Vie des arts Vie des arts

L'Activité artistique et ses institutions Artistic Life and Institutions

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Volume 23, numéro 92, automne 1978

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/54797ac

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Éditeur(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (imprimé) 1923-3183 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Couture-Laliberté, L. (1978). L'Activité artistique et ses institutions / Artistic Life and Institutions. *Vie des arts*, 23(92), 30–100.

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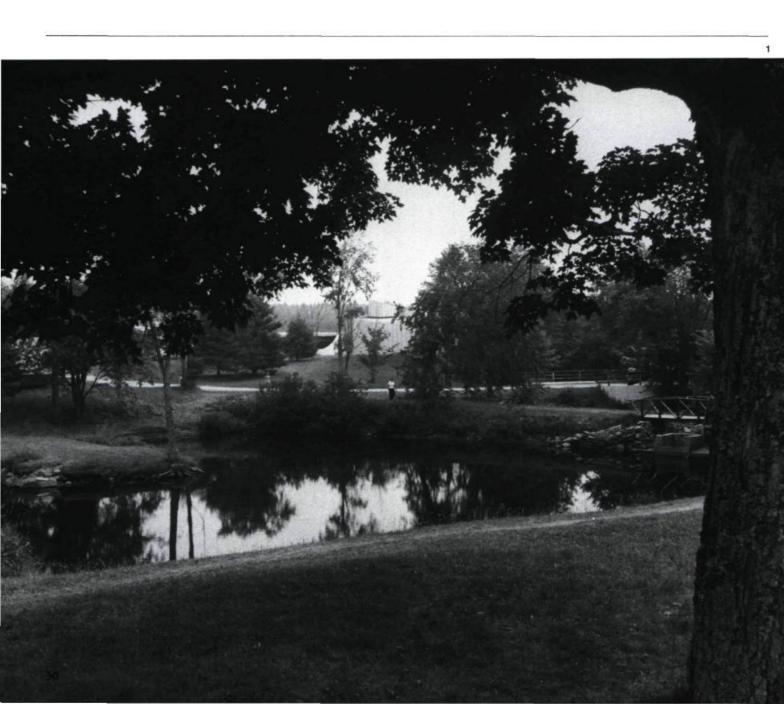
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L'Activité artistique et ses institutions

Luce Couture-Laliberté



Dans la région des Cantons de l'Est, l'activité artistique et artisanale se fait fort d'accéder à un niveau de perfection comparable à celui de la Métropole. Quoique peu éloignée de la ville de Montréal, la capitale des Cantons de l'Est, Sherbrooke, attire artistes et artisans désireux d'être en contact étroit avec une nature magnifique. On puise dans le milieu, on y gravite, pour prendre une expansion qui ne se borne pas à l'attraction régionaliste.

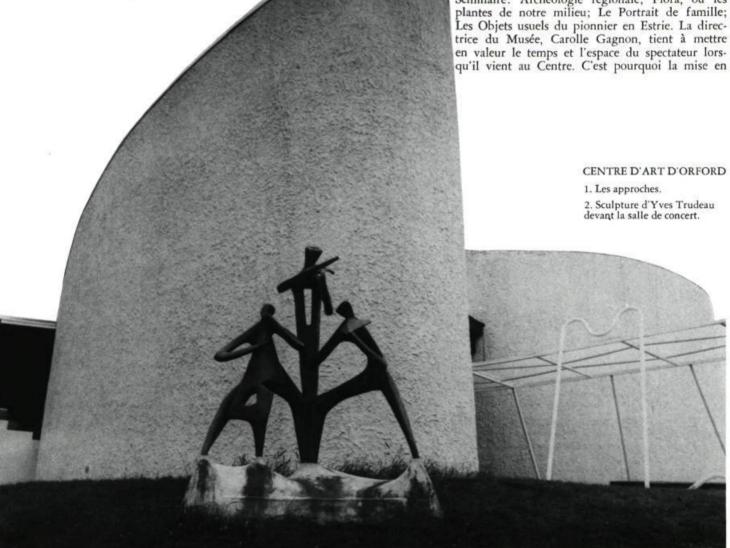
Les institutions, agents directs de la vie des arts, ne restreignent pas non plus leur visée à la seule portée régionale. Elles étendent leurs objectifs un peu plus loin par des collaborations, des échanges, de nouvelles approches et des restructurations constantes, afin de pallier la demande du public, d'une part, des artistes et artisans, d'autre part.

Nous parcourrons successivement les lieux de la vie des arts dans les Cantons de l'Est, ceux, du moins, qui jouissent d'un rayonnement régional, et nous parlerons en outre de deux groupements d'artisans en pleine extension et qui s'intègrent de plus en plus dans le milieu.

Le Musée du Séminaire

Installé dans les trois étages de la tour centrale du Séminaire de Sherbrooke, le Musée présente au public des collections impressionnantes de minéralogie, d'ornithologie, d'anthropologie, ainsi que d'autres collections. On y retrouve des pièces de curiosité remarquables, entre autres une épée du Dr Wolfred Nelson, patriote de 1837, et une canne ayant appartenu à Louis Riel.

L'entrée au Musée du Séminaire impressionne beaucoup de gens par son aspect quelque peu archaïque. Mais l'atmosphère qu'on y trouve fournit un excellent cadre pour les objets de curiosité que l'on examine avec l'œil de l'amateur renfermé dans son cabinet. On y entre aussi avec l'impression que les objets qui y sont conservés nous ont appartenu ou, du moins, appartiennent à notre patrimoine. Le sentiment d'appartenance à notre environnement et aux objets de notre patrimoine ne saute pourtant pas aux yeux. Les valeurs transmises par ces collections étonnantes se devaient donc d'être remises en question et actualisées. Et, c'est par l'ouverture du Centre Léon-Marcotte, le premier novembre 1976, que l'orientation du Musée a été modifiée. La politique de prêts entre musées favorisant une planification des programmes d'exposition, le Centre a pu monter des expositions de création à partir des collections du Séminaire: Archéologie régionale; Flora, ou les





 L'artiste de la bande dessinée Vinh Nguyen.

valeur des objets prend une place importante dans le concept du centre de création auquel s'attache Carolle Gagnon. Par exemple, on verra prochainement une exposition intitulée Du patenteux à l'inventeur, ainsi qu'une autre exposition touchant de plus près à notre environnement, Les Oiseaux du Québec, tirée de la collection du Séminaire.

Le Centre Culturel de l'Université

Sis sur le campus de l'Université, le Centre Culturel tient, à lui seul, une grande place dans la vie des arts à Sherbrooke et dans sa région. Regroupant cinéma, arts plastiques, musique et spectacles, il donne à voir, d'un côté, des choses traditionnelles et commerciales, et, d'un autre, des choses un peu plus modernes ou spéciales.

Divisé en sections bien définies avec, par exemple, la Salle Maurice O'Bready qui présente à un vaste public du théâtre venu de la métropole ou d'ailleurs, du cinéma pour cinéphiles, au programme Kinéart, et du cinéma commercial, au programme Cinémafeus, des spectacles musicaux variés en passant par le jazz, la musique classique, les groupes rock et les chansonniers, ainsi que des ballets modernes et classiques. Plus réservée, la petite salle sert de lieu de promotion pour les troupes, groupes et personnes qui veulent se faire connaître du public sherbrookois.

Dans une autre section du Centre Culturel, nous retrouvons la galerie d'art et son service d'animation dans des expositions qui vont du régional à l'international grâce à des échanges avec d'autres galeries, avec des collections privées et avec des musées de la Métropole et de la province. En outre, l'année 1977-1978 a vu passer quelques artistes et artisans régionaux qui œuvrent dans différents média des arts plastiques.

Le Grand Hall de l'université accueille également sa part d'expositions. D'ici peu, on y verra, par exemple, une exposition intitulée Les Arts visuels dans les Cantons de l'Est. L'animatrice nous a dit que les conférences et les activités qui auront lieu aux Mercredis de la Galerie d'art, à ce moment, se rapporteront, pendant un mois environ à l'exposition en cours dans le Grand Hall.

En ce qui concerne l'animation, les ciné-midis, périodes de présentation de films documentaires offerts aux étudiants du campus ainsi qu'au public, s'ajoutent à l'éventail des activités culturelles données par la galerie. Il y a aussi des expositions qui se tiennent dans le foyer de la salle Maurice O'Bready et qui, réservées, au début, aux amateurs et débutants, ont élargis leur champ en exposant des photographies de James Klotski et qui promettent encore beaucoup plus pour l'avenir. Voilà donc pour le Centre Culturel: artisanat, photographie, peinture, sculpture, objets de curiosité et du patrimoine, cinéma et spectacles.

Le Centre d'Art d'Orford

A environ vingt milles de Sherbrooke, se dresse, au pied du mont Orford, le centre musical peutêtre le plus populaire au Canada pour les musiciens soucieux d'une formation de haut calibre. Le Centre d'Art Orford, d'abord axé sur les présentations musicales, offre également mime, théâtre, expositions d'artistes régionaux, et ce, pendant la saison estivale seulement. Il y a donc pendant l'été, deux activités principales: les activités pédagogiques et le festival. Du côté pédagogique, l'été est divisé en deux sessions et regroupe des professeurs de compétence reconnue et de réputation internationale. Par exemple, pendant l'été qui vient de finir, on a pu voir Nadya Strycek, pour le piano, Peter McCutcheon, pour la guitare, pour n'en nommer que deux.

De son côté, le calendrier du festival présente, chaque année, concerts, cours publics et exercices publics de la part des élèves. De plus, une pièce de théâtre était à l'affiche cet été, Les Hauts et les bas de la vie d'une diva, ainsi que deux expositions d'artistes de notre région: Madeleine Audette et Mariette Fortin-Rouys. Le Centre d'Art Orford ne fonctionne pas ainsi à l'année, malheureusement, mais il est disponible, de septembre à juin, pour les organismes culturels en vue de sessions de cours et autres. Le directeur du centre, M. Gaston Germain, s'occupe aussi de la promotion du nouvel orchestre créé par le Ministère des Affaires Culturelles du Québec, l'Orchestre des Jeunes du Québec, qui a joué depuis sa fondation sous la direction de grands maîtres tels que Franz-Paul Decker et Otto Werner Mueller.

Le Centre d'Art Orford, qui a maintenant une réputation internationale comme lieu de perfectionnement en musique, constitue sûrement un des endroits les plus intéressants de notre région.

La Galerie d'Art Mena'Sen

Fondée depuis quatre ans, la Galerie Mena'Sen, c'est-à-dire la Galerie du Pin solitaire, fonctionne avec toute la bonne volonté de sa directrice, Louise Allard-Brulotte. Pendant quatre ans, elle a exposé des artistes de la province de tous les média d'art visuel, ainsi que des artistes très connus, comme Jean-Paul Riopelle et Albert Rousseau. Une des seules galeries, avec celle du Centre Culturel, à faire la promotion de la création plastique des Cantons de l'Est, la Galerie Mena'Sen veut aussi inciter les peintres de la Métropole à venir exposer à Sherbrooke. D'ailleurs, plusieurs peintres y sont représentés mais n'ont pas encore exposé.

Consciente que les échanges entre galeries sont un facteur important pour le lancement d'artistes qui ne font pas encore partie des circuits de l'art, la Galerie Mena'Sen pratique depuis peu cette politique. Quant aux productions qui peuvent lui être présentées, la galerie oriente de préférence son choix vers les œuvres figuratives, et ce, à cause de la demande de sa clientèle. Pour la saison 1978-1979, la Galerie Mena'Sen se propose de consolider la place qu'elle occupe dans la région.

L'Association des Métiers d'Arts

Depuis environ cinq ans qu'elle existe, l'Association des Métiers d'Arts, composée au début d'une quinzaine de membres, en compte maintenant quatre-vingts, qui vivent en majorité de leur métier. L'Association a favorisé les débuts de plusieurs de ses membres. «Il y a quelques années, on se formait seul ou en était apprenti chez d'autres artisans déjà en place», de dire Réjean Côtes. «Aujourd'hui, quelqu'un qui voudrait refaire la démarche est soumis à beaucoup plus de contrain-

tes: on lui demande une qualité supérieure ou équivalente à ce qui est déjà sur le marché.» C'est pourquoi l'Association veut mettre l'accent sur le perfectionnement des artisans. Le moyen? L'apprentissage dans les ateliers, avec, au préalable, une entente avec l'artisan, mais aussi avec une possibilité d'entente avec le Ministère de l'Éducation relativement à une certaine accessibilité aux cours universitaires dans des domaines comme l'anglais et l'administration. Ces cours permettraient aux artisans qui débutent de mieux affronter le marché.

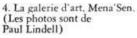
L'Association a beaucoup d'idées et travaille fort à les mettre à exécution. Il est question par exemple, à aller voir un peu ce qui se fait ailleurs, en Chine peut-être, afin de découvrir des moyens d'organiser les ateliers et d'économiser du temps. Pour le moment, la production des quatre-vingts artisans de l'Association se vend bien. On fait connaître les produits par le biais de la boutique Métiers d'Arts, où chacun paie un loyer pour l'emplacement qu'occupent ses pièces et retire ensuite le plein montant de la vente. Il y a bien aussi les salons, le Festival des Cantons. Les artisans continuent de vivre de leurs productions, tout en se faisant mieux apprécier de la population.

Les Artisans de la Bande Dessinée

Parrainée par un bédémane comme Richard Langlois, professeur et concepteur de bandes dessinées, la région de Sherbrooke est devenue, en quelques années, un centre de la bande dessinée au Québec. Il suffit de nommer Vinh Nguyen, Fernand Choquette, Pierre Houde et Raymond Lebrun pour comprendre que ces jeunes artisans, sans l'aide de Richard Langlois, sans son encouragement, n'auraient peut-être pas persévéré, comme ils le font aujourd'hui, dans ce domaine. Car le marché de la bande dessinée, ici au Québec, n'est pas facile. Les Québécois en consomment beaucoup, européennes et américaines, mais semblent méconnaître la bd québécoise. En créant un cours d'initiation à la lecture de l'image, Richard Langlois savait bien que les adeptes de la bd seraient attirés. Il y en a qui sont venus, qui ont étudié et qui ont voulu en faire. Certains talents découverts et encouragés, les persévérants ont poursuivi. Aujourd'hui, à Sherbrooke, certains vivent de l'illustration, du graphisme, tout en sachant bien que le véritable marché pour leur bd, c'est l'Europe. Mais, comme le dit Richard Langlois, l'originalité québécoise ne prime pas encore dans les œuvres de ces jeunes artisans. Leur formation, européenne, demeure livresque, et ils n'observent pas assez notre environnement. Quoi qu'il en soit, même si ces jeunes artisans ne constituent pas un groupement en soi, on peut croire qu'il existe, à Sherbrooke, un dynamisme certain dans le domaine de la bande dessinée.

Les centres artistiques et les deux groupements dont nous venons de parler ne représentent pas à eux seuls tout ce qui se passe et tout ce qui se fait dans notre région. Ils fournissent du moins, nous l'espérons, un aperçu de l'activité artistique et artisanale dans nos Cantons.

English Translation, p. 98





The settlers from the United States gathered where water was available in sufficient supply, in small hamlets of a few houses. They preferred to settle near falls in order to make use of their energy. For the Loyalists, the junction of two rivers was a favourite location. These were the geographical factors that influenced Loyalist Avery Denison to move in 1797 to the township of Shipton, at the meeting of two springs. From the Crown he obtained an expanse of 5,000 acres bordered on the south by what would be called Craig Road in 1811 and extending toward the north for about two miles. There he built a house of squared logs and in 1801 he settled in it with his wife, Eunice Williams, whom he had married the year before. Two sons were born to them, Simeon Minor and John Williams; and two daughters, Malvina and Eunice. Denison seems to have had a prosperous farm. And so he went on some occasions to Quebec to sell his produce and his animals. On June 28, 1826, as he was returning from Quebec, he was savagely attacked and killed at Three Rivers by thieves who seized the money he had received for his stock.

His older son, Simeon Minor, assumed the management of the farm, which continued to prosper. Gradually, other colonists settled on the Denisons' land. In 1850, Simeon Minor wanted to make one of his father's dreams come true: to build on his land a flour mill for the farmers of the area. Begun that same year, the construction was completed in 1855. To run the mill, water was needed. Fifty yards above the mill Simeon Minor built a dam with the stones gathered at the time of the clearing of the land. He dammed the water of the two springs and in this way created an 80-acre artificial lake later called Denison Lake. The water of the lake was directed by a big iron pipe toward the paddle-wheels of the mill, installed not on the side of the building but under the main floor.

Then, little by little, around the mill, built at a cross-road, arose a small service centre for the mostly anglophone farmers of the district; Denison's Mills hamlet was born. Toward the end of the 19th century there existed, grouped in a radius of an eighth of a mile around the flour mill, a post office, a general store, a cheese factory, a smithy, a sawmill, a church and a school.

The Flour Mill

The mill that Simeon Minor built in the middle of the last century and that was recently restored by the Quig family is a splendid piece of work. It comprises five stories, two of which are hidden under the main floor. The exterior walls made of lap-jointed planks cover a brick wall. To support the mill's framework, beams squared by the axe cross the rows of bricks slantwise.

It was at the time when the roads began to harden at the end of autumn and they could use their sleighs that the farmers of the surrounding townships came to the mill to have their grain ground. Then intense activity reigned at the mill, and the miller and his four or five employees could be seen, all white with flour, busy around the square vats, the millstones and the bolting-machine. For his work the miller received one sack of wheat for each ten sacks milled.

The General Store and the Post Office

Two steps from the mill, at the centre of the hamlet, stood a red brick house built in 1865 as the home of miller Joseph Root Denison. A house of lovely proportions, its large windows, its slate roof and its huge gallery lend it great charm. It was in the back wing of this dwelling that the post office and general store were located at the end of the century. The store belonged to the Denisons. In it they sold spices, tea, sugar, biscuits, cheese, oatmeal flour, lamp oil, whips, nails, screws, etc. Further, at the beginning of the century, miller Bill Denison offered for sale Denison's breakfast cereals, a mixture of wheat, rye and flax. In turn, this building was also used as a shoemaker's shop and a school.

The Cheese Factory

Beside the brick house there is a building which to-day unmistakably resembles an old abandoned barn and on the ground floor of which, at the end of the century, a certain Jim McCullum manufactured cheese, cottage cheese, that for a few years he sold in Halifax, N.S. At that time, he received payment in part in fish, with which he paid his milk suppliers.

It was also in this building, on the first floor, that public meetings and celebrations were held. Old people tell that during the thirties silent films were shown as the bats fluttered in front of the screen.

The Sawmill

Some three hundred yards downstream from the flour mill there was a sawmill whose construction Simeon Minor undertook in 1858, three years after the erection of his flour mill. To work the turbines of his sawmill, Simeon Minor had built a second dam of about twenty feet, downstream from the first one. The mill and the dam were demolished in 1938. All that remains to-day is their stone foundations.

The Smithy

At the end of the 19th century, it was usual to find a smithy in a service centre like Denison's Mills, situated in an agricultural area. The farmer often needed the blacksmith to shoe his horses and to repair his ploughs, wagons and tools. Built in 1861 some hundreds of steps from the flour mill, the blacksmith's shop was demolished in 1940.

The School

The school was situated about six hundred yards from the flour mill. As they entered, the children could read, engraved in the stone of one of the steps, the inscription *House of Knowledge*. In a common room heated by a wood stove, they learned the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Built in 1875, nothing remains to-day of this school but the foundation.

The Church

At the summit of the hill, overlooking the two mills, the brick house, the cheese factory, the smithy and the school, is Holy Trinity, the Anglican church. The centre of religious activity in Denison's Mills, the majority of whose population was Protestant, the chapel was built in 1875. The church was the place where the people met at least once a month for religious services; and important events in the lives of the inhabitants of Denison's Mills, such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, spring festivals and Thanksgiving Day, were celebrated there.

A building with simple lines, the Holy Trinity church has a beautiful appearance and to this day is one of the most attractive elements of the village.

The Denisons' Stone House

Finally, at about an eighth of a mile from the flour mill, rises the Denison's stone house. Built in 1831 by Simeon Minor, it has always been the home of the Denisons, big landowners. It was there too, in the large summer kitchen at the back of the house, that were served the meals for the some thirty persons whom the Denisons employed during harvesting. Furthermore, between 1860 and 1872, the attic of this home was used as a school. This very well preserved house, with its walls three feet thick, has the appearance of a fortress.

The village of Denison's Mills, a witness in its way of an important page of our history, deserves that its chief constituent elements should be preserved. It illustrates vividly the enterprising spirit, the hard work and the will to take root in the Quebec soil of the first Loyalist colonists who came to settle in the Eastern Townships. The safeguarding of this part of our heritage is important; it demands immediate government action.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

ARTISTIC LIFE AND INSTITUTIONS

By Luce COUTURE-LALIBERTE

In the Eastern Townships region, artistic and crafts activity is developing to a level of perfection comparable to that of Montreal. Although somewhat distant from that city, Sherbrooke, the capital of the Eastern Townships, attracts artists and craftsmen anxious to be in close contact with magnificent nature. They draw inspiration from the environment, they revolve around it to discover a scope that is not confined to regional attraction.

Nor do the institutions, direct agents of the life of the arts, restrict their aims only to regional possibilities. They extend their objectives a little further by collaborations, exchanges, new approaches and constant restructuring, in order to satisfy the demands of the public on the one hand and of artists and craftsmen on the other.

In turn we shall examine the sites of art life in the Eastern Townships; those, at least, that are enjoying a regional development and, besides, we shall discuss two groups of craftsmen in full expansion which are being integrated more and more into the milieu.

The Seminary Museum

Established on the three floors of the Sherbrooke Seminary's central tower, the Museum displays to the public impressive collections of mineralogy, ornithology and anthropology as well as others. There we can find unusual articles, such as a sword of Dr. Wolfred Nelson, a patriot of 1837, and a cane that belonged to Louis Riel.

The Seminary Museum's entrance is impressive in its somewhat archaic appearance. But the atmosphere there is an excellent frame for the curiosities that are examined with the eye of the amateur in his study. We also enter with the impression that the articles preserved there belonged to us or, at least, belong to our heritage. And yet, the feeling of belonging to our environment and to the objects of our heritage does not jump to the eye. The values transmitted by these astonishing collections, therefore, had to be challenged properly and presented realistically. So it was through the opening of the Léon Marcotte Centre on November 1, 1976, that the orientation of the Museum was changed. Since the policy of loans between museums encouraged the planning of exhibition programmes, the Centre was able to mount exhibitions of works beginning with the Seminary's collections: regional archaeology; flora, or the plants of our environment; family portraits; common objects of the pioneer in the Townships. Carolle Gagnon, director of the Museum, is determined to show to advantage the times and the environment of the viewer when he visits the Centre. This is why the displaying of the articles occupies an important place in the concept of the centre of creation in which Carolle Gagnon is deeply involved. For example, we shall soon see an exhibition titled Du patenteux à l'inventeur, as well as another one closer to our environment, Les Oiseaux du Québec, taken from the Seminary's collection.

The Cultural Centre of the University

Situated on the campus of the University, the Cultural Centre occupies in itself an important place in the life of the arts in Sherbrooke and in its area. Grouping together cinema, plastic arts, music and performances, it shows traditional and commercial events on the one hand and more modern or special events on the other.

The Centre is divided into well-defined sections, such as the Maurice O'Bready Hall that offers theatre from Montreal or elsewhere to a vast public, movies for movie-lovers on the Kinéart programme and commercial cinema on the Cinémafeus programme, varied music performances from jazz, classical music, rock groups and chansonniers, as well as modern and classical ballet. More restricted, the small hall is used as a place of promotion for troupes, groups and persons who wish to become known to the Sherbrooke public.

In another section of the Cultural Centre, we find the art gallery and its animation service in exhibitions that seek the regional in the international, thanks to exchanges with other galleries, with private collections and with the museums of Montreal and the province. In addition, the year 1977-1978 saw regional artists and craftsmen who were working in various media of the plastic arts.

The University's Great Hall likewise receives its share of exhibitions. For example, there will shortly be an exhibition titled Les Arts visuels dans les Cantons de l'Est. The animator informed us that the lectures and activities which will take place at the Wednesdays at the Art Gallery, at that time, will be related, for about a month, to the exhibition held in the Great Hall.

In the matter of animation, noon-cinema, periods of the presentation of documentary films offered to the students of the campus as well as to the general public are added to the cultural activities given by the gallery. There are also the exhibitions put on in the foyer of Maurice O'Bready Hall and which, restricted at first to amateurs and beginners, have broadened their field by displaying photographs by James Klotski, and which promise still much more for the future. And so for the Cultural Centre we have: crafts, photography, painting, sculpture, curios and articles of our heritage, cinema and shows.

The Orford Art Centre

Some twenty miles from Sherbrooke, at the foot of Mount Orford, rises the music centre which is perhaps the most popular in Canada with musicians seeking tuition of superior quality. The Orford Art Centre, at first oriented on musical presentations, now offers mime, theatre and exhibitions by regional artists as well, during the summer season only. So there are two main activities during the summer: educational activities and the festival. On the educational side, the summer is divided into two sessions and attracts professors of recognized competence and international reputation. For instance, during the past summer they had Nadya Strycek for the piano and Peter McCutcheon for the guitar, two among many.

For its part, each year the calendar of the festival presents concerts, public courses and performances by the students. Furthermore, a theatre play, Les Hauts et les bas de la vie d'une diva, was staged this summer, as well as two exhibitions by artists of our region: Madeleine Audette and Mariette Fortin-Rouys. The Orford Art Centre does not function in this way all year, unfortunately, but it is available, from September to June, to cultural organizations for

sessions of courses and other similar purposes. Gaston Germain, the director of the Centre, is also in charge of the promotion of l'Orchestre des Jeunes du Québec, a new orchestra created by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and which has played since its founding under the direction of such great masters as Franz-Paul Decker and Otto Werner Mueller

The Orford Art Centre, which now has an international reputation as a place of refresher courses in music, is certainly one of the most interesting locations of our area.

The Mena'Sen Art Gallery

Founded four years ago, the Mena'Sen or Lone Pine Gallery functions with all the profound interest of its director, Louise Allard-Brulotte. For four years she has exhibited the works of artists of the province in all media of visual art, as well as those of well-known artists such as Jean-Paul Riopelle and Albert Rousseau. One of the only galleries, with that of the Cultural Centre, to promote the Eeastern Townships' plastic creation, the Mena'Sen Gallery also attempts to encourage Montreal painters to exhibit at Sherbrooke. Besides, several painters are represented there but have not yet exhibited.

Aware that exchanges between galleries are an important factor in the launching of artists who do not yet take part in artistic circuits, the Mena'Sen Gallery has lately observed this policy. In the matter of productions that may be offered to it, this gallery purposely tends toward figurative works on account of the preferences of its clientele. For the 1978-1979 season, the Mena'Sen Gallery plans to consolidate the position it holds in the region.

The Association of Crafts

In the five years of its existence, the Association of Crafts, with some fifteen members at the beginning, now has twenty-eight, the majority of whom make a living from their craft. The Association gave several of them the opportunity of beginning in their craft. "A few years ago," says Réjean Côtes, "we taught ourselves or were apprenticed to other craftsmen already established. To-day, someone who wishes to take this step is subjected to many more restrictions: quality is demanded of him that is superior or equivalent to what is already on the market." This is why the Association tries to emphasize the improvement of craftsmen. By what means? Apprenticeship in workshops, with a preliminary agreement with the craftsman but also with the possibility of an agreement with the Ministry of Education on a certain accessibility to university courses in domains such as English and administration. These courses would help beginners to better tackle the market.

The Association has many ideas and works hard to put them into action. For example, there is the matter of going to see what is being done elsewhere, perhaps in China, in order to discover methods of organizing workshops and saving time. At present, the production of the Association's eighty craftsmen is selling well. Their products are promoted through the Métiers d'Arts boutique, where each craftsman pays rent for his works and then receives the full profit of the sale; and there are also the salons and the Eastern Townships Festival. The craftsmen continue to make a living from their productions, at the same time as they are becoming better appreciated by the public.

Designers of the Comic Strip

Sponsored by an aficionado like Richard Langlois, a professor and designer of comic strips, the Sherbrooke region has, in a few years, become a comic strip centre in Quebec. We have only to name Vinh Nguyen, Fernand Choquette, Pierre Houde and Raymond Lebrun to understand that these young artists would probably not have persevered as they do to-day in this field without the aid and encouragement of Richard Langlois. The comic strip market here in Quebec is not easy. Quebecers use a lot of European and American comic strips, but seem not to appreciate the Quebec ones. In creating an introductory course on the reading of the image, Richard Langlois knew very well that followers of the comic strip would be attracted. There were some who came, studied and wished to make them. Certain talents having been discovered and encouraged, the persevering artists continued. At Sherbrooke to-day some of these make a living from illustration or from graphics, knowing at the same time that the real market for their comic strips is Europe. But, as Richard Langlois says, Quebec originality is not prominent yet in the works of these young artists. Their European training is still acquired from books, and they do not observe our environment enough. Be that as it may, even if these young artists do not form a group by themselves, it can be believed that a certain dynamism exists in the domain of the comic strip at Sherbrooke.

These artistic centres and these two groups which we have discussed do not represent in themselves alone all that is happening and all that is being done in our area. At the least they offer, we hope, a glimpse of the artistic and crafts activity in our Eastern Townships.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE ARTISTS' GROUP OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

By Claude LAFLEUR

On September 22, 1973, sixteen professional artists of Sherbrooke and its region saw the multidisciplinary association that they had founded a few months earlier incorporated officially under the name of the Artists' Group of the Eastern Townships.

In five years the AGET doubled the number of its members and took part in more than twenty group exhibitions, while its artists exhibited individually more than fifty times. An engraving and serigraphy workshop, an exhibition hall, courses of advanced instruction, trips, encounters and, particularly, an atmosphere of real comradeship presently form the ensemble of what the Group offers. It was mainly on this point of mutual aid and friendship that the Eastern Townships artists were able to prove the necessity of a regional group that allows its members to play a large part in the cultural life of the area while respecting the individuality of each.

Who are they? We present to you twenty-one of them who offer you their productions and impressions.

At Saint-Isidore d'Auckland, among village, mountains and brooks, far from the city of his birth, Normand Achim teaches himself, blending photography with a multitude of materials (grating, taps, cable, etc.), the whole making up a theatrical effect whose stage setting is done with the subjects. Normand Achim's photographs, group creations, are generally the sequences of a still camera in black and white. "I'm counting on the movies and the theatre, without, however, abandoning photography."

Madeleine Audette set up at the foot of Mount Orford the house that she uses as a workshop. From her aviary of canaries in the forest that has become an accessory, she observes life, its forms, its colours, its movements, that are immediately expressed on canvas or paper. "She needs space for living and to express what stirs her, what sweeps her toward a release so long sought" (Marcel Dubé). Madeleine Audette loves big sizes; they correspond with the large, generous gesture that depicts her perfectly.

"I make images that try to be calendars like the ones of my childhood at Saint-Raphaël de Bellechasse and I would be happy to see my pictures hanging in kitchens..." Jacques Barbeau conceives his works outside of any philosophical context; he wants a popular image that is identified with the people of a region, a region he believes in and that he watches living all around his Sherbrooke workshop. He was president of AGET in 1976, then president of the Eastern Townships Cultural Council in 1977.

Serigraphy and photography are Francine Beauchesne's tools to shape the visions of the passerby. Everyday images such as the corner restaurant, the standing bicycle, a small part of a house, everywhere that light swallows shadow and is set against it in violent dabs, where colour still tries to be soft in this silent world. At Sherbrooke, her eye alert behind her camera, Francine Beauchesne tries to capture the unusual; "... art is a discovery, a continuous apprenticeship".

After studying in Montreal and London, Jacques Benoît also left the metropolitan region to establish his lithography workshop in Sherbrooke. His works are energetic fields full of coloured vibrations, amplified by the contrasts of transparence and opacity. His vibratiles reveal a personal writing addressed to viewers sensitive to chromatic poetry, "I do not believe in a style, but rather in a constant that is developed slowly through a work." Jacques Benoît paints light, not that of Monet but that of lightning, of energy.

"I would like to bring on the thunderbolt, to give the person who is looking at my pictures the charm of a pleasing melody to look at." Roxanne Bergeron lives in Sherbrooke, happy and divided between her production, her friendships and her love. "I have a need to speak, to feel, to be with others." She has passed progressively from lyrical abstraction of figuration, from a violent chromatism to the tranquillity of whites. Not much concerned with technical problems, Roxanne Bergeron goes easily from one medium to the other on the same picture.

To discover the Eastern Townships, Graham Cantieni had to travel a far distance; ten years ago he arrived from Australia. President of AGET in 1973, 1974 and 1975, he presently holds the position of artistic director at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. "At the moment, I am making models for pictures that will be eighty feet long. The problem is to establish to what point it is possible to section the work without its losing its tension, its rhythm and its dynamism. Eventually I shall arrive at an occupation of space which transcends painting, architecture and sculpture. Space and time are one."

"I would like to pursue my development toward the illustration of a contemporary mytology; to join animal to human, vegetation to man, to progress toward a symbiosis of all that is life." Mimi Dupuis is an enameller who arrived from Belgium more than ten years ago with enamels in the form of masks, bowls and jewellery. To-day, she is an engraver and farmer at Sherbrooke, and it is murals that come out of her workshop that smells of fragrant hay, located on the upper storey of the barn. Sometimes the engraved copper takes ink and is printed, then to receive the shimmering colours of enamels.

Beside the beautiful Memphremagog Réginald Dupuis listens and gazes at the imposing nature that surrounds him. A son of the Eastern Townships, self-taught, a bon vivant, he breathes in the fragrance of the life that his generous personality makes us incessantly discover. "From three years of age I have been daubing and I continue to express myself through painting. "Réginald Dupuis is curious; he tries all means capable of fulfilling his needs, going from the complicated techniques of engraving to the apparent simplicity of the coloured pencil."

At Knowlton, Brome Lake at her feet, Denyse Gérin sketches and writes her poem-drawings, her thought-pictures, in a dreamy workshop. "Paper and raw canvas stimulate my inspiration and guide it toward a spareness that is more and more demanding; colour, often single, slips subtly under the shape in many shades. Space becomes surface. Forms are hinged to receive the gesture and the line becomes writing." With Denyse Gérin life and work blend, life that is lived and that becomes work.

A graphic artist by training, an exhilerating companion in the purest Quebec tradition, Pierre Jeannotte of Sherbrooke easily combines graphics and painting. Birds, fish and cats form a large part of the menagerie where his research ends up. "...I have realized that if one thinks too much about theme and technique, the plastic attitude runs the risk of being stifled." Between pictures and drawings Jeannotte has produced several logos and symbols, among which are those of the University of Sherbrooke, the City of Sherbrooke and AGET.

André Lacroix used his studies in the plastic arts to end up soon at photography. In the darkroom in the basement of his house unobtrusively situated at the edge of Sherbrooke, Lacroix says: "My present conception of photography is directly dependent on my training..., photography in which figurative elements are treated not as objects but rather as forms, lines, masses, which give a result that is very near to abstraction and which is related to the plastic arts."

On Mill Road at La Patrie, sculptor Jacques Ladouceur has built his house in a setting of mountains and forests where there are still lumber camps, floating logs and spruce. However, fiber glass and polyester are the principal materials with which he produces his work, that he describes as "a confrontation of rigid forms and organic forms. My present empirical research is oriented in such a way as to minimize the complexity of forms in favour of impact."

"When summer warms the senses, he makes eyes at passing girls, finds nostalgia in them, the least bit old-fashioned, but borne along, hurried with the wind, he breathes in mainly the fleshy scents of wild grasses, the silence of people in a hurry... Claude Lafleur is a painter happily in love with the faces crystallized in his moments of tenderness... When Lafleur invites plants into his drawings, it is the vegetation of his country district (North Hatley) that is moved, pierces the banks of paths in black ink, sometimes in ochre" (Gaétan Dostie). Lafleur was president of AGET in 1977 and 1978.

For the last seven years, Claude Lafrance has lived in Sherbrooke, where his graphics workshop, *Nuit Blanche*, occupies a house of its own. Surrounded by African objects, nostalgic souvenirs of a stay of almost three years in the Ivory Coast, he is pursuing a multidisciplinary work in graphics, painting and drawing. "I tend toward a blending between the gestural and the organized through different materials and techniques where I hope to arrive at an original and bidimensional communication." Claude Lafrance's pictures and drawings reflect the demands of the graphics artist's métier that insist on varying materials and techniques.