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Summaries of the Articles

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SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES
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Claude Beaulieu

The presence of Egypt

There is an immense distance that separates us from Egypt and perhaps because of this great gap in time and space some of our officials may have failed to heed the appeal of UNESCO to safeguard the ancient monuments of that far-away land. Yet time and space have done nothing to lessen the influence that Egyptian art has exerted since its beginnings. Full of a mute beauty, its presence has a mysterious quality about it (this was so even in the days of ancient Greece) and it fascinates us. If proof of its appeal here is needed, it may be found in the fact that great throngs of people visited the exhibition that toured Montreal, Toronto and Quebec.

Marcel Breuer, in his preface to the work of Jean Louis de Cenival on Egypt, points out that one of the basic elements of Egyptian art is one that is present in contemporary trends. The element is simplicity. Look lovingly at the photographs that illustrate this current edition. They underline a spirituality in a world of art that may never again be equaled. They are a sampling of a great heritage—one that belongs to the whole of humanity.

Winifred Needler

The pyramid age

We live in an age of unprecedented engineering wonders and yet today, after more than 45 centuries, the Egyptian pyramids remain among the most wonderful works of man. It is a matter of record that the greater of them, the tomb of King Cheops (about 2600 B.C.) stood more than 483 feet high.

Almost nothing is known about the living people of this age except for the great tombs of the nobles who, through royal favor, were buried close to the king. Cities and palaces, built mainly of sun-dried brick and wood, have been entirely destroyed. But thanks to a religious tradition which produced living portraits of the tomb owner and wall-pictures representing scenes from his daily life, we now possess a vivid record not only of the aristocracy but of the ordinary people and animals.

We have here, as examples of the informative art, a statue and two pieces of wall sculpture from the tomb of Metjetjy, a high official who served under King Unas in the 21st century B.C. The fine statue of Metjetjy in the Brooklyn Museum represents him as an elderly man. The remarkable portraiture can best be appreciated when it is remembered that the ancient Egyptian sculptor generally concentrated his efforts to capture personality on the head alone, conceiving the rest of the figure as a mere symbol of his continued existence after death according to long-established tradition. In this statue some of the arresting individuality of the head seems to be carried over into the whole work.

One in the Nelson Gallery of Kansas City is clearly a portrait of the same man. One in the Boston Museum and a second, exceptionally well preserved, statue in Brooklyn are faultlessly executed but conventional representations, so idealized and impersonal that identification would be impossible except for the name and titles inscribed upon their bases.

The larger of two pieces of wall sculpture from Metjetjy's tomb in the Royal Ontario Museum again represents Metjetjy in a traditional position. Nevertheless, the two figures are delicately carved in relief and the bottoms of the hieroglyphs are filled with incised detail.

The second piece of relief-sculpture in the Royal Ontario Museum gives us a hint of the lively world of daily life which formed an all-over pattern, in horizontal bands of brightly colored bas-relief, on the walls of Meretiwy's tomb-chapel. Technically, it is not quite as fine as the larger piece since more care was expended on the figures of the owner. But the rhythm and liveliness of the composition, of which this is but a small fragment of one scene, compensate for any lack of technical virtuosity.

Labib Habachi

Thebes-Karnak

The visitors to the ruins of Thebes, arriving by Loukso by plane, boat or car may, by facing the north, see a considerable number of the buildings. But it is only after walking around among the ruins, where he can easily get lost in the maze of rooms and courtyards, that he becomes aware of the magnificence of the colossus, the obelisks, the towers and the porticos. He is struck by the beauty of the reliefs and inscriptions covering nearly all the surfaces of the various monuments.

This is Karnak, Karnak with its temples spread over an area of about 200 acres. The ensemble, erected during a period of more than 2,000 years, underwent a number of additions and modifications when Thebes was the capital of Egypt. Race were the kings who, during these 20 centuries, did not contribute to the architectural history of Karnak by building a temple or a monument dedicated to Amon, god of Thebes who became Amon-Re, king of the gods of the Middle Empire.

These additions made Karnak a vast complex. Its most important section includes the Grand Temple, or Temple of Amon-Re, in the center; the secondary temples of Montou, his wife, and Khonsou, their son, in the south; and that of Montou, the old god of Thebes in the north. These buildings could enclose several edifices which impress us with their size, such as St. Paul's Cathedral and Notre Dame in Paris.

During these many centuries, from 2050 to 30 B.C., the history of Egypt was recorded in the monuments of Thebes and Karnak, where there are reminders of a period that precedes even this. Even as late as the early years of the Christian era, some buildings were added. In the fourth century, Christians made use of some buildings as churches. After this, Karnak slept quietly until the middle of the last century when discoveries were made by Auguste Mariette. In this century, dynamic men like Legrain, Pillet, Chevrier, Abu-el-Naga, Lutf, Sobhi and Ibrahim have done much to restore the beauty that once was ancient Egypt.

Shafik Farid

Tell Basta

Southeast of the city of Zagazig, in the oriental section of the delta of the Nile, lies Tell Basta. It is situated on the site of the celebrated centre of antiquity. Per-Baster (House of the goddess Bastet), the city designated in the Bible as Pi-Beseth. The name is derived from Bubastis, the name the Greeks gave it to this city.

This city was once the centre of a cult dedicated to the great goddess Bastet, symbolized by the cat or again by a woman with the head of a cat. Bastet always represented the beneficence and tender warmth of the sun while the goddess Sekhmet was a symbol of destruction and detrimental forces.

Bubastis, whose history goes back to the most ancient period of Egypt, was an important city and a favorite of the twenty-second...
dynasty — the period of the Libyan pharaohs (256-730 B.C.) who made it their capital. During the lower empire, the Baster cult became particularly popular. The ceremonies which were held in its grand temple attracted great crowds from all over Egypt. Because of its geographical location, Bubastis was the key centre of the delta and was the object of invasions, notably that of the Hyksos who destroyed several buildings.

Several archaeologists, both Egyptian and foreign, became interested in Bubastis and searched by the Swiss archaeologist Naville between 1875 and 1889 turned up the ruins of the temple of the goddess Bastet, the biggest part of which is in granite. The origins of this temple go back to the time of the building of the pyramids. Many of the statues, sacrificial tables, jewels and funeral objects retrieved from this city will soon be on permanent exhibition in the municipal museum of Zagazig.

fayoum

ATTEYA HABACHI

For the traveller who, from his train or car window, sees these verdant groves after the seemingly endless and desert, Fayoum is a smiling, hospitable oasis. Appearing like a mirage among the seats of the desert, it bursts on to the view with the green of its palm trees, the brighter green of its fields, the serene blue of its skies, and the glistening yellow and gold of its sands.

This is the beautiful Alf Yom (thousand days in Arabic). According to this folkloristic and ancient manuscript, the king Rayan (Amenemhat the Third to the Arabs), urged on by the jealous courtiers of Joseph, ordered the latter to improve the basin of El Hun (Fayoum) which was simply a big marsh in which flowed the waters of its tributaries in which were entirely by his courtiers of Joseph. This three canals which emptied into Lake Karoun (Moeris, as it was known in antiquity.) El Hun thus became a well-irrigated province. The ancient king asked Joseph how long it had taken him to do this work and Joseph replied that it had taken 100 days. The king then told his courtiers, "It should have taken 1,000 days to accomplish a work like this." It was then that El Hun became Alf Yom (a thousand days).

The canal which today runs serpent-like in the streets of Fayoum has retained the name of Joseph. It is called Bahr Youssef (the Sea of Joseph) and in certain villages where the canal passes the water has curing powers.

On the map, Fayoum has the shape of a vine-leaf. Its land is celebrated for its fertility and in ancient times, it was known as the granary of Egypt. In the little valleys, little streams cascade down to join the fertile land. One of the most picturesque sites in the region is on the road between Fayoum and the lake. It is called Celline, a little village renowned for the beauty of its gardens. The lake itself is an excellent tourist area for hunters and anglers and for those who simply seek a pleasant, quiet place. For everyone, however, it is an undeniable source of inspiration.

alexandria

ANDRÉ BERNAND

With poetics like Cavafis and novelists like L. Durrell, Alexandria is no longer regarded by the honest man of modern times as a heep of ruins whose only appeal is to those people who are specialists in this sort of thing. Neither is it any longer considered a chapter of ancient history sandwiched between the classic Greek and the Roman Empire.

The ancient people called it Alexandria ad Aegyptum — or Alexandria, near Egypt. Very close but very different from the Egyptian colossus, this city on the Mediterranean was represented on ancient monuments by figures which leave no doubt as to the ambitions and strength of the centre.

For example, a mosaic of Thmouis, a city of the delta of the Nile, presents Alexandria in the form of a woman, crowned with a warship and holding a kind of rudder in her hand. Again, a silver pin in the Louvre Museum, found near Bostocera, shows Alexandria as a woman with a piece of elephant skin on her head, a serpent at the diadem and holding a horn of plenty. She is surrounded by the things that symbolize her strength, the moon, the sun, the image of Dionysos and that of Hercules. Here then, in all her glory, was the daughter of Alexander the Great, mistress of the seas and sovereign of Egypt.

Alexandria came to life in an area considered least practical as the site of a capital but perhaps there was never a city as rich as this. With a low shoreline and without promontory, Alexandria may be seen only as the ship enters the port and not before. From the air, one is astonished to discover that a capital could be squeezed into this space between the sea and Lake Mariout.

Alexandria and Lagos, as Claire Preaux wrote, formed part of what might be termed a society for the exploitation of Egypt and Alexandrian businessmen and others favored the king from their profits. In return, the king guaranteed them privileges and opened to Alexandrians the channels of commerce with the Greeks, the Africans and the Arabians. The king's money was the money of Alexandria, a fact which allowed for the strict control of wealth. This was an immense sum of money since all the products of Egypt and of the countries beyond passed through the capital.

eyptian fabrics

GEORGETTE C. DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

Search back into the history of the fabrics of Egypt, one finds the most colorful, most expressive view of the day-to-day life of the ancient land through its various historical periods. The dry, sandy soil of Egypt made it possible for the materials to survive down to our present day.

Egypt was celebrated for its decorative fabrics in the early days of history and reference is made to them by the elder Pliny. The oldest of the materials of the pharaohs are fragments of cloth found in the tomb of Thoutmose and a robe belonging to Tutankhamen. Lotus and papyrus decorated the materials with vivid colors. Reds and blues were the dominating colors. The artists of the pharaohs made their techniques known to their descendants.

Through its different historical periods, Egypt was subjected to a number of influences and these left mark on the art of the fabric. Weaving remained popular and fine, colored cotton is to be found in all the rural areas. Tapestry-making workshops flourished in Cairo and in the villages of upper Egypt.

The best-known work today is that of Rameses Wissa Wassef at Haratana. In a rural atelier, not far from Cairo but in the country, children come to weave. Without the benefit of drawings, and doing nothing but following the images in their minds, they create what they have seen and what they enjoy most. They call to the market places, the various harvests and such events as the traditional holidays. Their works, full of poetry and tenderness, suggest that their art form is a permanent one.

marchelle fennon

HERTA WESCHER

In a period of general confusion such as exists today in the world of art, where contradictory movements follow one another in rapid succession, artists like Marcelle Ferron, faithful to their chosen methods of expression, have an important role to fulfill. Their continuing work assumes the organic development of art itself.

Non-figurativeness, to which Marcelle Ferron dedicated herself at the decisive moment of her career, is a form of art which allows her to express the things that are dearest to her heart. By the variances and the nuances she introduces from time to time, she continuously enriches something new and convincing. One hesitates to describe her works as abstracts because there are so many vital forces at play in them.

The essential element of this painting is its color and here the artist excels, effecting a full range of subtle and fascinating shades. She knows how to mix the ingredients on her palette and gives her canvases a strange luminosity. She knows the secret, too, of balancing the various tone qualities and the result is a striking freshness.

In her works, Marcelle Ferron gives expression to all of her feelings. For her, painting is a means of conquering the vicissitudes of life and of creating an independent world of her own. The artist has been in Paris for some years and her work is part of the School of Paris but she maintains a constant awareness of her own country of origin.

mondriaan

FERNANDE SAINT-MARTIN

Abstract art was virtually born with Mondrian. After the pioneer work of Delaunay, Kandinsky and Malevich, Mondrian stepped in as the first artist to establish the base lines for the development of the abstract form.

The importance of his work, seen in retrospect this year in Toronto, Philadelphia and The Hague, should finally dispose of the many cliches which still surround this artist. He emerges as the most important artist of the century. Organized by Prof. Robert Welch, of the department of fine arts of the University of Toronto, the exhibition is one of the most complete ever presented of the artist, including as it does most of the key works that mark his development as a painter.

The catalogue of the exhibition, carefully prepared, should become an indispensable document for an understanding of Mondrian. In addition, it should serve as a blueprint for the presentation and explanation of new works.
Mondrian may be compared with the great painter of the Renaissance who defined the laws of perspective and established a new concept of pictorial space. Mondrian, too, sought a new concept of pictorial space with some newly-invented elements of non-Euclidian geometry.

Mondrian's basic elements were particularly rich in possibilities. The majority of the works from his naturalistic period, however, remain ambiguous. They express a spatial intuition which cannot be projected into the preconceived schemes of figurative painting. Within a remarkably short period of time, between 1909 and 1913, Mondrian assimilated Van Gogh, Cezanne, Monet, fauvism and cubism to become a resolutely 'modern' painter. But the elements of cubism with which he experimented in Holland in 1913 are the vertebral and the horizontal; and, in contrast to French cubism, these structures tend to cover and take possession of the entire surface of his canvass.

Mondrian's major works include his Lozenge With Grey Lines, 1918; Composition Number 2 With Black Lines 1930; and Composition with Yellow Lines, 1943. The artist, however, reaches full maturity in his 1941-1942 work entitled New York City.

Quebec collections

MICHEL CHAMPAGNE

An exhibition made up of five important Quebec collections of work by George Morisset, Jean Paule Lemieux, Lucien Maligny, Jean Soucy and Jean des Gagniers—was organized by the Quebec Museum. Nostalgic in the show were some Canadian silver pieces by Amyot, Lambert, Sainteau, Leperance and Beauregard, a splendid sculpture by Lavoie, and some lovely pieces of sculpture from the Canadian School. There was also a superb commonplace. In addition, there were works by Pelland, Borduas, Cosgrove, Riopelle, Lemieux, Dallaire, Fichet and Jordi Bonet.

Eskaio art

M. C.

The first centre of Eskimo art in the country has been opened in the historic Thompson House at 4 Rueille du Surrenines in Quebec. Eskimo works will be sold but the centre is primarily an art gallery where sculptors and engravers will be able to show their work. Exhibitions will be held about every three weeks and will give visitors an opportunity to meet the best Eskimos and study their styles and techniques. This centre will act as a meeting place for Eskimos from all over who are visiting Quebec.

Sabine Poulin

M. C.

The first one-man show of the poet-painter Sabine Poulin was held in March at the Galerie Zanettin. What impressed us was the exciting work evident in most of the canvasses. One might even have thought it was the only difference to the various subjects, was excellent. When he gets more sombre colors and his calmer subjects, was excellent. The paintings of Billmeier at the Art Français could be the reflection of three seasons in the life of a North. The artist's winter works, bright and nostalgic, include such pieces as Neige sur le Couteau, Neige Haute, l'Hermine d'un Bateau, Lac Sartanak. Billmeier takes us to the summers lands with such works as Haute Altitude, and Night Skating. Eight artists figured in a wide-ranging exhibition held at the Galerie Soixante. There were works by Leduc, Ferron, Le Feucre, Allee, Lenet, Mousseau, Dumouchel and Champagne and all of them were good choices. Allee was effervescent in his works, all of which were very much from and this is engaging. When he gets into his gray thins and his browns, however, he is less interesting.

Fernand Leduc

M. C.

The Quebec Museum this year inaugurated its Festival du Printemps (Spring Festival or Spring Show) by showing the large-scale works of Fernand Leduc. I must say that I always visit a plastic show with some misgiving but there was a veritable breath of spring in his canvasses, a technique producing a weak effect. There were also

Survey retrospective

M. C.

A sort of small-scale retrospective of the work of Philip Surrey was held in the Morrice gallery of the Quebec Museum. Most of the works came from private collections. Surrey has devoted himself to painting the city in which he lives and which he loves and it is as though his eyes were camera lenses. He absorbs things and reproduces them in a very personal way. This exhibition was an excellent event since Surrey had never exhibited there before. It was an opportunity for the Quebec public to make contact with him.

Gamache-Lacroix

M. C.

In March, the National Gallery of Canada presented a travelling exhibition made up of the works of two Canadian artists, Jeanine Gamache and Paul Lacroix, at the Académie de Quebec. There was little new to be-noted with Gamache. She is a promising painter, however, and better work may be hoped for. The Lacroix works were very poetic and of special interest was a vegetable gum such as Vendemiaire, l'Escloison de la Bouche and Brumaire.

Art for the public

CLAUDRE-LYSE GAGNON

When we enter an art gallery, we lower our voices, tread softly and often feel quite ill at ease. Why should this be? It is so partly because, between exhibitions, the galleries are nearly always deserted, and partly because we expect to meet only the experts and the connoisseurs in them.

Yet we are not on hallowed museum ground. There is as much difference between a gallery and a museum as there is between a book store and a public library. And speaking of books, there is a lesson to be learned here. The effort put forward to promote books has been so strikingly successful that the last Salon du Livre, organized by the Conseil Superieur du Livre and supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs, got bigger attendance than did the Sportsman's Show.

With this as an example, we should consider the situation in painting. Why not organize a salon of painting in the same way, in a popular place such as the Show Mart and with a proper publicity program? It would obviously take some years before a salon of art could attain the success of the Salon du Livre. Twenty years perhaps. We know who would win out.

The general public today does not know the artists and their works. If the Show Mart, for example, displayed hundreds of canvases and invited the people to go, a whole new field would be opened. For one thing, the galleries would benefit. There would be a good many more visitors.

Three Montreal Galleries

C.-L. G.

La Galerie l'Art Vivant held an exhibition of the recent works of Georges St. Pierre in May. Born in Chicoutimi, St. Pierre abandoned a career as a bank clerk to devote himself to painting. For him is a means of self-expression and if it is figurative in form, he is inadvertently so. His motives are deep and creative. He is aware that one who creates must not be guided by sensations and emotions. A creative person must explore every field.

Gino Lucini

REA MONTBIZON

An exhibition of the works of Gino Lucini was held in mid-March at the Galerie Ayres Lefort and no sooner had his structural reliefs in aluminum and plastics been up than the reports came in on the numerous constructivist exhibitions that preceded and coincided with the Gabo retrospective at the Tate Gallery in London. Basically, what this artist (he makes his home in Pointe Claire and is an art instructor at MacDonald College) does is a dialogue in esthetics, pure and simple. He builds reliefs composed of elements in polished aluminum, narrow blades, broader rods and hollow tubing.
madsam jean walter  

Everyone is in agreement that it is an exhibition quite unlike any other. Through an extraordinary set of circumstances, 145 canvases belonging to the collection of Mrs. Jean Walter have been brought together in the specially redecorated Orangerie. Mrs. Walter's gesture, an exceptional gift to the Louvre, makes it possible for 3,000 visitors a day to admire the masters of the French school from Renoir to Picasso.

The originator of the collection, Paul Guillaume, the first husband of Mssrs. Walter, was said by Max Jacob to have determined at the age of 18 what would be accepted during the century, and the contradictions in his personality come to the surface in this exhibition.

Which works are generally liked? They are the Cezannes, among the surviving works of Madame Cezanne and some noteworthy landscapes and still lifes; six magnificent Picassos and nine "D'ouen" Rousseaus; the Soutines; and in a corner, three superb landscapes, a Sisley, a Monet and a Gauguin. And just beyond these one notices a blue landscape by Renoir, rich, deep and beautiful.

negro art  

MARIE-M. AZARD

The World Festival of Negro Art, a show which for the first time in history represents the artistic efforts of an entire continent, opened in April at Dakar. The exhibition, consisting of between 600 and 800 works of sculpture and painting, together, it is in Paris where it opened in the Grand Palais on June 1. (It closes next October.) The works on display provide an exceptional look at the negro artistic contribution both in ancient and in modern times.

modern painting in egypt  

LUCILE OUIMET

La Peinture Moderne en Egypte, published by Les Editions Nouvelles, Cairo, in 1961, merits special note. The author, Aime Azar, dedicated 10 years of his life to the subject and the result is a studious work covering the period from 1927 to 1961. The work has a preface by Cyril de Baux and an introduction by the author. There are 203 reproductions of canvasses in black and white accompanying the text.

william stevenson smith  

L. O.

A new book by the celebrated authority on Egypt, William Stevenson Smith, curator of the Egyptian art section of the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston and the man in charge of the Egyptian art course at Harvard University, has been published by New Haven and London, Yale University Press. (It is distributed by the McGill University Press.) The book, Interconnections in the Ancient Near East, is a remarkable work dealing with the interaction of the arts in Egypt and the neighboring countries.

egyptian architecture  

JACQUES FOLCH

The Office du Livre of Fribourg has published a series of books under the general title of Architecture Universelle. The books are well written and well illustrated and are among the best of their kind. Readers will be particularly interested in one of this series, a volume called Egypte, Epoque Pharaonique. Jean Louis de Cenival's text is excellent, touching on a wide range of aspects of the Egyptian genius in history and civilization. The book has a preface by Marcel Breuer, the noted American architect.

quebec-antique  

M.C.

A new publication for collectors and lovers of art works has made its appearance in Quebec. It is called Quebec-Antique and it deals with a wide variety of subjects of historical interest such as houses, furniture, dishes, toys, arms, clocks, pottery, hardware and woven articles. In the near future, the publication will provide a price list as an aid to collectors and will also list means of distinguishing valuable pieces. It is one of the first publications of its kind in Quebec.

bach concertos  

CLAUDE GINGERAS

Three new complete recordings of the six Brandenburg Concertos of John Sebastian Bach have been released almost simultaneously. Two of these recordings were done under the direction of two of the most distinguished musicians of the day, Herbert von Karajan and Pablo Casals. The third features Friedrich Tiedgart and the Chamber Orchestra (??) of Southwest Germany, a conductor and an orchestra unknown in America. The Karajan version has been released by Deutsche Grammophon, the Casals by Columbia; and the Tiedgart by RCA Victor.