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Montréal, nouvelle Olympia
Montreal, the New Olympia

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La ville de Montréal, avec sa richesse culturelle et historique, accueille les athlètes du monde entier pour les Jeux Olympiques. Les athlètes sont vus comme des dieux qui ajoutent à l'homme la dimension rêvée, celle de la force et du courage conjugués avec l'habileté. Les athlètes ont besoin de régner d'abord sur soi avant de pouvoir se mesurer à autrui.

Montréal, belle et attentive, salue les héros du Stade. Elle est fière d'être, pour quelques jours, dépositaire de la flamme des Grands Jeux, d'être l'hôte de tous ces hommes et de toutes ces femmes qui vont nous démontrer que les dieux nous sont toujours nécessaires.

Andrée PARADIS
MONTREAL, THE NEW OLYMPIA

By Andrée PARADIS

Montreal is preparing to extol with the whole world the athletes, the heroes of poetry in action, these gods who add to man the dreamed-of dimension of strength and courage combined with skill. Gifts that demand self-mastery before measuring oneself against others.

Montreal has provided itself with colossal Olympic installations, in the spirit of Babylon and the Pyramids. There we shall honour daring, perfection of muscle, sense of co-ordination, savoir-faire, scorn of fatigue, determination and decisive intelligence. The athlete, like the artist, knowing his strength, finds exhibition in going beyond his limits. The masterpiece of athletics, like that of art, outlives athletes and artists. We have need of this immortality; in short, of life in its stupendous intensity.

Montreal, beautiful and courteous, salutes the heroes of the Stadium; it is proud to be, for a few days, the home of the Great Games Flame, proud to host all these men and women who are going to show us that the gods are real.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

QUEBEC TRENDS, 1976

AN IMAGINARY DEBATE

By Bernard LEVY

What is the state of art in Quebec? It is difficult to say. And what will be its state to-morrow? Unless we can fluently read a crystal ball... And yet two experts have taken a chance at this puzzle. Mrs. Fernande Saint-Martin, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, and Mr. Bogardi, art critic of the Montreal Star, have agreed to lend assistance to Vie des Arts as intermediary, how art in Quebec, as it appears in its present different trends, is linked to the admirable interrogation on Art (with a capital A) opening to-day in the world, which will be developed during the coming years.

At first sight, it seems that material and financial conditions enjoyed by artists in Canada are extremely conducive to creating. On that score, the programs of grants and aid to creation set up in Canada and Quebec can be compared to advantage with those of any other country in the world. Furthermore, it is not the essential definition of art and culture, the role of the State, the situation of artists, the function of criticism, etc.

And especially we ought to discern, finally, through the analysis of the two guests who express themselves through Vie des Arts as intermediaries, how art in Quebec, as it appears in its present different trends, is linked to the admirable interrogation on Art (with a capital A) opening to-day in the world, which will be developed during the coming years.

Surely, if there are still many measures to be found to all artists produce under better conditions, it would perhaps be time, for Mrs. Saint-Martin wonders, to think of "assuring an essential minimum for everyone, even if it demands the artists being satisfied with it". The solution would not be as Utopian as it seems if complementary measures were matched to it. Thus, if we consider that the work of art belongs to the public, and the conditions decreed by the federal government this year to fight inflation does not affect the artistic sector. But artists cannot live only on grants and bursaries. Therefore most of them teach in colleges or universities.

If we wish to speak of the possibilities of development of a living art in Quebec, we must ponder upon the present Quebec milieu. So, according to Mrs. Saint-Martin, we can understand this milieu only on a base of what it has been these last years, because the relationship of artists to established with works of art produced to-day, and works produced previously.

The retrospective exhibition of works of art from 1940 to 1970, presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art last year, offered the opportunity of becoming aware of what were the profound trends and the meaning that can be given to the works produced which come about since 1945-1948. With the Refus global, it was perceived that art sets itself in contradiction to traditional ways of defining culture as well as reality itself. The automatist movement was defined as a movement of radical opposition to Quebec post-war society. Through the instrument of automatism, the automatist movement made clear a sort of dispute over what had existed. At the same time, it expressed the wish to establish a different, parallel reality, by the means of the work of art and poetic experiment. The Refus global attempted to substitute for the real another real, a surreal produced by the scenes of the unconscious experience of reality another, less common reality. The movement had very deep roots with a social group that suffered from the limitations and constraints of that period.

Following the art-escapism offered by the automatists came the plasticians' movement that preached a form of art that was, to a greater degree, an expression of reality, a reality upon which artists could act — pictorial space, for example. The beginning of the 60's was a fruitful period for art in Quebec. The time of taking a stand had passed; the moment of creation began. A great number of artists, among whom were several automatists, really founded an art at the beginning of the 60's, such as Perron, Gaucher, etc. These years also saw the beginning of Optical Art (Roger Vider). We were in a period of sculpture rich in promise.

will be found somewhat arbitrary: however, these references seemed convenient to us in the discussion, whose essence they change not at all.

Those who expect to find here a catalogue of names will surely be disappointed. And certainly, if sometimes the name of an artist or a group is seen in the text it will be as an illustration or an example. This simply allows better placing or applying a principle which, without this type of remark would risk remaining too theoretical or too abstract.

A double thought expressed aloud will, therefore, be found retranscribed here. Double thought and parallel thought, since the two speakers have not met.

Accordingly, the debate presented here is an imaginary debate. But we shall see that, in the face of the same questions, although by different paths, Mrs. Saint-Martin's statements, Mr. Bogardi's answers to them are particularly on the essential: definitions of art and culture, the role of the State, the situation of artists, the function of criticism, etc.

The Beginning: Awareness of Contemporary Art

If the Refus global was presented entirely as a social confrontation movement, it was not less profoundly as a challenge, since for her "Culture is the result of an investigation of conditioning processes". This does not mean that it is necessary to put the question in terms of "all or nothing". And yet it is there that must be found the first element of the problem of creation in Quebec. There is another element: it concerns the network of information on art.