

Graff, centre de conception graphique et... un peu plus encore Graff, a Centre of Graphic Conception and ... a Little More

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Graff, centre de conception graphique et... un peu plus encore

Bernard Levy

Le reportage photographique est de
Gabor Szilazi

Tout a commencé en 1966. Il y avait grève à l'École des Beaux-Arts. Pour continuer à travailler, les étudiants et les professeurs de la classe de gravure se sont *provisoirement* installés rue Marianne (au 848 exactement), créant ainsi l'Atelier Libre 848. C'était une cave: l'art *underground* n'était pourtant pas encore à la mode...

A raison de \$15 par mois, les étudiants pouvaient suivre les cours qu'on dispensait à l'Atelier; ils pouvaient également se servir des presses. Après la grève, l'Atelier Libre n'a pas fermé ses portes: une cotisation de \$15 par mois permettait d'en devenir membre. Entre 1966 et 1969, un premier noyau d'une dizaine d'artistes s'est formé autour de Pierre Ayot. S'y trouvaient notamment Tib Beament, Lise Bissonnette, Gilles Boisvert, René Derouin, Madeleine Morin, Francine Simonin, Serge Tousignant, Robert Wolfe.

Il fallait rapidement déterminer une orientation à ce groupe et choisir un nom qui s'accordait à ses nouvelles définitions. C'est à René Derouin, semble-t-il, qu'on doit d'avoir suggéré le nom que l'on connaît bien aujourd'hui: GRAFF. Il répondait le mieux à la définition générale qui avait été retenue: centre de conception graphique.

Plus qu'un atelier

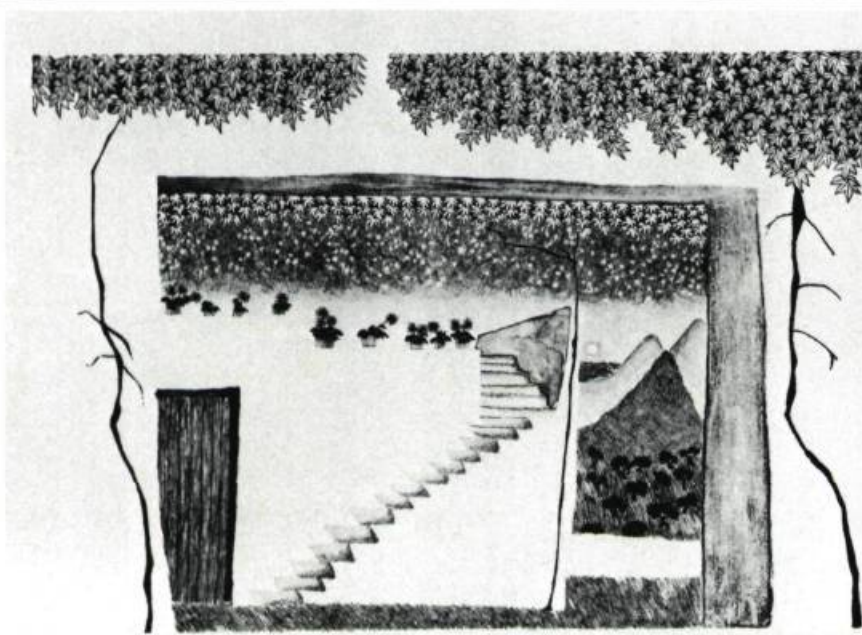
En effet, Graff ne veut pas être considéré comme un atelier où l'on se consacre uniquement à la gravure, encore qu'auprès de nombreux artistes et visiteurs il soit surtout identifié comme tel. On y travaille l'expression visuelle sous d'autres aspects: photographie, publicité, affiches, objets, etc. Graff se présente également comme un centre de formation où l'on dispense des cours; les sessions durent douze semaines (\$140) à raison de quatre heures de cours, un soir par semaine. Les groupes d'élèves ne dépassent pas une vingtaine de personnes. Cette activité permet à certains artistes de vivre ou de survivre. Mais qui sont les élèves? N'y a-t-il pas concurrence avec les établissements où l'on enseigne les arts graphiques? Pour Pierre Ayot, Graff ne concurrence pas l'Université du Québec, les cégeps ou les écoles professionnelles. «A l'Atelier, dit-il, on a le souci d'initier des gens qui veulent mieux connaître les techniques de la gravure (sérigraphie, eau-forte, lithographie, linogravure, etc.). On propose des cours de perfectionnement ou des cours de complément à de jeunes artistes qui ont déjà une formation générale dans le domaine des arts plastiques mais qui souhaitent s'exprimer davantage par la gravure;



Les ventes aux enchères d'œuvres d'art contemporain fleurissent un peu partout à Montréal. Il semble bien que le mouvement (car c'en est un) ait été amorcé par Graff voilà un peu plus de deux ans. Les *encans du Mardi Graff* attirent chaque fois une foule d'amateurs de plus en plus nombreux (deux cents, trois cents: l'estimation est difficile). Il s'agit de *jeunes* acheteurs (des 30-40 ans). Ils sont, bien sûr, animés par la perspective d'acquérir à un prix abordable (généralement moins de cent dollars) des gravures de qualité.

C'est d'ailleurs partiellement grâce au produit des ventes aux enchères que l'immeuble qui abrite l'Atelier Graff a pu être entièrement reconstruit. On comprend pourquoi, au cours des deux dernières années, durée des travaux, les artistes de la Galerie ne se sont pas beaucoup manifestés. Il n'en est plus de même depuis quelques mois.

Certes, les ventes aux enchères et les expositions ont contribué à faire connaître l'Atelier Graff et ses artistes. Mais Graff, c'est aussi bien plus qu'une simple galerie. Comme l'explique Pierre Ayot, son directeur, il s'agit fondamentalement d'un centre de conception graphique et peut-être, déjà, d'un peu plus encore, d'un véritable petit centre culturel.



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ils viennent chez nous pour se familiariser avec des méthodes qu'ils ne connaissent pas encore. Cet apprentissage leur permet d'éviter de déranger dans leur travail, par de perpétuelles et trop élémentaires questions techniques, les artistes qui travaillent à la galerie.» On trouve aussi, parmi les élèves qui fréquentent l'Atelier, de simples curieux qui, loin de chercher à obtenir des crédits de cours, désirent rapidement apprendre les techniques de base. On rencontre également des artistes heureux de découvrir certaines fines- ses récentes du métier, résultats de recherches originales sur le plan technique. On trouve enfin, parmi les élèves, des journalistes, des critiques d'art, de futurs directeurs de musée,...

Mais Graff, c'est tout de même un atelier-galerie. «Ce n'est pas son unique raison d'être», insiste Pierre Ayot. Il précise: «Graff n'est pas, par exemple, une galerie qui vit des ventes des œuvres exposées; Graff se propose plutôt de donner leur chance à des artistes en leur offrant de présenter publiquement leur production. Sur ce plan, nous n'hésitons pas à courir certains risques en exposant des pièces *expérimentales* qu'on ne trouvera nulle part ailleurs. Nous ne prélevons aucun bénéfice sur les ventes. En fait, nous demandons aux graveurs de donner deux exemplaires de chacun de leur tirage à la Galerie.» Aux yeux de Pierre Ayot et des membres de la Galerie Graff, le fait de présenter une exposition doit être perçu comme une sorte de complément (complément nécessaire, certes) au travail des artistes. «Pour faire connaître de jeunes artistes, nous organisons des expositions où figurent des œuvres de graveurs qui sont des *anciens* et qui comme ils sont plus connus, servent de *locomotives*. Ils attirent ainsi un public qui a le plaisir de les retrouver et de découvrir ou de suivre en même temps de nouveaux talents.»

Quel est le public de Graff? D'après les listes d'acheteurs (notamment celles dressées à l'occasion des ventes aux enchères), le profil du *client* s'établit come suit: femme ou homme jeune (30-40 ans), qui acquiert des œuvres par goût personnel (n'est pas collectionneur ou spéculateur), qui, pas très fortuné, vise des gravures dont le prix est largement inférieur à \$100; qui est francophone.

S'il y a eu peu d'expositions ces dernières années, c'est qu'il a fallu jeter bas l'immeuble du 963 de la rue Rachel. Puis le reconstruire entièrement. Une opération qui a duré deux ans. Les travaux ont pu être réalisés grâce aux subventions du Conseil des Arts (\$36.000) et aux revenus des ventes aux enchères (\$40.000).

1. Pierre AYOT
Venetian blind.
Sérigraphie sur plexiglas.

2. Fernand BERGERON
Yazou, 1977.

3. Serge LEMOYNE
Le Cinquantième but de Lafleur, 1977.

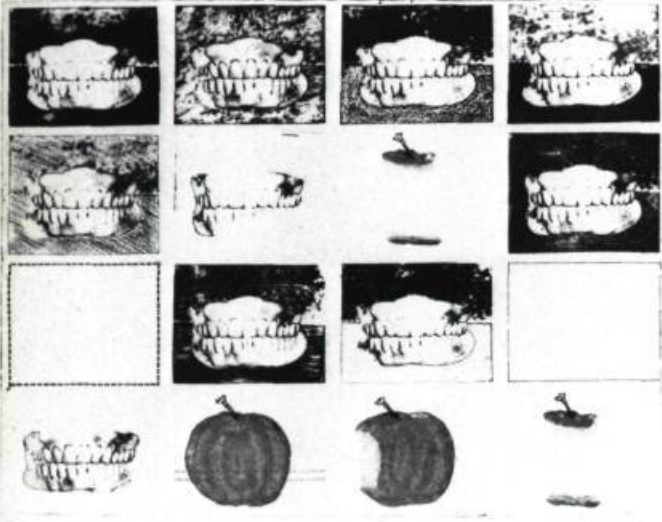
4. Gloria DEITCHER
Spring Fling à Berri de Montigny.



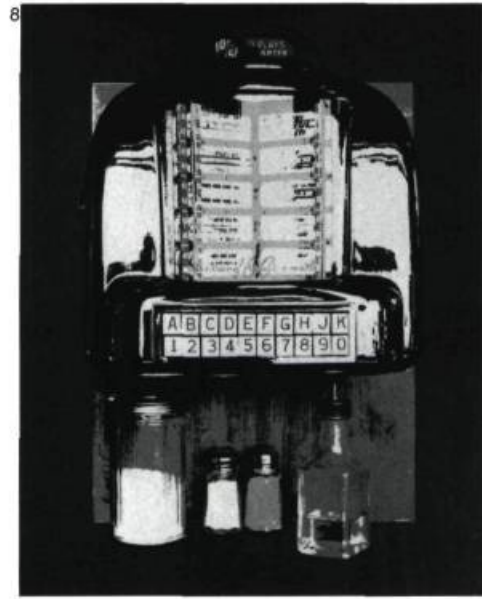
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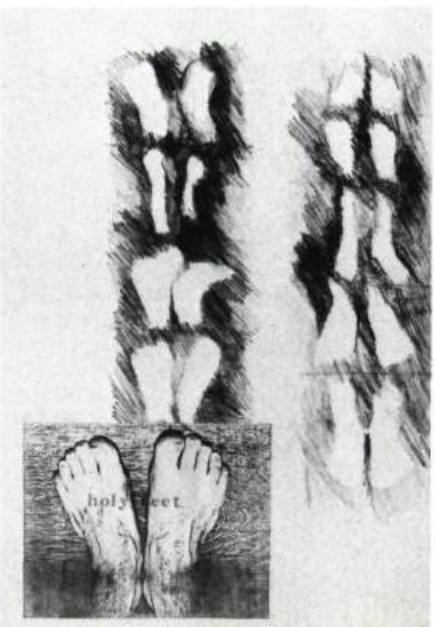
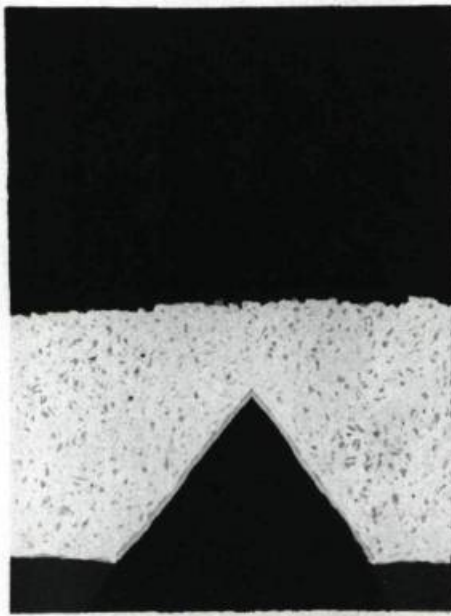
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5. Luc BÉLAND
Sans titre, 1974.

6. Hannelore STORM
Motorcycle Series I, 1968.

7. Pierre AYOT
Faites-le vous-même, 1965.

8. Denis FORCIER
La Boîte à musique.

9. Serge TOUSIGNANT
Transition, 1963.

10. Robert WOLFE
Reiye, 1977.

11. Bé van der HEIDE
Sans titre, 1977.

12. Francine SIMONIN
La Crucifixion, 1969.



Regroupement et rayonnement

Désormais, le versement d'une simple cotisation — elle s'élève à \$25 — ne suffit plus pour devenir automatiquement membre. Il faut présenter un portefeuille *prometteur*, c'est-à-dire renfermant des œuvres où, en plus de la qualité et du talent, s'affirme un évident souci de recherche et d'innovation graphiques. Graff compte actuellement une trentaine de membres.

Mais si Graff est un lieu de regroupement, c'est, de plus en plus, un centre de rayonnement. Certes, ce sont les œuvres des membres de l'Atelier qu'on expose en priorité. On s'efforce cependant d'accueillir des «artistes de passage», des non-membres auxquels on prête les presses. On s'attache à accueillir des artistes provenant du milieu anglophone de Montréal, des artistes provenant d'autres villes que Montréal ou encore vivant à l'extérieur du Québec, à l'étranger ou dans une autre province. Pour ces derniers, les conditions d'accueil sont les suivantes: l'Atelier fournit logement et fournitures (papier, encre, acides, peinture, etc.) en échange de quelques exemplaires de chacun de leurs tirages. C'est sur cette base que Pierre Ayot envisage de recevoir régulièrement des graveurs de Winnipeg, de Vancouver, et peut-être même certains graveurs américains et européens: un projet à suivre. Bien plus, Pierre Ayot songe à élargir encore le champ des activités de Graff. Ne se propose-t-il pas d'organiser, l'été, des spectacles (concerts, mimes, etc.) dans la cour qui est derrière l'immeuble? Demain, sans doute, faudrait-il ajouter, à la suite de la raison sociale *Graff, centre de conception graphique*, le terme *culturel*. Ce terme serait d'autant moins injustifié que les activités d'ensemble de Graff contribuent depuis longtemps à animer la vie du quartier qui entoure la galerie.

Au delà du style, une grande fraternité

On doit ce petit miracle à deux personnes qui s'occupent de la gestion et de l'administration quotidienne de l'Atelier: Madeleine Forcier et Pierre Ayot. Bien entendu, les membres de l'Atelier sont loin d'être étrangers au développement que connaît la Galerie puisque c'est ensemble qu'ils préparent les expositions (encadrement, accrochage, etc.), qu'ils décident des orientations générales de Graff (choix des expositions, appui aux projets d'échange) et qu'ils participent à la sélection des futurs membres.

Peut-on parler d'un *style* au sujet de Graff? D'après Pierre Ayot, peut-être une tendance pop existait-elle, il y a quelques années. Ce n'est plus vrai aujourd'hui. La plupart des tendances contemporaines se côtoient sans trop de froissements à l'Atelier: gestuel, conceptuel, réaliste, ... Cependant une double exigence commune demeure: qualité et originalité. Ainsi, cette double exigence relie les membres de l'Atelier par delà leurs conceptions artistiques, même quand celles-ci sont diamétralement opposées. Selon Pierre Ayot, les membres de Graff parlent rarement d'art entre eux. La conversation, quand elle a lieu, n'engage pas plus de deux personnes. En revanche, l'entraide technique est à la source de la fraternité qui lie les artistes de Graff. L'un des rôles fondamentaux de Pierre Ayot est de maintenir vivante cette fraternité, voire de l'élargir au delà des frontières du Québec. Il s'agit d'un travail d'animation patient et généreux qui explique un peu pourquoi Pierre Ayot n'a pas été plus présent, ces dernières années, sur les cimaises des galeries de Montréal et d'ailleurs.

ed under other, more acceptable titles, at the Canadians pavilion at Osaka a few years later. After so much energy voluntarily expended to bring about a new reality for artists and the public, the discouraged members of the group dispersed. The field of art is closed and, as soon as it tries to be critical or profitable, it comes up against the convenient prejudices of subversion or commercialization — all things in which artistic practice is rigged out as soon as it crosses the barriers of the myth of art in order to centre on a concrete reality. Artists having been sent back to their studios, the principle of everyone for himself necessarily takes over, and questioning on their practice, on their conditions of production, on relationship with social and cultural matters, no longer has reason to exist on the collective level. Formal codes proper to art for the elite can then be transformed with much greater difficulty because it is a matter here not only of giving access to elitist art to a greater section of society, but of producing, in terms of their concrete situation, significant images. Sensitizing to art is not a Utopia: in 1976-1977 the Canadian public's demand for chromos produced a revenue of 75 million dollars. These chromos, manufactured abroad, offer for the government the advantage of paying thirty per cent in ad valorem tax. Now, not one cent of this money is reinvested in a sector such as engraving. "The slogan 'Canadian content' preached by Ottawa," said Richard Lacroix, "seems to be valid only when it does not interfere with the government revenue from the taxes that are generated"¹².

The questions relative not only to the organization of production and distribution but also to ideology and economics are fundamental when we analyse the respective situations of Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques and Guilde Graphique, otherwise the artistic practice of the engravers is totally immaterial and ill-timed if it hides these questions; or else if it operates on them it is accused of subversion or commercialization by those who are unaware of the real problems that underlie it. For Richard Lacroix, the Atelier Libre and the Guilde Graphique exist in 1978 for the following reasons: for the producer of art, the engraving offers unique possibilities in the creation of images and in the democratization of art, due to the very wide distribution peculiar to this medium.

1. Through his stay in the United States in the forties, Hayter also had a determinative but direct influence on the training of American engravers: "His (Hayter's) impact on American printmaking — the first generative push since Whistler — resulted in the spreading of American art through prints rather than painting." (A. Hyatt Mayor, *Prints and People*, New York, 1971)
2. *La Presse*, May 1966.
3. The Arts Council would join the Ministry of Cultural Affairs from 1965: in this way the ALRG would receive from these two organizations annual grants which would go from \$6,000 to \$11,000 between 1965 and 1977.
4. *La Presse*, Saturday, May 22, 1965.
5. Paul Gladu, *L'Art et le beau travail des jeunes créateurs d'aujourd'hui*, in *Le Petit Journal*, May 1, 1966.
6. Yves Robillard, *Historique de Fusion des Arts*, in *Quebec Underground*, Montreal, Éditions Médiart, 1973, Vol. 1, p. 181.
7. The Arts Council would allot annually until 1970 a sum equal to that granted by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, an average of \$7,000 a year. In 1970, the Art Bank took over by its purchases from the Guilde. Actually, it would buy, annually, only the total of \$900, which amounts to a purchase of \$12 a year for each of the seventy Guilde artists and to a net revenue for each of \$3.67.
8. Now, in 1977, which school displays other than conventional images and full reproductions? An investigation by a group of UQAM professors into the teaching of the plastic arts in the schools emphasizes the fact that only a few privileged English schools, like St. George's, exhibit engravings of all kinds as naturally as chromos are hung in French private schools. On the other hand, in several francophone public schools visual arts productions created by the students are posted in the halls, but they appear marginal because the whole school system places no value on education in art.
9. *Toronto Star*, May 20, 1967.
10. Statements collected and summarized by Y. Robillard. See the Catalogue de l'Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques, 1965.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Interview, December, 1977.

GRAFF, A CENTRE OF GRAPHIC CONCEPTION AND . . . A LITTLE MORE

By Bernard LEVY

Auctions of contemporary art works are blossoming out all over in Montreal. It seems that the movement (because it is one) was begun by Graff a little more than two years ago. *Mardi Graff auctions* attract a crowd of amateurs that each time is more numerous (two or three hundred, difficult to estimate). These are *young* buyers (from thirty to forty years of age). Naturally, they are animated by the prospect of acquiring quality engravings at an affordable price (generally less than

one hundred dollars).

It is also partly due to the money from the auctions that it has been possible to entirely reconstruct the building which houses Atelier Graff. It is easily understood why the artists of the gallery have not been much in evidence in the last two years, the period of renovation. This has not been true in the last few months.

Certainly, auction sales and exhibitions have contributed to publicizing Atelier Graff and its artists. But Graff is more than simply a gallery. As Pierre Ayot, the director, explains, this is fundamentally a centre of graphic conception and, perhaps, already a bit more — a genuine little cultural centre.

It all began in 1966. There was a strike at the School of Fine Arts. In order to continue working, the students and the professors of the class in engraving set themselves up temporarily at 848 Marianne St., thus creating Atelier Libre 848. It was a cellar: but *underground* art was not yet in fashion . . .

At a fee of \$15 a month, the students could take the courses given at Atelier; they could also use the presses. After the strike, Atelier Libre did not close: a contribution of \$15 a month allowed one to become a member. Between 1966 and 1969 a first nucleus of some ten artists formed around Pierre Ayot. Among these were to be noted Tib Beament, Lise Bissonnette, Gilles Boisvert, René Derouin, Madeleine Morin, Francine Simonin, Serge Tousignant and Robert Wolfe.

It was necessary to quickly determine an orientation for this group and choose a name that better suited its new definitions. It was René Derouin, it seems, who suggested the name which is well known to-day: GRAFF. It best answered the general definition that had been retained: centre of graphic conception.

More than a Workshop

In fact, Graff does not intend to be considered a workshop devoted exclusively to engraving, although among many artists and visitors it is particularly identified as such. The members work on visual expression under other aspects: photography, advertising, posters, objects, etc. Graff also presents itself as a training centre where courses are given: the sessions last twelve weeks (\$140), with four hours per class, one evening a week. The groups are restricted to twenty pupils. This activity allows certain artists to live or to survive. But who are the pupils? Is there not competition with the establishments where graphic arts are taught? For Pierre Ayot, Graff does not compete with the University of Quebec, the CEGEP's or the professional schools. "At the Atelier," he says, "we are concerned with initiating the people who want to better know the techniques of engraving (serigraphy, etching, lithography, linocutting, etc.). We offer improvement courses or complementary courses to young artists who already have a general education in plastic arts but who prefer to express themselves through engraving; they come to us to learn methods which they do not yet know. This apprenticeship lets them avoid disturbing the artists working at the gallery, by perpetual and too-elementary questions." We also find among the pupils who attend Atelier persons who are simply curious, who, far from seeking to obtain course credits, wish to quickly learn basic techniques. We meet, too, artists happy to discover certain recent tricks of the trade, results of original research on technical matters. And finally, among the students we find journalists, art critics, future curators of museums, . . .

But, in any case, Graff is a studio-gallery. "This is not its only raison d'être," Pierre Ayot insists. He explains: "Graff is not, for example, a gallery that lives from the sale of exhibited works; Graff intends rather to give an opportunity to artists by offering to present their production publicly. On this plan, we do not hesitate to take certain risks by exhibiting *experimental* pieces which are found nowhere else. We do not take any profit on sales. In fact, we ask engravers to give two copies of each of their prints to the Gallery." In the eyes of Pierre Ayot and the members of Galerie Graff, the fact of presenting an exhibition should be seen as a sort of complement (a necessary complement, surely) to the work of the artists. "To introduce young artists, we organize exhibitions in which appear works of engravers who are *old* and who, as they are more known, serve as *movers*. In this way they attract a public that has the pleasure of finding them and of discovering or following new talents at the same time."

What is Graff's public? Judging from the lists of purchasers (particularly those drawn up at auction sales) the profile of the *customer* is as follows: a young woman or man (from thirty to forty years of age), who acquires works on personal taste (and is neither a collector nor a speculator); who, not being very well-off, chooses engravings whose price is much below \$100; who is francophone.

If there have been few exhibitions in recent years, it is because it has been necessary to throw down the building at 963 Rachel St. and then to entirely rebuild it; an operation that has taken two years. This work has been carried on due to grants from the Arts Council (\$36,000) and to the proceeds from auction sales (\$40,000).

Regrouping and Expansion

From now on, the payment of a subscription — raised to \$25 — is no longer enough automatically to become a member. It is necessary to present a *promising* portfolio, that is, one containing works in which can be seen, besides quality and talent, an obvious interest in graphic research and innovation. At present, Graff has some thirty members.

But if Graff is a place of regrouping, it is more and more a centre of expansion. Certainly, priority in exhibiting is given to the works of the members. However, an effort is made to take in "passing artists", non-members to whom the presses are lent. An interest is taken in welcoming artists from the anglophone milieu of Montreal, artists from other cities than Montreal or even living outside Quebec, abroad or in another province. For the latter, the conditions of entry are: l'Atelier makes available lodging and supplies (paper, ink, acids, paint, etc.) in exchange for some copies of each of their prints. It is on this basis that Pierre Ayot foresees regularly receiving engravers from Winnipeg, from Vancouver and perhaps even some from the United States or Europe: a plan to be watched. Much more, Pierre Ayot is thinking of further enlarging Graff's field of activities. Does he not intend to organize, for the summer, shows (concerts, mimes, etc.) in the courtyard behind the building? To-morrow, doubtless, it will be necessary to add to the social purpose of Graff, centre of graphic conception, the term *cultural*. This term would be all the more warranted because, as a whole, Graff's activities have contributed for a long time to animating the life of the area that surrounds the gallery.

Beyond Style, Broad Fraternity

This little miracle is owing to two persons who are involved in the management and the daily administration of the Atelier: Madeleine Forcier and Pierre Ayot. Naturally, the Atelier's members are far from being strangers to the Gallery's development since it is the ensemble who prepare the exhibitions (framing, hanging, etc.), who decide Graff's general orientations (choice of exhibitions, support for exchange projects) and who participate in the selection of future members.

When speaking of Graff, can we talk of a *style*? According to Pierre Ayot, a pop tendency perhaps existed a few years ago. This is no longer true to-day. At the Atelier, most contemporary trends work side by side without too much conflict: abstract expressionism, conceptual art, realism. . . . However, a double common exigency remains: quality and originality. And so this double exigency links the Atelier's members beyond their artistic conceptions, even when these are diametrically opposed. According to Pierre Ayot, Graff's members rarely discuss art among themselves. Conversation, when it takes place, involves no more than two persons. On the other hand, mutual technical help is at the source of the fraternity that binds Graff's artists. One of Pierre Ayot's fundamental rôles is to keep this fraternal spirit alive, even to expand it beyond Quebec's borders. This involves a patient and generous work of animation that somewhat explains why Pierre Ayot's work has not been seen in recent years on the line in galleries in Montreal and elsewhere.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

ARTIST IN THREE DIMENSIONS: FRITZ BRANDTNER

By Helen DUFFY

Fritz Brandtner was an extraordinary man. A painter, teacher, lecturer, a passionate idealist who firmly believed in the irrepressible creative forces in the arts as a vital part of a society in search of national identity.

A man of strong feelings and sensitivities, he had a clear understanding of the experience which had shaped him and would put him, the European, the immigrant, into a position of either a conformist or a catalyst among Canadian artists, his contemporaries. Their struggle for freer expression and emancipation from earlier academic and social prejudice involved traditions which were not his own.

He arrived in Canada in 1928, lived in Winnipeg for six years and then moved to Montreal, which was to become his permanent home. He had just turned 40, he knew what he wanted and what he could contribute.

At the very end of his life, in 1969, his answer to the question:

"What is your definition of an artist?" was perhaps the one he would have given at any time: "The task of the contemporary artist is to release and bring into social action the dynamic forces of visual language. To accomplish this he needs a clear grasp of the social field, intellectual honesty and creative power capable of integrating experiences into plastic form."

The remarkable quality of Brandtner's influence on the evolution of Canadian art and art education are deeply rooted in his stubborn and non-yielding faithfulness to his own truth.

To be "modern" in Germany in the 1920's had meant nothing distinctive, stylistically or emotionally. The men who came of age around 1905 in Western Europe had made things new in the arts: starting out with Art Nouveau, the decade preceeding the outbreak of the First World War brought fresh starting points in swift succession and with electrifying vivacity: Expressionism, Constructivism, Futurism, the new architecture, new concepts in art education for children. Such developments created new conditions of expression on a foundation of rupture with the principle of imitation in art.

Design and Industries associations were formed uniting artists, architects, industrial designers, manufacturers and writers which, by means of publications, meetings and exhibitions worked towards an integration of the various groups and directions of the moderns.

Young men like Brandtner, whose education was interrupted by the war, returned from the prisoner-of-war and forced labour camps in 1920 to discover the existence of the Bauhaus under the directorship of Walter Gropius firmly established in Weimar.

The Bauhaus did not try to formulate a new "style" or a set of rules which could be handed down to students. Its aim was to train students to understand new needs and to create objects which truly expressed and satisfied such needs. As the result of its program and viewpoint the Bauhaus exerted a decisive influence on the formation of the modern design concept and became its centre in Europe. It was but a logical extension of its basic ideas that the Bauhaus was international in character, extending the influence beyond the boundaries of Germany.

Brandtner's life-long pursuit of creative experimentation, his investigation into a diversity of media and the intensity with which he advocated the importance of a liberal art education for young people, stem without doubt from the logic the Bauhaus approach inspired. If he had had the opportunity to participate in the actual workshops at Weimar, he would have gained a first-hand insight into the implications of the collective discipline required of its students, the frequent adverse effect submission to multi-faceted methods for artistic training produced.

Some of the students, according to Kandinsky, lived in a state of sin — working by day hard on their futuristic lamp fixtures, metal chairs and plans for urban development, to indulge secretly at night in painting portraits! Landscapes! Fritz, with his sense of humour would have been among them.

As a "self-taught" artist and educator he could devise programs for his Children's Art Centre project in Montreal, 1936-50, making use of his own interpretation of the ideology developed in Vienna at the beginning of the century by Frantz Cizek (which was to be introduced in 1919 to the Bauhaus by Colour and Form expert Johannes Itten).

Dr. Norman Bethune and Marian Scott shared with Brandtner the responsibility for this unique venture. Children growing up in Montreal's crowded slum districts had their first chance to paint, make paper toys and use their imagination freely. Brandtner, free from the doctrine of teaching — tactics the European disciples of Cizek's methods were to debate long after the dissolution of the Bauhaus, gained the respect and love he fully deserved. He would go on with his unique mission to fight for contemporary art per se, not as the European imposing the cultural inheritance of his own background, but as the Canadian, the Montrealer he had become.

His letter, for instance, in December 1959, to the Registrar's Office at McGill University, sounds like pure Bauhaus language:

"Art forces people to examine what they are seeing, and most important, what it is they are thinking."

"We cannot fully participate in modern consciousness unless we learn to appreciate the significant art of our day."

"Just because people have not learned in their youth the habit of enjoying contemporary art, they cannot share the artist's vision. I think it is the primary function of a university to send out individuals with open eyes and active sensibilities, so that what they see they may enjoy."

To-day, looking at Brandtner's paintings, drawings and sketch-books, it is easy to understand why some of these works bewildered, shocked or upset art critics and public when they were first seen forty or fifty years ago. His compositions, separated from their historical context, the abstract/expressionist camp, were incompatible with the tempered realism and lyrical prettiness people expected at that time to find in an art exhibition. Their confidence in what they believed a picture