

## Errata

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Volume 27, Number 110, March–April–May 1983

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/54374ac>

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### Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

### ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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### Cite this document

(1983). Errata. *Vie des Arts*, 27(110), 80–80.

These works on paper constitute for him the bank of ideas that others might have begun by recording in a sketchbook. Soon the flat colours of his early acrylic panels were replaced by much more varied and subtle studies of the values and intensities of some few hues. Controlling his textures so that they remained relatively uniform, colour areas faded agreeably into one another along their borders in so skillful a manner that movement and continuity seemed intertwined. The notion of colour itself as a dynamic, organically transmuting, unifying element was elaborated in landscapes that reflected an almost mystical atmosphere. In some, parts of the paper were set aflame briefly to gain particular colouristic effects; and perhaps two or three such sheets were then fixed to a single surface to form again a continuum in which the reality of worldly change played its rôle. Toward 1978 the artist returned to oils, and since then he has rarely used acrylics.

Small, lyrical jottings often in ink appeared upon his coloured pencil drawings and became more fully articulated, finding their way into his paintings as ambivalent codifications of trees, buildings and fantastic imaginary animals. Highly variegated, always subtle and often elegant, these markings were invariably dwarfed by the seemingly huge spaces around them. They remind us of Oriental calligraphy written upon painted surfaces to help us understand the narratives illustrated. But Picotte insists that he has had no intention to narrate.

The drawings and paintings from perhaps 1978 into 1981 tell us something quite different indeed. Whatever the size and the media of his works, whatever their colouristic inventions, in each there is a traditional setting for narrative.

Foreground, middleground and background are clearly defined. Rich and subtle colouristic developments reinforce suggestions of vast spaces, with an almost unbroken flat terrain. And within these spaces, often along or near to what may best be taken as an horizon, are very brief and delicate gestures of pen or brush, gestures that describe beings floating between Eastern calligraphy and some strangely organic creatures of the mind's eye. Despite vague inspiration from Jack Chambers (*Victoria Hospital*, 1970, was known to Picotte) and perhaps from Ted Godwin (*G. Corners*, 1964, with similarly delicately diffused colour values), the best context within which to place these words of Picotte is that imaginary world described during the early forties by such artists as Tanguy, Matta, and Max Ernst. The small-scaled cryptographic gestures within the spacious realms of Picotte's paintings and drawings are beings dredged up effortlessly from his subconscious imagination. His art, then, may be considered as a poetic reinterpretation of an earlier descriptive surrealism, whether or not that approach was intentional on his part.

Toward the end of 1978 Picotte's landscapes are broken by empty horizontal and vertical margins that are continuous with the empty margins of the four sides of the painting. An element of ambivalence is introduced and is repeated in many of his works to this day. In such works we may perceive either a continuous vista as if seen through windows within the canvas or the paper surface, or a series of closely related paintings upon a single surface. In some works clouds appear to drift by from one frame into the next, perhaps changing in value and intensity of colour; or waves may be seen in the same manner, again changing in their colouristic aspects. One

notices after a while that the artist often plays against continuity and spatial unity by treating each framed section as an almost independent colour composition: colour effects are treated as variations upon the landscape theme.

Within his self-imposed formats, Picotte's changing environment has had its effects. Take, for instance, the work that he accomplished while residing in Italy from the summer of 1981 into the latter part of January, 1982. Colours much hotter than before come into play in extraordinarily sensitive juxtapositions and transitions. An aspect of linear sequence seen previously rather infrequently is strengthened. Acidly clear, thin horizontal lines are positioned in frequencies that reinforce colour sequences. Whether in India ink, colour, or simply intaglio relief, these provide a new rhythmic vitality that recalls some hard-edge paintings by Kenneth Noland such as *Graded Exposure* (1967, private collection, Chicago). In the drawings this is combined with a sensitive feeling for texture recognizable in his arrangements of parallel pencil markings, and his uses of fixative to heighten surface contrasts.

Since returning to Montreal early in 1982, Michel Picotte's landscape art has proceeded through soliloquies upon remembrances of Italy to reflect the energies of Montreal's urban environment in a new series of "mindscapes". Michel Picotte seems to have come to terms with his particular artistic sensibility when he replaced the idiosyncratic creatures and jottings of his surrealistic evocations with the elegance of undulating cloud and wave motives that grew out of his Italian sojourn. Landscape became seascape and both became mindscapes. The innately calm strength of his vision continues to develop now in symbiosis with the city.

#### FRANCINE GRAVEL (suite de la page 63)

lumière et le mouvement y représentent des éléments importants, cette œuvre repose énormément sur le personnage pour donner sa pleine signification à l'impression générale, en partie insouciance et lyrique, en partie méditative.

Le caractère pensif et mystérieux de *La Belle et le chat* évoque des associations d'idées qui lient cette image aux icônes. Cette peinture montre une femme assise, vêtue de jaune, tenant un chat noir sur ses genoux et encadrée par ce qui semble être une arche ou une fenêtre peinte en tons sombres et bordée d'un décor métallique. Le diptyque *Jour de fête* diffère des œuvres mentionnées précédemment. L'artiste y décrit une scène de carnaval, comprenant de nombreux personnages, des couleurs claires, des ballons qui flottent dans l'air. On note cependant que l'expression des visages n'est pas aussi gaie que les couleurs, les activités, comme le sujet, nous porteraient à le penser.

Deux tableaux détonnent dans cette exposition. Le premier, *After the Performance*, où un homme chauve, accroupi, et son singe, sont éclairés par les feux de la rampe d'une scène vide. Cette image presque macabre est aussi inattendue dans cet ensemble que le triptyque *Summer Fantaisies*, dépeignant un pré où, sous un agréable ciel d'été, des bambins tenant des ballons et des ombrelles, sont occupés à faire des bulles et à d'autres jeux enfantins. Rien, toutefois, de ces gestes ou de ces sentiments, n'est en harmonie avec les autres œuvres de l'exposition. En fait, le diptyque nous porte à croire que l'artiste s'est obstinée à peindre un sujet qui lui est trop étranger et qui, du point de vue thématique, n'a rien à voir avec ses autres œuvres.

La réputation de Francine Gravel comme graveur en creux n'est plus à faire. «J'ai eu comme professeur Albert Dumouchel, dit-elle, et j'ai appris toutes les techniques de la gravure. J'adore l'eau-forte et j'adore les textures.» Combinant la pointe sèche, le mezzo-tinto et la gravure, elle utilise souvent deux et quelquefois même trois couleurs sur la plaque. «Mais, ajoute-t-elle, pour moi, une gravure est avant tout du noir et du blanc, que je traduis ensuite en tons. Dumouchel m'a influencé pour ce qui est de la gradation des tons.» Les gravures et les aquarelles de Francine Gravel traitent des mêmes thèmes que ses peintures. Bien que les couleurs n'y soient pas aussi denses, aussi sombres et aussi diversifiées, les personnages de Gravel y conservent un regard introspectif, préoccupé. L'artiste ne rend pas la profondeur à la façon classique. Au contraire, comme dans l'eau-forte *Tarentelle*, par exemple, son personnage principal écrase, par son échelle, les personnages d'arrière-plan, proportionnellement beaucoup plus petits.

Qu'il s'agisse de peintures à l'huile, d'aquarelles ou de gravures en creux, les

œuvres de Gravel dégagent une atmosphère, une impression unique. Elles montrent des affinités avec l'art du passé, tout en se rattachant à la société contemporaine.

1. Du 2 au 20 octobre 1982.

Bente Roed COCHRAN

(Traduction de Diane Petit-Pas)

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DU PARC**  
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#### ERRATA

Dans notre dernier numéro, il faut lire, dans la note 1 de l'article *Confrontations 82*, à la page 51, Serge Beaumont et non Pierre Bourgault, et Michel au lieu de Claude Goulet. Quant à l'illustration en couleur qui figure dans l'article sur Michel Pellus, elle s'intitule *Far-fetched Fillies* et non *Punny's Dream*. (N.D.L.R.)