



123 Alexander Young (A.Y.) Jackson

ALC CGP G7 OSA RCA RSA 1882 – 1974

Jack Pine

oil on canvas, signed, 1950

30 x 40 in, 76.2 x 101.6 cm

PROVENANCE

Commissioned by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, Ottawa, 1950
Forest Products Association of Canada, Ottawa

LITERATURE

Six Forest Landscapes [brochure], Pulp and Paper Industry of Canada, circa 1955, reproduced, unpaginated

EXHIBITED

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Six Forest Landscapes*, July 4, 1955 – January 31, 1956

SPRIGHTLY PINES LIFT citrusy limbs aloft in this sun-filled landscape by A.Y. Jackson, a fresh and energetic example of the artist's later style. Here, Jackson's signature rhythmic contours communicate the vitality of the work's arboreal theme. His choice of subject matter in *Jack Pine* may be a nod to the artist's foundational role in the formation of the Group of Seven through its evocation of Tom Thomson's iconic 1916 canvas of the same title, now in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada. The jack pine motif also served a pragmatic purpose, however, the painting being one of six commissioned by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association (now the Forest Products Association of Canada) to advocate for enhanced public awareness of Canada's forests as both an economic driver and a collective responsibility.¹

The commissioning body's plan to distribute high-quality reproductions of the original artworks—which also included paintings by A.J. Casson (lot 122), Charles Comfort and

others—owed an important debt to Jackson. While Casson personally supervised the project's complex silkscreening process at the Toronto graphics firm of Sampson-Matthews Ltd., it was Jackson who first hit upon the notion of utilizing silkscreen as a medium for distributing reproductions of Canadian artworks—initially, to boost troop morale in World War II.² The influential Sampson-Matthews print program was an outgrowth of Jackson's impassioned advocacy of the Canadian War Records Office initiative as a lasting document of Canada's contributions to the fight against fascism.

Jackson had himself served as a war artist in World War I, a transformative experience whose impact on the canvases he produced as a member of the fledgling Group of Seven following his demobilization in 1919 has recently been explored by Douglas Hunter.³ When global conflict again broke out in September 1939, the Canadian government was initially reluctant to revive the Canadian War Memorials Fund program established by Lord Beaverbrook in 1916, for the long-planned war museum intended to house the canvases produced for that earlier initiative had yet to materialize, and the art languished in a storeroom of the National Gallery.

Deeply offended by the government's inaction, Jackson seized every available platform to promote his cause, addressing the Canadian public by radio and in newspaper editorials.⁴ Soon, a new generation of artists were being shipped overseas—as were paintings of home lent by sympathetic art societies, as a reminder of what the soldiers were fighting for. The inevitable damage suffered by those works encouraged Jackson to seek alternatives. The new medium of silkscreen printing suggested an inexpensive but durable solution. Soon, Jackson was in discussions with Casson and Sampson-Matthews president Charles Matthews as well as National Gallery director H.O. McCurry to formalize an innovative partnership that would eventually see 17,400 silkscreen reproductions distributed to military bases in Canada and overseas.⁵

Sampson-Matthews would build on the resounding success of this print program through post-war partnerships with private enterprise. These art-and-industry collaborations circulated reproductions of commissioned artworks intended to stimulate Canadians' sense of stewardship for their renewable resources. An initial series of 10 original artworks documenting every phase in the manufacture of pulp and paper was followed, in 1950, by a suite of six paintings, *Trees of Canada*, each documenting one of the tree species most commonly employed by the same industry—including *Jack Pine*. Given the convergence of nationhood, communications and economics in this suite, it is notable that the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association's commission coincided with the publication of Harold A. Innis's epochal *Empire and Communications* (1950), a work that began as research into the pulp and paper industry's role in the genesis of Canadian confederation, only to expand into far-reaching meditations on the influence of media in the rise and fall of global empires.⁶

We thank Adam Lauder for contributing the above essay. Lauder is an art historian based in Toronto and an instructor at the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Art and Design.



ALEXANDER YOUNG (A.Y.) JACKSON

Jack Pine

silkscreen

30 x 40 in, 76.2 x 101.6 cm

Not for sale with this lot

1. See D.H. Paterson, "The Canadian Forests as Seen by Six Canadian Artists" (Montreal: Pulp and Paper Industry of Canada, 1951).

2. See Margaret Gray, Margaret Rand, and Lois Steen, *A.J. Casson* (Agincourt, ON: Gage, 1976), 23, and Wayne Larsen, *A.Y. Jackson: The Life of a Landscape Painter* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 189.

3. *Jackson's Wars: A.Y. Jackson, the Birth of the Group of Seven, and the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).

4. Larsen, *A.Y. Jackson*, 181.

5. Gray, Rand, and Steen, *A.J. Casson*, 22; A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (1958; repr., Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1976), 168–69; Larsen, *A.Y. Jackson*, 190.

6. See Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950); D.H. Paterson, *Six Forest Landscapes* [brochure] (Montreal: Pulp & Paper Industry of Canada, 1951; reprint from *Pulp and Paper Magazine*); Alexander Watson, *Marginal Man: The Dark Vision of Harold Innis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

Consignor proceeds will benefit charity. In addition to A.J. Casson's painting from this series (lot 122 in this auction) the four other landscapes from the series can be found in Heffel's November Online Auction, closing November 30, 2023, at heffel.com.

ESTIMATE: \$90,000 – 120,000