

GET TO KNOW THE ARTIST BERTRAM BROOKER

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Bertram Brooker was one of Canada's first abstract painters—and he helped make this form of art popular.

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But in addition to being an artist, he was an award-winning novelist, poet, screenwriter, playwright, essayist, copywriter, graphic designer, and advertising executive.

All this work was made by Brooker

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Brooker loved music and sang in his church choir; his first surviving artwork illustrates a line from an eighteenth-century hymn called “Rock of Ages.”

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At the age of seventeen, Brooker and his family moved from London, England, to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. There he was active in local theatre productions.

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After the First World War, Brooker turned to newspaper work. A job at the Globe newspaper took him to Toronto in 1921, and he began a career in advertising in 1927.

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Brooker became an advocate for Canadian art. He published art criticism, and his books “Yearbook of the Arts in Canada” 1928–1929 and 1936 promoted many kinds of artists. For almost a decade, he wrote a national newspaper column called “The Seven Arts.”

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Brooker painted all sorts of subjects, including people and nature.

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Brooker's non-representational abstract paintings from 1927 to 1931 are among the most important bodies of work in Canada.

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Many of them sought to capture the ephemeral and magical qualities of music. Several of his works attempt to convey an experience of sound on the canvas.

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Brooker's relentless exploration of new ways of seeing and painting places him among Canada's most accomplished modernist painters.

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“Great art is essentially useless, in the practical sense. It appeals purely to the spirit.”—Bertram Brooker