

La belle histoire d'amour de Paul Livernois The Beautiful Love Story of Paul Livernois

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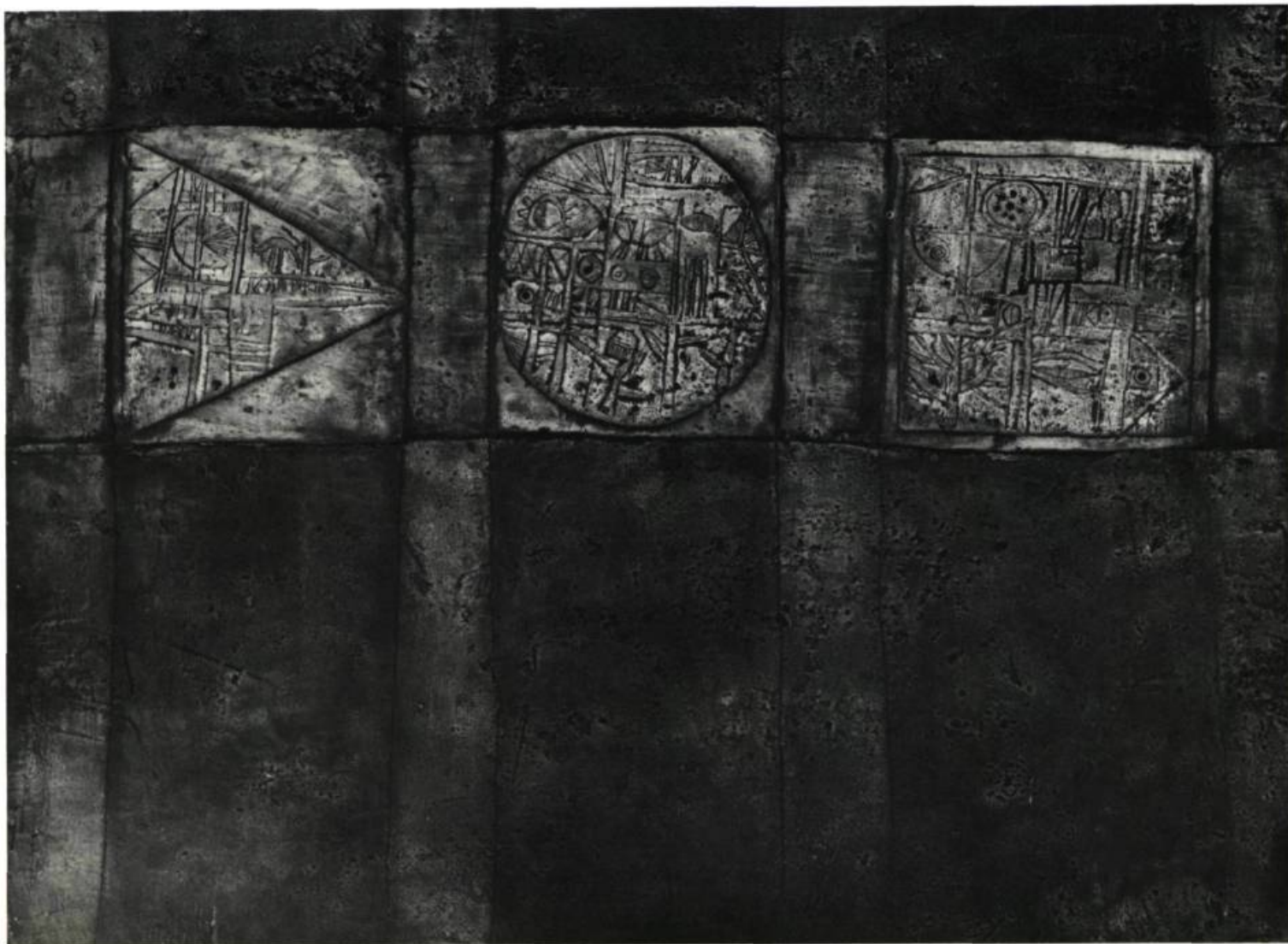
la belle histoire d'amour de PAUL LIVERNOIS

Gilles Daigneault

*C'est ainsi qu'il m'est impossible de considérer un
tableau autrement que comme une fenêtre, dont mon
premier souci est de savoir sur quoi elle donne.*

(André Breton)

1. Paul LIVERNOIS
Les trois signes.
60 cm 9 x 81,2.

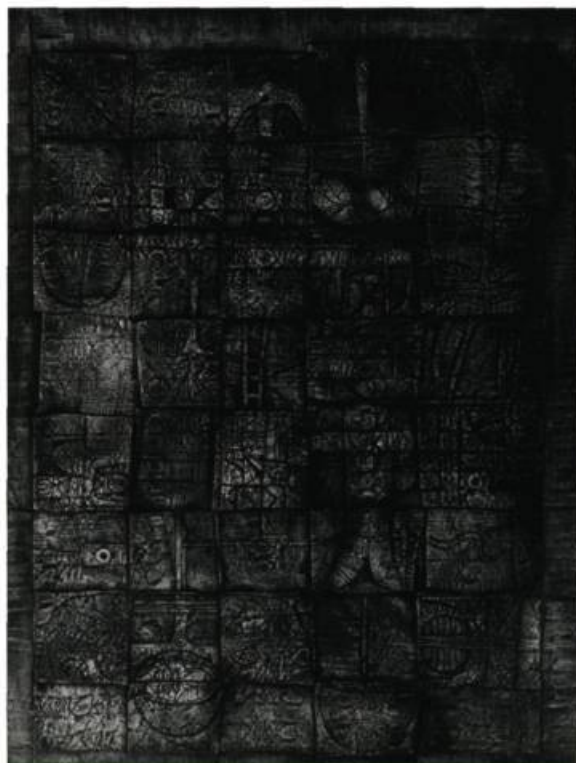




2. Paul LIVERNOIS
La Nuit scintille.
81 cm 2 x 121,9.

3. *Un échiquier dedans ma tête.*
81 cm 2 x 60,9.

4. *La Porte des étés.*
81 cm 2 x 60,9.
(Toutes les photos sont de Gabor Szilasi)



3



4

A écouter Livernois parler de peinture, on a envie de devenir peintre. En effet, les commentaires tout simples que fait l'artiste à propos de son aventure viennent confirmer la sensation de bien-être qu'on éprouve devant cette œuvre qui se développe sans tapage, depuis près de dix ans, avec une remarquable continuité.

L'intention de Livernois est claire: il s'agit de redonner aux spectateurs le sentiment de la beauté. «Au fond, mes tableaux ne sont pas plus importants ni plus *métaphysiques* qu'une branche de lilas qu'on a envie de regarder et de sentir de plus près.» Aussi, le peintre ne travaille-t-il jamais quand il est tenaillé par des problèmes intérieurs, ce que montre bien, du reste, la chaude lumière et la fantaisie de la plupart de ses compositions.

Le médium qu'il utilise presque exclusivement aujourd'hui — des reliefs de plâtre sur panneau colorés à l'acrylique — convient à son tempérament. Il aime façonner la matière et dialoguer avec les formes que le hasard de ses manipulations lui fournit, ce même hasard qui a présidé à l'élaboration des formes de certains cailloux et de certains arbres qui ravissent le peintre et «avec lesquelles il est illusoire de vouloir rivaliser».

Plastiquement, Livernois n'est pas un grand découvreur; il marche allégrement dans quelques-unes des voies qu'a ouvertes Paul Klee (qui fit aussi des œuvres sur plâtre). «Je ne suis pas un créateur. D'ailleurs, depuis Lascaux, il n'y en a pas eu vraiment. On refait, on recrée...» Pourtant cet univers imaginaire ou onirique que créent ces *signes* — des maisons, des arbres, des animaux, rarement des personnages, naïfs et enfantins, curieusement juxtaposés à des formes

abstraites et intégrés à des fonds extrêmement savants — a un grand pouvoir d'ensorcellement et, quoi qu'en dise le peintre, libère des forces que la seule nature ignore.

Il n'y a pas si longtemps, Livernois poursuivait deux démarches parallèles: des encres sur papier et des reliefs, et la délicatesse, la subtilité et la transparence des premières accentuaient l'aspect un peu brut des plâtres, que soulignait déjà l'utilisation de tons terreux. Aujourd'hui, il manie ses burins avec assez de dextérité pour intégrer à ses reliefs tout le charme de ses encres, et il en va de même pour les couleurs: des vernis empêchent les pigments de «s'assommer les uns les autres» et permettent à la lumière d'affleurer comme par magie. Livernois est enchanté de cette tournure des événements: «Peut-être que l'arbre grandit, que je me fais de nouvelles feuilles... et que les gens auront de plus en plus envie de traverser ces *fenêtres* que veut leur offrir mon travail et qui donnent sur le soleil, la source, les vents doux, ...»

En attendant, il est heureux et s'adonne avec une égale ferveur à une foule d'activités. Il lui arrive même parfois d'envier un peu les peintres du dimanche qui n'exécutent qu'une dizaine de tableaux par année, ceux-là seuls qui répondent à un mouvement intérieur spontané et qui résument tous ceux qu'un peintre de métier *doit* produire. Fort heureusement pour lui, Livernois est convaincu que, le jour où les gens seront capables de trouver beau un arbre ou un caillou, il n'aura plus de raison de peindre. Alors peut-être, après avoir bricolé toute la semaine, les dimanches...

Neo-Realism. Pop art is expressed especially by engravers (Gilde Graphique, Graff, Media Gallery, etc.) Let us mention Pierre Ayot, Fernand Bergeron, Michel Leclair, Réal Lauzon, Pierre Tétreault. Pop style seemed to be an opportunity to take a free look, light, humorous, caustic, whimsical, tender, romantic, at the everyday life — chiefly urban — of Quebec: Kitchens, clotheslines, the lady in her housecoat and curlers drinking a coke, omnipresent television sets, never-ceasing beers, shiny cars, gaudy posters, etc. Nevertheless, this style is losing momentum.

For the last five or six years there has occurred, particularly, the development of the lines of conceptual art. The line of art-environment with Bill Vazan, Pierre Boogaerts, Suzy Lake; the line of post-minimalist art that takes its conceptual origin from formal principles resulting from constructivism indirectly from the thoughts of the plasticians, with Poulin, Montgrain, Champagne, Noël, Cozic and Lemoyne; the line of art-object-symbol, with Betty Goodwin, Jhn Heward, Irene Whittome and Miljenko Horvath; the line of generative art with Jacques Palumbo and Roger Vilder. Very recently a group has been added in which appear Luc Béland, Lucio de Heusch and Kioppini, who tries to free himself from the plasticians' problem in a clear manner by taking up again (while turning away from) the colour/space approach used by the plasticians. Thus, schematically, there are two great currents: one founded on the study of the relation of the body in space and time (the first three lines) and the other based on an intellectual approach of the plastic phenomenon.

The supporters of the first proposition — the primacy of the body — assume, in particular, that there is a narrow correlation between nature and culture, that is, between natural environment and human production. These persons try to take possession of space, to reconstruct the world. They directly make use of elements chosen from the *terrestrial landscape* and they move it about in the décor of an exhibition hall: piles of sand, rocks, etc. To this type of approach are added thoughts on the transitory aspects of human life that define the relations from the body to memory. These perspectives explain the idea of *intervention* which takes the form of a date, the print of a shoe, a fingerprint, cans; in short, what has the shape of a mark, what shows the passage of the artist, what has left the evidence of a known or unknown witness. The use of photography, in which appear in this way different interventions (the series of snapshots capturing diverse moments in a landscape during the same day), is one of the most classic demonstrations of this understanding of space and time. Body and memory are expressed through relation with the object which takes on the force of a symbol. The object is the common object, often faded, useless and deservedly interesting; it is a sheet of paper that one hardly sees and on which one deciphers a few blurred words; it is a vest worn by some lost relative; these are presences stamped with emotion: games with time that are ways of abolishing time.

Almost completely contrary to this are the thinkers of generative art. Supporters of this type of creation offer from what went before a certain number of often arbitrary concepts with which they are fond of experimenting, that is, executing on a support (canvas, sheet of paper, aluminum) in order to *generate* authentic languages under the form of written geometric or chromatic signs. Thus they present real pages of *writing*. Unfortunately, they are prisoners of their concept of departure. The visual

result is sometimes disturbing if they refuse to *intervene*.

Finally, an essential common characteristic unites the ensemble of young artists in Quebec who practise conceptual art: these artists all strive, each in his way through his works, to *maximize the plastic result* with the minimum means. They thus prove that they are producing culture.

This flight of the diverse current art trends in Quebec probably does not emphasize enough the very great permeability that prevails between the styles nor the exchanges that exist at the heart of the artistic milieu, nor the relationship from one generation to another, nor the tradition of intellectual strictness that, born of the Automatist movement, is continued today. All these themes could by themselves alone provide subjects of articles. Indeed, considering the size of the milieu, exhibitions are numerous and opportunities for discussion are not as rare as one might believe.

But an essential guidepost is missing between the artist and the public criticism. What is happening on that score? There are generally journalists and teachers who *present* works they like; so they are prejudiced in favour. Thus articles follow, in the form of mini-monographs on artists. Further, these presentations are often inspired only by the statements that the artist makes on his work. Therefore these are at best only good introductions. Would we be justified in believing that representatives of newspapers and magazines prefer silence — aggressive indifference — to critical commentary? The absence of critical judgement productive of discussion contributes to allowing us to believe that artists bathe in a gentle lethargy, wonderfully marginalized. In fact, it is the artist's step itself — the methodology — that it is advisable not only to bring to light (on this plan, work is on the whole well done) but also to discuss, to analyze, to question, indeed to dispute, in order to perceive the meaning (or the absence of meaning) and the scope of a work. Now, we have the impression that criticism is disarmed in the face of contemporary art productions; this is perhaps not for lack of information: artists are more and more clear on their intentions. Critics, when they criticize, are content to describe the possible similarities that appear between one work and another. These exercises have not the slightest significance for a broad public which remains disappointed; for this public, too, is questioning itself and living through the crisis of our time. The public is waiting to be surprised, unexpectedly falling upon a work that will change its life.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE BEAUTIFUL LOVE STORY OF PAUL LIVERNOIS

By Gilles DAIGNEAULT

This is why it is impossible for me to consider a picture as other than a window, where my first concern is to know on what it looks out.

(André Breton)

Upon listening to Livernois speak of painting, one has the desire to become a painter. Indeed,

the very simple remarks the artist makes concerning his adventure confirm the feeling of well-being one experiences before this work that has developed without fuss for almost ten years, with a noteworthy continuity.

Livernois' intention is clear: it is a matter of restoring to viewers the feeling of beauty. "Basically, my pictures are neither more important nor more *metaphysical* than a lilac branch that one wishes to look at and smell more closely." Therefore this painter never works when he is tormented by personal problems, which, besides, is shown clearly by the warmth of the light and the fantasy of most of his compositions.

The medium he uses almost exclusively today — plaster reliefs on panels coloured in acrylic — suits his temperament: he likes to fashion his material and converse with the forms that the hazard of his manipulations offers him, this same chance that occurred in the development of the forms of some pebbles and trees that delight the painter and "with which it is illusory to wish to compete".

Plastically, Livernois is not a great discoverer; he walks briskly in a few of the paths opened by Paul Klee, who also created works on plaster. "I am not a creator. Besides, there have really not been any since Lascaux. We redo, we recreate..." And yet this imaginary or dream-like world that these signs bring into being — houses, trees, animals, rarely persons, naïve and childish, curiously juxtaposed on abstract forms and integrated into extremely skilful backgrounds — has a great power of bewitchment and, whatever the painter may say of it, frees forces that nature alone ignores.

It is not so long ago that Livernois pursued two parallel developments: ink on paper and reliefs, and the delicacy, the subtlety and the transparency of the first accentuated the somewhat crude appearance of the plasters that the use of earthy tones already emphasized. Today he handles his etcher's needles with enough dexterity to bring to his reliefs all the charm of his ink drawings, and the same is true of the colours: varnish prevents the pigments from "killing each other" and permits the light to flow as if by magic. Livernois is enchanted with this turn of events: "Perhaps the tree is growing, perhaps I am making new leaves for myself... and maybe people will want more and more to pass through these *windows* that my work tries to offer them and that open out on the sun, the spring, the gentle winds..."

In the meantime, he is happy and he devotes himself with equal enthusiasm to a host of activities. Sometimes it even happens that he slightly envies Sunday painters who produce only about ten pictures a year, only those who respond to a spontaneous inner movement and who sum up all those that a professional painter *must* produce. Very fortunately for him, Livernois is convinced that, on the day when people are capable of finding a tree or a pebble beautiful, he will have no further reason to paint. Then, perhaps, after tinkering all week, on Sunday...

(Translation by Mildred Grand)