

Philippe Lacelin-Bellefleur: The Whims of Chance and the Good Fortunes of the Artist

Le pouvoir de l'imprévisible, Galerie des arts contemporains, Artshowcase@videotron.ca, From 22 October to 3 November 2009

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PHILIPPE LACELIN-BELLEFLEUR

THE WHIMS OF CHANCE AND THE GOOD FORTUNES OF THE ARTIST

By Bernard Lévy

Translation : Oliver Haeffely

BY GATHERING TOGETHER ABOUT 30 OF HIS RECENT PAINTINGS UNDER THE TITLE OF *LE POUVOIR DE L'IMPRÉVISIBLE* (THE POWER OF UNPREDICTABILITY), PHILIPPE LACELIN-BELLEFLEUR UPDATES A THEME DEAR TO SURREALISTS. HOWEVER, WITH A SENSIBILITY THAT IS ALL HIS OWN AND A PICTORIAL TREATMENT APPROPRIATE TO THE PRESENT, HE SHOWS THAT THE NOT SO INCONSIDERABLE PROPORTION OF CHANCE, (THE UNPREDICTABLE), DEALT WITH BY HIS INTERVENTIONS, GIVES HIS IMAGES THE EMOTIONAL CHARGE THAT INVESTS THEM WITH THEIR DURABLE EFFECT. IN OTHER WORDS, THEIR VALUE AS WORKS OF ART.

There are scenes in the painting by Philippe Lacelin-Bellefleur that enliven a dramatic act much like that evoked by a theater within a theater or, from a literary perspective, the accounts parallel to the central narrative framework. His paintings call for a *perusal*, which is precisely the artist's intention.

Lacelin-Bellefleur resorts to the superimposition of shots — now dissolving one into the other, now competing with each other. In *Le pouvoir de l'imprévisible* or in *Les griffes du vent* (2009) for example, subtle transparent films, translucent or partially opaque, give the paintings their profound effect. The eye sees as if in an underground cave, an aquatic or an organic environment that recalls underbrush. Even though everything invites the exploration of the background, nothing prevents the eye from simply gliding along the surface of the painting. In a kind of synthesis, this surface effect of *frontalité*, (comprising the obvious image that dominates the painting), typical of the compositions of Lacelin-Bellefleur, makes them so particular in fact, that one could say they were encrusted on a wall.

This phenomenon of wall inscription cannot be ruled out, as it relates to the artist's early training in engraving. Lacelin-Bellefleur knows how to take advantage of the roughness of his medium as well as the irregularities of the pigmented material, without giving the illusion of some degree of relief but, on

the contrary, to recall the obstinate flatness of painting as seen in *Totem*, *L'Amérindienne*, *Violine* or *Mirages*. But if through his approach, the luminous vertical forms of his foreground are literally hurled before the observer, it may be better to let him probe the vertiginous depths of the varied backgrounds, since the figures standing in the middle of the painting are not without flaws. The gaps that cut or corrode them arouse further curiosity and double the work of plunging into the depths with an effect of launching into the abyss.

Like many artists, Lacelin-Bellefleur says that his main source of inspiration are visual elements that spring up or that he flushes out from his surroundings; whether they are in proximity to his home in Montreal, in remote areas, or even while traveling. He photographs leafless tree branches, fissures in the pavement and sidewalks, (particularly after the rain for the brilliance of the shades of gray), cracked walls (France, Tunisia) . . . He then completely or partially transfers the negatives onto the canvas. The images thus produced will serve as the primary structure for the development of the work.

The artist proceeds in successive layers: color schemes, surfaces and areas, particularly horizontal, translucent frames, glaze effects . . . Naturally, he does not transfer the digital negatives as they are, for these are used to initiate his compositions; he works on the stains, he reorients the curves, he trims the edges, in brief, he transforms the elements that he has chosen. He stops working when he is satisfied that he has achieved a sufficient balance through the complexity of the work's structure, when it demands that the viewer



L'Amérindienne, 2009
acrylic
61 x 91.5 cm

come to a standstill in front of it. Then, perhaps by reconstructing the artist's creative development, the spectator finds the right moment for analysis, reflection, meditation.

Of course, the artist is often the first to be surprised by the range of his work that "takes form while it is a work in progress". This is why the

names that he gives to his paintings come from his own contemplation of the works and are usually without any direct link to the creative process. Certainly, this is a further prerogative exercised by *Le pouvoir de l'imprévisible*. □

Philippe Lacelin-Bellefleur holds a Master's Degree in the Arts from the University of Montreal (1965). He undertook the study of painting and engraving during a training course at Aix-en-Provence (1967-1968) before obtaining his diploma in the Fine Arts at Concordia University. Concurrent to his creative activities, he has had a teaching career. He began exhibiting his works as early as 1966, and has since had close to 20 individual exhibitions and participated in about 30 group shows. His paintings belong to numerous prestigious collections.

EXHIBITION

PHILIPPE LACELIN-BELLEFLEUR
LE POUVOIR DE L'IMPRÉVISIBLE
Paintings
Acrylics and Mixed Techniques

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