

Vers la découverte de la collection permanente du Musée The Museum's Permanent Collections A Passage - Way of Discovery

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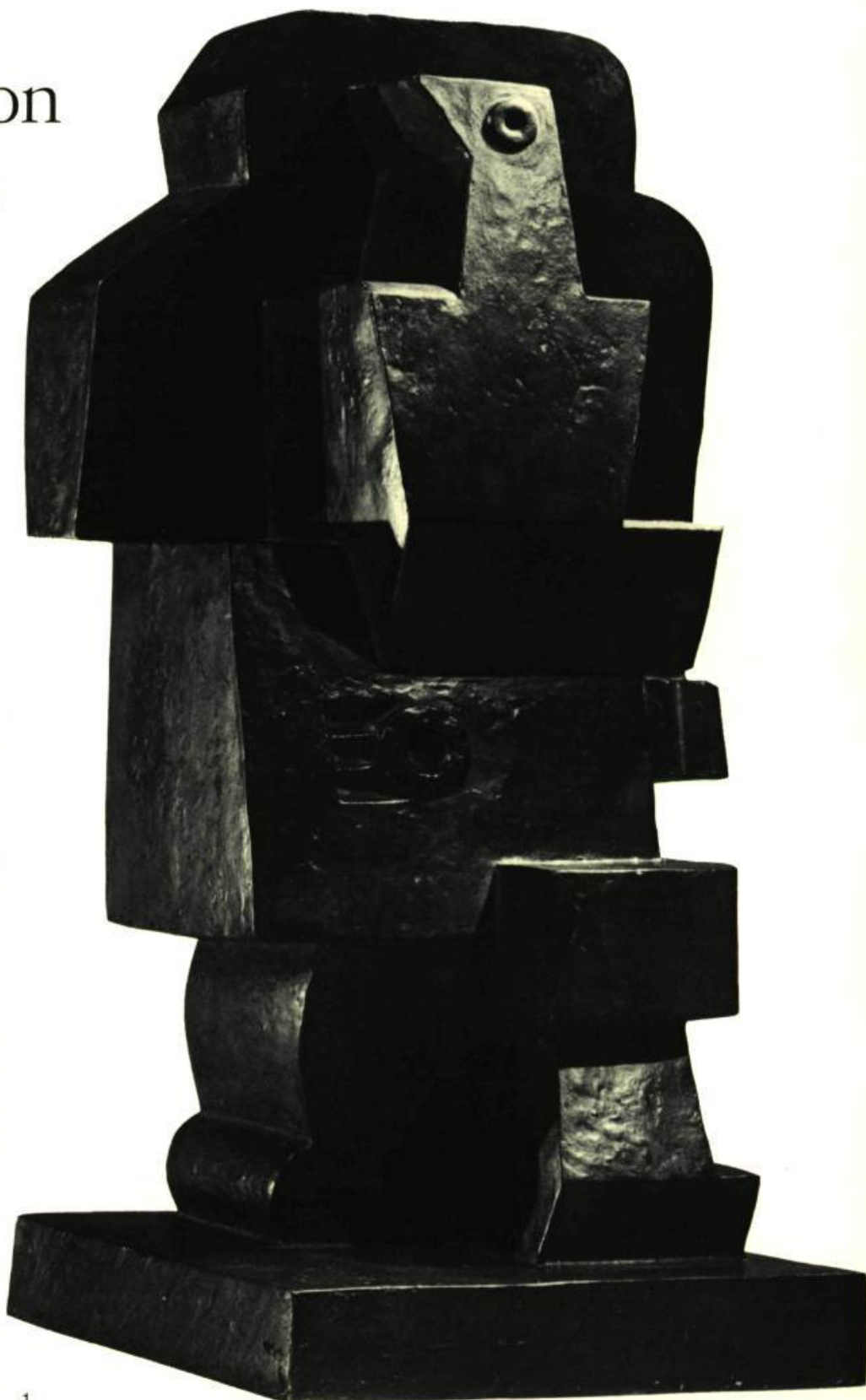
Vers la découverte de la collection permanente du Musée

David Giles Carter

Les besoins dictent la ligne de conduite, et celle-ci à son tour entraîne d'autres besoins. Les changements physiques du Musée sont le résultat d'un besoin éprouvé, énoncé et satisfait.

La politique adoptée témoigne de la continuité d'une activité vieille de 116 ans et des motivations de gens qui s'y intéressent. En dépit des modifications importantes exigées par la génération présente, on ne peut ignorer les constantes nées du désir de collectionner et d'exposer. Il s'ensuit naturellement un besoin d'interpréter et de faire connaître les collections dans leur contexte.

L'esprit esthétique du groupe d'hommes qui bâtit la galerie du square Phillips, ne pouvait imaginer ou prévoir une fraction des besoins qui ont abouti à la solution de 1976. A partir d'un immeuble construit pour abriter une petite collection permanente et présenter une exposition annuelle en vue de servir les artistes et le public, le Musée connut les transformations physiques suivantes. D'abord, l'expansion de la galerie du square Phillips et ensuite son abandon; en 1912, la construction de l'immeuble de la rue Sherbrooke, suivie de l'ajout des six nouvelles galeries de l'aile Norton en 1939; en 1965-1966, la première rénovation et, finalement, l'agrandissement d'aujourd'hui qui permet l'aménagement d'installations deux fois plus importantes que l'ensemble des galeries antérieures. Le nouvel immeuble est doté d'un système de climatisation perfectionné, d'installations flexibles et de dispositifs de sécurité inconnus des architectes qui considéraient les



musées comme des temples publics aux proportions élégantes, éclairés par des toits en verre ou des lampes à gaz du dernier style. Le musée d'aujourd'hui doit faire face aux exigences des programmes continuels d'exposition et loger des milliers de pièces appartenant à la collection permanente.

La nouvelle structure a été conçue en vue de répondre aux besoins croissants des Canadiens et, plus spécifiquement, à ceux des Québécois et des Montréalais. La participation du Musée à l'exposition de la Maison Du Calvet et sa récente fusion avec le Musée McCord sont une preuve évidente de l'intérêt qu'il porte à la collectivité.

M. Fred Lebensold d'ARCOP a créé des galeries qui mettront en valeur les objets d'arts. Pour accomplir cette œuvre d'envergure, il a travaillé en collaboration avec M. Laurent Marquart, de Jacques Guillon Design, à qui l'on doit un nouveau système d'indentification ainsi qu'un mode inédit d'exposition. On s'attend à ce que la réaction du public à l'endroit du nouveau musée l'amène à en faire un usage plus compréhensif.

Le contenu du Musée exige une présentation cohérente aussi bien que savante. La température ambiante crée des problèmes sérieux en ce qui a trait à l'éclairage et au chauffage. Les réflecteurs à incandescence, soutenus en certains endroits par la lumière du jour, fournissent diverses solutions. Le tracé original des salles offre, outre une aire de circulation aisée, l'exposition des œuvres par ordre chronologique, lorsqu'il y a lieu. Un cabinet spécial a été conçu pour recevoir les dessins et les estampes. Une brochure, un guide, des panneaux didactiques et des audio-guides seront mis à la disposition des visiteurs. Beaucoup d'efforts ont été déployés afin de donner des détails précis sur les œuvres et sur leur importance. Un centre d'orientation aidera le public à se diriger à l'intérieur du Musée.

Il serait faux de mesurer les collections du Musée de la même façon qu'un chimiste mesure ses éléments. La collection d'art canadien commence avec les premières formes d'art québécois et continue jusqu'à notre temps. Les collections des civilisations occidentales s'étendent aux arts de l'Europe contemporaine. L'Asie, l'Afrique et les Amériques sont représentées à des degrés divers. Les sculptures, les céramiques et les textiles forment aujourd'hui une partie importante des possessions du Musée qui, à l'origine, n'était qu'une galerie de peintures.

1. Jacques LIPCHITZ

Homme à la guitare.

Bronze; H.: 20 pces 5/8.

Acquis en 1971. (Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

2. Nicolas LECLERC

Louis XII et Anne de Bretagne.

Médaille en bronze; 114 mm.

Acquis en 1971. (Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

3. Michel ANGUIER

Amphitrite.

Bronze; H.: 21 pouces.

(Don de Mme Algernon Lucas)

4. Le MAÎTRE DU CŒUR

Ciboire en argent.

Amsterdam; Début du 17^e s. Argent et dorure;

H.: 65 cm 4; Diam. de la base: 23 cm 31.

Poinçons: sous la base, armoiries d'Amsterdam

marquées d'un I, poinçon en forme d'écusson.

Acquis en 1975 (Fonds spécial de remplacement).



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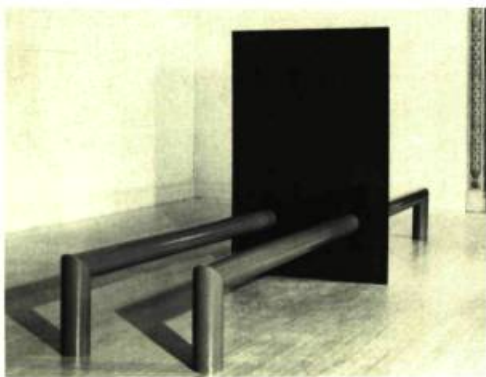


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Les collections d'un musée sont le produit des efforts de plusieurs générations. Comme dans le cas d'un collectionneur expérimenté, on remarque qu'à mesure que les collections s'accroissent, les objectifs se délimitent et que le choix des œuvres se fait avec le sens artistique du vrai connaisseur. Les fondateurs de notre Musée avaient des espérances bien modestes. Les legs de Benaiah Gibb et de James Ross, pris en exemple par la collectivité, furent suivis d'autres donations aussi importantes, offertes par les successions Learmont, Angus, lord Strathcona et Adaline Van Horne. Tous ces legs datent d'avant 1949. A partir des années cinquante, les familles Morrice, Ballantyne et Vaughan enrichirent les collections de nombreuses pièces. Durant les deux dernières années, des donateurs anonymes ont présenté plus de trois cents pièces de verrerie canadienne, comblant ainsi une lacune qui remontait à longtemps.

Ces donations sont le fruit d'un changement de politique. En 1916, M. F. Cleveland Morgan, devenu membre du conseil d'administration, convainquit le Conseil de former une collection d'objets d'art décoratif. M. Morgan, lui-même, offrit des centaines de pièces et présida à de nombreux achats. D'autres personnes, entraînées par le geste de M. Morgan, firent don de pièces rares de dentelle, de tissu, de fer forgé et de mobilier. La collection de tabatières chinoises de Georges Clemenceau est un exemple de contribution d'un genre particulier. La collection de porcelaine de Lucille Pillow en est un autre.

Le nouveau directeur d'un musée, quel que soit l'âge de cette institution, doit, en assumant les responsabilités et en essayant d'améliorer la qualité des collections, prendre en considération l'opinion et les goûts de toutes les générations précédentes de directeurs, de conservateurs et de donateurs. La direction du Musée par des professionnels fut amorcée en 1949 avec la nomination de M. Robert Tyler Davis. Dans le but d'équilibrer la collection, il favorisa l'acquisition de pièces d'art décoratif, d'œuvres des écoles contemporaines et effectua la première acquisition canadienne d'un Gréco. John Steegman, qui s'intéressait à l'art du portrait, acheta surtout des peintures italiennes anciennes, par exemple, l'œuvre de Giovanni del Biondo, *La Madone et l'Enfant*, qui faisait partie de la Collection Ashburnham, des portraits de l'école anglaise, tels que le *Portrait de Madame George Drummond* par Gainsborough. Nommé directeur en 1959, M. Evan H. Turner donna une nouvelle impulsion aux peintures de l'époque baroque et du vingtième siècle par des tableaux précieux tels que la nature morte attribuée à Alejandro Loarte, *Tobie bénissant Tobias* de Mattia Preti, *Jason charmant le dragon* par Salvator Rosa, *Ératosthène enseignant à Alexandrie* de Bernardo Strozzi et, parmi les maîtres modernes, des œuvres de Borduas, Riopelle, sir Matthew Smith et Karel Appel. Les acquisitions sont soumises à l'approbation de trois différents comités (quatre, auparavant) qui ont été présidés ou le sont encore par des hommes du calibre de MM. A. Sidney Dawes, F. Cleveland Morgan, Maurice Corbeil, L. V. Randall, David Y. Hodgson et Sean B. Murphy. Le jugement de ces personnes a souvent modifié le cours des acquisitions. Des fonds discrétionnaires modestes furent établis et permirent de participer aux ventes aux enchères ou aux liquidations de succes-

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sion. Par ailleurs, des décisions immédiates furent prises à des enchères importantes. A cet égard, on peut citer l'achat effectué chez Sotheby, de Toronto, de l'aquarelle de Paul Kane, *Le Jeu d'osselets*, et celui du carnet de croquis de Coburn chez Christie, de Montréal. D'autres exemples qui illustrent mieux le succès qui découle d'une politique plus audacieuse ont été l'acquisition du *Portrait de Madame Mercier* par Greuze et celle d'un mât totémique, grâce au fonds national d'urgence.

A l'exception de celui-ci, aucun autre fonds public n'est disponible pour des acquisitions. La réglementation concernant les déductions d'impôt relatives aux donations a, en raison de son statut privé, longtemps désavantagé le Musée. Son statut actuel d'institution semi-publique ne lui est guère plus avantageux. Toutefois, on espère que cette situation sera corrigée par l'article 10 de la nouvelle loi fédérale — 23-24 Élisabeth. D'autres fonds d'acquisition nous proviennent des intérêts cumulés des placements ou des titres reçus en legs ou en dons de particuliers. Les legs Gilman Cheney, Tempest et Annie et Horsley Townsend constituent la source principale de ces fonds.

Compte tenu des collections existantes, des fonds d'acquisition disponibles et de certaines espérances, quelle ligne de conduite faut-il adopter? Pour les non initiés, il convient de préciser que le terme *certaines espérances* désigne des œuvres d'art et même des collections que le Musée a des raisons d'espérer recevoir à titre de dons ou de legs. Dans la mesure où les donateurs éventuels sont disposés à faire connaître leurs intentions, il est possible d'évi-

5. Peter GNASS

Topolog sur pied No 2.

Plexiglas; 48 pces x 36 x 27.

(Coll. S. et S. Bronfman d'art canadien)

6. Hugh LE ROY

Sans titre.

Acier laqué et acrylique; 74 pces x 212 x 50.

(Coll. S. et S. Bronfman d'art canadien)

7. Aristide MAILLOL

La Victoire.

Haut-relief en bronze; 10 pces x 10 1/4.

Acquis en 1972. (Don du Comité Féminin du Musée)

8. Tilmann RIEMENSCHNEIDER

Saint Sébastien.

Tilleul; 28 pces 3/4 x 9 1/2.

Acquis en 1971. (Don de L. V. Randall et Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

9. *Un saint évêque bénissant.*

Italie (Abruzzes?); Milieu du 14e s.

Châtaignier et polychromie ancienne.

H.: 163 cm; Larg. aux genoux: 55.

Acquis en 1973. (Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

10. *La Vierge et l'Enfant.*

Art mosan; Premier tiers du 13e siècle.

Bois de châtaignier avec polychromie originale;

H.: 26 pces 1/4.

Acquis 1973. (Fonds du Comité des Bénévoles,

du Comité des Jeunes du Musée,

Legs Marjorie Caverhill et Legs Harold Lawson)

11. Auguste PAJOU

Buste de Jean-Philippe du Vidal, marquis de Montferrier.

Terre cuite; 70 cm.

Acquis en 1968. (Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

12. *Tête de l'empereur Alexandre Sévère.*

Art romain; 3e s. après J.-C.

Marbre; H.: 28 cm.

(Acquis avec le Legs de Horsley et Annie Townsend)



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ter l'achat d'œuvres de même nature que celle qui pourraient être offertes et d'adopter une politique d'acquisition plus judicieuse. Il est regrettable que ce principe ne soit pas appliqué de façon plus générale et qu'on ne puisse établir une communication plus suivie entre musées et donateurs. Par exemple, le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal et le Musée d'Art Contemporain possèdent tous deux des œuvres de Max Bill, de Franklin Koenig et de Vasarely. Bien que nos deux institutions soient fières de compter ces œuvres dans leurs collections, n'aurait-il pas été plus avantageux pour la collectivité que le Musée d'Art Contemporain fasse l'acquisition d'autres maîtres que ceux-ci, ou vice versa? La récente fusion du Musée Mc-

Cord et du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal devrait permettre une organisation plus cohérente des ressources dans les domaines de l'art canadien traditionnel et de l'art des peuplades indigènes.

Loin de nous, cependant, l'intention de vouloir mettre un frein aux ambitions légitimes du Musée. On évalue d'abord le milieu, les moyens disponibles, et l'on applique tout son zèle à l'étude du marché. Ceci suppose les efforts concertés de l'équipe des conservateurs qui entreprend des recherches préparatoires à cette étude, suppute les options et, enfin, soumet le résultat de son travail au comité approprié auquel revient la décision finale. Outre ses attributions ordinaires, le conservateur d'au-

jourd'hui doit déterminer la légalité des titres, de l'exportation, juger le prix demandé, l'authenticité, la condition, la qualité et la signification des objets en cause — cette dernière considération est capitale. Combien de fois n'a-t-il pas fallu tempérer de réalisme nos espoirs et réduire l'envergure de nos projets. Pierre Rosenberg me disait un jour que seul le Louvre, peut-être, possède une collection qu'on peut qualifier d'encyclopédique. Pour d'autres, l'objectif doit parfois se limiter à une collection *représentative*. Quelquefois, grâce au flair, à l'acuité de perception et à la chance d'un conservateur ou d'un collectionneur, il arrive qu'une collection particulièrement intéressante se constitue.

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C'est ce qui donne aux musées leur caractère individuel. Le nôtre possède la caractéristique d'être situé à Montréal, au Québec, dans le Canada et dans l'hémisphère occidental. Conséquence toute naturelle, l'art canadien et surtout l'art du Québec y sont fortement représentés. La moitié de nos possessions sont d'origine canadienne. Considérons seulement quelques spécimens des additions de l'année écoulée: deux portraits attribués à François Malepart de Beaucourt, deux autres par Eugène Hamel et un autre attribué à Roy-Audy; une œuvre cubiste de Bertram Brooker, *Le Magasin de tabac Hyman* d'Adrien Hébert, *Les Champions* d'Albert Dumouchel, un dessin intime de Jack Chambers et des sculptures de Sazor-Coté, de Jordi Bonet et d'Yves Trudeau.

Il n'en demeure pas moins que le Musée prétend s'intégrer dans le courant de la civilisation occidentale — un facteur qui joue un rôle important dans la politique d'acquisitions et la présentation des collections. Comment les acquisitions majeures des douze dernières années ont-elles illustré ce concept? En 1964, le Musée achetait un relief du palais d'Assournazirpal datant du IX^e siècle avant Jésus-Christ. Cet achat fut suivi de celui de deux portraits romains. Puis entraient dans la collection des œuvres du Moyen âge, telles un *Christ en croix* du 11^e ou du début du 12^e siècle italien, une *Madone à l'Enfant* mosane, datant du 13^e siècle, un *Évêque sur un trône* du 14^e siècle italien et le *Saint Sébastien* de Tilmann Riemenschneider de la première décennie du 16^e siècle. Les collections de la Renaissance se sont enrichies de plusieurs médailles de valeur frappées aux effigies de Sigismondo Malatesta, de Pierre l'Arétin, du dauphin Louis XII, et une médaille splendide qui représente Louis XII et Anne de Bretagne. De la période baroque datent une très belle *Amphitrite* de Michel Anguier et un *Portrait du cardinal Léopold de Médicis*, un marbre de Foggini. A la collection d'art rococo s'est ajoutée une élégante terre cuite d'Augustin Pajou, le *Portrait du marquis de Montferrier*. L'achat d'un *Christ* qu'on croit provenir de Gaspé constitua une addition splendide à l'art du 19^e siècle. Un généreux donateur nous offrit récemment *Le Casseur de cailloux*, un bronze d'Aimé-Jules Dalou. La diversité de l'art du 20^e siècle est représentée par des œuvres aussi variées que *Le Chanteur* de Barlach, un relief en bronze de Maillol, étude préliminaire à un monument, la *Grande tête totémique* d'Henry Moore, *Blanc-Sœur* d'Antoine Poncet, un plateau de Jean Arp, *Fruit de pagode*, *Thermopyle* de Dimitri Hadzi, *Fiesole* de Sorel Etrog, *Homme à la guitare* du cubiste Jacques Lipchitz, *Les Lignes de force d'une sphère* de Max Bill, *Composition 1963* d'Umberto Mastroianni et la *Colonne en quatre éléments* de Hugh Leroy. Je m'en voudrais de ne pas mentionner une grande collection qui vient d'entrer au Musée — celle-ci représentative d'une autre partie du monde — la collection d'art africain et océanien du Père Ernest Gagnon, de la Province du Canada français de la Compagnie de Jésus. La croissance d'un musée est l'une des manifestations de la maturité culturelle d'une société et, à mesure que le public prendra connaissance des ressources de son musée, l'existence de celui-ci trouvera sa justification.

Voici peut-être le moment de mentionner la revue du Musée, *M. Conçue* d'abord comme un organe de diffusion des activités du Musée, cette publication a maintenant pour but prin-

cipal de faire connaître la collection permanente et d'offrir au public des études et des jugements sérieux sur les œuvres qui la composent. Si l'on reconnaît qu'un musée est autre chose qu'un centre d'art, c'est qu'on a découvert un moyen de susciter de l'intérêt pour sa collection permanente — un moyen qui présente, entre autres, l'avantage d'un contact intime. En parcourant les quelque vingt numéros de cette revue, dont le directeur est M. Bill Bantey, on peut lire des articles sur des sujets aussi variés que la céramique maya, un sarcophage romain, un Salvador Dali ou un rouleau de Tch'en Hong-Chou.

Peu de gens connaissent l'étendue des collections du Musée. Combien ont pensé au plaisir que peuvent offrir des boîtes, à l'attrait des laques japonaises, des ornements micmacs en piquants de porc-épic ou de l'acier gravé allemand? Combien ont admiré l'harmonie des formes des vases — le répertoire établi des vases grecs —, l'éloquente fluidité du verre romain ou les surfaces imprimées des porcelaines Ts'ing ou un céladon. Combien ont contemplé les merveilleux portraits qui figurent sur les monnaies classiques, les marbres romains ou baroques, un buste en terre cuite de la Régence française, un bronze du début des années vingt ou une huile contemporaine? Combien s'arrêtent à penser aux diverses étapes par lesquelles passe l'œuvre d'art à partir des esquisses au crayon ou à la plume, aux transformations que subit une plaque de cuivre sous l'action du burin, jusqu'au plein épanouissement de l'idée de l'artiste? Toutes ces choses et beaucoup d'autres attendent d'être découvertes. Cette multitude d'images qui peuplent le Musée rappelle une vaste mosaïque — mosaïque qui s'est agrandie sensiblement grâce à de nombreux dons et legs, au cours des douzes années qui se sont écoulées depuis mon premier contact avec les collections. Des succès et des déceptions ont marqué quelques-uns de nos efforts, par exemple, une somme considérable d'énergie a été employée à tenter de stimuler l'enthousiasme de nos donateurs éventuels au moyen de déductions substantielles d'impôt.

Le Musée n'a pu échapper à l'action néfaste des prédateurs, criminels ou psychopathes. Les beaux tableaux tailladés en 1963 par un malade mental illustrent le danger de laisser des œuvres de valeur à la portée de tous. Un incident beaucoup plus désastreux devait se produire dans la nuit de la Fête du Travail de 1972, alors qu'une bande organisée volait ou endommageait un nombre substantiel de tableaux des galeries des dix-septième, dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles. On entreprit immédiatement la restauration des œuvres endommagées et on se mit à la recherche des moyens à prendre pour réparer la perte subie par le Musée. Le financement de l'expansion étant assuré, on commença, en mai dernier, des démarches en vue du remplacement des pièces volées. Dans certains cas, il a été impossible de trouver des équivalents, et les nouvelles acquisitions changent un peu la physionomie de la collection; lorsque les toiles convoitées n'étaient pas disponibles, nous avons acheté des œuvres graphiques.

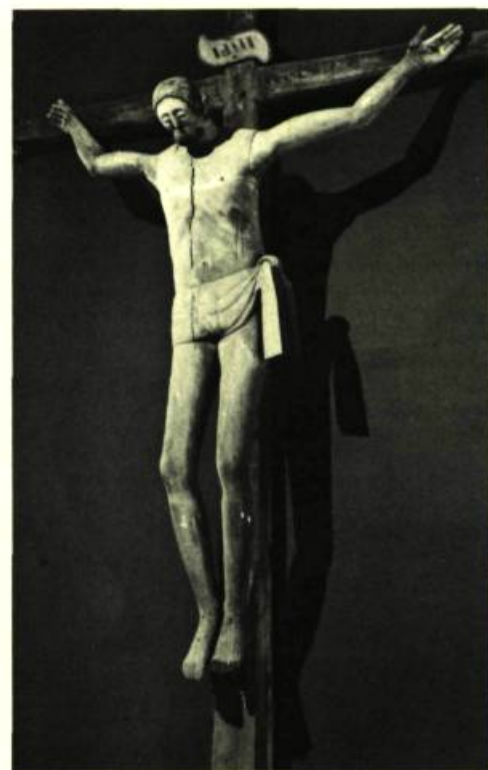
Parmi les pièces importantes acquises à même le fonds de remplacement, mentionnons *Les Léopards* de Pierre-Paul Rubens, un triptyque du 16^e siècle attribué à un maître d'Anvers, un paysage de Nicolas Poussin peint à

la demande de l'humaniste italien, Cassiano dal Pozzo, un paysage à l'eau-forte de Rembrandt, *Les sept vices*, un dessin d'Hendrick Goltzius, de 1594, un portrait d'Hubert Rohaut de Fleury, un dessin de Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, un ciboire d'argent hollandais du début du 17^e siècle, le buste en marbre de Foggini déjà mentionné et un *Portrait de famille* de Jean-François Sablet. Les œuvres achetées en remplacement ne sont pas égales en nombre à celles qui ont été dérobées, mais elles se distinguent toutes par leur qualité.

Le genre de dislocation causée par la catastrophe de 1972 remet en question la définition du Musée et l'orientation à lui donner. Cette question se pose au moment de faire des acquisitions et, plus particulièrement, lorsqu'il s'agit d'accepter des dons. L'objectif du Musée a toujours été de présenter une collection permanente éclectique et de la plus haute qualité réalisable en vue de constituer une documentation visuelle aussi complète que possible. Le Musée de Montréal est l'un des rares, au pays, qui puisse prétendre avoir poursuivi ce but avec quelque succès. Sa croissance ne peut que susciter l'intérêt de quiconque en comprend la valeur.

David Giles Carter, Directeur du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal.

English Original Text, p. 85



13. *La Vierge et l'Enfant entourés d'anges*. Florence. Relief en stuc doré et polychromé; 39 pces 7/8 x 43 1/2. (Don du Comité des Bénévoles du Musée)

14. *Calvaire*

Art canadien; Prov.: La Gaspésie; 18^e siècle. Le corpus est en pin et porte des traces de peinture blanche. Haut. de la croix: 14 pieds; christ: 8 pieds; Larg. approx. des bras étendus: 7 pieds. Acquis en 1965. (Legs Horsley et Annie Townsend)

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THE MUSEUM IN AN ERA OF MASS COMMUNICATION

By Andrée PARADIS

Considered for several generations a closed, privileged place reserved for an elite, the museum has become one of the necessities of life in modern society. Attendance at museums is spreading: all over the world, the public at large comes to it to seek its share of knowledge, and some larger exhibitions attract record attendance.

At first sight, one might think that these institutions have effected profound changes. In reality, their growing use results rather from a better definition of their purpose and their concern for supplying more complete information. Dedicated to exchange and communication through the expedient of the work of art, the museum is a cross-roads where encounters are organized around the artistic fact, whether it be traditional or contemporary. The twentieth century consumer is also hungry for cultural wealth and, as he has a much-varied scope of artistic and cultural activities, he has only an embarrassment of riches and can draw from it to his heart's content.

To be fully effective, the museum ought, nevertheless, to do more. And here lies its touchstone. It must concern itself with the currents of contemporary thought that underlie artistic expression; curtail the mass of experiments and retain what seems to be the most coherent and significant; make perceptible the phenomenon of the constant questioning of the data of culture, and present to the public, not a balance-sheet, but a realistic portrayal of the uncertainties and contradictions under which the artist of our era struggles.

The eagerly awaited reopening of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is equivalent to a new departure in several ways¹. For almost a century, the Museum was administered through private funds almost entirely contributed by Anglophones. The nucleus of the collections, their increase, the financial endowments bequeathed to the Museum, the funds for running expenses, came from the Anglophone donors as the institution progressed.

The period of government grants is relatively recent; it has involved the transformation of the administrative council, of the administration structures and, by the fact of its existence, of the spirit which prevailed up to that point in the destiny of the Museum. If one cannot reduce the still active force of a certain conventional spirit surely animated by the best intentions, it is sure that a new feeling is taking hold and that its effect will be irreversible.

In 1973 a firm association was established between the Museum and the government of Quebec. The State began to partially make good the deficits in running expenses. In return, representatives of the government sat on the council. The Museum is presently directed by a council of twenty-seven members, twelve of whom are named by the government; the executive numbers ten members, four of whom are chosen by the administrators named by the government. Francophones have benefited by this situation; of the twenty-seven members of the council, fifteen are now Francophones; on the executive committee, there are six. Also, Francophones are part of the committees on consulting and volunteer aid that work with the executive board and the internal management

on the solution of problems concerning the functioning of the Museum.

The influence of the French element also makes itself felt in internal management. Francophone curators are more and more numerous and they play an indispensable rôle. Whether in educational services, research, conservation of Canadian art, or of Islamic art, their presence is both active and effective. The same holds true in the area of managerial staff, where Francophones are found in the restoration, publication and library services. Out of an office personnel of about sixty, more than half, at all levels, are Francophones. French is equally the language of inside work, since all levels of management, with only two or three exceptions, have a good knowledge of this language. It goes without saying that bilingualism is obligatory in everything that makes up the graphic image of the museum: displays, explanatory texts and captions, publicity and publications.

If I emphasize these facts, it is in order to lay stress on the real efforts that are being made with a view to correcting certain peculiarities often denounced by critics. A process of transformation is going on at the Museum which recognizes present realities and needs. It must not, however, lead us to lose sight of the primary necessities of an art museum: to show works to advantage, to display them, to promote an understanding of them. In the age of communication and exchange, through its educational services and popularization, the Museum ensures a living presence in the cultural community.

1. In 1971, *Vie des Arts* devoted a section to Quebec's museums (Vol. XVI, No. 63). Two articles on this museum are to be found on pages 17-18 and 20-27: *Histoire de quelques musées du Québec* by Jules Bazin and *Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal* by David Giles Carter.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE MUSEUM'S PERMANENT COLLECTIONS: A PASSAGE - WAY OF DISCOVERY

By David GILES CARTER

Needs speak of policies and the conduct of policies, in turn, fuels needs. Material changes in the Museum are consequences of needs felt, needs articulated, and needs met.

Policies often are properly inherited, bespeaking the continuity of 116 years of activity and the motivation of generations of concerned people. Even amid the dramatic changes imposed by the present generation, one is reminded that strands of a permanent character stem from a wish to exhibit and then to collect. The need to interpret and to make known exhibits and collections in their full context was to follow in the manner of a corollary to an axiom.

The coalescent aesthetic forces which produced a gallery on Phillips Square could not have known or visualized more than a fraction of the needs which have led to a new solution in 1976. From a seemingly modest building designed to serve artists and public with an annual exhibition and to accommodate a small permanent collection of paintings, the Museum passed through the physical transitions first of expansion then of abandonment of the galleries on Phillips Square; construction of a new building on Sherbrooke Street in 1912; addition of the Norton wing of six galleries in 1939; the renovation of 1965-66; and now, renovation and

expansion of facilities to a plant twice the size of the aggregate structures of 1912-1939. Today's plant has environmental controls, flexibility of installation, and security features unknown to architects who thought of museums as public temples of elegant proportion capped with skylights and the latest in gas illumination. To-day's physical facilities must reflect the necessity to cope with virtually non-stop exhibition schedules and installation of thousands upon thousands of items belonging to the permanent collections.

This new architectural shell holds additional promise for the fulfillment of needs of Canadians and, more specifically, of Quebecers and Montrealers, as does the Museum's continued participation in the Maison Du Calvet and the Museum's merger with the McCord Museum.

Fred Lebensold of ARCOP has presented a building in which objets and pictures may be expected to speak for themselves; he has been assisted in this by Laurent Marquart of Jacques Guillon Design, responsible for a new system of museum graphics and an innovative exhibit system. Indeed, it is anticipated that public receptivity to his environment will result in a new mode of museum use by visitors.

The contents of the Museum need clarity and coherence in presentation as well as sensitive display. Climate posed severe problems regarding lighting and heating. Incandescent lighting, with accents of natural light introduced at judicious points, provides flexible and varied solutions: The architecture allows unusual patterns of circulation; these permit a chronological presentation where desirable along with extraordinary vistas and perspectives. Prints and drawings have specially designed facilities. Information about the collections is provided through a brochure, a guide, didactic panels, and oral aids; the maximum effort has been made to provide accurate data with clarity and a sense of their proper importance. An orientation centre is of material benefit as a preparation for a visit.

To weigh the collections as a chemist would weigh elements is misleading. Canadian collections begin with the earliest art of Quebec and continue with works of the present day. From Western civilizations, the Museum starts with the earliest art of the Mediterranean and the Ancient Near East to art of the present time. Asia, Africa and the Americas are represented in varying degree. Sculpture, ceramics, and textiles to-day are among the strengths of a Museum which began as a picture gallery.

Museum collections are the consequence of generations of effort. One may, as in the case of a mature private collector, distinguish that as growth proceeds, the objectives of the collection become further defined and the choice is made with greater knowledge and connoisseurship. The founding fathers were exceedingly modest in their expectations. Benaiah Gibb and James Ross made bequests which set an example for the community. These were followed by massive bequests from the estates of Learmont, Angus, Lord Strathcona and Miss Adaline Van Horne. Such bequests, made up to 1949, have been followed by donations from the Morrice, Ballantyne and Vaughan families. Anonymous donors have given the Museum over three hundred pieces of Canadian glass during the past two years, substantially filling a long-standing lacuna.

That such gifts should happen to-day must recognize a change in policy in 1916 when F. Cleveland Morgan, a new trustee, convinced the board to extend the Museum's collecting activities so as to include decorative arts. Hundreds of items in the collection were donated by Mr.

Morgan; many purchases essentially were his choice. Special collections followed in lace, textiles, ironwork and furniture by others inspired by Mr. Morgan's leadership. The Georges Clemenceau collection of Chinese snuff boxes is another instance of the contribution of a special taste. So is the Pillow Collection of Porcelain.

With an institution of any age, it is apparent that a new director assumes a responsibility in collecting which must acknowledge the cumulative consensus of generations of directors, curators and donors. Any effort to refine a collection, as opposed to adding to it, must take this into account. Professional guidance really began with the appointment of Robert Tyler Davis in 1949. He promoted decorative arts, contemporary schools and bought Canada's first El Greco in his goal to establish a balanced collection. John Steegman, with a professed interest in portraiture, primarily acquired early Italian pictures such as the Giovanni del Biondo *Madonna and Child* from the Ashburnham Collection, and portraits of the British School, such as the *Portrait of Mrs. George Drummond* by Gainsborough. Evan H. Turner, appointed in 1959, brought a fresh impetus to Baroque and twentieth-century painting with additions such as the still-life attributed to Alejandro Loarte, the *Tobit Blessing Tobias* by Mattia Preti, *Jason Charming the Dragon* by Salvator Rosa, *Eratosthenes Teaching in Alexandria* by Bernardo Strozzi and, among modern masters, examples by Borduas, Riopelle, Sir Matthew Smith and Karel Appel. Acquisitions have proceeded under a committee system and the leadership of such men as A. Sidney Dawes, F. Cleveland Morgan, Maurice Corbeil, L. V. Randall, David Y. Hodgson and Sean B. Murphy has made a considerable difference in the initiative of the object of the hunt. Modest discretionary funds were created to permit action or estate situations. Direct decisions were taken to participate in major auctions.

Paul Kane's water-colour *The Game of Bones* at Sotheby's (Toronto) and Coburn's sketch-book at Christie's (Montreal) were small successes in this regard. The acquisition of Greuze's *Portrait of Mme Mercier* at Sotheby's and of a totem pole at Sotheby Parke-Bernet (New York) under the aegis of the National Emergency Purchase Fund are further illustrations of success which can flow from more aggressive policy.

Other than access to the National Fund, there are no purchase funds from governments. Tax incentives related to donations for many years have left the MMFA at a disadvantage in relation to sister institutions because of its incorporation as a private corporation. It still has this handicap as a mixed corporation but a solution to the dilemma may be possible under a new federal law — 23-24 Elizabeth II, Chapter 50.

Purchase funds come from the revenue of invested cash or from securities bequeathed or donated to the Museum by individuals. The Gilman Cheney, Tempest, and Annie and Horsley Townsend bequests, particularly the latter, have afforded the primary means for purchase.

In view of the existing collections, the purchase funds at hand, and what one might term other expectations, how should one proceed? For the uninitiated, other expectations may be defined as those works of art, or even collections, which the Museum stands in reasonable hope of receiving as gifts during the lifetime of a collector or as a bequest. To the extent potential donors are prepared to make their intentions known, duplication or redundant acquisition can be avoided and a more mean-

ingful purchase policy occur. Regrettably, this principle has not had a broader application; namely, that the proper kind of liaison should make for an absence of competition within the community. Thus, while the Museum is proud to be the owner of a sculpture by Max Bill, a painting by Franklin Koenig, and a painting by Vasarely, would it not mean more to the total community if masters other than these and been acquired by the Musée d'Art Contemporain, or vice versa? With the recent merger of the McCord with the MMFA, greater clarity and coherence of action should emerge in the fields of traditional Canadian art and of art of the native peoples.

Let this not sound, however, as a cry to inhibit the proper ambitions of the Museum. One assesses the milieu and the means, and applies one's zeal, connoisseurship and knowledge to the market-place. This may call for the orchestration of curatorial staff from preparatory research to market surveys and evaluation of options in addition to the execution of one's own efforts which then are brought to the appropriate committee for a decision. Beyond the obvious points, to-day's curator must determine legality of title, legality of export, proper price, authenticity, condition, quality and meaning. The word meaning is the final key. In our encyclopedic goals, what realism tempers our hopes and achievement! As Pierre Rosenberg once told me, perhaps only the Louvre has the possibility of filling in all the leaves of the book. For others, the objective is at times redefined as a "representative collection". And occasionally, because of the perception, acumen and opportunity of a curator or collector, something special in the way of a collection comes into being. This is what gives museums their particular flavour. Furthermore the MMFA has the distinction of being in Montreal, in Quebec, in Canada, and in the Western hemisphere. The consequence, naturally enough, is a very strong representation of Canadian art and particularly the art of Quebec. Half the holdings are Canadian. Consider a sampling of the additions of the past year: two portraits attributed to François Malepart de Beaucourt; two portraits by Eugène Hamel; another given to Roy-Audy; a cubist work by Bertram Brooker; *Hyman's Tobacco Store* by Adrien Hébert; *Les Champions* by Albert Dumouchel; an intimate drawing by Jack Chambers; and sculptures by Suzor-Côté, Robert Roussil, Jordi Bonet, and Yves Trudeau.

Philosophically the Museum admits to identification with the mainstream of Western civilization — a premise which plays an important part in the policy of acquisition and the presentation of the collections. How has this fact been projected in terms of meaningful additions to the Museum collections over the last dozen years? In 1964, a relief from the palace of Assurnazirpal of the ninth century B.C. was bought. This was followed by two Roman portraits. From the Middle Ages the Museum welcomed an Italian *Christ on the Cross* of the eleventh or early twelfth century, a thirteenth-century Mosan *Madonna and Child*, a fourteenth-century Italian polychromed wood enthroned bishop, and a lindenwood St. Sebastian of the first decade of the sixteenth century by Tilmann Riemenschneider. Of the Renaissance, the collections were strengthened by a number of important medals bearing portraits of Sigismondo Malatesta, Pietro Aretino, Louis XII as Dauphin, and a splendid medal bearing the likenesses of Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne. The Baroque period was bolstered by a very fine *Amphitrite* by Michel Anguier and by the marble *Portrait of Cardinal Leopoldo dei*

Medici by Foggini. The Rococo period is represented by the elegant terra-cotta *Portrait of the Marquis de Montferrier* by Augustin Pajou. The nineteenth century found its most splendid representation in the purchase of a roadside Christ, believed to come from the Gaspé. A recent gift was a bronze of *Le Casseur de roches* by the French sculptor Aimé-Jules Dalou. The representation of the variety of twentieth-century talent added during these years runs from Barlach's *Singing Man*, a Maillol bronze relief sketch for a monument, Henry Moore's large *Totem Head*, Antoine Poncet's *Blanc-Soeur*, Hans Arp's plaster *Fruit de pagode*, Dimitri Hadzi's *Thermopylae*, Sorel Etrog's *Fie-sole*, Jacques Lipchitz' cubist *Man with Guitar*, Max Bill's *Striving Forces of a Sphere*, Umberto Mastroianni's *Composition* 1963, and Hugh Leroy's *Four Elements Column*. This list, incomplete as it is, conveys a vivid impression of the degree to which the Museum's Occidental collections have been enriched during my memory, and I have not mentioned a great collection which entered another area of global concern — the Père Ernest Gagnon collection of African sculpture donated by la Province du Canada français de la Compagnie de Jésus. Growth of the Museum is one facet of the increasing cultural maturity of society and as citizens experience its resources, its purpose will find its own confirmation.

This is perhaps the moment to mention the Museum's periodical *M*. The justification of its beginning was as a development vehicle but its central motivation to-day goes beyond dispensing news of museum activities. It has indeed become a vital medium for the publication of works of the permanent collection. By doing so Montreal's public is offered serious insights and appreciations of the collection. If a museum is understood to be something more than an art centre, it is because the means of establishing esteem for the permanent collection has been found, a means which has the incidental advantage of entry into the home. Looking back over the twenty-odd issues edited by Mr. Bill Bantey, one finds articles on such varied subjects as Mayan ceramics, a Roman lead sarcophagus, a Salvador Dali, or a Ch'ên Hung-show scroll.

Few people are truly familiar with the range of the Museum's collections. How many have thought of the pleasure of boxes — the fascination of Japanese lacquer, Micmac quill work, or engraved German steel? How many have considered the pleasure of the shapes of vessels — the established repertoire of Greek vases, the fluid vocabulary of Roman glass, or the impressed surfaces of Ting or Celadon wares? How many have contemplated the marvelous solutions of portraiture represented in classical coins, in Roman or Baroque marble, in a terra-cotta bust from Regency France, in a bronze of the early 1920's or in an oil of the present time? How many meditate upon the transitions from those trials in crayon or pen or the change of states effected on a copper plate with a burin to the full flowering of an idea? All of these things and more are in the passageway of discovery in the Museum.

The formidable array of visual images in the Museum seems like a vast mosaic, a mosaic whose enrichment is apparent in the perspective of the dozen years I have come to know collections which have grown through the generosity of bequests and donations. There have been disappointments as well as successes in the realization of some of aspirations and part of one's energy has gone into efforts to create incentives such as improved tax-deduction benefits for would-be donors.

The Museum has not escaped unscathed from predators, some criminal and some deranged. The slashing of fine pictures in 1963 by a depressed individual is an illustration of the problem of open material exposed to public trust. Worse was to happen on Labor Day night of 1972 when an organized gang took or damaged a substantial group of pictures from galleries devoted to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Restoration of damaged works was taken in hand immediately and ways sought of repairing the Museum's loss. With financial assurance of expansion, action began this past May to acquire replacements. For some losses, one will never find the equivalent and the resultant blend has a different flavour. In some measure, works on paper were bought where canvases were not available.

The major items bought by the Insurance Replacement Fund comprise Peter Paul Rubens's *The Leopards*; a triptych attributed to a sixteenth-century Antwerp master; a landscape by Nicolas Poussin painted for the Italian humanist Cassiano dal Pozzo; an etching of a landscape by Rembrandt; *The Seven Vices*, drawn in 1594 by Hendrick Goltzius, a portrait of *Hubert Rohault de Fleury* drawn by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres; an early seventeenth-century Dutch silver-gilt ciborium; the marble bust by Foggini mentioned earlier; and a *Portrait of a Family* by Jean-François Sablet. Numerically, the replacements are fewer but they are distinguished for their quality.

A dislocation of the kind presented by the catastrophe of 1972 once again presents the problem of what the Museum is and where it is going. Indeed, this kind of question is asked when acquisitions or, more specifically, donations, are in the offing.

The Museum's objective always has been to have an encyclopedic permanent collection of as high a quality as attainable, providing, in effect, as comprehensive a visual library as possible. The Montreal Museum is one of the few museums in the country which has been able to pursue this goal with some claim to success. Its continued growth can only be a matter of interest to everyone as one understands it for the resource it is.

THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS HANGS OUT A NEW SIGN: Welcome to Everyone

By Bill BANTEY

In its new life, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is not a museum designed solely to contain and display art treasures. It is a museum carefully planned to tempt people to come in and, once in, to wish to linger, to browse, to meditate.

The interior gives an illusion of transparency — a feeling there are no walls, only an aura of great spaciousness. No matter which gallery a visitor may be in, the eye is constantly attracted to other inviting vistas, luring the visitor effortlessly from one gallery to the next.

That, in essence, is the overwhelming first impression the "new" Museum makes on the visitor.

The fact that the "new" Museum openly intends to court the people of Montreal — the casual pedestrian as well as the long-time Museum visitor — is apparent even as one approaches the building.

The old, stately entrance on Sherbrooke Street is still there with its grand stair sweeping up to the massive doors. But there are now two smaller entrances at grade level. Ultra-modern and set in terraced and landscaped outdoor exhibition areas, they resemble circular telephone booths.

Some people have criticized the new doors as "too modern", claiming they clash with the traditional entrance. But Architect Fred Lebensold dismisses such complaints with a shrug. He candidly admits they are part of the plan to bring a new public into the Museum. They were deliberately designed to startle the passerby and, after catching his attention, to provide him with easier access to the Museum so that for the first time, he may enjoy treasures of all ages and civilizations of man.

The new wing, scaled to human dimensions, responds to the environment in a manner sympathetic to the visitor and passerby alike. There is no attempt to extend the neo-classical marble façade of the original building. Instead, the new wing is a modern architectural statement, serving as a contemporary foil for the old building. Indeed the new wing enhances the old while respecting the residential ambience of Avenue du Musée.

Even the area around the Museum has been treated with the same aim in mind. Thanks to an agreement with the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, which stands just west of the Museum, the area between the Church and the Museum has become a landscaped sculpture garden. Other areas on Avenue du Musée have been newly landscaped not only to please the eye, but to allow for the creation of additional sculpture courts with varying degrees of exposure. Such areas provide a quiet oasis in the very heart of a turbulent city.

Inside, the same painstaking attention to people's needs is evident everywhere. It is clear that Lebensold's intent was to make a visit to the "new" Museum more stimulating, yet more comfortable, than ever before.

To begin with, there is no feeling that there is an "old" and a "new" Museum — the two form an harmonious whole and even a regular visitor will find it difficult to tell where one starts and the other ends.

There is a large and comfortable public lounge. There is a restaurant seating 150 with a lovely view of the old and gracious buildings lining the east side of Avenue du Musée. There is one of Canada's greatest art libraries, with generous reading areas. And there is air-conditioning.

Perhaps the most spectacular feature of the "new" Museum, after the new space, is the auditorium, which seats 400. It is equipped with projection and closed circuit TV facilities, making transmission possible throughout the new wing which has risen on the spot where the Stable and Hickson House formerly stood. Eight galleries are included in the extension and four galleries have been added in the old building.

The collections themselves are presented in a format consistent in case requirements, lighting, engineering, security, graphic presentation, and basic style. The disposition of the works is endowed with coherence through chronological and stylistic groupings and, where possible, through schools, movements, and cultures. Collections parallel in time but not pertaining to the mainstream of Western man, e.g., Islamic art or Japanese art, are shown in spaces whose circulation patterns are tributary to the main flow of visitor traffic.

The new wing is on five levels — three above ground and two below grade, each connected

with the existing galleries. The visitor entering the extension from Avenue du Musée is able to see at a glance most of the new galleries as well as the old building's galleries since the wing is designed as an open space, providing great flexibility in exhibition planning.

A lobby and three galleries make up the entrance level of the new wing. One floor above are four galleries, the restaurant and lounges. The top floor contains one large gallery and the administration offices.

Visitors looking out from the stairway and from the upper galleries convey a sense of life and animation that not only recall the perspective ceilings of artists such as Mantegna, Honthorst or Tiepolo, but also transform that part of the building into a great kinetic sculpture.

Below the main entrance level are the library, education department offices, and a storage and workshop area. Further storage space has been developed at the lowest level.

Convenient though it is to the public, the "new" Museum has not in any sense set aside its primary purpose — to collect, research and exhibit art.

Much attention has been paid to ensure that its treasures are properly displayed. In fact, a new concept — "visible storage" — has been introduced so that works not actually on display may still be seen.

With the new wing, the Museum — the only major museum in Canada combining the fine and decorative arts — has more than doubled the previously available exhibition space. There are now 34 galleries.

The additional space does not come solely from the extension. The problem of storing art was rethought, with the result that the old basement — once a glum area — has been revitalized. A whole, bright new world has been created, complete with orientation centre, galleries, and new storage facilities.

In short, the new complex is not only a turning point in the 116-year-life of the Museum — it is a watershed which would be much appreciated by Beniah Gibb, the merchant who back in 1879 donated a number of paintings and bronzes as well as \$8,000 to give the Museum its start as a gallery on Phillips Square. In that first year of existence, the Museum, then called the Art Association of Montreal, attracted 7,000 visitors. In its last year of operation at the Sherbrooke Street location it inaugurated in 1912, it had 300,000 visitors.

As early as 1961, the New York firm of Raymond Loewy/William Snaith Inc. carried out an extensive study of 24 art museums in North America's greatest cities and found that between 1958 and 1961, the growth rate of the Museum had been "phenomenal and unprecedented" on this continent.

This "phenomenal and unprecedented" growth, in fact, was what made the addition to the Museum imperative. Back in 1972, Dr. Sean B. Murphy noted in his president's report that: "Lack of space continues to harm the Museum... it is not possible to show more than a single segment of the permanent collection at any one time. Several exhibitions which which should have been seen in Montreal were not presented because of the space problem. The loser in this situation is the Montreal and Quebec community."

The dire state-of-the-Museum report did not fall on deaf ears. Sparked by a \$500,000 gift from Robert M. Cummings and Jack L. Cummings and an anonymous private donation of \$1,000,000, the Government of Canada gave \$3,000,000 and the Government of Quebec, \$1,500,000.