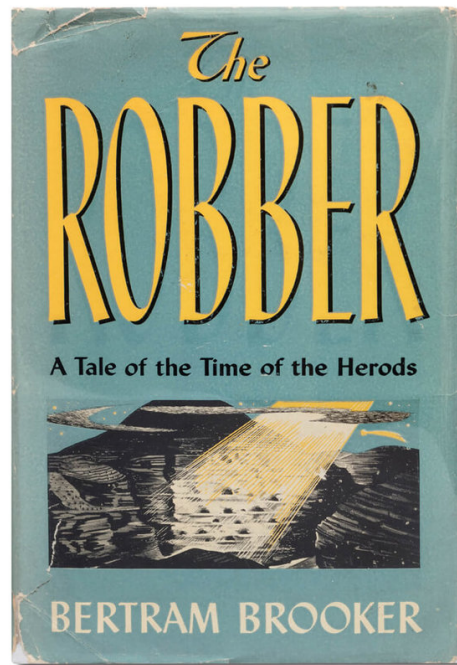
## CRITICAL WRITINGS

In 1972 Dennis Reid prepared a circulating exhibition for Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada and wrote an excellent monograph (1973) to accompany it. Some of Reid's assumptions about Brooker and modernism were challenged in Joyce Zemans's 1989 article, "First Fruits: The Paintings," in which she demonstrated that Brooker was aware of various forces in modernism well before his meeting with Lawren Harris in 1923. She showed that Brooker was more cognizant of abstraction than Harris when they met, and her research repositions the relationship between the two artists.

More recently, Ann Davis has written on the intellectual and religious ideas behind Brooker's abstracts; Glenn Williams, on Brooker and music; Carole Luff, on Brooker and Henri Bergson; Gregory Betts, on Brooker's place in avant-garde Canadian literature; and Adam Lauder, on Brooker's extraordinary influence on modern communication studies. Lauder has also written on Brooker's indebtedness to Bergson's theory of duration, his film scenarios, his connection to Vorticism, and his place in art history.

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LEFT: *The Robber: A Tale of the Time of the Herods* by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Collins, 1949), photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid. RIGHT: *The Tangled Miracle: A Mortimer Hood Mystery* by Bertram Brooker, under the name of Huxley Herne (United Kingdom: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936), photograph by Jonkers Rare Books, Henley-on-Thames, England.

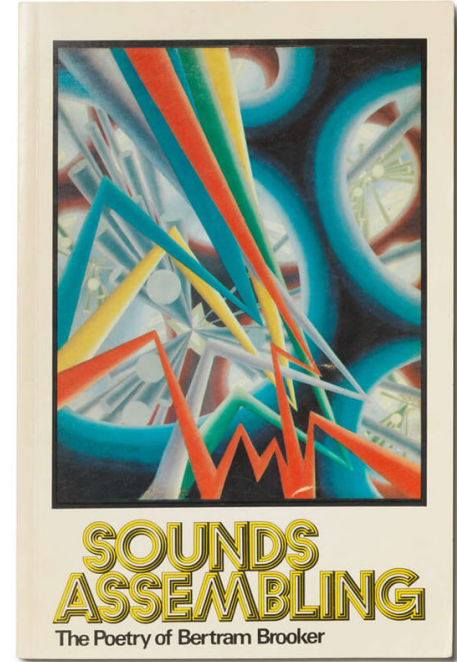
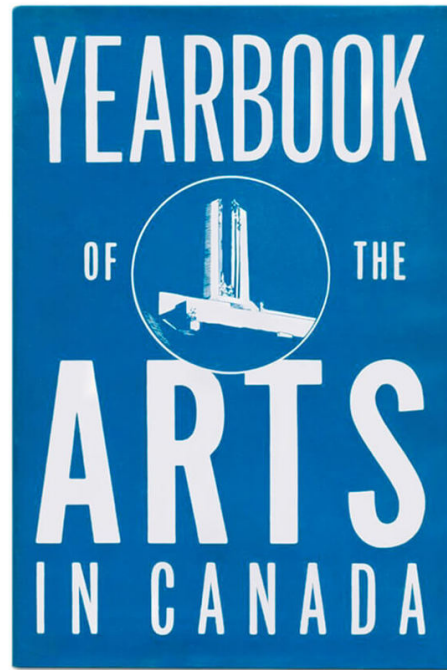


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LEFT: *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, edited by Bertram Brooker, photograph by David Mason Books, Toronto. RIGHT: Bertram Brooker, *Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker*, edited by Birk Sproxtton (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1980), featuring Brooker's oil painting *Sounds Assembling*, 1928, photograph by Rachel Topham.

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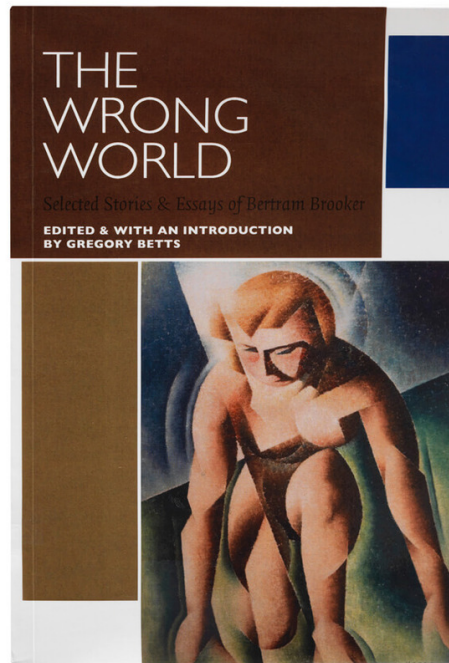
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LEFT: Cover of *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays of Bertram Brooker*, edited by Gregory Betts (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), featuring Bertram Brooker's oil painting *Kneeling Figure*, 1940, photograph by Rachel Topham. RIGHT: *Think of the Earth* by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936).





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### JAMES KING

James King is a professor of English at McMaster University. He was educated at the University of Toronto and Princeton University. He has been a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, a Killam Fellow, and a Nuffield Fellow and has been the recipient of numerous research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, King has authored six novels and nine biographies. His subjects have included Paul Nash, Lawren Harris, David Milne, and Greg Curnoe.



**“My interest in Bertram Brooker was awakened when I researched and wrote about his troubled relationship with Lawren Harris. I soon learned about his commitment to producing a distinctively Canadian abstract art and about his relationship with similarly minded artists like Kathleen Munn. What stands out for me is how this advertising executive worked relentlessly in visual and literary forms to create genuinely modernist art in Canada. For me, he remains a brave, resourceful and courageous individual.”**



## COPYRIGHT & CREDITS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### From the Author

I am forever indebted to John Brooker, Bertram Brooker's grandson, for the valuable encouragement and advice he provided during the writing of this book. I wish to thank Carol Eddy, Shelley Sweeney, Gregory Betts, and Nico Barrett for much-appreciated assistance. Sara Angel, Anna Hudson, and the anonymous readers made countless useful suggestions. Rick Archbold and Kendra Ward were kind, exemplary editors. I also wish to thank image researcher Stephanie Burdzy and copy editor Alicia Peres for their excellent assistance.

This book is dedicated to John Brooker, who has worked tirelessly to keep the memory of his grandfather alive.

### From the Art Canada Institute

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We thank our Lead Benefactors: Alexandra Baillie, Alexandra Bennett and the Jalynn Bennett Family Foundation,\* Grant and Alice Burton, Kiki and Ian Delaney,\* Jon S. and Lyne Dellandrea,\* Michelle Koerner and Kevin Doyle,\* Sarah and Tom Milroy,\* Partners in Art,\* Sandra L. Simpson,\* Pam and Michael Stein,\* and Sara and Michael Angel.\*

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### Credit for Cover Image



*Sounds Assembling*, 1928. (See below for details.)

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Biography: Bertram Brooker, 1930s or 1940s. Photographer unknown. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:2). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Key Works: *Still Life with Lemons*, c.1936. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: *Machine World*, 1950. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: *Ascending Forms*, c.1929. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Installation view of the exhibition *100 Masters: Only in Canada* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2013. Photo credit: Ernest Mayer, courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.





Sources & Resources: *Symphonic Forms*, 1947. (See below for details.)

Credits for Works by Bertram Brooker



*Abstraction, Music*, 1927. Collection of Museum London, F.B. Housser Memorial Collection, 1945 (45.A.47). Photo credit: Museum London.



Advertisement for T. Eaton Company Limited, "V (for Variety)," published in Brooker, *Layout Technique in Advertising* (1929).



Advertisement for *The Globe*, "The Conductor," published in Brooker, *Layout Technique in Advertising* (1929).



*Ahab's Death (Elijah Series)*, 1929. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie (1997.21.43). Photo credit: Andre Beneteau, courtesy of the MacLaren Art Centre.



*Ahab Worshipped Idols (Elijah Series)*, 1929. Collection of the British Museum, London, donated by Christopher Varley Inc. on behalf of the Estate of Bertram Brooker (19910511.30). Photo credit: The British Museum.



*Alleluiah*, 1929. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (15812). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*All the World's a Stage*, 1929. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Courtesy of Gallery Gevik, Toronto.



*The Ancient Mariner*, c.1930. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, on permanent loan from The Ontario Heritage Foundation, gift of Mr. Fred Schaeffer (71.795). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Hamilton.



*The Angel (Elijah Series)*, 1927. Private collection. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Vancouver.



*Art is Long*, 1934. Collection of the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, purchase, 1988 (1988.155). Photo credit: University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.



*Artist's Wife # 1*, 1934. Collection of the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie (1997.21.4). Photo credit: Andre Beneteau, courtesy of the MacLaren Art Centre.



*Ascending Forms*, c.1929. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (15814). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.





# BERTRAM BROOKER

Life & Work by James King



*Benday*, 1928. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (42c). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



*Blue Nude*, c.1936. Collection of the Art Gallery of Windsor, purchase, 1979 (1979.074). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Windsor.



Book jacket design for *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1937. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Norman Brooke Bell, Patricia Brooke Bell, and Douglas Ambridge Brooke Bell, 2007, in memory of Cicely Barlow Bell (42122). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Cabbage and Pepper*, c.1937. Collection of Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown, purchased, 1973 (CAG 73.5). Photo credit: Confederation Centre Art Gallery.



*"Chorale" (Bach)*, c.1927. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase, 1927 (87/175). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*The Cloud*, c.1942. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (15815). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



Cover design for *"A Candle in Sunshine,"* date unknown. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



Cover design for *Layout Technique in Advertising*, 1929. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (43). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



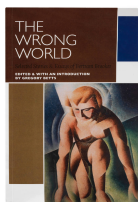
Cover design for *The Peg: A Magazine of Merry Mien Devoted to the Stage and Screen*, c.1915-21. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (39a). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



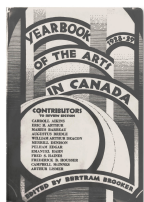
Cover illustration for "First Fruits: A Volume of Short Plays by Bertram R. Brooker," c.1913-15. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (18a). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



Cover of *Elijah* (1929).



Cover of *The Wrong World: Selected Stories and Essays by Bertram Brooker*, edited by Gregory Betts (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), featuring Bertram Brooker's oil painting *Kneeling Figure*, 1940. Photo credit: Rachel Topham.



Cover of *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, edited by Bertram Brooker.

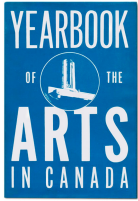




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Cover of *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, edited by Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: David Mason Books, Toronto.



*Creation*, 1925. Private collection. Photo credit: John Shearer.



*Crucifixion*, 1927-28. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*The Dawn of Man*, 1927. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Walter, Freeman, Harold, and Vincent Tovell, 1971, in memory of Harold and Ruth Tovell (16984). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Dentonia Park*, 1931. Private collection, Toronto. Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre, courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



*The Earthquake (Elijah Series)*, 1926. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Bernard and Sylvia Ostry, 2007 (2007/703). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Egyptian Woman*, 1940. Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, purchased with funds donated by the Women's Society of The Edmonton Art Gallery (81.2). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Alberta.



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*Endless Dawn*, 1927. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Gallery purchase with Wintario Matching Funds Grant, 1980 (980.016). Photo credit: Tom Thomson Art Gallery.



*Entombment*, 1937. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Evolution*, 1929. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (15813). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Face and Breasts (Crime and Punishment Series)*, 1930-34. Collection of the University Club of Toronto. Photo credit: University Club of Toronto.



*Fawn Bay*, 1936. Private collection. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Vancouver. Photo credit: Heffel Fine Art Auction House.



*Fed by the Ravens (Elijah Series)*, 1923. Collection of the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie (1997.21.43). Photo credit: Andre Beneteau, courtesy of the MacLaren Art Centre.



*Figures in a Landscape*, 1931. Unlocated. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.





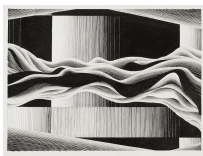
*The Finite Wrestling with the Infinite*, 1925. Collection of Gallery Gevik, Toronto. Courtesy of Gallery Gevik.



*The Fire (Elijah Series)*, 1929. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds from the Estate of Zenon (Larry) Skyba and with funds from Lynne Petrie (G-97-19). Photo credit: Leif Norman, courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.



*First Snow*, date unknown. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Sotheby's Canada.



*Fugue*, c.1928-29. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Dr. Walter M. Tovell, Toronto, 1983 (83/288). Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre, courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Green Movement*, c.1927. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1978 (78/14). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



Illustration for the line "Simply to Thy cross I cling" (from the 1763 hymn "Rock of Ages"), 1899. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*The Insulted and Injured*, 1934-35. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (41420). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Interiors Within Interiors (Whitman Series)*, 1931. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1978 (78/17). Photo: Ian Lefebvre, Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Kneeling Figure*, 1940. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest (1973.17). Photo credit: Christine Guest, courtesy of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



*Lone Tree*, n.d. Collection of Gallery Gevik, Toronto. Courtesy of Gallery Gevik.



*Machine World*, 1950. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Manitoba Willows*, c.1929–31. Private collection. Courtesy of Gallery Gevik, Toronto.



*The Miners*, 1922. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



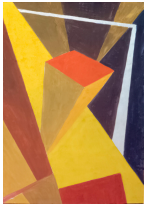
*Les Misérables #2 (Wagon Wheel)*, 1936. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Morley Callaghan*, 1932. Bertram Brooker fonds, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (e008299803).  
Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Muskoka Lake*, c.1936. Collection of the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, purchased 1988, with funds provided by the Alberta Advanced Education Endowment and Incentive Fund (1988.122). Photo credit: University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.



*Noise of a Fish*, c.1922-24. Collection of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa, purchase, 1994 (1994BB103). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



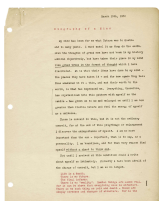
*North Shore*, c.1942. Private collection. Photo credit: John Shearer.



*Oozles*, c.1922-24. Collection of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, purchase, 1994 (1994BB104).  
Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



*Ovalescence*, c.1954. Collection of the Art Gallery of Windsor, purchase, 1985 (1985.052). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Windsor.



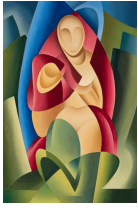
Page from "Biography of a Mind" (1930). Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (MSS 16, box 7, folder 1). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.





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*Pharaoh's Daughter*, 1950. Private collection. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



*Phyllis (Piano! Piano!)*, 1934. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1979 (79/59). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Progression*, 1948. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, 1948 (47/56). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Pygmalion's Miracle*, c.1941. Collection of Lynn and Ken Martens. Photo credit: John Dean, courtesy of Ken Martens.



*Quebec Impression*, 1942. Collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, purchase, 1985 (1985.55). Photo credit: McMichael Canadian Art Collection.



*The Rain (Elijah Series)*, 1927. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Bernard and Sylvia Ostry, 2007 (2007/702). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



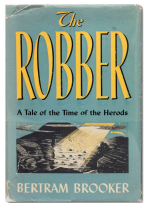
*Realization (Crime and Punishment Series)*, 1930-34. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase, 1943 (2717). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*The Recluse*, 1939. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Walter Klinkhoff, 1978 (1978.3). Photo credit: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



*Resolution*, c.1929. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Volunteer Committee, 1983 (83.15). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Hamilton.



*The Robber: A Tale of the Time of the Herods* by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Collins, 1949). Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Seated Figure*, 1935. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift from the Marie Louise Stock Fund, 1996 (1996.15). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Hamilton.



*Ski Poles (Ski Boots)*, 1936. Private collection. Courtesy of Alan Klinkhoff Gallery.



*Snow Fugue*, 1930. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Sounds Assembling*, 1928. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery (L-80). Photo credit: Ernest Mayer, courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.



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*Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker*, edited by Birk Sproxton (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1980), featuring Brooker's oil painting *Sounds Assembling*, 1928. Photo credit: Rachel Topham.



*The St. Lawrence*, 1931. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift from the Douglas M. Duncan Collection, 1970 (16556). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



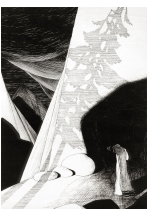
*Still Life Variation IV*, c.1929. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Kambiz Aghassi.



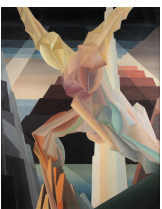
*Still Life with Bag #3*, c.1933. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Kambiz Aghassi.



*Still Life with Lemons*, c.1936. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the J.S. McLean Collection, by Canada Packers Inc., 1990 (89/772). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*The Still Small Voice (Elijah Series)*, 1929. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Striving*, c.1930. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.





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*Swing of Time*, 1954. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.



*Symphonic Forms*, 1947. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Volunteer Committee in memory of Kate Steiner, 1991 (1991.1). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Hamilton.



*Symphonic Movement No. 1*, c.1928-29. Collection of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, gift of the estate of Doris Huestis Speirs (2001BB2). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



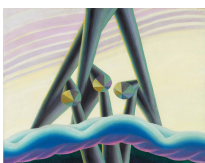
*The Tangled Miracle: A Mortimer Hood Mystery* by Bertram Brooker, under the name of Huxley Herne (United Kingdom: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936). Courtesy of Jonkers Rare Books, Henley-on-Thames, England. Photo credit: Jonkers Rare Books.



*Think of the Earth* by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936).



*Three Figures*, 1937. Collection of Museum London, Art Fund, 1971 (71.A.35). Photo credit: Museum London.



*The Three Powers*, 1929. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase, 1982 (82/33). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



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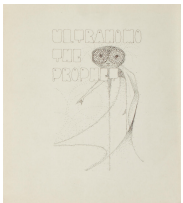
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*Torso*, 1937. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (16877). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Triptych*, c.1935. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (29228). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



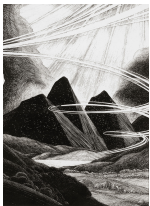
*Ultrahomo*, c.1912-13. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (6a). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



*Untitled*, n.d. Private collection. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Windsor.



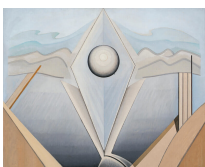
*The Way*, 1927. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, donated by the Estate of Anna K. Jetter (VAG 2004.12.12). Photo credit: Maegan Hill-Carroll, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*The Whirlwind (Elijah Series)*, 1929. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Bertram Brooker.

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## Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



*Abstract Painting #98*, c.1937-38, by Lawren Harris. Private collection. © The Family of Lawren S. Harris. Photo credit: Sotheby's Canada.



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*Abstract Speed + Sound*, 1913-14, by Giacomo Balla. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976 (76.2553.31). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Afternoon Sun, North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1924, by Lawren Harris. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (3351). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Altarpiece, No. 1, Group X, Altarpieces*, 1907, by Hilma af Klint. Collection of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Bertram Brooker, age twenty-five, Portage la Prairie, 1913. Photograph by Bender & Lewis, Croydon. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:2:4). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Bertram Brooker and actors in an early theatrical production, Arts and Letters Club, Toronto, date unknown. Original photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Arts and Letters Club. Photo credit: Scott James.



Bertram Brooker and colleagues in his office at J.J. Gibbons advertising agency in Toronto, January 1934. Photograph by J.J. Gibbons. Bertram Brooker fonds, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa (49). Photo credit: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



Bertram Brooker and members of the Group of Seven at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, 1929. Photograph by John Vanderpant. Courtesy of the Arts and Letters Club. Photo credit: Scott James.



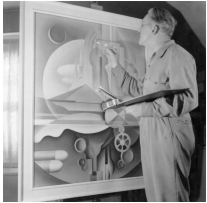


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Bertram Brooker on a trip to England, c.1910-12. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of James King.



Bertram Brooker painting *Machine World* in his studio, c.1950. Photographer unknown. Ontario Society of Artists fonds, Archives of Ontario, North York (F 1140-7-0-1). Photo credit: Archives of Ontario.



Bertram Brooker painting outdoors, Valpoy, Manitoba, 1927. Photographer unknown. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (MSS 16, A.80-53 / box 1, folder 4, item 76). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Bertram Brooker with his parents and siblings in England, 1890s. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Estate of Bertram Brooker. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Bert's Life Class*, April 25, 1937, by Arthur Lismer. Collection of the Arts and Letters Club, Toronto. © Estate of Arthur Lismer. Photo credit: Scott James, courtesy of the Arts and Letters Club.



*Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico / Out Back of Marie's II*, 1930, by Georgia O'Keeffe. Collection of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, gift of The Burnett Foundation (CR0730). © The Estate of Georgia O'Keeffe / Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Blue and Green Music*, 1919/21, by Georgia O'Keeffe. Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, gift of Georgia O'Keeffe (1969.835). © The Estate of Georgia O'Keeffe / The Art Institute of Chicago. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



The Brookers' three children in front of the family home, 107 Glenview Avenue, Toronto, 1930s. Photographer unknown. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg. Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



*Composition (Horses)*, c.1927, by Kathleen Munn. Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, purchased with funds donated by the Women's Society of The Edmonton Art Gallery (83.5). © Estate of Kathleen Munn. Photo credit: Art Gallery of Alberta.



*Composition (Reclining Nude)*, c.1926-28, by Kathleen Munn. Collection of Lynn and Ken Martens. © Estate of Kathleen Munn. Photo credit: John Dean.



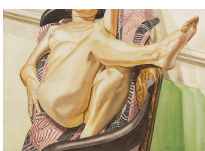
Cover of Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (first published in English in 1914; originally published in Russian in 1911). Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photo credit: MFA Publications.



*Doc Snyder's House*, 1931, by Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of P.D. Ross, Ottawa, 1932 (3993). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



Early twentieth-century postcard picturing St. James Anglican Church, Croydon, where the Brooker family worshipped. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:5:155). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



*Female Model Reclining on Red and Black American Bedspread*, 1976, by Philip Pearlstein. Collection of the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, gift of Rose M. Shuey, from the Collection of Dr. John and Rose M. Shuey (CAM2002.32). © Philip Pearlstein. Photo credit: Cranbrook Art Museum.



*From an Upstairs Window, Winter*, c.1950-51, by Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (5800). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Girl on a Hill*, 1928, by Prudence Heward, reproduced in black and white in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, edited by Bertram Brooker.



*Head of Baudelaire*, 1911, by Raymond Duchamp-Villon. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift in memory of Harold Murchison Tovell (1887-1947) and Ruth Massey Tovell (1889-1961) from their sons, 1962 (62/1). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)*, 1912, by Wassily Kandinsky. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.70.1). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Installation view of *Bertram Brooker Abstractions* at Hart House, University of Toronto, March 14-30, 1931, photographer unknown.



Installation view of *It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism*, Art Gallery of Windsor, January 10-March 8, 2009. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Windsor. Photo credit: Art Gallery of Windsor.



Installation view of the Cubist room of the International Exhibition of Modern Art (the Armory Show), Gallery 53, Art Institute of Chicago, March 24-April 16, 1913. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.





Interior page of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), by William Blake. Various collections. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Lake Superior*, c.1924, by Lawren Harris. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, bequest of Charles S. Band, Toronto, 1970 (69/121). © The Family of Lawren S. Harris. Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre, Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Mercury Passing Before the Sun*, 1914, by Giacomo Balla. Gianni Mattioli Collection, long-term loan to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Mountain Form IV (Rocky Mountain Painting XIV)*, by Lawren Harris. Private collection. Courtesy of Alan Klinkhoff Gallery, Toronto.



*The Mud Bath*, 1914, by David Bomberg. Tate Collection, London (T00656). Photo credit: © Tate, London 2018.



*Music, Pink and Blue No. 2*, 1918, by Georgia O'Keeffe. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, gift of Emily Fisher Landau in honour of Tom Armstrong (91.9). © The Estate of Georgia O'Keeffe / Whitney Museum of American Art. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, by Marcel Duchamp. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1950 (1950-134-59). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



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*Nude in a Landscape*, c.1930, by Edwin Holgate. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (3702).  
© Estate of Edwin Holgate. Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



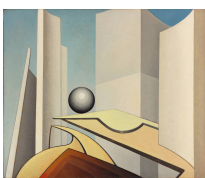
*The Peacock Skirt*, 1893, by Aubrey Beardsley. Collection of the Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943 (1943/649). Photo credit: Fogg Museum.



Photograph of Bertram Brooker taken in England just prior to his family's departure for Canada in 1905.  
Photograph by Proctor & Co., Croydon. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:2:6). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Photograph of Rill Porter and Bertram Brooker on their wedding day, July 3, 1913. Photographer unknown.  
Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:5:157).  
Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



*Poise (Composition 4)*, 1936, by Lawren Harris. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Hyman and Ruth Soloway, 2012 (2012/9). © The Family of Lawren S. Harris. Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre, Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Poplar Woods (Poplars)*, 1929, by Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold O. Brigden (G-75-66). Photo credit: Ernest Mayer, courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.



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Portrait of Bertram Brooker, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Bertram Brooker fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg (PC 16:1:13). Photo credit: University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



*The Procession, Seville*, 1912, by Francis Picabia. Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Chester Dale Fund and gift of Barbara Rothschild Michaels from the Collection of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1997 (1997.43.1). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



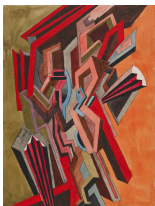
*Sleeping Woman*, c.1929, by Randolph Hewton. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (3738). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



A stage design by theatre designer Gordon Craig.



Thomas Wilfred seated at the Clavilux during a public performance, c.1920s. Photographer unknown. Photo source: "Music Is Turned Into a Glowing Color," in *Popular Mechanics* (April 1924).

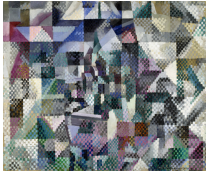


*Two-step II*, study for the lost painting *Two-step*, c.1915, by William Roberts. Collection of the British Museum, London (1986,0405.4). Courtesy of the Estate of John David Roberts. By permission of the Treasury Solicitor, the William Roberts Society. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Photo credit: British Museum.



*Untitled (Crucifixion)*, c.1927-28, by Kathleen Munn. Private collection. Courtesy of the Estate of Kathleen Munn. © Estate of Kathleen Munn.





*Window on the City, No. 3*, 1911–12, by Robert Delaunay. Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection (47.878.R). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.

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Art Canada Institute

Massey College, University of Toronto

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Toronto, ON M5S 2E1

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