



# WILLIAM BRYMNER

Life & Work

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A portrait painting of William Brymner, an older man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a blue bow tie. The word "BIOGRAPHY" is overlaid in white capital letters across the center of the portrait.

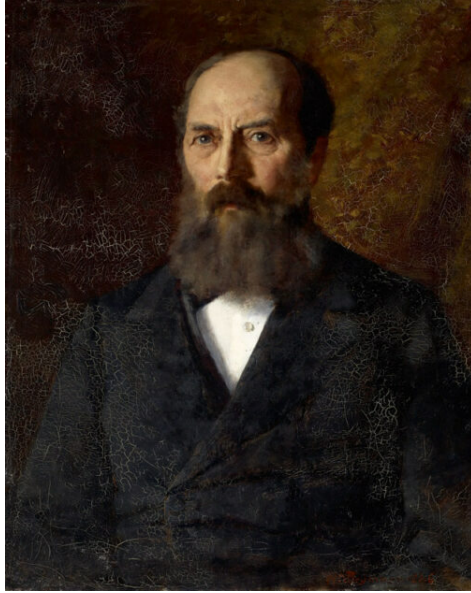
# BIOGRAPHY

A man ahead of his time, William Brymner (1855–1925) is the father of modern Canadian painting. A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer credited him with transforming art in Montreal, and the Canadian Impressionist movement and the Beaver Hall Group would not have taken root without Brymner's influence. Just as Canada was establishing itself as a nation, Brymner played an important role as an esteemed educator whose students included luminaries such as Helen McNicoll, Edwin Holgate, Clarence Gagnon, Prudence Heward, and Anne Savage. An adventurous artist and an inveterate traveller, both in Europe and within Canada, Brymner sought new subject matter constantly. At the height of his career, he was recognized as an artistic leader in Canada.



### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY WORK

William Brymner was born in Greenock, Scotland, in 1855. He was the eldest child of Douglas Brymner and Jean Thomson, who immigrated to Canada in 1857. Although Brymner spent nearly all his childhood and most of his adult life in Canada, his Scottish background remained a key part of his identity. On visiting Scotland in 1878, he reported, "My native air seems to agree with me because I never felt better in my life."<sup>1</sup> His friends and colleagues in Canada also thought of him as Scottish. In his recollections of Brymner, the art dealer William R. Watson noted that Brymner had never lost the Scottish accent he had acquired from his parents.<sup>2</sup> When Brymner died, an obituary described him as "tall and slender and typically Scottish in type."<sup>3</sup>



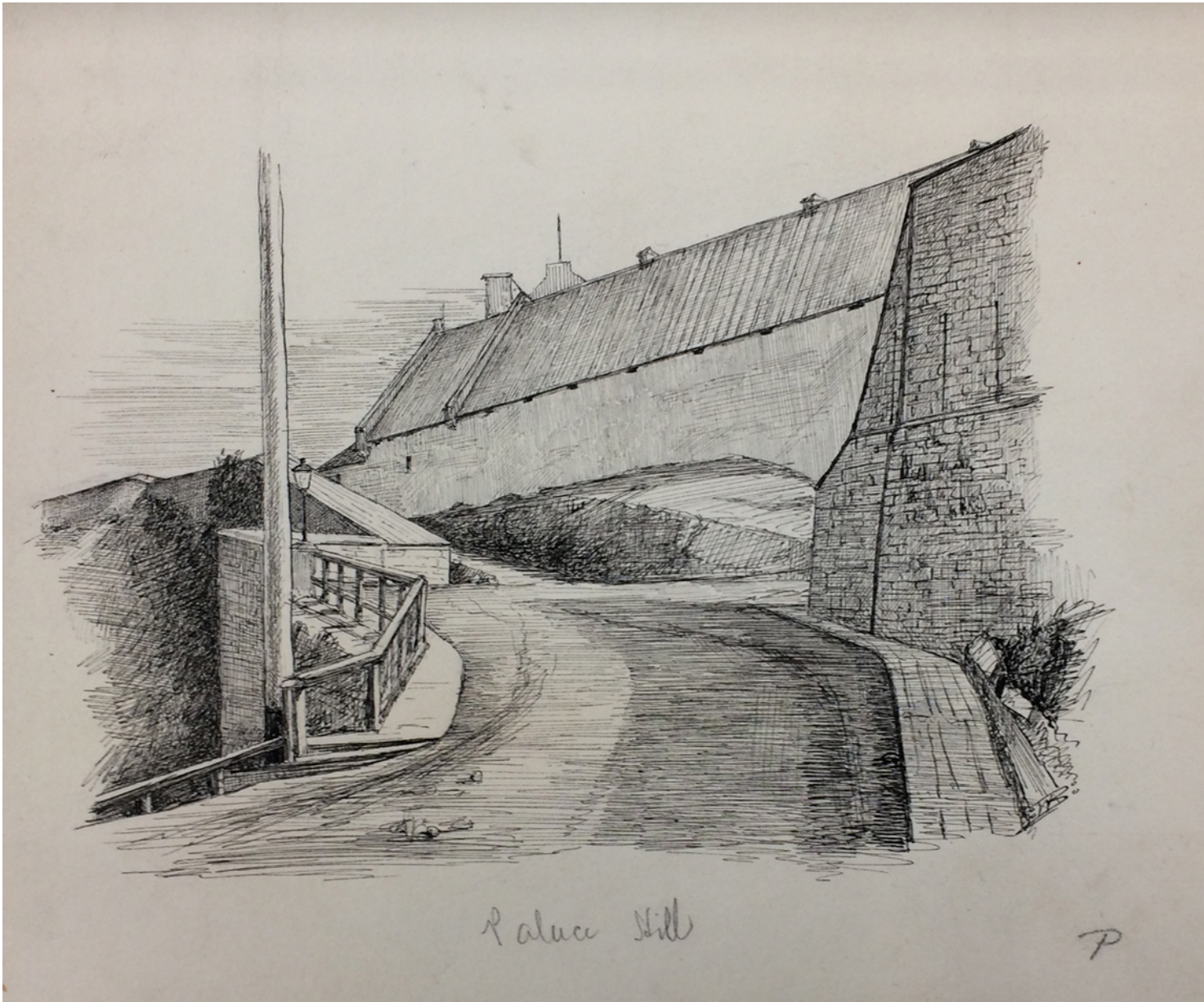
LEFT: William Brymner, *Douglas Brymner*, 1886, oil on fabric, 70.7 x 56.4 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Frederick Brown, *Jean Thomson*, 1883, oil on fabric, 32.7 x 24.8 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Little is known about Brymner's childhood, but the letters he wrote in later life indicate that he was close to his relatives, especially his parents. The family initially lived in Melbourne, Quebec, and Brymner attended St. Francis College in Richmond, Quebec. They moved to Montreal in 1864. As a teenager Brymner was interested in drawing and design, and in 1868, while still in school, he began taking night classes at the Conseil des arts et manufactures de la province de Québec, a school that offered drawing classes to promote industrial design.<sup>4</sup> Brymner's parents were supportive of his interests, and in 1870, when he finished school, his father arranged for him to study with the architect Richard Cunningham Windeyer (1831–1900). At this point Brymner's goal was to become an architect (it would be almost a decade before he decided against this career path). Unfortunately, he was too young to work in Windeyer's office—he was "so diminutive of stature that he had to stand on a bench to get his elbows above the drawing board."<sup>5</sup> Eventually Brymner left to study French at Sainte-Thérèse seminary.

In 1872 the Brymner family moved to Ottawa because the Canadian government offered Douglas Brymner the position of clerk in charge of the archives of Canada. It was only five years since the British North America Act had united Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick through Confederation, making Canada a dominion within the British Empire. As a country with a new national identity, Canada had no official archives. Douglas's first task was to establish them, and he quickly began seeking out records.<sup>6</sup> He may have used the connections he made in this work to help his son obtain a job in the office of Thomas Seaton Scott (1826–1895), the chief architect of the Department of Public Works—one of the many occasions when his support



would prove critical for his son. Though Brymner is not known to have designed any buildings for the department while working there, in 1876 he visited Quebec City (possibly at Scott's request) and made a series of drawings of its fortifications and streets. These drawings, which include *Mountain Hill Looking Up* and *Palace Hill*, demonstrate his early efforts to master perspective and depict urban space.



William Brymner, *Palace Hill*, 1876, pen and ink on paper, 29.8 x 29.8 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Brymner grew up a pleasant but serious young man. In a letter to his brother, Douglas reported that his son was saving to study at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and commented, "It is a great blessing he is so steady and associates only with very steady fellows so that we never have the slightest uneasiness about him."<sup>7</sup> Despite this proud claim, Brymner's parents may have been unsure about their son's plans. Opportunities in art and design in Canada were limited at this time. Many arts organizations were still very young and small; the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts would not be founded until 1880. As well, many patrons still looked to Europe and its buildings and art collections as the standards to emulate in Canada. Thus, many aspiring artists in Canada concluded that going abroad was necessary—a critical investment in a future career. They believed Europe was the ideal place to learn: for instance, Robert Harris (1849-1919), a Canadian artist in Paris in 1877, reported that the atelier he was studying in was "perhaps the best in Paris, which means the

world.”<sup>8</sup> Brymner undoubtedly shared this view. Although training in Europe was expensive, in the winter of 1878 he sailed for Britain, where he visited relatives in Scotland before moving to Paris.

### PARIS STUDIES

In March 1878 Brymner arrived in Paris intending to study art and design—he was still considering becoming an architect. The city offered unequalled access to artworks, from paintings by Old Masters in the Louvre to exhibitions elsewhere of works by contemporary French artists, from academic painters to the Impressionists he took an interest in later in his life. Paris was also home to a vibrant community of expatriate art students drawn to the city’s art schools that offered programs based on the curriculum at the École des beaux-arts.

Students began by drawing casts, often of antique statues, before progressing to drawing living models and, finally, to painting. This approach to artistic training was promoted through the École, but that school was difficult to get into because it offered limited spaces to non-French students and admission required passing challenging examinations. Many international students, Brymner included, found themselves attending alternative schools and directing their own studies.



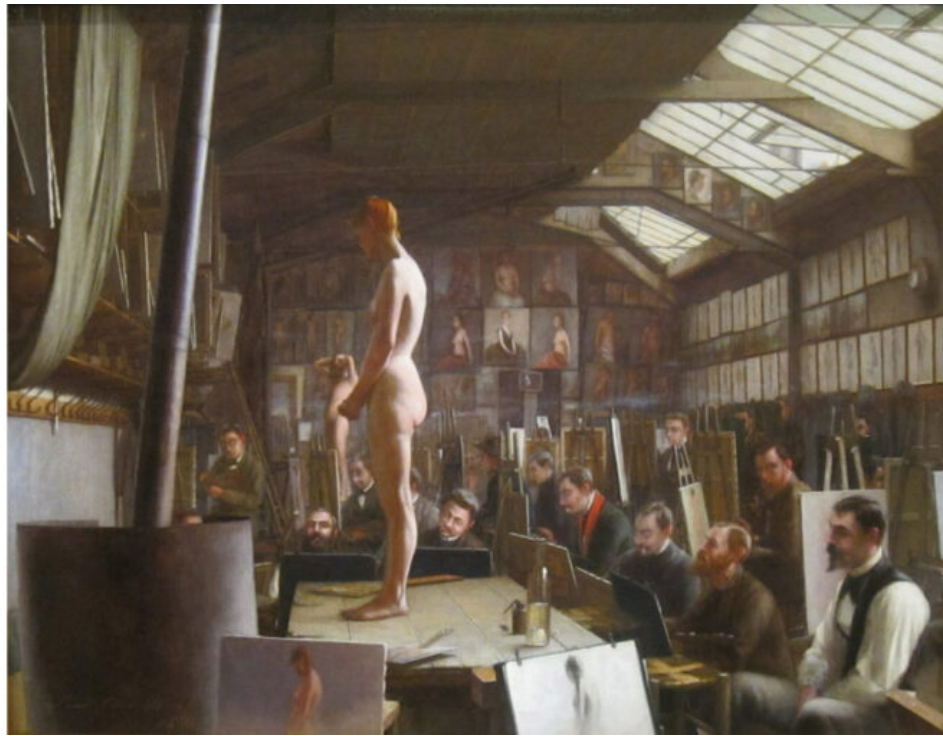
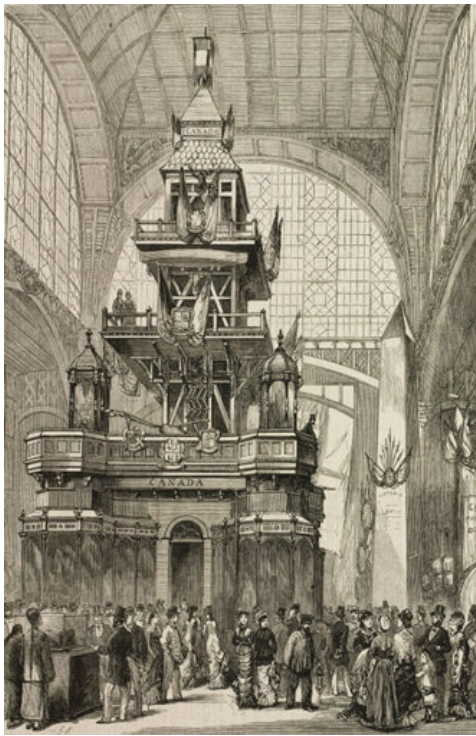
Édouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, oil on canvas, 96 x 130 cm, Courtauld Gallery, London.

When Brymner arrived in Paris he found a job working for the Canadian section of the Paris Exposition, assisting with the creation of displays. Like other world’s fairs, the exposition showcased an enormous range of objects, with a special focus on natural resources and manufactured goods. It also served as a presentation of European colonial power, a reflection of European dominance in global politics. (The Canadian exhibits were within the section allotted to the British Empire.)<sup>9</sup> For Brymner the exposition meant working long hours for a much-needed salary, but he still had the time to explore other countries’ displays, noting, “[It’s] worthwhile walking about to see the different ways of work and kinds of tools used by the Russians, Chinamen, Dutchmen and Spaniards.”<sup>10</sup> But Brymner had come to Paris to study art, and he had already begun taking night classes in drawing at the École gratuite de dessin.<sup>11</sup>

In July 1878 Brymner’s job with the exposition ended and he had more time to devote to his art studies.<sup>12</sup> He started additional drawing lessons with a new teacher, and then, in October, he enrolled at the Académie Julian.<sup>13</sup> There his teachers included the renowned French painters Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836–1911), Gustave Boulanger (1824–1888), Tony Robert-Fleury (1837–1911), and William Bouguereau (1825–1905), artists known for their skills in depicting



human bodies. Brymner's program at the Académie resembled the traditional progression at the École des beaux-arts. Drawing was the central focus, and he was initially sketching plaster casts.<sup>14</sup> He began working from live models in early January 1879.<sup>15</sup>



LEFT: "Canadian Trophy" at the Paris Exhibition, illustration from *The Graphic*, July 6, 1878. RIGHT: Jefferson David Chalfant, *Bouguereau's Atelier at the Académie Julian, Paris, 1891*, oil on panel, 28.6 x 36.8 cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Throughout his studies, Brymner wrote long letters to his parents in which he provided numerous details of his work, as well as of his worries. He repeatedly explained the costs he faced. Determined to show that he was careful with money, he reduced his expenses to the point of going hungry often; in retrospect, he felt that this deprivation affected his focus on his work.<sup>16</sup> He was also homesick. Thirty years later he told a friend: "I remember the feeling of never getting enough letters from home. . . . After a while unfortunately you begin not to care so much & then perhaps not at all. I have never reached that stage yet & hope I never will."<sup>17</sup>

Although Brymner fretted about his abilities, his correspondence suggests he was a focused and disciplined student. He especially admired Robert-Fleury's approach to teaching, reporting, "I like his ways of correcting exceedingly. . . . He does not put a line on the paper or at least very seldom, but the way he picks things to pieces is astonishing."<sup>18</sup> Robert-Fleury was an encouraging teacher, and when he noticed that Brymner appeared to be forcing himself to draw, he advised a break, declaring, "il faut vous amuser en dessinant" (you need to have fun drawing).<sup>19</sup>

Brymner sought out learning opportunities in the city. He visited many well-known sites in Paris and beyond, exploring randomly chosen locales in the French countryside and sketching the places he saw. Like many other art students in the city, he also studied by copying works in the Louvre, an experience he later depicted in an etching.

It was while he was in Europe that Brymner definitively decided to become a painter. In February 1879 he told his father that he had “given up all idea of being an Architect” and that he was “exerting [himself] altogether in the direction of painting.”<sup>20</sup> A year later he declared: “I must stay another year. I have now no doubt

of going through with what I started with such fear and trembling.”<sup>21</sup> He was not only determined to become an artist, he was also determined to avoid teaching art, telling his mother, “I hope from the bottom of my heart never to need to become Master at any art school.”<sup>22</sup> In 1880, however, financial necessity forced him to return to Canada, and to take up teaching.<sup>23</sup>

### THE AMBITIOUS ARTIST

Although Brymner’s *Self Portrait* of 1881, a drawing made after he came home to Ottawa, shows a confident young man, he had only just begun to establish a career. He had hoped to avoid becoming a teacher but he still needed an income, so, as a temporary solution, he took a position at the Ottawa Art School. In the summer of 1881 Brymner returned to Paris with the intention of formally resuming his studies, but he became seriously ill with rheumatic fever and returned to Ottawa that fall. By the spring he had recovered, and he accepted a commission to create illustrations for the writer Joshua Fraser’s book *Shanty, Forest and River Life in the Backwoods of Canada* (1883), most likely because he needed money. He went back to the Ottawa Art School that fall, but he stayed only through the spring.

Brymner returned to Europe in the summer of 1883. He spent time painting in Burgundy with the British artist Frederick Brown (1851–1941) and he returned to Paris, resuming his work at the Académie Julian. He felt there were several advantages to being in Europe. In a letter to his mother, he noted that “models are so much cheaper and more easily got than in Canada.”<sup>24</sup> To his father, he explained, “I would very much rather do my summer’s work on this side with some others, who can paint than go out and work by myself in Canada. I think it would be easier to sell work done here too.”<sup>25</sup> He was also interested in



LEFT: William Brymner, *Old Man Painting in the Louvre, Paris, 1880/81 and 1902/3*, etching, aquatint, watercolour highlights, 19.9 x 14.9 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. RIGHT: William Brymner, *A Street in Paris*, c.1878–85, pen and black ink on wove paper, 27.7 x 14.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Members of the Ottawa School of Art, 1890, photograph by William James Topley. Left to right: Franklin Brownell, Michel Frechette, William Brymner, John Watts, Frank Checkley, and Lawrence Fennings Taylor.



keeping up with European art. In the winter of 1884 Brymner visited the Édouard Manet (1832-1883) memorial exhibition at the École des beaux-arts, an experience he would recall later in life.<sup>26</sup> He admired Manet for painting *en plein air*, and believed that his late works, such as *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, would be long remembered.<sup>27</sup>

In the spring of 1884 Brymner made plans to go to Yorkshire with the British artist Frederick W. Jackson (1859-1918) and Scottish-Canadian artist James Kerr-Lawson (1862-1939), both of whom were also working in Paris that winter. The group elected to stay in Runswick Bay, where Brymner completed a critical group of paintings. These include *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, a large and complex work that eventually became his diploma submission for the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and *The Lonely Orphans Taken to Her Heart*, 1884, as well as smaller works.



William Brymner, *The Lonely Orphans Taken to Her Heart*, 1884, oil on canvas, 71 x 91.2 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Brymner was artistically productive in England, but he still worried about money and the feasibility of being a painter. His father was trying to sell his son's works in Canada but had limited success, and Brymner stated that he did not have "the same courage to go on painting" when they failed to sell.<sup>28</sup> After several months in Yorkshire, he returned to his studies in Paris in January 1885. He again enrolled part-time at the Académie Julian, believing that it should be his last winter there, because "what more I do must be done for myself. But I think it important that I should have this last turn."<sup>29</sup> He also wanted to create



a work that would improve his reputation as an artist, and in this he was successful. *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885, a landscape painting inspired by the Barbizon school, was accepted for exhibition at the Paris Salon. For Brymner, this was a major achievement.

Inclusion in the salon was prestigious but not financially rewarding, and Brymner returned to Canada. He spent the summer of 1885 in Baie-Saint-Paul in the Lower Saint Lawrence region of Quebec, a location he may have chosen because he believed it resembled the French countryside.<sup>30</sup> At Baie-Saint-Paul he continued to work on subjects similar to those he had painted in Europe, such as children playing outdoors. *Four Girls in a Meadow, Baie-Saint-Paul*, 1885, and *The Books They Loved They Read in Running Brooks (Ils aimaient à lire dans les ruisseaux fuyants)*, 1885, were among his earliest oil paintings depicting rural Quebec, a subject he would return to many times throughout his career. He would eventually become known for his depictions of French-Canadian landscapes and people. In 1885, however, his Baie-Saint-Paul works suggested a determination to create thematic continuity in his paintings despite having left Europe.



William Brymner, *Four Girls in a Meadow, Baie-Saint-Paul*, 1885, oil on canvas, 39 x 46.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

A year later, Brymner travelled to Western Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) had been completed the previous November, and it was a transformative project for the entire country. British Columbia had joined Confederation in 1871 with the agreement that Canada would build a railway connecting it to the provinces in the east—Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. The completion of the railway fulfilled this promise, but it also led the government to encourage mass settlement on the prairies and to force Indigenous peoples onto reserves with increasingly draconian measures.

Brymner would witness all these changes on his trip, which was critical to his future work. It was yet another strategic decision: he was aware that the CPR was commissioning landscapes depicting the Rocky Mountains from artists in Canada and from abroad. For instance, John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898) had received a commission for watercolours; one of the works he created was *Summit Lake near Lenchoile, Bow River, Canadian Pacific Railway*, 1886.<sup>31</sup> To demonstrate his abilities, Brymner, while staying near Rogers Pass, began a painting that was five feet in length, one “intended to beat this Aitkins [sic], who comes out from Glasgow to paint the Rockies for the C.P.R.” He clearly knew that the Scottish artist James Alfred Aitken (1846-1897) was working for the railway.<sup>32</sup> Painting on such a large scale was a challenge, and only a few



days later he reported, "A 5 foot picture is no joke."<sup>33</sup> He wrote no more about this painting, which he may not have finished. Later in his career, however, Brymner would paint other views of the mountains.



LEFT: John A. Fraser, *Summit Lake near Lenchoile, Bow River, Canadian Pacific Railway*, 1886, watercolour over graphite on wove paper, mounted on canvas, 65.8 x 92.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: The Honourable Donald A. Smith driving the last spike to complete the Canadian Pacific Railway, British Columbia, 1885, photograph by Alexander Ross.

Brymner's 1886 trip was also significant because he spent weeks visiting the Siksika Nation Reserve near Gleichen (now in Alberta). Outsiders were not usually permitted to live on the reserve, but the local Indian agent, Magnus Begg, permitted him to do so for a few weeks. It is unclear why this exception was made (or even why Brymner wished to stay there). Brymner thought Begg had made the decision on his own authority and he worried that it might be unwise to ask federal authorities in Ottawa for official permission.<sup>34</sup> While there, Brymner completed one of the most striking works of his career. *Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT*, 1886, is a haunting image of government food rations being distributed to the Siksika People. Brymner's time on the reserve had a limited impact on his work overall, but his memories of the visit remained vivid more than twenty years later when he recounted them in detail in a long letter to a friend, the artist Edmund Morris (1871–1913).<sup>35</sup>

Cultivating his reputation as an artist was challenging, but ultimately the years between 1882 and 1886 were some of the most productive of Brymner's career. He had created several large oil paintings, such as *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, with which he established himself as a professional artist. Not only was Brymner regularly submitting his work to exhibitions, but in 1886 he became a full member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. That same year, his paintings *A Wreath of Flowers* and *Crazy Patchwork*, 1886, were selected for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, a massive event intended to celebrate the British Empire, especially Britain's imperial possessions in India. These were notable achievements for a young artist in Canada, but they did not bring significant financial success. Money remained a major concern.



William Brymner, *Hermit Mountain, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Range*, 1886, oil on canvas, 154.5 x 213.8 cm, Glenbow Museum, Calgary.

### THE AMBIVALENT ART TEACHER

In the fall of 1886 Brymner accepted a job as master of the School at the Art Association of Montreal (AAM). He would go on to teach at AAM for over thirty years, but at the time he was ambivalent about teaching and had ambitions to advance his own artwork. Writing to his father in March 1889, he reported that he had not sold any paintings recently and so he planned to keep his teaching job for the following school year: "I feel as if it would be too much of a risk to throw up the School which is a certainty, for such very vague chances as I see ahead at present."<sup>36</sup> Brymner would not leave his position at AAM until 1921, but the fact that he was considering it in 1889 demonstrates that he was still determined to work on his own paintings.

Brymner's predecessor, Robert Harris, had been appointed director and principal instructor of AAM in 1883. Harris had also studied in Paris, and he developed a program at AAM that emulated the French academic tradition: students began by mastering the drawing of casts before they progressed to life drawing.<sup>37</sup> Brymner continued this system but gradually made additions to the classes the school offered, including outdoor sketching (1889) and elementary drawing (1898).

Brymner also occasionally gave special lectures, including a presentation on Impressionism in which he offered an assessment of the artistic movement, as well as of artistic styles in general. He was highly critical of anyone who aspired to work in a specific style, declaring: "You see a great deal



William Brymner with his students at the Art Association of Montreal, 1902, photographer unknown.



written about men who are classics and men who are naturalists and others Romanticists, and so on. . . . There are really only two kinds of painters. Those who show us what they sincerely see and feel, and those who are the followers of someone else."<sup>38</sup> His thinking around the formation of stylistic "schools of art" was that they represented a point at which "individuality is lost, and conventionality begins."<sup>39</sup> Brymner's conviction that an artist should not try to emulate a particular style was critical to his own oeuvre. In the same spirit, encouraging individuality was a principle of his advice to students.

Brymner's teaching position at AAM afforded him a stable income and professional position, and his own artistic practice during this period was defined by a voracious thirst for travel. He travelled back to Paris in the summer of 1889, returning to the Académie Julian and visiting the Exposition Universelle. Though this exposition is particularly famous because the Eiffel Tower was built for it, Brymner was more interested in the art. He thought there had never before been "so good a chance to study what is being done in the way of pictures all over the world. The collection is enormous and well arranged; not only are the pictures of each Country kept together, but each man's work is kept as much as possible by itself."<sup>40</sup> Brymner was always curious about the work of other artists and valued this opportunity, but he did not leave a record of the artists to whose work he was most drawn.



LEFT: Claude Monet, *The Gare St-Lazare*, 1877, oil on canvas, 54.3 x 73.6 cm, National Gallery, London. RIGHT: Léon-Charles Libonis, *Eiffel Tower*, 1889, lithograph on cardstock (postcard), 8.9 x 14 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Travelling in the summer became part of Brymner's annual routine despite the modest salary he earned at AAM.<sup>41</sup> In 1891 he spent time working in Killarney, Ireland, meeting up with friends such as the artist James M. Barnsley (1861-1929).<sup>42</sup> Visiting the Netherlands and Belgium later that summer, he went to Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Antwerp to see paintings by Rembrandt Haarmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), Frans Hals (c.1582-1666), and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). Brymner admired Rubens's works most of all, declaring that the artist did "everything as naturally as the bird flies"—he described Rembrandt as laboured in his work and Hals as lacking in Rubens's range.<sup>43</sup> In addition to giving him the opportunity to see more artworks first-hand, Brymner's European travels were critical to his professional standing because many Montreal collectors valued Old Masters and modern European paintings above all other art.<sup>44</sup> Thus, to understand these works was not only an opportunity to better understand Western art history, it was also an

opportunity to better understand the tastes of his potential patrons in Montreal.

Not all of Brymner's trips were to Europe, however. In 1892 the Canadian Pacific Railway sponsored Brymner's travel to Western Canada, and he returned there in 1893. Under the direction of William Van Horne, its influential general manager, the company funded many artists' journeys during this period, with the intention of commissioning artworks that depicted the Rocky Mountains. Though Brymner had painted on an earlier trip west, the 1892 journey was his opportunity to create a large series and to participate in the company's tremendous artistic project to represent the Rockies as landscapes that were integral to Canadian national identity—while simultaneously celebrating the company's own achievement in completing the railway. The drawings and painted studies Brymner made on these trips became significant source material for many future artworks.



William Brymner, *Canadian Rockies on Fraser River District*, 1886, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 144.8 cm.

By the late 1890s Brymner was spending more time visiting the Lower Saint Lawrence region; he went to Beaupré in 1896 and 1897. In 1897 he also visited Paris and Belgium. Taken together, these travels demonstrate a massive commitment to art studies and to searching for new subject matter. They were also crucial to his professional position in Montreal. Both the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the AAM held annual exhibitions, and Brymner contributed to their shows almost every year, submitting several works with travel-inspired subjects. The most prominent of these was *In County Cork, Ireland* (exhibited at both the RCA and AAM in 1892). He also held exhibitions in private galleries, sometimes advertised with reference to his recent trips, such as summer travels in France, Holland, or Quebec.<sup>45</sup>



In addition to his extensive explorations, Brymner sought out further artistic opportunities in Montreal. He was a member of the Pen and Pencil Club, formed to bring together Montreal's artists and writers. The organization regularly held meetings in which members were asked to share ideas about a specified theme, offering either a sketch or a brief text. Many of Brymner's contributions survive in the club's scrapbook. He undoubtedly valued the social environment of the club, and he was responsible for introducing some of his friends as new members, including the artists Edmond Dyonnet (1859–1954) and Maurice Cullen (1866–1934).<sup>46</sup> By the turn of the century, both of these professional friendships had become important to his artistic practice.



LEFT: William Brymner, "A Village Street – Memo of Composition," from the *Pen & Pencil Club Scrapbook* (volume 2), c.1891, watercolour, 19.5 x 16.5 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal. RIGHT: Edmond Dyonnet, "Hunger," from the *Pen & Pencil Club Scrapbook* (volume 3), 1896, graphite and crayon on paper, 17 x 12.3 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal.

### A NETWORK OF FRIENDSHIPS

In the early 1900s Brymner's dual career as artist and teacher was well established. He was still teaching at the Art Association of Montreal: his students during this period included William Henry Clapp (1879–1954), Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942), Kathleen Moir Morris (1893–1986), Emily Coonan (1885–1971), and Randolph Hewton (1888–1960). He was regularly participating in exhibitions at the AAM and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and he was showing his work in international exhibitions.

Above all, he was becoming well connected. He had long been sociable, and by now he had developed close friendships that were vital to his artistic practice. Brymner continued to travel during the summers, often with other artists. Between 1896 and 1903 he visited Beaupré almost every summer, frequently spending time with Maurice Cullen, Edmond Dyonnet, and Edmund Morris; James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) was there in the summer of 1903.<sup>47</sup> Brymner valued the fellowship of these visits as well as the artistic opportunities, and the friendships were enduring.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Venetian Canal*, 1904, watercolour on paper laid down on paperboard, 26.7 x 17.8 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. RIGHT: James Wilson Morrice, *Venice at the Golden Hour*, c.1901–2, oil on canvas, 65.4 x 46.3 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



In the early 1900s Brymner returned to Europe. He visited Venice with Cullen and Morrice in 1901 and again in 1902, when they also went to Florence. These European trips gave Brymner an opportunity to better understand Morrice's work in particular. It was more experimental than Brymner's own; for instance, Morrice was more interested in the possibilities of expressive brush strokes and of flattening pictorial space. Despite their differences, Brymner later commented that "I like him & like his work & [don't] know any one who is doing better," advising Gagnon that "you couldn't have a better man than Morrice to give you an occasional suggestion."<sup>48</sup> His travels also enabled Brymner to create works with new European subjects, such as views of Venice, some of which were included in a special exhibition of his and Cullen's work at the AAM in December 1904.<sup>49</sup>

Brymner's friendship with Cullen was one of the most important of his later career. In addition to travelling and exhibiting together, they shared studio spaces.<sup>50</sup> In the summer of 1905 they built a studio together at Saint-Eustache, a town that was near Montreal but far enough from the city to offer the artists many rural subjects. Brymner painted numerous scenes at Saint-Eustache, in both oil and watercolour. Writing to Gagnon in 1908, he noted that he was there all summer and was "very comfortable" but wished "there was no school to be attended to."<sup>51</sup>





LEFT: William Brymner, *Saint-Eustache*, 1905, watercolour on paper laid down on card, 35.6 x 25.4 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Maurice Cullen, *Été à Saint-Eustache*, c.1906, oil on canvas, 73.8 x 59.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Brymner's complaint about the school is revealing. Even after years of exhibitions and significant recognition, he still did not feel financially secure enough to leave his teaching position. Many years later, Group of Seven artist A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974) recalled that "someone said to William Brymner that if artists had more business ability they could make a decent living, to which he retorted, 'In Canada an artist has to be a financial genius merely to stay alive.'"<sup>52</sup> For Brymner, teaching meant "bread + butter," and he was conscious of every successful sale.<sup>53</sup> Yet frustration notwithstanding, he was an established artist, and he was on the cusp of his most prestigious achievement.

### A PROFESSIONAL LEADER

Brymner was elected president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1909, and he would remain president until 1917. His election is indicative of both his personal interest in the RCA and the leadership role he held in the Canadian art community. He was still committed to exhibiting his own work, and he routinely submitted paintings to the shows organized by the RCA, the Art Association of Montreal, and the Canadian Art Club. He experimented with a wide range of subject matter, including the coast at Louisbourg in Nova Scotia and the female nude. He also continued to teach; among his students in the early 1910s were Edwin Holgate (1892–1977), Lilius Torrance Newton (1896–1980), and Adrien Hébert (1890–1967). Outside these activities, Brymner's work as president of the RCA raised his profile, and his achievements in this role became central to his legacy.





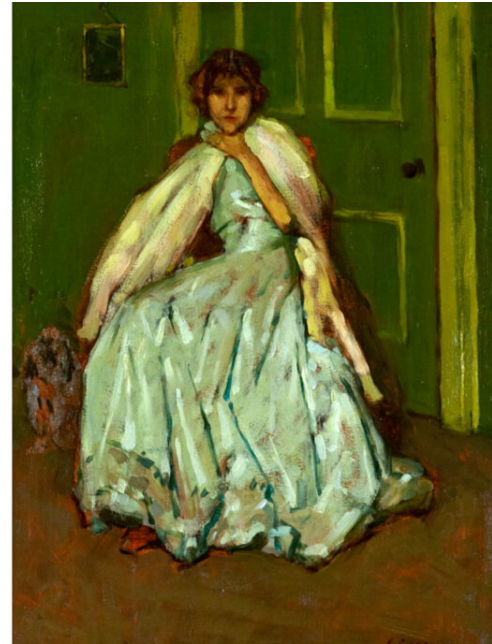
William Brymner, *The Vaughan Sisters*, 1910, oil on canvas, 102.4 x 129 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. This painting's original title was *Miss Dorothy and Miss Irene Vaughan*.

His presidency was marked by two major special exhibitions of Canadian art. The first, held in 1910, was originally prepared as part of the planned Festival of Empire in London. For Brymner and other Canadian artists, the occasion was a huge opportunity to be part of an exhibition on an international stage. Under Brymner's leadership, the RCA arranged a selection of 118 works to be sent (the vast majority were oil paintings); artists whose works were shown included Robert Harris, George Agnew Reid (1860–1947), Mary Hiester Reid (1854–1921), Homer Watson (1855–1936), Helen McNicoll (1879–1915), J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932), and A.Y. Jackson.<sup>54</sup> Brymner contributed his artworks *Miss Dorothy and Miss Irene Vaughan*, 1910, *October in Canada*, by 1910, *Under the Apple Tree (À l'ombre du pommier)*, 1903, and *Blackfoot Indian* (today known as *Blackfoot Chief*), c.1888 or 1906. By the time the festival was cancelled owing to the death of Edward VII, the Canadian art was already en route to Britain, in the care of Edmond Dyonnet, whom Brymner had asked to accompany the works.<sup>55</sup> With Brymner's approval, Dyonnet quickly made alternative arrangements for the art to be shown at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, where the exhibit was well attended and well received.<sup>56</sup> Although Canada had been a dominion since 1867, it was still a part of the British Empire, and Canadian artists and critics found the praise from British critics satisfying.

The second major special exhibition that Brymner spearheaded was prompted by the First World War. Like many Canadians, Brymner was horrified by the brutal lists of fatalities and casualties: writing in September 1914 to Eric Brown, the director of the National Gallery of Canada, he noted, "I see by the bulletins this morning that the slaughter in some of the English regiments is fearful."<sup>57</sup> He was determined to do something to support the war effort. Artists from the RCA, the Ontario Society of Artists, and the Canadian Art Club agreed to work together to arrange a patriotic exhibition. Brymner was chair of the exhibition committee, and the RCA undertook to cover the crucial expenses.



LEFT: J.E.H. MacDonald, *Canada and the Call*, 1914, Patriotic Fund Exhibition poster, 107.3 x 74.1 cm, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. RIGHT: Emily Coonan, *Girl in Green*, 1913, oil on canvas, 66.4 x 49 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.



Known as the *Exhibition of Pictures Given by Canadian Artists in Aid of the Patriotic Fund*, the exhibition toured throughout Canada, going to Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, Saint John, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, London, and Hamilton between 1914 and 1915. Artists contributed a wide variety of works; for example, Ozias Leduc (1864–1955) donated *Effet gris (neige)*, 1914, Lawren Harris (1885–1970) donated *The Corner Store*, 1912, and Emily Coonan donated *Girl in Green*, 1913.<sup>58</sup> Brymner himself gave a landscape painting entitled *Late Afternoon*, c.1913 (current whereabouts unknown).<sup>59</sup> In addition to selling these works, the exhibition raised funds through ticket and catalogue sales. It was a financial and critical success and led to Brymner being named a member of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, an honour from King George V that recognized distinguished service in the British Empire. To celebrate, his fellow artists arranged a dinner, and in 1916 a solo exhibition of Brymner's work was held at the Arts Club of Montreal to mark the pinnacle of an illustrious career.



## FINAL YEARS

On May 6, 1917, Brymner woke up to find he could not move his left side. He had had a stroke. Brymner spent the next three months at the Royal Victoria Hospital before going to Île d'Orléans to convalesce. Even after he was released from the hospital, he struggled with everyday tasks and later described his recovery as "damned slow. . . . I lay in bed and kept as quiet as possible. I was told I was to behave as much like an oyster as possible."<sup>60</sup> He returned to Montreal in the early autumn, and on September 12 he married Mary Caroline Massey Larkin.<sup>61</sup>

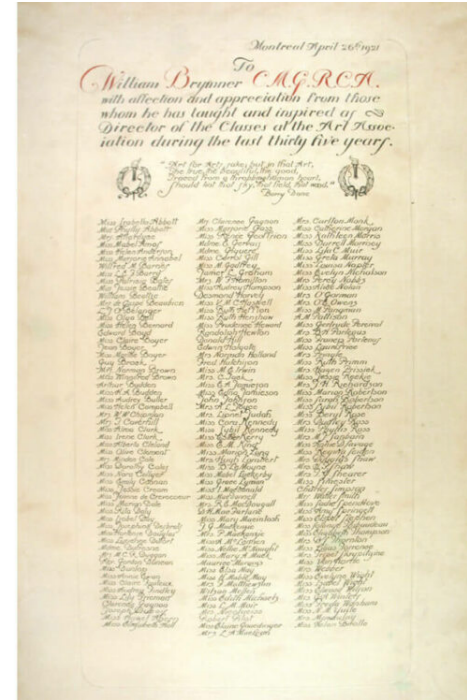
Little is known about Brymner's relationship with Larkin, but he did

tell Clarence Gagnon that he wished he had married her "long before."<sup>62</sup>

Larkin had been on the staff of the Art Association of Montreal, and they had likely known each other for several years at the time of their marriage.<sup>63</sup>

Although Brymner's personal life was happy, his professional life required changes. Edmond Dyonnet had supported him during his recovery and had been invaluable in temporarily managing the affairs of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, but Brymner concluded he could not resume his work as president of the RCA and resigned from his position. It seems unlikely that he was painting during his recovery.

Eventually Brymner was well enough to resume teaching at the AAM, though he walked with a cane. His students in the last few years of his career included Anne Savage (1896-1971), Regina Seiden Goldberg (1897-1991), Prudence Heward (1896-1947), and Robert Pilot (1898-1967). Despite his health struggles, he was still a tremendous teacher, committed to encouraging his students to pursue their own styles. Decades later, Savage would describe him as "a really magnificent man . . . way ahead of his time," who managed to inspire his students to embrace innovation even though he was "employed by a group of the most conventional people you could imagine."<sup>64</sup> In 1921, when Brymner finally retired, the AAM held a special afternoon tea in his honour. His students presented him with a celebratory scroll inscribed "with affection and appreciation from those whom he has taught and inspired." Although he had repeatedly expressed misgivings about teaching to his family and closest friends, Brymner was an immensely gifted teacher. Several of his students not only went on to have noteworthy careers as professional artists, but they also became leaders of modern art in Canada, as key members of the Beaver Hall Group and the Canadian Group of Painters.



LEFT: William Brymner with a group of students, June 1918, photographer unknown, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Certificate of Appreciation presented to William Brymner on his retirement from the Art Association of Montreal, 1921.

On his retirement, Brymner announced that he intended to travel in Europe for three years, particularly France, Spain, and Italy. He stopped submitting to the major exhibitions after he and his wife left Montreal, but he was still painting. *Carthusian Monastery, Capri*, c.1923, is one of his final works. In June 1925, while visiting some of his wife's relatives in England, Brymner died. He was honoured with two posthumous exhibitions, one at the Watson Art Galleries in Montreal in late 1925 and one at the AAM in early 1926.



William Brymner, *Carthusian Monastery, Capri*, c.1923, oil on panel, 46.2 x 61.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In many ways, Canadian art had moved on by 1925. The Group of Seven and the Beaver Hall Group had both formed in 1920, and the artists of these groups, with their different approaches to modernism, were commanding the attention of the Canadian art world. Brymner was an artist of a different generation: he fiercely supported his students' interests in modernism, but he had not undertaken radical stylistic experiments himself. Critics commenting on his memorial exhibitions praised him for the sheer range of his work. He worked extensively in oil and in watercolour but, above all, he experimented with an enormous range of subjects, from people on the Siksika Reserve to European villages.<sup>65</sup>

For those critics and for later art historians, the extraordinary variety of Brymner's works has made his career difficult to summarize. Ultimately, this diversity reflects Brymner's relentless willingness to experiment. In imparting this enthusiasm to his students—through his work as a teacher and through the



example of his own career—Brymner inspired a generation of modernists and ensured his own place in the history of Canadian art.



William Brymner, c.1910, photographer unknown, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.





# KEY WORKS

**William Brymner (1855–1925) was committed to personal innovation throughout his career. An enthusiastic traveller, Brymner was known for landscapes that depict places in Canada and Europe, yet he also created portraits, female nudes, and seascapes. Although today he is remembered for his oil paintings, he was highly regarded for his work in watercolour as well. The following selection reveals how Brymner rejected the notion of emulating a specific artistic style even though he was interested in a range of painters, from the Old Masters to his Canadian contemporaries. This conviction explains the diversity of his work and his important legacy as an art teacher with the Art Association of Montreal.**



## MOUNTAIN HILL LOOKING UP 1876



William Brymner, *Mountain Hill Looking Up*, 1876

Pen and ink on paper, 29.7 x 43.7 cm

Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa

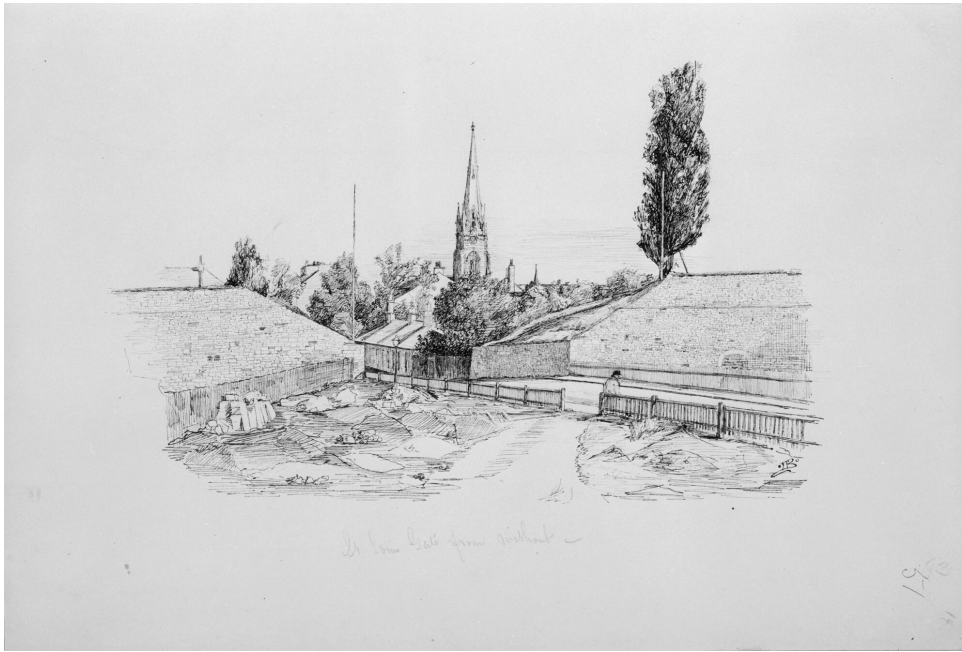
*Mountain Hill Looking Up* is one of a series of drawings of historic buildings and fortifications that Brymner made during a visit to Quebec City in September 1876, when he was only twenty. The viewer is positioned in the middle of a road, with fortifications on the right and a row of houses jammed together on the left. This drawing is one of the earliest of Brymner's surviving works and reveals his initial training as an architect and his interest in representing complex historic sites.

Brymner was still considering pursuing a career as an architect when he created this drawing and others of Quebec City. It is possible that he made the work at the request of the Office of Public Works, where he had been employed.<sup>1</sup> The surviving drawings include images of gunnery batteries and fortifications, St. Louis Gate, Notre Dame Church, Palace Hill, Hope Hill, and Mountain Hill. The series demonstrates Brymner's commitment to mastering the ability to represent urban space.

In *Mountain Hill Looking Up*, the planes of the houses and the walls are rigidly drawn with straight lines. Brymner's strategy here was not necessarily to depict a harmonious scene—the buildings in the distance are barely sketched, as if they are placeholders rather than forms—but to capture the solid masses of the structures and the textures of the walls, and particularly the dense pattern of the stone in the fortifications. Yet this is not a purely technical drawing, either: Brymner has included trees and shadows on the street, as if to invite the viewer into the space. A similar balance

between buildings and setting is apparent in another of his works from this series, *St. Louis Gate from Without*, 1876. Although in that drawing Brymner's principal focus is the fortification walls, he has built up the background and foreground and added a figure.

Together, these works embody Brymner's architectural drawing at its most pictorial. Within a few years of creating them, however, Brymner would decide to train as an artist rather than an architect. Still, when he began his studies in Paris in 1878, he would continue sketching urban spaces.



William Brymner, *St. Louis Gate from Without*, 1876, pen and ink on paper, 29.7 x 43.7 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.



## A WREATH OF FLOWERS 1884



William Brymner, *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884

Oil on canvas, 122.5 x 142.7 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

This deceptively simple painting of girls sitting on a hillside making a wreath of flowers was created during Brymner's visit to Runswick Bay, Yorkshire, from May to November 1884 (he worked on the painting periodically throughout his visit, finishing it shortly before he left the village).<sup>1</sup> *A Wreath of Flowers* was a critical success for Brymner and a turning point in his early career as an artist. At the time, he described this work as his "magnum opus" and agonized over whether to send it to the Royal Academy of Arts in London or the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts for exhibition—he eventually decided on the latter.<sup>2</sup> Today, many consider *A Wreath of Flowers* his best-known painting.

By the summer of 1884 Brymner felt a tremendous pressure to sell more of his work so that he would no longer have to ask his father for money.<sup>3</sup> The trip to

Yorkshire was strategic: he believed it would be affordable, and he had heard “that English subjects sell much better in England than foreign ones.”<sup>4</sup> Over the course of the summer he worked on a number of different paintings, such as *One Summer’s Day*, 1884.

Brymner decided on the basic composition of *A Wreath of Flowers* in early summer and began a number of sketches. He had met many people in the community, and he asked local children to pose. Although he did not record the names of the children, he did note how challenging they were as models: “The difficulties of painting children the size mine are are awful. Keeping the pose for two minutes and then doing something altogether different for 10 nearly drives me wild sometimes, but they are prettier than anything else which keeps me at them.”<sup>5</sup> The presence of clouds in the painting is significant because Brymner would not work when the weather was “too sunny,” so the tones are soft—a reflection of the diffused light.<sup>6</sup>



William Brymner, *One Summer’s Day*, 1884, oil on wood, 26.7 x 37.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Compositionally, the work is complex and surprising. The diagonal cut of the landscape is dramatic, and the hillside is crowded with wildflowers, rocks, and clumps of grasses. The girls’ figures are crisp and clear, but parts of the landscape are indistinct, almost smudgy. Colours create echoes and balance throughout the scene, from the blue sky and smock on the girl in the centre of the group to the grey undertones that establish an overall muted feel to the work—even the pink bonnet of the girl on the right and the pink pinafore of the girl at the left are greyish. Stylistically, this painting is typical of Brymner’s oeuvre in that it refuses any neat labelling. Its carefully modelled figures represent the influence of Brymner’s French academic training and perhaps especially of his teacher William Bouguereau (1825–1905). Its outdoor setting reflects Brymner’s commitment to painting *en plein air*, a practice that he knew was important to many modern French artists, such as Édouard Manet (1832–1883). In bringing these different artistic strategies together, Brymner signalled his commitment to innovation—and his refusal to conform to a specific style.

When *A Wreath of Flowers* was exhibited at the Art Association of Montreal in 1885, one critic wrote that Brymner’s works “have been exhibited here before, but the present one is far in advance of any of his previous efforts.”<sup>7</sup> In 1886 the painting was included in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London. That same year, Brymner became a full member of the RCA and he donated this painting as his diploma work, a required gift that symbolized his new professional status.



**BORDER OF THE FOREST OF FONTAINEBLEAU 1885**

**William Brymner, *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885**

**Oil on canvas, 54 x 80.6 cm**

**Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston**

*Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau* is a sombre wintry view of the French countryside in which two figures are gathering leaves. The subject is significant: Fontainebleau is located near Barbizon, and both places were critical for modern French landscape painters such as Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867), and Narcisse Diaz de la Peña (1807–1876), artists who are now the most famous of the so-called Barbizon school. Brymner painted this work to demonstrate his own talent as a landscape painter. He aimed to impress critics and peers with his complex composition, and his plan was to submit it to the Paris Salon exhibition, then considered to be one of the most prestigious exhibition spaces in the world. Just as Brymner had hoped, the painting was accepted for exhibition at the salon in 1885.

In letters to his father, Brymner described the work: “My picture is purely landscape. A screen of trees dead leaves under them a gray sky and village, and some fields seen through them. The subject is so full of detail by way of tree branches that [it’s] very tedious to work out, but I think it will do when finished if I can work out the whole of it as I have done a part. The only thing is that there may not be enough of effect about it. The whole thing is (in nature)



extremely delicate in colour."<sup>1</sup> The work reflects Brymner's stubborn commitment to painting outdoors. Reporting on his progress, he noted that "for the last week or 10 days I had to do it in the pouring rain under a blue umbrella, got soaked three or four times I finally had to put the two figures who are gathering leaves, in in the studio."<sup>2</sup> The poor weather is clearly apparent in the finished painting.

*Border* invites comparison with the work of the Barbizon school, but the connection is complex. Brymner had chosen his subject strategically; he knew that he was painting in a region where Millet, Rousseau, and Diaz had lived. The Barbizon school is now known for a commitment to painting en plein air to observe nature with sensitivity and to treat landscape as a serious subject, and Brymner shared these goals.<sup>3</sup> He was well aware that the region was an artistic centre, observing in 1881 that Barbizon "is on the borders of the forest, and is almost exclusively an artists' place of refuge. All the villages round about are frequented by the same fraternity. . . . There are a good many good painters here so that I am always learning something by watching them work from nature."<sup>4</sup>

But while Brymner believed in learning from other artists' principles and practices, he did not believe in stylistic emulation. In commenting on the Barbizon school, he noted that although he admired Rousseau and Millet, the Barbizon painters "developed into a school" and its followers fell "into the abyss of Blackness and Bitumen."<sup>5</sup> It is safe to assume that he did not consider himself to be a follower, perhaps because he considered *Border* an experimental work. The painting remained important to Brymner for many years and was among the works he displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.



Théodore Rousseau, *Forest of Fontainebleau, Cluster of Tall Trees Overlooking the Plain of Clair-Bois at the Edge of Bas-Bréau*, c.1849-52, oil on canvas, 90.8 x 116.8 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



## GIVING OUT RATIONS TO THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS, NWT 1886



William Brymner, *Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT*, 1886

Oil on canvas, 66 x 81.3 cm

Art Gallery of Hamilton

*Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT* depicts people of the Siksika Nation lining up to receive flour rations from the Canadian government. Brymner created this work while visiting the Siksika Nation Reserve near Gleichen (now in Alberta) in 1886. Although he is known to have worked on other paintings during his visit, only this one can be conclusively traced. Unlike many other nineteenth-century paintings that depict Indigenous people, such as *Six Black Feet Chiefs, Blackfoot*, c.1849-55, by Paul Kane (1810-1871), Brymner's work is not an image that purports to represent traditional culture. The painting is not detailed but it is evident that the people in it are wearing ordinary clothing, rather than ceremonial dress, and minimal jewellery.<sup>1</sup> Their expressions are sombre and viewers are asked to grasp the gravity of the situation. It is an image about a desperate need for food.

Food rations were among the promises of Treaty 7, an 1877 agreement between Canada and several First Nations, including the Siksika Nation.<sup>2</sup>

By 1886 the practice of distributing provisions had become controversial: the federal government had been accused of excessive spending and also of sending food unfit to eat.<sup>3</sup> Others criticized the government on moral grounds: when rations were withheld with the intention of forcing Indigenous people onto reserves, one member of parliament accused the government of "a most unwise and inhuman policy."<sup>4</sup> Brymner would have been aware of the political significance of the scene he was painting, as Canadian newspapers frequently reported on the federal government's handling of these rations.<sup>5</sup>

Brymner would have witnessed severe hunger during his visit to the Siksika Nation Reserve as the local Indian agent was limiting rations in an effort to reduce costs.<sup>6</sup> In a speech made in July 1886, the Siksika leader, Isapo-Muxika (then called Crowfoot in the Canadian media), spoke of the inadequacy of the rations and the risks of starvation, declaring that "he and his chiefs feared for their children, that food would not be given them."<sup>7</sup> Brymner had met Isapo-Muxika only weeks earlier.

Brymner's letters to his father recount his experiences on the reserve. On May 12, he wrote, "I saw them give out the rations for 4 days (1 ¼ lb. of meat per head per day and ½ lb. of flour I think) The sight was comical. These Indians are real painted Savages."<sup>8</sup> The language is clearly racist, though it should be noted that during the late 1800s the word "comical" sometimes meant "strange," as opposed to "funny," and this is likely what Brymner meant. In another letter, he noted, "I'm painting a picture of the Indians being rationed and I wont [sic] leave until it is finished. Of course I have been at other things too, but that is the most important."<sup>9</sup> Today it is unclear to what other projects Brymner was referring. While working on the reserve, he paid Indigenous people to pose for him, but he did not record their names.

This painting is a world apart from *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, with its radically different subject and a style much closer to realism. Brymner's motivations for the work are unknown, though he certainly understood the politics of his subject. Today the work is an important reminder of terrible colonial betrayal and the Canadian government's use of famine as a weapon to enforce the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.



Oliver Buell, "Crowfoot," Chief of the Blackfoot Indians, 1886, photograph, 19.05 x 11.43 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.



## IN COUNTY CORK, IRELAND 1892



William Brymner, *In County Cork, Ireland (Dans le comté de Cork, en Irlande)*, 1892

Oil on canvas, 95.7 x 129 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City

*In County Cork, Ireland (Dans le comté de Cork, en Irlande)* is an elaborate composition depicting a village scene. A curving road is defined by low walls and buildings and carefully balanced trees, grass, and vegetation. A young woman (whose identity is unknown) leads her geese along the road, as if making her way toward the viewer. This work was one of Brymner's most high-profile paintings in the early 1890s. Though he had taken up a permanent role as teacher at the Art Association of Montreal, he still had ambitions for his own painting.

Brymner visited Ireland in the summer of 1891, meeting up with friends, such as the artist James M. Barnsley (1861-1929), and making multiple excursions into the countryside.<sup>1</sup> The painting's date of 1892 indicates that it was likely based on drawings done in Ireland and may have been begun there, but it was completed in Montreal. In the spring of that year Brymner submitted this work both to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts exhibition and to the AAM exhibition, where it came second in a vote for most popular picture.<sup>2</sup> At the AAM, the work attracted significant critical praise. A report in the *Montreal*

*Daily Star* claimed that the painting was “most admired by genuine critics” and that some said it was “the best he has ever done.”<sup>3</sup>

Brymner’s other major submission to these shows was *Champ-de-Mars, Winter, 1892*, a painting that also showcases soft light, though here the subject is Montreal in winter. In contrast, *In County Cork* is not only a demonstration of Brymner’s abilities in landscape, it is also a reminder of his work in Europe. Montreal art collectors typically valued European art over works by Canadian artists, so a painting with an explicitly European subject signalled that Brymner was not only talented, he was also well travelled and understood collectors’ tastes.



William Brymner, *Champ-de-Mars, Winter, 1892*, oil on canvas, 74.9 x 101.6 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The critic for the *Montreal Witness* was impressed, stating that it was “one of the most noted pictures in the exhibition. It is a good type of Irish scenery, embracing nature in its human and scenic forms. Competent critics argue that the foreground is capable of better treatment. . . . In all other respects the picture is one of the best in the exhibition.”<sup>4</sup> The *Gazette’s* critic wrote that “in the matter of progress, Mr. Wm. Brymner takes a leading place. His work has always been careful and conscientious, but in some of the Irish pictures which he exhibits this year he has caught an artistic quality and finish quite new to him.”<sup>5</sup> The critic does not explain precisely what “quality” Brymner’s work had captured, though the review later praises the light in the painting. Even without further details, however, this review shows how the critical praise and success of *In County Cork* helped consolidate Brymner’s position as a leading Canadian painter.



## IN THE SELKIRKS NEAR GLACIER HOUSE C.1894



William Brymner, *In the Selkirks near Glacier House*, c.1894

Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 213.4 cm

Glenbow Museum, Calgary

Between 1886 and the early 1900s Brymner painted several mountain landscapes. *In the Selkirks near Glacier House* is representative of these artworks. Brymner travelled to the Rocky Mountains in 1886, 1892, and 1893. He made his first trip in an attempt to establish himself as an artist capable of painting mountain landscapes; later, his work was supported by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). This work is an unusually large canvas for Brymner. The view is composed to emphasize the scale of the peaks, which almost seem to press against the top of the frame. The mountains are jagged and forceful, but Brymner has softened them with clouds, and the pale grey tones in the sky echo the purplish-grey colouring of the mountains. A river cuts through the middle of the picture, drawing the viewer's eye to small puffs of smoke that reveal the presence of a train.

William Van Horne, the general manager of the CPR, believed that paintings of the Rocky Mountains could play a critical role in promoting the region and, by extension, the railway. He was keen to work with landscape painters who were members of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts because he wanted paintings of the mountains to be displayed in exhibitions, company offices, and the homes of company officials.<sup>1</sup>

Brymner was one of many artists Van Horne commissioned to depict the mountains; other artists who created works include Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899) and John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898). Though

Brymner embraced the project, he found painting the mountains challenging, perhaps because of their sheer size. In an 1892 letter to Van Horne, he wrote, "This place is as fine as can be. I have never seen anything much more beautiful in my life or difficult to paint. I hope what we have done will prove satisfactory although I must say I have been very blue about it often."<sup>2</sup> Brymner's work evidently did prove satisfactory, and he created at least twenty mountain landscapes, many of which he likely painted when he returned to Montreal using the drawings and painted sketches from his travels.



William Brymner, *Mount Cheops from Rogers Pass*, c.1898, oil over graphite on canvas, 152.6 x 213.6 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

Many of Brymner's mountain landscapes, such as *Ottertail Range*, 1894, share a similar composition with *In the Selkirks near Glacier House*. The canvas of *Ottertail Range* is unusually long, enabling a more expansive view of the peaks, which, like the mountains in *In the Selkirks near Glacier House*, push against the top of the image to better astonish the viewer. In several of Brymner's other mountain paintings, such as *Hermit Mountain*, *Rogers Pass*, *Selkirk Range*, 1886, and *Mount Cheops from Rogers Pass*, c.1898, the mountains dominate but the scene also includes a small train, a view of the tracks or a road, or a small village or camp.

Brymner represented some of the world's most awe-inspiring mountains with signs of newly built infrastructure, reminding his viewers that the CPR and, by extension, Canadians, had successfully built a railway through the Rockies. These paintings were simultaneously landscapes of extraordinary natural beauty and landscapes demonstrating the progress of settlement in the Canadian West. They did not acknowledge the violence of colonialism: they were seen as representations of a national achievement. Decades before the Group of Seven rose to prominence, Brymner and his peers were already exploring the Canadian landscape as a critical subject for nation building in art.



## THE GREY GIRL 1897



William Brymner, *The Grey Girl*, 1897  
Watercolour on linen, 102.5 x 74.6 cm  
Art Gallery of Hamilton



*The Grey Girl* is a striking composition of a girl looking out at the viewer, interrupted while drawing or writing. There is a graceful balance between the girl's dress and the chair, and both are offset by the patterning in the wall behind. One of Brymner's most interesting experiments in watercolour from the late 1890s, it is a critical demonstration of his confidence with this medium and his ambitions for exhibitions.

What is most notable about this painting is that it was created with watercolour on linen, a combination Brymner used only on a few occasions; like most artists, he typically painted his watercolours on paper. By the late 1890s he was confident with watercolour, which allows for exceptional delicacy but is also difficult to work with, especially on such a large scale and when painting on linen or canvas. With this work, Brymner was attempting to demonstrate mastery while offering viewers something creative and unexpected. *The Picture Book*, 1898, painted using watercolour, oil, and resin on linen, was another experiment with materials with a similar subject. Ultimately, he produced few paintings like these two, most likely because smaller watercolours on paper were easier to sell.

When *The Grey Girl* was exhibited at the Art Association of Montreal, critics deemed the painting an achievement. It was praised for "harmony of color" and for sentiment, and one writer declared that "the cleverness of the experiment is undeniable."<sup>1</sup> The review in the *Montreal Daily Star* stated: "The treatment is peculiar, being water color done on canvas in low tones and [it] has the decorative effect of tapestry. This is one of the best pictures in the exhibition."<sup>2</sup> If Brymner had made this work with a view to positioning himself as a talented, innovative artist, he succeeded. The critical success was likely a factor in the painting's selection for the display at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901.

Ultimately, however, Brymner struggled to sell *The Grey Girl*, perhaps because at the time many collectors were more interested in European artists' works. Abandoning the initial price he had set of \$300, he wrote to Charles Porteous (one of his most important patrons and a personal friend) and offered to sell it to him for \$150. As an incentive, he offered to include a black frame, though he also noted that the painting might be framed in gold.<sup>3</sup> Brymner's concern with how the painting might be framed is indicative of his need to make a sale. Porteous did eventually purchase the painting, and he remained a supportive client.



William Brymner, *The Picture Book*, 1898, watercolour, oil, and resin on linen, 103 x 74.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



## EARLY MOONRISE IN SEPTEMBER 1899



William Brymner, *Early Moonrise in September*, 1899

Oil on canvas, 74.2 x 102.1 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*Early Moonrise in September* is a landscape that showcases the moon rising from behind a small group of trees as a flock of sheep graze nearby. In 1897 Brymner visited Beaufort, Quebec, with two other Canadian painters: the French-born painter Edmond Dyonnet (1859–1954) and landscape artist Maurice Cullen (1866–1934). While he was there, Brymner began working on this painting.<sup>1</sup> A small oil sketch has survived; it may have been painted *en plein air* during the visit. The painting itself was most likely finished in Montreal, and it was not exhibited until 1899.

The contrast between the sketch and the finished work suggests how the composition evolved. In the study, Brymner is particularly concerned with the core arrangement of whites in the scene, a balance between the moon, the tree trunks, and the sheep (who are merely suggested through white splotches). In the final work, different shades of white have been modified such that the moon dominates, and delicate gradations of light represent the softness of the moonlight in the sky and on the trees' leaves.

When the painting was exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1899, the critic for the *Montreal Witness* cheerfully described it as a “very delightful” piece that “gives one an Oliver Twist-like appetite for ‘more.’” There is a silvery, atmospheric charm about this picture: the color scheme is very tender and dainty, and the scene, time of year and time of day, convincing; altogether, just the kind of picture one would like to add to one’s collection.”<sup>2</sup> The painting quickly became one of Brymner’s most celebrated works.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Early Moonrise in September*, 1896-97, oil on panel, 15.5 x 24.4 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. RIGHT: Jean-François Millet, *The Gust of Wind*, 1871-73, oil on canvas, 90.5 x 117.5 cm, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.



Subsequent exhibitions that displayed *Early Moonrise in September* include the Dominion Exhibition in 1903, the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in 1904, and the RCA exhibition of 1908, where it was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada.<sup>3</sup> The painting was reproduced in *Canada and Its Provinces* (1913), which declared that Brymner’s paintings were known for “a remarkably fine treatment of light.”<sup>4</sup> It also appeared in an article on Canadian landscape art that National Gallery director Eric Brown wrote for *Studio* magazine’s special volume *Art of the British Empire Overseas* (1917).<sup>5</sup>

Although *Early Moonrise in September* has been compared with landscapes of the Barbizon school because of its sensitive treatment of the landscape, it is more appropriate to see the work as a reflection of Brymner’s own approach to making art.<sup>6</sup> He did not believe in emulating any particular style, and at this point in his life he was highly critical of the Barbizon school because he believed following a specific school led to the loss of individuality. By 1899 he had become known as an artist whose commitment to personal innovation frustrated attempts to identify a trajectory in his work.<sup>7</sup> As a critic for the *Witness* noted, Brymner was “difficult . . . to write about” because he was “so many-sided, his aesthetic aspirations crop out in so many different directions.”<sup>8</sup> This painting was seen as one of his great successes, and it was well known and admired during his lifetime.

By 1919 the picture had suffered some damage. At the request of the National Gallery, Brymner undertook to repair the painting himself. He wryly commented, “It’s a good thing the thing happened before I died, for had it put itself off till then it would have been a real misfortune.”<sup>9</sup> Restoring the painting was a courtesy, but it was more than that. His letter suggests he had begun to see this painting as part of his legacy as an artist.



## SAINT-EUSTACHE, QUEBEC 1905



William Brymner, *Saint-Eustache, Quebec*, 1905

Watercolour with gouache highlights over graphite, 38.9 x 53.9 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

*Saint-Eustache, Quebec* depicts a local historic farmhouse dating from 1823, situated near the River du Chêne, framed by a group of trees.<sup>1</sup> Painted in watercolour, the work is notable for its deft use of a wide range of greens to represent subtle variations in foliage and light and shadows. The overall impression is that of a lush rural environment and a pastoral idyll. By the time he began working in Saint-Eustache, Brymner was known to be a talented and accomplished watercolour artist. In works such as this one, he demonstrates his confidence with the medium and his enthusiasm for landscape.

In the early 1900s Brymner painted several works at Saint-Eustache. He and Maurice Cullen (1866–1934), the artist with whom he shared his closest working relationship (they travelled together several times), had a studio there. Saint-Eustache was conveniently located close to Montreal, and Brymner valued his visits there. Although his surviving papers do not include an explanation of the attractions of Saint-Eustache, his works suggest that some of the appeal was that he could find rural subjects similar to those he had painted

in the Lower Saint Lawrence. He also knew that rural subjects were popular in Canadian exhibitions and many artists were experimenting with the genre; for instance, in Ontario, Homer Watson (1855–1936) specialized in these scenes, though he was better known for oil paintings.

Brymner's works in Saint-Eustache often depicted similar landscape sites. Another watercolour he painted there, *Summer*, 1905, is, like *Saint-Eustache, Quebec*, organized around the river, though the two works show the river from different viewpoints. Both paintings contrast the grandeur of the trees with the farm buildings, and both show complex and delicate reflections in the water.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *On the Grand River at Doon*, c.1880, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Summer*, 1905, watercolour on paper, 23.0 x 30.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.

In December 1905, Brymner included his Saint-Eustache watercolours in a group exhibition, hoping to sell them—he knew there was a market for watercolour landscapes, be they depictions of Europe (which Brymner also painted) or Canadian scenes.<sup>2</sup> A work entitled *Cool Shades*, c.1905, attracted particular attention at the exhibition as “a charming bit of landscape at St. Eustache. The river in the foreground, with cattle drinking at the brink, the farmhouse and meadow beyond, the luxuriant foliage of the trees, and the intense warm blue of the sky—all are given with the happiest possible effect.”<sup>3</sup> This description likely refers to *Saint-Eustache, Quebec*, but even if it does not, it is indicative of what critics admired in these watercolour landscapes.



## KENNETH R. MACPHERSON, K.C. 1909



William Brymner, *Kenneth R. Macpherson, K.C.*, 1909  
Oil on canvas, 84.7 x 65.4 cm  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



In a portrait titled *Kenneth R. Macpherson, K.C.*, Brymner depicts the lawyer-artist as a gentleman of leisure. Macpherson is wearing a golf coat (specifically the uniform of the Royal Montreal Golf Club) and holding a club. Notable for its subtle detailing, from the folds in the white waistcoat to the lines in the hand, and for the pensive expression on the subject's face, the portrait represents Brymner's achievements in portraiture late in his career and highlights the extent of his professional, social, and creative networks.

Macpherson looks straight at the viewer. His expression is thoughtful, even vaguely melancholic. The complexity of the expression encourages the viewer to reflect on what Brymner has achieved here. Macpherson had been a student of Brymner's, and for many years the two men were friends as well as fellow members of the Pen and Pencil Club. When Macpherson died Brymner was responsible for putting his affairs in order; Brymner claimed that "he would have done it for me had I died first."<sup>1</sup> Their close friendship is at the heart of the painting, but it is uncertain whether the painting was commissioned or whether Brymner asked Macpherson to pose. We can assume, however, that the two men discussed the composition as Brymner worked.

Macpherson no doubt understood that this painting would demonstrate Brymner's talents in portraiture. In this it was a success: when it was exhibited in 1909 the *Montreal Gazette* described it as "a striking portrait, indicating boldness both in color effects and technique." Noting that Brymner had also entered two other figurative paintings (*Miss Buller* and *The Letter*, neither of which can be traced today), the critic declared, "Not for seasons past has Mr. Brymner been so strongly represented as he is this year."<sup>2</sup> It was a triumph, but soon Brymner would begin a new, radically different, body of work—seascapes of Louisbourg.



## THE COAST AT LOUISBOURG 1914



William Brymner, *The Coast at Louisbourg*, 1914

Oil on canvas, 53.5 x 71.2 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*The Coast at Louisbourg* is a seascape, an ocean view in Cape Breton. The subject is straightforward—waves topple toward a rocky coastline, and a small boat is visible on the horizon—but the painting's colouring is striking. Blue, grey, and mauve tints in the water create harmony with the soft grey sky, while the creamy whites of the foam and spray of the waves are balanced by the clouds. Brymner's seascapes were admired as formal compositions and they were widely exhibited, but the Louisbourg seascapes are particularly meaningful because they were exhibited during the First World War and critics connected them with Canada's war effort.

Brymner began painting in Louisbourg in 1909. It is unlikely that he was attempting to emulate a specific style, but he did admire European artists who worked *en plein air* and he may have begun this painting outdoors. In a letter to his family, he reported, "I am down here painting the rocks & sea about the old fortifications and enjoy it, but would like it better if it did not rain so much, or get foggy."<sup>1</sup> He returned to Louisbourg at least twice more, and several paintings survive from these expeditions. Among the works are small oil sketches and large paintings, including *The Coast at Louisbourg*, *Fog on the Coast*, and *Incoming Tide, Louisburg*, all 1914. Other works from this period, such as *Sunset, Louisburg, N.S.*, 1916, are known through their reproductions.<sup>2</sup>



William Brymner, *Fog on the Coast*, 1914, oil on canvas, 53.8 x 72 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

*The Coast at Louisbourg* was widely exhibited and reproduced in Brymner's lifetime. In 1915 it was displayed at the Art Association of Montreal, the Canadian Art Club, and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts; in 1921 it was shown again at the AAM and at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It was reproduced in *Studio* magazine in 1915 and the *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature* in 1917. *Fog on the Coast* was not reproduced, but it too was included in several exhibitions. These paintings were key to Brymner's reputation in his later years, when he was president of the RCA.

At the time critics noted that the works Brymner exhibited in 1915 "were completed before the military authorities decided that one of Mr. Brymner's favourite sketching places would make [a] good site for rifle targets."<sup>3</sup> Brymner too viewed the subject as a lost possibility, telling Eric Brown that "I'd like to go back to Louisburg but am afraid the Soldiers guarding the Marconi Station their [sic] will make the place impossible. Damn the War" [emphasis Brymner's].<sup>4</sup> Exhibited at a time when the war and its terrible costs were dominating Canadian news, Brymner's greyish views of the coast and the distant horizon were no longer simply harmonious formal landscapes—they were melancholic and patriotic evocations.



## NUDE FIGURE 1915



William Brymner, *Nude Figure*, 1915

Oil on canvas, 74.7 x 101.7 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In the 1910s Brymner worked on paintings depicting the female nude, and this series was one of his last substantial projects. He completed at least four paintings that focused on a nude woman lying on her back. *Nude Figure*, a work exhibited in 1915, is both representative of the group and the most high profile, as it was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada. It became a controversial work: nude women subjects were common in nineteenth-century Western art, but they were not commonly seen in Canadian exhibitions. The painting is important to Brymner's oeuvre, however, not because of the controversy but because it represents the last major development in a career that had been characterized by diversity. *Nude Figure* was a radical contrast to Brymner's landscapes and seascapes.

As a young man, Brymner studied the academic tradition and the nude. He felt that this particular pose was a difficult one to work with, observing gloomily that "a girl lying down with a white skin is not an easy piece of work, especially as she never gets the pose twice exactly the same."<sup>1</sup> His decision to return to nudes so late in his career may have been influenced by a critic's observation

that a recent Canadian exhibition had lacked a good nude, then a highly prestigious subject.<sup>2</sup>

Alternatively, he may simply have been looking for a new subject that would enable him to demonstrate the full range of his talents and attract attention. After so many years of studying art, he would have known many paintings of the female nude that he might have turned to for inspiration. His former teachers Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836–1911) and William Bouguereau (1825–1905) had painted nudes many times, and the subject was one that Brymner's students and former students were also interested in—for instance, Randolph Hewton (1888–1960) had exhibited modern nude compositions at the Art Association of Montreal in 1914.<sup>3</sup>



William Brymner, *Reclining Figure*, c.1915, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 87 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Critics analyzed *Nude Figure* in stylistic and technical terms, praising it as “an admirable study in light and shade” and “excellent as to drawing and flesh tones. . . . The dull blues and reds of the cushions on which the figure is reclining help to bring out the ivory tints.”<sup>4</sup> But the subject matter was what caught the public's attention. According to Corinne Dupuis-Maillet (1895–1990), one of his former students, when Brymner completed *Nude Figure*, the painting shocked people: “Brymner was a conservative person and that picture flabbergasted everyone—the reclining woman in that position, lying on her back.”<sup>5</sup> Today it is somewhat difficult to appreciate just how surprised viewers were by this work.

*Nude Figure* proved to be a problem for the National Gallery. In 1916 Eric Brown, the director, wrote: “There has arisen some comment here on the propriety of Brymner's nude. . . . I do not wish the National Gallery to be subject to even ignorant attacks on such matters and pending consideration of the matter I have removed the picture from exhibition.”<sup>6</sup> In December of that year, Brown offered it to the future Group of Seven artist Arthur Lismer (1885–1969) for the Victoria School of Art and Design in Halifax, suggesting that the work was “not a gallery picture but . . . a frank study of the figure.”<sup>7</sup> Lismer quickly declined the loan, explaining that although he would personally welcome it, the painting “would prejudice the Halifax public against the school.”<sup>8</sup>

As president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, Brymner represented Canada's artistic establishment, but in one of the final twists to his career he created a work that was perceived as provocative and controversial. The painting shocked viewers—a fitting final milestone in a career dominated by a commitment to ongoing personal innovation.





# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Inspired by his travels, William Brymner (1855–1925) painted everything from Canadian landscapes to the canals of Venice. His paintings of the Rocky Mountains and rural Quebec contributed to notions of Canadian identity, and he strove to ensure that Canada became part of the international art community. For Brymner and his peers, a distinctly Canadian style for art was important, but so was the space in which they would show it to the world. He achieved critical success while teaching at the Art Association of Montreal for more than thirty years, where he was an inspiration for his many students. As Clarence Gagnon noted, “If Brymner couldn’t teach you, nobody could.”



## LOOKING ABROAD

Throughout his life and career, William Brymner was convinced that visiting Europe was important for his professional development as an artist. He saw Europe (and Paris in particular) as the centre of the Western art world, with its numerous art schools, museums, exhibitions, and artistic communities. He was also aware that many Canadian collectors valued European works over works by artists from their own country, and that both collectors and critics admired artists who understood European art traditions. Many of Brymner's Canadian contemporaries were also looking abroad for inspiration. Although some of his peers studied in the United States (where numerous artists and collectors were also turning to Europe), Brymner did not. In his later life he encouraged his students to study in Europe, and he lectured on and discussed modern European art with them.



LEFT: Titian, *Danaë*, 1544-45, oil on canvas, 120 x 172 cm, Capodimonte Museum, Naples. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Reclining Nude*, c.1915, oil on canvas, 46.2 x 76.7 cm, Musée d'art de Joliette.

Today, late nineteenth-century Paris is closely associated with the Impressionist movement, but Brymner went to Europe to study the academic tradition, an approach that required the artist to learn to depict forms naturalistically rather than embracing impressions of a scene. The two methods could not be more different: as Tobi Bruce notes, "the system of instruction that drew artists [like Brymner] to Paris was utterly at odds with Impressionism."<sup>1</sup> Brymner eventually took an interest in Impressionism, but in general he was attentive to an extraordinary range of artworks, from medieval sculptures to works by contemporary artists. He was not drawn to Europe by any specific style of modern art. If anything, he was more interested in the Old Masters, admiring painters such as Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) and Titian (Tiziano Vecellio; c.1488-1576).<sup>2</sup> As a mature artist Brymner did not believe in emulating a particular school of art. Instead he was committed to extensive and ongoing learning; he was inspired by the ideas of other artists rather than their styles.

Besides his early studies in Paris, Brymner made numerous trips to Europe. His motives for these visits are underscored in a review published in the *Globe* (Toronto) in 1892, written by Canadian poets Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, who claimed that "in a land like Canada, where we have practically no great pictures available and no eminent resident artist, the young painter . . . must go abroad; he must seek in the ateliers and in the galleries of



Europe for the practical insight which he could never obtain at home."<sup>3</sup> The same *Globe* review later identified Brymner specifically as one of the Canadian artists "who has had the advantage of the [French] schools."<sup>4</sup> The reviewers praised *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, most likely because Brymner's careful depiction of the little girls' figures highlighted his French academic training.



William Brymner, *Le Cours Martigues*, 1908-14, oil on canvas, 48 x 68.3 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

But Brymner's trips to Europe were not made solely for his education. He was well aware that working in Europe would shape his public reputation. His travels were critical to his identity as a cosmopolitan artist in Montreal; for instance, his painting *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885, alludes to his familiarity with the Barbizon school, a French group of artists whose works were popular with North American collectors in the late nineteenth century. For Brymner, travelling in Europe was a professional investment because his patrons would have seen his experience as a sign of well-informed, sophisticated artistic judgment, but it was also a pleasure for him. In a letter written to his friend Kenneth Macpherson (1861-1916) from Martigues in 1908, Brymner noted, "The beauty of it is partly that there have been so many generations of painters here that . . . they have an extraordinary respect for anyone with a paint box."<sup>5</sup>

Brymner's many trips enabled him to create numerous works depicting subject matter that was known to be European. One of the earliest paintings he exhibited in Canada was *With Dolly at the Sabot-makers*, 1883, a work quickly recognized as a French subject and the first of his works to be acquired by the National Gallery of Canada.<sup>6</sup> In later years Brymner visited France, Ireland, the

Netherlands, and Italy, and he created artworks inspired by his journeys. His painting *Ruin of a Church*, 1891, for instance, is a portrayal of the ruins of Muckross Abbey in Killarney, and *In County Cork, Ireland (Dans le comté de Cork, en Irlande)*, 1892, depicts an Irish village.



LEFT: William Brymner, *With Dolly at the Sabot-makers*, 1883, oil on canvas, 38.1 x 46.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Ruin of a Church*, 1891, oil on canvas, 21 x 32.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Whenever he wrote or lectured on art, Brymner's European experiences were vital to the reflections he shared. He viewed Europe's most famous sites, from the Eiffel Tower to the canals of Venice, with an artist's talent for visual analysis: "The general colour of Venice is a grey rose colour running into all kinds of other greys, and old faded greens and yellows. These colours lighted by the late afternoon sun and reflected . . . make a wonderful harmony."<sup>7</sup>

His other lectures, on drawing and on Impressionism, and his article "Progress in Art," published in the *University Magazine* in April 1907, are packed with references to European artists and to his experiences in viewing their works. For example, Brymner made special efforts to view works by Frans Hals (c.1582-1666), reporting to his father in a letter that the paintings in the museum in Haarlem "were worth coming all the way to see." He admired Hals's use of colour and the vitality in his work, declaring that the portraits were "painted in the most straightforward way I have ever seen."<sup>8</sup> He would later cite Hals's work in his lecture on drawing, simultaneously teaching his students about the Old Masters and demonstrating his expertise.<sup>9</sup> The depth of his commitment to his travels abroad demonstrates his genuine belief in the importance of these studies, even as he was also aware that his lectures and writing on European art enhanced his reputation.





William Brymner, *Scène de canal*, 1902, watercolour on paper on card, 24.8 x 34.9 cm, private collection.

### ENCOUNTERS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN WESTERN CANADA

The beginning of Brymner's career coincided with tremendous change and violence in Western Canada. He first visited the region in 1886, travelling on the brand-new Canadian Pacific Railway. At the time, the borders in Western Canada were very different. Saskatchewan and Alberta would not become provinces until 1905; in 1886 these lands were part of the North-West Territories. The governance of the entire region, including Manitoba, had been transformed by the numbered treaties with Indigenous nations. Treaties 1 through 7 were signed between 1871 and 1877, and created a system of reserves (a critical adhesion to Treaty 6 was signed in 1882). In the wake of the North-West Resistance of 1885, in which Canadian government forces fought the Métis people, there was an intensifying interest in the control of Indigenous people as the region was attracting increasing numbers of settlers.<sup>10</sup> By 1886 the federal government was attempting to force Indigenous people to settle on the reserves and to assimilate.<sup>11</sup>





Rand McNally and Company, "British America," 1889, print, 34 x 52 cm, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford University.

Brymner was made aware of these events in several ways. In addition to what he might have learned from newspapers, his father was an archivist for the federal government, and he also had a brother who was in the North-West Mounted Police during the Resistance of 1885.<sup>12</sup> Brymner's trip out west in 1886 brought him into direct contact with Indigenous people. (Though there were many First Nations communities in Eastern Canada, there is no record of Brymner meeting them.) He would have met Indigenous people from different nations. He stayed on the Siksika Nation Reserve near Gleichen (now in Alberta) for over a month, and there were Cree (Nehiyawak) visitors there at the time.<sup>13</sup> Later in his trip he may have met Indigenous people in British Columbia as well.

In 1909 Brymner wrote a detailed account of his visit to his friend Edmund Morris (1871-1913), an artist who was passionately interested in Indigenous people and history. The letter reveals the extent to which Brymner became involved with the Siksika community during his visit. While he was there, Pihtokahanapiwiyn (then called Poundmaker in the Canadian media) arrived to visit Isapo-Muxika (then called Crowfoot), his adopted father. Pihtokahanapiwiyn was one of the most important leaders of the period and a key negotiator in Treaty 6. In the wake of the North-West Resistance, the federal government accused him of supporting Louis Riel, the leader of the uprising, and charged him with treason-felony.<sup>14</sup> Pihtokahanapiwiyn was exonerated of these charges in May 2019; in fact, he had intervened to prevent Indigenous warriors from pursuing Canadian soldiers and today he is regarded



as a peacemaker.<sup>15</sup> After being imprisoned for nine months, he was released in March 1886 due to poor health; he died while visiting Isapo-Muxika. Brymner did not meet Pihtokahanapiwiyn, but he requested permission from the Canadian government authorities (most likely from Magnus Begg, the local Indian agent) to attend Pihtokahanapiwiyn's burial.<sup>16</sup> Brymner not only witnessed the ceremony, he assisted with preparations for the burial and with the interment. He was not invited, but he undoubtedly knew of Pihtokahanapiwiyn's fame and he was evidently curious.



LEFT: Harry Pollard, *Chief Crowfoot*, c.1885, gelatin cellulose nitrate negative, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton. RIGHT: Oliver Buell, *Poundmaker, also Known as The Drummer* (c.1842–1886), a Cree Chief, Later Adopted by Crowfoot of the Blackfoot Nation, 1885, photograph, 19.68 x 11.43 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Although the total number of paintings of Indigenous subjects Brymner created is unknown and some works cannot be traced today, he is known to have painted studies of Indigenous people's heads, including *Blackfoot Chief*, c.1888 or 1906. These works were likely intended to emulate the ethnographically inspired portraits by artists such as George Catlin (1796–1872) and Paul Kane (1810–1871) that are now recognized as perpetuating stereotypes. However, Brymner's most complex works depicting Indigenous people, *Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT* and *Yale in the Morning, B.C. (Fraser Canyon)*, both 1886, are startling because of their contemporary elements and their avoidance of stereotypes. It is unknown if Brymner wished to make a specific political critique, but he certainly knew that his subject matter was highly charged.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Blackfoot Chief*, c.1888 or 1906, oil on canvas, 80.6 x 50.2 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

RIGHT: William Brymner, *Yale in the Morning, B.C. (Fraser Canyon)*, 1886, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 66 cm, Power Corporation of Canada.

When he was visiting the Siksika Nation, Brymner painted *Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT*, 1886, a scene showing the distribution of food rations. This depiction of modern colonial violence refuses to offer any romanticized view of the past. Later in his trip when he went to Yale, British Columbia, he visited All Hallows School, an institution that Anglican missionaries had established in 1884 with the intention of educating and converting Indigenous girls. By 1886 the school was beginning to function as a form of residential school, and at the time of Brymner's visit the bishop had begun to advocate for government support; an agreement would be reached in June 1888.<sup>17</sup> Brymner depicted nuns and pupils at the centre of his 1886 work *Yale in the Morning, B.C. (Fraser Canyon)*. The figures are small, but the nuns' habits are recognizable, suggesting that Brymner wanted his viewers to see this as a contemporary scene. It is a painting that records an early moment in the development of the Canadian residential school system.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, Brymner's experiences and works are different from what we might expect from a colonial artist working in Western Canada in the nineteenth century. His paintings were inspired by ethnography and an interest in realistic scenes, whereas other nineteenth-century colonial artists were known for romanticizing Indigenous subjects in their paintings. Paul Kane, for example, was known for works inspired by ethnography but also for spectacular scenes with dramatic landscapes and idealized depictions of Indigenous people, such as *The Man That Always Rides, Blackfoot*, c.1849-56 and *The Constant Sky, Saulteaux*, c.1849-56. Such views of nineteenth-century Canada, which



typically fail to acknowledge the violence of colonialism, have been challenged by several contemporary Indigenous artists, including Carl Beam (1943–2005) and Jane Ash Poitras (b.1951). For example, in her 2004 work *Buffalo Seed*, Poitras incorporates a wide range of images (including a romanticized image of a buffalo hunt) to comment on the slaughter of the buffalo and its devastating impact on Indigenous people. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian paintings that minimize (and often erase) the brutal oppression of Indigenous people have also been challenged through critical writings.<sup>19</sup>



LEFT: Paul Kane, *The Man That Always Rides, Blackfoot*, c.1849–56, oil on canvas, 46.3 x 60.9 cm, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.  
RIGHT: Jane Ash Poitras, *Buffalo Seed*, 2004, mixed media, 153.2 x 244.2 cm, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

Brymner was aware of romanticized images of the Canadian West, but unlike many of his contemporaries, he was a witness to the impact of colonialism on Indigenous people in Western Canada. He did not choose to embrace a romantic vision. Instead he addressed the inhumanity of colonialism by depicting realistic scenes in paintings created at a pivotal moment in his career. Once he was back in Montreal he rarely returned to these subjects. Although he does not appear to have been deeply troubled, his vivid recollection of the events of 1886, as described in his letter to Edmund Morris more than twenty years later, suggests that the memories were powerful.

### PAINTING THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

In the 1880s the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) began promoting the Rocky Mountains as both a uniquely Canadian landscape and a national tourist attraction. As part of those efforts, the CPR's general manager, William Van Horne, wanted mountain landscapes to be shown in exhibitions of Canadian art. Not only did the CPR support the exhibition of these paintings, but it adapted them for promotional imagery and souvenir booklets. Van Horne chose to work with prestigious artists. Lucius O'Brien (1832–1899), then president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, was one of the first to whom he gave a commission: O'Brien's *Kicking Horse Pass (about 5000 ft)*, 1887, shows a spectacular mountain landscape with a train right in the centre.<sup>20</sup> By 1889 Brymner had become personally acquainted with Van Horne, who assured him that he "could have a [railway] pass to the Pacific whenever I wanted one."<sup>21</sup> In the early 1890s Brymner found himself travelling to Western Canada to create works for the CPR. At the time he was highly conscious of the landscapes that artists like O'Brien had created, and he saw himself in competition with them.



LEFT: Lucius O'Brien, *Kicking Horse Pass (about 5000 ft)*, 1887, watercolour, 45.2 x 33.2 cm, Royal BC Museum, Victoria. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Near Field, B.C.*, 1892-93, watercolour on paperboard, 26.8 x 19.1 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

In 1892 the *Montreal Gazette* noted that the CPR had commissioned Brymner to paint views of the Rockies for “the World’s fair [in Chicago], where they will, besides being good testimony of the progress of art in Canada, give hundreds of thousands of visitors to the fair an idea of the wonderful scenery to be found in the Canadian Rockies.” The paper described the project as “of a more ambitious nature” than Brymner’s work to date.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Brymner’s mountain paintings are designed to make a powerful impact on the viewer. Many of these paintings are unusually large, ideal for commanding attention and surprising viewers who encountered them in exhibitions. Most of these works, such as *Hermit Mountain*, *Rogers Pass*, *Selkirk Range*, 1886, and *Mount Cheops from Rogers Pass*, c.1898, take a major peak as their primary subject, though a few, such as *Sir Donald and Great Glacier*, *Selkirks*, n.d., focus on views of glaciers and peaks. The viewer is presented with spectacular landscapes devoid of people. In these paintings, Brymner chose not to record the contemporary presence of Indigenous people, perhaps because his patrons had asked him not to do so. Often these works include the presence of a railway, which, in the nineteenth century, represented the unification of Canada and a new national identity.<sup>23</sup>





William Brymner, *Sir Donald and Great Glacier, Selkirks*, n.d., oil on canvas, 153.7 x 214 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.

Brymner's own account of the CPR commissions to paint mountain landscapes for the world's fair in Chicago demonstrates that he saw this project as a major undertaking. He wrote to Van Horne from Lake Louise and provided a detailed list of subjects he was working on, including Mount Baker, Yale, Ross Peak, Field, Lake Louise, and Lake Agnes. He also asked Van Horne's advice: "If there is anything that you would suggest that should be done I will be glad to know."<sup>24</sup> He found painting the mountains difficult and, although he may have looked to European landscape traditions for guidance, his struggles suggest that foreign precedents failed him in the face of the Rockies' grandeur. In the following decade Brymner painted several places in the Rockies, including Mount Cheops, Ottertail Range, Castle Mountain, Emerald Lake, Mount Sir Donald and Illecillewaet Glacier, Mount Stephen, and Kicking Horse Pass, as well as several unnamed mountain views.

In 1893 Brymner's paintings of Lake Louise and Lake Agnes were shown in the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts exhibition in Montreal and at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The critical response these works received in Montreal is striking: commenting on *Lake Agnes*, c.1893, a critic for the *Herald* declared that "there is a grandeur about this pictuer [sic] which commands attention at once, while a closer inspection reveals deep melody of tone, which is delightful."<sup>25</sup>



William Brymner, *Camp in the Rockies*, n.d., oil on board, 39.4 x 54.6 cm, private collection.

Reviews like this one demonstrate that even if Brymner's primary motivation for visiting the Rocky Mountains to create works for the CPR was financial, the resulting paintings were important to his reputation as an artist because critics reviewed them and assessed them as representations of Brymner's talents. Today these landscapes illustrate how Brymner deployed his skills in the service of nation building in Western Canada.

### THE "REAL" QUEBEC

Brymner painted many works depicting rural communities and landscapes in Quebec. He presented his wealthy urban audiences with a pastoral vision of rural French-Canadian traditions, and this vision had powerful connotations. The figure of the "habitant" was perceived as distinctly Canadian and was part of an emerging national identity represented in art, literature, and even music. Brymner and several of his peers would contribute to this discourse through paintings; for instance, Maurice Cullen (1866-1934) painted several Quebec winter scenes, most notably *Logging in Winter, Beupré*, 1896, and Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté (1869-1937) created several works depicting rural scenes in Arthabaska, his home region. Paintings of rural Quebec invited viewers to reflect on the importance of French-Canadian culture within the nation. At the same time, these works tacitly reminded viewers of the contrast between rural Quebec and the modernity of the city.





William Brymner, *Haying near Quebec, Beauré*, 1907, oil on canvas, 68.1 x 101.3 cm, Power Corporation of Canada.

Initially Brymner worked in Baie-Saint-Paul, a place he may have chosen because the region reminded him of the French countryside.<sup>26</sup> Later he made visits to Beauré and Sainte-Famille, often in the company of other artists, particularly Edmond Dyonnet (1859–1954), Maurice Cullen, and Edmund Morris. He created numerous paintings of rural subjects, such as *Evening, Beauré*, 1903, and *Haying near Quebec, Beauré*, 1907, and he saw himself as an observer of French-Canadian rural communities. Although by this point Brymner was highly critical of the Barbizon school (and of any stylistic imitation), he did admire Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), a Barbizon painter who was known for his depictions of labourers, and these works may have inspired Brymner's rural Quebec paintings.<sup>27</sup> These are sites in the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wabanaki Confederacy Peoples, but Brymner does not appear to have recognized or reflected on the significance of the Indigenous inhabitants of this region.



In writing about Sainte-Famille, Brymner commented, "As no outsider had ever stayed there, to my knowledge, I determined that I would, and paint some real *habitants*."<sup>28</sup> Brymner was not the first artist to visit the region (for instance, Horatio Walker [1858–1938] travelled there in 1877, and he also became known for his paintings of the region), but he undoubtedly was an outsider.<sup>29</sup> Based in Montreal, a city experiencing significant industrial growth, Brymner was not wealthy, but he had numerous connections to the city's elite; in addition, he was Anglophone and Protestant. Still, he took a deep interest in the French-Canadian community he was living among in Sainte-Famille and published some of his musings in the *University Magazine*, in which he depicted the people as markedly removed from modern life. For instance, in describing his friendship with Michel Marquis, the local workman in whose home Brymner was boarding, he noted that Marquis was talented in woodworking, but that "most of the simplest things outside his own parish he knows nothing about."<sup>30</sup> Brymner's sense of superiority is evident.



William Brymner, *Baie St. Paul*, 1890, oil on canvas, 33.7 x 48.9 cm, private collection.

Brymner's Quebec paintings, such as *Early Moonrise in September*, 1899, represented agricultural landscapes and people at work, as if to celebrate a timeless pastoral community. Some works, such as *The Weaver (La Femme au métier)*, 1885, focus on the individual, while others, such as *La Vallée Saint-François, Île d'Orléans*, 1903, place figures at a distance. Critics recognized the people in these paintings as representatives of a distinct culture, one uniquely Canadian. For example, in 1906, the *Montreal Daily Star* claimed Brymner had a gift for representing "a typical scene down the lower St. Lawrence, and besides conveying the charm of the fresh unspoiled day, [his work] suggests the patient, submissive lives of the French-Canadians."<sup>31</sup> The tone of this review underscores the significance of Brymner's work in rural Quebec. He was not simply painting in a particular place, he was creating paintings that connoted cultural difference. In doing so, he was contributing to a wider discourse about the position of French Canadians in Canada.





LEFT: William Brymner, *The Weaver (La Femme au métier)*, 1885, oil on canvas, 61 x 63 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: William Brymner, *La Vallée Saint-François, Île d'Orléans*, 1903, oil on canvas, 74 x 102.3 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

### A CANADIAN ARTIST IN INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Through his participation in international exhibitions, Brymner was identified as a representative of Canadian art in a global arena. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the success of Canadian art on an international stage was seen as indicative of the growth and strength of Canadian art and of Canada as a nation. Artworks created by Brymner and his contemporaries have sometimes been viewed as reliant on European art (both during their own lifetimes and in later analyses). In some respects this assessment is fair: these were artists who had not only trained in Europe but were often inspired by European styles, from the French academic tradition to Impressionism. At the same time, these artists were invested in ensuring that Canada became part of the international art community. For them, a distinctly Canadian style for art was important, but so was the space in which they would show it to the world.

Displays of Canadian art at international exhibitions were seen as statements not simply about Canadian artists, but as affirmations about Canada as a new nation. At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, an event designed to demonstrate the strength of the British Empire (especially the Empire in India), Brymner's *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, and *Crazy Patchwork*, 1886, were on view in the Canadian art section. This display received significant critical attention. One English writer claimed that "while walking among the Canadian pictures . . ., you can fancy yourself in a good European gallery much more easily than you can if you are in the Fine Art section of any other Colony."<sup>32</sup>

This comment was intended as high praise. In his assessment, the British painter John Hodgson (1831–1895), who particularly admired *Crazy Patchwork*, specifically linked the display to colonial power and imperialist ambitions to spread "the blessings of civilization," declaring, "I make it part and parcel of that glorious dream that art shall be practised wherever Britain holds dominion."<sup>33</sup> As far as Hodgson was concerned, art was part of Canada's colonial project, whether or not it made direct reference to colonial settlement.

International recognition was important to Canadian critics. In coverage of the awards at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the *Montreal Herald* reported, "Canada has been successful beyond the fondest expectations," and noted that "sunny Italy, known as the birth place of fine art, exhibited 192 works of the old and modern school, and was awarded only ten diplomas and medals, while Canada, a new country, captured five out of 113."<sup>34</sup> The medal recipients included Robert Harris (1849–1919), who had led the committee to organize the Canadian display, and George Agnew Reid (1860–1947). The *Herald's* account indicates that these medals were more than individual achievements: international praise for Canadian art was a serious matter of national pride, and this continued to be the case in the early 1900s.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Crazy Patchwork*, 1886, oil on canvas, 59.7 x 44.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Brymner (and Horatio Walker), *Under the Apple Tree (À l'ombre du pommier)*, 1903, tempera on canvas, 102.3 x 74.7 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

In 1910 the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts organized an exhibition of Canadian art in Britain. Brymner was president of the RCA at the time, and his contributions included *Under the Apple Tree (À l'ombre du pommier)*, 1903, and *Miss Dorothy and Miss Irene Vaughan*, 1910. The exhibition was a success, and Montreal's *Gazette* reprinted praise from British papers. The *Morning Post* had optimistically suggested that Canadian art might be at "the beginning of a movement that will produce great things in future," and the *Times* had claimed, "In any future history of modern art, the Canadian section must occupy a conspicuous place."<sup>35</sup> Although British reviews also included criticism, these compliments were important.

While the vast majority of exhibitions that Brymner participated in were held in Canada, showing his work internationally mattered deeply to him. He occasionally exhibited in Britain during the early part of his career, and he was interested in the possibility of submitting work to the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He was delighted when *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885, was accepted for the Paris Salon exhibition. Later international exhibitions were milestones in Brymner's career: at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (1901), where his exhibited works included *The Grey Girl*, 1897, and *Francie*, 1896, he won a gold medal; while at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), his exhibited works included *Early Moonrise in September*, 1899, and *Under the Apple Tree*, and he received a silver (neither medal appears to have been awarded for specific works). Brymner's participation in these exhibitions was integral to his reputation as a leading Canadian painter.



## LEGACY AS A TEACHER

Brymner's approach to teaching was striking: it was defined by his strong commitment to the French academic tradition, but he also encouraged students to develop their own styles. A consideration of Brymner's career is incomplete without a discussion of his achievements as an instructor at the Art Association of Montreal. Brymner's ability to instill confidence was one of his greatest gifts. Although he knew that the majority of his students had no intention of becoming professional artists, many of them did make important contributions to modern art in Canada. His students included artists such as Kathleen Morris (1893–1986), Emily Coonan (1885–1971), Edwin Holgate (1892–1977), Liliás Torrance Newton (1896–1980), and Prudence Heward (1896–1947). Each of these artists created paintings that were radically different from Brymner's own, as can be seen in works like Heward's *Girl on a Hill*, 1928. Although Brymner was not an avant-garde painter, throughout his lifetime many believed he was a good one. But to focus on that issue is to miss the more profound point: Brymner did not need to be radical himself to have a radical impact on his students.

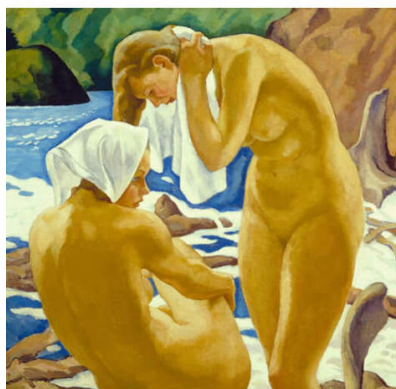
Brymner had trained in French art schools, and under his tenure he ensured that the AAM offered a program based on the French academic tradition. His approach to teaching was likely inspired by that of one of his own teachers, Tony Robert-Fleury (1837–1911). Brymner's practice was to advise his students only, almost never touching their works. Recalling a lesson from Brymner in November 1905, Randolph Hewton (1888–1960) noted, "I did nothing but draw in the head and



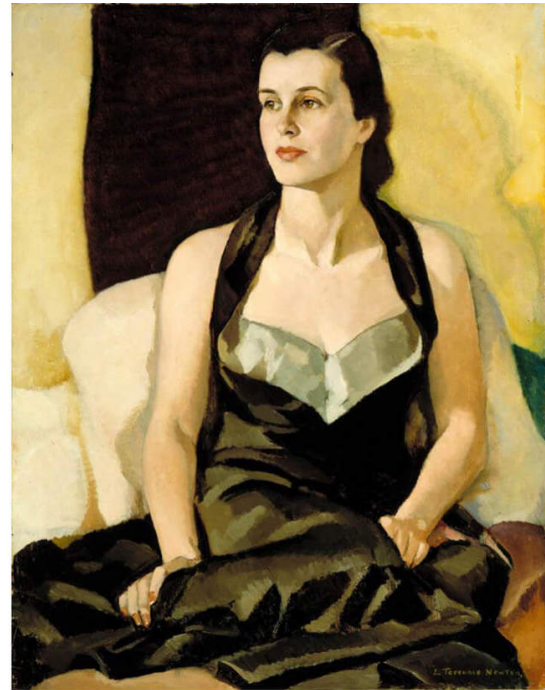
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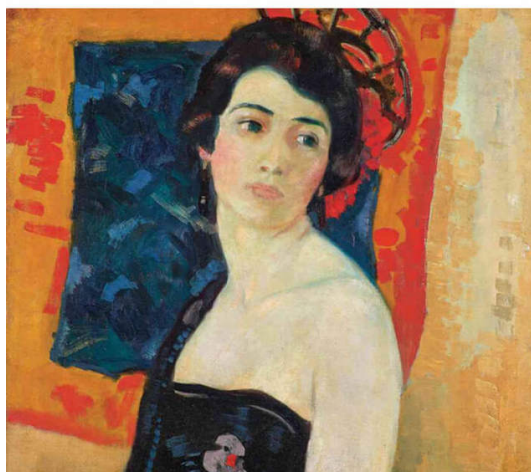
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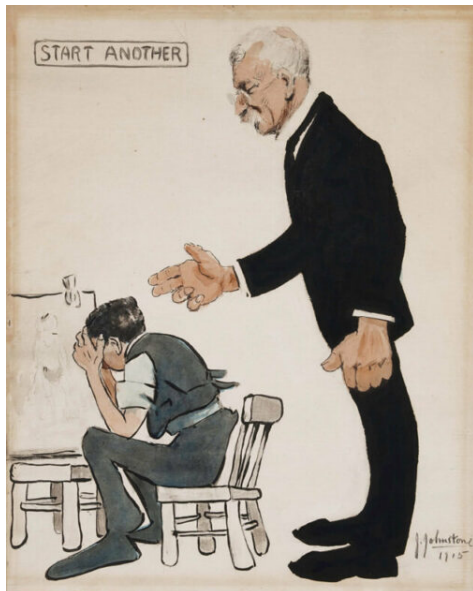
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[1] Kathleen Morris, *After "Grand Mass", Berthier-en-Haut*, 1927, oil on canvas, 61 x 71 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [2] Liliás Torrance Newton, *Lady in Black*, c.1936, oil on canvas, 91.8 x 71.3 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [3] Sarah Robertson, *Old Fort, Sulpician Seminary*, c.1931, oil on canvas, 61.2 x 66.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [4] Edwin Holgate, *The Bathers*, 1937, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 81.3 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [5] Anne Savage, *The Plough*, 1931–33, oil on canvas, 76.4 x 102.3 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [6] Randolph Stanley Hewton, *Carmencita* (detail), 1922 or earlier, oil on canvas, 63 x 66.2 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. [7] Prudence Heward, *Summertime*, 1936–39, oil on plywood, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

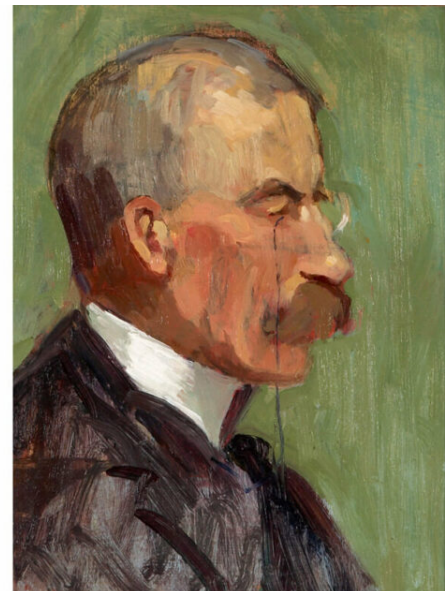


Brymner did nothing but talk.<sup>36</sup> In its emphasis on draftsmanship and the study of the human figure, Brymner's curriculum was conservative in many respects, and many of his students' drawings are classic academic studies. Yet despite this attachment to tradition, Brymner believed strongly that his students should be individuals, and he urged them to pursue new directions in their work. He often supported and mentored them long after they had left the AAM—he encouraged them to travel, as he himself had, and to explore art abroad, especially in Europe.

Brymner was remembered by his students as a teacher who was demanding but inspiring. A caricature by John Young Johnstone (1887–1930) suggests how Brymner pushed his students to excellence by repeatedly advising them to start over. The method was effective: according to Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942), "If Brymner couldn't teach you, nobody could."<sup>37</sup> More importantly, Brymner allowed for flexibility. Anne Savage (1896–1971) claimed that "he possessed that rare gift in a teacher—never to impose his own way on his pupils. .



LEFT: John Young Johnstone, *Start Another*, 1915, graphite and gouache on paper, 59.7 x 49.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. RIGHT: Anne Savage, *Portrait of William Brymner*, 1919, oil on wood, 22.86 x 17.78 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.



. . . Consequently from a small neucleous [sic] individuals of different types were able to develop their own mode of expression."<sup>38</sup> He wanted his students to develop confidence. At a 1979 retrospective, Corinne Dupuis-Maillet (1895–1990) spoke of Brymner affectionately, commenting: "He had a knack of making you feel you were the best of all. He gave us incentive. I'm still going on that energy."<sup>39</sup> The radical stylistic experiments that some of Brymner's former students made are the best evidence of how successful Brymner was at encouraging individuality. In Hewton's *Après-Midi Camaret*, c.1913, for instance, the former student represents a female nude in a landscape with strong, stylized colours, an approach clearly inspired by Post-Impressionism. It was a bold choice for a young artist who had trained in the academic tradition, but it was one Brymner supported.

A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974) knew Brymner, and in an assessment of Brymner's career, he noted that Brymner "encouraged his students to be independent" and "among his fellow Academicians he would stand for no intolerance or injustice toward the younger artists." Jackson concluded: "Of all the artists I knew as a student, there was no one I admired more. . . . He was not a very good painter, but he was a great individual, much respected by James Morrice and Maurice Cullen, and the young artists in Montreal."<sup>40</sup> Jackson was not alone in seeing Brymner's leadership as transformative for Canadian art. Arthur Lismer (1885–1969), when he was commenting on modern painting in Montreal in 1934, speculated that "this independence can be traced to William Brymner who was a fine artist and a great teacher . . . Toronto has not been so



fortunate.”<sup>41</sup> Brymner’s students had become leaders and trailblazers in the arts, participating in the Beaver Hall Group, the Contemporary Arts Society, and the Canadian Group of Painters. Through their works, Brymner’s influence would ripple through Canadian art for decades after his death.



William Brymner, *The Books They Loved They Read in Running Brooks* (*Ils aimaient à lire dans les ruisseaux fuyants*), 1885, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 61 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.





# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

The work of William Brymner (1855–1925) has long resisted stylistic definition. Although he trained in France in the academic tradition, he was also committed to painting *en plein air* and was one of the earliest Canadian artists to write about Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Most of his well-known works were accomplished in oils, but at the height of his career he explored the medium of watercolour to much critical acclaim.



### THE ACADEMIC TRADITION AND THE NUDE

For William Brymner and many of his contemporaries, drawing—particularly drawing the human figure—was an essential artistic skill. Critics recognized drawing as a quality within paintings: it was the foundation beneath the colours, the underlying formal structure. Brymner’s “drawing” within his paintings was often admired. He studied drawing at great length and valued highly the craft of draftsmanship.

Brymner’s early training took place in French art schools where students normally progressed from drawing casts to drawing the live model, and his formal studies emulated this academic tradition. The nude was often seen as the greatest test of an artist’s drawing ability. After Brymner had spent several weeks working from casts, only then did he begin drawing live models, both men and women, but he found drawing a woman’s torso “the most difficult thing to do. . . . I know I couldn’t have tried it last October.”<sup>1</sup> When he wrote this to his father in the spring of 1884, Brymner had been studying art for six years. He would continue to work on the human form for decades, and he made it a core element of his teaching at the Art Association of Montreal.

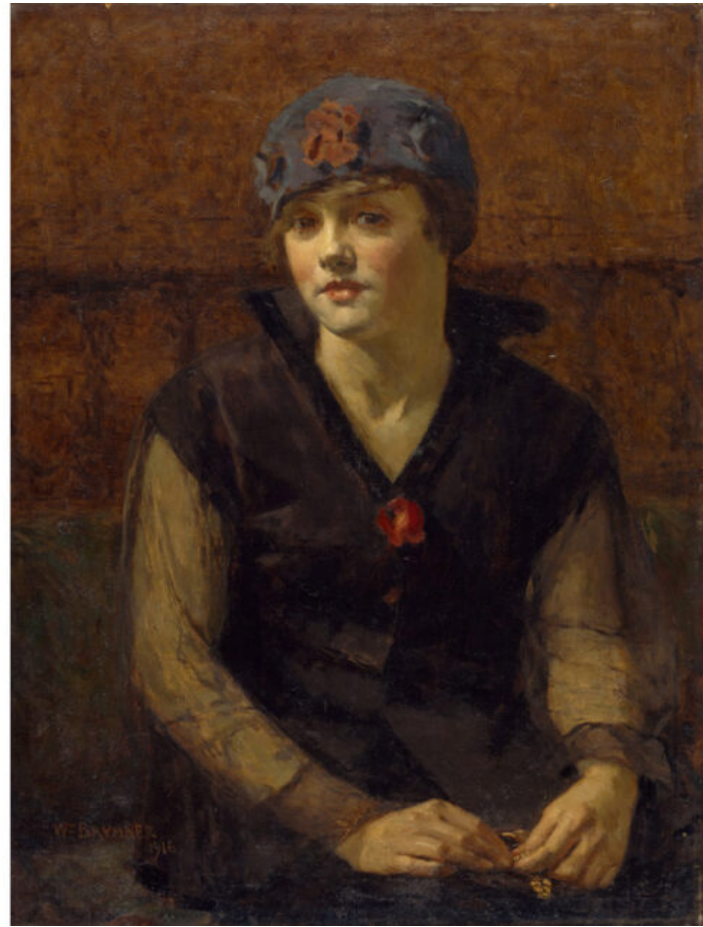
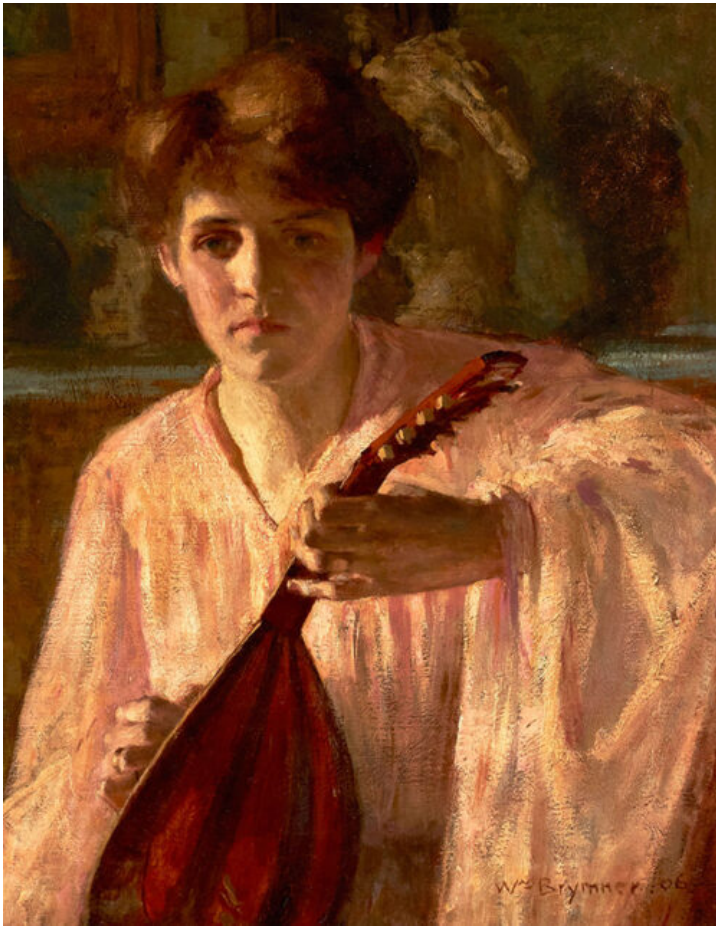


LEFT: William Brymner (attributed), *Standing Nude*, n.d., oil on canvas, 81.3 x 64.8 cm, private collection, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Étude de nu*, c.1900, graphite and pastel on paper, 34.6 x 22 cm, Musée d’art de Joliette.



Brymner’s efforts from the 1910s to paint the female nude developed out of his early studies in France. *Reclining Nude*, c.1915, *Standing Nude*, n.d., and *Nude Figure*, 1915, exemplify the challenge of the subject. In these works, Brymner captured the contours of the muscles of the women’s bodies and the play of light across them with masterful subtlety. The women’s surroundings, a nondescript landscape and a studio, are sketch-like in comparison—no doubt to focus the viewer on Brymner’s abilities in depicting the human figure.

Although drawing could be an important part of a landscape, it was seen as particularly important to artworks that represented people, because it was the underlying drawing that gave a body its structure and verisimilitude. For these reasons, critics considered drawing in relation to paintings that depict clothed figures as well as nudes; for example, when Brymner exhibited *Prelude*, 1906, the figure was praised as “well drawn.”<sup>2</sup> The ability to represent a person’s flesh such that it seems natural and vital was also discussed in more general terms. In analyzing Brymner’s *The Trinket* (*Jeune fille au chapeau bleu* [*La breloque*]), 1916, a critic commented, “Especially well managed is the painting of the flesh through the transparent material of the sleeves.”<sup>3</sup> The woman depicted is wearing a fashionable contemporary dress, but Brymner was still demonstrating his mastery of the human body.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Prelude*, 1906, oil on canvas, 67.4 x 52.2 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. RIGHT: William Brymner, *The Trinket* (*Jeune Fille au chapeau bleu [La Breloque]*), 1916, oil on canvas, 73.8 x 56 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Brymner's conviction that drawing was fundamental to artistic training was evident in his teaching and writings. He demanded his students approach it rigorously, often telling them to start over, but he did not expect them to perfect a particular style. Instead he emphasized that learning to draw was not about learning to copy, but about learning to see. Brymner described it as "the foundation of all the graphic and plastic Arts," and stated that "the primary object of an Art training is, to teach people to look at nature intelligently" and that "the mind can be more easily trained to observe nature with exactness by the study of the nude model than in any other way."<sup>4</sup> For Brymner, drawing was ultimately an intellectual exercise, and the process was at least as important as the work itself.

## WATERCOLOUR

Today, Brymner's most famous works are oil paintings, but at the height of his career he was widely admired for his ability to work in watercolour. Compared with oil paint, watercolour is highly practical and easy to use when an artist is on the move because it can be prepared swiftly and it dries quickly. As an art student touring Belgium in the summer of 1879, Brymner abandoned his oil paints for watercolours because they were easier to carry while travelling on foot.<sup>5</sup> This was one of the earliest of many trips on which Brymner used watercolour. *Île-aux-Coudres*, c.1900, for example, is a graphite drawing with watercolour applied on top of the sketch, and it was likely made during a summer boating trip in Quebec.





LEFT: William Brymner, *Île-aux-Coudres*, c.1900, watercolour over graphite on wove paper, 36.5 x 48.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Young Girl Shading Her Eyes*, 1897, watercolour over traces of graphite, 28.5 x 22.4 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The inscription reads, "To my friend Jame [sic] Morrice / W. Brymner / Montreal, 29th April 1897."

The convenience of watercolour made it ideal for informal works. Brymner used watercolour for preparatory sketches for oil paintings, for his contributions to the creative workshops organized by the Pen and Pencil Club, and even, occasionally, for decorating a menu. He sometimes inscribed watercolours and presented them to his friends as gifts; a small painting of a young girl done in 1897, for instance, was given to James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924).

Although watercolour was highly convenient for creating sketches, Brymner also prepared more formal watercolour paintings and was regularly exhibiting these works by the mid-1890s. He submitted watercolours to the annual exhibitions of the Art Association of Montreal and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and in 1894 and 1896 he held solo shows specifically devoted to watercolours.<sup>6</sup> The choice to exhibit his watercolours suggests that Brymner was using the medium strategically as a potential source of sales. With the exception of particularly large works like *The Grey Girl*, 1897, Brymner's watercolours were often priced considerably lower than his oil paintings. As a result, they occupied a distinct, more affordable, position within the art market that made them easier to sell. Given Brymner's perpetual financial worries, he likely hoped that the sale of his watercolours would bolster his finances.



William Brymner, *Waterfall*, 1898, watercolour on paper, 38.1 x 55.9 cm, Collection of Kristen Larsen, Calgary.



Brymner devoted considerable time to working in watercolour. A letter he wrote to Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942) in 1908 mentions that he had spent almost the entire summer working in the medium.<sup>7</sup> This fluency garnered him much critical acclaim. Critics admired his exhibition watercolours, praising him for exploiting the paint's delicacy to create striking images. In 1898 he exhibited two dozen watercolours as part of a Christmas exhibition at the AAM; *The Black Schooner*, 1898, and *Waterfall*, 1898, are believed to have been among the works. In reviewing the show, the *Montreal Gazette* claimed that Brymner's art "has something more than the ordinary degree of vitality" and "his work impresses one by the simplicity of subject, out of which he can make a picture [sic] excellent in tone, composition and color, and at the same time interesting in the general feeling conveyed."<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1900s watercolour was integral to Brymner's reputation. In 1903 a critic for the *Montreal Witness* declared: "We have one real watercolorist among us in the person of William Brymner. He . . . shows you watercolor for what it is, in all its delicacy and purity. . . . After his draughtsmanship, we consider it his strongest point."<sup>9</sup> There were even critics who claimed that he was more gifted in watercolour than oil. In Harriet Ford's view, watercolour seemed "to suit Mr. Brymner's powers, and [it] forces him to the reticence and delicacy which are lacking in his handling of the more vigorous medium."<sup>10</sup> For Brymner, watercolour had become a triumphant material.



William Brymner, *Fieldhands*, 1905, watercolour on paper, 22.9 x 30.5 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.



**WORKING EN PLEIN AIR**

When Brymner was studying in Europe in the late 1870s and 1880s, working outdoors was increasing in popularity among European artists. Although the Impressionists are the most famous artists to practise painting outside, artists associated with the Barbizon school, perhaps most famously Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867), did so as well. This practice is now known as painting *en plein air*, but for Brymner, *en plein air* had an even deeper meaning: it meant “that instead of painting a figure in the house with studio light when you wish to show it as doing something outside, you should paint the figure as it would appear in the open air.”<sup>11</sup> Brymner credited this practice to Édouard Manet (1832–1883), though he acknowledged that he had learned of it before he encountered Manet’s works at the memorial exhibition held for Manet at the École des beaux-arts in 1884. The principle demanded that figurative works as well as landscapes be painted outdoors, and it was very important to Brymner.



LEFT: Édouard Manet, *The Monet Family in Their Garden at Argenteuil*, 1874, oil on canvas, 61 x 99.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. RIGHT: William Brymner, *Near Louisbourg, Cape Breton, N.S.*, c.1909, oil on wood, 11.9 x 18 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

As a young man, Brymner was sharply critical of artists who worked from photographs. Throughout his life he believed that in order to depict the natural world he had to observe it directly. When he was working on the canvas of his most famous outdoor painting, *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885, Brymner worked outside under an umbrella for over a week.<sup>12</sup> Many of his small oil sketches and his watercolours were likely painted outdoors as well. Painting *en plein air* was perhaps the most effective way to get close to nature, and for Brymner, nothing was more important.

Brymner often experienced significant practical challenges to working outside. During his visit to Yorkshire in 1884, he complained, “The wind is blowing still very hard and makes it perfectly impossible to paint outside on account of the dust and sand that gets on the Canvas and Palette!”<sup>13</sup> In 1892, reporting on his work in the mountains, he noted, “I need not tell you what a very bad summer we have had for rain and mosquitoes.”<sup>14</sup> As annoying as the mosquitoes must have been, rain and clouds in the mountains could prevent artists from seeing the subject they had travelled to Western Canada to paint.<sup>15</sup> Brymner encountered similar problems elsewhere in Canada. Writing to Clarence Gagnon about his visit to Île d’Orléans in 1904, Brymner stated,

"I believe it is snowing on the hills opposite. I am trying to finish things & [can't] as we for the last six weeks have been having 3 days rain to one of fine weather."<sup>16</sup>

These myriad practical nuisances encouraged Brymner to develop a hybrid approach to painting nature. He became more strategic about using sketches to complete works in the studio. During his 1892 visit to the Rockies, he prepared drawings and made field studies (*Mount Baker*, 1892, may be one of them), and he made plans to use photographs in his studio, an aspect of his practice that merits further research. In his letter to Gagnon, he concluded, "I think you have to make endless studies outside but I believe the picture has to be painted inside."<sup>17</sup>

He was acutely conscious of the problem of shifting weather, noting that if one worked outside, "you must keep changing & changing the effect—Except in a country of eternal sun. Delacroix, Millet, Turner almost never did it. . . . At any rate I'd defy any one to have painted a picture of any size outside here this summer." He had faced the same challenges of changing weather decades earlier when he completed *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, but as a mature established artist with substantial professional commitments, he was no longer prepared to wait for better weather.

Brymner's landscapes vary considerably in their approach to light, colour, and form, but his foundational principle of studying nature was consistent throughout his career and was admired. In an article on Canadian landscape art, Eric Brown declared, "His work is sincere and painstaking: there is no striving after novelty or new colour, but the simple truths of nature's changing expression are given with a steady and sober earnestness which remains where much superficial brilliance fades."<sup>18</sup> Brymner's painting *Early Moonrise in September*, 1899, was included as an illustration: begun on a trip to the countryside, it reflects his abiding commitment to painting nature on his own terms.



William Brymner, *Mount Baker*, 1892, oil on panel, 15.3 x 22.8 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.





William Brymner, *The Ravine in Summer*, c.1900, oil on linen, 40.6 x 63.5 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton.

### IMPRESSIONISM AND MODERNISM

Brymner witnessed some of the most radical developments in Western art, but he never fully embraced any particular style. As a mature artist he took an interest in Impressionism, a style made famous by artists such as Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) and known for its revolutionary use of colour to capture impressions of light and forms, as well as its depiction of modern life. Though Brymner rejected strict adherence to a style, Impressionism influenced elements of some of his later works. *In the Orchard (Spring)*, 1892, for instance, brings together a modified academic approach to figures with an approach to nature that is closer to that of the Impressionists: he painted the people with care but the blossoms on the trees are merely expressed as dabs of pale pinks and white. This individuality of expression is in keeping with his approach to teaching: he encouraged his students to experiment and explore.





William Brymner, *In the Orchard (Spring)*, 1892, oil on paperboard, 40.2 x 30.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Brymner's interest in the art movements of his day are evident in the art lectures he gave. He delivered talks on Impressionism, first in March 1896, for the Women's Art Association of Canada at the YMCA in Montreal, and then in April 1897, for the Art Association of Montreal. These lectures have ensured him a place in the history of Impressionism in Canada, though neither his writings nor his works wholeheartedly embraced the style. He did not see Impressionism as an extreme departure, but as a new approach to creating vitality in art. Observing that the famous Impressionist artists Edgar Degas (1834-1917) and Claude Monet were in fact "entirely different," he concluded that "the first and principal tenet common to all is an intense love of and respect for nature and determination to give the exact character as they themselves see it."<sup>19</sup> Brymner believed in this core principle, and as he worked out how to express what he saw, he was open to the solutions the Impressionists offered.

In paintings from his later career, Brymner continued to experiment with form and colour in ways that might be considered Impressionist. In works such as *Girl with a Dog, Lower Saint Lawrence*, 1905, Brymner presents a carefully modelled figure, but the handling of the paint is bolder; rough brush strokes capture the play of light on the girl's clothing and the distant horizon—a hallmark of the Impressionist style. Like the Impressionists, Brymner was fully prepared to work with bright colours. When he exhibited *Summer* in 1910, he was praised for "brilliant Canadian summer green being most truthfully rendered with a very luscious and juicy quality of pigment."<sup>20</sup>



William Brymner, *Girl with a Dog, Lower Saint Lawrence*, 1905, oil on canvas, 48.5 x 60.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

*October (Octobre sur la rivière Beaudet)*, 1914, is a more muted work, but the extraordinary silhouettes of the trees suggest that Brymner may have wanted to experiment with flattening a landscape, an approach to space that is apparent in many Impressionist works, including Monet's series of paintings of haystacks and poplars (*The Four Trees*, 1891, is a good example of the latter).

Brymner was critical of the Post-Impressionists (at least the European ones), a group of artists who were creating radically different works that built on the Impressionists' experiments with colour and form. Although he believed that Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) had expressed themselves as best they could, he felt that their followers had repudiated "entirely any imitation of nature," producing a "mass of rubbish."<sup>21</sup> He was critical of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), for instance, because he believed Matisse could draw "draw as well as anyone, but in order to live up to his creed he has to draw things all out of proportion and pretend

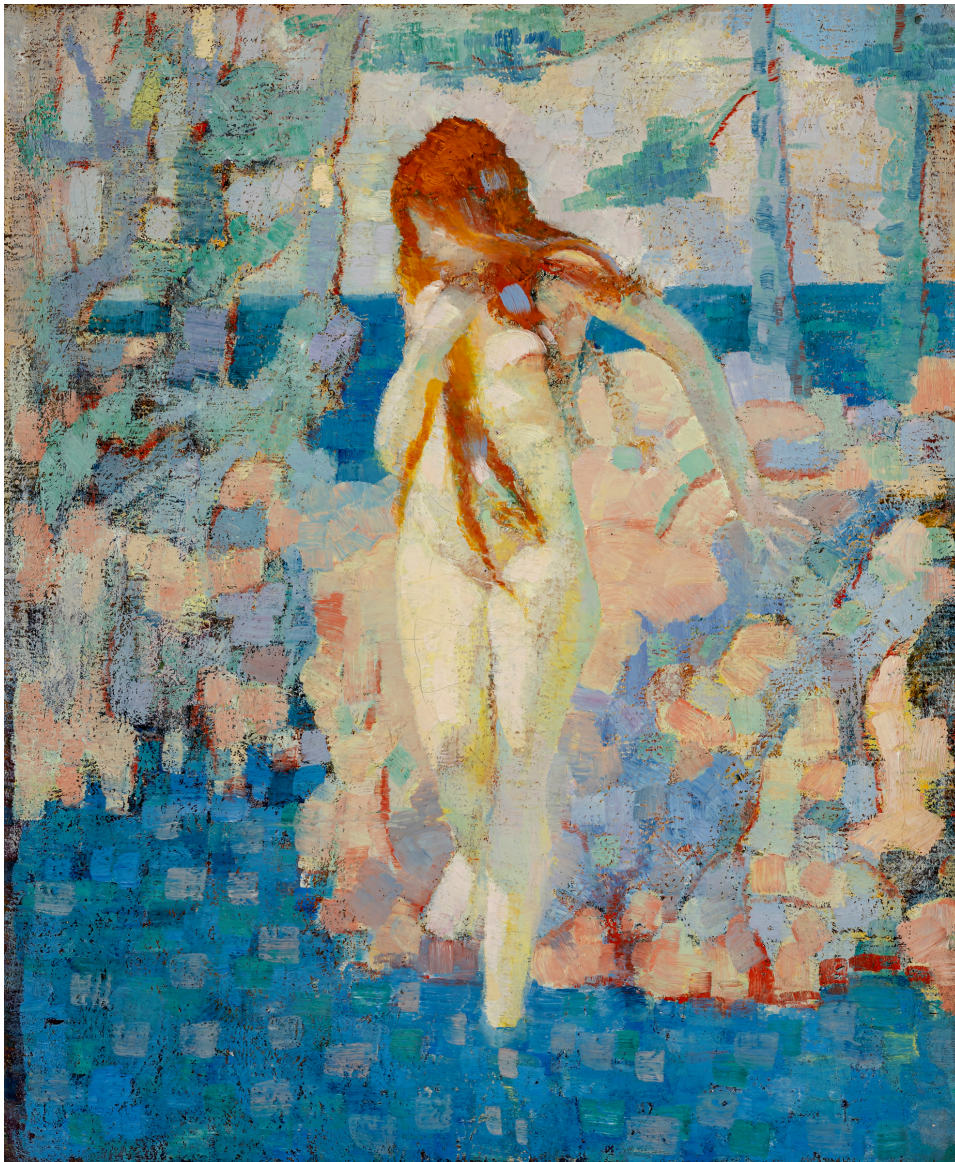


to be simple.”<sup>22</sup> Brymner’s views here are consistent with his own practice: his commitment to studying nature continued throughout his life.

However, when Canadian artists exhibited works inspired by the Post-Impressionists and were labelled as such, Brymner was supportive. In 1913 the Art Association of Montreal exhibition included works by the artists Randolph Hewton (1888–1960), John Lyman (1886–1967), and A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974) that attracted severe criticism from critics and from other artists; works such as Jackson’s *Assisi from the Plain*, 1912, were considered highly radical. A review for the *Montreal Witness* declared that “disciples of the Post Impressionists” had “invaded” the exhibition, using “immensity of canvas, screamingly discordant colors, and execrable drawing . . . to jar the public eye.”<sup>23</sup> Brymner defended the artists to his colleagues and in the press, declaring that Hewton and Jackson (whom he had known as students) were “extremely promising men” and that “while I may not care for some pictures personally, I recognize that they represent a phase of modern work

which should interest the public to see.”<sup>24</sup> Anne Savage recalled that during a visit to the AAM exhibition Brymner stopped next to some people gathered around Lyman’s work. “He looked absolute fire at the group . . . and he said ‘Well, if a man wants to paint a woman with green hair and red eyes, he jolly well can.’ And he stomped off.”<sup>25</sup> This anecdote illustrates his deep commitment to the need for artistic experimentation, as well as an abiding sense of loyalty to his students, colleagues, and peers.

Ultimately, in his own works Brymner chose to draw on Impressionism and other modern approaches without truly embracing these styles. In reviewing one of Brymner’s memorial exhibitions, the *Montreal Daily Star* observed that “it is almost hard, on first sight of the pictures, to grasp the fact that they are all the work of one man.” Noting that Brymner’s artistic practice had long been entwined with (and interrupted by) teaching, the review concluded that with every new artwork, Brymner began “not only with different aims but sometimes even with new technical methods, but in every case he got something which was well worth having.”<sup>26</sup>



Randolph Stanley Hewton, *Après-Midi Camaret*, c.1913, oil on canvas, 71.5 x 59.2 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg.



Brymner's enthusiasm for numerous creative experiments ensured that his oeuvre must be described as diverse, but it is also highly individual, a quality that Brymner valued deeply. Commitment to personal innovation was perhaps the most compelling lesson Brymner taught his students. In balancing open-mindedness with his artistic goals, he not only developed his own painting, but he earned his students' trust, giving them powerful encouragement to take their own works and, by extension, Canadian art in new directions.



William Brymner, *Summer Landscape*, 1910, oil on canvas, 74.3 x 102.6 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.





# WHERE TO SEE

The works of William Brymner are held in public and private collections in Canada and internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view. This list contains only the works in public collections discussed and illustrated in this book.





# WILLIAM BRYMNER

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## AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE

36 University Avenue  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-2190  
[agnes.queensu.ca/](http://agnes.queensu.ca/)



**William Brymner, *Border of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1885**

Oil on canvas  
54 x 80.6 cm



**William Brymner, *Summer*, 1905**

Watercolour on paper  
23.0 x 30.5 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

2 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
780-425-5379  
[youraga.ca/](http://youraga.ca/)



**William Brymner, *The Ravine in Summer*, c.1900**

Oil on linen  
40.6 x 63.5 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

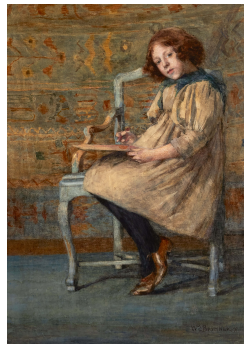
123 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-527-6610  
[artgalleryofhamilton.com/](http://artgalleryofhamilton.com/)



**William Brymner, *Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT, 1886***

Oil on canvas  
66 x 81.3 cm

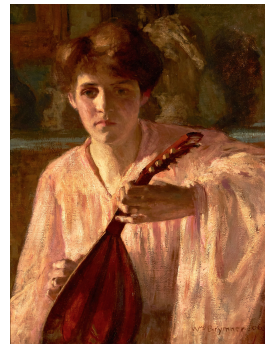
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**William Brymner, *The Grey Girl, 1897***

Watercolour on linen  
102.5 x 74.6 cm

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**William Brymner, *Prelude, 1906***

Oil on canvas  
67.4 x 52.2 cm

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**William Brymner, *Le Cours Martigues, 1908-14***

Oil on canvas  
48 x 68.3 cm

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**William Brymner, *The Vaughan Sisters, 1910***

Oil on canvas  
102.4 x 129 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA

1723 Hollis Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
902-424-5280  
[artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/](http://artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/)



**William Brymner, *Fieldhands*,  
1905**

Watercolour on paper  
22.9 x 30.5 cm

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## BEAVERBROOK ART GALLERY

703 Queen Street  
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada  
506-458-2028  
[beaverbrookartgallery.org](http://beaverbrookartgallery.org)



**William Brymner, *Venetian Canal*,  
1904**

Watercolour on paper  
26.7 x 17.8 cm

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## GLENBOW MUSEUM

130 9 Avenue SE  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
403-268-4101  
[glenbow.org/](http://glenbow.org/)



**William Brymner, *Hermit Mountain, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Range*, 1886**  
Oil on canvas  
154.5 x 213.8 cm



**William Brymner, *In the Selkirks near Glacier House*, c.1894**  
Oil on canvas  
152.4 x 213.4 cm

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## MCCORD MUSEUM

690 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-861-6701  
[musee-mccord.qc.ca/](http://musee-mccord.qc.ca/)



**William Brymner, "A Village Street – Memo of Composition," from the *Pen & Pencil Club Scrapbook* (volume 2), c.1891**  
Watercolour  
19.5 x 16.5 cm

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## MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West  
 Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
 514-285-2000  
 mbam.qc.ca



**William Brymner, *Old Man Painting in the Louvre, Paris, 1880/81 and 1902/3***

Etching, aquatint,  
 watercolour highlights  
 19.9 x 14.9 cm

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**William Brymner, *The Lonely Orphans Taken to Her Heart, 1884***

Oil on canvas  
 71 x 91.2 cm

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**William Brymner, *Champ-de-Mars, Winter, 1892***

Oil on canvas  
 74.9 x 101.6 cm

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**William Brymner, *Mount Baker, 1892***

Oil on panel  
 15.3 x 22.8 cm

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**William Brymner, *Early Moonrise in September, 1896-97***

Oil on panel  
 15.5 x 24.4 cm

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**William Brymner, *Young Girl Shading Her Eyes, 1897***

Watercolour over traces  
 of graphite  
 28.5 x 22.4 cm

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**William Brymner, *Girl with a Dog, Lower Saint Lawrence, 1905***

Oil on canvas  
 48.5 x 60.5 cm

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**William Brymner, *Saint-Eustache, Quebec, 1905***

Watercolour with  
 gouache highlights  
 over graphite  
 38.9 x 53.9 cm

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**William Brymner,**  
***Kenneth R.***  
***Macpherson, K.C., 1909***  
Oil on canvas  
84.7 x 65.4 cm



**William Brymner,**  
***Summer Landscape,***  
**1910**  
Oil on canvas  
74.3 x 102.6 cm



**William Brymner,**  
***Reclining Figure,***  
**c.1915**  
Oil on canvas  
45.7 x 87 cm



**William Brymner,**  
***Carthusian Monastery,***  
***Capri, c.1923***  
Oil on panel  
46.2 x 61.5 cm

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## MUSÉE D'ART DE JOLIETTE

145 Rue du Père-Wilfrid-Corbeil  
Joliette, Quebec, Canada  
450-756-0311  
[museejoliette.org/fr/](http://museejoliette.org/fr/)



**William Brymner, *Étude de nu,***  
**c.1900**  
Graphite and pastel on paper  
34.6 x 22 cm



**William Brymner, *Reclining***  
***Nude, c.1915***  
Oil on canvas  
46.2 x 76.7 cm

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## MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

179 Grande Allée Ouest  
Quebec City, Quebec, Canada  
418-643-2150  
[mnbaq.org/](http://mnbaq.org/)



**William Brymner, *The Books They Loved They Read in Running Brooks (Ils aimaient à lire dans les ruisseaux fuyants)*, 1885**

Oil on canvas  
76.2 x 61 cm

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**William Brymner, *The Weaver (La femme au métier)*, 1885**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 63 cm

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**William Brymner, *In County Cork, Ireland (Dans le comté de Cork, en Irlande)*, 1892**

Oil on canvas  
95.7 x 129 cm

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**William Brymner, *La Vallée Saint-François, Île d'Orléans*, 1903**

Oil on canvas  
74 x 102.3 cm

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**William Brymner (and Horatio Walker), *Under the Apple Tree (À l'ombre du pommier)*, 1903**

Tempera on canvas  
102.3 x 74.7 cm

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**William Brymner, *Saint-Eustache*, 1905**

Watercolour on paper  
35.6 x 25.4 cm

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**William Brymner, *The Trinket (Jeune fille au chapeau bleu [La breloque])*, 1916**

Oil on canvas  
73.8 x 56 cm

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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
[gallery.ca/](http://gallery.ca/)



**William Brymner, *With Dolly at the Sabot-makers*, 1883**  
Oil on canvas  
38.1 x 46.2 cm



**William Brymner, *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884**  
Oil on canvas  
122.5 x 142.7 cm



**William Brymner, *One Summer's Day*, 1884**  
Oil on wood  
26.7 x 37.5 cm



**William Brymner, *A Street in Paris*, c.1878-85**  
Pen and black ink on wove paper  
27.7 x 14.2 cm



**William Brymner, *Four Girls in a Meadow, Baie-Saint-Paul*, 1885**  
Oil on canvas  
39 x 46.5 cm



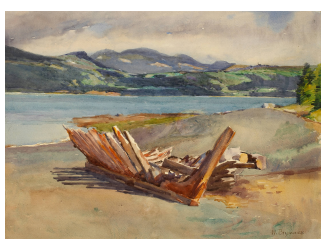
**William Brymner, *Crazy Patchwork*, 1886**  
Oil on canvas  
59.7 x 44.5 cm



**William Brymner, *The Picture Book*, 1898**  
Watercolour, oil, and resin on linen  
103 x 74.5 cm



**William Brymner, *Early Moonrise in September*, 1899**  
Oil on canvas  
74.2 x 102.1 cm



**William Brymner, *Île-aux-Coudres*, c.1900**  
Watercolour over graphite on wove paper  
36.5 x 48.5 cm



**William Brymner, *Near Louisbourg, Cape Breton, N.S.*, c.1909**  
Oil on wood  
11.9 x 18 cm



**William Brymner, *The Coast at Louisbourg*, 1914**  
Oil on canvas  
53.5 x 71.2 cm



**William Brymner, *Fog on the Coast*, 1914**  
Oil on canvas  
53.8 x 72 cm

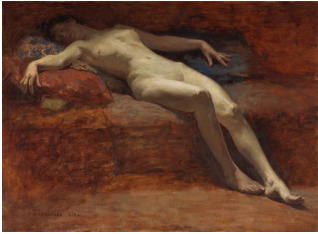




# WILLIAM BRYMNER

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**William Brymner, *Nude Figure*, 1915**

Oil on canvas  
74.7 x 101.7 cm

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## THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

72 Queen Street  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
905-576-3000  
[rmg.on.ca](http://rmg.on.ca)



**William Brymner, *Mount Cheops from Rogers Pass*, c.1898**

Oil over graphite on canvas  
152.6 x 213.6 cm

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## UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE ART GALLERY

4401 University Drive  
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada  
403-329-2666  
[artgallery.uleth.ca/](http://artgallery.uleth.ca/)



**William Brymner, *Sir Donald and Great Glacier, Selkirks*, n.d.**

Oil on canvas  
153.7 x 214 cm

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# WILLIAM BRYMNER

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## VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

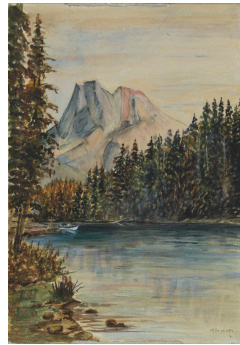
750 Hornby Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-662-4700  
[vanartgallery.bc.ca/](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca/)



**William Brymner, *Ruin of a Church*, 1891**

Oil on canvas  
21 x 32.5 cm

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**William Brymner, *Near Field, B.C.*, 1892-93**

Watercolour on paperboard  
26.8 x 19.1 cm

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## NOTES

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19. QUA, WB to JT, [October] 30, 1879.

20. QUA, WB to DB, February 4, 1879.

21. QUA, WB to DB, March 24, 1880.

22. QUA, WB to JT, September 30, 1879.

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### KEY WORKS: MOUNTAIN HILL LOOKING UP

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2. QUA, WB to DB, March 18, 1885.
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2. Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and Sarah Carter, *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 119-23.
3. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2014), 127-58.
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4. MMFAAPC, 3:206, "The Canadian Art Exhibition," *Montreal Witness*, April 20, 1892.

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5. Eric Brown, "Landscape Art in Canada," in *Art of the British Empire Overseas*, ed. Charles Holme (London: Studio, 1917), 17.

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#### KEY WORKS: THE COAST AT LOUISBOURG

1. Queen's University Archives, William Brymner fonds, CA ON00239 F02414, WB to Jean Elizabeth Brymner, August 28, 1909.

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2. Janet Braide, *William Brymner, 1855-1925: A Retrospective* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1979), 61.

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7. QUA, "Notes on Travel," 8-9.

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9. QUA, "Drawing," 10.

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13. Archives of Manitoba, P8226/2, WB to Edmund Morris, September 19, 1909.
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15. Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal till Death*, 142.
16. It was Begg who had authority over the reserve, and Begg had provided the coffin and shroud (Library and Archives Canada, Microfilm reel C-10133, "Blackfoot Agency—Memorandum from Indian Agent Magnus Begg Concerning Poundmaker's Death," July 7, 1886).
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## GLOSSARY

### **academic tradition**

Associated with the royal academies of art established in France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, the academic tradition emphasized drawing, painting, and sculpture in a style highly influenced by ancient classical art. Subject matter for painting was hierarchically ranked, with history painting of religious, mythological, allegorical, and historical figures holding the position of greatest importance, followed, in order, by genre painting, portraiture, still lifes, and landscapes.

### **Académie Julian**

A private art school established by Rudolphe Julian in Paris in 1868. Among the many Canadian artists who studied there are Maurice Cullen, J.W. Morrice, Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, A.Y. Jackson, and Clarence Gagnon.

### **Aitken, James Alfred (Scottish, 1846–1897)**

As a young man Aitken studied art in Dublin and travelled in Europe and North America before establishing himself as a painter based in Glasgow. He became known for his landscapes, and he specialized in working in watercolour. A friend of William Van Horne, he was one of several artists who painted landscapes for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

### **Art Association of Montreal (AAM)**

Founded in 1860 as an offshoot of the Montreal Society of Artists (itself dating to 1847), the Art Association of Montreal became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1947. The MMFA is now a major international museum, with more than 1 million visitors annually.

### **Arts Club of Montreal**

Founded in 1912 by a group of successful artists, sculptors, architects, and writers of high social status and modelled on the English gentlemen's clubs of London in the nineteenth century. Notable members were architect William Maxwell Sutherland (founder and first president); painter and respected art teacher William Brymner; Maurice Cullen; A.Y. Jackson; Henri Hébert; Alfred Laliberté; and James Wilson Morrice. In 1996 the membership was opened to women. The club is now a professional association representing a wide range of artists.

### **avant-garde**

From the French for "vanguard" or "advance guard," avant-garde entered discussions about art in the early nineteenth-century work of the socialist thinker Henri de Saint-Simon, who believed that artists had a role to play in building a new society. The meaning of "avant-garde" has shifted over the years, referring to artists in relation to their times rather than to a particular group of artists working at a specific time in history. It connotes radicalism and rejection of a status quo and is often associated with work that is provocative and confrontational.

**Barbizon**

From the 1830s to the 1870s, Barbizon (a village on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau near Paris) was a gathering place for French landscape painters who rejected the academic style in favour of realism. This informal group, later known as the Barbizon school, emphasized painting *en plein air*, in and directly from nature, setting the path for Impressionism. Major artists include Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Camille Corot.

**Barnsley, James M. (Canadian, 1861–1929)**

Born in Ontario, Barnsley grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, and studied at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts. He travelled to Europe to continue his studies, enrolling at the Académie Julian and exhibiting at the Paris Salon. He later lived in Montreal, and he was known for his landscapes. He ceased painting in 1892 owing to health problems.

**Beam, Carl (Ojibwe, M'Chigeeng First Nation, 1943–2005)**

A mixed-media artist who experimented with the photographic medium and spearheaded the reclamation of space by contemporary Indigenous artists in Canada. Beam often worked in photographic collage that featured family photos, text, drawings, and recurring images such as bird anatomy, Christian iconography, and famed freedom fighters. His painting *The North American Iceberg*, 1985, was the first work recognized as contemporary art by an Indigenous artist purchased by the National Gallery of Canada. In 2005 he received the Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts.

**Beaver Hall Group**

A group of approximately twenty-nine Montreal-based artists (1920–23), named after its headquarters on Montreal's Beaver Hall Hill. Half of the group's members and associates were women. Like the Group of Seven (founded just weeks earlier), it promoted modernist art, but the Beaver Hall Group went beyond landscapes to concentrate on urban and rural scenes, portraiture, and the human figure. Prominent adherents included Emily Coonan, Adrien and Henri Hébert, Prudence Heward, Edwin Holgate, Mabel May, Sarah Robertson, Albert Robinson, and Anne Savage.

**Bouguereau, William (French, 1825–1905)**

A painter known for his traditional, academic approach to his craft, Bouguereau was arguably one of the most famous artists in France during his time. Many of his highly realist paintings were mythological and allegorical, and his interpretation of human subject matter was sentimental.

**Boulanger, Gustave (French, 1824–1888)**

Often described as a Neoclassical painter, Boulanger was known for his paintings of life in ancient Greece and Rome, though he also painted scenes in North Africa, where he travelled in 1845. He later became a teacher at the École des beaux-arts and the Académie Julian. He encouraged his students to focus on the accuracy of their drawings.

**Brown, Eric (British/Canadian, 1877–1939)**

As the first director of the National Gallery of Canada, Brown held the position from 1912 until his death. Earlier, he had been curator of the gallery's collection, at the invitation of Sir Edmund Walker, a banker and major patron



of the arts. Brown was a passionate builder of the gallery's collections, both international and Canadian, and travelled often to Europe to make contacts with artists and dealers.

**Brown, Frederick (British, 1851–1941)**

A British oil painter and art teacher, Brown energetically opposed the conservatism of the Royal Academy of Arts in both his own style and his teaching methods. He became a founding member of the New English Art Club in 1886. He was influenced by James McNeill Whistler, the rustic Naturalism of Jules Bastien-Lepage, and Impressionism. Brown served as principal of the Westminster School of Art from 1877 to 1892 and taught at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1893 to 1918.

**Canadian Art Club**

Active from 1907 to 1915, the Toronto-based Canadian Art Club was spearheaded by the painters Edmund Morris and Curtis Williamson as a departure from what they viewed as the low standards of the Ontario Society of Artists. The invitation-only club included prominent Canadian painters and sculptors influenced by international developments, including recent Dutch and French painting. One of its goals was to entice expatriates, most notably James Wilson Morrice and Clarence Gagnon, to exhibit in Canada. Homer Watson served as the Canadian Art Club's first president.

**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 of Arts. 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.

**Catlin, George (American, 1796–1872)**

A painter, writer, and traveller passionately devoted to the subject of American Indigenous culture. Hundreds of Catlin's ethnographic paintings—some of which garnered high praise from contemporary critics, including Charles Baudelaire—are now held by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

**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.

**Clapp, W.H. (Canadian, 1879–1954)**

A landscape and figure painter, Clapp was influenced by the emphasis on light effects in Impressionism, the detailed and mottled brushwork of Pointillism, and the bold colours of Fauvism. Born in Montreal to American parents, he studied in Paris and Madrid before settling first in Montreal and then in

Oakland, California. Clapp served as curator and director of the Oakland Art Gallery for over thirty years and exhibited often with the California Society of Six.

### **Contemporary Arts Society**

Founded in 1939 by John Lyman, this Montreal-based society promoted a non-academic approach to modernist art and linked artistic culture in Quebec to contemporary life. Early members included Stanley Cosgrove, Paul-Émile Borduas, and Jack Humphrey.

### **Coonan, Emily (Canadian, 1885–1971)**

A portraitist and landscape painter known for her depictions of women in interior settings, Coonan was the only member of the Beaver Hall Group who did not belong to the established Montreal art scene or exhibit widely with them. Her later works show Impressionist and modernist influences with simplified backgrounds and expressive brushwork prioritized over realistic capture.

### **Cullen, Maurice (Canadian, 1866–1934)**

Like many Canadian painters of his generation, Maurice Cullen received his early art education in Montreal, then moved to Paris to continue his studies at the Académie Julian, the Académie Colarossi, and the École des beaux-arts. He was influenced by Impressionism, and his landscapes, in turn, influenced a younger generation of Canadian painters, including the Group of Seven. His winter landscapes and snowy urban scenes are considered his most impressive achievement.

### **Degas, Edgar (French, 1834–1917)**

A painter, sculptor, printmaker, and draftsman, Degas was aligned with but separate from the Impressionist movement, frequently departing from its norms: he was not interested in changing atmospheric effects and rarely painted outdoors. Characteristic subjects include the ballet, theatre, cafés, and women at their toilette.

### **Díaz de la Peña, Narcisse (French, 1807–1876)**

A landscape painter who, beginning in the early 1830s, established friendships with artists with whom he later formed the Barbizon school. Like most of those artists, he worked extensively in the forest of Fontainebleau, where he often spent his summers. He had a particularly close relationship with fellow Barbizon painter Théodore Rousseau. Díaz de la Peña's landscapes tend to be more richly painted and to rely on more dramatic lighting effects than do the generally more meditative views of his colleagues.

### **Dyonnet, Edmond (French/Canadian, 1859–1954)**

Born in Crest, France, Dyonnet immigrated to Canada with his family in 1875. After studying in Turin and Naples, he established a career as an artist in Montreal. He became a professor at the Conseil des arts et manufactures in Montreal, and he was secretary to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts from 1910 to 1949.



**École des beaux-arts**

A major institution in nineteenth-century France, the École des beaux-arts has its origins in the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture established by Louis XIV in 1648. This academy was suppressed during the French Revolution, and the École was established in 1819, becoming the new national art school. It was based on an atelier system in which students worked in studios with different master artists, learning to draw in the academic tradition and participating in regular competitions.

***en plein air***

French for “in the open air,” *en plein air* is used to describe the practice of painting or sketching outdoors to observe nature, and in particular the changing effects of weather, atmosphere, and light.

**Fraser, John Arthur (British/Canadian, 1838–1898)**

A painter, photographer, illustrator, and art teacher born in England. Upon immigrating to Canada around 1860, Fraser began painting studio backdrops for the photographer William Notman, becoming a partner in Notman’s Toronto firm in 1867.

**Gagnon, Clarence (Canadian, 1881–1942)**

Although he travelled and lived in Europe periodically throughout his career, Clarence Gagnon is best known for his paintings of the people and landscapes of his native Quebec, and particularly the Charlevoix region. A virtuosic colourist, Gagnon created highly original winter scenes in vivid hues and generous play between light and dark. He is also known for illustrating books such as *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hémon (1913) and *Le grand silence blanc* by L.F. Rouquette (1928).

**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.

**Group of Seven**

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, the Group of Seven was 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.

**Hals, Frans (Dutch, c.1582–1666)**

A Baroque painter, Hals is known for his portraits, both of individuals and of groups. Over the course of his career his style became increasingly freer, and he experimented with thin paint and loose, rapidly applied brush strokes, a technique that made his late work inspiring to many painters in the modern era.

**Harris, Lawren S. (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.

**Harris, Robert (Welsh/Canadian, 1849–1919)**

Born in Tyn-y-Groes, Wales, Harris immigrated to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, with his family in 1856. He studied at art schools in Boston, London, and Paris and quickly became one of the best-known portrait painters in Canada in the late 1800s, especially known for the group portrait *The Fathers of Confederation*, 1884. He was president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts from 1893 to 1906.

**Hébert, Adrien (Canadian, 1890–1967)**

The two sons of the sculptor Louis-Philippe Hébert, Adrien Hébert and his brother Henri (1884–1950), belonged to the liberal elite who favoured an open attitude toward change as the key to the future of French Canada. At a time when it was popular to celebrate the past and the traditional values of the Quebec countryside, the painter Adrien Hébert drew his inspiration from urban life in the city and port of Montreal. Boldly modern in his choice of subjects, he was more restrained in his treatment of form and colour.

**Heward, Prudence (Canadian, 1896–1947)**

A modernist painter recognized for her nuanced depictions of female subjects at the intersection of class, gender, and race, Heward was associated with the Beaver Hall Group, the Canadian Group of Painters, and the Contemporary Arts Society. She studied art in London and Paris, and later travelled to Italy with fellow artist and lifelong friend Isabel McLaughlin. Heward gained more recognition after the 1970s, as feminist art historians drew scholarly attention to Canadian women artists. (See *Prudence Heward: Life & Work* by Julia Skelly.)

**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 Julian 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.

**Hiester Reid, Mary (American/Canadian, 1854–1921)**

Born in Pennsylvania, Hiester Reid immigrated to Toronto with her husband, George Agnew Reid. Perhaps best known for her floral paintings, Hiester Reid worked in oil on canvas and sometimes watercolour. She was an elected member of the Ontario Society of Artists and an associate member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. She exhibited in Canada and the United States and was collected by major institutions and private collectors. After her death, she



became the first woman artist to receive a solo show at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario). (See *Mary Hiester Reid: Life & Work* by Andrea Terry.)

**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.

**Impressionism**

A highly influential art movement that originated in France in the 1860s, Impressionism is associated with the emergence of modern urban European society. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and other Impressionists rejected the subjects and formal rigours of academic art in favour of scenes of nature and daily life and the careful rendering of atmospheric effects. They often painted outdoors.

**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 brush strokes and vivid colours of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences.

**Jackson, Frederick W. (British, 1859–1918)**

An artist from Manchester, Jackson studied in Paris with Jules-Joseph Lefebvre and Gustave Boulanger in the early 1880s. After travelling extensively in Europe he returned to the United Kingdom, where he became known as a painter of landscapes, seascapes, and genre scenes. He was a member of the Staithes Group and the Royal Society of British Artists.

**Johnstone, John Young (Canadian, 1887–1930)**

A member of the Beaver Hall Group, Johnstone studied at the Art Association of Montreal and later became known for his landscapes depicting scenes in France, Belgium, and Quebec. He exhibited regularly in Montreal and also worked as an art teacher. In 1929 he travelled to Cuba, where he died the following year.

**Kane, Paul (Irish/Canadian, 1810–1871)**

Influenced by the American artist George Catlin, this nineteenth-century painter and explorer spent extensive time documenting Indigenous Peoples in North America and depicting, in a traditional European style, scenes of their culture and landscapes. The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto houses one hundred paintings and several hundred sketches by Kane. (See *Paul Kane: Life & Work* by Arlene Gehmacher.)

**Kerr-Lawson, James (Scottish/Canadian, 1862–1939)**

Both a skilled lithographer and a painter of landscapes and urban scenes, Kerr-Lawson immigrated to Canada as a child. He studied first at the Ontario School of Art, and later in France and Italy. He returned to Canada in 1885, but after a

brief stay he moved to Europe, establishing himself in Glasgow and London. In 1908 Kerr-Lawson became a founding member of the Senefelder Club to promote interest in lithography. He also exhibited with the Canadian Art Club from 1912 to 1915.

**Leduc, Ozias (Canadian, 1864–1955)**

A painter and church muralist whose work conveys a sense of intimacy and tranquility. Leduc's religious paintings—which decorate chapels in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New England—combine devotional iconography with a Symbolist use of light and colour. Leduc is also known as a painter of still lifes and landscapes. (See *Ozias Leduc: Life & Work* by Laurier Lacroix.)

**Lefebvre, Jules-Joseph (French, 1836–1911)**

Known for his portraits and his paintings of the female nude, Lefebvre was an established and successful painter in late nineteenth-century Paris. He exhibited regularly at the Salon and taught at the Académie Julian. As a professor, he encouraged his students to create life drawings with as much accuracy as possible.

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

A landscape painter and founding member of the Group of Seven, Lismer 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).

**Lyman, John (Canadian, 1886–1967)**

A painter and art critic. Founder of the Contemporary Arts Society and a champion of Canadian artistic culture, Lyman established the short-lived art school The Atelier and wrote for the *Montrealer*. In opposition to perspectives invested in a distinctly Canadian painting style, Lyman advocated for an international approach.

**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.

**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.



**McNicoll, Helen (Canadian, 1879–1915)**

McNicoll is recognized for popularizing Impressionism in Canada. Born into a wealthy Anglophone family in Montreal, she studied with William Brymner at the Art Association of Montreal and the Slade School of Fine Art in London, and worked in numerous artist colonies across Europe with her close friend and fellow artist Dorothea Sharp. Her works—depicting rural landscapes, childhood subjects, and modern women—are known for their bright quality of light. (See *Helen McNicoll: Life & Work* by Samantha Burton.)

**Millet, Jean-François (French, 1814–1875)**

Born into a peasant family, Millet was one of the founders of the Barbizon school, a group known for painting *en plein air* and favouring landscapes as subject matter. He is prominently recognized for empathetic depictions of rural labourers and peasants created just as the Industrial Revolution was causing mass migrations from the countryside to urban centres such as Paris. Millet was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1868 and was an inspiration for Vincent van Gogh.

**Monet, Claude (French, 1840–1926)**

A founder of the Impressionist movement in France, Monet created landscapes and seascapes that are among the canonical works of Western art. Introduced to *plein air* painting as a teenager, Monet returned to it throughout his life as a means of exploring the atmospheric effects and perceptual phenomena that so interested him as an artist.

**Morrice, James Wilson (Canadian, 1865–1924)**

One of Canada's first modernist painters and first artists to gain international recognition, during his lifetime Morrice was nonetheless more celebrated in Europe than he was at home. He is best known for richly coloured landscapes that show the influence of James McNeill Whistler and Post-Impressionism.

**Morris, Edmund Montague (Canadian, 1871–1913)**

A painter best known for his portraits of Indigenous leaders during Canada's post-Confederation treaty negotiations, especially of the early twentieth century, although he was also an admired landscape painter. In 1906 Morris, on commission, accompanied the James Bay expedition for the negotiation of Treaty 9 with Cree and Ojibway peoples. He often used pastel in detailed, close-up portraits of Indigenous chiefs. With fellow painter Curtis Williamson, Morris instigated the creation of the Canadian Art Club in 1907, of which he was a key member.

**Morris, Kathleen Moir (Canadian, 1893–1986)**

A painter especially noted for her urban and rural subjects. Morris studied at the Art Association of Montreal under William Brymner and Maurice Cullen. Although she does not appear to have exhibited with the Beaver Hall Group in the early 1920s, she is closely associated with the group. Her paintings of scenery in Montreal and Quebec City, as well as her depictions of the ByWard Market in Ottawa, exemplify the interest that she and her contemporaries had in chronicling modern city life.

**National Gallery of Canada**

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the governor general, the Marquis of Lorne, the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988 the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

**Newton, Liliat 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.

**Ontario Society of Artists (OSA)**

Canada's oldest extant professional artists' association, the Ontario Society of Artists was 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.

**O'Brien, Lucius Richard (Canadian, 1832–1899)**

A prominent oil and watercolour painter of Canadian landscapes, vice-president of the Ontario Society of Artists (1874–80), and the founding president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1880–90). He travelled extensively in Canada, reaching as far as the west coast. For the serial publication *Picturesque Canada* (1882–84) he supervised the commissioning of illustrations, himself producing the vast majority of images upon which the engraved illustrations were based.

**Paris Salon**

Beginning in 1667, the Paris Salon was a juried annual or biennial exhibition held at the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (later the Académie des beaux-arts). It became the major marker of prominence for artists, especially between 1748 and 1890, and was known for its crammed display of paintings, covering the walls from floor to ceiling. Through exposure and the connections to patrons and commissions, artists' careers could be made by their inclusion in the Salon.

**Pilot, Robert (Canadian, 1898–1967)**

A painter of landscapes, seascapes, and murals best known for his soft, atmospheric depictions of Maritime coastlines, the St. Lawrence River, and snow-capped Rocky Mountains. He was the stepson of Maurice Cullen, from whom he received much of his early training.



**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.

**realism**

A style of art in which subjects are depicted as factually as possible. Realism also refers to a nineteenth-century art movement, led by Gustave Courbet, concerned with the representation of daily modern life, rather than mythological, religious, or historical subjects.

**Reid, George Agnew (Canadian, 1860–1947)**

A painter of portraits, figure studies, and genre and historical scenes. With his training in the academic tradition, and his roles as president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1906–9) and principal of the Ontario College of Art, Reid became a key figure in Ontario's art scene. Inspired by the mural revivals in Europe and the United States, he promoted mural art in Canada—an activity that was part of his larger concern with using the visual arts to beautify urban life and encourage civic virtues.

**Rembrandt Haarmenszoon van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669)**

One of the most famous artists of his time, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (referred to as Rembrandt) painted portraits, self-portraits, and dramatic scenes, and created drawings and etchings that conveyed the personality of his subjects. Throughout, Rembrandt developed the interplay between light and shadow in his work, heightening contrast and using a narrow range of colours to generate a spotlight effect in his earlier work, and working with impasto (thick application of paint) and composition to create the radiance that characterizes paintings in his late style.

**Renoir, Pierre-Auguste (French, 1841–1919)**

One of the foremost figures of the Impressionist movement. Renoir's prints, paintings, and sculptures often depict scenes of leisure and domestic ease. He left the Impressionists in 1878 to participate again in the Paris Salon, the city's officially sanctioned annual art exhibition.

**Robert-Fleury, Tony (French, 1837–1911)**

Inspired by Neoclassicism and trained in the academic tradition, Robert-Fleury was known for his achievements as a history painter. He exhibited regularly at the Paris Salon, where he was awarded the medal of honour in 1870, and he became a professor at the Académie Julian. In his later life he was interested in Realism and Impressionism.

**Rousseau, Théodore (French, 1812–1867)**

A leading figure of French nineteenth-century landscape painting in general and of the Barbizon school in particular. Rousseau's early emphasis on painting from the direct observation of nature challenged the calm, idealistic landscapes of his Neoclassical teachers. His works embraced nature as a wild and undisciplined force with power that outshone the human industries of modern life.

**Royal Academy of Arts**

Established in 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts in London was a central art institution that, along with the Paris Salon, could exert tremendous influence on an artist's career. By the mid-nineteenth century, European avant-garde movements such as Impressionism began to diminish the power held by the Royal Academy and similar institutions.

**Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)**

An organization of professional artists and architects modelled after national academies long present in Europe, such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. (founded in 1768) and the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris (founded in 1648).

**Rubens, Peter Paul (Flemish, 1577–1640)**

The Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens was known for his religious and mythological compositions. Influenced in his early career by the painters of the Venetian Renaissance, Rubens's style evolved to typify the sensuousness and movement of Baroque painting, with a looser painting technique evident in his later works. He supervised a large studio for the production of his work, even as he served as an important diplomat for the Netherlands in Europe.

**Savage, Anne (Canadian, 1896–1971)**

A painter and educator. Savage's early work is characterized by rhythmic portrayals of Canadian landscapes, though her later paintings were abstract. She founded arts education organizations and was an original member of the Beaver Hall Group and the Canadian Group of Painters.

**Scott, Thomas Seaton (Canadian, 1826–1895)**

A British immigrant, Scott began working in Montreal in the mid-1850s, establishing a successful architectural practice that included church designs, corporate commissions from the Grand Trunk Railway, and private projects. In 1872 he became the chief architect in Canada's Department of Public Works. In this position he was responsible for the administration of a team of design staff who worked on dozens of federal building projects.

**Seiden Goldberg, Regina (Canadian, 1897–1991)**

A participant in the exhibitions organized by the Beaver Hall Group, Seiden trained at the Art Association of Montreal with William Brymner and Maurice Cullen. She became known for her portraits and was admired by the Canadian press. She later studied in Europe, where she met the artist Eric Goldberg; the couple married in Montreal in 1928, and Seiden largely ceased painting after her marriage.



**Suzor-Coté, Marc-Aurèle de Foy (Canadian, 1869–1937)**

A remarkably versatile artist, Suzor-Coté was a successful sculptor, painter, illustrator, and church decorator. In 1890 he left rural Quebec to study art in Paris and remained there for eighteen years, painting rural landscapes in an Impressionist style.

**Titian (Italian, c.1488–1576)**

Tiziano Vecellio, known as Titian in English, was one of the greatest painters of the Venetian Renaissance, whose formal innovations in brushwork and colour signalled the rise of a new aesthetic in Western art. Patronized by royalty, Titian enjoyed a formidable reputation throughout much of Europe. His work influenced later painters, including Diego Velázquez and Peter Paul Rubens.

**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.

**Van Horne, William (Canadian, 1843–1915)**

A major railway entrepreneur, industrialist, and capitalist, Van Horne was appointed general manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882 to oversee its proper construction; he became president in 1888. He viewed the railway as a communications system similar to telegraph technology, which his company also developed. As an amateur architect, Van Horne helped design the Banff Springs hotel and Château Frontenac. He also painted in his leisure time and was an important collector of art and Japanese porcelain.

**Veronese, Paolo (Italian, 1528–1588)**

Paolo Caliari, known as Paolo Veronese, was a Venetian painter of the Italian Renaissance known for the complex compositions of his paintings and for his use of colour. He was born in Verona, arriving in Venice in 1553, where he completed numerous fresco projects. Influenced by Venetian and central Italian painters, in particular Raphael, Veronese specialized in opulent feast scenes, often surrounding his figures and landscapes with complex architectural features that referenced important buildings and styles of his time.

**Walker, Horatio (Canadian, 1858–1938)**

Although born and raised in rural Ontario, Walker specialized in paintings of French rural life, especially on Île d’Orléans, Quebec, where he lived for many years and where he took up permanent residence in 1928. His widely admired art drew upon Jean-François Millet’s depictions of the rural poor in France and the naturalism of the Barbizon school. Walker was a founding member of the Canadian Art Club in 1907, serving as the club’s president in 1915.

**Watercolour**

A painting medium in which pigments are suspended in a water-based solution and the term that refers to a finished work painted in that medium, watercolour has a long history both in manuscript illumination (dating to Ancient Egypt)



and in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese brush or scroll painting. In Western art, it became a preferred medium for sketching in the Renaissance and grew in popularity through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially for botanical and wildlife illustrations. It continues to be used by artists and illustrators because of its transparency and the effects possible by laying washes of pure pigment.

### **Watson, Homer (Canadian, 1855–1936)**

A landscape painter, Watson was famous for his depictions of southern Ontario. He was born in Doon, in Waterloo County, and spent most of his life there, where he not only painted views of the countryside, he took an interest in protecting the local environment. The first president of the Canadian Art Club, he was a widely respected leader in Canadian art at the turn of the century. (See *Homer Watson: Life & Work* by Brian Foss.)

### **Windeyer, Richard Cunningham (British/Canadian, 1831–1900)**

Born in Plymouth, U.K., Windeyer trained in architecture in England and in the United States before moving to Montreal in 1862 where he established a successful practice. He moved to Toronto in 1871, and the following year he was a founding member of the Ontario Society of Artists. He worked on several government buildings and churches.

### **Winnipeg Art Gallery**

Established in 1912, the Winnipeg Art Gallery has the world's largest public collection of Inuit art; it displayed Inuit sculpture for the first time in December 1953, and began systematic purchases for its permanent collection in 1957. In 1960 the gallery made a serious commitment when it purchased 139 major pieces from George Swinton. Over the years, the gallery's Inuit art collection has grown to its present size of close to 13,200 works largely through the donation or purchase of large collections, including the enormous 4,000-piece Jerry Twomey Collection received in 1971. The gallery's other primary collections are dedicated to Canadian historical and contemporary art, decorative art, and contemporary Canadian photography. It has moved several times in its history but has been in its current location since 1971.





# SOURCES & RESOURCES

William Brymner (1855–1925) was a renowned painter during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who regularly exhibited his work in Canada and internationally. Today he is most known for his influence as an art teacher with the Art Association of Montreal. In 1979 Janet Braide curated a retrospective exhibition and published a catalogue, *William Brymner, 1855–1925: A Retrospective*, that has proven fundamental for subsequent research and highlighted the breadth of his work as an artist and his professional activities. Recent research into Brymner's encounters with Indigenous people has broadened our knowledge of his career as an artist who was a witness to the violence of colonialism.



## EXHIBITIONS

Brymner's selected exhibition history is divided into two sections: key exhibitions of his work during his lifetime and exhibitions held after his death.



LEFT: William Brymner, *Self Portrait*, 1881, charcoal on paper, 47.8 x 32.4 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. RIGHT: National Gallery, Ottawa, February 1900, photograph by Topley Studio. William Brymner's *The Picture Book*, 1898, is visible on the right-hand wall.

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS DURING BRYMNER'S LIFETIME

1885	Salon des Artistes Français, Paris
1886	Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London
1893	World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago
1901	Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo
1904	Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis
1910	<i>Canadian Art Exhibition</i> , Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
1916	February 26, <i>Solo Exhibition of Paintings by Wm. Brymner, Esq., C.M.G., P.R.C.A.</i> , The Arts Club, Montreal

In addition to those listed above, Brymner regularly submitted works to the annual exhibitions organized by the Art Association of Montreal and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. For lists of the works Brymner exhibited in these exhibitions, see Evelyn de R. McMann, *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, formerly Art Association of Montreal: Spring Exhibitions, 1880-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) and Evelyn de R. McMann, *Royal Canadian Academy of*





*Arts/Académie royale des arts du Canada: Exhibitions and Members, 1880–1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). Brymner also submitted works to the exhibitions organized by the Canadian Art Club. For information on these submissions, see Robert J. Lamb, *The Canadian Art Club, 1907–1915* (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1988).

### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AFTER BRYMNER'S DEATH

<b>1925</b>	November 30–December 14, <i>Paintings and Watercolors by the Late William Brymner, C. M. G., R. C. A.</i> , Watson Art Galleries, Montreal
<b>1926</b>	January 30–February 14, <i>Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by the Late William Brymner, C.M.G., R.C.A.</i> , Art Association of Montreal
<b>1979</b>	May 13–July 1, <i>William Brymner, 1855–1925: A Retrospective</i> , Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. Travelled to National Gallery of Canada, July 13–August 19; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, August 30–September 30; and Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, October 11–November 11.
<b>2010–11</b>	March 27–July 25, <i>William Brymner: Artist, Teacher, Colleague</i> , Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. Travelled to Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, November 11, 2010–April 10, 2011, and Winnipeg Art Gallery, May 14–August 21, 2011.

### SELECTED WRITINGS BY BRYMNER

"Progress in Art." *University Magazine* 6, no. 2 (April 1907): 239–46.

"Village Life in Three Countries." *University Magazine* 11, no. 2 (April 1912): 309–26.

Brymner's lecture on Impressionism has been published in Alicia Boutilier and Paul Maréchal, *William Brymner: Artist, Teacher, Colleague* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2010), 133–49, and in A.K. Prakash, *Impressionism in Canada: A Journey of Rediscovery* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2015), 698–705.

### KEY ARCHIVES

The largest surviving collection of Brymner's letters is a collection of letters to his family. This collection is housed at Queen's University Archives and also includes surviving manuscripts for some of Brymner's lectures and articles.

Brymner's letters to Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942) are part of the Clarence Gagnon fonds at the McCord Museum; they are available online at the following address: [http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=18&tablename=fond&elementid=182\\_\\_true](http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=18&tablename=fond&elementid=182__true).

The Art Association of Montreal's press clippings scrapbooks include numerous reviews that mention Brymner's work, as well as newspaper reports

on the teaching program at the AAM. The scrapbooks are available online at the following address: <https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/explore-the-museum/archives-and-library-department/#coupures-de-presse>.

#### SELECTED CRITICAL WRITINGS ON BRYMNER'S WORK

Bouchard, Lydia. "Les paysages québécois de William Brymner, expérience de la nature comme lieu identitaire canadien au tournant du XXe siècle." Master's thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2009.

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#### FURTHER READING

Boulet, Roger. *Vistas: Artists on the Canadian Pacific Railway*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 2009.

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*Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons, 1880–1930*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2019.

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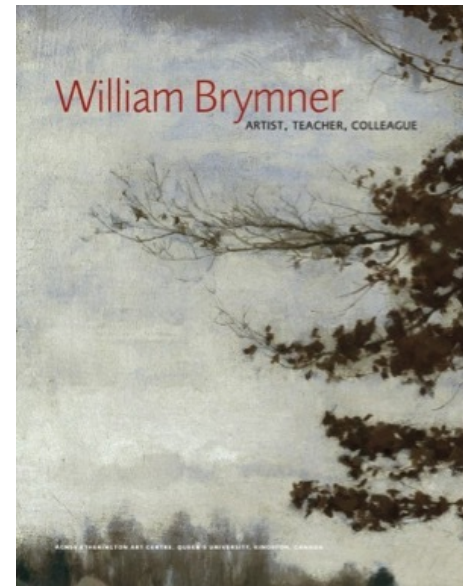
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Pringle, Allan. "William Cornelius Van Horne: Art Director, Canadian Pacific Railway." *Journal of Canadian Art History* 8, no. 1 (1984): 50–79.

Sicotte, Hélène, and Michèle Grandbois. *Clarence Gagnon, 1881–1942: Dreaming the Landscape*. Quebec: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2006.

Sisler, Rebecca. *Passionate Spirits*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1980.



Cover of *William Brymner: Artist, Teacher, Colleague*, 2010, by Alicia Boutilier and Paul Maréchal.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### JOCELYN ANDERSON

Jocelyn Anderson is an art historian whose research focuses on modern Canadian art and on art and the British Empire. She teaches Canadian art at the University of Toronto Mississauga and has also taught at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Birkbeck, and the University of East Anglia. Her work on images of the British Empire has been published in *British Art Studies*, the *Oxford Art Journal*, and *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. She is currently writing a book on early modern magazine illustrations, for which she received a Lewis Walpole Library Fellowship, and is the author of *Touring and Publicizing England's Country Houses in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2018). Anderson received her PhD from the University of London (Courtauld Institute of Art) in 2013, and subsequently held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (2014). Anderson is based in Toronto, where in addition to writing she teaches on art and colonialism and works with the Art Canada Institute.



**"I am fascinated with William Brymner because he was a highly creative artist and an inspiring art teacher who laid a foundation for modern art in Montreal, while earlier in his career he had witnessed the violence of colonialism in Western Canada. I am convinced that all these aspects of Brymner's life are fundamental to understanding his significance for Canadian art history."**



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#### From the Author

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*A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884. (See below for details.)

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Key Works: William Brymner, *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: William Brymner, *Hermit Mountain, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Range*, 1886. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: William Brymner, *Ruin of a Church*, 1891. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: William Brymner, *Palace Hill*, 1876. (See below for details.)

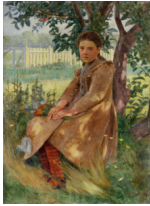




Where to See: National Gallery, Ottawa, February 1900, photograph by Topley Studio. (See below for details.)

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### Credits for works by William Brymner



(and Horatio Walker), *Under the Apple Tree (À l'ombre du pommier)*, 1903. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase, 1929 (1934.582). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Jean-Guy Kérouac.



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*The Books They Loved They Read in Running Brooks (Ils aimaient à lire dans les ruisseaux fuyants)*, 1885. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase (1979.150). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Patrick Altman.



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*Canadian Rockies on Fraser River District*, 1886. Courtesy of Masters Gallery, Calgary. Photo credit: John Dean.



*Carthusian Monastery, Capri*, c.1923. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, Dr. Francis J. Shepherd Bequest (1932.640). Photo Credit: MMFA, Jean-François Brière.



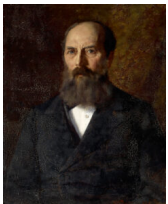
*Champ-de-Mars, Winter*, 1892. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Mrs. R. MacD. Paterson Bequest (R.B. Angus Collection) (1949.1008). Photo credit: MMFA, Christine Guest.



*The Coast at Louisbourg*, 1914. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1921 (1789).



*Crazy Patchwork*, 1886. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1886 (309).



*Douglas Brymner*, 1886. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Stewart Brymner Dawson, 2007 (R13531-2-2-E). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



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*Early Moonrise in September*, 1899. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1908 (42).



*Étude de nu*, c.1900. Collection of the Musée d'art de Joliette, Gift of Jacqueline Brien (1985.0L1). Photo credit: Musée d'art de Joliette.



*Fieldhands*, 1905. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of Gwen Kavanagh, Petite Riviere, Nova Scotia, 1988 (1988.21).



*Fog on the Coast*, 1914. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1915 (1123).



*Four Girls in a Meadow, Baie-Saint-Paul*, 1885. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Bequest of Louis de la Chesnaye Audette, O.C., Q.C., Ottawa, 1996, in memory of Judge and Mme Arthur Audette (38279).



*Girl with a Dog, Lower Saint Lawrence*, 1905. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Sarah Humphrey and Gerald van Gorp in honour of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' 150th anniversary (2012.46). Photo credit: MMFA, Christine Guest.



*Giving Out Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT*, 1886. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Edward and Marion Harrison in memory of Tyrrell Edward Harrison, 1971 (71.43.38).



*The Grey Girl*, 1897. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, anonymous gift, 1955 (55.43.J).



*Haying near Quebec, Beupré*, 1907. The Power Corporation of Canada Art Collection, Montreal. Courtesy of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.



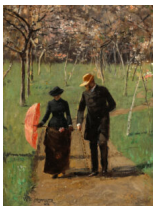
*Hermit Mountain, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Range*, 1886. Collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Gift of Evamy Family, 2010 (2017.018.001).



*Île-aux-Coudres*, c.1900. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1977 (18888).



*In County Cork, Ireland (Dans le comté de Cork, en Irlande)*, 1892. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase (1976.274). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Patrick Altman.



*In the Orchard (Spring)*, 1892. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2002 with the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Canadian Art Fund (41077).



*In the Selkirks near Glacier House*, c.1894. Collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Gift of Imperial Oil Resources Limited, 2017 (2010.008.001).





*Kenneth R. Macpherson, K.C.*, 1909. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of William J. Morrice (1919.20). Photo credit: MMFA, Jean-François Brière.



*La Vallée Saint-François, Île d'Orléans*, 1903. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase (1937.19). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Centre de conservation du Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications / Guy Couture.



*Le Cours Martigues*, 1908-14. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mrs. Harold H. Leather, 1957 (57.43.L).



*The Lonely Orphans Taken to Her Heart*, 1884. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, F. Cleveland Morgan Fund (2015.224). Photo credit: MMFA, Christine Guest.



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*Mount Cheops from Rogers Pass*, c.1898. Collection of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, donated by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1988, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jules Loeb.



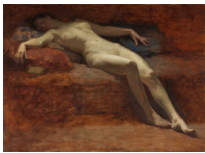
*Mountain Hill Looking Up*, 1876. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (1992-571-3). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Near Field, B.C.*, 1892-93. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund, 1992 (VAG 92.12.1). Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.



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*Old Man Painting in the Louvre, Paris*, 1880/81 and 1902/3. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of W. S. Maxwell (Gr.1920.18). Photo credit: MMFA, Jean-François Brière.



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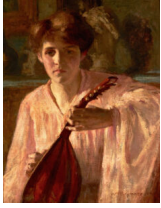


*Palace Hill*, 1876. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (1992-571-13). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*The Picture Book*, 1898. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1927 (3517).





*Prelude*, 1906. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Leroy E. Page in memory of Lillian C. Page, 1965 (65.43.21).



*The Ravine in Summer*, c.1900. Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, purchased with funds donated by the Women's Society of the Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980 (80.13).



*Reclining Figure*, c.1915. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mrs. William Brymner (1934.648). Photo credit: MMFA.



*Reclining Nude*, c.1915. Collection of the Musée d'art de Joliette, Gift of Dr. Harvey A. Evans, 1975 (1975.009). Photo credit: Guy L'Heureux.



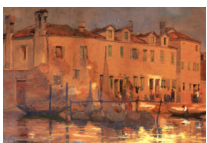
*Ruin of a Church*, 1891. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Dr. Rodrigo A. Restrepo, 2012 (VAG 2012.52.3). Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.



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*Saint-Eustache, Quebec*, 1905. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Dr. and Mrs. Charles F. Martin Bequest (1956.1148). Photo credit: MMFA, Brian Merrett.



*Scène de canal*, 1902. Private collection. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Calgary. Photo credit: Heffel Fine Art Auction House.



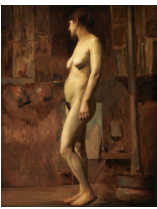
*Self Portrait*, 1881. Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Brymner Dawson, 2010 (53-052). Photo credit: Chris Miner.



*Sir Donald and Great Glacier, Selkirks*, n.d. Collection of the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, purchased in 1988 as a result of a gift from Mr. Gerald Pencer in 1987 (1991.17).



*St. Louis Gate from Without*, 1876. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (1992-571-17). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Standing Nude*, n.d. Private collection, Ottawa. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Calgary. Photo credit: Heffel Fine Art Auction House.



*A Street in Paris*, c.1878-85. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1916 (1220).



*Summer Landscape*, 1910. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of the Reverend and Mrs. Sydenham B. Lindsay (1968.1591). Photo credit: MMFA, Christine Guest.



*Summer*, 1905. Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, purchase, Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund, 2008 (51-014). Photo credit: Bernard Clark.

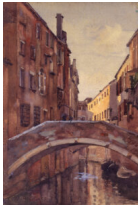




*The Trinket (Jeune Fille au chapeau bleu [La Breloque])*, 1916. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase (1976.371). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Jean-Guy Kérourac.



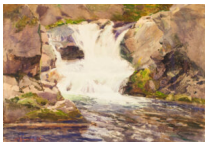
*The Vaughan Sisters*, 1910. Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mrs. Harold H. Leather, 1962 (62.43.12).



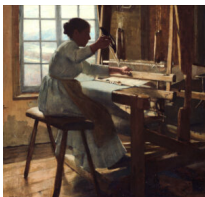
*Venetian Canal*, 1904. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, Gift of Mrs. Paul F. Sise (1959.23).



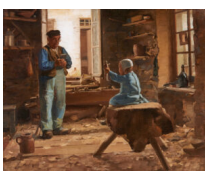
"A Village Street - Memo of Composition," from the *Pen & Pencil Club Scrapbook* (volume 2), c.1891. Collection of the McCord Museum, Montreal, transfer from McGill University (M966.176.29).



*Waterfall*, 1898. Collection of Kristin Larsen, Calgary. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Calgary. Photo credit: Heffel Fine Art Auction House.



*The Weaver (La Femme au métier)*, 1885. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, purchase, 1929 (1934.10). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Idra Labrie.



*With Dolly at the Sabot-makers*, 1883. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1884 (35).



*A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Royal Canadian Academy of Arts diploma work, deposited by the artist, Ottawa, 1886 (19).



*Yale in the Morning, B.C. (Fraser Canyon)*, 1886. The Power Corporation of Canada Art Collection, Montreal. Courtesy of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.



*Young Girl Shading Her Eyes*, 1897. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of David R. Morrice (1972.19). Photo credit: MMFA, Jean François Brière.

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*A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, by Édouard Manet. Collection of the Courtauld Gallery, London, Gift of Samuel Courtauld, 1934 (P.1934.SC.234). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.





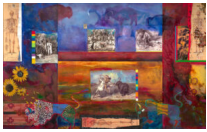
*The Bathers*, 1937, by Edwin Holgate. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, Robert Lindsay Fund (1937.664).



*Bouguereau's Atelier at the Académie Julian, Paris*, 1891, by Jefferson David Chalfant. Collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, 1979 (1979.7.26).



"British America," 1889, by Rand McNally and Company. Collection of the David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries, Stanford University (P952).



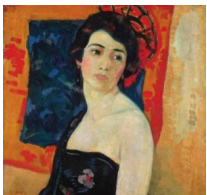
*Buffalo Seed*, 2004, by Jane Ash Poitras. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, acquired with the generous support of the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust Fund (2008.114.2). Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © ROM.



*Canada and the Call*, 1914, by J.E.H. MacDonald. Collection of the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (CWM 19940018-001).



"Canadian Trophy" at the Paris Exhibition, illustration from *The Graphic*, July 6, 1878. Photo credit: De Agostini Editore / Biblioteca Ambrosiana.



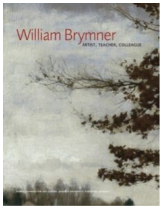
*Carmencita*, 1922 or earlier, by Randolph Stanley Hewton. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, Christine and Pierre Lapointe Fund, Gift of R. Fournelle (2017.55).



Certificate of Appreciation presented to William Brymner on his retirement from the Art Association of Montreal, 1921. William Brymner Fonds, Queen's University Archives, Kingston (CA ON00239 F02414, F3 A3.2).



*Chief Crowfoot*, c.1885, by Harry Pollard. Collection of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton (P129).



Cover of *William Brymner: Artist, Teacher, Colleague*, 2010, by Alicia Boutilier and Paul Maréchal. Courtesy of Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston.



*"Crowfoot," Chief of the Blackfeet Indians*, 1886, by Oliver Buell. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (C-001871). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Danaë*, 1544-45, by Titian. Collection of the Capodimonte Museum, Naples. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Eiffel Tower*, 1889, by Léon-Charles Libonis. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive—Gift of Leonard A. Lauder (2012.9434).



*Été à Saint-Eustache*, c.1906, by Maurice Cullen. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Gift of the Laurentian Bank Financial Group (2018.292). Photo credit: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Denis Legendre.





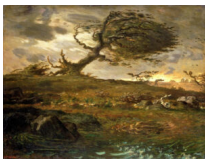
*Forest of Fontainebleau, Cluster of Tall Trees Overlooking the Plain of Clair-Bois at the Edge of Bas-Bréau*, c.1849-52, by Théodore Rousseau. Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, purchase, 2007 (2007.13). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*The Gare St-Lazare*, 1877, by Claude Monet. Collection of the National Gallery, London, purchase, 1982 (NG6479). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



*Girl in Green*, 1913, by Emily Coonan. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of A.Y. Jackson, C.M.G., R.C.A., 1956 (56.56.S).



*The Gust of Wind*, 1871-73, by Jean-François Millet. Collection of the National Museum Wales, Bequest of Margaret Davies, 1963 (NMW A 2475). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



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"Hunger," from the *Pen & Pencil Club Scrapbook* (volume 3), 1896, by Edmond Dyonnet. Collection of the McCord Museum, Montreal. Transfer from McGill University (M966.176.103).



*Jean Thomson*, 1883, by Frederick Brown. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Stewart Brymner Dawson, 2007 (R13531-3). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Kicking Horse Pass (about 5000 ft)*, 1887, by Lucius O'Brien. Image PDP04901 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.



*Lady in Black*, c.1936, by Lilius Torrance Newton. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, William Gilman Cheney Bequest (1939.699). © Estate of Lilius Torrance Newton.



*The Man That Always Rides, Blackfoot*, c.1849-56, by Paul Kane. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, The Honourable George William Allan Collection, Daphne Cockwell Gallery of Canada: First Peoples, Gift of Sir Edmund Osler (912.1.44). Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © ROM.



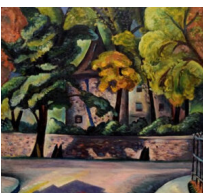
Members of the Ottawa School of Art, 1890, photograph by William James Topley. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (PA-201228). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*The Monet Family in Their Garden at Argenteuil*, 1874, by Édouard Manet. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975 (1976.201.14). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



National Gallery, Ottawa, February 1900, photograph by Topley Studio. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1936 (PA-028157). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Old Fort, Sulpician Seminary*, c.1931, by Sarah Robertson. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, William Gilman Cheney Bequest (1943.812).





*On the Grand River at Doon*, c.1880, by Homer Watson. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1952 (5900).



*The Plough*, 1931–33, by Anne Savage. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Arthur B. Gill (1970.1652).



*Portrait of William Brymner*, 1919, by Anne Savage. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 1959 (59.111.O).



*Poundmaker, also Known as The Drummer*, (c. 1842–1886), a Cree Chief, Later Adopted by Crowfoot of the Blackfoot Nation, 1885, by Oliver Buell. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (C-001875). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Start Another*, 1915, by John Young Johnstone. Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Gift of Mary Jane Braide in Memory of her Mother Janet G. M. Braide, 2010 (53-032). Photo credit: Paul Litherland.



*Summertime*, 1936–39, by Prudence Heward. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Eric Klinkhoff (2018.203).



*Summit Lake near Lenchoile, Bow River, Canadian Pacific Railway*, 1886, by John A. Fraser. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase, 1982 (28063).



# WILLIAM BRYMNER

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*Venice at the Golden Hour*, c.1901-02, by James Wilson Morrice. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gwendolen Rutherford Caverhill Bequest (1949.1005). Photo credit: MMFA.



*William Brymner*, c.1910, photographer unknown. National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa (NGC L&A, 18v Dyonnet Album).



William Brymner with a group of students, June 1918, photographer unknown. National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa (NGC L&A 035453).



William Brymner with his students at the Art Association of Montreal, 1902. Jean-Marie Gauvreau Fonds, Centre de conservation, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal (MSS-002). Courtesy of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

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