

NOTE

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Directorate of History
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REPORT NO. 99

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

15 Jul 43

Progress of War Artist Programme, Canadian Army Overseas.

1. This Report serves to record the progress of the War Artist Programme whose modest beginnings were described in Reports Nos. 64 and 82.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF WAR ARTIST PROGRAMME

2. The period since 19 Sep 42 (the date of Report No. 82) has seen important developments in this matter. The programme has been placed upon a more regular and permanent basis than was formerly the case. This was attained as the result of, it is understood, discussions in OTTAWA, in which recommendations forwarded by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada in LONDON, presumably exercised an important influence.

3. As the result of these discussions, C.M.H.Q. was informed by telegram Hist 34 (Defensor to Canmilitary, 23 Jan 43) that the Prime Minister had approved the formation of a War Artists' Selection Committee, with the Director of the National Gallery as Chairman and including members representing the three armed services "with eminent artists consulting". This Committee would also exercise control over the programme in Canada. Control of the programme overseas would be vested in a Canadian Overseas Artists' Control Committee, consisting of the High Commissioner, the Captain Commanding Canadian Ships, the Senior Officer of Canadian Military Headquarters and the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief. It was notified that approval had been granted for the employment of War Artists to the number of six each for the Army and Air Force and three for the Navy, with the pay and allowances of a Lieutenant (Army) or equivalent.

4. It was subsequently notified that Lieuts. E.J. Hughes and W.A. Ogilvie, who were already employed as War Artists at C.M.H.Q., had been officially appointed in this capacity for work overseas, and that in addition Lieut. C.F. Comfort, another of the six Army appointees, would shortly proceed overseas.

5. The work has proceeded on this basis since that time. The Canadian Overseas Artists' Control Committee has not yet met, but the High Commissioner has called a meeting for 15 Jul 43. Four R.C.A.F. War Artists arrived in the United Kingdom about the end of March, 1943, while Lieut. Comfort reported at C.M.H.Q. on 20 Apr 43.

6. During his visit to the United Kingdom in February, 1943, the C.G.S., Canada (Lt.-Gen. K. Stuart), emphasized in conversation with the writer the desirability of taking steps to ensure the adequate co-ordination of written history with pictorial history, both in the form of official photographs and paintings. He stressed the importance of obtaining a qualified individual to take charge of this work.

7. On 17 May 43, Capt. E.T. Heathcote, M.M., Lorne Scots, reported to Historical Section, C.M.H.Q., for duty

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on attachment, pending approval of a new establishment providing for an officer to take charge of pictorial history. Captain Heathcote is himself an artist and in civil life is Art Director for the T. Eaton Company, Ltd. He is also a soldier of wide experience. He has taken charge of the Pictorial History programme, and has the function both of administering the War Artists generally and of maintaining liaison with the Public Relations Section, C.M.H.Q., to ensure the adequate captioning and filing of Public Relations photographs for historical purposes.

8. Captain Heathcote has office space at Fairfax House (High Holborn), where studio space is available for all the War Artists now attached to C.M.H.Q. These accommodation arrangements have proved very satisfactory.

9. In the static conditions which have so far obtained, it has been the object of those directing the Canadian Army War Artist Programme overseas to obtain as wide a "coverage" as possible, both with a view to giving the artists themselves experience likely to be valuable when active operations begin, and creating as comprehensive an artistic record of the present phase as possible. An attempt has been made, accordingly, to arrange the attachments of the small number of artists available in such a way as to cover as many formations and as many arms of the service as possible.

10. No Canadian War Artist was present at the DIEPPE operation of 19 Aug 42. This was due to the fact that C.M.H.Q. had no previous knowledge that the operation was intended. The Minister of National Defence during his visit to the United Kingdom in October, 1942, expressed the opinion that it was very desirable that artists should be present at future operations. With the co-operation of H.Q., First Cdn Army, effective arrangements have been made to ensure that this will be the case; and an artist is attached to 1 Cdn Div, now participating in the campaign in SICILY.

11. It has been the view of the War Artists so far attached to C.M.H.Q. that an artist should not attempt to represent incidents which he has not himself experienced, and it seems likely that this attitude would be taken by most artists of standing. Imaginative pictures of operations are not likely to be particularly satisfactory.

12. It was apparently originally intended that the period of overseas employment for Canadian War Artists should normally be only six months. All experience, however, has indicated that this is an insufficient period, particularly with a view to the probability of protracted active operations. That this situation has been recognized by the authorities in Canada is indicated by the receipt on 5 Jul 43 of a telegram inquiring whether Lieut. Comfort (whose promotion to Captain is authorized) is willing to remain overseas for a further period of one year from 1 Aug 43. Capt. Comfort has signified his willingness to do so.

ACTIVITIES OF INDIVIDUAL WAR ARTISTS

13. The work done individually by the various artists employed at C.M.H.Q. since the date of Report No. 82 will now be briefly described.

14. Lieut. W.A. Ogilvie, like all the artists concerned, has spent a considerable amount of time in LONDON developing the material obtained during his attachments in the field. These attachments have been as follows.

15. From 10 Sep to 17 Oct 42, Lieut. Ogilvie was attached to various units of 5 Cdn Armd Div, and as a result obtained the first tank pictures painted by a Canadian artist in this country. He subsequently executed in LONDON two considerable canvases based on this material. During November and December this artist, in company with Lieut. E.J. Hughes, attended a course (one of the general courses of military instruction provided for medical and dental officers and chaplains) at No. 1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit. Subsequently, as described in Report No. 93, Lieut. Ogilvie was attached successively to 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes (13 Feb - 20 Mar 43) during Combined Operations training at INVERARAY. He brought back from this attachment a vivid and dynamic series of sketches, and it is felt that this experience was an ideal preparation for the portrayal of the actual operations now in progress in SICILY, the more so as it enabled Lieut. Ogilvie to form useful personal connections with the formation concerned.
16. Lieut. Ogilvie left C.M.H.Q. to rejoin 1 Cdn Div on 21 May 43. This formation landed in SICILY on 10 Jul, and operations are continuing. It is hoped and believed that Mr. Ogilvie will produce an important artistic record of them.
17. Lieut. E.J. Hughes carried out similar attachments, in addition to attending the course at 1 C.G.R.U. above referred to. From 16 Oct 42 to 7 Nov 42 he was attached to 14 Pd Regt, R.C.A., the only field regiment which an artist has yet visited; and for four weeks beginning 23 Mar 43 he was attached to 1 Cdn Armd Car Regt (R.C.D.), the first Armoured Car unit to be thus recorded.
18. It had been the consistent opinion of Mr. Massey that Mr. Hughes did not possess all the qualifications desirable in a War Artist, and in view of this opinion the question of the possible desirability of this artist's return to Canada was discussed with N.D.H.Q. Authority for his return and replacement by another artist was obtained, and Mr. Hughes left C.M.H.Q. en route for OTTAWA on 29 Jun 43.
19. It is considered that from an historical point of view the most important work done by Mr. Hughes while in England is found in the numerous pencil sketches executed while actually in the field. These have a vivid and spontaneous quality not found in his painting. The originals of these are being despatched to N.D.H.Q.
20. After the DIEPPE operation it was considered desirable to employ a painter to execute portraits of certain of the personnel who were decorated for gallantry in that action. Lieut. L.P. Harris, C.A.C. (G.G.H.G.), was accordingly attached for this purpose. He reported for duty on 9 Oct 42, and has been employed at C.M.H.Q. since that date. In addition to painting a considerable number of oil portraits of officers and soldiers decorated for gallantry, he has also painted portraits of representative types, and has executed two "subject pictures" in oil based on material obtained in the field during Exercise "SPARTAN" (see Report No. 94). Lieut. Harris, who is not one of the six artists appointed under the arrangement described above (para. 3), is at present at H.Q., Canadian Reinforcement Units, where he is painting a portrait of Major-General Roberts (Military Force Commander at DIEPPE) as well as one of a representative nursing sister.
21. It is felt that the portraits executed by Mr. Harris have decided historical value, and that they will constitute in the future a significant national possession, as providing a record of the types of personnel who made up the Canadian Army in the present war.

