Helen Kemp Frye's Writings on Art

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Compiled and Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

Before enrolling at Victoria College, University of Toronto, Helen Kemp, the future wife of the eminent Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye, had studied at the Danard and Hambourg Conservatories of Music, earning an associate diploma from the latter. The reviews of her performances while she was a conservatory student recognize her considerable talent as a pianist. She was no less interested in art. During her first year at Riverdale Collegiate Institute, where she received the highest standing in the first eight forms, she took part in the Saturday morning classes at the Ontario College of Art, and she entertained the idea of specializing in art in college. This was an interest fostered by her father, who, early in his career, had been an associate of the well-known artists Arthur Lismer and Tom Thomson. Kemp's letters to Frye contain a number of whimsical line-drawings, but even the best of these hardly suggest the genuine talent she had as an illustrator, which is revealed in the sketch-books that have been preserved and in the map she drew of the University of Toronto campus. The latter is a genuine *tour de force*. Although she never pursued drawing as a career, art, especially practical art, remained a central interest throughout her life. When she was a young woman, this interest developed in the direction of art education, and in her letters from the mid-1930s we see the role played by Arthur Lismer, who was educational supervisor at the Art Gallery of Toronto, in launching her career in adult education at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Most of our knowledge of Kemp's interest and achievement in art comes from her letters to Northrop Frye, which have been collected in the two-volume edition, *The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp 1932–1939* (University of Toronto Press, 1996).

At the initiative of Lismer, Kemp had become an assistant at the gallery in Toronto during the second week of October 1933. He had learned that the Canadian Committee, established by the Carnegie Corporation to study the problems of Canadian museums, wanted to train recent university graduates for museum work. The plan had two phases: students were to gain experience at local museums and then be sent to the Courtauld Institute at the University of London and to galleries on the continent for further study. Lismer, recognizing Kemp's potential as an art educator, hired her for the first phase at the Art Gallery of Toronto and

then recommended that she continue her museum training at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

In January 1934, Kemp applied to H.O. McCurry, secretary of the Canadian Committee, for an eight-month apprenticeship. Her application was approved, and in February she spent one week in Ottawa assisting Kathleen Fenwick, curator of prints and drawings at the National Gallery, in lecturing on an exhibition of nineteenth-century painting. She then returned to Toronto, where she finished her thesis on "The Educational Work of an Art Museum," and busied herself for the next month with the activities of the art gallery—lecturing on Holbein, conducting classes for a French exhibition, assisting Lismer with his Thursday morning study classes, doing clerical work, and in general familiarizing herself with the operation of the gallery.

In the fall of 1934 Kemp began her study in London at the fledgling Courtauld Institute. The Courtauld had been founded at the University of London in 1931. It offered courses for the B.A. honours degree and the academic diploma in both art history and archaeology, as well as for the M.A. and Ph.D. The Courtauld had a skeletal full-time faculty—the director, W.G. Constable, and four additional teachers. Most of the lectures and classes, in fact, were given by outside scholars, many of whom were from the museums and galleries in London. Kemp had some difficulty adjusting to the British form of academic life. "I don't like the utter and absolute isolation of one group from another," she wrote to Frye, adding that "there is hardly any social intercourse among the students." On the advice of Geoffrey Webb, her tutor, Kemp soon gave up on attending lectures, which she found exceedingly dull, and spent her time instead going to galleries, museums, and churches. "I am beginning to get a pretty fair idea of the nature of Gothic architecture," she wrote, but her knowledge came primarily, not from tutorials, lectures, or books, but from visits to Canterbury and Southwark, Westminster Abbey, and the Temple Church.

One little episode reveals Kemp's typical attitude toward her program of study: in October 1934 she initially planned to attend a lecture by Bernard Ashmole on Egyptian archaeology, but when she discovered that Albert Schweitzer was the same night giving a lecture entitled "Religion in Modern Civilization," she abandoned Ashmole, whom she knew was going to be dull, and rushed off to hear Schweitzer. She sent Frye an extensive summary of his lecture.

On the whole, Kemp was rather casual about her course at the Courtauld. She spent her first two months "fluttering about," and when she did turn her attention to learning some art history, she became anxious

about being able to accomplish the task in one year. "I'm almost afraid of June coming the day after to-morrow," she fretted in a letter to Frye, "and so much to be done. But all one's life is like that, and if they expect me to have anything more than the mere beginning of a taste for sculpture and painting in eight months, they are indulging in rather fond delusions." She had her moments of confidence, as when she reported that her papers "on a general outline of art history . . . would shame any yankee college for scope." When she finally got around to meeting with Constable, he told her that her work has been "excellent." But on the whole, Kemp's year at the Courtauld lacked focus: she was doing little more, she writes to Frye, than "tucking in a fair amount of information in a quiet way, not worrying, because I can't be bothered." Part of the problem was that she received no guidance. Webb, her tutor, hadn't the slightest idea of what she was doing, which made her skeptical of Constable's praise, and she lamented the complete absence of any counsel: "We haven't had any supervision all term and no essays to write as Webb is too busy or too lazy to read them and always postpones his session with us." Two weeks before her exams Kemp remarked that she is "at last getting some idea of what this course is about," but by then it is too late for her to fill her head with the kinds of information her examiners wanted.

On 20 March 1935, Kemp set out with a fellow student for Italy, spending three weeks in Rome, Tivoli, Orvieto, Assisi, Perugia, and Arezzo and three weeks in Florence. After returning to London in May, she devoted the next month to preparing, somewhat half-heartedly, for her exams, which she wrote on 17–18 June. A month later, after an interlude in Brussels where she represented the Art Gallery of Toronto at a conference of the British Museums Association, she learned that she had failed her exams, and she wrote broken-heartedly to Frye: "Exam results came out to-day. I failed. It looks pretty grim, written like that, but there it is. And I'm not doing any howling. I feel like a general after a lost battle, but I'm all ready for the next one. . . . I don't feel ashamed or degraded or any damned thing at all, for I haven't time to waste now. But I have wondered what you would think. And that has been my worst disappointment. If this makes any difference to you I shall just fade out of the picture so far as you are concerned. It may be better that way. I will not have you marrying a stupid woman." In his reply Frye proposed to Kemp that her "mental outlines don't altogether fit those of an exam, which places such a premium on glibness and assumes that brilliance is the most valuable of intellectual qualities. First-rate people don't do things brilliantly, they do them readily; and I think that this will make you much more clear-eyed and self-assured and take a lot more of the flutter and

splutter and gawkiness out of your work than the most meteoric examination success could possibly have done." The next day he cabled her, "FORTUNES OF WAR CHEER UP AND SHUT UP LOVE." Years later Frye remarked that Kemp "cherished [this telegram] all her life—I think of it as the best literary effort of my writing career."

This sketch of Helen Kemp's studio skills and her knowledge of art history and art education, especially the development of the museum as a center for art instruction for children and for continuing education for adults, provides a background for the writing on art that Kemp (later Frye) did for a period of more than twenty years, much of it for the *Canadian Forum*, after she graduated from Victoria College, University of Toronto. Copies of her articles and typescripts are in the Helen Frye Fonds of the Northrop Frye Papers, Victoria College Library.

Material in square brackets in what follows is an editorial insertion.

Thanks to Larry Pfaff of the Art Gallery of Ontario for his help, more than twenty years ago, in locating typescripts of Helen Frye's radio talks.

The paragraphs above rely heavily on my introduction to *The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp 1932–1939* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1996).

Robert D. Denham
Emory, Virginia
November 2016

1. THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FINE ARTS (1933)

This article appeared in Acta Victoriana *57, no. 5 (April 1933): 5–10. Helen Kemp was a fourth-year student at the time.*

It may be said, I believe, that the cultural life of Canada centres on its universities. There, in a region of relative detachment and calm, the students of the country congregate, some for the purpose of receiving a general education, others with an eye upon technical training in the professions. It is supposed that the broad field of knowledge will be adequately represented, preserved and advanced in a university, which has the heritage of centuries within its keeping. It is therefore surprising that so many universities almost entirely pass over two great traditions—that is, the arts of music and painting. While most other sides of life are given serious consideration, these are left in the background as amusements for an idle hour, and are as disregarded as the portraits on the walls of a dining hall where musicians accompany the chatter of guests. In the conception of a fully-developed cultural education each aspect of life should be given due importance. Thus the student may evaluate the different elements of life as he sees it, and as countless men through the years have seen it and given expression to their feeling in one form or another. So it seems that there is a need in our university which should be met: that provision should be made for the study of music and art and full recognition given to them in the regular curriculum.

There are, broadly speaking, two types of training in the fine arts, that is, technical and cultural. The former sort has been stressed more perhaps than the latter. In accord with an age which makes a fetish of specialization and the production of prodigies, it has been the fashion to supply the budding artist with a training in which the emphasis was placed largely upon technical proficiency. Little musicians, for instance, have been brought forward with a great deal of ostentation, children whose performance was remarkable for their age but whose work later showed no more maturity. The student who wishes to become a creative artist or musician, or a concert performer, is faced with two alternatives. In Canada, after high school, he may enter university or he may attend a

conservatory or an art school. Since ostensibly the university can have no appeal for him, he embarks upon an extremely technical and one-sided course which trains him in the one particular branch of study, but by too early a specialization it robs him of the advantages of a general intellectual background. Here very often he encounters adolescents who have gone little farther than the secondary school entrance, and who develop a bohemianism which lowers the intellectual level of the institution, stressing as it does erratic inspiration and revolt from discipline. To the serious student, the advantage of combining the two aspects would seem manifest. To enlarge the horizon of the student of art or music in his early years is of great value, for later on the growth of his ability depends upon his sensitivity to beauty expressed in art in one medium or another.

There is a second aspect of the question when we consider the student who has no intention of becoming a creative artist, but who regards the study of art as an end in itself. The Oxford method, in which a chair of learning is endowed, regardless of the number of students who will make that study financially a paying proposition, would seem ideal from the standpoint of disseminating knowledge. But when we begin to think of ways and means in our own colleges, the financial question always enters, and we must consider what the economists call the demand side of the situation. Here we cease to regard training in the fine arts from the viewpoint of the individual and think of the community.

An art training available in colleges should begin the work of creating an educated and discriminating public who will have intelligent enjoyment and a critical appreciation of the work of artists and composers and who will create a demand for their work. In a community whose finer sensibilities are fast becoming atrophied by passive amusements, such as professional hockey games, professional baseball games, professional leg-shows, and the clap-trap from Hollywood that passes for humour, such a group of enlightened citizens should leaven the mass somewhat. The erection of public buildings, of advertisements, the selection of pictures for public and private collections—many elements of public life would be influenced immeasurably by the art education of college men and women who are, after all, looked upon as leaders in the community.

In music the same argument holds true. A well-known musician remarked recently that the Canadian public is as innocent as a babe in regard to music. The average business man who prides himself on his hard shell goes to a concert, and admires certain technical gymnastics, such as performers put on to impress an audience, but he sees and knows little further in music. Without an enlightened and appreciative audience the performer is a lone prophet crying in a wilderness peopled by wolves and

saxophones—and radios.

The student who wishes to study art and music in college should have had some previous training, for there is not sufficient time there to begin the painstaking groundwork required to play an instrument even tolerably or to handle a pencil with ease. In the days before the advent of the radio and phonograph made many people think that the joy of making music oneself was not worth the drudgery required to learn, music lessons were given to most children. It now rests with the public schools to provide the rudiments at least of a knowledge of music and art, on an equal footing with the customary subjects, so that a child may carry on more advanced work as he proceeds through higher grades.

In Ontario, when authorities have found that there is little good in attempting economy in education, the need for specialized training in the colleges which send teachers all over the province will gradually become evident. The average art teacher in public schools has taken a short course in the painting of weeds and chalk-boxes at the normal school, and the high school teacher studies the same sort of thing at an art school or the college of education. The teacher of music studies out of books and composes tunes by mathematical formulae and, after an examination, returns to teach others to play the same set of pieces and write the same kind of exercises to pass an examination in order to teach. . . . Little attempt is made to train either of these teachers as systematically as for instance the teacher of English literature. Private schools import well-trained people to carry on their work. One girls' school I recall has in charge of art instruction a graduate from Liverpool and The Slade School in London; another employs a musician of first rate continental standing. Why should not the public schools also have the benefit of excellent instruction? One must conclude that sooner or later our universities must establish faculties of fine arts in order to educate the teachers who go out to instruct the children of the province.

Already some elementary work has been attempted with children of primary school age. This is most noticeable in the larger cities where there is a growing spirit of co-operation between art galleries, conservatories, museums and orchestras and the public and high schools. For instance the Art Gallery of Toronto holds classes in art on Saturday morning. The exhibitions of work of the children reveal a spring of natural talent which finds outlet in joyous and spontaneous expression. The symphony orchestra giving concerts to school children also may be mentioned as one means of giving the younger generation a firmer grasp of artistic values than their parents ever had. We find nowadays in this college itself perhaps a dozen people who have an A.T.C.M. [Associate, Toronto

Conservatory of Music] degree or its equivalent, and these are the logical people to wish to continue the study of music in college, since they have found it quite compatible with other subjects during high school years.

Besides such individuals as I have mentioned who are constantly coming to the university with a fairly adequate musical or artistic background, already in the university there are activities which show the trend of student interest. There is the sketch club at Hart House [student activity centre, University of Toronto], and there are various groups connected with literary societies of different colleges, and with the course in aesthetics, who attend lectures and exhibitions at the art gallery. Collections of paintings are exhibited in the university residences and club rooms, and perhaps in the libraries also in the near future. There is a growing number of students who attend the evening concerts of the symphony orchestra, who go to lectures at the conservatory prior to the concerts, and some are beginning to realize the opportunities possible in the establishment of a good collection of phonograph records available in the residences. I am not concerned here with a discussion of ways and means, or of what sort of degrees to confer upon graduates from a Faculty of Fine Arts, or what standing should be accorded a student for proficiency in art along with his other subjects. Surely such things could be arranged. At the present time, of course, lack of money is an important factor in the inaction of the authorities. The establishment of such courses has been considered for several years, but owing to the usual procrastination nothing has been done. It is rumoured that a fund is already available for lectures in art and that for the past year lantern slides and various other equipment for the use of the lecturer have lain stored up in the basement of Simcoe Hall. When the Toronto Conservatory of Music was affiliated with the University in 1921 it was a step in the desired direction, and now the degree of Bachelor of Music is conferred upon certain students enrolled in the Faculty of Music. But as yet students in the Faculty of Arts receive no credit for any work they may do in music. In the year 1928 the calendar of the Ontario College of Art mentioned its affiliation with the University and its hope in the near future of entering into complete affiliation and including art in degree courses in a Faculty of Fine Arts. Nothing has been done about it yet except to give male art students privileges at Hart House. [At the time, women were excluded from membership in Hart House.] Consequently events are at a standstill, and probably no action will be taken until the authorities become conscious of the need and of the insistent demand of students for such instruction.

And in the meantime the students of this college generation may ask what is to be done, lacking any formal programme of planned study

officially acknowledged in the curriculum. The answer is, we shall go on practically as we are going now, with perhaps a change of emphasis here and there. The obvious place is in extra-curricular activities. The Literary Society of Victoria College this year held a series of bi-weekly lectures on music, illustrated by both piano and vocal music. There is another group which studies the ballad. The college orchestra does not receive a great deal of publicity, probably because an excellent concert requires more time and perhaps more skilled performance than such an organization can give and still do justice to other works. The music club seems to be following out a policy of attempting a professional production which necessitates the development of a few stars. If the chorus is to include most of the club members it becomes clumsy and unwieldy, and if it is to be an effective unit it must be ruthlessly pruned and highly cultivated. Such a plan would seem outside the sphere of a college organization which should, I think, attempt rather to provide cultural amusement for its students. This would emphasize and help correlate work in other arts, rather than serve as a delightful but distracting activity. Perhaps choral and ballad singing purely for the fun of the thing, with a concert here and there is what I am thinking of, in which everyone can take part. The French Club lately had a meeting in which a short talk on the history of French music preceded an illustrated lecture on French art, given by one of Canada's leading artists. Now I do not wish to seem in favour of people rushing hither and yon in an undignified and ultimately futile attempt to cram in "culture" by the yard. But I am trying to show that study of one subject is heightened and coloured by a glimpse of a different viewpoint, by the bearing and influence of other arts upon it, and that the student should be given an opportunity of developing that catholic taste which is so desirable. The amateur, in the sense of the lover, is the hope of the nation's culture, and the sooner this is realized, the sooner shall we be on the road toward developing a civilized national life. It is my belief that the intelligent amateur as well as the cultured professional would be encouraged by the establishment of faculties of fine arts in the Canadian universities.

2. Loan Collections from the Art Gallery of Toronto (1936)

This article first appeared in The School: A Magazine Devoted to Elementary and Secondary Education *25 (October 1936): 105–9.*

The other day an old college friend dropped in to see the Gallery and finally found her way to the writer's particular corner [that is, the education wing of the Art Gallery of Toronto, where Kemp worked]. She had come from Northern Ontario, she said, where for two years she had seen nothing more in the way of pictures than the covers of popular magazines and a few dilapidated reproductions. There were a few people in the town who had travelled, a good many others who said they had liked drawing when they were young, and several others who wished that they lived nearer a city where they might visit an art gallery occasionally. But it was in her own work in the classroom that she felt most strongly the need of some pictorial material with which to illustrate and clarify her lessons, for to many of her pupils a cathedral was merely a word and the cities of Europe non-existent. Painting and sculpture and half a dozen other arts were unfamiliar, and the life of other countries nebulous in their imagination. They had no idea of what the people wore whom they read about in history, how they lived, what they amused themselves with, or what their cities and buildings looked like. It was a world entirely unknown and unexplored. The writer explained to this teacher that the Art Gallery of Toronto had a good deal of the very sort of material she needed both for her pupils and for their parents. It was not hoarded in storerooms. Indeed, the authorities of the Gallery were more than anxious to lend it to anyone who could make good use of it. For the past five years they had been lending original works, lantern slides, and reproductions of famous works of art, and this extramural service was continually increasing.

To show samples of what the Gallery could lend the writer brought out all sorts of drawings and paintings and a miscellany of objects made by the children in the Saturday Morning Classes. There were grotesque masks and linoleum cuts, illustrations of Bible stories, coloured posters of Canadian history, large mural decorations, paper cuts and textile designs printed from potato cuts, puppets made of hardened sawdust and habitat

groups in clay and plasticene. All these were made by children of public school age, and a great many of such objects are borrowed by teachers who find it stimulating to show their classes what other children are doing.

Besides the work of Canadian children there is a collection of lino-cuts, colour prints, and framed posters from the Cizek classes for Austrian children in Vienna. Contemporary etchings, modern Mexican lithographs in colour, coloured wood block prints by English, Austrian and American artists, Japanese prints, and Persian miniatures—all are available for special exhibitions. For people alive to modern trends in art, there are English posters by some of the outstanding designers of the present day, reproductions of French painting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and reproductions in colour and gold leaf from the designs of the Italian painter, Gino Severini. There is a splendid series of mounted textiles of various kinds from all over the world. For people interested in Canadiana there are colour prints showing the history of Canadian art, and a fine collection of large photographs of early Ontario architecture. For students of Old Masters there are reproductions in colour of illuminated Flemish manuscripts, and of drawings by Leonardo, Dürer, Raphael, Michelangelo, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Watteau, Blake, and many others. Here is abundant material for art exhibitions which with additional information and a lecture or two on occasion supplied by the Gallery, has proved of great interest in the winter programmes of many study groups and clubs.

In addition to this material, which is usually loaned in sets, there are several thousand reproductions which are particularly useful in supplementing school lessons. The artist has given us pictures of the life of the past which cannot be translated into any other medium. He is the contemporary witness of events and records them in the manner of his time. History is written in every stick and stone and bit of paint that has been fashioned by the hand of man, and we must recognize the value of this material in trying to recreate for children the story of past ages. History teaching throughout the whole school could be enlivened by the use of contemporary art. The study of Latin, Greek, and ancient history, can be illumined by illustrations of the life of ancient times taken from buildings, sculpture, and vase paintings. The pageant of mediaeval Europe with its chivalry and its richness of colour is still on record in the illuminations of manuscripts and books of hours, in battlemented castles, in the background of altarpieces, and in sculptures of the outside of cathedrals. A culture as comparatively remote as that of China can be brought into the Ontario school lesson to give something of the flavour of the great Empire which Marco Polo made known to the Western world in the thirteenth century.

The reproductions owned by the Gallery cover pretty well the whole history of art in range, and teachers are invited to let the educational staff of the Gallery know what they need. They can show their classes copies of some of the Egyptian paintings now in the museums of Cairo and Thebes, the temples of Karnak and Gizeh, sculpture of the great Pharoahs of Egypt. From Greece the Gallery has the Parthenon and the Acropolis of Athens, the sculptures of Phidias, and statues of the gods of Greek mythology set up in the time of Pericles. Temples and theatres and aqueducts of Rome are there; so too are miniatures from Persia and India, and sculpture from Assyria in the ninth century B.C. The great bulk of the material, however, is illustrative of the different branches of the art of Western Europe from the early days of the Christian era to the present. Among the many works of interest to the teacher of British history are the eighth-century Gospels of Lindisfarne illuminated in a Northumbrian monastery, the contemporary Irish Book of Kells, the Bayeux Tapestry embroidered in commemoration of the Conquest at the order of the Conqueror's brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux, and the Wilton Diptych now in the National Gallery, London, which shows Richard II with his patron saints, Edmund, Edward the Confessor, and John the Baptist, kneeling before the Virgin Mary and child Jesus. In the later period of great activity in architecture and sculpture, photographs of such details as the angels from the Angel Choir at Lincoln and tombs from Westminster Abbey help to clarify in the pupils' minds pictures of the buildings. French Gothic architecture, as the origin of all Gothic building, is shown in great detail.

With the Italian Renaissance there comes a tremendous burst of artistic activity which is shown in palaces and courtyards, fountains and statues, churches and wall paintings, and portraits of the distinguished people of the period by the great men of Italian art. Reproductions of every phase of this glorious activity are available at the Gallery. The whole of Europe was caught up in this movement, and we find Holbein painting Erasmus, the family of Thomas More, and the court of Henry VIII; Clouet painting the court of Francis I; Rubens, the English and French courtiers of the seventeenth century; his pupil, Van Dyck, immortalizing the ill-fated Charles I. Goya satirized the court of Spain, while Watteau, Fragonard and Boucher blossomed in all the gay decoration of the court of the Pompadour and pre-revolutionary France. Wealthy English landowners of the eighteenth century and the circle of Dr. Johnson still look down upon us from the canvasses of Gainsborough and Reynolds, and the social evils of the time are caricatured by Hogarth and Rowlandson. The coronation of Napoleon and the Empire period is glorified by David, Ingres and Gros. Decade after decade and century after century the great artists pass before

us, and as we look at the work they have left behind, we realize how that work preserves a little of the essence of a whole culture, a whole epoch. Reproductions of the work of all these periods can be borrowed and many more, for the collection includes works of art up to the present day.

These works are sent out to organizations in the city of Toronto and to schools, churches, study clubs, and libraries in any district in Ontario. The Gallery must be assured that good care will be taken of valuable material, and in some cases insurance is required before the loan is sent out. But the total cost to the borrower, merely that of insurance and of transportation, is very slight. The cost of transportation is practically eliminated if the borrower is able to call for the material and return it by car. For schools in Toronto and vicinity the exhibits are mounted on screens and delivered by truck ready to stand in hall or classroom. For sending a packet of unframed pictures to any place within fifty or sixty miles of Toronto, the cost of transportation and insurance would be about two dollars, but the expense of shipping framed pictures would be somewhat higher. The material is carefully packed by men experienced in handling pictures, and their method can be followed to ensure a safe return. The borrower is responsible for any damages or losses incurred.

Owing to the great demand for these exhibitions, the period for which each is available is limited to two weeks. However, under certain conditions the time may be extended by special request. Organizations wishing to borrow material should communicate with the Educational Department in good time, at least a week ahead. As special exhibitions are often travelling for weeks in different parts of Ontario, borrowers must notify the Gallery well in advance, if they wish to have their organization included in a regular itinerary.

The aim of the Art Gallery in loaning this material is not to supply something for children to copy, but rather to furnish material which will help to develop in these children a knowledge of the beautiful works of the past, and to lay the foundation for a genuine appreciation of fine things which will bear increasingly rich fruit, as time goes on.

3. CHILDREN IN THE GALLERY (1937)

A radio talk written by Helen Kemp and read by His Honor, Judge Frank Denton, on CBC Radio 30 March 1937. The typescript, with holograph corrections in Helen Kemp's hand, is in the archives of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

This evening I have been asked to tell you something of the children's activities in the Art Gallery. But before I do so I wish to remind you of several very interesting events of this coming week. The third lecture in the series on the Art of the Middle Ages will be given by Miss Yvonne Williams, on Friday afternoon, April 2nd, at four-thirty. Her subject will be the windows of Chartres Cathedral. Some of the finest stained glass in the world is to be found in the windows of Chartres Cathedral not far from Paris, which is one of the most precious monuments left to us of the extraordinary artistic activity of the Middle Ages. Its windows are of inestimable value because so little mediaeval glass has survived the damage done by centuries of exposure to the elements or the destruction caused by religious controversy. The lecture will be illustrated by lantern slides specially prepared by a process which shows the brilliant colours with unusual fidelity. Miss Williams, who is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and a worker in stained glass herself, has spent considerable time abroad studying ancient glass in the great cathedrals of France and in the churches in England where some still remains.

This week in the new East wing of the gallery there is an exhibition of the work of Emily Carr, which should not be missed by anyone who follows the development of Canadian painting. Emily Carr did not begin painting seriously until she was well over fifty. She lived in Vancouver and as her work took her among the Indians of the west coast she was overwhelmed by what she saw, the gradual decline of native craftsmanship and their old ways of living. Old villages and picturesque customs were being destroyed, and ceremonial totem poles were rapidly disappearing. Emily Carr began to work in an almost feverish effort to paint this Indian life which she saw vanishing before her very eyes, and in her mind there was first only an intention of preserving scenes of the life of the Indians. Then the National Museum at Ottawa bought her pictures as valuable records, and through their combined efforts a good deal was accomplished

in the restoration of the Indian towns and relics in British Columbia—even to the point of sending men to repaint the totem poles.

Up to this time Emily Carr's work had been more or less experimental. She had studied painting in Paris when she was younger, but suddenly she felt that she must go on seriously to work as an artist, not only to record the appearance of totems and log cabins and villages, but to express what she felt of the great forces of nature as she has seen them, living alone among the primeval forests of British Columbia. Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson, the Toronto painters, and Marius Barbeau of the National Museum in Ottawa saw her work and gave her great encouragement, and other painters in the east began to appreciate her singular gift. It may come as a distinct shock to eyes accustomed to the landscape of Southern Ontario, these paintings of the luxuriant growth of the immense forests of the West Coast. In looking at her work we feel the cities of men and all cultivated life fade away, and suddenly we are in a world of giant trees and rank vegetation and a world like that in which the dinosaur and mammoth roamed at will.

Next month's exhibition at the Gallery opens to the public on April 3rd and will be the work of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, The Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers, The Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, and the Toronto Camera Club. Mr. [Martin] Baldwin, curator of the Art Gallery, will speak about the exhibitions next week on this series at the same time.

For the last week the classrooms in the basement of the Gallery have been a very busy place with tables piled high with drawings and paintings and pieces of clay-modelling and parts of unfinished murals standing about in corners, in preparation for the special exhibition of children's work from all over Canada, arranged for Easter week during the Convention of the Ontario Educational Association. The public is cordially invited to visit the Gallery of the Children's Art Centre this week to see what is being done by children not only of Toronto and Oshawa and Aurora but St. John, New Brunswick, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver—all these are centres where creative work with children is being done similar to that in the Art Gallery of Toronto.

I wonder whether any of you have ever asked why there are so many children travelling on street cars on Saturday mornings all heading for one place on Dundas Street. Have you ever seen a traffic jam at Dundas and McCaul Street around nine o'clock on Saturday? There are hundreds of children all coming to the Art Gallery, some on foot, some on bicycles, some by street car, and some are so young that their parents have to bring them. There they are, nearly five hundred of them coming regularly each

week from every school in the city. There are all sorts of children from every walk of life. They file through the turnstiles at the front entrance, consult the plan which tells them where their class is to be held this morning, get their materials and start to work. One member of the Gallery told me recently that it is one of the most thrilling sights she knows, and she never fails to bring any visitor to Toronto to the Gallery to see the children in the Saturday Morning Classes all intently working and full of enthusiasm, from the ones lying full-length on the floor doing large designs with paper and paints spread all around to the ones in the basement workshops doing clay modelling or wood carving or printing from linoleum blocks.

Ever since Professor [Franz] Cizek of Vienna began printing the work of his children's art classes, people have been discovering a new interest in the art of children. As a result of his work, the Vienna school system has been profoundly affected and teachers all over the world have been compelled to recognize the value of the reforms he brought about. The London County Council Schools in England have been adopting new methods of teaching art. American schools, always willing to experiment, have taken up and developed the new idea, and not only schools but museums and art galleries all over the continent have become vast experimental laboratories where new ideas and new materials can be tested and new techniques evolved. In Cleveland, for instance, the children's art classes have been active for about twenty years, and at the present time the museum is carrying on one of the most important experiments ever attempted in child art education in trying to tabulate evidence gathered over a period of years as to the abilities of some thousands of children who have come under their supervision.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has given financial support for the advancement of art education to institutions in the United States and in Canada, and has recently undertaken to help spread the movement to other countries. For this purpose Mr. Arthur Lismer, Educational Supervisor of The Art Gallery of Toronto, has been given a year's leave of absence in order to lecture to teachers and organize educational work in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Thus the classes begun by Mr. Lismer in Toronto and encouraged by teachers and gallery members are becoming internationally known, and the story has been told by Mr. Lismer in a booklet recently published which will be sent to anyone upon application to the Art Gallery [*Education through Art for Children and Adults, Being an Account of Development, Experiments and Process of Educational Activities at the Art Gallery of Toronto during the Last Seven Years* (Art Gallery of Toronto, 1936)].

This booklet, “Education Through Art,” tells how for more than six years well-organized efforts have been carried out to give the children of Toronto and vicinity an opportunity to express themselves creatively.

The procedure in these classes is freedom within a necessary restraint, but not by any means license. The children are led towards experiments for themselves. There is no question of what they will become, no thought of making artists or art workers. Their professional and vocational life is not our problem. It is the business of the staff to encourage every latent idea in design, form and colour, to draw out the child’s ideas and to avoid the mere pounding in of theories and facts.

The Art Gallery of Toronto is a miniature world, one of the new world’s workshops, a growing expression of the future idea in art education for young people. It is more than lessons in the development of a skill and professional careers in the making. It is an effort to unleash the child’s own capacity to train a future population, in which art, both in its appreciation and practice, will take its proper place in the home, in industry, and in civic life. And what is more important in the happiness and creative energy of the individual himself.

During the last six years, since the beginning of these Saturday morning classes, more than 6,500 children have come to us from the schools of Toronto and vicinity. The discovery of special talent in children old enough to profit by further study at an art school has also been a part of our policy. Under this plan about thirty-six children each year have been recommended for scholarships in the junior courses of the Ontario College of Art. In addition to this, the art department of every technical school in the city knows the Art Gallery children. Their classes in art have a large proportion of students who received their early training and contacts at the Art Gallery classes.

As part of the curriculum of the Toronto Board of Education, every school day four classes of children from the public schools visit the art gallery and under the sympathetic guidance of one who knows both children and art spend a lively and instructive hour discussing the paintings in the galleries. More than 27,000 children visit the Art Gallery of Toronto each year under this plan alone.

If the Art Gallery on Saturdays and during the week is the field of action, the Children’s Art Center is the laboratory where other and more intensive activities of child-art are carried on.

The Art Center is housed in a building at the southeast corner of Grange Park on the property of the Art Gallery. It is an attractive place with studios and workshops, a little library and museum collection, reception rooms and a nursery room—all decorated with gay pictures by

the children themselves. In the hallways and cloak room are fascinating mural paintings done on the walls by the young people. The Center was founded originally to provide a place for the many young people who like to come in after school hours to draw and make things with all kinds of materials.

Here the children come to express all the things they wish to do in drawing, painting, and hand-work. Children of every age and environment are given an opportunity to find a means of releasing and give expression to that exultant form of creative energy that is called today Child Art.

The social life of the young people is encouraged by participation in the production of plays, in the execution of mural decoration schemes or the illustrating of a book. Here is a group of twelve-year-old children making the heads and bodies of dolls and dressing these little individual types with national costumes. Older children are designing stage settings and costumes. Some are making masks and helmets, and many are drawing and painting freely whatever ideas come into their heads. The older the children become, the more they are guided to develop their own ideas in good form, colour, and design. They may never become professional artists, but that is not their problem nor ours at this stage.

The value of such early contacts lies in the truth that the vivid imagination of the child should never be smothered but given the opportunity and desire to do more delightful things and to make fresh discoveries in a world that always has more beauty to unfold to those who go halfway to meet it.

There is an amusing story told of the nursery children—the youngsters of three to five years of age—who were taken to see a fire station. Their teacher and their mothers went with them, and when they arrived, the firemen played host with great enthusiasm. No one would go near the firemen's brass pole, except one little boy, the two-and-a-half old brother of one of the children in the class. He kept sliding down so fast that soon all the others had to go down too, and the mothers could hardly get them to leave this new game. The firemen put on their high boots and their rubber suits, and they showed the youngsters where they sleep, in recliners for a fire alarm, and the children had a go at holding a fire hose. Altogether they had a wonderful morning and their mothers did too. And if you visit the Children's Art Center, in a corner you will see the big wooden fire truck the nursery class is making and many paintings which are the result of their morning at the fire station. Nearly all children from six to twelve years of age have no thought for the future of their work, no conscious desire for success. In this they are like primitive native artists of other lands.

About twenty-five different groups of children, young people and adult members come regularly to the Art Center each week for recreational study and participation in the experiences of appreciating and doing things, with art as the subject and enthusiasm as the motivating factor.

As a rule, Thursday is visitors day at the Children's Art Center, but every day during Easter week, it is open for your inspection. We hope that our listeners this evening will accept our very cordial invitation to come and see the children's work at the Art Gallery and at the Children's Art Center at number four Grange Road. All who are interested in the educational programme of the Gallery should write to the Art Gallery of Toronto for the educational bulletin describing all gallery activities, or for Mr. Arthur Lismer's booklet on the children's work.

4. THE PERMANENT COLLECTION (1937)

A CBC Radio talk, broadcast on 25 May 1937. The typescript, with holograph corrections in Helen Kemp's hand, is in the archives of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Announcer: During the next quarter of an hour we will present the last of this season's radio talks arranged by the Art Gallery of Toronto. These talks have dealt with the different exhibitions held each month, with individual works of art shown in the Gallery and with the many activities of its monthly programs.

This evening Miss Helen Kemp of the Educational staff will speak on the Permanent Collection of the Art Gallery.

Miss Kemp.

As I came out of the front door one day last week, just as the Gallery was closing, three forlorn urchins were standing on the front steps, and I heard one of them say "The doorman says to come on Saturday. Gee! I wish this was Saturday and we could go in now! There are lots of wonderful things to see in there, and I've never been in before." So I told them that when they came I would show them all those wonderful things inside.

An art gallery is a modern treasure house: in it are stores which rival the fabulous cave of Ali Baba. Within its walls are contained associations and memories of the past well worth cherishing and works of our own time interpreting, through sensitive minds, the age in which we live. But this treasure house is not kept locked and barred; it is open for everyone to visit, and it is constantly changing its exhibitions so that there will always be something new to be seen. The Art Gallery of Toronto offers to its members and the public a variety of exhibitions which has something to captivate the taste of every lover of art, from the student of Old Masters to those who wish to keep in touch with art movements of our own time. Its records, its collection of books on the history of art, and its reproductions of great works of art in the famous galleries of the world are all at the service of anyone who wishes to consult them.

Besides the work of Canadian painters, during the past two seasons we have had the good fortune to present a number of very important

exhibitions. We have had contemporary British painting, the work of the Mexican artist, Jean Charlot, and exhibition of Great Masters, which showed European painting from Renaissance to the present day. This year we had two centuries of European painting, French painting in the 19th century, the Art of Soviet Russia, and the famous collection of Van Gogh paintings which awakened so much interest in New York and other American cities, and which came to Toronto, the only place it was shown in Canada, before being sent back to Holland. Last December, a work of one of the greatest Florentine masters of the Renaissance was shown here, and that was perhaps the most important Florentine painting ever to have been seen in Toronto: the Botticelli Madonna, which came to us for the Christmas season.

The Art Gallery of Toronto has been foster father to many Canadian art societies and does everything it can to encourage the work of Canadian painters and sculptors and workers in the allied arts, and this year will see a great many exhibitions of Canadian art. But very often, during all of the activity, many of the pictures in the Permanent Collection have to be kept in the vaults of the gallery storerooms for lack of space in which to hang them. Now, at this season of the year, the Permanent Collection can be seen and will be on view for the summer months until September.

The fascinating story of how the Art Gallery of Toronto began thirty-seven years ago as a small exhibition in a private house is one that reveals several generations of Toronto's history. Memories of old Toronto cluster around the doorway of the old Grange House in the park owned for years by the Boulton family. One can see the fine carriages driving up from Grange Road during the last hundred years, stopping perhaps for a moment at the quaint lodge at the gates of the park where William Chin, the butler, lived with his eleven children, and slowly going along the road leading to the imposing Georgian entrance. We can imagine the balls, the dignified assembly moving up the broad stairway to private theatricals in the room upstairs. We can see the whole of Toronto society gaily conversing in the red-carpeted drawing room with its crystal chandelier. We can imagine the conversation in the stately dining room with its copies of Lely and Holbein gazing down on the many celebrities who dined there.

At the death of Judge [William Henry] Boulton, mayor of Toronto, the estate became the property of his widow, later the wife of Professor Goldwin Smith, who played such a prominent part in the world of letters and in Canadian public affairs. No distinguished visitor came to Canada but was entertained in Toronto at the Grange, from famous scholars to the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. From that time many things have happened: the Grange was given to the City of Toronto as a nucleus of a

public art gallery; generous patrons have helped to build room after room onto the old house, so that what the visitor sees now, approaching the Gallery from Dundas Street, is a fine modern building set in a spacious garden which extends for almost a whole city block all around the building. This Georgian estate, always the centre of gracious hospitality, has become one of the sights of Toronto to which every visitor to the city still comes, and a community centre which, each year, welcomes more and more people to its doors.

Not long ago, I was glancing through the visitors' book at the front door. It began to look like the enrolment sheet of a world conference. Glancing through it at random, I found names of people from London, Paris and New York, from Vienna and Japan and Honolulu; from Greece and Korea and Poland, from Shanghai and Texas and the British West Indies. There had been visitors from Italy and Chicago and India, from Havana and Finland and Frankfurt-am-Main, from Medicine Hat and Moose Jaw and Kapuskasing and California, Nova Scotia and Ireland and Jamaica—and when I asked about all this, the doorman said the book was just a year old. He told me he was astonished one day to find Greta Garbo had signed her name to the book. He could hardly believe his eyes, and he went all over the Gallery trying to catch sight of the great one. But she hadn't been in. It was just a school girl from Port Credit. [This and the following paragraph have been cancelled on the typescript. Perhaps Kemp was asked to pare down her typescript to fit her remarks into the allotted time for the radio broadcast.]

When the visitor turns to the right from the front door, he comes to the Margaret Eaton Gallery, which contains paintings by nineteenth-century French artists. One of the most attractive works in the whole gallery is the picture Renoir painted of his little son Claude when he was a baby. There is the young child, with radiant blue background and blue eyes, the light playing over the child's white garment, and with that glow on the flesh, which only Renoir knew how to achieve. There is a story of an exiled French woman homesick for France who came one day to see the Gallery. Suddenly she saw the little Claude Renoir, and it was like a vision. It made her so happy—just this one painting, for Claude Renoir was a neighbor of hers, living across the road from her home near Paris.

Rodin, who was perhaps the greatest sculptor that the nineteenth century produced, was a friend of Renoir and used to visit him in his country retreat. He can be studied in Toronto, for we have three examples of his work—a terracotta head from the group called *The Burghers of Calais*, a colossal figure *The Creation of Man*, and his marble figure of Eve.

It is strange to see how old friends are united again after so many years, when we see two pictures in the Margaret Eaton Gallery which are quite unlike each other—Boudin's shipping scene on a canal and the excellent example of a Monet landscape, one in subdued colours and smooth technique, the other showing the division of tones and the bright colours used by that group of painters who were called "impressionists" because they depicted the momentary aspects of nature and the vibration of light and air surrounding objects. I have said these two were old friends, and so they were. For when Monet was a student trying to persuade his family to let him become a painter, he first studied with Boudin. The Impressionists gathered around them a number of friends, and one who became identified with the group was an Englishman named Alfred Sisley, whose painting is shown in this room. One of the greatest of the Impressionist group was Camille Pissarro, who worked at one time with Cézanne. Like a true metropolitan Frenchman he was always keenly alive to every aspect of the world before him, as you see in one of the most recent acquisitions at the Gallery, *The Bridge at Rouen*. The whole fascinating panorama of a city's docks lies before us, people streaming back and forth over the bridge, boats going up and down the river, gay little splashes of colour making a note of emphasis here and there. Works such as *The Market Place Concarneau* by a Canadian painter, James Wilson Morrice, are shown along with the modern French school because, while he was born in Montreal, he lived many years in France.

Perhaps the most valuable painting in the Gallery's collection of Old Masters is in the Fudger Rotunda, *The Elevation of the Cross* by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, the Flemish master who was not only the foremost painter in Europe but a diplomat, as well as the trusted friend of princes and kings. This picture, painted about 1630, has had an interesting history. At one time it belonged to the portrait painter of the court of France, Hyacinthe Rigaud, then later to the Prince of Conti, cousin of Louis XV of France. In the nineteenth century it came into the collection of Sir George Holford, Equery to King Edward VII and King George V, and at his death it was bought for the Art Gallery of Toronto. There is a portrait here by Paris Bordone of a wealthy Venetian gentleman of the sixteenth century, and the magnificence of Venice is shown in the pictures of Guardi and Canaletto. A picture of spring in the north of Italy is given in the painting by Bassano, the sixteenth-century north Italian who was one of the first to regard nature as of equal importance to his figures in the composition.

Eighteenth-century England looks down upon us from the walls of the octagonal room, with its Rowlandson water colour drawings of crowds of people boating on the Thames and strolling along Cheyne Walk. Then