

## Panorama de la gravure québécoise des années 1958-1965 A Panorama of Quebec Engraving From 1958 to 1965

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# Panorama de la gravure québécoise des années 1958-1965

François-Marc Gagnon

*Le reportage photographique est de  
Gabor Szilazi*

1958-1965 marque une période de transition pour la gravure du Québec. Les ateliers de graveurs qui s'imposent tellement à l'attention aujourd'hui sont encore en gestation ou, comme l'Atelier Libre de Recherche Graphique, viennent juste d'être créés à la toute fin de la période (1964). Pourtant, la gravure n'est déjà plus un mode d'expression de solitaires ou de poètes. Cette transition trouve sa parfaite image dans la rupture de Dumouchel avec l'Institut des Arts Graphiques, où il avait été *directeur artistique* jusqu'en 1960, et son engagement à l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, où il est chargé de diriger la section de gravure. Bien qu'il ait pu participer à la formation de jeunes graveurs alors qu'il était encore à l'Institut, notamment à celle de Richard Lacroix qui y sera de 1955 à 1960, de Janine Leroux-Guillaume (entre 1954 et 1957), de Robert Savoie (1957-1960) ou de Gilbert Marion qui y avait reçu un diplôme en 1953, c'est à l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal que son talent d'animateur trouvera enfin le moyen de s'exprimer. À l'Institut, Dumouchel se sentait brimé. L'insistance était sur les métiers de l'imprimerie. L'art ne venait qu'au second rang des préoccupations de la direction. Il faut se souvenir que l'Institut des Arts Graphiques était né, comme l'École du Meuble d'ailleurs, d'une fragmentation de l'ancienne École Technique et se ressentait encore de cette origine. Il n'en allait plus de même aux Beaux-Arts. On pouvait y enseigner la gravure sans avoir l'impression de voler du temps aux matières technologiques. Par ailleurs, les élèves — on ne disait pas encore *étudiants* à cette époque — s'enthousiasmaient pour la gravure. L'enseignement de Dumouchel n'était pas *directif*. L'insistance ne portait pas sur l'image et sur sa composition, ni sur le langage plastique mais sur l'apprentissage des techniques de la gravure, linogravure, bois gravé, eau-forte et lithographie. Pour les élèves qui avaient souffert de la critique de leurs professeurs d'atelier de peinture notamment et étaient portés à y voir un dirigisme intolérable, l'atelier de Dumouchel, où «l'on apprendait quelque chose» sans se faire dire quoi faire mais seulement comment le faire, paraissait un paradis. Dumouchel répondait à une attente. Il faut dire en toute justice que les comparaisons étudiantes en faveur de Dumouchel contre ses collègues des ateliers de peinture n'étaient pas toujours équitables. On fait vite le tour de l'enseignement de la technique de

la peinture à l'huile ou de l'acrylique, alors qu'en gravure on peut bien remplir un curriculum par l'enseignement des techniques, sans avoir à faire la critique des productions. Sous ce rapport, l'atelier de gravure ressemblait à celui de la sculpture, dont l'enseignement était aussi moins contesté. En sculpture, également, on apprenait un métier. Le tintamarre des scies, des marteaux, des torches à acétylène empêchait qu'on y donne un enseignement trop verbal, sinon monosyllabique. On m'a raconté que Filion, un excellent homme, coupait parfois le courant pour se faire entendre. «Écoutez la pierre», criait-il à ses élèves et il remettait les machines en marche. Quoi qu'il en soit, chez Dumouchel, on grattait le zinc, on taillait dans le linoléum ou dans le bois, on crayonnait sur des pierres lithographiques et on actionnait les presses. Dumouchel avait un sens aigu du métier et ne reculait devant aucune de ses exigences. Ponçage de la pierre, gravure sur métal, bain d'acides, etc., n'avaient pas de secret pour lui, et il entendait bien transmettre cette science à ses élèves. Ajoutez à cela la philosophie sereine de Dumouchel, sa joie de vivre, sa satisfaction évidente d'avoir trouvé enfin son véritable milieu de travail et vous vous expliquerez la conjoncture exceptionnelle créée par sa présence à l'École des Beaux-Arts. Toute une génération de jeunes en profitera. Serge Tousignant et Gilles Boisvert, bientôt rejoints par Pierre Ayot et Michel Fortier, seront parmi les premiers étudiants de Dumouchel aux Beaux-Arts. À partir de 1962, Roland Pichet, Pic pour les amis, devenait son assistant, tâche que Pierre Ayot partagera, à partir de l'année suivante, jusqu'en 1968. Le temps des Beaux-Arts était devenu un temps heureux. Je crois qu'on peut dire sans trop déformer les faits ni les intentions que lorsque Pierre Ayot fondera Graff, en 1966, il *entendra prolonger*, au delà du temps de l'École, l'esprit qui animait l'atelier de Dumouchel à l'époque où il l'avait connu. Certes, on fera autre chose à Graff que ce qu'on faisait à l'École, même sur le plan technique, mais on retrouve souvent à Graff l'atmosphère qui régnait autour de Dumouchel à l'École des Beaux-Arts. Comment caractériser la production qui sortait de ce milieu? Il est peut-être un peu tôt pour le dire. Quelques caractères généraux peuvent du moins s'apercevoir. Les techniques sont traditionnelles. Richard Lacroix et Serge Tousignant pratiquent l'eau-forte. Robert Savoie et Tobie Steinhouse se feront une spé-

1. Barry WAINWRIGHT  
*Fugue in C#*, 1966.

2. Richard LACROIX  
*Cascades*, 1962.

3. Michel FORTIER  
*Trixi mon cœur*, 1965.



"Zigzag 5"



3



Richard Luman 1962

2

cialité de l'eau-forte en couleur. Gilles Boisvert est plus à l'aise dans la sérigraphie. D'ailleurs, sa thématique pop se prête davantage à ce médium. Janine Leroux-Guillaume excellera dans l'eau-forte et le bois gravé, Gilbert Marion dans la linogravure, Peter Daghish, Huguette Desjardins-Faucher, comme Dumouchel d'ailleurs, dans la lithographie. Du point de vue stylistique, cette génération de graveurs profite aussi de l'espèce de manque d'inhibition que des mouvements comme la nouvelle figuration en Europe et le Pop art aux États-Unis viennent de créer sur la scène artistique. «Anything goes». Il n'est plus besoin d'être abstrait pour être moderne. On peut être figuratif sans paraître dépassé. Là-dessus, Dumouchel donne l'exemple. Ses meilleures lithographies sont souvent figuratives, nostalgiques même, venant de ses souvenirs d'enfance ou de sa vie intime. Pierre Ayot, Gilles Boisvert et Michel Fortier, dont l'enfance remonte à moins loin, chercheront dans le présent une matière analogue. D'autres, comme Serge Tousignant, Françoise Bujold, Huguette Desjardins-Faucher poursuivent en gravure la peinture gestuelle et lyrique à laquelle ils étaient arrivés sous l'influence de leurs maîtres des ateliers de peinture. Tobie Steinhouse et Robert Savoie ont déjà établi leur vocabulaire dans cette même veine. L'Europe, plus que les États-Unis, reste le grand pôle d'attraction. On peut en voir la preuve aussi dans les séjours en France ou en Angleterre qui marquent la vie de la plupart des jeunes graveurs de l'époque. La générosité du Conseil des



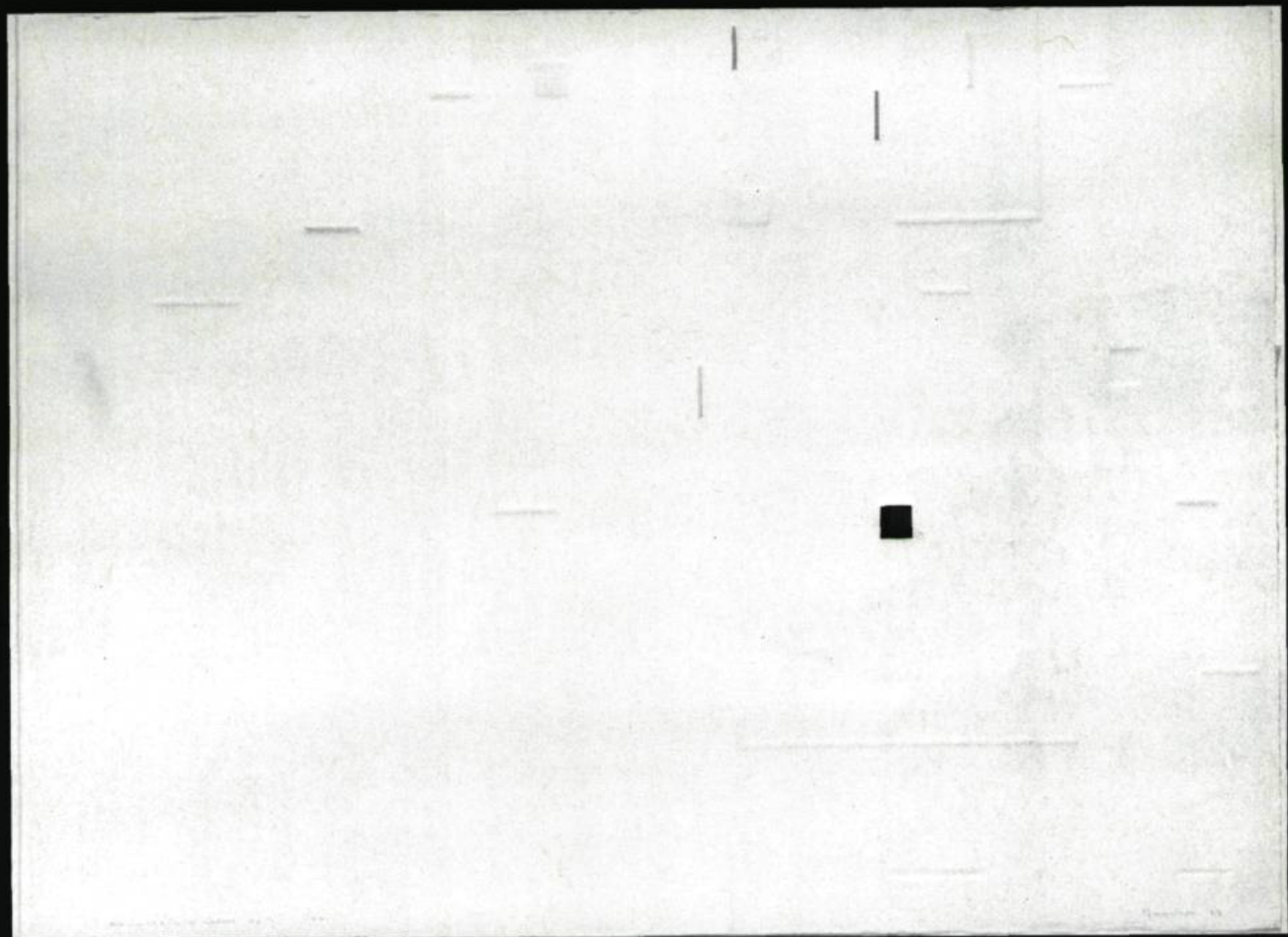
Les Mères de Paule 1971

Françoise Bujold 1971

4



5



6



4. Françoise BU'OLD  
*Les Mains de paille*, 1959.

5. Albert DUMOUCHEL  
*Mariage de l'oncle Neufbâle  
et de la tante Henriette*,  
1965.

6. Yves GAUCHER  
*Hommage à Webern*, 1963.

7. Gilbert MARION  
*Sémaphore*, 1963.

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*Infiltration lapidaire 74/59 Épreuve d'artiste N°1*

8. Janine LEROUX-GUILLAUME  
*Infiltration lapidaire*, 1959.

Arts permet à chacun d'aller faire son petit pèlerinage à Paris, chez Stanley William Hayter (Richard Lacroix, de 1961 à 1964; Robert Savoie, de 1963 à 1964; Tobie Steinhouse, en 1961-1962; Barry Wainright, de 1962 à 1964), chez Desjobert (Roland Giguère, de 1957 à 1963; Léon Bellefleur, en 1958-1959), chez Lacourière (Janine Leroux-Guillaume, en 1959) ou à la Slade School of Fine Arts, à Londres (Serge Tousignant, en 1965, Peter Daglish, de 1963 à 1965). Tous en reviennent un peu déçus et souscriraient sans doute à l'opinion de Richard Lacroix rapportée par Jacques de Roussan dans la petite monographie qu'il lui consacrait en 1967. «Lacroix sait ce dont il parle quand, après avoir habité deux ans et demi en France, il déclare qu'on exagère peut-être la portée de la France moderne dans le domaine international de l'art. (...) En tant que graveur, il a constaté qu'en fait, il n'avait rien à apprendre sur le plan technique.» Peu importe. Il n'était pas question de s'exiler du Québec comme au temps des automatistes. Des tâches urgentes et nombreuses les attendaient au pays.

Dans ce bref panorama de la gravure au Québec des années 1958 à 1965, nous n'avons pas encore mentionné l'œuvre de Yves Gaucher. C'est à dessein que nous avons réservé sa contribution pour la fin car, par bien des aspects, elle tranche sur le reste. Yves Gaucher ne moisira pas aux Beaux-Arts. Il y passe deux ans (1954 à 1956), avant que Dumouchel y soit. Les cours ne l'intéressent pas. Déjà, en 1957, il avait sa première exposition à la Galerie L'Échange et, en 1959, il décrochait le premier prix de la section de la gravure au Salon de la Jeune Peinture de Montréal.

Ses premières œuvres gravées innovent au point de vue technique. Il travaille sur des papiers laminés et obtient des effets de relief étonnants. Ses premières images n'ont rien à voir avec l'abstraction lyrique et la peinture gestuelle qui règnent alors partout. Bientôt, les verticales, qui cohabitaient étrangement avec ses formes carrées aux coins arrondis, lui ouvrent une voie nouvelle. Il découvre la musique de Webern et, sans perdre l'acquis obtenu jusqu'alors, crée, en 1963, la fameuse série des *Hommages à Webern*, qui sont aussi des impressions en relief sur papier laminé. Les formes légèrement biomorphiques de ses travaux antérieurs sont éliminées. Il ne reste que l'angle droit, les traits verticaux ou horizontaux, les carrés noirs ou blancs, en creux ou en relief. Parallèlement à cette recherche, la carrière de Gaucher est fulgurante. Son œuvre est remarquée à la IV<sup>e</sup> Exposition Internationale de Gravure, à Ljubljana, en Yougoslavie (1961), à la VII<sup>e</sup> Exposition Internationale de Gravure, à Lugano, en Suisse (1962) et au Japon, en 1962 et en 1963. Il est aussi représenté à la First Biennial of Prints tenue à Santiago du Chili, en 1963, et à Grenchen, en Suisse, en 1964. Cette liste n'est pas complète. L'aventure de Gaucher comporte ses leçons. Elle rappelle l'importance du travail individuel, de la liberté, pour la création. En ce sens, elle apporte un nécessaire complément au message de Dumouchel, qui croyait davantage à l'atmosphère stimulante du groupe, à l'ambiance collective. Avec le temps, il sera possible de mieux dégager l'importance de la période dont nous avons traité pour le développement de l'art au Québec.

English Translation, p. 87



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

the climate at the School, the spirit which animated Dumouchel's studio at the period when he had known it. Certainly, at Graff they would be doing something other than at the School, even on the technical plan, but at Graff one often finds again the ambiance that reigned around Dumouchel at the School of Fine Arts.

How can the production be characterized which came out of this milieu? It is perhaps a bit soon to say. A few general characteristics, at least, can be discerned. The techniques were traditional. Richard Lacroix and Serge Tousignant practised etching. Robert Savoie and Tobie Steinhouse would specialize in colour-etching. Gilles Boisvert was more at home in serigraphy. Furthermore, his pop theme lent itself more to this medium. Janine Leroux-Guillaume would excel in etching and wood-engraving, Gilbert Marion in lino-engraving, Peter Daglish, Huguette Desjardins-Faucher, like Dumouchel himself, in lithography. From the point of view of style, this generation of engravers also took advantage of the kind of absence of inhibition that movements like the new figuration in Europe and Pop art in the United States had just created on the artistic scene. "Anything goes". There was no longer a need to be abstract in order to be *modern*. One could be figurative without appearing out of date. Dumouchel is an example of this. His best lithographs are often figurative, even nostalgic, arising from his childhood memories or from his intimate life. Pierre Ayot, Gilles Boisvert and Michel Fortier, whose childhood was closer, would seek a similar subject in the present. Others, like Serge Tousignant, Françoise Bujold, Huguette Desjardins-Faucher followed, in engraving, the action and lyrical painting at which they had arrived under their teachers at the painting studios. Tobie Steinhouse and Robert Savoie have already established their vocabulary in this same vein. Europe, more than the United States, remained the important pole of attraction.

The proof of this can also be seen in the sojourns in France or in England that mark the life of most of the young engravers of the period. The generosity of the Canada Council gave each the opportunity of making his little pilgrimage to Paris, to Stanley William Hayter's (Richard Lacroix from 1961 to 1964; Robert Savoie from 1963 to 1964; Tobie Steinhouse in 1961-1962; Barry Wainright from 1962 to 1964); to Desjardins's (Roland Giguère from 1957 to 1963; Léon Bellefleur in 1958-1959); to Lacourière's (Janine Leroux-Guillaume in 1959); or to the Slade School of Fine Arts in London (Serge Tousignant in 1965; Peter Daglish from 1963 to 1965). All came back slightly disappointed and doubtless subscribed to Richard Lacroix' opinion reported by Jacques de Roussan in the little monograph he wrote on him in 1967. "Lacroix knows whereof he speaks when, after living two and a half years in France, he says that perhaps the significance of modern France in the international domain of art is exaggerated (. . .) As an engraver, he has stated that in fact he had nothing to learn in the matter of technique." This mattered little. It was not a question of exiling oneself from Quebec as in the time of the automatists. Urgent, numerous tasks awaited them at home.

In this brief panorama of engraving in Quebec from 1958 to 1965, we have not yet mentioned Yves Gaucher's work. We purposely kept his contribution for the end because, on many points, it contrasts strongly with the others. Yves Gaucher would not stagnate at the School of Fine Arts. He spent two years there (1954 to 1956) before Dumouchel appeared. The courses did not attract him. Already, in 1957, he had his first exhibition at the Galerie L'Echange and, in 1959, he won first prize in the engraving section at the Young Painting of Montreal Salon. His first engraved works were innovative from the technical point of view. He worked on laminated papers and achieved astonishing results in relief. His first images have no connection with the abstract lyricism and the action painting that predominated everywhere at that time. Soon the verticals that existed strangely with his square forms with rounded corners opened a new path for him. He discovered Webern's music and, without losing the knowledge gained until then, in 1963 he created the famous series, *Hommages à Webern*, which are also impressions in relief on laminated paper. The faintly biomorphic forms of his previous works were eliminated. There remained only the right angle, the vertical or horizontal lines, the black or white squares, in low or high relief. Parallel to this research, Gaucher's career has been dazzling. His work was noticed at the Fourth International Exhibition of Engraving at Ljubljana in Yugoslavia (1961), at the Seventh International Exhibition of Engraving at Lugano in Switzerland (1962) and in Japan in 1962 and 1963. He was also represented at the First Biennial of Prints held at Santiago, Chile, in 1963 and at Grenchen, Switzerland, in 1964. This list is not complete. Gaucher's adventure contains its own lesson. It reminds us of the importance of individual work and liberty, in creation. In this significance it brings a necessary complement to the message of Dumouchel, who believed more in the stimulating atmosphere of the group, in collective ambiance. In time, it will be possible to better discern the importance of the period with which we have dealt, in the development of art in Quebec.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

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## L'ATELIER LIBRE DE RECHERCHES GRAPHIQUES AND LA GUILDE GRAPHIQUE

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By Rose-Marie ARBOUR

Albert Dumouchel really marked the birth of contemporary engraving in Quebec through his teaching and practice at the Graphic Arts School at the Montreal School of Fine Arts. Richard Lacroix, founder of Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques, was influenced by him, like so many other Quebec engravers, when he studied at the Graphic Arts School from 1957 to 1959 under Dumouchel. "It was a shock," he says. "Dumouchel was a kind of second father to me. From the age of seventeen to twenty, he helped me, encouraged me, made me discover an ideal and find faith in myself. This is very important at that age." When Dumouchel left the Graphic Arts School for the School of Fine Arts, Richard Lacroix followed him, as assistant and professor.

However, the determinative influence in the matters of production and the dissemination of Quebec engraving was Atelier 17, directed by Stanley William Hayter in Paris<sup>1</sup>. It was there that Richard Lacroix worked for more than two years, from 1961 to 1963. It was there that he became aware of the possibilities offered by a free experimental workshop. In an interview with Claude Jasmin in 1966<sup>2</sup>, Richard Lacroix explained how Atelier 17 was for him a remarkable example of organization.

In 1963 he returned to Montreal with two copper-plate engraving presses and some unique ink rollers. A letter from Edmond Labelle, director of the School of Fine Arts, offered him the opportunity of again taking the position he had left in 1960, but the educational board of the time was not of the same opinion: at the School of Fine Arts, engraving was being done exclusively in black and white; Richard Lacroix would have introduced Hayter's techniques in colour, which were at the time completely unknown in Canada. In the face of such a situation, Lacroix directed his energies elsewhere: he moved to Querbes Ave., then to a studio on St. Christopher St. with his equipment (three copper-plate engraving presses, a lithographing press, and a relief press). Engravers asked to work with him. The idea of an open studio took shape, not as an Utopian project but out of the very need of the engravers. The discussions would culminate in a project for a *free workshop open to all*. Paul Mercier, from Assistance to Creation at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, was fired with enthusiasm: he took it upon himself to develop the plan and was instrumental in obtaining a grant of \$4500 in August 1964; the official opening of the first free workshop in Canada took place on the fourteenth of the following September. At that time, six artists were working there regularly. It was an experimental studio whose "aim was to put at the disposal of Montreal artists already having a certain education in this domain all the equipment necessary for the following métiers: lithography, engraving, etching, relief and serigraphy", Richard Lacroix stated in 1965<sup>3</sup>. Atelier Libre was open two days a week, and the rent for each artist was set at ten dollars a month. Results were not long in appearing: in May 1965 the first Atelier Libre exhibition opened in Quebec at the Galerie de L'Atelier, directed by Renée Lesieur. Five engravers took part: Huguette Desjardins-Faucher, Pierre Hébert, Richard Lacroix, Henri Saxe and Tobie Steinhouse. The average production for each of the six artist members had been four or five plates.

But Atelier Libre did not have only the function of serving engravers. The exhibition of May 1965 allowed Richard Lacroix to show the public the cultural rôle that Atelier Libre intended to play. "It is necessary," he said, "to find a means of putting engraving within reach of the people, a means of destroying the myths"<sup>4</sup>. The multiplying of the engraved image permitted reducing the price and consequently made it accessible to a greater public. "We want to work in the way of the Bauhaus," he declared, which here means to render art accessible to the greatest number. The results of that first year seemed positive enough to lead the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Canada Council to agree to subsidize Atelier Libre jointly in equal shares. The number of members doubled.

A few months earlier, Atelier had moved to 4677 St. Denis St., where, since autumn 1964, there had existed a group called *Fusion des Arts*, several of whose members also belonged to Atelier Libre. It is important here to point out the relationships between Atelier Libre and Fusion des Arts. There was some confusion in the minds of several persons, not only between these two groups but with Guilde Graphique that would be founded in 1966 and be located at the same address. This arises from the fact that on the ideological level the two groups had many points in common: if Atelier Libre had been opened, it was not because Quebec engraving did not exist; on the contrary, prizes and mentions won in numerous competitions and international biennales prove that