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TRANSFORMATIONS/TRADEMENTS

EDITORIAL

By Andrée PARADIS

Instead of the image, speech, for the reader, a message other than a written one: here are the first glimpses of a meeting that brought forth a wealth of strong, often contradictory impressions.

The Canadian government invited about a hundred art critics, historians, and museum scientists, all members of the Association Internationale des Critiques d’Art (A.I.C.A.) to come from the four corners of the world to become acquainted with Canadian art and art circles.

From August 17th to the 31st, the association held its twenty-second general assembly and its eleventh special congress, during its itinerant meeting which took place in the cities of Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria.

As they became aware of the size of the country, as the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Jules Léger, who greeted them in the name of the government so recommended, the members of the congress were able to measure the scope of the task that is truly incumbent on the art critic, that is to say, an attempt at a more global vision and synthesis of all the elements if we wish to arrive at a more perfect understanding. The president, Mr. René Berger, wishes that the critic-decipherer orient his work in such a way as to obtain a more rigorous course of action in order that no aspect or tendency of the work of art be neglected.

But that day in Montreal, the sun was shining, there was a taste for discovery and Kéro, the insatiable eye, was at the meeting with her cap . . .

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbison)
Cosgrove and establishment criticism

by François GAGNON

(A critic opposed to art criticism that harms art (1).)

Art criticism is certainly one of these activities whose purpose is the least clearly defined and whose necessity is the least justified. We shall see this with respect to Stanley Cosgrove.

In our circles—but in that, it follows European models—art criticism seems to be aimed primarily at defining the characteristic style of our painters. But its methods of procedure resemble those of treatises of graphology or typology, or even those of astrology columns that we can read by consulting the horoscopes in big-circulation newspapers. The same experts write in the interior configurations (forms of graphism, arrangement of facial features, arrangement of stars at birth, organization of lines and colours of a painting) the unique character of an individual and to express it by epithets which one believes appropriate. Thus, the result of these curious experts' reports strangely resemble one another. Let us read from start to finish a kitchen recipe, a horoscope, the definition of a temperament and handwriting analysis of a great person; we will be very astonished to find there the same mixture of adjectives borrowed from morality or para-psychology. Let us take it into our heads afterwards to read an article of art criticism: we will notice that the verbal landscape has not changed very much.

One of the first, the critic took a notion to define the characteristic style of Cosgrove, no doubt in November, 1939. On the occasion of an exhibition of Cosgrove at the Musée de Québec, M. Gérard Morisset, on page 4 of "L'Action Catholique", gave us this description of a large painting that he had referred to at the time: "... he suggests instead of affirming; he transposes the exterior world instead of photographing it ( . . . ) he willingly believes in his own vision, in his original reactions, in the great subtlety and refinement of his craft."

It is difficult to be more vague (or more precise). One does not dare think of the number of contemporary painters to whom exactly the same words could be applied. Thus, two years later, Morisset again takes up the same facts from his sketch, (A Look at the Arts of New France, 1941, p. 142):

"( . . . ) most of his works are freely spontaneous compositions, rich in subtle harmonies and unmovable objectivity, austere in their greatness and design."

The adjective "subtle" has been retained, but after having qualified the "craft" of the painter, it is now applied to his harmony of compositions.

Let us note also the appearance of the attenuating adjectives with respect to Cosgrove: "the unmovable" aspect of his movements (which ones?) coming to echo "he suggests instead of affirming."

From this time, we can say that the main lines of French-Canadian criticism—we will see that English critics use other registers—are fixed with respect to Cosgrove.

Maurois Gagnon takes them up again in his book "Modern Painting", 1943, p. 75:

"His works with a paint that envelops more than it specifies . . . ." Further on, "the coloured relationships", called "subtle" by Morisset are called "softness and sensuality".

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"He works with a paint that envelops more than it specifies . . . ." Further on, "the coloured relationships", called "subtle" by Morisset are called "softness and sensuality". Thus to cite only one example, since Buchanan, in 1939, in the book that he mentioned earlier, use "Landscape", 1948, from the collection of Mrs. H. A. Dyle of Edmonton, Hubbard, in 1960, and the author of "Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art", 1967, also Buchanan, who in 1961 had been interested in Cosgrove, in the block "Still life", 1939, from the collection of M. Gérard Morisset. We understand that at the time reproductions of Canadian works were hard to find, but in 1967 the art photography business makes a big improvement.

The critics, besides wanting to define the characteristic style of painters, attach a great importance at once to the tracking down of influences being exercised on the painters and to the revelation of influences being exercised on the painters and those of their predecessors or contemporaries. Thus do we see them record with a great deal of care the influences that he underwent? See Guy Vian (op. cit) who discovers "a Mexican flavour" (memory of his four years of study under Orozco, in Mexico) which adds a touch of pungency to Cosgrove's figurations. Guy Vian's liking for gastronomic epithets will have been noted in passing. There is Cosgrove defined in the same terms as a characteristic style.

With regard to the same comparative intention, we find among the critics attempts to classify the painters under vast headings, designating schools or tendencies. Thus, in his book of 1943, Gagnon placed the timid, shy Cosgrove among the Fauvists. Much later Guy Robert...
Jean McAllister

by René Garneau

Beyond resins, stone or wood, Jean McAllister sculpts her dream, the insistent human dream that seeks the inner face and the intimate movements of matter. A daughter of Lucretius who aspired only for knowledge, rather than a sister to Faust who wanted change.

Her artistic approach is first and quite naturally inscribed in exterior space by projections to which she periodically returns as though to possess herself as a sculptor. But every time there is more force and freedom in the impulse, and thus by research into the heart of the material, she has been able, in the meantime, to extend the play of light, form and colour within her modelled figures.

Jean McAllister worked in France with a master who led her to the loftiest galleries in Rennes to restore statues damaged by erosion. She certainly is fully aware that in the ninth and tenth centuries monks hollowed out the small mountains of the South-West by sheer strength to develop the stones that stand in open air. These monks took the stone out to put God in. Jean McAllister hollows out her resins to open perspectives in them and they invent inner forms. There is something in this procedure that has to do with metaphysics.

Thus far, this art of hollowing-out was carried out particularly on masses of a spherical form in which, much before the lunar harvests of the Apollo group of astronauts, she opened craters, pierced tunnels, carved out anfractuosities which give light strange and warm areas of refuge. To open unknown paths to light, to project colours in small chasms destined to blinding, to turn towards the opacity of matter and no longer be satisfied only with taking fragments from it, is perhaps a form of aesthetic violation. In any case, it is an original and spontaneous art which wants to soften a form of expression which, in its modern experiences, has too often become a rigid barrier; she wants us to be received into the sculpture.

She had already tried this experiment with a large scale piece, "Panorama of painting in Quebec, 1939-1946." In 1967, she was exhibited at the Musée Rodin in 1966. She is continuing and developing the experiment now, following the bent of her genius and without reference to her Japanese associations, with the density of a sort of box ("Décalque de nuit") where space will be created from the material, and light, of darkness.

But she is not interested in opacity alone. Animated by a dialectical movement, her art turns as successfully towards the projection of objects insomnigraphic, insomniacal. In a way that Jean McAllister had begun and, reassured by what she discovers in the course of her walk in the catacombs, she periodically returns to using full light. It is then a matter of taming the beast whose secrets one has disturbed and the new control is applied to mastering movement as to opening up darkness.

I like these forms that are firmly set on steel frameworks or "deployed metal" that exploit, according to the rules of a Valéry-like calculation, the rich possibilities of the play of cross-cut angles. Here there is full use, but no abuse, of freedom. There is no search for expressionism and still less any trace of this affirmation at all cost of the sculptor's personality which has falsified so many recent works. However, McAllister is not absent from her creations. One of them may evoke an animal from the Roman bestia, which Mary Eaton wants to be received by erosion, and then we recall the artist's experience in Rennes.

Would I say that her sculptures are admirably structured? I would say so if this word was not drained of its blood and... its "promontory vertical", which is indeed a pervasive power, is a fact that the works of Jean McAllister follow one another with an inexorable fidelity, in series in which one can recognize laws, and that both of the two groups (the inner sculptures as well as the spatial works) are connected by a coherent whole, and that the play of forms is always controlled within well-regulated limits.

How does sensitivity figure in this austere personal project? The mystery of inner spaces that are made to glitter in the sculptures with spherical forms collaborates freely with sensitivity in this respect. And then, her use of colour, to animate the material of sculptures in space, gives them a subtle charge of emotion. Suddenly, a plane becomes as smooth as skin. We might look for the pulsing of a fine vein there. And then, she is an acolyte of nature. Since the sculptures in space are intended to be placed outside she lets the snow coil up like a soft mass of a spherical form in which, much before the lunar harvests of the Apollo group of astronauts, she opened craters, pierced tunnels, carved out anfractuosities which give light strange and warm areas of refuge. To open unknown paths to light, to project colours in small chasms destined to blinding, to turn towards the opacity of matter and no longer be satisfied only with taking fragments from it, is perhaps a form of aesthetic violation. In any case, it is an original and spontaneous art which wants to soften a form of expression which, in its modern experiences, has too often become a rigid barrier; she wants us to be received into the sculpture.

Beyond resins, stone and wood, beyond the dream of Jean McAllister, the most fascinating element in her work, because that is what is behind it all, is, as Claudel said about his sister Camille, "her intelligent hands".
A man, that is to say a sensibility; an artist, that is to say an aroused sensibility, appears amid a new country, a country whose past is that of a young man and whose history is yet to be made. Man will look for himself, he will wander for a long time before finding his own character, his uniqueness. He will find his basic originality in the total adherence to his environment, in his identification with the forces that he is meeting, that he is assimilating. The man is Fernand Toupin, his country is Canada. The equation was a thrilling one to make.

An indeed remarkable painting is its solution.

It is fitting to note that painting is not a choice for Toupin; it is a certainty, if not a fate. It is as old as he is, that is to say identified with his conscious life. No salvation outside art! Toupin is a person totally committed to what he is doing, to his life, and the latter is directly identified with his art. The certainty of his vocation does not necessarily entail that of his success. For a long time, it was not Toupin’s work. While becoming aware of what he is, as a man, a Canadian, that is to say a citizen of a country in search of itself, that wants to assert itself, Toupin accumulates many notes and observations that he draws from every field. Not that he intends to take over acquired knowledge that came from elsewhere, and which physically will remain alien to him, but he has a determined desire to state the choice of his instinct in relation to knowledge of what has happened abroad. That is to say that he does not act in an unthinking manner and seek to claim a heritage without having become aware of his own uniqueness; neither does he assert himself while ignoring everything around him.

It is a matter of a choice that is not at all painful, sectarian, vindictive, but of a same choice, where harmony between sensibility, knowledge and even ethnic character, develops. Toupin tries every path although he knows that they lead him nowhere. They are the paths of others. But he wants to keep them before striking out. Curiously enough, the attitude of Toupin reflects an anxiety that is that of a whole generation. The awakening of Quebec nationalism is not a political matter, but really, the effort of a whole generation to assert itself in its essence and in what makes it different from others, from older people, from foreigners.

It would have been rather useless, in fact really rather stupid, for Toupin to have adopted the view of the Paris School (with which, however, he was well acquainted). A matter of temperament, of environment, of customs, of daily life. He likes Brique because his material is deep, reflective, searching, really tough out, but there can be no question, for him, of profiting by it. He does not want to make the same mistake as European artists looking toward America, trying in vain to translate the large, irreducible, imposing, moving, and bewildering qualities which are absent from a civilization of countries that are much too organized, old, sclerotic, and “different” in every dimension. Thought, like art, cannot cross the Atlantic like a simple object. Neither exporting nor importing have ever really been profitable. It is a matter of a choice.

Art at most, schools, tendencies, ideas can bear up, precipitate an evolution that should, to be brought to a successful issue and be sound, be contained in the recognized limits of a country, of a civilization.

Toupin has understood that well, and, for him, European art is only a catalogue to which he likes to refer for pleasure, but not really to sustain his own plastic problems. Thus he considered Mondrian (a man from Holland, that is to say of a necessarily geometric vision, and only capable of realizing it abstracted. Why not already in Vermeer?), but he withdrew nothing essential for himself besides exercises liable to strengthen his technique.

One example among many. Everyone around him synthesizes without cause, brings reality back to purified lines to a disembodied geometry; he struggles with the material, acknowledges feelings, personalizes his art to the utmost, projects himself frankly, adopts lyricism at the expense of a possible order. In the same way that the nature in which he lives, and with which he succeeds in identifying himself blooms, Toupin will have an expansive vision. He will also see white. Everything around him is immaculate. No doubt we must not consider his first paintings as the simple illustration of Canadian nature. White is also a colour that is sufficient unto itself, which has its mysteries, its beauties. Toupin plays with white, but, in the same way as the hero of Giono, he will experience vertigo.

Soon great tears will come to wound these virgin surfaces. Blood will spur from the icy hearts. A strident note. Vital urge. White stabbed is also a cry.
From that time onwards, Toupin's painting will be organized around this duality: the projection of material (granulations, impasto), and the crevices. At times these are a simple incision into the heart of the material, at times, evoking evident, or even suggested, by the recent works (1965-70) it is really a question of a violent and superb field of action where successive waves of colour are placed edge to edge like incandescent lava, storms at high sea, powerful energies. But Lardera builds them in their integrated autonomy. The monumental work, however, will not always be necessarily monumental, for it is due especially to a remarkable series of exhibitions and a pleiad of monumental works in public places. In the United States, a few cities also display large sculptures by Lardera, and the largest of all, more than forty feet tall, has just been set up in Washington. It has already been a few years since Montreal has recognized the prestige of Lardera, who participated in the International Symposium of Sculpture and who exhibited at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in 1963, and whose work was placed in front of the French pavilion at Expo 67.

Lardera and the challenge of architecture

By Guy ROBERT

To reply to the "need to think about matter, to dream matter, to live in the matter, or else—what amounts to the same thing—to militarize the imagination," according to the apt phrase of Gaston Bachelard, so-called modern sculpture has especially assumed the consequences of a fundamental questioning of its meaning and the modalities of its existence.

In this panorama, which is at fascinating as it is disturbing, the work of Berto Lardera is like a light house; it does not refuse to take risks, even the most compromising ones, and it sets strict equations whose relevance and depth are convincing.

From the perspective of the relationships between sculpture and architecture sometimes leads in the direction of what is called rather abusively a habitable sculpture, which has been attempted a few times with varying degrees of success by Gaudí, or Le Facteur Cheval, Le Corbusier or Niemeyer, André Bloc or Amancio Alpoim Guedes. As early as 1952, Lardera was developing careful studies concerning these relationships and, in 1961, he was working in metal on a first affirmation of the solution (boldly and rigorously coherent) under the pertinent title of Forme-fonction dans l'espace I, an important work acquired in 1963 by the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art.

Profile of Seven Witnesses

"At the villa Pensotti, my sculpture devours the architecture which does not work with it": how can the problem of the relationship between sculpture and architecture be set in more direct terms? In 1964-65, a work of 6 meters Dramatic occasion VIII has been receiving much attention in the Giardino di Boboli, Florence, and in the same rigorous eloquence, placed in the Duisburg municipal park and there asserting its indomitable presence. In 1966-67 Lardera undertook in his studio at Cité Falquier, in Paris, the composition Ile de France a few sober and vigorous planes divide the space into concentrated areas whose every outline combines, with an unforgettable grace, the steadiness of an examining look and the caress of a hand affected by emotion which shapes from the palpitating flesh of the emotion, to the homage to the Florentine sculptor's adopted land, and also the unprecedented pitfalls of such an avowal. The cutting torch sings all along the contours of the pieces of metal, and reveals its powerful energy, inscribed in the very thickness of the steel. And we deplore the fact that the City of Montreal was not able to keep such an evident masterpiece, which, in September of 1969, left the promenade of the Monument de la France pavilion of the international and universal exhibition of Man and His World (where, however, it had never really gotten along very well with the architecture of the previously mentioned pavilion), to enchant a museum in Hanover with its presence.

Very recently, in 1967-68, Lardera analyzed the problems presented by a building complex and found the masterful equation of Heroic Rhythm VIII for the cultural centre and the Conservatory of musical instruments in Neuchâtel (architects: Wogenscky, Duboin, Goullou). And for only a few months, Heroic Rhythm IX has been standing in the square of the University of Fribourg, exhibiting with a faithful authority the rigorous attitude that the artist proclaims in several cities in the world, towards the place of sculpture, and towards monumental sculpture in modern life.
The Inner Presence

In order to cast a very modest look at the man himself, let us broach a few questions. How for example, was he to forget his Lombardian élan vigorously expressing the best systmes of values that we might hope potential that the students presented and which revealed itself in the of the highly specialized studios but also because of the immense sagged if I had had to work alone. Encouraged by these results I began whose help proved to be not only useful, but began to give my work sculptures that have been exhibited throughout the world, from Tokyo to Venice, from Oslo to New York, that animate the public places of creative energy. Lardera's sculptures are like leaders forging ahead to the of his sculptures and the prestige of his word.

For about twenty years the work of Berto Lardera has been expressing the eloquent speech of a rigidly modern plastic language, and vigorously expressing the best systems of values that we might hope for: a savage authenticity, a violent passion, an unfailing lucidity, an intense will, a transparent affectation. Impressive, intimidating, charged with powerful energies that could overflow and explode if they were not concentrated in a form that sets the laws of intelligence to theran vital, Lardera's sculptures are like leaders forging ahead to the frontiers of what is possible and what is happening. 

"Human presence is essential for every work of art, but it is not necessarily the representation of a human figure in a group of certain aspects of nature. I conceive this presence to be like a manifestation of the soul and the spirit. The first drive that begins the work of artistic creation, is the rediscovery of deeply felt emotion which enabled me to express my thoughts. A sculpture is real because it constitutes in itself a vital gesture of an absolute importance. The truth of a work of art does not consist in the exactitude of the representation, but in its interior necessity. 

Thus speaks Lardera, confiding his deepest thought to José Julian. And it is exactly in this moral and ethical foundation, that we see the steel flowers of Lardera taking root. They testify that in our civilization, there is a just balance between romantic fulgence and cybernetic dryness; they attest to the nobility of the spirit and the turning of material to the naked.

And finally, Lardera's work is not limited to a few hundred metal sculptures that have been exhibited throughout the world, from Tokyo to Venice, from Oslo to New York, that animate the public places of art.

Colab—An experiment in group creativity. (Rhode Island School of Design, Spring 1968)

By Marc LEPAGE

Bringing the spectator to participate in the creation of the work of art has been the main concern of my work of the last four years. With the intention of discovering new possibilities of participation, I undertook, at the Rhode Island School of Design, the creation of inflatable environments that surround the spectator and give him the possibility of expressing himself by manipulating the pneumatic material. The spectator becomes both a sculptor since he gives form to the material with his movements, and a spectator of art since he becomes the important element of the work, being formed and surrounded by the material.

The procedure proved to be effective; and at the next meeting two kinds of thinking began to be evident, beginning with proposals already made. The first one concerned space: architecture, art, environment; the other was more interested in time: theatre, dance, music. At this point two different actors were proposed, since the beginning of the meetings, the use of inflatable material to house different areas of participation: participation with the materials themselves, or with other persons who would receive instructions to this effect. This new kind of actor would be there to help the visitor and to give him a new look at his environment and his actions, rather than communicate some kind of message to him. We had conceived different kinds of projections for the surfaces of labyrinth, atmospheres of smoke, light and surrounding music.

The presentation included Carignan's blue prints, a tunnel prototype and cybernetic dryness; they attest to the nobility of the spirit and the turning of material to the naked. 

A group project would be organized, a project that would not only introduce the participation of the spectator into my work but would henceforth reunite the creator to the spectator in the very process of creation. An active education, living creation of the artist, of the spectator and the work, henceforth interchangeable notions. At most the spectator becomes the creator and the work. It was thus necessary to reunite a few of these students into a group that would consent to collaborate in the creation of a work in which everything remained to be defined and which would offer each one equal opportunities to express himself.

Formation of the group

Assisted by an architecture student who had a talent for public relations, I gathered a few students and friends from related fields who had similar thoughts about contemporary research into art, architecture, film-making and technology. The group was made up of students in architecture, sculpture, town-planning, and film-making, an engineer, and myself, engaged in research in the environment and also working in film-making.

We did not have any pre-conceived notion about what would be the result of our project, but there was a point of common accord; it would be the product of a group of ideas united together for the creation of a unique and unified project, and not two isolated sculptures competing in a group exhibition.

The development of the meetings

The first meetings were rather chaotic. Above all, it was necessary to know how to organize the discussion sessions and afterwards be able to follow-up. Some students thought it would be necessary to elect a director, an idea which I immediately opposed for I knew that if a director organized the discussions this would introduce party spirit which we precisely wanted to avoid in this kind of project. The following procedure was finally adopted: a secretary was to take down all the ideas and would read them back if needed (this task would be assumed by each of the members in turn); and the sessions would thus be divided: 1. A period devoted to making proposals without any limitations; 2. Reading of the proposals by the secretary; 3. Period of reflection; 4. New, more global proposals by each of the members, beginning with the first ones; 5. Free discussion to endeavour to unify ideas.

The procedure proved to be effective; and at the next meeting two kinds of thinking began to be evident, beginning with proposals already made. The first one concerned space: architecture, art, environment; the other was more interested in time: theatre, dance, music. At this point we had reached the point where we had to present all this work to the school and industry.

Robert Carignan, the group's student in sculpture, and I had proposed, since the beginning of the meetings, the use of inflatable materials: we had both used them in our personal research and we did not stop praising their virtues. On the other hand, the name of labyrinth had often been used during discussions to describe the structure; at this point, we began to visualize a labyrinth of inflatable material to house different areas of participation: participation with the materials themselves, or with other persons who would receive instructions to this effect. This new kind of actor would be there to help the visitor and to give him a new look at his environment and his actions, rather than communicate some kind of message to him.

We had conceived different kinds of projections for the surfaces of labyrinth, atmospheres of smoke, light and surrounding music.

Distribution of tasks

These decisions were set forth at the next meeting, and precise tasks were given to every member. Carignan was put in charge of the final design of the labyrinth and the blue prints. The idea that I had proposed for airlight doors was accepted: two inflatable walls between which the spectators had to slip to enter the structure proper. I was also to be responsible for organizing the masks and costumes: the smart mist, projections of light rays, and the play of large balloons. Everyone had a specific task for which he was responsible to the group.

Help from the school and industry

We had reached the point where we had to present all this work to the administration of the school in order to obtain at least financial help.

The presentation included Carignan's blue prints, a tunnel prototype...
in inflated plastic, and a rotating machine, that I made, that caused immense balloons inflated with helium to move about the entire space of the gym. The whole thing was convincing. The professors were so impressed with our presentation that most asked their students, as projects for April, to search for solutions to planning the ground, building different parts of the structure and finding the materials from companies. We were given dozens of rolls of plastic as well as all the tape needed to join the different parts of the structure.

The setting up of the structure

All the uncutting of the plastic—carried out according to the plans and calculations of our engineer—was done in the gymnasium by students who gave freely of their time. It was necessary to draw, cut, then glue the different parts that were then transported to the project site and inflated all at once. The entire structure was pliable and was transported in pieces to be assembled on the ground that had been prepared and designed for this purpose. A few weeks before the end of the project, almost the whole school was working on it, from the first-year students who were making banners to announce the project throughout the city, to the fashion designers who were making a series of costumes for the Saturday evening masked ball.

The Colab Week-end

The atmosphere during the week-end was indescribable: enthusiasm was at its peak Saturday evening for the masked ball. Inside, the atmosphere was surreal: flashes of light danced in the atmosphere of artificial mist that had been created by special machines, immense balloons ten feet in diameter were pushed into space and seemed in a state of weightlessness because of the effect of the strobes. We had created an atmosphere of a universal exhibition with not one centime, a few good ideas, a great deal of energy, and a unique spirit of collaboration.

If one wants to speak of open works, I shall certainly speak of this one: a work open not only to the consumer or the spectator, but to its creators who embark on an adventure that gives creative ideas the opportunity to confront others and thus ensure their evolution. Colab was a thrilling group-work experiment as well as a structure, and a fascinating series of events. It was man, and his evolution, because of his contact with others in the group, that is really a work of art.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Roland Pichet

By Michel BEAULIEU

Since finishing his studies at the École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, about ten years ago, Roland Pichet has been engaged in a plastic research which, although it may seem to follow the beaten track now and again, still turns away from it in certain impulses of a clear originality.

The recent outcome of this research was horizontal bands on large canvases which seem to uninitiated people to be identical to the vertical bands of a painter like Molinari or the aesthetics of Noland, yet they differ from them by the irrational aspect of the process of creation within a rigid structure. In Pichet’s work, two essential factors, and again, still turn away from it in certain impulses of a clear originality.

The colours of the horizontal bands such as defined by Pichet in his paintings thus contain a dimension which, while seeming parallel to that of Molinari, proceed from paradox: the rigid frame contains an emotive charge which, opposed to the shock of colours which first appeals to retinal perception at least at first sight, opens onto another space by scarcely perceptible detonators which create, beyond vision, and in particular, to the depth of the picture, a climate of calm and serenity.

For Roland Pichet remains a serene artist, at least such as appear­ances and a certain playfulness indicate.

Born in Magog, Monique Voyer decided, last May, to present her new plastic works at the Apogée Gallery in St-Sulpice-des-Monts. Outwardly this lovely Canadian-style house is not distinguished in any way from its neighbours; but inside, it is full of contemporary Quebec masterpieces. In the basement there is an atmosphere of privacy and contemplation which provides a suitable setting for the monthly exhib­itions of the gallery. The warmhearted owners, Claude Gaudoury and Maurice Robillard, do not hesitate also to exhibit young, unknown talents.

Upon leaving the Montreal Beaux-Arts, Monique Voyer won the first prize in painting and left to study at the Beaux-Arts in Paris. On her return to Canada, she won another painting prize and an honourable mention in prints during a provincial show. Since 1954 she has had many personal exhibitions. In 1955-56 she also worked as a costume designer for C.B.C. Today she is teaching plastic arts part time at a secondary school in Duvernay. But in her studio she is overcome by poetry.

Monique Voyer

By Michèle TREMBLAY

Born in Magog, Monique Voyer decided, last May, to present her new plastic works at the Apogée Gallery in St-Sulpice-des-Monts. Outwardly this lovely Canadian-style house is not distinguished in any way from its neighbours; but inside, it is full of contemporary Quebec masterpieces. In the basement there is an atmosphere of privacy and contemplation which provides a suitable setting for the monthly exhib­itions of the gallery. The warmhearted owners, Claude Gaudoury and Maurice Robillard, do not hesitate also to exhibit young, unknown talents.

Suddenly tamed by colour the faces grow larger and look up and eyes too and hands too

and men

who again take their place

in this sunshine world.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
Such is the presentation that the artist herself wanted at her exhibition. Around Helios (the Sun) revolve Life, Nature, Fire, Weather, Desire. Monique Voyer sings of this Sun... this Centre. Since her last exhibition three years ago, an important change has occurred in the artist’s technical evolution. From sombre and cold tones, she passes on to lively and warm colours, which certainly reflect her overflowing enthusiasm and joie de vivre. Moreover, we will recall the expressionism, then lyricism of her abstraction. Today she presents more structured compositions to us, which, for all that, are not geometric; she would be closer, on the contrary, to an implicit figurative art. Vasarely has again recently reminded us, in an interview in Esprit, of the fundamental principle of abstract art. “Painting is abstract”, he said; “from the time when form-colour wins out over parasitic, naturalist or anecdotal reliefs.” Now, Monique Voyer places the Sun at the centre of her research. This Sun is looked at, studied, reflected in all its aspects. Now close... now far... now going toward it... now coming from it... now pale... now ardent... now surrounded... now solitary (which the artist prefers). In all time, the Sun has been this symbolic and inaccessible Force that intrigues peoples, this “Will to Power and Joy” sung by Nietzsche.

All this certainly belongs to the realm of the Metaphor, but it would be pertinent to know if the meaning of the sun-metaphor is simply a figure of style in the artist’s work or else a source of secret inspiration which would finally surpass Myth. Here the artist insists on the sun-theme. Now the artist’s function is to unveil, to shed light on the obscure, to bring to light the other side of things, which, in her case, would be to suggest the absence of light and heat, the theme of Death. After all, the plastic arts, as well as dance, music, or even cinema, are made less to distract than to move one into introspection and, as René Daumal, “incessantly to return one’s gaze to the intolerable centre of one’s solitude”.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

**Claude Girard**

By Christian ALLÈGRE

Let us try to establish a bond between the poet Claude Girard and ourselves, his audience, which by one, two, ten, a hundred canvases will lead us to the day when, after his first one-man show, he returned from New York, on the familiar and unknown road of his life as an artist.

A few words of his language come to us. Delicacy, let us say, refinement and sensitivity. And we know that nothing is said yet. Attempting to define what is perhaps most indefinable, we try to mix, unyielding, romanticism or melancholy, and we discover that Claude Girard has learned his art from Jean-Paul Lemaux in Quebec. Calm and cold exteriors, white moons, haiks as for a Shakerian setting, glacial blue, filamentous biology of worlds unborn; slow and subtle movements of canvases painted ten years ago, material ecstasy of a person born in 1938 near Chicoutimi, under the sign of Sagittarius: calm, strength and balance.

We make our way, powerless spectators wanting to capture everything with words; we think of these: Dream, Beauty, Hope, like in these delicate extracts of poems by Baudelaire and Éluard with which he marked each of the canvases of his first exhibition in Quebec, in 1961.

Lyrical abstraction, let us state, in our folly of rationalization, classification. Our perception is unsound and yet we want to judge. “C’est la mer allée avec le soleil” (It is the sea gone with the sun), would have spoken, better than us, another poet, Rimbaud. Sea, it is Venice, as seen during a period at the Fine Arts Academy in this city, or else Malaga or Morocco, which create his best memories.

Can the art of a painter like Claude Girard thus be enclosed in a few formulas, without some surprises? No. What happened in 1967? Need for rigour, a sudden taste for discipline, a need for exactingness, his isolation, and his refusal to belong to any school, which, for all that, are not geometric; she would be closer, on the contrary, to an implicit figurative art. Vasarely has again recently reminded us, in an interview in Esprit, of the fundamental principle of abstract art. “Painting is abstract”, he said; “from the time when form-colour wins out over parasitic, naturalist or anecdotal reliefs.” Now, Monique Voyer places the Sun at the centre of her research. This Sun is looked at, studied, reflected in all its aspects. Now close... now far... now going toward it... now coming from it... now pale... now ardent... now surrounded... now solitary (which the artist prefers). In all time, the Sun has been this symbolic and inaccessible Force that intrigues peoples, this “Will to Power and Joy” sung by Nietzsche.

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(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
David Samila et la joie de créer

par Virgil G. HAMMOCK


Le professeur George Swinton avait d’abord conçu l’exposition pour la Galerie du Siècle, à l’ Université du Manitoba, pour l’année 1970, mais il a dû être mis de côté car il a fallu attendre l’année 1972 pour que le projet soit réalisé. Le centre de Montréal a choisi de l’exposer à la Galerie du Haut-Pavé, à Toronto, a eu beaucoup de succès, et cette galerie lui prépare une autre exposition pour l’ hiver prochain.

Le centre de Montréal a donc exposé Samila, n’a pas encore trois ans, mais il est déjà l’un des artistes les plus prometteurs de l’ Ouest du Canada.

(Traduction de Pierre-W. DESJARDINS)

Louis Comois et integration into architecture

By Bernard LÉVY

“The integration of art into modern techniques, technology, and architecture is considered by a certain public and even by certain artists to be a fashion. This fashion will pass; it will give way to very concrete realities sometimes made up of awkward and incoherent groups, but sometimes also more subtle realities that result from the homogeneous or heterogeneous coordination of artists and technicians or industrial enterprises. Thus, the art that I execute, the forms that I design and the surfaces that I organize are meant to be integrated into the dimensions, problems, and materials of the world in which we live. The result is not a rigid expression, but a movement. What I do is inscribed, as are a great number of contemporary works, within a course of research that is in constant evolution.”

Thus speaks Louis Comois, a young Quebec artist who has been living in Paris for two years thanks to a Canada Arts Council grant.

An exhibition at the Galerie du Haut-Pavé, in the heart of the Latin Quarter, a programme filmed in colour by the Office de la Radio-Télévision Française (O.R.T.F.), in the framework of the series The face of art, an article by the France-Press agency, and a few brief articles about him published in the French dailies did not turn Louis Comois’s head at all. On the other hand, the stubborn silence of Quebec’s news media serves to have had on him a great deal more.

We hope that this article will make up, at least in part, for such an oversight.

Not any kind of aluminium/

Louis Comois is 25. He did not wait for the end of his secondary studies at the Collège Saint-Laurent in Montreal to become interested in painting and enrol in the art studio directed by Gilbert Marion and Gérard Lavallée, neither did he wait for the end of his studies at the Beaux-Arts to exhibit his first works in several Montreal galleries (Nova et Vetera, Galerie du Siècle). He recalled that his professors of the last two years, notably Mario Merola, Claude Courchênes and Jacques de Tommencour, had taught him that work truly takes on form and power when the artist works alone. Basically, a fine arts school should be a kind of free studio where dialogues and human relations that would give rise to better lessons would occur among the participants (students and teachers). Is this utopia? Certainly, we have not yet achieved this point in Quebec. However, we grant a greater place to imagination than do some European establishments. From this point of view, technique is acquired in a similar way. The important thing is to become aware of contemporary problems as quickly as possible. To the dry academicism of certain European schools, our schools raise topical questions which truly lead the artist to think.

“And today how can we imagine an artist’s life dissociated from
research work?* exclaims Louis Comtois. That is where there intervenes the collaboration of people who are often strangers to properly set up an exhibition at the site of the former Halles of Paris. All the contemporary trends and decorators who became enthusiastic about his models. Several works are vast panels in the dimensions of murals (nine feet wide by twenty feet long, for example). The forms include squares, rectangles, and circles. He proceeds by two steps: first, the construction of a model with the help of figures cut out from metallic "Mylar", cardboard and plastified paper; then the elaboration of a second model, the exact scale of the future work, this time using plates cut straight from anodized aluminum and glued to a wooden support. The creation finds its point d'appui from the first step. It is at this point that there is a participation of institutional, rational, irrational, indeed chaotic and creative, but which, on the contrary, leave the artist a kind of creative freedom. Indeed, it is the general group that one must see together, an enemy state: Austria. Because of this, neither the Italian nor the Austrian governments could not understand the singularity of the city either, there were political reasons that justified their attitude: Venice was, for the time being, a fringe area, and it had, moreover, as an immediate neighbour, an enemy state: Austria. Because of this, neither the port, nor the great shipyards—the only elements that might have given new impetus to the economic life of the island—were developed by the new Italian state.

But why use only geometric forms? Why use only two of the dimensions of space? Louis Comtois answers: "If I use only geometric forms—circles, squares, rectangles—I am not trying to be systematic, rather to disentangle, for the time being, a certain sensitivity that is my own. It is in these forms that I convey my present aesthetic emotion. I do not follow through with the project. The anodized aluminum model must yet be built. This stage is less fertile. The artist can be satisfied to reproduce the second model, to effect a few changes, or he may judge the result unsatisfactory and not follow through with the project. But of course, Louis Comtois points out, there is a movement in an imbalance supported by opposing tensions. In other words, a point or a group or points of tension, in a precise way, tension on another point or series of points, which, as factors of imbalance, turn to disorder and tend towards a kind of perpetual aesthetic entropy. In the very interior of these groups forces of equilibrium and imbalance exist. Indeed, it is the general group that one must see and like. It is not at all a question of the art of the easel enlarged in the dimension of the wall, but in the very essence of the difficulties to be resolved. However, the social problem of Venice cannot be understood without some historical background. For several centuries, Venice was the capital of a maritime empire. Its position on a lagoon was advantageous to its relationships with distant countries, to its contacts with the mainland with which it could communicate by waterway because of a system of canals that flowed into its lagoon. At that time it was a rich, prosperous, and active city. These conditions changed completely between the end of the XVIIIth century and the beginning of the XIXth, when Venice lost its freedom and when new means of transportation (the railway, then the automobile) made maritime transportation less important. Can Venice be saved? By Simona Ganassi SERENI Architects

Venice is an endangered city; the high tide, which about twenty years ago used to flood Saint Mark's Square and a few roads once a year, has become stronger and more aggressive. Twice or three times every year (sometimes more) the city is seen to be half-submerged. Moreover, air and water pollution cause an acceleration of the corrosion of statues, frescoes and works of marble in general. We could continue to describe this physical decay; it would not summarize the most important and too obscure aspects of the drama of Venice. It is a matter of problems related to the socio-economic decline of the city that cannot be ignored if we wish to understand the very essence of the difficulties to be resolved. Projects, projects, projects. The one-man exhibition which he held in Paris, on April 15, 1969, is already long past, it was only a step. Louis Comtois has, since that time, pursued his research and, taking advantage of the opportunity, travelled in Europe. He made many interesting contacts. Other ideas, other models were conceived. He presented them to the famous Danish architect-designer Arne Jacobsen who was very interested in them: it is too soon to say more about them at this time.

His present plans include a one-man exhibition in Milan (Italy) during the fall at the Apollinaire Gallery, where a stainless steel multiple work will be shown, and participation in the Salon Comparaison. In Milan, in March of 1970, Louis Comtois met several architects and decorators who became enthusiastic about his models. Several projects were conceived during these meetings. For the present, however, he decided to set up an exhibition at "Apollinaire", a gallery that is considered to be one of the most representative of present-day art in Italy. Only environment works are presented there. They will exhibit a work of Louis Comtois. A photographic reproduction of this work will appear in the fall issue of the magazine Domus.

The Salon Comparaison is an exhibition that takes place this year on the site of the former Halles of Paris. All the contemporary trends meet there to convince each other. Louis Comtois will hang one of his latest works at this exhibition. (Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
we consider the extent of the island of Venice, the characteristics of
over by Mr. Giusto Tolloy, has proposed linking Venice to the cities
research into new functions; restoration of buildings; setting up of new
modern living conditions. The effort must be made in several areas:
that it is necessary not only to hasten to prevent new departures, but
if we do not wish the population to decrease (because of the present
demographic structure) we must assure conditions of a veritable
repopulation.

To this end, it would be necessary to assure Venice of jobs and
modern living conditions. The effort must be made in several areas:
research into new functions, restoration of buildings, setting up of new
means of communication between the city and the mainland.

The problem is thus that there will be no sound defence for Venice
without the creation of new functions and without a vast programme
of communications: in fact, it permits excellent relationships without
seriousness of these problems, but as Ali Vrioni, special assistant to
the general director, writes in his editorial, To Save Venice, in the issue
Venice does not imply that we are underestimating the problems of
the human body animated by a vigorous expansion movement
physical protection. In its report,

Peter Gnass is not a sculptor, but a constructor. That is the conclu-

Peter Gnass: Construction with light

In 1957 Peter Gnass emigrated from Germany and settled in
Montreal. He was 21. In Hamburg he had registered at the Fine Arts
Academy, partially owing to the reluctance of his father, an
engineer, to see him take up this kind of a career.

He had to wait almost a year before being accepted at the Montreal
Beaux-Arts, where he remained until 1962. He went from one class
to another, without doing anything in particular there was something to be
learned. He registered in engraving with Albert Dumouchel. "That
was where I discovered sculpture", he said. "I dug, I cut into copper
and zinc plates deeper and deeper. I tried to obtain the greatest
possibility of the image without leaving a trace of the first plate.
"I was preparing my last exhibition at the Joliet Gallery in the old
Metropolitan network plays an important role even in the localization
of new activities especially for those linked to Venice's function as
chief-town of the region.

The fact that we have emphasized the socio-economic problems of
Venice does not imply that we are underestimating the problems of
physical protection. In its report, Unesco clearly emphasizes the
seriousness of these problems, but as Ali Vrioni, special assistant to
the general director, writes in his editorial, To Save Venice, in the issue
of Courier of Unesco: "The fate of the monumental and artistic
heritage of Venice does not depend only on physical factors..." Technics
is almost always up to the difficulties, when its intervention is required by
a healthy body animated by a vigorous expansion movement...

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However, Venice can be saved only on one condition: that is that
its salvation be thought of as a collective work, a "great collective
project" which is a matter of organization which concerns us all.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

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(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
The work of Harold Pinter, the only British dramatist who can clearly be ranked among the writers of the absurd, has at times a so perfect a quality that the term Pinteresque is at least a term whose meaning is not easily understood. Certainly the values that Pinter communicates by the absurd are more elusive, and if Ionesco is more anxious than the others to inform us about the nature of his vision, he does not need to explain himself. Pinter, on the other hand, the subject of conversation will change quickly, illogically. Here is an example of Pinteresque dialogue that appears in The Birthday Party:

Stanley—Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go.

Lulu—Where could we go?

Lulu—Where?

Pinter's work with the theatre of the absurd, for any critic that does not proceed from this basis will necessarily prove to be false. It is, however, true that in spite of the importance of the character of the absurd—the plays of Beckett, Ionesco, Genêt, Arrabal, Albee, and Pinter are continually being performed—this term has scarcely made its way into the terminology of the critics, who in their judgment of the plays, take them most often for satirical works. We must thus clarify for the absurd is incompatible with satire. The satirist always clings to a humanist ideal: he continues to believe that if man mends his ways, he can satisfy his essential desires: to know himself, to be aware of the world, to communicate, to love and feel loved, to fulfill his vocation, his reason for living. The writer of the absurd denies this ideal, which he judges to be unrealizable. He even pokes fun at it and invites us to take pleasure in situations where characters outrageously violate this ideal. Delights in the absurd are, however, characterized (as are unceasing uncontrollable laughter or we remain spell-bound, fascinated by the horror embodied by poetry.

What distinguishes Pinter from the other dramatists of the absurd is, first, this fact: that he creates the level at which he can satisfy his essential desires: to know himself, to be aware of the world, to communicate, to love and feel loved, to fulfill his vocation, his reason for living. The writer of the absurd denies this ideal, which he judges to be unrealizable. He even pokes fun at it and invites us to take pleasure in situations where characters outrageously violate this ideal. Delights in the absurd are, however, characterized (as are unceasing uncontrollable laughter or we remain spell-bound, fascinated by the horror embodied by poetry.

From his first play The Room (1957) until The Caretaker (1960), Pinter's themes will be the loneliness of the man who searches in vain for a home. If the theme remains the same, his art develops and expands in The Caretaker. The Birthday Party is a particular character, but the room in which Davies is living has a powerful presence with its disorder that groups objects such as an extremely old toaster, a statue of Buddha, a chair lying on the floor.

In the beginning of his career, Pinter had improbable events happenning to make a situation evolve, instead of having it develop naturally in keeping with the psychology of the character. But in The Birthday Party and The Caretaker the attention focuses on the psychology of the characters. Stanley in The Birthday Party and Davies in The Caretaker are both paranoiac, that is to say, "characterized by the pathological over-estimation of the ego, distrust, erroneous assumptions, guilt and inferiority feelings." Pinter is not the only dramatist of the absurd who shows man troubled by neurosis: it is just remarkable that Pinter makes us feel the life of the English people even to its very speech whose full flavour he conveys.

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