

Quand la monnaie est là pour être regardée Currency to Be Viewed

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QUAND LA MONNAIE EST LÀ POUR ÊTRE REGARDÉE

MARIE RAYMOND

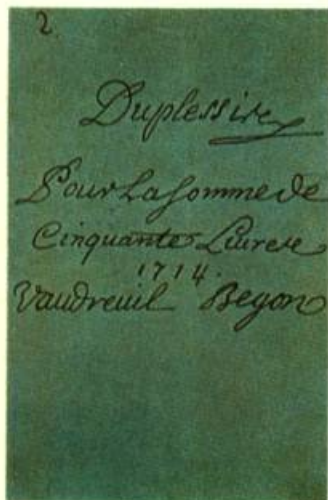
C'est en 1959 que la Banque du Canada s'intéresse à l'idée de créer une collection nationale de monnaies. Après consultation de diverses institutions et villes canadiennes, le projet rencontre, auprès de ces organismes, suffisamment d'intérêt et de collaboration pour prendre en peu d'années une réelle envergure. La Banque, désignée comme dépositaire et gestionnaire de ce qui est devenu aujourd'hui l'une des plus importantes collections du monde, reçoit en outre mission de la rendre accessible au public. Il s'agit d'une centaine de milliers de pièces, jetons, billets anciens ou modernes provenant de différents pays et de diverses régions du Canada, sans compter les merveilleux substituts utilisés avant l'apparition de la monnaie proprement dite. Accumulés au cours des années, ces objets, acquis, cédés ou prêtés, constituent le fonds prestigieux qui a permis à des conservateurs et à des conseillers en numismatique de procéder au choix des présentations du Musée¹. Au moment de l'élaboration des plans de ses nouveaux locaux², la Banque du Canada a choisi de le loger dans son premier édifice permanent, demeuré extérieurement intact. On retrouve la façade de granit gris d'inspiration classique, les portes de cuivre oxydé agrémentées de copies de six anciennes pièces de monnaie et les deux amphores, répliques de vases utilisés dans la Grèce antique pour conserver l'huile et le grain. En retrait, deux tours plus hautes dressent maintenant, de chaque côté, leur masse élancée aux surfaces transparentes, et dans le verre légèrement teinté se dessinent les silhouettes néo-gothiques et les toits vert-de-gris des édifices environnants.

L'entrée du Musée³ est à l'opposé, par le côté jardin, enclos dans une armature vitrée qui ressemble à une grande cage lumineuse garnie d'un bassin d'eau où se reflètent des arbres et des plantes. Un peu à l'écart, mais plus près du va-et-vient des piétons qui la voient au passage, se dresse une pierre de Yap, sorte de menhir arrondi et plat, troué au centre comme un beigne. Ce disque immense pourrait être une sculpture monumentale de la modernité mais c'est en fait un signe de richesse qui sert, pendant mille ans et plus,



de valeur d'échange chez une peuplade des Carolines. Il est communément admis de faire remonter son origine au désir d'un chef de tribu, admirateur de la pleine lune, qui voulut trouver sur terre quelque chose d'équivalent par sa forme et sa grosseur. Toutes les pierres de Yap ont été extraites de rochers enfouis dans les cavernes d'une des îles Palaos; on les a façonnées puis percées pour faciliter leur transport par radeaux sur une longue distance. Placées le long des sentiers et autour des huttes de bambou au toit de chaume, elles devaient leur valeur et leur importance au labeur de tous ceux qui y avaient travaillé: leur nom et leur histoire étaient connus de tous les membres de la communauté et étaient honorés par eux. La présence de cette pièce millénaire, équarrie par la main des hommes dans un calcite cristallin et qui s'apparente si facilement à un œuvre d'art, ne semble pas étrange dans le cadre du nouveau complexe architectural où s'allient avec bonheur les ressources des temps présents et celles d'autrefois.

Le rôle didactique du Musée s'ajoute de nos jours à sa vocation classique d'être le gardien et le reflet des civilisations. Ce lieu, traditionnellement dépositaire de valeurs artistiques, a acquis une nouvelle dimension depuis qu'il est devenu de façon presque systématique un endroit pour s'instruire: tous les services éducatifs qui sont maintenant ses corollaires en témoignent chaque jour. C'est en accord avec cette optique que les concepteurs du décor et de la mise en place des objets⁴, ont commandé et supervisé les textes explicatifs, planifié l'emploi de l'espace et créé tout le dispositif de présentation du Musée de la Monnaie. Leur réalisation s'est appliquée à assurer la coordination de l'histoire des facteurs humains, de l'architecture intérieure et du design. Ils ont choisi d'interpréter les choses en montre de



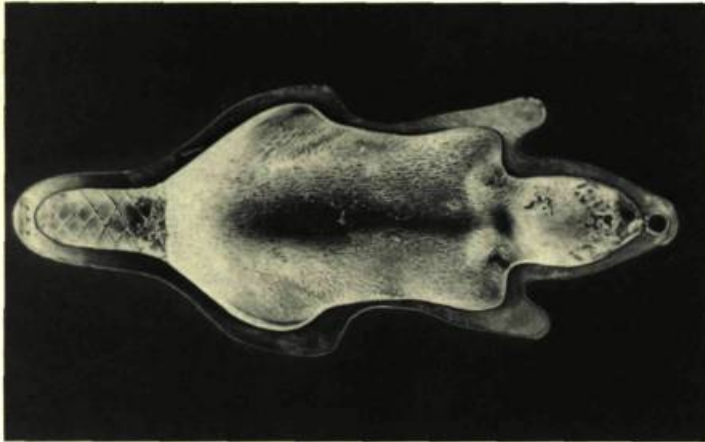
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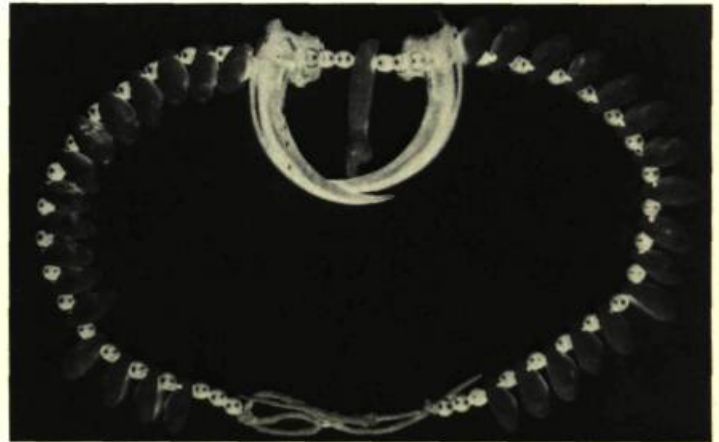
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1. La pierre de Yap, à l'entrée du Musée.

2. Nouvelle-France.
Monnaie de carte, 1714.3. Tétradrachme d'argent.
Athènes, 440 av. J.-C.



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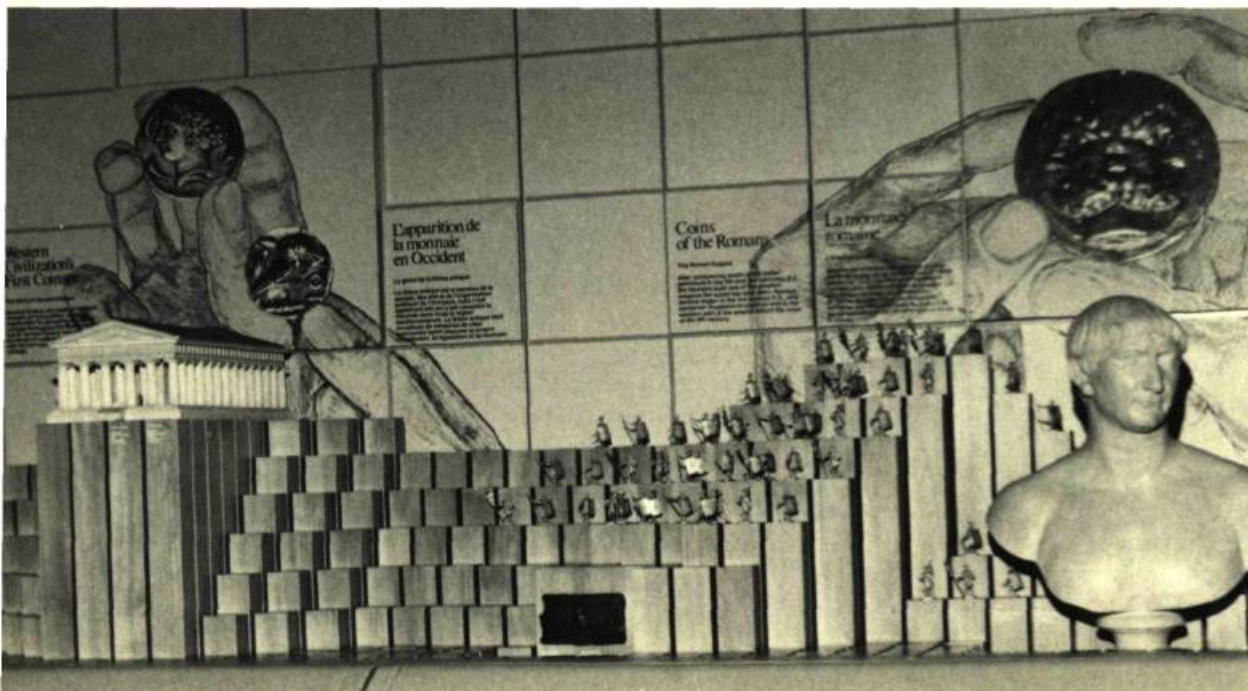
4. Castor d'argent.
Amérique du Nord.

5. Bijou d'argent.
Baie d'Hudson.

6. Orneau coquillage.
Amérindiens du Canada.

7. Étalage de la Banque de la Monnaie, Ottawa

façon à faire découvrir qu'on ne comprend pas vraiment leur sens à moins de commencer par saisir les motivations des hommes qui les ont diversement choisies, puis modifiées en les forgeant de leurs propres mains jusqu'à ce qu'ils arrivent à leur donner des formes et des marques distinctives dont la signification est universellement reconnue. Cette approche suit le filon de l'histoire; elle débute avec l'exposé de l'ordre de l'échange qui est à l'origine du numéraire et se poursuit à travers son évolution, au sein de laquelle s'inscrivent les étapes artistiques franchies par les diverses civilisations. Une ambiance théâtrale, donnée par l'éclairage, le choix des couleurs, la répétition du motif du carré pour unifier les différentes méthodes d'exposer et la présence constante du médium de la main comme facteur dramatique de communication, a contribué à résoudre le problème majeur qui consistait à créer une atmosphère vivante autour d'artefacts qui sont en majorité de très petite dimension. Les montages photographiques, joints à des éléments concrets comme la copie d'un cheval Tang, d'une tête de Bouddha, d'un chapiteau du Moyen âge, la reproduction d'un comptoir de fourrures de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson ou d'un personnage de la Nouvelle-France, intègrent les objets au contexte culturel et social de leur temps et donnent à l'ensemble l'allure d'un spectacle tout à fait



cohérent. Comme lever de rideau, les premières valeurs d'achat font ressortir le côté mythificateur du projet qui s'élabore, puis le premier acte se joue sur le marché où débute le commerce (des mains se tendent, offrent, se ferment, martèlent ou forgent); la grande aventure est commencée. Elle va d'abord se prolonger en Chine, pays agricole, premier précurseur de l'unité monétaire actuelle (des outils aratoires de proportions réduites ont été coulés dans le bronze et sont devenus la monnaie-bêche ou la monnaie-couteau); on est passé du fantastique à l'utilitaire.

L'histoire de la monnaie fait une large place à la collection canadienne, miroir de notre milieu et part importante de notre patrimoine. C'est l'occasion de connaître l'objet de troc, l'usage de la carte à jouer, puis d'aborder les différents stades de fabrication jusqu'aux billets imprimés porteurs de nos légendes, de nos paysages et de certains de nos hommes publics. Les amateurs d'art ne manqueront pas d'être particulièrement attirés par les colliers amérindiens, la broche de Luckenbooth, les castors d'argent, les pièces commémoratives qui portent des dessins d'artistes. Ils s'attarderont aussi, sans aucun doute, devant les cauris de la Nigeria ou d'Océanie (coquillages décrits par Marco Polo comme des morceaux de fine porcelaine enfouis au fond des mers), les Kissie pennies (languettes de fer tordu qui auraient une âme), les lingots d'argent du Siam portant la marque d'une fleur, la brique de thé séché, véritable matrice prête pour l'impression, les poignards du Congo en forme de poisson, les verroteries de Mauritanie, les colliers de bronze, . . . De même que le cercle, élément magique, se retrouve dans l'image rêvée par un chef de l'île de Yap, c'est tout un monde animiste qui surgit ici, rempli de symboles liés à la notion complexe de la puissance.

Certains concepts moins mystérieux apparaissent par contre sur le vrai numéraire dès qu'il devient un médaillon classique. Les têtes de Giovanni et de Ludovico Sforza, dessinées par Léonard de Vinci, nous remettent en mémoire la prospère Renaissance et les magnifiques portraits des maîtres de l'époque; Florence nous rappelle que, deux siècles plus tôt, elle voulut concurrencer l'Orient et son sou d'or sur les marchés mondiaux avec un florin frappé à ses armes. Avant le schisme, au sixième siècle de notre ère, Justinien 1er, empereur de Byzance et de la majeure partie de la chrétienté, fait inscrire sa propre effigie sur la monnaie, et ce qui l'associe au pouvoir divin, il y apparaît de face, semblable à un Christ en majesté. Sur le denier d'argent de Jules César, l'éléphant est le signe personnel de sa force invincible qui vient d'écraser les Gaules. La Grèce a la réputation d'avoir produit les plus belles pièces du monde, et le tétradrachme d'Athènes est lié à la notion de philosophie et aux dieux de l'Olympe; la chouette représente la sagesse; Athéna est la déesse protectrice de la Cité.

Le Musée contient un grand nombre d'objets prestigieux, de même que beaucoup d'autres, plus modestes mais tout aussi significatifs. Leur découverte fait partie du plaisir réservé au visiteur, mais ce qu'il importe de rappeler, c'est la continuité de l'objectif poursuivi. Les concepteurs, qui ont voulu faire comprendre l'universalité de la tendance des hommes à créer quelque chose puis de lui attribuer une valeur fonctionnelle conforme à leurs croyances ou à leurs aspirations, ont donné à des formes plastiques tout leur contenu didactique. Il semble que ce soit la première expérience du genre appliquée à la monnaie. C'est un apport important qu'il convient de souligner; grâce à lui il devient évident que si la monnaie est là pour être regardée, c'est qu'elle est une œuvre d'art.

1. Il est ouvert au public depuis plus d'un an.

2. Architectes: Arthur Erickson & Associés; Marani, Rounthwaite & Dick.

3. 245, rue Sparks, à Ottawa.

4. Alan Todd & Blair Ferguson.



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8. Denier d'argent.
Rome, 49-48 av. J.-C.

9. Monnaie de Byzance.
Justinien 1er,
Bronze, 527-565.

10 et 11. Florin d'or
Florence, 1242-1252.

12 et 13
Léonard DE VINCI
Jean Galéas Sforza
Ludovic Sforza le More
(15e siècle)

By Marie RAYMOND

AN IMAGE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

By Andrée PARADIS

In Mexico contemporary art is linked to the evolution of an historical and social context unique in America. Chief centre of preColumbian America, Mexico has preserved the creative spirit that animated the character of the ancient cultures. We are only beginning to know and measure the influence of the old Indian cultures that formed it and that left to that spirit the immense heritage of architectural, sculptural and pictorial works that are among the treasures of world art.

In full ferment, Mexican art of to-day was established at the beginning of the century in the current of modernity. The echo of the great art revolt of the twentieth century soon reached Mexico. But the Mexican artist knew how to strongly preserve his independence. He is little interested in schools and carries on an entirely personal work. From which arises great variety of expression, disdain for transitory styles and implanting the authentic values and vitality of symbols.

How should one not be astonished, particularly when one comes from the North, by the use of colour among Mexican painters? Invasive and exuberant, it remains the predominant value of expression. Mexican artists are aware of working in a more and more technological society, but they remember that yesterday still they were peasants, artisans and builders. The close relationship of the contemporary Mexican artist with his milieu, even if he lives abroad for some years, illuminates the reality of his works. Having known from earliest childhood the impact of preColumbian art leaves an indelible mark, but the attraction of the world, the spirit of conquest and new space, the need to join broad universal paths are evident, and are a part of the artistic challenge.

For about a year, we have had the privilege of preparing the material for the present issue in close collaboration with *Artes Visuales* magazine and very particularly with Carla Stellweg, then director of the magazine, and with José Carlos Gonzales its co-ordinator-administrator. Thanks to them, we have had the opportunity of meeting artists, Mexican art critics and representatives from the publishing world, and of visiting studios and art galleries. As a result of these consultations, we were convinced of the interest there would be in preparing a special section on to-day's Mexican art, where certain trends and experiments which seemed important to us would be brought to the attention of our readers. The small space available to us limits our scope. We have restricted ourselves to painting and photography, while hoping to have another opportunity to pay homage to sculptors and to the vitality of multidisciplinary art.

It remains for us to thank our Mexican colleagues, our special contributors and our translators for their co-operation, as well as the Director General of Cultural Affairs at the Foreign Relations Secretariat, Señor Rafael Tovar y Teresa, for the gracious welcome we received in Mexico. Our keenest gratitude is offered to the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs of Quebec for the help given to us in order that we might be able to establish contacts with our Mexican colleagues. I would like to emphasize particularly the untiring co-operation that we received from Luc Vachon at every stage of the project, as well as mentioning the friendly assistance of the Delegate of Quebec at Mexico City, Henri Dorion, and that of the Councillor for co-operation, François Le Duc.

In conclusion, at the time when North-South relations on the economic and social plan are the order of the day, it seems opportune to us to remember that cultural relations must also have their say and we are especially happy to have been able to take a step in that direction.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

It was in 1959 that the Bank of Canada became interested in the idea of creating a national currency collection. Upon consultation with numerous institutions and Canadian cities, the project met with enough interest and collaboration to encourage a real impetus in just a few years. The bank designated as depository and administrator of what has to-day become one of the most important collections in the world was also commissioned to make this collection accessible to the public. It comprises some hundred thousand coins, tokens, old or modern bills from different countries and regions in Canada, as well as the wonderful substitutes in use before the appearance of real currency. Accumulated during the course of years, these acquired, donated or loaned items form the prestigious base that has allowed curators and advisers in numismatics to choose presentations for the museum¹. When elaborating plans for its new premises², the Bank of Canada chose to house the collection in its first permanent building, which has remained externally intact. The gray granite façade is of classical inspiration, the doors are of oxidized copper ornamented with copies of six ancient coins and two amphora, replicas of vases used in ancient Greece to conserve oil and grain. Set back, two higher towers now raise on each side their slender mass with transparent surfaces and in the lightly tinted glass are outlined the neo-gothic silhouettes and verdigris roofs of the neighbouring buildings.

The entrance to the Museum³ is opposite, on the prompt-side, enclosed in a vitreous framework that resembles a large luminous cage with a pool of water reflecting trees and plants. A little apart, but closer to the movement of the pedestrians who see it as they go, rises a Stone of Yap, a kind of round flat menhir perforated at the centre like a doughnut. This huge disk could be an immense sculpture of modernity, but it is in fact a symbol of wealth used for a thousand years and more as a medium of exchange among the people of the Carolines. It is commonly thought that its origin goes back to the wish of a tribal chief who admired the full moon and wanted to find something on earth equal to it in shape and size. All the minuscule stones of Yap were taken from rocks hidden in the caverns of the Palaos Islands; they had been worked and then pierced to aid in transporting them by raft for a long distance. Placed along paths and around bamboo or thatched-roof huts, they owed their value and importance to the labour of those who had worked on them; their names and histories were known to all members of the community and were honoured by them. The presence of this millennial coin, reamed by the hand of man in a crystalline calcite and which so easily resembles a work of art, does not seem strange in the setting of the new architectural complex where the resources of the present and those of by-gone days are combined in a fortunate manner.

The instructive rôle of the Museum is added to-day to its classic vocation of being the guardian and the reflection of civilizations. This place, traditionally the depository of artistic values, has acquired a new dimension since it became in an almost systematic way a locale for instruction; all the educational services which are at present attached to it bear witness to this very day. It is in tune with this view that the creators of the décor and the display of articles have ordered and supervised the explanatory texts, planned the use of space and created the whole disposition of presentation at the Currency Museum. Their production applied itself to assuring the co-ordination of the history of human factors, interior architecture and design. They have chosen to interpret these objects displayed in such a way as to cause one to discover that one does not really understand their meaning unless one begins by realizing the motivations of the men who variously chose them, then modified them by forging them with their own hands until they succeeded in giving them the distinctive forms and marks whose meaning is universally recognized. This approach follows the lode of history; it begins with the statement of the order of exchange that is at the origin of legal tender and proceeds through evolution, at the heart of which are inscribed the artistic stages travelled by various civilizations. A theatrical ambience, given by the lighting, the choice of colours, the repetition of the square motif to unify the different methods of exhibiting and the constant presence of the medium of the hand as dramatic factor of communication, has contributed to resolving the major problem, which consisted of creating a living atmosphere around artifacts that are, for the most part, of small size. Photographic arrangements joined to concrete elements such as the copy of a Tang horse, a head of Buddha, the capital of a column of the Middle Ages, the reproduction of a fur counter from the Hudson's

Bay Company or of a person from New France integrate the exhibits into the cultural and social context of their time and confer on the ensemble the appearance of a completely coherent exposition. As curtain-raiser, the first means of exchange bring out the mystifying side of the project that is developing, then the first act plays on the market where business begins (hands are stretched forth, offered, close, hammer or forge); the great adventure has begun. It would first be continued in China, an agricultural country, first precursor of the present monetary unit (agricultural tools in reduced proportions were cast in bronze and became spade-money or knife-money); they went from the fantastic to the utilitarian.

The history of currency has a large part in the Canadian collection, mirror of our milieu and important share of our heritage. This is the opportunity to be acquainted with the medium of exchange, the use of the playing card, and also to inspect the different stages of manufacture up to printed bank bills bearing our legends, our landscapes and some of our public figures. Art lovers will be particularly attracted by the Amerindian Collars; the Luckenbooth Brooch; the silver Beavers; and the commemorative coins that bear designs by artists. No doubt they will linger in front of the cowries from Nigeria or the South Sea Islands (shells described by Marco Polo as pieces of fine porcelain hidden at the bottom of the seas); the Kissie Pennies — strips of twisted iron that would have a soul —, the silver Ingots from Siam bearing the mark of a flower; the Brick of dried tea, a genuine matrix ready for an impression; the Daggers from the Congo in the shape of fish; the small glass objects from Mauritania; the bronze collars . . . Just as the circle, magic element, is found in the image dreamed by a chief of Yap Island, it is a whole animist world that arises here, filled with symbols linked to the complex notion of power.

Some less mysterious concepts appear, on the other hand, on true coinage when it becomes a classic medallion. The heads of Giovanni and Ludovico Sforza, drawn by Leonardo da Vinci, recall the prosperous Renaissance and the magnificent portraits by the masters of that era; Florence reminds us that two centuries earlier it wanted to compete with the Orient and its gold coin on world markets with a florin struck with its arms. Before the schism, in the sixth century A.D., Justinian I, emperor of Byzantium and the greater part of Christianity, had his own effigy inscribed on currency and, associating him with divine power, he appears full face, similar to a Christ victorious. On Julius Caesar's silver denarius, the elephant is the personal sign of his invincible force that has just crushed the Gauls. Greece has the reputation of having produced the most beautiful coins in the world; the tetradrachma of Athens is linked to the notion of philosophy and to the gods of Olympus; its owl represents wisdom; Athene is the patron goddess of the city.

The Museum contains a great number of prestigious articles as well as many more modest but just as significant ones. Their discovery is part of the pleasure reserved for the visitor, but what is important to remember is the continuity of the objective kept in view. Those who conceived the collection, who wished to explain the universality of man's tendency to create something and then to give it a functional value consistent with their beliefs or their aspirations, gave the plastic forms all their didactic content. It seems that this is the first experience of its kind applied to currency. It is an important contribution that should be stressed, due to which it becomes obvious that if currency is there to be viewed it is because it is a work of art.

1. It has been open to the public for more than a year.

2. Architects: Arthur Erickson & Associates; Marani, Rounthwaite & Dick.

3. 245 Sparks Street, Ottawa.

4. Alan Todd & Blair Ferguson.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE DREAM OF ÉLISABETH CHÉDANNE

By Michel MILLETTE

"For me, painting is like a song. I sing of light, the sun, the joy of living. Sometimes pain and sorrow as well, because life is not made up only of joys. But I try to express these feelings in a special dimension — beauty."

Élisabeth Chédanne's works are indeed very beautiful. Definitely, they emit warmth and depth. The approach is often naïve, sometimes sensual. Each time, a detail such as the choice of colours or the composition of the whole retain one's attention. One of these works, titled *Le Château de mon père*, produced in February 1978, was

chosen among more than 300 works, to be used to illustrate a 1981 UNICEF card.

Élisabeth Chédanne has been painting since her arrival in Canada in 1971, when she decided to live in Vancouver. At first she explored various media, such as enamel, painting on fabric and batik. Her works have been exhibited many times in Vancouver, Angers, her native city, and London. They are to be found in private collections in Canada, the United States, Switzerland, England, the Netherlands and Spain.

"Like many painters, I have sometimes been inspired by the great masters and been influenced by them," says Élisabeth Chédanne, "but it is particularly the art of the Amerindians of the West Coast and the impressive nature of British Columbia that have inspired me. I have great admiration for the traditional art of Amerindians. And besides, naturally, I follow my imagination."

The Unicorn and the Apocalypse

Élisabeth Chédanne does not work outdoors. She needs the solitude of her studio to produce the works she conceives. "I must first become saturated with colours, images, odours, noises and the atmosphere of a given place that vibrates in harmony with my sensitivity and that I discover by chance in my journeying. Little by little the images take form, the picture builds. When it is ready, I lock myself into my workroom to recreate it on my canvas . . . sometimes long after, sometimes very soon." This is the way she produced a whole series of pictures inspired by the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and another by a sojourn at Ibiza.

Self-taught, Élisabeth Chédanne has profited from the advice of painter Jack Darcus, well known in Vancouver and to whom she owes a great deal. And it was through painting that she came to tapestry-making. In 1974, during a stay at Angers, she was attracted by the tapestries of the Apocalypse, woven in the fourteenth century from Nicolas Bataille's cartoons. "I thought that my images would suit this kind of medium very well." The artist confesses having suffered a shock at the sight of Lurçat's *Le Chant du monde* and having gone into raptures over the *Dame à la licorne* in the Cluny Museum.

"I was struck by the sensuality of wool. It is this special quality that tapestry-making expresses so well. Tapestry caresses not only the eye but also the touch. By using a sufficiently fine warp one can venture quite severe lines that the softness of the wool compensates."

Cartoons and Weavers

In 1977, after selling a number of works, she was able to afford the luxury of creating a tapestry two metres by one and a half, from one of her cartoons. This work, to which the artist devoted herself entirely, lasted six months. Titled *A quoi rêvent les oiseaux?*, it was accepted at the Autumn Exhibition in Paris in 1977. There is a clear continuity in everything that Élisabeth Chédanne does. For the last four years her work has directed her toward tapestry-making. She has many sketches that she wishes to transform into tapestries.

In 1976 the Banff Fine Arts School organized a competition for a mural. The artist submitted one of her cartoons and was among the twenty finalists. Unfortunately, a work three metres by ten could not be finished in three months, and furthermore she had neither space nor money enough to produce a work of such size. She dreams of creating cartoons for a weavers' workshop. "Lurçat never wove anything himself; his mother embroidered his first tapestries; then he went to the Gobelins." By herself producing small tapestries in high-warp, Élisabeth Chédanne was then able to take note of the possibilities and the limits of this language. This also allowed her to establish a close relationship between the lines of the chosen subject and those of the material.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)



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