

## Translations Traductions

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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# ROBERTS GALLERY

641, rue Yonge

**Juillet-Août-Septembre :** Artistes de la Galerie — Léon Bellefleur, Bruno et Molly Bobak, Alan Collier, Adrian Dingle, Tom Forrestall, John Gould, Jean-Paul Lemieux, Rita Letendre, Jock Macdonald, Alfred Pellan, Riopelle, Goodridge Roberts, York Wilson et William Winter.

LONDON LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ART MUSEUM

305, avenue Queens

**Jusqu'au 12 juillet :** Exposition en mémoire de Mackie Cryderman; **Du 22 juin au 30 août :** Sélection de la collection permanente; **Du 1 septembre au 3 octobre :** Allan Collier; Décalques de cuivres médiévaux.

CHARLOTTETOWN CONFEDERATION ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

Édifice des Pères de la Confédération

**Du 28 juin au 1er septembre :** 91e exposition annuelle de l'Académie Royale Canadienne; Peintures de Robert Harris et pièces choisies dans la collection permanente de la Galerie; **Du 1er au 30 septembre :** Rodin et ses contemporains; **Du 7 au 30 septembre :** Peintures d'Esther Warkov.

SACKVILLE OWENS ART GALLERY

Mount Allison University

**Jusqu'en septembre :** Exposition des diplômés et collection permanente.

VANCOUVER THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

1145, rue Georgia Ouest

**Jusqu'au 29 août :** Centenaire d'Emily Carr; **Du 8 septembre au 3 octobre :** Claude Breeze; **Du 13 septembre au 3 octobre :** Larry Boyce.

NEW-YORK THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Cinquième Avenue, à la 82e Rue

Dans les cloîtres

**Juillet :** Vêtements ecclésiastiques du Moyen-Âge.

**Du 1er juillet au 7 septembre :** Exposition d'été.

# WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

945, avenue Madison

**Jusqu'au 6 juillet :** L'abstraction lyrique; **Jusqu'au 18 juillet :** Gravures de Wayne Thiebaud; **Du 1er juillet au 12 septembre :** Couvertures piquées américaines; **Du 1er juillet au 29 août :** Gravures de John Sloan; **Du 23 août au 23 septembre :** Manfred Schwartz, 1909-1970; **Du 10 septembre au 24 octobre :** Edward Hopper, 1882-1967.

WASHINGTON

NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Sixième Rue, à l'avenue de la Constitution

**Jusqu'au 5 juillet :** Œuvres de Dürer en Amérique; **Du 19 septembre au 31 octobre :** John Sloan.

PARIS

MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

Cabinet des Dessins

**Juillet-Août-Septembre :** Gravures et dessins de François Boucher.

Orangerie des Tuileries

**Septembre :** Venise au XVIIIe siècle — Peintures et dessins des collections françaises.

MUSÉE NATIONAL D'ART MODERNE

**Juillet-Août-Septembre :** Rouault.

MUSÉE NATIONAL DU CHÂTEAU DE MALMAISON

**Jusqu'en octobre :** Collections de Sainte-Hélène, 150e anniversaire de la mort de l'Empereur.

MUSÉE RODIN

**Automne :** Sculptures et dessins d'Hubert Vencesse.

GALERIES NATIONALES DU GRAND PALAIS

**Juin-Août :** La peinture suisse depuis 20 ans.

AMSTERDAM

STEDELIJK MUSEUM

13, Paulus Potterstraat

**Du 25 juin au 25 juillet :** Les 50 plus beaux livres hollandais de 1970.

## TRANSLATIONS/TRADUCTIONS

### Foreword

By Andrée PARADIS

*Vie des Arts* continues the survey of museums: after the National Gallery of Canada (No. 58), the museums of Quebec. We take a look at the main art museums, some small or specialized museums. Directors define the personalities of their institutions. They are all different. Of course, we are not unacquainted with the places that house collections of objects, they have been a part of the familiar landscape for a long time. But do we really know them? Increasingly, people visit them to examine, to study, or to relax; the museums are attacked (as dusty mausoleums); they are served (by handfuls of faithful friends with much devotion). But who really worries about their complicated, basic, everyday problems, which impede any development and progress.

Museums function for the benefit of the community; they are doing so now under unacceptable conditions, which limit their field of action and their means of communication. Without a program of mass investment, they will be unable to get out of the rut. In the following pages, the reader will certainly realize what he owes to the tenacity, the imagination,

and the creative talent of the small teams who assure the functioning of the museums; he will just glimpse the scope of the real difficulties that are gradually undermining so many efforts. There is no lack of solutions to these problems and it would be very desirable that a study committee establish an order of priorities.

This action is necessary, it corresponds to the deep need of contemporary man to be acquainted more closely with his origins, his heritage, and to learn how the arts, techniques, culture and civilization developed. To frustrate him in this means of acquiring knowledge, not to provide him with the opportunity to verify the great human experiences is to rarefy the air of the cultural atmosphere, it is adding to another kind of pollution.

Happily, on the hopeful side, we bring to the reader's attention, the optimistic statement of the Minister of Cultural Affairs, who, in the spirit of a realistic prospective, places museums in the forefront of cultural development.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

### Cultural development in Quebec : the museums

By François CLOUTIER,  
Quebec minister of Cultural Affairs

"Heritage and development are interdependent. Their relationship indicates the development of the personality of a community"<sup>(1)</sup>.

This statement, taken from the findings of an international conference organized in 1969 by Unesco on the theme "Museums and the contemporary world", invites us to take stock of the present day evolution and future orientation of museums, institutions whose essential value is dependent

on the very value of the heritage of a community. The demographic, economic, and technological *explosions* as well as their cultural repercussions constitute the major aspects of the eminently contemporary phenomenon that is called development. So as to not simply be swept along by the general movement, our society must master development through an effort that is inspired at once by our most deeply rooted values and the most dynamic values of the culture



that characterizes it. It is precisely through the symbiosis of heritage and living art that culture will play its proper rôle in the midst of the entire phenomenon of development, being restricted neither to conserving the past or to reflecting the present, but anticipating what is to come.

The present day evolution of our institutions is still affected by the growing pains that overtook them a few years ago. As far as the museums are concerned, their activities were increased; to their traditional function of conservation were added functions of research and education, the techniques employed reflecting the general progress in audio-visual materials and means of communication. Museums have thus acquired a growing socio-cultural importance.

The facts clearly show that museums have already done away with the concept of the museum as an "ivory-tower" or "warehouse" that some people would definitely like to see them continue to justify replacing them with other institutions that would be created from new beginnings. It is true that several institutions make specific contributions to the general unity of the cultural development; what characterizes the proper function of the museum, is that it relates to this very general unity, to the global value of the culture whose main expressions are its heritage and living art which, at the same time, manifest the deepest aspects of the personality, sensitivity, and creativity of the community that is experiencing this culture. That is why the museum constitutes the special meeting-place of the artist and the public, it is where bonds of reciprocal understanding are established. Thus, the artist is presented with an opportunity for public contact freed of

the restrictions often imposed by his professional demands. For its part, the public will receive an awareness from the work of art that will not only allow them to discover the full value of the work, but will create the need to see this value in their everyday setting.

It is therefore important to promote the evolution of such institutions, to plan the evolution in such a way that a dynamic equilibrium is produced not only among the various functions proper to each museum, but also among the different museum departments: art, archaeology, science, history, small museums, etc., as well as among museums and other institutions that contribute to cultural development.

To this end, investment must be foreseen, as well as the perfecting of certain structures, the development of new areas, and the use of appropriate techniques. But there must especially be reliance on the efficient collaboration of creative efforts and talents. The obligation to participate, in which contemporary man sees an element necessary to the development of society, is more rigidly applied in the cultural field than in any other, because of the unifying value of culture. This is above all the concern of the community. Cultural participation thus requires that each person set his goals and conduct himself in full awareness of this collective character that was no doubt less evident in the state of culture that the mass media had reported.

NOTE:

(1) *ICOM*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 1970), p. 22.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## Historical account of some Quebec museums

By Jules BAZIN

The Association of Museums of the Province of Quebec, founded in 1958 unites all the institutions which conserve and present to the public collections of all sorts of objects or furthermore, which hold exhibitions. Its secretary, Mr. George L. Long, has kindly provided us with a list of members. Would you believe it? It names 152 museums.

Obviously, they are not all art museums, although some happen to contain works of art, especially portraits. A rapid count reveals the following. There are about sixty cultural centres, art centres, civic centres, and art galleries where exhibitions are held and where courses in art or animation are given; about twenty museums of natural history, generally set up in secondary schools, and in similar institutions, seven or eight religious museums. There also appear on the list a good twenty sites, monuments and historical houses in which there are often small museums and even art galleries, as for example, the *Maison des Arts de la Sauvegarde*, the *Du Calvet* and *Del Vecchio* houses in Montreal. There are also a dozen or so museums of regional or local history often called — as is the fashion — museums of man, which depend generally on a historical society; six military museums; five devoted to historical figures. Then we must also note some quite specialized museums: the Golf Museum in Aylmer; the Historical Museum of Electricity, in Longueuil; the Railway Museum, in Saint-Constant; the Bank of Montreal's Mercantile Museum and Bell Canada's Panorama of Communications, in Montreal.

There are also some Montreal museums that may be considered specialized art museums: Applied Arts and Wiser's Canadiana (Canadian furniture); Canadian Guild of Crafts; Canadian Centre of Design; and especially the *Château de Ramezy*, whose collections, comparable in many respects to those of the McCord Museum, suffer from an inadequate presentation.

This too rapid enumeration shows the need for a provincial organization which, after a detailed survey, would compile a collective catalogue, would help to emphasize the collections and lastly, would make them known to the public. The result: Education, Recreation, Decentralization and... Tourism!

Leaving it to the present curators to relate the recent developments of their institutions and the policy they intend to pursue, we present a brief historical account of four of the oldest museums so that the reader may get an idea of the

evolution of the museums of our province. We shall deal with the Museum of the Seminary and the Museum of Quebec in Quebec city; and the Museum of Fine Arts and the McCord Museum in Montreal.

### The Museum of the Quebec Seminary

This picture gallery, known for a long time as the Museum of Laval University — it was established in the central building of the institution — was founded by the Seminary and, in fact, has always belonged to it; it is now housed in the former medical school.

It was opened in 1874, after the purchase of the collection of the Quebec Gallery of Painting. The first museum of painting in Canada, this gallery had been established in 1838 by the painter Joseph Légaré, with the help of Thomas Amyot. In the beginning, it comprised about sixty paintings, including some from the Desjardins collection (1); the catalogue of 1852 mentions more than two hundred paintings.

According to Morisset, the Museum of the Seminary contained about twenty five of the 120 pictures included in the Desjardins collection which, for the most part, had been taken from religious establishments in Paris that were secularized during the Revolution. Father Philippe Desjardins, who had acquired them during the Empire, had visited Canada and he thought they might serve in the decoration of the churches and chapel of our country. Shipped to his brother Jean-Louis, chaplain at Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec, they were put on public sale in 1817 and 1821. We should add that these canvases played a considerable rôle in the development of painting in Quebec.

Gradually, the Museum grew richer. There follows a list of the main donors, all or almost all of whom were former pupils: in 1874, Mgr. Cyprien Tanguay; in 1886 Justice Bacquet; in 1900 Father Verreault; in 1901, Mgr. Maurois; in 1917 Mgr. Lindsay; in 1930 Father Scott; Father H.-R. Casgrain (ten copies of works of various schools and four family portraits, from old paintings, by Théophile Hamel).

In the last few years, the picture gallery has become a museum through the acquisition of objects other than paintings: furnishings (notably two 18th century altars, works by Jacques Leblond and the Levasseurs), Chinese ceramics, Canadian silverwork, numismatics.





These special collections are housed in annexes. One, devoted to Suzor-Côté, contains the donation made in 1957 and 1966 by his brother, Father Édouard Côté, of furnishings, family belongings, paintings, pastels, drawings, and plaster reproductions, which permitted the reconstruction of the setting in which the artist lived. A second gallery contains a collection of Canadian art, especially paintings by modern and contemporary artists, including several from the city of Quebec.

Finally in 1966, the Seminary made two important acquisitions: a group of antique ceramics of Cyprus and the collection of Mexican religious art of Lionel Roy, composed of objects from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.

### The Museum of Quebec

The Museum of Quebec was brought into existence by a law passed on December 29, 1922 whose aim was "to establish in the cities of Quebec and Montreal, museums to serve the study of history, science, and fine arts" and which appropriated to this end "a sum not exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand dollars". The building in Quebec was erected between 1929 to 1933 by the architect Wilfrid Lacroix and decorated with reliefs by the sculptor J.-Émile Brunet.

Until recent times, it housed three quite different services: the provincial archives, a museum of natural history and the fine arts museum, to which was added the Inventory of Works of Art. Thus the museum was cramped for room for a long time, in spite of the construction of a new wing from 1961 to 1963. In the beginning the collection was small and unevenly distributed. Of the 920 works of art composing it, there were 198 bronze statuettes by Alfred Laliberté, 84 works by Suzor-Côté, 56 by Charles Huot, 34 by Clarence Gagnon, and 14 by Kriehoff. During its first four years in operation, the Museum acquired more than 800 works. Since then, the main additions have come from the following collections: in 1943, Napoléon Bourassa (more than 200 works), in 1959, Maurice Duplessis (85 paintings, including works by Corot and Boudin, and 15 by Kriehoff) and Louis Carrier (more than 700 objects of silverwork); in 1966 Diniocopoulos (works of Greek art); in 1968, Canada Steamship (hundreds of Canadian furnishings and 3,500 objects of Indian art).

Evidently the museum was "almost entirely devoted to the early and modern art of the province of Quebec," as Gérard Morisset wrote, around 1963. I am fairly certain that in view of the findings of the inventory of the works of art, Morisset was thinking of ear-marking the major part of his budget for the acquisition of objects of traditional art in preference to contemporary works that might wait for the creation of a museum that was to be devoted to them. Especially since the museum received each year the contribution of the works that had obtained awards in the Provincial Art Competition. Of course, the artists did not look at it this way, for in general they are not all that interested in traditional art and its conservation. And again we are caught in a dilemma that is not yet nearly resolved.

One will be able to realize the tremendous progress made since 1934 upon learning that in 1969-1970 the museum contained 5,339 works classed as follows: 1,426 paintings; 1,292 engravings and drawings; 903 sculptures; 827 pieces of silverwork; 762 early utensils; 106 pieces of furniture and 23 tapestries and wall-hangings.

Since its establishment, the curators have been Pierre-Georges Roy, 1933-1941; Paul Rainville, 1941-1952; Gérard Morisset, 1953-1965; Guy Viau, 1965-1967; Jean Soucy, 1967.

### The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

The Art Association of Montreal was instituted by a provincial law ratified on April 23, 1860 (2). It continued, as it were, the work of the Montreal Society of Artists which, since 1847, had been exhibiting periodically the work of Montreal artists of the time: Duncan, Sawyer, Kriehoff, and others.

From 1860 to 1869, the first Anglican bishop of Montreal, Francis Fulford, was in charge of the new association. Exhibitions were held regularly but in various premises. In 1879, the gift of a lot and \$8,000 from an art lover, Benaiah Gibb, permitted the Art Association to settle in a home of its own. The building, constructed on the east side of Phillips Square at a cost of \$22,000 was the work of architect J.W. Hopkins. It was sold in 1910 for \$275,000, and was cleared for a parking lot a few years ago.

In the early days of the museum's existence, the works of painters of foreign schools, lent by Montreal collectors, especially drew the attention of enthusiasts. As the building was

not fireproof, in 1912 it was decided a new building should be put up. It was erected on Sherbrooke Street by the architects Edward and W.S. Maxwell, but it had to be enlarged after a little more than a quarter of a century. From 1916, the museum widened the scope of its action by beginning to conserve objects of the so-called minor arts. In 1949, the Association became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Down through the years, the Museum has received many important bequests and donations. The major ones are: John W. Tempest, in 1892, paintings valued at \$20,000 and \$70,000 to create an acquisition fund; William John and Agnes Learmont, in 1900, 120 paintings, art objects and books valued at more than \$110,000; Catherine Orkney, in 1907, \$45,000, on the condition that the museum not open on Sundays (it took fifteen years to reimburse this legacy and be free of the condition posed by the testatrix); James Ross, in 1909, \$150,000 for the construction of the building on Sherbrooke street; Mabel Molson, in 1919, several hundred objects of native crafts, to which she later added a collection of Spanish textiles; William Gilman Cheney, in 1936, \$55,000 and the same year, Mrs. Charles Meredith, \$100,000, a work by Lawrence, and a collection of 16th century Florentine bronze works; the second baron of Strathcona and his family, in 1926, a great number of paintings and art objects; Robert Lindsay, in 1932, \$5,000 for the purchase of Canadian works; Harry and Helen Norton, in 1938, \$60,000; Adeline Van Horne, in 1944 and 1955, her share (one quarter) of the estate of Sir William Van Horne, 84 paintings, almost 500 art objects, albums and art books; the Horsley and Annie Townsend Fund, in 1955; Mr. and Mrs. F. Cleveland Morgan who, in their lifetime gave more than 1,000 art objects chosen with the keenest discernment and taste; Samuel and Saydie Bronfman, in 1959, \$25,000, then, in 1962, \$50,000 to acquire works by young artists; Frida A. Kruse, in 1960, \$38,000 and Ronald T. Riley in the same year, \$15,000. It is impossible to mention all of the donors, but we should still note W.G. Murray, R.B. Angus, John Hutton, David Morrice, Dr. and Mrs. C.F. Martin.

In spite of the zeal and great generosity of its friends, the Museum has always had to exercise the greatest caution with regard to changes or important additions, for example, during the reparation and remodelling of the building in 1936 or, two years later, the construction of a new wing which cost \$25,000 and \$130,000 respectively, without forgetting the 1967 \$300,000 restoration.

From the time it was established, the Art Association also added an art school to the museum and beginning in 1872, there was an important annual spring exhibition which often provoked lively controversy.

Until 1947, the direction of the museum had been entrusted to enlightened enthusiasts. That year, a director who had received a specialized training, Robert Tyler Davis, was appointed. John Steegman followed him in 1952, then Evan H. Turner in 1961. David Giles Carter has been director since 1966.

For a long time, the Museum of Fine Arts existed due to the generosity of private individuals. It was only beginning in 1955, I think, that it received a modest annual grant of \$3,000 from the province. In 1957, the Metropolitan Montreal Arts Council assigned it \$40,000, then, in 1959, \$25,000, an example followed three years later by the province. In 1958 and 1959, the Canada Arts Council gave a grant of \$10,000 and the Canada Foundation, \$15,000 for the library.

### The McCord Museum

The founder of this museum, David Ross McCord (1844-1929), belonged to an old Montreal family of lawyers that had lived here for at least 150 years, which no doubt explains this lawyer's great interest in the early works of Quebec, and the eagerness with which he is said to have *stripped* his friends of their historical pieces for the benefit of his collection. McCord was not satisfied to gather objects with the greatest eclecticism — everything was good to him — he was interested in their history and kept up a steady correspondence with everyone who might provide him with information.

In 1919 he donated his collection to McGill University; it was set up in the Jesse Joseph house, a beautiful dwelling in the English palladian style which occupied the north east corner of Sherbrooke and McTavish streets, where the new wing of the University library now stands. The new museum opened its doors in 1921 but, after the crash, it was forced to close to all but research workers in 1936. As the Joseph house was condemned, the collections were taken to a house on McGregor street that belonged to the University, but it only became partially accessible to the public in 1954; they were even able to present some interesting exhibitions there.

It was at this time that two distinguished benefactors, Mr.



and Mrs. Walter M. Stewart, became interested in the museum and provided the funds necessary for its operation and the acquisition of important works. It appeared, in time, that this was insufficient and, to make the collections accessible to the general public, it was decided they should be transported not far from the original site, in the building formerly occupied by the McGill Students Union, at 690 Sherbrooke west, facing McGill University. The interior of the building was completely renovated at a cost of more than a million dollars, provided by the same donors.

The McCord Museum, devoted to the social and cultural history of the past, is not properly speaking, an art museum, even though it contains many pictures in oil and pastel, miniatures, watercolours, drawings, engravings, and prints. The most extensive collections are those of Notman (400,000 photographs) and those of early costume (500 suits and dresses of various eras), to which are added precious costumes accessories. There are also English and Canadian furnishings, Canadian silverware, sets of dishes, ceramics, a number of Eskimo and Indian objects (a totem), as well as important archives.

The galleries occupy three floors. The presentation of the objects is very deliberate and a skilful lighting shows them to advantage. The Curator Mrs. I. M. B. Dobell, was not only able to surround herself with an excellent staff, but assured the enthusiastic assistance of historians and specialists in every field. Therefore, the result is a splendid one.

The Museum was inaugurated last March 4th, at the height of the storm that nearly buried the city in snow. That should

be taken as an omen of the good days to come, even though at present there is money enough only for the operation of the institution for the coming year. We hope that in the meanwhile, a way will be found to assure its future.

Research workers at Quebec :  
Suzanne BERNIER  
Suzanne LACASSE  
Research workers at Montreal :  
Nicole CLOUTIER  
Danièle LAPIERRE

#### NOTES

- (1) Between September 1933 and October 1936, Gérard Morisset wrote for the *Canada Français* (a publication of the University of Laval) a series of 14 articles on the paintings of the Desjardins collection. The end of the study was devoted to the works of Laval University but, after two articles, the publication was interrupted because it was thought to be prejudicial to the reputation of the museum. In fact, Morisset was demolishing the glorifying attributions of J. Purves Carter.
- (2) For the early days of the history of the museum, one may consult the thesis by Father Pierre Leduc, *The Origins and Development of the Art Association of Montreal 1860-1912*. Thesis for the Faculty of Arts of the University of Montreal, 1963. See also the *Annual Reports* of the Museum.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

By David G. CARTER, Director



Even the most casual observation of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts reveals a number of facts which distinguish it from its fellows. Since 1961 it has been officially bicultural and bilingual, the degree of this in one department or another varies depending upon the individuals concerned. In its exterior, e.g. public manifestations, it means that every label, every publication and every public function employ French and English. The term bicultural is subject to the same observations. Since the end of World War II the Museum has gained increasing government support and stands on the threshold of a more intimate and vital relationship with government. Since its incorporation as Canada's first art museum in 1860, it has been run with a small staff and an elaborate compensating committee structure composed of volunteers drawn from its membership; it has also relied heavily on many such volunteers for fund appeals and for certain kinds of social and artistic events and continues to do so.

Whatever its final legal structure, the base of the Museum's support must be adequate to respond to the needs of a metropolis of nearly three million people.

Today, we are one among a number of Montreal institutions which include the Bronfman Centre, Centre Mont-Royal, La Sauvegarde, le Musée d'Art Contemporain, Sir George Williams presenting active exhibition programmes. I exclude McGill University institutions which are not art centres or art museums per se. Now le Musée d'Art Contemporain and Sir George Williams as well as ourselves cultivate permanent collections, and it is this feature that distinguishes museums and their responsibilities from art centres. If a Museum of a traditional format is thought of as outmoded, I suggest that no other means has yet been invented to preserve, collect, classify and study the materials of the past and the present. If the institution's rôle is to be merely that of an art centre, the burdens of maintaining a collection, particularly a collection with an historical dimension, might be regarded as a luxury. It could also be a comment on misplaced energy or an indication of serious understaffing. The presence of other institutions in the same community calls for a sharp awareness of objectives and there is room for better communication with other Montreal organizations both in the matter of collecting and in programming to provide Montreal with maximum returns. Austerity and deprivation have been the lot of museums long before the current recession, Montreal among them. Even with self-

limiting steps, such as the cancelling of seven exhibitions between April and December of 1971 and the substitution of smaller exhibitions for the balance of the season, the time and energy of the staff have been directed almost exclusively to exhibitions and programmes. Three-quarters of the Museum's traditional functions have been discharged in a skeletal fashion or not at all. Lack of money, staff and space account for this condition which is so inhibiting to the Museum's full function of collecting, of conserving and restoring, of extracting knowledge, of exhibiting and of interpreting the pictures, sculptures and objects in its charge.

No one would deny that it is desirable to operate the Museum in a professional manner — a manner not limited to the direct activity of the Museum alone but extending into the realm of both popular and academic contributions. While business management and even library staffs can be calculated closely according to the scale of the operation it is more complex when it comes to the staff needed for the functions of conservation, curating and educational services. In our present state of numerical comparison of our staff with those whose museum collections bear the closest comparison; namely, the Royal Ontario Museum and the National Gallery of Canada, presents an almost bizarre contrast. Montreal's director and deputy director together with a registrar and an assistant curator for special projects and research provide the curatorial services of the Museum and three of these people are often preoccupied with other functions. The National Gallery of Canada has at least seven presently concerned with curatorial tasks and as published in the last issue of *Vie des Arts* is advertising seven positions, two of which may be described as curatorial in nature. The Royal Ontario Museum apart from its administration has 38 staff involved with curating collections and 12 staff involved with archaeological work for a total of 50 exclusive of technicians, designers, and secretaries in the departments pertaining to art and archaeology. Does this help explain how National Gallery personnel and Royal Ontario Museum personnel have the time and energy to visit and even solicit gifts from Quebec collections? Does this convey similar implications for the time devoted to research and publication of the Museum's own collections? Similar comparisons would be manifest in the educational services provided; although, Montreal has through the use of devoted volunteers been



better able to sustain its obligations in this sector.

Asked what is an art museum or more specifically what is the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; the first reaction is to wonder whether the question is asked out of curiosity, ignorance, or just plain cussedness. Given the changes occurring in our society and the frequent testing of any visible institution, the question carries by implication a corollary that change is mandatory. Change without pre-meditation is foolish. Nevertheless, anyone believing that the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is the same beast today that it was in 1941, 1951, or 1961 has myopia, or astigmatism or worse; change has occurred and more is in the wind.

Whether these changes are calculated to please is not the point except to indicate that any institution responding to people's needs will demonstrate its flexibility to meet these needs. Certain contemplated improvements related to certain objectives cannot take place until more space, staff, and funds are available. Yet, the realization of a sufficiency of space, staff and funds is not in itself the answer but only the means to make the experience of art available to everyone.

In the interim, despite reorganization of the library and the collections, one feels the Museum is in danger of becoming a Chinese puzzle. Montreal did not experience the post-war expansions of physical plant common to museums in most large North American cities although uncoordinated and fragmented interests saw in the sixties in Greater Montreal creations and failures of a number of new cultural enterprises — the Bronfman Centre, le Centre Culturel du Vieux Montréal, the Bonsecours Centre of Loyola, La Maison du Calvet, le Centre Mont-Royal, Le Musée d'Art Contemporain, La Sauvagerie, La Maison Del Vecchio, and Sir George Williams.

While we have not known the intense racism of many United States cities, the Museum has become entangled to the disadvantage of all in both the fact and the mythology surrounding French and English culture — fact from our existence in Québec, from the traditional art of Québec, from some contemporary artists rooting their creations upon an identifiable tradition — myth from our notion of the limitation of experience to Québec, from the denial of other contributing sources, from the actual derivation of much of contemporary creation from sources in London, Paris and especially New York. Let us not forget that artists 'speak' with brushes, chisels and other tools. It would indeed become a twentieth century folly to channel our aesthetic interests exclusively or to limit our service in a parochial fashion with a resulting denial of universal interests, that would be a short-changing of the community for the sake of expediency and for a mistaken notion of national patrimony.

Present problems of our activity stem less from any politically motivated factors than from financially generated ones. Programmes including shows such as Picasso, Canaletto, the Group of Seven, and Rembrandt justifiably drew a large attendance; but it is to continue to make great art accessible to the public that improved conditions must be realized. Here policy will take into account what other organizations can and cannot do; it suggests that the Museum should concentrate in its major shows on subjects beyond the scope of smaller institutions and because of their probable expense and the vulnerability of exhibits protract the duration of exhibition.

Often people ask what is the Museum public? Do we know what it is? After more than twenty years of watching visitors in many museums, it is clear that the pitfall of oversimplification would lead us into serious error in the matter of whom and how we serve. The experience of a museum visit is not like that of a visit to a hockey game where the same format, the same rules and objectives make for a consistent expectation. This experience of art in a museum means the visits of many publics some of which will mix, some of which will not. The Curator sees appetites conditioned by differences of generation, of education, of ethnic background, of religious viewpoints. These publics may be further separated by the moods of individuals and the contrasting desire to share the experience of art or on the contrary to retain it as an intimate highly personal experience. Fairness to the Community obliges us to take account of all these distinctions in the selection, presentation and interpretation of art; the ability and the material capacity to do this in an equitable fashion is determined by staff, facilities, time, and the art (permanent or borrowed) available. The Museum's aim is to create visually articulate audiences prepared to understand and enjoy the experience of original works in all media and to offer meaningful interpretation of such material in the context of one's own community without sacrificing the requirements of the curating of the collections in its charge.

The state of these collections is not wholly negative. A crash and entirely new conservation programme of the collection of paintings was carried out in 1965. This programme

also marked the beginning of a permanent conservation facility in the Museum which could not only treat its own collections but also treat pictures and objects belonging to local collectors. It marked the recognition of an important fact — objects and pictures are not static. They deteriorate if preventive medicine and treatment are lacking. The building of 1912 and its 1939 additions await air-conditioning; in the interval special cases providing an atmosphere within an atmosphere can be constructed.

The individual that collects may be guided by compulsion which has no special rationale — men have been known to collect almost everything; therefore, let us take stock of what the collections are and what they may be. If approximately eighty percent of the collections have come by gift or bequest and noting that curatorial guidance has been in effect for only twenty years, it would be a surprise to find a collection formed according to a preconceived ideal. Like every museum, Montreal hopes to become a Mecca for those subjects in which it is strong and to achieve a representation adequate to its needs in others.

In that we learn from the past and explore the present and the indications of the future, it may be worth a glance at the past in the fashion that archaeologists uncover past civilizations. As with many beginnings there was no clearcut expectation of the dimension of future possibilities. Casts of classical sculpture were added along with heterogeneous Canadian and European pictures for the most part nineteenth century; yet, it is remarkable that in 1879 the first old master was bought — a painting thought to be by Pieter de Hooch subsequently attributed correctly to Emmanuel de Witte. The knowledge and taste applied to the task of acquisition was occasionally erratic. Would you find it difficult to believe that Gabriel Max's *Jesus and the Daughter of Jairus* was for some years the most popular picture in the collection. Efforts to refine the collection sometimes misfired, but the intent to upgrade the level of the collections was there. It is a part of the process of maturity.

The Museum's acquisition policy where possible takes into account items in private collections where friendly interest has been expressed. The Museum would not purchase in an area where an expected gift would give a redundant result. The Museum has also sought in this regard a favorable climate for incentives in the matter of succession duties and income tax.

As all purchases are made from trust funds, given or bequeathed, the exercise of responsibility has been guided first by the duty to preserve and conserve the item followed by the cataloguing and researching, the displaying and interpreting, and finally the publishing of the item. While the nature and state will determine the advisability of its loan elsewhere or even its handling in the Museum, various museums do borrow about 2,000 works per year.

Numbers do not tell the whole story and there are masterpieces in fields meagerly represented such as the bas-relief from the Palace of Assur-nasirpal (IX B.C.) or the high relief of Vishnu from the Chola region (XIII A.D.) or Hubert Robert's *Ancient Ruins of Egypt* of 1798. In the total quality and number of its collections, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts ranks only behind the National Gallery of Canada in painting and only behind the Royal Ontario Museum in sculpture and decorative arts; its one surprising weakness lies in the domain of prints and drawings. In the Canadian field the stature of the collections would be closely matched by the holding in Quebec, Ottawa, and Toronto. In the representation of particular artists chance plays a greater rôle e.g. Emily Carr in Vancouver or FitzGerald in Winnipeg or Morrice in Montreal. Acquisition policy, except in contemporary art where some acknowledgement has been made of the experimental facets of art, has been guided by one word — quality. Balance has been determined by a three committee system devoted to Canadian Art, Non-Canadian Art and Active Cultures, and Non-Canadian Art of Historic Cultures.

The Museum's already respectable collections are still growing and with the right blend of curatorial knowledge, funds, tax-incentives, benevolent collectors, interested government support and space, Montreal could achieve a new level of international significance. It must be pointed out that in this contest to bring new artistic resources into our community we are in rivalry with Ottawa spending 750,000 and sometimes more public tax dollars a year, with Seattle spending 250,000 dollars or Cleveland spending 1,000,000 dollars. It is time to demand federal support to supplement the purchasing power provided by the private sector. The existing collection, this artistic equity, however, needs a first class environment.

The dictation of architecture is both curse and blessing. The architect guiding the design of today's Museum complex



is expected to produce an envelope flexible in its uses meeting requirements beyond any city building code and hopefully handsome. After the architect walks away, it becomes another story for the men and women who work in it. How many of you have run a library or an office or a sales desk or a conservation lab in a space designed for another purpose. How many have thought of the circulation or human traffic patterns established by the building. How many consider the sequences of installation and what makes them coherent within specific space.

Once you have penetrated the neo-classic façade of 1379 Sherbrooke Street West, the architecture offers multiple choice of directions and it has been an unending struggle to make the best sense of the heterogeneous collections acquired by bequest and purchase. Six years ago had you turned left of the main entrance you would have seen Chinese and Japanese porcelains, had you turned right you would have found European porcelain and silver — logical? The present disposition imposes the choice of Canadian art beginning with the traditional art of Quebec replacing European decorative arts and the art of Egypt, the Ancient Near East, and the art of Greece and Rome replacing oriental porcelain. This sequence displaying the art of western man, of which we are a part, is continued with galleries given over the Mediaeval,

Renaissance, Baroque and later periods. Our dilemma — the exhaustion of space, nineteenth and twentieth century collections seem to be retired to the reserve every time the Museum presents a new exhibition. Every time a film or lecture is given, a gallery becomes lost for the duration of the event; this is the point at which logic and coherence are defied. The intrusion of a sales desk and of a sales and rental gallery would be beyond logic in the scheme if the need for these facilities simply did not have to be recognized. Clearly the physical requirements of the Museum must be apparent to even the most obtuse criticism.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has endured a decade at the cross-roads of decision in many senses, philosophically, financially, juridically, and physically. Responsibility for this is shared not only by the Museum but by the country at large, by the capitals which are seats of policy and finance. If the additional services assumed by the financial pump-priming of the Museum do not prompt major solutions now, the alternatives will be painful for a proud community. The Museum with its collections should be a great forum for the visual arts and provide the original experience of great art of all times which can be so meaningful to each individual. Let us hope that positive results will come from imminent decisions.

## The Museum of Quebec

By Jean SOUCY, Director



Institutions must follow the pulse of the communities they function to serve. Thus it is only fitting that they be transformed according to the requirements of the times if they do not wish to be endangered. Museums are not exempted from this elementary and universal principle. However, we must not dramatize this principle and extend it so far that, for fear of seeming retrograde, museums renounce the essential aspect of their rôle, which is the conservation of the cultural heritage.

From the outset, the Museum of Quebec has been gathering works that were outstanding or at least representative — of the evolution of the arts in French Canada from its origins. One of the former curators, M. Gérard Morisset, did a great deal of work in this area, as much from the point of view of plastic quality as that of the historical interest of the works collected. The collection of silver, recognized as being one of the most important in Canada, was organized when the Carrier collection was acquired in 1959; this collection contained more than seven hundred items of French and English Canadian silver. Had it not been for the intervention of the Museum, many of the pieces bearing the hall-mark of François Ranvozé, Laurent Amyot, and Pierre Lespérance, among others, would have been lost forever. In the same way we may think that in the area of sculpture and painting many things might have been lost if the Museum had not carried out its essential mission of conservation. Thus, among the most beautiful portraits of the XIXth century middle class, several would no doubt have gone into "exile", when they would not quite simply have been destroyed. We hesitate to think what could have happened to works by artists like Roy-Audy, Légaré, Plamondon, Hamel and many others that have enriched our collections.

A few months ago, we began to rearrange the large gallery of traditional sculpture, grouping the works of religious art of the XVIIth, XVIIIth, and XIXth centuries in such a way as to evoke the interior of a church of days gone by. The beautiful sacristy doors of Denys Mallet, executed about 1699, and which no doubt come from the former chapel of the Jesuits, frame grilles lent by the Ursuline monastery. At the far end of the room are the columns and the main altar of the church of Ange-Gardien, to the right is a pulpit with carved medallions that comes from Baie-Saint-Paul. Along the walls are paintings from the Desjardins collection and, overlooking a side altar, one of the masterpieces of Canadian sculpture, *Le Père éternel*, attributed to Pierre-Noël Levasseur (1690-1770). The works of different periods assembled in this gallery sum up in a single stroke the profound inspiration of the religious sentiment which influenced our history. Less subject perhaps to the conditions of the times, which after all,

presented practical requirements which the sculptors of the traditional period necessarily had to consider, painters had the leisure to exploit various themes: the portrait, the landscape, and the anecdote gave them the opportunity to put their talent to the test. The art of the ex-voto flourished at the same time as the grave vicars of the XVIIIth century were posing. In the XIXth, Cornelius Krieghoff skillfully depicted the cheery inn where carriages stopped. Skilled in drawing maps and bodies of water, officers of the English army garrisoned in Quebec sent their faraway relatives some charming watercolours illustrating various areas of the city. Painters travelled, bringing new techniques back from Europe. In the beginning of the XXth century, several artists resolutely turned to other shores for inspiration while others glorified regionalism. Fascinated by Matisse, James Wilson Morrice painted the Cafés of Algiers. In Paris Suzor-Côté frequented the Académie Julian while Clarence Gagnon visited the snows of Charlevoix. The Museum of Quebec exhibited the great elms of Marc-Aurèle Fortin in 1930 and in 1940 the work of Alfred Pellon. This exhibition was a milestone. Soon the great currents of international art filtered into our country from all over. The evolution came about slowly but the impulse that was given was irreversible and the Museum, although it had just recently been founded, participated in the general movement. For the last ten years, especially, several important exhibitions have acquainted the public with some of the most famous names of contemporary art including artists like Lardera, Soulages, Hartung, Moore and a few prestigious Canadians like Borduas, Riopelle, and Lemieux.

However, in 1971, we are aware that a profound change in mentality has taken place. In 1968, the Museum had already opened its doors to young artists. "Vacation 68", "69" and "70" invited the public to participate in experiences which new materials, techniques, and means of expression were allowing young people to attempt. About the same time, the institution made further efforts to interest the public in a more lively way in its activities: since then the Educational Services have experienced a considerable surge of popularity. Information booklets are distributed to visitors; slides are projected in the rotundas; the Ciné-Museum tells about Versailles and Manicouagan. In a large room, an engraver shows his press and answers the public's questions; a mime troupe improvises. The Museum is open to all artists and to all art forms... carried along by the movement, ships figureheads and angels with trumpets are discovering television. Feeling the pulse of contemporary culture, the museum has spontaneously become committed to a renewal whose objectives and policy we must now clearly define.

The contemporary museum should insist on a policy of



participation : of putting artists and works in the presence of and in communication with the public. The infinite possibilities of audio-visual techniques not only deeply modify people's lives, but they arouse in people a new sensitivity to the perception of the work of art, which is itself dependent upon a new inspiration in the sensitivity of artists. It is thus most important that the Museum be able to make maximum use

of these possibilities not only to facilitate access to ancient works but to make the public aware of living art.

Thus the museum's objective of conservation will no longer exclusively be directed at the past but will wish to record our present experience and assure its duration and permanence.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## The Museum of Contemporary Art

By Gilles HÉNAULT, Director

The traditional museum used to be defined by its conservation and exhibition of established values, confirmed by time and history.

The contemporary art museum no longer relies on these supreme guarantees. It must welcome the very latest new experiences and tendencies. To a certain extent, it must even suscitate creative work. Like many other institutions, it is at once the scene and the object of the acceleration of history, but a very special one : the history of art. The latter coincides with history in general, but not in an absolute way. In other words, when the history of man continues in spite of more or less serious crises, the very historicity of art is compromised in so far as it reflects an idle period in the evolution of a certain form of culture.

That is why, for some time, in the great capitals of the world, there has increasingly been question of an end to the history of art. This makes us aware of the fact that art as an activity cut off from the whole of the cultural and social reality has not always existed in all societies. Thus, it is not unthinkable that a certain form of art should be destined to disappear to make way for other forms of creative activity and that certain traditional values be replaced by new values based on original criteria.

If such is the case, then what are the new values that are elaborated and what rôle should a museum of contemporary art play in this context? Should it not be transformed into a centre for research and creative work? What is its relationship with education? In what direction and how far can democratization go? Would the museum not be better replaced by a gallery in a shopping centre? Does it not duplicate the function of other institutions, cultural or not : movie-houses, discothèques, cultural foundations, exhibition halls and others? What specific rôle can it still play in the community?

These are a few of the questions which directors of modern art museums throughout the world, whether they are in New York, Paris, Amsterdam, or Montreal, are asking themselves. I have discussed this with several among them personally and no one has been able to give me a satisfactory answer. I do not have any wondrous solutions either. However, the beginning of an answer involves certain preliminary established facts. First, an overtaking of history supposes that this history

has already existed. Now, in Quebec, the history of art, and especially of contemporary art is almost non-existent. Thus, it is essential to try to constitute at least an inventory, were it only to permit current or future generations to know what they are contesting. I would be wary of contestation that was based only on ignorance. That is why for the last five years, the museum has been noting the evolution of art here and elsewhere, with thematic or retrospective exhibitions.

We must also note that we are living in a technological society whose manifestations have implications on the level of the plastic arts. The museum thus must devote its attention to this aspect of artistic research. That is why it has presented several experimental exhibitions. This orientation, according to the activity of the artists themselves, will no doubt continue to be emphasized.

These options for the museum suppose a parallel programming of acquisition and conservation, in so far as revenues allow and when it is not a question of purely transitory or else totally irrecoverable works. (As is the case, notably, for some environments.)

Finally, it is urgent to realize that a contemporary art museum's means of dissemination of information should be radically revised to permit intensive use of all audio-visual means, notably the tape-recorder, radio, slides, films, television, and tapes, in short, the whole arsenal of the mass media, which certainly does not exclude catalogues, posters, newspapers, and reviews.

We would thus create what I call the "unwalled museum" which would multiply its information a hundred, a thousand fold. I know very well that would not replace being physically present in front of the work. Audio-visual means transform the perception of art as they transpose that of the everyday world. However, it would be pointless to try to avoid their use. All other fields of culture use them and if the plastic arts were to benefit from them too, that might perhaps contribute to lowering the present day level of visual pollution.

The future rôle of the museum, like that of art itself, would be determined in terms of the values that currently exist in society. And if society contests art, it will be necessary for creative activity, in turn, to contest society.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)



## The Art Museum of Joliette

By Wilfrid CORBEIL, c.s.v., Curator

It is a small country museum that began modestly in the '40's with the acquisition of paintings bought from visiting exhibitions; in 1942, a group of avant-garde artists was exhibited, among which it is fitting to mention Paul-Émile Borduas and Alfred Pellon. We have sought to uphold this standard of artistic production in subsequent exhibitions.

Today, the collection of Canadian art numbers one hundred and thirteen paintings and a few sculptures; it includes an altar

with altar-piece, and about thirty decorative pieces, in sculpted and gilded wood, that came from some very old Quebec churches. To this group, which already included several pieces of European art, there was added in 1961, the important collection of Canon Wilfrid Tisdell, of Winchendon, Mass., a former pupil of the Seminary. This brings to over three hundred, the number of works in the collection which ranges from the XIIIth century to the century of the "Tenebristi". In





all there are some four hundred pieces, apart from the knick-knacks and ivories which are exhibited in the showcases and on the furniture in the rooms. Arranged in a suite of adjoining rooms, these objects are presented in a varied and sumptuous display which surprises even the most well-informed visitor (Fig. 1 and 4).

What gives educational value to our collection is that it shows visitors the main aspects of a constant and progressive evolution, in relation to the disciplines which, throughout the centuries, have helped in artistic creation. Art and its representation change with the times and with the techniques in use, yet they follow the path traced by predecessors; I do not know that a masterpiece has appeared outside of standards established by the masters: Michelangelo was influenced by the art of Signorelli, or painters like Donatello, or Verrocchio. Now, in this century of technology, our art students contest every technique, every school discipline; they believe, in their illogicality, that it is sufficient to create the hoped-for masterpiece, to abandon themselves to the impression of the moment, to the sole muscular reactions to which chance emotions give rise. In this respect, the catalogue that we hope to publish this year emphasizes the progress of living art, rich in the experiences of the past and whose main steps are marked, let us say it, by as many masterpieces as the Museum has.

The abstraction of the Roman capital column (Fig. 2); in spite of the numerous spalls which time and men have inflicted on it, clearly illustrates the idea that we have of artistic creation. Without losing sight of the functional aspect of this piece of Pyrenean marble, intended to accompany the light rhythm of a claustral blind arch, the sculptor's work has been influenced by an iconography that was in vogue, whose symbolism, as is known, aroused the anger of Saint Bernard; but, there is no doubt that he worked on a study and an arrangement of planes and volumes which, under the effect of a reflected light, are organized into one of the most successful of plastic arts; in this way, the artist introduces us into the mysterious world of things sacred. The stamen which overlaps the aspic in the middle of spiny acanthus leaves is, in short, only the pretext for this arrangement.

Since 1950, the *Virgin and Child* (Fig. 3), in hard limestone from Paris, has been delighting us with its grave smile. This madonna from Ile-de-France unites Attic gracefulness and divine grace: originally from a Gothic cathedral whose impetus and fervour it bears, like the cathedrals, it announces the accession of the Divine.

One of the masterpieces in the Museum is unquestionably the *Virgin and Child* from Châlon-sur-Marne. In polychromatic stone, it is the only one to be seen in Canada, apart from that done in the same style and having the same dimensions which is in the Royal Museum in Toronto. Indisputably, it is the ultimate in an evolution which, in a moment of pose or arrest, has produced a quantity of masterworks in the same style; it bears all its characteristics: the flattened oval of the face; the swaying look that engenders the gracious curve of the whole body; finally, the smile of the Mother and Child which is characteristic of the statutory art of Rheims. M. René Huyghe, who considered it carefully, and to whom I asked what precise date should be assigned it, answered me easily: Medieval Virgins began to smile in 1345!

Among the sorrowful and "piteous" representations of Christ which we have, I have chosen the detail reproduced opposite (Fig. 5) that is part of a high relief by the school of Rogier van der Weyden, or, if you like, Roger de la Pasture. The representation says a great deal more than could any description of the high quality of the craftsmanship and the intensity of the expression. In the length and delicacy of the fingers the work is traditional Gothic; in its elegance it is already related to the Renaissance. The detail shows the hand of Christ that has been injured on the road to Calvary and whose perfection is in no way affected by the loss of the little finger, no more than Matisse's *Bather* of Collioure is affected by the loss of a toe. In all honesty, one cannot help feeling amazement or admiration at the thought of this piece of wood transformed into the right hand of the Saviour by the supreme art of a pious artisan. Is the gesture that graciously begins in the deep pleat in the sleeve one of searching for a point d'appui or rather one of forgiveness and blessing? Elie Faure notes that "The material resemblance, by means of exactness, leads to moral resemblance."

The delightful Italian *Nativities* which form an entire group, and, in particular that of Albertinelli, announce the Renaissance, this return to the origins of antiquity. As the Museum cannot pride itself on having a Raphael, it has at least one of his contemporaries, Mariotto di Biagio di Bindo Albertinelli (1474-1515). The attribution of the painting to the school was made by Ettore Camesca, in the *Italian Encyclopedia of Painting*.

We are in the presence of the stylization of a naturalist

form that Michel Ragon would rank with secondary abstraction, where space and time have been sacrificed to the concept of the adoration, the historical reality to poetry. Enlarged as it is in the landscape and the frame, the Virgin acquires a monumental character which inspires respect. This formal plenitude is nothing other than the exaltation of the love and adoration that go from the Mother to the Child, who is placed, naked on the ground, in the most unlikely way — a composition that originated in Flanders and proved to be successful among the painters of the Cinquecento. If we add to this secret art of modelling, the delicate and precise rendering of the drawing, the symbolic element of the colours of the clothing and the springtime landscape, we thus arrive at the conclusion that the painting is dependent more on metaphysics than on reality. This clearly illustrates the neoplatonism of Albertinelli whose art follows from the principles of the school of Botticelli.

We pass over some works to discuss the astonishing representation of the *Repentant Magdalene* one of the most recent acquisitions of the museum; the splendour of its beauty is enhanced by the gold of the hair, and the brightness of the clothing. In the restoration of the cult of the saints which the counter-Reformation had inaugurated, shortly after the Council of Trent, the fashion had changed to a Magdalene whose ravishing beauty, threatened by hardship and tears, had the power to move people to pity.

Caravaggio's influence has not yet reached the forms and planes of painting; this brings us to the end of the XVIth century. Truthfulness is presented in a full light; Robert Genaille writes that this is a particular manner "of using light to give the images their presence, their volume, and their weight". The mannerism of the time appears in the study of clothing and hair-style, as is apparent in the diagonal position of the grieving and tearful saint; finally, the Flemish liking for detail and the object is obvious in the picturesque drawing of the hair and the cloak, and even in the vase of perfume that in the painting takes on the importance of a work of Solomon, that is to say, a piece in which the master's skill appears. Let us add, to justify our attribution to the Flanders school, that the cave opening is not, as it is in works by the Bolognese painters, a hole of light that is dazzling and creates a contrast; on the contrary, the delightful blue landscape in the poetic manner of Patenier, fills it and makes a single plane with it. In the presence of a canvas whose importance and beauty have been understood, one does not remain indifferent to the strong feeling that arises from a humanism that tends towards "the embellishing of the real world" and which will soon lead to a new world that will see the genius of Peter-Paul Rubens spring forth from a brisk and gleaming brush.

Our Museum does not only present religious works; it also has a good number of paintings with secular subjects; but, what is the point of making such distinctions, when we know that at a certain point secular and religious art are related and unite. Our ornamental sculptors, of whom the Museum has several original pieces, should be considered as veritable artists; we cannot indefinitely confuse them with simple craftsmen, since they were inventive and created new forms. The high altar (Fig. 1) flanked by four columns of Spanish origin in the "churrigueresque" style comes from the old church at Champlain; it is the work of François Normand and dates back to 1820. The general disposition of the altarpiece and its threefold division reveal an obvious Palladian influence and make it a work remarkable for its elegance and its even proportions. It would be fitting, in a more searching study that we would one day emphasize the progressive and successful evolution of the sculptural production of our old churches, which would testify to the degree of culture of the people for whom they were made.

The construction of the tabernacle door became for the craftsman, the builder of the altar-piece, the feature that tested his skill, that would illustrate his talent and his spirit for inventiveness; moreover, it was suitable for the piece to be treated with care and piety because of its purpose which was to protect from sacrilege the Reservation of the Sacrament. Most of these doors, from a single block of pine and "free of knotholes", were worked like jewellery, in the manner of a cameo: sculpted on the side according to the method of a careful and sparing cut, the bottom was hollowed out so that the eucharistic symbol would show off in an impressive gesture. The pelican wounding itself (Fig. 6), a symbol of the Resurrection, with its little ones simply stylized, stands out in high relief on the door topped by a diamond-shaped canopy and a scalloped drapery that recalls the veil in liturgical colours that should cover the tabernacle. This arrangement of swift and twisting lines shows the lyricism of our craftsmen in all the fervour of their inspiration. The personality of our sculptors was brought to light in these pieces which are of a great manual skill.



Of the Canadian collection we will examine only two paintings: the *Onions* by Ozias Leduc and *Winter* by Marc-Aurèle Fortin: they remain, so to speak, representative of an art that one would have thought non-existent at the beginning of the century; their pictorial qualities attest that art has not died among us.

The *Onions* by Ozias Leduc is assuredly one of the most remarkable paintings of the time. This still life which is related to the art of the Dutch painters of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries displays the technique that the master of Saint-Hilaire had and the marvellous talents that he had for the arrangement of modelled figures. The value of this canvas, found in an apartment on Dorchester street in Montreal, is that "by means of being true" it explodes with beauty. The realism of the red onions, spread out as if by chance, spilling out over the copper pot, is heightened by an arrangement in a pyramid which in turn is dependent on a completely Car-

tesian logic. A work of this quality is sufficient to make Leduc a classic painter.

*Winter* is one of the first works by Marc-Aurèle Fortin; it apparently dates back to before 1920. At the time when I acquired it, it seemed modern in the use of the paint directly from the tube: the contours are outlined in black, the snow is stark white. One can anticipate the art of Fortin in the arabesques traced by the branches of the stripped trees, and, which in a frantic expressionism will appear to storm the mountain and the white clouds. We must do justice to Fortin, in spite of the Cubist and Fauvist influences that he must have felt, that he thus remained true to himself.

To become aware of the wealth the Museum holds, only a pious pilgrimage will confirm the truth of my account. The admission is free: all one needs is a certain state of grace.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## A museum of primitive arts in Montreal

By René ROZON

In the first quarter of 1971, the following was observed in Montreal. First, all the precolumbian pieces that the Godard Lefort Gallery exhibited were purchased. Second, more than 60% of the 1,000 precolumbian art objects gathered for the major exhibition of the Museum of Fine Arts, "Man-Eaters and Pretty Ladies" come from Montreal collections. These two events in rapid succession testify to an undeniable infatuation for the primitive arts in Quebec. For the time being we do not know what will be their repercussions. On the other hand, we may affirm now that the primitive arts have indeed gained ground in Montreal during the last twenty years. To support this, consider the following facts: most of the Montreal universities have small beginnings of collections of primitive art; two galleries of the metropolis, le Petit Musée and the Lippel Gallery have been catering for some years to a market for primitive art objects; finally, one last thing, but not the least, there is even a museum of primitive arts in Montreal. This is the Museum of African and Oceanic Arts founded in 1968 by Father Ernest Gagnon, of the Jesuit order, whose collection is now accessible to the public at large. What is to be concluded from such a surge in interest? Would an art that is antipodal to our sensitivity suddenly correspond with our aspirations? In this connection we questioned Father Gagnon who, in giving us his views of primitive arts, and in particular the African arts which make up the core of his collection, reveals to us their secrets and their ramifications for the western world.

Q. — Quite early on, you displayed a marked interest for the primitive arts at a time when they were practically unknown and had few enthusiasts. What circumstances led you to act as a forerunner?

A. — Several factors led me to the primitive arts. First was chance: the first objects I collected, African masks, were literally given to me, so "ugly" and "barbarous" were they considered to be at the time. Moreover, this stroke of good fortune favoured my personal culture: from the time I was in college, I was interested in the works of Braque and Picasso on one hand, and the Surrealist movement on the other. These cultural antecedents predisposed me, so to speak, to receive favourably this art which was not well known. Finally, the primitive arts answered an inner need: they gave me an aesthetic and spiritual meaning. At the same time they made me understand life.

Q. — As a matter of fact, to what aesthetics do you refer?

A. — Surely not "primitive" aesthetics! To begin with, we are making a serious error in qualifying as "primitive", objects that come from civilizations other than our own and which are not industrialized, but which instead, obtain their livelihood from age-old traditions. For the term "primitive" has become disparaging when used by Westerners: more often than not it indicates an inferior status; or sometimes quite the opposite when it is exalted beyond measure in a romantic sense. That is why, moreover, I changed the name from Museum of Primitive Arts to Museum of African and Oceanic Arts. No doubt the latter name dispels the am-

biguities inherent in the first. On the other hand, the term "primitive", although it is known to be wrong, is no less in common use, because we are unable to find an adequate replacement for it. Therefore, we are obliged to use it provisionally from time to time. But we should always be cautious of the meaning ascribed to it and use it with the greatest circumspection.

The African work is neither primitive, according to the common Western acceptance, or is it an art, at least in the beginning. For the African, art is neither a precept, or an absolute, but a by-product; that is why the work is never bound to art trends. Rather, if a work is beautiful, if it comes within the domain of art, it is sometimes by accident, but whatever the reason may be, it is always in addition to its function.

Thus, not really primitive, nor necessarily artistic, the African work is quite different and in that respect, I think, clearly superior to Western production. By way of an approximation, and not a real definition of African aesthetics, which is the only way of considering it without betraying it, let us say that formal rigor and profound meaning are the two essential characteristics of African art. Now few Western works contain this duality.

Q. — One of the fundamental traits of modern Western art is precisely this formal severity which has come from the primitive arts. The two civilizations meet at this level. Do they not differ rather in the degree of meaning that arises from their respective works?

A. — That is true. In the West a few Romanesque works have an inner understanding, a sense of life comparable to African works. But it is the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, under the circumstances, which comes closest to the African masks and attains their level. For, like the African work of art, it is inseparable from the sacred, that is to say from man in search of spirituality, of what is most profound. For the primitive, the realm of the sacred contains two fundamental ideas. The first one gave me faith in life: there is to begin with, a *problematical* element of the sacred. In the West, in the area of religion, we have no problems, but we have ready made answers everywhere, even for problems we do not have. Whereas in Africa, every five years, individuals are initiated, "recycled" to use a Western term, into the single goal of evaluating their spiritual life. In this way they have a spiritual progression in physical life: they do not really attain Sanoufo before they are 50 years old, or Bambara before 65. If we Westerners had greater knowledge of this school of wisdom, it would have spared us much exegetic groping.

Q. — But is your Judeo-Christian formation reconcilable with African spiritual searching?

A. — Certainly. Africans make the same quest as Westerners do with regard to invisible reality, but they do so without Revelation. Basically they are monotheistic. For them, the sacred is not religious, but akin to religion, which does not exclude it, and never falls into Western moralism. And there, we approach the second fundamental aspect of the sacred





that I would like to point out: for the African, everything that is real is sacred, whether it is a matter of the vegetable or animal kingdom, or more abstract ideas like time and space. That is why primitive holidays are times of exaltation and resurrection where life takes back all its rights. And then, they have an incredible respect for nature: the entire tribe is to be consulted if a tree is to be felled. For the primitive thinks a tree is more beautiful than a book. In that respect, he is of the same mind as Saint-John Perse for whom a book is above all, the death of a tree. Even war is sacred for the primitive. Thus it is rare that he takes a life. For him, war is a game. If someone is to die, it is through a spirit of sacrifice, it is rarely an enemy. That explains why the Spaniards conquered Mexico so easily: the Mayas did no killing, thus they were completely routed. But we Westerners have lost the meaning of the symbol and the sacred. In short, there are very few experiences we live deeply. Whereas for the primitive, the meaning of the sacred, and symbolic language is related to gesture and the object. Everything takes on a symbolic value, every reality is worthy of contemplation: there is no real limit between the visible and invisible worlds. Certainly, he is able to distinguish between these two ideas, but for him, the invisible is always in the visible. The means of communication between the visible and the invisible is the word which is life, the word, the equivalent of the Word made flesh. For example, the African mask is a sign of the word: the ancestor lives in the mask, he is endowed with a real presence, analogous to the Eucharist. Unfortunately, our limitations prevent us from understanding them, but if we enter their universe, we shall better understand ourselves after.

Q.—What are the limitations to which you make allusion?

A.—I mean the limitations of the Western mind that tends to intellectual colonialism. To understand foreign civilizations Western man needs to penetrate, label and restrict them. For everything that does not belong to the white race, category, and method does not exist. Inversely, other societies exist only if they resemble us or if they are known to us. Briefly, we are thinkers, as opposed to primitive dialectics which deal with the heart and love, the irrational. Since the Middle Ages the ruling classes have suppressed the irrational. However, the people remained fundamentally medieval until the French revolution. The culture of the XVIIIth century is not only Versailles, it is also Tabarin. But from the XVIIIth century our civilization reached a tyrannical intellectual colonialism. Printing, which marks the transition from oral and aural communication to visual and linear communication, is paralyzing the West. The more things appear in print and

are read, the more things are categorized, the more reality becomes stagnant, dull and gloomy, unrelated to life. All the great cities including Sumer and Rome died from water pollution. Mind pollution is no less alarming. What is there to be said when both kinds of pollution coexist? Let us admit it we are no longer down to earth. According to a Dogon (TR: Dogon, people of Mali) author, "the whites think too much".

Q.—Do you think the primitive arts can get us out of this impasse?

A.—The primitive arts can save the West by renewing it. Let us not forget that the primitives are men like us, that have values equal to our own. They have similar preoccupations: love, hunger, the survival of the race and death. They have also tackled the great human problems — philosophical, sociological, and so on — and have attempted to resolve them. Their solutions are often more intelligent than ours. Let us take psychoanalysis for example, they have been familiar with it for a long time. Carl Jung claims that the great disorder of the West is the Oedipus complex. Now, primitive people have found a solution to this problem by adopting the following custom: at an early age the child is separated from his father and entrusted to an uncle, his father's brother, who is responsible for raising him. It is thus in opposition to our fine theories that primitive people have succeeded in dealing with the Oedipus complex. They have also found pertinent solutions to several other basic problems, including education, consumption, social classes, and human love, to mention only a few. It is true that primitive people, being very close to nature, have the advantage in finding concrete solutions to problems that arise. And that it is due to the contact with their natural environment, the forest and bush, that their inner life developed. That is why Africa, and by extension every primitive society, is an immense monastery. That is why, as we mentioned, they consider reality sacred, and the sacred a reality worthy of contemplating. They offer us a deep meaning of things that even allows contradictions to be reconciled.

We Westerners are seeking proof. The primitive finds evidence. The important things in life, like love, are not proved but observed. Primitive people never abstract, they are always rational and logical, but *through the concrete world*. It would therefore be to our advantage to be inspired by the primitive arts. The meaning of life escapes us because we have smothered life. Primitive people have faith in life which they convey in their objects. Will we be able to understand them in time?

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## Education

By Bernard LEVY

The three major museums of Quebec do not compete with each other; not always. To a certain extent, they even complete each other. However, the lack of real and systematic co-ordination among them leads to inevitable overlapping. Thus, one cannot but regret the absence of a policy of exchange and all the advantages that would flow from it.

Each museum certainly has its own personality. For all that, the latter remains quite broad for the Museum of Quebec and the Museum of Fine Arts or too exclusive for the liking of a certain public as far as the Museum of Contemporary Art is concerned.

Financial or administrative difficulties, space, definition and permanent redefinition: these are the problems which they all share. Each of them, in fact, is trying in its own way to face the imperatives connected with its personality or its environment. It is thus striving to satisfy as best it can a new public of all ages groups which is emerging from all social classes. It should thus not be surprising to see the museum making a priority of taking on a rôle — a mission? — of a pedagogic order. In this way it is meeting an implicit or explicit requirement of its visitors. Every museum has been equipped with an educational service. The persons in charge (M. André Juneau, in Quebec, Miss Patricia Railing, at the Fine Arts Museum, and M. Alain Parent, at the Museum

of Contemporary Art) have certainly understood that they not only had to inform but also, and especially, they had to form their respective publics. How are they going about it? That is what *Vie des Arts* asked them.

In their structure and organization, the museums are increasingly drawing nearer to cultural centres. They seem, in short, like cultural centres that specialize in the plastic arts.

Almost all that is lacking is a drama group to make the Fine Arts Museum a complete cultural centre in the heart of the city. Indeed, the programme of conferences, concerts, film showings, the library, photothèque, school and art centre, harmoniously exist side by side: better yet, these elements make up a whole body whose activity is reported in the review *M*. Every year that passes sees four new exhibitions, and the donations of contributing members enrich the permanent collection. In truth, it is rather of a living school that one must speak, as the various components of the museum seem to answer a pedagogic objective.

A comparable, although much less complete, organization, is the Museum of Quebec: conferences, films, various publications, and reproductions of works of art... The too limited budget of the Museum of Contemporary Art does not permit holding such varied activities.





### *No one guides the guided tour.*

The preoccupations of the educational services of the various museums are essentially based on the guided visit. Short of funds, or wealthy, the museum attaches a prime importance to contacts with the public. The approach to the public is appreciably the same: communications with school boards, correspondence with the administration and teachers of the regional schools, the preparation of calendars, announcements in newspapers, press conferences, notices, etc... The style is what differs completely from one museum to another.

To the volunteer guides (trained in the school for guides) of the Fine Arts Museum, the Museum of Quebec prefers specialists chosen according to the character of the exhibitions. At the Museum of Contemporary Art, the director of the educational services acts as the only guide...

In Quebec as in Montreal, the guide does not present himself as an agent for information or an unerring scholar, but rather as an intermediary. From this basic idea, common to the three museums, three divergent ideas emerge. The itineraries vary but often reach the same result.

At the Museum of Fine Arts, the personality of the guide is most important. Through his own emotions, the guide attempts to enrich and enhance the viewer's perception of the works of art. As he makes his comments, he inserts sociological, historical, or geographic details. In brief allusions, he calls on sensations that affect senses other than vision. It is thus hoped that the visitor will gain confidence by a simple and direct exhibition, and analyze by himself, for his personal satisfaction, the general context in which are situated the objects that have been brought to life — as if by magic — before his eyes. Patricia Railing affirms: "Ideally the guide becomes transparent and the viewer forgets he is there. We often achieve this. That is why we say that no one guides the guided visit!"

In Quebec there are conference-visits. There are no conducted tours led by volunteers with or without previous training. Depending on the exhibitions, the tours are led by professors of history, art history, and literature. Thus, they work for and with the public.

### *Understanding the artist*

They are proceeding, in fact, with modern techniques of animation; and making abundant use of audio-visual means. The image holds visitors back. Soon all the galleries of the museum will be connected to the sound system. The visitor will be able to listen to a commentary of the historical and aesthetic features of the exhibitions while strolling about.

Having an exhibition only by showing paintings draws only experts or connoisseurs. The public at large needs reference points. It wants to *understand*. This is an inevitable question. We must take care not to avoid it. Understanding: the guide does not attempt to *explain* a work of art, he tries to introduce the viewer into a different world, a *new* world. Understanding does not mean deciphering a code: there is no code. André Juneau confided to me: "I am not even sure that there is any sort of key, understanding is grasping a language, no longer feeling exterior or apart from a work; it is being introduced at first, then invited to dialogue with a different means of expression, that of the artist." The guide at the Museum of Quebec is the intermediary between the artist and the viewer. Understanding is understanding the artist, his intentions, his limitations. The artist does not speak with words: he expresses himself with his work and there intervenes a whole personal range of emotions, of love or rejection; everything happens on the level of real impressions: the dialogue can begin; in this way the feeling of understanding is born.

The Museum of Quebec has an important collection of traditional art. However, it remains open to contemporary art and even to artistic experiments. The *style* of the educational service is thus greatly determined by the interest of the visitor. Therefore, the museum does not appear the same to nursery school children as to a research worker or a specializing critic.

The visit for children of nursery school age is never longer than three quarters of an hour. When it is possible concrete things are presented. Simple questions are answered: what is a sculpture? They are even shown a sculptor at work. They are shown the differences that exist between a photo and a painting. These notions are unknown to a great number of young people for whom what is beautiful is what is *lifelike*.

For adolescents there is a social history of Quebec through traditional art: the importance of religion, the importance of the portrait...

The initiation to contemporary painting may begin with

the analysis of a figurative piece: the young visitors (age 12 to 17) experience a feeling of security when they *recognize* such and such an object. Progressively, from work to work, there is greater abstraction to reach finally the field of present day plastic experiences. There emerge criteria of appreciation that are subjective (optical illusions, vibrations, sensitizing experiences), and objective (means used). There is another manner of proceeding: the analysis of a work by the artist himself.

A welcoming word greets those who make unplanned visits. A brief account presents the museum and its various orientations. The choice is left up to the visitors to begin with what they please, then a guide accompanies the group and answers questions. Finally he invites the group to return under better conditions, that is by integrating the visit into the framework of planned activities. It is better, in fact, to prepare students. André Juneau can send to teachers, a few weeks before they come to the museum, a folder containing texts and slides on the museum and its collections. With these documents, the teacher can build a course that arouses the curiosity of the students. "We need the school", André Juneau assures me. The museum constitutes a complementary and not a competitive element because it offers to show the original works, that is to say, unique, irreplaceable, and authentic.

"Students are our best ambassadors to the parents who come to the museum on their own. The museum is thus also the school of the parents." So if it is true that the museum conserves, it also instructs and enriches in a dynamic and modern manner: this is not one of its least surprises.

It is also to young people that the museum offers the possibility of creating an original environment that is the object of an exhibition every year: we recall Vacances '68, '69, '70, etc. They find a source of practical teaching in it and the public feels a keen satisfaction. To traditional art the directors of the Museum of Quebec would like to add popular art: the recent exhibition of the dresses of Madame Belley are eloquent witness to this.

At the Museum of Contemporary Art, there is no properly so-called educational service. M. Alain Parent, a young 25 year old graduate looks after *opening the eyes* of the young people who come to visit the museum. The budget is slender. No question here of sending teachers luxurious catalogues, exhaustive documentation, and still less any audio-visual documents. Most often Alain Parent composes a brief text of introduction, of the historical aspects and main features of an exhibition. Never more than two or three typewritten pages! He also includes an invitation. Under these conditions everything rests on the visit. "A simple visit with a personal touch", he says. His favourite arm is the telephone. It is the most rapid and efficient means of getting to know the public they will have to guide. It is important to know the age of the young visitors, their social environment, their scholastic level, their ideas about the history of art... It is an important phase, for the museum is not presented in the same way to a 13 year old boy — the most difficult age — as it is to an adolescent Cegep student or to nursery school children.

Like his colleagues at the Fine Arts Museum and the Museum of Quebec, Alain Parent contacts school boards, informs teachers in regional schools and Cegeps and he already foresees a collaboration at the university level.

### *For the works: identification*

Alain Parent defines himself as an *eye-opener*. In this sense nothing is more further removed from his intentions than the strictly didactic point of view. For children of from 4 to 8 years of age, he *tells* of the organization of the plays of colour of contemporary works. "At that age, they understand very quickly and very well that the gesture of the artist is not necessarily scribbling: they have not reached the 'I can do as much' that characterizes the adolescent." It is also often possible to have the children *work* at the museum. This is putting into practical application the commentary and explanation about colour.

From 12 to 13 years of age, everything changes. You have to win over this public. And first, put them at ease. As a general rule, young visitors should never enter the galleries of a museum without some preparation. The reason is that the museum is not the street. Before contemporary works (before works of art in general) the boys may become mocking, they thus refuse to take part in the act of exploration; they take a pre-conceived defensive attitude; efforts should be made to reduce this before entering the exhibition galleries. The introduction aims therefore, at making them curious. Alain Parent asks them: "What is a museum?" The dialogue begins quickly and directly. A museum is not a box. It is not the city, it is not the street. There is a



separation. Why deny it? The problem consists of showing that in spite of the privileged place that the museum is, there is no real border between the street and the museum. One must know how to look, that is all. The most difficult part is yet to come. In fact, as soon as they are with the works, the adolescents do not know what attitude to assume and they refuse to see. Their faces tighten and close. This is because, at thirteen, they have preconceived ideas for or against their parents with whom they are living, often in a very conservative context. Before a work of art, they repress their natural sensitivity; they are uprooted; at best they let their eyes *glide* over the canvas. Some are so abashed that they slip out to smoke a cigarette downstairs... "I no longer get upset by such an attitude, Alain Parent confesses, basically it is very natural. The work of art is shocking. It shocks some more than others. For someone who has never gone to the museum, the combination of prejudice and surprise can be jarring." There are still other aspects: the monetary value of the works. Why be offended? There is a market for works of art. Speculation is a part of everyday life... We must thus answer. The World Exposition is one important point of reference that Alain Parent often uses as an element for comparison. The memory of it is still vivid among the students.

At about 17 years of age, young people appreciate more a brief didactic statement during the course of which there is explained the history of art in Quebec since the war: the Automatists, the Neo-Plasticists. At this age there appears a feeling of identification. It is a matter of showing these young people, in fact, that the art hanging in the Museum of Contemporary Art is *their* art, so that they feel close to it. Possibly the dates of birth of the artists will be given. And in the case of a one-man show (Charles Daudelin for example) an attempt will be made to present an evolution. At thirteen as at seventeen, there is risk of a catastrophe without some preparation, that is to say they may have a general refusal to see.

Whoever the public is, that is being addressed, it is better to dwell on one or two works rather than to try to present a whole exhibition. In fact, people are curious about only

one thing: knowing the name of the work and the author. Thus we see visitors going from title to title, casting a furtive glance at the work itself. That is what should be avoided. "I have my young visitors sit right on the floor in one of the galleries, facing a work. And we discuss: the play of colours, forms, and movements. I use comparisons taken from everyday life; a window that opens, traffic, the arrangement of the buildings in a city, lights blinking... That is how the museum becomes amusing."

That the Museum of Contemporary Art is situated off the island of Montreal and consequently is difficult for most of the population to reach does not constitute an obstacle for the educational service. School boards rent buses that let students off at the very door of the museum. The isolation of the museum on the other hand, credits prejudices like those saying the museum is like a mausoleum, a jar of preserves, etc... and does not facilitate the integration of art into life either.

Three museums, three different itineraries, three conceptions of art education. The result is proportionally the same everywhere. According to those in charge of the educational services, the average public, and the students who visit the three major museums, the results are quite satisfactory.

What system should be chosen? That of the Museum of Quebec that proposes a closer contact with the artists? That of the Fine Arts Museum that creates an atmosphere that situates the viewer between the inspiration and the work? That of the Museum of Contemporary Art that analyzes the work without going further? Perhaps it is not in terms of a choice that we must consider this, because, in short, all of these methods are exciting to initiate a large public to the plastic arts. The public will soon become more exacting. It is already beginning to be.

Teaching remains the major preoccupation, but there should scarcely be any delay in granting a more important rôle to research. This field, still in the embryonic stage, certainly obliges the museums to perfect a system of communication from which the public will only benefit.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## The Dissemination of Information

By Claude-Lyse GAGNON

"We have noticed that students who visit the museum during the week, usually come back on the weekend with their families, even more interested in the works of arts", reports M. Jean Soucy, director of the Museum of Quebec. We are thinking mostly of them in our dissemination of information. The number of visitors has almost doubled in the last two years, thereby justifying the new methods we are using to inform, enlighten and retain attention.

Optimism reigns on the Plains of Abraham. Enthusiasm too. And what is more fascinating, imagination. "It is because of the director, most of his co-workers will say. He stimulates everyone and believes so strongly in the future of the museum." A painter himself, a professor for more than twenty years, living as a poet, he succeeds moreover in what is so difficult elsewhere, in obtaining revenues. And when they are smaller than hoped for, he is resourceful. So...

"We organize twelve to fourteen major exhibitions a year, explains M. Soucy, sometimes they differ greatly from one another. Take the 'Surrealism in costume' exhibition held during the Carnival (1); it was exciting and a great success; before each exhibition, we see to it that it is announced to attract the public. To do this, we are fortunate to be working in close step with the Department of Cultural Affairs. We prepare statements for the newspapers, radio stations, and films for television. We put up perhaps 150 posters at Laval University, in the Cégeps (the students first), in our twin city, and in the main tourist areas. Starting from the principle that what is unsaid is unknown, we publicize our exhibitions."

And still in collaboration with the Department, the Museum of Quebec prepares catalogues, cartridges, but more than ever, they use audio-visual means to interest the public. Photographs, slides, films, background and period music surround the work. Soon a whole sound system in all the galleries will

permit larger groups of visitors to hear recorded commentaries. Naturally, for small groups, for students, there will always be guided tours.

They are very modern at the Museum of Quebec, the exterior of which however, looks more like a dark grey collegiate or convent fortress. There is the Ciné-Museum that runs films on art every afternoon. There is the projection of slides in the rotundas. The public, also, seems sensitive to this present time, delighted to experience what it feels in the museum. The young people appreciate the atmosphere so much that the students from the Fine Arts School in Quebec, for example, eagerly apply for the bursary that would allow them to live at the Museum during the summer. "They thus have a key to the Museum, concludes M. Soucy, they can visit it at night. The main thing is that they like to work, that the place inspires them, leads them to create, and that they feel comfortable with modern means of recognizing the past."

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, in spite of grave financial difficulties, seeks to draw the attention and interest of the population through printed material. The work in this area has been so well done, that the Museum won several international honours for graphic art. For 105 years, all manner of printed material had appeared according to the needs of the institution, without a concerted effort towards coordination. In 1965, the director, Mr. David Carter, asked four Montreal graphic artists, to propose a symbol. Fritz Gottschalk won the contest and shortly after was joined by artist Stuart Ash. The creation of a symbol and the remodeling of the letterhead for the letter-paper, envelopes, and visiting cards, was a sign of the process of unification of the means of visual communication. The unity of style that designers today call "the image" was established. Since then, Gottschalk





and Ash have had the opportunity to present objects as varied as a mobile-announcement, matchboxes, and paper masks. The present form of the review "M" equally expresses their concept of an art publication.

"We are handling the museum's publicity in several ways, says Madame Françoise St-Michel, assistant to the chief of public relations, by monthly calendars distributed to friends of the Museum, by catalogues, when our budget allows. We also create three or four posters a year to distribute in strategic spots, not counting the posters placed on buses, the large panels at the entrance, quite visible on Sherbrooke Street, and the new Neon panels. We are staking a lot on "M", our quarterly review, that has a circulation of 8,000.

Ever in the same spirit of drawing visitors, the Museum has a counter of artistic post cards, reproductions of ancient jewellery, original toys and prints. Let us mention too the photothèque and the library of more than 22,000 books used by researchers, students, and teachers.

At the Museum of Contemporary Arts, catalogues are the main arms used to conquer the public. They are presented in every size, in every colour, and printed on the most diverse paper.

"We publish about twenty a year", says M. Gilles Hénault, the director who has a fine romantic spirit, for almost every exhibition that we organize. Naturally, this is in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs. But I would certainly like to have other ways of giving an image to the Museum, of having it talked about and appreciated. Audio-visual means that suit the world in which we are living, but the Museum

of Contemporary Arts is no doubt the one that makes less use of contemporary methods of dissemination of information."

It is expected that 50,000 persons will visit the museum this year, for as M. Tisdale emphasizes, "we have not had a single month with less than 4,000 people". At present, it is mainly by invitations to exhibition previews, about 3,000 for each one, that the museum makes its activities and programmes known. Then, we have to rely on the newspapers, radio, and special television programmes.

"We also have notices, short texts giving the details of each exhibition, continues M. Hénault, but we would need slides and films really to interest visitors. We want to create a new environment that would be moving, sensitive, lively and piquant. I would like to see cineasts filming exhibitions, choosing the museum as a place to work, photographers coming here to be inspired for fashion photos or whatever. In short everything of an audio-visual order that could arouse some motivation."

#### NOTE :

- (1) "Surrealism in costume" during the '71 Quebec Winter Carnival was inspired by Madame Belley, a strange little lady from Quebec, a fortune-teller, who provides one of the best shows in Quebec, dressed one day as Cleopatra another as an Indian or a missionary. Her many costumes were exhibited on mannequins that resembled her. It was a great success.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirkysen)

## Povungnituk

By René de SOLIER



At the beginning of the adventure, a postcard from Povungnituk, the centre of Eskimo art. The project, entrusted to friends, was to visit Eskimo and Indian centres. They tried to dissuade me. Renouncing, for the time being, visiting the Indians north of Vancouver, despite indications given by William E. Taylor, director of the National Museum of Man, on my return to Montreal, the trip to the Eskimos, the *Far North* for us, had been organized with the help of the Department of External Affairs.

Montreal-Timmins. This was already the last stop for one airline company. From that point we were entrusted, as was the luggage, to another airline. It took two days to reach Povungnituk. Stop-overs: Moosonee, Fort George, Great Whale, Port Harrison, then the art centre at about 18:30 o'clock. Before nightfall... A small group was waiting... From the hydroplane to the jetty, by canoe, the trip was fast. As soon as we arrived, we met George Waldo who is in charge of the federal school. His warm welcome was comforting. Straight away we were in the heart of the colony where English predominates, but the role of French-speaking Canadians is not forgotten.

We had already heard of Father André P. Steinmann. In Paris I had participated in a radio broadcast in honour of the scholar of the antiquities of Iran, Henri Corbin, with Father Steinmann's brother, who met a tragic death in the gorges of Petra. We were familiar with the work undertaken and accomplished at Povungnituk, while concerning ourselves not with the very scholarly Eskimo grammar established by Lucien Schneider and A.E. Spalding, but with the writing and the art.

How many sculptors are there in Povungnituk? I don't know. The entire population (of about 600 Eskimos) sculpts. We met two sculptors, one of them sitting outside, in front of his house (no more igloos, besides, it wasn't the season) handling a small, very soft gray stone: steatite. It was about two feet high and three feet wide. No doubt he was sketching a seal, with few tools, really crude (sold in a kit in the Coop, for a dollar ten), including a rough file which traces waves, not undulating, but soft, on the top edges of the stone.

At the Cooperative and the Hudson's Bay Company, cardboard cases containing sculptures were being filled. We were able to see only what was left on the shelves, perhaps about a thousand sculptures, stacked side by side. Instinctively, choice and preference directed one to the oldest ones, of

Levi Smith — the sophisticated ones, people would say. In fact, they established the survivals of a mythology: *Big eye on foot*, an octopus-gnome, with forked or clawed tentacles. And the strange *Sea Spider*, marvellously carved in its cut edges, is perhaps related to Taquliluk, "Big Eye Spots" (cf. Zebedee Nungak, *Eskimo Stories from Povungnituk*, 1969, pl. 19, text 15).

The art of Levi Smith, evidently poorly known, unknown, is related to the *Old Bering Sea Culture* (found by Jenness in 1926): circles with a nucleus, ciliary scratches, ellipses, rising above rounded low elevations, suggesting the eyes of a hybrid, straight and curved lines, single or double, thickened edges (no ribs), with rounded protuberances; humps, a zoomorphic composition of patterns, and hybridization of themes — so many characteristics of an art that comes from the unconscious, and may manifest the ancestral, before it disappears. With this art, we are really close to another world.

The traditional themes that survive: *Mother and Child* by Markossiapik, *Fisherman* by Paulosie Sivuak, *Hunters shooting a walrus* by Markossie Nungak, *Eskimo Totem* by Simon Smith, *Caribou Hunter* by Joanesialuk, show how closely they stay with the form of the stone, attacked with ingenuity by means of the edge. What survives of the Eskimo mythology, what emerges, such as the mysterious character: Angatko (1964, engraving by Davidealuk) is surprising. No body, the head rests on the two legs (a character of Jerome Bosch! problem or phenomenon of the "grylles", from the latin *grillus*, painting in caricature, according to Pliny; the "grylle" would be derived from an antique model, whose creator would have been Antiphilos the Egyptian; a squat figure, a monster defined by the combinations of heads; the rudimentary type of this species, according to Jurgis Baltrušaitis replaces "the entire body by a face"); the sex, male or female, being inscribed on the face.

In his nomadic life, a short while ago, the Eskimo hunter, half-bird, half-man, moved swiftly. But the sedentary present-day man? The price seems a heavy one. The forms become too round — the soapstone plays tricks! It would be necessary to be able to attack the stone in another way, while testing its relative endurance, perhaps by *percussion*, blows, shatterings (none of these methods now used). It would be necessary to revert to a lithic industry or the elaboration of forms by means of appropriate tools. The use of the file, which is very easy, contributes to softening the contours.



We sometimes come upon a more beautiful stone, black steatite with marble veins... This is instinctively suitable for the chosen hybrid: *Siren* by Syollie Arpatu and *Igloo*; it is increasingly rare.

How does the sculptor work? From memory. From his life, Father Steinmann tells us. We can thus say of the sculptor that he *plays* at work. Is homo faber becoming homo ludens? or is there a leisure crisis? In an optimistic hypothesis, and considering those who are still working, one cannot know beforehand what is *to be found* in the material. A certain necessity remains because of the material proposed.

An Eskimo sculptor will say in an abridgment that is not concerned with linguistic correction: "I have no stone where it is inside". The Povungnituk Eskimo follows the stone, impassive, and will say: "I am looking at what is in the stone."

In the history of Arctic peoples, and according to the dynamics of cultural evolution, we must consider the role of tools and, now, the materials used. While the actual "engravings", in the last ten or so years, come from the hands of the Eskimos, what can be said of the production?

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

## Joe Plaskett

In conversation with Marie-France O'LEARY



Q. — Joe Plaskett, what can you tell us about the evolution of your painting?

A. — During the 40's until about 54, abstraction dominated in my painting. In 1947 I studied with the masters of the abstract in San Francisco, where several painters of the New York school were staying. After the war, art was in gestation in the U.S., because of the arrival of great European masters in America: confrontations among all the present artists existed and it was one of the most interesting periods of development. After a few months in San Francisco, I went to New York to study with Hans Hoffmann. I was very definitely influenced by him. He taught us to look at nature in its slightest details. It was not a purely abstract research of nature, but a concrete observation pushed further and further, work that always took place in front of a model, a search for reality and forms, their colours and volumes. Many students reacted by returning to the figurative. I experienced the same thing, I discovered that I was not cut out for abstract.

Q. — What are you trying to express in your painting?

A. — In my painting, I try to express my feelings about the marvels of the world. I have translated this in a self-portrait "Painter in awe of the world" which is now in the National Gallery of Canada. It is essential for me to have a free spirit and consider the world with eyes open, as if it were always for the first time.

Q. — And do you think this awareness can always be translated in a picture?

A. — I have an optimistic nature and I do not believe in the end of painting. I think art is eternal and not only contemporary: it has its continuity in time. I think there are always discoveries to be made.

Q. — Like those of the new painting?

A. — I understand the excitement of those who are always looking for a new painting, but despite that, that does not exclude what I call true painting. The great tradition of painting is where I find my inspiration, without, however, shutting out what is happening now. However, I feel overtaken by the present day research and it would be pointless for me to update myself scientifically and technologically. There is a secret garden in me that I wish to cultivate. I leave it to the young artists to wage their revolution.

Q. — Is that to say that you do not agree with this new tendency?

A. — All tendencies are valuable. To my mind, abstraction does not succeed after figuration; each form enriches the other. I consider that there is still something to be learned from great masters like Raphael and Rembrandt. I refute the present day idea that one must be absolutely up-to-date and completely reject the past.

Q. — For you painting...

A. — For me, painting is an act of love and not the formulation of an intellectual reasoning. This act can lead to an extreme excitement or remain quiet, private. I would qualify my painting as inward. Creation is important and remains mysterious.

Q. — I notice in your studio a great variety of whimsical and interesting objects that appear again in your paintings. Are they important to you?

A. — I surround myself with objects that I buy in the flea market. I am now collecting several made of terra-cotta because it is a material that affects me. I find however, that

nothing is as good as a living model. Thus in certain pictures I am tempted more by the picture and in others by the surroundings.

Q. — Why did you choose Paris as a permanent residence?

A. — For all the familiar reasons, but also for personal reasons: living in Paris inspires me tremendously. In spite of the state of modern painting here, there is such a wealth, that what I see outwardly allows me to be renewed inwardly. After having spent five years in Canada, I returned to Paris as delighted, as amazed, as I did twenty years ago. All the tradition still exists in the heart of the city: I am thinking of the pace of life, of the people in the streets, in cafés, in markets. I detest the conditioning that technological development brings to the human being. In the centre of Paris I feel life such as it was celebrated by the Impressionist painters. Now we cannot find this phenomena in Canada, at least not in the same form as here.

Q. — Then would your inspiration be solely European?

A. — No, my inspiration is not essentially European. It springs from two continents. I have a romantic side. I have always loved romanticism and what the picturesque element of Europe offers to the imagination. For a long time I was enthused by Venice, Gothic cities, and ancient ruins. At first I liked Paris for this reason. But I remain faithful to Canada whose great space inspires me. I have a tendency to flee the modern world. One can be modern and contemporary and love to paint a beautiful woman: there is no period for this desire. It is evident that there is a certain beauty in the contemporary world that can inspire artists, but I am not one of these. I keep my personality without denying others their enthusiasm.

Q. — Do you appreciate the forms painted by your young contemporaries?

A. — I can like a few experiments of young painting although I am not really knowledgeable about it. Some of the research fascinates me, but to my mind, it remains something other than painting. It seems to me a language that speaks to the eye but not the soul. It is a rather light form and from time to time one can appreciate lightness.

Art is now changing so rapidly that we have a tendency to accept everything and I deplore the fashionable side of young painting. Several such painters are trying to be shocking, to create a stir, but perhaps art needs these attempts to be renewed. I admire most painters like Balthus and Jean-Paul Lemieux. Obviously we find young people along the same lines who are also original.

Q. — But do you have the impression you are discovering new forms within your pictorial research?

A. — There is never an end to exploration in painting. I always like to think of myself as a young student painter. Now the danger is in rigidly adhering to one formula. I begin with a design and I do not know what is going to happen. I have no formulas. Each canvas is a new adventure.

Q. — Have you exhibitions in progress?

A. — I exhibited last year under the auspices of the Canadian Embassy in Germany. I am preparing for next May at the Waddington Gallery in Montreal.

Q. — And in Paris?

A. — In Paris I prefer to remain unknown and live there joyfully.

(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)