

## RACE, un groupe de créateurs The Artist's Group of the Eastern Townships

Claude Lafleur

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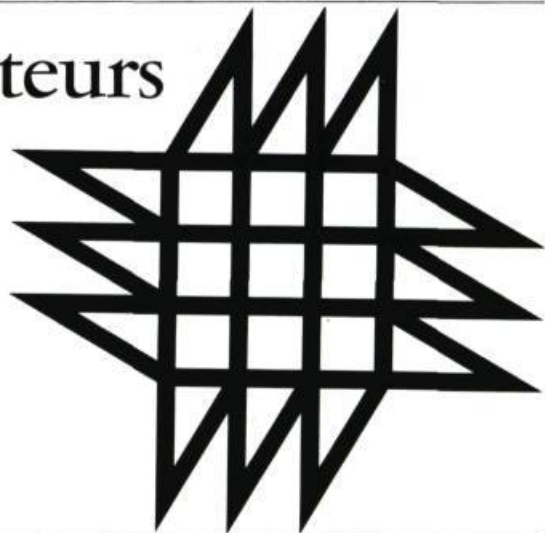
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# RACE, un groupe de créateurs

Claude Lafleur



1. Madeleine AUDETTE  
*Quinze novembre*, 1977.  
Encre; 55 cm x 75.

2. Jacques BENOÎT  
*Les Vibratiles*, 1976.  
Lithographie; 30 cm x 30.



1. Font aussi partie du RACE les artistes suivants: Anne-Marie Audet-Harris, graphiste de Sherbrooke; Ophra Benazon, peintre de Lennoxville; Louise Dazé, peintre de Sherbrooke; Francine Duguay, peintre de Lennoxville; Gilles Larivière, sculpteur de Sherbrooke; Pierre Lecompte, peintre de Cherry River; Maya Lightbody, graphiste de Knowlton; Richard Milot, historien d'art de Sherbrooke.

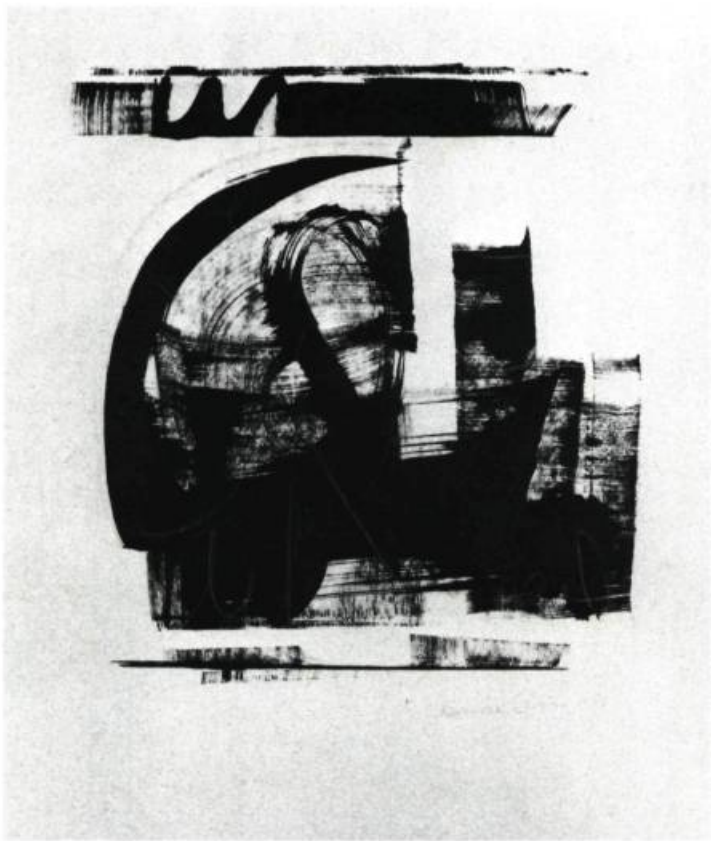
Le 22 septembre 1973, seize artistes professionnels de Sherbrooke et de sa région voyaient l'association multidisciplinaire qu'ils avaient formée quelques mois plus tôt officiellement *incorporée* sous le nom de Regroupement des Artistes des Cantons de l'Est.

En cinq ans, le RACE a doublé le nombre de ses membres, a participé à plus de vingt expositions collectives, tandis que ses artistes se manifestaient individuellement plus de cinquante fois. Un atelier de gravure et de sérigraphie, une salle d'exposition, des stages de perfectionnement, des voyages, des rencontres et, surtout, une atmosphère de franche camaraderie forment actuellement l'ensemble de ce qu'offre le Regroupement. C'est principalement sur ce point d'entraide et d'amitié que les artistes des Cantons de l'Est ont su prouver la nécessité d'un regroupement régional qui permet à ses membres de prendre une grande part à la vie culturelle du milieu tout en respectant l'individualité de chacun.

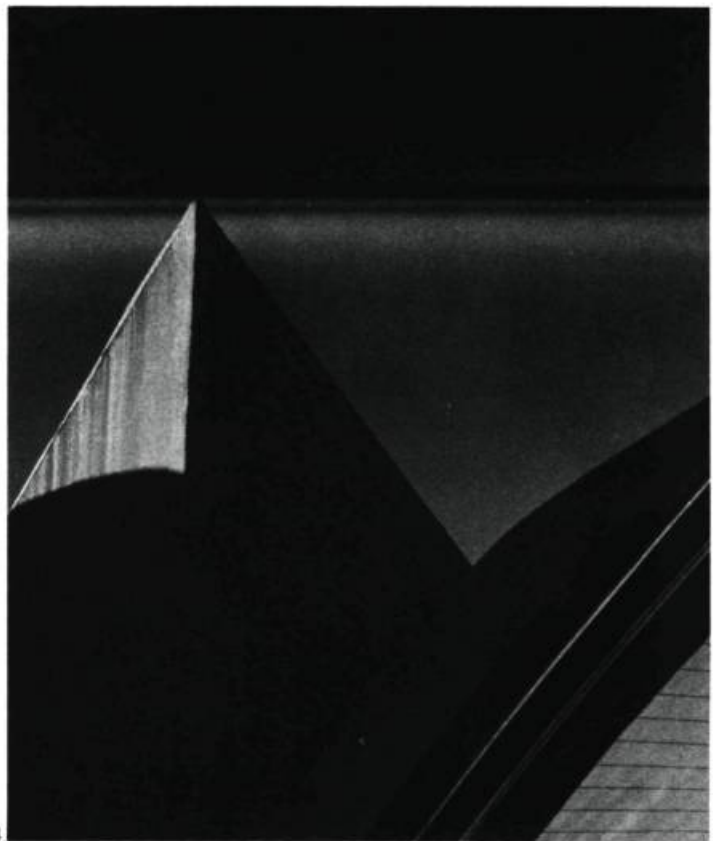
Qui sont-ils? Nous vous en présentons vingt et un<sup>1</sup>, qui vous livrent leurs réalisations et leurs impressions.

A Saint-Isidore d'Auckland, entre village, montagnes et ruisseaux, loin de sa métropole natale, «s'autodidacte» Normand Achim, en alliant la photographie à une multitude de matériaux (grillage, robinet, câble, etc.), le tout formant un jeu théâtral dont la mise en scène se fait avec les sujets. Les photographies de Normand Achim, créations collectives, sont généralement les séquences d'un cinéma fixe en noir et blanc. «Je compte sur le cinéma et le théâtre, sans pour autant délaissier la photographie.»

Madeleine Audette a installé la maison qui lui sert d'atelier au pied du mont Orford. De sa volière aux canaris, dans la forêt qui se fait complice, elle observe la vie, ses formes, ses couleurs, ses mouvements, qui se retrouvent aussitôt sur la toile ou le papier. «Elle a besoin d'espace pour vivre et exprimer ce qui la secoue, ce qui l'emporte vers une libération si longuement recherchée» (Marcel Dubé). Madeleine Audette aime les grands for-



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3. Denyse GÉRIN  
Sans titre.  
Encre et crayon; 72 cm x 57.

4. André LACROIX  
*Bécancour*.  
Photographie; 50 cm x 40.

5. Mimi DUPUIS  
*L'Amante religieuse*, 1978.  
Émail sur cuivre cloisonné  
d'argent; 68 cm x 55.

6. Jacques LADOUCEUR  
*Coulée N° 2*.  
Bois et fibre de verre;  
75 cm x 45.

7. Jacques BARBEAU  
*Souper chez l'artisan*, 1978.  
Huile; 124 cm x 124.

8. Normand ACHIM  
*Tivaillement funèbre*.  
Photographie; 40 cm x 50.



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mats; ils correspondent au geste large et généreux qui la dépeint parfaitement.

«Je fais des images qui voudraient être des calendriers comme ceux dont se souvient mon enfance à Saint-Raphaël de Bellechasse et je serais heureux de voir mes tableaux accrochés dans les cuisines . . . » Jacques Barbeau conçoit ses œuvres en dehors de tout contexte philosophique; il veut une image populaire qui s'identifie aux gens d'un pays, un pays auquel il croit et qu'il regarde vivre tout autour de son atelier de Sherbrooke. Il fut président du RACE, en 1976, puis président du Conseil de la Culture de l'Estrie en 1977.

La sérigraphie et la photographie sont les outils de Francine Beuchesne pour façonner les visions du passant. Images de tous les jours comme le restaurant du coin, la bicyclette au repos, un peu d'une maison, partout où la lumière vient gruger l'ombre et s'y oppose en taches violentes, où la couleur veut pourtant être douce dans ce monde silencieux. A Sherbrooke, l'œil aux aguets derrière son appareil, Francine Beuchesne cherche à capter l'insolite « . . . l'art est une découverte, un apprentissage continu ».

Après ses études à Montréal et à Londres, Jacques Benoît quitte lui aussi la région métropolitaine pour établir son atelier de lithographie à Sherbrooke. Ses œuvres sont des champs énergétiques pleins de vibrations colorées, amplifiées par les contrastes de transparence et d'opacité. Ses *vibratiles* révèlent une écriture personnelle s'adressant aux spectateurs sensibles à la poésie chromatique. «Je ne crois pas en un style mais plutôt à une constante qui se développe lentement à travers une œuvre.» Jacques Benoît peint la lumière, non pas celle de Monet mais celle de la foudre, de l'énergie.

«J'aimerais susciter le coup de foudre, offrir à celui qui regarde mes tableaux le charme d'une mélodie agréable à regarder.» Roxanne Bergeron vit à Sherbrooke, partagée et heureuse, entre sa production, ses amitiés et son amour. «J'ai besoin de dire, j'ai besoin de sentir, j'ai besoin d'être avec les autres.» Elle est venue progressivement de l'abstraction lyrique à la figuration, d'un chromatisme violent à la tranquillité des blancs. Peu préoccupée des problèmes techniques, Roxanne Bergeron passe aisément d'un médium à l'autre sur un même tableau.

Pour découvrir les Cantons de l'Est, Graham Cantieni a dû parcourir, pour sa part, un fameux bout de chemin; il y a dix ans, il arrivait d'Australie. Président du RACE en 1973, 1974 et 1975, il occupe présentement le poste de directeur artistique au Centre culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke. «Actuellement, je fais des maquettes pour des tableaux qui auront 80 pieds de long. Le problème est d'établir jusqu'à quel point il est possible de continuer de sectionner l'œuvre sans qu'elle perde sa tension, son rythme et son dynamisme. Éventuellement, j'arriverai à une occupation de



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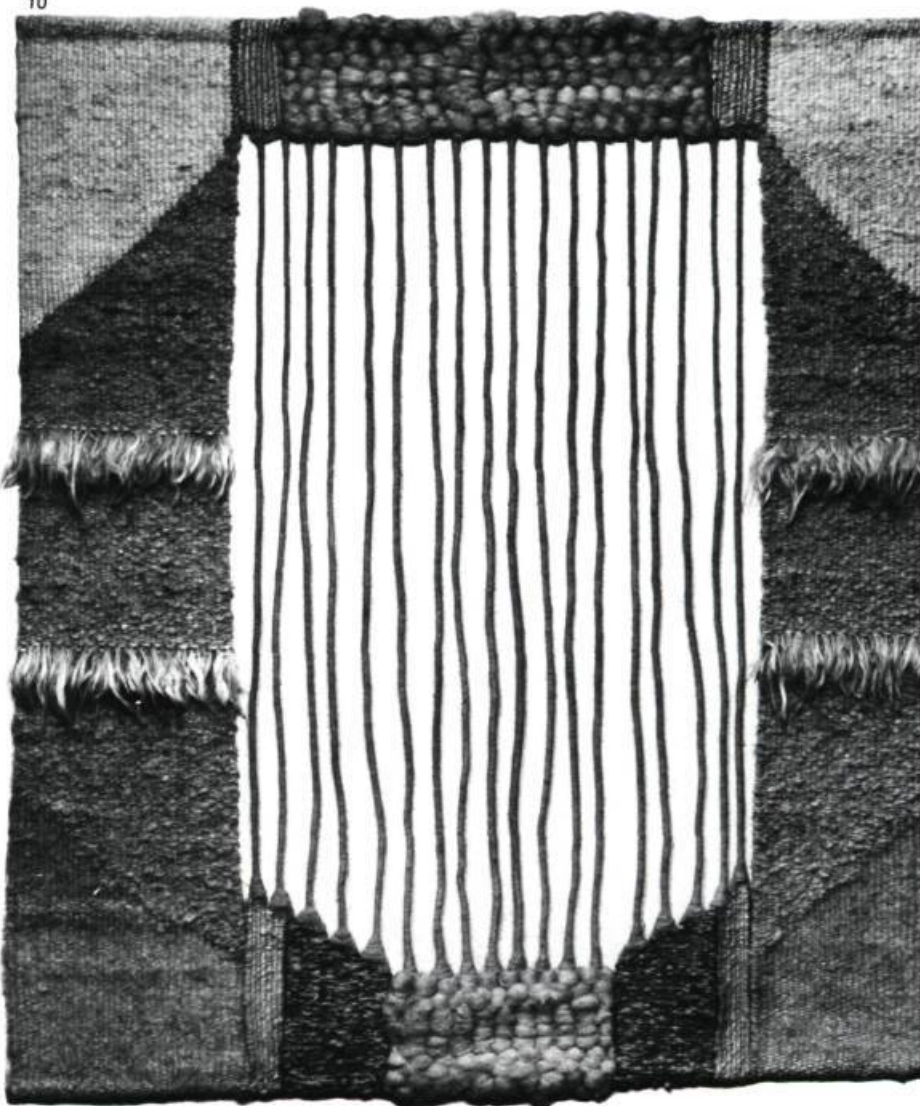
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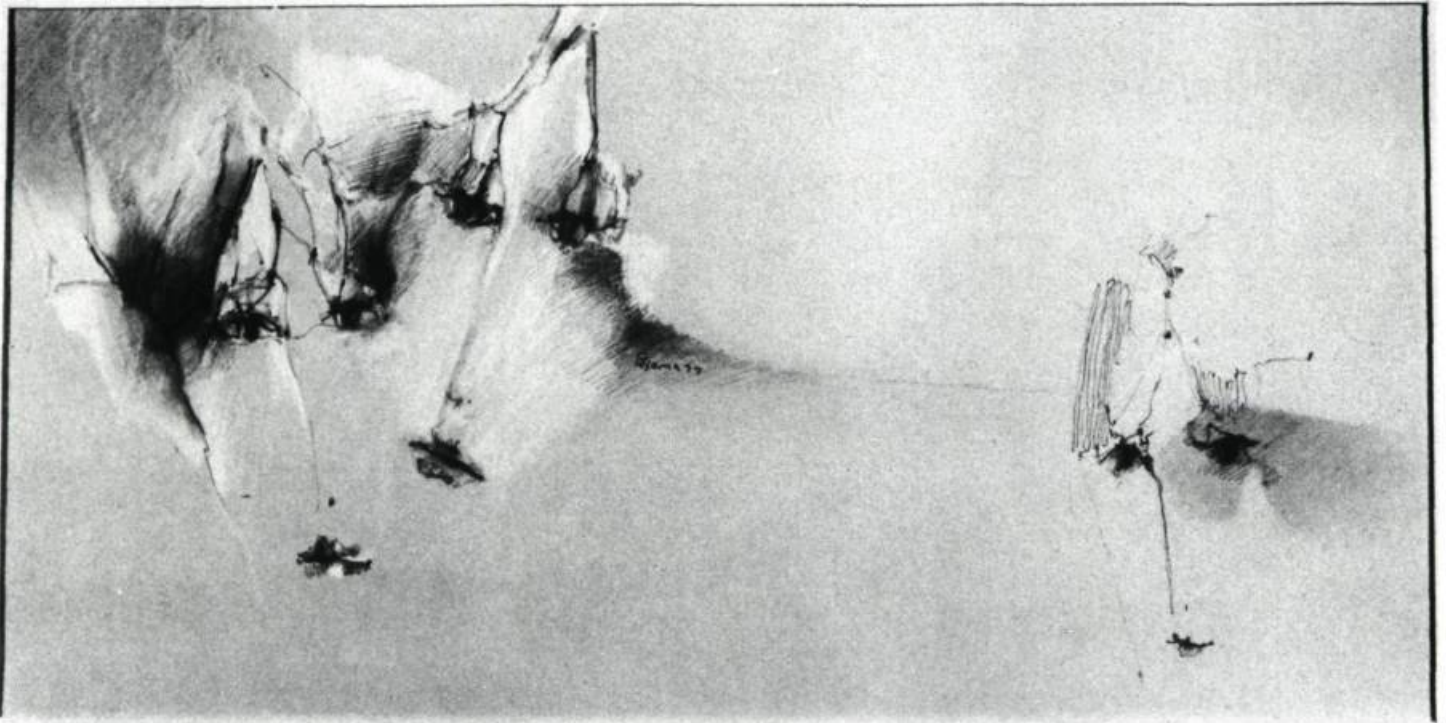
l'espace qui transcende la peinture, l'architecture et la sculpture. L'espace et le temps ne font qu'un.»

«Je voudrais poursuivre ma démarche vers l'illustration d'une mythologie contemporaine; joindre l'animal à l'humain, la végétation à l'homme, tendre vers une symbiose de tout ce qui est vie.» Mimi Dupuis est un émailleur qui arriva de Belgique, il y a plus de dix ans, avec des émaux en forme de masques, de bols et de bijoux. Aujourd'hui, graveur et fermière à Sherbrooke, ce sont des murales qui sortent de son atelier qui sent bon le foin, perché qu'il est tout au haut de la grange. Quelquefois, le cuivre gravé recevra l'encre et sera imprimé pour ensuite recevoir les chatoyantes couleurs des émaux.

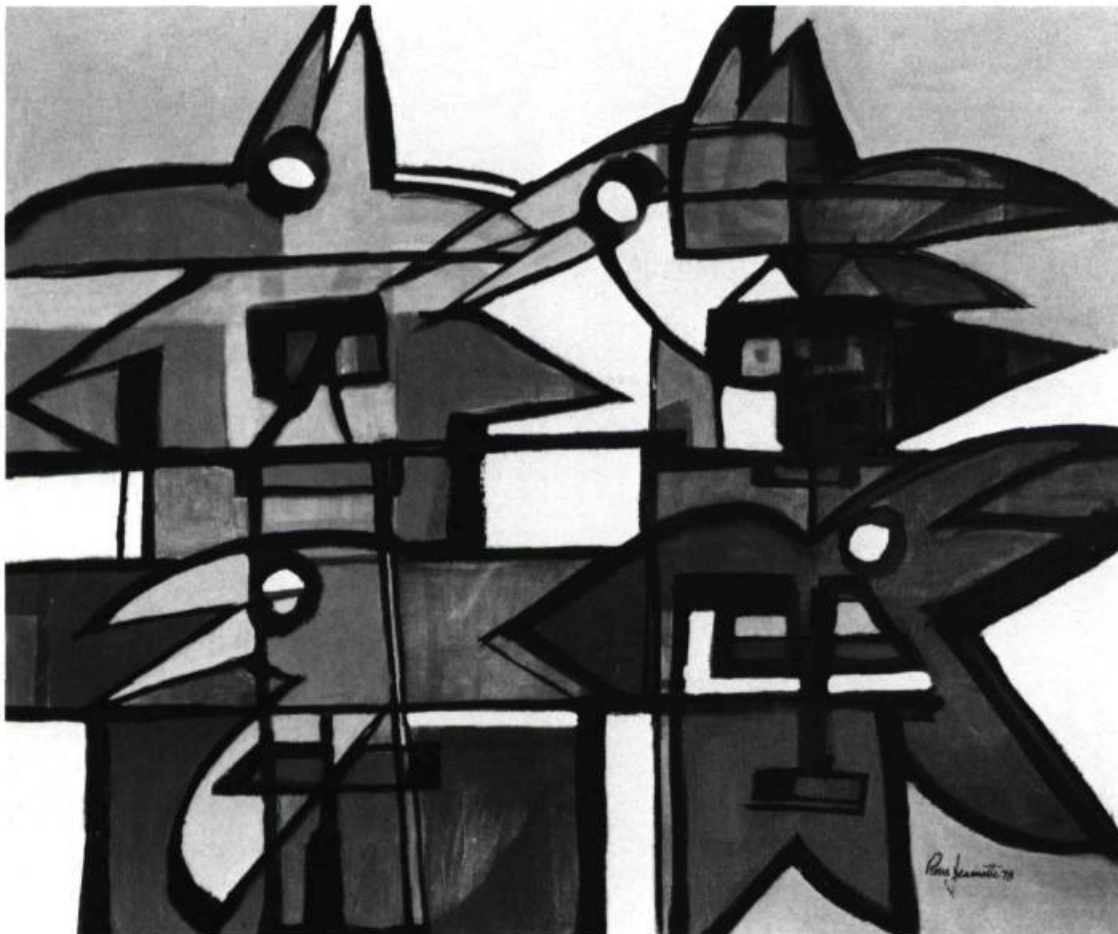
Au bord du beau Memphrémagog, Réginald Dupuis écoute et regarde la nature grandiose qui l'entoure. Fils des Cantons de l'Est, autodidacte, bon vivant, il hume les parfums de la vie que sa personnalité généreuse nous fait découvrir sans cesse. «Depuis l'âge de trois ans, je barbouille et je continue à m'exprimer par la peinture.» Réginald Dupuis est curieux; il expérimente tous les moyens susceptibles de répondre à ses besoins, allant des techniques complexes de la gravure à l'apparente simplicité du crayon de couleur.

A Knowlton, le lac de Brôme à ses pieds, Denyse Gérin trace et écrit ses dessins-poèmes, ses tableaux-pensées, dans un atelier de rêve. «Papier et toile brute stimulent mon inspiration et la guident vers un dépouillement de plus en plus exigeant; la couleur, souvent unique, se glisse subtilement sous la forme en multiples nuances. L'espace devient surface. Les formes s'articulent pour recevoir le gestuel et la ligne, qui devient écriture.» Chez elle,





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9. Graham CANTIÉNI  
*Triptyque Opus 121*, 1978.  
Encre, Conté, crayons de couleur, 70 cm x 160.

10. Anke van GINHOVEN  
*Les Trésors de la neige*.  
Laine brute et filée, poil de chèvre et lin; 209 cm x 178.  
(Phot. Anke van Ginhoven)

11. Roxanne BERGERON  
*Souvenir*, 1977.  
Techniques mixtes; 16 cm x 32.

12. Pierre JEANNOTTE  
*Les Magiciens arrivent*, 1978.  
Acrylique; 75 cm x 90.



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la vie et l'œuvre se confondent, une vie qui se vit et qui devient une œuvre.

Graphiste de formation, boute-en-train dans la plus pure tradition québécoise, Pierre Jeannotte, de Sherbrooke, allie le graphisme et la peinture avec aisance. Oiseaux, poissons et chats forment une bonne part de la ménagerie où aboutit sa recherche. « . . . Je me suis rendu compte que si l'on réfléchit trop au thème et à la technique, l'attitude plastique risque de s'étouffer. » Entre tableaux et dessins, il a réalisé plusieurs sigles et symboles dont ceux de l'Université de Sherbrooke, de la Ville de Sherbrooke et du RACE.

André Lacroix utilisa ses études en arts plastiques pour déboucher rapidement sur la photographie. Dans la chambre noire, au sous-sol de sa maison discrètement sise aux limites de Sherbrooke,

Lacroix le confirme: «Ma conception actuelle de la photographie est directement tributaire de ma formation . . . , une photographie où des éléments figuratifs sont traités non en tant qu'objets mais bien en tant que formes, lignes, masses, qui donnent un résultat qui frôle l'abstraction et qui s'apparente au plasticisme.»

Sur le chemin du Moulin, à La Patrie, le sculpteur Jacques Ladouceur a construit sa maison dans un paysage de montagnes et de forêts, où il est encore question de chantiers, de *pitounes* et d'épinettes. Pourtant, la fibre de verre et le polyester sont les principaux matériaux avec lesquels il réalise son œuvre, qu'il décrit comme une «confrontation de formes rigides et de formes organiques. Ma recherche empirique actuelle s'oriente de façon à minimiser la complexité des formes en faveur de l'impact».

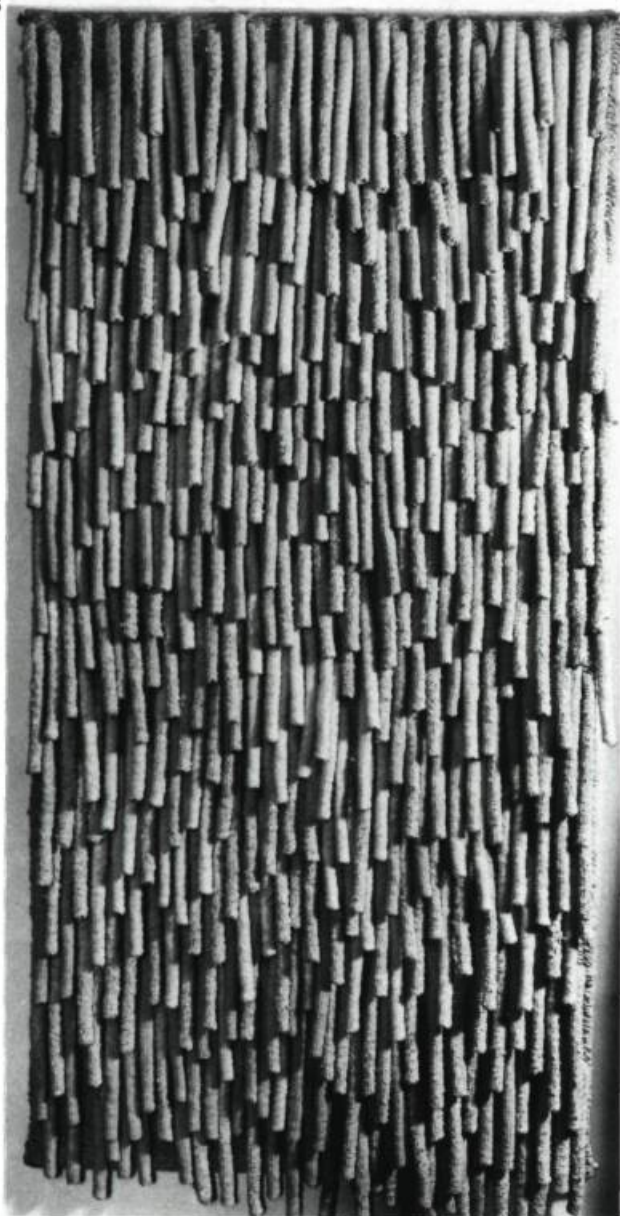
13. Hélène RICHARD  
*Les trois pintades*, 1977.  
Huile; 210 cm x 110.

14. Claude LAFLEUR  
*Passes, passez la belle*, 1977.  
Encre; 69 cm x 44.  
(Phot. Claude Lafleur)

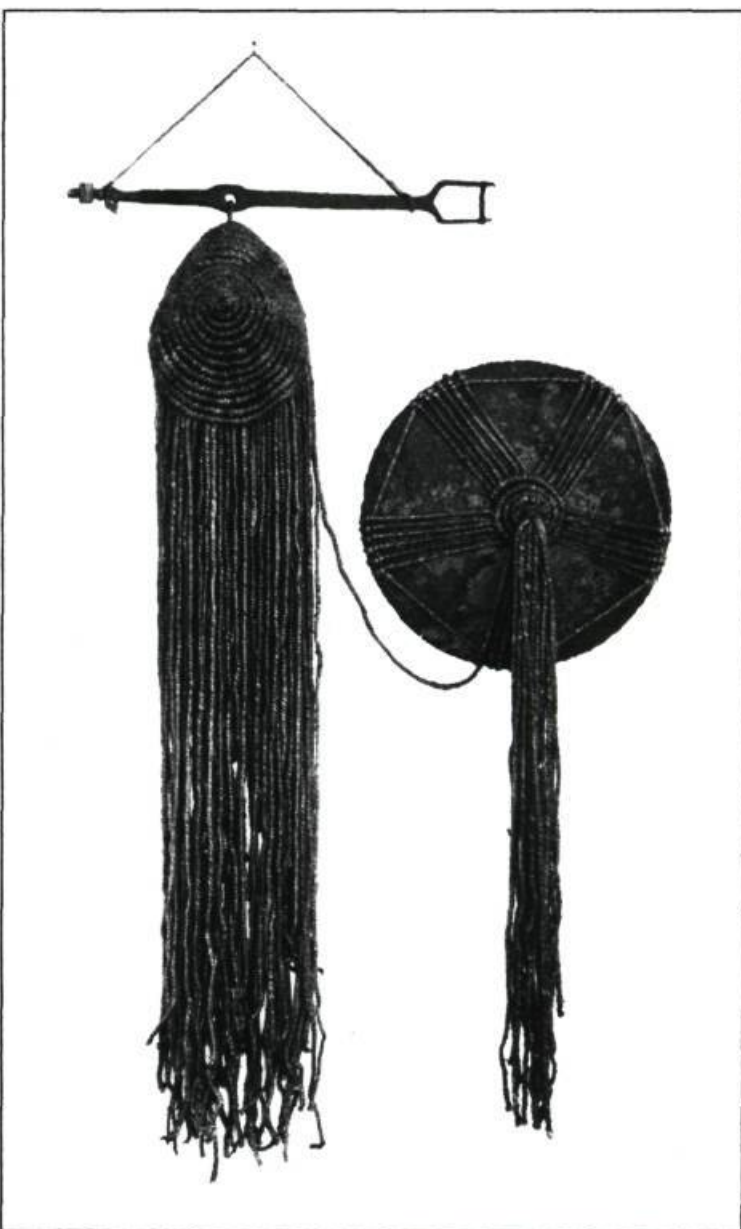
15. Pierrette MONDOU  
*Composition en blanc*, 1977.  
Laine; 175 cm x 88.

16. Monique PARADIS  
*Le Repos du guerrier*, 1978.  
Corde et métal; 2 m 3 x 1,4.

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«L'été vient-il réchauffer les sens, il lorgne les passantes, il leur trouve des airs nostalgiques, un tantinet vieillots, mais portés, précipités avec le vent, il hume surtout les odeurs charnues des folles herbes, le silence des gens pressés . . . Claude Lafleur est un peintre volontairement amoureux des visages qui se sont cristallisés dans ses moments de tendresse . . . Quand Lafleur convie les végétaux dans ses dessins, c'est l'herbier de sa campagne (North Hatley) qui se mue, transperce les amoncellements de sentiers à l'encre noire, à l'ocre parfois» (Gaétan Dostie). Président du RACE en 1977 et en 1978.

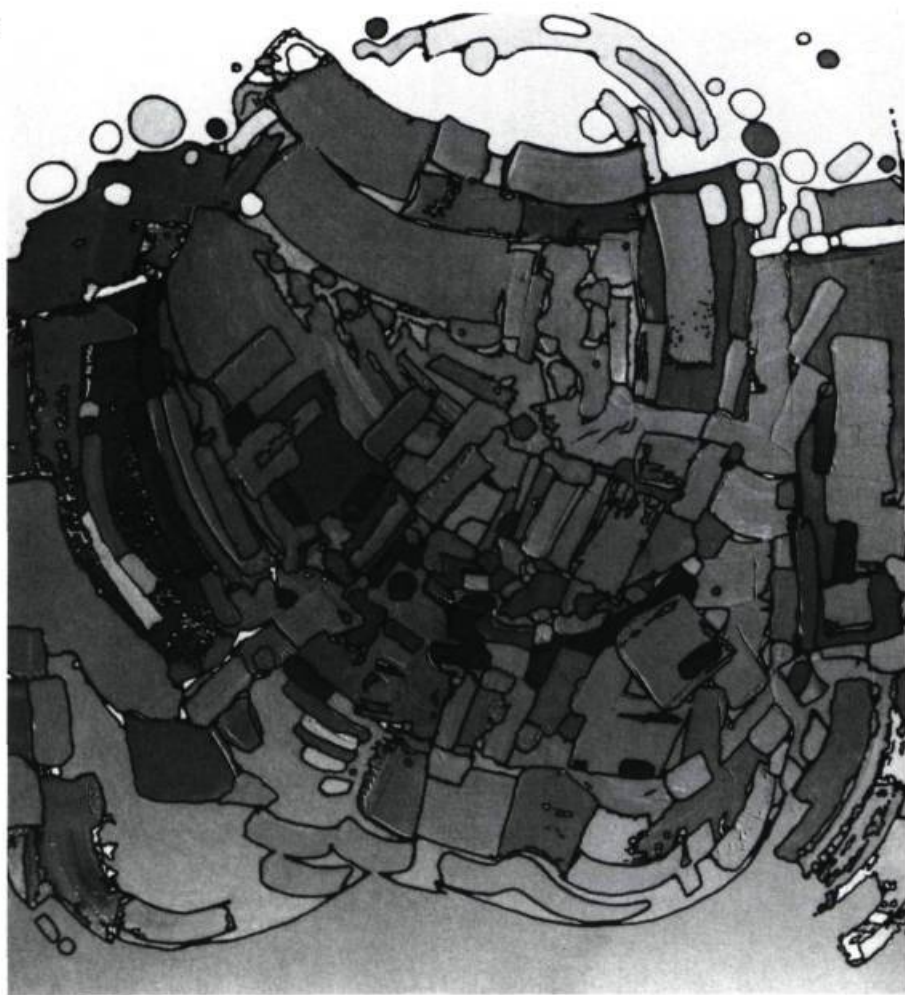
Depuis sept ans, Claude Lafrance habite Sherbrooke où son atelier de graphisme, *Nuit blanche*, a pignon sur rue. Entouré d'objets africains, souvenirs nostalgiques d'un séjour de près de trois ans à la Côte d'Ivoire, il poursuit un travail multidis-

ciplinaire en graphisme, en peinture et en dessin. «Je tends vers un alliage entre le gestuel et l'organisé à travers différents matériaux et techniques où j'espère arriver à une communication originale et bidimensionnelle.» Ses tableaux et ses dessins reflètent les exigences du métier de graphiste qui obligent à varier les matériaux et les techniques.

A L'Avenir, au bout d'un rang, en plein champ, Normand Lefebvre, à la suite d'une production de dessins très figuratifs, voire même réalistes, a débouché sur un monde surréaliste qu'il traduit au crayon de plomb ou à l'acrylique. «Ma démarche m'amène sur des thèmes de plus en plus imaginaires, vers l'abstraction, vers l'imprévisible. Tout cela pourrait fort bien me conduire à la sculpture.» Le monde cosmique de Normand Lefebvre s'organise à partir des formes de l'être humain, de l'oiseau et de la végétation.



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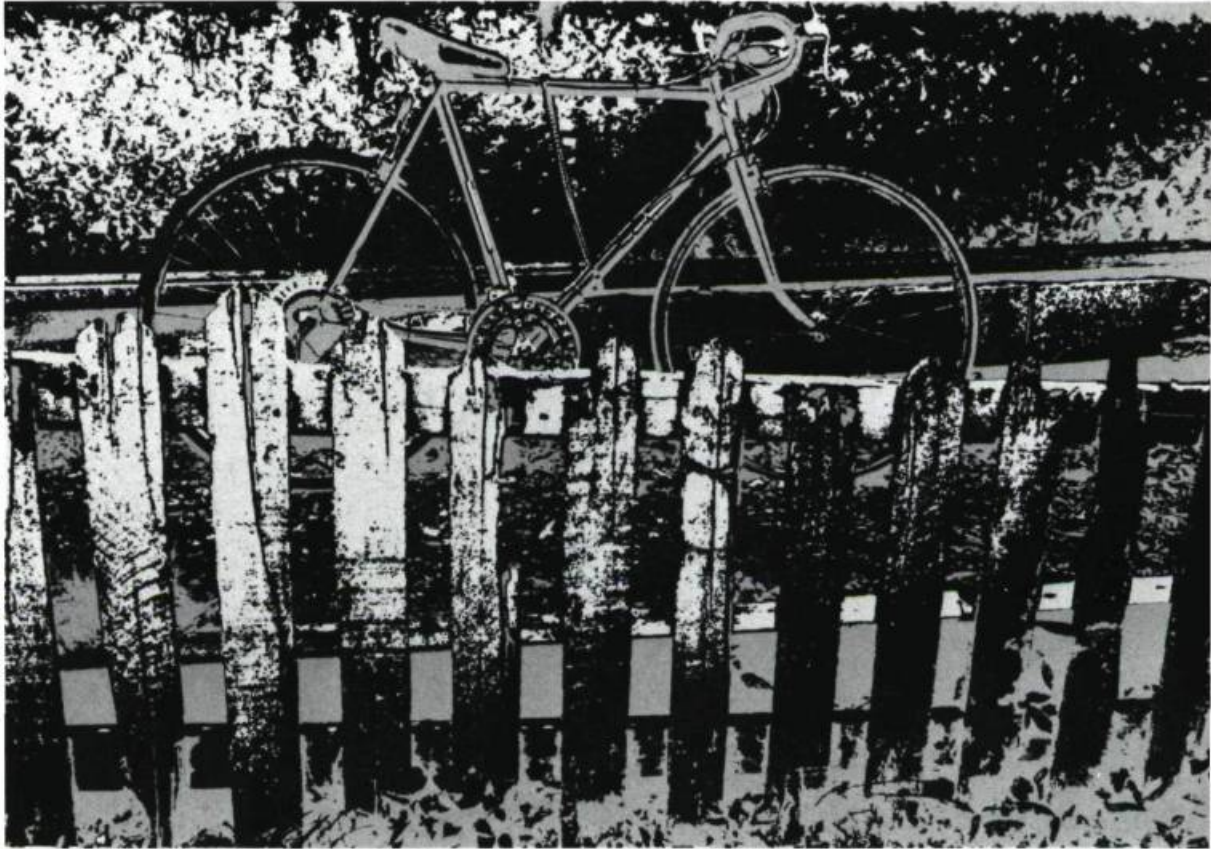
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17. Réginald DUPUIS  
*Chemin Beckett*, 1977.  
Huile; 90 cm x 60.

18. Claude LAFRANCE  
Sans titre, 1977.  
Encre sur acrylique;  
120 cm x 120.

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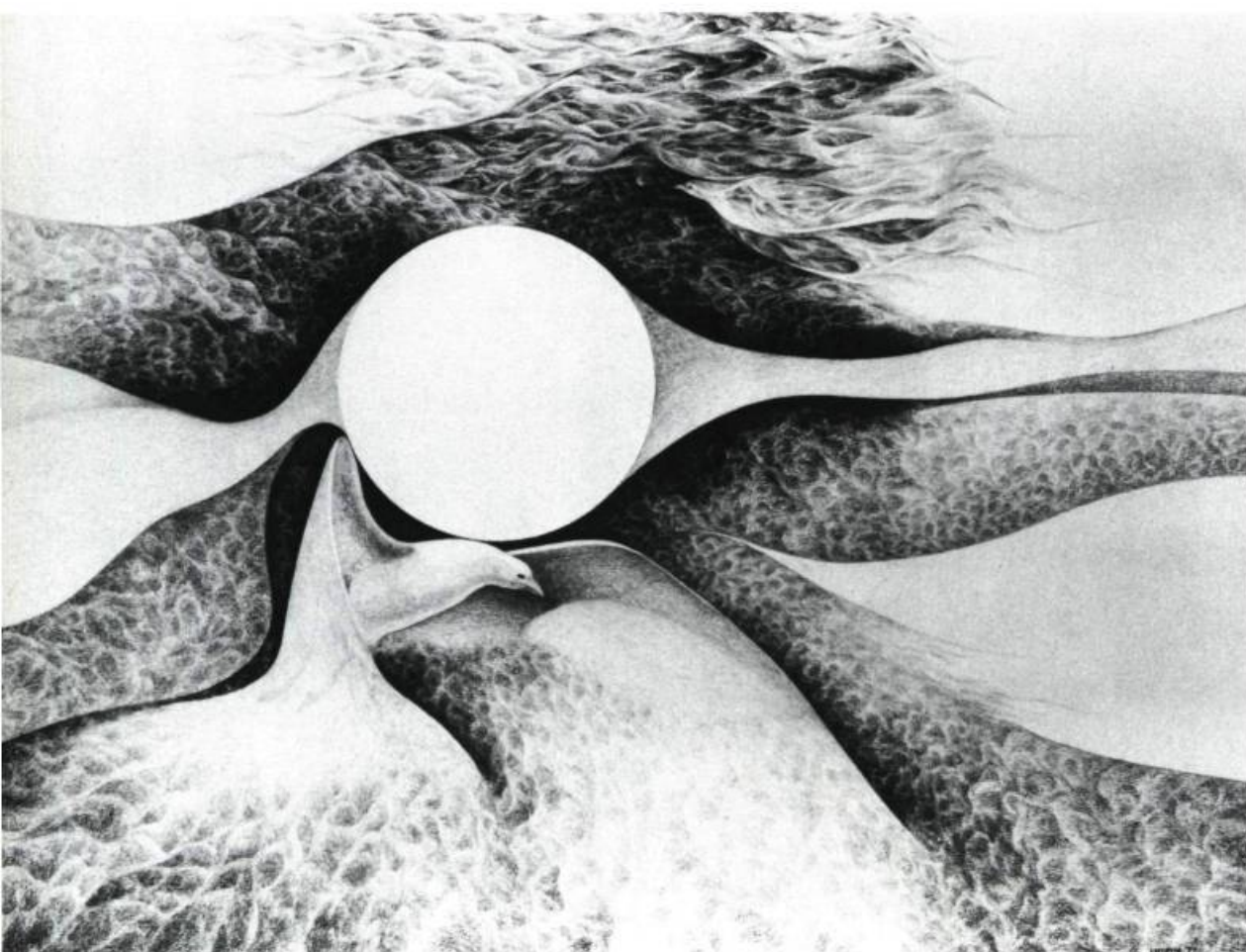


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19. Francine BEAUCHESNE  
*Jardin vert*, 1977.  
Sérigraphie; 42 cm 5 x 50.

20. Arlette VITTECOQ  
*Le Roc pointillé*.  
Photographie; 40 cm x 50.



«Je travaille la tapisserie. Actuellement j'explore la forme du cylindre. Par choix, je me restreins au monochrome afin de pousser au maximum la sensibilité de l'élément. Mes pièces deviennent de plus en plus sculpturales, chevauchant présentement entre la deuxième et la troisième dimension.» Pierrette Mondou est une autodidacte qui travaille à Sherbrooke dans un espace qu'envahit une forêt de cylindres et de lianes de laine aux tons de neige et d'écume.

Monique Paradis dira: «J'ai choisi la nouvelle tapisserie comme moyen d'expression parce que je peux jouer tant avec la couleur et la forme qu'avec la texture et les matériaux, et cela sans barrière. Il n'y a rien d'intellectualisé dans ma démarche; je me laisse être avec ce que je crée tout simplement.» Installée à Sherbrooke depuis cinq ans, Monique Paradis utilise une gamme impressionnante de matériaux, allant du fer de rebut à la laine la plus soyeuse, de la racine au brin de paille.

À Sherbrooke, dans une maison enveloppée de verdure et dans un atelier tout aussi verdoyant d'orangers, de vignes et de lauriers, Hélène Richard peint, dessine et conçoit les sérigraphies qu'elle ira imprimer à l'atelier du RACE. Passée de l'abstraction à la figuration, elle a aussi changé les couleurs vives de sa palette pour des tons de poudre de riz.

«Illustration de personnages et de paysages où les coloris se rejoignent dans un effleurement très pâle, difficilement perceptible parfois, quasi monochrome.» Cette démarche n'est peut-être que le présage d'un monochromisme absolu.

Anke van Ginhoven a quitté les plats paysages de Hollande pour finalement s'établir à Sutton, coin de montagnes et de ravins, où elle élève les moutons dont la laine deviendra tapisserie et où elle façonne la terre qui deviendra sculpture. «J'utilise tout ce qui est à ma portée. Je m'inspire de la géométrie de la nature que je trouve dans les plantes, les racines, etc. J'ai une formation de sculpteur et, pourtant, je ne conçois pas la tapisserie autrement que sur un mur.»

En passant par Québec, Arlette Vittecoq s'est fixée à Sherbrooke avec un solide bagage de photographe qu'elle apporta de sa France natale. «Je travaille par thèmes en essayant d'enregistrer tout simplement ce que je sens. J'évite de tenter des expériences mais je cherche à affirmer une idée grâce à mon expérience.» La vision d'Arlette Vittecoq est originale et convaincante; et elle aborde la photographie comme le peintre son tableau, par la composition, les formes, les textures, mais en noir et blanc.

English Translation, p. 100

21. Normand LEFEBVRE  
*Vent contraire*, 1977.  
Plombagine; 42 cm x 60.

(Sauf indication contraire,  
toutes les photos sont  
d'Arlette Vittecoq)

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 transparency 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 mythology; 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 sparseness 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 exhilarating 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.

At l'Avenir, at the end of a range, in the open field, following the production of very figurative, even realist, drawings, Normand Lefebvre has arrived at a surrealist world that he translates in lead pencil or acrylic. "My development leads me to more and more imaginary themes, toward abstraction, toward the unforeseeable. All this could very well lead me to sculpture." The cosmic world of Normand Lefebvre is organized along the lines of the human being, birds and vegetation.

"I work in tapestry; I am presently exploring the form of the cylinder. By choice, I restrict myself to monochromy in order to force the sensitivity of the element to the maximum. My pieces are becoming more and more sculptural, overlapping now between the second and third dimensions." Pierrette Mondou is self-taught and works at Sherbrooke in a space invaded by a forest of cylinders and vines of wool in shades of snow and foam.

Monique Paradis says: "I have chosen the new tapestry as a means of expression because I can play as much with colour and form as with texture and materials, without barriers. There is nothing high-brow in my development; very simply, I let myself be with what I create." Established at Sherbrooke for the last five years, Monique Paradis uses an impressive range of materials, going from scrap iron to the silkiest wool, from the root to the blade of straw.

At Sherbrooke, in a house enveloped in greenery and in a workshop as green with orange trees, vines and laurels, Hélène Richard paints, draws and conceives the serigraphs that she prints at the AGET workshop. Having gone from abstraction to figuration, she has also changed the bright colours of her palette for shades of rice powder. "The illustration of figures and landscapes where colours meet in a very pale grazing, sometimes perceptible with difficulty, almost monochrome." "This stage is perhaps only the portent of absolute monochromism."

Anke van Ginhoven left Holland's flat landscapes to settle finally at Sutton, a corner of mountains and ravines where she raises the sheep whose wool will become tapestry and where she fashions the earth that will become sculpture. "I use everything that is within my reach. I am inspired by nature's geometry that I find in plants, roots, etc. I have training as a sculptor and yet I cannot conceive of tapestry elsewhere than on a wall."

After living at Quebec, Arlette Vittecoq settled in Sherbrooke with a background as a photographer that she brought from her native France. "I work in themes while trying to record very simply what I feel. I avoid attempting experiments but I seek to assert an idea born of my experience." Arlette Vittecoq's vision is original and convincing; she approaches photography as the painter approaches his picture, through composition, forms, textures, but in black and white.

1. The following artists are also members of AGET:

Anne-Marie Audet-Harris, graphist at Sherbrooke; Ophra Benazon, painter at Lennoxville; Louise Dazé, painter at Sherbrooke; Francine Duguay, painter at Lennoxville; Gilles Larivière, sculptor at Sherbrooke; Pierre Lecompte, painter at Cherry River; Maya Lightbody, graphist at Knowlton; Richard Milot, art historian at Sherbrooke.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

## JOSEPH LÉGARÉ, 1795-1855 — HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE REVIVAL OF QUEBEC PAINTING

By John R. PORTER

*The profound love he had for painting, one of those fine arts still so little known and so little appreciated in this country, where material needs absorb all minds, made me look upon him with feelings of respect.*

(François-Xavier Garneau)<sup>1</sup>

In Quebec the first half of the 19th century was a period of profound social, political and cultural changes. Far from showing himself indifferent to these changes, painter Joseph Légaré took part in them in an intensive fashion. Very active on the Quebec municipal scene, he occupied various official positions and repeatedly demonstrated a great civic understanding. On the national scene, he embraced Papineau's political options, was one of the Quebec region's Patriots arrested in 1837, twice ran in partial elections and was finally named legislative councillor. At the cultural level, he gathered a collection of European pictures very remarkable for the time, opened the first gallery of paintings in the whole country and

strove all his life to spread the taste for fine arts among his compatriots.

In these fields as in his work, Légaré clearly stands out among his most prolific contemporaries, such as Jean-Baptiste Roy-Audy (1778-1848), Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895) and Théophile Hamel (1817-1870). History tells us that these artists were devoted above all to the religious picture and the portrait. In this they filled a growing number of commissions from prominent persons of the Church, the professions and the world of business. If he participated in these trends in the Quebec art of his time, Légaré soon went far beyond them. Thus, in 1828 he received an honorary medal from the Society for the Encouragement of Sciences and Arts in Canada for a picture he composed titled *Le Massacre des Hurons par les Iroquois* (Quebec Museum). To a certain extent this work expressed the artist's wish to leave the beaten path and diversify his production. A similar wish was to manifest itself continually from the eighteen thirties in works in which Légaré would show himself in turn a committed chronicler, an innovating landscapist and a remarkable painter of history.

In 1832 a terrible cholera epidemic decimated the population of Quebec City. Brought by immigrants, it killed no fewer than 3292 persons (2208 in Quebec) and seriously disturbed the life of the town for three months. Légaré showed himself doubly sensitive to the ravages caused by this epidemic. As a citizen, he fought against it within the framework of the Quebec Department of Health and was on a benevolent committee set up to aid afflicted families. As an artist, he painted *Le Choléra à Québec* (Fig. 1), a picture of great dramatic intensity, in which he conveyed his social preoccupations and expressed his profound attachment to his fellow citizens. While playing the rôle of chronicler, the artist displayed a pictorial audacity uncommon in his time. Indeed, we are in the presence of one of the very first night pictures in Canadian painting.

*Le Choléra à Québec* is not an isolated case in Légaré's work. Many of his canvases bear witness to his sensitivity to the misfortunes experienced by his fellow citizens. This is the case in his works devoted to the cave-in at Cape Diamond in 1841, the fires in St. Roch and St. Jean Baptiste wards in 1845, and the fire at the St. Louis theatre in the next year. A living memory of the people through his work, the artist never hesitated to prove concretely his affection for them by participating in collections, in aid committees, etc. Others of Légaré's pictures have a more determinedly political character. *Scène d'élections à Château-Richer* (Quebec Seminary), for example, is a work whose rich contents arises at one time from chronicle, allegory and genre scene. Beyond its intrinsic qualities, we would not be able to grasp all the meaning without knowing certain episodes of the artist's political career to which it is closely linked.

Before Légaré, no Quebec or Canadian painter had been interested in landscape per se. Going beyond tradition, the artist made his first attempts in this genre in the middle of the eighteen twenties. From that time on, he would reveal a more and more pronounced taste for falls, rivers, forests, country houses, certain urban landscapes and, in a general way, picturesque views. Since the Cession, English topographer painters, who were staying in the country, had given proof of a similar interest in the same subjects. Légaré was well acquainted with one of them, Lieutenant-colonel James Patterson Cockburn (1779-1847). Thus it is very possible that contacts of this nature were at the origin of his fondness for landscape. The recent discovery of several of this artist's oils on paper allows us to-day to better measure his talent as a landscapist.

Situated not far from Saint-Ferréol, the falls on the Saint-Anne River attracted a great number of visitors at that time through their picturesque, romantic appearance. In 1840 a newspaper, *The Quebec Mercury*, published a long description of these falls, emphasizing the impressive beauty of a place where the river, after subdividing on one part of its course, reunites its waters which are then engulfed at the bottom of an immense rocky cauldron<sup>2</sup>. It was this spot that Légaré painted in an oil on paper preserved at the Quebec Seminary (fig. 2). The brushwork of his paintings shows great skill. In this work the painter faithfully portrayed the movement of the water, the many levels of strata and of the rocky walls. His sketch presents a beautiful range of ochres, greens and turquoises whose luminosity is accentuated by the somber rock of the foreground.

Among the many other landscapes painted by Légaré, *Le Bassin de la rivière Etchemin, à Saint-Anselme* (fig. 3) presents a particular interest. The young parish of Saint-Anselme was famous at the time for its charming and picturesque sites<sup>3</sup>. To emphasize their variety, Légaré had recourse to an astute solution. In the foreground of