

Le premier venu...et les autres First Comers...and Others

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LE PREMIER VENU . . . ET LES AUTRES.

Il est indéniable, si l'on croit vivre en démocratie, que la culture, y compris la contre-culture et la nouvelle culture, comptent parmi les droits fondamentaux. Réduire la démocratie à ses traits essentiels, c'est établir le rapport de l'individu à l'État. En démocratie, l'individu vaut mieux que l'État. La Société est faite pour l'homme et non l'homme pour la Société. L'État doit mettre à la portée de toute personne qui tombe sous sa juridiction, en quelque lieu qu'elle se trouve, les outils éducatifs, culturels ou autres, nécessaires à son bonheur et à son épanouissement.

La démocratie s'oppose au racisme, au régime totalitaire; elle croit en une «étrange qualité de l'homme», à sa poésie, à son mystère. Une démocratie digne de ce nom admet que les hommes non seulement naissent et vivent égaux mais qu'ils soient capables de singularité. Elle favorise leur propre choix de vie dans un régime qui contient des modes d'action souples et variés.

La démocratie va loin dans le respect de l'homme; en retour, elle attend que l'homme *aille loin* dans le sens de la responsabilité, de la solidarité, «pour elle l'homme vaut par ce qu'il a de naturel, d'immédiat, de naïf plutôt que par ce qu'il acquiert». Elle lui donne les moyens d'acquérir, mais n'impose pas le grand savoir. Le premier venu vit dans un processus de culture aussi bien que le savant ou l'artiste, avec cette différence qu'en général, il ne le sait pas. Tenter de l'en convaincre, lui parler de son acquis réel, risque de le frustrer momentanément, mais le lent cheminement d'une civilisation ne se fait pas autrement. On a tellement galvaudé la notion de culture, qui est avant tout un état d'esprit, une attitude de la pensée et des sens, on l'a tellement confondue avec les outils culturels présentés comme privilèges des élites, qu'il ne faut pas s'étonner d'assister à une levée de boucliers contre la culture. Le phénomène est international; il est toutefois plus vivace, plus agressif dans les pays jeunes qui ont peu de culture traditionnelle.

Dans cet affrontement de la contre-culture et de la nouvelle culture avec la culture traditionnelle fermentent des bouillons de «création». Cette nouvelle phase-action semble aller du côté de l'engagement et de la prise de conscience. Il reste aux esprits justes à développer des pensées exactes! Il reste aussi à améliorer sans relâche la qualité du milieu ambiant.

Andrée PARADIS

TEXTS IN ENGLISH

JEAN-PAUL JÉRÔME PAINTER OF COMMUNICATION

By Fernand OUELLETTE

*What always saved me was that
I never knew what I wanted.*
BRAQUE.

There is no more profound reason for confronting canvas than responding to Desire, to the necessity of the lofty music of the human being. If we wished to convince ourselves of this, the single work *Apollon* (1974) would be enough to seize our gaze. One cannot follow a trail without giddiness. Jérôme plunges us right into a labyrinth. He captures visible light the better to abandon us to invisible light. The great black resonance permeates us. The *Novalisian night* resounds like a summons. The earthly tissue of greenery, of solid brown, of love dense as a high vintage wine, of traces of fine blue, can only prepare the eye for the illuminating passage from gray to bold white, and what a violent vibration this is! but in order the better to lose it, and in order that the eye should go, bewildered, into the abyss that black opens. Reversing a remark by Dufy, one might say that there are black backgrounds, equal in value to absolute white. "But we come too late, friend. Yes, the gods live. But up there, on our foreheads, in the heart of another world." (Hoelderlin). When he superimposes labyrinths, Jérôme sweeps us along into the *elsewhere* of the gods.

Fundamentally, Jean-Paul Jérôme is a painter of communication. In this sense, there is no sensitivity more modern. When he paints he drifts, he rambles (how should he know what will arise?), but this very wandering is possible only through the networks, the many systems he establishes as he proceeds with a sure instinct. Two triangles are sometimes joined by cycles of parallels. A sphere is connected to a triangle by two bridges. Taut forms, shaken by attraction, are related by one, two or many lines. With this artist, all geometry is mobile. This goes from the complexity of *Haut Pays* (1974) to *Matin de lumière* (1974), where, in a blue triptych, spheres slowly drift while attracting each other.

If one can say that in the passion for perfection that distinguishes Jérôme, in his patience, one feels the presence of the long tradition of European painting, one can also add that this painter of expanding galaxies and of molecules certainly has the generosity and the openness of American painting. A painter of forms rather than of gesture or sign, he pursues in solitude the work of profound study undertaken by marvellous illuminators and the miniaturists of the Middle Ages.

Let us consider a few picture painted since 1972. Upon glancing at the series of Saint-Ours canvases (1972), we see that movement and form predominate. The black stroke expands, develops a form (as in Atlan's work), defines clear zones. The linen canvas (for Jérôme always paints on a raw linen canvas) reduces the too vivid leaps from black to white. In this way, the repercussion is only stronger. Then come big surfaces with pure forms such as *Nocturne* (1972-1974), *Essor* (1972) and *Musique pour Neige* (1972). In the last one, for example, Jérôme begins by dividing space, as if he needed windows. This division will support his whole composition. Each window breathes in tonalities. The weave itself widens more or less. The encircled parts have a visible

autonomy, although they remain in correspondence with each other. Jérôme lets the black lines run free. Acute angles appear. The graphism resembles the visible threads of a vast, invisible aviary, as if the painter wanted to prevent his so light forms from flying away. But this black net modulates like music. Who is more of a musician? What tenderness in *Musique pour Neige*, what courtesy toward Woman. No one is more secretly admiring of the feminine enclosed in this canvas. (Schubert accompanies it with his wounded heart in the andantino of *Sonata for Piano in A Major*.) No picture makes us understand better to what point Jérôme is a plastician.

This surface of clean forms (this sky of big birds) will become more and more organic, plant-like, delirious, to reach its peak in *Le Jardin de la licorne* (1973), a large triptych in which the mystery, the profusion and the completion of the forms astound. Worlds call each other, feed each other, grow like a virgin forest. But, in his vegetable chasm the joy of the conquest of a space is so great that it irradiates and all is spiritual. The works of the same period as *L'Ange des moissons* (1973), *L'Envers de l'eau* (1973) and *Voyage vers Amsterdam* (1973), more peaceful, reveal the light that rises from the heart. Jérôme breathes through his forms, his colours, as one breathes the blue of the sky, the green of foliage, the shimmering or the silence of water.

The drawing was so spontaneous in this series of works where the plant-like and the organic devour all the space that Jérôme would try to escape this "trap of reality" (Bazaine). "Only God must know how to draw", said Chagall. Forsaking the organic, Jérôme applied himself with the same freedom to demonstrating the organized. In each part of the picture, he began by building a big basic network made up solely of straight lines. During this period he abandoned the curve. The *Sequences de ciel* (1973) are very significant. No curve at all. And already, by its silence, the gray window foretells *Mécanique céleste* (1974). Jérôme struggles against his gift for the curve or the sinuous. Other networks of straight lines are superimposed, become entangled, command attention, and leave us in suspense, confused. It would suffice him, in *Grimpeurs* (1973), to conceive vertical zones joined beyond the canvas, to allow some modulating traces to rise, in order that ascensional dizziness should involve us in the indescribable. *Grimpeurs*, *Le Randonneur* (1973) and *Le Sud belliqueux* (1974) are certainly celebrations, states of possession in which joy penetrates everything like telluric water.

In 1972, the limits of canvas had not yet been crossed. From *Séquences de ciel*, the curtain of linen is abandoned. Forms are carried from one space to the other, are subdued or explode. We would see in *Grimpeurs* (diptych), a stroke travel through the four parts of the panel on the right. And in *Matin de lumière*, the line of the weave becomes a trail that crosses the volets and the centre panel, distributes the space, balances the spheres. In the more recent works (*Matin de lumière* and others) spheres slide in the half light, as if veiled by a membrane of dull light. Thus, after the explosion of forms in *Le Jardin de la licorne* and in *Apollon*, Jérôme no longer hears anything but the slowness of some spheres which pass in blue or green. Silence itself begins to vibrate. We can already foresee another cycle, where the richness of the painter and his passion for forms will break forth in many fugues, in the intoxication of his Hymn to Joy.

FIRST COMERS . . . AND OTHERS

By Andrée PARADIS

It cannot be denied, if we believe we are living in a democracy, that culture, including counter-culture and new culture, are to be reckoned among fundamental rights. To reduce democracy to its essential characteristics is to establish the relationship between individual and State. Under democracy, the individual is more important than the State. Society is made for man, not man for Society. The State must put within the reach of every person under its jurisdiction, wherever that person may be, the required educative, cultural and other tools necessary to his happiness and his full development.

Democracy is opposed to racism, to a totalitarian rule; it believes in a "strange quality of man", in his poetic capacity, in his mystery. A democracy worthy of the name admits not only that men are born and live as equals, but that they are capable of special characteristics. It encourages their own choice of lifestyle in a régime that contains supple and varied methods of action.

Democracy goes far in its respect for man; in return, it expects than man should go far in the direction of responsibility and solidarity, as "under democracy, man is valued through his natural, immediate, naïve quality rather than through what he acquires". It gives him the means of acquiring, but does not demand great knowledge. The first comer lives in a process of culture as well as the scholar or the artist, with this difference, that in general he does not know it. To try to convince him of it, to speak to him of his real attainments, risks frustrating him temporarily, but the slow advancement of a civilization does not occur otherwise. To such an extent have we botched the idea of culture, which is above all a state of mind, an attitude of thought and of the senses, so much have we confused it with cultural tools offered as privileges of the élite, that we must not be surprised to see a barrier raised against culture. The phenomenon is international; it is, however, stronger and more aggressive in young countries that have little traditional culture.

Within this confrontation between counter-culture and new culture and traditional culture, bubbles of "creation" are fermenting. This new action-phase seems to be going toward commitment and awareness. It remains for well-rounded minds to develop exact thoughts! It remains also to improve the quality of the surrounding milieu, without faltering.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)