Vie des arts

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Translations/Traductions

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Number 56, Fall 1969

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/58155ac

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Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (print)
1923-3183 (digital)

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Cite this article

Kirbyson, Y., Ouimet, L. & Desjardins, P. W. (1969). Translations/Traductions. *Vie des arts*, (56), 76–90.

TRANSLATIONS / TRADUCTIONS

Editorial

BY ANDRÉE PARADIS

The Integration of the arts, a permanent debate.

Should an architecture that is complete be sufficient unto itself? And when may we speak of completeness?

Perhaps we can in the case of the Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto who, since about 1930 has been taking the part of a franc-tireur in international architecture circles. Putting aside concrete to return to traditional materials like wood and brick, introducing poetry into functionalism without denying the geometric severity in favour since constructivism; it is not an accident that he created a style that assured him a great popularity. He meets the aspirations of a society for which he conceives a place to live that answers fundamental necessities. His taste for well-known materials and sensual forms leads him to build not only a house but also everything that serves the man who lives in it. Moreover, the manner in which he treats materials makes all ornamentation superfluous. He is said to be violently opposed to the integration of the arts.

The debate between partisans and non-partisans of the integration of the arts thus retains all of its acuity. It nevertheless remains that the architect who acts as a creator can also complement the painter and the sculptor with whom he feels affinities and with whom he can develop his ideas in favourable conditions. Such an attitude to work existed at the National Arts Centre where architect Fred Lebensold frankly opted for integration of the arts. Has this broad-mindedness, this desire to involve the artist found a satisfactory answer? Diverse opinions will allow us to have at least some idea of this and to measure the importance of the problems to be resolved.

The Omnipresence of Cultural Needs

The accelerated construction of vast architectural complexes intended for cultural purposes is a phenomenon of our times. Here and there, new buildings are going up. The postulate of Novalis is especially apt: "It depends on us whether the world is consistent with our wishes."

For a long time cut off from cultural wealth, North America is taking the lead and is feverishly building theatres and cultural centres. Lively controversy is the result. In the United States as in Canada, numerous objections are raised: from the economic point of view, the increased costs of building and operating; from the cultural point of view, design against the technical requirements of contemporary artists; from a political point of view, centralization versus decentralization.

This opposition is often justified of course, but the enthusiasm of the crowds who frequent the new art centres is undiminuished. For more than 30 years we have called for theatres and concert halls, and we have advocated policies of cultural development. A first step has been achieved: there are buildings devoted to the arts in Vancouver, Charlottetown, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa, and their scope coincides with the impetus given to artistic creativity by the Canada Council of Arts and the provincial ministries of cultural affairs. In Canada, at the present time, we have one of the most dynamic policies of assistance to artists that there is; it is comparable to that of Sweden and Holland.

The problem is not that of knowning what we might have done if . . . we had done otherwise; but of setting in motion what already exists, making a maximum use of artistic potential, and of involving new sectors of the public. Decentralization will, logically, take place in the wake of strong centralization, Europe with its deeply-rooted cultures attains this with difficulty; its modest results, although interesting, are based on old foundations. We still have to develop the source of all our future influences.

Finally the tone is an optimistic one. If it has been possible to find the sums needed for the construction of theatre and art centres, the people responsible for cultural policies will certainly find ways to assure the proper operation of artistic activities. They would not be able to disappoint two million Canadian art enthusiasts who expect a great deal from the artistic climate in which they would like to live. They sometimes dream, during periods of austerity, of a trans-Canadian road that would be bordered with monumental sculptures. A vast country needs such forcefulness.

The act of faith by the builders who wanted to give everyone the opportunity for entertainment, the opportunity to increase their knowledge and pleasure, to assure their access to a world of marvels, such is the adventure of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa with which this issue will deal. The centre was brought into existence by the National Arts Centre Act (14-15 Elizabeth 11, 1966, chapter 48) which received royal assent on July 15, 1966. On December 1, 1966, by Order of the Privy Council (1966-2273) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Corporation and nine other members were appointed as provided in Section 4 of the Act. Section 3 of the Act also includes as "ex officio" members of the Board, the Mayors of Ottawa and Hull, the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Director of the Canada Council, and the Government Film Commissioner.

The National Arts Centre owes its inception to the National Capital Arts Alliance which was founded in February 1963 and soon after embodied approximately 65 art organizations within the National Capital region. In June of that year the Alliance invited Dominion Consultants Associates to study the feasibility of creating a national centre for the performing arts. The report which followed — the so-called Brown Book — was submitted to the Prime Minister in November, and on December 23, Mr. Pearson announced acceptance in principle of its two key recommendations; the creation of a national performing arts centre in Ottawa, and the organization therein of an annual national festival, as the major centennial project of the Federal Government in the National Capital.

An inter-ministerial committee was then created, its task was to prepare the necessary recommendations for implementation of the project until an appropriate agency had been created. The committee reported directly to the Secretary of State. The appointment of a Coordinator — Mr. G. Hamilton Southam on secondment from the Department of External Affairs — and the choice of the Montreal architecural firm of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, Sise were among the committee's first recommendations to be accepted. In February 1964 the Prime Minister announced that the building was to be erected on Confederation Square, a central location made possible by a most generous gift of land by the City of Ottawa. At the same time the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State announced the setting up of advisory committees on operations, on music, opera and ballet, on theatre, and on the visual arts. The role of these committees was to analyze the Brown Book in detail and to make appropriate recommendations to the Coordinator. In January 1965 construction work was begun under the direction of the Department of Public Works. The completion date was set for December 1968.

The first function of the Board of Trustees who met in Ottawa on March 8th, and 9th, under the chairmanship of Mr. Lawrence Freiman, was to determine that the Director, Mr. G. Hamilton Southam, should bear the title of Director General. More than anyone else, Mr. Southam was the animator of the project that he brought to completion. He wanted to give the capital the prestigious dimension that it had lacked: a centre propitious to the development of artistic talent, an "open" centre that would symbolize friendship and cooperation and which would arouse new national pride. The opening of the National Arts Centre on May 31, 1969 is an event that involves all of us.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Architecture at the National Arts Centre

BY JULES GAUVREAU

On May 31, 1969, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa was officially opened. Erected in the centre of the city on 6½ acres of land at a cost of $46 million, the complex is the first actual sign of an intent to endow the capital with the cultural and social facilities that had always been lacking there.

Following representations and studies undertaken by the national capital's Arts Alliance, the Canadian government entrusted the preparation of the building plans to the architectural firm of Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, and Sise. From a technical point of view, the solution was not an easy one, for with the exception of the fairly wide-spread neo-gothic style, the city had almost no architectural tradition or, "à fortiori," a cultural tradition. The problem that was set and the conditions to be met could be summarized as follows:

(1) To create an Arts Centre answering to the expressed or latent needs of a population of 400,000 people.

(2) To equip this centre in such a way as to make it suitable to become one of the most representative centres of artistic life in Canada.

(3) To integrate the building, if possible, into the extremely characterized but dissimilar elements that surround it.

(4) To make this centre a starting-point for urban renewal of the city centre.

The building had to integrate, while unifying, the following facilities: a 2300 seat theatre and opera, an 800 seat theatre with Italian or Elizabethan stage, a 300 seat experimental production studio, a reception hall that could be used for recitals, a large restaurant, a coffee shop, administrative offices, a 900 car underground garage, and finally a snack-bar and a street of shops.

Six years after the first efforts were made by the Arts Alliance, the public is able to take an admiring look at what is an incontestable architectural success, considering its complexity and the limitations of the programme.

Although its mass is imposing, the building remains unobtrusive due to the at once supple and virile modulation of its walls built in an hexagonal form. We rediscover these hexagons or their components strictly respected in the slightest details: in the prefabricated elements of a hanging ceiling or in the unexpected volume of the elevator cars. It is again due to the possibilities of the design and following the windings of an uneven ground that a foyer, which is largely glassed-in, connects the hermetically sealed blocks of the auditoriums and, according to the areas of intersecting traffic flows and the lounge areas, is expanded by extending into public terraces above the Rideau canal.

Austere and sobre outside, retired within itself, the interior of the building displays a luxury and a multitude of harmonious colours.

The opera and concert hall in particular — the most carefully done of the areas within the complex — presents qualities that are not always met again to the same extent elsewhere in the building. The choice of colours with dominating red and gold, the arrangement of the spotlights, the amazing sound-proofing by Julien Hébert and, in another respect, the theatre curtain by Micheline Beauchemin, contribute harmoniously to make this immense warm, and almost intimate hall one of the most successful of the new concert halls.

Unfortunately, although one cannot but admire the sumptuous door by Jordi Bonet or the fascinating asymetrical aluminium sculpture by Gino Lorcini, one deplores the fact that there was not more often a really successful integration of the decorative work with the architectural volume.

Culminating an endeavour that was carried on with a single inspiration and by the same architect, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa presents an undeniably advantageous homogeneity which does not exist in most other comparable centres that have been built recently. Without being revolutionary or even particularly original, this work, executed with taste and sobriety should be carefully considered. It is to be hoped that within the area of its influence it will serve to strip away from new building the gangue of fashionable sentimentality with which it has been coated since pretension has allowed the work of Mies Van der Rohe, among others, to be forgotten.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

From architecture to the integration of the arts

BY LAURENT LAMY

Directly bound to function and to economic and social needs, architecture is, of all the arts, the one that best represents the culture that gives it life. Thus, a work on the scale of the National Arts Centre assumes the value of a symbol. Before such an architectural group we may well ask ourselves what we are. Among all architectural works, does a National Arts Centre not occupy a choice place? Not being at the service of practical life like the subway, a factory, or even a house, it is rather, like a church, a place that man, curious about himself and the world and avid for experiences rich in imagination and fantasy, occupies in exceptional moments.

The architectural group

For the National Arts Centre, the architects used the hexagon as a module. This form which follows from the lie of the land has been fully exploited since we find it again not only as the volume of the building but again in the light wells, the stairways, and the elevators. It is moreover the link between the terraces, the foyers, and the offices. The hexagon which is near to the perfect æsthetic form of the circle, presents several advantages for a theatre: it groups the audience around the stage, offers them the utmost in visibility, and favours the principle of participation.

The neighbouring area of the Centre was not paticularly charming. The vaguely gothic architecture of the Parliament buildings, the vague greco-roman traces of the former train station, the baronial style of the Chateau Laurier, and the modernity of the museum, required a clear visual affirmation that would in some way form the centre of Confederation Square. The massive, almost blind architecture of the centre answers this need. On the theme of the hexagon, the different volumes of the centre unfold by overlapping in a simple way and by maintaining the strength too often interpreted as rigidity or coldness. This austere architecture enters into modern research. Let us recall the blind architecture of the pavilions of England and Venezuela at Expo, the church of Nevers in France by the architect Claude Parent, the work of Louis Kahn in the United States. Completely oriented to the interior and the activities that it houses, the Centre affirms itself as an architectural success that is perfectly integrated into the surroundings. The lines created by the vertical windows and their ribs animate the main façades. The open angles of the hexagons and the different levels of the volumes put rhythm into the architectural space and make them constructions where triumphs the spirit of truth and absolute simplicity. Contrary to the buildings at Place des Arts, the Centre is devoid of any exterior decorative ornamentation and, on the architectural level, fully assumes its social purpose.

But, what is to be found once you go inside the doors? In its function such a "place" should invite invention, escape, and dream. The finality of an arts centre is related closely enough to the essence of man that the atmosphere should be stimulating, even strange. This is not another work-area but it is an area that calls for sensitivity and emotion. One expects that the interior of such a building should be of the same quality as the exterior. In its dimension and its form this architecture is devoid of lyricism. On the other hand, by its severity and virility it lends itself, and no better occasion could be imagined, to the integration of the arts.

The Works of Art

Is not integrating works of art the use of these works in such a way that they form a whole with the environment? Integrated art can be compared to stones incorporated into concrete: they are an essential part of it. Without them the concrete is more crumbly and less resistant.

At the National Arts Centre, is the contribution of the artists limited to additions, or do the creations participate in the group? Have we progressed since the first step was taken at Place des Arts in Montreal?

In their "place", the architects have chosen areas to present works of art; the artists completed the projects without their being able to discuss their location; a committee accepted their works. They are often excellent works, as is the case with Daudelin's sculpture outside the Centre. But stuck in a corner between the large theatre and a low wall, it is dwarfed by the building, and from the street it is partially hidden by shrubs and the wall. Although it is monumental, it looks small there, being neither on the scale of the architectural group nor easily seen by the passers-by. Let us approach the centre on foot or by car, from one direction or from the other, one can never see it all, neither can it be seen from the terrace where it is placed, nor from the surrounding streets.

Inside the centre the prevailing material is conglomerate concrete a strong material, whose rich greyish texture wanted emphasizing. This was done in some places by the red carpet. But in the main foyer, the monotonous and dull mosaic floor offers no contrast at all with the wall, in the area of colour as well as texture.

At the entrance to the small theatre, at the very place where the foyer is the smallest, where there is little place to step back, there has been placed an immense painting by Ronald. No total view is possible. The place is not suitable for this work whose highly coloured and changeable forms would have been very visually effective, if they could have been discovered gradually, while being approached. However, this mural serves as a vertical link between the floors.

The banners by Laliberté and the Polish tapestries in which multiple brightly coloured motifs appear to leap out of the cloth spark life and fantasy. As they are warm they might have been incorporated into a building of this size, but, too small for the group, they do not manage to really animate the powerful concrete masses.

As for Zadkine's sculpture, half-lost in the shadow of the mezzanine and the immensity of the main foyer, it unfortunately reminds one of the knick-knacks set on bourgeois fireplaces. It has many

qualities. But its acquisition would have been more significant at the beginning of the century, right in the middle of the cubist period; in 1969 it would be more in its place in a museum. Is it not in an arts centre that one should find works that depend on the most lively sources of art. As McLuhan would put it, the choice was made by looking through a "retroviewer".

In the stairwells, the giant glass block chandeliers by William Martin of Boston, are near to being arborescent forms but look too much like sugar candy. The result is one of the most debatable.

The work by Lorcini, made of aluminum rods and plates almost disappears, it is much too light and thin to bring to life the wall where it was placed. Again, not much room to step back and see it well. Enlarged and multiplied, it might have been able to effect an interesting counterpoint with the exterior walls of the east side, which are gloomy in their severity. Better yet, Lorcini could have been asked, in collaboration with the architects and the engineers, to study the form and dimensions of the steel structure in order that it might project beyond the concrete. The structure incorporated into the architecture but partly apparent, could have become a really integrated mural.

Pretty, but with a disconcerting simplicity, the fountain by Julien Hébert is jarring in its banality. That is not the work of a sculptor. On the other hand, Julien Hébert succeeds completely as a designer when he composes the ceiling of the great hall. Conceived according to the imperatives of the acoustics engineer, the perforated, mobile, metal panels become in their unexpected but clear language, surfaces that are animated by the interplay of forms and sensitive modulations. That is integration. Around the great hall, the anodized metal grilles by Slater, without being of a dazzling inventiveness fulfill their purpose quite well: to form a screen between the hall and the foyers.

So as not to abandon certain conventions there has been retained in this hall the red rug armchairs synonymous with the luxury and pomp of theatrical tradition. Trite symbolism, if there be any, that is rejuvenated in part by the lighting that comes from the ceiling and the walls, the latter are composed of vertical bands of naked low-intensity bulbs that are reflected in the textured glass. A golden yellow colour participates in the red gold harmony that could not be forsaken and whose use was not questioned. Another choice made through a "retroviewer"!

The immense doors by Jordi Bonet do more than support the neighbouring concrete. Their monumental size, the fullness of the rhythms, maintain with the surrounding architecture an accurate and intimate relationship. Their material — cast aluminium — a very modern product, and their rich texture — create areas of light and shadow that soften where these immense surfaces could have been too forceful. Warm and serene, blended from a few accents, Manessier's tapestry accentuates the intimacy of the small concert hall, a hall which, after all, is the most harmonious one but which by its size is reserved for official receptions and concerts of chamber music.

As for the stage curtains by Micheline Beauchemin and Mariette Rousseau-Vermette (1), they have followed the good tradition that has it that the utilitarian curtain should be covered by a decorative curtain. Like the doors by Bonet, they foster the transition from everyday life to the life of the imagination. They set a festive tone and open onto a world of marvels. Micheline Beauchemin has made a maximum use of luxuriant colours and scintillating materials: gold, silver, green, and red, electric shades that emanate from the materials. In using plastics and other common materials she is doing something new. Up to the final measure she gambles on the brilliant and showy colours, and she wins.

At the National Arts Centre there are thus works by quite a few artists. The architects and the committee were preoccupied with the contributions of artists. Besides, it is difficult to imagine how they might have done without their creative talents. Is the integration accomplished for all that? A good architecture and a few good works do not make a coherent unit. With the exception of the ceiling of the great hall, the doors and the stage curtains, and in spite of singular and praise-worthy efforts, the integration remains to be achieved. One might have hoped for better after Place des Arts. It would have been necessary for the master-builder to consent to share his responsibilities, at the very beginning of the project, with artists, designers, and specialists in interior design and arrangement; and he should not have been content to seek decorative effects with things that do nothing and which, whether intentionally or not, were put there and made to be entertainers as an afterthought.

(1) The curtain by Mariette Rousseau-Vermette was not seen at the time of the opening. Therefore, I cannot speak of it, but knowing the great qualities of her previous works I am certain that it is up to the measure of her other works.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

The integration of the works of art at the National Arts Centre

Guy Viau answers the questions of Raymond-Marie Léger, on Carnet des Arts, CBC, June 1969.

Q. — The building of the National Arts Centre cost $46 million and, of this sum, half a million was spent for works of art. Do you consider this amount sufficient or definetly too modest?

A. — It corresponds roughly to standards accepted almost everywhere: that famous 1 percent intended for what is called the everywhere: that famous 1 percent intended for what is called the embellishment of the architecture.

But we should not approach this problem from a financial point of view. The essential thing is especially that the architecture be beautiful; then there is no need to embellish it. If the architecture is self-sufficient, it is preferable not to *add* to it works of art for the sole purpose of *encouraging* artists, which seems rather odious to me.

Q. — Anyway, since there are works of art, can you tell me how the artists were chosen?

A. — The National Arts Centre formed a consulting committee, and this committee, in full agreement with the architect, chose most of the artists to be commissioned. In some cases, they chose to proceed by means of a competition, but the competitions were limited to a few artists designated by this same committee.

Q. — Is it true that artists were asked to try, as far as possible, to make the style of their works agree with the form of the architecture; that is to say, with the two geometric patterns that constantly recur: the circle and the hexagon?

A. — No, I do not know that that condition was set. That would have been a mistake. No self-respecting artist, and there are many such artists, could have agreed to such a stipulation. An artist who agrees to produce a work intended for a building should understand its character and produce a work that is in harmony with it, not by adhering to a theme or given designs as, for example, the hexagon or the triangle, which dominate here, but very simply by ways of his own, ways that emerge from his imagination, and his creative talents.

Q. — Let us proceed to the works themselves. Let us begin, if you like, with the sculptures. There are two of them; let us speak first of the exterior sculpture by Charles Daudelin.

A. — It produces a great effect and is quite in keeping with the scale; that is the essential thing when we speak of integration into architecture. This monumental sculpture is in proportion; in this respect, Daudelin, who is very conscientious, took all possible precautions. It was said that only the two sculptures were not integrated into the architecture. That is conceiving integration in a narrow and restricted sense, and it is erroneous, after all. Whether a work is part of the architecture or separate from it, the integration can be successful in both cases if the scale is right. As for the very principle of construction of Daudelin's work, I find it to be honest, solid; it has a rhythm that is at once calm, set, and vigorous. This open worked structure inspires confidence by its healthiness and the sort of good humour that flows from it.

Q. — Let us pass on to the second sculpture, Zadkine's bronze which is inside the centre. What do you think of it?

A. — My reaction would probably be more reserved as far as Zadkine's work is concerned. If I admire certain works by this artist, I am not particularly infatuated with this one. It seems rather banal to me, rather *dull* if I dare say so. Concretely, moreover, it has neither depth nor coutline; it is seen only from in front or behind, but very badly from behind, because it is almost standing against the wall. This poses a problem of integration. It might have been possible to place it in an area that was rather closed but that would have allowed it to be seen from the back as well, and, moreover, it should be illuminated better. Although it is not bad, I am not enchanted by this Zadkine and I take the opportunity to say that, all things being equal, we might have gambled on a Canadian.

Q. — Let us now pass on to Jordi Bonet who tends to specialize in the production of works intended for large architectural groups like the National Arts Centre for which he made the huge aluminium doors of which you will speak, and who is in Quebec now, busy installing in the Grand Théâtre a mural which it seems will be much discussed.

A. — I hesitate to talk about Bonet's doors. Physically, they unite with the building, closed they act as murals; they open easily. Yet, to my mind, their inspiration is cold. This is conscientious, applied craftsmanship, it is good cooking. I would not want to abuse Jordi Bonet, for it was an extremely difficult problem that was set him, and he solved it with elegance. Yet, personally, I do not care for this kind of integration. It is integration understood in an immediate sense, and which restricts the artist's imagination. It is the perpetuation of the decorative art of the last few centuries.

Q. — Behind the doors by Jordi Bonet which protect the holy of holies, is an immense tapestry by Alfred Manessier.

A. — It is a good Manessier. What should we understand by that? Manessier is an excellent minor painter. In his production there are some rather ordinary works, but this tapestry is excellent. Especially as the mounting was magnificently accomplished by the weaver Plasse-Le Caisne, who, not only executed the work, but took part in the creation and, besides, signed it with Manessier, for when Plasse-Le Caisne executes a work, he invents as well, evidently, in the extension of the sketch. Both succeeded in composing a monumental work, with an immense movement that sweeps us away. Moreover, corresponds to the orientation of Canadian art in the course of the fifteen years that followed the end of the last World War, that is to say our abstract expressionism. It also corresponds, in Manessier's mind, to the character of the Canadian scene. The artist was very impressed by Canada's lakes and forests, and he has been remembering the impact that it made on him in the execution of all of his work, including this tapestry, for the last four or five years.

Q. — Let us pass from Manessier to the standards by Norman Laliberté that are installed over the bars.

A. — These standards are banners, made of fabrics hanging from a rod and juxtaposed so as to form a tapestry. Laliberté is an American, but I believe that he is of French-Canadian descent. These decorations are unpretentious. Some of my colleagues have evoked Dallaire. That is praising them, for Dallaire had a great deal of spirit and imagination. Laliberté perhaps does not possess such an inspiration, but he has succeeded in four tapestries — four mural decorations if you prefer — that are each very different and that are stamped with humour, fantasy, and charm, and have a certain voluptuousness that is rather reminiscent of Oriental art.

Q. — What do you make of the stage curtain that Micheline Beauchemin executed for the great opera hall?

A. — I would say that it is, perhaps, the master work of the decoration of the National Centre. It is a revelation, a festival of colour and light, an absolutely extraordinary production. I certainly think that it is one of the most beautiful stage curtains in the world. It is the largest, in any event, that has ever been woven in such a way. The work was done in Japan on special looms. The evening of the opening, the spectators applauded the stage curtain even before applauding the dancers of the ballet *Kraanerg*. It is made to capture light, in several ways. It is first translucent, although it also receives the light from the fore-stage, and takes on in this way a striking relief. Moreover, I know that the artist would like it to be illuminated from the front, with full intensity, in such a way as to almost eliminate the shadows cast on it. I have not seen it thus, but such as it is, it is absolutely splendid.

Q. — Julien Hébert conceived two important works for the Centre. First a fountain towards which you hold certain reservations?

A. — That is to say that in broad daylight the fountain seems to me to be simplistic. A fountain does not fulfill only a functional and utilitarian role; it should be, at the same time, an attracting pole. Now this one seems to me to be rather rigid, rather puritanical. That is a fault, or rather a tendency, that one can find elsewhere in the National Centre, and perhaps you will say in the whole city of Ottawa. . .

Having said this, I saw the fountain last night, and beneath the flood lights and the shadows of the basins; the water that illuminates itself and the pennies that, happily, were thrown there for luck, give it an atmosphere, and life. So that in spite of the reservations already expressed I accept the fountain, such as it appears at night. It would be desirable to adjust the lighting to allow it to find again during the day, the charm it held at night.

Q. — Julien Hébert also executed the ceiling of the opera hall.

A. — Here I maintain my reservations. In itself, it is beautiful, and beyond reproach, but it is too spectacular. It should be unobtrusive like the one in the theatre. The latter is formed of black grille work that serves only to conceal the cat walks and lighting fixtures set in the ceiling. I think the ceiling of the opera attracts attention to the detriment of the stage, and its corollary, the curtain.

Q. — Finally, in the suburbs, if I may thus speak of the experimental studio, there is a large mural fresco that extends over two stories. The work by William Ronald is very highly coloured.

A. — Yes, it has a rather *psychedelic* character which is basically quite suitable to the foyer of the experimental studio. However, this large fresco poses the problem of integration. Strictly speaking, it is integrated since it completely surrounds the hall which serves as the studio's foyer, and moreover, it corresponds to the atmosphere that was sought there. Even if it is a little superficial, it remains joyous and gay. I would thus willingly accept it, if it were harmonious with the group of the centre, but it is obvious, notwithstanding the supposed directives of the consulting committee or the architects, that here is where the sensitivity of the artist was to intervene. It should have permitted him to give his work the qualities that I recognized in it, while respecting the general character of the centre, and while uniting with it by the quality of the invention and the sensitivity; and not by direct recalls of the architectural forms.

Q. — In closing could you speak to us of the Theatre's stage curtain. Conceived and executed by Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, we have not, unfortunately been able to see it, because the arrangement of the sets of *Lysistrata* did not allow it to be lowered on opening night.

A. — That is the reason for which it has been much discussed, and it is a shame. I know it from the model. Not a gouache or water-colour model, but a small scale tapestry which gives a precise idea of the large one. Now, this tapestry has qualities of warmth, voluptuousness, authenticity, and at the same time, monumentality, which make it a great work; and I wish that there could be a special opening devoted to it, as soon as other performances would allow it.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

The Presence of Manessier

BY JEAN-RENÉ OSTIGUY

Following his visit to Canada in 1967, Alfred Manessier, whose immense tapestry has just been unveiled at the National Art Centre, executed a series of paintings inspired by his brief sojourn in Canada. As these new works have not yet been exhibited, it would be difficult to write a criticism of them; yet, by looking at some reproductions, we can preview them and make a few remarks. First, the artist has rediscovered a more delicate light, very much like the one he knew during his childhood in Abbeville in the Somme. "For some time I had already been feeling nostalgic for a "certain northern light" which I found, I was about to say, found again, in your country, but on a different scale, with a very new pattern which, I believe, is particular to Canada, and which I tried to express." (1) There is thus, a new light, but also a form that stands out differently, more prismatic, with a new brilliancy. It seems that Manessier has a good grasp of the problems of scale, since, in "*La tache orangée*" for example, there is developed a space different from that of all his previous pictures, a space in which the artist has achieved an exceptional stripping-away. Here Manessier draws very near to the American expressionist Franz Kline: by the tensions that they develop, a few large vigorously drawn movements suffice to create a dynamic space of a type particular to North America.

There is no reason to think that Manessier has been granting more importance to the gestual aspect of his painting only since his visit to Canada. As early as 1966, following a trip to Spain, where he became quite taken with the work of Goya, there was a change in him. He painted with a new joy, his brushwork shows a surprising ease and is fuller. Looking at his painting entitled *Terre assoiffée* (Parched earth) (1966), visitors to the French pavilion at Expo '67 could see an unexpected parallel between Manessier and Riopelle. But let us not too quickly judge a work that spans over forty years of development. Without emphasizing too strongly the gestual aspect of these recent works, let us first see how Manessier summarizes in an exemplary way the lyric expression of our era. Is it not surprising that certain elements of his paintings suddenly bring to mind, without our being able to speak of proper so-called influences, the names of Singier, Music, Bazaine, Zack, Atlan, and even Riopelle and Kline, as we have already mentioned. In fact, all of these artists resemble one another (and even the artists of "American Action Painting" and Canadian automatism), in that they are determined to work though they may be alone, for a restoration of the dignity of man. In spite of the abstract character of their works, they are clearly committed artists.

What distinguishes Manessier from several artists who, like him, are interested in cosmic forces and the "Heracletian flux of the impermanent" is how marvellously he has captured some essential and solid values. It requires time to become fully aware of how many canvases created a sensation one day only to prove

uninteresting the next. Now there is more than one Manessier that stands the test of time. In answer to a skeptical critic who wants to know what authoritative work has been produced by lyric abstraction we would do well to reply: "Look at *Salve Regina* (1945) of the Musée de Rennes, the *Flot en Baie de Somme* (1949) of the Philippe Leclerq collection *Février près Harlem* (1956) of the Museum of Berlin, or better yet, the three masterpieces of the Musée National d'art moderne de Paris, *Aube matinale* (1948) *La Couronne d'épines* (1950), and the 1962 triptych, l'*Empreinte*. The picture in the National Gallery of Canada, *La Sève* (1963), clearly illustrates the series of glorious works, the one of the *Alleluias* that the artist contrasts with *Gethsemani* or *Saintes Faces*, and with all his paintings of shadows. The central element of the composition is reminiscent of *La Couronne d'épines* (Crown of thorns) (1954) of the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburg, but this crown could also be the sun's corona at noon. In fact, the ambiguity of the metaphor is enriched by the Provence countryside that inspired the artist in 1958 and 1959.

Mountains furrowed by hairpin roads and hollowed out by deep gorges subtend the abstract composition of the National Gallery's work. It must be compared in this respect to the picture of the Musée de Lyon: "*Aube sur la garrigue*" (1958) (2). Yet it is only to the latter work that Manessier's declaration applies in full: "Even more than to the colours and the light, I have been sensitive to the cadences, the rhythms, and the play of the various levels of the landscape. As when hearing a musical work I felt that I was experiencing a rhythmical combination of lines, a counterpoint". (3) The Ottawa picture constitutes a tribute to the coloured paradise of Bonnard. It is also reminiscent of the iridescent colours of Redon's pastels.

Some people will perhaps be confused by the ease of Manessier. He passes from a coloured cubism of the 40's to a more impressionistic formula in 1958, and then touches on automatism. The constant use of the metaphor however, assures the unity of his work. The metaphor's signs and symbols are modified and enriched at each new phase. The ones that animate the compositions "*Per amica silentia lunae*" (1954) and *L'Hiver* (1955) are found again in *La tache orangée* (1968) and *Fishes' Sanctuary* (1969), but greatly modified by a new conception of light, more closely bound to the matter and more dramatic, creating tensions between the background and the motif. Thus Manessier's "abstract lanscape" should be considered as a desire to make symbolic images evoking the deepest spiritual realities, the ones that cannot but relate to the sacred world. His fervour does not depend in any way on some stray impulse, it expresses a courageous faith. He has been taking from nature and perfecting the abstract signs of his vocabulary with the same point of view since 1941. At that time he was presented to the French public in an exhibition at the Braun Gallery in the company of Jean Bazaine, Maurice Estève, Charles Lapique, Gustave Singier and a few others, under the name of "Young painters in the French tradition". His painting retained ties to coloured cubism at that time. If he evolved slowly in the years that followed towards lyric abstraction and gradually came to use the blot, he constantly kept in mind his desire to build the form of his picture, to clarify it beyond the inspiration of the moment. That characteristic is French, or at least European, and is one of the reasons why his art had no direct effect on the painting of Canadian artists of the time. The North American mainstream would grant more importance to gesture and automatism. Thus by his very special attention to the making of the work, by his desire to articulate and his unequivocal choice, the lyric art of Manessier is distinguished from that of Borduas and of Riopelle on the one hand, and of that of Pollock, Kline and de Kooning on the other.

The committed character of Manessier's work explains why several Montreal and Quebec critics and art lovers were drawn to him as early as the 50's. The works of all the previously mentioned French artists not having appeared in private or public collections until the 60's, it was through art magazines, among others the "Cahiers du Zodiac", that interest was maintained here, and mainly by reference to the thinking of these artist. The little book by Jean Bazaine, "Notes sur la peinture d'aujourd'hui" received laudatory reviews in Canadian newspapers and art magazines, but the work by Manessier at the Eglise des Brézeux (stained glass windows), at the chapel of Hem (windows and mosaic) attracted the attention of a public of Canadian art lovers in no less measure. The numerous awards that Manessier has won have also not dimmed his reputation here, including the one at the Biennale of Sao Paulo in 1953, the internationale of Pittsburgh (1954) the Guggenheim competition in 1956 and finally the Venice Biennale in 1962.

Today Manessier feels that his experience in Canada will allow him to begin a great pilgrimage to the heart of his childhood. Perhaps he recalls his reply to the critic of the American magazine, Art Digest, in 1953. (4) At that time he was asked if the American avant-garde were over-estimated, he replied: "We will be able to say in 20 or 30 years. Only then will the American or French painters of this generation have finished their work. Painting is a slow construction by the mind and it often happens that when the artist is nearing his sixties his innermost feelings emerge." Born in 1911, Manessier is almost sixty. Montreal could consider itself honoured by seeing his recent work before it is given (as Bazaine's was by the Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris, and Willem de Kooning's was by the Museum of Modern Art of New York) a great retrospective exhibition.

NOTES
(1) Letter from the artist to the author, dated March 7th, 1969.
(2) See Camille Bourniquel, *Alfred Manessier peintre mystique*, *XXe Siècle* No. 55 Christmas. Page 82.
(3) id. Page 83.
(4) Art Digest, October 15, 1953, Page 11.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

The Dramaturgy of Jordi Bonet

BY GUY ROBERT

There are works of art that draw back into the opaque gangue of the material, revealing their entity only through a patient initiation; other works, on the contrary, display their aggressive ardour and blow their own trumpets often sounding more noise than music; certain works invite one to a celebration, offer a joyous saraband whose sensuality exudes from the form; and finally there are a few works that totter the pillars of emotion and compel man to face his destiny straightforwardly.

And far too few works succeed in synthesizing the diverse modalities of expression, and in beginning, between the implicit and the obvious, the lascivious and the serious, between order and chacs, between Apollo and Dionysious, such fruitful reconciliations as would allow opposites to combine in systematized paradoxes.

These works, in which dramaturgy constitutes the main foundation, retain from reality the pulsation of the moment and the breadth of the horizon, and are able to preserve the fleeting moment for eternity. Dramaturgy frees the unrestrained movement of emotion by spreading out its entire panoply and calling forth a sort of environment that is much more affective than physical, and which avoids the dangers of strictly sensorial superficiality (in which an entire recent aesthetics has been engulfed, that of the physiological shock stimulated by the reality of certain objects that are more or less aggressors), and is able to bring out the vaster and more searching dynamism of the inner-connected sensitivity of the relationship between the body and the soul.

In this respect the work of Jordi Bonet provides numerous examples, whose various levels permit, precisely, a more fruitful approach. And we emphasize the murals, compositions which placed in public places put into action the global phenomena of environment, which release a collective phenomenology of perception, producing, in return, a shock in the consciousness of the artist and engaging him to perfect in the subsequent works a praxis of expression which is all the more concerned for its extension into society.

Ten Years of Murals

Jordi Bonet was born in Barcelona in 1932 and settled in Quebec in 1954. An accident in childhood cost him his right arm; this did not prevent him from drawing, painting, then sculpting, first in ceramic, then in aluminium and, more recently, in concrete. Jordi Bonet was already drawing and painting when he arrived in Quebec; in 1956 he learned ceramics and immediately developed a liking for it; in 1957 he began some studies on ceramic squares then returned to Barcelona for a few months, and again came in contact with the architecture of Gaudi, that had so recently made an impression on him as a child; in the beginning of 1958, he ardently began to work on ceramic murals; he had several exhibitions of them in Montreal in 1959, 60, and 61.

In 1961 he was awarded his first important contract: a 9 x 30 foot mural in the new church of Saint-Raphael de Jonquière (Saint-Gelais and Tremblay, architects); other contracts followed including the one for the 36 x 89 foot mural for the facade of the science faculty of the new Laval University campus in Quebec city (Lucien Maireguy, architect); the execution of this great mural was prepared for by more than a year of studies, drawings, research, on a pictorial level (a series of tableaux from 1961-2 revealed the masterful talents of the artist)

as well as that of materials and techniques; the 28 year old artist admitted that he was impressed by the scale of such a contract, and acquired new strength from his pilgrimage to Talhull (it is a small pre-Roman Spanish village, almost inaccessible, made up of about ten buildings that have been stripped of their admirable frescoes, but that retain no less an indelible sense of architectonics), certain aspects of the production require that the mural be baked in Courtrai, Belgium.

These varied works mark a period in Bonet's work, a period already clearly diminated by drawing, which is at times reminiscent of Picasso's; the large Quebec mural is very impressive, and deceiving at the same time: the grandiose quality of the drawn gesture does not find sufficient balance in the other elements of the plastic composition. Jordi Bonet is perfectly aware of this and vehemently begins to work on relief in 1963, first dedicating a tumultuous hommage to Gaudi; then there is the first master work (I have no reserve whatever in using this strong term), his eight 3 x 10 foot tympans for Place des Arts in Montreal.

The period of reliefs in ceramic opens a remarkable audience to Jordi Bonet, and stimulates him to the point that he no longer hesitates to expand his expression towards concrete and aluminium. In six years (1963-69) about thirty of his great murals quickly reach beyond the borders of Montreal and Quebec, to go to Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, and as far as Vancouver; and in the United States, to Boston, New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago and Charleston.

The main ceramic murals unite an instinctive sense of telluric forces to the dynamism of symbolical form, and that is, we would say, the very alchemy of the fire that burns the clay and coats it at the same time in sumptuous colours, with unforgettable transparencies, as in the 15 x 86 foot long, 1965 composition for North American Tower, Toronto (Bregman and Hamann, architects), or still the one in a Boston bank (19 x 55 feet), or in an exterior mural for the University of Chicago, in 1965; in 1969, a Vancouver building receives an 18 x 30 foot ceramic mural.

Ceramics involve complex techniques and a certain risk in baking in the high temperature kilns. Impatient, Jordi Bonet increasingly developed a liking for construction yards and the pungent smell of raw concrete. In 1965, temptation won out, and we note the project of a hall of white concrete that he offered the new Museum of contemporary art in Montreal, in a gesture of an unparalleled generosity: *Vivir y Morir* established at the same time the fundamental dialectics of the work of the artist, who is working in the building of Chateau Dufrenne (where he seems to have been negligently forgotten), and explodes four years later in the colossoal Quebec triptych. As for concrete, let us once more underscore his participation in the 18 outdoor sculptures for the monument to Dollard des Ormeaux, at Carillon (see Vie des Arts, number 50, Spring 1968 pp. 38-41).

The fire which baked clay fascinated Jordi Bonet and he soon found another use for it, by sculpting with a knife and a blow-torch pieces of styrofoam that he afterwards casts in aluminium, the fire of the foundry coming to join the acetylene flame to build in space, these walls of tumultuous metal, laden with signs as an ancient wizard's book of spells. Witness the 1967 1200 foot square mural at the University of Alberta in Edmonton; the four reliefs of the Tracy Institute of Technology in the same year, and the group of five characters nine feet high for La Place des Nations at Expo '67; and again a 20 x 140 foot cylinder for a bank in Charleston, West Virginia; and the 20 x 15 feet doors of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in 1968-69 (Fred Lebensold, architect).

Finally, Jordi Bonet has pursued, in the medium of stained glass windows, the development of that passion he feels for fire; and light explodes and flames through his compositions for a convent in Brooklyn, and again in the 6,000 square foot chapel of the Kennedy International Airport in New York.

The Quebec triptych

The fiery inspiration that runs along the 13,000 square feet of tumultuous concrete in the triptych of the Grand Théâtre du Quebec (Victor Prus, architect) can be the result neither of improvisation nor imposture: the energetic eloquence of this work is naturally rooted in the tight, organic evolution of the works that have been implacably following one another for ten years.

The Quebec triptych is developed in three walls, each about 100 feet long, and 40 feet high. Must we add that these walls, exploiting to the maximum the extremely rough language of grey concrete, impose an impact stronger yet than only their colossal dimensions: in effect, the architecture of the building had made it almost impossible to view works from a distance, so that the viewer, cornered between the stairs and the pillars is constantly thrown up against the mural that is quick to increase its stress by the aggressive deployment of important reliefs; the position of he who would view from a distance becomes impracticable and the mural composition imposes its discourse, articulated on the theme of life and death that we have noted above, by unfolding into three monumental movements: Death, Space, and Freedom.

In three months in Quebec Jordi Bonet gave himself up to the utmost rituals of the recovery. Crushed by tons, by cubic feet of concrete, deafened by the dusty and barbarous procession of cement trucks, he none the less attacked the blind wall, digging in meaning with his trowel, inscribing a palpitating significance.

And it is a poignant vision that emerges from the enormous, paradoxically fragmented, compartmentalized composition which is concealed behind the walls and pillars of a group, thus avoiding an otherwise too brutal shock, and in detached pieces, offering a fulgurating plea for the cause of Life and Freedom.

The tragic meaning of life

Shall I be permitted to borrow the title from a famous work by Miguel de Unamuno to more tightly define the sculptural motives of Jordi Bonet? In the same way that Unamuno was able to extricate himself from the artificial astuteness of metaphysics, which ends up dealing with things without even condescending to touch them or even less *feel* them, Jordi Bonet resolves to unfold the horizons of his life completely in the "redeeming uncertainty" of which his native compatriot spoke in *The tragic meaning of life*, in 1914, and he thinks also that it is in facing Death that life takes on all its meaning and tragic savour.

In ceramic, aluminium, glass, or concrete, the dramaturgy of Jordi Bonet offers a complex dialectical series of which we can here mention some points of reference: life-death, man-woman, liberty-oppression, manifest-occult, peace-war, etc. . . Drawing, always energetically present in each work, through the medium of the stylized evocation, makes readable the emotional content and also the emotional continuum which assures the very quality of its ritual, of this *happening* that he captures in the sculptural forms by capturing the irreplacable pulsation of the secret event.

The colour sometimes voluptuously seductive, sometimes strictly constrained, establishes scales the best adapted to support the dynamic expression of the work, and establishes the consequent climate of this dynamism, always heavily impregnated with a grave and delicate eroticism. And the form, springing from the snare of the lines and incorporating the ambiance woven by the colour, imposes with an often vehement conviction the tumults of his reliefs and his rhythms.

Jordi Bonet is able to develop a remarkable sculptural syntax, and puts plastic art at the absolute service of a tragic reflection on the meaning of life. By avoiding the routine of a declamatory illustration (a frequent weakness of the Mexican art of 1920-50, for example), as well as that of abstract (and often vain and superficial) speculation, he injects into his gesture the precision of symbolism, which gives the richest and most moving echo of Reality.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Stone Age Painters in the Laurentians

BY SELWYN DEWDNEY

On a granite wall that edges the southwest shore of a lake in the Laurentians only thirty-two miles northwest of Trois Rivières there is a group of severely-weathered aboriginal paintings that may prove to be the oldest surviving examples of prehistoric rock art in eastern Canada.

Late in July of 1966 my wife and I drove to Trois Rivieres from our home in London, Ontario, with two objectives. We were to pick up our son Christopher and his young Visites Interprovinciales host, Roland Nobert, who was to be our guest for the month of August. And we hoped to find and record the rock paintings on Lac Wapizagonke. Geologist Jacques Béland had described these pictographs in the February, 1959, issue of *Le Naturaliste Canadien*, which I had read with keen interest, being then engaged in searching for and recording aboriginal rock art across Canada, particularly in the Canadian Shield woodland region. Were these paintings in the Laurentians of a similar nature to the more than two hundred sites I had visited in central and northwestern Canada; or were they the expression of a different culture?

So, before calling on the Noberts, my wife and I drove north into the rock country. Thanks to the intelligence of people we met along the way who were able to interpret my rudimentary and ungrammatical French we were able to find and follow the rough

bush trail that led into Lac Wapizagonke. By great good fortune our first encounter at the lake was with M. René Vallerand and his wife (the famous "Maman Fonfon") who knew where the site was and took us there.

But it was with mixed feelings that I first viewed the paintings: delight at having reached them, sadness at finding how little had survived the ravages of time; and dismay at discovering that unthinking souvenir-hunters had deliberately broken off fragments of the host rock, senselessly accelerating the slow weathering of the centuries.

These vestigial paintings are the easternmost so far found in the Canadian Shield Woodlands, the region that lies between the northern limit of the paper birch and the southern edge of the Precambrian rock formations. The westernmost is nearly 2,000 miles away, on a little beaver stream known as Written Rock Creek in the Northwest Territories twenty miles north of Fort Smith. By the fall of 1966 my systematic search for aboriginal rock art, initiated by the Royal Ontario Museum in 1957, and broadened by support from the Glenbow Foundation and National Museum of Canada, had covered the whole region between the Rocky Mountains and the Ottawa River. In 1967, under contract with the National Museum, the search was extended eastward to the Atlantic. Reports of rock paintings, other than the one site I had recorded, proved to be unfounded, or based on sites between the St. Maurice and the Ottawa that had been flooded by lumber dams or hydro projects. So far, therefore Beland's find remains unique, not only as the easternmost example of a Shield rock painting site, but as the *sole* example in Canada east of Ontario.

The Shield sites vary greatly in extent. In some instances one will find only two or three faint markings barely recognizable as the handiwork of man. On other sites there are dozens of paintings, some strong, some faint, scattered singly or in groups along the base of shore rock formations. All are accessible from the water, seldom more than four or five feet above the prevailing level, and usually in situations where they could only have been painted from a canoe. The only other common feature is the invariable use of the natural earth colour, red ochre.

Throughout the region the indigenous people are of Algonkian stock. Wherever I have interviewed the older residents they have assured me that no one knew how old the paintings were. "When my grandfather was a boy he was told that the paintings had always been there", was the usual statement. But there was a division of opinion as to who made the paintings. Some were sure that they had been made by the *Maimaiquaissiwuk*, mythical denizens of the rock formations that so frequently dominate the shores of Shield lakes and streams. An equal number believed that the forms depicted were the record of the "medicine dreams" of the shamans of long ago. Evidence from historical as well as ethnological sources tends to support the latter view; for it is well established that Amerindians throughout the continent attached extraordinary importance to dreams induced by fasting, especially to those of their shamans.

At Wapizagonke, therefore, it is likely that we are viewing the work of shaman-artists. But their intentions were utilitarian, not aesthetic. It is rarely that we find a painting in the Shield region in which the artist took an obvious delight in the form he was depicting, or even in the composition of a group of figures. He seemed, too, to have been oblivious of the reaction of the viewer — at least of the human one. For, although many of the paintings are on prominent rocks facing well-travelled waterways, not a few others are in obscure backwaters where few would ever pass. Indeed, there is historical evidence that pictographs were sometimes so distorted, even to the extent of deliberately mis-representing the intended subject, that the human viewer would be misled as to the meaning. So one could ensure that the "power" of the painting would not "leak" away, as well as reassure the supernatural being concerned that no other audience was intended.

Many of the European cave paintings and engraving clearly suggest that the pictographs were intended to influence the accessibility or fertility of game animals through sympathetic magic; and such intentions are obvious in rock art elsewhere. In the Americas, however, there appears to be far less emphasis on hunting magic. One would expect, for example, that bison hunters in the western plains would have made such use of their rock art. Yet among the numerous petroglyphs in sandstone along the banks of the Milk River in southern Alberta, which include representations of bears, mountain sheep, elk and deer, I found only three small and very recent drawings of bison, the main food source of the aborigines. The Shield paintings portray all the larger game animals of the region; but there is only one instance where there is any suggestion of a hunting motive; and representations of fish, a very important element in the food supply, are rare.

It is now widely believed that primitive art passed through an evolution from naturalistic to abstract styles. The Milk River glyphs do indeed show a transition from what I call an archaic naturalism to a high degree of abstraction in the case of animal forms, but human forms seem to have been highly abstract from the beginning. With the appearance of the horse the abstract trend suddenly goes into reverse, and a stylized naturalism emerges.

In the Shield paintings individualism runs so rampant that one looks in vain for the stereotypes — so easily identified among the Milk River glyphs — on which any chronological analysis of styles could be based. Representations of canoes, of a birdlike abstraction not too reliably identified as a "thunderbird", and handprints comprise the only frequently-occurring motifs. Three rock paintings in Quetico Provincial Park approach the vital quality of the Lascaux paintings; and here and there throughout the Shield one may find occasional rendering that show some sensitivity to the natural form. But these are the exceptions. More than half of the Shield paintings show no hint of naturalism. They may be divided into four groups: semi-abstractions in which it is still possible to recognize an unspecified quadruped; distorted or fantastic forms in which one may find human or animal associations (a triangle, for example, with two human feet); pure abstractions without discernible associations of any kind; and what I call "tally marks."

In turning to a detailed examination of the Wapizagonke paintings we must clearly reconcile ourselves to the fact that with them, as with the Shield paintings generally, we will never know what the specific intentions of the aboriginal shaman-artists were. But we can compare them with what has been found elsewhere, and we have the added advantage of Béland's verbal descriptions made at a time when the painting were more intact.

The first illustration reproduces in the scale of an inch to the foot the disposition of all the paintings I found at this site. Roman numerals designate the rock face on which each painting or group of paintings appears, reading from left to right. Arabic numerals indicate the height of the paintings above the water level as of July 28th, 1966. Detailed drawings of each face follow, along with representative examples of similar subjects found elsewhere in the Shield region.

It is evident that Face I has suffered from vandalism since Béland's visit in 1959. "On distingue assez nettement la forme d'un animal quadrupède de bonne taille, peut-être un orignal ou un chevreuil ou un caribou." My selection of cervidae from other Shield sites shows three identifiable moose (1, 3 and 7), a likely caribou (5) and two abstract creatures (4 and 6) whose identity is very much in doubt. The central animal, rendered in a rectilinear style, is conceivably the closest in character of these seven examples to the vanished quadruped of Wapizagonke.

I should note in passing that granite typically weathers by *exfoliation*. In the course of thousands of years of daily and seasonal variations in temperature and moisture thin plates of granite will separate from the mother rock, imperceptibly at first, but as water penetrates the microscopic cleavage frost action pries the plate loose until finally it falls into the water. It is plain from the present condition of the rock wall at Wapizagonke that exfoliation has destroyed all but a few remnants of the original rock surface. The surviving faces show the smoothing effects of glaciation, as no doubt the vanished faces did. The paintings that have vanished would have been made on faces that seemed intact at the time, so that I have no hesitation in asserting that their disappearance must have taken place over no less than a thousand years.

By the time of Béland's visit Faces I and II had reached a degree of exfoliation that made it possible for souvenir hunters to detach fairly large plates of loosened rock. Hence the disappearance of his "quadrupède de bonne taille." So also only part of a single bird remains where Béland observed, "D'autres signes ont la forme d'oiseaux." I offer examples of "thunderbirds" from other Shield sites. Two are headless (1 and 6). One is clearly a bird (4). The remaining two (2 and 3) represent a style that appears repeatedly all over the continent, and may be found among a group of glyphs as far away as Hawaii!

At first sight the predominating forms at Wapizagonke appear to be mere tally marks. On closer examination, however, we find, as Béland did, that "Certains ont vaguement une forme humaine." I am convinced that most series of vertical strokes are numerical expressions; but illustrate here three drawings of canoes, in the third of which the verticals represent human occupants. The samples of human renderings illustrated could be multiplied five times over without repeating a single style. It suffices merely to mention that three of them (1, 3 and 6) find their affinities in Face III. Like Béland I must decline to comment on the abstractions on Face IVa.

"Un signe plus élaboré," continues the geologist, "fait songer à une tortue." This is a discerning interpretation, and a good example

of how a natural form may be distorted and abstracted to a point where less sophisticated eyes might fail to recognize the subject. For comparative purposes I have added examples from farther west. Of these one would have misled me completely (7) had its interpretation by a reputable shaman not been recorded by Henry Schoolcraft, an American collector of Saultaux folk lore in the Sault Ste. Marie district in the 1840's.

Finally, "On remarque aussi plusieurs triangles et des séries de traits verticaux rappelant une numération quelconque." The viewer now will find only one surviving triangle. The vertical strokes on Faces IVc and Va are undoubtedly tally marks, but I believe those on Vb and Vc are the mere vestiges of larger abstractions rather than numerical expressions. Face VI is too badly weathered to offer any information except to suggest that others more severely weathered have preceded it to oblivion. It has probably suffered more than the higher paintings from the effects of wave action and ice erosion.

A study of the complexity of variables involved in weathering is probably our best hope of arriving at a reliable estimate of the age of these paintings. But such a study will not be easy. Variations in the hardness of the rock, differences of exposure to rain, seepage and post-pluvial drip, and the effects of lichen growth, sunlight, and the drying action of winds are all major factors that must be considered in relation to the varying degrees of protection from weathering agents. Nor can we be sure without microscopic examination whether a rock painting is faint because of long exposure or because a weak pigment was used in the first place.

Until recently we had thought that rock paintings exposed to the climate prevailing in the Shield woodlands would weather off in a few centuries. Recent work done by Valery Tchernetsov, however, has established that a number of sites in the Ural Mountains include paintings made between 3000 and 2750 B.C. Like the Shield paintings these were made with red ochre on rocks of a hardness quite comparable with the Shield rocks and in a climate (north of Sverdlovsk) at least as severe as that of the wooded Shield region. Tchernetsov records, too, that — like myself — he found the paint so firmly bonded to the rock that it could only be removed by scraping off the rock pinnacles it adhered to. So hard is the paint in some instances he notes, that the adjacent rock has weathered more than that which lay under the paint! Neither his sites nor those I have recorded have any shelter from wind-driven rain, and it seems logical that any binder that might have been mixed with the pigment originally would have been leached out in a century or more. It follows that the red ochre itself has remarkable binding properties.

Earth colours, ranging from the yellow ochres through the umbers and siennas to Indian red, have been used in rock paintings by primitive people the world over. Usually these colours are found in beds of clay impregnated with iron oxide, but they may also be derived from weathered exposures of various iron ores, particularly haematite. Yellow ochre is an impure *hydrous* iron oxide, which can be converted by heat to the anhydrous red ochre. I have run into two instances, one in Saskatchewan the other in Manitoba, where deposits of yellow ochre are still being used as sources for the red. Throughout Canada, but uniquely in the Shield country, red ochre had the overwhelming preference. The practice of the extinct Beothuk of rubbing red ochre over his entire body gave rise to the Micmac name for him, "Red Man". This was the source of the myth of a red race. Amerindians generally regarded red as a sacred colour, associated with blood, health and vitality. As one would expect this is the only colour used at the Wapizagonke site.

But what of the artists themselves?

If we assume, as I think we may, a modest age of 1000 years for the Wapizagonke paintings, then we may be fairly sure that the shaman-artists who painted them were of the same Algonkian stock as the present indigenous population, practising a culture which is believed to have been remarkably similar throughout the Shield Woodlands. Indeed, some archaeologists believe that it maintained its character over the thousands of years since the migrations into North America, retaining many of its Old World features. Regardless of this it was Algonkians whom Cartier encountered on the north shore of the St.Lawrence, and — mistakenly or not — named 'Canadians."

From the beginning their ancestors had been wanderers; wanderers across the breadth of the North American continent, wanderers across and out of the wide isthmus that joined Alaska to Siberia during the height of the Wisconsin ice age. Millenia before that they had been wandering eastward over the vast continent of Eurasia, and earlier still they had emerged — like our own remote ancestors — out of the cradle-continent of Africa. Tens of thousands of years of such wanderings bred in them an intimacy with nature beyond the imagining of 20th century man. Who better than they knew the unpredictability of life? Who had better learned how to cope with the terrible uncertainties of human existence?

Raging bushfires might alter the migration routes of the caribou by a hundred miles or drive the hunting band into totally unfamiliar territory. Three weeks' delay in the spring breakup could exhaust the last scrap of dried fish or meat needed for survival until the first fish-spawning. An exceptionally dry summer, an insect infestation or an animal epidemic might so alter the forest ecology — by processes we are only now beginning to understand — that the food resources dwindled to the vanishing point. Against these hazards a man could only turn to the manitous who guarded his welfare. His own resources failing there was only the skill of the shaman that he could turn to. The shaman, if he were a man of acute intelligence, his intuitions sharpened by long fasting, his self-confidence reinforced by the dreams that he believed could confer on him supernatural powers, might reach decisions that made the difference between survival and disaster.

Emerging over millenia of human experience with the conflicting elements of nature, unseen but omnipotent, there developed the concept of supernatural beings; not spirits withing our weak meaning of the word, but *more real* than the evanescent, unpredictable world of physical appearances. Survival nurtured in these pioneers of humanity a *surrealist* view of the world, with the dream as a doorway through which one might visit reality. These men had no reason to see themselves as the lords of creation. Quite the contrary: for them man was the least of the animals. For behind the mere appearance of each hunted animal, providing an endless supply of the flesh that nourished man, stood the great Source Animal of the species: the Sacred Bear, the Essential Moose, the Giant Beaver; all superrealities whose wishes or whims were revealed to mortals only through the dreams of their most gifted individuals. If one carefully observed the rituals of the hunt, if one treated the bones of the slain animal with the prescribed respect, the Great Providing Animal would graciously reclothe the bones with new flesh, and a man would have meat for his children.

There were other powers that must be reckoned with, too. Among the central Algonkians, feared by the Ojibway to this day, was the sinister underwater "lion", Michipichou, who haunted the rapids and the great waves of the larger lakes. If not properly placated he might swing his stone-knobbed tail over the gunwale of one's canoe, to swamp or capsize it. One was careful, too, in passing the great rock where the Maimaiquaissiwuk dwelt, to lay an offering of tobacco or a fat lake trout lest a sudden storm lash the lake. But in the grim silence of winter, as the hunter's snowshoes creaked loudly over the lake drifts — his wife and children lying weak with hunger in the snow-banked pole and turf wigiwaum — he might hear the bone-chilling shriek of the Witigo, incarnation of winter starvation, and find himself cursed with an insatiable lust for human flesh.

This was the world in which the men of Canada's Stone Age lived, out of which these deceptively simple rock paintings emerged. At Wapizagonke we are not merely viewing the curious markings of a vanished people. These are the lingering symbols of a spirit that enabled the first Canadians to endure, to survive, to lift themselves above nature and the animal world around them: to be men.

Viewing their art we can offer to their memory no less than our full respect.

(The original text has been placed in this section because Mr. Dewdney whishes the French translation to be considered as the original version of his article.)

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

A Meeting with Peter Daglish

BY MARIE RAYMOND

When I went to meet Peter Daglish, in his studio in Chiswick, I almost had the feeling of being indiscreet. Knowing someone through his work is a very personal approach, to confront him with himself is a kind of self-examination that can easily become a more or less favourable public confession. I was not taking into account the simplicity of a real person, who is remarkably available and for whom the adventure of art is such a strong need that he speaks of it as freely as water runs from its source. Daglish is not a person caught up in a definitive formula — people who have seen his recent exhibition at the Galerie Libre and perhaps his album of lithographs at the Musée d'Art Contemporain were certainly able to establish this, — for him the liking for experimentation with the plastic arts seems less a rash reflex than an inquisitive gesture con-

trolled by the intellect. He is aware of it, does not try to deny it and above all has not finished pursuing his research, feeling that he has no reason to limit himself to only one material, and still less to only one manner of expressing himself.

Born in Scotland, he arrived in Canada when he was an adolescent, and settled there and found in our Nordic decor the natural surroundings in which to grow up. He first studied in Montreal — mainly with Dumouchel — and except for one or two periods when he taught, at the Banff Fine Arts School, he pursued his career in the East, then in 1965 he came to Great Britain for some time. He left it last summer in order to give a series of courses in Victoria, but for the time being, a scholarship from the Canada Council, and a part-time teaching position are keeping him in London, where he finally found a place to begin painting again in the Chiswick area.

For two years, in fact, Daglish produced very little, due to lack of space. In 1965 he painted two canvasses, then none for an entire year, but to stay in form he made frequent use of his lithograph press and still participated in two exhibitions, one at the Commonwealth Institute and the other at the Whitechapel Gallery, which, in East-end London is playing the avant-garde role originally attributed to the Tate Gallery. Having returned to his palette, he immediately began to paint many works. Some of his works are separate panels, that were afterwards reunited within the same frame, not because his scope is fragmentary, but because he saw an extension from one composition to another, and once finished, he saw them as an indivisible whole. Besides the paintings there are coloured drawing where the stencil serves as a plate. He also makes types of models containing four distinct vignettes; they can be approached one at a time or all together depending on the meaning that one finds in them.

I think that everything that I do, he says, always relates to reality, "*it is a vision more than an abstraction*". His titles are quite personal references. *November*, for example, is so called because it was painted then; the date is a reference mark that indicates a precise moment in his evolution. As, according to him, the artist is generally a well-ordered person who proceeds through successive stages, he thus answers the need that he has to remember each one in a specific way.

Daglish also has a desire to accumulate material for the future. Some of these lithos were made after he had discovered the difficulty of framing a subject, of preventing it from over-running the canvass. I saw him leaf through a series that he was finishing and explain to me that it was a matter of different designs invented to decorate the corners and thus more easily surround his initial vision. This problem of framing now seems to be a common one to several of his colleagues, thus he proposes placing the result of his research at their disposal, allowing them to use his own composition to their own account. Another of his most recent experiments is the portfolio he exhibited last April in Our Musée d'Art Contemporain — entitled *Random words and album drawings*. An introductory note tells us how it must be considered: it is a question of trying to accommodate certain ideas and certain pictures that are not contained in his painting. Ideas on subjects to paint as well as the manner of execution, more literary images that depend on language, require words and even nonsensical images. In making this album, his intention was to present it as a notebook for reading, that is to say as bits of information gathered without any care given to the composition. During this time, he confides, I was in the dilemma of not being able to reconcile what I wanted to paint with the idea that I had of painting, I thought that the album would let me conserve my literary ideas that I did not want to lose but that I did not want to use as a painter. Now that it is finished, I know that I was wrong; everything can be used in art. This was a necessary step to allow me to feel that nothing restrains the freedom of the creator.

Despite this assertion, or perhaps, on the contrary, because of it, Daglish has not touched his brushes since last summer, when he embarked on a new adventure; that of creating sculpture objects. These are large works of corrugated cardboard, a multitude of ribbons introduce the element of colour. It seemed to me that at the beginning, some educational toys with detachable parts had been used as models; he gradually transforms them in the course of working with them and it is difficult to know to what extent they are the source or the necessary tool of his inspiration. As none of them has yet been finished, he speaks of them hesitatingly; at most did he mention that he was thus becoming engaged in a phase of construction and I felt that it could be going too far to ask him to elaborate further.

The need to communicate, the desire to share are marked characteristics of his personality, and from this point of view London does not give him as much as might have been expected. The Briton is insular, he is accustomed to getting along without other people; his reserve is thus not a myth. Moreover, the problems of distance in a city that contains nine million people, often requires that people live far from one another and all that makes it difficult to keep in touch. Daglish does not suffer from this; being in a productive period he has less need of it. What he especially deplores, however, is the spirit that animates the gallery directors at this time. What is being shown there, is not, in his opinion, sufficiently representative of what young painters are doing, and it is not without some nostalgia that he speaks of the year of his arrival, in 1965, when names like Harold — Cohen — Denny — King — Caro — Tilson — Caulfield had more frequent exhibitions. Today they are less supported, people are impressed more by standards that are too established and he would go to Los Angeles — if he could — as the ideal place for numerous exhibitions of what he calls "a more personal excentric work".

Daglish is also very involved in his teaching; he is giving basic and advanced courses on engraving. Giving students an opportunity for dialogue is an experience of which he speaks with an almost paternal fondness, so vital does he deem it to the period of formation. And I can well imagine him, discreet, respectfully directing the first rough sketches of coming artists, "*the discipline comes from students and not from myself*". "*Teaching is a reexamination of my own ideas and essential for me*", he adds; I think that one can also find in this assertion another of his essential characteristics because it translates very well his instinctive reaction, which is to always question everything that he is.

When I left him, he was two weeks away from leaving for Montreal to preside at the setting up of his exhibition. When he returned I found him optimistic, cheering, happy with what he had seen at home, full of plans, one of which will no doubt take him to Victoria next fall, since he has been offered a professorship there for next year.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Les Levine

BY JOANNA MARSDEN WOODS

This article deals with two works by Les Levine, one of which *Electric Shock*, will be exhibited at the VIIth Biennale des Jeunes at the Musée d'art contemporain of the city of Paris during October 1969.

Process of Elimination (pl. 1) has already been exhibited at the Art Gallery of Glendon College, York University, in 1968, and in New York in February 1969, on a vacant lot on Wooster street, between 3rd and 4th Streets. It consists of an assemblage of 300 curved white plastic works scattered pell-mell on the ground. Every day for thirty days, ten works are removed until the end of the month when the work has been completely removed and the ground is bare. The plastic works, thrown on refuse, dead leaves, and all the trash usually found on a vacant lot resemble the strewn pages of a newspaper that have been left to chance and the elements, every bit as much as the refuse that is already on the lot. The wind shifts them here and there and regroups them; a few crowd against the others, others are blown right off the lot, the work is constantly changing before our eyes. The artist accepts chance as a part of the process which determine the forms seen by the viewer. It is a work without a preconceived idea of orthodox forms, without a determined internal structure. There is an unexpected poetry in the unforeseen displacements and formations of the artificial objects, which are returning to nature, and are subject to the laws of physics. In fact, the work is reminiscent of the monochromatic Canadian landscape, as seen from an airplane in winter, but the colours are transposed; the white background of the snow is replaced, in *Process* by the greyish brown of the lot (pl. 3). In *Process*, Levine does not seek to interpret reality in the traditional sense, that is to say by laying down the order of his own imagination. Instead of imposing form to matter or of fashioning this matter, he has us observe the forms that already exist. He leaves things such as they are. Levine accepts the arbitrary condition of the lot for what it is in itself; he presents the daily environment as a part of reality, as a fragment of the life that we lead. This is "litter art", the art of thrown away things.

The plastic works are a logical extension of "disposables", of art to throw away (1), they are made of styrofoam, a material that is ordinarily used in packaging and that is thrown away after use (Pl. 4). One of Levine's central ideas is that we should no longer consider the work of art as a valuable object. With *Process*, he moves

even further away from the orthodox conception of the previous object, by creating a work that, even before having been seen, has already been "discarded", this time by the artist himself rather than by the collector. For Levine, the character of disposable art puts it into the service of mankind. From the social point of view, as soon as man obtains permission to destroy, he is freed from the upkeep and protection of the work. Levine maintains that accumulating is a constipating activity; the idea that there is security in possession is false.

Electric Shock is a no less static work; here art has become something completely transitory. If it may be said that *Process* is still a work to be contemplated, although what the viewer is contemplating is constantly changing and diminishing every time that he looks at it; the physical presence, the visual appearance of *Shock* is the least important part of the work. This sculpture which has already been presented at the Douglas Gallery in Vancouver in 1968, consists of a gird of electric wires hanging 6 feet above the floor, in a room 100 feet square; the wires give a slight shock when they are touched. These wires conducting electrical vibrations, so reminiscent of a concentration camp, create a feeling of claustrophobia and transform an ordinary space into a kind of cage.

Levine has said: "What I am after is a physical reaction and not a visual preoccupation" (2). *Shock* illustrates McLuhan's idea that visual culture has fallen into disuse and that the modern world requires a reaction of the central nervous system. The viewer is invited to give himself up to the work, to enter an aesthetic situation without first refering to the visual, and to have a completely transitory experience. It is not a dramatic experience, a work that the viewer has made operate to his liking, as is for example, *Soundings* by Robert Rauschenberg, where the degree of illumination is in direct relation to the quantity and quality of the noise that the viewer makes around it. "People will be works of art!" Levine said in 1966 (3), about his environment, *Slipcover:* but *Slipcover* was also a visual experience in itself. The shining and glossy surfaces, the dazzling lights projected on the sides and the continuous fan-driven movement set a contrast with the severity and the rigidity of *Shock*. This last work is discreetly balanced, hanging in the space between the ceiling and the viewer, a work whose qualities become apparent only when the viewer is present with his need to touch and to explore, in his search for something tangible and corporeal. It may be said that the work does not exist before it is shown to the viewers. Not only are people associated with the creation, they are integrated quite as much in the sculpture as are the elements of *Process*. Levine has succeeded in creating a work that depends almost entirely on the viewers, on their physical forms, their colouring, their weight in relation to one another and their unforeseen gestures.

Basically, *Shock* is just as exposed to haphazard arbitrary motions as *Process* is — people replace the plastic works. The variations of the movements and the regroupings of plastic works of the same form, size, and colour on an uneven ground resemble the spontaneous movements and gestures of human beings who are differentiated in size, texture, and colouring, but seen against a background, or rather under a ceiling made of repeated and serial elements. Whether at the viewer's feet or above his head, the work consists, on the one hand of rigid and identical elements, where the lack of weight invites the intervention of the wind for the "composition" of the sculpture, and on the other hand, of fixed and identical elements which invite the intervention of the viewer as an essential component of the sculpture.

Process and *Shock* are two large scale sculptures that occupy two given spaces, one out of doors, the other inside, without supressing the definition of these spaces as such, without hiding their everyday qualities. Levine would not want the works to distract our attention from the environment as an experience in itself. There is no advantageous position where the viewer can stand to look at them. A sculpture is usually thought to be an object that defines the environment, and it is chosen for its ability to define it. Levine believes that the environment defines what the sculpture is. The environment is not subordinated to the work; instead of commanding attention, the work adapts itself to the given space. It is a collaboration with the environment. Separated from the environment, the work does not physically exist. The elements, which have no meaning by themselves receive their value and their interest from the given context. It would be impossible to regard an element as a fragment of an ancient sculpture, as a work in itself.

Process and *Shock* are large scale works and they are portable works at one and the same time. The two sculptures are transitory and consequently have no permanence; they happen in time. The element of time assumes prime importance. Since they do not exist out of time, neither of them are objects that can be bought or sold. Their lasting value is reduced to the mental influence that they require. John Cage has written: "we are getting rid of ownership, substituting use" (4), and the works of Levine illustrate the current aesthetics that require that the artist does not give us a unique object, but a certain way of seeing, that art not be a thing, but an event, that the process be more important than the final result.

However, Levine does not insist on a conscious participation. "What I want to create is something that is such an integral part of the environment that it dissolves *into* the environment, and does not exist as a separate object." (5) His works make us aware of the total environment, the natural one and the man-made one, and of their aesthetic possibilities, whether it be a question of an urban landscape created by negligence or a technological panorama of the XXth century, knowingly and deliberately created by man, by helping us to notice it more sharply and more deeply. "I am not at all interested in illusions, I am interested in reality". (6) Levine's art allows us to become aware, with a deeper and more personal knowledge, of the qualities and characteristics of the world that we are in the process of creating and the life we lead in it, and consequently, it meets the purpose of art set forth by D. H. Lawrence, that is, that the purpose of art is to reveal the relationship between man and his ambient universe "at this living moment".

NOTES

1. "Disposables" have already been exhibited in Paris, number 36 of the exhibition *Canada — Art of Today*, which was held at the Musée National d'art moderne, in January and February of 1968.
2. Quoted in the article by Jay Jacobs, "More Les", *Art gallery*, March 1968.
3. Quoted ih the announcement-catalogue of the *Slipcover* exhibition, Art Gallery of Ontario, September-October, 1966.
4. John Cage, *A Year from Monday*, Weslayan University Press, 1967.
5. See Note 2 above.
6. Quoted in the article by Elayne Varian "Schemata 7", in *Minimal Art*, red. Gregory Battock, New York, 1968.

PLATES

1. Levine: *Process of Elimination*, in New York.
2. The basin which is situated between the two modern art museums in Paris.
3. Levine: *Process of Elimination*, in New York.
4. On the wall: Levine: *Art to throw away*. In the foreground: André Malraux is going through Levine's *Star Machine*, Paris, January 12, 1968.
5. Levine: *Electric Shock*, in Vancouver.
6. Levine: *Slipcover*, in Toronto.

Art that Lives in an Enchanting Frame

BY CLAUDE BEAULIEU

From the top of the hill the house looks down upon the river and the great urban centre of the city. To reach it, it is necessary to meander up the western slopes of Mount Royal. Beneath the immense trees that surround it, a large metal sculpture, placed on the grass, greets the visitor; further on, another sculpture, painted red, indicates the entrance to the home that harbours a collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, books, and art objects. They are witnesses, some of them temporary, to an art of living that is subtle and uneasy, ever seeking perfect balance between the various styles, moods, and eruptions of our times which are resolutely preoccupied with universal research. It is impossible to keep to only one style; it is better to use one's flair. Tempered by a certain wisdom or by a reasoned discipline, this flair allows a choice of tasteful works whose constant companionship is sought. For it is necessary to live with such works as with people who take a long time to reveal themselves, when one would want them to divulge confidence from the time of first meeting.

Every collector has a regard for display which inevitably translates his personality and his most diverse intentions: the desire to accumulate, the need to live in harmony with his acquisitions, the irresistible leaning towards the sensitive organization of the works, treated, more or less, as elements of composition. The evolution of styles, the scientific progress of archeology, the uncompromising creativity inherent in our times, lead the collector to unite related works, of various origins, which a secret bond unites. Thus, a sculpture of a spare style works quite well near a canvas or an object made to exalt sensitivity, to sustain the visual sense, and in this meeting, allows one to attain to the joys of the mind.

Crossing the entrance hall, where one will notice in passing, some sculptures by Vaillancourt and Couturier, one enters the large living room. All around, there are works by Moore and Ernst in the company of those by Atlan; opposite are two works by Bissière, a Riopelle canvas, and the very latest acquisition: a canvas of the Hourloupe by Dubuffet, a small sculpture by Germaine Richier; finally, a silver dish by François Hugo from a Picasso drawing,

beneath a 1946 watercolour by Riopelle and a graphite sketch by Picasso. Between the visitor and these works chosen with love, a tactile and mysterious communication spontaneously begins.

It is in the dining room that is evident the change that is taking place in this collection, always harmoniously adjusted with the *eargerness* of the excited owners, who acquire new works by artists who are still unknown, but beginning to gain repute. There are also memories of trips: a Clavé, a Buffet discovered almost twenty years ago, a very large early McEwen, are among their *furnishings*. But it is in a small, intimate room that the transformations are most keenly sensed. African masks, an armchair by Breuer placed on a zebra skin replace graphic works, of which some remarkable examples remain: Léon Bonhomme, Derain, Rodin, and Vlaminck.

A privileged place is evidently given to Canadian artists. In most of the rooms and free areas hang McEwens, and Dallaires, including the *Poète aux fleurs* (see the cover of no. 45 of *Vie des Arts*).

Objects, rugs, furnishings, everything attests to a veritable cult of beauty. There is also a remarkable book-lover's collection including: *Miserere*, *Le Père Ubu* and *La Passion*, by Roualt; the *Parler seul* of Tristan Tzara, by Miro; the *Prométhée* of Gide by Henry Moore; *Sainte Monique*, by Bonnard; *La tentation de Saint Antoine*, by Odile Redon; the *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* of Balsac, by Picasso; the *Le Spleen de Paris*, of Baudelaire by Francis Gruber, and so many others . . . !

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Zao Wou-Ki

BY RENÉ DE SOLIER

He is the most taciturn painter in the West! His silence is baffling. Wou-ki does not speak about his painting. Amused, smiling, he looks to others.

— "Your turn to play!" (Wou-ki is, moreover, a remarkable tennis player). This sportsmanship is pleasing, even if it does not make the critic's task any easier. The painter surrounds himself with only the best people. Henri Michaux was one of his first friends. And the already lengthy bibliography indicates rather clearly the interest aroused by his work which is reputed to be incomprehensible.

The reason for his silence are very easily understood. Learned, knowing ancient signs, writings and transcripts, wondrous materials, as well as the research of graphic etymology, Zao Wou-ki imparts his knowledge elsewhere. In the course of his still unpublished study, "The Human Plant", Wou-ki pointed out and detailed certain scripts, of divinatory inscriptions on shells or on bones (Kià kôu wên).

Certainly one experiences a great nostalgia when one is familiar with all these symbols, "the picture of the 214 keys", Wou-ki does not yield to the temptation. But what a calligraphy!

Could his painting, and his lithographs be variants, whose composition is inverted, of what we call the "science of signs"? Perhaps. But that matter pertains more to psychology than to art criticism, which does not like to take the slightest risk — unfortunately! At least we could willingly support this idea, with the painter's consent, if Wou-ki were not so inscrutable! To each his own risks.

Knowledge of the line, in the existing manuscript writings is so rich that one would wish to become very wise, or to be introduced into the secret workshops. One must make the best of it, of one's ignorance, especially since Wou-ki, who is not very stingy, does not necessarily impart his knowledge "inside out", like a negative onto his canvasses, but according to a style of painting that is steady, lively, sprightly, and that needs not resort to the abominable blotting or staining that spoils so many works.

Having seen that and proceeding from what is real, there is one patient observation to be made, this painting has a hold on nature, how harmonious it is! It is a painting of "signs", if one can so designate the *elements* that intervene: waves, vapour, breath (lat. *aura*), clouds, networks (without linear figuration). We are baffled by the quality of the techniques, by the extent of the knowledge of the science of colours, by the vigour and clarity of the colours.

— "I like all the colours" Wou-ki declares. — Which ones especially? None. I do not have any favourite colours. I am particularily sensitive to vibrations".

That is perhaps the key word to the enigma, if one wishes to enter the painter's universe, one of the most mysterious of contemporary art.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

McLaren, or creative schizophrenia

"I shall build you a city with ragged bits
I shall build for you without plans or cement
An edifice that you will not destroy."
Henri MICHAUX
(La Nuit remue)

BY DOMINIQUE NOGUEZ

Norman McLaren is the leader of a heretical sect that had the cinema pass from polytheism to monotheism. What art form was more inevitably devoted to multiplicity than the cinema before his? On one side of the film was a whole lot of co-creators ranging from the deity of the dialogues to the little godess of makeup, and on the other side, the innumerable rank and file of the viewers. The pre-McLarian film producer like the motion picture fan before the "magnétoscope" (Translator's note: a procedure of recording televised pictures on a plastic magnetic tape) was surrounded on all sides, and if he was a god it was in the manner of Jupiter, disturbed every two seconds by the tears of Thetis, or the girdle of Juno. Beginning in about 1933 to paint his films and their sounds just as he did the film itself, McLaren produced the most individual art form from the most collective of them, and henceforth, there was room in the cinematographic cosmos for solitary gods.

By such a rough comparison of cinematographic practices with literary or pictorial practices, by freeing the film writer from the cumbersome panoply of filming apparatus and from the unwieldy attendance of technicians and actors, by doing away with the mediation and the relays, McLaren was thus restoring to the creative *gesture* all its meaning, its force, and especially its freedom. Tearing the cinema away from the theatre or from the puppet show, he was putting or rather putting it back into the sphere of painting and drawing, that is to say, among the arts where everything depends on one maker and where *everything* is possible. This liberation was a veritable Copernican revolution, for it saved the cinema from a seemingly inherent fate: enslavement to reality. With McLaren and his non-figurative cinema, cinema no longer revolves around the world, it is the world that revolves at the will of the cinema. The animated numbers of *Rythmetic* (1956), the facetious microphone of *Opening Speech . . . McLaren* (1961), the paramecium of *Begone dull care* (1949), the chicks or earthworms of *Hen hop* (1942): these helter-skelter elements of the *realistic* universe are whimsically called together to the rhythm of the sarabands of Desormeaux or Blackburn. They are elements, to be sure, and they are most often elementary: molecules or debris, blobs or points — simple starting points of a reconstituted world, a *rebuilt* world. For everything occurs as if McLaren, the impatient scientist were inventing atoms of a new physics, amoebas of an imaginary biology in order to observe them as he pleased.

Now these multicoloured microorganisms that always seem to appear to us as though through a gigantic microscope or a dwarfed telescope, increasingly stirred up and increasingly furtive as the work progresses, significantly draw the McLarian fairyland nearer to one of the most fantastic and yet coherent modern literary worlds, the one of Henri Michaux. Like many a text from Michaux's pre-mescaline period, each of McLaren's little films constitutes in effect something like an imaginary trip to a world of replacements, to a *counter-creation*. A trip, yet, where exclamation and amazement are banished, and which appears to be all the more factual as it reveals more surprising creatures and gestures to us. In Michaux's Grande Garabagne (1) sick people are choked, ministers burned, drowned, tears shed over a falling leaf, people are upset over a sniffle, they sneeze for months, in the most natural way in the world. And in the same way, who will be astonished by the extravagant pirouettes of the characters of *Two Bagatelles* (1953), by the lengthy shots of the backs of the antagonists of *Neighbours* (1952)? Is Jutra, confronted by a chair in *A chairy tale* (1957), astonished by the swerves, the changing moods, and the remorseful movements of his wooden partner? And in *Opening Speech . . . McLaren* in which he is the protagonist, is McLaren startled to see his microphone expand, contract, wriggle, and flee into the wings? Finally, in the presence of the fabulous white forms of *Pas de deux* (1968), reduced in ratio and reunited to the rhythm of a harp or a Pan's flute, having a gracefulness that never before existed, who would prefer surprise to awe? Is it not as much the apparent lack of logic and realism of these cinematographic fantasies that should surprise as well as their deep coherence and their necessity?

I have spoken of debris and it is very true that in a certain way this phantasmic world is made up of pieces of ours. But we must see how these pieces immediately regroup, find meaning and balance that depend a thousand times less on a destructive negativism than on a Promethean and almost obsessive need to create. Obsessive, for it is not so much a question of an entertainment as of an urgency: to

be surrounded by these populations of signs and scribblings as though they were indispensible protection. The geometrical ballets of *Lines-vertical* (1960) and *Lines-horizontal* (1962), the spewed oranges and reds of *Fiddle de dee* (1947), the shimmering and oily reflections, the light confetti, the balls and marbles, the Dali-like setting, and the butterfly of *Short and suite* (1959), the stars and tricoloured bands of *Stars and stripes* (1939), the brief and abstract phantasms as aggressive as a bolt of lightning or an electric discharge, the geometric-figurative motifs — the umbrella, chicken, pineapple, palm tree, bluebird, heart, and eggs of *Blinkety Blank* (1954), the dancing of blue, red, and green signs in *Hoppity hop* (1946), the mystic-phallic birds of *A Phantasy* (1952), or yet again, of *Short and suite*, the evanescent bird of *La poulette grise* (1947), the rows of unruly numbers of *Rythmetic* (1956), the hands, cubes, the drawings of little men, and then the "real" and reduced in ratio characters of *Canon* (1964), — all this lively and rapid multiplication of forms and creatures that are rarely figurative, and often comparable, in a visual nature, to the neologisms of Michaux, constitutes a sort of *buffer state* (the formula is still Michaux's) between the creator and the real world, a real world still perceived as a threat, at best as a source of jokes (the chair of *Chairy tale*, the microphone of *Opening Speech . . . McLaren*), and at worst as an assurance of future wounds and even death. It is symptomatic, in this respect, that in McLaren's *Neighbours*, where struggle what most resemble "real" men, the story that is related is a story of aggression and destruction. No doubt this allegorical nightmare will be compared to the pacifist message of *Hell unlimited* (1936). But, more profoundly, one would not be too far wrong to read in it the deep-seated schizoid traits which, as we think about it, govern McLaren's entire work and which once again draws the author of *A Phantasy* close to the one of *Ailleurs*.

Schizoid traits first in the manner in which this work is produced. It is perhaps not by chance that McLaren is the film maker who has contributed the most, as we noted in the beginning, to perfecting an individual, closed cinema, which does without apparatus and assistants (2), in short the cinema of a recluse, a misanthrope. Yet, it is in the work itself that we must seek the most manifest traces of the break, of this quasi pathological inadequacy towards reality. Not only in what is related to the themes (objects in revolt and almost humanized, men on the contrary treated as things, mechanized like jumping-jacks; the difficulty of communication, good neighbourliness) but in its structure: if the word schizophrenia could be ventured here, by virtue of a hypothesis, it might be possible for something of the deep motives of McLaren's work to appear. How, in particular would we not be tempted to explain *Rythmetic*, *Canon* (1964) or *Mosaic* (1965) in the light of the descriptions that Binswanger or Minkowsky have made of the hyper-logical, indeed morbidly rational form of schizophrenia delirium? In effect, everything happens as though each one of these little films constituted an imaginary problem, set by chance, immediately imposing itself obsessively on McLaren's mind and as though the latter could not abandon it without having resolved it in the most logically possible way. Let us think for example, of the beginning of *Mosaic*: a whistling man passing before us drops a ping pong ball. This white point immediately begins to haunt the black space of the screen like an enigma: divided into 4, then 9, then 16, etc, it is then quickly caught up in the implacable complexity of a geometric progression. Certainly it is not unimportant that this progression gives rise to the appearance of increasingly complex and beautiful figures — as beautiful as a multicoloured logarithmic table, as beautiful as a Mondrian canvas, as beautiful as the stained glass window of a cathedral of the future — but finally what animates and precipitates from the rigorous metamorphoses remains a kind of irrepressible logical tension. And we can not disregard the humour which transfigures the arithmetical operations of *Rythmetic* (these numbers that scratch themselves like dogs!) or the mobile frescoes of *Canon*: without having first perceived that their quasi mechanic performance owes nothing to chance.

Or else then to a very un-haphazard subconscious chance. Moreover, this is how McLaren describes his method himself (3). It is true that he could have described it also in the way in which Robbe-Grillet, Ricardon or other such new French film writers (Rivette Garrel) described theirs: barely begun the work takes its own origin on itself; imposes its structure, in short, makes itself. And certainly one can also accept this explanation that attributes in sum to the unconscious of the work what the traditional psychological explanations attribute to the unconscious of the author. McLaren, to take up again for a moment the theological metaphor from which we began, would consequently not even be a monotheist, but an atheist —: his films would exist as the atheist must well admit that the universe exists: without an extrinsic cause. But after all, it scarcely matters if the schizophrenic appearance of the production or the themes, or the structure of his films come to the films through themselves, or that, on the contrary, it is McLaren who in them, by them, exorcises or simply stimulates the schizoid nature. The essential thing is the unity that this creative "neurosis" assures them in themselves; the essential thing is the link that reunites these rigorous phantasmagories, and confers on them, beyond their formal diversity, a similar sense: the one of a successful metempsychosis in the moving, superb, and super-logical world of the film.

P.S. May Jacqueline Saint-Pierre, of the N.F.B., who considerably facilitated access to the McLaren films find here mentioned my deep gratitude.

NOTES

(1) *Voyage en Grande Garabagne*, Paris. N.R.F. coll. "Métamorphoses" 1936, taken up again in *Ailleurs*, Paris, N.R.F. 1948.

(2) At least theoretically, for it cannot be forgotten how important was the presence of Evelyne Lambart to Norman McLaren in the creation of many of his short-features.

(3) in: Roger Benayoun, *Le dessin animé après Walt Disney*, Paris, Pauvert 1961 p. 24 sqq.

(4) In the manner of Breton and Eluard (*L'immaculée conception*) Paris Seghers, re-ed. 1961.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Kraanerg

BY PIERRE W. DESJARDINS

Five and a half years after the initial approval of the project, the curtain finally rose in the Opera House of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa on Monday June 2nd. The Governor General, the Prime Minister, the diplomatic corps, guests from all the provinces and critics from all over the world filled the 2,300 seats. It was the first performance at the Arts Centre and also the world première of Roland Petit's latest ballet, "Kraanerg", commissioned for this occasion by the National Ballet of Canada. Defying chauvinism, a Frenchman created the choreography, a Hungarian designed the sets, a Greek wrote the music, an American conducted the orchestra, and Paris, Berlin, and New York provided the star dancers Georges Piletta, Lynn Seymour, and Edward Villella. (To be altogether fair, one should point out that Lynn Seymour, from the Berlin Opera Ballet, is a native of Vancouver.)

First, a short and very unmemorable ballet titled "The Queen/ La Reine" paid its respects to nationalism and to both of our founding races. The "O Canada" followed and at last the evening really began. It was well worth the wait.

As the critic from La Presse aptly noted, the collaboration of Xenakis (music), Vasarely (sets and costumes), and Roland Petit (choreography) recalled the glorious days of Diaghilev, when renowned composers, artists, and choreographers worked together in creating the first great contemporary ballets.

Clive Barnes of the New York Times hailed the music for "Kraanerg" as one of the major ballet scores of the century. Although Xenakis was not altogether satisfied with the acoustic resources of the hall, his music, a mixture of recorded tapes and live performance (with a 23-piece orchestra under the direction of American conductor and composer Lukas Foss), dominated the evening. Xenakis also created the title *Kraanerg*, from two ancient Greek words: "kraan" meaning accomplishment and "erg" energy.

The sets, using straight lines, circles and squares, established the atmospheric environment. In ancient times, the circle symbolized earthly paradise and the square celestial paradise. However, in topology, both have the same significance. This is more a pretext for the ballet than a link between the work's eleven movements; there is no plot and the choreography must be freely interpreted by each of us.

Assisted by his son Yvaral, Vasarely translated these ideas into a grandiose and beautiful set, using the resources of 'op' and kinetic art. The stark simplicity of this geometric environment in black and white, its inventiveness, its scale, all contributed towards a cosmic and poetic effect. Blown up to the proportions of this huge stage and subtly emphasized by the lighting, Vasarely's familiar op motifs went beyond geometry to achieve an almost lyrical classicism. The dancers themselves became part of the effect with their costumes, their movements, their shadows, their image reflected and transformed by a circular mirror. The set became a work of art rather than an empty shell.

Kraanerg's choreography disappointed certain Canadian critics who found it "an ugly, disturbing, violent prophecy of anarchy . . . a masochist's evening of ballet . . . " (James Barber, Vancouver Province), "a danse macabre" (Nathan Cohen, Toronto Star), "a tiny rubber balloon of a thought inflated to giant proportions . . ."

(Max Wyman, Vancouver, Sun). These comments are more a reflection of the critics' ignorance than of the work of Roland Petit. One could be more justified perhaps in saying that his choreography was not particularly new. On the other hand, neither Xenakis nor Vasarely were innovating completely; they utilized known elements of their artistic vocabulary and developed them into a new work. Petit did the same thing. *Kraanerg* may have brought few revelations to those who had seen his *Éloges de la folie*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Forms*, but it was nevertheless excellent Roland Petit (with maybe a few hints from other choreographers). All this being said, the choreography remained perhaps the weakest element of the work, but only in comparison to the outstanding creations of Xenakis and Vasarely. Indeed the importance of *Kraanerg* lay more in the collaboration of these three artists than in the individual contribution of any of them, in the Gestalt rather than in the detail. The most stimulating element was the correspondance of intentions, the harmony between sets, music, and choreography, all created together, part of the main stream of their time rather than pastiche of the past. Musical, visual, and choreographic explorations were merged, in a spirit of contemporary 'classicism'.

Roland Petit was right in saying that this was the most important ballet première of the year anywhere.

Sondages '69 au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, du 16 mai au 26 juin 1969.

PAR WILLIAM VAZAN

Sur 300 participants choisis, douze des travaux ont été retenus pour cette exposition contrairement à l'amoncellement de l'an dernier: 313 travaux par 113 artistes. Cette année, l'espace permet au spectateur de mieux voir les œuvres.

Le directeur du Musée, David Giles Carter, explique dans le mince catalogue de l'exposition que Sondages '69 adopte une nouvelle formule. Le jury qui comprend les personnes suivantes: Andrée Paradis, directrice de la revue *Vie des Arts* Lucy, Lippard de New-York, critique d'art et écrivain, et Ron Bloore de York University, Ontario, artiste et professeur. Ces personnes ont simplement choisi les participants sans aucune intention d'accorder des prix parce que la diversité des tendances rendait absurde de telles attributions. Il a de plus laissé entendre que le Musée abandonnera la coutume de s'en remettre à un jury pour les expositions de groupe. Ceci est souhaitable pourvu que les futures équipes aient le courage d'adopter ces nouvelles directives sans céder à la tentation de favoriser les tenants des sentiers battus.

Des noms d'artistes aussi bien que des noms d'écoles qui nous sont devenus familiers sont absents de cette exposition: Molinari, Snow, Bush, hard-edge, pop — quelques artistes peuvent, bien entendu, avoir décliné l'invitation — car le jury a choisi de montrer les œuvres d'artistes peu connus afin de donner une meilleure idée de l'orientation de l'art d'aujourd'hui.

Après mûre réflexion, RIEN est le mot qui décrit le mieux notre première impression. Comme il est agréable de laisser à la sensibilité l'occasion de s'épanouir! Ces douze travaux sont très autonomes et si l'espace le leur permettait, ils pourraient sûrement rappeler l'encombrement de l'exposition de l'année dernière.

Dans cette exposition, l'art minimal atteint un degré voisin de l'immatérialité. Les divers éléments des œuvres sont en partie éliminés et atteignent un tel degré de raffinement dans la négation que le spectateur, afin de combler ce vide, arrive à se composer une vision qui lui est propre.

La notion de couleur telle que nous la connaissions est dépassée avec la matière acrylique qu'emploie Guy Montpetit et avec les joints de métal de Henry Saxe. Les jeux de meccano colorés de Montpetit font le lien avec le pop que nous avons connu. C'est la glorification de deux sociétés mécanisées dont les deux branches recourbées aux extrémités se rejoignent vers le centre du tableau.

Désenchantement et jeu sont les thèmes de Saxe dans son tableau "X — tree Link" en vert et écarlate. Le flou de ses bandes anguleuses couvertes de vinyle sont visuellement illusoires mais le spectateur en circulant autour est éclairé par elles.

Les masses enveloppées et de couleur grise de Charles Gagnon sont à peu près monochromes cependant que d'étroites lisières noires disparaissent sous les coups de pinceau formant soit un sentier, soit des gouttelettes et puis de brusques arrêts. Comme un iris qui se transforme à la faveur de la lumière et de l'obscurité et vice versa, le regard découvre et compose les couleurs à compter des teintes suggérées.

David Gordon présente trois larges formes grandes ouvertes. Ces surfaces de couleur ocre et noir vers les côtés sont peintes au vaporisateur avec les arêtes non peintes et d'autres de couleur vive. Malheureusement, les montants de soutien empêchent le spectateur de s'approcher de l'œuvre et de se rendre compte des proportions de ces formes à la fois déployées et contractées. L'œil est attiré vers le côté et aperçoit le décalage entre l'espace et la forme, ce mouvement étant aplani et diminuée par les arêtes non peintes. Le regard est par la suite ramené au centre d'un espace incertain et ramené sur le côté pour rechercher encore les éléments tangibles de la composition.

L'œuvre de Daniel Salomon, *The Grass is Greener* bien que très près de ce que l'œil peut percevoir normalement, soulève le problème de la réalité. Il juxtapose en contraste un tapis d'herbe fait de papier plastifié et de gazon naturel; un miroir peint de couleur acrylique réfléchit ces deux éléments et les projette sur le mur. Lequel de ces éléments est le plus vrai? Aucun, est la réponse.

Les autres artistes continuent à répondre aux mêmes questions. Robert Jack suggère l'illusion d'un double jeu de lignes entrecroisées qui ouvre la voie à un espace entre les formes de tissu non peint et les coins teintés de violet. Entre les deux se trouve un croisement plus étroit peint de teintes contrastantes. Il en résulte une distortion de l'image à travers la mince vitre de la fenêtre qui passe de l'intérieur à l'extérieur et amincit la surface peinte en adoucissant les angles.

L'œuvre de Michael Morris de couleur neutre fait l'effet d'une œuvre peinte. Ses bandes de couleur laissent la place à des reproductions de photos de dessins au fusain représentant des tuyaux avec une petite surface imprimée 16 fois qui donne l'illusion de papier peint opaque en noir et blanc avec de minces incrustations de miroir qui reflètent à demi à la fois le spectateur et l'intérieur de la pièce. Tout ceci rappelle le décor du cinéma des années 30 et de son bon goût décadent.

Un mur de six pieds de haut en fibre de verre de Peter Kolinsnyk reflète la lumière et l'objet au moyen de la transparence et de l'opacité. Au-delà, la vision fragmentée par les nervures anguleuses est complètement obstruée par le mouvement circulaire du spectateur.

Un morceau de bois de construction de 14 pieds de long drapé de vinyle transparent est l'œuvre de Ian Wallace. Ces formes manifestent une préoccupation du minimal. L'éclairage des cordages de vinyle formant des rayures provient des chassis vitrés du plafond et des lumières de la galerie et accentuent la longueur de la pièce de bois en même temps qu'elle abolit la forme naturelle de la pièce originale.

Une feuille de polyéthylène translucide étendue sur le plancher invite le spectateur à la participation à mesure qu'il se déplace. Ces formes de Carl Beveridge, bien que superficielles en apparence, remplissent l'espace plus que ne le laissent percevoir les éléments de la composition. Les tiges qui soulèvent la feuille de polyéthylène et l'élèvent dans l'espace donnent à l'œuvre un caractère à la fois de force et de contrainte.

Talk de N. E. Thing Co. ne devait pas être identifié au catalogue afin d'ajouter à son caractère évasif. A certains endroits sur les murs de la galerie une petite plaque porte l'inscription suivante: "Please ask any museum guard for the N. E. Thing Co. work and he will tell you: Thank you."

Le jury s'est rendu compte d'un changement par-delà l'art minimal: l'objectivité s'est transformée en maniérisme. Réduction, prolongement, élimination et sens du transitoire ont pour effet de désintégrer l'objet. On est plus préoccupé du concept et de la pensée; ceci n'est pas une attitude négative mais une absence d'intention qui toutefois ne verse pas dans la littérature ou la préciosité.

L'art minimal (l'inexprimable, le rien) a triomphé.

Cette exposition nous a révélé que notre attitude devrait être celle d'une perpétuelle attente. Nous devrons exiger que les galeries commerciales de Montréal et les divers mouvements au niveau des structures tiennent compte, sans en abuser, de ces nouvelles préoccupations se rapportant à la réalité impalpable.

Traduction de Lucile Ouimet

Université de Calgary
Ateliers de lithographie et de sérigraphie

PAR SHIRLEY RAPHAEL

Les universités sont devenues aujourd'hui des centres de diffusion de l'art. Elles sont le lieu d'élection d'expériences artistiques; elles

ont des galeries d'art où des artistes connus et inconnus peuvent exposer leurs travaux; plusieurs d'entre elles ont commencé à monter des collections permanentes importantes. De plus, elles emploient comme professeurs des peintres renommés et, bien que l'engagement de ces artistes sur le campus soit d'une durée relativement courte, ils n'en exercent pas moins une influence considérable sur leurs étudiants. La plupart des universités ont été construites dans un nouveau district et les plus modernes possèdent des studios spacieux, bien éclairés et bien équipés. L'Université de Calgary est du nombre.

Le but du récent atelier de gravure tenu en juillet 1969 était de fournir à tous ceux qui s'intéressent sérieusement à la gravure l'occasion de travailler sous la direction d'un graveur de réputation internationale, Andrew Stasik, directeur du Pratt Graphic Centre, de New-York; le maître était assisté de Robert Bigelow et Mahen Patel, tous deux graveurs professionnels. Les deux ateliers offraient à tous ceux qu'animait un réel désir d'apprendre une direction très sûre, des techniques et des procédés nouveaux qui ont aidé les participants à aplanir bien des difficultés sur le plan métier. Le but de ces ateliers était d'élever les normes d'excellence au moyen de travaux de création, de réunions, d'expositions, etc., et ainsi d'approfondir les divers aspects de ce métier.

L'inscription était limitée à 30 étudiants pour les deux ateliers de sorte que les participants eurent l'avantage de bénéficier d'une attention suivie et plus personnelle.

Des ateliers de ce genre sont inexistants au Canada et aux États Unis. Helmet Becker, assistant professeur d'art et d'éducation artistique à l'Université de Calgary est celui à qui revient le mérite d'avoir organisé et surveillé la mise en marche de cet atelier. Il fut responsable en 1967 de l'atelier de bois gravé alors que Toshi Yoshida était l'artiste invité; en 1968, il organisait un atelier de gravure avec Shane Weare d'Angleterre. Aussi est-il juste de reconnaître que même avec l'aide de l'Université de Calgary, du département des arts de la division de l'Education Permanente et l'assistance du Conseil des Arts du Canada, Helmut Becker a été l'âme dirigeante de cette activité qui s'est maintenue grâce à lui.

M. Andrew Stasik est reconnu comme une autorité dans le monde de la gravure à cause de son oeuvre, qui est remarquable. Il a exposé en Amérique du Nord et en Europe et a fait partie pendant plusieurs années du Pratt Graphic Centre. Il est bon administrateur et excellent professeur. Il ne fut pas avare de conseils et a partagé généreusement le fruit de sa vaste expérience avec ses élèves. Des diapositives furent mises à la disposition des étudiants et elles ont fait le sujet de commentaires intéressants. Le projet de l'organisation d'un atelier de gravure dans chaque ville fut aussi discuté: la façon d'établir un tel atelier, comment il fonctionnerait, i.e., le facteur économique, tous ces aspects de la question ont été discutés. Sur le plan de l'art, nous avons reçu des directives qui ont permis à chacun de développer ses propres tendances et sa propre personnalité.

M. Stasik transmet à ses élèves l'amour du travail bien fait. Le travail négligé, des gravures imparfaites n'étaient pas acceptés. Il devint essentiel d'apprendre tous les raffinements et la perfection d'un graveur de métier.

Robert Bigelow, graveur de la section de lithographie faisait autrefois partie de l'atelier Tamarin Lithographic et des studios Gemini à Los Angeles. Il est maintenant professeur à la Vancouver School of Art. Sa fonction consiste à guider les artistes dans l'exécution d'éditions d'art et à les assister dans tous les problèmes techniques qu'ils rencontrent. Il a aussi gravé des éditions originales de l'artiste anglais Anthony Benjamin qui fait partie du personnel de l'Université de Calgary. Chacun des étudiants ayant participé à la réalisation de ce travail a reçu en cadeau une édition de ces lithographies originales.

Mahen Patel de l'Université de Calgary a été très apprécié des étudiants qui s'intéressaient aux procédés de la sérigraphie. Il a collaboré avec chacun et les a aidés dans l'exécution d'éditions d'art. Il fut d'une patience exemplaire et il répondait sans se lasser aux innombrables questions des étudiants.

En quoi consistaient ces ateliers? . . . La plupart des participants, moi-même y compris, venaient du Canada, à l'exception d'un artiste américain qui avait déjà pris part antérieurement à de semblables ateliers. Les cours se donnaient officiellement de 9 à 4, mais dans bien des cas, la journée se prolongeait de 7 heures à minuit, sept jours par semaine. La plupart d'entre nous n'avions jamais tant travaillé, et ce pendant trois semaines d'affilée . . . mais l'élan initial avait été si fort qu'il eût été difficile de l'arrêter! L'enthousiasme était à son comble car il était devenu possible de tout expérimenter, explorer, demander, faire, apprendre, questionner, comparer, discuter, argumenter, offrir des conseils, critiquer et être critiqué avec un égal intérêt. Une franche camaderie a résulté de ces rencontres et si quelques rivalités existaient, elles ne furent pas apparentes. Chacun était libre d'exécuter son propre projet.

Il y eut aussi des heures de détente: des réceptions et des excursions furent organisées auxquelles tout le monde a participé. La plupart d'entre nous ont eu très peu de sommeil durant ces trois semaines!

Chaque artiste a laissé à la collection permanente de l'Université quelques gravures. Une exposition des travaux accomplis au cours de cette rencontre aura lieu au cours de l'année. Il serait aussi souhaitable que ces gravures soient exposées dans les universités d'un océan à l'autre.

L'Université de Calgary projette de tenir un autre atelier en 1970. Souhaitons que ce projet se réalise et espérons que les autres universités et écoles d'art du Canada suivront cet exemple et qu'elles ouvriront bien grandes leurs portes à des graveurs invités de renommée internationale.

Les artistes ne peuvent travailler continuellement dans la solitude. Ces ateliers de groupe sont très efficaces car ils stimulent les contacts et permettent d'échanger des idées.

Le facteur le plus important qui a contribué au succès de ces semaines d'étude est le fait pour les participants d'avoir eu la possibilité de s'accorder le luxe de consacrer tout leur temps, leur énergie et leurs pensées à la gravure, et ce, pendant trois semaines. Pour la plupart d'entre nous que leur gagne-pain oblige à cumuler diverses fonctions, ces trois semaines furent un luxe incomparable. Vive la gravure!

Traduction de Lucile Ouimet

A Meeting with Arthur Pepin

BY M. F. O'LEARY

Passing through Paris, I met Arthur Pepin, a Canadian painter who has been sojourning at Vence for a year. We made our way to an atelier in the Marais quarter where he showed me his recent pictures. These oils are, to my mind, combinations of signs that remind me of certain trigrams and hexagrams taken from the *I Ching*. Each picture is in itself a cycle that is beginning or ending, a symbol of a language that is past, present, and future.

Q. — Arthur Pepin, why have you come to France?

A. — I came here to break with the kind of life that I was leading in Quebec, in order to compare myself with the other artists here in Paris where the competition is very keen; this confrontation will permit me to get my bearings.

Q. — Should an original painter be measured in this competition?

A. — It is vital to know what other people are doing. Seeing this is stimulating and in this sense Paris is a hive of activity, so I can go on from there.

Q. — You chose Provence . . .

A. — Yes, because I have a studio there that the Karolyi Foundation offered me. It is a marvelous workshop, with lighting an artist dreams of, and when I work I feel inspired. Such a place is not to be found in Paris.

Q. — You attach a great deal of importance to nature . . .

A. — It always influences me, even unconsciously.

Q. — Is your painting related to Oriental writings, and are you doing research in this area?

A. — No. I am an intuitive painter. I express myself with a rapid gesture, it may be compared with Chinese or Japanese . . . I am not developing this in a definite way.

Q. — You cannot deny the relationship between your painting and the East . . .

A. — I believe in previous existence. A stored-up knowledge that re-appears. Even if in 1969 one is French-Canadian, even if one is living in Paris, and why Paris, were it not for a question of language and ease of communication, I believe in a common thinking among Western and Eastern artists.

Q. — Well, for you being a painter identified with Canada . . . . .

A. — Is not important. One is bound to a country as much by one's affinities as by one's affections, but the mind has no borders and remains international. Now, painting, no doubt more than any other art, is related to this concept for we do not need words to translate our poetic message.

Q. — Yet you exhibit and use the intermediary of galleries, how do you see this problem?

A. — Galleries should not exist, but this is impossible. We must bow to requirements which are wretched hagglings. Young people are struggling against this state of things, but it seems difficult to do away with it: it is a millstone . . . It is obvious that painting would

be better off if we could manage to get rid of this marketing. However, I think that exhibitions that accept artists without eliminating any, even if all the works exhibited are not quality works, are valuable.

Q. — Engravings, gouaches, paintings, poetry, you are taking up different techniques, is the research the same throughout these varied approaches?

A. — Yes, since with each procedure I am translating an expression of myself that varies, certainly, according to the techniques, but whose direction remains the same. I am a colourist and my engravings as well as gouaches, or my oils, are a search for unity through colour and graphism. It is a spontaneous action, self-definitive, I do not start over again.

Q. — Do you work only by intuition?

A. — Yes. I am an intuitive painter, but lyric as well. I belong to the anstract lyric school. I am not as interested in explaining phenomena, as I am at having phenomena experienced such as they are. A landscape unfolds before us; we like it not because we understand why a tree is there or not, but because its imposing appearance strikes us and moves us, and finally pleases us: painting has the same meaning for me.

Q. — And is it easier to interpret this landscape in France?

A. — Yes the freedom that I have here is precious. In Quebec I am obliged to work, I am a teacher; one cannot paint under these conditions: one becomes drained and one cannot communicate with others.

Q. — What are your upcoming exhibitions and those in which you have participated recently?

A. — A few group exhibitions including the Superintendents and the Independents (Paris), and my own exhibition in Biarritz in June, and at the Mouffe Gallery in Paris in November.

Every sign stands out from the canvas and emerges in a moment that is jarring or harmonious, according to the dialogue that the viewer engages in with the canvas of Pepin. Nudity, and the baring of nature remain the essential thing and this essential is a subject to reflect upon. Pepin takes forms apart and through this disintegration tries to rediscover the core of life.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson