

## Au début des années 50 — Erta Arts graphiques et poésie

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Gilles Hénault

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# Au début des années 50

# Erta - Arts graphiques et poésie

Gilles Hénault

*Le reportage photographique est de  
Jean-Pierre Beaudin*



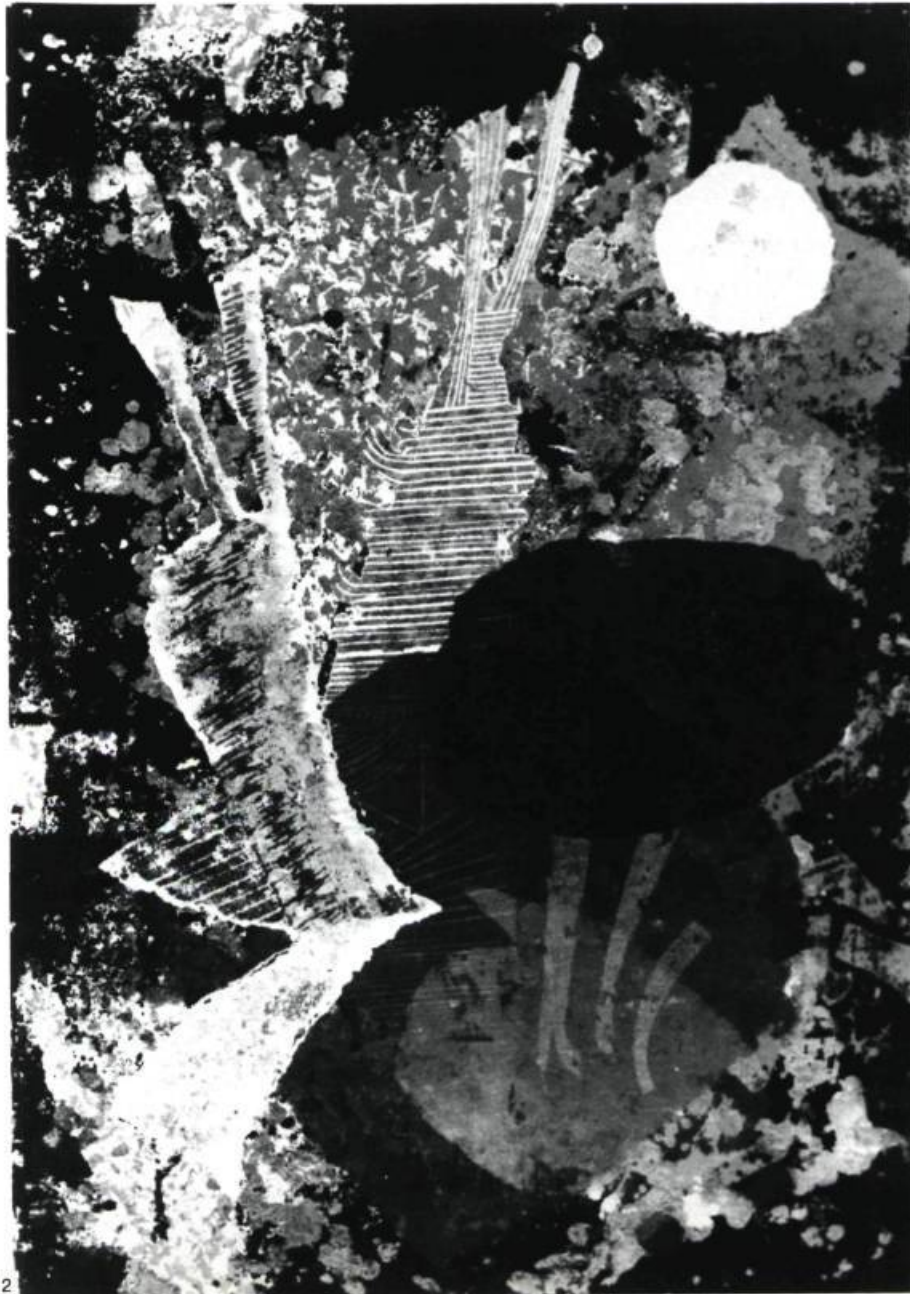
Le graveur, le typographe et le poète ont une qualité commune: ils voient l'envers des choses, sinon le monde à l'envers. C'est pour cela qu'une fois retourné, remis à l'endroit pour en faciliter la lecture, ce monde nous étonne comme s'il était le résultat d'une opération magique.

En outre, s'il est évident que la gravure et l'art typographique, comme tous les arts et artisanats, sont des activités qui rendent gloire à la main, il n'en est pas moins vrai que la poésie est également un art du faire, ce que dénote sa racine grecque: *poiësis*, soit, fabrication, *création*. Chacun à sa manière, ces trois arts donnent à voir, se répondent, se complètent: ils rendent l'objet poétique multidimensionnel. Beaucoup d'anciennes civilisations — et parmi les plus raffinées — avaient reconnues les rapports étroits et, dans certains cas, indissolubles, entre l'iconographie et l'écriture.

Ainsi, les hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens, comme on le sait, se composaient, en partie de dessins; les caractères chinois des origines se rapprochaient souvent du pictogramme; les poètes arabes organisaient parfois leurs poèmes sous forme de calligrammes. Puis, des manuscrits enluminés du Moyen âge aux livres illustrés modernes, la tradition d'une synthèse de l'écriture et de l'image est constante, bien qu'elle ait évolué. Ce sont les Chinois, sans doute, qui ont poussé le plus loin cette intégration du poème, de la calligraphie et de l'iconographie. En Occident, le pendant moderne en serait l'affiche et, particulièrement, le poème-affiche.

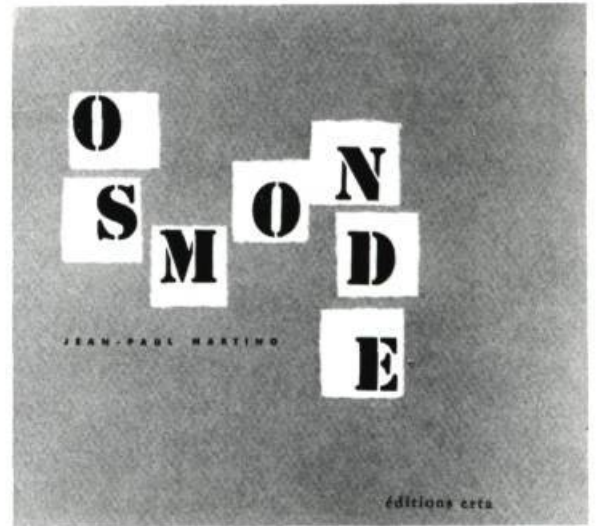
Au Québec, nous avons été long à renouer avec cette tradition. Il aura fallu, vers le début des années 50, la rencontre, chez un même homme, du typographe, du graveur et du poète: Roland Giguère. Les Éditions Erta étaient fondées.

Tout a débuté dans l'antre de la Typographie, dans cet étrange Institut des Arts Graphiques où quelques professeurs passionnés, notamment Arthur Gladu et Albert Dumouchel, se livraient à des recherches entièrement nouvelles, dans notre milieu, sur la mise en page et sur la sérigraphie. Cela devait donner naissance à deux Cahiers d'une grande originalité de présentation, qui sont comme les incunables de l'époque héroïque de l'édition d'art au Québec. Les collaborateurs de Gladu et Dumouchel, c'était les élèves: outre Giguère, il y avait Gilles Robert, Conrad Tremblay (le frère de Gérard) Ivar Labrie, etc. Cependant, pour les Cahiers, ils faisaient appel à des collaborations exté-





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1. Page couverture des Ateliers d'Arts Graphiques.

2. Jean-Pierre BEAUDIN  
*Varsole*, 1957.  
Sérigraphie.

3. Gérard TREMBLAY  
Sérigraphie tirée du *Sommeil et la neige*.

4. Anne KAHANE  
Gravure tirée de *La Vie reculée*.

5. Jean-Paul MOUSSEAU  
Dessin tiré de *Sur fil métamorphose*.

6. Albert DUMOUCHEL  
Gravure tirée de *Totems*.

7. Page de couverture d'*Osmonde*.

rieures, et j'ai été appelé à y participer, comme d'ailleurs tout le groupe des Automatistes.

Dans *Projections libérantes*, Borduas donne sa version des faits quant à cette collaboration. Il écrit: «... nous sommes aimablement invités quelques-uns — Fernand Leduc part pour Paris, Jean-Paul Riopelle y est rendu — à participer individuellement au premier «Cahier des Arts graphiques»: collaboration qui nous valut des chicanes d'amis à l'étranger. On reprocha notre manque de discernement, notre peu de rigueur et d'exigence, comme si nous eussions endossé l'entière responsabilité de tous les articles et reproductions de ce fameux «Cahier» (bien québécois, des pires bon-dieuseries à l'automatisme). Lorsqu'il s'est agi de la collaboration au deuxième numéro (No 3) projeté pour 1948, une réunion d'étude s'organise avec nos amis des Arts graphiques où il est décidé de la participation de chacun de nous. L'on promet de grouper nos envois en un tout, et nous prévenons qu'aucune censure ou rejet partiel ne saurait être appliqué sans entraîner le retrait du tout.

Dans ces conditions le travail commence. Ça va bien jusqu'au moment où l'on nous prévient que le papier d'un de nos amis ne peut passer tel quel. L'auteur refuse de changer les paragraphes incriminés; nous rappelons les conditions posées. En plus, on nous informe que, à cause de difficultés d'exécution, nous serons dispersés un peu partout dans la revue, comme l'on répand la muscade sur un pouding!

Dans l'impossibilité de nos amis des Arts graphiques de faire mieux — ils relèvent d'autorités que nous ne voyons pas — à regret nous nous quittons.»

Si j'ai cité tout au long ce passage, c'est qu'il est révélateur à plus d'un titre: il montre la cohésion qui existait à cette époque au sein du groupe automatiste, et son intransigeance concernant ce qu'il considérait comme des questions de principe. D'ailleurs, Borduas ajoute: «A partir de ce moment, les ruptures se précipiteront». Mais surtout, cet incident reflète les difficultés auxquelles devaient faire face les animateurs des *Cahiers*, car cette publication se faisait aux frais d'un Institut relevant directement d'un gouvernement dont le chef était Duplessis. Ceux qui se souviennent de la fameuse *Loi du cadenas* — loi interdisant toute publication considérée comme de gauche — me comprendront.

Je ne crois pas avoir suivi la consigne. J'optais pour la poésie malgré tout.

C'est dans ce climat que Giguère va commencer modestement sa grande aventure, en publiant ses textes sous forme de livres-objets, dont il soigne la toilette typographique, comme on dit. Au cours des années, cela donnera une production nombreuse et variée qui a fait l'objet d'une exposition à la Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, en 1971. Dans son intelligente introduction au catalogue, Denise Marsan note ceci: «Le tout premier ouvrage au titre prometteur: *Faire naître* (1949) illustré de sérigraphies d'Albert Dumouchel, se présentait comme un véritable catalogue de caractères — tous ceux des Arts Graphiques y passèrent — un délire typographique: on découvrait la magie de l'imprimerie, cet art noir...»

Cela inaugurerait aussi l'utilisation de ce procédé alors à peu près inconnu, à Montréal: la sérigraphie, procédé qui permettra à dix artistes de s'exprimer d'une façon nouvelle, en 1957, sous la direction technique de Jean-Pierre Beaudin, à l'atelier des Éditions Erta, rue Saint-Denis. L'album, dont le tirage est limité à 50 exemplaires, se compose de 10 sérigraphies originales en couleur de Jean-Pierre Beaudin, Léon Bellefleur, Albert Dumouchel, Pat Ewen, Marcelle Ferron, Roland Giguère, André Jasmin, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Maurice Raymond et Gérard Tremblay. La plupart de ces artistes participeront plus ou moins sporadiquement à la réalisation de ces beaux objets graphiques et poétiques que sont les plaquettes dont Giguère, en utilisant toujours des moyens simples et artisanaux, demeure le maître d'œuvre.

On peut dénombrer une trentaine de productions en l'espace de vingt ans. Et ce n'est pas fini. L'aventure se poursuit avec une série d'albums, dont le plus récent est *La Marche à l'amour*, poème de Gaston Miron accompagné de cinq eaux-fortes de Léon Bellefleur.

Que l'on songe seulement aux moyens mis en œuvre: simple presse à épreuves, au début; presse à tailles-douces, presse à platine. Tout se fait à la main: composition du texte, tirage, assemblage, reliure. Évidemment, les tirages ne dépassent pas 400 exemplaires, car ces petites merveilles se vendent mal... à \$1.50. Aujourd'hui, des bibliophiles donneraient cher pour se procurer ces livres à peu près introuvables.

Au cours des ans, les plaquettes naissent de la rencontre d'artistes et de poètes. Dès le début, Conrad Tremblay fera des gravures sur linoléum pour accompagner un texte de Giguère: *3 pas*. Plus tard, il devait faire des dessins pour illustrer un recueil de Théodore Koenig, poète belge bon vivant et farfelu. Quant à moi, j'ai eu le très vif plaisir d'obtenir d'Albert Dumouchel qu'il accompagne de trois gravures sur zinc mes poèmes de *Totems*, premier recueil de la Collection de la Tête Armée. Devaient suivre, toute une série de plaquettes: *Les Armes blanches* de Roland Giguère, avec six dessins de l'auteur, dont la couverture était illustrée d'une photo-sérigraphie par Albert Dumouchel (sans doute la première réalisée grâce à cette technique, à Montréal); *Le Jardin zoologique écrit en mer*, poèmes de Théodore Koenig, avec 14 dessins de Conrad Tremblay, dessins étranges, surréalistes.

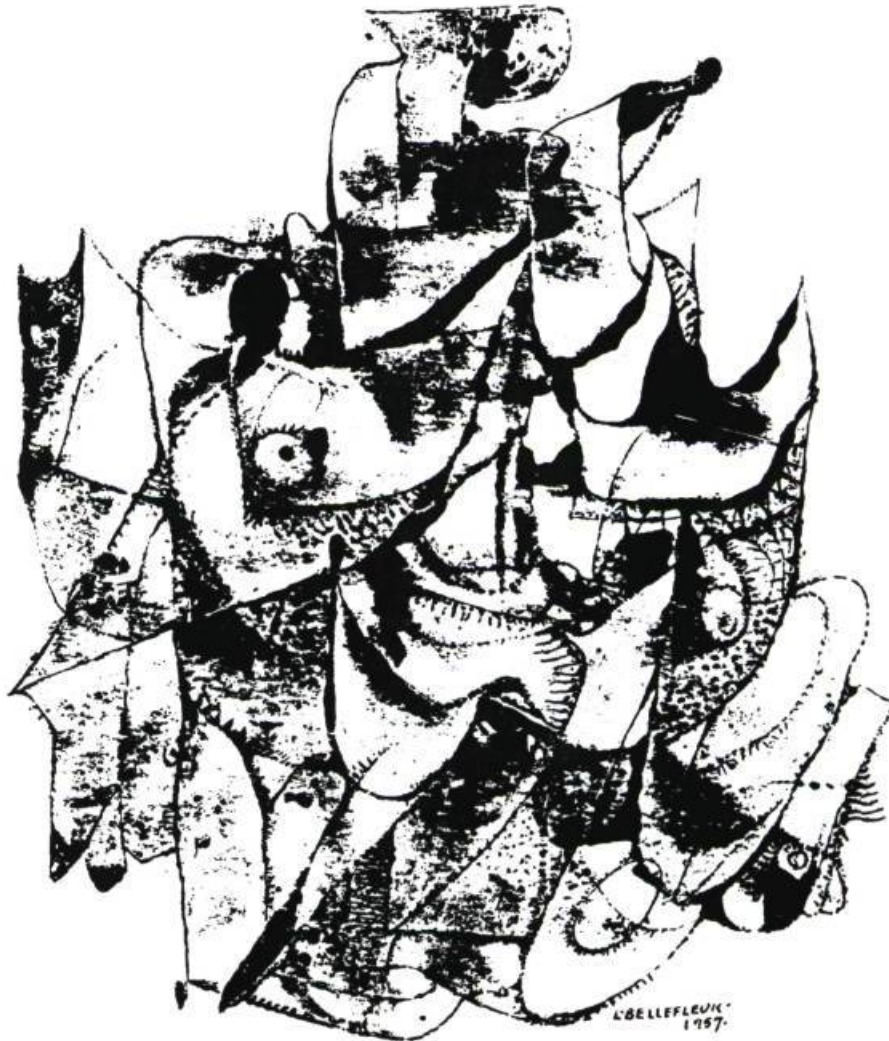
Déjà, en 1953, le poète Claude Haefely avait participé à la fondation de la Collection de la Tête Armée, chez Erta. Ses recueils, *La Vie reculée* ainsi que *Le Sommeil et la neige*, seront accompagnés de linogravures par Anne Kahane et de sérigraphies par Gérard Tremblay.

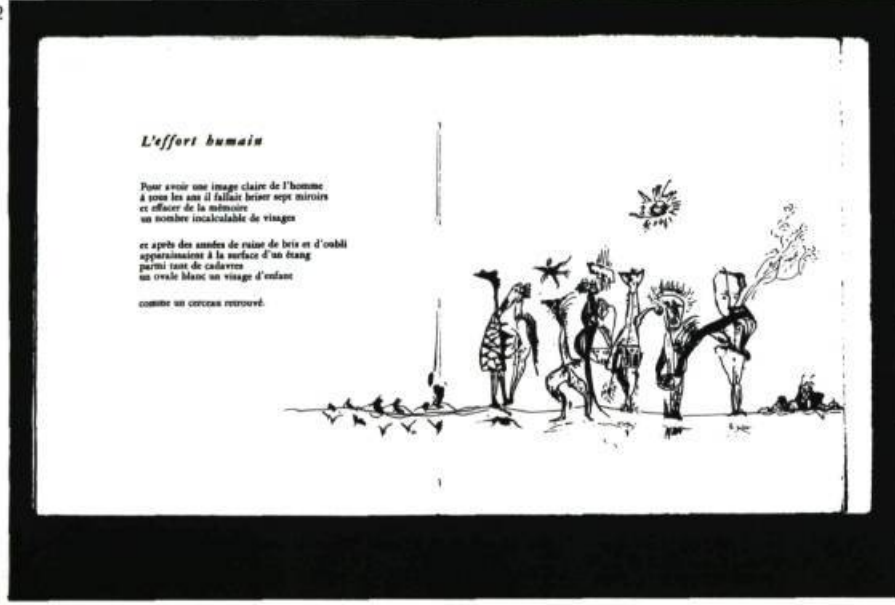
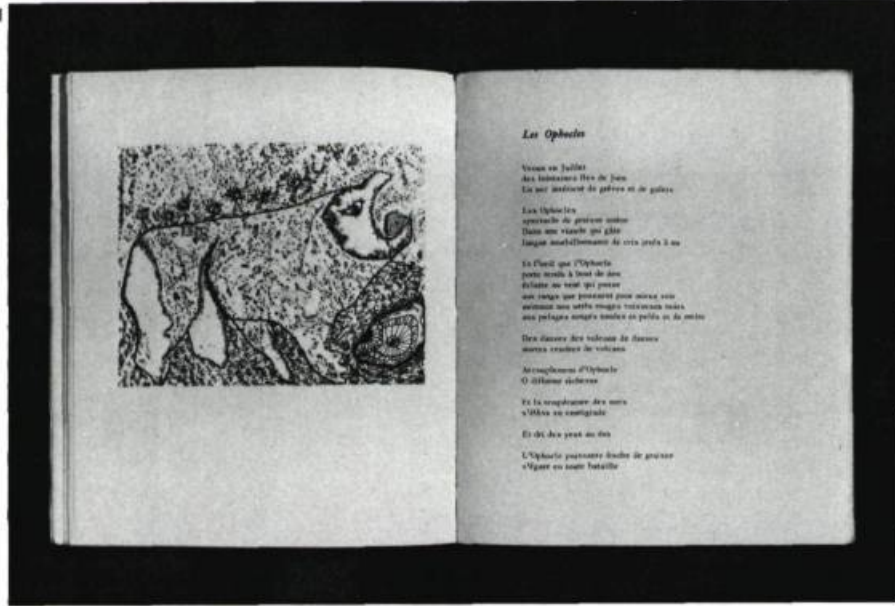
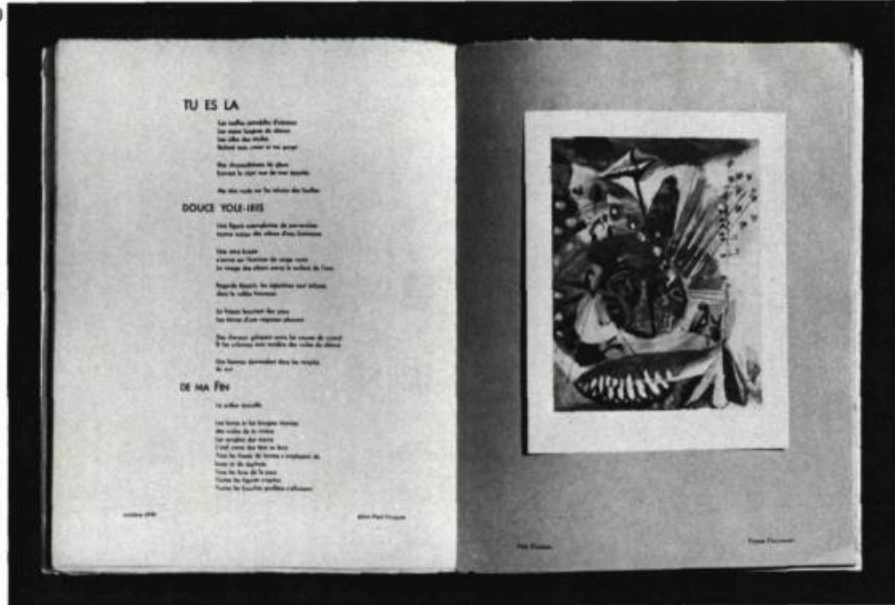
Claude Gauvreau publie *Sur fil métamorphose*, avec des dessins de Jean-Paul Mousseau, plus une



8. Page de couverture (sérigraphie) des *Armes blanches*.

9. Léon BELLEFLEUR Frontispice tiré d'*Osmonde*.





pointe-sèche et une sérigraphie en couleur pour la couverture. Un recueil de Jean-Paul Martino, *Osmonde* est illustré d'un dessin par Léon Bellefleur. Puis, deux sérigraphies originales de Jean-Pierre Beaudin accompagnent la plaquette d'Alan Horic intitulée: *L'Aube assassinée*. Entre-temps, Giguère a illustré lui-même, de trois dessins, ses poèmes en prose: *Le Défaut des ruines est d'avoir des habitants*.

A partir de 1958, il fera un assez long séjour en France, mais il n'abandonne pas, pour autant, son travail d'éditeur-artisan. De Jean-René Major, il publiera *Les Archipels signalés*, poèmes en prose pour lesquels il réalise cinq lithographies. Puis il compose un album de dix bois gravés de Robert Roussil. Poursuivant son œuvre de poète, il écrit *Adorable femme des neiges* dont le texte manuscrit en fac-similé et six planches en couleur sont entièrement réalisés en sérigraphie par l'auteur. C'est à Paris également qu'il réalise une édition de luxe de mes poèmes en prose: *Voyage au Pays de mémoire*, accompagnés de six eaux-fortes en noir de Marcelle Ferron et d'une eau-forte en couleur.

De retour au Québec, sa collaboration avec Gérard Tremblay (avec lequel il partage son atelier) sera de plus en plus suivie. Tremblay va réaliser une suite gravée comprenant 21 aquatintes et intitulée *Les Semaines*, avec un texte de Bernard Jasmin. C'est lui également qui illustre les poèmes de Giguère: *Abécédaire*, présentés sous forme de rouleau. Il fera également dix lithographies pour le poème de Giguère: *J'imagine*.

Àuparavant, Giguère avait publié ses poèmes intitulés: *Naturellement*, accompagnés de huit sérigraphies en couleur de l'auteur.

Puis, ce fut la suite des poèmes-affiches pour la Nuit de la Poésie et pour une exposition en France.

Ce qui étonne dans cette production, outre la qualité du travail, c'est la variété des techniques utilisées: lithographie, eau-forte, aquatinte, linogravure, bois gravé, dessin, sérigraphie; mais aussi, collages sur bois, photogramme, et même, pour *Images apprivoisées*, de Giguère, en 1953, des clichés typographiques «... trouvés et reproduits tels quels», espèces de ready-made pour la gravure.

L'autre dimension de cette aventure ne relève pas de l'esthétique uniquement, mais aussi de l'éthique. Les Éditions Erta ne présentent pas des reproductions lithographiques ou sérigraphiques; chaque planche est une œuvre originale réalisée par chacun des artistes en employant le procédé graphique approprié. Il fallait que l'artiste mette la main au burin, la main à la plaque, la main au bois, au linoléum ou à la soie pour être admis dans cette prestigieuse collection... à la gloire de la main.

10. Texte de Rémi-Paul Forgues et œuvre de Pierre Gauvreau tirés des *Ateliers d'Arts Graphiques*, N° 2.

11. *Les Ophocles*. Dessin de Conrad Tremblay et poème de Théodore Koenig tirés du *Jardin zoologique écrit en mer*.

12. Roland GIGUÈRE *L'Effort humain*. Poème et dessin tirés des *Armes blanches*.

By Gilles HÉNAULT

engraving may occasionally be printed in three or five thousand copies is possible, but to believe realistically that an enterprise would operate in this way for each work it publishes is absurd. I shall explain why.

At least fifty per cent of the retail price of any product in our capitalist societies is involved in the marketing of that product. And the establishing of a market in engravings is under these same laws. *Gilde Graphique* of Montreal, which is an operation without a lucrative goal, reveals to whoever asks the details of what the price of an engraving consists: twelve per cent for the creator, eighteen per cent for reproduction costs (material, workshop, technicians, etc.), five per cent for advertising costs, ten per cent for administration costs, secretary, accountant, fifteen per cent for representation costs (the salary of the *Gilde's* representatives) and forty per cent commission to middlemen, galleries, salesmen, etc.

### Marketing Regulations

*Gilde Graphique* offers eight hundred different images in printings averaging one hundred impressions. Theoretically, they offer eighty thousand engravings. In 1976 they sold 1,776 of these for \$15,538. *Gilde* does not make any profit and, in order not to show a deficit, they must sell \$150,000 worth of engravings a year. Now imagine their eight hundred images printed in five thousand copies. Imagine what the production and the marketing of these four million images would entail! Imagine the amount of money required. Imagine the staff. Imagine the workshops.

Therefore it would be completely unthinkable to hope to be able to control by crafts means the quality of the images proposed. No, the function of the original engraving is not reproduction in large printings. Just the same, this does not mean that, by this very fact, it confirms the myth of the Genius Artist and its commercial consequences. Merchants use it for these purposes, this is certain, but it nonetheless remains that the first aim of original engraving is to supply to a greater number of persons the possibility of having available images of quality produced with craftsman means. If it is illusory at present to think of regular printings of five hundred impressions and more, it is in any case possible to imagine that we can gradually raise the printings to five hundred, and it is especially possible to ask a greater number of artists to do engraving in order that we have more images whose craftsman qualities of production they would supervise.

### A Revolutionary Activity

It is believed in some milieus that engraving is an easy way of becoming rich. This is one of the myths linked to the mirage of the multiple — multiplied original work, multiplied money. Quite the contrary. Engraving is essentially an art of education, of the establishment of a market in engraving, a work of animation. For a picture he has painted, an artist must find one buyer; for an engraving, at least fifty. This is a thankless task that discourages many artists. The establishment of a market in engraving centred not on the rarity of the product but on the multiplication of experiences of quality is, in itself, a revolutionary artistic activity, because the whole present structure of the artistic phenomenon (definition of art and market) based on uniqueness tends to deny this possibility. That is the reason why I said at the beginning of this article that engraving in Quebec is a major art intrinsically the bearer of social change.

I have listed in the Montreal area at least seventy-five engraver artists of some fame. This is tremendous if we consider that there are at most three hundred equivalent painters. I have very carefully evaluated at three thousand different images the number of engravings these seventy-five artists have put on the market in ten years. Undoubtedly, engraving plays an important rôle in the story of art in Quebec. Unfortunately, our standards in the history of art are still following big international styles.

Engraving in Quebec has achieved such success among artists because they were unconsciously seeking to reach a wider public. The artistic education of five million francophone Quebecers is still limping along. For the majority of Quebec artists the public is a pure abstraction or else boils down to each one's ten personal collectors and to the vague memory of some fifty possible sympathizers at a vernissage. The Quebec artist wishes at any price to find means of increasing his possibilities of communication.

For several of the artists, engraving was one of those means. There would be reason to study the contribution of Quebec engravers under this aspect of the public reached. That assuredly constitutes one of the chief points of our national story of art. And this is undoubtedly what a good number of artists mean when they declare that "engraving in Quebec is not a by-product!"

1. Statements taken from a poster signed: F.A.P., headquarters, 7 Mazarine St., Paris 6e.

(Translated by Mildred Grand)

The engraver, the typographer and the poet have a quality in common: they see the reverse of things, if not the world in reverse. This is why, once turned around, put back in place to make reading of it easier, this world amazes us as if it were the result of a magic process.

Furthermore, if it is obvious that engraving and typographic art, like all arts and crafts, are activities that glorify the hand, it is no less true that poetry is equally an art of *making*, which denotes its Greek root: *poiêsis*, meaning manufacture, creation. Each in its way, these three arts make us see, respond to each other, complete each other: they render the poetic object multidimensional. Many ancient civilizations — and among the most advanced — recognized the close and, in certain cases, indissoluble relationships between iconography and writing.

Thus the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, as we know, were composed in part of drawings; original Chinese characters were often close to pictograms; Arab poets sometimes wrote their poems in the form of calligrams. Moreover, from the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages to modern illustrated books, the tradition of a synthesis of writing and image is constant, although it has evolved. Doubtless it was the Chinese who carried furthest this integration of the poem, calligraphy and iconography. In the West, the modern equivalent would be the poster and especially the poster-poem.

In Quebec it has taken us a long time to catch up with this tradition. It needed, in the beginning of the fifties, the combination of typographer, engraver and poet in one single man: Roland Giguère. *Editions Ert* was founded.

The whole thing began in the home of *Typography*, in that unusual *Graphic Arts Institute* where some enthusiastic professors, particularly Arthur Gladu and Albert Dumouchel, devoted themselves to research, entirely new in our milieu, on layout and serigraphy. This was to give birth to two *Cahiers* of great originality of presentation, which are like the incunabula of the heroic period of art publishing in Quebec. Gladu and Dumouchel's collaborators were the pupils: besides Giguère, there were Gilles Robert, Conrad Tremblay (Gérard's brother), Ivar Labrie, etc. However, for the *Cahiers*, they called upon outside collaborations, and I was invited to participate, as was also the whole *Automatist* group.

In *Projections libérantes*, Borduas gives us his version of the facts bearing on this collaboration. He writes: "... a few of us were kindly invited — Fernand Leduc left for Paris, Jean-Paul Riopelle was already there — to participate individually in the first *Cahier des Arts Graphiques*: a collaboration that annoyed our friends abroad. They rebuked our lack of discernment, our small degree of strictness and exigency, as if we had taken on the entire responsibility of all the articles and reproductions of this famous *Cahier* (very Québécois, from the worst church art to automatism). When it became a matter of collaboration on the second issue (No. 3) planned for 1948, a study session was organized with our friends from *Arts Graphiques*, where the participation of each of us was decided. They promised to group our contributions together in one whole and we warned that any censorship or partial rejection would result in the withdrawal of all the works.

The work began under these conditions. It went well until the time when we were informed that the article of one of our friends could not be used in its original form. The author refused to change the paragraphs in question; we reminded them of the conditions imposed. Further, we were informed that, on account of the difficulties in production, our work would be scattered here and there in the magazine, the way nutmeg is sprinkled on pudding!

Since it was impossible for our friends at *Arts Graphiques* to do better — they worked under controls we did not accept — we regretfully parted."

If I have quoted this whole passage, it is because it is revealing on more than one point: it shows the closeness that existed at that time at the heart of the automatist group and its intransigence concerning what it considered matters of principle. Furthermore, Borduas added: "From now on, breaks will occur rapidly." But this incident particularly reveals the difficulties that the animators of the *Cahiers* had to face, because this publication was issued at the expense of an institute directly supported by a government whose head was Duplessis. Those who remember the notorious *Padlock Law* — a law forbidding any publication considered leftist — will understand me.

I do not believe I followed the orders: I chose poetry in spite of everything.

It was in this atmosphere that Giguère would modestly begin his great adventure by publishing his texts in the form of book-objects, to

the typographical appearance of which he paid great attention. During the years this would give rise to a full and varied production that was the subject of an exhibition at the National Library of Quebec in 1971. In her intelligent introduction to the catalogue, Denise Marsan notes the following: "The very first work, with the promising title, *Faire naître* (1949), illustrated with serigraphs by Albert Dumouchel, presented the appearance of a genuine catalogue of characters — all those of Arts Graphiques were to be seen — a typographical delirium: one discovered the magic of printing, this *black art* . . ."

This also inaugurated the use of the process almost unknown at the time in Montreal — serigraphy, a process that would allow ten artists to express themselves in a new way in 1957 under the technical direction of Jean-Pierre Beaudin, at the Éditions Erta workshop on St. Denis St. The album, whose printing was limited to fifty copies, was composed of ten original serigraphs in colour by Jean-Pierre Beaudin, Léon Bellefleur, Albert Dumouchel, Pat Ewen, Marcelle Ferron, Roland Giguère, André Jasmin, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Maurice Raymond and Gérard Tremblay. Most of these artists would participate more or less sporadically in the production of those beautiful graphic and poetic objects, the plaquettes of which Giguère, always using simple crafts-related methods, remains the master.

We can count some thirty productions in the space of twenty years. And this was not the end. The adventure is continuing with a series of albums, the most recent of which is *La Marche à l'amour*, a poem by Gaston Miron accompanied by five etchings by Léon Bellefleur.

Let us think only of the means used in this work: simple printing press at the beginning; relief press and platen press. All done by hand: composition of text, printing, assembling, binding. Obviously, the printings did not go beyond four hundred copies, because these little wonders sold badly — at \$1.50. To-day, book-lovers would pay dearly to obtain these books that are almost impossible to find.

As the years went by, the plaquettes originated in the meeting of artists and poets. At the beginning, Conrad Tremblay made engravings on linoleum to accompany a text by Giguère, *3 pas*. Later he was to make drawings to illustrate a collection of the works of Théodore Koenig, a strange, bon vivant poet. Myself, I had the very great pleasure of having Albert Dumouchel make three engravings on zinc to go with my poems, *Totems*, the first volume in the *Collection de la Tête Armée*. A whole series of plaquettes was to follow: *Les Armes blanches* by Roland Giguère, with six drawings by the author, the cover of which was illustrated with a photo-serigraph by Albert Dumouchel (certainly the first produced in this technique in Montreal); *Le Jardin zoologique écrit en mer*, poems by Théodore Koenig, with fourteen strange, surrealist drawings by Conrad Tremblay.

Previously, in 1953, poet Claude Heffely had participated in the launching of the *Collection de la Tête Armée* at Erta. His collections, *La Vie reculée* as well as *Le Sommeil et la neige*, were accompanied by lino-engravings by Anne Kahane and serigraphs by Gérard Tremblay.

Claude Gauvreau published *Sur fil métamorphose*, with drawings by Jean-Paul Mousseau, with an etching and a serigraph in colour for the cover. A volume of Jean-Paul Martino's work, *Osmonde*, was illustrated with a drawing by Léon Bellefleur. Then two original serigraphs by Jean-Pierre Beaudin were added to Alan Horic's plaquette titled *L'Aube assassinée*. Meanwhile, Giguère himself illustrated with three drawings his prose poems, *Le Défait des ruines est d'avoir des habitants*.

Beginning in 1958, Giguère stayed a rather long time in France, but, just the same, he did not abandon his work as publisher-craftsman. He would publish *Les Archipels signalés* by Jean-René Major, prose poems for which he produced five lithographs. Then he composed an album of ten wood-engravings by Robert Roussil. Pursuing his poetic work, he wrote *Adorable femme des neiges*, whose manuscript text in facsimile and six colour-plates are produced entirely in serigraphy by the author. It was also at Paris that he created a de luxe edition of my prose poems, *Voyage au Pays de mémoire*, with six etchings in black by Marcelle Ferron and one etching in colour.

Back in Quebec, Giguère's collaboration with Gérard Tremblay (with whom he shared his studio) would be closer and closer. Tremblay would produce an engraved suite comprising twenty-one aquatints and titled *Les Semaines*, with a text by Bernard Jasmin. It was also he who illustrated Giguère's poems, *Abécédaire*, presented in the form of a scroll. He would make ten lithographs, too, for Giguère's poem, *J'Imagine*.

Earlier, Giguère had published his poems titled *Naturellement*, accompanied by eight serigraphs in colour by the author.

Then came the suite of poster-poems for *La Nuit de la Poésie* and for an exhibition in France.

The astonishing thing in this production, aside from the quality of the work, is the variety of techniques employed: lithography, etching, aquatint, lino-engraving, wood-engraving, drawing, serigraphy, but also

collage on wood, photograms and even, for Giguère's *Images apprivoisées* of 1953, typographical negatives ". . . found and reproduced as is", kinds of ready-made for engraving.

The other dimension of this adventure arises not only from aesthetics, but also from ethics. Éditions Erta does not present lithographic or serigraphic reproductions; each plate is an original work produced by each of the artists by employing the correct graphic technique. The artist had to put his hand to the etcher's needle, the plate, the wood, the linoleum or the silk to have his work admitted to this prestigious collection . . . to the glory of the hand.

(Translation by Mildred GRAND)

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## A PANORAMA OF QUEBEC ENGRAVING FROM 1958 TO 1965

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By François-Marc GAGNON

1958-1965 marks a period of transition in Quebec engraving. The engravers' studios which command attention so much to-day were still in a stage of development or, like *Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques*, had just been created at the very end of the period (1964). However, engraving was already no longer a manner of expression of individualists or of poets. This transition found its perfect image in Dumouchel's break with the *Graphic Arts Institute*, where he had been *artistic director* until 1960, and his appointment at the *Montreal School of Fine Arts*, where he became director of the engraving department. Although he was able to participate in the education of young engravers while he was still at the Institute, in particular that of Richard Lacroix who was there from 1955 to 1960, of Janine Leroux-Guillaume (1954-1957), of Robert Savoie (1957-1960) or of Gilbert Marion who graduated in 1953, it was at the *Montreal School of Fine Arts* that his talent as an animator would finally find the means to express itself. At the Institute, Dumouchel felt restricted. The emphasis was on printing. Art was of second importance in the concerns of the administration. It must be remembered that the *Graphic Arts Institute* had been born, like the *Ecole du Meuble*, of a breaking up of the former *Technical School* and still felt the effects of its origin. The same was not true of the *School of Fine Arts*. There one could teach engraving without having the impression of stealing time from matters of technique. On the other hand, the pupils — they were not yet called *students* at that time — were enthusiastic about engraving.

Dumouchel's teaching was not authoritarian. The emphasis was not on the image and its composition, nor on plastic language, but on the learning of the techniques of engraving, lino-engraving, woodcuts, etching and lithography. For pupils who had suffered from the criticism of their painting studio professors especially and were led to see in this an intolerable control, Dumouchel's studio, where "one learned something" without being told what to do, but only how to do it, seemed a paradise. Dumouchel was the answer to an expectation. It must, in all justice, be said that students' comparisons favouring Dumouchel over his colleagues in the studios of painting were not always fair. The instruction of painting in oil or acrylic is quickly accomplished, while in engraving it is possible to fill a curriculum with the teaching of techniques, without criticizing the productions. On this point, the engraving workshop resembled that of sculpture, whose instruction was less disputed. In sculpture, also, one learned a métier. The noise of the saws, the hammers and the acetylene torches prevented the giving of instruction that was too verbal, if not monosyllabic. I have been told that Filion, an excellent man, sometimes turned off the power in order to be heard. "Listen to the stone!" he used to shout to his pupils and he set the machines going again. Be that as it may, with Dumouchel they scraped zinc, cut into linoleum or into wood, sketched on lithographic stones and worked the presses. Dumouchel had a sharp sense of the craft and retreated in the face of none of its demands. Erasing the stone, engraving on metal, acid bath, etc. held no secrets for him, and he seriously intended to convey this knowledge to his pupils. Add to this Dumouchel's serene philosophy, his *joie de vivre*, his evident satisfaction in finally having found his true working milieu and you will comprehend the unusual opportunity created by his presence at the *School of Fine Arts*. A whole generation of youth would profit by it. Serge Tousignant and Gilles Boisvert, soon joined by Pierre Ayot and Michel Fortier, would be among Dumouchel's first students at the *School*. From 1962 Roland Pichet, "Pic" to his friends, became his assistant, a task which Pierre Ayot would share the following year, until 1968. The atmosphere at the *School of Fine Arts* had become a happy one. I believe it might be said without greatly distorting either the facts or the intentions that when Pierre Ayot founded *Graff* in 1966 he planned to extend, beyond