

Une topologie mentale de l'objet A Mental Topology of the Subject

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Une topologie mentale de l'objet

Pierre Hamelin

L'été dernier, j'ai rencontré Jocelyne Alloucherie dans son atelier de l'avenue Charles, à Québec. Voici quel fut notre entretien.

Jocelyne Alloucherie – Ce n'est jamais vraiment du pur dessin... de la pure sculpture... Ce n'est jamais vraiment de la peinture... Un objet me suggère un dessin, une surface; on peut me ramener à l'objet encore. Je n'essaie pas de me situer dans les définitions traditionnelles de peinture, de sculpture, de dessin; c'est la notion de lieu qui m'intéresse, le plein espace, multidirectionnel et signifiant à des degrés divers; c'est pourquoi je veux rester ouverte et disponible à toutes ses conventions. Par l'esprit, du moins, mon activité rejoint l'architecture, une certaine définition de l'architecture.

Pierre Hamelin – Et l'art, en général, en tant qu'activité qu'en pensez-vous?

J.A. – Une manière d'appréhender la réalité, d'en retirer une connaissance et d'en témoigner. C'est le terme connaissance qui prend ici un sens beaucoup plus grand; il contient le désir de transgresser les schèmes préexistants et l'aspiration au prodige. La réalité... Il s'agit d'une réalité qui a la qualité du rêve. Mieux vaudrait dire la surréalité.

P.H. – La surréalité, au sens d'André Breton?

J.A. – Non, à mon sens! Par l'immanence et au-delà. Peut-on vraiment savoir, maintenant, le sens où l'entendait Breton? Le drame, c'est qu'il y a l'histoire; la chance aussi, paradoxalement. Que serions-nous sans mémoire? Et que sommes-nous, vivant sur une mémoire collective faussée? Je me tais sur ces questions!

Je ne voudrais pas qu'on m'accuse d'avoir plagié Gauguin...

P.H. – Le réel en relation avec la subjectivité. Est-ce qu'il est question de l'expression personnelle?

J.A. – L'art n'est évidemment pas qu'une affaire d'expression personnelle. C'est à la fois une aventure d'ordre sensible et intellectuelle, une démarche globale. Si ce n'était qu'affaire de s'exprimer, il y a pour cela des moyens plus efficaces. Il est vrai qu'il est reconnu comme plus décent d'y aller chacun de sa petite spatule avec les jolies petites couleurs et de tout fixer aux beaux jours des automatistes! Chacun s'exprime, c'est rassurant, et que les bourgeois vous bénissent!

P.H. – N'approche-t-on pas alors de la notion de science?

J.A. – Connaissance, science, savoir... A l'origine, *ars* signifiait science.

P.H. – Revenons à vos travaux; comment se développent-ils?

J.A. – Il m'arrive de m'étonner devant la structure de certains éléments naturels; remarquez que je ne suis pas la première. Généralement, ce sont des pierres dont je révèle une qualité que j'intègre à un système d'organisation artificielle. Ce premier système de transition n'est jamais vraiment abstrait; sa structure demeure très dépendante des propriétés inhérentes à l'objet. Sur cette seconde nature, s'élaborent des retranscriptions diverses; un modèle, d'un modèle, d'un modèle...

P.H. – Est-ce que ce serait des variations d'un même objet?

J.A. – Si on veut. Mais elles ne sont ni d'ordre formel, ni de type conceptuel. Elles s'opèrent dans le temps et peuvent être comprises à partir d'une mémoire de l'objet. J'appelle cela une topologie mentale de l'objet.

P.H. – Nous sommes loin de la stylisation. Est-ce que cela ne touche pas à la transformation esthétique de Théo van Doesburg ou des néoplasticiens?

J.A. – Van Doesburg? Mécaniste et linéaire. Je fonctionne en mosaïque, par *collages*.

P.H. – Je constate dans vos travaux un aspect farouche, sauvage, comme si vous vouliez apprivoiser le réel. Seriez-vous attirée par un certain primitivisme?

J.A. – Plutôt une tentative pour une manière d'être plus fondamentale; une volonté de rompre la dissociation objet-sujet.

P.H. – Comme lorsque le primitif porte le masque de l'animal, il devient, il est l'animal.

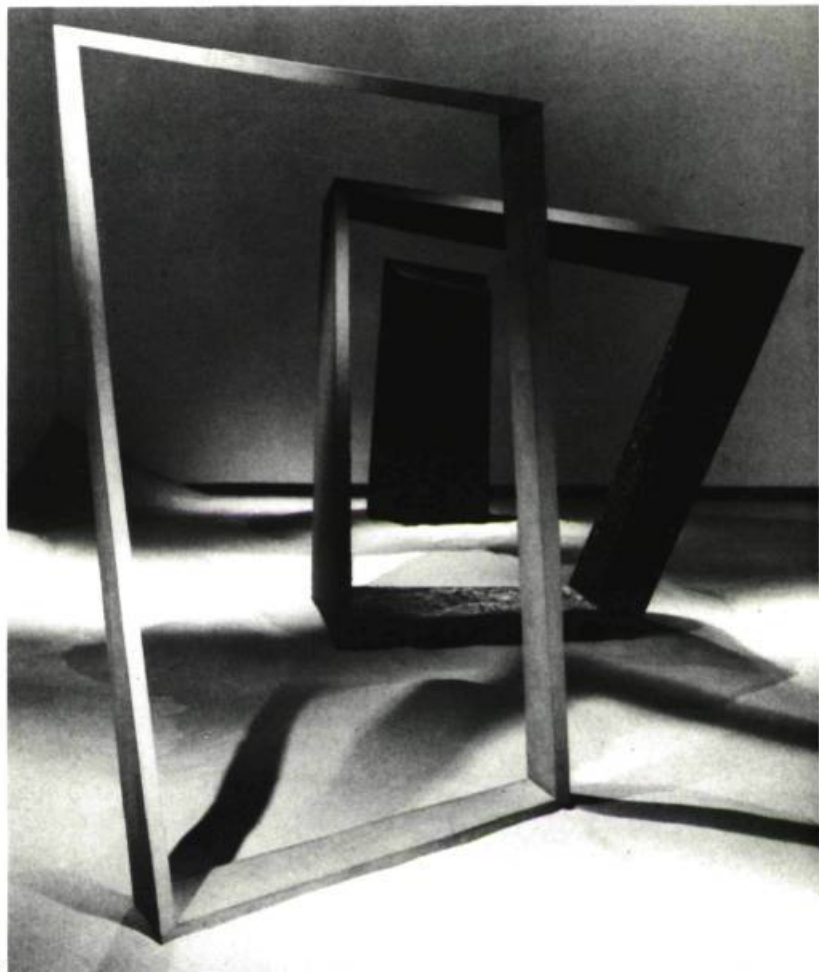
J.A. – C'est en ce sens que je dis que l'artificial rejoint le naturel. Dans le théâtre nô, c'est cette qualité globale qui est recherchée par le comédien.

P.H. – J'ai remarqué que vous démontiez vos pièces et que vous les reconstituez en tenant compte du lieu, de l'espace. Vos objets ne sont pas fixés, leur arrangement peut varier.

J.A. – Je pense d'abord à l'art en termes de lieu plutôt qu'en termes d'objets. Un lieu physique et mental. En fait, ce n'est pas l'objet qu'il faut d'abord, à tout prix, incessamment renouveler. On tombe vite dans le gadget. C'est la relation objet-sujet qu'il faut recréer; les formes, par la suite, se régénèrent d'elles-mêmes.



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1. Sans titre.
(Phot. Jean Payette)

2. Sans titre.
(Phot. Jean Payette)

3. Jocelyne ALLOUCHERIE
Environnement.
(Phot. Musée du Québec)

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forms of activity are more centred on the collective good than on that of the individual.

From the point of view of urban form, each building should first serve the urban ensemble, just as from the point of view of social form each individual should first act for the good of the ensemble, thanks to a much stronger social conscience, in more appropriate politico-economic structures.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE REMAKING OF A WARD

By Reynald and Reny GADOURY

Reynald and Reny Gadoury describe the development of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste ward and suggests means of giving this part of the city back to its inhabitants. It was in this ward that the communal engraving workshop, L'Atelier de Réalisations Graphiques, was established; it is here also that Comme Gallery has just moved; and a theatre has its creative studios in this ward.

The modern city, that of bungalows, shopping centres, industrial parks, highways and big complexes, leaves little room for the local life of the district. Time, which mellowed Old Quebec and the suburbs of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Saint-Roch and Saint-Sauveur, no longer has the same rhythm. The models that shaped Limoilou and Montcalm wards are no longer to be found in the Sainte-Foy or Charlesbourg suburbs. The new order has dictated the final solution to this old heart of Quebec: an enormous administrative block in Upper Town, a commercial zone in Lower Town, an historical sector for tourists, and highways to tie it all together. So Quebec's centre will now have to exist like *modern style* cities. However, the diversity of milieus is an original characteristic of this city. Everything is to be found here, including the richness of architecture. We ought, therefore, to expect that this wealth should be preserved for the well-being of the citizens, and that the ward should be remade!

One ward of Quebec, the Saint-Jean-Baptiste, had 25,000 inhabitants a few years ago. At its centre, it contained a virus, indeed a cancer-producing cell: the parliamentary city. This virus, fed by government budgets and capitalist investments, caused a serious illness. Charlatans and mandarins then did their work. Parliament Hill was attacked as gangrenous. Great destruction took place: 1200 dwellings destroyed, connecting roads, office buildings, hotels, luxury apartments, parking lots added.

Then, all around, there was to be seen decay, criminal arson and the insecurity of the 14,000 survivors. All these things come under one title: complexes H and G, the Hilton, the Concorde, Place Québec, Convention Centre, the Laurentian, the Grand-Théâtre, the Dufferin-Montmorency autoroute, Place de la Capitale, Saint-Cyrille Boulevard . . .

We must remake this sector, so that it will not die. We must redo connections and links with the cut-off parts. We have to join the suburb to the town and allow the passageways for pedestrians to become continuous from one place to another. Let us return to St. John St. its status as *The Street of Quebec*, the street unique in this country, the street that restores Quebec's pleasures to us, that lets us discover the thousand and one colours of Quebec cul-

ture and life.

The suburb ought to be connected again and linked to its southern part, Parliament Hill and the Plains of Abraham. So little is needed, just to retie these links, compared to what the government has invested in the area to build towers and parking lots.

It is necessary to remake the texture of the ward that was created by the people who lived in the city and made it theirs, and we must avoid falling into the complacency of the renovator or the administrator of funds for renovation who superimposes on the old web of the city a modern fabric of the fifties in which a downtown area, a central hub, absolutely must be established; and in this centre — this is the town-planner's rule — hotels, rooms one below the other, shops because the rooms exist and, in these boutiques, clients from the hotel who buy souvenirs and old things; restaurants, banquet and convention halls because there are rooms where the members of a convention can stay.

Why destroy a residential fabric made with man and family in mind; a texture that, daily renewed, would offer the life of the Quebecker to the people, with its children and its old folks, the Quebec way with its restaurants, its boutiques, its commercial establishments, the Quebecker's rhythm, with its moods, its streets for walking and its cautious cars? We know that capitalism always prevails over it, but the need to compete, to be bigger and stronger, can belong only to *doers* and not to generators of life and love here.

The ward's fabric of life must be reinvented and services must be allowed to be set up in the residential area and bring to it an activity of work, of interest in work and daily life, a rhythm appropriate to people disturbed in their space, their mood, their season, their movement, in order that they stand fast and do what they must.

It is necessary to reinvent the suburb's range of activities by complementary equipment, rejuvenated equipment, to keep and increase the number of families in the ward, to allow senior citizens to live out their time in their milieu among the things they love.

It is necessary to invent roads for automobiles and pedestrians that will cause the city to belong again to the resident, to the one who makes the city; pathways planted with trees, those indicators of time and seasons, passages that will open on clearings, squares of sand, parks and reserves of light and sun.

It is necessary to invent and promote new means so that the wards may renew and restore themselves continually. These means might be funds taken from taxes, which would be given as loans, at very reasonable rates of interest and repayment of capital, to whoever wishes to improve his home or to groups desiring to enhance their environment. Another method would be to relieve the person who wants to improve his home of a part of the taxes he regularly pays. Our rulers do not hesitate to spend enormous sums to allow companies to establish themselves in the wards, they do not hesitate to spend large amounts to restore the governor's home in the citadel, the residence of one man; and they hesitate to permit a sector of fourteen thousand persons to live decently . . .

It is necessary to bring the residents, all the residents, to do their part of renovation, to suit their town to their needs. They must be given the desire to create a ward with day nurseries and art studios, a food store, a bookshop, a carpentry repair shop, a restaurant, a geriatrics

service, a florist's shop, a crafts centre, a handy store, an architecture clinic, a furniture workshop, a grocery, and a photography shop.

The city administration ought also to institute renovation that would go on slowly in the wards. This should allow the residents to repair, improve, recondition their homes and their environment through aid and encouragement programmes continued with the same alacrity as this administration shows each year in collecting the taxes of these rate-payers. They should avoid acting mechanically, in separate cases, and spending considerable sums distributed indiscriminately on buildings. They should make interventions on the scale of the ward and gradually solve the serious problems of the deterioration of the environment by planning a programme of renovation of electrical systems, a programme of renovation of heating systems, a programme of renewal of roofs and exterior walls, a programme of renovation and improvement of back yards, emergency staircases and sheds, a programme for the repairing of roads and sidewalks, a programme that would solve the problem of electric power and telephone lines.

Renovation ought also to be carried on in experiments where the ends of streets would be closed off to return them to pedestrians and to nature, where unessential traffic would be slowed, turned away and discouraged, where spaces would be animated by sand or greenery, where walls and back yards would be revitalized by colour, where bicycle trails and pedestrian walks would be created, all these being experiments in which renovation would become creation and the administrator, an inventor.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

A MENTAL TOPOLOGY OF THE OBJECT

By Pierre HAMELIN

Last year I visited Jocelyne Allouche in her studio on Charles Ave. in Quebec. Our interview follows:

Jocelyne Allouche — It is never really pure drawing, . . . pure sculpture, . . . It is never really painting, . . . An object suggests a drawing to me, a surface; I can be brought back to the object again. I don't try to locate myself in traditional definitions of painting, sculpture or drawing; it is the idea of place that interests me, full space, multidirectional and significant to different degrees; that is why I wish to remain open and available to all its conventions. In spirit, at least, my activity is related to architecture, a certain definition of architecture.

Pierre Hamelin — What do you think of art in general as activity?

J.A. — A way of seizing reality, of drawing knowledge from it and of expressing it. It is the term "knowledge" that takes on a much greater meaning here; it contains the desire to contravene pre-existing ideas and the aspiration to the extraordinary. Reality . . . It is a matter of a reality that has the quality of a dream. One might better say surrealism.

P.H. — Surrealism, according to André Breton?
J.A. — No, according to me! Through subjectivity and beyond. Can we really know now the sense in which Breton understood it? The dramatic part of this is that there is history; chance too, paradoxically. What would we be without

memory? And what are we, living on a warped collective memory? I am silent on these questions! I would not like to be accused of having plagiarized Gauguin . . .

P.H. — The real in relation to subjectivity. Is this a question of personal expression?

J.A. — Art is obviously not only a matter of personal expression. It is an adventure of a sensitive kind at the same time as intellectual, an inclusive step. If it were only a question of *expressing oneself*, there are more effective methods. It is true that it is recognized as more proper for each to go with his small spatula of pretty little colours and settle everything in the finest hour of the automatists! Each one expresses himself, that's reassuring, and let the middle class bless you!

P.H. — Aren't we, then, coming close to the idea of science?

J.A. — Knowledge, science, learning . . . Originally, *ars* meant knowledge.

P.H. — Let us come back to your works. How are they developed?

J.A. — I become astonished in the face of the structure of certain natural elements; notice that I am not the first. These are usually stones, of which I reveal a quality that I integrate into a system of artificial organization. This first transition system is never really abstract; its structure remains very dependent on the properties inherent in the object. On this second quality, varied readaptations build up; a model from a model from a model . . .

P.H. — Would these be variations of the same object?

J.A. — If desired. But they are neither of formal order nor of conceptual type. They come about with time and can be understood from a memory of the object. I call this a mental topology of the object.

P.H. — We are far from stylization. Is this not related to the aesthetic transformation of Théo van Doesburg or the neoplasticists?

J.A. — Van Doesburg? Mechanical and linear. I work in mosaic, with *collages*.

P.H. — I see in your works a fierce, savage aspect, as if you wished to tame reality. Are you attracted by a certain primitivism?

J.A. — Rather an attempt toward a way of being more fundamental; a wish to disrupt the object-subject dissociation.

P.H. — As when the primitive wears the mask of the animal, it becomes, it is the animal.

J.A. — It is in this sense that I say the artificial catches up with the natural. In the Nô theatre, it is this inclusive quality that is sought by the comedian.

P.H. — I have noticed that you dismantled your works and set them up again with attention to place and space. Your objects are not fixed; their arrangement can vary.

J.A. — I think first of art in terms of place rather than in terms of object. A physical and mental place. Indeed, it is not the object that must first, at all costs, be renewed incessantly. One falls quickly into gadgetry. It is the object-subject relationship that must be recreated; afterwards, forms regenerate by themselves.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

MICHEL CHAMPAGNE

By Jean TOURANGEAU

The first works to which Michel Champagne devoted himself from 1957 come out of chroma-

tic and structural principles which would later establish the origin of his work. Thus the inks he created from 1960 to 1962 are still-lives, simple vases set on a horizontal surface that the flowers interrupt, since they soar upward, then cutting the centre by the vertical lines they subtend. From 1962 to 1965 he would expand the subject of still-lives to fruits, to jugs and to various objects in a composition without any other matter but a surface that simulated depth and the structure of the elements and the colours that he meant to work at the same time on the objects and the background. These are the shadows and the transparencies which make us perceive that the artist wishes to go beyond simple figuration while revealing how life hides behind its materiality.

After leaving the Beaux-Arts, he would refute its rules, which would lead him to liberty of execution, to abstract attempts. The result he gave us (1965-1966) is distinguished by tridimensional composition; white spatters textured by a concrete material (sand) and placed on a monochrome black background, illuminated in its turn by spots of colour whose arrangement is governed by the internal movement of the picture. The succeeding stage (1966-1970) is translated by signs expressed by an ensemble of forces that balance according to planes governed by a spontaneous trajectory; the work consists of an idea and a perception of significance. The outlines of paint and the sand painted white are covered with colours mixed with a varnish superimposed with an intermittent fluidity, as if the texture brought the contours into being as the eye receives the light.

The most productive period, however, is the one from 1970 to 1975, Champagne's writing building up from a diversification of colours and non-colours, of small and large flat tints which are freed according to their arrangement, showing us their innate concentration, the tensions of this pulsation. The idea-synthesis of this pictorial language would be summed up by the structuralization of blobs of colour, a spatial organization in which are developed the base elements of this gravitation whose mass is conveyed by the brush stroke and the tints and whose arrangement creates balance. The paint matter, as though retained in these irregular variations, is accentuated by juxtaposed flat tints, giving by their continuous play the real dimension of this world that is built up, crosses and is directed beyond itself.

1975-1977 opens on two types of research: the first (engraving) combining the plastic with earlier action painting and the second (box construction) bringing back to mind the basic assumptions of this *exploratory writing*.

After a stay in Martinique the artist, feeling that he had exploited oil as thoroughly as he foresaw being able to through his aesthetic, produced a silk-screen, *Gaoulé*. This picture brings together the aims of the engraver and those of the painter, the brush stroke, not on the plate but on the paper, India ink — here bright red — increasing by its outlines the vigor of the dark spurts of black, the neutrality of the paper, violated, as it were, by these contrasted flat tints whose intensity expresses rhythms all in relief. The latter are linked by the duel of the non-colours which seem beaten by the red, wide streams of pure colour, the power and the form of this expression in a theme that is more than moving, disturbing, vibrating with shadows and light. The effects of this gravity bring out the conception of this time sculpted by the depth of the volumes, the mobility of this copiousness.

Gaoulé or rebellion, revolt against slavery, faith in the gesture, more than the sign of a language, the determining image of its contents, the artist's essence. There would be a sequel to *Gaoulé*, *Suite martiniquaise*¹, an art album whose twelve silk-screens, enhanced also with India ink, result from experimentation in techniques, besides inventing an incisive style, the displacing of the flashes that gives life to these exotic places.

Suite martiniquaise is an important work from more than one point of view; indeed, the sudden impacts of the paintbrush and the ink-roller unite wholly, the blob devising its space, which, surrounded by other blobs and other spaces, recreates the atmosphere, the impression that has inspired the painter. Each engraving is thus articulated by flat black tints on a white surface, chaos and the infinite being evoked, retained and structured by the play of the solids and voids that are in fact their reality, since they confer a dimension on the limits of their content. When each of these is assembled, the evocation of this foreign state continues, each village possessing its own groupings, the awakening of this stupendous ardour materializing a world that is dark and bright at the same time, the route relived since the global quality of the sites is restored.

These silk-screens, whose black and white rhythm modulates long and short conflicts, sensitize, through their icy, regular aspect, precise areas, vibrant points that colour, which always follows the immediate gesture, the flat black, multiplies and harmonizes, as if the blob became the fragment, as if this very purity had to preserve only the sign of the object. A poetic sensation, a power of expression, dynamism and mystery, so many passages under the Tropics, the picture melted, melting, the writing of the gesture.

From that time Champagne reinvented a language centred on space, not in its classic nature but in a dialectic whose choice would be instantaneousness, determinism that takes precedence over the possible. In this vein, *Anthurium* (two silk-screens, one lithograph) takes in this savage impulse, as if the painter perceived it for the first time through the mirror that is his painting, besides involving a word surrounded by the succession of identical elements, of a same growth, thirty-six equal little anthuriums, similar, sharing their only relationship.

The explosion of this writing would lead the creator to produce *Suite Queen Mary*, a group of pictures that comes forth through the materials upon which it rests, diagrams of a personal grammar lived through a trellis, of a social fabric that it would reveal little by little.

The support used — or the sign — is not the canvas, but a piece of masonite almost completely painted black, with a frame also black and a white mat repeating the limits or the border space of the surface that the painter intends to circumscribe (these frames would change completely).

The first picture, whose title is *Une reine ou une queen*, does in fact show a queen, a photographic portrait placed in the centre of a frame whose moulding of wrought gold symbolizes wealth and the importance given to it by society, at the same time as it symbolizes the personification of an institution fixed here by the artist and which he brings forth for this same society. The two components, object and subject, fit one within the other under the evocative image of its emblem.

It is no longer a matter of identification or of idea-forming, but of a will that emerges on action, on its personal and total challenge. The