Une autre saison de
LÉON BELLEFLEUR

Huile sur toile; 50 cm x 61.

Bellefleur, lui, demeure dans sa vieille maison canadienne, près du Richelieu (encore un rêve réalisé), où je l'ai rencontré. La veille, une très violente tempête avait fait rage dans la région et il a projeté son voisin: «un dessin» — dans la rivière; il me dira au cours de l'entretien: «Le retour de Pellan en 40, c'était pire que l'ouragan d'hier pour les arts plastiques!» Il est resté le même homme sympathique, drôle et sensible (cette précieuse sensibilité à laquelle son œuvre est fidèle depuis près de quarante ans). A peine a-t-il pris un peu d'assurance. Pourtant, il parle volontiers, simplement, posément. Il n'en est pas moins convaincu que ses commentateurs n'avaient en rien (...) ou si peu) les gens à pénétrer son œuvre. «Je sais qu'il y a des artistes qui parlent très bien de leur peinture mais, mème dans ces cas-là, l'explication des mécanismes musicaux (et plus encore) est plus facile à résoudre les problèmes, que désormais mes limites sont à peu près d'accorder de mon fonds intérieur». À ce stade, il y a danger d'embourgeoisement, je sais, de préciosité, de décoration; personne n'est à l'abri de cela (je ne parle pas seulement des peintres) et j'en suis conscient. Je me méfie en quelque sorte de mon métier qui rend les choses trop faciles, qui me permettrait de me protéger en moi le meilleur de l'enfance, cette fraîcheur dont aucune maturité ne saurait se passer.» En l'écoutant parler de l'enfance, je compkjis que ce n'est pas uniquement par la peinture que son œuvre ne le sug
gère.

Quoi qu'il en soit, les tableaux récents de Bellefleur ont beau refléter davantage un rêve qu'une situation réelle, ils n'en atteignent pas moins, sur le plan plastique, une plénitude subtile, une richesse, un équilibre indéniables. «C'est toi qui le dis, mais je t'hésite à te contredire...» Disons plus justement que je connais maintenant mon métier, qu'il y a de moins en moins de failles à ce niveau-là, que j'arrive de plus en plus facilement à résoudre les problèmes, que j'ai toujours essayé de maîtriser tout cela et je crois que je suis bien plus vulnérable maintenant que je le dis, mais j'hésite à te contredire...»

Pour le moment, il n'est pas besoin de rechercher des jeunes pour pousser plus loin la carrière de l'œuvre de Bellefleur... Il s'en charge très bien lui-même.

J'ai bâti à sa prochaine saison.

English Translation, p. 92.

Gilles Daigneault est né à Montréal en 1943. Titulaire d'un doctorat de troisième cycle de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines d'Alx-en-Provence, il rédige actuellement une monographie sur Léon Bellefleur.
boardroom, and, on account of its large size, is never in the travelling exhibitions of the collection.

Among the entries from the Maritimes, we should note St. John Harbour by Bruno Bobak, artist in residence in New Brunswick famous for his panoramas of cities in the Kokoschka manner, in which we find his delightful colourist's verve. As for his wife Molly Lamb Bobak's English Beach, we see it in a litigious swimming comparable to that of the early Tofutsies but we do not rediscover in it her usual exuberance.

Woman at a Dresser by Christopher Pratt, the magic realist of Newfoundland, is one of his most popular and bewitching canvases, in which we enjoy the delicacy of the drawing and the mellowness of the tints.

Milk Truck and Children in a Tree are two typical oils, although of average quality, by Alexander Colville, the neo-Scottish head of the Canadian hyperrealist school.

Ontario is represented by some twenty painters, several of whom are hyperrealists: Ken Danby, D. P. Brown, Willis Romanov, Wim Blom and David Mayrs. The stars, Kazuo Nakamura of Toronto and Yves Bral of Ottawa. More interesting are the two Ronald Bloores, Homage to Matisse and Homage to Cubism, of great finesse and artistry.

Among the oil painters, we prefer Harold Town, the talented and versatile Toronto painter, who appears at his best in Homage to Cubism, of great finesse of texture, and particularly in his superb Sky Panel, where his use of colour and his feeling for values are displayed; we also admire greatly Jack Macdonald's lovely blue harmony and the precious and delicate treacly of Ralph and Brian Taylor.

The most remarkable works of the painters of the West are, in our opinion, Christine Pflug's Interior at Night with its mysterious play of lights and shadows, and the very large canvas of Arthur K. H. Smith, whose extreme geometrical simplicity recalls some of Georgia O'Keefe's studies of barns, and the two Ronald Bloores, Homage to Matisse and especially Triple Sun Pan, of an infinite delicacy and artistry.

If we note in British Columbia's share the presence of a few "hard edge painters" like Gordon Smith and Boyd Pfeiffer, laurels are due, in our opinion, to Tony Onley (Winter Landscape), to Brian Fisher for his exquisite Window, a clever creation and a genuine masterpiece of symmetry, to Donald Jarvis for his flamboyant Winter Figure, and to Jack Shadbolt for his Islamic Memory, which hits the mark perfectly and is executed in the shimmering atmosphere of an oriental miniature.

To conclude this brief evaluation, it is interesting to observe the reactions of the Canadian public to this collection. Its preference goes to the hyperrealists, with Alex Colville in the lead, and we find the two Lembors, the two naive painters Arthur Villeneuve and Miyuki Tanabe and two pictures that illustrate, one about games, Louise Scott's Série des Jeux No 1 and the other the holiday atmosphere Mary Phyllis Phillips' Adam & Eve & Pinch Me. If we were to believe the old adage, "Vox populi, vox Dei," such a verdict would be painful for those critics who accept in art only the unusual or the subliminal.

Within its purposes limited framework, the Canadian painting collection gracediously put at the disposition of the public of Canada by C.I.L. has served the cause of art well in our milieu, on the one hand by encouraging our painters, on the other by causing them to be better known, not only by art lovers but also by the initiated. This is an auspicious venture that we cannot praise too much, and of which we would like to see many imitators.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

LÉON BELLEFLEUR

By Gilles DAGNEAULT

Léon Bellefleur has taken off again. The first time, it was in 1954, and he departed in the two meanings of the word: he freed himself of his influences in painting and left to accomplish a dream that was "a bit delirious", at the age of thirty: to know Paris and live in Provence. This time, it is his canvases that are leaving to earn fame real recognition for him, another major dramatic and artistic venture. "You are the one who is saying it, not I. I know that there are artists who talk very well about their painting but, even in those cases, the explanation they give carries a rational dimension that... that... in short, the painter has said everything when he has created his canvas. After that, it is the turn of the critics." However, these remarks would not prevent Bellefleur from adopting a very critical tone concerning the attitude of some commentators who do not see clearly enough the limits of his work. He recovered from three months of etching (one had to see him struggle with his old press and his ink) into the river; Bellefleur would say during the interview, "Pellan's return in 1940 was worse than yesterday's hurricane for the plastic arts!"

He has remained the same likeable man, funny and sensitive (this precious sensitivity to which he freed himself of his competition, the immensity and monotony of the prairie. Among the Ontario painters, we prefer Harold Town, the talented and versatile Toronto painter, who appears at his best in Homage to Cubism, of great finesse and artistry.

Bellevue lives in his old Canadian house near the Richelieu River (another dream that came true), where I met him. The day before, a violent storm had raged in the area and had nearly thrown his neighbour—a giant—into the river; Bellefleur would say during the interview, "Pellan's return in 1940 was worse than yesterday's hurricane for the plastic arts!"

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If a period of engravings follows the oils of 1954, it is because my adventure is enough for me. There is no doubt, however, that the Greek reality offered less serenity and balance than its art suggests.

Let us conclude by saying that Bellefleur's works reflect a dream rather than a real situation, they reach no less, on the plastic plan, undeniable fullness, wealth, and balance. "You are the one who is saying it, but I hesitate to contradict you... Let us say more exactly that I now know my craft, that there are fewer and fewer failures at that level, that I understand my art. No one is immune from the evidence of its stultification that ancient Greece was populated only by magnificent beings? There is no doubt, however, that the Greek reality offered less serenity and balance than its art suggests.

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Be that as it may, it is of no avail that Bellefleur always wants to do it as before. In engraving I can produce drawings with shades, a range of grays, blacks... If a period of engravings follows the oils of 1954, it is because my adventure is enough for me. There is no doubt, however, that the Greek reality offered less serenity and balance than its art suggests.

Between the entries from the Maritimes, we should note St. John Harbour by Bruno Bobak, artist in residence in New Brunswick famous for his panoramas of cities in the Kokoschka manner, in which we find his delightful colourist's verve. As for his wife Molly Lamb Bobak's English Beach, we see it in a litigious swimming comparable to that of the early Tofutsies but we do not rediscover in it her usual exuberance.

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(Translation by Mildred Grand)
eral of his most beautiful canvases ...

Since 1910 modern art has evolved with incredible speed. Does Bellettier accept being classified among the traditional painters? "Why not? I haven't overthrown anything. On the plastic plan my work is not revolutionary ... but I have searched the unconscious so thoroughly that it is not impossible that young people will some day follow my lead to go further than I have done.

For now, there is no need to seek young people to carry further certain aspects of Bellettier's work. He is attending to it very well himself. I am eagerly awaiting his next production.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

CLAES OLDENBURG IN TORONTO

By Roger MESLEY

In April and May 1976 the exhibition Oldenburg: Six Themes was shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The evolution of the geometric mouse, three-way plug, bag ends, clothes-pin, typewriter eraser, and standing mitt with ball handles was documented by the 317 items exhibited. Oldenburg came to Toronto for six days to oversee the exhibition's installation, to give a lecture on his work, and to attend the AGO opening. This was his first visit to Toronto since the 1967 Dine-Oldenburg-Segal exhibition. At that time, he had proposed a colossal drainpipe monument for Toronto's waterfront.

Roger Mesley - When did you first realize that the CN tower had become Toronto's colossal monument, and what was your first reaction?

Claes Oldenburg - I felt quite surprised. Sometimes I have the feeling that I'm tuned in to certain things that are going to happen, which may not be very difficult to be tuned in, but I didn't really know there was going to be a tower. I think I saw it first in an airline's magazine, or advertisement for some kind of Toronto, and I said, "My God! There it is!", you know. Actually I felt left out. I felt as if I hadn't been consulted as if I hadn't had a chance to have a separate category, like my own.

R.M. - You were in Montreal in 1967 to install your Giant Stop Fan for Expo; was there ever a proposed colossal monument for Montreal?

C.O. - . . . The fan was my version of a colossal monument. I never got into Montreal very much - I was on the island there and kept pretty occupied. It was a terrific time because it was a terrific country of contrasts, and you could go into all the exhibits just by yourself, without having to stand in line. You could ride those trains all by yourself. I think that one of the most unforgettable days of my life was the opening. It was a very brilliant day, very clear, and the Canadian planes were flying the Canadian flag.

R.M. - How did the concept of Oldenburg: Six Themes originate? (Oldenburg explained that he viewed the 1969 New York retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, the 1971 Pasadena Art Museum exhibition, and the present show as "a continuous retrospective . . . one show, six themes").

C.O. - . . . but I think the show, or shows, have been getting better, clearer. The Modern's show was just a sort of collection of things without much thought behind it . . . The Pasadena show had a point of view, showing how the object developed into the monument, and the Modern's show was different because it was organized it, is quite an intellectual. He wanted to do a thinking show about process, and I did too. That's what I've always wanted to do. The subjects have become more limited and the focus has been more and more on the thinking process. I think this is the best of the shows.

R.M. - The A.G.O.'s Henry Moore Centre likewise documents his creative process. How struck by the similarities are you?

C.O. - I've always heard about these rocks that he collects and I've always felt that that's what sculptors do - they have a museum of things which attract them in nature which become the stock that they use. But with different concepts. He is in the countryside, but it is basically, I should think, the same kind of process. You get fond of something - he's claimed, hasn't he, that he really has derived everything from those pebbles and rocks that he's so fond of - and I see that, in the same, my Mouse Museum contains almost every original object and variations of it.

R.M. - Of what significance has Moore's work been to you as a sculptor?

C.O. - I've always been aware of Moore. He's been the big sculptor, along with Calder and Picasso, and we've been aware of this man for so long; he's part of the language. When I do a lot of references to other artists and very often I feel that I make references to him - sort of unconsciously, because you've been so aware of his particular type of mass.

R.M. - Would you like an Oldenburg centre like the Henry Moore Centre in order to perpetuate the concept of process?

C.O. - Who can deny that it would be pleasant to have a place to put all your things? You'd have more room than at home. You don't take proper care of your things . . . I think that's a problem with a sculptor, especially. He gets crowded at home. You don't take proper care of your things . . . I think the (one-artist) museum is a funny old tradition that they have. I think that one of the reasons that some people like to have a separate category, where I just draw figures, is that somehow that bridges the gap. If I'm able to make references to him - I often feel that I make references to him in my work - I think this is the best of the shows.

R.M. - The human figures as such rarely appear in your work, save in the "pornographic" drawings. Why is that?

C.O. - I use the object because it's a nice free way of bridging the gap between representation and non-representation . . . It's a shame that those tendencies are separate and run in two different ways and we've been aware of this since Mondrian in the 1920's, and I see that the whole thing, the whole art of the last 40 years, has been to try and work out this problem. When I do figure drawing, rather than portrait, it's my way of getting at it more productive to sit in a room and draw. And I started to draw figures because I was alone. So that became a whole activity. I started to draw a lot of figures in a lot of hotel rooms, and finally I had a whole show and I showed it in London last November. They were portraits, but I think they were revealing . . . A lot of people gave me an argument about that, because eroticism is so personal. Nevertheless, they were figures with sexual parts doing things to another person . . . I think that the eroticism is important, because people argue about what's erotic. It's especially sensitive from a woman's point of view. Several families see something in it that isn't erotic, that they had nothing to do with, but that's just eroticism. It's very much in your own head.

R.M. - Yet both your work and your comments seem much more formal and analytical than they were at the time of the 1967 Toronto show . . .

C.O. - Well, I finally admitted that publicly. They certainly are. My tendency is, I think, to do a revisionist history - to read back into your own work and say "I was really thinking of this and that," you know; and then you need someone to straighten you out by remembering some of your earlier statements . . . It's true that that (formal and analytical) development occurred, and it probably occurs for most artists, the more they look at their work and think about it.

R.M. - There are references to Mondrian in your drawings and writings. Is your search for the ultimate basic form a spiritual quest like his?

C.O. - I'm really very interested in that basic form. I have a metaphysical streak and would like to reduce things to very simple forms. It's my way of thinking . . . I feel very happy when I go to Holland, because it's a country where everything really is reduced to vertical and horizontal. It's a very peaceful sensation. Chicago's that way too - the vertical-horizontal. I feel an affinity with that kind of thinking.

R.M. - Which is not, however, to admit that you're a Theosophist?

C.O. - Not in any formal way. It's a kind of informalized metaphysical feeling about things. I have a feeling, a sort of Platonistic notion, about the form underlying appearances, and that may be because I was at one point influenced by being raised as a Christian Scientist, and their thinking runs along that line - that appearances are just a mask.

C.O. - Well, they tend to be charged with emotion . . . In my mind, figure drawing has always been associated with the nude, and I've always accepted the nude literally. In art schools, instead of saying that this is like a statue, I've always said that this is a living person who has taken his or her clothes off and is standing in front of us. It means something; you can't ignore this. The reality of it is there, and if I'm going to make a work about that piece of this creature standing there naked. So my figures have never really been formalistic. They've been involved with the humanity, or the eroticism of the person . . . When I do figure drawings, I do them to please myself and I draw what I like to see. That's tended to be slightly erotic . . . I'm not a woman, or however I feel. But again, it's like words: since it's not my main occupation, I don't feel I have to be responsible for what I produce. I do whatever I feel like, you see - it's not my official art. It's kind of backroom stuff . . . Last summer, I started to draw in hotel rooms. I was travelling a lot, and I would be in a strange town, and rather than have all the problems of trying to find a studio, I thought it more productive to sit in a room and draw. And I started to draw figures because I was lonely. So that became a whole activity. I started to draw a lot of figures in a lot of hotel rooms, and finally I had a whole show and I showed it in London last November. They were portraits, but I think they were revealing . . . A lot of people gave me an argument about that, because eroticism is so personal. Nevertheless, they were figures with sexual parts doing things to another person . . . I think that the eroticism is important, because people argue about what's erotic. It's especially sensitive from a woman's point of view. Several families see something in it that isn't erotic, that they had nothing to do with, but that's just eroticism. It's very much in your own head.

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