Translations/Traductions

Yvonne Kirbyson, Lucile Ouimet et Pierre W. Desjardins

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The National Arts Centre owns its inception to the National Capital Arts Alliance which was founded in February 1963 and soon after embodied approximately 65 art organizations within the National Capital region. In June of that year the Alliance invited Dominion Consultants Associates to study the feasibility of creating a national centre for the performing arts. The report which followed — the so-called Brown Book — was submitted to the Prime Minister in November, and on December 23, Mr. Pearson announced acceptance in principle of its two key recommendations: the creation of a national performing arts centre in Ottawa, and the organization therein of an annual national festival, as the major centennial project of the Federal Government in the National Capital.

An inter-ministerial committee was then created, its task was to point the way to the achievement of the objectives of the project until an appropriate agency had been created. The committee reported directly to the Secretary of State. The appointment of a Coordinator — Mr. G. Hamilton Southam on secondment from the Department of External Affairs — and the choice of the National Capital architectural firm of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, Sise were among the committee’s first recommendations to be accepted. In February 1964 the Prime Minister announced that the building was to be erected on Confederation Square, a central location made possible by a most generous gift of land by the City of Ottawa. At the same time the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State announced the setting up of advisory committees on operations, on music, opera and ballet, on theatre, and on the visual arts. The role of these committees was to analyze the Brown Book in detail and to make appropriate recommendations to the Coordinator. In January 1965 construction work was begun under the direction of the Department of Public Works. The completion date was set for December 1968.

The first function of the Board of Trustees was to meet in Ottawa on March 8th, and 9th, under the chairmanship of Mr. Lawrence Freiman, to determine that the Director, Mr. G. Hamilton Southam, should bear the title of Director-General. More than anyone else, Mr. Southam was the animator of the project that he brought to completion. He wanted to give the capital the prestigious dimension that it had lacked: a centre propitious to the development of artistic talent, an "open" centre that would symbolize friendship and cooperation and which would arouse new national pride.

The opening of the National Arts Centre on May 31, 1969 is an event that involves all of us.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Architecture at the National Arts Centre

On May 31, 1969, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa was officially opened. Erected in the centre of the city on 6½ acres of land at a cost of $46 million, the complex is the first actual sign of an intent to endow the capital with the cultural and social facilities that had always been lacking there.

Following representations and studies undertaken by the national capital’s Arts Alliance, the Canadian government entrusted the preparation of the building plans to the architectural firm of Desbarats, Affleck, Southam and Kounovsky. Two key recommendations of the study were: the main auditorium on one floor, the view of the solution was not an easy one, for with the exception of the fairly widespread neo-Gothic style, the city had almost no architectural tradition or, "à fortiori", a cultural tradition. The problem that was set and the conditions to be met could be summarized as follows:

The problem is that of knowing what we might have done if . . . we had done otherwise, but of setting in motion what already exists, making a maximum use of artistic potential, and of involving new sectors of the public. Decentralization will, logically, take place in the wake of strong centralization. Europe with its deeply-rooted cultures attains this with difficulty; its modest results, although interesting, are based on old foundations. We still have to develop the source of all our future influence.

Finally the tone is an optimistic one. If it has been possible to find the sums needed for the construction of theatre and art centres, the people responsible for cultural policies will certainly find ways to assure the proper operation of artistic activities. They would not be able to disappoint two million Canadian art enthusiasts who expect a great deal from the artistic climate in which they would like to live. They sometimes dream, during periods of austerity, of a trans-Canadian road that would be bordered with monumental sculptures. A vast country needs such forcefulness.

TRANSLATIONS/TRADUCTIONS

The Integration of the arts, a permanent debate

BY ANDRÉE PARADIS

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(1) To create an Arts Centre answering to the expressed or latent needs of a population of 400,000 people.

(2) To equip this centre in such a way as to make it suitable to become one of the most representative centres of artistic life in Canada.

(3) To integrate the building, if possible, into the extremely characterized but dissimilar elements that surround it.

(4) To make this centre a starting-point for urban renewal of the city centre.

The building had to integrate, while unifying, the following facilities: a 2300 seat theatre and opera, an 800 seat theatre with Italian or Elizabethan stage, a 300 seat experimental production studio, a reception hall that could be used for recitals, a large restaurant, a coffee shop, administrative and service facilities, an underground garage, and finally a snack-bar and a street of shops.

Six years after the first efforts were made by the Arts Alliance, the public is able to take an admiring look at what is an incontestable architectural success, considering its complexity and the limitations of the programme.

Although its mass is imposing, the building remains unobtrusive due to the once supple and vivacious modulation of its walls built in an hexagonal form. We rediscover these hexagons or their components strictly respected in the slightest details: in the prefabricated elements of a hanging ceiling or in the unexpected volume of the elevator cars. It is again due to the possibilities of the design and following the windings of an uneven ground that a foyer, which is largely glassed-in, connects the hermetically sealed blocks of the auditoriums and, according to the areas of intersecting traffic flows and the lounge areas, is expanded by extending into public terraces above the spotlights, the amazing sound-proofing by canals.

Austere and sobre outside, retired within itself, the interior of the building displays a luxury and a multitude of harmonious colours.

The opera and concert hall in particular — the most carefully done of the areas within the complex — presents qualities that are not always met again to the same extent elsewhere in the building. The choice of colours with dominating red and gold, the arrangement of the spotlights, the amazing sound-proofing by Julien Hébert and, in another respect, the theatre curtain by Micheline Beauchemin, contribute harmoniously to make this immense warm, and almost intimate hall one of the most successful of the new concert halls.

Unfortunately, although one cannot but admire the sumptuous door by Jodl Bonnet or the fascinating asymmetrical aluminium sculpture by Gino Lorcan, one deplores the fact that there was not more often a really successful integration of the decorative work with the architectural volume.

Culminating an endeavour that was carried on with a single inspiration and by the same architect, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa presents an undeniably advantageous homogeneity which does not exist in most other comparable centres that have been built recently. Without being revolutionary or even particularly original, this work, executed with taste and sobriety should be carefully considered. It is to be hoped that within the area of its influence it will serve to strip away from new building the gangue of fashionable sentimentality with which it has been coated since pretension has allowed the work of Mies Van der Rohe, among others, to be forgotten.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

From architecture to the integration of the arts

BY LAURENT LAMY

Directly bound to function and to economic and social needs, architecture is, of all the arts, the one that best represents the culture that gives it life. Thus, a work on the scale of the National Arts Centre assumes the value of a symbol. Before such an architectural group we may well ask ourselves what we are. Among all architectural works, does a National Arts Centre not occupy a choice place? Not being at the service of practical life like the sub-way, a factory, or even a house, it is rather, like a church, a place that man, curious about himself and the world and avid for experiences rich in imagination and fantasy, occupies in exceptional moments.

The architectural group

For the National Arts Centre, the architects used the hexagon as a module. This form which follows from the lie of the land has been fully exploited since we find it again not only as the volume of the building but again in the light wells, the stairways, and the elevators. It is moreover the link between the terraces, the foyers, and the offices. The hexagon which is near to the perfect aesthetic form of the circle, presents several advantages for a theatre: it gives the audience around the stage, offers them the utmost in visibility, and favours the principle of participation.

The neighbouring area of the Centre was not particularly charming. The vaguely gothic architecture of the Parliament buildings, the vague greco-roman traces of the former train station, the site of the Chateau Laurier, the modernity of the museum, required a clear visual affirmation that would in some way form the centre of Confederation Square. The massive, almost blind architecture of the centre answers this need. On the theme of the hexagon, the modernity is partially unfolded of the group of the building on a simple way and by maintaining the strength too often interpreted as rigidity or coldness. This austere architecture enters into modern research. Let us recall the blind architecture of the pavilions of England and Venezuela at Expo, the church of Nevers in France by architect Claude Parent, the work of Louis Kahn in the United States. Completely oriented to the interior and the activities that it houses, the Centre affirms itself as an architectural success that is perfectly integrated into the surroundings. The lines created by the vertical windows and their ribs animate the main facades. The open angles of the hexagons and the different levels of the volumes put rhythm into the architectural space and make them constructions which could not be imagined to the integration of the arts.

The Works of Art

Is not integrating works of art the use of these works in such a way that they form a whole with the environment? Integrated art can be compared to stones incorporated into concrete: they are an essential part of it. Without them the concrete is more crumby and less resistant.

At the National Arts Centre, is the contribution of the artists limited to addition, or do the creations participate in the group? Have we progressed since the first step was taken at Place des Arts in Montreal?

In their ‘place’, the architects have chosen areas to present works of art. Projects coexist within the Centre in order to discuss their location; a committee accepted their works. They are often excellent works, as is the case with Daudelin’s sculpture outside the Centre. But stuck in a corner between the large theatre and the wall, it is loked into, it is loked down, the building is partially hidden by shrubs and the wall. Although it is monumental, it looks small there, being neither on the scale of the architectural group nor easily seen by the passers-by. Let us approach the centre on foot or by car, from one direction or from the other, one can never see it all, neither can it be seen from the terrace where it is placed, nor from the surrounding streets.

Inside the centre the prevailing material is conglomerate concrete. This strong material, rich greyish texture wanted emphasizing. This was done in some places by the red carpet. But in the main foyer, the monotonous and dull mosaic floor offers no contrast at all with the wall, in the area of colour as well as texture.

At the entrance to the small theatre, at the very place where the foyer is smallest, there is a little place to step back, there has been placed an immense painting by Ronald. No total view is possible. The place is not suitable for this work whose highly coloured and changeable forms would have been very visually effective, if they could have been discovered gradually, while being approached. However, this mural serves as a vertical link between the floors.

The banners by Laliberté and the Polish tapestries in which multicoloured multiicoloured tapestries the little place to step back, there has been placed an immense painting by Ronald. No total view is possible. The place is not suitable for this work whose highly coloured and changeable forms would have been very visually effective, if they could have been discovered gradually, while being approached. However, this mural serves as a vertical link between the floors.

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qualities. But its acquisition would have been more significant at the beginning of the century, right in the middle of the cubist period; in 1969 it would be more in its place in a museum. Is it not in an arts centre that one should find works that depend on the most lively sources of art. As McLuhan would put it, the choice was made by looking through a "retroviewer".

In the stairwells, the giant glass block chandeliers by William Martin of Boston, are near to being archaistic forms but look too much like sugar candy. The result is one of the most debatable.

The work by Lorčin, made of aluminum rods and plates, almost dissolves in its transparency. Something too thin to bring to the wall where it was placed. Again, not much room to step back and see it well. Enlarged and multiplied, it might have been able to effect an interesting counterpart with the exterior walls of the east side, which are gloomy in their severity. Better yet, Lorčin in collaboration with the architects and the engineers, to study the form and dimensions of the steel structure in order that it might project beyond the concrete. The structure incorporated into the architecture but partly apparent, could have become a really integrated mural.

Pretty, but with a disconcerting simplicity, the fountain by Julien Hébert is jarring in its banality. That is not the work of a sculptor. On the other hand, Julien Hébert succeeds completely as a designer when he composes the ceiling of the great hall. Conceived according to the imperatives of the acoustics engineer, the perforated, mobile, metal panels become in their unexpected but clear language, surface and volume. They are ornamented by the play of forms and modulations. That is integration. Around the great hall, the anodized metal grilles by Slater, without being of a dazzling inventiveness, fulfill their purpose quite well: to form a screen between the halls and the foyers.

So not to abandon certain conventions there has been retained in this hall the red armchairs synonymous with the luxury and pomp of theatrical tradition. Trite symbolism, if there be any, that is compensated in part by the lighting that comes from the ceiling and the walls; the latter are composed of vertical bands of naked low-intensity bulbs that are reflected in the textured glass. A golden yellow colour participates in the red gold harmony that could not be forsaken and whose use was not questioned. Another choice much more significant would have been made of materials: gold, silver, and red, electric shades that emanate from the walls and open onto a world of marvels.

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The immense doors by Jordi Bonet do more than support the neighbouring concrete. Their monumental size, the fullness of the rhythms, maintain with the surrounding architecture an accurate and intimate relationship. Their material — cast aluminum — a very modern product, and their rich texture — create areas of light and shadow that soften where these immense surfaces could have been too forceful. Warm and serene, blended from a few accents, Manessi's tapestry accentuates the intimacy of the small concert hall, a hall which, after all, is the most harmonious one but which, for the master-builder to consent to, work on its walls, the latter are composed of vertical bands of naked low-intensity bulbs that are reflected in the textured glass. A golden yellow colour participates in the red gold harmony that could not be forsaken and whose use was not questioned. Another choice much more significant would have been made of materials: gold, silver, and red, electric shades that emanate from the walls and open onto a world of marvels.

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As for the stage curtains by Micheline Beauchemin and Mariette Rousseau-Vermette (1), they have followed the good tradition that has it that the utilitarian curtain should be covered by a decorative curtain. Like the doors by Bonet, they foster the transition from everyday life to the life of the arts. This monumental sculpture is in proportion; in this respect, Daudelin, who is very conscientious, took all possible precautions. It was said that only the two sculptures were not integrated into the architecture. That is conceiving integration in a narrow and restricted sense, and it is erroneous. Whichever artist who agrees to produce a work intended for a building should understand its character and produce a work that is in harmony with it, not by adhering to a theme or given designs as, for example, the hexagon or the triangle, which dominate here, but very simply by ways of his own, ways that emerge from his imagination, and his creative talents.

The integration of the works of art at the National Arts Centre

Guy Viau answers the questions of Raymond-Marie Léger, on Carnet des Arts, CBC, June 1969.

Q. — The building of the National Arts Centre cost $46 million and, of this sum, half a million was spent for works of art. Do you consider this amount sufficient or definitely too modest?

A. — It corresponds roughly to standards accepted almost everywhere: that famous 1 percent intended for what is called the embellishment of the architecture.

But we should not approach this problem from a financial point of view. The essential thing is that the architecture be beautiful; then there is no need to embellish it. If the architecture is self-sufficient, it is preferable not to add to it works of art for the sole purpose of encouraging artists, which seems rather odious to me.

Q. — Anyway, since there are works of art, can you tell me how the artists were chosen?

A. — The National Arts Centre formed a consulting committee, and this committee, in full agreement with the architect, chose most of the artists to be commissioned. In some cases, those chosen to work part of the architecture or separate from it, the integration could be successful in both cases if the scale is right. As for the very principle of construction of Daudelin's work, I find it to be honest, solid; it has a rhythm that is at once calm, set, and vigorous. This open worked structure inspires confidence by its healthiness and the sort of good humour that flows from it.

Q. — Let us pass on to the second sculpture. Zadkine's bronze which is inside the centre. What do you think of it?

A. — Artists, My reaction would probably be more reserved as far as Zadkine's work is concerned. If I admire certain works by this artist, I am not particularly infatuated with this one. It seems rather banal to me, rather dull if I dare say so. Concretely, moreover, it has neither depth nor contour; it is seen only from in front or behind, but very badly from behind, because it is almost standing against the wall. This poses a problem of integration. It might have been possible to place it in an area that was rather closed but that would have allowed it to be seen from the back, as well. All in all, it should be illuminated better. Although it is not bad, I am not enchanted by this Zadkine and I take the opportunity to say that, all things being equal, we might have gambled on a Canadian artist, who is very conscientious, who tends to specialize. In the production of works intended for large architectural groups like the National Arts Centre for which he made the huge aluminum doors of which you will speak, and who is in Quebec now, busy installing in the Grand Théâtre a mural which seems will be much discussed.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson
A. — I hesitate to talk about Bonet’s doors. Physically, they unite with the building, closed they act as murals; they open easily. Yet, to my mind, their inspiration is cold. This is conscientious, applied craftsmanship, but it is not the kind of inspiration that comes from the heart. Perhaps Bonet, for it was an extremely difficult problem that was set him, and he solved it with elegance. Yet, personally, I do not care for this kind of inspiration. It is inspiration understood in an immediate sense, and not the aspiration of imagination. It is the perpetuation of the decorative art of the last few centuries.

Q. — Behind the doors by Jordi Bonet which protect the holy of holies, is an immense tapestry by Alfred Manessier.

A. — It is the largest, I think, that was executed for the Centre. What do you understand by that? Manessier is an excellent minor painter. In his production there are some rather ordinary works, but this tapestry is excellent. Especially as the mounting was magnificently accomplished by the weaver Plassé-Le Caisne, who, to my knowledge, has never executed such work, but took part in the creation and, besides, signed it with Manessier, for when Plassé-Le Caisne executes a work, he invents as well, evidently, in the extension of the sketch. Both succeeded in composing a monumental work, with an immense sweep that sweeps us away. Moreover, corresponds to the orientation of Canadian art in the course of the fifteen years that followed the end of the last World War, that is to say our abstract expressionism. It also corresponds, in Manessier’s mind, to the character of the Canadian scene. The artist was very impressed by Canada’s sites and forests, and he has been remembering the impact that it made on him in the execution of all of his work, including this tapestry, for the last four or five years.

Q. — Let us pass to Manessier to the standards by Norman Laliberté that are installed over the bars.

A. — These standards are banners, made of fabrics hanging from a rod and juxtaposed as to form a tapestry. Laliberté is an American, but I believe that he is of French-Canadian descent. These decorations are unpretentious. Some of my colleagues have evoked Dali, that is praising them, for Dali had a great deal of spirit and imagination. Laliberté perhaps does not possess such an inspiration, but he has succeeded in four tapestries. Few, if any, mural decorations if you prefer — that are each very different and that are stamped with humour, fantasy, and charm, and have a certain voluptuousness that is rather reminiscent of Oriental art.

Q. — What is the difference between Laliberté and that Michelene Beauchemin executed for the great opera hall?

A. — I would say that it is, perhaps, the master work of the decoration of the National Centre. It is a revelation, a festival of colour and light, an absolutely extraordinary production. I certainly think that it is one of the most beautiful stage curtains in the world. It is the largest, in any event, that has ever been woven in such a way. The work was done in Japan on special looms. The evening of the opening, the spectators applauded the Lyftasaur, and the murals, and light, in several ways. It is first translucent, although it also receives the light from the fore-stage, and takes on in this way a striking relief. Moreover, I know that the artist was like to be illuminated from the back, in full color, in order to eliminate the shadows cast on it. I have not seen it thus, but such as it is, it is absolutely splendid.

Q. — Julien Hebert conceived two important works for the Centre. First a fountain towards which you hold certain reservations?

A. — That is to say that in broad daylight the fountain seems to me to be simplistic. A fountain does not fulfill only a functional and utilitarian role; it should be, at the same time, an attractive pole. Now this one seems to me to be rather rigid, rather pontifical. This is a fault, or rather a tendency, that one can find elsewhere in the National Centre, and perhaps you will see in the whole city of Ottawa.

Having said this, I saw the fountain last night, and beneath the lights and the shadows of the basins, the water that illuminates itself and the fountains that, happily, were thrown there for luck, give it an atmosphere, and life. So that in spite of the reservations already expressed I accept the fountain, such as it appears at night. It would be desirable to adjust the lighting to allow it to find again during the day, the charm it held at night.

Q. — Julien Hebert also executed the ceiling of the opera hall.

A. — I have reservations about that. In itself, it is beautiful, and beyond reproach, but it is too spectacular. It should be obtrusive like the one in the theatre. The latter is formed of black grille work that serves only to conceal the cat walks and lighting fixtures set in the ceiling. If the mounting of the opera hall attracts attention to the detriment of the stage, and its corollary, the curtaining, the ceiling should be much less.

Q. — Finally, in the suburbs, if I may thus speak of the experimental studio, there is a large mural fresco that extends over two stories.

The work by William Ronald is very highly coloured.

A. — Yes, it has a rather psychedelic character which is basically quite suitable to the foyer of the experimental studio. However, this large fresco poses the problem of integration. Strictly speaking, it is integrated with some frescos inspired by his bush scene in the studio’s foyer, and moreover, it corresponds to the atmosphere that was sought there. Even if it is a little superficial, it remains joyous and gay. I would thus willingly accept it, it were harmonious with the group of the centre, and I am speaking here of the supposed directives of the consulting committee or the architects, that here is where the sensitivity of the artist was to intervene. It should have permitted him to give his work the qualities that I recognized in it, while respecting the general character of the centre, and while uniting it by the quality of the invention and the sensibility; and not by direct recall of the architectural forms.

Q. — Closed to you speak to us of the Theatre’s stage curtain. Conceived and executed by Mariene Roussel Lavallée. We are not, unfortunately been able to see it, because the arrangement of the sets of Lysistrata did not allow it to be lowered on opening night.

A. — That is the reason for which it has been much discussed, and it is a shame. I know it from the model. Not a gouache or water colour pattern, which, I imagine, is particular to Manessier, and a precise idea of the large one. Now, this tapestry has qualities of warmth, voluptuousness, authenticity, and at the same time, monumentality, which make it a great work; and I wish that there could be a special opening devoted to it, as soon as other performances would allow it.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbys

The Presence of Manessier

BY JEAN-RENE OSTIGUY

Following his visit to Canada in 1967, Alfred Manessier, whose immense tapestry has just been unveiled at the National Art Centre, executed a series of paintings inspired by his brief sojourn in Canada. As these new works have not yet been exhibited, it would be difficult to write a criticism of them; yet, by looking at some reproductions, we can preview them and make a few remarks. First, this artist has rediscovered a moment of light, very much like the one he knew during his childhood in Abbeville in the Somme. "For some time I had already been feeling nostalgic for a certain northern light" which I found, I was about to say, found again, in your country, but on a different scale, with a very new pattern which, I believe, is particular to Canada, and which I tried to express." (1) There is thus a new light, but also a form that stands out differently, more prismatic, with a new brilliance. It seems that Manessier has a good grasp of the problems of scale, such as the "laite orange" (or light orange) that is so much different from that of all his previous pictures, a space in which the artist has achieved an exceptional stripping away. Here Manessier draws very near to the American expressionist Franz Kline by the tensions that they develop, a few large vigorously drawn movements that suffice to create a dynamic space of a type particular to North America.

There is no reason to think that Manessier has been granting more importance to the gestural aspect of his painting only since his visit to Canada. As early as 1966, following a trip to Spain, where he became quite taken with the work of Goya, there was a change in him. He painted with a new joy, his brushwork shows a surprising ease and is fuller. Looking at his painting entitled Terre asséchée (Parched earth) (1966), visitors to the French pavilion at Expo 67 could see an unexpected parallel between Manessier and Riopelle. But let us not too quickly judge a work that spans over forty years of development. Without emphasizing too strongly the gestural aspect of these recent works, let us first see how Manessier summarizes in an exemplary way the lyric expression of our era. It is not surprising that certain elements of his paintings suddenly bring to mind, without our being able to speak of proper so-called influences, the names of Sengier, Music, Buzanne, Zack, Atlan, and even Riopelle and Kline, as we have already mentioned. In fact, all of these artists resemble one another (and even the artists of "American Action Painting" and Canadian automatism), in that they are determined to work though they may be alone, for a restoration of the dignity of man. In spite of the abstract character of their works, they are clearly committed artists. What distinguishes them from the landscapes and actions of those artists is their interest in cosmic forces and the "Heraclean flux of the impermanent" how marvellously has he captured some essential and solid values. It requires time to become fully aware of how many canvases created a sensation one day only to prove
uninteresting the next. Now there is more than one Manessier that stands the test of time. In answer to a skeptical critic who wants to know what an artist's work has been made of by lyric abstraction, we would do well to reply: "Look at Saint Rémi (1945) of the Musée de Rennes, the Petit à Bâte de Somme (1949) of the Philippe Leclerq collection, Fervier prés Harim (1956) of the Museum of Berlin, and L'arche (1950) at the Musée d'art moderne de Paris, Abe matinal (1948) La Carnation d'épines (1950), and the 1962 trypich, L'Empire. The picture in the National Gallery of Canada, La Siré (1963), clearly illustrates the sentiment works, the one of the Allobar which the artist contrasts with Gethsemani or Saints Face, and with all his paintings of shadows. The central element of the composition is reminiscent of La Carnation d'épines (Crown of thorns) (1954) of the Carnegie Institute, but this crowning could also be the odious at noon. In fact, the ambiguity of the metaphor is enriched by the Provence countryside that inspired the artist in 1958 and 1959. Mountains furrowed by hairpin roads and hollowed out by deep gorges submerge the composition of the National Gallery's work. It must be compared in this respect to the picture of the Musée de Lyon: "Aube sur la garrigue" (1958) (2). Yet it is only to the latter work that Manessier's declaration applies in full: "Even more than to the colours and the light, I have been sensitive to his rhythmic approach. And we emphasize the indifference of the indiscernible colours of Redon's people.

Some people will perhaps be confused by the ease of Manessier. He passes from a coloured cubism of the 40's to a more impressionist approach in 1958, and he touches on abstraction over the constant use of the metaphor however, assures the unity of his work. The metaphor's signs and symbols are modified and enriched at each new phase. The ones that animate the compositions Per amantium cordem (1957) and Hiver (1959) are the one in La tache orangée (1958) and Fillet Sacrement (1960), but greatly modified by a new conception of light, more closely bound to the matter and more dramatic, creating tensions between the base of the light and the motif. Thus Manessier's abstraction should be considered as a desire to make symbolic images evoking the deepest spiritual realities, the ones that cannot but relate to the sacred world. His fervour does not depend in any way on the stray impulse, it expresses a courageous faith. He has been told from nature and perfecting the abstract signs of his vocabulary with the same point of view since 1941. At that time he was presented to the French public in an exhibition at the Braun Gallery in the company of Jean Bazaine, Maurice Estève, Charles Lapique, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy and the new school ol "Young painters of the French tradition". His painting retained ties to coloured cubism at that time. If he evolved slowly in the years that followed towards lyrical abstraction and gradually came to use the blot, he constantly kept in mind his desire to build the form of his picture, to clarify it and making of the work, by his desire to articulate and his unequivocal choice, the lyric art of Manessier is distinguished from that time. If he evolved slowly in the years that followed towards lyrical abstraction and gradually came to use the blot, he constantly kept in mind his desire to build the form of his picture, to clarify it and making of the work, by his desire to articulate and his unequivocal choice, the lyric art of Manessier is distinguished from that time. If he evolved slowly in the years that followed towards lyrical abstraction and gradually came to use the blot, he constantly kept in mind his desire to build the form of his picture, to clarify it and making of the work, by his desire to articulate and his unequivocal choice, the lyric art of Manessier is distinguished from that time.
as well as that of materials and techniques; the 28 year old artist admitted that he was impressed by the scale of such a contract, and acquired new strength from his pilgrimage to Talhull (it is a small pre-Roman Spanish village, almost inaccessible, made up of about ten buildings that have been stripped of their admirable frescoes, but that really tell the story of their builders); the taste of the architect for the plastic aspects of the production require that the mural be baked in Courtrai, Belgium.

These varied works mark a period in Bonet's work, a period already clearly dominated by drawing, which is at times reminiscent of Picasso's; the large Quebec mural is very moral, and deceiving at the same time: the grandiose quality of the drawn gesture does not find sufficient balance in the other elements of the plastic composition. And Jordi Bonet, with his electrically aware hand, did not want to work on relief in 1965, first dedicating a tumultuous homage to Gaudi; then there is the first master work (I have no reserve whatever in using this strong term), his eight 10 x 10 foot tympanes for Place des Arts in Montreal.

The period of reliefs in ceramic opens a remarkable audience to Jordi Bonet, and stimulates him to the point that he no longer hesitates to expand his expression towards concrete and aluminum. In six years, he (through) 60 sculptures for his monumental works beyond the borders of Montreal and Quebec, to go to Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, and as far as Vancouver, and in the United States, to Boston, New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago and Charlotte.

The main ceramic murals unite an instinctive sense of telluric forces to the dynamism of symbolical form, and that is, we would say, the very alchemy of the fire that burns the clay and coats it at the same time in sumptuous colours, with unforgettable transparencies, as in the (15 x 86 foot long), 1965 composition for North American Tower, Toronto (Bregman and Hamann, architects), or still the one in a Boston bank (15 x 35 feet), or in an exterior mural for the University of Chicago, in 1965, in 1969, a Vancouver building receives an 18 x 30 foot ceramic mural.

Ceramics involve complex techniques and a certain risk in baking in the high temperature kilns. Impatient, Jordi Bonet increasingly developed a liking for construction yards and the pungent smell of raw concrete. In 1965, temptation won out, and we note the project of a hall of white concrete that he offered the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal, in a gesture of an unparalleled generosity: Vivir y Morir established at the same time the fundamental dialectics of the work of the artist, who is working in the building of Chateau Dufremine (where he seems to have been negligently forgotten), and explodes four years later in the colossoal Quebec triptych. As for concrete, let us once more underscore his participation in the murals of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, the four reliefs of the 'Tracy Béland des Ormeaux, at Carillon (see Vie des Arts, number 50, Spring 1968 pp. 38-41).

The fire which baked clay fascinated Jordi Bonet and he soon found another use for it, by sculpting with a knife and a block of styrofoam that he afterwards casts in aluminium, the fire of the foundry coming to join the aceross flame to build in space, these walls of tumultuous metal, laden with signs as an ancient proverb of the occultists, makes readable the emotional content and also the emotional continuum which assures the very quality of its ritual, of this happening that he captures in the sculptural forms by capturing the irreplaceable pulsation of the secret event.

The colour sometimes voluptuously seductive, sometimes strictly constrained, establishes scales that adapt themselves to the dynamic expression of the work, and establishes the consequent climate of this dynamism, always heavily impregnated with a grave and dedicated eromanticism. And the form, springing from the share of the fires for and incorporating the ashen load of the past, is also visited with an often vehement conviction the tumults of his reliefs and his rhythms.

Jordi Bonet is able to develop a remarkable sculptural syntax, and puts plastic art at the absolute service of a tragic reflection on the meaning of life. By avoiding the routine of a declamatory illustration (a frequent weakness of the Mexican art of 1920-50, for example), as well as that of abstract (and often vain and superficial) speculation, he injects into his gesture the precision of symbolism, which gives the richest and most moving echo of Reality.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Stone Age Painters in the Laurentians

By SELWYN DEWDNEY

On a granite wall that edges the southwest shore of a lake in the Laurentians only thirty-two miles northwest of Trois Rivières there is a group of severely-weathered aboriginal paintings that may prove to be the oldest surviving examples of prehistoric rock art in eastern Canada.

Late in July of 1966 my wife and I drove to Trois Rivières from our home in London, Ontario, with two objectives. We were to pick up our son Christopher and his young Visites Interprovinciales host, Roland Nobert, who was to be our guest for the month of August. And we hoped to find and record the rock paintings on Lac Wapizagonke. Geologist Jacques Beland had described these pictographs in the February, 1959, issue of Le Naturalité Canadien, which I had read with keen interest, being then engaged in searching for and recording aboriginal rock art across Canada, particularly in the Canadian Shield woodland region. Were these paintings in the home of this homely rough language to the more than two hundred sites I had visited in central and northwestern Canada, or were they the expression of a different culture?

So, before calling on the Noberts, my wife and I drove north into the limestone hills that surround the village of Trois Rivières.
bush trail that led into Lac Wapizagonke. By good fortune our first encounter at the lake was with M. René Valland and his wife (the famous "Maman Fonfon") who knew where the site was and took us there.

But there was a unique feeling I first had that the paintings were delight at having reached them, sadness at finding how little had survived the ravages of time; and dismay at discovering that unthinking souvenir-hunters had deliberately broken off fragments of the rock, senselessly accelerating the slow weathering of the centuries.

These vestigial paintings are the easternmost so far found in the Canadian Shield Woodlands, the region which lies between the northern end of Lake Superior and the southern edge of the Precambrian rock formations. The westernmost is nearly 2,000 miles away, on a little beaver stream known as Wieton Rock Creek, in the Northwest Territories twenty miles north of Fort Smith, by the fall of 1971. After a general search for Aboriginal rock art initiated by the Royal Ontario Museum in 1957, Béland's find in 1957, proved to be unconfirmed, or based on sites between the St. Maurice and the Ottawa that had been flooded by dam barriers. But it is the easternmost example of a Shield rock painting site, but as the solo example in Canada east of Ontario.

The Shield sites vary greatly in extent. In some instances one will find three faint markings barely recognizable as the handwriting of man. On other sites there are dozens of paintings, some strong, some faint, scattered singly or in groups along the base of shore rock formations. All are accessible from the water, seldom more than four or five feet above the water level. The remaining two or three faint markings barely recognizable as the work of man, put the artist in an obvious delight in the form he was developing the rock face on which the painting or group of paintings appears, with a little smile of satisfaction. Roman numerals designate the rock face on which each painting or group of paintings appears, ranging from left to right. Arabic numerals indicate the height of the paintings above the water level as of July 28th, 1966. Detailed drawings of each face follow, along with representative examples of similar subjects found elsewhere in the Shield region.

It is evident that Face I has suffered from vandalism since Béland's visit in 1959. "On distingue assez nettement la forme d'un animal quadrupède de bonne taille, petit-être un original ou un chevreuil ou un cerf. My selection of cervidae from other Shield sites shows three identifiable moose (4 and 7), a fish can be detected, and two abstract creatures (4 and 6) whose identity is very much in doubt. The central animal, rendered in a rectilinear style, is conceptually the closest in character of these seven examples to the vanished quadruped of Wapizagonke face 2; pure abstractions without discernible associations of any kind; and what I call "tally marks.""

In turning to a detailed examination of the Wapizagonke paintings we must clearly reconcile ourselves to the fact that with them, as with other Shield paintings we are dealing with abstractions whose specific intentions of the aboriginal shaman-arts were. But we can compare them with what has been found elsewhere, and we have the advantage of Béland's verbal descriptions made at a time when the paintings were intact.

The first illustration reproduces in the scale of an inch to the foot the disposition of all the paintings I found at this site. Roman numerals designate the rock face on which each painting or group of paintings appears, ranging from left to right. Arabic numerals indicate the height of the paintings above the water level as of July 28th, 1966. Detailed drawings of each face follow, along with representative examples of similar subjects found elsewhere in the Shield region.

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It is now widely believed that primitive art has passed through an evolution from naturalistic to abstract styles. The Milk River glyphs do indeed show a transition from what I call an archaic naturalism to a high degree of abstraction in the case of animal forms, but human forms seem to have been highly abstract from the beginning. With the appearance of the horse the abstract trend suddenly goes into reverse, and a stylized naturalism emerges.

In the Shield paintings individualism runs so rampant that one loses interest in the subject for the sake of the horse. Among the Milk River glyphs — on which any chronological analysis of styles could be based. Representations of canoes, of a birdlike abstraction not too reliably identified as a "thunderbird," and handprints comprise the only frequently occurring motifs. Three rock paintings in Quetico Provincial Park approach the vitality of the aboriginal art. The Lateau paintings; and here and there throughout the Shield one may find occasional renderings that show some sensitivity to the natural form. But these are the exceptions. More than half of the Shield paintings show no hint of naturalism. They may be divided into four groups: semi-abstractions in which it is still possible to recognize an unspecified quadruped; distorted or fantastic forms in which one may find human or animal associations (a triangle, for example, with a pair of legs); pure abstractions without discernible associations of any kind; and what I call "tally marks.""

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of how a natural form may be distorted and abstracted to a point
where less sophisticated eyes might fail to recognize the subject. For
comparative purposes I have added examples from farther west. Of
these one would have misled me completely (7) had its interpretation
by a reputable shaman not been recorded by Henry Schoolcraft, an
American collector of Saulteaux folk lore in the Sault Ste. Marie
district in the 1840's.

Finally, "On remarque aussi plusieurs triangles et des séries de
traits verticaux rappelant une numération quelconque." The viewer
now will probably not see them as anything but a series of puzzling
shapes. Faces IV and V are undoubtedly tall marks, but I believe those
on Vb and Vc are the mere vestiges of larger abstractions rather than
numerical expressions. Face VI is too badly weathered to offer any
information as to whether I am correct or not. More severe weathering
has preceded it to oblivion. It has probably suffered more than the
higher paintings from the effects of wave action and ice erosion.

A study of the complexity of variables involved in weathering is
probably our best hope of arriving at a reliable estimate of the age
of these paintings. But such a study will not be easy. Variations in
the hardness of the rock, differences of exposure to rain, seepage and
post-pluvial drip, and the effects of lichen growth, sunlight, and the
drying action of winds are all major factors that must be considered
in relation to the varying degrees of protection from weathering
agents. Nor can we be sure without microscopic examination
whether a rock painting is faint because of long exposure or because
a weak pigment was used in the first place.

Until recent work done by Valery Tchernetsov, however, has
established that a number of sites in the Ural Mountains include
paintings that are almost 3000 and 3500 years old, the earlier
paintings were made with red ochre on rocks of a hardness quite
comparable with the Shield rocks and in a climate (north of Sverd­
lovsk) at least as severe as that of the wooded Shield region. Tcher­
netsov records, too, that - like myself - he found the paint so
firmly bonded to the rock that it could only be removed by scraping
off the rock pinicles it adhered to. So hard is the paint in some
instances he notes, that the adjacent rock has weathered more than
that which has been painted! Not only the rock, but the surface
recorded have any shelter from wind-driven rain, and it seems
logical that any binder that might have been mixed with the pigment
originally would have been leached out in a century or more. It
follows then that the red ochre itself has remarkable binding properties.

Earth colours, ranging from the yellow ochres through the umbers
and siennas to Indian red, have been used in rock paintings by
primitive people the world over. Usually these colours are found in
beds of clay impregnated with iron oxide, but they may also be
derived from weathered exposures of various iron ores, particularly
haematite. Yellow ochre is an impure hydros iron oxide, which can
be converted by heat to the anhydrous red ochre. I have run into two
instances recently, one in the Ursul Mountains in Manitoba, the other
in Saskatchewan, where deposits of yellow ochre are still being used as
sources for the red. Throughout Canada, but uniquely in the Shield
country, red ochre had the overwhelming preference. The practice of the extinct
Beothuk, the tribe the red ochre on the great rock where the Maimaqiusiwuk dwelt, to lay an offering of
smoke and the animal world around them: to be men.

There were other powers that must be reckoned with, too. Among
the central Algonkians, feared by the Ojibway to this day, was the
great rock where the Maimaqiusiwuk dwelt, to lay an offering of
humanity a surrealist view of the world, with the dream as a doorway
open to the spirit. The Great Providing Animal was the least of the animals. For behind the mere appearance of
each hunted animal, providing an endless supply of the flesh that
nourished man, stood the Great Source Animal of the species, the
Sacred Bear, the Essential Moose, the Giant Beaver, all supernatu­
regionals whose wishes or whims were revealed to mortals only
through the dreams of their most gifted individuals. If one carefully
observed the rituals of the hunt, if one treated the bones of the slain
animal with the prescribed respect, the Great Providing Animal
would graciously redone the bones with new flesh, and a man
would have meat for his children.

This was the world in which the men of Canada's Stone Age lived,
one which we are only now beginning to understand. We are just
emerging over millennia of human experience with the conflicting
elements of nature, unseen but omnipotent, that governed hunting and
warfare and the shape of an entire human society. And now, as the
wildlife begin to recover, as the forest regenerates, we are only just
beginning to realize what kind of impact we can have on the world.

Raging bushfires might alter the migration routes of the caribou
by a hundred miles or drive the hunting band into totally unfamiliar
territory. Three weeks' delay in the spring breakup could exhaust the
last scrap of dried fish or meat needed for survival until the first
fish-spawning. An exceptionally dry summer, an insect infestation
or an animal epidemic might alter the forest, unbalancing all the
processes we are only now beginning to understand — that the food
availability for all living things is at the mercy of the weather, and
that the impact of human activities on the environment is far
more severe than we have previously realized. The world we
live in is a delicate balance of forces, and we are only now
beginning to understand the extent of our own impact on it.

A Meeting with Petef Daglish

BY MARIE RAYMOND

When I went to meet Peter Daglish, in his studio in Chiswick, I
almost had the feeling of being indirect. Knowing someone
through his work is a very personal approach, to confront him
with himself is a kind of self-examination that can easily become a
more or less favourable public confession. I was not taking into
account the simplicity of a real person, who is remarkably available
and for whom the Old World is such a strong need that he speaks of it as
freely as water runs from its source. Daglish is not a
person caught up in a definitive formula — people who have seen
his recent exhibition at the Galerie Libre and perhaps his album of
literature, who are familiar with his Art, have nothing to fear from
this, — for him the liking for experimentation with the
plastic arts seems less a rash reflex than an inductive gesture con-
trolled by the intellect. He is aware of it, does not try to deny it and above all has not finished pursuing his research, feeling that he has no reason to limit himself to only one material, and still less to only one manner of expressing himself.

Born in Scotland, he arrived in Canada when he was an adolescent, and in this he found a reason for his projects. His career in the East, when he was 16, was initiated by an accident that left him in the dilemma of having found his own way to paint. Over the last summer in order to give a series of courses in Victoria, but for the time being, a scholarship from the Canada Council, and a part-time teaching position are keeping him in London, where he finally found a place to begin painting again in the Chirwitz area.

For two years, in fact, Daglish produced very little, due to lack of space. In 1965 he painted two canvases, then none for an entire year, but to stay in form he made frequent use of his lithograph press and still participated in two exhibitions, one at the Commonwealth Institute and the other at the Whitechurch Gallery, which, in East-end London is playing the avant-garde role originally attributed to the Tate Gallery. Having returned to his palette, he immediately began to paint many works. Some of his works are separate panels, that were afterwards reunited within the same frame, not because his glance is fragmentary, but because he saw an extension from one composition to another, and once finished, he saw them as an indivisible whole. Besides the paintings there are coloured drawings which were then translated as a plate, and he also makes designs containing four distinct vignettes; they can be approached one at a time or all together depending on the meaning that one finds in them.

I think that everything that I do, he says, always relates to reality, "it is a vision more than an abstraction". His titles are quite personal references. November, for example, is so called because it was painted then; the date is a reference mark that indicates a precise moment in his evolution. As, according to him, the artist is generally a well-ordered person who proceeds through successive stages, he thus answers the need that he has to remember each one in a specific way.

Daglish also has a desire to accumulate material for the future. Some of these lithos were made after he had discovered the difficulty of framing a subject, of preventing it from over-running the canvas. I saw him leaf through a series that he was finishing and explain to me that it was a matter of different designs invented to decorate the corners and thus more easily surround his initial vision. This problem of framing now seems to be a common one to several of his colleagues, thus he proposes placing the result of his research at their disposal, allowing them to use his own composition to their own account. Another of his most recent experiments is the portfolio he exhibited last April in Our Musée d'Art Contemporain — entitled Random words and album drawings. An introductory note tells us that he considers it a question of trying to accommodate certain ideas and certain pictures that are contained in his painting. Ideas on subjects to paint as well as the manner of execution, more literary images that depend on language, require words and even nonsensical images. In making this album, his intention was to present it as a notebook for reading, to say as bits of information gathered without any care given to the composition. During this time, he confides, I was in the dilemma of not being able to reconcile what I wanted to paint with the idea that had of painting, I thought that the album would let me conserve my literary ideas that I did not want to lose but that I did not want to use as a painter. Now that it is finished, I know that I was wrong, everything can be used in art. This was a necessary step to allow me to feel that nothing restrains the freedom of the creator.

Despite this assertion, or perhaps, on the contrary, because of it, Daglish has not touched his brushes since last summer, when he worked on a new adventure. These are large works of corrugated cardboard, a multitude of ribbons introduce the element of colour. It seemed to me that at the beginning, some educational toys with detachable parts had been used as models; he gradually transforms them in the course of working with them and it is difficult to know to what extent they are the source or the necessary tool of his inspiration. As none of them has yet been finished, he speaks of them hesitatingly, at most, did he think that he was thus beginning a new adventure in construction and I felt that it could be going too far to ask him to elaborate further.

The need to communicate, the desire to share are marked characteristics of his personality, and from this point of view London seems to be the ideal place for numerous exhibitions of what he calls "a more personal eccentric work".

Daglish is also very involved in his teaching; he is giving basic and advanced courses on engraving. Giving students an opportunity for dialogue is an experience of which he speaks with an almost paternal fondness, so vital does he deem it to the period of formation. And I can well imagine him, discreet, respectfully directing the first rough sketches of coming artists, "the discipline comes from students and not from myself", "Teaching is an exorcism of my own ideas and essential for me", he adds; I think that one can also find in this assertion another of his essential characteristics because it translates very well his instinctive reaction, which is to always question everything that he is doing.

In 1969 he took a break away from leaving for Montreal to preside at the setting up of his exhibition. When he returned I found him optimistic, cheerful, happy with what he had seen at home, full of plans, one of which will no doubt take him to Victoria next fall, since he has been offered a professorship there for next year.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Les Levine

BY JOANNA MARSDEN WOODS

This article deals with two works by Les Levine, one of which Electric Shock, will be exhibited at the VIIth Biennale des Jeunes at the Musée d'art contemporain of the city of Paris during October 1969.

Process of Elimination (pl. 1) has already been exhibited at the Art Gallery of Glendene College, York University, in 1968, and in New York in February 1969, on a vacant lot on Wooster street, between 3rd and 4th Streets. It consists of an assemblage of 300 curved white plastic works scattered pell-mell on the ground. Every day for thirty days, ten works are removed until the end of the month when the work has been completely removed and the material works are gathered. This process, which is to be presented to the public, consists of a page from the newpaper with the text prefixed, the question "Could there be anyone who has not read the article that has caused so much publicising and the answer...", and all the trash usually found on a vacant lot resemble the atrocity pages of a newspaper that have been left to chance and the elements, every bit as much as the refuse that is already on the lot. The wind shifts them here and there and regroups them; a few crowd against the others, others are blown right off the lot, the work is constantly changing before our eyes. The artist accepts chance as a part of the process which determines the forms seen by the viewer. It is a work without a preconceived idea of orthodox forms, without a determined internal structure. There is an unexpected poetry in the unforeseen displacements and formations of the artificial objects, which are returning to nature, and are subject to the laws of physics. In fact, the work is reminiscent of the monochromatic Canadian landscape, as seen from an airplane in winter, but the colours are transposed; the white background of the snow is replaced, in Process by the greyish brown of the lot (pl. 3).

Levine does not seek to interpret reality in the traditional sense, that is to say by laying down the order of his own imagination. Instead of imposing form to matter or of fashioning this matter, he has us observe the forms that already exist. He leaves things such as they are. Levine accepts the arbitrary condition of the lot for what it is in itself; he presents himself as the director of a social commentary on the realities of the life that we lead. This is 'litter art', the art of thrown away things.

The plastic works are a logical extension of "disposables", of art to throw away (1), they are made of styrofoam, a material that is ordinarily found in packaging works, this then remains, after use, does not give him as much as might have been expected. The Briton is insular, he is accustomed to getting along without other people; his reserve is thus not a myth. Moreover, the problems of direct contact with the public require that the artist distance himself from people live far from one another and all that makes it difficult to keep in touch. Daglish does not suffer from this; being in a productive period he has less need of it. What he especially deplores, however, is the spirit that animates the gallery directors at this time. What is being shown there, is not, in his opinion, sufficiently representative of what young painters are doing, and it is not without some nostalgia that he speaks of the year of his arrival, in 1965, when names like Hafalo, Cohen, Denny, King, Curo — Tilson — Gaulfield had more frequent exhibitions. Today they are less supported, people are impressed more by standards that are too established and he would go to Los Angeles — if he could — as the ideal place for numerous exhibitions of what he calls "a more personal eccentric work".
even further away from the orthodox conception of the previous object, by creating a work that, even before having been seen, has already been "discarded", this time by the artist himself rather than by the collector. For Levine, the character of disposable art puts it into the service of mijrion, from the social point of view as man obtains permission to destroy, he is freed from the upkeep and protection of the work. Levine maintains that accumulating is a constituting activity; the idea that there is security in possession is false.

Electric Shock is a no less static work; here art has become something completely transitory. If it may be said that Process is still a work to be contemplated, although what the viewer is contemplating is constantly changing and diminishing every time that he looks at it, the physical presence, the visual appearance of Shock is the least important part of the work. This sculpture which has already been presented at the Douglas Gallery in Vancouver in 1968, consists of a grid of electric wires hanging 6 feet above the floor, in a room 100 feet square; the wires give a slight shock when they are touched. These wires conducting electrical vibrations, so reminiscent of a gird of electric wires hanging out of time, neither of them are objects that can be bought or sold. Their lasting value is reduced to the mental influence that they have on the viewer. Levine has said: "What I am after is a physical reaction and not a visual preoccupation" (2). Shock illustrates McLuhan's idea that visual culture has fallen into disuse and that the modern world requires a reaction of the central nervous system. The viewer is invited to undergo the shock and to the work's impact. A sculpture is an aesthetic experience without first referring to the visual, and to have a completely transitory experience. It is not a dramatic experience, a work that the viewer has made operate to his liking, as is for example, Soundings by Robert Rauschenberg, where the degree of illumination is in direct relation to the quantity and quality of the noise that the viewer makes around it. "People will be works of art!" Levine said in 1966 (5), about his environment, Slipcover, but Slipcover was also a visual experience. Levine has succeeded in creating a work that depends almost entirely on the viewers, on their physical forms, their colouring, their weight in relation to one another and their unforeseen gestures.

Basically, Shock is just as exposed to haphazard arbitrary motions as Process is — people replace the plastic works. The variations of the movements and the regroupings of plastic works of the same form, size, and colour on an uneven ground resemble the spontaneous reactions of the plastic work to the visitor's gestures: further differentiated in size, texture, and colouring, but seen against a background, or rather under a ceiling made of repeated and serial elements. Whether at the viewer's feet or above his head, the work exists only when the viewer is present with his need to touch and to explore, in his search for something tangible and corporeal. It may be said that the work does not exist before it is shown to the viewers. Not only are they associated with the creation, they are integrated quite as much in the sculpture as are the elements of Process. Levine has succeeded in creating a work that depends almost entirely on the viewers, on their physical forms, their colouring, their weight in relation to one another and their unforeseen gestures.

Process and Shock are two large scale sculptures that occupy two given spaces, one out of doors, the other inside, without supressing the definition of these spaces as such, without hiding their everyday qualities. Levine would not want the works to distract our attention from the environment as an experience in itself. There is no advantageous position where the viewer can stand to look at them. A sculpture is usually thought to be an object that defines the environment, and is chosen for its ability to define its site; Levine believes that the environment defines what the sculpture is. The environment is not subordinate to the work; instead of commanding attention, the work adapts itself to the given space. It is a collaboration with the environment. Separated from the environment, the work does not exist; the environment which have no meaning by themselves receive their value and their interest from the given context. It would be impossible to regard an element as a fragment of an ancient sculpture, as a work in itself.

Process and Shock are large scale works and they are portable works at one and the same time. The two sculptures are transitory and consequently have no permanence; they happen in time. The element of time assumes prime importance. Since they do not exist out of time, neither of them are objects that can be bought or sold. Their lasting value is reduced to the mental influence that they require. John Cage has written: "we are getting rid of ownership, substituting use" (4), and the works of Levine illustrate the current aesthetics that require that the artist does not give us a unique object, but a certain way of seeing, that art not be a thing, but an event, that the process be more important than the final result.

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However, Levine does insist on a conscious participation. "What I want to create is something that is such an integral part of the environment that it dissolves into the environment, and does not exist as a separate object." (5) His works make us aware of the total environment, the natural one and the man-made one, and of their aesthetic possibilities, whether it be a question of an urban landscape created by negligence or a technological panorama of the XXth century, knowingly and deliberately created by man, by helping us to notice it more sharply and more deeply. 'I am not at all interested in illusions, I am interested in reality." (6) Levine's art allows us to become aware, with a deeper and more personal knowledge, of the qualities and characteristics of the world that we are in the process of creating and the life we lead in it, and consequently, it meets the purpose of art set forth by D. H. Lawrence, that is, that the purpose of art is to reveal the relationship between man and his ambient universe "at this living moment".

NOTES
1. "Discardables" have already been exhibited in Paris, number 56 of the exhibition Canada — Art of Today, which was held at the Musée National d'art moderne in January and February of 1968.
5. See Note 2 above.
6. See Note 2 above.

PLATES
2. The basin which is situated between the two modern art museums in Paris.

Art that Lives in an Enchanting Frame

BY CLAUDE BEAULIEU

From the top of the hill the house looks down upon the river and the great urban centre of the city. To reach it, it is necessary to meander up the western slopes of Mount Royal. Beneath the immense trees that surround it, a large metal sculpture, placed on the ground, is visible. It is the visitor's first point of reference. The entrance to the home that harbours a collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, books, and art objects. They are witnesses, some of them temporary, to an art of living that is subtle, fantastic, ever seeking the perfect balance between the various styles, modes, and eras of our times which are relatively uncorrupted with universal research. It is impossible to keep to only one style; it is better to use one's flair. Tempered by a certain wisdom or by a reasoned discipline, this flair allows a choice of tasteful works whose constant companionship is sought. For it is necessary to live with such works as with people who take a long time to reveal themselves, when one would want them to divulge confidence from the time of first meeting.

Every collector has a regard for display which inevitably translates his personality and his most diverse intentions: the desire to accumulate, the need to live in harmony with his acquisitions, the irresistible leaning towards the sensitive organization of the works, treated, more or less, as elements of composition. The evolution of styles, the scientific progress of archeology, the uncompromising creativity inherent in our times, lead the collector to unite related works, of various origins, which a secret bond unites. Thus, a sculpture of a spare style works quite well near a painting by Robert Motherwell, a canvas, and the very latest acquisition: a canvas of the Riopelle canvas, and the very latest acquisition: a canvas of the Bissière, a Picasso drawing, finally, a silver dish by François Hugo from a Picasso drawing,
beneath a 1946 watercolour by Riopelle and a graphite sketch by Picasso. Between the visitor and these works chosen with love, a tacit and mysterious communication spontaneously begins.

It is in the dining room that the evident change that is taking place is most eloquently harmoniously adorned with the totemic aura, which is the signature of the admitted experts, who acquire new works by artists who are still unknown, but beginning to gain repute. There are also memories of trips: a Clavé, a Buffet discovered almost twenty years ago, a very large early McEwen, are among them. But it is in a small, intimate room that the transformations are most keenly sensed. African masks, an armchair by Breuer placed on a zebra skin replace graphic works, of which some remarkable examples remain: Léon Bonhomme, Derain, Rodin, and Vlaminck. A place of reserved pleasure is evidently given to Canadian artists. In rooms of the rooms and free areas hang McEwens, and Dallaires, including the Peintes aux fleurs (see the cover of no. 45 of Vie des Arts).

Objects, rugs, furnishings, everything attests to a versatile cultured interest. There is also a remarkable book-lover's delight, including: Miscérenes, Le Père Ubu and La Passion, by Rouault; the Parler seul of Tristan Tzara, by Miro; the Prométhée de Gide by Henry Moore; Saint Monique, by Bonnard; La tentación de San Antón (1961), by Francis Gruber, and so many others ...

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Zao Wou-Ki

BY RENÉ DE SOLIER

He is the most taciturn painter in the West! His silence is baffling. Wou-Ki does not speak about his painting. Amused, smiling, he looks to others.

"Your turn to play!" (Wou-Ki is, moreover, a remarkable tennis player). This sportsmanship is pleasing, even if it does not make the critic’s task any easier. The painter surrounds himself with only the best people. Henri Michaux was one of his first friends. And the already lengthy bibliography indicates rather clearly the interest aroused by his work which is reputed to be incomprehensible.

The reason for his silence are very easily understood. Learned, knowing antiquarian signs, writings and transcripts, wondrous materials, as well as the research of graphic etymology, Zao Wou-Ki imparts his knowledge elsewhere. In the course of his still unpublished study, "The Human Plant", Wou-Ki pointed out and detailed certain scripts, of divinatory inscriptions on shells or on bones (Ki à kôu wên).

Certainly one experiences a great nostalgia when one is familiar with all these symbols, the "picture of the 214 keys", Wou-Ki does not yield to the temptation. But what a calligraphy!

Could his painting, and his lithographs be variants, whose composition is inverted, of what we call the "science of signs"? Perhaps. But that matter pertains more to psychology than to art criticism, which does not like to take the slightest risk — unfortunately! At least we could willingly support this idea, with the painter's consent, if Wou-Ki were not so inscrutable! To each his own risks.

Knowledge of the line, in the existing manuscript writings is so rich that one would wish to become very wise, or to be introduced into the secret workshops. One can only marvel at the best of it, of only his ignorance, especially since Wou-kí, who is not very strong, does not necessarily impart his knowledge "inside out", like a negative onto the paper, like a negative onto the paper, like a negative onto the paper, like a negative onto the paper, like a negative onto the paper.

Having seen that and proceeding from what is real, there is one patient observation to be made, this painting has a hold on nature, that is to say, its canvasses, but according to a style of painting that is steady, lively, sprightly, and that needs not resort to the abominable bloating or staining that spoils so many works.

"I shall build for you a city with ragged bits
I shall build for you without plans or cement
An edifice that you will not destroy."

HENRI MICHAI YEAR

BY DOMINIQUE NOUZEGE

Norman McLaren is the leader of a heretical sect that had the cinema pass from polytheism to monotheism. What art form was more inevitably devoted to multiplicity than the cinema before his? On one side of the film was a whole lot of co-creators ranging from the deity of the dialogues to the little goddess of makeup, and on the other side, the cinema and the film director. The pre-McLarian film producer like the motion picture fan before the "magnetocope" (Translator's note: a procedure of recording televised pictures on a plastic magnetic tape) was surrounded on all sides and every time by the tears of Thetis, or the girdle of Juno. Beginning in about 1933 to paint his films and their sounds just as he did the film itself, McLaren produced the most individual art form from the most collective of them, and henceforth, there was room in the cinematographic cosmos for solitary gods.

By such a rough comparison of cinematographic practices with literary or pictorial practices, by freeing the film writer from the counterfeiting panoply of forcing appropriate unwieldy attendance of technicians and actors, by doing away with the mediation and the relays, McLaren was thus restoring to the creative gesture all its meaning, its force, and especially its freedom. Tearing the cinema away from the theatre or from the puppet show, he was posing the question of painting and drawing, that is to say, among the arts where everything depends on one maker and where everything is possible. This liberation was a veritable Copernican revolution, for it saved the cinema from a seemingly inherent fate: enslavement to reality. With McLaren and his non-figurative cinema, cinema no longer revolves around the world, it is the world that revolves at the will of the cinema. The animated numbers of Rhythmic (1956), the facerious microphone of Opening Speech ... McLaren (1961), the paramut of Beigne skull care (1949), the ducks or earthworms of Hen hop (1942): these helter-skelter elements of the realistic universe are whimsically called together to the rhythm of the sarabands of Desormeaux or Blackburn. They are not, to be sure, and they are not, are even, rather than molecules or debris, blobs or points — simple starting points of a reconstructed world, a rebuit world. For everything occurs as if McLaren, the impatient scientist were inventing atoms of a new physics, a new collective of them, and henceforth, there was room in the cinematographic cosmos for solitary gods.

Now these multicolloured microorganisms that always seem to appear to us as though through a gigantic microscope or a dwarfed telescope, increasingly furthest from what we consider to be the progress, significantly draw the McLarian fairytale nearer to one of the most fantastic and yet coherent modern literary worlds, the one of Henri Michaux. Like many a text from Michaux's pre-cinematic period, each of McLaren's films seem so as to offer something like an imaginary trip to a world of replacements, to a counter-creation. A trip, yet, where imagination and amazement are banished, and which appears to be all the more factual as it reveals more surprising creatures and gestures to us. In Michaux's Grande Garbage (1) sick people are choked, ministers burned, drowned, tears shed over a fulling leaf, people are upset over a sniffle, they sneeze for months, in the most natural way in the world. And in the same way, who will be astonished by the extravagant pirouettes of the characters of Two Brides (1935), by the lengthy shots of the backs of the antagonists of Neighbours (1952)? Is Jutra, confronted by a chair in A chairy tale (1957), astounded by the specks, the changing, minds, and the remorseless movements of his wooden partner? And in Opening Speech ... McLaren (1961) in which he is the protagonist, is McLaren startled to see his microphone expand, contract, wriggle, and flee into the wings? Finally, in the presence of the fabulous white forms of Pas de deux (1966), reduced in ratio and reunited to the rhythm of a harp or a Pan's flute, having a gracefulness that never before existed, who would prefer surprise to awe? Is it not as much the apparent lack of logic and realism of these cinematographic fantasies that should surprise us as well as their deep cohesion and their coherence?

I have spoken of debris and it is very true that in a certain way this phantasmatic world is made up of pieces of ours. But we must see how these pieces immediately recombine, find meaning and balance themselves in thousand times less having a gracefulness that never before existed, I who would prefer surprise to awe? Is it not as much the apparent lack of logic and realism of these cinematographic fantasies that should surprise us as well as their deep cohesion and their coherence?
be surrounded by these populations of signs and scribblings as though they were indisputable protection. The geometrical ballets of Limes-vertical (1960) and Limes-horizontal (1962), the spewed oranges and reds of Fiddle de deec (1947), the shimmering and oily reflections, the light confetti, the balls and marbles, the Dali-like sets of Shuffle (1945), the tricoloured bands of Stars and stripes (1959), the brief and abstract phantasmagories as aggressive as a bolt of lightning or an electric discharge, the geometric-figurative motifs — the umbrella, chicken, pineapple, palm tree, bluebird, heart, and eggs of Blindeye Blank (1954), the dancing of blue, red, and green signs in Hopity hop (1946), the mystic-phallic birds of A Phantasy (1952), or yet again, of Short and sult, the evanescent bird of La polette grise (1947), the rows of untidy numbers of Rythmetic (1956), the bands, call-drawings of little men, and then the 'real' and reduced in ratio characters of Canos (1964), — all this lively and rapid multiplication of forms and creatures that are rarely figurative, and often comparable, in a visual nature, to the neologisms of Michelau, conveys the appearance of buff-state (the formula is still Michaux's) between the creator and the real world, a real world still perceived as a threat, as a threat as a source of jokes (the chair of Chaity talk, the microphone of Operating Speech ...). 

Nothing will be compared to the pacific montage of Half unanimated (1956). But, more profoundly, one would not be too far wrong to read in it the deep-seated schizoid traits which, as we think about it, govern McLaren's entire work and which once again draw him closer to techniques of montage: the jump-jacks; the difficulty of communication, good neighbourliness) out in its structure: if the word schizophrenia could be used here, by virtue of a hypothesis, it might be possible for something of the deep motives of McLaren's work to appear. How, in particular would we not be tempted to explain Rythmetic, Canon (1964) or Musica (1965) in the light of the descriptions that Binswanger or Minkowski have made of the hyper-logical, indeed morbidly rational forms of an omnipotent delirium? In effect, everything happens as though each one of these little films constituted an imaginary problem, set by chance, immediately imposing itself obsessively on McLaren's mind and as though the latter could not abandon it, could not resolve it logically in any way. Let us think for example, of the beginning of Musica: a whistling man passing before us drops a ping pong ball. This white point immediately begins to haunt the black space of the screen like an enlightened spirit (3). This melodic rhythm is developed with the aid of various means: the umbrella, chicken, pineapple, palm tree, bluebird, heart, and eggs of Blinkety Blank (1954). 

Schizoid traits first in the manner in which this work is produced. It is perhaps not by chance that McLaren is the film maker who has contributed the most, as we noted in the beginning, to perfecting an individual style, which is, without authors or assistants (2), in short, the cinema of a reclusive, a misanthrope. Yet, it is in the work itself that we must seek the most manifest traces of the break, of this quasi pathological inadequacy towards reality. No longer considered as the literal (objects in revolt and men humanized, men on the contrary treated as things, mechanized like jumping-jacks; the difficulty of communication, good neighbourliness) but in its structure: if the word schizophrenia could be used here, by virtue of a hypothesis, it might be possible for something of the deep motives of McLaren's work to appear. How, in particular would we not be tempted to explain Rythmetic, Canon (1964) or Musica (1965) in the light of the descriptions that Binswanger or Minkowski have made of the hyper-logical, indeed morbidly rational forms of an omnipotent delirium? In effect, everything happens as though each one of these little films constituted an imaginary problem, set by chance, immediately imposing itself obsessively on McLaren's mind and as though the latter could not abandon it, could not resolve it logically in any way. Let us think for example, of the beginning of Musica: a whistling man passing before us drops a ping pong ball. This white point immediately begins to haunt the black space of the screen like an enlightened spirit (3). This melodic rhythm is developed with the aid of various means: the umbrella, chicken, pineapple, palm tree, bluebird, heart, and eggs of Blinkety Blank (1954). 

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Sondages '69 au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, du 16 mai au 26 juin 1969.

PAR WILLIAM VAZAN

Sur 300 participants choisis, douze des travaux ont été retenus pour cette exposition conçue à l'aménagement de l'an dernier: 313 travaux par 113 artistes. Cette année, l'espace permet au spectateur de mieux voir les œuvres.

Le directeur du Musée, David Giles Carter, explique dans le mince catalogue de l'exposition que Sondages '69 adopte une nouvelle formule. Le jury qui comprend les personnes suivantes: Andrée Paradis, directrice de la revue Viv des Arts, Lucy, Lippard de New-York, critique d'art et essayiste, et Ron Moore de York University, artiste et professeur. Ces personnes ont simplement choisi les participants sans aucune intention d'accorder des prix parce que la diversité des tendances rendait absurde de telles attributions. Il a de plus laissé entendre que le Musée abandonnera la coutume de s'en remettre à un jury pour les expositions de groupe. Ceci est souhaitable pourvu que les futures équipes aient le courage d'adopter ces nouvelles directives sans céder à la tentation de favoriser les tenants des tenants et des barons.

Des noms d'artistes aussi bien que des noms d'écoles qui nous sont devenus familiers sont absents de cette exposition: Molinari, Snow, Bush, hard-edge, pop - quelques artistes peignent, bien entendu, avoir décliné l'invitation - car le jury a choisi de montrer les œuvres des artistes peu connus pour donner une meilleure idée de l'orientation de l'art d'aujourd'hui.

Après mûre réflexion, RIEN est le mot qui décrit le mieux notre première impression. Comme il est agréable de laisser à la sensibilité l'occasion de se faire. Ces douze travaux sont très autonomes et si l'espace le permettait, ils pourraient sûrement rappeler l'encombrement de l'exposition de l'année dernière.

Dans cette exposition, l'art minimal atteint un degré voisin de l'immatérialité. Les divers éléments des œuvres sont en partie éliminés et atteignent un tel degré de raffinement dans la négation que le spectateur, afin de combler ce vide, arrive à se composer une vision qui lui est propre.

La notion de couleur cesse d'être la nuance acrylique réfléchit ces deux éléments et les projette sur le mur. Les autres artistes continuent à répondre aux mêmes questions. Robert Jacek suggère un double jeu de lignes entrecroisées qui ouvre la voie à un espace entre les formes de tissu noir peint sur le couche dégradé et le noir peint sur le papier peint de violet. Entre les deux se trouve un croissement plus étroit peint de teintes contrastantes. Il en résulte une distorsion de l'image à travers le miroir de la fenêtre qui passe de l'intérieur à l'extérieur et élimine la surface peinte en adoucissant les angles.

L'œuvre de Michael Morris de couleur neutre fait l'effet d'une œuvre en plastique. Ses bandes de couleur laissent la place à des reproductions de photos de dessins au fusain représentant des tuyaux avec une petite surface imprimée 16 fois qui donne l'illusion de papier peint opaque en noir et blanc avec de minces incrustations de noir qui retiennent à demi le spectateur derrière la paroi. Tout ceci rappelle le décor du cinéma des années 30 et de son bon goût décadent.

Un mur de six pieds de haut en fibre de verre de Peter Kolinski reflète la lumière et l'objet au moyen de la transparence et de l'opacité. Au-delà, la vision fragmentée par les nervures anguleuses est complètement obscurcie par le mouvement circulaire du spectateur.

Un morceau de bois de construction de 14 pieds de long déposé sur le sol, transparant à l'oeilllure de la lumière, apparaît comme un problème de la réalité. Il juxtapose en contraste un tapis d'herbe et une surface translucide étendue sur le plancher. Ces formes à la fois déployées et contractées. L'œil est attiré vers le côté et aperçoit le décalage entre l'espace et la forme, ce mouvement étant aplani et diminuée par les formes de papier peint noir et blanche qui se déroulent de côté à côté.

La version finale de la composition, réalisée par les trois artistes, est montée sur le côté pour rechercher encore les éléments tangibles de la composition.

L'œuvre de Daniel Salomon, The Grass is Greener l'intérêt pour cette exposition contrairement à l'amoncellement de l'an dernier. Les formes ont simplement été ramenées au centre d'un espace incertain et ramené au côté pour explorer encore les éléments tangibles de la composition.

David Gordon présente trois larges formes grandes ouvertes. Ceux-ci peuvent être vus non seulement comme une extension de la réalité. Il juxtapose en contraste un tapis d'herbe fait de papier plastifié et de gazon naturel; un morceau de papier peint noir et blanc qui renforce la situation. Il est ramené au côté pour explorer encore les éléments tangibles de la composition.

L'équipe de Brian Rush et de l'art minimal (l'inexprimable, le rien) a triomphé. Elle a réussi à remettre en cause l'idée de l'art comme expression et de la perception de l'œuvre. Les choses sont devenues familières sont absents de cette exposition: Molinari, Snow, Bush, hard-edge, pop - quelques artistes peignent, bien entendu, ayant décliné l'invitation - car le jury a choisi de montrer les œuvres des artistes peu connus pour donner une meilleure idée de l'orientation de l'art d'aujourd'hui.

Traduction de Lucile Ouimet

Université de Calgary
Ateliers de lithographie et de sérigraphie

PAR SHIRLEY RAPHAEL

Les universités sont devenues aujourd'hui des centres de diffusion de l'art. Elles sont le lieu d'élection d'expériences artistiques; elles
Chaque artiste a laissé à la collection permanente de l'Université quelques gravures. Une exposition des travaux accomplis au cours de cette rencontre aura lieu à l'aube de l'année. Il serait aussi souhaitable que ces gravures soient exposées dans les universités d'un océan à l'autre.

L'Université de Calgary projette de tenir un autre atelier en 1970. Souhaits que ce projet se réalise et espérons que les autres universités et écoles d'art du Canada suivront cet exemple et qu'elles verront bien leurs portes à des gravures invitées de renommée internationale.

Les artistes ne peuvent travailler continuellement dans la solitude. Ces ateliers de groupe sont très efficaces car ils stimulent les contacts et permettent d'échanger des idées. Une bonne atmosphère favorise la création, les réunions, les expositions, etc., et ainsi d'approfondir les divers aspects de ce métier.

L'inscription était limitée à 30 étudiants pour les deux ateliers de sorte à garantir l'avantage de bénéficier d'une attention suivie et plus personnelle.

Des ateliers de ce genre sont inexistants au Canada et aux États-Unis. Helmut Becker, assistant professeur d'art et d'éducation artistique à l'Université de Calgary est celui qui avait le mécénat d'avoir organisé et surveillé la mise en marche de cet atelier. Il fut responsable en 1967 de l'atelier de bois gravé alors que Toshi Yoshida était l'artiste invité; en 1968, il organisait un atelier de gravure avec l'artiste américain Robert Bigelow et Mahen Patel, tous deux graveurs professionnels. Les deux ateliers offrirent aux participants la possibilité de développer leurs propres tendances et leur propre personnalité.

M. Andrew Stasker est reconnu comme une autorité dans le monde de la gravure à cause de son œuvre, qui est remarquable. Il est exposé en Amérique du Nord et en Europe et a fait partie pendant plusieurs années au Pratt Graphic Centre de New York. Il est un excellent professeur. Il ne fut pas avare de conseils et a partagé généreusement le fruit de sa vaste expérience avec ses élèves. Des diapositives furent mises à la disposition des étudiants et elles ont fait le sujet de commentaires intéressants. Le projet de l'organisation d'un atelier de gravure dans chaque ville fut aussi discuté: la question de la division des arts, la division de l'Education Permanente et l'assistance du Conseil des arts du Canada, Helmut Becker a été l'âme dirigeante de cette activité qui s'est imposée gracieuseté de la part de tous.

Robert Bigelow, graveur de la section de lithographie faisait autrefois partie de l'atelier Tamarin Lithographie et des studios Gemini à Los Angeles. Il est maintenant professeur à la Vancouver School of Art. Sa fonction est de guider et d'assister les étudiants dans l'accomplissement d'ateliers de gravure et de les assister dans tous les problèmes techniques qu'ils rencontrent. Il a aussi gravé des éditions originales de l'artiste anglais Anthony Benjamin qui fait partie du personnel de l'Université de Calgary. Chacun des étudiants ayant participé à la réalisation de ce travail a reçu en cadeau une édition de ces lithographies originales. Mahen Patel de l'Université de Calgary a été très apprécié des étudiants qui s'intéressaient aux procédés de la sérigraphie. Il a collaboré avec chacun et a aidé dans l'exécution d'ateliers d'art. Il fut d'une patience exemplaire et il répondait sans se lasser aux inombrables questions des étudiants.

En quoi consistaient ces ateliers? ... La plupart des participants, moitié-y compris, venant du Canada, à l'exception d'un artiste américain qui avait déjà pris part à différentes occasions, ont été formés de diverses origines, et de diverses écoles d'art et d'éducation artistique. De tous les participants, trois semaines de travail ont été dédiées à des exercices et des expositions organisés par les trois ateliers. Il y eut aussi des heures de délicates: des réceptions et des excursions furent organisées auxquelles tout le monde a participé. La plupart d'entre nous ont eu très peu de sommeil durant ces trois semaines.

A Meeting with Arthur Pepin

BY M. F. O'LEARY

Passing through Paris, I met Arthur Pepin, a Canadian painter who has been sojourning at Venice for a year. We made our way to an atelier in the Marais quarter where he showed me his recent pictures. These oils are, to my mind, combinations of signs that remind me of certain trigrams and hexagrams taken from the I Ching. Each picture is in itself a cycle that is beginning or ending, a symbol of a language that is past, present, and future.

Q. — Arthur Pepin, why have you come to France?
A. — I came here to break with the kind of life that I was leading in Quebec, in order to compare myself with the other artists here in Paris where the competition is very keen; this confrontation will permit me to get my bearings.
Q. — Should an original painter be measured in this competition?
A. — It is vital to know what other people are doing. Seeing this is stimulating and in this sense Paris is a hive of activity, so I can go on from there.
Q. — You chose Provence?
A. — Yes, because I have a studio there that the Karolyi Foundation offered me. It is a marvelous workshop, with lighting an artist would die for.
Q. — You attach a great deal of importance to nature.
A. — It always influences me, even unconsciously.
Q. — Is your painting related to Oriental writings, and are you doing research in this area?
A. — No. I am an intuitive painter. I express myself with a rapid gesture, it may be compared with Chinese or Japanese, but I am not developing this in a definite way.
Q. — You cannot deny the relationship between your painting and the East.
A. — I believe in previous existence. A stored-up knowledge that re-appear. Even if in 1969 one is French-Canadian, even if one is living in Paris, and we do not question the reception of language and ease of communication, I believe in a common thinking among Western and Eastern artists.
Q. — Well, for you being a painter identified with Canada.
A. — I am not impressed. One is bound to a country at much by one's affinities as by one's affections, but the mind has no borders and remains international. Now, painting, no doubt more than any other art, is related to this concept for we do not need words to translate our poetic message.
Q. — Yet you exhibit and use the intermediary of galleries, how do you see this problem?
A. — Galleries should not exist, but this is impossible. We must communicate and use the intermediary of galleries, how do you see this problem?
be better off if we could manage to get rid of this marketing. However, I think that exhibitions that accept artists without eliminating any, even if all the works exhibited are not quality works, are valuable.

Q. — Engravings, gouaches, paintings, poetry, you are taking up different techniques, is the research the same throughout these varied approaches?
A. — Yes, since with each procedure I am translating an expression of myself that varies, certainly, according to the techniques, but whose direction remains the same. I am a colourist and my engravings as well as gouaches, or my oils, are a search for unity through colour and graphism. It is a spontaneous action, self-definitive, I do not start over again.

Q. — Do you work only by intuition?
A. — Yes, I am an intuitive painter, but lyric as well. I belong to the abstract lyric school. I am not as interested in explaining phenomena, as I am in having phenomena experienced such as they are. A landscape unfolds before us; we like it not because we understand why a tree is there or not, but because its imposing appearance strikes us and moves us, and finally pleases us: painting has the same meaning for me.

Q. — And is it easier to interpret this landscape in France?
A. — Yes the freedom that I have here is precious. In Quebec I am obliged to work, I am a teacher; one cannot paint under these conditions: one becomes drained and one cannot communicate with others.

Q. — What are your upcoming exhibitions and those in which you have participated recently?
A. — A few group exhibitions including the Superintendents and the Independents (Paris), and my own exhibition in Biarritz in June, and at the Mouffe Gallery in Paris in November.

Every sign stands out from the canvas and emerges in a moment that is jarring or harmonious, according to the dialogue that the viewer engages in with the canvas of Pepin. Nudity, and the baring of nature remain the essential thing and this essential is a subject to reflect upon. Pepin takes forms apart and through this disintegration tries to rediscover the core of life.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson