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Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article
The autumn edition of *Vie des Arts* looks different. It is only a beginning. A magazine that views itself as both witness to the multifarious research in progress in the area of artistic creation recognizes the need to harmonize with the tone of the current graphic language, the facets of the phenomenon of artistic productions which this language directly or indirectly influences.

To make a magazine such as ours, keeping in mind its rather unique situation in the North American context, a faithful mirror, and, at the same time, a plea for the future of art, one must take some risks in terms of imagination and fantasy to propose art as a good necessary for the service of man and, in the first place, of the artists who produce it. In a developing society such as we understand it, art is a factor in the growth of the individual. It is an art for free men, and an information that is equally free. To inform well is to respect the dignity of the individual, to solicit his participation, his initiative, to have him like and not dread the experience of the work of art.

First an attitude must be taken. Ours is to seek for a valid approach to the examination of current positions. Not to refuse the past but to present it in a new light. To be living memory. To use a simple language and question whatever creates confusion and boredom. To combat the defeatist aspect of certain ultra-conservative or outdated ideas, and finally never to forget that formation and information go hand in hand.

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**On Albert Dumouchel**

By Jacques de TONNANCOUR

Since last January the death of Albert Dumouchel has made me go back and examine the past often. Albert was a close friend that I thought I knew well, but death makes us discover irreversibly, that from day to day we only lightly touch the surface of people who are close to us.

For example, someone had to tell me when and how I met Albert. I no longer remembered. And yet Dumouchel was not a man to slip but unnoticed. It is my fault, Albert, and not yours!

I recalled all kinds of mental pictures of him, which basically are of only one kind: Albert was governed by a force which finally always brought together (without necessarily reconciling) his contradictions and his conflicts under a dominant image, under one roof which often blew off from the pressure of his inner turbulence, but which he always set to rights without worrying too much if he were right or wrong.

All his friends, I think, have this impression of him, which was always so striking and which was due at one and the same time to the ram and the bull. The ram according to the zodiac. More like a bull, as far as I am concerned; but a good bull, jovial, not harmful, one that would never have gored anyone. A bull fed on fine herbs!

Deeply rooted in his land owning origins, he was a man of a particular place, (the region of Valleyfield), of a particular world, and of a particular attitude towards life. His life was through the filters of all that he imbued himself with values drawn from very far away sources without his basic values being in the least upset, diminished, or adulterated.

With his look of a good, simple country priest; wherever he was in the world, in Venice or in the Laurentians, the whole sky was one immense aurora borealis shimmering and rippling from the north to the south. A sight of a distracting beauty which only Dumouchel could hear. In any order or another, that as soon as the sensation had run through him, it awakened a whole series of sensations. So that the reaction was never simply visual, or auditory, or olfactory, or tactile, but all that at once. He was somatic, pan-sensorial, like a child. And in that I rediscover what seems to me Albert's most original quality: until the end he retained a child-like soul made more attentive by an enormous and gargantuan power of love tempered by no system or measure of economy whatsoever.

He could have been overwhelming or exasperating for people less extroverted than him; might as well say almost everyone. But his intensity was always quickly monomiously within him not separated, not categorized, and it excited him to the point where, having made a discovery, it was liable to cause him not to be able to sleep at night. It was in a similar state that one fine clear morning while he was photographing Corsica, rarely visible from Tourettes, his pyjama bottoms slipped off in front of a flabbergasted group, without his even noticing it at the time.

He could experience this frenzied enthusiasm, this trance, when encountering a person, an object, a word, a landscape, or a material, and never did I know the equal of this in anyone else. For example, one evening in August in St. Adolphe in the Laurentians, the whole sky was one immense aurora borealis shimmering and rippling from the north to the south. A sight of a distracting beauty! Dumouchel, an in mesmerically psychodelic exaltation, not only saw the aurora borealis as we did; but what is more he also heard them!

An I still wonder if the aurora borealis do not produce sounds, infra or supra, which only Dumouchel could hear. In any case, what seems certain, is that he integrated so quickly a sensation of one order or another, that as soon as the sensation had run through him, it awakened a whole series of sensations. So that the reaction was never simply visual, or auditory, or olfactory, or tactile, but all that at once. He was somatic, pan-sensorial, like a child. And in that I rediscover what seems to me Albert's most original quality: until the end he retained a child-like soul made more attentive by an enormous and gargantuan power of love tempered by no system or measure of economy whatsoever.

The affection, respect, and veneration that his students felt for him properly reflected the feelings he incubated in them towards the work to be done; it was not just to execute but to excel. This gift for animation was supported by a complete mastery of the engraver's craft; it conferred on him an exceptional greatness as a master creator and thinker.

Being a completely different type of person from him, frugal and linear, rather than torrentially harmonic, I have often wondered how the elements of his expression were able to be recognized, chosen, and reunited in this permanent inner flood. I am still astonished at it while knowing that life is multiform and that each individual has the problems his character presents and the ability to solve them. I know from experience that some fish handle difficulties amazingly well in tumultuous waters, and others do in calm and silent waters. A matter of ecology!

Earlier, I made allusion to Albert's conflicts and contradictions. But ever swimming in this seething, harmonious flood, did he perceive the conflicts in everything that was happening in him? No doubt. But did he pay attention to it? In his eyes everything was concomitant and the multiplicity of life was normally composed of affinities and oppositions. I think that he never sought to arrange anything whatever he was thinking. He foresaw this against the tumult of life and helps us to find a relative coherence in it. He was not attempting to tame his life. His unconquerable need for confrontation always compelled him to swim in the strongest part of the current even if he had to bear the painful consequences.

If we know little of his work it is because this very communicative man, always intensively lyrical, had, paradoxically,
a modesty that his explosive exterior did not hint at. He felt that art was an inward act, indeed very private. The competitive spirit that more than ever tears artists always horrified him. To such an extent that during his last years he had progressively withdrawn from all the exhibition circuits.

Feeling such a defensive attitude growing in him, I experienced a similar modes-

ty with regard to asking to see what he was doing. So I know almost nothing of his production of the last ten years, except for what he told me about it from time to time. And that could be summed up to something like: "You can't imagine, I have gone back to landscapes. And what is more, charcoal too. It is extraordinary, I no longer know how a tree is made. I have to go out and see. It is amazing what we don't know..."

The childlike soul of Albert Dumouchel. And since his passing, I note that it is amazing what I do not know about this friend who was, however, so close.

Unfortunately, death has closed his eyes on everything that he saw or otherwise felt, and how one, in view of the fact which he so secretly painted, drew, or engraved, that we shall rediscover Dumouchel.

(Translation by Yvonne KIRBYSON)

The unfinished work of Dumouchel By Guy ROBERT

It may be useful to recall that it was in 1956, at the age of 52 that Jean-Paul Lemieux took the new direction that led him to his greatest success, and especially which revealed him to us in a completely new light, that of maturity, of the admirable integration of the enduring conquests of the methods of his craft and the constraining force of a gravid sensitivity.

Since 1955 or 1966, I have felt that Albert Dumouchel was on the verge of taking a similar direction: he was reconnoitring in his new works, a certain number of fundamental elements of his plastic language, ready to eliminate other redundant or arbitrary elements. The personalities of Lemieux and Dumouchel were not without some similarities, and they reciprocally develop their sincere esteem. Both were teachers for a long time. In 1934, when he was thirty, Lemieux began to teach; in 1936, when he was only twenty, Dumouchel began his first art workshop. Both were to be influential teachers in the fine arts schools, Lemieux in Quebec city, Dumouchel in Montreal, and their teaching careers continued for about thirty years, in a parallel direction with their careers as artists.

An exuberant nature

The two personalities differ clearly in terms of temperament. Dumouchel was whimsical, fiery, and impulsive; Lemieux, rational, calm, and deliberate. By that I do not mean that Jean-Paul Lemieux is incapable of impulse, indeed even zest; nor that Dumouchel was an incoherent bohemian. It seems to me the two personalities best find accord in the value each one places on authenticity each in his own way however: with Lemieux there is a serene and subtle authenticity; with Dumouchel, a tumultuous and provocative one.

I had been interested in Dumouchel's career for a long time and this interest was sustained by a friendship of more than fifteen years, and intensified during the last two or three years, when Dumouchel was living in a refuge in Saint-Antoine-sur-le-Richelieu. The first time that we spoke of writing a book about his work was in 1955, when he was preparing his New York exhibition for which he had asked me to write a preface. For some years we had already been discussing collaborating on a comprehensive edition of his prints. But Dumouchel, as usual, blew hot and cold, every so often he reconstructed the universe. The problem was clear: how to classify this series of storms, how to set up a typology of this chaos? Albert Dumouchel made fun of my difficulties as a critic, a glass of red wine in his hand, his laugh resonating, his gaze lost in some now and dizzying vision, far beyond the Richelieu or the woods behind the buildings and wheatfields. It was in Rome, where we were travelling with friends in the spring of 1970, that we seriously decided to tackle the project of a little book on his work and also on his workshop. Two main factors had occasioned what I am about to describe and was published in homage to the artist, the teacher, and the friend, by the University of Quebec Press at the end of December, 1970, less than a month before the sudden death of this force of nature.

The point his work had reached

At what point was Dumouchel's work at his untimely death? Let us summarize its main lines. First, in his more than thirty years of generous teaching, he did two things: he brought warm animation to the world of plastic arts, and he initiated the great interest in print making which he literally founded and propagated in Quebec.

Then his work was also of a dual nature: that of a masterful printmaker, a virtuoso of all the variations of the print, whose reputation was established from Japan to Ljubljana, from Copenhagen to Rio do Janiero; that also of a versatile painter who was equally successful in taking up charcoal, pen, felt pen, watercolour, gouache, oil, acrylic and went as far as making miniatures on 35mm, slide films.

Like other Montreal painters of the years 1940-1960, Dumouchel passed from the scales of a hesitating figuration to the enthusiastic apprenticeship of the Surrealist language, then soon to the explicit and pitfalls of Automatism, and from there to lyric and research into lights, textures, materials and reliefs. In 1960, he was one of the most important members of the Montreal School; he was in good health, was spirited and dynamic, one of the most brilliant exhibitors in his galleries and art museums. There is some confusion about him, caused by this ambiguous need to classify phenomena: we label Dumouchel as belonging to the current of lyric abstraction; in Ecole de Montréal I get around the difficulty by placing him at the beginning of the chapter on engraving and calling him a sensualist poet with a Surrealist imagination...

From 1964 to 1971, Dumouchel pursued his impetuous voyage; moreover his research was voluptuous. First he made a sudden return to the folkloric and sentimental sources of old family albums, at the time when he had a faithful clientele as a painter of vancases with relief and abstract appearance; then, after having mocked these very likeable relatives, he led off an audacious procession of erotic, sometimes troubling works; similarly, his Liturgies d'Eros, a great series of paintings and prints in an atmosphere that very astutely combines American pop art and European figurative concerns, once more the dual nature of the artist; finally, during the winter of 1969-1970, the admirable series Fusains du Richelieu where the dawn of a maturity finally won with a great struggle appears through the dizziness of more than a third of a century.

A tormented man

Albert Dumouchel was still tormented, especially so during the summer of 1970. Troubled for quite a few years by goitre, he decided to have it removed. If we could truly express it that way, for all his work, we can do it all the less with a man as self-willed and as anxious as Dumouchel. The surgical operation took place in September, and the painful convalescence ended with his sudden death in January, 1971.

The point the work of Dumouchel was abruptly interrupted, at the turning point of what we can consider to be the dawn or the promise of a profound and capable maturity, which finally allowed the artist to invest the experience of a double apprenticeship of thirty years of fertile teaching and of remarkable works into the execution of more sustained works.

Several signs support this intuition. The enthusiasm of Dumouchel had been deeper, less voluble, for several months. He was seriously attempting to put order into his personal life. The preparation of this book began for him, for the first time, to face his life and all of his artistic production, and to draw certain conclusions and resolutions from that. His lengthy and consuming career as a teacher was coming to an end and his imminent retirement allowed him at last to concentrate all of his energy on his own work. We had finally agreed after more than ten years of plans, to set to work on a major edition of the Song of Songs illustrated with his prints. With an infectious joy he was once more plunged into the magic of his childhood, for two personalities best find accord in the value each one places on authenticity each in his own way however: with Lemieux there is a serene and subtle authenticity; with Dumouchel, a tumultuous and provocative one.

I had been interested in Dumouchel's career for a long time and this interest was sustained by a friendship of more than fifteen years, and intensified during the last two or three years, when Dumouchel was living in a refuge in Saint-Antoine-sur-le-Richelieu. The first time that we spoke of writing a book about his work was in 1955, when he was preparing his New York exhibition for which he had asked me to write a preface. For some years we had already been discussing collaborating on a comprehensive edition of his prints. But Dumouchel, as usual, blew hot and cold, every so often he reconstructed the universe. The problem was clear: how to classify
The Magic Paradox of Roger Vilder
By Alain PARENT

Besides his kinetic, or we might say, cybernetic works, Roger Vilder offers more ambiguous objects, which only begin to move when they are touched: "Jello", "Please Touch". The surprise effect comes from the apparent hardness, the crystal hardness of these objects. The viewer's surprise in touching the viscosity of the silicone is accompanied by various reactions according to his temperament. Taken off guard, he sometimes displays his anger at having been fooled, disgust with the stickiness, or the sensual joy of caressing (ex: the breast). But facing the dimensions of the other works, these objects seem to us to remain on the level of Dada-like games: the new material adding nothing to Marcel Duchamp's "Please Touch".

The art of movement in Vilder's work seems to be based on a paradox: with perfected technical means, similar to those with which traditionally we use in their defence of technology and cybernetics, he opposes the mechanized world by turning it away from its principal function: the repetition of effects. From this there are two main results: a new idea of cycles, a new measuring of time. His kinetic works, the "Contractions", the "Neons", are based on the principle of non repeated cycles: that is to say that the introduction of an element of chance in the mechanical game forbids the latter's being repeated once in several thousand cycles. It thus becomes practically impossible to say a given time as if all the steps of the work twice in a row. Out of a series of eight neons, none move at the same speed; all turn in the same direction, but it is impossible to see the same group movement twice in a row. The pieces in which two white quadrilaterals on black backgrounds break out of shape independently of each other but at the same time, never reproduce the same geometric figure. The slow breaking up of the quadrilaterals produces effects of false perspective, which adds a third imaginary dimension to these moving tableaux, especially in the case of the largest among them, seen in a dim light. In the canvases entitled "Pulsations", although the speed of the optical meshing may be controlled by the viewer, the cycle is uniformly repeated, but the effect is far from being monotonous, for, according to the speed, the disks group themselves into series to form undulation on the total surface of the painting, undulations which are also infinitely variable, as the disks are covered by metal or painted: in the first case, the metal set overlapping on each disk, creates in the viewer a visual pulsation, which is augmented with the painted disks by contrasting colours, each colour having a tendency to regroup in the eye of the viewer into a whole: there is conflict between the two moving colours, from which comes the optical effect.

The notion of cycle is inseparable from that of time, since it is its very essence. Here the time of Vilder's "machines" is exactly the opposite of the mechanical time of the clock, and seems to be an equivalent of human time or rather of the time of nature, which, if it obeys the great cycles, never repeats itself twice in the same way. Great art is not to reproduce, but to present equivalences, and Vilder excels in this. His paradox comes from the fact that with mechanical means, those of factories and wrist watches, he resolves the internal contradictions between technique and nature. The introduction of chance produces transformations, whereas repetition only brings monotony. His objects show that in a world where, according to common acceptance, nature itself is mechanized, the mechanism can become "natural", without for all that, recopying nature. This desire to resolve contradictions goes further; the personal philosophy of Roger Vilder results in the idea of presenting no longer objects but human beings in the natural state, thus breaking every barrier between the world of art and the world of itself. It is there that chance enters this paradox in the perception of the viewer looking at most of these works. We mentioned earlier that some produce an immediate effect, situated between tactile pleasure and repulsion. The kinetic works do not produce an effect of shock on the surface, but what we might call a magical "subtlety" effect. If it is easy to let oneself be captivated by the hypnotic power of moving neons, of "Pulsations", of "Contractions", it is very difficult to leave them.

The power to fascinate seems to reside in the internal contradiction. Thus: contradiction between the crystalline hardness and elasticity of the breast and the Jello, paradox of the neon tubing whose arrangement and movement fascinate the viewer, because, if the curve is the supremely sensual form, the curve of curves in movement, in a "natural kineticism" varying according to certain rhythms, can affect the viewer in the deepest part of himself. In the same way, "Pulsations" in their total effect of undulation have an essential quality of fluidity which it is hard to imagine being produced by an assemblage of metallic pieces. Finally, the viewer caught in the simultaneous but not synchronized workings of the moving quadrilaterals nourishes the secret hope of seeing them inscribed in a parallel direction in each other, for they always seem so close to it. There is humour in this movement which finally consists in breaking the viewer's habit of logical, mathematical reasoning: and the paradox of an impossible geometry in the fictitious black space opposing the habit of the viewer to think in rational terms also produces this magical effect of fascination, of enigma, which is rarely found in familiar kinetic works.

Why? They depend on a deep philosophical which also goes back to abolishing the barriers between art and life, by wanting to have the viewer participate in a game in which he already knows the rules, when these works are the transposition in the most "artistic" way of the more evident manifestations of the modern world: red lights, green lights, city neon, etc. . . . On the contrary, the works by Roger Vilder offer the viewer the surrealist game of the diversion from the function of the object; the mechanized world becomes more evocative of nature than its own representation.

In an area where, perhaps more than elsewhere, it is very difficult to create new things, it is astonishing to note the original manner in which Vilder poses the problem of kinetic art. His "magic paradox" earns him the right to be considered one of the best known Canadian kinetic artists, as has been shown by the success of his two recent exhibitions in London and Toronto, in Paris and Ottawa.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)
Conceptual art, a disturbing change
By Laurent Lamy

Two exhibitions presented under the name "45°30'N — 73°36'W", geodetic coordinates of two areas that housed these two exhibitions (Sir George Williams University, and Saidye Bronfman Centre), took place simultaneously in Montreal last February. Why? Why such coincidence? Isn't it a joke? Surely not. It has to do with conceptual art. By this title, the artists who organized the exhibition, Gary Coward, Arthur Bardo, and William Vazan indicate that the artist wants to be a witness on a global scale beyond all considerations of nationality, culture and history. Neutral, precise numbers, lacking all emotional connotations, with no reference other than that of the entire network of the geographic system, identify the two exhibitions which complete each other. Certain works were in part in the University building and in part in the Bronfman Centre; for example, seventeen mounds of earth were placed at the Bronfman Centre; every day a pile was transported from this centre to Sir George Williams for the seventeen days that the exhibition lasted.

Although conceptual art raises questions about the entire tradition of art and constitutes a new step with a view to superseding the state of crisis that painting and the aesthetic object are currently undergoing, the exhibition was largely unparalleled save for the important article devoted to it by Normand Thériault in Le Presse. The exhibition, however, was enriched by outside participation with Dibbets, Haake, Sol Lewitt, and Huebler, men who have been pioneers of conceptual art in New York, London, and Amsterdam.

Today conceptual art is sufficiently established so that it is possible to isolate the art forms which are often related to it and which have a common denominator: the refusal of the plastic work, of the object. At the time of the Third International Conceptual Art Gallery in Lausanne, conceptual art was defined as a "body of research questioning the traditional status of works of art, and notably their character as material objects, and substituting a simple designation, or photographic information, so that the mental attitude and tension of the viewer are themselves central to the aesthetic phenomena".

By way of example, here is what the Montreal artist William Vazan proposed at these exhibitions of conceptual art: in 25 different sites around the world, angles were drawn with 4" black tape. The two sides of the angle each pointed towards two other cities situated near the first. So for a day a zigzag line was made in space that united 25 world museums, a virtual line, obviously. The angles were positioned by a computer, considering the roundness of the earth. Even if the line is not complete physically and visually, its existence is real in our minds. It is neither more imaginary or real than a border between countries, than air corridors, than the sinuous or rectilinear lines of roads or the trajectories of satellites. Does this line not give us an idea of space, as traditional perspective did, and even better yet? In another "production", Vazan united eight Canadian museums from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

Spatial discontinuity fascinates Vazan who tries to give space an existence between the works of art which constitute his exhibition. No doubt it is in this desire to enlarge the field of perception, to contain the artist's work in a mental activity and limit it to the latter reality, that resides the positive and innovating aspect of conceptual art.

A work of art, which is self-evident, is integrated in a narrative process that constitutes the work. The documents which render an account of it, the typed page, the sketch, most often photos, intervene only as the established facts necessary to communication, and as simple support of the idea. By that very fact, the artist's point of view is changed and the reader-viewer should adopt this viewpoint if he wants to take part in the new awareness. Beginning with the documents, the viewer retraces the artist's path: the structure of art is indeed questioned here. In the work to be, the artist seeks more to perceive than to express himself; the work now consists of an idea; the viewer only has to act as an onlooker. He is called on by the artist to understand the relationships between the elements coming from the world, a sort of password. Depersonalized in the established facts, successfully finished by computers, airplanes, cars, and photos, the work is presented as anonymous, even if it is signed, because, beyond the initial conception, it bears no mark of the artist at all. Using the most modern techniques, conceptual art recovers and explores time as one of its primary elements, in the same way as space or language. The work does not refer to a subjective time, like Tinguely's machine which self-destructed according to a pre-determined duration, but to a referable, objective time. Thus the seventeen piles of earth deposited at the Bronfman Centre on the first day of the exhibition corresponded to the seventeen days of the exhibition. Time is one part of the work, as are earth and the distance between the piles and the two exhibition sites.

Starting with realities that escape us but which are no less real the artist seeks to encompass the concept: Paul Woodrow has us "see" a mile of string in 25 different places around the world, from Vancouver to Montreal, by photos taken about every 300 miles at gas stations; on the back of the photos are indicated the stops, the quantity of gasoline and the price: a map of Canada shows the stages along the road.

In all these cases, it has given rise to conceptual art, all these forms of art are no longer confined with poor art merely show; they use the isolation of the material to remove the viewer's mask, to rid him of the pollution which ruins his vision, and put him back in touch with a cold, hard truth.

In ecological art, the artist creates directly in nature, digging trenches, tracing forms in fields, colouring the sea, etc., and thus arrives at changing the environment.

All these expressions constantly raise the question, "Is it art?" Why not take up the affirmation of Schwitters: "Everything I come up with is art, since I am an artist", a declaration that Donald Judd significantly echoed at the exhibition "45°30'N — 73°36'W": "If someone says his work is art, it's art."

Before denying these forms of art and conceptual art in particular, it is perhaps good to remember that the most turbulent movement of the century, Dada, was one of the most fertile. No doubt it did not lead to works in the usual sense of the word — to the great censure of merchants of canvases, moreover — but its spirit is still alive today. The richness of conceptual art will perhaps not reside in works either, but in the affirmation of an awareness of the
radical transformations that took place in the world, in the outcome of upsets that have already occurred in artistic creation, and in its capacity to influence the creative process.

As such we can no longer put it aside. At the most we can regret that in Quebec, contrary to what exists elsewhere in the world, in Bern, Paris, Turin, Düsseldorf, Toronto (Carmen Lamanna Gallery), neither ministry nor gallery is interested in the valuable contribution it can make to our time. (Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

Adrien Hébert in a new light
By Jean-René OSTIGUY

To do homage to the Montreal painter Adrien Hébert (1892-1967), we could limit ourselves to the study of only one of his numerous works whose historic and artistic interest could not be disputed. It is a work that would be practically unknown, if it were not for the reproduction of it made by the magazine L’Action Universitaire in 1935. Marius Barbeau confirms an oral tradition when he mentions that the Port of Montreal, 1928, is a part of the collection of the Havre Museum, but very few Canadians could identify this painting. Fortunately, the photo that we are using here bears the following inscription on the back: “Adrien Hébert - Elevator No. 2, Montreal - Width 3 ft. - Height 3½ or 4 ft. - Painting acquired by the Havre Museum, France - Act. Universitaire.” A label of the National Photogravure, followed by a classification 5 inches wide and 8½ vertically, confirms it is certainly the photo that Adrien Hébert was sending the editors of his article. The stamp of the photographer Marc Vaux, of 114 Rue de Vaugirard, in Paris, means that the canvas was photographed in Paris, probably at the time of the artist’s exhibition at the Bercy Gallery in 1931. The painting is signed but not dated, perhaps it may be on the back? It is impossible to know since the Havre Museum states it does not own a work by Adrien Hébert. The canvas is now considered to be lost. There is one quite like it in Montreal, a rough sketch, an unfinished painting, although it is signed and dated lower right, Adrien Hébert, 1928. It measures exactly 45” x 36”. An etching dated 1929 also deals with the same subject. The last two documents let us follow the evolution of a composition to the degree of perfection sought by the artist and suggest a later date than that proposed by Marius Barbeau. The first document even gives an idea of the colour of the lost canvas.

But in itself, this simple photograph invites the observer to a powerful use of space. The clouds in the sky rhyme perfectly with the smoke and vapours coming from the ships. This is the work of a man who appreciates mechanized work and business; who understands the great port city of which he is a citizen. Marc-Aurèle Fortin (1888-1970) dealt with similar subjects without ever approaching this rugged and animated idea. In his work, the vapours, smoke and clouds will always only tell fairy tales.

Like Albert Marquet whom he approaches here, Adrien Hébert avoids abstraction and does not want to establish anything on principle. However, he knows the art of the cubists; his friend the French painter André Favory who was influenced by Metzinger during his youth surely knew of it. Hébert is satisfied to be a witness, to give “his point of view” in a style which does not seem at first glance to add much in the way of renewal to pictorial tradition, but which, at any rate, is inspired by a new spirit. Let us listen to him defending his position and explaining his aesthetics:

“Why do you not paint Canadian subjects? I was asked, at the time of an exhibition I had in Montreal. By nature I am rather calm; however, my patience has limits. This is what I replied. Is the Port of Montreal Canadian or not? Most people ask for Canadian subjects; the meaning of this is rather restricted for them; it excludes first, any manifestation of modern life... Are there only forests in Canada? Are there only villages? Is there the entire Canadian population asleep and waiting for the end of the world?... The Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren wrote marvelous verse about the industrial life of Belgium. Did the composer Honegger not compose Pacific 2, 3, 1? And to mention one of our own. Robert Choquette admirably expressed the beauty of the locomotive. Why should a painter also not have the right to be inspired from these works?...”

In these writing lines, Adrien Hébert summarizes the position he adopted as early as 1923. Before that his works remained very eclectic and were not numerous; they included especially landscapes of Gaspé executed in a post-impressionist style. The point of view of Adrien Hébert in 1935, if we recall that he summarizes an old attitude more than he announces some new programme. It is a question of seeing in Adrien Hébert a revolutionary or a prophet, but of recognizing how, with a wisdom that should be respected, he was able to bring a unique testimony to Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century.

When all around him were turning to the countryside or the virgin forest, he chose to paint the life of the metropolises. He keeps the harbour activity and mechanized work foremost in his thoughts, but he describes well and sometimes elevates to the level of an ikon, the avenues of urban traffic, the work areas of the artist, blacksmith, writer; he depicts the sporting activities of city dwellers, does not fear to compare modern productions with the past. The retrospective exhibition of the National Gallery says all this very well. Thanks to it we have rediscovered a Montreal painter who has been unknown too long. In this article we have presented everything we could about a lost painting and an article unknown to researchers.

NOTES
(2) Marius Barbeau, Painters of Quebec, Toronto, 1946, p. 22.
(3) Excerpts from the article already quoted.
(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

1890—Born in Paris on April 12. Son and brother of the sculptors Louis-Philippe Hébert (1850-1917) and Henri Hébert (1884-1950).
1904-1910—Studies at the Monument National under Edmond Dyonnet and Joseph Saint-Charles; at the Art Association of Montreal under William Brymner.
1912-1914—Studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. On returning to Montreal, he taught at the Monument National before going to the Catholic School Commission. (From 1915 to 1954, he exhibited twenty nine times at the Salon du Printemps and was often a member of the jury).
1916—Exhibition at the Saint Sulpice Library in Montreal. He collaborated on the magazine Le Nigog in 1918.
1923—Visit to France where he acquired a new assurance since his production increased in number and quality. On his return he worked a great deal in the port of Montreal and painted a good number of portraits.
1928—A serious accident cost him the loss of an eye.
1950—Occupied the paternal studio situated at 34 Lavelle street.
1956—Retrospective exhibition (1926-1956) in the Hélène-de-Champlain restaurant.
1963—Demolition of his studio on Lavelle street.
Marcelle Maltais
An interview by Marie-France O'LEARY

Q. — Marcelle Maltais, many people, looking at your current paintings, wonder what is the reason for your return to figurative art.
A. — There is no question at all of a return to the figurative. No more than there is question in the history of painting of a radical transition at a given time from the figurative to the abstract. There is simply painting. I have been saying this for some time: the figurative-abstract duel dates back several decades. Perhaps it was necessary to simplify, define and label everything when the new experiments of the XIXth century were begun. Now everything overlaps. This is the era of synthesis, everything is possible. And painting especially is again possible.

Q. — There has, however, been a transformation in your painting. How did this evolution take place?
A. — I had been doing research since 1964, a year in which I only drew. I started using colour again in 1965, then in 1966 came the 'fragmentures' (collages), in which I thought I saw ten years of future painting. But how could I find the equivalent, in painting, of these intersecting planes, these 'graphic-colour' dualities, and those irregular forms which I thought I saw ten years of future painting. How did this evolution take place?

Q. — Light to the painter is what language is to the writer: the means, the unity of existing communication. Thus to appreciate a painting (figurative or non-figurative) one must ask if the light is right, beautiful, vibrant, not make a stumbling block of, or linger over the subject, which may or may not be anecdotal, which is basically the end result of the theory of "pure painting" but which is not painting. For the work should be more than a searching visual research, it should be a re-creation of the world, the expression of man at his ultimate point of awareness and sensitivity. Painting is not: 'expressing oneself with forms and colour'; painting is 'conveying light'.

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Q. — How is your ambition, what do you wish to attain with your painting?
A. — In my painting I would like to enlarge the vision of the world. Recreate it according to my imagination, to make it more perceptible to others, and through a greater vision of the world, arrive at a better understanding of man, who is a part and an awareness of the world.

Q. — Is all art communicative, according to you?
A. — Art does not have the right to be uncommunicative, especially communication. No art is hermetic, Work that is closely related (or purely technical research) is hermetic and thus, hermeticism should also be surpassed to reach artistic research. Artistic research ceases being sterile when it becomes communicative to everyone, that is to say when it becomes the expression of the world — universal — instead of only being an expression of self.

Q. — What are your immediate plans?
A. — Due to a grant from the Arts Council, I am going to paint Manicouagan this winter. In the spring I shall exhibit in Brussels, then in October 71, in the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris.

(Translation by Yvonne KIRBYSON)

Fafard
By David ZACK

There are enough art writers who also paint and sculpt. Joe Fafard isn't one of them, though he does write as well as make sculptures of painted plaster, glazed clay, now and then metal, sometimes with a shoe, a purse, or a necklace delicately inserted in the composition. In February of 1970 Fafard prepared his first and only piece of writing about
art, for a symposium of art students and faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina, held in the drinking rooms of the Kings Hotel for a full weekend.

Fafard worked on his writing for an intense evening, longer than he spends on many a sculpture. He called it “Stud”. “Stud” was published by the Lady Bessborough Press, a continuing project of Saskatoon’s resident artist writer, Clyde McConnell, and has been reprinted since. Last year he picked up the lead canoe and headed south to learn about the art world. In grade school and high school, and at college, at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg and later at the University of Pennsylvania in the States, where he really learned what art’s about.

And how to paddle his canoe up the learned creek. The graduate school was situated closer to Mecca than the banks built by the wordmen. And how to paddle his canoe up the proverbial creek about. And how to paddle his canoe up the lead canoe (his own allowed him to soak up the Mecca and possessed much more faith that our hero had in the theories of friends not conventionally seen as artists: Larry a mechanic; Ali, noted patrons, Joe’s Gallic sophist. Fred, an all-boy class to create a symposium of art students, all by the age of 26.

Plaster art people weren’t Fafard’s final answer. He spent a while doing photographs. Made the series of the dead cow on 35mm color slides, then developed it in clay. Made Roman style busts of friends not conventionally seen as artists; Larry a mechanic; Ali, noted patrons, Joe’s Gallic sophist. Fred, an all-boy class to create a half-hour film about a lady who lives on the prairie near St. Martha, tending goats and expressing a philosophy of grass-like growth and moss-like acceptance. Bought in kiln for his mother, whose 12 children are now all past babyhood, and encouraged her to produce funky ceramic sculptures for friends, neighbors, local henhouses. She now works almost as much as her artist son, at making art.

Also, Fafard got an all girl class to sculpt a local town in clay, complete with copulating pets and programmes on TV screens. An all boy class to create a ceramic parade. And encouraged his wife Susan, who comes from a Mennonite community in Manitoba, to resume her student involvement with clay. She now works in her own style, a sort of German naivete compared to Joe’s Gallic sophist. Fred, an all-boy class to create a symposium of art students, all by the age of 26.

Fafard first approached his portraits of the Regina art scene in plaster. It is a high humans. Pecking order, if you please. And going to high school in the big town 15 miles from home, he discovered young what it is to come from a farm, speaking French, and face the big world. He thrived in Regina for two years last year, from California. He was deeply involved in the Funk Art thing there, and of course the beginnings of Nut Art. Here was a man in prairie Saskatchewan who’d been written about in innumerable art magazines around the world, had more than fifteen one man shows, been in several hundred group shows, all by the age of 26. Gilhooly’s very natural and full of vigor, besides having received every accolade the San Francisco art scene can offer short of electing a man mayor. The only thing Gilhooly lacks is reverence for local custom. His African beasts in clay and his intricate mythology of frog Greeks.
Egyptians, Atlanteans, Americans, Canadians, was the kind of stimulus every art school needs, but no art school can stand for long. Next year Gilhooly will be guest artist at York University, Toronto. He leaves behind in Regina a flourishing new movement of prairie ceramicists, northern Nut artists. Joe Fafard gilded Gilhooly so he shines like Midas, and put horns on his head. The horns of the ram, as Gilhooly was born in Aries. Then Fafard made Gilhooly again as a pink frog, singing to a bunch of small green frogs in his arms, all smoking joints.

Then he made a pair of Russ Yuristys, one a dour intellectual sitting devilishly despondent on a wood stool. The standing one is the new Russ, turning out a new landscape filled with mushrooms every day, with angel’s wings and a blue beard. Fafard was also perceptive enough to sculpt this writer in two versions. We are unregistered since 1962 and 1963. Gilhooly was born in Aries. Then Fafard saw out of his window a bunch of small green frogs in his arms, all smoking joints.

He showed Ted Godwin (Ted has been painting tartans for over ten years now and if the Scots ever discover him he’ll be rich as a buttered scone) with a clumsy clay in commemoration of Godwin’s untried efforts to get rid of Gilhooly, which of course succeeded. Another local painter, Art McKay, a philosopher on the brink who goes in for brown, got made with his head sticking pink out of a white toilet with real chrome hardware, right hand sorting the turds, left pointing accusingly at the art-loving viewer.

Terry Fenton, distinguished assistant to the director of Regina’s Mackenzie Gallery, critic of abstract art for ARTS CANADA and even ART FORUM, painter of watercolors; Fafard portrayed him gag in one hand, crooked pencil in the other, dragging on the ground writing: “I have the spiffiest office in the Art Museum”. On his back is a green bird with tongue flapping out like a Jules Olitsky painting or Superman’s cape, an allusion to the effect on Fenton of the visit of a New York critic with a name similar to Green Bird, several years ago. The Terry portrait is facing forward, with his feet shuffling backwards, the same direction the bird is talking.

More: My wife Maija, another California Nut, with her arms supporting the beasts she paints and our dog Wolf coming out of her heart. Don Chester, a serious local abstract painter and college wrestler, in a highly colored abstract wrestler’s outfit. Frank Nulf, assistant dean of the library. Colombian Polychrome Turk, the first Nut artists. Joe Fafard gilded Gilhooly so he shines like Midas, and put horns on his head. The horns of the ram, as Gilhooly was born in Aries. Then Fafard saw out of his window a bunch of small green frogs in his arms, all smoking joints.

André Elbaz’s Collages
By Jean AMBROSI

For the true painter, the creator of structures who is master of his palette and certain of his touch, the art of the collage requires what amounts to total amnesia. Very few among the great masters have ever emerged from this artistic fugue, and some have pretended to. Matisse himself could not keep his distance from an over-facile draughtsmanship. At most, he was able to lay aside his palette. His collages added to the web of his art but he was unable to escape the entrapment of the basic warp.

André Elbaz, an artist of less than forty years, emerges from his artistic formation, Draughtsmanship, colour, and composition are his juggling tools. His sensibility evolves on a new plane, he discoursed on how the society which weighs upon him and it comes to pieces, like a construction game which goes back in its box. The overused and yet all-powerful symbolism of advertising is exposed and its nakedness becomes laughable; a frightening enemy shed of its armor becoming a puny being overthrown by a snap of the fingers.

Once the spectator comes in contact with this series of collages he experiences within himself the twisted advertising games which attempt to overpower us. Then, a kind of rage against oneself enters the unconscious. How could such crude artifice intrude into our minds, so easily take its effect, and continue to prosper with such impunity? A desire to cry out and attack as Elbaz has done overcomes us, if only to regain our own voices. But we are left with empty words that speak the orderly and sterile language of mere intellect. We are moved far beyond the strict remembrance of the fragments presented in spite of hastily disposed bars.

Aestheticism is a kind of fencing which enforces any work of art. Its established structures reassure and please. Through them we are alienated from the work itself, but the collage speaks to us; its force engulfs all abstract conceptions and its peaceful cry is prolonged. Then to escape is a re-birth. Elbaz’s collage speaks anew. No talent before him has dug his raw material out of such an intimate environment. Young master painters or sculptors plunder easily into the concreteness of the commonplace. At most they force a new insight upon us. The precious reference would remind us of Warhol or Johns. Forgotten by the author in the bottom of a Moroccan polychrome trunk, the first works of this genre in black and white date back to Elbaz’s childhood about 1952. Elbaz acts on the level of subconscious language. He reorganizes the multi-faceted words that advertising so carefully orders for its particular aims. All his raw material is taken from actual ads. By this expedient advertising is undressed, its true message rings in our ears and its language takes on the wild Elbazian meaning. The direct language of a sensitive artist: a calm voice, assured and vibrant, tells us that we are fooled. Elbaz is superbly gifted in his implacable revolt for communicating the message of deliverance which he discovered. Only the artist foresee the heavy implications in the innocent sounding advertising message. He takes it apart, destroys it, and returns it to us in the shape of a dream. These dreams, even when they seem exaggerated, to which are attached swarms of associations, simultaneously liberate each of us according to our unique perception.

Sometimes, following the will of a white page, Elbaz ignores the call to destruction and lets himself slide into the dream. The publicity then acts as no more than a pretext and colour tones take on primary importance. A simple, unassuming, almost invisible composition envelops the raw material. We could easily interpret and intellectualize upon the meaning of this page which is conceived in a dream-world for all of us but the lasting factor is the unerring intuition of the artist. The educated mind scrutinizes each of the elements of the dream in search of authenticity-elements which are thoroughly catalogued in scholarly books – thus, the cultural thirst is quenched and a deep world of wonders opens to the apoplectic mind.

Past the obvious fades, each one of us releases his share of personal pulsations among the plentiful bounty offered by the artist. The malicious and undifferentiated slavery which clings to us like a plague bursts and disappears. Elbaz leads us to the end of the road through his art. The last steps are left to the self.

(Translation by the Author)
Born in Rome in 1941, Francesca Vivenza has lived until 1970 in Milan. In the favourable setting of a decentralized Italy with a unique tradition of dedication to the arts, she has already had fourteen exhibitions which have made her name familiar to art-lovers. Hence the North-American scene (today Francesca Vivenza lives in Toronto) presented her with a challenge — a challenge in more than one sense of the word. Toronto, as we know, is not always well-disposed to those painters, whether European or not, who work outside of directly fashionable movements, lyrical or (above all) geometric abstraction.

Geometric abstraction often contains a quality of reassurance, and nothing is more removed from such an aesthetic than Vivenza's painting which has been reared on European expressionism. At the same time the artist has benefited by her stay in Toronto: she has had before her eyes a kaleidoscope of visual impressions and strange sensations. It is this very meeting, on the one hand of a sensitivity formed in the European pictorial tradition, and, on the other of rich North-American subject-matter which is of interest here. The originality of this encounter derives from the fact that the material is not restored in a literal way by the artist. On the contrary, it has been transformed by the strangeness in the spectacle itself as soon as the observer individuates. Where pop-art is content with truncated quotation, Vivenza's painting appears as a deciphering of the North-American reality.

Direct acquaintance with Vivenza's canvases will bring the names of Ensor and Nolde to mind. It is perhaps not essential but nevertheless interesting to confirm that the latter are the artist's favourite painters.

But these paintings are anything but imitative. Certainly, there is an echo of Ensor and Nolde in the frantic, the hallucinatory, the masquerading, the disconcerting. But the painting is not the mirror on the imaginary. Imagination's romantic or symbolic flights are rejected. In contrast to Ensor and Nolde, Vivenza's paintings are fantasies like those of the Manierists. They lend themselves rather to individual contemplation than to public scrutiny and contemplation. The majority of 'viewers' can scarcely suppress a certain surprise on finding that the drawings carry the same signature as do the paintings. In speaking of them, we could in fact repeat, but in reverse, what we have already said. Minutes in detail, wholly placed on the side of the imaginary, Vivenza's drawings are fantasies like those of the Manierists. They lend themselves rather to individual scrutiny and contemplation than to public presentation. Technique, the manner, the subject matter are more than the medium of the artist's conscious personality. The overlapping of Indian ink and ball-point pen reminds one of the Frenchman Lurven's efforts.

The literary inspiration of these drawings, based on a theme from Shake­speare's The Tempest has been a pretext for letting through books of geological interest and for the resurrection of unknown flora and fauna. The pen freely seeks equivalents to poetic (and verbal) imagery, tracing corals and madrepores of the male form. The female form is also to be seen. It is just because there is no obvious resemblance between the canvasses and the drawings that they concerned with the community of men. Vivenza's painting, highly accomplished as it is as oil-painting, nevertheless tends towards the fresco. In this way the painter can defy speculators and professional collectors. Vivenza has already had the opportunity to produce a small square in Toronto. Let us hope that further opportunities of this kind will be offered to her, where her talent and her taste for colour, her feeling for life which is joyous and serious, neither sentimental nor farcical, would flower.

From Fresco to 'figurative narration' there is only a step, but a difficult step. The practice of the Primitives has often demonstrated. Here we are dealing with a vast area which is being explored at the moment by our contemporary artists. Many forgotten works of this kind by other Primitives are being re-discovered, for example from the 15th century (Moritz von Schwind's Cinderella).

The danger inherent in "figurative narration" is to make concessions to the anecdote, to naive symbolism, to the over-explicit message. Vivenza avoids such pitfalls in her series of four paintings which is somewhat reminiscent of Gauguin (the Where do we come from?... in the Baltimore Museum). The first canvas shows the lovers' meeting, the second, their love. The title of the third is Waiting. Few painters know how to treat, as does Vivenza, without indiscernible or mauldn affectation, the expectation of the pregnant woman. In contrast, one might mention the deliberate indiscernment of Klimt's Hope, counterbalanced by his Byzantine style. In the fourth painting it is a skeleton-baby which the young lovers proudly rock. The brown tones and the decorative patterns of the series express a poetry of acceptance of life and of death which is the condition of life. Here we have the opposite of a poetry of resignation.

But these paintings are not from reality, all these motifs are transfigured by a composition which plays freely on oblique lines, on reflections and superimpositions. The viewer is forced to recover an innocence lost to him but natural to the painter's eye. In spite of the stylization of the human figure, where the brush is furtively tampered with, and the essential ambiguity of the 'grotesque', with its hidden face of anxiety, revealed. At the same time, the gamut of colours weaves a living texture, not a fabric, but a tissue of flesh. The painting is a sort of superimpositions of different media, of different ephemeral forms which is also to be seen. It is just because there is no obvious resemblance between the canvasses and the drawings that they
A retrospect of Biéler's past fifty years as a painter has recently toured Canada.

Ernest Biéler, a very well known artist in Paris as well as in Switzerland, and later with Maurice Denis and Paul Sérusier. He also met Lugén with whom his son Ted worked later on and in 1935 and with Zadkine who after seeing a sketch pad of Ted, who was only fourteen then, accepted him in his studio.

Upon his return to Canada in 1926, he settled in the island of Orleans, at Sainte Famille since it offered him the nearest milieu where man was in full command of nature and life and man. This led to innumerable sketches, many of which are little masterpieces with which he made some of his best works years later. Looking back on his work in a chronological order, one can easily see an increased assurance in the choice of subjects as well as in the use of material.

Strangely enough his work does not reflect the influence of either Sérusier or Denis. In Canada, while Maurice Caur. Milne and the members of the Group of Seven were gaining recognition, Biéler goes on seemingly unaware of their existence. If his evolution at times appears to be moving forward slowly, it is nevertheless constant and positive, free of any outside influence. In Biéler's second period, so to speak, begins. His work seems to gain more power and although still figurative it was becoming obvious that the artist subdues the technical aspects of his work and the materials he uses to suit what he has in mind. Sometimes he eliminates and simplifies leaving only the essentials. This, however, is to return to his original formula, but with always improved results.

Never satisfied and very inquisitive, he soon decided to invent a new press which he calls "The Twelve Points Press" in order to force and shape paper and other similar materials into three-dimensional pictures that are both pictorial and sculptural in their relief form with outstanding results. This method was so effective that Richard Lacroix used more or less the same process for his excellent plastic work called "Pitonnes".

Perhaps remembering his discussions with Zadkine in 1953 or due to the influence of his son Ted, one of our very best sculptors, Biéler decided to turn to sculpture with extraordinary results. He tackled this new medium with enthusiasm. I saw one of his first sculptures. I was simply speechless, for there in front of me stood some of the finest sculptures I had seen in a long time in Canada. There was one in particular, which is now in my collection, which impressed me very much. It was a standing form which looked half human and half bird, not unlike some of the things Manzu did for his doors of the Vatican, but definitely better and more powerful. There was something sinister about it which was perhaps only toned down by the golden finish of the sculpture. It is a man-woman. On it are a standing number of cherubs, in particular, which is now in my collection, which impressed me very much. It was a standing form which looked half human and half bird, not unlike some of the things Manzu did for his doors of the Vatican, but definitely better and more powerful. There was something sinister about it which was perhaps only toned down by the golden finish of the sculpture. It is a man-woman. On it are a standing number of cherubs, and they have lived there ever since, although making extensive trips across Canada and abroad. At Queen's University, in his new chair, André Biéler soon became professor, promoter, lecturer, and with his works much fame and shows an element of sheer joy and happiness where one can easily detect the presence of his wife, this wonderful woman who completes him and shares his ideas and thoughts which she understands so thoroughly. She has been this sort of second period, so to speak, begins. His work seems to gain more power and although still figurative it was becoming obvious that Biéler was saying something in the abstract only if through its power of evocation. Some of the sketches and the paintings of that period show clearly that the artist has a very profound understanding of life and the miseries of war. These paintings are full of energy and movement and turbulence. The war and Guy Biéler's death had a lot to do with this. What may appear at times as humor was at first
Entretien avec Helen Frankenthaler
Par Shirley RAPHAEL

La plus grande ambition d'Helen Frankenthaler, qu'elle réussit d'ailleurs à réaliser dans ses inoubliables tableaux — est de marier dans une mêmeœuvre d'art la joie intérieure et la discipline extérieure.

Barbara Rose, célèbre critique d'art américaine, considère Helen Frankenthaler comme l'une des principales figures à paraître, au cours des deux dernières décennies, dans le monde de l'art international.

Flood (Inondation), peint en 1957, est l'un de ses meilleurs tableaux et il atteste de la maturité de son travail. Mlle Rose, dans le numéro d'avril 1958 d'Artforum, écrivait : « Pour différentes raisons, Flood est une œuvre importante, parce qu'elle réaffirme la maîtrise de Frankenthaler en matière de propositions. Elle est tout ce que l'art des années 60 n'a pas été... libre, spontanée, extravagant, romantique, volupueuse, éprise, gourmande d'une joie de vivre totale. Et elle contient une note de grandeur solennelle qui annonce la maturité de style d'une grande artiste qui a derrière elle une longue expérience et qui ouvre un nouveau chapitre dans un style encore riche d'une réconfortante vitalité enrichie par l'expérience. »

L'art d'Helen Frankenthaler produit un effet particulier : après y avoir été exposé, on se sent plein de vie et en affectionnée harmonie avec le monde entier. C'est un art qui attire comme un aimant. Une fois, à l'Institut d'Art de Chicago, j'ai vu une œuvre plus ancienne de Frankenthaler, baptisée Santorini. Il s'en dégageait un tel mystère et une telle joie, de foi dans la vie. Cela peut se faire de la place pour du nouveau. »

Serious
L'artiste se révèle comme une personne sérieuse, réfléchie. Autant que possible, et de toutes les façons, elle aime être vraie. « Je suis peintre... et mes tableaux sont l'écho de l'état général de ma personne; ce sont les poteaux indicatifs de la direction que je prends. Tout le monde, j'espère, connaît des moments de retour vers l'enfance jusqu'à l'heure du tombeau. Dans la vie, il faut se sentir bien en vie, ou au contraire de certains êtres qui vivent mais se sentent morts. »

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Très active
Mlle Frankenthaler est une personne très active, mais qui ne suit pas une routine établie. Elle est mieux à son aise quand elle travaille librement... Elle peut enseigner, faire des conférences, être prise ensuite d'une rage de peindre; puis, elle s'arrête et fait quelque chose de tout autre. Elle organise son travail mais ne s'en tient pas à une routine quotidienne de 10 à 17 heures.

Comme elle dit, « créer est toujours une lutte; on a toujours des doutes quand on essaye quelque chose de nouveau ». Elle a conscience de courir autant de risques aujourd'hui qu'au temps de ses débuts (pour un peintre tachiste, si le résultat trahit l'intention il faut jeter le tableau). Et, même à présent, après tous les hommages admiratifs qu'elle a reçu,

y a bien des moments où elle doute d'elle-même et se sent prise d'un sentiment d'insecurité.

Mais, elle aime essayer de choses nouvelles. Ainsi, elle a conçu un décor pour un ballet d'Erick Hawkins donné au théâtre Anta de New-York, le 9 mars dernier. Elle aime beaucoup travailler à grande échelle et en profitant pour parler de bannières.

Elle a toujours fait de grands tableaux... son plus grand ayant été peint pour le Pavillon américain à l'Expo 67 de Montréal. Il mesurait 16 pieds ½ sur 33. Un agréable défi, mais tout un problème de réalisation! Elle pouvait seulement voir l'œuvre sur toile, et jamais dans son entier, ou au fur à mesure que l'ouvrage avançait. Il lui fallut louer un vieux cinéma et engager une équipe pour constamment rouler et dérouler la toile afin qu'elle puisse y travailler.

A propos de succès
Mlle Frankenthaler ne se sent pas célèbre, même si elle aperçoit de ses tableaux un peu partout où elle va.

Quand je lui ai demandé ce qu'elle éprouvait à l'idée d'avoir eu des rétrospectives au Whitney de New-York et au Whitechapel de Londres, à l'âge de 40 ans, elle a répondu avoir été à la fois surprise et très encouragée.

Selon elle, il n'est pas nécessaire pour un artiste d'être une vedette. Car alors, on se préoccupe trop de son moi et on se rattrape de façon non productive. La peinture se doit de révéler le caractère même du peintre. Sans qu'il puisse, non plus, en détacher l'amour pour les autres êtres.

« Il n'y a ni règles ni programmes qui soient justes ou faux. Toute action comporte sa magie. Tout problème est difficile. En chaque être, le subconscient travaille sans cesse; mais parfois, ce subconscient est plus libre d'agir. »

Les diapositives de ses travaux de la fin de 1970 révèlent l'addition de lignes, faite aux crayons de couleur, au crayon-feutre, au crayon... à tout ce qui lui convient le mieux.

Grande artiste, elle est également vraie en tant qu'homme. Elle possède la joie de vivre et sait la partager.

(Traduction de Denise Courtois)

Helen Frankenthaler est venue à Montréal, en février, à l'occasion de son exposition particulière dans une galerie montréalaise et afin de donner au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal une conférence intitulée Parlant de peinture avec Helen Frankenthaler.

Magnelli (1888-1971)
By Jacques LEPAGE

There is no scientific study devoted to the almost simultaneous emergence of new phenomena in different places and situations. Yet it is common to see in the objective as well as speculative or artistic disciplines, discoveries being made within a very short period whose similarity is disturbing. In this way non-
Magnelli has told us of the isolation in which he lived in Florence during the years 1913-19, which had produced the first of his works in which figuration disappeared: no reviews, no reproductions, no contacts. If his relations with the Futurists were friendly, they were disturbed by the lack of understanding of Marinetti's group towards growing non-figuration. By their adherence to epidermic modernity. Now we must remember that Magnelli who began to paint late, self-taught — he liked to say he had fresco painters for masters: Giotto, Paolo Uccello, Masaccio, and Piero della Francesca. His last figurative work reveals this transposed influence; it may be seen in "Théâtre Stentorrello No. 3", which is reproduced. The Aretze frescoes revealed to him "composition in a surface", made him understand, he said, the interplay of empty and fully occupied space. Beginning with Piero della Francesca, he felt that his art, his pictures, "would always tend towards the architectural". He rediscovered flat tint and removed the anecdote from the anecdotal. He was not far from thinking that the taste for movement's taste, for machinery, proper to the Futurists, was regressive. That was happening in 1914. After a brief stay in Paris, Magnelli returned to Florence, where he was at the outbreak of the war. The studio that Apollinaire had kept for him in the French capital was never to be occupied. What is there when the friends of the poet, Picasso, Léger, Juan Gris, did not change his mind. "One had the feeling that art should return to creation instead of being an imitation of something. Even cubism, which is magnificent, which is formidable, saw its creators start from an idea of reality; they distorted the object, they transformed it; they wanted to see its four sides. Whereas, for my part, one fine day I wondered if it was possible that I had to make a character when I can have the freedom to create a canvas according to the forms that I need within the rectangle of the canvas. And then I completely removed all that was real, even imagined, and I created canvases, the first abstract canvases." 

For forty years he has exploited this change in art that would be the great adventure of the first half of the century. Magnelli, like other inventors of non-figuration, would see his work plagiarized for the benefit of followers, who often do not go beyond fraudulent imitation. The fecundity of his work gives way as quickly as styles. There remain only those who have added to the development of knowledge. Magnelli is eminently one of those. A plastician, he constructed his work strictly, felt repugnance at facility, built with the sobriety of exigency, which is useful to relate these characteristics to the work of Malevitch in Russia. We note that towards 1909, the creator of Suprematism painted oils with a conclusion akin to those of Magnelli in 1913. Both, thus seem to reach constructivism by a similar method, by the purification of forms, as it were, by a classic approach contrary to Kandinsky, who reached the informal by expressionist lyricism. The route followed by Mondrian was different again, an imperturbable logic led him to an absolute geometrism by the deepening of forms. But the most uncompromising men sometimes have unexpected repentance. First Magnelli abandoned his naughty serenity; the war came to an end, and was over. Enthusiasm exalted him. A more sensual effusiveness was manifested in his compositions, a tumultuous song overwhelmed him. The end of hostilities liberated in him a generous taste that overexerted colour, impassioned form, which to this point had been so strict. He called a "lyric explosion" the work of this period that preceded a questioning of the very meaning of the work of art. Magnelli was to hesitate in the exploration of the possibilities opened by his own approach: he experimented by applying to his research the work of the Futurist, Cubist, and Surrealist painters, without ever giving in to their formulation. A powerful temperament kept him from adhering to whatever was not his fundamental intuition. He experienced these teachings, then moved away from them.

In 1928 he reached an impasse: he stopped painting. With difficulty two years later, he began to draw again, and was reconciled with painting by discovering in Carrara, the language of unpolished marble: with their transfiguration into a series of canvases "Les Pierres", lyricism made an encore of the work of the Tuscan painter. Beginning in 1937, the creative tumult was mastered, Magnelli's work reached a state of serenity that even the upheavals of the second world war were not able to shake.

"If one wants to produce something absolute, one must be able to choose what is necessary to realize this vision". As early as 1912-1913, Magnelli deliberately crossed the threshold of tradition, breaking it. He directly created his own language, reinvented a new plastic vocabulary which the work's after-effects had hidden. His choice was definitely made shortly before the second world war, and his work, henceforth, was to join in with the non-figurative trend which held general attention until 1955-60. The resistance of the constructivists he remains on the fringe, keeping his distance towards geometrism. A suppleness of form which is not softness, assures his freedom. "The straightest straight line is that produced by the maximum straightening of a line". This remark by Closon applies exactly to Magnelli's works. If the rhythm is architectonic in its discretion, it is shaded with a sensitivity which suits an ambiguous structure. The strength, the firmness of the construction bring daylight to the poetic line."