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Citer cet article
The conference on Art and its Social Responsibilities held in Montreal last February at Sir George Williams University and the Saidye Bronfman Centre was too glamorous to be really significant; the scholarly intellectual element, the New York critic, Harold Rosenberg, reaffirmed his concern about the separation of the North American artist from social realities; this constitutes — according to him — a serious threat to the survival of painting as a serious activity. “In the face of the mounting pace of social and political upheavals, the program of shunning political fact in art has resulted in increasing frustration. Artists stirred by social indignation have found themselves locked in a medium that has lost its voice. Politics among artists has consisted of accepting a package of ready-made issues — peace, civil rights — while renouncing the ability to contribute to an imaginative grasp of the epoch. Artists have protested, but not their art — a matter of signing the attendance record but being present in name only. Both in the United States and abroad, art has been denounced as part of the system for preserving the status quo. Painting has, of course, other interests than politics, but a too long immersion in itself has infected art with ennui. Painting needs to purge itself of all systems that place so-called interests of art above the interests of the artist’s mind. Abstract Expressionism liberated painting from the social-consciousness dogma of the thirties; it is time now to liberate it from the ban on social consciousness.”

Thus at a time of a far-seeing warning signal that should be remembered, and of a troubled period when art cannot venture to be sterile while finding its way with regards to fashion rather than life, we learned that Sweden, on the other hand, and due to a good number of artists who are between thirty and forty, is experiencing a successful new phase, and explosion in all the tendencies. In this part of the world there is clearly talk of social conscience and more of reality. Having art accepted into the reality of life by means of the image is again becoming “an instrument of truth”. H. G. Pontus Hulten, director of the Contemporary Art Museum in Stockholm, an unrivalled animator, who is responsible for his museum growing to reach Europe and the international scene, as well as for the publicizing and acceptance of contemporary Swedish artists abroad, recognizes the difficulty of handling the image, but he is convinced that it does not have its equal in reality. He adds, to prevent any misunderstanding, that “this reasoning applies to the image that is representational as well as to the one that is not”.

The presentation in Paris by Animation-Recherche-Confrontation, in February 1971, of an exhibition of eight young Swedish artists allows for some interesting observations. The exhibition was the idea of the director of the A.R.C., Pierre Grubel, who is himself very aware and open to the research of new people. He went to Sweden and after examining and studying Swedish art for one month made a selection about which he notes the absence or the lack-lustre vitality (beginning of 1970, date of the selection) of the “minimal”, “poor” and “conceptual” currents. On the other hand, beside a constructivism which is affirmed, there is the image that reflects political commentary, at times brutal and satirical, at times more enigmatic, more secret, more hunted by a necessity to define human and social relationships, and finally there is the new figuration which completely utilizes all techniques of assemblage, of setting, to translate under the cloak of modernity, a Nordic reality made up of myths, dreams, contacts with nature and age-old nostalgia.

The other hand, the evolution of Swedish art is bound to an artistic policy whose merits lie in creating a balance between the private and public sectors, and in making good use of education, an indispensable support, which our cultural policies are now seeking to establish, not without some difficulty, so hostile is our consumer society to creation.

In Canada the responsibility of cultural policies falls on the federal, provincial, and increasingly on the municipal governments. When the policies are not the stakes of purely political wrangles that finally harm the planning of the artistic and cultural development of this country, they represent one of the most important initiatives attempted up to this point in North America with a view to creating a climate favourable to artistic creation and diffusion.

It is sufficient to recall a few important milestones established within less than thirty years. The creation of Arts Councils on three levels of government, of a department of Cultural Affairs in Quebec, which has contributed to the rise of the interpretative arts, the plastic arts and literature; the development of the Radio-Canada Society, the national and provincial film boards, the quite recent creation of Information Canada, so many organizations indispensable to diffusion; finally, the studies that are being known, the Inquiry Commission into the teaching of art in Quebec (Rioux Commission) whose mandate consisted in preparing a complete reform of the teaching of art in Quebec, a real foundation stone that will determine the cultural needs of future generations. Unfortunately, the limited distribution of the report, the fact that it has not yet been translated, despite the manifest interest of English-speaking people, the absence of a serious examination of the recommendations, indefinitely delay its implementation and demonstrate once more our tendency towards non-utilization.

Moreover, the rather recent intervention of the Secretariat of State into the field of cultural policies allows us to hope for new support. A truly realistic policy of museums and publishing is being prepared; it is at once complementary and indispensable to the progress that will eventually be made in all levels of education. It dictates concern the protection of the national heritage, its diffusion and the use of publishing on a very large scale as a cultural means.

In the course of Consultation 1: Museums 70, on Tuesday, February 16, in Ottawa, Secretary of State, Gérard Pelletier, defined certain new vision of priorities which should lead to specific programmes. They appear important to us and will return to the analysis of a few of them in the July issue that will be devoted to the Museums of Quebec; but it is seems important to quote it in detail for the reader who is interested in forthcoming policy.

1) The establishment of an overall plan governing the use of the National Museums collections and covering such matters as presentations in Ottawa, travelling exhibitions, and long-term loans of items from the national collections to museums that are able to provide the necessary security and make effective use of them; a list would also be prepared of items that should normally remain permanently at the Museums because of their fragility, size or irreplaceability.

2) the establishment of a list of museums — which could be called “affiliated museums” — based on population distribution in Canada. We could thus have about twenty affiliated museums covering the whole country and providing the communities they serve with access to those items in our collections which do not, for some reason, have to remain in one place;

3) the drafting of the conditions on which museums could be given “affiliated status”, and receive capital and operating grants to enable them to provide the necessary qualified staff and physical environment to ensure full and safe utilization of items loaned to them;

4) a study of the additional needs of the National Museums in terms of the acquisitions necessary to bring the collections up to the standards of quality and quantity required by this expansion of their use;
If, when writing an article about Richard Lacroix you start to write it using "hip" New York art jargon, then we can call Richard Lacroix a "superstar".

In Canada he is the equivalent of the Americans like Andy Warhol, or any of the other current favourites that make news in art magazines and newspapers the most often.

Richard Lacroix is one of the best examples of a Quebec artist, who stayed in Montreal, who hasn't lost his French Canadian identity, but at the same time, by being himself, and doing work that is himself and no one else, he has managed to exhibit his work in international art circles as well as being written up in major art publications and winning international awards.

Walk into any top gallery in New York such as the Martha Jackson, Richard Feigen or any other of 25 galleries or more across Canadian and the United States. You will find the prints of Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique on display in all of them.

What counts and what is most important to note is that Richard Lacroix is smart enough to have travelled and studied the art market and the competition, so that when he came back to work in Montreal he realized what he had to do.

He knew that the only way to have his work included in the top places was to produce work that was professionally as good or better than what was being offered.

For this he deserves much credit — he is a very realistic and sensible person.

He is a "superstar" because he is a creative artist in many different mediums. Painter, printmaker, sculptor, designer, film maker — such as the 6-minute film made in 1967 shown at Expo "Les Mécaniques" a 10 sculptural/kinetic/musical instruments film that was for the active participation of the spectators. He also made a 3-minute film "Fusion des Arts" a kinetic/light & sound plastic sculpture.

During the month of December 1970, Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique held an open house at the atelier at 4677 St. Denis St. For those who didn't have a chance to see what is being done there, you can visit the place any Monday or Tuesday.

Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique are like no other graphic group in the whole of Canada. It is completely professional and operates like a business — they have salesmen on the road who call on the different galleries, they send work off to have shows of The Guilde Graphique and there is an office and files set up that is organized and ready to receive gallery orders from museum officials or people who want to buy prints at any time.

When I interviewed him in December for this article he had just finished illustrating the poems of Alain Granbois, who hadn't lost his French Canadian identity, but at the same time, by being himself, and doing work that is himself and no one else, he has managed to exhibit his work in international art circles as well as being written up in major art publications and winning international awards.

The works of Robert Savoie, Tobie Steinhouse, Kettie Bruneau, Molinari, Tousignant, Hurtubise, Barry Wainwright and other prominent artists.

This thoroughly professional venture is similar to the publishing houses elsewhere in the world. By establishing The Graphic Guild Lacroix forced other Canadian printmakers to work and think more professionally and in a way strive to get into the international market. Each print that comes out of The Graphic Guild (the prints are printed by professional printers, the artists just do the design) bears the "chop" or stamp of The Guilde Graphique. A "chop" is an identifying mark on the bottom of a print to either say who published the print or who printed it. It is usually stamped so that it comes out as an embossed seal.

Richard Lacroix himself says, "I want to create fields of color and energy, I want the color to be intense and alive." His work is similar to what he himself is like; alive, intense and colorful.

The Canadian artistic world could use more Richard Lacroix's ... more artists who have drive and ambition and know exactly where they are going.

Richard Lacroix and The Guilde Graphique

By Shirley RAPHAEL

He also created a series of small prints which show a panorama of seven years of his artistic work. These are hand signed copies that sell at a very low price and highlight his most important themes during this time. You can see the gradual development of his work from seven years ago to what he is doing today.

Even though he was born in 1939, look at all he has accomplished.

He had a Canada Council scholarship in 1961-1962 to study at the various print workshops in Europe. He spent most of his time at Atelier 17 of S. W. Hayter in Paris. He returned to Canada in 1963 with two antique printing presses that he found in France and a set of gelatin rollers. He set up a studio above a garage on St-Christophe Street. For the next two years he concentrated on printing his own plates.

In 1964 he founded the Atelier Libre de Recherches Graphiques with assistance from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec and the Canada Council.

He invited other printmakers to work in the atelier and they did come and work to the tune of over 150 artists. The atelier (at this writing) might have to close unless grants come through from the government. This "open workshop" which is stimulating because of the printmakers around was the idea for The Graphic Guild was born.

In 1966 he founded The Graphic Guild (La Guilde Graphique) dedicated to the publishing of original Canadian graphic arts with assistance from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec and the Canada Council. The government helped start this private enterprise; now it is a flourishing business that is self-supporting.

Editions are printed of the work of Robert Savoie, Tobie Steinhouse, Kettie Bruneau, Molinari, Tousignant, Hurtubise, Barry Wainwright and other prominent artists.

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He has made slides of the different graphic media and has lectured with these slides to the guides at the Montreal Museum and to groups at the Saidye Bronfman Centre. He has also printed up an illustrated folder explaining the difference between etching, silkscreen and lithography and these are available to those who write to him.

As Lacroix himself says, "I want to create fields of color and energy, I want the color to be intense and alive." His work is similar to what he himself is like; alive, intense and colorful.

The Canadian artistic world could use more Richard Lacroix's ... more artists who have drive and ambition and know exactly where they are going.
Headquarters of the Civil Service Alliance of Canada

By Jacques FOLCH-RIBAS

It is indeed a rare pleasure to present an architecture that is beyond the formalism of fashion and is yet a present-day architecture, and to contemplate intense simplicity, in an era devoted to mediocre neo-baroqueism. The Civil Service Alliance of Canada had this building constructed to house its headquarters. The latter occupies the three top stories. Half of the ground floor serves as a conference centre. On the other stories there are offices. In the basement, a garage and a cafeteria.

The lot is long and narrow. In order to emphasize the importance of the building, it was decided that it should be set near the busiest street. As the city of Ottawa is to make a park on the other side of Gilmour street, the architects thought other than the traditional rectangle was in order. The zoning rules requiring a long and narrow building, the elliptical form was retained. Thus, the curve of the side walls softens the mass of the building and integrates it perfectly with the charm of the future environment.

The circular form occurs again in the window arches, in the bricks with rounded patterns, and in the fibreglass panels. The mass is unified by the dark colour of the brownish-purple brick, whose surface slightly gleams. The fibreglass ornamentation in a bronze colour that covers the tympanum beams, the glass and aluminum frames which are also this colour, all this adds to the effect of unity.

The exterior is lighted by white globes, set up on each brick pillar. This ring of lights emphasizes the curves of the building. The two vertical sections in the front and rear of the building are identical. The brick pillars alternatingly contain concrete columns and air registers. The side walls contain the fire escapes.

The frame of the building is reinforced concrete. All the floors, including that of the garage are slabs of concrete. The rounded lateral walls and the central core contribute to the structural rigidity, necessary to withstand eventual earth tremors in the Ottawa region.

The building is completely air-conditioned with an interior and perimetric control. The machine room covers two thirds of the top floor. Above, hidden by a wooden oval screen painted in a dark colour, is the machinery of the elevators and the refrigeration units of the air conditioning system. Each storey is lighted by recessed fluorescent lights in a ceiling of acoustical tiles. The building is also equipped with a smoke and fire detection system. Three conference rooms on the ground floor can accommodate 40, 50, and 90 people. The moveable partitions permit these three rooms to be transformed into only one. The rest-rooms and cloak-rooms are adjacent to the foyer, near the main entrance. In the basement are the duplicating, postal, and printing services, the parking areas and the cafeteria which can serve 150 people at one time.

The total usable floor space is 136,900 square feet, with 10,400 square feet per storey. The building cost $3,170,000 including landscaping. The cost per square foot, except for the underground parking and the moveable partitions in the offices is set at $19, which makes this architecture an example of economic beauty too.

Only a few small criticisms could be made (we thing especially of the two service entrances made in the oval walls). The implantation of the building, its design, its perfect inclusion, and its relationship with the parking and access ramp in the basement, everything combines in a cautious lyricism and shows a lack of self-satisfaction that is to be seen in few buildings in Ottawa. This is a spirit to retain and to repeat.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Creation : Operation “Why not?”

by Bernard LÉVY

The idea of uniting art and efficiency, artists and technicians, is not new; it is rather an entire state of mind that must be renewed. To do this, the groupe Création simply proposes an original way of utilizing present day means. It is still only a plan which combines ideas with varied ramifications, and outlines that would be worth completing.

We met Marcelle Ferron (painter) and Gérard Beaulieu (professor) who undertook to plan in a rational and systematic way the development of the group to which they belong. Through their statements we shall present the objectives that they set for themselves and the main stages through which they intend to pass to make Création a centre whose presence and necessity is incontestable.

Création: the group and its intentions are little-known. Création is the name of the movement that Marcelle Ferron and Yves Trudeau began two years ago in Montreal. This organization essentially sought to be a meeting place for Quebec artists of every discipline and technologists. In this respect, it has not changed its orientation. Since then, other objectives have been added to the initial project. As for financial resources, they have not changed: they remain about nil. On the other hand, technical resources may seem less scarce, and, at any rate, more promising than in the beginning. And yet, let there be no mistake, Création is still only at the outline stage and does not even have a secretariat.

The fundamental objective for Création is to become a centre of information on the arts to be used not only by artists and creators, but also by technicians and especially by the whole of the Quebec community. Marcelle Ferron explains “that there is no question of setting up a federation, an association or a group of artists. These already exist (Association of Professional Artists, Association of Sculptors, etc.) with a specific role: to protect the arts and the interests of those who have chosen to make art their profession”. In fact, the groupe Création could be defined as both an instrument of communication and a catalytic agent, since by simplifying exchanges and putting information in common that is easily available to all, it will stimulate research and creation. The ivory tower is no more.

“An inventory must immediately be made of university and industrial research centres, to be used for artistic and cultural purposes. It is necessary to know the people who are working in these centres and ask them to collaborate in creative experiments. We must scrutinize the environment in which we are living and distinguishing its real or potential dynamics”, Marcelle Ferron has thus, in short, an evocative and descriptive sentences, outlined the main aim of the first step: the inventory.

For the time being everything rests on a simple compilation of our assets, a fastidious task which is seldom thought of.
and which has always been neglected. To index the existing means, to know the individuals who are available, to take advantage of all the initiatives, to convince the directors of enterprises or laboratories that their collaboration could be useful to the development of their own industry or the advancement of their own research work, to do away with prejudice, there are a few priorities to be included in the inventory. Already the first meetings have had favorable results: chemists, electronics technicians, designers, architects, and musicians enthusiastically accepted the idea of an interrelation of the arts and technology. Thus Création intends to be primarily an exchange platform.

For the time being a committee of nineteen members is contributing to successfully completing this first step. It is composed of: Serge Lamarche (music), Paul Buissenne (theatre), Gilles Carle and Raymond Brousseau (cinema), Archiv Gundjian (electronics), Jeanne Renaud (dance), Gaëtan Beaudin (ceramics), Jean-Pierre Beaudin (photo and graphics), Michel Leblanc (architecture), Claude Goulet (chemistry), Pierre Gauvin and Jean Labbé (audio-visual), Marcelle Ferron (painting), Peter Gnass (sculpture), Gérard Beaulieu (sciences), Michel Brunel (sociology), Jean Saint-Cyr (industrial design), Maurice Demers (cultural animation), Roland Gignac (engraving, poetry). The committee was joined by advisors: Marcel Rioux (sociologist), Pierre Champagne (journalist), Jean Zallon (technical advisor), and Luc Durand (architect). About sixty other persons select, support, and even orient certain initiatives.

**An exchange bank**

When a great volume of information will not stop coming in and will by systematically catalogued, indexed, filed, and analyzed, it is thus to say, when the first phase will have taken on sufficient volume, a simple telephone call to the Création group will permit for example, even an unknown artist to put forth the problem that is hindering his creative process. He will then be provided with the information (documents, references, etc.) that can enlighten him; he will be introduced to another artist grappling with similar difficulties; he will be introduced to one or several technicians able to propose solutions; he will be shown what industrial company could best help him to successfully conclude what he is undertaking. In short, there is no longer a question of remaining isolated.

**Why not?**

And finally, why set up an organization like Création? Marcelle Ferron replies, "to gain a veritable popular culture, to do away with the artist-idol, so that art can actually go into the street and the street can become more beautiful, to live better, and then, why not?" Gérard Beaulieu adds: "It is a question of an extensive movement, firmly rooted in the social clan", in other words it is above all a collective service whose goal is to favor creation in all its forms. It is open to all those who by their work reveal original ways to creation. Utopia? A golden dream? Certainly, but... but we can compare the efforts of the Création group with other attempts at integration of the arts and technology: *Intermedia* in Vancouver, *Interstices* in Toronto, *Experiment in Art and Technology* (E.A.T.) in New York, then in Montreal. It is true that it is hard to compare their resources and objectives. These organizations address themselves in fact only to recognized artists and technicians, Création aims at the widest and most inclusive participation. Finally, is it completely impossible to bring together all those who have something to invent?

*(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)*

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**Some young sculptors decide to use plastic**

By Nicole ROBERT

Plastic, a twentieth century phenomena, is a world apart. Its appearance answers an increasingly pressing human need, a desire for refinement and getting back to basics, a need for space and light.

We are already familiar with the use architects and designers have made of plastic. A few young sculptors are deciding to use it.

**MICHEL LUSSIER,** 22 years old, tried working with this new material. He found that the transparency of plastic can give an inner dimension to form. Inside his sculptures we find an aspect of the exterior structure, an aspect an opaque material would ordinarily conceal from us. This is creating a form within a form. The illusion of light renews our perception of the conjunction of the contents with the container. A large-scale work can even integrate its environment.

His technique can be divided into three phases: first, the lamination, the superimposition of coloured acrylic surfaces pressed together. In his work the lamination is horizontal but it can also be horizontal; the usage another process may be used, the casting or formation of a mould in which resin, polyester or acrylic may be cast. It is thus possible to obtain very diverse forms and inner angles.

The second phase is the cutting of the plastic block that is thus formed from the sheets that have been pressed together. It is done by moulinet files by machine.

Then comes the polishing, the last and longest of the operations; ten different abrasives are needed to obtain the desired transparency.

Michel Lussier tells us that working with plastic led him to change his vocabulary of forms. Because of transparency, the form must be considered not only in terms of its contour or space, but the potential of the inner forms must also be taken into account. Moreover, this leads to research dealing with the electro-luminescence of plastics, that is to say, the incorporation of the use of an electric current with the plastic that will give it colour and make it vary as the frequency of current changes. Thus, the electrical current colours the inner forms and then in turn travels towards the exterior contour causing the entire form to appear.

**JACQUES DAVID,** 24 years old, who took part in three symposiums in Longueuil a few years ago, and in Quebec in 1970, uses plastics in a different way. He integrates another material, chrome steel, into plastic. He chose plastic for its special properties, which other materials do not have: its transparency, colour, and especially its flexibility and dynamism. He puts this flexibility of plastic to the test by creating stress with metal wires that evoke forms and produce a play of graphism.

Thus his technique calls on no artificial means. He uses purely physical phenomena such as stress, suspension, the centre of gravity and the point of attraction.

His total form is the result of a conflict between the metal and plastic materials, a conflict that is never definitive, where one draws the other, where the other resists or yields.

He begins with sheets of acrylic cut to the desired size that are unworked and untreated. The total integrity of the material is retained. The sheets are fastened to a selected centre in the metal by means of a vice. At each end a system of links brings the plastic back towards the interior, thus...
The Fernand Leduc Retrospective

By Laurent LAMY

At the Musée d'Art Contemporain at the end of 1970, one hundred paintings made up a coherent, enduring, and dynamic retrospective — an evaluation of twenty seven years of work.

Fernand Leduc calls to mind the beginnings of modern art here. A friend of Borduas, he belonged to the group of Automatists and in 1948 signed the Refus global with Ferron, Moussouin, Riopelle, Barbeau and others. With Molinari, Toungour and Jutras he founded the group of Plasticians. It follows that if we go back to the origin of the two most notable movements in the evolution of painting in Quebec, we find that both times Fernand Leduc was an important element in the formation of the group.

From the Surrealism of the beginning of the 40's, he soon went on to Automatism where gesture is all important and where the accidental is primordial. In these canvases, the traditional criteria of depth and still applicable since objects float in a three-dimensional space. These are abstract landscapes with dark, thick tones which gradually, towards 1950, begin to close. The touch becomes heavier, more constructed; then, massive, it eliminates the possibility of being guided by a perspective. During the entire Automatist period, the almost austere rigour which is a fundamental trait of Leduc is displayed only in the choice of rather leader colours.

But the dull colour soon left its trace. The evolution of Leduc during the years 1946 to 1955 appears completely natural in the retrospective, it progresses from canvas to canvas. The construction, the touch, the colour, everything falls into place. The same inspiration leads to purely geometric canvases in 1953. With a steady presence, pure surfaces tend to occupy all the space, leaving fewer and fewer openings. The subject and the accidental have completely disappeared in canvases like Porte d'Orient (1955). The gestural treatment has been gradually replaced by "pavings" (to use Leduc's own words) which block up the canvas, eliminate depth and give the canvas back its original two-dimensional quality.

At that time the personal itineraries of Leduc took a very clear direction towards geometrisms. He definitively broke with Automatism. Moreover, Leduc explained himself why this break occurred at the time of the Space 55 and Plasticians exhibitions:

"The stain theories of Borduas only prolong the past illusions of perspective and depth in the unlimited expanse of space, and that is their only margin of life (...) This is where we oppose the enthusiastic apostolate of Borduas: his way is not necessarily ours."

Today we can properly appreciate Leduc's critical look at his work since we believe that the best of his pictorial adventure did not occur in his Automatist period. With time it is clear that Leduc was more or less ill at ease with this form of spontaneous creativity which led to shimmering variations that were relatively easy to obtain. Leduc was too deliberate to be completely himself with this form of expression.

Beginning with one of the first geometric paintings in 1955, with Point d'ordre in particular, a composition of right angles in which the forms become simple in order to attain a greater visual efficacy. The controlled dynamism, obtained by articulations of oblique forms is supported by the lively colours of planes which intersect and cross in triangles, trapeziums, and parallelograms; the triangles play the part of active forces, the irregular figures become areas of balance. The points are poles, the strategic areas of the canvas that orient it, creating opposing rhythms, ready to confront each other. During this period, a 1957 canvas proves to be premonitory since it foretells the era that will follow only much later, in 1964, when rounded forms, and the optical effects of the positive-negative contrast of colour will flourish.

Until then Leduc had been working only with surfaces. Beginning in 1960, a new element was inscribed in the composition: the line. Unobtrusive in the beginning it was only an accessory to the picture: it comes in counterpart like a variation to accompany a movement. Inscribed on the coloured planes at first, the line takes on increasing importance to the extent of existing for itself on the canvas, which is almost completely stripped of its triangular elements as in White (1962).

This was a turning point in the evolution of Leduc, who then settled down to a research where forms lose their rigidity. The contours and angles softened while the colours were reduced often to a binary chromatism which the painter explained in 1964 and 65. The conflict of two coloured surfaces which formerly coloured the picture became enveloping, closed in on itself to flowing lyricism and a tender, always human sensuality. The forms thus created seem to answer one another in the same canvas interdependent, as though issuing from one another, they relate to each other. From this constant dialogue, issues a dynamism that is exacting for the eye because, although the forms are separated, they virtually tend to meet. Moreover, this movement is supported by the optical effects of strongly contrasting colours, yellow-red, blue-red, violet-green, rose-blue, mauve-brown.
Leduc simplifies his register more and more, cuts down on the forms and in the colours. Thus a whole series of canvases springs from only a few combinations of form-background. As though to better detail the problems of rhythm-colour, Leduc composes canvases with multiple elements which strike the same chord: relations of similar forms and contrasting colours which makes them an indivisible whole.

After this group of canvases with closed forms, Leduc undertakes a new series which he calls Passage et Étiquettes, in which one of the surface-lines passes through the canvas like a knife through a coloured field. Drawn almost from a single stroke, his graphs depend on a writing that is more organic than before and often evoke a few distant reminiscences of the world. The canvases of '67, '68, and '69 continue the previous plastic experiments, but their writing is erratic and broken. Waving, the stroke crosses the canvas like a plough.

A 1970 canvas shows Leduc's interest in the line. He makes it the compelling dividing line between equal squares, in Page d'écriture, a capricious line unicoils like a serpent in each square. Rhythmed by the colour which is set up like a checkerboard, the canvas is almost a schematization of the Passage works with reducing canvases reduced to essentials.

Such is the pictorial progress of Leduc. The retrospective is coherent and enduring because Leduc's adventure was pursued quietly, with the humility and confidence of the true researcher; the work is logical because it is made up of paintings where the few elements that were retained contribute to the unity of the whole. Leduc knows the power of drawing, of finished forms which condition their environment, of the rigid, yet soft line that creates the curve that is concave, swells and flourishes in completeness. Bearing a powerful inflexion, deep and warm as a human voice, given a particular timbre by the colour, in several paintings the line has become the plastic means which gives the painting its meaning. This accounts for the density of canvases like the series of Binary Chromatism based on the line, composed of two covered surfaces related by a cut out. A lively red ribbon on a blue background, the close points tend to follow the angle which is made, the form that turns round itself and becomes a surface seeking to unfold itself, the viewer can notice how well-regulated the itinerary is since it goes on to the exploration of blue shores, calm and spread out, that are torn by the intensity of the red.

In the manner in which he treats line and colour, Leduc presents a work where the mind and the senses find balance. There is a perfection of new forms which refer only to themselves and to the plastic quality of their relationships only reveals itself slowly; these testify to an exacting inner life, and the ascendency of the intellect on the organic.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Suzanne Duquet:
Between electronics and the easel
By Luc BENOTT

Suzanne Duquet had not had an exhibition for several years. Then, suddenly last fall, fourteen of her paintings were shown at the gallery of L'Atelier Pédagogique de Reliure d'Art Artis­maulde, in Old Montreal; the exhibition was somewhat upset by the October disorders.

The reproductions herein will give us a very concise idea of her pictorial work. I do not intend to deal with this subject, even if the exhibition which was mentioned earlier was the starting point for my article.

Visiting Suzanne Duquet, I found her to be a committed woman, positive and involved, in her research, as well as in politics or in teaching.

She is a professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal. Now that art studies have become a department, she teaches in the Department of two-dimensional plastic arts. After studies at the former École des Beaux-Arts, Suzanne Duquet decided to teach and then worked for Radio-Canada. While she taught, she did some animation and television scripts for children. In 1960 she gave it all up and returned to painting. "Until '66 I really had to struggle to be able to do some work. It is pointless to give courses in painting if one does not paint oneself."

She then returned to painting. Then, in the spring of 1970, she received a grant from the Ministry of Telecommunications to a conference at York University in Toronto: Telecommunications and the arts, and its influence on the environment.

"There were scientists, technicians and artists from across the country present. It seemed to me that most of the artists gathered there had a few reservations about these new toys. They said: 'The machine is wonderful for reproduction or use in an educational field, but it can be used by the engineers play with the machines, they succeed better than the artists, which is not completely false.'"

"It was there I realized how slow the artist sometimes is, more so than once when facing a new world of expression, have we forgotten to the artist that he is not a scientist. Musicians have responded to electronics in a positive way. The electronic synthesizer — this machine that creates sounds — has progressed beyond the stage of experiments. Today musicians are engaged in pure research and in improving the machine.

It was at the same conference that Suzanne Duquet met Dr. John F. Hart, director of the Computer Science Department of the University of Western Ontario in London who invited her to do some graphic experiments with the help of a computer."

"I was up against the unknown. I had to find a simple language to make an animated drawing by computer. It was no longer a question of becoming an engineer. Besides, the engineers did not see why I felt the need to review basic mathematics. In fact, all that was needed was to receive certain data on the central unity of the computer, to review some arithmetic, to learn the language of the computer, the layout, the telescript language, and coding operations for graphism on the cathode screen."

"I was even more surprised to see how much I could retain, understand, and assimilate, given my complete ignorance of cybernetics in general, and the computer in particular. These experiments, as brief as they were, because they were properly conducted, showed me all the possibilities that the artist can explore with such an instrument. While the computer is not easy to handle, is fixed in its requirements, it can produce extraordinary and rich results and solutions."

"Cybernetic graphism has been possible for almost ten years. It has not been widely used, and in general it has been used without much imagination: artists were often content to copy or reproduce works. This shows a lack of boldness on the part of inventors."

Suzanne Duquet also notes that it would be unwise, indeed rash, to leave the field entirely to engineers, mathematicians, physicists, technologists and computer programmers.

"Nothing has really been done. We need artist-teachers ready to undertake studies and experiments in cybernetic graphism. Then we should prepare students who would prepare other students to thus open the way to research. The programs are kept on tape, it will be necessary to establish a program­me library."

"With the computer, colour is almost non-existent, and much remains to be done in this respect. We have to let the computers go wild and cybernetic graphism offers researchers exciting prospects."

Yet for all that, Suzanne Duquet is giving up neither her painting nor her teaching. On the contrary, the machine provides a positive contribution, an exchange, as it were, between man and itself.

The possibilities of electronics are infinite; and the graphism that can be discovered using electronics is as varied as it is inexhaustible.

This summer Suzanne Duquet is returning to London for four months to pursue her adventure. "I do not say that I will succeed completely with what I hope to do; but in so far as I succeed in spreading the idea here ... Well, there are many other machines..."

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
Some forty miles from Ottawa, a short distance from the tiny village of Rupert, stands an old farm where John Eaton, a young artist of exceptional talent, lives. It may appear unusual that such a young artist who has spent several years in New York and travelled all over Europe should choose to retire to the seclusion of this particular farm, somewhat lost in the Gatineau Hills. However, there is nothing monastic about his way of life. Although reluctant to admit that it had any influence on his recent work, it becomes obvious when one looks at his output of the past three years that the serenity and calm of this newly found milieu have contributed significantly to his art. His work has progressed rapidly and to the point where it is highly meaningful, has depth and shows a great deal of self-confidence which was lacking to some degree five or six years ago. It is clear that he is moving forward with a sense of freedom which the hustle and distractions of city life such as New York presents could have curtailed. This does not mean that Eaton would not have achieved the same goals, but his progress would probably have been slower and less positive.

At first glance, the drawings of John Eaton may appear somewhat Raphael'esque and in the purest tradition of the Renaissance until one takes a closer look. They pick up where the great draughtsmen of that period left off and at a time when drawings became generally lifeless and highly static with the exception of a very few. Eaton goes on, but with renewed energy thus making his work more dynamic and at times overflowing with vigour and movement. Some of his works reflect a degree of violence and even brutality rarely seen today except in certain abstract works where this may have been accidental as was perhaps the case in certain works that César and Mathieu did in recent years. His work is not mechanical but a great deal of turbulence is always present. This is accomplished not without the awareness of the artist, if only subconsciously, although I suspect that this is achieved willingly.

Very much in the style of Rodin many years ago, what he draws is never an end in itself but rather brings to one's mind what the next movement will or should be. The power of suggestion is so strong that one cannot help but go beyond the drawing itself and wander past the sheet of paper. When I look at some of Eaton's works, I get the feeling that I am being drawn into a strange whirlpool. In contrast, although some of his abstractions may appear to lack the energy or the power which we find in his other drawings, they probably compensate this absence by being perhaps more disturbing in that everything seems to be floating, to be untouchable, in other words, beyond one's reach. At times they tend to remind me, but only temporarily, of Odilon Redon only to prove in the next instant that they are very much John Eaton.

In Eaton, one discovers two definite and distinct personalities. The first is highly sensitive, and this is clearly apparent in the illustrations he did for the great American poet E. E. Cummings in his book of Fairy Tales. The second personality reveals an individual in constant revolt and this is very much in evidence in the drawings which are reproduced in this issue of *Vie des Arts*. They all bear the stamp of defiance, of a challenge which has no rebuttal. The effect is calculated but only in part. The inner thoughts and turmoil which seem to be implanted in this artist come out loud and clear. Yet, in his illustrations of the American poet's Fairy Tales, Eaton becomes subdued and quite lyrical. Although Cummings had been dead for three years, Eaton seems to have read the poet's mind and one cannot help but feel that the book would be quite incomplete without the collaboration of one or the other. Eaton illustrates what Cummings did not say and Cummings writes of that which Eaton did not illustrate.

As a follower of certain theories expressed by the disciples of the esoteric movement created by Rudolf Steiner and which is called "anthroposophy", John Eaton expresses himself in terms of masses, of energy and of related movements. Everything becomes what it should be in terms of qualitative and quantitative densities arranged in many varied ways resulting in elements, animated or inanimated, physically and functionally different from one another. In his abstract work, Eaton asks several questions which remain without an answer either because we are afraid to delve into them or because they are too disturbing and fall in areas where we have little or no knowledge. A remarkable thing about Eaton's work is that whether or not we fully understand what he is desperately trying to tell us, we seem to fall under a certain spell which forces to return again and again to view his work. John Eaton who is not yet thirty years of age, will have a great deal to tell us in the next few years. From what he has already accomplished, he leaves us with little choice but to follow him attentively. The potential is very much there, massive, powerful and highly promising. Although success and recognition are rapidly moving his way, there is no indication that they will spoil this determined man in any way.

(Translation by Pierre-E. Chassé)

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**Criteria : An exhibition of Lise Brunet and Richard Mill at the Galerie Jolliet in Quebec City.**

By Michel PARENT

Excerpt from the invitation to this exhibition, also a sort of little manifesto: "Criteria indicates that every thought comes from an acceptance, from a rule. Obviously the acceptance and the rule chosen here are starkness and order. These are the characteristics which make these canvases startling at first, as for some time we have been used to more violence and noise, to more shocks or more mediocrity. If at nothing new technological folk-lore. There is, on the contrary, an invitation to a withdrawn reflection, almost monastic, perhaps oriental. This is a universe defused of all violence, aspiring to some improbable, utopian essential with precision of meaning, introverted character of the subject, and fulfillment in the treatment. Quickly, according to what he wishes, the viewer will be able to pick out on these rectilinear fields his horizons or his delusions.

Lise Brunet. First the visualization of white light, the play of the variable proximity of the geometric planes, which are also white and symmetrically arranged, then fine, sharp verticals, even more luminous, designating imaginary spaces. This repertory of precise forms balances the fluid aspect of the tonality, subtle to the point of dissolving momentarily under a changing lighting, of abolishing every strict relationship within the canvas and of placing the canvas for some time, in more direct relationship with the environment. It is a square open on the white clarity through which the surface becomes space and space perhaps a landscape. Space of snow? Of sky? It is a sky of nothing but steps, and nothing that exists without echo. Area of diffusion of a light sensitive to the slightest condensation of these almost cloud-like unusual geometric forms.

Richard Mill. Monochromes, canvases in medium gray, a gray that is impossibly gray, the gray that is lack of colour, that is its antithesis, painted without any trace of gesture, artificial colour and matter, neither frosted nor dull, neutral in every way, of an evident and intentional neutrality, punctuated only on the right and left borders by two vertical lines slightly more sombre or clear according to the case, circling the surface, measuring it, limiting it as though putting an absent image in parenthesis, a non-subject subject or a space
Albrecht Dürer, a Renaissance man

By Irene HEYWOOD

Albrecht Dürer was a Renaissance man from Nuremberg in Germany and this year the world celebrates his 500th birthday. It was celebrated in Ottawa early in the year with an exhibition of his woodcuts and engravings and a film of two, at the National Gallery. Although the exhibition included such great works as his Melancholia I, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and other main prints, from this impetus to make his life as an artist, it gave only a limited view of him as a man of his time and place.

Dürer is an old hero of mine, one of my first, perhaps because he could draw so well, so the idea of giving a fuller portrait of him during his year is a welcome one. It is also a chance to compare the great excitement of the Renaissance in Europe with the turmoil and change of our world today; there are many similarities and differences.

He was an activist. Although he never left the church in Rome, he fought its "establishment" during this period of the Reformation. He was a humanist, one of the new breed of men who helped to uncover individuality in man. One of the first painters to use himself as a model, his self-portraits are no mere representations but dig deep into his own personality to show us what sort of man he was, how he felt and what he wanted. The first of them, a drawing made when he was 13 years old, gives little more than an indication of his future powers as a draughtsman, but even here, there is a feeling of a separate human being.

The Louvre in Paris has a great example. Painted when he was 22 his carroty hair touches his shoulders, the flamboyance of the dress of the time of course exceeds that of our time but in his hand he carries a sprig of Eryngium, a plant associated with love in the symbolism of flowers, we are told. The self-portrait was painted before his first trip to Italy and shunts part of the life as an artist. It gave only a limited view of him as a man of his time and place.

At the Prado in Madrid is a later self-portrait painted after his first visit to Italy. Here we can see that he has developed as a painter, away from the graphic training of his early life: we can see too the influence of the Renaissance painters of Italy. At 26 he is now sophisticated and sure of his ability and the portrait shows a young man capable of a cool assessment of what life has to suggest to him.

Considerations such as these can seem mundane enough to us today until we remember that Dürer and his Italian contemporaries were the first to show us the emerging human personality, the individual man who separated himself from the group by insisting on his own right to develop his ideas apart from the fetters of established custom.

Today we reverse the Renaissance challenge. We seem too willing as a group to accept the ideas of other groups in group movements, but have discovered the power of group opinion. We have given up the search for personal identity to follow vague leaders who are all too often difficult to identify, since they remain part of the group.

We also deny the personal in our art, aiming for the unique, touch-by-human-hand expression, where plagiarism becomes meaningless.

We deny the past. We are without this perspective and our forward forging often weakens itself in its constant search for gimmicks which will gain immediate notice if not acceptance.

Renaissance artists moved away from the role of artisans into the more prestigious one of thinkers and philosophers. They became men with special vision. They also revived the classicism of the Greek and Roman world to separate their art from the bondage of the Gothic orientated church and ended by taking the church along with them.

But of course the really big discovery of this period was the "great perspective", the ability to simulate the vision of the eye by surrounding objects in a painting with the appearance of light and air. It kept Leonardo awake at night with its excitement.

Albrecht Dürer brought it back with him to Northern Europe from his travels in Italy.

Why it was so hard for painters of this time to see diminishing space or to think in terms of the individual, why these things had to be discovered at all is hard for us today to understand. They have been our inheritance for centuries now and since the impressionists we have been shaking them off by degrees. Its all part of the need to move on, to find new ways of seeing and developing.

But this year, 500 years after Dürer was born in Nuremberg, is perhaps a good time to remember that this was also the time of the birth of easel painting and the idea of a landscape, as subject in itself.

Dürer painted landscapes in water color around Nuremberg and as well as on his Italian visits, possibly from sketches made out of doors. Oil as a medium, which took painting off the walls of buildings, was developing at the time but of course it had to wait for the development of the tube, as a means of holding the paint, to allow painters to really work in the field.

Now we have gone back to the studio to paint and we can construct sculpture by telephone or create a work of art by simply agreeing that it is naturally beautiful without touching it and without attempting interpretation.

I predict on Dürer's 500th birthday that some of what we do is important perhaps in the development of man as a thinking and feeling being but that very little of it will have any lasting effect on the art of the future. We are really in a sloughing off period still and it would seem that soon we will have finished with it. Perhaps in our lifetime we will see a new Renaissance yet, something solid, as Cézanne described his own ambition, good enough to last even in a museum.
The poets driven from Plato’s ideal city met again twenty three centuries later in Montreal, specifically during the night of March 27 - 28, 1970. They were about fifty strong, French speaking and Quebeckers. There, for more than two hours, they spoke, yelled, yapped, sang, murmured, and grew silent. It was pure and praiseworthy: it was a matter of committing the cinema of fiction. And I do not know why I wrote “in a Machiavellian fashion. This is a rare example of a cinematic spectacle. In this we recognize a kind of Quebec specialty (let us think of Saint-Jérôme by Fernand Dansereau or of Normétal, or still of Pour la suite du monde by Brault and Perrault). Does that mean that the presence of the cameras played an active role in the unfolding of the recital, in short can we speak of a cinematographic happening? In one sense, yes: for the eagerness with which many poets responded to the invitation that was made to them and exhibited themselves is revealing. On one hand, and this was already known, for about fifteen years Quebec poetry in large part has been a poetry of the spoken word — like the French poetry of the Resistance, like the new black poetry in the United States, like the poetry of Africa or Martinique, like the poetry of all ethnic groups struggling for their freedom. Most Quebec poems (this is particularly evident in the work of Michele Lalonde) call for the microphone and the stage and impassioned applause. To the extent that the dividing line between poetry and song has always been finer in Quebec than elsewhere (the presence of Pauline Julien or of Georges Dor at this poetry recital reminds us of it). But on the other hand, nothing obliging (in March, 1970, I specify) Quebec poetry to be sobre or clandestine, since Quebec society belonged, for all that, to the group of societies of abundance and was still at that time in one of its periods of greatest freedom, the temptation became great and almost irresistible to make poetry no more than an entertainment (3). La Nuit de la poésie shows that few resisted this temptation: there were the poetry of the Black Poets of the Inference, the apple green garage mechanic’s suit (with a pink heart) of Paul Chamberland, gaudy ties even on the chest of the prudent Préfontaine, in short this exaggerated use of all kinds of furbelows and flounces, where a charming spontaneity joins with a deliciously child-like taste for disguise (I also had a friend in college who wore a butterfly bow to signify that he was a poet), the transformation after the hippie fashion of Baudelairean dandyism and assuredly the influence of pop music singers. To which we must add the traces of a plastic gaiety that was semi-flower-power (the distribution of balloons for La Barre du jour) and semi-neronian (for lack of bits of guitars, Georges Dor generously scattered his unsoiled copies among the public) which attempted to change the spectacular into a celebration. Bread and circuses. But that night the bread was poetry and the gladiators carried only plastic revolvers.

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thology of Quebec poetry. Anthology: that is to say they to weak stomachs, faint hearts, asthmatic spirits; a theatre to Rimbaud than Marx: thus of "changing life" than "transforming society", in short closer culture" (pop music, Ginsberg, hashish, etc.), more desirous the popularity it enjoys. (Nicole Brossard) justified a retake. Because of the does not bespatter white nylon shirts and leaves intact a fixed order: the poets are presented neither in chronological order of their appearance on earth or in that of their poems. in this meeting of poets as her very "telquellienne", very few solitary stars: Gauvreau, Quebec's Isidore Isou; Pierre Morency, whose rather nice fables make one think a little of the time and tempo of this Night of Poetry in considering "written" poetry contrasted in the midst of so many "oral". Morency, whom he lets speak, whom he listens to with discretion and fervour, without seeking to capture idiosyncrasies or picturesque detail, in brief with humility. With the humility of talent.

We must hope that this film will play to a wide audience, everywhere, but especially in Paris, Nice, Brussels, Luxembourg, Lausanne, Dakar, or Pointe-à-Pitre, everywhere where there are long, fixed shots. The cinemast is here serving the cénacle Vert between two boulevards: thus — with Chamberland who here plays a role of intermediary — Denis Vanier, Pélisson and Raoul Duguay. In the midst of these constellations, a central star, who is related to each of them in some way: Gaston Miron. Close to Pilon and the poets of Liberté, he is also the most committed and perhaps the most illustrious of the poets who militate for the liberation of Quebec and actually, by his influence on Chamberland and his role as a secret counselor (in fact not so secret at all) on Quebec poetry, he remains one of those that the young poets listen to the most, in spite of a few important differences of opinion. There were also a few solos, for example, arriving magnificently stoned. It is not centered like Woodstock on the relationship of the theatrical to the public, but invisibly — only revealed by the shouts that mark the end of the readings by Gauvreau and to the pleasure of the audience during the first poem by Michèle Lalonde ("America — For sale!") and by the applause, especially at the end of the second number of l'infonie. Remarkably, Labrecque has refused even more than in his De Gaulle au Québec, the ease of direct cinema. La Nuit de la poésie is a film of an exemplary sobriety: no zooms, no rapid-fire sequences, on the contrary there are long, fixed shots. The closest is here serving the poets, whom he lets speak, whom he listens to with discretion and fervour, without seeking to capture idiosyncrasies or picturesque detail, in brief with humility. With the humility of talent.

The Rideau Vert. We know the story. Known for a long time to Montreal the "boulevard" of Saint-Denis street is recognized by its patrons, its subscribers, and its critics as the cénacle of light comedy. From boulevard to boulevard, a specialized theatre has been made of it. . . in its manner. A constant factor in the history of the Rideau Vert has always been the desire to please the majority, to deny the fact that in Montreal theatre is in a constant state of crisis. The measure taken was to attract a public at all costs, by all possible means. Present a theatre that is not too upsetting to weak stomachs, faint hearts, asthmatic spirits: a theatre that does not bespatter white nylon shirts and leaves intact the newest — fashion — chic — reduced — outfits. A repertoire of light comedies proves to be tight for creating and keeping such a public. So much for the adult public. Moreover, by including in the programme a regular repertory of children's plays, a completely new public is thereby initiated to going to the theatre and to liking the theatre. . . a public that will eventually be adult. The Rideau Vert is the only theatre in Montreal that has been regularly including children's plays in its programme, and it has for many years: it is a remarkably positive initiative. Light comedies and children's theatre, up to this point, such were synonymous with Rideau Vert.

Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson
I say such were, because for two or three years, the policy of the group has been somewhat changed, probably at the express request of a certain well-informed public. In fact, the new policy requires that 50% of the plays be dramatic or Quebec works. Already, three years ago, Les Belles Soeurs by Michel Tremblay had almost made the theatre walls break out in a sweat. Then, at the rate of one or two a year, the Quebec creations (in the present day sense of the word) began to take over the stage. There is nothing surprising or even so dramatic about that; sooner or later we had to dare to confront our reality. Even at the Rideau Vert. By agreeing to present Les Belles Soeurs by Tremblay, the Rideau Vert had just taken that necessary step that brought Quebec theatre a new vitality.

And indeed, the essential goal of the theatre is not to caress, but to arouse the viewer. Jouvet said somewhere in this connection, that the theatre is not a diversion, but a warning. But to arouse the viewer. Jouvet said somewhere in this connection, that the theatre is not a diversion, but a warning. That is what plays that "alert" reality, while purging his mind. That is what plays that "alert" reality, while purging his mind. That is what plays that "alert" reality, while purging his mind.

A well-supported proof: "The Return" by H. Pinter

Pinter's universe, authentically English, smacks of the furnishing, the "shut in", the static, the memory. It is the home in all its majesty that maintains the characters in their schizophrenia, their dreams, even in their most morbid memories. A family drama where none faces the others and where each one has all the trouble in the world facing himself.

Pinter's reputation is already well-established. One of the most authentic authors, he is known for his psychological dramas of high tension where, in the soul of each character, passion holds back the gentleman and the gentleman holds back passion. There is no happiness there at all. The central theme, that of the mother, acts as a link and is present at each instant of the play. She is the very centre of dreams, of memories from which no one, the father or the sons, and also Uncle Sam, will be able to be freed before death. Besides, at the very end, the mother will get the upper hand.

The staging by Paul Blouin does justice to Pinter's thought. The apparent and exterior inactivity of each character incites the viewer more to explore his psychological drama. When a character speaks, it is very evident that the viewer cannot but see him in an inner close-up. In this respect, everything agrees so as not to disperse the spectator's attention.

On the other hand, the performance of the actors seems to me sometimes rather weak. Some seem to feel ill at ease with themselves; we felt that some gestures, certain words did not fit the characters. This weakness can be easily enough explained considering the fact that these actors have been used to exploiting their talents in comic characters. Apart from this small weakness, and there is never one without two, I especially noticed that the translation did not always do justice to verbal French expression. Finally, let us not attach more importance to that than is necessary. In short The Return proves to be a very interesting play in itself and I trust that the Rideau Vert will be able to include in its repertoire other plays of the genre. It is a good choice that could further stimulate the regular public of the Rideau Vert to call for more dramatic plays in the seasons ahead.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

The Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec

Maryvonne Kendergi, vice-president and organizer of the SMCQ, informs us of an important, new aspect of our cultural life.

As told to René ROZON

Q. — Along with Jean Papineau-Couture, Wilfrid Pelletier, Serge Garant and Hugh Davidson, you are one of the founding members of the SMCQ whose first concert was held in December, 1966. In what way were the goals which your organization proposes irreconcilable with those of societies already in existence?

A. — The very aims of the SMCQ justified its creation and its concurrence with the other Montreal societies. In keeping with its statutes, the SMCQ intends to disseminate or propagate the knowledge of contemporary music, international as well as Canadian, and that of Quebec as well as the other provinces. Its main objective is to bring together groups of interpreters who devote themselves to a repertoire of the most recent, if not innovating music. Could that not have been done by someone else you ask? First of all, it was not being done. For not only were the already established societies not making modern music known, but they gave the short end of the stick to contemporary music. Certainly they were some exceptions, but not without restrictions. We shall get back to this. The artistic circles in Montreal were thus suffering from a serious lack. We like to think that the efforts of the SMCQ had some part in filling it.

Q. — It must be acknowledged that an organization like yours is created overnight. In fact, what are the factors that favoured the expansion of the SMCQ?

A. — Indeed, the founding of the SMCQ is the result of a process of cultural evolution marked by meetings, conversations, events and assiduous efforts supported by many musical personalities. I shall restrict myself to the most significant elements, to those that contributed to initiating and forming the undeveloped public. First, on the audio-visual level there were programmes devoted to contemporary music, due to the initiative of government networks: on L'Heure du Concert that Pierre Mercure produced for television, modern works were included as early as 1955; there was Festivals européens, a programme I myself produced for seven years, that was broadcast on the radio from 1956 to 1963. Besides the programmes there were what I would call the events, mentioning only the three most notable ones. The first referred to the visit to the University of Montreal and presented his Klavierstück II, one of the pillars of present day musical composition. Then there was the Modern Music Week organized by Pierre Mercure in August, 1961, which led to the visit to Montreal of David Tudor and John Cage, as well as the playing of several unfamiliar works including Atlas Ecliptiques by Cage, Transicion by Mauricio Kagel, the first performance of America by Serge Garant, which had been waiting on the shelf for years to be played, and finally Structures métalliques, combining an electronic pattern by Mercure himself with the sonorities of elements sculpted by Armand Vaillancourt. The third and last event to be emphasized is the second visit to Montreal of Stockhausen in 1964; two performances had been planned, but a third was added, this time by public demand. This time Stockhausen chose Kontakte, a relatively recent work (1960). You will imagine how these events filled the air, even by serious critics, profoundly upset the listening habits of the public.

Q. — But in a parallel direction with these actions that contributed to creating progressively a climate favourable to the expansion of contemporary music in Montreal, there were musical societies before you that were also working towards this end?

A. — I was just getting to that. Yes, throughout the years, various groups had been formed, but we should specify, their
efforts were sporadic and their objectives limited. As early as the month of May 1954, a small group that had not taken a name, which was formed of three young composers — Serge Garant, François Morel and their youngest member, Gilles Tremblay — gave a concert of works by Messiaen and Webern in Toronto with a Washington recording company. After the concert, Tremblay left for France, and Garant and Morel joined the composer Otto Joachim and the pianist Jeanne Landry to form the group, Music of Our Time. A group, alas, which had an ephemeral existence of two years. (1954-1956). The reason that its members were at once interpreters and purveyors of works and funds. You understand that in these circumstances it could not last long. Finally the Canadian League of Composers, then supported by the Société de Musique Canadienne, had the advantage of making Canadian works known to Montreal, but the disadvantage of limiting itself to that. In a parallel direction to all that, many people, notably Marc-Andre Hamelin and Jean-Jacques Vallerand were thinking of a society devoted to contemporary music. So that in the spring of 1965, Wilfrid Pelletier, then Director of the Service of Music for the Government of Quebec, asked me to mark out the outline of the structure of a society of this kind. In March, 1966, he invited the four persons whom you mentioned at the beginning of our talk to take up the task. The first concert of the SMCQ was held on December 15, 1966. In short, if the SMCQ came to be, it was because it was in keeping with the wish that had often been expressed by several personalities of the musical scene in the rest of Canada and particularly in Quebec I should say.

Q. — How is the SMCQ different from other similar societies in Canada as well as abroad?

A. — There are no similar societies in Canada. In Toronto today, if we are speaking of 1970-1971, Ten Centuries Concerts is a group which occasionally interprets modern music but let us not forget its repertory ranges, as its name indicates, over ten centuries. Also in Toronto, there is the Lyric Arts Trio which is a second group. On the other hand, Jean and René Hétu, and the group they call Domaine Musical, without being quite an instrumental group. Another group, that is to say a main group of instrumentalists which is joined occasionally, and as the work to be performed dictates, by soloists like the soprano Phyllis Mayling or the tenor René Lacourse, the pianists Gilles Manny or Takahashi, to mention only a few. Another analogy with Domaine Musical is that of the freedom, the broadmindedness that we are attempting to maintain facing a contemporary repertory. In this respect, we do not devote ourselves solely to a national repertory, but we also program foreign composers, Rossini, or Stravinsky, or Bartók, or even the great German music of the 18th century that lives today. From analogies, let us now pass on to distinctions. Our strength lies in the fact that the members of the committee of directors are all professional musicians. Another distinction: that the work is done by a Canadian composer, notably Gilles Tremblay, Norma Beecroft, Jacques Hétu, and this year, Murray Shafer. One last particularity, at least at the time, the creation of the SMCQ was one of the first of its kind in the Western provinces. Many governments or official organizations give grants to the performing arts. The Canadian Council did not hesitate to give us a subsidy when we were in our circumspection. And it was because it was in keeping with the wish that had often been expressed by several personalities of the musical scene in the rest of Canada and particularly in Quebec I should say.

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