

# L'art, une priorité urgente du développement culturel

## Art, an Urgent Priority in Cultural Development

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## **L'ART, UNE PRIORITÉ URGENTE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT CULTUREL**

L'éveil progressif à la notion de culture et à ses composantes se poursuit au Québec depuis plus d'une trentaine d'années. En dernier lieu, le Ministre d'État au Développement culturel, M. Camille Laurin, présente une réflexion significative sur des perspectives d'ensemble de la culture et sur les dimensions des futures politiques de développement. Le Livre blanc sur la politique québécoise du développement culturel prend donc la suite des nombreuses études et des autres documents publiés au cours de la dernière décennie, qui poursuivent, il me semble, un objectif commun: la reconnaissance et l'égalité de traitement qu'il faut aussi bien accorder aux secteurs culturels qu'à ceux de la vie économique.

On n'insistera jamais assez sur l'aspect global de la culture; elle comprend tous les aspects de la vie. Les auteurs du Livre blanc, qui appartiennent aux milieux de l'histoire et de la sociologie, ont certes fait preuve de générosité humaine et d'esprit positif mais ils n'ont, toutefois, pas su éviter entièrement les pièges que pose toute recherche de solutions idéales. En culture, comme ailleurs, il faut faire des choix, et seules les solutions réalistes ont un certain avenir.

Il est bien exact que les Québécois font et feront leur culture. En accord, avec les définitions actuelles de la culture, ils l'ont toujours fait. Mais cette culture est nourrie de tellement d'apports qui la fécondent et l'enrichissent, particulièrement à l'âge de l'information boulimique, que sa vitalité créatrice dépend de la liberté d'accès à toutes ses sources et du développement de l'esprit critique, sans lesquels il n'y a point de progrès véritable. A l'heure actuelle, la culture québécoise, comme toute culture, appartient à la civilisation universelle, fondée sur l'équité, la reconnaissance mutuelle et la coopération planétaire. Conséquemment, elle est engagée, en premier lieu, dans la voie de la solidarité, de la conquête spirituelle et de l'avancement intellectuel.

A propos du développement culturel, les auteurs du Livre blanc ont eu raison de rappeler quelques-unes des positions préconisées par M. René Maheu, l'ancien directeur général de l'Unesco. M. Maheu fut une des plus grandes voix de la culture de notre époque. Il a suscité le respect et l'admiration de tous parce qu'il incarnait ce que doit être un véritable homme de culture. D'abord et au-dessus de tout, il aimait croire à la suprématie de l'esprit dans l'histoire et faire appel à la conscience de l'homme pour construire «un avenir universel de paix et de progrès fondé sur la seule solidarité humaine, qui transcende les différences et les oppositions». Aussi, les auteurs du Livre blanc, qui souhaitent sans aucun doute une meilleure cohésion de tous les efforts en vue du plein épanouissement de la vie culturelle, n'hésitent-ils pas à proposer des moyens d'action et de recherche à l'échelle des régions, ce qui coïncide avec notre curiosité et notre besoin de découverte, et qui, de plus, montre l'urgence de favoriser l'éducation artistique chez les enfants et même chez les adultes.

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Dans l'élaboration du cahier, *Sherbrooke et les environs*, que renferme le présent numéro de *Vie des Arts*, nous avons voulu souligner l'intérêt et la diversité des éléments créateurs qui sont actuellement à l'œuvre dans cette région du Québec, et il nous a semblé important d'inviter les initiateurs de l'élan dynamique sherbrookois à présenter leur propre conception d'un phénomène en plein épanouissement. Grâce à ces pages documentaires, nos lecteurs connaîtront un peu mieux, nous l'espérons, les artistes de l'Estrie et leurs œuvres. Après quoi, ils souhaiteront sans doute suivre de plus près l'art qui s'y pratique et qui dépasse le cadre de la région.

Andrée PARADIS

# TEXTS IN ENGLISH

## ART, AN URGENT PRIORITY IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

by Andrée PARADIS

The progressive awakening to the conception of culture and to its constituents has been going on in Quebec for more than thirty years. Recently, Dr. Camille Laurin, the Minister of State for Cultural Development, presented significant thoughts on the prospects of the whole of culture and on the dimensions of future policies of development. The White Paper on the Quebec policy of cultural development therefore takes over the many studies and other documents published during the last decade which, it seems to me, pursue a common objective: the recognition and the equality of treatment that must be as much accorded to the cultural sectors as to those of economic life.

We can never emphasize enough the global aspect of culture; it encompasses all facets of life. The authors of the White Paper, who belong to historical and sociological circles, have certainly displayed human generosity and a positive spirit, but yet they have not been able to avoid entirely the pitfalls set by all research for ideal solutions. In culture, as elsewhere, it is necessary to make choices, and only realistic solutions have a sure future.

It is very true that Quebecers make and will make their culture. According to present definitions of culture, they have always done so. But this culture is fed by so many contributions that fertilize and enrich it, particularly in the age of unending information, that its creative vitality depends on freedom of access to all its sources and on the development of the critical spirit, without which there is no real progress. At present, Quebec culture, like all culture, belongs to universal civilization, founded on impartiality, mutual recognition and world co-operation. Consequently, it is committed, first of all, to the path of solidarity, spiritual conquest and intellectual advancement.

With regard to cultural development, the authors of the White Paper were right to mention some of the positions advocated by Mr. René Maheu, the former director general of UNESCO. Mr. Maheu was one of the greatest voices in the culture of our time. He aroused the respect and admiration of all because he personified what a true man of culture should be. First and above all, he believed in the supremacy of the mind in history and appealed to man's awareness to build "a universal future of peace and progress founded on the only human solidarity, which transcends differences and antitheses." Therefore the White Paper's authors, who doubtless wish for better cohesion of all the efforts with a view to the full expansion of cultural life, do not hesitate to propose means of action and research at the scale of regions, which coincides with our curiosity and our need for discovery, and which, further, demonstrates the urgency of encouraging artistic education among children and even among adults.

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In the preparation of the section *Sherbrooke et les environs* in the present issue of *Vie des Arts* we have attempted to emphasize the interest and diversity of the creative elements that are presently at work in this region of Quebec and it has seemed important to us to invite the initiators of the dynamic Sherbrooke élan to present their own conception of a phenomenon in full bloom. Thanks to these documentary pages, our readers will, we hope, be a little better acquainted with the artists of the Eastern Townships and their works. After which they will want, certainly, to follow more closely the art that is being practised there and which goes beyond the framework of the area.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

## ART IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS BETWEEN 1815 AND 1940

By Richard MILOT

At the time they were populated, the Eastern Townships were bordered on the north and east by the former seigneuries of the banks of the St. Lawrence and the Chaudière; on the west by those of the Yamaska and the Richelieu; on the south by a disputed and

debatable frontier, so great is the division produced by the Appalachians and by the extension of some lakes and rivers into the United States. Incidentally, the people who first settled there were similar in every way to those who had come to Canada after the American Revolution. The Townships, therefore, were still in great part to be explored when American Gilbert Hyatt came to settle at the junction of the St. Francis and Magog rivers, at the place where later the city of Sherbrooke was to arise, then known as Hyatt's Mills.

The lack of a natural border between the townships and Vermont must be remedied, wrote Joseph Bouchette in *A Topographical Description of the Province of Lower Canada*, which appeared in London in 1815. Under François Baillargé this surveyor had received the artistic training that allowed him to record, with great sensitivity, the first views of the region. It was chiefly his sketches or, perhaps, also those of his son Robert Shore Milnes, published in 1836 by the British American Land Company under the title of *Views in Lower Canada . . .*, that by their subject revealed Sherbrooke as this new territory's center of development and Stanstead as adjacent village; through their simplicity of composition, arranged according to the moderation of a common Loyalist architecture, they invited new immigrants to come and fill the empty spaces.

During four voyages to America between 1836 and 1852, William Henry Bartlett produced a series of sepias and water-colours. From 1840, some of these appeared as monochrome prints; American N. P. Willis wrote the texts of the installments, joined later in two volumes and published in London in 1842 under the title *Canadian Scenery Illustrated*.

Bartlett's style belongs to the English Romanticism in which the precise reality of British topographers of the beginning of the century is clouded by a picturesque atmosphere through the choice of rural landscapes, village views and scenes from everyday life. As the area was served by the railroad only from 1852, Bartlett borrowed the former colonization roads which led from Sherbrooke to Hereford and Stanstead as well as the very new Montreal-Sherbrooke road of 1835; he immortalized their landscapes. But Bartlett had a preference for the boat that supplied him with the lakes and rivers of the district as subjects; the views of the Memphremagog, the surrounding majestic mountains, Owl's Head or Orford and the riverside villages such as Georgeville, lakes Massawippi and Orford and the confluence of the Magog and St. Francis display a romantic taste for water. But for this passing artist the landscape was always in summer.

Bartlett's influence is evident in the work of William Stewart Hunter, who came from St. John, Quebec, where he was born in 1823. In 1857-1858 he is registered in the *Canada Directory* as artist, illustrator and draughtsman living at Stanstead, then in 1875 as shoe manufacturer. He died there in 1894. Several of Hunter's drawings are collected in his 1860 publication, *Eastern Township Scenery*, in which he treats, in his own fashion, certain of Bartlett's subjects such as Lake Memphremagog, Owl's Head Mountain or Lake Massawippi. But this artist left works of more precise anecdotal character, such as his residence at Stanstead or the falls of Coaticook River.

In the same period, Jane Ann Cooke, a landscape artist, painted views of Drummondville and her husband's sawmill, which were published in the *Canadian Illustrated News* of 1875 and 1876.

It was at Sherbrooke that John A. Fraser, the British portraitist, established himself in 1857. He lived there until being employed at William Notman's photography studio in Montreal. His work, however, obliged him to travel and he gladly returned to the townships. Thus in 1862 he executed the portrait of the Honourable J. S. McCord, chancellor of Bishop's University at Lennoxville and exhibited a group of seven water-colours on landscapes of the region, at the Montreal Art Association's fifth exhibition in 1868.

During this same period there also appeared Mrs. J. Fullarton, the naive style of whose pastel portraits forbade access to official art, but who nonetheless enjoyed great popularity in Sherbrooke and the area during the second half of the 19th century.

Among the many sites of the countryside, that of the Memphremagog became, following Bartlett's visits and Hunter's publication, the preferred place of a galaxy of artists. Cornelius Krieghoff painted several canvases there. Illustrators, among whom were W. Sheuer and Frederick B. Shell, made the places famous. Itinerant painter Munsey Seymour stopped there, and the Memphremagog was one of Samuel A. Kilbourn's regional subjects, to such a point that Georgeville could be considered, during the years 1860-1870, if not as an artists' summer colony, at least as a home-port. In 1859, John Ross Dix added to the Memphremagog's reputation as a tourist spot, with the publication of *A Handbook for Lake Memphremagog*, being both its author and its illustrator; as Bertha Maud