

GREGORY HARDY



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I. I first saw a painting by Greg Hardy in 1973 at one of the University of Saskatchewan's Emma Lake workshops. It was a large, awkward, almost child-like landscape with a rigid figure, a stop sign and a perfectly wonderful dog. The drawing was schematic, the paint handling tentative, as though the painter weren't quite sure of what he was doing, but the picture had a remarkable intensity and conviction that made it, as it turns out, unforgettable. Especially the dog. Hardy, who had just turned twenty-three, and I talked about what he was doing, what he hoped to be doing, and tried to pin down just what those of us at the workshop liked about the dog, why it was so much better than the rest of the picture. I discovered that Hardy was more or less self-taught as a painter. His only formal training was in photography, but he'd gotten bored with what he perceived as the mechanical, indirect properties of the medium and had begun to draw and paint on his

photographic prints. He had been painting daily for about a year I remember Hardy's saying something about what he painted being very specific, about places or things that he had seen that meant something to him. It showed, even through the tyro's paint handling and the clunky drawing.

Over the next few years, I tried to see Hardy's work whenever I was in Saskatoon, which was fairly regularly. He had taken a studio in the same building as the painter Robert Christie, and clearly Hardy's proximity to Christie was important. Not that their work was at all similar; at the time, Christie was making eccentric, abstract pictures that seemed a response to the challenge of Jack Bush's work of the 1970s, while Hardy was struggling with simplified images of the prairies. But the daily encounters with Christie's exacting (and more sophisticated) eye and the discussions of each other's work helped to sharpen Hardy's focus. Christie demands a great deal of himself. He is not easily satisfied by his own work, but always seems to aspire to something better, an attitude that impressed Hardy and allowed him to remain sceptical about my enthusiasm for pictures of the dog and stop sign type. It helped him to get on with the task of turning himself into a painter. As well, Christie has always been able to handle brilliant chromatic color and I suspect that his example encouraged Hardy to experiment with a similarly saturated palette or at least, gave him the confidence to follow his inclination towards bright color. Other Saskatchewan artists, such as Douglas Bentham, Dorothy Knowles and William Perehudoff, provided encouragement and helpful criticism, too, and Hardy responded by producing a series of astonishingly fresh small pictures that were equally notable for their economical treatment of landscape imagery and for their clear unmodulated color.

Hardy's paintings of 1974 to 1975 were so vigorous and so personal that it was disappointing to see him change direction about 1976. His exuberant landscapes, often painted from nature, became increasingly stylized; Hardy now describes them as "clunky Paul Klees." It was not that he thought that abstraction was somehow more "advanced" than working from nature, as many young artists of his generation did. Rather he explains the change as part of "a process of uninhibited experimentation."

Ironically, the shift to a greater degree of abstraction was triggered by Hardy's being forced to pay even more attention to the landscape, once he moved out of Saskatoon to Meacham. In the small prairie town, there was nothing but landscape on every side, and in the winter it was a monochromatic expanse a good deal of the time "The beginning of the abstract pictures" Hardy says, "came out of a need to relieve the boredom of working in a dim studio in Meacham in the middle of winter. I wanted to invent color for its own sake". Something similar occurred almost a decade later when Hardy spent the fall and winter of 1985 in Toronto. Working in an urban studio in one of the scrubbiest industrial districts of the city, in winter; he found his surroundings so drab that he began, for the first time, to paint still lifes that included large bunches of out-of-season flowers. "It's nothing unusual", Hardy says. "My instinct was always towards color."

More disturbing than Hardy's move toward abstraction was his virtual retreat from painting itself for almost a year in the mid-70s. He was preoccupied with an enormous project, collaboration on a 4000-square-foot clay mural for the exterior of a new

Government of Saskatchewan building in downtown Saskatoon. Hardy had initially refused when the ceramist Randy Woolsey asked him to help prepare a competition proposal for the site, but he eventually was convinced to work on a general design.

He began working on preliminary sketches for the mural in the fall of 1976; in the spring of 1977 he moved to Cupar Saskatchewan, to work with Woolsey on the actual clay elements for the project, which was completed the following spring, 1978. The finished mural, which animates the east facade of the Sturdy Stone Building, is an all-over scattering of repeated but varied motifs, stylized organic shapes in low relief that suggest plant or landscape forms without looking specifically like anything pre-existing in nature. The palette of glazes is subdued for Hardy, an earthy range wholly unlike the near-Fauvist colors of his pre-mural paintings. The small group of watercolors Hardy produced while working on the mural, not surprisingly, develops and expands the motifs he was exploring in clay. These economical little pictures are often divided horizontally, so that the ambiguous shapes of the mural take on more precise meanings by virtue of having been assigned to “earth” or “sky”; color in the watercolors, is once again intense and heightened, as though Hardy were reacting against the restrictions imposed by the site and materials of the ceramic project.

Many of Hardy’s pictures of this type are uncannily like some of Georgia O’Keeffe’s abstracted landscape watercolors of the 1920s, pictures he says he was not particularly interested in or even specially aware of. Asked which artists he did find provocative in the years when he was striving to find his own direction, Hardy’s list includes painters chiefly known for dealing with recognizable landscape imagery – or rather landscape imagery filtered through a powerful individual vision – and one Abstract Expressionist. “I always admired David Milne for his energy,” Hardy says. “Milton Avery and Adolph Gottlieb are there somewhere, although I can’t lock them into a specific time. John Marin would fit in there somewhere as well, although in ’78 I would have seen him only in reproduction. Goodridge Roberts was someone I admired quite deeply, as well as Tom Thomson”

The inclusion of Gottlieb in this company is interesting. Hardy says he was very impressed by an exhibition of Gottlieb’s paintings of the 1940s, the Pictographs, that he saw in Toronto in 1978. Gottlieb’s allusive hieroglyph-like images, along with the way they were distributed across the surface of the canvas in an unstable grid, fascinated Hardy. “I was thinking about hieroglyphics then and their meaning” he says. The Pictographs may have seemed related to what Hardy was seeking in his own painting at the time – a synthesis of reference to nature and simple geometric order – but I suspect that Gottlieb’s paintings of the 1950s, the Imaginary Landscapes, may have provided an even stronger stimulus. These horizontally split, declaratively frontal pictures, their lower zones filled with robust calligraphy, upper zones punctuated by essential geometric shapes, offer a clear parallel to Hardy’s paintings of 1978 and 1979.

During these years, Hardy’s work became even more abstract, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his implied landscapes became increasingly geometric. It was an unusual period for the young artist. In 1978, he had met a young law student, Wanda

Wieggers, and on completing the clay mural, Hardy uprooted himself once again, to follow her to Halifax, Nova Scotia. (They have lived together since then.) After a year dedicated to the ceramic project, he found himself trying to begin to paint seriously in an unfamiliar setting, while supporting himself by working on the docks of Dartmouth, across the river. “I made about twelve watercolors from the landscape while I was there,” Hardy recalls. “The rest were made in the studio out of my head.” Even after the couple returned to Meacham in the spring of 1979, Hardy continued to paint what he describes as “abstract landscapes. I wasn’t dealing directly with the landscape, although they were still more specifically prairie landscapes – Avery influenced. But they didn’t really go anywhere.”

Hardy returned to Emma Lake in the summer of 1979. The guests that year were German-born, Boston-based abstract painter Friedel Dzubas, known for his brooding dramas of smoldering masses of color; and the British-born critic and art historian, John Elderfield, director of drawings at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

“Dzubas had a great effect on me,” Hardy says. “I’d have to say he was a kindred spirit. He had been painting a long time and cared about it. He passed this on by osmosis. He seemed genuinely to like my work and I responded to his work.” John Elderfield, however had a more direct and subtle influence on Hardy’s development. “He said the problem I would have to face was that I had too vivid an imagination. He used Hans Hofmann as an example – his desire to experiment, often to the detriment of the picture. I was doing about three or four different things at the lake that year. It didn’t bother me too much because I like and respect Hofmann’s work so much. But I still think about it.”

In part because of Elderfield’s comments, Hardy began to work once again out-of-doors, painting directly from nature. “I deliberately wanted to restrain imagination. I wanted to pay attention to local color” In a sense, the results of this self-imposed program mark the beginning of Hardy’s mature work, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that in them Hardy committed himself to a direction that he still follows. Paradoxically, working directly from nature eventually freed Hardy the way working from more or less predetermined compositions freed abstract painters such as Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. As with his abstract painter predecessors, Hardy found that accepting a given structure (in his case, given by the motif he selected in nature) allowed him to concentrate on the expressive possibilities of nuances of color surface, interval, edge and so on. By using his direct observations and responses to nature as points of departure, Hardy was finally able to allow his imagination free rein, in terms of color touch or manipulation of space, without losing the potency of his initial confrontation with a specific place.

The earliest of Hardy’s paintings from nature, however, remained largely faithful to what was seen, albeit painted with extreme freedom and vigor. Hardy’s debt to the work of Dorothy Knowles was apparent, as though he had consciously apprenticed himself to the older artist. Since Knowles is arguably western Canada’s most original and best landscape painter it’s understandable. In addition, Knowles was an old friend; Hardy was thoroughly familiar with her work and admired it.

Knowles's pictures evoke particular places, particular phenomena of weather, time of day or season, with startling accuracy, not because of finicky detail, but because of the artist's unflinching sense of color and light. Her canvases and watercolors are always celebrations of the sensuous act of painting, but they also seem to have come into being without any mediation between seeing and result; touch and sense of materiality are evident, but at the same time, it appears as though Knowles's eye dictated what was set down without the intervention of concern for technique, manner or style.

Hardy acknowledges that he was after something similar in his own work. He had spoken of it back in 1973, at Emma Lake – a desire to encapsulate his perceptions and his feelings about specific places. “And I wanted to paint directly, to really pay attention to particulars without thinking about style and such.” The superficial resemblance of his paintings of 1980 to some of Knowles's work doesn't upset him. “Maybe it was because I had seen so much of Dorothy's work,” he says. “Or maybe that's what happens when you really pay attention to local color and particulars.”

Knowles's example was significant to Hardy in other ways. Like him, she had begun as a landscape painter but during the early 1960s, she had experimented with abstraction – despite her preference for working from nature – before finding her own vision of the landscape and ignoring considerations of what might be regarded as up-to-date in painting. Hardy had already stopped painting abstractly by 1980, but it is possible that Knowles's experience provided confirmation that returning to landscape themes did not mean abdication of ambition for the quality and reach of one's art.

Even though Hardy's plein air landscapes of 1980 proved seminal in establishing his future direction, he describes the next few years as “a flat period.” He was, largely, devoting his energies to mastering a subtle and, for him, new medium – oil paint. Hardy is young enough to have begun to paint with acrylic; he had never used oil before the spring of 1980. Oil paint's slow-drying properties, which had been the bane of the abstract and Pop painters of the 1960s and had precipitated their quick adoption of newly developed acrylics, were a plus for Hardy “Since I went outside to work directly, oil made that easier,” he says. “Also, I didn't like the color of acrylic. It wasn't intense enough. And I didn't want to continue with watercolors.”

Hardy worked fairly large scale at this time, usually on masonite. He liked the way the paint sat up on the surface, allowing him to emphasize the material substance of his pigment. When he had abandoned photography for painting, in the early 1970s, it was, in part, because he found the mechanical medium lacked physicality. Working out-of-doors in oil, on masonite, Hardy was starting to make objects that not only looked like places that were special to him – photography could have done that – but whose material properties were beginning to be equivalents for his feelings and experiences of place. Yet despite his voluptuous paint handling, Hardy remained remarkably attached to literal appearance in his pictures of the early 1980s, attached to local color especially, in his effort “to restrain imagination.”

In 1982, an encounter with that year's Emma Lake workshop leader the New York painter Stanley Boxer proved – once again – decisive. Boxer a notably inventive colorist, criticized Hardy for being too dependent on actuality and on local color. “It was pretty general but it rekindled my interest in Fauvism, which I thought I'd left behind,” Hardy recalls. Kenworth Moffett, then curator of contemporary art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, had said something similar at the 1980 workshop. “It wasn't addressed to me, but Moffett said there was lots of room left in Fauvism. I remembered that when Stanley said what he did.”

Even more important, Boxer spoke to Hardy of an attitude toward picture making that has stayed with him. “He said that you have to be very aware of every square inch of the painting. It was general advice, but over the years it's become even truer”

At the workshop and soon after; Hardy's response to Boxer's comments was immediately visible. The smallish landscapes of this period once again have the intensified palette of those promising landscapes of the mid-70s – a red sky, a black-green tree, an orangey foreground – and a new intensity of paint application. They are fulfillments of the implications of the paintings on masonite of 1980 and 1981 and, with the advantage of hindsight, we can see them as prefigurations of many of Hardy's current concerns, in embryonic form.

II. By 1984 Hardy had been assembling his vocabulary over a decade, polishing his craft, discovering what he wanted to paint about and something of how to do it, exploring a variety of directions and alternatives. At the end of that year; with more than ten years of serious painting behind him and the fresh stimulation of his European trip, Hardy began painting with new assurance. The pictures from this period on, large scale oils painted either directly from nature or from studies done from nature, are the works that established Hardy's reputation. They are characterized by a powerful sense of place and time, translated into loaded surfaces, full throttle color and an urgent touch that seems like a graph of passionate feelings. For all of Hardy's hard-learned facility, they are often edgy pictures, slightly uncomfortable or deliberately awkward in ways that make the viewer pay that much more attention to just what the painter has done instead of simply recognizing the image. Despite his apparent fidelity to specific places, longer acquaintance with Hardy's pictures reveals his willingness to compress and tilt space, elide the middle distance, exaggerate things in the foreground. The planar geometry of the abstract landscapes he experimented with in the mid-70s persists in a subtle sense of underlying order that compensates for the vagaries of undisciplined nature. Ultimately, it's color that holds Hardy's pictures together and establishes the illusion that his world is a three-dimensional, inhabitable place. Color determines, too, mood and temperature, suggests weather and season, without resorting to the specifics of local color the tonal modulations of aerial perspective or conventional modelling from dark to light.

The best pictures are often the most intense. Hardy's exaggerated color evokes the drama of extremes of weather and light: the still heat of a late summer day or the cold dimness of a winter morning, a blazing sunset over a limitless prairie or a shadowy forest interior; a cloud-dappled sky arching over a brilliant lake or the same lake whipped into whitecaps

(and squeezing the sky out of the painting). Hardy is capable of other kinds of pictures, as well, more tranquil, more lyrical and, frequently, more conventional. Sometimes, the most heated pictures begin as relatively calm images that Hardy works and reworks particularly in the last few years, heightening and adjusting color; building a surface until, as he says, “it comes alive again”

“Still, today” Hardy says, “it’s a kind of battle between wanting a sense of light and place and local color; and wanting to have all kinds of color. It seems the more color the paintings have, the more interested in them I am.”

The simultaneous desire for a sense of place and for color sometimes leads Hardy to dare subject matter that would have satisfied the 19th-century longing for the sublime: lush sunsets, moonlit nights, picturesque clouds. It’s only fair to point out that he has also been engaged by – and produced first-rate pictures about – such unpromising subjects as hillsides with bare tree trunks seen close up and weedy patches of willows beside shallow sloughs. Hardy’s flamboyant subjects are risky choices and he knows it. At times he seems to be testing the limits of just how outrageous a motif he can use without succumbing to sentimentality. And despite their associations with 19th-century Romanticism, even Hardy’s most extravagant pictures are firmly planted in the 20th century by virtue of his assertive touch. The mark of his brush is not simply a technical necessity either to be disguised or made to stand for an assortment of information about nature, but an end in itself, a declaration of the artist’s presence as artificer and maker of choices. Perhaps even more important, the generous mark serves to establish a unit of scale on the surface of the canvas independent of the illusory scale of what is depicted, heightening the tension between the fact of paint and the fiction of representation.

This tension between the actual and the invented (in the broadest sense of both words) keeps Hardy’s best pictures alive and surprising. In *Side Hill with Poplars*, 1987, for example, the chill of a winter hillside is suggested primarily by color; but it is color that proves to be wholly nonliteral: the whites aren’t whites, the greys aren’t greys but instead are tinged with other chromatic hues that break through and, paradoxically, make the picture’s range of non-colors function as chroma. (Snow never looked like this!) The bare tree trunks that slice down from the top of the horizonless picture read as dark silhouettes but are, in fact, improbable verdigris greens and dull crimsons that, equally improbably, cool the temperature of the painting still further. Even the logic of construction is warped. The frieze of trunks is not superimposed on a continuous “ground” that stands for snow, but instead is engulfed by the brushy surroundings.

Hardy takes similar liberties with the “twin” of *Side Hill with Poplars*, entitled *Old Forest*, 1986, a green woodland interior where the fierce energy of growth finds its visual equivalent in a tree form excavated from its surroundings by the sheer density of paint piled on paint. He treads the borderline between the particular and the painted. A row of insistent, parallel vertical strokes reasserts the painter’s hand and also becomes shorthand for a row of trees, while broken, vibrating color suggests dappled light in equally nonliteral ways. The sea of paint almost subsumes the image and the sense of layering, of workedness, of time spent building the picture’s crusty surface, becomes a metaphor for

the age of the forest itself. At the same time, in spite of its physical density, the picture seems on the verge of dissolution. Odd colors tug at our peripheral vision from the corners; strange blues flicker throughout. The image seems about to fragment into patches of paint; only the force of Hardy's will seems to keep it together.

Old Forest is typical of the best of Hardy's recent work in that the sheer density of paint on its surface bears witness if not precisely to labor; then to effort expended. It's something the artist is acutely aware of. He says he is frequently unsatisfied, these days, by pictures that once would have appeared quite complete to him after an initial campaign out-of-doors; now he feels he has to keep working on them. Watching a picture of Hardy's evolve in 1989, you keep seeing where he might have stopped had he been painting that picture in, say, 1985, or the stage he might have brought it to in 1986. This is not to belittle Hardy's earlier work. It's simply that his earlier plein air landscapes often depended upon the immediacy and energy of "one shot" execution, an approach that Hardy came to feel that he had exhausted or that left him little room for growth. Hardy realized that the way forward from already successful pictures was, for him, to keep working through them, even at risk of losing the look of spontaneity that characterized paintings done rapidly from the landscape. "I came to think that I was stopping too soon," Hardy says. It had something to do with the example of the old master painters that he admired and something that can only be described as the character of painting in the 1980s.

Hardy matured as a painter surrounded by abstract artists who strove to work out of pure intuition without imposing too much conscious calculation on their pictures. The risk was that the result might be mere manipulation of paint, but the hope was that the entire freight of the artist's uniqueness as a human being would somehow charge his materials and make the picture expressive. Keeping the picture or the sculpture fresh and unlabored was of paramount importance. Of course, some artists have been able to preserve the appearance of freshness while, in fact, reworking and altering their pictures or sculptures many times, but for many, the literal retention of the initial impulse was crucial. Some very good, very powerful art has been made as a result of these notions and Hardy attempted – and succeeded – making landscapes according to similar precepts. But in the past few years he found himself seeking, along with many other contemporary abstract and figurative artists, a greater degree of physicality, a more material sense of process in his work. Hardy's desire for more worked-looking pictures was not simply personal preference, but part of a recent widespread reaction to the character of painting of the 60s and 70s. He discovered that the paintings that he had returned to and reworked in the studio – pictures such as Old Forest, for example, which was begun out-of-doors at Emma Lake – had a visual, physical and emotional density that interested him.

Hardy's present working methods – which are subject to great variation, I should point out – are a combination of plein air start, either full size or as oil sketch or drawing, and continuation in the studio. Often the initial motif is changed drastically as the painting evolves and begins to assert its own demands. Hardy speaks of needing "to get the energy back in" as his studio paintings develop. "I get something from working from the

landscape that I can lose in the studio and now it seems that I have to keep working on a picture until it comes back.”

Hardy is intelligent enough to remain alert to suggestions that arise in the course of working. Over the years, he has stopped work on a small number of canvases when they seemed not so much resolved or complete as puzzling, keeping them in the studio to study periodically in order to find out if, in fact, they could lead to something new. In other instances, he has risked overworking a picture, even risked destroying it, in order to discover how far he could go in a given direction. The pictures that have been stopped at critical stages or, conversely, have been aggressively worked past Hardy’s more usual point of completion often seem like “orphans” without a context in the body of Hardy’s work. Frequently, though, they are prophetic works that lead the painter to explore new possibilities of color or structure or surface. The eccentric pictures become the ancestors of subsequent works that in turn provide the “orphans” with a context, after the fact.

In the summer of 1989, Hardy spent two weeks at Triangle Artists Workshop, an international event held at a large farm in upstate New York. The landscape, a broad valley enclosed by wooded hills, full of immense trees, cornfields, pastures, a large pond, was completely new to him. Hardy found the place difficult to cope with, at first. The heavy rains of the past spring had made the normally lush landscape remarkably exuberant. “It’s like being in the jungle,” Hardy complained. “All that green and those enormous leaves. And everything is soft – the light is so moist and hazy And every time I start a picture out-of-doors, I’m interrupted, something happens”.

The first pictures he produced in this unfamiliar setting were relatively conventional, accomplished landscapes that nonetheless displayed a noticeable sensitivity to the look of the place. There was nothing wrong with them – some were even very beautiful – but they seemed predictable. Within a week, however; Hardy had begun several paintings in the barn that served as a communal studio, basing them on some of the most characteristic spots of the surrounding area – an unmistakable clump of trees on the far side of the pond, for example Tree at Mashomack. The initial drawing on these canvases was extraordinarily robust, virtually squeezed out of the tube, in surprisingly “unlandscapey” colors. “I had to force the energy into these,” Hardy explained. By the end of his stay, Hardy had transformed these surprising beginnings into vigorous, elemental images that both suggested the special qualities of particular places and existed independently as highly charged painting. He also attacked several of the earlier pictures aggressively, simplifying their masses and intensifying their color. The finished canvases, both those begun later in his stay and the reworked earlier ones, severely criticized his initial efforts and, ironically, were far more evocative of Dutchess County than the more naturalistic versions of similar subjects. It’s entirely possible, of course, that Hardy will continue to work on his Dutchess County paintings in his Saskatchewan studio and will further revise them. The broadness and directness of these paintings point to new possibilities for Hardy’s landscapes; at the same time, they are like more substantial versions of a provocative, loosely painted woodland picture, totally unlike anything else Hardy has painted, up to now, but with a special authority that made him keep it,

unexhibited, in the studio for several years. That woodland picture may now have descendants and a context.

III. Hardy is in many ways a quintessentially Saskatchewan painter; not because of what he chooses to paint, but because of how he was formed as an artist. The existence of a community of serious, ambitious, accomplished painters and sculptors in the province has been critical to his development. It's even arguable that the existence of this community helped to make Hardy a painter in the first place. A school project of interviews with Saskatchewan artists, done while he was a film and photography student at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto, at the moment when he describes himself as "disenchanted with the medium of photography" convinced him to return to Saskatchewan in order to paint full time. The Emma Lake workshops, which Hardy attended quite regularly between 1973 and 1988, provided a forum for discussion and criticism, an opportunity for exchanges with a variety of participants, visiting artists and critics that not only deepened Hardy's connections with Saskatchewan painters and sculptors (and those from elsewhere), but helped him to clarify his own point of view and hone his abilities. Saskatchewan offers a unique combination of a strong, stimulating local community and regular infusions of outside opinions. The list of significant practitioners from the province is testimony to how beneficial this combination has been. Hardy's experience bears this out, although he comments: "There are a lot of good landscape painters here and the experience of being here with them has been important. But I think it's the Saskatchewan landscape that has power. The landscape pushes individual painters. It's not that the painters push other painters – although I could be wrong about that!"

It's possible, too, to maintain that Hardy is a particularly Canadian painter, visible proof of the persistence of a healthy tradition of landscape painting, and unlike the majority of modernist painters elsewhere who have concentrated less and less upon the appearances of the natural world around them and more and more upon an interior landscape.

In Canada, the tradition of 19th-century landscape painting, which is, to a large extent, the history of Canadian art, simply absorbed modernism without losing any of its commitment to landscape. Canada's first modernists, the Group of Seven, achieved their initial reputations equally for their Post-Impressionist-derived broad paint handling and intensified color; and their choice of eastern Canadian wilderness as subject. The majority of Canada's most innovative artists have, until recently, been landscape painters. Emily Carr (particularly the late work), David Milne, Goodridge Roberts all come to mind, among others.

The artists, whom Hardy lists as having had most influence on him, are not, for the most part, Canadians, apart from his immediate circle and David Milne, whom Hardy says he always admired, but the general context in which Hardy has lived has undoubtedly shaped him as an artist and as a person as much as the specifics of the Saskatchewan prairie. Nationalism and regional pride are not, of course, what make Greg Hardy worth paying attention to. It's self-evident that the excellence and conviction of his painting are what set him apart, not his history. Hardy is a very good painter; not yet forty, with

fifteen years of serious work behind him and, it is to be hoped, many more years of challenging painting ahead of him. This is an appropriate moment to look back and see what he has achieved. Hardy's vivid, uninhibited paintings of the past five years are enormously satisfying. In addition, they make us anticipate eagerly what is to come.
Karen Wilkin

