Vie des arts

Vie des arts

Texts in English

Number 69, Winter 1972–1973

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/58959ac

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (print)
1923-3183 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

(1972). Texts in English. *Vie des arts*, (69), 85–99.

TEXTS IN ENGLISH

TO SERVE THE FUTURE

By Andrée PARADIS

At the present time, can we really question a culture (language, art, literature, architecture) and observe the forms of social organization, without feeling the need of direct experience? Art is action. To act upon the one who perceives, to awaken, on the one hand, the knowledge of the destructive forces which threaten collective life and, on the other hand, to insist on the dynamic changes which are continually taking place, on the availability of the resources which regenerate. Art exists only if it allows the intensification of exchanges and human relationships, only if it recreates life.

Life, City, The City in the Museum, many books on the City, sociologists, philosophers, art critics, town-planners, economists and many others are studying the problem. Why this explosion? Because there is an immense body of work to be done, a complete reorganization to be undertaken beginning with the forms of thought, a real cultural transformation to be assured and "All the future of man on earth", according to André Wogenscky, "depends in very great measure on what town-planning and architecture will become, on what will be the organization of our physical environment". The City, as it concerns us, is this first priority of a very great problem. To think of the City is to think of Life. The study recently published by the Club de Rome, an association of thought and research on the future, with the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), speaks of a *state of emergency*. While keeping a cool head, there is reason to be troubled about the futility of so much effort, produce of intelligence, of courage, of imagination, to resolve the difficulties which the modern city, the destruction of nature and the demographic explosion present.

It is above all necessary to recognize that the harm is deeper, that it comes from a fundamental separation approved by the majority of the scientists and artists of the 20th century, and which is still badly perceived in the whole. How does Jacques Monod define this sickness of soul in *Hasard et la nécessité?* "Modern societies, woven by science, living on its products, have become dependent on it like an addict on his drug. They owe their material strength to this founding ethic of knowledge and their moral weakness to the systems of values, ruined by knowledge itself, to which they still try to refer. This contradiction is fatal. It is this which is digging the abyss which we see opening at our feet. The ethic of knowledge, creator of the modern world, is the only one compatible with it, the only one capable, once understood and accepted, of guiding its evolution."

Tomorrow the ethic of knowledge will probably be the only acceptable one because it rests on respect for creative man, guardian of the sublime and of the demand for going beyond the ordinary. It could thus allow the man who accepts it lucidly and who uses it, to pursue his old dream: to build the future.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

CHANGE LIFE . . . CHANGE THE CITY

By Bernard LÉVY

Change life . . . change the city. The alternative is beautiful. Change the city: the choice seems clear. Almost protected from vain speculations. At grips with the actual. Hurried. Too much? Perhaps. Perhaps not. And if we were to change the city . . . . life, our relationships — our caste relationships as well — would they be improved more easily?

Change the city: what a wager! And yet, who has never *built his city?* The offices of architects are filled with designers who are only waiting for a signal to accomplish *their city*, or, failing that, to transform the city in their way. Plans of all kinds are accumulating in drawers or on the shelves of libraries: from the rediscovered primitive village to the cybernetic city, from the concrete city to the inflatable city. Innumerable reasons — calculated or not — support, justify, legalize ideas and intentions beyond any suspicion but not less to be dreaded and feared. Doctors, sociologists, philosophers, geographers, mathematicians, historians have added their theories to a concert which heads toward wholly possible babelisation. Economists and politicians also

involve themselves, with more success, if not with more luck. A sign, a signature are enough to cause whole walls to collapse to bring it about that concrete — lyrical or not — should raise a tower in the heart of the city by one more storey. To build. To destroy. Wider avenues, dormitory cities, automated cities: *they* open, *they* close a street, *they* move a thousand, ten thousand people *elsewhere*. What shall we say of this?

And even if this were to be in order to *create* green spaces or to limit air or noise pollution, can we qualify these decisions otherwise than arbitrary? Can we speak only of changes?

Change the city: the proposition involves more demands. Simple structural modifications, techniques, technological or legal changes are not enough. A capital movement is lacking: that of the population. Without this fundamental element, the quality of life will remain only an expression for abstract idealists; beauty and ugliness will still be simple effects of conditioning and of class. And art? Apart, foreign to all acts of everyday life. Not lived at all: a matter of specialists.

Certainly the city is changing, it is changing in appearance — but without us. Building or industrial promoters as well as public powers carry out profitable and spectacular projects (massive relocation, construction of prestigous commerccial complexes). We are sometimes present at the launching of pilot or experimental projects: certainly one must approve or simply work in the name of *progress* . . . the guinea-pigs are not consulted much.

If the citizen has no opinion, it is because he concerns himself little or badly, in this sense that he is assailed by an amount of secondary information, from which he cannot separate the chaff; besides, he is still too much isolated to demand explanations. In sum, he is accused of not desiring what he is ignorant of. But how should he suspect the existence of what he might need? So technocracy relies on statistics without really seeing that the results — figures often cheer us — are strewn with gaps, those for instance, of the questionaire from which they arise and those of the marketing equation which they induce. The generalised multiplication of these deficiencies transforms all citizens into marginals, that is into individuals whose basic problems will never be solved, or worse yet, will be only half satisfied. These *details* are skipped by a technocracy which is concerned only with averages. Thus we are all average but terribly unique and different. Then where is the dialogue? Where is the debate? There is a crisis.

Four parties are opposed to each other.

1) The businessmen. They carry on business while pretending to fulfill authentic needs.

2) The architects and the urbanists. They are relegated to the ranks of intermediaries, and at best, of simple executives.

3) The thinkers. They offer solutions. They are often prisoners of their ideas, indeed of their ideology.

4) The population. Incredulous, it *reacts* sometimes violently in the face of the excess of decisions whose cost it assumes. From this movement comes forth a citizens' conscience.

Strenuous efforts are being made to define the contours of the city. Well, the city escapes analysis, all analyses. They offer concrete solutions; they generally prove to be prejudiced, partial, utopian. Does a solution to the urban crisis exist? The question is not new. The answers of the new citizen's conscience seem to open promising horizons because they presuppose another form of common choice, a new policy. Reflection limits itself here to the identification crisis in the city considered as an esthetic value. The reflection takes place in the heart of a more global reflection on the urban conscience and its consequences.

What is urban awareness?

1) It is fundamentally the discovery of a setting — urban environment — the product of collective will, of historical socio-economic phenomena placed side by side of which the combination makes up an extremely complex ensemble, formed by a whole network of interrelations at different levels: power (political, economic, . . .), communications (transport, information . . .), dwellings . . .

2) It is also the discovery of a *society* which is becoming urban, that is to say the assembly of a number of autonomous individuals, independent but also bound together by a unity of social possibilities and especially by the urban phenomenon. It is in reality a matter of a force which is real but scattered, fragmented. Is this gathering a simple aggregation or the placing side by side of several conglomerations of distinguishable unities?

3) It is finally the discovery of a *possible end to the problems of growth* out of which results the industrial city, that is to say orientation toward an uncertainty of its own, an urban problem free of the problems of growth and which considers in the very first place man and his development.

Thus the urban phenomenon joins wider involvements and very probably includes them since, to a certain extent, we are heading toward total urbanization. The awareness of this global phenomenon is accompanied immediately by another awareness: society is completely sectioned off, divided, partitioned, almost impenetrable. A task for each, a class for each, a place of dwelling for each. Certainly there are exceptions; but nonetheless there remains a definite division which determines an absence of participation, indeed a global disinterest in the urban question and a denial of individual responsibility. What is the cause for this if not a reason of political order?

We can question ourselves now on the conditions of the city, collective creation, and of the city, work of art. Fundamentally, everything begins with the awareness of cultural specifics divided among the different social environments. As for the forms of urban life, they must be linked to the whole of a clearly-defined social structure, without at the same time neglecting cultural and space characteristics. Within the context of present urban planning such a perspective is impossible since, between the common points of the whole and the objectives of technocratic growth, there is an irreconcilable difference. And, in consequence, a total absence of dialogue. We cannot, however, exclude under this pretext the assumption of decisive and creative liberty of man acting as *self-governing agent* of his own life and his own milieu. Well, it is precisely what we are doing to the individual who is seen not as a citizen but as a consumer, which means that in his group the decisions are made without his being consulted. And these decisions, the privileges of an elite not always elected, are definitely imposed on him. This is practically the whole system of representation and communication implicated here, that is to say the whole ideological superstructure.

How then shall we build a city — a collective work which takes into account common choices? One of the methods consists of beginning with reality of public awareness since it is beginning to be formed, with a view to leading to a responsible citizens' conscience. Schematically speaking, two levels of decision are considered:

1) Action on the immediate environment: habitat, the way of inhabiting it, the suburban cell, the neighbourhood;

2) Action on urban networks: production, communication, etc.

In such a system, the individual delegates his power of decision less. Thus, it is in collaboration with architects, urbanists, artists and, in terms of his real needs, that he undertakes collectively the building of his immediate environment (dispensary centres, centres of leisures, schools, homes). Would it be astonishing to note that any individual satisfactions should be, under these conditions, shared by the community?

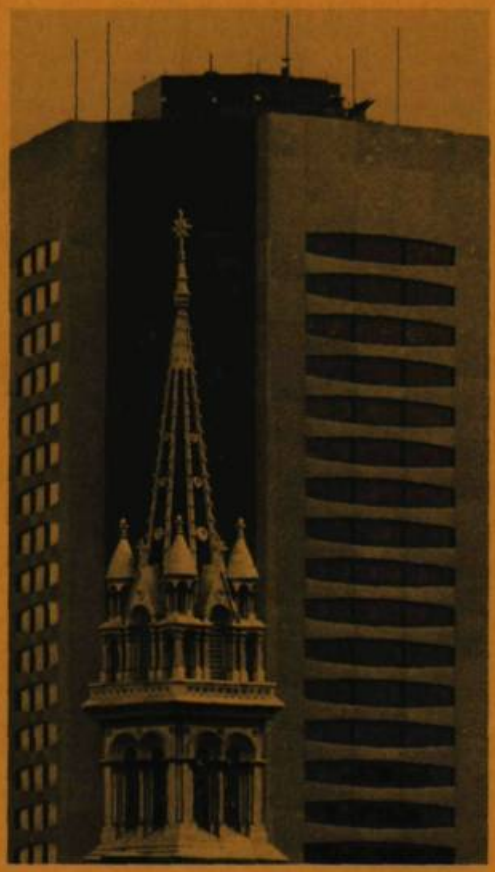
In a larger view and considering the process of urban planning the citizen is considered as the urban *user*. In this capacity, he shares directly in fundamental options which concern the whole of the city, section by section, network by network. He participates in the election of committees responsible for the administration and control of public services: transport, information, etc. The major direction of each system is submitted to the approval of all the users. Thus, strictly private interest becomes subordinate to public interest.

What would be the appearance of such a city? It is difficult to foresee it. It would in any case be a faithful mirror of the will of different majorities of its inhabitants. Such a concept would involve a cultural awareness followed by radical changes in education. At its limit, it would lead to a transformation in the relationships between classes. How, indeed, would we deny the means which condition so fundamental a reorganisation of the city.

We have just spoken of a possible city. One more. We have neither added nor subtracted any building, whatever it may be. In sum, we have *changed* nothing. The urban phenomenon is a global phenomenon. And everywhere it is broken up. It is there, doubtless, that it is necessary to seek a cause for the remarkable passivity of the most important people involved: the citizens. They do not manage to seize the practical reality (politics) of a whole which systematically escapes them and with which they refuse to identify. What would be the use, consequently, of changing the city? Others would make it over to their views, that is to say in the image of their utopia, or, still worse, of their idle fancies.

Change the city, then? Yes, but how?

(Translation by Mildred Grand)



THE UTOPIAN CITY, THE HUMAN CITY

Around the *Vie des Arts* microphone there are four guests: Marcel Bélanger, professor in the Faculty of Geography of the University of Montreal, Michel Lincourt, advisor in the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, Michel Ragon, French art critic and Yves Gaucher, a Quebec artist. Subject: the Utopian City. Moderators: Mrs. Andrée Paradis and Mr. Bernard Lévy.

By Utopia we do not understand the meaning which the 19th century gave to this term. No question here of *building* a city as Fourier, Saint Simon or Enfantin could have done.

To speak of an Utopian city is in itself a form of Utopia. The objective of such a debate is not to achieve any such city. To speak of it constitutes an Utopia since everything that we are going to say has little chance of being channeled officially, at least toward an existing power.

We consider as a working theory the fact that the city was originally conceived for man; well, it is no longer human. Under these conditions, an Utopian city is a human city. It is that city which is involved here.

M.L. — An optimistic remark to begin with. There are many examples of ideas which have developed beginning with simple conversations. So, why not dream . . .

M.R. — We must understand each other on the term Utopia. The Utopias of the 19th century were not Utopias, since they came about for better and for worse: most present cities come out of the same thought, they are a little less inhuman. That is all. Think of Cabet. Think of severely geometric cities, of their feeling of bookkeeping, of their tyrannical style of life. Think of the great conglomerations of mercantile and industrial civilization with their great spaces which serve no purpose. Is it the city or man which is inhuman?

Y.G. — Human, inhuman, that is what we should clarify. Utopian: what should one consider? Architecture? Planning?

Urban Awareness

B.L. — It is exactly during the course of this debate that it will be necessary to analyse these ideas. For the last few years urban awareness has been making itself felt: what do you think of it?

M.L. — We are witnessing a renewal of the power of public opinion in North America. It is enough to see the revival of the Democratic party in the United States; to take note of the stopping of the Spadina highway in Toronto, to appreciate the value of the awareness of the citizens. From now on, committees of residents have the right of veto on programs of area renovation. These same committees can even plan such programs and follow their fulfillment step by step.

M.B. — This awareness, which is going on right through city-planning, properly speaking, arises from the difficulties caused by regional planning. In Quebec we have lived through an era where the citizens believed in technocrats. The well-known defeat of their enterprises is at the origin of an awareness of the public which is perhaps not yet very clear, but is still real.

M.R. — It is a matter of an anti-nineteenth century attitude. The predominance of transport over habitat has become tyrannical in the 20th century. Cities are no longer cities but highways. There is no longer a question of urbanism under these conditions. Thus committees of residents constitute a capital phenomenon. The city should arise from decisions of its inhabitants. The idea is still new and I am not sure that it is popular yet.

Y.G. — I do not believe that one can speak about citizens' committees as true accomplishments. Speculators still succeed often in twisting the law. The few successes of groups of citizens are not very satisfying. Public protest is not a sufficient guarantee. Perhaps it is necessary to think in more radical terms.

M.L. — Can the population act otherwise than by protesting? It is not aware of realities other than those which it has in sight. To the question: "What do you want?" it answers in a negative way: "We don't want construction or highways . . ."

B.L. — Perhaps the population is not aware of its actual power, and, in consequence, does not express itself . . .

M.R. — The two phenomena are parallel. If the people were aware of their power, we cannot see very well what they could demand. On the other hand, we know very well what they do not wish to want.

M.B. — Worse. The public can want precisely what seems to be its good and which is its bad. That means that an entire population can live in the most complete Utopia and think, for instance, of rural life, of paradise, of a certain prehistoric age . . .

Toward The City State

B.L. — Urban awareness is not global but partial at the moment.

M.L. — Double awareness: awareness of the realities which one can build up and awareness of the power to limit these realities. It remains to put in place mechanisma, mirrors which allow the population to look. These mirrors ought to offer a richer reflection than dull reality.

Y.G. — Distorting mirrors, in fact?

M.L. — Distortions, certainly, offered in terms of possible options. Then, a desire for liberation will appear. It is already beginning at the level of municipal authorities. In thirty years they will speak in Canada of a confederation of seven or eight city-states.

B.L. — City-state and planning of territory, is it not a matter of one and the same entity?

M.L. — Certainly, urbanisation of influence considerably goes beyond geographical urbanisation. For example, if we consider all the phenomena of social and cultural life in Manitoba (one million inhabitants), we perceive that they all converge at Winnipeg (600,000 inhabitants). That covers the whole of real estate transactions, political decisions, and almost all cultural activities. We must soon expect a struggle for power between provincial and municipal authorities.

M.R. — This supremacy of a city over a whole territory is a technocratic danger. We have an illustration of it in Paris and the French *desert*.

B.L. — Let us come back to the mirrors. They give back the images of a city and a society completely compartmented. Even enlightened, urban awareness has trouble in tying everything together.

M.L. — There is a partition, certainly. But where do you classify an experiment like videograph? Is it a matter of education, of leisure, or of work? Those who produce the Opportunities for Youth or Local Initiatives projects belong to the same process of global integration.

M.B. — I add that the relating of technology and permanent education in the more classical context of multi-discipline research could lead us toward a new culture.

B.L. — Isn't this still not enough?

M.R. — Technology for the city works very badly. It functions in an anti-urban and non-urban manner. It has almost never been used to resolve a problem of a city which corresponds to the needs of present-day man.

M.L. — There is a fundamental distinction between the limit of education and the limit of technology.

B.L. — Not necessarily, since this education leads to a seizing of power, that is to say to the control of men by technical means.

M.L. — Education leads to much more than that: it is the acquiring of knowledge, certainly, but also the development of intellectual capacities which go beyond technology.

B.L. — Even in school as we know it . . .

M.R. — The school we know is a set school. So is the city we know. Permanent education can emerge into permanent revolution and, in what has to do with the city, on the permanent organic city.

M.L. — In the matter of urban technology I claim, on the contrary, that it is functioning admirably well. If we take the example of Montreal we have every right to be satisfied: when I use the telephone, I get my party without difficulty: when I go home, I push a button and the light goes on. A short time ago, I left Ottawa by plane; we must believe that all went well, since I am here speaking to you. One objection: too high a price.

M.B. — I had thought that when speaking of urban technology, we were alluding to urbanism itself, that is to say urban planning.

M.R. — That is precisely what is not working. The rest must be considered as equipment of the territory.

M.B. — In the absence of global planning, we must realize that to speak of the city is Utopian; because the city does not exist in itself. We are rediscovering the notion of the isolated city which the Utopians tried to conceive.

Architects in the Service of Everyone

B.L. — We are speaking of the urban phenomenon and up to the present there has been almost no question of housing, habitat, architects, urban planners . . .

A.P. — . . . And not even of art!

M.R. — These elements were contained in what we said. We did not name them. Perhaps this is a good sign . . .

A.P. — Perhaps it is because the city should be a work of art.

M.R. — Yes, but not only that.

B.L. — What would be the place of the architect?

M.R. — But first what is an architect? It is generally a master of works who collaborates with an engineer. Or with another specialist — the urban planner — who is often also an architect. The city-planner often forms an idea of the city and an idea of the habitat without concerning himself with knowing if these images correspond with the needs of the inhabitants. There are historic examples like that of Le Corbusier with Pessac. In the twenties Le Corbusier built in a style which was ultra-modern for its time, a workers city near Bordeaux, at Pessac, with terrace-roofs, pilings, windows in the length, etc. Workers and their families were settled there. Only lately, at the time of an inquiring, it was observed that these houses now had pointed roofs which contained attics and that the pilings have been used to enclose garages. Very simply, the people reconstructed their ideal house. There was a disparity between the mind of Le Corbusier and that of the inhabitants. Who is right?

M.B. — Has the architecture of transition been developed?

M.R. — Yes, not only for offices but also for the building of homes.

M.L. — Flexible architecture also constitutes a form of architectural transition.

M.R. — It is a matter of an architecture where the divisions are mobile, which permits the arranging of the area at one's choice. If Pessac had possibilities of extension, the result would have been better on the aesthetic plan.

B.L. — Would such ideas limit the mobility of the people?

M.L. — People move very often in North America. However, these moves are not all linked to a simple dissatisfaction, but rather to civil changes in the family: marriages, births, deaths.

Y.G. — It is easier to change houses than to modify the one we occupy. At present, at least.

B.L. — Then the architect has only a rôle as advisor or as critic. Since everything is preconceived, prefabricated, he has no more to do than to make his selection.

Y.G. — Actually, the architect is the victim of the financier. At this moment, the supply of apartments of one or one and a half rooms exceeds the demand by 30 to 40 per cent. On the other hand, more than 70 per cent of the families in Montreal would need two to three extra rooms. There is the whole gap between the interest of society and that of the promoters.

B.L. — Therefore there is reason to question the social order.

M.B. — For me, it is first of all a matter of the principle of development: either the principle is economic and only economic or else it is economic and also ecological.

M.L. — The State can control land speculation if it wants to. It would be enough that a people's will should strongly urge it to do so. That would involve the prohibition of building single family houses inside a certain perimeter. The result is the definite halting of urban spread, the protection of green spaces around urban areas, the control of pollution in the centre of the cities . . . There would be many other consequences.

B.L. — I am impressed by the importance you give to the State.

M.L. — I am simply saying what would be the powers of the State. There are other means of arriving at strong control: experimental projects, polling, analysis of needs, etc.

B.L. — Computer society?

M.L. — No, not at all.

M.R. — The great danger would be to hand over the city to the computers.

B.L. — Would not the cybernetic city — I am coming back to that — offer to each the freedom to modify his urban space as he wished?

M.R. — That would be much too dangerous.

A.P. — The ideal city would be rather a city where man would have hardly any needs.

B.L. — That is difficult, perhaps.

Y.G. — No, because we are witnessing more and more a curbing of consumption of goods. We prefer to renovate houses rather than to demolish them.

M.R. — That's understandable: people know what they have, they do not know what will be suggested to them. By destroying an area, even a very unhealthful one, we destroy an organic city which exists and which we replace by a system without organization.

M.B. — We are living in an Utopian society. If we examine planning programs, whether they be urban or not, we perceive that they carve out small islands at the interior of a territory of which they develop only scattered areas which will serve as models. This is truly the step of an Utopian thought, which for a long time has introduced these sub-universes to us. How can you expect people to have confidence?

A.P. — Do all our accomplishments lead us inevitably toward new Utopias?

M.L. — Perhaps not if we grant that the city is a zone of converging where a whole series of systems which can be compared to servo-mechanisms isolate us, gather us together, protect us, expand us. It is for us to increase the rate of profit, for us to humanize it.

M.R. — I believe that the superimposing of all the networks which make up urban life condition the liberty of the city dweller. Professional systems of leisure, family systems: they all go along in different directions. There is one of the fundamental differences between the city and the parish. In the city, one can very well have no connection with his neighbours but many relationships with people through the channel of the systems.

The Human City

M.B. — It seems to me that we are at the core of the problem: problems of habitat, culture and territory. We generally evade these real problems because we do not know where we are going: it is certain that they arise in terms of territorial organization. We are in a world where individuals share several areas; we exist at different levels. Certain of these relationships are those of the street or the district, others are relationships of the city, the province, the country. One cannot prevent oneself from realizing that we are heading toward a world where territorial functions tend to polarize around the very specific needs of the professional milieu which our colleague. D. Janelle, calls "ad-hocratie". We are going toward a sort of structure where these professional relationships will determine our preferred relationships, our most important links with other human beings.

It is impossible not to see that this is a complete deadlock. And, since we are discussing the problem of habitat and culture in terms of territory, we cannot eliminate the dimension of a continued attendance of a same number of persons or of a same human group, if we wish to speak of humanism or of humanity. The recognition of the other can be accomplished only on that condition. I do not intend to defend the parochial ideal or an outline of fascist life where people would be regimented. I believe it will be necessary to find a formula which will favour interaction between individuals to the greatest extent. But it is important that a part of this interaction should come about in a certain degree, and at a certain level with the same individuals.

M.L. — I have another definition of humanism. I think we will have attained contemporary humanism when we have the power of no longer using our power: to abstain from erecting buildings of 30 stories and to limit ourselves to 10, to do without extra autoroutes, to dispense with a thousand technological follies, to reach a certain moderation. Thus the urban fabric will be *densified* and *profitable* from a human point of view. We will then be able to devote ourselves to intellectual tasks, to creative tasks.

B.L. — Is this how you forsee the urban finality?

M.L. — I don't know. Is there a distinction between the goal and the step toward it? In this case, creating the city becomes the finality of the city. It is not a heaven which must be reached by passing through the purgatory of present technology. To discuss the city is for me, in a certain way, to attain the finality of the city.

Y.G. — We rarely speak of the individual. For me, any definition of the city and any finality of the city must consider the individual in the very first place. The community is an aggregate of individuals. That, to me, is fundamental.

M.B. — I believe that I have already explained myself on the matter of urban finality. I would like simply to emphasize, in ending, the danger there would be in following political ideals which would lead us into ways which are a little backward, those of bureaucracy. The State is progressively becoming a kind of supreme organ which ought to solve all our problems. What I am against is the absence of critical attitude toward the increasing of this phenomenon.

M.R. — The city is the privileged place of production and consumption. One of its finalities would be to plan this production-consumption for man, and not for the city-object. This inversion of rôles will perhaps create a new urban system. Although we can forsee it with difficulty.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE GREEN INFILTRATION — An attempt to integrate vegetation into the city

By Christian LALONDE

The text which we reproduce here is a résumé of the thesis of Mr. Christian Lalonde titled *The Green Infiltration*. Therefore you will not find here all the technical details but only the general principle which determines the conditions of the green infiltration.

Mr. Lalonde is a graduate of the University of Quebec in Montreal.

Five o'clock Friday night. Get out of the city. All with the same hurried gestures, there are a thousand of them, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, sometimes more, in search of a little less brick, asphalt or concrete.

Sun, space, pure air, greenery: magic words. So away they go, not too far in spite of everything, looking for nature to be found again. Or failing that, to be re-invented. Get out of the city.

There are those who do not leave. Spring, summer, autumn, winter: they are relentless in making household plants survive under ridiculous conditions, often without results. And why apply so much effort in the face of essential conditions of light, water and space which are insufficient or mediocre? For nothing, for perhaps one flower. For nothing also is the Sunday walk in the greenhouses of the botanical garden in search of a permanent spring.

Return to nature: a stereotyped solution, an easy solution. Easy? Indeed. Solution? It is still marginal. Not very satisfying in any case for our henceforth urban civilization.

Flee the city. Yes, but to find it again better. And we are at the heart of the problem. Condemned to live in town — with the city? — we must certainly recognize that beyond technological developments there are other *things* particular to the biological being which is man, special to his nature, and to nature.

Let us make no mistake. It is not a question here of good feelings about *generous and benevolent* nature — nor does the subject relate to floral decoration either.

An investigation undertaken in 1968 in several western capitals showed that the dream of the average citizen was concerned with using the advantages of the city and the happiness of the country. In short, the *city-country* is to be created. To reconcile these two extremes is utopian. And yet means of *softening* the city do exist. Certainly, but how do we introduce more *nature* into the city? How shall we integrate vegetation into the city at the beginning? This comes back to determining the conditions of the *green infiltration*. This is the whole theme of this short text.

Montreal is only in the tenth rank of big world cities for its green spaces. And yet — who would have believed it — the metropolis of Canada benefits from a privileged geographical position. It is situated on the forty-fifth parallel. Thus, compared to London and Paris, located more toward the north, Montreal enjoys a clearly greater amount of sunshine. Besides, the precipitation is quite regular and well distributed. Even better, growing urbanisation determines a microclimate, similar to that of more southern zones, and turns aside the downpours of the surrounding areas, to the advantage of the metropolis. We can guess without fear of being mistaken that there will be from now on and always more rain in Montreal than in the neighbouring countryside.

An inevitable detail: air pollution. One single example: carbon monoxide. This gas is discharged from the muffler of automobiles and does not always have time to oxidize. It is breathed by pedestrians and car drivers upon whom it acts like a powerful poison. Well, green plants would render it inoffensive since they would accelerate its oxidization by using it as a gaseous fertilizer.

The first beneficiaries: the trees. These, in effect, would be the first to increase their boughs and their rate of growth. A big, healthy, leafy tree is much more fit to deaden the noises of the city, to fight air pollution and to produce more oxygen than any other small plant. On an equal area, it creates a green volume — its foliage — much more important than shrubs or grass. The silver maple, the negundo maple, the linden and the American elm, the European linden, the green ash, the red oak and the honey locust with three thorns would be the best adapted in Montreal.

Sun, rain and even pollution: here united are the ideal conditions for a green infiltration, even without considering the variations of pressure. Cross streets and skyscrapers change winds into violent air currents, which prevents all vegetation from growing normally. The general direction of the winds in Montreal is oriented west-south-west. It would be enough to set against this some successions of windbreaks in order to curb its force. Vegetable windbreaks, naturally (trees again), but themselves protected by special architectural structures.

In reality it is therefore a global modification of urban planning which could bring about a penetration of the plant element in the city. However, it would be possible to apply this principle of integration to the single-family house or the duplex, such as we know them: a simple matter of orientation. It would be neither ideal nor satisfying. That is why, notice having been taken of strictly physical factors (geophysical) and human habits permeating the present urban life (types of residence, means of transport, leisure, etc.), it seems more practical to anticipate the construction of buildings erected in terms of plant integration. These buildings would regroup a great number of families (200) while at the same time preserving intimacy. Thus, we consider a construction of a pyramidal type.

To control the wind and to take the greatest advantage of solar energy, the height of the building must be three times less than its base on the north-south axis. The southern face is perpendicular to the ground. The two planes inclined east and west constitute the areas of noble human activities: dwellings, schools, clinic, etc. The dark centre shelters parking lots, warehouses, machines, theatre halls or meeting halls, restaurants, laundries, heating plants, etc.

The great originality of the areas for living is seen in the place which is made there for plants. Each apartment on the east and west faces has a terrace with a pool of light. Fully on the south, it is rather of an inside garden that we must speak. The plants have as their purpose to purify, to humidify and to enrich the air of the habitation; they filter and harmoniously diffuse the light which is too intense for the human eye. If all the windows of the apartment look out on the terrace (as in the case we have chosen), the wall without openings can be covered with vines.

Terraces: an area of eight feet is planned at the north end of each terrace to preserve privacy. This space is occupied by the well of light of the dwelling below. This well allows the channelling of the rays of daylight and reflects them into the home situated under the terrace. The heating apparatus, of course, is far from the plants.

Outdoors: the street, parks. Naturally, the topography determines the division of the buildings, traffic routes and green spaces. It is desirable that each pyramid should include the equivalent of its surface in parks and that the latter should be oriented to the north-east, sheltered from the prevailing winds. Nor does anything forbid building the pyramid on pilings.

Do you know that there still remain in Montreal a few parcels of land, last vestiges of the wild woods? Most of these zones are intended for urbanisation; most of these little woods could form ecological reserves, places for walks and rest.

Still another word, another paradox. Along the highways, at the traffic circles, we could replace the beds of yellowing grass by real groups of trees, except at places where lateral visibility is necessary. This change would lesser the atmospheric and noise pollution of the autoroutes.

City-country or country-city: will the choice be only ad-libbed? We have spoken here of a possible city-country, that is to say of a possible city-flower, city-tree, green city, city-life.

Parking, streets, throughways, houses: concrete protects the trees, pollution nourishes them. Paradox? Heresy? Indeed.

Then flee the city? No. One does not escape the city, that is to deny the possible balance and to lose the initiative still offered to achieve a human city, that is to say an environment of life.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE CITY IN THE MUSEUM

René ROZON interviews Melvin CHARNEY

From the eleventh of June to the thirteenth of last August, The Museum of Fine Arts of Montreal presented a startling exhibition, *Montreal, More or Less*, which was to upset more than one traditional scheme. Because its theme, the arrangement of the city, is not normally considered among artistic motives. And its contents — to which we shall return — were to be found outside the conventional boundaries of a museum known for its artistic austerity. Finally, wishing to appear as the reflection of a metropolis in development, the exhibition was at the same time, through purely visual techniques, a radical denunciation of an outmoded conception, and yet at the same time prevalent, of urbanism, that is to say recourse to the primary notion of addition (new projects) and substraction (demolition).

The enterprise was new and ambitious too. It necessitated prolonged analyses, probes and discussions; it sought the collaboration of artists, architects, town-planners, different action groups, without omitting the participation of the provincial and municipal governments (which withdrew as a last resort!) Balance sheet of this effort: a collection of documents (among which were posters, photographs, comic strips, advertising, different plans of the city); audio-visual productions (including the film *Urbanose*, a documentary series in ten parts, produced by the National Film Board); urban games (allowing the public to modify the configuration of the city at will); neo-realistic paintings (ordered by telephone); multiples (which the visitor could unhook and carry away with him!) bidimensional pictures (which the spectator had the leisure to cross) linked by a labyrinth formed of fences (an allusion to the mazes of big cities).

In the short space of two and a half months, they succeeded in bringing this project to fruition, — huge, it goes without saying, and difficult to coordinate, so complex was it. In full summer (considered as out of season) the museum registered more than 52,000 admissions, a record number in attendance, for several years, for a single exhibition. The exhibition was really stimulating and thrilling to visit. It was, however, not without gaps and raises many contradictions. We have noted a few of them and have submitted them to Mr. Melvin Charney, architect and assistant professor in the Faculty of Planning of the University of Montreal, who was on this occasion the advisor and the co-ordinator of the exhibition.

VdA — The problems raised by the exhibition and linked to its planning — underprivileged wards, uniform and inhuman skyscrapers, pollution, green spaces, as well as the application of an adding and subtracting urbanism — are found in every modern big city, from Tokyo to New York, from Paris to Mexico City. Was the integration of these matters found universally going to allow the exhibition to attain its objective, that is to say to set forth the special quality of Montreal?

M.C. — From the beginning, I must specify that if there is confusion as to the goal which we intended to reach, it is to the title of the exhibition that it must be attributed. A title which certainly alludes, as you have emphasized, to the adding and subtracting concept of the planning of the city. But this same title encompassed in the beginning a double meaning: the exhibition was going to deal more or less, that is to say yes and no, with Montreal. Alas, badly translated into English (Montreal, plus or minus?) and badly punctuated in the two languages (comma and question mark), this second level of meaning was unfortunately going to disappear. It is with the aim of re-establishing the duality of the initial concept of the exhibition that I have taken the liberty of titling the introduction to the catalogue *Montreal . . . plus ou moins/Montreal . . . more or less.*

This having been said, when a city like Montreal becomes the subject of an exhibition, one must never lose from sight two levels of reality impossible to dissociate by reason of their interaction: in the first place, the elements which result from the extent of its territory and from the density of its population, elements which join inevitably with other cities of the same caliber; and in the second place, the unique conditions, the way of life particular to the city in question. In this exhibition, they took note, as it should be, of this first aspect, but they especially stressed the second. That was a way of emphasizing the context, which they have too great a tendency to forget, in which this first level appears, better known and more widespread, but which nevertheless risks considerably modifying the second.

Allow me to give you a precise example. The Green Spaces group exhibited a survey indicating the acres of green space available by thousands of inhabitants of several cities of the world. In this list, Cincinnati, Ottawa and St. Louis appear at the head, while Rome, London and Montreal appear at the bottom of the ladder. Well, what comes out of this example is not the fact that at Montreal we lack green spaces, but rather a questioning and a redefinition of the very notion of green spaces. In Montreal, the community spirit of the city is such that public squares, meeting places, and even the streets reflect its real urban and civilized character, and which are spaces not necessarily green, but *open* and accessible to the public. While as for the built-up areas at the head of the list, they are completely deprived of this spirit which animates a city worthy of this name. Shapeless and without character, these cities were created by a race having a profound distrust of urban life. Have you visited St. Louis? You will see that it is a city without a soul. The old heart of St. Louis was demolished and never rebuilt. The center became a ghetto inhabited by Blacks, a concentration camp of the poor. The majority of the population lives far from the center, in suburbs. That is why there are so many green spaces. Nonetheless, it is a ghostly, sad city. Let it be said in passing, the policy of the federal government of Canada in the matter of dwellings is in the process of committing the same errors by exiling the population of urban centers to suburbs. I therefore believe that by its presentation, Green Spaces has given rise to an uneasiness coming from the fact that we are neglecting the public and communal aspect of our city. The citizen, real capital element of every urban mass, is not always favored by the planning of his own city. The upkeep of public places leaves much to be desired and the automobile is king in our streets. Why, for example, should we not close the main throughway, St. Catherine St., to all automobile traffic and give it over to pedestrians, as do so many other cities across the world? All the more because in Montreal the adopting of this measure would not be marginal, but in perfect accord with the predominant character of the city as indicated earlier.

Thus, from a problem which is found universally, like green spaces, one can arrive at bringing out specifically Montreal conclusions. Montreal has affinities with other cities, but she is at the same time different from them. She has her own heritage, her own history, and there is a way of life here which persists to this day and which gives its pulse to the city, her unique rhythm. This is what the exhibition tried to demonstrate, with the goal of maintaining and preserving this spirit which threatens the present planning.

VdA — On choosing to present an exhibition about the city in the framework of a museum devoted to fine arts, organisers and participants find themselves by the very fact in the impossibility of dissociating themselves completely from the notion of art. Considering the practical and instructive scope of its theme, would the exhibition not have been more effective if it had been presented on neutral ground, outside of any artistic consideration?

M.C. — But I did not choose a priori to mount this exhibition in a museum devoted to the arts. On the contrary, it was rather the Museum of Fine Arts of Montreal which approached me to discuss the possibility of taking in hand and carrying out this project. Besides, does a neutral ground really exist? For if an institution other than artistic had made me a similar proposition, the exhibition would without doubt have been different, although, there too, it would have been necessary to take other imperatives into account.

Moreover, before arriving at the definite form, different projects had been studied, precisely with the intention of going out of the confines of the museum, so as to reverse its traditional role: the people would not have come to the museum, it is rather the museum which would have gone to meet the people. In this view, the museum became a simple centre of information transmitting to the public the itinerary to be followed.

One of these projects consisted of distributing the exhibition in five sections of the city, in places easily accessible and integrated into the everyday life of Montrealers. For example, I suggested to a theatre group that they should find an unoccupied house and install themselves in it to play the roles of a typically Montreal family, while the public would have the right to ring at the door and to visit the fictitious tenants. Another aspect of the same project: they had the idea of showing a history of Montreal in the streets, by placing posters specifying the state of the building, its rent and its real owner on several buildings, among which was that house on Clark Street in Mile End, which is

an important monument in the evolution of the architecture of the city.

Another method of setting up an open exhibition had been contemplated with the assistance of the Central Council of National Unions of Montreal, which was favourable to this project. A formula of compromise: the CCNU first suggested to holding the exhibition at the museum, and presenting it later in different areas of the city. Unfortunately, the CCNU had to withdraw.

In the face of the impossibility of wholly fulfilling these projects, I realized that the only way of coming out of them, if we really wished that the exhibition should come to pass — and moreover there remained little time after all these steps — it was finally necessary to make maximum use of the actual resources of the museum. Just the same, we succeeded in maintaining certain elements of the exhibition outside the museum: Green Spaces organized visits by bus for the public across the city, and Mauve, a feminist group, besides displaying an environment in a window of Dupuis Frères department store, was going to play theatre productions in the street.

Certainly, the museum, by its very nature, is not reality itself, but the reflection of reality. And the reflection of reality is art, one cannot escape from it, and it was necessary to admit this. But to be in a position to reflect it adequately, we preferred to assume this reality rather than to plan below it. And that is why, in spite of the limits imposed — including budget and limited staff — we have never had an exhibition so committed, so political, in the history of this city, and so much developed on an artistic plan. Did you know that to create an exhibition of this kind on Montreal, it was necessary to upset the established order, in the field of artistic creation as in that of the conception and the organization of an exhibition, and to reconstruct the whole from reality, from the actual life of the people who live in Montreal, which has been too long unknown? Nevertheless, it is in this reality that we rediscover what is unique in Montreal, and it is to the extent that we will be able to be inspired by it that we will be able to communicate with the people who live in it, and thus lead them to reflect on their own life, one of the important rôles, it seems to me, of the art of our time.

VdA — Several action groups, notably Élan, Point Zéro and Alternatives, made up of citizens aware of urban problems, participated in the preparation of the exhibition. They faced up to many problems, a very valuable step, but without offering solutions to solve them, sometimes leaving the visitor puzzled. On this matter, has the exhibition not missed a unique opportunity to enlighten the visitor and inspire him to take means of positive action to solve the problems raised, in order to better his lot?

M.C. — The real problem in Montreal, as in most large cities, is not the formation of small autonomous groups, which are in the last resort powerless, but the formation of a common front to exert pressure effectively on the authorities who do not always take into account the real needs of the citizens. One of the aims of the exibition was to make people conscious of the very existence of these different action groups taken separately, as well as of the diversity of their purposes. But, indirectly, the visitors, while going through the exhibition, were forming *in spirit* a kind of common front: they no longer felt isolated or lost and they realized that there were other people concerned with the same problems. Besides, I do not believe that it belongs to a museum of fine arts to suggest ready-made formulas to the public. Because the field of action of the visitor is elsewhere, it is political. The best one can do within the context of a museum is not politics, but rather to educate the public politically, to sensitize it to the necessity of acting, while hoping to incite it and promote in it this desire to effect the necessary changes in the priorities of the planning of Montreal.

VdA — Large cities without defects are utopian. There are, nonetheless, some cities which are beautiful and captivating. And Montreal is one of those rare, attractive cities on the North American continent. The exhibition seems to have neglected this positive side. If certain policies of planning of the city of Montreal leave something to be desired, others have been clearly successful, as witnessed by its public transport system (the subway line and its stations), the conception of the underground urbanism of the downtown area (one of the best examples in North America) and the preservation of an historic quarter (Old Montreal) to cite only the most convincing examples. If they are worth being encouraged, why not have taken note of them?

M.C. — What you have just mentioned are all examples which arise from an official urbanism imposed on the city. Let me explain.

Let us take the question of public transport. Yes, we have a subway; however, the planning of the city still favours the vehicle. In Toronto, the citizens were able to stop the construction of the Spadina highway. But not in Montreal where we are in the process of introducing a highway right in the centre of town. That is pure genocide!

In what refers to the aforesaid subterranean city, it was never planned, but was going to be born by accident, like all good city plans across the world. On the other hand, it must be said that this underground city favours purely financial interests: it does not belong to the citizens, but to the owners of the buildings which shelter it: the idea of the street no longer exists in this case, and the corridors which replace it are controlled by policemen in uniform in the service of private companies.

As for Old Montreal, it is the historical Disneyland of Quebec. From a section falling in ruins and practically uninhabited, it became, once renovated, a priveleged section, with shops, restaurants and luxurious apartments. But the real Old Montreal is found in Panet Street where the people still live under historic conditions. Yet, no one thinks of saving this area, no more than the buildings of the workmen's quarters of the 19th century, no more than the public squares of St. Henry.

No, it was precisely through keeping a certain backward movement through a link with this official urbanism that the exhibition was going not only to innovate, but to touch favourable points, very favourable even. For it was, in my opinion, a clearly positive exhibition, which adopted not the official point of view of the planning of the city which might have been expected, but rather the point of view of the *citizen*. You will understand that the appreciation of a city begins with the judgement of the people who live in it. It is with difficulty that these two entities can be dissociated. We wished therefore that the people should be proud of their city and I would even go so far as to say proud of their slums. Besides, is not the capture of consciousness the first step toward its own liberation? Actually, it was a very optimistic exhibition and deeply based on the popular character of Montreal, that is to say which took note of the majority of its inhabitants, although the middle-class preoccupations, which are joined with them, such as pollution and green spaces, have not been excluded.

Finally, I agree with you in saying that Montreal is a beautiful city. But will it be so much longer? For our governments, our town-planners, our system of developing the resources of the city are unfortunately in the process of spoiling everything of value here. However, city-planning is a sufficiently developed discipline and the authorities make use of every means to put it to use (as proved by the isolated and futile case of Old Montreal). But as long as the political and economic structures will not respect its demands — historical and geographical context, and above all the *human* potential of a built-up area — it is in vain that urbanism is advanced, it is nothing in practice, and is no longer in the way of preserving the character of a city like Montreal, even while improving it. As long as our way of life is different from that of other cities and as long as we are capable of reflecting these differences in the physical organization of our city — and it is that, actually, which the true notion of city-planning encompasses — Montreal will remain an interesting urban centre and pleasant to live in. To tell the truth, it is the only thing worth the trouble to encourage.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

MONTREAL, AN ATMOSPHERE

By Raymond CARBONNEAU

A caricaturist, aggressive or political, speaks to me of a sick city, in the grip of sombre socio-economic realities. Pierre Dupras illustrates a struggle between two cultures: The one, anglophone, rich and self-confident, taking delight in its West Island ghetto; the other, francophone, poor and bourgeois, incessantly pushing back the linguistic borders towards the west. Elsewhere, Melvin Charney stresses to me that there are colours in this city. Others, the geographists, having come from all parts of the world, having met in congress, discover the Metropolis. They travel through it in all directions, by bus, on foot. I follow them. I become a foreigner in my city. My eyes play at tourist.

Montreal. A business opportunity for free enterprise. A friendly space for the neighbours beyond the forty-fifth parallel. Some speak of a creative environment, others of an area of unrest which shakes Quebec by its autumnal crises. Montreal is a little of all this. But it is above all an intense visual discovery with its roads of communication, its downtown area, its university sections, its residences, its people.

Make Room

Drowsy, the city awakens suddenly, becomes the prototype of the North American city. Montreal expands, invades the island and annexes it. Stopped in its territorial expansion by a few municipalities concerned for their integrity, it turns the problem aside and forces the area to live according to its rhythm. The urban community forms principally an economic solution — a solution which temporarily settles the accumulated and the future deficits of International Montreal, that of the world exhibition and that of the coming Olympic Games. The rhythm is accelerating. I am holding my breath.

The metropolis should also equip itself with a network of roads to satisfy its conquests. In 1941, only sixteen percent of the population owned a car. In the fifties, this percentage doubled, then, in 1967, climbed to sixty-four percent. More than 650,000 vehicles of all models travel in the streets each day. The residential boulevards are disappearing, invaded by a tide of drivers. The swift Bonaventure road, the LaFontaine bridge-tunnel are built. Bonaventure, LaFontaine: names which recall a more tranquil era. Other roads remain in the planning stage: the highways of the Thousand Islands, of the St. Scholastique airport. Still others, like that of the centre of town, rouse strong feelings. And the ancestor common to all these roads: the metropolitan boulevard. Daily, morning and evening, each hour, 9,000 vehicles pass there in both directions. It is no longer equal to the task; it has become fatal for those who dare to speed.

Montreal: a road network of more than a thousand miles with highways, downtown arteries, residential streets and others. An odd administrative jig-saw puzzle. A nightmare in the parking of automobiles, those devourers of space. We even take possession of building lots in Old Montreal. History yields to parking. The latter occupies nearly sixteen percent of the downtown area. More than four million square feet!

A Solution?

1967. I smile, hesitate, then deposit my ticket. A dull noise, I go through the turnstile, a wait of a few seconds and the subway train arrives. Five years later, joy is erased with routine. They promise me many developments in order to appease my impatience. Ten years from now they will go from sixteen stations to thirty-six. The user will travel rapidly between Verdun and Anjou, without neglecting the site of the Olympic games. The bus will serve the sectors forgotten by the subway. And yet, the curve of use is lessening. Even if, in rush hours, one must jostle in the trains. The service on Sunday accentuates the operational deficit. The figures of the Transport Commission tell the story: 843,000 passengers in 1970. At the beginning of 1968, there were more than 904,000 people each day. Thirty-five percent of the people move by car against twenty-five and a half percent by common transport. Just the same, the MTC has already won one battle, that of the centre of town: seventy percent of users travel by it.

The Rebirth of Concrete

I am listening to the guide, a geographer. My eyes look upward. A centre of town which is reviving. We believed it given up to an apathy of several years, in the example of its American neighbours. New buildings group themselves near Place Ville Marie, near the skyscrapers of the Bank of Commerce, IBM, Bonaventure Place, Château Champlain, etc. The sky is disappearing, sees itself conquered by masses of concrete. It resists little before the planners of space.

In another new movement, from now on we are moving toward the east, in contrast to seasonal moving. Place Desjardins will share the two sides of St. Catherine St. with Place des Arts. Farther along, the Chinese quarter awaits the white invader, federal officials who will be accommodated in immense blocks. The old Latin Quarter will be revived with the downtown campus of the University of Quebec. The Dupuis store will aggravate the epidemic of public squares. And, down there, opposite the living centre of Montreal, the Radio-Canada building contrasts with the immediate environment. At the east of the Jacques Cartier bridge, the Quebec provincial police defend law and order in glass headquarters, without counting the many and luxurious towers of dwellings, such as the Concordia project. Certainly, to plan the future, it is necessary to sacrifice some so-called historical monuments. Besides, what I see today will be a memory in 1980.

The sidewalks overflow, supporting an incredible weight. A downtown area where are counted 150,000 workers to the square mile. A commercial centre with hundreds of shops and stores. Distinguished also by its subterranean life. Long corridors link the Place Victoria to Place Ville Marie and Place du Canada. A religious and historical centre of town with its Old Montreal, its churches, mostly old, Catholic and Anglican. Restaurants, terraces set up on the edge of the pavements. Art rubs shoulders with cabarets. Hotels work with information centres. Three important daily papers compete with the electronic press. Newspaper stands monopolize the street corners.

A downtown area where people work, eat, sleep, use facilities, walk about, learn. Better still, the people humanize these masses of concrete, caress with the eye the few rare green spaces or the trees in tubs. A heavy traffic, auto horns, crunching of tires, strike their eardrums. Neon signs, advertisements, posters play subtly on their subconscious. The Centre of town: a city within a big city.

Witnesses

Districts, islets give evidence of the degree of wealth and multiculturalism of Montreal. The bus travels; the geographers press themselves to the side windows. Ahuntsic, Rosemount, St. Michael emphasize the economic rise of the French-Canadians after the last war. Sections populated by skilled labourers, white-collar workers. A few feet of grass in front of the duplexes.

In the west, where an exception must be made of the poor islets of Saint-Henri and Point Saint-Charles, the English predominance asserts itself; middle-class houses, images of a well-off minority. Corners of greenery where the streets wind, frequent traffic stops. They protect their environment by removing noise and speed. A break-through of francophones nevertheless takes place. The mountain attracts them. Language defines the boundary less and less. Wealth replaces it.

Quadrilaterals divide the francophone sections. Straight streets and heavy traffic. Two institutions illustrate and recall the rapid urbanisation of this society. One, the church, sees its rôle diminishing. The other, the credit union, is attracting an increasing number of members. The French-Canadian citizen is struggling with materialism. Commercial centres are becoming more numerous, creating a very near economy. The corner restaurants, the tobacco shops, the centres of popular movement complete the picture. Living islets.

At the heart of Montreal, I feel the cross of poverty. East-west, North-south sectors sheltering dwellings shared between French-Canadians and immigrants. Sidewalks encumbered by innumerable outside stairways. Sidewalks which are transformed into playgrounds. Backyards where people hold discussions.

In this metropolis of contrasts, there are added the regions occupied by the academics: a kind of islet within an islet.

A Few Lines Are Not Enough

What remains to be said, to be sensed, of Montreal? Many, many things. A few lines are not enough to tell everything. What shall we think of its political and legal institutions, of its clearly inadequate facilities for leisure, of this unique fact of a mountain in a city? Of a Mount Royal proudly parading its green spaces in the face of asphalt? Geographers have granted it a quick glance. For myself, my two eyes are not enough. I feel that I am blind. An architect has presented Montreal within four walls in order that its inhabitants may recognize each other. A fog hides the perspectives from me, a deafness hardly allows a few noises to penetrate my silence. I nonetheless begin to understand. Montreal is more than a city, it is an environment offered to all the senses.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

CLAUDE TOUSIGNANT

By François GAGNON

An exhibition by the Exterior Services of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

An important retrospective exhibition of the works of painter *Claude Tousignant* of Montreal comprising fifty works (40 paintings and 10 prints) produced between 1951 and 1972, will be presented in twelve centres across Canada from January 1972 to November 1974, and also during October 1973, in the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris.

Itinerary of the exhibition, 1973-1974

January 12 - February 11, 1973
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

March 15 - April 30
Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg

May 25 - June 24
Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

July 15 - August 15
Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

October 1 - October 31
Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris

December 1 - December 31
Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton

January 15 - February 15, 1974
Memorial University, St. John's, Nfld.

March 1 - March 31
Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax

April 15 - May 15
Confederation Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown

June 1 - June 30
Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton

July 15 - August 15
Undecided

September 1 - September 30
University of Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke

October 15 - November 15
Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison Univ., Sackville, N.B.

A series of exhibitions from one museum to another, even if not planned, can sometimes include instruction. Thus, an important Claude Tousignant retrospective, organized by the National Gallery of Canada will follow the Borduas and the Automatists exhibition, Montreal 1942-1955, presented last year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal. In a few months, the opportunity of re-living one of the important movements in the history of contemporary painting in Quebec will be given to visitors interested in the two showings. Claude Tousignant has been, with Guido Molinari, one of the chief contributors in the dispute over automatism and the drafting of plastician proposals.

One cannot miss perceiving, looking back in time, that Automatism appears in history, clad in a theory of pictural abstraction, badly adjusted to the works which it was supposed to defend. The questioning of the representation of things and persons seemed so radical to the automatist painters and to their public, that to explain it they resorted to an exclusively plastic vocabulary. Thus, Borduas' gouaches of 1942, if they were titled "Surrealist Painting" on the invitation card, were designated first by the title "Abstraction", followed by a single number which told its place in order. Reporters' commentaries inspired by the exhibition of these gouaches in the Hermitage Theatre, the same year, also spoke only of *abstraction*, calling upon music which evokes moods without, for what it is worth, suggesting precise forms, proclaimed the virtues of a single plastic language of lines and colours and tried out frenzied verbal transpositions, these alone being judged capable of taking account of going beyond all significance, they believed, in their experience. And yet, several of these gouaches were still obviously figurative. It is without effort that one can now detect in them here a bird, there a woman's head or a torso or even a Harlequin. Much more, when Borduas brings about during the year 1945 a significant return to representation, as in *La Femme au bijou*, *L'Ile enchantée* or *Le Nu vert*, etc., he continues no less to give his canvases numbered titles, such as *3.45*, *4.45*, *5.45*, which are really the dates of production and should be read, "made in the month of March, April, May, 1945."

At the very moment when the representation of objects was abandoned, as in most of the gouaches of 1942 and of the oils of 1943, more definitely from 1946 with Borduas or in the first canvases of Fernand Leduc (1944), of Pierre Gauvreau (1944) or in the watercolours of Riopelle (1946), the notion of object and, correspondingly, that of sign standing out on a background was maintained. The object had lost its conventional form but kept its structure as an object. We were far from the explosion which American *action painting* had caused it to undergo, except with Barbeau, perhaps (the astonishing *Tumulte à la mâchoire crispée* is from 1946), but we know what difficulties Barbeau had in maintaining this type of suggestion in the face of the plastic agreements implicit in the automatist group. Even non-representative, the automatist propositions were less abstract than one would have liked to believe.

Having taken its point of departure in spontaneity, Automatism was perhaps influenced to neglect the fact that the spontaneous, like instinct, is structured and includes its determinants. The non-premeditation of works, which was the fundamental principle of automatist productions, involved the fact that the process of the destruction of the concrete appearance of the figure, their structure as object in a tridimensional space, risked being maintained, even unknown to the protagonists. The old space box, inherited from ancient habits going back to the Renaissance, resisted the assaults of non-figuration and the *Parachutes végétaux* were at their ease there, like

the soft watches of Dali.

It is on this last point that criticism of Automatism by Plasticism takes on all its meaning. The abstract character of automatist production was challenged first by the plasticians, then in the name of a new structure by Claude Tousignant and Guido Molinari. If one wished to achieve a truly abstract painting, it was necessary to renounce not only representation, but the very notion of an object on the one hand and of all suggestion of tridimensional space on the other. From 1956, as a joint Molinari-Tousignant exhibition demonstrated, the stakes were down. A strictly bidimensional painting is proposed, without objects, and from that point it developes along its own lines.

One by one, what Matthew Baigell called "depth clues" disappear. The superimposing of one element upon another, which so clearly suggests depth, is avoided, the surfaces simply being placed side by side. Impressions of gravitation, of distance or even of orientation (left field and right field), on account of the references which they make to natural space, are prevented. Making use of circular surface, Claude Tousignant surely shows that he intends to avoid the traps of the rectangle in which one spontaneously distinguishes a top and a bottom, a left and a right, and on which the planes situated near the bottom of the picture risk appearing nearer the viewer than the planes situated in the top. For planes of different dimensions distributed on the surface painted in such a way as to form the illusion of atmospheric space, a plane of large dimension having a tendency to come forward and to seem closer than a smaller plane placed at its sides, are substituted bands of equal width, following each other in vertical stripes in Molinari's work, or in concentric circles and in oval bands more or less in length in Claude Tousignant's. Plays of texture on the planes are also eliminated. A textured plane stands out on a plane which is not textured. The surface of the paintings of the plasticians is, on the contrary, treated with a painter's roller, in such a way that even brush marks should not alter the perfect flatness of the surface of the picture. Finally, for the tonal colour which retains variations of shade according to whether one adds more or less white or black to the same tint, they substitute a saturated colour, avoiding all play of contrasts which, for example, would cause a bright red area to stand out on a pale blue background. This exclusive use of saturated colour brings out such a quickening of the pictural field that one might believe it, in reference to Tousignant, an op painting. This is an unfortunate interpretation, because it reduces to a secondary effect the whole of his production, which turns on more crucial research.

While rejecting the plays of the third dimension, Plasticism first discovered the fundamental idea of the series and then began a new research in the field of lyricism par excellence, pure colour. In effect they replaced the object with the series, more coherent with what science teaches about the structure of the universe, a vast undulating field ruled by the repetition of recurrent series, opposed or progressive. Thus, instead of following each other at the pleasure of I don't know what fantasy, as in the paintings of the American Gene Davis, for instance, the concentric bands of Tousignant obey a system of succession which a prolonged and attentive contemplation can rediscover.

But at the same time what has become for Claude Tousignant the essential principle of pictural research, the problems of spacial structure having been put in place once for all, is colour itself. It is especially colour that we risk allowing to escape from our considerations, as criticism has sometimes given the example, being occupied with the only definition of the space structure of the plasticians. With the pre-eminence given to colour, it is all the dionysian lyricism which we would be tempted not to see in this painting strictly defined structurally, which is reinvested with its full powers. Let us wish, in ending, that the Tousignant exhibition will offer a brillant demonstration, I was going to say *accelerated*, of the energetic quality of pure colour.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

PIERRE OUVRARD, AND THE DRESSING UP OF BOOKS

By Hélène OUVRARD

Bookbinding: an art whose object is the book and whose function is to assure permanence and translate for the eye and the hand the beauty of the literary work it contains. The technique is complex: the many and indispensable steps required were set many hundred years ago in the monasteries. The vocabulary to describe it has also come through the centuries, and in so doing has kept intact the magic heritage of an imaginary dress: priming, backing, heading, decorating . . . As to materials used, bookbinding inherited them from an age when man still had close ties with the animal and vegetable worlds: the leather, which the reader's hand will keep from drying, hand-made paper, hemp rope and flax thread well known for their toughness, animal glue which will never harden and thus enable the book to open forever with ease . . .

Bonded together almost organically (nerve fibers were once used) the book and its binding form an inseparable whole. To hold in one's hand a hand-bound book before reading it, to examine it, to touch it, is almost like caressing the skin of a stranger, that first blinding flash at the sight of its beauty, to foresee the enchantment in store. It is the preparation for an act of love.

To become a bookbinder, Pierre Ouvrard needed at the outset a love for books and the opportunity of meeting, at the time one prepares his tools for the future, the people to help shape this direction. Born in a family that included several booksellers, he discovers a taste for working with living matter: wood or leather. A visit to the year-end exhibitions at the École Technique and the École du Meuble de Montréal, accompanied by his father, who is himself interested in all he sees, along with the meeting of Louis-Philippe Beaudoin, first Canadian graduate of the École Estienne, of Paris, gave the direction to his vocation. The École des Arts Graphiques, which Philippe Beaudoin founded and which was to become famous, is still in 1943 when Pierre Ouvrard began his studies as a printer, in search of its indentity. Along with its first bookbinding

students, the school welcomes that year, a new graphic arts professor to whom Philippe Beaudoin will soon give the artistic direction of the school: Albert Dumouchel. For Pierre Ouvrard this is the beginning of a friendship and an influence which will remain unfailing.

Four young bookbinders graduated from the École des Arts Graphiques in 1947. Ian Trouillot, on a scholarship from Haïti, goes back home, Louis Grypinich starts teaching his craft, Jean Larivière specializes in Ottawa in the restoration of old books. In 1949, Pierre Ouvrard opens a bookbinding studio with Marcel Beaudoin who graduated one year after him. This took much daring, a sort of calculated risk because America, as opposed to Europe, had few bookbinding craftsmen. In Quebec, where this art has been passed on from craftsman to craftsman for generations we can count only a few well-established studios: the Chabot studio in Quebec, that of Vianney Bélanger and *The Gazette* bookbinding department under the direction of Ernest Boudreault in Montreal. A few well-known isolated craftsmen such as Louis Forest, Gérard Perreault and a few amateurs of high standing such as Mrs. Carl Stern, devote themselves to interesting research. However, Quebec, as a whole, is not ready to support these two new bookbinding partners formed to new ideas by Albert Dumouchel and the great currents of contemporary bookbinding.

Interesting contracts none the less start to arrive from such as: François Hertel, Roland Giguère who brings for binding the first books of "Les Éditions Erta" . . . The Ouvrard and Beaudoin studio will last two years: a fire destroys the premises leaving thousands of dollars of debts. Pierre Ouvrard will open his studio only seven years later prompted by Philippe Beaudoin with whom he had kept close bonds of friendship, as he had done with Albert Dumouchel and Lionel Jolicoeur, who had taught him the techniques of bookbinding. He has today reached the objective set as he left l'École des Arts Graphiques. to devote the major part of his time to artistic bookbinding.

Pierre Ouvrard, bookbinding craftsman — as he likes to be called — has equally the respect of tradition and a passion for research. Leather is always the basis of his bookbindings, with the exception of a few experiments with vinyl. But what leathers! Cape morocco leather, mountain goat skins for the very luxurious bindings, English morocco, practical and resistant shagreen, prepared with chemical dyes in beautiful colours, French bookbinding leathers dyed with plant dye according to techniques of the oldest and most refined, and that must be "brought out" by exposure to light for two or three months in order to stabilize the dyes — leathers so fragile that the perspiration of a hand marks them and therefore limits their use to very luxurious bindings.

There are many ways to dress the leather. Mosaïque in counterset or appliqué, in relief, smooth, veined, burned with acid, stamped with pigments or gold . . . It is at this stage that the bookbinder's technical research is put to use where he juxtaposes, mixes and extends one with the other the ancient and modern processes as well as his own discoveries. The mosaïque can be applied to the leather with glue or carved as a whole and counterset into the cover. The gold impressions we often see must be reworked with acid as for an engraving. The irons that characterize the Dentelle styles, take on a modern character, almost unwonted, with Pierre Ouvrard. An original iron, designed by the bookbinder and engraved by an engraver will serve only on the binding for which it was created and only once. Finally, the leather, which has become the site of the creation, will marry with foreign substances and create together harmonies never before known. Now a Japanese dyed paper moulded in plastic and integrated to the cover, now a bark inlay, wood (what could be better to decorate a book by Félix-Antoine Savard?), metal, paper, a glass agglomerate. In a future binding, a jewel by Bernard Chaudron, comprised of transparent parts, will be introduced into the cover, renewing with the Middle Age bindings whose boards carried ivory sculptures, precious stone inlays and metal stud-nails.

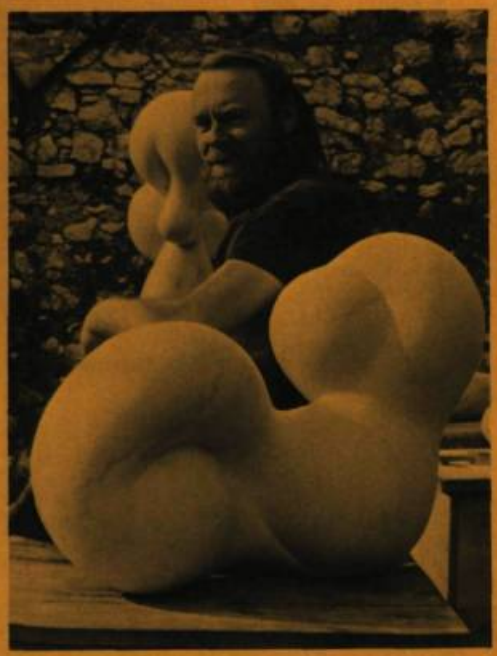
A bookbinding by Pierre Ouvrard is never an illustration of the book although it will be in harmony with it. At the most it will try to reveal its spirit, using graphic forms, mostly studies in form, colour and especially movement. This attitude ties him without doubt to the contemporary French school of bookbinding which Philippe Beaudoin tried to instill in Canadian bookbinding. He was not directly influenced by the French surrealism movement affecting the Montreal artistic milieu during his formative years but he was influenced by refraction, through the artists he traveled along with, Roland Giguère, Léon Bellefleur, the group Prisme d'Yeux . . . From this period also originates his admiration for Klee in whose work he saw certain affinities with the problems of form and colour also found in bookbinding. His real master was Albert Dumouchel. He cites this anecdote that clearly shows at what school he was formed: "When I was at the Graphic Arts School, I had as a task to bind a very beautiful book by the mime Chaplin, uncle or grand-uncle of Charlie Chaplin. I began to play with lines around the contour of the subjects, adding here and there diamond shapes found in the costume. Albert told me: "No, you will take only one element, the line or the diamond and make your binding from that." This habit of casting off the superfluous and the concentration of effect are still found in any bookbinding by Pierre Ouvrard. But any style would be dead without the inspiration that gives it life. And here, that of the bookbinder is in line with the reasons which made of him a craftsman first and foremost: "To remain close to nature, the real things". No matter how abstract they may be, the bindings evoke nature: the forest is present in the matter used, the Quebec countryside undulates in the background along the winding lines, the mysterious beginnings of the world surge forth under the stamping irons without blurring on the most beautiful leather in the world.

The law of affinities brought Pierre Ouvrard to work in collaboration many times: editions of engravings, research in plastics at various petrochemical companies with Guy Robert, current research on leather and marbled fabrics with Bernard Parent. Because of the nature of his inspiration, however, none of these associations has been as lasting, as enriching, or based on understanding and an affinity as deep as that which he had with the Saint-Gilles paper-factory of Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, with Mgr Félix-Antoine Savard who founded it and with Georges Audet, craftsman paper-maker. Those who have never seen this marvelous hand-made paper still do not know that a simple sheet of paper, dotted with hawkweed petals, inlaid with fern heads, tree leaves or moose moss, can become a poem before the writing. Pierre Ouvrard has instinctively known that nothing would better reflect our belonging to this land and he uses this paper abundantly on his bindings of Canadian books. To cite a detail: to gather this moss also called caribou moss in other regions, a sort of parasite that developes on old evergreens, the paper-makers must organize expeditions in a forest reserve at their disposal. Who could find anything more authentically Québécois?

Conscious both of the privilege that he has had as well as of the exigencies of the perenniality of his craft, Pierre Ouvrard transmits this approach to the art of bookbinding that was given him in an almost unique way. Under his guidance, at the École des Arts Graphiques, now the Ahuntsic Cegep, numerous bookbinding enthousiasts have been initiatetd into his difficult craft, learning the same traditional gestures, precise and meticulous, acquiring with patience the mastery of the most delicate operations, gaining the respect of their professor for their concepts. Ten of them now practice their art professionally, either in the restoration of old books, artistic bookbinding or library binding. We are still far from the French cultural climate where there are perhaps ten thousand bookbinders and where artistic bookbinding is considered an art just as painting.

But still, we are also far from the day when Philippe Beaudoin did not want to form more than two classes of bookbinders, for fear and with reason, that no matter how determined — and that they were! — they would not be able to earn their living with their craft. However, Quebec bookbinding which was at the outset, like everything else, utilitarian, is now in great demand by art lovers, even, if only one bookshop to this day — the Librarie Garneau in Quebec, under the direction of Mrs. Jacqueline Rioux — has all year a showcase to show the work and sell it as well. It can be said that in conformity with the vision that Philippe Beaudoin had, a new bookbinding school has been born in Quebec. From this angle, the work of Pierre Ouvrard takes on all of its importance since he was one of the only ones to persevere in the art of bookbinding. The task is now his to create a synthesis of an artistic and technical tradition of Europe and the Québécois spirit.

(Translation by Hélène Marcoux)



JIM RITCHIE: ANATOMIES IN MARBLE

By Jeffrey ROBINSON

Jim Ritchie comes back to Canada in October for his 13th one-man show, his seventh in Montreal, this time at the Waddington Gallery. He has been an every-other-year commuter from Vence on the south coast of France to Montreal for over a decade.

"I left in 1959 to live in France. Most of my work is done here although I also do some work in Carrara, Italy. Why I'm working here is a very complicated question, and the answers all revolve around factors like the quality of life, the fact that I can work outdoors all the year round, the fact that the marble is here. Naturally there are a lot of problems working here because I want to show in Canada. After all, that's home. Shipping and customs are, every-other-year, a huge problem. Yet I believe that working where the marble is, where it has always been carved, is the right way for me."

Each of Ritchie's one-man shows features new work. In recent years he has stopped working in clay and chosen instead to work mostly in stone. He has also chosen to make his work a living thing.

"For the most part I am carving directly, without a maquette. Yes, large pieces need maquettes so that the workers who help to rough out work can have something to guide them. But most of my work is done directly with the stone. With it. I work with the stone so that, eventually, a form grows. That's an important word, grows. It's a living thing. Firstly it grows in my mind and then one day I start to exteriorize it. It grows as an extension of myself, the idea I've had, the techniques and knowledge that I've acquired."

Putting together a show means almost two years worth of work.

"Carving takes me a long time. It takes me about 24 months to turn out 15 pieces. It's rare that I ever spend less than six weeks on a piece of say 200 pounds. For something that size, I start with a block of about 400 pounds, working mostly with a bush-hammer to find my forms. The final filing and polished finish, that's very time consuming, defines the sculptures outlines. I know there are faster ways of working but I can't do that and still produce the quality that I insist on producing. What I in affect am doing then is destroying each day's previous sculpture to make a slightly different one until there's nothing more to do and the piece is complete."

Many people seem to be impressed with the stones themselves but James Ritchie feels the sculpture is the important thing. The stone itself is his catalyst for what will come.

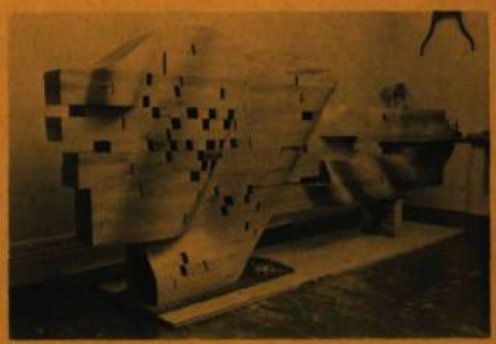
"I let some stones sit around for many months before I start work with them. I have to get a feeling for the stone. We build up a relationship, if you will, the stone and I. But the audience should be concerned with the work. That's what's important. Yes, some stones make better media than others. I work in onyx, black marble, Portugese rose marble, to name a few. And I have a favorite in white Carrara marble. I like it because it has a luminous quality which is ideal for my work. But the work is still the important thing. I've recently just completed my largest work to date from a three-ton block of white Carrara marble. The piece completed weighs about 3000 pounds, is almost five feet tall and is called *Life*."

The word "life" seems to be apropos as Jim Ritchie has made sculpting his life.

"It's something I've been doing all my life, although I didn't start selling until 1949. It was the Galerie Agnès Lefort, on Sherbrooke Street, where I made my first sale. And it's interesting because looking back nearly two dozen years, I can see how far I've come and also how far I've yet to go. And maybe that's why I work as much as I do. I'm a compulsive worker. Seeing where I've been shows me where I'm going. The more I do, the more I can do."

And just where is he going?

"To THE sculpture. It's like writing THE novel or painting THE oil. It's the thing that every artist I guess strives for. I'm trying to do that and everything I've done to date is another step in that direction. I've acquired over the years the knowledge of my own work and how to separate the good from the bad. This is a turning point. It's knowing instinctively if a piece is good. And that's as important as knowing that it's new. You see, I must do things I've never done before. A sculptor, I think, must be an inventor. He must create forms that have never existed before, not even in his own mind. Then it becomes a truly valid statement. It's a unique experience. It's something the viewer can share because it's a totally new experience for him also. When I was eight years old I made things out of plasticine to fascinate myself. And things are much the same now. I must fascinate myself. I must always take the risk of loosing a piece by changing it to make it better, to make it more fascinating. I have to get very much involved with it, become a part of it, or all of it. It's the only way I know how to create the kind of work I'm creating."



ANNE KAHANE: A FLOOD OF PINE

By Alma de CHANTAL

A warm light flooded the studio of Anne Kahane on this lovely autumn afternoon, accentuating the festive mood which already prevailed, since, as she immediately told me, she had finished the mural destined for the new buildings of the Canadian embassy in Pakistan the day before.

It is doubtless unusual that an artist living in Montreal should produce one day a work of monumental dimensions intended for a country so far away. That was possible because there is a policy of the federal government, Anne Kahane explains, which allows the Ministry of Public Works to allocate to works of art a percentage of the budget of the costs of the construction. A firm of architects of Winnipeg, responsible for the erection of the embassy, then communicated with the artist; she submitted sketches and a maquette to them and the project was accepted. Happy that they gave her this commission, she contemplated this work with a special enthusiasm. "This was for me", she said, "a unique opportunity, truly exceptional, of producing a work of monumental character, which would then be installed on an immense wall measuring 34 feet in length. Without this commission," she added, "I would certainly never have been able to achieve a sculpture of this dimension."

At the heart of everyday life

And six months later, following intense labour during which Anne Kahane obtained the constant aid and collaboration of Jean-Léon Deschênes, one of her former pupils,

the finished work entirely occupied the available space in the studio of the sculptor. It also took up the other rooms of the ground floor, bringing about the strange sensation of a dwelling created and arranged exclusively in terms of a work of art, which exists and breathes only by it, a live presence in the heart of everyday life.

The impressive dimensions of the sculpture, 29 feet long, 2 feet high and 10 inches deep, obliged the artist to divide the work in three distinct sections which would be reassembled only upon arrival at their destination. Moreover, Anne Kahane will go to Pakistan, which pleases her greatly, in order to supervise personally the installation of the sculpture in the entrance hall of the embassy, situated in Islamabad, the new capital of the country. And it will be only at this moment that the artist will really be able to perceive the work in its totality, to evaluate the visual impact and the degree of integration of "The Sea" in the architectural whole, in the setting and the surrounding environment which will be its permanent home.

"We are all born of the sea."

Of an abstract character, this work displays itself in a horizontal fluctuating order, an immense fresco animated by a supple and continuous movement where forms and volumes arise, evolve and transform themselves in space evoking the universe unceasingly recreated by the ebb and flow of the sea. Certain volumes with particularly open contours curve inward in space, diminish and melt imperceptibly in long undulating planes. The blond pine, sometimes white under the impact of light, blends harmoniously with the ensemble of the forms, smooth and gentle to touch like pebbles polished by the waters of the sea. Here and there, crevices, slits and cavities of different forms, carved in the depth of the wood at irregular intervals, break up the flat surface and will create, when the sculpture is fixed on the wall, wells of shadow, caverns of secret life alternating from gray to deepest black. In so doing, the artist inserts, in opposition to the three-dimensional demands of the sculpture, an original graphic language of a subtle refinement which will surely charm the oriental soul. Questioned as to the interpretation and the possible reactions of the Pakistanis with regard to her work, Anne Kahane will reply simply: "They will see it through their own culture."

The sculptor will speak to us at length of the sea, of her preference for the coasts of Nova Scotia, of the perpetual movement of the waves and of their continually changing forms, of stones and shells carved by the action of the water. This world literally fascinates her. "We are all born of the sea," she will say at a certain moment with profound conviction; "it is all that which I wanted to express," and her look rests for a long time on each of the components of the sculpture; a long silence follows, almost tangible. "It seems to me", she suddenly said, "that I see my sculpture today for the first time." Then she had an understanding smile, a fraternal gesture for these forms whose constant possessive presence had not ceased to inhabit her for a single moment during the course of the last six months.

A deep compassion

An important landmark in her career, "The Sea" proceeds very naturally from the whole of the sculptured work of Anne Kahane, undertaken upon her return to Montreal after her studies (1945 to 1947) at the Cooper Union Art School in New York. From the beginning, she will assign a primary rôle to humans: "Human beings are what is most important to me", she insists. "They are what count the most in my eyes." Thus, a great variety of persons will be represented, during the course of the years 1950-1960, into the most ordinary occurrences: *Rain, The Group, Monday Wash, The Bather, Figures in the Field;* the elementary volumes, the pronounced stylisation of the forms, their initial simplicity will evoque a primitive world interpreted with an innate sense of humour and satire, animated above all by a profound compassion. There will follow other works of more abstract conception — narration, folklore aspect disappear — revealing a progression of an increased severity, condensed into a few essential forms, very bare. An inner dynamism and an expressive intensity of strength will characterise the series of sculptures titled *Fallen Figure* and *Broken Man*, created during the years 1963-1965; they have as their central theme a disjointed body, projected in space, suddenly immobilised in its dizzy fall. Almost all these works were produced in wood, pine and mahogany; the idea of construction, cabinet-making, which belongs specifically to wood, interests the artist greatly. She would like to make furniture and would be pleased to see, over her work-bench, a sign with the inscription "Cabinet-maker."

Window of two Worlds

Since 1951, Anne Kahane exhibited her works regularly in Canada and abroad, received the Grand Prize for Sculpture in the Artistic Competition of the Province of Quebec in 1956, participated in the Biennal in Venice as well as in the Universal Exposition in Brussels in 1958 and in Man and his World in 1967; her sculptures are found in several museums of this country, in private collections and in public buildings, such as Place des Arts in Montreal.

A retrospective, grouping her works of the last fifteen years, took place at Sir George Williams University, in 1969. A professor of sculpture at this institution, this new activity gives her satisfaction; teaching encourages varied human contacts which are valuable to her. She will willingly say of her pupils: "They teach me more than I can teach them." Mentioning some great names in contemporary sculpture, Anne Kahane will emphasize particularly the work of Hans Arp; Brancusi and Henry Moore, among others, interest her as well. These affinities will be reflected in a subtle way in her own work.

Two recent works having as theme *The Window* will reflect new preoccupations and orientation. "Is not the window the meeting point of two worlds, the exterior and the interior? It is an interesting world to explore where each will see what pleases him." The sculptor wishes to pursue her research in the silence and the solitude of her studio, apart from short-lived movements and styles. "I love this solitude . . . , the artist is a being essentially alone", and she will add, "It is often because one does not understand what he is trying to do, and this contributes to his isolation."

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

ART PRICE
THE METAPHYSICS OF METAL

By Pierre-Ed. CHASSÉ

Over the past few years Art Price has emerged from a self-imposed seclusion, into one of the major sculptors of our country. One has only to travel across Canada to witness his work either at some of our air terminals or doting some of our public buildings like his most recent one for the new post office building in Ottawa. Although one can still see the impact and the influence Canadian Indian and Eskimo art had on Art Price in the past, what we now see is a much freer expression by the artist. Their conception like their execution is a reflection of that still virgin land which is ours and of its

vastness. He is without question the Canadian artist most closely related to the primitive arts of the country. Like his father-in-law, Marius Barbeau, the well known Canadian anthropologist and historian, the clays of the Haidas of British Columbia like the totems of other Indian tribes of Western Canada fascinated him early in his career. Although their influence was less felt, some of the several birds in flight executed by Art Price over the years show clearly that stages spent in the north had a certain effect on him. Whatever their size, his sculptures always give the impression that they were conceived on a very large scale. This probably explains the reflection of the vastness of the land which he tries and very often successfully conveys. He could be better described as the sculptor of the Canadian wilderness perhaps as Tom Tompson was in his paintings. Neither of them could be properly described as urban artists. Although generally figurative and only a step away from realism, his work conveys, and often with force, thoughts, impressions, feelings and moods very distant from the subject or the form used to achieve this. The subject is strictly an expedient, nothing else. He is somewhat of a perfectionist who leaves nothing to chance. The end product offers little room if any to add or substract anything.

The road Art Price took from the beginning was a hard one. Painter, illustrator, film director, stage decorator, he came to sculpture gradually. The beginning may seem to some like a form of hesitation. I do not think it was. Circumspection would be a more appropriate word. Looking back at what he has done over the past thirty years, it becomes obvious and clear that Art Price knew what he was doing, what he wanted to do and which path he would follow to do it. From this retiring man, one could not expect sudden impulses or surprising flamboyant gestures. Every approach is rational, properly analysed and never accidental. Spontaneity resides in the conceptual approach but not in the execution which bears clearly the stamp of an artist in absolute command of his material and never the other way around. The great simplification seen in recent works reveals without the shadow of a doubt that every gesture is calculated. This reduction to the bare elements or to the very essence of the subject is not without risks, but with Art Price, the idea or the spirit remains present. It is true that time alone will tell if these works will like all others endure the passing of years, but for what they evoke effectively and the aesthetic qualities which reside in these sculptures, chances are that they will. For a man who is well known not to be very loquacious, the work of the past decade stands by itself as a very eloquent and powerful statement.

For those who wonder what kind of a man Art Price is, the answer is relatively simple. He is a polite and charming man who goes his own way without fracas. He abhors noise except that of his studio, where he spends a great deal of his time. He has little time for polemics or empty arty discussions. The hours of the day which are always too few for this artist are shared between his family and his work which will keep him busy for years to come for there is still a great deal to be said. If he is not very talkative, he is a very keen observer as well as a patient listener. He is well read and can sort out the valuable from the rubbish. He reminds one of Zadkine, the great European sculptor. Like him he sems to move silently with works mushrooming from one ocean to the other, perhaps silent and looming at first, but soon standing firmly against the Canadian background proud and somewhat defiant. Like Zadkine, he has a deep sense of space and height, using the earth as well as the sky to give a feeling of mobility to his work. Well aware of the relation that must exist between the architectural and the sculptural for works intended for public buildings or similar projects, his work is conceived bearing this in mind. Like Paolo Soleri, the structures of the future intrigue him, and it is clear that he has given it some thought. From what he has done recently, it would appear that he agrees that the functional can and should have aesthetic qualities as an essential condition in its conception or design. With a reputation which is reaching further and further with time, Art Price has done and is doing far more for the Canadian image than we have given him credit for so far. It is Lynn Chadwick who told me not so long ago: "Look out for Price, he will outlast and outgrow a great many." This he may well do. In the meantime we must recognize that he has contributed significantly to transform the generally mundane, large-sized public buildings or utilities into something more aesthetically dramatic.

If some of his early work seemed conceptually confined within a national context, that of more recent years is clearly addressed to a much wider public, well beyond our bounderies. It is a modern language in which the parochial has no room. It seems to be a fairly accurate reflection of this era where the technological accomplishments and its accelerating progress would have shattered the wildest dreams of the thirties. It is also a projection of the contemporary man's way of thinking, of unlimited possibilities. It is not easy to say it and it takes courage to do so. Art Price obviously has it. Regarding the future, although this has not been finalized yet, Art Price is looking into the possibility of executing sculptures in precious metals such as gold and silver. Somewhat similar in concept to those created by Georges Braque and Salvador Dali some years ago, these will be done on a relatively small scale. They will differ from those of Braque and Dali as they will not be conceived and intended as jewelry but strictly as miniature sculptures standing on their very own. Should the project materialize, it should be interesting to see the results.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF BILL VAZAN

By Gilles TOUPIN

The limitations which the artists of former times knew are henceforth abolished. There are no more boundaries, no more preconceived ideology; only a great forward-looking force which takes root in the very mysteries of creation and of man. Art is chaos, and its expansive consciousness makes of it without ceasing, during the course of its historic evolution, the anarchy of chaos.

When I look on my work table at the photographs of the many facets of the work of Bill Vazan, it appears evident to me that this artist continually explores the universe. There are postcards which he has sent me, the book of the *Ligne mondiale*, photos of works of exterior and interior, summaries of videographic achievements, etc. All means are good for him to attain knowledge and dreams . . . These different tangents of the work of Vazan could make us believe that he is on the lookout for a style which he has not yet found and that his paths of exploration with contradictory appearance, which go from the picture painted on an easel to a form of conceptual art, present no personal identity. This is not the case. His progress has no nonsense about it but possesses, on the contrary, certain unifying principles which we shall try to outline.

Three years at the College of Art of Ontario, one year in Paris where he attends the École des Beaux-Arts without much conviction, to prefer later to hitch-hike through Europe, his return to Montreal in 1962 where he rediscovers in a hospital bed, after ten years of abstention, the joy and the need of creating. A few water-colours, some drawings, will lead him in 1963 toward those oil paintings furrowed by threads of iron like fields of chains which already unconsciously reveal certain structures organization which remind us of bird's eye views. In 1964, small black structured signs on a white background suggest, this time, mock-ups of urban planning as if it were a matter of real

town-planning. Curiously, the following year (without his forgetting his previous research, as we shall see later), Bill Vazan proceeds to hardedge. Large pictures which resemble immense monograms establish illusions of depth by basing themselves on delicate and subtly expressed plays of tonal values.

A definition of art

These geometric works will play a strange rôle in the life and the work of Vazan. These related tonal values will become almost monochromatic. A picture in aluminum colour, for instance, was formed in strong zones by a chromatic inner play to be found at the limits of the possibilities of differentiation of this same aluminum colour. From these pictures, the idea of another possibility of exploration was born by chance, as often occurs in a work of art. While playing with one of his daughters in the sand of Wells Beach, in Maine, he saw her write her name on the beach with a stick. At this moment, in 1967, Bill Vazan knew nothing of land art, which was, incidentally, beginning in the United States. To grasp the idea of external space had always been the essence of his development. On this same beach, he lay down and had himself covered with sand. Upon getting up and seeing the imprint of his body on the beach, he thought: "Why would this not be art?"

Many exterior works in which Vazan took up again the principles of his geometric pictures while dividing expanses of land into zones were created. The only evidence of these works (aside from the work itself) is photography. He fashioned on a beach of the east coast a kind of sculpture in sand which gave the impression of being an immense pitfall. The tide destroyed the work little by little, as the different slides of the artist show. He created in the forest lines of polythene which he called his light lines, where the sun in refraction played gently with this material. At Beaconsfield, he activated space by joining trees between them with many networks of ropes. A red dome made with the sand of Prince Edward Island, by its round form becomes a cultural object combined with natural elements. A single one of these ideas gives rise to tens of other accomplishments which would necessitate, to make a good account, a voluminous monograph.

The history of the world then becomes a perpetual re-creation. The notion of a fleeting quality includes work and man, with a certain wise consciousness of the flight of time, in the successive transformations of the universe. The human being, by this act, is inscribed in cosmic changes. He detaches himself little by little from his old anthropology-centred ideal. The dream, with Bill Vazan, joins the objective ideas of his exterior works. Is not the whole Milky Way or the Galaxy of Andromeda there, buried in the hollow of a handful of sand, inherent in the work and coupled with its antitragic meaning?

The work of Bill Vazan, like that of many of his contemporaries, pursues this incessant struggle against the traditional conception of art. It compounds the vandalism which partly destroyed the Pieta of Michaelangelo. It affirms positively that things do not have to last. However, the characteristics which define the true identity of Vazan remain elsewhere, in these other researches which appear sometimes to enter into contradiction with those which we have just mentioned.

Presence of the line

While Vazan was tracing a parenthesis on one of the beaches of Prince Edward Island on the thirteenth of August, 1969, at the same moment on the west coast of the country another artist, Ian Wallace, was closing the parenthesis. To this gigantic hold on exterior space corresponds the interior grasping which the public had the occasion of seeing at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal at the time of the Sondage exhibition, in 1969, and at the Art Gallery of Ontario, at the end of the following year. The gummed tapes which ran slanting on the floor and the walls created an impression of a fall in space and indefinitely opened the architecture of buildings, somewhat in the manner of Mondrian. Around the island of Montreal, as well as from one ocean to the other, Vazan created focal points by which the lines unified the geographical distance of these places. Finally, on the fifth of March, 1971, the *Ligne mondiale*, which united more than twenty countries, encircled the globe. Between the concept and the actual material, this world line, in the same way as the transcanadian line, is a synthesis of the principal components of Vazan's oeuvre.

In redefining the concept of a work of art, the *Ligne mondiale* takes up again the theme of the first works of Vazan which evolved around an imaginary topography re-created in his pictures of 1963, 1964 and even those of 1972(1); it also resumes this capture of possession created from works of the exterior. The work of art always remains a sign of semi-logical culture. (We shall see as well that with Vazan this sign upholds certain linguistic preoccupations.) All the persons who cooperate in the work — I who am writing this article, for example — become one of its manifestations. The *Ligne mondiale*, by its ecological and geographical overtones, establishes a link between man and nature. All the landscapes through which it passes are seen included in the development of the work, thank to the skill of the man in making a line almost straight, and therefore civilized.

The work of Vazan, with or according to geographical maps, stems directly from this play between nature and culture. The map is in itself another kind of language, another sign, a little like Chinese writing. This archtype of human knowledge which is the map is not necessarily codified with Vazan. Space, atmosphere, light, distance, time are often merged in an empirical way in his achievements. It is there that what I called the linguistic preoccupations of Vazan enter into play, signifiying, whether it be the lines or the pictures or the works of the outdoors, and are not always integrated in a map-making fashion in the normal signifying signified relationship. Thus, when Vazan places side by side on a postcard two subway transfers (one taken at the Place des Arts station and the other at the Laurier station eight minutes apart) instead of calculating the geographical angle in degrees as that should be done, he titles his map *8-Minute Angle*. One coded agreement is taken for another. He fixes his space in temporal coordinates as if time and space were one single and the same thing.

The last videographic accomplishment of Vazan, which is titled *Stylo à vue*, takes up this problem again. While filming the city in video, the artist sketches the name of things which he sees, by using space. Here the signifying and the signified are compared in this combination of language and picture. The *Ligne de vie*(2) is also a part of this space-time juggling of Vazan's research. Each day, since the thirtieth of January, 1970, Vazan sends to Wallace a postcard on which he draws a segment of one inch, until the death of one of the participants. One thinks of the 365 steps of certain Aztec temples and of all these enigmas of the past.

The mystery of the lines of Vazan remains, even if we have tried to distinguish in it some rational conclusions. It resembles those very ancient lines of Nazca in Peru, which seemed to mean nothing when seen from the ground, but which revealed meanings visible only from above. It is toward these heights that the works of Bill Vazan unceasingly lead us. They are a part of this new sensitivity to the playful which is awakening in contemporary man and which is making a wonderful chaos of art.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

(1) Moreover, it is this work parallel to the creation of easel-painting which makes us respect an internal contradiction in the work of Vazan. The place of creation established a redefinition of the characteristics of the object of art while refuting the traditional limitations in the canvas. While admitting the destruction of the limitations and of the material boundaries in the elaboration of the work, nothing prevents the artist from coming back to more limited space preoccupations. The content of Vazan's recent pictures is in close relation with his topographical tendencies. They are formed of coloured, very short lines (about one inch), placed side by side so as to create zones of the whole similar to weather maps. They are therefore linked to this passion of Vazan for this other line which is the visual presentation of geographical maps and they are preserved in the personal semiology of the artist.

(2) The idea of the *Ligne de vie* arises directly from the experience of Prince Edward Island where, with Wallace in Vancouver, Vazan placed Canada within parentheses.