

Nancy J. Dunbar, compiler, introduction by Hugh MacLennan, *Images of Sport in Early Canada/Images du sport dans le Canada d'autrefois*. Montreal, McCord Museum and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976. 96 pp., 126 illus., \$14.95 (cloth), \$7.50 (paper)

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This introduction is followed by twenty-four colour plates, beginning with *Red Vision* of 1958. No earlier works are reproduced, not even for documentary purposes. Each plate is identified by title, date, medium, size, and present ownership. The colour is often poor and one painting has been illustrated upside down (*June Lilac*, pl. 44). There are also thirty-two black-and-white illustrations. Interjected casually between the colour and the black-and-white photographs is an extremely interesting transcript of a tape recording of 1975 called "Reminiscences by Bush." Six pages of the catalogue are devoted to a redundant, verbatim recital of the information included, with each plate suggesting that the want of substantive information in the catalogue must be attributed to lack of research rather than lack of funding. So little thought was given to this document as an historical record or a source of information that its pages were not even numbered. A concise biographical summary and a "selected" bibliography conclude the text.

Bush is dead. We shall have to rely on secondary sources in the future. The catalogue will serve as a souvenir item for many, but it will do nothing to establish Bush's true rôle as an artist either in Canada or in the international scene.

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originates more often in the task of survival among early cultures (canoeing, bows and arrows, fishing), frequently in the technology of warfare and personal forms of combat (riding, shooting, fencing), in the need for means of transportation (snowshoes, riding, sleighing), and, sometimes, in religious and competitive ritual such as the ceremonial "ball-games" of the Mesoamerican Indians.

Sport conceived as "sport," without utilitarian function other than sheer pleasure in the activity itself, like "art for art's sake," is a special phenomenon within human history. High development of sport is limited to cultures which place value upon the individual conceived as having free will, as self-creating, and self-disciplining. It is a conception of humanity not limited to Western culture, but is one which reached its fullest and best known expression in the context of ancient Greece and in the phenomenon we have come to cherish and preserve as the Olympic Games.

The publishers missed a wonderful opportunity by not exploring more thoroughly the concept of sport, the ideal of the self-governing, disciplined human body, and the significance of the ideal, performing human organism as an "idea" as well as an image in the history of art and thought. Instead they chose this mediocre, jumbled enterprise.

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Editor's note: Images of Sport in Early Canada/Images du sport dans le Canada d'autrefois was declared a prize-winner in the 1977 Book Show and 1977 Jacket Show of the Association of American University Presses. The book was designed by Fritz Gottschalk and Don Kindschi of Gottschalk + Ash Ltd.

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Images of Sport in Early Canada is a meaningless concoction prepared out of a sense of duty to the Montreal Olympic Games of 1976, yet it is the sort of thing that so often substitutes for more worthwhile forms of art historical or ethnographic endeavour among Canada's educational institutions.

In the first place, the rationale for the selection of images — objects, photographs, paintings, and drawings, most of which are in the collection of the McCord Museum — is unclear, imprecise, and inconsistent. Musical objects, such as the woodcarving of a Quebec fiddler (Fig. 1) or a ceremonial Haida Indian rattle, are combined with a lady's costume and embroidered Cree gloves. Nor are all of these images representative of sport: Eskimo kayaks, bows and arrows, and the portrayal of a buffalo chase by the American painter Catlin (why not Kane, Canada's equivalent?) have to do instead with the quest for food and sheer survival. How is a nineteenth-century copper weathervane an image of sport? Is it because it depicts a horse which, in turn, may suggest racing or riding?

The feeble and no doubt hastily written introduction by Hugh MacLennan leaves a good deal to be desired. For one thing, not all sport is an outgrowth of innocent play. It



FIGURE 1. Adélard Turgeon, *Fiddler*. Dunbar, p. 35.