

L'art de *Norman Yates* parle de sa terre natale et de l'homme
From the People — From the Land
The Art of Norman Yates

George Melnyk

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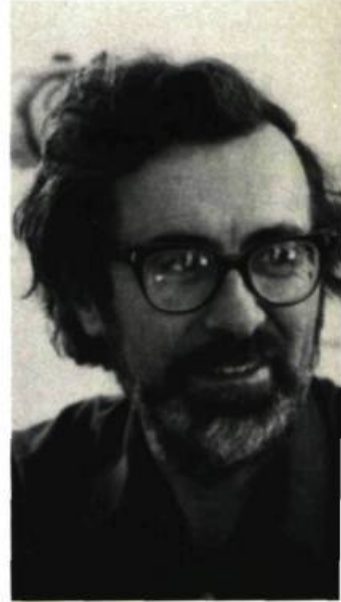
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l'art de *Norman Yates* parle de sa terre natale et de l'homme

George Melnyk



1. Norman YATES.
(Phot. J. Berry)

2. *Banner Figure*, 1968.
Acrylique, plastique et bois sur
toile; 91 cm 4 x 101,6.

L'évolution picturale de Norman Yates fournit un exemple du processus long, souvent marqué de déviations et parfois douloureux, suivant lequel un Canadien de l'Ouest revient à son inspiration naturelle afin de manifester son originalité artistique foncière.

L'artiste provincial se trouve coincé entre la nouveauté et la séduction des mouvements artistiques venus de l'extérieur et ses racines dans un lieu précis. Certains artistes régionaux résolvent le dilemme en se repliant complètement sur eux-mêmes et en peignant des paysages ou des scènes locaux, tandis que d'autres fuient le cadre local comme la peste et imitent frénétiquement le dernier style avant-gardiste importé. Seuls les quelques artistes qui s'efforcent ardemment de synthétiser ces tendances opposées apportent un élément original au domaine artistique. Norman Yates est du nombre.

Né à Calgary en 1923, Norman Yates a passé son enfance à Régina à l'époque de la crise des années trente et, comme plusieurs jeunes gens talentueux de l'Ouest, il vint dans l'Est et étudia à l'Ontario College of Art. A l'exception de quelques brefs séjours dans cette province et en Angleterre, Yates a exécuté la plus grande partie de son œuvre artistique en Alberta. Au cours des dix dernières années, grâce à la maturité politique acquise par l'Alberta pétrolifère et l'importance grandissante de son rôle économique au sein de la Confédération, ses artistes ont commencé à manifester un nouveau sentiment de confiance, un mélange de nationalisme canadien et de fierté provinciale qui s'exprime, au point de vue culturel, comme une interprétation inédite de l'identité canadienne de l'Ouest.

L'art de Norman Yates reflète la difficulté d'être artiste dans l'Ouest, de créer à la périphérie plutôt qu'au cœur des mouvements artistiques contemporains. C'est l'une des questions fondamentales à laquelle la culture de l'Ouest canadien a dû faire face. Le seul obstacle à l'absorption totale du particularisme de l'Ouest par l'autre tendance, ce fut la terre natale. Voilà ce qui a fait toute la différence pour la préservation du caractère de l'Ouest et permis la naissance



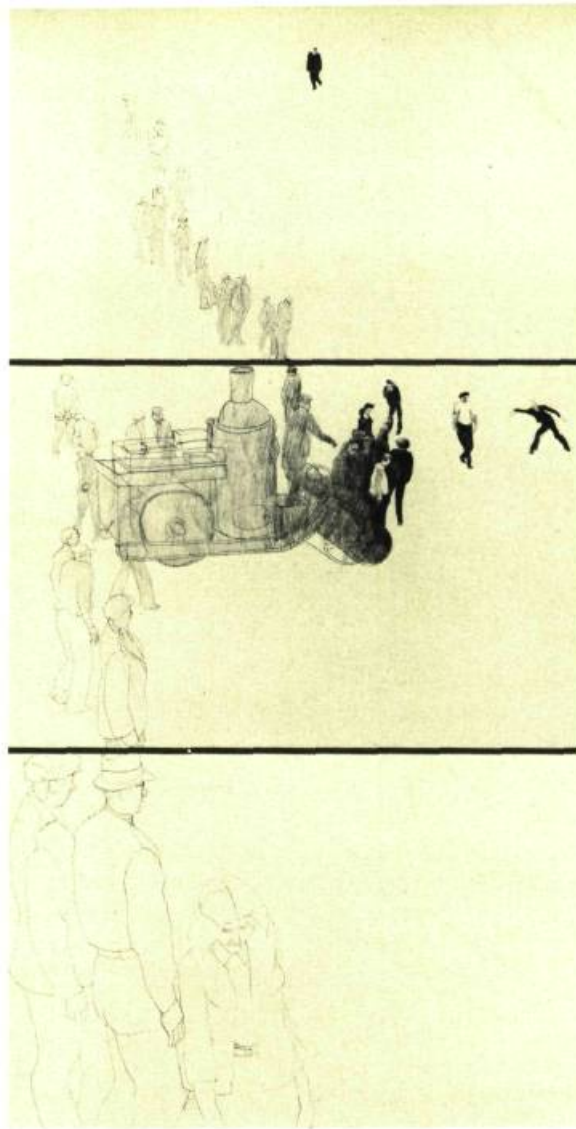
d'une nouvelle identité.

A la base de cette identité, on retrouve la relation de l'homme avec sa terre. L'homme et sa terre représentent les deux pôles de l'expression artistique de Norman Yates. Pour ne pas être écrasé par sa terre natale, il s'est tourné vers l'homme et vers l'histoire. Pour ne pas être accablé par les créations de la société, il alla vers la terre. Dans ce domaine restreint, il a su trouver le moyen d'exercer son esprit créateur.

Au début de sa carrière artistique, l'Impressionnisme français et l'Expressionnisme allemand l'attiraient à la fois. Cette double attraction indiquait son désir de traiter également de la condition humaine (l'expressionnisme) et des sujets esthétiques et de la nature (l'impressionnisme). Dans *Landscape*, son œuvre la plus récente, il a surtout rendu l'homme par le dessin en noir et blanc, la nature, par la couleur, créant ainsi une métaphore fondamentale par la tension qui existe entre l'histoire et l'environnement. Cette tension, dynamique principale de son œuvre, provient de la vie qu'il a menée dans l'Ouest où il a trouvé, dans l'histoire de sa région, son sens de l'homme et, dans le paysage, son sens de la couleur et de la perspective. Dans le passé, la synthèse de ces éléments n'a pas toujours été heureuse, en ce sens qu'il n'a pas été capable de produire une expression authentique dans laquelle le facteur moderne et le facteur indigène s'intégreraient parfaitement. C'est maintenant seulement qu'il a réussi à donner un sens local à ses préoccupations esthétiques, de même qu'une signification universelle aux éléments propres à sa terre natale, à son peuple, à leur histoire.

Sa première tentative de synthèse, au cours des années cinquante, quand il exprimait sa préoccupation fondamentale, celle du problème de la relation entre personnage humain et espace, fut, on le comprend, maladroite, empruntée et dépendante; il s'attaquait à un environnement qui n'était pas le sien. Il provenait de l'Est du Canada ou de l'étranger dont la société et la culture ne lui étaient apparentes que de loin. Ainsi, les aquarelles représentant une Torontoise, intitulée *Merry Go Round* (1954), et *New Town* (1963), où l'on voit des personnages déambulant dans une rue bordée de maisons anglaises en rangées, ne dépassent pas de beaucoup le niveau de scènes observées par un étranger.

Au cours des années soixante, il tenta de réaliser une deuxième synthèse qui s'avéra plus sophistiquée. A cette époque, il était retourné définitivement dans l'Ouest et, en sa qualité de professeur des beaux-arts à l'Université d'Alberta, figurait au nombre des membres bien considérés de la société artistique d'Edmonton. Son sens du caractère local s'accroissait. Il l'exprima dans la série intitulée *Allegoria*, constituée d'esquisses satiriques sur l'homme et sur le pouvoir dans le monde universitaire. Puis, en réaction contre cette immersion dans le cadre local, on assista à un retour vers l'aspect universel représenté par une expérience purement esthétique de la couleur au moyen du nouveau médium, l'acrylique. L'inévitable synthèse des deux influences — l'aspect particulier devenant social, et l'universel devenant esthétique — fit son apparition sous la forme de tableaux symboliques tels *Banner Figure* (1968) représentant un personnage humain crucifié sur un arrière-plan fait d'une épaisse matière colorée. Cependant, cette étape n'apportait pas de solution parce que son contenu esthétique provenait d'ailleurs et que même l'aspect social, apparemment indigène, ne représentait

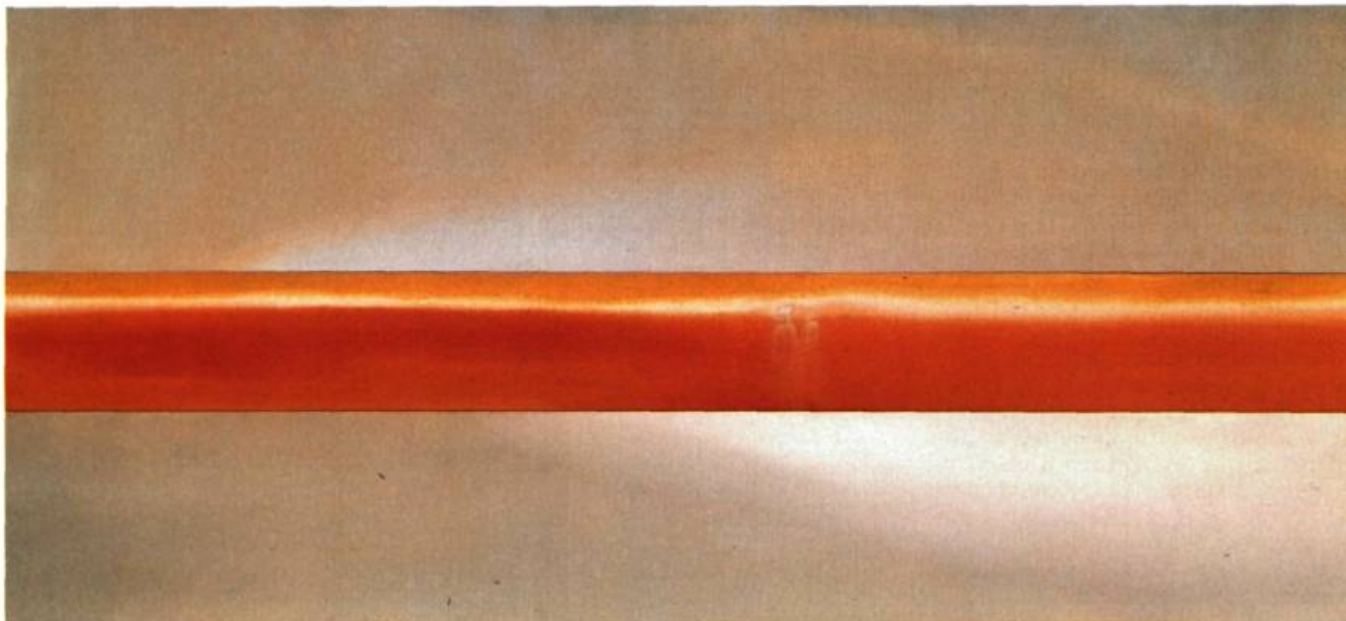


3. *Three Space Regina Riot*
1935, 1972.
Graphite sur papier;
198 cm x 101,6.
(Phot. James A. Dow,
Camerawork Associates)

en réalité que l'expression locale de la révolte étudiante universelle des années soixante. Bref, cette seconde synthèse n'évoquait pas suffisamment le pays.

Devenu familier, le même cycle continua. Tout d'abord Yates se plongea dans l'universel. Il expérimenta avec les arts Op et Pop, le film et la photographie, et en arriva à créer, pour la pièce de Wilfrid Watson intitulée *Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Rules of Marshall McLuhan*, un décor d'une étonnante technologie utilisant divers médiums. Puis, en contrepartie de cet extrême, l'artiste retourna entièrement à ses racines et créa, à l'instar de la série *Allegoria*, une suite de dessins ayant pour titre *Regina Riot 1935* et *Canadian Heros Series Number One* comprenant quelques simples dessins au crayon représentant des êtres humains. Ces nouvelles scènes de son enfance au cours de la crise s'engageaient plus avant dans son pays natal et offraient plus de liens avec l'Ouest que les œuvres de la série *Allegoria*. Une dialectique plus profonde s'y développait et, par voie de conséquence, établissait une synthèse plus poussée. Même si la série *Regina Riot* traitait du problème abstrait de l'espace et de la perspective de manière très conceptuelle — plutôt que des entités, elle exposait mécaniquement sa théorie sur les relations dans un monde multidimensionnel, multispacial et aux multiples facettes —, son caractère et sa force provenaient du conflit humain qu'elle représentait.

Il tira sa synthèse la plus récente et, à mon avis, la plus réussie, de la contradiction entre l'art technologique provenant de New-York et de Toronto et les visions d'un adolescent de la Prairie. Plutôt que d'être



4. *Landscape Sixteen*, 1975.
Acrylique sur toile;
115 cm x 275.

réservé aux dessins en noir et blanc de personnages et d'objets, le pays fait vraiment sa première apparition dans le royaume de la couleur, dans le souci esthétique de la forme dominée auparavant par l'influence des mouvements artistiques de l'extérieur. Pour la première fois, l'abstraction prend racine dans le paysage. Ainsi, dans la série *Landscape* l'homme acquiert la couleur, fait partie de la nature, de l'universel. Même si la contradiction entre la création de l'homme et la nature persiste, on perçoit quelques lueurs communes. La plus intéressante, c'est que sa perception de l'universel ne correspond pas à la technologie impérieuse du village global de McLuhan mais à l'univers de la terre, qui respecte l'aspect particulier, qui fait montre de diversité et non d'uniformité. Ainsi, né du sol, du particulier, l'universel ne représente pas une menace.

Landscape fait le pont entre les deux principales tendances de l'art contemporain, le haut réalisme du mode représentatif et le formalisme des champs colorés du mode abstrait. Les tableaux s'approchent, de manière symbolique, abstraite et conceptuelle, de l'horizon naturel de l'Ouest. Ils l'expriment en profondeur plutôt que superficiellement, à la manière des paysages traditionnels et ou narratifs. Les personnages flous, qui ont ennuyé certains observateurs qui y ont vu un élément discordant, créent en réalité la tension de l'œuvre, la tension entre l'homme moderne et la nature que Yates a perçue dans l'histoire de l'Ouest. Elles expriment le pont que l'artiste construit entre les aspects esthétiques de l'art figuratif et de l'art abstrait, que les critiques s'entêtent à diviser. Si ces personnages représentent exactement des hommes de la terre ordinaires sortis de l'histoire de l'Ouest canadien, ils possèdent cependant, à n'en pas douter, une qualité universelle, comme le montre *Landscape Twenty-One* où l'humanité se rappelle la misère des premiers malheureux de la terre — Adam et Ève.

Ces peintures font preuve d'*originalité* de plusieurs façons. D'abord, en entamant le dialogue si essentiel entre l'art représentatif et l'art abstrait, et en retournant aux origines retrouvées dans la terre, dans le peuple qui habite cette terre, dans la lumière brillante et dure de la Prairie, dans l'espace immense et dans le sentiment d'écrasement que produit l'horizon

et l'horizontal. Elles sont originales également en reprenant la question fondamentale de l'homme de l'Ouest face à la nature, en exprimant ses propres origines dans la civilisation agraire du premier immigrant européen blanc qui s'attaqua à cette terre. Elles sont originales aussi en faisant un retour à la simplicité et aux premiers principes qui viennent d'une expérience immédiate et directe de la terre. Finalement, elles sont originales en ce qu'elles frayent un chemin aux artistes canadiens dans leur lutte contre la double menace du provincialisme culturel et de l'impérialisme culturel. L'originalité de Yates provient de ses origines régionales mais elle atteint les origines universelles et les problèmes de la condition humaine.

Le problème de l'artiste provincial n'est pas particulier au Canadien de l'Ouest. Le peintre québécois Jean-Paul Lemieux, lui-même un régionaliste profondément conscient des problèmes du Québec, a, entre autres, inspiré Norman Yates. «L'idée de pouvoir travailler principalement avec l'espace, l'espace en tant qu'espace, l'espace profond en peinture, m'est venue du personnage perdu dans l'espace de Lemieux», nous dit Yates. Tous deux aiment leur terre et les gens de leur terre. Cet amour les a fait se découvrir eux-mêmes. Ils ont tous deux montré que lorsqu'une personne bien enracinée dans le sol natal rencontre et absorbe sans servilité les influences et les idées de centres puissants et dominateurs, la synthèse qui en résulte s'avère pleine de force pour les deux mondes.

Norman Yates n'a pas encore trouvé le parfait accord avec l'Ouest. La dialectique continue, approvisionnée par les nouvelles contradictions qui alimentent sa démarche. S'il poursuit plus avant son voyage dans l'originalité, il fera face à la tâche monumentale de dépasser son héritage d'immigrant pour se plonger dans l'immense région de l'histoire et du mythe qui fut et continue d'être la vie des peuples natifs de l'Ouest. Cette route vers le passé crée en réalité un passage vers l'avenir de l'identité de cette région. Ce voyage vers la terre natale, l'*originalité*, est une façon de découvrir une identité qui se dévoile éternellement.

(Traduction de Marie-Sylvie Fortier-Rolland)

English Original Text, p. 90



ANDRÉ JASMIN —
ART FOR THE PRESENT MAN

By Danielle RONDEAU

To reveal the living, breathing artist behind the work — and through it — without the need to place it in the outline of history, to find man, to become saturated with the ebb and flow in order to seize the passing of time, the language of the gesture, there, to a small degree, is the attitude that a contemplative view of the last ten or twelve years of André Jasmin's production inspires us to adopt, without the concern of finding in it the unusual, the new gadget, *the giant steps forward*, in the name of Art! And yet these steps exist: some clearly asserted, others on the point of being affirmed; but their trail is proving discreet and solitary, since Jasmin favours a process of research irreducible to any form of alienation, even at the risk of being wilfully ignored by some milieus, if not hardly touched by a discourse parallel to the work and without a real connection with its substance.

Both the verb and the creative gesture possess an autonomy of language and of function, so there exists at first glance no guarantee of accurate responsiveness between the two means of expression. In this sense, André Jasmin's production is no exception, posing us in a pointed manner the problem of a *translation*, through writing, of the pictorial message . . .

Between 1965 and 1969, just before the long silence that would last almost two years, Jasmin made use of colour to contend with the concept of space that he penetrated, fragmented and reanimated in a succession of gouaches, oils and acrylics. Borrowed from the range of primary and secondary colours, treated in semi-transparencies, in blobs sometimes scattered, sometimes close together, this colour became in turn mass and background, a geometric and linear element, while progressively developed the notion of a triangle in formation, which would find its completion in the large format of 1967 (Fig. 1).

Latent as it was in 1965, wedged between the play of two forms incapable of completing it, this triangle proves itself here in a more complex structure: the angles face each other in an internal entanglement while the largest of them, presented in warm tones, dashes to the summit to find support on bases that, to all intents and purposes, are present. Cold tones are organized around this structure and become its place of turmoil, the complementary dynamics, confined in three portions also triangular. The balance of matter and awareness, of things said and of inner life, appears finally. Once assumed, this equilibrium can then show itself in the heart of a free composition, all but violent: *Fleurs cosmiques* (Fig. 2). Here the blobs themselves become constructive and are linked in clusters around a red trail that bestows upon them a movement shared between two indefinable thresholds: this is the coexistence of a double, dynamic entity that is faced freely, without any other restriction than an animated cosmic space.

Then occurs the anti-climax of the years 1970-1972: on the one hand, engaged in a university post that demanded a good deal of his time (Jasmin became vice-dean of the Department of Plastic Arts at UQUAM) and, on the other hand, disturbed by personal problems, the man, more than the painter, had to experience solitude, against which nature revolted at first, to tame him little by little and to make an ally of him. But since with Jasmin the act of creation and inner reactions are channel-

led by the same keen sensitivity and are therefore indissoluble, these two years would remain almost empty in terms of production.

However, at the beginning of 1972, wishing to shake off this lethargy which had possessed him for long months, the artist engaged a model whose presence forced him to work, to translate his immediate emotion. This was the resumption of contact with the tangible world, which quickly led him to an almost euphoric state: the human body became a kind of transitory medium, a call to life. Jasmin then proceeded in the following fashion: he walked around his model, gathering many views of her, preoccupied by a global dynamics that he rapidly transposed onto paper.

The result: a series of charcoal sketches on a feminine theme, where the line is developed and moves in a space it generates at will, asserting itself in a figurative content, either by the object or by the state of it retained by the line. *Double*, from 1973, (Fig. 3) gives us an uncommon perception of the body in motion when the spatial context is materialized and interferes with this body whose reality is expressed in two distinct tempos. Space and matter, translated into one single language, penetrate and inhabit each other.

Of these years Jasmin would say: "This was the first time I sensed my ability to express, by means of drawing, what I had desired during the years 1940-1945: to be capable of translating life directly on paper; this was a unique period, when I lived the union between the conscious and the unconscious . . . When I was drawing, I was making love" (Fig. 4).

Experience with the living model — return to sources in some way — continued until the beginning of 1975, when Jasmin, taking a sabbatical leave, rediscovered a long-forgotten pleasure — continuity in work and, by that very fact, the possibility of paying greater attention to his inner world: "Introverted but idealistic, I had become involved socially through fine arts, hoping to change certain things; before, I had participated in group exhibitions at the opening of a gallery, but this was a dead-end street. I no longer wished to play that game, because it did not mean a fundamental step. But in terms of altruistic concerns, I think that it is by listening to oneself that one can really accomplish something . . ."

From then on Jasmin no longer required the presence of a model: paper, hand and tool became his primary mediators, without, however, his denying the source of inspiration found in the material world.

To express himself, he would turn to charcoal, gouache, pastel and acrylic, used alone or in combination . . . These were so many media by means of which the artist would create an extremely vast and mobile language, strongly articulate as to the specific contents that he conveyed but irreducible to a totalitarian definition. The viewer desirous of understanding the message, of penetrating the reality underlying the works of 1975 and 1976 will therefore have to adopt a contemplative attitude, agreeing to live for a moment in the intimacy of the creative gesture, be it violent, contained or serene.

Nodal, charcoal on Japanese vellum executed in March 1975 (Fig. 5), no longer evokes the material and its texture but the feverish quality, if not the irritation, the artist felt upon contact with them. The line unfolds in a detailed outline that makes a surface vibrant, to which dark islets are attached in passing; the forms thus exposed, less bold on the periphery, present at the interior the paradox of aggressiveness and refinement.

This paradox would tend to diminish in sub-

sequent works. The artist, more and more able to perceive the different aspects of his sensation and master a technique directly translating his feelings, would arrive progressively at a homogeneity of composition. The most recent charcoal drawing of a series exhibited in February 1977 at Galerie A (See cover) bears witness to this free, powerful force of expression of the individual: in its ardour, the gesture assumes its moments of repose to better burst forth later; it determines its own field of expansion, rendering the restraint of the frame useless.

This new inspiration that Jasmin has rediscovered, this coincidence between emotion and gesture, are strong enough for the artist to attempt to express them by colour, too, without the risk of seeing them spoiled. It is *Pégase à la recherche du poète, Mutation, Les Sanglots des sources or Ombre affolée* (Fig. 6), a poetic, luminous suite that speaks of subtleties and tenderness confessed without shame.

This work of André Jasmin is perhaps difficult to define, even over a period of some ten years, because it cannot be summarized. The language it adopts follows the rhythm of the man, and this man is made of desires, of hesitations and certainties, of contradictions assumed, but above all of a fundamental vitality at whose heart awareness of the past could take offence no more in the present than in the future.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

FROM THE PEOPLE — FROM THE LAND —
THE ART OF NORMAN YATES

By George MELNYK

The evolution of Norman Yates as a painter exemplifies the long, often digressive, sometimes painful process by which a Western Canadian returns to indigenous inspiration in order to create an original artistic statement.

The hinterland artist is caught between the novelty and glamour of external art movements and his roots in a particular place. Some regional artists solve this dilemma by retreating into place completely, becoming painters of landscape and local scenes, while still others flee locale like the plague by frenetically imitating the latest imported avant-garde style. The few artists who struggle to synthesize these opposing trends are the only ones who can contribute something original to the world of art. Norman Yates is one of them.

Norman Yates was born in Calgary in 1923, spent his childhood in Depression Regina of the Thirties and then, like many talented Westerners, went East to study at the Ontario College of Art. Except for several brief stays there and in England, he has done most of his work as an artist in Alberta. During the past decade, as oil-rich Alberta has matured politically, flexed its economic muscle in Confederation, its artists have begun to express a new sense of confidence which is a mixture of Canadian nationalism and provincial pride. Culturally, this has expressed itself as a new interpretation of the Western Canadian identity.

The art of Norman Yates reflects the struggle of being an artist in the West, of creating on the periphery of contemporary art movements rather than at its centre. This has been

a basic issue confronting Western Canadian culture. The only barrier that has stood in the way of having this Western self totally defined or absorbed by the other has been the land. For the Western identity it has been the measure of difference. That difference made a new identity possible.

The basis of that identity is man's relationship to the land. Man and the land are the two poles of Norman Yates' art. Not to be overwhelmed by the land, he turned to man and history. Not to be swamped by the creations of society, he retreated to the land. In this tenuous balance he has found creative space.

As a young artist he was simultaneously drawn to both French Impressionism and German Expressionism. This dual attraction signaled his desire to deal equally with the human condition (expressionism) and with aesthetic concerns and nature (impressionism). In his most recent work, *Landscape*, he has interpreted man predominately as black and white drawing and nature as colour, thereby creating a basic metaphor for the tension between history and the environment. This tension, which is the prime dynamic of his art, has been generated by living in the West where he has found his sense of man in the history of this region and, in its landscape, his sense of colour and perspective. In the past, the synthesis of these elements has not always been successful in the sense that it has not produced an authentic expression in which modernity and the indigenous are totally integrated. Not until now has he succeeded in giving an indigenous dimension to aesthetic concerns and a universal meaning to the indigenous elements of place, people and history.

During the Fifties, his first attempt at a synthesis in which he articulated his fundamental concern as being the problem of the human figure's relationship to space was understandably fledgling, derivative and dependent. The environment he dealt with was not his own. It was Eastern Canadian, or it was foreign. The society and culture was only distantly his own. So that the water-colour of the girl in Toronto *Merry Go Round* (1954) and that of the figures in a street of English rowhouses *New Town* (1963) remain very much at the level of scenes observed by an outsider.

During the Sixties, he attempted a second synthesis which was more sophisticated. By this time he had returned permanently to the West and was a respected member of the local Edmonton art community as a professor of fine arts at the University of Alberta. So his sense of the indigenous was greater. He expressed it in a series of drawings titled *Allegoria* which satirized man and power at the university. Then he reacted to this immersion in the local by going back to the universal, represented by his purely aesthetic experimentation in colour with newly developed acrylics. When the inevitable synthesis of these two forces (the particular as social and the universal as aesthetic) appeared it was in the form of symbolic paintings such as *Banner Figure* (1968) of a human figure crucified on a flat background of thick tonal colour. This stage did not provide a solution because the aesthetic was imported and even the social, which was outwardly indigenous, was actually only the local expression of a universal student revolt of the Sixties. In short, the indigenous was under-represented in this second synthesis.

Yates returned to the now all too familiar cycle. First, he immersed himself once more in the universal. He experimented with op and pop art, film, photography, culminating in a multi-media technological wonderland of a set designed for Wilfred Watson's play *Let's*

Murder Clytemnestra According to the Rules of Marshall McLuhan. In response to this extreme, he turned completely back into his roots in a series of drawings titled *Regina Riot*, 1935 and *Canadian heroes series Number One* which were sparse, simple, pencil drawings of the human figure paralleling the *Allegoria* series. These new scenes from his childhood in the Depression went further into the indigenous, were more in touch with the West than the content of the *Allegoria* series. A deeper dialectic and therefore deeper synthesis was developing. Although the *Regina Riot* series dealt with the abstract problem of space and perspective in a highly conceptual way (expressing rather mechanically his theory of the multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, multi-spacial world of relationships rather than entities) their life and strength came from the human struggle they portrayed.

Out of the contradiction between the technological art emanating from New York and Toronto and the visions of a Prairie youth came his most recent, and to my mind, most successful synthesis. For the first time, the indigenous, rather than being restricted to content, to black and white drawings of figures and things, has crossed over into the realm of colour, into aesthetic concerns of form which were dominated before by the influence of imported art movements. For the first time, abstraction became rooted in the landscape. Likewise, in the *Landscape* series, man has gained colour, becomes part of nature, the universal. Though the contradiction between man's creation and nature is still there, there are glimmerings of commonality. What is most interesting is that his universal is not the imperializing technology of McLuhan's global village but the universal of the land, one which respects the particular, one which displays diversity and not uniformity. Coming as it does out of the indigenous, the particular, it is a universal that does not threaten.

Landscape has bridged the gulf that separates the two major trends in contemporary art — the high realism of the representational mode and colour field formalism of the abstract mode. These paintings approach the indigenous horizon of the West, symbolically, abstractly, conceptually. They express it essentially, rather than superficially the way traditional landscape or scenic art does. The faint figures, which have bothered some observers who find them a discordant element, do in fact create the tension of the work which is the tension between modern man and nature that Yates has seen in the history of the West. They express the bridge he is building between the aesthetics of representational art and abstract art, which critics keep separate. Although these figures are definitely populist agrarian figures out of Western Canadian history, they carry an unmistakably universal quality as witnessed in *Landscape Twenty-One* where the humanity is reminiscent of the original wretched of the earth — Adam and Eve.

These paintings are *origin-al* in a number of ways. They are *origin-al* in breaking ground for the much-needed dialogue between representational and abstract art. They are *origin-al* in their going back to origins that are in the land, in the people of the land, in the brilliant, hard light of the Prairies, in the immense space and in the overwhelming sense of horizon and the horizontal. They are *origin-al* in their taking up of the fundamental issue facing the human in the West — dealing with nature. They are *origin-al* in expressing his own origins in the agrarian civilization of the white European immigrant who first attacked this land. They are *origin-al* in returning to the simplicity and first

principles that come from an immediate, direct experience of the land. And they are *origin-al* in pioneering a way for Western Canadian artists to deal with the dual threat of cultural provincialism and cultural imperialism. Norman Yates' originality comes from the regional but ends in the universal origins and issues of the human condition.

The problem of the hinterland artist is not peculiar to the Canadian West. The Quebec painter Jean-Paul Lemieux, himself a profound regionalist with a deep sense of Quebec's angst, has been one of the inspiration for Norman Yates. "Lemieux's figure in space," Yates says, "gave me the idea that paintings could deal primarily with space, with space as space, with deep space." Both men love the land and the people of the land. In that love they found themselves. Both artists have shown that when the indigenous, rooted self meets and absorbs, without subservience, influences and ideas from powerful imperial centres, the resulting synthesis is potent for both worlds.

Coming to terms with this place, the West, isn't over for Norman Yates. The dialectic continues with new contradictions feeding his development. If he continues further in his journey into the *origin-al* he will face the momentous task of going beyond his immigrant heritage into the immense region of history and myth that has been and is the life of the native peoples of the West. This road into the past is actually a way into the future of the Western identity. The journey into the indigenous (the *origin-al*) is a process of discovering a perpetually unfolding identity.

TIM ZUCK — LOOKING FOR A HOUSE

By Eric CAMERON

Most of Tim Zuck's creative life has been spent in or around Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; his art plots the course of personal adjustment to the institution.

He was a student here five years ago and his work earned shows in Toronto and New York, alongside artists of the calibre of Dan Graham and Vito Acconci. Quite an achievement for an undergraduate! Something to be proud of! The works themselves tell a different story. The two major pieces were performances and both had him closed away in a box. In the Toronto presentation he was completely hidden in a great dark horizontal tomb-like structure, and he just stayed there all day while people came and looked and found no trace of him at all. Earlier, at the college's own gallery, it had been a vertical box with a plexiglass front. In the course of the day he slowly covered it from the inside with black paint. The notion of the artist hiding behind a layer of paint is so poignant it seems almost to have had to be contrived as an explanation of his later work. The point I want to stress is that he was hiding, and hiding is a human issue as well as an art issue.

He went to California Institute of the Arts in September 1971 and in May 1972 he did another box piece there. It had grown tentacles reaching out into space, but one doesn't need to force the metaphor; other works already speak of the sense of release. In No-