

Adriana A. Davies

FROM REALISM
TO ABSTRACTION

The Art of J. B. Taylor

J. B. Taylor



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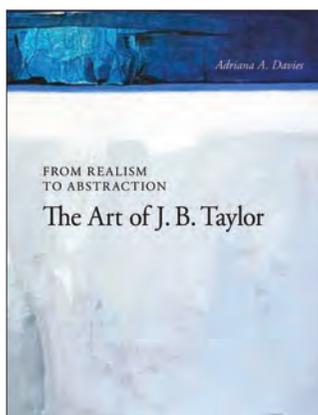
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**FROM REALISM TO ABSTRACTION:
THE ART OF JB TAYLOR**
Adriana A. Davies

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From Realism to Abstraction

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Adriana A. Davies

FROM REALISM
TO ABSTRACTION

The Art of J. B. Taylor



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Cover Art: J. B. Taylor, *Columbia #II*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4 cm, Private collection.
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*To my sons, Alexander and William Davies,
my daughters-in-law, Catherine and Sabrina,
and my grandsons, Oliver and Ciaran*

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This book would not have happened without Michale Lang, former Executive Director of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff. The first exhibit that she curated at the Whyte had a broad perspective – “Group of Seven to Takao Tanabe.” It was at this time that she discovered J. B. Taylor. At the exhibit opening in 2008, we discussed the possibility of an exhibition, and I indicated my interest in curating it. I had become aware of Taylor’s work, in 2005, when I advised Christopher Taylor to create a website showcasing his father’s work. This book evolved from the Curatorial Manual prepared for the “J. B. Taylor and the Idea of Mountains” exhibition for the Whyte. As I immersed myself in the research, I became captivated and entranced by Taylor’s work and couldn’t stop myself from finding out more and more.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of J. B. Taylor’s sons Philip and Christopher, as well as Taylor’s former colleagues and friends at the University of Alberta. A particular, though posthumous, thanks to his wife Audrey is also necessary. She carefully preserved his papers and photographs and created a marvellous scrapbook relating to his career and achievements. The scrapbook was an invaluable resource as it includes clippings of newspaper and magazine articles, catalogues of exhibits as well as other things related to his artistic output. Her lead was followed by son Christopher, who created an amazing website that includes a searchable database of Jack’s works, including photographic images (<http://www.jbtaylor.ca/>). During his life, Jack had begun to have slides made of his works. Christopher continued this process so that most works in the online catalogue are accompanied by images as well as ownership information. Christopher made all family papers available to me as well as his knowledge of his father’s work. He also generously aided me in searching the online catalogue to select works for the exhibit and the book.

The artist's studio still exists in the family's Edmonton home as he left it, including paints and other materials. His collection of art historical works that he used for teaching at the university is also there. With Christopher's assistance, I was able to view all of this material. In addition, Jack's extended family contributed biographical information.

I was fortunate to meet people who knew Jack extremely well. I had the pleasure of interviewing sons Philip and Christopher, and Taylor colleagues and friends including Allison Forbes, David Cantine, Robert Sinclair, Norman Yates, and Charlie Stelck.

Through both primary and secondary research, I have enjoyed enormously the discovery of Taylor's work. Over forty years after his death, it is appropriate to re-examine his work critically. At a time when Western Canadian artists were asserting their talent and also providing a visual identity for the West, Taylor was critically and commercially successful. His paintings, in particular his mountain landscapes, were a reflection of the West but also signalled a break with the representational art of the past as he moved into abstraction.

Adriana A. Davies, CM, PhD
Edmonton, Alberta
February, 2013

1 | Introduction

In the creaking, whispering world of rock and ice, where fragile vegetation can never hope to soften or obscure the uncompromising austerity of the environment, he discovered a light that diffused in eerie blues and purples, strata that showed the marks of enormous, relentless pressure, and crevasses of milky opacity.¹

Ron MacGregor, *The Edmonton Journal*

John Benjamin or J. B. (Jack) Taylor (1917–1970) was born and grew up in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. It is a historic city, with strong English roots, and the location of the conference that resulted in the birth of Canada. Its downtown core comprises the initial five hundred lots surveyed by Samuel Johannes Holland (1728–1801), a Royal Engineer and the first Surveyor General of British North America. Three rivers meet at its harbour, which opens into Northumberland Strait. While growing up in this typically picturesque place with some of the oldest buildings in English Canada, Taylor was exposed to the landscapes of the maritime region. Rocky coves and inlets, fishing hamlets and, in the interior, small farms are all on a comfortable human scale. Only, the sea, the limitless deep, embodied the grandeur of nature. This is the world that he learned to paint under the tutelage of his first teacher Mabel Gass and his mentor Frank Vincent DuMond at the Art Students League of New York.

As Taylor travelled westward, like other Canadians and visitors, he was awed by the expanses of the three prairie “steps” rising from Manitoba, to Saskatchewan and, finally, Alberta. His wartime service in the Canadian Air Force enabled him to traverse the Great Plains by train and airplane. Taylor depicted what he saw as backdrops for some of his aircraft paintings used to train air crew in recognition during World War II, as well as panoramas and murals for messes and recreation rooms.

None of this, however, prepared him for what he would experience in the Rocky Mountains when he first taught at the Banff School of Fine Arts in summer of 1948. Taylor shared the sense of discovery and awe of the first explorers, surveyors, and settlers as they encountered the Rocky Mountains. It is no wonder that the laying of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Rockies became central to the narrative of nation-building and a rich source for artistic production. For Taylor, the journey westward was not only a physical journey from the cradle of nationhood in Charlottetown to the Rockies, but also a journey from art student to mature artist.

The Canadian Rockies became the predominant subject matter of his artistic production. Unlike other mountain systems made up of granite and other rocks resulting from volcanic processes, the Rockies are largely composed of sedimentary rock. The Rockies, at the western edge of what was a prehistoric inland sea that covered the plains, were formed from the layered sediments at the bottom of this sea. Limestone, dolomite, sandstone, and shale were layered and, over millennia, were cracked, bent, and thrust up by tectonic forces. The movement of ice sheets and glaciers, as well as the forces of erosion, further shaped them. There is a sense not only of grandeur but also of time immemorial evidenced in the tiny micro-organisms from ancient times contained in the dolomite and limestone formations. There are also glaciers and icefields, the remnants of the last era of glaciation when the continent was covered in ice. The Rocky Mountains form part of the Continental Divide, which can be considered the spine of North America with river systems draining to the East and West from the mountain slopes. The vistas are endless, both eastward and westward, and the terrain has a raw feel to it as if it had just been formed by an invisible Creator.

This is the terrain that captured Taylor's imagination and to which he would return again and again even after he stopped teaching in Banff. Just as figurative artists would benefit from studying anatomy, painters of mountains can benefit from studying geology. Taylor did this and became friends with professors in that discipline at the University of Alberta, where he began his careers as a professor/artist. Taylor also studied art history and fell in love with the ancient buildings of Italy. It's as if his artistic imagination needed to be able to move from the depiction of classical civilization in Europe to the untamed nature of the New World as he experienced it in the Rockies. His keen eye saw the structure in nature in both the Old and New Worlds. The "idea of mountains" became his great theme, serving as a visual commentary on life and national identity. The Rockies were not only the place of the heart for him but also the source of his artistic inspiration. It would be the jagged peaks and tumbled rock falls, caverns, cirques, remnants of glacial ice, and ice fields that he would capture in representational and abstract works largely in watercolour and oil. These challenged him to explore new media to represent the texture of

rock strata in the presence and absence of light. He did this through the layering of acrylic paint, sawdust, sand, and other materials. Ultimately, the mountains would be the resting place of his ashes. In May, 1970, a few months before his death, he wrote:

Climbing among the glaciers, you become aware of time. You can see the sun, wind, and rain that caused the great masses of ice to change their forms over many thousands of years.... The final painting evolved out of the essential elements of art, that is, the concern for a basic abstract design. Whether or not an artist uses a subject as a point of departure, his main aim is to construct on canvas the simplest statement he can make.... With knowledge of the subject matter – in this case the glacial structure – the artist can be much freer in his experiments; he can concentrate on his feelings about the subject which best express his ideas. *Opabin #1* is one idea and is an expression of the grandeur of those magnificent glaciers.²

The following pages describe his life and art, and place his work in the context of Albertan and Canadian art history. Taylor's initial influences were the American landscape painters of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Later, he would be influenced by British artist John Piper. Ultimately, he would move from a realistic representation of nature to an intuitive perception of the essential elements of landscape – rock, water, and sky – as they are impacted by light. Using acrylics and other media, Taylor presented these fundamental elements and made a breakthrough from representational art to abstraction. Rather than presenting mountains in all their majesty, he captured the “idea of mountains” in a unique and very personal style.

Over forty years after his death, his work deserves re-examination, not only because of its subject matter and technique, but also because it was an aspect of Alberta's coming of age in the context of Canadian art.

2 | A Biographical Sketch

Jack Taylor was born on June 12, 1917, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, the son of Reginald Taylor, a jeweller, and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Chappell, a housewife.¹ He was a twin; his brother Arnold died at the age of nine months. The family was a prominent one and part of the British establishment in Charlottetown. His grandfather, George Henry Taylor, emigrated to Canada from Diss, Norfolk, England, in 1877 (his brother Edwin established a jewellery store in Charlottetown in 1879). His mother attended the Notre Dame Convent on Hillsborough Square and there learned to paint with watercolours, oils, and pastels. According to family lore, the girls were given famous paintings to copy. This was one of the accomplishments of fashionable young ladies of the time. The family home had various pictures that she painted, including a copy of the *Roman Girl at a Fountain* by Léon Bonnat, which was painted in 1875.² She stopped painting after the birth of her children. Taylor had a happy childhood growing up with two older brothers, Earl and Roland, and a younger sister, Joan, and received his schooling in Charlottetown. According to his wife Audrey, he became interested in drawing from an early age.³ His interest in art was nurtured by his mother and he appears to have been closer to her than to his father, who wanted him to go into the family business – Taylor’s Jewellers. Taylor worked one summer in the store developing film and hated it. When he chose to make a career as an artist, he had the full support of his mother. The bond between mother and son is evident in the picture of the two relaxing on the sofa in the family home surrounded by antiques and Lizzie’s artwork.

Taylor’s formal art instruction began when he was seventeen, in 1934, with local artist Mabel Gass.⁴ She was a high-profile, established artist and teacher. She set the early course for Taylor’s art education and he followed in her footsteps. She considered him talented enough to be able to attend a summer school in painting in Cape Breton, in 1935, taught by her mentor Frank Vincent DuMond of the Art Students League of New York. It is likely that Gass organized the course. Taylor also attended the summer school in Cape Breton in 1936. DuMond was an inspirational teacher and artist who taught at the League for about sixty years until his death

Fig. 1: Lizzie Taylor and son Jack in the family home in Charlottetown, ca. 1936–39, Taylor Family Collection.



Fig. 2: Lizzie with the copy of *Roman Girl at a Fountain* that she painted behind her, ca. 1936–39, Taylor Family Collection.



in 1951.⁵ Taylor enrolled in art courses at the League over a two-year period (1936–38). This was the turning point in Taylor’s life when he committed to becoming a professional artist. Living in an international capital with access to major museums and galleries proved exciting and artistically challenging. The League, situated in a late-nineteenth-century building at West 57th Street, was and still is a hive of studios with exhibition spaces. It has been in continuous operation since 1875 and prides itself on preparing students for professional careers as artists. There was and is no formal curriculum, only studio work with leading artists.

DuMond was born in 1865 in Rochester, New York, and came to the city in 1884 to study at the League with William Sartain and J. C. Beckwith. He also studied at the Académie Julian in Paris with Gustave Boulanger, Jules Joseph Lefebvre, and Benjamin Constant. In his long career, DuMond received many prizes, including one at the Paris Salon of 1890.⁶ He began teaching summer art classes in the 1890s in France, New England, and New York and by the late 1930s was doing this in the Canadian Maritimes.⁷ Students received rigorous instruction and painted from sunrise to sunset. DuMond was also a muralist, who painted a large mural titled “Conquest of the Pacific Coast” for the Court of the Universe at the Panama-Pacific Exposition held in 1915 in San Francisco. In Taylor’s own mind, it was DuMond who helped to shape him as an artist. He wrote in a short, unpublished essay titled “Development of My Work”: “I was fortunate to have had Frank V. DuMond of N.Y.C., to instruct me in the fundamentals of art and thinking. It was this kind of analysis of nature, the use of mind and eye that gave the ground to plan and develop.”⁸ DuMond describes his own artistic philosophy as follows:

It’s the light in the sky that gives the earth its meaning, not an inventory list of objects. To find the motif for your picture – that’s the thing. The motif. And that is what space, and weather, and light help you find. These are the universal things, and when you can paint them so they will have universal appeal, you can call yourself an artist.⁹

In 1938, Taylor returned to Charlottetown and set up a studio and began to teach. This required enormous self-confidence and it appears that Taylor had this in spades. He continued to attend DuMond’s summer schools on Cape Breton until 1941. His first one-man exhibition was in 1939 at the Harris Memorial Gallery in Charlottetown. In a newspaper clipping in wife Audrey’s scrapbook titled “Local Artist Represented in CNE at Toronto [August 23, 1940], Taylor is described as “one of Charlottetown’s rising young painters.” The painting titled *Morning*

Fig. 3: The two pictures show DuMond instructing at the summer school in the Margaree Valley, Cape Breton. Taylor can be seen in the upper picture in the top right corner wearing a pith helmet. Taylor Family Collection.



Shadows was chosen for the exhibition in the General Exhibits Building and was purchased by the International Business Machines Corporation (now IBM). In this, also, he followed in the footsteps of Mabel Gass, who also exhibited at the CNE and whose work was purchased by the company. Taylor's award-winning painting was done in 1939 and is oil on canvas, and 30 x 60 cm. Only a newspaper image exists (not reproduced in this book), and it is typical of his landscape painting at the time. It depicts on the left a belt of trees topping a gentle slope with a square of sky on the right. The following pictures are of the same era and suggest his subject matter, colour palette, and technique. They are gentle, romanticized landscapes of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island. The Margaree Valley is on the Cabot Trail on Cape Breton and was where the DuMond summer workshop took place; Keppoch is on PEI.

As with many young men of his generation, the coming of World War II was to change Taylor's life utterly. However, while the norm was that military service would be a detour from career ambitions, with Taylor, the two went hand-in-hand. In 1941, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as a draughtsman and mural designer and, in 1942, was stationed in Moncton, New Brunswick, at Scoudouc, which had been designated No. 4 Repair Depot in September 1941. Subsequently, he was sent to Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and, finally, in 1944, to Edmonton. He chose the RCAF because of an interest in flying. In a 1981 oral history interview, Audrey Taylor mentions that he had taken flying lessons when he returned to Charlottetown after his studies in New York.¹⁰ His wartime duties involved creating "recognition rooms" for the training of aircrew as well as murals for messes and recreation rooms. Flight crew needed to be able to identify aircraft in all types of light and weather conditions and, most importantly, differentiate Allied from enemy aircraft. The recognition rooms were a type of diorama designed to aid in this training. Taylor also did a series of paintings of Allied aircraft. These initially served as studies for the recognition rooms but also were intended for exhibit purposes.

Taylor's posting to Edmonton is significant. During World War II, the Canadian Northwest and Alaska became strategically important and, from 1939 to 1942, the federal Transport Department controlled development of the Northwest Staging Route. When the United States entered the war in 1941, the route became important for the movement of bombers and supplies to the USSR. This required the upgrading of airport and landing strips in Edmonton as well as northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories the building of the Alaska Highway, and the Canol (Canadian Oil) Project. The last involved the construction of a pipeline to carry oil from the Norman Wells field to supply fuel for vehicles using the Alaska Highway and Northwest Staging Route. A large concentration of equipment and men from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was located in Edmonton. In 1942, control of the route was given to the RCAF since

Fig. 4: J. B. Taylor, *The Elm [Margaree Valley]*, 1937, oil on canvas, approx. 60.96 x 71.12 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 5: J. B. Taylor, *Keppoch [also called "York Point # 19"]*, 1937, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 50.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 6: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [Birch Grove, Keppoch PEI]*, undated (ca. 1939), oil on canvas, 60.96 x 50.8 cm, Private collection.

it was being used for military purposes. With the end of the war in sight, in June 1944, a new entity – the Northwest Air Command – was established to take over the route. This was based in Edmonton with the eastern command in Toronto. Prior to this, there were air commands in Winnipeg and Vancouver. Taylor was posted to Edmonton to execute a series of murals for the new headquarters.

Taylor loved his time in the RCAF, and there are a number of pictures that document both his artistic work and the social life. His experience on the home front was very different from that on the front in Europe and other theatres of war. His wartime experience was one of artistic achievement and conviviality with fellow soldiers. He was also able to indulge his love of music by singing with a military choir.

The exhilaration of flight comes across in the backdrops to the aircraft pictures and also in the murals. While the figures in the foreground are aircraft, Taylor's joy in the landscape is evident, whether it is the sweep of mountain scenery and water in the Peace River District Mural in the Officer's Lounge of North West Air Command, or the bird's eye view of vistas below the wings of airborne aircraft. The relevant Northwest Air Command buildings at the Edmonton Municipal Airport were torn down in 1967; thus, the murals no longer exist. However, there are some photographs and, based on these, it can be seen that they were an impressive suite of works for a relatively young and inexperienced artist to accomplish. The scale is huge and Taylor selected iconic images to represent each region depicted in the murals. These images include the Edmonton airport runways with aircraft being loaded, the Alaska Highway Bridge in the Peace District Mural, a truck convoy travelling the Alaska Highway in another mural, and various images including grain elevators to suggest different regions of Alberta.

In the period 1941 to 1945, Taylor arranged three one-man shows for the RCAF focussed on Allied aircraft. These exhibits travelled across Canada and the eastern United States. He also exhibited in the Maritime Art Association Annual Show in 1942 and the Sketch Club of the Moncton Society of Art in 1943. The *Halifax Herald*, Friday, April 13, 1945, under the heading "Prince Edward Island News," has a feature article on Taylor titled: "Helps Others through Organizing Classes: Airman Continues his Activity in Art Work." The article notes that the artist is stationed at Dawson Creek, B.C., and that he enlisted in the RCAF in November 1941 as a trades draughtsman. It continues:

Since joining the Air Force in 1941 Mr. Taylor has been very active in his chosen profession. He has organized art classes in the service, painted murals, decorated



Fig. 7: Leading Aircraftsman J. B. Taylor with unknown man in front of the mural of the Edmonton Airport in the Officer's Lounge, North West Air Command, Edmonton, 1945, Taylor Family Collection.



Fig. 8: Taylor working on the mural of the Peace River District in the Officer's Lounge of Northwest Air Command, Edmonton, 1945, Taylor Family Collection.

Fig. 9: This photograph provides a larger view of the Peace District Mural including Taylor and an unknown man, Taylor Family Collection.



canteens and lounges, and painted Link Trainor [*sic*] panorama. He has also had his own exhibitions in the service, the most outstanding of which was at the Edmonton Art Museum, and ran for two weeks. Later this exhibit, which consists of 118 training aircraft, was shown in the Arts and Science building in the University of Alberta at Edmonton. Two of these are shown in the background of the above photos.¹¹

Three photos of Taylor with a background of murals accompanied the article. Another article from *The Standard*, August, 1945 by A. W. O'Brien titled "Air Force Murals: They symbolize the 800,000 Square Miles of Northwest which RCAF Controls" focuses on three Northwest Air Command murals. The article subtitle states: "Air Force Artist Worked From Memory, His Own Sketches and Photographs." O'Brien notes that Taylor had painted the murals in oil paints and had used shades of brown. It can be seen from these photos that Taylor wanted to represent all of the regions covered by the Air Command.

The clippings reveal that Taylor's work was very well received by the media and the public. The individual aircraft paintings were in the nature of studies for the recognition rooms and murals or were secondary products of these. Colleague J. Allison Forbes describes this work as follows: "Jack created artist recognition rooms. These were white-washed rooms depicting airscapes with hundreds of planes – both near and far. These were used to train pilots to recognize different aircraft. Lantern slides were also used. Planes had to be identified in both daytime and night time conditions."

The aircraft paintings are fascinating and untypical of others of the time. While the aircraft are well-executed, since their purpose was to help aircrews identify them, it is the exuberance of the depiction of the landscapes over which they fly that is amazing. If the aircraft were removed, the paintings could stand on their own as representations of Canadian landscapes. This is evident in the images of several paintings used to illustrate this text. Perhaps what would draw Taylor to the "high places" of the Canadian Rockies is the "high" he experienced from flying and viewing the creation spread out below him in all of its colour and diversity. The depiction of the sky with different qualities of light and cloud formations, as well as the aerial view of landscape, would be qualities that marked his later work.

Taylor's posting to Edmonton would be the "career-making" move for him because he met H. G. (Geo) Glyde. Their connection came through Taylor's exhibit of Allied aircraft. The critical mass of murals at Northwest Air Command would also have impressed Glyde, who was himself a muralist. At the time, there were few artists of Taylor's age with this degree of



Fig. 10: Mural of Norseman Aircraft on Watson Lake, Officer's Lounge, Northwest Air Command, Edmonton, from *The Standard*, Montreal, August 1945.



Fig. 11: Mural of Truck Convoy on Alaska Highway, Officer's Lounge, Northwest Air Command, Edmonton, from *The Standard*, Montreal, August 1945.

Fig. 12: Three Murals: Alberta Grain Elevators, Dawson Creek and Yukon Scene, Officer's Lounge, Northwest Air Command, Edmonton, from *The Standard*, Montreal, August 1945.

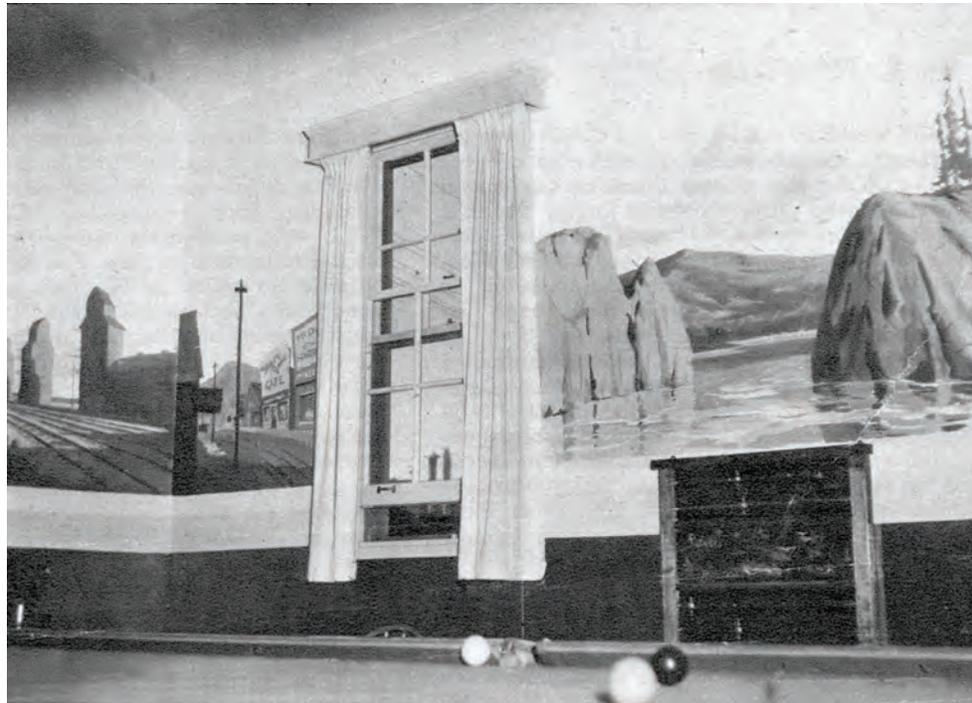




Fig. 13: J. B. Taylor, *Dakota DC3*, 1945, gouache on paper board, 41 x 51 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 14: J. B. Taylor, *Boston*, 1945, gouache on paper; 24 x 29 cm, Royal Alberta Museum.



Fig. 15: J. B. Taylor, *Lockheed Hudson*, 1945, gouache on paper; 24 x 29 cm, Royal Alberta Museum.



Fig. 16: J. B. Taylor, *Mosquito*, 1945, gouache on fiberboard, 41 x 51 cm, Private collection.

accomplishment. Glyde and Taylor also shared the attribute that they were both wartime artists. In 1943, the National Gallery of Canada commissioned Group of Seven founding member A. Y. Jackson and Glyde to travel the Alaska Highway and document it. They did this for three weeks in October and their work not only presented the northern landscape but also the men and equipment that were clearing the land and constructing the ribbon of road. The American Corps of Army Engineers was in charge of the project, and it symbolized the close relationship between Canada and the United States. Undoubtedly, there was an immediate sense of kinship between the older, English-trained established artist and the enthusiastic novice.¹²

Glyde was instrumental in determining the next twenty-five years of Taylor's life since it was likely his suggestion that Taylor continue his studies at the Ontario College of Art.¹³ Glyde knew that to make a solid living an artist not only had to be a successful practitioner but also had to teach at either a college of art or university. Through his study at the pre-eminent English-language art school in the country, Taylor enhanced his skills as an artist.

The year 1945 was also important in Taylor's personal life since he met his future wife, Audrey MacLean Anderson.¹⁴ She was the daughter of Victor Anderson and Lola Stiver, and her father owned a general store on the main street in Elgin, Manitoba.¹⁵ At the time, she was working in Toronto at Imperial Optical. She had worked for the company in Winnipeg from 1938 to 1942. Their sons tell the story of the two meeting on a train having both been assigned to the same berth. It was somewhere between Winnipeg and Toronto as each was heading either home to Charlottetown or to work in Toronto or Edmonton. Taylor got the berth because he had to travel further, but this chance meeting led to their falling in love. They married in October, 1945, in Elgin and honeymooned in Niagara Falls. Their marriage began as Taylor started his studies at the Ontario College of Art with the financial support of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Audrey was a devoted wife, supporting his work and documenting it carefully. She did not remarry after his death.

In 1947, Taylor graduated with honours and received a medal for proficiency in painting and drawing. He was advised of a new teaching position at the University of Alberta, applied, and was interviewed in Toronto. Glyde appointed him as a Lecturer in Art in the new Department of Fine Arts that he had established at the University of Alberta in 1946. Glyde assigned Taylor responsibility for teaching art history because he did not enjoy doing it, preferring the studio teaching instead. It was Glyde's intention to set up a diploma program modelled on that offered at the Slade School in London, part of the University of London.¹⁶ J. Allison Forbes, who was pursuing a Bachelor of Education degree at the time, was one of the first students and, when he graduated in 1948, became the third instructor.



Fig. 17: Audrey and Jack Taylor in PEI, ca. 1945–46, Taylor Family Collection.



Fig. 18: Audrey and Jack Taylor on their wedding day in Elgin, Manitoba in October, 1945, Taylor Family Collection.

In these early days, Forbes assisted Taylor in teaching art history while Glyde and Taylor did the studio teaching. The former were the professor/artists kitted out in white lab coats demonstrating the various classical techniques through formal, studio-based art instruction. Taylor also used a quizzing glass, a type of monocle with a magnifying lens, perhaps to add to his mystique. Forbes was not a member of staff in the department but was employed by the Faculty of Education. Forbes and Taylor quickly bonded because of their Maritime connection (Forbes' father was born in PEI) and because they had both served in the RCAF. The hiring of Norman Yates added a third art professor, who also had served in the RCAF and received training in the early use of radar in reconnaissance. Yates too was a graduate of the Ontario College of Art. The core of the department that Glyde created was, thus, Canadian. This was important to Glyde, who saw himself as helping to establish an artistic tradition in Alberta.

The year 1948 was personally and professionally significant for Taylor. On March 4, his son Philip was born and that summer he began teaching at the Banff School of Fine Arts (son Christopher was born on September 9, 1952). While he visited the mountains during his wartime service in Edmonton and included them in his aircraft pictures, in Banff, Taylor was able to conduct *plein air* sketching expeditions with his students as well as spend leisure time climbing and contemplating the Rocky Mountains in their glory. Photographs of this period document this and there is a joy and excitement in his face. Mountain scenery captured both his heart and imagination. The mountains were to become the quintessential landscape of his spirit as well as the primary subject matter of artistic production throughout his life.

At this time, Banff featured large in Canada's cultural life. In 1946, the National Film Board of Canada released a short film (about half an hour long) titled *Holiday at the School*. The Film Board was shifting from wartime production to peace time, and what better place to showcase than an art school in the Rockies! Beautiful scenery, beautiful people, and pride in Canada's cultural scene – this was a heady mix. Painting faculty staff were featured as well as instructors in other program areas and recreational activities. No doubt, new staff were given the opportunity to watch this film in their orientation.

Taylor taught at the Banff School from 1948 to 1954 during spring, main, and fall sessions and, on occasion, thereafter. The art instructors in summer session 1948 were a “who's who” of Canadian art: W. J. Phillips, A. Y. Jackson, H. G. Glyde, George Pepper, James Dichmont, Andre Bieler, Murray MacDonald, Marion Nicholl, and J. W. G. Macdonald. Taylor taught in the *Introduction to Painting* course described as “a general elementary course for all non-credit students” daily from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The lineup of instructors set out in the *Catalogue of Offerings* was as follows:

- John Taylor covers *Principles of Composition*
- W. J. Phillips teaches *Elements of Water Colour Painting*
- Will Ogilvie teaches *Preparation for Oil Colour Painting*
- James Dichmont teaches *The Preparation of Materials for Outdoor Sketching*
- W. J. Phillips, H. G. Glyde, Charles Comfort, Will Ogilvie, J.W.G. Macdonald and others teach *Advanced Landscape Painting*
- Frederic Taubes teaches *Painting Techniques and Methods*.

Taylor was the youngest of the professors and, in photographs of the period, looks more like a student. While other faculty members wore suits, he was frequently seen in shirts and sweaters, signalling a generational shift at the school. He was mostly surrounded by attentive, female students. While there is no question that his physical good looks and talent attracted women, there is more than sexual attraction at play. As Mary-Beth Laviolette revealed in her important 2012 exhibit at the Art Gallery of Alberta, and the accompanying exhibit catalogue titled *Alberta Mistresses of the Modern: 1935–1975*, women were an important part of the art scene in Alberta.¹⁷ This, however, did not equate to them having exhibits or teaching opportunities comparable to those of their male colleagues.

The Banff School had been founded in 1933 by the University of Alberta through a grant from the Carnegie Foundation of \$10,000 a year for three years. By 1948, it was well established with a range of courses available, including art, piano, singing, drama, French language, ballet, leatherwork, weaving, and photography.¹⁸ Founder Donald Cameron’s vision of creating a “Salzburg” of the Rockies required buildings, including classrooms, studios, theatres, and other spaces. His perseverance was rewarded. In the post-war period, the federal government was instrumental in providing land on prime public property in the national park for a permanent campus, which opened in 1947. This site was on Tunnel Mountain across from the Banff Springs Hotel. P. J. Jennings, the parks superintendent, and philanthropist Eric Harvie assisted Cameron in approaching the federal government. Academic PearlAnn Reichwein writes: “Following Cameron’s persistent lobby for the site, Ottawa officials agreed to grant the prestigious St. Julien lot on a perpetual lease for one dollar a year and contributed the development of municipal services to the project.”¹⁹ Edmonton-based architects Rule, Wynn and Rule designed an initial prospectus that: “imagined an expansive campus amalgam of flat-roofed modernist buildings spread across a broad open hillside on the St. Julien site, with plans for 20 to 30 chalets and accommodation for a thousand students. The drawings suggest a forest cut back to open the vistas to and from a small urban complex distinct from the main Banff townsite.”²⁰

Fig. 19: Taylor and art students, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1948, The Banff Centre AO2 0303. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.



Fig. 20: Painting faculty in 1948, Banff School of Fine Arts (taken in front of the Banff Auditorium on Banff Avenue), left to right J.W.G. Macdonald, Walter J. Phillips, Murray MacDonald, Holly Middleton, H. G. Glyde, J. B. Taylor and James Ditchmont. Photographer: Bill Gibbons. The Banff Centre AO2 0410. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.





Fig. 21: J. B. Taylor Art Class, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1952. Photographer: George Noble. The Banff Centre AO3 0308. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.



Fig. 22: Art Faculty, Banff School of Fine Arts, from left to right: Eric Byrd, William Scott, Walter J. Phillips, J. B. Taylor, and J. W. G. Macdonald; taken at Lake Minnewanka, 1953. Photographer: George Noble. The Banff Centre MO301 04. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.

Fig. 23: Taylor and art class at Quartz Ridge, Sunshine Meadows, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1952, Taylor Family Collection.



By 1950, Cameron's vision of "a campus in the clouds" had taken root and is reflected in a fascinating issue of *The Standard* magazine, Montreal, August 19, 1950, with a cover picture of Taylor with one of his students, Pat Switzer of Calgary. The cover promotes the "Art in the Rockies" pictorial feature inside. The lead article is titled "Summer School Banff Is Rapidly Becoming Canadian Cultural Centre." It can be seen that the branding of Banff as a cultural education centre was well underway. The cover image of the handsome art professor and his female student suggests the sexy, vital, young vibe that the school wished to project. One can but imagine Taylor's excitement at being a part of this dynamic scene. The mystique of the Rockies and the arts, together with beautiful young students and establishment artists was to become the national, and international, perception of the school.

The Banff School of Fine Arts calendar of offerings for the early 1950s is modernist in design, including a stylized representation of the mountains in the background, and a violin, artist's easel, and masks of comedy and tragedy in the foreground. The early 1950s were an



Fig. 24: Taylor and unknown man sketching at Marble Canyon, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1952, Taylor Family Collection.



Fig. 25: Taylor and class, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1953. Photographer: George Noble. The Banff Centre AO3 0319. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.



Fig. 26: Taylor and painting class at Vermilion Lakes, Banff School of Fine Arts, 1953. Photographer: George Noble. The Banff Centre AO3 0316. Courtesy of The Banff Centre.

Fig. 27: *The Standard* magazine feature reprises the terrain covered by the National Film Board 1946 documentary *Holiday at the School*. The cover depicts Taylor and student Pat Switzer.

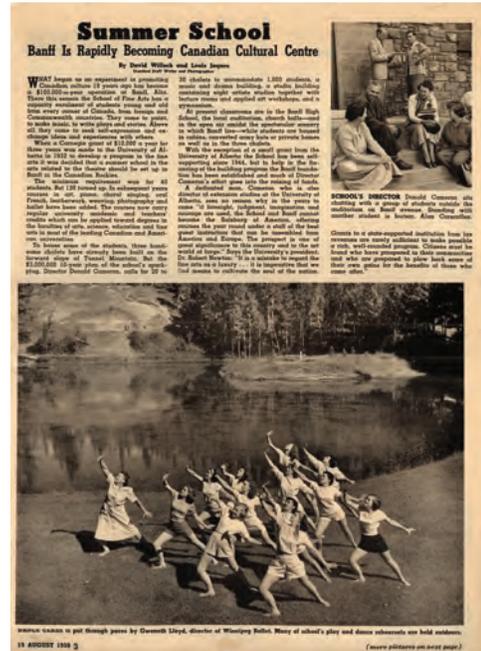
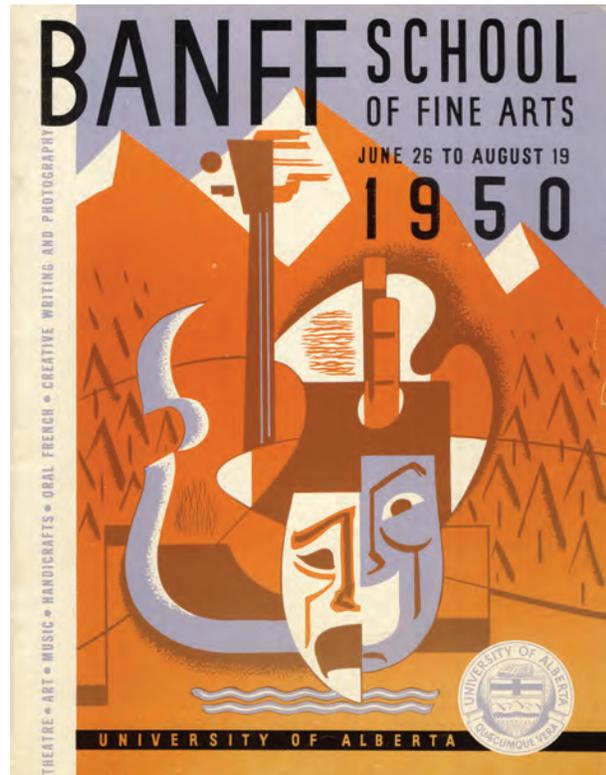


Fig. 28: The Banff School of Fine Arts calendar of offerings is in the nature of a magazine selling the life style and natural surroundings of the School in the Rockies. Designer: Charles Comfort, OC (1900–1994).



important period in Canada's cultural development, as the country shifted from a war-time focus to peaceful pursuits of which the arts and culture were seen as central. The Massey-Harris Royal Commission was a product of this era, and it was intended to provide a cultural road map for the country. One of its most important products was the Canada Council, which was created to hold funds in trust to provide grants to practising artists and art institutions.

Philip Taylor recounts the following about the years that his father taught at the Banff School and afterwards when the family would go for holidays in the Rockies:

In the Rockies, dad took us to see some of the places he had taken students for outdoor teaching classes: these included Bow Lake and areas around Banff. Later we went to O'Hara as a family. Dad enjoyed hiking all the paths, rain, snow or shine. If asked, he probably would have said that he loved to walk and hike. The extensive and varied hiking trails at O'Hara provided dad with the perfect opportunity to easily get above the tree line into the alpine areas, close to glaciers, melting ice and snow, rock faces and scree slopes, ever-moving clouds which seemed especially attractive to him. Elemental. Raw. Undisturbed. Freedom. Few people to distract him. Being up in the high alpine of the Rockies at cloud and mountain peak level was perhaps as close to flying as one could get without being in an airplane.

Audrey Taylor mentions in her oral history interview that she stopped going to Banff with him because she found it too difficult to look after the children there. What was not said but can be understood was that raising a family was different from the single-minded focus on artistic creation and the socializing around that. Audrey preferred the life in the "rabbit row" of faculty housing on the university campus. There were twelve suites and most couples had children. The professors were from various faculties and departments (among them, English, Chemistry, Fine Arts, Education, Commerce and Philosophy), and included the following families: Mardiros, Baker, Campbell, Johnson, Orchard, Brown, Folinsbee, and Elder. The children shared a communal sandbox, and the adults partied together and set up a kind of radio device that allowed them to listen in on sleeping children left at home. The Taylors had bought a piano for \$100 in Toronto and shipped it to Edmonton, and musical evenings at their home were popular. The family was outdoors-oriented and there were regular trips into nature, and some of the terrain would later feature in Taylor's work.

During the winter session in Edmonton, Taylor began field trips for the Department of Extension, visiting many communities in central, northern, and southern Alberta to provide art instruction. Donald Cameron of the Extension Department of the University of Alberta began classes in summer of 1937 in Vegreville and Vermilion, later adding Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Peace River. In the 1950s, classes were also held in Dawson Creek, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.²¹ These art programs were intensive and involved long drives for the instructors, a significant commitment for a busy university professor, working artist, and family man. For example, the Medicine Hat course took place every three weeks and involved teaching Saturday afternoon and evening classes. Audrey mentions that he regularly went to Holden, Tofield, Jasper, Wetaskiwin, Lacombe, Brooks, and Dawson Creek during the winter. Sometimes he would bring his son Philip.

These programs were crucial to the development of artists throughout Alberta, as well as enhanced public appreciation of the visual arts. While the Banff experience was perhaps “sexier” and national (and somewhat international in nature at the time), the extension courses were local and nurtured the development of regional art. A small booklet in the nature of a teaching aide was developed by E. S. Faiers, titled *An Approach to Sketching in Oils*. Edward Faiers is an interesting figure. He was born in England and raised in Canada studying at the Department of Extension, University of Alberta (1941–46).²² He was thus an older contemporary of Taylor’s, established in the Alberta art scene and therefore capable of creating this instructional tool. The booklet begins with an introduction by P. H. Henson, Director, Edmonton Museum of Arts. It is illustrated with clever cartoon drawings, which Philip Taylor believes were done by his father. They resemble some ad copy drawings and cartoons from Taylor’s period at the Ontario College of Art. The booklet begins with an introduction to painting and the first few sections are: “Materials & Equipment,” “Oil Painting Pigments,” “Brushes and their Care,” “Mediums – Turpentine and Oil,” “Incidental Equipment,” “Let’s Go Sketching! – ‘Feeling out’ the Subject,” “Composition of Sketch Compared with Subject,” “‘Casting’ the Sketch.” Each section includes some sample paintings and a brief description of the work of key Alberta artists such as Maxwell Bates, W. F. Irwin, Illingworth Kerr, Janet Mitchell, J. B. Taylor, Laura Evans Reid, H. G. Glyde, Annora Brown, Luke Lindoe, and Dorothy Barnhouse. The philosophy of the program is stated on the back cover:



Fig. 29: Philip and Christopher Taylor at Beaverhill Lake, 1958, Taylor Family Collection.



Fig. 30: Audrey Taylor and the boys at Beaverhill Lake, 1958, Taylor Family Collection.

Leisure in Alberta

No province in Canada ... indeed, no area in the world is more blessed than Alberta with natural beauty and wealth. To live in this gracious province is a privilege that each one of us should appreciate to the full.

This background should allow every community to develop a community program in keeping with the perfect setting in which we live. Interest and skill in the fine arts ... in music, literature, painting and drama will deepen and enrich the life of every citizen of Alberta.

The province is anxious to assist your community cultural program. Drop a line to find out how this assistance can be extended to you.

Write to Blake Mackenzie
Co-ordinator of Cultural Activities
Cultural Activities Branch
Department of Economic Affairs
Legislative Bldg. Edmonton

It is significant that this activity is occurring through the Department of Economic Affairs. Taylor's commitment to his students went above and beyond the call of duty. Audrey notes that he continued to go to Dawson Creek every year even after the university terminated the course. An article in the Peace River newspaper, dated June 13, 1962, titled "Local Art Group Completes Course Under Prof. Taylor," observes that the artist had completed the eleventh annual short course for the Dawson Creek Art Group. The president of the group, Mrs. J. C. (Betty) Mundy, became a good friend.

For the artists, these trips provided opportunities to observe the range of Alberta landscapes. Thus, northern Alberta woodland and the foothills and rolling prairies of southern Alberta became a part of Taylor's subject matter. This had occurred with Glyde's art and also with Douglas D. Barry, who devoted his entire university career to extension art teaching. Taylor painted the different regions of the province in vivid colours that evoked the undulating plains, rolling foothills, shelterbelt trees hedging fields, and naturally occurring vegetation. The sky in these pictures is seemingly endless.



Fig. 31: Taylor instructing an extension class likely in the Dawson Creek area, no date, Taylor Family Collection.

In 1950, Taylor was promoted to Assistant Professor of Art and showed in annual exhibitions, whether in group or one-man shows. This was to be the pattern of his career. His artistic production to the end of his life was prodigious, and he carved out time from his busy teaching and administrative schedule to paint. His sons remember their father working late into the night in his studio in the basement of their home.

Some of Taylor's exhibits travelled; for example, in 1949, he exhibited in various small Alberta centres, largely where the Faculty of Extension provided courses and workshops. In 1950, he exhibited in Lethbridge and Red Deer. He also belonged to various professional organizations, including the Alberta Society of Artists and the Humanities Association of Canada, Edmonton Branch. The former was established in 1931 and the first two presidents, A. C. Leighton (1901–1965) and Glyde, dominated its first era. Taylor helped to found the Alberta Society of Education through the Arts and served as president. He was also a member of the Provincial Arts Board, established by the Government of Alberta. In 1950, he gave a lecture on “Beauty” to the Humanities Association meeting in Edmonton.²³



Fig. 32: J. B. Taylor, *Alberta Sky* [also – *Prairie*], 1951, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 91.44 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 33: J. B. Taylor, *Looking West*, 1951, oil on masonite, 92.1 x 127.6 cm, University of Alberta, Student's Union Collection, L.1974.1.14.



The 1950s saw meteoric growth in the University of Alberta, which was a direct result of the economic boom started when oil was struck in Leduc south of Edmonton in 1947. The university grew with the province of Alberta's economy, and science and technology and arts and culture flourished. The Department of Art and Taylor's career were beneficiaries of this boom. Alberta's fiftieth anniversary of becoming a province, celebrated in 1955, prompted the Government of Alberta to purchase artworks from eight established artists, and Taylor was among them. His *Alberta Badlands* painting (1952, oil on masonite, 60.8 x 71.2 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Acc # 0230.175.000003) became part of the Jubilee Art Collection, then housed at Government House. The other artists were H. G. Glyde, Douglas Barry, Euphemia McNaught, Annora Brown, Theodore Schintz, Robert Hyndman, and Elva Frederking.²⁴

In 1955, Taylor was eligible for a sabbatical year at half his salary. While sabbaticals were a normal occurrence, his sabbatical was prompted by some negativity with respect to his tenure at the university. In a letter dated March 16, 1954, President Andrew Stewart advised Taylor that he would not be promoted to Associate Professor on the recommendation of the General Promotions Committee for the following reason:

The Committee noted the limited formal training you have had, and felt that if you were to remain in teaching work at the University level – it was essential that you add to your qualification by further training. Your appointment was made at a time when it was expected that most of your effort would be in extension classes. If you wish to continue teaching at the University – as I hope you will plan to do – it is in your own interest to obtain more formal training; and you should not expect promotion until you have done so.²⁵

The question arises as to why this came up at this time. Taylor's educational background was no different from that of Glyde, who trained as an artist at the Brassey Institute in Hastings, from 1920 to 1926, and at the Royal College of Art in London from 1926 to 1930. According to Taylor's son Philip, his father's relationship with Glyde was collegial but they were not friends. There can be no doubt that the General Promotions Committee ruling was based on Glyde's assessment. Whether Glyde resented his younger colleague's apparently effortless success as an artist will never be known, but, clearly, his opinion had a negative impact on Taylor's rise through the ranks at the university.

The outcome of this negative review prompted Taylor to apply for funding support to the Nuffield Foundation Travelling Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences program. In the application, he notes: "I have been accepted by The Slade as a specialist student commencing October 7, 1955 to July 15, 1956." The Slade School of Fine Art is part of the University of London.²⁶ The answer as to why Taylor chose the Slade is that Glyde had visited the school in 1949 as a model for the art program that he wished to develop at the University of Alberta. In fact, in 1953, Glyde and Taylor initiated a four-year Diploma Program in Art that included the following courses: Fundamentals of Drawing and Painting, Art History and Appreciation, Pictorial Composition, and Advanced Drawing and Painting. Teaching of art within the faculties of Arts and Education continued.²⁷ Thus, for Taylor's sabbatical year, studying at the Slade was a logical choice that would enhance his knowledge of art history and technique for teaching purposes. He took a course in etching and attended seminars under E. H. Gombrich, noted art historian and writer on aesthetics. Taylor went to England with his family and, with his wife Audrey, travelled to the continent. They lived in a large house in the London suburb of Ealing. Visits to London galleries and exposure to contemporary artists energized him.

After his return from England, Taylor assumed that he would be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor but President Stewart advised him of the committee's rejection of his advancement in a letter dated April 19, 1956. His promotion would not be approved until April, 1958. There is no question that this decision affected his sense of well-being and security at the university.

In 1956, Taylor returned to teaching, and Audrey observed (in the oral history interview) that they were relieved to come back to the "reality and security" of the university. The sabbatical year was stimulating for Taylor but, according to Audrey, he was also confused – "we saw too much and the adjustment took a year or two." She also observed that he struggled with "what to take from the sabbatical but also how to remain true."

Taylor integrated his London learnings into his teaching immediately. Christopher Taylor was given the lecture notes that student Morley Riske took for Art 51, the course that Taylor taught beginning on September 28, 1956. This course was popular with third- and fourth-year science students as the compulsory arts option. Taylor used Helen Gardner's book *Art Through the Ages* as the text, and the Christmas exam was valued at 30 per cent and the final at 70 per cent. Riske's notes are excellent and demonstrate that the course covered the basics of artistic style and then went on to provide an overview of Western art, including architecture from classical times.²⁸ The fact that Taylor had seen some of this art and architecture first-hand undoubtedly enriched his teaching and the student experience.



Fig. 34: Audrey, Christopher, Taylor and Philip aboard the Empress of Scotland on their return from his English sabbatical in 1956, Taylor Family Collection.

Taylor's busy teaching and exhibit schedule continued although, in 1955, he had stopped teaching at the Banff School of Fine Arts on an annual basis. He only taught there again for the summer session of 1962. Colleague Norman Yates (in an oral interview) provides the following insight into Taylor's personality and teaching style:

Taylor was the most-gentlest person that I knew. Students felt "this man isn't going to do me any harm." He was an easy-going guy. I saw him in the classroom where he was demonstrating – there was a hushed silence – students were fascinated. He would start his demonstration by creating almost an abstraction – bits and pieces – and it would emerge as a landscape. He revealed a feeling of total acquaintance-ship with the medium. He loved to teach by demonstration but would get into

Fig. 35: Taylor, in his typical lab coat instructing a painting class at the University of Alberta in 1961, Taylor Family Collection.



technicalities. He was always willing to try to show students how to do it. He would sometimes transform an inadequate effort into something quite good. He never gave students a sense of personal fault – only assistance.

Yates also described teaching an art history course with Taylor as follows:

I was assigned the task of teaching history of art (Jack had done this before). We used glass slides and a massive projector. The class became a laughing fest. It was fun. I taught the early “ancestors” on to prior to the Renaissance and Jack then took over. Geo sometimes filled in doing his version of the moderns; otherwise Jack did it. This class would have been at the finish of the 1950s. The university was expanding enormously. I got on very well. Geo was the English-trained Academy type. Jack was the demonstrator and theorist.

In 1961, Jack went to Europe again and visited with artist friend Harry Kiyooka in Italy and also visited Holland, Belgium, and France.²⁹ He sought funding support from the Canada Council

for a study tour component that focussed on the following: “My purpose in this study abroad is to go more thoroughly into the art of Italy, in order to enrich my lecturing program in the history and appreciation of art. (To date, I have only been able to make only one very brief visit to Italy).”³⁰

In 1962, Taylor travelled to Gunnar Mine and Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories to give lectures and demonstrations. He also served as a juror for the Canada Council grants program.

When Taylor began to exhibit, there were few venues in Alberta. The Edmonton Museum of Arts (now the Art Gallery of Alberta) was established in 1924 and is the oldest, continuously operating gallery in the province. Perhaps the oldest commercial gallery was the Canadian Art Galleries, established in 1945 in Calgary by John Davenall Turner, himself an artist.³¹ Letters reveal that Taylor first exhibited with them in 1958 and, again, in 1963. Coste House, home of the Calgary Allied Arts Centre, after World War II provided artist spaces as well as a gallery. Taylor exhibited there in 1953. As a university professor, he regularly exhibited in the University Art Gallery and Museum, located on the top floor of the Rutherford Library (Glyde had been appointed curator in 1950). Prior to this time, Professor E. S. Keeping had organized exhibits on the second floor of the Arts and Sciences Building. The University Gallery not only had faculty shows but also brought in travelling exhibits that were both national and international in scope. Some came from the Western Canada Art Circuit.³²

In 1964, Taylor first exhibited through the commercial Jacox Gallery in Edmonton, run by John Jacox.³³ The gallery not only gave him access to non-academic buyers but also was an incentive to produce works for annual shows. It appears that Jacox circulated these exhibits to other venues; for example, in January 1966, an exhibit went to the University of Alberta, Calgary campus, and then travelled on to the Banff School of Fine Arts. Taylor’s paintings sold well not only to colleagues at the university but also to the emerging business and professional elites. This success was unique and not shared by some of Taylor’s colleagues. Allison Forbes describes him as a very “commercial” artist. Son Philip notes:

The Jacox Gallery exhibit was an important turning-point for Dad. It was a place to show and sell works but this also put more pressure on him to create for the next show. People liked the works, in particular, the large ones. This put more and more pressure on Dad to produce these large works. Jacox also likely pushed him to do this. All the small and large works were selling well. Jacox really supported Dad’s

effort and gave him the first major opportunity to exhibit in a commercial setting. Dad and Mom were not sure how to value them for the first show. All sold well and very quickly so they decided to raise prices for the next show (it sold well also). The Gallery took a 40 percent commission.

My mother was an astute advisor to my father throughout his career. They discussed everything from how he might overcome impasses with his painting to how best to promote his works. Early efforts at showing his work in Mel Hurtig's bookstore in Edmonton met with limited exposure to the public. Then, when the opportunity came to show his paintings at the Jacox Gallery, my mother helped to decide which paintings were suitable for sale, holding those which were felt to be less representative. I recall discussions surrounding the question, "what price will we ask for a painting?" While neither had formal experience in marketing or sales, Audrey was firm in saying that Dad should ask a price that reflected his efforts and what other artists were asking at the time, so as not to undervalue his work. Dad was not particularly concerned with this part of the business but Mom made sure he did not give his work away, particularly since sales at Jacox were strong. I recall going around either the second or third show at Jacox and seeing all the red dots on paintings, before the opening evening had barely begun.³⁴

A highlight for Taylor must have been when the son of renowned Canadian artist Lawren S. Harris, Lawren P. Harris, Head of the Department of Fine Arts at Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, wrote to him on January 4, 1965, complimenting him on the success of his exhibition at the university and also notifying him that the University Acquisitions Committee for Contemporary Canadian Art had recommended the purchase of his painting *McArthur '64*. This sale was important to Taylor because it gave him national exposure.

While his career as an artist was in ascendance, from 1963, tensions were increasing at the university. In 1962, the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Art was introduced, and with it came the need for greater academic rigour. This resulted in a new scrutiny of the credentials of department staff, and it appears that, again, Taylor's credentials were questioned. Dean of Arts Douglas E. Smith, in a letter dated March 27, 1963, informed Taylor that he would only receive half the amount of the normal merit increment and noted:

The staff handbook makes it clear that advancement through the ranks and salary levels should be steady for staff members who “steadily improve their qualifications and demonstrate increasing capacity.” Recently there has been a complementary policy that individuals may remain at a level salary when it seems that such development has stopped. The General Promotions Committee has adopted the policy of awarding half-increments to individuals who seem to be approaching such a plateau.³⁵

Taylor kept his completed *Annual Reports of Faculty Member* documents from 1959 onwards and these are revealing. It is clear that the emphasis was now placed on “Research or Scholarly Activity,” and this was blank in Taylor’s reports from 1960 to 1965. In 1966, he reports that he helped to supervise Mr. Novakshonoff on his thesis on “Russian Painting of the 19th Century.” He also itemized the following: “nineteen completed experiments in acrylic resins etc.; Portrait of Col. Eric Cormack, O.B.E.; twenty-nine works, major show for 1966; and Research Study Tour – Iowa State University, Saint John’s College, Minnesota, Denver University, Colorado, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.” The reports become more detailed and, in 1967, Taylor notes four official portraits done for the university as well as a study tour to London and Amsterdam, and a research study tour to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, including visits to university art galleries. He is struggling to make his work as a professor and practising artist fit within the narrow strictures of what the university considered to be research or scholarly activity.

Again, in 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967, Taylor was refused a merit increment. In 1968, he was denied a “normal increment.” The letter for 1969 does not mention a merit increment though there is an increase in salary from \$15,800 to \$17,400, which would suggest that there was a normal step increment. A letter from Dean Smith, dated February 19, 1970, indicates that Taylor has been granted a “normal increment.” It’s unclear whether this includes a merit increment or not. There is a touching letter from artist and professor William Townsend of the Slade School of Fine Art, dated June 2, 1970, in which Townsend states that he will be pleased to provide a reference for Taylor with respect to his promotion. In the end, Taylor became a full professor for the academic session 1970–71. Taylor had also enquired about a sabbatical in London for the academic year 1970–71, noting that he wished to do some academic work and also paint at the Slade. He also wanted to reconnect with John Piper. Townsend mentions that

space will be a problem and that Piper is no longer a regular visitor but that he will ensure that Taylor will be enrolled as a part-time student and will have Keith Vaughan as a tutor.³⁶

While others did cave in as a result of the pressures placed on them by the university, Taylor continued to try to do what he felt they required; therefore, it must have been devastating for him when he was denied fair monetary recognition. It is ironic that the department chose to do this at the same time as asking him to act as department chair for a year after Glyde left at the end of the 1965-66 academic year. Taylor was given only an administrative honorarium of \$1,000 for doing this work. The disappointment did not stop him from accomplishing what he felt that he needed to do to support the department. For example, as was noted above, in 1965, Taylor toured various art schools and galleries in the United States to look at models for art instruction.³⁷ On this trip, he met Robert Sinclair, who was studying at the University of Iowa at the time, and helped him to obtain a travel grant to get to Edmonton when he was hired. In the summer of 1966, the family went for holidays to Britain, including trips to Wales and Holland. Taylor made opportunities for professional development through visits to favourite galleries and museums including the British Museum, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and also museums in The Hague.

The Art Department, as Glyde had structured it, did not survive his departure. Major changes were afoot and they began with the creation of three separate departments: Art, Music, and Drama. For Music and Drama specialists, this was an enormous achievement because, under Glyde, they felt the bulk of resources went to the visual arts. Ronald Austin Davey, the new chair of the Art Department, was an external hire from the UK, and this was done, according to Taylor colleagues, because the university establishment was largely anti-American and did not want an American as chair.³⁸ Davey was a lecturer in art history who had taught at the Slade and at Newcastle-on-Tyne University and, before coming to Edmonton, was the principal of the West Sussex College of Art.

With Davey's coming, the old regime of professors, who were practising artists, and the nature of art instruction based on demonstration changed. Some younger professors (for example, Robert Sinclair and David Cantine) had already felt that the instruction regime used by Glyde and Taylor was passé. The department also saw the introduction of a range of other disciplines, including printmaking, sculpture, photography, and industrial design. Staff went from six to twenty-eight in three years, making it, according to Sinclair, the largest art department in the country.³⁹

David Cantine, who joined the department in 1965 as a sessional lecturer and became a close friend of Taylor, noted that the younger staff affected the outlook of the department



Fig. 36:
Colleagues and
friends David
Cantine (left) and
Robert Sinclair
(right), ca. 1968,
Taylor Family
Collection.

fundamentally and brought in new British and American influences. The old “collegial” department in which Taylor had grown up was gone. This was the culmination of the academization of art instruction at the university, begun in 1954 when credentials began to be scrutinized and university degrees rather than artistic ability and production became primary criteria for hiring. In Taylor’s files, there are various documents relating to the push to academization and the emphasis on research and performance measures. In an undated document, titled “Report of the Department of Art Committee Investigating Problems Concerned with Staff Research,” the recommendation is made that department staff be strongly encouraged to seek funding from a range of funding agencies. Taylor has labelled the file in which this document appears “1969–70.” A paper by T. P. Chen, titled “Effective Representations of Faculty Economic Interests: A Preliminary Position Paper Submitted to the AASUA,” dated August, 1970, discusses the possibility of setting up a collective bargaining model.

The powers of the General Promotions Committee were huge and Taylor and others who were not rewarded must have felt powerless. It is clear that a measure for artistic activity and other kinds of artistic developmental work needed to be found. As well, since Taylor’s relationships

with his students were so positive and his artistic production was recognized, the question arises of whether his negative reviews were the result of professional jealousy.

In addition, “student power” manifested itself and resulted in the establishment of reviews for professors. Students began to appeal grades and used the course curriculum as described in calendars of offerings as a vehicle for complaint. There was also unrest among staff who believed it was difficult to grade paintings and justify those grades, particularly in the new teaching era in which the emphasis was on the student’s own creative vision. Some commentators even believed that art schools should not be located in universities. All of these issues were a part of the larger debate as to the role of universities in contemporary life. Were they training schools for industry or the professions, or were they something more? Taylor was tracking these changes, and in his papers there is a copy of an article by J. Percy Smith titled “Teach – Or Get Lost.” Smith rebuts the “publish or perish” advocates and pushes for the view of a university that is humanistic in nature and is involved in “the growth and nourishment of the life of the mind.”⁴⁰ Smith also believes that universities should be involved in social change.

While in many humanities disciplines the “publish or perish” dictum became the benchmark for measuring performance, for artist/professors this had to be adapted. While the publication of academic papers was certainly feasible, a measure for artistic success had to be developed as well. Thus, nature and frequency of exhibits became important and “artistic currency” of works. These were problematic areas and difficult to define with few, if any, objective measures. In a number of discussions with Taylor’s colleagues, I found that that there were tremendous pressures in the department that served to heighten the stress for artist/professors.

This was particularly true for Taylor because of his seniority – he was the “go-to” person for all who came after him. It became more difficult for him to carve out time from his academic duties to paint and for his family. This meant that his life became a tremendous juggling act. While he had always served on university committees, his administrative load grew dramatically in the late 1960s. While denying him monetary recognition, the university fully exploited his knowledge and abilities as the oldest and most senior professor in the department. In 1967, Taylor travelled to the west coast and to Expo ’67 in Montreal, participating in the Canadian Universities Centennial Drawing Exhibition. He also attended “The Arts and The University” Conference on May 12, 1967, as part of the University of Alberta team that included Drama, Art and Music representatives.⁴¹ From 1967, he served on the acquisitions committee of the Edmonton Art Gallery. In 1968, he was a visiting lecturer at the University of British Columbia Summer Session. All of this activity was accompanied by an exhibit at the Jacox Gallery. Of the twenty-four paintings exhibited, the majority were large-scale mountain paintings, which



Fig. 37: Taylor is seen painting in the basement studio of his home in 1968 with one of his Italian pictures in the background, Taylor Family Collection.

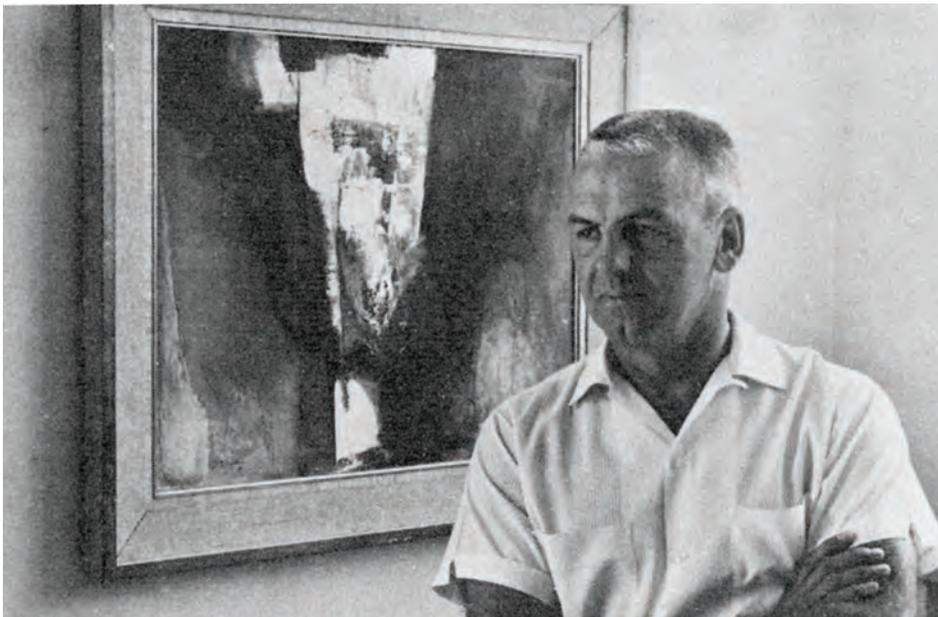
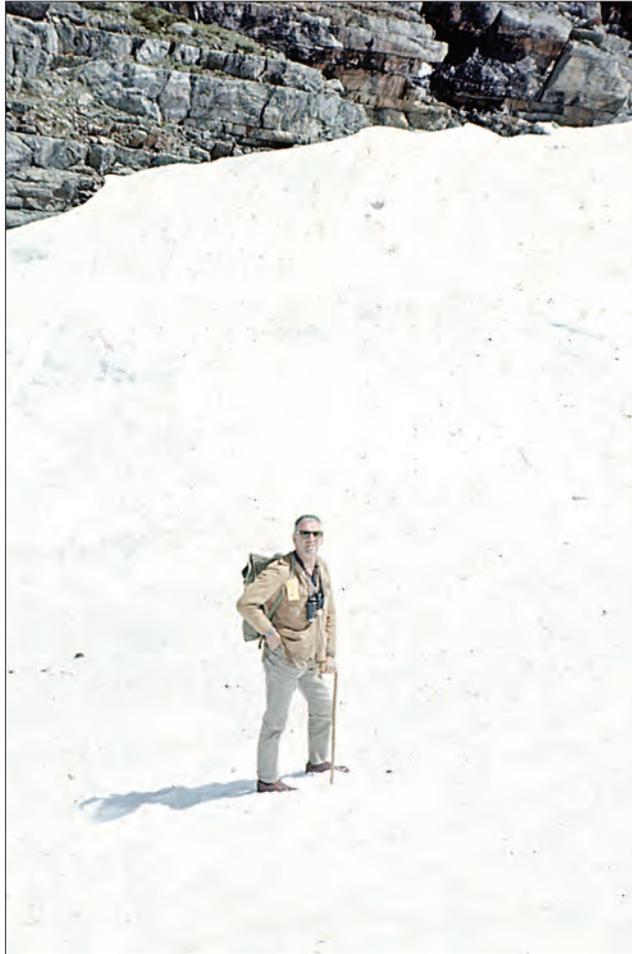


Fig. 38: Taylor is pictured next to his *Opabin Glacier* painting, *ATA Magazine*, June, 1970.

Fig. 39: Taylor hiking on the way to the Opabin Glacier, ca. 1969. Photographer: Christopher Taylor, Taylor Family Collection.



were the most time-consuming and labour-intensive to produce. These were priced in the \$600 to \$1,000 range. In 1969, Taylor travelled to the western United States visiting art schools and galleries again to determine teaching styles and best practices. He also undertook a range of art instruction activities in the community as well as giving talks to schools and a range of community organizations.⁴²

It's important to note that Taylor took great interest and pride in his son Philip's biological studies and the summer work that he undertook for the National Museum of Natural Sciences (Ottawa), including time at Polar Bear Pass on Bathurst Island in the Canadian High Arctic. He even discussed going there on a painting trip.⁴³ Philip notes that his father's hikes to Lake

O'Hara were a personal time for reflection – the other members of the family no longer had the time to do this. Sometimes he went with friends, such as Phyllis Jeffrey and Irving Simpson. Visits to the mountains were the “stillpoint” in his complex life and always provided solace and inspiration. In late April 1970, Taylor took the opportunity to drive his son back from the University of Victoria when he completed his year's studies there. They drove via Kamloops to Jasper and on to Edmonton. It was their last shared trip to the mountains, and Taylor spoke to Philip of the important role his wife Audrey played in his life as an artist, encouraging and facilitating his work.

The summer of 1970 was spent studying mountains and glaciers in British Columbia and Alberta, as well as opening an exhibit of portraits at University Hall, University of Alberta. He also applied for a grant that would have enabled him to go to areas where he had not been before. Taylor hoped that this would trigger new creative production.

For the academic session 1970–71, Taylor became a full professor and was scheduled to team teach an introductory art course with his younger colleague Robert Sinclair. In an interview, Sinclair noted that Taylor had been worrying about this. Taylor did not arrive for the class. He died of a massive heart attack at home on the morning of Tuesday, September 15, 1970. He was only fifty-three. The funeral took place at Garneau United Church, which he, Audrey, and later the boys had attended until the early 1960s. The family asked that no flowers be sent and that tributes be made to the Winnifred Stewart School for Retarded Children. His ashes were scattered above Lake O'Hara.

3 | Mountain Pictures: The Sublime Period (1947 to 1961)

ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE TRADITION

It is helpful to view Taylor's mountain paintings in the context of the evolution of the landscape tradition in both Europe and North America. In the art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, depictions of landscapes are secondary to the figures in the foreground, whether religious, mythic, or symbolic. By the mid-seventeenth century, the scale changed, with artists painting large landscapes with small figures inspired by religious stories or mythology. These paintings, however, were not intended to be representations of real landscapes.

It was philosophical ideas in the latter half of the eighteenth century that would result in artists focussing on nature and viewing it in new ways. The aesthetic of their works was based on theories such as the Sublime, the Beautiful, and the Picturesque. These ideas involved a re-examination of man's relationship to nature and to the divine. English philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797), in his work *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), wrote: “WHATEVER is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a matter analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.”¹ The natural world was, thus, a vehicle for exciting strong feelings (such as awe, wonder, or fear) and stimulating the creative imagination, thereby giving rise to poetry, prose, painting, and other forms of artistic expression. Mountains, rushing torrents, violent storms – any elements in nature that inspired extreme feelings – became preferred subjects.

The contemplation of nature could be a spiritual experience whether expressed in conventional religious terms or pantheism, which saw the divine as immanent in nature. The appeal, however, was to the imagination and not reason. The emphasis on the individual's reaction to the landscape linked these works with the Romantic Movement that focussed on the individual and his/her feelings about the human and natural world. It was the Romantic poets William

Wordsworth (1770–1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) who made landscape accessible through their works. They fell in love with the English Lake District, living and writing there as well as extolling its beauties. The ruggedness of moors and the Scottish highlands also excited them. Victorian art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) also influenced aesthetic theory and notions of the Sublime. George P. Landow writes of Ruskin: “Ruskin used his theory of the sublime, like the theory of beauty which it complements, to solve the problem of the role of emotion in beauty and art.”² He also links Ruskin with Wordsworth and Coleridge and quotes Coleridge as follows:

I was one day admiring one of the falls of the Clyde; and ruminating upon what descriptive term could be most fitly applied to it, I came to the conclusion that the epithet “majestic” was the most appropriate. While I was still contemplating the scene, a gentleman and a lady came up, neither of whose faces bore much of the stamp of superior intelligence, and the first words the gentleman uttered were “It is very majestic.” I was pleased to find such a confirmation of my opinion, and I complimented the spectator upon the choice of his epithet, saying that he had used the best word that could have been selected from our language “Yes, sir,” replied the gentleman, “I say it is very majestic: it is sublime, it is beautiful, it is grand, it is picturesque.” – “Ay (added the lady), it is the prettiest thing I ever saw.” I own that I was not a little disconcerted.³

Linked to the notion of the “Sublime” was the concept of the “Picturesque,” which had its origins in landscape design and architecture. Baronet Sir Uvedale Price (1747–1829), in 1794, authored the *Essay on the Picturesque, As Compared With The Sublime and The Beautiful* (1794). The focus of his theories and practical applications were the gardens and grounds of his country estate in Herefordshire. His neighbour Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824), a classical scholar and archaeologist, in the same year, published his poem “The Landscape.” Both favoured dramatic elements in nature and, if they did not exist, created them. Picturesque painters favoured ruins, charming cottages, twisted trees, and exuberant vegetation.

Nature is no longer background but rather becomes the foreground of an artistic form devoted to it, thereby giving rise to the establishment of schools of landscape painting. This occurred in Britain, continental Europe, and, later, North America. Beginning in the first part of the nineteenth century, artists depicted real landscapes in their works and many worked *en plein air*,

creating watercolour studies that would, in some cases, be worked up to major oil paintings in the studio. These works were and are an affirmation of regional geology, physical geography, and flora and fauna that made a place unique and had the stamp of national identity about it. Thus, such landscapes are quintessentially English, German, French, or North American in matter. As Laure Meyer notes in *Masters of English Landscape*, “Each of these three areas – topography, scenes of hunting and racing, and seascapes – led in their different ways to the development of a fine and independent school of landscape painters.”²⁴ John Constable’s (1776–1837) depictions of the rural English countryside and J.M.W. Turner’s (1775–1851) epic seascapes would be products of this tradition.

While painters working in North America were influenced by European landscape traditions, they were motivated by a desire to create an art that would reflect the scale and grandeur of the North American continent. In the United States, the establishment of the nation spurred the development of a native tradition of the arts and letters – a tradition as distant as possible from the Old World and its values. In terms of the visual arts, an artistic movement developed around the representation of landscape. The Hudson River School was not a formal school but rather a group of painters who shared a common theme – depictions of the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill, Adirondack, and White Mountains. In the autumn of 1825, Thomas Cole (1801–1848) journeyed to the Catskill Mountains and painted the first formal landscapes of the area. It was the pristine nature of these landscapes that appealed to Cole and others. It was as if, in an age of belief, they were freshly minted from the hand of God. With the absence of the influence of human beings, the observer, whether in the real landscape or viewing the painting, could more readily commune with God. Cole, who was born in England and received his art training there, coming to the United States when he was twenty, was one of the many artists who turned away from industrial England. The most significant works of the first generation of the Hudson River School were painted in the period 1825–55. Raymond J. O’Brien in *American Sublime: Landscape and Scenery of the Lower Hudson Valley* writes:

The Hudson is consequently the quintessential North American example. The interplay of attitudes and ideas about mountainous riverscapes in nineteenth-century America unfolded most dramatically in the lower valley. The period guidebooks touted this region as “nature’s greatest panorama.” It was an integral part of any “Grand Tour,” birthplace of the nation’s first school of landscape painting, and home of successive generations of aristocratic and landed patrons of culture and

conservation. That section of the valley characterized by mountainous or highland topography was visually accessible to the greatest number of travelers and was universally agreed to be a prime source of aesthetic inspiration and national pride.⁵

The second generation of Hudson River School painters, including Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900), who studied with Cole, John Frederick Kensett (1816–1872), Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823–1880), Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) and others, continued the tradition but also added elements of their own. Their most significant works were painted in the period 1855–75 and, as the railways moved west, so did the artists, adding images such as the Grand Canyon and Yosemite to their repertoire. Their style has been described as “American Sublime.” In the twentieth century, art historians coined another term – Luminism – to describe their work, which is characterized by the effects of light on landscapes, and also by the quality of the brushstrokes, which were so fine as to be invisible. Light literally glows in these landscapes. Cloudy skies and water were depicted in this way as well as fog and mist.⁶ In this, they were following in the footsteps of Turner.

With respect to the development of a Western Canadian landscape tradition, the Rockies and the Kootenay Ranges became as iconic as the Hudson River region, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite in the United States.⁷ These ranges inspired the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) artists under the patronage of American railroad builder Cornelius Van Horne, who became the General Manager of the CPR on January 2, 1882.⁸ As Van Horne’s managerial and financial prowess grew (he became vice president in 1884 and, finally, president, in 1888), so did his power to authorize passes and reduced fares, and also to influence the artists whom he selected and promoted.⁹

The artists who were given passes included painters, photographers, and illustrators of books and magazines. These included John A. Fraser (1838–1898), Lucius O’Brien (1832–1899), John Forbes (1846–1925), William Brymner (1885–1925), Edward Roper (1832–1904), Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith (1846–1923), Marmaduke Matthews (1837–1913), Thomas Mower Martin (1838–1934), Forshaw Day (1837–1903), and Albert Bierstadt. Van Horne also envisioned the Banff Springs Hotel and Chateau Lake Louise to encourage wealthy visitors to visit and experience wild nature without sacrificing the comforts of home.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON TAYLOR

Mabel Gass was Taylor's first teacher and certainly inspired him to continue his art education but, in Taylor's own mind, it was Frank Vincent DuMond who helped to shape him as an artist. At the time when DuMond received his own art education, the pre-eminent American landscape painters had been influenced by the first and second generation of the Hudson River School. His studies in France exposed him to Impressionism, which defines his mature style. In a short overview of his work likely written for a grant proposal, Taylor wrote about his evolution as an artist as follows:

I was fortunate to have had Frank V. DuMond of N.Y.C., to instruct me in the fundamentals of art and thinking. It was this kind of analysis of nature, the use of mind and eye that gave the ground to plan and develop.

The years at the Ontario College of Art gave me the opportunity to experiment and work out many problems I had been able to pursue during the war.

More serious work began on arrival at the University of Alberta. The further development of the landscape was made even more exciting by the fact that my teaching commitments took me all over Alberta, Northern B.C. and the Northwest Territories. The exposure to the many and varied areas made it necessary for me to familiarize myself with this land. I attended classes in Geology under Dr. Warren for two sessions and made use of the maps and photos of all the areas of specific interest. Drawings, field sketches and experimental works gave more freedom to explore new areas of composition on a two dimensional surface. Work between 1948 and 1955 concentrated largely on the visual world with specific structural changes. At that point I was experimenting with structure and light.

DuMond gave Taylor a thorough grounding in composition and perspective, both critical to landscape painting. He is quoted in the catalogue of a tribute exhibit on his retirement from the Art Students League of New York as follows:

"I like to paint in Vermont because of the great space there," he explains, "I don't like 'picturesque' places with lobster pots and nets and cork floats hanging all

around. It's the light in the sky that gives the earth its meaning, not an inventory list of objects. To find the motif for your picture – that's the thing. The motif. And that is what space, and weather, and light help you find. These are the universal things, and when you can paint them so they will have universal appeal, you can call yourself an artist...

“And I don't mean just copying them, either. Why all this fuss about 'copying' nature? Nobody can copy anything anyway. It's like trying to whistle a symphony. Cezanne had the right word when he said art is a harmony parallel to the harmony of nature. It is a parallel. But still a painting must have universal appeal.”¹⁰

Taylor did not study art history initially. His training was in the studio and in nature. DuMond provided Taylor with a thorough grounding in *plein air* painting, a staple of American painting summer schools on the eastern seaboard. This was representational but also shaped by the artist's vision. It was the structure in nature as well as effects of light that DuMond emphasized to his students. DuMond was passing on what he had learned within the American landscape tradition at the Art Students League of New York and his studies in Paris that exposed him to Impressionism. Choice of subject matter was crucial and artists faced the difficulty of how to represent the enormity of what they saw without, at the same time, appearing to tame or diminish nature. They thus tended to paint in multiples, simply because the landscapes were so extensive and a slight shift in perspective provided a whole new set of opportunities.¹¹ Frequently, they were not exact replications of a real scene but, rather, composites based on observation and reflection in the studio.

From his first encounter with the Rockies, Taylor was aware of the problem of composition and of the necessity of choosing from the rich landscape before him to find the right subject matter for a specific painting. Among the works left in his studio is a large panel, which he used for teaching purposes. He has sketched a mountain scene (perhaps a Lake O'Hara scene) on it. What is interesting is that he has created oblong “frames” around specific elements of the landscape such as rocks and trees, scree and boulders, the mountain-top and transition to sky. These were all possible compositions.

Simplistically stated, there are typically four elements represented in a mountain landscape: rock, vegetation, water, and sky. It is the juxtaposition of these elements, as well as their depiction in the fore, middle, or background that comprises the composition of a painting. It is the composition, as well as effects of colour, that engage the viewer and provide a link to the subject matter.



Fig. 40: J. B. Taylor, teaching painting, *Alpine Meadows*, 1953, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

There are various established techniques for juxtaposing the elements of the landscape. These include the use of mirroring (mountains reflected in a clear lake); “V” composition or inverted “V” in which the focal point is in the immediate foreground or at the apex of the picture (e.g., a mountain peak); as well as the “X” in which the point of interest is in the centre of the picture. Taylor used all of these techniques, which in his own words comprise the “structure” of a painting, and avoided the detail of rock or tree in the mid-foreground, which typified the work of other painters. Composition for Taylor was, thus, the work of “mind and eye.”

The other element that he learned from DuMond is the importance of light. As has been noted, this was a characteristic of Sublime art. Light is no longer simply an aspect of weather and/or seasonal change. It becomes a central aspect of the painting that draws the viewer’s eye and, for believers in the nineteenth century, demonstrates a divine presence. God is the light in the landscape, and the effect is reminiscent of Baroque works in which a funnel of light is used to illuminate the face of Christ, martyrs, and saints. While Taylor was a churchgoer, at least in his upbringing and the early years at the University of Alberta when he and his wife sang in a

church choir, he was not a nineteenth-century Christian seeing God in nature. The divine he saw in the landscape was in the nature of pantheism. The mountains for him were not only evidence of geology and geomorphology but also the spirit. It is significant that he chose to have his ashes scattered near Lake O'Hara.

THE SUBLIME MOUNTAINS

Taylor began to implement his learnings in mountain pictures almost immediately. However, there is a difference in Taylor's paintings from the nineteenth-century landscape artists of the American eastern seaboard, including DuMond. Taylor's colour palette is that of the northwest region of the Canadian west. The tree species are montagne/boreal forest; they are not the deciduous trees of the Hudson River region. In comparison, the Taylor paintings appear sombre; however, the impact of light, whether filtering through mist in the sky or reflected from water or glacial ice, still suggests the sacred in the landscape. These early works are reminiscent of the CPR artists.¹²

In the picture titled *Mountain Top*, dated 1949 (oil on canvas, 40.64 x 50.8 cm, private collection), grey rocks in the right foreground lead the eye to a V-shaped view of pale blue clouds and sky at the inter-crossing of two mountain peaks. The wash of light can be seen outlining rocks and mountains depicted in shades of creamy white, grey, and grey-blues. *Cloudy Day – Near Banff* (1949, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) depicts in the foreground rocks and trees, but the eye is drawn to mountain peaks bathed in a wash of light culminating in a back-lit cloudy sky. *Moraine Lake* (undated, likely ca. 1949, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) makes use of mist on a cloudy day to draw attention to snow/glacier ice in the middle of the composition.

A similar effect is achieved in *Valley of Seven [sic Ten] Peaks* [also known as *Moraine Lake*] (undated, ca. 1950–51, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # 1984.154.001). In this picture, in the lower middle-ground, a sliver of lake can be seen. An *Untitled* [likely Lake O'Hara] picture (1952, oil on canvas board, 46.99 x 55.88 cm, private collection) makes use of pines forming an inverted V formation to draw the eye to a V gap in a mountain range. Another *Untitled* picture [also known as *Smooth Rock*] (undated, ca. 1952, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96, private collection) uses a V composition with rocks in the foreground and misty mountain peaks in the background. *Marble Canyon* (1954, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) depicts boulders in close-up with light reflecting off the fall of water.



Fig. 41: J. B. Taylor, *Mountain Top*, 1949, oil on canvas, 40.64 x 50.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 42: J. B. Taylor, *Cloudy Day - Near Banff*, 1949, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 43: J. B. Taylor, *Moraine Lake*, undated, ca. 1949, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 44: J. B. Taylor, *Valley of Seven [sic Ten] Peaks [also Moraine Lake]*, undated, ca. 1950–51, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # 1984.154.001.

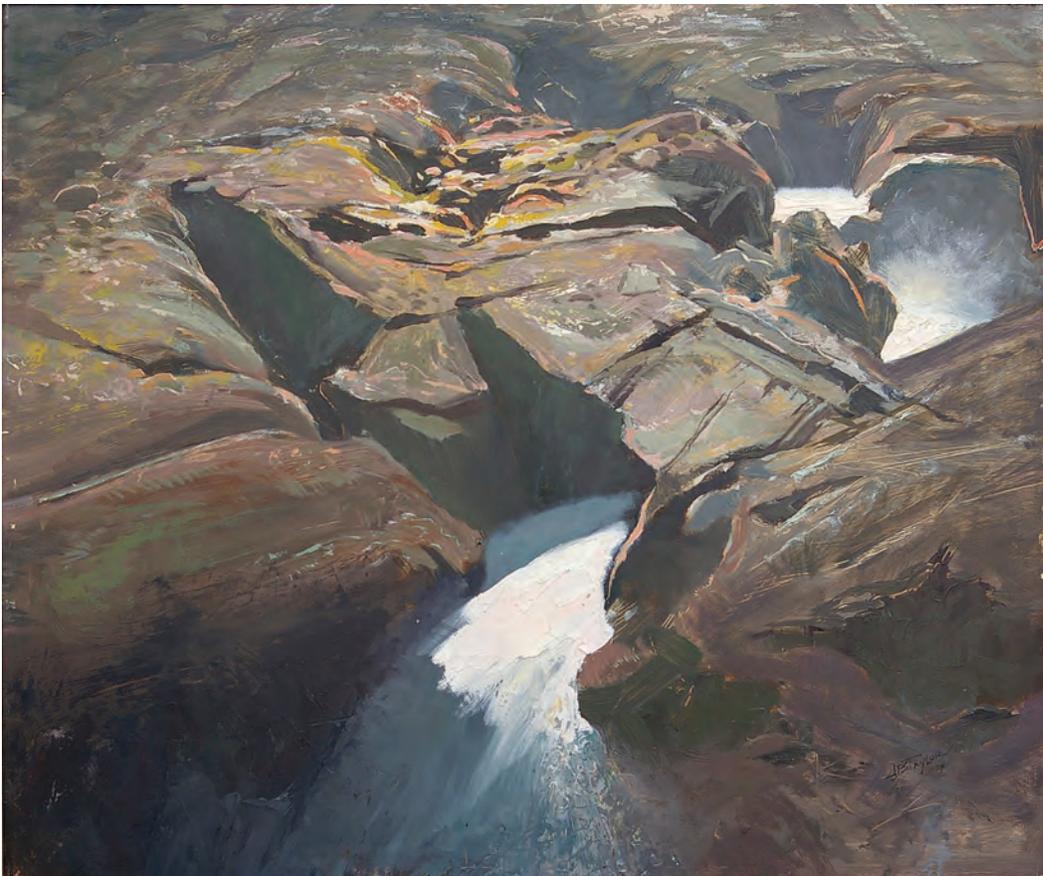
Fig. 45: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [likely Lake O'Hara]*, 1952, oil on canvas board, 46.99 x 55.88 cm, Private collection.





Fig. 46: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [also known as Smooth Rock]*, undated, ca. 1952, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 47: J. B. Taylor, *Marble Canyon*, 1954, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



In *Above Lake O'Hara* (1953, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), the light on the surface of the rocks contrasts with the pyramid-shaped mountain peak surrounded by threatening clouds. Depiction of the ice in *Columbia Ice Fields* (1952, oil on masonite, 48.9 x 59.06 cm, private collection) serves a similar function as the light on the rock and provides a contrast to the underlying rock fragments and the mountain walls above fronted by wisps of cloud. There is no doubt about the elevation and the lack of vegetation in these high mountain reaches. The illuminated rocks in the foreground, covered in lichen and mosses, contrast with the jagged mauve peaks and skeletal fir trees thrusting into the sky in *Near Sunshine* [likely Simpson Pass] (1952, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection).

While Taylor did field sketching with his students, he himself did very few *plein air* sketches or studies. In the family holdings, there are black and white photographs typical of the time, but these were merely *aide-mémoires*. Taylor captured mountain scenes in his visual memory and then created a composition that was pleasing to him. Having said this, the location, whether stated in the title of the work or inferred by the viewer, is recognizable. To echo his own description of his work, it focuses on structure, mind, and eye. It was the “idea of mountains” that he was presenting, their innate nature as well as the primary elements of rocks, water, vegetation, and sky. While realistic, these compositions are not photographic representations and were not meant to be. They are highly atmospheric mood paintings and provide an imaginative journey for those who have climbed these high places and been intimidated by their vastness.

The year 1958 is important because it saw the beginnings of a transition to abstraction. The encounter with John Piper's work, during his sabbatical year in London in 1955–56, had to be processed by Taylor and adapted to meet his own needs and artistic expression. Mature works of this first period begin to suggest mountains and are transition works to his later style. This is evident in the work simply titled *Mountain* (1958, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection). It is not a specific mountain but rather a kind of mountain archetype. His palette is shades of grey, white, blue, and pink, used to depict a rugged, snowy peak bathed in a pearly light. He is moving from the painting of a specific scene into the depiction of the essence of mountains as geological entities or constructs.

Other paintings also reflect this change in style. *Glacier 58* (1958, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) focuses on a square cut-way of a glacier. The artist actually frames the glacial ice in a square of dark rock. The whites, blues, greys, and pinks depict the texture of the ice with the white and pale-blue elements being the focus of the light in the picture. *Glacier 58* is also a good example of the shift away from more representational work. The palette is much darker and the rock serves to frame the glacial ice, drawing the eye into the rock interior. In



Fig. 48: J. B. Taylor, *Above Lake O'Hara*, 1953, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 49: J. B. Taylor, *Columbia Ice Fields*, 1952, oil on masonite, 48.9 x 59.06 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 50: J. B. Taylor, *Near Sunshine [Simpson Pass]*, 1952, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 51:
J. B. Taylor,
Mountain,
1958, oil on
masonite,
50.8 x 60.96
cm, Private
collection.



these works, Taylor, a teacher of composition and master of form and perspective, uses positive and negative space or, in other terms, colour or the absence of colour, to evoke landscape. Black suggests positive space and the shades of white and blue-green suggest negative space. Thus, natural forms are evoked rather than represented.

In this period, Taylor struggled with colour – the dark shades of granite and the muddy-green of pine cover on some mountains proved challenging, and there are a number of works held by the family on which he wrote “not to be exhibited or sold.” *Ice Age Rock #6-59* (1959, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) is an interesting work in that the palette is mostly black with only a limited use of white, which is specked with black. What is intriguing about this work is texture, achieved through using the end of his brush to scrape and gouge the paint to show the rock striations. In this painting, he demonstrated that not just colour or its absence but also form and texture could be used to suggest natural forms. I believe that this



Fig. 52: J. B. Taylor, *Glacier* 58, 1958, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 53: J. B. Taylor, *Ice Age Rock #6-59*, 1959, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 54: J. B. Taylor, *Glacier* [also known as *Mountain Wall*], 1958, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 55: J. B. Taylor, *Valley of the Ten Peaks*, 1959, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.





Fig. 56: J. B. Taylor, *Columbia Icefield*, 1960, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 57: J. B. Taylor, *Lake McArthur*, 1960, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 58: J. B. Taylor, *Above Lake O'Hara*, 1961, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 1984.19. Alma Mater Art Acquisitions Fund; Community Special Projects Fund.

Fig. 59: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [Mountain Scene]*, 1961, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 60: J. B. Taylor, *Lake Oesa II*, 1961, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 61: J. B. Taylor, *Lake McArthur # III #19*, 1961, oil on masonite, 51.27 x 67 cm, Private collection.

freed him from his earlier representational work and enabled him to see not only the surface of things but also a deeper spirituality suggested by the age of the rocks, glaciers, and icefields that he painted.

In *Glacier*, also known as *Mountain Wall* (1958, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), Taylor focuses on the depiction of the glacier itself, using white pigment to show the flow of ice. *Valley of the Ten Peaks* (1959, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) depicts in a subdued palette of whites, greys, and beige rock and ice, a hanging valley. The picture suggests mountains but they are not identifiable.

A series of other works, including *Columbia Icefield* (1960, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), *Lake McArthur* (1960, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), and *Above Lake O'Hara* (1961, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 1984.19), all show mountains and glaciers simplified to their essential forms.

It is difficult to draw a hard line with respect to Taylor's evolution as an artist at a particular year, but it is clear that around 1961–62 his paintings began to change significantly. It was as if he had reached the limit of his desire to depict mountain landscapes in a realistic though stylized fashion so that his subject matter could be located in a particular place. Using his own words, he, in a sense, had reached the limit of depiction using the “eye” as a camera lens. He was moving inward and focussing on the mind, and its perception of mountains, in other words, the “idea of mountains.” He also began his exploration of acrylic and mixed media, and this was to have a far-reaching impact on his art.

In three 1961 works – *Untitled* [mountain scene] (1961, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), *Lake Oesa II* (1961, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) and *Lake McArthur #III #19* (oil on masonite, 51.27 x 67 cm, private collection) – he uses these techniques to show the massed forms of rocks that comprise mountains. The pictures have an almost three-dimensional quality through the depiction of the planes of rock surfaces. Again, the palette is black, off-white, grey, and blue-green. *Lake McArthur* is significant because he has used a palette knife to scrape some of the paint from the surface, a technique perhaps suggested by the scouring action of glacial ice on rock, which he observed in the mountains. In these paintings, he was still working with oil on canvas or masonite.

4 | Mountain Pictures: The Abstract Period (1962 to 1970)

EVOLUTION OF HIS LATER STYLE AND VISION

With respect to Taylor's mature style in the last eight years of his life, the seeds were sown in 1955–56 during his sabbatical year in London. He heard the pre-eminent British art historian of the time – E. H. Gombrich lecture.¹ Gombrich exposed Taylor to leading-edge thinking about artistic creation and public perception of art. In his library, Taylor has Gombrich's *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*.² The book was based on the A. W. Mellon Lectures in Fine Arts that Gombrich delivered at the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., in spring 1956 under the title "The Visible World and the Language of Art." In his introduction to the book, Gombrich notes that he had given variants of these lectures during his tenure as Slade Professor at Oxford University and in presentations to various institutions of the University of London. Taylor heard him deliver some or all of these lectures when he was at the Slade.

Through Gombrich's lectures and published work, Taylor became more aware, not only of the broad scope of the Western artistic tradition and role of individual artists, but also of the psychological motivations and perceptions of both the artist and the viewer. The book looks at the long history of representational art from multiple perspectives at a time when non-representational art began its ascendance, at least in the United States. Taylor could not but be affected by this. The exposure to Gombrich's sophisticated and complex thinking provided him with a larger framework within which to view not only his teaching but also his own artistic creation. In his Introduction titled "Psychology and the Riddle of Style," Gombrich writes:

Why is it that different ages and different nations have represented the visible world in such different ways? Will the paintings we accept as true to life look as unconvincing to future generations as Egyptian paintings look to us? Is everything

concerned with art entirely subjective, or are there objective standards in such matters? If there are, if the methods taught in the life class today result in more faithful imitations of nature than the conventions adopted by the Egyptians, why did the Egyptians fail to adopt them? Is it possible, as our cartoonist hints [the first illustration in the chapter is a *New Yorker* cartoon by Alain, 1955, showing an Egyptian art class painting an image of a Cleopatra-like naked women in a flat, hieroglyphic-like pose], that they perceived nature in a different way? Would not such a variability of artistic vision also help us to explain the bewildering images created by contemporary artists?³

In “Part Four: Invention and Discovery,” Gombrich writes:

The theoretical origins of pictorial illusionism are to be found among the Renaissance champions of perspective. It was Alberti who first suggested the idea of considering a painting as a window through which we look at the visible world. It was Leonardo da Vinci who gave substance to this idea by suggesting that “perspective is nothing else than seeing a place behind a pane of glass, quite transparent, on the surface of which the objects behind the glass are to be drawn.”⁴

It is clear that Taylor reflected on this and realized that his own art was of the “window into the natural world” type. This is borne out by colleague Allison Forbes, who stated in an interview:

Jack taught students who took art history as an “Arts option.” Students benefited from being taught by a practicing artist who understood spatial relationships and perspective. Jack taught both art history and studio for the B.A. in Fine Arts. He was interested in Philosophy of Art and the distinction between theoretical/historical/practical. Glyde was suspicious of art historians who couldn’t paint and that’s why he hired painters.

Taylor’s stay in London became a rich resource for discussion with colleagues. Forbes also noted that he, Taylor, and other colleagues would discuss these issues:

I had discussions about art theory with Jack. Jack was affected by the idea that an artist who dealt with depth was chasing up the wrong road – he saw an emerging emphasis on the canvas as flat – the artist didn't need to “punch a hole” through it. These ideas were coming from the States and were written up in magazines.

Jack painted at a “transition point” – from hole in the wall to flat canvas – he no longer expected the viewer to look through the frame into another world. The modernists recognized this as an illusion – just paint on the canvas; the relationship is around the canvas. Taylor gave up on “atmospheric space” that traditional artists created.

We discussed these issues a lot because of our teaching not as art historians but, rather, as practicing artists. Jack was seeing what others were doing and how this affected his own work. Jack's problem was simply how to resolve “deep space as an illusion” with “no space/flat surface with organized colour.” He had a “lower key colour” than others – he worked with tones (which also related to space – the tool of dimensionality).

Through these discussions, Taylor was not only able to refine his teaching but also, ultimately, to re-shape his art. It was not theory alone that helped him to do this; it was also the exposure to the work of contemporary English artists. Taylor acknowledged this in an interview with Leonard Stahl for the *Edmonton Free Press*. In an article titled “Personality of the Week,” January 24, 1962, Stahl focuses on Taylor's landscapes and observes that it took the artist as much as a hundred hours to complete works such as *Lake O'Hara* and *Wenkchemna Pass*. Of his trip to London, Stahl writes:

He describes it as a “most rewarding experience.” Although the galleries in London appealed to him primarily, he enjoyed the London operas and theatre.

Among the outstanding artists he has met are Henry Moore, the noted English Sculptor; Dr. E. H. Gombrich, art historian and connoisseur, author of such books as the recent “Art, An Illusion [*sic*],” and “The Story of Art”; J. B. Ward-Perkins, director of the British School in Rome; and such famous English painters as Edward Bawden, John Piper, John Sutherland, Francis Bacon and William Scott.⁵

In his late essay, “Development of My Work,” Taylor observes:

Sabbatical leave in England in 1955 and 1956 made it possible to go back to figure drawing, graphics and sculpture, and to re-evaluate what I had been doing up to that time. Discussion with artists William Scott, Edward Bawden, Wm Townsend and others helped considerably to assess some of my ideas.

My sense is that Taylor probably concluded that his work to date, viewed in a British context, was merely pretty landscapes and realistic portraits, not “modern” as, for example, Bacon’s work was, or that of John Piper (1903–1992). It was Piper’s work that would introduce new subject matter to Taylor’s work, that is, Italian pictures. But Piper also influenced Taylor stylistically, not just in terms of the Italian pictures, but also with respect to the later mountain pictures. Piper at the time was an established artist known for his paintings of the English landscape with a focus on buildings (particularly churches) and architectural detail. What intrigued Taylor was the way in which Piper worked the ground of his paintings, suggesting, through the layering of paint, the impact of time on old building surfaces. Piper uses sepia and other earth-tones, and superimposes on them, in a linear “cartoon” style, architectural elements that suggest rather than represent the building.

Taylor, in his basement studio, had a Piper image on a bulletin board that includes a range of other materials that interested him. The Piper work is titled *Seaton Delaval* and, according to son Christopher, comes from a British Information Services Calendar (date unknown). The painting is in the collection of the Tate Gallery, London, and Taylor may have seen it or others like it. The Tate description of the picture states:

N05748 – The baroque castle of Seaton Delaval, Northumberland, was built by John Vanbrugh between 1718 and 1729 and destroyed by fire in 1822. Piper visited the castle in 1941. He had previously made records of major buildings in anticipation of their destruction through bombing or modernisation. He had also recorded bomb-damage, and found parallels between the ruined castle and these recent subjects. The image seems to be both a nostalgic lament for a lost time and a statement about the present. Piper described the castle’s colouring as “ochre and flame licked red, pock-marked and stained ... incredibly up-to-date: very much of our times.”⁶



Fig. 62: John Piper, *Seaton Delaval*, 1941, oil on canvas laid down on plywood, 71.1 x 88.3 cm, Tate Gallery, London, NO 5748. Copyright Tate, London 2013.

To the end of his life, Taylor would go on to produce wonderful Italian pictures inspired by Piper. However, it would be the worked ground of Piper's paintings that he would redefine to represent mountain landscapes and geological time.

By 1960, Taylor had also become fascinated by the new acrylic paints used by contemporary American artists such as Morris Louis (1912–1962) and Friedel Dzubas (1915–1994). In the desire to add texture and flow to his work, in the 1940s, Jackson Pollock had used industrial oil and resin-based enamels to drip colour onto canvas laid down on the floor. It was Leonard Bocour and his nephew Sam Golden who developed and marketed the first artist acrylic paints, known as Magna Paints, in 1947. These continued to be improved and were reformulated in the 1960s.⁷ Magna paints were pigments ground into an acrylic resin with solvents such as turpentine or mineral spirits. It was thus dangerous to use them in an enclosed space. Modern acrylics are water-based. Magna paints dried quickly and could have either a matte or glossy finish.

Taylor began to experiment with acrylics and, since his basement studio is essentially as he left it, the remnants of paints that he used are still there. These include: Liquitex; gesso; emulsion – water-based, Cincinnati, Ohio; acrylic emulsion colours, e.g., ultramarine; Golden sample acrylics, regular gel; Alphacolour (dry pigments – whole range of them); oil pastels; Reeves – fine powder colours; tempera, damar picture varnish; Aquatec Polymer Medium, General Paint Corp; Talens painter; Grumbacher Stand Oil; Rembrandt Retarding Medium – acrylic – Talens; 2-ethyhexyl acetate; Demonstration Kit – all oils; Rhoplex – Maxwell Artists Materials, Vancouver (a binder for acrylic paint).⁸ He also kept the promotional brochures provided by manufacturers of acrylic paints that hyped their products. The Talens paints booklet notes:

Acrylic colours are the realization of the ideal of pure colour. They offer the technical possibilities of all other traditional types of colour methods. Rembrandt acrylic colours can be used on practically any surface and they can be used in combination with other materials. They allow the artist virtually unlimited freedom. As an added advantage, acrylic colours have a number of obvious practical qualities. All this thanks to a binder developed by a modern chemical industry.⁹

Royal Talens, a Dutch company founded in 1899, made oil and acrylic paints, watercolours, pastels, and pencils and had an agent in Montreal. Taylor cultivated a close relationship with the company and, in May, 1970, Randy Koenig, a representative, came to Edmonton with supplies for Taylor's art classes in Dawson Creek.¹⁰ Colleague and friend Robert Sinclair observed in an interview that Taylor had a "big lump of plastic on his desk. He anticipated by 10–15 years the gel work of later acrylic painters." In a letter to Christopher Taylor, Sinclair writes:

What was so very interesting about Jack's paintings at that time was his attempt to create actual textures on his painting surfaces of his ice/glacier series. Oil painting can only have so much texture projecting out from the surface because of the greater drying time needed for the oil paint to dry out. Because it takes so long (months) there is a tendency for the painted surface to sag and stretch. Acrylic on the other hand being water soluble dries quickly by evaporation – hardens faster and holds its shape.¹¹

Norman Yates also provides insight into their experimentation with acrylics:

I started off by making my own acrylics. I was excessively interested in this new medium. I couldn't get paints so I made my own – emulsion mixed with pigments. I had to order five-gallon tubs. I got Liquitex pigments – ground them up as I did with oil paints. I made quite a lot of experimental paintings. I still have one or two of those. With the evolution of acrylics, we lost the oil paint and original acrylic odors – heavy with turpentine. It took a long time to find various mediums that would work. I once experimented with a highly-volatile solution – my wife couldn't stand the smell and I stopped using it.

Son Christopher (in some notes prepared for the author) remembers how his father worked in this period:

My father's use of acrylic paint probably began around 1960 with the introduction of acrylic paints. He used Liquitex paints to my knowledge, but may have used others. He used acrylic gesso in both a standard consistency for masonite support preparation, and also in a thicker, sculptable consistency on masonite support for the more textured works. But for many of the large mountain and Italian works Bondfast glue or Rhoplex was used to create a textured surface on a canvas board or masonite support.

By no means did all mountain works employ this textural treatment.

I remember watching him at work in his home studio on many occasions. Sometimes he'd be beginning the preparation of the masonite support by pouring from a one-gallon jug of Bondfast glue onto the rough side of the masonite which would either be gessoed or raw. He'd put as much on as needed and, if it was a mountain painting, occasionally mix in some fine sawdust or sand. If it was an Italian work, he might also add some collage of gold or silver-coloured paper taken from a gift box. After a while it would be dry enough to score with a tool, a palette knife, wood end of a brush, Exacto knife or leather-working tool, etc. I believe, at least for the works I saw at this stage of their production, the masonite may already

have had some preliminary drawing, colour and light texture already present (I'm sure he painted over older discarded works).

I'd usually ask "What'cha painting Dad?" or "When'll it be finished Dad?" and he'd reply, "a glacier" or "I haven't decided yet," or words to that effect. He didn't usually talk much as he was painting so I'd stand and watch him for a while. He would deftly mix the colours on the palette (he used a cabinet with a pull-out glass palette in his home studio) and using different brushes for different purposes, apply some paint in a decisive way, stand back, take a puff on his cigarette, use the diminishing glass or the mirror to check scale, proportion (even for abstract works) and continue. I saw him work in both oils in the early days – the smell of turpentine and linseed oil heavy in the air – and acrylics later on. He installed an exhaust fan in his small studio to vent all the toxic fumes and cigarette smoke.

Larger works were laid flat on a table. Interestingly, Kronos Canada Inc., Varennes, Quebec, a Canadian manufacturer of acrylic commercial paints, beginning in 1971, acquired Taylor's painting *Opabin Pass* and reproduced it with the following description:

We live in a wonderfully technical era. We are reminded of this as, at our Varennes, Quebec plant, we watch coal-black titanium slag undergo its transformation into brilliantly white titanium dioxide pigment, whose refractive index is higher than that of diamonds. We are conscious of it, too, in the diverse technologies of the industries to whose products our "TITANOX" contributes whiteness, opacity, and color brightness.

This is a technical time, and it is also an expressive one. Color itself, and color in countless manufactured products, expands almost everyone's means of expression.

J. B. Taylor's "Opabin Pass" is the last of a series of sixteen paintings with which, over four years, we have illustrated our advertisements. We have sought, through the genius and sensitivity of the sixteen painters, to probe the world of color in which you – and we – participate as humans and as professional practitioners. We hope you have enjoyed, with us, this exploratory journey.¹²

Taylor's experimentation with a new medium resulted in innovation in his art. He was able to use acrylics to create the textured and patterned ground of his later mountain paintings. He was not always pleased with what he painted. Sometimes the colour palette did not please him (there are a series of green and muddy brown works among those he rejected); while with other paintings there is a failure to achieve the forms and texture that he desired. The acrylic medium was difficult to work with and, eventually, he used Bondfast glue (acrylic polyvinyl adhesive) as a substrate on which he added texture through the use of sand or sawdust. He then worked the ground with the ends of paintbrushes and other sharp tools, reminiscent of the engraver's burin, thereby adding pattern. While his study of etching and sculpture at the Slade did not result in his producing works in these media, both influenced his later work in the textured and sculpted surface of some mountain paintings.

David Cantine noted in an interview that Taylor's second sabbatical year, 1966, was a transitional year for him:

I remember a dinner at the Oliver Steak House Restaurant where Jack told me that he could turn his pictures upside down and that they still worked. I rejected this and Jack remained quiet. I regretted not letting him continue to explain the change in his work. When he started talking about turning pictures around, he was feeling the impact of formalism – line/colour/shape/value/contrast – if you are looking at that, then, you are no longer looking at the iconography. I believe that Jack was trying to adopt abstraction and formalism into his work, which was already very successful.

In the late 1950s, as has been seen in the previous section, Taylor had already begun to move from the representation of mountains and glaciers from a distance. Exploring the new non-representational aesthetic, and observing the way in which Piper suggested aged buildings and walls, stimulated his own artistic development. These influences can be outlined, but, ultimately, it was the way in which Taylor processed these concepts and techniques to make them his own that resulted in the breakthrough in his work. Taylor wrote in "Development of My Work":

1961 to 1969: This period illustrates the fundamental change of structure in my landscape series. Working larger, because of idea and concept change, the final work

became semi-abstract in form and stronger in its ability to illustrate the structure in nature.

The value of study tours in Europe, and U.S.A. during this time is of course invaluable. The awareness of the change in other artists' work, and the reason for these changes is of utmost importance for the artist working in a rather isolated area. This has enriched my understanding of the new forms of art today.¹³

No one at the time, or since, has created mountain landscapes as he did. Basically, he moved into abstraction without losing representational form. To return to his own words for describing his work – “analysis of nature, the use of mind and eye,” in this last phase of his mountain painting, it is the mind that directs the eye and it is the “idea of mountains” that triumphs.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the discussions that Taylor had with his friend and fellow university professor Charlie Stelck had sensitized him to what might be described as the “inner life” of mountains. Stelck was born in the same year as Taylor, and they had offices next to each other on the top floor of the Arts Building and, according to Stelck, they had conversations about each other's work. Stelck became an award-winning petroleum geologist, paleontologist, and stratigrapher. Their discussions prompted Taylor to take geology courses from Professor Warren. In an interview with the author, Stelck noted:

The Rockies that Jack painted are not Colorado or Nevada. These have nothing to do with the glaciated canyons of our mountains, which are chewed up rock. Taylor had to fight against the “Swiss-style” mountain paintings. When he got his own route, separate from Glyde, he followed it through. He became knowledgeable about how to paint that particular geophysical construct. He painted shale and other rocks as they were.¹⁴

An application for funding provides some insight into Taylor's late working methodology. He completed an application, dated December 16, 1969, for a grant from the university's General Research Fund for “Summer 1970 Research Project” in the amount of \$2,000 for six months' work on the project. A painting field trip is described in bureaucratic language: “To collect specific visual material of glacier terminus, and study geological structures.” His proposed itinerary is as follows:

- (a) 4 days Mt. Baker area, specifically (i) Chowder Ridge and (ii) Coleman Glacier Terminus
- (b) 4 days Garibaldi National Park, B.C.: North Foot of Mt. Garibaldi Terminal Glacier
- (c) 5 days Garibaldi National Park: East Mt. Sir Richard, via Lillooet and Spetch [Creek]
- (d) 4 days Department of Fine Arts, University of British Columbia for collating material

He also describes his materials:

Both oil and acrylic pigments are required to complete these studies. Canvas panels, specially prepared masonite panels with planned textured surface, canvas paper, assorted heavy drawing papers. All of these surfaces will assist in exploring various methods of representing glacial forms. Drawings in line, line and wash, surface stain and direct painting should give ample opportunity to record the geological structure of these ice fields. 35 MM film to be used to make further records of line, texture, colour and mass, and to deal with “light” in terms of environment and time of day.

I have consulted the following in terms for specific information e.g. contour and geological maps. Dr. J. A. Jacobs, Faculty of Science, Department of Geography, University of Alberta. Research and Exploration National Geography society and Smithsonian Institute Washington D.C., Department of Lands and Forests, Vancouver and Department of Fine Arts, U.B.C.¹⁵

The application sets out the close observation of natural forms that had been Taylor’s *modus operandi*. In the last years of his life, it was as if he stood directly in front of the rock face and glacier and interpreted what he saw. He had come to understand that “a part could represent a whole” – a weathered rock surface could represent a mountain, and a section of glacial ice could represent an icefield. He had broken out of the realistic landscape tradition and moved into abstraction.

MOUNTAIN ABSTRACTIONS

He was fascinated by the surface tension of ice and snow and the composition that surfaces create when they expand and contract. He was very excited by the prospect of his journeys to and from the mountains. It was as if he had waited a lifetime to

explore their visual elements with the eye of the philosopher. He was the professor about to burst out of his enclave, on the cusp of a great discovery of understanding. (Wallis Kendal, student in 1968, artist)

Glaciers and icefields dominated Taylor's imagination in the last years of his life. It was the experimentation with acrylics that enabled Taylor to make the final shift to abstraction that largely represented his mature work culminating in 1968 when his production was astounding. The shift is reflected in the fact that many of these paintings do not have a title that links them to a specific location. They are simply numbered "compositions." Three works in 1963–64 demonstrate his experimentation with mixed media. These are *Lake McArthur No. 7* (1963, acrylic and thick gesso on canvas, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc #1984.134.001), *Landscape* (1963, acrylic and oil on canvas, 71.1 x 86.4 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta Acc #65.1), *Composition #4 '64* (1964, acrylic on masonite, 61 x 76.2 cm, private collection) and *Composition No. VII '64* (1964, acrylic on canvas, 60.96 x 91.4 cm, private collection). The quick-drying properties of acrylic paint enabled him to layer it thickly and to work the ground. He did this using not only the brush itself but also the wooden tip and a palette knife. This impasto technique allows him to show the rough surface of mountain rock faces as well as glacial ice. In terms of the colour palette, while using black and white flecked with black (suggesting the inclusions of rock matter in ice), he also introduces blue-greens. These colours suggest the sedimentation found in some Rocky Mountain lakes that give them their unique presence. The blue-green or aquamarine colours become markers in his later works. The AGA painting is interesting not only because it mixes acrylic and oil paints but also because the paint, in certain areas, is "compromised," requiring conservation treatment. Thus, not all experiments with the new media were successful.

In *Composition #3* (1964, acrylic on masonite, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, private collection), it is clear that this is a whole new way of presenting landscapes. The painting suggests rock masses through a muted palette of greys, white, and aquamarine. The blocks of rock and glacial ice have a three-dimensional quality. Taylor shows the impact of light by outlining the blocks with white flecked with black. It is these touches that balance the heaviness and weight of the rock and provide a sense of the spiritual and transcendent.

While continuing to explore the effects of layering of acrylic paint in later works, he would also use acrylics in a wash technique. In these paintings, he uses texture as an accent on only a portion of the painting field. It is as if he had moved back from the rock or glacier face and could



Fig. 63:
J. B. Taylor,
Lake McArthur
No. 7, 1963,
acrylic and
thick gesso
on canvas,
60.96 x 76.2
cm, Alberta
Foundation for
the Arts Acc #
1984.134.001.



Fig. 64:
J. B. Taylor,
Landscape, 1963,
acrylic and
oil on canvas,
71.1 x 86.4 cm,
Art Gallery of
Alberta Acc #65.1.

Fig. 65: J.
B. Taylor,
Composition #4
'64, 1964, acrylic
on masonite,
60.96 x 76.2 cm,
Private collection.



Fig. 66: J.
B. Taylor,
Composition No.
VII '64, 1964,
acrylic on canvas,
60.96 x 91.4 cm,
Private collection.



see the inherent form but not the whole. It is interesting that he regularly used a quizzing glass (or monocle), both in his teaching and in his painting, and was aware of the effects on perspective when looking at the real thing or at it through different levels of magnification.

When looking at the Oesa series, for example *Untitled, Oesa #1* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), the canvas is brighter, almost ethereal, but the elements of stone, glacial ice, and water are evident. In *Oesa #2*, also known as *Ice Caves* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 81.3 cm, University of Alberta Collections, Faculty Club Acc #8), using a palette of grey, white, pinks, and blues, Taylor suggests glacial ice shaped by the forces of nature. The works become more and more minimalist. In *Columbia #2* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 71.1 x 91.4 cm, private collection), which is reproduced on the cover, the canvas is divided into horizontal bands. The lower quarter suggests the icefield and the darker blue band is broken up in the middle by an aquamarine rectangle. Taylor had studied the science of glaciation and captures it in his paintings. Snow falling over millennia (hundreds and thousands of years) becomes compacted. This forces out the air and gives glaciers and icefields their blue tinge. When the weight of glacial ice reaches a critical mass, glaciers begin to move, forming river-like formations. This can be seen in the glacier and icefield paintings.

Great works of this last period include *Glacier #2* [15/68], *Columbia # II* [#11/68] and *Opabin #1*. In 1968, the Confederation Arts Centre in his home town, Charlottetown, opened, and an exhibit of his work was held – the first one-man show. The centre was a legacy of Canada's centenary, and the exhibition of his work was an affirmation of his stature in Canada's art world. He gifted *Glacier #2* to the centre. *Columbia #II* and *Opabin #1* share a highly polished surface and transcend the limits of the framed artwork in suggesting the enormity of geological time. *Columbia #2* was exhibited as part of a faculty exhibit in the Student's Union Building Gallery from March 15 to 30 and, in his artist's statement, Taylor notes: "I continue to explore the spectacular abstract forms presented by powerful geological structures."¹⁶

Taylor's early studies of geology and geomorphology enabled him to see these eternal elements in the landscape in the context of geological time in which human beings emerge a couple of minutes before midnight. In *Composition #4* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), grey columns of rock are capped by a cross-bar and, in the centre, is a textured aquamarine ground with elements of white, brown, and black. Through the textured surface, Taylor suggested the effect that the retreat of glaciers had had on the mountain landscape. The actual pitting and scouring can be seen on the surface of the masonite or canvas. *Glacier #3* (1966, acrylic, sawdust, mixed media on canvas board, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), *#21 Composition # III* (1966, acrylic and gesso on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), *Oesa*



Fig. 67: J. B. Taylor, *Composition #3*, 1964, acrylic on masonite, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 68: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [Oesa #1]*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 69: J. B. Taylor, *Oesa #2 [also known as Ice Caves]*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 81.3 cm, University of Alberta Collections, Faculty Club Acc #8.





Fig. 70: J. B. Taylor,
Composition 4, 1968,
acrylic on canvas, 60.96 x
76.2 cm, Private collection.

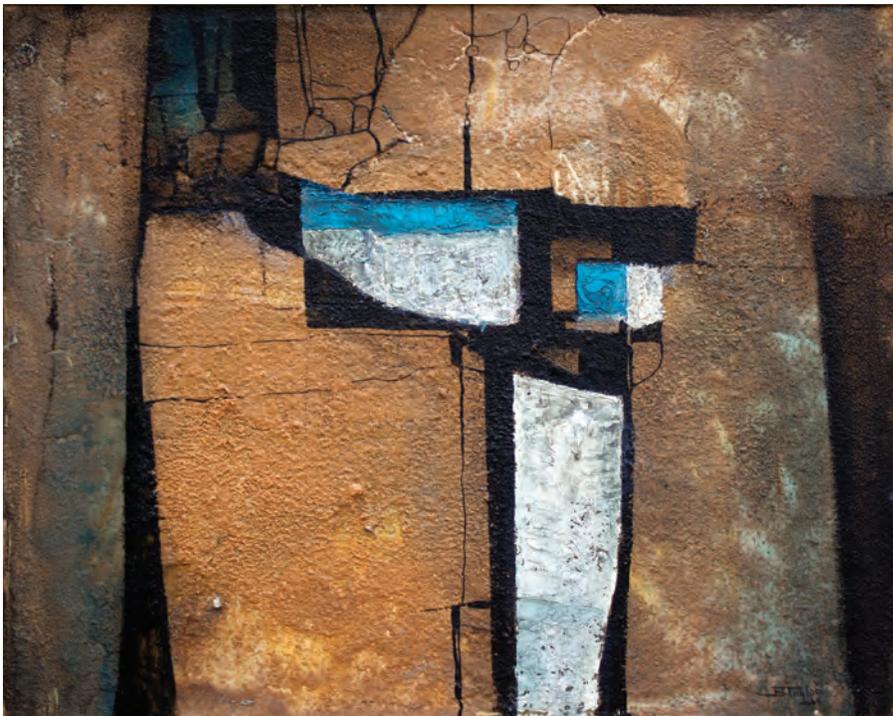


Fig. 71: J. B. Taylor,
Glacier #3, 1966, acrylic,
sawdust, mixed media on
canvas board, 60.96 x 76.2
cm, Private collection.

Fig. 72: J. B. Taylor,
#21 Composition # III,
1966, acrylic and thick
gesso on masonite,
60.96 x 76.2 cm, Private
collection.



Fig. 73: J. B. Taylor,
Oesa # II, 1966, acrylic
and sand on canvas,
76.2 x 101.6 cm, Private
collection.

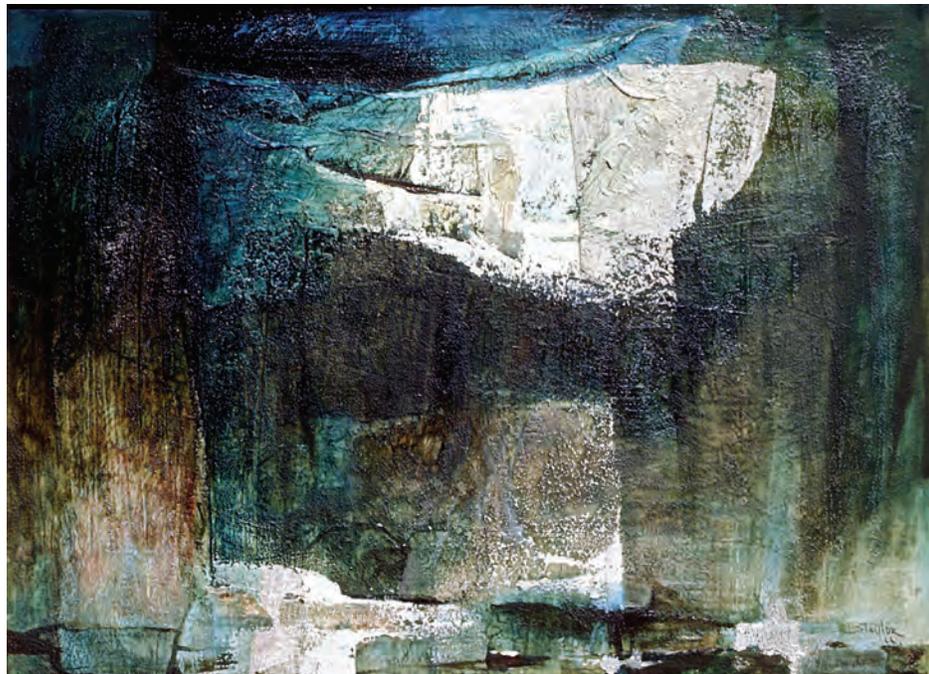




Fig. 74:
J. B. Taylor,
Composition
1 [3-66],
1966, acrylic
on canvas,
76.2 x 101.6
cm, Private
collection.

II (1966, acrylic and sand on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, private collection) and *Composition #1 [3-66]* (1966, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, private collection) show such effects.

Various paintings represent the ancient ice and the particulate matter embedded in it. Paintings such as *Columbia # III [20/68]* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4 cm, private collection), *Untitled [#6/68]* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 60.96 x 76.2, private collection), *Glacier #2 [#15/68]* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm, Confederation Centre for the Arts, Acc. CAG 68.11), *Columbia # II [#II/68]* (1968, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4 cm, private collection), *Opabin #1* [also known as *Glacier #2/68*] (1968, acrylic on masonite, 83.18 x 89.69 cm, private collection) and *Composition #2* (1968, acrylic and thick gesso on masonite, 76.2 x 71.1 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # GHF76.023.002) are examples of this late work.

Fig. 75: J. B. Taylor,
Columbia III [20/68], 1968,
acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4
cm, Private collection.



Fig. 76: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled*
[#6/68], 1968, acrylic on
canvas, 60.96 x 76.2 cm,
Private collection.





Fig. 77: J. B. Taylor, *Glacier #2* [#15/68],
1968, acrylic on canvas, 60.96 x 76.2 cm,
Confederation Centre for the Arts, Acc
CAG 68.11.



Fig. 78: J. B. Taylor, *Columbia # II* [#II/68],
1968, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4 cm,
Private collection.



Fig. 79: J. B. Taylor, *Opabin # 1 [Glacier # 2/68]*, 1968, acrylic on masonite, 83.18 x 89.69 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 80: J. B. Taylor, *Composition #2*, 1968, acrylic and thick gesso on masonite, 76.2 x 71.1 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # GHF76.023.002.

Taylor's commentary on his own work is very rare, but he provided the following description of *Opabin #1*, which was used on the cover of the ATA (Alberta Teachers' Association) *Magazine* (June 1970):

OPABIN #1 is a painting that developed out of many years of research in high glacier country. From the beginning much time was spent discovering where the various ice fields are located and how they have shaped the terrain in which they are found.

Climbing among the glaciers, you become aware of time. You can see the sun, wind, and rain that caused the great masses of ice to change their forms over many thousands of years. Geological drawings, diagrams, and air photography assisted me in becoming more familiar with the structure of the subject. Field drawings and paintings done on location added to my store of information, necessary to develop a more meaningful statement.

The final painting evolved out of the essential elements of art, that is, the concern for a basic abstract design. Whether or not an artist uses a subject as a point of departure, his main aim is to construct on canvas the simplest statement he can make. All textures or characteristic marks are simply used as relief to the large abstract masses.

With knowledge of the subject matter – in this case the glacial structure – the artist can be much freer in his experiments; he can concentrate on his feelings about the subject which best express his ideas.

OPABIN #1 is one idea and is an expression of the grandeur of those magnificent glaciers.¹⁷

In the large-scale works in the period 1964–68, Taylor suggests crevasses, faultlines, and rock strata, the parts representing the whole. It was as if throughout his career he had undertaken a symbolic journey into the heart of nature. While still representing the physical mountains in his works, it was their essence, what I have described as the “idea of mountains,” that intrigued him. Although Taylor had a Christian religious upbringing, in the last decade of his life, he moved away from traditional worship. Perhaps like many artists, past and present, he saw the Creator in the Creation. The last paintings undeniably have a spiritual element – whether it is

simply that mountains and great natural forms diminish the human element while illuminating the divine. It is the element of the “sublime” that is awe-inspiring and fearful, and that is what nineteenth-century artists of the Romantic and Picturesque saw in mountain landscapes.

The year 1968 was the culmination of his large-scale abstract mountain works, and it appears that Taylor reached a stylistic dead end, exacerbated by stress at the university. It may be that Taylor felt that he had reached the end of his exploration of his great theme – mountain landscapes – and was looking for new inspirations, whether of subject matter or medium. Son Philip observes of these works:

I recall mother and father talking about his painting and she encouraged him to return to something he knew well and was very comfortable doing – small, loose sketches of many subjects that he could work on quickly and would not have to come back to and labour over. Perhaps more akin to how he would teach sketching in art classes at the university. Mom encouraged him to get his inspiration from wherever – drives in the country to photos from the mountain trips or his memory. Then, not long afterwards, I remember him sitting in the back yard painting sketches on warm summer days. He wore shorts, a hat and no shirt. The product was a series of sketches, interestingly, many using pastel colours (pale yellow, greens), which was a palette that dad had not used much in recent years. They were very fresh, very light, very minimalist, when compared to the recent darker textural works.¹⁸

The period 1968–70 is represented by a series of sketches, not only of mountain landscapes but also foothills and other Alberta regions. It was as if, by going back to more representational painting, using both acrylic and oil media, he would find himself and his next creative impulse. His death ended his exploration, and this important Canadian figure, who straddled the transition from representational art to abstraction, was unable to complete his artistic journey.

5 | Non-Mountain Pictures

LANDSCAPES

Taylor's gift as a landscape artist manifested itself in 1935 at the first summer school taught by DuMond in Cape Breton. For the next ten years, he painted the land that he knew well, both on Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island – slopes, flat valleys, rocky inlets, and wooded groves. The sun shines gently on these scenes and they are on a human scale. Examples of these include *Untitled* [Margaree Valley, Cape Breton] (1937, oil on canvas; 76.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), *Untitled* [Keppoch Shore, PEI] (undated, ca. 1935, oil on paperboard, 30.5 x 40.6 cm, private collection) and *Keppoch* [PEI] (undated, ca. 1939, oil on canvas; 60.96 x 76.8 cm, private collection). While pleasant enough, there is no spark, no sense of personal vision or style. They have a flat, conventional quality typical of the works of a young artist. If this was the only work that Taylor accomplished, he would not be remembered today.

The change in subject as he moved west in 1945 to take on the work of painting murals at the North West Air Command in Edmonton is evident in a painting titled *Summer in Yukon* (1945, gouache on paper board, 58.4 x 68.6 cm, private collection). In comparison with the earlier paintings, this landscape has an edge not only in the composition but also in the colour palette and execution. The animated “big” sky dwarfs the semi-circular lakeshore fringed with trees. The colours are those of the early mountain pictures – pale blues and greys and tans with the mossy green of fir trees providing contrast. This may have been a study for the Peace Country mural at North West Air Command, and the sky is reminiscent of the backdrop of some of the airplane paintings.

Taylor then goes on to paint the range of Alberta landscapes in a kind of journey of discovery, in particular, those around Edmonton and all of the extension art class locations where he taught. There is a greater assurance in his technique, and the paintings paradoxically have clarity in the depiction of the landscape as well as a dreamy quality. An element of drama is found in

Fig. 81: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled* [*Margaree Valley, Cape Breton*], 1937, oil on canvas; 76.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 82: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled* [*Keppoch Shore, PEI*], undated, ca. 1935, oil on canvas board, 30.5 x 40.6 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 83: J. B. Taylor, *Keppoch* [*PEI*], undated, ca. 1939, oil on canvas; 60.96 x 76.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 84: J. B. Taylor, *Summer in Yukon*, 1945, gouache on paper board, 58.4 x 68.6 cm, Private collection.

these works, whether it is the animated sky, tortuous vegetation, or complex rock structures. The composition is never the same, and he is selective in the natural elements that he chooses to depict. The badlands around Drumheller fascinated him, perhaps because of their startling physical geography, but not to the extent that they ever usurped his love of mountains. *Badlands*, painted in 1949 (oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) uses the same colour palette as the mountain pictures and could even be mistaken for a mountain painting. A 1952 work *Alberta Badlands* (oil on masonite, 60.8 x 71.2 cm, Alberta Government Jubilee Collection #0230.175.000003) focuses on the hoodoos, the formations formed as a result of wind and water erosion with their strange anthropomorphic forms. In *Red Deer River*, painted in the same year (oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), Taylor presents either a twilight scene or one just before a big storm with the field of the painting being more than half sky. *Whitemud*

Creek, painted in Edmonton (1952, oil on panel, 26.7 x 29.2 cm, unknown location), presents lush and exuberant vegetation with light streaming in through breaks in the tree canopy.

From the mid-1950s, the non-mountain landscapes have an increased sophistication about them in terms of colour, structure, and perspective. This can be seen in his paintings that focus on typical prairie scenes. In *Alberta Landscape*, grain fields are given a twist (1955, oil on masonite, 35.6 x 45.7 cm, private collection). Instead of the line of the horizon separating a golden field from a blue sky as in the works of many other artists, Taylor chooses to present the band of golden grain across the bottom of the painting with bluey/violet slopes above and, above that, stormy sky. *Untitled* [sketch] (1955, oil on plywood, 26 x 33 cm, private collection) is also a prairie scene, but the colour of the grain is a muted pale yellow and gold. A thin strip of violet hills separates the land from the pale-blue sky filled with threatening clouds. The prairie *Farmhouse in Winter* [sketch] (1956, oil on paperboard, 24.1 x 31.8 cm, private collection) is not softened by a cover of snow but looks stark and cold. *Hillside* [also known as *Untitled Landscape*], painted in about 1957 (oil on canvas board, 30.5 x 40 cm, private collection), depicts a pale gold slope with touches of orange, grey, and off-white culminating in straggly trees where the sky would normally be. Taylor purposely chooses not to place figures in the landscape; in fact, there is an absolute absence of humanity in his landscapes. This may be what struck him about the West, the lack of major urban areas and the ascendance of nature rather than human beings. As well, he appears to have favoured that in-between light as the sun is about to go down, or as the sky darkens before a storm.

In the late 1950s, Taylor began to experiment with abstraction with his non-mountain landscapes but not to the degree that he did with the mountain works. *Nordegg Road* (1958, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 2010.7.1) presents a road that is a cutline in the forest. The eye is led down the avenue of feathery trees to the deep blue of flat mountain elevation crowned by stormy clouds. He has moved from the clarity of the earlier landscape work to something more mysterious and imaginative, and there is an impressionistic quality to the work. *Yellowknife, NWT* (oil on canvas board, 1961, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) has this same quality of abstraction and looks like an aerial view in which individual trees and other elements of landscape meld into each other.

Even the badlands are given a different treatment using the looser more abstract style that he developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Whereas in the earlier paintings, different elements were painted with great clarity, in *The Badlands* (1960, mixed media [watercolour, acrylic, sand, Bondfast glue] on masonite, 50.8 x 63.5 cm, location unknown), Taylor uses mixed media to suggest the sedimentary rock structure and surface. He does this again in *Badlands* (1963,



Fig. 85: J. B. Taylor, *Badlands*, 1949, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 86: J. B. Taylor, *Alberta Badlands*, 1952, oil on masonite, 60.8 x 71.2 cm, Alberta Government Jubilee Collection
Acc #0230.175.000003.

Fig. 87: J. B. Taylor, *Red Deer River*, 1952, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 88: J. B. Taylor, *Whitemud Creek*, 1952, oil on panel, 26.7 x 29.2 cm, unknown location.

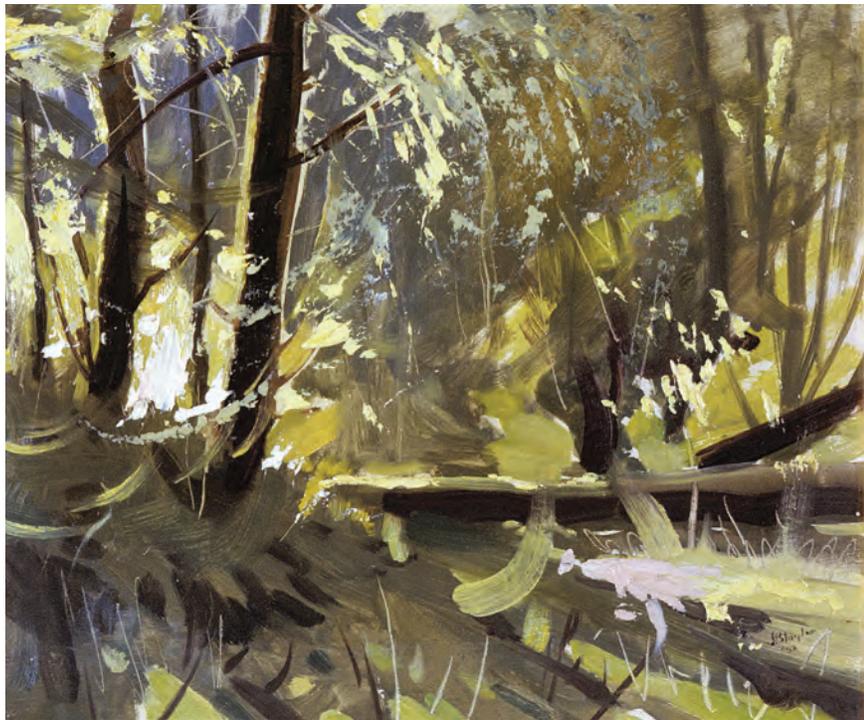




Fig. 89: J. B. Taylor, *Alberta Landscape*, 1955, oil on masonite, 35.6 x 45.7 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 90: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled [sketch]*, 1955, oil on panel [plywood], 26 x 33 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 91:
J. B. Taylor,
*Farmhouse in
Winter* [sketch]
1956, oil on
paperboard,
24.1 x 31.8
cm, Private
collection.



Fig. 92: J. B.
Taylor, *Hillside*
[also known
as *Untitled
Landscape*],
ca. 1957, oil
on canvas
board, 30.5 x
40 cm, Private
collection.





Fig. 93: J. B. Taylor, *Nordegg Road*, 1958, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 2010.7.1. Gift of Moyna Parker.



Fig. 94: J. B. Taylor, *Yellowknife, NWT*, 1961, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

watercolour, ink and Bondfast glue on paper, 55.9 x 71.1 cm, private collection) using mixed media. The watercolour, ink, and Bondfast enable him to create a worked surface similar to the mountain pictures of the same period. In 1964, in *Badlands #2* (1964, oil on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), he goes back to a more representational style, although the paint is laid down in feathery rather than precise strokes. There is a playful quality and it's as if he is saying to the viewer, "look at how different I can make the badlands look!" *Saskatchewan River* (1962, oil on canvas board, 45.1 x 60.96 cm, private collection) is all undulating curves and there is a wash-like quality to the laying down of the paint. *Peace River* (1963, oil on canvas, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, private collection) has the same undulating shapes, but Taylor has chosen to trace slope and tree forms in black line as in an engraving. *Landscape #3* [also known as *Alberta – 64*] (1964, mixed media [acrylic or oil, Bondfast glue, sawdust] on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection) uses a similar technique but with a different colour palette. *Foothills #2/64* (1964, oil on canvas, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, private collection) uses a wash background on which iconic prairie buildings have been outlined in a haphazard way – a technique that typifies his Italian pictures. *Badlands #1/ 68* (1968, acrylic with collage on canvas, 60.8 x 71.6 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # 2007.026.001) uses the heavily textured style of the late mountain pictures and suggests the petrified marine micro-organisms contained in the rock.

In the 1970s non-mountain landscapes, Taylor is constantly challenging himself and pushing the boundaries of representational art as he did with the mountain landscapes. But these landforms did not lend themselves to the degree of abstraction that he could achieve in the mountain works, and, thus, these types of landscapes are fewer in number.

In the last two years of his life, Taylor went back to painting more traditional landscapes without the use of mixed media. It's as if he was pursuing a "purer" form of landscape painting to re-energize himself while looking for new sources of inspiration. These last sketches are abstract and Taylor uses short, grainy, angular, vertical brush strokes. He paints in both oils and acrylics and even artist friends are unsure of the medium in specific works. Examples include *Peace River Landscape* [sketch] (late 1960s, oil or acrylic on plywood, 25.4 x 30.5 cm, private collection); *Parkland* [sketch] (1968, oil or acrylic on masonite, 20 x 25 cm, private collection); and *Foothills* [sketch] (1970, oil on masonite, 25.4 x 30.2 cm, private collection).



Fig. 95: J. B. Taylor, *The Badlands*, 1960, mixed media (watercolour, acrylic, sand, Bondfast glue) on masonite, 50.8 x 63.5 cm, location unknown.

Fig. 96: J. B. Taylor, *Badlands*, 1963, mixed media (watercolor, ink and Bondfast glue) on paper, 55.9 x 71.1 cm, Private collection.





Fig. 97: J. B. Taylor,
Badlands #2, 1964, oil on
masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm,
Private collection.

Fig. 98: J. B. Taylor,
Saskatchewan River, 1962,
oil on canvas board, 45.1 x
60.96 cm, Private collection.





Fig. 99: J. B. Taylor, *Peace River*, 1963, oil on canvas, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 100: J. B. Taylor, *Landscape #3 [also known as Alberta - 64]*, 1964, mixed media (acrylic or oil, Bondfast glue, sawdust) on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 101: J. B. Taylor, *Foothills #2/64*, 1964, oil on canvas, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 102: J. B. Taylor, *Badlands #1/68*, 1968, acrylic with collage on canvas, 60.8 x 71.6 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Acc # 2007.026.001.





Fig. 103: J. B. Taylor, *Peace River Landscape* [sketch], late 1960s, oil or acrylic on plywood, 25.4 x 30.5 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 104: J. B. Taylor, *Parkland* [sketch], 1968, oil or acrylic on masonite, 20 x 25 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 105: J. B. Taylor,
Footbills [sketch], 1970, oil
on masonite, 25.4 x 30.2 cm,
Private collection.



Fig. 106: J. B. Taylor,
*Untitled [Glacier '70 or
Glacier at Peyto Lake]*
[sketch], 1970, oil or acrylic
on masonite, 20.3 x 25.4 cm,
Private collection.



THE ITALIAN PICTURES

During his sabbatical year in London, in 1955–56, Taylor briefly visited Italy and fell in love with the hilly towns, streetscapes, and buildings of the north and the Roman antiquities of the central part of the country. Through the classes that he had taught in art history, he had become informed about the building types of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods; however, this was not the same as actually seeing and experiencing Italy. As with many artists both before and after him, he fell in love with the architectural detail and the amazing Italian light that bathed the countryside in gold during the day and added mystery and depth at twilight.

In the first instance, Taylor's medium of choice was watercolour because it lent itself to laying down colour washes quickly to set a scene and fine brush strokes to add detail. In these, he captured the essence of the places that he visited; the paintings are loose and impressionistic in nature and sparing in the details of buildings. They resemble the watercolour drawings of artists doing the "Grand Tour" of Italy beginning in the eighteenth century. Examples include *Florence* (1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, private collection), *Roma* (ca. 1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 20.6 x 18.8 cm, private collection) and *Outside of Florence* (1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 17.8 x 20.3 cm, private collection).

When he turns to the oil medium, the paintings have a different quality, and the influence of John Piper can be seen. The typical delicate wash of watercolour when executed in oil allows Taylor to set down a rich and complex ground for the architectural details that he focuses on. Building parts come to represent the whole structure. This, of course, is also a move towards abstraction. *Church of Santa Fosca, Torcello* (1957, oil on board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) is more traditional in that the entire building can be viewed, although it is simplified and arches and other features are softened. The later *Forum Romanum* (1959, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) is more like Piper's work, with the architectural features having an almost cartoon-like quality. In *Roman Keep* [also known as *Roman Town – Near Ostia*] (1959, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), the buildings have an almost cubistic quality with building elements being presented as cubes and triangles. Piper had also explored geometrical shapes in his pictures of classic buildings. The abstraction continues in *Ancestral Altar* (1960, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection), in which oval niches, pediments, and slabs suggest the altar elements. All of these paintings have a luminous quality.

In 1961, Taylor returned to Italy and his love-affair with the country deepened. In his application to the Canada Council for funding support for this study tour, he noted that he wanted to study the art of Italy in depth to enrich his teaching and mentioned that he had only had a brief

Fig. 107: J. B. Taylor, *Florence*, 1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 108: J. B. Taylor, *Roma [Theatre of Marcellus]*, ca. 1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 20.6 x 18.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 109: J. B. Taylor, *Outside of Florence*, 1956, ink and watercolour on paper, 17.8 x 20.3 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 110: J. B. Taylor, *Church of Santa Fosca, Torcello*, 1957, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 111: J. B. Taylor, *Forum Romanum*, 1959, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

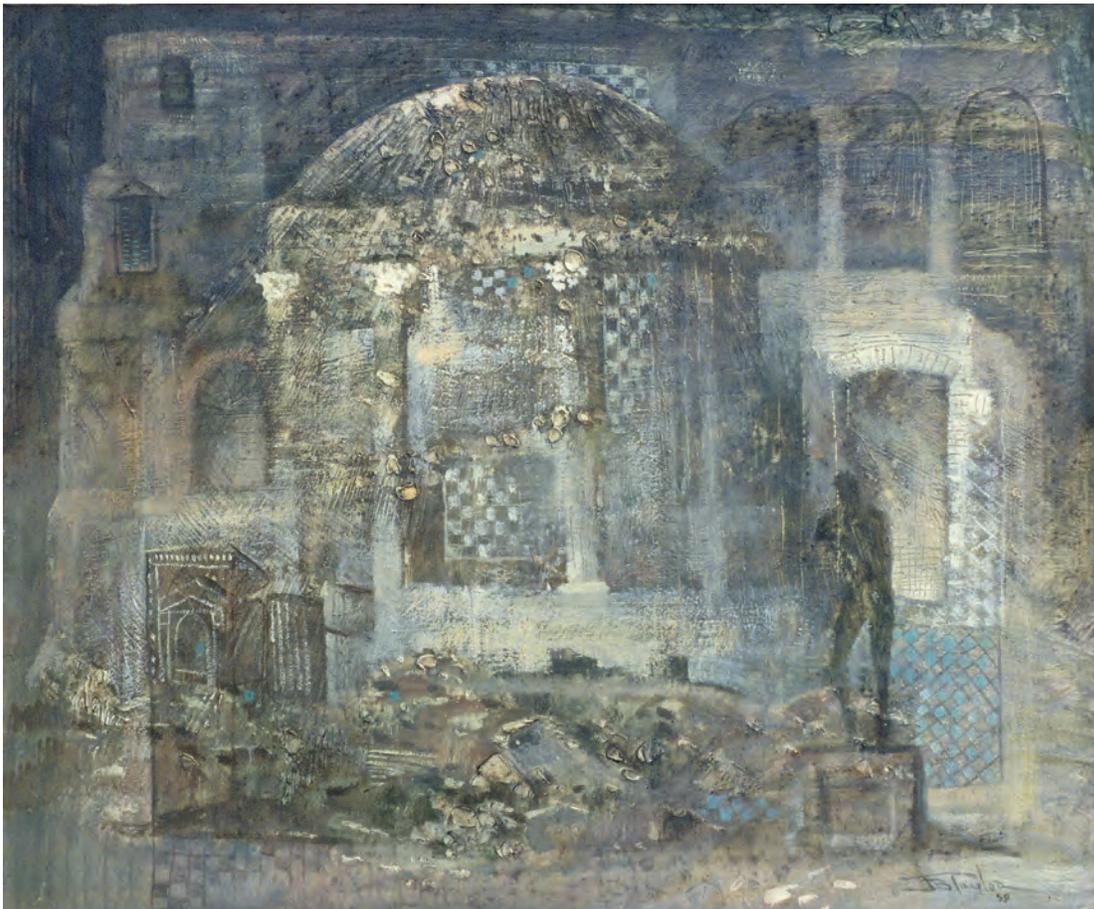


Fig. 112: J. B. Taylor, *Roman Keep* [also titled *Roman Town – Near Ostia*], 1959, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 113: J. B. Taylor, *Ancestral Altar*, 1960, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



visit before. To do this, he would need to visit museums in various parts of the country, and he went from Tuscany in the north to Naples in the south. Taylor's vision resembles that of various novelists, who have focussed on the ambivalence between the voluptuous richness of Italian towns and cities and the parallel squalor and assault on the senses. Literary examples include Henry James in the *Wings of the Dove* and Thomas Mann in *Death in Venice*.

On his return, Taylor continued to paint remembered scenes in oils. These paintings are more complex than the earlier ones, and the intermingling of the themes of age, decay, and great beauty is obvious. In *Memories of Rome* (1961, oil on canvas board, 49.5 x 59.7 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 1987.13.2), he makes use of a sunnier palette, introducing oranges and browns, but grey shadows assert themselves on the building facades and background. In *Gimignano* (1962, oil on masonite, 45.7 x 60.96 cm, unknown location) and *Venice 61* (1962, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 61 cm, private collection), he returns to his familiar grey-blue and white palette for the entire painting. The aquamarine shade of the *Mediterranean in Amalfi, Italy* [#15] (1963, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) comes as a lovely surprise and it is a much sunnier picture.

When Taylor makes the shift to acrylic, the paintings become even more complex. He begins to experiment with acrylics and mixed media in his Italian pictures in 1960 at the same time as this shift occurred in his mountain pictures. The use of acrylic paint, Bondfast glue, and gesso make these later works undeniably richer both in colour and texture. He uses ink to define building edges and details, and for added contrast. In *Baths of Caracalla* (1963, acrylic on unknown substrate, 42.5 x 52.1 cm, location unknown), the texture and unusual colour choice (mustardy yellow, moss green, blue, and black) overwhelm the eye, and the texture almost hides the architectural forms. This work is very reminiscent of mountain paintings of that period. In *Naples 64* (1964, mixed media [acrylic and unknown other media] on unknown substrate, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, location unknown), *Hilltown* (1964, acrylic, Bondfast glue, and ink on paper, 38.9 x 37.8 cm, private collection) and *Naples* [# III 64] (1964, acrylic and thick gesso on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection), he returns to his traditional blue-grey palette, but the worked ground suggests an overwhelming sense of decay.

The 1966 works include greater architectural detail and a broader colour palette. He also has moved away from the dense texture of the previous works. In *Venice #1 66* (#9) (1966, acrylic on masonite, 46 x 55 cm, private collection), vertical stripes of colour highlight aspects of the buildings. Jewel-like tones of blue, red, and yellow illuminate *Naples #1 66* [also #13/66] (1966, mixed media [acrylic, ink, paper towel] on masonite, varnished, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, acrylic, private collection). The paints in many of the 1966 pictures have an enamel-like quality, whether bright

Fig. 114: J. B. Taylor, *Memories of Rome*, 1961, oil on canvas board, 49.5 x 59.7 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 1987.13.2.



Fig. 115: J. B. Taylor, *Gimignano*, 1962, oil on masonite, 45.7 x 60.96 cm, Location unknown.





Fig. 116: J. B. Taylor, *Venice 61*, 1962, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 117: J. B. Taylor, *Amalfi, Italy [#15]*, 1963, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 118: J. B. Taylor, *Baths of Caracalla*, 1963, acrylic on unknown substrate, 42.5 x 52.1 cm, location unknown.



Fig. 119: J. B. Taylor, *Naples 64*, 1964, mixed media (acrylic and unknown other media) on unknown substrate, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, location unknown.

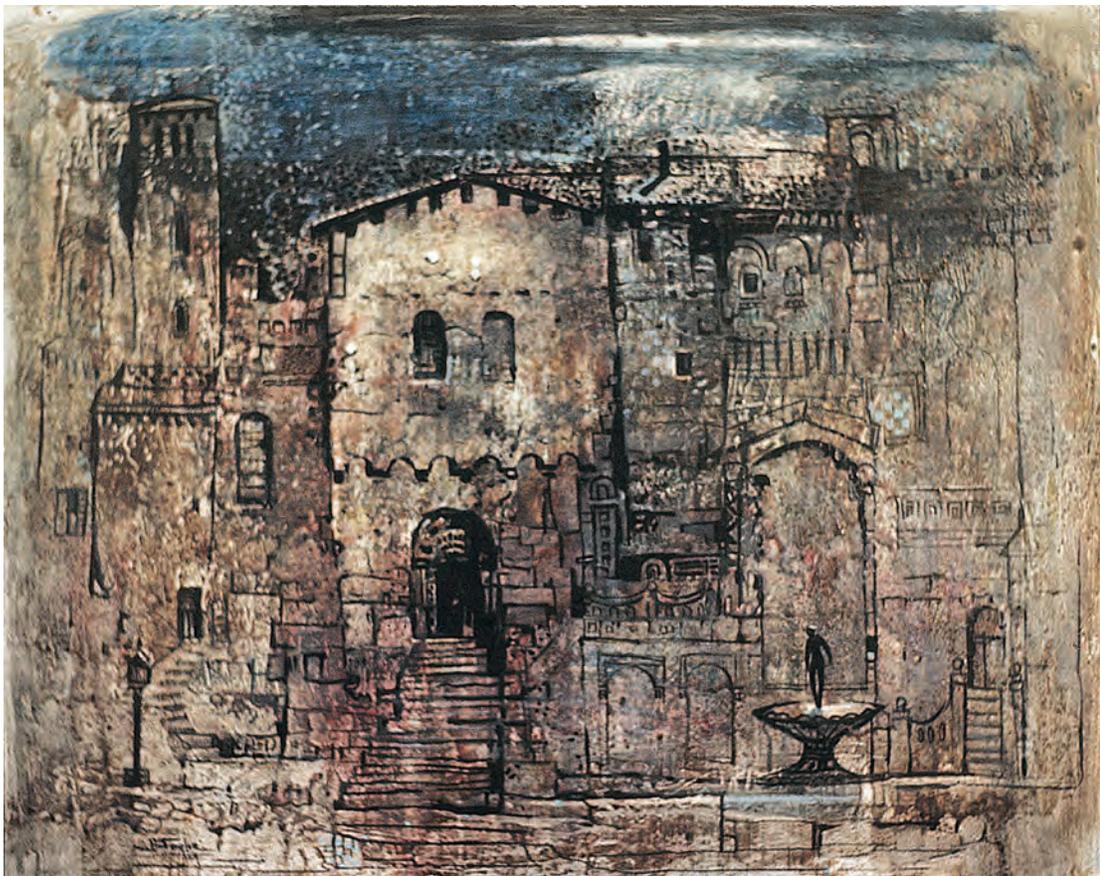




Fig. 120: J. B. Taylor, *Hilltown*, 1964, acrylic, ink and Bondfast glue on paper, 38.9 x 37.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 121: J. B. Taylor, *Naples #III 64*, 1964, acrylic and thick gesso on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 122: J. B. Taylor, *Venice #1 66 (#9)*, 1966, acrylic on masonite, 46 x 55 cm, Private collection.

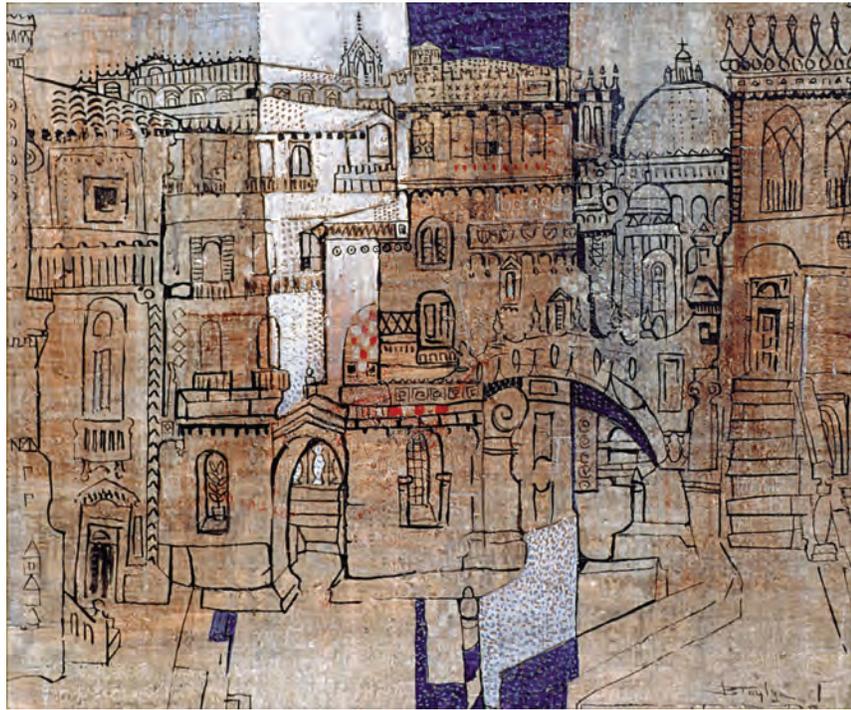


Fig. 123: J. B. Taylor, *Naples #1 66 [also #13/66]*, 1966, mixed media (acrylic, ink, paper towel) on masonite, varnished, 60.96 x 71.1 cm, Private collection.





Fig. 124: J. B. Taylor, *Villa Ostia*, 1966, mixed media (acrylic, ink, tissue paper, Bondfast glue) on paper, 53.5 x 63.5 cm, Edmonton Public School Board.



Fig. 125: J. B. Taylor, *Volterra #1 66*, 1966, acrylic on paper, 47 x 55.9 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 126: J. B. Taylor, *Ravenna*, 1966, acrylic or oil on paper, 44.2 x 59.5 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 127: J. B. Taylor, *Imperial Façade #11/66*, 1966, mixed media (acrylic, gold paper, paper, ink, Bondfast glue) on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 128: J. B. Taylor, *Ancient Façade*, 1966, mixed media (acrylic and thick gesso or plaster) on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 129: J. B. Taylor, *Ostia* [sketch], undated, ca. 1968, acrylic on paper or cardboard, 26.7 x 34 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 130: J. B. Taylor, *Untitled sketch [Hilltown]*, 1968, acrylic and ink on paper, 18.7 x 24.1 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 131: J. B. Taylor, *Italian Romanesque* #22/68, 1968, ink and scraperboard, 27.9 x 40.6 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 132: J. B. Taylor, *Hilltown* #13/68, 1968, mixed media (acrylic and thick gesso) on masonite, 45.7 x 54.9 cm, Private collection.



as in *Naples #1 66* or more sombre as in *Villa Ostia* (1966, mixed media [acrylic, ink, tissue paper, and Bondfast glue] on paper, 53.5 x 63.5 cm, Edmonton Public School Board), *Volterra #1 66* (1966, acrylic on paper, 47 x 55.9 cm, private collection), *Ravenna* (1966, acrylic or oil on paper, 44.2 x 59.5 cm, private collection), *Imperial Façade #11/66* (1966, mixed media [acrylic, gold paper, paper, ink, and Bondfast glue] on masonite, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, private collection) and *Ancient Façade* (1966, mixed media [acrylic and thick gesso or plaster] on masonite, 60.96 x 76.2 cm, private collection).

By 1968, the works appear even more sombre. In some instances, the ground colour and texture dominate and almost obliterate the architectural elements. It is likely that Taylor, attuned to the geological time of the mountains as he was, understood that the human hold on the world, through buildings and other man-created entities, is finite. The sense of the passage of time and decay is intense. The background in these works becomes foreground and is similar in nature to the rockwalls, glaciers, and icefields of the mountain pictures. Examples of this technique include *Ostia* [sketch] (undated [ca. 1968], acrylic on paper or cardboard, 26.7 x 34 cm, location unknown), *Untitled sketch* [also known as *Hilltown*] (1968, acrylic and ink on paper, 18.7 x 24.1 cm, private collection), *Italian Romanesque #22/68* (1968, ink and scraperboard, 27.9 x 40.6 cm, private collection) and *Hilltown #13/68* (1968, mixed media [acrylic and thick gesso] on masonite, 45.7 x 54.9 cm, private collection).

THE PORTRAITS

At the Art Students League of New York, Taylor studied portraiture with DuMond and quickly demonstrated competence. The family has some of these early works, and among them is a striking self-portrait, *Self Portrait* [Jack Taylor] (1937, oil on canvas, 50.1 x 40.3 cm, private collection). The artist places himself slightly left of centre and uses a punch of colour – the red chair – to add interest. The artist’s essential seriousness is evident.

At the Ontario College of Art, in 1946, he painted a head-and-shoulders portrait of a Negro boy that fills the whole frame of the painting (*Negro Boy*, 1946, oil on canvas, 50.1 x 40.3 cm, private collection). He gives power to the face by creating a V structure from the wide forehead at the top of the canvas to the tip of his V-neck sweater.

Taylor also did some charming portraits of his own children and those of friends in the early 1950s. These include *Portrait of Philip Taylor* (1951, oil on masonite, 30.8 x 30.8 cm, private

Fig. 133: J. B. Taylor, *Self Portrait* [Jack Taylor], 1937, oil on canvas, 50.1 x 40.3 cm, Private collection.

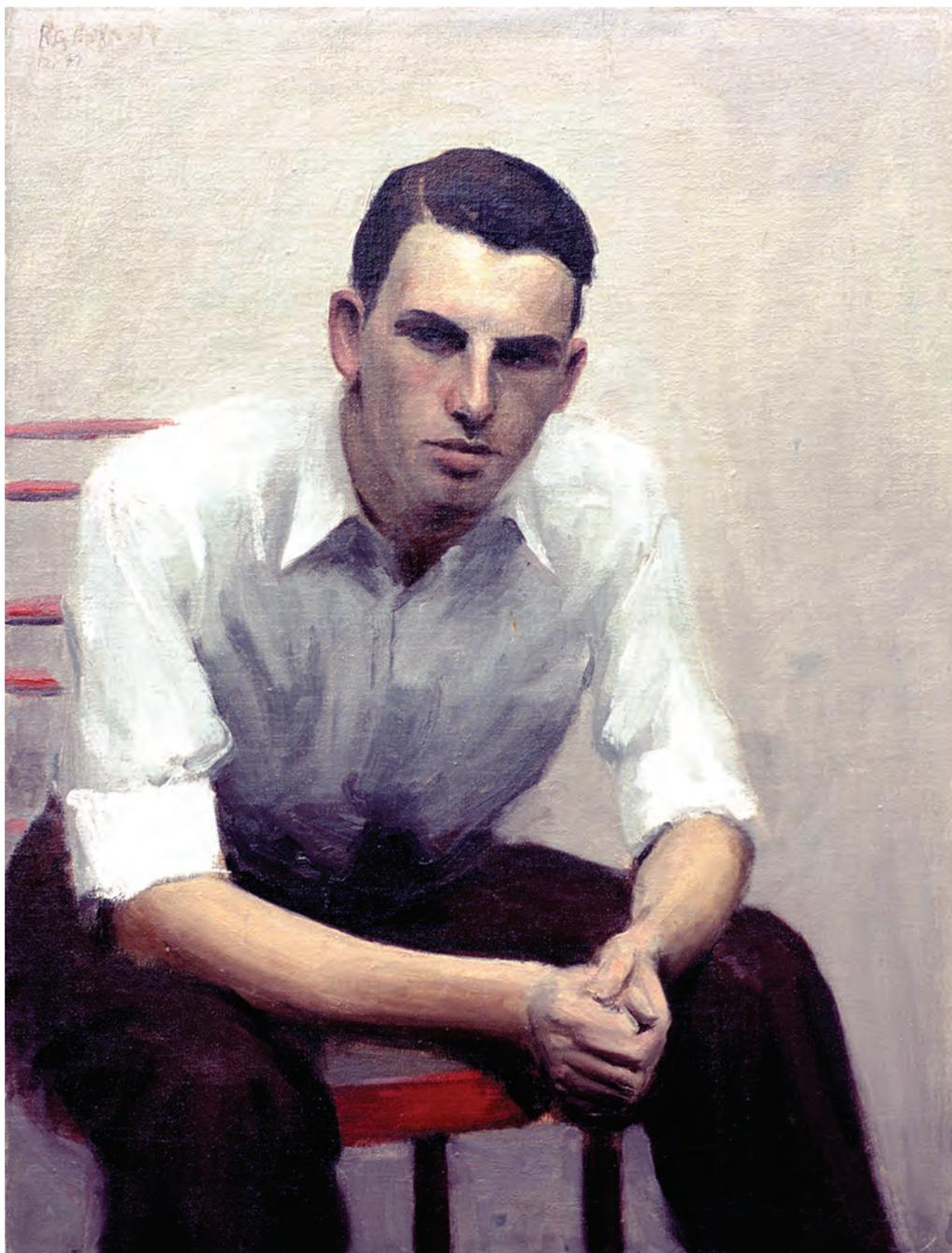




Fig. 134: J. B. Taylor, *Negro Boy*, 1946, oil on canvas, 50.1 x 40.3 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 135: J. B. Taylor, *Portrait of Philip Taylor*, 1951, oil on masonite, 30.8 x 30.8 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 136: J. B. Taylor, *Portrait of Christopher Taylor*, 1958, oil on masonite, 30.8 x 30.8 cm, Private collection.

collection) and *Portrait of Christopher Taylor* (1958, oil on masonite, 30.8 x 30.8 cm, private collection).

Taylor also undertook some private commissions as well as some official portraits for the University of Alberta. These portraits capture the character of the individuals represented and the background serves to focus attention on the “uniqueness” of each sitter. They are interesting in terms of their composition and colour palette. Examples include *Portrait of Dr. R. A. Rooney, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Alberta* (1959, oil on canvas, 87 x 66.3 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # AD 1974.20.3), *Portrait of Dr. K. C. McLeod* (1963, oil on canvas board, 59.7 x 49.3 cm, private collection), *Portrait of Dean H. E. Smith*, former Dean of Education (1965, oil on canvas, 71.8 x 61.6 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # AD 1974.29) and *Portrait of Dr. V. Ross Vant*, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Alberta Hospital (1970, oil on canvas board, 61.2 x 50.8 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # 1976.9.2). In terms of Taylor’s artistic production, these works are in the minority. He could paint portraits but this was not his passion. He did this to please the administration and also because he realized that these portraits could be listed on his list of annual achievements as a performance measure.

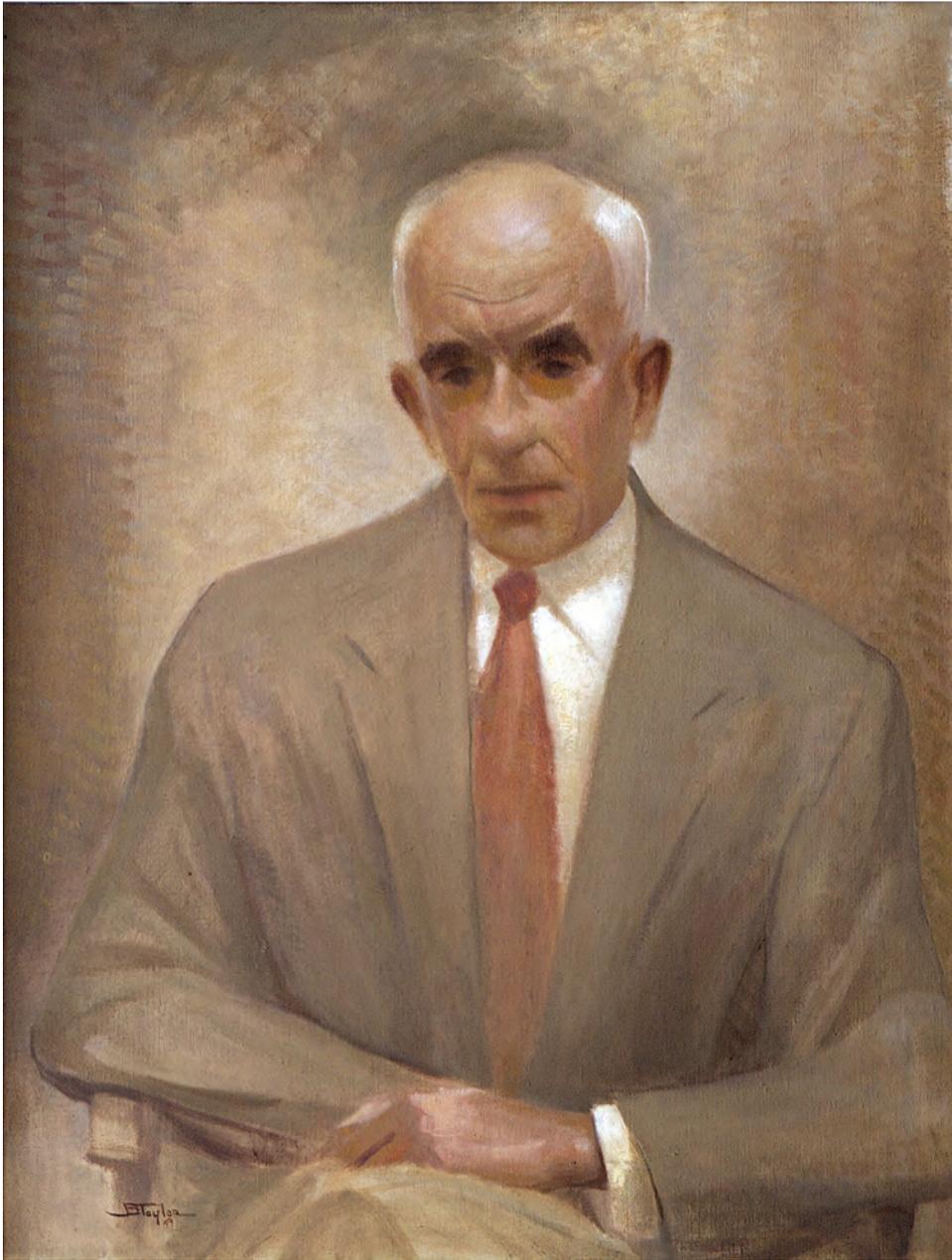
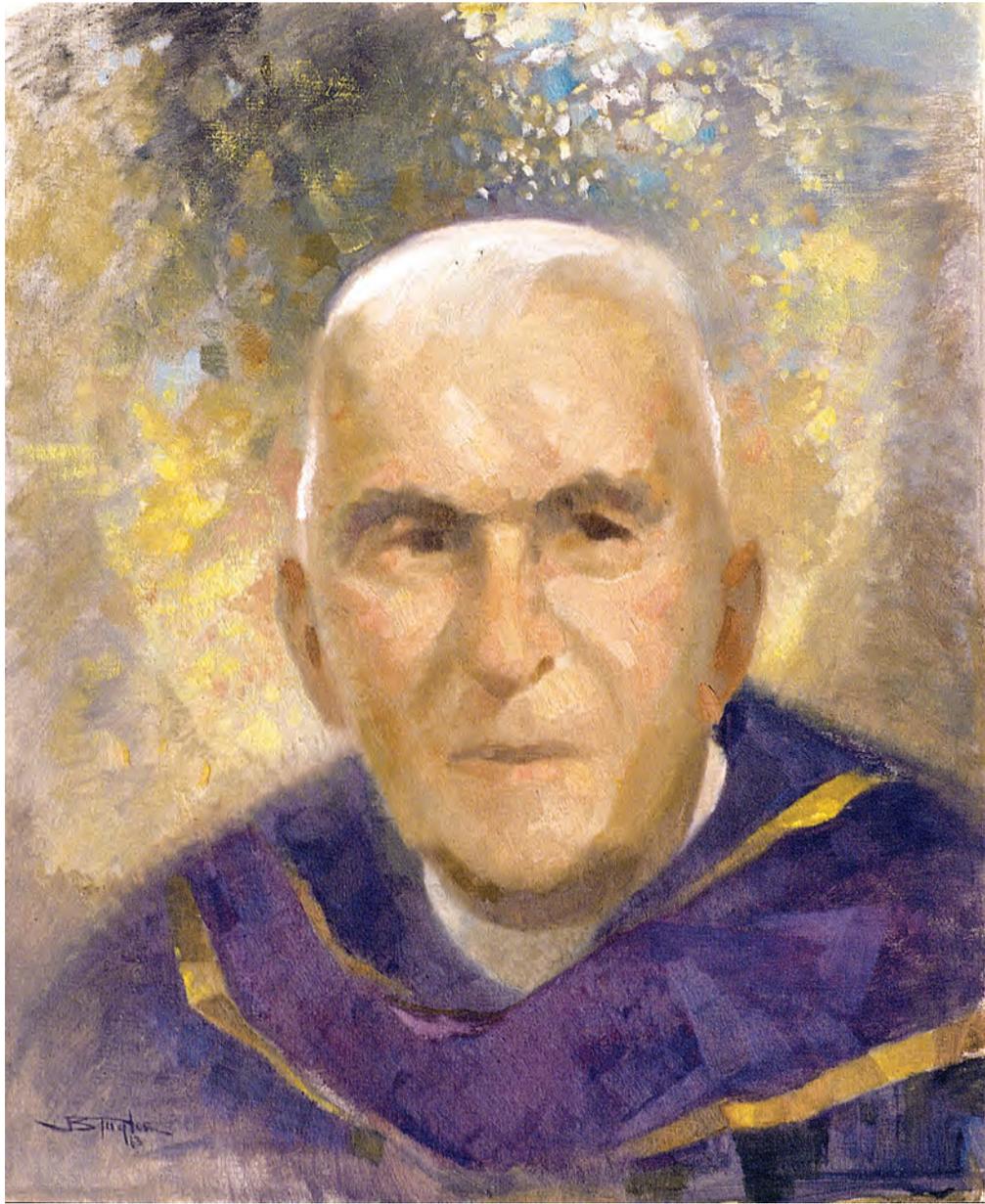


Fig. 137: J. B. Taylor, *Portrait of Dr. R. A. Rooney*, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Alberta, 1959, oil on canvas, 87 x 66.3 cm, University of Alberta Collections Acc # AD 1974.20.3.

Fig. 138:
J. B. Taylor,
*Portrait of Dr.
K.C. McLeod*,
1963, oil on
canvas board,
59.7 x 49.3
cm, Private
collection.



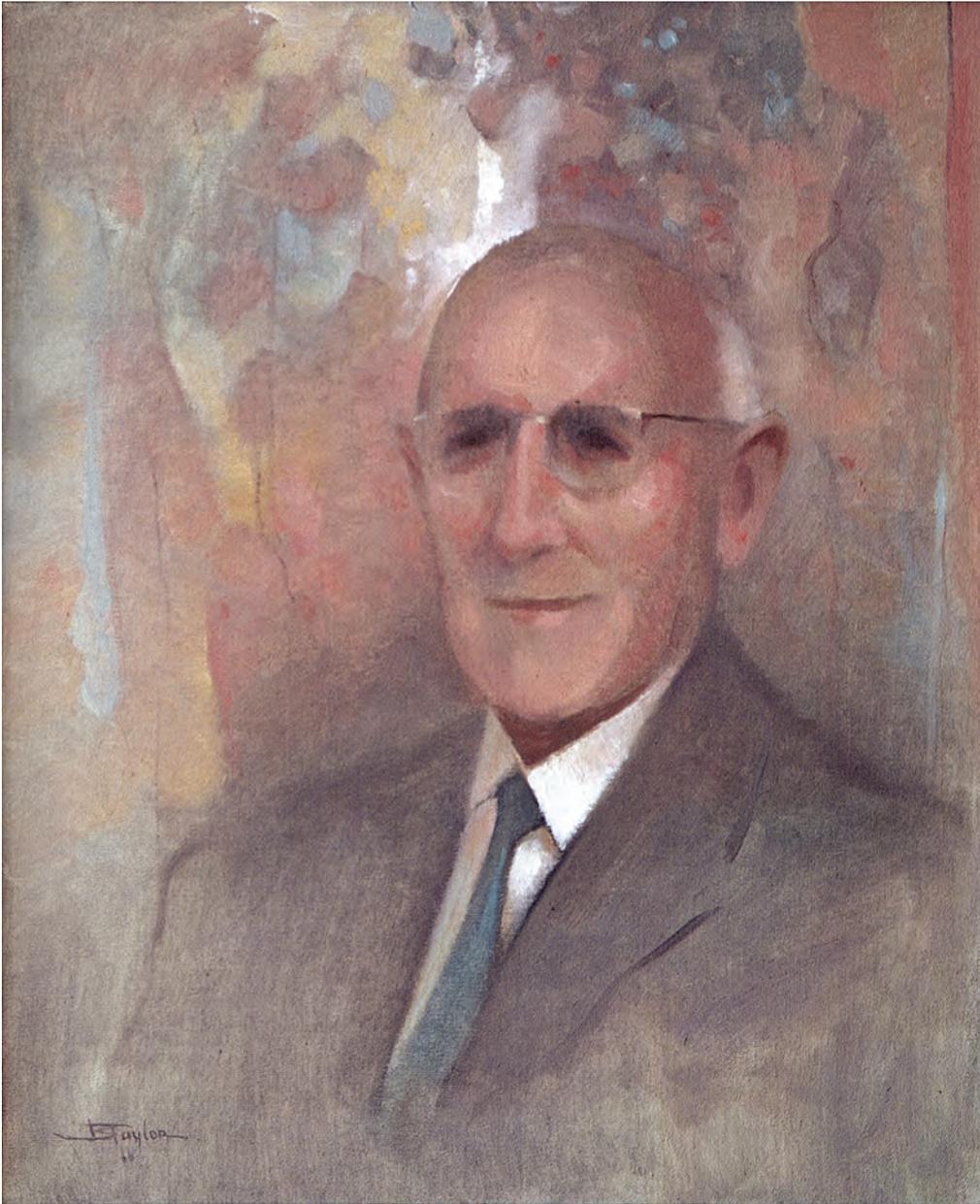


Fig. 139:
J. B. Taylor,
*Portrait of
Dean H.E.
Smith*, former
Dean of
Education,
1965, oil on
canvas, 71.8
x 61.6 cm,
University
of Alberta
Collections
Acc #
AD 1974.29.

Fig. 140:
J. B. Taylor,
*Portrait of Dr.
V. Ross Vant*,
Department of
Obstetrics and
Gynecology,
University
of Alberta
Hospital, 1970,
oil on canvas,
61.2 x 50.8
cm, University
of Alberta
Collections
Acc # 1976.9.2.



6 | Significance and Contribution

In order to determine the significance of Taylor's work and contribution to Canadian art, it is important to look at how contemporary and later critics viewed him. Taylor's work sold well to academic and non-academic staff of the University of Alberta, but also, through the Jacox Gallery, to other lovers of contemporary art. This in itself is a significant indicator of success. In addition, his exhibits were always well and positively reviewed. American art critic Clement Greenberg became involved in Canadian art circles after being invited to teach at the University of Saskatchewan art summer school at Emma Lake. In 1963, he was asked by the editor of *Canadian Art* magazine to write about western Canadian art.¹ In his review of the Edmonton art scene, Greenberg writes:

The most professional and accomplished of all the abstract painters whose work I saw in Edmonton was John B. Taylor, whose example (not style) may be responsible for the fact that most of the abstract art there stays close enough to nature to be called semi-figurative. The fault I found with him lay, however, precisely in his professionalism: in fact that his art was so completely and seamlessly encased in a rather familiar manner from Klee, prismatic cubism and what I call "Northwest Indian" abstraction. And I felt (I hope Mr. Taylor will excuse this presumption in saying so) that he could have put his high talent to better use in more forthrightly representational art.²

While Greenberg was perceptive in placing Taylor's work in the camp of abstract art, his observations about his influences are wrong since Taylor's breakthrough into abstraction was influenced by British artist Piper. Ironically, Greenberg's advice that Taylor become more "forthrightly representational" would have required him to take a step backward to his former style.

Fellow artist and art critic Dorothy Barnhouse, in an April 20, 1968, *Edmonton Journal* review titled “Prosaic Subjects Infused with Imagination, Drama,” writes:

Mr. Taylor paints nature, not as it is, but as it should be and as he wishes it to be.

Slow Drama

A flat rock face or an ancient façade becomes a stage where flickering light and mysterious shadow present the slow drama of erosion and decay.

Mr. Taylor is primarily a tone painter and hues are rather suggested than exploited. When he uses purer color it is for chromatic surprise and he applies it succinctly, following the time-tested maxim of thin in shadow, thick in light. He uses light tones as he does textural devices of sand, glue, and resins in minimum quantity for maximum effect.

She understood the dramatic change in Taylor’s work in the 1960s and his innovation. This exhibit travelled to the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Art Gallery in Charlottetown, where it was extremely well received.

This exhibit was reviewed by Rev. Adrian Arsenault, Chair of the French and Fine Arts Department at St. Dunstan’s University, who wrote a review for the *Evening Patriot* (October 11, 1964). Arsenault was an interesting personality in Canada’s art scene at the time. He had degrees in art and drama from Laval University, the Sorbonne and the University of Washington. He was a professor at St. Dunstan’s from 1963 to 1969 and then went on to teach at the University of Prince Edward Island. He was the province’s representative on the Canada Council and was one of the moving forces in the building of the Confederation Centre for the Arts. He was also an artist in his own right, working in various media, including acrylics.³ The review, titled “Taylor paintings speak soft, intimate language,” states:

This is indeed a most interesting one-man show. Technically competent, the works have completely emancipated themselves from Canadian landscape tradition. They are nonetheless concerned with the land: stone, rocks and mountains, soil. The spirit is contemplative, and the production, though it appears leisurely, is ecstatically executed.

As we move toward the present year, the style, the language spoken, become more and more abstract. The earlier paintings – a number reminding one of John Piper’s works – appear rather eclectic in content and style, baroque in their theatrical use of architectural motifs, slightly poster-like.

Then they gradually become contemplative, more secretive in nature, more stark; the subject tends to become one with the form and the medium. The latest paintings, full of introverted intimacy, constitute a painstaking search of textures and graffiti which nonetheless retain an unquestionable quasi-human emotional quality. Most of the recent works speak of melancholy and dampness, lonely and inaccessible landscapes seen as from above but at close range. They tell – they don’t quite sing – monochromatic ballads of hard prehistoric mountain sides, dried up lands and dark crevices, time-worn rock where life has given up trying to survive....

John Taylor is indeed an interesting painter, shunning the loud, brassy language of so many painters, the “action” effects of the American school of abstract expressionists, the regional and traditional Canadianisms that have made so many well-painted works unexciting.⁴

Rev. Arsenault places Taylor’s work in that cusp between American Abstract Expressionism and Canadian regional art. Taylor painted at a time when modernist trends and styles were in ascendance in Canada, including Abstract Expressionism. In his later works, though, he still has a foot in both camps; he has moved significantly away from the early-twentieth-century representational art that is rooted in place. His predecessors in Alberta, who he knew both as artists and teachers, included Walter J. Phillips, who from 1940 was a resident artist at the Banff School of Fine Arts, and H. G. Glyde. Glyde and all of the instructors in the extension art program nurtured local Alberta artists, who almost without exception were landscape artists.

Canada’s centenary in 1967 resulted in an affirmation of national identity and pride that culminated in the opening of Expo ’67 in Montreal. The fair’s theme, “Man and His World,” was an expression of a global vision that included art and culture. Canada was struggling then, as it is today, with competing provincial and national visions and a desire to be accepted on the international stage. These same tensions were present in the art scene and, for many critics and young artists, regional art was parochial, and international modernist trends were the wave of the future. This conflict was playing out at the end of Taylor’s life and, since that time,

non-representational work has dominated the art scene not only in Alberta but also in Canada as a whole. An examination of reviews and the art history literature pertaining to Alberta demonstrates the conflict and also the ascendance of abstract art.

The memorial exhibit curated by Allison Forbes in 1973 drew record crowds to the Edmonton Art Gallery. To accomplish the exhibit, donations of cash were solicited by the art department at the university. Ron MacGregor wrote in a review titled “He captured mountains – and Albertans’ admiration,” in *The Edmonton Journal*, December 1, 1973:

The works in this show encompass a period of a little over 20 years. Only part of the prolific output, they are visible evidence of Taylor’s affection and respect for natural forms: for their simplicity, for their durability, for their strength.

They held so much to interest him that for a long time he was content to represent them comparatively literally. His aim seems to have been to evoke a response from the viewer that comes from ready identification with familiar elements.

.....

The nature of the elements with which he concerned himself was perhaps responsible for Taylor’s continuing interest in texture at a time when many artists were turning to flat surfaces and the staining of unsized canvas.

His use of white glue and sand, the scoring he produced with the wooden end of his brush, were means to achieve equivalence with the granular surface of rocks. It comes as no surprise to read in the catalogue of Taylor’s admiration for the British painter John Piper, whose heavily-hatched surfaces and savage juxtapositions of light and shadow must have struck a responsive chord in him.

The last paintings of his life have a special fascination. His attention had been progressively focusing upon the mountains, first on the rock-face, then by degrees on the mysterious realm of the glaciers.

There is a strange sense of pilgrimage about these later works. It is as if the mountains drew him always closer to them with a promise that if he persisted, he would, one day, know their innermost secrets.

MacGregor concludes:

Taylor was not interested in achieving great status in the art marketplace. He did what he wanted to do, impervious to pundits and style-brokers, and at the end of it all he had captured the aura of the Rocky Mountains in a manner that completely eluded those distinguished visitors – Leighton, Sargent, Brown[e] – who came to paint, but failed to understand.

MacGregor also places Taylor in the context of Alberta art in his review titled “Alberta’s art heroes, past and present,” *The Edmonton Journal*, Friday, April 13, 1973. He is reviewing an exhibit at the Edmonton Art Gallery titled “Art in Alberta: Paul Kane to the Present,” curated by Karen Wilkin to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the EAG (the exhibited also travelled to the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary). He writes:

But the most striking contrast in the interpretation of Alberta’s landscape is to be seen in the juxtaposition of works by Belmore Browne and Jack Taylor.

Browne’s has all the conventional trimmings of the Great Canadian Landscape: conifers, a stream, snow tinged pink by the setting sun.

In Taylor’s painting, all the excess generalities have been stripped away, so that what remains is rock, snow and an austerity that John Donne would have admired.

Browne’s looks as if it had been assembled from a Handikit of winter scenery: it has no particularity. Taylor’s, on the other hand, is the apotheosis of Alberta’s Rockies.⁵

The tensions between provincial, national, and international movements were experienced very strongly at the University of Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s. Among the most articulate proponents of concepts of Canadian identity, and what has been described as “Western alienation,” was University of Alberta professor and author Dr. Henry Kreisel. In an editorial article titled “The West – still the unknown country,” he talks first about his own lack of knowledge about the West when he came in 1947 and continues:

Central Canada has long regarded the other regions of the country as appendages, and that's how the consciousness of our country has been shaped.

.....

The result of this was the creation and perpetuation of certain stereotyped images. But in a real sense the West remained an unknown part of the country.

You may object that all this happened in the past, 25 or 30 years ago. And things are a little better now but not very much better.

.....

The new stereotypes are no more helpful to an understanding of the region than the old ones.

Yet the materials for an adequate understanding of our region exist. It can be argued, for instance, that prairie literature is the richest body of regional writing in the country.

Writers like Philip Grove and Martha Ostenso, Sinclair Ross and W. O. Mitchell, Margaret Laurence and Rudy Wiebe (to mention only a few) have created a rich image of the people who settled here and of the forces that shaped them.

Any painters from Paul Kane onwards to such contemporaries as Dorothy Knowles and William Pehudoff, J. B. Taylor and Marion Nicoll, Takao Tanabe and Norman Yates have given us a rich pictorial heritage.

.....

For the development of a true national consciousness it is necessary that all the regions of the country understand one another. Or at least be properly informed about each other.⁶

The situation has not changed dramatically since Kreisel made his observations. The National Gallery of Canada in its Canadian painting exhibit area still has a preponderance of Group of Seven works as well as other central Canadian establishment artists. The only major exception is Emily Carr. There is no sense of the landscape tradition established by the CPR artists, and certainly there is no representation of the western landscape tradition as it evolved under the artists that Kreisel names above. With respect to non-representational art, it is the Quebec artists, including Jean-Paul Riopelle, that dominate.

Within ten years of his death, J. B. Taylor had been forgotten though his work continued to be exhibited largely as part of group exhibits. In 1980, the Edmonton Art Gallery mounted a seventy-fifth anniversary exhibit for the Province of Alberta titled *Painting in Alberta: An Historical Survey* (July 1 to August 31, 1980). Curator Karen Wilkin, again, contributed an essay on “Paul Kane to the Present.” The essay provides an overview of the development of art in Alberta and represents not only the work of itinerant painters such as Kane but also the CPR artists and Group of Seven members who painted the West. She also creates a kind of “who’s who” of significant Alberta-born artists, or those who spent significant time in the province. With respect to Taylor, whom she describes as “a transplanted Albertan,” she writes:

Taylor, a native of Charlottetown, spent most of his painting career in Alberta, teaching for many years in the art department of the University of Alberta, succeeding H. G. Glyde as its head⁷; he also taught at the Banff School. Taylor’s work ranges from fresh *plein air* landscape studies, which capture the sparkling light of the prairies, to brooding studies of icefields. Done just before his death in 1970, the icefield paintings become near-abstractions, with their flattened perspective, cool colours, simple shapes. Although Taylor’s work is not well-known outside of Alberta, his activities as both painter and teacher won him a large audience of admirers within the province.⁸

She included three Taylor paintings in the exhibit, all early works: *Alberta Badlands*, n.d., *Looking West*, 1951, and *Snow Patch, Sunshine*, 1951.

In 1982, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts mounted an exhibit of works in its own collection. The exhibit was curated by Jetske [Sybesma]-Ironsides and is titled *Spaces and Places: Eight Decades of Landscape Painting in Alberta*. The introductory essay is titled “Spaces and Places: An Introduction to the Formative Years of Painting Alberta.” She includes two paintings by Taylor: *Peace River, Above Hudson Hope, BC*, 1960, (oil on masonite) and *Lake McArthur No. 7*, 1963 (oil on canvas). She writes of this painting:

Jack Taylor, in *Lake McArthur No. 7*, concentrates on an almost abstract depiction of a massive rockwall. The painting is a good example of the so-called “dark paintings” from the early 1960s, in which the artist explores the subtleties of light on a rock

face. In spite of the intricate textures of the stone seen at close range, Taylor still retains in the foreground, at the bottom edge of the painting, a faint reference to water: a mountain stream or lake. The translucency of water, in subtle contrast with the opaque and solid rocks, foreshadows Taylor's last work.⁹

In 1990, twenty years after Taylor's death, Sybesma guest-curated an exhibit titled "The Sublime Revisited: Mountain Paintings by J. B. Taylor," for the Fine Arts Building Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Alberta. The exhibit includes the works of Taylor's second period (1962–70). In her short contextual essay, Sybesma references CPR artist John Fraser, and Immanuel Kant's, *The Critique of Judgment*, and also Paul Crowther's *The Kantian Sublime*. The focus of the essay appears to be a desire to contrast Taylor's close observation of the Rocky Mountains with Fraser's less-closely-observed works, which, according to established Canadian art historian Denis Reid in his benchmark work *Our Own Country Canada*, were sometimes based on photographs. She writes:

What does all this have to do with Taylor? My contention is that, contrary to the "CPR artists," Jack Taylor was not satisfied with taking a "free ride" by painting mountain scenery on the basis of photographic images. Further, in order to create his abstract alpine compositions of the 1960s, Taylor had experienced year after year at O'Hara that effervescent feeling of being literally on top of the world. Only after he had absorbed perceptually the region surrounding the lakes O'Hara, Oesa, Opabin and McArthur could he synthesize his feelings about it. Only then could he paint their "light at the edge of shadow," as Dorothy Barnhouse once put it.¹⁰

Jane Lytton Gooch in her book *Artists of the Rockies: Inspiration of Lake O'Hara*, illustrating a hundred years of landscape painting by the Lake O'Hara area in the Canadian Rockies, presents the region as a place of power. Focussing on one subject enables Gooch to show how its depiction has varied over time, and her book provides an almost art historical lesson on the evolution of landscape painting styles. Gooch writes:

Landscape painting dominated Canadian art until the 1940s, but abstract images became more popular in the '50s and '60s. The careers of J. B. Taylor and Lawren

Harris are examples of this trend as they moved from stylized images to totally abstract symbols of the alpine scene. The art inspired by Lake O'Hara over the years offers, in microcosm, the spectrum of Canadian art history, from the artistic explorers in the school of railway painters, to the Group of Seven discovering the spirit of the Canadian northland, through a period of abstraction when artists turned away from representational landscapes, and, finally, more recently to a renewed interest in painting O'Hara in a more realistic way.¹¹

I think that her linking of Harris and Taylor is significant. She writes of Taylor:

J. B. Taylor, originally from Prince Edward Island, returned to O'Hara many times over twenty years in his attempt to capture the feeling of the alpine landscape and, especially, the effects of light around the mountain lakes above O'Hara – Oesa, Opabin, and McArthur. He made his first trips to the mountains in 1948, the same time he started teaching in the summers at the Banff School, and his O'Hara landscapes of the early '50s represent mainly small portions of the alpine scene, with the rocks and isolated trees, rather than the expansive mountain landscape. The more he experienced his beloved O'Hara, however, the more abstract his compositions became until in the late '50s and throughout the '60s, before his death in 1970, his paintings express the interplay of light on designs of ice, rock, and water. A retrospective exhibition in 1990 at the University of Alberta clearly showed that O'Hara was a great inspiration to him.¹²

She uses Taylor's work *McArthur #1* (1968, acrylic on masonite, private collection) as an illustration in the book.

In 2005, Nancy Townshend published *A History of Art in Alberta 1905–1970* and dedicated it “to Alberta's first and second generation of artists who laid the foundation for Alberta's contemporary visual arts.” She includes a short critical biography of J. B. Taylor in “Chapter 6. Modernism with Objectivity 1947–1970.” She begins with a quote from Les Graff (1995): “Individualism in Alberta's art has been so minute that it wasn't strong enough in a group way that it wasn't recognized by the rest of Canada.”¹³ That is an interesting perspective, but many so-called “schools” of painting do not necessarily involve individuals working together but rather

a set of common themes or even style and medium. The entry includes short quotes from a range of reviews of Taylor's work, including Greenberg's observation cited above.¹⁴ Greenberg, a polarizing force in Canadian art, was to have an enormous influence on younger Edmonton artists who created non-representational works in acrylics and who became a small "New York" school in their own right.

The next comprehensive look at Alberta art came in 2007 with the publication of *Alberta Art and Artists: An Overview*, by Patricia Ainslie and Mary-Beth Laviolette. Taylor is discussed in the section titled "Modernists: Embracing Abstraction," written by Patricia Ainslie, former vice president and senior curator of art at the Glenbow.¹⁵ She includes Taylor's work *Composition #2* (1968, acrylic and gesso, Government House Foundation, Edmonton) and writes in the caption:

Even in his most abstract work, Taylor continued to be inspired by nature in his search for an uncomplicated statement about the natural environment. His intent was to work on the picture plane and manipulate the surface to reflect his analysis of the underlying structure of rock and ice related to his study of glacial formations. Here, he has first applied a thick medium of gesso to the surface, which he has worked with a palette knife to create a shallow textured relief. Over this he has applied three bands of colour in thin luminous veils and then glazed the surface. The translucency of paint in close-valued blues is in a rich, harmonic key.¹⁶

While Taylor's name is only mentioned in passing by Laviolette in her book, *An Alberta Art Chronicle: Adventures in Recent and Contemporary Art*, this is important in the contextualization of his work. The book was a project for Alberta's centenary in 2005 and focuses on artistic production after 1970. The title of her first section – "Place, Landscape and Art about Nature" – echoes the title of the 1982 exhibit mounted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts – *Spaces and Places: Eight Decades of Landscape Painting in Alberta* (discussed above). The exhibit toured to Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and Calgary, in Alberta; Prince George and Burnaby, in British Columbia; St. Catharines, Toronto, and Stratford, in Ontario; and Sackville, New Brunswick. Its perhaps unstated mission was to take Alberta landscape art to new audiences, in particular, Canada's heartland of Ontario. In Chapter One: "A Troubled Genre: Post-1970 Landscape Art," Laviolette quotes art critic Liz Wylie's review of the exhibit in *Canadian Art*: "Since it is touring nationally, it is a shame that Spaces and Places was restricted to only landscape paintings, since most of Alberta's top contemporary artists do not work in this genre. Because of its emphasis on

the traditional, this exhibition serves to reinforce the national image of Alberta as a non-intellectual, unpeopled vacationland.”¹⁷

Lavolette describes the movement away from landscape painting in Alberta (and throughout Canada) as follows:

In general, unless the subject of landscape is used to address a contemporary art issue, like deconstructing or analyzing its representation in historical art and western culture, or how the developed world treats nature as a resource for exploitation, contemporary works inspired by or representing the Canadian terrain are largely viewed as passé, even problematic. As the Banff-based publication *The Cairn* informed its readership in 1994: “Landscape painting has fallen out of vogue in the mainstream of contemporary Canadian art.”¹⁸

She notes that Alberta, by and large, has bucked this trend and concludes:

It is true: painting of all kinds has survived and flourished in Alberta. But given what many in the influential public sector of the visual arts have focused their attention on across Canada, it can be said that what will have been thoroughly documented into the next century is art that is interdisciplinary, and whose strategies are conceptual and critical. Painting will be considered only when it addresses the same kind of social and cultural concerns that have preoccupied interdisciplinary work, including installation, video, mixed media, performance and photo-based art.¹⁹

In Chapter Two: “A Modernizing Perspective: Second Generation Landscape Painting,” Lavolette distinguishes between the first generation of Alberta landscape artists (e.g., Illingworth Kerr, A. C. Leighton, Margaret Shelton, Maxwell Bates, W. J. Phillips, Euphemia McNaught, Roland Gissing, W. L. Stevenson, H. G. Glyde, Catherine and Peter Whyte) and the second generation (e.g., Marion Nicoll, Thelma Manarey, Janet Mitchell, Jack Taylor, Norman Yates, Frank Vervoort, Ken Christopher, Ted Godwin, Joice Hall, John McKee, and Dulcie Foo Fat). She notes that the first generation “established landscape as a primary subject matter for art in Alberta – the overwhelming presence of the environment perhaps making it almost inevitable.”²⁰ She sees them as “swimming against the tide” as “in the international art world, landscape

has become a minor genre – a regional practice that can't quite shake its associations with the nineteenth century.”²¹ Her contextualization of Taylor's work in the next passage is significant:

Abstraction has also become the prevailing language of post-war art and although some first-generation artists are willing to experiment with it, few are able to adapt to it with the vigour or success of a Marion Nicoll or Jack Taylor. Still, even with the introduction of an abstract approach, the subject of landscape guarantees its reception will most often be limited to the region in which it is produced. Worse, it will sometimes be dismissed as an unworthy subject.²²

It is important to understand the evolution of Alberta's art scene from 1970 onwards because it accounts for the eclipse of Taylor's reputation and work.

The most recent art publication that provides commentary on Taylor is Nancy Townshend's book, *Art Inspired by the Canadian Rockies, Purcell Mountains and Selkirk Mountains 1809–2012*. Townshend groups Taylor with modern artists inspired by these mountains. She observes: “J. B. Taylor (1917–1970) abstracted mountains, especially those around Lake O'Hara in paintings like *Landscape* (1963, Insert 22) and *Opabin #11* (1968). Creating abstracted and textured transparent layers, Taylor presents his visual equivalences of his experiences in these great mountains.”²³

7 | Conclusion

Christopher Taylor has created a database of his father's works that provides insight into what fuelled his creativity. There are 678 works in the database of paintings that he has located, and he has images for 484 (194 are thus unknown). Of the known works, 391 are Canadian landscapes broken down as follows: mountains, 109; glaciers, 100; foothills, 50; parkland, 46; prairie, 32; badlands, 15; Maritimes, 27; Yukon, 3; and Northwest Territories, 2; West Coast, 7. There are 105 Italian pictures; 28 aircraft pictures; 62 portraits; 11 miscellaneous, known works; and 81 not fully catalogued in any category (either subject is unknown or the documentation is very sketchy). The primary sources of Taylor's work are, thus, mountains (in my discussion I include glaciers with them) and the Italian pictures. Wallis Kendal, an artist and activist who studied with Taylor in 1968, wrote a moving tribute to Taylor's work:

When he showed me the work he was doing he explained that he was trying to get inside the emotions of the mountains, most notably the icefalls and glaciers. He was fascinated by the surface tension of ice and snow and the composition that surfaces create when they expand and contract. He was very excited by the prospect of his journeys to and from the mountains. It was as if he had waited a lifetime to explore their visual elements with the eye of the philosopher. He was the professor about to burst out of his enclave, on the cusp of a great discovery of understanding. I remember vividly when he brought out some of his most intimate paintings. They were not just works of art. They were the philosophy of nature at its most primal state. The very beginning of time reformed.¹

It is clear that Taylor's mountain paintings, whether the early, more traditional representations of nature, or the late-period, more abstract works, are significant contributions to Alberta

and Canada's artistic canon. His innovation in the use of acrylic paints and movement into abstraction, had he lived, would have placed him in the vanguard of artists creating non-representational acrylic works that has dominated, and continues to dominate, painting production in the province into the twenty-first century. As with other artistic eras, contemporary curators tend to focus on the art of the moment, and what is considered avant-garde. Thus, multi-media productions tend to dominate exhibits such as *The News from Here: The 2013 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art* at the Art Gallery of Alberta. Interestingly, Curator Nancy Tousley's vision for the exhibit emphasizes place and identity, which are hallmarks of landscape art. She writes: "'The News from Here' is that we have entered an era of post-regionalism in which the significant particularities of place have been sharpened, nonetheless, and set in relief against the fabric of an increasingly interconnected world."²

One cannot but wonder whether Taylor would have moved further into abstraction and even beyond what I have described as the "idea of mountains." It is interesting to compare him with Norman Yates, Robert Sinclair, and Takao Tanabe, who continue to paint highly stylized landscapes. All, in fact, serve a bridging function between more traditional landscape painting that can be seen as a representation of nature and abstract paintings that are more about form and colour. Does that relegate them to the ranks of "regional artists," which in the Canadian art scene has become a pejorative term, although this staggers the imagination? Does anyone accuse Constable, Turner, or any of the Dutch Masters, whose subject matter is quintessentially regional, to second-class status? Having said this, it is clear that Taylor was aware of the changes in the art scene and experienced them first-hand as the Department of Art at the University of Alberta evolved. He had made at least two trips to art schools in the United States to see what new methodologies had been developed for the instruction of art. He had travelled to Europe twice. He had read art historical assessments such as Gombrich's work. The paintings of the last ten years of his life demonstrate his awareness of change, both in societal and art historical terms. They also reveal his ability to process it and create works that are uniquely his own.

Landscape painting continues to be about a sense of place, and place is an essential component of regional and national identity. Taylor is a master of this, and the critical opinion of his time, as well as the popularity of his art with buyers, demonstrate that he tapped into that sentiment, which he shared. Taylor's mountain paintings, whether representational or abstract, simply depict places of the heart. These paintings defy artistic and critical fashions and trends and, just as classic books are read from one generation to the next, present and future audiences will connect to the wonder in his work and the celebration of all landscapes.

In the end, his works are about time – the enormous span of geological time and the finite span of human existence. In the high places of the Rocky Mountains, he was able to connect with the unimaginable span of geological time. This is what he depicted in the fractured rocks and ice of glaciers and icefields, and the fossil-rich rocks of the badlands. When he looked at the ancient civilization of Italy, he read the human past in the aged walls and evolving architectural styles. Thus, his work has a universality that transcends the specifics of his subject matter, and he belongs in the canon of significant artists of the twentieth century.

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J. B. Taylor Chronology

This chronology is based on Allison Forbes's catalogue *J. B. Taylor Landscapes*, 1973. Additions were made by Christopher Taylor and Adriana Davies from a range of sources.

- 1917 John Benjamin Taylor born at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, son of Reginald Taylor, jeweller, and Elizabeth Chappell.
- 1934 Receives art lessons from local artist Mabel Gass.
- 1935 Attends Summer School in Painting on Cape Breton. The teacher is Frank DuMond of the Art Students League of New York.
- 1936 Leaves Charlottetown for New York, where he enrolls in Frank DuMond's painting class at the Art Students League.
- 1937 Begins a second year of study at the Art Students League.
- 1938 Opens a studio and begins teaching in Charlottetown.
- 1939 First one-man show of paintings at the Harris Memorial Gallery in Charlottetown.
- 1940 *Morning Shadows* purchased by International Business Machines for their North American Collection. Participates in an exhibition of the Maritime Art Association.
- 1941 Participates in an exhibition of the Maritime Art Association. Enlists in the Royal Canadian Air Force as Draftsman [and mural designer] and is posted to New Brunswick.
- 1941-45 Arranges three one-man shows for RCAF representing allied aircraft in use during the Second World War. Collections travelled across Canada and eastern United States.
- 1942 Stationed in Moncton, New Brunswick.
- 1943 Exhibits with the Sketch Club of the Moncton Society of Art.
- 1944 Stationed with the RCAF in Edmonton, Alberta.
- 1945 Stationed for a time in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. First Edmonton exhibition of Allied aircraft paintings. Discharged from the RCAF. Marries Audrey Anderson of Elgin, Manitoba. Enrolls as a Veteran in the Ontario College of Art.
- 1946 Spends second year at the Ontario College of Art.
- 1947 Graduates with honours from the Ontario College of Art and receives medal for proficiency in painting and drawing. Appointed Lecturer in Painting [Art] in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Alberta.
- 1948 During summer begins teaching at the Banff School of Fine Arts. During the winter session in Edmonton begins field trips for the Department of Extension. Visits many centres in central and southern Alberta. Has an exhibition of paintings in the Arts Building of the University of Alberta. First son Philip is born in March. Taught at the Banff School from 1948 to 1954 (spring, main and fall sessions).
- 1949 Exhibits paintings in several smaller Alberta centres.

- 1950 Promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor [of Art]. Exhibits paintings at Lethbridge and Red Deer, Alberta. Gives lecture on "Beauty" to the Humanities Association of Canada, Edmonton Branch.
- 1951 Exhibits paintings at the Banff School of Fine Arts, where he continues to teach summer sessions.
- 1952 One-man exhibition of paintings is shown at the Rutherford Library Art Gallery at the University of Alberta. Teaches spring and fall courses in painting at the Banff School of Fine Arts. Second son Christopher is born in September.
- 1953 Rutherford exhibition is sent on tour of Western Art Circuit. Exhibits at the Coste House in Calgary.
- 1955 Granted sabbatical leave. The family goes to London, England, and Jack studies at the Slade School of Art, University of London. They travel in the United Kingdom and Jack and Audrey visit the continent. Jack sketches in Italy. Attended Art seminars under E. H. Gombrich, noted art historian.
- 1956 Returns to teaching at the University of Alberta.
- 1958 Promoted to Associate Professor [of Art]. Exhibits with Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour in their Annual Show. Exhibits with the Royal Canadian Academy in their Seventy-ninth Exhibition.
- 1959 Travels to Prince Edward Island and visits New York. Exhibits paintings in the Studio Theatre, University of Alberta. Participates in the Eightieth Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy.
- 1960 Exhibits in the Summer Festival of the Arts in Edmonton.
- 1961 Travels to Europe in summer; visits Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy.
- 1962 Travels to Gunnar Mines and Yellowknife, N.W.T. to give lectures and demonstrations. Becomes juror for the Canada Council. Teaches at the Banff School of Fine Arts Summer Session.
- 1963 Exhibits at the Canadian Art Galleries, Calgary. Exhibits with the Saskatchewan Arts Board in Regina. Serves as president of the Edmonton Film Society. Works included in the All-Alberta Exhibition.
- 1964 First Show at the Jacox Galleries, Edmonton. Exhibits at the Confederation Gallery in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Exhibits at the Torches Theatre, Edmonton. Delivers lecture to the Dante Alighieri Society on Michelangelo. Is represented in the All-Alberta show at the Edmonton Art Gallery.
- 1965 Makes a tour of art schools and art galleries in the mid-western United States. Exhibits at the Owen Gallery at Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B.
- 1966 Second one-man show at Jacox Gallery, Edmonton. In summer, travels to Europe, visits London, Wales, and Amsterdam. Appointed Acting Head of the Department of Art on the retirement of Professor H. G. Glyde. Participates in All-Alberta Exhibition at the Edmonton Art Gallery. Organizes Memorial Exhibition for late Professor Bart Pragnell.
- 1967 Travels to the west coast and to Expo '67 in Montreal. Participates in Canadian Universities Centennial Drawing Exhibition.
- 1968 Visiting Lecturer at the University of British Columbia Summer Session. Third show at the Jacox Gallery, Edmonton. Travels to eastern United States visiting art schools and galleries. Has a small exhibition of sketches at Jacox Gallery in December.
- 1969 Travels to western United States visiting art schools and galleries.
- 1970 Spends summer studying mountains and glaciers in British Columbia and Alberta producing many sketches. Exhibition of portraits in University Hall, University of Alberta. Plans trip to the Northwest Territories.
- 1970 Dies September 15 at his home in Edmonton and his ashes are scattered above Lake O'Hara.

SERVICE ON PROFESSIONAL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

n.d.	President of the Alberta Society of Education through Art
n.d.	Member of the Provincial Arts Board, Government of Alberta
n.d.	Member of the College Art Association of America
1948-53	In charge of departmental exhibitions, Fine Arts Gallery, Rutherford Library
1948-53	Extension Department Art Course Committee
1948-53	Banff School of Fine Arts Course Program Committee
1949-54	Banff School of Fine Arts Final Student Exhibition
1949-53	Extension Department Community Art Program
1950-53	Banff School of Fine Arts Staff Selection Committee
1952-54	University of Alberta Summer School Staff Appointments
1957-66	University of Alberta Summer School Staff Appointments
1960-66	Department of Art Timetable Committee, Chairman
1961-66	Space Committee, Department of Art
1961-70	Department of Art Tenure Committee
1963-70	In charge of Departmental Registration Week
1964-66	Academic Standing Committee
1966-67	Department Heads Committee
1966-67	General Faculty Council
1966-70	Department of Art, B.F.A. Application Committee
1968-69	Department of Art, Staff Meetings Secretary
1970	Department of Art, Chairman's Responsibilities, July 1970

J. B. Taylor, 1917–1970: Selected Exhibitions

Numbers of paintings (where known) shown in square brackets. This list was begun by Allison Forbes and completed by Christopher Taylor and is reprinted with their permission. See the J. B. Taylor website created by Christopher Taylor (<http://www.jbtaylor.ca/exhibitions.php>; retrieved April 27, 2013).

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1939 | Harris Memorial Gallery, Charlottetown, P.E.I., first solo show [13];
Maritime Art Association, Charlottetown;
Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto;
IBM Canadian Art Exhibition, New York World's Fair, New York. |
| 1941 | Sixth Annual Exhibition, Maritime Art Association, Charlottetown [2];
Prince Edward Island Art Association, Harris Memorial Gallery, Charlottetown. |
| 1942 | Seventh Annual Exhibition, Maritime Art Association, Charlottetown [2]. |
| 1943 | Sketch Club Exhibition, Moncton Society of Art, Moncton, N.B. [4]. |
| 1944 | Edmonton Art Museum;
Arts and Sciences Bldg., University of Alberta, Edmonton [118 allied aircraft]. |
| 1945 | Memorial Art Gallery, Charlottetown [118 allied aircraft]. |
| 1948 | Arts Bldg., University of Alberta [20]. |
| 1949 | Several exhibitions in smaller Alberta centres. |
| 1950 | Summer Show, Alberta Society of Art, Edmonton Museum of Art, Edmonton [1]. |
| 1951 | Banff School of Fine Arts, Banff;
Faculty Show, Arts Bldg., University of Alberta. |
| 1952 | Prince Albert Regional Library, Prince Albert, Sask., solo show;
Rutherford Library Art Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, solo show. |
| 1952–53 | Western Art Circuit travelling show. |
| 1953 | Coste House, Calgary;
Brandon Public Library, Brandon, solo show, sponsored by the Brandon Art Club. |
| 1955 | Jubilee Art Collection exhibited – these paintings were purchased by the Province of Alberta to celebrate its 50th anniversary and include Taylor's painting <i>Alberta Badlands</i> , 1952, oil on canvas, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, as well as works by artists H. G. Glyde, Douglas Barry, Euphemia McNaught, Annora Brown, Theodore Schintz, Robert Hyndman, and Elva Frederking. |
| 1958 | 79th Exhibition, Royal Canadian Academy. |

- 1959 80th Exhibition, Royal Canadian Academy;
Studio Theatre, University of Alberta.
- 1960 Summer Festival of the Arts, Edmonton.
- 1963 Canadian Art Galleries, Calgary, solo show;
Saskatchewan Arts Board, Regina;
All Alberta Exhibition, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton.
- 1964 Jacox Galleries, Edmonton, solo show;
Confederation Memorial Gallery, Charlottetown;
Exhibition, Torches Theatre, Edmonton;
All Alberta Exhibition Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton;
Dawson Creek Art Gallery, Dawson Creek.
- 1965 Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B.
- 1966 Jacox Galleries, Edmonton, 2nd solo show;
All Alberta Exhibition, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton.
- 1967 Canadian Universities Centennial Drawing Exhibition.
- 1968 Jacox Galleries, Edmonton, 3rd solo show.
- 1969 The University of Saskatchewan Art Collection, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
Gift from the Government of Alberta to the Department of Agriculture [1].
- 1970 Portrait Exhibition, University Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, solo [6].

Posthumous Exhibitions

- 1971 Environment 71, Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Calgary, solo show.
- 1973 Memorial Exhibition, *Landscape Sketches*, University Art Gallery and Museum, University of Alberta, Edmonton, solo show; *J. B. Taylor Landscapes*, exhibition catalogue, J. Allison Forbes, text (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1973), Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton [39]. Memorial Exhibition, *Landscape Sketches*, Confederation Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown [38].
- 1980 *Art in Alberta: An Historical Survey. Paul Kane to the Present*, exhibition catalogue, Karen Wilkin, text (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton [3].
- 1986 *Spaces and Places: Eight Decades of Landscape Painting in Alberta*, exhibition catalogue, Jetske Sybesma-Ironside, text (Edmonton: The Alberta Art Foundation, 1986), Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton (travelling exhibition) [2].
- 1988 Paintings of Polar Bear Pass, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa [1].
- 1990 *The Sublime Revisited: Mountain Paintings by J. B. Taylor*, exhibition catalogue, Jetske Sybesma, text (Edmonton: Fine Arts Building Gallery, University of Alberta, 1990); Fine Arts Building Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, solo show [40].
- 1998 *Taylor's Planes*, exhibition catalogue, Susan Sax-Willock, text (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1998). Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton (travelling exhibition through Harcourt House Gallery) [9].
- 2000 *Mechanics of Vision: Drawing in Alberta*, exhibition catalogue, Jim Davies, text (Edmonton: Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, 2000), Extension Centre Gallery, University of Alberta Extension Centre, Edmonton [2].
- 2001 *J. B. Taylor: The Later Works*, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, solo show of mountain and foothill sketches [18];
J. B. Taylor: A Retrospective, exhibition catalogue (Edmonton: Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, 2001), Extension Centre Gallery, University of Alberta Extension Centre, Edmonton, solo show same as Whyte Museum Show [18].
- 2004 *Edmonton Excels, Half a Century of Painters at the University of Alberta's Department of Art & Design*, exhibition poster, Fine Arts Building Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton [4].
- 2005–2006 Alberta Golden Jubilee Collection, exhibit held at Government House, Edmonton [1].
- 2007 *Capital Modern: Edmonton Architecture & Urban Design 1940–1969*; exhibition poster, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton [1].
- 2008 *The Group of Seven to Takao Tanabe ... Inspiring Landscape*, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff [5].
- 2012 *J. B. Taylor and the Idea of Mountains*, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff [66].

Notes

1 | INTRODUCTION

- 1 Ron MacGregor, “He captured mountains –and Albertans admiration,” *Edmonton Journal*, December 1, 1973.
- 2 A quote from J. B. Taylor’s artist’s statement about OPABIN #1, which was featured on the cover of the *ATA Magazine* [June 1970]. Cover story by Evelyn Blakeman.

2 | A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

- 1 Reginald George “Gunny” Taylor (1883–1975) was born in Charlottetown and was a talented engraver whose work included silver trays and mirror sets. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Chappell (1887–1961) was an accomplished young woman who started to see her future husband when she was sixteen. Her family was affluent and they had servants in their home at 95 Upper Prince Street.
- 2 *Roman Girl at a Fountain*, a painting by Léon Bonnat (1833–1922), was commissioned by Catharine Lorillard Wolfe and was bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1887 (oil on canvas, 170.2 x 100.3 cm), Accession Number: 87.15.137.
- 3 Audrey Taylor was interviewed by Jackie Phillips in 1981 as part of an oral history project undertaken by the University Women’s Faculty group as part of the

American Year of Women. The two audiotapes are in the University of Alberta Archives,

- 4 She is listed as “GASS Mabel McCulloch (Mrs. Donald M. Gass)” in the online database of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative based in the Art Department at Concordia University, Montreal. She is said to have undertaken sketching expeditions in France, Switzerland, and England. The short biography also notes that her works are in many private collections, including that of International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) “Art of the America’s” for which she received a medal. Her biography in *Maritime Artists*, vol. 1, indicates that she was born in Nova Scotia and trained at the Ontario College of Art, the New England School of Design, Boston, and the Art Students League of New York with Frank Vincent DuMond. Mary W. Hashey, ed. *Maritime Artists* vol. 1 (Fredericton: Maritime Art Association, 1967), p. 34. I am grateful to the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative for this biography and also for some photocopies of the Paintings by Artists of the Maritimes, 1941–42, from the catalogue assembled by the Maritime Art Association, which lists her work titled *Elms* for sale at \$250. This appears to be the highest price for any of the artists listed. J. B. Taylor has two works listed: *Summer Birches* and *Nature’s Castle*, each for \$40.

- 5 The League's website (<http://www.theartstudentsleague.org>; retrieved April 27, 2013) states: "Founded in 1875 by artists and for artists, the Art Students League of New York has been instrumental in shaping America's legacy in the fine arts. Many renowned artists have honed their skills at the League, which is dedicated to sustaining the great tradition of training artists. Today, more than 2,500 students of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels, study at the League each month."
- 6 DuMond's best-known students include Charles Hawthorne, Georgia O'Keefe, John Marin, Andrew Loomis, Norman Rockwell, Frank Mason, Everett Raymond Kinstler, Arthur Maynard, Frank Reilly, Ted Seth Jacobs, and Herbert E. Abrams. Artist Matthew Innis on his blog has an interesting article titled "Frank Vincent DuMond and the Prismatic Palette." <http://underpaintings.blogspot.com/2008/07/frank-vincent-du-mond-and-prismatic.html>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 7 DuMond painted at the Art Colony in the village of Old Lyme, Connecticut, established by artist Henry Ward Ranger. http://www.flogris.org/learning/foxchase/html/essay_colony.php; retrieved February 14, 2013.
- 8 Family papers.
- 9 The quote is from an exhibit catalogue – *An exhibition in honor of the senior instructor at the Art Students League of New York*, January 9 to 22, 1949, in the League Gallery at 215 West 57th Street.
- 10 University of Alberta Women's Club oral history of Audrey Taylor, University of Alberta Archives.
- 11 The Wikipedia entry notes: "The term Link Trainer, also known as the 'Blue box' and 'Pilot Trainer' is commonly used to refer to a series of flight simulators produced between the early 1930s and early 1950s by the Link Aviation Devices, Inc., founded and headed by Ed Link, based on technology he pioneered in 1929 at his family's business in Binghamton, New York. These simulators became famous during World War II, when they were used as a key pilot training aid by almost every combatant nation." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Link_Trainer; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 12 Glyde received his training in England and came to Canada, in 1935, at the invitation of his friend A. C. Leighton, who was teaching at the Provincial Institute of Art and Technology in Calgary (later the Alberta College of Art and Design and now ACAD). By the time Taylor met him, Glyde was one of the most powerful figures in the visual arts in Alberta, a position that was consolidated in 1945 when he became the president of the Alberta Society of Artists. At this time, he was also invited to move to Edmonton to develop a fine arts department at the University of Alberta.
- 13 Now OCAD University.
- 14 Audrey was born on February 24, 1920, and died September 17, 2001.
- 15 Victor Anderson was born July 12, 1894, and died February 20, 1983; Lola Stiver was born January 28, 1896, and died November 22, 1986.
- 16 See Patricia Ainslie, *A Lifelong Journey: The Art and Teaching of H. G. Glyde* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1987), 52–53, for further details about the setting up of the department and its programs.

- 17 Mary-Beth Laviolette, *Alberta Mistresses of the Modern: 1935–1975* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2012). *Mediamag* writes about the exhibit: “Focusing on the work of ten women artists, all born by the end of 1918, the exhibition *Alberta Mistresses of the Modern: 1935–1975* shines new light on the establishment of modernism in the province. Working largely in Edmonton and Calgary, the work of these artists reveals the important role that women played in the development of modernism, particularly early forms of abstraction, in Alberta. Of the ten-member ‘Calgary Group,’ whose 53 oil paintings were featured in an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1948, four of the artists were women, including: Marion Nicoll, Janet Mitchell and Dorothy Willis. Of that group, only Marion Nicoll is still well recognized today for her commitment to modernism. The exhibition *Alberta Mistresses of the Modern* demonstrates, however, that there were many more women artists in this pioneering generation who contributed to Alberta’s cultural roots and the formation of a vibrant visual arts community in the province, and who were decidedly modern.” <http://mediamag.ca/2012/03/14/alberta-book-of-interest-10-alberta-women-artists-featured-in-mistresses-of-the-modern/#.URVRGWdRJ4M>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 18 A paper titled “America’s Salzburg: Designing Culture, Campus, and Landscape at the Banff School of Fine Arts 1946–1953,” by Dr. PearlAnn Reichwein, notes: “Envisioned as a great educational institution in the Canadian Rockies and a world centre for art and culture, the Banff School was conceived as the ‘Salzburg of America’ by its longtime director Donald Cameron (1901–1989). Cameron was a proponent of adult education who worked in the Department of Extension in Edmonton and ran the summer school in Banff. The school was located, he explained, based on the premise that ‘in Banff we had a great natural asset and a natural setting for a school in the Fine Arts.’ Naturalizing the idea of a mountain national park as exactly the right place for creating and consuming fine arts, education, and tourism, he saw potential for the Banff School to combine scenery with artistic capital in a symbolic landscape, much like the Austrian Salzburg Festival.” Reichwein, “America’s Salzburg Paper: Designing Culture, Campus, and Landscape at the Banff School of Fine Arts 1946–1953,” PDF posted online at <http://conferences.ncl.ac.uk/unescolandscapes/files/REICHWEINPearlAnn.pdf>.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 21 Ainslie, in *A Lifelong Journey*, notes that, from 1937 to 1943, Glyde did the Extension teaching alone and then was assisted by Walter J. Phillips. After 1945, she notes that Annora Brown, Florence Mortimer, Murray MacDonald, Marion Nicoll, and J. B. Taylor became instructors, pp. 37–38.
- 22 Faiers continued his studies with Will Barnet at the Art Students League of New York and, in 1952, became Professor of Painting and Printmaking and Chairman of the Art Department at the Memphis College of Art in Memphis, Tennessee. Edward Spencer Faiers (1908–1985). <http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/biography.aspx?artist=101608>; retrieved April 27, 2013.

- 23 The lecture, unfortunately, has not survived.
- 24 The Alberta Foundation for the Arts files note: "In July 1954, the Honorable C. E. Gerhart, Chair of the Alberta Jubilee Committee, announced that the Alberta Government under Premier Ernest C. Manning would purchase eight oil paintings by Alberta artists as part of the Jubilee celebration. These paintings would also be included in the 'Alberta Golden Jubilee Anthology,' along with the work of other Alberta writers and artists. The artworks would become a permanent provincial art collection."
- 25 The letter is in Taylor family papers.
- 26 The Slade School of Fine Art was established in 1871 and was the pre-eminent art school in the capital when Taylor went there. It was part of the University of London and was intended to provide fine art education within a liberal arts institution. At the time, it was a "new" university in contrast to Oxford and Cambridge. John Aiken, Slade Professor, on the School's website is quoted as follows: "UCL is one of the leading research universities in the world and increasingly provides opportunities for students and staff to develop collaborative projects and interdisciplinary research initiatives. In addition to UCL's extensive academic facilities, the Slade's location in the centre of London enables easy access to a wide range of unparalleled learning resources including many important galleries, museums, libraries, cultural institutions and theatres." (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade>; retrieved April 27, 2013). Of course, these were the advantages that it offered Taylor.
- 27 Ainslie, *A Lifelong Journey*, 52.
- 28 The binder also includes the final exam written in April, 1957. This not only includes the identification of twenty-four artworks in slide form but also required drawings of architectural elements and Renaissance works of art (together with information about the artists and the school to which they belonged).
- 29 Family Papers. Taylor applied for funding support for the study tour component of the trip (May 25–August 25, 1961) from the Canada Council and was supported by Geo Glyde, Dean of Arts Douglas E. Smith, and Dr. Charles F. Comfort, Director, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 30 Family Papers, from the letter to Mr. Victor Noonan, Scholarship Officer, The Canada Council.
- 31 Its records were donated to the Glenbow Archives, and it is described as follows: "Canadian Art Galleries was established by John Davenall Turner, 1900–1980, and his wife, Grace Robertson, 1904–1994, in late 1945 at 332–7th Avenue SW, Calgary. John had previously studied art. The Turners represented many well-known Canadian artists, and also sold some American work. The gallery also sold artists' supplies and undertook framing. In 1948 it moved to 330–7th Avenue SW and in 1955 to 505–17th Avenue SW. In 1961 it moved to 811–17th Avenue SW. The gallery was sold to J. Patrick Cowan in 1965 and Doug Maclean in 1983. In 1994 the gallery moved to 110–9th Avenue SW and in the late 1990s to Canmore, Alberta." Source: Glenbow Archives, Canadian Art Galleries Fonds. http://www2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspx?XC=/search/archivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&R

- L=0&NP=255&%0AMF=WPEngMsg.ini
&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20
entry+|+Title&QI0=Canadian+Art+
Galleries+fonds; retrieved April 27, 2013.
<http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archives>
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Msg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=
Main%20entry+|+Title&QI0=Canadian
+Art+Galleries+fonds
- 32 Ainslie, *A Lifelong Journey*, 54–55.
- 33 The gallery played an important role in promoting local artists, and it is mentioned in the exhibit listings of various artists, including Norman Yates, Alex Janvier, and Doug Haynes. In 1964, when the Edmonton Art Gallery refused to show Dennis Burton's controversial *Garterbeltmania* series, John Jacox took the exhibit for his gallery.
- 34 Notes written by Philip Taylor as a result of questions from the author.
- 35 The letter is among the Taylor Family papers.
- 36 Taylor met Townsend when he was a visiting professor at the Banff School of Fine Arts. Townsend taught there eleven years from 1951 and died while still at the school in 1973. Townsend also served as a visiting professor in the Art Department at the University of Alberta in 1962–63, and he and Taylor were friends. Townsend had a one-man show at the Jacox Galleries in June, 1963. Taylor Family papers.
- 37 Among the family papers is a list of art schools that he intended to visit as well as his contacts. These include: Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada, and Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Indiana, New York, and Kansas. He ended up visiting the School of Art, University of Iowa; Fort Hays Kansas State College (the letter to Dr. Eleanor Caldwell mentions his interest in acrylics); College of Fine Arts, University of Utah; School of Art, University of Denver; and St. John's University College of Arts and Sciences, Collegeville, Minnesota.
- 38 An online search on Davey done on July 5, 2012, found no information on him. In Taylor's files, there is a small program from the 1968 Art Class Conference of the Department of Extension, and it provides the following biography: "Professor Davey was educated in England. In 1953, he received a French Government Scholarship for post-graduate study at L'École des Hautes Études, University of Paris, and for private research. In 1956, he was given a grant from the Courtauld Institute of Art for a three months study tour of the United States. From 1954 to 1958, he was lecturer in the History of art at the Slade School of Art and visiting lecturer at the Kingston-on-Thames School of Art. From 1958 to 1964, Professor Davey lectured in the Department of Fine Art, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and, prior to coming to Canada in September 1967, he was Principal of the West Sussex College of Art and County Art Adviser for the organization and supervision of all art education in primary and secondary schools."
- 39 The University of Alberta Archives website (<http://www.ualberta.ca/ARCHIVES/guide/3FACULTY/rg41c.htm>; retrieved February 2, 2011) provides the following information on the department, its structure, and archival holdings of administrative records: "The University established

the first Department of Fine Arts in the province in 1945. Visual arts, music and drama were included under the headship of Henry George Glyde. In 1962 the BFA program in art was introduced; 1965 saw the establishment of the Department of Art and Design; and by 1970/71 an MFA Program was instituted. The Department's present structure was developed between 1967 and 1974. Courses are offered in the three major areas of Art, Design, and History of Art and Design."

Heads

1945–1966 Henry George Glyde

1966–1967 John Benjamin Taylor (Acting)

1967–1976 Ronald Davey

40 J. Percy Smith, "Teach – Or Get Lost," in *c.a.u.t. Bulletin de l'a.c.p.u.* 17, no. 4 (April 1969): 2–18.

41 The other University of Alberta representatives were Drama: Gordon Peacock, Frank Bueckert, and John Terfloth; Art: besides Taylor, J. A. Forbes and E. Norman Yates; Music: R. S. Eaton, Thomas Rolston, and Violet Archer.

42 His work in the community included: art classes from 1966 to 1969 at the Derrick Golf and Country Club; from 1964 to 1966, he organized experimental art classes for the School of the Deaf in Edmonton; and, from 1953 to 1963, he organized art classes for polio patients at the university hospital.

43 Philip's interest in nature was nurtured by his parents through bird-watching trips through the Edmonton Bird Club. In fact, Audrey served as president of the club. Philip, in notes prepared for the author, remembers when his father gave an evening talk to the club members on "drawing and painting nature" and notes:

"He covered the basics of composition, perspective and dealing with natural subjects (birds). Toward the very end one young member asked if Dad really had put a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the tree he had drawn as part of the demonstration. Everyone in the audience laughed heartily at that point."

3 | MOUNTAIN PICTURES: THE SUBLIME PERIOD (1947 TO 1961)

- 1 Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (Harvard Classics, 1909–14, vol. 24, pt. 2), New York: P. F. Collier and Sons Publishers, 1909–14. Bartleby: Great Books Online. <http://www.bartleby.com/24/2/107.html>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 2 George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin*. Victorian Web: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.1.html>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 3 Cited by Landow.
- 4 Laure Meyer, *Masters of English Landscape* (Paris: Terrail, 1995), 11.
- 5 Raymond J. O'Brien, *American Sublime: Landscape and Scenery of the Lower Hudson Valley* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 5.
- 6 The term was first used in 1954 by John Baur, Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; see <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/luminism.htm>.
- 7 Jane Lytton Gooch in *Artists of the Rockies: Inspiration of Lake O'Hara* demonstrates the hold that this extraordinarily beautiful area had on artists from the CPR artists to John Singer Sargent and the Group of Seven.

- 8 Nancy Townshend, *Art Inspired by the Canadian Rockies, Purcell Mountains and the Selkirk Mountains, 1809–2012* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 2012).
- 9 Sir William Cornelius Van Horne entry, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* – <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=41876>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 10 DuMond is quoted in an exhibit catalogue (“An exhibition in honor of the senior instructor at the Art Students League of New York, January 9th to 22nd, 1949, in the League Gallery at 215 West 57th Street”), 3–4.
- 11 The 2002 Tate Gallery exhibit titled *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820–1880* revived interest in the Hudson River School and resulted in a whole new generation of contemporary criticism. The exhibit resulted in some new ways of looking at the works as well as a critical vocabulary. An example of this is Judith Hansen O’Toole’s *Different Views in Hudson River School Painting* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Hansen traces the use of multiples to English writer and landscapist William Gilpin (1724–1804), who emphasized the infinite variety of nature and the need for artists to capture this, p. 15. The book provides extensive examples of this practice.
- 12 Nancy Townshend provides the most comprehensive view of them in her *Art Inspired by the Canadian Rockies*.

4 | MOUNTAIN PICTURES: THE ABSTRACT PERIOD (1962 TO 1970)

- 1 Gombrich had become the Senior Research Fellow of the Warburg Institute in November 1946 and, when Taylor heard him lecture, he was a Reader (1954). In 1959, Gombrich became Director of the Institute, which is a part of the University of London, and focussed on the study of classical tradition in Europe viewed as the basis of Western civilization.
- 2 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Bollingen Foundation and Pantheon Books, 2nd ed., 1961).
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- 5 Clipping in Audrey Taylor’s scrapbook. The book Stahl cites is E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*.
- 6 Tate online, <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ArtistWorks?cgroupid=999999961&artistid=1774&page=1>; retrieved April 27, 2013. Piper painted this work in 1941.
- 7 The Golden Artist Colours website provides information about founder Leonard Bocour and his nephew Sam Golden as well as the company’s important role in the development of acrylic paints. <http://www.goldenpaints.com/justpaint/jp5article1.php>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 8 The author examined these painting supplies with David Cantine and Christopher Taylor.
- 9 Taylor Family papers.
- 10 Letter from Randy Koenig to Taylor dated April 29, 1970, confirming his arrival

in Edmonton with supplies. Koenig was asked to demonstrate the supplies to the students. Taylor Family papers.

- 11 Letter from Robert Sinclair to Christopher Taylor, ca. 2006.
- 12 Audrey Taylor's scrapbook.
- 13 While Taylor travelled to the United States to visit art schools and colleges as possible models for retooling the program at the University of Alberta, he also visited galleries along the way. Friend Warren Gaylor, who took art classes with him in Dawson Creek, remembers travelling to New York with him and observes that they had animated discussions about works in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 14 Interview with the author, April 26, 2010.
- 15 Family Papers. The file folder also includes letters to the Smithsonian; Arctic Institute of North America in Washington, D.C.; National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., in which Taylor asks for any material relevant to his research.
- 16 The exhibit included works by Stephen Andrews (Visiting Professor), Bruce Bentz, David Cantine, Alison Forbes, Virgil Hammock, John Knowlton, Jeremy Moore, and Bob Sinclair. The prospectus notes: "This exhibition presents aspects of the professional concerns of individual faculty members at the present time. The majority of the work has been executed during the current academic year and includes evidence of the personal research by both permanent and visiting members of the faculty." Source: Taylor Family papers.
- 17 Audrey Taylor's scrapbook.
- 18 Discussion with the author.

6 | SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION

- 1 Clement Greenberg's involvement in Canadian art is well-documented in David J. Currell's "Modernism in Canada: Clement Greenberg and Canadian Art," unpublished MA thesis, 1995, Concordia University.
- 2 Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," *Canadian Art* (March–April, 1963). Reprinted in Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 161.
- 3 The government of Prince Edward Island provides a senior arts award in his name. The biographical information is from their site: <http://www.peiartsawards.ca/FatherArsenaultSeniorArtsAward/AboutFatherAdrienArsenault/tabid/111/Default.aspx>; retrieved April 27, 2013.
- 4 Audrey Taylor scrapbook.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Henry Kreisel, "The West – still the unknown country," *Edmonton Journal*, June 7, 1978.
- 7 In fact, Taylor was acting head for only a year.
- 8 Karen Wilkin, "Paul Kane to the Present," in *Painting in Alberta: An Historical Survey* (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), n.p.
- 9 [Sybesma] Ironside, *Spaces and Places* Catalogue, 134. The Forbes quote is from the 1973 commemorative exhibit catalogue.
- 10 Exhibit catalogue, 19.

- 11 Jane Lytton Gooch, *Artists of the Rockies: Inspiration of Lake O'Hara* (Ferne, BC: Alpine Club of Canada, 2003), 22–23.
- 12 Ibid. 21.
- 13 Nancy Townshend, *A History of Art in Alberta* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 2005), 95.
- 14 Ibid., 119.
- 15 Patricia Ainslie and Mary-Beth Laviolette, *Alberta Art and Artists* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2007), 51.
- 16 Ibid., 59.
- 17 Mary-Beth Laviolette, *An Alberta Art Chronicle: Adventures in Recent and Contemporary art* (Canmore, AB: Altitude, 2006), 18–19.
- 18 Ibid., 19.
- 19 Ibid., 21.
- 20 Ibid., 27.
- 21 Ibid., 27.
- 22 Ibid., 27.
- 23 Townshend, *Art Inspired by the Canadian Rockies*, 50.

7 | CONCLUSION

- 1 Tribute written by Wallis Kendal for the Taylor website, ca. 2006.
- 2 Nancy Tousley, *The News from Here: The 2013 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Art Gallery of Alberta. <http://www.youraga.ca/alberta-biennial>; retrieved April 27, 2013.

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Climbing among the glaciers, you become aware of time. You can see the sun, wind, and rain that caused the great masses of ice to change their forms over many thousands of years.... His [the artist's] main aim is to construct on canvas the simplest statement he can make. —J. B. Taylor, 1970.



J. B. (Jack) Taylor (1917–1970) was an important figure in the history of Banff and western Canada's artistic community. Inspired by the locale, Taylor spent his career striving to depict the idea of the mountain, moving over time from traditional representations of nature to an intuitive perception of the essential elements of landscape – rock, water, and sky. Always, he sought to capture his ideas through the development of a new visual language. He applied this new vernacular to a range of studies encompassing portraiture through to other landscapes.

Filled with images of his work and photographs of his life as an artist and teacher in western Canada, this book is the first to focus completely on J. B. Taylor, his importance to the western Canadian and Banff artistic communities, and his role in the transition from traditional, eastern, North American and European landscape ideals and technique to a more abstract representation and the formation of a new aesthetic of the wilderness based on the mountains of the West.

ADRIANA A. DAVIES is a well-known researcher, writer, editor, and poet. She was the Executive Director of the Alberta Museums Association for thirteen years and founding Executive Director of the Heritage Community Foundation. In 2010, she was invested in the Order of Canada for contributions to heritage.



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