PROGRESS IN ART
By Andrée PARADIS

There is a close connection between art and culture: that of the evolution of artistic expression. If the arts change with time, it is because the cultures to which they belong also change. And the times themselves determine general characteristics easily observed in the expression of different cultures. Thus Wölfflin points out that a head by Holbein, without the national imprint being erased, will always in principle resemble the drawing of an Italian contemporary, Michelangelo for instance, simply because both are of the same century.

In the second millenary Greece, especially the city of Mycenae, was strongly influenced by the Cretan culture. Then occurred the great invasions and the formation of the Hellenic civilization that gave birth to a new art of more human proportions, an art created by and for man, which developed in a parallel direction to Greek thought. In the 6th century B.C., it was at Athens, a city of Attica, that the greatest and the most amazing revolution in the history of art took place, which from then on marked all Western civilization and to which we are still indebted today. Greek artists of that era admired the civilizations and to which we are still indebted to this day. Greek artists of that era admired the civilizations.

Greek society did not impose the same constraints on its people as Egyptian society did, which prided itself on a close connection between art and science and technological thought. But art lives also from intuition, a reality that, according to Piaget, is a chief means of knowledge and has the properties of a forerunner in its best experiments. Finally, the debate remains whole.

In the twentieth century the great adventure of art unfolded side by side, no longer only with the action of philosophical thought but with that of scientific and technological thought. This brought about a fruitful artistic revolution, doubtless the most important since those of Greece and the Renaissance. To the revolution of the gaze was added that of a new language. The exuberant Greek artist was the first to dare to question, once engaged in experimentation of forms with everything that this spirit of discovery requires of success and failure, and put to work new ideas and a process of innovation taken up later by artists of all the generations.

The question of quality not only in art but never surpassed by the best works of the ancient precepts. Greek society did not impose the same constraints on its people as Egyptian society did, which prided itself on a more perfect, more hieratic art. The exuberant Greek artist was the first to dare to question, once engaged in experimentation of forms with everything that this spirit of discovery requires of success and failure, and put to work new ideas and a process of innovation taken up later by artists of all the generations.

In the twentieth century the great adventure of art unfolded side by side, no longer only with the action of philosophical thought but with that of scientific and technological thought. This brought about a fruitful artistic revolution, doubtless the most important since those of Greece and the Renaissance. To the revolution of the gaze was added that of a new language established in favour of the fulgurant development of the human sciences. Nevertheless, an interrogation was soon to arise. Science continually refines on experiments and discoveries: it progresses. But can we speak of progress in art when history has firmly established the everlasting ingenuity of masterpieces that can be equalled but never surpassed by the best works of the present and the future? Suzi Gablik approached this problem by considering the history of art as an unceasing history where it is possible to introduce the notion of progress, not in the analysis of a movement rising toward more beauty, more perfection the question of quality not being involved, given the subjective character of aesthetic judgments, but in the structure of artistic development. Her approach to examination is intimately linked to the path of knowledge. She believes that art has evolved from a series of cognitive stages, that it can be considered the element of transformation of the ways of thought through time and that the dynamics of stylistic changes can be explained, at least in part, by the delineation of the growth of knowledge.

Future histories of art will be written, we can imagine, with this concern for placing art as an integral part of the development of civilizations, since it is one of its chief means of knowledge and has the properties of a forerunner in its best experiments. Finally, the debate remains whole.

For many persons it is quite out of the question to speak of true progress in art, each period having its plenitude of excellence. On the other hand, progress in the knowledge of art and its functioning opens new perspectives on the creative act itself that results from many achievements and from a will to transform the perception of reality according to its structures and its share of intuition, a reality that, according to Piaget, is an unceasing history where it is possible to introduce the notion of progress, not in the analysis of a movement rising toward more beauty, more perfection the question of quality not being involved, given the subjective character of aesthetic judgments, but in the structure of artistic development. Her approach to examination is intimately linked to the path of knowledge. She believes that art has evolved from a series of cognitive stages, that it can be considered the element of transformation of the ways of thought through time and that the dynamics of stylistic changes can be explained, at least in part, by the delineation of the growth of knowledge.