

Anne Kahane
Marées de pin

Alma de Chantal

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Une chaude lumière inondait l'atelier d'Anne Kahane en ce bel après-midi d'automne, accentuant l'ambiance de fête qui y régnait déjà, ayant terminé la veille, me dit-elle aussitôt, la sculpture murale destinée aux nouveaux édifices de l'Ambassade du Canada au Pakistan.

Il est sans doute peu commun qu'un artiste vivant à Montréal réalise un jour une oeuvre de dimensions monumentales à l'intention d'un pays aussi lointain. Cela fut possible parce qu'il existe une politique du gouvernement fédéral, explique Anne Kahane, qui permet au Ministère des Travaux Publics d'allouer à des oeuvres d'art un pourcentage prévu du budget des coûts de la construction. Une firme d'architectes de Winnipeg, chargée de l'édification de l'ambassade, communiqua

Et six mois plus tard, à la suite d'un labeur intense pendant lequel Anne Kahane obtint l'aide et la collaboration constantes de Jean-Léon Deschênes, l'un de ses anciens étudiants, l'oeuvre enfin terminée investit entièrement l'espace disponible de l'atelier du sculpteur. Elle occupe aussi les autres pièces du rez-de-chaussée, suscitant l'étrange sensation d'une demeure créée et aménagée exclusivement en fonction d'une oeuvre d'art, qui n'existe et ne respire que par elle, présence vive au coeur du quotidien.

Les dimensions impressionnantes de la sculpture — 29 pieds de longueur, 2 pieds de hauteur et 10 pouces de profondeur — obligèrent l'artiste à répartir l'oeuvre en trois sections distinctes qui ne seront rassemblées qu'à leur arrivée à destination. Anne Kahane se rendra d'ailleurs au Pakistan, ce qui

Alma de CHANTAL

ANNE KAHANE

marées de pin

alors avec l'artiste; elle lui soumit des croquis, une maquette, et le projet fut accepté. Heureuse qu'on lui ait passé cette commande, elle envisagea ce travail avec un enthousiasme particulier. « C'était pour moi, dit-elle, une occasion unique, vraiment exceptionnelle, de produire une oeuvre à caractère monumental, laquelle serait ensuite fixée à un mur immense, mesurant 34 pieds de longueur. Sans cette commande, ajoute-t-elle, je n'aurais sans doute jamais pu réaliser une sculpture de cette dimension. »



Anne Kahane avec un segment de *La Mer*, 1972.
(Phot. Gabor Szilasi)

la réjouit beaucoup, afin de surveiller personnellement l'installation de sa sculpture dans le hall d'entrée de l'ambassade, située à Islamabad, nouvelle capitale du pays. Et ce ne sera qu'à ce moment que l'artiste pourra véritablement percevoir l'oeuvre dans sa totalité, évaluer l'impact visuel et le degré d'intégration de *La Mer* dans l'ensemble architectural, dans le décor et le milieu ambiant qui lui serviront désormais de cadre permanent.

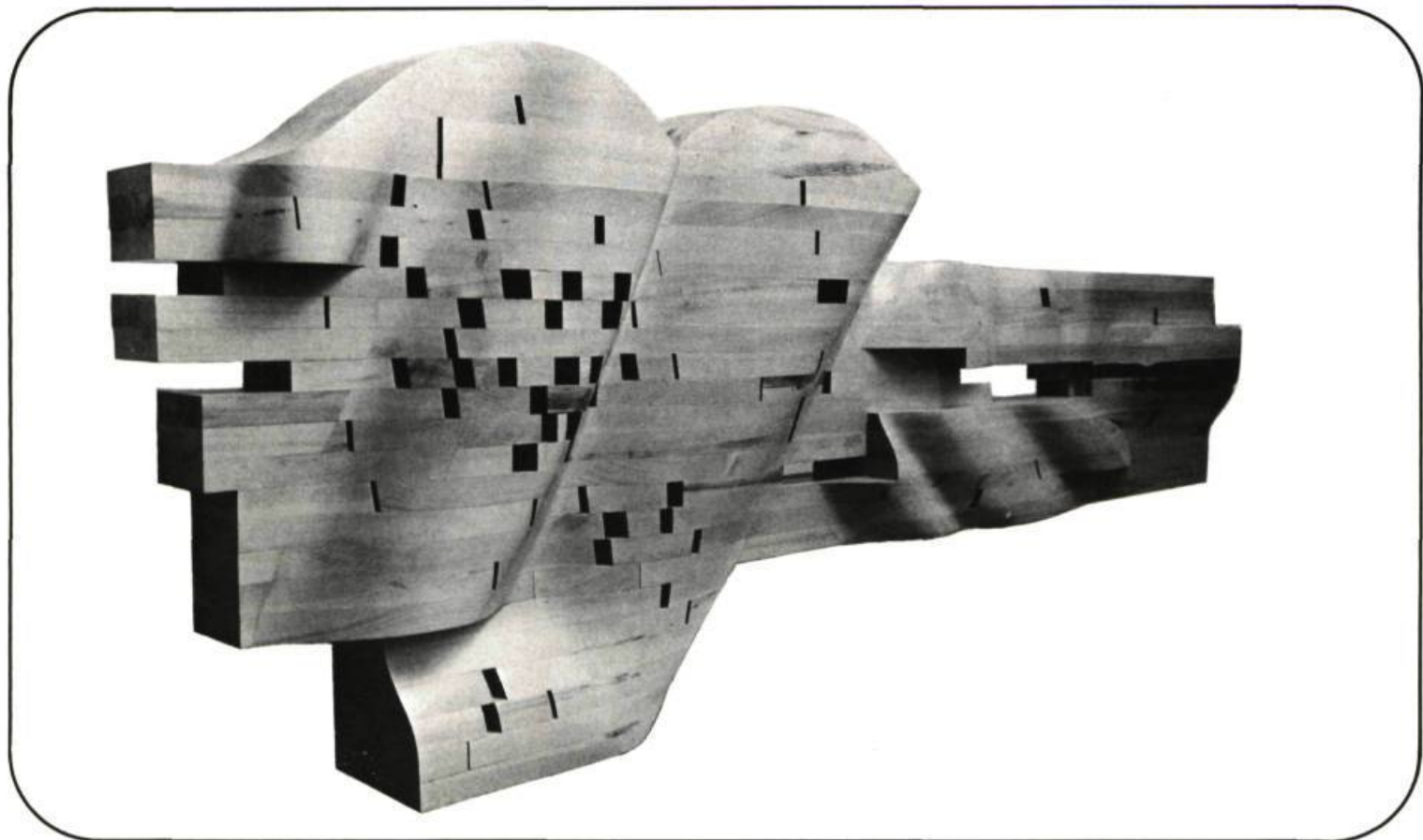
« *Nous sommes nés de la mer* »

De caractère abstrait, cette oeuvre se déploie dans un ordre horizontal fluctuant, presque immense animée d'un mouvement souple et continu où formes et volumes naissent, évoluent et se transforment dans l'espace, évoquant l'univers sans cesse recréé par le flux et le reflux de la mer. Certains volumes aux contours particulièrement

épanouis s'incurvent dans l'espace, décroissent et se fondent imperceptiblement en longues plaines ondoyantes. Le pin blond, parfois blanc sous l'éclat de la lumière, épouse harmonieusement l'ensemble des formes lisses et douces au toucher comme des galets polis par les eaux de la mer. Ici et là, des interstices, fentes et cavités de formes diverses, taillées dans la profondeur du bois à des intervalles irréguliers, morcellent la surface plane et créeront, lorsque la sculpture sera fixée au mur, des puits d'ombre, des cavernes de vie secrète alternant du gris au plus noir. Ce faisant, l'artiste insère, en opposition aux impératifs tridimensionnels de la sculpture, un langage graphique original d'un raffinement subtil qui séduira sans nul doute l'âme orientale. Interrogée quant à l'interprétation et aux réactions possibles des Pakistanais à l'égard de son oeuvre, Anne Kahane répondra simplement: « Ils la verront

à travers leur propre culture. »

Le sculpteur nous parlera longuement de la mer, de sa prédilection pour les côtes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, du mouvement perpétuel des vagues et de leurs formes toujours changeantes, des pierres et coquillages creusés par l'action de l'eau. Cet univers la fascine littéralement. « Nous sommes tous nés de la mer, » dira-t-elle à un certain moment avec une conviction profonde; c'est tout cela que j'ai voulu exprimer », et son regard effleure longuement chacune des composantes de la sculpture; un long silence plane, presque palpable. « Il me semble », fit-elle soudain, « que je vois ma sculpture aujourd'hui pour la première fois! » Elle eut alors un sourire complice, un geste fraternel pour ces formes dont la présence constante, envahissante, n'avait en réalité cessé de l'habiter un seul moment au cours des six derniers mois.



Détail d'une section de *La Mer*, 1972.
Pin blanc canadien; 4 pds sur 10.
(Phot. Gabor Szifasi)

Une compassion profonde

Jalon important dans sa carrière, *La Mer* procède tout naturellement de l'ensemble de l'oeuvre sculptée d'Anne Kahane, entreprise à son retour à Montréal, après ses études, de 1945 à 1947, au Cooper Union Art School, de New-York. Dès les débuts, elle assignera un rôle primordial aux humains: « Les êtres humains sont ce qu'il y a de plus important pour moi, » insiste-t-elle, « c'est ce qui compte le plus à mes yeux. » Ainsi, une grande variété de personnages s'incarneront, au cours des années 1950-1960, dans les gestes les plus quotidiens: *Rain, The Group, Monday Wash, The Bather, Figures in the field*; les volumes élémentaires, la stylisation prononcée des formes, leur simplicité originelle évoqueront un monde primitif interprété avec un sens inné de l'humour et de la satire, animé surtout d'une compassion profonde. Suivront d'autres oeuvres de conception plus abstraites — la narration, l'aspect folklorique disparaissent — révélant une démarche plastique d'une rigueur accrue, condensée en quelques formes essentielles, très dépouillées. Un dynamisme interne et une intensité de force ex-

pressive caractériseront la série de sculptures intitulées *Fallen Figure* et *Broken Man*, réalisées au cours des années 1963-1965; elles ont comme motif central un corps désarticulé, projeté dans l'espace, immobilisé soudain dans sa chute vertigineuse. Presque toutes ces oeuvres furent réalisées dans le bois, dont le pin et l'acajou; l'aspect *construction, ébéniste*, qui appartient spécifiquement au bois, l'intéresse vivement. Elle aimerait faire des meubles et verrait bien, au-dessus de son établi, une pancarte avec l'inscription « Ébéniste »!

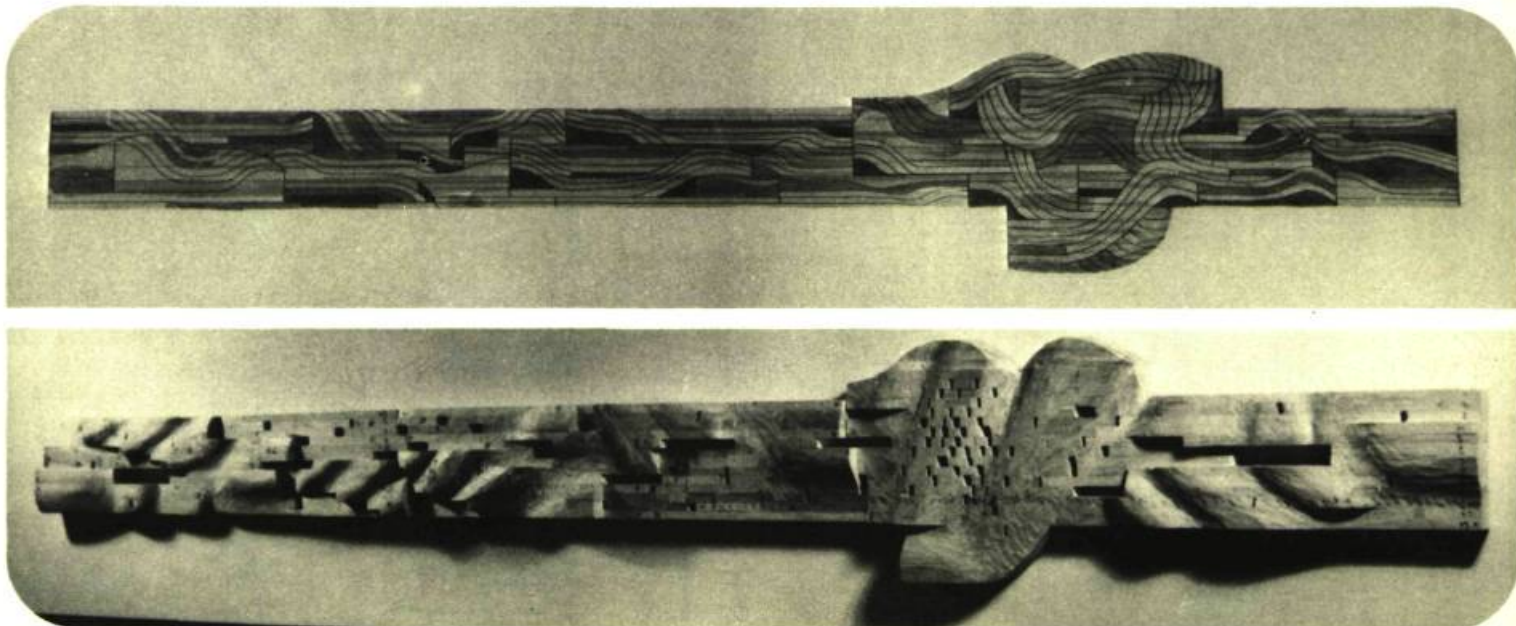
Fenêtre des deux mondes

Depuis 1951, Anne Kahane exposa régulièrement ses oeuvres au Canada et à l'étranger, obtint le grand prix de sculpture aux Concours Artistiques de la Province de Québec en 1956, participa à la Biennale de Venise ainsi qu'à l'Exposition Universelle de Bruxelles en 1958 et à Terre des Hommes en 1967; ses sculptures se trouvent dans plusieurs musées du pays, dans des collections privées et des édifices publics, dont la Place des Arts de Montréal. Une rétrospective, groupant ses oeuvres des quinze dernières années,

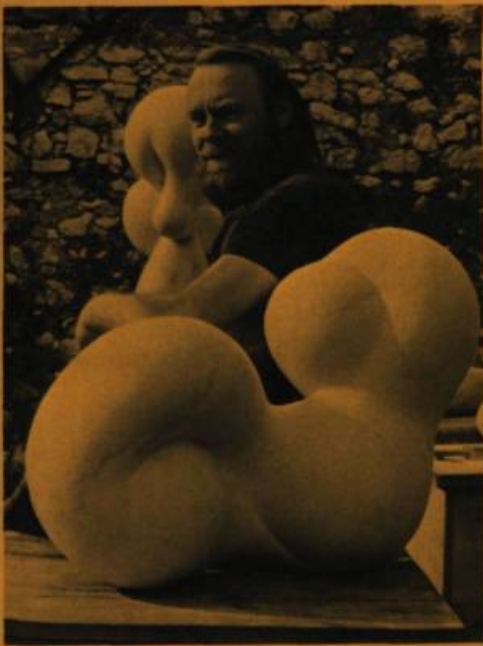
eut lieu à l'Université Sir George Williams, en 1969. Professeur de sculpture à cette institution, cette activité nouvelle lui plaît; l'enseignement favorise des contacts humains diversifiés qui lui sont précieux. Elle dira volontiers de ses élèves « ils m'apprennent plus que je peux leur enseigner ». Evoquant par la suite quelques grands noms de la sculpture contemporaine, Anne Kahane soulignera particulièrement l'oeuvre de Hans Arp; Brancusi et Henry Moore, entre autres, l'intéressent également. Ces affinités se reflèteront de façon subtile dans ses propres travaux.

Deux oeuvres récentes ayant pour thème *La Fenêtre* révéleront des préoccupations et une orientation nouvelles. « La fenêtre n'est-elle pas le point de rencontre de deux mondes, l'extérieur et l'intérieur? Il s'agit d'un univers intéressant à explorer où chacun verra ce qu'il lui plaît. » Le sculpteur désire poursuivre ses recherches dans le silence et la solitude de son atelier, à l'écart des mouvements et des modes éphémères. « J'aime cette solitude... l'artiste est un être essentiellement seul », et elle ajoutera: « C'est souvent parce qu'on ne comprend pas ce qu'il tente de faire, et ceci contribue à son isolation. »

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Croquis et maquette de *La Mer*, 1972.



JIM RITCHIE: ANATOMIES IN MARBLE

By Jeffrey ROBINSON

Jim Ritchie comes back to Canada in October for his 13th one-man show, his seventh in Montreal, this time at the Waddington Gallery. He has been an every-other-year commuter from Vence on the south coast of France to Montreal for over a decade.

"I left in 1959 to live in France. Most of my work is done here although I also do some work in Carrara, Italy. Why I'm working here is a very complicated question, and the answers all revolve around factors like the quality of life, the fact that I can work outdoors all the year round, the fact that the marble is here. Naturally there are a lot of problems working here because I want to show in Canada. After all, that's home. Shipping and customs are, every-other-year, a huge problem. Yet I believe that working where the marble is, where it has always been carved, is the right way for me."

Each of Ritchie's one-man shows features new work. In recent years he has stopped working in clay and chosen instead to work mostly in stone. He has also chosen to make his work a living thing.

"For the most part I am carving directly, without a maquette. Yes, large pieces need maquettes so that the workers who help to rough out work can have something to guide them. But most of my work is done directly with the stone. With it, I work with the stone so that, eventually, a form grows. That's an important word, grows. It's a living thing. Firstly it grows in my mind and then one day I start to exteriorize it. It grows as an extension of myself, the idea I've had, the techniques and knowledge that I've acquired."

Putting together a show means almost two years worth of work.

"Carving takes me a long time. It takes me about 24 months to turn out 15 pieces. It's rare that I ever spend less than six weeks on a piece of say 200 pounds. For something that size, I start with a block of about 400 pounds, working mostly with a bush-hammer

to find my forms. The final filing and polished finish, that's very time consuming, defines the sculptures outlines. I know there are faster ways of working but I can't do that and still produce the quality that I insist on producing. What I in affect am doing then is destroying each day's previous sculpture to make a slightly different one until there's nothing more to do and the piece is complete."

Many people seem to be impressed with the stones themselves but James Ritchie feels the sculpture is the important thing. The stone itself is his catalyst for what will come.

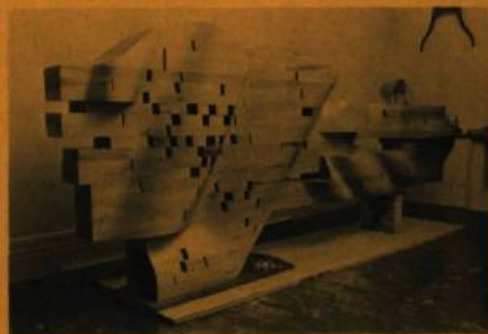
"I let some stones sit around for many months before I start work with them. I have to get a feeling for the stone. We build up a relationship, if you will, the stone and I. But the audience should be concerned with the work. That's what's important. Yes, some stones make better media than others. I work in onyx, black marble, Portugese rose marble, to name a few. And I have a favorite in white Carrara marble. I like it because it has a luminous quality which is ideal for my work. But the work is still the important thing. I've recently just completed my largest work to date from a three-ton block of white Carrara marble. The piece completed weighs about 3000 pounds, is almost five feet tall and is called *Life*."

The word "life" seems to be apropos as Jim Ritchie has made sculpting his life.

"It's something I've been doing all my life, although I didn't start selling until 1949. It was the Galerie Agnès Lefort, on Sherbrooke Street, where I made my first sale. And it's interesting because looking back nearly two dozen years, I can see how far I've come and also how far I've yet to go. And maybe that's why I work as much as I do. I'm a compulsive worker. Seeing where I've been shows me where I'm going. The more I do, the more I can do."

And just where is he going?

"To THE sculpture. It's like writing THE novel or painting THE oil. It's the thing that every artist I guess strives for. I'm trying to do that and everything I've done to date is another step in that direction. I've acquired over the years the knowledge of my own work and how to separate the good from the bad. This is a turning point. It's knowing instinctively if a piece is good. And that's as important as knowing that it's new. You see, I must do things I've never done before. A sculptor, I think, must be an inventor. He must create forms that have never existed before, not even in his own mind. Then it becomes a truly valid statement. It's a unique experience. It's something the viewer can share because it's a totally new experience for him also. When I was eight years old I made things out of plasticine to fascinate myself. And things are much the same now. I must fascinate myself. I must always take the risk of loosing a piece by changing it to make it better, to make it more fascinating. I have to get very much involved with it, become a part of it, or all of it. It's the only way I know how to create the kind of work I'm creating."



ANNE KAHANE: A FLOOD OF PINE

By Alma de CHANTAL

A warm light flooded the studio of Anne Kahane on this lovely autumn afternoon, accentuating the festive mood which already prevailed, since, as she immediately told me, she had finished the mural destined for the new buildings of the Canadian embassy in Pakistan the day before.

It is doubtless unusual that an artist living in Montreal should produce one day a work of monumental dimensions intended for a country so far away. That was possible because there is a policy of the federal government, Anne Kahane explains, which allows the Ministry of Public Works to allocate to works of art a percentage of the budget of the costs of the construction. A firm of architects of Winnipeg, responsible for the erection of the embassy, then communicated with the artist; she submitted sketches and a maquette to them and the project was accepted. Happy that they gave her this commission, she contemplated this work with a special enthusiasm. "This was for me", she said, "a unique opportunity, truly exceptional, of producing a work of monumental character, which would then be installed on an immense wall measuring 34 feet in length. Without this commission," she added, "I would certainly never have been able to achieve a sculpture of this dimension."

At the heart of everyday life

And six months later, following intense labour during which Anne Kahane obtained the constant aid and collaboration of Jean-Léon Deschênes, one of her former pupils,

the finished work entirely occupied the available space in the studio of the sculptor. It also took up the other rooms of the ground floor, bringing about the strange sensation of a dwelling created and arranged exclusively in terms of a work of art, which exists and breathes only by it, a live presence in the heart of everyday life.

The impressive dimensions of the sculpture, 29 feet long, 2 feet high and 10 inches deep, obliged the artist to divide the work in three distinct sections which would be re-assembled only upon arrival at their destination. Moreover, Anne Kahane will go to Pakistan, which pleases her greatly, in order to supervise personally the installation of the sculpture in the entrance hall of the embassy, situated in Islamabad, the new capital of the country. And it will be only at this moment that the artist will really be able to perceive the work in its totality, to evaluate the visual impact and the degree of integration of "The Sea" in the architectural whole, in the setting and the surrounding environment which will be its permanent home.

"We are all born of the sea."

Of an abstract character, this work displays itself in a horizontal fluctuating order, an immense fresco animated by a supple and continuous movement where forms and volumes arise, evolve and transform themselves in space evoking the universe unceasingly recreated by the ebb and flow of the sea. Certain volumes with particularly open contours curve inward in space, diminish and melt imperceptibly in long undulating planes. The blond pine, sometimes white under the impact of light, blends harmoniously with the ensemble of the forms, smooth and gentle to touch like pebbles polished by the waters of the sea. Here and there, crevices, slits and cavities of different forms, carved in the depth of the wood at irregular intervals, break up the flat surface and will create, when the sculpture is fixed on the wall, wells of shadow, caverns of secret life alternating from gray to deepest black. In so doing, the artist inserts, in opposition to the three-dimensional demands of the sculpture, an original graphic language of a subtle refinement which will surely charm the oriental soul. Questioned as to the interpretation and the possible reactions of the Pakistanis with regard to her work, Anne Kahane will reply simply: "They will see it through their own culture."

The sculptor will speak to us at length of the sea, of her preference for the coasts of Nova Scotia, of the perpetual movement of the waves and of their continually changing forms, of stones and shells carved by the action of the water. This world literally fascinates her. "We are all born of the sea," she will say at a certain moment with profound conviction; "it is all that which I wanted to express," and her look rests for a long time on each of the components of the sculpture; a long silence follows, almost tangible. "It seems to me", she suddenly said, "that I see my sculpture today for the first time." Then she had an understanding smile, a fraternal gesture for these forms whose constant possessive presence had not ceased to inhabit her for a single moment during the course of the last six months.

A deep compassion

An important landmark in her career, "The

Sea" proceeds very naturally from the whole of the sculptured work of Anne Kahane, undertaken upon her return to Montreal after her studies (1945 to 1947) at the Cooper Union Art School in New York. From the beginning, she will assign a primary rôle to humans: "Human beings are what is most important to me", she insists. "They are what count the most in my eyes." Thus, a great variety of persons will be represented, during the course of the years 1950-1960, into the most ordinary occurrences: *Rain, The Group, Monday Wash, The Bather, Figures in the Field*; the elementary volumes, the pronounced stylisation of the forms, their initial simplicity will evoke a primitive world interpreted with an innate sense of humour and satire, animated above all by a profound compassion. There will follow other works of more abstract conception — narration, folklore aspect disappear — revealing a progression of an increased severity, condensed into a few essential forms, very bare. An inner dynamism and an expressive intensity of strength will characterise the series of sculptures titled *Fallen Figure* and *Broken Man*, created during the years 1963-1965; they have as their central theme a disjointed body, projected in space, suddenly immobilised in its dizzy fall. Almost all these works were produced in wood, pine and mahogany; the idea of construction, cabinet-making, which belongs specifically to wood, interests the artist greatly. She would like to make furniture and would be pleased to see, over her work-bench, a sign with the inscription "Cabinet-maker."

Window of two Worlds

Since 1951, Anne Kahane exhibited her works regularly in Canada and abroad, received the Grand Prize for Sculpture in the Artistic Competition of the Province of Quebec in 1956, participated in the Biennial in Venice as well as in the Universal Exposition in Brussels in 1958 and in *Man and his World* in 1967; her sculptures are found in several museums of this country, in private collections and in public buildings, such as Place des Arts in Montreal.

A retrospective, grouping her works of the last fifteen years, took place at Sir George Williams University, in 1969. A professor of sculpture at this institution, this new activity gives her satisfaction; teaching encourages varied human contacts which are valuable to her. She will willingly say of her pupils: "They teach me more than I can teach them." Mentioning some great names in contemporary sculpture, Anne Kahane will emphasize particularly the work of Hans Arp; Brancusi and Henry Moore, among others, interest her as well. These affinities will be reflected in a subtle way in her own work.

Two recent works having as theme *The Window* will reflect new preoccupations and orientation. "Is not the window the meeting point of two worlds, the exterior and the interior? It is an interesting world to explore where each will see what pleases him." The sculptor wishes to pursue her research in the silence and the solitude of her studio, apart from short-lived movements and styles. "I love this solitude . . . , the artist is a being essentially alone", and she will add, "It is often because one does not understand what he is trying to do, and this contributes to his isolation."

(Translation by Mildred Grand)



ART PRICE THE METAPHYSICS OF METAL

By Pierre-Ed. CHASSÉ

Over the past few years Art Price has emerged from a self-imposed seclusion, into one of the major sculptors of our country. One has only to travel across Canada to witness his work either at some of our air terminals or dotting some of our public buildings like his most recent one for the new post office building in Ottawa. Although one can still see the impact and the influence Canadian Indian and Eskimo art had on Art Price in the past, what we now see is a much freer expression by the artist. Their conception like their execution is a reflection of that still virgin land which is ours and of its