

Le réel et... l'espoir Reality and... Hope

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LE RÉEL ET . . . L'ESPOIR

Le présent numéro porte essentiellement sur quelques aspects de l'engagement de la femme dans les arts plastiques. Il est pour nous l'occasion de rendre hommage, en cette Année Internationale de la Femme, aux Canadiennes et à celles de leurs sœurs qui ont ajouté l'art à leur plan de vie. Ce numéro ne prétend pas, hélas! donner une image vraiment complète de l'activité de la femme dans le domaine des arts. Même à l'intérieur des arts plastiques, il a fallu limiter l'inventaire et se résoudre à ne présenter que quelques articles sur d'importantes expériences qui n'avaient pas encore trouvé place dans nos pages. C'est également avec regret que nous avons omis les secteurs du cinéma, du théâtre, des lettres, de la musique et de la photographie.

Les difficultés financières que nous connaissons actuellement réduisent nos possibilités de recherches au strict minimum. De même, le nombre de nos pages a été légèrement réduit afin de faciliter notre retour à l'équilibre budgétaire. Nous comptons reprendre en juin et, surtout, en septembre notre présentation habituelle et nous remercions d'avance nos lecteurs de leur patience et de leur compréhension. Nous leur demandons même un peu plus afin de permettre à la revue de reprendre son élan: de nous faire un don, pour lequel nous leur ferons parvenir un reçu pour fins d'impôt sur le revenu.

Nous remercions aussi ceux qui ont bien voulu répondre au questionnaire inséré dans le dernier numéro. Cette enquête avait pour but de nous faire connaître ce qui intéresse surtout nos lecteurs, et, conséquemment, de mieux orienter le futur développement de la revue. Nous rappelons à nos abonnés qu'ils ont automatiquement droit au tirage de dix gravures d'artistes québécois. Ce tirage se fera en juin 1975.

Nous *poursuivons* une seule et unique tâche. Elle exige de notre part une attention constante au travail de production et à la coordination des services administratifs. Par ailleurs, elle ne saurait être menée à bien sans le soutien actif de lecteurs intéressés, curieux et soucieux de se tenir au courant de l'activité artistique. Cette forme de soutien, de plus en plus sensible, nous apporte la certitude que, dans le secteur des arts, le champ des besoins augmente sans cesse. Pour les satisfaire, il faudra de l'élan, de l'imagination et un indispensable appui financier.

Andrée PARADIS

English Translation, p. 65

TEXTS IN ENGLISH

REALITY AND . . . HOPE

By Andrée PARADIS

This issue is centred essentially on some aspects of the involvement of women in the plastic arts. For us it is the opportunity of rendering homage, in this International Women's Year, to Canadian women, and to those of their sisters who have added art to their lifestyle. This issue does not, alas, claim to give a truly complete image of woman's activity in the domain of the arts. Even at the interior of the plastic arts it was necessary to limit the inventory and make up our mind to present only a few articles on important experiments which had not yet found place on our pages. It is also with regret that we have omitted the sections on cinema, theatre, literature, music and photography.

The financial difficulties that we are experiencing at present reduce our research possibilities to the bare minimum. In the same way, the number of our pages has been slightly reduced in order to facilitate our return to budgetary balance. We plan to return, in June and especially in September, to our usual presentation, and in advance we thank our readers for their patience and understanding. We dare to ask a little more of them in order to give the magazine the opportunity to regain its momentum: make us a donation, for which we will send a receipt for income tax purposes.

We also thank those who have been good enough to answer the questionnaire inserted in the last issue. The purpose of this survey was to let us know what particularly interests our readers and, consequently, to help us better direct the future development of the magazine. We wish to remind our subscribers that they automatically have the right to participate in the drawing of ten engravings by Quebec artists. This drawing will take place in June 1975.

We are pursuing one single task. It demands on our part unflinching attention to the work of production, and to the coordination of administrative services. Furthermore, this could not be successfully achieved without the active support of interested readers, curious and concerned with being informed about artistic activity. This form of support, ever more sensitive, brings us the certainty that in the sector of the arts, the scope of needs increases unceasingly. To satisfy these, élan and imagination will be needed, and an indispensable financial support.

Translation by Mildred Grand

THE ROLE OF QUEBEC WOMEN IN THE PLASTIC ARTS OF THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

By Rose-Marie ARBOUR and
Suzanne LEMERISE

It is in its totality that we intend to examine the rôle of women in the domain of the plastic arts in Quebec during the last thirty years, a domain in which we perceive an emergence and official recognition of some artists, some styles, some media. We have only to look through magazine articles and art books (among others, books published by Harper and G. Robert) to become aware of the numerical importance of women in artistic practices from the 19th century on — a rôle much greater in the arts than in other, well-defined domains, such as the law, medicine, or the scientific disciplines.

As early as the thirties, several anglophone women were working with Lyman on the promotion of contemporary art. Later, among the fifteen signers of the *Prisme d'yeux* manifesto published in February, 1948, we find the names of two women, while the *Refus global*, appearing the following August, included seven women's names out of fifteen signatories. The cultural and political impact of the *Refus global* being known, it is revealing that there were so many women who signed it. However, in February, 1955, the *Manifeste des Plasticiens* was signed only by men and the exhibition of January, 1959, titled *Art abstrait* included not a single woman painter¹.

During the 1950-1960 decade, officially at least, women artists did not support the geometric movement in painting. For them post-automatism was a chosen field of exploration rather than others which would be termed a conventional alignment on the stylistic effects of automatism. "In Ottawa the thinking follows the official American models, and the work of Canadian artists will be widely distributed only if they conform to these artistic movements. In Quebec they are more conventional, they have patterned themselves on Father Couturier, they love things in good taste, they have even accepted lyrical abstraction, but this particularly conveyed by women artists after automatism"². Indeed, the era of the Quiet Revolution opens partially under the aegis of post-automatism with the exhibition that the National Gallery of Canada organized with the members of the Association of Non-Figurative Artists of Montreal, among whom nine painters out of a total of twenty-two were women. These were Kittie Bruneau, Henriette Fauteux-Massé, Marcelle Ferron, Rita Letendre, Laure Major, Marcelle Maltais, Suzanne Meloche, Suzanne Rivard, Tobie Steinhouse. Following the conflict between post-automatism and the intellectualism of the geometrical movement, there was an identification of gestural painting (lyrical abstraction), with the *states of soul* qualified as feminine: cry, sincerity, sensuality, instinctive outbursts of feeling, emotivity. So we realize that this new promotion of women artists at the beginning of the sixties was promptly interpreted as encouragement toward a certain academism, under the circumstances post-automatism, and the greater participation of women in the artistic system was immediately classified in the category of *service* linked to the interests of a Quebec controlling cultural class. This type of telling judgment takes good care not to mention the male painters who practised post-automatism,

such as Dulude, Salette, Gendron, Ulysse Comtois, Jean McEwen, Pat Ewen and others.

A recent study³ brings out rather well the institutionalized devaluation of the production of women in the plastic arts: it shows that the profile of the creator in the plastic arts, man or woman, is the same in the plan of preprofessional education. The differences appear at the level of professional practice; domains reserved for women, such as batik and tapestry; almost total exclusion from sculpture and jewellery; concentration of women in the field of painting and engraving.

The organizational efficiency of women in the domain of tapestry justifies their success. We cite Edith Martin and her studio at Trois-Pistoles, Marie-Jeanne Contant, whose activity is divided between her studio *Les Navettes volantes* at Sainte-Dorothée and the direction of the Centre de tissage Leclerc at Montreal. Further, by way of individual recognition, we mention, among others, Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, Monique Mercier, Louise Panneton. Since 1955, Micheline Beauchemin has freed tapestry-making from its regional and matriarchal connotations. Yet the prejudice still exists that tapestry-making is a practice of the traditional type whose formula may be summed up as the connection between patience and woman. The material organization of enamelling and batik is easily adaptable to domestic life, a fact which has led many women to the practice of these techniques. These techniques, which are called more manual than intellectual, would for this reason be the preferred area of women artists. In our opinion, so simplistic a reason would never have been invoked by serious criticism concerning the production of a male artist, even an enameler. Rather than using artistic categories founded on segregation, which evaluate or devalue pictorial techniques and movements to the benefit of a masculine *avant-garde*, it would be necessary to study thoroughly the very conditions of these methods. The example of Françoise Sullivan and other women sculptors is convincing regarding the destruction of these segregationist categories; on the other hand, it has quickly been forgotten that a Sylvia Daoust, an Anne Kahane, very early proved themselves as sculptors; since 1965, several women have been part of the Association des Sculpteurs and exhibit regularly: Yvette Bisson, Ethel Rosenfield, Lise Gervais, Claire Hogenkamp, Sarah Jackson, Lise Dupuis. Françoise Sullivan has been producing sculpture since 1960, the dance having previously been her means of expression. And it is the difficult and arduous side of the dance that she rediscovers in sculpture, as well as its spatial and rhythmical possibilities. She first used metal, then plexiglas, from 1969; not only did she contradict the prejudice that soft media and the predominance of *instinct* characterize women artists, but she also gave the lie to that of the anti-intellectuality of women, when, strongly impressed by Joseph Kosuth's article, *L'Art après la philosophie*⁴, she engaged in a reflection on conceptual art.

Historically, then, the place occupied by women in the plastic arts is not unimportant, although most of the female artists remain almost on the fringe. There are as many, if not more, women who attend art schools; well, access to official recognition is almost entirely reserved for men. Weekly art criticism confirms the privilege of *recognition* for the masculine artist: a list of the names of *criticized* artists revealed in 1968 that ten women were mentioned, against sixty-four men, and in 1969 the