

JACK SHADBOLT  
A STUDY OF A CANADIAN PAINTER

by

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### Abstract

For over four decades, Jack Shadbolt's multifaceted career as a British Columbia artist and educator has both enriched Canada's cultural heritage and earned for the artist a position of national importance. Few Canadian painters surpass Shadbolt in terms of discipline and dedication, or in the mastery of the formal elements and technical requirements of the craft. Over time, Shadbolt has consistently broadened his artistic vision and refined his form of expression. Today, Jack Shadbolt enjoys a reputation as the leading painter on the West Coast and is regarded as second only in stature to the much celebrated Emily Carr.

This investigation attempts to document Shadbolt's career and, in particular, the personal and professional experiences which shaped his painting from the early 1930's to 1963. While the artist remains active to the present day, the scope of this paper is confined to the aforementioned dates in order to afford some measure of historical perspective. A broad range of Shadbolt's drawings, paintings and mural commissions up to 1963 are analyzed to: outline the formative stages of the artist's development

and the evolution of his style; divide his work chronologically into a series of major periods according to the form and content of his painting; and, identify the primary sources of his ideas and the chief influences on his work. Attention is also directed toward the critical responses to Shadbolt's endeavors and the process by which he achieved national recognition. Overall, Shadbolt's career presents an opportunity to explore how an artist's painting and writing reflect the historical circumstances of a particular time and place.

The number of critical studies devoted to Canadian artists in the modern era is regrettably limited. As a consequence, methodological procedures for such treatments are employed in the main without the benefit of a widely-accepted scholarly model. Through an examination of Shadbolt's private papers, published statements and the literature pertaining to his work, this discussion attempts, in a modest way, to suggest one possible approach to critical evaluation.

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## CHAPTER I

### YEARS OF APPRENTICESHIP: 1909 - 1938

Jack Leonard Shadbolt was born into a working-class family, the second of five children, on February 4, 1909. Shortly after his birth the family left the village of Shoeburyness in the rural countryside of Essex and emigrated to Canada. Upon arrival in British Columbia in 1912, they made a brief attempt to settle in Nelson before establishing permanent residence in Victoria on Vancouver Island. For the Shadbolt family, life in the provincial capital had its advantages and disadvantages. The city had a far less pioneer character than the interior of the province and its climate more closely resembled their own native environment. In addition, the local population was largely of English origin and they quickly felt at ease within the community. Steady employment, however, was difficult to find and both parents had to struggle to resume their respective trades. Shadbolt's father, Edmund, gradually found work as a house-decorator and paper-hanger, while his mother, Alice, worked at home as a dress-maker.<sup>1</sup>

Despite a certain degree of economic hardship, Shadbolt's childhood years were happily spent exploring

the beaches and woodlands around Victoria and in helping his father in the decorating business. In every respect, he was a normal healthy boy with an easy outgoing personality. At school he was considered a good student with as much enthusiasm for amateur sports as for his studies. To help support his education, he worked part-time with the YMCA as an athletic director and park supervisor.

Shadbolt's early contact with the visual arts was not extensive and there is little evidence in his conventional upbringing to suggest the inevitability of his decision to become an artist. The only pictures he remembers from his youth were the colored reproductions that appeared in magazines such as the *Lady's Home Journal* and the illustrations in the mail-order catalogues popular at the time. While his father occasionally tried his hand at water colors, it was through the sign-painting business, a side-line to his father's work as a house-decorator, that Shadbolt found an outlet for his own nascent artistic inclinations. His skills in mechanical drafting and lettering were further developed at Victoria High School where he was enrolled in a technical programme from 1922 to 1925. For awhile he considered pursuing a career as a commercial artist but was practical enough to realize that it offered few employment prospects and he abandoned the idea in favor of continuing his education. Upon completion of his senior matriculation, he enrolled

in a general arts programme at Victoria College, an institution then affiliated with the University of British Columbia.

Victoria College offered Shadbolt the opportunity to broaden his knowledge, make new friends and participate in a stimulating cultural and intellectual environment. For the first time he discovered the world of literature and the value of libraries. He worked on student publications to improve his writing and demonstrated his administrative and organizational abilities as president of the student council. In addition, he took an active role in the amateur theatrical productions of Victoria's Little Theatre and as a member of the Fossils Club, a local literary society.<sup>2</sup>

It was during these two years at college that Shadbolt first became aware of the latest developments in Canadian art. This decisive occurrence was the result of a combination of external influences: his friendship with Max Maynard, as aspiring artist and fellow student; his introduction to the accomplishments of the Group of Seven, then causing a national furor over their landscape painting; and his personal contact with Emily Carr, Victoria's only nationally-recognized artist and the woman destined to become the most famous painter in British Columbia. All three had a profound effect on his decision to become both an art teacher and an artist.

Born in India in 1903, Max Maynard came to Victoria with his family in 1912. He developed an interest in modern painting, particularly Cezanne and the Group of Seven, while studying to become an art teacher at Victoria College. In 1928 he held his first local exhibition and shortly afterwards became an active member of the Victoria Arts and Crafts Society. In 1936 he received the Beatrice Stone award for the best painting in the British Columbia Annual Exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Maynard continued to work as a teacher and painter on the West Coast up to the time of his departure for the United States in 1942. For more than ten years, he was a close friend and mentor to Shadbolt.

When Shadbolt first met Maynard in 1926, his conception of art was confined solely to its commercial application and he had virtually no knowledge of art history. It was Maynard who directed Shadbolt to read F. B. Housser's significant monograph, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (1926).<sup>3</sup> Maynard not only enlarged Shadbolt's vision with respect to the possibilities of art, but he also provided the much-needed guidance and encouragement for Shadbolt's first tentative efforts at representational drawing. During the early 1930's they sketched together in a variety of locations throughout the southern region of Vancouver Island and, as late

as 1936, Shadbolt was still reliant on Maynard's advice and criticism.<sup>4</sup> Maynard had already made the decision to become an art teacher when he met Shadbolt and it is likely that this influenced Shadbolt in making a similar choice.

Shadbolt and Maynard were not alone in their admiration for the Group of Seven. In fact, the general impact of the Group on Canadian painting in the 1920's and 1930's cannot be overestimated. More than just an aggressive assembly of painters, these men were responsible for awakening the national consciousness to the idea the Canadian images were worthy subject matter and that their painting represented the birth of a genuine and exciting interpretation of the landscape. Furthermore, the controversy that developed over the Group's style of painting--a mixture of Post-Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Expressionism--prompted much critical discussion and generated a great deal of publicity.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the general public became more interested in Canadian art and somewhat more informed about the modern movements in European painting.

For both romantic and practical reasons, Shadbolt and Maynard were filled with enthusiasm for this new and progressive development in Canadian art. The Group of Seven made field-sketching a glamorous activity. To paint the Canadian landscape was a noble undertaking, an affir-

mation of one's national identity, and, the more remote the locale, the more it seemed a heroic struggle. Of equal importance, the Group established the fact that Canadian artists could achieve national acceptance in their own lifetime. While Victoria offered limited encouragement for artists, Shadbolt and Maynard were heartened by the prospect that other parts of Canada were more supportive and that art promised at least some future career possibilities.

Shortly after learning of the Group of Seven, Shadbolt became acquainted with Emily Carr. When he first visited her studio in 1927, Carr's years of hardship and isolation were finally coming to an end. Mortimer Lamb and Marius Barbeau had brought her work to the attention of Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery, and he included twenty-six of her paintings in an exhibition, "Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern", which appeared in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal in the fall of 1927.<sup>6</sup> Carr travelled to the east for the opening of the show and was warmly greeted by members of the Group of Seven who greatly encouraged her to resume painting. Upon her return to Victoria, Carr began to work again after a fourteen-year hiatus. Her paintings of Indian totems, swirling skies and forest interiors, done between 1928 and 1942, represented the greatest achievement of her career and firmly established her position as one of

Canada's leading modern artists.

Although Shadbolt never received any formal training from Carr, his contact with her proved to be a powerful influence on his later development. He saw much of her work during the 1930's and was inspired by her emotional and romantic response to the natural landscape. Carr was also responsible for introducing Shadbolt to the vital artistic heritage of West Coast Indian art, a subject he pursued at the Provincial Museum in Victoria and on sketching excursions to Indian reservations on Vancouver Island and the mainland. The mystique of the B. C. forest, however, was the main theme he adopted from Carr. Through her work, he learned to treat nature in an expressionistic fashion, to ignore representational details and to concentrate on creating a graphic record of the internal rhythms of the forest.<sup>7</sup> Much later he acknowledged his debt and paid his belated respects to her in a series of charcoal drawings produced on Hornby Island in the winter of 1968-69 and entitled, "Homage to Emily Carr."

In 1927 Shadbolt entered the Provincial Normal School in Victoria in order to qualify as a teacher in the public school system. At this time he had already decided that, more than anything else, he wanted to become an artist. He realized, however, that to achieve this goal he would have to undertake a lengthy apprenticeship and that critical recognition and public success

might forever remain an uncertainty. It would be nearly impossible, he felt, to support himself solely through the practice of art. Like numerous other Canadian artists, Shadbolt chose teaching as a means to financial security and as a logical adjunct to the development of his art.

From his first job as an art instructor with the Duncan Consolidated Elementary School in 1928, up to the time of his retirement as Head of Painting and Drawing at the Vancouver School of Art in 1966, teaching was a fundamental part of Shadbolt's life. It not only provided him with continuous employment throughout his career but also kept him constantly involved in a stimulating and ever-changing artistic environment. For Shadbolt, the classroom became a forum in which to discuss theoretical ideas and the studio became a place to perfect technique and experiment with new forms of expression. In a farewell address to the faculty and students of the Vancouver School of Art, he stated: "It is I who am the beneficiary of the years as a teacher; everything I've learned about art has been by teaching it."<sup>8</sup>

When Shadbolt left Victoria in 1928 to accept his first teaching position in Duncan his artistic efforts had not progressed beyond the commercial designs of his high school and college years. He had yet to draw from life and lacked even a basic knowledge of the fundamental

principles of composition, color harmony and perspective rendering. The little he knew of the Group of Seven or modern French painting came only from reproductions. What he had seen of actual canvases was limited to the work of Emily Carr. As an art teacher he had the opportunity to learn along with his students, but he realized that if he were to fulfill his ambition to become a serious artist he would have to undertake formal instruction and acquire a first-hand knowledge of the wider world of art. The lengthy apprenticeship which occupied him for the next ten years included taking courses from the leading artists and art educators in British Columbia and extensive travel and study in eastern Canada, the United States, England and France. Consequently, his development as an artist followed a slow and methodical course. In fact, he did not begin to find his own personal direction until he had experimented with various mediums and explored a number of the diverse tendencies present in modern art.

In the late 1920's, Vancouver began to experience its first period of dynamic growth in the field of visual arts. The British Columbia Society of Fine Arts and the British Columbia Art League had joined forces with the municipal authorities to assist and support the creation of an institutional basis for art. This was accomplished in less than a decade with the establishment of the

Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (1925), the Vancouver Gallery (1931), and the important but short-lived British Columbia College of Arts (1933-35).<sup>9</sup> While a number of concerned individuals and private enterprises were actively involved in the promotion of art and artists, the crucial and enduring sponsorship of art remained under the direction of the Vancouver School of Art and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Consequently, the officers and faculty of these respective civic institutions were the instrumental force in the establishment and maintenance of a progressive climate for the arts. Although Vancouver was not yet a cultural rival to Toronto or Montreal, it could no longer be considered as a provincial backwater. In fact, art was quickly becoming a permanent part of the cultural life of the city and, within twenty years, Vancouver had become an important centre in Canada for modern painting.

Several factors led to Shadbolt's decision to make Vancouver his home. To begin with, the city offered employment opportunities not available to a teacher of art on Vancouver Island. Furthermore, the city presented instructional and exhibition facilities unique to Western Canada at this time. Shadbolt's fruitful association with the Vancouver School of Art proved to be of lifelong consequence to the artist, first as a student and later

as a faculty member. Similarly, the Vancouver Art Gallery functioned as an immediate and receptive forum for his work. It not only promoted his public exposure, but also advanced his artistic reputation on the West Coast. For over four decades, Shadbolt's strong affiliation with the Gallery has been evidenced by the fact that hardly a year has passed without an exhibition of his painting. Additionally, his participation in the wider cultural affairs of the city through such activities as drama, poetry readings and public lectures contributed to his sense of personal attachment to Vancouver.

From 1925 onwards, the staff of the Vancouver School of Art were the leading painters of the West Coast and assumed a vital role in the teaching of visual arts. Charles Scott (1886-1964), the first director of the VSA, was the man responsible for bringing together the first faculty of highly talented individuals. In 1927, Scott managed to attract to Vancouver Frederick Varley (1881-1969), one of the Group of Seven and the first member to separate from that close-knit fraternity.<sup>10</sup> Some critics regard Varley's nine year stay in Vancouver as one of the high points of his illustrious career.<sup>11</sup> Given Varley's charismatic personality and his position as Head of Drawing, Painting and Composition at the School, it is not surprising that he was lionized and quickly collected a number of devout followers. Even an accomplished painter

such as Scott was deeply influenced by Varley's presence. Varley's greatest impact, however, was his effect on J. W. G. (Jock) Macdonald (1897-1960). Prior to his arrival in Vancouver, Macdonald worked only in commercial design and had never painted. Under Varley's guidance, he rapidly learned the landscape style of the Group of Seven and, by 1936, had progressed toward a highly personal form of abstraction.<sup>12</sup> Along with William Weston (1879-1967), the only other major Vancouver-based artist, these individuals are notable for their commitment to teaching and the fact that they represented the vanguard of modern painting on the West Coast. Significantly, they all became founding members of The Canadian Group of Painters in 1933.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1929 and 1933 Shadbolt's artistic training came under the direction of each of these artists. He first met Weston when he enrolled in the Department of Education Provincial Summer School for Teachers, which he attended in Victoria during the annual vacation in 1929 and 1930. Born in England and trained as an academic painter, Weston had emigrated to Vancouver in 1909 to accept a position with the Provincial Normal School. In the 1920's, Weston became an ardent follower of the Group of Seven and instructed his students in the Group 'method' of field-sketching.<sup>14</sup> While Shadbolt considered Weston a competent teacher and eagerly responded to his lessons

on drawing, he found working directly from nature a difficult task and it was not until the second year of study that he felt confident enough to complete a series of crayon sketches of West Coast Indian masks. In time, Weston's instruction was of particular value in helping Shadbolt reduce the physical enormity of the British Columbia landscape to a manageable pattern of rolling contours and studied rhythms--an approach characteristic of the Group of Seven. In the summer of 1931, Shadbolt made his first effort at applying these lessons when he accompanied Max Maynard on a camping trip in the Cowichan Valley. His initial experience of sketching in the wilderness produced in him a "tremendous excitement over the huge rhythms of this desolated country, black stumps, dusty earth craters and rolling hills."<sup>15</sup> Five years later, these drawings were re-worked into oil canvases and included in his first one-man exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Having returned to Vancouver in the Fall of 1931, Shadbolt enrolled as a part-time student in Varley's course at the Vancouver School of Art. Initially, Shadbolt's contact with this accomplished artist proved less than successful as he was unwilling to become a Varley disciple and generally avoided the faddist ideas of transcendentalism, theosophy and mental philosophy associated with Varley's circle.<sup>16</sup> More importantly,

Shadbolt found Varley's classroom instruction somewhat bewildering and was dissatisfied with his first serious attempts at anatomical drawing. In private conversations, however, Varley was instrumental in discouraging Shadbolt's interest in the fantastic architectural concepts of Hugh Ferriss.<sup>17</sup> Before the year was over, Shadbolt had come to appreciate the poetic mood and feeling for the landscape expressed in Varley's paintings.<sup>18</sup> In a summer session conducted by Jock Macdonald on Hornby Island in 1932, Shadbolt attempted to introduce into his oil sketches some of the lyrical quality and expressive technique found in Varley's work.

Through other courses at the art school, Shadbolt developed his technical skills. Charles Scott offered him valuable assistance in handling problems of composition such as the triangulation of points and the relationship of angles within the picture plane. He worked with Harry Tauber, a visiting lecturer and formerly a member of the Vienna State Theatre. From Tauber he received his introduction to stage design and a brief exposure to the ideas of Cubism and Futurism.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of 1932, Shadbolt's knowledge of art was considerably expanded through journal study and art instruction. As a teacher at Kitsilano High School he conducted innovative experiments in creative art work,

including two group mural projects with his students. His own work, to this time, was generally limited to linoblock prints and drawings, however, he had made some tentative efforts at landscape painting and expressed a growing interest in modern art. This year was of further importance to Shadbolt in that it marked the first public showing of his work. He participated in the All-Canadian Exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in May, entering two prints entitled, "Desolation" and "Rhythmic Roots."<sup>20</sup>

By the spring of 1933, the effects of the Depression were increasingly apparent in Vancouver. The only job Shadbolt could find was temporary work in the construction field and, with few prospects for continued employment, he decided to use the money he had saved from teaching to accompany two friends, John Pollock and Alex Dalpheist, on a motor trip to see the Chicago World's Fair. As he later remarked in explaining his resolve to travel at this time, "I decided, well, I had nothing to lose, I couldn't get any work anyway. Had I got a job, I probably would have been too cautious to risk going away." The devastation caused by the Depression was even more apparent to Shadbolt during his journey across the United States. What he saw was a "social system shaken by the roots," a nation deeply divided by ideological, economic and racial issues.<sup>22</sup> Enroute, he witnessed the plight of the farmers and the factory workers and was horrified at the awful

poverty. Breadlines were commonplace and everywhere unemployment was painfully evident. In New York, he read the proclamations of the John Reed Club and became aware of the growing popularity of Marxist ideas among young American artists. Yet he found himself unable to support the call for social revolution. As he later wrote:

Something in me wouldn't let me take part politically in that kind of way. I was too, I suppose, romantically idealistic and not realistic enough. But at any rate, I got a real exposure to the whole ideology of it . . . and all of this made the interpretation of events <sup>23</sup> very much more real than I could have imagined . . . .

Although deeply moved by the prevailing social conditions, Shadbolt directed all of his energies toward the study of art. Fortunately, his visit to the United States coincided with the first great outpouring of American painting in the twentieth century. In the early 1930's, art captured the imagination of the nation and became the subject of much public discussion, flamboyant rhetoric and massive publicity. Museums and galleries increased in number and size and devoted more space and coverage to American artists. The whole system of patronage underwent extensive change. Corporate business and educational institutions commissioned murals on an unprecedented scale. And, in response to the deepening crisis caused by the Depression, the federal government inaugurated programmes such as the Public Works of Art Project and the Federal Art Project in order to provide

financial support for thousands of artists.<sup>24</sup>

Undoubtedly, the most popular and widely publicized movement of the decade was American Regionalism. The four artists recognized as the leading figures in this movement were Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, Grant Wood and Charles Burchfield. While they shared few stylistic similarities, they all focused on rural life in the Midwest, the heartland of the nation, and their paintings became a dynamic force in promoting the idea of an indigenously American subject matter for art.

Regionalism, however, represented only one of a number of major developments in American painting occurring at this time. The impact of the Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco, was equally apparent and even more controversial. Their large-scale commissions in the United States made many young American artists conscious of painting as a vehicle for social protest against injustice, economic inequality and racial discrimination.

From a political viewpoint, the social realism of the Mexican muralists and their followers in the United States was in direct opposition to the American Regionalists. The former embraced a leftist, Marxist ideology and called for violent social upheaval, while the latter espoused a conservative, isolationist position based on a resurgence of the traditional values associated with

America's agrarian past. Both, however, represented a genuine response to the economic, political and social calamities of the times and were closely related in terms of aesthetics.<sup>25</sup> Each group renounced the notion of art for art's sake and disavowed any connection with European modernism. Furthermore, they both employed illustrational realism in order to communicate easily with a mass audience and, to this end, they frequently revived the techniques of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>26</sup> Great emphasis was placed on good draftmanship and all the devices of academic illusionism; even tempera became a popular medium.

The regionalists and the social realists exerted the greatest influence on Shadbolt and, in a number of locales, he had the opportunity to examine their work in depth. At the Chicago World's Fair, he was overwhelmed by Benton's massive mural in the Indiana State Building. Crossing the United States, he saw Rivera's murals in San Francisco and Detroit, and in New York he viewed the work of both Rivera and Orozco. Together, these artists' works generated in Shadbolt a lifelong interest in mural painting.

While the American and Mexican muralists captured Shadbolt's imagination, he did not ignore the work of other American artists. In an article written in 1948, when he was again studying in New York, he summarized the major events and identified the figures who contributed

to his development:

The controversial Diego Rivera mural *Man at the Crossroads of Civilization* had recently been removed from the lobby of the Radio City building and he was painting his New Workers' School mural free in retaliation. Orozco had just completed murals in the New School and likewise Benton who had also produced his monumental mural record of the Hoosier State for the Chicago World's Fair where a magnificent art show had just concluded. Siquiros had a manifesto on 57th St. for a *monumental motional plastic* for outdoor murals. The John Reed Club was active. The Scotsboro trials had not been long concluded. Tobacco Road was on the boards. George Grosz was an American discovery and Gropper was making his excoriating lithographs. Boardman Robinson and Art Young were legends. Peggy Bacon was active. The impact of Mexican school was terrific and the emergence of the midwest school gave a hope for a great American renaissance. Craven was rehearsing his heavy brass for the overture to Men of Art and the PWA project was reaching full stride. Steiglitz was alive and kicking. Georgia O'Keefe was a rave. Peter Blume's *Above Scranton* had won the Carnegie International. Marin was turning out his exciting new Maine watercolors and jazzing up his frames with a collage of metals and textures to extend the dynamic lines of his pictures outward. The Museum of Modern Art had recently been formed and the Bliss collection was open to the public. Salvador Dali was being shown here for the first time.<sup>27</sup>

Concurrent with this exposure to contemporary painting, Shadbolt received his first introduction to important collections of historic European art. At the Chicago Institute of Art and in the exhibition held for the World's Fair, he saw a good selection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist canvases. Of particular interest to Shadbolt was the work of Cezanne, an artist whose style and technique he later attempted to imitate. During his six-month stay in New York, he spent a considerable period of time at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, copying and

analyzing in line drawings the works of El Greco and Rembrandt and the frescoes of the early Italian Renaissance masters. In time, Shadbolt would continue his efforts to perfect his drawing in the classical manner. And, throughout his career, he would recall again and again these formative experiences of his youth.

Between September and December, 1933, Shadbolt interrupted his travel throughout the United States to visit Toronto. During his stay in the city, he made an unsuccessful attempt to find employment as a commercial artist but did manage to acquire a temporary position as a night-school instructor in drawing at the Danforth Technical School. Fortunately, Shadbolt was on hand to witness a new development in Canadian art. Earlier in the year, the Group of Seven was dissolved in order to create a larger, less exclusive, exhibiting organization which adopted the name of The Canadian Group of Painters. In their first Canadian show at the Toronto Art Gallery in November of 1933, the twenty-eight founding members of The Canadian Group of Painters were joined by twenty-five guest contributors in an effort to represent the broadest possible range of contemporary art in Canada.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, the Canadian Group did not stimulate the growth of a more modern approach to painting; up to the time it was dissolved in 1969, its principal function was as a national exhibiting society.<sup>29</sup> As Paul Duval remarked in

his history of the Canadian Group: "During the thirty-six years of its existence it played host to virtually every major contemporary artist. All of the pivotal figures of those decades were to exhibit with The Canadian Group of Painters, many of them coming to national attention for the first time through it."<sup>30</sup> Shadbolt's first exhibition with the Group came in 1940, and ten years later he became an official member.

While Shadbolt considered the Toronto show of 1933 as mostly a dull repetition of the landscape style of the Group of Seven, he greatly enjoyed meeting Lawren Harris and seeing Emily Carr again during her brief visit to the East. The importance of these two artists on Shadbolt's youthful style is evident in the first drawing he had reproduced in print. Entitled "West Coast Impressions" it appeared in the November, 1933, edition of *Canadian Forum*, a leading literary journal.<sup>31</sup> The work of both Harris and Carr can be seen in the emphasis on the sculptural qualities of the tree-stump and in the rigid stylization of the drawing. Furthermore, the faceted cuts on the sides of the stump and its truncated top suggest the stepped-back design of a skyscraper and can be related to the architectural drawings of Hugh Ferriss. In effect, this work is an odd mixture of elements, neither wholly representational nor abstract. Although Shadbolt's later works far surpass this drawing in originality and

technique, the strong graphic quality already evident in 1933 remains a lifelong characteristic of his art.

Shadbolt's year of travel in the United States and Canada yielded numerous benefits. It not only helped him overcome his sense of provincial isolation but also enabled him to escape the narrow confines of the "national" style of landscape painting in which he had been trained. While the American and Mexican muralists made him realize that pure landscape painting was out of touch with the economic, social and political conditions of the Depression decade, he also became aware of other equally appealing alternatives, such as the surrealism of Salvador Dali and Peter Blume, the precisionist style of Charles Sheeler and the abstract creations of John Marin, to name only a few. Furthermore, he had the opportunity to explore some of the historical foundations of modern art, from Post-Impressionism and Impressionism all the way back to the Renaissance. Although Shadbolt ended his year of study filled with enthusiasm over the variety of directions he could pursue as an artist, he still lacked the technical skill and artistic knowledge to completely assimilate these influences. Consequently, he was slow to register the full impact of this experience.

Upon returning to Vancouver in 1934, Shadbolt resumed his position as an art teacher at Kitsilano High School and commenced a crowded three-year period of

teaching, lecturing, organizing art activities and further private study. Through the Carnegie Art Collection and the library at the University of British Columbia he continued to broaden his knowledge of contemporary and historic art. Of notable interest at this time were the modern European artists Picasso, Matisse, Nolde, Pechstein and Kokoschka, the drawings and frescoes of the Italian Renaissance, and the newly-discovered art of Africa and Pre-Columbian Latin America.<sup>32</sup> Mural painting continued to hold his attention; he lectured on the subject at the Vancouver Art Gallery and contemplated travelling to Mexico at some future date to study under Rivera.<sup>33</sup>

There is no unifying theme or singular style evident in Shadbolt's drawings and paintings from the period between 1934 and 1937. Rather they suggest an artist striking out in a number of different directions all at once, freely experimenting with the various styles of art he had encountered in his travels. Surrealism was one of his first interests. The West Coast Indian masks he had previously sketched at the Provincial Museum in Victoria were now given bizarre settings to make them appear as dream images. In works with specific titles, such as "Memory of a Forgotten Song," "Electric Chair" and "Fallen Angel," he injected literary overtones into his surrealist creations and described his approach as "bleak and involved" and tending toward "erotic satire."<sup>34</sup> Shadbolt imitated

the dazzling watercolors of John Marin in "Memory of New York," a cubist type of abstraction in which the natural forms of buildings are shattered in order to communicate a sense of the tempo of urban life. Reproductions of Picasso's beach figures provided him with a model for a more abstract conception of the human form. Other derivative works from this period include paintings of old barns in the manner of A. Y. Jackson, sketches of sheds and dilapidated houses after Charles Burchfield, and fantastic flower themes set against a naturalistic landscape inspired by Marc Chagall.

Along with drawing and painting, writing now became an important outlet for Shadbolt's creative energies. In 1934, he wrote and produced a play entitled "Noon Whistle" which failed to elicit any favorable critical response. The following year he attended a course in modern poetry conducted by Hunter Lewis at the University of British Columbia and immediately began to write poetry. Many of his poems from this period were subsequently published at a much later date in an illustrated volume, *Mind's I* (1971).

In October, 1935, Shadbolt moved to Point Grey where he rented his first studio and "settled down to a prolonged creative session full of thoughts of 'epic grandeur' and 'sombre passion'."<sup>35</sup> Such romantic notions were directed towards a series of oil paintings of the B. C. landscape upon which he was presently working. He

used his drawings of the Indian Reserve near Duncan and sketches of the Cowichan hills, done in the summer of 1931, as cartoons for twelve large canvases which he included in his first one-man exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in October and November, 1936. Unfortunately, the only information on these paintings are the remarks of a critic writing for a local newspaper: "The colors are vivid and the realism in some cases is made secondary to impressionism."<sup>36</sup> While no mention is made of the sixteen water-colors also in this show, the same author found Shadbolt's fifty drawings praiseworthy. Although the exact nature of most of these drawings and paintings is unknown, a considerable number of them were of Vancouver's industrial section and done under the influence of Burchfield, Rivera and Blake. Shadbolt referred to these works as images of "dark satanic mills" and that they represented the "classical industrial landscape documented in all of its mechanical detail."<sup>37</sup> One example of this type of work is "Concrete Mill, False Creek" (1936), a pencil sketch of a few dilapidated buildings and old machinery.<sup>38</sup> In this drawing, Shadbolt revealed an equal concern for the formal character of pictorial representation which he derived from Cezanne. The entire composition is made up of patterned and repetitive shapes that are intended to create a sense of formal unity through the relationship of planes and directional angles.<sup>39</sup> This cross-linking of

parallel planes, rather than volumetric modelling, establishes a sense of spatial depth. Shadbolt described this eclectic mixture of subject matter and formal technique as "the heritage of Cezanne grafted on to American realism."<sup>40</sup>

In the summer of 1937, Shadbolt returned to Victoria to teach an art course for the Department of Education. At this time he had accumulated sufficient savings to finance a year of study outside of Canada but had to decide during the summer where exactly he wanted to go. For several years he had considered the idea of going to Mexico to apprentice with Rivera and had corresponded with Pablo O'Higgins, Rivera's assistant, concerning the necessary arrangements. Once away from the harsh reality of Vancouver, however, he found that his enthusiasm for social commentary had subsided and that he was now more interested in resuming his attempts at landscape painting. Two factors contributed to this change of direction. In Victoria, he renewed his acquaintance with Emily Carr and was greatly impressed with her later work. And, at the end of the summer class, he accompanied some friends on a two-week boat cruise through the Gulf Islands. Each helped rekindle his desire to paint the magnificent scenery of the West Coast. Along with this change in subject matter, Shadbolt became increasingly preoccupied with mastering formal technique. From his study of Post-

Impressionism, particularly the work of Cezanne, he had come to appreciate the importance of a knowledge of color theory and the emphasis on the structure of a painting for its own sake. He already understood these ideas on an intellectual level but felt that he needed more instruction in refining his technique and in gaining greater control over the medium. For Shadbolt, French Post-Impressionism triumphed over Mexican and American social realism, at least for the time being. When he left for England on August 21, 1937, he wrote that "the final choice between the romantic, turgid, expressionistic, social approach, and the classical, austere and dispassionate one had been decided upon."<sup>41</sup>

Shadbolt's decision to study first in England rather than France came as a result of his introduction to two British visitors who arrived in Vancouver on separate occasions less than a year before his departure for Europe. In the fall of 1936 he met Marian Richardson, a noted art educator, while she was travelling through western Canada with the London County Council Children's Show. They became friends after Shadbolt accompanied her on a number of visits to local schools where she lectured on creative methods of teaching art. Several months later he met Eric Newton, an art critic for the *Manchester Guardian*, when he spoke at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Newton commended Shadbolt on his art programmes at Kitsi-

lano High School and was impressed by the fact that his was the only classroom in Canada where he had seen reproductions of Picasso and Matisse on the wall.<sup>42</sup> Shadbolt corresponded with Richardson and Newton after they returned home and both continued to urge him to consider studying in England.

Upon his arrival in London in September, 1937, Shadbolt followed Marian Richardson's advice and enrolled in the Euston Road School of Drawing and Painting (1937-39). Despite its short-lived existence, the School was highly regarded and had many notable intellectual and literary figures associated with it. Shadbolt was taught by the three founding members, William Coldstream, Victor Pasmore and Claude Rogers, all well-established British painters. Herbert Read described the teaching of this group of "master-painters" as a "conscious protest against the tyrannical influence of the 'School of Paris'."<sup>43</sup> In life drawing and painting from the nude, these artists copied some of the mannerisms of Degas and felt that "an unprejudiced approach to the objective world" was still possible.<sup>44</sup> Shadbolt particularly remembers Coldstream's instruction in painting--"a sort of rain-drop technique with little sable brushes, almost like Pointillism."<sup>45</sup> Eventually Shadbolt found this approach too refined and conservative for his taste and he decided not to attend the second term in the spring. During his six-month stay

in London, he frequently visited the National and Tate Galleries where he studied and drew the works of Pollaiuolo, della Francesca, Titian and Blake.

Early in 1938, he moved to Paris to continue his studies. He was not only thrilled with the museums and galleries but was on hand to see the Paris International Exposition. Everywhere Shadbolt went he was surrounded by art. At the Academie Grande Chaumiere, he joined a class with Otho Friesz, a notable Fauve painter. Two months later he enrolled with Andre Lhote, a better-known cubist and highly respected teacher.<sup>46</sup> Shadbolt considered Lhote to be the most gifted teacher he had ever met and felt he learned more with Lhote than he had with any other artist. Lhote's extremely analytical approach to painting, his emphasis on the work of Cezanne and Picasso and his insistence on complete intellectual involvement, all appealed to Shadbolt. He credits Lhote with teaching him color theory (how to modulate color by warm and cool instead of light and dark) and the basic rules of composition (the opposition of straight lines and curves, the clear articulation of planes through contour, movement and rhythm in drawing).<sup>47</sup> Shadbolt's most memorable experience during his year in Europe was when Lhote, a man known for his harsh criticism of students, examined one of Shadbolt's canvases and announced to the class that "this person has a concept of the nobility of form."<sup>48</sup> It was an accolade he never forgot.

## Notes

## Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jack L. Shadbolt, Burnaby, British Columbia, 6 August 1975 (37 page transcript), pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Jack L. Shadbolt, Personal Records, Document I (entries from 1926 to 1948, 18 pages), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Mellen, *The Group of Seven* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>Doris Shadbolt, *Emily Carr* (Vancouver: Art Gallery, 1975), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>"With an artist friend I used to visit Emily Carr in her studio and there is no doubt at all that my interest in tree forms grew into something compelling under the image of her brooding, visceral and vaulted interior spaces of the rain forest. Her silent world had a vision of terrible grandeur and the lonely solitude of the visionary mind" (Jack L. Shadbolt, *In Search of Form* [Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968], p. 64).

<sup>8</sup>George Peloquin, "Art Teacher Shadbolt Turns to Full-Time Commitment," *Vancouver Sun*, 31 May 1966.

<sup>9</sup>Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford, 1973), p. 191.

<sup>10</sup>J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University, 1966), p. 294.

<sup>11</sup>Reid, *Canadian Painting*, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>13</sup>Paul Duval, *Four Decades: The Canadian Group of Painters and their contemporaries, 1930-1970* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Reid, *Canadian Painting*, p. 191.

<sup>15</sup>Document I, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Videotaped Interview with Jack Shadbolt, Vancouver, British Columbia, 25 April 1974 (15 page transcript), p. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Ferriss was a New York artist who received considerable attention for his cubist-inspired drawings of imaginary skyscrapers during the 1920's. His work appeared in architectural journals and popular magazines and in his own book, *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* (New York: Ives, Washburn, 1929). Reference: John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), p. 358.

<sup>18</sup>Document I, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>Videotaped Interview, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>Vancouver Art Gallery, *Catalogue*, May-July 1932, n.p.

<sup>21</sup>Interview, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup>Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup>Barbara Rose, *American Art Since 1900: A Critical History* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 118.

<sup>27</sup>Jack L. Shadbolt, "Concerning American Painting," *Arts Students League Quarterly* (Spring 1949), pp. 17-18.

<sup>28</sup>Duval, *Four Decades* pp. 13-16.

<sup>29</sup>Mellen, *Group of Seven*, p. 186.

<sup>30</sup>Duval, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup>*Canadian Forum* (November 1933), p.

<sup>32</sup>Document I, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Document I, pp. 3-4

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>"Shadbolt Show," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 23 October 1936.

<sup>37</sup>Jack L. Shadbolt, *Personal Records*, Document II (entries from 1931 to 1948, 2 pages), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 60.

<sup>39</sup>"At this early stage, the structure of buildings used to fascinate me. I had already come under the spell of Cezanne's planular modulations of volume into spatial progressions and of a sentence by Tristram Edwards about architecture being the 'beautiful interplay of planes brought together in light'" (*In Search of Form*, p. 72).

<sup>40</sup>Document II, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Document I, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup>Interview, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup>Herbert Read, *Contemporary British Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), p. 15.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>Interview, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup>"Andre Lhote (1885-1962), perhaps the most influential teacher associated with cubism, made of it an academic formula with which he indoctrinated generations of students" (H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art* [New York: Abrams, 1970], p. 196).

<sup>47</sup>Interview, pp. 32-33.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY WORKS: 1939 - 1948

When Shadbolt returned from Europe in the summer of 1938, he was nearly thirty years old and had been studying and teaching art for almost a decade. At this critical juncture in his life two distant goals were foremost in his mind: to develop his own personal approach as an artist and to establish a reputation within the Canadian artistic community. Remarkably, ten years later he was on the verge of achieving both of these aims. By then he had earned national recognition as one of the country's important young painters and, by the early 1950's, he was considered an artist of major stature.

For Shadbolt, the ten-year period from 1938 to 1948 marked a time of trial and exploration. The form and content of his art remained in a constant state of flux as he adjusted to personal growth and a shifting focus on the objective world. Between 1938 and 1942, he concentrated on traditional subject matter--still lifes, human figures, street scenes, buildings and landscapes--while he gradually learned to apply the formal lessons of the preceding decade. The next three years were spent on documentary drawings of war-time activity and culminated

with a series of evocative watercolors of London bomb ruins. After 1945 his work became less literal. He began to introduce allegorical and symbolic elements into his paintings, and by 1948 he was prepared to make the transition to cubist abstraction.

Shadbolt established a growing reputation through his large and numerous exhibitions of drawings and paintings. In less than ten years, he held fourteen one-man shows: one at the Laing Fine Art Gallery in Toronto, three at the University of British Columbia and ten at the Vancouver Art Gallery.<sup>1</sup> Given the fact that each show contained an average of forty or fifty works, this represented a substantial artistic output. In addition, he annually participated in a number of regional and national exhibitions through such organizations as the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, Canadian Society of Water Color Painters, Canadian Group of Painters, Canadian Society of Graphic Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy. His drawings and paintings appeared in major centres in Canada and significant purchases were made by the National Gallery, Toronto Art Gallery, Laing Gallery, University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Art Gallery. As a consequence, Shadbolt received an ever-increasing amount of critical attention. The Vancouver newspapers reviewed all of his local shows and, after 1943,

feature articles and reproductions of his works began to appear in national magazines and art periodicals.

At the same time, Shadbolt pursued his career as a teacher. In 1938 he joined the Vancouver School of Art as an instructor in drawing and painting. On a part-time basis, he taught courses for the Department of Education and the University of British Columbia and gave lectures at the Vancouver Public Library and the Gallery. During three years of military service from 1942 until 1945, he completed a large mural commission for the United Services Centre in Vancouver while on duty with the Canadian Army Engineers and was later stationed in England as Acting Administrative Officer for Canadian War Artists. When he returned from London in 1945 he resumed his teaching position and was appointed a senior staff member of the Vancouver School of Art.

To understand Shadbolt's aesthetic and stylistic development in the 1940's it is necessary to consider his work within the artistic and intellectual currents which formed him, and to examine the gradual evolution and transformation of his art. Travel and study not only removed him from the narrow confines of his cultural and geographic isolation, but made him aware of the major movements in art on both sides of the Atlantic. Consequently, his work cannot be judged solely within the context of Canadian art but must be seen from a somewhat

larger perspective.

For several reasons, Shadbolt rejected the extreme positions advanced by modern movements in European and North American painting in the 1920's and 1930's. European "isms" were too intellectual, too dependent upon rigid theories of form and color, and did not directly relate to the social and historical conditions of these troubled decades. On the other hand, North American movements such as regionalism or social realism were overly concerned with national ideals or political protest. Caught in the midst of these cross-currents of movements and counter-movements, he was nevertheless unwilling to mindlessly follow what appeared to be the latest vanguard trend. In his search for a personal artistic idiom, he sought to reconcile the figurative and landscape approach of North American artists with the formal principles of European picture-making. His eclectic borrowings included elements from these modern traditions and an equal acknowledgement of their historic precedents in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Before turning to an analysis of Shadbolt's work in the decade 1938 to 1948, some general observations can be made concerning his method of approach. To begin with, he accepts his immediate surroundings as the factual basis for his art and considers the field sketch an important source for producing original and spontaneous creations.

In going directly to nature, he believes that the artist is confronted with an infinite series of problems--selection of detail, vantage point, the connection and disposition of forms in space, and the two-dimensional nature of the canvas. The act of drawing or painting is not only an exercise in creative freedom but is also a vigorous intellectual process requiring disciplined perception.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, he believes that an artist needs a formal strategy or concept of form to synthesize his experience of particular configurations in the visible world into effective and lasting images. While in individual works the representation of objective forms and the presentation of abstract ideas of form are of equal value, taken as a whole, Shadbolt's subject matter is not so much the objective world as the artistic technique of rendering it in pictorial form. For example, in describing his work from 1938 to 1942, he wrote: "A formative period of landscape and figure themes painted less as subjects of literary interest than as vehicles for exploring form--from the monumetal and static to the baroque and rhythmic."<sup>3</sup>

Shadbolt's artistic production began in earnest upon his return from Europe in 1938 when he rented a new studio in Point Grey and settled down to "a four year period of working out accumulated ideas in native surroundings."<sup>4</sup> Prior to this time, most of his efforts had been little more than student exercises, awkwardly conceived and

lacking in technique. No longer interested in these experiments, he destroyed much of his earlier work. As he recorded, his formal explorations were directed toward:

The rhythmic Florentine structural approach, experimenting constantly in pictorial construction, striving for larger mass units and greater integration between the parts; and, at the same time a continuous study of color and its relation to plastic form, working chiefly through Cezanne.<sup>5</sup>

Simultaneously, he was attempting to master several different artistic traditions. From the Renaissance and Baroque periods he gained an appreciation of an expressive and rhythmic use of line, a sense of monumentality, and strong compositional devices. From Cezanne, and cubism in general, he learned the modern dictates of plastic values, abstract patterns, a geometric conception of space and the theory of color. Drawing was his principal means of working from these sources and became, to borrow Hilton Kramer's phrase, his "crucible of style."<sup>6</sup> In both studio work and field sketches he used drawing as the chief point of departure for all of his painting in oil and watercolor. And, as a teacher at the art school, he was able to devote even greater scrutiny to life drawing.

The early drawings and paintings from 1938 to 1942 essentially divide into five different types of subject matter--portraits, still lifes, nudes, urban scenes, and landscapes. With only slight variations on a theme, all of these works were the product of Shadbolt's "prolonged

search for more intense and expressive rhythmic relations between forms."<sup>7</sup> The small number of portraits mostly of friends and students are not exact representations, but are intended as more of a psychological interpretation of mood and character. The technique varies, from the carefully drawn and solidly modelled "Max" (1938) and "Study of Doug" (1939), to the single wavering "Line Drawing of Rita" (1941).<sup>8</sup> In each case, the faces are distorted and stylized and take on a mask-like appearance. As a subject area, portraits never become an important concern and in most of Shadbolt's later figurative work the human face is treated either superficially or as a caricature.

The still life compositions, in general, are based on simple ideas of "geometric solidity and Baroque transitional rhythms."<sup>9</sup> In "Still Life" (1939-41), for example, the objects are rendered in full volume in a tight centre grouping and become animate through the proliferation of rhythmic contours.<sup>10</sup> Shadbolt's skillful handling of this subject received recognition when his oil painting, "Still Life with Cassaba Melon" (1940), won the Beatrice Stone Silver Medal, an award for the best painting in the 10th Annual B. C. Artists Exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in November, 1941.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar fashion, the studies of the nude are also exercises in creating dynamic design. The alternate clenching and relaxing of the powerful muscles in "Male

"Nude" (1940) convey a feeling of monumental structure and anatomical tension, while the formal interplay of figure and negative space in "Female Nude: (1940) suggest a state of rhythmic repose.<sup>12</sup> No concern is shown for classical beauty or any idealization of the form, the sole emphasis is on the plastic and sculptural qualities of the human figure.<sup>13</sup> "Reclining Nude" (1940) is one of the few works in this group with a complete background and painted in watercolor.<sup>14</sup> In this painting, the diagonal placement of the figure and the elongation of the limbs closely resembles Baroque compositions, but, in several respects, the sense of space is less illusionistic and more modern. The uniform lighting and close-up focus flatten the figure against the picture plane and the remaining space is filled with forms that are related to the contours of the figure. The flow of body rhythms are repeated in the floral design and folds of the bedspread, setting up a progression of rhythmic recessions which culminate with the stacked pillows in the upper right-hand corner. In the opposite upper corner, the head is turned parallel to the picture plane and the angular profile of the face is balanced by the horizontal lines of a small shelf. A further extension of this integration of the figure and its surrounding space is evident in a crayon sketch, "Pam" (1940), where the full-bodied rhythms of the figure repeat the undulating forms of the natural landscape

in the background.<sup>15</sup>

As an art school instructor, Shadbolt had daily access to studio subjects and his portraits, still lifes and nudes were the logical outcome of his lessons in teaching life drawing. However, these studies represent only a small portion of his total artistic production during this period, and by 1941, they were no longer central to his work. From 1938 to 1942, the majority of drawings and paintings are urban and landscape scenes and, in characteristic fashion, focus on "the rhythms of organic nature in counterpoint to the geometric masses of old houses at the suburban edge."<sup>16</sup> In all of these words, the basic method for controlling and defining pictorial space is a simple opposition of curvilinear and rectilinear shapes which cross-link and integrate the different elements into a unified whole.

In oil paintings and watercolors Shadbolt addressed the formal problems of pictorial construction, particularly with respect to the use of color. The references to color theory contained both in his notes and in his reviews of his work, emphasize an indebtedness to late nineteenth century French painting. In 1939 he mentions, in one instance, a grouping of Renoir, Cezanne, Signac and Bonnard and the "impressionistic use of watercolor--splintered fragments of the color plane," and in another, the applica-

tion of "warm and cool color as a modelling agent."<sup>17</sup> The following year he was at work on a series of "severe canvases, reviving the Indian village themes, trying to apply Cezannesque color plane modulations to more sombre Canadian landscape color."<sup>18</sup>

Reviewers identified some of the characteristics of Shadbolt's emerging style. In an examination of Shadbolt's work up to 1940, Charles Scott, Director of the Vancouver School of Art and Shadbolt's former teacher, summarized the artist's approach:

His main concern is with form, and the arrangement of form, which is perhaps one reason why his drawings are more satisfying than his paintings. Not that he is neglectful of color--there is abundant evidence in his work of his sensuous enjoyment of it--but it is not always used in support of his form.

A characteristic of his form is heaviness: it is weighty and elemental, at times aboriginal. This brings forth a quality of stylized distortion which, in places, hints at Picasso and West Coast Indian art, and in other places is Shadboltian caricature at its fiercest.<sup>19</sup>

Shadbolt's first recognition in a national magazine followed his participation in a two-man exhibition with Eric Bergman from Winnipeg at the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1941.

Graham McInnes, art critic for *Saturday Night*, observed:

Shadbolt's art owes a good deal to French contemporaries . . . He has that rich integrity of form, and plasticity of paint which is their hallmark. But he is working in a land that is vast and raw, and you can see this French approach stretching, like some liquid plastic, to deal with and confine a bigness in subject for which it was not at first intended. The fusion, so far as you can see, is perfect. Shadbolt's is a new and authentic voice, owing nothing to the

Canadian landscape tradition, yet for all that, distinctively of this country.<sup>20</sup>

Under the growing impact of the war Shadbolt shifted his attention away from the purely formal explorations of rhythmic contour and geometric structure toward a closer observation of the objective character of old buildings and street scenes. In works like "Sign of the Golden Sheaf" (1942)<sup>21</sup> and "Abandoned Houses, Victoria" (1941),<sup>22</sup> he refined his graphic technique in order to achieve a greater degree of linear precision, clarity of design and accuracy of detail. Beginning with the series of drawings, "The Occupation of Point Grey" (1942), he turned to documentary images of more immediate and contemporary significance. Numerous contributory factors, both formal and personal, lead to this change.<sup>23</sup> The initial conception behind the "Occupation" series developed out of his awareness of the conflict overseas and the idea awakened his interest in the artistic possibilities of working on a large group of drawings devoted to a specific theme. Furthermore, in anticipation of his military enlistment, he sought to prepare himself in the event that he could serve in some capacity as a war artist. What would be needed, he felt, was representational or documentary images of military life and the activities of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The fifty drawings in "The Occupation of Point Grey"

series represent Shadbolt's own suburban district following an imaginary aerial attack and invasion by enemy forces. By setting the violent conflict against the intimate background of a Canadian locale, he attempted to make war a personal experience: "The series is designed to give a sense of nostalgia for what the people of Point Grey would miss if their homely surrounding were ever invaded . . . and also to leave the impression of alertness in the homes of every community."<sup>24</sup> The finely drawn scenes are a mixture of stark realism and surreal fantasy.<sup>25</sup> German soldiers prowl the streets and occupy the houses while the bodies of dead civilians are strewn along the sidewalks and in the gardens. The familiar elements of the urban scene--houses, corner stores, trees, telephone poles, backyards and mailboxes--are recorded with vivid accuracy. Shadbolt described the effect as "a feeling of space and calm offset by sinister horror."<sup>26</sup> Other images show a man hanged in a tree in the midst of huge sunflowers and the destruction of the air raid--the blasted houses and smoldering ruins. His inspiration for this work came from a variety of sources: the surreal stillness of the scenes derived from De Chirico; Picasso's abstract masterpiece, "Guernica," provided the idea of the brutal and mechanical massacre of civilians; and Goya's "Disaster of War" series of etchings served as a model for a group of related images on a war theme.<sup>27</sup>

Following his completion of the "Occupation" drawings, Shadbolt enlisted in the army on November 23, 1942. While finishing his basic training at Little Mountain Camp in Vancouver he completed a group of drawings recording the details of the architecture and equipment at the camp and a number of satirical caricatures of his fellow recruits. Shadbolt's work was brought to the attention of General Pearkes who secured his transfer first to the Pacific Command Headquarters at Jericho Beach, mapping section, and then on to the Camouflage Training Centre at Point Grey, where he served on the demonstration staff. Here he drew and painted the vast array of camouflage paraphernalia and the men at work building dummy field guns, air planes and trucks.<sup>28</sup>

After six months with the Camouflage unit and while awaiting the decision as to his appointment as an official war artist, Shadbolt requested an extended leave from normal duties to undertake a large mural project for the newly redecorated United Services Centre in Vancouver. He was assigned to the task in the summer of 1943 by the Co-Ordinating Committee of Auxiliary Services.

Shadbolt's fascination with mural painting originated ten years earlier and continued throughout his whole career. It began during his visit to the United States in 1933 where he saw the work of Benton, Rivera and Orozco. Their paintings not only provoked his interest

in Renaissance frescoes but also convinced him of the social significance and artistic value of large-scale painting. Prior to 1943, Shadbolt had worked on several other murals. Two panels were commissioned by Mortimer Lamb and were exhibited in the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1941. One critic described them as similar in technique and "bizarre" in appearance, one depicting the "Lamb family in a Chinese setting with fantastic, awesome lions, the other of fruit."<sup>29</sup> The following year Shadbolt joined with Paul Goranson, a well-known muralist in British Columbia, to paint two panels for the new Vogue Theatre. One feature made this project unusual--the owner specified that they use only fluorescent paint which could be illuminated with mercury-vapor lamps to give the effect of neon. As a result, they were unable to represent any spatial depth or volume and had to settle for a purely decorative effect. One reviewer provided a general description:

The panels, each ten feet by twenty feet high, to go on the walls of the body of the theatre on either side of the stage. The composition of both panels has the same basic structure and theme of dancers descending a curving staircase. Mr. Goranson deals with costumes of military derivations against a classical background, Mr. Shadbolt's figures are dressed with modern fantasy in "jazz" scenery. Of course a compromise has been necessary on the part of each artist in personal technique to ensure a harmonious relationship between the two panels.<sup>30</sup>

Although the theatre finally decided not to use the panels, Shadbolt felt that the experience was a valuable exercise

and looked forward to other similar opportunities.

The mural for the United Services Centre, referred to as either "About Town with the Services" or "Vancouver Streets by Day and Night," afforded Shadbolt his first opportunity to work on a monumental public endeavor. Considering the scale, the length of time involved, and the lack of financial reward, the project was indicative of his formidable resolve to carry his ideas and technique to a logical conclusion. The theme and style of the mural was a natural evolution of his extensive study of the human figure and the urban landscape over the past five years. Over 250 individual figures in civilian and military costume were represented and the variety of facial types was broadly caricatured. In a satirical fashion he included portraits of famous people such as Churchill and Montgomery and one of Rembrandt looking in a milliner's window. Shadbolt's passion for authentic architectural detail, however, was the real subject of the mural. With painstaking accuracy, he created both a visual document of many of the recognizable landmarks of downtown Vancouver\* and a highly animated panorama of the urban tableau during wartime. The final product took over six months to complete and consisted of 8 panels, 9' x 23', and 2 panels, 11' x 23', and covered 2,000 square feet of wall surface.<sup>31</sup>

(\* C. P. R. docks, Aristocratic Cafe, Stanley Park Causeway, Capitol Theatre, Hotel Vancouver)

It was reputed to be one of the largest murals in Western Canada at that time, and the publicity it generated was instrumental in gaining Shadbolt further national recognition.<sup>32</sup>

Various aspects of the United Services mural revealed Shadbolt's debt both to the Italian Renaissance--particularly the linearity and subdued color of Piero della Francesca--and to American painting in the 1930's. Like Benton's "City Scenes" (1930), he used a panorama of urban images and a broad caricature of human types in a celebration of contemporary life. The technique, however, was completely traditional. In keeping with the Renaissance approach, all of the preparatory cartoons were done in charcoal and later painted with watercolor-tempera pigments. The scenes were cast under various forms of artificial and atmospheric light in order to reproduce the exact effects of different times of day, local conditions and changes in the weather. The colors, predominantly half-tones of blue-grey and grey-green, remained subordinate to the linear grid of the outline. An illusionistic perspective was maintained throughout, with the figure placement street level designed to give the spectator the sensation of the picture plane as an extension of the space of the auditorium. Life-sized figures appeared in the foreground of each of the ten panels.

Shadbolt's highly documentary approach engendered

some criticism. Walter Abell, a noted authority on Canadian art at that time, commented that the "realism is perhaps somewhat literal for the best integration between subject and design" and that, in some instances, there appeared a lack of unity between this "dominant literalness and the satirical figures."<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, Shadbolt was generally satisfied with his execution of this large undertaking. In a typically analytical fashion, he recorded some of his concerns regarding the formal aspects of this project:

An increased respect for near-tone, near-intensity relation of color; increased respect for clarity of unit shapes of form; desire for tension in structure and design; an awareness of significant detail in building psychological overtures; and the need for a total form in which all parts are given a consistent kind of treatment.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1944, three months after completing the mural, Shadbolt was transferred to Kingston, Ontario for further training with the Signal Corps. Initially it was a period of uncertainty and dissatisfaction as he doubted that he would receive a commission as a war artist and the only works in production were "sterile detailed drawings of the barracks."<sup>35</sup> On May 5 he received the welcome news that he was to be sent immediately to the Officer Training Camp at Brockville. Six weeks later he graduated with the rank of lieutenant and was posted to a position as narrator for the Historical Section of the War Records Department in Ottawa.

Shadbolt's artistic production during his ten-month stay in Ontario was limited to documentary drawings, principally of the Prisoner of War Camp at Petawawa where he spent several weeks in October, and watercolors of the rural landscape around Ottawa during the winter and early spring. His interest in watercolors was greatly stimulated by his exposure to the work of a number of leading war artists. At the National Gallery in Ottawa he saw the paintings of two of the foremost Canadians: Will Ogilvie, famous for his documentation of the Italian campaign, and Charles Comfort, a brilliant technician in watercolor and oil, also renowned for his chronicle of the war. In addition, he viewed a travelling exhibition of four major British war artists--Graham Sutherland, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, and John Piper--whose work he studied in greater detail when he later arrived in England.<sup>36</sup> His acquaintance with their works no doubt provided him with a greater strength and ease in handling the watercolor medium and gave him a keener perception of the demands of war painting for a more symbolic form of expression. Before leaving Ontario Shadbolt had the opportunity to meet Andre Bieler, an important figure in Eastern art, and the legendary A. Y. Jackson.<sup>37</sup>

On February 15, 1945, he boarded a troop ship to assume his post as Acting Administrator for War Artists at the Canadian Military Headquarters in London. Shortly

after his arrival, he began a series of watercolors to record the profound impact of the war on the urban environment, the sense of epic disorganization, and the stark tragedy of civilians living in the midst of such devastation. Shadbolt considered these works as more than mere factual records produced quickly under the pressure of events; they were symbolic evocations of his personal emotions. As he later remarked:

I had studied in London and Paris before the war and when I returned to London as a war artist, I found the bomb ruins inflamed me to anger and compassion. I tried to record my feelings in these often heroic but ironic monuments of rubble. I think I came near to saying what I wanted to say about war--how much I hate its callous indifference to human meaning.<sup>38</sup>

Amidst the ruins of London, Shadbolt felt that he had found the kind of potent image that could symbolically express the human drama of wartime existence. For Shadbolt, these works represented the culmination and purification of all his earlier romantic tendencies. In a somewhat poetic manner he wrote:

It had been the 'doomed and the damned' of Gustave Dore in 1931, Blake in 1933 in the barren tragic hills of Cowichan, the icebound and barren shacks from Jackson and Burchfield in 1935, the 'dark satanic mills' of Granville Island from Blake in 1936, the sombre sheds of the Cowichan Indian Reserve in 1938, the strange old West End Vancouver houses in 1942, and how the building itself, with no setting smashed and de-humanized, as an epic symbol of desolation.<sup>39</sup>

From this statement, it is evident that a continual strand of social consciousness was a motivating factor behind many of his works. Even in his earlier images of

urban and rural scenes, the primary focus was not on man but on his environment. The devastated city represented a logical and unavoidable extension of this theme. His past experience helped refine his ability to handle architectural drawings. In a sense, the subject matter converged with the formal technique that embodied it; the form was the exact counterpart of the idea. The expressive realism of these paintings made them genuine statements of an immediate event and lasting artistic creations. Charles Scott eloquently remarked of these works that "one feels that life itself has been torn and disorganized until the very heavens weep at the dumbly gaping and protesting shapes."<sup>40</sup> In all, Shadbolt completed approximately eighteen watercolors on the war theme in London.<sup>41</sup> In addition to his depiction of the war-ravaged city he also dealt with the pathetic victims--the wounded and dismembered soldiers, huddled masses of refugees, and German prisoners. On the whole, these works suggest a considerable growth of the artist's technique and imaginative powers.

Shadbolt's final months in England were spent working on a second series of watercolors inspired by his visit during the summer to the comparatively idyllic countryside of Cornwall. For the most part, they were picturesque scenes of Cornish villages--the brightly colored houses and harbors filled with small fishing boats. With

fluid brush strokes, he "applied stark and cold color washes, generally low in color intensity; within this grey scheme, and in contrast to it, lie pockets of jewelled color."<sup>42</sup> Such works as "Seagulls in the Harbor" (1945) and "Boats in the Rain" (1945) captured the atmospheric effects of the local climate: "The quality of shifting light, the sense of wetness in the atmosphere, and the wet-pebble nature of the color scheme, all built into a truly English picture."<sup>43</sup>

In September, after a brief visit with relatives in Surrey, Shadbolt returned to Canada, stopping enroute in Ottawa to marry Doris Meissel, a research officer with the National Gallery whom he had met while stationed there in 1944. Upon arrival back in Vancouver in October, he was appointed Head of the Drawing and Painting Section at the Vancouver School of Art, and on November 20, 1945, he received his final discharge from the army.

Following his return to Vancouver, Shadbolt continued in the same romantic vein which characterized the Cornwall paintings. He rented an apartment on Thurlow Street in downtown Vancouver and directed his attention to what he termed the "Canadian Scene." His work at this time included studies of the fishing boat colonies along the Fraser River, industrial scenes, the Cambie, Granville and Marpole Bridges, and the Cambie Street Fair Grounds. The basic aim was to represent the romantic quality of his immediate

surroundings and "to catch some quiet beautiful moment in its complete authentic character."<sup>44</sup> In an article written in 1947, Shadbolt listed some of the elements of the urban tableau which he sought to record:

But above all, over and over again, I find my full satisfaction as an artist in the streets about me: in the strange facade of a modern city block built up of all the historic hangovers of old architectural styles, the tawdry but fascinating jangle of jazzed-up store fronts built over the street-level sections of old buildings, the endless variety of shop windows, the enthralling continuous interplay of personality in passing people, their dress, carriage and expression. All these, with the multitude of appendages of a modern street, telephone poles, unbelievable neon signs, sign scaffolds, guy wires, radio poles, chimneys, --constitute the endless material which piques my interest. It is not just an accumulation of detail interesting in itself but a complete reflection of our society.<sup>45</sup>

Shadbolt's focus on human interest values found its most poignant expression in a series of watercolors of delapidated houses. To quote him again from the same source:

Then there is the West End, the old residential district of Vancouver with its strange old Victorian houses and decorated eaves and crenellated towers and a crazy network of built-on outside wooden fire-escapes and garbage can racks. These are the crowded tenements of city office workers and the old and infirm cast-offs, and I am tremendously interested in the pathetic lives of these people.<sup>46</sup>

While the bomb ruins had represented symbols of destruction, these old frame structures became the gaunt shells where people live out their lives of quiet desperation. One notable variation of this theme involved a combination of West End houses with figures representing the war victims

of Europe. In "The Living Dead" (1946), Shadbolt recalled the photographs of German concentration camps which he had access to while in the army.<sup>47</sup> These ghastly images of physical emaciation are placed in front of a bombed landscape, littered with bodies, and stare out from the picture with gaping eyes. A later critic considered this work as Canada's "closest approximation to the vehemence associated with German art forms" and in reference to "Evening, Granville Street" (1946), Shadbolt acknowledged his admiration for George Groz's *Ecce Homo*.<sup>48</sup> In "Mansions of the Dead" (1946), a group of figures similar to those in "The Living Dead" descend the steps of an old Vancouver house.<sup>49</sup> The delapidated building has thus been transformed into a symbolic reflection of human suffering. These works marked the beginning of a more symbolic type of imagery.

Between 1946 and 1948, most of Shadbolt's artistic efforts reflected his personal anguish over the turbulent climate of the post-war world. These feelings of disillusionment and horror at the prospect of mankind's uncertain future lead to a significant modification in the form and content of his art. In his search for new images of greater human relevance and contemporary significance, he redirected his inclination for social realism toward a more symbolic expression of the state of man, and, in the process, he abandoned his realistic manner of painting in favor of the abstract pictorial language of cubism. He

summarized the main features of this development in 1948:

Then response to the increasingly vast complexity of the postwar state I realized the futility of trying to comment in detail on what I was moved to say. I had to evolve condensed, symbolized statements about the general aspects of our frustration because basically these general aspects were its permanent truths in spite of all the details. So I gradually turned to symbolic imagery which I have tried to find through transformations of material with which I had previously been familiar: dogs became savage animals, the human figure became the emaciated body; West Coast Indian masks and totemic forms, bird and animal skeletons from museums now revealed new symbolic suggestions; and form correspondingly became less descriptive; a more abstractly expressive vehicle for these new meanings.<sup>50</sup>

Shadbolt's interest in "symbolic imagery" can be related to the work of the leading British war artists and the later paintings of Picasso. He had seen paintings by Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland in Ottawa in 1944 and further studied them when he was stationed in London. Although it is impossible to group these British artists under a definite stylistic heading, some similarities are evident in their approach to the problem of war art. Each attempted to go beyond documentary realism by translating the literal apocalypse of war into more metaphorical statements of a cosmic catastrophe. Herbert Read has commented on the remarkable character of Moore's shelter drawings, Nash's aerial landscapes and Sutherland's sketches of furnaces and mines:

None of these achievements had any direct bearing on the war: in each case the artist expressed an obstinately personal vision. Moore's recumbent figures are images of the archetypal womb, in which

life itself seeks shelter from external stress. Nash's wrecked airplanes are symbols of a defeated attempt to mechanize life; and Sutherland's fiery furnaces are alchemical in their significance and assert the presence of spirit in matter.<sup>51</sup>

Read borrowed a phrase from Sir Kenneth Clark to loosely group these artists together: "A 'new form of allegorical painting' would serve as a general description of whatever positive character British painting possessed at the end of the war."<sup>52</sup> Like these artists, Shadbolt sought a symbolic expression of his subjective feelings about the powerful forces of destruction present in the world of man and nature.

At the same time Shadbolt acknowledged an even greater debt to Picasso. He had first seen *Guernica* in Paris in 1938 but it was nearly ten years later before he fully comprehended this apocalyptic vision of modern war. By 1948, however, Shadbolt recognized Picasso's ability to unite the formal approach of cubism with the emotional appeal of expressionism. In effect, Picasso's work after 1937 revealed how conventional forms could be endowed with psychological possibilities of meaning in their translation from fact into image. In a lengthy and well-argued article written in New York in 1948-49, Shadbolt praised Picasso's unique achievement and interpreted the later phase of his work as "symbolic abstraction"--the fusion of abstract structure and symbolic content:

Where Braque stylized for the sake of provocative sense-possibilities of abstract form, Picasso abstracted

for the sake of new psychological possibilities of meaning. To show a woman weeping he did not paint the tears or the look of grief in the eyes but by an act of inward projection he visualized how the woman was transformed by grief in her own mind. We read the still recognizable but transfigured fragments into a final image which is itself torn, lacerated, distressed--the essence of the idea of grief. It is the equivalent of the poet's image in a language of visual metaphor. His process was that of a child or a primitive mind in the intuitive selection and rejection of the facts from the model: but he analyzed his results into an intellectual structure, the process of which, by re-analysis, is available to us for the enlargement of our expressive heritage.

Picasso's greatest intuitive act was to sense exactly the vehicle that would enable artists to handle society's unstated collective need--not for the appearance of formalistic order but order of the spirit by a return to symbolic images, in a way that would take into account the spectator's own<sup>53</sup> emotional need for suggestion rather than fact.

Picasso, Shadbolt further believed, not only opened up new expressive dimensions to form but also made possible wholly individual interpretations:

Perhaps it is again the mark of Picasso's genius that while he formulated an idiom internationally useable, it was, obversely, one which demanded a more intimate personal evolution. Graham Sutherland is a perceptibly English Picasso--and no less English for being so.<sup>54</sup>

Both Picasso and Sutherland, Shadbolt felt, transformed objective reality into a metaphorical realm where things found a new form through human feelings.

Shadbolt's exploration of symbolic imagery can be specifically related to several smaller canvases done by Picasso immediately after *Guernica*. In works such as *Cat and Bird* (1939) and *The Bull's Skull* (1942), Picasso continued his violent commentary on the modern world through the symbolic use of savage animals and skeletal

remains.<sup>55</sup> Shadbolt, in a number of works from 1946 to 1948, employed similar images to convey the same message of predatory terror and death.

In the fall of 1946, Shadbolt completed two large oils, "The White Ruin" and "The Dogs". The first painting portrayed a mother and child against a background of bomb ruins and carried specific reference to Christian symbolism as each of the figures has a halo formed out of a projecting drain-pipe behind their heads.<sup>56</sup> Following this work, the human figure largely disappears. In the second canvas a group of ferocious dogs engage in a violent struggle amidst the bones and rubble of an imaginary landscape.<sup>57</sup> The treatment of the dogs' snarling faces closely resembled the painting by the Mexican artist, Rufino Tamayo (b. 1899), *Animals* (1941) in New York's Museum of Modern Art, and it is likely that Shadbolt was acquainted with this work from reproductions.<sup>58</sup> Shadbolt did not intend the work to simply suggest the idea of civilization going to the dogs but as a commentary on the contest of power politics taking place at that time in Europe.<sup>59</sup>

In June 1947, Shadbolt took a holiday at Buccaneer Bay where once again he was captivated by the romance of the rugged shoreline and primordial forest of the British Columbia landscape. Initially he avoided any kind of symbolic imagery as he worked daily on charcoal sketches and oils painted on paper. His primary focus was on images of

gnarled trees, rock formations and windswept beaches and in these studies he attempted to recreate the poetic lyricism of his early mentors in Canadian painting, Varley and Carr.<sup>60</sup> In the drawings "Bowen Island," "Rigg's Island Spit" and "The Jetty, Buccaneer Bay. 1 and 2," he refined the compositional strategies and structural approaches which had characterized much of his landscape work since 1940.<sup>61</sup> Again the emphasis was on the rhythmic relation of forms, directional movements across the picture plane and the creation of pictorial space out of structural elements. Of the oils on paper, Paul Duval wrote:

A summer spent at Buccaneer Bay produced some of the most powerful, significant and original landscape paintings produced in this country. They are the work of an artist who has been in no hurry to throw himself into the production of large scale canvases; they are also obviously the end result of much deep contemplation. The Buccaneer Bay landscapes are both vibrant and haunting. Their grave sonorous colors, often thickly pigmented, add lustre and emotional impact to the forms.<sup>62</sup>

This type of landscape, however, was not the only painting Shadbolt completed during his holiday. As his vision of nature was drawn into a tighter focus, he found "a new, original symbolic synthesis from the forest floor --with rib-cage-like structures of tree branches metamorphosed into bones."<sup>63</sup> In paintings such as "Image in Driftwood" and "Image in the Cedar Slash" a few curved and interlocking tree limbs are transformed into the partial remains of a human anatomy, one suggesting a reclining skeleton and the other a skeletal figure trapped

inside a cage of branches.<sup>64</sup> He described this recognition of anthropomorphic features in organic debris as "a vivid experience of malignant wilderness."<sup>65</sup> Reduced to its primordial state, nature was now seen as an impersonal and destructive force and the landscape became a kind of natural graveyard. Like the world of man the natural environment had been transformed by a malevolent power. While these two paintings indicate a return to symbolic content, they also reveal a greater degree of abstraction. At this point Shadbolt went beyond the representation of natural forms and began a deliberate and conscious dissection and reintegration of these elements into his own abstract conception of form.<sup>66</sup> In the series of works that developed out of these later landscapes he further pursued this idea of symbolic abstraction.

Before returning to Vancouver in the fall of 1947, Shadbolt spent the remainder of the summer studying animal and bird skeletons and Northwest Coast Indian art at the B. C. Provincial Museum in Victoria. During the next year he worked on a group of water colors and oils on paper which grew out of these museum sketches. Before examining individual works from this period, some mention should be made of Shadbolt's relation to the primitive art of the area. Indian totem poles, ceremonial masks and the buildings on Indian reservations frequently appeared in his work in the 1930's and early 1940's, but at that time

they were not used as a source of symbolic or abstract imagery. After 1947, however, Shadbolt grasped the greater significance of Northwest Coast Indian art as an expression of man's primitive fears and motivations, his superstitions and fundamental beliefs. It is notable that his wife, Doris Shadbolt, wrote an article in the same year on this topic. In it she remarked:

Now it is at this point that our generation and the primitives really come together. For we too, as we lose confidence in the capacity of our technological civilization to do anything but lead us further into our impasse, are feeling the urgent need of an art that is symbolic in its true sense, that can be for us the talisman of a new faith without which there is not will to live. Of all the symbolic arts the primitive embodies a statement of the most direct and impassioned response to the world and because of the very complexity of our problems it has an especial meaning to us. We have no desire to revert to the primitive, but in such art we find an emblem for the release we crave.<sup>67</sup>

While Shadbolt's own interest in primitive art developed out of close contact with a local native tradition, it had obvious parallels with the larger world of modern art. Throughout the twentieth-century, primitive art has been a powerful influence on Western painting and sculpture. Nevertheless, the popularity of Northwest Coast Indian art among modern artists dates only from the late 1930's. Two French surrealist painters, Kurt Seligmann and Wolfgang Paalen, helped promote interest in the primitive artifacts of these Indian cultures when they arrived in New York in the early 1940's.<sup>68</sup> The American artists particularly

attracted to this form of primitivism were Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb.<sup>69</sup> To quote Gottlieb from 1946:

If we profess kinship to the art of primitive man, it is because the feelings they expressed have a particular pertinence today. In times of violence, personal predilections for niceties of color and form seem irrelevant. All primitive expression reveals the constant awareness of powerful forces, the immediate presence of terror and fear, a recognition of the brutality of the natural world as well as the eternal insecurities of life. That these feelings are being experienced by many people throughout the world today is an unfortunate fact and to us an art that glosses over or evades these feelings is superficial and meaningless. That is why we insist on subject matter, a subject matter that embraces these feelings and permits them to be expressed.<sup>70</sup>

Although it is difficult to determine if Shadbolt knew of this interest in Northwest Coast Indian art in New York prior to his arrival there in the fall of 1948, it is obvious that he shared many of the sentiments expressed by Gottlieb.

In most of the paintings from this period, primitive motives play a secondary part to Shadbolt's preoccupation with animal and bird skeletons. He considered this type of imagery as a logical extension of the "bone" theme which began with the emaciated figures in "The Living Dead" and was continued through "The Dogs" and the later Buccaneer Bay landscapes of skeleton tree forms.<sup>71</sup> Like the primitive designs of the Indian artists, he sought a simple form capable of communicating strong feelings of terror and pathos. Through the suggestion of nature's continuous transformation of physical matter and the never-ending

struggle between life and death, Shadbolt believed that the skeletal form would have an enduring and emphatic impact on the spectator.<sup>72</sup> On the whole, the symbolic message emphasized in these pictures represented a sustained polemical attack or romantic outrage against a world fraught with danger and chaos. In "Goat's Skull" (1947) a grinning animal head suggests the paradoxical notion of living death.<sup>73</sup> A more distressed image appears in "Trapped Bird" (1948).<sup>74</sup> Here the bird skeleton has merged with a smashed machine while the outstretched wings of the hybrid creature are held captive by two tree branches in a sort of organic trap. Shadbolt further commented on these works in an article in 1951:

Following the war I was so moved socially by the increasing destruction of individualism in personality that I was straining to make relentless symbolic images of this 'state of man.' I was obsessed with tortured and emaciated forms, heraldic color and the strongest contrasts. My form, tending toward the skeletal, had become an angular wrack in which was trapped by violent image.<sup>75</sup>

Both skeletal images and Indian elements enabled Shadbolt to move a step closer to an abstract conception of picture-making. By focusing solely on a central image he freed the figurative element from a naturalistic setting and located it within a desolate vista of indeterminate space. For example, the image in "Dead Stag" (1947) is flattened against the picture plane by reducing its physical presence to a network of lines that can be read as a

two-dimensional pattern.<sup>76</sup> In this work a sense of spatial discomfort is imparted by the contorted posture of the carcass, its constriction within the borders of the picture, and the effect of the raised hindquarters pressing the skull into the confined space of the lower righthand corner. Two other examples reveal some of the ways in which Shadbolt employed Indian elements to suit his own artistic purposes. In "Killer Birds" (1948), he incorporated the elongated stylized beaks and color patterning common to Kwakiutl raven masks to make the birds appear more predatory and also to emphasize the flat picture surface.<sup>77</sup> Like the bones of animals, the ritual mask offered a means of altering the literal appearance of forms in order to arrive at an abstract appreciation of fundamental structure. His long familiarity with these primitive artifacts allowed him to freely transform their features in order to create his own unique emotional, intellectual and physical image. In "Red Knight" (1947), he used a human type of Kwakiutl mask to suggest a face transfigured and dehumanized by anguish or fear.<sup>78</sup> As the title indicates, he further combined the Indian mask with the idea of a medieval knight.<sup>79</sup> The head and shoulders of the figure are adorned with fragments of abstract chevrons and color designs borrowed from armorial heraldry. These non-representational forms of archaic origin help remove the figure from the temporal world by suggesting a

vaguely defined timeless and mythological realm. Even the "bone" theme is present in this synthesized image; bands of bright colors alternate with darker forms which represent the skeleton of the figure. In fact, all of the elements in this picture are not constructed but deciphered --a subjective translation of objective facts into visual metaphors. The human form has been completely reduced to its essential parts: a mask and a skeleton dressed in military costume.

Shadbolt exhibited this series of symbolic paintings under the title of "Contemporary Images" in several one-man shows in 1948 and 1949. The first was held at the Laing Fine Art Galleries in Toronto in April 1948 and provoked a notable critical reaction. Pearl McCarthy of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* pronounced his work "both art and horror" and commented that some of the pictures could make people "scream in their sleep the next night."<sup>80</sup> *Time* reproduced the painting "Red Knight" with the following caption:

The usual tidy line-up of Canadian pine trees, ski slopes and autumn landscapes was not for Shadbolt. He painted bones--human bones, animal bones, bones of weird "robber birds"--all swept with bright colors and twisted into more shapes than a rumba-dancing eel.<sup>81</sup>

Paul Duval, art critic for *Saturday Night* gave extensive coverage to Shadbolt's work in several articles. In a review of the Canadian Group of Painters' Exhibition at

the Toronto Art Gallery in December 1947, he identified Shadbolt as one of the leading artists in British Columbia broadened his acclaim and expanded his analysis after Shadbolt's one-man show opened.<sup>82</sup> In his initial remarks, Duval placed Shadbolt in a pretigious line of descent:

Any great art produced in British Columbia has had to find its path into the Canadian consciousness the hard way. The noble carvings of the West Coast Indians were only recognized in the country of their birth after many of the best examples were housed abroad, where they were hailed among the finest of primitive works of art the world has known. The late Emily Carr, whose name is now spoken with respect and honor, found recognition only in the last years of her long and memorable life. Now, another original painter has matured in the West. His name is Jack Shadbolt.<sup>83</sup>

Duval went on to record the different stages of this artist's development and made a particular effort to explain the symbolic images which he felt would not be greeted with much appreciation by the general public. When the same exhibition opened at the Vancouver Art Gallery in July 1948, the local critics were generally unimpressed. One referred to the works as "sensationally blatant pictures" and another felt that Shadbolt had been "whipping up his emotions deliberately."<sup>84</sup> However, after Shadbolt held a one-man show at the Laurel Gallery (108 East 57th Street) in New York in September-October 1949, the Vancouver newspapers and *Saturday Night* emphasized the success of his American debut.<sup>85</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* now described him as "one of the Dominion's leading abstractionists" and featured the *Canadian Press* Release written by Fred Kerner

which summarized the reviews of the New York critics:

The magazine *Art News* called Shadbolt the "leading avant-garde artist" of the day in its review of the exhibition. *Pictures*, a monthly periodical, said it was "an auspicious American debut."

"It is stimulating to come across such a high degree of successful experimentation," *Pictures* added.

The daily press was lavish too, in its praise. The *New York Times* said that with all the painter's "concern for the minutiae of detail and technique, he never forgets the design as a whole." The *Herald-Tribune* said his work has "dynamic substance and remarkably penetrating color."

"Bold in execution, full-bodied in color and rich in texture," was the way the *New York Sun's* critic summed up the Shadbolt show.<sup>86</sup>

These three exhibitions of the "Contemporary Images" and the subsequent publicity they generated established Shadbolt's reputation as one of the important Canadian painters to emerge in the post-war period. In the following chapter, his position as an artist of regional and national stature will be further examined.

By mid-1948, Shadbolt decided to take a study leave from teaching in order to spend a year in the United States. He undoubtedly felt the need to escape from the isolated atmosphere of the West Coast and also to avoid falling into a stultifying or confining mode of expression. In a government application written in 1948, he listed some of the reasons why he wanted to work in New York:

1. To have access to the invaluable collections of the Museum of Natural History, the large Coast Indian collection, the other collections from primitive cultures, the animal, bird, fish, reptile and prehistoric animal skeletal forms.

2. To have access to the Metropolitan Museum, an opportunity to meditate over the medieval forms and the historic material in general.
3. To have a sharper contact with the political social scene at its core such as can only be experienced in a world centre like New York at this strategic time.
4. To fill a real need for contact at first hand with artists and critics who are similarly concerned with problems like my own and on a level which can offer a real pace-making. (It is difficult to avoid provincialism indefinitely in a centre as isolated from the main current of art as Vancouver).
5. A chance to concentrate on my own painting problems; while I have found teaching stimulating and rewarding, there are periods when its distractions and exhaustions tend to dissipate one's focus.<sup>87</sup>

The time spent in New York produced a new stage of development in Shadbolt's art. Like his visit to the United States in 1933, he had come at a crucial point in the history of American painting in the twentieth-century. By 1948, many of the artists who would later be termed Abstract Expressionists (also Action Painters or New York School), and others loosely associated with the birth of this new movement, had established themselves as the leading figures in the New York art world. The formal departures made by these artists introduced a new type of abstract painting that would come to dominate the North American art world in the 1950's. Such a timely exposure to the works of artists like Arshile Gorky, William Baziotes, Jackson Pollock, Hans Hofmann, Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb and Robert Motherwell enriched Shadbolt's understanding of the expressive potential of a post-cubist mode of

painterly abstraction. Ultimately, the stimulus provided by these artists resulted in Shadbolt's total acceptance of an "abstract attitude to form."<sup>88</sup>

## Notes

## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>The dates of Shadbolt's one-man shows were as follows: Vancouver Art Gallery--Oct. 1938, Oct. 1939, May 1940, Jan. 1941, Feb. 1942, Oct. 1942, March 1943, Feb. 1946, Feb. 1947, July 1948; University of British Columbia--Mar. 1941, April 1943, March 1947; and Laing Galleries--April 1948.

<sup>2</sup>"The problem of art is to express adequately the problem that exists in the mind--the world of experience. It is the difference between trying to make a photograph of a tree and trying to create a form that shall express our feelings about that tree" (Shadbolt quoted in William Colgate, *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1943), p. 193).

<sup>3</sup>University of B. C. Arts Centre Gallery, "J. L. Shadbolt: A Review of Paintings and Drawings, 1933-1950." A catalogue of an exhibition held in April 1950, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Jack L. Shadbolt, Personal Records, Document III (a copy of an application for government assistance prepared in New York in the fall of 1948, 12 pages), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968), p. 582.

<sup>7</sup>Document I, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plates 38, 143, 144.

<sup>9</sup>Document II, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form* Plate I.

<sup>11</sup>Reproduced, Vancouver Art Gallery, *Bulletin*, vol. IX (November 1941), cover page.

<sup>12</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form* Plates 25, 24.

<sup>13</sup>"In this phase I came to a lasting admiration for Signorelli, Pollaiuolo, Donatello, Michelangelo, Cosimo Tura, Pisanello and Breughel" (*In Search of Form*, p. 34).

<sup>14</sup>Reproduced, *Saturday Night*, Vol. LXXII, 5 January 1957, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 70.

<sup>16</sup>Document II, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Document I, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, In a lecture at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Shadbolt was quoted as describing Cezanne as a "Painter's painter, and difficult for the layman to understand. He dehumanizes his subject matter, reducing it to the elemental image. He does not create mood but builds as a mason builds--in color, architecturally" ("Shadbolt Traces Life of Cezanne," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 10 January 1942).

<sup>19</sup>Charles H. Scott, "Alert Vancouver Artist Showing Promise of Notable Career," *Vancouver Daily Province* 27 January 1940.

<sup>20</sup>"Anxiety over Canadian Art," 1 March 1941, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 66.

<sup>22</sup>Reproduced, *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 June 1941.

<sup>23</sup>"By 1942 had worked through the first rapture of Post-Impressionism and had now found my interest somewhere between an austere Florentine approach and a need for a certain psychological edge stemming from Picasso's *Guernica* and an increasing concern over the war situation" (Document III, p. 5.).

<sup>24</sup>Shadbolt quoted by Iris Smallwood, "Shadbolt Depicts Invasion of Vancouver," *Victoria Daily Times*, 17 October 1942.

<sup>25</sup>Reproduced, 3 drawings, "It Could Happen in Point Grey," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 1 October 1942, and 4 drawings, "Shadbolt," *New World Magazine* (Toronto), 1 March 1943.

<sup>26</sup>Document I, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>Reproduced, "Dental Clinic", Art Gallery of Toronto, *Bulletin* (Summer 1944), p. 12, and purchased along with "Poker Game": 2 paintings, "Camouflage Training, Kitsilano Beach" and "Camouflage Workshop, Point Grey",

28 cont'd reproduced in National Gallery of Canada, *Shadbolt* (Ottawa: National Gallery, 1969), Plates 4, 5. Other works from this period were listed in the catalogue National Gallery of Canada, *Canadian Army Art Exhibition* (Ottawa: National Gallery, 1944), p. 8.

29 T. H. W., "Mural Feature Gallery Display," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 10 May 1940.

30 Browni Wingate, "Speaking of Pictures," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 15 February 1942.

31 From a transcript of a lecture by Walter Abell, editor of *Canadian Art*, delivered at the Vancouver Art Gallery in the fall, 1943, in Shadbolt's Personal Records.

32 Reproduced, one panel, *Canadian Art*, Vol. 1 (June-July 1944), p. 221.

33 Personal Records and Charles H. Scott, "West Coast," *Canadian Art*, vol. 1 (April-May 1944), p. 170, "The street vistas with their backdrops of mountain and sky are convincingly rendered, while the figures have that touch of caricature wherein one recognizes the human comedy. The general effect of the color scheme is heavy, and the pattern busy. One could wish that the artist had been given more time for completion of the project in order that the form as a whole might move more easily."

34 Document I, p. 12.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Organized by the British Advisory Arts Committee and circulated in Canada in early 1945 by the National Gallery of Canada, *Canadian Art*, Vol. II (February-March 1945), p. 133.

37 Document I, p. 12.

38 Shadbolt quoted in Richard Lawrence, "The Man Who Paints Nightmares," *Mayfair Magazine* (Toronto), December 1951, p. 104.

39 Document I, p. 14.

40 "Jack Shadbolt," *Canadian Art*, Vol. III (March-April 1946), p. 98.

<sup>41</sup>Reproduced, "Tank in a Bomb Crater," *Canadian Art*, above reference, p. 97, and National Gallery, Shadbolt, "Bombed Building," Plate 6.

<sup>42</sup>Scott, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>"Canadian Artists," *World Affairs*, April 1947, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 154.

<sup>48</sup>J. Barry Lord, "The New Figure," *Canadian Art*, vol. XXI (July-August 1964), p. 197, and Shadbolt, *In Search of Form*, p. 79, Plate 67.

<sup>49</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 156.

<sup>50</sup>Document III, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup>"Great Britain," *Art Since 1945* (New York: Washington Square, 1962), p. 208.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 208-217.

<sup>53</sup>"Concerning American Painting," p. 20.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Timothy Hilton, *Picasso* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 249.

<sup>56</sup>Reproduced, *Bildende Kunst* (Berlin), 2 January 1948.

<sup>57</sup>Reproduced, *Saturday Night*, 1 May 1948, p. 4, and water color version, *In Search of Form*, Plate 139.

<sup>58</sup>The only mention of this influence on Shadbolt was made by Alan Jarvis, "Canada," *Biennale di Venezia* XXVIII, 1956, p. 278.

<sup>59</sup>Document I, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plates 54, 55, 56, 57.

<sup>62</sup>"The Jack Shadbolt Show," *Saturday Night*, 8 May 1948, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup>Document I, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup>Reproduced, *Canadian Art*, Vol. VI (Autumn 1948), p. 30.

<sup>65</sup>Document II, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup>"To produce his enduring image the artist first lives with the facts until he understands their significance and then, gradually, by directing the emphasis, .... by condensing the multitude of individual details, .... by reinforcing suggestions of relationships and rhythms, .... by a process of abstracting nature, .... he lays bare the essential image" (Shadbolt, "Metamorphosis of an Image," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VI [Autumn 1948], p. 30).

<sup>67</sup>"Our Relation to Primitive Art," *Canadian Art*, Vol. V (Autumn 1947), p. 15.

<sup>68</sup>Dore Ashton, *The Life and Times of the New York School* (London: Adams and Dart, 1972), pp. 115-116.

<sup>69</sup>Sandler, *American Painting*, p. 68.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>71</sup>Document I, p. 17.

<sup>72</sup>Shadbolt, *In Search of Form*, p. 38.

<sup>73</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 26.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, Plate 31.

<sup>75</sup>Donald W. Buchanan, "Shadbolt Explores a World of Roots and Seeds," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VII (Spring 1951), p. 114.

<sup>76</sup>Reproduced, *In Search of Form*, Plate 29.

<sup>77</sup>Reproduced, National Gallery, *Shadbolt*, Plate 14.

<sup>78</sup>Reproduced in color, William Withrow, *Contemporary Canadian Painting* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 45.

<sup>79</sup>Lawrence, "The Man Who Paints Nightmares," p. 59.

- <sup>80</sup>"New Images By Shadbolt Are Macabre," 3 May 1948.
- <sup>81</sup>"Painted Bones," 17 May 1948, p. 20.
- <sup>82</sup>"Canadian Group Exhibition," 13 December 1947,  
p. 21, "The Jack Shadbolt Show," 8 May 1948, p. 17.
- <sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, last reference.
- <sup>84</sup>Clare Gellatly, "Indian Forms Give Artist Wide  
Scope," *Vancouver Sun*, 22 May 1948, and Constance Mackay,  
"Shadbolt's Art Shows New Trend," *Vancouver News-Herald*,  
19 July 1948.
- <sup>85</sup>"Thunderbird Risen," *Saturday Night*, 25 October  
1949, p. 25.
- <sup>86</sup>"New York Critics Praise B. C. Artist," 4 November  
1949.
- <sup>87</sup>Document III, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>88</sup>Document II, p. 2.

### CHAPTER III

#### CUBISM AND SURREALISM: ORIGINS OF SHADBOLT'S CYCLE OF NATURE PAINTINGS, 1949 - 1955

Shadbolt, upon his departure for New York in the fall of 1948, was no longer the young, inexperienced artist he had been when he first visited the United States in 1933-34. He was now nearing forty years of age and in every sense a well-trained professional teacher and painter. The advance of his art over those intervening years had come as a result of his dedication and discipline, and it seemed unlikely that any radical change would occur during this brief study period. Nevertheless, Shadbolt's style of painting underwent considerable modification once he was exposed to the *avant-garde* forms of abstraction which had been developing in New York since the late 1930's. However, his ability to easily assimilate the new kinds of subject matter and techniques practiced by the younger generation of New York artists was due largely to the fact that his own artistic evolution had paralleled many of the recent changes in American painting. Consequently, several useful comparisons can be drawn between Shadbolt and many of the members of what would later be called the "New York School."<sup>1</sup> Like Shadbolt, most of the American

artists in this group were around forty years of age and had progressed over much of the same terrain; the social realism and regionalism of the Depression era had been superseded by a form of late-cubist abstraction derived primarily from Picasso. Following the example of Picasso, they all sought to emphasize the two-dimensional character of the picture surface while still communicating a message of social relevance--an expression of the elemental, profound and universal in human experience.

On the whole, the only thing that distinguished Shadbolt's approach from that of the New York artists was a time-lag of about ten years. While his use of "symbolic abstraction" did not begin until 1947, a similar conception of abstract painting was already popular in New York by the late 1930's.<sup>2</sup> By 1948, however, the leading figures in New York had begun to alter this form of Cubism through the introduction of new ideas and techniques derived from the Surrealist *emigres* who had resided in the United States during the war. Out of this synthesis of *avant-garde* European styles a new type of abstract painting would emerge. And, by 1952, the work of the 'New York School' was collectively recognized under the title of 'Abstract Expressionism', the first American artistic movement to achieve the status of an international style.

Shadbolt's visit to New York coincided with the tremendous creative upsurge which led to the birth of

Abstract Expressionism. Yet this movement had not surfaced by 1948 and neither Shadbolt nor most of the contemporary critics or observers recognized the beginning of a new style of painting at that time.<sup>3</sup> What was evident, however, was an atmosphere of artistic ferment; on a number of different fronts, American artists were experimenting with extreme forms of abstraction. In order to isolate the specific influences and to evaluate the changes in Shadbolt's style after his one-year stay in New York, it is necessary to examine in some detail the various kinds of abstract painting he encountered. Wherever possible or relevant his own response to the work of particular American artists will be cited.

When Shadbolt arrived in New York in September 1948, he was eager to investigate the changes that had taken place in American painting since his visit fifteen years earlier. Before leaving Vancouver he had already heard of the exciting developments occurring in New York from former students returning after study in the United States.<sup>4</sup> And, in the autumn of that year, he was fortunate to be able to view the first important exhibitions of contemporary American art held in the post-war period: in particular, the recently resumed Whitney Annual of American Art, the first section of the American acquisitions of the Museum of Modern Art, and the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art retrospective American survey.<sup>5</sup> These shows presented

him with a broad cross-section of the latest styles and some historical perspective on the evolution of these trends since the end of the Depression. A keen and knowledgeable observer, Shadbolt's recorded impressions offer a valuable insight in the divergent approaches practiced by New York artists during the 1940's.<sup>6</sup>

By 1948, social realism and regionalism--the two principal movements of the Depression era which had nurtured Shadbolt's own early artistic development--no longer attracted any serious followers. A younger group of painters had come of age in New York during the intervening period who had more completely absorbed the vanguard styles of European modernism. At one extreme was a form of geometrical abstraction based on the theories Neoplasticism, Constructivism and the Bauhaus. Represented by a group called the American Abstract Artists, the "pure abstractionists", as Shadbolt referred to them, closely imitated the non-objective painting of Mondrian, Leger, Miro, Kandinsky, Klee and Arp.<sup>7</sup> While this geometric variant of Cubism remained popular throughout the 1940's, the majority of New York artists considered it overly refined and academic, as restrictive a mode of expression as social realism and regionalism.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond question the most popular approach to abstract painting was a personal and eclectic mingling of different modern styles. As with Shadbolt, the living

artist most admired in New York from the late 1930's onwards was Picasso.<sup>9</sup> The reasons for this singular influence are fairly clear. Picasso, more than any other modern master, had escaped confinement within a single stylistic movement. Each decade he found new ways of enlarging the scope of his art: the fracture of analytical Cubism was superseded by the planarity, color harmony and logic of synthetic Cubism; classical and archaic elements gave way to the violence of Expressionism; and, from Surrealism, came a deeper probing of the human personality and the destruction of rational association. In effect, Picasso constantly discovered new means with which to humanize and monumentalize the character of Cubism and, in the process, made himself the consummate model of eclecticism. The strong sense of individualism ingrained in North American artists, as indicated by their general unwillingness to submit to a programmatic aesthetic, partially explains their attraction to Picasso. More importantly, it was Picasso who taught artists like Shadbolt and the New York group that it was possible to maintain a humanistic content without violating the formal principles of modern picture-making. *Guernica*, in particular, expressed Picasso's commitment to social content in art, content meaning not the literal depiction of actual tragedy but a transcendental assertion of the elemental, profound and universal in human life and

emotions. Inspired by these ideals, the North American imitators of Picasso sought their own personal form of symbolic abstraction.

While Shadbolt had gained a knowledge of Picasso's method from his study with Lhote in 1937-38, many of the New York artists learned the fundamentals of cubist composition from Hans Hofmann, now recognized as the most influential teacher of modern art in America. When Hofmann emigrated to New York from Germany in 1932, he brought with him a broad knowledge of *avant-garde* styles--Symbolism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism and Cubism--which he imparted to most of the New York artists who became the leaders of the post-war generation.<sup>10</sup> Irving Sandler has outlined Hofmann's basic theories of abstract painting:

In brief, he taught that an artist must take into account simultaneously three factors: nature and its laws; the artist's personality, spiritual intuition, and imagination; and the medium and its inherent laws. The painter was to begin by visualizing volumes and voids in nature, then to translate them into planes of color in accord with the nature of the picture surface, that is, by flattening solids and filling voids. The planes were to be organized into "complexes"; the total effect of a picture issued from the inter-relationship of the complexes, which are always more significant than the elements themselves. What makes the relations consequential is the sense of volume, or plasticity, with which the planes are reinvested while remaining flat.<sup>11</sup>

Although Shadbolt was not formally enrolled in Hofmann's classes, he obviously found Hofmann's ideas extremely important. Writing in 1948, he acknowledged "the powerful influence of Hans Hofmann's teaching among

younger American painters."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Shadbolt's analysis of the nature of abstract painting, taken from the same source, reveals his indebtedness to Hofmann's theories:

The abstract movement logically throws greater emphasis on the purely physical aspects of shape, texture and color. It also induces more clearly defined interaction between areas, and the liberation of color from descriptive context or localized hair-split tints, into broad schematic interplay. These factors amount to a greater concern for the formal aspects of pictorial construction,--a recognition that intrinsically a picture is the translation of the visual aspects of three-dimensional reality onto a two-dimensional canvas which is in itself a created object, independent of nature, and therefore demanding its own independent laws of surface appropriate to its flatness. These laws are largely concerned with the "real" space of overlapping, interlocking and integrating planes as compared with the "illusionary" depth space of long perspectival vistas.<sup>13</sup>

Hofmann's instruction in the methods of abstraction had considerable impact on the development of Canadian painting in the 1950's. In fact, Shadbolt was only one of a number of Canadian artists who came under Hofmann's influence around this time. In 1947, the first Canadian artists to attend Hofmann's classes included Alexandra Luke and Ron Lambert from Oshawa, Hortense Gordon from Hamilton, and two Vancouver artists, Joe Plaskett and Lionel Thomas. Over the next few years, Hofmann taught J. W. G. Macdonald, one of Shadbolt's early teachers, Donald Jarvis, another graduate of the Vancouver School of Art, and Takao Tanabe, a Winnipeg artist who moved to Vancouver shortly after his return to Canada.<sup>14</sup> All of

these Canadian artists, including Shadbolt, became leading figures in their respective locales in the following decade. By then a study period in the United States had become a common practice for aspiring, young Canadian artists.

Shadbolt's knowledge of Hofmann's theories enlarged his understanding of the formal process of abstraction, but contributed little to the actual style of his paintings. The American artists who had the greatest influence on Shadbolt, however, were those most closely associated with Surrealism. More than any other single factor, it had been the unexpected arrival of the European Surrealists at the outbreak of the war which eventually brought about the emergence of an independent and vigorous school of painting in New York in the late 1940's.<sup>15</sup>

After Paris fell to the Germans in 1940, many of the leading members of the School of Paris sought refuge in the United States. By 1942 the more prominent figures in New York included: Breton, Chagall, Dali, Ernst, Leger, Lipchitz, Masson, Matta, Mondrian, Ozenfant, Paalen, Seligmann and Tanguy. As the majority of these foreign artists were affiliated with Surrealism and numbered among them the movement's leader Andre Breton, it is not surprising that this group quickly came to dominate the New York art scene. The Surrealists made their presence felt by virtue of their sense of group identity, a flair for publicity, and an ability to generate excitement and attract patrons.

Despite the lack of a cafe society such as they were used to in Paris, they remained in contact with each other by congregating around the few private dealers exhibiting their work. These outlets, mainly the Julien Levy Gallery and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery, not only provided considerable exposure but allowed the Surrealists the opportunity to meet and communicate their ideas to the younger generation of New York artists.<sup>16</sup>

For the most part, the American artists were not interested in the style of Surrealism favored by Breton-- the academic, illusionistic and literary art of Dali, Magritte and Delvaux.<sup>17</sup> Unwilling to abandon the pictorial principles of Cubism, they selectively absorbed from the whole cluster of ideas surrounding Surrealism certain ideas relating picture-making to unconscious impulses and fantasies through the method of automatism. Originally derived from Freud's theory of free association, the concept of "pure psychic automatism" had been one of the first principles of Surrealism. It was largely ignored during the 1930's, however, and only the interest of marginal Surrealists like Matta and Masson brought about its revival in New York in the early 1940's.<sup>18</sup> Of all the exiled Surrealists, Matta most actively promoted a return to automatism. He viewed it as a technique for liberating images trapped in the unconscious mind and, in 1942, organized a group to study automatism which included Gorky,

Motherwell and Pollock. Within several years other American artists like Rothko, Gottlieb and Baziotes began experimenting with this method of generating images.<sup>19</sup> While Matta provided these Americans with an introduction to automatism, it was the example of Masson's seemingly improvisational paintings that had the greatest influence. Apart from Miro, whose influence was equally apparent, Masson was one of the only members of Surrealism to retain a high regard for the formal and structural character of Cubism. Although he occasionally practiced a type of automatic writing or drawing, Masson "insisted that a painting had a plastic value which lay in the realm of visual art and was independent of the value of the ideas and images brought up from the subconscious."<sup>20</sup>

Like Masson, the New York painters felt that automatism was not sufficient in itself but served rather as a useful technique in the creation of vital and spontaneous images. Motherwell, writing in 1944, changed the term "psychic automatism" to "plastic automatism" and commented: "Plastic automatism...as employed by modern masters, like Masson, Miro and Picasso, is actually very little a question of the unconscious. It is much more a plastic weapon with which to invent new forms."<sup>21</sup> Irving Sandler has summarized the reasons why the New York artists sought to modify the concept of automatism as follows:

Gorky, Hofmann, Pollock, De Kooning, Baziotes, Rothko and Gottlieb were all occupied with "plastic" qualities; they wanted to employ automatism--to arrive at their forms freely and directly--but at the same time they desired to cultivate the pictorial values threatened by this technique--the structural cogency and painterly finesse that they admired in the works of Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, and Miro. For it was from these and other modern masters that the New Yorkers derived their awareness of quality in art, their conception<sup>22</sup> of the modern picture and how it should project.

Automatism, by giving precedence to process over conception, reversed the order of values in abstract painting and, as a result, undermined the notion that abstract art has its origin in an intellectually derived concept of form. Furthermore, the New York artists realized that total automatism put good and bad art on the same level by making all art a self-expressive function like dreams or make-believe instead of a hard-won intellectual advance. Consequently, these American painters sought to retain a discernible object in their pictures or figurative elements which could be interpreted as a kind of subject matter or content. Most found a temporary solution to this problem through the use of various types of mythological references; first, by incorporating elements from archaic and primitive art forms in order to create their own archetypal imagery; and, later, by freely abstracting from organic forms in order to develop a kind of nature mythology. Used in this fashion, mythological references functioned like a control mechanism with which to focus the shapes and patterns that flowed from the artist's

unconscious mind.<sup>23</sup> Once the automatic gesture or doodle released the spontaneous and random flow of images, the artist could then recognize connections with archetypal forms or organic configurations and produce a more controlled sort of design which had vague, ambiguous mythological overtones.

In general, the Surrealists spurned mythic references, preferring instead to illustrate dreams, hallucinations or other psychological experiences. One of their expressed desires, however, was to eradicate the influence of civilization by awakening man's knowledge of his primitive instincts. By introducing the New York artists to some of the theories of modern psychology, particularly those of Freud and Jung, the Surrealists offered the Americans a theoretical or speculative justification for the discovery in the unconscious mind of the memory residue of the innocent primitive in modern man.<sup>24</sup>

During the early 1940's the New York artists who made use of mythic figures or made reference to primitive or archaic mythology in the titles of their works included: Gottlieb, Rothko, Newmann, Pollock, Baziotes, Stamos and Hofmann.<sup>25</sup> Their romantic preoccupation with myths owed as much to Jung's speculative psychology about archetypes and the collective unconscious as it did to Picasso's use of the Minotaur and other Greco-Roman mythological motives

in the 1930's. Pollock had undergone Jungian Analysis at one time and a number of his works from 1942-44 have mythic overtones relating them to the Greek legend of Psyche. In those same years Rothko was equally absorbed in the Oedipus myth. Yet Greco-Roman mythology was only one source of inspiration. In their search for more expressive archetypal imagery many of these American painters became interested in the art of primitive cultures, primarily those of Mexican and American origin. Both archaic and primitive art were considered as expressions of elemental truth in the form of universal symbols and, thereby, represented a tangible depiction of the psychological background of mankind.<sup>26</sup> None of these artists, however, copied specific motives from either of these sources. Although Gottlieb titled his works 'Pictographs' and Newmann referred to his as 'Ideographic' pictures, what they were attempting to do was to create new forms of expression that were analogous to those of primitive man. As Rothko wrote in 1943:

Our presentation of these myths, however, must be on our own terms, which are at once more primitive and more modern than the myths themselves--more primitive because we seek the primeval and atavistic roots of the idea rather than the graceful classical versions: more modern than the myths themselves because we must redescribe their implications through our own experience.<sup>27</sup>

On the one hand, these New York artists employed primitive references to assert the importance of a meaningful content, the thematic elements they considered "tragic and timeless"

such as fertility, violence, birth and death.<sup>28</sup> And on the other, they used primitivist referents as both a justification for relegating their art to a direct emotional plane and as a reason for a lack of surface finish or crudity of appearance.

Shadbolt, working in isolation on the West Coast, had arrived at somewhat similar conclusions. In the immediate post-war years, he had re-evaluated the significance of Northwest Coast Indian art and had made his own attempt to incorporate primitive elements into his paintings. Like the American artists, he realized that primitive forms offered a simple method for emphasizing the two-dimensional surface of the canvas and represented a powerful expression of human emotions, fears and fundamental beliefs. Prior to his New York visit, Shadbolt's primitive references were used in connection with allegorical and metaphorical ideas, as in "Killer Birds" and "Red Knight", and did not have the mysterious or ambiguous character of the work done by American artists. The difference between Shadbolt's series of "contemporary images" from 1947-48 and the myth-inspired paintings of the New York artists from the early 1940's was less a matter of intent, which was clearly similar, and more a product of working methods. Up to this point, Shadbolt was still confined to the world of objective reality in that his images were drawn from actual artifacts or were literal depictions of things seen. The New York

artists, however, used automatism as a device for generating a new vocabulary of ambiguous and abstract forms that only vaguely resembled primitive motives or objects in the visible world. Shadbolt eventually adopted the same procedure but not until he had learned more about primitive art and had gained a greater knowledge of mythic concepts. During his first four months in New York, he studied a wide range of primitive artifacts and spent a semester enrolled in the New School for Social Research in a course examining the development of myth patterns in literature.<sup>29</sup>

The incorporation of mythic or primitive references by the New York painters represented the first efforts to unite the Surrealist's method of automatism with the infrastructure of Cubism.<sup>30</sup> By 1945, however, many of these artists began to experiment with a type of organic abstraction frequently described as 'biomorphism'.<sup>31</sup> Although Kandinsky, Picasso and Klee had all used abstract organic forms at one point, the principal originators of this style belonged to Surrealism. From the mid-1920's onwards, biomorphic forms appear in the work of Arp, Ernst, Tanguy, Miro, Masson and Matta. Biomorphism appealed to the Americans not only for its ambiguous and sexually evocative imagery but also because it allowed them the freedom to use the improvisational gestures and accidental effects which invested their paintings with a specifically

personal character. As with their primitivist or mythic paintings, the New York artists used organic forms as their point of reference or control mechanism. In the preliminary stages, the artist creates shapes and patterns in no way formed by reason or logic and discovers from these configurations some relation to human, animal, floral or insect-like forms. In his essay, "The Biomorphs '40's", Lawrence Alloway commented:

Particular cases of resemblance are not interesting: the point is the identity of everything with its simultaneous phases of seeding, sprouting, growing, loving, fighting, decaying, rebirth. The impression is one of a natural and personal abundance, in opposition to geometric or figurative art. The desire for a nuanced and subjective imagery was manifested in paintings that did not subordinate the artist's use of paint to a tidy and cleaned up end-state. On the contrary, rich meanings were located within the creative act itself, so that the process-record itself is sensitized. Biomorph art depends in part on the depiction of beings and places, but also on the enactment of the work itself. The artist's gestures are image-making and keep their identity as physical improvisations beyond the point of completion.<sup>32</sup>

In various ways biomorphism signalled a transformation in the artist's conception of nature. The discoveries of science and technology had expanded man's knowledge of the new and mysterious worlds that exist beyond the normal comprehension of reality. Microscopy, in particular, provided a close-up view of nature which revealed a swarming jungle of complex shapes and formations existing below the ordinary scale of human vision. Such a penetration into the heart of nature had great appeal for artists

as it opened the door to endless unknown and virgin worlds engaged in the process of creation--a parallel condition to that of the artist similarly occupied with a creative or formative process. Viewed in this way, the world of nature becomes an infinite source of organic forms and the pastoral experience is replaced by a more intimate participation with the inner life of natural phenomena.

Biomorphism was the final stage the New York painters passed through before they reached the mature and individual styles that identified them as Abstract Expressionists.<sup>33</sup> It reached its peak of importance between 1945 and 1948, the years immediately preceding Shadbolt's visit to New York. During this period, Rothko, Baziotes, Gottlieb and Stamos found their biomorphic forms in underwater life. They all used marine forms to suggest a fantasy world filled with aquatic organisms which were made to represent protagonists in an animistic nature myth.<sup>34</sup> Shadbolt recognized in these artists the importance of "primordial nature symbols" and grouped them all together, along with the Surrealist artists Seliger, Heliker and Paalen and the British sculptor Henry Moore, under the title of the "neo-geological school."<sup>35</sup> He described this style of painting as using "forms or images in some sort of talismanic communion in the field of the picture" and viewed this as "an assertion of a basic longing for earth-communion."<sup>36</sup> In the same article on American

painting written in 1948, the only quotation Shadbolt included was by Mark Rothko:

An atavistic memory, a prophetic dream, may exist side by side with the casual events of today... One recognizes the principles and passions of organisms...Unlike the world of the Greeks, the world we live in is not static and neither is it discontinuous. What we know and study is forms in transition.<sup>37</sup>

What Shadbolt recognized in these artists' work was an attempt to go beyond conventional notions of time, space and being in order to establish a link between the world of natural organisms and the psychic life of the artist. Another source of this kind of abstract sign language was Paul Klee. Klee's combination of painterly and graphic forms and his suggestion of fantastic or mysterious worlds influenced many of the New York artists and also left its mark on Shadbolt. Shadbolt wrote the following about Klee:

There are occasional painters of rare intuitive gift who cannot seem to see an everyday fact except through the magic of revelation. Of such as mercurial vision was the genius of Paul Klee and his example is of the greatest consequence....He has re-instated the magical for us; and he has taught us to look in unexpected places for new sources of inspiration, even in the unknown corners of our minds.<sup>38</sup>

For Shadbolt, however, the single most important figure among the many New York artists attracted to this mixture of primitivism and nature mythology was Arshile Gorky. Although only a few references to Gorky appear in all of Shadbolt's subsequent notes and published statements,

it is evident that the new style of abstraction practiced by Shadbolt after his return to Vancouver owed a great deal to Gorky's influence. At the time of his exposure to this American painter's work in 1948-49, Gorky had become the most recognized artist among those later identified as belonging to the New York School.<sup>39</sup> In early 1948, following a series of personal tragedies, Gorky had committed suicide. The public attention aroused by his sudden death resulted in numerous exhibitions which gave Shadbolt the opportunity to thoroughly acquaint himself with the different stages of Gorky's artistic development.

Like most of the founding members of Abstract Expressionism, Gorky's style in the 1930's was heavily indebted to the masters of the School of Paris--Picasso, Miro, Matisse, Leger and Mondrian.<sup>40</sup> By 1942 he began to incorporate Miro's abstract organic forms with a loosely brushed or expressionistic handling of surface texture akin to Picasso's heavy pigmentation in *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932).<sup>41</sup> About the same time Gorky came under the influence of Matta's ideas concerning automatism and discovered Kandinsky's improvisational paintings from 1911-14. From this mingling of sources, Gorky developed his own form of biomorphism in which Cubism provided the abstract conception of pictorial structure while Surrealism legitimized the expression of emotional states of mind through a process of manic doodling.

What distinguished Gorky's work from Surrealists such as Miro and Matta, however, was his spontaneous and poetical interpretation of nature. As Breton wrote in 1945, Gorky was "of all the Surrealist artists, the only one who maintains a direct contact with nature--sits down to paint *before her*."<sup>42</sup> Gorky saw nature as an unlimited supply of form suggestions which he could filter and transform according to his own psychic moods. By looking beneath the surface of nature Gorky discovered a mysterious world engaged in a never-ending struggle between life and death. In this close-up view, according to Elaine de Kooning, Gorky

found in the contours of weeds and foliage, a fantastic terrain, pitted with bright craters of colors which he let swim isolated on the white paper while a labyrinthine pencil line, never stopping, created dizzy, tilted perspectives that catapulted the horizons to the top of the page. Then he focused more minutely, staring down into the hearts of flowers to come up with magnified stamens and pistils, aggressive as weapons, with petals like arching claws, leaves like pointed teeth and stems like spears.<sup>43</sup>

Shadbolt's work after his return to the West Coast in 1949 reflected the influence of Gorky more than that of any other New York artist. His paintings were now entirely devoted to the theme of "the growth cycle of nature" and his approach to the natural world could be described in almost the same terms as that of Gorky.<sup>44</sup> In an article which appeared in *Canadian Art* in 1951, Donald W. Buchanan quoted Shadbolt as saying that he found "the perfect, indirectly symbolic images", he was

seeking, "in the birth and struggle under the earth to break through in the flowering and return to earth of plants--or in the drama of the minute life among the grass stems."<sup>45</sup>

Gorky, however, represented only one source in what Shadbolt referred to as his "return to the heart of nature."<sup>46</sup> Gorky's style of organic abstraction closely resembled the metaphorical nature painting of Graham Sutherland, the English artist much admired by Shadbolt when he was stationed in London at the end of the war. Both Gorky and Sutherland viewed nature as a poetic realm in which natural objects assume a powerful resemblance to human life. Sutherland's 'thorn' paintings which began around 1945 were filled with disquieting objects and an atmosphere of sinister mystery. In these works, he created totemic figures that assume the form of nature-idols while the prickly tangle of thorns and spurs convey a sense of nature's malevolent power.<sup>47</sup> Gorky also saw the natural world as a basically hostile environment and populated his paintings with aggressive forms engaged in some kind of combat, encounter or awareness of each other. For both of these artists, the fragmentary remembrance of natural forms aroused feelings or emotional responses which transformed the original object into a complex figure that appears vaguely familiar but cannot be exactly

deciphered. In essence, their paintings imply the existence of a primitive animism or nature mythology and can be seen as representing the pictorial equivalents of the abounding phallic vitality of the natural world.

On the whole, it is difficult to distinguish Gorky's influence on Shadbolt from that of Sutherland. Both of these artists showed Shadbolt the way toward a poetical and lyrical interpretation of nature through a form of cubist abstraction. Gorky, however, deserves credit for introducing Shadbolt to the idea of looking under the surface of nature at the minute life forms existing below the normal scale of vision. Furthermore, Gorky's use of automatic procedures gave his paintings a more improvisational and spontaneous appearance, thereby providing Shadbolt with an example of how to incorporate accidental effects as a means of giving his paintings a fresh and original character. In contrast, Sutherland's method was more conscious and predetermined and the modelling of his forms maintained a greater illusion of spatial depth. Under Gorky's influence, Shadbolt learned to place his images in an extremely shallow space and to organize his compositions into complex configurations of interlocking and interpenetrating shapes which created a kind of all-over pattern.

While Gorky's biomorphic abstraction was a significant influence, Shadbolt was a sufficiently talented and

independent artist to avoid mere imitation. Rather, he considered Gorky a valuable source in his own attempt to discover a personal direction within the larger context of abstract painting in New York. Compared to Gorky, the work of Shadbolt reveals formal similarities in terms of compositional and design elements yet some important differences are evident in respect to thematic content. Like most of the Surrealists, Gorky was preoccupied with the

drama of sex, which was projected in the interaction of erotic signs: softly rounded and yielding shapes and pudenda-like crevices that evoke a warm, tender voluptuousness, and hard, bony thorn and claw-like protuberances that suggest hostile, even cruel, phallic aggression.<sup>48</sup>

In the series of paintings done between 1949 and 1955, Shadbolt frequently interpreted nature as a hostile environment. And, in several instances, he used sharply pointed shapes which seem to penetrate or forcefully intrude into softer, more pliable forms. In works such as "Expansion of Seed" (1949) and "Dark Fruition" (1952), such contrasting shapes bear some distant resemblance to sexual organs but this is as close as he came to the overt eroticism of Gorky.<sup>49</sup> In general, Shadbolt was more inclined to suggest the formative power of nature through the idea of a ritual cycle than to specifically allude to human sexuality. He described his symbolic and poetic content as an expression of his desire to maintain contact with the forces of nature

and as "a paraphrase of our human need for communion, working itself out through strange and compulsive rituals of time, season, growth, encounter, decay, and rebirth."<sup>50</sup>

Another aspect of Shadbolt's work which distinguished it from Gorky was the fact that much of his inspiration and imagery was deeply rooted in the intrinsic mysticism of Northwest Coast Indian art with which he was closely acquainted. In many of his paintings he conjured up an image of nature as a place inhabited with supernatural spirits, a world filled with mythological "presences". The vaguely organic forms in works like "At the Red Rock" (1950), "Emblems after Fire" (1950), and "Presences after Fire" (1953), assume the quality of a medicine object, a thing of magical properties, engaged in an unconscious, mysterious drama.<sup>51</sup> A more specific reference to primitive objects appears in two paintings from 1952, "Invaders" and "Trophies", where floral designs, in particular pointed leaves, are used to suggest tribal spears, shields and masks.<sup>52</sup> Other works from this period from 1949 to 1955 suggest a kind of totemic affinity between plants, animals and insects. For example, in "Birds in Rock Caves" (1954) and "Transformations along a Hedge" (1954), the shapes of the birds are arranged to resemble their surroundings so that a bird looks like a rock or a tree branch.<sup>53</sup> All of these works are composed of colors, primarily earth tones, and textures that allude to the organic materials of the

West Coast. Writing in 1955, Shadbolt summarized the variety of ways he and other artists used primitivist elements:

There is evidence that we long for some dawn-of-the-world ritual communion to offset our sophisticated complexity. We see it in our wish to show the canvas as matter in the rough state of formation, in our exploration of time-weathered effects and textured surfaces suggesting the reality of nature, in our creation of ancient-seeming calligraphies reminiscent of rock-scourings or runic inscriptions. We seek forms or themes of ritualistic or cabalistic mystery, cross sections showing fossil remains or cell-growth suggestions. These atavistic seekings lead us to prefer erosion as a technique. Whether erosion gives us the nostalgic cave-womb or the enigmatically marked impervious wall of the canvas, its use expresses the desire to be at one with primordial nature.<sup>54</sup>

Between 1949 and 1955, Shadbolt produced a highly unified body of work devoted to this central theme of the ritual cycle of nature. During this period he completely abandoned the use of oil paint on canvas, preferring instead to work only on paper with a rapid medium such as watercolor, casein, ink or gouache. His previous experience with watercolor and oil on paper enabled him to skillfully utilize the subtle nuances of tone and transparent effects offered by these fluid media, and, at the same time, gave him the freedom to explore a more improvisational approach to the act of painting. In fact, it was the spontaneous and gestural qualities of these later paintings which most accurately marked the development of Shadbolt's new style of abstraction.

Shadbolt arrived at this form of improvisational

abstraction as a result of his contact with those New York artists who had been influenced by the Surrealist method of automatism. Gorky, in particular, had shown him how to incorporate seemingly random and gestural brushstrokes without sacrificing the general structural and compositional characteristics of Cubism. As a consequence of his respect for these formal qualities, Shadbolt strongly disapproved of the extreme form of automatism practiced by Jackson Pollock. In 1947 Pollock had abandoned conventional brushwork for a technique called 'drip-painting', which Shadbolt had the opportunity to examine when these works were first exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery the following year. In 1948 Shadbolt commented on Pollock's radical approach to abstraction:

We have Jackson Pollock admitting that he lays his canvas on the floor, works on his hands and knees like an Indian over his sand picture, walks around it, dropping paint on it, working from no rigidly predetermined concept but sensing his image as the lush scumble accumulates suggestions of form. It is claimed that the image which derives from this so-called organic process is a true plastic image which could only exist in terms of the medium itself.<sup>55</sup>

Although Shadbolt agreed with Pollock that "the initial impulse should come from the medium itself", he favored the more conscious, aesthetic rationale of Hans Hofmann:

When the canvas reaches this 'hot' state of image suggestion, the artist has two alternatives; either to follow at random each wayward evocation in a procedure that must be charged, finally, with emotional irresponsibility; or, as Hofmann's method

implies, sensing the plastic demands of the palpable image and placing it under increasingly disciplined tension until, finally, the whole leaves whimsically far behind, reaching simultaneous plastic scale and magnitude of meaning.<sup>56</sup>

In a later statement, written for the journal of the California School of Art while he was a guest instructor in San Francisco in the summer of 1953, Shadbolt reaffirmed his opposition to extreme forms of gestural abstraction:

I see no particular virtue in spreading oleaginous and scumbled textures over huge areas unless the structure supporting these sensuous rhapsodies is articulate and distinguished, unless, in short, the forms, emerging from exploratory uncertainty, discover their evolving image and translate this into total structure. For I believe the structure of the work is its real meaning. Noble form, consequent statement.<sup>57</sup>

In this same article, Shadbolt offered an accurate and concise summary of the major influences on his conception of painting up to that date:

To me, Matisse and Picasso offer us the noble structure available to either of our two great temperamental needs, the sensory and the psychological, sublimated from sensuous dilettantism or incoherence by an overmastering concern for a detached structure; while Klee, Miro and the post-Gorky American painters give these compositional discoveries a personal and private imagistic possibility.<sup>58</sup>

From this latter statement and much of the previous evidence, it is obvious that the development of Shadbolt's style after his stay in New York had its origin in two divergent artistic traditions--Cubism and Surrealism. Like Klee, Miro and Gorky, and, to some extent Sutherland, Shadbolt made his own personal attempt to synthesize the pictorial qualities of Cubism with the more evocative and

poetic subject matter of Surrealism. In contrast to the extreme non-objective styles of the New York painters after 1950--the simplified chromatic abstraction of Rothko, Still and Newmann, and the gestural abstraction of Pollock and Kline--Shadbolt's work throughout much of the 1950's still contained a form of organic imagery or referential object. The fact that he continued to populate his paintings with strange objects which maintained a vaguely symbolic connection with the physical world places him outside the mainstream of Abstract Expressionism. Consequently, his style of painting during this decade does not fall into the category of a well-defined movement but is most appropriately described as a form of lyrical abstraction.

The artists Shadbolt made specific reference to--Klee, Miro and Gorky--showed him the way to a lyrical interpretation of the natural world through the creation of a kind of abstract sign language which used objects in much the same manner as poets used words. That is, by removing the object from its representational and descriptive functions, Shadbolt was able to break down the pattern of normal associations and to endow the object with new functions and new relationships. What this amounted to was an attempt to transform the physical world through purely subjective means. Instead of interpreting reality according to his rational faculties, Shadbolt now sought to engage his intuitive and imaginative powers in an effort

to bridge the gap between imitation and creation. After 1948 he came to realize that painting was shifting toward a more intimate and introspective approach and that, as an artist, he was free to select as "the field of his creation the exploration of the inner personal world of his feelings."<sup>59</sup> Although he felt this subjectivity widened the gap between the artist and the public, he considered it valid because it expresses "the importance of imagination and feeling in a world that is all too inclined to materialism and rationality."<sup>60</sup>

Shadbolt's lyrical abstractions grew out of an intimate participation and poetic identification with the creative processes of nature. The natural world furnished the suggestions or stimuli and as he recollects or meditates upon them they become richer in his imagination and invite him to create new objects as variations of those he finds in nature. As Shadbolt wrote in 1951: "I immerse myself in nature, but when I paint I put nature behind me and try to conjure up new inventions of form."<sup>61</sup> This approach to abstraction does not distort nature but invents a vocabulary of colors and forms which serve as plastic equivalents that reflect the substance or essence of the natural world. In Shadbolt's paintings, nature is never reduced to the point of being a purely formal structure; some referential element, such as a title, a detail, or a whole series of vaguely organic forms, remains

in the work as a suggestion to the viewer not to confine himself solely to the formal data--the colors and shapes --but to attempt to recapture the artist's experience of the natural setting. In 1951 Shadbolt commented on his first attempts at a form of lyrical abstraction:

I have tried to be inventive...to make these forms intricately interdependent, to accept the picture as a creation in itself with its own organized movements on the surface and in space, and I have tried to restrict the color to one haunting theme of earth colors in which smoulder fragments of clear blaze. Above all I have tried to make my pictures a delight for the senses--an exploration of the unexpected and in this regard I have tried to endow shapes with their own unique personalities....<sup>62</sup>

Like the abstract sign language of Klee, Miro and Gorky, Shadbolt developed a kind of pictorial shorthand which allowed him to freely transform objects from the natural world. He frequently described his unique creations as "hieroglyphic equivalents" charged with metaphorical overtones and saw these forms as a way of imparting multiple connotations.<sup>63</sup> Writing in 1955, he outlined the reasons behind this autographic process:

For me, an object that is a merely stylized, decorative configuration does not go deep enough. Its meaning cannot be peeled down into subconscious layers of emotive connections. Everywhere we see great facility with new pictographic depiction, but there are few signs as yet of a mature language that can create the hieroglyph of what once was--the significant remnant charged with memories, striking provocative permutations of enigma, always potent with new suggestions in the very process of becoming.<sup>64</sup>

In order to extend the range of poetic analogies and

to further break down the barriers between the vegetable, mineral and animal kingdoms, Shadbolt employed a number of different devices. The pictorial metaphor allowed him to "describe one thing in terms of another, to make an image stand for a double meaning, itself, and a figurative meaning that can, at the same time, infer other overlays."<sup>65</sup> For example, in "Birds in Rock Caves" (1954), the birds sitting in the rocks resemble a rock; in "Summer Bouquet" (1954), a vase of flowers looks like a ship with sails; and, in "Invaders" (1953), a leaf suggest primitive shields, spears and masks. Other techniques included using a background color in one part of the painting as a foreground color in another area, and the suggestion of a duality of identities "where parts of one image may serve as parts of another."<sup>66</sup> Shadbolt realized that such devices could easilty degenerate into triviality:

However, I find I must risk this in a serious bid for those tingling meanings obtained by deliberately keeping forms at the demonic edge where they can be flesh, fish, or fowl yet never quite, still equivocal in their mystery, awaiting the spectator's extension into his own connotative experience.<sup>67</sup>

The greatest difficulty Shadbolt encountered in his effort to create 'hieroglyphic equivalents' was a personal tendency to constantly elaborate on the forms or to overload his work with too many ideas. His solution to this problem was to work simultaneously on a series of painting:

When new associations come flooding in, instead of trying to incorporate them at the expense of the work

in progress, I have learned to spill them over onto another picture. I jot them down rapidly...to relieve myself of their urgency. I have found that I can keep a whole series of pictures going at once, switching among them, keeping each autonomous.<sup>68</sup>

This working method enabled Shadbolt to give free rein to the spontaneous and unstructured impulses flowing from his conscious and unconscious mind. And, by developing a theme in a number of successive paintings, he could not only retain a fresh and original quality but could also constantly refine his imagery by testing every form and color in different ways to achieve the effect he sought. This process of thematic generation provided Shadbolt with a workable, controlling unity and, in essence, allowed him the means to make a conscious style of automatism.

This concludes the examination of the matrix of ideas and influences absorbed by Shadbolt during his year of study in New York and the analysis of the ways in which he incorporated them into his own personal style of lyrical painting between 1949 and 1955. The following section will assess the critical reaction to these works, the biographical details of his later career, and Shadbolt's position within the larger context of Canadian painting in the 1950's.

## Notes

## Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>The artists most frequently listed as belonging to the New York School are: William Baziotas, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Phillip Guston, Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Ad Reinhardt. (See for example: Maurice Tuchman, *New York School: The First Generation* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1966).

<sup>2</sup>Sandler, *American Painting*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>Document II, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Shadbolt, "Concerning American Painting", *The League Quarterly*, Spring 1949, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16-23.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup>Sandler, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, p. 511.

<sup>11</sup>Sandler, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>"Concerning American Painting", p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup>Joe Plaskett, "Some New Canadian Painters and their debt to Hans Hofmann," *Canadian Art*, Vol. X (Winter 1952-53), p. 220.

<sup>15</sup>Sandler, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 36

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup>Chipp, p. 372.

<sup>21</sup>Sandler, p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence Alloway, *Topics in American Art Since 1945* (New York: Norton and Company, 1975), p. 19.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 217.

<sup>25</sup>Alloway, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>Sandler, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>Document III, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup>Alloway, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup>William S. Rubin, *Dada and Surrealist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 407.

<sup>32</sup>*Topics in American Art*, p. 19-20.

<sup>33</sup>Rubin, p. 408.

<sup>34</sup>Alloway, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup>"Concerning American Painting," p. 22.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup>Sandler, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup>Rubin, p. 396.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 404.

- <sup>43</sup>Sandler, pp. 55-56.
- <sup>44</sup>Vol. VII (Spring 1951), p. 114.
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup>"Concerning American Painting," p. 22.
- <sup>47</sup>Edward Sackville-West, *Graham Sutherland* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 12.
- <sup>48</sup>Sandler, p. 56.
- <sup>49</sup>Reproduced, National Gallery, *Shadbolt*, Plates 16, 52.
- <sup>50</sup>Document III, p. 11.
- <sup>51</sup>Reproduced, National Gallery, *Shadbolt*, Plates 17, 18, 19.
- <sup>52</sup>Reproduced, *Saturday Night*, Vol. LXIX, 6 February 1954, p. 5.
- <sup>53</sup>Reproduced, National Gallery, *Shadbolt*, Plates 22, 20.
- <sup>54</sup>Shadbolt, "Picture in Progress" from *Art and Artist*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 200-201.
- <sup>55</sup>"Concerning American Painting," p. 20.
- <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup>Shadbolt, "Education For the Artist," Photocopy from the journal of the San Francisco School of Art in the Personal Records of the artist, no page.
- <sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup>"Concerning American Painting," p. 16.
- <sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>61</sup>Shadbolt quoted by Donald W. Buchanan, "Shadbolt Explores a World of Roots and Seeds", *Canadian Art*, Vol VII (Spring 1951), p. 114.
- <sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup>Shadbolt, "Picture in Progress," p. 197.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 202.

## CHAPTER IV

### YEARS OF CRITICAL ACCLAIM: 1949 - 1963

Before discussing the contribution of Shadbolt and other Vancouver artists to the general development of modern Canadian painting after 1945, it is first appropriate to examine the significance of the major institutions and organizations devoted to the visual arts in British Columbia. In general, these agencies can be described by their primary interest in the exhibition and promotion of art and in the furtherance of art education. Moreover, it will be seen that they shared a progressive attitude and commitment toward contemporary styles in art and architecture. Their broad and forward-looking approach did much to dispel the cultural insularity characteristic of Vancouver's earlier history. The institutional foundations established in the late 1920's and early 1930's--the Vancouver School of Art, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the short-lived British Columbia College of Art--finally came to fruition in the period from 1945 to 1960. The reasons for this new vitality are two-fold. First, the rapid expansion of these organizations during and immediately after the Second World War reflected the overall growth of the city's size in terms of its population,

industry and economic prosperity. The art scene benefited from a number of diverse factors, including: improved communications at the local, national and international levels; enlarged public and private sponsorship of artistic undertakings and facilities for cultural exchange; and, greater and more accessible sources of patronage. Second, professional artists in this area understood that their support and participation in the organization of art activities would serve both the goals of their individual careers and the cultural needs of the larger community. Those who performed the triple function of artist-educator-organizer were rewarded for their efforts by increases in recognition and appreciation, sales and commissions. At the same time, they used the institutional base to introduce the public to *avant-garde* styles of painting, design and architecture.

In turning to a brief consideration of the central institutions and organizations serving the arts on the West Coast, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, it not only expanded its facilities and the size and range of its permanent collection, but extended the scope of its educational, curatorial and promotional activities. As a result, it became a vital resource for artists living in the city and the province as a whole. The growth of the Gallery during the war years was

attested to by Charles Scott in 1944:

The Gallery continues to 'hum' as a centre for exhibitions, discussion groups, lectures, 'painting for pleasure' groups, musicales for service-men and women ... thus fulfilling its function as an institution for the furtherance of community culture.<sup>1</sup>

Operating with only limited financial support, the Gallery managed to improve its services and to attract more visitors and members every year. The permanent collection was enriched substantially in 1946 by Emily Carr's bequest of 160 of her works. Subsequent to her bequest, the Gallery was able to acquire the property and funds necessary to expand its premises through private and public donations.<sup>2</sup> In 1949-1950, the Gallery completed a \$200,000 addition and remodelling programme. Further support enabled the Gallery to establish a purchase fund for works by British Columbia artists and to instruct children in art education.

The primary emphasis of the Vancouver Art Gallery, however, focused on its exhibition programme. Beginning in the early 1940's, the Gallery began to feature exhibitions circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, most notably, the annual shows of the Canadian Group of Painters and the Canadian Society of Water Colour Painters. In addition to its regular offerings, such as the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, regional exhibitions of the work of members of the Federation of Canadian Artists, and the British Columbia Annual Exhibition of Art, the

Gallery provided much-needed facilities for one-man shows of important Vancouver artists. In 1951, the Gallery began to organize major exhibitions of local artists for circulation outside the province, the first of which appeared in Montreal in December of that year at the Dominion Galleries and included work by Edward Hughes, Molly and Bruno Boback, B.C. Binning, Lionel Thomas, Peter Aspell, Ralph Blakstad and Shadbolt.<sup>3</sup> The following year, the Gallery sent a show entitled, "Six Canadian Painters," to the San Francisco Museum of Fine Art which featured paintings by Binning, Shadbolt, Thomas, Jerry Brusberg, Orville Fisher and Lawren Harris.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with the National Gallery of Canada, in October 1951 the Gallery brought to Vancouver the first significant collection of contemporary painting from French-Canada.<sup>5</sup> Other exhibitions of consequence which toured Canada and were organized by the Gallery included shows of French Impressionist painting and works of the Group of Seven.<sup>6</sup> The Gallery's outlook was made evident by the fact that it secured important exhibitions of British and American art, particularly a major show of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism which had recently appeared in Paris, and an equally impressive selection of paintings by Graham Sutherland and sculpture by Henry Moore, the latter organized by the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art.<sup>7</sup> Both of these shows appeared in 1953 and are

notable because they were not available to other Canadian cities. An assessment of the Gallery's overall impact and status was rendered in 1955 by R.H. Hubbard, then Curator of Canadian Art for the National Gallery of Canada:

[T]he Vancouver Art Gallery, is one of the most active of its kind in the country, to judge by the number and quality of its special exhibitions and the heavy use of its facilities by the public. It occupies the largest gallery building of contemporary design in Canada and has an excellent location in downtown Vancouver.<sup>8</sup>

The other major outlet for the exhibition of art in Vancouver was the newly-formed Fine Arts Gallery at the University of British Columbia. Following its opening in 1949, the Gallery immediately revealed its contemporary interests with a series of one-man exhibitions by leading Vancouver artists--Shadbolt, Brusberg, Thomas and Don Jarvis--and group shows of some of the most advanced American painters in the Pacific Northwest--Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan--as well as re-exhibiting several *avant-garde* collections first displayed by the Vancouver Art Gallery. Under the curatorial direction of Rene Boux, the Gallery began an acquisition programme and commissioned a local artist to execute a mural decoration for the building.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it provided a meeting-place for student members of the Visual Arts Club and the University community.

The importance of the University of British Columbia was even more apparent through the considerable influence of the School of Architecture, headed at that time by Fred Lasserre. Although ironically headquartered in temporary huts, the impact of this applied school on local architecture and on the visual arts in Vancouver, especially through the efforts of the architects Lasserre and Porter, and the artists teaching design, Binning and Thomas, was substantial. In large measure, the emergent interest in architecture issued from the tremendous outburst of building activity which took place in the postwar period. As Lasserre and others frequently noted, a close relationship existed between contemporary architectural design and vanguard styles of painting.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, the most important point to be emphasized in this regard is that Vancouver was free from any constraining academic tradition in both areas. Stated simply, there was little or no resistance to new ideas in painting and architecture, thereby permitting an immediate and widespread acceptance of modern international idioms. Hubbard summarized this remarkable period of development:

The developments in architecture since the war are related, in no small measure, to the prosperity and consequent expansion of the Vancouver area during this period. Equally important, there has been virtually no resistance to contemporary modes of design. There is little to be seen of the conservatism of the East with its tenacious loyalty to the classic, colonial, Tudor and other styles of the past.<sup>11</sup>

The third institution--the Vancouver School of Art--was beyond question the most significant in terms of the development of painting. During the 1940's the School steadily enlarged its scope and improved its standards, expanded its premises, its staff and generally added to its reputation. As early as 1948, J.W.G. Macdonald considered it to be "the foremost art school west of Toronto."<sup>12</sup> The reasons for the growing status of the School stemmed from a burgeoning public interest in art and the fact that a number of professional artists associated with the School, either as recent graduates or teachers, were beginning to attain national prominence.<sup>13</sup> After 1948, the dramatic shift toward a greater understanding and appreciation of contemporary directions in painting was characterized in the work of long-time teachers such as Shadbolt and Binning. Just as these two artists had overcome the geographical isolation of the West Coast through extensive travel and study in Europe and the United States, their proteges similarly sought out a wider range of experiences abroad. For example, between 1946 and 1950, Thomas, Jarvis and Joe Plaskett studied with the renowned Hans Hofmann in New York.<sup>14</sup> The return of these young artists to Vancouver complemented the School's impressive faculty, many of whom were now mature artists. Like Shadbolt, the Bobaks, Hughes and Fisher had served as Official Canadian War Artists before

assuming teaching duties. Other instructors and graduates of the School included Aspell, Brusberg, Gordon Smith and Alister Bell, in all, a talented cadre of painters and graphic artists. In 1955, Hubbard observed:

The outlook of the school is uncompromisingly contemporary and its teaching thorough. The city is much to be envied in supporting it as part of the public education system. The present unity of style in Vancouver exists surely because most of the artists not only derive from the same teachers but quite literally form a "school."<sup>15</sup>

To understand the nature of postwar painting in this region, it is necessary to review briefly the contribution of the first wave of modern painters to work on the West Coast. From the time of Fredrick Varley's departure for Ottawa in 1936 until the end of the Second World War, the art scene in Vancouver remained largely unchanged. The first artists and teachers to work with Varley--William Weston, Charles Scott and J.W.G. Macdonald--had become well-established regional painters and continued their important role in the development of local art education. During this period, however, the only artists living in British Columbia to achieve national recognition were Emily Carr, a long-time resident of Victoria until her death in 1945, and Lawren Harris, a leading figure in the Group of Seven who had moved to Vancouver in 1940. These six artists, viewed as a group, represented the first generation of modern painters to work on the West Coast. In many respects, they shared a common heritage; all had

been closely associated with the Group of Seven, either as members, as in the cases of Varley and Harris, or had been deeply influenced by the landscape style of this movement since the late 1920's, such as Carr, Weston, Scott and Macdonald. When the Group of Seven was finally dissolved in 1933, these six artists became founding members of the Canadian Group of Painters.<sup>16</sup> Yet, despite these close attachments to the Group of Seven, none of these artists attempted to follow the trend that developed during the 1930's which viewed Canadian landscape painting as an expression of patriotic or nationistic sentiment. Nor did they attempt to transform this landscape style into an academic tradition. Weston, Scott and Macdonald carried on Varley's teachings and remained supportive of a modern approach to painting, while Carr and Harris developed highly personal styles that were as advanced as any painting done in Canada up to the early 1940's. Although few in number, these West Coast artists encouraged innovation and experimentation among the younger group of painters who were coming of age during the war years, and, as a result, helped make Vancouver a relatively progressive centre for modern painting in comparison to other parts of Canada.

Abstract painting, in fact, had a longer history in Vancouver than it did in Montreal. As early as 1934, Macdonald had begun to experiment with automatic procedures

as an extreme counterpoint to his more conventional landscape paintings.<sup>17</sup> After 1940, he became a friend of Lawren Harris who introduced him to Kandinsky's theories of the spiritual component in art and further encouraged him in his efforts at abstraction. By 1941, he had learned more of Surrealism from Herbert Read's *Art Now*, and he continued his automatic paintings up to the time he left Vancouver for Calgary in 1946.<sup>18</sup> Harris had begun his own shift toward abstraction during his stay in the United States around 1936 and, after his arrival in Vancouver, produced hard-edge, geometric abstractions of the British Columbia landscape.<sup>19</sup> These first abstract paintings done in Vancouver in 1940 occupy a significant position in the history of Canadian art in the modern era. As the art historian and curator Dennis Reid wrote: "These canvases of Harris's, along with the paintings brought from Paris early that same year by Alfred Pellán, represent the first solid beginnings of abstract art in Canada."<sup>20</sup> Macdonald's surrealist-inspired paintings and Harris's geometric abstractions represented not only the beginning of abstract art in Vancouver but formed the two different approaches to abstraction which characterized much of the painting done on the West Coast from the late 1940's to the early 1960's. The contrasting styles of abstraction which Macdonald and Harris followed were carried on and further advanced by the two artists who

emerged after 1950 as the recognized leaders in the new wave of abstract painting developing in Vancouver, Jack Shadbolt and B.C. Binning.

In many respects, Shadbolt and Binning pursued a parallel course in their dual careers as artists and teachers. Born in the same year, (1909) they were both early graduates of Varley, Scott and Macdonald at the Vancouver School of Art and both broadened their artistic education with study and travel in the United States and Europe. In 1938 Binning trained overseas with the British sculptor, Henry Moore, and the French painter and leading exponent of Purism, Amedes Ozenfant, and the next year studied at the Art Students League in New York. Binning joined the staff of the Vancouver School of Art in 1934 and, apart from study leave, taught there until 1948. He was appointed Associate Professor of Art at the University of British Columbia in 1949 and later served as curator for the University's Fine Arts Gallery. Shadbolt joined the Vancouver School of Art while Binning was in Europe and, apart from military service and study leave, remained there up to his retirement in 1966.

In addition to similarities in their educational training and professional vocation, their artistic development also reveals some general parallels. Binning and Shadbolt both encountered the formal influence of Cubism from leading teachers of that style in the late 1930's,

Shadbolt with Lhote and Binning with Ozenfant, and for each artist it took approximately ten years to completely digest these lessons. For Binning, the change came in 1948 when he abandoned his representational pen and ink drawings of coastal landscapes and began to paint Purist-inspired oil canvases.<sup>21</sup> These new works were lyrical and decorative abstractions, mostly composed of geometric shapes derived from ships' hulls, nautical pennants, masts and rigging, all arranged into dynamic patterns.<sup>22</sup> Shadbolt's shift to abstraction came at about the same time; after his encounter with surrealist ideas in New York in 1948, he adopted a more organic and gestural type of painting. The contrasting styles of Shadbolt and Binning--the free-flowing versus the hard-edge--defined the polarities of the painting styles followed in Vancouver in the 1950's.

Binning's long-time preoccupation with architecture was not only evident in his painting but naturally led to a sustained interest in mural decoration. He was perhaps the best known muralist in Western Canada and received numerous commissions for large building projects throughout the region. Binning wrote on the subject of mural painting and, through his teaching position at the University of British Columbia, was a major influence on the School of Architecture at that institution.<sup>23</sup> Like Binning, Shadbolt considered mural painting as an

important aspect of his work and, in the final chapter of this discussion, his contribution in this area will be examined. Although the growth of mural painting in Vancouver in the post-war period can be largely attributed to the wide-spread building boom, it also reflected the general interest in large-scale painting by a number of the leading abstract artists. In addition to Shadbolt and Binning, the principal figures involved in mural commissions were Korner, Smith, Tanabe, Thomas and Bruno Bobak.<sup>24</sup> On the whole, their work in this field represents a tangible expression of the growing popularity and acceptance of abstract art from the late 1940's onwards. Local architects viewed this type of applied decoration as a successful means for offsetting the starkness of modern design and worked closely with the artists to make murals an integral part of the buildings.

The close relationship which developed between artists and architects in Vancouver was further advanced by the "Art in Living Group"--an offspring of the regional organization of the Federation of Canadian Artists begun around 1945.<sup>25</sup> This Group gave many of the aforementioned painters an opportunity to directly involve themselves with various aspects of architectural design. Early exhibitions assembled by the Art in Living Group offered the public an introduction to the fundamentals of architecture and town-planning, as well as an appreciation

of the aesthetic and physical characteristics of progressive architecture, the nature and problems of school design and neighborhood planning.<sup>26</sup> Richard Neutra, one of the foremost architects of the period, lectured at the invitation of this Group in 1946.<sup>27</sup> While mural commissions were one of the most direct consequences of the cooperation between artists and architects, an equally apparent result was the fact that many Vancouver artists employed leading architects to help them design their own homes and the architects hired painters to execute murals for their residences.<sup>28</sup> Building their own homes was only one example of the conventional lifestyle that typified the Vancouver painters. In fact, most of these artists enjoyed the security of a steady income from teaching. Peter Desbaretz, a journalist with the *Winnipeg Tribune*, offered an accurate comment on the assimilation of Canadian artists into their urban environment:

The exodus from bohemia to suburbia is integrating the painter with his community. He learns to understand his neighbors and they come to appreciate him as a hard-working, productive member of society.<sup>29</sup>

Shadbolt's own recollection of the postwar years in Vancouver supported a similar viewpoint:

Perhaps no where else in Canada is the artist so completely integrated with the middle-class community pattern. In smaller centres, such as many across the prairies, the artist is forced into a lone fight for values, while much larger centres like Toronto and Montreal tend to subdivide so that interest groups form their own inner communities. The artists collect in a colony....

The tendency for artists in Vancouver--and that is where most of the artists in B.C., of necessity, collect, is for them to have their own private homes in the residential districts and to live as reasonably assimilated members of the public. Most of them teach for a steady income to which their painting or sculpture is a supplement....

Our B.C. artists are generally liked and respected by their community and are thus unconsciously warmed by the following of their loyal audience and anxious to lead them on but not to shock them. They take the long-term view that creation is deep, steady and a matter of personally unfolding style and unhurried integrity.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the decade from 1950 to 1960, a dominant viewpoint shared by writers in the field of Canadian art advanced the notion that there was a distinct unity of style which could be attributed to a large group of artists residing in Vancouver. Some even went as far as to claim the existence of an identifiable West Coast School.<sup>31</sup>

A more critical interpretation suggests that this generalization may be somewhat overstated, yet contains a measure of truth sufficient to be of use in describing the basic characteristics of this group. Most of these writers appear to hold a common conception of what constituted a "school," namely, that local or regional schools develop out of a combination of factors: local climatic or geographic conditions, local enthusiasms and patronage, and similar educational experiences.<sup>32</sup>

It is clearly evident that the popular image of the West Coast style of painting during this period was a type of surrealist or lyrical abstraction based on organic

forms and frequently associated with the style of Jack Shadbolt.<sup>33</sup> Artists usually connected with this so-called "animistic" approach were the Bobaks, Jarvis, Fisher, Bell, Smith and Thomas. While all of these Vancouver artists retained their own artistic integrity and individualism, their work did have much in common with respect to form and content. Thematically nearly all of the Vancouver artists maintained some reference to their local environment and largely based their paintings on the idea of extracting essential forms from nature. Like the work of Toby, Graves and other painters from the Pacific Northwest, the Vancouver artists were interested in the expressive possibilities of Japanese and Chinese calligraphy and the Oriental tradition of landscape painting. From Oriental philosophy they absorbed theories concerning the unity of man and nature--a pantheistic or animistic view of the natural world. This may be partially explained by the geographical proximity of the Orient and the existence of large Oriental populations living in the area from San Francisco to Vancouver. The view of nature expressed by these artists also belonged to the specifically Canadian traditions which had a significant impact on this region--particularly English landscape painting and the influence of the Group of Seven.

The initial exposure of Vancouver artists to a national audience began with the aforementioned

exhibitions organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery in the early 1950's and through their participation in the annual shows of the Canadian Group of Painters. By the mid-1950's, art critics began to express their excitement with the flourishing state of Vancouver art.<sup>34</sup> In the first Biennial of Canadian Painting at the National Gallery of Canada, the West Coast was well-represented by Jarvis, Shadbolt, Binning, Thomas, Smith and John Korner. The first prize was awarded to Smith for his painting, *Structure with Red Sun*. The select group of Canadian artists chosen by jury to represent the nation at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1958 further reflected the overall importance and position of West Coast artists in both a national and international forum.<sup>35</sup> One year earlier, Shadbolt had the unique distinction of being the most honoured Vancouver painter of this period when he won the Canadian section award and a \$1,000 prize for his canvas, "Medieval Landscape," at the Guggenheim International Exhibition in New York.

Returning to the main topic--Jack Shadbolt's career and the artist's significance in contemporary Canadian painting--it is appropriate to note some important professional details before chronicling his major exhibitions and reviewing a number of critical responses to his work. From 1949 to 1963, the middle-years of the artist's life, Shadbolt enjoyed a generous measure of

public success and recognition. During this period, he established a reputation as one of the leading Canadian painters of the postwar era. Shadbolt's national visibility was not solely derived from his artistic achievements but stemmed equally from his multi-levelled involvement in the arts. Aside from his work as a painter, he became known as a teacher, author, guest lecturer, juror and organizer of all manner of artistic endeavors.<sup>36</sup> By the early 1950's, Shadbolt had received widespread acclaim as one of the preeminent artists of the Western region. Not only had his work provoked serious critical attention but he had been the subject of many newspaper articles and personality profiles. After 1955, his stature extended beyond regional boundaries; he was now seen as occupying a commanding position and worthy of representing Canada in international competition. This growing recognition was reflected in substantial increases in the purchase of his work by private collectors and public institutions, in fact, his paintings were sought after by civic and national galleries, libraries, museums, universities and corporate offices as well as distinguished public collections outside the country. At the same time, Shadbolt was awarded a number of government fellowships, prizes and public mural commissions, and frequently invited to exhibit internationally. These achievements

affirmed in every way his capacity for hard work and a dedication to his craft.

Upon his return to British Columbia from New York in the autumn of 1949, he resumed his duties as Head of Drawing and Painting at the Vancouver School of Art. The familiar pattern of his life continued, teaching three days a week and painting whenever time permitted, primarily in the evening. A year later, he acquired a heavily-wooded, half-acre property on Sentinel Hill in Burnaby which offered seclusion and a sense of permanency. The building of his house in 1950-1951 represented a family project--his brother, Douglas, a promising young Vancouver architect, assisted with the design, and Jack and his wife Doris undertook much of the construction.

Not only did Shadbolt's labors produce a handsome residence of contemporary design but the task of clearing the land gave Shadbolt some new perceptions of nature which were directly incorporated into his cycle of nature paintings. Reflecting on this experience, Shadbolt commented in 1965:

I started to dig! I'd never experienced digging through the earth, through layers of material. As we dug the basement for this house--digging for the septic tank, that kind of thing--we found lots of little white lizards. I thought this extraordinary. Then tree-roots, mole-holes, worm-tracks--all the signs of subterranean life. That division between under the soil and on the surface of it, that cross-section idea, has never really left my painting altogether ever since. And it really came into existence as a result of setting to work on the building of this house.<sup>37</sup>

On another occasion, he reaffirmed the connection between the construction of his home and the development and subsequent success of his abstract painting:

With the new language of abstraction, the digging around the foundations of the house, and having land of our own, I recaptured the sense of growing things, of teeming forests. I began a ten year cycle of opulent watercolors; I worked in gouache-- in browns, blacks, orange and greens. Up until then I had sold very few pictures, but these got circulated, and I began to get a grip on the public.<sup>38</sup>

Two principal factors can be mentioned with respect to the question of how Shadbolt "began to get a grip on the public." The artist's sustained output and capacity for remaining contemporary allowed him to produce new works for public and critical consideration every year. Moreover, he deliberately pursued an active exhibition policy. In an article written by the artist for *Canadian Art* in 1949, Shadbolt was realistic about the fact that the market for the sale of art in Canada was extremely limited, yet he was optimistic about the overall value of artists participating in the exhibition of their work.<sup>39</sup> He offered the following reasons for involvement in exhibitions:

As I see it, the possible returns are: first, an ultimate increase in reputation with a wider audience; second, the doubtful possibility of ultimate sales; and third, such intangibles as satisfaction from cooperation towards the common advance of art, a feeling of increasing self-assurance the hope that someone along the way will truly understand your point of view, will see and respond to your work, and the resulting encouragement.<sup>40</sup>

In the following decade, Shadbolt's exhibitions would earn all of these rewards for him.

A year after returning from New York, Shadbolt assembled his first retrospective exhibition. Installed at the University of British Columbia's Fine Arts Gallery from April 4 to April 22, 1950, and entitled, "J.L. Shadbolt: A Review of Paintings and Drawings 1933-1950," this exhibition summarized the major stages of the artist's evolution and included 72 drawings, water colors and oil canvases.<sup>41</sup> Although mainly composed of earlier work, this show also served to introduce the public to the direction Shadbolt's painting had taken since 1948. Critics noted the new "lyrical quality" in contrast to what they saw as the "excessive intellectualism" which marked his work in the period 1946 to 1948.<sup>42</sup> In 1951, Donald W. Buchanan, editor of *Canadian Art* at this time, singled out Shadbolt's nature abstractions as being particularly praiseworthy:

In many passages in these paintings, there is a disarming spontaneity which is new to Shadbolt, as are also these free-flowing forms which are so different from his earlier tighter and more angular conceptions. His recent achievements, at their best, combine lyricism, regionalism (his inspiration comes from West Coast flowers and plants and marshlands) and abstraction--three qualities which haven't appeared this way in Canadian painting before.<sup>43</sup>

The retrospective show in Vancouver and the national attention it received did much to enhance

Shadbolt's growing reputation. Increasingly, he was invited to participate in small, select exhibitions and in larger group shows in Canada and abroad. In June of 1952, he exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art while teaching summer session at the California School of Fine Arts. The following January, Shadbolt was represented in a four-man show with Guy Anderson, Louis Bunce and Carl Morris at the Seattle Art Museum. These two shows marked the artist's first exposure in the Pacific Northwest and were generally well-received.<sup>44</sup> His next exhibition, held at the Vancouver Art Gallery in February and March 1953, included 62 works executed between 1948 and 1953.<sup>45</sup> A year later, he had his first important showing in Toronto since 1948 when he was invited by the Art Gallery of Toronto to exhibit along with Roloff Benny, a young artist from the prairies.<sup>46</sup> In November that year, Shadbolt exhibited 30 new paintings at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, most of which were devoted to the theme of bird images. According to Colin Graham, the Curator of the Gallery, Victorians purchased over half of the paintings within the first few days of the opening.<sup>47</sup> In October 1955, he joined E.J. Hughes in a two-man show at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, and, one month later, appeared at the gallery of the Winnipeg School of Art.<sup>48</sup> George Swinton, a well-known Winnipeg painter and art educator, wrote of these works:

*Birds in the Tide Marsh* and *Plague of Birds* are the type of paintings for which Shadbolt has become so well-known,--magnificent watercolors of great color subtlety and linear expressiveness, in which a major theme is taken and then its suggestiveness is developed in variations of the forms. In both pictures sea birds are the starting point and their activities and forms animate the pictures to the extent of creating images of a supernatural bird world . . . .

It is this mysterious animation of Shadbolt's that links him so closely to West Coast folk lore and which, at the same time, establishes his undisputed position in Canadian art.<sup>49</sup>

Shadbolt's numerous exhibitions in Canada and the Pacific Northwest brought him a considerable national and regional reputation. As a direct result, he was now selected to represent Canada in international competition. In the period from 1953 to 1956, he was invited to exhibit at the following events: Caracas Biennial, Venezuela (1953); Sao Paulo Biennial, Brazil (1954); Venezuela International Exhibition (1955); Carnegie International Exhibition, Pittsburgh (1955); and, Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy (1956).<sup>50</sup>

On the whole such international shows gave Canadian artists, curators and critics the chance to compare what was happening in their own country with contemporary developments elsewhere. Furthermore, these shows served to confer a degree of status on participants and, at the same time, assisted in delineating a hierarchy within the national community of artists. In retrospect, at least with reference to the Canadian

scene, there appears to be a strong correlation between invitations to exhibit internationally and the development of an artist's national reputation. It is equally apparent that the establishment of an artist's reputation is, as a rule, a cumulative process. First the artist must achieve a certain level of national acclaim in order to be chosen for international competition. However, once selected, the status accrued from this distinction further bolsters an artist's national position. This cumulative effect is clearly illustrated in Shadbolt's case.

For Shadbolt, one of the immediate benefits derived from this period of sustained productivity and public recognition was the award of a Canadian Overseas Fellowship in 1956. Valued at \$4,000 plus travel expenses, the grant enabled him and his wife to study and travel in France for one year.<sup>51</sup> This opportunity to work in Europe was important to Shadbolt's artistic development for a number of reasons. Not only did it provide him with the time necessary for reflection and self-renewal but it gave him an uninterrupted and lengthy period in which he could devote himself completely to painting.

Before leaving Vancouver, Shadbolt had begun to experiment with oil painting, a medium he had left untouched since the late 1940's. No doubt Shadbolt felt that he

had gained sufficient mastery over such fluid media as water color, ink and gouache and, moreover, it is not unlikely that he perceived oil painting as having the potential for greater expressive possibilities and saw it of more lasting value. Apart from these immediate personal concerns, several other considerations were influential in Shadbolt's decision to work in oils. Gordon Smith, one of Shadbolt's fellow artists at the Vancouver School of Art, had recently made the transition from water colors to oils--a transition that was obviously successful in that Smith received the top award in the First Biennial of Canadian Painting at the National Gallery of Canada in 1955.<sup>52</sup> Such recognition was undoubtedly of interest to an artist of Shadbolt's ambition. Moreover, Shadbolt must have realized at this time that if he continued to restrict himself solely to water colors he would be unable to join the mainstream of Abstract Expressionism, a movement fast becoming the dominant style of international art in the 1950's. Borduas and Riopelle, two of the leading French-Canadian artists, had already gone beyond their earlier surrealist tendencies to become recognized as major abstract expressionists and, in Toronto, a new group called Painters Eleven, formed around 1954, were equally committed to this international style.<sup>53</sup> Shadbolt's presence in New York in the late 1940's had not only

provided him with a first-hand glimpse of the emergence of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism, but his approach to abstract painting derived from the same cubist and surrealist sources of this movement. It was not until 1956, however, that Shadbolt began to expand his range of media and make subsequent readjustments to his style. By then, Abstract Expressionism had achieved phenomenal success and had become the new vanguard of modern art.

Upon his arrival in France in September 1956, Shadbolt settled down to work in Menton on the French Riviera. Inspired by the dramatic change in climate and the vivid colors and brilliant light of the Mediterranean, he first executed a series of pastels and representational drawings in order to adjust to his changed environment. In an article published in *Canadian Art*, entitled, "A Year in the Sun," Colin Graham, a close associate of the artist, faithfully recorded Shadbolt's own impressions and concerns during this eventful year in France. Graham recounted Shadbolt's initial difficulties:

How could one get on to canvas "dry tingling sun heat" after decades steeped in the moist and veiled atmosphere of the British Columbia coast? How [to] deal with the startling strawberry and Pompeian reds, the lime greens and "crushed pinks" of the stucco villas with their age-old crumbling textures? Or the stepped hillside vineyards with their brilliant ochres and red oxides?<sup>54</sup>

Gradually, Shadbolt discovered from his experiments with pastels the appropriate form and color to capture the

essence of this wholly different landscape. In little more than three months, Shadbolt had executed over 50 oils on canvas.<sup>55</sup>

The series of abstractions completed at Menton in late 1956 and early 1957 represented both a highly unified body of paintings and marked a new phase of the artist's development. In comparison with Shadbolt's work during the period 1949 to 1955, a number of significant changes are apparent. In general the symbolic character of his earlier imagery has been reduced and, although images are still derived from the landscape, the scene principally serves as a motif for the organization of patterns of color. In effect, the subject matter of these abstractions is the artist's physical manipulation of raw pigment. Stated simply, the artist attempts to make evident the spontaneous properties of the paint, as if to release the magical force of light and color imprisoned in the material. In essence, the individual forms have become more ghost-like or evasive and are submerged into a mosaic pattern--this type of painting does not represent but resembles the natural world.

In most of the Menton abstractions, Shadbolt abandoned the use of brushes and applied the oil paint with strips of cardboard or "anything else handy" which he used like a palette knife.<sup>56</sup> The rich impasto surface produced by this technique allowed Shadbolt to build the

painting out of broad patches of color. Although he sacrificed the fluid lines which characterized his water colors, this method permitted Shadbolt to retain an equal degree of expressive spontaneity while at the same time creating a more composed or architectonic sense of structure. Areas of color are marshalled into a loosely-arranged grid of vertical and horizontal patterning.

It is evident in these paintings from Menton that Shadbolt had come to appreciate more fully Hans Hofmann's theories concerning the interplay of color areas and spatial dynamics. The two-dimensional nature of the picture plane is asserted by the thick application of paint while the rich texture brings the forms close to the surface. As Colin Graham observed:

Space is created mainly through the advancing and receding properties of colour, and it is colour which plays the major role in the paintings. Chromatically intense, affirmative and joyous, it now creates not only the space but the light.<sup>57</sup>

To a large extent, Shadbolt had eliminated the sharp tonal contrasts familiar to his earlier work in water colors, ink and gouache. Now, he concentrated on "using small slabs of intense hue" to achieve the effect of "color-as-light."<sup>58</sup> Upon his return to Canada, Shadbolt explained his motivation behind these "high-keyed" works. He stated that these paintings were "in a very real sense my private poetry, intended to evoke only, so that I can

hold vivid on my return to a grey light, certain particularly cherished sensations."<sup>59</sup> From his experiences in France, Shadbolt discovered "a greatly extended range of textural inventions and a new colour-light vocabulary."<sup>60</sup>

The most single famous work from the Menton series, "Medieval Landscape," the painting which won for Shadbolt the coveted Guggenheim award for Canada in 1958, exemplifies the major elements of this whole stylistic grouping.<sup>61</sup> Like much of the Menton work, this painting typifies the artist's method of "processing" a landscape.<sup>62</sup> Distilled from a number of different impressions, fragments of buildings--mainly rooftops and walls--emerge from the pattern of color patches. "Medieval Landscape," like other works in the "town-cycle," conveys a strong sense of formal unity--the integration of architectural elements with their surrounding environment--wherein the images derived from the visible world are transformed into purely plastic forms. Although predominantly abstract, this work expresses in a lyrical manner the artist's interpretation of nature. Moreover, the overall gestural quality and the use of glowing color harmonies suggest the sensuous pleasure Shadbolt felt from handling paint. Clearly, this expressionist concern with the possibilities of manipulating paint directly connects Shadbolt's Mediterranean work to the general interests of those

groups of French painters loosely identified as *Tachists* or belonging to the movement *Art Informel*.<sup>63</sup>

The high-keyed colors of the Menton paintings distinguish them as an isolated and unique corpus of work. Following his return to Vancouver, Shadbolt readjusted his palette, introducing darker hues to create a more sombre expression--one that was in keeping with the West Coast climate. Gradually, the tightly-structured mosaic patterning of the Menton abstractions gave way to a more rhythmic approach. Undoubtedly, painting in oils had proved to be a liberating experience and had given him a sense of confidence in using this medium. He was now free to adopt a more painterly technique and to explore richer textural effects and a wider range of colors. In general, Shadbolt's post-Menton work retained many of the same themes which had occupied him during the past decade. Paintings such as "Autumn Tokens" (1958), "Below Naples" (1958), "Up from the Deep" (1959) and "Italian Garden" (1959) reflect his abiding interest in elements of nature, particularly, plant life, marine forms and birds.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1959 and 1963, Shadbolt further explored different variations of Abstract Expressionism. In 1959-1960, he produced a series of "Calligraphic Paintings," mostly inks and gouaches, which revealed his interest in

the "action painting" of Pollock and de Kooning. Through his use of fast strokes and slashes of the brush, Shadbolt's calligraphic paintings reflected a violent and chaotic mood. Examples of this style can be seen in such works as "Battered Head" (1959) and "Requiem for a Friend" (1960).<sup>65</sup> Increasingly, Shadbolt's work in all media suggested his attempt to express the primacy of the unpremeditated act of painting. The next group of Mediterranean paintings, completed during a second one-year visit to France, Italy and Greece in 1960-1961, were far less ordered in appearance than their Menton precursors of 1957. In these later works, raw oil pigment is dripped and smeared on the canvas with raucous effect.<sup>66</sup> "Collioure, Riviera Coast" (1961) perhaps best exemplifies the artist's expressionistic use of color and texture at this time.<sup>67</sup> Unlike his earlier work where vague semblances of landscapes could be discerned, these new works appear completely abstract. In the Stratford Festival Art Exhibition Catalogue, published in 1959, Shadbolt summarized his basic working method:

I paint with no preconceived notion of what my finished picture will or should be. I may start with a token subject, as a convenience; but in reality I let the true subject reveal itself as the picture takes on its final configuration. I concentrate on the experience and enter as deeply as possible into its inner meaning--that is, when I can sense, after considerable "feeling out" of the canvas, what the nature of the experience is. Usually I am aware of a strong mood which expresses itself in the sensuous excitement of some one colour, or in the special nature of a form configuration which I have vivid in my mind. Thus I get enough clues to locate the strategy needed

to get the canvas started in a preliminary rough-out--to know the quality and movement and shape of its big areas and to know its precise overtone--whether of land-edge against sea, or rockface, or old village; whether it is explosive or luminous, monolithic or rhythmic, epic or intimate, cross-sectional or panoramic. All in all, I suppose, I dwell in portents and images and I crave a continuous flow of energy in my work.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the dramatic changes and constant evolution of Shadbolt's style after 1957, his work continued to receive widespread acceptance. The first group of Mediterranean paintings were successfully exhibited in one-man shows at the New Design Gallery in Vancouver in the autumn of 1957, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in January 1958, and at the Seattle Art Museum in March 1958. The following year, the artist assembled a "Ten Year Retrospective Exhibition" for the Vancouver Art Gallery. Between 1960 and 1963, Shadbolt held highly popular one-man shows in Vancouver (New Design Gallery, 1960, 1961 and 1963); Seattle (Zoe Dusanne Gallery, 1960, 1962); Toronto (Laing Galleries, 1960, 1961); and Victoria (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1960 and 1961). Furthermore, in addition to his continued participation in annual group shows in Canada and the Pacific Northwest, Shadbolt's work was selected for exhibition at the Biennials of Canadian Painting, National Gallery of Canada (1955, 1957, 1959 and 1961); at Dallas (1958), Portland (1959), Brooklyn (1959) and Louisville (1962) in the United

States; and in international exhibitions at Brussels (1958), the Guggenheim International Exhibition in New York (1958), Seattle World's Fair (1962), Warsaw (1962) and the Tate Gallery in London (1963). In all, these exhibitions represented an impressive achievement for Shadbolt.

## Notes

## Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> "Vancouver Art Gallery," *Canadian Art*, Vol. 1 (April-May 1944), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Doris Shadbolt, "The Vancouver Art Gallery," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VI (Autumn 1948), pp. 8-13.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ayre, "Western Painting Comes to Montreal," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX (Christmas-New Year 1951-52), pp. 57-59.

<sup>4</sup> "Vancouver Paintings Shown in San Francisco," *Canadian Art*, Vol. X (Winter 1953), p. 85. This article included the remarks made by Alfred Frankenstein, critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as to the different styles of Shadbolt and Binning:

"Jack Shadbolt is the most powerful of the six. His water colours, painted almost entirely in browns and blacks, are dynamic, explosive, and excited, but they are none the less disciplined for all the steam inside the painter. He deals with elemental forces of nature in things like *Stirring of Seeds* and *Death is an Untimely Frost*, and with equally elemental forces of the supernatural in his *Heraldic Forms*.

"B. C. Binning ... stands at the opposite pole from Shadbolt. This artist is a cool, crisp, decorative precisionist, an impeccable craftsman in paint and line, and one who approaches the forces of nature through the mathematician's instruments rather than through intuition and emotional symbolism."

<sup>5</sup> "Exhibition of Contemporary Painters of Quebec Will Tour Pacific Coast Cities," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX (October 1951), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> "Vancouver Gallery Shows Important Works by French Impressionist Masters," *Canadian Art*, Vol. X (Summer 1953), p. 166, and "Group of Seven Exhibition in Vancouver," Vol. XI (Summer 1954), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> "American Vanguard Art Moves from Paris to Vancouver," *Canadian Art*, Vol. X (Spring 1953), p. 123, an exhibition that was organized by the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York for the Galerie de France and shown in Paris in 1952. It included 25 large-scale paintings by Hofmann, Gorky, Motherwell, de Kooning, Pollock, Baziotes, Guston, and Tomlin. And, "Sutherland-Moore Exhibition in Vancouver," Vol. XI (Winter 1954), p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> "A Climate for the Arts," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII (Spring 1955), p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> Rene Boux, "An Art Gallery for College Students," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX (Autumn 1951), pp. 17-18. The mural was executed by Takao Tanabe in an "abstract-expressionist" style according to Rene Boux, "The Mural as Ballet in Paint," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XI (Autumn 1953), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Fred Lasserre, "Regional Trends in West Coast Architecture," *Canadian Art*, Vol. V (Autumn 1947), p. 9, "Keeping Pace with Architecture in Vancouver," Vol. XV (January 1958), pp. 84-89. Also, Doug Simpson, "Towards Regionalism in Canadian Architecture," Vol. X (Spring 1953), p. 112.

<sup>11</sup> Hubbard, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup> "The Development of Painting in the West," *Journal of Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, Vol. XXVI (January 1948), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Shadbolt was one of the first to identify and actively promote the idea of a West Coast group of Painters (Jack Shadbolt, "A Report on Art Today in British Columbia," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IV (November-December 1946), pp. 4-5, 45). In this article he stated:

"The most outstanding evidence of a creative ferment in British Columbia is the emergence of a student group of younger artists centred around the Art School. This group might justly be regarded as one of the most significant creative groups in Canada today. It has as yet produced no large body of work, but there is every evidence of calibre which in the next few years will make its presence felt in the Canadian scene as it now is locally.... Among the present leaders are Ronald Thom, Don Jarvis, Bruce Boyd, Joan Wright, Dorothy Mouat, and Peter Aspell."

Shadbolt also included a list of what he considered "senior exhibitors": Lawren Harris, J.W.G. Macdonald (gone to Calgary), W. P. Weston, B. C. Binning, Jane Bullaux, Nan Cheney, Pat McPherson, J. Parker, Lionel Thomas, Orville Fisher, Paul Goranson, Edward Hughes, Pat Cowley-Brown, Harry Hood, Gerald Tyler, Bob Alexander, Paul Rand, Ronald Jackson, Marian Morham, Mildred Valley Thornton, Dorothy Willis, C. H. Scott, Joe Plaskett, Illingworth Kerr, Fred and Betty Amess, Gladys Ewan, Alister Bell, Bess Harris, Mrs. F. C. Bell, Irene Reid, Catelle Porter, Gordon Smith, Jack Shadbolt, George Angliss and Sing Lin.

Other references to a West Coast group include: "Directions in British Columbia Painting," *Canadian Art*, Vol. V (October-November 1947), pp. 2-6; "A New West Coast Group," Vol. VI (Spring 1949), p. 127; Charles Scott, "New Tides in West Coast Art," Vol. VII (Christmas-New Year 1950), pp. 58-59.

<sup>14</sup> Joe Plaskett, "Some New Canadians and Their Debt to Hans Hofmann," *Canadian Art*, Vol. X (Winter 1953), pp. 59-63.

- 15 Hubbard, p. 100.
- 16 Duval, *Four Decades*, p. 14.
- 17 Harper, *Painting in Canada*, p. 362.
- 18 Reid, *Canadian Painting*, pp. 192-193.
- 19 Duval, p. 26.
- 20 Reid, p. 195.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- 22 Donald W. Buchanan, "Exponent of a New Architecture in Paint," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VI (Summer 1949), pp. 148-150.
- 23 B. C. Binning "Colour in Architecture," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XI (Summer 1954), pp. 140-141, and, "Mosaics: Vancouver to Venice and Return," Vol. XV (November 1958), pp. 252-257.
- 24 For example, in 1953-54 alone, Thomas painted murals for the new Imperial Oil Building and Mercantile Bank in Vancouver; Korner did murals for the home of the architect Douglas Simpson and the residence of R. J. Young; Tanabe painted a mural at the University of British Columbia; Bruno Bobak created a concrete relief mural for the Vancouver School of Art after it moved from its old location at Cambie & Dunsmuir to the newly renovated building on Hamilton Street; Binning executed decorative designs for the advertising firm of M. J. O'Brien and the B. C. Electric Co.; and, Shadbolt painted a mural for another advertising firm of Cockfield, Brown and Company.
- 25 Fred A. Amess, "The Art in Living Group", *Canadian Art*, Vol. V (Autumn 1947), p. 13.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 "Vancouver Discusses Modern Architecture," *Canadian Art*, Vol. III (Summer 1946), p. 170.
- 28 Douglas Shadbolt designed a house for the Bobaks and assisted his brother Jack; Arthur Erickson designed Gordon Smith's home and that of the artist Charles Stegeman; and, Binning designed his own home.
- 29 "Art in Full Flight from Bohemia," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 2 November 1957.
- 30 "'Toronto '61' in Vancouver," *Arts Council News [Vancouver]*, Vol. XIII (January 1962), p. 1.
- 31 R. H. Hubbard's previously cited article, "A Climate for the Arts," is the most important single document to advance this position:
- "In painting as in architecture the main characteristics are a youthful vigour and originality. Along

with originality goes a unity of style, a unanimity of purpose, that is remarkable in the face of the modern passion for individuality and that seems to denote an admirable modesty and seriousness on the part of the artists. The style itself, derived very largely from the example and teaching of Jack Shadbolt, is a sort of abstraction based on organic forms. In this it shows the effect of influences from Graham Sutherland in England and from nearby American painters like Morris Graves of Seattle."

Alan Jarvis, Director of the National Gallery of Canada, wrote in the introduction to the catalogue of the Canadian section in the Venice Biennale (*Biennale di Venezia XXVIII*, 1956, p. 278):

"The general influence of the English painters has been strong upon the vigorous school of painting which has sprung up in Vancouver during the past five years under Shadbolt's inspiration."

Eric Newton, an English critic and professor, offered a generalized viewpoint ("Canadian Art in Perspective," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XI (Spring 1954), p. 94):

"It is easy, no doubt, to exaggerate the effects of environment, but I do not think I am wrong in detecting a large-scale rhythmic energy in the painting of the Vancouver school."

Art historians writing from a longer vantage point did not enlarge greatly on these opinions. Russell Harper placed Shadbolt, Smith, Jarvis, and Korner under the title of "Lyrical Expressionism" and saw their work as being closely connected to the painters of the Pacific Northwest (*Painting in Canada*, p. 359). Dennis Reid wrote of this period (*Canadian Painting*, pp. 277-279):

"The dominant concern among Vancouver painters during the fifties, however, was pervasive nature, which found its principal spokesman in Jack Shadbolt... These painters [Shadbolt, Jarvis, Smith, Tanabel], exploring their subjective reactions to nature, dominated the art scene in Vancouver until well into the sixties, and ... were seen nationally as the most coherent 'group' working outside Montreal."

<sup>32</sup> The Vancouver artists, like many of the American painters in the neighboring states of Washington and Oregon, adapted contemporary international styles of abstraction--surrealist, gestural, lyrical, expressionistic--to suit their own unique geography and climate and artistic traditions. Overall it would be difficult to clearly distinguish between Canadian and American artists working in this general region.

<sup>33</sup> Hubbard et al, rf. #31.

<sup>34</sup> As Harper wrote (*Painting in Canada*, p. 398):  
"British Columbia painting, particularly that in Vancouver, surged forward in the forties and fifties until newspapers

spoke of a western art renaissance."

<sup>35</sup> Alan Jarvis noted this fact in his discussion of the selection of artists to be shown in the Canadian Pavilion at the Brussels Fair ("Recent Developments in the Visual Arts in Canada," *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, London, Vol. CVI [November 1958], pp. 960-961):

"Analysing the list geographically it is interesting to note how the artists from Montreal and Vancouver now overwhelmingly outnumber those from Toronto, the centre of *avant garde* painting in the days of the Group of Seven: it is small wonder that there was an outcry from Toronto artists when the list was published!"

The selection committee limited itself "to the work of those living artists who have made their impact in Canada during the post-war period" (Canadian Art for the Brussels International and Universal Exhibition, "Canadian Art, Vol. XIII [Summer 1956], p. 342). The complete list of this 'who's who' of Canadian art was provided by Donald W. Buchanan ("The Changing Face of Canadian Art," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XV [January 1958], pp. 23-24):

"Louis Archambault, Montreal; Leon Bellefleur, Montreal; B. C. Binning, Vancouver; Bruno Bobak, Vancouver; Paul-Emile Borduas, Montreal and Paris; Alexander Colville, Sackville, N. B.; Jean Dallaire, Montreal; Albert Dumouchel, Montreal; Anne Kahane, Montreal; Jean-Paul Lemieux, Quebec; Kenneth Lochhead, Regina; Jean-Paul Mousseau, Montreal; Jack Nichols, Toronto; Alfred Pellan, Montreal; Joe Plaskett, Vancouver; Jean-Paul Riopelle, Montreal and Paris; Goodridge Roberts, Montreal; William Ronald, Toronto; J. L. Shadbolt, Vancouver; Takao Tanabe, Vancouver; Gentile Tondino, Montreal; Jacques de Tonnancour, Montreal; Harold Town, Toronto."

<sup>36</sup> Apart from the Vancouver School of Art, Shadbolt taught at Victoria College Summer School (1952); California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco (1953); and at the University of Saskatchewan Emma Lake Workshop (1955). In the latter case, Shadbolt was the first guest instructor at Emma Lake, a workshop which subsequently became famous for having the leading American exponents of Post-Painterly Abstraction as summer teachers. Shadbolt frequently gave public lectures at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the University of British Columbia as well as in other parts of Western Canada. In addition, he served as art adjudicator for the Saskatchewan Arts Festival, Regina (1954) and as director, Outdoor Art Festival, Vancouver (1954). The same year he participated in two one-half hour programmes on his own painting for the television show, "Looking at Art," CBUT, Vancouver. Shadbolt's extensive jurying experience included: B. C. Annual Exhibition, Vancouver;

Vancouver Island Artists Annual, Victoria; Pacific Northwest Annual, Seattle; National Gallery Biennial Regional Selection Jury; and, the Canadian Group of Painters Jury.

37 Interviewed by David Watmough, "A Few Words With Artist Shadbolt," *Vancouver Sun*, 4 June 1965, sec. A, p. 5.

38 Quoted in *Time*, 8 September 1961, p. 18.

39 "A Plea, Not for More Caution, but for Less," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VII (October 1949), pp. 26-27.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 26. In the same article, Shadbolt offered some final reasons for attempting to reach the public (p. 27):

"Why not accept the historical necessity of our position, not in the sense of flaunting or ignoring the public but rather in assuming the leadership that is being demanded of art to vindicate the personal and intuitive in a world of depersonalizing complexity ... Certainly in the 'good old days', artists were free to create by being sure of their faith and social status. They were free from responsibilities, as it were, but their freedom only extended to creating within the existing pattern. We have been given a new freedom--to initiate, rather than merely follow."

41 University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery *Catalogue*.

42 Donald Buchanan, "Shadbolt Explores a World of Roots and Seeds," *Canadian Art*, Vol. VII (Spring 1951), p. 114; Richard Lawrence, "The Main Who Paints Nightmares," *Mayfair Magazine*, December 1951, p. 99; and, Marya Fiemengo, "Images in the Abstract," *P. M. Magazine*, Vol. I, no. 3, (February n.d.), p. 35.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Of Shadbolt's one-man show at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the critic Alfred Frankenstein commented ("An Objective Study of the Current Shows by Non-Objective Artists," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 June 1952):

"For Shadbolt, art seems to be totem, a medicine object, a thing of magical, fierce and incantatory properties. His forms seem based on those of spear and shield; they are jagged and sharp and move with the swift zigzag of a wild man's knife. The browns, blacks and whites of these pictures reminded me of tapa cloth and of the painted sculpture of the Melanesians, but it turns out Shadbolt is a Canadian and that the principal influence on his work has been the art of the Northwest Indians; at all events its philosophic primitivism is clear enough."

Kenneth Callahan, curator of the Seattle Art Museum, made

the following remarks about Shadbolt's first showing ("N. W. Artists Show Trend to Abstract," *Seattle Times*, 25 January 1953):

"In the case of Shadbolt, a Canadian whose work has not been exhibited in Seattle before, it is not known whether his present style of abstract expressionism is a transition from an earlier interest in realism.

"In this exhibition Shadbolt proves himself a sensitive, accomplished artist who has the rare combination of talent in formal picture construction and a strong feeling for nature."

The following year Callahan again singled Shadbolt out for mention ("N. W. School of Painting Emerging," *Seattle Times*, 29 October 1954):

"Shadbolt's 'Invaders,' a symbolic semi-abstraction from nature, is one of the most fully realized paintings in the show. In recent years something closely approximating a school of Northwest painting has become increasingly apparent. The work stems from nature, is usually nonrepresentational and is often highly abstracted. Shadbolt fits into this category, as do Alden Mason, Tsutakawa, David McCosh, Schwidder, Horiuchi and Lucas."

<sup>45</sup>"Paintings by J. L. Shadbolt, 1948-1953," Vancouver Art Gallery (February 24 to March 17, 1953) *Catalogue*.

<sup>46</sup> Reviewed by Paul Duval, "Contemporary Artists Mirror The Troubled Times," *Saturday Night*, 6 February 1954, p. 5, and, Rose Macdonald, "At the Galleries," *Toronto Telegram*, 7 February 1954.

<sup>47</sup> Ab Kent, "Victorians Scramble to Buy Examples of Modern Painting," *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 November 1954. Other references include: "Shadbolt Rises to New Heights With Showing of Bird Paintings," *Victoria Daily Times*, 27 October 1954, and, "J. L. Shadbolt - Recent Paintings," Arts Centre of Greater Victoria, 1954, *Catalogue*.

<sup>48</sup> Shadbolt received considerable acclaim from the Montreal newspapers for this show: "Hughes and Shadbolt Exhibiting Paintings," *Montreal Gazette*, 8 October 1955; Robert Ayre, "Art Notes," *Montreal Star*, 8 October 1955; and, R. de Repentigny, "Shadbolt, the West Coast Mousseau," *La Presse*, 15 October 1955.

<sup>49</sup> "Two Canadian Painters," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 14 November 1955.

<sup>50</sup> Canada made its first appearance at the Venice Biennale in 1952 when it was represented by Emily Carr, Goodridge Roberts, David Milne and Alfred Pellán; by 1954 the ascendancy of abstract painting was clearly recognized

with the selection of paintings by Paul-Emile Borduas, Jean-Paul Riopelle and B. C. Binning; and, in 1956, abstract styles were evident in various media: prints by Harold Town, sculpture by Louis Archambault, and paintings by Jack Shadbolt.

51 "Canadian Government Overseas Awards," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XIV (Autumn 1956), p. 34.

52 Anthony Emery, "Gordon Smith and the Gesture of Painting," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XIV (Autumn 1956), p. 4.

53 Reid, *Canadian Painting*, pp. 240-245.

54 Vol. XV (January 1958), pp. 94-95.

55 *Ibid.* p. 95.

56 Quoted in, "Engagements with Paint," *Time*, 8 September 1961, p. 18.

57 Graham, "A Year in the Sun," pp. 96-97.

58 Quoted in, "J. L. Shadbolt Ten Year Retrospective Exhibition," Vancouver Art Gallery (February 24 to March 22, 1959), *Catalogue*.

59 Quoted in, "A Year in the Sun," p. 148.

60 *Ibid.*

61 Also titled as "Medieval Town," this painting is Shadbolt's most reproduced work: (Chronologically) *Canadian Art*, Vol. XV (Spring 1958), p. 97 and Vol. XV (Winter 1958), p. 26; Malcolm Ross, *The Arts in Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 15; *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 March 1959; *Paintings and Sculpture of the Pacific Northwest*, Portland Art Museum Exhibition, (Portland Art Association: Portland, 1959), p. 48; Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), p. 336; R. H. Hubbard, *An Anthology of Canadian Art*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), plate 127, and *The Development of Canadian Art*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), p. 129.

62 Dorothy Adlow, "Guggenheim Awards," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 March 1959, p. 23.

63 Art Informel is a term invented by the French critic Michel Tapié, and is equally broad and vague in usage as Abstract Expressionism. It generally refers to the mainstream of French abstraction in the post-war period when younger painters sought to go beyond the tradition of Cubism by adopting more intuitive, spontaneous and undisciplined approaches. *Tachisme* (from the French word *tache*) may be considered as a sub-group within this larger movement and is distinguished by the use of the blot, the stain, the spot or drip. As Werner Haftmann commented (*Painting in the Twentieth Century*, [London: Lund Humphries, 1968], Vol. II, p. 331):

"The conception of painting as a spontaneous, psychographic visual expression of direct life-impulses has in the last decade extended to the whole of western painting. It has already acquired a number of well known names, including 'art informel', 'art autre', 'tachisme', 'action painting', and 'abstract expressionism'. In Europe it was the tragic work of Wols which many young painters took as their model. The basic idea, however, goes a long way back --to Kandinsky's abstract Expressionism of the years 1911-14, to Paul Klee's psychic improvisations and to the automatic experiments of Dada and the early Surrealists."

64 Shadbolt wrote of these paintings (Vancouver Art Gallery *Catalogue*, 1959):

"Since then, back in B. C., I have been re-comprehending the enigmatic nature images which still fascinate me. The result is a group of recent large canvases, structurally controlled but loose in handling and with a new smoulder of colour."

65 Of these script paintings, Shadbolt remarked ("Jack Shadbolt Exhibition," New Design Gallery (Vancouver) *Catalogue*, 1963):

"Mostly I take a lyric delight in the rhythms and the counter-rhythms in the flow of a script; but also there is the fascination between characters and intervals and the deciphering of 'meaning-about-to-be-revealed' as each letter shapes and adds its particularized form idea. Like the absorbing interest of handwriting itself, only given a poetic nostalgia when seeming to be some unknown or forgotten language, as with ancient runes or hieroglyphs."

66 The paintings done in the Mediterranean in 1961 did not impress the Toronto critics and for the first time Shadbolt came under harsh attack. Of the show in the Laing Gallery in November 1961, Paul Duval wrote ("Accent on Art," *Toronto Telegram*, 25 November 1961):

"Shadbolt has painted some of the most personal and memorable pictures of his generation. Now he has come up with his weakest display to date.

"Apart from three or four canvases, notably *Bouquet*, *Dry Summer* and *White Town*, this exhibit is filled with tentative and loosely constructed efforts. The bright, heavily loaded colors are more florid than festive and for some reason there is a complete lack of the artist's customary incisive draughtsmanship."

Robert Fulford was equally negative about this show ("Shadbolt," *Toronto Daily Star*, 18 November 1961):

"Most of his pictures are, at best, sweetly messy. Only once in a while--in "Memory of a White Town" and parts of the dazzling "Blue Channel"--does Shadbolt

show any real authority; and then the dominant force is the old, not the new, Shadbolt."

<sup>67</sup> Reproduced, National Gallery, *Shadbolt*, plate (color) 3.

<sup>68</sup> Stratford Festival Art Exhibition, *Catalogue*, 1959.

## CHAPTER V

### MURAL COMMISSIONS AFTER 1945

Before concluding this discussion of Shadbolt's career up to 1963, some mention must be made of the artist's later work as a muralist. A brief survey describing five of these wall murals will provide further insight into Shadbolt's development as an abstract painter in the post-war period and, at the same time, reveal his mature understanding and approach to the complex problem of designing large works for a particular architectural setting. Moreover, these public commissions serve as another measure of the artist's important position in modern Canadian painting.

As previously noted, Shadbolt's interest in large-scale paintings began in the early 1930's during a visit to the United States where he saw the highly publicized murals of the American regionalists and the Mexican social realists. Several years later, as a student in Paris in 1937-38, he studied the large paintings of many Renaissance and Baroque masters and shared in the excitement surrounding the Paris exhibition of *Guernica*, Picasso's epic vision of war. By the early 1940's mural commissions for the home of Mortimer Lamb, the Vogue Theatre and the United Services Centre, had enabled Shadbolt to gain

valuable experience in large works, yet such ambitions were somewhat frustrated by a lack of interest in this type of painting on the West Coast at that time.<sup>1</sup> However, the post-war building boom in Vancouver did much to change the situation. It not only brought with it an overall increase in mural commissions but also an acceptance of abstract painting and design as suitable forms of decoration for contemporary architecture. Like other Vancouver artists, Shadbolt welcomed this new patronage.

As in his easel painting, Shadbolt's approach in these public mural commissions reflected a total commitment to a vanguard style of abstraction. One reason he considered abstraction as a more suitable idiom for wall painting was that the nature of modern architecture had substantially altered by mid-century. As he commented in 1953:

To begin with, we do not build buildings now with that same belief in their permanence which previously reassured the artist about the enduring existence and meaning of his work. We accept the idea of change and that the building itself may be rebuilt, redecorated or remodelled within its honeycomb frame within a period of twenty or thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

Shadbolt also addressed himself to the question of content and concluded: "[W]e have no conviction about a set of durable symbols in which our whole society has a common belief, nor a sense of permanence in mythology which could produce a stability of style."<sup>3</sup> Yet he welcomed this new freedom from traditional concerns:

I had always wanted to be a mural painter but I had long since been discouraged by being unable to conceive of the present-day mural as permanent enough to bear a load of serious content. Now that I have come to accept the idea of change as our norm, I accept temporariness, and this allows me to cease thinking of the mural only in epic terms, with all their consequent problems, and to focus<sup>4</sup> on the personal, intimate and lyrical aspects.

Contemporary architecture, with its emphasis on aesthetic formalism and functional design, no longer favored figurative compositions nor narrative subject matter and the artist creating public works of art was now at liberty to explore his own individual themes and stylistic approaches. For Shadbolt, this new freedom to concentrate on the "personal, intimate and lyrical aspects" of mural painting was not a justification for complete artistic license. He maintained that the essential difference between easel and mural painting was that the latter must always discipline itself by its relation to an architectural setting. Unlike an oversized canvas, a wall mural does not function as a self-contained art object; it interacts directly with such formal elements of the building as space, structure, color and scale. Shadbolt's knowledge of abstract design and attention to architectural detail can be seen in his post-1945 commissions. In each of these works he sought to make the mural a harmonious part of the environment without sacrificing the integrity and visual impact of the painting.

Shadbolt's first opportunity to paint an abstract mural came in 1949 when the owner of the Alcazar Hotel in Vancouver commissioned a large decoration for the newly renovated dining-room. While the client gave him complete freedom in the selection of theme, color and design, the project was made somewhat difficult due to the unusual shape of the room--a cage-like space with three walls rounded off to form an apsidal end opposite to the lobby. Basically, the task confronting the artist was how to convey an atmosphere of festivity, airiness and elegance in a small and narrow enclosure. The theme Shadbolt chose for the Alcazar mural, entitled, "Cycle of Seasons," developed out of the biomorphic abstractions he began in New York a year earlier. The larger format and odd shape of the room, however, offered Shadbolt the chance to develop the equivalent of a whole series of paintings in a single undertaking.

Viewed from the original entrance and progressing from left to right, the Alcazar mural depicts the four seasons of the year in a continuous panorama on the three walls and curving corners. Painted in casein on plaster and later coated with wax, the mural covers a wall surface 10' x 70'. Fragments of natural objects--birds, insects, withered fruit, leaves and seed pods--are represented as flat designs or almost abstract signs. Painted in earth

colours appropriate to each season, these clusters of organic forms are subtly woven together to create an all-over pattern. The objects appear to float on an indeterminate space, yet some suggestion of illusionistic depth remains as a result of the background color being divided into multifaceted planes composed of slight tonal variations or outlined with a fine tracery. What this amounts to is a kind of cubist fracture and serves as a device to integrate the transitional areas between the different seasons. At the same time, it makes the space of the whole room take on a plastic quality. A lively sense of movement is created by both the interrelated horizontal and vertical accents of the figures and by the advancing and receding planes of the ground. Throughout the mural, the size of the forms is kept within the intimate scale of the room and the general impression conveyed to the viewer is one of fanciful humor and playfulness.

In the Alcazar mural, Shadbolt did not attempt to duplicate the spontaneous and gestural quality which characterized his smaller works. Although the images were freely conceived in the preliminary drawings, when transferred to the wall the forms have a more clearly defined appearance and are subject to a tighter control than those found in his watercolors and gouaches. Shadbolt acknowledged the influence of Miro in this mural,

particularly in his imitation of the whimsicality often associated with the work of this Surrealist master and also in the careful attention paid to the delineation of the forms.<sup>5</sup>

Both the client and the artist were pleased with the final result. Nearly twenty years later, Shadbolt still had fond memories of the Alcazar mural:

I never worked on a project so spontaneously and elicited such spontaneous enthusiastic general approval. Art school students over the years refer to it for study in space related to architecture.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the Alcazar mural provided Shadbolt with a similar commission the following year. For the restaurant of the Dominion Hotel in Victoria, he painted a colorful and humorous mural based on the theme of "Cadborosaurus," the capital's mythical sea monster. Completed in the summer of 1951, this work was executed in much the same style and technique as the "Cycle of Seasons" but was conventionally positioned across one wall approximately 10' x 40'. Shadbolt's interpretation of "Cadborosaurus" took the form of a long, undulating creature that was a playful mixture between a dragon and a sea monster. Surrounding this main figure were smaller, abstract marine designs which suggested an aquatic environment.<sup>7</sup>

These two restaurant murals exposed Shadbolt's work to a larger audience and generated considerable

publicity. Newspapers featured photographs of Shadbolt's murals and art critics acclaimed his achievement. Marya Fiemengo offered the following comments:

Another Shadboltian form of expression emerges in the painter's murals. Here a robust sense of humor, satire, piquant and lively is the dominant characteristic. Forms are used for their dancing, laughing relations one to the other. There is mimicry and sly wit in the mural done for the Alcazar dining room, and a sophisticated urban smile not unappreciative of the frivolous aspect of mythology on the wall of Victoria's Dominion Hotel.<sup>8</sup>

Writing in 1955, George Swinton compared the artist's work with that of B. C. Binning:

Shadbolt's murals on the other hand, though sensitive to the needs of architecture, never sacrifice their communicative content. To him a wall is not merely a wall, but a surface for the expression of powerful and suggestive images that forcefully emerge from his eidetic mind. His mural in the Hotel Alcazar in Vancouver--depicting the biomorphic metabolism of the four seasons--is one of the most exciting works of art in contemporary Canada.<sup>9</sup>

After the Dominion Hotel, the next mural commission Shadbolt received came in 1953. That year he was invited by the advertising firm of Cockfield, Brown and Company to provide a large wall painting for their new office building in downtown Vancouver. Unlike the restaurant murals which were done for turn-of-the-century hotels, this latest project offered the artist his first chance to design an abstract mural for a contemporary architectural setting.

In several respects, it is apparent that both

Shadbolt and the client who selected him set a minor precedent. A year after Shadbolt's mural, B.C. Binning worked on a similar commission for the M.J. O'Brien Advertising Company. As Vancouver business rivals, it is not surprising that each firm sought to surpass each other in terms of architectural design and decoration for their new buildings.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the O'Brien agency, it may have been a question of not wanting to appear out of fashion. To both patrons, however, abstract murals not only added color and personality to the working environment, but also projected the kind of forward-looking image that suggested the creative nature and rapidly changing pace of the advertising and public relations fields. With respect to this latter idea, it is clear that both firms believed that mural decorations by leading Vancouver artists were of some promotional value. In announcing the opening of its new premises, Cockfield, Brown and Company gave equal credit to "architect, contractor, muralist."<sup>11</sup>

For the Cockfield-Brown mural, Shadbolt adopted an approach which reflected the client's wishes for a purely decorative scheme to compliment the simple and functional design of the architecture. Painted in enamel on plaster and untitled, the mural covered a single wall 9' x 24' in the foyer and open working area of the building. In keeping with an office environment, the artist applied a

bright but non-distracting range of colors--neutral tones of white, tan and grey formed the background while the design elements and color accents were done in red, green and black. In this particular commission Shadbolt eliminated any reference to the biomorphic or nature imagery which characterized all of his work at this time. Instead, he created a design entirely composed of abstract, geometric shapes which were organized into a decorative pattern of interlocking and overlapping forms. Without question, the Cockfield-Brown mural represented a considerable departure for the artist. In fact, this mural was the only major non-objective painting by Shadbolt in the 1950's. And, furthermore, it was the only instance in which he approximated the geometric forms and hard-edge precision of B.C. Binning's style of painting.<sup>12</sup>

After the Cockfield-Brown mural, six years elapsed before Shadbolt had the opportunity to work on another large wall painting. In 1959, a year after his return from Europe, he won a closed competition held by the architectural firm of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, Michaud and Sise to paint a mural decoration for the restaurant wing of the newly-constructed Queen Elizabeth Theatre complex in Vancouver.<sup>13</sup> The designated mural area, a long narrow strip 4' x 50', began halfway up the wall and extended the length of the east-side of the dining room. Under the terms of the commission

Shadbolt was free to design whatever he wished.

Entitled, "Pageant of Transformation in Nature," The Queen Elizabeth Theatre Restaurant mural recalled many aspects of Shadbolt's work for the Alcazar Hotel ten years earlier and much of his easel painting since that time. In this latest restaurant mural, the transformation theme focused on the growth of a single seed through its different stages of life--sprouting, flowering and gradually withering away as a new seed begins to develop. Painted in an acrylic medium and treated with a matte varnish spray, the work was composed of contrasting dark and light colours against a grey background. Deliberately, Shadbolt made the individual forms as large as he could within the confines of the four-foot height in order that the design could be seen through the glass wall from as far away as 300' across the plaza. Within these large, rhythmically-disposed shapes, were numerous smaller details intended to arouse viewer interest at a closer range. In comparison to his previous wall paintings, this particular work had a more spontaneous appearance due to the gestural quality of the brushwork and rapid execution of the design. Undoubtedly, it was Shadbolt's most important public commission up to this time.

Following the pattern of the past decade, Shadbolt again allowed four years to pass before involving himself

in another mural project. In 1963, the artist received a major commission from the Department of Transport, Government of Canada, to execute a large wall painting for the new international airport terminal in Edmonton, Alberta. Selected by a panel of distinguished advisors for an art programme of national significance, it was further evidence of Shadbolt's stature as one of the leading painters in Canada. In every respect, the Edmonton mural represented a considerable achievement and remains one of the high points of the artist's entire career. The imaginative scope of the painting and its effective integration with the surrounding architecture made it one of the finest works of art produced under the sponsorship of the Department of Transport.

Before examining some of the thematic and formal elements of the work, some mention should be made of the development of this programme of government patronage. The idea of commissioning works of art for Canadian airports occurred almost by accident. In 1956, the architects responsible for the design of the Gander International Airport, Newfoundland, approached the Department of Transport with the suggestion of adding a mural decoration to the passenger lounge. The matter was handled by the Deputy Minister, John Baldwin, a former history professor at McMaster University.<sup>14</sup> In consultation with Alan Jarvis,

Director of the National Gallery of Canada 1955-60, Baldwin organized a limited competition and Kenneth Lochhead, a well-known Regina artist, was awarded the commission. However, this was only the beginning of the Department of Transport's involvement with contemporary art. Almost six years later, a decision was made to replace the outdated terminal buildings at Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton and Baldwin used this opportunity to convince the Minister of Finance and the Treasury Board to pass a ruling allocating a sum of one-half of one per cent of the total cost of each new building to be spent for exterior and interior works of art.<sup>15</sup> Under this formula, amounts of \$150,000, \$65,000 and \$55,000 were awarded to the Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton terminals respectively. With a total art budget of approximately \$270,000, the Department of Transport embarked upon the most substantial act of patronage in the history of Canadian art.<sup>16</sup> In effect, this programme provided a small, select group of sculptors and painters in Canada with the largest commissions they had ever received in terms of scale, public visibility and financial reward. In 1964, *Time* magazine commented on the appropriations of the Department of Transport: "This year alone it will spend about five times as much on new Canadian works as the National Gallery."<sup>17</sup>

Under the direction of John Baldwin and W.A. Ramsay,

Chief Architect for the Department of Transport Air Services, a national panel was convened with three principal advisors: Charles F. Comfort, Director of the National Gallery in Ottawa, John A. Russell, Director of the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba, and John C. Parkin, a Toronto architect and Chairman of the National Design Council. In addition, regional advisory boards were created for each airport.<sup>18</sup> The coordinating secretary was Stan White, an architect with the Department of Transport. The guidelines established by the chief advisors were of a general nature: to commission works of art expressly designed for specific locations in the three terminals; to select only those Canadian artists who were "at the height of critical favor"; and, to avoid any form of regional preference. With respect to the latter condition, it was felt that it would be "a service to Canadian culture to expose a Vancouver artist in Edmonton, Montreal artists in Toronto, Toronto artists in Winnipeg."<sup>19</sup> Contemporary rather than traditional artists were selected purposely in order to stay in advance of popular taste. Stan White explained the ultimate aim of the programme: "We were trying to achieve for Canada the most sophisticated image we possibly could."<sup>20</sup>

The advisory panels approached twenty artists in all and only one, Alex Colville, declined the invitation for a commission. Of the nineteen artists participating

in the project, eleven produced either sculptural works or some form of applied decoration while eight painted wall murals.<sup>21</sup> As the majority of artists worked in a non-figurative or abstract idiom, overall the programme demonstrated a major commitment to contemporary artistic styles. Remuneration for these various works ranged from \$4,000 to \$20,000.

These two factors--the predominance of *avant-garde* art forms and the sizeable amount of money paid for them--touched off a wide-spread controversy once the new air terminals opened. Journalists became self-appointed art experts and humourously referred to the new buildings as "artports," while politicians in the House of Commons and the Senate bemoaned the waste of taxpayer's money on abstract art.<sup>22</sup> In Toronto, public outrage centred on the \$20,000 mural completed by Jean-Paul Riopelle in five hours. Anne Kahane's symbolic statue of the famous Manitoba bush pilot, Captain Fred Stevenson, for the Winnipeg airport engendered such adverse public reaction that the Department of Transport agreed to place a life-like portrait elsewhere in the terminal. And, in Edmonton, the storm of protest was directed at the two painted murals by Dennis Burton and Shadbolt. Generally, community concern focused on the abstract style of all these works and terms like "way-out" and "modernistic blob" were used to describe the paintings.<sup>23</sup> The Department of

Transport was criticized from a variety of sources. The editor of an aviation magazine appeared to summarize much of the popular sentiment when he observed: "If we have to make a choice between being practical or 'cultured'--let's be practical."<sup>24</sup> Yet throughout this debate Baldwin's faith in the value of the programme remained unshaken:

The violet pro-and-con repercussions to our airport abstractions don't alarm me at all.... If Canadians were apathetic to it, or if they uniformly accepted it, then I'd have called the art work a flop.<sup>25</sup>

In Shadbolt's case, some of the criticism directed at his work stemmed from the fact that, prior to the opening of the new international airport in Edmonton, an announcement was made that his mural decoration would commemorate the heroic efforts of pioneer aviators in the exploration of northern Canada. Consequently, the general public were led to expect a literal interpretation of this theme. When Shadbolt's abstract mural was unveiled in December 1963, understandably it provoked some hostility.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that, with the exception of Anne Kahane, Shadbolt was the only other artist given a specific subject for the commissioned work by the Department of Transport. Moreover, the advisory panel supervised the project throughout the various stages of development before approving its final design.

In every respect, Shadbolt approached this undertaking with the utmost seriousness. For nine months he

labored over the project, systematically testing a number of different methods and forms. To help conceptualize the design, he flew in the cockpit of a DC-3 and studied aerial photographs of the northern terrain. Out of some forty experimental sketches and paintings, he gradually assembled a composite impression of the landscape from the air. In the final design he discarded the image of an aircraft as too concrete a symbol and decided upon a more abstract concept of a disembodied wing hovering over the sub-arctic tundra. Shadbolt later commented on the theme of his work: "I conceived of the idea of a bush pilot lifting the entire north country off the ground and soaring with it on his wings into the blue space of the sky."<sup>27</sup> In a letter to the *Edmonton Journal* he further explained the distillation of ideas which went into the work:

I had to boil down each element into a configuration which would be suggestive only so as to stir the imagination and memory rather than to convey a literal image.... By this process the mural became abstract and contemporary and, I hope, worthy of its evocative function and the dimension of its setting.<sup>28</sup>

Painted in oil on canvas and varnished for protection, the 18' x 37' mural occupies a commanding position in the main concourse of the Edmonton International Airport. Entitled, "Tribute to the Northern Bush Pilots," the work is mounted on a wall eight feet above ground level on the central axis of the terminal building and can be seen from nearly every angle in this vast space. For the commission,

Shadbolt received \$18,000--an amount second only to that paid to Riopelle.

Despite the negative responses to this work in the popular press, art historians and museum curators were lavish in their praise. Heralded for its "epic power" and "thoughtfully conceived grandeur,"<sup>29</sup> Shadbolt's mural was regarded by these knowledgeable authorities as one of the outstanding commissions of the Department of Transport's entire art programme. Russell Harper summarized his overall impressions of the work:

The artist has chosen an aerial view of the northern landscape, flattening out hills and valleys, but this is compensated for by a lively surface pattern of white snow fields scattered among deeper blues and browns of winter wood and barren lands. Such a unity of composition has been achieved that the entire painting makes an immediate impact on the most casual viewer.

For those who like pictorial art, there are oil derricks, villages, lakes, rivers and other small details woven into the arrangement; these are always kept subordinate to the larger pattern.

The whole conveys a mood of bigness, stillness and drama of the great northland which man is only now beginning to penetrate.<sup>30</sup>

Evan Turner, then Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, was equally generous in his analysis of Shadbolt's accomplishment:

Among these commissions the Shadbolt "Memorial to the Canadian Bush Pilot" [variously titled] is unquestionably the most effective use of a picture to make its surrounding space even more vital and significant. The great abstract pattern of aeroplane wings, propellers and other details... has a force which matches the space in which it is situated. The restriction of the colours to those of the skies, rich blues with

great white cloud-like masses, and the development of specific details in terms of black and white and here and there an intense yellow, adds greatly to the carrying power of the work from whatever angle it may be seen. Most ingenious of all, however, is the great upward spatial movement of the work.<sup>31</sup>

Since 1963, Shadbolt has remained an active artist.

In 1964 he continued his work as a muralist, painting a large canvas based on a flag motif specifically for the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Centre, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. That same year, he participated in a billboard project to publicize the efforts of prominent Vancouver artists. And although these works were generally well-received by the public and critics alike, they did not achieve a recognition comparable to that of the Edmonton mural. Nevertheless, other appreciations of his work have grown due largely to his ability to explore new approaches and to incorporate elements of more recent artistic movements such as op art and post-painterly abstraction. His capacity for artistic renewal is a lifelong characteristic. Moreover, his general involvement with art on an organizational level continues despite his retirement as an instructional member of the Vancouver School of Art. In 1967, he helped establish Intermedia, a cooperative enterprise designed to promote the use of electronic media as a form of artistic expression. The following year Shadbolt published *In Search of Form* (1968), which recorded the evolution of his ideas and the aesthetic convictions guiding his work. In 1969-70, a major retrospective was assembled by the

Vancouver Art Gallery for the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa) and appeared in eight major centres across the country. Since 1970, he was awarded the Order of Canada's Medal of Service (1972) and an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Victoria (1973). His work can be seen in permanent collections in Canada and in numerous galleries and museums throughout the world. Jack Shadbolt currently lives with his wife Doris in Burnaby, British Columbia.

## Notes

## Chapter V

1 The status of these three murals remains unknown. It is likely that the unused panels for the Vogue Theatre were destroyed in the 1940's, and the United Services Centre mural was probably lost when the building was demolished sometime after the war.

2 Quoted in, "The Mural Related to Architecture," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XI (Autumn 1953), p. 25.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

5 Shadbolt, *In Search of Form*, p. 192.

6 Quoted in, Doris Munroe, "Public Art in Vancouver," M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1972, p. 56.

7 The Alcazar Hotel mural was reduced by four feet in length when a doorway was added but remains in fair condition. The Dominion Hotel mural was destroyed during renovations in 1975.

8 *P.M. Magazine*, Vol. 1 (February, n.d.), p. 35.

9 "Painting in Canada," *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. LXII (Autumn 1955), p. 550.

10 As the journalist Michael Bragg commented (*Vancouver Province*, 14 March 1955)

Advertising agencies ... go in for something more modern because they want to show that their business is ultra-modern and their ideas up-to-date.

11 "Mural Related to Architecture," p. 25.

12 A comparison between Shadbolt's mural and that of Binning reveals only general similarities. Binning's work was based on a rigid pattern of colored squares while Shadbolt used a variety of different geometric shapes. The Cockfield-Brown mural was destroyed when the building was renovated in the 1960's. It is reproduced in *Canadian Art*, Vol. XI (Autumn 1953) p. 25 while Binning's mural is reproduced in *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII (Winter 1955), p. 84.

13 Munroe, "Public Art in Vancouver," p. 78.

14 Frank Rasky, "The Agony and Ecstasy of Our Airport Art," *Canadian Weekly (Toronto Star Weekly)*, 9-15 May 1964, p. 10.

15 Frank Lowe, "Art in the Airports Gives Canada a Sophisticated Image," *Canadian Weekly*, 18-25 April 1964, p. 7.

- 16 Evan H. Hunter, "Art at the Airports," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XXI (May-June 1964), p. 129.
- 17 29 November 1963, p. 23.
- 18 In addition to the three principal advisors, the regional panels included: Toronto - E. R. Arthur, professor at the University of Toronto School of Architecture; Thomas Howarth, Director of the University of Toronto School of Architecture; Evan H. Turner, Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; and William Withrow, Director of the Art Gallery of Toronto; Winnipeg - Jean Boggs, Chief Curator of the Toronto Art Gallery; Wolfgang Gerson, Acting Director of the University of British Columbia's School of Architecture; Evan H. Turner, Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; and G. Leslie Russell, Consulting Architect; Edmonton - Miss Suzanne Rivard, of the Ecole des Beaux Arts; Henry Kreisel, Head of the Department of English, University of Alberta; Wolfgang Gerson, Acting Director of the University of British Columbia's School of Architecture; and Fred Minsos, Consulting Architect (Lowe, "Art in the Airports," p. 8).
- 19 Lowe, p. 7.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.* p. 8.
- 22 "Edmonton Airport Mural Hit," *Calgary Herald* 4 October 1963.
- 23 "Master Mural At Airport Termed Modernistic Blob," *Edmonton Journal*, 19 February 1964, and, "The Layman, the Critic, the Mural," *Edmonton Journal*, 15 August 1963.
- 24 An editorial from *Western Wings* (December 1963), quoted in *Canadian Art*, Vol. XXI (May-June 1964), p. 141.
- 25 Quoted in, Rasky, "Agony and Ecstasy," p. 10.
- 26 The mural was completed in August 1963, with the official opening taking place several months later.
- 27 Quoted in, Rasky, p. 12.
- 28 A photocopy of the letter to the newspaper, undated, in the files of the artist.
- 29 Hunter, "Art at the Airports," pp. 132, 129.
- 30 Department of Transport, "Edmonton Air Terminal Includes Works by Four Prominent Artists," *Press Release*, November 1963, p. 2.
- 31 Hunter, pp. 134, 143.

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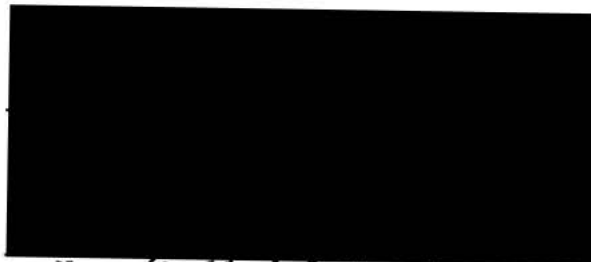
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Title of Thesis/Dissertation

JACK SHADBOLT

A STUDY OF A CANADIAN PAINTER

Author



Name (in block letters)

August 31<sup>ST</sup>, 1979

(Date)