CARL SCHAEFER: THE PAINTINGS OF THE 1930'S

by

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Carl Schaefer is a Canadian painter who has worked in Toronto and southwestern Ontario since the late twenties. His style developed from the landscape tradition established by the Group of Seven; yet he evolved a distinct style in the thirties, largely affected by the medium of watercolour and a personal approach to a familiar countryside.

This thesis, entitled Carl Schaefer: the Paintings of the 1930's, is a study of Carl Schaefer's work and the artistic environment in which he painted during the decade of the 1930's as a means of showing the development of what is considered his mature style and of establishing him as one of the distinguished painters of the period.

Though now singled out for their importance in a retrospective view of the 1930's, Carl Schaefer's paintings warrant a more thorough study. This thesis intends, in Chapter I to trace his early development, bringing in his background and early art training, the influence of his teachers, several of whom were members of the Group of Seven, of his contemporaries and of those artists whom he both admired and felt a sympathy for. Chapter II examines the milieu in which Carl Schaefer worked by following critical reaction to exhibitions and to artistic trends.
in Canada (with an emphasis on Ontario). The landscapes and still lifes of the thirties are the subjects of Chapters III and IV. Here, selected works have been studied as a means of tracing his style from the early works until 1940. Chapter V looks at critical reaction during the 1930's to Carl Schaefer's work in order to establish his place among his contemporaries.

The existing material, that is to say, paintings, prints and drawings, exhibition catalogues, histories of Canadian art, letters, a taped interview, a monograph and periodical articles (with particular emphasis here on those written during the 1930's) have been studied as the background for this thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

The artistic career of Carl Schaefer has spanned more than fifty years; at 77, he is still painting. Over those years he has worked in oil, watercolour and egg tempera, as well as making prints and drawings.

This thesis will deal with a small portion of that career, a period of about ten years, beginning with the early thirties and concluding with the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship in March 1940. He was the first Canadian to be granted this fellowship and it allowed him to spend a year working in Vermont.

The choice of time is not an arbitrary one, but is based on the importance of these years in the establishment of Carl Schaefer's style, a style which has subsequently changed little in fundamentals. The direction of his work was governed by a number of factors; his artistic affiliations -- particularly with members of the Group of Seven, student days at the Ontario College of Art, during which he had his first exposure to art history and literature -- and poverty which imposed on him a medium and a subject matter that he might otherwise have ignored.

Histories of Canadian art single out Carl Schaefer for special attention in chapters devoted to artists working in the decade following the Group of Seven.
Some describe him as a regionalist; others remark on his break from the Group of Seven's tradition of the formidable brilliant canvases, which alone might be considered a noteworthy contribution to painting in the thirties. Most, however, recognize in his work of this period a strong, individual style which established him as a major Canadian landscape painter. Dennis Reid wrote of the series of landscapes painted in Hanover during the thirties:

The group of spreading 'field' canvases produced at Hanover, some more than four feet wide -- is the most moving series of pictures painted in Canada in the thirties. They all display heroic breadth.

Reid's focus on the paintings of the 1930's is common to most of the writing on Carl Schaefer. All this attention given by the critics to the Hanover period of Carl Schaefer's career suggests that it takes a more important place in any retrospective view of Canadian painting than his subsequent work. The post-Hanover period, however, has been prolific and in many respects broadening in both subject matter and theme. The year in Vermont marked the end of the Hanover period and the war years, when he was overseas as an official Canadian war artist, presented him with a drastic change in subject matter. He never returned to paint Hanover
after the war, but after several years of searching for a new subject he settled on Waterloo County in Ontario where he has worked ever since. His work in Waterloo has been recognized by the University of Waterloo who honored him with a Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) in 1976; in 1978 he received the award of Order of Canada.

The availability of reproductions and documentary material also makes the 1930's the most accessible period to consider. While these are Carl Schaefer's best known ten years, they warrant a more careful study.

I propose first of all to trace Carl Schaefer's artistic development from his youth until he reaches what has been considered his mature style at the end of the 1930's. In order to do this, I shall speak about his education in Toronto at the Ontario College of Art, and also the various artists for whom he felt sympathy and who may be considered influential figures in the development of his style, choice of medium and subject. It will be necessary even to consider his physical well-being, affected as was that of many of his contemporaries by the depression which also had a strong influence on his direction.

I intend also to look at the milieu in which
Carl Schaefer worked, largely through the writings of the art reviewers and critics in Toronto in the 1930's. Through the critics' articles, it is possible to see the trends in painting, particularly in Ontario at this time.

Carl Schaefer's work during these years included not only paintings but also prints and drawings; I propose to study his prolific output by focusing on landscape and still life painting in oil and watercolour and I shall bring in his graphic work in order to throw light on the paintings. And of the paintings I shall be selective and concentrate on those which bring out most clearly the development of his style during these ten years.

I shall conclude with a critical assessment of Carl Schaefer's work by the art critics and reviewers who came to know his work in the thirties.
During the year 1940-41 in New England, Carl Schaefer studied lithography and printmaking at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire under Ray Nash.

Donald Buchanan, *The Growth of Canadian Painting* (Toronto and London: Collins, 1950), pp. 61 & 62. "...His best work is a distinct form of regional art, presented, not with dramatic realism, but in a dry, reticent style..."

Paul Duval, *Four Decades* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, Limited, 1972), p. 37. "In an era when the word 'regional' has often been used in a derogatory way, Carl Schaefer has always readily confessed to being a regional painter. He has said: 'I find that the best subjects for me are concentrated in a pretty small area!'"


George Johnston, "Carl Schaefer: Artist and Man," *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. LXI, No. 3 (Autumn 1954), 348. "Carl has never been interested in figures and he wisely stays away from them. They scarcely appear, even incidentally, in his paintings. Nevertheless his real interest is in men, and he expresses his feelings about them by showing their own feelings towards their fields and the houses and barns they keep. He sees men, in other words, in their land and their work. This is what is known as regional painting."
Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), p. 180. "...Schaefer resolutely turned his restrictions to advantage, and made some memorable paintings of wheatfields and farm houses around his family home that catch the spirit of the region."

Christopher Varley, *Carl Schaefer in Hanover* (Edmonton: The Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980). "Schaefer is usually referred to as a regionalist, for he strongly identifies with the areas he paints, but I want to distinguish his work immediately from the so-called regionalism of his U.S. contemporaries, the American Scene painters. Whereas the Americans tended to use their art primarily for topical social commentary and as a weapon against the 'ultra-modernism' of European art, Schaefer's essential interest lay in the analysis and depiction of his immediate surroundings."

With the exception of George Johnston's passage, all the above-noted excerpts describe Carl Schaefer's regionalism as simply capturing the essence of a region by painting it over and over in all its various looks and moods. Johnston, however, emphasizes man's role in the fields, barns and houses of the region, rather more in the spirit of Charles Burchfield's feelings, say, towards houses of which Burchfield wrote in 1916: "A house is often more moody than nature. They are built by men as dwellings...and this strange creature results. In the daytime they have an astonished look; at dusk they are evil, seem to brook over some crime... Each one is individual". From John I.H. Bauer, Charles Burchfield (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), p. 34. For a further discussion of Carl Schaefer and Charles Burchfield, see pages 20, 21 & 22. For a further discussion of Carl Schaefer as a regional artist see page 13 and footnotes 11 and 13 of Chapter I.


6 Reid, p. 179.

7 The exceptions are the writings on his war paintings and the articles by George Johnston, which deal largely with the post war period. Also the monograph by Gray, Rand and Steen.

8 His wartime subjects were airplanes, machinery and the men who operated them, as well as airfields and skies. George Johnston's article "Carl Schaefer" in Canadian Art, March 1960, pp. 65-71 and 99 deals in part with this period.
CHAPTER I

Carl Schaefer's Background, Training and Early Influences

Carl Schaefer was born in Hanover in 1903. His family were well-established farmers of German origin who had settled in Bruce and Grey Counties of southwestern Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century; it was in this rural environment that Carl Schaefer grew up. At the age of eighteen he entered the Ontario College of Art in Toronto.

These early years played a decisive role in his choice of an artistic career. It was from his Grandfather Fellman that he had his initial exposure to craftsmanship and working with one's hands. Fellman was a furniture finisher by trade and his grandson felt a sympathy for the care and skill that he put into his work. He too had the urge to use his hands, and drawing was what attracted him most strongly. His formal education was basic; he had only two years of high school, and before entering the Ontario College of Art in 1921, his knowledge of art and literature was limited. He recalls from his childhood, readings by his Great-grandfather from Goethe, Schiller and the Bible, and although he remembers almost nothing of the readings, he attributes to them
his earliest consciousness of things literary and visual and the first awakening of his awareness of the mystical.1

Growing up on a farm instilled in him a feeling for the land which was to have a strong effect on his painting during the depression years. He was familiar with it, he knew the fields, as he says:

...like the back of my hand. This was my heritage. It was what I got from my family. It was something solid. It was a very big and important thing in my life.2

When he went to Toronto to study, he had no preconceived notions about art, no theories and very little formal knowledge, only an eagerness to learn. Perhaps the single most influential person in his development as a painter was his teacher, J.E.H. MacDonald, a member of the Group of Seven who took a particular interest in him. He introduced him to art history and to art theory through the writings of Roger Fry and Clive Bell and the Bloomsbury Group in general.3 MacDonald was not a formally trained teacher, but taught his classes what he knew and what interested him and this, along with his support had a lasting effect. In his first year at the Ontario College of Art in 1921, J.E.H. MacDonald taught Carl Schaefer design and lettering. He also introduced him to William Blake, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman
and the nature writers.  

A discovery Carl Schaefer made on his own was William Morris, whose craftsmanship again aroused in him an enthusiasm for the work of man's hand. In Carl Schaefer's own work this was realized in the art of drawing.

During the early twenties when he was a student, the Group of Seven was beginning to be recognized as a distinct, progressive movement in Canadian art. In 1920, a year before he enrolled at the Ontario College of Art, its members held their first exhibition as a group at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Grand and brilliant canvases in oil depicted the rugged northern Ontario landscape. As a pupil of two of its members, J.E.H. MacDonald and Arthur Lismer (who also taught him at the Ontario College of Art) he was inevitably impressed by their views, enthusiasm and style and one recognizes many of their features in his paintings of the twenties, and even those of the early thirties.

For instance, Pine Pattern, Pickerel River (Fig. 1) a small oil painted in 1926, depicts a northern Ontario scene of rocks, white pines and bedraggled jack pines, in the manner of MacDonald or Lismer. The surface is
flatly painted, the trees decorative; the whole composition has a poster quality, especially in the interlacing art nouveau treatment of the branches. At the same time, it reveals an interest in line not so apparent in the Group’s work, which possibly stems from his love of drawing.

The draughtsmanship is more apparent in another oil of the same year, The River, Winter, Hanover (1926) (Fig. 2). Although painted in his native Hanover, it has the starkness and forbidding quality of one of Lawren Harris’ Lake Superior paintings. Unlike Pine Pattern (Fig. 1) this sketch is more highly abstract, emphasizing the shapes through line and marked contrasts of dark and light. Such a divergence shows that he was still experimenting and had not yet arrived at his own particular style.

The northern landscapes of the late twenties were painted on fishing trips with his friends Lowrie Warrener and George Pepper, and he says of these experiences:

The north surprised me a great deal because here were great whalebacks, great rocks. The great bold forms really shook me. What could you do with them? Here were pines which I felt to be like those of the Group of Seven. I never felt that I was painting imitations of the “unpopular” Group of painters. I drew trees looking like trees, and a rock looking like a rock in bold forms, and I used very close observation.
During his college years, he gained practical experience through work on theatre stage and set designs for Hart House, the Royal Alexandra and Princess Theatres and the Grand Opera House. After leaving the Ontario College of Art in 1924, Carl Schaefer found work decorating church ceilings in southern Ontario and Toronto as well as apartment and office buildings. These commissions were often obtained for him through J.E.H. MacDonald and carried out with Thoreau MacDonald, whom Carl Schaefer had come to know through his association with his father.

Usually MacDonald would design the work and Carl and Thoreau would execute it. In 1929 he became a display designer for the T. Eaton Company and from 1930 on he taught one day a week at Central Technical School in Toronto.

The Depression brought unemployment, and although Carl Schaefer continued with his part-time teaching, he was unable to support his wife and two sons on freelance jobs and was forced to return to his childhood home of Hanover, where he spent his summers and Christmases in the home of his grandparents from 1932 to 1940.

This was the land he knew from childhood, it was a part of him, and it was during these summers that he
painted it over and over again. In 1932 he began painting the Hanover series; with these landscape paintings, done in oil and watercolour, as well as with pen and ink drawings, he established himself as an artist in his own right, no longer trailing in the shadow of the Group of Seven. These paintings reveal a familiarity and sympathy with the landscape which became singular to Carl Schaefer. They earned for him the label of 'regionalist' painter, one which he readily acknowledges and accepts. Although it is an unreliable term, which can be used both to praise and condemn, it has a true sense which can be applied to the Hanover paintings: "of or pertaining to a particular region or district." It is meaningful here because these paintings portray one region of Ontario over and over in its various moods and seasonal changes.

Such a single-minded concentration on one region in painting after painting sets Carl Schaefer apart from his predecessors, the Group of Seven and also from his contemporaries, many of whom were following the Group tradition of painting, on a large scale, hinterland country that had not previously been regarded as painting subjects. Their country was untouched, rugged and formidable; they sought out dramatic subjects
and composed them of many varied elements. Their interest was not in what was familiar but what was new, and they moved on through the northland in search of yet undiscovered subjects.

Carl Schaefer, on the other hand, restricted by poverty, chose to paint his home, and scenes he could almost recreate with his eyes closed. His farm upbringing instilled in him a love of the land and this region particularly. This love, combined with his exposure to the Group of Seven and the art scene in Toronto, would naturally have led him to choose the landscape subject rather than portraiture or generic subjects. At the time he was starting out in Toronto there was really little tradition in portrait painting, except perhaps in the world of officialdom and these tended to be taken by the academicians. An influential teacher like J.E.H. MacDonald would probably not have encouraged him in such a direction. As well, for whatever reason, Carl Schaefer seemed to have had no particular interest in the human figure or understanding of it. He chose rather to paint the same fields, barns, houses and fences in one composition after another, each distinct from one another with a freshness of approach one might not expect from
such repetition. His paintings convey the same love of the country as the Group's, yet what he sees and achieves is the antithesis of their approach and goal. The Group of Seven painted quick oil sketches on location, later to be painted up into large, oil paintings in the studio, one composition often being the composite of several sketches, or possibly an elaboration of one. Carl Schaefer would study the landscape before him for fifteen or twenty minutes, then turn his back on it to paint it in watercolour. He would turn away with the idea of the composition in his mind, preferring not to keep looking up at what he was painting, for fear that it might distract him by its detail. Many of the watercolours produced in the field are finished works, perhaps slightly touched up later in the studio. Some became bases for larger oils, although they are finished works in themselves. This is the case, for example, of *Ontario Farmhouse* for which there exists a watercolour (Fig. 4), a pen and ink drawing (Fig. 5), and a large oil (Fig. 3) and also with *Storm over the Fields* for which there is both a watercolour (Fig. 7) and an oil (Fig. 6).

During the thirties, Carl Schaefer made a conscious decision to switch from the medium of oil to that of
watercolour. It was not a sudden decision but built up slowly during the depression years when he worked in both oil and watercolour as well as pen and ink. By 1940, the year he went to work in Vermont, he was painting almost exclusively in watercolour. In some respects, his choice of watercolour and his method of painting in the field (to which either drawing or watercolour most easily lends itself) were the result of need. Paper and watercolour paints were cheaper; then too, financial restrictions confined his field trips to the area around Hanover. There were other considerations too, which led to his choice of the watercolour medium and the Hanover subjects. Frank Carmichael was the first to suggest he try watercolours; it was on a day painting expedition to Streetsville in 1933 and Carmichael supplied him with a good piece of Italian paper. He told Carl Schaefer that his painting was too tight, he should loosen it up for watercolour, but the effect of his comment was encouraging.

Lawren Harris, however, in a letter of 1936 advised Carl Schaefer against giving up oil painting. He begins his letter by saying what glowing reports he receives of Carl's work and continues:

Your watercolours impress them as particularly fine. This led me to wonder if perhaps you have
been neglecting oils. If there is a chance of your doing so forgive me if I suggest that it might prove a mistake. I don't know of course if you have been neglecting oil painting. I merely take a chance and in all humility suggest you keep working in oils as well as water colour. Each medium has its own virtue but oils seem capable of a deeper, a profounder and a more exhaustive expression. I feel the results are of equal importance in the evocative power working in the artist as much as in the paintings created. And that for the full tide of an artists creative power to flow oil as well as watercolour and other mediums are essential, and that oils call out deeper resources.  

About this time, Carl Schaefer was attracted by Japanese painters, especially the artist Hokusai. His sympathy for that artist's work is not surprising, considering his interest in pen and ink drawing and the predominance of line in his own work, both oil and watercolour. He also came to admire the work of the American painter Charles Burchfield, who preferred watercolour (and this may have encouraged his preference too); and it would seem that many circumstances favoured this medium.

While Carl Schaefer denies direct influence from any artist, he admits that certain painters inspired him. He feels an affinity with the mystical northern European painters, Hieronymous Bosch, Peter Brueghel, Albrecht Altdorfer and Jacob van Ruysdael, partly because of his
own Germanic background but more because he feels a sympathy with these painters. It is in his use of light that a mystical or visionary quality appears. In a dramatic landscape such as Storm over the Fields (Fig. 6) (see pp. 49-51 for a fuller discussion of this painting), the light, the source of which is unnatural, emanates from the centre of the field. It is easy to suggest that this sort of otherworldly glow is no more than a theatrical interpretation of an impending storm, something Carl Schaefer would have mastered from his days of painting stage sets. However, his admitted interest in the mystical aspects of the northern European painters, mentioned above, and of Paul Nash, Samuel Palmer and Charles Burchfield, suggests that one must interpret his use of light as more than simply drama. Other paintings possess this same quality, namely Yellow Apples on a Fall Landscape (1939) (Fig. 27), Eggplant and Peppers (1938) (Fig. 30) or Farmhouse by the Railway (1938-39) (Fig. 11).

Paul Nash was both a watercolourist and a visionary and these qualities in his painting as well as his writing about painting and nature, show similarities with Carl Schaefer's expressed views. Of light in a landscape, for example, Nash wrote in 1949, describing the view seen from the morning-room window of his family home:
Like the territory in Kensington Gardens which I found as a child, its magic lay within itself, implicated in its own design and its relationship to its surroundings. In addition, it seemed to respond in a dramatic way to the influence of light. There were moments when, through this agency, the place took on a startling beauty, a beauty to my eyes wholly unreal. It was this 'unreality' or rather this reality of another aspect of the accepted world, this mystery of clarity which was at once so elusive and so positive, that I now began to pursue and which from that moment drew me into itself and absorbed my life. 17

Carl Schaefer got to know Paul Nash's work in the late twenties, through a book of engravings of poisonous plants. He spoke of this book as "...a contact with workmanship and craftsmanship and a good deal of art and I admired him a great deal." 18 At the time Carl Schaefer had been doing some lino cuts but this book encouraged him to do engravings on wood. He produced these between 1930 and 1935; their advantage, he explained was that although it was difficult to sell anything because it was depression times, it was possible to sell engravings at a cheaper price than a painting or drawing, say $1.50 or $1.75. 19

The three most important Canadian figures in Carl Schaefer's early development were J.E.H. MacDonald, his son Thoreau and Lawren Harris. J.E.H. was really his
teacher and his mentor. He taught him brushwork, drawing and design. Thoreau was his very good friend who published his drawings throughout the thirties in *The Canadian Forum*. Lawren Harris, on the other hand, was an intellectual; he taught Carl Schaefer about abstraction, he encouraged him and gave him stretchers of canvas. Then too, in the early thirties when the Hanover series was begun, Carl Schaefer was familiar with the work of Charles Burchfield and he corresponded with him; he may be considered, along with the above-mentioned Canadians as a significant figure in the development of Carl Schaefer's mature style.

Although the two painters did not meet until 1938 or 1939, Carl Schaefer was familiar with Burchfield's work and would have seen his first exhibition in Toronto in the mid-thirties. The resemblance between them appears most clearly in the way each approaches his subject. The human figure rarely appears in their compositions, never in this period of Carl Schaefer's work and occasionally though incidentally in Burchfield's. Like Carl Schaefer, he paints what he knows and feels close to; for him it is houses on the edge of town, for Carl Schaefer it is more often fields and fences, though houses are frequently
included. They choose subjects which reveal the work of man rather than the empty northland of the Group of Seven, which excludes humanity. Burchfield's houses are animated, some almost resemble faces; Carl Schaefer's fields and houses too are full of life: everywhere except in the unruly skies, man's presence is implicit in them and they are moody, lively and often full of humour.

A comparison of Carl Schaefer's *Moon over the Don Jail* of 1938 (Fig. 8) and Charles Burchfield's *The Edge of Town*, 1921 (Fig. 9) illustrates the similarities in approach to their subject and their treatment of it. The buildings convey a moodiness, a despondent air. In the Burchfield they are more animated even than the figures on the street. The monochromatic colours and uneasy skies intensify the air of melancholy. Carl Schaefer includes one of his trademark symbols of the landscapes of this period, a dead tree. Unlike his landscapes, however, there is nothing in this painting to give one hope. A jail, full moon, dead tree, back alley all convey despair. The only bright spot is the street light and its sphere of radiance is dismally small. The edges of town, the slums with their ramshackle Victorian buildings are Burchfield's "region" just as the fields and farms of
Hanover are Carl Schaefer's. In Moon over the Don Jail, Carl Schaefer has digressed from his landscapes to capture "...that great, grey fortress, ominous and grim" and to protest its presence.

Charles Burchfield was labelled a 'regionalist' in an attempt to associate him with the regionalist movement in the Mid-West in the thirties, although he never entirely fell within that category. He is also labelled a romantic. But in the sense that he, like Carl Schaefer, always painted a particular district or region, he might also be considered a 'regionalist' painter in the true meaning of the word.

By the late thirties, Carl Schaefer had achieved what I consider to be his mature style, and had established himself as a prominent Canadian painter. Recognition of his success is evident not only through favourable critical reviews for his contributions in the various society exhibitions, small group shows and a one man show but through several major acquisitions by private citizens and galleries (in spite of a general cautiousness about purchasing paintings during depression years) and through his appointment to artistic societies. In March 1940 he was awarded a John Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Painting, the first Canadian to receive this honour. It
allowed him to spend a year working in Vermont and studying in New Hampshire. The fulfilment of this fellowship marked the end of the Hanover paintings.
FOOTNOTES

1 Interview with Carl Schaefer, Toronto, 26 June 1976. In a later discussion of light in Carl Schaefer's paintings, I pay further attention to this awareness of the mystical. See page 18.


3 Interview, 26 June 1976.

4 Interview, 26 June 1976.

5 Lawren Harris' Lake Superior paintings were done about 1924 and undoubtedly Carl Schaefer, through his acquaintance with him, had seen these canvases. He used to visit Harris at the Studio Building in Toronto where he painted. Harris gave him some stretchers of canvas. It was on one such stretcher that Ontario Farmhouse was painted. Carl Schaefer explained that he never would have bought such a large canvas, he could not have afforded it. Interview, 26 June 1976.

6 Twelve drawings from these northern fishing trips have been reproduced in Northward Journal: A Quarterly of Northern Arts, February 1979, pp. 23-49. Accompanying the drawings are excerpts from Carl Schaefer's diary, pp. 51-71 and an article by George Johnston, "Carl Schaefer: The French and Pickerel River Drawings, 1926-1933," pp. 19-22.


8 Thoreau MacDonald, Letter to George Johnston, 26 February (about 1958), in the possession of George Johnston. Under J.E.H. MacDonald, he worked on St. Ann's Church, Toronto, the Claridge Apartments and Concourse Building, Toronto. Carl Schaefer, Biographical Information.
Graham McInnes in reviewing Carl Schaefer's One Man Show at the Picture Loan Society, Toronto in 1937 described his progress: "He has passed from studenship to imitation, from imitation to unruly chaos and from this chaos he has emerged to find himself and to state with apparent facility, and in an extremely personal way, truths about his environment that have never before been stated so simply, so convincingly and with such a genuine devotion to the strict requirements of combined plastic and representational form." From "The World of Art," Saturday Night, 23 January 1937, p. 16.

Duval, Four Decades, p. 37. I have selected this reference which describes Carl Schaefer as a regional painter for in it Duval states that Carl Schaefer "... has always readily confessed to being a regional painter". The earliest documentation which refers to him as a regional artist is Donald Buchanan's article "Carl Schaefer: Regional Painter of Rural Ontario," Canadian Geographical Journal, 36 (April 1948), 200-201. In an article entitled "Variations in Canadian Landscape Painting," University of Toronto Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 1 (October 1940), 42 he defines Carl Schaefer's painting as regional without ever using the term. "Let us look at his mass of water-colours, done, two-thirds of them at least, in Bruce and Grey Counties in Western Ontario. They are first of all documentation. Here are rail-fences, rolling fields of wheat and oats, typical farmhouses, patches of wooded knolls, a stone school-house, rural cemeteries. They are painted simply, without sentiment or show. Unlike some of the compositions of MacDonald and Lismer, you do not think of them often as courageous patterns. You admire them usually for other reasons. In their dryness of form and line, in their restrained use of colour (although crisply gay greens tempered with strong yellows can be used with emphasis by Schaefer when he wishes), in their almost obstinate repetition of what might be thought commonplace subjects -- frugal, profit-earning woodlots, broad but not limitless expanses of grain, scattering of trees along the edge of a meadow, the monotonous roll of field and hillock in a pleasant but far from spectacular countryside -- you are presented with a realism that is new in contemporary Canadian painting".

Oxford Dictionary.
It is worth noting here that the term "regionalist" as applied to the paintings of Carl Schaefer has a different meaning to that applied to a group of American Scene painters in the 1930's in the mid-western United States. Among the American Scene painters were such regionalists as Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry (to name the best known) who instilled in their work a social consciousness, a mythologizing of the working man in his rural environment.

Without singling out painters, a number of critics mentioned the artists who were tied to the Group tradition. For instance, Graham McInnes, in praising Carl Schaefer for gleaning what he could from the Group and then breaking away writes: "To do this at a time when a great number of young painters were slavishly imitating the Group, seeing life at second-hand and reducing their discoveries to formulae, is evidence of his great strength of character." The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVI, No. 193 (February 1937), 18. Or Augustus Bridle, in reviewing the second exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1936, writes: "As never before in the history of insurgent art since 1919, led by G. Jackson from Quebec, these 60 exhibitionists remind us that 99-100th of Canada is yet unconquered by the palette, and that more of it is solitude than society. These folk have pushed back our horizons, and killed off a lot of our humanism. In their effort to make rocks, old dead trees and icebergs sing the music of the spheres, they have shoved the cheerful common crown off the road."


Interview, 26 June 1976.

Lawren Harris, Letter to Carl Schaefer, 15 August 1936, in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Carl Schaefer avidly read whatever art journals and books he could find. He had access to Studio International and some American periodicals and newspapers. Interview, 26 June 1976. In this way, he may have seen reproductions of Hokusai's work.


21. See footnote 5.

22. Interview, 26 June 1976.


CHAPTER II

The Critics' Assessment of Painting in Canada (and Ontario in particular) during the 1930's

The visual arts of the 1920's were dominated by a group of radical young painters, the Group of Seven whose break from the traditional style of landscape painting of the Royal Canadian Academy surrounded them with controversy in their early years as a Group.¹ Their struggle for recognition had been a long one. In 1933, however, the Group embraced a larger membership and named itself the Canadian Group of Painters. By then, it was established country-wide. Its original members were the core of this new Group and still a dominating force within it. Although the Group had disbanded -- MacDonald had died in 1932, Varley had moved to the West Coast in 1926 and Harris to the United States -- its painting style and approach still held the commanding position in this new body.

In Toronto in the thirties, where the young painters were most strongly affected by the Group tradition of rugged landscape painting, the still life, figurative painting and portraiture were, on the whole, neglected. Their subjects were out of key with the Group's nationalistic
spirit. A manifesto published by the Group at the time of its expansion into the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933 declares the preference of its members for landscape:

The Group of Seven has always believed in an art inspired by the country, and that the one way in which a people will find its own individual expression in art is for its artists to stand on their own feet and by direct experience of the country itself...to produce works of its own time and place. ...2

This only mildly suggests their preference for the land as subject; however, A. Y. Jackson, one of its members, was more emphatically critical of any divergence from this tradition and labelled such a divergence, anti-nationalist. In a letter of 1938 to H. O. McCurry, the Director of the National Gallery of Canada, he wrote with disdain of the aims of contemporary art in this country:

...There has been a lot of persistent effort to establish painting which has no reflection of the Canadian background. The international outlook is the thing and from that standpoint it is of very little importance. There has, at the same time, been an effort to belittle the Canadian movement by people who have no feeling for the country and it has resulted in a kind of sneer when the north country is mentioned. With all the young people here there is no longer any desire to go north. They do still life and back yards and when you try to arrange an international show it is almost impossible to find a dozen canvasses of any distinction.3
The inference of his final statement is clear, that neither a still life nor a backyard could be considered a Canadian painting of any distinction.

Several trends appear to emerge from the critical writing of the thirties, or rather one trend predominates and two or three others emerge as accompaniments to it. The principal trend is to continue painting the Canadian landscape, in the tradition established by the Group of Seven. Naturally, the role of the Royal Canadian Academy is not infrequently brought under discussion in relation to this trend. Some critics focus their attention on nationalism, which is one of the accompanying trends mentioned above, vis a vis the Canadian painter's awareness of painting in Europe and the United States. The link between nationalism and landscape painting has already been made clear. The other concern of some critics and certain artists is the artist's responsibility to social conditions and politics as contrasted with his responsibility to art for its own sake. To continue painting the countryside, oblivious of the troubled times all around and the approach of war seems irresponsible to some; others, however, defend it.

By examining critical reaction to the major exhibitions of the time (especially those held in Ontario), one gets an impression of the critical atmosphere in
which Carl Schaefer worked. I shall do this according to the trends outlined above and where possible, chronologically.

The continued interest in painting the rugged Northern Ontario landscape met with a mixed critical response. Robert Ayre, in reviewing the first exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters, held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in December 1933 wrote optimistically of the new works, though he did not fail to notice the influence of the Group:

The younger men and women have brought a new energy and a new vision. Canada is growing up. It is true the Laurentians and Algonquin, Muskoka and Georgian Bay are still being painted, we are still invited to look at pines, pools and lakes and rocks, but the revolutionary spirit remains revolutionary by moving away from extra-human landscapes.4

For the most part, however, it is the original members of the Group who have not been able to break away from their own landscape tradition.5 Ayre also applauded the disappearance of academic influence, the appearance of figurative painting and a growing awareness among such younger artists as Gordon Webber, Andre Bieler, Yvonne McKague and Charles Comfort of social conditions, human concerns.

Not only are we moving toward human life, away from landscape, which in the long run must be
sterile, but in growing up we are beginning to show the effects of the profound disturbances in human affairs which have shaken the world; social implications are creeping in.6

The Royal Canadian Academy was, it must be remembered, still a society with an established reputation and it invariably received a reaction from the critics. Robert Ayre was pleased to note its gradual disappearance in 1933 but recognized that the Canadian Group of Painters still faced the prejudices of those "...Philistines who insist that painting is a matter of old mills and duck-ponds".7

Wyly Grier, a member of the Academy, on the other hand, lamented the decline of Academic discipline, and therefore the disappearance of figurative painting:

In this age it would seem that the dread of being thought Academic (like Michel Angelo, for instance); or of telling a story (like Giotto, for instance) keeps a number of painters silent on the subject of mankind. And the net result is that we are continually experiencing, at the hands of the painters, the thrills, the risings and sinkings, the qualms and the raptures of a sort of pictorial scenic railway journey.8

The last Group of Seven exhibition as such was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in December of 1931. In summing up its contribution to Canadian painting, Jehanne Bietry Salinger noted that even the Royal Canadian Academy (whose annual exhibition she had recently viewed in Montreal) had greatly benefited from the revolutionary
influence of the Group of Seven "...all because the
Seven did some 12 years ago, shake the Barbizon and
Dutch shackles which held Canadian art in bondage." 9

Lucy Van Gogh's review of the November 1934
Royal Canadian Academy exhibition at the Grange in
Toronto was as unruffled as the exhibition itself;
with the exception of her enthusiasm for an Edwin Holgate
contribution (Holgate was an invited contributor), the
review displays utter boredom:

The autumn show of the RCA, now on view at the
Grange is, if anything, more placid than usual.
To change the metaphor, the academic pool has
not been troubled by any angel; unruffled,
smooth, quite beautiful, but quite devoid of
any healing power, it mirrors the ancient
landscape in the ancient way, and gives a
vague impression of waiting, of remembering
dimly that it once was stirred, of wondering
where the angel has gone and when it will
return. Not particularly, I think, of wanting
it to return. Academies do not like to be
troubled. 10

Frank Underhill's reaction to the 1936 annual
exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy is considerably
less tolerant than Lucy Van Gogh's to the 1934 show, for
he writes:

...The authorities (of the Toronto Art Gallery)
have shown their sense of the fitness of things
by staging the annual display of the RCA right
up against the paintings of Van Gogh. Experiences
such as these (the other was a visit to the
Association of Canadian Bookmen's book fair)
leave one in a jaundiced mood for the contemplation of Canadian art in general.\textsuperscript{11} The jaundiced mood brought on by Canadian art permeates his review of *The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1936* (ed. by Bertram Brooker). He feels exasperated at the continued predominance of what he describes as "rustic rumination"\textsuperscript{12} among Canadian artists. Underhill takes the Canadian artist to task for his lack of political commitment or social conscience, an apathy he attributes to his rustic nature. He is particularly disturbed by this apathy at a time when he feels civilization is undergoing such an upheaval "...not merely an economic but a spiritual crisis..."\textsuperscript{13} particularly when the editor Bertram Brooker encourages artists to stay away from controversy in their art.

His review prompts a public row over the role of the artist in society. The sculptor, Elizabeth Wyn Wood responds by arguing that it is imperative that art remain detached from politics. Artists, she claims, have in no sense been blinded by nationalism, and are fully aware of what is happening around them.\textsuperscript{14}

The public squabble subsides with painter, Paraskeva Clark's article "Come Out from Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield"; she opposes the views of Elizabeth Wyn Wood
and Bertram Brooker and encourages artists to lend their support to the social struggle through their art. This article, written on her behalf by Graham McInnes, appeared in *The New Frontier*, a radical journal of Canadian literature and social criticism, published in Toronto for only a year and a half (1936-37).

Jehanne Bietry Salinger wrote art reviews and criticism for *The Canadian Forum* in the early thirties. An American, she may have been more aware than her contemporaries of a rather stifling nationalism in Canada for in reviewing the 1930 annual R.C.A. exhibition she writes:

> When a Canadian reputation is at stake there is, in Canada, no literary criticism exercised, no more than there is any discriminating criticism of Canadian playwriting, dramatics, music or the fine arts. It is understood by all who serve as critics that it is unbecoming and unworthy of a citizen or resident of Canada to declare any product of Canada -- be it of the hands or of the mind -- as being anything but outstanding.

Salinger's reaction to the 59th annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists in April 1931 represents her view of Canadian art at that time. The few noteworthy contributions, among them paintings by Jack Humphrey, Bertram Brooker, Yvonne McKague, A. J. Casson and Carl Schaefer, the sculptures of Edward Norman and Florence
Wyle and the wood carving of Thoreau MacDonald, give her hope that Canadian art will come to life, that the artists will break away from their art societies which can only produce "...thin, provincial, stale..." works that do not in any sense exhibit the true abilities in the country.  

Interestingly, she reverses her scornful position in her final article for The Canadian Forum, written shortly after her return to the United States. From a new viewpoint in California, she praises the honesty and freshness of Canadian painting, the result she believes of the painter's love for his subject. She arrives at this view by way of her disappointment in the dextrous but essentially "hot house" flavour of European- and Mexican-influenced American painting.  

In January of 1936 the second exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto. On view were 200 paintings by 28 members and 31 invited contributors. Among those represented were Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, A. Y. Jackson and Frank Carmichael (now seen as the pioneers of the new group), Edwin Holgate, Prudence Heward, George Pepper, Yvonne McKague, Isabel McLaughlin, Anne Savage, Lawren Harris Jr., L. L. Fitzgerald, Charles Comfort, Bertram Brooker
and Carl Schaefer. A lively critical response, for the most part very favourable, provides us with a look at the state of Canadian painting (in Ontario in particular) in the mid-thirties.

G. Campbell McInnes, for instance, an enthusiastic supporter of Canadian painting applauded the painters who had struck out on their own, while acknowledging their indebtedness to the Group of Seven (a debt he considers far more acceptable than one to the R.C.A.).

His opening paragraph sets the tone of his generous and enthusiastic article:

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about the fine exhibition at the Toronto Art Gallery is that the tendency to a somewhat slavish imitation of the Group of Seven has to a very large extent disappeared.

Augustus Bridle, writing for The Toronto Daily Star, good-humouredly complains of the exhibitors' preference for the untamed northern landscape at the expense of humanity:

In the effort to make rocks, old dead trees and icebergs sing the music of the spheres, they have shoved the cheerful common crowd off the road. In trying to make new stylized symphonies of colour, rhythms and design, they ignore the everyday humoresque right under their noses.

He is sufficiently interested in the exhibition, however, to devote a second week's review to the work of the invited
contributors, among whom is Carl Schaefer.\textsuperscript{24} The exhibition is described as a landmark in Canadian painting by R. G. Kettle in Queen's Quarterly.\textsuperscript{25} His response overall is enthusiastic though he too cannot ignore the obvious comparisons with the Group of Seven.\textsuperscript{26} Without actually naming the R.C.A., he notes that in post-war painting, Canadians had set out to break away from "...the nineteenth century attitude which demanded that its art be story-telling, descriptive and romantic, and aim at the most perfect photographic representation..."\textsuperscript{27} (which are obviously the ideals of the Academy) and had, in his view, succeeded. He delights both in the diversity of outlook and interpretation and in the exhibition's accessibility to the average spectator. Unlike Bridle, he finds this accessibility in a greater predominance of the human figure and also in a reduction in scale of the landscape compositions, and in their greater intimacy. He attributes these improvements to the influence of European painting. How the public will respond to the inevitable influx of European abstract painting raises questions in his mind.\textsuperscript{28}

In three articles, one by Pearl McCarthy in The Globe and Mail in 1938 and two by G. Campbell McInnes,
one in Queen's Quarterly in the summer of 1938 and
one in Saturday Night in December 1937, the tone is
more despondent. The first of these is an article
on fashion and style in Canadian art, the second an
evaluation of Canadian art and the third a review of
the third exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters.
While each points out the importance of individual
expression, each, in varying degrees and styles,
disapproves of the lingering influence of the Group
of Seven and the inability of its successors to shake
off that influence.

Pearl McCarthy concludes that time and public opinion
will separate the artists of fashion from those of style.

The style of art should change with our time,
reflecting the new ideas, but the temporary
circumstances should not be allowed to obscure
the lasting truths. They do not in the work of
strong-minded artists. They do in the work of
artists who imitate a point of view. The former
have style, the latter follow fashion.\textsuperscript{29}

She singles out Carl Schaefer's Ontario Farmhouse, 1934
(Fig. 3) as setting a style:

When Carl Schaefer painted his brilliant stark
farmhouse, we admired, but were terrified of
admiring too loudly because we feared that
here was another point of view which less original
minds might grasp, producing a whole line of bleak
houses and stark fields of which we should tire
as we tire of a modish hat.\textsuperscript{30}
Unlike most critics who tend to expect the painters to be clear-sighted about the future of painting and therefore capable of more self-criticism, particularly about exhibition selections, McCarthy implicates the public in deciding the direction art will take by giving them, along with time, the responsibility for weeding out the good from the mediocre.31

The source of mediocrity in painting is to be found in the indecisiveness of the painters, according to Graham McInnes. He praises and encourages artists who are in pursuit of a new and individual expression but feels, on the whole, a lack of commitment over the previous five years, a "...languishing in the doldrums".32 On a brighter note, however, he assures the reader that Canadian art is in a transitional phase, and he is hopeful that the situation will improve.33 He advises artists "...to paint sincerely and with deep feeling from the reservoir of experience, with an eye to the touchstone of tradition".34 He too places a responsibility with the public "...to help, to encourage and to try and understand".35

Barker Fairley's article "Canadian Art: Man vs. Landscape" of 1939 is much the strongest on the subject
of the Canadian preoccupation with the land, and almost despairing in its tone. He finds it hard to believe that the landscape is still such a popular subject among Canada's painters:

That there should be a strong landscape movement here is understandable enough, not to say inevitable, given such a geography as ours. But that it should go on and on, with increasing competence in some quarters but with -- on the whole -- decreasing vitality, to the virtual exclusion of any strong creative impulse to paint humanity -- this is very disquieting for any who care about these matters.\(^{36}\)

In all critical writing on painting of the thirties in Canada, little attention is paid to what was happening artistically elsewhere in the world. At most there was a mild concern that abstract and surrealist painting might creep into Canada. While the subject of nationalism does not often come into the open, it is implied by the absence of any comparisons to painting outside of Canada.

For this reason, the exhibition of Canadian art held at the Tate Gallery in London, England in 1938 is of special interest. It was a retrospective view of Canadian art from Indian and French Canadian to contemporary work. Canadian art was now to be judged by people who had never seen the great rugged northland of Ontario, the mountains and towering trees of the West Coast or even the more settled rural areas of Quebec and Ontario.
Two reviews appear in The Canadian Forum -- one by Northrop Frye in January 1939 and one by an English critic, Eric Newton in February 1939. Frye's article interests us, not so much for his supportive stance of the works presented as for his recounting of the reaction of the British. It should be mentioned first, however, that Frye was disappointed, for the most part, in the selection of works, adding that it must have been a difficult task to choose an exhibition for so mixed a public. The exhibition, he explains, was opened by a puzzled Duke of Kent who, according to The Times said "...that Canadian painting was very interesting and that the really interesting thing about this exhibition was that it gave the English a chance to see this painting".

Frye goes on to express his uncertainty about the reaction of the intelligent English public but he is most unimpressed by the response of their press which he describes as inadequate, slovenly, contemptuous and patronizing. He concludes that because the European influence, in both American and Canadian painting, is so slight, the ideal international setting for Canadian exhibitions would be New York.

What Eric Newton tries to identify in his review "Canadian Art Through English Eyes" is a national style
and a national point of view. He claims to find it among the twentieth century works; the essence of Canadian art has been found here by the painter ignoring his European heritage and painting his country as he understands it. He pays greatest attention to the Group of Seven (which he labels "School of Thomson") and explains that he feels that if one looks beyond the superficial aspects of their style, that is to say, oversimplification, over-emphasis in colour, a lack of atmosphere and subtlety it is possible to see that they learned more from Canada than Constable. He also singles out for comment Morrice — who provides relief for the English eye — David Milne and Emily Carr. Newton feels that the Englishman is convinced by the exhibition that Canada:

...is today leading an independent artistic life of her own, more so perhaps than any other part of our empire. In the best sense of the word the exhibition is national and expresses a truly national spirit. In these days when to hear the word national makes most of our hearts sink, that is something to be proud of.41

Graham McInnes mentions the critical reaction to the Tate Gallery exhibition in a book he brought out in 1939 called A Short History of Canadian Art. Though the exhibition made clear "...the organic unity of Canadian art...", the critical reaction he felt was
not as enthusiastic as it had been in the 1924-25 exhibition. He goes on to say that "...while we may attribute this in part to a certain condescension on the part of the English critics, it would seem that the indecision of the last decade was reflected in our painting and that the critics were quick to spot it".\(^42\)

The end of the decade is reached then on a rather subdued note. For the most part the overall critical view was that there seemed not to have been any strong new directions in Canadian painting but rather a continuation of a trend in landscape painting launched by the Group of Seven. McInnes, who maintained, throughout the thirties a strongly supportive voice delivers gentle but firm advice to both artist and public at the end of his \textit{A Short History of Canadian Art}:

\begin{quote}
All that is needed is fresh enthusiasm -- but this time let it be based not so much on the discovery of a country. That has been done. Let it be based this time on the discovery of art, and all that it means...Let the emphasis be less on the subject, and more on what is done with it; less on directionless strength, and more on truly painterly qualities. If those things are done, the 'Canadian Scene' will come to life automatically, so long as we are Canadians, and paint with complete honesty and genuine feeling. The most we can do as non-artists is to help, to encourage, and to try and understand.\(^43\)
\end{quote}
In spite of the apparent lack of direction, a number of Canadian painters did make strong, individual contributions, moving off in diverse directions, perhaps to establish an independence from the Group of Seven, with the result that unlike the twenties in which a group movement stands out, the thirties are marked by individual successes. Charles Hill has celebrated the achievements of the thirties' painters in his exhibition *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* of 1975. Among the painters represented in this exhibition for his own particular and distinct style is Carl Schaefer.
For a full account of the Group of Seven story, see Peter Mellen, The Group of Seven (Toronto, Montreal: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1970).

"Group of Seven issues statement defending aims," Montreal Gazette, 31 January 1933.


Robert Ayre, p. 100.

Robert Ayre, p. 100.

Robert Ayre, p. 100.


Lucy Van Gogh, "World of Art," Saturday Night, 17 November 1934, p. 11.


Frank Underhill, p. 28.

Frank Underhill, p. 28.

Paraskeva Clark (as told to G. Campbell McInnes), "Come Out from Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," New Frontier, Vol. I, No. 2 (April 1937), 16.

The presence of this Marxist journal is an indication at the time of a growing political awareness among Canada's artists and intellectuals though it is also true that throughout the thirties The Canadian Forum took a political stand.


G. Campbell McInnes, "World of Art," Saturday Night, 18 January 1936, p. 4.

G. Campbell McInnes, p. 4.

G. Campbell McInnes, p. 4.


R. G. Kettle, p. 78-79.

R. G. Kettle, p. 78.

R. G. Kettle, p. 80.


32 G. Campbell McInnes, "Canadian Art," Queen's Quarterly, Vol. XLV (Summer 1938), 239.

33 G. Campbell McInnes, p. 240; G. Campbell McInnes, "World of Art," Saturday Night, 4 December 1937.

34 G. Campbell McInnes, "Canadian Art," Queen's Quarterly, Vol. XLV (Summer 1938), 244.

35 G. Campbell McInnes, p. 244.


38 Northrop Frye, p. 304.

39 Northrop Frye, p. 304-305.


41 Eric Newton, p. 344-345.


43 G. Campbell McInnes, p. 97.
Since it is most representative of what people know of Carl Schaefer's paintings, not only of the thirties, but of his entire career, I have started this chapter with Storm Over The Fields of 1937 (Fig. 6) rather than follow a chronological sequence. Formally, it is a simple composition: low, undulating hills covered by fenced-off grain and stubble fields lead the eye back to a horizon line about midway up the canvas, above which is a dark, cloudy sky. The colours are subtle greens, browns, yellows and grey and black. The painting has captured a disturbing mood as a storm blows up over the fields - much of the dramatic nature of this landscape is achieved by the contrast of dark and light. Such strong contrasts are characteristic of Carl Schaefer's style; in this painting the sky conveys an unsettled, stormy mood and the light areas possess an unreal brilliance. The sky against the horizon is made up of solid, abstract blocks of clouds, black on the underside but with small openings between, where light shines through: behind them is a greyish layer, than an almost flat, black sky along the horizon, broken only by a slim area of light in the left corner
which has an eerie effect because of its fantastic
nature. The fields of the foreground give the viewer
a sensation of movement; the brush strokes rush the
eye to the glowing fields of the middle and background.
The storm is all the more threatening because of the
unnatural but brilliant light which gives the composi-
tion an otherworldly feeling. This feeling might be
described as visionary.¹ Such a feeling emanates from
the paintings of Paul Nash and early Burchfield. Its
view is also the expansive one of the Group of Seven.
The subject is smaller, more familiar and more intimate,
the brushwork is finer, as it would not be in a Group
canvas, but the overall effect is grand. The water-
colour which corresponds to the oil, also painted that
year, conveys the same feeling, though its scale is
smaller. Whereas many artists painting up a large
oil from a small sketch lose the spirit of the original
composition in the achievement of a more carefully
composed, exact and often stilted finished product,
Carl Schaefer makes the transition with ease, achieving
perhaps with greater intensity the mood and inner light
which is so characteristic of his work, and the imme-
diacy of a watercolour painted on the spot.

It is interesting to look forward thirty years to
a work of 1964, *Rain Cloud Over The Fields, Waterloo County* (Fig. 10) and note the difference in mood from that of *Storm Over the Fields* (Fig. 6). The later painting depicts a similar scene in a similar composition; and it is a watercolour. What Carl Schaefer learned in his early years and the style and technique he came to use during the thirties is still visible in *Rain Cloud Over The Fields* (Fig. 10). It depicts with assurance what the earlier work achieves through studied and dramatic means. Carl Schaefer is now completely at home with his medium and uses his brush deftly and simply. This work is a mere matter-of-fact portrayal, it conveys none of the surreal, fantastic quality of the earlier work. The painter imposes less of himself on it. The moodiness of *Storm Over The Fields* (Fig. 6), which may well have reflected the uneasiness of the times, has vanished from the later work.

*Ontario Farmhouse* of 1934 (Fig. 3) is another large oil preceded, in this case, by a watercolour of 1934, and also a pen and ink drawing, of 1932. Although Carl Schaefer was already working extensively in watercolour when this canvas was painted, it has none of the fluidity and ease of the watercolours, or even of such a later oil as *Storm Over The Fields* (Fig. 6). It has
a tightness and precision found in his pen and ink drawings, certainly in the drawing for this painting, and a concern for detail which is close to portraiture. Nonetheless, it is a magnificent painting and recognizably Carl Schaefer's in the attention to detail, the sky and the dramatic placement of the house, no matter how removed it seems from the pure landscapes of the same time. The huge farmhouse, placed diagonally, as in the watercolour The Voelzing Farmhouse, 1934 (Fig. 4), though unlike the farmhouse of the drawing which faces frontally, towers out of the slight mound on which it stands. The brilliant blue sky is abstract, in the manner reminiscent of Lawren Harris. The foreground depicts layers of different vegetation carefully separated from one another and painted in an excessively orderly fashion. A characteristic dead tree stands to the right of the house.

Throughout the thirties, the dead tree is a favourite motif in Carl Schaefer's work. It appears not only in such landscapes as Farmhouse By The Railway, (Fig. 11), Ontario Farmhouse (Figs. 3, 4, & 5), (both paintings and drawing) and Summer Harvest (Fig. 13), but in his still lifes as well and the cityscape Moon Over The Don Jail (Fig. 8). With
the exception of the last-mentioned painting, its hopelessness is always countered by the promise of new life in a field of grain or a table of fruit.

A composition similar to Ontario Farmhouse (Fig. 3) is found in a watercolour of 1937, Before Rain, Parry Sound (Fig. 12) - similar in that the focal point is a building in the centre. Although the same nervous attention to detail appears in the foreground growth, and the flower garden to the right of the building, the composition is more relaxed than Ontario Farmhouse (Fig. 3). The sky, again menacing, is no longer the abstract one of the earlier oil. Carl Schaefer seems to be more at ease now with his style, enough, at any rate to break away from the restrictions imposed by his formal approach in works of the earlier thirties.

A work, representing the same stage as Ontario Farmhouse (Fig. 3) is Summer Harvest, Hanover, 1935 (Fig. 13). Like Ontario Farmhouse 1934, (Fig. 3) it is a highly stylized work and busy in detail. It invites comparison with a print by Hokusai (whom I have mentioned earlier as being an important influence ²) of c. 1825 entitled Mount Fuji In Fine Weather (Fig. 14). The treatment of the clouds in both works is similar, as is the subtle use of
colour and the nervous brushwork of the grasses. It is worth mentioning also the attention he paid to Chinese painting\(^3\), particularly of the Tang Dynasty, in which line was dominant over colour to an extent that colour was almost monochromatic. This, undoubtedly, encouraged him to pay particular attention to line, a trait that can be traced back to his association with Thoreau MacDonald. There is a stiffness in this painting, in the orderliness of the fences and the stooks of hay, which is not found in the Hokusai or the Chinese painting, and which is considerably modified in Carl Schaefer's paintings of the late thirties. *Summer Harvest*, Hanover, 1935 (Fig. 13), is painted in oil and this may account for some of its stiffness. Later works in watercolour display a much greater ease in brushwork, a quality characteristic of that medium.

The technique I have been discussing, that is of painting in watercolour, of bringing the painting almost to its finished stage in the field, of using a limited and subdued palette which was nevertheless capable of dramatic contrasts, and making brilliant use of the white of his paper to give an effect of inner light diffused throughout the subject, had already come to a recognizable development by the
mid-thirties and has been apparent in the paintings I have been discussing except perhaps **Ontario Farmhouse** (Fig. 3), where it might be described as still tentative. These qualities of his style become more pronounced in the latter half of the decade which might lead one to expect a softening in his style. Such a softening does occur but not so as to weaken the sharpness and angularity and occasional obsession with minute detail which characterizes **Ontario Farmhouse** (Fig. 3) or **Summer Harvest, Hanover** (Fig. 13).

**Wheatfield, Hanover**, 1936 (Fig. 15) might be considered a transitional work, between the stiff, less confident **Summer Harvest, Hanover** (Fig. 13) or **Ontario Farmhouse** (Fig. 3), and the easier, more personal **Fall Ploughing At Schomberg** (Fig. 16). The sky still has an abstract quality, though not the extreme angles or brilliant colours of the sky of the **Ontario Farmhouse** (Fig. 3). These subjects seem to be chosen to meet his interest in orderly composition - as in this case, a partially harvested wheat field with regularly placed wheat stooks. His brushwork consists of a number of fine repetitious strokes, very like those in the Hokusai painting, and perhaps reminiscent of pointillism. This style of brushwork has come to be a recognizable feature. Although he painted this in oil, he has
applied the paint in parts as though it were water-colour, very thinly and with long strokes, leaving sections of canvas to show through.

The brilliance of the colours in *Ontario Farmhouse* (Fig. 3) is seldom found in either landscapes or still lifes after the mid-thirties, when he favours dull browns, greens and golds. By the early thirties he had absorbed as much as he was going to of the abstract style he learned from Lawren Harris ⁴ and had moved on from the flat two-dimensional decorative style which may be seen in some of his drawings, such as *Rock And Pines, Pickerel River, 1927* (Fig. 34), and paintings, such as *Pine Pattern, Pickerel, 1926* (Fig. 1) of his early career. He describes his new approach as "... a fusion of Northern and Southern aspect" (Northern and Southern refer to Ontario); also as "the decorative giving way to a stark realism".⁵ With his simplified and austere realism comes a confidence in technique. The landscapes in particular become less and less cluttered; fields are marked off with wooden fences, small clusters of vertical lines indicate crops growing, horizontal demarcations indicate a furrowed field. The impression of a glowing inner light is sometimes given by unpainted sections. In *Late Sun*
And Oatfields of 1939, (Fig. 35), the greater part of the painting is a light colour, giving a sense of luminosity. A few simple lines form trees or fences around fields of oats.

Fall Ploughing At Schomberg of 1937 (Fig. 16) conveys the ease and familiarity with which Carl Schaefer now uses watercolour. The medium itself demands a less studied treatment of its subject and allows him to work, as he prefers, in the field, painting the finished work in the presence of the subject rather than from a sketch. Like many of the landscapes of the latter part of the decade, this seems a straightforward representation, full of vitality and sympathy with the subject but with none of the moodiness of a work like Farmhouse By The Railway (Fig. 11).

Painted at the end of the decade, Farmhouse By The Railway, 1938-39, (Fig. 11) has an uneasy air about it, reminiscent of Charles Burchfield's The Edge of Town (Fig. 9). It possesses all of Carl Schaefer's identifiable gloomy features - a broken down fence, dead tree and threatening sky - and its gloominess here is intensified by the ramshackle state of the buildings, the railway tracks, a bent telephone pole and rather dull ochre colouring.
There is hope, however, in the ripe garden in front of the house and a touch of humour in the precarious angle of the out-house.

Just as his treatment of the watercolour medium in the thirties takes on a distinctly Schaeferian look in its colours and brushwork, so too Carl Schaefer's view of a subject and compositional interpretation of it come to be distinctly his own. The vantage point is frequently high, and in the manner of the seventeenth century Dutch landscape, his outlook may be from a high promontory, the edge of which appears in the foreground of the painting. Fields, Township Normandy 1936, (Fig. 17), R.R. No. 3, Hanover 1936 (Fig. 18), Concession Road, Township Bentinck, Hanover 1937, (Fig. 19) and View of Hanover, 1937-38 (Fig. 20) are viewed in this way. As usual as the high vantage point, however, is a low one, from which the painter sometimes looks straight ahead, though more often his view has an upward direction. Examples of this upward view can be seen in Farmhouse By The Railway, 1939 (Fig. 11), Storm Over The Fields, 1937 (Fig. 6) Wheat Field, Hanover, 1936 (Fig. 15), The Voelzing Farm, Hanover, Township Bentinck, Grey County, 1938 (Fig. 21) and Ontario Farmhouse, 1934 (Fig. 3).
For the most part, Carl Schaefer will choose an angle from which he can introduce a strong diagonal - a diagonal formed by a road, a fence, a hill or a line of uncut grain against a field of cut grain. To complement these diagonals, the skies may extend or otherwise mirror them. The countryside around Hanover naturally lent itself to geometric divisions, as Christopher Varley has noted in his introduction to the catalogue *Carl Schaefer in Hanover* 9. Carl Schaefer did not hesitate to take advantage of this natural layout to heighten the mood, say, of an impending storm or to accentuate the architectural style of a farmhouse or barn, by setting the orderly countryside or building against an unruly sky. The *Ontario Farmhouse* (Fig. 3) provides the most obvious example of this sort of dramatic juxtaposition, though many of the Hanover landscapes could be singled out; and even some of the close up studies of grain stooks such as *Wheat Stooks, No. 2 Hanover*, 1939 (Fig. 22) or a broken fence *Wire Fence, Hanover*, 1937 possess this same theatricality. In certain works Carl Schaefer tends to emphasize the horizontal appearance of the countryside. *View of Hanover*, 1937-38, (Fig. 20), while composed in an almost standard way with diagonals leading the eye into the back-
ground, has strong horizontal bands, echoed in the large still sky. In *The Brunt Barns, Hanover, 1937* (Fig. 24), he has used horizontal bands in the foreground fields and fence, and in the sky, giving the painting a very shallow dimension which both draws the eye to the angularity of the farm buildings and at the same time accentuates their flatness.
FOOTNOTES

1 For a fuller discussion of the mystical quality of Carl Schaefer's light, see Chapter I, page 18.

2 See Chapter I, page 17 and Footnote 17.

3 The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto has a fine Chinese collection which Carl Schaefer would have known.

4 See Chapter I, pages 16 and 20 and Footnote 5 for a discussion of Carl Schaefer and Lawren Harris.

5 Carl Schaefer, Accomplishments 3, p. 2.

6 See Chapter I, page 15 for a fuller description of Carl Schaefer's method of painting in the field.

7 It is worth noting again Carl Schaefer's interest in the work of Jacob van Ruysdael.

8 See attached chronology for exhibitions to which Carl Schaefer contributed during the 1930's.

9 Christopher Varley, Carl Schaefer in Hanover, Introduction.
CHAPTER IV
The Still Life Paintings

Landscape has always been Carl Schaefer's major subject, in the thirties as well as at other stages of his career. His persistence, in spite of the critics' attacks (and he was, by no means, alone in that persistence) demonstrates the strength of his convictions. At the same time that he was producing his landscapes, however, he also painted, drew and engraved a number of lovely and unusual still lifes.

Still life painting has been compared to chamber music. There is something about the relatively small scale of the genre and the intimacy of its composition and subject matter which is reminiscent of a string quartet. The viewer tends to feel he is being permitted to see something of the personal side of the artist; through his books or other belongings he is allowed a glimpse of the artist's own life which may not reveal itself in his commissioned or public works.

In some respects, the still life painting or drawing is the antithesis of the landscape. Where the former tends to be small and intimate, the latter, while often, though not always, on a large
scale, is necessarily of a grander nature. The artist's eye is forced to incorporate a broader view; it is unconfined by a wall, curtain or table, but allowed to scan and absorb several acres of fields or a hillside; sometimes the panorama is infinite. The difference between the two naturally demands a different type of composition: the still life is close to the painter and he paints what he sees before him in accurate detail, whereas the landscape painter must record an impression, perhaps exaggerating certain features and even omitting others.

The integration, then, of still life and landscape into one composition would seem to be paradoxical. But this is what Carl Schaefer has done in several still lifes of the thirties, namely Harvest Festival of 1936, (Fig. 25), Still Life With Landscape of 1939 (Fig. 26) and Yellow Apples On A Fall Landscape of 1939 (Fig. 27). To continue the music metaphor, the combination of these two genres is as unusual as the combination of a string quartet with a symphony. Carl Schaefer's venture into this type of composition is unusual but entirely successful and very suitable to his style.

In this study, I shall examine seven still life paintings by Carl Schaefer done during the nineteen
thirties. They are: Apples, 1933 (Fig. 28), Pears, 1934, (Fig. 29), Harvest Festival, 1936 (Fig. 25), Eggplant And Peppers, 1938 (Fig. 30), Still Life, 1939 (Fig. 33), Still Life With Landscape, 1939 (Fig. 26) and Yellow Apples On A Fall Landscape, 1939 (Fig. 27).

Apples, 1933 (Fig. 28) is a small watercolour that belongs among his early paintings. Like many of its period, this work is not unmistakeably his, though it does reveal an excellence in draughtsmanship and sensitive use of watercolour both of which qualities remain in later works of greater distinction.

Pears, (Fig. 29), a watercolour still life of 1934, painted only one year later than the Apples (Fig. 28), displays his own style with greater assurance. The brushwork, for example in the white cloth and the repetition of line to demarcate folds strike a familiar note in the mind of the viewer acquainted with the fields of stubble in any of Carl Schaefer's landscapes of this period. There is a randomness about the composition, which is curiously at odds with the inherent nature of still life. The subject has unmistakably been composed, the pears carefully placed on the white
cloth and primitive patterned material. Yet the composition is not centred - it seems weighted down on the left side. This apparent imbalance is stressed by the partial pear in the left corner - cut off by the picture frame - and the large empty space of the upper right, the first timid appearance of landscape in a still life. Both these features have a disconcerting effect on the viewer's impression of space. While the frame's intrusion on the composition in the bottom left corner has the effect of reminding us of the two dimensionality of the surface, the empty landscape of the upper right corner tempts our imagination into space. Our perceptions are further played with by the ambiguity of the viewpoint.

One is reminded of a Cezanne such as Still Life With Apples And Oranges of 1895-1900 (Fig. 31), both in the discrepancy of viewpoint and in the treatment of the draped white cloth, where the material seems to have given up its suppleness for stiff, almost sculptural folds. Carl Schaefer's debt to Cezanne seems to me unquestionable, though it may be unconscious.²

Harvest Festival, an oil of 1936 (Fig. 25) is unmistakably Carl Schaefer's. His style here,
compared to that of the still life of three years earlier, is firm and confident. Squash, marrow, vegetables and pears are the subject; behind them, through a partially curtained window, spreads a field of grain stooks. The colours are his favourite natural, earthy ones, deep and sombre. What is most original about this and a number of other still lifes is the landscape in the background. It is reminiscent of a type of composition, established in the Renaissance, for portraiture, in which the sitter would be positioned before a window. Beyond that, an almost endless vista would lie, suggesting perhaps the extent of the sitter's property. Here, while the composition may prompt such associations in the mind of the viewer, the intent is different. The farmland of the background is the source of the foreground subject; its inclusion is, in a sense, an acknowledgement of its importance. Leading the eye into the background is a sheer, draped curtain, which reaffirms the presence of humanity. The meticulous attention to detail in the border of the curtain is very like the care given to the details of the Ontario Farmhouse (Fig. 3). Unlike the landscapes of these years, however, this composition is lit by a natural source which shines in from the
left side. The sky does not have the usual, unsettled clouds, but is clear and calm - the mood is one of calm. The only unsettling feature is the large dark area of wall in the upper right corner, forming a blank rectangle above the eggplant. As with Pears, (Fig. 29), Carl Schaefer has again allowed the picture frame to intrude upon the composition, cutting off the left side of the pumpkin, at the same time leaving the right corner empty.

The awesome quality which permeates the landscapes of the late thirties manifests itself in Eggplant And Peppers (Fig. 30), a watercolour of 1938. Both the subject matter and the formal treatment of the composition are melancholy and unsettling. Sharp diagonals intercept one another to divide the right side of the painting, and these divisions are heightened by strongly contrasted areas of light and shadow. Here, as in many of his landscapes, the composition has no identifiable light source; it seems mysteriously lit from within. In the centre stands an eggplant, surrounded on either side by peppers. In choice of subject matter, it bears a resemblance to a still life by the American painter Charles Demuth called Eggplant And Tomatoes, 1926 (Fig. 32), though the similarity ends there. The
American still life is a matter-of-fact portrayal of vegetables: they reflect Demuth's attraction to their pleasing shape and colour. Undoubtedly Carl Schaefer is drawn by these same qualities but through them he evokes a mood of melancholy and uncertainty. Although there is not a landscape background, nor any definable boundary such as a table edge or wall, one is tempted to compare the cloth on which the vegetables stand with a stormy sky, in the same vein as the abstract sky behind the Ontario Farmhouse (Fig. 3). It is this piece of material, with its sharp folds and strongly contrasted areas of light and shadow, that overpowers the composition, even the smooth, solid, centrally-placed eggplant. The viewpoint is unambiguous; it is low, almost exaggeratedly so, allowing the eggplant to assume extreme proportions.

A watercolour still life of the same year, entitled simply Still Life, (Fig. 34), depicts a potted plant, a philodendron and a bowl of apples on a table. The portrayal of this subject is considerably more straightforward than that in Eggplant And Peppers, (Fig. 30). Here the viewpoint is unambiguous, the table is clearly outlined; this painting conveys none of the austerity or tension
expressed by the draped cloth of the latter. The only disturbing features are the slight downward slope of the table surface and the brilliant but inexplicable light behind it. A comparison of this work with the Apples (Fig. 28) of five years earlier reveals the development of Carl Schaefer's painting technique. The compositions are very similar but stylistically they vary greatly. The earlier work is skillfully, if somewhat academically, worked, whereas the later work shows a good deal more flourish and assurance. The brush strokes have become firmer and bolder; the palette reflects his preference for sombre hues, interspersed in high contrast with almost white areas. One feels that the painter has arrived at maturity, and an examination of any of the later works confirms such a feeling.

Still Life With Landscape (Fig. 26) of 1939, depicts a still life which has almost moved from an interior to an exterior location; that is to say the window frame has disappeared and the surface on which the fruit stands is unidentifiable, though a heavy curtain remains prominent in the left corner. The angularity of the draped cloth, pears and curtain is mirrored in a more subdued manner in the sky and
and even the hint of a town in the far background, and softened by the roundness of the bowl and the rounded, rolling fields beyond. In its merging of the inside and outside worlds this still life is rather like a transitional stage between the earlier Harvest Festival (Fig. 25) in which the still life is distinctly separated from the landscape and Yellow Apples On A Fall Landscape (Fig. 27) of the same year in which the still life is entirely absorbed into the landscape.

Yellow Apples On A Fall Landscape (Fig. 27), a watercolour of 1939, is unusual as a still life in its landscape setting and mood; here the apples are incorporated into the fields that stretch out behind them. The juxtaposition is a strange one--the autumn fruit in the foreground with ominous, stormy skies over rolling fields in the background. Carl Schaefer has suggested that this painting is a reflection of the dark mood of the late thirties when everyone knew that was imminent. Charles Hill in Canadian Painting In The Thirties remarks on the "sentiment of impending menace" of much of his work of 1939 and 1940 and likens it to the work of Charles Burchfield during this same period. He writes of his painting: "While the apples still hold out the possibility of abundance
and regeneration, the storm clouds, dead trees and autumn colours bespell decay". Certainly the dead trees in the background and the fact that it is a fall scene have gloomy overtones. The dead tree is a favourite motif, perhaps even a symbol, as I have already suggested, in the thirties paintings; while its implication clearly is of death and transience, that implication is softened by its usual placement beside a field of ripe or harvested grain, which symbolize life and regeneration. He does not view his land with despair, but as George Johnston writes with "fatalism, which is not sentimental nor pessimistic but simply a country man's feeling for the inevitability of growth and decay and the change of the seasons". 7
1 See Chapter II for a discussion of the critics' reactions to landscape painting in the 1930's.

2 Among Carl Schaefer's first contacts with the world of art criticism was Clive Bell's writing, through whom he learned about Cezanne. For him, discovering Cezanne was "...a great revelation". Interview, 26 June 1976.

3 An 18th century painting Robert Andrews and His Wife (c. 1748-50) by Thomas Gainsborough is a typical example of this type of portraiture in which the sitters are surrounded by their property and world possessions.

4 Interview, 26 June 1976.

5 Charles Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties, p. 91.

6 Charles Hill, p. 91.

CHAPTER V

Criticism and Evaluation of Carl Schaefer's Paintings in the 1930's

Carl Schaefer, like many of his contemporaries, was reared in the painting tradition of the Group of Seven; he was formally taught by two of its members, MacDonald and Lismer, though he also learned from the others, notably Harris, Carmichael and Jackson; and in the spirit of their search for subjects and their way of painting he went north where he was confronted with their landscape, which he represented in their style and by their method, i.e. by painting up a larger canvas from a quick sketch made on the spot.

He soon moved away from their large northern subjects, however, and painted in a more intimate, less abstract manner than their large canvases allowed. He also discovered that the medium of watercolour was more suited to his temperament and to the fields and houses and skies that were his subjects. Gradually he abandoned the method of sketching the field in anticipation of a larger oil painted up in the studio. He made finished paintings in the field. This marked his style and distinguished him from the Group, his teachers and many of his contemporaries.
Carl Schaefer left the Ontario College of Art in 1924 without graduating ("I never graduated from anything", he claims\textsuperscript{2}), to make his way as a freelance painter, doing sign painting, murals or whatever he could get that would pay him. That year he held his first one man show in the Fire Hall of his native Hanover, Ontario. From then on he contributed to at least one exhibition a year, local, national and international. At first his contributions were in the field of graphic art, then oil paintings appear and by the mid-thirties he was chiefly exhibiting watercolours.

It was Carl Schaefer's graphic work which first came to the attention of the public and in his article "The Amateur Movement in Canadian Painting" in The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928-29\textsuperscript{3}, Fred Housser singles out Carl Schaefer and Thoreau MacDonald among the young generation of painters.\textsuperscript{4} Of them he writes: "MacDonald's pen drawings of animals and imaginative northern landscapes have a naive simplicity, while Schaefer's pen-work is more rugged and spirited".\textsuperscript{5} At this stage of his career he still painted or drew the uninhabited northern landscape.

Two reviews of the 63rd annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists in March 1935 comment on Carl Schaefer's contributions. Among his fellow contributors
are Frank Panabaker, Bertram Brooker, Dorothy Stevens, Wyly Grier, Kenneth Forbes, George Reid, Gordon Webber and Kathleen Daly. Pearl McCarthy, the art critic for The Mail and Empire, though gratified by the inclusion of not only landscapes but buildings, seascapes and the human figure is, however, cautious in her praise. She considers the paintings good but wonders if they will achieve importance of a lasting nature. Her admiration then for "...the brilliance of Carl Schaefer's bitter painting of a Canadian farmhouse..." (Ontario Farmhouse, 1934 (Fig. 3)) stands out.

On the other hand, Lucy Van Gogh, writing in Saturday Night, is less enthusiastic. Her boredom with the similarity of Ontario Society of Artists's exhibitions to one another from year to year is undisguised and the adjective "competent" describes Carl Schaefer's work as it does everyone else's. The conclusion of her review is not entirely without hope as he writes:

The general trend of the Ontario Society of Artists has been for some years in the direction of competence. It is possible that there is now a trend in the direction of something better, but it has not got far enough to be visible.8

By 1935, Graham McInnes has appeared on the art scene as Saturday Night's regular columnist of "World of Art"
though his articles appear also in The Canadian Forum, Queen's Quarterly from time to time and in The New Frontier during its brief lifetime. His admiration for Carl Schaefer's work is consistent and is not only enthusiastic but intelligent and specific. His praise singles him out from his contemporaries, for example, in his review of the 8th annual exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour at the Grange, Toronto in April 1935: "There is an aggressive power in his work, coupled with an imaginative vein that is lacking in most of his colleagues." McInnes has divided the landscape painters in Canada into three groups, the first belongs to the academic school, the second to the "Canadian School" and the third is a group of experimenters. Carl Schaefer stands out in the "Canadian School" for his contributions Spring Evening, The Churchyard and Pears. Others in this category are A. J. Casson and Frank Carmichael.

Pearl McCarthy's review of this same exhibition also notes that Carl Schaefer, had by this time, established his own style sufficiently to be distinguished from followers of the Group: "Carl Schaefer's contribution indicates that he will not settle into a cliche expression".

Carl Schaefer first exhibited outside a society or large-scale exhibition in 1932 when the Art Gallery of Toronto
presented David Milne, Paraskeva Clark, Caven Atkins and Carl Schaefer in an Exhibition by Young Canadians. Of the approximately 65 works by Carl Schaefer, not one was a watercolour; some were oil canvases, others oil sketches and a large number were pen and ink drawings, lithographs and wood engravings. Many derive from fishing trips on northern Ontario rivers, for at that time he had not yet returned to his home in Hanover.

A second of these small group exhibitions, Six Canadian Painters was held in December of 1935. On this occasion his co-exhibitors were John Alfsen, Caven Atkins, Thoreau MacDonald, Pegi Nicol and Robert Ross. He contributed five works, two oils, Orchard and Begonia and Pears and three watercolours, Farm, Township Bentinck, The Farmhouse of John Voelzing, Hanover and Late Fall; one is a still life and the others are landscapes from around Hanover. These works drew an admiring review from Graham McInnes who felt that of the six, Carl Schaefer and Pegi Nicol produced the most interesting work.

In my opinion, Mr. Schaefer is one of the foremost of our younger artists. His development has been slow but it is all the better for that, for his seriousness and his concentration have at length imposed upon his native sensibility and his untrammeled feeling for paint, a coherence and a form which elastic though it is, does not permit him to slop
over into beautiful but directionless excess. Mr. Schaefer also has a strong vein of mildly satirical humor - I would ask you to look at "Orchard". The selection of work he has here - oil and watercolour, still life and landscape - show him now master of himself and his medium. He is going to be very important.\textsuperscript{11}

That year, the National Gallery of Canada, under the directorship of H. O. McCurry bought two watercolours, Green Valley and Fields, Township Normandy for $60 each. Two others were bought by Vincent Massey.\textsuperscript{12}

As I noted earlier, in Chapter II, Augustus Bridle was critical of the scarcity of humanity in the second exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters held in early 1936 at the Art Gallery of Toronto. He drew attention to the paintings of some of the invited contributors, paintings he considered among the best in the exhibition. Of Carl Schaefer's Summer Harvest, he wrote: "Schaefer's Summer Harvest, on the rocks, is quite magnificent as pictorial drama -- with no harvesters".\textsuperscript{13}

Graham McInnes' praise of Carl Schaefer's entries in the same exhibition is more generous. He not only praises his individuality but also compares his entry Spring Ploughing to Paul Nash's Hampton Common: This highly individual artist, who may yet have the dubious privilege of becoming a chef d'ecole, shows two canvases. "Summer Harvest" is a magnificent and striking thing but for me "Spring Ploughing" is the better picture of the two. It
seems better coordinated, more sensitive with more of the real plastic and less of the dramatic qualities. If feel that Mr. Schaefer has achieved here something analogous to John Nash's "Hampton Common" shown here in November. 

A third and unfavourable view of Summer Harvest is found in the following excerpt from a letter to the editor of The Globe:

"Summer Harvest" is a dreadful example of modern art where every canon and fundamental observed by about all the great artists of the United States and England particularly is flagrantly flouted. Let me particularize. The view is about the same in make-up, right and left side excepted. The sky is actually 'funny', supposed clouds are simply theatrical sky borders (I know so well, for I painted theatre productions once upon a time)! The fields are just like plum puddings with countable plums. More than that, the view occupies about half of the picture horizontally: no atmosphere at all; distance hard and impossible. As a final last straw, I do not find a single bit of good drawing or other redeeming feature in it. It is designated 'outstanding' and in The Globe too. I am sorry for your young artists. Art is still long and hard with a bewildering lot of problems to face and conquer, and they will never get beyond the Christmas-card effect if they imitate such utterly hopeless stuff.

William Gill, Newton Highlands, Mass.

In 1936, Carl Schaefer's paintings received more favourable critical attention than previously. Graham McInnes not only anticipates that he will perhaps become Canada's most important landscape painter but also recognizes in his paintings of this year what has come
to be known since as his "regionalism". In his summary of the season's artistic activity, McInnes predicts that the future of Canadian painting lies in the work chiefly of David Milne, Carl Schaefer, Alexandre Bercovitch, F. H. Varley and Arthur Lismer and to a lesser extent John Lyman, Louis Muhlstock, Jack Humphrey, Fritz Brandtner, Pegi Nicol and Paraskeva Clark. The following passage describes Carl Schaefer as a regional painter:

Schaefer...a skilled and sensitive artist, and competent in many media...has set out to paint what he sees about him, and to put life and strength into the commonplace and the near-at-hand, transmuted by the artist's eye.17

His one-man show of watercolour paintings organized by Douglas Duncan was the first exhibition of the Picture Loan Society held in January 1937. (The object of the Picture Loan Society was to make Canadian paintings more accessible to the Canadian public by renting the works on a monthly basis and putting the rental fee towards the purchase price if the rentor chose to buy the work.) Purchases were rare during depression years so his sale that month to Douglas Duncan of Winter Landscape #2, Hanover, would have meant a great deal to an artist in Carl Schaefer's poor financial situation. As well, of course, recognition in the form of a purchase was important moral support for an artist. Again McInnes gives him a
glowing review, though he stresses that his judgements on art are personal and the reader must decide for himself whether or not he agrees with him. He writes:

Therefore when I say that Carl Schaefer is the most important of our younger painters, and that his One Man Show at the Picture Loan Society...is an exhibition that should not be missed, I am laying down no immutable law but merely expressing a personal belief.¹⁸

By the end of the decade he was an internationally recognized painter and engraver. In 1933 and 1936 he contributed wood engravings to the International Exhibition of Wood Engravings in Poland. An oil Spring Ploughing was entered in an exhibition of contemporary art of the British Empire in celebration of George VI's coronation in 1937. In 1938 he contributed to the annual exhibition of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour and in the same year three works made up part of the exhibition A Century of Canadian Art at the Tate Gallery in London, England.

Recognition of his success as a painter came in 1940 when he became the first Canadian to receive the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for Creative Painting. This was a great honour and with some additional financial assistance from the Canadian art patron J. S. McLean, it allowed him to spend his year
working in Vermont.  

His move to Vermont marked the end of the Hanover paintings. Here, in the rolling Vermont hills, he was confronted with a very different countryside to that of Hanover. He studied lithography and printmaking at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire under Ray Nash. His work that year produced watercolours, several oils as well as lithographs and etchings but as George Johnston has written: "...it was the first year of the war and although he did some good paintings while he was away, he seemed to be finishing up an older time rather than preparing himself for something new." On his return to Canada he joined the R.C.A.F. as a war artist and painted overseas from 1943 to 1945. Following the war he did not go back to Hanover to paint the country, skies and farms as he had in the thirties.
1 See Chapter 1, pages for a fuller discussion of the role of the Group of Seven in Carl Schaefer's artistic development.

2 Gray, Rand and Steen, Carl Schaefer, p. 8.


4 Others in this group are George Pepper, Lowrie Warrener, Robert Ross, John Byers, Edward Drover and Edith Manning.


6 Pearl McCarthy, "Ontario Society of Artists Exhibition Holds the Interest," The Mail and Empire, 2 March 1935, p. 5.

7 See page 39 for another quotation by Pearl McCarthy on Ontario Farmhouse.


10 Pearl McCarthy, "Canadian Society Art Exhibit Opens," The Mail and Empire, 5 April 1935, p. 15.


12 Gray, Rand and Steen, Carl Schaefer.

14 Graham McInnes, "World of Art," Saturday Night, 18 January 1936, p. 4. He refers to John Nash -- this must be a printing error for it should be Paul Nash.


17 Graham McInnes, "Thoughts on Canadian Art," Saturday Night, 1 August 1936, p. 11.

18 Graham McInnes, "World of Art," Saturday Night, 23 January 1937, p. 16.

This chronology covers the period with which this thesis is concerned, beginning with Carl Schaefer's first exhibition in 1924 and ending with the year 1940 when he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

1924 - first exhibition, Fire Hall, Hanover, Ontario
1925 on - contributed at least one drawing, print or oil to the annual Ontario Society of Artists exhibitions
1927 on - contributed drawings and prints to the Ontario Society of Graphic Art exhibitions
1928 - invited contributor to Group of Seven exhibition
1929 on - contributed to the Canadian National Exhibition annual exhibitions
1930 on - contributed to the National Gallery of Canada annual exhibitions of Canadian art
1931 - invited contributor to Group of Seven exhibition
1932 - Exhibition by Young Canadians, Art Gallery of Toronto -- David Milne, Paraskeva Clark, Caven Atkins, Carl Schaefer
1932 - invited contributor, Royal Canadian Academy exhibition
1933 - contributed to First International Exposition of Wood Engraving, Poland
1933 on - contributed to exhibitions of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour
1933 - invited contributor to the first exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters
1935 - Six Canadian Painters, Art Gallery of Toronto -- John Alfsen, Caven Atkins, Thoreau MacDonald, Pegi Nicol, Robert Ross, Carl Schaefer

1936 - invited contributor to Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Art to Southern Dominions, circulated by Carnegie Corporation, New York

1937 - One Man Show of Watercolours, Picture Loan Society

1937 - invited contributor to Exhibition of Contemporary Art from Dominions of British Empire as part of George VI's coronation celebrations

1938-39 - invited contributor to 85th Annual Exhibition Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour, Edinburgh

1938 - invited contributor to A Century of Canadian Art, Tate Gallery, London

1938-39 - invited contributor to Great Lakes Exhibition, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo

1939 - invited contributor to 18th International Watercolour Exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago

1939 - invited contributor to Exhibitions of Canadian Art, New York's World Fair

1939 - contributor to Canadian Group of Painters exhibition

1939 - One Man Show, Picture Loan Society, Toronto

1939 - Four Canadian Artists, Art Gallery of Toronto -- David Milne, Caven Atkins, Paraskeva Clark and Carl Schaefer
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1 Carl Schaefer, Pine Pattern, Pickerel River, 1926
oil, Coll. D.S.M. Field, Toronto

2 Carl Schaefer, The River, Winter, Hanover, 1926
oil, Coll. Artist
3  Carl Schaefer, Ontario Farmhouse, 1934
   oil, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

4  Carl Schaefer, The Voelzing Farmhouse, 1934
   watercolour, National Gallery, Ottawa
5  Carl Schaefer, Drawing of the Voelzing Farmhouse, 1932
pen drawing, Coll. G. Johnston, Quebec

6  Carl Schaefer, Storm over the Fields, 1937
oil, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
7 Carl Schaefer, Storm over the Fields, 1937
   watercolour, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

8 Carl Schaefer, Moon over the Don Jail, 1938
   Watercolour, Private Collection
9 Charles Burchfield, *The Edge of Town*, 1921-41  
Watercolour, Atkins Museum

10 Carl Schaefer, *Rain Cloud over the Fields*, Waterloo County, 1964, Watercolour, Coll. Artist
11 Carl Schaefer, Farmhouse by the Railway, 1938-39
Oil, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton

12 Carl Schaefer, Before Rain, Parry Sound, 1937
Watercolour, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
13 Carl Schaefer, *Summer Harvest*, Hanover, 1935
Oil, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

14 Katsushika Hokusai, *Mount Fuji in Fine Weather*, c. 1825
Colour Print, Atami Museum, Shizuoka-Ken
15 Carl Schaefer, *Wheatfield, Hanover*, 1936
Oil, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

16 Carl Schaefer, *Fall Ploughing at Schomberg*, 1937
Watercolour, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
17 Carl Schaefer, Fields, Township Normandy, 1936
Watercolour, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

18 Carl Schaefer, R.R. No. 3, Hanover, 1936
Watercolour, Hart House, University of Toronto, Toronto
19 Carl Schaefer, Concession Road, Township Bentinck, Hanover, 1937, Watercolour, Private Collection, Vancouver

20 Carl Schaefer, View of Hanover, 1937
Watercolour, Parkwood, Oshawa
21 Carl Schaefer, The Voelzing Farm, Hanover, Township Bentinck, Grey County, 1938, Watercolour, Coll. Artist

22 Carl Schaefer, Wheat Stooks No. 2, Hanover, 1939
Watercolour, Anon. Collection
23 Carl Schaefer, Wire Fence, Hanover, 1937
Oil, University College, University of Toronto, Toronto

24 Carl Schaefer, The Brunt Barns, Hanover, 1937
Watercolour, Coll. M. & R. Schwass, Toronto
25 Carl Schaefer, Harvest Festival, 1936
Oil, Pickering College, Newmarket

26 Carl Schaefer, Still Life with Landscape, 1939
Watercolour, Coll. Artist
27 Carl Schaefer, *Yellow Apples on a Fall Landscape*, 1939
Watercolour, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

28 Carl Schaefer, *Apples*, 1933
Watercolour, Coll. L. P. Harris, Sackville, N.B.
29  Carl Schaefer, Pears, 1934
Watercolour, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

30  Carl Schaefer, Eggplant and Peppers, 1938
Watercolour, Coll. Mr. & Mrs. L. Buckby, Ottawa
31 Paul Cezanne, *Still Life with Apples and Oranges*, 1895-1900, Oil, The Louvre, Paris

32 Charles Demuth, *Eggplant and Tomatoes*, 1926, Watercolour
33 Carl Schaefer, Still Life, 1938
Watercolour, Coll. Mrs. Pearson, Ottawa

34 Carl Schaefer, Rock and Pines, Pickerel River, 1927
Pen Drawing
35 Carl Schaefer, *Late Sun and Oatfields*, 1939
Watercolour, Dept. of External Affairs