

Le Château Dufresne et la conservation du jeune patrimoine The Château Dufresne and the Conservation of the Recent Heritage

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Volume 22, Number 87, Summer 1977

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/54898ac>

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Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

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

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

d'Iberville-Moreau, L. (1977). Le Château Dufresne et la conservation du jeune patrimoine / The Château Dufresne and the Conservation of the Recent Heritage. *Vie des arts*, 22(87), 12–88.

Le Château Dufresne

Luc d'Iberville-Moreau



et la conservation du jeune patrimoine



1. Le Salon d'Oscar Dufresne après restauration. Cette pièce, où ne manquent que les rideaux, possède un magnifique plafond peint par Nincheri. Ce plafond avait été repeint par les Pères de Sainte-Croix quand la pièce devint la chapelle de l'Externat Classique Sainte-Croix. Les murs

ont été recouverts d'un velours de soie verte comme ils l'étaient à l'origine. Les tableaux faisaient partie de la collection Dufresne et ont été restaurés. Ce sont des œuvres de petits maîtres français et des copies de grands maîtres des 17^e, 18^e et 19^e siècles. (Phot. Gilles Rivest)

2. Le Jardin d'hiver d'Oscar Dufresne, après sa restauration, en 1976. (Phot. Gilles Rivest)

David M. Stewart occupe, au Canada, une place très importante dans le domaine de la conservation du patrimoine et de la muséologie. Au Québec, peu nombreux sont les musées qui n'ont pas bénéficié de ses largesses.

Président de la Fondation Macdonald-Stewart, il a constitué la Société Historique du Lac-Saint-Louis; il est l'âme dirigeante de la restauration du Château Dufresne et de celle du Château Ramezay. Membre du Conseil d'administration du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, de la Commission des Biens Culturels, du Musée Maritime et Militaire de Montréal, dont il est le fondateur, et de bien d'autres conseils d'administration, il a encore eu le temps de s'intéresser très activement à la mise en valeur de la maison de Jacques Cartier à Saint-Malo, un projet qui lui tient présentement à cœur. Pour la troisième fois, il a facilité la tenue d'un symposium (tenu, cette année, pour la première fois à Montréal) sur les influences française, anglaise et européennes sur les arts et l'architecture du Canada. Cette année, il a reçu la médaille d'argent de la Ville de Paris ainsi que la médaille d'or de Venise pour l'intérêt et l'aide qu'il a apportés à la conservation du patrimoine international.

Ce ne sont là que quelques-unes des très nombreuses occupations de M. Stewart. Il s'intéresse aussi très activement à la médecine et à l'éducation.



Le Château Dufresne, une des résidences les plus prestigieuses de Montréal, a récemment été classé monument historique par le nouveau ministre des Affaires Culturelles. Située à l'angle de la rue Sherbrooke et du boulevard Pie-IX, près du site olympique, cette résidence fut bâtie entre 1916 et 1918 par deux frères, Oscar et Marius Dufresne. A la mort de ce dernier, en 1948, la maison fut vendue par sa veuve aux Pères de Sainte-Croix qui l'utilisèrent comme annexe à leur collège, alors connu sous le nom d'Externat Classique Sainte-Croix. En 1957, les Pères la céderent à la Ville de Montréal en échange de terrains situés au sud du collège. De 1965 à 1968, le Musée d'Art Contemporain l'occupa. Après le départ du Musée, la maison, inoccupée, subit des dégâts importants. En 1976, M. David Stewart, président de la Fondation Macdonald Stewart et de la Société Historique du Lac-Saint-Louis, visita la maison. Impressionné par la qualité de son architecture mais attristé par son pitoyable état, il décida d'en entreprendre la restauration. Entre-temps, Mme Marius Dufresne étant décédée, la Société Historique du Lac-Saint-Louis acquit le mobilier et les tableaux qui se trouvaient originellement au Château. Une fois la restauration terminée, la maison sera la seule résidence d'une des grandes époques de Montréal à avoir retrouvé son état premier, y compris ses meubles, tableaux, tapis et rideaux. Le Château Dufresne deviendra un musée consacré aux arts décoratifs de la seconde partie du 19^e siècle à venir jusqu'à nos jours.

Oscar et Marius Dufresne étaient intimement liés au développement de la ville de Maisonneuve. Leur père Thomas y avait fondé une importante manufacture de chaussures dont Oscar était devenu le président. De plus, ce dernier était échevin de Maisonneuve. Marius était l'ingénieur de la Ville, arpenteur et propriétaire d'une importante compagnie, la Dufresne Engineering, qui construisit éventuellement plusieurs des ponts de Montréal dont une partie du pont Jacques-Cartier. Il était donc naturel, lorsque vint le moment de se construire une maison (ils avaient respectivement 41 et 32 ans), qu'ils le fissent dans cette partie de la



3. Le Château Dufresne en 1930.

4. Le Château Dufresne en 1977.
(Phot. Gilles Rivest)

5. Le Salon de Marius Dufresne (1940).
Très Second Empire, le salon de Marius Dufresne était fort différent de celui de son frère Oscar. Par les tableaux et les sculptures qu'elle contient, cette pièce nous révèle les goûts d'un Canadien français riche du temps. Les tableaux entrent dans trois catégories: influence des écoles de La Haye et de Barbizon; scènes anecdotiques et historiques; copies de vieux maîtres. Les meubles de cette pièce furent faits en France et en Belgique, au début du siècle, mais, en général, la plus grande partie du mobilier, qu'il soit Louis XV ou Louis XVI, Adams ou Tudor, provenait du Québec et de l'Ontario. L'ensemble donne une impression générale de richesse et d'abondance qui révèle la place que la famille Dufresne occupait dans la société ainsi que leurs aspirations culturelles. Cette pièce sera restaurée sous peu.

ville qu'ils connaissaient si bien. Ils décidèrent alors aussi d'unir leurs efforts sous le même toit mais la résidence qu'ils se construisirent possédait néanmoins deux appartements distincts et complètement séparés. Inspirée du Petit Trianon de Versailles, la maison avait près de quarante pièces (vingt dans chacun des deux logis). Si l'extérieur était néo-classique, les intérieurs, comme la mode le voulait alors, empruntaient leurs décos à une plus grande variété de styles. Les chambres à coucher étaient d'influence Louis XV et Louis XVI, les bibliothèques, Tudor et Gothique, les

salles à manger, Georgienne et Renaissance, les salons, Second Empire, alors que d'autres pièces avaient subi une influence orientale comme le Salon turc et le hall de Marius.

Le Château Dufresne, construit à une époque difficile (pendant la guerre de 1914-1918), constituait un projet onéreux pour l'époque. Il est cependant amusant, en étudiant les archives du Château, de constater que le coût de construction n'atteignait que de trente cents du pied carré alors qu'aujourd'hui il s'élèverait à \$25. Une des raisons principales de la modestie de ce prix tient au fait que, malgré les grandes dimensions du bâtiment et sa décoration fort élaborée, une très grande partie des matériaux utilisés étaient préfabriqués. Ainsi, toutes les moulures des murs et des plafonds, les cheminées, les fresques en relief, les parquets ainsi que la clôture en métal du parc avaient été commandés sur catalogue à des compagnies américaines. On avait fait cependant appel à de nombreux artistes et artisans. Tous les plafonds y compris ceux des chambres à coucher avaient été décorés et peints par Guido Nincheri, un peintre d'origine italienne qui orna plusieurs de nos églises dans les années vingt et trente. Nincheri avait aussi travaillé aux nombreux vitraux qui ont depuis été presque totalement détruits. Les frères Dufresne avaient utilisés les services de l'architecte français Jules Renard qui était employé dans le bureau de Marius Dufresne. Le Château devait faire partie d'un ensemble de quatre maisons, mais trois ne furent jamais construites.

L'importance de Marius Dufresne dans le développement et la planification de Maisonneuve n'est pas encore connue en détail. On sait cependant qu'il participa à la construction du magnifique poste de pompiers, des bains publics, du marché et de l'hôtel de ville. Tous ces importants édifices subsistent toujours et comptent au nombre des plus beaux monuments d'architecture civique de Montréal. Si les autorités de Maisonneuve déployaient toutes leurs énergies et leur goût à faire de Maisonneuve une des municipalités les plus agréables de l'Amérique du Nord, ils ne négligeaient pas pour autant la santé de leurs concitoyens. Dans le sous-sol de l'hôtel de ville se trouvait un laboratoire offrant des services de stérilisation et de pasteurisation du lait; des garde-malades donnaient, de maison en maison, des cours pour la garde des enfants selon les méthodes les plus récentes. Ces mesures, alors uniques à Montréal, eurent pour effet de réduire le taux de mortalité infantile à six pour cent, alors qu'il était de quarante à travers le reste du Québec et du Canada et de seize aux États Unis à cette époque. La même attention était accordée à la purification des eaux.

La présence de la famille Dufresne par la restauration de leur maison sera un témoin permanent pour les générations futures ainsi qu'un souvenir d'un essai unique de planification d'une de ces cités-jardins qui prirent naissance à cette époque. La rue Sherbrooke possédait autrefois de nombreuses grandes maisons bourgeoises qui valurent à Montréal le surnom de ville des princes du commerce. Beaucoup de ces maisons ont disparu; celles qui subsistent ont été grandement changées. Le Château Dufresne sera la seule résidence de Montréal à être restaurée en sa condition originale. En tant que musée des arts décoratifs, elle contribuera de plus à faire connaître un domaine artistique qui a été jusqu'ici négligé.

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6. Le Salon d'Oscar Dufresne avant restauration.

7. Le Jardin d'hiver de Marius Dufresne.

Des deux côtés de la maison se trouvaient de grands jardins d'hiver qui commandaient alors une vue magnifique sur Maisonneuve et sur le Saint-Laurent. Moins lourdes dans leur décoration, ces pièces étaient décorées de meubles en rotin et de grandes plantes. Les fenêtres possédaient autrefois des vitraux qui ont été détruits. Une de ces pièces est présentement restaurée, à l'exception des vitraux.

8. Le Salon turc ou Fumoir de Marius Dufresne (1930).

Cette petite pièce était réservée aux hommes pour la conversation après dîner. Sur l'un des murs, il y avait une fresque en relief (commandée par catalogue à New-York, comme beaucoup des éléments décoratifs de la maison). Les murs et le plafond étaient ornés de motifs géométriques. Une fontaine, des paons, un poêle chinois, des pipes contribuaient à donner à cette pièce le côté exotique que l'on cherchait à cette époque. Les coussins sont des exemples particulièrement réussis du type d'artisanat très en vogue dans les années 20. Cette pièce n'est pas encore restaurée mais tout le mobilier a été récupéré.



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TEXTS IN ENGLISH

such as it is, Château Dufresne represents an important section of the social life of a ward and a period, and deserves to be preserved. Then again, the minister of Cultural Affairs has recently classified the canvases that Charles Huot (1855-1930) produced for the church at Lac-Bouchette, in the Chicoutimi district; this decision will allow an important painter to become better known and confirms the interest long bestowed on these works by historian Jean-René Ostiguy. As well, the Canadian Conservation Institute's visit can only convince us of the indispensable rôle it is called upon to play in the restoration and successful showing of our heritage's works. And, finally, do our craftsmen remain faithful to-day to the traditions of yesterday, do they still have this taste for challenge, this feeling for fine technique? It seems that in the studios of genuine artisans and certainly in Bernard Chaudron's at Val-David, there is to be found a sincere desire to return to pure forms.

We ought to have emphasized several other aspects of our heritage. We ought to have shown the success of the restorations presently going on: churches, chapels, ancestral homes, architectural ensembles. We ought to have deplored the paucity of financial aid received by the Archives, supported the urgent appeals of the Quebec Museum for the safeguarding of its collections, noted the recent archaeological excavations, discussed the work of the Commission on Cultural Property which, presided over by M. Georges-Émile Lapalme, is making great efforts to publicize the establishing of safeguarding plans in the historical wards in order to facilitate the implementation of policies in restoration.

We must, however, as usual devote a large part of our publication to current art, which will assure to-morrow's heritage. Contemporary arts also form part of this line of continuity. It is recognized that their vitality depends largely on a vigorous craftsmanship. Ours is not lacking in strength, but in severity. It was possible to realize this at the last crafts exhibition, last December. It is high time to definitely steer ourselves in that direction, in order to rediscover the beauty of simplicity. This is a problem of education, of liaison with design, a problem of the development of markets and, finally, a problem of criticism. Completely free, criticism must be aware of its responsibilities. There still exist criteria establishing what is acceptable and what is not. A climate of quality must be our goal.

(Translation by Mildred GRAND)

TO-DAY EVEN MORE THAN YESTERDAY

By Andrée PARADIS

Even if one favours innovation, one can feel a deep concern for safeguarding the national and historical heritage and for fruitful encouragement. To consider it, not as a hindrance but as a stepping stone toward the future. Once a year, at the end of June, Quebec celebrates this idea of the heritage at the same time as its national holiday. A whole week is devoted to the inventory and the appreciation of what has been handed down to us; this is the time to examine the present state of the conservation of cultural wealth and drawing attention to its importance. A reckoning that cannot be entirely positive, since the task is so great and the means for accomplishing it are still too limited.

Therefore an appeal is being made to the collective conscience, in order that the public may take a hard look at this past, still badly defined but infinitely rich in its diversity. Is there a risk of over-emphasizing the past? Not so much, if we are convinced of the dynamism that the culture and traditions of yesterday assure in our life of to-day. Without, none the less, losing sight of the complexity of the notion of heritage that goes from the most recent and extends to the most remote eras, when western man had not yet set foot on the soil of the New World. It is interesting to seek a continuity in this. Ancient man, during a long period and without the support of writing, ensured a heritage that he conserved within himself and that he imparted from generation to generation. Modern life has greatly eroded this faculty of ourselves reliving the events of the past. We must have guide marks to fulfil our need for roots. Even the recent past can serve as example.

In the present issue, some articles bear witness, each in its way, to the care taken here to conserve and maintain traditions. Thus, the restoration of Château Dufresne is surprising in the youth of the building involved and certainly in the doubtful quality of its architecture but,

brothers, the house was sold by his widow Mrs. Marius Dufresne to the Fathers of Ste Croix and it became a Catholic college. In 1957, the Fathers sold it to the City of Montreal. Between 1965 and 1968, it was occupied by the Musée d'Art Contemporain until they moved to the Expo '67 site. During the next few years, the house was left unoccupied and was heavily damaged.

In 1976, Mr. David M. Stewart, President of The Macdonald Stewart Foundation and of the Lake St Louis Historical Society visited the house and saddened by its poor condition, decided to begin its restoration. The house has since been classified a historical monument. One of the most interesting aspects of the restoration is that most of the original furniture, including the paintings and curtains, was also acquired from the Dufresne family, and when fully restored the house will be back in its original state. The Château Dufresne will become a museum of decorative arts from the second part of the 19th century till to-day.

Oscar and Marius Dufresne were intimately tied to the development of the City of Maisonneuve. Oscar was an important shoe manufacturer and an alderman of the City. Marius was the city engineer, land surveyor and also engaged in private practice. Consequently, it was natural that when they decided to build themselves a house (at the age of 41 and 32) that they chose to do so in that part of town which they knew well and in which they were so much involved. They decided also to unify their efforts under the same roof, but the house they built had two distinct and completely separate lodgings. Inspired by the Petit Trianon at Versailles, the house had approximately forty rooms, twenty in each side of the house.

If the exterior was neo-classical, the interiors borrowed, as was the fashion then, from a wide selection of styles. The bedrooms were Louis XV and Louis XVI style, the libraries were Tudor and Elizabethan, the dining-rooms were Georgian and Renaissance, both living-rooms were in the Second Empire tradition while smaller rooms had a oriental feeling as did the smoking room.

The Château Dufresne was without doubt an expensive venture for the two brothers, especially that it was built during the first world war. However, it is interesting, when looking at the archives of the Château, to compare the prices of construction with those of today. Price of construction per square foot amounted to 30 cents (compare to to-day at \$25). This was partly due to the fact that much prefabricated elements had been used. Most of the plaster moulding, fire places, decorative frescoes, inlaid floors were ordered by catalogue from American firms. However, many local craftsmen and artists worked on other details of the house. For instance, all the ceilings were decorated by Guido Nincheri, a painter who also had worked on the decoration of many churches in Montreal at that period. This element only made the house the most sophisticated residence of Montreal in that time. Nincheri had also helped to decorate the stained glass windows which were in the Jardin d'Hiver and have since been broken.

In the planning of their house, Oscar and Marius Dufresne used the services of a French architect, Jules Renard, who was employed by Marius Dufresne in his office. The Château Dufresne was to be one of four large houses which were to be erected at the four corners of Sherbrooke and Pie IX; however, the three other ones were never built. The importance of Marius Dufresne in the planning of the City of

THE CHÂTEAU DUFRESNE AND THE CONSERVATION OF THE RECENT HERITAGE

Luc d'IBERVILLE-MOREAU

The Château Dufresne, one of the most prestigious residences of Sherbrooke Street in Montreal, was recently classified a historical monument by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Province of Quebec. Located next to the Olympic Stadium, the house was built as a private residence between 1916 and 1918 by two brothers, Oscar and Marius Dufresne. Upon the death of the second of the two

Maisonneuve is not yet fully known. We know that he was involved in the construction of the fire station, the public baths, the market and the City Hall. These buildings still remain today. In their time, they contributed to giving to Maisonneuve the reputation for being one of the most beautiful municipalities in North America. And while the authorities of Maisonneuve had been working for a "City Beautiful", they had not neglected the health of the residents. In the basement of the City Hall was located a laboratory for sterilizing and pasteurizing milk; trained nurses were also instructing housewives in the best methods for caring for their children. These measures had the effect of reducing the infant mortality to about six per cent, as against forty in other cities of Canada. The same care was exercised in regard to water supply. The presence of the Dufresne family, through the restoration of their house, will be a lasting witness for future generations. Sherbrooke Street once had many such mansions. Most of them have now been destroyed. Those that are left were greatly altered. The Château Dufresne will be the only one restored to its original furnished condition.

A PAINTER OF SPACE: MICHEL MORIN

By Marie-France O'LEARY

Michel Morin's work is the reflection of a daily research beginning with a fundamental, original tone. This tone is in harmony with the cosmos and in each of his canvases there is inscribed a landscape of different and subtle nuances. Morin translates an interior vision, deliberately prepared and pondered. "I feel myself rather close to Zen philosophy. Just as the archer projects himself in the arrow, I pass through everything physical to project myself on the canvas."

Through innumerable colours the canvas develops under the heedful eye of its creator to become his own creation. Uninterrupted continuations in which the artist makes his choice. The dominating picture is the outcome of a series of canvases that have been the pretexts to the final movement.

"Truth is in the interior, Form at the exterior", Confucius wrote several thousand years ago, applying this thought to the domain of numbers. Now, we can perceive the language of painting only through our history; and so it is of Morin's pictures. A gaze fixed on the picture teaches us something about ourselves in so far as we enter into it. "It is by work that our language is formed. It is essential that I find my rhythm and that I explore it and not a language that might have been imposed on me."

For this artist, it is essential to place himself at the interior of the object and of surrounding nature. Because no one perceives his environment in the same fashion as another. Each colour corresponds to a personal vibration. To perceive and express it is to enter into intimate contact with the universe and to open oneself to nature's cycles. "I choose a colour that corresponds to my interior state. This will be the point of departure of my picture, which then develops progressively. I feel that I am guided by an interior force where I control each movement."

Vast spaces in which blacks, grays and whites communicate with each other, melt one with the other and take on their meaning, the manifestation of a universal harmony where we feel the balance of a work. Landscapes blossoming out in half-tints that the eye is unceasingly surprised to discover under different angles. Flashing light of an intimate and awesome nature. "Certainly nature is a source of inspiration. At present man is destroying it. And in the end the land will turn against the one who imposes an ill-fated development on a balanced evolution. It is imperative that persons sensitive to this situation find a solution to improve this state of things. I have chosen to paint. And, doubtless for this reason, I am more at ease in big forms where my interior perception of nature expresses itself more freely."

Painting is a difficult adventure, and Morin must daily take up his choice: "Every day, I go on. But I also have the right to live according to this choice. Now, we are incessantly confronted with the play of a system in which the artist becomes a commercial value. How to reconcile these contradictions? I do not believe in undertaking two crafts at the same time; for me, this is unthinkable. What to do? Are we continually called upon to be divided between our livelihood and our creating?" These are questions that have been for so long without answers. One day, perhaps, this community — hoped for by so many — will be formed, where art will be integrated into the daily life of everyone!

During his career Morin has touched lightly on all artistic disciplines, and his research originates from several stages. From 1965 to 1970 he worked at the Ciba laboratory on different techniques of impression on fabrics. During this period, also, he carried on research on ceramics in the North Hatley Studios and worked with American potter Kent Benson. Solo as well as group exhibitions are evidence of this research where little by little the painter discovered his reality. From 1970 to 1976 he produced serigraphs, acrylics, inks and gouaches, which led to a private exhibition in Paris, to a joint exhibition with Canadian and Avignon painters and, finally, to this recent solo exhibition in Montreal, where the painter's expression is asserted in all its maturity.

"Facing my work, I commune with myself. A daily ritual in which I always rediscover my rhythm. I meditate until I feel ready. I concentrate my energies: the picture comes to life."

A slow preparation during which the canvas woven in the mind is executed spontaneously. A language that is formed and always newly created because it is open to spatial dimensions. A direct and moving means of communication. A projection of waves on magnetic fields that stretch to infinity, since everything that lives is movement of a little-explored field of awareness.

In a series of drawings, Morin, playing with colours, calls upon the symbol of the circle that we rediscover, structured, allied to yin-yang figuration, elements of a whole that we cannot isolate, complementary aspects of the Universe. Harmony, rhythm, Morin conveys to us an exact dimension of space-time, and no part of the drawing can be dissociated from another. This involves a form of expression different from pictures, which allows us to be confronted with respects ostensibly opposed to the canvas, but perhaps created as a prelude to vast spaces, the origin of the artist's reflection. Drawings are of prime importance in the evolution of Morin's work, and, if he tends to produce architecture of larger size, we must first enter

into contact with them and live the luminous emotion that is released by them: intense vibrations of the four seasons of man, agony and joy, the search for the Holy Grail always present in each of us.

Morin's canvases are related to the currents of the history of mankind's painting when the painter remains a pioneer in areas whose exploration is constantly renewed. From his perception he draws the substance of his canvas, which he produces beyond external appearances. In this way he instigates associations that enrich each element of his picture while bringing forth a new meaning conveyed by a concentration of each moment.

(Translation by Mildred GRAND)

ON THE SECRET PAINTING OF LOUISE FORGET

By Jean-Claude LEBLOND

The first time I met Louise Forget in her Paris studio, she was engaged in the production of a series of pictures different from anything she had created up to that time. *Suite parisienne* ushered in a new cycle, a new stage characterized by an extreme and strict structuralization of her pictorial space and the fundamental architectonic element: the triangle¹.

Suite parisienne

In fact, the observation of one of her canvases reveals to us, at the level of composition, a distribution of the surface in triangles clearly indicated at one time by chromatic masses, but also by lines, segments of straight lines that cross the field like signs. Number 16 of this Suite gives us a good example. On the left rises, like a column, a drawn-out mass composed of the opposition of two triangles linked by vectors with obviously imaginary focal points, which creates an ensemble of triangles and freely calls to mind an architectural form. "I chose the triangle as a symbol", she would say, "because I constantly found it in my field of vision. When I was walking and thinking of my picture, I always encountered this triangle, whether vertical or oblique, which was the initial step."

The strategic centre of this lengthened mass, a modified lozenge, rests on a tension introduced by two horizontal elements: a short line on the left and a white mass like a zone of demarcation on the right. The lower right rectangle, separated by an oblique line that joins the structure to support it, creates two triangular masses in its turn.

However, one's gaze will not spontaneously be directed to the left onto the heart of the obelisk, but will be arrested right in the middle of the surface at the junction of the two white zones: horizontal and vertical. Afterwards, it will travel to the periphery, along lines placed there to direct the reading, to simplify it, one might say. A curious vision placing lower down a sphere that establishes the farthest ultimate point in this perspective by opposing to it, on the extreme right, another sphere which marks the closest point, and the whole composition is organized between these two focal points.

Another detail. When the picture has been executed in flat tint, the two focalization points