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A unique book assembled by Dr. O.S. Pokorny of Sarnia of the work of the deceased painter, J.S. Hallam during a posthumous exhibition at the Sarnia Art Gallery, mentions Hallam's influences:

He credited York Wilson with loosening up his painting approach which enabled him to reach out with considerably more freshness...

The introduction to the combined Hallam/Panton exhibition was written by York Wilson.

During our absence, the Canadian Embassy, Mexico, celebrated "Canada Week" with an exhibition in their Art Gallery. They borrowed two geometric works owned in Mexico City.

To mark the demise of the Canadian Group of Painters, York Wilson, as president wanted a reminder of their important contribution to Canadian art. Robert McMichael offered a permanent gallery at the McMichael Art Gallery, which would display a work of each member guaranteeing 50% would hang six months of the year, then change to the other 50%. Since new Directors have taken over, this agreement has not been carried out. I have personally reminded the new directors of the agreement and found they knew nothing of its existence, but promised to look into it. Unfortunately nothing has changed. I feel responsible for York to all those painters,

many deceased. Shortly before York's death he was informed that the CGP Charter was safely in the vault of the son of the deceased lawyer Erickson Brown. York felt it should go to the McMichael Gallery and I have informed each new Director of its existence.

The book "Four Decades" The Canadian Group of Painters and their Contemporaries, 1930-70 was also conceived by York and published by Clarke Irwin, text by Paul Duval in 1972. The quality of the colour plates is largely due to the perseverance of York and Sydney Watson. It will always be the definitive book of that period and won the 1973 Leipzig Gold Medal—"...as the most beautiful book of the year." It won two other medals: The Art Director's Club and The Book and Editorial Club, both of Toronto.

Harold Town became so difficult during assembling the material for "Four Decades" (among other things threatening to sue if anything of his appeared in the book) so unfortunately no reproduction of his work appears, only a mention in the text. It's ironic that the Globe and Mail asked Harold Town to review the book. No one gained as one letter to the editor said:

Harold Town's piece on Paul Duval's Four Decades (Nov. 25) was not a book review, but an unrestrained emotional ramp...

Another began: Armed with his little vial of vitriol...

Another: When Harold Town opens his mouth to talk of someone else's spew, he should be careful not to face into the wind... was not a considered criticism, but pure personal bile...

And so on, all derogative to Harold Town.

A letter from Paris in 1973 from Ceres Franca, Director of the “Salon L’Oeil de Boeuf” sent along the catalogue for an exhibition which included York’s Encore de Shaka, which was later acquired by the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 1983.

Now that York’s painting and seven serigraphs, geometric period, from the Rose Fried exhibition in New York have settled in their new home at the “Birla Academy of Art and Culture,” Calcutta, India, we received information about them. Their beautifully designed building has 11 stories and the Gallery of International Modern Art is on the 4th floor. It contains paintings, drawings, sculptures, woodcuts, serigraphs, etc. “by eminent artists of the world.”

On May 9, 1973 Mr. and Mrs. O.J. Firestone of Ottawa, gave their Gallery-Home to Heritage Ontario. It became the Ottawa Art Gallery, now moved to the previous court house. Jack Firestone had been collecting works of York Wilson as well as other Canadian artists over the years. There are 49 works of York’s in his collection which includes some of York’s finest drawings.

Douglas Peacher (former American Colonel) and President of Simpson Sears Company, Toronto, had commissioned York to do a tapestry for their Executive Dining room more than a year earlier. It had taken that long for it to arrive from France, when Peacher was told it had arrived, he said, “What tapestry?” He had momentarily forgotten. Fortunately they were delighted with the results. They had earlier approved York’s sketch. Since it was to be in their dining room, York thought of “Game” and his design included stylized fish, bear, turtle, etc. Yvette Coquil Prince of the Atelier du Marais in Paris was one of the finest tapestry makers and made tapes-

tries from other artists' designs. We were annoyed having to pay 'sales tax' on it at the Airport because when billed to Simpson Sears we had to include 'sales tax' again.

The Peachers were good friends and this same year Douglas donned his General's uniform at a dinner given for the occasion and performed the ceremony of inducting York and Maestro Ernesto Barbini into the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. It was a highly humorous evening and eventually added up to York receiving a certificate signed by the Governor of Kentucky and Secretary of State with a large gold seal attached. York soon found his duties were to support cultural projects. The certificate hangs in his studio.

Clarke Irwin published a book on Frances Loring and Florence Wyle by Rebecca Sisler, entitled "The Girls." York was asked to review the book for the *Globe and Mail*:

To the many friends and admirers of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle rumours of a biography being written came as welcome news.

Rebecca Sisler, as a personal friend and great admirer of them, seemed to be ably equipped to do it. Because the period of their lives is still only slightly documented in the area of Canadian art made the project doubly interesting. The book has been thoroughly researched and many of Rebecca Sisler's personal experiences have been described in great detail. Everything has been done to make this an informative book but it just does not work. To title the book "The Girls" is in a sense derogatory. Certainly these artists were referred to as 'the girls' but only by close friends, as one would say 'the guys,' 'the gang,' or a designation that was enjoyed by only a close group of friends. And to embellish the cover with two examples of the worst of their respective sculptures was unforgivable.

Frances Loring is the sculptor who first comes to mind

when considering the background of Canadian sculpture. Florence Wyle is the second sculptor that comes to mind, only because Frances Loring and Florence Wyle sounds like a more natural phonetic sequence. Though these artists were together in thought, in fact they were completely unlike as artists and as people. Though they were both gregarious, they thought and worked as distinct individuals. To write a composite biography creates the unfortunate impression that they were artistic Siamese twins. The fact that they spent countless hours and most of their very limited funds on helping young or destitute sculptors is admirable. It is by no means the reason that these two have become two of the biggest names in Canadian sculpture.

With all due respect to this publication we can only hope that in the future a more scholarly evaluation will be done of these people who we consider two giants in the world of sculpture in their time and in the Canadian arena.

York Wilson

Leonard Brooks in San Miguel drew our attention to a Canadian sculptor (unknown in Canada) working in San Miguel, Fred Powell. He had a studio full of large, excellent carved wood sculptures and no money. Fred had been in the Canadian army and after the war had gone to California where he worked on sculpture then later to San Miguel, Mexico. York was so impressed with Fred's work he asked his dealer, Roberts Gallery in Toronto, to give Fred an exhibition. Fred had an old, patched truck which he loaded with his work and somehow reached Toronto without it falling apart but he had many momentary worries during the trip.

We introduced Fred to Cleve Horne, Sorel Etrog and other friends who realized here was a very important sculptor and we publicized him as much as possible before the exhibi-

tion. At the Opening we quickly purchased the largest piece, "San Remi" (title related to Van Gogh, his God) just to be sure a little money went into Fred's pocket. Our house was already jammed with treasures, in fact our son-in-law called it the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' but we asked Roberts Gallery to sell it again if possible. Etrog also bought a piece, he was really enthusiastic about Fred's work. With these two well-known names buying pieces, it gave the public confidence in the unknown sculptor's work, and he did very well for a first exhibition in Toronto. We worked hard to promote Fred Powell because we believed in his work, it was really great sculpture but there was a problem, Fred had a bad time with alcohol. When a friend, a collector from Western Canada was visiting his daughter in Toronto, we told him about Fred's work and he said, "If York Wilson says it's that good I will promote him in the West; bring him to dinner." We told Fred and he promised not to have a drink, the dinner went well, our friend was agreeably disposed and said his daughter would visit Fred's studio the next morning. Fred had been drinking before our friend's daughter arrived and she was so disgusted that was the end of that. We realized we could not promote him further, it jeopardized our own reputation. However Fred went on to have exhibitions with the Dresdnere Gallery and the Moos Gallery. In turn they were so excited about Fred's work, Walter Moos was going to present him in New York and to the world. The Powell exhibition at the Moos Gallery was the stuff of genius, now quite different to his earlier work. But with both Galleries in spite of such excellent work, in short order they had had enough and that's the last I've heard of him. We ourselves had to make the rule that he was not to come to our house if he had

a drink. We had too many disasters with him, York was frail and ill during Fred's last visit in the 80's, we simply couldn't cope, fortunately other friends were there and jollied him out the door.

York had a solo exhibition at the Wallack Galleries in Ottawa; the beautiful painting YingYang graced the cover of the invitation. I was just recovering from pneumonia and York thought three weeks of sun in Mexico would help. We had taken our packed bags to Ottawa planning to carry on from there to Mexico. We stayed with Dr. Francis and Letitia Echlin in San Miguel. While sitting in the "Jardin" (town square) one day a Mexican Real Estate agent approached us to see a house she thought was very special. We went to see it and ended up buying it. It was too large with five bedrooms with baths and patios but had a good studio on the second floor, quite remote. Only guest quarters at the opposite end was all there was on the second floor or roof garden with an acre of patios. We were back to take possession July to September. York was at work immediately and I began alterations which included a real roof garden with trees, bougainvillea and long perimeters of climbing geraniums. We were back again from December to April. Everything had been left in place.

A retired American, Jules Roskin, and his concert pianist wife, Phyllis, had great entrepreneurial ability and started a series of lectures at Bellas Artes in San Miguel, using the wealth of visiting talent. Jules invited York to start off the venture with the first three lectures on abstract art. Jules' suggested title was "All You've Ever Wanted to Know About Abstract Art and Were Afraid to Ask." This was a subject dear to many as the large Auditorium was filled each night. Jules was an

excellent Master of Ceremonies and the lectures carried on weekly during the winter seasons until the late 80's. Phyllis gave many a recital and often was part of a Duet. They were greatly missed when they returned to the States. I have York's notes for his three lectures but unfortunately they are just headings as reminders as he often spoke extemporaneously.

In 1974 Visual Arts Ontario published "Ontario Index of Canadian Artists." McMaster University Art Gallery presented an exhibition of a few selected painters and York was represented. The admirable Montreal Art Dealer, Wm. Watson (who had closed his Art Gallery previously) published a book "Recollections of a Montreal Art Dealer" and of course mentioned York Wilson. Thoughtful Mr. Watson sent his papers to the National Archives.

The Sarnia Art Gallery mounted a second retrospective of York's work in 1974 which toured to The Gallery, Stratford, the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa and the London Art Gallery. York's first retrospective presented by the Sarnia Gallery was in 1965 and toured to four other galleries. Sarnia is in a strategic position on the border of the United States; many of its members and support comes from Michigan which also reviews the exhibitions. It was a pleasure working with Director Ross Bradley and Curator Margo Street. They produced an excellent catalogue with a quote from York's close friend, Marshall McLuhan:

What you see in the rear view mirror is the foreseeable future, and a quote by York:

A retrospective is like sending ashes to Newcastle.

The introduction is by Paul Duval and includes an odd

new observation:

...he opened up his own studio in Toronto in the early forties in the New Wellington Building at 137 Wellington Street West. (That building is important in local art history, because during the years of 1942-45 many of the people who were to change art in Toronto worked or owned studios there. Besides Wilson, there were Jack Bush, Oscar Cahen, Walter Yarwood, D. MacKay Houstoun and M.F. Feheley, all of whom one way or another, made an impact on the local art scene for the next two decades.) ...Wilson must be ranked as the most important of all Canadian mural designers. Since 1954 he has completed ten major commissions... Within a few decades Wilson had developed... to one of Canada's finest abstract painters. His works have been exhibited in the Carnegie International at Pittsburgh, the Sao Paulo Bienal, and in one-man shows at the Musée Galliera in Paris and the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City...

(Catalogue) Let York Wilson give us his reflections:

The two small watercolours in the exhibition, The Ward and Corner of Richmond and York, were first shown at the juried Montreal Spring Show in 1932. The Ward was subsequently invited to the next National Gallery Annual selected exhibition. These sketches were done during lunch hours from the roof of Brigden's Limited, Toronto, where at 17 years of age I was an apprentice earning five dollars for a 44-hour week. My art training had been the second and third years of a four year course at Central Technical School in Toronto. In those days, art training was little more than an introduction to art materials, a smattering of drawing, and some elementary hints about colour. There was little or no direction in the study of art history or philosophy. As a result, these early sketches were done with no more thought than just that of getting an attractive impression of the subject.

At this time Charles Comfort, Will Ogilvie and Fred Finley were artists at Brigden's and in various ways they helped me to move in the direction of fine art. Charles Comfort frequently criticized my sketches and paintings and he also suggested philosophical readings and classical music studies. Fred Finley, who had just come from Juliens Academy in Paris, encouraged me to draw regularly from the figure. Probably because of this early practice, I still draw realistically from the nude a half day every week, in spite of the fact that for several years my painting has been almost completely abstract.

From 1924 to 1928 I worked as a commercial artist in Toronto and Detroit. I was a weekend and evening painter, continuing to study art on my own through books and museums. With the exception of several graphics that appeared in two Canadian National Exhibition shows, I did not exhibit again until 1939.

By 1938, not only was I ready to paint larger works, I felt I had something to say and was ready to begin exhibiting. In the meantime I had become aware of a great variety of painters from all periods. The ones I admired were as disparate in style as Breughel, Pierro della Francesca, Degas, Bellini, Seurat, Gaugin, Vermeer and Ucello.

The first large canvas was to be called Burlesk No. 1. But after weeks of work it turned out so badly that I burned it and started another larger one. For that reason, my first large canvas is entitled Burlesk No. 2. It was juried and accepted for the O.S.A. Exhibition in the spring of 1939. Later that year the work was exhibited with the Canadian Group of Painters at the New York World's Fair.

From 1939 to 1949 I was concerned with a very realistic "social commentary" type of painting. The titles suggest the subject matter: Welfare Worker, National Affairs, Public Library, Local Dance, Blood Donors, The March Past, Beauty Contest and After Dinner Speaker. Concurrently with these were interspersed a series of Burlesque paintings, Lovely Ladies of the Ensemble, Dressing Room and

Back Stage. Oddly enough although I was sketching landscape on a regular basis, I did not enlarge on any of them except Indian Harbour.

Barn Window is a unique piece for me. The actual barn window was so perfect a piece of design and texture that I literally copied it as accurately as possible. I am often tempted to do more of this kind of realism but I am afraid it could lead into a type of painting that only interests me technically.

Entrechat was one of a series of ballet paintings. After painting ballet for a year or two, the subject became so popular that if I continued, the public would never allow me to paint anything else. Therefore I was not surprised to find that when I stopped, sales dropped off very sharply, because as many erstwhile collectors said, "They were not interested in my paintings of other subjects," and proved it by not buying.

Cocktail Party is different from the other social commentary paintings. I had thought that caricaturing a subject made communication much stronger. But now I believe that caricature makes it ludicrous and thereby makes a work less acceptable as a serious painting.

Sunlit Street was the major turning point in my painting. Before this time I could appreciate abstract painting, but was unable to find the exact point of departure for myself. It was while doing the sketch for this painting that the meaning of abstraction became amazingly clear. The whole scene in front of me became visually a related environment. The mountains had the same basic form as the roofs of the houses. The rebozos on the figures in the street repeated the same form. The markings on the street and sky and all the elements of the scene seemed to complement one another. Even though today this painting seems to be very slightly abstracted, nevertheless for me it was the key to abstracting form. This later led to my ability to also abstract colour.

It was shortly after this discovery that I began to study

picture construction per se. Prior to this time, a composition was limited to what could only be described as “tidying up the elements.” But now there was a conscious effort to orchestrate each painting so that even without any recognizable subject the painting would be complete as a work of art. En route to the Canary Islands in 1957, we spent many days at the Louvre in Paris and at the Prado in Madrid. It is a fact that during the time spent in these museums I developed an insight into abstraction through the work of artists like Ucello, Pierro della Francesca, Breughel, etc. The understanding that I derived from them was much clearer than from any contemporary painters. Facade is another painting done in Mexico. At this time I was involved in numerous discussions with Rico Lebrun about various art theories, one of which was that of trying to make each painting timeless. In this case I painted a facade that was not a specific one, but rather the idea of the meaning of a timeless visual facade.

Corner of Venice is an impression derived from numerous sketches done in Italy. Again I was attempting to create a timeless statement. We lived in Italy for a year and took advantage of the opportunity to study the history of the Roman Empire and to experience and enjoy the vastness of the subject. Taormina and Mount Etna, with the usual cloud formation over the volcano, evolved from a sketch done that same year.

A Propos de Shaka is one of several collages I did from brown paper, newspaper and india ink. Graeme Wilson (a British poet) wrote the following poem about the painting.

Shaka Zulu

Here in a shieldshape Ishilangu
Of mirror-grass and marker

stones

The sorcerers of Shaka Zulu

bones	Cursed and cast their lucking
Dingiswayo,	Here are the days with
shadow	The IziCwe, their queasy eyes; And here the swaying vulture-
ened daisies	Over the shields and assegais; Scarred cattle-hide; M'zilikazi's Hidden cattle, muscle gloss; And sorghum stains like black-
gnarling	Starred on the orgy-hard kaross; And here, the blood already
snarling	Sunblack in the ochre light, Are Dingaan's dirk and Shaka's
	Boneshapes in the kraals of night.

Chioggia is an impression of Adriatic fishing boats on the island of Chioggia near Venice. And Reflection developed from sketches done in the city of Venice.

The title of Lepanto should be The Battle of Lepanto, after a naval engagement in 1571 between Turkey and the Christian League. This canvas is typical of the creative process that is almost automatic. A canvas is started without a specific idea of subject in mind. At some point while painting, past experience, or even impressions of things read start to take over subconsciously and determine the end result of the work. For this reason it is difficult to title a painting that contains elements derived from experiences in various countries over a period of several years. Braque, when asked if he could visualize the end result before he

started a painting answered, "Of course not. If that were possible there would be no reason for painting it."

Le Figaro Construction was produced when we had just moved to Paris. At that point I didn't know where to buy art supplies. As we were getting settled we bought furniture, which was delivered in large sheets of brown paper. And every day there were one or two newspapers. Almost inevitably, collages began to develop from the brown paper, newspaper and india ink. This medium became so fascinating that canvases continued to appear for about six months. From time to time it is still interesting to use this medium.

In 1965-66 my wife and I travelled for a year. During the trip I did many sketches in oil, completed 180 paintings (12" x 16") and five sketch books of black and white drawings. Mogul Bridge developed from one of the drawings. The bridge is on the Kralian Canal near the City of Srinagar in Kashmir. The bridge is surrounded by medieval-looking buildings that were influenced by the Moguls (Mongols). Another painting that emerged from the drawings I did on this trip was Cave on South Canal. It depicts the entrance to a building on South Canal Street in Singapore. Small Wall of China was painted in Hong Kong. My imagination was stirred by the sight of a wall covered with the remains of posters. The natural pattern of the posters with bits and pieces torn off intrigued me and the result is a fairly figurative rendering of the scene as I perceived it. Safari and Paeon To Autumn are two of my geometric paintings (described earlier).

Tribute to Arthur Lismer is dedicated to a good friend. It was painted just after Lismer's death in 1971, with his painting "Islands of Spruce" particularly in mind. Kashmir Facade was painted from a sketch I did while living briefly on a houseboat on the Jhelum River, near Srinigar. Mediterranean Reflection is ambiguous. It is a reflection on reflections. As I discussed earlier, this type of painting emerges from a myriad of impressions. It is enough that

they appear automatically on canvas. To discover their respective sources would be beyond even the ability of a psychoanalyst.

Game is a tapestry commissioned for the Simpson-Sears director's dining room. For that reason, game (rabbit, deer, elk, bear, grouse, pheasant, duck, fish, crab, turtle, etc.) that might appear on the dining table is the subject of the tapestry. Both tapestries in this exhibition were woven in the Gobelin technique at Atelier du Marais, Paris.

The collage Design For a Square No. 2 is related to so many subjects, both Oriental and Occidental, that it can have no real explanation. The work evolved out of many ideas that had been on my mind for a long time, and they emerged all at once. The colours and textures are related to things like walls, landscapes, people and clothing. However, in the final analysis this piece, like all my works of art, should be interpreted by the viewer.

York Wilson

Curator, Margo Street:

...Although a retrospective is important to an artist, it is even more important to his public because it adds to the understanding and appreciation of his work... paintings date from 1927 to 1973. During that time York Wilson has travelled and painted all over the world, and as a result his work reaches beyond the confines of the Canadian experience... he never joined any movement, nor was he ever classified into any of the isms. His work is completely unique... Unlike many of his contemporaries, he had attained considerable recognition abroad. For example, he was the first English Canadian to receive the supreme compliment from the Government of France: an invitation to mount a one-man show in the Paris gallery of his own choice. It is interesting to note that in the World Book Encyclopedia, York Wilson's work is illustrated with that of Michelangelo and Thomas Hart Benton, all great and memorable muralists.

There were pages of complimentary reviews from both sides of the border, it hardly seemed like Canada. One new point:

Talking with York Wilson is like hearing a young artist with talents he hasn't even begun to test... he makes theory sound as vivid as gossip; he is fired by memories of masterworks he has seen—Egyptian frescoes, pre-Columbian idols and masks, the massive stonework of the Hittites... His serene enthusiasm makes one forget... he began to paint almost half a century ago... has been working purely in the abstract. He believes abstraction is “the more important task because it's a complete statement of my own.”

A telegram arrived at the Opening in Sarnia from the distinguished Canadian painter Yvonne McKague Houser:

I'm sad to miss the opening of the retrospective exhibition of an artist whose integrity has been an inspiration to me through the years.

The Gallery/Stratford's Director, Robert Swain, seemed pleased about the turnout for the retrospective but failed to send reviews. York was the main speaker at his opening.

Congratulations from Frances K. Smith, Curator, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, and Art Price, sculptor.

F.W. Lyonde: If indeed, “a Retrospective is like sending ashes to Newcastle” it gives glowing testimony to the heat of the creative fire.

In anticipation for the opening of the York Wilson retrospective at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, 1975,

Joan Murray, the Director's enthusiasm was delightful, in part:

...I want your opening to be the event of the year and I want all of your - and our friends to come! Please give the longest list of which you can think. I am thinking of a buffet (with wine) before the opening... The show will be great. I enjoyed reading your catalogue. It's one of the best and clearest I have ever read.

We are photographing the show so you will be able to see it in absentia.

(In far away Mexico we were saddened not to be there.)

The reviews were excellent and included:

Accompanying the McLaughlin Gallery exhibit is a 30-minute film showing the muralist working with two assistants on the Imperial Oil murals. This will be of particular interest to school children.