

HELEN BERGEN PETERS *Painting During the Colonial Period in British Columbia 1845-1871: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Maltwood Art Museum, University of Victoria*. Victoria, Sono Nis Press, 1979. 80 pp., 40 illus., \$6.95.

BERNICE C. GILMORE *Artists Overland: A Visual Record of British Columbia, 1793-1886*. Burnaby (B.C.), Burnaby Art Gallery, 1980. 156 pp., illus., \$7.50.

BERNICE C. GILMORE *Artists from the Sea, 1778-1793: A Visual Documentation of British Columbia*. Burnaby (B.C.), Burnaby Art Gallery, 1978. 36 pp., illus., \$3.00.

Painting During the Colonial Period in British Columbia 1845-1871, centered on the work of four artists, includes biographies, a catalogue of known works, and historical background. While one may read it for its special appreciation of the art, those interested in history will find the detailed outline of the early settling of the Colony to be of particular interest. Written with clarity and abundantly illustrated, this is a significant addition to the history of art in British Columbia.

The title led to expect a survey of art during the period 1845-1871. The concentration on four artists is of far greater value; much material not otherwise readily available has been brought to light and should lead to further studies on this period. Three of the artists, Edward Parker Bedwell, Henry James Warre and John Clayton White, have in common a background of military and naval training in draughting. The other, Frederick Whympfer, with his training as an

engraver, shares with them a concern for topographical detail while adding a picturesque quality, as did Warre in some of his paintings. The lay reader is given a clear understanding of the aims of these artists and of the techniques which they used, accounting for differences between their art and the more usual scenic, or romantic, type of landscape. 'Military draughting,' 'Water colour and landscape aesthetic,' and the progress from field sketch to engraving for reproduction in publications are all explained. Several recent photographs of the same scenes have been included to prove the authenticity of the artist's view, and his powers of observation.

Persons wishing to relate these painters to other artists working on the West Coast at the time would find it of interest to consult *From desolation to splendour: changing perceptions of the British Columbia landscape*, by Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole (Clarke, Irwin, 1977). Chapter 2 covers the colonial scene from 1843 to 1885, with illustrations of these and other artists' paintings (Whympfer's *Fort Yale, British Columbia*, 1864, is reproduced in colour). Of those artists who came to the coast prior to the influx of eastern Canadian artists, Paul Kane has been well recorded in several books, and in his own writings. Also, *William George Richardson Hind*, by J. Russell Harper, in the Canadian artists series (National Gallery of Canada) is worth mention, in the same context.

One wishes that the artists Frederick G.F. Bedford and E.M. Richardson had been included, as well as the surveyor Joseph Des-

pard Pemberton and the architect and civil engineer H.H. Teideman. We can only trust that the future will bring other studies. Certainly, this one has set a high standard. We are grateful to Helen Bergen Peters, who has succeeded in making the reading entirely enjoyable. And we are indebted to the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery at the University of Victoria for publishing this monograph. May its success guarantee future publications in this series.

After a short survey of the period 1778-1793, the introduction of *Artists Overland: A Visual Record of British Columbia 1793-1886* sets the background in the context of painting in England and in the United States during the first half of the 19th century.

The topographical artists who were in the military service did not leave a large record of their work, except Lieut. Henry James Warre. He, and his companion, Lieut. Mervin Vavasour of the Royal Engineers, came disguised as travellers though under instructions by the British Government to record and report on the country 'from a military point of view'. Fortunately Warre did not confine himself to the military aspects, but painted both a wide range of territory and the happenings on the journey. The surveyors and engineers who followed did many sketches and paintings, and wrote of their experiences. Most were experienced artists, Frederick Whympfer being an outstanding example. Ms. Gilmore has devoted several chapters to this period, discussing the events and the paintings, also those of Paul

Kane, and William George Richardson who stayed in Victoria for several years.

Emphasis is placed on the increasing popularity of the use of watercolour for landscape painting, which particularly appealed to the amateur artists who flourished in England. It is certain that, had British Columbia not attracted such a large number of British visitors, the art heritage of the province would be considerably reduced. Nearly all the works exhibited being in watercolour, some pencil and ink sketches, but very few oil paintings.

The official visits by the Governors General, Lord Dufferin and the Marquis of Lorne, added to the growing interest in British Columbia's scenic beauty. Lord and Lady Dufferin, and the Marquis of Lorne did a number of sketches and landscapes. Princess Louise found the locale most pleasing and extended the planned visit of three weeks into two months, taking the opportunity to record her trip in watercolours which she later loaned to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts 1883 Annual Exhibition.

The influx of visitors began, most sent home accounts of their trips, their paintings, and later they wrote and illustrated books of their experiences. Their paintings have a special interest, they did not always approve of the expansive landscape and reduced it to the smaller scale they were accustomed to in England. Others, overwhelmed by the grandeur, painted with exuberance, sometimes in the picturesque style of the time, but giving the viewer of their works the same excitement they felt.

With the increased use of illustrations in magazines, introduced by the *Illustrated London News*, and the public's interest in travellers' tales, many artists found an outlet for the sale of their works. Frederick Whympster was one of the artists who appeared frequently in the *ILN*; through his illustrations and those of other artists, the professional painters became interested and began arriving in the province. Edward Roper, Tomtu Roberts, George Harlow White and John Fraser were in the vanguard of those who were to come by rail after 1886.

A few of the early settlers contributed to the visual record of Victoria, notably the family of Sir

Henry Crease – Barbara, Henry, Mrs. Henry, Josephine, Mary Sr., Mary Maberly, Lady Sarah, Sarah and Susan. Other residents were also active painters, such as Henry Ogle Bell-Irving, and Helen Bell-Irving who did a number of landscapes, not confined to Victoria.

Ms. Gilmore gives a very clear, straightforward chronicle of the times, of the roles played by the artists. She has compressed a large amount of material while retaining the essentials and interspersed the text with selections from the writers of the day, their impressions of the new land, comments on fellow artists and travellers; their sense of humour is evident in the lively scenes of the days of the gold rush. She has done extensive research, giving a comprehensive account of the growth of art following the days of the last discover-explorers, to the settlement of the province. The Bibliography lists over fifty of the references used; there are also 149 footnotes documented.

One hundred and twenty of the paintings in the large exhibition are reproduced, three in colour, and detailed notes are given of the fourteen that are not in the catalogue. The photographs of the works, by Bill Cupit, are well reproduced. The design of the catalogue, by J. Starck, is spacious, text and lists are easy to read and the whole is pleasing to the eyes.

The Selected References, pp. 127-156, list one hundred and fifty-six artists, title of each work, medium, date and location in collections in Canada and the United States. The list comprises those works in the exhibition and related works, and will be of particular value to students and scholars, setting a broad foundation for continued study.

Artists from the Sea was the first in a planned series of three exhibitions, to cover the history of art in British Columbia from 1778 to the end of the 19th century, when the railroad to the west coast was completed.

Organized for presentation within the celebrations of the Bi-Centennial of Captain Cook's arrival at Nootka Sound, 1778, it recounts the journeys of the explorers, from the legendary Hwui Shan, in the 5th century, through the years when the Spanish, English,

Russian and French sailed the Pacific coast.

It was not until the latter part of the 18th century that topographers and artists accompanied the expeditions. Over twenty artists are mentioned in the text, as well as the infamous fur trader, Captain John Meares, who included sketching and ship construction in his talents. Seven of the artists mentioned are represented in the fifteen illustrations.

Ms. Gilmore has written an interesting and detailed account of the historic voyages and the earliest artists who depicted the coast of British Columbia. There are footnotes in the text and a bibliography of thirty-three titles.

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Vancouver Public Library

JEAN ÉTHIER-BLAIS *Autour de Borduas; essai d'histoire intellectuelle*. Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1979. 199 p., \$12.95.

Rien n'est plus cruel sans doute pour un auteur que la désuétude dont frappent ses textes les délais de publication de nos maisons d'édition québécoises. La « première mouture » de l'ouvrage de Jean-Éthier Blais, intitulé *Autour de Borduas*, a vu le jour il y a dix ans, comme le souligne l'auteur (p. 10) et ne semble pas avoir été remise à jour. Même si le sous-titre précise l'intention d'élaborer un « essai d'histoire intellectuelle », la plupart de ses données sur le plan historique ont été largement dépassées, sinon contredites, par l'historiographie abondante sur cet artiste depuis 1970.

Et même à cette époque, ce type de discours relevait moins de la méthodologie de l'histoire que des « lois de la causerie » – c'est ainsi que décrivait déjà en 1921 Roman Jakobson, les commentaires les plus courants sur les phénomènes artistiques (*Questions de poétique*, Paris, 1973). La recherche historique ne s'incommode pas ici des nécessaires références aux sources, ni des distinctions nécessaires entre la validité des sources primaires, secondaires ou tertiaires. Volontiers, des témoignages de tierces personnes à la fin des années 60, auxquels on fait une vague référence, prévalent sur les déclarations écrites de Bor-