

## Jacques Villon and the Tovell Family: A Canadian Connection with Modernism

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### Article abstract

De la fin des années 1920 et tout au long des années 1930, le docteur Harold Tovell, radiologue de Toronto, et son épouse Ruth Massey Tovell, cousine du Gouverneur général du Canada Vincent Massey, ont été mécènes et ont entretenu des relations internationales dans le but d'introduire le modernisme avant-gardiste européen au Canada. Par des contacts avec la mécène américaine Katherine Dreier et la Société Anonyme, le docteur Tovell et Lawren Harris, peintre du Groupe des Sept, ont participé à la présentation de la première exposition d'importance consacrée à l'art moderne à Toronto, en 1927. C'était à l'époque où les Tovell étaient proches du critique d'art américain Walter Pach et du cercle de Marcel Duchamp. Un des frères de Duchamp, le maître du modernisme français Jacques Villon, est devenu un ami de la famille. Le présent essai examine la relation des Tovell avec Villon, leur place dans les débuts des collections d'oeuvres d'art modernistes européennes à Toronto et le rôle clé qu'ils ont joué dans les premières années du Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario.

# Jacques Villon and the Tovell Family: A Canadian Connection with Modernism

MICHAEL PARKE-TAYLOR, ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

## Résumé

De la fin des années 1920 et tout au long des années 1930, le docteur Harold Tovell, radiologue de Toronto, et son épouse Ruth Massey Tovell, cousine du Gouverneur général du Canada Vincent Massey, ont été mécènes et ont entretenu des relations internationales dans le but d'introduire le modernisme avant-gardiste européen au Canada. Par des contacts avec la mécène américaine Katherine Dreier et la Société Anonyme, le docteur Tovell et Lawren Harris, peintre du Groupe des Sept, ont participé à la présentation de la première exposition d'importance consacré à l'art moderne à To-

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In the spring of 1928, Jacques Villon (né Gaston Duchamp) wrote from Puteaux, near Paris, to Dr Harold Murchison Tovell in Toronto to express his delight at being represented in the art collection of Dr Tovell and his wife, Ruth Massey Tovell.<sup>1</sup> The couple had just acquired *Louissette*, 1926 (fig. 1), from an exhibition of Villon's work at the Brummer Gallery in New York. The artist's brother, Marcel Duchamp (fig. 2), had received news of the purchase, informed Villon, and suggested that he send the Tovells more information about the painting. Villon's subsequent letter to Dr Tovell initiated a unique relationship between a prominent Canadian family and one of the masters of French modernism. A friendship developed and then a lifetime of mutual respect – sealed when Villon and his wife Gaby invited the Tovells' youngest son, Vincent, to stay with them *en famille* during the summers of 1937 and 1938. When the Tovells purchased *Louissette* in 1928, inaugurating the Villon/Tovell connection, they had already established a presence in Toronto as collectors and supporters of various arts communities. The formation of their artistic proclivities, the nature of their involvement with art world luminaries such as Marcel Duchamp, Walter Pach, and Katherine Dreier, and the events leading up to their meeting Jacques Villon are worth recounting since the Tovells were remarkable as the only patrons in Canada with such deep international modernist connections from the late twenties through the thirties.<sup>2</sup>

Born into a distinguished Canadian family, Ruth Lillian Massey (1889–1961) (fig. 3) was a first cousin of the actor Raymond Massey and his brother Governor General Vincent Massey.<sup>3</sup> Ruth Massey's own devotion to the arts developed from an early age. Through Vincent Massey she met Harold Tovell (1887–1947) (fig. 4), an arts and medical student at the University of Toronto. After their marriage in 1910, the couple moved to New York, where Tovell pursued graduate studies in medicine at the Presbyterian Hospital (Columbia University). This led to further work in radiology in Munich, where they lived until the advent of World War I. Inveterate travellers, the

Tovells made the Grand Tour both in 1913 and 1914, steeping themselves in the art, architecture, literature, and music of Italy, France, and England.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to the then provincial confines of Toronto in 1914, the Tovells brought with them a developed taste for a wide range of European art. Their home at Dentonia Park (fig. 5), originally the summer house of Chester Massey (Vincent Massey's father), became a magnet for Canadian, American, and European artists, writers, and musicians, and indeed the parties at the Tovells' throughout the twenties were famous for bringing together Toronto's intelligentsia. This environment fostered the education of the Tovells' four sons: Walter (1916–2005), Freeman (b. 1918), Harold (1919–2001) and Vincent (b. 1922).

The youngest son, Vincent, who was to have the closest contact with Jacques Villon, remembers his parents as "radical conservatives" whose respect for time-honoured traditional values in manners and mores blended with an "innate scepticism of fashion."<sup>5</sup> Their Edwardian roots militated against a rejection of the past, while their American and European experience confirmed an understanding of a new world order by the beginning of the First World War. Together they began to form an art collection in the twenties that reflected their avant-garde tastes.

The Tovells travelled frequently to New York, where they became familiar with the major art museums and dealers. Almost immediately upon his appointment in October 1925 to the Exhibition Committee at the Art Gallery of Toronto (AGT), Dr Tovell went to the United States on behalf of the gallery to secure loans for the January 1926 inaugural exhibition of the Walker Sculpture Court and the Fudger Memorial Galleries.<sup>6</sup> In Pittsburgh he was promised works from the Carnegie Institute, and his successful negotiations in New York elicited positive responses from both the Metropolitan Museum and the Pierpont Morgan Library. Tovell reported having "considerable difficulty" with a crusty J. Pierpont Morgan Jr (1867–1943)

Figure 1. Jacques Villon, *Louisette*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 81.2 × 60.2 cm. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Vincent Tovell, 1985 (© Estate of Jacques Villon / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).



Figure 2. The brothers Jacques Villon and Marcel Duchamp in Villon's studio at Puteaux ca. 1951 (Photo: Courtesy Gallery Louis Carré & Cie, Paris).



who agreed to lend thirteen Old Master drawings (works that he had refused to an exhibition in Los Angeles) because he “wished in every way to help Art in Canada.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, Dr Tovell visited various dealers in New York, forming connections with FitzRoy Carrington at Knoedler and Co., Marie Sterner, Keppel and Co., Durlacher, and the American-based operation of Durand-Ruel. A love for works on paper from all periods is reflected in the Tovells’ acquisitions for their personal collection. In 1925, a Paul Gauguin woodcut, *Manao Tupapau*, was acquired from Weyhe and Co. This was followed the next year by Dr Tovell’s purchase of prints by Jacopo de Barbari and Claude Lorrain from Knoedler, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir from Weyhe, and by Philip Galle after Pieter Bruegel from Colnaghi & Co., London; meanwhile Ruth Massey Tovell bought two Pablo Picasso prints from Gobin in Paris.<sup>8</sup>

No doubt Dr Tovell’s interest in prints led the Exhibition Committee in February 1926 to adopt a motion that he, Dr Frederick Banting, and W.G. Greening be placed in charge of the Print Room at the Art Gallery of Toronto.<sup>9</sup> In 1927, when Charles Trick Currelly (1876–1957), a family friend of the Tovells’ and director of the Royal Ontario Museum, suggested that the gallery should no longer acquire prints since he was planning to establish a print department, the defiant response of the Exhibition Committee was to appoint Dr Tovell to a sub-committee at the AGT “to advise upon the purchase of etchings, lithographs, wood blocks, etc.”<sup>10</sup>

Dr Tovell’s devotion to the many activities of the AGT and his easy familiarity with the New York art world of the mid-twenties would have brought him into contact with Walter Pach (1883–1958). An American artist/writer/dealer, Pach acted as the agent in Paris for the 1913 Armory Show and was an early champion of the three Duchamp brothers: Jacques Villon, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Marcel Duchamp. The Tovells’ friendship with Pach existed by 1926 when he is first mentioned in the Tovells’ travel diary, kept during a summer trip to Paris. On 30 July 1926, Ruth Tovell notes having dinner with the Pachs in Montmartre followed by meeting Marcel Duchamp, who showed them his painting *The Chess Players*, 1910 (fig. 6).<sup>11</sup> As a result of this encounter with Duchamp, arranged through Pach, the Tovells purchased *The Chess Players* – their first acquisition of a painting by a major European modernist artist.<sup>12</sup> In a letter to Dr Tovell dated 13 September 1926, Duchamp identified the sitters:

Figure 3. Ruth Massey Tovell, ca. 1932 (Photo: Violet Keene).





Figure 4. Dr Harold M. Tovell, New York, 1936 (Photo: Dr Hubert Howe).



Figure 5. Dentonia Park, Toronto 1934. (Photographer unknown, architect unknown; copy photo: John Glover; courtesy Vincent Tovell).



Figure 6. Marcel Duchamp, *The Chess Players*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 114.0 × 146.0 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950 (© Estate of Marcel Duchamp / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art).



From left to right: my brother, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, sculptor, who died from blood poisoning, as a physician during the war. His wife lying on the ground. My other brother, Jacques Villon, the painter whose paintings were also in the Quinn Collection. His wife sitting at the tea table.<sup>13</sup>

The date of this purchase in late 1926 is noteworthy since shortly thereafter Dr Tovell and his friend Lawren S. Harris (1885–1970), one of the original members of the Group of Seven, would advocate bringing the most advanced exhibition of international modern art of the time to the AGT.<sup>14</sup>

In August 1926, Katherine Dreier (1877–1952) wrote to Lawren Harris to inform him that she was organizing the *International Exhibition of Modern Art Assembled by the Société Anonyme* for presentation later that year at the Brooklyn Mu-

seum. Founded by Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray in 1920, the Société Anonyme was formed to promote European modernism in America through exhibitions, lectures, and publications. The Exhibition Committee at the AGT had already turned down Dreier's offer to bring the show to Toronto. Harris met Dreier, and possibly Duchamp, in New York that November and saw the collection.<sup>15</sup> Excited by what was then undoubtedly the most avant-garde collection of modern art anywhere in the United States, Harris wrote an impassioned letter to the Exhibition Committee at the AGT in December 1926 to advocate a reconsideration of Dreier's proposal.<sup>16</sup> Since he was already a member of the Société Anonyme, Harris was hardly neutral, but a personal conflict of interest was avoided by his assurance that his own painting would be withdrawn from the exhibition if it were to come to Toronto. Dr Tovell reopened the matter by initiating a motion in the committee to seek

further opinions from the directors of the Brooklyn Museum and the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo.<sup>17</sup> Thus the stage was set for a reversed decision and the official acceptance of the exhibition by the committee on 30 December 1926.

The implications of this exhibition of European avant-garde modernism in Toronto, akin to the 1913 Armory Show in New York, were profound for the work of Canadian artists such as Lawren Harris, Bertram Brooker, Kathleen Munn, and Edna Taçon. Certainly the show forged yet another link between the Tovells and Marcel Duchamp through their friendship with Dreier in her capacity as president of the Société Anonyme. When Dreier received the dates for the exhibition in Toronto (1–24 April 1927), she offered to lecture at the opening, and invited Dr Tovell to visit her in New York: “I would like to show you the beautiful decorative panel Duchamp painted for me in 1918 for over my bookcase (*Tu m’* [Yale University Art Gallery]) – beside my Brancusi.”<sup>18</sup> While it is not known if the Tovells ever saw her collection in New York, they would have come to know Dreier when she travelled to Toronto to help install the exhibition. With messianic fervour, she spoke to a large audience at the Art Gallery of Toronto of the need to live with modern art in the home in order to absorb its meaning – a point that would not have been lost on the Tovells.<sup>19</sup>

The inclusion in the Société Anonyme exhibition of Jacques Villon’s *The Jockeys*, 1924 (Yale University Art Gallery), may have afforded the Tovells their initial experience of the artist’s work.<sup>20</sup> It was certainly the first painting by Villon to be exhibited in Toronto, and it met with considerable vitriol from the artist Franz Johnston, who likened it to “an interior view of what a rider’s stomach must look and feel like during the most intense motion, while on a fleeing horse with a rough spine.”<sup>21</sup> Although criticism of this nature was meant to ridicule the artist (it was actually close to Villon’s conception), it had no negative effect on the Tovells. Indeed their conviction about the merits of *The Jockeys* would have been confirmed by Dreier, who was so impressed by it that she acquired eight preparatory drawings demonstrating the evolution of the composition. Only five years earlier, she was responsible for Villon’s first one-man show in the United States, at the Galleries of the Société Anonyme in New York.<sup>22</sup> The brochure/catalogue for that exhibition had been written by the Tovells’ friend Walter Pach.

In February 1928, Pach came to lecture at the AGT and stayed with the Tovells at Dentonia Park.<sup>23</sup> No doubt he spoke of his involvement with the forthcoming Jacques Villon exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in New York, for which he contributed the catalogue essay. Less than a week after the opening on 26 March 1928, the Tovells had purchased *Louissette* for \$500.<sup>24</sup> The *New York Times* critic Edward Alden Jewell considered it the “most sensational picture” on view in New York. He reported his encounter with Dr Tovell:

The reviewer was fortunate enough to meet, directly in Louissette’s presence, the man who had just bought the picture. He is a Toronto physician. Or rather, he said, his wife had bought it, and he was sorry she was not there, because she could interpret the work more clearly than he could. Did he like the picture? Yes, he was coming to like it very much. At first he had considered it ugly, but it was becoming strangely beautiful. And indeed there does seem something strangely beautiful about it: a something almost monumental and very haunting. Villon has used the Rouault heavy line method, if it may be called such, in other portraits, but nowhere else so arrestingly as here.<sup>25</sup>

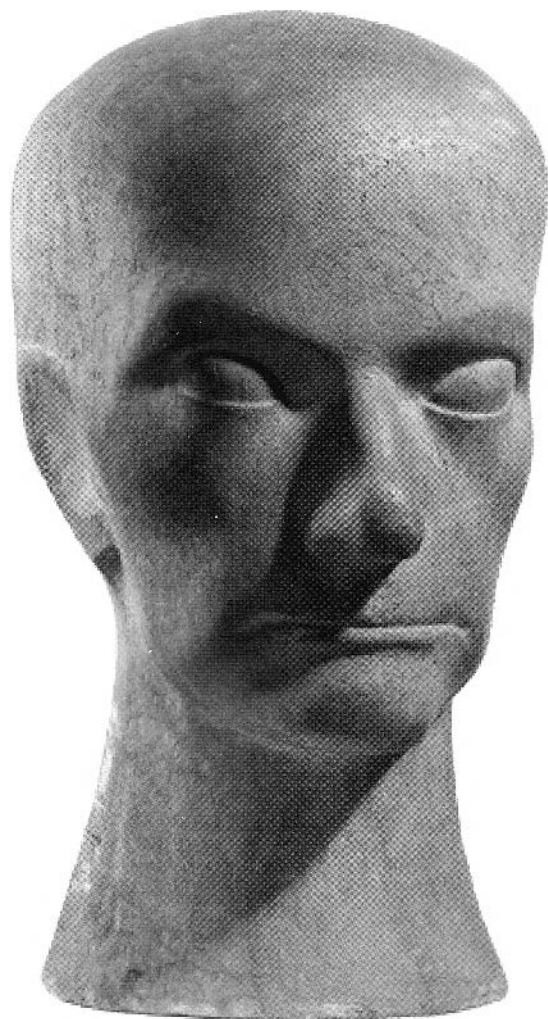
As noted, the purchase of *Louissette* (Art Gallery of Ontario) led to the first contact between Villon and the Tovells.<sup>26</sup> With works by both Marcel Duchamp and Jacques Villon in their collection, the Tovells wanted to round out their holdings of the three Duchamp brothers with a sculpture by Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876–1918). Once again an opportunity came through the agency of Walter Pach. After the success of his first lecture at the AGT, Pach was invited back in November 1928 to speak on “True and False Art in the Modern Period.” Again he stayed with the Tovells, and probably mentioned the first American retrospective of Duchamp-Villon, which he was helping to organize for the Brummer Gallery in early January 1929. On the day of the opening, Pach wrote to Dr Tovell about the exhibition, advising him that “there are things there that could be in your museum or anywhere else – including the Louvre.”<sup>27</sup>

The Tovells heeded his call by attending the New York exhibition and buying one of Duchamp-Villon’s terracotta busts of *Baudelaire* (Art Gallery of Ontario) (fig. 7).<sup>28</sup> This celebrated sculpture had apparently already influenced the work of Toronto artist Bertram Brooker (1888–1955), a regular visitor at the Tovells’ home. Brooker’s painting *The Dawn of Man*, ca. 1927 (National Gallery of Canada), which once belonged to the Tovells, demonstrated “simplified and symbolic forms [that] would have appealed to admirers of Duchamp-Villon.”<sup>29</sup> Brooker’s annotated catalogue of his visit to the 1929 Duchamp-Villon show at Brummer’s<sup>30</sup> not only records his interest in the artist, but also leads one to suspect that he, like Walter Pach, might have encouraged the Tovells to purchase *Baudelaire*.

With the installation of the Duchamp brothers’ works at Dentonia Park, Dr Tovell wrote to Pach in Paris on 25 October 1929 to communicate the salutary influence of Duchamp’s *The Chess Players* on the Toronto art community:

How is Marcel Duchamp? We don’t hear from him but we think of him every day. In fact the house here would be rather bare if it weren’t for the Duchamp family. I hope you

Figure 7. Raymond Duchamp-Villon, *Baudelaire*, 1911. Terracotta, 38.7 × 22.3 cm. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift in memory of Harold Murchison Tovell (1887–1947) and Ruth Massey Tovell (1889–1961) from their sons, 1962 (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).



will tell them how greatly we prize their works. The other evening we had a string quartet [Hart House Quartet] playing here. They sat in front of the Chess Players. It was remarkable how the people reacted to the music and the painting. The painting showed new qualities, the music was better felt. Everyone here had the same experience.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1929, the AGT presented an exhibition of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French paintings from the Kraushaar Galleries in New York, augmented with loans from private Toronto collections. It is hardly surprising that the Tovells proudly contributed their works by the Duchamp brothers.<sup>32</sup> In addition, they had just purchased from Kraushaar Delacroix's large painting *The Return of Christopher Columbus* (Toledo Museum of Art), which appeared under their name in the Toronto catalogue, and which was requested immediately for the major Delacroix retrospective organized by the Louvre in

Figure 8. Jacques Villon, *Les Jeunes Demoiselles*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 73.0 × 60.0 cm. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Vincent Tovell, in memory of Jacques and Gaby Villon, 1979 (© Estate of Jacques Villon / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).



June 1930.

During a trip to Europe in the spring of 1930 (a trip that included stops in Budapest and Vienna), the Tovells visited Paris (and Puteaux), where they saw Walter and Magda Pach, Henri Pierre Roché (who had been an agent for John Quinn's collection), and Marcel Duchamp. But of greatest interest is their meeting with Jacques Villon, which was described by Ruth Tovell in her diary entry of 27 April 1930:

We went out to Puteaux with the Pachs and had tea with Jacques Villon and his wife. He is a man of great erudition and much charm – as simple as a child and very much the artist – absolutely unworldly. It was a memorable afternoon. He had just finished the “Nudes in a Landscape” – it is now ours. Another Red Letter Day.<sup>33</sup>

The painting referred to is *Les jeunes demoiselles* (Art Gallery of Ontario) (fig. 8), which the Tovells purchased for \$600. Less than a week later, Mrs Tovell recorded a dinner with the Villons and Pachs that was followed by a visit to Villon's studio on 6 May 1930: “In the afternoon we went to Jacques Villon's and saw all his engravings. He is the finest engraver of his time I am sure. His technique is astounding and he is original always besides being a fine student.”<sup>34</sup> It was likely during this studio



visit that Villon presented the Tovells with his etching *Nature morte aux noix*, 1929 (Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), which is dedicated “à monsieur et madame Tovell, en souvenir de leur visite à Puteaux.”<sup>35</sup> The Tovells did not stay long enough in Paris to attend the opening of the Delacroix exhibition at the Louvre, which included not only their painting *The Return of Christopher Columbus* but also a study for *The Barque of Dante* (National Gallery of Canada) that they had just acquired through Walter Pach from André Schoeller in Paris.<sup>36</sup> In July, Villon reported how much he admired the Columbus painting and that it was his great wish that the Tovells’ grandchildren one day might see a loan exhibition of his own work in the same room in the Louvre.<sup>37</sup>

In the spring of 1936, the Tovells took their precocious fourteen-year-old son Vincent, fluent in French, to visit the Villons at Puteaux. During that meeting, arrangements were made for him to return the next summer to live *chez* Villon and to study art.<sup>38</sup> In early July 1937, Vincent Tovell arrived for an eight-week stay. During that period Villon taught Vincent the technique of etching, and together they pulled a number of the young student’s impressions on the artist’s press.

Obviously in some sense I imitated him being vaguely aware of how he went about things... the whole business of cross-hatching, framing, *mise en page*, and setting up the composition within a structured pattern. He actually showed me how he did that and then we got into colour theory. Indeed he persuaded me to buy M.A. Rosenstiehl’s *Traité de la couleur*.<sup>39</sup>

Villon also gave Vincent a treatise on colour by F. Forichon, complete with colour wheel.<sup>40</sup> As the foremost theoretician, along with Albert Gleizes, of the group of artists associated with the Section d’Or in the heyday of Cubism, Villon advocated a marriage of theory with a careful observation of the natural world.

When Vincent left Villon at the end of August 1937, he had acquired the artist’s painting *Mme Fulgence*, 1936 (Art Gallery of Ontario), and the prints *La table servie*, 1913, *Enfants à la pomme*, 1929, and *Mon vieux Luxembourg*, 1935.<sup>41</sup> In addition, Villon had made a portrait etching of Vincent that summer (fig. 9). The artist used Vincent as a model again the following year when he came to stay in late June 1938. Consistent with his practice, Villon constantly reworked a subject in different media and contexts. For example, a 1937 working drawing of Vincent playing a recorder was translated in September 1938 into a highly finished print, *Le joueur de flageolet* (fig. 10), which in turn became the subject of a large oil painting in 1939.<sup>42</sup> Vincent received a letter from Villon in 1955 concerning his illustrations for *Les Bucoliques* and in particular his

Figure 9. Jacques Villon, *Portrait of Vincent Tovell*, 1937. Etching on wove paper, 9.2 × 7.6 cm. Collection Vincent Tovell (© Estate of Jacques Villon / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).



return to the image of Vincent and his recorder in the Eighth *Bucolic Pastoral* (fig. 11):

I am pleased that the *Bucoliques* are of [greater] interest to you. The process was a long one in that the printer required more time in order to deal with the details. In the *Bucolique*... there is a flute player that is, was, and aspired to be “you,” after my life drawings of you at Puteaux ... study of which “one” could make a painting.<sup>43</sup>

At the end of the summer of 1938, the now sixteen-year-old Vincent Tovell returned home to Toronto with yet another print by Villon, *La petite mendicante*, 1936, and a white plaster sculpture by Raymond Duchamp-Villon, *Jeune fille assise*, 1913, which had stayed in Villon’s studio since his brother’s death. It was a period of transition in the Tovells’ life. In 1938, after Dr Tovell’s retirement the previous year and the family’s move to a new house, the Delacroix painting was sold back to Kraushaar. Reduced financial circumstances also made it necessary to sell Duchamp’s *The Chess Players* to Walter Pach in 1939/40. He subsequently sold it to the great Duchamp collector Walter Arensberg, and now the painting resides in the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Figure 10. Jacques Villon, *Le Joueur de Flageolet*, 1938. Etching and drypoint, 20.2 × 15.8 cm. Print Department, Boston Public Library (© Estate of Jacques Villon / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Boston Public Library).

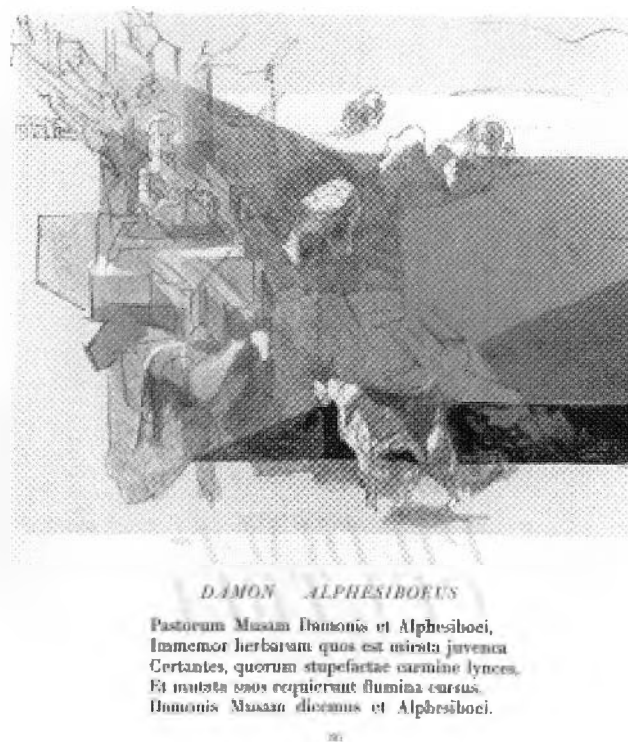


The Tovells were concerned for the Villons' safety during World War II. In 1940 the Tovells opened their home in Canada to them. Although the Villons declined graciously, they never forgot the Tovells' offer of hospitality. For more than three decades, from 1928 until Villon's death in 1963, a friendship between the two families can be documented in the extensive correspondence they shared. The Tovells' gifts of major works by Villon and his brother Duchamp-Villon to the Art Gallery of Ontario are a lasting reminder of this friendship, and of the family's links with European modernism and its contributions to the early life of the gallery.

#### Acknowledgments

My foremost debt is to Vincent Tovell to whom I should like to dedicate this article in recognition of his willingness to share with me his memories and observations of Jacques Villon. Over the years he has been a constant source of information, inspiration, and support through his conversations and by making available diaries, letters, and photographs. I have also benefited from the assistance of many people who helped in ways too numerous to specify: Allan Antliff, Christine Boyanoski, Janet Brooke, Barbara Butts, Gary Fitzgibbon, the late Lucien

Figure 11. Jacques Villon, Eighth Bucolic Pastoral from Virgil, *Les Bucoliques*, trans. Paul Valéry (Paris: Editions Scripta et Picta, 1953). Lithograph on Arches wove paper, Collection Vincent Tovell (© Estate of Jacques Villon / SODRAC, 2007; photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).



Goldschmidt, Charles Hill, Anna Hudson, Elise Kenney, Marge Kline, Denise Seltz, the late Francis Steegmuller, the late Walter Tovell, Alan G. Wilkinson, and Judith Zilczer. At the Art Gallery of Ontario, the following individuals went beyond the call of duty to offer their assistance: Lucie Chevalier, Syvalya Elchen, Sylvia Lassam, Katharine Lochnan, Larry Pfaff, and Dennis Reid.

#### Notes

- 1 Jacques Villon to Dr Harold Tovell, 4 May 1928, Tovell Family fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
- 2 Indeed, the Tovells' interest in international modernism was focused on avant-garde developments in early twentieth-century France. The only other notable patron of international modernism in Canada during the thirties was the Ottawa collector H.S. Southam, who bought works by van Gogh, Cézanne, and Matisse. Attitudes to international modernism among artists and collectors in Canada at that time indicate a growing awareness. Members of the Group of Seven were certainly modern in a Canadian context but essentially nationalist in focus. This nationalism prevented them from embracing French modernism as wholeheartedly as did the Montreal artists who eventually formed the Contemporary Art Society in 1939.

To date, little has been written on the subject of the early history

- of collecting European modernism in Toronto. There is, however, a useful summary of the Tovells and the cultural life of Toronto in the 1920s in M. Phileen Tattersall, "Tibor Pólya meets the Group of Seven: Harold and Ruth Tovell, and Canadian-Hungarian Cultural Contacts in the 1920s," *Tibor Pólya and the Group of Seven: Hungarian Art in Toronto Collections 1900–1949*, exh. cat., Toronto, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House (Toronto, 1989), 10–14. See also Dennis Reid, "Marcel Duchamp in Canada," *Canadian Art*, 4 (Winter 1987), 52–54. For a history of the major collectors (both private and institutional) of Canadian art contemporary with the Tovells' collection and a discussion of modernism and internationalism in Canada during the late twenties and thirties, see Charles Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, exh. cat., Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, 1995), 223–37 and 257–60.
- 3 See the Massey family tree in Charlotte Gray, "The Massey Mystique," *Weekend Magazine*, 16 June 1979, 12–13.
  - 4 Ruth Massey and Harold Tovell kept a travel diary that documents various European trips from 1911 to 1930 (collection Vincent Tovell). From 1926, Ruth Tovell began studying sixteenth-century Flemish illuminated manuscripts and paintings in Brussels and this resulted eventually in the scholarly publications *Flemish Artists of the Valois Courts* (Toronto, 1950) and *Roger van der Weyden and the Flémalle Enigma* (Toronto, 1955). She also published a crime novel set in the world of art: *The Crime in the Boulevard Raspail: a tale for those who know nothing about art and for those who know too much* (Toronto and London, 1932). The American edition was titled *Death in the Wind* (1932).
  - 5 Author interview with Vincent Tovell, 29 October 1991.
  - 6 Dr Tovell served on the Exhibition Committee at the AGT from October 1925 to October 1927, and was chairman of the Education Committee from October 1926 to March 1929.
  - 7 Report included with the minutes of an Exhibition Committee meeting, 10 December 1925, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Toronto.
  - 8 By 1930, the Tovells had acquired a significant print and drawing collection. The following is a chronological summary of some of their most important purchases. (Those in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario are followed by accession numbers.) 1925: Gauguin, *Manao Tupapau*, woodcut, 88/86 (Weyhe & Co., \$100); 1926: Pablo Picasso, *Le bain*, drypoint and *Les saltimbanques*, drypoint (Gobin & Co.); Jacopo de Barbari, *Three Men Bound to a Tree*, engraving, 86/295 (Knoedlers, \$1200); *Adoration of the Magi*, Italian miniature, fifteenth century, 88/90 (Marie Sterner, \$200); Phillipe Galle, after Bruegel, *Charity*, engraving, 88/93, and *Justice*, engraving, 88/92, from *The Set of Seven Virtues*; Pieter van der Heyden, after Brueghel, *Gluttony*, engraving from *The Set of Seven Vices*, 88/91 (Colnaghi & Co., London, \$10 each); 1928: Degas, *Danseuse vue du dos*, black chalk with white chalk, 88/85 (Durand-Ruel, New York, \$600); Matisse, *Odalisque à la coupe des fruits*, lithograph, 88/88 (Weyhe & Co., \$35); 1929: Gauguin, *Tahitian Girl in Pink Pareu*, counterproof (monotype) with watercolour and pastel, 99/45 (Gobin & Co., Paris, \$350); 1930: Georges Rouault, *L'Idylle*, watercolour, 88/87 (Brunner Gallery, New York, \$1600); Picasso, *Groupe de trois femmes*, etching and drypoint (Gobin & Co., Paris).
  - 9 Minutes of an Exhibition Committee meeting, 17 February 1926, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
  - 10 Minutes of Exhibition Committee meetings, 25 February 1927 and 23 March 1927, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
  - 11 Ruth Massey and Harold Tovell travel diary, 30 July 1926, collection Vincent Tovell.
  - 12 Duchamp in conversation with Pierre Cabanne: "I bought back one of my paintings, which was also in the Quinn sale [1924], directly from Brummer. Then I sold it, a year or two later, to a fellow from Canada. This was amusing. It didn't require much work from me." Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (New York, 1979), 74.
  - 13 Marcel Duchamp to Dr Harold Tovell, 13 September 1926, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Duchamp refers to the Irish-American lawyer from New York, John Quinn (1870–1924), who amassed a significant collection of post-impressionist and early modern art. Further in the letter, Duchamp informs Tovell that the painting would be shipped to Toronto from Paris around 1 October 1926.
  - 14 In January 1927, Bertram Brooker recorded in his diary that he and Lawren Harris "had a fine time over the Duchamp picture" at the Tovells'. Bertram Brooker diary entry, 24 January 1927, Brooker Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba.
  - 15 For details of the 1927 Société Anonyme exhibition and the Tovell/Dreier/Duchamp connection, see Dennis Reid, "Marcel Duchamp in Canada," *Canadian Art*, 4 (Winter 1987), 52–54.
  - 16 Lawren Harris in L.R. Pfaff, "Lawren Harris and the International Exhibition of Modern Art: Rectifications to the Toronto Catalogue (1927), and Some Critical Comments," *RACAR*, XI, 1–2 (1984), Appendix A, 84.
  - 17 Minutes of an Exhibition Committee meeting, 13 December 1926, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
  - 18 Katherine Dreier to Dr Tovell and D.H. McDougall, 5 March 1927, file for *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
  - 19 Katherine Dreier, "Lecture on Modern Art, Toronto, April 4th, 1927," n.p., n.d., E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives. Dreier also gave an informal talk on the exhibition to a group of Toronto artists at the AGT on 3 April 1927, and a lecture on "Abstract Art" in the studio of Lawren Harris on 4 April 1927.
  - 20 See Robert Herbert, Eleanor Apter, and Elise Kenney, *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven, 1984), 700, no. 738, reproduced in colour, plate 52.
  - 21 Franz Johnston "An Objection," *The Canadian Forum*, VII (May 1927), 239–42, reprinted in L.R. Pfaff, *RACAR*, XI, 1–2 (1984), Appendix C (3), 95.
  - 22 Villon, Galleries of the Société Anonyme, 16 December 1922 – 10 January 1923.
  - 23 Pach's lecture, "The Classical Element in Modern Art," on 10 February 1928 at the AGT was attended by 256 people.

- 24 *Villon*, exh. cat., New York, Brummer Gallery (New York, 1928), no. 27 (preface, "For Jacques Villon," by Walter Pach). The exhibition included thirty-five paintings with a selection of engravings and drawings by Villon (as well as some sculptures by Raymond Duchamp-Villon).
- 25 Edward Alden Jewell, *The New York Times*, 1 April 1928.
- 26 Louise was the young daughter of the housekeeper in the Villon home in Puteaux. In his letter of 4 May 1928 to Dr Tovell, Villon wrote that the sitter was "une jeune écolière" and that he had painted a second work entitled *Enfant*, very different in colouration and with the drawing reduced only to an indication of proportions, which was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in 1926.
- 27 Walter Pach to Dr Harold Tovell, 5 January 1929, Tovell Family fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
- 28 *Memorial Exhibition of the Works of Raymond Duchamp-Villon*, exh. cat., New York, Brummer Gallery (New York, 1929), no. 29 (preface by Walter Pach). Judith Zilczer records that Villon claimed Duchamp-Villon made five or six plaster casts of *Baudelaire*, as well as three or four casts in terracotta, in addition to the edition of eight bronzes. See Judith Zilczer, "Raymond Duchamp-Villon," *Bulletin*, 76 (Fall 1980), Philadelphia Museum of Art, 23, n. 12. The Tovells' terracotta, now in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, is not likely the cast of the *Baudelaire* included in the 1913 Armory Show.
- 29 Dennis Reid, *Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa, 1973, rev. ed. 1979), 12 and 26, plate 6.
- 30 Brooker Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba.
- 31 Dr Harold Tovell to Walter Pach, 25 October 1929, microfilm reel 4218, frames 252–55, Walter Pach Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 32 *French Paintings and Sculpture from the Kraushaar Galleries, New York, and Private Collections...*, exh. cat., Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto (Toronto, 1929); the exhibition included Villon's *Louise* (no. 229), Duchamp's *The Chess Players* (no. 230), and Duchamp-Villon's *Baudelaire* (no. 231).
- 33 Ruth Massey and Harold Tovell travel diary, 27 April 1930, collection Vincent Tovell.
- 34 Ruth Massey and Harold Tovell travel diary, 6 May 1930, collection Vincent Tovell.
- 35 Provenance: Walter Tovell, André Bachand, Charles S.N. Parent. See Denis Martin, *Jacques Villon (1875–1963). La donation Charles S.N. Parent au Musée du Québec*, exh. cat., Québec, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (Québec, 1992), no. 62.
- 36 *Exposition Eugène Delacroix*, exh. cat., Paris, Palais du Louvre (Paris, 1930): *Le retour de Christophe Colomb*, no. 92, and *Étude pour Dante et Virgile aux Enfers*, no. 237.
- 37 Jacques Villon to Dr Tovell, 4 July 1930, Tovell Family fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
- 38 Dr Tovell purchased for \$400 another painting directly from Villon in the spring of 1936: *Self-Portrait in his Studio*, 1934, collection Vincent Tovell.
- 39 M.A. Rosenstiehl, *Traité de la couleur au point de vue physique, physiologique, et esthétique, comprenant l'exposé de l'état actuel de la question de l'harmonie des couleurs* (Paris, 1913). Author interview with Vincent Tovell, 21 January 1992, typescript, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives.
- 40 F. Forichon, *La couleur: ses manifestations, son rôle dans les arts, ses harmonies* (Paris, 1934).
- 41 For Vincent's fifteenth birthday on 29 July 1937, Villon gave him *Enfants à la pomme* and allowed Tovell to purchase *Mme Fulgence* for the nominal sum of \$85.
- 42 These three works are illustrated in Daniel Robbins et al., *Jacques Villon*, exh. cat., Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum (1976), 148–49 (nos. 128, 128a, and 128b).
- 43 Jacques Villon to Vincent Tovell, 11 August 1955, Tovell Family fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives. "Je suis heureux que les Bucoliques vous aient plus intéressé. Ce travail a été long car l'imprimeur a demandé beaucoup de temps pour les détails. Dans la Bucolique ... il y a un joueur de flûte qui est, a été, a voulu être 'vous', d'après mes dessins faits d'après vous à Puteaux, dessin, étude dont 'on' ferait une grande toile."