Texts in English

Volume 28, Number 114, March–April–May 1984

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/58903ac

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Publisher(s)
La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN
0042-5435 (print)
1923-3183 (digital)

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In the face of the scope of the questions raised by the development of technology, we cannot remain indifferent to the changes taking place in the domain of communication. Art, particularly, is affected by its relationships with all new forms of technology. Does this dictate means of expression while relying on repetitive mechanical logic or is it manipulated by the users who seek to maximize its possibilities of profit by defusing aesthetic values? In other terms, is technology servant or master in a period when art, aided by additional supports, is rushing toward other conquests? The debate is open one; it is the fight for content which, until now, has received little consideration, so much has the economic, financial and political part dominated the cultural section in the establishment of new technologies. This is also the most important change of direction in art since the appearance of modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century. How then shall we discuss content without taking into account the important transition that has been going on for some years between modernism and post-modernism?

In the United States criticism has not definitively established what it understands by post-modernism. It attempts to define its nature: is it an idea, a movement, a transitory stage, the beginning of another historic period or else simply an idea, a movement, a transitory stage, the beginning of another historic period? The authors, stresses interrogation rather than non-consideration of political and social realities.

Among these authors, Jean Baudrillard is not optimistic when he speaks of the rapture of communication that condemns modern man to the fascination of the screen and the loss of a critical distance. He is particularly troubled about the transfer of the human scale to a system of nucleic matrices, of miniaturization that limits the person to his intellect and a genetic code and that also revolts the notion of a true but useless time; “the instantaneousness of communication has miniaturized our exchanges in a sequence of moments”. He states that all functions have been abolished in one single dimension, that of communication; all secrets, spaces, fields of action destroyed to the benefit of theetic fascination, and he emphasizes that promiscuity, saturation, extremist entreaty create a climate of obscenity that fascinates and which must be endured. Doubtless, we must look for a more comforting view of “what can be a part in technologism, at least contain it, perhaps even reduce it”, according to René Berger, who is also concerned about the effect of technological changes and about the importance of content; he does not wish to make of this a topic of conflict but of “attachment to the value of which art is one of the manifestations and which can help us to put technology in its place and technology at a distance”.

“Whether aesthetic or ethical by nature, value reverts to the fact that action is not the only modality of our existence. Contemplation, dreaming, meditation, interior research, the need to love, to believe, to sacrifice oneself, all of these are tendentious, but we cannot weigh a single weight in the scale of our society enamoured of competition and profit... At the time when humanity and our planet are threatened by the nuclear revolution, the ultimate triumph of technology, nothing is more urgent than to save our imagination from total surrender by breathing into it the sense of respect and wonder. Still more must we learn to look clearly”. And we must hope to make it possible for art to play its part to the full.

Whether it be in an engraving, a painting or a drawing, this message is conveyed in an impressive production. If one line up the four hundred paintings and drawings of large size (55,6 cm by 76,2) in the Kaddish series, the world of the concentration camp is revealed to our eyes. Each of these works is complete in itself. They record half-breaths, sighs of suffocation and posthumous cries: “I have represented only myself, I have lived only in the arms of death”. Jan Menses. These works disclose to us a long interior progress; this is a denunciation, a commentary and a social criticism, a fragment of an atomic future. Kaddish means a sanctification of the innocent, victims of Nazi barbarism. It is also a prayer for the dead, “a cry of hope, of unpainted faces which look forward upward to the deliverer of our souls”. Kaddish is a series of extraordinary drawings and pictures.

Under the pressure of a diabolical obsession, sustained by an impeccable technique, in a purified interior world, Jan Menses painted, drew and outlined the paper of the Klippoth series comprising five hundred new works. These are a continuation of the death theme and are caught in the abyss of agony, a strange atmosphere. This research into the transformation of matter extracts white from blackened leaves and trees the Executioner and the Victim. This moral conflict is without outcome; the elements of evil are the rulers. Klippoth also signifies envelopes, peel, bark or refuse, debris. The spiritual practice consists of working on the destruction of its wrappings. In order to allow the flashing forth of the Divine Light imprisoned within each human being. This is the work done by the Tsadikim. It is by means of this information that drawings of very complex architecture strip away the elements of evil. These places harbour futurist, frantic, robotized persons who are sometimes even exposed to radiation; alone or in reciprocal action, they are divided, abandoned to themselves, bound hand and foot in the face of death. The imprisoned, paralyzed being splits, is reflected, is extended and takes more room under a stylized and geometrized light. A flashing, progressive breadth materializes under our eyes: an appearance of transformation watches the viewer.

Menses remains equal to himself. The many surfaces of lines of different tonality and size are occupied by miniature spheres, comparable to baleful visitors. Apparitions of regular form, like counterbalancing agents of pollution or flying objects like knives cross the parts and the persons. “Each work has a scent of obsessive strangeness” (Jan Menses). The fascination of a formal, senescent and spiritual approach... The viewer must grasp these black, go through his own fears and meet this liberating light on the second plane. In its complexity the Tikkoune series well represents this optimistic path for a monastic elite, by itself alone.

Jan MENSES. Kaddish Series 436, 61 cm x 81,3. Olivacrylic on masonite. (Phot. St. Broth.)
During this exhibition the heedful visitor could thrill to this light of repentance. The continuity and the flow of each theme blend; it is at the sight of this ensemble and through Menses that the shadow of this darkness, this earth, exceeds. "Each time that man purifies himself, he brings back to its true place an atom of uncreated light and advances the messianic time when the divine person will be fully revealed."

Tikkoune is the explosion of life of the black, a spark of transformation of metaphysical matter. This ensemble, the calligraphy of human skeletons, will make a rebirth possible for the human face; it is a glorious message, half warlike, half redeeming. These blacks of atonement give life. The explosion of the second reading, this time on observing the whites, is a luminous cluster. Its dazzling concentration is used in droplets, measured in its wavelength, in the manner of an unearthly mystical scientist. In Menses' drawing the clear distinction between good and evil is the demarcation between white and black. The gestures of the painter, the brush strokes and the lines of the ruler have completely disappeared. It is as though the artist twists each hair in the grain of the paper and penetrates it. The surface of the maté blacks offers the moment of repose for the eye. "All these reflections of silhouettes draw human prototypes in the image of God", says Jan Menses.

The expression of his work is a delight for the eye, a light of concentration nurtured in the ethereal fire of poetry, the quivering reality of a cellular memory, traced in the meaning of black. This significance is indefinable without the presence of this light, whether it be corrosive or beneficial. 1

1. Presented at the Michel Têroux gallery, Montreal, October 1982.

Translation by Mildred Grand

ROBERT MOTHERWELL:
ART CHARGED WITH FEELING
By Helen DUFFY

A major Robert Motherwell retrospective exhibition, arranged by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, opened in Buffalo, N.Y. on October 1, 1983. It will travel to four American museums before ending its tour at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, from December 7, 1984 to February 3, 1985. This is the artist's tenth retrospective in twenty-four years, and it brings together ninety-two oil and acrylic paintings and collages on canvas, board and paper, created between 1941 and 1982. The conventional scaffolding of such presentations has become perhaps the most suitable framework for assessing the broad repertory of his oeuvre, which calls for periodical summing up on a grand scale.

Once the youngest member of the group whose name he coined, The New York School, Motherwell is—with Lee Krasner and Willem De Kooning—one of the few still active key figures of an Abstract Expressionist movement that included fellow painter such as (in alphabetical order) William Baziotes, Arshile Gorky, Franz Kline, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, David Smith and Clyfford Still, all no longer living. He stands at the center of a circle that has not closed and his art today springs from the same inexhaustible resources of feeling and sensibility, kept alive by his ideology and attitude.

Motherwell (born 1915 in Aberdeen, Washington), painter, collagist, printmaker, art historian and editor, is well known in Canada where his influence on younger artists was particularly strong during the 1950's. With its unique fusion of refined lyricism, acute form-sense and calligraphic ease of line, Motherwell's abstract imagery lent itself to imitation more readily than is commonly supposed. It is our loss that this exceptional show will not cross the border to provide the kind of perspective that is difficult to gain from textbooks.

The artist's vocation as a writer and critic, his facility in communicating the central concerns of modernism with clarity and conviction, was part of his early success. An outspoken internationalist with a thorough knowledge of Western history and culture, he formed the vital link between European expatriate painters in New York and a small circle of American sympathizers during the war years, when such a rapprochement was of crucial importance. In his words: "When I started out, all but a few were against abstraction painting. The art world, as it was then, hated it. But the university world was very interested in what we were doing. Since I knew how to talk about it (I had originally been trained in philosophy) I was given, by default, the office of spokesman for the Abstract Expressionists, especially in the university world."

Motherwell was twenty-seven when he abandoned university studies (and his doctoral thesis on Delacroix's journals) in favour of painting. Two years later, in 1944, he had his first mature solo exhibition at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery in New York, and was appointed first director, then general editor of "The Documents of 20th-Century Art" series. In this capacity, he introduced writings by outstanding figures in art and literature (Apollinaire, Mondrian, Hans Arp, Max Ernst and others) often translated into English from European texts. The slim, sparsely illustrated paperbacks reached a wide public long before New American Painting and the New York style by excellence began to attract world attention.

This retrospective exhibition concentrates on major works selected to "reveal the origins, nuances and stylistic changes with which the artist has dealt in his substantial and long career."

Included are paintings from principal series such as Spanish Elegies; Open; In Plato's Cave; The Blue Painting Lesson; Je t'aime, and A la Pintura. To Motherwell, subject matter has always been crucial, and creating in open-ended series is a ritualized experience that cannot be confused with so-called "serial painting." A particu-

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Mexican Night, 1977
Acrylic on canvas; 121 cm x 121.9 cm
Coll. Douglas S. Cramer, Los Angeles, California (Phot. Albright-Knox Art Gallery)

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Agendart

MONTREAL

MUSEE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTREAL, 3400, avenue du Musee.
Jusqu'en 1er avril: Alex Coolecule, Jusqu'au 22 avril: Eddyco Eddyco.
Du 13 au 3 juin: T&T; Du 19 mai au 19 juin: L'Or, Galerie de nouvelle sculpture contemporaine.
Du 22 juin au 23 septembre: Bourgeoise.

MUSEE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN, Chateau du Havre.

MUSEE MCCORD, 600, rue Sherbrooke Ouest.
Du 4 avril au 5 mai: Conversation avec des Loubophores canadiens de la Colombie-Britannique.

MUSEE D'ART DE SAINT-LAURENT, 615, boulva Saint-Laurent.
Jusqu'au 8 Juillet: Piers et peintres dans l'art quebecois; Du 1er avril au 24 juin: Art et technique de l'orfèvrerie aux 18' et 19e siecles; Du 2 au 16 mai au 8 Juillet: Les recuperations de Jean-Claude Jacob.

MUSEE DES ARTS DECORATIFS, Angle du boulevard Pie-IX et de la rue Sherbrooke.

GALERIE DES H.E.C., Universite de Montreal, 5255, avenue Duquesne.
Du 15 mars au 4 avril: Alliance - 100 ans d'histoire (objets et photographies). Du 8 avril au 5 mai: Leonia Valley, Photographies.

GALERIE CANADIANE DES METIERS, 3255, rue Kent.

INSTITUT GOETHE - Centre culturel allemand, Edifice Bonaventure.

ARTICLE, 4060, boulevard Saint-Laurent.
Du 4 au 22 avril: Aspects of Theory and Artifice, Exhibition collective: Du 5 au 26 mai: Bernard Chauffoud; Eclaire; Louise Lippe Chaudron; Du 2 au 29 avril: Bill Sib, Markham; Photographies. Du 29 mai au 17 juin: Francine Messier; Peintures.

GALERIE AUBES, 3935, rue Saint-Denis.
Du 5 au 21 mai: Pierre Bruneau, Dessins et peintures. "l'azur et l'onde communient", "le vierge, le swan, et le bel aujourd'hui".

OPTICA, 3981, boulevard Saint-Laurent, suite 501.

GALERIE LES OEUX B, 4872, rue Saint-Denis.
Jusqu'au 1er avril: Album Tavolino, Photographies d'Alain Carmou, et texte de Philippe Carmou; Du 4 au 24 avril: Wendy Northwest; Gravures; Du 1er avril au 3 juin: Pierre Beauregard, Acrylques sur toile et sur paper.

GALERIE JOLLUT, 279, rue Sherbrooke Ouest.
Du 7 au 31 mai: Judith Reigl; Andre Martin, Du 4 au 28 avril: Claude Proulx, Oeuvres recentes; Du 6 au 20 mai: Alain Lefrancois.

GALERIE STUDIO J. YAHUDA MEIR, 2166, rue de la Montagne.

GALERIE NOUVELLE, 307, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, suite 505.

GALERIE CHOI, 3981, boulevard Saint-Laurent.

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