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Laurier Lacroix

MARIUS DUBOIS

Marius Dubois travaille depuis près d'un an à un tableau que vient d'acquérir le Musée du Québec et qui s'intitule L'Éclipse. Nous avons choisi de présenter ce tableau avec quelques dessins préparatoires et les notes de travail suivantes préparées par l'artiste.

1. Marius DUBOIS
L'Éclipse, dessin préparatoire.
Crayon noir et crayons de couleur sur papier;
36 cm x 35,5. Coll. de l'artiste. (Phot. Patrick Altman)

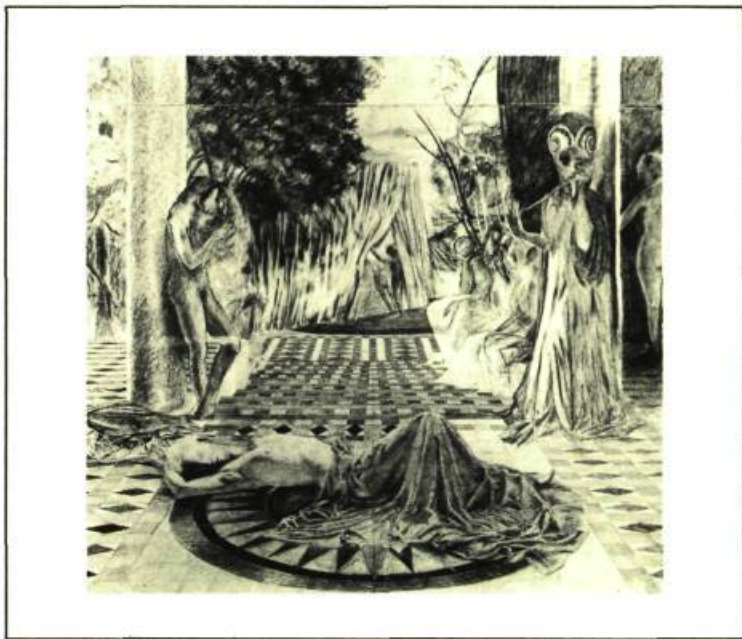




«La géométrie est la structure de toute chose, un principe magnifique qui comblera tout être qui désire approfondir sa vision du monde et des choses; elle est l'art de construire, et les chemins qu'elle trace devant nous sont clairs et harmonieux. Rien de parfait sans elle. C'est sur sa base que j'entends désormais tisser ma toile, comme le pinceau, la règle et le compas deviennent indispensables au peintre.

«Quant à la présence du miroir dans mes tableaux, c'est autant pour moi que pour les autres une présence mystérieuse. Le sens ou le symbole que je lui donne ne me paraît pas réel. On dirait un élément magique qui s'est glissé en moi en silence et qui impose périodiquement sa présence dans les tableaux. Je suis tenté de dire qu'il est peut-être l'élément surréaliste qui a résisté le plus longtemps aux diverses fluctuations de mon inspiration. Parfois j'ai, en l'utilisant dans le tableau, l'impression de garantir à mes œuvres la pureté qui devrait toujours assurer la vérité de mes œuvres, et c'est peut-être là qu'il devient le fétiche ou le talisman qui m'assure également que ce que je fais vient vraiment de moi.

«Pour ce qui est du vêtement, ou plus précisément des tissus ou des textures, c'est peut-être l'aspect tactile de la réalité, le plaisir et la volupté du sens du toucher. C'est aussi le symbole de la somptuosité



Au premier matin, l'homme s'éveilla chargé de ses rêves.

Silence. Le rideau vient de se lever sur le décor sylvestre et la lumière qui se dégage révèle dans tout son éclat la pureté, la précision de l'action. Aucune ombre, mais pourtant l'argument reste à éclaircir.

Regardez. C'est un tableau. Les acteurs ne bougeront pas. Aucune parole ne sera prononcée que celle de votre discours mental.

Les corps lisses, les miroirs réfléchissants, le verre magique, l'opalescence des pierreries, les tissus évanescents ou lourds, le marbre. Surfaces à caresser. L'escalier du temple descend lentement vers la nature, la verdure s'agrippe aux marches, la flore laurentienne est luxuriante et riche de ses couleurs de fin d'été. Les marbres ont choisi leurs textures les plus gaies, leurs dessins les plus sinueux. Formes envahissantes.

Le corps, allongé sur la surface circulaire, forme la base d'un triangle, et le miroir, le sommet. Les colonnes encadrent la scène, la nature débordé du rectangle architectural. L'espace, le profond espace. Attention! L'homme qui lève sa lance va rompre le miroir. La femme à la baguette de verre va-t-elle éveiller le dormeur? Le rêve tire-t-il à la fin?

Pour l'instant, il se poursuit, et le dessin, précieux dessin, en précise chaque forme. Raphaël et Ingres proposent les positions de la femme-colonne et du dormeur. La géométrie vient régler les mouvements, la disposition des personnages, de l'architecture. Les mousses de l'Ile-aux-Grues grimpent au calcaire poli, et les iris de la Matapédia foisonnent. La forêt, l'eau rutilent. Aucun vent ne vient agiter les branches ou rider la surface de l'onde. Silence. Nous sommes au théâtre, et les costumes imaginaires de soies diaphanes et de velours sont chargés de pierreries. Que faire? Suivre cette femme et sortir du tableau pour ne pas voir le miroir se briser? Attendre d'être soudainement réveillé? Le rêve sera-t-il toujours rompu?

Pourtant, il se continue. Le cauchemar le transgresse parfois la nuit; mais, le matin, règnent l'harmonie, les formes pures. En deçà du miroir, le réel est composé de surfaces lisses au toucher. Le frottement, la caresse seuls excitent l'imagination. L'abondance des détails, dans les objets qui sont donnés à voir, répond à la surenchère tactile.

La panthère est venue s'abreuver au lac, et les personnages se sont regroupés autour du feu. Toujours cette ambivalence; l'eau, le feu; le marbre, la végétation; le corps chaud sous

des vêtements de tissus précieux; les rideaux qui dissimulent la nature; le rêve dont on s'éveillera; le monde à toucher, à regarder, à saisir, mais dont il ne reste qu'une image.

Marius Dubois recompose cette image toujours contemporaine, en tentant de renouer avec une tradition quasi artisanale. L'artiste est de nouveau créateur de son tableau, dans les tâches manuelles de la préparation des surfaces, des matières picturales. L'œuvre s'élabore lentement autour d'une idée qui évolue en même temps que les études préparatoires.

Sur la surface, les touches de couleur, préparées sur la palette, soulignent la valeur exacte de la lumière colorant les objets et les êtres. Peinture réactionnaire, régression vers un surréalisme d'académie? Ne s'agirait-il pas plutôt de la réaction d'un jeune visionnaire découvrant l'apport des techniques anciennes, témoin du mûrissement de son œuvre et proposant un nouvel idéal de Beauté? Une beauté qui allie symbolisme personnel et contrainte de la tradition. La peinture de Marius Dubois témoigne du phénomène culturel marginal nord-américain de la deuxième moitié du 20^e siècle, une Renaissance.

et de la richesse; plus encore, c'est la caresse charnelle qui capte et retient la chaleur des corps.

«En regardant les œuvres de la Renaissance italienne, période sublime de l'histoire de l'art, mes yeux sont attirés de toute part et mon esprit est enchanté à la vue de tant de grandeur. Ce n'est pas le côté solennel des œuvres que j'aime le plus dans la Renaissance, mais ce qu'elles impliquent de conscience universelle. Ce qui m'attire, c'est l'infinie Beauté que je pressens y être enfermée et je ressens pour elle un amour imprécis. Je lui accorde bien des qualités, les plus grandes sans doute, mais ce qu'elle me dicte est probablement plus exigeant que la simple attitude noble que l'on doit avoir vis-à-vis de la Beauté. On me pose souvent la question que feraient Raphaël ou de Vinci s'ils vivaient à notre époque? Cette question m'embête énormément car, comme tout le monde, je n'ai pas de réponse à donner aux spéculateurs de l'art, mais je sais bien que Vinci ou Raphaël, s'ils vivaient de nos jours, seraient aussi confus que moi en ce qui concerne les problèmes de l'art et je pense qu'ils encourageraient fortement ceux qui ont l'intuition que la Beauté est éternelle, que l'artiste doit toujours regarder vers elle comme vers le soleil et que c'est vers elle que tous nos gestes et toutes nos œuvres doivent être orientés.»

2. *L'Éclipse*, dessin préparatoire.
 Fusain sur papier.
 Coll. de l'artiste.

3. *L'Éclipse*, dessin préparatoire.
 Crayon noir et crayons de couleur sur papier;
 36 cm x 35,5.
 Coll. de l'artiste.

4. *L'Éclipse*, étude.

5. *L'Éclipse*, 1976.
 Huile sur bois; 915 cm x 965.
 Québec, Musée du Québec.
 (Phot. Patrick Altman)
 (Couverture d'*Estuaire*.)



painter reviews his means, he will henceforth use acrylic, putting an end to his research with oil. Acrylic is close to Champagne's *system of colour*, the eye's stimulus-response, and, doubling itself by a stable support, pursues this renouncing, the technical work being reduced to its simplest resonance. What Champagne adds are objects used by man, bringing out the distinction of the individual and of his social group.

Puzzle de l'amour surprises at first by the simplicity of the elements that compose it. Pieces of puzzles, painted in different colours, are stuck on a black and green background, as if emerging mysteriously from a dark cloud. In addition, these pieces are placed according to a non-apparent movement, thrown pell-mell as if by chance. Then, two groups separate: some units reunite, the others remain apart; each piece however, has its own colour. Could each section of the puzzle, considering its different tonality, be an individual and each group a couple? Would the background, through the coordination of two colours, reinforce this assumption? Without the slightest doubt it can be perceived that each piece fits or not, according to the variety that makes it up or stamps it.

En haut de l'escalier, App. 14 is also based on a simplification of supports. By its neutral quality the background of a uniform black accentuates the cut-outs of white and red and consequently braces the *popsicle* sticks, since they attract the gaze to a greater degree. These sticks, their whiteness and form remaining complete, go from bottom to top, recreating the staircase within their dimensions. At its end, segmented, they expand in red, lying as if in big headlines, App. 14, the word and figures that are written on our apartment doors.

In the light of this, we could put forward a key, a content that these signs specify in the field of semantics where they belong. Could the queen of *Une reine ou une queen* not be a woman who has importance through her literary salon, and it would be for this reason that she would pose stiffly in her gilt frame? This woman reigns, surrounded by the attributes of royalty, thanks to her circle of friends, flattered but loving very little. *Une reine ou une queen* would shrink under the idea of *who*. *Puzzle de l'amour* would condense the *what*, while *En haut de l'escalier*; App. 14 would locate the *where*.

Michel Champagne would, consequently, seize a reality intrinsic to his life, choosing himself as his model, putting his notion of the artist at stake, since he would win fame as a man taking part in a will and a deed similar to those of other men.

If we continued in this direction, *Le Bouquet de fleurs* would be divided into two halves: the first, through the multi-coloured paper flowers, would present the motive or what brought the picture into being; and the second, the letter, would engrave and by its existence assert the proof of the deed and the gesture. The painter can no longer get out of it, someone has written tenderly to him, with a G as signature. Are the flowers not the symbol of the transitory side of an object one gives to a beloved person? The letter approves the flowers, a visual phenomenon of its superfluity. *Le Bouquet de fleurs* would reveal the act.

After these pictures would follow box constructions, from the same substrata, the framing becoming, through the swelling of its lateral edges, a box closed by a plexiglas plate. On the other hand, we see here an extension of the situation, references to events of the

creator, since they will be the origin of the tributes to the alphabet on which he is presently working.

Other box constructions (some fifteen) would harden the components of this imaginary materiality by displaying the anecdote, in the most lively manner, in order to renew and reactualize the point of departure.

The end, however, is given to us in a superb gesture, establishing by its differences our privileged rôle of viewer. Indeed, the first picture, *Aux ordures, les amours* (which is not a painting, since it is a matter of a garbage can), projects its own redundancy, increasing the artificial aspect of the flowers and the technical means, since both are in lovely cheap polyurethane. This falseness, based on prejudices, is turned into reality by the ephemeral quality of the plastic, the flowers and the garbage-can, the painter here denying his own stages of the development which had authenticated it, the symbol represented by the two objects: love and rejection, thrown into the garbage. The cover has a hole in it; so we can look inside, inside the affairs of other people. The letter at the bottom: "Dear Michel, I want you to know that... I love you..."

The second, *Si le musée n'était conté*, summarizes all the work; this fusion of will and deed in one whole that brings us face to face with a situation in front of which we cannot remain cold. At the extreme right, at the bottom, a photograph, a monumental entrance, is marked with an enormous orange X. The stamps of the Quebec Museum at the bottom of the photograph are contrasted with those of the Documentation Centre and those of Michel Champagne. The latter is working there, and has set up this centre. Does he want to publicize it before he is smothered under the monument that this museum has become? Would he not, rather, attack the institution it represents? In this way the matter would be settled, Michel Champagne returning to point zero.

The fact that, shortly after, he added an old gilt frame, a museum frame, to a closed box construction shut by a plexiglas plate seems to me to confirm it. Michel Champagne challenges from the interior, through the interior, while constantly revealing his aesthetics based on colour and a balanced structure, aesthetics that he has fragmented, overturned in this last development, destroying his concept of an artist even if he had to lose this title, since more than ever he creates through his sole necessity.

1. Cf. the review by Gilles Rioux in *Vie des Arts*, Vol. XXI, No. 83, p. 83.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

MARIUS DUBOIS

By Laurier LACROIX

Marius Dubois worked for almost a year on a picture, titled *Le Matin*, that the Quebec Museum has just acquired. We have chosen to present this picture with some of the artist's preliminary drawings and working notes.

"*Geometry* is the structure of all things, a magnificent principle which will fully gratify every person who desires to deepen his vision of people and of things; it is also the art of

building, and the roads it traces before us are clear and harmonious. Nothing is perfect without it. It is on this basis that I intend henceforth to weave my canvas, as the paint-brush, the ruler and the compasses become indispensable to the painter."

"As for the presence of the *mirror* in my paintings, it is a mysterious presence for me as much as for others. The meaning or the symbol I give to it does not seem real to me. One might call it a magic element that slipped silently into me and which periodically imposes its presence in the paintings. I am tempted to say that it is perhaps the surrealist element that for the longest time resisted the varied fluctuations of my inspiration. Sometimes, while using it in a picture, I have the impression of guaranteeing in my works the purity that ought always to assure their verity, and it is perhaps then that it becomes the fetish or the talisman which convinces me also that what I create really comes from myself."

"Concerning the dressing, or, more exactly, *the fabrics and the textures*, it is perhaps the tactile aspect of reality, the pleasure and delight of the sense of touch. It is also the symbol of sumptuousness and richness; more still, it is the carnal caress that captures and retains the warmth of bodies."

"Looking at the works of the Italian Renaissance, a sublime period in the history of art, my eyes are attracted everywhere and my mind is spell-bound at the sight of so much splendor. It is not the solemn side of the works that I love most in the Renaissance, but what they imply of universal awareness. What attracts me is the infinite Beauty which I feel is locked in it and I experience a vague love for it. I concede many qualities to this beauty, doubtless the greatest, but what it dictates to me is probably more exacting than the simple noble attitude one ought to have toward Beauty. I am often asked what Raphael or da Vinci would do if they lived in our time. This question annoys me tremendously because, like everyone, I have no answer for art speculators, but I know very well that if da Vinci or Raphael were living to-day, they would be as confused as I am about problems in art and I think they would strongly encourage those who feel intuitively that Beauty is eternal, that the artist should always look towards it as if toward the sun, and that it is toward Beauty that all our actions and all our works ought to be oriented."

On the first morning, man awoke burdened with his dreams.

Silence. The curtain has just gone up on the woodland scene and the light given off reveals in all its brilliance the purity and precision of the action. No shadow, but still the argument remains to be clarified.

Look. It is a picture. The actors will not move. No word will be spoken, other than those of your mental speech.

Sleek bodies, reflecting mirrors, magic glass, the opalescence of precious stones, evanescent or heavy fabrics, marble. Surfaces to caress. The temple stairway descends slowly toward nature, greenery clings to the steps, the Laurentian flora is luxuriant and rich in its end-of-summer colours. The marbles have chosen their gayest textures, their most sinuous designs. Absorbing forms.

The body, lying on the circular surface, forms the base of a triangle and the mirror forms its vertex. Columns frame the scene, and nature overflows from the architectural rectangle. Space, deep space. Attention! The man who is raising his lance is going to break the

mirror. Is the woman with the glass wand going to wake the sleeper? Is the dream coming to an end?

For now, the dream continues, and the drawing, the precious drawing, makes each of its forms clear. Raphael and Ingres suggest the positions of the woman-column and the sleeper. Geometry regulates the movements, the arrangement of the figures and the architecture. The mosses of Iles-aux-Grues climb on the polished limestone, and the iris of Matapedia abound. The forest and the water gleam. No wind comes to shake the branches or ripple the surface of the water. Silence. We are in the theatre, and the imaginary costumes of diaphanous silk and velvet are covered with gems. What shall we do? Follow this woman and leave the picture so that we will not see the mirror break? Wait to be awakened suddenly? Will the dream always be broken?

However, the dream continues. Sometimes during the night nightmare encroaches upon it; but in the morning harmony and pure forms hold sway. Beyond the mirror the real is made up of surfaces smooth to the touch. Stroking and caresses alone excite the imagination. The wealth of detail in the objects to be seen answers the tactile urgency.

The panther has come to quench his thirst at the lake and the persons have regrouped around the fire. Still this ambivalence: water, fire, marble, vegetation; the warm body under garments of precious fabrics; curtains that hide nature; the dream from which one will awake; the world to touch, to look at, to seize, but of which there remains only an image.

Marius Dubois recomposes this always contemporary image, trying to connect it with a tradition almost related to crafts. The artist is again the creator of his picture, in the manual tasks of the preparation of the surfaces, the pictorial materials. The work is built up slowly around an idea that evolves at the same time as the preparatory studies.

On the surface the blobs of colour, prepared on the palette, emphasize the exact value of the light colouring the objects and the figures. Is this reactionary painting, regression toward academic surrealism? Would it not, rather, be dealing with the reaction of a young visionary discovering the contribution of old techniques, witness of the maturing of his work and presenting a new ideal of Beauty? A beauty that combines personal symbolism and the constraint of tradition. Marius Dubois' painting bears witness of the North American marginal cultural phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century, a Renaissance.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE QUEBEC MUSEUM

By Henri BARRAS

Never so much as to-day has the museum, as an institution, been attacked, and never so much as now has it been so necessary to the community. If the conservation of green spaces is at the head of our preoccupations, with the aim of assuring healthful air to the city; if so much effort is expended in safeguarding monuments or districts that witness our evolution, how can we with the same emphasis demand that museums now modify their character to adopt the signs of dehumanization which corrupt the life style that we attempt to reject vig-

orously and, sometimes, it must be said, without too much discrimination?

To collect, to conserve and to bear witness are the rôles and the aims pursued by museums. If these functions are understood and preserved, the museums, better than any other institution, answer the concerns that to-day cloud our thoughts and our actions.

Demanding that the museum be *open* resembles demagoguery if it does not have the financial means necessary to the establishing of its collections and to their conservation. Asking that the museum should *democratize* itself is, certainly, to display Machiavellism if it must for this reason depart from the fundamental principles of its purpose and from the criteria of quality that assure its orientation. And yet it is on these old, badly-tuned refrains that we hear the new rôle defined for the museums in a society that is also intended to be new.

In 1922 the Government of Quebec sanctioned the *Law on the Museums of the Province*. In 1933, the Quebec Museum opened its doors. A neo-classical building, erected in the centre of the Plains of Abraham, it then housed collections of natural science, art and history, as well as the public archives. It was only around 1950 that Gérard Morisset imparted to this museum a clearly plastic orientation which would become exclusive only in the sixties. From that time, from quiet revolutions to bold aspirations, from unexpected stagnations to concerted spasms, the Quebec Museum became the national museum of French Canada. It would be daring to claim that it is perfect, but it is not vain to emphasize the characteristics which make it arresting and almost exemplary.

I shall not expand upon the history of this museum nor stop to analyse its fabulous collections, each significant on the aesthetic or the historical plan. Interested readers will be able to profitably consult articles by Alice Parizeau and Jean Soucy, which appeared in issues 47 and 63, respectively, of *Vie des Arts*. But in this building surely erected to astound, the works presented are surrounded by a climate of serenity that wonderfully suits the patient search that engendered them in an era and a place that, to dazzle, knew only the contrivances of the heart. I love these high rooms and these rotundas that are like a quiet tribute to the artists who painted, engraved, sculpted or chiselled the paths unceasingly trodden by the collective soul of a nation. I love these places because their peculiarities bring it about that the works escape the veneration that ordinarily surrounds those conserved by a museum. Thanks must be given, naturally, to curators who know that creation is a matter of love and that frequentation of art is also an affair of the heart. However, if the works of art are treated with so much affection at the Quebec Museum, the critical aspect is neither disguised nor neglected, and all presentations of collections are intended, not to flatter the taste of the public, but to sensitize it by informing. Therefore, the Quebec Museum is, in my eyes, a model where the public feels comfortable and where, without other prejudices than its own, they are able to understand the gestures of love that are offered to them. Certainly, this language is anachronistic or misplaced in an era when profit and efficiency are the qualities that must be applied to all human activities. And yet I believe that the work of art is witness of what we are and that, by virtue of this, it deserves our untiring affection. I also think that the museum is the only place where these

works can be gathered together and that in this place they can be significant for the greatest number of persons. So the Quebec Museum, for me, takes on the value of an example. However, it is far from being exemplary on every point and, retracing the wide lines of its successes, I owe it to myself to emphasize its gaps.

Art of the past — paintings, sculptures, goldsmith's work, furniture, tools, textiles, folk art — forms an important part of the collections. Let us simply note — the subject of this article not being criticism of the works preserved — that the collection of silver objects is the richest and most complete in Canada, just as the collection of old Quebec furniture is among the most important in America; let us note also that the impressive number of Kreighoffs owned by the museum; the undisputable quality of the Plamondon and Hamels, to mention only these two famous painters whose importance history has not yet revealed; and these few mentions only suggest the extent of the treasures which make up this collection.

Moreover, the Quebec Museum actually has only four exhibition halls. A new wing was built during the sixties, housing administrative offices, an indispensable little cafeteria, a small lecture-room, a library, a reading-room and an exhibition hall, recently changed into a store-room, the Museum being without one until then. The Museum is therefore too small to present its collections to the public. Projects for expansion were suggested from time to time without anything concrete resulting until the beginning of this summer, when the head of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, M. Jean-Paul L'Allier, announced that the Petite Bastille was going to be converted and annexed to the Museum. This former prison that overlooks the Plains next to the Museum will certainly be able to give it the exhibition halls it lacks and will endow it with the store-rooms and work-rooms indispensable to the fulfilling of its purpose. But once enlarged and equipped with the essential services that it always lacked, will the Quebec Museum be provided with the necessary staff to animate its activities in proportion to the dimensions it will then have attained and will it be able to restore the works that will have to come forth from the limbo in which they have been confined until then? The promised model pales somewhat, surely, and yet, because with a great deal of ingenuity they have finally created an image that becomes blurred only when one has access to museological secrets, the Quebec Museum remains the institution that characterizes the modern notion that we should have of a museum.

This is so because the curators of the museum have fully assimilated the double facet that determines the traditional approach to works of art as that of ethnographic objects. And they have tried, not without success, to reconcile these two points of view, by organizing lengthy thematic exhibitions in which works are selected and grouped as much with regard to their aesthetic values as with regard to their sociological characteristics. It would be hard work to quote all the examples which come to mind, but I shall mention these exhibitions: *Old Quilts and Beds*, which took place in the summer of 1975, and *Three Centuries of Furniture in Quebec*, which was put on in the summer of 1976. With such ensembles as these, the Museum displays in turn all the important works of its different collections, by actualizing them through instruction that never falls into antiquated academism or misplaced elitism. Further, the visual presentation of these ensem-