Régions
Nostalgie ou avant-garde?
Regions
Nostalgia or Avant-Garde?

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D'autres diront ce qu'on d'original les manifestations artistiques et culturelles des créateurs d'une région qu'on appelait jadis « le royaume de Saguenay ». Il sied tout à fait que la série de cahiers que publie Vie des Arts comprenne cette région qui a toujours eu la réputation d'être fortement individualisée, pour plusieurs raisons certes, mais, à coup sûr, à cause de son relatif isolement historique. Je voudrais, pour ma part, essayer de dégager très brièvement la signification que prennent aujourd'hui les manifestations et les mouvements régionalistes, et ce, dans plusieurs pays occidentaux. Il me semble, en effet, qu'au-delà de ce qui se passe au Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean et dans d'autres régions du Québec, on peut déceler un phénomène beaucoup plus général que d'aucuns ont appelé un phénomène de mutation culturelle. C'est dire d'embellie que le phénomène régionaliste, loin d'être l'expression d'une nostalgie de ce qui se meurt, se présente, au contraire, comme une manifestation d'avant-garde. Il s'agit d'une rupture, d'une cassure dans le modèle de développement des sociétés occidentales. Naguère, on s'intéressait aux régions pour les comparer aux métropoles, repérer des survivances et montrer comment elles étaient en train de rattraper le modèle des grandes capitales. Aujourd'hui, c'est pour dégager ce que peuvent avoir d'exemplaire les régions en tant que l'on s'y intéresse de nouveau. À la limite, on s'aperçoit vite que ce type de développement technologique et son expansion ont souvent détruit non seulement l'harmonie de l'homme avec la nature. De là sont nés les mouvements écologiques qui visent à restaurer l'harmonie de l'homme avec la nature. On s'aperçoit vite que ce type de développement détruit non seulement la nature mais aussi les patrimoines traditionnels et les mémoires collectives, en un mot les cultures. Les parcellisations, spécialisations et divisions qu'engendrent ces

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Plan de la rivière du Saguenay et de ses environs par A. Larue, d'après les données fournies par Pascal Taché. Gravé par Gabor Szilasi. 

**NOTE**

genres de vie nécessitent des contrôles et des coordinations de la part des États et des grandes entreprises qui robotisent les individus et les groupes et les isolaient de la nature, de leurs semblables et de leur passé. C'est la logique de la marchandise — celle de l'uniformité et de l'équivalence — qui s'applique à l'homme, devenu aussi interchangeable que la marchandise elle-même. Les grandes idéologies occidentales, qui ont essaimé sur toute la terre, partagent les mêmes options quant à la croissance économique et au développement technologique.

Dans plusieurs pays, on se rend de plus en plus compte qu'au-delà de la critique du capitalisme à l'américaine ou du communisme à la russe, il faut résolument s'engager dans la création de nouvelles formes sociales et, par-dessus tout, d'un nouvel imaginaire social. Et c'est ici qu'entrent en ligne de compte les régions — celles sur lesquelles les grandes machines niveleuses ont laissé quelque humus — et les arts qui sont, par essence, la prospection de nouveaux possibles.

Il est bien évident que ni les régions ni les arts ne recèlent d'emblée toutes les réponses à nos malaises et à nos angoisses contemporaines. Mais on peut affirmer que là où continue d'exister une certaine épaisseur culturelle — une façon harmonieuse de vivre avec la nature, ses semblables et soi-même dans la continuité des temps de l'histoire — et des créateurs qui vont au-delà de l'imaginaire social que veulent imposer les publicitaires de tout acabit, résident des possibles qui, à travers de multiples médiations, indiquent la voie vers une nouvelle vie.
ART AND REGIONALISM

By Andrée PARADIS

Is the art of regions a regionalist art? How can we define a regionalist art? These are the questions that have arisen during the surveys made in the region of Chicoutimi and Lake St. John among groups involved in plastic arts, as also occurred a few months earlier during those undertaken in the Sherbrooke area for the preparation of our preceding issue.

Regionalist art as conceived to-day reflects an always thorough relationship to a milieu which is due not to an accident of birth but which is truly a place where one lives, where immediate and surrounding nature feeds the eyes and the imagination, where the appeal to expression is urgent. Formerly isolated and protected, the art of regions has inspired an intimate art, a realist art largely dominated by the need to interpret the landscape and a naive art on which we shall do a thematic study in the near future. In it we shall stress the important contribution of the naive painters of the Saguenay and Charlevoix, the Villeneuves, the Bouchards and the Bolducs. This art of regions is presently characterized by its freedom of expression and by its concern for participation in the interrogations that preoccupy the artists of all parts of the world.

The recent establishment of universities in the regions has contributed to the creation of a new social and cultural climate. On the one hand, the university is in the process of rediscovering one of its most ancient functions, which is to be a centre of spiritual influence, intellectual and artistic as much as scientific. The age of political expansion is perhaps over, finally. And the university will regain its vocation in culture and civilization.

On the other hand, art is always the first medium to inform us that there has been something changed. Its new orientations seem positive to us. Due to the presence of universities and colleges, the artist of the region is well informed. He tries to integrate better with the community and his need to communicate becomes evident. He freely confesses that he is much more influenced by New York than by Montreal, Quebec or Toronto. But in the libraries documentation is not only nature but also traditional heritages and collective memories.

In this spirit, it is necessary to stress the important role of a cultural agent such as the Lending Library of the Saguenay-Lake St. John which serves sixty-five municipalities of the region, from Tadoussac to Chapeaux and which, besides circulating books, films, records and educational toys, also lends without charge works of art to homes. The Library's director, Jean-Marc Bourgeois is never short of projects: at present, in collaboration with the René-Dumont Foundation, he is organizing a collection of engravings and series of photographs by artists of the Saguenay-Lake St. John, the promotion of which he plans to assure. There is no doubt that such an activity and such a sense of animation inspire an awareness in which contradiction exists, but what is particularly impressive is the will to express themselves without restraint, to advance toward a thought that seeks to take form.

To these artists who are working so close to us I leave this reflection by Bernard Noël: "The world could be the open book of the world's thought, but habit shuts our eyes and makes us not be in the world. The thinker wishes to awaken the gaze, but for that purpose he must rewrite the book of the world."

1. See the article by François-Marc Gagnon In Vie des Arts, Vol. XVI, No. 55, pp. 38-41.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)
from their peers and from their past. This is the logic of merchandise — that of uniformity and equivalence — applied to man, having become as interchangeable as merchandise itself. The great western ideologies that have spread over the whole world share the same options concerning economic growth and technological development.

In a number of countries the people are realizing more and more that beyond criticizing American-style capitalism or Russian-style communism, it is necessary to enter determinedly upon the creating of new social forms and, above all, a new social image. And it is here that the regions enter the picture: those regions on which the big levelling machines have left some humus — and the arts which are, by their nature, the mine of new possibilities.

It is very evident that neither the regions nor the arts contain right away all the answers to our concern and to our contemporary anxieties. But we can state that where a certain cultural density is the result of levelling machines have left some humus — and the arts which are, by their nature, the mine of new possibilities.

The Presence of Man

The presence of man in the universe, even hidden behind his supermen, however, is constant with Moisan. From 1963, man appears on his student's ceramics, stylized as in the Grecian geometrical period. He continues to be seen in the geometrical paintings after 1965, but he is imprisoned in limited spaces and always as abstract. The humanoid seen in the paintings produced before last August appeared since 1974, when the painter moved to Sainte-Rose-du-Nord.

What will become of this philosophical research in Moisan's plastic universe? The last time we met him, at the end of July, he was a happy young father getting ready to move into a big studio whose construction he had just completed. He showed us large works divided into one, two or three panels, in which figures of more human morphology were the main subject and formed the link between the parts. Already, although they were only begun, we discerned an atmosphere in which plasticity was counterbalanced by the inner quality of the figures, as if Moisan wished to place man and his inner world in a physical milieu previously exploited in his earlier productions. We wager that the act of proceeding to larger works will also lead to an increased spontaneity of touch!

Jean-Guy Barbeau — Poetry Above All

Modern schools develop aesthetic theories. An unknown artist will renew painting by painting.

This statement, recorded in one of the exhibition booklets kept by Jean-Guy Barbeau, professor and artist-painter of Chicoutimi, has been taken by him at the same time as an avowal and a declaration. An avowal in the sense that he does not concern himself with fashion or criticism and, still less, with the avant-garde. A significant declaration that, for him, art is particularly the occasion of a renewed and everyday action: that of taking up his brush and painting in his little studio.

Behind him he has a diversified background: fine arts course at Quebec, a year of specialization in stained glass at Arts and Crafts in Detroit, Michigan, additional courses in the plastic arts at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi. His experience is impressive: advertising and commercial art, interior decoration, professor of plastic art in schools, mural productions and, notably, stained glass in Quebec and abroad. Aside from having won American and Quebec prizes, he recalls nostalgically an important solo exhibition at Warsaw, where he had been invited by the Ministry of Culture and the Arts.

Even if he does not deny certain ties (pastiches executed humorously and which are reminiscent of Dalíre, his former professor, of Pellan or of Picassiesque lives in the present. A philosopher and also a scoffer, he is more inclined to talk about his professional interests than about his past. And so we are not going to linger on his earlier works, but rather take a look at his recent production: acrylics and small gouaches.

A Second Signature

The canvases in acrylic are not all produced in flat tints. Some are completely different: their ranges of colour are more extensive; the material is sometimes worked to a greater degree. The atmosphere of L'Homme au petit cheval gris (Coll. of Mme Germaine Laviolette) is very different. The picture titled Les trois snares de Trois-Pistoles reveals Barbeau's qualities as a graphic artist and a colourist. The composition is incisive and balanced, the lines are sharp and refined. The figures are stylized in the typical fashion of his present pictures. The space is defined by three levels on which the three

By Roger SARRAZIN

THREE TEMPERAMENTS, THREE CONSTANTS

How shall we identify artists who work in a geographically remote region like ours? How do they respond to the great urban movements: conceptual art, minimal art, hyperrealism, social intervention art? Recent meetings with three of them whom I have known for a long time soon made me understand that manifestations of art must be perceived in themselves and not according to ready-made definitions or those from elsewhere. Gatien Moisan, Jean-Guy Barbeau and Suzanne Tremblay are, in their own way, artists whose first characteristic is not to reject what they see but, having entered upon a unique procedure, to continue in it. In this sense, they are firmly individualists working outside the trends in fashion and create no problem about this for themselves!

Gatien Moisan — Reason First

Those who have seen Gatien Moisan's recent productions are impressed by the subjects with which he deals and by his uncommon way of treating them. The most astonishing paradoxes dwell in his pictures. While the themes suggest timeliness, movement, even weightlessness (Lévitation, J'entre dans la zone couleur, Promenade géométrique, La Course inutile, Le Combat), it is nevertheless a sensation of the halting of time, of immobility, that possesses the viewer.

What does this come from? Without wishing to repeat Gilles Daigneault's excellent explanation on Moisan's purposes and development, there is some value in re-examining the elements of his images.

To begin with, the immensity of the rocky décor and the sky is fascinating. This holds no surprise, since for some years this painter has daily faced the fjord of the Saguenay, more than two miles wide at Sainte-Rose-du-Nord. When the background of the picture is not completely filled by this décor, geometrical spaces complete it, especially in the water-colours. The terrestrial or aerial space thus created is occupied by one or several giant humanoids fixed in their motion; sometimes animals, just as unmoving, accompany them. Superimposed lines or geometrical figures mark out portions of space or remind the spectator that nothing is left to chance and that the compositions demonstrate a development that is not only rational but also systematic. Besides, the artist freely explains himself on this. He does not expect that his development will be found easy on this. He does not expect that his development will be found easy. He has daily faced the fjord of the Saguenay, more than two miles wide at Sainte-Rose-du-Nord. When the painter moved to Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, he was a happy young father getting ready to move into a big studio whose construction he had just completed. He showed us large works divided into one, two or three panels, in which figures of more human morphology were the main subject and formed the link between the parts. Already, although they were only begun, we discerned an atmosphere in which plasticity was counterbalanced by the inner quality of the figures, as if Moisan wished to place man and his inner world in a physical milieu previously exploited in his earlier productions. We wager that the act of proceeding to larger works will also lead to an increased spontaneity of touch!

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