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➤ 241 LAWREN STEWART HARRIS

ALC BCSFA CGP FCA G7 OSA RPS 1885 ~ 1970

Iceberg, Baffin's Bay North

oil on board, on verso signed, titled twice and inscribed
owned by C.J. Harris and in graphite C.S. Band, 1930
12 x 15 in, 30.5 x 38.1 cm

PROVENANCE:

Charles S. Band, Toronto
Estate of Helen E. Band, Toronto

LITERATURE:

Paintings and Drawings from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. C.S. Band, 1953,
National Gallery of Canada, listed, titled as *Iceberg, Baffin Island North*,
unpaginated

Jeremy Adamson, *Lawren S. Harris, Urban Scenes and Wilderness Landscapes, 1906 ~ 1930*, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978, listed page 231,
and the 1930 canvas entitled *Icebergs, Davis Strait*, reproduced page 197
Jean Blodgett et al, *The McMichael Canadian Art Collection*, McMichael
Canadian Art Collection, 1989, the 1930 canvas entitled *Icebergs, Davis Strait* reproduced page 59

Christopher Jackson, *Lawren Harris, North by West: The Arctic and Rocky Mountain Paintings of Lawren Harris 1924 ~ 1931*, Glenbow Museum,
1991, entitled *Iceberg, Baffin Island North*, reproduced page 53

Andrew Hunter and Ian Thom, *Lawren Stewart Harris: A Painter's Progress*,
The Americas Society, 2000, page 36, the 1930 canvas entitled *Icebergs, Davis Strait* reproduced page 40

EXHIBITED:

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Arctic Sketches by A.Y. Jackson, R.C.A. and Lawren Harris*, November 26 ~ December 8, 1930, titled as *Icebergs, Baffin Bay North*, catalogue #14

Art Gallery of Toronto, *Arctic Sketches by Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson, R.C.A.*, May 1931, titled as *Iceberg, North Baffin Bay*, catalogue #430

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Paintings and Drawings from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. C.S. Band*, 1953, catalogue #18

Art Gallery of Hamilton, *The C.S. Band Collection*, November 5 ~ 30, 1954, catalogue #16

Vancouver Art Gallery, *Painting and Drawings from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Band*, March 1 ~ 21, 1960, catalogue #18

Art Gallery of Ontario, *Lawren S. Harris: Urban Scenes and Wilderness Landscapes, 1906 ~ 1930*, January 14 ~ February 26, 1978, titled as *Iceberg, Baffin Bay North*, catalogue #169

Glenbow Museum, Calgary, *North by West: The Arctic and Rocky Mountain Paintings of Lawren Harris 1924 ~ 1931*, April ~ June 1991, catalogue #59

Remarkable in the estate of Charles S. Band are the oil studies for iconic Canadian masterworks. *Iceberg, Baffin's Bay North*, is the final oil sketch for the McMichael Canadian Art Collection's masterpiece canvas, *Icebergs, Davis Strait*. Like other masterpieces in the estate, this oil sketch can be considered the birth of a Canadian icon.

Lawren Harris was captivated by the search for universal, singular spiritual truth. This search took him further and further into the northern regions of Canada, and it was in Canada's Arctic that he found the land at its most simple, spare and austere. Whereas in the southern regions, below the tree line, Harris was stripping the land bare, in the Arctic the land was already naked. Here, amongst the ice and water, in the cold clarity of the north, Harris spent almost two months working, and produced some of his most profound, dramatic paintings. His journey towards abstraction that had begun in the Rockies crystallized in the Arctic where, in the icebergs, Harris was free to explore one of nature's purest natural forms. Here, as Ian Thom writes, "it is almost as if this journey were the fulfillment of Harris's destiny."

At the same time that Harris was exploring the scenery of northern Canada, he had become involved in the theatre scene in Toronto. Hart House Theatre was funded by, and built in honour of, Hart Massey, and was state-of-the-art. Harris was very interested in set design, and more particularly with the way in which theatre affects its audience. His search for other-worldly, mystical, out-of-body experiences found solid footing in theatre, where temporal belief is suspended in order to immerse one's self in the time, place and setting of the play. So it should be, Harris felt, in viewing art.

Harris's iceberg works have the quality of being set as if they are on a stage. The massive ice forms seem to float in the centre of a space that is somehow, despite its apparent vastness, contained. We are invited to become a part of Harris's spiritual journey, as theatre-goers are invited to watch a play. How much we get out of it depends on how much we are willing to surrender to what we are seeing. It depends on our imagination and our willingness to participate in the heightened state of being that is being offered to us by this work.



LAWREN S. HARRIS, *Icebergs, Davis Strait*
oil on canvas, 1930, 47 3/4 x 60 in, 121.9 x 152.4 cm
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. Spencer Clark
McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 971.17
Photograph © McMichael Canadian Art Collection
Courtesy of the family of Lawren S. Harris

In addition to their stage set parallels, Harris's Arctic works often feel as if the sense of the space in the picture plane is somehow indefinable. Here, we drift or float outside of Harris's mystical spatial organization. A metaphor for the state of our life in the physical place of existence, the iceberg, by contrast, sits in the spiritual plane. These are two separate places, and in the Arctic works the journey to join Harris requires a leap of faith. The light in *Iceberg, Baffin's Bay North* is inexplicably ethereal and comes from an indefinable source, perhaps the icebergs themselves. A glowing blue breaks the surface of the almost black water, indicative of the massive bulk of ice beneath. The iceberg forms are remotely beautiful, an essay in blue, which, being the theosophical colour symbol for faith, asks that we accept them. Thus faith, being the basis of knowledge, will lead us forward.

As Harris progressed down his spiritual path, the paintings he created progressed in an evenly matched stride, and it is in the Arctic works that we are required to make the biggest leap of faith. To cross the frigid waters and join Harris at his mystical goal, we must suspend our expectations of landscape art and embrace what Harris offers us: serene, pure, unadorned form. Upon the close of the Arctic period of Harris's career, he broke entirely with representational landscape and began his foray into pure abstraction.

Icebergs, Baffin's Bay North is offered here for sale for the first time since Charles S. Band acquired this masterwork.

ESTIMATE: \$1,200,000 ~ 1,600,000