Vie des Arts

Texts in English

Volume 27, numéro 110, mars–avril–mai 1983

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/58944ac

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Éditeur(s)
La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN
0042-5435 (imprimé)
1923-3183 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article
we have worked with the writer, the art critic and
sion of the human experience that is the appre­
conceived our
having emphasized that periodicals like ours are
contains. Having lived the adventure of the spe­
cerned with some of the recommendations it
held our attention, our magazine being  con­
reinforce the idea that the pursuit of any objective
above the fact that, in spite of the cultural explosion of the recent years, real
interest in culture is penetrating only slowly into the different strata of the population. Much
remains to be done and, in what concerns periodi­
cals, the means to do it will depend on strategies
which, we hope, will be established in the spirit of the policies proposed for the publishing of books.
Acting through the Canada Arts Council, the
government has strongly supported the publication of periodicals. This is a fundamental
aid without which most specialized publications
could not exist. But, in order to obtain better
results, it is necessary to inject stimulants. After
recommending to the authorities that they should
give more attention to periodicals which, in gen­
eral, create a sense of belonging among readers with
the same interests, the Committee makes the following recommendation. The Federal
Government should enable its commitment of support for Canadian magazines through both
the Canada Council and the Department of Communication. The Council should establish
a two-pronged system of grants based on the twin elements of content and design. In
implanting the recent subsidy program already outlined for book publishing.
The launching of a program of economic ex­
pansion for periodicals is awaited. This would
save many and not only would encourage distri­ution on a larger scale but it would assure more
diffusion for art and creator; it would also prolong
the immense efforts to increase the exposure of
all arts and would give rise to a new period of expres­
sion.
Finally, during the year we intend to present
commentaries on the recommendations dealing
with visual arts and contemporary applied arts,
as well as on those concerning our heritage.

Virulent criticism—some of which, doubtless,
is justified—has attacked the report since it was
issued. This is certainly not the work of reflection
on our cultural problems that we expected, but in
it, containing a compilation of facts and recom­
1. Peter WALKER
Untitled.
Fibreglass; 1 m 82 x 3.96 x 4.26
modern art in our museums and galleries, the
day to day existence of an artist working and
living in the Maritimes is a Spartan and emotion­
ally battering experience. The sensuous is sus­
pect. The connections between the eye and the
mind are for the most part utilitarian. Sex is an
activity confined to the bed, art to galleries. If
the galleries don't use your art it doesn't exist; a
catch-22 existence, an engorged phallus in a
vise.

Peter is a builder and manipulator of objects
and materials close to hand. Many of his fib­
glass pieces grow organically from castings he
has taken from objects as diverse as a plastic
beach ball and a Catholic monstrance. His com­
pulsion to build extends to wonderful play­
grounds that can be found swarming with kids in
B.C., Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and Newfoundland. A
few years back, in a marathon of maple manipu­
ation, he completed all the furniture for a St.
John's restaurant: from design work to com­
pleted installation in a couple of short months. In
Nova Scotia he built several beautiful and func­
tional kayaks using fiberglass and methodolo­
gies similar to those for building his sculpture.
He built his own studio-house in the woods of
Nova Scotia.

Peter came east from Vancouver through his
town of Cayley, Alberta to St. John's, Nfld.
on a bicycle in 1970. He settled here for a short
time and completed a large fiberglass sculpture
for the Arts and Culture Centre grounds. He
worked as a part-time fisherman here and as a
carrot digger in P.E.I. before restlessly moving
on to Nova Scotia trying to find a home for himself
and his work. The last couple of years he has spent
here in St. John's.

Peter's formal training was in art schools in
Calgary and Vancouver, where most of his study
was centered on commercial and graphic arts.
His sculptural interests started in Vancouver just
prior to his 1970 trip to St. John's.

Physical and intellectual restlessness are
strong characteristics of Peter and are mirrored
in an art that is full of surprises. His is an urban
art, an extension of the art of Brancusi and David
Smith. I get a shock when I remind myself that
this art is thirty to eighty years old; ancient history,
art from the Stone Age. Peter's art shows us
there are still stones unturned.

Peter's work is, however, well off the beaten
path of maritime concerns with the exterior en­
vironment, which goes a long way toward ex­
plaining the neglect his art has suffered. A great
sadness for me and a tragedy for this society now
and in the future is to watch a resource like Peter
Walker year after year shriveled up the energy
and materials to bring to completion his ideas gather­
ing dust in rooms and barns all over the
Maritimes. From this lack of funds his work for the
past few years has been confined to drawing and,
 lately, printmaking.

Peter's sculpture grows out of his incessant
drawing and vice-versa. I have a vision of Peter
years from now tunnelling through tons of draw­
ings trying to find his last cup of tea. Most of
Peter's invention happens in the drawings, many
of which are elegant and complete works intheir
own right.

"I like, therefore I am," a typical Peter-pun, says
a lot about the nature of the man; the ideal torture
for Peter would be to lock him up and throw away
the pencil. That Peter continues to pour out his
ideas in these drawings and prints is amazing to
me, a testimony to his courage in the face of an
essentially blind and cautious society.
phesized by cornices with draw drapery of large-scaled stylized floral patterns, installed over draw casement or sheer undercurtains.

Consoles and coffee table bases were sculptural 'free-form' designs with glass tops, which contrasted to the set-back bases of cabinets. Layered and stacked furniture of the 1930's influenced by Aztec-Mayan architecture continued into the 1940's. Gauvreau's office desk, probably designed in the early 40's, now in the office of Andrée Paradis of Vie des Arts, was modelled on the semi-circular hunt-table. The desk has hinged cabinet bases which pivoted, a device seen in cabinetry designs of Eileen Gray (1879-1976) in the Salons of 1923.

In 1945 a four-year ceramics program which had originated at the École des Beaux-Arts ten years earlier was transferred to École du Meuble, and a four-year weaving course began in 1948.

To elevate student taste, and for construction studies, Gauvreau installed a museum in the premises. Gauvreau purchased furniture and decorative art as prototypes for students to copy. Period furniture, often copies, was obtained by acquisition, and Quebec traditional art was collected. Original Art Déco furniture or decorative art objects were prohibitively expensive to purchase for teaching purposes, so student works were of necessity copied from magazines.

From the late 1940's, the clean lines and spare forms of furniture of Scandinavian design influenced contemporary furniture at École du Meuble. By the early 1950's, low, armless mattresses on day beds on metal or wood frames, long, low benches with detachable seat pads, and coffee tables with legs set at angles to the bases, were being produced at the school. The industrial aesthetic and use of metal tubing, taught in the school's metal shop, brought Art Moderne concepts to the student repertoire.

In 1958 École du Meuble moved to the Montreal Polytechnic School on St. Denis just north of St. Catherine, and became the Applied Arts Institute, which came under the jurisdiction of the CEGEP of Old Montreal in 1966. Gauvreau and his associates' designs at École du Meuble utilizing hand-crafted cabinetry can be interpreted as a swansong for an era for those romantic concepts personified by devotion to traditional craftsmanship. The trend to Art Moderne gained ground in the commercial sector and art goods began even more strongly to service the masses.

3. Michel PICOTTE
Aubace, 1976
Acrylic on canvas; 76 cm x 76,2.
(Phot. A. Kibertus)

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Michel PICOTTE: URBAN LANDSCAPES
By WARREN SANDERSON

Expressive at times but not Expressionist, and more rooted in the old Bauhaus tradition than in any "New Wave," Michel Picotte's pathway has been consistent since he took his baccalauréat in painting in 1974 at UQAM. A Montreal painter without the slightest interest in partaking of the fashionable new, his periods in landscape, a subject favoured from the outset in Canada. In a rich development Picotte takes landscape out of the confines of its earlier origins to infuse within it his own self and his environment. Picotte's "New Landscape" brings a venerable, academically-oriented genre into the midst of the twentieth century, qualifying, transmuting and renewing it with his particular artistic vision.

His early efforts were almost immediately rewarded in 1974, earning for him the then coveted Prix du Québec in painting as well as entrance as a printmaker into the prestigious Basle Art Fair. Superpositioned rectangular fields with pronounced colouristic differences were painted very flatly upon acrylic metallic-based canvases, so that the central horizontal zone would appear to recede from the areas above and beneath it. The resultant spatial impression was furthered by roughened contours that were accomplished by laying down acrylic emulsions with a sponge. Clouds come to mind with these contours, and occasionally a small tree motif was included. Thus, the stark, direct quality of colour and form treated as related but abstract elements in these canvases was relieved by reference to the natural world. By the summer of 1974 Picotte had left Montreal to reside at St. Hilaire on the Richelieu River. He remained active there until 1979.

Employing only minimal references to nature, his concern with capturing the physical reality of space by means of colour juxtapositions and textural differentiations led Picotte to a breakthrough in 1977. The word "breakthrough" is particularly appropriate here, since his canvases became shaped, three-dimensional entities with deep, rectangular and oblong recesses. In these paintings he carried further, in effect, what had been only suggested upon flat surfaces by others such as Michael Snow (Red Square, 1960; Toronto Dominion Bank, Toronto) and Josef Albers (Homage to the Square series, late 50's and 60's). Virtually the same colours appeared upon the shaped surface of the canvas and within its recesses. These hues, however, would be seen necessarily under different conditions of lighting and would be modified by changes in viewing distances. The forms of the recesses became the determinants of the directions that a suddenly surprising broad brushwork took as it played over and within the painting. This was a kind of "pop" diversion for Picotte, an effort to touch directly upon the chords of light and space that are usually handled illusionistically. After some few such explorations, he turned away altogether from his previously rather rigid geometric inventions toward a more poetic mode.

This direction had been prepared since the summer of 1974, when he undertook a sustained series of carefully finished drawings with coloured pencils, a series that still continues to-day.
These works on paper constitute for him the bank of ideas that others might have begun by recording in a sketchbook. Soon the flat colours of his early acrylic panels were replaced by much more varied and subtle studies of the values and intensities of some few hues. Controlling his textures so that they remained relatively uniform, colour areas faded agreeably into one another and then into the air. In so doing, the manner of movement and continuity seemed intertwined. The notion of colour itself as a dynamic, organically transmuting, unifying element was elaborated in landscapes that reflected an almost mystical atmosphere. In some, parts of the paper were set aflame briefly to gain particular colouristic effects; and perhaps two or three such varied and subtle studies of the values and intensities of some few hues may best be taken as an horizon, are very brief and delicate gestures of pen or brush, gestures that describe beings floating between Eastern calligraphy and some strangely organic creatures of the mind's eye. Despite vague inspiration from Jack Chambers (Victoria Hospital, 1970, was known to Picotte) and perhaps from Ted Godwin (G. Corners, 1964, with similarly diffusely, colur combinations), the final work with which to place perhaps two or three of Picotte's works is that imaginary world described during the early forties by such artists as Tanguy, Matta, and Max Ernst. The small-scaled graphic rhythms within the spacious realms of Picotte's paintings and drawings are being dredged up effortlessly from his subconscious imagination. His art, then, may be considered as a poetic reinterpretation of an earlier descriptive surrealism, whether or not that approach was intentional on his part.

Toward the end of 1978 Picotte's landscapes are broken by empty horizontal and vertical margins that are continuous with the empty margins of the four sides of the painting. An element of ambivalence is introduced and is repeated in many of his works to this day. In such works we may perceive either a continuous vista as if seen through windows within the canvas or the paper surface, or a series of closely related paintings upon a single surface. In some works clouds appear to drift by from one frame into the next, perhaps changing in value and intensity of colour; or waves may be seen in the same manner, again changing in their colouristic aspects. One notices after a while that the artist often plays against continuity and spatial unity by treating each framed section as an almost independent colour composition: colour effects are treated as variations upon the landscape theme.

Within his self-imposed formats, Picotte's changing environment has had its effects. Take, for instance, the work that he accomplished while residing in Italy from the summer of 1981 to the latter part of January, 1982. Colours much hotter than before come into play in extraordinarily sensitive juxtapositions and transitions. An aspect of linear sequence seen previously rather infrequently is strengthened. Acidly clear, thin horizontal lines are positioned in frequencies that reinforce colour sequences. Whether in ink, colour, or simply a rapturie, these provide a new rhythmic vitality that recalls some hard-edge paintings by Kenneth Noland such as Graded Exposure (1967, private collection, Chicago). In the drawings this is combined with a sensitive feeling for texture recognizable in his arrangements of parallel pencil markings, and his uses of fixative to heighten surface contrasts.

Since returning to Montreal early in 1982, Michel Picotte's landscape art has proceeded through soliloquies upon remembrances of Italy to reflect the energies of Montreal's urban environment in a new sense of "mindscapes." Michel Picotte seems to have come to terms with his particular artistic sensibility when he replaced the idiosyncratic creatures and jottings of his surrealistic evocations with the elegance of undulating cloud and wave motifs that grew out of his Italian scium. Landscape became seascape and both became mindscapes. The innate calm strength of his vision continues to develop now in symbiosis with the city.

La réputation de Francine Gravel comme graveur en creux n'est plus à faire. "J'ai eu comme professeur Albert Dumouchel, dit-elle, et j'appris toutes les techniques de la gravure. J'adore l'eau-forte et j'adore les textures," combinant la pointe sèche, le mezzotint et la gravure, elle utilise souvent deux et quelques morceaux de couleurs sur la plaque. "Moi, ajoute-t-elle, pour moi, une gravure est avant tout du noir et du blanc, que je traduis ensuite en tons. Dumouchel m'a influencé pour ce qui est de la gradation des tons." Les gravures et les aquarelles de Francine Gravel traitent des mêmes thèmes que ses peintures. Bien que les couleurs n'y soient pas aussi denses, aussi sombres et aussi diversifiées, les personnages de Gravel y conservent un regard introspectif, précupé. L'artiste ne rend pas la profondeur à la façon classique. Au contraire, comme dans l'eau-forte Tarentelle, par exemple, son personnage principal évoque, par son échelle, les personnages d'arrière-plan, proportionnellement beaucoup plus petits.

Qu'il s'agisse de peintures à l'huile, d'aquarelles ou de gravures en creux, les ouvrages de Gravel dégagent une atmosphère, une impression unique. Elles montrent des affinités avec l'art du passé, tout en se rattachant à la société contemporaine.