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CRITICISM PROBES ITSELF IN FINLAND

By Andrée PARADIS

The theme under study during the last conference of the International Association of Art Critics, *Art in Search of a New World Order*, gave the participants the opportunity of reflecting on the problems of criticism on the subject of cultural identity.

It was a matter of defining the attitude of national and international criticism with regard to the phenomenon of regions and relations — or the absence of relations — that regions maintain with artistic centres or capitals. In strongly structured poles, this goes on due to information assured by the mass media, advertising and the activity of the art market. Regional art is dependent on this, whether it be that of the North-European or North-American countries; bonds are established with centres such as New York, Paris, Düsseldorf, which, it seems, offer no other alternative but to reflect, to repeat ceaselessly, formulas whose content finally shrinks. With the result that we now find in almost all the museums of modern art in the world lifeless works deprived of originality and any inner content, and in which the absence of close relationship between artist and culture denies us a comprehensive vision on the twentieth century.

We tend to confuse national identity, which is closely linked to history and politics, and cultural identity, which escapes these areas and which, according to the important testimony of Michel Morin1, seeks to create its “own imaginary territory.” For lack of this guidance, cultural identity risks being a snare and serving interests that are opposed to it; particularly, it is most often improperly defined. One would certainly like to assign it to its proper place but by its very nature it escapes frameworks. At the base of this extremely complex wish for cultural identity there is the desire to know each other better, to exist for others, and, if possible, to be recognized. There is also, according to René Berger, honorary president of IAAC, a need for individual or collective resistance to a tendency toward cultural uniformity, due to the always growing invasion of technology into our daily life. Finally, art plays an essential role in the determination of our cultural identity, not the reverse.

When one thinks of Finland, one demands an image of its artists more than of its political future. The powerful, integrated architectures of Alvar Aalto and those of Eliel Saarinen, who also exerted an influence on American architecture, contribute to this; as do the works of Finland’s musicians, Sibelius for example, and those of contemporary composers. One cannot refrain from admiring those young painters who struggle, in spite of exacting criticism, to find the authentic path of creation; in performance the Jack Hurtubise HMH (Coll. Brèches), 1982.

THE PAROXYSMAL FIGURATION OF KOKOSCHKA

By Didier ARNAUDET

Even to-day it is truly useful to dwell on the work of Oskar Kokoschka. This painter, born on the first of March, 1886, at Pöchlarn in Austria, was to find himself at the centre of the tragic events that marked the first half of the twentieth century that rang the knell of the political, economic and cultural predominance of Europe. His painting, a more or less intensive passage through the beginning of modern culture, carries all the scars of an era marked by cruel disillusionments, talk of war, fascist voracity and concentration camps.

In 1909, Oskar Kokoschka entered the Vienna School of Decorative Arts. At that time, he was influenced by the spell-binding painting of Gustav Klimt. He became friends with architect Adolf Loos; the defender of functionalism, who was against the ornamental architecture supported by the Vienna Secession. In the first years of the twentieth century, that foretells the monstrousness of the tragedies inherent in the century which had hardly begun. Kokoschka revealed the gloomy reality of a sick society in which man was bogged down in a dramatic alienation. This approach placed him on the same ground as that explored by the expressionist groups defended by Herwarth Walden, founder of Der Sturm, the magazine and gallery in Berlin. In 1910, the artist settled in Berlin and participated in the “esthetic subversion enterprise” of German Expressionism that called for the liberating of self and a transformation of society.

If Kokoschka was involved in the expressionist proposals, he nevertheless kept a certain pictorial autonomy. To him, to paint was to express life. What makes him different from other expressionists is this vital side that he developed in his painting. The violence of his brush stroke always reveals fully a man of experience, which gives to painting what Elie Faure calls “a rather strong flavour”. As a portraitist Kokoschka tried ardently to grasp in a sometimes morbid way the unconscious fears and desires of his models. As a landscape-painter he transformed topographical facts into organic signs of an immense, passionate body. Thanks to the lessons of Van Gogh, Munch and Egon Schiele, Kokoschka unfurled a space filled with rhythms and figures; a space shaken by the explosion of chromatic combustion and the harshness of forms drawn with the precision of a knife. He took the risk of clearly explaining the movement of his figures whose vitality is uneasily reinforced by the sensual impetuousity of colour.

Kokoschka was challenged by Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism and Cubism. But even if he paid some attention to these artistic movements,
he remained unaffected by modernist logic. Thus, he rejected abstract art, which he considered an "aberration". For Kokoschka, art purified. It was a kind of redeemer. This explains the need to implant painting in a figurative content in which the weight of humans and things asserted itself. Kokoschka questioned figuration in its most abrupt form and without any devotion to it. He probed the human form in its most intimate implications. He refined it without exhausting it. He tormented it in order to grasp only its profound authenticity. But in spite of this formidable vehemence, Kokoschka's pictorial freedom offers more resurrections than exclusions, which is not the case in abstraction.

Alone, Kokoschka was on the edge of systems centered? Didier ARNAUDET — Can you trace the origin of this important exhibition?

Gilberte MARTIN-MÉRY — In 1948 Kokoschka was the guest of honour at the Viennese Biennial, which devoted a pavilion to him. It was at that showing that I rediscovered this artist who offered so much pent-up passion, rapturous emotion and hope for a better world. It gave me a real shock, and I still feel the memory of a sudden and yet lasting emotion. Later I went to the Cologne Museum and saw Le Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux, a wonderful canvas. When I produced the *L'Art du Canada* exhibition, I found one of Kokoschka's paintings in a Canadian collection at Vancouver. It was L'Eglise Notre-Dame. At that time, I thought that these two pictures Kokoschka had painted during his stay at Bordeaux in 1925 ought some day to be together in Bordeaux itself. After the painter's death I was able to meet Mr. Kokoschka. She was interested in my project and gave me her approval. From that time, I became absorbed in the subject and worked steadily to organize this exhibition. Mme Kokoschka has kept valuable documentation, particularly letters and cards, which ensure the proper dating of canvases and water-colours. Access to her personal records enabled me to become familiar with unpublished articles and recollections and was very useful in research made more difficult by the absence of French publications.

D.A. — In your opinion, who was Kokoschka? Expressionist? Humanist? A conservative revolutionary?

G.M.-M. — He was first of all a great humanist. In him there is an extraordinary research into his brotherhood. Kokoschka threw pure colour on canvas in the manner of the Fauves and the Expressionists, but he worked at it so much that he drew another substance from it. He was outside of time, place and the era; in a word, Kokoschka is a painter above the average. He was a man who had suffered. And a man who has suffered can say everything, sing everything, understand everything. That is why, to-day, Kokoschka retains a strong presence.

*(Translation by Mildred Grand)*

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THE IMAGINATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF LUC ARCHAMBAULT
By Herbert T. SCHWARZ

Lean and graceful with sensitive brooding features, dark brown eyes, cool, appraising and penetrating, Luc Archambault looks like one of his studies in black and white...He might well have stepped off an 18th century portrait of a nobleman. And he behaves like one too. He keeps very much to himself, has a great deal of personal dignity and an absolute conviction in his studies in black and white...He might well penetrate, Luc Archambault looks like one of the most imaginative and gifted Quebec artists. And he art which so uniquely bears the stamp of his originality. He has in fact become a genuine folk hero amongst the young of Quebec, a potent catalyst force which, like that of the avant-garde singers, musicians, poets and writers, inspires new generations.

And now his art is reaching outside the boundaries of Quebec. He has represented a group of young Quebec artists at the Grand-Palais in Paris, and this spring he has held yet another exhibition there, and when that venerable M. A. Mora looked at some of the photos of Luc Archambault sketches he remarked: "Oh yes! These I must do, now bring me the originals". A remarkable accolade from that master printer of Vallauris, who collaborated so closely with Picasso! 1.

Luc Archambault is emerging as one of the most imaginative and gifted Quebec artists.

In the art of Luc Archambault, undeniably there is this strong surrealistic element; it appeals to his vivid imagination and feeling for fantasy. But even with his very traditional paintings, in which he portrays great human loneliness, longings, tenderness and love, there is no conscious effort to please his public. Like a number of great artists before him, he is only trying to communicate through his art, to establish a bond between himself and his viewer; and although this may be only a temporary manifestation it produces satisfaction which implies a spiritual unity between the artist and the recipient. At times this spiritual unity between the artist and the public transcends his art.

In an unprecedented city-wide exhibition called L'Art aussi! held in the winter of 1982, all the major shopping centres, hotels, bars, restaurants, book stores, boutiques, craft shops, cobblers, doctors' and lawyers' offices, exhibited a profusion of Luc Archambault ceramics, sketches, paintings and murals. The whole city of Quebec became his personal gallery, the people identifying themselves with Luc Archambault the artist and his art, his desperate struggles to keep on going with his work, his need to be himself, and his art which so uniquely bears the stamp of his originality. He has in fact become a genuine folk hero amongst the young of Quebec, a potent catalyst force which, like that of the avant-garde singers, musicians, poets and writers, inspires new generations.

1. Luc Archambault is presently working on a series of lithographs to be called A Tribute to Pablo Picasso.

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PROPOSAL INVITATION
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

Facilities for Athabasca University are under construction in the town of Athabasca. Proposals are invited from artists in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia for the following competitions:

• One major exterior three-dimensional work. Budget: $40,000.00
• One large scale interior three-dimensional work. Budget: $12,000.00
• One large scale interior work spanning two stories. Budget: $10,000.00
• One medium sized interior three-dimensional work. Budget: $8,000.00

Inquiries are invited from artists working in a variety of media who wish to participate in these competitions. Application deadline is October 11, 1983. Address inquiries, requests for application form, and information package to: Art Acquisition Committee, Athabasca University, 12352-149 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5V 1G9

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UNIVERSITE CONCORDIA

Doyen Faculté des beaux-arts

L'Université Concordia recherche des candidats au poste de doyen de la Faculté des beaux-arts. L'entrée en fonction se fera le 1er juin 1984 pour un mandat de cinq ans renouvelable.

L'actuel doyen prendra sa retraite en 1984 et ne pose donc pas sa candidature.

La Faculté des beaux-arts décèle les grades suivants: BFA, MA in Art Education et MA in Art History; MFA in Studio Arts et Ph.D. in Art Education. Ses disciplines comprennent les arts plastiques, l'enseignement de l'art, la thérapie par l'art, l'histoire de l'art, le cinéma, le design, la photographie, la sculpture, la céramique et les fibres, le théâtre, la musique et la danse. En 1982-1983, l'effectif se composait de 1100 étudiants à temps complet et de 1200 étudiants à temps partiel. La Faculté compte à peu près le même nombre d'étudiants anglophones et francophones.

Il est essentiel que le titulaire du poste puisse participer en français à des réunions, notamment avec des représentants du gouvernement et d'autres universités.

Les candidatures ou les propositions de candidatures, accompagnées de renseignements biographiques, doivent être adressées avant le 1er octobre 1983 au président du Comité de recrutement, M. John S. Daniel, vice-recteur à l'enseignement, Université Concordia, 1455, boulevard de Maisonneuve Ouest, Montréal (Québec) H3G 1M8.