

Graphia, un atelier vivant

Graphia

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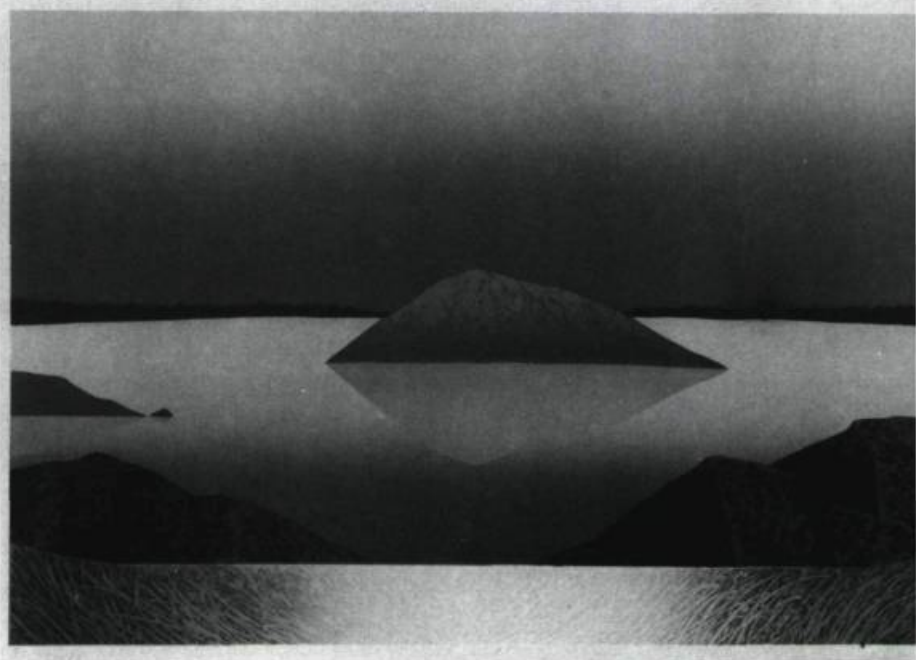
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Graphia, un atelier vivant



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Le local a déjà servi d'atelier à Albert Dumouchel et, plus tard, d'espace de rangement pour une compagnie de tissus logée à l'étage inférieur. Aujourd'hui, le deuxième étage abrite Graphia et ressemble à plusieurs greniers du boulevard Saint-Laurent revivifiés par leurs artistes-locataires. A titre d'atelier de Graphia, ce local, depuis les six dernières années, a fourni à quelque dix membres actifs un lieu de travail et logé, outre l'équipement nécessaire à la sérigraphie, deux presses lithographiques.

Sa création remonte à 1972, au moment où Ghitta Caiserman-Roth et Suzan Hudson, qui avaient travaillé ensemble au Centre Saidye Bronfman pendant plusieurs années, décidèrent qu'il leur fallait un lieu de travail indépendant de l'école pour poursuivre leurs travaux de lithographie et de sérigraphie. Au cours des années, leur présence, comme celle de Doreen Lindsay et d'Ann McCall, a assuré la continuité, alors que d'autres membres venaient à l'atelier et le quittaient.

Un roulement de cette sorte n'est pas exceptionnel étant donné la nature de l'atelier de gravure qui s'adresse, non seulement aux artistes qui travaillent exclusivement dans le domaine graphique, mais

également aux peintres et aux sculpteurs qui, à l'occasion, désirent s'exprimer dans le langage exceptionnel de la gravure. Cependant, en vue d'assurer la permanence, Graphia demande à ses nouveaux membres une cotisation initiale de \$50 dont il rembourse la moitié après six mois.

Ces frais, en plus d'une part du loyer mensuel, représentent les seuls déboursés imposés au graveur pour se joindre à Graphia. En retour, il profite des nombreux avantages du travail en commun. Voilà, bien sûr, la raison principale de l'épanouissement des ateliers de gravure auquel on assista, à Montréal, pendant les années soixante et le début des années soixante-dix, lui-même le résultat indirect de l'énergie créatrice suscitée par l'enthousiasme pédagogique d'Albert Dumouchel. Il y a quelque ironie dans le fait que la gravure, le plus démocratique des beaux-arts, en raison de sa vaste diffusion et de son prix relativement peu élevé, soit, pour l'artiste, l'un des plus dispendieux à pratiquer. Ainsi, la base de l'atelier collectif est pragmatique et passe avant toute idéologie qui pourrait influencer son avenir. Cela ne nie pas l'épanouissement, dans un tel environnement, d'un esprit commun parmi les graveurs.

1. Andrea BLANAR
Kimono, 1978.
Gravure sur bois et peinture;
58 cm 4 x 43,2.

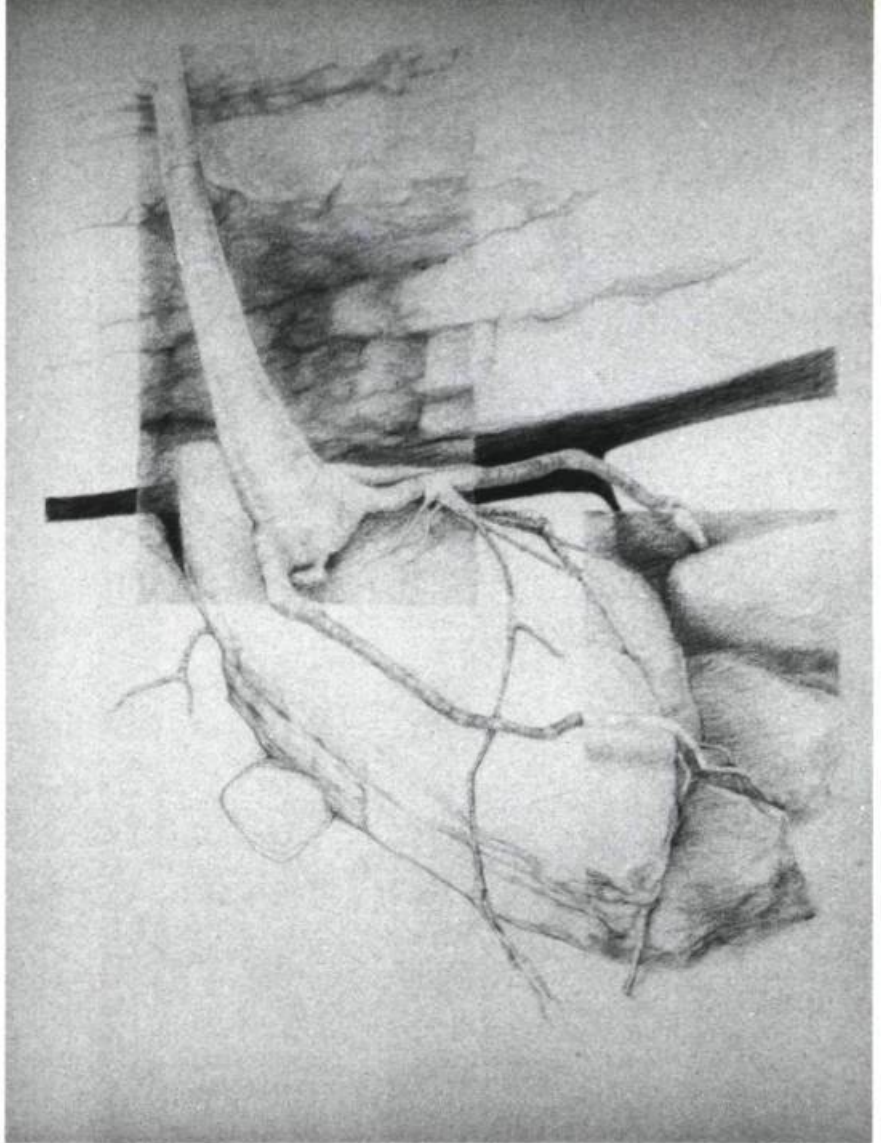
2. Ann McCALL
Rocks, 1978.
Sérigraphie: 55 cm 9 x 76,2.
(Phot. Gabor Szilasi)

3. Terence RICHARDSON
Thistle and Shadow, 1976.
Lithographie;
27 cm 9 x 38,1.
(Phot. Terence Richardson)





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Ceux qui travaillent présentement à l'atelier Graphia, un groupe qui comprend, en plus de ceux dont on a déjà parlé, Sylvia Ary, Frances Balough, Andrea Blamar, Ron Headland, Earl Preston et Pat Weyer, affirment qu'un climat d'aide mutuelle sous-tend l'activité qui règne à l'atelier. Cependant, l'esprit communautaire s'exerce dans le domaine technique plutôt que dans celui de l'esthétique. A cet égard, les membres de Graphia favorisent une approche entièrement individualiste. Ils soulignent ce fait en s'abstenant d'exposer leurs œuvres sur les murs de l'atelier et entendent ainsi conserver un environnement aussi neutre que possible. Un tout autre esprit domine concernant les questions techniques. Depuis l'achat en commun des fournitures jusqu'au tirage de la gravure, il est loisible aux membres de travailler de concert et d'échanger renseignements et ressources. Quoiqu'il ne se donne aucun cours à Graphia, le partage officieux de la maîtrise technique vaut infiniment pour les membres engagés dans toutes les étapes de la gravure, depuis la conception jusqu'à l'impression de l'œuvre.

Les aspects techniques de la gravure et l'importance concomitante accordée à la connaissance du métier permettent d'approcher au plus près la prétendue *mystique* de la gravure. Comme Ghitta Caiserman-Roth le signale, les artistes ne font pas nécessairement les meilleurs graveurs, car, si, en général, on considère encore le métier d'artiste comme essentiel à la gravure, les peintres ont tendance à se refuser à cette conception. Bien que, personnellement, Caiserman-Roth juge la technique secondaire à l'image, elle estime que ce médium est un diable qui ne s'exorcise que par une connaissance intime de la technique.

D'autres membres de Graphia adoptent des attitudes diverses à l'égard de la connaissance du métier. En général, cependant, ils admettent que son importance dépend, du moins en partie, des exigences du marché et de l'assurance que doit avoir l'acheteur qu'aucun des exemplaires d'un tirage est supérieur aux autres.

Une autre considération existe, celle de la nature du travail de chacun des graveurs. Ainsi en est-il des sérigraphies d'Ann McCall, dont l'effet repose sur une subtile nuance des tons, et pour les-

4. Ghitta CAISERMAN-ROTH

Love on a trapeze, 1977.
Lithographie.

5. Frances K. BALOGH

Moving Tree #2, 1977.
Crayon; 55 cm 9 x 76,2.

6. Susan HUDSON

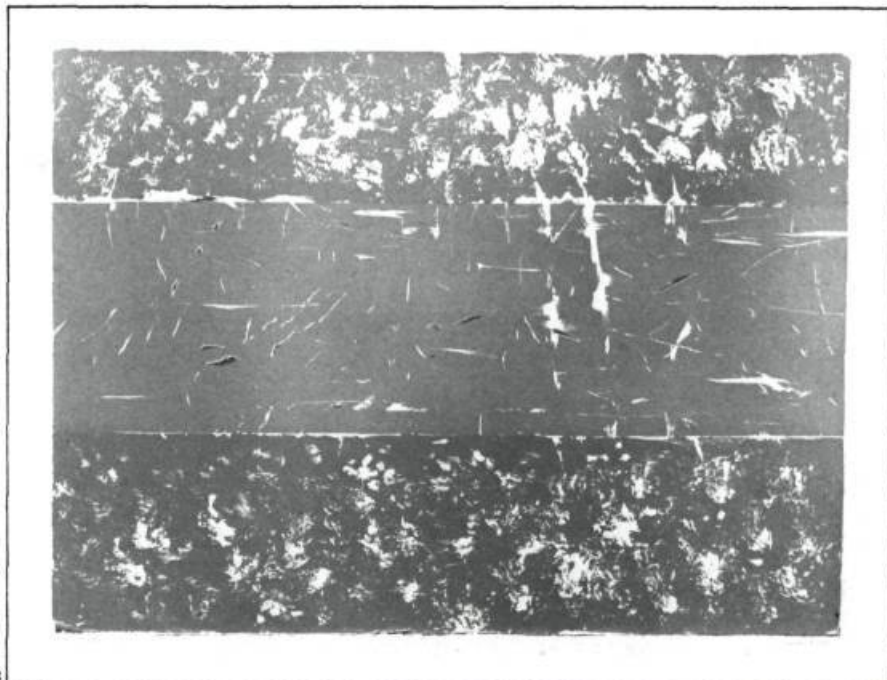
David, 1978.
Eau-forte; 40 cm 6 x 35,6.

7. Doreen LINDSAY

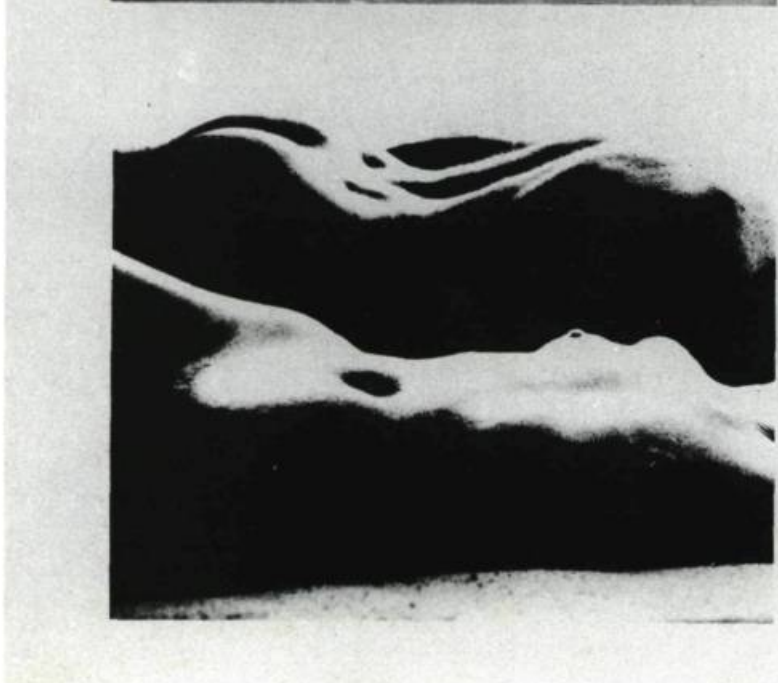
Conception, 1976.
Photo-lithographie sur papier
d'Arches; 76 cm 2 x 55,8.
(Phot. Gabor Szilasi)

8. Ron HEADLAND

Green Centre, 1978.
Sérigraphie;
64 cm 8 x 81,3.
(Phot. Gabor Szilasi)



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quelles il est indubitable qu'une maîtrise précise des procédés est de première importance. A l'opposé, on retrouve les gravures d'Andrea Blonar. Elle réunit les techniques traditionnelles — gravure sur bois, lithographie et sérigraphie — à des effets de monotype très variables où l'accident devient un élément essentiel. Son attitude plus libre à l'égard des variantes qui existent d'une gravure à l'autre dérivent de ses études au Japon où les irrégularités sont considérées comme des preuves de la relation dynamique de l'artiste avec son œuvre.

Même si des styles multiples se rencontrent à l'Atelier Graphia, on peut, cependant, y discerner certaines affinités. Ainsi, tous, à l'exception de Ron Headland, ont adopté une forme quelconque de la figuration, malgré les différences d'interprétation.

Headland, également peintre et musicien, produit des sérigraphies dans lesquelles il explore des harmonies chromatiques voisines, en divisant le plan pictural en rectangles de couleur mate. De petites taches de couleur contrastante, appliquées au hasard, animent la surface, en suggérant la texture de graffiti sur un mur lépreux.

C'est, peut-être, Sylvia Ary qui utilise le plus directement le médium de la lithographie dans ses gravures d'acteurs en noir et blanc. Les noirs possèdent une texture riche et veloutée, et la touche est sûre et spontanée. Elles suggèrent la douce mélancolie du demi-monde de l'acteur où se mêlent pour un instant la fantaisie et la réalité.

Dans leur travail en lithographie et en sérigraphie, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth et Susan Hudson ont en commun le goût d'une figuration où domine la fantaisie. Par des images et des perspectives multiples, chacune crée un monde de rêve. Elles partagent également un grand intérêt pour le dessin, ce qui transparait dans la qualité graphique de leur œuvre.

Hudson utilise également l'image photographique dans ses gravures, mais l'allie à des formes dessinées pour obtenir un effet de collage. Doreen Lindsay est la seule qui s'applique exclusivement aux techniques de la photographie. Ses lithographies-photos, intitulées *J'existe*, constituent un essai autobiographique qui traite des expériences féminines de la conception, de la grossesse, de la maternité et de la curieuse relation symbiotique entre mère et fille.



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Le paysage et la flore inspirent les gravures de Pat Weyer, d'Earl Preston et de Francis Balough. Weyer exécute, dans des harmonies expressionnistes, des représentations simples de plantes, et Preston, des lithographies en couleur construites d'après des formes tirées du paysage, abstraites de leur contexte et autrement disposées. Balough dessine au crayon lithographique des formes tirées du paysage et les allie à des sérigraphies rectangulaires de ton plat. Dans une autre veine, ses sérigraphies-photos *Doll's House* utilisent des formes décoratives unies et de violents contrastes de couleur.

Le paysage fournit également la base des compositions sérigraphiques d'Ann McCall. Il ne constitue, cependant, qu'un point de départ pour sa vision infiniment abstraite et raffinée, remarquable par les très subtiles gradations de couleur qu'elle en tire.

Kimono, une série de gravures produites par Andrea Blonar avec divers médiums, exploite les effets puissants de la couleur et de la texture. Combinaison de médiums et utilisation d'une seule composition, son travail oscille véritablement entre la gravure et la peinture.

Le fonctionnement d'un atelier collectif comme Graphia et les gravures produites par ses membres ne représentent qu'une étape d'une longue marche qui débute avec le recrutement de membres, pour atteindre son point culminant dans la recherche d'un public. Les institutions d'enseignement anglo-

phones, telles l'Université Concordia et le Centre Saidye Bronfman qui possèdent toutes deux des programmes d'étude de la gravure, représentent pour Graphia une source de nouveaux membres. Caiserman-Roth et Hudson ont enseigné dans ces deux écoles, poursuivant ainsi la tradition pédagogique de Dumouchel avec qui Caiserman-Roth a étudié.

En plus de vendre leurs gravures par l'entremise des marchands qui les représentent, les membres de Graphia ont senti l'importance d'éduquer le public à l'égard des procédés de la gravure. A cette fin, l'atelier tient, chaque année, un week-end à porte ouverte pendant lequel les artistes font des démonstrations et le public peut acquérir des gravures. En hommage à l'esprit communautaire qui anime Graphia, chaque graveur remet à l'atelier un pourcentage sur le produit de ses ventes.

L'idée d'atelier collectif est ancienne puisqu'elle remonte, sous diverses formes, au Moyen âge et même plus tôt. Les ateliers modernes de gravure que l'on a vus surgir au Québec pendant les dernières années, à la suite de la renaissance virtuelle de la gravure dans la province, ont repris une vieille tradition à laquelle ils ont ajouté un esprit d'entreprise et une flexibilité modernes. Tout n'est peut-être pas rose pour la gravure, mais l'enthousiasme et la ténacité de groupes comme Graphia attestent de sa fondamentale bonne santé.

(Traduction de Marie-Sylvie Fortier-Rolland)
English Original Text, p. 100

9. Earl PRESTON
Compedium, 1978.
Lithographie;
55 cm 9 x 76,2.
(Phot. John Macdonald)

10. Sylvia ARY
Actors in a Window, 1977.
Lithographie;
38 cm 1 x 55,9.
(Phot. John Peyman)

Denis Langlois — Meticulous Hyperralism

Professor at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, Denis Langlois, who previously tried action painting and geometric painting, to-day presents hyperralist canvases done with great meticulousness from photographs that he does not reproduce in their entirety. He uses certain details of a photograph to combine them with parts of other photographs. An overlapping which owes nothing to chance or to accident, but from whose ensemble emanates an atmosphere of solitude, of silence and of peace.

Richard Langevin — Fundamental Structures

Well-known as a creator and animator, still a student at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi after spending the year 1975 at the University of Quebec at Montreal, Richard Langevin is one of the most active artists of the area. At the age of twenty-three, he has already taken part in several productions: shows and murals, organizations of exhibitions, . . . Graphic artist at *Focus*, the cultural magazine published at Chicoutimi, it was he who set up the Galerie de l'Arche and directed the serigraphy workshop of this gallery.

While his first works are based on minimal art, in 1976 he went into research in structures, working with pieces of building wood that he juxtaposed. Four pieces 4 by 4 inches resting on four blocks 8 by 8 by 16 inches placed on one of their edges create an unstable balance, and in these elementary structures the instability is visual and real at the same time. The sculptures contain a virtual movement, since the slightest shifting would unbalance them. From the same eight pieces of wood, certain variants almost defy the laws of gravity. Self-supporting and stable, the sculpture is in equilibrium, an equilibrium arising from the relationship of weight and the position that each of the parts occupies in the whole. Move one piece: the ensemble collapses. The interest of the works does not lie in its components, insignificant in themselves, nor in the form which comes from the assembly of them, but in the structural system: the relationship and equilibrium of the parts.

Richard Langevin also uses spruce billets (*pitoune*), a material which is an integral part of the culture of the local inhabitants¹. Assembled, piled up, grouped, these billets are used for environments in which they lose their identity while taking part in the abstract reconstitution of a forest through the arrangement of little ensembles of billets. Langevin hopes to produce a project in the forest: in a sector of a mountain side, he would remove the trees which did not belong on previously traced straight lines. Only the aligned trees would remain, cut to a certain height from the ground, in such a way that all the ends of the cut trunks would thus be on a same horizontal level for the viewer positioned at the top of the slope. This horizontal plan would visually contradict and re-erect, so to speak, the incline of the land.

Although he has produced few works, Langevin commands attention by the unusualness of his temperament and by his predilection for contemporary experiments centred on a renewed Constructivism.

Denys Tremblay — Gritting Hyperrealism

One of the most productive artists of the region, Denys Tremblay has become known through his environments generally considered macabre, in character undeniably spectacular and theatrical. His first exhibition took place in 1969 (at the age of sixteen!) even before he entered Laval University. At that time he presented degenerate, dazed or haggard figures that forced the viewer to reflect on the conditions imposed on man. The themes of death, fear and alienation were already established, such as we shall find them later in his work.

An environment, *Québec, Octobre 1970*, presented at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi in 1972, commemorates the October crisis that shook Quebec in 1970. Denys Tremblay wished to express the confusion felt at the violation of the rights of the individual. This he did by the expedient of a skeletal dying person lying on a fleur-de-lys flag, at his last gasp, vomiting blood while a sound tape transmits the news bulletin announcing the War Measures Act. This is very far from decorative art: to Denys Tremblay, art must be *the awakening of conscientiousness*.

The second environment, *Saloon funéraire* (sic), speaks ironically on the business of death. A dead body lying in a coffin surrounded by all the gadgets connected with the exposing of the deceased² sets forth the exploitation of Quebecers all the way to death³. All the accessories belonging to the dead are there: upholstered coffin, prie-dieu, candlesticks, aspergillum, floral wreaths, messages of condolence, . . . and cards of sympathy from friends, neighbours, employers, . . . giving information on the life of the deceased. In a context that is almost more real than the genuine, the objects, stripped of all aesthetic qualities, presented in a neutral way, take part in a biting satire on our funeral customs.

In 1975, *Obsession Beach*, a work of the same type as the preceding ones, shows a man in a bathing suit taking a sun bath, while the sound of the sea is heard and a little farther along other mannequins hanging by their feet imperceptibly move arms and legs while a loud-speaker delivers a contentious speech. The setting of these two groups in strong contrast is opposed to the beautifying art that camouflages the problems of our society.

Attacking excessive consumption, in 1975 Tremblay created *Cylindre de la consommation*, in which the viewer is invited to move about. His stroll is impeded by tighter and tighter strong bands of rubber, at the same time as advertising messages are beamed at him which encourage him to buy always more: the difficulty experienced by the spectator in forcing his way in the cylinder is intended to make him aware of the hellish cycle in which one who consumes while falling constantly into debt is trapped without end.

When I met Tremblay last spring he was finishing up his last environment, *Salon québécois contemporain*. At first sight there was nothing disturbing about this *salon*. Rather conventional, it could exist in reality. It is the praise of the Phony, the praise of the *plastic-imitator*. Everything in it is Phony. Everything in it is imitation. Phony wood, phony bricks, phony stones, phony beams *suspended* at the phony ceiling (instead of supporting it). Phony bearskin of plush. Phony gilding on the lamps. Phony plants. Phony fireplace. Phony fire⁴. Phony cushions decorated with phony leopard skin. Phony carpet imitating a lawn. Phony satin worn by the figures. Phoniness carried to its paroxysm. But each element certainly belongs to reality, and Tremblay's mockery is aimed at the imitation in plastic of natural materials and at the use made of it with the intention of deceiving. (However, the imitations deceive no one!). In itself, plastic is a material like any other, to the extent to which it is presented as what it is, in all its truth. Tremblay shows with this environment how much contemporary man has lost the meaning of what is true, how much Phoniness constantly besets him, how man so easily accepts this deception, how he lives in a phony Walt Disney or Marcus Welby "wonderful world".

Denys Tremblay's works, done with a care that reveals the artist's involvement, have their place in an artistic approach that bears first of all on content. Conceived with the purpose of popular education, they can be broken down and easily exhibited, not only in galleries and museums but also at agricultural fairs, shopping centres, etc. Demonstrating a desire for the democratization and the demystification of art, they first incite to laughter but, especially, to social and political thought.

Trickery, fraud, bitter sarcasm, black humour and harsh irony serve a sharp denunciation of absurd situations and behaviour. Phony-real funeral parlour. Phony-real Quebec living room. Hyper-reality that leads us to believe, at first sight, in a soothing reconstruction. Here it is the Phony that is true. Redundancy, accumulation, excess and transgression set up a cruel game made of parody, complexity and ambiguity: the Phony is the genuine and the genuine is the Phony. It is impossible to distinguish the genuine from the Phony. Where does one begin? Where does the other end?

1. In the Saguenay-Lake St. John region, the forest is never far away! (In the literal and figurative sense).
2. When the deceased gives "his last party", as Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *L'Amérique au jour le jour*.
3. Statistics prove that it is more expensive to die in Quebec than anywhere else in North America.
4. The Phony fireplace's Phony fire is placed on the lintel while in the fireplace a real television set shows the image of a real (?) fire in a fireplace. Is this over-doing it in order to better serve his purpose? Tremblay feels that, in this environment, it is necessary. Proof by the absurd or Phony purpose?

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

GRAPHIA

By Diana NEMIROFF

Once the studio of Albert Dumouchel, and later a storage area for a fabric company downstairs, the third floor which now houses Graphia is like many other lofts on boulevard St. Laurent that have been revitalized by their artist-tenants. For the past six years, as the

Graphia studio, it has provided working space as well as two lithography presses and facilities for silkscreen printing for about ten active members.

The beginnings were in 1972, when Ghitta Caiserman-Roth and Susan Hudson, who had been working together at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for several years, decided they needed a space independent of the school to carry on their work in lithography and serigraphy. Their presence, as well as that of Doreen Lindsay and Ann McCall, has afforded a thread of continuity over the years as members have come and gone.

Such a turn-over is not unusual, given the nature of a printmaking studio, which caters not only to those working exclusively in the graphic media, but also to painters and sculptors, who may wish occasionally to express themselves in the unique language of the print. Nonetheless, to ensure a certain stability, it is the policy at Graphia to charge new members an initial fee of \$50, half of which is refunded after six months.

This and his share of the monthly rent is all that the printmaker pays to belong to Graphia. In return he reaps the many benefits of working in a collectivity. This, of course, is the primary reason for the flowering of printmaking ateliers seen in Montreal in the 1960's and early 1970's, itself the indirect result of the creative energies nourished by the pedagogical enthusiasm of Albert Dumouchel. It is a minor irony that printmaking, the most democratic of the fine arts by virtue of its wide diffusion and relatively low cost, is for the artist one of the more expensive to practise. Thus the basis of the group atelier is pragmatic and exists prior to any ideology that may influence its later course. This is not to deny that a communal spirit undoubtedly does flourish among printmakers in such an environment.

Those working at Graphia at the moment, a group which includes, as well as those mentioned above, Sylvia Ary, Frances Balough, Andrea Blana, Ron Headland, Earl Preston, and Pat Weyer, affirm that a philosophy of mutual assistance underlies their activity at the studio. But this communal spirit prevails more in the technical than the aesthetic realm. As far as the latter is concerned, Graphia members favour a completely individualistic approach. To emphasize this, they refrain from hanging any of their work on the studio walls, trying in this way to maintain as neutral an environment as possible. Quite another spirit dominates in technical matters. From buying supplies in common to pulling the print, members are able to work in concert and share information and resources. While no courses are given at Graphia, the informal sharing of technical expertise is especially valuable where members are undertaking all the phases of printmaking, from conception through to the printing of an edition.

It is through the technical aspects of printmaking and the concomitant emphasis on craftsmanship that one comes closest to the so-called *mystique* of printmaking. As Ghitta Caiserman-Roth points out, artists don't necessarily make the best printers, for while the fine art craft is still generally considered essential in printmaking, painters have been rebelling against it. While she herself considers craftsmanship secondary to imagery, Caiserman-Roth reflects that the medium is a demon that is only exorcised through familiarity.

Other members of Graphia vary in their attitude to the question of craftsmanship, but generally agree that the importance it assumes depends at least in part on the demands of the marketplace, where the buyer must be assured that no one print in an edition is superior to any other.

The nature of the individual printmaker's work is another consideration. Clearly, with Ann McCall's serigraphs, which depend on a subtle nuancing of tones for their effect, precise control of the processes is all-important. At the opposite pole are Andrea Blana's prints. She mixes traditional techniques — woodcut, lithography and silkscreen — with highly variable monotype effects, where accident becomes an essential ingredient. Her freer approach to individual variations from print to print is a legacy of her studies in Japan, where irregularities are valued as tokens of the artist's dynamic relationship with his work.

While a multiplicity of styles prevails at Graphia, one can discern certain affinities. All except Ron Headland use some kind of figurative imagery, although the interpretations differ.

Headland, who is also a painter and a musician, produces serigraphs in which he explores close chromatic harmonies, dividing the picture plane into rectangles of flat colour. Randomly distributed small flecks of contrasting colour animate the surface, suggesting the texture of graffiti on a scarred wall.

Perhaps the most direct use of the medium of lithography is made in Sylvia Ary's black and white prints of actors. The blacks are rich and velvety, and the touch sure and spontaneous. In mood they suggest the sweet melancholy of the half-world of the actor where fantasy and reality mingle for a while.

Ghitta Caiserman-Roth's and Susan Hudson's work in lithography and silkscreen have in common the use of figurative imagery in which fantasy dominates. Through multiple images and perspectives each creates a dreamlike world. They share as well a strong interest in drawing, which is evident in the graphic quality of the work of both.

Hudson also uses photographic imagery in her prints, but mixes this with drawn forms for a collage effect. Doreen Lindsay is the only one to concentrate exclusively on photographic techniques. Her photo-lithographs, *J'existe*, are an autobiographical essay treating the feminine experiences of conception, pregnancy and motherhood, and the curiously symbiotic relationship of mother and daughter.

Landscape and plant forms inspire the prints of Pat Weyer, Earl Preston and Frances Balough. Weyer does simple portraits of plants with expressionistic overtones, while Preston's colour lithographs are built up of landscape forms, abstracted from their context and rearranged. Balough combines landscape forms drawn with lithographic crayon with flat silkscreened rectangles. In a different vein, her photo-silkscreen *Doll's House* uses decorative flat forms and dramatic colour contrasts.

Landscape, too, provides the basis of the imagery of Ann McCall's serigraphs. It is, however, merely a starting point for a highly abstract and refined vision, remarkable for the very subtle gradations of colour she achieves.

Andrea Blana's series of mixed-media prints, *Kimono*, exploit strong effects of colour and texture. Indeed, with her combination of media and use of the unique image, her work hovers between printmaking and painting.

The workings of a group studio like Graphia, and the prints produced by its members are but one step in a continuum which begins with the recruitment of members and culminates in the search for a public. With Graphia, such anglophone teaching institutions as Concordia University and the Saidye Bronfman Centre, both of which have well-developed programmes in printmaking, have been a source of new members. Caiserman-Roth and Hudson have been teaching at both schools, thereby carrying on the pedagogical tradition of Dumouchel, with whom Caiserman-Roth studied.

As well as selling their prints through dealers who represent them, the members of Graphia have felt the importance of educating the public with regard to the printmaking processes. To this end, the studio holds an open house weekend once a year, at which time demonstrations are held and the public may buy prints. In tribute to the communal spirit which lies behind Graphia, a percentage of the sales is returned to the studio by each printmaker.

In many ways the concept of a group workshop is an old one, having its roots in the Middle Ages and earlier. The modern printmaking studios, which we have seen springing up in Quebec during the sixties and early seventies in answer to the virtual rebirth of printmaking in the province, have taken from an old tradition and added to it modern enterprise and flexibility. All may not be rosy for printmaking, but the enthusiasm and tenacity of groups like Graphia attest to its essential health.

PIERRE GAUVREAU AND THE AUTOMATIST UNDERCURRENT

By Jacques RENAUD

The spectacle of the evolution of natural forms under the pressure of creative energy is a fabulous, sometimes dizzying sight. How many forms have appeared, only to disappear as if the blind play of Nature was never enough to fulfil the secret yearning that torments it? We call these destructions deluges. It is then that creative energy becomes destructive, turns inward upon itself, dreams in the rediscovered chaos of the new form it will take.

In Quebec the automatist painters were the initiators of the deluge. That order was inherent in this disorder, that there was the presence of order in this chaos of colours and forms, was certain from the time of Borduas, whose last pictures submitted to us the problem to be solved: that of the densification of elementary geometric forms.