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ON SOME RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
APPLEBAUM-HEBERT REPORT

By Andrée PARADIS

Much has already been written about the
Applebaum-Hebert report. Three decades after
the publication of the Masseley-Lévesque report, an
other stage is being reached in the development of the
cultural policies of the central government rather than on
culture which has ended with the publication of the Report
of the Committee on the study of the federal cultural
policy. A hundred and one recommendations and
a concise approach to the problems raised by the
study of cultural activity. At what concerns perio­
cals, the means to do it will depend on strategies
which we, hope, will be established in the spirit of the
policies proposed for the publishing of books.
Acting through the Canada Arts Council, the
government has strongly supported the
publication of periodicals. This is a fundamental
aid without which most specialized publications
could not exist. But, in order to obtain better
results, it is necessary to inject stimulants. After
recommending to the authorities that they should
give more attention to periodicals which, in gen­
eral, can create a sense of belonging among readers
with the same interests, the Committee makes the
following recommendation. The Federal
Government should enlarge its commitment of
support for Canadian magazines through both
the Canada Council and the Department of
Communication. The Council should establish
a two-pronged system of grants based on the twin
elements of content and format. Accordingly, the
recent subsidy program already outlined for book
publishing. The Department should initiate an
economic development program for the maga­
zine industry similar to the one recommended by
this Committee for book publishing.
The launching of a program of economic ex­
pansion for periodicals is awaited. This would
save many and not only would encourage distri­
bution on a larger scale but it would assure more
diffusion for art and creator; it would also prolong
the immense efforts to increase the exposure of
all arts and would give rise to a new period of
exposure.
Finally, during the year we intend to present
commentaries on the recommendations dealing
with visual arts and contemporary applied arts,
as well as on those concerning our heritage.
Virulent criticism - some of which, doubtless
is justified - has attacked the report since it was
issued. This is certainly not the work of reflection
on our cultural problems that we expected, but in
it, containing a compilation of facts and recom­
mandations, we have found some positive
aspects that we could not neglect without para­
lyzing the efforts at organization undertaken
during the last thirty years. It is from this point that
we must act.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE DUALITY OF PETER WALKER

"I ink, therefore I am."

(Peter Walker)

By Jim HANSEN

Unfortunately for Canadian art lovers, but
fortunately for me, I've had, over the last
decade, a most unique opportunity. I've
had the unique opportunity to be a part of a
whole edifice of art worth living in, then it's good.
Peter's work has always been a stimulus to me.
Peter's art is exciting for many of the same
reasons that Picasso's work affects me. There
are parallels here. Peter's interests, as reflected
so strongly in his work, are formal, human and
plastic. Literally plastic: most of the sculpture
Peter has produced in the last twelve years is
made of fiberglass and plastic resin. Peter's
works are complete and irreversible. They
are inevitable, satisfying forms. Peter has the
same unerring sense of proportion that Picasso
had, the same powerful urge to create tangible
objects.

An appreciation of Peter's work does not
require an intimate knowledge of art history. As
seems to be the case in much of contemporary
art, mental gymnastics are not necessary. A walk
through a group of his works is a pure and
straightforward experience of fascinating, fabu­
los form and caloric colour. If we could digest
fibre-glass there wouldn't be a scrap of Peter's
sculpture in existence.

Most of the sculptures done in the early 70's
are assembled from folded and molded sheets of
fibre-glass. These pieces, although fabricated
from sheet material, are three dimensional. The
surfaces are gel-coated or spray-painted in
bright primary colours. Some works were left in
the natural tan translucent state. A small group
of flat works to hang on the wall were made during
the mid 70's. The early works, however, stand
and occupy space as variously-vertical volumes.
The form language of Peter's art is organic and
human; its scale is human. Peter's is not a surreal
art. His art, although abstract, is solidly grounded
in a world very close to him; it's not fantasy: it's
tangible, understandable.

There are, however, a couple of stray strands to
this work. Peter has a funny bone, a sort of funk
rock that he occasionally throws out to us culture
munchers to chew on; for instance, a series of
fibre-glass garbage bags with resin fingers poking
out of various orifices. Another would be a
drawing of a boat-like mountain stuck full of faucets
(leaked) to be like a public fountain. I have in
my collection a drawing on fibre-glass of Peter's
mouth with a giant tongue that drops toward the
floor. The world is not all nonsensical.

In 1979 and 80, Peter made a series of large
brightly-coloured airbrush drawings of male
private parts in various painful poses, perfectly
perturbed penises. These were seen for a couple
of short weeks, exposed one might say, in the
Memorial University Art Gallery here in St.
John's. Peter Bell wrote an excited and penetra­
ting review that the local newspaper would not
publish, colitis interruptus.

I find, particularly in this two-year period of
Peter's work, a kind of metaphor for the bind
in which he finds himself. In spite of the ubiquity of

1. Peter WALKER

Untitled.

Fibreglass; 1 m x 2 x 3.96 x 4.26
modern art in our museums and galleries, the day to day existence of an artist working and living in the Maritimes is a spartan and emotionally battering experience. The sensuous is suspect. The connections between the eye and the mind are for the most part utilitarian. Sex is an activity confined to the bed, art to galleries. If the gallery doesn't use your art it doesn't exist; a catch-22 existence, an engorged phallus in a vise.

Peter is a builder and manipulator of objects and materials close to hand. Many of his fibreglass pieces grow organically from castings he has taken from objects as diverse as a plastic beanbag ball and a monstrous. His compulsion to build extends to wonderful playgrounds that can be found swarming with kids in B.C., Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and Newfoundland. A few years back, in a marathon of maple manipulation, he completed all the furniture for a St. John's restaurant; from design work to completed installation in a couple of short months. In Nova Scotia he built several beautiful and functional kayaks using fibreglass and methodologies similar to those for building his sculpture. He built his own studio-house in the woods of Nova Scotia.

Peter came east from Vancouver through his home town of Cayley, Alberta to St. John's, Nfld. on a bicycle in 1970. He settled here for a short time and completed a large fibreglass sculpture for the Arts and Culture Centre grounds. He worked as a part-time fisherman here and as a potato digger in P.E.I. before restlessly moving on to Nova Scotia trying to find a home for himself and his work. The last couple of years he has spent here in St. John's.

Peter's formal training was in art schools in Calgary and Vancouver, where most of his study was centered on commercial and graphic arts. His sculptural interests started in Vancouver just prior to his 1970 trip to St. John's.

Physical and intellectual restlessness are strong characteristics of Peter and are mirrored in an art that is full of surprises. His is an urban art, an extension of the art of Brancusi and David Smith. I get a shock when I remind myself that this art is thirty to eighty years old; ancient history, art from the Stone Age. Peter's art shows us there are still stones unturned.

Peter's work is, however, well off the beaten path of maritime concerns with the exterior environment, which goes a long way toward explaining the neglect his art has suffered. A great sadness for me and a tragedy for this society now and in the future is to watch a resource like Peter Walker year after year short of the money and materials to bring to completion his ideas gathering dust in rooms and barns all over the Maritimes. From this lack of funds his work for the past few years has been confined to drawing and, lately, printmaking.

Peter's sculpture grows out of his incessant drawing and vice-versa. I have a vision of Peter years from now tunnelling through tons of drawings trying to find his last cup of tea. Most of Peter's invention happens in the drawings, many of which are elegant and complete works in their own right.

"I link, therefore I am", a typical Peter-pun, says a lot about the nature of the man; the ideal torture for Peter would be to lock him up and throw away the pencil. That Peter continues to pour out his ideas in these drawings and prints is amazing to me, a testimony to his courage in the face of an essentially blind and cautious society.

2. Jean-Marie Gauvreau
Bedside Table, 1928-1930.
Ebony and Amboyna.
(Phot. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts)
phrased by cornices with draw drapery of large-scaled stylized floral patterns, installed over draw casement or sheer undercurtains. Consoles and coffee table bases were sculptural "free-form" designs with glass tops, which contrasted to the set-back bases of cabinets. Layered and stacked furniture of the 1930's influenced by Aztec-Mayan architecture continued into the 1940's. Gauvreau's office desk, probably designed in the early 40's, now in the office of André Paradis of Vie des Arts, was modeled on the semi-circular hunt-table. The desk has hinged cabinet bases which pivoted, a device seen in cabinetry designed by Eileen Gray (1879-1976) in the Salon of 1923. In 1945 a four-year ceramics program which had originated at the École des Beaux-Arts ten years earlier was transferred to École du Meuble, and a four-year weaving course began in 1948.

To elevate student taste, and for construction studies, Gauvreau installed a museum on the premises. Gauvreau purchased furniture and decorative art as prototypes for students to copy. Period furniture, often copies, was obtained by acquisition, and Quebec traditional art was collected. Original Art Deco furniture or decorative art objects were prohibitively expensive to purchase for teaching purposes, so student works were of necessity copied from magazines.

From the late 1940's, the clean lines and spare forms of furniture of Scandinavian design influenced contemporary furniture at École du Meuble. By the early 1950's, low, armless mattresses on day beds on metal or wood frames, long, low benches with detachable seat pads, and coffee tables with legs set at angles to the bases, were being produced at the school. The industrial aesthetic and use of metal tubing, taught in the school's metal shop, brought Art Moderne concepts to the student repertoire.

In 1958 École du Meuble moved to the Montreal Polytechnic School on St. Denis just north of St. Catherine, and became the Applied Arts Institute, which came under the jurisdiction of the CEGEP of Old Montreal in 1966. Gauvreau and his associates' designs at École du Meuble utilizing hand-crafted cabinetry can be interpreted as a swansong for an era for those romantic concepts personified by devotion to craft. The trend to Art Moderne gained ground in the commercial sector and art goods began even more strongly to service the masses.

Expressive at times but not Expressionist, and "breakthrough" is particularly appropriate here, since his canvases became shaped, three-dimensional entities with deep, rectangular and oblong recesses. In these paintings he carried further, in effect, what had been only suggested upon flat surfaces by others such as Michael Snow (Red Square, 1960; Toronto Dominion Bank, Toronto) and Josef Albers (Homage to the Square series, late 50's and 60's). Virtually the same colours appeared upon the shaped surface of the canvases and within its recesses. These hues, however, would be seen necessarily under different conditions of lighting and would be modified by changes in viewing distances. The forms of the recesses became the determinants of the directions that a suddenly surprisingly broad brushwork took as it played over and within the painting. This was a kind of "pop" diversion for Picotte, an effort to touch directly upon the chords of light and space that are usually handled illusionistically. After some few such explorations, he turned away altogether from his previously rather rigid geometric inventions toward a more poetic mode.

This direction had been prepared since the summer of 1974, when he undertook a sustained series of carefully finished drawings with coloured pencils, a series that still continues to-day.

MICHEL PICOTTE: URBAN LANDSCAPES

By WARREN SANDERSON

Expressive at times but not Expressionist, and more rooted in the old Bauhaus tradition than in any "New Wave." Michel Picotte's pathway has been consistent since he took his baccalaureate in painting in 1974 at UQAM. A Montreal painter without the slightest interest in partaking of the fashionable new, his interest is landscape, a subject favoured from the outset in Canada. In a rich development Picotte takes landscape out of the confines of its earlier origins to infuse within its own self and his environment. Picotte's "New Landscape" brings a venerable, academically-oriented genre into the midst of the twentieth century, qualifying, transmuting and renewing it with his particular artistic vision.

His early efforts were almost immediately rewarded in 1974, earning for him the then coveted Prix du Québec in painting as well as entrance as a printmaker into the prestigious Basle Art Fair. Superpositioned rectangular fields with pronounced colouristic differences were painted very flatly upon acrylic metallic-based canvases, so that the central horizontal zone would appear to recede from the areas above and beneath it. The resultant spatial impression was furthered by roughened contours that were accomplished by laying down acrylic emulsions with a sponge. Clouds come to mind with these contours, and occasionally a small tree motif was included. Thus, the stark, direct quality of colour and form treated as related but abstract elements in these canvases was relieved by reference to the natural world. By the summer of 1974 Picotte had left Montreal to reside at St. Hilaire on the Richelieu River. He remained active there until 1979.

Employing only minimal references to nature, his concern with capturing the physical reality of space by means of colour juxtapositions and textual differentiations led Picotte to a breakthrough in 1977. The word "breakthrough" is particularly appropriate here, since his canvases became shaped, three-dimensional entities with deep, rectangular and oblong recesses. In these paintings he carried further, in effect, what had been only suggested upon flat surfaces by others such as Michael Snow (Red Square, 1960; Toronto Dominion Bank, Toronto) and Josef Albers (Homage to the Square series, late 50's and 60's). Virtually the same colours appeared upon the shaped surface of the canvas and within its recesses. These hues, however, would be seen necessarily under different conditions of lighting and would be modified by changes in viewing distances. The forms of the recesses became the determinants of the directions that a suddenly surprisingly broad brushwork took as it played over and within the painting. This was a kind of "pop" diversion for Picotte, an effort to touch directly upon the chords of light and space that are usually handled illusionistically. After some few such explorations, he turned away altogether from his previously rather rigid geometric inventions toward a more poetic mode.

This direction had been prepared since the summer of 1974, when he undertook a sustained series of carefully finished drawings with coloured pencils, a series that still continues to-day.

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These works on paper constitute for him the bank of ideas that others might have begun by recording in a sketchbook. Soon the flat colours of his early acrylic panels were replaced by much more varied and subtle studies of the values and intensities of some few hues. Controlling his textures so that they remained relatively uniform, colour areas faded agreeably into one another and into the white of the canvas in a sort of manner that movement and continuity seemed interwoven. The notion of colour itself as a dynamic, organically transmuting, unifying element was elaborated in landscapes that reflected an almost mystical atmosphere. In some, parts of the paper were set aflame briefly to gain particular coloristic effects; and perhaps two or three such fragments were then fixed to a single surface to form again a continuum in which the reality of worldly change played its role. Toward 1978 the artist returned to oils, and since then he has rarely used acrylics.

Small, thoro-soft jottings often in ink appeared upon his coloured pencil drawings and became more fully articulated, finding their way into his paintings as ambivalent codifications of trees, buildings and fantastic imaginary animals. Highly variegated, always subtle and often elegant, these markings were invariably dwarfed by the seemingly huge spaces around them. They remind us of Oriental calligraphy written upon his coloured pencil drawings and became an integral part of his working methods. He seems to have had no intention to narrate.

The drawings and paintings from perhaps 1978 to 1980 tell us something quite different indeed. Whatever the size and the media of his works, whatever their colouristic inventions, in each there is a traditional setting for narrative.

Foreground, middleground and background are clearly defined. Rich and subtle coloristic developments reinforce suggestions of vast spaces, with an almost unbroken flat terrain. And within these spaces, often along or near to what may best be taken as an horizon, are very brief and delicate gestures of pen or brush, gestures that describe beings floating between Eastern calligraphy and some strangely organic creatures of the mind’s eye. Despite vague inspiration from Jack Chambers (Victoria Hospital, 1970, was known to Picotte) and perhaps from Ted Godwin (G. Comers, 1964, with similarly diffused colour values), the best context with which to place these works of Picotte is that imaginary world described during the early forties by such artists as Tanguy, Matta, and Max Ernst. The small-scaled cryptographic gestures within the spacious realms of Picotte’s paintings and drawings are being dredged up effortlessly from his subconscious imagination. His art, then, may be considered as a poetic reinterpretation of an earlier descriptive surrealism, whether or not that approach was intentional on his part.

Toward the end of 1978 Picotte’s landscapes are broken by empty horizontal and vertical margins that are continuous with the empty margins of the four sides of the painting. An element of ambivalence is introduced and is repeated in many of his works to this day. In such works we may perceive either a continuous vista as if seen through windows within the canvas or the paper surface, or a series of closely related paintings upon a single surface. In some works clouds appear to drift by from one frame into the next, perhaps changing in value and intensity of colour; or waves may be seen in the same manner, again changing in their colouristic aspects. One notices after a while that the artist often plays against continuity and spatial unity by treating each framed section as an almost independent colour composition: colour effects are treated as variations upon the landscape theme.

Within his self-imposed formats, Picotte’s changing environment has had its effects. Take, for instance, the work he accomplished while residing in Italy from the summer of 1981 to the latter part of January, 1982. Colours much hotter than before come into play in extraordinarily sensitive juxtapositions and transitions. An aspect of linear sequence seen previously rather infrequently is strengthened. Acidity clear, thin horizontal lines are positioned in frequencies that reinforce colour sequences. Whether in India ink, colour, or simply inagio relief, these provide a new rhythmic vitality that recalls some hard-edge paintings by Kenneth Noland such as Graded Exposure (1967, private collection, Chicago). In the drawings this is combined with a sensitive feeling for illusion recognizable in his arrangement of parallel pencil markings, and his uses of fixative to heighten surface contrasts.

Since returning to Montreal early in 1982, Michel Picotte’s landscape art has proceeded through soliloquies upon reminiscences of Italy to reflect the energies of Montreal’s urban environment in a new sense of “mindscapes.” Michel Picotte seems to have come to terms with his particular artistic sensibility when he replaced the idiosyncratic creatures and jottings of his surrealistic evocations with the elegance of undulating cloud and wave motives that grew out of his Italian sojourn. Landscape became seascape and both became mindscapes. The innately calm strength of his vision continues to develop now in symbiosis with the city.

FRANCINE GRAVEL
(suite de la page 63)

La réputation de Francine Gravel comme graveur en creux n’est plus à faire. « J’ai eu comme professeur Albert Dumouchel, dit-elle, et j’ai appris toutes les techniques de la gravure. J’adore l’eau-forte et j’adore les textures. » Combinant la pointe sèche, le mezzo-tinto et la gravure, elle utilise souvent deux et quelquefois trois encreurs superposés dans une plaque. « Mais, ajoute-t-elle, pour moi, une gravure est avant tout du noir et du blanc, que je traduis ensuite en tons. Dumouchel m’a influencé pour ce qui est de la gradation des tons. » Les gravures et les aquarelles de François Gravel traitent des mêmes thèmes que ses peintures. Bien que de couleurs n’y soient pas aussi denses, aussi sombres et aussi diversifiées, les personnages de Gravel y conservent un regard introspectif, précocé. L’artiste ne rend pas la profondeur à la façon classique. Au contraire, dans l’eau-forte Tarentelle, par exemple, son personnage principal écrase, par son échelle, les personnages d’arrière-plan, proportionnellement beaucoup plus petits.

Qu’il s’agisse de peintures à l’huile, d’aquarelles ou de gravures en creux, les œuvres de Gravel dégagent une atmosphère, une impression unique. Elles montrent des affinités avec l’art du passé, tout en se rattachant à la société contemporaine.

Bente Roed COCHRAN
(Traduction de Diane Petit-Pas)