Une topologie mentale de l’objet
A Mental Topology of the Subject

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L'été dernier, j'ai rencontré Jocelyne Alloucherie dans son atelier de l'avenue Charles, à Québec. Voici quel fut notre entretien.

Jocelyne Alloucherie - Ce n'est jamais vraiment du pur dessin ... de la pure sculpture ... Ce n'est jamais vraiment de la peinture ... Un objet me suggère un dessin, une surface; on peut me ramener à l'objet encore. Je n'essaie pas de me situer dans les définitions traditionnelles de peinture, de sculpture, de dessin; c'est la notion de lieu qui m'intéresse, le plein espace, multidirectionnel et signifiant à des degrés divers; c'est pourquoi je veux rester ouverte et disponible à toutes ses conventions. Par l'esprit, du moins, mon activité rejoint l'architecture.

Pierre Hamelin - Et l'art, en général, en tant qu'activité qu'en pensez-vous?

Jocelyne Alloucherie - Ce n'est jamais vraiment du pur dessin ... de la pure sculpture ... Ce n'est jamais vraiment de la peinture ... Un objet me suggère un dessin, une surface; on peut me ramener à l'objet encore. Je n'essaie pas de me situer dans les définitions traditionnelles de peinture, de sculpture, de dessin; c'est la notion de lieu qui m'intéresse, le plein espace, multidirectionnel et signifiant à des degrés divers; c'est pourquoi je veux rester ouverte et disponible à toutes ses conventions. Par l'esprit, du moins, mon activité rejoint l'architecture.

Pierre Hamelin - Et la surréalité, au sens d'André Breton?

Jocelyne Alloucherie - Non, à mon sens! Par l'immanence et au-delà. Peut-on vraiment savoir, maintenant, le sens où l'entendait Breton? Le drame, c'est qu'il y a l'histoire; la chance aussi, paradoxalement. Que serions-nous sans mémoire? Et que sommes-nous, vivant sur une mémoire collective faussée? Je me tais sur ces questions!

Je ne voudrais pas qu'on m'accuse d'avoir plagiaré Gauguin ...

Pierre Hamelin - Si on veut. Mais elles ne sont ni d'ordre formel, ni de type conceptuel. Elles s'opèrent dans le temps et peuvent être comprises à partir d'une mémoire de l'objet. J'appelle cela une topologie mentale de l'objet.

Pierre Hamelin - Nous sommes loin de la stylisation. Est-ce que cela ne touche pas à la transformation esthétique de Théo van Doesburg ou des néo-plasticiens?


Pierre Hamelin - Je constate dans vos travaux un aspect farouche, sauvage, comme si vous vouliez approviser le réel. Seriez-vous attirée par un certain primitivisme?

Jocelyne Alloucherie - Plutôt une tentative pour une manière d'être plus fondamentale; une volonté de rompre la dissociation objet-sujet.

Pierre Hamelin - Comme lorsque le primitif porte le masque de l'animal, il devient, il est l'animal.

Jocelyne Alloucherie - C'est en ce sens que je dis que l'artificiel rejoint le naturel. Dans le théâtre nô, c'est cette qualité globale qui est recherchée par le comédien.

Pierre Hamelin - J'ai remarqué que vous démontiez vos pièces et que vous les reconstituez en tenant compte du lieu, de l'espace. Vos objets ne sont pas fixes, leur arrangement peut varier.  

Jocelyne Alloucherie - Je pense d'abord à l'art en termes de lieu plutôt qu'en termes d'objets. Un lieu physique et mental. En fait, ce n'est pas l'objet qu'il faut d'abord, à tout prix, incessamment renouveler. On tombe vite dans le gadget. C'est la relation objet-sujet qu'il faut recréer; les formes, par la suite, se régénèrent d'elles-mêmes.
1. Sans titre.
(Phot. Jean Payette)

2. Sans titre.
(Phot. Jean Payette)

3. Jocelyne ALLOUCHERIE
Environnement.
(Phot. Musée du Québec)

English Translation, p. 105
forms of activity are more centred on the collective good than on that of the individual.

From the point of view of urban form, each building should first serve the urban ensemble, just as from the point of view of social form, each individual should first act for the good of the ensemble, thanks to a much stronger social conscience, in more appropriate politico-economic structures.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE REMAKING OF A WARD

By Reynald and René GADOURY

Reynald and René Gadoury describe the development of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste ward and suggests means of giving this part of the city back to its inhabitants. It was in this ward that Jetsun's engraving workshop, L'Atelier de Réalisations Graphiques, was established; it is here also that the Saint-Jean-Baptiste ward is the suburb to the town and a theatre has its creative studios in this ward.

The modern city, that of bungalows, shopping centres, industrial parks, highways and big complexes, leaves little room for the local life of the district. Time, which mellowed Old Quebec and the suburbs of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Saint-Roch and Saint-Sauveur, no longer has the same rhythm. The models that shaped the old town and Montcalm wards are no longer to be found in the Sainte-Foy or Charlesbourg suburbs. The new order has dictated the final solution to this old heart of Quebec: an enormous administrative block in Upper Town, a commercial zone in Lower Town, an historical sector for tourists, and highways to tie it all together. So Quebec's centre will now have to exist like modern style cities. However, the diversity of milieux is an original characteristic of this city. Everything is to be found here, including the richness of architecture. We ought, therefore, to expect that this wealth should be preserved for the well-being of the citizens, and that the ward should be remade.

One ward of Quebec, the Saint-Jean-Baptiste, had 25,000 inhabitants a few years ago. At its centre, it contained a virus, indeed a cancer-producing cell: the parliamentary city. This virus, fed by government budgets and capitalist investments, caused a serious illness. Charlottetown and Montcalm wards then died. Parliament Hill was attacked as gangrenous. Great destruction took place: 1200 dwellings destroyed, connecting roads, office buildings, hotels, luxury apartments, parking lots added.

Then, all around, was to be seen decay, criminal arson and the insecurity of the home. We must redo connections and links with the cut-off parts. We have to join the suburb to the town and allow the passageways for pedestrians to become continuous from one place to another. Let us return to St. John St., its status as The Street of Quebec, the street unique in this country, the street that restores Quebec's pleasures to us, that lets us discover the thousand and one colours of Quebec culture and life.

The suburb ought to be connected again and linked to its southern part, Parliament Hill and the Plains of Abraham. So little is needed, just to redo connections and links, and the government has invested in the area to build towers and parking lots.

It is necessary to remake the texture of the ward that was created by the people who lived in the city and made it theirs, and we must avoid falling into the complacency of the renovator, or the administrator of funds for renovation who superimposes on the old web of the city a modern fabric of the fifties in which a downtown area, a central hub, absolutely must be established; and in this centre — this is the town-planner's rule — hotels, rooms one below the other, shops because the rooms exist and, in these boutiques, clients from the hotel who buy souvenirs and old things; restaurants, banquet and convention halls because there are rooms where the members of a convention can stay.

Why destroy a residential fabric made with man and family in mind; a texture that, daily renewed, would offer the life of the Quebecer to people, with its children and its old folks, the Queen's Road and its restaurants, its boutiques, its commercial establishments, the Quebecer's rhythm, with its moods, its streets for walking and its cautious cars? We know that capitalism always prevails over it, but the need to compete, to be bigger and stronger, can belong only to the doers and not to generators of life.

The ward's fabric of life must be reinvented and services must be allowed to be set up in the residential area and bring to it an activity of work, of interest in work and daily life, a rhythm appropriate to people disturbed in their space, their mood, their season, their movement, in order that they stand fast and do what they must.

It is necessary to reinvent the suburb's range of activities by complementary equipment, rejuvenated equipment, to keep and increase the number of families in the ward, to allow senior citizens to live out their time in their milieu among the things they love.

The ward ought also to be carried on in experiment where the ends of streets would be closed off to return them to pedestrians and to nature, where unessential traffic would be slowed, turned away and discouraged, where spaces would be animated by sand or greenery, where walls and back yards would be revitalized by colour, where public trails and pedestrian roads would be opened, where the experiments in renovation would become creation and the administrator, an inventor.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

A MENTAL TOPOLOGY OF THE OBJECT

By Pierre HAMELIN

Last year I visited Jocelyne Alloucherie in her studio on Charles Ave. in Quebec. Our interview follows:

Jocelyne Alloucherie — It is never really pure drawing, ... pure sculpture, ... It is never really painting, ... An object suggests a drawing to me, a surface; I can be brought back to the object again. I don't try to locate myself in traditional definitions of painting, sculpture, drawing; it is the idea of place that interests me, a surface; I can be brought back to the object, to the idea of place again. The object again. I don't try to locate myself in traditional definitions of painting, sculpture, drawing; it is the idea of place that interests me.

J.A. — A way of seizing reality, of drawing knowledge from it and of expressing it. It is the term "knowledge" that takes on a much greater meaning here; it contains the desire to converse pre-existing ideas and the aspiration to the extraordinary. Reality ... It is a matter of a reality that has the quality of a dream. One might better say surrealism.

P.H. — Surrealism, according to André Breton?

J.A. — No, according to me! Through subjectivity and beyond. Can we really know now the sense in which Breton understood it? The dramatic part of this is that there is history; chance too, paradoxically. What would we be without
The real in relation to subjectivity. Is this a question of personal expression?

JA. — Art is obviously not only a matter of personal expression. It is an adventure of a sensitive kind at the same time as intellectual, an inclusive step. If it were only a question of expressing oneself, there are more effective methods. It is true that it is recognized as more proper for each to go with his small spatalia of pretty little colours and settle everywhere in the finest hour of the automatists! Each one expresses himself, that’s reassuring, and let the middle class bless you!

PH. — Aren’t we, then, coming closer to the idea of science?

JA. — Knowledge, science, learning ... Originally, arts meant knowledge.

PH. — Let us come back to your works. How are they developed?

JA. — I become astonished in the face of the structure of certain natural elements; notice that I am not the first. These are usually stones, of which I study the quality that I integrate into a system of artificial organization. This first translation system is never really abstract; its structure remains very dependent on the properties inherent in the object. On this second quality, varied readaptations build up; a model from a model from a model...

PH. — Would these be variations of the same object?

JA. — If desired. But they are neither of formal nor of conceptual type. They come about with time and can be understood from a memory of the object. I call this a mental topography of the object.

PH. — We are far from stylization. Is this not related to the aesthetic transformation of Théo van Doesburg or the neoplasticisms?

JA. — Van Doesburg? Mechanical and linear. I work in mosaic, with collages.

PH. — I see in your works a fierce, savage aspect, as if you wished to tame reality. Are you attracted by a certain primitivism?

JA. — I am tempted toward a way of being that is more fundamental; a wish to disrupt the object-subject dissociation.

PH. — As when the primitive wears the mask of the animal, it becomes, it is the animal.

JA. — It is in this sense that I say the artifact catches up with the natural. In the N5 theatre, this is an inclusive quality that is sought by the comedian.

PH. — I have noticed that you dismantled your works and set them up again with attention to place and space. Your objects are not fixed: their arrangement can vary.

JA. — I think first of art in terms of place rather than in terms of object. A physical and mental place, it is not the object that must first, at all costs, be renewed incessantly. The one does not quickly into goutte, it is the object-subject relationship that must be recreated; afterwards, forms regenerate by themselves.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

MICHEL CHAMPAGNE

By Jean TOURANGEAU

The first works to which Michel Champagne devoted himself from 1957 come out of chromatic and structural principles which would later establish the origin of his work. Thus the inks he created from 1960 to 1962 are still-lifes, simple vases set on a horizontal surface that the flowers interrupt, since they cause a great weight that I cut off the centre by the vertical lines they subtend. From 1962 to 1965 he would expand the subject of still-lifes to fruits, to jugs and to various objects in a composition without any other matter but a surface that simulated depth and the structure of the elements and the construction of the picture at the same time on the objects and the background. These are the shadows and the transparencies which make us perceive that the artist wishes to go beyond simple figuration while revealing how life hides behind its materiality.

After leaving the Beaux-Arts, he would refuse its rules, which would lead him to liberty of execution, to abstract attempts. The result he gave us (1965-1966) is distinguished by a tridimensional composition; white spaces textured by a concrete material (sand) and placed on a monochrome black background, illuminated in its turn by spots of colour whose arrangement is governed by the internal movement of the picture. The succeeding stage (1965-1970) is transfigured by the white, but remains dominated by the forces of forces that balance according to planes governed by a spontaneous trajectory; the work consists of an idea and a perception of significance. The outlines of paint and the sand painted white are covered with colours mixed with a varnish superimposed with an intermediary fluidity, as if the texture brought the contours into being as the eyes receive the light.

The most productive period, however, is the one from 1970 to 1975. Champagne's writing building up from a diversification of colours and non-colours, of small and large flat tints which are freed according to their arrangement, shows the same nature as the variations of this pulsation. The idea-synthesis of this pictorial language would be summed up by the structuralization of blocks of colour, a spatial organization in which are developed the base elements of this gravitation whose mass is conveyed by the brush stroke and the tiny charges, the latter being the prelude to the 'savage impulse', as if the painter perceived the outlines of paint and the sand painted white are covered with colours mixed with a varnish superimposed with an intermediary fluidity, as if the texture brought the contours into being as the eyes receive the light.

The explosive gesture, as if the painter wished to preserve only the sign of the object, A poetical sensation, a power of expression, dynamism and mystery, so many passages under the Tropics, the picture melted, melting, the writing of the gesture.

From that time Champagne reinvented a language of objects in space, not in its classic nature but in a dialectic whose choice would be instantaneousness, determinism that takes precedence over the possible. In this vein, Anthr (two silk-screens, one lithograph) takes in this savage impulse, as if the painter perceived it for the first time through the mirror that is his mirror, his mirror of signs, of which the two components, object and subject, fit one within the other under the evocative image of its emblem.

The explosion of this writing would lead the creator to produce Suite Queen Mary, a group of pictures that comes forth through the material upon which it is superimposed, diagrams of a personal grammar lived through a trellis of a social fabric that it would reveal little by little.

The support used — or the sign — is not the canvas, but a piece of masonite almost completely painted black, with a frame also black and a white mat repeating the limits of the border space of the surface that the painter intended to explore (these frames would change completely).

The first picture, whose title is Une reine ou une queen, does in fact show a queen, a photographic portrait placed in the centre of a frame whose moulding of wrought gold symbolizes wealth and the importance given to it by society, at the same time as it symbolizes the personalization of an institution fixed here by the artist and which he brings forth for this same society. The two components, object and subject, fit one within the other under the evocative image of its emblem.

It is no longer a matter of identification or of idea-forming, but of a will that emerges on action, on its personal and total challenge. The