THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN ART HISTORY
ANNALES D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART CANADIEN

Volume XXVI
2005

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN ART HISTORY
ANNALES D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART CANADIEN

Études en art, architecture et arts décoratifs canadiens
Studies in Canadian Art, Architecture and the Decorative Arts

Volume XXVI
2005

Adresse / Address:
Université Concordia / Concordia University
1455, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest, EV-3.819
Montréal, Québec, Canada H3G 1M8
(514) 848-2424, ext. 4699
jcah@vax2.concordia.ca
http://art-history.concordia.ca/JCAH/index.html

La revue *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* est membre de la Société de développement des périodiques culturels québécois (SODEP), de l'Association canadienne des revues savantes et de la Conference of Historical Journals.
Cette revue est répertoriée dans les index suivants:

Tarif d'abonnement / Subscription Rate:
Abonnement pour 1 an / 1 year subscription:
28 $ individus / individuals
35 $ institutions / institutional
L'étranger / Outside Canada
40 $ US individus / individuals
50 $ US institutions / institutional

The Journal of Canadian Art History is a member of the Société de développement des périodiques culturels québécois (SODEP), the Canadian Association of Learned Journals and the Conference of Historical Journals.
This publication is listed in the following indices:

Architectural Periodicals Index (England)
Art Bibliographies (England)
Art Index (New York, U.S.A.)
Arts and Humanities Citation Index (ISI, Philadelphia, U.S.A.)
Canadian Almanac and Directory (Toronto, Ont.)
Canadian Business Index (Micromedia, Toronto, Ont.)
Canadian Literary and Essay Index (Annan, Ont.)
Canadian Magazine Index (Micromedia, Toronto, Ont.)
Canadian Periodical Index (INFO GLOBE, Toronto, Ont.)
Current Contents / Arts & Humanities (ISI, Philadelphia, U.S.A.)
Historical Abstracts and America (Santa Barbara, U.S.A.)
IBR (International Bibliography of Book Reviews, F.R.G.)
IBZ (International Bibliography of Periodicals Literature, F.R.G.)
Repère (Répertoire analytique d'articles de revues du Québec)
RILA (MA, U.S.A.)

Les anciens numéros des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* sont disponibles par l'*Annales* lui même à l'adresse suivante: Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien, Université Concordia, 1455, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest, EV-3.819, Montréal, Québec, H3G 1M8, ou jcah@vax2.concordia.ca ou http://art-history.concordia.ca/JCAH/index.html

Back issues of *The Journal of Canadian Art History* are available by *The Journal* at the following address: The Journal of Canadian Art History, Concordia University, 1455, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest, EV-3.819, Montréal, Québec, H3G 1M8, or jcah@vax2.concordia.ca or http://art-history.concordia.ca/JCAH/index.html

Mise en page / Layout and Design:
Pierre Leduc

Révision des textes / Proofreading:
Élise Bonnette, Mairi Robertson

Traduction / Translation:
Élise Bonnette, Janet Logan

Pelliculage et imprimeur / Film Screens and printer:
Imprimerie Marquis

Couverture / Cover:
Joyce Wieland, **Don't Tread On Me Or! Else!**, n.d, Fonds Joyce Wieland, Clara Thomas Archives, York University, Downsview. © National Gallery of Canada, Estate of Joyce Wieland / Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, succession de Joyce Wieland

ISSN 0315-4297
Dépôt légal / Deposited with:
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada / National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

REMERCIEMENTS / ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Les rédacteurs des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* tiennent à remercier de leur aimable collaboration de l'Université Concordia, Faculté des beaux-arts.

The Editors of *The Journal of Canadian Art History* gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Concordia University, Faculty of Fine Arts.

Les rédacteurs annoncent l'institution des Amis des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien.* Un don minimum de 300 $ vaudra un abonnement de trois ans au donateur.

The Editors wish to announce the institution of the category of Patron of *The Journal of Canadian Art History*. A donation of $300 minimum to *The Journal* will entitle the donor to a three year subscription.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES / CONTENTS XXVI / 2005

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This issue of *The Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* marks the first occasion where we provide a short introduction to the articles. After almost thirty years of publishing, we have seen the emergence of new strategies and approaches to the analysis and interpretation of issues within the discipline. At the same time, a number of tried and true methodologies have maintained their importance and value for the dissemination of knowledge in our field. Each period of Canadian art writing asks its own questions and finds it own answers. As our narrative continues to be constructed, it is evident that this is not a seamless story. Perhaps the most telling sign of the maturity of Canadian art history is the desire to position our enquiries within a borderless context and to take account of shifting parameters.

The text situating the seminal writings of J. Russell Harper and the article on Norah McCullough's contribution to craft, locate and define the work of individuals who have shaped our discipline. The study of artists as different as James Wilson Morrice and Joyce Wieland allows for the rereading of specific moments and definitions of nationalism in the work of the latter, and of internationalism in the former. Three articles are based on papers presented at the 2003 colloquium held in Montreal in conjunction with the exhibition *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière/ Light and Matter*. Two texts are concerned with the position of the artist in the wider arenas of reception and patronage, while the third challenges the accepted aesthetic interpretations. The memorial tribute to Guido Molinari honours both his pictorial achievement and his critical thinking, which challenged us for over half a century.

This brings us to the Book Review section. In quantitative terms, art writing in Canada has still not negotiated as solid a place within Canadian publishing as one sees in other countries. Mindful of this situation, we would like our readers to regard the book review section as a forum for ideas and as an arena for fruitful debate. Contributions are not necessarily limited to a single author; for example, the examination of a recent study of the National Gallery of Canada will be followed by another view in the next issue of *The Journal/Annales*. The exhibition catalogue continues to be our primary source of information and discussion, as evidenced here by the text on the Tom Thomson show. Since catalogues have an audience beyond those who actually attend the exhibition, we would like to expand this section and urge potential authors to submit proposals for publication reviews.

One of the most important sections in a scholarly publication is the Letters to the Editor column. Perhaps because we are still a relatively small community, despite the expansion of art history within cultural studies and other academic fields, individual scholars have still not spoken up sufficiently. We hope our readers will initiate new conversations by voicing their pleasures and displeasures, corrections and challenges so that we can develop this column as an important part of the narrative of Canadian art history.

Sandra Paikowsky
Publisher and Managing Editor

NOTE DE L'ÉDITRICE

Dans ce numéro des *The Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, nous donnons, pour la première fois, une courte introduction aux articles. Après presque trente ans de publication, nous avons vu l'émergence de nouvelles stratégies et approches en matière d'analyse et d'interprétation des questions relatives à la discipline. En même temps, certaines méthodologies sûres et éprouvées gardent leur importance et leur valeur pour la diffusion des connaissances dans notre domaine. Chaque époque de la littérature sur l'art canadien pose ses propres questions et trouve ses propres réponses. À mesure que se construit notre histoire, il est évident qu'elle n'est pas uniforme. Le signe le plus significatif de la maturité de l'art canadien est peut-être le désir de situer nos recherches dans un contexte sans frontières et de tenir compte de paramètres changeants.

L'article sur les écrits féconds de J. Russell Harper et la contribution de Norah McCullough à l'artisanat situent et définissent le travail de personnes qui ont façonné notre discipline. L'étude d'artistes aussi différents que James Wilson Morrice et Joyce Wieland permet une relecture de moments spécifiques et de définitions du nationalisme, dans le cas de cette dernière, et de l'internationalisme, pour le premier. Trois articles sont fondés sur des textes présentés lors du colloque tenu à Montréal, en 2004, conjointement avec l'exposition *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière/ Light and Matter*. Deux de ces textes étudient la place de l'artiste aux plans de la réception et du mécénat, alors que le troisième met en cause les interprétations esthétiques communément reçues. L'hommage souvenir à Guido Molinari célèbre aussi bien ses réalisations picturales que sa pensée critique qui nous ont interpellés pendant plus d'un demi-siècle.

Cela nous amène à la section Comptes reudus. En termes quantitatifs, la littérature sur l'art au Canada ne s'est pas encore fait une place bien établie dans le milieu canadien de l'édition, comme c'est le cas dans d'autres pays. Conscients de cette situation, nous aimerions voir nos lecteurs considérer la section Comptes reudus comme un forum d'idées et une arène de débats fructueux. Les contributions ne sont pas nécessairement limitées à un seul auteur. Ainsi, l'examen d'une étude récente du Musée des beaux-arts du Canada sera suivi d'un autre point de vue dans le prochain numéro des *Journal/Annales*. Les catalogues d'expositions demeurent notre principale source d'information et de discussion, comme on peut le voir ici dans le texte consacré à l'exposition *Tom Thomson*. Puisque les catalogues ont un lectorat qui dépasse le nombre de visiteurs des expositions, nous aimerions élargir cette section et nous invitons instamment les auteurs potentiels à proposer des recensions de publications.

Une des sections les plus importantes dans une publication savante est celle des lettres à la rédaction. Sans doute parce que nous sommes une communauté relativement petite, malgré l'expansion de l'histoire de l'art dans les études sur la culture et autres domaines académiques, les spécialistes ne se sont pas encore suffisamment manifestés. Nous souhaitons voir nos lecteurs lancer de nouveaux débats en communiquant leurs motifs de satisfaction ou d'insatisfaction, leurs corrections et défis afin que nous puissions faire de cette section une partie importante du discours sur l'histoire de l'art canadien.

Sandra Paikowsky
Éditrice et rédactrice en chef

fig.1 J. Russell Harper at the opening of his 1973 exhibition *People's Art: Naive Art in Canada* at the National Gallery of Canada. (Photo: Duncan Cameron, Capital Press, courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada)

TO BETTER KNOW OURSELVES
J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History*

> You know my feeling about Canadian art is that it's not the greatest art in the world. It's part of us, part of our ethos, part of the Canadian way of life and why in hell shouldn't we know something about ourselves?[1]
>
> J. Russell Harper, 1972

The publication of writing on Canadian art has increased significantly throughout the latter twentieth century, particularly with the formalization of the study of Canadian art in universities and the creation of such scholarly forums as *The Journal of Canadian Art History*. Only recently, however, has art historical scholarship focused on the historiographical and institutional formation of the precepts that shape our understanding of Canadian art.[2] The interest in institutions as a central component in the formation of the discipline is worth attention. Writing from a related discipline, Jody Berland has argued that the history of Canadian culture is in large part the history of institutions: the NFB, the CBC/Radio Canada, the CNR, and the governmental policies that regulate them.[3] Canadian art fits within the same purview, shaped by institutions – museal, academic and critical – which not only have provided the means of disseminating Canadian art, but have built the framework through which works are viewed and understood. While this institutional history is important, it is only one aspect of the analysis of Canadian art history: the texts lining the shelves of university libraries and perused every year by students also require assessment and evaluation.

This article begins that examination by analysing what has been described as one of the seminal texts of Canadian art history. *Painting in Canada: A History*, written by J. Russell Harper (fig.1), was published in 1966 by the University of Toronto Press (figs.2 and 3) with a simultaneous translation by les Presses de l'Université Laval. Its publishers, its main patron the Canada Council, and countless reviewers heralded *Painting in Canada* as the first comprehensive and definitive history of the nation's artistic production. It was the Council's sole contribution to celebrations of Canada's Centennial and *Painting in Canada* must be understood within the political, cultural and intellectual climate that underscored this symbolically charged event. The book was also the first major publication of J. Russell Harper, who had left his position as Curator of Canadian Art at the National Gallery of Canada to devote himself full-time to the project. Although his particular interest and scholarly strength was Canadian art of the nineteenth century – evident

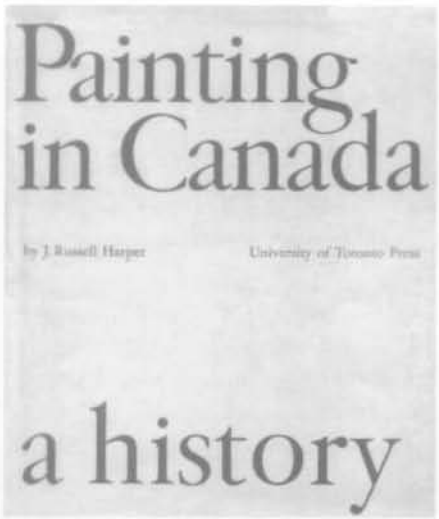


fig.2
Cover of J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History*, University of Toronto Press, 1966. (Photo: the author)

fig.3
Painting in Canada: A History, page 135. (Photo: the author)

in his publications on Krieghoff, Paul Kane, and folk art of the period[4] – it is this survey text that established him as "the father of Canadian art history,"[5] and that mapped out the narrative and analytical framework that would set the standard for the study of Canadian artistic production for decades to come.

Harper resisted efforts to establish such paternity; however it is impossible to deny his impact on the establishment of Canadian art as a worthy object of scholarly study. In tandem with *Painting in Canada* (re-issued in paperback in 1976), Harper helped shape the academic study of Canadian art history through his appointments at Sir George Williams (later Concordia) and Carleton universities, and in the creation of a graduate program in Canadian art history at Sir George in 1972. Written during what might be described as the "Centennial decade,"[6] *Painting in Canada* subscribed to many of the ideological and intellectual sentiments of the period: a conscientious attention to Canada's regional and linguistic diversity, a commitment to the development of narratives of national becoming to benefit contemporary generations, and a strong belief in the ability of culture to ensure the maintenance of an independent nation-state. The full extent of Harper's contribution remains to be studied. This article however, limits itself to mapping the social and intellectual contexts of his best-known book in order to gauge its effects as the first comprehensive survey of Canadian painting on the subsequent development of this field of study.

Writing for the Centennial

To fully appreciate the contribution of *Painting in Canada*, it is necessary to situate the text fully within the context of the Canadian Centennial. The 100th anniversary of Confederation was an excuse for celebration by communities from all corners of the nation, and the federal government encouraged local events as a means of appearing to bring the regions of the country into a national conversation. Provinces were encouraged to enact their own Centennial legislation (all complied) and matching grant programs were implemented to ensure that municipalities across Canada would receive funding for festivals, beautification projects and monuments. For some, this deferral to provincial and municipal governments was evidence of a decentralized approach – the federal government providing the money but leaving the decisions to individual communities. However the broad reach of official celebrations can be seen as the containment of regional and local responses within a homogeneous, nation-building project.

Although the nation as a unified entity was the focus of the celebrations, politicians were quick to realize that such nationalism could only be achieved through attention to all components of the nation: linguistic, regional and to a limited degree, ethnic.[7] In particular, the ideology of the Centennial mandated a more considered attention to improving relations between francophones and anglophones in Canada. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,

struck in 1963 and submitting the final volume of its report in 1970, is the clearest example of the federal government's interest in giving official recognition to the role played by both cultures in Canada's history. All government agencies, including the arm's-length Canada Council, were attentive to the issue.[8]

Russell Harper's book was not the University of Toronto Press' first attempt to produce a broad survey history of Canadian art. Late in 1960 Marsh Jeanneret, Director at the Press, outlined a similar project to the Canada Council, describing his proposal as a "definitive history of Canadian art" under the general editorship of Alan Jarvis, with Paul Arthur as the production editor.[9] Jarvis had been relieved of his duties as Director of the National Gallery in 1959 and in his newfound positions as Director of the Society for Art Publications and Editor of *Canadian Art*, he was the ideal leader for the kind of monumental project envisioned by the UTP. After a series of aborted starts, the project under Jarvis' leadership was abandoned although the concept continued to be strongly endorsed by both the Press and the Canada Council. Several replacement authors were suggested and in 1964 it was agreed that Harper would be the most suitable. While information on the content of Jarvis' projected text is scarce,[10] correspondence between the Press and the Canada Council is instructive for continuities and changes in the overall conception of the project from its original inception under Jarvis' editorship to its fulfillment by Harper.

From the beginning, the book was conceived both as a centenary project and as a scholarly publication. Internal UTP memoranda discussing the format and content of the book compare it to certain of the Skira art volumes, approximately 28 x 25 cm in size, with a large number of high-quality reproductions.[11] The publication was not to be a coffee-table or picture book however. It is clear through correspondence within UTP, with the Canada Council and with other publishers interested in Canadian art, that the projected *History of Canadian Art* – the title given to the project until 1963 – would be a "critical historical survey." It was to be informed by serious scholarship and not tainted by "journalistic writing." The scope of the initial project was large: the comprehensive, at one point two-volume history, would cover not only Canadian painting, but sculpture, architecture, drawing, and Aboriginal art. While Jarvis would oversee the whole in his capacity as General Editor, the writing of specific chapters would be given over to various authors: R.H. Hubbard on painting, Kathleen Fenwick on drawing, Allan Gowans on architecture and Jarvis himself on sculpture. An advisory committee would be formed to provide input and to consult with Jarvis on matters of content.

Like Harper's text, the initial *History of Canadian Art* was to be published simultaneously in English and French. As A.W. Trueman, Director of the Canada Council, asserted in a letter of 2 December, 1960:

> When the matter was first discussed by the Council, great emphasis was laid on the necessity of bringing to bear on the whole project an adequate measure of judgement and experience from the French-Canadian side. In view of the great

> contributions made to our national art by the French Canadians, this proviso appeals to all as logical and necessary. I mention the matter here at this length merely because in preliminary conversation the names of Mr. Jarvis and Mr. Arthur and Dr. Hubbard were the only ones specifically mentioned, although from the start the vital importance of the French contribution was emphasized and assumed on all points in the conversation.[12]

Trueman goes on to underline that establishing full collaboration between anglophone and francophone traditions needed be an integral part of the planning process and that he expected both Jarvis and the Press to comply. It is clear from the correspondence that such strong language was in response to what was perceived to be Jarvis' reservations about francophones playing a more significant role, and the matter was regularly raised as a concern.[13] Throughout, it was the Canada Council that insisted on securing a francophone presence, if not at the level of contributors then at least at the level of a larger supervisory board. This is confirmed by the comment Marsh Jeanneret made in a 1961 memo to Frances Halpenny, Managing Editor at the Press: "It remains clear that the Canada Council expects a national history of Canadian art, incidentally, i.e. national in concept from the standpoint of contributors as well as content."[14] As with the subsequent Harper project, a "Francophone presence" was established by way of a consultative committee, described early on as a means of ensuring the "adequate measure of judgement and experience" desired by the Council.[15]

Jarvis' tenure as General Editor of the *History of Canadian Art* came to an end with his resignation from the project on 5 March 1963. Concern over missed deadlines had already been expressed by UTP and Jarvis' ability to see the project to completion in a timely fashion was under increasing scrutiny by both the Press and the Canada Council. Names of possible replacement authors were put forward, including R.H. Hubbard and Russell Harper, but it was felt that Hubbard's contribution to scholarship on Canadian art had been exhausted. Harper, meanwhile, was viewed as a solid researcher but it was thought that he was lacking the writing skills that such a project required. Many of the books published at the time presented either biographical sketches of artists or narratives depending largely on reproductions of significant artworks. Both the Jarvis and Harper texts were conceived from the outset as primarily textual, with illustrations to add visual interest and complement the writing. The U of T Press in particular was adamant that any publication on Canadian art be scholarly in nature, rejecting as being too commercial the 1962 proposal by Les Editions HMH Ltée of Montreal to collaborate on a volume of masterpieces of Canadian painting.[16] The seriousness of the endeavour is not surprising, given the important function that histories in general and cultural histories in particular played in the nation-building process. That Harper's text achieves this goal clearly reflects the strong editorial presence of both UTP and the Canada Council.

However it must be underscored that writing a narrative that was detailed in its coverage of artistic production of both anglophone and francophone artists, and that was attentive to developments outside of the traditional geographical foci of art historians up to that point, was one of Harper's own goals and had formed the basis for the writing of an earlier essay, "Three Centuries of Canadian Painting," published in *Canadian Art* in 1962.[17] In a 1963 memorandum to the Canada Council describing the format and content of *Painting in Canada*, Harper addressed this very point:

> Much difficulty has resulted from the realization that Canada is five artistic countries: the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia. Painters of Quebec and Ontario have made the outstanding contributions, yet lesser men in, for example, Winnipeg and Edmonton, may be of greater importance to the Prairies than certain giants in older regions. It would be unjust to the Prairies to omit these lesser men completely. Certain compromises must therefore be made so that this history will relate to developments in all parts of Canada.[18]

Despite these difficulties, Harper pays scrupulous attention to regional as well as linguistic coverage. Painters from Atlantic Canada are particularly well-represented due in part to the long history of settlement in the area, but also to Harper's own knowledge. His attention to the western provinces is less complete, focusing largely on the work of Kane and the painting expeditions to the Rockies by members of the Group of Seven. In both cases, the West is considered as subject matter rather than as the source of any "authentically Canadian" artistic style. There are two exceptions to this general observation: in his analysis of Emily Carr, Harper views her as an artist who is intimately rooted in the landscape and people she paints, and in his discussion of post-war painting, work from Saskatchewan and British Columbia figures prominently in what is largely a cross-country listing of art and artists. Where Harper differs from his predecessors is in his treatment of artistic production as instrinsically connected to the context or location of its production. Because his narrative does not assume an overarching landscape tradition that culminated in the Group of Seven, it is possible for Harper to examine the work of artists working across different genres and in different geographical locations in a manner that allows specificity. As he noted in a progress report to UTP in July 1965:

> The book must combine a choice of material based on aesthetic criteria in regard to significant paintings, men and periods, and a fitting of the major achievements into the Canadian historical background – in no other way can an understanding and evaluation of painting be arrived at in a country which has developed from a struggling colony to nationhood where our painting now has international overtones.[19]

Harper's approach to the project thus demonstrates the influence of the intellectual climate of the period, that included debates around the dominance of Ontario and Quebec in existing narratives of the development of Canadian nationhood with historians in particular calling for a more concerted study of the impact of regional identities on the formation of national feeling. As I discuss below, Harper's approach to the writing of the history of art in Canada shared many of the concerns of Canadian historians regarding the impact of the climatic and political environment on the actions of figures of the past.

Harper's correspondence reveals that ultimately he found the Centennial requirements of his text somewhat constraining. During negotiations with the UTP for a revised edition of *Painting in Canada* in 1976, he wrote that if there were not going to be a revised French version, the number of illustrations of art from Quebec could be reduced. He further noted: "You realize that the original edition was a Centennial production and consequently given an almost over-heavy French bias;" and he wonders whether there was still a requirement to extend his enquiry to all provinces in all periods:

> I stretched the point when hunting material representing every part of Canada. Aesthetically, some paintings from newer or smaller provinces were thin. I can replace some with more significant works which have surfaced more recently. But I wonder about dropping others. For example, if you hope for any Newfoundland institutional sale, one should not completely omit Newfoundland. There is a similar problem in other areas.[20]

This comment also owes much to Harper's frustration with the process of transforming a lavishly illustrated text into a more affordable paperback edition. Furthermore, it relates to his own interest in giving Ontario's cultural history its intellectual due during a period of intense Quebec nationalism.[21] However, such comments should not be seen to invalidate his scholarly goals at the beginning of the project. Much like any other survey publication, national or otherwise, the requirements of representativeness and inclusiveness override personal inclination. An analysis of the content of *Painting in Canada* and Harper's methodological approach should illuminate some of the decisions that were taken.

Writing the History of Art in Canada

The conventional organization of the survey text is chronological. As Robert Nelson[22] has suggested, they are the "map of art history" ordering objects into temporal and spatial categories that ensure both their intelligibility as works of art and their place within a linear historical trajectory. The twenty-eight chapters of *Painting in Canada: A History* follow a standard chronology that takes the reader from the first French settlers up to the 1960s. Much like his earlier "Three Centuries of Canadian Painting," the book follows traditional divisions of Canadian history by grouping the chapters into four eras: the French colonial period, the English

colonial period, Confederation to the First World War, and the rise of the Dominion to the present. Within these temporal parameters, Harper tells the story of Canada's artistic production through a combination of anecdotes about artists' lives, discussion of their painting styles and subject matter, and frequent reference to the social and historical forces that shaped their contribution. Relatively short chapters enable him to focus on particular regions or on specific themes that emerge at particular moments in time, such as the rise in popularity of portraiture or the interest in depictions of "the West." In many ways, this is a chronicle of artists arriving from Europe – occasionally from the United States – and making art in less than amenable conditions. Harper does not make grandiose claims for the artists but seeks to record their presence and to note their accomplishments, even if these primarily consist of the visual recording of the landscape of the new colony.

Perhaps the most notable difference between Harper's text and earlier publications is its conceptualization of the temporal parameters of what constituted Canadian art. This is particularly evident in his attention to francophone artists who claim a considerable portion of the narrative. Writers from Newton McTavish (1925) to Donald Buchanan (1950) had largely ignored the work of artists from French-Canada prior to the mid-nineteenth century except to praise their skills in wood carving.[23] Artists who had escaped this general characterization, such as François Malépart de Beaucourt and others whose stylistic innovation and ability moved beyond the copying of French masters, were acknowledged as contributors to the development of a native art tradition in Canada. Most anglophone texts followed William Colgate (1943) by beginning their narratives in 1820 with the arrival in Canada of Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff.[24] This particular periodization of the birth of "Canadian" art, however, was contested by Gérard Morisset in his introduction to *La peinture traditionelle au Canada français*:

> Il n'y a pas longtemps, des critiques d'art faisaient remonter la peinture canadienne à Cornélius Krieghoff. Dans leur esprit, il apparaissait nettement que les Canadiens d'avant Krieghoff, pauvres, frustes et bornés, n'eussent pu faire autre chose de mieux que de cultiver médiocrement leurs terres, avoir beaucoup d'enfants et s'amuser d'une façon grossière. Et on laissait entendre que les Canadiens de l'époque 1860 n'avaient pas compris l'art de Krieghoff – ce qui était le comble de l'infamie! – en encore que leurs petits-enfants ne s'étaient, enfin, éveillés à la peinture qu'à la contemplation des œuvres du "Groupe des Sept".[25]

Beyond addressing the insulting characterization of French Canadians as unskilled painters and unsophisticated consumers of art, Morisset questions the disappearance of the early artists of French Canada from the literature. He notes that Robert Harris had already provided what Morisset described as a brief and incomplete, yet solidly researched study in 1898.[26]

The dominant focus on English-speaking artists by anglophone art historians prior to Harper should not come as a surprise. Many of the texts written from the

1930s to the 1960s sought to establish an artistic chronology that would lay the groundwork for the establishment of the Group of Seven as Canada's "national school." As a result, greater emphasis was placed on the development of a landscape tradition in painting, a decision which tended to favour the work of anglophone artists. One explanation might be found in the dominance of religious subject matter in much French colonial art, and the corresponding inability of many English-speaking writers to see the work as anything other than poorly executed copies of French originals. British colonial artists, on the other hand, arrived with the more "aesthetically disinterested" desire to document the people and the landscape and therefore it was easier to incorporate them into an artistic chronology that privileged distinctive style as well as subject matter. Harper was meticulous when it came to researching material related to all facets of art production in the Canadas, and his bibliography contains references to both anglophone and francophone authors including Olivier Maurault, Guy Viau, and of course Gérard Morisset; his careful documentation of artists working in Quebec owes much to these authors. From a certain standpoint, there are definite parallels between these histories of art in French Canada and Harper's narrative. In both, the search for a distinctive national artistic vocabulary is a central preoccupation, and the compilation of such material in the form of a survey is the primary means of underscoring the coherence of Canadian art.

In a *national* history of art such as *Painting in Canada*, chronological ordering assumes particular centrality in the organizing of the text: not to establish a formal genealogy of artistic expression but to map the development of artistic production onto the formation of an autonomous nation-state. As Harper noted in his preface, *Painting in Canada* attempts to provide an overview of Canada's art as "an integral part of the life of an expanding nation."(p.vii) His lectures, notes and correspondence emphasize his concern to unearth as much information about as many artists as he could find. For Harper, such research not only provided a more in-depth knowledge of Canada's cultural past, but served the loftier purpose of enabling a country to better understand its origins and development as a nation. Thus, beginning with the arrival of the French colonists, Harper traces the growing independence and authority of artists in Canada, linking developments in artistic style and subject matter with the seemingly inevitable movement towards nationhood. This process is not as coherent a linear progression as might be assumed. Certain chapters discuss work that has only a marginal relationship to the larger developmental narrative. For example, Harper describes the work of British Army topographers as a "gratuitous bonus...foster[ing] some local interest in water-colour painting" but otherwise "not part of a developing Canadian tradition." (p.49) Such moments are the exception, however, as Harper attends closely to artists' contributions to an emerging Canadian art history through the identification of a specifically Canadian sensibility in style, subject matter and even the origins of the artists (fig.4). The concluding paragraph

fig.4 J. Russell Harper inspecting the Canadian Collection at the National Gallery of Canada, *c.*1963 (Photo: Cliff Buckman, Photo Features, Ottawa, courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada)

of Chapter 7, "The Golden Age in Quebec: The Beginning," summarizes his consideration of artists' embodiment of such putatively national sensibilities:

> This whole phase we have been discussing should be of the greatest interest to all lovers of Canadian painting, for in it our artists had gone beyond mere imitation of European prototypes to create paintings with a "Canadian" character. It is art without close parallels. The untutored ex-voto painters of the eighteenth century's opening years were now superseded by a virile, more sophisticated and more accomplished group. Their new painting is unique not just because Quebec was prosperous with an economic climate favourable to artistic development; it is so chiefly because the evolution took place when Quebec painters, cut off by the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, were vigorously pursuing an almost solitary path as they worked out their own ideas. Yet during those years, trickling rumours of the rococo and neo-classical age gave a special piquancy to their paintings, so that they were also contemporary, lively, and attuned to the times. Near-isolation had had its compensations. (p.78)

Two principal themes figure largely in this paragraph and provide a broad framework for understanding the work of artists in Canada from the past to the present. First, the growing separation of artists from the mother countries is indicated both geographically in the move to the colony and stylistically as imitation is replaced by originality. Secondly, this newfound independence leads to the production of altogether new artistic vocabularies that are manifest in the exploration of new subjects and through the development of an appropriate formal language. Harper argues that "Canadian-ness" was to be found to some degree in the artists' focus on portraiture and landscape rather than the religious images characteristic of the French colonial period. These subjects afforded the artist a measure of freedom to concentrate almost entirely on the painterly or formal aspects of the work. Writing of François Malépart de Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave* (1786), for example, Harper notes that: "This is the earliest Canadian painting conceived purely in terms of picture-making and painterly qualities," (p.56) and, following a description of its formal components, he concludes that: "In this painting, the artist consciously seeks after an aesthetic rather than any didactic or literary response." (p.56-7)

The growing independence of Canadian artists from European masters is traced throughout *Painting in Canada*. Successive waves of artists who manage to detach themselves from the degraded pall of imitation lead to the establishment of a uniquely Canadian artistic vocabulary, almost wholly achieved with the Group of Seven and, as Harper remarks later in the book, it is a vocabulary that is notably absent from the work of more recent artists.[27] The virility and sophistication that he notes in the work of artists such as de Beaucourt, François Baillargé and Louis-Chrétien de Heer at the turn of the nineteenth century are meant to rhetorically invoke conventional descriptors of the work of the Group of Seven. Harper suggests

that in their search for artistic independence, Quebec artists prefigured the members of Canada's "National School." Both artistic periods coincide with important moments in Canada's national history: the first years of British rule in Canada and the post-First World War years of economic and cultural independence, and this only further underscores their relevance for the development of Canadian art history.

The increasing independence of Canadian artists from their European counterparts that indicates a changing relationship between the colony and the parent countries, allows Harper to produce a history of names that form the basis for a Canadian art history. Interest in artistic genealogy can be seen in his fairly consistent identification of Canadian "firsts": from the description of the "first Canadian canvases" (p.13) painted for Monsignor Laval in the seventeenth century, to the first Canadian-born artist (François Malépart de Beaucourt) to the Group of Seven as the first artists "to make artists and public listen and observe." (p.303) All these "firsts" establish a history of Canadian artistic production that increasingly severs its ties to European traditions. Just as Canada developed from "colony to nationhood," so did its artistic production.

As noted above, Harper was not alone in the development of this artistic nation-building genealogy. Other art historians, including Gérard Morisset, employed a similar organizational framework. Laurier Lacroix argues that Harper's text owes much to Morisset's evolutionary narrative of French Canadian art from its origins in medieval France to its eventual decadence.[28] The differences between the approach of each author, however, mitigates against an argument that might privilege this line of influence. Morisset's account of French-Canadian painting depends upon a highly-developed stylistic analysis that pays limited attention to socio-historical factors that may have had an impact upon the development of such a genealogy. In *La peinture traditionelle au Canada français*, Morisset's detailed examination of painterly form provides a level of art historical analysis that was unmatched in Canada at the time. Works that had largely been dismissed as the product of copyists are given a depth of treatment that enabled an appreciation for pre-Confederation painting which consciously suggested parallels with European art. Morisset's discussion of the lives of the artists fleshes out his analysis of the paintings and situates his work squarely within a conventional history of styles.

In contrast, Harper shows greater interest in the artist as an historical figure whose relevance to the history of art simultaneously frames his position as an actor in the nation's history. In every chapter of *Painting in Canada*, an account of changes in artistic style and subject matter is set against salient political and social developments in the emerging nation. As a result, the text is rich in its analysis of the conditions of production as well as the circulation of artworks, and particularly in accounts of art schools, artists' groups, exhibition spaces and patronage. Earlier texts also addressed some aspects of the importance of art institutions in the history of Canadian art, but attention largely focused on the

formation of artists societies such as the Ontario Society of Artists or the Royal Canadian Academy and their bringing together of artists. *Painting in Canada* also addresses questions of patronage during the French colonial period, the exhibition of art in agricultural fairs and other issues relevant to a broad understanding of the experience of artists working in different historical periods. In Harper's text, the artist and the artwork exist at the conjunction of an analysis of stylistic development, artistic value and society.

Emphasis on the historical character of art situates Harper at some distance from Morisset's connoisseurial approach and more in concert with the work of Canadian historians of the post-war period. Historical writing in Canada from the inter-war period onward may be broadly characterized by an environmentalist approach which sought to explain the specificity of Canada's political, economic and social development by the impact of its environmental context. Whether in the more economically-oriented focus of the proponents of the Laurentian thesis (e.g. Harold Innis and Donald Creighton[29]) or the broader-based approach of scholars such as William Morton and A.R.M. Lower,[30] historians argued that the geographical and climatic character of the nation produced specific economic relations within Canada and between this country and other nations, producing conditions that shaped Canadian political institutions. Even though the environmentalist approach owes much to the frontier thesis of nineteenth-century American historian Frederick Jackson Turner, its focus on geography and climate necessitates the formulation of an argument in which the specificity of the Canadian context is central, and differentiates Canada from the more dominant nations of Britain and the United States.

The environmentalist model is of course familiar to historians of Canadian art because it is the dominant trope for discussing the work of the Group of Seven. Writing in 1927, historian W. Stewart Wallace noted: "The work of this group has attracted international attention, mainly because of its strong native character. It tends at times to the crude and bizarre; but at its best it is instinct with the feeling of Canada's 'great open spaces,' from which...it draws its inspiration." [31] Indeed, the same political and intellectual context that produced the Group of Seven as Canada's "national school" was instrumental in cementing the dominance of the environmentalist approach in the writing of Canadian history and its almost exclusive focus on issues relevant to Central Canada.

By the 1950s, some writers were critical of the nationalist focus of this approach, particularly for its assumption of the homogeneous impact of geography and the general disregard of the potentially different experiences of the regions. J.M.S. Careless first raised this critique in 1954,[32] arguing that the sweeping nationalist orientation of Canadian history in the first half of the twentieth century effectively blinded scholars to other, more local or regional events that aligned Canada with developments in the United States and Britain. Careless argued that significant socio-economic concepts such as the emergence and consolidation of metropolises and their ability to shape the political and economic institutions of the

surrounding regions, enabled a more complex understanding of the development of the nation. In this view, the emergence of metropolises in Canada, their domination of the economies of the surrounding regions, and the relationships between metropolises across Canada, provide the basis for understanding the character of the country. In 1969, Careless would expand his revision of the nationalist cast of Canadian history in his theorization of the "limited identities"[33] approach which questioned the inevitable imbrication of national identity and national unity, suggesting instead that Canadian identity could be found in different forms through the smaller affective units of region, class, and ethnicity.

While the exploration of the concept of limited identities post-dates *Painting in Canada*, the book's concept of the region as a central aspect in this country's history is worth considering in light of Harper's much-lauded attention to regional diversity. Ramsay Cook's initial call for limited identities[34] extended to class and ethnicity, but Careless's decision to focus on region in his 1969 essay is a telling indication of the symbolic attachments that regionalism provided in Canada during this period. Attention to the region preserved the environmentalist focus of Canadian historical writing in large part because the limits of Canada's regions were virtually identical to existing provincial borders, and consequently reinforced the political makeup of the Canadian nation-state. Regions could be viewed as the nation writ small, microcosms of national identity differentiated one from the other by a few clearly identified, usually environmentally derived characteristics.[35] It is important to note here that Quebec is largely seen as one region among many, a tactic which effectively de-legitimizes any claim to nationhood voiced by French Canadians. In the context of the Quiet Revolution, this strategy is employed by anglophone historians as well as by the federal government as a means of appearing to take Quebec's calls for *cultural* distinctiveness seriously, while ignoring the political implications such distinctiveness might hold.[36]

The environmentalist approach continued to dominate Canadian historiography well into the 1960s as the fervour surrounding the Centennial celebrations increased. As many writers have noted, 1967 provided the ideological as well as the financial support for projects that could be characterized as nation-building. For example the re-issue in paperback of standard works of Canadian history and the publication of source materials such as the Carleton Library series published by McClelland and Stewart, revived the nationalist aims of the one-volume histories of Canada that had emerged in the 1940s and 50s.[37] The narrative structure as well as the ideological orientation of these publications reinforced the teleological and environmentalist structure of the development of Canada from colony to nationhood that would characterize writing produced for the Centennial. *Painting in Canada* evinces a similar strategy partly because of Harper's belief in the largely reflective relationship between artist and society, but also because of the institutional and contextual requirements made of the text.

Writing a "Canadian" Art History

Although I have been arguing that *Painting in Canada* was strongly shaped by the Centennial context for which it was written, it is also evident that Harper espoused nationalist views on Canadian art and culture that were consonant with those of the dominant English-Canadian intellectual climate. As he painstakingly demonstrated, art played a central role in the formation of the nation, not simply providing an image of an emerging country. Through the formation of its artists and affiliated cultural institutions, Canada was able to develop an autonomous cultural tradition. It is clear in *Painting in Canada* and throughout his correspondence that Harper believed that Canada's future depended upon the continued development of the cultural field, not only through historical research but in the creation of new work. A particularly revealing glimpse into Harper's approach to the study of the relationship between art and nationhood can be found in his account of the post-war scene in Canadian art. It is here that we can see the historiographical process at its most raw because he attempts to place contemporary artists within an already existing historical schema.

By his own admission, Harper was not comfortable with contemporary art,[38] and this is clear from the shift in tone and emphasis in the writing of the final chapter. Earlier portions of *Painting in Canada* considered the close connection between the artist and her or his social milieu, often with brief anecdotes to enliven the story, but Harper employs a primarily formalist vocabulary to talk about the production of artists working after World War II. Also notable is the absence of a sense of the relationship between recent painting and the continuing development of Canada as a nation that dominated the rest of the book. This is not altogether surprising since an analysis of work virtually contemporaneous with the writing would require the kind of speculation incompatible with the academic history intended for *Painting in Canada*. At the same time, it is clear that Harper was keenly aware of and interested in the effects of certain conditions on post-war art, conditions that were arguably characteristic of the Centennial period and mitigated against contemporary artistic production being able to present a strong and relatively coherent front. In this final chapter he appears genuinely puzzled that, having painstakingly traced the development of distinct Canadian painting through three centuries, it seems to have completely disappeared into an anarchy of styles. In the first few pages of the chapter, he discusses what he feels to be the impediments to the formation of a national style in the post-war period, issues which extended to the writing of Canadian art history. Harper sees three specific conditions emerge: the threat of a weakened Canadian identity in the face of international movements, the related increase in mass media, and the lack of cultural institutions in Canada that could play a leadership role in defining and promoting contemporary Canadian art.

Perhaps the most powerful condition impeding the creation of a distinctly Canadian art after 1945 was the increasing influence of international art. The reliance upon foreign approaches worried Harper because it seems to prevent the

kind of personal statement and exploration that is the mark of serious art. Although not overtly stated in the chapter, it appears that this borrowing of "isms" from Europe and New York differs from earlier modes of influence because contemporary artists have not been able to transform the terms to suit their particular national idiom. Throughout *Painting in Canada*, Harper makes comparisons and notes links between artists working in Canada and other countries, but the period of influence is always of limited duration and the Canadian artist's ability to assimilate the formal elements taken from the masters and to then move beyond them, is considered to be a sign of artistic maturity. The detrimental effect of the influence of Paris and New York on contemporary artists, however, is only compounded by Canada's "national inferiority complex," that results in "playing down the domestic achievement at the expense of the foreign." (p.383)

In his view the threat generated by the influence of internationalism on Canadian artists is intensified by the mass media. Here, however, the threat is largely American and Harper voices many of the fears of cultural imperialism that were to characterise Canadian concerns in the 1960s and 1970s.[39] For Harper, the media are a double-edge sword. On the one hand, the "ever-increasing speed of communication" (p.383) should provide ample opportunity for the creation of an indigenous Canadian art movement, so the lack of such a phenomenon is puzzling. On the other hand, the dominant American presence in the mass media prevents Canadian communities from independent thought and subjects them to a constant barrage of American ideas. Unlike Quebec, which Harper viewed as largely safeguarded from such media imperialism by a "protective language wall," English Canada is laid bare to such influence in the arts as in day-to-day life: "A national identity in the arts depends on a national habit of thought, and Canada has never created this essential basis." (p.383)

The formation of a sense of identity is further troubled by the dearth of cultural institutions that support contemporary Canadian art through critical writing and university-level research. Harper would pursue this theme for many years following the publication of *Painting in Canada*. In conference presentations, lectures and in letters to university administrators during his tenure at Sir George Williams/Concordia University, he frequently bemoaned the lack of substantive critical writing on contemporary art in Canada, and the role that such institutions should play in fostering not only the nation's artistic production but a broader sense of nationalism. In a lecture entitled "Research in Universities"[40] for example, he describes the need for more investigation of all aspects of what he terms "the field of Canadian background," which seems to incorporate the fine arts as well as history and other areas in the humanities and social sciences. For Harper, the advantage of undertaking this research in the university lies in the opportunities for interdisciplinary conversations that such an institution facilitates, one that is made

more difficult by the specialized focus of the art gallery: "I do not believe that I can formulate a proper analytical presentation of any phase of my subject without setting it against a social, economic, political and other multi-faceted background of this country. This should be possible by association and discussion with one's colleagues in other disciplines."[41] Such research was to be first disseminated to academics, but Harper adds the second argument that academic work should also serve as the basis for writing addressed to a broad spectrum of the Canadian public. He would later make this point more directly in a letter to the CBC by suggesting that *Painting in Canada* be the basis for a television series on Canadian art in the style of Kenneth Clark's 1971 *Civilization*.[42]

Harper also emphasizes the importance of university programs staffed by Canadians to ensure that the art and artists of the nation are a primary focus of research, and secondly to further the production of home-grown approaches to the study of that art. In a later document exploring advances made in the study of Canadian art history, he remarked:

> All phases of Canadian-oriented studies are expanding rapidly. This happens despite agnostics, academics pre-occupied with old established disciplines to the exclusion of contemporary demand, and the influence of those American and European immigrants holding key cultural positions in Canada who are prone to decry the local achievement.[43]

Here Harper is in line with a number of academics, writers, critics and artists who saw the hiring of Americans in Canadian universities and cultural institutions not simply as taking jobs away from Canadian citizens, but more significantly as preventing the formation of an indigenous approach to the study of the nation's culture and traditions. This position was famously voiced by cultural nationalists in the late 1960s and the 1970s.[44] While Harper was briefly a member of the Committee for an Independent Canada in 1972, his writings do not share the militancy of many of the period. For example, *artscanada*'s publication of "The Canadian Cultural Revolution,"[45] an issue devoted to the state of contemporary Canadian art, received much criticism because its primary author Dale McConathy was an American critic who was criticized for having little comprehension of the particular conditions for art production in Canada.[46] In 1976 the editors of *CAROT* (the Canadian Artists Representation newsletter) asked Harper to write an essay in response to this much-reviled issue of *artscanada* but he demurred, noting that he believed he could be more effective through his own writing and research than by authoring what would be a highly polemical piece.[47] Like many of the more conservative Canadian intellectual figures of the period,[48] Harper endorsed the need for strong Canadian cultural and academic institutions. He knew that in his particular field of Canadian art history, the means to achieve sustained and in-depth research in the field was through the hiring of Canadians who could be relied upon to carry out such a project.

In its examination of the process of canon-formation in national histories of art, this article has questioned both the narrative tradition of art historical writing and the mapping of a history of cultural production onto a narrative of national identity. Art history survey texts have long functioned to establish a select number of artists and artworks as having value within a broad conception of western civilization. When these histories are given a national focus, the process of selection and combination of a defined number of valued artists and artworks occurs within an existing discourse that describes the emergence and consolidation of the modern nation as a geo-political unit to which individuals have developed an affective relationship.[49] As a publication with direct links to celebrations of the nation, *Painting in Canada* had to negotiate the imperatives of a federal ideological project that was based on the celebration of national unity, and the complexities of Harper's personal vision of the historical emergence of a "Canadian" artistic tradition. While this narrative situates itself within the larger context of nation-building, Harper's quest for stronger Canadian national feeling was located in the advancement of an increased awareness of the nation's past, rather than in support of an instrumental relationship between artworks and an ideological project of nationalism.

The importance of *Painting in Canada: A History* can be gauged by its numerous reprints, especially of the paperback edition, its creation of opportunities for the teaching of Canadian art at the university level, and its subsequent imitators.[50] In its geographical and linguistic inclusiveness, *Painting in Canada* opened opportunities for subsequent study and even more significantly, laid the groundwork for the creation of the systematic scholarly study of *Canadian* art history. As such, Russell Harper and his work deserve to be at the center of any analysis of Canadian art historiography.

ANNE WHITELAW
Department of Art and Design
University of Alberta

Notes

1 J. Russell Harper, interview with Janet Braide, *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 Feb. 1972.

2 In recent years, Joyce Zemans has published important work on the production and circulation of prints by the National Gallery of Canada and select partners as a central component in the construction of a dominant representation of Canadian art. See Joyce ZEMANS, "Establishing the Canon: Nationhood, Identity and the National Gallery of Canada's First Reproduction Programme of Canadian Art," *The Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* XVI, no.2 (1995); "Envisioning Nation: Nationhood, Identity and the Sampson-Matthews Silkscreen Project: The Wartime Prints," *JCAH/AHAC* IXX, no.1 (1998); "Sampson-Matthews and the NGC: The Post-War Years," *JCAH/AHAC* XXI, nos. 1& 2 (2000). Sandra Paikowsky's recent essay on the support of a particular (international) vision of Canadian modernism in the National Gallery's first participation in the Venice Biennale similarly documents the processes through which definitions of Canadian art are institutionally produced and circulated. See Sandra PAIKOWSKY, "Constructing an Identity: the 1952 XXVI Biennale di Venezia and 'The Projection of Canada Abroad'," *JCAH/AHAC* XX, nos. 1& 2 (1999). Recent debates over First Nations cultural production, historical and contemporary, has provided the impetus for many examinations of the institutional structures which govern the display and evaluation of Canadian art, evident in the work of, for example, Ruth PHILLIPS, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998). Quebec art historians have also been instrumental in examining the institutional conditions for the formation and understanding of art in Quebec, from the excellent essay by Laurier LACROIX, "Gérard Morisset et l'histoire de l'art au Québec" in *À la découverte du patrimoine avec Gérard Morisset* (Quebec: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles/Musée du Québec, 1981), to the discussion of art journalism in Quebec since the Second World War in Louise MOREAU, "L'art de la modernité. La revue *Vie des Arts* et sa contribution au discours sur les arts visuels au Québec dans les années 1950 et 1960," *JCAH/AHAC* XIX, no.1 (1998).

3 "It would not be stretching the truth very far to say that the first texts in Canadian cultural studies were written by royal commissions.... These studies, spread across most of the twentieth century and synthesizing a range of political viewpoints within the country, have done much to define and circumscribe the values and goals of critical thinking about culture in Canada." Jody BERLAND, "Marginal Notes on Cultural Studies in Canada," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 64, no.4 (1995): 515.

4 J. Russell HARPER, *Krieghoff* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial and Folk Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), *Paul Kane's Frontier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). For a full list of Harper's writing see the bibliography compiled by Brian FOSS and Loren LERNER, in *JCAH/AHAC* VII, no.2 (1985).

5 See for example, Virginia NIXON, "Meet J. Russell Harper, father of Canadian art history," *The Gazette* (Montreal), 8 March 1975.

6 Dating roughly from 1961 to 1971, it encompasses both the preparation for the Centennial (the Centennial Commission formed by an Act of Parliament on 29 Sept. 1961) and the years following 1967 when "Trudeaumania" extended the feeling of pride and optimism about Canada's future (at least amongst English-Canadians) that characterized the Centennial celebrations. For an introduction, to these isues, see Peter AYKROYD, *The Anniversary Compulsion* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992).

7 In the "Terms of Reference and Structure of the Centennial Commission," the Research Branch is given the following mandate: "A contribution to national unity is one of the principal objectives of the Centennial Commission. Several aspects of the Commission's program are related

to the improvement of relations among Canada's various ethnic groups. To this end, the Research Branch, has as its main object to keep abreast of current developments in Canada and to provide indicators as to the proper and most productive course to follow." Centennial Commission, *Centennial Facts: General Information on the Centennial of Canadian Confederation 1867 - 1967* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer 1966), 7.

8 For example, discussions on the make-up of the Centennial project's advisory board stressed that there be suitable linguistic and well as regional representation. The advisory board consisted of the following: Guy Viau (Montreal), Gérard Morisset (Musée du Québec), Stephen Vickers (University of Toronto) and Ian McNairn (University of British Columbia). In letters to each of them requesting their participation in the project, Marsh Jeanneret (Director UTP) wrote: "It is our hope that the committee described above would be composed of members from representative areas of Canada.... The advice of members of the committee would be a most important contribution to what we hope and expect will be a major event in the celebration of 1867." History of Canadian Art, University of Toronto Archives, University of Toronto Press, UTA, A89-0009/012.

9 Marsh Jeanneret to Dr. A.W. Trueman, Director, Canada Council, 9 Nov. 1960, UTA, A89-0009/012.

10 In a memo from Francess Halpenny to Jeanneret, 12 April 1962, mention is made of an attached report from Jarvis outlining the proposed contents of the book. This document was apparently sent to the Canada Council along with a number of other UTP files that have not been located.

11 University of Toronto Press, File Memo, 11 Oct. 1960, UTA, A89-0009/012. Even at this early stage, discussion was taking place as to the kind of printing technology which would be most appropriate to a book of the quality envisioned by UTP. Paul Arthur's role as production editor was seen as pivotal to its success: "even if the viewers don't get too much into the text, they will sense the history through the symbols of the pictures." UTP, File Memo, 13 Oct. 1960.

12 A.W. Trueman to Marsh Jeanneret, 2 Dec. 1960, UTA, A89-0009/012.

13 In a UTP file memo recording notes of a meeting with Jarvis on 5 Dec. 1960, it was noted that the importance of including French-Canadians on the Editorial Committee "was raised with Mr. Jarvis, who is going to take it under advisement." Such directives were reiterated in a memo from Jeanneret to Halpenny of 2 May 1961, and a letter from Jeanneret to Trueman of 27 Feb. 1962, UTA, A89-0009/01.

14 Jeanneret to Halpenny, 2 May 1961, UTA, A89-0009/012.

15 In these early negotiations between UTP and the Council, possible francophone participants are discussed, including Jean-Paul Morisset – only once briefly named as a possible contributor/collaborator with Jarvis – and a representative from *Vie des Arts*, possibly art director Claude Beaulieu.

16 In a letter to Claude Hurtubise, Director of Les Editions HMH Ltée, Marsh Jeanneret wrote: "In addition to covering a rather wider field than Canadian painting, our project is perhaps likely to concern itself more with a critical historical survey than yours is likely to, to judge from your description of the latter." 1 Aug. 1962, UTA, A89-0009/012.

17 HARPER, "Three Centuries of Canadian Painting," *Canadian Art* 19 (Nov.-Dec. 1962): 405-52.

18 HARPER, *Memorandum re Projected Centennial History of Canadian Painting*, 8 Nov. 1963, National Archives of Canada, MG 30 D352, vol 43, file 4.

19 Progress Report, 19 July 1965, UTA, A89-0009/012.

20 Harper to Ian Montagnes (General Editor, University of Toronto Press), 14 June 1976, NAC, MG 30 D352, vol. 42, file 27.

21 In the last few years of his life, Harper devoted himself to researching pre-Confederation artists in Ontario. In letters to various Ontario cultural institutions and individuals, Harper would write a variant of the following: "I am beginning to assemble material for a history of painting in Ontario before 1867, chiefly because I think we have been very much short-changing ourselves in comparison to what is happening in other provinces in the cultural art field. We have a rich cultural past as well if we can only get it down...." NAC, MG 30 D352, vol. 21, file 26.

22 Robert NELSON, "The Map of Art History," *The Art Bulletin* LXXIX, no.1 (March 1997): 28-41.

23 See for example, Newton MCTAVISH, *The Fine Arts in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1925) and Donald W. BUCHANAN, *The Growth of Canadian Painting* (London and Toronto: Collins, 1950).

24 William COLGATE, *Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943).

25 Gérard MORISSET, *La Peinture traditionelle au Canada français* (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960), 7.

26 Robert HARRIS, "Art in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces" *Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country*, vol. 4 (Toronto, 1898), 353-59.

27 HARPER, *Painting in Canada*, "The styles of this country's best-known contemporary artists were developed initially on foreign soil; they have absorbed popular 'isms' originating in the United States or Europe and then adapted them to suit their own personal tastes. Thus their personal statement is more restricted because they link themselves to a foreign style. But while there is no 'Canadian School,' certain focal points of great artistic activity have developed." (p.383)

28 LACROIX, "Gérard Morisset et l'histoire de l'art au Québec," 143-4.

29 See for example, Harold INNIS, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930) and Donald CREIGHTON, *The Commercial Empire of the Saint-Lawrence, 1760-1350* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).

30 W.L. MORTON, *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) and Arthur R.M. LOWER, *Colony to Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

31 W. Stewart WALLACE, *The Growth of Canadian National Feeling* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1927), 77.

32 J.M.S. CARELESS, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 35, no.1 (March 1954): 1-21.

33 J.M.S. CARELESS, "'Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no.1 (March 1969): 1-10.

34 Ramsay COOK, "Canadian Centennial Cerebrations," *International Journal* XXII (Autumn 1967), 659-63.

35 For a thorough analysis see William WESTFALL, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no.2 (Summer 1980): 3-15.

36 One early notable exception is historian W.L. Morton who uses the example of "la survivance" in French Canada to explore ways that Western Canada could potentially achieve a measure of independence or recognition from the Center. See MORTON, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History" in *Contexts of Canada's Past: Selected Essays by W.L. Morton*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980), 496-519. This essay was originally published in 1946.

37 See William KILBOURN, "The Writing of Canadian History" in *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

38 For example in a letter to Harold Town (26 Sept. 1976), Harper writes: "I never did want to deal with anything in the way of contemporary art since I don't believe that it really fits into a historical context." NAC, vol.42, Correspondence, 1976. In 1974, Harper wrote to Doris Shadbolt, then Associate Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, asking if she would be interested in writing a survey of Canadian painting since 1945 in two or three chapters. Shadbolt declined because of prior commitments. NAC, RG 30 D342, vol.44, Correspondence, *Painting in Canada.*

39 Concern over American cultural imperialism was voiced in the 1951 Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (Massey Report) and even earlier in the 1929 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Aird Report).

40 NAC, MG 30 D352, vol. 19. This document is undated but is located in a file titled "Correspondence 1968-1973". In a letter to Frances Halpenny dated 1 Nov. 1971, Harper noted at the bottom "Trying to think about things to put in a brief about university research in the humanities – I don't feel very lucid." NAC, RG 30 D342, vol. 44, Correspondence, *Early Painters and Engravers.*

41 Ibid.

42 See letter to Robert Weaver of the CBC, 29 Nov. 1974, NAC, MG 30 D352, vol. 20: "This lifetime of research has produced a mosaic which I would dearly love to pass on to others because I have always been personally excited about the Canadian evolution and I see no reason why others should not experience it as I see it."

43 "Advance in the Study of Art History: A Progress Report," *c.*1977/78, NAC, MG 30 D342, vol. 19, Notes.

44 See for example, *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*, ed. Robin Mathews and James Steele (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), and Susan CREAN, *Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture?* (Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1976).

45 *atscanada* 200/201 (Autumn 1975).

46 For a cogent critique of this issue of *artscanada*, see Greg CURNOE, "Feet of Clay Planted Firmly in U.S.A.," *Canadian Forum* 56, no. 661 (May 1976): 9-11.

47 Letter to Jane Martin, editor of *CAROT*, 11 March 1976, NAC, MG 30 D342, vol. 20-31.

48 As one example, Jack McClelland, of McClelland and Stewart, resigned from the Committee for an Independent Canada because he felt their publishing policy was too extremely nationalistic. See his letter to Mordecai Richler, 16 April 1973 in *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland*, ed. Sam Solecki (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1998), 179-80.

49 For a discussion of affect in relation to national formations, see Homi BHABHA, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 291-322.

50 Two histories of Canadian art appeared within less than a decade of the publication of Harper's book: Dennis REID, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Barry LORD, *Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974).

Résumé

POUR NOUS CONNAÎTRE MIEUX

La peinture au Canada : des origines à nos jours

Publié en 1966, le volume de J. Russell Harper, *La peinture au Canada : des origines à nos jours* est apparu au moment où les préparations pour le centenaire de la confédération canadienne suscitaient une grande ferveur. Mis en vente simultanément en français et en anglais par les Presses de l'Université Laval et la University of Toronto Press, le volume de Harper fut promu comme la première histoire complète et définitive de l'art canadien par son traitement des traditions artistiques francophones et anglophones. Étant la seule contribution du Conseil des Arts du Canada pour marquer le centenaire, *La peinture au Canada* ne peut être comprise en dehors du contexte politique, culturel et intellectuel de cet évènement d'une immense signification symbolique. Ce fut aussi la première publication importante de Russell Harper, qui a d'ailleurs quitté son poste comme conservateur d'art canadien au Musée des beaux arts pour se consacrer entièrement au projet. En dépit du fait qu'il est plus reconnu pour ses recherches sur l'art canadien du XIX^{e} siècle, comme en font foi ses publications sur Cornelius Krieghoff, Paul Kane et l'art populaire de la période, on associe le nom de Harper avec *La peinture au Canada*, ouvrage qui l'a consacré comme «doyen de l'histoire de l'art canadien» et qui a établi le cadre narratif et analytique – du moins au Canada anglais – de l'étude de la production artistique au Canada pour les décennies à venir. Cet essai se limite à l'examen des contextes intellectuels et sociaux du texte de Harper, afin d'évaluer l'influence de ce premier aperçu complet de la peinture au Canada sur le développement de ce champ d'étude. En tant que texte relatif au centenaire, *La peinture au Canada* souscrit aux sentiments idéologiques et intellectuels de la période : une attention consciente à la diversité linguistique et régionale du pays, un engagement à développer des récits du devenir national pour les générations futures, et une reconnaissance du rôle important de la culture pour maintenir l'indépendance du Canada face aux États-Unis.

Le caractère bilingue et biculturel du texte se présente comme l'aspect le plus particulier de l'entreprise de Harper, étant donné le soutien du Conseil des Arts du Canada et le contexte de sa publication à l'occasion du centenaire. La correspondance entre le Conseil et la University of Toronto Press affirme, de plus, que les directives concernant l'inclusion à parts égales d'artistes francophones

et anglophones sont venues largement du Conseil des Arts, qui avait insisté, au début du projet, pour que soit formé un comité consultatif composé d'un nombre égal d'anglophones et de francophones. Néanmoins, Harper lui-même avait déjà montré qu'il était intéressé à écrire une chronique de l'histoire de l'art aussi bien du Canada français que du Canada anglais dans son article intitulé «300 Years of Canadian Art» publié en 1963 dans la revue *Canadian Art*. À cet égard, il se distingue de la plupart des historiens de l'art anglophones qui l'ont précédé et qui traditionnellement situent la naissance de l'art canadien au moment de l'arrivée au pays de Paul Kane et de Cornelius Krieghoff. En prenant ses distances avec cette convention, Harper est, d'une part, clairement soumis aux impératifs de l'année du centenaire qui demandaient de prendre en considération les contributions égales des cultures anglophones et francophones au Canada. Par contre, la recherche entreprise par Harper pour *La peinture au Canada* doit énormément aux contributions d'historiens d'art canadiens français tels que Gérard Morisset qui note explicitement, dans l'introduction de son volume *La peinture traditionnelle au Canada français*, que les historiens d'art anglophones étaient jusque-là incapables de reconnaître la contribution des artistes canadiens français en dehors de la sculpture sur bois.

Quoique Harper soit redevable à des historiens d'art francophones tels que Morisset pour accroître ses connaissances sur les artistes canadiens et pour ainsi écrire une histoire plus complète, il ne les a pas suivis dans son approche historiographique. Contrairement à Morisset, en particulier, qui démontra à travers ses écrits une maîtrise singulière de l'analyse formelle, Harper est davantage un historien sociologique, traitant en premier lieu des contextes de production et de réception des œuvres d'art plutôt que de l'évaluation de leurs qualités esthétiques. À cet égard, il se situe dans une tradition plus proprement liée à la thèse environnementale de«l'école laurentienne» associée aux historiens anglophones Harold Innis, William Morton et A.R.M. Lower. Ces historiens, écrivant durant les années trente, quarante et cinquante, soutenaient que le caractère géographique et climatique du pays produisait des relations économiques particulières au sein même de la nation, et entre le Canada et l'extérieur qui ont données forme aux institutions politiques et culturelles canadiennes qu'on connaît encore de nos jours. Ce modèle historiographique est d'ailleurs bien connu des historiens de l'art du Groupe des Sept. En effet, le même contexte politique et intellectuel qui a présenté le Groupe comme «école nationale» d'art a renforcé le pouvoir de l'approche environnementale sur l'élaboration de l'histoire (anglophone) canadien et son intérêt presque exclusif pour les questions propres au Canada central. Malgré la critique du caractère homogène que cette vision du Canada présentait au cours des années cinquante – en particulier les textes de J.M.S. Careless qui, déjà en 1954, demandait une considération des caractéristiques régionales dans l'analyse de l'histoire

canadienne – l'approche environnementale restera dominante à travers l'historiographie canadienne des années soixante, surtout lors des célébrations du centenaire. On peut noter dans cette historiographie l'apparition constante d'écrits qui soulignent le développement du Canada de ses origines coloniales à sa maturité nationale. La présentation de l'art et des artistes dans *La peinture au Canada* démontre une téléologie presque identique, d'une part à cause de la conviction de Harper que l'art est un reflet de la société qui l'a produit, mais d'autre part à cause des exigences institutionnelles et contextuelles concernant ce texte.

C'est ici que les convictions nationalistes de Harper sont les plus évidentes. Comme il le démontre à travers son texte, l'art a joué un rôle important dans la formation nationale, non seulement en présentant l'image d'une nation en voie de formation, mais en démontrant, à travers l'établissement d'artistes et d'institutions culturelles, que le Canada est capable de développer une tradition culturelle autonome. Le dernier chapitre, traitant de la peinture au Canada après 1945, démontre clairement que les convictions nationalistes de Harper s'étendaient au-delà d'une simple énumération de peintres, pour analyser le besoin immédiat d'encourager une vie intellectuelle proprement canadienne. Alors que le chapitre donne une liste des artistes travaillant à travers le Canada – ce qui le distingue de la richesse du contexte narratif du reste du volume – Harper se demande, dans les premiers paragraphes, pourquoi la période d'après-guerre n'a produit aucun style dit «canadien». Il présente trois hypothèses : en premier lieu, la dominance de styles internationaux chez les artistes contemporains empêche la formation de styles innovateurs ici au Canada; en deuxième lieu, l'influence des médias de masse largement américains se fait ressentir de plus en plus sur la société canadienne; finalement, l'absence d'institutions consacrées à l'art canadien contemporain nuit au développement d'une culture proprement «canadienne». Dans ce livre de Harper, on peut voir un soupçon du discours nationaliste canadien qui se fera ressentir dans les années post-centenaire. Pour Harper, ces remarques à propos de la disparition d'un style «canadien» est une indication de la force de ses convictions que ce n'est que par l'étude sérieuse du passé que les Canadiens se reconnaîtront. C'est peut-être dans cet effort de reconnaissance que l'influence de Harper s'est fait le plus ressentir : dans la création de cours traitant de l'histoire de l'art canadien dans les universités Concordia et Carleton, et par le biais de la publication d'un corpus croissant d'écrits critiques sur l'art au Canada.

Traduction : auteur

fig.1 Florence Wyle, **Head of Norah McCullough,** *c.*1930, plaster, 57 x 23 x 16 cm, Coll. of MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan. (Photo: University of Regina)

NORAH McCULLOUGH
Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada

In a career spanning five decades, Norah McCullough (1903-1993) contributed greatly to Canadian culture, particularly in the area of crafts. However, her role as one of this country's preeminent arts administrators remains largely overlooked in art historical literature. Perhaps this can be attributed to the many pathways of McCullough's career. She curated exhibitions and wrote catalogues on several significant Canadian artists; in later years she organized a traveling show of paintings by Montreal's Beaver Hall Group for the National Gallery of Canada in 1966, and twenty years after, she wrote *Arthur Lismer Watercolours* for the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre. The painter Ronald Bloore has credited McCullough with discovering the western folk artist Jan Gerrit Wyers, and in 1989 the Saskatchewan Arts Board presented her with a an Annual Lifetime Award for Excellence in the Arts.

During the peak of modernist sensibilities McCullough had boldly promoted and curated exhibitions of marginalized materials, including folk art and the crafts. Her desire for including both professional and amateur artistic production was certainly at odds with the realities of organizing some of the first juried exhibitions of the highest quality crafts. Gender is possibly another reason for her absence from art historical study. As an attractive single woman occupying positions of power in post-war culture, McCullough developed a strict professional persona to avoid gender stereotyping. As her friend Patricia Leigh Wiens recalls: "Norah was a powerhouse, and not always loved for it."[1] McCullough's contributions to the crafts, however, remain indisputable even if they are not fully acknowledged. By the time she retired from public life in 1968 she had established the Saskatchewan Arts Board as a craft-inclusive educational, funding and exhibition body; served as Canada's first representative on the World Crafts Council; orchestrated the formation of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association, and curated *Canadian Fine Crafts*, Canada's largest-ever exhibition in this field. Feted by the National Gallery of Canada upon her retirement, McCullough was praised for her achievements. The Norah McCullough Lecture Series, designated as a bi-annual forum for leading researchers in the crafts, was the Gallery's final tribute to McCullough. Sadly, the speakers' series was not actively promoted after its inception and this has surely contributed to her relative lack of recognition. The project's brief history also serves as a reminder of the tenuous and delicate relationship between crafts and the institutions of Canadian culture.

fig.2 Norah McCullough in Pretoria, South Africa, *c.*1940.
(Photo: courtesy of Robin Poitras)

Born in Alison, Ontario in 1903, Norah McCullough was the daughter of Dr. John W.S. McCullough, appointed the Provincial Officer of Health for Ontario, and Chief Medical Officer in 1912. Her siblings followed in their father's footsteps, her brother becoming a doctor and her sister serving as the chief Public Health Officer for the City of Toronto.[2] While McCullough might have been expected to become a scientist herself, she instead chose the arts. In 1925 she graduated from the Ontario College of Art with a specialization in painting and two years later was in the employ of the Art Gallery of Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario), where she would assist Arthur Lismer for ten years. During that time McCullough became a force within Toronto's art community and developed an impressive list of contacts including members of the Group of Seven, the ethnologist Marius Barbeau, and the sculptors Florence Wyle and Frances Loring.

McCullough was also careful to nurture her public image. She dressed well, always employing a dressmaker who could fashion the latest designs from handcrafted fabrics, often using cloth commissioned from weavers. McCullough was noted for wearing jewellery made by Canadian craftspeople and she was admired for her cooking, her knowledge of wines, and for hosting excellent parties. As Patricia Wiens notes, "Norah possessed an elegance that separated her from the average social strata."[3] The cultivation of these talents should not be viewed as frivolous. In the social climate of the times McCullough skillfully balanced her roles as an upper-class single female, and a talented and bright career woman. In the 1930s Florence Wyle produced a stylized, modernist plaster and bronze portrait (fig.1) of McCullough. The sculpture shows her strong nose, full lips, and high cheekbones, but most remarkable are McCullough's eyes: "icy blue – intense and intimidating – they made you not question her."[4]

Her work as Lismer's full-time assistant from 1927 to 1937 in his children's art programs at the Art Gallery of Toronto initiated her career as one of Canada's chief supporters of craft. During the period 1933 to 1938 the Gallery received grants ranging from $6,000 to $10,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to support educational instruction expenses, supplies, and training for teachers.[5] McCullough directly benefited from Carnegie Foundation money: "To broaden my view, I was sent in 1934 to the Courtauld Institute, London, and enabled through a number of other Carnegie grants to survey educational programmes at the Cleveland Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Boston Museum of Fine Art."[6] While attending the Courtauld McCullough began taking courses in the history of embroidery, textiles, English furniture, pottery and porcelain, glass, gold and silversmithing, and studying the work of William Morris.[7]

In 1938 Lismer selected McCullough to move to Pretoria, South Africa to help organize an art school, a venture also funded by the Carnegie Foundation.[8] McCullough (fig.2) spent nearly a decade in Africa and it was here that she

observed the importance of Native craftspeople. McCullough was also painfully aware of the social inequalities faced by South African tribes and the malnutrition, ill-health and illiteracy that resulted from a lack of access to proper education and inadequate wages. However, McCullough also realized that the crafts played a vital role in providing independent cultural expression for this oppressed group.[9] Her time in South Africa was featured in a 1946 *Star Weekly* article titled "A Girl Against the Veldt," and her experience of the cultural and natural "exoticism" of South Africa was highlighted by stories of mistaking crocodiles for logs while swimming in the Zambesi River, and stumbling across a native initiation ceremony.[10] The *Globe and Mail* also wrote of McCullough as an independent woman, able to lead in the public sphere yet conforming to society's expectations of women in the arts through her involvement with children's art education. Toronto newspaper articles on McCullough admired her ability to negotiate a role for herself within Canada's artistic milieu: "When we heard that, grown up, she had taken a prominent place in art leadership, we were not surprised...we were willing to bet guineas that the woman in question could not be tamed to docile following of anyone else's ideas."[11]

Upon her return to Canada in 1946, McCullough worked for the Extension Services Department of the National Gallery of Canada. A year later she left Ottawa to become the Executive Secretary of the Saskatchewan Arts Board.[12] The title of McCullough's new position is misleading, for in actuality she was the director of the newly-formed organization. This was a significant move in her career, for not only was she given complete control over the Board, she now switched her focus to adult education. During her time in Regina from 1947 to 1958 she maintained links to the National Gallery staff, recommending Prairie artists to them and bringing their traveling exhibitions to Saskatchewan. She was seen locally as a conduit to the national art community and regarded as part of the cultural elite. To be sure, one of McCullough's main aims was to raise the level of cultural awareness in the province: "She was adored, and good at talking to people, and considered the first lifeline to what was going on in the country."[13]

One of her early projects in Saskatchewan was to organize a home industries programme modeled on Marius Barbeau's initiatives to train rural Quebecers in traditional craft practices such as weaving.[14] By the mid 1950s she had also established several craft projects that promoted cottage industry. These were based specifically on British Art Board models which often considered craft an equal player in the national arts scene.[15] For example, Patricia Wiens established a pottery studio in eastern Saskatchewan that quarried pure deposits of lime-free clay, supplied pottery equipment, and built a studio open to all members of the community.[16] McCullough placed ads in small-town Saskatchewan newspapers inviting local craftspeople to demonstrate their skills to the public. As a result, large numbers of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds were encouraged to preserve

and promote their own work. Wiens recalls Ukrainian women demonstrating weaving on looms built by their husbands, and using dyes made from crêpe paper. The inclusive nature of these projects resulted in strong rural support for the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

In 1956 McCullough's interest in the crafts expanded when she received a Canadian Government Overseas Awards Fellowship to study home industries in Europe. She set out to investigate the working relationship of artists and craftspeople, citing in her proposal the example of Picasso's connections with the potteries that produced the wares he had painted. From 1956 to 1958 she traveled in France, England and Denmark, where she looked at regional variations in craft as well as the range of materials in craft production, and methods of marketing. This experience was instrumental in shaping her approach to Saskatchewan's own handicraft program. During the next decade she was also the National Gallery of Canada's liaison officer for Western Canada which gave her new opportunities to highlight the crafts. Although she was still based in Regina during this period, she spent increasing amounts of time in Ottawa.

In order for crafts to be taken seriously, McCullough believed that the quality of Canadian work needed substantial improvement. By the mid 1960s consensus on the definition of professional craft was slowly developing and three key elements emerged. In order to be regarded as professionals, craftspeople first required exceptional technical skills; and secondly, they were expected to give conceptual meaning to their objects. This meant that their forms, images, and materials were to be articulated in a manner that reflected an awareness of and engagement with the current language of fine arts. Thirdly, craft professionals required a set of infrastructures including organizations and exhibitions, as well as educational opportunities for the administrators who oversaw crafts' development. McCullough's concern for professionalism in the field might be taken for granted, but as a woman with socialist leanings she was concerned that the definition of professionalism would prove to be too exclusive. The Saskatchewan Arts Board's early successes had relied upon its inclusive nature and McCullough was hesitant to exclude craftspeople who were considered to fall outside mainstream definitions of "good" craft. However, this created a certain amount of confusion. In the early 1960s McCullough arranged annual juried exhibitions of local Saskatchewan artists in Regina; but Patricia Wiens recalls that after a number of these presentations, professional artists and craftspeople stopped submitting work, objecting to the high number of amateurs in the shows.[17]

At the same moment that McCullough was dealing with the widening gap between professional and amateur makers in the province, Canada's national craft organization, the Canadian Handicraft Guild, was facing the same dilemma. By 1963 the Guild's problems had captured the attention of *Canadian Art* magazine. In design writer Sandra Gwyn's article, "Guild at the Crossroads,"[18] she lauded the

fig.3 Aileen Osborn Webb leading the first meeting of the World Crafts Council. Rice, Jacqueline (ed.), *The First World Congress of Craftsmen, June 8-19, 1964* (New York: American Craftsmen Educational Council), 203. (Photo: American Craft Council Archives)

long history of the Guild, but also pointed out the division between the senior members' adherence to tradition and the younger members' desire for change and new directions. Many of the latter members felt that the Guild's definition of craft failed to recognize that craftspeople were working in increasingly varied and overlapping media. It was becoming clear that the Guild's 1906 mandate to preserve traditional craft no longer applied to contemporary makers, many of whom were trained as artists and expected to exhibit and compete in exhibitions. Gwyn shared McCullough's support for the increasing number of educated, professional craftspeople:

> But in 1963, when the home arts are all but moribund, when the *habitant* woodcarver, the Maritime hooker of rugs, the country cabinet-maker have all given way to the sophisticated, art-school trained fine craftsman, and less fortunately, to the "do-it-yourselfer" with his cut-price craft kit, the Guild's confused organization and outdated structure put it at an almost hopeless disadvantage.[19]

Gwyn praised the Quebec chapter of the Guild as leading the way for the modernization of the organization with its Spring 1963 exhibition, *The Arts and Crafts of Canada*, at the Guild headquarters on Peel Street in Montreal. Norah McCullough served as the only woman on its three-person jury, signifying her role as a recognized expert in the Canadian craft community.[20] Nevertheless, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild turned to the United States for its symbolic capital in the form of Aileen Osborn Webb (1892-1979), the philanthropist who sponsored the American Craft Council. When she visited Montreal to open the Guild's exhibition, Webb took the opportunity to promote her most ambitious craft project yet, the First World Congress of Craftsmen. It was an event that would dramatically increase McCullough's own involvement with craft.

The Congress was held 8-19 June 1964 at Columbia University in New York. Webb believed that by uniting the world's craftspeople (fig.3), the event would contribute to world peace; and the conference attracted nine-hundred and forty-two attendees from forty-seven countries. Some delegates undoubtedly took advantage of Webb's offer to provide free board and lodging for the two-week period but the costs of travel meant that the Congress was dominated by Americans: six-hundred and ninety-two were in attendance. The second largest delegation comprised thirty people from Canada.[21] Seven represented the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, three were from the Canadian Guild of Potters, one attended on behalf of Les métiers d'art du Québec, and the remainder were delegates from various arts groups and galleries across the country, including Norah McCullough who represented the National Gallery.[22] The Conference booklet, "A Short Guide to World Crafts," contained material submitted by each national craft association and provided revealing statistics and surveys of the crafts in the countries represented at the Congress. The American section gave extensive listings of craft organizations, universities and art schools offering professional training for craftspeople, and a list of successful artists who worked in various craft media. "It is of interest to note here," wrote the Education Department of the American Craft Council, "that the approach to craftsmanship in America is that of the individual artist, working most often alone as both designer and producer, and creating one-of-a-kind prestige pieces."[23] This contrasted greatly with the approach described in the booklet's other entries, including the section on Canada. While the Canadian text noted a revival of interest in the crafts, its anonymous author confessed to the lack of schools or institutions here that offered full instruction in crafts, and cited the hobbyist focus of provincial craft programs, leading to "the major drawback that confronts all craftsmen [is that] little of the work done is recognized as art."[24]

While American craft was advancing within the recognized hierarchy of the fine arts, Canadian crafts struggled to occupy the same professional space. Lois Moran, the editor of *American Craft*, believes that "Canadians could see what was

happening in the United States and wanted to fill that gap in their own country."[25] The American Craft Council had achieved its artistic aims through a number of initiatives funded by Webb over the preceding twenty years. America House, a successful retail outlet in New York City, was established in 1940, followed in 1942 by the launch of the publication *Craft Horizons*, with a distribution of 3500 copies and a professional editor.[26] In 1946 the Council created the School for American Craftsmen within the Fine and Hand Arts Division of the Liberal Arts College of Alfred University in south-western New York State (today affiliated with the Rochester Institute of Technology). This involvement in the university milieu elevated the status of crafts in America by linking it to professional levels of training and by placing new emphasis on the development of conceptual skills.

As well as the economic capital Aileen Osborn Webb invested in hosting the 1964 First World Congress of Craftsmen, cultural and symbolic capital came into play in her selection of the participants in its numerous conference panels and workshops. Among them were two influential Americans: René d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the writer Harold Rosenberg. Rosenberg had achieved critical fame through his essay, "American Action Painters" (first published in *Art News* December of 1952), and his books, *The Tradition of the New* (1962) and *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audiences* (1964). Unlike his contemporary Clement Greenberg, who focused on the avant-garde at the expense of craft concerns, Rosenberg was careful to note the links between art and craft. In *The Tradition of the New*, he argued for the self-reflexivity that was developing within American craft: "A form of work establishes itself as a profession not only through the complication of its technique – many of the ancient crafts involved more complex recipes than their counterparts today – but through self-consciousness with regard to this technique."[27] He added that: "This is a time of rapid change in the arts as well as in any other field of human endeavor. Old classifications are apt to become obsolete overnight. As folk art declines and individual craftsmanship gains in importance, the line dividing craftwork from sculpture often becomes very vague."[28] In his paper for the panel discussion "The Contemporary Scene," René d'Harnoncourt agreed with Rosenberg's assessment of crafts as fine art, although he excluded the non-professional. The enthusiastic response to their views led the American Craft Council and the World Crafts Council to seek to institutionalize their national modernist narrative and make it the official description of the international craft world. With over six hundred representatives from the United States at the Congress, the dominance of American attitudes was not surprising.

Many of the Canadian representatives were influenced by the conference's emphasis on non-traditional crafts, and a serious political and ideological rift would develop by the end of the Congress. Those attending on behalf of the Canadian

Handicrafts Guild had assumed that their president, Harold Burnham, a weaver, curator and well-regarded author, would act as the primary Canadian representative to any future body that arose from the Congress.[29] A March 1964 Canadian Handicrafts Guild bulletin had clearly stated the case: "Our president, Mr. Harold B. Burnham, who is also president of the national guild, is to be the official Canadian delegate."[30] It therefore came as a surprise to many when Norah McCullough became the Congress delegate as a result of the votes of "young rebels" at the conference. McCullough represented a shift toward the new and she was also aware of the professional standards promoted by many Canadian craftspeople. In the words of Anita Aarons, the "Allied Arts" columnist for the journal *Canadian Architecture*:

> Hitherto the craft field, so called, has been the province of the adult educator or the leisure time dilettante and preserve of archaic custom. This orientation made it of little use to the architect. However, the new group, while not excluding these other activities, has forced attention on the changing nature and growing body of artist-designers who defy categorization and means by education and professional practice to elevate their status to one of economic reality and social responsibility.[31]

McCullough was careful to appear to be inclusive of non-professional craftspeople. However, the "young rebels" had their own exclusive mandate as they intended to improve the quality of Canadian crafts by promoting the work and ideals of specific craftspeople. Following her return to Regina from New York, McCullough was approached by the Guild to participate more fully in their activities. While McCullough had served as a juror for their exhibitions, she had never played an official role within the organization. Wilson Mellen, President of the Quebec chapter, raised the possibility of appointing McCullough to replace Burnham as the new national president of the Guild. However, like many others, Mellen feared that she would be too busy as liaison officer for the National Gallery to be effective in both positions.[32]

Interest in McCullough increased when she began arranging an alternative national organization to institute major changes in the structure of Canadian crafts – changes that challenged the very existence of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. On 26 June 1964, the Saskatchewan Arts Board sent out a newsletter written by McCullough in which she encouraged Canadian craftspeople to respect the urgent need for a national organization to work with the World Crafts Council. No mention was made of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild serving as this entity. After she had received over seven hundred names and addresses of craftspeople, a second more detailed "Newsletter to the Craftsmen of Canada from Miss Norah McCullough" was distributed in mid-September. Here her suggestions for a new national organization centred on two key questions. Basing

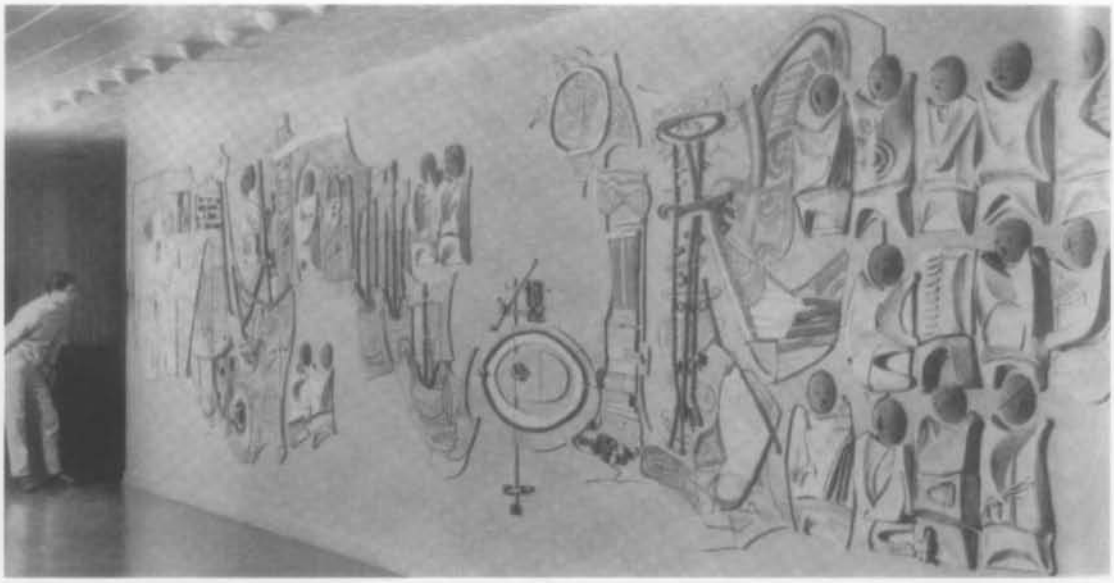


fig.4 Merton Chambers with his ceramic mural, in Aarons, "Canadian Handicrafts and the Architect," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, May 1965. (Photo: RAIC)

her argument on the importance of unity of purpose and good communication, she first asked craftspeople if a new organization was necessary. But even more important, she raised the issue of criteria for membership. Recalling debates over exclusivity at the New York Congress where delegates had agreed on the importance of international relations and the limitations of restricted membership, she urged Canadians to keep the new organization open to artist-designers, rural and folk designers, and amateurs as well as enthusiastic laypeople. Almost all the recipients responded to her newsletter and with the majority in favour of a new organization, a conference was planned to take place at the Department of Architecture and Interior Design, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, on 5-7 February 1965. The more than forty government officials, university professors, craftspeople and representatives of major craft organizations who attended the meeting brought a diversity of backgrounds and approaches. One important motivation for creating a united group was that Canadian craftspeople were keenly aware of increasing funding opportunities available to organizations planning events for the Centennial year.

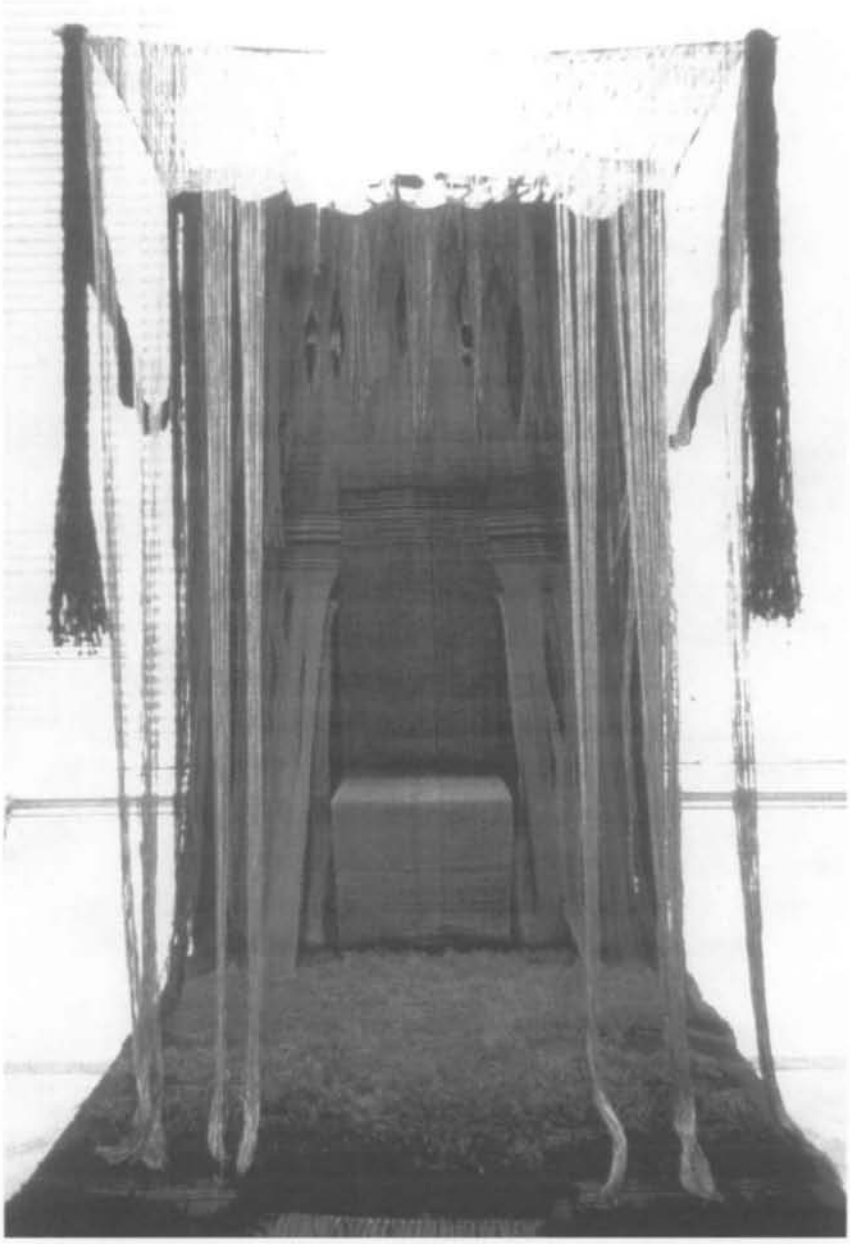


fig.5 Charlotte Lindgren, *Aedicule*, 1967. (Photo: courtesy of Charlotte Lindgren)

Government officials took advantage of the Winnipeg conference to announce new initiatives that would benefit Canadian craft and design. The Department of Industry, along with the National Design Council, unveiled "Canadian Design '67," a programme intended to promote good design. The Minister of Public Works announced a commitment to set aside one percent of the cost of any new federal government buildings for works of art.[33] These initiatives brought increased opportunities for craftspeople working in a more conceptual manner. For example, the ceramist Merton Chambers from Ontario won commissions for his large-scale ceramic murals (fig.4), and the textile artist Charlotte Lindgren from the Maritimes created free-form woven sculptures for federal government offices (fig.5). The fear of being excluded from these opportunities whether through geography, status, or lack of symbolic or cultural capital, provided craftspeople with the incentive to engage in collective action.

Although the American Craft Council was not represented at the Winnipeg Conference, there was an awareness of the importance of its activities and its impact on Canadian craft, along with the need for strong Canadian representation in the North American section of the World Crafts Council. Despite McCullough's attempts to emphasize the increased quality of Canadian crafts, the perceived strengths of the Americans continued to expose the deficiencies of Canadian efforts:

> Handcraft in the USA is big business. This is due to the indefatigable devotion of a dynamic entrepreneur, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb and her organization, the American Craftsmen's Council. With her vision and untiring effort (plus the use of personal fortune) she and her craftsmen supporters have elevated the handcrafts of America well above the sentimental preservation of cottage craft, or the promotion of the indigenous native artifacts as perpetual souvenirs. A well organized body of contemporary trained craftsmen is producing highly original, well crafted products in any media. They expect, and do, earn a good professional income disposing of their products to all branches of society, independent of the tourist industry.[34]

What had begun as a conference focusing on crafts ended, as McCullough had undoubtedly intended, by creating a new organization dedicated to "all those forms designed for use in man's environment, either hand-made or designed for large-scale industrial production."[35] Delegates to the Winnipeg meeting had agreed that there should be room for "jewelry, pottery, weaving, enameling, sculpture and murals or, for other artifacts that can be industrially produced from well-designed prototypes such as printed textiles, ceramic garden planters or furniture."[36] Arnold Rockman, editor of *Canadian Art* and contributing art critic to several Canadian newspapers, suggested the name "Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts/Conseil canadian pour les arts de l'espace." Rockman argued

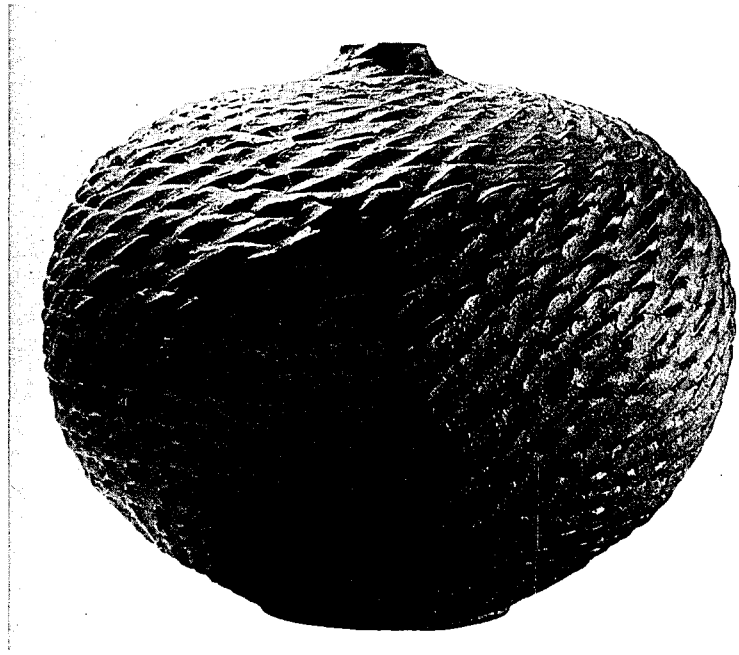


fig.6 Joan Bobbs, Stoneware bottle, 1966. This bottle was featured on the cover of the *Canadian Fine Crafts* catalogue and poster. (Photo: courtesy of Joan Bobbs)

that the title embraced far more than craft and would benefit craftspeople far into the future. For Burnham and other members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, however, the name indicated a problematic shift away from craft concerns toward an overly broad involvement with design, architecture and art.

The government officials at the Winnipeg conference recognized the potential of the new organization to operate as a standard-setting body. The Expo 67 Corporation officially demanded evidence from the Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts that it could speak as a national organization for the majority of Canadian craftspeople and designers. However Jean-Claude Delorme, the Secretary-General of Expo attended the Winnipeg meetings and had already decided that the Council's standards were high enough to satisfy the government.[37] The new organization and its leaders were thus officially sanctioned as the gatekeepers of Canada's craft culture. Following the Winnipeg meeting, the Canadian Council undertook the momentous task of uniting Canada's craftspeople, designers,

and architects. The executive committee consisted of Norah McCullough as Chair, Françoise Brais of Montreal as Vice-Chair, and George Shaw from Regina as Secretary-Treasurer. In Burnham's official report on the conference he offered his sympathy to this group, stating "the problems faced by this executive council are of the greatest magnitude."[38]

Based in Regina, a city outside the dominant power base of Central Canada, the group held greater appeal in the West than did the Guild; but soon its official address was moved to Ottawa in the hope of securing federal funding. By the summer of 1965 it was clear to the executive that they could not retain the name Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts. Although the words reflected McCullough's ideals for an all-encompassing national arts group, the Department of the Secretary of State was unwilling to provide funding to the association under this name as there were too many organizations already using the phrase "Canadian Council."[39] The executive committee began searching for a replacement, well aware that their choice had to embrace the established goals of the group: "The problem is that the word design does not translate into French. There has been some strong feeling about including words like 'professional,' and excluding words like 'Guild,' and we did not want to call it by a name too closely emulating the American one, the American Craftsmen's Council."[40] After a great deal of discussion among the executive and its lawyers, the group was renamed the Canadian Craftsmen's Association/Association des Artisans du Canada, identifying the organization specifically with crafts, and thus abandoning the desire of many members to publicly encompass a wider variety of arts within its mandate.

The new organization suffered a significant setback when Norah McCullough resigned as Chair in 1966 to curate a major exhibition of Canadian crafts for the National Gallery of Canada for the Centennial celebrations. Her traveling exhibition *Canadian Fine Crafts* (fig.6) was the largest of all the 1967 craft exhibitions and was praised by *Time Magazine* for convincing the public that finally "fine crafts have something artistic to say."[41] Ironically, while women were highly involved in the establishment of the new group of craft professionals in the 1960s, men were often asked to operate as the "official" arbiters of good taste and professionalism in the field. McCullough, the recipient of Carnegie Foundation grants, founder of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association, Canada's representative to the World Crafts Council, and National Gallery curator, was required to work with an American male judge in jurying the final selection for her Ottawa show. Daniel Rhodes (1911-1989), a ceramist and professor of ceramics at Alfred University in New York State became her co-juror. The Gallery and the press promoted his involvement, believing that it would ensure a professional approach to the crafts. Trained as a painter, Rhodes was well-known in North America through his exhibitions and for his publications in which he espoused the

view that artistic individuality and technical skill in ceramics could be achieved simultaneously.[42] It is, however, too simplistic to argue that the National Gallery of Canada was discriminating against McCullough because of her gender. There was in fact a declining interest in the crafts at the Gallery because of tighter restrictions on travelling exhibitions and the difficulties of storing fragile craft objects.[43] Unfortunately, it would be the last exhibition of its type organized by the Gallery.

Published material on the exhibition always acknowledged McCullough's key role in the show, but Rhodes soon stole the spotlight as a leading authority on crafts. The Gallery's newly-appointed director Jean Sutherland Boggs, thanked Rhodes in her Forward to the *Canadian Fine Crafts* catalogue for his "wise guidance;" and indeed McCullough herself wrote to Rhodes expressing gratitude for his "sound guidance in selecting the crafts," adding her appreciation for "clarifying my own judgment."[44] However, her resentment over credit he erroneously received as a single juror surfaced in an October 1966 internal memo to National Gallery curator, Jean-Paul Morisset: "As for the jurying please note that our notices state that Rhodes assisted in the jurying for I actually was his co-juror."[45] Rhodes was given the entire catalogue essay to espouse his views on Canadian craft, but Norah McCullough was rendered mute despite the central role she had taken in organizing the largest exhibition of Canadian crafts that Canada had ever witnessed, and one that set attendance records and drew only positive reviews.

Nevertheless, McCullough's efforts made a major contribution to the ascendant state of Canadian craft in the late 1960s. A profound shift in its ideology was signaled by the emphasis on professionalism that emerged under her leadership during the formation of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association. As a professional arts administrator, McCullough played a significant role in the institution of new ideals for Canadian crafts on both the national and international stage. Her dedication to the frequently marginalized crafts, as witnessed by her initiatives to institutionalize the field, continues to impact upon today's craftspeople and administrators. It is time that the legacy of Norah McCullough receives its proper attention.

SANDRA ALFOLDY
Historical and Critical Studies
NSCAD University

Notes

1 Patricia Wiens, interview with the author, 28 Aug. 2003.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. Wiens notes that McCullough was a beautiful woman, with a striking figure, "remarkably thin ankles, nice legs and a flat tummy."

4 Ibid.

5 For a more detailed breakdown, see Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Series III (grant files), Box 348, folders 3-4, Columbia University.

6 Ontario College of Art Alumni Association, *Alumnus*, Spring 1983. National Archives of Canada, MG30D317, Volume 8, McCullough, Norah and Family.

7 Norah McCullough, *Biographical Notes*, NAC, MG30D317, Volume 6.

8 In 1938, $2160 was granted to cover McCullough's salary and travel expenses to establish and direct the Children's Art Center in Pretoria, South Africa. In 1939 and 1940 the Carnegie Corporation gave two additional $3000 grants, "for continued support of the work of Miss Norah McCullough in the organization and development of the Children's Art Centre at Pretoria." My thanks to Jane Gorjevsky, Curator, Carnegie Corporation Collection, Columbia University, for her assistance.

9 "New Cultural Vistas Open to Rural Areas," The *Regina Leader Post*, 10 Feb. 1948.

10 "The old native whispered to her to retreat quickly to her car and as she ran the native women commenced throwing stones at her," in H.J. LAWLESS, "A Girl Against the Veldt," *The Star Weekly* (Toronto), 5 Jan. 1946. The exoticism of McCullough's encounters with the "natives" was also captured in an article in the *Regina Leader Post*, in which McCullough praised her students: "The African Natives she described as intelligent and extremely appreciative of any assistance given them. In Miss McCullough's opinion the natives are especially talented in handcrafts." "New Cultural Vistas Open to Rural Areas," *Regina Leader Post*, 10 Feb. 1948.

11 Pearl MxCARTHY, "Art and Artists," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 Jan. 1938.

12 Sandra Flood is currently researching the history of the Saskatchewan Arts Board as part of her post-doctoral research on Canadian craft from 1950-2000.

13 Wiens interview.

14 Norah McCullough, *Looking Back to my Early Days in Regina*, NAC, MG30D317, Volume 6. During McCullough's time at the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Canada's first arts board, it established initiatives to "assist handicrafts groups." "New Arts Board for Saskatchewan," *Regina Leader Post*, 2 Feb. 1948.

15 See Tanya HARROD, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Wiens notes that David Smith, the founder of the Saskatchewan Arts Board was instrumental in assisting McCullough with her projects. At the time he was the provincial Director of the Adult Education Division, Department of Education.

16 Wiens interview.

17 Ibid. Wiens states that the painter Maxwell Bates, one of the jurors, called McCullough from Calgary in the early 1960s claiming that he found her guidelines for selection were confusing.

18 Sandra GWYN, "Guild at the Crossroads," *Canadian Art* 20, no.5 (September/October 1963): 276-81.

19 Ibid., 277.

20 The other members were Gordon Webber, painter and professor at the School of Architecture at McGill University, and Paul Arthur, the Managing Editor of *Canadian Art* magazine.

21 The third largest delegation was Italy with twenty-eight representatives, the fourth largest was Mexico with twenty-two, followed by India with fourteen. New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Bolivia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanganyka also had representatives at the conference. Czechoslovakia and Hungary were the only countries from "behind the iron curtain." "First World Congress of Craftsmen," *Craft Horizons* 24, no.5 (Sept./Oct. 1964): 8.

22 American Craft Council, New York, *Short Guide to World Crafts*, June 1964. AAC Archives, WCC Box 2. The Canadian participants in the First World Congress of Craftsmen were: Françoise Braise, Montreal, Secretary of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Harold B. Burnham, Toronto, President of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Merton Chambers, Toronto, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Helen Copeland, Toronto, Olea Davis, Vancouver, Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Canadian Guild of Potters; Professor and Mrs. Eric Dodd, Calgary; Aleksandra Dzervitis, Toronto; Ruthann Gardner, Thornhill, Ontario; Mrs. McGregor Hone, Regina; Tess Kidick, Jordan, Ontario; Mr. and Mrs. Michel Lacombe, Verchères, Quebec; Bailey Leslie, Toronto, Canadian Guild of Potters; Norah McCullough, Regina, National Gallery of Canada; Ludwig Nickel, Winnipeg; John Pocock, Toronto; Eileen Reid, Montreal; H. Baroness Riedl-Ursin, Montreal; Ellis Roulston, Halifax, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Catherine Ross, Toronto; Mildred Ryerson, Toronto; Tutzi Haspel Seguin, Toronto; Mr. and Mrs. George Shaw, Regina; Laurant Simard, Les métiers d'art de Québec, Montreal; Sheila R. Stiven, Toronto; J.R. Woolgar, Yellowknife, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Jack Young, Saskatoon.

23 American Craft Council, *Short Guide to World Crafts*, June 1964, 101 (Conference proceedings).

24 Ibid., 12.

25 Lois Moran, interview with the author, 9 Dec. 1999, New York.

26 *Craft Horizons* changed its name to *American Craft* in 1979. Lois Moran was appointed editor in 1980.

27 Harold ROSENBERG, *The Tradition of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962 ed.), 63.

28 Ibid., 84.

29 Harold Burnham and his wife Dorothy were major forces in the Canadian craft milieu. Both were affiliated with the Royal Ontario Museum, where Dorothy Burnham worked as a curator from 1929 until 1980. Together they published *Keep Me Warm One Night* (1972), considered to be the seminal text on early handweaving in Eastern Canada. Dorothy Burnham published a number of key histories of textiles, including *The Comfortable Arts* (1981), *Cut My Cote* (1973), *Unlike the Lilies* (1986), and *Warp and Weft* (1980). Her husband published *Handweaving in Pioneer Canada* (1976) through the Royal Ontario Museum.

30 *Canadian Handicrafts Guild Bulletin* 53 (March 1964): 2.

31 Anita AARONS, "An Absent Minded Attitude," *Architecture Canada* 505, 44/10 (October 1967): 22.

32 Wilson Mellen to Adelaide Marriott, 25 Jan. 1965. Archives of Ontario, Ontario Crafts Council, Archives of Canadian Craft, MU5752, Box 7, BW8-CB2.

33 "Stress Excellence of Design," *The Windsor Star*, 8 April 1965.

34 Anita AARONS, "Canadian Handcrafts and the Architect," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 476, 42/5 (May 1965): 16.

35 "Report of the Meeting of Canadian Craftsmen Pro Tem Committee Winnipeg, 5-7, 1965." NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.

36 Ibid.

37 Jean-Claude Delorme, to George Shaw, Acting Chairman, Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts, 10 March 1966. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.

38 Harold Burnham, "Report of the Winnipeg Conference," Archives of Ontario, Ontario Crafts Council, Archives of Canadian Craft, MU5750, Box 5, BU-BW2.

39 Norah McCullough to Glen Lewis, University of British Columbia, 26 Aug. 1965. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association: "We would never get our charter through the Secretary of State office because it seems there are already too many organizations with 'Canadian Council' linked in their terminology."

40 McCullough to Alan E. Blakeney, 6 July 1965. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.

41 "The Arts: Beauty by Design," *Time Magazine* (23 Dec. 1966): 9.

42 Daniel Rhodes was well known for his books, *Clay and Glazes for the Potter* (New York: Greenberg, 1957), and *Stoneware and Porcelain: The Art of High-Fired Pottery* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1959).

43 Wiens interview. She notes that the National Gallery of Canada's neglect of the crafts is a result of a number of issues, including increased concerns for the safety of traveling exhibitions (humidity, storage and shipping) and budgetary factors. It could be argued that the situation coincided with the growth of the National Museum of Man (today the Canadian Museum of Civilization) as the gatekeeper for Canadian crafts, a role that was heightened in the late 1970s when the Massey Collection of Canadian Crafts was gifted to the Museum.

44 McCullough to Alfred Rhodes, 25 Feb. 1966. National Gallery of Canada Archives, 12-4-296, Volume 3, Canadian Fine Crafts.

45 McCullough to Jean-Paul Morisset, 17 October 1966. NAC, MG30D317, Volume 7, McCullough, Norah and Family.

Résumé

NORAH McCULLOUGH
Pionnière de l'artisanat professionnel au Canada

Norah McCullough (1903-1993) a apporté, dès les années 1920, une contribution importante au milieu canadien des arts. En tant qu'administratrice des arts, conservatrice et fondatrice de l'Association des Artisans du Canada, elle s'est engagée avec audace à promouvoir un large éventail d'activités culturelles. Elle est peut-être mieux connue des historiens de l'art par son travail sur le Groupe du Beaver Hall, mais le présent article veut souligner sa contribution au domaine de l'artisanat. À un moment où les artisans canadiens luttaient pour se faire admettre en tant que groupe professionnel, Norah McCullough leur a fourni de nouvelles occasions d'être reconnus officiellement en créant une nouvelle organisation et en mettant sur pied une des plus importantes expositions d'artisanat, *Canadian Fine Craft.*

Peu de temps après avoir obtenu son diplôme de l'Ontario College of Art, en 1925, avec spécialisation en peinture, Norah McCullough devient l'assistante d'Arthur Lismer à la Art Gallery of Toronto (devenue la Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario), où elle enseigne dans des classes d'art pour les enfants jusqu'en 1937. Pendant ce temps, elle acquiert de l'influence sur la scène artistique de Toronto, cultivant des amitiés avec les sculptrices Florence Wyle et Frances Loring, membres du Groupe des Sept, et l'ethnologue Marius Barbeau. L'intérêt de McCullough pour l'artisanat remonte à 1934, alors qu'elle suit des cours de l'Institut Courtauld (université de Londres), voyage de recherche financé par la Corporation Carnegie. En 1938, elle est choisie par Lismer pour aller à Pretoria, en Afrique du Sud, mettre sur pied une école d'art subventionnée par la Carnegie. Pendant les huit années qu'elle passe en Afrique du Sud, elle constate l'importance de l'artisanat pour les artisans indigènes, et s'intéresse aux problèmes de malnutrition, de mauvaise santé et d'analphabétisme dus à l'impossibilité d'accéder à une éducation convenable et, par conséquent, à des revenus adéquats. Pour McCullough, l'artisanat joue un rôle vital pour procurer à cette population opprimée une expression culturelle indépendante.

À son retour au Canada, en 1946, elle développe l'idée de la responsabilisation à travers l'artisanat dans son travail à la section des services de l'expansion de la Galerie nationale du Canada (devenue le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada en 1968). En 1947, elle est engagée comme secrétaire exécutive du Conseil des arts

de la Saskatchewan, poste qui lui permet de réaliser certains programmes d'artisanat dans le but de préserver et de promouvoir les talents d'artisans de diverses origines ethniques. Déjà, dans les années 1950, elle avait réalisé en Saskatchewan plusieurs projets de promotion de l'artisanat à domicile, inspirés des modèles britanniques où l'artisanat joue un rôle important sur la scène des arts. En 1956, son intérêt pour les métiers d'art s'accroît avec l'octroi d'un prix du gouvernement fédéral pour étudier le travail à domicile en Europe. De 1956 à 1958, elle voyage en France, en Angleterre et au Danemark, étudiant les variantes régionales ainsi que les différents matériaux utilisés pour la production d'objets artisanaux et les méthodes de mise en marché. À son retour à Regina, elle est engagée par la Galerie nationale du Canada en tant qu'agent de liaison avec les provinces de l'Ouest, poste qui lui permet de promouvoir davantage l'artisanat.

Elle s'intéresse bientôt à l'amélioration de la qualité des métiers d'art au Canada, car selon elle, ils ne pouvaient occuper une place sérieuse dans la hiérarchie des arts à moins d'accroître leur valeur esthétique et leur expertise technique. Au début des années 1960, le Canada manque d'infrastructures professionnelles pour les artisans. La Guilde canadienne des métiers d'art, organisation nationale qui avait reçu le mandat, en 1906, de préserver l'artisanat traditionnel, est perçue comme une institution sur le déclin, incapable de fournir des perspectives d'avenir à un nombre croissant de professionnels instruits. Au même moment, Aileen Osborn Webb, fondatrice de l'American Craft Council, crée le World Crafts Council en 1964. Les trente délégués canadiens à l'assemblée inaugurale du conseil élisent Norah McCullough comme représentante canadienne à cette nouvelle organisation internationale de métiers d'art. Elle ne tarde pas à profiter de ce poste et, en février 1965, elle organise une conférence d'artisans, d'administrateurs d'art, de fonctionnaires du gouvernement et de professeurs d'université pour discuter de la nécessité de créer une nouvelle association d'artisans au Canada. Le résultat de cette rencontre est la fondation de l'Association des Artisans du Canada. Cette dernière supplante bientôt la Guilde canadienne des métiers d'art comme principal groupe d'artisans, alors qu'elle est choisie pour superviser les normes pour les métiers d'art au Canada à l'exposition universelle de Montréal, Expo 67.

En 1966, McCullough démissionne de son poste de présidente de sa nouvelle organisation afin de se consacrer à la mise sur pied d'une exposition majeure d'artisanat canadien pour la Galerie nationale du Canada à l'occasion de l'année du centenaire. Son exposition itinérante, *Canadian Fine Crafts*, est la plus importante de toutes les expositions d'artisanat du centenaire, et le magazine *Time* la félicite d'avoir convaincu le public de la valeur artistique des

métiers d'art. Encouragée par le succès de cette exposition d'artisanat et pour célébrer la prise de retraite de Mme McCullough, en 1968, la Galerie nationale du Canada crée la série de conférences sur l'artisanat Norah McCullough, qui se poursuit pendant une décennie.

Bien que les métiers d'art ne furent qu'une partie de ses nombreux intérêts dans le domaine de l'art, Norah McCullough fut parmi les premiers défenseurs de la place de l'artisanat parmi les beaux-arts au Canada. Pour cette seule raison, sa contribution mérite d'être célébrée.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette

fig. 1 James Wilson Morrice, **The Flower Seller**, 1901, oil on panel, 13 x 15cm, Thomson Works of Art, Toronto. (Photo: Thomson Works of Art, PC0155)

JAMES WILSON MORRICE IN VENICE
The Campiello delle Ancore

The city most associated with the paintings of James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924) is Paris; it was his principle residence for most of his life and the only place where he maintained a permanent studio. Venice, however, is second to Paris in terms of the number of Morrice's urban images. Although he made only a few trips to Italy at the turn of the nineteenth century, Venice is the subject of over one hundred paintings (panels and canvases) and an almost equal number of drawings. There is much to suggest that these numbers could increase if and when more works come to light, especially from private collections here and abroad. Another factor that would provide more knowledge of Morrice's Venetian images is a reconsideration of the sites of artworks that are already in the public eye. This article will deal with one such example, a small panel (fig.1) in the Thomson Works of Art Collection in Toronto.[1] It was first reproduced as *The Flower Seller* in the monograph on Morrice by the Toronto art dealer Blair Laing, where he describes the setting: "Among the most pleasing and colourful street sights in Paris are the flower vendors' markets. This one is located in front of the elegant midtown buildings on the rue Royale, or perhaps on an avenue near the Madeleine."[2]

The painting, however, is identifiable as an image of Venice at first glance. The largest figure in the painting wears a long dark shawl that was a characteristic item of dress for ordinary Venetian women. The *scialle* (in Italian) or *sial* (in Venetian) immediately situates the woman in the region of the Veneto and within her social status amongst the city's *popolani*, the largest and lowest class of Venetian citizens also known as *minore veneziana* (fig.2). Granted, the architectural setting of the women gathered near a small fruit and vegetable stand is not as obviously Venetian as the clothing. A primary clue to the location, however, is the darkened opening at the left, a perfect example of a covered passageway running beneath a Venetian building and known as a *sottoportego*. The sottoportego permits easy access from one open space to another and functions as a short cut, allowing people "to go by the hidden ways" (*andare per le sconte*), and to avoid crowded thoroughfares. They also provide for more inhabitable space above the passageway as buildings extend over the lane.

Nevertheless, the misidentification of the site as Parisian is certainly understandable. The place of the painting has little to do with the geographical settings of Morrice's better-known Venetian images, most of which display the

fig. 2 Postcard, *Venezia. Erberia* (Rialto Market), early 1900s, Photo-Studies Fred. W. Martin, Venezia. (Photo: the author)

city's most famous landmarks. The majority of his paintings and drawings indicate the Piazza San Marco, the adjoining Piazzetta and the long promenade of the Riva degli Schiavoni that extends eastwards along the waters of the Bacino di San Marco. His other favoured subjects are the large buildings or *palazzi* along the Grand Canal near the Rialto Bridge. The Thomson panel, however, is one of the few Morrice views of Venice that differs from these popular tourist sites. Instead, it records a place that was rarely mentioned in Venetian travel literature or illustrated in popular commercial photograph albums of the time: the Campiello delle Ancore.[3]

The Campiello delle Ancore is a small rectangular space (fig.3) located at the eastern end of the monumental Via Garibaldi in the borough or *sestiere* of Castello.[4] It is adjacent to the Fondamenta Sant' Anna (or Ana), the street bordering the south side of the Rio Sant' Anna.[5] The name of the campiello suggests that anchors for ship construction at the nearby Arsenale were manufactured in the immediate area centuries ago.[6] The plain sixteenth and seventeenth-century buildings that line the campiello have little to distinguish

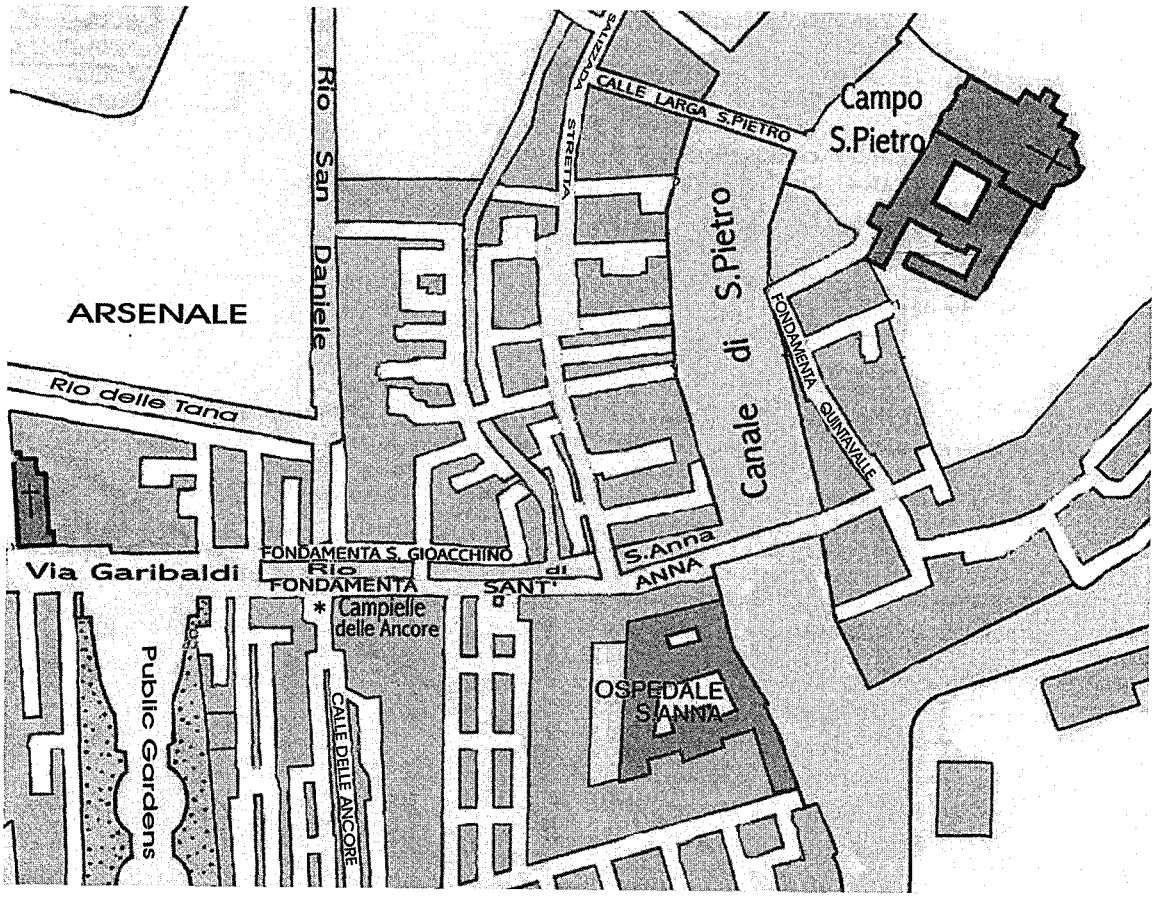


fig. 3 Map (detail) of the sestiere of Castello. (Photo: Brenda Hutchinson, Montreal)

fig. 4 F. Hopkinson Smith, *A Little Hole in the Wall of the Via Garibaldi*, in Smith, *Gondola Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897). (Photo: the author)

the site architecturally.[7] Its deep sottoportego at the southeast corner leads to the Calle delle Ancore, one of a network of adjoining streets behind the campiello. A primary purpose of this campiello is to provide easy access to the Via Garibaldi from the tracery of those narrow calle that were home to a large number of working-class Venetians. As well, it is an unimpressive stop on the northerly route to the island of San Pietro di Castello, the location of the original basilica of Venice. It is only in relation to San Pietro that the area of the Campiello delle Ancore is ever (and rarely at that) cited in English-language travel books of the turn of the nineteenth century.[8] The fondamenta and the rio are named after the nearby monastery founded in 1240, and the abandoned church, hospital and convent of Saint Anne, where the daughters of the sixteenth-century painter Tintoretto were educated. Separated by the Sant' Anna canal, the campiello faces the Fondamenta San Gioacchino[9] with its eleventh-century hospital of Saints Peter and Paul. The two fondamente join at the top of the Via Garibaldi, where the western end of the Rio Sant' Anna terminates. Small shops and cafés were popular local gathering places, particularly at the foot of the Fondamenta Sant' Anna (fig.4).

The rio,[10] the fondamente and the campiello with their adjacent buildings are all that remain of the original configuration of the area. The lower part of the Sant' Anna canal, toward the Lagoon of Venice, was filled in by Napoleonic Decree in 1808 and named the Via Eugenia in honour of Napoleon's stepson Eugene de Beauharnais.[11] As Viceroy of Italy resident in Venice, Beauharnais oversaw the creation of this unusually wide promenade, reminiscent of Hausmann's urban vistas in Paris.[12] With the unification of Italy in 1866, the street was renamed the Via Garibaldi and remains the broadest street in Venice as well as carrying the un-Venetian (and more Italian) designation of a "via."[13] Nearly midway along the Via Garibaldi and the Campiello delle Ancore is the grand entrance to the Public Gardens, another Napoleonic project. At the end of the Giardini Pubblici are the pavilions for the Biennale delle Arte exhibitions, held there since 1895.[14] Needless to say, this description of the area surrounding the Campiello delle Ancore is not merely an excuse for a touristic guide to what is still one of the least visited areas of Venice. More to the point, it may help explain when and why Morrice strayed from his beaten path and painted one of his most unusual Venetian images.

Today the Campiello delle Ancore looks much the same as it did at the time of the Morrice panel (fig.5). Such remarkable preservation is the norm in Venice, even in this northeastern area of the sestiere of Castello which had undergone extensive change in the later nineteenth century. The accuracy of Morrice's representation of the topography of the campiello is further substantiated by an image of the site by the American illustrator, Joseph Pennell (1860-1926).[15] More significantly, the Pennell provides a substantial clue to the date of the panel and suggests the circumstances that may have led to Morrice's painting the campiello. The Pennell image (fig.6) derives from his second trip to Venice during the summer and fall of 1901. He had arrived in the city from Florence in June expressly to make drawings to illustrate the two-volume travel book, *Gleanings from Venetian History*, by the American author Francis Marion Crawford.[16] First published in 1905, the book would be printed in several editions by Macmillan and Co., London and the 1906 publication carried the additional title line of *Salve Venetia*. (In 1909 it was called *Venice. The Place and the People.*) Pennell's illustration, entitled simply *Campiello delle Ancore*, is in the second volume of the *Gleanings*. This volume also contains an illustration of the small gothic palazzo with its shops and bar adjoining the campiello on the Fondamenta Sant' Anna. Like most of his images for the book, there is no direct relation to the adjoining text as Pennell describes contemporary Venice while Crawford deals with its past.

The image of the campiello is also reproduced in Pennell's own *Adventures of an Illustrator. Mostly in Following his Authors in America and Europe* of 1925. Here the illustration, which is substantially larger than in the *Gleanings*, carries the longer caption *Campiello del la Ancore. A study of the real daily life of Venice.*

fig. 5 Campiello delle Ancore, 2004. (Photo: John Fox, Montreal)

fig. 6 Joseph Pennell, *Campiello delle Ancore*. In Marion Crawford, *Gleamings from Venetian History* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 190. (Photo: the author)

Pen drawing 1901.[17] According to Pennell in his *Adventures of an Illustrator*, Crawford "made a list of things for me to draw, as all authors do. I did those I liked and ignored the ones I did not. Some were impossible, others ridiculous."[18] Pennell's reprinting of the enlarged image of the campiello suggests that he, at least, considered it one of his more successful Venetian images.[19] In the *Adventures*, Pennell recollects his daily routine and his working methods. He comments that he worked in the mornings and began again an hour after lunch: "if the light was right to start another subject, maybe from the caffè, if not, I walked till I found one. And so I have walked and worked all over Venice." After choosing a view "that I had determined on the day before," he returned to the site: "When I reached my previously chosen spot, if the light was right and I felt right, I began and if possible finished my charcoal or pastel or etching. I knew exactly what I wanted to do, but rarely knew whether I could do it and I never did it as I wished."[20]

It is pure speculation that James Wilson Morrice may have accompanied Joseph Pennell on one of the walks that brought him to the Campiello delle Ancore. Pennell does not mention Morrice in any of his writings on Venice and regrettably, Pennell's letters from this trip to his wife Elizabeth Robins in London have not survived. The only known communication from Morrice is his well-documented letter to Pennell that recalls an evening spent together the previous summer on the fashionable Riva degli Schiavoni, near the Piazza San Marco.[21] The rarity of such an undistinguished place as the Campiello delle Ancore among Morrice's Venetian works does, however, give strong support to the premise that he discovered and then painted the campiello in the company of Pennell. The date of 1901, which is secure for the Pennell image, is also appropriate to the Morrice panel in terms of both its chronology and visual language. Little is known of Morrice's trips to Venice (or the particular details of his entire life for that matter), and unfortunately the English-language newspaper that provided information on visitors had long ceased publication. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of his being in Venice in the summer of 1901,[22] and other Pennell images in the *Gleanings*, although generally of more notable places, also show that similar sites and viewpoints attracted both artists.[23]

The similarities (and even the differences) in the renderings of the Campiello delle Ancore further suggest that the relationship between the two artists is a considerable factor in bringing Morrice to the Rio Sant' Anna. If we accept the likelihood that Pennell introduced Morrice to the site, its is not difficult to propose how Morrice encountered the campiello, either alone or together with Pennell. As mentioned earlier, the Campiello delle Ancore is on a main route to San Pietro di Castello. Morrice painted one canvas of the island and its ancient church (Power Corporation of Canada Collection, Montreal).[24] A small panel showing the modest two-story buildings to the south of the church along the

San Pietro Canal at the Fondamenta de Quintavalle is also in the Thomson Works of Art collection.[25] As well, at least three drawings of San Pietro are to be found in the Morrice sketchbook #18 at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The proximity of the Campiello delle Ancore to the Public Gardents leaves room for further and similar speculation. It is without question that Morrice went to the Giardini Pubblici and the *Esposizione Internationale d'Arte della Citta di Venezia* (the Biennale delle Arte) in the summer of 1901 and this visit undoubtedly encouraged him to contact its director concerning the possibilities of participating in the 1903 exhibition.[26] A small panel, previously entitled *Paris*, but now changed to *Venice* in the MMFA collection, suggests a view of the Giardini as do a few drawings also in their sketchbook #18. Pennell's own visit to the Esposizione Internationale would also have been a matter of course for any foreign artist in Venice in the summer of 1901 and both Pennell and Morrice would participate in the next Biennale.[27]

Last, but certainly not the least consideration is that Pennell and Morrice would share an interest in visiting an area frequented by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). As Pennell knew well, Whistler spent much of his stay of 1879-80 in quarters in the Casa Jankovitz on the (now) Riva dei Sette Martiri alongside the Lagoon at the junction of the Via Garibaldi.[28] Whistler is also known to have done a pastel of the entranceway of a building near the Campiello delle Ancore.[29] Morrice's own admiration for Whistler is clearly evident in the approach to painting in his pictures from the turn of the nineteenth century; and at this time, he even had a penchant for entitling works with the Whistlerian term "nocturne." Whatever circumstances brought Pennell and Morrice to the Fondamenta Sant' Anna, the Campiello delle Ancore provided them both with a glimpse of ordinary life in an extraordinary city.

The Morrice panel shows the site viewed from the railings enclosing the Fondamenta Sant' Anna, directly in front of the Campiello delle Ancore. Morrice excludes any indication of the lateral walls of the square and crops both the left side of the sottoportego and the right end of the facades. He also does not disclose the full height of the three-storey building. As a result, the Campiello appears to be a larger and less constricted space than in actuality, but this enhances the immediacy of the image. He also made certain changes in the scale and position of the architectural elements of the buildings. These adjustments make explicit Morrice's attention to the relationship between the architectural details and also between the buildings and the figures. Nevertheless, the panel provides an accurate representation of the degree of space that would have existed between Morrice and the main facade of the campiello. The Pennell image offers a more expansive view and the campiello itself is shown as relatively small. The differences between the two images begin with the vantagepoint of the two artists.

fig. 7 Campiello delle Ancore from the Ponte Nuovo, 2004. (Photo: John Fox, Montreal)

While Morrice painted his panel from the apron of the campiello, Pennell's drawing was made from a much greater distance, on the opposite Fondamenta San Gioacchino (fig.7). Pennell was standing on the Ponte Nuovo, the small bridge where the northerly Tana Canal empties into the Rio Sant' Anna. In contrast to Morrice, Pennell includes the railings of the Fondamenta Sant' Anna (where Morrice could have positioned himself), the set of steps leading down to the rio, and a portion of the canal itself with a vegetable *barca* propelled by a boatman. Pennell also indicates the north wall of the Campiello delle Ancore by the iron lamplight (still in place) and the name of the site is clearly written on a purposely enlarged street sign (*nizioleto*) above the sottoportego. Perhaps in order to give greater emphasis to the name of the site, Pennell eliminated the two windows above the sottoportego. Morrice includes them as well as the line of the drainpipe leading to the ground floor, but he only paints one shutter at the far left. While Pennell clearly indicates the depth of the sottoportego and even shows a pair of legs moving along the calle at far end, Morrice's passageway is a less-clarified dark space of limitless recession.

A further and more important difference between the two images is that Pennell has included almost two dozen people – adults and children – circulating through and around the Campiello. The figures show a wide variety of poses, gestures and costume; almost an encyclopedia of "Venetian types," and reminiscent of the figures used as "stuffing" in Canaletto's eighteenth-century vistas of Venice. Morrice's campiello contains just five women who inhabit the space with only the slightest suggestion of movement, and with none of the bustle and activity intrinsic to the Pennell image. While Pennell intends his illustration to be "A study of the real daily life of Venice," for Morrice it is a painting of an undisclosed narrative.

Perhaps the most obvious indication of Morrice's intention to see the image as a self-contained painting rather than the record of a specific site, is the fact that he has obliterated the name of the campiello in his own small, dabbed nizioleto. In Whistler's images of Venice, the identification of the place in and for itself was also of secondary interest and he rarely directly titled his work with the exact name of the site.[30] Certainly Morrice shared Whistler's interest in the visual delights of the city but he rejected Whistler's determined search for the "Venice of the Venetians." Instead, Morrice's paintings are glimpses of the Venice around him, wherever he happened to be at the time. As in all of Morrice's Venetian images (as well as in much of his other work), he displays the modernist propensity for painting what is directly in front of him and whatever can be captured as a distillation of the moment. It is Venice in its ambiency rather than its actuality.

As John Lyman wrote in his superb, short biography of Morrice: "Les données de l'étude serviront moins d'esquisse que pour évoquer dans l'esprit du peintre une image plus simple et plus légère."[31] Morrice's image of the campiello allows a consideration of the functions of the small works. His panels are often referred to as *pochades*, which is perhaps more indicative of their pocket size than their purpose. In the nomenclature at the turn of the nineteenth century, various terms were used to describe the intention of such small paintings but none is completely satisfying in regard to Morrice's Venetian pictures because he seems to have followed few traditional rules. In some cases, a wood panel was sufficiently resolved to be regarded as a preparatory study for a larger canvas done later in his Paris studio, although Morrice would often make alterations to the original image. Other canvases suggest that he used several panels to produce a single image. In further instances, the panel has few details and provides only the most general impression of a specific site, often with much of the wood surface left bare. Occasionally, elements from these cursory images were integrated into canvases, but with extensive elaboration and multiple changes. This suggests that those highly simplified panels may have functioned as an *aide-memoire*, like the drawings in his little notebooks.

However, many of Morrice's Venetian wood panels are as finished as his oil canvases. While some led to larger works as mentioned, most were left as small paintings, complete and satisfying unto themselves. In order to consider fully the attention and importance that Morrice gave to these small works, it is worth recalling Muriel Ciolkowska's description of his process for painting his panels. Her recollections provide a rare insight into his working method, even if there is no evidence that he used his panel of the Campiello delle Ancore as the subject of a larger canvas:

> I once had the good luck to attend the production of one of these little preparations for his bigger pictures. He spent three afternoons on a surface hardly bigger than a medium-sized envelope. He would look long at his subject, mix his tone, look again, then dab on a tiny morsel of colour, lay down his little brush, take a puff of smoke, and so on between every minute touch; for the severest precision in the sketch – precision of form and tone – was the secret of that lovely looseness and laxness in the enlargement.[32]

It is not difficult to imagine Morrice near the railings of the Fondamenta Sant' Anna with his painting equipment elegantly and efficiently stowed within his specially-made, cigarbox-size carrying case. The respect for the panels that he garnered from other artists, especially for his ability to produce such complete objects out-of doors rather than in the studio, is echoed in an earlier appreciation by Ciolkowska:

> One is so impressed by the balance between art and craft in Mr. Morrice's pictures that one cannot imagine them in any other form. His smallest sketch is in this sense is as definite and satisfying as are many of his larger canvases. There is finality in everything he does, and this finality is not conveyed by elaboration but by the equilibrium of all those elements which make a picture as distinct from a mere painting.[33]

Such "equilibrium" is key to the visual resolve of Morrice's panel of the Campiello delle Ancore. The actual architecture of the campiello provides the internal framework or more correctly, the armature of the image. His grid-like composition of the architectural elements and the spaces in-between serves as its pictorial infrastructure. The insistent frontality of the planes of the buildings and the pavement then lock it into place. But Morrice subtly adjusts both the positioning and scale of the elements of the centuries-old buildings; their paced in-and-out movement across the image lessens the tension of the grid and animates the setting. Such refinements exemplify Morrice's modernist tendency to impose a design on whatever place he paints. At the same time, however, his loose and almost flimsy touch seems to work in direct contrast to the careful composing of the image. The rhythmic displacement of Morrice's forms, his subtly shifting focus points and a sense of the casual give a redolent intensity to the quiet atmosphere of the Campiello.

The lower level of the building and the sottoportego is an arrangement of dark shapes, silhouetted against the light Istrian stone façade and the multi-hued market stall. To create a balance with the sottoportego on the left, Morrice greatly increased the width of the doorway at the right. It is his most overt change in the appearance of the facade in comparison to both the Pennell drawing and the site's actual proportions. The upper area of the building has a similar equalized interplay of large and small elements, open and closed forms, solid and void spaces. However, the division between the two stories of the building is muted by the grid of architectonic shapes. For example, Morrice deliberately shifts the position of the balcony window, giving a more defined space between it and the shuttered window to its left. He then aligns the right edge of the shutter with the side pilaster of the widened doorway below, and lowers the balcony corbels to the same level as the lintel of the sottoportego.

The plain stone pavement has an equal volume and weight to the façade wall. Echoing the colour of the building, it shapes the contour of the campiello and emphasizes its function as a forecourt. Morrice's nuanced tonal harmonies construct a continuous visual rhythm across the surface, similar to the notes on music sheets for his beloved flute. His carefully positioned touches of red provide a counterpoint to the façade's loosely brushed tones that range from luxuriant ivory-whites to elegant green-blacks. The lightly laid-on colour both divides and connects the forms as it reiterates the painting's compositional and spatial structure. Softly glimmering sunlight articulates the details of the site at the same time that it is evokes of the pervasive watery atmosphere of Venice herself.

At the center of the painting is the laden fruit and vegetable stand, typical of the numerous small local market stalls scattered across Venice. However, Morrice's dappled paint merely suggests the profusion of goods on display, rather than describing the commodities brought to Venice from the islands in the Lagoon. In fact, whether there were even flowers for sale cannot be easily determined, despite the current title of the painting. The women at the produce stand are themselves elements of display, even more than the goods offered by the market seller. Their simplified shapes are carefully anchored in place and their bodies contoured by the architecture. They remain oblivious to the spectator outside their intimate domestic life with its daily ritual of shopping for food. Together they occupy a space that becomes resolutely their own. Morrice's shawl-clad women with their hair in topknots are framed by their surroundings in both the literal and figurative sense of the word. They show little evidence of motion and even the approaching figure in the sottoportego seems part of their placid group. The pacing (and spacing) between the women give a sense of both the momentary and the timeless, without anything actually happening. At the same time, the female figures gently disrupt the severity of the architectural

fig. 8 James Wilson Morrice, figure studies, Morrice Sketchbook/Carnet 16, page 7 recto, *c.*1901-06, pencil, 17 x 11 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: MMFA)

setting, or perhaps more correctly, they ease the weight of Venice's overwhelming historical character.

Often treated as elegant, sweeping figures, the women in Morrice's Venetian images are individualized by their carefully positioning against and within the city.[14] Regardless of their implied class as members of the popolani, they share the dignified gestures and noble bearing of all of his Venetian women. The British author and life-long resident of Venice, Horatio Brown, had a similar fascination with the ordinary women of the city: "Nothing can surpass the grace of these shawl-clad figures, seen down the perspective of a narrow street, or gathered in groups…in some open campiello."[15] Morrice's own infatuation, one might say, with the silhouette of Venetian women draped in shawls is evidenced by the numerous drawings in his sketchbooks (fig.8) where, like the women in the Campiello panel, they are usually shown in profile.

The slight difference in costume of the full-length figures beside the market stall indicate the variety of shawls worn by popolani women. At the same time, their overlapping bodies reinforce the social bonds of their everyday lives. The position of the third figure suggests that she may be the greengrocer (who was usually female), and is by implication a working woman. Nevertheless, she is shown as no different from her customers as she is an essential part of their communal urban life. There is a similar group of these three women amongst the crowd in the Pennell image, but Morrice allows them greater physical and psychological space, uninterrupted by others. Visually and metaphorically, the seated woman at the balcony window echoes the women below as she observes their conversation. Joseph Pennell included the suggestion of a similar figure as a witness to daily life in the Campiello, but she is far from Morrice's active spectator. The motif of the woman in the window as emblematic of the Venetian popolani had also earlier caught the attention of the American author, William Dean Howells: "I believe that I had less delight in proper Objects of Interest than in the dirty neighborhoods that reeked with unwholesome winter damps below, and [who] peered curiously out with frowzy heads and beautiful eyes from the high, heavy-shuttered casements above."[36]

Morrice's female figures have absolutely nothing in common with the sentimentalized lower-class women in many popular images of market-stalls in Venice by Italians and foreigners alike. The women in the Campiello delle Ancore are neither broken by poverty, nor good-time girls with smoldering looks (fig.9). Through gesture and posture, Morrice's women reveal only their outward dignified appearance. The shadowy outline of the woman in the sottoportego also adds to the vagueness of their identity, just as the darkness of the passageway allows only an indication of the place where they lived. Morrice's women in the Campiello delle Ancore create a quiet narrative of the daily life of the Venetian popolani, but without imposed sentiment or coded behaviour. More specifically, the campiello becomes a significant place for women as he removes them from the confined setting of the domestic interior or the garden, traditionally gendered spaces. Countless images of Venice show women out-of-doors, often as happy but impoverished bead-stringers or lace-markers sitting together near the entranceway to their houses. Morrice's women are beyond such stereotyping or commodification; they occupy the campiello in their own right and as an intrinsic part of the fabric of the city.

Essential elements in the urban design of Venice, the campielli and campi serve as meeting places as well as sites of entry and exit.[37] They exemplify Henri Lefebvre's concept of a social space, in a city he regards as "unique, original, [and] primordial."[38] The sight of Venetians standing outdoors deep in conversation, as they do in the Morrice panel, has always been an essential component of daily life in Venice. As Henry James commented in his 1882 essay "Venice": "One

fig. 9 Stefano Novo (1860-*c.*1930), **Fruit-Seller, Venice**, 1894, oil on canvas, size and location unknown.
(Photo: http:imagehost.Vendio.com/bin viewimage.x)

may say indeed that Venice is the city of conversation; people talk all over the place because there is nothing to interfere with its being caught by the ear."[39] Because of the peculiar topography of Venice where the streets are occupied only by people, a campiello functions as much as a private space as a public sphere. The actual shape of the Campiello delle Ancore is an analogy of this Venetian duality, with one side open to the city and the others keeping it apart. Morrice's watchful woman in the upper window reinforces the coming together of the interior and exterior realms of the campiello, and erases the distinction between them.

Within this conflation of the public and the private, the campiello acts as a type of stage on which the action unfolds of its own accord. As Lefebvre wrote of Venice, "everyday life and its functions are coextensive with, and utterly transformed by, a theatricality as sophisticated as it is unsought, a sort of involuntary *mise-en-scène*."[40] Like a piece of theatre, the Campiello delle Ancore reveals the spectacle of ordinary urban culture to those passing by on the Fondamenta Sant' Anna. It also shows itself to those, like Pennell, who

view the scene from opposite side of the canal, where as Janson and Burklin suggest, "the result is not only a fully framed space, but also a special kind of scenic relationship" with its surroundings.[41]

The simplicity and self-containment of the Campiello delle Ancore panel (especially in comparison to the Pennell drawing) locates Morrice's empathetic contemplation of the objects and subjects of the site. Both his measured distance from and proximity to life in the campiello, however, have other implications. It could perhaps position Morrice as a type of Baudelairian flâneur, the passionate observer of the crowd as John O'Brian has incisively proposed.[42] At the same time, the open and empty foreground of the Campiello delle Ancore painting could be understood as the metaphoric space of the outsider. It can be considered as emblematic of the position of visitors to Venice, the *forestieri* (*foresti* in Venetian). They are the *stranieri*, strangers who, like Morrice, intensely embrace the city but will always remain separate and apart from its people and their millennia-old culture.

Morrice's small panel of the Campiello delle Ancore is a quiet but resonant image of the discourse of looking and seeing. The painter "with the delicate eye" as Matisse would later describe him, provides a quiet but discerning glimpse onto the private life of a very public city. "It is Venice, a Venice gray and softly-coloured, a Venice true, of Morrice and of Morrice alone."[43]

SANDRA PAIKOWSKY
Department of Art History
Concordia University

Notes

This article is part of my larger study of James Wilson Morrice in Venice. I wish to thank the British and Commonwealth Advisory Committee of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation of New York for their recent support of my research in Venice. An earlier SSHRC seed grant from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, was essential to my project. I am most grateful to Judy Hayes for her diligent research assistance, and to Rose and Peter Lauritzen in Venice. I also wish to thank Lucie Dorais for her long friendship and exceptional knowledge of Morrice.

1 *Flower Seller*, Thomson Works of Art, #PC0155, purchased 1984.

2 Blair LAING, *Morrice. A Great Canadian Artist Rediscovered* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1984), 44, plate13. There are no known drawings that relate directly to the panel. Another painting entitled *Flowerseller* (private collection, undated) is obviously an image of Paris.

3 The notorious inconsistencies in spelling of Venetian place names even today allow for such variations as dell' Ancore, del' Ancore or de le Ancore. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the most commonly accepted spelling, although the street sign currently reads "Campiello de le Ancore."

4 Contemporary social economists consider Castello as part of the "Peripheral Zone" of the city; see Robert DAVIS and Garry MARVIN, *Venice, the Tourist Maze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 100-01.

5 A Venetian canal is usually called a *rio* (plural rii) and only four waterways in the city proper use the term *canale*: most important is the Grand Canal also known as the Canalazzo. The Rio Sant' Anna measures 210 by 9 metres; at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was in poor condition and in need of "urgent dredging," typical of canals in this impoverished area. See Gianpietro ZUCCHETTA, *I Rii di Venezia, la storia degli ultimi tre secoli* (Venezia: Edizioni Helvetia/foligraf, 1985), 221. The Rio Sant' Anna had originally been a major waterway and a short-cut from the Bacino San Marco to the northeastern Lagoon.

6 A street or *calle* of the same name and also an old site for anchor making is located near the Piazza San Marco.

7 For a discussion of the multifamily buildings in the adjacent calle, see E.R. TRINCANATO, *Venezia Minore* (Milano: Edizioni del Milione, 1948 and Venezia: Filippi Editore, rpt., n.d.), 192-94; and Paolo MARETTO, *La Casa Veneziana* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1986), 183-84.

8 For example, it is mentioned briefly in Lonsdale and Laura RAGG, *Venice* (London: A & C Black, 1916), 12-13: "On foot one approaches [the Public Gardens] by the broadest street in Venice, the Via Garibaldi, which will lead us on to the *fondamenta* of Sant' Anna..., at the end of which a ferry takes us across to the island of [San Pietro di] Castello."

9 The street was named after the nearby Franciscan church dedicated to Saint Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary. Anne or Anna, of course, was her mother.

10 Like many Venetian canals and streets, the name often changes *en route* and the southwestern portion of the S. Anna canal was originally called the Rio del Castello.

11 On the closing of the Sant' Anna canal, see Gianpietro ZUCCHETTA, *Un' Altra Venezia/ Another Venice. Immagini e storia degli antiche canali scomparsi/ An illustrated history of concealed Venetian canals* (Venezia: Erizzo Editrice, 1995), 138-53.

12 The architect Giannantonio Selva was responsible for the Via Eugenia and other of Napoleon's Venetian projects. Following the end of the French occupation in 1814 and during the Austrian regime, the street was called the Strada Nuova dei Giardini in reference to the adjacent Public Gardens.

13 Venetian streets have different descriptors, depending on their size and length, ranging from the wider *salizada* and *fondamenta* to the narrower *calle*, *ramo*, etc., but rarely *via*. However in late nineteenth- and early twentiethth-century Italian guidebooks to Venice, streets were generally referred to as "via" perhaps so as not to confuse visitors who had little knowledge of the intricacy of Venetian urban nomenclature.

14 The original name of the Biennale was the *Esposizione Internationale d'Arte della Citta di Venezia* but later became known as the more familiar "Biennale delle Arte."

15 Joseph Pennell's lengthy career as a printmaker and author has not been the subject of extensive examination. Harriet Hunter Smart's "A Study of Joseph Pennell's illustrations for 'Gleanings from Venetian History'," Honours Dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2003, is an important addition and I wish to thank her for making her text

available to me recently. Much of Pennell's life and work is drawn from his own publications and from biographies by his wife Elizabeth Robins Pennell, as well as catalogues of his prints. The Pennells are well known for their writings on James McNeill Whistler and their archives of Whistleriana. A lithograph portrait of Pennell, *c.*1908-09 by the Scottish-Canadian artist James Kerr-Lawson is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada (#830) and elsewhere.

16 Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909) was born in Italy, the son of the American sculptor Thomas Crawford and nephew of the poet Julia Ward Howe. After living in the United States and Europe, he returned permanently to Italy in 1883. He was the author of a number of travel books although the *Gleanings* was the only one illustrated by Pennell. A recent reprint of the *Gleanings from Venetian History* by Pavilion Press does not include all of the original Pennell illustrations.

17 The book was published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston. The caption continues: "Printed in Gleanings from Venetian History. Macmillan & Co." The illustration is included in Chapter XXXI, "Marion Crawford and Venice," pages 280-87. He notes that he went to Venice just prior to Crawford's arrival. Pennell had been working in Tuscany, preparing images for Maurice Hewlett's *The Road in Tuscany* (London: Macmillan, 1904). Pennell mistakenly comments that he arrived in Venice "just after the Campanile fell," although that dramatic event would not occur until a year later on 14 July 1902, when Pennell was again in Venice. Pennell had few positive things to say about Crawford, and in his *Adventures*, he noted, "I saw at once that he didn't approve of me." (p.282) A few pages later, Pennell added, "I do not think I ever saw him again. He never wrote me a word about the book." Pennell has no specific discussion of the Campiello delle Ancore in his *Adventures*.

18 Crawford wanted him to draw the places illustrated by others, such as "the Illustrissimo Ruskin." Given Pennell's relationship with Whistler and the latter's famous lawsuit against Ruskin, such a suggestion would have a particular edge.

19 The image of the Campiello delle Ancore is not, however, found among the twenty-five illustrations in Joseph PENNELL, *Venice. The City of the Sea* (London and Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1913). The small book emphasizes Venice's major monuments and dramatic vistas of the Venetian lagoon.

20 PENNELL, *Adventures of an Ilustrator*, 287.

21 Morrice to Pennell, 1 June 1902, Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, container 248.

22 For important discussions of Morrice in Venice, see Lucie DORAIS, "Deux moments dans la vie et l'œuvre de James Wilson Morrice," *Bulletin, The National Gallery of Canada*, 30/1977, 19-35 and David McTAVISH, *Canadian Artists in Venice 1830-1930* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1984), 18-25, 34-35.

23 One specific example is the night image of the buildings at one end of the Rialto Bridge on the Riva del Carbon. It is the subject of Morrice's well-known *Venice at the Golden Hour* (MMFA) while the Pennell charcoal drawing is titled *Rialto at Night*.

24 *L' Église San Pietro di Castello, Venise*, oil on canvas, 61 x 81 cm, accession number 1972.6.1. Although the painting has been dated *c.*1904-05, I would suggest that it is earlier. The route by foot to San Pietro became more direct in 1910 with the construction of the Quintavalle bridge at end of the Fondamenta Sant' Anna.

25 The painting is entitled *Venice*, oil on wood, 24 x 33 cm, accession # PC0803.

26 According to the 1903 Biennale catalogue Morrice showed *Autumn in Paris* (#37) and *The Beach at San Malo* (#38) in Hall I of the Sale Internazionale. Neither is reproduced in the *Illustrated Catalogue*. Of the 533 participants, over half were foreign artists. Some correspondence to and from Morrice relating to his participation in the 1903 and 1905

exhibitions can be found at the Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee della Biennale di Venezia.

27 The 1903 Biennale was the first time that Pennell exhibited his prints in Venice. He would participate in six more Biennales and in 1910 was given a special exhibition in the American section.

28 Recent publications on the relationship between Pennell and Whistler in Venice can be found in Eric DENKER, *Whistler and his Circle in Venice* (Washington: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2003), Margaret F. MACDONALD, *Palaces in the Night. Whistler in Venice* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), and Alistair GRIEVE, *Whistler's Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

29 Grieve suggests that the chalk and pastel *The Steps*, 1881, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, may be a view of the Rio Sant' Anna at the Campiello Correr, slightly east of the Campiello delle Ancore. Whistler's etching *The Fruit Stall*, for his "Second Venice Set" of 1886, shows a nearby calle on the Rio San Isepo.

30 Morrice generally preferred the non-descriptive title "Venice" according to the lists of paintings for exhibitions found in his sketchbooks.

31 John LYMAN, *Morrice* (Montreal: L'Arbre, 1945), 23.

32 Muriel CIOLKOWSKA, "Memories of Morrice," *Canadian Forum* VI, no.62 (November 1925): 52-53.

33 CIOLKOWSKA, "A Canadian Painter: James Wilson Morrice," *International Studio* 59 (June-September 1913): 180.

34 Morrice includes comparatively fewer men in his Venetian paintings, many of whom are generic gondoliers and boatmen. The theme of Morrice's Venetian women is the subject of my forthcoming study.

35 Horatio BROWN, *In and Around Venice* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 34.

36 W.D. Howells was the American Consul in Venice from 1861 to 1865. His reminiscence is found in: William Dean HOWELLS, *Venetian Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin: 1907, rev. ed.), 24. A similar motif is seen in an undated collodion print, *Woman on a Balcony* by the famous late nineteenth-century Venetian photographer, Carlo Naya.

37 For a discussion of the structural and social functioning of the Venetian campo and by extension the campiello, see Alban JANSON and Thorsten BURKLIN, *Scenes. Interaction with Architectural Space: the Campi of Venice* (Basel: Brikhauser, 2002).

38 Henri LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 37.

39 Henry JAMES, "Venice" in *Italian Hours* (London: William Heinemann, 1909), 16. This edition of the book, where his various essays on Italy were first published together, was also illustrated by Joseph Pennell.

40 LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space*, 74.

41 JANSON and BURKLIN, *Scenes. Interaction with Architectural Space*, 102.

42 See for example, John O'BRIAN, "Morrice's Pleasures," in Nicole CLOUTIER, *James Wilson Morrice 1865-1924* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), 89-97. For a recent discussion on the concept of the flâneur, see Keith TESTER, ed., *The Flâneur* (London: Routledge, 1994).

43 Louis VAUXCELLES, "The Art of J.W. Morrice," *The Canadian Magazine* XXXIV, no.2 (December 1909): 172.

Résumé

JAMES WILSON MORRICE À VENISE

Le Campiello delle Ancore

James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924) n'est allé que rarement à Venise à la fin du XIX[e] siècle et au début du XX[e]. Pourtant cette ville ne le cède qu'à Paris pour le nombre d'images urbaines qu'il en a faites. Elle est le sujet de plus de cent peintures et d'un nombre presque égal de dessins. Cet article se propose d'examiner un panneau de la collection Thomson d'œuvres d'art, à Toronto, qui a été reproduit comme étant une vue de Paris, mais qui est en réalité une représentation du Campiello delle Ancore, dans la partie est de Venise. Le campiello, petit espace ouvert, rectangulaire, est situé au bout de la monumentale Via Garibaldi, le long du canal Sainte-Anne près de l'île de San Pietro di Castello. C'est un site inhabituel chez Morrice, ce qui pourrait expliquer qu'il ait été mal identifié.

L'œuvre de Morrice est une représentation exacte du campiello et de son long passage couvert qui mène au réseau de rues plus loin. Le panneau a sans doute été peint en 1901 et pourrait avoir été réalisé à la suite d'une visite du site en compagnie de l'illustrateur américain Joseph Pennell (1860-1926). La rare présence d'un site aussi peu remarquable que le Campiello delle Ancore dans la production vénitienne de Morrice apporte un solide appui à l'hypothèse que ce panneau aurait été peint en compagnie de Pennell ou, du moins, à sa suggestion. La représentation du campiello par Pennell aurait été faite au cours de l'été ou au début de l'automne 1901, pour illustrer le livre en deux volumes de Francis Marion Crawford, *Gleanings from Venetian History* (1905). Pennell a reproduit l'illustration dans son propre livre *Adventures of an Illustrator* (1925), dont la légende donne 1901 comme date du dessin original à la plume. Morrice a aussi fait des peintures et des dessins de sites proches du Campiello delle Ancore, comme des vues de San Pietro di Castello et des jardins publics contigus à la Via Garibaldi, où se tenaient les expositions de la Biennale des arts. (Morrice a participé aux Biennales de 1903 et de 1905.) Le campiello est aussi situé dans un quartier fréquenté par James McNeil Whistler, artiste auquel Pennell et Morrice s'intéressaient beaucoup. Ces considérations peuvent expliquer quand et pourquoi Morrice s'est écarté de ses trajets habituels autour de la place Saint Marc et du pont du Rialto.

L'image du Campiello delle Ancore par Morrice diffère de celle de Pennell en ce qu'il ne montre pas les murs latéraux des immeubles ni la pleine hauteur des façades. Il l'a peinte près des garde-fous qui longent le canal, alors que le dessin de Pennell a été fait du côté opposé du Rio Sant' Anna. Pennell inclut de nombreux «types vénitiens», alors que Morrice ne montre que cinq femmes, figures emblématiques des *popolani*, la plus nombreuse et la plus basse classe de citoyens de Venise. Tandis que Pennell voulait que ses illustrations soient «une étude de la vie quotidienne authentique à Venise», Morrice a produit un tableau complet en lui-même, plutôt que l'illustration d'un site particulier. Ses panneaux ont longtemps été admirés pour la précision de leur méthode et leur résolution picturale, et il a été particulièrement louangé pour son habileté à produire des œuvres si complètes en travaillant en plein air.

C'est l'architecture même du campiello qui fournit l'armature de l'image. Morrice utilise une composition en grille des éléments architecturaux et des espaces comme infrastructure picturale du panneau. Il ajuste subtilement l'échelle et la position de certains aspects des immeubles des XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècle, ce qui illustre sa tendance moderniste à imposer un plan aux lieux qu'il peint, quels qu'ils soient. La couleur, délicatement appliquée, divise et relie à la fois les formes en répétant la structure compositionnelle et spatiale. En même temps, sa touche lâche et presque légère semble en contraste direct avec la composition soignée de l'image. La lumière douce et miroitante, en articulant les détails du site, évoque l'atmosphère aqueuse de Venise elle-même. Le subtil déplacement des formes architecturales, les points d'intérêt changeants et une impression de naturel ajoutent un air de proximité au caractère placide et modeste du Campiello delle Ancore.

Les femmes autour de l'étalage de fruits et légumes et la figure féminine assise à la fenêtre-balcon sont elles-mêmes des objets d'exposition, mais elles demeurent indifférentes au monde extérieur à leur vie domestique quotidienne. L'environnement architectural encadre la dignité de leurs gestes et la noblesse de leur attitude, mettant en valeur leurs liens avec la ville et entre elles. L'élégante silhouette de leurs châles, accessoire vestimentaire habituel des femmes *popolani*, est le signe principal de leur identité et a un lien de parenté avec les nombreux dessins délicats qui remplissent les carnets de Morrice. Les figures féminines de Morrice n'ont rien en commun avec le sentimentalisme des femmes des classes inférieures de tant d'images de Venise que produisaient, à l'époque, aussi bien les Italiens que les étrangers. Morrice fait sortir les femmes des lieux féminins traditionnels, l'intérieur ou le jardin, et fait du campiello un lieu où elles existent à part entière et font partie du tissu de la ville.

Le Campiello delle Ancore sert de lieu de rencontre, ce qui illustre le concept d'Henri Lefebvre qui voit l'espace social urbain comme «unique, original [et] primordial». À cause de la topographie particulière de Venise, où les rues ne

sont occupées que par les gens, le campiello sert d'espace aussi bien privé que public. La forme même du campiello est une analogie de cette dualité vénitienne, avec un côté ouvert sur la ville et les autres qui l'en séparent. La spectatrice que Morrice a représentée à sa fenêtre, renforce la rencontre du monde intérieur et du monde extérieur du campiello et efface leurs différences.

Le caractère simple et complet en soi du panneau du Campiello delle Ancore (surtout si on le compare au dessin de Pennell) situe la contemplation empathique des objets et des sujets du site par Morrice. Il place aussi Morrice comme une sorte de flâneur à la Baudelaire, observateur actif de la foule. En même temps, le premier plan ouvert et vide du campiello pourrait être compris comme l'espace métaphorique de l'étranger. Il peut être perçu comme le symbole de la place des visiteurs de Venise, qu'on appelle les *forestieri*. Ce sont des *stranieri*, des étrangers qui, comme Morrice, aiment la ville intensément mais qui resteront toujours en dehors, séparés de ses habitants et de leur culture millénaire.

Le petit panneau de Venise peint par Morrice est une image calme mais expressive du discours sur le «regarder» et le «voir». Sa représentation du Campiello delle Ancore donne un aperçu doux et pénétrant de la vie privée d'une ville très publique.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette

fig.1 Joyce Wieland performing as Laura Secord in **True Patriot Love,** 1971, artist's bookwork, p.191, NGC. (Photo: Courtesy of NGC) © National Gallery of Canada, Estate of Joyce Wieland

JOYCE WIELAND AT THE BORDER

Nationalism, the New Left, and the Question of Political Art in Canada

In an interview given to *Miss Chatelaine* magazine in 1973, Joyce Wieland explained her return to Canada after having spent most of the 1960s living in the United States: "I felt I couldn't make aesthetic statements in New York any more. I didn't want to be part of the corporate structure which makes Vietnam."[1] This statement points to Wieland's shifting artistic identity from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies when she moved between the U.S.A. and Canada, and as she positioned herself strategically at the border. Many artists and intellectuals of her generation developed an anti-war, anti-corporate political consciousness, and this coincided with an assertion of Canadian identity on this side of the border. Wieland made counter-cultural values the very basis of an artistic project however. By the time of her solo exhibition *True Patriot Love/Veritable Amour Patriotique* at the National Gallery of Canada in 1971, she had forged an inventive and humourous political art that also challenged the norms of nationalist art. The artworks addressed Canada's political and economic sovereignty, ecological damage to the North, and the American war in Southeast Asia; and did so in the guise of conceptually-wrought photographs, cinematic fragments, objects that mimicked the plastic-wrapped world of commercial pop culture, as well as various stitched, hand-crafted, or otherwise feminized and "low-tech" artefacts. With this material heterogeneity, Wieland set in motion a process by which the attributes of nationhood could be continually unmade and remade. The exhibition received much attention although critics were split on its value as nationalist art, as political art, or as any kind of meaningful art. Some authors would remark on its anti-American stance while ironically others suggested the opposite. I will return to these critical responses and particularly to the writing of Barry Lord, who refused to regard Wieland's exhibition at the National Gallery as a legitimate political intervention. In his opinion, "this burlesque of our national symbols was a slap in the face to patriotic Canadians."[2] For Lord, the artwork looked too much like Pop Art and therefore represented a capitulation to American cultural imperialism.

This article analyzes the new kind of political art Wieland presented to the nation in 1971. It can be argued that Wieland's work remains fascinating and relevant because ecology, feminism, social justice, and nationalism are so thoroughly entwined and these issues are all components of her politicized art practice. Much of the best scholarship on Wieland's visual art has been informed by feminism;[3]

I want to investigate how Wieland's artwork also resonated with the "New Left" articulation of nationalism, and with a radical critique of U.S. economic and foreign policies. To some extent, this means returning to those critical voices that most immediately framed Wieland's 1971 exhibition. But it is also an opportune time to revisit the anti-American rhetoric in Wieland's art because ideological differences between the U.S.A. and Canada are once more being debated against a backdrop of war, while post-9/11 border-crossing has become a potentially fraught and politicized action. Ten years after the National Gallery exhibition, Wieland would observe that her compatriots "didn't like my sense of humour in relation to nationalist politics."[4] If we find ourselves equally reluctant to joke about these matters today, this is another reason to look anew at an art practiced on the border.

The Canada – U.S. border was indeed a recurring motif in Wieland's art practice during the 1960s and 70s. On more than one occasion the historical figure of Laura Secord provided the artist with a kind of imaginary alter ego through which she could negotiate a space between the two countries. The *True Patriot Love* exhibition of 1971 included black and white photographs of the artist reenacting Secord's trek through enemy lines during the War of 1812, as she alerted fellow-Canadians to an imminent American invasion.[5] All we actually see in these images is the artist wearing a semblance of nineteenth-century dress (fig.1), striding across a snowy field. The cow that comically hovers nearby was supposedly Secord's decoy. Wieland's performance and the resulting documentary-style photographs, apparently provide "proof" of an individual woman's small contribution to a collective effort to keep Americans off Canadian soil. The actual border is not evident in this imagery and the background scenery might well correspond to any number of northerly places on the continent. And yet, Secord's presence in this otherwise anonymous locale makes it a politicized border-zone.

Wieland evidently considered it important to resurrect this historical episode, when the sovereignty of Canada was threatened and the border was unmistakeably contested. The artist's gleeful incarnation as the anti-American heroine Laura Secord linked past to present, and certainly Wieland's contemporaries would have been highly attuned to these issues. Greg Curnoe is notable amongst other Canadian artists of this generation because he also made the looming presence of the U.S.A. the very subject-matter of his art. His censured *Dorval Mural* of 1968 is key in this respect as the large anti-war painting would have been seen by thousands of people entering or leaving the country through the Montreal airport.[6] For both artists, developing a critique of the United States was essential to their understanding of themselves as politicized Canadian artists. Wieland called herself a "protective nationalist,"[7] and Curnoe would similarly comment that, "I have a sense of nationalism but it's simply protective.... My sense of nationalism is simply Anti-Americanism, just fuck the Americans."[8] Whereas Curnoe remained sceptical about the benefits

of any form of national art and was more inclined to champion regional or provincial culture, Wieland became committed to the idea that a new kind of nationalist art was possible. It is important to note that Wieland began to tackle the question of what "Canadian Art" might eventually become while living in New York City during the 1960s when her work was also responding to the excesses of American nationalism/patriotism. Even when it appears to be most Canadian, therefore, Wieland's artwork must also be understood in relation to the intersection of art and politics as it was being played out in the U.S.A.

During her New York years, Wieland made a series of assemblages and short films dealing with the Vietnam War. This body of work aligns her with that generation of American artists, intellectuals, students and activists who sought to express their moral outrage about the war, and their alienation from governmental and institutional authority. Vietnam was *the* issue around which a countercultural political consciousness was forged. Despite the near unanimity of anti-war sentiment within the art world, however, there would be no consensus about the role that art should play. Indeed, the 1960s art-world was fractured by disagreements about whether or not it was possible to make effective political art, and scholars continue to debate the issue up to the present day. Tony Godfrey has asserted that, "given the political furore of the time, it is surprising how little art addressed the political situation directly."[9] Francis Frascina argues that overtly political art was marginalized or silenced during the sixties, and discusses collaborative efforts that were staged outside of the museum/gallery circuit such as the 1966 *Peace Tower* in Los Angeles and the 1967 *Angry Arts Week* in New York City.[10] What is striking about this model of political art is how it attempted to integrate artists' individual contributions into the collective gestures of activism: demonstrations with their jumble of banners and signage, crowds of people chanting or singing, and theatrical actions like burning draft cards. Other artists were uncomfortable with the very idea of refashioning their art for a political cause and attempted to come up with alternative strategies. In 1968, for instance, Lucy Lippard helped organize "a striking show of major Minimal art whose content had nothing to do with the war," as a benefit for the "Student Mobilization Against the War" group.[11] Donald Judd, Carl André, Sol LeWitt and the other participants decided to exhibit examples of their usual (apparently apolitical and relatively autonomous) art practices while still raising their voices as artists in support of the anti-war movement. André, as spokesman for the New York-based *Art Workers' Coalition*, tried to convince his peers that "artists could politicize themselves rather than their art."[12] Some artists did make explicitly anti-war art that was meant to be exhibited on its own merit; for example Leon Golub's *Napalm* and *Vietnam* series of paintings featured flayed and dismembered victims of the war. It can be argued that works such as these were a legitimate prolongation of the old-left tradition of socially engaged realism that

fig.2 Joyce Wieland, **Betsy Ross, look what they've done to the flag you made with such care,** 1966, mixed media, 56 x 34 cm, Edie and Morden Yolles, Toronto. (Photo: Courtesy of M. Yolles)

had historically taken the form of easel painting, murals or printmaking. But for many more artists of the sixties, the heroic legacy of the Mexican muralists and the powerful American realism of the WPA years no longer seemed to offer an appropriate aesthetic vocabulary for their political concerns.

Perhaps the body of work that can be most profitably compared to Wieland's Vietnam-inspired artwork is Martha Rosler's *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72). The series juxtaposed images of the war and home decor, using the photographic imagery readily available to the American public on television or in the successive pages of picture magazines. Cutting and pasting, Rosler made this proximity obscene: horrific scenes from the war appear at the windows of elegantly decorated suburban homes, or soldiers brandish guns right there on the sparkling kitchen floor. Wieland also made a significant body of work in 1966 and 1967 which, like Rosler's, brought mass-media images of the Vietnam War up against the colourful, mood-enhancing world of America's consumer culture. In works such as *N.U.C.* (1966), *War and Peace: 8mm Home Movie* (1966-67), *Patriotism* (1966), and *Betsy Ross, look what they've done to the flag you made with such care* (fig.2), ephemeral and grayish newspaper images are encased in shiny, multi-coloured plastic shapes hand-sewn by the artist. This series of work is Pop-like, not so much because it borrows the iconography of popular culture but rather because the artworks mimic its semiotic and sensory impact – the polychrome, sheen and glamour of post-war plastic objects and appliances. In *N.U.C.* (which could stand for "Navy Unit Citation," a Vietnam-era military award), a plastic dollar sign frames a newspaper image of wounded soldiers in a field, while a dangling star-covered heart can be opened up to reveal additional clippings about Vietnam. In *Betsy Ross, look what they've done to the flag you made with such care*, large red lips disgorge a tongue-like American flag, on which a circle of Vietnam imagery is revealed like a canker sore. "Vietnam" thus becomes a malignant blot impeding the flag's role as a genuine patriotic symbol.

With such works, Wieland joined the many other artists who treated the American flag as something contaminated by a shameful war; but what is remarkable about *Betsy Ross* is that the artist summoned up the spectre of the woman reknowned for having hand-stitched the first U.S. flag. If Wieland could urge Canadians to commemorate Laura Secord for her historic anti-imperialist walk, so too this work suggested, should Americans take care to appreciate Ross and the emancipatory spirit that accompanied the first material incarnation of the Stars and Stripes. Wieland obviously admired this seamstress/heroine and a few years later she would make the feminized home-made flag a privileged object for her own nationalist-art project in Canada.

Rosler and Wieland seemed to show how easily the disconnected fragments and detritus of the contemporary image-world could be reassembled to create new images and new meanings. The Vietnam art of Wieland and Rosler is also awash

with feminist connotations, since "bringing the war home" implied a gendered distinction between public and private realms. Rosler's photomontages point to the ideological role played by home-and-garden photography while Wieland challenged the public status of the newspaper photograph by inserting it into personalized, fetish-like objects. This re-framing demonstated how a mediatized war becomes lodged in subjective experience and in everyday domestic spaces.[13] If the ambition to breach the boundaries between art and everyday life goes back to the historic avant-garde, the implications of such a gesture would be different for the "neo-avant garde" of the 1960s and 70s. As Andreas Huyssen explains: "the earlier avant-garde was confronted with the culture industry in its stage of inception while postmodernism had to face a technologically and economically fully developed media culture."[14] These interventions into the technocratic visual culture of the time represent a key transitional moment in the understanding of what politically-engaged art could be in a North-American context. Crucially they indicated a new development beyond social realism's apparent demise.

Not long after making her anti-war assemblages, Wieland completed the 14-minute film *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, an animal allegory which evokes the anti-war movement, draft-dodgers, American imperialism, Canadian nationhood, and ecological concerns, etc. At the time of its first screening, Jonas Mekas said that, "It may be about the best (or richest) political movie around."[15] Lucy Lippard would later remark that Wieland was "perhaps fortunate not to be characterized as a 'political artist' although several of her short films are among the best political art of the 1960s."[16] Notwithstanding Lippard's ambivalence about the term, it could be said that *Rat Life and Diet in North America* more than any other work earned Wieland the "political artist" label. It is somewhat ironic that around this time Wieland was affiliated with the so-called "structural" side of the experimental film scene that has been described as "a 'process'-orientated endeavour, eschewing content, narrative and illusionistic techniques."[17] If Wieland's films (and other artworks) set out to deconstruct conventional narrative, they are far from "eschewing content" because the narrative fragments inevitably point to complex socio-political questions.

The gesture of border-crossing in *Rat Life and Diet in North America* (fig.3) is both funny and ideologically incisive, prefiguring the serio-comedy of the later Laura Secord impersonation, but the point-of-view is different. While the Secord figure is positioned on the Canadian side of the border looking across empty fields toward the U.S., the film's protagonists initially regard the border from a beleaguered position within the States. We are told that *Rat Life*'s rat-heroes are political prisoners who manage to escape over the border into Canada where they proceed to take up organic farming, only to have their dream of a new life shattered by the end of the film when Canada is invaded by America. The various episodes in this rudimentary story are made intelligible through a sequence of intertitles and

fig.3 Joyce Wieland, still from the film **Rat Life and Diet in North America,** 1968, © National Gallery of Canada, Estate of Joyce Wieland.

subtitles. Otherwise the film is characterized by its sequence of artful, colourful compositions that usually involve eating: we see the heros gnawing away at an American flag, nibbling away at a richly-appointed dinner table when they are on the run and have broken into a millionaire's home, or munching away amidst a splendid natural landscape of fruit and flowers north of the border. There is a conspicuous difference between this film and the anti-war assemblages, because now Canada comes into focus as an escape route, a vision of healthy fecundity, and ultimately as a political alternative.

It must be remembered that this film was made at the height of the Vietnam War, when anti-war protests were increasing and tens of thousands of draft-dodgers and army deserters found refuge in Canada. The film does not deliver a happy ending: the final inter-title and a loud thud announce that the U.S. has invaded the country, and

an earlier inter-title had already informed viewers that "Canada is seventy-two per cent owned by the U.S. industrial complex." However, crossing the American/Canadian border was not a meaningless gesture. Although the little animals would not ultimately escape their persecutors and Canadians were not truly in control of their own territory, somehow moving northward was still emancipatory and "Canada" could function as a signifier of freedom and pleasure. Considering that 1968, the year *Rat Life and Diet in North America* was made, was the culminating moment of the decade's revolutionary youth movement, it could be said that Wieland's rodent flower-children are the very embodiments of that countercultural impulse. When Wieland refused to remain "part of the corporate structure which makes Vietnam," this was a sentiment she shared with many Americans of her generation. But for Wieland this meant she would turn to Canada with a new-found nationalist fervour and the volition to make a different kind of political art. When Wieland claimed she "couldn't make aesthetic statements in New York any more," this was not because other artists in the U.S. did not share her political views, as we have already seen. Circa 1971, it seemed that politicized artists in the U.S. had no choice, however, but to make art that was critical, angry, and oppositional. In Canada, Wieland foresaw the possibility of making art that was equally politically-engaged, yet profoundly different because it was affirmative and utopian, and because it was participating in a larger project to reinvent the nation. *Rat Life and Diet in North America* announced the emergence of a different kind of political art.

Wieland's *True Patriot Love* opened at the National Gallery on Canada Day 1971 and initially it might seem that the whole event was overdetermined: nationalistic art in the national gallery in the nation's capital on the national holiday. But it is fascinating that no two reviewers would concur on whether Wieland's project was serious or a farce, sophisticated art or the opposite, whether it was celebrating or mocking Canada, whether it was anti-American or proto-American. In order to make sense of these critical voices, it is important to address the phenomenon of Canadian nationalism. By the time she returned to Canada for the 1971 exhibition, Wieland was highly involved with an alternative, New Left nationalist position and so her art must be considered in relation to a particular set of beliefs and propositions about the nation. In fact, multiple and often contradictory forms of nationalism were in play in Canada during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1967 the federal government had celebrated the centenary with great fanfare; Expo 67, the world's fair held in Montreal, was the culminating event meant to spectacularize Canadian nationhood for local and global audiences alike. The main opposition to this official story of a unified and stable nation was, of course, the massive surge of Quebecois nationalism; but challenges to Ottawa's upbeat version of nationhood emerged in English Canada as well. For a time it even seemed that the goals of leftist

Canadian and Quebecois nationalists would not be mutually exclusive, because they shared a similar discourse of emancipation that also linked these local quests for self-determination with post-colonial liberation struggles elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa and Latin America.[18]

By the latter part of the 1960s, while still living in New York home, Wieland was receiving the journal *Canadian Forum*, edited by her friend Abe Rotstein, and becoming acquainted with this "alternative" Canadian nationalism.[19] Certainly Pierre-Elliot Trudeau's charismatic leadership impressed her for awhile and her feature length film *Reason Over Passion* (1969) visually imprinted his face onto the national territory. But by the time of the 1971 exhibition the effects of Trudeaumania had seemingly worn off,[20] and the artist was instead affiliated with the renegades within the New Democratic Party known as the "Waffle" caucus who wrote a "Manifesto for an Independent Socialist Canada." The Manifesto called attention to the extent of American influence, investment and ownership in Canada and argued for Canadian public ownership of natural resources and basic industries. Wieland invited the economist and Waffle leader Mel Watkins to be the guest of honour at her National Gallery opening. The important work *Water Quilt* (1970) was a *de facto* collaboration with James Laxer, another Waffle leader and an important figure in the New Left.

During this period many other small parties, ad-hoc committees, and journals would contribute to the debate about nationalism, and crucially this discussion often took place alongside other New Left concerns such as the youth, anti-war, and global liberation movements, civil rights, women's rights, ecological issues, and so on. In this context, the question of nationalism could thus emerge dialectically in relation to a range of social and political issues. Indeed, this kind of New Left politicking was very different from the "old left" concept of political action which was inexorably linked to political parties and labour unions, and with proletarian revolution as its ultimate goal. In the words of Stanley Aronowitz, the emergence of the New Left marked a break with the "doctrine(s) according to which the working class was anointed with sacred historical powers."[21]

For nationalists on the New Left, Canada had to be understood as a doubly colonized territory – historically by the British, and more practically and recently by the Americans. What was therefore now required was an intensified process of decolonization before true nationhood could be achieved. A period of consciousness-raising was needed so that Canadian's could re-educate themselves as post-colonial subjects. As Laxer explained, "an inability to perceive the reality of conditions in one's country is quite naturally endemic to colonialism."[22] Canadian nationalism was thus reconceived as something more subversive than the country's 1967 birthday party, and as something other than an affirmation of the economic and geo-political status quo. The New Left emphatically asserted that nationalism

in a Canadian context could be progressive, emancipatory, countercultural, and ultimately socialist. The nation was not to be regarded as a *fait accompli*; it was this activist attitude towards nationalism which Wieland's 1971 *True Patriot Love* exhibition translated into an aesthetic attitude.

This New Left movement does not simply constitute background or context to Wieland's art activity, as the artist was fully immersed in the vocabulary and ideals of left-wing nationalism.[23] As Lauren Rabinowitz has so astutely commented, "the superficial charm and naiveté of Wieland's show mask a rigorous intellectualism."[24] This understanding of the artist is key because some of Wieland's supporters have over-emphasized her feminine intuition and emotiveness, as if the artist had simply chosen "passion" over "reason."[25] While Wieland was attuned to the economic and political issues being debated by Canadian intellectuals and activists, her particular concern as an artist was to investigate how this radical nationalism could be transformed into visual, material, and symbolic forms.

True Patriot Love can be thought of as the culmination of Wieland's efforts to artistically intervene in the discussion about nationhood. The exhibition displayed an array of "Canadiana" appropriate to the late twentieth century – not the usual display of rustic stuff that would nostalgically bespeak bygone days – but rather, colourful, urbane, ironic objects crafted out of plastic, cloth and other ordinary materials. She emphasized stitched, quilted, and embroidered objects, along with a preponderance of texts, words, and linguistic signifiers. Wieland also created a bookwork *cum* catalogue for the exhibition that has in itself been recognized as a significant contribution to the international phenomenon of Conceptual Art.[26] The opening day of the exhibition was an extravaganza with music, a pond with live ducks, and as mentioned, a special appearance by the Socialist/Waffle leader Mel Watkins. A massive white-frosted confection, the *Arctic Passion Cake*, was on display while the gift shop sold a custom-made scent labelled *Sweet Beaver*, "the perfume of liberation." Is there an obligation for patriotic art to be tasty and sexy as well as visually pleasing? *True Patriot Love*'s multi-sensorial and comedic gestures unsettled the usual markers of national identity. It was as if Wieland had set up a kind of aesthetic laboratory where she could modify readymade signifiers of nationalism, or else take everyday things and magically endow them with symbolic or heraldic significance. Commonplace emblems of Canadian-ness such as the maple leaf flag or the national anthem would be de-familiarized, and animals like beavers and polar bears took on a new allegorical significance. When iconic images of Canada's natural environment appeared, it was only so that these could be visibly overwritten and re-inhabited. This was Wieland's signature contribution to a new kind of Canadian art; liberating the nation also meant freeing its signs and symbols, and allowing them to take on a new metaphoric life. In the artist's words, "everything

from the trillium to the name of the country must be re-translated in order to renew and begin to invent the country's future."[27]

It is important to remember that at the time of the *True Patriot Love* exhibition, in 1971, Canada was emblematized in a new way to itself and to the world. Only six years earlier the new maple-leaf flag had been designed and officially unfurled, while the anthem was approved by Parliament during the centenary celebration of Canadian confederation in 1967. While the New Left seized upon this newness as an opportunity to re-negotiate the terms of nationalism, for Wieland it literally meant grabbing hold of the signs of national identity, rather than allowing them to lie inert within institutions or leaving them in the opportunistic hands of politicians. Thus, *O Canada Animation*, a cloth embroidered with a sequence of cartoony red lips apparently singing the "O Canada" anthem, can be thought of as a clever twist on the ubiquitous use of words and slogans in political art. No words are spelled out, but rather each freeze-frame invites the viewer to perform one of the key rituals of nationalism. If the nation is usually invoked publicly, this artwork reminds us that it is also registered in specific bodies. As John O'Brian has noted, these hyper-feminine lips cannot belong to the gender-neutral body of a generic citizen.[28]

The *True Patriot Love* exhibition also has art historical significance as a critical intervention into the museum environment. Wieland treated the gallery as a social space, that is only provisionally isolated from a larger world of politics and everyday life. A contemporaneous project that bears comparison with the *True Patriot Love* exhibition is Hans Haacke's *MoMA-Poll* (1970), which consisted simply of wall text and a voting box, with the request that visitors to New York's Museum of Modern Art answer yes or no to a question about elected officials who supported the Vietnam War.[29] Both Haacke and Wieland disputed the notion that art should occupy a rarefied, interiorized space, even while their critiques were articulated from within the institution. When one newspaper critic sneered that "Joyce the housewife empties out her attic and her barnyard and fills...the National Gallery with pillows and quilts,"[30] he was actually close to understanding the artist's intent. She was urging the nation's most prestigious art institution to enter into a dialogue with everyday life (even that of housewives!) and to engage with the important political issues of the day.

Since Wieland was operating in the context of a national museum and as Group of Seven paintings were available for viewing in adjoining rooms, her exhibition also begged comparison with those paragons of national art. The artworks in *True Patriot Love* could not be mistaken for a simple affirmation of nationhood because viewers were being asked to become participants in the imaginative dimension of nationalism; they were being asked to help reinvent the nation. This attitude towards nationhood is in agreement with recent scholarship on the "imaginary"

fig.4 Joyce Wieland, **Flag Arrangement,** 1970-71, knitted wool in four pieces, *True Patriot Love* installation at the National Gallery of Canada. (Photo: Courtesy of NGC) © National Gallery of Canada, Estate of Joyce Wieland

character of nationalism whereby the nation is understood to be a cultural artifact, invented and imagined under particular historic conditions. Challenging the concept that an authentic nation is based on ethnicity or birthright or a singular historical narrative, Benedict Anderson has asserted that, "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[31] The question of "style" is not fully developed by Anderson, but David Carroll has more recently argued that analyzing the aesthetics of nationalism is absolutely crucial if we want to understand how so many nationalist discourses that are initially affirmative and emancipatory, are transformed into oppressive and xenophobic ideologies.[32]

Maple leaf flags and maple leaves appear in various guises throughout the exhibition and inside the *True Patriot Love* bookwork. The book of black and white photographic images has a real silky red-and-white flag attached to its inside cover; the

first full-page image is a close-up photo of a knitted maple-leaf flag and the second is a lone, slightly dried maple leaf set against a white background. Thus, throughout the book the maple leaf morphs from symbol to botanical object and back again, and in semiotic terms from symbol to iconic representation to indexical mark. Like the evoking of subjective experience in *O Canada Animation*, the flag which is ostensibly the most privileged and public of national signs, reappears as a hand-knit, home-crafted object, or as a mass-produced article of consumption. If Wieland and Martha Rosler, had both attempted to "bring the war home," it can be said that here, Wieland was convincingly "bringing nationalism home" through her insistence on everyday objects. This is also true of Wieland's *Flag Arrangement* (fig.4) which presents four versions of the maple leaf flag in knit form. The flag is stretched and absurdly distended as if people of different shapes and sizes had all been wearing the same flag-sweater, or as if the flag were reflected in a sequence of fun-house mirrors. Wieland showed how the meaning of the flag as sign could be subtly altered through a material metaphormosis. This is somewhat reminiscent of Jasper Johns's flag "paintings," begun in the 1950s, which were actually built from many layers of newspaper and wax. Wieland's flags also endow the symbol with a surfeit of material substance, insisting on its presence as a thing in the world, an object amongst other objects. How far should artists go in this direction? At what point does a modification of colour or texture become a potential obliteration of the flag's patriotic meaning? By the time Wieland set about playfully distorting the Canadian flag, the American artist's right to tamper with his or her own flag was going before the Supreme Court.[33]

As already mentioned, Wieland's earlier artwork had used American flags in a satirical way: *Rat Life and Diet in North America* had shown the rodent-heroes chewing on the stars and stripes; the *Betsy Ross* assemblage had a canker/hole cut right out of the flag, while another work, the film *Patriotism, Part II* (1964), made a comic phallus out of the American emblem. Wieland's approach to the maple leaf flag was different, partly because no trauma comparable to the Vietnam War was undermining the flag's legitimacy as a national symbol. In Canada, it was instead a matter of figuring out which narratives, histories, and responses might be appropriate to a new flag. On both sides of the border, however, certain fundamental questions could be posed about the process whereby people learn to admire, respect, or adulate such bits of coloured cloth, and about the role these symbolic objects play in the everyday life of the nation-state. The artist's answer to the question of what could be done with the flag was also a kind of cautionary tale; the flag was not simply something to wave in response to politicians' speeches or as the tanks roll by in a military parade. *True Patriot Love* showed that the state's imprimatur need not be passively accepted, but rather that all aspects of national culture could and should be periodically appropriated and reinterpreted by its citizens.

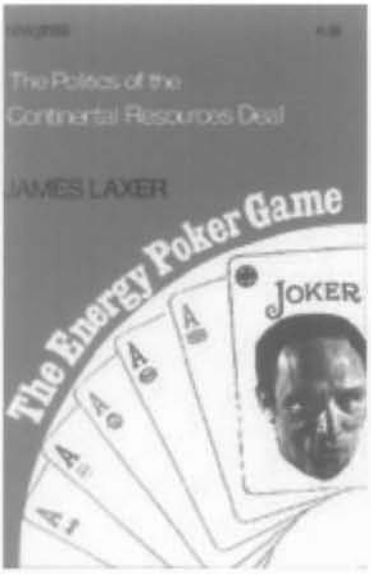


fig.5 Cover of James Laxer, *The Energy Poker Game: The Politics of the Continental Resources Deal* (Toronto: New Press, 1970). (Photo: Courtesy of J. Laxer)

The *True Patriot Love* artworks featured an array of plant and animal species that had the potential to bespeak the re-emergent nation. In *Arctic Day*, flora and fauna appear as delicately drawn motifs on cushion-like objects, bringing natural history into the feminized domestic sphere. At first, *Water Quilt* appears to be an innocuous blanket-like object, covered with meticulously embroidered, botanically-accurate Arctic flowers. Each square of embroidered fabric could be lifted up, however, to reveal a page from James Laxer's book *The Energy Poker Game* (fig.5) published in 1970. As mentioned, Laxer had been a signatory to the Waffle manifesto and his publication called attention to the exploitation of Canada's natural resources, criticizing the plan to redirect huge quantities of water from northern lakes and rivers towards thirsty Americans.[34] In Wieland's artwork as in Laxer's book, the newly emerging "picture" of environmental damage challenged artistic representations of the Canadian north – as a vast region of untouched wilderness, forever beautiful in its wildness and forever a treasure-house of untapped natural resources. In the conventionally aestheticized formulation of the Canadian North, the most important

border is not the political border separating Canada from the U.S., but rather an invisible, vaguely defined Northern frontier. The border that Northrop Frye linked genealogically to a "garrison mentality" supposedly affects cultural production in a more elemental manner.[35] With *Water Quilt*, Wieland historicized the representation of nature and showed how contemporary border politics could have repercussions throughout the national territory, even hundreds of miles north of the 49th parallel. Wieland's work can be thought of as a kind of landscape representation, even if the artist provided neither scenery nor spatial illusionism. Viewers were alerted to how the delicate ecosystem of the north, epitomised by those minute and evanescent flowers, was in danger of being irreparably altered if Canadian sovereignty was relinquished. Photographs of these same embroidered flowers appear in the *True Patriot Love* bookwork, where the artist used a scientific volume on Arctic flowers as a kind of scrapbook and superimposed photographic images, drawings, and hand-written marginalia in English, French, and occasional Inuktitut or Gaelic. The bookwork certainly did not shore up the museum's usual role of explaining and contextualizing, or imposing order and system onto an artist's work. In this remarkable production, the northern landscape is quite evidently not a barren wilderness because the artist shows it to us crisscrossed by many gazes and presences, words and images, by footprints in the snow and stitches across a page. Christine Conley's recent interpretation of Wieland's *True Patriot Love* bookwork further develops the concept of the palimpsest in feminist terms, proposing that the artist's semiotic play allows feminine desire to be superimposed onto "'phallic' social texts."[36]

Wieland's iconographic revision of the beaver was particularly striking, especially since this creature has appeared on innumerable crests, badges, coins and commercial products as the quintessentially productive Canadian beast. The small bronze statuette of a woman with a beaver at each breast, entitled *Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, might be absurd, but the inverted Romulus-and-Remus grouping suggests that a new nation needs to mythologize its origins. This is the work that Barry Lord would term "an insult to both nations," while he deemed the perfume *Sweet Beaver* "degrading."[37] Although it was not included in the exhibition, another beaver image worth mentioning here is a cartoon-type drawing depicting a serious-looking beaver carrying a gun, surrounded by the words "Don't Tread on Me Or! Else!"[38] This logo-like image (fig.6) was evidently Wieland's Canadian version of an early American flag, the so-called "Rattlesnake Flag," that was similarly inscribed with the challenge, "Don't Tread on Me." In Wieland's alternate universe, the table is turned on the Americans. The normally well-behaved beaver has been transformed into a creature that is lusty, dangerous, and fiercely protective of the Canadian nation.

Wieland's 1971 exhibition provoked a surge of commentary in the Canadian press, not only in the art pages, but also in newspaper editorials and discussions of national affairs. It was certainly not clear to everyone that the *True Patriot Love*

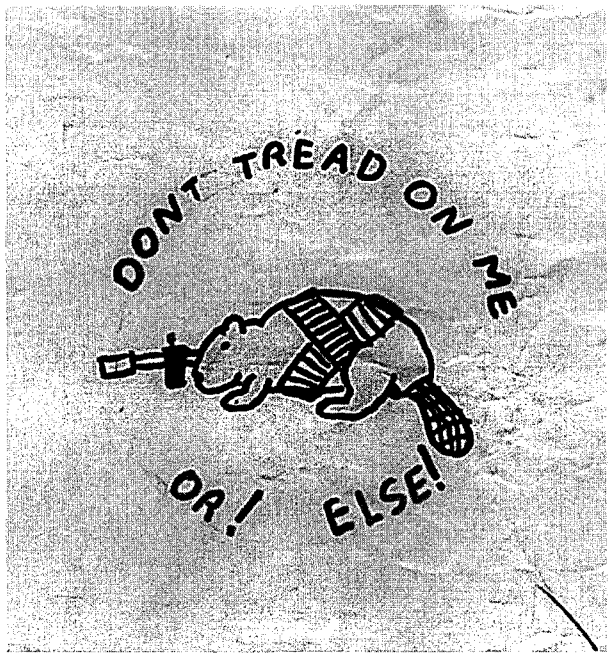


fig.6 Joyce Wieland, **Don't Tread On Me Or! Else!,** n.d, ink on paper, 27 x 21 cm, Fonds Joyce Wieland, 1993-009/005 (030), Clara Thomas Archives, York University, Downsview. (Photo: Courtesy of York Univ.) © National Gallery of Canada, Estate of Joyce Wieland

exhibition was effective political art, or that it was genuinely patriotic art, or that viewers were being interpellated as citizens. "Ardent art for unity's sake" was the headline of a positive, full-page review in the *Globe and Mail.*[39] Another sympathetic review referred to the exhibition as "mind-blowing," and asked, "Can we dig her epiphany of North before time runs out?"[40] But there were many contrary voices: "The new wave of Canadian nationalism taken to its ultimate absurdity,"[41] is how one writer characterized the exhibition, while an editorial opined that the National Gallery "is allowing itself to be conned...it seems to have lost the capacity to separate fads, banality, and quackery from art."[42] Montreal's French-language newspaper *La Presse* published a long review but concluded that the exhibition, "asks us to accept that a country amounts to no more than its symbols."[43] A political columnist for the *Toronto Star* said that the Wieland show was "a depressing reminder of all that is least attractive about Canadian nationalism; hatred of U.S. values," and went on to comment that the artwork was "cheap patriotic claptrap

expressed in indifferent workmanship."[44] The exhibition was deemed worthy of a review in the *New York Times*. The art critic Jay Walz expressed interest in the artist's multi media practice, but seemed most concerned to unmask the exhibition's anti-American essence: "Miss Wieland...lets Canadian anti-Americanism show in places. There are denunciations of 'US imperialism' here and there, and subtle references to Vietnam in innocuous-looking pillows."[45] This remark was in reference to works such as the white-on-white quilted cloth assemblage *I Love Canada – J'aime le Canada* (1970) where the slogans "Death to U.S. Technological Imperialism/A bas l'imperialisme technologique americain" appear as small hand-written add-ons between the lines of larger text. A few years later, in his 1974 book, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art*, Barry Lord went to great lengths to explain how Wieland's style and content were too Americanized, warning the public to be suspicious of this kind of ersatz or "cosmetic" nationalism. Lord was by then a member of the Canadian Liberation Movement (CLM), a Maoist group active during the years 1969-76, which dramatically called for the annihilation of both capitalism and American imperialism as prerequisites to the formation of a new nationhood. A similarly damning critique of Wieland's exhibition had appeared in the CLM's newspaper, signed only "a Canadian art worker," and anticipated Lord's later comments in proclaiming that "at heart Wieland is loyal only to the Americanized avant-garde."[46] This might well have been penned by Lord himself or by his wife Gail Dexter Lord, also a writer and member of the CLM, who had herself come down hard on Canadian artists' "cultural servitude" to empty American style.[47]

Barry Lord's comments are worth investigating more closely, especially because his discussion of Wieland came at the end of a book which ambitiously attempted to re-narrate Canada's art history in left-wing terms. Lord was an unusual figure in the Canadian art world, having been editor of the country's primary art magazine, *artscanada*, in the late sixties and also the organizer of the "Painting in Canada" section at Expo 67, an exhibition which included Wieland amongst the artists selected. As a member of the Canadian establishment during the centenary celebration, Lord's job was to showcase art in such a way that it would appear to enhance Ottawa's message of national unity. A few years later, however, Lord would become a marginalized and radical figure, no longer affiliated with any art institution, and a committed member of the Canadian Liberation Movement;[48] it was the CLM-affiliated publishing house New Canada Press that would publish Lord's book. While *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art* covered much of the same historical material as more mainstream surveys by Dennis Reid or J. Russell Harper, Lord insisted on the importance of underlying class interests and affiliations in the narrativization and interpretation of art in Canada. Lord's book is often insightful, although at times his propositions are provocative or outrageous,

such as when he makes the reclusive Emily Carr a mouthpiece for Mao Tse-tung maxims.[49] The year before his own book on Canadian art appeared, Lord had written a scathing review in *Canadian Forum* of William Withrow's *Contemporary Canadian Painting*.[50] He accused the author of a "comprador" stance on Canadian art; this derogatory term referred to the dutiful type of colonial servant who never challenges the supremacy of the foreign master. In contrast to that of other scholars who were considered to be afflicted with a residual "colonial mentality," Lord's book set out to confront the country's colonial legacy, to promote a de-colonized consciousness, and assert the legitimacy of art as part of a national liberation struggle. "Knowing the history of our art...is a powerful weapon in the hands of a colonial people," he wrote in the introduction.[51] Whereas artists from the historical past could be half-excused for their false consciousness about the role of art, Lord was unwavering in his expectation that contemporary artists and art writers should serve the cause of the imminent liberation of Canada.

It might be expected that Lord would have been sympathetic to Wieland's project, since from a present-day perspective it seems evident that they occupied similar political ground. They both denounced American militarism and economic hegemony and were committed to the redefinition of Canadian nationalism in socialist terms. Furthermore, Wieland and Lord shared the rather idiosyncratic desire to reclaim the legacy of Tom Thomson and the early twentieth-century landscape art of the Group of Seven as part of a necessary art-historical revisionism. And so Lord wrote admiringly that "Thomson at last solved the struggle for the Canadian landscape,"[52] while Wieland's *True Patriot Love* bookwork included a film script that strategically re-presented Thomson's life and early death as moments of resistance to the bourgeois vision of Canada. However, Lord vilified Wieland's *True Patriot Love* exhibition and in the section of his book entitled "Decadent Phase II, 1968-74: Cosmetic Nationalism," Wieland is given centre-stage. Lord was resorting to a rather crude Marxist vocabulary when he used the concept of "decadence" to denigrate avant-garde art for its counter-revolutionary position; in this case Lord was specifically blaming the U.S. for unleashing contagious forms of Conceptual and Pop Art into the Canadian art world. He wrote: "This idea that 'painting is dead' is characteristic of the latest stages of decadence in U.S. imperialist culture."[53] Rejecting the demise of painting, he championed figurative painters such as John Boyle, Claude Breeze, and Greg Curnoe. Lord's allegiances here were surely linked to his bigger project to repair the ruptured connection to a longer history of socially-engaged realism. The contemporary multi-media art of Joyce Wieland could not be made to fit this narrowly-defined concept of Canadian political art, and her work was singled out for mocking the debate on nationalism, for putting the emphasis on "cultural" issues rather than political ones, and for implicitly emasculating the virile domain of nationalism. His use of the term "cosmetic" cannot escape a gendered

connotation. The worst thing Lord could say, finally, was that Wieland's art was only masquerading as Canadian; scratch the "cosmetic" nationalistic surface of her art and the underlying Americanism would become evident.[54] Lord's name-calling points to fissures in the Canadian art world, and also to the sectarianism of Canada's New Left. Like their American counterparts, by the mid 1970s politicized Canadians were apparently just as unable as to agree upon how art and politics should intersect. Yet what is striking when looking back at this period, is the passionate commitment of those involved and the liveliness of the debate about reinventing the nation. It could even be argued that *True Patriot Love*'s ability to engender such an animated exchange in the public realm was actually a measure of its success as political art.[55]

Was Wieland's experiment a failure as political art, though, because her definition of Canadian nationalism remained so elusive? Because her aesthetic vocabulary was not sufficiently home-grown? Because the humour got in the way? These apparent contradictions can be regarded as aesthetic strengths if we consider that Wieland's 1971 exhibition was in many respects the extension and culmination of her border art project. Although it was presented at the geographic and political epicentre of Canada, *True Patriot Love* cultivated artistic and political ambiguity in such a way that undermined Ottawa's ostensible position of centrality and cultural authority. The border was the place from which one could become stereoscopically aware of both the American and the Canadian political systems. Therefore Wieland positioned her audience within a border-zone so that the horrors of the Vietnam War and the toxic patriotism of America-at-war did not fade from view even when the vision of a new Canadian nation appeared on the horizon. Linked this way, the critique of the U.S. and the celebration of Canada could only be historically contingent. The border was something potentially internal as well. Wieland did not package the nation as something unified, seamless, and easy to consume; and it was impossible to deny the fractures caused by gender relations, economic interests and language. Wieland's extensive use of English and French throughout the exhibition, for example, did not serve as a simple affirmation of the bilingualism which had become official policy but rather it pointed to the linguistic borders within the country. This was made apparent in the very title of the exhibition, as Wieland literally and perversely translated the line "True Patriot Love," from the English version of the national anthem, into "Veritable Amour Patriotique." However, this phrase is not found in the French version of the anthem as the lyrics are entirely different. And so by imitating the federal government's decree that every document and utterance be issued in both official languages, Wieland's artistic gesture satirized an ongoing history of mistranslation and miscommunication.[56]

Wieland would struggle to come to terms with art's national boundaries and to advocate a new national art, but with the understanding that this could only be

an elusive and fractured category. From the border, it is obvious that all art is impure. Lord had certainly been right to say that Wieland did not repudiate American art and culture when she returned to Canada. Indeed, her immersion in the New York art scene, and her exposure to American pop-culture nourished her art practice, allowing her to reimagine Canadian art. From the border, Joyce Wieland showed how the nation could remain always on the verge of being invented.

JOHANNE SLOAN
Department of Art History
Concordia University

Notes

The research for this article was made possible by a National Gallery of Canada Research Fellowship, as well as a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would like to thank Murray Waddington and the staff at the National Gallery Library for providing such an excellent research environment. I am very grateful to Reesa Greenberg and Kristina Huneault for their insightful comments on an early draft of this text, and to Philip Dombowsky for allowing me to consult an unpublished manuscript on Barry Lord's early development as an art critic.

1 Wieland, quoted in Myrna KOSTASH, "Women as film-makers: hey, it's happening!," *Miss Chatelaine* (Winter 1973): n.p.

2 Barry LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1974), 214.

3 Lauren Rabinowitz and Kay Armatage both contributed important early essays and interviews with Wieland, and subsequently other scholars have continued to raise feminist issues of embodiment and subjective experience, the link between personal life and art practice, and Wieland's status within the institutionalized worlds of art. For an excellent bibliography of the early material, see Gerta MORAY, "Joyce Wieland," in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. D. Gaze (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), 1451-54. More recently, Christine Conley has addressed questions of nationahood and the maternal body; see Christine CONLEY, "True Patriot Love: Joyce Wieland's Canada," in *Art, Nation and Gender: Ethnic Landscapes, Myths and Mother-Figures*, ed. T. Cusack & S. Bhreathnach-Lynch (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2003), 95-112.

4 Wieland, quoted in Lauren RABINOWITZ, "An Interview with Joyce Wieland," *Afterimage* (May 1981): 10.

5 Two of these photographs appear as part of the artist's bookwork, *True Patriot Love* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1971), published on the occasion of the similarly-titled exhibition. Ten years earlier Wieland had given an abstract painting the title *Laura Secord Saves Upper Canada* (1961), while in 1974 she made a large quilted assemblage entitled *Laura Secord.*

6 For a recent discussion of the controversy surrounding this mural, see Charles C. HILL, "Greg Curnoe's Hommage to the R34," *National Gallery of Canada Review* IV (2003): 84-104. Other artists such as Claude Breeze, Charles Pachter, John Boyle, and Jack Chamberlain adopted critical positions regarding American culture and/or developed Canadian subject-matter, but Curnoe and Wieland stand out for sustaining these interests across large bodies of work.

7 The phrase "protective nationalist" comes up in an interview in *The Pittsburgh Press*, 9 March 1972.

8 Greg Curnoe interview, *File* (1974): 46.

9 Tony GODFREY, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 190.

10 Frascina comments that there was virtually no response to the Peace Tower in the national art press until five years later when *Art in America* very belatedly put it on its cover. Francis FRASCINA, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 68.

11 Lucy LIPPARD, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* (Whatcom Museum of History and Art and The Real Comet Press, 1990), 18.

12 Ibid., 22.

13 It is interesting too that both Wieland and Rosler made films that subvert the post-war "domestic goddess" figure: Wieland's *Water Sark* (1965) and Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) present the artist investigating and defamiliarizing the housewife's everyday world, opening it out to aesthetic, social, and sexual connotations.

14 Andreas HUYSSEN, "The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s," *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 32.

15 Jonas MEKAS, "Movie Journal," *The Village Voice*, 3 April 1969. This was his opinion after watching the film eight times.

16 Lucy LIPPARD, "Watershed: Contradiction, Communication and Canada in Joyce Wieland's Work," in Lucy LIPPARD et al., *Joyce Wieland* (Toronto: Key Porter Books and Art Gallery of Ontario, 1987), 3. Lippard goes on to suggest that "it may be that Wieland is not categorised as a political artist because she is not an ideologue." Wieland herself was anxious not to fall into the trap of didactic political art: "I want to reach out and help in Canada's spiritual and economic struggle but I don't want my art just to be propagandistic." Wieland, quoted in KOSTASH, "Women as film-makers," n.p.

17 Michael O'PRAY, "Framing Snow," *Afterimage* 11 (Winter 1982/3): 53.

18 The Waffle Manifesto described "two nations, one struggle," while insisting that "socialists in English Canada must ally themselves with socialists in Quebec in this common struggle." *The Waffle Manifesto: For an Independant Socialist Canada*, 1969 (www.notacolony.ca/Waffle%20Manifesto).

19 When she was interviewed by Anne Wordworth in January 1973, Wieland noted the importance of reading Rotsteins' *Canadian Forum.* Anne WORDWORTH, *Descant* 8/9 (Summer 1974): 110. Indeed Wieland advertised her knowledge of the main players in the debate about nationalism; in 1971, she re-wrote the National Gallery newsletter about herself and her exhibition, and in a new section entitled "Canadians she admires," included the ex-Minister of

Finance Walter Gordon and the philosopher George Grant. Another category she added to the newsletter was "new Canadian recipes," which featured Canadian Independence Pancakes – a pun on Waffles? NGC Newsletter 1971, NGC Archives, True Patriot Love Exhibition Record 24-520.

20 In a recorded conversation that took place in the spring of 1971 between Hollis Frampton and Joyce Wieland, he asks her, "How do you feel about Trudeau now?" to which she responds, "I feel that he is not as much concerned and impassioned about Canada as I thought. I am the one who is." Hollis FRAMPTON and Joyce WIELAND, "I Don't Even Know about the Second Stanza," in *The Films of Joyce Wieland*, ed. Kathryn Elder (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario Monographs, 1999), 178. Also, James Laxer's book *The Energy Poker Game*, which Wieland used for *Water Quilt*, is clearly critical of Prime Minister Trudeau's laissez-faire position regarding the sale of water and other northern resources.

21 Stanley ARONOWITZ, *The Death and Rebirth of American Radicalism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 38.

22 James LAXER, *The Energy Poker Game* (Toronto and Chicago: New Press, 1970), 47.

23 This is an important methodological point that can be linked to T.J. Clark's contemporaneous assertion about the social history of art: "I am not interested in the notion of works of art 'reflecting' ideologies, social relations, or history.... I do not want to talk about history as 'background.'" For Clark, as for Wieland, the work of art is considered an *active* piece of culture. T.J. CLARK, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 10.

24 Lauren RABINOWITZ, "Issues of Feminist Aesthetics: Judy Chicago and Joyce Wieland," *Woman's Art Journal* (Fall 1980/Winter 1981): 40.

25 Wieland's *Reason Over Passion* and *La Raison Avant la Passion* (1968) were quilted cloth assemblages based on a sound-bite by then-Prime Minister Trudeau in which he described his decision-making process; Wieland's heart-strewn text-works do suggest an ironic and feminist reversal of this dictum. *Reason Over Passion* was also the title of her 1969 film.

26 Wieland's *True Patriot Love* bookwork was included in the influential exhibition/catalogue, *Global Conceptualism: Politics of Origin, 1950s - 1980s* (New York: Queen's Museum of Art, 1999).

27 Wieland, quoted in CONLEY, "True Patriot Love: Joyce Wieland's Canada," 99.

28 John O'BRIAN, "Anthem lip-sync," *The Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* XXI, no.1-2 (2000): 140-51.

29 Hacke's *MOMA-Poll* question was: "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?" This was one of a series of polls Haacke conducted in art galleries and museums between 1969 and 1973. A 1973 poll asked "Does your notion of art favor, tolerate, or reject works that make deliberate reference to socio-political things?" *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York and Boston: New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1986), 105.

30 Tom ROSSITER, "Weiland (*sic*) vs. Picassso: Patriotism's absurdities lose to art," *The Saturday Citizen* (Saturday version of *The Ottawa Citizen*), 7 Aug. 1971. The artist's name is misspelled throughout the article.

31 Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 15.

32 David CARROLL, "The aesthetics of nationalism and the limits of culture," in *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 112-38; see expecially 127-29.

33 The Supreme Court case was linked to the artist Mark Morrell's disputed right to use the flag to construct "a phallus, a cannon barrel, a hanging figure and other expressions of Mr. Morrell's distaste for the Vietnam War." Fred GRAHAM, "The Supreme Court and the Flag," *Art in America* (March/April 1971): 27. Also, the 1970 "People's Flag Show" held at the Judson Memorial Church in New York City, had been shut down by the authorities and its organizing committee arrested.

34 This issue of "bulk water exports," as the sale of lakes and rivers to the U.S. is referred to euphemistically, continues to be raised in Parliament up to the present day.

35 Northrop Frye's concept of a "garrison mentality," prominent within Canada's literary and cultural theory at this time, implied that the Canadian psyche was somehow locked into shape when the first European settlers, barricaded inside a fort or garrison, confronted the terrors of nature in the new world. Northrop FRYE, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), 123. See also, Gaile MCGREGOR, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 5. She describes a "beleaguered human psyche attempting to preserve its integrity in the face of an alien, encompassing nature."

36 CONLEY, "True Patriot Love: Joyce Wieland's Canada," 110.

37 LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada*, 214.

38 This doodle/drawing is part of the Joyce Wieland Fonds in the York University Archives and Special Collections, 1993-0091005 (030).

39 Kay KRITZWISER, *Globe and Mail*, 3 July 1971. Her opening line is even more emphatic about Wieland's genuine nationalistic credentials: "All I can say is Canada hath need of Wieland at this hour."

40 Hugo MCPHERSON, "Wieland: An Epiphany of North," *artscanada* (Aug./Sept. 1971): 17-27.

41 Tom ROSSITER, "Patriotism's absurdities lose to art," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 7 Aug. 1971.

42 "The Put-On at the National Gallery," *The Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1971.

43 "Le Canada, c'est du folklore," *La Presse*, 10 juillet 1971. "L'exposition...nous demande d'accepter qu'un pays ne soit pas plus que ses symboles."

44 Anthony WESTELL, "Insight/Politics," *The Toronto Star*, 10 July 1971.

45 Jay WALZ, "Canadian Gallery Show Strikes Nationalist Note," *The New York Times*, 16 July 1971.

46 "Official 'National Art' sees Canadian culture as folklore," *New Canada* (Sept. 1971): 11. The article is lavish in its damnation: "Joyce Wieland is a parasite who panders to a bored and exhausted elite...she can play the fool stitching chic coloured quilts."

47 Gail DEXTER, "Yes, Cultural Imperialism Too!," in *Close the 49th Parallel etc: The Americanization of Canada*, ed. Ian Lumsden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 165-66.

48 The Maoist orientation of the organization was not disguised as is made clear in the extensive documentation in the *Canadian Liberation Movement Fonds*, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton Ontario. Mimicking Chinese communist party practices, Lord and other members wrote "self-criticisms," dissecting the remnants of bourgeois corruption in their own personalities and social behaviour.

49 Lord writes: "'Dare to struggle! Dare to win!,' Mao Tse-tung's motto would have appealed to Emily Carr." LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada*, 173.

50 Barry LORD, "Comprador Canadian Painting," *Canadian Forum* (Nov./Dec. 1973): 36-37.

51 LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada*, 9.

52 Ibid., 127. As a review of Lord's book pointed out, he strategically neglected to mention that Tom Thomson frequently came into contact with European and American art. See Joan LOWNDES, "Review of Barry Lord's *The History of Painting in Canada*," *artscanada* (June 1975): 76.

53 LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada*, 213.

54 Wieland and Snow were redeemed, however, once they moved permanently back to Canada: "Now in daily contact with the people again, they have become two of the patriotic personalities who are lending their support to anti-imperialist causes." Ibid., 215.

55 Writing about forms of "public art" that flourished primarily in the decades after Wieland's exhibition, Rosalyn Deutsche has suggested that the success of political art must be measured by its ability to reveal the fractures within an ostensibly democratic public space. Rosalyn DEUTSCHE, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996). See especially the chapter entitled "Agoraphobia," 269-327.

56 Wieland would also juxtapose the two quite different version of the national anthem in her bookwork. Other bilingual works include two separate quilt-works, *Reason Over Passion* and *La Raison Avant la Passion* (1968), as well as *I Love Canada/J'aime le Canada*.

Résumé

JOYCE WIELAND À LA FRONTIÈRE

Le nationalisme, la nouvelle gauche et la question de l'art politique au Canada

Cet article montre comment l'identité artistique de Joyce Wieland s'est transformée entre le milieu des années soixante et le milieu des années soixante-dix, alors qu'elle voyageait entre les États-Unis et le Canada et se positionnait stratégiquement à la frontière. L'art activiste et pacifiste des années new-yorkaises avait été remplacé par une sorte d'art politique plus utopique lors de son exposition solo *True Patriot Love/Véritable Amour Patriotique* à la Galerie nationale du Canada en 1971. Les œuvres d'art de cette exposition traitaient des importantes questions de la souveraineté politique et économique du Canada, des dommages écologiques dans le nord et de la guerre américaine en Asie du Sud-Est au moyen d'un assemblage conceptuel de photographies, de fragments cinématographiques, d'objets imitant l'univers enveloppé de plastique de la culture pop commerciale, ainsi que de divers artefacts tricotés, fabriqués à la main ou autrement féminisés et «low tech». Wieland met ainsi en mouvement un procédé par lequel les symboles de l'identité nationale sont continuellement déconstruits et reconstruits.

L'art de Wieland est en résonance avec le nationalisme de la nouvelle gauche et sa critique radicale des politiques économique et extérieure des États-Unis ainsi que sa conviction que les Canadiens doivent entreprendre un processus de décolonisation. Le moment est propice pour revisiter la rhétorique antiaméricaine dans l'art de Wieland. Les différences idéologiques entre les États-Unis et le Canada sont de nouveau objet de débat sur fond de guerre, et toute traversée de la frontière, depuis le 11 septembre 2001, est devenue une action potentiellement risquée et politisée.

Le thème de la frontière entre le Canada et les États-Unis revient périodiquement dans l'art de Wieland au cours des années soixante et soixante-dix. À plus d'une occasion, la figure historique de Laura Secord fournit à l'artiste une sorte d'alter ego imaginaire à travers lequel elle peut construire un espace entre les deux pays. Wieland croyait qu'il était important de reconnaître la petite part qu'une femme individuelle peut apporter à l'effort collectif pour garder les Américains en dehors du territoire canadien. La frontière est aussi un élément important du film de Wieland, *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, tourné en 1968, allégorie animale qui évoque le mouvement pacifiste, les réfractaires, l'impérialisme américain,

l'identité nationale canadienne et les problèmes écologiques. Les critiques ont décrit ce film expérimental comme un exemple d'art politique. Il marque aussi un tournant dans l'œuvre de Wieland. Même si, finalement, les petits animaux n'avaient pas pu échapper à leurs persécuteurs américains et même si les Canadiens n'étaient pas vraiment maîtres de leur propre territoire, monter vers le nord était tout de même, en quelque sorte, un geste émancipateur et le Canada pouvait signifier la liberté et le plaisir.

Tandis que Greg Curnoe et d'autres artistes partageaient les opinions anti-américaines de Wieland sur l'identité canadienne, il est également important de comprendre Wieland à l'intérieur de la grande scène de l'art politique dans les dernières années du XX[e] siècle, alors qu'une génération d'artistes américains étaient aux prises avec le problème de la manière de faire de l'art politique. Ses œuvres de la dernière moitié des années soixante, *N.U.C.* (1966), *War and Peace: 8 mm Home Movie* (1966-67), *Patriotism* (1966), et *Betsy Ross, look what they've done to the flag you made with such care* (1966), peuvent être avantageusement comparées à celle de Martha Rosler *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72). Les deux artistes ont montré des images médiatiques de la guerre du Viêt Nam sur un fond coloré et suggestif de culture consumériste américaine. Avec ces œuvres, Wieland rejoignait aussi les nombreux artistes des États-Unis qui traitaient le drapeau américain comme quelque chose de contaminé par une guerre honteuse. En faisant référence à Betsy Ross, qui a cousu à la main le premier drapeau américain, Wieland évoquait aussi l'esprit d'émancipation qui accompagnait à l'origine l'incarnation matérielle de la bannière étoilée. Quelques années plus tard, Wieland allait faire du drapeau artisanal féminisé un objet privilégié pour son projet artistique nationaliste au Canada.

L'exposition *True Patriot Love* de Wieland a été inaugurée le jour de la fête du Canada 1971, et l'événement semble avoir été entièrement surdéterminé : un art nationaliste, dans la Galerie nationale de la capitale du pays, le jour de la fête nationale. Il est pourtant fascinant de voir que les critiques n'aient pas été d'accord entre eux pour dire s'il s'agissait d'un projet sérieux ou d'une farce, d'un art recherché ou de son contraire, s'il célébrait le Canada ou s'en moquait, s'il était antiaméricain ou «proto américain». Il est important de se rappeler que des formes de nationalisme nombreuses et contradictoires étaient à l'œuvre au Canada vers la fin des années 1960 jusqu'au début des années 1970. La principale opposition à la théorie officielle d'une identité nationale stable et unifiée était, naturellement, la poussée massive du nationalisme québécois, mais des défis à la version optimiste d'Ottawa de l'identité nationale ont aussi émergé dans le Canada anglais. Même alors qu'elle vivait à New York, Wieland a eu connaissance de ce nationalisme canadien «alternatif». Si le leadership charismatique de Pierre Elliot Trudeau avait pu un moment séduire Wieland, les effets de la trudeaumanie semblaient avoir disparu au moment de l'exposition de 1971. Elle s'est plutôt associée de près aux membres radicaux du Nouveau parti démocratique (la faction Waffle) qui avait écrit un manifeste «Pour

un Canada indépendant et socialiste». Wieland a directement associé les chefs du Waffle, Mel Watkins et James Laxer, à sa pratique artistique, en faisant du premier l'invité d'honneur à son vernissage et en utilisant un livre du second dans son œuvre importante *Water Quilt*. La nouvelle gauche affirmait hautement que le nationalisme dans un contexte canadien devait être progressif, émancipateur, contreculturel et, finalement, socialiste. Il était crucial que la nation ne soit pas perçue comme un fait accompli, et c'est cette attitude activiste envers le nationalisme que Wieland a traduite en une attitude artistique pour l'exposition *True Patriot Love*. Les œuvres exposées adaptaient et transformaient le drapeau unifolié et l'hymne national qui venaient d'être adoptés. Elle montrait aussi qu'un étalage de plantes et d'animaux pouvaient devenir les symboles d'une nation en réémergence.

L'exposition a suscité une foule de commentaires dans la presse canadienne, non seulement dans les pages artistiques mais aussi dans les éditoriaux et les débats d'affaires nationales. Peu de critiques étaient d'accord pour dire si l'exposition était un art politique efficace, ou authentiquement patriotique, ou si les spectateurs étaient interpellés en tant que citoyens. Une des réponses les plus intéressantes à la nouvelle forme d'art nationaliste pratiquée par Wieland est venue de Barry Lord dans son livre de 1974 *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art*. Il s'est donné beaucoup de mal pour expliquer comment le style et le contenu de l'art de Wieland étaient trop américanisés, mettant le public en garde contre cette sorte d'ersatz ou de maquillage du nationalisme. Le point de vue de Lord sur l'art canadien était influencé par ses idées politiques marxistes. Contrairement à d'autres intellectuels censément affligés d'un résidu de «mentalité coloniale», Lord visait à décoloniser la conscience et affirmait la légitimité de la contribution de l'art à la lutte pour la libération nationale. Il croyait fermement que les artistes et écrivains d'art contemporains devaient servir la cause de la prochaine libération du Canada et portait un jugement très dur sur Wieland, affirmant que sa première allégeance allait à l'avant-garde américaine. Au bout du compte, la pire chose que Lord pouvait imputer à l'art de Wieland, c'était qu'il se faisait passer pour canadien et que si on grattait la surface, l'américanisme sous-jacent devenait évident.

Les causes de la faillite de cet essai d'art politique par Wieland étaient-elles une définition trop vague du nationalisme canadien, un vocabulaire esthétique pas assez vernaculaire ou un humour intempestif? Ces contradictions apparentes peuvent être vues comme des forces esthétiques si nous considérons que son exposition de 1971 était, sous plusieurs rapports, l'extension et le sommet de son projet d'art frontière. Même situé à l'épicentre géographique et politique du Canada, *True Patriot Love* cultivait l'ambiguïté artistique et politique de telle manière qu'elle en minait la position évidente de centralité et d'autorité culturelle.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette

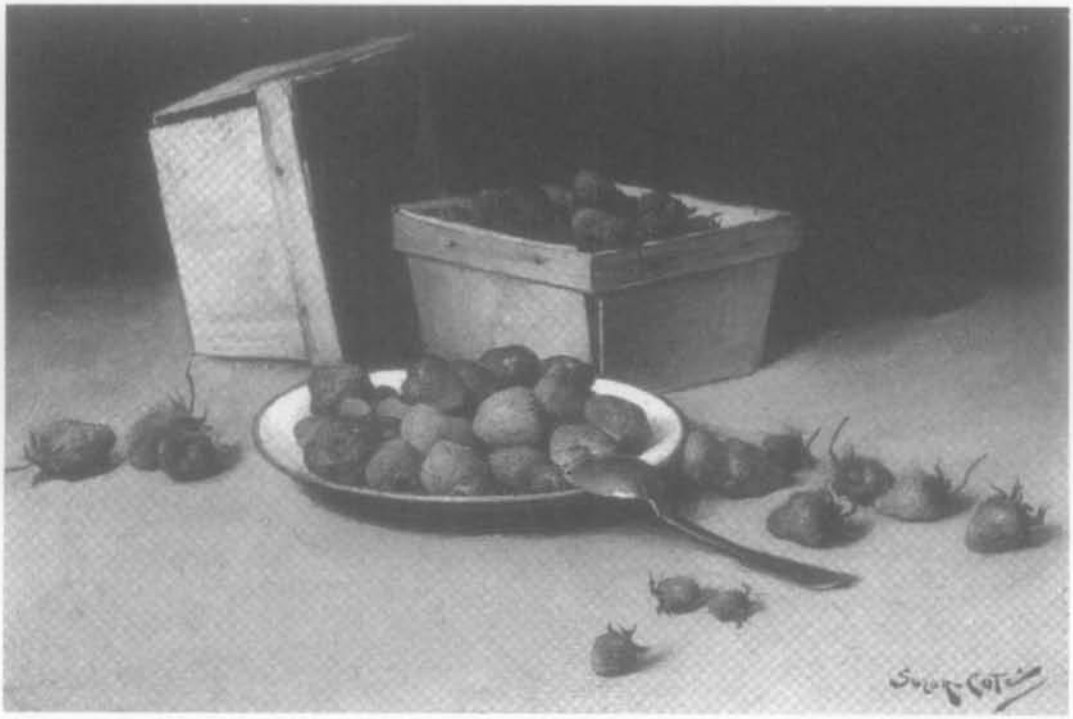


fig.1 Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, **Nature morte aux fraises,** 1895, huile sur toile, 31 x 47 cm, coll. particulière. (Photo : Courtoisie du MNBAQ)

SUZOR-COTÉ CHEZ W. SCOTT & SONS DE MONTRÉAL

Du rôle de l'exposition particulière dans la consécration d'une carrière d'artiste

Suzor-Coté fut l'une des grandes têtes d'affiche de la galerie Scott & Sons, de Montréal, avant la Première Guerre mondiale[1]. Il aurait fait son entrée dans cette maison de la rue Notre-Dame vers 1895, en y laissant en consignation une *Nature morte aux fraises* (fig.1) qu'on jugea digne d'être placée en vitrine. C'est là que Robertine Barry, rédactrice anonyme de la «Chronique du lundi» dans le journal *La Patrie*, la remarqua un beau jour, en passant. En avril 1897, lors d'une autre présentation en vitrine, qui mettait cette fois en vedette un portrait au pastel de Suzor-Coté[2], la journaliste se remémora l'«impression ineffaçable» que lui avait laissée, quelques années plus tôt, le petit tableau représentant «une boîte de fraises à demi-renversée[3]». Pour traduire cette impression et bien faire sentir la parfaite illusion du trompe-l'œil comme preuve éloquente du savoir-faire de l'artiste, elle eut recours au subterfuge de la fiction narrative. «J'ai d'abord cru», écrivait-elle, «que quelqu'un, entrant acheter un tableau, l'avait déposée là [elle parle bien sûr de la boîte de fraises], et qu'un malheureux hasard l'avait jetée par terre. L'illusion était complète; c'était criant de réalisme, et en l'écrivant l'eau m'en vient encore à la bouche[4]».

En retraçant l'historique des rapports entre Suzor-Coté et la galerie Scott & Sons, je m'en tiendrai aux quatre expositions particulières qui lui furent consacrées entre 1901 et 1912 – dont une de moindre importance sur le plan du nombre des œuvres, en septembre 1903, mais qui intéressa la Galerie nationale du Canada au point de lui faire acquérir ses deux premières toiles de cet artiste[5]. Ce faisant, mon but sera de montrer comment ce mode de diffusion en appelle lui aussi des ressorts de la construction narrative, tant par son dispositif propre que par tout l'appareil discursif qu'il met en branle.

Selon le modèle proposé par Alan Bowness dans *The Conditions of Success : How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (Londres, Thames & Hudson, 1989), quatre cercles de reconnaissance contribuent à établir une réputation d'artiste. Il fait d'abord intervenir le jugement des pairs : confrères d'études, collègues de travail et cercles d'amis. Viennent ensuite le cercle des marchands et des collectionneurs et, plus ou moins loin dans le temps, celui des spécialistes et des experts : critiques d'art, conservateurs de musée ou historiens d'art. Pour sa part, le grand public n'intervient qu'en bout de ligne, son rôle étant surtout d'enrichir une renommée en la propageant et en lui donnant le poids du nombre[6].

L'exposition particulière nous situe d'emblée dans les deuxième et troisième cercles : celui du marchand et des collectionneurs et celui de la critique d'art, c'est-à-dire dans un présent qui pourra, au besoin, faire intervenir certains éléments d'un passé récent par le détour notamment de la citation et du rappel biographique. Dans le cas de Suzor-Coté, ce passé récent recouvrira par exemple sa formation européenne et les succès obtenus sur la scène parisienne. En sélectionnant tel artiste et en lui offrant l'exclusivité de sa cimaise, le marchand pose un jugement que la critique et le public viennent ensuite entériner, idéalement. Dans ce cadre particulier de lecture qu'est la présentation individuelle en galerie, la trame de la mise en exposition situe l'artiste dans un espace-temps qui lui est propre. Ainsi détaché de la masse de ses contemporains, l'artiste se présente comme un cas de réussite singulière, toutes les œuvres réunies servant à faire la démonstration de la maîtrise de ses moyens particuliers.

Contrairement au Salon académique, où tous les projets singuliers tendent à s'identifier à une tradition centralisatrice et deviennent de ce fait comparables entre eux, l'exposition particulière démarque l'artiste et lui appose du même coup un statut d'exception. Loin de rassembler les pièces détachées d'un ensemble pluriel, elle introduit à une trajectoire unique, pensée dans la durée, et non à ces moments privilégiés que déterminent les apparitions au Salon. De ce fait, elle s'imprime plus durablement dans les mémoires. C'est ainsi par exemple que, lors de l'exposition de 1907, le critique du quotidien *Le Canada* reconnut en substance que les quelques toiles de Suzor-Coté qu'il avait vues exposées jusque-là, bien qu' «à de trop rares intervalles», ne lui avaient pas permis de juger pleinement de son talent[7]. À l'époque de la modernité, à l'heure où l'essentiel du jugement esthétique se cristallise autour des notions d'originalité et d'expressivité individuelle, l'exposition particulière s'impose comme instance de reconnaissance, car elle fonctionne elle-même sur un principe d'individualité.

J'ai parlé de la sélection de l'artiste par le marchand comme d'une étape de reconnaissance. Or, dès ce stade, d'autres éléments, pour la plupart indépendants de la volonté de l'artiste, interviennent et qualifient son rattachement à une galerie particulière. Ainsi de la réputation du marchand lui-même et de la place qu'occupe sa galerie au sein du marché de l'art à l'échelle nationale et/ou internationale. Que dire à cet égard de l'entrée de Suzor-Coté chez W. Scott & Sons au tout début du XX^{e} siècle? En 1901, cette maison, fondée en 1859, en était déjà à sa quarante-deuxième année d'existence[8]. Elle avait depuis longtemps délaissé son premier statut d'atelier de fabrication d'encadrements et franchi plusieurs étapes de développement qui, un peu avant le tournant du XX^{e} siècle, l'avait amenée à faire table rase de son passé industriel afin de se spécialiser dans le commerce d'art. Après de timides débuts sur le marché de l'art, au cours des années 1860, son fondateur, William Scott (1831-1904), avait

procédé à une lente mais décisive réorientation de ses affaires. En 1875, il avait franchi une étape cruciale qui devait rapidement le placer à l'avant-scène du commerce d'art à Montréal. Pour contrer l'envahissement croissant du marché local par des importations d'œuvres de reproduction, Scott avait en effet choisi de se faire lui-même importateur de tableaux. Il avait donc coupé les ponts avec ses anciens fournisseurs locaux et s'était associé avec le peintre canadien William Lewis Fraser (1841-1905) dans le but de faire entrer au Canada des œuvres originales d'artistes qui exposaient régulièrement dans les salons académiques de Paris et de Londres.

En misant désormais sur des critères d'unicité et d'authenticité, Scott & Fraser avaient contribué à relancer le marché de l'art à Montréal sur des bases nouvelles. Au bout de quelques années, la firme avait établi sa crédibilité auprès de divers publics de collectionneurs et s'était donné les moyens financiers d'augmenter progressivement son débit d'œuvres d'art tout en visant, selon les termes mêmes de Scott, à l'importation d'une peinture de qualité toujours supérieure[9]. En 1887, la concurrence à l'échelle internationale avait obligé cette galerie à opérer une volte-face stratégique. N'étant pas de taille à se mesurer à la concurrence grandissante qui sévissait sur le marché international des valeurs européennes, la direction de l'entreprise avait dû sacrifier son indépendance en s'affiliant à de grandes firmes d'art britanniques. Comptant désormais sur les consignations et n'ayant donc plus à débourser de sa poche pour ses importations de tableaux, elle put dès lors mieux satisfaire à la demande d'une nouvelle classe de riches collectionneurs canadiens qui se voyaient de plus en plus sollicités par des marchands d'art étrangers[10].

Lorsque Suzor-Coté fit sa première véritable apparition chez Scott, en septembre 1901[11], cette galerie se targuait déjà d'être la plus ancienne entreprise du genre à Montréal. Elle avait acquis un statut de prestige en tant que représentante de la French Gallery de Londres et d'autres firmes britanniques qui la fournissaient en objets d'art décoratifs provenant de tous les coins du monde. En plus d'avoir en inventaire des œuvres d'artistes liés à certains des courants les plus prisés de la peinture contemporaine à l'échelle internationale, notamment des écoles de Barbizon et de La Haye, elle avait inauguré depuis peu un nouveau type de transaction en offrant des toiles de maîtres anciens, secteur du marché qui interpellait des collectionneurs de plus haut vol, tels que les Montréalais William Van Horne, George A. Drummond, Richard B. Angus ou James Ross et le Torontois Byron Walker (futur Sir Edmund Walker)[12].

À la lumière de ces faits, on peut conclure que l'élection de Suzor-Coté par W. Scott & Sons constituait à elle seule une première marque importante de reconnaissance[13]. Mais il y a plus, car le marchand ne s'en tint pas à accueillir quelques toiles récentes de l'artiste de temps à autre ou à faire transiter ses toiles

vers les salons annuels des grandes institutions artistiques[14]. Bien au contraire, puisqu'il lui consacra quatre expositions particulières : la première en 1901, la deuxième en 1903, la troisième en 1907 et la quatrième en 1912[15]. En l'espace de onze ans, ces quatre diffusions proposèrent au public montréalais plus de deux cent cinquante peintures, pastels et modelages. Chiffre impressionnant comparé aux trente-deux œuvres que Suzor-Coté présenta au Salon du printemps de l'Art Association of Montreal (AAM) durant la même période. D'autant que, dans ce cadre collectif, elles y côtoyaient une moyenne annuelle de plus de quatre cent œuvres et objets d'art de tout genre, tel qu'indiqué par les chiffres compilés à l'examen des douze catalogues produits entre 1900 et 1914. Nous touchons là à une autre dimension de la construction d'une réputation, car c'est une chose d'entrer dans une grande galerie commerciale par la petite porte de la consignation et c'en est une autre d'y accéder par le grand portail de l'exposition particulière. Comme on le verra bientôt en relevant certains aspects de la fortune critique de Suzor-Coté, le sommet fut atteint lors de sa troisième apparition chez Scott, en 1907, avec l'hommage rendu dans tous les grands quotidiens montréalais, anglophones et francophones, dont *La Presse* qui coiffa son article d'un vibrant et très catégorique : «Un grand artiste[16]»!

Suzor-Coté fut le premier artiste canadien-français à bénéficier d'une telle marque de reconnaissance de la part de Scott & Sons. Tous types de diffusion confondus, il fut également l'un des deux seuls canadiens-français, avec le sculpteur Louis-Philippe Hébert (1850-1917), qui eurent l'heur de complaire à ces marchands. Dès le début de son intervention sur le marché de l'art à Montréal, Scott avait fait une place aux artistes canadiens, tout en donnant par ailleurs prédominance à la diffusion étrangère. Jusqu'au milieu des années 1880, le marchand avait reçu en consignation des œuvres canadiennes dans sa boutique de la rue Notre-Dame; il en avait placées dans ses présentoirs lors de ses participations aux expositions provinciales, que ce soit au Québec ou en Ontario; il en avait intégrées dans ses grandes ventes publiques annuelles et en avait prêtées également à l'Art Association[17]. Au fil des ans, Scott avait progressivement transformé ses méthodes de diffusion, donnant ainsi de plus en plus d'importance à ses présentations en boutique. Il faut dire que, durant les vingt premières années de son commerce d'art, le marchand s'en était remis principalement au mode de la vente publique. De temps à autre, les journaux avaient bien sûr signalé quelques œuvres accrochées en boutique, mais jamais de véritables expositions individuelles. Cette situation commença à changer en 1884 avec la présentation dans sa galerie de quelques œuvres de la britannique Maria Brooks (1837-1913), établie à Montréal depuis 1881[18]. Un pas plus décisif fut franchi en ce sens en 1886, chez Scott bien sûr, mais aussi chez d'autres marchands-encadreurs de la ville. Quant à l'Art Association, elle adopta à son tour cette méthode en 1887, avec une exposition consacrée au peintre français Gaston Roullet.

En accédant à la cimaise de Scott & Sons, Suzor-Coté s'inscrivit dans la lignée des quelques rares artistes canadiens qui, à une, deux, trois ou même quatre reprises, y avaient eu les honneurs d'une présentation en solo. Cette filiation le rattachait à des peintres comme John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898), Henry Sandham (1842-1910), James Barnsley (1861-1929), William Brymner (1855-1925), John Hammond (1843-1939), Alexandra Bell (1864-1951) et Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899)[19] qui, pour la plupart, avaient déjà acquis une certaine renommée sur la scène artistique locale. Après 1907, les artistes étrangers devaient cependant avoir l'avantage sur les Canadiens dans les solos organisées chez Scott. Avec ses expositions de 1907 et de 1912, Suzor-Coté fut néanmoins le plus choyé parmi les Canadiens, car même James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924) n'eut droit qu'à une seule exposition particulière chez Scott avant 1914. Il est vrai que la carrière de Morrice se déroulait d'abord en Europe et que l'artiste ne croyait guère aux vertus de ce type d'exposition, trop susceptible à son goût de sombrer dans la monotonie[20]. Pour Suzor-Coté, l'exposition de 1912 fut toutefois la dernière de la série. Et s'il fallait trouver une raison à son départ de la galerie au moment où il atteignait pourtant l'apogée de sa carrière, je dirais que les changements opérés à la tête de la firme y furent pour beaucoup, car les nouveaux directeurs de Scott & Sons orientèrent désormais leur programmation dans le sens des intérêts britanniques, défendus par la French Gallery de Londres. Je m'explique.

Après le décès de William Scott, en 1904, et le départ de la firme de son fils Walter, en 1907, la nouvelle direction, composée par les frères Frank Robert et William Heaton, auxquels vint ensuite s'ajouter leur beau-frère, Herbert W. Ashby, fit en effet une part toujours plus grande aux valeurs britanniques et européennes contemporaines que soutenaient leurs associés londoniens de la French Gallery. Selon des informations recueillies auprès d'un descendant de William Scott, son fils Walter aurait quitté l'entreprise parce qu'il divergeait de vues avec le principal associé, Frank R. Heaton. Or, lui et ses partenaires étaient tous arrivés assez récemment au Canada en provenance de Grande-Bretagne et l'un d'entre eux, Ashby en l'occurrence, devait y retourner pour de bon en 1913. Un simple survol des expositions particulières organisées de 1907 à 1914 montre bien que les artistes étrangers furent désormais privilégiés dans ce type d'événement. Citons pour mémoire les expositions consacrées aux Britanniques A.C. Wyatt, en juin 1908, Arnesby Brown, en septembre 1909, John Lavery, en octobre 1909 et janvier 1913, Sir Alfred East, en janvier 1911, Walter Greaves, en février 1912, James Riddell, en septembre 1912, et Arthur Wardle, en mars 1913. Durant la même période, il y eut encore deux expositions consacrées aux Hollandais Josef Israels et J.H. Jurres, la première en janvier 1912, la deuxième en mai 1913. Du côté canadien, les seuls artistes à bénéficier de ce type de présentation furent Suzor-Coté et James Wilson Morrice, tous deux en 1912,

et le Canadien d'origine hongroise Charles de Belle, en février 1914. Cette volte-face de la galerie[21] expliquera pour beaucoup les critiques croissantes des artistes montréalais à l'endroit de Scott & Sons[22].

Mais revenons à notre propos, car on a maintenant une assez bonne idée du contexte et de l'importance du choix de Scott & Sons dans le projet de lancement d'une carrière artistique à Montréal. Deux autres cercles de reconnaissance se dessinent à partir d'ici : celui des collectionneurs et celui des critiques d'art. Les données susceptibles de nous éclairer sur le quatrième cercle, celui du grand public, sont assez minces dans le cas qui nous occupe, mais on en relève quand même quelques allusions dont il sera fait état plus loin. Arrêtons-nous pour l'instant au cercle de la critique.

Sans entrer dans le détail de la réception critique de chacune des quatre expositions individuelles que Scott consacra à Suzor-Coté, on verra néanmoins, en relevant certains aspects du discours journalistique, comment elle put contribuer à façonner la réputation de l'artiste. À cet égard, il faudrait sans doute parler d'*arguments* car, en citant à l'appui des faits tirés de la jeune carrière de l'artiste, la critique ne visait pas moins qu'à établir *la preuve* de son talent, confirmant du même coup le bon jugement du marchand qui lui rendait hommage. En portant à l'attention du public certains faits relatifs à la formation européenne de Suzor-Coté, à ses succès critiques dans les expositions parisiennes ou lors de ses participations au Salon du printemps de l'Art Association, la critique posait les jalons d'une réussite qui sera au fondement de sa légende. Comme l'a souligné Laurier Lacroix dans un récent catalogue, Suzor-Coté lui-même devait se montrer expert dans l'art d'utiliser les médias à son avantage[23] – ce qui m'incite à faire entrer l'artiste lui-même dans l'un des cercles de sa propre reconnaissance. Mais il y a plus. Bien avant que Suzor-Coté inaugurât sa première exposition particulière à Montréal, sa renommée l'y avait précédé. Au nombre des éléments qui établissaient cette renommée, retenons son choix d'une formation européenne et les mentions récoltées au cours de cet apprentissage. À nouveau, je serais portée à élargir le nombre des cercles de reconnaissance de l'artiste en y ajoutant celui constitué par les maîtres qui l'ont instruit. Jugeons-en plutôt.

Dans un numéro de 1891 de la revue *Le Monde illustré*, de Montréal, un auteur, qui se faisait appeler Amicus, rapporta que l'un des professeurs de Suzor-Coté à l'École des beaux-arts de Paris l'avait remarqué parmi les nombreux élèves de sa classe. Selon cette source, l'académicien Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), pourtant réputé avare de compliments, lui avait rendu un rare hommage en lui déclarant un jour : «Continuez, jeune Canadien, il y a une longue route pour arriver à la perfection, mais vous l'avez trouvée[24]». En juillet de la même année, un autre maître européen de Suzor-Coté fut cité à témoin dans un article de *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*. Cette fois, les propos flatteurs étaient attribués à

Henri Harpignies (1819-1916), paysagiste de bonne renommée dont les œuvres figuraient chez Scott, depuis 1882, avec celles d'autres disciples de l'École de Barbizon. L'éloge de Harpignies touchait à différents aspects du traitement du paysage chez Suzor-Coté et au réalisme qui s'en dégageait. Tout comme la parole de Bonnat, celle-ci valait surtout pour l'autorité dont elle était imbue. Autorité d'un maître reconnu, dont les propos furent accueillis en terre canadienne avec tout le respect dû aux représentants de la «culture française».

Rapprochons-nous maintenant des expositions pour voir quels autres éléments furent mis à contribution et notamment dans l'appareil documentaire qui servait de support aux présentations. Je pense, bien sûr, aux catalogues et aux communiqués de presse, mais aussi aux notices biographiques et à tout autre type de renseignements qui pouvaient être divulgués lors du déroulement de l'événement. Dans le cas qui nous occupe, cette littérature n'a pas été retrouvée, mais quelques morceaux de son contenu se laissent aisément deviner à la lecture des articles publiés à l'époque. En s'y arrêtant brièvement, on notera tout particulièrement le rôle primordial dévolu à la presse étrangère dans la consécration d'une renommée artistique. Dans plusieurs des recensions critiques des expositions qui nous occupent, on trouve des notes biographiques et des renseignements sans doute fournis par Scott & Sons ou par l'artiste lui–même. Tels que livrés dans les journaux, ces renseignements invoquent une opinion qui s'est exprimée en amont de l'exposition dont il est question et sert à instruire sa réception actuelle. Lors de l'exposition de septembre 1901, trois articles retracèrent ainsi le parcours parisien de Suzor-Coté. Ils firent état d'une première période de formation à l'École des beaux-arts de Paris, des médailles décernées par les académies Julian et Colarossi, des participations de l'artiste aux prestigieux Salons parisiens, des prix et mentions qu'il y récolta ainsi qu'à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900, à Paris. Leurs auteurs y glissèrent même une information erronée, qui, de l'avis du professeur Laurier Lacroix, pouvait émaner de Suzor-Coté lui-même[25] – information importante puisqu'elle touchait à la nomination de l'artiste au titre d'Officier de l'Académie par le gouvernement français! Au terme de la revue de cette première exposition, le critique du *Montreal Daily Star* conclut son panégyrique en déclarant triomphalement : «The talented artist's work has received due recognition in the first country in art[26]», ce qui établissait pour lui la preuve *incontestable* de la valeur du jeune Canadien-français.

La référence à la fortune critique de source étrangère ajoutait un aspect qualitatif au discours qui s'élaborait, en reprenant un à un tous les éléments qui fondent le succès d'une carrière d'artiste. Après le témoignage apporté quant à l'excellence de sa formation et les récompenses obtenues en signe d'une maîtrise technique grandissante, que traduisaient également son accession au Salon

fig.2 M.-A. Suzor-Coté, **La Découverte du Canada** (connu aussi sous le titre : *Jacques Cartier et les Indiens de Stadaconé*), 1907, huile sur toile, 266 x 401 cm, MNBAQ.
(Photo: Courtoisie du MNBAQ)

parisien et sa sélection pour l'Exposition Universelle, on pouvait ajouter des informations sur le jugement de certains contemporains et de critiques d'art pour raffermir encore cette idée d'un talent indéniable. Dans un article de juillet 1907, qui annonçait le retour de l'artiste au Canada et une prochaine exposition chez Scott, un journaliste de *La Presse* évoqua par exemple les propos élogieux qui avaient salué, dans la presse parisienne, sa réalisation d'un grand tableau portant sur *La Découverte du Canada* (fig.2). Le chroniqueur y citait à l'appui les noms de critiques bien connus, comme Péladan, Arsène Alexandre, Thiébault-Sisson et Victor de Swarte. Il mentionnait également un long article paru dans le *Strand Magazine*, de Londres, article qui avait valu au peintre canadien des commandes dans la capitale anglaise et à New York[27].

En 1912, c'est au jugement de ses pairs qu'un autre journaliste s'en remit en signalant un trio d'artistes, croisé lors d'une visite à la galerie Scott. Les trois hommes y avaient décrété à l'unisson que le numéro 5 au catalogue (dont il ne jugea pas nécessaire de nous communiquer le titre) était «l'un des plus beaux paysages jamais brossés par un Canadien[28]». Mais nous voici rendus à l'orée même des expositions. Voyons donc maintenant leur contenu général et le type d'appréciation qu'elles suscitèrent. Entre celle de 1901, qui proposait soixante-cinq sujets européens, et celle de 1912, qui rassemblait une cinquantaine de tableaux, mais beaucoup plus de sujets «distinctively Canadian[29]», il y eut celle de 1903, composée de seulement six toiles, et celle – majeure – de 1907 qui introduisit au pays cent cinquante œuvres à contenu majoritairement européen. La première de ces expositions proposait surtout des paysages, dont plusieurs avaient été peints dans les environs de Senlisse et de Cernay-la-Ville, près de Paris. D'autres scènes, peintes en Bretagne, à Fontainebleau, à Ville-d'Avray et à Rambouillet, établissaient un périple qui était commun à bien des artistes français que Scott avait fait connaître à Montréal depuis 1875. Le plus prestigieux d'entre eux était certainement Léon-Germain Pelouse (1838-1891), paysagiste à la facture très minutieuse et réaliste que le jeune Allan Edson avait choisi pour maître au tout début des années 1880. Dans une toile comme *Les Coteaux de Senlisse* (1892), qui présente certains points communs avec *Les Fonds de Senlisse*, de Pelouse[30], Suzor-Coté se désignait à son tour au titre d'émule du fameux peintre français.

La manière variait au fil des ans bien que, dans plusieurs de ses toiles, Suzor-Coté s'accorda à l'observation de phénomènes naturels, climatiques ou atmosphériques : un lever de lune, l'effet d'une première neige sur un champ de blé, les derniers rayons d'un soleil couchant ou les vapeurs d'une matinée brumeuse. D'une exposition à l'autre, la critique était portée à comparer les étapes et à souligner les progrès accomplis dans l'affirmation d'une maîtrise individuelle grandissante. À la progression dans le temps répondait une certaine surenchère verbale que l'on décèle surtout dans la presse francophone. En 1903,

on y fit remarquer par exemple que Suzor faisait «honneur à la race canadienne-française[31]». En 1907, on y parla de l'exposition comme de «la plus importante jamais organisée par aucun autre artiste canadien[32]». En 1912, Suzor-Coté y fut déclaré «le plus grand artiste du Canada» et l'on recommanda l'entrée de ses tableaux «dans les grands musées[33]». De son côté, la critique anglophone marqua plus sobrement les progrès accomplis. Témoin : ce constat du critique de la *Gazette* pour qui l'exposition solo de 1912 témoignait, plus simplement, «of the great strides that his vision and facility have taken[34]».

En réitérant trois fois l'hommage à Suzor-Coté, la galerie Scott & Sons confirma la réputation d'excellence que l'artiste s'était acquise en France et souligna sa filiation à certains courants européens récents de la peinture paysagère. Rattaché de la sorte au droit fil d'une continuité historique, formée par les apports successifs des grands maîtres de la peinture européenne, Suzor-Coté put dès lors être comparé «aux plus grands peintres de Paris[35]», dans *La Presse*, tandis qu'on notait, dans *Le Canada*, comment «le contact journalier des maîtres européens a[vait] contribué puissamment à délimiter [sa] perception exacte et [sa] juste compréhension du sujet à peindre[36]». De là à conclure à la naissance d'un *maître canadien*, il n'y avait qu'un pas que bien des lecteurs de la presse francophone durent franchir en pensée, car voici qu'on reconnaissait enfin *un des leurs*!

Avant de conclure, arrêtons-nous brièvement à d'autres cercles de reconnaissance définis par Alan Bowness, tel celui des collectionneurs et du grand public. On verra par exemple qu'en 1901 des journalistes mentionnèrent les «nombreux tableaux déjà vendus[37]», tandis que d'autres de leurs confrères dévoilaient des noms d'acheteurs, ceux en particulier de Markland Molson[38] et de S.B. Allan[39]. En 1907, il fut question de la vente de *Commencement de dégel, pont rouge* au conseiller municipal Payette[40], autre précision qui ajoutait au crédit de l'artiste en identifiant son public à une classe de gens bien en vue et haut placés. Cette année-là, l'annonce de la vente au gouvernement canadien de la fresque historique sur la découverte du Canada fit grand bruit dans les journaux et contribua à rehausser d'un cran la réputation de l'artiste, même si cette nouvelle devait finalement être non fondée. De trop brèves notations journalistiques éclairent également sur la réception de l'artiste au sein d'un plus large public. En 1901, tandis qu'on soulignait dans *La Presse* l'affluence à l'exposition en cours, le *Daily Star* rappela combien, lors de son premier retour à Montréal en 1894, Suzor-Coté avait été bien accueilli au Salon du printemps de l'AAM, combien ses œuvres y avaient été «universellement admirées» et s'y étaient «vendues rapidement[41]». En 1903, un autre journaliste déclara tout bonnement que les toiles de l'artiste s'apercevaient «dans maints foyers[42]», mais sans rien avancer pour le prouver.

Ainsi, tout en qualifiant l'œuvre de l'artiste, la critique divulguait par petites touches toute une série d'informations qui composaient au fil du temps un portrait de plus en plus flatteur où s'entremêlaient des éléments du présent et d'un passé récent. L'exposition particulière permet l'élaboration d'un tel discours en concentrant toute l'attention sur un seul artiste. Les quatre expositions individuelles de Suzor-Coté chez Scott & Sons contribuèrent d'autant mieux à sa fortune critique qu'elles convoquèrent en masse, et pour la première fois dans l'histoire de cette galerie, la presse et le public francophones. Cette ouverture à une population pourtant devenue majoritaire à Montréal fut toutefois de courte durée. En effet, après la dernière exposition de l'artiste, en 1912, la galerie referma brusquement cette porte. La recherche reste à faire sur ce qu'il advint de Scott & Sons entre 1914 et le moment de sa fermeture en 1939. Quelques données recueillies à ce jour montrent toutefois que le retour à la direction d'un Canadien d'origine, en l'occurrence : John Clarke Heaton, fils de Frank R. Heaton et petit fils de William Scott, marqua une certaine réorientation de la politique de diffusion après 1927. Dans les faits, la galerie conserva son penchant internationaliste, non sans opter pour une plus récente modernité artistique. A partir de là, elle accueillit aussi plus volontiers des artistes canadiens. Le rôle de conseiller artistique joué par le peintre et critique John Lyman (1886-1967) ne fut sans doute pas étranger à cette transformation. Bien que, du côté canadien, les artistes anglophones y aient eu la plus grosse part du gâteau, on nota néanmoins, durant les années trente, la présence en galerie d'œuvres de Clarence Gagnon (1881-1942), de Paul Caron (1874-1941), d'Henri Fabien (1878-1935), de Jean Palardy (1905-1991), sans oublier celles de...Suzor-Coté. Dans cette dernière décennie de sa vie, l'artiste n'y fut pas accueilli en solo comme au temps de sa jeunesse, mais figura tout au plus dans des présentations collectives, tel ce *Panorama du Canada d'hier à aujourd'hui*, présenté en mai 1936[43].

HÉLÈNE SICOTTE
Historienne d'art indépendante
Montréal

Notes

1 Cet article révise et met à jour les données sur Suzor-Coté, contenues dans ma thèse de doctorat; voir Hélène SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal : le cas de W. Scott & Sons, 1859-1914. Comment la révision du concept d'œuvres d'art autorisa la spécialisation du commerce d'art*, UQAM, 2003.

2 Le portrait représentait Gabrielle Lavergne, fille du notaire Lavergne d'Arthabaska; voir Laurier LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière* catalogue d'exposition, Québec, Musée du Québec; Montréal, Éditions de l'Homme; Ottawa, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, 2002. Le pastel est reproduit à la page 77.

3 [Robertine BARRY], «Chronique du lundi», *La Patrie* (Montréal), 12 avril 1897. Précisons que la nature morte en question fut vendue à un monsieur P. Labranche, de Montréal, à une date indéterminée. En 1967, la toile fut acquise par la galerie Klinkhoff, de Montréal, qui la revendit, une dizaine d'années plus tard, à un client de Toronto; voir Dennis REID, *Collector's Canada: Selections from a Toronto Private Collection*, cat., Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1988, p.4 (planche couleur) et 46. La *Nature morte aux fraises* est reproduite dans LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*; voir fig. 36, p.78.

4 [Robertine BARRY], «Chronique du lundi».

5 Ma recherche doctorale, basée surtout sur la presse anglophone, n'avait pas permis d'identifier cette exposition. Je dois à Laurier Lacroix d'en avoir pris connaissance à la lecture d'articles publiés dans *La Presse* (édition du 16 septembre), dans *Le Canada* et dans *La Patrie* (éditions du 17 septembre). C'est lui également qui a retracé les acquisitions faites à ce moment par la Galerie nationale du Canada.

6 Sur ce modèle théorique, voir aussi Nathalie HEINICH, *La Sociologie de l'art*, Paris, Éd. La Découverte, Série Repères, 2001, p.69-71.

7 F.J.L., «Suzor-Coté : l'exposition de ses œuvres chez Scott», *Le Canada* (Montréal), 20 déc. 1907.

8 Pour tout ce qui touche à l'historique de W. Scott & Sons, voir SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, qui présente, en annexe, une chronologie de la diffusion à Montréal pour toute la période étudiée.

9 *Ibid.*, chapitre III, section 3.2.1.

10 *Ibid.*, chapitre IV, section 4.1.

11 Je néglige les présentations de 1895 et 1897, de moindre importance, car constituées seulement quelques tableaux mis en consignation chez le marchand.

12 SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, chapitre IV, section 4.2.

13 On ne sait pas si, à l'origine, ce fut Suzor-Coté qui est alla vers Scott ou l'inverse. Il n'importe puisque c'est l'admission de cet artiste chez ce marchand qui compta finalement.

14 Laurier Lacroix m'a appris, par exemple, que de France, où il séjournait alors, Suzor-Coté envoya des tableaux à Scott pour les faire acheminer au Salon de 1898 de l'Art Association. Son compatriote James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924), installé en France depuis plus longtemps, faisait de même, à l'instar d'Allan Edson (1846-1888) et d'autres artistes canadiens qui faisaient affaire avec Scott.

15 Sur l'exposition de septembre 1903; voir LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.123. Sur les autres expositions de Suzor-Coté chez Scott, voir SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, chapitre IV, section 4.3.

16 Voir *La Presse* (Montréal), 21 déc. 1907.

17 De 1859 à 1914, cette présence canadienne chez Scott & Sons fit appel notamment aux artistes suivants : James M. Barnsley (1861-1929), John W. Beatty (1849-1941), Alexandra Bell (1864-1951), Charles de Belle (1873-1939), Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith (1846-1923), William Brymner (1855-1925), William Cruickshank (1848-1922), Maurice Cullen (1866-1934), James Duncan (1806-1881), Wyatt Eaton (1849-1896), Frederick C.V. Ede (1865-v. 1907), Allan A. Edson (1846-1888), Daniel Fowler (1810-1894), Joseph-Charles Franchère (1866-1921), John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898), Robert F. Gagen (1847-1926), Duncan Grant (1846-1924), John Hammond (1843-1939), Robert Harris (1849-1919), Samuel Hawksett (1827-1910), Otto R. Jacobi (1812-1901), William C. Jefferys (1869-1951), Alphonse Jongers (1872-1945), Cornelius Krieghoff (1815-1872), James Kerr-Lawson (1862-1939), Thomas M. Martin (1838-1934), Marmaduke Matthews (1837-1913), James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924), Edmund Morris (1871-1913), Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899), Paul Peel (1860-1892), John Charles Pinhey (1860 1912), William Raphael (1833-1914), George A. Reid (1860-1947), Mary H. Reid (1854-1921), Henry Sandham (1842-1910), Frederick A. Verner (1836-1928), Adolph Vogt (1843-1871), John Henry Walker (1831-1899), Homer Watson (1855-1936), Charles J. Way (1835-1919), Percy F. Woodcock (1855-1936). Pour plus de amples détails sur leurs présentations, voir l'Index des artistes présentés chez Scott & Sons dans SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, Annexe III, tome II, p.781- 853.

18 Voir à cette date dans la chronologie de la diffusion, Annexe I, dans SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal.*

19 J.A. Fraser exposa chez Scott en novembre 1886, Sandham en février 1888 et septembre 1893, Barnsley en novembre 1888, novembre 1889, octobre 1890 et novembre 1891, Brymner en novembre 1891, novembre 1894, novembre 1896 et décembre 1898, Hammond en septembre 1889, Bell en décembre 1891, O'Brien en mars 1892.

20 Cette opinion de Morrice fut exprimée à une date indéterminée dans une lettre à son ami Edmund Morris; voir Nicole CLOUTIER (dir.), *James Wilson Morrice, 1865-1924*, cat., Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1985, p.61.

21 En parlant de «volte-face», je révise le jugement porté dans ma thèse, car la dissension entre Walter A. Scott et ses nouveaux associés ne m'était pas encore apparue sous le jour (plus limpide aujourd'hui) d'une différence de vues entre un Canadien de naissance (Walter A. Scott était né à Montréal en 1860) et des Canadiens de plus récente adoption (Frank Robert Heaton était arrivé au Canada en 1887, et avait épousé la fille aînée de Scott en 1891. Son frère William l'y avait suivi un peu avant 1897. Quant à leur beau-frère, Herbert W. Ashby, il n'était entré officiellement dans la firme qu'en 1910); voir SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, p.76. On peut penser en effet que la plus grande importance accordée à la diffusion canadienne chez Scott, entre 1886 et 1907, dut sans doute beaucoup à l'implication de Walter A. Scott au sein de l'entreprise. Devenu partenaire de la firme en 1883, à l'âge de 23 ans, il y fut bientôt rejoint par son frère cadet, William Wilson Scott. Or, c'est à cette époque justement que la maison s'orienta de façon plus décisive vers la vente d'œuvres d'art et d'objets d'art décoratifs, relativisant ainsi l'ancienne vocation de production d'encadrements, privilégiée par leur père peu après son installation dans la ville en 1859. En 1884, la maison entamait sa série d'expositions particulières qui, jusqu'en 1906, devait donner priorité à des artistes résidant au Canada.

22 Ainsi de William Brymner, artiste pourtant choyé de Scott puiqu'il avait exposé régulièrement dans sa galerie entre 1891 et 1898. En 1905, il écrivait en effet à son ancien élève Clarence Gagnon : «W. Scott & Sons just take as much interest as usual in our work at the time of the Spring Exhibition in the Art Gallery. They took occasion to have an exhibition of 15th rate Dutch watercolours and oils. I like good pictures at any time by whoever...but detest this

kind of damned rotten dealers' trash that are shown as very superior works. Peacock [il parle de Lawson Peacock, l'un des associés de la French Gallery] is a sort of octopus we have to fight.»; voir cette partie plus tardive de la lettre du 25 décembre 1904 dans le Fonds Clarence-Gagnon, au service des archives du Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne. Pour en savoir davantage sur les changements à la direction de Scott & Sons et sur ses expositions particulières; voir SICOTTE, *L'Implantation de la galerie d'art à Montréal*, point 1.2.2 et point 4.3.

23 LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.69.

24 *Ibid.*, p.60.

25 *Ibid.*, p.31.

26 «Mr. Suzor Cote's Work on View», *The Montreal Daily Star*, 26 Sept. 1901.

27 «L'artiste canadien M.A. Suzor Coté», *La Presse*, 26 juil. 1907.

28 «Une exposition des œuvres de Suzor-Coté», *La Presse*, 2 avril 1912.

29 «Suzor Coté's Exhibition», *The Montreal Daily Star*, 6 April 1901.

30 Le tableau fut exposé chez Scott en 1884 et photographié par le studio Notman à cette occasion; voir le cliché II-75157 dans le fonds Notman au Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne.

31 «Une œuvre d'art», *La Presse*, 16 sept. 1903.

32 «L'artiste canadien M.A. Suzor Coté», *La Presse*, 26 juil. 1907.

33 «Une exposition des œuvres de Suzor-Coté», *La Presse*, 2 avril 1912.

34 «Suzor Coté Shows Work», *The Montreal Gazette*, 30 March 1912.

35 «Un grand artiste», *La Presse*, 21 déc. 1907.

36 F.J.L., «Suzor-Coté : l'exposition de ses œuvres chez Scott», *Le Canada*, 20 déc. 1907.

37 «Exposition de peintures», *La Presse*, 26 sept. 1901.

38 «Exhibit Interesting», *The Montreal Gazette*, 27 Sept. 1901.

39 «Some Paintings by Suzor-Cote», *The Montreal Herald*, 27 Sept. 1901.

40 «Work of a Canadian Artist», *The Montreal Gazette*, 2 Jan. 1907.

41 «Mr. Suzor Cote's Work on View», *The Montreal Daily Star*, 26 Sept. 1901.

42 «Un tableau de M. Suzor-Coté», *La Patrie*, 17 sept. 1903.

43 Voir REYNALD, «Le Canada d'hier et d'aujourd'hui», *La Presse*, 16 mai 1936.

Summary

SUZOR-COTÉ AT W. SCOTT & SONS OF MONTREAL

The Role of the Solo Exhibition in Establishing the Career of an Artist

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté (1869-1937) was one of the principal artists at the W. Scott & Sons' Gallery in Montreal. Between 1901 and 1912, he had four solo exhibitions, a feat unequalled by any other French-Canadian artist during the eighty-year history of this commercial gallery. His accomplishment provides an opportunity to examine the role of the solo exhibition as a strategy for the construction of an artist's career during the period of modernity.

According to the theoretical model proposed by Alan Bowness in *The Conditions of Success: How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (London, 1989), an artist's reputation is based upon four circles of recognition. Each has its own particular composition, but generally speaking the circles are comprised, respectively, of the artist's peers, dealers and collectors, specialists and experts (critics and art historians above all) and lastly, the general public. Because of its own internal mechanisms and the discursive systems that it sets into motion, the solo exhibition causes several of these players to interact at the same time. There are also other participants whom Bowness does not identify. Most notably is the artist himself, for he can help create his own fame by becoming directly involved with the media – a domain in which Suzor-Coté excelled.

The academic Salon brought together separate yet comparable works. At the same time, a group presentation allows individual processes to converge in respect to a centralist position. In contrast, the solo exhibition separates the artist from the rest of his peers, thus bestowing him with a special status. It also introduces a unique trajectory, one that is of its own time and space. In the period of modernity, as aesthetic judgment crystallized around notions of originality and individual expressiveness, the solo exhibition offered a new means of artistic recognition because it too rested on the principle of individuality.

Before examining the issue of Suzor-Coté's work at Scott & Sons, a short history of the gallery reveals that the choice of a particular place to exhibit was one of the elements that contributed to the artist's fame. At the time of Suzor-Coté's first solo exhibition in 1901, the Scott gallery commanded great respect as Montreal's oldest commercial art firm, having been founded forty-six years

earlier. It was also highly regarded for its affiliation with important art dealers abroad and for its influential and wealthy clientele. In 1884, Scott had introduced the solo exhibition to Montreal. Since that date, only a few select Canadian artists had been offered this mark of distinction. With his own presentations, Suzor-Coté added his name to those of John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898), Alexandra Bell (1864-1951), James Barnsley (1861-1929), William Brymner (1855-1925) and Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899).

The solo exhibition and its critical reception bring into play the various circles of recognition. Accordingly, the documentary material furnished by the gallery creates a laudatory portrait of the artist's career. Critics are easily inspired by this information and select materials for their texts from here and there: the catalogue, press releases and biographical notes. In the case of Suzor-Coté, articles in the press contributed to shaping his reputation by mentioning the opinions of distinguished French art critics who had acclaimed his work in Europe. Writers listed the prizes and honours he had received at the Paris Salons and cited favourable remarks on his work by two influential French artists with whom Suzor-Coté had studied. This suggests that the artist's teachers may be the first circle as they are the earliest sources for accrediting the merit of a rising artist.

Other circles emerge from the content of the critical reception; these take the form of the public support that the artist has received up to this point. For example it was from writings in the Montreal press that the public learned of the acquisition of Suzor-Coté's paintings by important local figures. The critics also fed the rumour (false but flattering) that the federal government was about to purchase his monumental mural depicting the discovery of Canada. Further to proving the worth of this young local talent, there was mention of commissions received from abroad from cities like London and New York. Suzor-Coté's contemporaries and the public would also make their contribution to the construction of his reputation. This was accomplished, for example, by quoting laudatory comments made by some of his Canadian colleagues or by mentioning the welcome he had received from Montrealers upon his first return to Canada in 1894. There was also boasting about the large crowds visiting his current exhibition at Scott's.

The solo exhibition stimulates this kind of discourse as all the attention is concentrated on just one individual. In itself, the dealer's decision to give the artist an exhibition already expresses a judgement about his work, and the presentation then confirms and expands this opinion even more. Subsequently all new work that comes into the gallery by this same artist can be used to emphasize the progress he has made, thereby adding another feather to his cap and heightening his fame. By increasing the artist's visibility, the gallery helps raise his standing in the art market, in the best of cases, and either in the short or the long term.

As a result of his solo exhibitions at Scott & Sons, Suzor-Coté flooded the local art market with more than two hundred and fifty paintings, pastels and pieces of sculpture in the space of eleven years. During the same period of time, the annual Spring Exhibition at the Art Association of Montreal accepted thirty of his works, but they were usually lost among the yearly average of more than four hundred art works and various objects on display. These figures demonstrate how the artist's appearances at Scott & Sons were able to establish his reputation, and at the same time affect the value of his work.

With this in mind, one might wonder why Suzor-Coté did not show there again after 1912 when he was at the height of his career? His departure from Scott & Sons can be attributed to a reorientation of the gallery's exhibition policies during this period. After the death of William Scott in 1904, and the departure of his son Walter in 1907, the firm's management steadily reduced its support of Canadian artists. The new partners, who had all recently immigrated to this country, soon reached an agreement with their London supplier to give greater importance to European art. This was so much so that from 1907 to 1914 the majority of artists who had the honour of a solo exhibition at Scott & Sons were from abroad, primarily from Britain. However, during the 1930s Suzor-Coté's name reappeared in the catalogues of a few group exhibitions at the gallery. A further change in management had taken place at the end of the 1920s. Until the gallery's closing in 1939 the new director, acting on John Lyman's advice, gave greater pride of place to Canadian artists.

Translation: Janet Logan

fig.1 Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, **La Vallée de Senlisse**, 1906, huile sur toile, 121 x 192 cm, MNBAQ. (Photo : MNBAQ, Patrick Altman)

QUELQUES RÉFLEXIONS SUR LES ASPECTS DU SYMBOLISME DANS L'ŒUVRE DE SUZOR-COTÉ ET DE SES CONTEMPORAINS

Dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Suzor-Coté, 1869-1937. Lumière et matière*, le commissaire Laurier Lacroix affirme que Suzor-Coté n'est pas un peintre philosophe, si bien que vouloir traiter de sa filiation au symbolisme devient, pour paraphraser le titre d'une pièce de Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Cependant, dans les nombreux champs qui restent, sinon à découvrir, tout au moins à nourrir et à consolider dans le domaine de la recherche en art québécois et canadien, la vogue qu'a connue le symbolisme chez certains artistes, dans les années 1910 et au début des années 1920, me semble être un de ceux-là. Si tous n'ont pas eu, dans ce rapport à cette esthétique marquante en Europe à la fin du XIX[e] et au début du XX[e] siècle, la cohérence d'un Ozias Leduc, plusieurs ont entretenu un flirt plus ou moins prononcé avec cette tendance, flirt dont les degrés d'engagement et la profondeur ont varié considérablement. C'est pourquoi j'ai eu envie d'aborder cette question par le biais de quelques œuvres de Suzor-Coté, même si le résultat devait se révéler n'être qu'*un peu de bruit pour rien*.

D'abord, une brève contextualisation pour signaler que le mouvement symboliste auquel je fais référence est ce courant esthétique qui, à partir de la fin des années 1880, va toucher une partie du monde littéraire, artistique et culturel à travers l'Europe. S'il ne se caractérise pas par une unité stylistique et formelle (c'est bien là une des difficultés que pose son analyse, car y sont associés des artistes qui peuvent aussi bien travailler à partir de procédés classiques que novateurs), il répond néanmoins à une position philosophique et esthétique commune. Il faut, de prime abord, se garder d'apparenter l'essence de ce courant dit symboliste à une traduction picturale ou sculpturale du dictionnaire des symboles ou encore à l'art allégorique. Ce n'est pas la présence de symboles codifiés par la tradition religieuse ou classique qui garantit la nature symboliste de la production d'un artiste. Le symbolisme repose plutôt sur un processus de création essentiellement subjectif et, dans ce contexte, la notion de symbole acquiert une singulière polysémie, comme en témoigne cet énoncé de 1891 du poète Stéphane Mallarmé :

> Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu; le *suggérer*, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole : évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements[1].

Rappelons que l'éclatement de la structure féodale et la consolidation du monde capitaliste, s'ils permettent l'avènement du rationalisme, nourrissent par ailleurs ce paradoxe où la célébration de la subjectivité va néanmoins se conjuguer, pour certains, avec la nostalgie des structures sociales réputées organiques et unitaires (structures sociales, comme celles du Moyen Âge, au sein desquelles pourtant la valorisation de l'individu et le concept de subjectivité, étaient pratiquement inexistants). De ce paradoxe découle la récurrence, au sein de mouvements comme le romantisme et le symbolisme, des thèmes du Paradis perdu, de l'Âge d'or, de la fuite vers un Ailleurs d'ordre naturel ou culturel qui incarneraient cet idéal d'unité et d'harmonie, où, écrivait Baudelaire, «tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, luxe, calme et volupté».

Comme l'explique Jean-Marie Schaeffer[2], la révolution philosophique et littéraire romantique, dont participe en grande partie le mouvement symboliste de la fin du XIX[e] siècle, se nourrit de ce sentiment de perte de l'harmonie et de perte de l'unicité. Elle donne lieu à la constitution d'une théorie spéculative de l'art dans laquelle celui-ci est investi de la mission de rétablir cette «unité» perdue, cette communication avec la dimension ontologique. On voit donc émerger, chez les tenants de cette position, une sacralisation de la fonction artistique conçue comme outil de médiation, de révélation, de communication entre le monde de la contingence (où s'est perdue l'unité originelle) et le monde spirituel, lequel peut tout aussi bien être celui de la vision intérieure de l'artiste, nouveau prophète du sens.

Citons, pour mieux saisir encore ce courant esthétique, un extrait du *Manifeste du symbolisme* que Jean Moréas publie dans *Le Figaro* du 18 septembre 1886 :

> Ennemie de l'enseignement, la déclamation, la fausse sensibilité, la description objective, la poésie symbolique cherche : à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible.... L'Idée, à son tour, ne doit point se laisser voir privée des somptueuses simarres des analogies extérieures; car le caractère essentiel de l'art symbolique consiste à ne jamais aller jusqu'à la conception de l'Idée en soi. Ainsi, dans cet art, les tableaux de la nature, les actions des humains, tous les phénomènes concrets ne sauraient se manifester eux-mêmes : ce sont là des apparences sensibles destinées à représenter leurs affinités ésotériques avec des Idées primordiales.... Ainsi dédaigneux de la méthode puérile du naturalisme, [le symboliste] édifiera son œuvre de *déformation subjective*, fort de cet axiome : que l'art ne saurait chercher en l'*objectif* qu'un simple point de départ extrêmement succinct.

Plus exemplaire encore cette formule du critique Gustave Kahn qui écrivait en 1886, dans *L'Événement*, que le but de l'art symboliste est «d'objectiver le subjectif et non subjectiviser l'objectif», c'est-à-dire d'extérioriser, de matérialiser l'idée plutôt que de rendre la nature à travers un tempérament (selon la formule de Zola)[3]. Voilà tout un programme que poètes et artistes ne réaliseront qu'à des degrés divers, et autant de propositions qui, à première vue, nous éloignent de l'œuvre de Suzor-Coté. Examinons néanmoins ces postulats en regard de la peinture.

Le paysage

Si de nombreuses thématiques ont nourri le symbolisme, le paysage – genre privilégié des courants réaliste aussi bien qu'impressionniste, tous deux décriés par les symbolistes pour leur choix de «subjectiviser l'objectif» – fut néanmoins utilisé par certains artistes symbolistes, aussi bien que romantiques, dans la mesure où la nature est considérée par eux comme propice à cette «objectivation du subjectif». Ainsi, la nature, non spoliée par le matérialisme contemporain, pourra incarner le rapport spirituel, émotif ou individuel qu'a l'artiste au monde. Dans ce contexte, la nature devient un des lieux de médiation ontologique ou de réconciliation de l'homme avec l'unité perdue. Pour que le paysage accède au statut d'incarnation du subjectif, l'artiste ne peut se contenter de n'être qu'un œil, comme le disait Gauguin de Monet. Il doit, non pas, «chercher autour de l'œil» comme les impressionnistes mais, toujours pour paraphraser Gauguin, le faire «au centre mystérieux de la pensée[4]». Autrement dit, pour que la peinture de paysage soit telle une de ces «somptueuses simarres qui revêtent l'Idée», il faut que l'artiste effectue un travail formel qui induise une lecture, un effet de sens différents de ceux produits par le réalisme ou l'impressionnisme.

Les solutions avancées furent nombreuses. Ainsi, le synthétisme, influencé entre autres par l'estampe japonaise, opposera à l'analyse impressionniste la synthèse des formes, l'aplat, le rabattement de l'espace, l'arbitraire relatif de la couleur, l'arabesque décorative ou encore la répétition de verticales décoratives pour marquer l'écart avec le réel et induire une lecture différente. Les tableaux d'Émile Bernard, de Paul Sérusier, de Maurice Denis et de bien d'autres gravitant autour de l'École de Pont-Aven en sont des exemples. On verra même certains juxtaposer sur une même surface des espaces-temps de nature différente comme Gauguin dans *La Vision après le Sermon*, œuvre que le critique d'art Albert Aurier donnait en 1891, dans *Le Mercure de France*, comme exemplaire de cette nouvelle tendance esthétique idéaliste antithétique de l'impressionniste[5]. Au Québec, le jeune Adrien Hébert a réalisé des œuvres, certes moins audacieuses, mais néanmoins apparentées par leur synthétisme et leur esprit décoratif à cette esthétique. *Un Voilier*, aquatinte réalisée vers 1912, en témoigne[6].

D'autres artistes encore vont utiliser des effets particuliers de lumière (lumière de la lune, des couchers ou des levers du soleil, lumières tamisées par le brouillard), des organisations de l'espace jouant sur la concavité et la convexité, la proximité ou, au contraire, un positionnement aux limites du monde physique pour transformer un paysage environnant en un monde doté de dimensions mystiques ou oniriques, pour, selon les préceptes qu'énonce le poète Novalis dans *Das philosophische Werk* de 1798 : doter le monde familier d'un aspect énigmatique, conférer au connu le prestige de l'inconnu, de l'infini[7].

On pourrait ici multiplier les exemples depuis Caspar Friedrich qui, dans son journal, écrivait : «Ferme tes yeux de chair pour contempler d'abord ton image avec l'œil de l'esprit puis fait monter vers la lumière ce que tu as vu ainsi dans les ténèbres afin que cette image agisse en retour sur ceux qui la regardent de l'extérieur vers l'intérieur[8]», en passant par Lévy-Dhurmer, Degouve de Nuncques et plusieurs de ses confrères belges. Mentionnons encore ces artistes des pays du Nord de l'Europe qui ont constitué ce courant que Roald Nasgaard a qualifié de *northern symbolist landscape*[9] qui, en rupture avec le réalisme et le formalisme de l'art français, ont voulu traduire l'essence spirituelle de leur nations nordiques (Harald Sohlberg, Karl Nordström, Gustaf Fjaestad et combien d'autres). Leur influence, tant formelle que spirituelle, fut majeure sur les artistes canadiens du Groupe des Sept.

Au Québec, comme au Canada, outre les artistes du Groupe des Sept, les exemples sont aussi relativement nombreux. Citons au passage Charles de Belle, cet artiste médiocre si prisé par l'écrivain et critique Albert Laberge[10]. Il n'en demeure pas moins que le maître du genre est certainement Ozias Leduc qui, à partir de son environnement de Saint-Hilaire, a produit un corpus significatif de représentations du paysage dans lesquels une composition dominée par le jeu complexe des courbes ou des volutes, les arabesques des motifs et le traitement raffiné de la matière picturale se conjuguent pour induire ces effets de rapprochement, de concavité et de convexité dont l'effet décoratif ne transcende jamais les impressions d'intimité, de contemplation et parfois même d'inquiétante étrangeté qui s'en dégagent, impressions renforcées par l'atemporalité et l'absence de repères géographiques ou culturels précis.

Personne ne contestera que les paysages québécois de Suzor-Coté échappent à cet esprit symboliste et cela même si leurs titres ne les ancraient pas dans un espace-temps bien circonscrit : *Commencement de dégel, fin mars* (1906); *Paysage d'hiver canadien* (1909); *Coucher de soleil en hiver, Arthabaska* (1909); *Labour d'automne, Arthabaska* (1909); *Rivière Magog, hiver* (1913); *Dégel soir de mars, Arthabaska* (1913); *Rivière au printemps, comté d'Arthabaska* (1913). Toutefois, l'exposition signalait quelques exceptions comme *La Vallée de Senlisse* (fig.1), dont certaines caractéristiques, notamment la luminosité crépusculaire et l'harmonieuse sérénité ont permis à Laurier Lacroix de l'apparenter à un

certain esprit symboliste. Soulignée par le cartel qui accompagnait l'œuvre, cette interprétation était renforcée par l'accrochage qui, au Musée du Québec, plaçait *La Vallée de Senlisse* pour ainsi dire en pendant d'une œuvre à saveur définitivement plus symboliste, *Harmonie du soir* (1917), sur laquelle je reviendrai. J'aimerais cependant élargir un peu le réseau parental de *La Vallée de Senlisse*.

On sait que, nonobstant les catégories stylistiques ou esthétiques si commodes pour les historiens de l'art, les séparations ne sont pas étanches entre les unes et les autres. Si les luminosités crépusculaires ou lunaires furent reprises *ad nauseam* par les romantiques de tout acabit puis, dans leur sillage, par les symbolistes, elles ont également séduit nombre de barbizonnais qui firent paître dans de nombreux levers de lune ou couchers de soleil des troupeaux entiers de moutons ou de vaches. À cela il faut ajouter les innombrables ciels gris et bas, chargés d'émotions troubles, des peintres de l'École de La Haye dont étaient fervents nombre de collectionneurs montréalais adeptes de cette peinture de «*moods*[11]».

Par ailleurs, le texte de Brian Foss sur Mary Hiester Reid m'incite aussi à inscrire le tableau de Suzor-Coté dans la foulée de la vogue qu'a connue au Canada le tonalisme, un courant nord-américain, certes influencé par le symbolisme et le mouvement esthétique dont Whistler est une figure de proue. À ce propos, Foss écrit :

> Le tonalisme – tendance artistique qui s'est manifestée aux États-Unis du début des années 1880 jusqu'à 1915 – emprunte à l'impressionnisme la transcription des effets fugitifs de lumière et d'atmosphère. Lumière diaphane, ambiance palpable et contours flous sont autant d'éléments utilisés par les adeptes du tonalisme pour donner à leurs compositions une dimension onirique.... Le crépuscule et le soir comptent parmi les thèmes de prédilection des tenants du tonalisme à qui ils offrent non seulement la possibilité d'imposer une uniformité de ton et de brouiller les frontières entre les formes, mais de transcrire leur vision poétique[12].

Des artistes pratiquant à des degrés divers le tonalisme se retrouvent parmi les exposants du Canadian Art Club, fondé en 1907. Des œuvres comme *Bewitchment* (vers 1910) de Archibald Browne ou *The Old Town, Brittany, Night Effect* (1913) de William E. Atkinson en sont des exemples[13]. Suzor-Coté joint les rangs du Canadian Art Club en 1910. Si *La Vallée de Senlisse* n'y fut pas exposée, il est intéressant de noter qu'il y présente, en 1913, sous le titre de *Mauve et Or* (vers 1912), un tableau qu'il exposera à partir de 1915 sous celui plus descriptif de *Coucher de soleil, rivière Nicolet* (1925)[14], adoptant avec cette première identification une mode consolidée par Whistler qui, par ses titres comme *Nocturne in Blue and Gold, Valparaiso* (1866), entendait bien souligner l'écart entre le sujet et le travail formel.

fig.2 M.-A. Suzor-Coté, **Lever de lune**, vers 1901, huile sur toile, 50 x 66 cm, Coll. particulière. (Photo : Courtoisie du MNBAQ)

Quant à *Mauve et Or*, pris indépendamment du corpus nombreux des paysages d'Arthabaska qui, par leur volonté systématique de représenter les variations saisonnières aussi bien que lumineuses de ce coin de pays, s'apparentent un peu aux entreprises de Sisley à Marly, de Pissarro à Pontoise ou de Monet à Giverny, il correspond assez bien à l'esprit du tonalisme, encore que *La Vallée de Senlisse* et quelques autres paysages comme *Isolement*, ou *Le Tournant de la rivière Gosselin, mars, paysage d'hiver canadien* ou *Lever de lune* (fig.2) en soient plus proches. Peut-être avons nous là une autre confirmation de l'extraordinaire versatilité de Suzor-Coté, de sa connaissance de toutes les esthétiques en vogue sur les scènes où il se produit. Cela dit, ces œuvres, que leurs titres ou leurs procédés peuvent apparenter au tonalisme, me semblent ne flirter que de loin avec le symbolisme[15]. Elles «subjectivisent» sans doute l'objectif (pour reprendre la formule de Kahn), en ce sens qu'elles traduisent la vision subjective qu'a l'artiste d'un paysage précis, mais ne témoignent pas de transformations formelles qui transmueraient ces paysages objectifs en quelques somptueuses simarres revêtant l'Idée.

Le Paradis perdu

Reprenons notre réflexion sur le symbolisme à partir du tableau exposé à Québec, en pendant de *La Vallée de Senlisse*, *Harmonie du soir* (fig.3), peint en 1917, dont le motif s'inscrit dans une iconographie qui a joui d'une énorme popularité auprès des artistes de la mouvance symboliste, soit celle du Paradis perdu et de la fuite vers un Ailleurs idéal qui peut prendre aussi bien des saveurs médiévale, tahitienne, tropézienne ou antiquisante, ce dernier type engendrant le plus souvent la figure de la muse ou celle d'une figure féminine vêtue «à l'antique[16]». On pourrait citer d'innombrables exemples : Puvis de Chavannes, *Le bois sacré cher aux arts et aux muses* (vers 1884-1889); Böcklin, *Le bois sacré* (1882); Maurice Denis, *Les muses ou le bois sacré* (1893) ou *Figure féminine dans un paysage printanier (Le bois sacré)* (1897); H. Le Sidaner, *Le dimanche* (1898); une bonne partie des Gauguin réalisés dans son «paradis exotique»; les œuvres peintes sous l'influence d'un Signac établi à Saint-Tropez, comme *L'air du soir* (1893-1894) de H.E. Cross ou *Luxe, calme et volupté* (1904-1905) de Matisse. Chez les peintres plus académiques la thématique jouit aussi d'une grande popularité, et *Chant sur l'eau* de Francis Dubutin (1866-1930) ou *Soir antique*, *Muse au lever du soleil*, 1918 d'Alphonse Osbert[17] se rapprochent singulièrement, dans la représentation du thème, de *Harmonie du soir* de Suzor-Coté.

Au Québec, ces représentations «arcadiennes» connaissent aussi une certaine faveur. Pensons à Adrien Hébert, *Panneau décoratif soleil couchant (esquisse)*, (fig.4), ou encore à *Idylle* (avant 1927) de Suzor-Coté privilégiant un décor printanier. Les effets décoratifs que permettent le printemps sont, avec ceux du soleil couchant, un autre incontournable de ce type d'iconographie. Nous retrouvons également les arabesques des arbres en fleurs caractéristiques de cette saison dans *L'île enchantée* (après 1920) d'Ozias Leduc (qui toutefois nous fait grâce de la figure féminine en péplum). Notons de même l'importance du thème de l'enchantement et le fait que le pastel de Suzor-Coté, *L'île enchantée* (vers 1920) n'est pas très éloigné non plus du *Bewitchment* d'Archibald Browne cité précédemment.

L'esprit décoratif et le rêve de synthèse des arts

Revenons à *Harmonie du soir*. Exposée pour une première fois à Montréal à l'Exposition du printemps de l'Art Association en 1919, *Harmonie du soir* est identifiée comme «panneau décoratif[18]». Cet ajout me permet d'ouvrir sur deux dimensions caractéristiques du travail de plusieurs artistes symbolistes animés par un même désir de synthèse des arts.

Premièrement, ce parti pris pour l'esprit décoratif qui a nourri leurs tableaux de chevalet en a aussi conduit plusieurs à tenter une intégration de l'art à l'architecture ou encore à contribuer, toujours avec cette volonté de fusionner

fig.3 *Suzor-Coté, 1869-1937. Lumière et matière*, MNBAQ, de gauche à droite, **La Vallée de Senlisse, Contreforts des montagnes Bleues vues d'Oak Tidge, à Lovington en Virginie** et **Harmonie du soir**). (Photo: MNBAQ, Jean-Guy Kérouac)

fig.4 Adrien Hébert, **Panneau décoratif soleil couchant (esquisse)**, vers 1915, huile sur toile, 46 x 104 cm, Coll. Irène Hébert, Joliette. (Photo : Courtoisie du MNBAQ)

l'art à la vie, aux grands mouvements d'art décoratif (profanes ou religieux) de leur époque[IV]. De ce point de vue, peut-être n'était-ce pas une coïncidence si *Harmonie du soir* et *La Vallée de Senlisse* faisaient pendant, à Québec, à une peinture murale que Suzor-Coté a produite pour la résidence du magnat Thomas Fortune Ryan à Oak Ridge en Virginie.

Deuxièmement, *Harmonie du soir*, par sa référence directe à la musique, ne nous parle pas que des liens personnels que Suzor-Coté pouvait entretenir avec cet art, mais renvoie aussi à ce désir d'établir des correspondances formelles entre les arts dont Baudelaire et nombre de théoriciens du symbolisme ont rêvé. Des projets, comme celui de l'Exposition Beethoven de la Sécession viennoise de 1902, à laquelle participent notamment Gustav Klimt et Max Klinger, mais aussi l'identification d'œuvres visuelles sous des titres comme *Opus* ou *Nocturne*, par exemple, sont autant de manifestations qui témoignent de ce désir de synthèse et de recherche de correspondances entre les arts qui a traversé le XIX[e] siècle et une partie du XX[e]. Un exemple plus près de nous : les tableaux des années 1920 de l'artiste canadien Bertram Brooker qui tente de composer une structure visuelle qui soit analogue à celle de compositions musicales. Pensons à *Toccata* (vers 1927), à *Sounds Assembling* (1928) ou à *Abstraction-Music* (vers 1927).

Certes, cet effort de fusion entre les arts en est souvent resté à un niveau assez superficiel, les artistes se contentant d'évoquer des scènes ou des motifs inspirés du répertoire musical, comme ce fut le cas de Fantin-Latour avec Wagner ou, au Québec, d'Adrien Hébert qui, dans ses œuvres de jeunesse, plus proches du symbolisme que du réalisme moderne qui caractérisera sa production ultérieure, a produit des tableaux comme : *Le Bateau fantôme* (1918)[20], *Une nuit un faune appelait* (vers 1918) ou *La danse des nymphes* dont les références sont indubitablement tirées du répertoire musical cher à cette génération de jeunes «parisiannistes» montréalais[21].

Par ailleurs, la présence, dans de nombreux tableaux, de la figure des muses est aussi significative de cette quête de correspondances entre les arts, même si on peut arguer, avec raison, qu'elle est d'ordre plus allégorique que symboliste. D'ailleurs Laurier Lacroix parle d'*Harmonie du soir* comme d'une œuvre dans la «veine allégorico-décorative[22]» ce qui indique, en effet, que, chez les artistes dont le rapport au symbolisme est plus l'effet d'une liaison sans conséquence que d'une réflexion philosophique et esthétique intégrée, la frontière est ténue entre allégorie et symbolisme.

De ce point de vue, la figure d'Érato, telle que traitée par Ozias Leduc dans *Érato (Muse endormie)*, (1898) et mieux encore dans *Érato (Muse dans la forêt)*, (vers 1906) est particulièrement intéressante. La nudité de la muse, la luminosité des œuvres, la rythmique des volutes inscrite dans la matière picturale d'*Érato (Muse endormie)*, la construction d'un espace où se dessinent ces effets ambigus de concavité et de convexité brisés par les verticales décoratives des troncs d'arbres dans *Érato (Muse dans la forêt)* confèrent à ces œuvres une dimension intimiste et singulièrement subjective qui transcende l'allégorie.

Si Suzor-Coté était aussi musicien, il ne semble pas que sa «pratique» de la musique ait considérablement «enrichi» ou donné une profondeur particulière à son œuvre. Toutefois, nudité et référence à la musique s'entremêlent aussi chez Suzor-Coté dans la *Symphonie pathétique* (1925), [voir Grandbois, fig.9], œuvre dont la matière et la juxtaposition audacieuse des couleurs témoignent de sa connaissance de l'impressionnisme mais qui, dans une certaine mesure, tente d'associer nu, paysage, musique et émotion[23]. Outre son titre, qui réfère à une œuvre musicale et nous oriente vers une certaine lecture de l'œuvre, le rapport du fond à la forme vient soutenir cette lecture : les violents empâtements d'un fond divisé par une légère ligne d'horizon contribuent à créer une structure paysagiste où la partie supérieure se lit comme un ciel tourmenté dont le mouvement répond à celui de la chevelure. Le nu se trouve ainsi mis en rapport avec le paysage par un tourment de la matière qui se pose sans doute comme une métaphore des émotions «pathétiques», tout comme dans *Les Gémissements du vent* (1926). En tout cas, il y a là une intégration plus convaincante que dans d'autres

fig.5 Ozias Leduc, **Judith**, vers 1914, huile sur carton, 21 x 27 cm, MNBAQ. (Photo : MNBAQ)

nus qui utilisent le même artifice d'un titre à saveur romantico-symboliste, comme *Sérénité* (1925), par exemple. Cependant, cette saveur symboliste n'est pas généralisée dans la représentation des nus féminins de Suzor-Coté.

La recherche de traces du symbolisme dans l'œuvre de Suzor-Coté ne risque pas non plus d'être très fructueuse du côté du symbolisme à caractère religieux. Si cette veine a nourri d'abondance les œuvres européennes, il me semble qu'au Québec seul Ozias Leduc puisse prétendre à cette parenté. Non seulement par ce travail formel, parfois si proche du préraphaélisme par l'androgynie de ses figures, l'espace fermé par les volutes et les arabesques décoratives de certaines murales comme *La Crucifixion* de la chapelle privée de l'archevêché de Sherbrooke, mais surtout par certaines œuvres, plus rares, comme cette exemplaire *Judith* (fig.5), dont je ne rappellerai que ceci : elle délaisse totalement les attributs allégoriques de la figure biblique de Judith, de même qu'elle ignore complètement le détournement érotique que lui ont fait subir nombre de peintres à la fin du XIX^{e} siècle en représentant Judith comme

fig.6 M.-A. Suzor-Coté, **Bretonne en prière**, 1905, huile sur toile, 113 x 126 cm, Archevêché de Rimouski. (Photo : Courtoise du MNBAQ)

une femme fatale. Leduc tente plutôt de rejoindre un aspect du récit biblique essentiel à l'esprit du christianisme, soit celui de l'interpellation divine par la prière présentée ici comme une relation de méditation intimiste[24].

On trouve également des références à la foi et à la piété, fut-elle naïve, chez certains artistes français, notamment Maurice Denis ou Gauguin, dont les *Calvaires bretons* ou la *Vision après le Sermon* mettent en scène, à travers des procédés novateurs, une piété paysanne à saveur mystique et primitive qui se démarque de celle représentée dans les tableaux de Bretonnes en prière qui abondent dans les scènes de genre pittoresques des peintres réalistes aussi bien qu'académiques et dont on trouve des exemples au Canada, notamment chez Paul Peel (*Dévotion*, 1881) et Suzor-Coté (*Bretonne en prière*, fig.6).

*fig.*7 M.-A. Suzor-Coté, **Autoportrait**, 1894, 63 x 50 cm, pastel sur papier, Musée Laurier, Arthabaska.
(Photo : Courtoise du MNBAQ)

En conclusion, je dirai que Suzor-Coté n'a pas cédé à une autre des tentations de l'artiste symboliste, comme de l'artiste romantique d'ailleurs, tentation cohérente avec sa vision de l'art comme médiation ontologique, soit celle de s'autoreprésenter dans la posture d'une figure christique, messianique ou salvatrice[25]. Seule concession à une mode héritée du romantisme, Suzor-Coté aime plutôt entretenir son image de dandy (fig.7). Mais il est, dans les faits, loin de l'esthétique du dandy qui, dans son mépris de l'utilitaire, du travail, du bourgeois, de la nature, de la chair, de la femme, fait de sa vie et de sa propre personne son œuvre d'art[26]. Ce dandy d'Arthabaska est trop amoureux de son village, de ses paysans, de la chair féminine, de la réussite et de la reconnaissance pour prétendre à l'essence du dandysme. Suzor-Coté est un travailleur, lié aux contingences du

fig.8
M.-A. Suzor-Coté,
Le Tanneur, 1934,
bronze, 25 x 33 x
19 cm, Collection
particulière.
(Photo : Courtoise
du MNBAQ)

métier et du marché de l'art et qui partage, comme l'a bien démontré Laurier Lacroix, l'idéologie libérale de la bourgeoisie d'Arthabaska et de l'élite politique qu'elle a engendrée. Suzor-Coté est fondamentalement matérialiste dans son approche de la peinture. Si, pour filer la métaphore avancée par Lacroix au cours d'une de ses visites guidées de l'exposition, on peut considérer *Le Tanneur* (fig.8) comme une ultime autoreprésentation, d'ordre symbolique, métaphorique ou inconscient, de l'artiste, le peu d'idéalisation du corps, l'attention donnée à l'usure des muscles, à la déformation des os et des mains nous donnent à voir, dans la matière même de la sculpture, non plus le jeune dandy, mais un ouvrier de la transformation de la matière. Ainsi, Suzor-Coté, au-delà des modes, des genres et des styles se serait ultimement représenté comme ce qu'il était d'abord et avant tout : un artisan passé maître dans la pratique de son art mais usé par sa matérialité même.

ESTHER TRÉPANIER
Département d'histoire de l'art
Université du Québec à Montréal

Notes

1 Stéphane MALLARMÉ, *Réponse à l'enquête de Jules Huret sur l'évolution littéraire* (1891), Vanves, Thot, 1982.

2 Jean-Marie SCHAEFFER, *L'art de l'âge moderne, l'esthétique et la philosophie de l'art du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992.

3 Gustave KAHN, cité par Magdalena Dabrowski, *The Symbolist Aesthetic*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1980, p.6

4 À la décharge de Gauguin ajoutons que dans son évaluation de Monet comme n'étant qu'un œil il précisait : « mais quel œil!». Dans le même ordre d'idée, Gauguin écrivait au peintre Emile Schuffenecker le 14 août 1888 : «Un conseil : ne peignez pas trop d'après nature. L'art est une abstraction, tirez-la de la nature en rêvant devant et pensez plus à la création qui en résultera, c'est le seul moyen de monter vers Dieu en faisant comme notre Divin Maître, créer». Cité par Françoise CACHIN, *Gauguin*, Paris, Le Livre de poche, 1968, p.108.

5 «Aujourd'hui qu'en littérature nous assistons à l'agonie du naturalisme, alors que nous voyons se préparer une réaction idéaliste, mystique même, il faudrait s'étonner si les arts plastiques ne manifestaient aucune tendance vers une pareille évolution. *La Lutte de Jacob avec l'Ange* [autre titre de *La Vision après le Sermon*], que j'ai tenté d'écrire dans l'exorde de cette étude, témoigne assez, je crois, que cette tendance existe et l'on doit comprendre que les peintres engagés dans cette voie nouvelle ont tout intérêt à ce qu'on les débarrasse de cette absurde étiquette d'«impressionnistes» qui implique, il faut le répéter, un programme directement contradictoire du leur». Albert AURIER, «Le Symbolisme en peinture – Paul Gauguin», *Le Mercure de France*, mars 1891.

6 Pour les œuvres d'Adrien Hébert citées dans ce texte, on se référera au catalogue *Adrien Hébert* (Pierre l'Allier dir.), Québec, Musée du Québec, 1993.

7 «By giving the common place higher meaning – the familiar an enigmatic look, the known, the prestige of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite. I make it romantic». NOVALIS, *Das philosophische Werk I*, 1798, cité par Boris ASVARISHCH et Robert ROSENBLUM dans *The Romantic Vision of C.D. Friedrich: Paintings and Drawings From USSR*, Sabine Rewald ed., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1991, p.v.

8 Cité par Michel LEBRIS, *Journal du romantisme*, Genève, Skira, 1981, p.7.

9 Roald NASGAARD, *The Mystic North, Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890-1940*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, Art Gallery of Ontario and University of Toronto Press, 1984.

10 Outre l'ouvrage qu'il lui a consacré (*Charles de Belle, peintre-poète*, Montréal, Édition privée, 1949), Albert Laberge a fait paraître de nombreux articles, entre autres dans *La Presse* où il commente l'œuvre de cet artiste (notamment le 6 nov. et le 20 nov. 1915, les 5 fév. et 5 nov. 1923, 24 avril et 29 nov. 1924, 27 nov. 1925, 26 jan. 1926, 30 mars et 14 nov. 1927, 19 oct. 1928, 7 fév. 1930, 30 sept. 1932, etc.) Sur Albert Laberge et Charles de Belle voir aussi Esther TRÉPANIER, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939*, Québec, Éditions Nota bene, 1998, p.47-49.

11 J'emprunte cette expression de «moods» pour qualifier le travail des peintres de l'école de La Haye à François-Marc Gagnon qui est l'auteur de la section «La peinture» dans l'ouvrage de Paul-André LINTEAU, René DUROCHER et Jean-Claude ROBERT, *Histoire du Québec contemporain. De la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929)*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Boréal express, 1979, p.629-31.

12 Brian FOSS, «Une expression empathique : l'esthétique de Mary Hiester Reid», dans Brian FOSS et Janice ANDERSON, *L'univers harmonieux de Mary Heister Reid*, Toronto, Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario, 2000, p.63-64.

13 Ces œuvres sont reproduites dans Robert J. LAMB, *The Canadian Art Club 1907-1915*, Edmonton, The Edmonton Art Gallery, 1988.

14 Pour la liste des œuvres exposées au Canadian Art Club, voir LAMB, *The Canadian Art Club 1907-1915*, et aussi pour la liste des expositions des œuvres de Suzor-Coté, voir Laurier LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, Québec, Musée du Québec; Montréal, Les Éditions de l'Homme; Ottawa, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, 2002, p.355-75.

15 On pourrait dire la même chose du tableau *Isolement (Isolation)* présenté sous ce titre à saveur symboliste à la septième exposition annuelle du Canadian Art Club en 1914 et qui donne à voir une maison isolée dans un paysage de fin de jour. Ce tableau est aussi connu sous le titre de *Isolement, Vieille maison isolée* et *Isolation, Old Isolated House*.

16 Figures que, lors de la communication, je traitais plus familièrement de «poupounes en péplum».

17 Le lecteur intéressé à voir des reproductions de ces œuvres et des autres œuvres européennes symbolistes que je mentionne dans ce texte pourra les trouver dans des ouvrages comme : Jean CASSOU (dir.), *Encyclopédie du Symbolisme*, Paris, Somogy, 1988; Michael GIBSON, *Le Symbolisme*, Bonn, Taschen, 1994; en collaboration, *Paradis perdus. L'Europe symboliste*, Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1995.

18 LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.360.

19 Pensons aux peintres préraphaélites britanniques et au mouvement Arts and Craft, aux ateliers d'art sacré de Maurice Denis, au travail décoratif de Vuillard, Bonnard et de combien d'autres.

20 Ces deux œuvres sont reproduites dans le catalogue *Adrien Hébert*, 1993, aux pages 29 et 77.

21 Adrien Hébert comptait parmi ses amis des musiciens, notamment Rodolphe Mathieu et Léo-Pol Morin dont il a d'ailleurs peint les portraits. Morin, un ami de Ravel, a présenté de nombreux récitals, entre autres d'œuvres françaises de Fauré, Debussy, Frank, Ravel, etc.

22 LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.284

23 Je reprends ici l'analyse avancée dans TRÉPANIER, *Peinture et modernité*, p.249-51.

24 Voir ma notice dans le catalogue *Ozias Leduc : une œuvre d'amour et de rêve* (Laurier Lacroix dir.) Québec, Musée du Québec; Montréal, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1996, p. 188-89.

25 Si plusieurs artistes européens ont donné dans l'autoreprésentation de cette nature, les exemples sont plus rares chez nous. Mentionnons toutefois l'exemple d'Ozias Leduc dont l'autoportrait de 1899 est utilisé pour dépeindre les traits du Christ dans *Le Bon Pasteur* de 1917. Voir LACROIX, *Ozias Leduc*, p.137 et 208-209.

26 Michel LEMAIRE, *Le dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé*, Montréal, Paris, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Éditions Klincksieck, 1978.

Summary

A FEW THOUGHTS ON ASPECTS OF SYMBOLISM IN THE WORK OF SUZOR-COTÉ AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

The Symbolist movement was popular, to a greater or lesser degree, with a number of Quebec artists in the 1910s and early 1920s. In light of this interest, my article looks at the work of Suzor-Coté to determine if this approach to painting might have had an influence on some of his production. The discussion begins with a brief overview of Symbolist aesthetics and philosophy as defined in Europe at the end of the 1880s, and in terms of its meaning as a creative process that was based on the subjective rather than merely the use of symbols or allegory. This distinction is particularly evident in the writings of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, the art critic Albert Aurier, as well as in the ideas expressed by the contemporary philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer in *L'art de l'âge moderne, l'esthétique et la philosophie de l'art du 17e siècle à nos jours*, of 1992. My study of Suzor-Coté's work begins with recurring themes in Romanticism and Symbolism: Paradise Lost, the Golden Age and the flight to the Other, whether it be a natural or cultural place. These concepts embody the ideals of ontological unity and harmony that formed the foundation of such aesthetics.

Considering the significance of the landscape in Suzor-Coté's paintings, this subject is the first to be examined as it occupied a decisive place in both Symbolist and Romantic attitudes. Nature was conceived as a unifying space for man's transcendence, or as a method of representation suitable for visualizing the concepts of the critic Gustave Kahn. Writing in *L'Evénement* in 1886, he assigned Symbolist art the goal of "objectivizing the subjective rather than subjectivizing the objective;" that is to say, to exteriorize or materialize an idea rather than to show nature as a temperament, as had been expressed by Emile Zola.

Suzor-Coté's approach to landscape is then compared to the work of such European artists as Caspar David Friedrich, Lévy-Dhurmer, Degouve de Nuncques as well as certain other painters from northern Europe who broke with French formalism and realism. Their aesthetic concerns lay with the expression of the spiritual essence of their Nordic countries; one thinks of Harald Sohlberg, Karl Nordström, Gustaf Fjaestad among many others. After

acknowledging both their formal and spiritual influence on Canada's Group of Seven, the text focuses on a few Quebec artists and in particular, Ozias Leduc. On a formal level at least, Leduc conveyed the basic Symbolist approach to landscape. For example, he integrated its complex play of the arabesque line and rounded shape as a decorative motif; but he always used it in the service of the contemplative and the intimate to reinforce that sense of a temporality and an absence that inhabits his landscape painting.

In comparison, Suzor-Coté's landscapes borrow more from Realism, Impressionism or Tonalism, depending on the painting. To take but one example, his *La Vallée de Senlisse* captures the spirit of the Tonalists but more in terms of a Canadian understanding of their approach. The titles of Suzor-Coté works often have allusions to those used by the Symbolists or by Whistler, as evidenced by the name of his painting *Mauve et Or*. But more to the point, Suzor-Coté's production certainly demonstrates his extraordinary versatility and his knowledge of all the aesthetic modes then in fashion within representational painting. However, his landscapes do not lend themselves to the formal process that would allow them to be classified within a Symbolist aesthetic, even if they occasionally seem to flirt with its concerns. A certain spirit of Symbolism can be detected in Suzor-Coté's evoking of the luminosity of evening light and the sense of harmonious serenity, but not without its limitations.

On the other hand, a work such as his *Harmonie du soir* (1917) may suggest an iconography privileged by the Symbolists, such as that of Paradise Lost or the flight towards the idealized Other, which in itself may have been influenced by Tahiti, Saint Tropez, the medieval period or antiquity. The latter most often engendered the motif of the muse or a female figure dressed "à l'antique" and positioned within an Arcadian landscape. This is somewhat the situation in *Harmonie du soir*. But after looking at specific examples by European and Quebec artists as well as the work of members of the Canadian Art Club, it would again appear that such Symbolist themes are rare in the work of Suzor-Coté.

Nevertheless the stylistic and thematic elements of *Harmonie du soir* allow a consideration of two significant parameters of Symbolist aesthetics: the decorative spirit and the ambition of synthesizing the arts. Discussion in the text of these concerns, including the integration of art and architecture, leads to a consideration of the relationship between painting and music. By again citing European and Canadian examples, a comparative analysis of Ozias Leduc and Suzor-Coté's works establishes that the latter's work falls within the "allegorical-decorative vein," as defined by Laurier Lacroix. This tendency is characteristic of those artists whose relationship to Symbolism is a matter of an aesthetic effect than of a philosophical reflection, and one that Leduc embodies in a more convincing

manner. Unfortunately, the search for traces of Symbolist religious iconography in Suzor-Coté's work is also not a particularly fruitful endeavour. His *Bretonne en prière* (1905) is closer to picturesque or academic realist interpretations than to Paul Gauguin's *Vision après le Sermon* and its innovative representation of the primitive, mystical devotion of rural people. Furthermore, Suzor-Coté's image does not share the resonance of an evocation of prayer as private meditation that is to be found in Ozias Leduc's *Judith* (*c.*1914).

To conclude, this article also demonstrates that Suzor-Coté did not submit to another temptation of the Symbolist artist and the one consistent with a vision of art as an ontological mediation: the self-portrait in the pose of a Christ-like, messianic or salvation figure. Suzor-Coté's only concession to a mode inherited from Romanticism was that he liked to maintain his image as a dandy, even if in his actions he was far from the aesthetics of the flâneur. A dandy made himself and his life into a work of art in his disregard of the utilitarian, the middle-class, work, nature and the female. The dandy from Arthabaska was too much in love with his village, country people, women, success and recognition to aspire to the essence of dandyism. Suzor-Coté was a worker who was tied to the contingencies of craft and to the art market. As Laurier Lacroix has well demonstrated, he shared the liberalist ideology of the Arthabaska bourgeoisie and the political elite that it engendered. Suzor-Coté's attitude to painting was fundamentally materialist. In the end, any great pondering over his relation to Symbolism is "much ado about nothing."

Translation: Janet Logan

fig.1 Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, **Un coin du vieux Montréal,** avant 1927, huile sur toile, 71 x 91 cm. Œuvre détruite dans l'incendie du Bois-de-Coulonge en 1966 (MPQ, P.74). (Photographe non identifié)

SUZOR-COTÉ ET LA COLLECTION DU MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

Le temps n'a pas altéré la relation privilégiée que le Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) entretient avec l'art de Suzor-Coté. Cette relation repose sur des bases solides, mises en place du vivant de l'artiste, à l'époque où celui-ci était parvenu au faîte de sa gloire. Amorcée avant même l'inauguration du Musée de la province de Québec, en 1933, elle s'est poursuivie pendant les quatre-vingts années de l'histoire de notre institution. Aujourd'hui, avec ses quelque deux cent cinquante peintures, sculptures et dessins de Suzor-Coté, le MNBAQ est le principal dépositaire de son œuvre. En 2002 et 2003, à l'occasion de la rétrospective *Suzor-Coté, 1869-1937. Lumière et matière*, plus du tiers des œuvres exposées provenait du MNBAQ.

Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté occupe la huitième place au palmarès des artistes les plus représentés dans nos collections. Il se distingue largement de ses «concurrents» du fait que soixante-quinze pour cent des acquisitions le concernant furent l'objet d'achats[1], une situation exceptionnelle. Lors de son décès, en 1937, le Musée de la province de Québec abrite déjà quatre-vingts peintures, sculptures et dessins du maître d'Arthabaska. Un seul autre artiste a suscité un tel intérêt de son vivant : Alfred Laliberté, à qui le gouvernement a commandé, en 1928, près de deux cents statuettes en bronze sur les légendes, les métiers et les coutumes d'antan. Cependant, à la différence de son ami Laliberté, essentiellement représenté par son œuvre sculpté, Suzor-Coté rayonne aujourd'hui au MNBAQ par une production multiforme qui témoigne de son tempérament versatile, avec trente-quatre peintures, cinquante-quatre sculptures et cent cinquante-neuf dessins.

Dans les lignes qui suivent, nous retracerons l'histoire de cette collection. Nous nous attarderons d'abord aux premiers achats faits à Suzor-Coté, exceptionnellement nombreux avant juin 1933, date de l'inauguration du Musée. Nous verrons ensuite comment leur mise en valeur a bénéficié d'un traitement privilégié lors des premières présentations de la collection nationale. Enfin, nous parlerons du développement de la collection après le décès de l'artiste, après avoir auparavant porté une attention toute particulière au contexte qui mena à l'acquisition, en 1946, de *Symphonie pathétique*, 1925, œuvre phare de notre collection.

Suzor-Coté au cœur de la collection initiale

En 1920, deux ans avant que le projet de créer un musée soit sanctionné par la Loi sur les musées de la province, le gouvernement libéral d'Alexandre Taschereau autorise l'achat d'œuvres d'art pour former le noyau d'une collection nationale. Sous la conduite de l'Honorable Athanase David[2], secrétaire de la province[3] – à qui l'on doit la création de plusieurs institutions et organismes encore actifs aujourd'hui dans le secteur culturel[4] – les premières acquisitions sont faites par un jury, dans le cadre d'un programme d'encouragement aux arts. Six représentant de l'élite intellectuelle et artistique de l'époque forment le jury : Edmond Dyonnet, Robert Lindsay, William Hope, J.-O Marchand, Édouard Montpetit et l'Honorable Athanase David[5]. Ce jury se rend aux deux expositions annuelles à Montréal[6], où il sélectionne six peintures et deux gravures d'artistes réputés, francophones et anglophones[7]. Les peintures choisies sont des œuvres de Maurice Cullen, d'Alice Des Clayes, de Clarence Gagnon, de John Young Johnstone, d'Albert Henri Robinson et de Suzor-Coté, et elles ont en commun le paysage québécois – urbain et rural – sous les effets de neige. En plus de montrer les beautés du territoire, ces peintures sont les premiers témoignages du projet politique visant à faire du futur musée «une peinture de l'âme canadienne française[8]».

Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté vient juste de mettre la dernière touche à la chatoyante composition *Après-midi d'avril*, 1920, pour le Salon du printemps de l'Art Association of Montreal, lorsque son tableau est choisi par le jury. Conformément au prix inscrit dans le catalogue de l'exposition (numéro 260), le gouvernement s'en porte acquéreur pour 500 $[9]. Si, depuis le début du siècle, Suzor-Coté avait entretenu des relations avec les deux paliers de gouvernement, provincial et fédéral, cette première vente marque le début d'une longue et fructueuse relation d'affaires entre le gouvernement du Québec et l'artiste, alors âgé de 51 ans.

La nouvelle Loi sur les musées de la province, sanctionnée le 29 décembre 1922, stipule que l'établissement de musées, à Québec et à Montréal, doit servir l'étude de l'histoire, des sciences et des beaux-arts, dans un objectif éducatif. Le secrétaire de la province est chargé de leur bon fonctionnement, sous l'autorité du Lieutenant-gouverneur. Quelques mois avant l'adoption de la Loi, le gouvernement achète à Suzor-Coté une deuxième œuvre. Lors de sa première visite au salon d'automne à l'Académie royale du Canada en 1920, le jury du programme d'encouragement aux arts avait pu admirer la grande composition à l'huile *La Bénédiction des érables*, 1920 (MNBAQ 34.13)[10]. L'œuvre imposante répondait tout à fait aux critères historiques et patrimoniaux souhaités pour la future collection de peintures. Depuis sa première présentation, elle avait été exposée successivement à Winnipeg et à Toronto, en 1921[11]. Craignait-on que l'œuvre quitte la province après ses présentations successives au Canada anglais? Rien

ne nous permet de l'affirmer, mais, chose certaine, cette deuxième acquisition fut saluée par le journaliste du *Montreal Star*, qui n'avait que de bons mots pour la «politique» d'encouragement aux arts de monsieur David. Selon le journaliste, cette politique allait assurer un héritage dont la postérité serait fière.

> Such paintings as Suzor-Cote's "Blessing of the Maples" ought to be preserved. It would be a national loss if they were allowed to pass out of the country. They possess a distinct significance that goes beyond mere pigment or technique, for they commemorate in permanent form habits and customs that are part and parcel of this country's rural life. In securing this and other pictures for the province Mr. David is doing something that will have an influence in the future far beyond what may now appear. He is giving to posterity a heritage of which posterity will have every right to be proud[12].

Après son acquisition en janvier 1922, *La Bénédiction des érables* demeura à Québec, d'abord suspendue aux murs de l'Hôtel du Parlement, puis rapatriée au Musée de la province de Québec après 1934. Cependant, l'œuvre s'avéra être une copie agrandie de plus petits formats exécutés par Suzor-Coté en 1913 et 1914. Cette version, signée Suzor-Coté, avait été peinte par son élève Rodolphe Duguay[13].

Les ventes suivantes de Suzor-Coté se concluront directement avec Charles-Joseph Simard, sous-secrétaire de la province. Simard était un fidèle admirateur et un ami, comme en témoigne la correspondance que les deux hommes ont entretenue jusqu'en 1931, année du décès de Simard. À partir de l'attaque d'apoplexie qui paralysa l'artiste en février 1927, et au cours des dix années suivantes, le frère de Suzor-Coté, Arthur T. Côté, le représenta auprès des instances gouvernementales et cultiva à son tour un échange épistolaire. Écrites sur une période de quatorze ans, ces lettres sont parmi les plus abondantes concernant un artiste québécois moderne[14]. Elles sont une source incontournable pour comprendre l'intérêt soutenu et l'admiration que l'élite politique de la province vouait alors au peintre d'Arthabaska. Cette correspondance permet aussi de saisir les visées sur la collection nationale qui animaient Athanase David et son sous-secrétaire, Charles-Joseph Simard, ainsi que Pierre-Georges Roy, conservateur du Musée de la province de Québec, et Paul Rainville[15], conservateur adjoint du Musée et natif d'Arthabaska tout comme Suzor-Coté. Entre 1920 et 1933, la faveur dont jouit Suzor-Coté auprès du gouvernement se concrétise par des achats qui correspondent à dix pour cent de la totalité des acquisitions effectuées avant l'inauguration du Musée, ces œuvres que nous désignons familièrement sous le nom de «collection initiale[16]».

Le troisième achat fait par le gouvernement à Suzor-Coté est de taille. En 1923, grâce à l'appui de Charles-Joseph Simard, *Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535*, 1907 [voir Sicotte, fig.2], trouve enfin preneur. Depuis bientôt quinze ans, l'artiste garde entreposée dans son atelier cette «grande

machine» de plus de deux mètres par quatre mètres qu'il destinait au Sénat, à Ottawa, à l'époque de sa réalisation en 1905-1906. Suzor-Coté avait pourtant obtenu un succès d'estime dans la presse, en 1907, à la suite des présentations publiques de cette œuvre au Salon de la Société des artistes français à Paris et, en 1907-1908, à la galerie William Scott & Sons à Montréal, mais cela n'a pas suffi pour que le gouvernement canadien s'en porte acquéreur. Entre 1923 et 1925, une fois la vente confirmée, Suzor-Coté recevra en paiement trois versements annuels de 1 000 $. Au dernier versement, l'artiste adressera ses remerciements dans une lettre donnant le juste ton de son engagement et de ses attentes envers le gouvernement de sa province :

> Permettez que je vous remercie encore, ainsi que le ministre Mr David, pour tout le bien que vous m'avez fait et que vous pouvez encore me faire, si je peux continuer à mériter votre encouragement et votre appui par mon travail consciencieux dans la peinture, la sculpture et le dessin. Chaque artiste est un apporteur de gloire à son pays, et il est du devoir des gouvernants de les assister, de les aider dans leur carrière souvent si pénible, soit par des commandes ou des achats fréquents[17].

En février 1927, la maladie frappe l'artiste, mettant bientôt fin à sa carrière. Cette nouvelle situation a pour effet d'activer les achats du gouvernement. Pour cette seule année, une soixantaine d'œuvres, en majorité des dessins au pastel et au fusain, s'ajoutent aux deux sculptures acquises en 1926, *Le Vieux Pionnier canadien*, 1911 (38.55), et *La Compagne du vieux pionnier*, 1918 (38.54)[18]. Avec pour interlocuteur Arthur T. Côté, qui agit désormais à titre d'agent artistique pour son frère, Charles-Joseph Simard finalise d'abord la vente qu'il avait amorcée avec Suzor-Coté en mars, laquelle comporte dix dessins au fusain et à la sanguine qui représentent des «types canadiens-français[19]» ainsi que le tableau *Un coin du Vieux Montréal* (fig.1), aujourd'hui détruit. Les achats sont payés avec les budgets du fonds fédéral de l'éducation technique, en vertu du fait que ces œuvres seront de futurs «modèles» pour les écoles des beaux-arts. Le principal objectif de la Loi sur les musées de la province n'en est-il pas un d'éducation? C'est aussi avec l'appui financier des autorités fédérales que le gouvernement de la province acquiert, au début de l'été, vingt et un des vingt-cinq dessins de Suzor-Coté ayant servi à illustrer le roman de Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine : Récit du Canada français*, publié en 1916 par l'éditeur LeFebvre et diffusé en France par la Librairie C. Delagrave. Suivront peu après les quatre dessins manquants, qui s'avéreront être des copies exécutées par Rodolphe Duguay[20]. Dans le colis se trouvent aussi six fusains et un pastel[21].

Le 8 août 1927, Simard fait une nouvelle sélection d'œuvres à l'atelier du 67 de la rue Sainte-Famille à Montréal[22]. Depuis 1919, Suzor-Coté occupe cet espace de travail dans la maison de son ami Alfred Laliberté qui abrite plusieurs ateliers d'artistes. En septembre, la «campagne d'achat» se poursuit de plus

belle lorsque Charles-Joseph Simard y retourne, accompagné cette fois du peintre Horatio Walker, un de ses proches. Leur choix se porte sur trente-trois huiles et pastels, notamment *Les Ombres qui passent, rivière Nicolet*, 1925 (34.14), *Un garçon de mon village (Jacques Gérard)* (34.15) et *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal*, 1921 (34.17). Parmi la trentaine de dessins, on retrouve les portraits de personnages historiques et de types canadiens ou amérindiens, ainsi que des scènes du terroir et des scènes symbolistes[23].

En 1927, le gouvernement a donc acheté massivement l'œuvre de Suzor-Coté[24]. Le geste posé était unique : l'autorité politique intronisait de son vivant l'artiste le plus célèbre de son temps. Le caractère exceptionnel de ce geste eut naturellement des échos sur la mise en valeur des acquisitions. Lors de l'inauguration du Musée de la province de Québec, en 1933, la représentation de Suzor-Coté n'aura pas de comparable chez les autres artistes canadiens. Déjà, en 1929, les amateurs eurent une idée de l'importance qu'on accordait à l'œuvre de Suzor-Coté lorsque Charles-Joseph Simard organisa la première rétrospective de l'artiste : parmi les cent cinquante-deux œuvres réunies alors dans la salle d'exposition de l'École des beaux-arts de Montréal (peintures, dessins, sculptures), plus du tiers appartenaient à l'État[25].

Or, telle qu'elle se présente dans cette rétrospective de 1929, la collection ne rend pas compte de la diversité de l'art de Suzor-Coté. Elle fait surtout valoir le talent de dessinateur du maître d'Arthabaska, ce qui restera d'ailleurs un point fort de notre collection. Le visiteur peut y voir cinq tableaux, surtout des paysages illustrant l'hiver québécois. La sculpture en bronze est représentée par une vingtaine d'œuvres, dont deux exemplaires seulement figurent dans la collection initiale, si pauvre en ce domaine. Cette carence a de quoi étonner si l'on tient compte de l'élan qu'a pris l'œuvre sculpté de Suzor-Coté durant la période où les relations fleurissaient entre le gouvernement et l'artiste. Déjà, le 10 mars 1925, attendant impatiemment le règlement de sa vente de *Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535*, l'artiste a confié à Athanase David l'urgence dans laquelle il se trouvait pour payer les frais du coulage en bronze à New York de quelques-unes de ses sculptures, œuvres qu'il destinait alors à la *42nd Spring Exhibition* de l'Art Association of Montreal[26]. C'était le début de longues discussions au sujet de la vente des bronzes tant souhaitée par Suzor-Coté. Ce projet, du reste, il le partageait avec ses interlocuteurs gouvernementaux, Charles-Joseph Simard, puis Paul Rainville. En vérité, les échanges soutenus n'allaient se concrétiser avant 1934 que par quelques rares acquisitions, situation que les deux parties déploreraient par la suite.

Le 25 août 1926, Suzor-Coté écrit à Simard qu'il tient à vendre au gouvernement l'ensemble de son œuvre sculpté[27] parce qu'il pressent que les sujets représentés disparaîtront bientôt de la réalité canadienne. Une telle préoccupation anthropologique et patrimoniale caractérise d'ailleurs cette

époque charnière. Cependant, les autorités politiques ne lui achèteront pas ses sculptures, mais commanderont plutôt à son collègue et ami Alfred Laliberté, en 1928, une série de bronzes sur les légendes et les coutumes d'autrefois. Même le commentaire contemporain de Jean Chauvin, selon qui «Suzor-Coté, en effet, est un sculpteur de premier plan. Le sculpteur, chez lui, nous paraît même mieux inspiré que le peintre. Ce n'est qu'en 1907 qu'il trouva dans la plastique son mode d'expression le plus personnel et le plus vivant...[28]», ne changera pas les choses. Pourtant, sur la «question des bronzes», l'artiste a trouvé une oreille attentive en Charles-Joseph Simard[29], qui vient d'être nommé conservateur du futur musée. Or, le décès du haut fonctionnaire, en 1931, mettra brusquement fin aux espoirs de Suzor-Coté de voir le Musée abriter ce volet de sa production.

Quelques mois après l'ouverture du Musée, l'artiste adresse une lettre à Paul Rainville, dans laquelle il revient sur sa représentation en tant que sculpteur au sein de la collection nationale : «...je me demande souvent si cette si chère intention de Mr Simard se réalisera un jour pas trop lointain. [Je l']espère afin que je puisse jouir de la notoriété de ce fait ajoutée au Musée et à mon nom – et puis s'il y a rémunération, afin que j'en puisse bénéficier de mon vivant et m'aider à adoucir mes longues heures de chaise longue et d'inaction...[30]». De son vivant, Suzor-Coté n'allait pas voir se réaliser totalement son rêve d'être justement représenté au Musée par l'ensemble de son œuvre peint, dessiné et sculpté, et de bénéficier de la notoriété et des dividendes que cette représentation lui aurait donnés.

Suzor-Coté au nouveau Musée de la province

Le 5 juin 1933, le Musée de la province de Québec ouvre ses portes (fig.2), se définissant en fonction de trois grands secteurs de la connaissance : la nature, l'art et l'histoire. La présentation inaugurale[31] comprend quatre tableaux de Suzor-Coté. Ce sont des paysages de neige : *L'Atelier de l'artiste [Le Vieux Pommier]*, 1918 , *Les Ombres qui passent, rivière Nicolet*, 1925, *Un coin du Vieux Montréal*, av. 1927, et une nature morte, *Monsieur est servi* (fig.3). De ces toiles, seule *Les Ombres qui passent, rivière Nicolet*, 1925 (34.14), figure encore dans nos collections. Les deux dernières ont été détruites dans l'incendie du Bois-de-Coulonge en 1966; quant à *L'Atelier de l'artiste*, de 1918, cette toile connaîtra au cours des années 1940 un parcours étonnant qui mérite que nous lui réservions quelques lignes dans la troisième partie de notre texte.

Pendant l'exposition inaugurale de 1933, un des trois petits salons contigus à la salle d'art canadien était tapissé des dessins que Simard avait acquis de Suzor-Coté en 1927, ce qui fait de lui l'artiste le mieux représenté de cet événement. Le visiteur pouvait y admirer plus de soixante-dix œuvres, têtes de paysans,

fig.2 Salle d'art canadien, Galerie des beaux-arts, Musée de la province de Québec (MPQ), juin 1933. (Photo: MPQ, Edgar Gariépy)

fig.3 M-A. Suzor-Coté, **Monsieur est servi,** 1907, huile sur toile, 65 x 89 cm. Œuvre détruite dans l'incendie du Bois-de-Coulonge en 1966 (MPQ, P.79). (Photographe non identifié)

fig.4 Salon des dessins de Suzor-Coté, contigu à la salle d'art canadien, MPQ, juillet 1933. (Photo: MPQ, Edgar Gariépy)

illustrations de *Maria Chapdeleine* et pastels symbolistes. Ici, l'intention du conservateur, Pierre-Georges Roy[32], et de son adjoint, Paul Rainville, était on ne peut plus claire : en accordant cette vitrine exceptionnelle à Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, ils lui assuraient une place dominante dans le panthéon des artistes canadiens et québécois, conformément aux gestes posés précédemment par David et Simard. Le 22 juillet, de Daytona Beach, Suzor-Coté écrivit à Pierre-Georges Roy :

> J'ai appris avec plaisir et une certaine fierté que je crois raisonnable l'honneur que vous m'avez fait en dédiant une petite salle de votre Musée à une partie de mon œuvre, la partie, dessins, j'en suis très heureux, car je crois fermement, que la partie dessin de mon œuvre est peut-être la meilleure.... Cher Mr Roy si vous pouvez me donner quelques détails sur cette petite salle où sont logés mes œuvres et dessins : situation, éclairage, dimension, placement des dessins, leur nombre, les titres et la liste, ou catalogue, vous comprenez que savoir tout cela intéresse beaucoup «l'Auteur», si possible dites-moi donc où sont mes tableaux à l'huile dans le Musée et donnez-moi donc les titres. Avant de terminer permettez-moi de vous donner un avis, celui de grouper les œuvres d'un même artiste en un bel ensemble bien éclairé et facile d'accès, pour ma part je tiens essentiellement à ce que mes œuvres soient réunies, je vais vous envoyer pour cela ma photo, pour votre galerie.

À la fin de l'été, la présentation du petit salon fut provisoirement enrichie du tableau *L'Atelier de l'artiste* (groupe central, en haut) comme en témoigne une ancienne photographie (fig.4). À la fin du mois d'octobre, ce fut au tour de la sculpture *L'Évêque*, 1926 (34.71), de rejoindre la sélection de dessins (fig.5). L'artiste venait d'offrir ce plâtre en don :

> Il n'y a pas très longtemps je vous envoyais par les soins de mon frère Eugène d'Arthabaska un buste d'Évêque en plâtre patiné antique que j'avais en dépôt chez lui et que je vous ai offert à titre gratuit pour votre Musée, lequel buste d'évêque est une très bonne chose que vous devriez si possible ajouter à ma salle de dessins, et me faire voir aussi comme sculpteur.

Le 2 novembre, Paul Rainville lui répond : «...je l'ai placé au centre de votre salle sur un socle simple, uni, en érable naturel.... [C]e buste est admirablement bien fait et je vous en félicite sincèrement et vous remercie de tout cœur de nous l'avoir offert».

Quelques mois après la présentation de juin 1933 vint celle de novembre, dans laquelle Paul Rainville augmenta la représentation de l'artiste à titre de peintre, en empruntant à la collection personnelle de Suzor-Coté. Les peintures passèrent ainsi à une quinzaine, de quatre qu'elles étaient en juin dans la salle d'art canadien (figs.6 et 7). Le 2 novembre, avec une précision étonnante, Paul Rainville décrivit sa nouvelle présentation à Suzor-Coté, qui était toujours à Daytona Beach, en disant que les tableaux couvraient maintenant un mur complet

fig. 5 À gauche, le salon de dessins de Suzor-Coté vu de la salle d'art canadien et à l'entrée la tête de **L'Évêque** déposée sur un socle clair au centre de l'ouverture, MPQ, novembre 1933. (Photo: W.B. Edwards)

fig.6 Salle d'art canadien. Les peintures de Suzor-Coté sont énumérées de gauche à droite, d'abord dans la rangée supérieure à partir de la 6e : **Marine, Petit-Métis**, 1925, **Les ombres qui passent, rivière Nicolet**, 1925, et **Les Fumées, port de Montréal**, 1914. À partir de la 6e dans la rangée inférieure : Rodolphe Duguay et Suzor-Coté, **La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal**, 1921, [7e : non identifiée], **L'Atelier de l'artiste / Le Vieux Pommier**, 1918, **Un coin du vieux Montréal**, avant 1927, détruite en 1966, et **Monsieur est servi**, 1907, MPQ, novembre 1933. (Photo: W.B. Edwards)

*fig.*7 Salle d'art canadien. Les œuvres de Suzor-Coté, de gauche à droite, dans la rangée supérieure: **Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535**, 1907, **La Vallée de Senlisse**, 1906, **Bretonne en prière**, 1905, **Mariette** ou **En pleine lumière**, vers 1912, et **Le Coureur de bois**, 1907. Dans la rangée inférieure, de gauche à droite, les œuvres de Suzor-Coté sont : **Un garçon de mon village**, 1925, **La Mort de Cadieux**, 1907, et **Scène d'automne**, 1911, MPQ, novembre 1933. (Photo: W.B. Edwards)

et tout avait été mis en œuvre pour maximiser : «...l'agencement des masses, et l'harmonie des couleurs ont été étudiés attentivement, et les tons, passant du brun foncé de l'été et de l'automne, jusqu'aux teintes de neige de l'hiver, font une gamme de teintes très agréable à voir...». Les peintures empruntées à l'artiste témoignaient essentiellement de sa carrière canadienne, à l'exception de *Bretonne en prière*, 1905 (collection de l'Archevêché de Rimouski), [voir Trépanier, fig.6], et de *La Vallée de Senlisse*, 1906 (54.126), [voir Trépanier, fig.1]. À cette occasion, Paul Rainville avait retiré *L'Atelier de l'artiste* du salon de dessins pour l'intégrer à son accrochage de la salle d'art canadien. L'œuvre était suspendue à gauche de *Un coin du vieux Montréal* et en dessous de *Marine, Petit-Métis*. Attardons-nous un peu à cette composition intitulée *L'Atelier de l'artiste*.

Le Vieux Pommier* alias *L'Atelier de l'artiste

En 2002, lors de la préparation de l'exposition *Suzor-Coté, 1869-1937. Lumière et matière*, le tableau *L'Atelier de l'artiste* allait sortir de l'ombre après avoir été conservé à l'écart, dans une collection particulière, pendant plus d'un demi-siècle. Ce tableau figurait dans les salles du Musée en 1933, comme en témoignent les photographies d'époque. Il faisait partie de la collection initiale : dans les inventaires successifs que Paul Rainville colligea entre 1934 et 1946, il portait le numéro P. 71. On l'y retrouve identifié sous le titre *L'Atelier*, ou *L'Atelier de Suzor-Coté*, ou encore *L'Atelier de l'artiste*. La composition montre une scène d'hiver sous un ciel aux couleurs chatoyantes : au premier plan, un espace blanc et lumineux traité à la manière impressionniste; au second, un bâtiment devant lequel se déploient les branches enneigées d'un vieux pommier, situé vers la droite, à proximité d'un petit pavillon (fig.8). Le titre du tableau donnait à penser qu'il présentait une vue dirigée vers l'atelier de Suzor-Coté. À part les documents de 1933, l'unique autre témoignage visuel de son existence résidait dans une reproduction en noir et blanc, publiée à la fin des années 1960[33].

Beaucoup plus tard, au cours de ses recherches menant à la rétrospective de 2002-2003, Laurier Lacroix retracera un tableau intitulé *Le Vieux Pommier*, daté de 1918 et présenté la même année en avril à la *35th Spring Exhibition* de l'Art Association of Montreal (cat. n° 337). Depuis cette époque, *Le Vieux Pommier* n'avait jamais été présenté publiquement et personne ne savait ce qu'il était advenu de ce tableau. Quant à l'œuvre répertoriée dans la collection du Musée et intitulée *L'Atelier de l'artiste*, nos recherches ne nous permettent pas de retrouver le moment précis de son acquisition par le gouvernement. Elle s'est retrouvée en août 1933 dans le salon de dessins du Musée, puis en novembre parmi le groupe de peintures exposées dans la salle d'art canadien. Grâce aux inventaires que tenait le conservateur, nous savons que, par la suite, le tableau a été accroché dans le bureau de l'Honorable Athanase David, en 1935, et qu'entre 1938 et 1946, il ornait le bureau du sous-secrétaire de la province, à l'Hôtel du

fig.8
M-A. Suzor-Coté, **Le Vieux Pommier,** 1918, huile sur toile, 84 x 67 cm, Collection particulière. (Photo: Patrick Altman)

Parlement. Or, à partir de 1946, *L'Atelier de l'artiste* ne figure plus nulle part. Comment expliquer sa disparition de la collection nationale?

29 janvier 1937 : Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté décède à Daytona Beach. À la fin de l'été de cette année-là, madame Suzor-Coté s'enquiert auprès de Paul Rainville du sort des œuvres prêtées par son défunt mari et exposées au Musée depuis bientôt quatre ans : si elles ne sont pas acquises par le Musée, madame Suzor-Coté souhaiterait les mettre en vente à la galerie Scott & Sons de Montréal[14]. Rainville ne croit pas «qu'il soit de bonne politique d'acquérir d'autres tableaux de Suzor-Coté», le Musée possédant déjà «onze tableaux à l'huile, et plus de soixante-dix-neuf pastels et fusains[15]». Le conservateur adjoint recommande plutôt d'évaluer la possibilité d'acheter la collection de bronzes «en établissant un plan d'ensemble réalisable en quatre ou cinq ans [que] nous pourrions acquérir à des conditions avantageuses», tout en rappelant à Pierre-Georges Roy que le Musée ne conserve en 1937 qu'un seul bronze en ses murs, acquis de l'artiste en 1934 : *Je me souviens*, 1926 (34.70)[16]. Pour leur part, les

fig.9
M-A. Suzor-Coté, **Symphonie pathétique,** 1925, huile sur toile, 125 x 112 cm, MNBAQ. (Photo: Patrick Altman)

bronzes intitulés *Le Vieux Pionnier canadien* et *La Compagne du vieux pionnier* sont toujours prêtés au Secrétariat de la province.

Mathilde Savard Suzor-Coté a un pressant besoin d'argent pour régler les droits de succession de feu son mari. En juillet 1945, sa situation précaire l'oblige à rembourser ses dettes en remettant à l'avocat Léo L'Espérance vingt-cinq tableaux de sa collection[17]. Monsieur L'Espérance désire vendre rapidement ce groupe d'œuvres : il le dépose donc dès l'automne au Musée de la province, en proposant un échange à Paul Rainville, qui vient de succéder à Pierre-Georges Roy à la tête de l'institution. L'Espérance est convaincu de vendre plus rapidement les petits formats du groupe. Il offre l'œuvre de grand format *Symphonie pathétique* (fig.9) en échange de trois petits tableaux de la collection du Musée : *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal*, 1921 (34.17), *Dégel de mars*, 1909, et *L'Atelier de l'artiste*, 1918. Paul Rainville prend au sérieux cette proposition de l'avocat et il écrit au sous-secrétaire de la Province, Jean Bruchési :

> Le Musée devrait posséder cette «Symphonie pathétique» qui est une des plus belles œuvres de l'artiste et, comme nous n'avons pas de fonds, le marché proposé serait avantageux sous tous rapports parce que la représentation de Suzor-Coté dans nos collections serait de beaucoup plus variée. Nous avons plusieurs toiles de l'artiste dans le même genre que les trois petites que nous pourrions échanger, mais nous n'avons rien du genre de la «Symphonie pathétique». Je crois toutefois que je pourrais réussir l'échange pour deux toiles, au lieu de trois, mais j'aimerais avoir votre autorisation de donner les trois au besoin[38].

L'accord verbal ne se fait pas attendre. De son côté, Rainville convainc l'avocat L'Espérance de n'accepter que deux toiles du Musée : *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal* et *Dégel de mars*[39]. Le 31 janvier, le conservateur reçoit l'autorisation écrite de Jean Bruchési, ponctuée d'une mise en garde sur cette pratique d'échange :

> Il est évident qu'un échange de toile est parfois avantageux, mais il ne serait pas bon d'en faire une pratique courante, surtout lorsque l'échange ne nous est pas demandé par l'artiste lui-même. Je vous rappelle à ce propos que les œuvres d'art, comme tous autres objets achetés par la Province, ne peuvent être revendues sans l'autorisation du Bureau des achats...[40].

Cependant, quelques semaines plus tard, Jean Bruchési reconsidère le contenu de l'échange : il demande à Paul Rainville de garder *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal*[41] et de lui substituer *L'Atelier de l'artiste*. Cette transaction finit par se conclure le 26 mars 1946 avec la veuve qui, pour un montant de 25 000 $, récupère les œuvres déposées au Musée par l'avocat L'Espérance[42], dont *Dégel de mars* et *L'Atelier de l'artiste*.

En préparant la rétrospective de 2002-2003, Laurier Lacroix et son assistante mettent la main sur une courte description, publiée à la suite de l'exposition de 1918, de l'œuvre intitulée *Le Vieux Pommier*[43]. Se pourrait-il que la vue de *L'Atelier de l'artiste* ne représente pas l'atelier de Suzor-Coté, mais qu'elle ait été plutôt captée à partir de cet atelier? Le peintre y aurait brossé la maison voisine ainsi que le pavillon du jardin de la famille orné d'un pommier. L'exercice de comparaison est concluant. *L'Atelier de l'artiste* avait toujours été intitulé de façon erronée. Il constitue avec *Le Vieux Pommier*, disparu depuis 1918, une seule et même œuvre. La substitution de ce tableau et de *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal*, commandée par Jean Bruchési, fut regrettable. L'avenir nous apprendra que le Musée échangeait un tableau de Suzor-Coté contre une réplique. En effet, *La Rue Saint-Louis à Montréal* avait été peinte par Rodolphe Duguay sous la supervision de son maître, Suzor-Coté, qui lui enseignait alors les principes de sa technique «mosaïquée[44]».

Notons, à la défense du conservateur Paul Rainville, que la collection nationale ne possédait rien de comparable à *Symphonie pathétique*, un nu magistral.

La collection initiale ne comportait que trois rares témoignages se rapportant au nu, des peintures de Raoul Barré et de Charles-Ernest De Belle et une étude de Suzor-Coté exécutée au pastel en 1923 (34.30)[45]. Malgré les frontières morales que l'époque imposait à ce genre pictural, on comprend les raisons qui avaient permis l'accès de ces œuvres au Musée : en effet, elles partagent avec *Symphonie pathétique* la pudeur d'un modèle vu de dos ou de trois quarts, ou encore d'une scène enveloppée dans un flou vaporeux. Toutefois, il n'y a rien là qui atteigne la modernité de l'imposante acquisition de 1946, avec son traitement expressionniste et ses accents symbolistes. À son départ du Musée, en 1946, *Le Vieux Pommier* a été confié par Mathilde à la galerie d'art Watson de Montréal. Peu après, l'œuvre fut vendue à un collectionneur.

La collection Suzor-Coté après le décès de l'artiste

L'impulsion donnée à la représentation de l'art de Suzor-Coté dans la collection nationale n'allait pas diminuer après le décès de l'artiste. Entre 1938 et 2003, les acquisitions effectuées ont triplé le nombre d'œuvres acquises avant 1937. Les dons totalisent aujourd'hui une soixantaine d'œuvres – en majorité des sculptures – tandis que les achats atteignent la centaine, qui se décline en vingt peintures, huit sculptures et soixante-douze dessins.

En 1937, la faible représentation de Suzor-Coté «sculpteur» préoccupait beaucoup le conservateur Rainville. Dans la foulée de la proposition que Mathilde lui avait faite quelques mois après la disparition de l'artiste, il recommanda à ses supérieurs d'acheter trois sculptures en bronze : *Le Halage du bois*, 1924, *L'Essoucheur*, vers 1926, et *Femmes de Caughnawaga*, 1924[46]. Seule la première rejoindra la collection, en 1946 (46.101). En 1938, les autorités préférèrent aux choix de Paul Rainville deux bronzes réalisés en 1925, *Le Pionnier* (38.19) et *Le Coureur des bois* (38.20), ces derniers ayant été réalisés dans le contexte du *Monument à Louis Jolliet*. Au fil des années, le Musée achètera d'autres pièces[47], dont le buste du *Père Fleury*, de 1908 (47.161), une des premières sculptures connues de l'artiste et considérée parmi ses types canadiens les plus accomplis[48]. En 1987, on réalisera le grand projet que Suzor-Coté partageait avec Charles-Joseph Simard et Paul Rainville de voir le corpus complet de son œuvre sculpté intégrer la collection nationale. Cette année-là, on acquerra quarante modèles en plâtre, à la faveur d'un don exceptionnel de la petite-nièce de l'artiste et d'un groupe de gens d'affaires[49], ce qui permettra de présenter en 1991 ce remarquable travail dans une exposition et son catalogue signés Pierre L'Allier, le conservateur de l'art moderne à l'époque[50].

À part *Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535*, les œuvres de la collection initiale témoignaient essentiellement de la carrière canadienne de Suzor-Coté (1908-1927). Les sujets traitaient de la vie canadienne, de son histoire, de ses paysages, de ses traditions et de ses légendes[51]. Cette orientation,

donnée à la collection dès les premières acquisitions, se poursuivit jusqu'au décès de l'artiste. C'est seulement à la fin de la décennie suivante que les autorités du Musée entreprirent de représenter, par des œuvres majeures, les paysages exécutés en France lors des deux séjours que Suzor-Coté y fit, entre 1890 et 1894, et entre 1897 et 1907. Ainsi, on a acquis successivement *Les Coteaux de Senlisse*, 1892 (49.12), *La Vallée de Senlisse*, 1906 (54.126), *Effet de soleil, village de Fourcherolles*, 1893 (68.200), et *Paysage de Bretagne*, n.d. (89.173). Par ailleurs, la peinture d'histoire a été enrichie par deux achats d'importance : en 1943, la collection accueillait l'*Esquisse pour «La Mort de Montcalm»*, 1902 (43.176), puis, en 1952, *La Mort de Cadieux* (52.51), auxquels s'est ajoutée, en 1978, une étude pour *Champlain et ses compagnons en hiver*, datée de 1923 (78.52).

Parallèlement au développement de la collection de sculptures, la collection de peintures de Suzor-Coté bénéficie elle aussi de plusieurs achats. Parmi le groupe de tableaux exposés en 1933 dans la salle d'art canadien et offerts en vente par la jeune veuve de l'artiste, le choix des autorités du Musée se porta sur *Les Fumées, port de Montréal*, 1914 (38.18). La même année, ce tableau avait remporté le Prix Jessie Dow à la *31st Spring Exhibition* de l'Art Association of Montreal. À cette composition impressionniste de grand format, préfigurant l'intérêt que le peintre Adrien Hébert portera bientôt à la thématique du port de Montréal, succède l'achat de peintures de dimensions plus modestes, des portraits et des natures mortes[52], sans oublier les petites pochades, ces précieux témoignages exécutés sur le motif, comme *Crépuscule*, 1907 (54.145), et *Coucher de soleil en automne*, 1911 (66.197). En 1978, on acquiert *L'Enfant malade* (78.45), un témoignage-clé de la scène de genre dans la peinture canadienne. Son prix est le plus élevé à avoir été versé par le Musée pour l'achat d'une œuvre de Suzor-Coté. Les dons en peinture aussi ont contribué à une plus juste représentation de l'artiste. Si les paysages d'Arthabaska[53] et le *Portrait de mon vieux modèle*, connu aussi sous le titre *Le Vieux Cultivateur*, 1901 (59.600), provenant de la Succession Maurice Duplessis, figuraient au nombre des acquisitions majeures pour sa qualité d'exécution, l'acquisition de *Allégorie de l'automne canadien*, 1914 (2000.224), élargissait, pour sa part, la variété des sujets avec un exemple inédit de peinture décorative.

Au point de vue de la quantité, c'est encore la collection de dessins qui profita le plus des acquisitions au cours des années qui suivirent le décès de l'artiste. Les achats débutèrent en 1954 avec l'intégration du plus ancien dessin de l'artiste conservé à ce jour, *Portrait de femme*, fusain daté de 1890 (54.105). L'année suivante, la collection accueillait une allégorie personnifiant la *Résignation*, exécutée au pastel vers 1907 (55.576). Les achats ne reprirent ensuite de manière régulière qu'en 1977, après une interruption de deux décennies. La collection accueillit alors une dizaine de dessins, des études pour des tableaux

fig.10
M-A. Suzor-Coté, **Paysanne canadienne,** 1896, pastel sur papier collé sur carton, 54 x 45 cm, MNBAQ. (Photo: Patrick Altman)

historiques[54], des nus[55] ainsi que des pastels ayant pour sujet le portrait et le paysage. Au nombre des pastels, mentionnons le portrait exécuté en 1897 de *Gabrielle Lavergne* (82.09), dont le dynamisme tranche avec le paisible paysage de 1900 qu'offre à voir *L'Étang* (86.108).

Jusqu'à la fin de la décennie 1980, de nouvelles œuvres de Suzor-Coté entrent au Musée. En 1988, la collection fera l'achat du seul carnet de dessins connu de l'artiste, noirci entre 1898 et 1901 d'une soixantaine de croquis. Puis les dons d'œuvres sur papier prendront le relais des achats. Cette même année, le geste généreux de monsieur André Bachand[56] permet d'intégrer à la collection neuf études de paysage français au fusain, non datées. Succèdent à ces petites études trois portraits d'une rare intensité. Le premier, un *Autoportrait* (89.174), [voir Trépanier, fig.7], exécuté à l'huile en 1896-1897, a été acquis en 1989; le deuxième, *Portrait de femme*, 1907 (98.33), est un fusain, offert en don en 1998; le troisième, la plus récente acquisition de Suzor-Coté, est le portrait inédit d'une *Paysanne canadienne* (2003.46). Cette étude de caractère (fig.10) révèle toute la maîtrise de portraitiste et de pastelliste à laquelle Suzor-Coté était parvenu après son premier séjour de formation en France.

La vaste collection des œuvres de Suzor-Coté conservée au MNBAQ constitue un outil de connaissance de premier plan pour l'historien de l'art ainsi que pour ceux et celles qui recherchent la délectation. La dimension et la qualité de cette collection permettent d'en suivre le développement esthétique, d'apprécier la grande variété des œuvres et de bien saisir la précieuse contribution de l'artiste à l'histoire de l'art canadien. De plus, elle possède l'atout unique de s'être développée très intimement avec le Musée. La collection des œuvres de Suzor-Coté est donc une «collection miroir» qui réfléchit, avec ses quatre-vingts ans d'existence, l'histoire des orientations et des pratiques muséologiques du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

MICHÈLE GRANDBOIS
Conservatrice de l'art moderne, 1900-1950
Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec

Notes

L'auteur tient à remercier Denis Martin et Nathalie Thibault du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec pour leur précieux support à la recherche.

1 Les acquisitions concernant Suzor-Coté se répartissent en 184 achats et 63 dons.

2 Voir Fernand HARVEY, «La politique culturelle d'Athanase David, 1919-1936», *Les Cahiers des dix*, Québec, Éditions Laliberté, n° 57 (2003), p.31-83.

3 La loi relative au Secrétariat de la province est sanctionnée en 1868. Gardien du Grand Sceau de la province, le Secrétariat est d'abord une chancellerie, c'est-à-dire un organisme chargé de sceller tous les actes administratifs importants du gouvernement. À certains moments et, selon le cas, durant des périodes plus ou moins longues, le Secrétariat assume également l'administration des lois relatives au système municipal, à la police, à l'hygiène, à l'instruction publique, aux écoles de réforme et d'industrie, aux musées, ainsi qu'aux conservatoires de musique et d'art dramatique.

4 Ce sont notamment les Archives de la province de Québec, les Écoles des beaux-arts de Québec et de Montréal, la Commission des sites et monuments historiques et la Loi sur les musées (toutes fondées au début des années 1920). Voir HARVEY, «La politique culturelle d'Athanase David, 1919-1936», p.40-49.

5 Voir *La Presse*, 7 avril 1920 et *The Montreal Star*, 7 Apr. 1920.

6 Le jury visite la *37th Spring Exhibition* de l'Art Association of Montreal (du 25 mars au 17 avril 1920) et la *42nd Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Exhibition* (du 18 novembre au 19 décembre 1920), présentées dans les locaux de l'AAM.

7 Les œuvres acquises à la *37th Spring Exhibition* sont : Alice Des Clayes, *Place Jacques-Cartier, Montréal*, 1919? (34.587); John Young Johnstone, *Arrière-cour d'une vieille maison de la rue Saint-Vincent, Montréal*, 1919 ou début 1920 (34.250); Albert Henri Robinson, *Midi, village de Longue-Pointe*, 1919 (34.567); Suzor-Coté, *Après-midi d'avril*, 1920 (34.591). Les achats du printemps sont complétés par deux eaux-fortes de Herbert Raine, représentant des scènes à Saint-Joachim aujourd'hui disparues. Les deux œuvres acquises à l'automne, à l'exposition de l'Académie royale du Canada, sont : Maurice Cullen, *Le Printemps, rivière Cachée*, 1920 (ou avant) (34.115), et Clarence Gagnon, *Le Pont de glace à Québec*, 1919 ou 1920 (34.636).

8 Voir Laurier LACROIX et coll., *Peindre à Montréal 1915-1930. Les peintres de la Montée Saint-Michel et leurs contemporains*, Montréal/Québec, Galerie de L'UQAM/Musée du Québec, 1996, 143p., et «Le paysage, une forme d'art national» dans Laurier LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, Ottawa/Montréal/ Québec, Musée des beaux-arts du Canada/Musée du Québec/Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2002, p.163.

9 Après son achat, le tableau sera exposé à l'Hôtel du Parlement puis expédié, en mars 1924, à la résidence officielle du Lieutenant-gouverneur, au Bois-de-Coulonge (appelé à l'époque Spencer Wood) où il ornera les murs de la grande salle à manger jusqu'au 7 février 1945, date de son retour au Musée de la province. (Voir lettre de Charles-Joseph Simard, sous-secrétaire de la province, envoyée à A. Metayerm, sous-ministre des Travaux publics, Hôtel du Gouvernement, 12 mars 1924). Il s'agit sans doute de la peinture signalée dans l'inventaire du 14 mai 1934 par Paul Rainville sous le titre *Scène d'hiver à Arthabaska. Après-midi d'avril* a longtemps porté le titre *Dégel d'avril.*

10 Au numéro de catalogue 241, l'œuvre porte le titre *La Bénédiction des Érables. Vieille coutume canadienne-française disparue.* À ce propos, Laurier Lacroix s'interroge sur l'existence véritable de cette «vieille coutume canadienne française disparue» représentée sur ce tableau de Suzor-Coté. LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.206.

11 *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings «Canadian Art of Today»*, Winnipeg Art Gallery (du 15 octobre au 10 décembre 1921); *Canadian National Exhibition*, Toronto (du 27 août au 10 septembre 1921); l'œuvre est mise en vente à 2 000 $.

12 «A Worthy Policy», *The Montreal Star*, 25 Jan. 1922.

13 Voir sur la contribution de Duguay au tableau : *Rodolphe Duguay, Journal 1907-1927*. Texte intégral, établi, présenté et annoté par Jean-Guy DAGENAIS, Montréal, Les Éditions Varia, 2002, p. 100 et 102. Comme l'indique Laurier Lacroix, Rodolphe Duguay aurait travaillé à partir du pastel de 1913 (voir n° 83 dans LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.207) et de sa version à l'huile réalisée en 1914, aujourd'hui propriété du Club Saint-Denis de Montréal.

14 Cette correspondance, constituée de plus d'une centaine de lettres, est conservée aux Archives institutionnelles du MNBAQ.

15 Paul Rainville, beau-frère d'Athanase David, était conservateur adjoint de 1932 à 1941, puis conservateur de 1941 à 1952.

16 Se chiffrant à un peu plus de huit cents œuvres, dont une quarantaine furent détruites lors de l'incendie de la résidence du Lieutenant gouverneur au Bois-de-Coulonge en février 1966, la collection initiale est connue aujourd'hui grâce à l'inventaire qu'en fit Paul Rainville entre 1934 et 1938.

17 Lettre à Charles-Joseph Simard, 2 juillet 1925.

18 Le Gouvernement achète ces deux bronzes pour un montant de 500 $, que l'artiste réclame dans une lettre adressée à J.-C. Simard, le 12 septembre 1926 : «J'en ai un

besoin très pressant. Je suis dans un grand embarras». Les deux sculptures sont déposées à l'Assemblée nationale avant d'être transférées au Musée en 1938.

19 Deux autres dessins se sont ajoutés dans les inventaires successifs. Les fusains sont *Le Père Tardif*, 1908 (34.65); *Majoric Tardif*, 1908 (34.66); *Tit-Gène Pépin*, 1910 (34.50); *Charles Labelle*, 1910? (34.64); *Pierre Denault*, 1922 (34.45); *Balthazar Paradis*, 1924 (34.43); *Le Père Boisjoli*, 1925 (34.53); *Madame Gauthier*, 1925 (34.58), *Tête de paysanne*, nd (34.51), et la sanguine est *Le Père Verville*, 1911 (34.54).

20 Dès juillet 1926, Charles-Joseph Simard s'enquiert auprès de l'artiste des dessins qui ont servi à illustrer *Maria Chapdelaine*. «Si tu as encore les originaux, je crois que nous pourrions faire des affaires», écrit-il le 13 juillet 1926. Le 10 mai 1927, Arthur T. Côté reprend ce projet et écrit à Simard au sujet des dessins dont il a réussi à trouver dix-sept originaux. Il termine : «D'une façon ou d'une autre, nous réussirons d'ici à quelque temps à réunir et compléter la série de dessins de l'édition M.C. [Maria Chapdelaine]». Le 26 mai, il en retrouve quatre autres, ce qui porte le nombre à vingt et un. Le 13 octobre suivant, Arthur écrit à Simard : «Vous recevrez par Express une caisse contenant quatre dessins originaux de la 1ère édition française de Maria Chapdelaine. Ces dessins complètent la série des 25 dessins dont 21 vous ont déjà été expédiés...». Les quatre derniers dessins expédiés par Arthur T. Côté – *Le Chien* (34.81), *Le Four* (34.87), *La Pompe* (34.88) et *François Paradis* (34.90) – sont des copies qui ont été commandées à Rodolphe Duguay par Suzor-Coté. Il en est de même pour une autre composition qui rejoindra la collection initiale en 1927 : *Les Brûlés, lac à l'Eau Claire* (34.60).

21 Nous n'avons jamais retrouvé la liste de ces six fusains. Un seul d'entre eux est identifié par Côté dans la lettre à Simard du 15 juin 1927 : *La Mère Moreau*, 1921 (34.697), dont il écrit qu'il est facturé à 200 $ parce que : «...c'est un morceau exceptionnel. Les artistes le considère (*sic*) comme une œuvre d'une très grande valeur au point de vue artistique». Le titre du pastel est aussi inconnu.

22 Simard répondait à l'invitation d'Arthur Côté (8 juillet 1927) : «Je serais très heureux de vous voir pour causer ensemble des affaires de mon frère Suzor et en même temps examiner à tête reposée les œuvres qui pourraient figurer avec avantage dans le musée que le Gouvernement doit construire [et] de cette façon perpétuer ses œuvres et sa mémoire». Suivant cette visite, Arthur lui écrit que les dessins et pastels sélectionnés à ce moment-là lui parviendront prochainement.

23 L'excellente recherche menée par Denis Martin et Nathalie Thibault sur l'histoire des acquisitions de Suzor-Coté par le gouvernement montre que toutes les œuvres signalées sur la liste d'Arthur n'ont pas été achetées comme prévu. Le tableau intitulé *Le dégel en mars à Arthabaska*, et les quatre pastels – *Fleurs de pommiers, Habitant partant pour le bois, Une rue d'Arthabaska, hiver* et *Fondation du Séminaire de Joliette* – n'ont jamais appartenu à nos collections. Parmi les œuvres acquises, les fusains sont : *L'Heure de la soupe*, 1899 (34.46); *Faucheur aiguisant sa faulx*, 1913 (34.42); *Le Porteur d'eau d'érable*, 1916 (34.40); *Le Vieux Verger*, avant 1927 (34.68); *Étude pour «Le Défricheur»*, 1927 (34.55); *Étude pour «L'Essoucheur»*, 1927 (34.47); *Indien de Caughnawaga*, 1927 (34.61); *Le Chef Montour, Caughnawaga*, 1927 (34.41). Deux œuvres acquises avant 1934 pourraient fort bien correspondre à *Bûcheron canadien* et à *Étude d'un bûcheron* qui portent respectivement les nos 15 et 20 sur la liste du 4 octobre 1927 : il s'agit des deux fusains *Le Bûcheron*, vers 1920 (34.63), et *Le Bûcheron*, 1918 (34.48). L'acquisition réunit aussi les pastels suivants : *Étude pour «L'arrivée de Samuel de Champlain à Québec»*, 1908-1909 (34.32); *Madeleine de Verchères*, vers 1910 (34.24); *Le Jeune Bouvier*, 1915 ou 1916 (34.38); *Rue Laviolette, Trois Rivières*, vers 1920 (P.102 : œuvre détruite dans l'incendie du Bois-de Coulonge); *Les Trois-Rivières, rue du Haut-Boc*, vers 1920 (34.31); *L'île enchantée*, vers 1920 (34.25); *Alexander Mackenzie*, avant 1927 (34.23); *Poésie, Littérature, Musique*, vers 1920 (34.29); *Harmonie du soir*, vers 1920 (34.18); *La Vieille Église, Lennoxville,*

P. Q., vers 1920 (34.26); *Idylle*, avant 1927 (34.35); *Sentier fleuri*, avant 1927 (34.27); *La Canadienne*, avant 1927 (34.33), et *Inspiration*, avant 1927 (34.34).

24 Entre le 25 avril 1927 et le 27 décembre 1930, sept paiements totalisant 8 298 $ seront versés à l'artiste pour l'achat de ses œuvres. (Correspondance entre Charles-Joseph Simard et Arthur T. Côté, de 1927 à 1930)

25 La compilation a été effectuée à partir de deux sources : la liste des 152 œuvres de l'exposition et les cinq prises de vue qui témoignent de cet événement. Voir LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.312-13 et 364.

26 Les œuvres sont *Le Halage du bois*, *Femmes de Caughnawaga*, *L'Homme de Douleurs* et *Bacchante*.

27 «J'entends souvent dire parmis (*sic*) les gens qui aiment les arts, et les sujets canadiens surtout, Pourquoi le gouvernement de Québec n'achète-t-il pas tous Mes Bronzes, et mes travaux sur les types de la province. Bientôt, tout sera disparu, tout sera vendu...».

28 Jean CHAUVIN, *Ateliers. Études sur vingt deux peintres et sculpteurs canadiens illustrées de reproductions d'œuvres*, Montréal et New-York, Louis Carrier & Cie/Les Éditions du Mercure, 1928, p.91.

29 Dans une des dernières lettres adressées à Charles-Joseph Simard, Arthur T. Côté écrit : «J'espère que vous n'avez pas oublié la question des bronzes. Mr David qui est venu le [Suzor-Coté] voir avant son départ pour la Floride [où l'artiste s'installe pour sa convalescence], et Mr le Ministre lui a dit comme vous d'ailleurs qu'il s'en occuperait en temps et lieu» (Outremont, 21 janvier 1929). La correspondance entre les deux hommes se termine avec une lettre datée du 26 juillet 1929, dans laquelle le sous-secrétaire fait parvenir un chèque de 2 000 $ pour Suzor-Coté, sans préciser la nature de l'achat ou du service.

30 Suzor-Coté à Paul Rainville, Daytona Beach, octobre 1933.

31 Henri Du Berger a décrit très précisément la galerie «réservée aux arts» dans son article du 22 septembre 1933 publié dans *L'Action catholique de Québec*.

32 «Nous vous avons dédié un des petits salons du musée. Nous avons mis dans ce salon tout ce que nous possédons de vous. Les visiteurs voient cette salle avec grand plaisir et nous en avons eu beaucoup de félicitations». Pierre-Georges Roy à Suzor-Coté, Québec, 25 juillet 1933.

33 Hugues DE JOUVANCOURT, *Suzor-Coté*, Montréal, Éditions La Frégate, 1967, p.17.

34 Lettre de Paul Rainville à Pierre-Georges Roy, 1 sept. 1937, où il expose la demande de madame Suzor-Coté.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Le 5 juillet 1934, Paul Rainville écrivait à Arthur Côté qu'il était autorisé à faire l'achat au prix de 240 $.

37 Contrat de vente entre Mathilde Suzor-Coté et Léo L'Espérance devant Me J.L. Desjardins, notaire, le 10 juillet 1945, accompagné d'une copie de la liste originale faite par madame Suzor-Coté des peintures entreposées chez Morgan Trust. Archives institutionnelles MNBAQ, dossier de l'artiste.

38 Paul Rainville expose l'offre dans une lettre adressée à Jean Bruchési, le 21 jan. 1946.

39 Paul Rainville à Jean Bruchési, 28 jan. 1946.

40 Jean Bruchési à Paul Rainville, 31 jan. 1946.

41 Une note manuscrite à l'encre, datée du 14 mars 1946, est inscrite dans le coin inférieur droit de la lettre de Bruchési du 31 janvier : «Substituer L'Atelier / de Suzor-Coté, à Vieille / rue St-Louis Mtl. Téléphone / de M. J. Bruchési, le 14 / Mars 46, 11.00 a.m. / P. R».

42 Lettres de Paul Rainville à William Watson de la Watson Art Galleries, 18 mars 1946; Mathilde S. Suzor-Coté à Paul Rainville, 21 mars 1946; Paul Rainville à Mathilde S. Suzor-Coté, 22 mars 1946; et Mathilde Suzor-Coté à Paul Rainville, 26 mars 1946.

43 «Among Montreal artists whose work one always looks for is Mr. Suzor-Cote, R.C.A., who this year exhibits winter scenes among others : 'Le Vieux Pommier,' shows an old apple tree and snow-laden, against the warm tones of an old-brick colored house». «Artists Young and Well-Known in Exhibition», *The Herald*, 5 Apr. 1918. Voir aussi LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.216.

44 LACROIX, *Suzor-Coté. Lumière et matière*, p.198 et p.202.

45 Raoul Barré, *La Baigneuse*, 1913 (34.02), Charles-Ernest De Belle, *Le Baiser*, avant 1926 (34.570), et Suzor-Coté, *Étude de nu*, 1923 (34.30). Nous ne connaissons pas précisément le moment de l'acquisition de ce petit pastel de Suzor-Coté, qui était présent dans la rétrospective de 1929 et accroché, en 1935, dans le bureau du secrétaire de la province, Athanase David.

46 Paul Rainville à Pierre-Georges Roy, 1 sept. 1937.

47 Ce sont les bronzes *L'Hydrographe ou l'Arpenteur : Étude pour le Monument à Louis Jolliet*, 1925? (78.339), et *Docteur Rodolphe Boulet*, 1924 (78.340); et deux plâtres patinés : *Jeanne Boissonneau*, 1925 (79.146), et *Démangeaison ou Le Modèle*, 1925 (79.147).

48 Pierre L'ALLIER, *Suzor-Coté : l'œuvre sculpté*, Québec, Musée du Québec, 1991, p.43.

49 Madame Eugénie Côté Farmer Saint-Jean, petite-fille d'Eugène Côté, frère de Suzor-Coté et groupe B.K.M.; numéros d'accession 87.175 à 213.

50 La donation compte trente-sept sculptures différentes, un fragment pour *Le Halage du bois*, une deuxième version de référence en plâtre blanc pour *La Glaneuse* et enfin une deuxième version en plâtre blanc pour *Le Trophée*. L'exposition fut présentée au Musée du Québec du 19 mai au 2 septembre 1991.

51 Exception faite des pastels suivants réalisés au cours des années 1920, qui présentent une iconographie symboliste : *Harmonie du soir* (34.18), *L'île enchantée* (34.25), *Sentier fleuri* (34.27), *Idylle* (34.28 et 34.35), *Poésie, Littérature, Musique* (34.29), et *Inspiration* (34.34).

52 *Portrait de femme*, 1920 (73.360); *Portrait d'homme*, 1911? (75.290); *Vieux Paysan canadien-français*, 1918 (77.211); *Nature morte au canard*, 1897 (46.115), et *La Bécasse*, entre 1894 et 1897 (98.21).

53 *Temps orageux, passage à Arthabaska*, 1923 (89.31), *Le Pont Bourbeau, Arthabaska*, 1902? (93.297), et *Le Vieux Pont aux environs d'Arthabaska*, 1907 (95.12).

54 *Étude pour Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535*, 1905 ou 1906 (84.24), et *Étude pour La Mort de Montcalm*, 1902 (89.30).

55 *Nu [féminin] de dos*, 1924 (79.127), et *Nu masculin de dos*, 1892 (85.12).

56 Voir les œuvres portant les numéros d'accession de 88.15 R à 88.21.

Summary

SUZOR-COTÉ AND THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

The collection of works Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté in the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is an indispensable reference source for both the researcher and the art lover. The drawings, sculptures and paintings conserved here total two hundred and forty-seven works created between 1890 and 1927; and this exceptional corpus of work constitutes one percent of the museum's extensive holdings. The Suzor-Coté collection is multifaceted and ranges from a sketchbook showing his creative process to significant pastels and images of early spring on canvas, as well as strikingly realistic drawings of Canadian "types." There is also a group of sculpted works consisting of forty plaster models. In short, the collection reflects his expressive variety of work and demonstrates the outstanding contribution he made to Canadian art in the years that preceded the period of modernity in Canada.

It is important when considering the historical and aesthetic importance of the Suzor-Coté collection to keep in mind its long ties to this institution; and that in itself provides an insight into the development and growth of the museum. In 1920, at the beginning of the project to establish and create a provincial museum, the purchase of Suzor-Coté's *Après midi d'avril*, along with paintings by Maurice Cullen, Alice Des Clayes, Clarence Gagnon, John Young Johnston and Albert Robinson, was part of the politically-motivated plan to ensure that the collection would be "a portrait of the French-Canadian soul." This first sale of a Suzor-Coté work to the state marked the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between the fifty-one year old artist from Arthabaska and the Quebec government, represented by the Honourable Athanase David, Provincial Secretary of Quebec. For example, with the support of the provincial Under-Secretary, Charles-Joseph Simard, who was a loyal admirer and friend of Suzor-Coté, the state acquired *Jacques Cartier rencontre les Indiens à Stadaconé, 1535* in 1923. This painting from 1905-06 had been intended for the Senate in Ottawa. In 1926, the Suzor-Coté holdings were increased with the acquisition of two sculptures, *Le Vieux Pionnier canadien*, 1912 (38.55) and *La Compagne du vieux pionnier*, 1918 (38.54). The following year when the artist began to suffer from an illness that would soon put an end to his career, about sixty works,

mostly pastel and charcoal drawings entered the collection. Representing the province of Quebec, Charles Joseph Simard had visited the artist's studio in Montreal on two occasions in order to select the works and to negotiate the purchases with Arthur T. Côté, then acting as an art agent for his brother. On Simard's second visit he was accompanied by the painter Horatio Walker. This large acquisition is unique in many ways but perhaps most significantly it demonstrates the recognition of the most celebrated Quebec artist by government authorities and that it occurred during his lifetime.

This exceptional gesture would, of course, have a major effect on the activities of the museum. In 1929, the art community was made aware of the importance given to the work of Suzor-Coté when Simard organized the artist's first retrospective. Of the one hundred and fifty-two works presented in the exhibition hall of the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, more than a third belonged to the Province. In 1933 at the inauguration of the Musée de la Province, approximately ten percent of the eight hundred works in the collection were by Suzor-Coté and this number greatly outweighed that of art objects by any other Canadian artist. It is also interesting to note that half of the four hundred items that were acquired at the very start of the collection were produced after 1920. These figures show that the government of the time had made a decisive effort to encourage and support contemporary art, but without neglecting the purchasing of historical works. Nevertheless, when the Canadian art gallery opened in June 1933, visitors were able to appreciate the museum's commitment to contemporary acquisitions. For example, there were four paintings by Suzor-Coté, including *Les Ombres qui passent, rivière Nicolet* from 1925, and *Un coin du Vieux Montréal*, before 1927. At this inaugural exhibition, one of the three small spaces adjoining the large Canadian gallery was hung with works on paper by Suzor-Coté that Simard had acquired in 1927. Here the visitor could see more than seventy artworks, including portrait studies of rural people, illustrations for *Maria Chapdeleine* and Symbolist pastels. By showcasing the work of Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté in this exceptional manner, the curator Pierre-Georges Roy and his assistant Paul Rainville assured his dominant position in the pantheon of Canadian and Quebec artists. In 1933, the second largest number of works in the collection were by Suzor-Coté. He was surpassed only by Alfred Laliberté, who was represented by about two hundred bronze sculptures that the government had commissioned in 1928 to illustrate the legends, customs and artisan skills of the people of New France.

The museum's initial support of Suzor-Coté would not diminish after the death of the artist. On the contrary, between 1938 and 2003 the number of acquisitions tripled those obtained before 1937. Nevertheless during his lifetime the dream of Suzor-Coté, and one shared by Simard, to have an extensive corpus of paintings, drawings and sculpture in the museum was not realized.

However, over the ensuing years the museum acquired a number of his major paintings, such as in 1938, *Les Fumées, port de Montréal*, 1914, which had been awarded the prestigious Jessie Dow Prize at the Art Association of Montreal's *31st Spring Exhibition*. Then in 1949 and in 1954, landscapes produced during the artist's two sojourns to France from 1890 to 1894 and from 1897 to 1907, most notably *Les Coteaux de Senlisse*, 1892, and *La Vallée de Senlisse*, 1906, further enriched the collection. Through an exceptional gift from the artist's great-niece and a group of businessmen in 1987, Suzor-Coté's dream came closer to fulfillment as forty plaster sculptures representing his entire sculpture production entered the museum. In 2003, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec acquired the previously unpublished portrait *Paysanne canadienne*, 1896. This character study reveals Suzor-Coté's great mastery of portraiture in pastel, skills he had learned during his first trip to France. The acquisition in 1946 of *Symphonie pathéthique*, 1925, describes a process that goes beyond the standard acquisition practices by purchase or gift as it was exchanged for three smaller works already in the collection. It surely demonstrates the importance that the curator Paul Rainville gave to this magnificent nude with its expressionist treatment and Symbolist undertones. At the same time, it signifies how much ingenuity is needed to combat the endemic inadequacy of financial resources in public art institutions.

Translation: Janet Logan

TOM THOMSON
Dennis REID (ed.)
Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver: National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario and Douglas & McIntyre, 2002
386 p., illus., $65.00

Although it might seem to some that Canadian artist Tom Thomson (1877-1917) has been done to death, an in-depth, scholarly gathering and examination of his work was in fact long overdue. The last major monograph on Thomson was David Silcox and Harold Town's celebratory if somewhat irreverent work, *The Silence and the Storm*, published in 1977. The collaborative 2002 exhibition and its accompanying multi-authored book on our national artist-hero was masterminded by the National Gallery's Curator of Canadian Art, Charles Hill and Art Gallery of Ontario Chief Curator, Dennis Reid. From the outset they must have been determined to avoid the pitfalls that have long plagued the path of those en route to "mapping Tom," (the title of one of the essays in *Tom Thomson*). There is almost no mention in this book, for example, about the murky circumstances of Thomson's tragic, early death – officially by drowning in Canoe

Lake in July of 1917, a few weeks shy of his fortieth birthday. No pop-psych personality analyses, speculations on the artist's love life, personal habits and interests or new possible causes of his demise are put forward, as has been the case in so many other publications on Thomson. Instead we have a serious, straightforward, scholarly look at the context – political, social, economic, aesthetic – and at the paintings. The more mundane facts of his life are kept to a point-form chronology, compiled by Joan Murray.

The approach of individually authored essays was the right one and is laudable. But I think the fear of falling into fulsomeness and the commitment to adhere to a critical focus makes the book just ever so slightly tame and dry in tone, which is lamentable. Nevertheless, this is a hugely important work and achievement. It immediately becomes the authoritative text on the artist, and is a good read. Its design has been carefully considered and the book is physically beautiful and pleasing, while remaining elegant and understated. Every decision and care seems to have been taken to serve and showcase the work of Thomson. The colour in the plates is excellent, which is an achievement in itself. The book is a coffee table tome, but only in the good sense of that term – it is a distinct pleasure to hold and look through. A reader can dip in for only a few moments, or choose to read just one essay at a time, as each provides a separate lens on his production. One could also sit down and read the whole book in one go, then spend time digesting the feast. Amazingly, a full exhibition history for each of the one hundred and forty works has been compiled, which is rare these days when it is so difficult for galleries and museums to muster and allocate resources to the more scholarly, less marketing-oriented aspects of a project.

All the myth-making that has gone on around Thomson aside, there truly is something in his work itself that compels and moves us to edge closer to him and his thinking – if only we could. How often have I, canoeing along the shore of an Algonquin Park lake, felt embarrassed by my irresistible but maudlin yearnings to paddle where Tom paddled, to see what he saw, hoping to penetrate more deeply the feeling and conviction of his paintings. There is a passion and intensity about his work, the sensuous pushing about of the gorgeously coloured, stiff but malleable paint – which Thomson used so effectively as a carrier for feeling, ambition, ideals, even for a sense of place. He seemed able to create a powerfully concentrated elixir of what David Milne termed "aesthetic kick" (riffing on Clive Bell's invented phrase "aesthetic emotion"), but using stylistic means very different from those of Milne. In reading the five main essays of this book, I felt the underlying commitment and excitement of each author's response to Thomson's work, but I also had the sense of this being constantly held in check by intellectual rigor. None of the writers could afford to let down his guard for fear of falling victim, as have others in the past, to the overwhelming fumes from the spell of the Thomson myth.

It is a powerfully bewitching myth that can lead people to do things even more foolish than composing purple prose. I myself, I confess, have not been immune: I recall one summer several years ago on a canoe trip in Algonquin Park when I suddenly felt utterly compelled to change my planned route and head into an area denoted on the map as "under-maintained," which turned out to be a dangerously brutal euphemism indeed. But I was convinced in a crazily "bushed" manner that I would find the site for Thomson's *Northern River*, that I would spot that famous black scrim of twisted jackpines with the swampy little waterway opening up behind among the thick, punishing, unchecked growth and almost unpassable "portages." Surely Tom would have explored this part of the park, and perhaps no art historian had been here before. After several days of exhausting bushwhacking, I emerged in crushed disappointment, concluding, as Dennis Reid tells us coolly on page 79, that *Northern River* is actually an amalgam, a studio concoction that is a summation or paradigm for any and every swampy lake outlet that Thomson paddled. It existed only in the artist's imagination and despite the purity of our desire and motivation, no effort of ours can take us there in reality; we can only journey towards it by looking at the painting.

Not to be swayed then by the heady, visceral delight of Thomson's paintings, the delicious colour and paint handling, the sheer radicalness of his project (the sketches particularly are still alive and pack their almost violent aesthetic kick), the writers remain cool-headed during their own journey. How *did* the five male authors of this book fare on their quest to re-examine the work of Thomson, giving the reader all the context they could muster, and keeping their focus scholarly as they penetrated more and more deeply into the dangerous mire of Thomson-land, armed only with their antidote of intellectual rigour and critical focus as their defense?

The first of the party is Andrew Hunter, who is an artist, a curator and a writer, known for projects that obliterate and delightfully confuse old boundaries between/among traditional art and artifacts, the curated exhibition, and installation. Hunter does not tell the reader at the outset of his essay "Mapping Tom," what it will encompass or try to achieve. A reader must just forge ahead and move on from one of his three subheadings – *Going North*, *Gone Fishing*, *Industrial Park* – to the next. While many of Hunter's points are fascinating, his essay would have benefited from some basic infrastructure elements, such as an introduction and a conclusion. Unless, however, it was purposely meant to just unravel like a "ripping yarn of derring-do" recounted in one of the fireside lumberjack songs Hunter speculates that Thomson knew. Hunter does raise questions and make statements that are new and interesting; for example, that much of the underpinning of Thomson's approach to nature can be

found in Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* (of 1653), which Thomson owned and read thoroughly. Hunter postulates that many of Thomson's paintings could have been executed at good fishing spots. In fact, he tells us that Thomson took his fishing as seriously as he took his painting, which I found a shock to contemplate, although apparently Thomson was an outstanding fisherman.

Charles Hill notes in his essay that when A.Y. Jackson first visited Mowat Lodge in Algonquin Park in 1914 he wrote to J.E.H. MacDonald that: "It appears that Tom Thomson is some fisherman, quite noted around here." The importance of Thomson's fishing and his overall ability to thrive as a woodsman is also touched on by Dennis Reid, and he quotes the Canadian art historian Donald Buchanan, writing in 1950: "Thomson's originality as a landscape artist and his skill as a woodsman developed hand in hand, one as it were deriving sustenance from the other." So the importance of fishing and life in the woods to Thomson is not an entirely new idea, but is one that is brought to the fore in this book especially as the integration of all aspects of life was an Arts and Crafts ideal. It contributes to the feeling that the authors of this book are attempting to give us a properly reconstituted Thomson, one without overlays and distortions. The texts prompt the reader to re-think the role of Thomson's art in his life as one distinct element, but not the central or only meaningful activity. It could also be said that the same needs to be done for J.E.H. MacDonald, who integrated design, writing, painting and other activities in his life in accordance with the Arts and Crafts paradigm, yet he is remembered today in the general culture solely as a painter.

Independent curator and writer Robert Stacey follows Hunter with an essay that focusses on Thomson's work as an applied artist. It is a beautifully written text, dense with detail about the artist's early life in commercial art, especially when he came to Toronto in late 1908 or early 1909, working first at Grip and then at Rous and Mann. Stacey has carefully reconstructed Thomson's milieu and activities in a highly informative manner. Things have changed so much in the last century that the old intertwined nature of art and applied art needs to be explained as these are now completely separate fields of study and practice. Thomson was not, after all, trained as an artist and it was only through the rather technical activity of commercial art that he met artists in Toronto, including those who would form the Group of Seven. It was these fellow artists who encouraged him to paint. In fact A.Y. Jackson and J.E.H. MacDonald almost had to twist Thomson's arm to get him to devote time and concentrated effort to his painting. His serious production as a fine artist dates pretty much from only the last five years of his life, beginning in 1912 when he was thirty-five. Charles Hill writes in his essay: "There was no precedent [pre-1912] in his life to predict the passion with which he would now pursue his art." Everyone was surprised, maybe even Thomson himself.

The middle essay is by Dennis Reid, who took charge of the overall conception and editing of the book (while Charles Hill managed the curating of the exhibition). Reid sets out to explore the Arts and Crafts movement as it manifested itself in Toronto when Thomson lived there from late 1908 until his death in 1917. In a nutshell, the movement was centred on a rather utopian vision of an artistic/craft community that was non-hierarchical and led to lives that were aestheticized and in accord with nature. Reid holds that its ideals and underlying notions were if not wholly, at least partially absorbed by Thomson. He believes that this helps to explain the integrated power and passionate resonance he feels in Thomson's work, where design, art, the artist's beliefs and lived experience come together so wonderfully.

Historian John Wadland then takes the stage with his essay called "Tom Thomson's Places," that attempts to reconstruct how Thomson would have seen Algonquin Park in the years he painted (and fished) there, from 1912 to 1917. Providing great detail and adopting a "curious eye" (a term he borrows from cultural theorist Irit Rogoff), Wadland seeks to identify the artist's cultural baggage, and speculates that Thomson was acutely aware of the scale and brutality of the logging industry in Algonquin Park. He also suggests that it is highly unlikely that Thomson experienced the area as wilderness at all. This is certainly a major debunking of the myth of Thomson travelling through the untrammelled wilds and goes a long way to redress the sad state of affairs whereby, in Wadland's words, Thomson (and his art) has been reduced to a logo for the "north."

The fifth of the main essays is Charles Hill's on Tom Thomson's paintings. Hill painstakingly constructed the most accurate chronology of Thomson's paintings that he could establish and used this timeline to structure his essay. As a result of his intense observation and analysis, one develops a distinct, almost palpable sense of the paintings themselves, ranged round a room for our contemplation, season by season, with the winter studio paintings following on the small sketches done in the earlier part of the year. The colour reproductions follow the same sequence, and it is very easy to hold one's finger in the plates section and flip back and forth while reading Hill's essay, to follow in his footsteps, or rather eye-steps (if that were a word). Hill's analyses and ruminations on each work always ring true, and a reader can imagine him speaking to us spontaneously in front of each painting, speculating on what it was that interested Thomson in the scene and how he set up his composition and laid on his colours.

As well as maps, a bibliography, a list of exhibitions and an index, the book publishes all of Thomson's known letters, which are illustrated with reproductions of related photographs and drawings. There is a most informative chapter on the artist's materials by the two conservators who worked on the exhibition for

the Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Gallery, Sandra Webster-Cook and Anne Ruggles. Virtually no stone, it would seem, was left unturned, except those that would have exposed the writhing snakes of populist conjecture and myth-making. No effort was spared, and we are the beneficiaries.

Was nothing missed? Thomson's reputed love of reading, especially poetry, and of music (and how these related to his painting), do come to mind. Other books on the artist mention these but perhaps it is too difficult to substantiate any conections. One other aspect not touched on by any author here but dealt with previously for example by Silcox and Town, is the notion of Thomson's composition and pictorial space being derived from the "canoe-eye view." The term was previously used by Robert Stacey in writing on Frances Anne Hopkins. Perhaps this topic was not considered important or germane by these authors.

In conclusion, the book has accomplished even more than its principals likely set out to achieve, which can happen with truly well-conceived projects. It is a model, an exemplar, an inspiration in methodology, design and production, writing, scope, and scholarship.

LIZ WYLIE
Art Curator
University of Toronto

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA
Ideas, Art, Architecture
Douglas ORD
Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003
464 p., illus., $49.95

The slow transformation of Ottawa from lumber town to fairy-tale capital of turrets and crocketted spires is one of the central, if most unlikely, stories in Canadian architectural history. Ottawa's picturesque, neo-Gothic character is unique in the western hemisphere, and against all odds – bureaucratic indifference, political meddling, budget freezes, kickback scandals, aesthetic and cultural conservatism – the public buildings that dominate the city's core especially along Wellington and Sussex Streets, are the work of some of Canada's most inventive architects of the last 125 years. Among them are Thomas Fuller, Thomas Stent,

Ross and MacFarlane, Ernest Cormier, Ernest Barrott, Arthur Erickson, John A. Pearson, John Lyle, Douglas Cardinal and the Montreal firm of Rother, Bland and Trudeau.

With the completion of a new building for the National Gallery of Canada in 1988, Moshe Safdie, the Israeli-Canadian-American architect could be added to that distinguished list. Almost twenty years later, Safdie's design for the National Gallery still ranks, arguably, as one of his most widely-recognised, successful and accomplished works. For those who follow Safdie's career – and there have been several book-length studies and many articles including *Moshe Safdie: Buildings and Projects 1967–1992* (1996) and *Moshe Safdie* (1996) – the National Gallery commission proved to be the first of a long series of large-scale Canadian projects including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1985-1991), Ottawa City Hall (1988-94), Vancouver Library Square (1992-95) and Toronto International Airport Terminal 1 (opened 2004).

The construction of Safdie's National Gallery of Canada building also proved beneficial to the fortunes of the Gallery itself. Built to replace a temporary facility, it had the effect of rejuvenating an institution in trouble as a result of systemic problems that included diminishing attendance and declining real term budgets. By the early 1990s, the reinvigorated Gallery had emerged as Ottawa's cultural showpiece. But at that very moment, a series of controversies brought the era of celebration to an unexpectedly early end. Criticism of the Gallery's acquisition of Barnett Newman's painting *Voice of Fire* (1990) and its exhibition policies, especially Jana Sterbak's *Meat Dress* (1991) and Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata's thirty-five sheds constructed at the gallery's edge, led to negative publicity in the local press. Fallout on Parliament Hill forced the Gallery to re-examine its mandate and pursue a less contentious, more politically-savvy agenda.

Exactly why acquisition policies and art practices that scarcely raised an eyebrow in other cities across Canada, aroused a storm of indignation in Ottawa is a difficult question. But one explanation, or at least the beginning of an explanation might lie in the very success of the Gallery building itself. One could say that the brilliance of Safdie's design had the effect of drawing power to itself. The elegant, spectacular spaces of the Gallery made it the preferred site of Prime Ministers' meetings and dinners and celebratory events of all kinds. It became the embodiment of a socio-political status quo, that by its very nature is uneasy and wary in the company of contemporary art's critical spirit.

This, at least, is the view of the Toronto-based critic Douglas Ord, as he explains in the introduction to his recently-published, densely-written, copiously-referenced tome. It was the sudden difficulties faced by the National Gallery in the early 1990s that prompted him to think seriously about contemporary art in the

context of the Gallery as a place and an institution. This led to a fellowship at the Gallery and over a period of seven years to the conception, research, writing and publication of a book on the subject. To his surprise, Ord found himself preoccupied not so much with contemporary art in the National Gallery, as with the architecture of the building itself, and in particular what he describes as "a sacralization linked not so much with art...as with the unified Canadian nation-state." Ord found qualities in the architecture that suggested themes at the heart of the National Gallery as an institution, and by "drawing inferences and following leads as they appeared," he became more and more interested in the relationship of Safdie's design to the institutional culture of the Gallery. His investigation "became one of not only reading more carefully the patterns that I had discerned within the building itself, but of looking more systematically into the institution's past, to see whether my initial sense of comparable pattern there was justified."

Obviously, the intention of such an endeavour is not to produce (impossible as this might be in practice) an objective, balanced account of the National Gallery as an institution, a work of architecture, or even as a collection. The opposite occurs: the defence of an a priori subjectivity or "intuition" as he describes it and the bringing forward of an understanding of what the implications of that perception might be. To his mind, the National Gallery as an institution and the National Gallery as a building are both representative of a traditional, idealist view of art – art as a realm of transcendental universals – a view which, he argues, is decidedly out of step with the main currents of contemporary art. While some would see this as no bad thing, or at least something that could be accommodated in a pluralistic age, Ord sees this as problematic. It tends to limit the manouverability of the Gallery as an institution, binding it too closely to the ideologies and practices of power and keeping it from its true function: making a space for and encouraging the critical practices of art.

Whatever one might think of Ord's general thesis, this book is testimony to the fact that it has motivated him to go where no man (or woman) has gone before; in this case deep into the vaults and tangled history of the National Gallery itself. Beginning with the appointment of Eric Brown as Director in 1913, Ord offers his readers a sustained account of curatorial policy over the course of the 20th century. In his view, the appointment of Brown was not by accident and it was a critical move with consequences apparent to this day. Brown, like his champion and chairman of the Board of Trustees, financier Sir Edmund Walker, was a Christian Scientist and from Ord's perspective, this as much as anything else explains his rise to the top and subsequent career. Despite his talent, Brown did not come to the job with obvious credentials. Ord writes that: "Throughout his

tenure at the National Gallery...Brown was faced with the challenge of making both his experience and his artistic program fit his prior commitment to Christian Science and his parallel claim that 'art has a purpose and a mission greater than that which it now holds, its purpose is spiritual and its mission the good of humanity'." At first this goal was pursued through the purchase of European historical art in London; however by 1914 this policy was already coming under attack by Lawren Harris amidst the first foreshadowings of the cultural nationalism of the 1920s. Although Harris, as is well known, faced sustained opposition to his plan to create a national art movement, we are told here that both Brown and Walker were extremely sympathetic since they believed that art could be used as a "unifying and refining force" encouraging and sustaining a sense of nationality. As evidence, Ord points out that during the 1920s Brown actively supported the Group of Seven and their activities through purchases and their inclusion in exhibitions abroad in London (1924, 1925) and Paris (1927).

While Brown and Walker's Christian Science beliefs suggest a natural link between the two men, Ord extends his religio-ideological-motivational speculations to explain the cooperation and accommodations of Brown and Harris as well. He suggests that Brown's support for Harris was based on the ease with which his transcendental metaphysics could find common ground with Harris's belief in theosophy. Similarly, both men had little difficulty responding to or promoting a nature-based nationalist iconography. The effect of the Brown-Harris dialogue was to strengthen the Gallery's commitment to Canadian art and, correspondingly, the promotion of the idea that a primary function of the gallery and of art itself was to support the Canadian project of self-identification and unified statehood. Unfortunately, at least from the point of view of our own time, that ideology was not open to the insights offered by new movements like Futurism or Cubism. It also neglected the modernist impulse to make art a non-objective, form-based, internationalist practice which was opposed in principle to the tendency of national, ethnic or tribal-based cultures that separated humanity into carefully defined, mutually-antagonistic groups.

In Ord's view, the anti-modern, nationalist culture established at the Gallery by Brown was not succcessfully challenged until the appointment of Jean Sutherland Boggs in 1966. Brown's immediate successor at the Gallery was H.O. McCurry, a former Assistant Director and also, perhaps incidently, another Christian Scientist. McCurry, who stayed in the job until 1955, was an adept manager but had little inclination to change direction. His more dynamic replacement Alan Jarvis resigned under a cloud in 1959 only four years into the position. Retrenchment followed with the appointment of Charles Comfort, a *bona fide*, if aging member of the pre-war generation of ardent nationalists. Despite the conservative, generally

lackluster record of these years, Ord points out that the quarter century from 1940 to the mid-1960s was marked by some significant accomplishments including important acquisitions of early work by Canadian modernists such as Paul-Émile Borduas. The early 1950s was also the era of the Massey Report. Parliament's response to the document led to increased funding and a higher profile for the Gallery, including a design competition (later compromised) for a new Gallery building. But the nationalist tenor of the Massey Report also precluded any meaningful recognition and response to the rise of New York as the world capital of contemporary art. In Ord's s view, this indifference to American developments on the part of the National Gallery was self-defeating and the inevitable legacy of Brown's idealism and self-conscious nationalism. It reflected a self-righteous and narrow-minded "Canadianism" that left the National Gallery an artistic backwater by the mid-1960s.

The arrival in Ottawa of Jean Sutherland Boggs, the Canadian Harvard-trained art historian brought north to run the gallery in 1966, promised better things. In fact, it proved to be the case. Boggs lost little time in bringing the Gallery into the complex world of the late twentieth century and in gathering a host of new curators into the institution to help her. New arrivals included such (now) well-known figures as Brydon Smith and Pierre Théberge, both of whom were to make important contributions to the work of the Gallery. Still, as Ord demonstrates, Boggs' achievements (over two terms: 1966-1976 and 1982-1987) were stubbornly realised in the face of complex artistic and political struggles. It was only with great difficulty and the direct support of Pierre Trudeau that the National Gallery, so often-planned and so long-awaited, became a reality.

Like prologue and epilogue, this book begins and ends with an analysis of the National Gallery building. This is partly a question of form. In recounting the genesis of his project, Ord locates it first in his experience of the building and consequently, at the end of his investigation, it is fitting that he should return to the starting point and see it anew in the light of his findings. But Ord returns to the building for another reason. Not satisfied with demonstrating the persistence of the idealist/nationalist current instituted by Eric Brown in the culture of the National Gallery, he is intent that we should recognise similar values in the building itself. The "ritual" spaces of the entrance ramp and great hall are seen to act against the critical practices of art as Ord understands them to be. As evidence he points to the presence in the design of Euclidean geometries (octagons, star forms); he finds formal and experiential links with symbols or notions of "Canada" in the architecture of Parliament Hill and views of surrounding nature. A sense of the sacred is conveyed by an architectural language that itself recalls a host of ancient types from gothic cathedrals to mesopotamian temples to the metaphor of Jacob's Ladder. From these connotations he spins an elaborate and involved hermeneutic:

> 'Jacob's ladder, Jacob's dream' adds a crucial, if historically dubious, moment in early Judaism to the list of possible associations with the ramp.... This would seem to be quite the weight of analogy for the National Gallery of Canada to assume.... Soft-focus references to 'Jacob's ladder, Jacob's dream' notwithstanding, then, what is the content of the 'ritual', the 'ceremony' into which the architect of the National Gallery of Canada was asking visitors to enter?.... What does seem clear is that the 'ritual' along the length of the ramp that the visitor can see, has little or nothing to do with art, as this term came to be understood in the twentieth century...the Colonnade ramp...is aestheticized in a way that provides a focal point for a new conflation: one that blends the symbolic and institutional iconography of the Canadian nation-state with the generic structures, rituals and experiences of religion.... Such a state...is one profoundly foreign to...contemporary streets and technologies.... But what has any of this got to do with art, or for that matter with the actual history of the institution...for these are as much as invisible throughout this process. Nevertheless, there is, built into the structure of the Great Hall itself, an implicit resonance both with the history of the Gallery as an institution and with a peculiar pattern in Canadian art history during the twentieth century. (p.22)

Perhaps. Despite such ingenious displays – and there are many in this book – in the end it is not entirely clear what Ord or his general argument has to gain from "proving," if that is the right word, the existence of some deep-rooted correspondence between the traditional values of the National Gallery as an institution and the artistic ideology which underscores Safdie's architecture. It is certainly the case, as Ord concedes, that Safdie professes no such self-conscious intent. In view of this, perhaps the suggestion of such a possibility would have been enough.

Whatever the upside, the downside of Douglas Ord's heavy-handed quest is that it obscures as much as it illuminates. Ord's "thesis" rests on a consideration of just one part of the building – the entrance sequence and "Great Hall" – and the remainder of the building is virtually ignored. In a text of over 400 pages, ostensibly devoted to a deeper understanding of the architecture of the National Gallery, we find not a single plan nor a detailed discussion of the Gallery's general disposition, composition or form. Moreover the unceasing struggle to convince the reader of what could only ever be at most a tendency, leads to missteps and dubious assertions. It is difficult to take seriously the notion that Safdie's design is "a new conflation, one that blends the symbolic and institutional iconography of the Canadian nation state with the generic structures, rituals and experience of religion" when in full view of the Great Hall lies the reconstructed Centre Block of Parliament Hill. This neo-Gothic monument was widely understood in its time as a memorial to the dead of World War I. When Ord describes Safdie's

"sacral references" and "Platonic geometries" as "peculiar" and "radical" in the contemporary architectural context, one immediately thinks of the work of Louis Kahn and its enormous influence on Safdie and architecture generally. In addition, I.M. Pei's exactly contemporaneous Pyramide de Louvre, with its transparent pyramid and spiral staircase, reiterates ratios and geometries old to architecture even in the age of Classical Greece. One is forced to conclude that for all of Ord's insights, this is not a serious discussion of the National Gallery as a work of architecture.

In 1992, the Italian literary critic Umberto Eco published a short article entitled "Interpretation and History."[1] The philosophy of deconstruction was at its fashionable height and Eco, a master of interpretative strategies, found himself in the unusual position of sounding a note of caution. He agreed there are innumerable meanings in a work endowed with aesthetic value, but wrote that: "I have the impression that, in the course of the last decades, the rights of the interpreters have been overstressed.... To say that a text has potentially no end does not mean that every act of interpretation can have a happy ending." While reading *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art Architecture*, Eco's comments often came to mind. They came to mind, because at some point not long into the book, I was struggling to follow Ord's highly detailed and often meandering prose, and trying to sort out the mainline from spur-lines (which frequently pass through interesting countryside only to come to a puzzling and often unsatisfactory stop). It became evident that in Ord's view, more is better than less. In the spirit of deconstruction, this book is a record of one person's attempt to uncover the web of interconnections, alliances, choices and coincidences that produced and so constitute the National Gallery; and to follow them wherever they might lead. Not surprisingly, as Eco allows, not all acts of interpretation made in this spirit will have a happy ending. For example, the attempt to link Eric Brown with European fascism on the grounds that he was described as "the art dictator of Canada" seems at best gratuitous. More broadly, as one considers the merits of Ord's intepretations, his neglect of existing historiography often seems obtuse or perhaps simply willfull. Yes, Eric Brown and H.O. McCurry were nationalists with a conservative, anti-modern bent. But as the architectural record of Ottawa in the 1920s and 30s shows, they lived in a society that was also artistically conservative and increasingly nationalistic and, yes, it was about them – but it wasn't just about them.

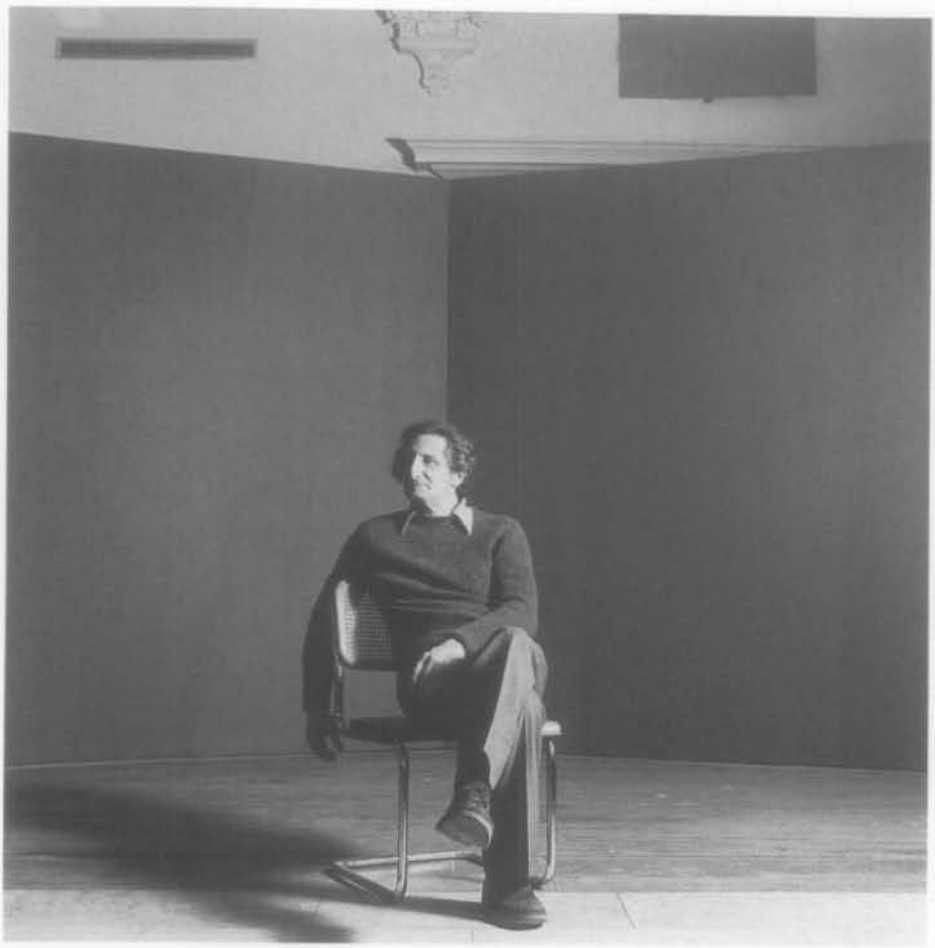
Despite these reservations and criticisms, it is clear on balance, that Douglas Ord has written a worthwhile and stimulating book. This is because, as Ord understands, deconstruction at its heart is a response to a desire to create an opening to the complexity of the world around us, and especially to the potential offered by practices of art in all its forms including architecture. As Ord is fond of repeating, a crucial function of art is "the critical scrutiny of all other spheres

including the political." This book has been written in that spirit, and on those terms it is a success. There is no doubt that, thanks to his research, all those who value and treasure the National Gallery have been led to a better understanding of its history and the role it has been called upon to play over the many years of its existence. Is this the final word on the National Gallery? I hope not. I hope that others will pick up and follow the many threads that are revealed here for the first time. And when they do, they will begin inevitably at that point where Douglas Ord, after a lengthy and frequently fascinating journey, has left us.

KELLY CROSSMAN
School for Studies in Art and Culture
Carelton University

Notes

1 Umberto ECO, "Interpretation and History," in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan COLLINI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 23-43.



Richard-Max Tremblay, **Guido Molinari**, 1987, épreuve argentique à la gélatine / gelatin silver print, 50 x 41 cm, Coll. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal / The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: Christine Guest, MBAM)

GUIDO MOLINARI (1933 - 2004)

Je commencerai par évoquer le dernier souvenir que je garde de Guido Molinari. Nous sommes à l'étage, chez lui, au dessus de la Banque qu'il avait acquise dans l'est de Montréal et avait transformée en atelier et entrepôt de ses propres peintures. Déjà très atteint par le cancer, il a de la peine à respirer, il parle à voix basse et se traîne d'une pièce à l'autre pour me faire voir sa collection de tableaux. Molinari, peintre collectionneur. Il me fait deviner : «Qui a peint ça? Tu ne devineras jamais! C'est Léopold Dufresne. Un bon peintre». Je connaissais Léopold Dufresne comme celui que Borduas appelle simplement Léopold dans *Projections libérantes*. Je savais qu'il avait habité chez les Molinari, quand Guido était tout jeune – mais je n'avais jamais vu de ses tableaux. Un sous-bois avec deux troncs d'arbres verticaux, peint dans une atmosphère vaporeuse, avec des effets de taches solaires sur le sol, un peu à la Harpignies. Déjà l'idée des bandes parallèles?

Puis il me faisait voir ses Lyman, un peintre pour lequel il avait la plus grande admiration : des paysages et des nus. John Lyman paysagiste, c'était le côté moins évident du personnage, révélant qu'il avait voulu se mesurer avec le Groupe des Sept sur leur terrain pour ainsi dire. Mais le côté polémique du personnage n'intéressait pas mon hôte. Chaque fois il me ramenait aux dimensions formelles de l'œuvre. Mieux, il tentait de me communiquer le feu qui l'habitait devant chaque œuvre d'art. C'est cette réponse esthétique globale, cette sorte d'extase devant les tableaux qu'il aimait et qu'il tentait de me communiquer, plutôt que quelques commentaires érudits ou quelques anecdotes à propos des peintres ou de leurs œuvres, qui était frappante dans ses propos. Tout pouvait l'abandonner, Molinari gardait encore cet enthousiasme pour la peinture. Chez personne avant lui, je n'ai senti cette ferveur quasi religieuse pour les œuvres d'art, cette «ivresse de l'art» dont parle Nietzsche.

Plus loin, sur le mur du salon, un décor de Pellan pour *La Nuit des rois*. Il s'agissait d'une esquisse en noir et blanc. «Ce que Pellan a fait de mieux». Je sentais bien pourtant que dans cet éloge la technique *hard edge* appliquée ici rigoureusement par Pellan n'entrait pour rien. Une fois de plus, c'était l'impression globale d'art, de perfection qui fascinait Molinari.

Il venait d'acheter un petit paysage de Mondrian «pour le prix d'une maison». Cela valait bien une maison, car même dans cette œuvre figurative du premier Mondrian, tout Mondrian était là pour celui qui savait voir. On le sait, Mondrian aura été la grande admiration picturale de Molinari.

Tout au long de cette visite, je ne pouvais m'empêcher de penser au texte de Loménie de Brienne rapporté par Francis Haskell. Le mémorialiste raconte

que quelques semaines avant sa mort, il avait accompagné le cardinal Mazarin dans sa galerie de peintures et l'avait entendu se dire à lui-même tout bas : «Je dois laisser tout cela. Là où je vais, je ne verrai rien de cela». Il mentionnait ensuite sa *Vénus* du Titien, son *Déluge* d'Antoine Carrache et s'écriait : «Adieu, mes tableaux que j'ai tant aimés», ajoutant une note qui à elle seule confirmerait l'authenticité de l'histoire «et qui m'ont coûté si cher[1]».

Molinari n'est plus et déjà nous nous interrogeons sur la signification de son œuvre, de sa présence dans notre milieu. Il est venu à la peinture à un moment où l'automatisme représentait à lui seul la pointe avancée de la peinture au Québec. L'inconscient venait de déballer ses trésors et une peinture qui, sans ressembler de trop près au surréalisme européen mais s'en réclamant, s'affirmait déjà comme «abstraite» ou «non-figurative» (on ne savait pas trop bien). Borduas avait compris à quel renouvellement de la sensibilité il fallait procéder pour que cette peinture fasse partie de notre univers culturel, alors encore si mince et si fragile. «Au diable le goupillon et la tuque!» s'était-il écrié dans *Refus global.*

L'entrée quelque peu fracassante de Molinari dans ce décor de l'avant-garde automatiste et post-automatiste a paru à l'époque introduire une rupture que d'aucuns jugèrent malheureuse ou venue trop tôt dans le développement de la peinture au Québec. Molinari dénonçait dans la peinture de Borduas et celle de ses disciples, Pierre Gauvreau, Marcelle Ferron, Marcel Barbeau, Jean-Paul Mousseau...un attachement encore visible à ce qu'il appelait «le cube scénique de la Renaissance» et donc à la suggestion de la troisième dimension. Bien plus, les effets atmosphériques de la couleur chez ces mêmes peintres démontraient une relation aux apparences du monde extérieur et rendait suspect leur prétention à l'«abstraction». Ne pouvait s'en réclamer, déclarait Molinari, qu'une peinture strictement bidimensionnelle, renonçant à tout horizon (sinon à toute horizontale), et à toute couleur atmosphérique pour lui préférer la couleur énergie. Ce n'est qu'à cette condition de non-référentialité radicale que le tableau pouvait être dit abstrait. Et Molinari d'administrer la preuve de ses dires, dans la magistrale série des *Noirs et blancs* exposés en 1956 et dans ses tableaux à bandes verticales des années soixante.

On accusa le coup jusque dans nos commissions scolaires où la division en automatistes et plasticiens résuma à elle seule, et pour longtemps, toute l'histoire de la peinture contemporaine au Québec.

Sur le coup, les prises de position de Molinari et bientôt celles du Groupe Espace Dynamique pouvaient paraître introduire une césure totale dans le tissu de la peinture d'avant-garde au Québec. Qu'en est-il maintenant que nous avons pris quelque distance avec ces vieilles chicanes? La réponse est simple : une profonde continuité.

Borduas avait pris ses distances avec ce que Marcel Rioux appelait «l'idéologie de conservation», c'est-à-dire cette manière de définir l'identité québécoise par l'attachement à la religion catholique, à la langue française, mais surtout comme «gardienne de la foi» et à la terre (agriculturisme). «Fini l'assassinat massif du présent et du futur à coups redoublés du passé» (*Refus global*). Il aspirait à rejoindre le mouvement de la pensée universelle, à «rattraper» (un autre mot de Rioux) le temps perdu à lire Veuillot ou l'abbé Groulx, pour s'ouvrir enfin à Lautréamont et Breton.

Quand Molinari fait son apparition, ce vieux nationalisme malmené par Borduas est déjà loin. À vrai dire, il venait de faire peau neuve avec la Révolution tranquille. Gaston Miron récusait et «le régionalisme et l'universalisme abstrait, ces deux pôles de désincarnation», et les voyaient l'un et l'autre comme les «deux malédictions qui ont pesé constamment sur notre littérature[2]». Certes, Borduas nous avait libérés du régionalisme, mais il avait pressenti dans les révélations de l'inconscient la présence d'un langage à la fois le plus subjectif et le plus universel. Cet universel ne lui avait pas paru «désincarné». Bien au contraire. Il était fait de l'expérience sensible du sujet, expérience qu'il partageait avec le reste des hommes. À Jean-René Ostiguy qui lui demandait : «Croyez-vous que la non-figuration inaugure une forme nouvelle de l'art pictural où le tableau n'aurait plus rien à voir...avec les apparences visibles du monde extérieur...?», Borduas avait répondu : «Des lignes, des formes et des couleurs qui n'auraient pas de justifications profondes avec le monde extérieur seraient impuissantes à exprimer le psychisme[3]». C'est bien plutôt le communautarisme qui accompagnait la nouvelle vague nationaliste qui risquait, au nom de la collectivité, d'éteindre et le subjectif et son aspiration à l'universel, c'est à dire le sujet et son ouverture sur le monde. Que le danger ait été réel, on en trouve le témoignage dans l'art des années soixante. Les peintres crurent trouver une source d'inspiration nouvelle dans la «quétènerie» comme les littéraires adoptèrent le «joual» pour affirmer leur identité québécoise. L'art passait au service des idées et revenait à la figuration. Même Louis Belzile, des premiers plasticiens, s'égara un moment dans le figuratif.

C'est quand on songe à ce contexte particulier que l'aventure de Molinari prend tout son sens. Il sent que si le Québec aspire légitimement à sa propre culture, ce ne peut être par la voie du kitsch, qui ne pourrait que l'enfermer sur lui-même et proposer ou des succédanés locaux du pop art ou une néofiguration à la remorque de l'Europe et des États-Unis. S'il a repris confiance dans sa culture, le Québec doit accepter de s'ouvrir sur le monde et confronter sa production sur la scène internationale. À une idéologie de rattrappage culturel doit succéder une idéologie de participation pour reprendre une fois de plus une distinction de Marcel Rioux. Quand Molinari participa, avec Claude Tousignant à l'exposition *The Responsive Eye*, organisée par William C. Seitz au Musée d'art

moderne de New York, en 1965, on peut dire qu'il montrait la voie. Qu'il ait su non seulement tenir le cap sur l'abstraction la plus exigeante mais qu'il l'ait fait au moment où les sirènes nationalistes sonnaient le plus fort est, il me semble, le sens dernier de son œuvre.

L'universel n'était plus celui que Borduas défendait encore, mais celui-là même qui sortait de la pratique picturale elle-même. C'est en elle-même que la peinture devait trouver sa terre, comme les littéraires le comprirent bientôt à propos de la langue.

Comme pour me donner raison : sa dernière exposition de son vivant, *Guido Molinari - équivalence* – une suite, non une illustration, au fameux poème de Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* – chez René Blouin. Un long panneau, en jaune, rouge et bleu traverse en diagonale toute la pièce. On comprend que les vides et les pleins correspondent à la mise en page du singulier poème. On pense à Valéry qui avait eu le privilège d'entendre Mallarmé lui-même lui lire ce poème.

> Mallarmé, m'ayant lu le plus uniment du monde son *Coup de dés*, comme simple préparation à une plus grande surprise, me fit enfin considérer le dispositif. Il me sembla voir la figure d'une pensée, pour la première fois placée dans notre espace.... Ici véritablement, l'étendue parlait, songeait, enfantait des formes temporelles. L'attente, le doute, la concentration étaient *choses visibles*. Ma vue avait affaire à des silences qui auraient pris corps. Je contemplais à mon aise d'inapréciables instants : la fraction d'une seconde, pendant laquelle s'étonne, brille, s'anéantit une idée; l'atome de temps, germe de siècles psychologiques et de conséquences infinies, – paraissaient enfin comme des êtres, tout environnés de leur néant rendu sensible. C'était murmure, insinuations, tonnerre pour les yeux, toute une tempête spirituelle menée de page en page jusqu'à l'extrême de la pensée, jusqu'à un point d'ineffable rupture : là, le prestige se produisait; là, sur le papier même, je ne sais quelle scintillation de derniers astres tremblait infiniment pure dans le même vide interconscient où, comme une matière de nouvelle espèce, distribuée en amas, en traînées, en systèmes, *coexistait* la Parole[4]!

Je ne connais pas de meilleur commentaire à l'œuvre de Molinari que ce texte de Valéry inspiré par la vue du manuscrit même de Mallarmé. Il n'y est en effet jamais question du sens des mots, mais des pleins et des vides, des traits et des espaces, des êtres et du néant qu'avait retenu *exclusivement* Molinari, à quelques mois avant sa mort, lui victime du seul coup de dé qui abolit le hasard.

FRANÇOIS-MARC GAGNON
Institut de recherches en art canadien Gail et Stephen A. Jarislowsky
Université Concordia

Notes

1 Francis HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters*, New Haven et Londres, Yale University Press, 1980, p.186.

2 Georges-André VACHON, «Gaston Miron ou l'invention de la substance», dans Gaston MIRON, *L'Homme rapaillé*, Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1970, p.140.

3 Paul-Émile BORDUAS, «Questions et réponses (Réponses à une enquête de J.-R. Ostiguy)», dans André-G. BOURASSA, Jean FISETTE et Gilles LAPOINTE, *Paul-Émile Borduas. Ecrits I*, Montréal, PUM, 1987, p.533.

4 Paul VALÉRY «Stéphane Mallarmé», dans *Œuvres*, édition établie et annotée par Jean Hytier, Paris, Gallimard, coll.: «Bibliothèque de la Pléiade», tome I, 1957, p.624.

GUIDO MOLINARI (1933 - 2004)

I would like to begin this tribute by recalling the last time I saw Guido Molinari. We are at his home, which is above the bank he bought in Montreal's east end and had turned into a studio and storage space for his paintings. He is already extremely ill with cancer and has difficulty breathing; he speaks in a low voice as he carries himself from one room to the next, showing me his collection of paintings. This *is* Molinari, the painter-collector. He tests me: "Who do you think did this? You'll never guess! Léopold Dufresne. A good painter." I know of Dufresne as the person Borduas simply called Léopold in *Projections libérantes*. I am aware that he had lived with the Molinari family when Guido was very young – but I had never seen any of his work. A painting of an undergrowth and two vertical tree trunks with touches of sunlight in a hazy atmosphere, a little like Harpignies – is this the source of Molinari's striped bands?

Molinari then shows me landscapes and nudes by John Lyman, a painter for whom he has the greatest admiration. Lyman's lesser-known side, his landscape painting, reveals that he would have liked to confront the Group of Seven on their own ground, so to speak. But Molinari could not have cared less. He continually brings me back to the work's formal elements. Rather than making erudite comments or relating anecdotes about the painters and their work, he just wants to communicate his excitement, the rapture he feels in front of the paintings. All else might have left him but Molinari still keeps his commitment to painting. He is the only person in whom I have felt this almost religious fervour for works of art, what Nietzsche described as "the intoxication of art."

On the living room wall is a black and white Pellan sketch of a stage set for *Twelfth Night*. "This is what Pellan did best." I feel that this praise is not simply based on Pellan's hard-edge technique; once again it is the overall impact of art, its perfection that fascinates Molinari. He had just bought a small Mondrian landscape "for the price of a house." But this early figurative work is priceless: all that Mondrian would become is already there in this painting. And as we all know, Molinari was devoted to Mondrian's work and his writing.

All through my visit, I could not help thinking of a passage from Loménie de Brienne's writings as quoted by Francis Haskell. In his memoirs de Brienne recounts that a few weeks before Cardinal Mazarin's death, he walked with him in his painting gallery and overheard him mutter: "I must leave all this. Where I am going, I will see none of this." He pointed to his *Venus* by Titian, his *Flood* by Carracci and cried out: "Adieu, my beautiful paintings, I was so fond of you," adding a single phrase that authenticates the story: "and you have cost me so much money."[1]

Molinari is no longer with us and already we are asking ourselves about the significance of his work and his place in our milieu. When he began painting, automatisme was the only progressive direction in Quebec painting. The unconscious had just unlocked its treasures; but even if the automatistes claimed their painting was rooted in European surrealism, the resemblance was not that evident in their work. At the time, Quebec painting was already being called "abstract" or "non-figurative" even if there was hesitation about which term was better. Borduas certainly understood that a major change of sensibility was imperative if automatisme was to become part of our culture, which itself was then so narrow and so fragile. "To hell with the goupillon and the *tuque*!" he exclaimed in the *Refus global*.

Molinari's entry onto the automatist and post-automatist avant-garde scene was rather dazzling and it gave the impression of short-circuiting the development of Quebec painting. However, this rupture was neither as premature nor as unfortunate as some thought at the time. Molinari denounced Borduas and his followers Pierre Gauvreau, Marcelle Ferron, Marcel Barbeau, Jean-Paul Mousseau etc., because of their attachment to what he called the "Renaissance scenic cube" and the reference to the third dimension in automatiste painting. More importantly, the use of atmospheric colour suggested a connection to the external world that made the automatistes' claim to "abstraction" rather unclear. Molinari insisted that only strictly two-dimensional painting, which renounced the horizon line as well as all horizontals and that replaced muted tones with vibrant colour, could be considered abstract. He declared that avant-garde painting must be radically non-referential. Molinari proved his point with the magnificent series of paintings, *Noirs et blancs* exhibited in 1956, and his vertical bands from the 1960s. The upheaval he caused was recognised even

by provincial school boards; for many years the curriculum of the entire history of contemporary art in Quebec was based on the distinction between the *automatistes* and the *plasticiens*!

The position of Molinari and then of the Groupe Espace Dynamique was seen as the cause of a total *caesura* in the fabric of Quebec avant-garde painting. But what does this signify now that we have had time to distance ourselves from those old disputes? The answer is simple: profound continuity. Borduas had already distanced himself from what Marcel Rioux called "the ideology of survival," the defining of Quebecois identity in terms of its attachment to Roman Catholicism, to the French language which was seen as the "keeper of the faith" and finally, to the land. "End the cascade of blows from the past which annihilates both present and future," Borduas wrote in the *Refus global*. He longed "to catch up" (what Rioux termed *rattrapage*) with the movement towards universal thought; to retrieve the time lost reading Veuillot and Abbé Groulx by now reading Lautréamont and Breton.

When Molinari came on the scene, the old nationalism that Borduas had so severely criticized had become a thing of the past. But a new nationalism was to resurface with the Quiet Revolution. Gaston Miron challenged both "regionalism and abstract universalism, those two disembodied polarities," defining them as the "two curses that have constantly weighed down our literature."[2] Certainly Borduas had freed us from regionalism, but in the revelations of the unconscious he sensed the presence of a language that could be both highly subjective and universal. For Borduas, this universal language was not "disembodied." Quite the contrary. He believed that it came from sensory perception, which is experienced by everyone. In response to Jean-René Ostiguy's question: "Do you think that non-figuration is the beginning of a new form of painting where the picture will have nothing to do...with the visible exterior world?" Borduas replied: "Lines, forms and colours that have no profound justification in the exterior world will be powerless to express the psyche."[3] However, the communitarianism (to use Charles Taylor's terminology) that accompanied this new nationalism actually threatened the belief that subjective experience could aspire to universalism. Evidence of the reality of this threat is apparent in the art of the Sixties. Quebec painters found a new source of inspiration in *quétènerie* or kitsch, in much the same way that writers adopted *joual* or colloquial language to assert their Quebecois identity. Art became a vehicle to express these ideas and artists returned to figuration. Even Louis Belzile, one of the first plasticiens, explored figurative imagery for a time.

Considered in this context, Molinari's work takes on particular meaning. He felt that Quebec's aspirations to define its own culture could not be achieved through the use of kitsch; that it could become too insular and appear to be a local substitute for pop art or neo-figuration, trailing along behind Europe

and the United States. If the people of Quebec were to have confidence in their culture, they must open themselves to the world and bring their work onto the international scene. To return to Marcel Rioux's ideas, an ideology of cultural "catching up" must be followed by an ideology of participation. When Molinari, along with Claude Tousignant, participated in *The Responsive Eye* organized by William Seitz at the Museum of Modern art in New York in 1964, they were showing the way. To me, the essential meaning of Molinari's work rests in the fact that he was producing his most demanding abstract works at the same time that the Sirens of nationalism were singing the loudest. This was not the same "universal" that Borduas had defended; now it lay within the practice of painting itself. Painting had to find its voice from within, and writers would soon learn the same lesson about language.

To prove my point. Molinari's last exhibition: *Equivalences*, a response – not an illustration – to Mallarmé's great poem *Un seul coup de dés n'abolira pas le hasard* (*A Throw of the Dice Will Not Eliminate Chance*) at Galerie René Blouin in Montreal. A long yellow, red and blue panel stretches diagonally across the room. It is clear that the negative and positive spaces echo the visual design of this remarkable poem. One thinks of Valéry, who had the privilege of hearing Mallarmé recite his poetry.

> After reading his *Coup de dés* as calmly as could be, in simple preparation for a greater surprise, Mallarmé finally showed me how the words were arranged on the page. It seemed to me that I was looking at the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space. Here space itself truly spoke, dreamed, and gave birth to temporal forms. Expectancy, doubt, concentration, all were *visible things*. With my own eye I could see silences that had assumed bodily shapes. Inappreciable instants became clearly visible: the fraction of a second during which an idea flashes into being and dies away; atoms of time that serve as the germs of infinite consequences lasting through psychological centuries – at last these appeared as beings, each surrounded with a palpable emptiness. There amid murmurs, insinuations, visual thunder, a whole spiritual tempest carried page by page to the extremes of thought, to a point of ineffable rupture – there the marvel took place; and there in the same void with them, like some new form of matter arranged in systems or masses or trailing lines, *coexisted* the Word![4]

I cannot think of a better way to reflect on Molinari and his work than Valéry's text. It was never a question of the meaning of the words, but of fullness and emptiness, marks and spaces, being and nothingness, that occupied Molinari exclusively for some months before his death. He was the victim of a single throw of the dice that eliminated chance.

FRANÇOIS-MARC GAGNON
Gail and Stephen Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art
Concordia University

Notes

1 Francis HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 186.

2 Georges-André VACHON, "Gaston Miron ou l'invention de la substance," in Gaston Miron, *L'Homme rapaillé* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1970), 140.

3 Paul-Émile BORDUAS, "Answers to an Enquiry by J.-R. Ostiguy," trans. François-Marc Gagnon and Dennis Young, in *Paul-Émile Borduas. Ecrits/Writings 1942-1959*, ed. François-Marc Gagnon (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1978), 146.

4 Paul VALERY, "Concerning A Throw of the Dice," in *Leonardo. Poe. Mallarmé.*, trans. Malcolm Cowley and James R. Lawler, ed. Jackson Matthews, vol. 8, *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series XLV, 1972), 309.