

Demain plus encore qu'hier Today Even More Than Yesterday

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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DEMAIN PLUS ENCORE QU'HIER

Même ami des innovations, on peut avoir la passion de sauvegarder le patrimoine national et historique, de le faire fructifier. Le considérer non comme un poids mais comme un tremplin vers l'avenir. Une fois par année, dans les derniers jours de juin, le Québec célèbre cette notion du patrimoine en même temps que sa fête nationale. Une semaine entière est consacrée à l'inventaire et à l'appréciation de ce qui nous a été légué; c'est le temps de l'examen de l'état de conservation actuel des biens culturels et de leur mise en valeur. Bilan qui ne peut être entièrement positif tant la tâche est considérable et les moyens pour l'accomplir encore trop restreints.

C'est donc un appel à la conscience collective qui se fait afin que le public jette un regard clair sur ce passé encore mal défini mais infiniment riche par sa diversité. Risque de passéisme? Pas tellement, si on est convaincu du dynamisme qu'assurent à notre vie d'aujourd'hui la culture et les traditions d'hier. Sans toutefois perdre de vue la complexité de la notion du patrimoine qui va du plus près et s'étend aux époques les plus reculées, alors que l'homme occidental n'avait pas encore foulé le sol du Nouveau Monde. Il est intéressant d'y chercher une continuité. L'homme archaïque a assuré, pendant une longue période, sans le support de l'écriture, un patrimoine qu'il conservait en lui-même et qu'il transmettait de génération en génération. La vie moderne a considérablement érodé cette faculté de revivre par nous-mêmes les événements du passé. Il nous faut des points de repère pour satisfaire notre besoin d'enracinement. Même le jeune passé peut servir d'enseignement.

Dans le présent numéro, quelques articles témoignent, chacun à leur façon, du soin que l'on prend ici à conserver et à maintenir les traditions. Ainsi, la restauration du Château Dufresne peut surprendre par la jeunesse de l'édifice concerné et, certainement, par la qualité discutable de son architecture mais, tel quel, le Château Dufresne représente une tranche importante de la vie sociale d'un quartier, d'une époque, et mérite d'être conservé. D'autre part, le ministre des Affaires Culturelles a classé récemment les toiles que Charles Huot (1855-1930) a exécutées pour l'église du Lac Bouchette, dans la région de Chicoutimi; cette décision permettra de mieux connaître un peintre important et confirme l'intérêt que l'historien Jean-René Ostiguy accorde depuis longtemps à ces œuvres. Par ailleurs, la visite de l'Institut Canadien de Conservation ne peut que nous convaincre du rôle indispensable qu'il est appelé à jouer dans la restauration et la mise en valeur des œuvres du patrimoine. Enfin, nos artisans d'aujourd'hui demeurent-ils fidèles aux traditions d'hier, ont-ils encore ce goût du défi, cette notion de la belle technique? On retrouve, semble-t-il, dans les ateliers des artisans authentiques et, assurément, dans celui de Bernard Chaudron, à Val-David, un désir profond de retour aux formes pures.

Il aurait fallu souligner plusieurs autres aspects du patrimoine. Démontrer le succès des restaurations en cours: églises, chapelles, maisons ancestrales, ensembles architecturaux, déplorer le peu d'aide financière que reçoivent les Archives, appuyer les appels pressants du Musée du Québec pour la sauvegarde de ses collections, faire état de fouilles archéologiques récentes, parler des travaux de la Commission des Biens Culturels qui, présidée par M. Georges-Émile Lapalme, s'acharne à réclamer l'établissement de plans de sauvegarde dans les arrondissements historiques afin de faciliter la mise en œuvre des politiques de restauration.

Nous devons, toutefois, consacrer, selon notre habitude, une bonne partie de nos pages à l'art qui se fait, celui qui assurera le patrimoine de demain. Les arts contemporains s'inscrivent, eux aussi, dans cette ligne de continuité. Leur vitalité, c'est reconnu, dépend largement d'un artisanat vigoureux. Le nôtre ne manque pas de force mais de rigueur. On a pu s'en rendre compte au dernier Salon des Métiers d'Art, en décembre dernier. Il est grand temps de donner un vigoureux coup de barre de ce côté, afin de retrouver la belle simplicité. Problème d'éducation, de liaison avec le design, problème de développement des marchés et, enfin, problème de critique. En toute liberté, la critique doit être consciente de ses responsabilités. Il existe encore des critères établissant ce qui est acceptable et ce qui ne l'est pas. Ce qu'il faut viser: un climat de qualité.

Andrée PARADIS

TEXTS IN ENGLISH

such as it is, Château Dufresne represents an important section of the social life of a ward and a period, and deserves to be preserved. Then again, the minister of Cultural Affairs has recently classified the canvases that Charles Huot (1855-1930) produced for the church at Lac-Bouchette, in the Chicoutimi district; this decision will allow an important painter to become better known and confirms the interest long bestowed on these works by historian Jean-René Ostiguy. As well, the Canadian Conservation Institute's visit can only convince us of the indispensable rôle it is called upon to play in the restoration and successful showing of our heritage's works. And, finally, do our craftsmen remain faithful to-day to the traditions of yesterday, do they still have this taste for challenge, this feeling for fine technique? It seems that in the studios of genuine artisans and certainly in Bernard Chaudron's at Val-David, there is to be found a sincere desire to return to pure forms.

We ought to have emphasized several other aspects of our heritage. We ought to have shown the success of the restorations presently going on: churches, chapels, ancestral homes, architectural ensembles. We ought to have deplored the paucity of financial aid received by the Archives, supported the urgent appeals of the Quebec Museum for the safeguarding of its collections, noted the recent archaeological excavations, discussed the work of the Commission on Cultural Property which, presided over by M. Georges-Émile Lapalme, is making great efforts to publicize the establishing of safeguarding plans in the historical wards in order to facilitate the implementation of policies in restoration.

We must, however, as usual devote a large part of our publication to current art, which will assure to-morrow's heritage. Contemporary arts also form part of this line of continuity. It is recognized that their vitality depends largely on a vigorous craftsmanship. Ours is not lacking in strength, but in severity. It was possible to realize this at the last crafts exhibition, last December. It is high time to definitely steer ourselves in that direction, in order to rediscover the beauty of simplicity. This is a problem of education, of liaison with design, a problem of the development of markets and, finally, a problem of criticism. Completely free, criticism must be aware of its responsibilities. There still exist criteria establishing what is acceptable and what is not. A climate of quality must be our goal.

(Translation by Mildred GRAND)

THE CHÂTEAU DUFRESNE AND THE CONSERVATION OF THE RECENT HERITAGE

Luc d'IBERVILLE-MOREAU

The Château Dufresne, one of the most prestigious residences of Sherbrooke Street in Montreal, was recently classified a historical monument by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Province of Quebec. Located next to the Olympic Stadium, the house was built as a private residence between 1916 and 1918 by two brothers, Oscar and Marius Dufresne. Upon the death of the second of the two

brothers, the house was sold by his widow Mrs. Marius Dufresne to the Fathers of Ste Croix and it became a Catholic college. In 1957, the Fathers sold it to the City of Montreal. Between 1965 and 1968, it was occupied by the Musée d'Art Contemporain until they moved to the Expo '67 site. During the next few years, the house was left unoccupied and was heavily damaged.

In 1976, Mr. David M. Stewart, President of The Macdonald Stewart Foundation and of the Lake St Louis Historical Society visited the house and saddened by its poor condition, decided to begin its restoration. The house has since been classified a historical monument. One of the most interesting aspects of the restoration is that most of the original furniture, including the paintings and curtains, was also acquired from the Dufresne family, and when fully restored the house will be back in its original state. The Château Dufresne will become a museum of decorative arts from the second part of the 19th century till to-day.

Oscar and Marius Dufresne were intimately tied to the development of the City of Maisonneuve. Oscar was an important shoe manufacturer and an alderman of the City. Marius was the city engineer, land surveyor and also engaged in private practice. Consequently, it was natural that when they decided to build themselves a house (at the age of 41 and 32) that they chose to do so in that part of town which they knew well and in which they were so much involved. They decided also to unify their efforts under the same roof, but the house they built had two distinct and completely separate lodgings. Inspired by the Petit Trianon at Versailles, the house had approximately forty rooms, twenty in each side of the house.

If the exterior was neo-classical, the interiors borrowed, as was the fashion then, from a wide selection of styles. The bedrooms were Louis XV and Louis XVI style, the libraries were Tudor and Elizabethan, the dining-rooms were Georgian and Renaissance, both living-rooms were in the Second Empire tradition while smaller rooms had a oriental feeling as did the smoking room.

The Château Dufresne was without doubt an expensive venture for the two brothers, especially that it was built during the first world war. However, it is interesting, when looking at the archives of the Château, to compare the prices of construction with those of today. Price of construction per square foot amounted to 30 cents (compare to to-day at \$25). This was partly due to the fact that much prefabricated elements had been used. Most of the plaster moulding, fire places, decorative frescoes, inlaid floors were ordered by catalogue from American firms. However, many local craftsmen and artists worked on other details of the house. For instance, all the ceilings were decorated by Guido Nincheri, a painter who also had worked on the decoration of many churches in Montreal at that period. This element only made the house the most sophisticated residence of Montreal in that time. Nincheri had also helped to decorate the stained glass windows which were in the Jardin d'Hiver and have since been broken.

In the planning of their house, Oscar and Marius Dufresne used the services of a French architect, Jules Renard, who was employed by Marius Dufresne in his office. The Château Dufresne was to be one of four large houses which were to be erected at the four corners of Sherbrooke and Pie IX; however, the three other ones were never built. The importance of Marius Dufresne in the planning of the City of

TO-DAY EVEN MORE THAN YESTERDAY

By Andrée PARADIS

Even if one favours innovation, one can feel a deep concern for safeguarding the national and historical heritage and for fruitful encouragement. To consider it, not as a hindrance but as a stepping stone toward the future. Once a year, at the end of June, Quebec celebrates this idea of the heritage at the same time as its national holiday. A whole week is devoted to the inventory and the appreciation of what has been handed down to us; this is the time to examine the present state of the conservation of cultural wealth and drawing attention to its importance. A reckoning that cannot be entirely positive, since the task is so great and the means for accomplishing it are still too limited.

Therefore an appeal is being made to the collective conscience, in order that the public may take a hard look at this past, still badly defined but infinitely rich in its diversity. Is there a risk of over-emphasizing the past? Not so much, if we are convinced of the dynamism that the culture and traditions of yesterday assure in our life of to-day. Without, none the less, losing sight of the complexity of the notion of heritage that goes from the most recent and extends to the most remote eras, when western man had not yet set foot on the soil of the New World. It is interesting to seek a continuity in this. Ancient man, during a long period and without the support of writing, ensured a heritage that he conserved within himself and that he imparted from generation to generation. Modern life has greatly eroded this faculty of ourselves reliving the events of the past. We must have guide marks to fulfil our need for roots. Even the recent past can serve as example.

In the present issue, some articles bear witness, each in its way, to the care taken here to conserve and maintain traditions. Thus, the restoration of Château Dufresne is surprising in the youth of the building involved and certainly in the doubtful quality of its architecture but,