THE CHOICE BETWEEN A STONE WALL AND A BRIDGE

By Andrée PARADIS

Big exhibitions are expensive. Too expensive, some people say. This is a point of view. The other attitude consists of questioning oneself on their necessity and of finding the means to bring them about. This is the policy adopted by the two largest museums of the West, the Museum of the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum, which have just announced a huge program of exchange: works, men, information, exhibitions prepared jointly and presented simultaneously in Paris and in New York. Thus, we shall be able to see, at the end of autumn 1973, the great tapestries of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance sharing the walls on both sides of the Atlantic and, the year after, it will be the turn of a first-rate exhibition of Impressionism.

The same necessity for interesting a public always more numerous and more demanding is present in the decisions of the National Gallery in Ottawa and obtains for us exceptionally large exhibitions such as that of Fontainebleau, the most important since those of Rubens and the Arts of the Courts of France and England. It goes without saying that other private Canadian museums would also support such programs if they were better maintained financially and morally.

It is not difficult to agree upon the necessity of large exhibitions. The attendance figures of the museums are eloquent. In 1947, a million visitors attended the Metropolitan in New York; in 1972, 3,500,000 visitors were recorded (the same number as at the Louvre). An increase of about five per cent a year therefore seems normal for museums which have a dynamic policy, which do not fear to innovate and which at the same time are concerned with educating and preserving. To democratize, to open the museums to all citizens, these are hollow words if they do not signify the basic purpose; to educate. We realize with regret that our Canadian museums lack personnel in the educational sectors.

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The problem is to assure the life of the museum. The finest collections, the best presentations, information on recent experiments, audio-visual means, television, advertising technique and even the computer, all these are very costly. Large funds, imagination and initiative are necessary for success. Otherwise, we are up against a stone wall and can progress no further.

We can never repeat enough the necessity of developing cultural sectors and the importance of the credits that must be given to them. Culture is a thing which is constructed like a bridge. With as much care, patience and savoir-faire.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)
du Cerceau, some water-colours of Rubens, some drawings and engravings of Van Thulden and six paintings of Le Primatice or of his studio which copy the themes of the story of Ulysses and Penelope (Toledo Museum of Art), by mysterious, misty lyricism, bring thoughts of an anticipation of Prud' hon. The principal pieces, which have continued to exist at Fontainebleau, are the Gallery of Francis I, whose sumptuousness, destroyed in 1785, of which the thirteen frescoes of abstruse iconography intertwine the good luck and the misfortunes of the reign in the beginning plan of cultural reform, the Chamber of the Duchess d'Étampes, mistress of Francis I, which, by a transparent allusion, is decorated with the loves of Chariclée, and the Ballroom, painted under Henry II with mythological frescoes in such a decorative line that the arabesque becomes musical, with the theme of holiday or diversion coming back as left-motif. The paintings of Niccolo del Abate, spoiled by being painted over in encaustic under Louis XIII, have been restored to their first freshness through the will of André Malraux. The recent restoration has also rid the female nudes in stucco of the Chamber of the Duchess d'Étampes of the sanitary towels in which the prudery of a time passed through. The second Fontainebleau School will sanction the re-establishment of the unity and the works of peace after the recantation of Henry IV and the granting of freedom of worship to French Protestants by the Edict of Nantes (1598). More notice was taken of it than of the first, but the splendour of its possession remain six of the eight compositions of Dубois of Antwerp illustrating the loves of Tancred and Clorinda (about 1605) and, in the Cabinet de Théagène, which became the Louis XIII salon, are still in place, with some changes, eleven of the fifteen pictures of Dubois recalling the loves of Théagène and Chariclée. And above all the Trinity Chapel, which Phillibert de l'Ome had finished in 1551, presents almost intact the imposing program of the altar with its altar-piece and its stuccoes friezing in the ceiling, a renewed vision of that of the Sistine Chapel, whose namesake it might have warranted in the letter from 1608 to 1619. This art is pre-baroque. Under Henry IV the atmosphere changed radically. Sensitivity directed itself toward the romantic: programs were inspired in the Cabinet of Clorinde by the Jerusalems Delivered of Tasso, and, in that of Théagène, by the Histoire Aethiopique (or the loves of Théagène and of Chariclée, which Amoyt had translated from the Greek in 1547). On the other hand, the Catholic church had regained control of itself at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Trinity Chapel is witness to the new mentality, serious and strong right into the interior of the Church; it is not opposed to religious art by the post-Tridentine church. But it also gives evidence of the triumph of Michaelangelo, who had never ceased casting a spell on the Fontainebleau School since the beginning, through the magnetism which he exerted from Florence on the French, and it is for this reason that one could be seen and touched in France: the two Slaves of the tomb of Julius II, the engravings of the fresco of the Last Judgment, and, at Fontainebleau itself, the marble Hercules, a work of youth (about 1492), mounted on a fountain beside the pond, which disappeared after 1714, and is now known only through a drawing attributed to Rubens, and the Leda and the Swan, painted in 1529-30, but already spoiled "by the spitefulness of time" before 1642 (Père Dan: Le Trésor des merveilles de la Maison royale de Fontainebleau, Paris, 1910). The signature of the master, the big model of the Leda and the Swan, attributed to Le Rosso, was hung beside the Pietà, painted shortly after by Le Rosso for High Constable Anne de Montmorency, this comparison presenting sacriilege only by its exterior, since the sensual ecstacy of Leda,理想, indeed, the erotic value, is next to death and universal suffering.

The Fontainebleau School was under the control of the Italians, who had arrived in two waves at the head of large enterprises — first that of Le Rosso, of Luca Penni and of Le Primatice, who grafted onto the French school the Italian mannerism which, since the death of Raphael, had been developing in Rome subsequent to the stanza of the Vatican and in the palaces of Mantua and Genoa. Niccolo dell'Abate, a native of Bologna like Le Primatice, who combined in the same manner as his predecessors the instinct of the monumental with the feeling of ornamental writing in the decoration of large works, was in addition a landscape artist. He arrived twenty years after the pioneers, enriched by the exquisite cadences of the Parmesan. On Salvati and on Ruggiero de Ruggierio who followed him, we are reduced to guessing the evolution of the art of engraving in the ancient city of Flora, a changeable term, perhaps masks an Emillea painter, the son of Niccolo or Ruggiero. After the two Italian waves opened the trench of religious wars, dug even at Fontainebleau around the palace in the form of mosaics which, under Catherine de Médicis, would adorn the temple of arts of Francis I into a bastion. The second Fontainebleau School is Franco-Flemish. Between the two Fontainebleau Schools are found Frenchmen of very original talent: Étienne Delaune, a Protestant, who had to flee the court after Saint Bartholomew (1572), designer of the statures of an Ingres, the somewhat stuggly presentation of whose works at the exhibition at the Grand-Palais might be regretted, and Antoine Caron, prophet of the surrealists, whose art is the model of this looseness of refinement and cruelty which was in the beginning of French art. Our Cabinet de Théagène pictures, representing the entrance of Francis I into Milan in 1515, recently acquired by the National Gallery of Canada, will be one of the poles of attraction of the Ottawa exhibition, beside the drawing of the same subject lent by the Louvre.

Italian art transplanted to Fontainebleau became international, there, under the influence of the royal and aristocratic milieu and thanks to the transfusion of the nordic tradition brought about by the French and the Flemish who collaborated with those beyond the Alps in a team spirit which had no fol­ lower in France since the communal erection of cathedrals. A symbiosis more than a metaphorosis, which took its place as well in the linear structure of works of art, more pure, more austere than anywhere else in Europe as in the fantastic vitality communicated to gro­ thics? America, which had just been discov­ ered, was not missing from the grotesques. The Indian feather masks are placed beside the grind of the satyrs and besides they had already been sculpted on the tomb of Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, in the cathedral at Rouen, and on the pilasters of the palace of the prince-bishop of Liége. The Fontainebleau School presented in Paris is going to be on view at the National Gallery of Canada from the second of March to the fifteenth of April. We must congratulate ourselves that this exhibition, which took ten years of efforts to assemble and study, should take the road not of the United States on the American continent, following the route of very many preceding ones, but that of the capital of Canada, in the spirit of cultural diffusion between French Canada and English Canada. The first school of painting which was set up in France, at the same time as the first explorations in New France, is coming to visit the friendly nation after a long historical detour. It was inevitable and fortunate that the Fontainebleau School should establish itself in Canada. Devoted to the universal, which is the most authentic French tradition, had a need in the arts of Italian contribution, which represented a form of higher civilization, in order to enter more completely into the current of European re­action, set the fashion for all decorative engravings, for instance, engraved armors, illuminated manuscripts, illustrated books, bindings and enamels. Engraving had to be the propaganda means par excellence of the explicit idioms of the man­ nerists. The engravings of Dürr had introduced into the art of the High Renaissance in Italy the fateful "climaxes" which immediately caused it todeviate toward the anxiety of an unsatisfied spirituality of a rational definition of the image of man and of nature, a spirit that could only be satisfied by the northern rafaelism, but the masters of the north: Schongauer and Lucas of Leyde.

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Fontainebleau decoration, through a chain reaction, set the fashion for all decorative arts: tapisserie and the work of goldsmiths, engraved armors, illuminated manuscripts, illustrated books, bindings and enamels. Engraving had to be the propaganda means par excellence of the explicit idioms of the man­nerists. The engravings of Dürr had introduced into the art of the High Renaissance in Italy the fateful "climaxes" which immediately caused it todeviate toward the anxiety of an unsatisfied spirituality of a rational definition of the image of man and of nature, a spirit that could only be satisfied by the northern rafaelism, but the masters of the north: Schongauer and Lucas of Leyde.
The commonplace trap of eroticism. And yet it is at Fontainebleau, still more than in Italian engraving and than with Jules Romain, that eroticism received its letters of credit in the history of art, but redeemed by ingenuousness or by a healthy alertness. In an art of the court, the scandals of the court weave the texture. The works which are going to be presented at the National Gallery of Canada are for the most part graphic. They appeal to the imagined reconstruction of their context. But their originality of technique and execution is surprising. The Italians brought to Fontainebleau drawing with red chalk and the wash-tint of red chalk, in pen and in brownwash. Etching was the medium per excellence of the engravers of Fontainebleau. Fantuzzi handled it with extraordinary verve, often substituting for mytho-political subjects copied from the frescoes of the Gallery of Francis I immense cartographic landscapes, with visionary outgrowths, which cause an effect of unreal escape, crushed, in the middle of giant cariatides, of Herculean terms, of heavy garlands of fruit and of children reproducing the stuccos of the framing. Delacroix asked himself nostalgically what must be the colour effect of the Titians in their freshness. Were the frescoes painted by Niccolo in the Gallery of Ulysses according to the models of Le Primaticie more mysteriously radiant than these wonderful festoons of flesh, as lighted from inside by a night-light, of the drawings of Le Primaticie, with the shaky line, a vibration of a string stricken by a divine light? (Translation by Mildred Grand)

ANTOINE PRÉVOST: SILENCE AND REALITY

By Pierre DUPUIS

The year 1972 marks for the artist his permanent attachment to painting. In a little village of the lower part of the river (at Cacouna, more exactly) where he was living for the last year, Prévest painted about forty canvases, of which about thirty were exhibited in the Morency Gallery last autumn.

The blossoming of the form which his painting reflects is partially explained by his education (town-planning and fine arts). But the astonishing fact remains that he should have reached after a few rough sketches — qualifying them himself as "Sunday painting" — the point of producing coherent and personal works. And this in spite of the almost instinctive comparing which we do, a priori with Jean-Paul Lemieux (whose influence he does not deny, as well as that of Wyeth and of Colville). The awareness he has of this will then favour a thoroughness of his research since different intentions preside at the point of departure.

The material which he uses almost exclusively, today, is water-colour. This limits his work to canvasses of small dimensions; they cause the spectator to look attentively at each detail of the work without, for all that, losing the whole from view. This evidence, which might seem commonplace brings no less, in this case, a major importance: each element being a symbol and, in this frame (the canvas) they are significant each in relationship to the other; this thematic reading promotes the understanding of the work. Thus, Saint Denys, in the water-colour which bears the same name, is deprived of his mitre and has no head. He does not exist, or, if you will, he lives in the appearance which his clothing presents. A return to the years of youth among the Jesuits. His characters are, furthermore, most of the time, without a face (without being), otherwise the faces are blurred, indiscernible. By means of them one is referred to the social strata which they symbolize (Les Notables, Le Braconnier, Le Bedeau). This coldness of vital absence joins with the expanses covered with snow as far as the eye can see and with the sky neutralized to the greatest degree. Total uniformity, because vertical forces are silent. Even the protagonists who lead us to suppose, by their position in space, that their view is directed toward other characters (often in a unilateral way) do not communicate; a powerful and nihilistic look. Powerful, when the child (in Le Départ) is going toward the horizon without an exit because it is too immense. Nihilistic, in Schisme, when the bishop looks at the characters and when, in a parallel direction, the distance seems to increase with the group.

There is in that a deeper denunciation than that of the hierarchical church, being itself, when all is said and done, a copy of what remains intrinsic in society.

This universe of solitude and silence is close to that of Lemieux. But this relationship in his perception of the world (Prévest speaks of "a same sensitivity") is embodied differently in painting. As much by the mediocrity with which he paints — should we not see in the angular folds of the garments a logical harmony with the sharp reliefs of glaciers? — as by the surreality which transpires from it (shadows under a sky without sun, for example).

Other elements graft themselves to this theme, but elements which always resolve around the same symbol. In this sense Jeux des enfants possesses, at its source, an ambivalence made up of phenomena of attraction and rejection or, at the least, of a questioning of the innocence of their games. This is not without recalling certain verses of Saint-Denys Garneau (whom he knew well):

They have a snare
With an incredible stubbornness
They did not leave you
Before having won you.
Then they left you
The treacherous ones abandoned you
Run away laughing!

The compositions of Prévest are inscribed equally very well in the romantic universe of Anne Hébert (c.f. Kamouraska). Their common origin determine the similarity of their works — transposed in a different medium. The awareness of emptiness will influence him to suppress completely the separation between earth and sky. In Les Notables, there is no longer the slightest spacial reference, outside a fence of barbed wire; a plastic requirement first, but, especially, a semiologial importance which it is easy to imagine.

In closing, let us speak of the exception which proves the rule: Le Bedeau. This bust, hemmed in a closed environment (a belfry), is completely impersonal. One perceives it as element of the setting. In this work, Prévest continues in some way the question which he has already raised, to know a dehumanized world like this conflict of appearances and reality. And, through a graph conditioned by his childhood, he reinstates, once more, existing uneasiness. The imaginary carries him away. Poetic work above all.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

(1) Regards et jeux dans l'espace, in Complete Poems, Fides, p. 49.
ALLAN HARRISON, AN UNAPPRECIATED PAINTER
By Paul DUMAS

Painters of quality are not always recognized or in style. The opposite proposition, knowing that painters in style are not always good, is perhaps equally true. Meissonier, Alma-Tadema, so much praised in their time, and are sparing of their exhibitions in art galleries; often they carry their easel and their sketch-book toward far-away horizons, the public of their country forgets them or does not recognize them and the younger critics do not even know their name. It is the privilege of connoisseurs to find them, to rediscover them or to remember them. Jori Smith, Jack Beder, Benoît East, William Armstrong, Allan Harrison are among these.

The career of Allan Harrison was eventful and woven with contradictions. Of a middle-class family and grandson through his mother of a well-to-do manufacturer, he early chose adventure and emancipated ideas, but did not find satisfaction in this political awareness. A man of taste who believed that perfection is found in simplicity as it should be, he created posters and design of the first rank in the domain of advertising. He was therefore classified, labelled once and for all as a designer, when he was first of all a painter and wished to be and considered himself as such.

A Montrealer, Allan Harrison belongs to this little group of artists faithful to what is real who, after Morrice, have fought academism and have defended the cause of living art: John Lyman, Goodridge Roberts, Philip Surrey, Stanley Cosgrove, Jori Smith, Jack Beder, Eldon Greer, who are united under the vague label, Montreal School. Allan Harrison was born in Montreal in 1911. At the age of fourteen, he went to work at harvesting in Saskatchewan and, for two years, he travelled in the West and on the Pacific coast, going as far as Panama and, from there, to Cuba. On his return to Montreal, he found employment in the shop of a sign painter and attended evening courses in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he drew from the antique. A small inheritance from his grand mother allowed him to go to New York where he diligently followed the teaching of Kimon Nicolaides at the Art Student League. He also had the opportunity of admiring the exhibitions of Matisse and other great contemporaries, which decided him in his choice of vocation. Back in Montreal, he attended L'Atelier, an art school directed by John Lyman and André Biéler, where he fulfilled the duties of student in charge. In 1933-1934, thanks to a scholarship from Mr. and Mrs. James Wilson Morrice, he spent some time in Europe and divided this between London and Paris. In London he studied particularly in museums, in the British Museum, at the National Gallery, at the Tate Gallery; he worked at advertising art free lance and took a job as clerk in two art galleries. He met people such as Wyndham Lewis and Louis Marcoussis and, on Sunday, he attended lectures on political science that Harold Laski gave at his home. In Paris, he took classes in sketching at the Colarossi studio and at the Grande-Chaumière and he often went to the Louvre and the Jeu-de-Paume Museum. There he acquired as well a good knowledge of French which he has still retained since that time.

Having returned to Montreal, he found employment for a year as a salesman at the Scott Gallery, then located in the building which the 400 Restaurant was later to occupy. For a while, he was living on a budget and he took up commercial art. He returned briefly to France in 1938, travelling on foot from Lyons to Marseilles, and brought back several beautiful sketches and watercolours. In 1939, he became, as he put it, "a Sunday painter", being occupied all week by his advertising work. At this time, he became connected with many artists: John Lyman, Goodridge Roberts, Alexandre Bercovitch, Jean La Palud, Jacques de Tonnancour, Jeanne Rhéaume, and exhibited for the first time at the Contemporary Art Society founded by John Lyman and would exhibit each following year. In 1946, he spent some time in Brazil where he met Arpad Szenes and Vieira de Silva, who had taken refuge there during the war. He found them again in Paris in 1947-1948 and worked with them. From there, he often went to Rome where he became acquainted with Paul-Émile de Chabot, Robert Giaquinto and Emilio Greco. Back in Canada in 1949, he soon went to New York, where he would remain until 1959 and where, not allowing himself to be absorbed by his advertising work, he would draw with enthusiasm. He lived for some time in Chelsea Hotel and he had the opportunity of meeting many artists — Francis Kline, the de Koonings and, naturally, Paul-Émile Borduas. In 1956 he returned to France and Italy, attended the André Lhote studio for some months and made excellent sketches in the cities of Paris, Nîmes, Carcassonne, Venice, which he exhibited at Agnès Lefort's in 1957.

He came back to Montreal in 1959, taught graphic art at Sir George Williams University from 1961 to 1965, then drawing and graphic art at the University of Quebec, from 1969 to 1971, and also gave courses at the School of Architecture at McGill University in 1971 and 1972.

Allan Harrison took part in several collective exhibitions in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro and Jerusalem and held solo exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, the Institute of Architecture of Rio de Janeiro (1947), at the Agnès Lefort Gallery (1957), at Macdonald College of McGill University (1957) and at the library of McGill University (1957). Since 1964, he has been painting more and more actively. Allan Harrison recognizes the fact that he is "not a prolific painter", and he adds: I know also that I am not a revolutionary painter and that I have always loved good traditional art, from Corot to Cézanne, from Matisse to Marquet and Vuillard, and, perhaps, due to circumstances, I have always thought that in my case I had to attach more importance to quality than to quantity. I have spent half my life hating the superficial character of academism and today I deplore the notion that simple decorative compositions are accepted as abstract art. I was preoccupied for years by the problem of three dimensional painting. I admire the mystery of which Vuillard had, while still doing away with it partially."

Aside from Vuillard, Allan Harrison admires Giorgio Morandi, Marquet, Manessier, Vieira da Silva, Arpad Szenes and several other painters; he has an eclectic taste and he is faithful to what he admires. His work consists of oils, water-colours, pastels, drawings in charcoal and ink. Spread over thirty years, it does not at first appear abundant, doubtless because a good part of it is scattered in other countries. Nor has the painter created large-scale works, or any mechanical repetition would make his work recognizable on the spot. The connoisseur who tries to take the measure of the work of an artist likes to know his filiation and to find similarities or points of reference to him. The paintings and the drawings of Allan Harrison are in no way closely connected subjects but always sober, portraits, interiors, still-lifes, landscapes, the latter painted in Canada, in the United States, in Brazil, in France and in Italy. On account of his cosmopolitanism and the reserved aspect of his art (Grégory McIlhinney has spoken very justly of the "suave understatement" of Allan Harrison's painting), the painter belongs in the rank of Morrice, still more than in that of Lyman, whose pupil and admirer he was. For Harrison, the subject of the picture is only a pretext; only a point of departure, to create a composition, a form of arrangement of forms and colours which expresses the shades of his emotion and his personal conception of the harmony of the world.

The refined simplicity and the successful layouts of the commercial artist have been praised. These qualities existed before in his art. The painter brings back the real in some chosen forms, in a few essential lines, he excludes from this any superfluous element. His restrained style recalls that of Corot and of Marquet, two painters he admires greatly. Upon occasion he makes use of light or brilliant colours, but generally prefers the relationships of duller tones, minor chords. Setting himself a new problem with each picture, he does not repeat himself and seldom takes up the same theme twice. A painter of the second half of the day, he likes the contrast between dense shadows and the brilliance of afternoon, between the softness of Jakob Ochtervelt, the Dutch painter of the seventeenth century. This velvety relief is one of the great attractions of Harrison's art. It has seemed to us so far that his painting, conceived and executed in the light of the

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declining day, expressed wonderfully the melancholy feeling of the fragility of things and of time which is passing. Perhaps it translates more simply the nostalgia of lost happiness and of a classic order banished from today's world.

The drawings of Allan Harrison possess the same conciseness as his painting. They say much in few words. A few touches of shadow, a few lines, even if not the line alone, are enough for him to give us the expression of a face or an attitude, the engaging atmosphere of a favourite place. These are, for connoisseurs, choice pieces.

True painters have the privilege of transfiguring by the magic of their brush the most humble objects of everyday reality and investing them with poetry. This change is often the source of keen delight. The feeling of it is of a quality all the more unusual and lasting when its accents have been more subtle and more discreet. Such is the special quality of Allan Harrison's art: he does not expose his secret right away, but his mastery, an accomplice of time, follows the space of a peaceful and ingratiating crescendo.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

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YEVEs GAUCHER:
REVERIE OF THE ABSOLUTE

By Michel RAGON

Yves Gaucher is typically the kind of painter whose work one either likes or does not like, but concerning whom it is difficult to write. The painting of Gaucher is also impossible to photograph, since it is impossible to tell about it. To challenge the problem of the reproduction of his works, the catalogue of his exhibition at the Vancouver Museum, in 1969, opened with a studio photograph where six large neutral paintings were shown: that is to say, with forms and colours not set by the film, erased paintings, since they were not able to be reproduced.

Leaving after the name: Yves Gaucher, a few blank pages to the free disposition of meditation or dreaming of the reader is equally tempting. But if Gaucher is always at the limit of the almost nothing, of what is almost without colour, of what is almost without form, there is nonetheless something, some colour, some form on his canvases. And now I have been given the difficult task of trying to translate this into words.

Yves Gaucher is connected with Hard-edge, with Suprematism, with Monochromism. He sometimes makes us think of a Rothko who might be geometrical, of a Barnett Newman who might be clear. That is, that he places himself, in technique and in expression, completely at a pole opposite from that of Rothko and Newman. But, finally, they meet. Yves Gaucher is a painter of restraint, a quiet painter. His canvases are big backdrops of meditation. If one does not like it, one finds that it is all empty. If one likes it, one is invaded by it, possessed by it. Personally, I like the painting of Yves Gaucher very much.

To say how he works can clarify his work. In his studio he has three or four canvases upon which he paints at the same time, resting from one by working on another, taking advantage of the changes of scale, using a same range of colours. Each painting is taken up repeatedly, to thirty coats of paint one upon the other, without the result giving an impression of material. He stops only when the three or four canvases on which he is working at the same time are ripe; only when he, the painter, has in any case the impression of maturity, of not being able to go any further, of having reached his limits.

The work particular to Yves Gaucher begins in 1963 with his engravings on Webern. Strange engravings, at the same time in intaglio and in relief, which were to give the artist a serious reputation as an engraver, leading him to become professor of engraving at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. But since Gaucher became a professor of engraving, he no longer engraves. Just as, after having written a great deal, he no longer writes, the silence of the virgin canvas has entirely taken possession of him.

It is in 1962 that he becomes aware in Paris of what the music of Webern is. As others have had their vision of the world upset after seeing a Cézanne exhibition, Gaucher, after his encounter with Webern's music, is no longer the same. Quite naturally, he attempts to transpose the dodecaphonic musical language into painting. He even works in the electronic music laboratory of McGill University. But he quickly perceives that transposition is impossible and that one achieves only relative equivalences.

Failure? No. Because Yves Gaucher emerges transfigured out of these experiments, out of this confrontation with the musician who is without doubt the most difficult and the most perfect of the twentieth century. In 1965 he works at square pictures, presented in the shape of diamonds, on the point of one side, and in which appear only yellow geometric shapes. In 1966, a painting, eloquently titled Silences, is all blue with green and gray bars (the gray becoming maroon through its nearness to the blue). In 1967, Gaucher creates a last coloured painting, very large, of a brilliant yellow, in which thirteen little rose and blue bars play their chamber music. But after this bold stroke, Gaucher devotes himself to gray. Big gray pictures, painted with a roller. Some of these gray paintings are huge (4 metres by 3). Thin little white bars are the only interruption which occurs on these monochromatic surfaces.

In 1969, he again questions everything, a large red picture being produced at the end of the year. After this new painting which breaks away from his usual work, the forms which appear on his paintings are only horizontal. These bar-lines are lengthened so far as to divide the picture into three parts. Gaucher plays on the theme of the two tones divided by a white line. Some pictures are composed of five parallel tints, from white to gray, on a bluish background. Three lines, two gray; two lines, three gray. An optic illusion is formed, a space rhythm. Colour, although not very strong, finishes, in the later canvases, by becoming invading, possessive. All the more encompassing since it is extremely unobstructive. It is the separation of tones or of colours which divides the canvas, not the line-bars reduced to a simple white harmony.

From his engravings on the theme of Webern's music, Yves Gaucher achieved effects by a process of reversal and turning back. Later, he came to the opposite of symmetry. Now his painting is more equivalent to problematical music.

Such perfection in pictorial language is possible only with the great slowness with which Gaucher works; but also by reason of his exigency. A week after finishing his pictures, he goes on to cruel destructions. To such an extent that his exhibited production is extremely limited.

No titles for his recent works. Nothing which seeks to attract the spectator. Some Quebecers believe that they find northern grandeur in his work of Gaucher. This is a way of attaching oneself to a naturalism which here seems to me beside the point. Indeed, Yves Gaucher, if he works in Montreal, could as well be elsewhere. His painting is beyond time and place, as can be that of Mallarmé, Webern and John Cage.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)
These lines summarize better than I can the attack the steepness crowned by the elegant and the groves of cherry trees which rise to eye does not tire of admiring the fields of vines which mounts toward the Renaissance castle but to demonstrate briefly its possibilities and to obtain wild joys for us."

The display, contrary to traditional retrospectives, does not go from the oldest to the newest. It is reversed. We work our way up to the origin. The conducting thread is a composition which we rediscover even in the first works, a grouping learned from the Bauhaus and which will arrange itself right through the years, passing through the disposition of stones and through geometric abstraction, through the checkered board and photography, through the positive-negative of black-white, to form-colour union and to the system of transposition which will later form the alphabet and the syntax of his recent work."

There is in all that evidence of fidelity. One feels that projection does not come about by chance and that research builds up from an art which could be taken for a craft to an art centred on science and technology. Besides, the artist becomes aware of it as his creation develops. His Notes brutes, of which he speaks in his recent monograph, establish this route. Thus, in 1950, he writes "Scientific popularizers have the great merit of working out a Common language which makes the things of the world and of the universe understandable to us if not exactly, then at least intuitively. To feel things in a exact way is already to know them, to feel them little, it is not essential in a world necessarily partitioned to establish osmosis, to shatter the obscure, to allow the confirmation of a movement approximately identical in all the sectors of human activity?"

This way of seeing was to lead him to a coded art of which the artist is simply the designer, but which is executed by assistants before being carried out by computers! They have cried sacrilege, hoax... Vasarely answers, in 1960: "The star artist or the solitary genius are so many anarchisms, only groups of seekers, collaborating and in silent competition, can truly create." That was the aim of the Group for Research in Visual Arts of the artists of the Denise René Gallery, a group which would dissolve after a few years of work in common. After that, these artists became either stars or solitary geni. It does not seem that Vasarely has renounced this fate."

This does not ignore the fact that he has exercised, by his art and his thinking, a considerable influence on the artistic orientation of a whole generation. His ideas are essentially generous. In 1961, he notes, "How far we are from 'art for the sake of art' — plasticity is food, due to all as the same right as knowledge, song or vitamins!" Whence come its struggles for social art, for the polychromatic city, for form-colour unity usable by all like a game of checkers or chess, for multiples, for the integration of the arts and their democratization. However, all considered, this is hardly new. It is a long time since the integration of the arts into architecture was achieved in cathedrals, since graphic arts and, even, sculpture or tapestry produced multiples and since the buildings of certain countries have been polychromatic. In other respects, the snare of production-consumption does not always act in favour of true democratization, which is not necessarily a synonym of uniformity and multiplication. In the purely plastic domain, Vasarely revolts especially, as do many other contemporaries, against the artisan aspect, accidental and even inspired, of the work of art. He wants it to be, on the contrary, a simple plastic joy for the eye, an accomplishment of scientific knowledge, a discovery of the structure of the real."

What interests him is the elaboration of a coded system which allows an incalculable number of permutations starting from simple elements like the circle and the square (with all their variations towards the oval and the parallelogram) and the contrasted use of black-white or complementary colours. He thus obtains, as in chess, a series of moves or possible games which have no end in common."

It will be said that chance, in informal works, produces the same diversity and this is true. But what is completely different, in his formal or structured works, is the gestalt effect, for the fuzziness of outline, for the psychic impulse which relates to the soul, one substitutes the pure plasticity which first produces a visual shock before reverberating in the brain which must recombine the whole according to an almost mathematical process. From this there would, therefore, result a kind of mental pleasure, and one which is at the same time more transparent, since the work does not offer intuitive mystery, but a sort of critical route which allows us to understand how it is made and why we feel pleasure in seeing what is presented to us (if there is a pleasure). In fact, the lag operates from contemplation to a simple delight of a plasticity which appears as an enigma to be deciphered. Some would say that it is a matter of a morose enjoyment. "What a bore!" a painter said to me who is the exact opposite of Vasarely."

And yet there is, in these works, a kind of contemplation attaching the negation of poetic effectivity, the certain attraction which arises from the irradiation and the vibration of coloured surfaces. From the ratios of light, from the capricious, unexpected or aggressive geometry of blacks and whites, from moving grids, in brief, from colour and form which speak a purely plastic language. (Translation by Mildred Grand)
LEARNING TO SEE:
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ACTION GROUP

By René ROZON

Habit veils observation. After a certain time, one no longer sees his environment, no more than the people who animate it. Reality becomes dreary, uniform, monotonous. Only the appearance of an extraordinary element — be it a thing, a person or an event — manages to bring us out of our apathy. Nevertheless it was this reverse step which the Groupe d'Action Photographique (GAP) was to take.

But what did this group come about spontaneously? Not completely. Let us quickly go over a story which is very simple. Three young Montreal photographers — Michel Campeau, Roger Charbonneau and Serge Laurin — were working separately, each in his way, until the day when chance united them. They realized than that they had purposes in common and created the GAP in October, 1971. Shortly after, three other photographers of the metropolis — Claire Beaupré-Champagne, Pierre Gaudard and Gabor Szilasi — sharing the same tastes, joined the developing group and, in February 1972, the GAP was formally set up.

Now, what is this common purpose which unites them, in spite of different personalities? It is inherent in their method of work which consists of capturing man and his environment alive, without disguise, without alterations, without idealization. They draw from the everyday, from the usual life of ordinary people and their environment, the basic material of the film. Ingredients which normally belong to mediocrity. However, to judge by the results of such a procedure, nothing is further from the commonplace.

It was a wager, and the GAP has succeeded in this feat: to begin with the ordinary in order to rehabilitate it in our eyes. Because, by means of their photographs, we rediscover the real, the most basic real, that is to say the most essential: Life or this sense of life which we have forgotten, refuted or lost. By taking on the everyday, GAP has brought it forth, has given it a dynamic dimension, as witnessed by its many achievements.

Because GAP is a very productive group, if one judges by the sum of its work at the end of its first year of existence, marked by exhibitions and by projects both in common and individual. By displaying its works in the very locations which inspired them — at the french-fried restaurant Chez Georges and at La Grange de Séraphin tavern, in November 1971 — confronting the regular customers of these establishments with the reflection of their own image, the GAP has adequately fulfilled its role of individual and social awareness. The GAP also exhibited in more official places during the course of the summer of 1972: in the picture gallery of the National Film Board in Ottawa, as well as participating in the Montreal, plus ou minus exhibition in the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal (on this subject see the article titled La Ville au musée in Vie des Arts, No. 69 [Winter 1972], pages 29-33). Finally, last December, the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Montreal, devoted a special exhibition to GAP. With regard to individual projects, let us mention the principal ones accomplished since the beginning of GAP: photographic displays devoted especially to workers (see Image 10, published by the National Film Board, October, 1971) held at LaFontaine Park (see, on page 32, our photographic reproduction illustrating La Vie au musée), and to the inhabitants of Charlevoix (see La Région du Charlevoix in Vie des Arts, No. 62 [Spring 1971], pages 46-49). As for collective projects, let us consider that of Opportunities for Youth which consisted of photographing different aspects of life at Disraeli, a small rural community of the Eastern Townships, whose documents will be gathered into a volume to be published under the title: Disraeli, a Human and Photographic Experiment; and a second project presently under way, entitled Montreal as it is, with the collaboration of the Montreal group PhotoCell, which intends to compile an important photographic documentation on the city of Montreal, a project which could eventually develop into the creation of a photographic agency for the urban community.

These are, as we can see, numerous activities, but never detrimental to the quality of the work. The GAP contains six names, six names to remember, because they are guarantees of talent. Let us open our eyes, in our turn, and, with the sight of these images which we are offering to you, let us bring ourselves out of the boredom which threatens us more each day. Then only shall we realize, like the GAP, that the everyday commonplace is a myth, that it exists nowhere for the person who knows how to see. And if in any case one were to be mistaken, if there were everyday dulness, just the same one would have at least to admit, thanks to the GAP, it remains an inexhaustible source of discoveries, that it hides and encloses unsuspected wonders.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

SAM TATA:
AN ARTIST SEEN BY ANOTHER ARTIST

By Geoffrey JAMES

Asked by Queen Victoria whether he felt his livelihood endangered by the new medium of photography, the fashionable French miniature portrait painter Alfred Chalon replied, in memorable Franglais: "Ah, non, Madame, photographie cannot flatter." Poor Chalon. It soon became apparent that photography was indeed an ideal way to flatter les bourgeois: and the first to suffer were the mini-
turers. The threat to the older art came from
the small daguerrotypes, whose unique
silvered image was as delicate and inviolable
as a butterfly’s wing, but from later negative-
positive processes, which had the advantage
of being cheap, repeatable and retouchable.
Once given the embalmer’s power to cover
up the blemishes of the human face, photo-
graphers did not hesitate to cater to their
sitters’ vanity. The results, almost invariably,
were an abomination.

It is something of an oversimplification
- though one which contains some truth - to
say that the best photographic portraits have
been taken when the photographer goes in
search of the sitter, and not vice versa. In
the history of the medium, a remarkably large
proportion of the most memorable portraits
have been made not by commercial practi-
tioners but by inspired amateurs or by photo-
graphers who have earned their living outside
the studio. Consider a few examples. The first
great body of portraits was executed by a
Scottish painter, David Octavius Hill, a tech-
nical primitive whose photographs were made
largely to be used as aides-mémoire. Julia
Margaret Cameron, whom I consider to be the
strongest of the English Victorian portraitists,
was also an amateur and a primitive: she was
a wonderfully eccentric and effusive lady who
took up photography in middle age and whose
work (at least in its earlier phases and among
friends) that, perhaps out of exhaustion, they
yielded up little pieces of their souls. Of the
French 19th century portrait photographers,
the greatest, Nadar, was admittedly thoroughly
commercial. Yet even Nadar was selective
about whom he photographed. As a republican
he refused to take the portrait of anyone con-
necting with the French court. And as a re-
formed caricaturist he realized that he could
never satisfy the vanity of women, so he never
photographed them. (Fortunately he ex-
cepted the very beautiful Sarah Bernhardt
and the very talented George Sand.)

The list can be extended endlessly: Alvin
Langdon Coburn’s enthusiastic pursuit of
Edwardian literati, Alfred Stieglitz’s intense
portraits of his friends, August Sander’s
extraordinary collective portrait of the German
people. Perhaps the point can be pushed too
far: perhaps, in a roundabout way, what’s sug-
gested in one of the most remarkable admirers
of Sam Tata. Tata is by profession a photo-
journalist, and as such he is frequently asked
by editors to photograph the famous or the
passingly notorious. But the pictures here
were made by choice. They are part of a
continuing, personal collection of portraits of
Quebec artists - a term that Tata rightly
interprets broadly. They are unpretentious
photographs, quiet and deceptively simple.
Without obvious stylistic flourishes and car-
ried out with the simplest of means, they yet
bear an unmistakable autobiographic stamp.

Tata’s mentor, Henri Cartier-Bresson, has
called “a certain identity”. Where the
photographer can make any man look like
a criminal and where Youssuf Karsh can
make any man look important, Tata allows
his subjects to speak for themselves. To
dwell on the individual merits of the photog-
rapher’s work would be superficial; for a
photographer’s work finds full expression
in reproduction. Perhaps the best thing one
can say about these pictures is that they admi-
ably achieve Tata’s own aim of “showing
what people look like and how they live”. It
may seem a modest goal, but it is one that has
been the basis for many of photography’s most
last ing images.

Paul Delvaux was born in Antheit, in 1897,
in the district of Liège, a dreary country of
glacial colours, with immense horizons fur-
rrowed by rails, bristling with aerials and
lamp-posts which give off a bleak light at
night.

Timid and repressed, he lived in a family
circle until the age of thirty-one, a fact which
had many consequences on his work. He
lived under the domination of a mother who
put him on his guard by teaching him the
equation, “Woman = danger”, which would
later reveal his obsessions. From 1920, he
studied at the Beaux-Arts in Brussels; in an
order afterwards to give free rein to his
passion for painting, with greater mastery.

Catalyst of Magritte and De Chirico

For a long time, Delvaux sought his course,
in search of his identity. During this slow
development of the work, it came about that
his first canvases had Post-impressionism as
their pole of attraction, then little by little his
pictures revealed a certain expressionism, a
faith which he quickly renounced (Maternité,
1930). The discovery of Surrealism, in 1934,
was for him a way out thanks to which
he would assert himself. Among the sur-
realists he found a prophetic language which
would take the rôle of catalyst in his painting.
The discovery of René Magritte and, especial-
ly, of Giorgio de Chirico set him ablaze; he
grasped the pictorial model in his contempora-
ary works. Then his enthusiasm was without res-
traint; he began the spell-bound period of his
painting in which gravity and fervour were
combined. Nonetheless, he would still place
himself at the edge of Surrealism, because
there is an evident devotion to solitude in
Delvaux.

When one applies himself to reading the
pictures of Delvaux with vigilance, a noctu-
arnal idealism and a mystique of the dream
are revealed: it is a whole poetry of the image
that one succeeds in deciphering. Now we
must define the field of the possible
approaches of this painting and take inventory
of his world, of his syntax which calls upon
signs (mirrors, lamps, the plays of perspec-
tive), of his themes which are always the
same, orchestrated with a poetry which is a
therapy of the mind of its author. Due to
the setting, Delvaux will never stop intro-
ducing us to the mysteries of the city where
his childhood was spent. He sets up lamp-
posts, electric and telephone wires, rails, level
crossings, trains which continue to call forth
departure towards a mysterious destination,
the melancholy objects of an unknown,
inhabitants. In the city, he seeks tremendous
perspective esplanades, palaces, temples of Greco-Latin
architecture; we discover an omnipresence of
pavement, whose contact is icy under the
feet of the passerby. The painter also paints
middle-class interiors whose doors open on
the street or upper storeys from which they
are reflected in furniture without distinction, brass
lamps which rest as well on mantelpieces as
on the tiling of the floor or even directly on
it, in the middle of streets fit for escape
(Les Lampes, 1937). A whole closed world of
objects deprived of frivolity and attraction
is offered to us, objects whose relationships
with their surroundings are peculiar, at the
least.

Women Statued

With Delvaux, the movement of thought, a
constant element at grips with the materials
of the setting, creates an environment per-
meated by dreams and anxiety where the
skies of night or of metallic blue twilight are
combined, moonlight which hangs over the
all-powerful reign of the mineral and pun-
tuates the striking character of his composi-
tion. (Les Lampes of Tata) and recreates in
this encompassing setting, nude enigmatic
women move about slowly in the streets,
distorting their gestures which, suddenly sus-
pended, show a certain choreographic ambi-
tude (La Belle du couchant, 1945). Or else
these women are immobile, taking fixed
poses, hieratic as it turned into statues
seated on absolutely rigid chairs, reclining
on sofas, lascivious, their limbs somet-
times intertwined with clever draperies (La Voix
publique, 1948); or again taking root in the
true sense of the term in Femmes arbres,
1937. At this juncture, sensual vocabulary
is extreme; it is the temporal; these women
are immobile, taking fixed
poses, hieratic as it turned into statues
seated on absolutely rigid chairs, reclining
on sofas, lascivious, their limbs somet-
times intertwined with clever draperies (La Voix
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seated on absolutely rigid chairs, reclining
on sofas, lascivious, their limbs somet-
times intertwined with clever draperies (La Voix
Introverted Man

These creatures, nymphs or goddesses, in the course of their wandering, pass, full of the explicit physical charm of women, in front of men dressed in the most severe fashion, nose plunged with austerity in a newspaper, or absorbed in the observation of tiny objects which they scrutinize with a perseverance without apparent result (L'Entrée de la ville. 1939). What impresses us in these persons is this intension of mind on futile things. While loitering, some seem to be preaching in the desert, to converse with several others on Illusory subjects or to devote themselves to disconnected remarks. Sometimes one of these men strangely resembles the painter himself, as in La Ville endormie, 1939; placed at the edge of the picture, perhaps he is questioning himself on the obscure fate which at the edge of the picture, perhaps he is questioning himself on the obscure fate which will be that of these actors confined in a rôle of dramatic inaudacity. One of the types one meets the most often, notably in Les Phases de la lune, 1939, is Otto Lidenbrock of Jules Verne whose illustrator was Edouard Rion, from whom Delvaux borrowed the model without the slightest alteration. Curiously enough, only a nude adolescent shows himself awkwardly, with an emphasized innocence of manifest anxiety, in the midst of all these adults who are paying more attention to each other (L'Aube sur la ville, 1940). No relationship is created between the male and female persons, if it is not incidentally a tip of a hat or vague gesture on the part of these automata, one might say, considering the restraint of emotion which they feel at the sight of the woman exposed to their view. Each of these persons, men and women, lives separately an individual life.

The joining of a masculine and feminine structure is unceasingly deferred, with a few near exceptions. Although there is a relatively hardened look of the described people, a whole theatre of gesture is decanted under the paint-brush of Delvaux and in his art of representation as much as that of the visual transcription of a poetic state. We think of the plays of mirrors in which women look at themselves, of procesional marches, of movements which precede flight, of Sapphic encounters: Les Demoiselles des Tongres, 1962, or yet of the embracing of a marble bust of a man by an impassive woman in Pygmalion, 1939. We can observe in this connection that the female ideal of Sacher-Masoch appeals to an essential coldness, "Corps de marbre", "Vénus de glace". "Femme de désir", are the favourite words of Sacher-Masoch and his characters willingly fulfill their apprenticeship with a cold statue under the light of the moon (quoted by Gilles Deleuze in Présentation de Sacher-Masoch).

Freudian Themes

All these scenes centre our reflections on the creative undertaking and semiology; they assume a network of references to the equivalence of basic idea and form. Jointly with the simple perfection of the design, the portraits of Delvaux are fed by mental reservations of a psychological kind, moral and perhaps psychoanalytical to a greater degree. The return to the subconscious is fulfilled by means of Freudian themes. The exercise of this painting seems to have exercised little by little a libidinous fantasy, the inward fears and the Oedipus of its author.

Speaking the language of linguists, we find at the level of the significant combinations of lines, gestures, attitudes, stiff as they may be, which call upon the meaningful level which is the incomunicability of human beings, their solitude, their dreams and their anticipation. Delvaux has never done anything but reflect through different environments a same beauty as he brings to the world. In Formes et significations, Jean Roussel tells us that "the artist of genius marks himself by a revealing monopoly; typical phrases, identities of structure are the signs of his creative originality, being the disjointed fragments of a strange universe." Always the same work, therefore, under different figures, combined in variations which allow the same themes to be recognized, transformed and adorned.

At a time when exploration of new techniques and new means of expression are uninteresting ideas for Delvaux, one can ask himself how this painting can please.

By all evidence, it is not on technique and means that we must question ourselves but rather on the meaning of this painting; the implications of the signs of which it makes use.

Death and Sexuality

First of all, Delvaux translated a state of reverie, a contemplative state and a sort of fanciful relation to which we are all attached. On the other hand the artist stigmatizes the lack of communication between people, due to their futurity, to their sterility and above all to the forbidden. All people are in a state of expectancy whose object we surely do not know, if it is not vague probabilities, vague promises of sin which we lend to their imagination and which the theme of death subordinates, often recalled by the appearance of skeletons in the midst of them (Vénus endormie, 1944). The forbidden linked to death is one of the most contemporaneous themes. One can quote Georges Bataille on this subject: "If in essential forbidden matters we see the refusal which the human being offers to nature (the body) viewed as a corruption of life energy and as an orgy of destruction, we can no longer make a difference between death and sexuality."

In the pictures of Delvaux woman poses and creates a feeling of distance and even of absence; the attitude of man is refusal, he bears in order not to follow the movement which attracts him. Nonetheless, one can calculate in these persons the idea of a becoming taking place in a hidden temporality which, in the end, does not systematically close the pictures. It is a matter of a time of stopping and not of a last immobility.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

GEORGES BRAEM: CLOSER TO DELVAUX THAN REEDON?

By Pierre PARET

I knew Bernard Pallissy: he was called Georges Braem. That was about fifteen or sixteen years ago; he was living on the quai des Chartrons, in Bordeaux, on a fourth storey that the rats themselves had deserted. From the windows that looked out over the boat-houses of the port, we watched boats leaving and dreamed of journeys.

Thus we felt less keenly the biting cold that became increasingly aggressive as we went further towards the inside of the house. (My wife and I were looking for a house in which to stay. In this paradise, but she will never admit it.) After a brief respite, invisible shafts of cold soon oured our ears and we went off in search of a piece of furniture.

— Not that one: the kids put their toys there.
— What about that chest?
— Why not?

It was old, rickety, worm-eaten, we found all manner of fault with it, we had to make a fire, the children's teeth were chattering, ours too.

The fire served two purposes, first, heating, almost a relative and short-lived heat, and cooking.

We did not roast suckling pigs on charcoal as in Polynesia, we were content with a coarse milk soup. When the chairs and cupboards began to run out (I forgot to mention that the aunt who was putting her nephew up in this unrentable apartment, had the lack of conscience to furnish the immense rooms with everything she had not the courage to get rid of and which, in fact, was not worth much), they were replaced by old newspapers. When the andirons were exchanged for five or six kilos of bread, they were replaced by two racing bicycle handlebars salvaged from the scrap heap.

Braem was going through his Bateau-lavoir period. He did not like having a rough time for the sake of it, but he did not compromise. He wanted to paint and he would paint, whatever it cost him.

The apartment, although it began to look more and more deserted, was no less of a caravansary. Friends passing by stopped off at this place where it was authorized for nomads to stop, ate what they found, spent a few nights and disappeared forever.

A beardless Van Dongen

In Bordeaux, a lethargic city where, to be important, one must have a house of one's own, go to church on Sunday, and wear a fedora, paintings were selling badly. The Chartrons(1) hardly appreciated this tall fellow who looked like a beardless Van Dongen, and strolled about in the middle of winter in blue jeans and a turtleneck pullover. How could these rather insensitive middle-class people have understood that Braem preferred poverty to an ill-paid job in their badly heated offices? They said he was lazy because he turned down employment that would have turned him from his calling. A hasty judgment that prevented easily alarmed conscience from being upset.

One day a merchant marine commander of a generous nature, asked him to carry his wood up from the basement to the third or fourth floor of an apartment building that obviously had no elevator. When the work was finished, with a gesture of compassionate simplicity, he slipped him a ten francs
I knew him to be a candle maker, a projectionist, a decorator of candy boxes, and goodness knows what else? It never lasted very long; just whatever was needed to bring home a few loaves of bread, to buy some colours and possibly, to pay off a debt.

Then everyone said he knew he was a success, how many of us were there who believed it at the time? Now, he owns, on the basin of Arcachon, a "real bargain" house which he set up — or upset — the way he liked. He built himself a cozy studio, warm and well lit, watched over by a cat and a turtle-dove. The studio is his own room. You can find everything there, a cluster of photos of nudes, as lovely as statues, and more like than reality.

That is where he dreams, paints and smokes his pipe. Silence is indispensable: only the birds perched under the roof, between the branches, have the right to speak, and so the talker with us of the time when the tree trunk was a quivering sapling, scarcely taller than the green grass sea. At night elves danced a round in his honour and joining in, the moon cast yellow beams on the earth of his alone.

Braig has left for the unknown and enchanted land, but always, the carnal aspect of life commands attention, rejecting obscenity and giving new dimensions to an eroticism that is his alone.

What have I not heard about this painting that is so much of those who cannot paint so especially see in themselves.

—and up suddenly, internal combustion engines, crowds, mottos, and verbiage.

He also detested humming machinery, pawnbrokers, the smug rich, and advisers. But he liked real things, wild plants, large houses that sprawl in the sun, trees that have lived long, the fogs of the harbour, and large bowls of milk.

He thinks that if a picture can be explained it isn't good and that people who are always trying to understand are those who will never be able to paint. He has found something that one must be able to control to go fast and far.

More like Delvaux than Redon

You live in the south west of France, but you are of Flemish origin, and for the last two years you have been making lengthy excursions in the region of Anvers, which has produced a certain something in your art. It may be mainly a pictorial quality that places it in the great Nordic tradition.

Do you believe in the influence of race?

— The individual is always the result of heredity. I bear the mirages and phantasms of my race, this liking for or against Pretry, whose origins, however, are different from mine, called "work well done". The first thing that we must require of a painter, is to be a painter and the best painter he can be.

More like Delvaux than Redon, in his view of the universe, you find, in Braig's work, a tendency to be a minimalist... on a large scale, and this love of completed work that gave intimacy and density to his canvases that are open onto infinity as well as those of strange scenes, condensed in geometric areas or filling universes, whose walls or skies seem to be removed.

The time has now passed when, in the house on the quai des Chartrons in Bordeaux, straw were drawn to see what furniture would be burned to heat the milk soup and give, at the same time, a bit of warmth to the large rooms overlooking the almost deserted port.

The word is now well established, at least in the opinion of some people whose naturally equivocal prudishness does not turn away from elementary truths. Far from stimulating these doubtful complexions which affect precocious old people, his surrealist scenes and psychological landscapes give out boundless peace and serenity.

Consumed by the turbulence of cities, the fever of speed and hammering of noise, our age aspires to this kind of peace and serenity more each day.

(1) The Chartrons, who were castigated by Mauriac in Présences, are the inhabitants of the Pavé des Chartrons, a well set apart, however, from the crowd of people, today generally impoverished, but that continues to live in the manner of their ancestors at the turn of the XVII century, whose ways they have conserved.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
The Option of the Groupe Véhicule

By Gilles Toupin

There is an idea which has been occupying the mind of the public for some years, at least in great part, and which seems to me timely to demystify. I am often asked what is happening in art in Montreal with this intoxication which hopes, almost begging, for an immediate approval: "Since Borduas and since the plasticians, there is nothing more, which would remain open and available to all the artists of the rest of the country, which would be of use in strengthening the lines of communication among artists and between artists and the public; b) integrate the works of people of other discipline (music, poetry, dance, theatre, etc.) which also need a locale different from existing institutions; c) give a greater priority to the needs of each artist in what concerns the space and the time for their exhibitions, which present institutions do not or cannot do; d) contribute to the education of the public at large on the subject of art, by inviting schools, universities, artistic groups and the public to visit the premises; e) create an environment, a comfortable place for artists and public, which would promote dialogue between the different forms of art and their respective publics.

There is certainly no need to mention that a system of educative dissemination, similar to that of the Groupe Véhicule necessitates financial resources. Up till now the group has been able to count on the help of the Canada Council. As the cooperative centre has a non-commercial aim, it seems to me normal and greatly to the credit of this state organisation to support this social enterprise. The cultural and conservative power exercised by the commercial system of galleries is finally offset (in part, certainly, because the effort of Véhicule would need to be repeated by many other persons) by a freedom of exhibition. The system of alternative jury made up of three members of whom one is outside the group permits, even if it is not perfect, many young artists to exhibit for the first time. Véhicule is in its introductory phase. It will expand, without doubt, if it is definitely allowed to continue its work. Not only will it be able to become an important point of reference at the level of its immediate territory, but it will be able to stretch its tentacles over the whole world. It is thanks to immersion in research movements, in the whole world that we will have the option of recognizing and identifying our roots.

By establishing itself as to space, Véhicule, by its aims, becomes a sort of source of energy. The flood of artists frustrated by the inadequacy of a system will find in it a beneficial exit; it is an alternative.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)