Two perspectives
Yves Trudeau, "Parvis et portails" / David Luksha, "Inside The Promised Land"

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TWO PERSPECTIVES:
Yves Trudeau: "Parvis et portails"
David Luksha: "Inside The Promised Land"

"For although creative men usually live
unknown to one another, without influence on
one another, a common force seems to drive all
those men who ever compensate for a cultural
canon at a given time or change a new one.
They are all moved in the same direction,
though they follow an unknown
impulse in themselves rather than
any new road charted in advance.
This phenomenon is called simply
Zeitgeist, and no further attempt is
made to account for it”. Erich
Neumann’

Presented simultaneously
in the two separate exhibition
spaces at Galerie Daniel in Mon­
treal during October, the works of
Montreal sculptor Yves Trudeau
and Toronto artist David Luksha
initially appear to express very
different concerns, both in terms
of form as well as content. It be­
comes evident upon closer con­
sideration of their works, how­
ever, that while the language dif­
fers, the issues addressed are re­
markably similar.

The painted constructions
proposed in Luksha's Inside the
Promised Land are awesome,
massive both physically as well as psychologically. In them, Luksha combines formal aca­
demic painting technique with an acute sensi­
tivity to composition and material. Aching­ly barren, the interior architectural landscapes created by Luksha are only occasionally inhabited by one or two anonymous figures. All works are enveloped by a feeling of ritual, of
ceremony, of importance. The colours are
sombre (deep blues, crimson, ochres, charcoal)
and the mood is solemn, mysterious.

Of particular interest is From Below the
Threshold. The largest piece in the exhibition
(exceeding eight feet in length) and perhaps the
most complex, this work most accurately repre­
sents the recent work of Luksha. The human
figure is present, yet its importance has greatly
diminished since the exhibition of Luksha's
works a year ago at the Art Gallery of Hamilton.
Constructed in three sections, From below the
Threshold draws the viewer into its core
through a staired entranceway which hangs
below the bottom center of the work. The stair­
resulting irregular shapes and textures, en­
hanced with generous applications of heavy oil
paint, create a surface rich both visually as well
as spatially.

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In the exhibition Parvis et portails by Yves Trudeau an air
of calm, controlled strength pre­
vails. Reference to such para­
mount structures as the sequential
variations of Stonehenge and Medieval gothic
architecture are clearly evident. Of his work,
Trudeau explains: "The works presented in
Parvis et Portails draw their inspiration from
Gothic architecture, and more particularly the
spaces around buildings, their faces, as well as
their entranceways: doors, posterns, portals".

Yves Trudeau, Parvis et portail 83, 1988. Bronze. 8½"
seven works on paper. The new bronzes, averaging approximately 12" in height, each consist of two separate pieces which, when placed together, form an arch. They were created to be manipulated by the viewer. The elegant polished surface of these works contrast dramatically with the angular geometric rectangles of the black, highly polished plexiglass bases. In some, deeply coloured patinas cover the entire smooth metal piece, whereas in others a richly textured surface contrasts with sharp planes of polished bronze. The dense metal and the severely geometric lines of the outer edges provide a foil for the delicate curves of the interior arches themselves. Defined only by the negative space between two adjacent sections, the arches are open, fragile, elegant.

Three freestanding relief works in welded steel, while respecting the theme Parvis et portails, diverge somewhat in style. In the largest, measuring 20 x 16 x 5", a gothic arch is repeated rhythmically inside a cathedral-like structure. In another, a mood of fragility is created by the irregular shape of the exterior edges. This piece, the smallest of the three, seems exposed, unprotected, vulnerable. In a highly contrasting third piece, a massive vault-like door remains closed, as if just slammed shut for the last time, leaving the viewer with a sense of finality, of permanence, of time eternal. The cut, raw edges of the heavy steel joined by solder recall the crude technique normally associated with industry. A striking paradox in thus created by the juxtaposition of medium and message!

Accompanying the sculptures is a series of works on paper, consisting of four works in lead pencil and three pastel and charcoal works on arches paper 40 x 26". Meticulously executed, the drawings capture and develop the formal aesthetic proposed in the free-standing works. Gothic arches, soaring spires and intricate internal spaces in each piece create a visual environment which mirrors the three-dimensionality of the sculptures. The merge of these two disciplines (sculpture and drawing) and the inherent duality (bronze and charcoal, weight and weightlessness, dark and light) seems to unify the exhibition. It emphasizes the exact qualities inherent in the Parvis et portails theme and subject. Is not a portal itself, particularly an arched portal, the physical embodiment of the concept of duality?

The extreme contradictions in the work of the two artists described above are numerous. Luksha is young, an artist from Toronto, presenting his first solo exhibition in a Montreal gallery. Trudeau, contrastingly, represents one of the most prominent forces in Quebec sculpture, celebrating this year his anniversary of thirty years of work and exhibitions. Luksha's large scale, passionate, expressive works, constructed using objects discarded by others, provide a direct antithesis to the elegant controlled, formal works in cast bronze proposed by Trudeau. Here, where the ponderous outcry of youth parallels the quiet understatement of experience, one perceives twenty years. Twenty years of searching; twenty years which separate yet unite. For despite the apparent dissimilarities in their work, Luksha and Trudeau share a great deal. Previously unfamiliar with the work of the other, both artists speak of transition; from exterior to interior, from below to above, from now to then. Portal and passageway are both theme as well as symbol of transition and of the steps necessary to achieve it. Somehow this congruence in the worlds and insights of Luksha and Trudeau reassures. Both artists, despite their language and vantage point, are concerned with thresholds, with beginnings and endings, where in order for one to gain, one must experience (and accept) loss. Passage, transition, evolution. Transcendence. The juxtaposition of such commonalities in the works of these two artists both reveals and affirms a Zeitgeist for which no account has yet been made.