Vie des arts

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In examining the sphere of artistic activity, one is struck by the leading role which exhibitions play. The vitality of the relationship between art and the public depends on their functioning in modern life. Whether they are the responsibility of the museum, the commercial gallery, the shopping centre, or, whether they simply assure a contact and channel attention to a given point. At a time when experiments are prolific, the multiplication of means of information cannot fulfill all needs; certainly not the need to condense surveys, to take stock, to make an evaluation, to analyze orientations and interpret historical trends. One of the functions of the exhibition is to rekindle interest in the works, to enlighten, and create sensitivity, to be, in short, on the other hand, to make the living conscience of an art that is constantly being rediscovered.

In the following pages we shall note that almost all of the articles are related to exhibitions. Not limiting us to reviews, our collaborating writers think of these exhibitions as a pretext for reflections or commentaries. Thus, we thought it useful to examine the expedient of the itinerant exhibition of the Canada Council's collection, organized by the National Gallery, to define one of the fundamental policies concerning the assistance given to the artist by the Canada Arts Council. In the same way, the success of recent exhibitions in London, Florence and Paris, of The National Gallery's Collection of Drawings of the Old Masters reminds us of the wealth and diversity of the Gallery's Print-room, whose foundation was organized by a former curator, Mrs. Kathleen Pemberton, European specialist in medieval and modern art, "a homogeneous collection", "an important collection". The director of the National Gallery, Miss Jean Sutherland Boggs, intended the exhibition to be an homage to the taste and adroitness of the author of the collection, who has just entered retirement. From Florence, Mario Bucci, and from Paris, Jean-Dominique Rey, communicate their appreciations.

The Stained Glass Window in Our Time, an exhibition presented in Montreal during the summer of 1969 in the Exposition du Canada, the French pavilion at the Man and His World, and then, in October at the Quebec Museum, permitted Joseph Pichard, the commissioner of the exhibition and the former director of the magazine Art sacre, to approach current problems set by stained glass art. In the interval of a few days the Art Gallery of Ontario hosted two important international exhibitions. The first, Sacred and Profane Symbolism in Art, in the course of 26 days, manifestly enraptured a crowd of 33,000 visitors. That it is unusual and poetic retains its admirers, relegated to obscurity by impressionism, symbolism is redefined as an important step in the evolution of art. Moreover, the interest aroused by the subsequent exhibition, Fifty Years of the Bauhaus, is no less considerable. More rigorous than the preceding exhibition, and admirably documented, this exhibition, assembled under the direction of Mr. Hans W. Wingler, describes an experience that is still one of the keys of modern art. Furthermore, its extensions, more particularly in architecture, provided the material for another part of the exhibit not to be missed: anthologies of the works conjointly presented by the Canada Design Centre in Toronto.

The Dubuffet exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is a veritable paradox. Dubuffet, who does not care for museums and refuses to go into them, consented, on the other hand, to make an important donation to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and authorized a thematic exhibition of his work in Montreal. François Gagnon, a critic opposed to art criticism that harms art, considers the human being under an intriguing and certainly revealing aspect.

If we continue the examination of the index, we can pick out several names that appeared in various exhibitions during the fall: Miller Brittain, Rita Letendre, the Sixth Paris Biennale, Novak, Canadian Painters at the Gallery of France, New Alchemists at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Masters of Needlework in Germany at the Athanasie-David Pavilion of the CECEP of Old Montreal, Harold Town, Alex Bertrand, Jean-René Ostiguy, the graphic arts in Bur­naby—this testifies to an increasing activity and makes us regret that we are able to examine only a small part of the panorama of the exhibitions which were held in Canada during the last three months.

The increase in curiosity about the work of art, and the necessity of having the work confront the viewer, are the prime concerns of the organizers of major exhibitions. The exhausting efforts undertaken for art education must be supported by a policy of bringing the public into contact with works that are worthwhile.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

In 1966 the Arts Council decided to become a collector. This decision followed the course of action which Peter Dwyer had taken, from the beginning, in the arts of the Canadian Maritimes. "The large sculptures are housed in narrow corridors and the canvases of too large dimensions simply stay in the basement", wrote Ross Woodman in "Arts Canada" to deplore the treatment being given the acquired works in the Ottawa office. He was exaggerating a little, but in any event, the itinerant exhibition settles the matter for the time being.

What will become of it afterwards? "We are not a museum, so what can we do? Give the collection to a museum? Disperse it into schools, galleries, etc.? Use it as a basis for itinerant international exhibitions? We are not equipped to keep it, thus we should disperse it. We could sell it as a lot and begin again. That is what I would like to do. To us, it is an attempt at patronage; it is the act of buying and not the canvas that matters", Mr. Silcox told us. Brian Fisher, Tain Baxter, Michael Snow, Harold Town, Guido Molinari, Claude Hervutine are the luminaries of the collection. What criteria govern the choice of the works?

We ask David Silcox why...: "We take a work, I would choose a little drawing by Joyce Wheelan. Also a drawing by Greg Curnoe, 'Zebra-egg' by Comtois, the collage by Michael Snow, 'The Ladies of the January Jubilee', the 'Culture wall 1961' by Harold Town. I also very much like a large Molinari work from 1966."

He takes all possible precautions to avoid any charge of unfairness. "Most of the purchases are made in close collaboration with a jury, the Arts Council administers competitions for bursaries for further training, and which travels throughout Canada and chooses works which it recommends to the person in charge; but, in the final analysis, I make the decision; this is to assure continuity. However, I always consult with well-informed people—critics, museum curators."

"Perhaps I am not a completely objective observer", he says, "but our collection represents in a broad sense the preoccupations of Canadian artists".

Personal taste also plays a part in the choice and it appears that Mr. Silcox has only a small appetite for the small part of the panorama of the exhibitions which were held in Canada during the last three months.

The Arts Council is collecting... why... we ask David Silcox

BY PAQUERETTE VILLENEUVE

BY ANDRÉE PARADIS

Editorial

An excusade that should not be disregarded
From Dürer to Picasso

BANDO BY MARIO Bucci

The National Gallery of Canada exhibits its drawings at the Cabinet des Dessins de Florence.

Interest in the fact that the founding of Canada's National Gallery took place relatively recently (it dates back only to 1880), that private donations to public collections have traditionally been inconsiderable, and that two world wars inevitably limited acquisitions for years, the Ottawa museum's collection of drawings has been able to redress this, with a promise of a rich offer of the most beautiful works in the Cabinet des dessins et des estampes at the Galerie des Offices. Along with the Cabinet des dessins de la Louvre, and the collections of Albertina of Vienna, Windsor Castle and London's British Museum, the Cabinet des Dessins offers among the most famous museums in the world.

Canadians, so proud of public and private collections of ancient and modern art of the museums in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto, should recognize and appreciate the immense effort made in these last years to enrich and complete the collection of drawings of Canada's National Gallery.

In 1911, when the first seventeen drawings were purchased for $1850, until 1921 (a decisive date in the development of the collection), and from the second world war and the postwar years (very comprehensive acquisitions of modern drawings), until the last ten years, when the course of a collection became subject to the exigencies of the budget which changes greatly from year to year, is a remarkable effort. This budget is the result of the continuing action of the Canada Council, which this year has given the most important artists. It is a remarkable effort. This budget is the result of the continuing action of the Canada Council, which this year has given the

In the catalogue of the "Canada 101" exhibition, Mr. Silcox enlightens us about his tastes and his way of seeing things. "Montreal painting—of a type found in the Ontario province, and Tousignant is a reaction to the gradual transformation of Montreal into a tourist centre through colour and composition. It is an art of illusion, strictly controlled by a knowledge of colour theory and its visual effects. It is a picturesque art."

At 32, Mr. Silcox is playing a role that is all the more important as he has a dual responsibility. First he administers the budget of the collection. This budget which changes greatly from year to year, is detailed as follows: in 1911, $10,000; in 1929, $25,000; and in 1948, 40 thousand; and in 1969, only ten thousand, to which was added the cost of publication of the 5,000 copies of the catalogue of the collection. Moreover, Mr. Silcox is in charge of the section of the Plastic Arts of the Council, which this year has given 350 bursaries to painters. That is three times more than writers receive.

Mr. Silcox received his training in England at the Courtaulds Institute in London. Thanks to a Council bursary, he studied history of art there, and he even worked on a dictionary of art. With his almost inexhaustible knowledge of the field, he is going. "Wisdom is not the monopoly of older people", he says, "and Mr. Silcox is a charming man. Moreover, he knows where to look for what he needs."

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attention to, and give a reproduction of a marvellous pencil drawing representing a Yang girl seated on the ground by Suzanne Valadon, which is rigorous and extremely valuable in the incredible exactness of the strokes. Although one of the best Picasso's drawings, it is certainly more vigorous than a drawing by her son, Utrillo, who is however, held in greater esteem by the critics and the public.

Among the numerous sketches of almost contemporary artists, with which there is a question of Matisse, Nolde, Rouault, or Klee, Kirchner, Klee, or Moore, we were particularly impressed by a masterful drawing by the wizard of modern graphism, which Picasso still is, a Woman standing, seen from profile, dated 1906, which as the catalogue states, is the "evidence of a fine example of the Panatheneans of the Parthenon". That is why we can consider perfect the choice of this drawing, for the cover of the catalogue, as well as the notice spread all over Florence, and even almost all of Italy. By the present, of quality of a stroke that sometimes observed as classic, Picasso's woman unites tradition and newness in a single image, and the past and present at the same time, as always happens when art is true.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

The Drawings of the Ottawa National Gallery in Paris
BY JEAN-DOMINIQUE REY

In a similar vein to the "imaginary museum" that not long ago André Malraux dreamed of with a lot of more or less faithful reproductions, our time has become that of the movable museum. Today works of art are travelling. Sometimes the respect that they are shown is the same as if they were heads of state; a few years ago the Mona Lisa left the Louvre with a motor escort before going to cross the Atlantic. More often the works take long and complicated organised journeys like prominent tourists… which people would go to see.

Thus, by the present, of quality of a stroke that sometimes observed as classic, Picasso's woman unites tradition and newness in a single image, and the past and present at the same time, as always happens when art is true.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

An erotic tinge in the art of Jean Dubuffet (1943 - 1952)

BY FRANÇOIS GAGNON

Between 1943 and 1952, Jean Dubuffet executed one thousand four hundred and five works (properly called paintings, gouaches, drawings…), that represented one, two, or several human figures (once a hundred and five works, with 29 figures). More than seventy one among them represent only one person, that is 68% of the total production of figures. 16% of this 68% represent nude figures. These percentages give only a partial view of reality if we do not situate them in the present. They describe a phenomenon that they describe as "typical" that most of these nude figures belong to the series "Corps de Dames" (Women's bodies). These "Corps de Dames" caused a great deal of talk and even led Dubuffet to be called "terrible" by the French critic André Malraux and the Céline-Space of paintings, these paintings represent only a small proportion of the whole work, statistically speaking, and make it difficult to speak of a constant erotic inspiration in Dubuffet's work (as much as painting the female nude indicates erotic art anyway). We would be much closer to the truth if we were satisfied to affirm that each time that Dubuffet chooses to represent a nude figure, it is generally a female person that he chooses to represent.

Most of the time however (in 72.1% of the cases) Dubuffet's figures are male. Not only male, but clothed (66% of the cases). (2) We can even specify this observation and go so far as to say that it is male figures that wear most clothing. In any event, more details of clothing are noted for them. 25% for men as opposed to 1.5 for the women, even more than the Mona Lisa. Male. A butterfly bow, watch and gold chain, smartly braided trousers, laced shoes etc., fascinate Dubuffet more than do feminine costume.

Henceforth we have spoken of the representations of single figures. Let us state by exception that couples are accompanied by a representation of more erotic subjects, and does it become more frequent? Let us first note that out of 1405 works, only 183 represent two people side by side. Moreover, it is not always a matter of a man-woman couple. Most of them (123/183) represent two men—this is in keeping with the very high rate of masculine representation previously observed. Only in 52 cases, do we deal with true couples, in the usual sense of the word, representing a man and a woman.

Among the fifty two representations, twenty cases present a man and woman simply placed side by side without any special feature (the direction of looks, gestures, the sharing of tasks… indicating in the slightest that there is communication between them. They co-exist on the surface of the same canvas, but their respective worlds do not meet. In nine other cases, communication is one-sided, that is to say that one of the two figures is looking at the other, but without the latter's knowledge. Finally there are only 23 cases where intimate communication of the couple is expressed, and not necessarily in an erotic manner. Of these 23 cases, nineteen belong to the years 1949 and 1950 and bear the frankly erotic drawings destined to illustrate the short treatise written in jargon (phonetic writing) entitled "labor-feins abelcher" (Bébert's old lady). (3)

Once more, our statistics fit in like the parts of a telescope, and it is always at the small end that are concentrated the representations of an erotic character in Dubuffet's work.

Jean Dubuffet is a painter of a great deal. Hubert Damisch recently took the trouble to reunite in two large volumes of more than 500 pages (exactly 543 and 558 pages each), the texts of Dubuffet under the title "Prospectus and all following writings" (N.R.F. 1967) (Translator's note—Nouvelle Revue Française). There are several passages there which confirm the impression which arises from our examination of the 1405 works. The most explicit is clearly titled "Conçu aux seins et aux fesses"! (Be done with breasts and buttocks). It belongs to a collection called "Notes for the discerning literati" which was written in the spring and summer of 1943, for the gentlemen Pierre Seghers, Louis Parrot, Jean Paulhan, Georges Limbour, etc… all discerning literati, "who paid attention to his work and expressed the desire to write about it." (4) Here is the "note" such as it is, complete and without remarks:

Be done with breasts and buttocks.

Man calls what enraptures him beautiful, so does the sensualist the object of his appetites; but art deals no more with sexual drives than with those of the stomach. From the ill-considered use of the word Beauty arises the confusion which the Greeks first experienced between beauty and sex; the so singular confusion of art with eroticism. The Greeks were amused in the beginning by works that were sexual in the relationship, instead of that, today, the use of love themes in art is so exhausted that it is rather in putting them aside that art scandals. There is nothing reprehensible in a painting being erotic, just like another would be Catholic for example or gastronomic, or Bonapartist, of just as well, anti-erotic, anticatholic, etc. (5)

But even before that, as early as 1944, in a project which was never
to be finished (a "Guide of Paris") that sought to return to simple volumes: sphere, cube, cone, and cylinder, which give way to the function "sitting." The Bauhaus will attempt to rediscover this technological synthesis, this close collaboration of craftsmen which has remained unparalleled in history.

Fifty years have passed, and the works of the Bauhaus have taken hold on us, and influenced our way of life and our environment to such an extent that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish the creative power and originality of the Bauhaus, as the solutions tested in disciplines as diverse as architecture, painting, sculpture, theatre, typography, graphics and weaving, have, for the most part, found a use in our daily life.

The basis of the Bauhaus teaching is given by ateliers, indeed, the school does not claim to form artists, but rather craftsmen of the new industrial age.

Breaking with academic tradition, the Bauhaus will try to involve, in a direct manner, the student with the problems of the material; and Gropius will declare. "Together, let us conceive and create the building with which we shall cast aside artificial and conventional fashions in building, and painting into a single mass, and which, from the hands of a million workers one day will reach to the heavens like to crystallized symbol of a new faith."

I think that the organization of the school, I believe it is indispensable to refer to the organizational diagram of the curriculum.

By providing their students with the possibility of technically mastering their tools and machines, the Bauhaus sought to form artists able to express themselves in the industrial language of their time, thus suppressing the clear dichotomy encouraged by the 19th century academy, namely, the formation of artists completely separated from the preoccupations and problems of industrial production, and by that very fact they would be unable to remedy a production not adapted to real needs.

Starting there, it is easy to understand the emphasis placed by the Bauhaus on preliminary courses intended to give the newcomer: "the experience of proportions and volumes, that of rhythm, light, shadow, and at the same time to allow him to pass through all the stages of original experimentation with every kind of tool and material, to find his own way within the limitations of his natural talents."

This approach permitted not only the acceleration of the subsequent teaching, but it also gave the student maturity, and a deep awareness of the world and his environment. It was the task of the professors Kandinsky, Klee, Moholy-Nagy, Schlemmer, Albers, Itten, etc... to provide the students with the basis of a plastic language.

After having completed the six-months preliminary course the student was admitted into the atelier of his choice, with the goal of learning the techniques of the various disciplines; the hand-made, required an unfailing knowledge of the methods of industrial production, in the event of a production in series, or in certain cases, the student might wonder, in the same way if sexuality is not threatened with an obsession with sex kills sexuality. In the same way that colleges of academicians, rings of buyers and sellers, the journalistic body, the suppression the clear dichotomy encouraged by the 19th century academy, namely, the formation of artists completely separated from the preoccupations and problems of industrial production, and by that very fact they would be unable to remedy a production not adapted to real needs.

The collaboration was an important aspect; it showed its effectiveness in the constructive work of the Bauhaus, in the second school in Dessau; moreover, by organizing exhibitions of their productions, the ateliers drew the attention of industrialists, and the awarding of contracts brought a redistribution of fees in the ateliers.

Theatrical approach of the Bauhaus was of the represented nowhere so clearly as it was in the extract from the film by Marcel Breuer, where by showing the evolution of the design of the chair, Breuer leads us to the logical conclusion of the design; for after the column of elastic support, to the chairs, the chair object is completely disappeared, to entirely give way to the function "sitting."

The goal is to find the functional aspect which the object must take; to be rid of everything that is decoration, ornamentation, and to return to simple volumes: sphere, cube, cone, and cylinder, which
The Stained Glass Window in our Time

BY JOSEPH PICHARD

The seventy-five stained glass windows exhibited this summer in Montreal at the Palais des Beaux Arts, almost all works of well-known artists, and which were presented in October at the Museum of Quebec, give us an opportunity to take up the current problems raised by the art of the stained glass window.

Does this vivid light cast on an art that since its origins in the 13th century has successively known periods of glory and disregard signify that this art is again approaching a glorious period or is this manifestation gratuitous and admitting no real future?

Certainly the construction of the stained glass window has been associated with religious art. It originated in a time when the construction of churches was at its peak. How was it associated to this movement? I believe that like architecture itself, it was governed by man's desire to create a space for himself in a suitable place to contemplate the light falling from outside to come and disturb his inside lighting. The Gothic nave corresponds perfectly to this desire. Conceived and built for the use of the crowds which on some days gathered there, and still gather there, it is also made to the dimension of a single man. Even today, far from crushing us with its mass, from intimidating us with its height, the cathedral is perhaps the only monument to which we are less sensitive to the actual biblical depiction than to its original significance. In the stained glass window of the 13th century, it is sufficient that a few allusions to biblical history appear to us. And we are less sensitive to the actual biblical depiction than to a certain plastic and coloured construction that reflects our inner rhythm.

In the 14th and 15th centuries that followed the Renaissance, it was to be expected that the importance of the stained glass window would diminish. At that time it played almost a decorative role; it became a secondary element conceived in the imitation of these earthly paradises and which men sought to make of their homes—of their churches. It is in the framework of architecture, and of assurance planning and cooperation between the artist and industry. After fifty years numerous projects conceived between 1920 and 1922 and the Gedruckt catalogue of the exhibition to become aware of the dynamism and innovation in the creations; certain projects dating back more than forty years are still avant-garde.

One knows how closely the stained glass window has been associated with the art of stained glass. From the 13th century to the 19th, it is our duty to bow to the pioneers of what is becoming a veritable science of human ecology.


The Bauhaus had set themselves the goal of assuring a rationalization of the entire usual environment within the framework of architecture, and of assuring planning and cooperation between the artist and industry. After fifty years numerous projects conceived between 1920 and 1922 and the Gedruckt catalogue of the exhibition to become aware of the dynamism and innovation in the creations; certain projects dating back more than forty years are still avant-garde.

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André Kertész

PAR GEOFFREY JAMES


La photographie a été bien maltraitée par les revues qui précisément avaient pour mission de la promouvoir. Il n'existe que quelques bons articles sur la photographie, peu de compréhension de son histoire et encore moins de critique véritable. Dans un certain sens, cela est heureux car alors les gens se sont intéressés à la photographie sans succomber à une vague de malignité. Il y a encore plus apparente quand on regarde la date des photographies de Kertész. Dans les années '20, alors que la petite caméra était considérée comme un outil de travail à peu près aussi sérieux que l'œuf à incuber, d'aujourd'hui l'appareil photo se confond avec le spécialisme monument qui reçoit et développe une esthétique qui vous permet de vivre en paix avec la photographie. Egalement il est vrai, c'est le cas de Kertész, que la photographie est une des expressions artistiques les plus importantes de notre temps.

Kertész, la maison, c'est l'homme. Il vit avec sa femme au Riverside Museum de New-York, sur Washington Square. Il domine un entrelacs incroyable d'arbres, de toits, de cheminées et d'échelles de sauvetage. Muni de son Wheaty élégant et intelligent à l'aide d'une longue lentille, Kertész met de l'ordre dans ces éléments disparates, invente une géométrie sublime et crée le tout d'un brin d'humour. Son appartement, très européen d'allure, est rempli de livres, de tableaux, de photographies et d'oiseaux. Il y a des oiseaux partout: un beau coq métallique sur le rebord d'une fenêtre, un pigeon de bois sur une table et une très belle cage décorée pleine d'oiseaux sculptés. ("J'aime aussi les grenouilles," me dit en parti le photographe.) Kertész est devenu tout à fait européen... courtois et raffiné, refusant toujours d'être boursicote, tout à fait à l'aide quand il s'exprime en français ou en anglais. "J'ai toujours travaillé à ma façon," dit-il en parlant de son œuvre. "Je n'ai pas subi d'influences. En Hongrie, nous vivions assez isolés et je n'ai pas connu d'autres photographes. Ma seule inspiration venait de dessins trouvés dans des revues d'enfants. Je rêvais toujours de faire de la photographie, mais je ne savais pas exactement ce que je voulais. C'est à Paris que mon rêve se réalisa. Durant onze ans, de 1925 à 1936, nous avons vécu une vie de poésie et de rêve, nous nous contensions de peu d'argent, juste ce qu'il faut pour vivre et pour des arts. Au début, je pensais que le monde entier était là, journalistes, écrivains, artistes, sculpteurs, peintres, nous les avons tous connus. Dans ce milieu et au cours d'une période remarquablement réceptive aux idées nouvelles, Kertész n'éprouvait aucune difficulté à publier ses photographies qui toutes étaient autant de points de repère. Les remarques parfumées qu'il recevait dans Bifur, un magazine d'avant-garde et dans Vu de Roger de Vaugue (le premier hebdomadaire de photographie valable. Je tenais à cette époque de cacher quelque chose. Le journaliste photographique? Non, je réalisais tout simplement et honnêtement ce que je ressentais, c'est tout et cela était bien réçu." En 1936, Kertész accepta un contrat d'un an et partit pour les États-Unis. En relançant sa carrière à compter de cette époque, un même mot commence souvent sous ces phrases: "malheureusement," "tristement." Malheureusement, il passa 14 ans de sa vie professionnelle à photographier les intérieurs de maisons. Heureusement, il n'a jamais cessé de photographier pour lui-même, et il n'a jamais eu le moindre doute à l'endroit de sa propre main. "J'entends le demeurer toute ma vie," dit Kertész. Kertész a conservé l'enthousiasme de sa jeunesse. Il nous montre des photographies faites il y a que quelques mois, photos prises de la fenêtre de son appartement à l'aide d'un téléobjectif, qui représentent encore la vie. Il y a encore d'autres sujets, un sujet horrible montrant un noir morphinomane s'affaissant dans la rue. "C'était peut-être cruel de ma part," dit-il, "mais quelqu'un est venu au secours du malheureux. Je n'aurais pu faire cette photo autrement." Le Photographe. Se servant d'une expression euphémique bien sympathique, Kertész dit: "Un photographe n'est jamais plus important que
Rita Letendre

PAR CLAUDE-LYSE GAGNON


Orphée was directed collectively by the actors and technicians of the production (many of these actors are former pupils of Charpentier from the National Theatre School). From the piano Serge Garant directed the musicians; the actors Claude Flagel, Francine Dionne and Claude Griez respectively supervised the foldieric elements, the choreography and the movement, while Jean Perraud and Jacques Dumarresq were responsible for the spoken text. The result was a lively and fresh production where a few minor weaknesses were largely compensated by the close interaction of the actors among themselves and with the audience. There was in Orphée a successful fusion between theatrical poetry, music and dance to which the spectators were invited to participate actively.

Orphée has continued to evolve since its premiere: the instrumentation has been changed and the few elements of folklore eliminated (the piece now accentuates the poetic mood). The text has been modified also and now has the three Orpheus successively discovering light, colour, words, and language. Future audiences will be involved even more actively in the action and the singing.

Although Orphée is closely linked to the theatre for which it was written, hopefully other productions will soon prolong its career on stage and on records for the benefit of a wider public. In the meantime, Gabriel Charpentier is already at work on another "liturgy", on the theme of Prometheus.

Translation by Pierre W. Desjardins

Orphée

BY PIERRE W. DESJARDINS

Orphée was perhaps the most original of all the works created for the inauguration of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Publicized as a chamber opera, it did not attract the audiences that it deserved, perhaps because of the reminiscences of powdered wigs conjured up by the term chamber opera. The author now prefers Orphée to be described as a "liturgy", an expression more modern, more intimate and grave which the acting and the contrasts of the play. While keeping the visual aspect predominant, he could have given the text and the acting more importance, in order to involve the spectator's sensibility.

Orphée's score is written for soloists, choir, mass chorus and an instrumental ensemble of two pianos, ondes Martenot, celesta, harp, percussion and recorded voices. There are no sets; the stage is made up of wood, cane, colour and movement. The lighting, designed by Robert Reinholdt, defines the theatrical space, creates the mood and adds a symbolic dimension. The beautifully simple and effective costumes were designed by Claudette Picard.

The Sixth Paris Biennale: the keynote was participation

BY LAURENT LAMY

About ten years ago the Paris Biennale exhibition was established to present artists under the age of thirty-five. The Sixth Paris Biennale had two points at issue: the intervention of technology into art, and the viewer's contribution to the work of art.

I am willingly unmindful of the byproducts of lyric abstraction, pop art, optic art, new realism, and minimal art. What is the good, for example, of showing pale imitators of Le Parc or of Soto? The increasingly numerous group works almost make the work of the solitary artist anachronistic. No doubt this is not true, but such is the impression felt at the Biennale.

Coming after Fuller's constructions, spatial architecture, done mainly as group work, is presented in a manner renewed by the use of the vertical or most often the slant, after the fashion of the polyhedral architecture which seeks to resolve the problems of an intense concentration and population and a massive urbanization. Versatile, proliferous, still semi-utopian, this research really shows the new face of a futuristic architecture.

The artist holds out his hand to the public, forces it to take an initiative, and no longer limits its role to that of onlooker. At the Musée Galliera, an empty studio has been provided so that the passer-by can write on a wall, put on colour, drive in nails... It is pleasant and, at the same time, a bit derivative.

From the entrance to the Musée d'art moderne, the visitor is greeted by "L'Espace Luminephore" (light space) which transforms and translates the presence and the movements of the visitor into a variety of sounds, triggered by photo-electric cells. The Crow Group from Montevideo incorporates in a scaffold, dancers in white tights, who by their slow smudging of frames and white poles, create a moving sculpture that is constantly changing.

The numerous environments are presented under the form of happenings or "parcours". Here, there is a games room, there a small room for relaxing. A living-room that promises euphoria! Further on, a Czechoslovakian entry, a tremendous air jet, blows up all the skirts. The siren by Sergio Lombardo of Italy grates on the ears. The Biennale is often more sonorous than visual!

The most interesting thing in this Biennale, I thought, was the "poor art", the "earth art" and the question-works. Never has the work been so free, so provocative, so dependent on the attitude of the viewer. Rather, it is poverty and humiliation, the antithesis of all that modern civilization can produce, that are given us by the first element, the earth. In "La Comission à perfundir" (France), for example, poles of earth surrounded by a few steel beams, in their distressing truth, are as fearsome as a grave. From Japan, "Les Quatuor Boussac" a canvas is spread out on the ground; on one side is a stain, a pile of red earth, on the other is a white sheet. These rough materials, in the colours of blood and death are a stripping-away. How can one turn away from this?

Trente-deux messes pour des Argentins morts anonymes is the title of a
multi-dimensional work by the Argentinian Carballa. Bands of cloth are stretched out on metal structures, a foot apart from each other. On the cloth is the name of a person who was killed in Argentina. A note indicates that, at the same time, a mass is said every day for the 32 dead. The work, of which a part is patterned by the succession of the bands of cloth, requires, in order to fully come to life, that the viewer establish a questioning relationship between the masses and the image of the Stations of the Cross.

In a small boxing ring a chair of coloured ice slowly melts, staining the white ground red and black, to the cacophonous accompaniment of the sounds of crowds and interviews with the boxers. In this Combat (France) which takes place before us, the artist is surely not executing an aesthetic work in the traditional sense of the word. The consumption by the viewer almost exactly follows the tempo of the destruction of the object. Many are the visitors and critics who refuse to consume the work of art in this manner. We are all so accustomed to looking for the permanent and eternal work of art, so fond of the security, which the finished work gives us, that to see an object melt as a song passes on or as a film unfolds, seems a dubious initiative. But, after all, why not?

This Biennale, Canada, represented by Les Levine and the Nihilist Jazz Band of London, occupied a place of honour. Why does Canada, of space relative to these movements, are treated in a manner that Toronto is now showing a retrospective of his work, Robert Fulford or even abstract, because of the elements which are grouped around the triangle, which is nothing else than the extreme purification of the same nature as that evoked by the abstract-concrete explosion of the same nature as that evoked by the abstract-concrete.

I do not think so. It remains to be seen if it was only a tornado! The painting invites one not only to participate, but much more, to pursue his effort, to fulfill it. Like the kinetic painters he goes deeper into the condition of instability, a theme which touches us closely, and his effort seems valuable to us in the personal qualities he brings to it.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Mr. Laurent Lamy, President of the Canadian section of the International Association of Art Critics, was a member of the jury of the Sixth Paris Biennale.

Harold Town

The Waddington Gallery has just given us a geometric perception of art. In the next few weeks it is offering a series of canvases that, it would seem, in a formal way, bear more subtle characters; although they are more rigorously constructed.

Harold Town has been an authoritative force for a long time. Toronto is now showing a retrospective of his work. Robert Fulford is publishing a fascinating book by Jack McClelland on his drawings. Montreal is concentrating on his new canvases. The Fine Arts Museum is granting him a place of honour in the exhibition of its recent acquisitions.

These facts will enable us to understand more clearly the purification which the painter has attained in his new STRETCH series. The balance of the forces and movements that are engendered, the problem of space relative to these movements, are treated in a manner that is totally different from that of Soto or Takis.

The long threads that reunite the elements stretched to the maximum suggest a slowness in gestation, a painstaking and prolonged effort. An interminable difficulty, which for some people, is the very component of life, of nature. Very close to this nature, Harold Town uses elements with biological forms that are sinuous and unctuous, but which at the same time are dynamic (the dynamism is due perhaps to the chain which is nothing else than the extreme purification of these swellings).

The living composition, the elegance and sureness of the stroke, the restrained exercised by the vibrations and contrasts of the tones, the general tension arouse in the viewer an explosive feeling. An explosion of the same nature as that evoked by the abstract-concrete music of Ivo Malec, for example, who borrows this same explosive character from a cell by Luc Ferrari, who is working with him to create in their concerto, Tutti, a single sonorous formula applicable to different orchestral densities. Similarly, Town presents us with these visual formulas to which he gives resonances and a group density according to their arrangement, dynamic in STRETCH No. 3, for example, static (the square is static compared to the triangle in STRETCH No. 9), or even abstract, because of the elements which are grouped around an invisible, but present axis. Using methods such as collages, and hard-edge technique, painting in oil with luminosities quite his own, he attains by painting what others have succeeded in by spacing. Painting might be always a theme which touches us, and the desire to understand it remains as it was always: to understand the world in which we live.

Town also presents us with another series, that of the Silent Lights which, curiously enough, he worked on at the same time as the first series. At first contact, they are opposed to the formal purity of the preceding series by their complexity and also by their electicism. However, they both mark the distance and the tefilin link existing between objects. Sometimes they depict vagueness, disorder, and great release, Silent Light No. 3; sometimes a meaning gives them direction, Silent Light No. 4.

The work of Town is rich. The painter invites one not only to participate, but much more, to pursue his effort, to fulfill it. Like the kinetic painters he goes deeper into the condition of instability, a theme which touches us closely, and his effort seems valuable to us in the personal qualities he brings to it.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson

Miller Britain—Un souvenir

PAR LUKE ROMBOUT

Lorsque je rencontrai Miller Britain pour la première fois, au cours de l’été 1954, il était à l’apogée de sa carrière. Ses toiles se vendaient avec la précipitation de nouveaux livres de Milan. En France il passait pour un grand artiste.

Connie, sa femme, vivait encore. Jamais je n’ai rencontré deux personnes qui paraissaient plus pour le monde. Aucun d’eux deux ne se sentait complètement à l’aise avec le sens de l’âge. Ils habitaient un appartement petit dans le quartier de Chipman Hill, à Saint-Jean, et leur intérieur, où se bousculaient pêle-mêle les livres, les meubles, la nourriture et les vêtements, me rappelait une scène d’intérieur du dix-septième siècle peinte par Jan Steen. Cette bousculade créait une ambiance où il faisait bon se trouver.

Il fallait littéralement monter à la cuisine où Connie, excellent cuisinière, préparait de bons soups, dans un chat-bouillie. A New-York, sa réputation grandissait au Canada; bref, il était en pleine possession de son talent.

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maison. Pendant presque deux ans Miller lui avait servi de garde-ma-
lade. Une dépression nerveuse le guettait. Il avait cessé presque tout
travail et il faisait face à la tâche d'élever sa fille et de tenir maison;
deux tâches qu'il ne pouvait assumer. Plus tard, Jennifer fut placée
dans une école pour jeunes filles et Miller resta seul dans son énorme
villa avec son chien comme seul compagnon.

Un an et demi plus tard j'allai rester avec lui. J'occupais, près de
la villa, un bâtiment qui avait servi aux domestiques et j'y vécut
pendant un an. Ce ne fut pas toujours facile. Miller avait toujours
bu régulièrement mais avec modération. Désormais il buvait trop. La
mort de sa femme l'avait cruellement frappé. Cette perte irréparable
l'avait rendu solitaire à l'excès et il ne pensait qu'à l'agonie de Lonne.
De plus, je crois qu'il se sentait écarté par le style autant que par
deux dimensions de la ville qu'il habitait. Il est vrai qu'il buvait trop
mais il ne perdait conscience de ce qu'il faisait ou de ce qu'il
disait. Même dans cette condition il travaillait constamment à des
dessins et quelquefois à des toiles. Il remplissait plusieurs albums de dessins
et de croquis de genre que l'on peut voir au cours de cette exposition.

Durant ses meilleurs moments, et il y en eut plusieurs, sa présence
était charmante, pleine d'esprit teinté d'humour fin. Parce qu'il vivait
en solitaire il téléphonait constamment à ses voisins, à des connaissances
et parce qu'il n'avait aucune notion du temps il téléphonait souvent
au milieu de la nuit. Les appels interurbains l'enchantaient particu­
lièrement. "Chacun a son péché mignon", disait-il, "c'est le mien." Je
me souviens d'un jour où il avait téléphoné à un ami qui se trouvait
dans un village perdu de l'Irlande du Nord. Il n'y avait qu'un télépho­
ne au village et pendant que quelqu'un est allé chercher l'ami, à
bicyclette, Miller engagea une conversation époustouflante de vingt
minutes avec la téléphoniste irlandaise. Il lui récita la généalogie
irlandaise de certains membres de sa famille, s'enquit de sa généalogie,
parla du temps, etc... etc...

Malgré ses revenus restreints, il savait être d'une extravagance su­
perbe lorsqu'il arrivait d'avoir des espèces somnambules. Lors de ses
visites à Montréal, Miller se rendait sur le mont Royal, retênait pour
la journée les services d'un cocher et c'est dans cet équipage, qu'il
qualifiait de royal, qu'il visitait ses amis et les marchands de tableaux.
Les pourboires qu'il distribuait dans ses voyages étaient toujours géné­
reux parce que, disait-il, "j'aime être bien servi." Naturellement, le
service ne lui manquait pas. Je le vis un jour dans sa chambre d'hôtel,
à Fredericton, où il ne devait séjourner que quelques heures. D'un
bouc à l'autre de la chambre il avait aligné sur le plancher des billets
de vingt dollars. Il était d'excellente humeur, presque comme un
enfant, parce qu'il avait vendu une toile ce jour-là. En me montrant
les billets sur le parquet il me dit: "Tiens! Prends tout ce que tu
veux!"

Personne, du laitier ou de la domestique, du collectionneur et du
directeur de galerie d'art ne pouvait rester insensible à l'envoûtement
que sa présence exerçait. Il était à la fois un mystique, un enfant,
un intellectuel, un romantique, un gourmet et, à l'occasion, un provo­
cateur espagnol. Il était bien connu à Saint-Jean et dans certains cercles
de New-York. La comédienne américaine Anna Russell était l'une de
ses amis. Il avait des amis dans toutes les classes de la société de
Saint-Jean et ne faisait pas de différence entre les jardiniers, les char­
pentiers, les chauffeurs de taxis, les avocats, les médecins et les politi­
ciens. Les gens le fascinaient, c'est ainsi qu'il pouvait réciter la généal­
ogie de Myrtle, sa domestique noire, qu'il plaçait au même rang
qu'une duchesse.

Il continua de travailler dans des circonstances difficiles malgré sa
santé chancelante. Il passa de pénibles hivers dans sa maison délabrée
et impossible à chauffer convenablement. Pendant ses périodes de
grande fatigue, alors qu'il buvait trop et ne mangeait pas assez, il
accepta de faire des portraits qu'il exécuta jusqu'à ce que l'épuisement
physique et mental l'empêche de travailler. Il fut jusqu'à la fin débor­
dant d'enthousiasme. A chaque année Miller Gore Britann, D.F.C.,
prit part au défilé des anciens combattants au premier rang parmi
les anciens pilotes de guerre. Pourtant, jamais il ne parla de ses
brillants états de service en territoire ennemi.

Un peu avant Noël, en 1967, il subit une crise cardiaque qui le
paralyssa presque complètement. J'allai le voir à l'hôpital quelques jours
avant sa mort. Il était devenu, comme le faisait remarquer un ami,
le calque exact des gens aux yeux creux et cadavériques qui peuplaient
tos croisiers. Avec de peines infinies, il me présenta à son infirmière
à qui il tâcha d'expliquer qui j'étais.

C'était là, en tenant compte de son état, une manifestation remar­
quable de sa volonté et de sa persévérance. Ce fut le dernier signe
de notre amitié.