Québec, ville née d’un fleuve
Quebec, a City Born of a River
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Ville citadelle, Québec a été le premier bastion des traditions artistiques en Amérique. C'est elle qui donna l'essor à un art traditionnel et religieux ainsi qu'à un artisanat qui constituent aujourd'hui la richesse du patrimoine national.

Mais Québec est aussi une ville du 20e siècle, et l'on peut à son sujet parler de la crise de l'art qui affecte les civilisations industrialisées. Hier, c'était la force tranquille d'un art régionaliste, coupé des grands courants internationaux mais personnel et vivant, chargé de symboles et bien enraciné dans la vie locale. Aujourd'hui, avec l'avènement et le règne des moyens de communication, Québec participe au destin collectif de l'art. Il faut, là comme ailleurs, regretter la perte de la fonction sociale de l'art et sa séparation du système de la culture active. Il faut aussi accepter une autre définition de l'artiste contemporain, qui tente de retrouver l'intégrité et la plénitude créatrice par le moyen de la réflexion autant que par celui de la communication. C'est un témoin des forces positives ou négatives qui sont à l'œuvre, qui réconcilient l'homme à son entourage ou qui l'entraînent vers sa perte. Dans l'art actuel, les signes que l'artiste nous transmet paraissent non familiers parce qu'ils sont des constats, des avertissements et qu'ils ont tendance à déboucher sur l'urbanisme et l'écologie. Même la critique en est perturbée, qui doit de plus en plus transformer ses perspectives et tenir compte des sciences modernes et compréhensives, comme l'anthropologie.

En étudiant bien sommairement — il faut le regretter — ce phénomène du développement artistique actuel dans un lieu concentré comme la ville de Québec, deux choses semblent évidentes: la transformation rapide d'un foyer de civilisation traditionnel et conservateur en une jeune capitale dynamique, avec le cortège de traumatismes que cela entraîne et l'activité artistique qu'on y trouve, dépourvue d'uniformité, bien informée de tous les courants de pensée, affichant des différences marquées dans ses modes d'expression et agissant comme tremplin vers l'avenir.

Le professeur Laurier Lacroix, coordonnateur du cahier sur le Québec actuel, prépare une thèse sur la nature de la Collection Desjardins et sur ses influences. Il est donc particulièrement sensible à cette transmission entre le Québec d'hier et celui d'aujourd'hui. Je le remercie de sa généreuse collaboration et je remercie également tous les amis et collaborateurs qui nous ont aidé à préparer les pages qui suivent.

Andrée PARADIS

LES COLLABORATEURS DU CAHIER

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TEXTS IN ENGLISH

QUÉBEC, A CITY BORN OF A RIVER

By André PARADIS

A citadel city, Quebec was the first stronghold of artistic traditions in America. It was this characteristic of its historical and religious art as well as craftsmanship, which today constitute the wealth of the national heritage.

But Quebec is also a city of the twentieth century, and in this regard one can speak of the crisis in art that affects industrialized civilization. For Quebec, yesterday, it had the quiet strength of a regional art, intersected by great international currents, but personal and alive, laden with symbols and well rooted in local life. To-day, with the advent and the predominance of the means of communication, Quebec shares in the collective fate of art. One ought, here as elsewhere, to regret the loss of the social function of art and its separation from the system of active culture. One ought also to accept another definition of the contemporary artist who tries to rediscover integrity and creative fulness through reflection as much as through communication. This city stands as a testimony of the positive or negative forces at work that reconcile man with his environment, and take into consideration modern, comprehensive sciences, such as anthropology.

In a regrettably very hasty study of this phenomenon of current artistic development in a concentrated place like Quebec City, two things seem obvious: the rapid transformation of a centre of traditional and conservative civilization into a young, dynamic capital; we can see the train of traumas that this entails and the artistic activity to be found, deprived of uniformity, well informed on all currents of thought, displaying marked differences in its modes of expression and acting as stepping stone to the future.

Laurel Lacroix, coordinator of the section on present-day Quebec, is preparing a thesis on the nature of the Desjardins Collection and its influences. He is, therefore, particularly sensitive to this transition between the Quebec of yesterday and that of to-day. I wish to offer him my gratitude for his generous collaboration and to thank all the friends and contributors who have helped us to prepare the following articles.

Translation by Mildred Grand

MODERN-DAY QUÉBEC

By Laurier LACROIX

( . . . ) I found at Quebec what is always to be found there, a situation perhaps unique in the world: points of view diversified almost to infinity and always enchanting: extensive plains, mountain chains, high caps, a very large island with varied picturesque sites; our beautiful river seen in different directions, seeming to double and triple itself for the pleasure of the spectator, and, as if to enlarge itself more, receiving the St. Charles River with its large mouth, and farther, but in opposite direction, the Montmorency and the Chaudière. ( . . . ) At distances more or less great, pleasantly situated churches and villages offer charming sights, particularly in summer.

Passing from topography to architecture, from nature to art, I noticed in Quebec this last time just as before a marvelous diversity in the alignment or direction of the streets and the public squares; an astonishing variety in the site, the position and the structure of public and private buildings. ( . . . ) But what I found the most pleasing in Quebec, the most comfortable, especially for a stranger, was the friendly, gracious bearing of its worthy inhabitants, in a word, French refinement and courtesy. On this point Quebec is the Paris of America.

After more than a hundred thirty years, how should one not agree with the writer of the Encyclopédie Canadienne, Michel Bibaud, when the geographical location, the architecture and the warm courtesy one meets in Quebec remain even that nothing changes in Quebec and that this city still presents only the attractive and antiquated face of a French town that stopped living at the end of the eighteenth century? We do not believe so. It is with the desire to reconsider and redefine it that this section is planned.

Finally, we offer a working tool which will allow the reader of Vie des Arts to make his own discoveries: a comprehensive view of the visual art galleries in Quebec and a report on the Quebec Museum. Many young artists are not represented there yet, but the dynamism of cultural educators, as well as the quality of the productions at the Visual Arts School of Laval University, permit us to hope that the long tradition of creation in the city of Quebec will carry on.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

QUÉBEC CITY

SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPACE AND ARCHITECTURE

By Pierre MORISSET

By reason of its history, its architecture, its geography and the homogeneity of its population, Quebec would be a city unique in North America. We have always been told this, as if it were a matter of a city for sale. This is all true for anyone who is seeking what distinguishes Quebec. But upon analysis we find in Quebec a different combination of universal elements, which, above all, makes it a city among others, geographically and historically. The Quebec artist is not born but grows. But we are touching on a problem which is only in part: that of the difficulty of recruiting writers, journalists or art historians who accept the adventure of defining a new work and translating it into words. Thanks are due for their cooperation to those who have defined the cultural portrait that we offer of Quebec.

This first look at the Quebec of the visual arts already reveals a part of its wealth: the work of young creators who reflect and act on art in different directions. There come to mind Jocelyne Alloucherie's poetic redefinition of the tridimensional work, Mill's or Asselin's structural research, Marius Dubois' subjective figurative work, Michel Champs' well-polished lyricism, Antoine Dumas' observations. If Quebec, cross-roads of space and contemporary times at the same moment, were pondering the trends of current art and were supplying already ripe proposals.

In this region, tapestry also finds its most sensitive creators. The beauty of textures and a quality of light due to special climatic conditions are to be found in the productions of the weavers who have been practising their art for generations.

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