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Editorial : Utopia and Realizations

By Andrée PARADIS

The conference on Art and its Social Responsibilities held in Montreal last February at Sir George Williams University and the Saidye Bronfman Centre was too clamorous to be really significant; the supremely moderating element, the New York critic, Harold Rosenberg, reaffirmed his concern about the separation of the North American artist from social realities; this constitutes — according to him — a serious threat to the survival of painting as a serious activity : "In the face of the mounting pace of social and political upheavals, the program of shunning political fact in art has resulted in increasing frustration. Artists stirred by social indignation have found themselves locked in a medium that has lost its voice. Politics among artists has consisted of accepting a package of ready-made issues — peace, civil rights — while renouncing the ability to contribute to an imaginative grasp of the epoch. Artists have protested, but not their art — a matter of signing the attendance record but being present in name only. Both in the United States and abroad, art has been denounced as part of the system for preserving the status quo . . . Painting has, of course, other interests than politics, but a too long immersion in itself has infected art with ennui. Painting needs to purge itself of all systems that place so-called interests of art above the interests of the artist's mind. Abstract Expressionism liberated painting from the social-consciousness dogma of the thirties; it is time now to liberate it from the ban on social consciousness."

Thus at a time of a far-seeing warning signal that should be remembered, and of a troubled period when art cannot venture to be sterile while finding its way with regards to fashion rather than life, we learned that Sweden, on the other hand, and due to a good number of artists who are between thirty and forty, is experiencing a successful new phase, and explosion in all the tendencies. In this part of the world there is less talk of social conscience and more of reality. Having art accepted into the reality of life by means of the image is again becoming "an instrument of truth". H. G. Pontus Hulten, director of the Contemporary Art Museum in Stockholm, an unrivalled animator, who is responsible for his museum growing to reach Europe and the international scene, as well as for the publicizing and acceptance of contemporary Swedish artists abroad, recognizes the difficulty of handling the image, but, he is convinced that it does not have its equal in reality. He adds, to prevent any misunderstanding, that "this reasoning applies to the image that is representational as well as to the one that is not".

The presentation in Paris by Animation-Recherche-Confrontation, in February 1971, of an exhibition of eight young Swedish artists allows for some interesting observations. The exhibition was the idea of the director of the A.R.C., Pierre Gaudibert, who is himself very aware and open to the research of young people. He went to Sweden and after examining and studying Swedish art for one month made a selection about which he notes the absence or the lack-lustre vitality (beginning of 1970, date of the selection) of the "minimal", "poor" and "conceptual" currents. On the other hand, beside a constructivism which is affirmed, there is the image that reflects political commentary, at times brutal and satirical, at times more enigmatic, more secret, more hunted by a necessity to define human and social relationships, and finally there is the new figuration that completely utilizes all techniques of assemblage, of setting, to translate under the cloak of modernity, a Nordic reality made up of myths, dreams, contacts with nature and age-old nostalgia.

On the other hand, the evolution of Swedish art is bound to an artistic policy whose merits lie in creating a balance between the private and public sectors, and in making good use of education, an indispensible support, which our cultural policies are now seeking to establish, not without some difficulty, so hostile is our consumer society to creation.

In Canada the responsibility of cultural policies falls on the federal, provincial, and increasingly on the municipal governments. When the policies are not the stakes of purely political wrangles that finally harm the planning of the artistic and cultural development of this country, they represent one of the most important initiatives attempted up to this point in North America with a view to creating a climate favourable to artistic creation and diffusion.

It is sufficient to recall a few important milestones established within less than thirty years. The creation of Arts Councils on three levels of government, of a department of Cultural Affairs in Quebec, which has contributed to the rise of the interpretative arts, the plastic arts and literature; the development of the Radio-Canada Society, the national and provincial film boards, the quite recent creation of Information Canada, so many organizations indispensable to diffusion; finally, the studies that are too little known, of the Inquiry Commission into the teaching of art in Quebec (Rioux Commission) whose mandate consisted in preparing a complete reform of the teaching of art in Quebec, a real foundation stone that will determine the cultural needs of coming generations. Unfortunately, the limited distribution of the report, the fact that it has not yet been translated, despite the manifest interest of English-speaking people, the absence of a serious examination of the recommendations, indefinitely delay its implementation and demonstrate once more our tendency towards non-utilization.

Moreover, the rather recent intervention of the Secretariat of State into the field of cultural policies allows us to hope for new support. A truly realistic policy of museums and publishing is being prepared; it is at once complementary and indispensible to the progress that will eventually be made in all levels of education. Its dictates concern the protection of the national heritage, its diffusion and the use of publishing on a very large scale as a cultural means.

In the course of Consultation 1 : Museums 70, on Tuesday, February 16, in Ottawa, Secretary of State, Gérard Pelletier, defined a certain number of priorities which should lead to specific programmes. They appear important to us and we shall return to the analysis of a few of them in the July issue that will be devoted to the Museums of Quebec; but is seems important to quote it in detail for the reader who is interested in forthcoming policy.

1) The establishment of an overall plan governing the use of the National Museums collections and covering such matters as presentations in Ottawa, travelling exhibitions, and long-term loans of items from the national collections to museums that are able to provide the necessary security and make effective use of them; a list would also be prepared of items that should normally remain permanently at the Museums because of their fragility, size or irreplaceability;
2) the establishment of a list of museums — which could be called "affiliated museums" — based on population distribution in Canada. We could thus have about twenty affiliated museums covering the whole country and providing the communities they serve with access to those items in our collections which do not, for some reason, have to remain in one place;
3) the drafting of the conditions on which museums could be given "affiliated status", and receive capital and operating grants to enable them to provide the necessary qualified staff and physical environment to ensure full and safe utilization of items loaned to them;
4) a study of the additional needs of the National Museums in terms of the acquisitions necessary to bring the collections up to the standards of quality and quantity required by this expansion of their use;

5) a study of the space needs of the National Museums;
6) the establishment of a network of "National Exhibition Centres" to complement the affiliated museums; the Centres would benefit under exhibition-grant agreements and their staffs would include cultural development officers;
7) the formation of a "National Circulating Collection" which would be used to supply regional circuits, so as to reach as wide a public as possible;
8) the establishment of a "National Popularization Program" in conjunction with Information Canada, the CBC, the National Film Board and the Canada Council;
9) at the same time, a scientific study of the clientele of the National Museums and those museums that could qualify for "affiliated status";
10) a start on the preparation of an inventory of the major collections in Canada;
11) a check on exports of works of art and objects that are part of our national heritage.

The foreseen legislation should assure the safeguarding of the national heritage and we trust that it will take into consideration the commentary of the Association of Canadian Museums on certain aspects of the fiscal revisions proposed by Finance minister Edgar Benson, which will affect the purchase and donation of art objects. Canadian museums are asking that equal treatment be given all recognized art museums according to article 62 (1) (2) of the Law on the taxation of revenue. Contributions to museums and art galleries should be encouraged, not discouraged.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique

By Shirley RAPHAEL

If, when writing an article about Richard Lacroix you start to write it using "hip" New York art jargon, then we can call Richard Lacroix a "superstar".

In Canada he is the equivalent of the Americans like Andy Warhol, or any of the other current favourites that make news in art magazines and newspapers the most often.

Richard Lacroix is one of the best examples of a Quebec artist, who stayed in Montreal, who hasn't lost his French Canadian identity, but at the same time, by being himself, and doing work that is himself and no one else, he has managed to exhibit his work in international art circles as well as being written up in major art publications and winning international awards.

Walk into any top gallery in New York such as the Martha Jackson, Richard Feigen or any other of 25 galleries or more across Canadian and the United States. You will find the prints of Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique on display in all of them.

What counts and what is most important to note is that Richard Lacroix is smart enough to have travelled and studied the art market and the competition, so that when he came back to work in Montreal he realized what he had to do. He knew that the only way to have his work included in the top places was to produce work that was professionally as good or better than what was being offered.

For this he deserves much credit — he is a very realistic and sensible young man.

He is a "superstar" because he is a creative artist in many different mediums. Painter, printmaker, sculptor, designer, film maker — such as the 6-minute film made in 1967 shown at Expo "Les Mécaniques" a 10 sculptural/kinetic/musical instruments film that was for the active participation of the spectators. He also made a 3-minute film "Fusion des Arts" a kinetic/light & sound plastic sculpture.

During the month of December 1970, Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique held an open house at the atelier at 4677 St. Denis St. For those who didn't have a chance to see what is being done there, you can visit the place any Monday or Tuesday.

Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique are like no other graphic group in the whole of Canada. It is completely professional and operates like a business — they have salesmen on the road who call on the different galleries, they send work off to have shows of The Guilde Graphique and there is an office and files set up that is organized and ready to receive gallery owners, museum officials or people who want to buy prints at any time.

When I interviewed him in December for this article he had just finished illustrating the poems of Alain Granbois, one of Quebec's most important poets. The rich etchings he did to go with the poems were truly jewels. Rich texture, intense colour... simple, yet dazzling in their texture and so suitable to the text. There are two versions issued by the publisher, Fides. Two original hand-signed editions of which there are 50 and 75 copies, and the commercial one of 700 copies.

He also created a series of small prints which show a panorama of seven years of his artistic work. These are hand-signed copies that sell at a very low price and highlight his most important themes during this time. You can see the gradual development of his work from seven years ago to what he is doing today.

Even though he was born in 1939, look at all he has accomplished.

He had a Canada Council scholarship in 1961-1962 to study at the various print workshops in Europe. He spent most of his time at Atelier 17 of S. W. Hayter in Paris. He returned to Canada in 1963 with two antique printing presses that he found in France and a set of gelatin rollers. He set up a studio above a garage on St-Christophe Street. For the next two years he concentrated on printing his own plates.

In 1964 he founded the Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques with assistance from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec and the Canada Council.

He invited other printmakers to work in the atelier and they did come and work to the tune of over 150 artists. The atelier (at this writing) might have to close unless grants come through from the government. This "open workshop" which is stimulating because of the printmakers around was where the idea for The Graphic Guild was born.

In 1966 he founded The Graphic Guild (La Guilde Graphique) dedicated to the publishing of original Canadian prints on a cooperative basis, with assistance from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec and the Canada Council. The government helped start this private enterprise; now it is a flourishing business that is self-supporting.

Editions are printed of the work of Robert Savoie, Tobie Steinhouse, Kittie Bruneau, Molinari, Tousignant, Hurtubise, Barry Wainwright and other prominent artists.

This thoroughly professional venture is similar to the publishing houses elsewhere in the world. By establishing The Graphic Guild Lacroix forced other Canadian printmakers to work and think more professionally and in a way strive to get into the international market. Each print that comes out of The Guilde Graphique (the prints are printed by professional printers, the artists just do the design) bears the "chop" or stamp of The Guilde Graphique. A "chop" is an identifying mark on the bottom of a print to either say who published the print or who printed it. It is usually stamped so that it comes out as an embossed seal.

He has made slides of the different graphic media and has lectured with these slides to the guides at the Montreal Museum and to groups at the Saidye Bronfman Centre. He has also printed up an illustrated folder explaining the difference between etching, silkscreen and lithography and these are available to those who write to him.

As Lacroix himself says, "I want to create fields of color and energy. I want the color to be intense and alive." His work is similar to what he himself is like; alive, intense and colorful.

The Canadian artistic world could use more Richard Lacroix's... more artists who have drive and ambition and know exactly where they are going.

Headquarters of the Civil Service Alliance of Canada

By Jacques FOLCH-RIBAS

It is indeed a rare pleasure to present an architecture that is beyond the formalism of fashion and is yet a present-day architecture, and to contemplate intense simplicity, in an era devoted to mediocre neo-baroqueism. The Civil Service Alliance of Canada had this building constructed to house its headquarters. The latter occupies the three top stories. Half of the ground floor serves as a conference centre. On the other stories there are offices. In the basement, a garage and a cafeteria.

The lot is long and narrow. In order to emphasize the importance of the building, it was decided that it should be set near the busiest street. As the city of Ottawa is to make a park on the other side of Gilmour street, the architects thought that a form other than the traditional rectangle was in order. The zoning rules requiring a long and narrow building, the elliptical form was retained. Thus, the curve of the side walls softens the mass of the building and integrates it perfectly with the character of the future environment.

The circular form occurs again in the window arches, in the bricks with rounded patterns, and in the fibreglass panels. The mass is unified by the dark colour of the brownish-purple brick, whose surface slightly gleams The fibreglass ornamentation in a bronze colour that covers the tympanum beams, the glass and aluminum frames which are also this colour, all this adds to the effect of unity.

The exterior is lighted by wmhite globes, set up on each brick pillar. This ring of lights emphasizes the curves of the building. The two vertical sections in the front and rear of the building are identical. The brick pillars alternatingly contain concrete columns and air registers. The side walls contain the fire escapes.

The frame of the building is reinforced concrete. All the floors, including that of the garage are slabs of concrete. The rounded lateral walls and the central core contribute to the structural rigidity, necessary to withstand eventual earth tremors in the Ottawa region.

The building is completely air-conditioned with an interior and perimetric control. The machine room covers two thirds of the top floor. Above, hidden by a wooden oval screen, painted in a dark colour, is the machinery of the elevators and the refrigeration units of the air conditioning system. Each storey is lighted by recessed fluorescent lights in a ceiling of acoustical tiles. The building is also equipped with a smoke and fire detection system. Three conference rooms on the ground floor can accommodate 40, 50, and 90 people. The moveable partitions permit these three rooms to be transformed into only one. The rest-rooms and cloak-rooms are adjacent to the foyer, near the main entrance. In the basement are the duplicating, postal, and printing services, the parking areas and the cafeteria which can serve 150 people at one time.

The total usable floor space is 136,900 square feet, with 10,400 square feet per storey. The building cost $3,170,000 including landscaping. The cost per square foot, except for the underground parking and the moveable partitions in the offices is set at $19, which makes this architecture an example of economic beauty too.

Only a few small criticisms could be made (we thing especially of the two service entrances made in the oval walls). The implantation of the building, its design, its perfect inclusion, and its relationship with the parking and access ramp in the basement, everything combines in a cautious lyricism and shows a lack of self-satisfaction that is to be seen in few buildings in Ottawa. This is a spirit to retain and to repeat.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Creation : Operation "Why not ?"

by Bernard LÉVY

The idea of uniting art and efficiency, artists and technicians, is not new: it is rather an entire state of mind that must be renewed. To do this, the groupe Création simply proposes an original way of utilizing present day means. It is still only a plan which combines ideas with varied ramifications, and outlines that would be worth completing.

We met Marcelle Ferron (painter) and Gérard Beaulieu (professor) who undertook to plan in a rational and systematic way the development of the group to which they belong. Through their statements we shall present the objectives that they set for themselves and the main stages through which they intend to pass to make Création a centre whose presence and necessity is incontestable.

Création: the group and its intentions are little-known. Création is the name of the movement that Marcelle Ferron and Yves Trudeau began two years ago in Montreal. This organization essentially sought to be a meeting place for Quebec artists of every discipline and technologists. In this respect, it has not changed its orientation. Since then, other objectives have been added to the initial project. As for financial resources, they have not changed: they remain about nil. On the other hand, technical resources today seem less scanty and, at any rate, more promising than in the beginning. And yet, let there be no mistake, Création is still only at the outline stage and does not even have a secretariat.

The inventory

The fundamental objective for Création is to become a centre of information on the arts to be used not only by artists and creators, but also by technicians and especially by the whole of the Quebec community. Marcelle Ferron explains "that there is no question of setting up a federation, an association or a group of artists. These already exist (Association of Professional Artists, Association of Sculptors, etc.) with a specific role: to protect the arts and the interests of those who have chosen to make art their profession". In fact, the groupe Création could be defined as both an instrument of communication and a catalytic agent, since by simplifying exchanges and putting information in common that is easily available to all, it will stimulate research and creation. The ivory tower is no more.

"An inventory must immediately be made of university and industrial research centres, to be used for artistic and cultural purposes. It is necessary to know the people who are working in these centres and ask them to collaborate in creative experiments. We must scrutinize the environment in which we are living and distinguish its real or potential dynamics", Marcelle Ferron has thus, in three firm and decisive sentences, outlined the main aim of the first step: the inventory.

For the time being everything rests on a simple compilation of our assets, a fastidious task which is seldom thought of

and which has always been neglected. To index the existing means, to know the individuals who are available, to take advantage of all the initiatives, to convince the directors of enterprises or laboratories that their collaboration could be useful to the development of their own industry or the advancement of their own research work, to do away with prejudice, there are a few priorities to be included in the inventory. Already the first meetings have had favourable results: chemists, electronics technicians, designers, architects, and musicians enthusiastically accepted the idea of an interrelation of the arts and technology. Thus Création intends to be primarily an exchange platform.

For the time being a committee of nineteen members is contributing to successfully completing this first step. It is composed of: Serge Garant (music), Paul Buissonneau (theatre), Gilles Carle and Raymond Brousseau (cinema), Archvir Gundjian (electronics), Jeanne Renaud (dance), Gaétan Beaudin (ceramics), Jean-Pierre Beaudin (photo and graphics), Michel Leblanc (architecture), Claude Goulet (chemistry), Pierre Gauvin and Jean Labbé (audio-visual), Marcelle Ferron (painting), Peter Gnass (sculpture), Gérard Beaulieu (sciences), Michel Brulé (sociology), Jean Saint-Cyr (industrial design), Maurice Demers (cultural animation), Roland Giguère (engraving, poetry). The committee was joined by advisors: Marcel Rioux (sociologist), Pierre Champagne (jurist), Jean Zalloni (technical advisor), and Luc Durand (architect). About sixty other persons select, support, and even orient certain initiatives.

An exchange bank

When a great volume of information will not stop coming in and will by systematically catalogued, indexed, filed, and analyzed, that is to say, when the first phase will have taken on sufficient volume, a simple telephone call to the Création group will permit for example, even an unknown artist to put forth the problem that is hindering his creative process. He will then be provided with the information (documents, references, etc.) that can enlighten him; he will be introduced to another artist grappling with similar difficulties; he will be introduced to one or several technicians able to propose solutions; he will be shown what industrial company could best help him to successfully conclude what he is undertaking. In short, there is no longer a question of remaining isolated.

This abundant and varied information will contribute to modifying the very work that the artist intended to produce. In fact, an organization like Création could serve as a link. The universities are in possession of precious information that is not widely diffused, and is consequently rather inaccessible. This has to be classified and it is fairly impossible for one person working alone to do. Marcelle Ferron and Gérard Beaulieu envisage an effective collaboration with the University of Quebec. How? As a satellite of this institution, Création would benefit from certain material advantages (computers, space, etc.) As a liason agent between industry and the university, Création could play an active role in the organization of exchanges and projects. Everything is to be gained from such a project. According to Gérard Beaulieu, industrialists would be astonished to discover the vitality and originality of the creative spirit of twenty year old youths: "They are not unaware", he assures, "of the problems of the contemporary world. They have something to say and they ask only to tackle *real* difficulties. We should be able to organize competitions on themes like the environment of a student residence, the development of recreational parks, etc."

Why not?

And finally, why set up an organization like Création? Marcelle Ferron replies, "to gain a veritable popular culture, to do away with the artist-idol, so that art can actually go into the street and the street can become more beautiful, to live better, and then, why not?" Gérard Beaulieu adds: "It is a question of an extensive movement, firmly rooted in the social clan", in other words it is above all a collective service whose goal is to favour creation in all its forms. It is open to all those who by their work reveal original ways to creation.

Utopia? A golden dream? Certainly, but . . . but we can compare the efforts of the Création group with other attempts at integration of the arts and technology: *Intermedia* in Vancouver, *Intersystem* in Toronto, *Experiment in Art and Technology* (E.A.T.) in New York, then in Montreal. It is true that it is hard to compare their resources and objectives. These organizations address themselves in fact only to recognized artists and technicians, Création aims at the widest and most inclusive participation. Finally, is it completely impossible to bring together all those who have something to invent?

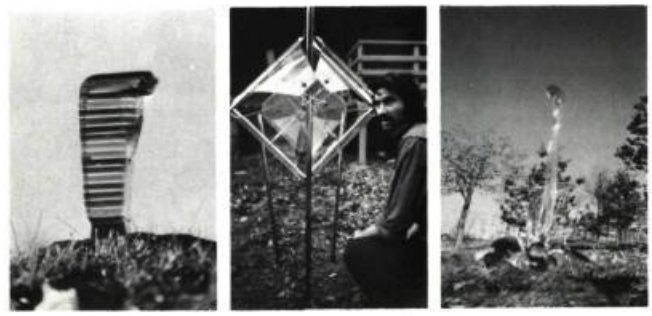
(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Some young sculptors decide to use plastic

By Nicole ROBERT

Plastic, a twentieth century phenomena, is a world apart. Its appearance answers an increasingly pressing human need, a desire for refinement and getting back to basics, a need for space and light.

We are already familiar with the use architects and designers have made of plastic. A few young sculptors are deciding to use it.



MICHEL LUSSIER, 22 years old, tried working with this new material. He found that the transparency of plastic can give an inner dimension to form. Inside his sculptures we find an aspect of the exterior structure, an aspect an opaque material would ordinarily conceal from us. This is creating a form within a form. The illusion of light renews our perception of the conjuncture of the contents with the container. A large-scale work can even integrate its environment.

His technique can be divided into three phases : first, the lamination, the superimposition of coloured acrylic surfaces pressed together. In his work the lamination is horizontal but it can also be vertical. At this stage another process may be used, the casting or formation of a mould in which resin, polyester or acrylic may be cast. It is thus possible to obtain very diverse forms and inner angles.

The second phase is the cutting of the plastic block that is thus formed from the sheets that have been pressed together. The cutting is done by means of files and saws.

Then comes the polishing, the last and longest of the operations; ten different abrasives are needed to obtain the desired transparency.

Michel Lussier tells us that working with plastic led him to change his vocabulary of forms. Because of transparency, the form must be considered not only in terms of its contour or space, but the potential of the inner forms must also be taken into account. Moreover, this leads to research dealing with the electro-luminescence of plastics, that is to say, the incorporation of the use of an electric current with the plastic that will give it its colour and make it vary as the frequency of current changes. Thus, the electrical current colours the inner forms and then in turn travels towards the exterior contour causing the entire form to appear.

JACQUES DAVID, 24 years old, who took part in three symposiums in Longueuil in 1969, in Haute-Rive and in Quebec in 1970, uses plastics in a different way. He integrates another material, chrome steel, into plastic. He chose plastic for its special properties, which other materials do not have : its transparency, colour, and especially its flexibility and dynamism. He puts this flexibility of plastic to the test by creating stress with metal wires that evoke forms and produce a play of graphism.

Thus his technique calls on no artificial means. He uses purely physical phenomena such as stress, suspension, the centre of gravity and the point of attraction.

His total form is the result of a conflict between the metal and plastic materials, a conflict that is never definitive, where one draws the other, where the other resists or yields.

He begins with sheets of acrylic cut to the desired size that are unworked and untreated. The total integrity of the material is retained. The sheets are fastened to a selected centre in the metal by means of a vice. At each end a system of links brings the plastic back towards the interior, thus

producing more or less swollen forms, that seem to be inflated. The tension the metal exercises on the plastic is what creates the forms. The use of these physical phenomenas produces a very pure result; the plastic bends perfectly, the stress of the metal wire produces a perfect line.

The plastic is most often transparent white which shows the curve of stress of the acrylic sheets, the play of lines of the wires, and the edges of the sheets, and which leaves all of the inner forces of the total form yet to be discovered. The spot of colour creates a point of reference.

Jacques David considers plastic to be one of the most beautiful of materials; it is beautiful in itself.

LUCIEN GOBEIL, 24 years old, was looking for a sensual material that could contribute to the effect of his forms. The luminosity of plastic attracted him. When transparency is fully exploited it produces a new effect. It breaks the perspective, dominates the colours that surround it and creates an environment. Plastic gives form a greater sensuality, creating an immense object that we want to touch. His sculpture is formed of two independent and inter-connected parts. They can be arranged in different ways if the owner so chooses. The plastic is left transparent.

Lucien Gobeil used a casting technique to execute his sculpture. There were several stages in this plastic work. First, a drawing, then a wooden model were made. The model was then reproduced to the desired size. The work was a large one, which required several hours of work. Beginning with this wooden work, he made the mould in which he cast the plastic. This stage was done industrially, where for the first time such a large work of organic form was cast. The work was then baked to 200° in an oven that was hermetically sealed to avoid the formation of air bubbles. After the heating, he began the polishing of the work, then the sanding, which represented one of the longest, but also one of the most satisfying stages, for it was at this time that the smoothness of the work was created. The finishing work was done by polishing with a cotton buffer.

Lucien Gobeil remembers his dealings with industry as an enriching experience. The personal contact with men who were working with a material in an entirely different way than usual, their discovery of a new world, their desire to see and touch the immense form, made him feel the experience was more valuable than an exhibition in a gallery.

He is now interested in blown glass which he works with a technician, and he is thinking of a study project in various glassworks in Europe.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

The Fernand Leduc Retrospective

By Laurent LAMY

At the Musée d'Art Contemporain at the end of 1970, one hundred paintings made up a coherent, enduring, and dynamic retrospective — an evaluation of twenty seven years of work.

Fernand Leduc calls to mind the beginnings of modern art here. A friend of Borduas, he belonged to the group of Automatists and in 1948 signed the *Refus global* with Ferron, Mousseau, Riopelle, Barbeau and others. With Molinari, Tousignant, and Juneau he founded the group of Plasticians. It follows that if we go back to the origin of the two most notable movements in the evolution of painting in Quebec, we find that both times Fernand Leduc was an important element in the formation of the group.

From the Surrealism of the beginning of the 40's, he soon went on to Automatism where gesture is all important and where the accidental is primordial. In these canvases, the traditional criteria of depth are still applicable since objects float in a three-dimensional space. These are abstract landscapes with dark, thick tones which gradually, towards 1950, begin to close. The touch becomes heavier, more constructed; then, massive, it eliminates the possibility of being guided by a perspective.

During the entire Automatist period, the almost austere rigour which is a fundamental trait of Leduc is displayed only in the choice of rather leaden colours.

But the dull colour soon lightens. The evolution of Leduc during the years 1946 to 1955 appears completely natural in the retrospective, it progresses from canvas to canvas. The construction, the touch, the colour, everything falls into place. The same inspiration leads to really geometric canvases in 1955. With a steady progress, plane surfaces tend to occupy all the space, leaving fewer and fewer openings. The subject and the accidental have completely disappeared in canvases like *Porte d'Orient* (1955). The gestural treatment has been gradually replaced by "pavings" (to use Leduc's own words) which block up the canvas, eliminate depth and give the canvas back its original two-dimensional quality.

At that time the personal itinerary of Leduc took a very clear direction towards geometrism. He definitively broke with Automatism. Moreover, Leduc explained himself why this break occurred at the time of the *Space 55* and *Plasticians* exhibitions:

"The stain theories of Borduas only prolong the past illusions of perspective and depth in the unlimited expanse of space, and that is their only margin of life (...) This is where we oppose the enthusiastic apostolate of Borduas: his way is not necessarily ours."[1]

Today we can properly appreciate Leduc's critical look at his work since we believe that the best of his pictorial adventure did not occur in his Automatist period. With time it is clear that Leduc was more or less ill at ease with this form of spontaneous creativity which led to shimmering variations that were relatively easy to obtain. Leduc was too deliberate to be completely himself with this form of expression.

Beginning with one of the first geometric paintings in 1955, with *Point d'ordre* in particular, a composition of right angles with broken colours, he started to study irregular geometric forms. After a few canvases which were to recall Herbin and Delaunay, he suppressed the curve which always tends to create a centre and a depth. The painting is composed on the surface where the oblique lines create triangles whose points project on straight planes which refer to other points. That is the source of the vitality of the canvases of this period from 1956 to 1958, in which the forms become simple in order to attain a greater visual efficacy. This controlled dynamism, obtained by articulations of oblique forms is supported by the lively colours of planes which intersect and criss-cross in triangles, trapeziums, and parallelograms; the triangles play the part of active forces, the irregular figures become areas of balance. The points are poles, the strategic areas of the canvas that orient it, creating opposing rhythms, ready to confront each other. During this period, a 1957 canvas proves to be premonitory since it prefigures the era that will follow only much later, in 1964, when rounded forms, and the optical effects of the positive-negative contrast of colour will flourish.

Until then Leduc had been working only with surfaces. Beginning in 1960, a new element was inscribed in the composition: the line. Unobtrusive in the beginning it was only an accessory to the picture: it comes in counterpoint like a variation to accompany a movement. Inscribed on the coloured planes at first, the line takes on increasing importance to the extent of existing for itself on the canvas, which is almost completely stripped of its triangular elements as in *White* (1962).

This was a turning-point in the evolution of Leduc, who then settled into a research where forms lose their rigidity. The contours and angles softened while the colours were reduced often to a binary chromatism which the painter exploited in 1964 and 65. The connecting line of the two coloured surfaces which formerly coloured the picture became enveloping, closed in on itself with flowing lyricism and a tender, always human sensuality. The forms thus created seem to answer one another in the same canvas; interdependent, as though issuing from one another, they relate to each other. From this constant dialogue, issues a dynamism that is exacting for the eye because, although the forms are separated, they virtually tend to meet. Moreover, this movement is supported by the optical effects of strongly contrasting colours, yellow-red, blue-red, violet-green, rose-blue, mauve-brown.

Leduc simplifies his register more and more, cuts down on the forms and in the colours. Thus a whole series of canvases springs from only a few combinations of form-background. As though to better detail the problems of rhythm-colour, Leduc composes canvases with multiple elements which strike the same chord: relations of similar forms and contrasting colours which makes them an indivisible whole.

After this group of canvases with closed forms, Leduc undertakes a new series which he calls *Passage* and *Érosions,* in which one of the surface-lines passes through the canvas like a stream through a coloured field. Drawn almost from a single stroke, his graphisms depend on a writing that is more organic than before and often evoke a few distant reminiscences of the world. The canvases of '67, '68, and '69 continue the previous plastic experiments, but their writing is erratic and broken. Waving, the stroke crosses the canvas like a plough.

A 1970 canvas shows Leduc's interest in the line. He makes it the object of a painting divided into nine equal squares, in *Page d'écriture,* a capricious line uncoils like a serpent in each square. Rhythmed by the colour which is set up like a checkerboard, the canvas is almost a schematization of the *Passage* works or preceeding canvases reduced to essentials.

Such is the pictorial progress of Leduc. The retrospective is coherent and enduring because Leduc's adventure was pursued quietly, with the humility and confidence of the true researcher: the work is logical because it is made up of paintings where the few elements that were retained contribute to the unity of the whole. Leduc knows the power of drawing, of finished forms which condition their environment, of the rigid, yet soft line that creates the curve that is concave, swells and flourishes in completeness. Bearing a powerful inflexion, deep and warm as a human voice, given a particular timbre by the colour, in several paintings the line has become the plastic means which gives the painting its meaning. This accounts for the density of canvases like the series of *Binary Chromatisms* based on the line, composed of two coloured surfaces related by a cut out. A lively red ribbon on a blue background, whose points tend to close permits the viewer to follow the angle which is made, the form that turns round itself and becomes a surface seeking to unfold itself, the viewer can notice how well-regulated the itinerary is since it goes on to the exploration of blue shores, calm and spread out, that are torn by the intensity of the red.

In the manner in which he treats line and colour, Leduc presents a work where the mind and the senses find balance. There is a perfection of new forms which refer only to themselves, and the plastic quality of their relationships only reveals itself slowly; these testify to an exacting inner life, and the ascendancy of the intellect on the organic.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

1. Notes published by Leduc following Borduas' visit to Montreal on the occasion of the exhibitions *Espace 55* and *Les Plasticiens.*

Suzanne Duquet : Between electronics and the easel

By Luc BENOIT

Suzanne Duquet had not had an exhibition for several years. Then, suddenly last fall, fourteen of her paintings were shown at the gallery of L'Atelier Pédagogique de Reliure d'Art Artisanale, in Old Montreal; the exhibition was somewhat upset by the October disorders.

The reproductions herein will give us a very concise idea of her pictorial work; I do not intend to deal with this subject, even if the exhibition which was mentioned earlier was the starting point for my article.

Visiting Suzanne Duquet, I found her to be a committed woman, positive and involved, in her research, as well as in politics or in teaching.

She is a professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal. Now that art studies have become a department, she teaches in the Department of two-dimensional plastic arts.

After studies at the former École des Beaux-Arts, Suzanne Duquet decided to teach and then worked for Radio-Canada. While she taught, she did some animation and television scripts for children. In 1960 she gave it all up and returned to painting. "Until '66 I really had to struggle to be able to do some work. It is pointless to give courses in painting if one does not paint oneself."

She then returned to painting. Then, in the spring of 1970, she received an invitation from the Ministry of Telecommunications to a conference at York University in Toronto: Telecommunications and the arts, and its influence on the environment.

"There were scientists, technicians and artists from across the country present. It seemed to me that most of the artists gathered there had a few reservations about these new toys. They said: "The machine is wonderful for reproduction or use in an art library" or still, "that it was necessary to let the engineers play with the machines, they succeed better than the artists, which is not completely false."

"It was there I realized how slow the artist sometimes is, more than once when facing a new world of expression, have we forgotten to answer new creative opportunities. Musicians have responded to electronics in a positive way. The electronic synthesizer — this machine that creates sounds — has progressed beyond the stage of experiments. Today musicians are engaged in pure research and in improving the machine."

It was at the same conference that Suzanne Duquet met Dr. John F. Hart, director of the Computer Science Department of the University of Western Ontario in London who invited her to do some graphic experiments with the help of a computer.

"I was up against the unknown. I had to find a simple language to make an animated drawing by computer. It was no longer a question of becoming an engineer. Besides, engineers did not see why I felt the need to review basic mathematics. In fact, all that was needed was to receive certain data on the central unity of the computer, to review some arithmetic, to learn the language of the computer, the layout, the telescript language and coding operations for graphism on the cathode screen."

"I was even more surprised to see how much I could retain, understand, and assimilate, given my complete ignorance of cybernetics in general, and the computer in particular. These experiments, as brief as they were, because they were properly conducted, showed me all the possibilities that the artist can explore with such an instrument. While the computer is not easy to handle, is fixed in its requirements, it can produce extraordinary and rich results and solutions."

"Cybernetic graphism has been possible for almost ten years. It has not been widely used, and in general it has been used without much imagination: artists were often content to copy or reproduce works. This shows a lack of boldness on the part of inventors."

Suzanne Duquet also notes that it would be unwise, indeed rash, to leave the field entirely to engineers, mathematicians, physicists, technologists and career programmers.

Nothing has really been done. We need artist-teachers ready to undertake studies and experiments in cybernetic graphism. Then we should prepare students who would prepare other ones and thus open the way to research. As the programmes are kept on tape, it will be necessary to establish a programme library.

With the computer, colour is almost non-existent, and much remains to be done in this respect.

"We have to let the computers go wild and cybernetic graphism offers researchers exciting prospects."

Yet for all that, Suzanne Duquet is giving up neither her painting nor her teaching. On the contrary, the machine provides a positive contribution, an exchange, as it were, between man and itself.

The possibilities of electronics are infinite: and the graphism that can be discovered using electronics is as varied as it is inexhaustible.

This summer Suzanne Duquet is returning to London for four months to pursue her adventure. "I do not say that I will succeed completely with what I hope to do; but in so far as I succeed in spreading the idea here . . . Well, there are many other machines . . ."

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

John Eaton, at Rupert-in-Quebec

By Pierre-E. CHASSÉ

Some forty miles from Ottawa, a short distance from the tiny village of Rupert, stands an old farm where John Eaton, a young artist of exceptional talent, lives. It may appear unusual that such a young artist who has spent several years in New York and travelled all over Europe should choose to retire to the seclusion of this particular farm, somewhat lost in the Gatineau Hills. However, there is nothing monastic about his way of life. Although reluctant to admit that it had any influence on his recent work, it becomes obvious when one looks at his output of the past three years that the serenity and calm of this newly found milieu have contributed significantly to his art. His work has progressed rapidly and to the point where it is highly meaningful, has depth and shows a great deal of self-confidence which was lacking to some degree five or six years ago. It is clear that he is moving forward with a sense of freedom which the bustle and distractions of city life such as New York presents could have curtailed. This does not mean that Eaton would not have achieved the same goals, but his progress would probably have been slower and less positive.

At first glance, the drawings of John Eaton may appear somewhat Raphaelesque and in the purest tradition of the Renaissance until one takes a closer look. They pick up where the great draughtsman of that period left off and at a time when drawings became generally lifeless and highly static with the exception of a very few. Eaton goes on, but with renewed energy thus making his work more dynamic and at times overflowing with vigour and movement. Some of his works reflect a degree of violence and even brutality rarely seen today except in certain abstract works where this may have been accidental as was perhaps the case in certain works that César and Mathieu did in recent years. His work is never chaotic but a great deal of turbulence is always present. This is accomplished not without the awareness of the artist, if only subconsciously, although I suspect that this is achieved willingly.

Very much in the style of Rodin many years ago, what he draws is never an end in itself but rather brings to one's mind what the next movement will or should be. The power of suggestion is so strong that one cannot help but go beyond the drawing itself and wander past the sheet of paper. When I look at some of Eaton's works, I get the feeling that I am being drawn into a strange whirlpool. In contrast, although some of his abstracts may appear to lack the energy or the power which we find in his other drawings, they probably compensate this absence by being perhaps more disturbing in that everything seems to be floating, to be untouchable, in other words, beyond one's reach. At times they tend to remind me, but only temporarily, of Odilon Redon only to prove in the next instant that they are very much John Eaton.

In Eaton, one discovers two definite and distinct personalities. The first is highly sensitive, and this is clearly apparent in the illustrations he did for the great American poet E. E. Cummings in his book of Fairy Tales. The second personality reveals an individual in constant revolt and this is very much in evidence in the drawings which are reproduced in this issue of *Vie des Arts*. They all bear the stamp of defiance, of a challenge which has no rebutal. The effect is calculated but only in part. The inner thoughts and turmoil which seem to be implanted in this artist come out loud and clear. Yet, in his illustrations of the American poet's Fairy Tales, Eaton becomes subdued and quite lyrical. Although Cummings had been dead for three years, Eaton seems to have read the poet's mind and one cannot help but feel that the book would be quite incomplete without the collaboration of one or the other. Eaton illustrates what Cummings did not say and Cumings writes of that which Eaton did not illustrate.

As a follower of certain theories expressed by the disciples of the esoteric movement created by Rudolf Steiner and which is called "anthroposophy", John Eaton expresses himself in terms of masses, of energy and of related movements. Everything becomes what it should be in terms of qualitative and quantitative densities arranged in many varied ways resulting in elements, animated or inanimated, physically and functionally different from one another. In his abstract work, Eaton asks several questions which remain without an answer either because we are afraid to delve into them or because they are too disturbing and fall in areas where we have little or no knowledge. A remarkable thing about Eaton's work is that whether or not we fully understand what he is desperately trying to tell us, we seem to fall under a certain spell which forces to return again and again to view his work. John Eaton, who is not yet thirty years of age, will have a great deal to tell us in the next few years. From what he has already accomplished, he leaves us with little choice but to follow him attentively. The potential is very much there, massive, powerful and highly promising. Although success and recognition are rapidly moving his way, there is no indication that they will spoil this determined man in any way.

(Translation by Pierre-E. Chassé)

Criteria : An exhibition of Lise Brunet and Richard Mill at the Galerie Jolliet in Quebec City.

By Michel PARENT

Excerpt from the invitation to this exhibition, also a sort of little manifesto : "Criteria indicates that every thought comes from an acceptance, from a rule."

Obviously the acceptance and the rule choosen here are starkness and order. These are the characteristics which make these canvases startling at first, as for some time we have been used to more violence and noise, to more shocks or mobility. There is nothing here of the new technological folk-lore. There is, on the contrary, an invitation to a withdrawn reflection, almost monastic, perhaps oriental. This is a universe defused of all violence, aspiring to some improbable, utopian essential with precision of meaning, introverted character of the subject, and fulfillment in the treatment. Quickly, according to what he wishes, the viewer will be able to pick out on these rectilinear fields his horizons or his delusions.

Lise Brunet. First the visualization of white light, the play of the variable proximity of the geometric planes, which are also white and symmetrically arranged, then fine, sharp verticals, even more luminous, designating imaginary spaces. This repertory of precise forms balances the fluid aspect of the tonality, subtle to the point of dissolving momentarily under a changing lighting, of abolishing every strict relationship within the canvas and of placing the canvas for some time, in more direct relationship with the environment. It is a square open on the white clarity through which the surface becomes space and space perhaps a landscape. Space of snow ? Of sky ? It is at any rate, an area of sustained, monodic vibration without echo. Area of diffusion of a light sensitive to the slightest condensation of these almost cloud-like unusual geometric forms.

Richard Mill. Monochromes, canvases in medium gray, a gray that is implacably gray, the gray that is lack of colour, that is its antithesis, painted without any trace of gesture, artificial colour and matter, neither frosted nor dull, neutral in every way, of an evident and intentional neutrality, punctuated only on the right and left borders by two vertical lines slightly more sombre or clear according to the case, circling the surface, measuring it, limiting it as though putting an absent image in parenthesis, a non-subject subject or a space

for dreaming. A space at once untouched and surveyed, new and conquered, prepared to receive our mental constructions, our mathematical dreams and the projections of our becomings. A haughty, hieratic, chilling space. Thus do the images projected meet, merge and dissolve, each time revealing the inflexibility of the gray. With Mill also, something very new. Lively yellow panels, curious, nagging, hung facing each other on opposite walls, favouring spatial areas we may explore, creating a space in space and a particular time, a framework in which the viewer himself becomes a reflected object with a variable physical situation.

Such are the preoccupations of these two young artists about whom we could certainly say that it is only extreme seriousness that seems to distract them.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Albrecht Dürer, a Renaissance man

By Irene HEYWOOD

Albrecht Dürer was a Renaissance man from Nuremberg in Germany and this year the world celebrates his 500th birthday. It was celebrated in Ottawa early in the year with an exhibition of his woodcuts and engravings and a drawing or two, at the National Gallery. Although the exhibition included such great works as his Melancholia I, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and other main prints, from this important part of his life as an artist, it gave only a limited view of him as a man of his time and place.

Dürer is an old hero of mine, one of my first, perhaps because he could draw so well, so the idea of giving a fuller portrait of him during his year is a welcome one. It is also a chance to compare the great excitement of the Renaissance in Europe with the turmoil and change of our world today; there are many similarities and differences.

He was an activist. Although he never left the church in Rome, he fought its "establishment" during this period of the Reformation. He was a humanist, one of the new breed of men who helped to uncover individuality in man. One of the first painters to use himself as a model, his self-portraits are no mere representations but dig deep into his own personality to show us what sort of man he was, how he felt and what he wanted. The first of them, a drawing made when he was 13 years old, gives little more than an indication of his future powers as a draughtsman, but even here, there is a feeling of a separate human being.

The Louvre in Paris has a great example. Painted when he was 22 his carrot-red hair touches his shoulders, the flamboyance of the dress of the time of course exceeds that of our time but in his hand he carries a sprig of Eryngium, a plant associated with love in the symbology of flowers, we are told. The self-portrait was painted before his first trip to Italy and shows him a thoughtful searching individual, so that we know that he had already begun his investigation into man's individuality before he met the great Italians.

At the Prado in Madrid is a later self-portrait painted after his first visit to Italy. Here we can see that he has developed as a painter, away from the graphic training of his early life; we can see too the influence of the Renaissance painters of Italy. At 26 he is now sophisticated and sure of his ability and the portrait shows a young man capable of a cool assessment of what life has to suggest to him.

Considerations such as these can seem mundane enough to us today until we remember that Dürer and his Italian contemporaries were the first to show us the emerging human personality, the individual man who separated himself from the group by insisting on his own right to develop his ideas apart from the fetters of established custom.

Today we reverse the Renaissance challenge. We seem too willing to lose ourselves in group movements; we have discovered the power of group opinion. We have given up the search for personal identity to follow vague leaders who are all too often difficult to identify, since they remain part of the group.

We also deny the personal in our art, aiming for the untouched-by-human-hand expression, where plagiarism becomes meaningless.

We deny the past. We are without this perspective and our forward forging often weakens itself in its constant search for gimmicks which will gain immediate notice if not acceptance.

Renaissance artists moved away from the role of artisans into the more prestigious one of thinkers and philosophers. They became men with special vision. They also revived the classicism of the Greek and Roman world to separate their art from the bondage of the Gothic-orientated church and ended by taking the church along with them.

But of course the really big discovery of this period was the "great prespective", the ability to simulate the vision of the eye by surrounding objects in a painting with the appearance of light and air. It kept Leonardo awake at night with its excitement.

Albrecht Dürer brought it back with him to Northern Europe from his travels in Italy.

Why it was so hard for painters of this time to see diminishing space or to think in terms of the individual, why these things had to be discovered at all is hard for us today to understand. They have been our inheritance for centuries now and since the impressionists we have been shaking them off by degrees. Its all part of the need to move on, to find new ways of seeing and developing.

But this year, 500 years after Dürer was born in Nuremberg, is perhaps a good time to remember that this was also the time of the birth of easel painting and the idea of a landscape, as subject in itself.

Dürer painted landscapes in water color around Nuremberg as well as on his Italian visits, possibly from sketches made out of doors. Oil as a medium, which took painting off the walls of buildings, was developing at the time but of course it had to wait for the development of the tube, as a means of holding the paint, to allow painters to really work in the field.

Now we have gone back to the studio to paint and we can construct sculpture by telephone or create a work of art by simply agreeing that it is naturally beautiful without touching it and without attempting interpretation.

I predict on Dürer's 500th birthday that some of what we do is important perhaps in the development of man as a thinking and feeling being but that very little of it will have any lasting effect on the art of the future. We are really in a sloughing off period still and it would seem that soon we will have finished with it. Perhaps in our lifetime we will see a new Renaissance yet, something solid, as Cézanne described his own ambition, good enough to last even in a museum.

La région de Charlevoix — photographiée par Gabor Szilasi

par Geoffrey JAMES

Marcel Duchamp, le père de la *machine optique* est aussi celui de l'idée que les tableaux ont la vie brève car, selon lui, il se dégage des oeuvres d'art une sorte de parfum, d'émanation esthétique . . . qui s'évapore en quelques décennies. Ainsi en 1913, le *Nu descendant l'escalier* soulevait l'enthousiasme, mais c'est maintenant une peinture sans vie, sans odeur. Ars brevis ut vita.

En photographie, c'est généralement le contraire qui se produit.

Des photos parfaitement indifférentes pour leurs contemporains s'auréolent d'un séduisant mystère quelques générations plus tard. Il en est peut-être d'elles comme de la loi de la mode décrite par James Laver : les vêtements des parents sont affreux, ceux des grands-parents sont charmants, amusants, et ceux des aïeux sont magnifiques. Une vieille photo possède le mérite d'avoir fixé pour toujours quelque chose qui est désormais révolu. En général, on ne remarque pas autour de soi ce qui est en voie de disparition. C'est seulement plus tard, par hasard, qu'on s'aperçoit de ce qui a disparu de notre horizon quotidien. Qu'un photographe doué de sensibilité s'attache à percevoir aujourd'hui ce qui intéressera la postérité, et son art devient le constat d'une époque.

C'est du moins ce qui vient à l'esprit quand on regarde la collection d'environ 50 documents photographiques croqués par Gabor Szilasi l'été dernier, dans le comté de Charlevoix, objet d'une exposition au Studio 23, de Montréal, et à la Galerie de Baldwin Street, à Toronto. Il n'a fallu que trois semaines à Szilasi pour saisir ses images-témoins, à l'aide d'un appareil de 4 sur 5. A la manière de Paul Strand, il a photographié choses et gens dans le cadre de leur vie, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur, créé de main d'homme et fourni par la nature.

Il a su le faire sans tomber dans l'erreur courante, ces dernières années, chez les adeptes du grand format, de ne s'attacher qu'à la perfection technique de la composition qui ne donne du monde qu'un aspect figé et stylisé. Rien à redire au style de Szilasi. Superbe. Mais sa qualité première est de s'effacer au profit de la vie qui bat. Des prises de vue humaines, tendres sans tomber dans le sentimentalisme, très agréables à l'oeil, font surgir une société déjà destinée au souvenir . . ., une nappe de toile blanche dans un restaurant de motel . . . du pain cuit au four . . . l'intense piété des vieilles femmes . . . pour combien de temps est-ce encore là? Une scène d'intérieur fournit la réponse, sous la forme d'un poste de télévision qui trône dans le coin d'une pièce à la place coupée traditionnellement par une niche ornée d'une statue.

La collection de Gabor Szilasi contient bon nombre d'excellentes photographies très personnelles, notamment les intérieurs et les portraits, mais elle vaut surtout par l'ensemble, qui reflète la personnalité du petit monde de Charlevoix. Un témoignage dont la valeur apparaîtra vraiment dans trente ans et qui mérite qu'on lui trouve quelque part une place permanente.

(Traduction de Denise Courtois)

Quebec Poetry in its Glory

By Dominique NOGUEZ

The poets driven from Plato's ideal city met again twenty three centuries later in Montreal, specifically during the night of March 27 to 28, 1970. They were about fifty strong, French speaking and Quebeckers. There, for more than two hours, they spoke, yelled, yapped, sang, murmured, and grew silent one after the other. It was in the salle Gésu, in front of — with — five thousand people. In front of — with — five thousand poets, *if it is true that we are all poets, or if it is true* that pot makes poets. For a lot of pot was smoked that night and, it was a lot of fun.

Now these poets by profession or circumstance did not suspect, or only half suspected, that they were caught in one of the most formidable traps that the cinema has ever set for literature. Jean-Claude Labrecque and Jean-Pierre Masse were not satisfied, however, with filming the most important poetry recital ever held in Quebec: they had organized it themselves in a Machiavellian fashion. This is a rare example of a cinema of actuality which creates the actuality that it intends to capture. It is the border line where documentary cinema joins the cinema of fiction. And I do not know why I wrote "in a Machiavellian way", for the intention of the two cineasts was pure and praiseworthy: it was a matter of committing to memory on film, forever if possible, for a long time, at any rate, the face of Quebec poetry of 1970. They succeeded in that, for, with a very few people absent — Grandbois too elderly, Brault, too discreet, Paul-Marie Lapointe, Fernand Ouellette, Jacques Godbout; a few young "Telquelliens" (1) —, all the present day poets were there. They even succeeded beyond their desires, since these eleven hours of public poetry, condensed to two hours in a film which still seems too short, appear in retrospect, highly significant, not only of the poetry, but of the entirely new Quebec. By that I mean two things: first the film by Labrecque and Masse is a document on the intellectual atmosphere of the year 1970, which for all sorts of reasons which we can imagine will prove to be a capital year in the history of Quebec. Then, *La Nuit de la poésie* (2) (The Poetry Night) is the first meeting of the two intellectual forces that have been most operative in the growing awareness by Quebeckers of their national particularity. As though through the intermediary of Labrecque and Masse, for the first time, Perrault, Brault, Jutra, Lefebvre or Gilles Groulx, who have all contributed to giving Quebeckers a new image of themselves, saluted those before them and alongside them who have not ceased through their words, in telling of the will of an entire people to survive and to be free.

I said before that it was the cineasts who had created the event. In this we recognize a kind of Quebec specialty (let us think of *Saint-Jérôme* by Fernand Dansereau or of *Normétal,* or still of *Pour la suite du monde* by Brault and Perrault). Does that mean that the presence of the cameras played an active role in the unfolding of the recital, in short can we speak of a cinematographic happening? In one sense, yes: for the eagerness with which many poets responded to the invitation that was made to them and exhibited themselves is revealing. On one hand, and this was already known, for about fifteen years Quebec poetry in large part has been a poetry of the spoken word — like the French poetry of the Resistance, like the new black poetry in the United States, like the poetry of Africa or Martinique, like the poetry of all ethnic groups struggling for their freedom. Most Quebec poems (this is particularily evident in the work of Michèle Lalonde) *call for* the microphone and the stage and impassioned applause. To the extent that the dividing line between poetry and song has always been finer in Quebec than elsewhere (the presence of Pauline Julien or of Georges Dor at this poetry recital reminds us of it).

But on the other hand, nothing obliging (in March, 1970, I specify) Quebec poetry to be sobre or clandestine, since Quebec society belonged, for all that, to the group of societies of abundance and was still *at that time* in one of its periods of greatest freedom, the temptation became great and almost irresistible to make poetry no more than an entertainment (3). *La Nuit de la poésie* shows that few resisted this temptation: thus we see the Pakistinian dresses of *l'Infonie,* the apple green garage mechanic's suit (with a pink heart) of Paul Chamberland, gaudy ties even on the chest of the prudent Préfontaine, in short this exaggerated use of all kinds of furbelows and flounces, where a charming spontaneity joins with a deliciously child-like taste for disguise (I also had a friend in college who wore a butterfly bow to *signify* that he was a poet), the transformation after the hippie fashion of Baudelairean dandyism and assuredly the influence of pop music singers. To which we must add the traces of a prodigality that was semi-flower-power (the distribution of balloons for *La Barre du jour*) and semi-neronian (for lack of bits of guitars, Georges Dor generously scattered his unsold copies among the public) which attempted to change the spectacular into a celebration. Bread and circuses. But that night the bread was poetry and the gladiators carried only plastic revolvers.

It would have been easy for Labrecque and Masse to abet this slight exhibitionism (which the presence of their cameras evidently reinforced) and to film La Nuit de la Poésie as a spectacular. On the contrary, they filmed it as a living an-

thology of Quebec poetry. Anthology: that is to say they made a choice among the fifty or so poets who followed one another on the Gésu stage in such a way as to give a fairly complete idea of the different aspects of this poetry, going so far as to refilm later poets who had badly "turned out" on March 27th, but whose importance (Gaston Miron) or particularity (Nicole Brossard) justified a retake. Because of the film it is thus possible almost at first sight to spot the major constellations in present day Quebec poetry: first the poets, generally born in the thirties, who think of the poem rather as an inner murmur (Yves Préfontaine) and do not refer specifically to the country; thus Pilon, whose landscape is more Canadian than Quebec ("The sun never sets on my country") but also Gatien Lapointe or Y.-G. Brunet. Then the group of poets or "chansonniers" who are more "public" and more militant and who have brought Quebec poetry of the sixties the popularity it enjoys (Michèle Lalonde, Suzanne Paradis, Michel Garneau, Gérald Godin, Georges Dor, Pauline Julien, Raymond Lévesque). Finally the young people, less *committed,* and more directly influenced by what I would call the "pot culture" (pop music, Ginsberg, hashish, etc.), more desirous of "changing life" than "transforming society", in short closer to Rimbaud than Marx: thus — with Chamberland who here plays a role of intermediary — Denis Vanier, Péloquin and Raoul Duguay. In the midst of these constellations, a central star, who is related to each of them in some way: Gaston Miron. Close to Pilon and the poets of *Liberté,* he is also the most committed and perhaps the most illustrious of the poets who militate for the liberation of Quebec and finally, by his influence on Chamberland and his role as a secret counsellor (in fact not so secret at all) on Quebec poetry, he remains one of those that the young poets listen to the most, in spite of a few important differences of opinion. There were also a few solitary stars: Gauvreau, Quebec's Isidore Isou; Pierre Morency, whose rather nice fables make one think a little of Jean Tardieu; and Nicole Brossard, who posed a contrast in this meeting of poets as her very "telquellienne", very "written" poetry contrasted in the midst of so many "oral" poems.

It is an anthology, but a living one: for if Labrecque and Masse were guided in their choice and their editing by a certain number of a priori ideas, for all that they did not adopt a fixed order: the poets are presented neither in chronological order of their appearance on earth or in that of their appearance on the stage. Labrecque and Masse have recreated the time and tempo of this Night of Poetry in considering also the unforseeable possibilities the event offered, Péloquin, for example, arriving magnificently stoned... There results a carefully proportioned composition with down-beats and more piani times, which gave the impression of diversity and made this film a thrilling medley.

However, I repeat, the aspect of a narration of events is constantly transcended. It is, if you like, the anti-*Raquetteurs* or anti-*Zouaves* side of *La Nuit de la poésie.* The first shot of the film (Walter Boudreau from the back, directing with robot-like gestures the group of l'*Infonie*) could make one think of some new *Avec tambours et trompettes* (or of Milosz Forman), in the same way as the crowd scenes afterwards (where one can recognize Miron and Gauvreau), can for a few seconds give the impression that the film will emphasize the reactions of the public. But if *La Nuit de la poésie* in a certain way — by its exceptional character, which is euphoric and which very rapidly became mythical —, was for Quebec poetry what Woodstock was for American pop music, and if the film that Labrecque and Masse made from it can play for the public at large the role that the film made by Wadleigh at Woodstock did, it remains that *La Nuit de la poésie* is not centered like Woodstock on the relationship of the stage and the public. Certainly the public is present in the film, but invisibly — only revealed by the shouts that mark the end of the readings by Gauvreau and to the pleasantry during the first poem by Michèle Lalonde ("America — For sale!") and by the applause, especially at the end of the second number of l'*Infonie.* Remarkably, Labrecque has refused even more than in his *De Gaulle au Québec,* the ease of direct cinema. *La Nuit de la poésie* is a film of an exemplary sobriety: no zooms, no rapid-fire sequences, on the contrary there are long, fixed shots. The cineast is here serving the poets, whom he lets speak, whom he listens to with discretion and fervour, without seeking to capture idiosyncracies or picturesque detail, in brief with humility. With the humility of talent.

We must hope that this film will play to a wide audience, everywhere, but especially in Paris, Nice, Brussels, Luxemburg, Lausanne, Dakar, or Pointe-à-Pitre, everywhere where people speak French, to tell them that Quebec poetry exists, that it is, in 1970, one of the most dynamic that exists, and that its dynamism is identical with that of a people who perhaps on day will verify the remark by Marx: namely that in literature or the arts, little nations can play first violin.

N.B. — The beginning of the year 1971 has definitely been auspicious for Quebec cinema: besides *La Nuit de la poésie* we were able to see in Montreal— perhaps there were too few showings — a film about youth by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (certainly too long), *Mon oeil,* and the first full-length films of Roger Frappier (*Le Grand film ordinaire*), by André Théberge (*Question de vie*), by Yvan Patry (*Ainsi soient-ils*), by Michel Audy (*Jean-François-Xavier de*) and especially by Jean Chabot (*Mon enfance à Montréal*), who, in spite of a final aesthetic misinterpretation which breaks the unity of the film, directly reveals himself to be a very talented cineast from whom much may be expected. On the other hand, Claude Jutra and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre have each produced a full length film: *Silent Night* (which became alas, *Mon Oncle Antoine*) by Jutra and *Les Maudits Sauvages* by Lefebvre. We shall take it up again.

(1) Allusion to the Parisian review *Tel Quel.*
(2) N.F.B., 1970.
(3) The events quickly proved that perhaps that was hasty, I mean: a premature euphoria, giving some reason to those who, like Michel Van Schendel, refused to play this game on March 27th.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Behind the Rideau Vert between two boulevards: "The return" ... to the theatre

By Yves-Gabriel BRUNET

From the theatre to the public
and from the public to the theatre

The *Rideau Vert.* We know the story. Known for a long time to Montreal theatre-goers, the "boulevard" of Saint-Denis street is recognized by its patrons, its subscribers, and its critics as the cenacle of light comedy. From boulevard to boulevard, a specialized theatre has been made of it... in its manner. A constant factor in the history of the *Rideau Vert* has been the desire to please the majority, to deny the fact that in Montreal theatre is in a constant state of crisis. The measure taken was to attract a public at all costs, by all possible means. Present a theatre that is not too upsetting to weak stomachs, faint hearts, asthmatic spirits; a theatre that does not bespatter white nylon shirts and leaves intact the newest — fashion — chic — reduced — outfits. A repertory of light comedies proves to be right for creating and keeping such a public. So much for the adult public. Moreover, by including in the programme a regular repertory of children's plays, a completely new public is thereby initiated to going to the theatre and to liking the theatre... a public that will eventually be adult. The *Rideau Vert* is the only theatre in Montreal that has been regularly including children's plays in its programme, and it has for many years: it is a remarkably positive initiative. Light comedies and children's theatre, up to this point, such were synonymous with *Rideau Vert.*

I say such were, because for two or three years, the policy of the group has been somewhat changed, probably at the express request of a certain well-informed public. In fact, the new policy requires that 50% of the plays be dramatic or Quebec works. Already, three years ago, *Les Belles Soeurs* by Michel Tremblay had almost made the theatre walls break out in a sweat. Then, at the rate of one or two a year, the Quebec creations (in the present day sense of the word) began to take over the stage. There is nothing surprising or even so dramatic about that; sooner or later we had to dare to confront our reality. Even at the *Rideau Vert*. By agreeing to present *Les Belles-Soeurs* by Tremblay, the *Rideau Vert* had just taken that necessary step that brought Quebec theatre a new vitality . . . whether or not it was in keeping with its own decision. Finally with the inclusion of dramatic plays, the scope is widened, the public digests less easily and becomes more critical. We had to reach this point, to make the choice of plays more universal. If the *Rideau Vert* had restricted itself to its first specialization, it certainly would have ended by saturating the spectator while accelerating in him an already latent disease : facility.

I have nothing in particular against the theatre of the Boulevard : it is fine, it is nice, but it never seems more than a lap dog that serves at once as a decoration and a diversion. And exactly, the essential goal of the theatre is not to caress, but to arouse the viewer. Jouvet said somewhere in this connection, that the theatre is not a diversion, but a warning. In other words, the theatre is not essentially a place to escape oneself, but indeed, on the contrary, a place to confront oneself, a place for revelation. I consider the theatre to be a kind of hospital where the surgeon-actor performs on the spectator's minds, befuddled by everyday banality, a very delicate shock-operation that finally makes him aware of reality, of *his* reality, while purging his mind. That is what plays that "alert" us can particularily contribute.

A well-supported proof : "The Return" by H. Pinter

Pinter's universe, authentically English, smacks of the furniture, the "shut in", the static, the memory. It is the home in all its majesty that maintains the characters in their schizophrenia, their dreams, even in their most morbid memories. A family drama where none faces the others and where each one has all the trouble in the world facing himself.

Pinter's reputation is already well-established. One of the most authentic authors, he is known for his psychological dramas of high tension where, in the soul of each character, passion holds back the gentleman and the gentleman holds back passion. There is no happiness there at all. The central theme, that of the mother, acts as a link and is present at each instant of the play. She is the very centre of dreams, of memories from which no one, the father or the sons, and also Uncle Sam, will be able to be freed before death. Besides, at the very end, the mother will get the upper hand.

The staging by Paul Blouin does justice to Pinter's thought. The apparent and exterior inactivity of each character incites the viewer more to explore his psychological drama. When a character speaks, it is very evident that the viewer cannot but see him in an inner close-up. In this respect, everything agrees so as not to disperse the spectator's attention.

On the other hand, the performance of the actors seems to me sometimes rather weak. Some seem to feel ill at ease with themselves; we felt that some gestures, certain words did not fit the characters. This weakness can be easily enough explained considering the fact that these actors have been used to exploiting their talents in comic characters. Apart from this small weakness, and there is never one without two, I especially noticed that the translation did not always do justice to verbal French expression. Finally, let us not attach more importance to that than is necessary. In short *The Return* proves to be a very interesting play in itself and I trust that the *Rideau Vert* will be able to include in its repertory other plays of the genre. It is a good choice that could further stimulate the regular public of the *Rideau Vert* to call for more dramatic plays in the seasons ahead.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

The Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec

Maryvonne Kendergi, vice-president and organizer of the SMCQ, informs us of an important, new aspect of our cultural life.

As told to René ROZON

Q. — Along with Jean Papineau-Couture, Wilfrid Pelletier, Serge Garant and Hugh Davidson, you are one of the founding members of the SMCQ whose first concert was held in December, 1966. In what way were the goals which your organization proposes irreconcilable with those of societies already in existence?

A. — The very aims of the SMCQ justified its creation and its coexistence with the other Montreal societies. In keeping with its statutes, the SMCQ intends to disseminate or propagate the knowledge of contemporary music, international as well as Canadian, and that of Quebec as well as the other provinces. Its main objective derives from these premises: to form a group of interpreters who devote themselves to a repertory of the most recent, if not innovating music. Could that not have been done by someone else you ask? First of all, it was not being done. For not only were the already established societies not making modern music known, but they gave the short end of the stick to contemporary music. Certainly there were some exceptions, but not without restrictions. We shall get back to this. The artistic circles in Montreal were thus suffering from a serious lack. We like to think that the efforts of the SMCQ had some part in filling it.

Q. — It must be acknowledged that an organization like yours is not created overnight. In fact, what are the factors that favoured the expansion of the SMCQ?

A. — Indeed, the founding of the SMCQ is the result of a long process of cultural evolution marked by meetings, conversations, events and assiduous efforts supported by many musical personalities. I shall restrict myself to the most significant elements, to those that contributed to initiating and forming an undeveloped public. First, on the audio-visual level there were programmes devoted to contemporary music, due to the initiative of government networks: on *L'Heure du Concert* that Pierre Mercure produced for television, modern works were included as early as 1955; there was *Festivals européens*, a programme I myself produced for seven years, that was broadcast on the radio from 1956 to 1963. Besides the programmes there were what I would call the *events*, mentioning only the three most notable ones. The first referred to the visit in December 1958, at my request, of Karlheinz Stockhausen who gave a conference at the University of Montreal and presented his *Klavierstuck II*, one of the pillars of present day musical composition. Then there was the *Modern Music Week* organized by Pierre Mercure in August, 1961, which led to the visit to Montreal of David Tudor and John Cage, as well as the playing of several unfamiliar works including *Atlas Eclipticalis* by Cage, *Transicion* by Mauricio Kagel, the first performance of *Anerca* by Serge Garant, which had been waiting on the shelf for years to be played, and finally *Structures métalliques*, combining an electronic pattern by Mercure himself with the sonorities of elements sculpted by Armand Vaillancourt. The third and last event to be emphasized, was the second visit to Montreal of Stockhausen in 1964; two performances had been planned, but a third was added, this time by public demand. This time Stockhausen chose *Kontakte*, a relatively recent work (1960). You will imagine that these events, called everything, even by serious critics, profoundly upset the listening habits of the public.

Q. — But in a parallel direction with these actions that contributed to creating progressively a climate favourable to the expansion of contemporary music in Montreal, there were musical societies before you that were also working towards this end?

A. — I was just getting to that. Yes, throughout the years, various groups had been formed, but we should specify, their

efforts were sporadic and their objectives limited. As early as the month of May 1954, a small group that had not taken a name, which was formed of three young composers — Serge Garant, François Morel and their youngest member, Gilles Tremblay — gave a concert of works by Mesiaen and Webern at the Montreal Conservatory. Afterwards, Gilles Tremblay left for France, and Garant and Morel joined the composer Otto Joachim and the pianist Jeanne Landry to form the group, Music of Our Time. A group, alas, which had an ephemeral existence of two years (1956-1958) for the good reason that its members were at once interpreters and purveyors of works and funds. You understand that in these circumstances it could not last long. Finally the Canadian League of Composers, later supported by the Société de Musique Canadienne, had the advantage of making Canadian works known to Montreal, but the disadvantage of limiting itself to that. In a parallel direction to all that, many people, notably Pierre Mercure, Jean Papineau-Couture, and Jean Vallerand were thinking of a society devoted to contemporary music. So that in the spring of 1965, Wilfrid Pelletier, then Director of the Service of Music for the Government of Quebec called me to ask me to draft the outline of the structure of a society of this kind. In March, 1966, he invited the four persons whom you mentioned at the begining of our talk to take up the task. The first concert of the SMCQ was held on December 15, 1966. In short, if the SMCQ came to be, it was because it was in keeping with the wish that had often been expressed by several personalities of the musical scene in the rest of Canada and particularily in Quebec I should say.

Q. — How is the SMCQ different from other similar societies in Canada as well as abroad?

A. — There are no similar societies in Canada. In Toronto today, if we are speaking of 1970-1971, Ten Centuries Concerts is a group which occasionally interprets modern music, but let us not forget its repertory ranges, as its name indicates, over ten centuries. Also in Toronto, there is the Lyric Arts Trio which is in its second season. There too, this group of soloists does not devote itself solely to contemporary music, although it grants a major place to it. Thus I believe that in Canada, we are the only ones of our kind, and notably because we have our own instrumental group. And from that comes our analogy with not a Canadian, but a European group, that is to say the Domaine Musical of Paris. For with Domaine Musical, and another French group, Ars Nova of ORTF, we have an analogy of artistic structures, if I can say: a main group of instrumentalists which is joined occasionally, and as the work to be performed dictates, by soloists like the soprano Phyllis Mayling or the tenor René Lacourse, the pianists Gilles Manny or Takahashi, to mention only a few. Another analogy with Domaine Musical is the freedom, the broadmindedness that we are attempting to maintain facing a contemporary repertory. In this respect, we do not devote ourselves solely to a national repertory, but we also present works by foreign composers, without distinguishing their origin. We are concerned only with the value of the work. This policy has the advantage of confronting our Canadian composers with people like Berio, Boulez, Stockhausen, Xenakis and others, with whom they agree very well, I must say. From analogies, let us now pass on to distinctions. Our strength lies in the fact that the members of the committee of directors are all professional musicians. Another distinction: the annual commission of a work by a Canadian composer, notably Gilles Tremblay, Norma Beecroft, Jacques Hétu, and this year, Murray Shafer. One last particularity, at least at the time, the creation of the SMCQ was one of the first or one of the rare times that a western government having a department of cultural affairs granted a sum of money for the *foundation* of a society devoted to contemporary music. Many governments or official organizations give grants to things that already exist. Thus the Canada Council did not hesitate to give us a subsidy when we were in our third year. But the Department of Cultural Affairs in Quebec in 1966 ventured into the unknown, its only guarantee was the professional caution of those who were in charge of this society. And I think that this is a fact worth noting in the history of our socio-cultural life and disseminating on the international level.

Q. — To what point does the SMCQ reflect present day tendencies?

A. — The particular spirit that prevails at the SMCQ is naturally oriented towards the selection of works representative of present day tendencies. I shall explain. That a composer is writing in the XXth century is not enough for us. Poulenc, or some other member of the Group of Six, would not be played only because he is of the XXth century. What we consider important, more than the chronological criteria, is aesthetics, the nature of the musical piece. Now, from this point of view, we would rather choose works that have made an impact, or that have upset the musical language, including innovating works; or still, works that the SMCQ will judge within its province to introduce, works which other groups cannot make known because they have neither the musical experience of a Serge Garant who directs, or that of the participants, whether they be the interpreters or members of the committee, or finally the sums that we invest in it. Having said this, *Zeitmasse* by Stockhausen, *Différences* by Berio, the *Structures pour deux pianos* by Boulez, *Eonta* by Xenakis, *Déserts* by Varèse, *Offrande I* by Serge Garant, and many other original works — it would almost be necessary to make a complete list of our programmes — were presented by the SMCQ.

Q. — Repertory whose works are sometimes unpleasing, sometimes impossible to understand as well as to interpret. Does the choice of the interpreters not pose serious problems when we consider that they have a particularly classical training?

A. — If this choice set us problems at the beginning, it poses fewer and fewer today. It is a problem that is not particular to the SMCQ, or particular to Quebec, or to Canada. Everywhere, there are thus periods of initiation for a repertory that is new. We do not think, for example, of regretting or remarking that there are not many interpreters of medieval music. The problem is, however, the same. To return to SMCQ, a certain permanence has already been established because we try to have a continuity in the participation of the interpreters who themselves desire to maintain this continuity. In the beginning several among them — and I do not think it is disparaging to say it — hesitated over this repertory. Today the repertory stimulates them and they are very happy to belong to our instrumental group. And I think that we can be optimistic about the possibility of gradually having the interpreters we need. That we cannot play some works because they require a certain kind of interpreter, that such works of which Kathy Berberian is the only interpreter cannot for the time being be taken on by such or such a Canadian interpreter, that happens elsewhere too. On the other hand, I think that there are enough works capable of being played by the excellent means of our interpreters that we can still present — I am not at all worried — many interesting programmes at the SMCQ. We are not short of plans . . .

Q. — Well, before we finish, this is the time to tell us of them.

A. — The most immediate of our projects consists in maintaining in number and in quality what we have accomplished up to this point. Another project that is dear to our heart is to present more concerts elsewhere than in Montreal, that is to say, to answer the invitations that we have received. Apart from the five regular concerts of our Montreal seasons, we must consider the supplementary concerts given outside. Last year we went to Ottawa twice, this year Toronto has invited us. But Quebec city and the western provinces have also sounded us out. Moreover, we have had the good fortune of being invited by the French network of Radio-Canada to appear on three occasions — twice last year, and once this year (the concert is on March 28) — this allowed us to be broadcast nationally. Another task which SMCQ intends to take on is to find ways to repeat, in part or in full, its concerts before diversified publics. How to reach the young people, in student or labour circles, and the professionals or semi-professionals with average incomes? Those are questions we are asking ourselves, but whose answers suppose financial means we scarcely possess. We are also thinking of publishing an information bulletin devoted to contemporary music, but there also due to lack of means, we must content ourselves for the time being with our documentary programme which seems to be becoming a collector's item for many people, and I think that in these circumstances that is already quite satisfactory. We should like to organize conferences, but these projects are extremely costly, and we prefer to devote the subsidies we are given to having the music heard rather than to speaking about music. As you can see, as complex and absorbing as our present work is, there is still much to be done. Having said that, the major part of our grants is used above all — it is a question of social and artistic ethics — in assuring that the music which we present will be very well interpreted by professionals whose working conditions should be excellent. The results are more than encouraging. For after five short years of existence, the SMCQ exists not only for Quebec, not only for Canada, but its existence is also recognized abroad. There is nothing left but to go ahead, without forgetting our public who was born with us, and faithful to our meetings, grows with us.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)