

Québec à l'heure actuelle Modern-Day Quebec

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Québec à l'heure actuelle

Laurier Lacroix

«(. . .) j'ai retrouvé à Québec ce qu'on y retrouvera toujours, une situation unique peut-être dans le monde; des points de vue variés presque à l'infini et toujours enchanteurs; plaines étendues, chaînes de montagnes, caps élevés; une grandissime île à sites variés et pittoresques; notre beau fleuve vu en différents sens, semblant se doubler et se tripler pour le plaisir du spectateur, et recevant, comme pour s'agrandir encore, la rivière Saint-Charles à large embouchure, et plus loin, mais en sens opposés, celles de Montmorency et de la Chaudière. (. . .) A des distances plus ou moins grandes, des églises et des villages agréablement situés offrent des coups d'œil charmants, particulièrement dans la belle saison.

Si je passe de la topographie à l'architecture, de la nature à l'art, j'ai remarqué à Québec, cette dernière fois, comme les précédentes, une diversité prodigieuse dans l'alignement ou la direction des rues et des places publiques; une étonnante variété dans le site, la position et la structure des édifices publics et particuliers.

(. . .) Mais ce que j'ai retrouvé de plus agréables à Québec, de plus confortable pour un étranger surtout, ce sont les manières amènes, affables de ses notables habitants, l'urbanité, la politesse française, en un mot. Sous ce rapport, Québec est le Paris de l'Amérique.»

(M. B.....d, Mon dernier voyage à Québec, L'Encyclopédie Canadienne, t. 1, N° 8 (Octobre 1842), p. 308-312.)

Après plus de cent trente ans, comment ne pas être en accord avec le rédacteur de l'*Encyclopédie Canadienne*, Michel Bibaud, tant la situation géographique, l'architecture et la civilisation accueillante que l'on rencontre à Québec demeurent exceptionnelles? Est-ce à dire que rien ne change à Québec, et qu'elle n'offre toujours que le visage attachant et désuet d'une ville française qui aurait cessé de vivre à la fin du dix-huitième siècle? Nous ne le croyons pas. C'est sur cette volonté de la redécouvrir, de la redéfinir qu'est construit ce cahier.

Au premier abord, ce qui semble le plus évident, c'est le changement de vocation de la ville, une nouvelle orientation de sa fonction, qui en a modifié la silhouette. Québec n'est plus uniquement une ville touristique, dominée par le Château Frontenac; elle est devenue une capitale administrative où sont développés la Cité parlementaire, des centres de congrès, des autoroutes.

La ville a fait place à une des fonctions principales de ses habitants, le fonctionnarisme, et a créé les équipements qui, par leur situation et leur structure, ont relégué le tourisme dans un secteur restreint: l'intérieur des murs. C'est pourquoi nous avons voulu consacrer une part importante de ce numéro à l'aspect physique de la ville, à son urbanisme, à son architecture, à sa restauration. L'étude de la répartition de la population, du paysage urbain dont elle s'est dotée, est un préalable à la connaissance des phénomènes architecturaux qui s'y développent. Parallèlement à la mise en place de nouveaux bâtiments, il semble surgir dans la population des mouvements de citoyens qui veulent avoir leur part dans la définition de ce nouveau visage. Aussi, trouverons-nous ici le témoignage d'un quartier qui tente de conserver son identité tout en faisant sa propre restauration. Restauration sauvage, restauration parallèle, quand on la compare aux grands projets qui ont cours actuellement dans cette même ville: place Royale, parc de l'Artillerie.

Pour parler adéquatement des arts plastiques à Québec chez les jeunes créateurs, il nous faudrait disposer d'un double numéro double, tant les tendances et les expressions que nous y avons rencontrées sont multiples et fécondes,

sur le plan de l'expression savante aussi bien que populaire. Aussi devrions-nous retrouver dans ces pages, à côté d'un article sur Marie Laberge, un reportage sur un atelier de décoration de motocyclettes; une analyse de l'œuvre des sculpteurs Marcel Saint-Jean et Richard Sainte-Marie, mais aussi des *gosses* de la région. Mais, nous touchons là un problème que je ne fais que mentionner: celui de la difficulté de recruter des écrivains, journalistes ou historiens d'art qui acceptent l'aventure de définir une œuvre nouvelle, de la traduire avec des mots. Que ceux qui ont défini le portrait culturel que nous proposons de Québec soient remerciés de leur collaboration.

Ce premier regard sur le Québec des arts visuels révèle déjà une partie de sa richesse: le travail des jeunes créateurs qui réfléchissent et agissent sur l'art dans des directions diverses. L'on pense à la redéfinition poétique de l'œuvre tridimensionnelle que propose Jocelyne Allouche, aux recherches structurales de Mill ou d'Asselin, aux figurations subjectives de Marius Dubois, au lyrisme engagé de Michel Champagne, aux observations d'Antoine Dumas. Comme si Québec, à la fois carrefour de l'espace et du moment contemporain, réfléchissait sur les tendances de l'art actuel et apportait des propositions déjà arrivées à maturation.

La tapisserie trouve aussi dans la région ses créateurs les plus sensibles. L'attrait des textures et une qualité de lumière due aux conditions climatiques particulières se retrouvent dans les œuvres des liciers qui s'exercent depuis déjà plusieurs générations.

Nous présentons enfin un outil de travail qui permettra au lecteur de la Revue de faire ses propres découvertes, un panorama sur les galeries d'art visuel de Québec et un reportage-réflexion sur le Musée du Québec. Bien des jeunes artistes n'y sont pas encore représentés, mais le dynamisme des éducateurs culturels, de même que la qualité des réalisations produites à l'École des Arts Visuels de l'Université Laval nous permettent de souhaiter que se poursuive la longue tradition de la création dans la ville de Québec.

TEXTS IN ENGLISH

MODERN-DAY QUEBEC

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 capes, 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 directions, 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 exceptional? Is this to say 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 rediscover and redefine it that this section is planned.

To begin with, what seems the most evident is the change in purpose of the city, a new orientation of its function, which has altered its silhouette. Quebec is no longer only the tourist city dominated by the Château Frontenac; it has become an administrative capital where the parliamentary city, convention centres and highways have been developed.

The city has made room for one of the chief functions of its dwellers, the civil service, and has created the facilities which, by their location and their structure, have relegated tourism to a limited sector: inside the walls. This is why we wanted to devote an important part of this issue to the physical aspect of the city, its town-planning, its architecture, its restoration. The study of the distribution of the population and the urban appearance it has adopted is a preliminary to the knowledge of the architectural phenomena that are being developed. In a parallel fashion to the locating of new buildings, citizens' movements seem to be arising and these people wish to have their say in the defining of this new face. Thus we shall find here the testimony of a ward trying to preserve its identity while doing its own restoration. A wild, parallel restoration, when compared to the big projects which are being carried on now in this same city: Place Royale, Artillery Park.

To adequately discuss the plastic arts in Quebec among the young creators would oblige us to have a double issue at our disposi-

tion, so many and so prolific are the trends and expressions we have encountered there, on the level of well-informed as well as common expression. And so we ought to find in these pages, beside an article on Marie Laberge, a report on a workshop for the decoration of motorcycles, as well as an analysis of the work of sculptors Marcel Saint-Jean and Richard Sainte-Marie, but also of the whittlers of the surrounding area. But we are touching on a problem which I only mention: 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 Allouche's poetic redefinition of the tridimensional work, Mill's or Asselin's structural research, Marius Dubois' subjective figurations, Michel Champagne's political lyricism, Antoine Dumas' observations. As 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.

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-reflection 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)

QUEBEC 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, a geographical space arranged to shelter and group men, whose plots of land are distributed according to a fierce struggle disguised by the sophisticated nature of the weapons used. Who makes the city? For whom? How is the space shared? Who is going where?

Quebec is a city built on two levels. An upper plateau surrounded by cliffs on three sides, dominating the river on the south for the pleasure of the view and, on the north, the working-

QUEBEC, A CITY BORN OF A RIVER

By Andrée PARADIS

A citadel city, Quebec was the first stronghold of artistic traditions in America. It was this city that gave full scope to traditional and religious art as well as to 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 civilizations. 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 or sweep him along to his ruin. In current art, the signs conveyed to us by the artist seem unfamiliar because they are established facts or warnings and because they tend to lead to urbanism and ecology. Even criticism is troubled by this, criticism that should more and more change its perspectives 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, with 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.

Professor Laurier 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 I also thank all the friends and contributors who have helped us to prepare the following articles.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)