

Jock Macdonald: Letters from Europe, 1954-55

Jennifer C. Watson

Volume 7, numéro 1-2, 1980

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1076872ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1076872ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Watson, J. C. (1980). Jock Macdonald: Letters from Europe, 1954-55. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 7(1-2), 25-32.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1076872ar>

Jock Macdonald: Letters from Europe, 1954-55

JENNIFER C. WATSON

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

Among the fine collection of Alexandra Luke's personal papers in the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, some of the most illuminating are letters presented in 1968 by the artist's daughter, Mary P. Hare.¹ Luke is perhaps best known as a member of Painters Eleven, the group that sought – and achieved – recognition for abstract painting in Ontario. The letters, only a few of which are typewritten, are largely holograph; some even have covers.² Yet they are important not merely for the many autographs of artist friends, but also for the particular light which they shed on shared concerns of Luke and her correspondents. The gem of this sub-collection, certainly as regards hitherto unpublished data which it contains, is a series of letters from Jock (J.W.G.) Macdonald (1897-1960).³

Of thirty-six Macdonald-Luke letters, by far the greater number stem from the year Mac-

donald and his wife, Barbara, spent in Europe owing to a Canadian Government Overseas Fellowship. Covering as it does the entire period 1954-55, beginning with a note from the ship *Liberté* and ending on their return to a new apartment in Toronto, the Luke correspondence

FIGURE 1. J.W.G. (Jock) Macdonald, *Jardin or Riviera Garden*, 1955. Private collection (Photo: VIDA/Saltmarche).



1 For a brief summary of further Luke papers, in the gallery archives and also those retained by Luke's family, see this author's exhibition catalogue, *Alexandra Luke: A Tribute* (Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, 6 July–7 August 1977), 5.

Acknowledgement is made to the Robert McLaughlin Gallery and to the McCord Museum, Montréal, for permission to publish these letters from Jock and Barbara Macdonald. I would also like to thank Joan Murray for reading the manuscript; Prof. Joyce Zemans, who is gathering Macdonald material in preparation for a monograph and exhibition, and whose help in the search for paintings of this period was not ungenerous; and finally Barbara (Mrs. J.W.G.) Macdonald herself, in particular for details of the appendix.

2 I am indebted to Shelly Dorfman Feldman for her efficient organization of the Luke letters, several of which are undated and many signed only with the correspondent's first name.

3 The artist's name as given is specified in the following memorandum from Ella McLaren to Charles E. McFaddin, Toronto, 9 July 1959 (Art Gallery of Ontario): 'Apparently J.W.G. Macdonald wishes to be known as Jock Macdonald. Nancy [Robertson, later Dillow] called him about this when we were sending [a] print of "Fleeting Breath" to [The] Art Quarterly, and he said to send it as follows: Macdonald, Jock (J.W.G.). He is going to decide whether all his works will be identified as above, or whether he will change just the last five years onwards, and he is to write us a letter stating what our policy is to be in connection with his paintings.' The letter, to my knowledge, was never written. It seems to have been 1956 not 1954 that Macdonald changed the form of his name, for he wrote to Maxwell Bates, Toronto, 3 June 1957 (McCord Museum), '[I am] now working under the painting name of "Jock Macdonald" ... I decided a year ago to drop the "J.W.G." as every artist appears to use a Christian name of some sort. If I used "James" I could be mixed up with James (A.S.) Macdonald of Vancouver.' The pictures themselves bear out his remark to Bates, for those of 1954-55 are still signed 'J.W.G.'

provides almost continuous documentation of Macdonald's experience abroad. Beyond this, the letters add material which, in fact, complements in many ways the letters addressed to Maxwell and Charlotte Bates, and Marion and James Nicoll, now in the McCord Museum, Montréal. Though R. Ann Pollock and Dennis Reid published the latter collection in their Macdonald exhibition catalogue of 1969, a more complete account can be obtained by using both archives.⁴ It is, for example, the McCord Museum letters which describe Macdonald's notable encounter with Jean Dubuffet, for Luke's own European travels occurred at about this time and presumably she could not be reached by post. On the other hand, since Macdonald was, like Luke, a member of Painters Eleven, confidential information is made known through her papers which naturally would be withheld from a correspondent outside this sphere.

The full extent and significance of this period have not yet been properly appreciated. As Macdonald's correspondence reveals, it was his European sojourn which prepared the way for the late, impressive flowering of his art. While his works of 1957-60 have become classic, those of 1954-55, so crucial to his development, remain almost unknown. A list of paintings done in Europe is therefore appended below.

Jock and Barbara Macdonald sailed from New York on 11 August 1954, bound for France. The

first few letters were written from Paris, then Scotland and England, where the Macdonalds stayed with family and friends.⁵ Visiting art galleries, dealers, and artists, in London he went to Gimpel Fils Gallery and there showed colour slides of work by Painters Eleven. (The contact would prove an important one.) Since Gimpel based his knowledge of the Canadian art scene on *Canadian Art* (later *Artscanada*), Macdonald expected the slides to be quite 'a new awakening.'⁶ He soon became convinced that the British were not simply unaware of contemporary painting in Canada, but that Canadian work was comparable to, if not better than, what he had so far seen. Back in Paris, still later from Nice, we find similar criticism of art in France: 'I saw nothing in all the modern galleries which excited, looked sound or even fresh.'⁷ This, with reference to Dubuffet, is rather ironic in view of his response seven months later.

Macdonald began using watercolour as early as 24 October. His progress was interrupted when, seeking winter quarters, the Macdonalds moved into the lower floor of a furnished villa with a well-lit room for a studio, plus garden, in nearby Vence. Resuming work on 25 November, he counted four or five finished canvas boards and ten or twelve watercolours. His dissatisfaction with these first attempts is apparent: 'I don't feel that they are anything very exciting but Barbara is quite interested in some of them which of course means that there is some merit somewhere in them.'⁸ At this time, Macdonald was having difficulty obtaining art supplies and despaired of

4 R. Ann Pollock and Dennis R. Reid, *Jock Macdonald, Retrospective Exhibition* (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 19 September–12 October 1969), 20 ff. Other letters consulted include several addressed to William and Helen Ronald, Lois Steen, and John D. and Grace Turner. With one exception (see n. 17), the information is already given, and in greater depth, in the above archives.

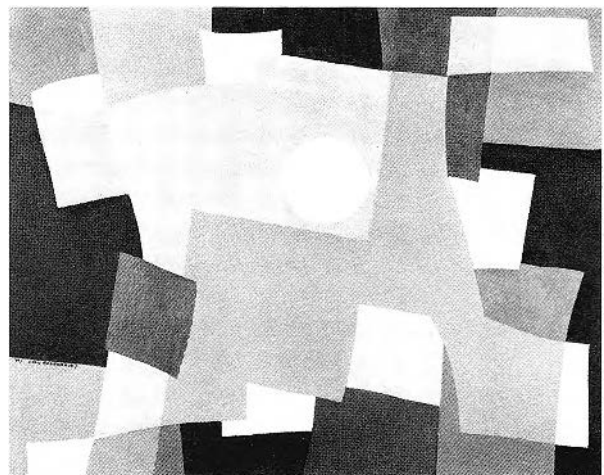
5 One host, Dr. Grace Pailthorpe, whom they knew from Vancouver, had first introduced Macdonald to automatic painting, according to Barbara Macdonald's letter of 5 November 1954 (to Alexandra Luke, Nice, France [Robert McLaughlin Gallery]). This fact, unpublished until now, is discussed at length in the previous article. Henceforth, unless otherwise stated, the Robert McLaughlin Gallery correspondence should be understood as being addressed to Margaret McLaughlin; Alexandra Luke, the name she was working under at the time, is used here to avoid confusion. Macdonald's original spelling and punctuation is followed in all citations.

6 Apparently Gimpel mentioned the Canadians B.C. Binning, Charles Comfort, Molly Lamb (Bobak), and Will Ogilvie.

7 To Luke, Nice, 20 October 1954 (McLaughlin Gallery).

8 To Luke, Vence, France, 25 November 1954 (McLaughlin Gallery). Barbara Macdonald, having studied art herself, had first encouraged her husband to take up painting seriously. The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this same letter.

FIGURE 2. J.W.G. Macdonald, *Orange Impulse*, 1955. Oshawa, Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Photo: Peter W. Richardson, courtesy Robert McLaughlin Gallery).



being able to paint large canvases. Lack of fluency in French exacerbated the problem, for he was unable to explain the quality and the size he desired, finding the change from inches to centimetres a further annoyance. Nor was wax paper, so essential for the transportation of small works in wet condition, to be had.⁹ As for his wax resists, 'I'll probably be able to find a candle yet but at the moment I am using [one which] is no good as it flakes down in thin layers perpendicularly & one cannot draw with it'; the watercolours traced to date, however, reveal little evidence of wax resist. Despite these deterrents, Macdonald averred, 'Paint I must come what may as I don't intend to return to Canada short of work.' Indeed, not long afterwards at least some of his difficulties were resolved.¹⁰

The same letter to Luke tells us of Macdonald's enthusiasm for a second Painters Eleven exhibition, originally scheduled for March 1955.¹¹ Reference was made to financial and shipping complications from Europe, and the fact that only small pieces were in readiness, Luke having sent the one canvas he did esteem to the Canadian Group of Painters show. Macdonald was quite convinced that Painters Eleven was 'the group who will be of tremendous importance in Canadian painting & the art history of Canada,' thereby filling the void left by the time-worn Group of Seven.

Further reports on his early painting efforts followed. As of 19 December, Macdonald had completed twenty-two works, including two canvases. 'There is some change taking place in the work,' he informed Bates on 26 December, 'mainly through colour and possibly subject matter as I find I am being moved by the growth forms and by the charming colour of the old villas with their amazing shutters, also by the cool peacefulness of the trees, those powder blue-green olive trees and back [black?] cypress.'¹² Once his twin sister and her daughter departed, having visited the Macdonalds for Christmas and New Year's, he was again painting steadily. On 10 January 1955, with twenty-six 'not too bad' smaller pieces, eight of them oils and eighteen watercolours – two watercolours he mailed unframed to Luke for the Painters Eleven show (a fact which scholars seem to have overlooked) – he announced finishing his third canvas 'yesterday, begin another tomorrow & hope to do two this week. I have seven canvases sitting ready to work on in the studio room. When I get ten completed then I will feel that I have broken the back of the commencement.'¹³ But several

months later, on 20 April, Macdonald wrote of fifteen canvases completed in total, which he would forward to Canada 'in 3 weeks time.'¹⁴ His initial disappointment in his work seemed assuaged, for he added, 'Most of them interest us both as they are all very diverse in idiom and technique & I believe that in some there is evidence of a higher standard than anything done before.'¹⁵

While it is clear that he responded to the French landscape, as late as March Macdonald had painted no landscapes *per se*, despite thirty canvas boards at hand. He did intend to sketch a number of views: 'There are many subjects & I hope to make impressions, broadly ... not worrying about visual reality too much.'¹⁶ By April he had thirteen or fourteen landscape studies finished. Here, too, a change was apparent: 'The landscape work is rising slowly in colour values & reaching something of the purity and light of colour in southern France.'¹⁷ The first two

9 Macdonald therefore asked if Luke would send two rolls of wax paper, which arrived more than three months later, according to his letter of 10 March 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

10 Barbara Macdonald's letter to Luke of 29 November 1954 (McLaughlin Gallery) noted Macdonald's plans to order canvas boards and, subsequently, his painting on canvas.

11 *Painters 11* actually opened on 11 February 1955 at Roberts Gallery, Toronto, travelling afterwards to Oshawa rather than Vancouver as Macdonald had suggested.

12 To Bates, Venice, 26 December 1954 (McCord Museum).

13 To Luke, Venice, 10 January 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

14 To Maxwell and Charlotte Bates, Venice, 20 March 1955 (McCord Museum). It seems to have been 20 April not 20 March that Macdonald wrote the preceding, for he included, 'Margaret McLaughlan & Gladys Montgomery, from Oshawa & Toronto, have been here for the past three weeks. ... They go to Italy in five days time, where they expect to stay for three weeks before going home.' Luke's European Diary (Mary P. Hare) clearly states that they arrived in Venice on 2 April; went to Italy on 25 April; returned to Canada on 20 May. Moreover, the next part of Macdonald's same letter is dated 1 May and begins, 'Goodness! this letter is'n't away yet. In the past ten days I have'n't had a chance to finish it.' Finally, he would hardly have written to Luke on 10 March (of her arrival on 2 April) if she was then in Venice; there is, besides, correspondence dated 1 March, 8 March, and 15 March from Barbara Macdonald.

15 Earlier, Barbara Macdonald had written to Luke, Venice, n.d. [1 March 1955] (McLaughlin Gallery). 'James has been painting away and as usual his work always looks not like the last one done. Ronald thinks this is a weakness. There is of course a likeness in his work like his handwriting.'

16 To Luke, Venice, 10 January 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

17 To Maxwell and Charlotte Bates, Venice, 20 March [20 April] 1955 (McCord Museum). The remainder of the paragraph derives from this same letter. Just before leaving Venice, Barbara Macdonald wrote to John D. and Grace Turner, Venice, n.d. (Collection John D. and Grace Turner), 'James has done some very good small landscape sketches but not nearly as many as he wanted to do.'

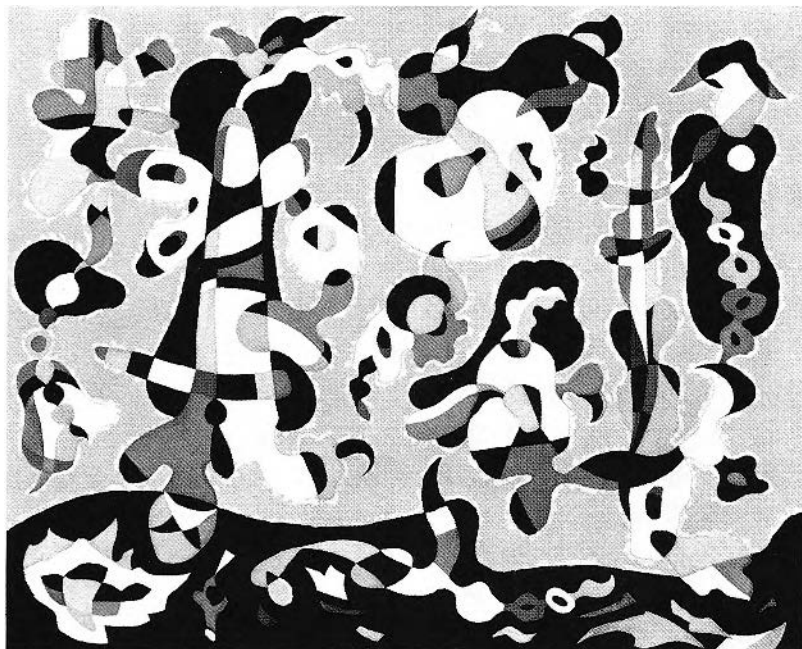


FIGURE 3. J.W.G. Macdonald, *Riviera Carnival*, 1955. Collection Imperial Oil Limited (Photo: Larry Ostrom, courtesy Art Gallery of Ontario).

sketches were markedly western Canadian – ‘heavy & durable’ was Macdonald’s comment – ‘but I now manage to obtain some of the pastel pinks, yellows, olive greens, cerulian blues, etc; & I find it a delight to struggle for this delicacy ... If my experience in landscape broadens my colour capabilities then I consider that that will be one more enrichment to my experience over here.’ His attitude was that ‘I am not weary of non-objective painting but feel that a long association with the visual world will be the necessary stimulation for future non-objective canvases.’

Of the works cited in the appendix, only the watercolour entitled *Anemones* is securely dated, having been done in December 1954. The remainder, when information is available, are from 1955. Because this is a preliminary list with not a few yet untraced items, it is impossible to establish a strict chronology. Certain data, however, can be obtained from the letters and from the paintings themselves. *Cathedral Light*, for instance, must have been inspired by Chartres, a visit described in Barbara Macdonald’s letter of 13 October 1954.¹⁸ Likewise, Macdonald’s surprised reference to ‘snow on Sunday & flakes flying around on Mon. Tues. & yesterday’ in his letter of 10

March 1955 pinpoints the origin of *It Snowed on Sunday*.¹⁹ Pictures of Nice date from the Macdonalds’ stay in Nice, October to November 1954 and June to July 1955, and pictures of Vence and its environs, November 1954 to May 1955, while the relevant season may be indicated by such titles as *Riviera Winter Colour Symphony*. The carnival subjects necessarily reflect festival time, more specifically, the Nice Carnival which is held before Lent; a look at *Carnival of Nice* confirms that this is one of his later canvases. As for Macdonald’s landscapes, comparison of Figures 6 and 7 exemplifies his discussion above: *Vence, a.m., France* (Fig. 7), with its sombre background mountains, differs indeed from the brighter tones of *Tourettes, am., France* (Fig. 6). Figures 1 to 3 are typical of his diversity in ‘idiom and technique.’ Do not *Riviera Carnival* (Fig. 3), and *Mythical Birds* (Fig. 5) as well, suggest the influence of Matisse, even more, Miró? We know that Macdonald was looking at Matisse, for he commented on the Chapelle du Rosaire (Matisse Chapel) as early as 5 November 1954, and actually attended Matisse’s funeral.²⁰ Mention was also made of cactus plants (hence, *French Riviera Cactus*), cypress trees (hence, *Cypress Trees, Riviera, France*), and olive trees (hence, *Olive Trees*) among others, but simply in general terms. Perhaps we would know more if Macdonald’s one-artist show scheduled for December 1954 at the gallery in St.-Paul-de-Vence had been realized. But the gallery closed, re-opening about July 1955, too late for a second

18 To Luke, Paris, 13 October 1954 (McLaughlin Gallery).

19 To Luke, Vence, 10 March 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

20 To Marion and James Nicoll, Vence, 5 November 1954 (McCord Museum).



FIGURE 4. J.W.G. Macdonald, *From a Riviera Window*, 1955. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).

show to be arranged. Earlier, Macdonald had decided to hold such an exhibition only if convinced that his work was 'really Talking.' It was evidently a disappointment: 'This I regret as I would be interested to learn the reactions – no matter which form they would be expressed in.'²¹

Barbara Macdonald affirmed that Vence was even then world-famous as a town of artists, 'full of notables & their shades!' numbering among them Braque, Dufy, Léger, Matisse, Picasso, and Chagall, the last then still in residence. Macdonald in fact met Chagall, and plans were made to visit his studio. But it is the encounter with Dubuffet which generally is considered the highlight of Macdonald's year abroad.

They first met in mid-April. Before May, Dubuffet and two friends unexpectedly arrived at the apartment. Although the landscape sketches elicited varied response, Dubuffet found interest in half of the canvases and surprised Macdonald by being enthusiastic over one or two that he was less 'moved by.' His watercolours provoked even greater reaction: 'They thought them quite something & remarked that I was "expressing myself" in this medium.'²² Then Dubuffet took Mac-

donald aside, saying, ' "You have not so far been able to express yourself as freely in oils as in water-colour" "If *only* you could speak in oil as you speak in water-colour then – then – you would have a profound contribution & a personal one." ' Four oils Dubuffet felt were 'stated similar' to the watercolours, ' "but you have'nt managed to come through, for you paint with too solid a medium." ' His advice, therefore, was to paint thinly into a wet turpentine and linseed-oil ground, using long, soft, pliable brushes. Dubuffet insisted, ' "start experiments of technique immediately, it is only a technique discovery you have to find, everything else you have already." ' Macdonald's verdict was that 'If I should find my way then certainly De Buffet will be given the credit for a change in my oils.' Although at least one other meeting took place between the two artists before Macdonald left France, surely the earlier encounter was the more influential.

After several weeks touring Italy, by June the Macdonalds were in Nice again. His letter of 3 July outlines a rather curious project: the Vence art supply store was being painted in a colour scheme devised by Macdonald, 'bright & distinctive ... golden sort of orange with pale yellow-green trim around the window, the cases and name of the shop being done ultramarine blue.'²³ Yet of other work he admitted, 'My painting is at a stop right now. I need to go somewhere other than here. There is no distance. All is in a humid sort of haze. But inside me, I am looking forward to going to work very energetically on our return & believe that I have an urge to express myself differently – non-objectively of course.' Doubtless his urgency owed not a little to Dubuffet.

Then in August, having noted the recognition of Painters Eleven through purchases by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Art Gallery of Toronto (later Art Gallery of Ontario), Macdonald referred to his promotion of the group at Galerie Rive Droite, a private gallery in

²¹ To Maxwell and Charlotte Bates, Vence, 20 March [20 April] 1955 (McCord Museum).

²² To Maxwell and Charlotte Bates, Vence, 1 May 1955 (McCord Museum). The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this same letter.

²³ To Luke, Nice, 3 July 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery). By this time, the Macdonalds were close friends with the Auffrays, proprietors of the art supply shop in Vence, even philosophical discussions being mentioned. It should be recalled that Macdonald had graduated from the Edinburgh College of Art with a Design Diploma of Art, and first came to Canada as the Head of Design at the School of Decorative and Applied Arts, Vancouver. The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this same letter.



FIGURE 5. J.W.G. Macdonald, *Mythical Birds*, 1955. Private collection (Photo: VIDA/Saltmarche).



FIGURE 6. J.W.G. Macdonald, *Tourettes, am., France* [Tourettes-sur-Loup, Alpes-Maritimes], 1955. Oshawa, Collection Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin (Photo: VIDA/Saltmarche).

Paris.²⁴ The directors were impressed with his slides (brought forth previously at Gimpel Fils Gallery) and would contact him by letter, visiting the Painters Eleven artists if possible the next winter. Macdonald firmly believed that his introductions to Galerie Rive Droite, and Gimpel Fils Gallery as well, would not prove the group's final connections with Europe. For he felt increasingly that "Painters XI" are on the threshold of something even more exciting than the Group of Seven ... What I would like to see,' he therefore suggested to Luke, 'is the conscious acceptance each group member has in the other member, stay united without any additions or alterations, drive forward for the acceptance and recognition they deserve & do most of this driving outside Canada.'²⁵ Having learned of other developments for Painters Eleven, Macdonald asserted, 'the group is now not thought of as a passing incident. In fact it is a considerable worry to the societies – doubtless they look on us as a bunch of traitors.

²⁴ Though unspecified in his letter to Luke, Nice, 3 July 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery), the purchases can only be *Red Lanterns* (ca. 1955) by Tom Hodgson, *Hill-Side* (1954) by Kazuo Nakamura, and *A Nearness and a Cleanness* by William Ronald, all for the National Gallery of Canada; and *In Dawn the Heart* (1954) by Ronald for the Art Gallery of Toronto. The National Gallery also bought *Landscape* by Nakamura but in November that year. Oddly enough, writing to Bates, Nice, 9 July 1955 (McCord Museum), Macdonald included Harold Town in his list of National Gallery purchases, yet the earliest acquisition of a work by Town seems to be 1956.

²⁵ To Luke, Paris, 15 August 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery). The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this same letter.

²⁶ *Ibid.* The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this same letter.

We are not that. Our devotion to the Societies is just as sincere as ever. The meaning in our group is the fact that we think alike about creativeness in art & the unity established is our power. It is this power that worries & that is certainly a good omen for us.'

While a Painters Eleven exhibition in Europe was clearly a primary concern, at the same time Macdonald indicated almost indifference to exhibiting his own work: 'It doesn't matter to me if I miss this show & that show. Time will give me whatever place I deserve, good or bad.'²⁶ He affirmed that he was returning with one aim only, 'that I get down to painting & saying what I am able to say ... I feel that now, at long last, I am ready to paint. My Vence work is the introduction; an introduction to change & the change will be quite apart from the Vence work.' After six days in Holland, where Charles Comfort was to spend his fellowship, in comparative luxury Macdonald judged, he himself expressed no regret at having chosen France.

Two further letters to Luke, one of them from Jack Bush citing Macdonald, elaborate on the prospective Painters Eleven show. Galerie Rive Droite was linked not just with Gimpel Fils Gallery but with Martha Jackson Gallery, New York; apparently Macdonald envisaged a three-way show. As his letter of 18 August has it, at least one exhibition was a certainty.

Determined to make known 'the true power of creative art in Canada,' and encouraged by the reception of his slides in London and Paris, and by artists such as Dubuffet, Macdonald had ventured to broach the Canadian Embassy in Paris. René Garneau, then Head of Cultural

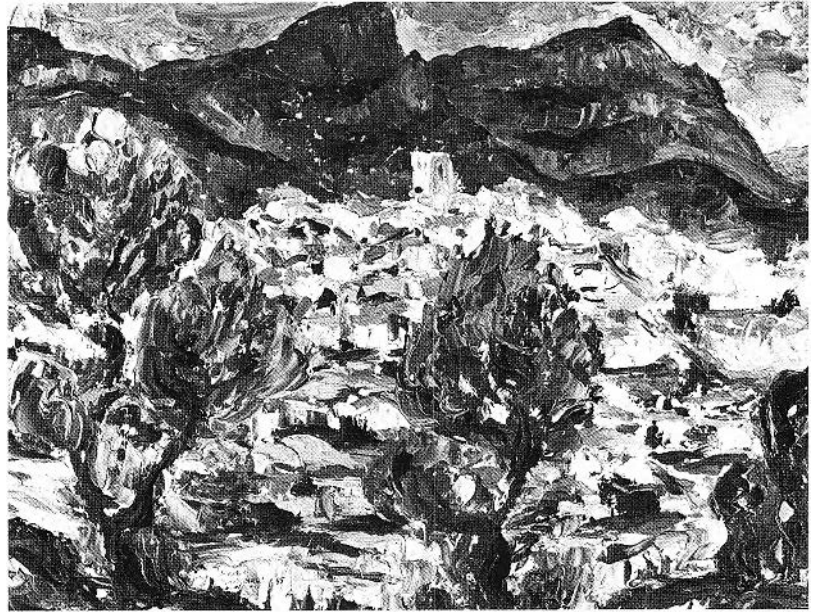


FIGURE 7. J.W.G. Macdonald, *Vence, a.m., France* [Alpes-Maritimes]. 1955. Thornhill, Collection Mrs. Martin Baldwin (Photo: VIDA/Saltmarche).

Affairs, had agreed to sponsor a show of fifty works by March 1956. In fact Garneau had asked if Dubuffet would write the catalogue introduction. Macdonald expected that Galerie Rive Droite would later organize an exhibition with perhaps half of the group members. The repercussions would be significant: 'I have seen enough of European art (modern) over here to know what is likely to happen,'²⁷ explaining that even if Painters Eleven as a group failed to win acceptance in Paris, several of the artists would probably be taken up by Galerie Rive Droite, Gimpel Fils Gallery, and Martha Jackson Gallery, 'and become internationally known painters.' Reflecting afterwards, he admitted that once their 'distinctive Canadian group' show was no longer a secret, societies like the Canadian Group of Painters, Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, and Ontario Society of Artists would demand his reasons for giving preference to Painters Eleven. Macdonald's justification was that 'The simple reason for my support of the Pxi is because they – as a group – & they alone, can put on an exhibition of work (in Paris) which parallels what is the accepted idiom in creative experimentation, for 1955-56, over here.'²⁸ His early opinion of the European avant-garde, at least that on view at Gimpel Fils Gallery and Galerie Rive Droite, and, above all, Dubuffet, had evidently undergone a change.

All that remained was a formal request to the Minister of External Affairs in order to obtain the Canadian Government's support, and Macdonald was to prepare the letter on shipboard. As it

happened, a number of difficulties intervened, and neither show so feverishly planned took place. The next spring, however, saw Painters Eleven exhibiting in New York, with William Ronald later being taken up by Kootz Gallery; Macdonald's expectancy for the group's extra-national recognition did not therefore go unrealized. Nor did Macdonald's expectancy for his own work go unrewarded, as the paintings of his last few years are acknowledged as his masterpieces.

Previous to his leaving for Europe, Macdonald had written, 'I feel like ripping up every piece of work I've ever done. Somehow or other I seem to have an idea that what I may now do will contain a more durable quality and say something which is more truly myself.'²⁹ That his year abroad is a turning point, later facilitated when Harold Town introduced him to the medium of Lucite 44 (July 1956) and bolstered by Clement Greenberg's critical support (June 1957), is readily confirmed by these letters. This is also true of the works themselves, although they are little known and few are in public collections. With so much new information provided by the hitherto unpublished Luke correspondence, it seems particularly fitting that Macdonald's French landscape once owned by Luke be given here (Fig. 6).

27 Paris, 16 August 1955, cited by Jack Bush, Toronto, 25 August 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

28 To Luke, Paris, 18 August 1955 (McLaughlin Gallery).

29 To Bates, Toronto, 2 July 1954 (McCord Museum).

APPENDIX: CHECKLIST OF PAINTINGS

Jock Macdonald, as the foregoing letters reveal, painted a great many works in Europe, 1954-55, with a wide range of both subject matter and style. Although his correspondence mentions quantities of pictures, unfortunately few are given by title. Furthermore, Macdonald's notebook detailing pieces exhibited and sold dates from 1956 and provides only a partial list. Our knowledge must be extended by other sources, for example, newspaper articles in which titles are French or dates correspond. Macdonald's dealer in later years, Roberts Gallery in Toronto, also proved informative. But dates are not always given, nor are titles always in French. This checklist accordingly contains all the paintings known to me at present through references or colour slides. I would appreciate hearing from owners of Macdonald's works yet unlocated or which do not appear here.

CANVASES

- 1 *By the Sea, Nice*, 1956(?) [exhibited 1955]. Oil, 79.4 × 99.1 cm. Location unknown.
- 2 *Carnival of Nice*, 1955. Oil on canvas, 86.4 × 101.6 cm. Location unknown.
- 3 *Cathedral Light* (Chartres), 1955. Oil on canvas, 81.3 × 100.3 cm. Location unknown.
- 4 *Dance Music*. Location unknown.
- 5 *Jardin* or *Riviera Garden*, 1955. Oil with surface scoring on canvas, 81.4 × 100.5 cm. Private collection. (Fig. 1)
- 6 *Orange Impulse*, 1955. Oil and graphite on canvas, 73 × 91.8 cm. Oshawa, Robert McLaughlin Gallery. (Fig. 2)
- 7 *Riviera Carnival*, 1955. Oil on canvas, 81.3 × 100.9 cm. See no. 19. Collection Imperial Oil Limited. (Fig. 3)
- 8 *Riviera Winter Colour Symphony*, 1955. Illustrated in Jean-René Ostiguy, 'Canadian Abstract Painting Goes on Tour,' *Canadian Art*, XIII (1956), 337. Location unknown.
- 9 *Shadows from a Window*. Location unknown.

WATERCOLOURS

- 10 *Ancient Plans Prevail*, 1955. Watercolour on paper, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Private collection.
- 11 *Anemones* (Vence), 1954. Watercolour and ink on paper, 24.8 × 33.7 cm (sight). Private collection.
- 12 *French Riviera Cactus*, 1955. Watercolour?, 43.8 × 32.4 cm. Location unknown.
- 13 *From a Riviera Window*, 1955. Watercolour and ink on paper, 42.8 × 32.7 cm. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario. (Fig. 4)
- 14 *Grasses by a Pathway*, 1955. Watercolour on paper, 45.7 × 61 cm. Private collection.
- 15 *It Snowed on Sunday* (Vence), 1955. Watercolour?, 32.4 × 42.6 cm. Location unknown.
- 16 *Mythical Birds*, 1955. Ink over gouache with surface scoring and traces of graphite on paper, 25.8 × 33.5 cm (sight). Private collection. (Fig. 5)
- 17, 18 Two watercolours, one likely *Nice buildings*, sent from France for the 1955 Painters Eleven show at Roberts Gallery. Location(s) unknown.

- 19 *Riviera Carnival*, 1955. Coloured inks on canvas board, 26.7 × 33 cm. See no. 7. Private collection.

SMALL OILS AND LANDSCAPE SKETCHES

- 20 *Cactus Flower*. Oil, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Location unknown.
- 21 *Cypress Trees, Riviera, France*, 1955. Oil, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Kelowna, Collection Ann Arnold.
- 22 *Grand Jardin, Vence* [Place du Grand-Jardin], 1955. Oil on canvas board, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Private collection.
- 23 *Hillside, Cote d'Azur, France* (Vence), 1955. Oil on canvas board, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Calgary, Sundance Gallery.
- 24 Landscape, 'the main motif of the sketch being "bamboo plants."' Location unknown.
- 25 *The Old Mill, Vence, France*, 1955. Oil on canvas board, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Private collection.
- 26 *Olive Trees* (Vence), 1955. Oil on canvas board, 29.2 × 39.4 cm. Private collection.
- 27 *St. Jeanet - Riviera, France* [Saint-Jeannet], 1955. Oil on canvas board, 29.9 × 40.6 cm. Private collection.
- 28 *Spring on the Riviera near Vence* or *Springtime on the Riviera*, 1955. Oil on canvas board, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Private collection.
- 29 *Tourettes, am., France* [Tourrettes-sur-Loup, Alpes-Maritimes], 1955. Oil over some graphite on canvas board, 31.2 × 40.8 cm. Oshawa, Collection Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin. (Fig. 6)
- 30 *Tourettes (East Side), a.m., France*, 1955. Oil over some graphite on canvas board, 30.6 × 40.7 cm. Toronto, Collection Dr. and Mrs. A.H. Squires.
- 31 *Tourette Market*, sketch. Perhaps to be identified with no. 32, the word *place* being French for square (in a town) and *place du marché* for market square. Location unknown.
- 32 *Tourette Square* or *La Place, Tourettes*. Oil, 30.5 × 40.6 cm or 40.6 × 50.8 cm. See no. 31. Location unknown.
- 33 *Vence, a.m., France* [Alpes-Maritimes], 1955. Oil over graphite on canvas board, 30.1 × 40.5 cm. Thornhill, Collection Mrs. Martin Baldwin. (Fig. 7)
- 34 *The Village of Vence - French Riviera*. Oil, 30.5 × 40.6 cm. Location unknown.