

Québec, ville née d'un fleuve Quebec, a City Born of a River

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QUÉBEC, VILLE NÉE D'UN FLEUVE

Ville citadelle, Québec a été le premier bastion des traditions artistiques en Amérique. C'est elle qui donné l'essor à un art traditionnel et religieux ainsi qu'à un artisanat qui constituent aujourd'hui la richesse du patrimoine national.

Mais Québec est aussi une ville du 20^e siècle, et l'on peut à son sujet parler de la crise de l'art qui affecte les civilisations industrialisées. Hier, c'était la force tranquille d'un art régionaliste, coupé des grands courants internationaux mais personnel et vivant, chargé de symboles et bien enraciné dans la vie locale. Aujourd'hui, avec l'avènement et le règne des moyens de communication, Québec participe au destin collectif de l'art. Il faut, là comme ailleurs, regretter la perte de la fonction sociale de l'art et sa séparation du système de la culture active. Il faut aussi accepter une autre définition de l'artiste contemporain, qui tente de retrouver l'intégrité et la plénitude créatrice par le moyen de la réflexion autant que par celui de la communication. C'est un témoin des forces positives ou négatives qui sont à l'œuvre, qui réconcilient l'homme à son entourage ou qui l'entraînent vers sa perte. Dans l'art actuel, les signes que l'artiste nous transmet paraissent non familiers parce qu'ils sont des constats, des avertissements et qu'ils ont tendance à déboucher sur l'urbanisme et l'écologie. Même la critique en est perturbée, qui doit de plus en plus transformer ses perspectives et tenir compte des sciences modernes et compréhensives, comme l'anthropologie.

En étudiant bien sommairement — il faut le regretter — ce phénomène du développement artistique actuel dans un lieu concentré comme la ville de Québec, deux choses semblent évidentes: la transformation rapide d'un foyer de civilisation traditionnelle et conservateur en une jeune capitale dynamique, avec le cortège de traumatismes que cela entraîne et l'activité artistique qu'on y trouve, dépourvue d'uniformité, bien informée de tous les courants de pensée, affichant des différences marquées dans ses modes d'expression et agissant comme tremplin vers l'avenir.

Le professeur Laurier Lacroix, coordonnateur du cahier sur le Québec actuel, prépare une thèse sur la nature de la Collection Desjardins et sur ses influences. Il est donc particulièrement sensible à cette transmission entre le Québec d'hier et celui d'aujourd'hui. Je le remercie de sa généreuse collaboration et je remercie également tous les amis et collaborateurs qui nous ont aidé à préparer les pages qui suivent.

Andrée PARADIS

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TEXTS IN ENGLISH

MODERN-DAY QUEBEC

By Laurier LACROIX

"(. . .) I found at Quebec what is always to be found there, a situation perhaps unique in the world: points of view diversified almost to infinity and always enchanting; extensive plains, mountain chains, high capes, a very large island with varied picturesque sites; our beautiful river seen in different directions, seeming to double and triple itself for the pleasure of the spectator, and, as if to enlarge itself more, receiving the St. Charles River with its large mouth, and farther, but in opposite directions, the Montmorency and the Chaudière. (. . .) At distances more or less great, pleasantly situated churches and villages offer charming sights, particularly in summer.

Passing from topography to architecture, from nature to art, I noticed in Quebec this last time just as before a marvelous diversity in the alignment or direction of the streets and the public squares; an astonishing variety in the site, the position and the structure of public and private buildings. (. . .) But what I found the most pleasing in Quebec, the most comfortable, especially for a stranger, was the friendly, gracious bearing of its worthy inhabitants, in a word, French refinement and courtesy. On this point Quebec is the Paris of America."

After more than a hundred thirty years, how should one not agree with the writer of the *Encyclopédie Canadienne*, Michel Bibaud, when the geographical location, the architecture and the warm courtesy one meets in Quebec remain exceptional? Is this to say that nothing changes in Quebec and that this city still presents only the attractive and antiquated face of a French town that stopped living at the end of the eighteenth century? We do not believe so. It is with the desire to rediscover and redefine it that this section is planned.

To begin with, what seems the most evident is the change in purpose of the city, a new orientation of its function, which has altered its silhouette. Quebec is no longer only the tourist city dominated by the Château Frontenac; it has become an administrative capital where the parliamentary city, convention centres and highways have been developed.

The city has made room for one of the chief functions of its dwellers, the civil service, and has created the facilities which, by their location and their structure, have relegated tourism to a limited sector: inside the walls. This is why we wanted to devote an important part of this issue to the physical aspect of the city, its town-planning, its architecture, its restoration. The study of the distribution of the population and the urban appearance it has adopted is a preliminary to the knowledge of the architectural phenomena that are being developed. In a parallel fashion to the locating of new buildings, citizens' movements seem to be arising and these people wish to have their say in the defining of this new face. Thus we shall find here the testimony of a ward trying to preserve its identity while doing its own restoration. A wild, parallel restoration, when compared to the big projects which are being carried on now in this same city: Place Royale, Artillery Park.

To adequately discuss the plastic arts in Quebec among the young creators would oblige us to have a double issue at our disposi-

tion, so many and so prolific are the trends and expressions we have encountered there, on the level of well-informed as well as common expression. And so we ought to find in these pages, beside an article on Marie Laberge, a report on a workshop for the decoration of motorcycles, as well as an analysis of the work of sculptors Marcel Saint-Jean and Richard Sainte-Marie, but also of the whittlers of the surrounding area. But we are touching on a problem which I only mention: that of the difficulty of recruiting writers, journalists or art historians who accept the adventure of defining a new work and translating it into words. Thanks are due for their cooperation to those who have defined the cultural portrait that we offer of Quebec.

This first look at the Quebec of the visual arts already reveals a part of its wealth: the work of young creators who reflect and act on art in different directions. There come to mind Jocelyne Allouche's poetic redefinition of the tridimensional work, Mill's or Asselin's structural research, Marius Dubois' subjective figurations, Michel Champagne's political lyricism, Antoine Dumas' observations. As if Quebec, cross-roads of space and contemporary times at the same moment, were pondering the trends of current art and were supplying already ripe proposals.

In this region, tapestry also finds its most sensitive creators. The beauty of textures and a quality of light due to special climatic conditions are to be found in the productions of the weavers who have been practising their art for generations.

Finally, we offer a working tool which will allow the reader of *Vie des Arts* to make his own discoveries: a comprehensive view of the visual art galleries in Quebec and a report-reflection on the Quebec Museum. Many young artists are not represented there yet, but the dynamism of cultural educators, as well as the quality of the productions at the Visual Arts School of Laval University, permit us to hope that the long tradition of creation in the city of Quebec will carry on.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

QUEBEC CITY SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPACE AND ARCHITECTURE

By Pierre MORISSET

By reason of its history, its architecture, its geography and the homogeneity of its population, Quebec would be a city unique in North America. We have always been told this, as if it were a matter of a city for sale. This is all true for anyone who is seeking what distinguishes Quebec. But upon analysis we find in Quebec a different combination of universal elements, which, above all, makes it a city among others, a geographical space arranged to shelter and group men, whose plots of land are distributed according to a fierce struggle disguised by the sophisticated nature of the weapons used. Who makes the city? For whom? How is the space shared? Who is going where?

Quebec is a city built on two levels. An upper plateau surrounded by cliffs on three sides, dominating the river on the south for the pleasure of the view and, on the north, the working-

QUEBEC, A CITY BORN OF A RIVER

By Andrée PARADIS

A citadel city, Quebec was the first stronghold of artistic traditions in America. It was this city that gave full scope to traditional and religious art as well as to craftsmanship, which today constitute the wealth of the national heritage.

But Quebec is also a city of the twentieth century, and in this regard one can speak of the crisis in art that affects industrialized civilizations. Yesterday, it had the quiet strength of a regional art, intersected by great international currents, but personal and alive, laden with symbols and well rooted in local life. To-day, with the advent and the predominance of the means of communication, Quebec shares in the collective fate of art. One ought, here as elsewhere, to regret the loss of the social function of art and its separation from the system of active culture. One ought also to accept another definition of the contemporary artist who tries to rediscover integrity and creative fulness through reflection as much as through communication. This city stands as a testimony of the positive or negative forces at work that reconcile man with his environment or sweep him along to his ruin. In current art, the signs conveyed to us by the artist seem unfamiliar because they are established facts or warnings and because they tend to lead to urbanism and ecology. Even criticism is troubled by this, criticism that should more and more change its perspectives and take into consideration modern, comprehensive sciences, such as anthropology.

In a regrettably very hasty study of this phenomenon of current artistic development in a concentrated place like Quebec City, two things seem obvious: the rapid transformation of a centre of traditional and conservative civilization into a young, dynamic capital, with the train of traumas that this entails and the artistic activity to be found, deprived of uniformity, well informed on all currents of thought, displaying marked differences in its modes of expression and acting as stepping stone to the future.

Professor Laurier Lacroix, coordinator of the section on present-day Quebec, is preparing a thesis on the nature of the Desjardins Collection and its influences. He is, therefore, particularly sensitive to this transition between the Quebec of yesterday and that of to-day. I wish to offer him my gratitude for his generous collaboration and I also thank all the friends and contributors who have helped us to prepare the following articles.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)