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Making Art Modern

The first decade of Vie des Arts magazine and its contribution to the discourse
on the visual arts in Quebec during the 1950s and 1960s.

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in
The Department
of
Art History

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts, from a socio-historical perspective, to assess the contribution of Quebec's longest-running art periodical, Vie des Arts, to the discourse surrounding the visual arts in Quebec. The period under analysis, from 1956 to 1966, signaled the completion of Quebec's accession to social and cultural modernity and the events which took place during this time provide the context for the thesis. Areas examined include: the magazine's relationship to cultural policy in both Quebec and Canada; the history of the magazine; the content of the magazine; and the implications of the modernist aesthetic as viewed through Vie des Arts' perspective. The study provides a means of recontextualizing Vie des Arts' first decade of publication in order to examine its role in Quebec art history.

To my father,
Jean-Jacques Tremblay

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Art as a radar environment takes on the function of indispensable perceptual training rather than the role of a privileged diet for the elite.¹

-- Marshall McLuhan

Introduction

McLuhan's faith in the power of art to stabilize the course of society in an increasingly technologized world was characteristic of an era in Canada when the democratization of culture was viewed as a necessity in the drive to build national identity. During the 1950s and 1960s, the art magazine in Canada, having transcended its original function as a type of arts community newsletter, reached out to the wider community in an effort to sensitize Canadians to cultural production. Post-war Canada proved to be fertile ground for the establishment of Canadian Art and Vie des Arts, the nation's two longest-running visual arts magazines:² Post-war prosperity created an expanded readership, an emerging international art market demanded a commercial platform, and advances in printing and reproduction techniques provided the

¹ Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1964), p. xi.

² Canadian Art first appeared in 1943 and continued publishing under that title until 1967, when it became artscanada. Vie des Arts was founded in 1956 and still appears today under its original title.

visual appeal needed to transform text-based journals into appealing "glossies".³

The Quebec magazine Vie des Arts was both witness and participant in Quebec's accession to cultural modernity during the 1950s and 1960s. With the aid of the newly established federal grant system provided through the Canada Council, along with slowly but steadily growing advertising revenues, Vie des Arts was able to present to a general readership an overview of the visual arts in a modern, accessible format. By becoming an ambassador of Quebec culture to the Québécois, the Canadian and the international communities, Vie des Arts helped shape the reception of art in the public sphere.

In its attempt to reach its audience, Vie des Arts not only espoused a modernist discourse which sought to promote progressive values, but through its format, modeled on the mass-circulation magazine, cultivated a late-modernist communication aesthetic which came to favor the pictorial over the written word. If we apply Baudrillard's definition of modernity-- that it is not a social, political or historical notion, but rather a process of opposition to tradition -- we can understand the value of a modernist logic in the context of Quebec society

³ Karen McKenzie and Mary F. Williamson, The Art and Pictorial Press in Canada: Two centuries of art magazines (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), p. 30. The term "glossies" is used by McKenzie to describe what still stands today as the commercial art magazine, in which a great percentage of the pages are filled with large colour gallery and art dealer advertisements.

during the 1950s.⁴ Cultural modernity was strongly entrenched in Europe by this time; but due to various historical events, the process was long delayed in Quebec. However, the Quebec visual arts milieu struggled to promote the inherent individualism of a modernist visual aesthetic in the context of a nationalist *projet de société*.⁵ In this light, the role of Vie des Arts acquired a double-edged identity: not only did it espouse the values of cultural modernity in its mandate to educate and sensitize Quebecers to their culture, but it also promoted international modernist theories in the visual arts. It embraced the social implications of its role as communicator, while promoting the individualism inherent in high modernism; hence the conflicts that began to appear between a desire for artistic recognition on the international playing field and the desire for a national cultural identity.

The magazine in the visual arts context

Self-referentiality is a central principle of modernism in art. However, autonomous self-referentiality in art is not possible without the creation of a supportive field, i.e. the network of institutions and professions which foster its survival: museums, galleries, collectors, critics. The art publication is an

⁴ Baudrillard's definition of modernity is discussed in this context in Andrée Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993), p. 3.

⁵ See Yvan Lamonde and Esther Trépanier's introduction, in L'Avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec (Québec: Institut Québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986).

important element in this field. The autonomy of modern art was dependent on two criteria: an informed reception, and, to insure total artistic freedom, an audience found beyond the patronage tradition.⁶ Explaining and illustrating modern art to a wider audience became a viable option for artists and critics who wanted to advance modernist art practices. Art magazines flourished throughout North America and Europe during the late fifties and early sixties, bringing modern art to the corner newsstand.

The magazine, in order to function as an apparatus of culture, relies on the inherent immediacy of its form. Positioned somewhere between the temporality of the newspaper review and the academicism of the journal article, the magazine “piece” must at once entertain, inform, and, in cases such as Vie des Arts, also educate its readers.⁷ By offering varied subject matter and adopting a critical viewpoint, and delivering them in a timely and fresh manner with every issue, the magazine format, especially in the case of the art magazine, allows for the dissemination of information which might otherwise be available only through specialized channels. Although this information was filtered for a general readership, Vie des Arts, during the 1950s and 1960s, represented a site where the professional milieu and the uninitiated public could intersect. The magazine, as an inherently accessible form, was an ideal vehicle for simultaneously demystifying and building culture. Andrée Fortin, in an analysis

⁶ See Trépanier in L'Avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec, pp. 69-71 on this subject.

of the role of periodicals in Quebec intellectual history,⁸ defines the periodical as a site for debate, a forum for new ideas and a vehicle for agency;⁹ in short, periodicals are described as both creating and sustaining discourse. Founding a periodical is an intellectual act designed to give autonomy of discourse to a specific group; the notion of editorial control, when vigilantly sustained, inscribes the parameters of a periodical's discourse and gives voice to its specificity.

A distinction must be made, however, between the English terms "periodical" and "magazine", and the French "revue". Whereas the word "periodical" defines a continuous publication which may appear at regular intervals, there are words within the category "periodical" which may or may not be used to create distinctions: journal, review, magazine. The first two terms often *suggest* a scholarly or intellectual content and audience, while the term "magazine" is usually interpreted as meaning "mass market". The French "revue" also encompasses all periodicals, but fewer definitions are available to distinguish different types of publications. "Revue" can therefore signify a political journal as well as a mass circulation magazine. This is a crucial point in the analysis of a periodical such as Vie des Arts because of its nature as a general information publication, but one which operates in the intellectual sphere of high culture.

⁷ Vie des Arts' first editorial mandate (vol. 1 no. 1, January 1956, pp. 2-3), clearly states the educational goals of the magazine. A discussion of this first mandate and its implications can be found in Chapter II of this thesis.

⁸ Fortin, Passage de la Modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues.

⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

Publications such as Vie des Arts borrowed the modus operandi of the mass circulation “magazine” and applied it to an area of discourse traditionally reserved for the cultural elite. Because Vie des Arts sought to identify itself with a broad, general readership, it shall heretofore be referred to in this analysis as a “magazine”.

Because a magazine’s relevance is measured *against and in proportion to* the events and issues it examines, it is also an adequate barometer by which to gauge the discourse surrounding these events. However, over time, a magazine’s content is decontextualized and its import diminished. In an attempt to answer these questions, this analysis attempts, through a socio-historical perspective, to recontextualize the first decade of Vie des Arts magazine (from 1956 to 1966) in order to assess its contribution to issues in the visual arts in Quebec during the 1950s and 1960s. A rereading of Vie des Arts within the parameters of its original context, juxtaposed with the perspective afforded by the 40 years that have elapsed since the magazine’s first issue, raises important questions about the image we draw of the evolution of the visual arts in Quebec during this time period: what were Vie des Arts’ motives for crossing the cultural divide? What group needed a platform for its discourse? And how did this particular voice integrate with the discourse at large?

This thesis attempts to answer these questions through an analysis of the content of Vie des Arts over its first decade of publication. By statistically

compiling and examining such relevant areas as the amount of space devoted exclusively to Quebec art, the biases of reviewers and critics, or the importance of international art movements and theories in the magazine's overall content, and then juxtaposing this information with the historical and cultural context of Quebec during the same time period, a picture of Vie des Arts' *raison d'être* begins to emerge. Its polemical position can be assessed; its intent can be defined.

The first chapter of the thesis draws a broad profile of the socio-cultural conditions in Canada and Quebec during the 1950s and 1960s in order to contextualize Vie des Arts' first ten years of publication. Precursors to Vie des Arts in Quebec are examined in this chapter, as well as the emergence of federal and provincial grant programs, to which Vie des Arts owed its financial survival. Chapter Two presents a history of Vie des Arts' first ten years. Circumstances surrounding the magazine's founding, its first editorial mandate, and its editorial board, contributors and columnists from 1956 to 1966 are discussed. Design and production values are evaluated, and revenue sources described.

In the third chapter, the content of Vie des Arts is analyzed from a variety of perspectives: cultural provenance (where did the art discussed in its pages come from?); medium (which artistic media were favored?); editorial style (what types of articles were felt to best communicate Vie des Arts' mandate?); critical

position (where did Vie des Arts stand on contemporary art issues?). Chapter four discusses Vie des Arts' interpretation of the modernist agenda, its contribution to the cultural discourse in Quebec, and its impact on the definition of a Quebec cultural identity. Vie des Arts' place in the discourse at large is also evaluated. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the magazine form as a cultural vehicle in the field of art during the post-war period, and its validity as a cultural apparatus in the post-modern environment.

What this thesis will not attempt, however, is an in-depth analysis or comparison of the critical positions adopted by Vie des Arts contributors. While certain critics' viewpoints may be briefly discussed, they will be presented solely in their capacity to illuminate facts and events directly affecting Vie des Arts. Nor shall this thesis engage in a comparison between Vie des Arts and its English-language counterpart, Canadian Art. While such a comparison would be most interesting, it goes beyond the purview of this thesis.

Chapter 1

Art and culture for a modern nation

A brief examination of the development of post-war cultural policy in Canada

“...in a country like ours, new and growing, what greater need than the creative mind of the artist?”¹⁰

In order to analyze Vie des Arts' first ten years, it is necessary to return to an earlier period during which Canadian cultural policy was first established. The link between Vie des Arts, a French-language art magazine from Quebec, and Canadian cultural policy, may at first glance seem to be a tenuous one; but by retracing Canada's cultural history back to the 1940s, the influence of Canadian post-war nation-building on the artistic community throughout Canada, including Quebec, can be seen as a major force that would lead to the establishment of a Canadian art press and, concurrently, to the creation of an art magazine that would serve the linguistic and cultural imperatives of modern Quebec.

The above quote, from artist André Biéler, describes the spirit of concerned optimism that drove Canadian artists to demand a major role in building a modern Canada. The war in Europe had forced the Allies to reinvest the

¹⁰ André Biéler, cited in Walter Abell, "Conference of Canadian Artists," Maritime Art, vol. 1 no. 4 (April 1941), p. 21.

principles of democracy with new fervor, and to restate their beliefs in the humanist ideals it represented. The atrocities perpetrated in Europe with the rise of fascism encouraged a current of humanist thought in North America, with art becoming a sign for democracy. Support for artistic expression came to signal anti-fascism, and the dissemination of art to the general population became known as a positive value for public good. When Biéler and other artists assembled for the Conference of Canadian Artists at Kingston in 1941, the preservation of democracy and the supportive role Canadian artists could play was uppermost on their agenda.¹¹ In the words of Harry O. McCurry, then Director of the National Gallery of Canada:

Never before has it happened that Canadian artists, professional artists from all over Canada, have been brought together, to discuss their problems, not only the problems of technique and practice, but (...) to consider the means of making most effective that vital contribution to the life of Canada which our artists can do, and to make our contribution to the solution of those problems which confront us, as they confront the whole democratic world at the present time.¹²

The Kingston Conference was a rallying point for Canadian artists and brought forward an agenda that would form the nucleus of Canadian cultural policy in upcoming decades: the contribution of the artist to society and the hope of a governmental solution to the problem of the integration of art and artists into all levels of the Canadian social fabric. Art should become accessible to all in a modern, democratic Canada, the delegates said, and the state should play a

¹¹ For a detailed account of this event, see Sicotte, "À Kingston, il y a 50 ans, la Conférence des artistes canadiens," The Journal of Canadian Art History, vol. 14 no. 2 (1991), pp. 28-48.

major role in its public dissemination. This concern over the function of art in Canadian society gave rise to numerous propositions and resolutions at the Conference, including a proposal for a national art magazine.¹³ The establishment of a pan-Canadian art publication would serve to educate and inform the public, and would provide a forum for Canadian artists in the struggle to create Canadian identity. Two years later, in 1943, the first issue of Canadian Art magazine was published in Ottawa under the editorship of Walter Abell.

Walter Abell, Canadian Art's first editor and a founding member, had been editor and founding member of Maritime Art, a regional publication whose reach had broadened to include increasing coverage of Canadian art from coast to coast. Abell, an American who had come to Nova Scotia's Acadia University in 1927 to institute an art history program funded by the Carnegie Corporation, became a tireless promoter of the visual arts in Canada. He spoke for the social integration of art and its inclusion in a discourse of progress which was integral to the liberal humanist alignment favored by contemporary artists and intellectuals.¹⁴ Using Maritime Art as his base, Abell expanded its mandate to a fully national one by 1943, and in the first issues of Canadian Art the societal axis of the magazine was evident: articles ranged thematically from the importance of art at the community level, to the contribution of artists to industry and the applied arts and the creation of a national arts program.

¹² From McCurry' opening address at the Kingston Conference, cited in Sicotte, p. 28.

¹³ See Sicotte, pp. 42-43, for Conference propositions and resolutions.

The Kingston Conference is particularly relevant here because of its role in the establishment of Canada's first national art magazine. But its contribution to the development of cultural policy is discerned in events which furthered the visual arts discourse in Canada and Quebec, the most noteworthy of which are the 1944 "Artists' Brief" to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment; the Royal Commission Inquiry into National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, which resulted in the *Massey Report* in 1951; and the establishment of the Canada Council in 1957.

The "Artists' Brief" reiterated the agenda of the Kingston Conference, demanding government involvement in the arts and a national support structure for all aspects of cultural production, from town planning and industrial design to community cultural centres.¹⁵ Five years later, in 1949, the federal government acted upon the legacy of the Kingston Conference and the "Artists' Brief" by launching a national inquiry into the status of Canadian culture. For a nation of which could be said in 1951 that it had "as yet no national history and no genuine consciousness of the past,"¹⁶ the Massey-Lévesque Commission drew attention to the lack of Canadian content in all aspects of Canadian cultural production. The results of the inquiry demonstrated a need to ground Canadian

¹⁴ For a more detailed account of the importance of liberal humanism at this time, see Paul Litt's book *The muses, the masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Schafer, *Aspects of Canadian Cultural Policy* (Paris: UNESCO, 1976), p. 44. The "Artists' Brief" resulted in the establishment of Canada's first national artists' association, the Canadian Arts Council, which later became the Canadian Conference of the Arts.

culture in a heretofore absent historical consciousness if future cultural production was to reflect a central national mythology. Indeed, the Commission was told by the Periodical Press Association that "Canada was the only country of any size in the world whose people read more foreign periodicals than they did their own."¹⁷ The federal impulse to create a modern national identity was well served by the *Massey Report's* recommendations, which made a case for national unity in cultural matters to fend off growing Americanization and materialism. It has been argued, however, that the distrust for American mass culture expressed in the *Report* forged the profile of a national culture which would henceforth polarize high art and popular culture in Canada, further enlarging the gulf between the artist and society.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the *Report* put into place an infrastructure which, if only in terms of financial support, would foster the dissemination of culture -- often regardless of its provenance -- during a time when nation-building was a priority on the political agenda. The contribution of Laval University social scientist Georges-Henri Lévesque as co-director of the Commission signaled the acknowledgment of Quebec's role in fashioning national cultural policy.

One of the most important recommendations of the *Massey Report* was for the establishment of a Canada Council for the encouragement of the arts, letters,

¹⁶ From Hilda Neatby, "National History," *Royal Commission Studies*, 1951, cited in Dot Tuer, "The Art of Nation Building -- Constructing a 'Cultural Identity' for Post-War Canada," *Parallélogramme*, vol. 17 no. 4 (1992), p. 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁸ See Tuer, "The Art of Nation-Building -- Constructing a 'Cultural Identity' for Post-War Canada."

humanities and social sciences.¹⁹ As will be seen later, the Canada Council played a vital part in Vie des Arts' survival (as it did in that of many other Canadian publications) from its earliest years. When the Canada Council was instituted in 1957, its financial pool was derived from income earned on a large endowment fund based on an annual appropriation from the federal government, and private donations.²⁰ The establishment of the Canada Council reflected the power the federal government could exercise over Canadian art and culture, extending its reach across the entire country in an effort to build national identity. Quebec was of course no exception, and federal support of Quebec artists would become a disconcerting fact to an increasingly nationalist province in the following decades.

When the first issue of Vie des Arts was published in 1956, the emergence of Canada as a prosperous, modern post-war nation was well under way, and the general mood towards the arts, if not marked by unbridled enthusiasm, was at least one of acceptance of the notion of public support in cultural matters. Economic growth made possible the advent of a Canadian consumer society, which in turn would provide fertile ground for the establishment of a Canadian magazine culture. The earnestness and enthusiasm which fueled art magazines such as Canadian Art and Vie des Arts reflected a desire by the artistic community to transgress its traditional elitist position and become a participant in the wider life of the nation.

¹⁹ See Schafer, Aspects of Canadian Cultural Policy, pp. 44-45.

The changing discourse: repositioning art in the new Quebec

“French-Canadian culture is the most traditionalist in the New World, with the possible exception of Spanish America, and the most self-conscious.”²¹

Mason Wade's 1957 assessment of Quebec's cultural climate may have seemed unduly harsh to the informed observer, yet this picture painted from an American perspective could only reflect the outsider's lack of insight into a society that for so long had turned inwards in order to preserve its identity. The events which shaped cultural policy in Quebec were interwoven with the establishment of the Canadian cultural policy infrastructure, yet in many ways remained self-contained due to the particular climate of Quebec politics during the 1950s. Quebec's passage from a conservative, clergy-dominated rural society to a modern, secular state was accomplished over several decades, but the change crystallized during the early 1960s, with the Quiet Revolution. During the post-war years, the emergence of a new middle class which would equate its class aspirations with those of Quebec society at large, enabled the articulation of a renewed nationalism.²²

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²¹ From the chapter by Mason Wade, “The Culture of French Canada,” in Park, ed., The Culture of Contemporary Canada, p. 367.

²² Pierre Anctil, “La Révolution Tranquille: vers une réinterprétation” (Conference, October 31, 1990), Études sur le Québec à McGill, Bulletin no. 8, p. 2.

The end of the Duplessis régime and the advent of the Lesage government in 1960 marked a new expansiveness in Quebec, where cultural and intellectual life openly shaped itself to the demands and desires of modernity. Without the restrictive surveillance of the clergy or a conservative political élite, the synthesis of art and politics which Borduas had begun with the Refus Global in 1948 finally began to adopt concrete form in the determination of the architects of the Quiet Revolution to align cultural production with social change. When Borduas and other artists including Riopelle, Ferron and Barbeau published Refus Global, they underwrote a politicization of the discourse on art in Quebec, an act which would henceforth influence both the establishment of cultural policy and the production of art.²³ It was during the 1950s that Quebec writers and artists publicly voiced their commitment to social change, the former by engaging in debate through their written works, the latter by adopting pedagogical methods to promote progressive discourse.²⁴ Many inroads were made by the visual arts milieu during this period to educate and inform the public: schools, colleges, universities, theatres, restaurants and bookstores became temporary exhibition venues, manifestoes were published and proclaimed, newspapers became willing accomplices in the impassioned debates on contemporary painting, and art criticism found a place in the media.²⁵ Vie des Arts was both product and participant in this flood of activity.

²³ Schafer, Aspects of Canadian cultural Policy, p. 7.

²⁴ Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues, p. 165.

²⁵ The Librairie Tranquille, the Restaurant Hélène de Champlain and L'Université de Montréal were among the venues which became temporary exhibition spaces; debates on contemporary painting could be found in Montreal's major French-language dailies such as La Presse and Le

As art historian Marie Carani has argued, however, the pairing of a nationalist *projet de société* and the evolution of a modernist language in Quebec visual arts gave rise to conflicting aspirations – a *conflit des codes* – within which the desire to participate in a liberal/nationalist social reform agenda was put to the test by the internationalist/humanist ideals of modernist art. Borduas' Refus Global would signify an anarchic refusal of the constraints inherent in a direct alignment with the state.²⁶ The ambiguity of this position would also be felt in Vie des Arts, where relentless promotion of contemporary art would always be counterbalanced by generous coverage of the *patrimoine* – a situation which would remain unchanged until the advent of theory-based contemporary art magazines such as Parachute in the seventies.

The Conseil des Arts de Montréal, established in 1956, and the Ministère des Affaires culturelles, instituted in 1961, were both essential to solidifying Quebec's new cultural policy, and would both contribute to Vie des Arts' survival in its first decade. Headed by the Liberal Party's Georges-Émile Lapalme, and responsible for four separate cultural sectors (the Office de la langue française, the Département du Canada français d'outre-frontière, the Conseil provincial des arts, and the Commission des monuments historiques)²⁷ the Ministère des Affaires culturelles was part of the infrastructure created by the Liberal Party to

Devoir. For a more detailed account, see Marie Carani's study of the period in L'Oeil de la critique (Québec: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1990).

²⁶ See Marie Carani, ed., Des lieux de mémoire. Identité et culture modernes au Québec, 1930-1960. (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1995). Présentation: "D'un conflit de codes, sous la modernité, entre l'artistique et le social," pp. 3-26.

²⁷ Schafer, Aspects of Canadian Cultural Policy, p. 11-12.

support its new brand of progressive nationalism. The Quebec government was responding to artists' insistence on being recognized as a contributing force in society, as the Canadian government had done at the federal level with the Canada Council. In Quebec, however, the demands included more than direct action on the part of the government: artists yearned for public and official acknowledgment of their struggle against the repression of the Duplessis era. As the arts became common currency in Quebec's new political agenda, the discourse between artists and the state was altered. Artists no longer needed to exercise confrontation in order to be heard: negotiation would now be the required *modus operandi* if they were to advance their cause with the new government. Quebec embraced the visual arts as a building block of national identity, and the artistic milieu, regardless of its aesthetic or theoretical differences, became a broker in the political arena. One of the most significant results of this collaboration was the creation of Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain in 1964, which would serve to build Quebec's first official collection of contemporary art as the heritage of future generations.²⁸

In 1966, art critic and historian Jean-René Ostiguy would describe 1956 as a watershed year for all aspects Quebec culture: "le début d'une totale remise en question de toutes les structures de la société québécoise²⁹". Indeed, the social and cultural changes brought about by the Quiet Revolution in the mid-fifties

²⁸ Francine Couture, ed., Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante: La reconnaissance de la modernité (Montréal: vlb éditeur, 1993), p. 14-15.

would provide fertile ground for the establishment of an expanded field for contemporary art, a field within which Vie des Arts would take its place as communicator, educator and arbiter of taste for the new urban middle class.

Modernity to modernism: precursors of Vie des Arts

The arts in Canada were seen to gain full coverage on a national scale only with the last few issues of Abell's Maritime Art, which in 1943 became Canadian Art (and thus recognized in name as Canada's "official" arts magazine) -- and this in spite of such long-established European models as the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in France and The Art Journal in England, which had been publishing for nearly a century by the time Canadian Art and Vie des Arts were founded.³⁰ However, in Quebec itself the cultural periodical had enjoyed a long tradition dating back to the early 19th century, although most publications were short-lived. In the 19th century, with secondary education in Quebec accessible only to a minority of the population, the sought-after educated urban reader was in very short supply; and the changing fashion of opinion among the urban élite too often failed to sustain a publisher's personal vision through more than a few issues. One of the first Quebec cultural publications to include visual arts in its contents was L'Abeille canadienne (1819-1820), the mandate of which sought

³⁰ Ibid., from chapter by Rose-Marie Arbour, "L'apport des femmes peintres au courant post-automatiste: une représentation critique (1955-1965)," p. 29.

to include international coverage of art and literature. The need to respond to international art in a context of relatively regional scope in terms of the readership it could attract was without a doubt influenced by Quebec's general cultural climate. Culture in Quebec was nurtured through language and history by a continental European aesthetic -- one which would still bear upon Vie des Arts more than a century later. By the turn of the century, the Revue de l'art, littérature, esthétique, peinture, sculpture, architecture, published in Montreal in 1895, was able to go one step further: by exploiting new developments in reproduction techniques within its pages, it could bring art to an even wider audience. "Notre revue peut être regardée comme un recueil des plus belles productions de l'art à l'aide de la photographie et de la gravure," claimed its publishers.³¹ Image reproduction, which arguably served to democratize the visual arts, was now available to publishers, creating new opportunities to engage a broader readership.

It would not be until 1918, however, with the publication of Le Nigog, that a periodical would champion the cause of cultural modernity. This short-lived journal (1918-1919) is frequently cited as the first modern *revue* in Quebec, signaling the beginning of accession to cultural modernity and causing a breach in the intellectual trajectory.³² Le Nigog's espousal of formalism and its declared anti-regionalist and anti-nationalist stance posited an alternative to the

³⁰ The Gazette des Beaux-Arts was founded in 1859 and The Art Journal in 1949. See McKenzie and Williamson, p. 25

³¹ Ibid., p. 36.

insular nationalist agenda espoused by many of the cultural and political élite in Quebec. Such high regard for the autonomy of art and the independence of the artist from a social agenda, however enjoyed at the time in international circles, was in direct opposition to the ideology which characterized contemporary opinion in Quebec. The mandate adopted by Le Terroir (1918), for instance, a cultural periodical contemporary to Le Nigog, reflected the traditional nationalism exemplified in the notion of *la survie* – the survival of French in Quebec by the prevention of outside interference. The organ of La société des arts, sciences et lettres du Québec, Le Terroir dealt directly with Quebec socio-cultural issues: it openly argued for nationalism and sought to support and promote Quebec art almost exclusively.³³ Le Nigog, in contrast, sought to explore all avenues in art, and desired a Quebec art that could compete on an equal footing in the international arena. Le Nigog also signaled the emergence of 'experts' in the field of cultural journalism – contributors such as Louis Bourgoïn and Fernand Préfontaine, both collectors of modern European art, were also directly involved in the artistic community.³⁴

After Le Nigog, few Quebec publications dealt specifically with the visual arts, and several decades would pass before the emergence of Arts et Pensée, Vie des Arts' short-lived predecessor.³⁵ Founded in 1951 by Father Julien Déziel, a

³² Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues, p. 27.

³³ Ibid., p. 103-104.

³⁴ Trépanier, "L'émergence d'un discours de la modernité dans la critique d'art", in Lamonde and Trépanier, L'Avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec, p. 106.

³⁵ Mention can be made of the publication Qui, a cultural magazine published in Montreal from 1949 until 1954. However, its approach was strictly biographical (biographical portraits of Quebec

teacher at Montreal's l'École des Beaux-Arts, Arts et Pensée sought to initiate a general audience to the visual arts by drawing parallels between culture and social concerns. It clearly positioned itself as an advocate of the spiritual over what its editors and contributors thought of as the invading tide of materialism during the 1950s. The regeneration of the human spirit through the contemplation of beauty fueled its editorial policy: salvation through art would counter the detrimental influences which menaced all aspects of contemporary culture. A sampling of its contents includes articles on Canadian art history and religious art, studies on the psychological and pedagogical aspects of art, and a special 1955 issue on Ozias Leduc. The magazine counted among its contributors the artists Jean Paul Lemieux, Ozias Leduc, John Lyman, and Paul-Emile Borduas, as well as critics André Jasmin, Claude Robillard and Robert Élie.³⁶ Criticized by some as favoring religious over secular art,³⁷ Arts et Pensée was nevertheless welcomed as a supporter of *l'art vivant* and as a disseminator of artistic thought:

...la nouvelle revue Arts et Pensée dès son premier numéro s'avéra excellente. Elle correspond à un besoin de notre milieu artistique et si son directeur veut réellement en faire le carrefour vivant de tous les courants d'idées qui surgissent un peu partout

artists, writers, musicians etc.). As well, it placed equal emphasis on all the arts, from the visual arts to literature and music, making it less relevant in the context of this thesis. See André Beaulieu, Jean Boucher, Jean Hamelin, Gérard Laurence, Jocelyn Saint-Pierre, La Presse Québécoise -- des origines à nos jours, vol. 8, 1945-1954 (St-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989), pp. 135-136.

³⁶Ibid. pp. 179-181.

³⁷Ibid. Beaulieu et al cite the following tongue-in-cheek observation from the cultural magazine Place Publique, a contemporary of Arts et Pensée: "Des malins lui reprochent une forte tendance vers l'art sacré. Vu que c'est le milieu où nous voyons le plus de camelots, de laideurs, nous n'avons pas du tout objection, tout au contraire, à ce que notre ami Rolland Boulanger veuille d'abord instruire nos zouaves, nos bédoux et nos marguilliers."

dans le pays, cette revue peut rendre à coups sûrs de grands services.³⁸

Unlike Le Nigog, Arts et Pensée believed in the social function of art -- hence its pedagogical aspirations.³⁹ It was in Arts et Pensée that high modernism and abstraction became part of a broader discourse attempting to reach the general reader. This humanist approach, however, was one driven by the religious and spiritual convictions of its editorial board, whose policy can be said to have reflected the still strong guiding hand of the clergy in Quebec education and culture, with its longstanding support for the tradition of *l'art sacré*. Only with the founding of Vie des Arts five years later (1956) -- and this only after its first few issues -- would the clergy's influence diminish enough to make way for a completely secularized art milieu to emerge, demonstrating a parallel with Quebec society at large during the pre-Quiet Revolution years.

³⁸ Beaulieu et al, La Presse Québécoise: des origines à nos jours.

³⁹ Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues, pp. 162-64.

Chapter 2

A Canadian art magazine for a modern Quebec

Establishing a voice: founding of Vie des Arts and formulation of a mandate

The first issue of Vie des Arts appeared in the winter (January-February) of 1956 (plate 1), following the demise of Arts et Pensée in February 1955. The cessation of Arts et Pensée was the result of a lack of financial resources: not wanting the quality of the magazine to suffer, the publishers decided it would be best to abandon publication.⁴⁰ Jacques Simard, Editor-in-Chief of Vie des Arts in 1957, commented about Arts et Pensée that "le vide créé par sa disparition fut vivement ressenti dans les milieux favorables au développement des arts."⁴¹ Vie des Arts was first published by the Société des Arts, an association dedicated to the support, promotion and dissemination of art in Quebec: art which it defined as "des arts d'inspiration latine",⁴² which we can surmise represented art of non-Anglo-Saxon origin, or more precisely the art of Quebec, France and perhaps the rest of continental Europe. The intention of the association was to organize and publicize exhibitions and to publish an art magazine to be called *Vie des Arts*. Archives have revealed, however, that the founders of Vie des Arts and the Société des Arts were in fact closely linked to

⁴⁰ Jacques Simard, from the Fonds Vie des Arts (UQAM, Service des archives), in a 1957 grant application to the Canada Council, from a section describing the history of Vie des Arts. "Au Conseil des Arts: Demande de subvention pour la revue Vie des Arts," with a covering letter dated September 30, 1957.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

the group which had spearheaded Arts et Pensée. A note from Gérard Morisset, dated January 12, 1955, to his friend Andrée Paradis (who would regularly contribute to Vie des Arts and in 1964 become the magazine's Editor), requests her attendance at a meeting to discuss Arts et Pensée's future. Also invited were, among others, Arts et Pensée's Editor, (Père) Julien Déziel, and future Art Director and founding member of Vie des Arts Claude Beaulieu. "...Il s'agit de renflouer la revue et de lui donner une nouvelle orientation."⁴³

The Société des Arts was headed by prominent art historian Gérard Morisset, then Curator of the Musée Provincial de Québec. Morisset, known for his seminal work on the architecture of French Québec, and therefore an important figure in the establishment of the *patrimoine*, was a firm believer in the social function of art, and felt that it had been sorely neglected by historians in both Quebec and Canada: "En général, nos historiens ont ignoré l'art -- cette manifestation collective et spontanée d'un peuple sensible et sain, dont le langage et les formes plastiques, les objets usuels et d'agrément jouent un rôle primordial dans l'évolution de sa culture. ... On néglige la valeur sociale de l'art et l'action éminente qu'il exerce dans toute civilisation."⁴⁴ Morisset remained Editor-in-Chief for just over a year, his duties coming to an end in June of 1957 "pour des raisons de santé et de géographie."⁴⁵ The first issue masthead of Vie

⁴³ Fonds Andrée Paradis (UQAM, Service des archives).

⁴⁴ Gérard, Morisset, La peinture traditionnelle au Canada français (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960), p. 8.

⁴⁵ Simard, from the 1957 grant application (Fonds Vie des Arts). According to correspondence between Andrée Paradis and Gérard Morisset (from the Fonds Andrée Paradis), in the fall of 1956 Morisset suffered a fairly serious car mishap involving a plunge into a river at Les Éboulements,

des Arts lists the following as members of the editorial board: Directeur -- Gérard Morisset; Secrétaires de rédaction -- Julien Déziel (of Arts et Pensée) and Claude Picher; Directeur artistique -- Claude Beaulieu. Of these, Art Director Claude Beaulieu would long outlast the others, his name appearing on the masthead for close to three decades.

The first issue of Vie des Arts is highly suggestive of Morisset's interests, and his views on the social function of art are well represented within its pages. Its contents included the following articles: "Au Lecteur" (editorial); "Les concours artistiques de la province de Québec", by critic and Musée de la Province de Québec Exhibitions Director Claude Picher (a justification and history of official art competitions in Quebec since 1945, with accompanying photographs); "Nos monuments historiques" by Paul Gouin, President of the Commission des Monuments historiques (a plea for the preservation of the architecture of the French régime in Quebec), and explanation of the Commission des Monuments historiques' position; "La Société des Arts Plastiques", by painter Jean Paul Lemieux and Claude Picher (an exposition of the functions and aims of the Quebec City-based Société des Arts Plastiques by its founder, Picher, and its president, Lemieux); "Portraits de cadavres", by Gérard Morisset (a study of the portraiture of deceased nuns and clergy during the French régime); "Auguste Perret", by architect André Blouin (a portrait of the French architect and

Quebec. He was accompanied at the time by Jacques Simard, who would become editor the following Spring. The correspondence also suggests that his curatorial and project workload was ever-increasing.

theoretician). A series of columns were also established in the first issue, including exhibition reviews, book reviews, and a music and a theatre column. Space was also allotted for "letters to the editor".

Although the magazine listed its address as a Montreal post office box, it is interesting to note that many of its contributors, including Morisset, Lemieux and Picher, were Quebec City-based and that much of the content was derived from material located in and events which took place at Quebec City. The material contained in the columns reinforces this geographical factor: of the four exhibitions noted in the "Expositions" section, three took place at the Musée Provincial de Québec, and one in a Quebec City gallery⁴⁶. The theatre column drew a portrait of a new Quebec City theatre company, and the two letters to the editor are signed by readers from the Quebec City area. Morisset's position as Curator of the Musée was no doubt a deciding factor, and his field of expertise in Quebec historical art and architecture was surely a strong influence upon the content of the magazine. The outcome was a first issue with bureaucratic overtones and a penchant for an academic style, with a slightly old-fashioned approach to communicating the importance its founders placed on the function of art in society. Overall, the first issue of Vie des Arts favored local history and geographical regionalism in art -- the currents of internationalism and high modernism which would become a defining characteristic of Vie des Arts in the

⁴⁶ The Musée de la Province exhibitions which were noted are the following: a David Milne retrospective; an exhibition of Jacques Villon works on paper; and an Ozias Leduc retrospective organized by the National Gallery on tour at the Musée de la Province. The Quebec city gallery is

next few years were not yet apparent. The editorial in this first issue, titled “Au lecteur” and signed “La Direction”, is unique in that the magazine would publish no more official editorials until it reached its ten-year mark in 1966 under the editorship of Andrée Paradis. An analysis of this first editorial reveals the magazine’s objectives and serves to present its official mandate to readers.

According to André Fortin in his analysis of Quebec intellectuals and their magazines, the first issue of any periodical is most important as it introduces the founders to their prospective readers and serves to contextualize the magazine within the intellectual and social landscape. With the appearance of any new magazine or periodical, its founders seek to fill an intellectual void⁴⁷ – in the case of Vie des Arts a void left by the demise of its predecessor, Arts et Pensée. The first editorial reveals a plan of action, a mandate by which its founders wish to change an existing situation, and in many cases resembles a manifesto in tone and intent: the authors speak as a group, they determine a call to action and offer a critical position vis-à-vis the status quo.⁴⁸ As will be shown, Vie des Arts’ first editorial, in its own punctilious style, admirably fills these criteria.

The editorial opens with a comparison of two periods in Quebec art: the period between 1910 and 1930, and the period at the time of writing, the mid-1950s. The authors summarize the former as a time of arrested progress in Quebec art,

“L’Atelier”, which showed a series of watercolors by Jeanne Rhéaume, a Canadian artist living in Italy.

⁴⁷ Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuel québécois et leurs revues, p. 8.

a time during which numerous disciplines fell out of favor and production came to a relative standstill. The later, contemporary period is characterized as a renewal in all areas of artistic endeavor: "Il s'agit donc d'une renaissance, et le mot n'est pas trop fort." Given the magnitude of this artistic renaissance, the editorial declares that a link must be fashioned between artists and the public -- a connection which can only be established, according to the authors, from within the pages of a magazine:

Un tel mouvement ne peut se soutenir ni s'épanouir s'il n'existe un contact étroit entre les artistes et le public, c'est-à-dire entre les producteurs et les consommateurs de la chose artistique. Ce contact étroit, seule une revue d'art peut l'assurer avec plénitude et efficacité, à condition qu'elle ouvre ses pages à tous les éléments de la culture humaine. C'est le rôle qu'entend jouer Vie des Arts dans la nation.

Next follows a description of the methods the magazine will employ to fulfill this mandate, inscribing the parameters within which the magazine will operate: Vie des Arts is to become a source of information, will cover all artistic disciplines from the past to the present, and will objectively examine the currents of contemporary art without favoring one group over others in the interest of a better understanding of contemporary art practices. In closing, the founders of Vie des Arts assume the responsibility of education, promising to bridge the gulf that is rapidly dividing contemporary art from its public: "À l'heure où le fossé se creuse plus profond entre un certain art, qui est légitime, et un certain public qui ne demande qu'à comprendre mais qui n'en a pas toujours le pouvoir, le moment n'est pas à la querelle plus ou moins stérile, mais à l'action éducative."

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 17-18.

With these words Vie des Arts summarized the conflicts inherent in the broad acceptance of *l'art actuel* -- a problem which was characteristic of high modernism and abstraction in the visual arts -- and established its agenda: the empowerment of a general audience to participate in the discourse of modern art and, as a corollary, the creation of a broad audience to support the continuing evolution of Quebec's artistic "renaissance".⁴⁹

How did Vie des Arts differ in its agenda from its predecessors Le Nigog and Arts et Pensée? Both of these also sought to communicate and disseminate art and to initiate its readership into the complexities of the modernist discourse. In the case of Le Nigog, we can assume that given the cultural and educational demographics of the time, a more restricted readership was being courted. Arts et Pensée was much closer to Vie des Arts in this respect, and most sources cite Vie des Arts as a seamless continuation of the work begun by Arts et Pensée.⁵⁰ There is, however, an appreciable difference between the two magazines -- one which grew more and more obvious as Vie des Arts evolved --and it rests as much on social transformation as it does on the founders' and publishers' personal visions. Unlike Arts et Pensée, in which views on art were inseparable from Quebec's Catholic tradition in culture and education, Vie des Arts represented a release from traditional channels of dissemination. No longer did art need to be sanctioned by clergy-inspired purposefulness in order to reach its public, as Quebec society had already begun a long process of secularization.

⁴⁹ See Couture, Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante, pp. 10-11.

Echoing these currents of social change, Vie des Arts' mandate to democratize the discourse on art in Quebec and to build a showcase for Quebec artists enabled the magazine to flourish.⁵¹ Vie des Arts would attempt to promote contemporary Quebec art beyond Quebec's borders, while creating a Quebec audience for the art of Canada and Europe.⁵²

Building and structuring: Vie des Arts staff and contributors, 1956-1966

If founding a magazine can be seen as an act of faith, assuring its continuity must in many cases be viewed as a labor of love. Vie des Arts, like so many Canadian art magazines before and after, operated on a shoestring during its early years, relying on its dedicated staff for survival. Budgets and revenue sources will be examined in a later section, but suffice it to say at this juncture that during the first few years, Vie des Arts' editors, contributors and production staff received no payment for their work, and it was clear that the number of issues per year was limited to the quarterly format because staff and contributors' remunerated occupations outside the magazine demanded most of their time and attention. This is well documented in the magazine's first grant

⁵⁰ For instance, Beaulieu et al, La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours.

⁵¹ According to Beaulieu et al, however, the fairly high level of cultural sophistication was required of the Vie des Arts reader, although the writing style was generally fairly accessible. Nevertheless, Beaulieu et al conclude that "Les collaborateurs de la revue évitent le jargon et l'hermétisme, de sorte que cette revue contribue à l'éducation artistique du grand public." La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours vol. 9, p. 38.

⁵² Vie des Arts is still published today by "La Vie des Arts", a non-profit organisation. Its current Editor and Director is Bernard Lévy.

application to the Canada Council in 1957: "Parce que la collaboration était gratuite et qu'il fallait bien placer la revue au second plan du travail des collaborateurs, il fut jugé prudent de publier trimestriellement sans cependant diminuer le nombre de pages annuel."⁵³ Further, "À l'heure actuelle, le directeur artistique et le directeur technique de la revue s'occupent bénévolement de la production de Vie des Arts. Aucune collaboration de la revue n'est payée à l'heure actuelle."⁵⁴

When Gérard Morisset left the magazine after just over a year as its Directeur, with Jacques Simard replacing him in the summer of 1957, a shift in both staff and contributors seems to have taken place. The Quebec City focus, which had been less prominent in the review columns since the first issue, concomitantly gave way to a less parochial point of view as the magazine became established. Articles on contemporary issues and events beyond Quebec's borders began to appear more frequently ("L'UNESCO, un palais d'aujourd'hui"; "L'art des Esquimaux du Canada"⁵⁵), faintly echoing the currents of an international humanism which already characterized the high modernist art of the late fifties and sixties. A special issue on the Brussell's World Fair in the summer of 1958 showcased Quebec and Canadian art in an international setting. As well, art historical articles focused less and less on the pre-Conquest *patrimoine* and began to explore European art traditions

⁵³ From the Fonds Vie des Arts, "Au Conseil des Arts: Demande de subvention," 1957.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Vie des Arts, vol. 2 no. 8, by Jean-Louis Lalonde; and vol. 2 no. 9, by Paul Dumas.

("Rationalisme du Directoire"; "British Painting of the 18th Century"⁵⁶). Quebec City art critic Claude Picher's name no longer appeared on the masthead, and his Société des Arts Plastiques colleague Jean Paul Lemieux would no longer contribute to the magazine. The only original staff member remaining on the masthead is Claude Beaulieu. If we go as far as to assume the shift was based on personal or critical differences, this could be explained by the indispensability of Beaulieu's technical and production skills in the financial context of Vie des Arts at the time. As well, Picher and Lemieux were viewed as conservatives by the Montreal art community. However, there are no archival accounts explaining their departure. The changeover may simply have reflected the fact that Montreal, as it secured its place as the province's cultural metropolis, was a more favorable environment for the subject at hand. Nevertheless, as of the summer of 1957 Vie des Arts gained a new staff, a new direction, a new look with the publication of its first full-color pages, and a new approach to its survival with the beginning of its requests for federal governmental aid from the newly formed Canada Council.

In the Summer 1957 issue (no. 7), when Jacques Simard became Editor-in-Chief, Vie des Arts' masthead read as follows: Directeur -- Jacques Simard; Administrateur -- Daniel Chantal; Conseiller -- Eddie MacFarlane; Directeur artistique -- Claude Beaulieu. This staff line-up would vary, with the exception of Jacques Simard and Claude Beaulieu (with an issue in the Fall of 1960

⁵⁶Vie des Arts, vol. 2 no. 8, by Jacques Beaulieu; and vol. 2 no. 9, by John Steegman.

carrying these two names only) until the Fall of 1962, when both Jacques de Roussan, as Chef de la Rédaction, and Jacques Folch-Ribas, as Secrétaire and shortly thereafter Chef des Chroniques, would appear consistently on the masthead until the end of the magazine's first decade.⁵⁷

Little has surfaced about Jacques Simard's professional life. However, his exposition of Vie des Arts' raison d'être in his first request for funding to the Canada Council reveals his strong feelings about the importance of disseminating Quebec art in Quebec, Canada and beyond, and by doing so from a Quebec perspective:

On convient généralement que dans la province de Québec se développe une activité artistique qui, quoique dispersée, n'en est pas moins pleine d'une saine vigueur. ... On est en droit d'espérer qu'une maturité éventuelle se muera en génie propre, soit une civilisation canadienne. ... Sans se poser en censeurs et avec une certaine humilité qui n'exclut pas la discussion, la direction de la revue espère encourager cette croissance par un choix du meilleur, par un groupement des lignes de force, par la critique de ce qui se passe *vu par l'optique canadienne d'origine française*. (italics mine).⁵⁸

The issue of language also became an important factor for Simard in ensuring the survival of Vie des Arts. Bearing in mind the designated readers of his grant application, it is interesting to note how Simard expressed the sentiment that both the québécois readership and the institution of Canadian culture would benefit from his publication: "La revue pourrait être auprès de ses lecteurs de

⁵⁷ Daniel Chantal would be gone by the next issue (vol. 2 no.8); in the Summer of 1958, Chantal's Administrateur position would be filled by Maurice Chartrand, who would stay on for only one

langue française *l'instrument de propagande* du Conseil des Arts et de la Galerie Nationale" (italics mine). Jacques Simard would remain on Vie des Arts' masthead as Directeur until the summer of 1964, when his functions were taken over by Andrée Paradis. He appeared thereafter as Président (changed to Président du Conseil d'Administration in the spring of 1966).

Founding member and Art Director Claude Beaulieu not only assumed design and production responsibilities for Vie des Arts, but also contributed a number of articles (eleven in total from 1956 to 1966). He was an architect and urban planner, and a teacher at the École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, and his writings in Vie des Arts echoed his professional interests. His earliest contribution, in the 1956 May-June issue, titled "La maison des hommes", is a discussion of a televised presentation on world architecture. Other articles include "Le Pavillon du Canada" (at the Brussels world exhibition); "L'Édifice de Canadian Industries Limited" (the C.I.L. building); and "À Saint-Sauveur-des-Monts, une résidence classique dans la nature sauvage". It is interesting to note that the buildings discussed in these articles are modernist in style. Vie des Arts also published an article by Émile Jacques on one of Beaulieu's architectural projects in Montreal: "Le Parc de Mésy, une expérience".⁵⁹

issue; Eddy MacFarlane, who had been with Vie des Arts since its second issue under Gérard Morisset, would be a regular on the masthead until the Fall of 1960.

⁵⁸ Fonds Vie des Arts, "Au Conseil des Arts: Demande de subvention," 1957

⁵⁹ "Le Pavillon du Canada," vol. 3 no. 11; "L'Édifice de Canadian Industries Limited," vol. 7 no. 28; "À Saint-Sauveur-des-Monts," vol. 10 no. 42; "Le Parc de Mésy, une expérience," vol. 6 no. 25.

Jacques Folch-Ribas had been a contributor to Vie des Arts since the summer of 1958, when he published an article on Canadian applied arts at the Brussels world exhibition. He had also been an exhibition reviewer for the magazine since issue 11, and from 1958 to 1966 consistently authored contemporary art reviews (approximately 42 columns). In 1962 he officially became "Review Editor" (Chef des chroniques), a position he held until his resignation in the spring of 1965.⁶⁰ Throughout Vie des Arts' first decade he wrote a total of twelve feature articles, almost exclusively on Canadian and Quebec contemporary art and significant cultural events, examining the work of artists such as Yves Gaucher and Suzanne Bergeron, or reporting on the mural installations at the newly inaugurated Place des Arts in Montreal.⁶¹

Andrée Paradis' arrival at Vie des Arts in the summer of 1964 as Editor-in-Chief ushered in the end of the magazine's first decade and the beginning of an editorship which would span over twenty years. Her public career was inextricably bound to Vie des Arts from the magazine's founding. In fact, as early as the fall of 1956, Gérard Morisset, fearing his busy schedule would keep him away from the magazine, beseeched Andrée Paradis to take over as the Editor.⁶² An active contributor to Vie des Arts since its second issue in the spring of 1956 ("Visite à Marc Chagall", an interview with the painter), Andrée

⁶⁰ Documented in the Fonds Vie des Arts in a letter to Folch-Ribas dated May 10, 1965 from then Editor-in-Chief Andrée Paradis, in which Mme Paradis expresses regret at Folch-Ribas' resignation and thanks him for his many years of dedication to the magazine.

⁶¹ "Yves Gaucher," vol. 10 no. 41; "Une romantique" (Suzanne Bergeron), vol. 3 no.14; "Les Arts plastiques à la grande salle de la place des Arts de Montréal," vol. 9 no. 35.

Paradis had already penned nine feature articles by the time she became Editor-in-Chief. Her range of interests and expertise was varied, and the subjects of her articles reflected eclecticism and cultural sophistication. At ease in various areas concerning artistic production, she brought a personal perspective to topics as diverse as contemporary Quebec sculpture, doll collecting, applied arts, anthropology, and art collecting.⁶³ More pertinent to Vie des Arts, however, was Paradis' unrelenting contribution to the early survival of the magazine during her tenure on the Canada Council from 1957 to 1961.⁶⁴

Born in Montreal, Andrée Paradis (1919-1986) was involved in Quebec and Canadian cultural affairs throughout her career. In addition to her appointment to the Canada Council during its first year of operation, Paradis was active in both radio and the emerging television culture of Quebec as a cultural commentator and interviewer, and was on the boards of numerous cultural organizations including the Rioux Commission (Commission of Inquiry into the Teaching of the Arts in Quebec; from 1959 to 1963), the Arts Advisory Board for the Canada Council (1966-1968), and the Arts Council of the Metropolitan Area of Montreal (1965-1975); and was President of the Board of the National Arts Centre (1965-1970), President of the Canadian section of the International

⁶² Fonds Andrée Paradis, letter from Gérard Morisset dated September 7, 1956: "C'est la direction de la revue qui m'inquiète. Pourquoi ne l'assumerez-vous pas?"

⁶³ Articles by Andrée Paradis on these subjects include: "Roussil et la sculpture," vol. 2 no. 7; "Le tour du monde en 40 poupées," vol. 2 no. 9; "Présence de la tapisserie," vol. 2 no. 10; "Autour d'une collection (Georges-P. Vanier)," vol. 3 no. 13 ; and "Les monuments de la Nubie -- leur sauvegarde, un devoir de solidarité internationale," vol. 5 no. 19.

⁶⁴ Correspondence in the Fonds Andrée Paradis documents her appointment to the Canada Council.

Association of Art Critics, member of the University Council of Quebec, and Vice-President of the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO from 1960-1962. Andrée Paradis also received the Centennial Medal and was an Officer of the Order of Canada.⁶⁵

Paradis' career is representative of her unrelenting support and promotion of the arts in both Canada and Quebec. Her public accomplishments were an endorsement of her interest in helping to build and structure the nation's culture and testify to her belief that the arts could make an important contribution to the nation's well-being -- an ideology which could be seen as directly descended from the liberal humanism of the Kingston Conference of 1941. Paradis would also work tirelessly to promote both Canadian and Quebec art on an international level. By the mid-1960s, Vie des Arts would reflect a form of pan-Canadian nationalism (adopted mostly by the bureaucratic élite) which would reach its apex in Canada's Centennial celebrations and Montreal's Expo 67. Andrée Paradis would remain true to this vision of Canada despite later upheavals in Quebec (the October Crisis and the election of the Parti Québécois, for example) and would stand firm against regionalism in art: "Many Quebec artists are asking themselves serious questions against (Quebec) nationalism ... We feel there's no place for nationalism. Nationalism can become an oppressive force if it hampers new development in artistic styles."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Fonds Andrée Paradis, curriculum vitae dated January 1984.

⁶⁶ "Quebec arts editor decries nationalism," The Montreal Star, April 28, 1978, p. B3.

Under her editorship, Vie des Arts not only gained international status but also became institutionalized as a Canadian cultural resource.

Contributors to Vie des Arts were numerous and varied during the first decade, and no doubt helped to shape the magazine's perspective as much as did the editorial board. Notable among feature writers were critics Robert Ayre, Guy Viau and Yves Robillard; critic and National Gallery curator Jean-René Ostiguy; musician and composer Pierre Mercure; gallery owners Gilles Corbeil and Léon Lippel; author, critic and École des Beaux-Arts Director Robert Élie; theoreticians Rodolphe de Repentigny and Fernande Saint-Martin; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal Director Gilles Hénault; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Director Evan H. Turner; critic and art historian Guy Robert; cultural historian and author Marius Barbeau; and architect and artist Melvin Charney. Gérard Morisset also continued to contribute articles throughout the decade.

This roster of names is evidence that the cultural community was eager to participate in Vie des Arts' project of supporting and disseminating contemporary art. Of the feature writers who could, through fairly regular contributions to the magazine, have perceptibly influenced readers' opinions about issues in the art milieu, Claude Picher, Rodolphe de Repentigny, Guy Robert and Jean-René Ostiguy are worthy of further examination.

Claude Picher's early staff affiliation with Vie des Arts and his presence in the Quebec City art community have previously been discussed in these pages. He penned only four articles during his short tenure at the magazine, but internally his active involvement within the art milieu as a critic, painter and founder of the Société des Arts Plastiques positioned him as an influential force within the magazine's editorial ranks.⁶⁷ In his writings about his friend and colleague Jean Paul Lemieux, Picher revealed his critical position to be regionalist and unremittingly pro-figurative. Art historian Francine Couture, commenting on Picher's views in her essay "La réception de la peinture de Jean Paul Lemieux ou la construction d'une figure identitaire",⁶⁸ remarks that Lemieux as understood by Picher was a "peintre authentiquement canadien" and "fidèle à sa culture nationale". Picher's views opposed the high modernist impulse to sever the bonds of tradition, and denied the universalist principle which drove the modernist aesthetic.⁶⁹ His insistence on a pro-regionalist, anti-abstractivist viewpoint was much different from what Vie des Arts would become in the years following his departure.⁷⁰

Rodolphe de Repentigny's critical agenda represented the opposite view from that held by Picher. Repentigny began his collaboration with Vie des Arts as a

⁶⁷ Picher contributed the following articles to Vie des Arts: "Les concours artistiques de la province de Québec depuis 1945," vol. 1 no. 1; "La société des Arts Plastiques," vol. 1 no. 1; "Le marché d'art international," vol. 1 no. 4; "Hommage à Rembrandt," vol. 1 no. 5.

⁶⁸ In Carani, ed., Des lieux de mémoire: Identité et culture modernes au Québec, pp. 63-71.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

⁷⁰ The "La Matière chante" exhibition incident, in which Picher, Lemieux and painter Edmund Alleyn organized the submission of fake Borduas paintings, demonstrates the intensity of

columnist, in the magazine's second issue. He wrote only three feature articles,⁷¹ but his exhibition review columns were regular until his untimely death in 1959.⁷² Repentigny was also a painter (under the pseudonym Jauran) and a member of the Premiers Plasticiens group. He wrote their manifesto in 1955, and supported the cause of geometric abstraction in all his writings, whether in Vie des Arts, in his capacity as art critic for the Montreal daily La Presse (from 1952 on), or in the liberal weekly L'Autorité (writing under the pseudonym François Bourgogne) and he held timely and progressive views on the social function of art: "... Repentigny réclame des artistes vivants qu'ils fournissent à la société d'ici des éléments symboliques subversifs comme solution de rechange visuelle au circuit de la consommation de masse qui s'implante alors sans contrôle apparent."⁷³ Repentigny was at the forefront of the Montreal intellectual avant-garde, and his association with Vie des Arts no doubt helped the magazine gain credibility in this milieu which was hostile to Picher. His position as art critic in La Presse may have helped Vie des Arts, by association, to attract a certain percentage of the broader readership it sought.

Poet, art historian, critic and academic Guy Robert was also an important contributor to Vie des Arts: he wrote twelve feature articles over the magazine's first ten years. He became the first Director of the Musée d'art contemporain de

Picher's anti-abstractionist views. See Marie Carani, L'œil de la critique (Québec: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1990), pp. 54-56.

⁷¹ Repentigny contributed the following articles to Vie des Arts: "La Collection Zacks, une tranche de vie," vol. 2 no.10; "Le Groupe des Onze," vol. 3 no. 12; "Louis Mulhstock," vol. 4 no. 16 (posthumous).

⁷² For a critical biography of Repentigny, see Carani's L'œil de la critique.

Montréal in 1964 and during the 1960s authored a series of art books and artists' monographs titled "Collection Artistes Canadiens dirigée par Guy Robert" which included a study of the Montreal School (École de Montréal -- situations et tendances). For Vie des Arts, he wrote on a variety of subjects but produced mostly monographic pieces on contemporary Quebec artists such as Rita Letendre, Marcelle Maltais, and Mariette Vermette. Viewing public education through mediated information as the best method for preserving cultural identity, Robert was disappointed at the public's failure to grasp the importance of its recent artistic heritage. Blaming the underutilisation of available media for this situation he would write, in 1973: "...le monde des arts plastiques présente, depuis la fin des années '50, des dimensions spectaculaires et économiques dont le relief devrait pouvoir attirer l'attention du grand public et la retenir si les reportages, entretiens et autres approches étaient réalisées avec dynamisme et compétence."⁷⁴

While Jean-René Ostiguy was Curator of Canadian Art at the National Gallery in the latter part of the sixties, he penned an important summary article on contemporary Canadian painting for Vie des Arts. In this article he underlined the importance of the decade beginning in the mid-fifties in the evolution of Quebec society. For Ostiguy, 1956, the year Vie des Arts published its first issue, was seminal in this respect: "le début d'une totale remise en question de

⁷³ Ibid., L'œil de la critique, p. 81.

⁷⁴ Guy Robert, L'Art au Québec depuis 1940 (Montréal: Les Éditions La Presse, 1973), p. 44-45.

toutes les structures de la société québécoise."⁷⁵ This use of historical perspective, put to work in a visual arts context, is characteristic of Ostiguy's approach to contemporary art. He defended a pan-Canadian version of Canadian art, including the rest of Canada in what he thought of as a remarkable period in the history of Quebec and of Canadian painting: "la peinture a été l'un des créateurs de la nouvelle ambience que la société canadienne s'est donnée."⁷⁶ A decade after the stirrings of the Quiet Revolution and on the eve of Canada's centennial and Expo '67, Ostiguy's point of view fit in remarkably well with Vie des Arts' cosmopolitan, internationalist flavor. In 1954 and 1955 Ostiguy had been art critic for the Montreal daily Le Devoir, in the pages of which he defended "le rattrapage culturel" for Quebec and supported European abstraction as a model for internationalism in art.⁷⁷

Surviving: revenue sources and production values

A magazine cannot depend uniquely on the quality of its content or the hard work of its editors and contributors, no matter how dedicated, to ensure its survival. This is especially true of cultural publications in Canada, and was certainly true of Vie des Arts from its earliest days. Regardless of the effort invested in producing an art magazine of integrity and critical value, or of the

⁷⁵ "L'âge nouveau de la peinture canadienne," Vie des Arts, vol. 11 no. 44, p. 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Carani, L'oeil de la critique, p. 29.

fact that contributors went unpaid for published articles,⁷⁸ infusions of money from the outside world were needed to finance, at the very least, the cost of starting up the presses. Vie des Arts depended upon both government grants and advertising revenues to ensure issue-to-issue survival, with paid subscriptions and some corporate and private donations rounding off income.⁷⁹ Archives have revealed, for example, that in the magazine's 1958-59 budget projections, subscriptions would cover less than 25% of operating expenses; advertising revenues covered another 25% of costs; and grants from various government agencies (including federal, provincial and municipal) were counted on to cover roughly the remaining half of operating costs. By 1962, budget projections saw the percentage of costs offset by subscriptions remain the same, and although subscriptions and advertising revenues combined would account for approximately two-thirds of operating costs, the magazine would still depend heavily on government grants to cover the balance.⁸⁰

Vie des Arts' relationship with the Canada Council began at the very outset of the agency's existence. Andrée Paradis' appointment to a four-year term in the Council's first year no doubt expedited the process and generated encouragement for the fledgling magazine. In the magazine's first application to the Canada Council in June 1957, Editor-in-Chief Jacques Simard's covering

⁷⁸ This is documented in the Fonds Vie des Arts in editor Jacques Simard's first request for funds from the Canada Council, in September 1957: "...la collaboraion était gratuite et (qu')il fallait bien placer la revue au second plan du travail des collaborateurs... ."

⁷⁹For example, the Rougier Pharmaceutical Company, already a regular advertiser since the early years, was also a donor, contributing \$500 in 1966; and archives show communication between Steinberg Limited for projected donations. (Fonds Andrée Paradis).

letter pleads the case for funds to ensure the survival of the only French-language art magazine in North America. He also emphasized in no uncertain terms that Vie des Arts could help to expand the reach of Canadian culture in Quebec. He also makes a case for adding colour pages to Vie des Arts, which he deemed absolutely necessary for a visual arts magazine. Being astute, he sent letters with copies of his brief that Fall to members of the Canada Council whom Simard knew were from Quebec (Eugène Bussi eres, Dr. Eustace Morin, Georges Vanier and Andr ee Paradis). On October 15, confirmation arrived from Bussi eres of a \$4,500 grant for the upcoming year, the grant to be paid in two installments. The document also contained a proviso that any moneys received should not in any way lessen regional or local aid. This would become more of a challenge when Vie des Arts would enter into negotiations with Quebec's Minist re des Affaires culturelles. It appears that from 1958 on, Vie des Arts regularly received aid from the Canada Council. By 1967, the figure requested by the magazine was \$24,000, with additional requests for the separate publication of artists' monographs and art historical texts.

Vie des Arts' relationship with the Minist re des Affaires culturelles in Quebec began with the creation of the Minist re in 1961. The first letter in the Vie des Arts archives that documents the magazine's appeal for funds from the Minist re is dated February 10, 1964.⁸¹ Jacques Simard closes his covering

⁸⁰ See the Fonds Vie des Arts, financial statements 1958-1962.

⁸¹ The first public acknowledgement of financial help from either government appears on the magazine's contents page only as of the Winter 1967 issue (vol. 12 no. 45): "La revue Vie des

letter with the following appeal: "J'espère, cher Monsieur, que vous prendrez en considération la place unique qu'occupe notre revue au Canada. ... Elle est cependant, à cause de son marché restreint dans le domaine culturel, dépendante des subventions de l'État."⁸²

Subsequent correspondence shows that overall, the Ministère seemed more reluctant than the Canada Council to help support Vie des Arts. However, the grant process for the year 1964-1965 appears to have been accelerated by an outside threat. In 1964, it came to the attention of Vie des Arts' editors that Canadian Art magazine (viewed as Vie des Arts' English-language counterpart) was to be restarted and refinanced by Montreal newspaper publisher John McConnell after it failed that year to meet its financial commitments. In a letter to the Ministère, Jacques Simard outlines these facts, and pleads for help to keep Vie des Arts afloat in view of Canadian Art's privatization and possible expansion. The takeover by a Montrealer is quite unfavorably perceived by Simard, who accuses McConnell of American-style financial imperialism in Quebec: "Il est tout de même curieux de constater que l'Anglo-Saxon qui criait si fort contre l'invasion américaine ... s'impose par son 'impérialisme de l'argent' dans le Québec."⁸³ The result was a quick response from the Ministère's Romuald Miville-Deschênes, in which he remarked: "L'attitude de

Arts est publiée avec l'aide du Conseil des Arts du Canada et du Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec."

⁸² Fonds Vie des Arts, letter to Romuald-Miville Deschênes from Jacques Simard, February 10, 1964.

⁸³ Fonds Vie des Arts, letter to Romuald-Miville Deschênes from Jacques Simard, March 4, 1964.

nos compatriotes anglo-saxons ne surprend nullement la Direction générale des arts et des lettres.” After several letters to and from various representatives of the Ministère, a letter from Minister of Cultural Affairs Pierre Laporte arrived with a cheque for \$5,200 in exchange for 1,300 subscriptions to Vie des Arts to be expedited to the Délégation générale du Québec in Paris and to the Ministère in Québec City.⁸⁴

As of 1965, however, correspondence between Vie des Arts and the Ministère showed some strain. Andrée Paradis, by then newly-appointed as Editor-in-Chief (and now an ex-Canada Council member), constantly chastised the Ministère for its poor show in terms of financial support – the grants were never sufficient and did not measure up to those of the Canada Council. Aware of the politics of the situation, Andrée Paradis aligned Vie des Arts with the Lesage government’s desire to build a modern Quebec culture: “...nous croyons ... que nous pouvons aider à la longue à créer un véritable milieu artistique au Québec; nous croyons aussi, que nous pouvons amener nos artistes à réaliser leur part de responsabilités.”⁸⁵ Funds were subsequently granted in most years, but were never won without a great deal of ink flowing between the two concerned parties.

It is important to signal that Vie des Arts’ relationship with both the Canada Council and the Ministère des Affaires culturelles was representative, in both

⁸⁴ Fonds Vie des Arts , letter dated November 19, 1964.

cases, of the state's newly instituted policies with regard to cultural affairs. On the one hand, the creation of the Canada Council validated the Canadianization of culture as an antidote to the spread of American mass culture; and on the other, the institutionalization of Quebec culture by the Lesage government's Ministère des affaires culturelles was an attempt to inscribe art and culture within the realm of democratic public discourse. In Quebec especially, the cultural revolution had prepared the way for a recognition of the arts as invaluable to the creation of a national identity. Georges-Émile Lapalme, Quebec's Cultural Affairs Minister from 1961 to 1964, would perceive modernism in the arts as adjunct to the modernization of Quebec society and as a symbol of the struggle for Québécois emancipation.⁶⁵ Vie des Arts, as an emerging magazine during this watershed era for modern Canadian culture, benefited from the new state policies at both the federal and provincial levels, and perhaps set a precedent in its capability to assimilate the inherent similarities and contradictions of the two governments' respective objectives.

The second outside income source that needs to be examined is the magazine's advertising revenues. Throughout Vie des Arts' first decade, the number, if not necessarily the variety, of its advertisers grew as the magazine found its voice and stabilized its readership. As the magazine evolved from its early days as a regional, black-and-white outgrowth of Arts et Pensée to a pan-

⁶⁵ Fonds Vie des Arts , letter to Pierre Laporte, dated January 21, 1965.

Canadian, full-color cultural institution, so did the nature of its advertising content change, to finally stabilizing into a typical art magazine mix of gallery ads and corporate messages. A three-issue analysis of advertising content spanning the first ten years (issue 1, Winter 1956; issue 14, Spring 1958, and issue 39, Summer 1965) reveals a rapid increase in advertisers in the first years and a leveling off by the end of the decade: the ratio of advertising to editorial rose from 1% in the first issue to 22.5% in issue 14, and marked only a slight increase to 25% in issue 39. Needless to say, an improved visual presentation, colour reproduction and more photographs all played a part in attracting advertisers. The analysis also underlined the importance of certain advertising sectors compared to others. For example, in issue 1, advertising is evenly split between cultural (galleries and institutions) and retail (shops, bookstores, etc.) at 44% each of ad space. In issue 14 the split becomes 33% compared with 29%, with another 29% for corporate advertisers, while in issue 39 the cultural sector ads rise to 59%, while the balance between the number of cultural sector ads and the space they occupy balances out at 59% and 56%.

In Vie des Arts' first issue, advertising reflects the magazine's connection to the clergy-influenced Arts et Pensée in text-only ads from Willis Montreal (a distributor of musical instruments which in this instance advertises its selection of church organs and bells; plate 2) and Les Ateliers Saint-Grégoire de l'apostolat liturgique (a religious art and book distributor; plate 2) which were

⁸⁸ Couture, Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante, p. 13.

clearly directed at readers with affiliations to religious institutions. The first few issues also include a number of government and institutional ads in the form of public service announcements, inviting people to consult the provincial archives (Secrétariat de la Province), declaring endorsement of the preservation of the *patrimoine* (Commission des monuments et sites historiques du Québec), or simply describing its various learning institutions (Conservatoire de musique, Institut des Arts appliqués, etc.)

By the 1960s, as mass-market advertising became a force to be reckoned with by both readers and the media, Vie des Arts became more sophisticated in its strategies to attract advertisers. A now well-worn technique was the “special issue”, in which advertisers were rallied around a special theme, exhibition or event. Issues 32 (Fall 1963) and 38 (Spring 1965), on France and Italy respectively, are representative of this trend. The “French” issue contains articles on exhibitions of French art in Montreal, the Paris school, Delacroix and contemporary French industrial design; as well as full-page ads from the Compagnie Transatlantique (shipping; plate 3); and the Comité National des vins de France. The “Italian” issue is a celebration of all things Italian, from Roman mosaics to contemporary Italian art and architecture, to olive groves (Gattuso); wine (Italvine); and the comforts of air travel (Alitalia -- “Le seul bon chemin qui mène à Rome”); in its advertising pages.

As in most art magazines, Vie des Arts' advertising content was dependent from its beginnings on local galleries buying space. The relationship is evidently symbiotic, with one party happily absorbing the advertising revenues while the other benefits from a captive market. In the case of Vie des Arts during the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship flourished: Vie des Arts was, aside from the daily newspapers, probably the most promising venue for commercial galleries to display their wares. More importantly, Vie des Arts came along at a time when the Montreal area was enjoying a downtown gallery boom largely justified by the importance placed on painting as the era's most revered form of expression. From a handful of galleries in the late forties, the Montreal gallery scene after 1956 had expanded to offer as many galleries as could absorb the era's remarkable diversity of painting styles.⁶⁷ Galerie Agnès Lefort was the first gallery to advertise in the magazine (issue 1), and was followed by others which would become the magazine's core of gallery advertisers over its first decade: Agnès Lefort, Denyse Delrue, Waddington, Dominion and Monique de Groot. However, such a happy symbiosis does not escape the question of patronage: did Vie des Arts favor its most regular advertisers with more frequent show reviews? It does appear that the magazine's most frequent gallery advertisers (Dominion, Agnès Lefort and Monique de Groot), can also be counted amongst those most reviewed, but it is impossible to determine whether this is due to these galleries' more frequent exhibitions and dominance in the art marketplace or in fact to preferential treatment.

⁶⁷ See H  l  ne Sicotte, "Un   tat de la diffusion des arts visuels    Montr  al -- Les ann  es cinquante:

A magazine's design and production values are often inextricably linked to its financial health. This was certainly true in the case of Vie des Arts because of its availability on news stands. As well, the 1950s and 1960s saw tremendous improvements in the magazine printing industry, but these were only available if grants were obtained, advertising revenues flourished and circulation was maintained. As the magazine's viability as an established publication became more secure, additional money could be transferred to the enhancement of its appearance -- a preoccupation which was a high priority.⁸⁸ Colour first appeared in Vie des Arts in the third issue of its second year (no. 7, Summer 1957) through the generosity of the company Festivals de Montréal, a theatrical promotion company which allowed the magazine eight pages of colour reproductions in addition to the inclusion of its seasonal program.⁸⁹ The availability of colour, better overall reproduction, increased accessibility of design tools (typefaces, photo enlarging, spot colour, etc.) and more efficient printing methods were all factors which helped to change Vie des Arts' appearance over its first ten years. In an effort to remain current in the eyes of its readership, Vie des Arts mirrored magazine design trends: from a strictly black-and-white, scholarly format with a conservative design grid in 1956, it had evolved, by 1966, to a full-colour, larger magazine with a progressive design layout.

lieux et chronologie," Journal of Canadian Art History, vol. 16 no. 2, pp. 41-76.

⁸⁸ Jacques Simard, in his 1957 brief to the Canada Council, insists on the importance of colour for an art magazine: "La direction de la revue voudrait dans chaque numéro étudier l'œuvre d'un peintre influent. Comment le faire sans couleur? La couleur est essentielle."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

The responsibility for the magazine's production and design rested upon its Art Director, Claude Beaulieu. His tasks were numerous: design, layout, production, photo editing and printing supervision. He also designed most of the advertisements so that they would not jar with the "art magazine" context but rather in some way enhance it. For example an entire series of full-page corporate advertisements, from issue 7 through issue 32, for Vie des Arts' printing house Pierre DesMarais, includes visual references to the history of printed communication: Babylonian cuneiform inscription, a medieval illuminated manuscript, a 15th-century French depiction of a printing workshop and so on (plates 4, 5, 6, 7). A great number of advertisers benefited from Beaulieu's determination to create a visually coherent magazine. By the mid-sixties, while still operating on a restricted budget, Vie des Arts had developed a balanced mixture of visual appeal and informed content to simultaneously uphold its credibility as an art publication and deliver a pleasurable reading experience to its growing audience.

Chapter 3

Content as discourse: the Quebec perspective

Une oeuvre peut être le moment de vérité d'un peuple, d'une civilisation.⁹⁰

This aphorism from the Plasticiens' 1955 Manifesto reveals the degree of importance which certain factions of the contemporary art milieu in Quebec placed on artistic production. The statement, written by critic and Vie des Arts columnist Rodolphe de Repentigny, acknowledges the liberating impulse of art and recognizes the value of its role in shaping society. One can sense the liberal humanism upon which such a statement was certainly founded.⁹¹ The same liberal humanism could be said to have given shape to Vie des Arts, and, as can be deduced through an analysis of its content from 1956 to 1966, Vie des Arts also placed significant value on contemporary Quebec art. The magazine's educational mission vis-à-vis the public, its involvement in the art milieu, and its untiring promotion of local artists is well-represented in the choices it made regarding content.

⁹⁰ From "Aphorismes Plasticiens" in "Manifeste des Plasticiens," 1955, ref. Carani, L'oeil de la critique, p. 233.

⁹¹ It is more productive here to avoid reading a nationalist sub-text into the Plasticien's aphorism, as the *peuple* and *civilisation* described here seem to exist more in a Borduaesque, Refus Global sense than in any contemporary context within which we may be tempted to interpret it. Regarding the humanist basis of the Plasticien manifesto, see Carani's work on Repentigny (L'oeil de la critique), in which she traces the critic's philosophical influences to existentialism (Sartre and Camus) and Bergson, leading Repentigny to work within a "nouvel épistème humaniste" (pp. 75-76).

Quebec art versus Canadian art: geography as culture

One of the first areas to examine in order to establish Vie des Arts' contribution to the discourse within the boundaries of Canadian, if not Quebec, culture, is the geographical provenance of the art to presented as content of its articles. Vie des Arts, as the only continuous Quebec publication with the means of reproduction (and the mandate) to offer visual testimony to contemporary art, was positioned to play an important role in shaping public opinion about art. The magazine's presentation of historical art was perhaps less crucial in contemporary terms because of past accessibility (if somewhat limited) in books, exhibition catalogues and collections; nevertheless, the editorial slant given to historical content could still be construed as an influence on public opinion.

The "geographical provenance" of the art reproduced and discussed within the pages of Vie des Arts' during the first ten years can also be interpreted as "cultural provenance", if contextualized within the Canadian cultural and political framework. Given the inherent duality of the Canadian cultural landscape, it is natural to assume geographical boundaries as representing a division between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Similarly, given Quebec's linguistic and historical parameters, consideration must be given to continental Europe (especially France) as a major category in analyzing Vie des Arts'

content, while American art is factored in as an essential element of the analysis because of its perceived domination of artistic trends during the post-war decades as well as its physical proximity. Articles on Canadian native art and non-Western art are also included in this overview, in an attempt to determine the scope of Vie des Arts' editorial policy.

An analysis of the geographical/cultural breakdown of Vie des Arts' contents revealed, not surprisingly, a fairly high percentage (37%) of the magazine's feature articles to be about art (both historical and contemporary) produced in Quebec. The amount of European art is fairly high (27.6%), while Canadian (non-Quebec) art, at just under 12%, falls well below European content. Native and non-Western art make up the remaining percentage. That the percentage for Canadian art is less than half of that for European art speaks for the strength of Quebec's European cultural and linguistic ties – and perhaps, as well, for a lingering, colonial perception of foreign culture as a superior and therefore more desirable model. This does not, however, directly address the relatively low representation of Canadian art in Vie des Arts. A comparative analysis of the content of Canadian Art magazine revealed a similar attitude towards the art of Quebec: 8% of Canadian Art's feature articles between 1956 and 1966 were about Quebec art. To be fair, and in an attempt to stem the creation of a too-broadly drawn Quebec/Canada dichotomy, Canadian Art had a much larger territory to cover in assuming the responsibility of pan-Canadian coverage; nevertheless, if one accepts the historical importance subsequently placed on

developments which occurred in the post-war Montreal art milieu, from Borduas to the later Plasticiens, as well as those in Western Canada (Emma Lake) and Toronto (Painters Eleven), it is clear that the lack of reciprocal coverage both in Vie des Arts and Canadian Art reflected each magazine's agenda: Vie des Arts to promote and support art which was probably perceived as "regional" by Canadian Art; and Canadian Art to allot relatively equal, if lesser, space to art from the various cultural centres across the country.⁹²

The most remarkable statistic in the geographical/cultural provenance analysis, however, belongs to the category of American art, which garnered less than 1% of feature articles for the entire decade. Only two feature articles at the end of the magazine's first decade (this excluding exhibition reviews) attempt to explore movements which influenced American art: "Le monde du Pop", by Melvin Charney (issue 36,) and "Vers une nouvelle esthétique industrielle", by Fernande Saint-Martin (issue 39). There are no discussions on American artists, and no features on Abstract Expressionism or the New York School. The lack of attention paid to American art in the pages of Vie des Arts can be interpreted as evidence of the Quebec art milieu's bias towards a Paris-defined modernism. At a time when America was remaking the art world in its own image,⁹³ when the supremacy of European art was being in part jeopardized by

⁹² At the very end of the decade, during the pro-Canada frenzy surrounding the country's centennial and Expo '67, Vie des Arts would devote major articles to art from cultural centers across Canada. See vol.10, issue 44.

⁹³ A perusal of early sixties issues of Art in America revealed the extent to which a magazine could go to build a favourable perception of American art and secure its place in the community at large. Artists were invited to participate in the magazine's agenda through magazine-sponsored

critic Clement Greenberg's broadside declarations in favor of American art,⁹⁴ Quebec seems to have sought to maintain its European roots, validating its passage into modernity by re-interpreting the European modernist canon. In a 1956 Vie des Arts article on Quebec painter Jean-Paul Riopelle, Rodolphe de Repentigny criticized Jackson Pollock's work, and by extension most contemporary American painting, for its traces of biomorphic figuration which, for Repentigny, translated into a faithless attachment to atavistic figurative impulses at the expense of true abstraction.⁹⁵ Repentigny disliked American abstraction as not geometric enough. This refutation of the American abstract expressionist esthetic would also colour Repentigny's opinion of Toronto's Painters Eleven, whose works he would criticize as being filtered through a New York-derived sensibility.⁹⁶ If Repentigny's opinion, given his position as a respected critic and his alignment with geometric abstraction (as well as his antagonism towards gestural abstraction, even in Quebec) represented a conscious effort to validate the tradition of European influence in Quebec -- particularly Mondrian-inspired geometric abstraction -- at the expense of American tendencies, then the exclusion of American art from the pages of Vie des Arts can be seen as an endorsement of these values. It is interesting to

competitions ("Coins by Sculptors, Painters' Playing Cards," vol. 51 no. 2, April 1963; "Ceramics by Twelve Artists," vol. 52 no. 6, December 1964). The common belief at Art in America was that "the best artists of our time should be involved in the everyday life of the people and that this concept should be encouraged by the government" (from "Coins by Sculptors," portfolio preface).

⁹⁴ Greenberg's views entered the realm of mass culture when Life magazine published his appraisal of Jackson Pollock in the late 1940s. See Denise Leclerc, The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada, the 1950s (Ottawa: the National Gallery of Canada, 1992), p. 39-40.

⁹⁵ "L'art tellurique de Riopelle," Vie des Arts, vol. 1 no. 5. Also see Carani, L'oeil de la critique, pp. 156-57.

note that the same tendencies were reflected in the acquisition policies of Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain during *its* first few years: in the mid-sixties, during the tenure of the museum's first director, Guy Robert, the MAC would acquire 59% of its works from outside Quebec and Canada, and of this percentage, only 5% of artworks were from the US, while 34% were from France, 6% from Belgium and the rest from other European countries.⁹⁷ Guy Robert, a decade later, would reflect on the period: "... la scène artistique québécoise se trouve désormais coincée entre la traditionnelle vénération de l'art européen, surtout français, et l'arrogante pression d'un art américain qui s'enivre de son récent triomphe."⁹⁸

Contemporary art: the drift towards formalism

Given that over half (52.5%) of feature articles in Vie des Arts from 1956 to 1966 were devoted to contemporary art, and recognizing the intensity of the debate surrounding *l'art vivant* in Quebec during this period, it is necessary to further qualify Vie des Arts' position on contemporary art in order to determine the magazine's impact on the surrounding discourse. Statistics revealed that during Vie des Arts' first ten years, 39% of its feature articles were devoted to non-figurative art. Out of this figure, between 25% and 30% of articles were

⁹⁶ Carani., L'œil de la critique, p. 159.

⁹⁷ See Jocelyne Connoly, "Le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal – Décideurs et tendances socio-esthétiques de la collection," Journal of Canadian Art History, vol. 16 no.1 (1994), pp. 36.

concerned with expressionist and Automatiste-derived painting, while around 10% were devoted to geometric abstraction.

During the decade of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec society's conscious effort to distance itself from the past, begun at the cultural level by the Refus Global in 1948, resulted in a series of breaks and oppositions that would polarize the visual arts community, especially in Montreal.⁹⁹ The first of these occurred between *l'art vivant* and academicism, a polemic which was further exacerbated by the opposition of figurative and non-figurative painting. As non-figurative painting gained ground with the success of the Automatistes (critic Guy Robert would later write that during the late 1950s and early 1960s, roughly 90% of exhibitions in Montreal showed non-figurative works), another break occurred within the camp of abstraction between what some critics called "lyrical abstraction" encompassing works which followed the Automatiste model, and the more rigorous approach of geometric abstraction as represented by the Plasticiens. According to Marie Carani in her analysis of the period, "...Au moment de l'exposition *L'Art abstrait* (1959), l'abstraction géométrique a ainsi supplanté définitivement la peinture cosmique comme le pôle d'attraction de la jeune peinture montréalaise."¹⁰⁰ Most critics, however, continued to favor the *abstraction lyrique* current until around mid-decade, when the Seconds

⁹⁸ Robert, L'art au Québec depuis 1940, p. 13-14.

⁹⁹ See Carani, "Les débats esthétiques au sein de la critique d'art montréalaise," Chapter 1 in L'œil de la critique (pp. 21-46), for a detailed picture of the situation.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

Plasticiens became generally recognized as representing *l'art vivant* in Quebec painting.¹⁰¹

It should be noted, though, that the transfer of theoretical and intellectual authority from lyrical to geometric abstraction did not take place without its share of incendiary debate (which took place mostly in newspaper reviews and columns).¹⁰² Vie des Arts, considering its self-imposed mandate as a generalist publication covering all aspects of artistic production, stayed clear of the more militant aspects of these debates but was nevertheless drawn into the broader aspects of the discourse. It is significant that Claude Picher, who would vehemently denounce abstract art (both expressionist and geometric) throughout the 1950s, held a place on Vie des Arts' first issue masthead -- and, concurrently, that the first issue of the magazine did not carry one reproduction of an abstract work. However, by 1958 (Picher was no longer on the masthead as of the summer of 1957), Vie des Arts was regularly publishing features on abstract expressionist and automatiste-influenced work, and the magazine published a commemorative Borduas issue shortly after the painter's death in 1960.

¹⁰¹ Marie-Sylvie Hébert, "La réception de la peinture formaliste montréalaise (1965-1970): art et identité nationale," in Couture, Les arts visuels dans les années soixante, p 149.

¹⁰² For an overview of these debates, see Carani in L'oeil de la critique, Chapter 2, pp. 47-73.

Theoretician Fernande Saint-Martin is recognized as having brought Vie des Arts readers a first thorough critical interpretation of hard-edge abstraction.¹⁰³ Her articles include “Vers une nouvelle esthétique industrielle: L’illusion optique de l’Op art” (Summer 1965; plate 8); “Mondrian ou un nouvel espace pictura” (Summer 1966); and “Le dynamisme des Plasticiens de Montréal” (Fall 1966). Saint-Martin’s close links to the Seconds Plasticiens and her thorough grasp of the Montreal group’s innovative approach to the problems of abstract art helped to forge hard-edge abstraction’s hold on the Montreal art world, and Vie des Arts was her instrument in this endeavor. In general, however, Quebec critics were reluctant to endorse geometric abstraction, which may explain its rather late appearance in the pages of Vie des Arts.

Vie des Arts’ drift from strict coverage of lyrical abstraction in the late 1950s to enthusiastic support of formalist abstraction by the mid-sixties was a progression which was echoed in other areas of the Montreal art milieu. The Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, for instance, during the tenure of its first director Guy Robert from 1964 to 1966, failed to acquire any contemporary formalist works, preferring to concentrate its acquisitions on abstract expressionist and automatiste-influenced paintings. The museum would begin to acquire abstract geometric works later on in the decade, under the direction of Gilles Hénault.¹⁰⁴ Vie des Arts should be recognized, however, as a specialized forum welcoming the new formalist tendencies in Montreal painting

¹⁰³ Hébert, “La réception de la peinture formaliste à Montréal” in *Couture*, p. 165.

through its exhibition coverage and its articles by Repentigny and Saint-Martin. Given the literary tradition of art criticism and analysis, however, one must remember that similar discussion was occurring in the newspapers.

Was the medium the message?

A statistical breakdown of the art represented in Vie des Arts' pages by category of medium would at first glance seem to be of little relevance in the general context of cultural discourse. However, analysis revealed that certain areas beyond the traditional categories of painting and sculpture were given added value, reflecting the concerns and aspirations of a society in transition between its past and its accession to modernity.

Statistics bear out the dominance of painting in the post-war decades: over 35% of Vie des Arts' feature articles from 1956 to 1966 were devoted to the work of artists for whom it was the primary form of expression, whether contemporary or historical. Sculpture (10%) and architecture (15.4%) make for roughly another quarter of the content; and just over 5% is devoted to the miscellaneous (folk and religious traditions in the arts) and the performing arts (music, theatre, dance, cinema). Features on printmaking, pottery, and fibre art

¹⁰⁴ Connoly, "Le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal," p. 37.

as well as industrial design, however, exceeded both those on architecture and those on sculpture: 19% of feature articles belong to this group.

The fairly high percentage of coverage Vie des Arts gave to architecture in the wake of the theoretical debates surrounding easel painting at the time can be construed as representative of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity which characterized Quebec society during the fifties and early sixties. The result, in the magazine's pages, was a vivid concern with the recognition (if not preservation) of Quebec's pre-Conquest architectural *patrimoine*, coupled with a support of the new urban landscape emulating the canons of modernist universality. As the decade advanced under the aegis of the Quiet Revolution, the magazine published features on the new structures which were quickly altering Montreal's skyline, such as the C.I.L. (Canadian Industries Limited) building and Place Victoria. With the increase of state participation in cultural affairs during the sixties, architecture gained an increasingly public profile and visual artists such as Jean-Paul Mousseau and Micheline Beauchemin were able to articulate their modernity in projects that sought to integrate the arts into the architectural context through murals, stained glass, tapestries etc. -- a direction which had already attracted critical support from Rodolphe de Repentigny during the 1950s.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ See Carani, L'oeil de la critique, p. 192.

The push-pull effect between tradition and modernity, between the regional and the universal/international, was most particularly represented in the renaissance of certain categories of the applied and decorative arts – an occurrence which, according to Quebec art historian Rose-Marie Arbour, was a peculiarly Québécois transitional symbol.¹⁰⁶ The resurgence of rural practices such as tapestry, ceramics and rug hooking as acceptable forms of modernist art linked Quebec's cultural heritage to a progressive vision of the new society. Articles in Vie des Arts on tapestry (Micheline Beauchemin, issue 14; Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, issue 36), ceramics (Suzanne Guité, issue 40) and other forms of craft-inspired work reflected this trend. The impulse to attach modernist values to traditional craft and folk practices found favor within the post-Quiet Revolution government agenda. Paul Gérin-Lajoie, Youth Minister in Lesage's cabinet in 1960, would reflect:

Le gouvernement du Québec a l'intention de prouver qu'il ne reste pas indifférent à la renaissance de l'art décoratif chez nous, dont la tradition s'était perdue depuis longtemps ... Le public acheteur se tourne vers les oeuvres de chez nous, qui ne sont pas inférieures à une multitude d'oeuvres étrangères.¹⁰⁷

Printmaking was another medium outside painting which found favor in the pages of Vie des Arts and which also fostered a characteristically Québécois link to an artisan tradition via a European model – in this case printmaking traditions in France. The magazine published, in its 1959 Christmas issue, a

¹⁰⁶ Rose-Marie Arbour "Intégration de l'art à l'architecture" in Couture, Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante, pp. 227-273.

seminal feature article which would introduce its readership to the French *atelier* tradition of printmaking.¹⁰⁸ Titled “Aux ateliers Desjoberts”, the article by Roland Giguère gives a detailed description of printmaking techniques and features works by Albert Dumouchel, Léon Bellefleur, Paul Vanier Beaulieu and Bernard Vanier, all Quebec artists who had spent time at the Desjoberts studio (plate 9). Modern printmaking in Quebec would occupy an important role in the visual arts milieu during the sixties -- another manifestation of the vital link to Europe despite the proximity of the US art world, which no doubt for many Quebec artists represented a world without tradition.¹⁰⁹

Communicating the message.

A magazine's relevance to its readership is dependent on its content, but successfully reaching and maintaining a magazine's readership depends to a significant degree upon editorial approach. The types of articles chosen play an important role in establishing the magazine's style and, in retrospect, can draw a fairly accurate profile of the readership the magazine wishes to attract and hold. Vie des Arts' self-professed mandate to build a Québécois audience

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Arbour, “Intégration de l'art à l'architecture”, Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante, p. 262.

¹⁰⁸ “Aux Ateliers Desjoberts,” vol. 4 no. 17.

¹⁰⁹ See Michèle Grandbois, “Les ateliers de gravure parisiens et les artistes du Québec”, in Carani, ed., Des lieux de mémoire: Identité et culture modernes au Québec , pp. 205-206.

for the visual arts can be further qualified, and its targeted readership more accurately defined, by examining its editorial presentation style.

The ten years of Vie des Arts surveyed, from 1956 to 1966, present a picture of a magazine whose editorial style was effectively balanced to interest a general readership. Feature article categories are numerous, ranging from criticism and theory to interviews, historical features and articles on collections and markets, with a fair division between thematic and monographic topics (60% and 40%, respectively). Special seasonal issues, such as the yearly Christmas issues (plates 10, 11), many of which focused on religious art or crafts, as well as the theme issues mentioned above in relation to advertising revenues, were frequently published, helping to generate reader interest through time-specific events. Throughout its first decade, Vie des Arts published a variety of these, devoting entire issues to special events such as the Brussels World's Fair (issue 11, Summer 1958; plate 12), or to the art of a specific region when Canadian artists were invited to exhibit: the Spring 1958 issue (no. 10) on tapestry in Europe was built around Canadian tapestry in the Canadian ambassador's residence in Paris and the Spring 1964 issue (no. 34) on Spanish art revolved around five Canadian painters exhibiting at the Galliéra Museum. The fairly high percentage of features on historical art and related subjects (38% of feature articles), spanning all media from painting to architecture and applied arts, once again reflects not only Vie des Arts' generalist approach, but also its interest in conserving links with the past as it sought to build an audience for

Quebec contemporary art. Artists' interviews and studio visits (4.3% of articles) contributed a degree of accessibility and human interest, aiding to counteract the purely descriptive or critical perspective of other feature articles.

Criticism (18.7% of features) and articles focusing on issues in contemporary art (10% of features) together made up close to 30% of Vie des Arts' content. The figure reflects the magazine's desire to participate in the affairs of the artistic community, and defines Vie des Arts as a vehicle for artists and critics to voice their opinions and concerns. From articles on the state of contemporary architecture ("Enquête sur l'architecture contemporaine", issue 2) and local trends in painting ("L'École de Montréal existe", issue 23) to museum presentations by curators ("La Galerie nationale, un musée vivant!" by Jean-René Ostiguy, issue 19; and "Premier bilan du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal" by Guy Robert, issue 41), Vie des Arts published a wide range of criticism and issue-oriented pieces, becoming a somewhat more reflective alternative to the confrontational writing style these critics might espouse when writing newspaper articles or columns – one thinks of Claude Picher and Jean Paul Lemieux's presentation of La Société des arts plastiques in Vie des Arts' first issue, or Rodolphe de Repentigny on Painters Eleven ("Le Groupe des Onze", issue 12).

Approximately 7% of articles focused on art collections both at home and abroad. Articles on the collections of Georges P. Vanier ("Autour d'une

collection”, issue 13,) and of Dr. Paul Larivière (“Un collectionneur présente sa collection”, issue 20; and “Dernières acquisitions du Docteur Larivière”, issue 25), and on foreign collections (“Réflexions sur la Collectin Robinson-Niarkos”, issue 8; and “La Chase Manhattan Bank, un écrin monumental pour oeuvres d'art”, issue 42), introduced readers to local collectors and also served as windows onto important European and American collections. However, the state of contemporary art collecting in Montreal during the 1950s and 1960s was, in the words of critic Guy Robert, “neither too spectacular nor too speculative.”¹¹⁰ Robert described the market as unpredictable and not fully commercially developed, in spite of numerous exhibitions and the increasing number of galleries, with younger buyers showing most of the interest. The role of Vie des Arts in helping to develop the local art market cannot be estimated, but its presence as a parallel exhibition forum and as one of the few existing advertising vehicles for galleries no doubt contributed to generating a certain degree of activity in this area.

In discussing Vie des Arts' presentation style, the issue of language must also be noted. It appears that in the first half of the decade, the magazine held no strict restriction on language: articles by anglophone writers were published sporadically in English from 1956 to 1961 (for a total of 2.5% of feature articles in the first decade). Examples of English language articles include “Painting in Quebec, The Older Traditions” by Robert Ayre (issue 5); “The Twentieth Century

¹¹⁰ Guy Robert, École de Montréal – situations et tendances (Montréal: Éditions du centre de

Discovers the Object” by Evan H. Turner (issue17); and “Norman McLaren – Artist with Film” by Anne McDermot (issue16). After 1961, however, English-language articles cease to appear, and by the Winter of 1962 (issue 19) a section was set aside at the end of each issue for English translations of feature articles in summary form. This policy would be effective until June 1986, when the magazine adopted a French-only format.

Columns and reviews

Throughout its first decade Vie des Arts published columns and reviews as a parallel complement to its feature articles. The magazine reviewed not only the visual arts but also, at various periods and more sporadically, the Quebec literary scene, theatre, music and film. None of these, however, would surpass gallery and museum reviews in depth and consistency, and this more and more as the visual arts (still including architecture but not, for instance, the performing arts) came to define Vie des Arts' profile towards the end of the decade. Books on art were fairly consistently reviewed throughout the decade, while commentary on the Quebec literary scene, provided by Wilfrid Lemoine, was regularly included only from issue 7 (Summer 1957) to issue 15 (Summer 1959). Theatre reviews were included from the first issue in the fall of 1956 to issue 19 in the summer of 1960, while a later column on cinema written by

psychologie et de pédagogie, 1964), p 4.

Quebec film-maker Jacques Godbout was short-lived, appearing only from issue 32 (Fall 1963) to issue 39 (Summer 1965). Musical performances ("serious" music only), however, were reviewed throughout the decade but again only sporadically.

Gallery and museum reviews appeared in every issue of Vie des Arts, with coverage of several shows in the same issue as is customary in most art magazines. Reviews throughout the ten-year period were often written by staff members such as Claude Beaulieu, Jacques Folch-Ribas, Eddy MacFarlane, Gérard Morisset, Andrée Paradis and Claude Picher. Of these, Jacques Folch-Ribas was the most prolific: his reviews began in issue 11 (Summer 1958), and appeared regularly until he left the magazine in 1965; from 1962 until 1965, he was listed on the masthead as *Secrétaire des chroniques* (1962) and *Chef des chroniques*. Andrée Paradis contributed book reviews on a fairly regular basis from issue 4 (Fall 1956) throughout the decade. The magazine also attracted reviewers whose critical influence was already at work in the Quebec art milieu, such as Repentigny, Guy Robert and Yves Robillard. Repentigny reviewed Canadian and Quebec contemporary art from the magazine's second issue (Spring 1956) until the Fall of 1959.¹¹¹ Guy Robert signed approximately 35 reviews in Vie des Arts from issue 20 (Fall 1960) to issue 35 (Summer 1964); and Yves Robillard, who in 1966 would join Vie des Arts' staff and go on to become art critic at La Presse and a member of the avant-garde Fusion des Arts

¹¹¹ For a list of Repentigny's writings, see Carani, L'oeil de la critique, pp. 239-261.

group in the late sixties, reviewed for Vie des Arts from issue 37 (Winter 1964) to issue 41 (Winter 1966).¹¹²

The content of Vie des Arts' columns and reviews, in terms of critical position or aesthetic preference and the relationship of the magazine's critics with the Montreal art milieu, would demand a separate, in-depth analysis. For the purposes of this overall study, however, it is fair to assume, from analysis of the reviews' subjects (which here include not only artists and their works but also the galleries whose shows were reviewed) that Vie des Arts reviewed contemporary art almost exclusively. Included in the galleries most often reviewed were a number of Montreal contemporary art galleries: Galerie Agnès Lefort, Galerie Libre and Galerie Monique de Groot as well as the Galerie XII at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.¹¹³ Canadian art outside Quebec was also consistently reviewed, with commercial galleries in Toronto (Moss Gallery, Roberts Gallery) and museums in other Canadian cities (The Public Library Art Gallery, Regina; the Public Library and Art Museum, London, Ontario) counting among the galleries most often reviewed in the magazine. In all, from 1956 to 1966, Vie des Arts reviewed shows from 16 different galleries in Toronto and 25 more galleries in the rest of Canada -- figures which, when compared to the 34 Montreal galleries the magazine chose to review during the same time period, demonstrates the magazine's interest in bringing Canadian art to its readers.

¹¹² Hébert in Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante, p. 134.

¹¹³ See Sicotte, "Un état de la diffusion des arts visuels à Montréal -- Les années cinquante: lieux et chronologie".

Galleries abroad did not fare as well, no doubt due to physical distance: only two European galleries were reviewed, both in France. Galleries in the US, with only three reviews, despite Montreal's proximity to New York and New England centers, were virtually excluded.

Chapter 4

A decade in modernism

À l'heure où le fossé se creuse plus profond entre un certain art, qui est légitime, et un certain public qui ne demande qu'à comprendre mais qui n'en a pas toujours le pouvoir, le moment n'est pas à la querelle plus ou moins stérile, mais à l'action éducative.

–La direction, Éditorial, Vie des Arts, Premier numéro, Janvier-Février 1956

L'art, comme à toute époque de transition, est un catalyseur de premier plan. S'il n'est pas toujours facile de défricher son langage, il n'est pas moins vrai que les formules d'évolution plastique correspondent au stade d'évolution des sociétés qu'elles tentent de refléter...

–Andrée Paradis, Éditorial, Vie des Arts, Numéro du dixième anniversaire, printemps 1966

La revue *Vie des Arts* affiche un parti pris de clarté. Elle fait œuvre de vulgarisation en refusant la contamination par le vocabulaire «savant» ou celui que dictent les modes.

–Bernard Lévy, Éditorial, *Vie des Arts*, Numéro du quarantième anniversaire, printemps 1996

...un certain public qui ne demande qu'à comprendre...

The three citations above, each quoted from a Vie des Arts editorial at important junctures in the magazine's history, illustrate the coherence of the magazine's mandate over several decades. From 1956 to the present, Vie des Arts has remained faithful to its original vision, which was essentially pedagogical and

anti-elitist. Over the forty years of the magazine's existence, the consensus at Vie des Arts has been that modern and contemporary art is "difficult" and needs to be mediated in order to gain public acceptance. From "l'heure où le fossée se creuse" in 1956, to the need to "défricher son langage" in 1966 and the refusal of "la contamination par le vocabulaire «savant»" in 1996, Vie des Arts has defended contemporary art as a viable and necessary contribution to the mainstream in a democratic society. It has held onto the humanist ideology that fostered its emergence, and fought through the years for the acceptance of the visual arts by the general public.

This viewpoint has, however, over time, served different agendas in the attempt to interpret the role of art in society. From 1956 to 1966, a period encompassing Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the triumph of liberal politics, the Lesage government's recognition of modernism in art as a representation of its own progressive agenda resulted in the creation of the Ministère des Affaires culturelles in 1961 and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 1964. In the context of these developments, Vie des Arts' educational function mirrored a politics of modernity which saw state intervention in cultural matters as an essential strategy in the progression towards full modernity. Nationalism, the corollary to Quebec society's accession to modernity, also influenced Vie des Arts' role, especially in the earlier years of the decade when the magazine emphasized the conservation of the *patrimoine québécois* in its pages and qualified art as instrumental in defining Quebec's identity.

By 1966, the “difficulty” of modern art was still an assumption around which Vie des Arts could articulate its mandate. The context for its pedagogical mission, however, had been altered by shifts in the political and social climates. As Quebec society opened outward under Liberal leadership, its cultural milieu embraced an internationalist view of the arts which included Canadian art beyond Quebec’s borders. In the fall of 1966, Vie des Arts devoted an entire issue to contemporary painting in Canada, with major articles describing the state of painting region by region, including the Atlantic provinces, the Prairies, Toronto and British Columbia, with several articles on painting in Quebec.¹¹⁴

The advent of Expo 67 in Montreal, which would act as a symbol of Canadian-style internationalist humanism, was also a testament to Quebec’s accession to modernity. In a setting which mirrored the devotion to progress by which the modern world sought to describe itself, the world’s fair offered a celebration of international art and architecture and, conversely, was the vehicle by which Canadian art was brought to the international community on a major scale. This manifestation of openness and internationalism, and the built-in accessibility to the public which characterized events of this magnitude, was heartily embraced

¹¹⁴ Articles on Canadian painting listed in the Table of Contents of vol. 11 no. 44 (1966) are as follows: “L’Âge nouveau de la peinture canadienne” by Jean-René Ostiguy; “L’Art des provinces de l’Atlantique: Variations sans thème” by Louise Rombout; “À l’origine de l’explosion picturale au Québec” by Jacques Folch-Ribas; “Génération 1950-60” by Guy Robert; “Le dynamisme des Plasticiens de Montréal” by Fernande Saint-Martin; “Montréal aujourd’hui” by Yves Robillard; “L’art nouveau des jeunes peintres de Montréal” by Claude Jasmin; “Le renouveau de la peinture à Toronto” by Paul Dumas; “Trois peintres torontois” by Arnold Rockman; “Les Prairies” by Andrée Paradis; “La peinture à Winnipeg” by Illi-Maria Harff; “Les peintres de la Colombie-Britannique et leur environnement” by Jacques de Roussan. In addition, the magazine published its regular columns and reviews, bringing the total of pages to well over 100, the largest issue in the magazine’s first decade.

by Vie des Arts, where concern for the acceptance of the visual arts into mainstream culture had always been a main priority on the agenda. Andrée Paradis' view of art as a catalyst in serving to describe social change and progress (as quoted above) addresses a broad vision indeed of art's role in society – a role which would deflect the notion of borders and insular nationalism.

Thirty years later, Bernard Lévy, in Vie des Arts' fortieth anniversary issue, reiterated the magazine's educational mandate. However, the tone has changed from a desire for broad inclusion to aggressive anti-elitism. In the wake of the post-modern fragmentation of the visual arts into a multiplicity of theory-based disciplines (and the subsequent proliferation of specialized publications), Levy claims clarity and plain language as the primary vehicles with which to bring about the inscription of contemporary art within the ever-growing spectrum of mass culture. Vie des Arts' current battle, it would seem, is no longer played out against a canvas inspired by political or societal concerns, but rather on the ideological site of cultural ownership.

The end of an era

By 1966, at the end of Vie des Arts' first decade, Quebec's *projet de modernité* and modernism in art would be perceived as having reached a modicum of closure as new forces gathered strength. The modernity/modernism axis is

remarkable in the Quebec context because of its compressed nature: just as Quebec's societal transformation was reaching its culmination, modernism in art was beginning to lose momentum. The point of intersection of these two manifestations -- Quebec's accession to modernity and the final flourish of high modernism -- occurred in the adoption of high modernism as political currency by the Quebec government during the early 1960s. Vie des Arts' first ten years of publication stand as testimony to the substance and impact of these events, which it interpreted for its readers through the double filter of modernity and modernism.

While Vie des Arts' synergy with the events of the decade is confirmed, the question arises as to where the magazine's absorption and reflection of the political and cultural context ends and its contribution to it begins. The answer resides in the acceptance of media as conductor, or, on the other hand, to paraphrase McLuhan's sixties aphorism, in the transformation of media into the message itself. Vie des Arts' impact can only be assessed through the speculative window of art history and the degree of importance given not only to art but also to its interpretation. Vie des Arts represented art as a determinant in the course of society, and stood for the democratization of culture at a time when culture in Quebec was perceived to be the exclusive concern of a minority élite. For this it can be viewed as progressive in its vision, regardless of its positions on artistic trends. It can then be said that Vie des Arts, at least during its first ten years, constituted a sign for modernist values. In a broader sense,

the decade which saw the emergence of Vie des Arts stands as a cultural juncture with important repercussions. The period was one of change and transition which in its later years ushered in postmodernism in art and culture. Pinpointing the exact events surrounding this passage is problematic, but it has been acknowledge that the cultural transition, in North American terms, began as early as the late 1950s and early 1960s. Cultural theorist Fredric Jameson described these years as the extinction of modernism, with a "final, extraordinary flowering of a high modernist impulse which is spent and exhausted with them". Postmodernism brought the "emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by the ideologues of the modern."¹¹⁵

For Vie des Arts, the approach of cultural postmodernism would signal a *détournement* of the artistic milieu from the pedagogical aspirations it espoused during the 1950s. In accepting both post-war modernist ideology and Quebec's *projet de société*, Vie des Arts had embraced an egalitarian (as in participatory democracy) and progressive view of art which, as applied within the parameters of Quebec, served to build cultural identity. Culturally, the mid-sixties can be seen as the public triumph of these aspirations: the state had endorsed modernist art by granting its financial support; Expo 67 reflected Quebec's internationalist outlook; and Quebec culture was validated through the acknowledged contribution of its visual artists to the advancement of painting.

¹¹⁵ Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke

These achievements, however, redefined the prerogatives of the art magazine in Quebec. In a culture now aware of its identity, the artistic milieu sought, on the one hand, an even larger playing field by seeking full participation in the international arena and, on the other, shortened its reach by confining its discourse to those who shared its particular vision. By 1975, the magazine Parachute would embody these tendencies: devoted to "l'art de recherche" and positioning itself as "révélateur d'idéologies contemporaines", it sought to distance itself from the pedagogical mandate of publications such as Vie des Arts. Parachute would not seek out the general public, but would rather address a smaller readership of international art specialists.¹¹⁶ Similarly, The Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien, which had appeared in 1974, would "provide a forum for the investigation and analysis of issues in the discipline", devoting itself exclusively to Canadian art using art historical methodologies.¹¹⁷ As well, art in Quebec no longer needed to be validated or defended as much as it needed to be shown; as such, the educational mandate of the visual arts publication was espoused by the museum network, which in its turn sought to forge links with the public.¹¹⁸

University Press, 1992), p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Fortin, Passage de la modernité: Les intellectuels québécois et leurs revues, p. 214.

¹¹⁷ Sandra Paikowsky, "A Scholarly Journal of Our Own," ACS Bulletin AEC, vol. 18, no. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1996), p. 16.

¹¹⁸ Fortin, p. 215.

This, of course, did not preclude Vie des Arts' survival: the magazine continues regular publication to this day. Nor has its mandate to bridge the gap between art, artists and the general public been altered. However, its sphere of influence stands diminished: the general public is no longer viewed as the most desirable conquest, but rather represents only one facet of a fragmented audience.

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PLATES

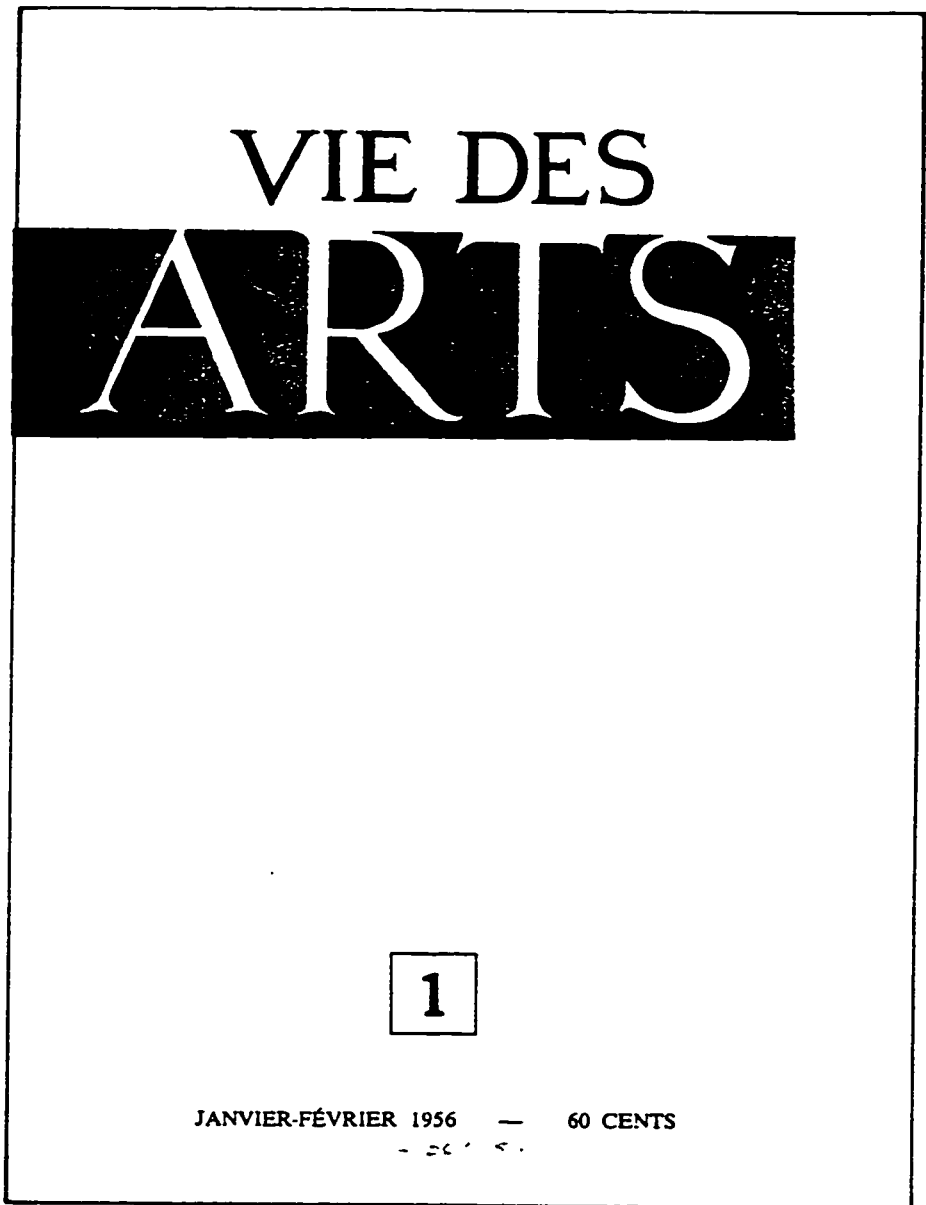


Plate 1

Vie des Arts, front cover, issue no. 1, January/February 1956

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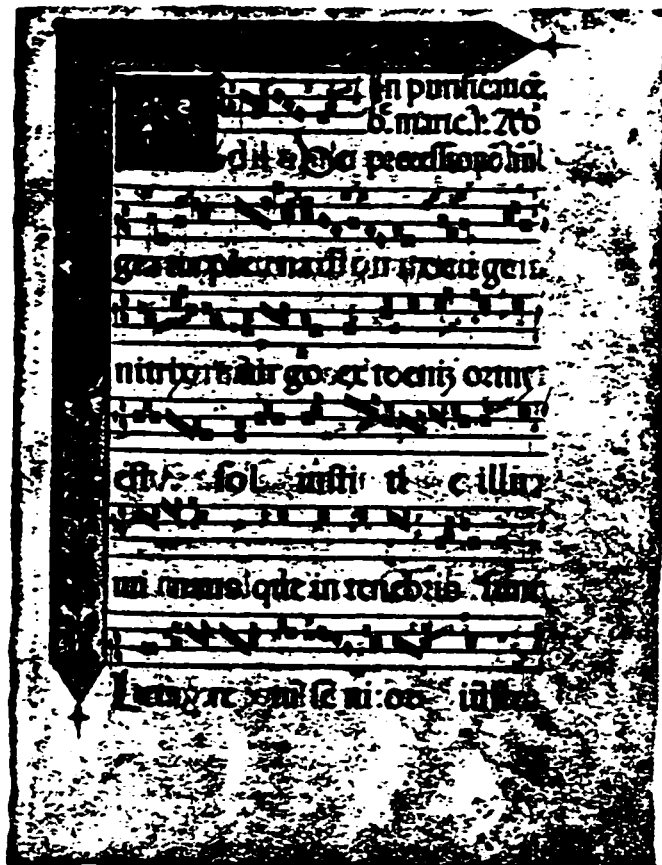


ATTENTIF SENSIBLE, INTELLIGENT LE SCRIBE, SOUS L'EMPIRE DES PHARAONS TRANSCRIVAIT AVEC CONSCIENCE ET FIDELITE LES MANIFESTATIONS DE LA PENSEE. AINSI DE NOS JOURS, L'IMPRIMERIE PIERRE DES MARAIS EXECUTE AVEC PERFECTION TOUS LES TRAVAUX DE HAUTE TENUE.



Plate 4

Advertisement for Imprimerie Pierre Des Marais, issue no. 6, spring 1957, p. 3



La Vierge à l'Enfant illustre la première de trois

pages-titres d'un missel français du 15^e siècle. Ce manuscrit enluminé avec tout l'art inspiré par la mystique du Moyen Âge est un exemple de savoir et de conscience selon les pures traditions de l'artisanat où la main de l'homme garde sa dignité.

De nos jours, l'imprimerie Pierre Des Marais renouant avec ces traditions, offre cet exemple de l'ouvrage bien fait dans ses travaux d'héliogravure en noir et en couleur.



Quodam capto legatur q' seru Saul
 et dicitur ad eum Saul spiritus
 dei malus exegit te et dicitur
 seru tuu hominis facitrua p' illu
 mpara ut cum accipuerit te ser
 uis dei malus p' illu manu
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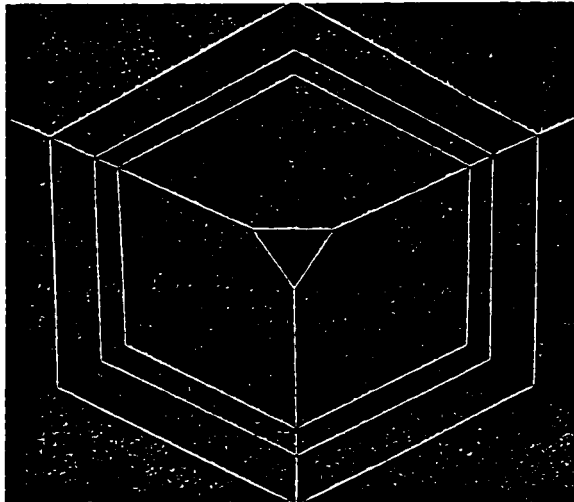
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(photo Giraudon)

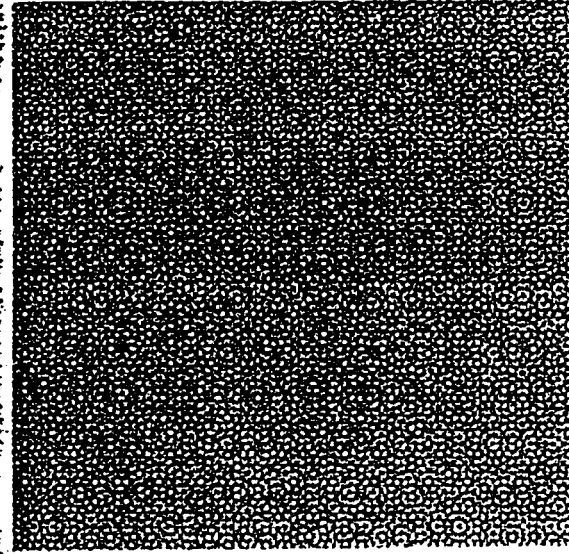
Voici deux scènes extraites de la vie de David
 contenue dans un incunable daté du 15e siècle,
 et qui a pour titre: *Liber Regum*. Cette oeuvre
 qu'on peut admirer au musée Condé, à Chantilly
 est un très bel exemple de gravure sur bois, à
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vers une nouvelle esthétique industrielle
L'ILLUSION OPTIQUE DE L'OP ART

par **Fernando Saint-Martin**



28



L'A récente exposition du Musée d'Art Moderne de New York, intitulée *The Responsive Eye* — ou "L'œil et sa partie" —, a suscité attentivement de vives controverses dans les milieux d'art américains. On a dit que ce musée prestigieux qui a été un certain temps nommé "Musée de l'Expressionnisme abstrait", qui a presque été tabellé au développement du Pop-Art — et de nos jours connaît une telle à ce genre d'opérations — l'honneur d'organiser — en 1965 — et d'inaugurer dans *The Responsive Eye* ce qui

s'est encore que ses tendances marginales, souvent comprises dans un assez grand nombre de pays. Le musée propose sans doute un grand nombre de chose un peu originales que ce musée fait de deux chefs de file pour cette nouvelle tendance, soient *Vasarely* et *Allison*, représentés chacun par une dizaine de pièces, alors que les principaux contributeurs du mouvement néo-impressionnisme depuis une quinzaine d'années, *Gianni*, *Selezny* et *Dixon* qui ont eu une très grande influence dans le développement de l'op-art sur

Page ci-contre.
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Plate 8

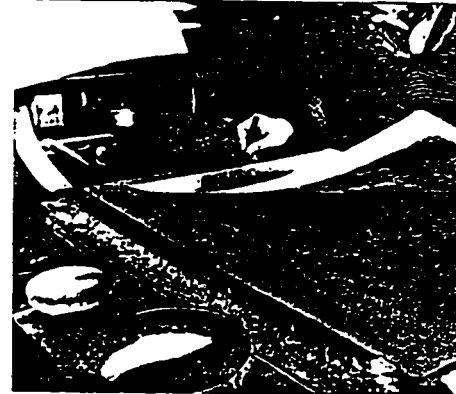
Title pages, "L'illusion optique de l'Op Art" by Fernando Saint-Martin, issue no. 39, summer 1965, p. 28-29



Aux ateliers de lithographie Desjobert

40

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Aux Ateliers de lithographie Desjobert

par Roland GIGUÈRE

*Un des habitats caractéristiques des ateliers
nous introduit dans l'ambiance
incomparable de ce lieu de production
Jean-Pierre Beaudin en discute le texte*

LA VILLA L'ŒUR DE VEY est située aux confins de quartier Montparnasse à Paris. Au fond de cette impasse sans nom, juste après le boulevard de la Chapelle, se trouvent les ateliers de lithographie Desjobert, les plus importants de Paris, au sein de l'immeuble n° 12. On y trouve tout l'équipement de lithographie, toujours animé d'une foule de gens travaillant entre les murs de briques rouges qui bordent le trottoir. Plusieurs artistes renommés commencent leurs ateliers à Villa L'Œur de Vey ou ils sont allés se former directement sur les presses lithographiques. Paul Bonaventura, Edouard Belloc, Jacques Naybar, Albert Dumouchet, Bernard Vautier, et quelques autres, doivent à MM Desjobert leur art, et à leur époque d'or.

Ces ateliers de lithographie s'étendent sur deux étages. Au rez-de-chaussée on se trouve les tables de gravure où, une fois les images gravées, on enlève à la pierre le surplus de l'encre, on nettoie dans les rayons comme des livres, des centaines de pages de lithographies. C'est au premier étage que se trouve l'atelier proprement dit, là où travaillent les artistes et où s'effectuent les tirages sur les pierres à base. Les états, les tirages de lithographies multicolores, sont faits de plusieurs artistes de

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Plate 9 Title pages, "Aux Ateliers de lithographie Desjobert" by Roland Giguère, issue no. 17, Christmas 1959, p. 40-41

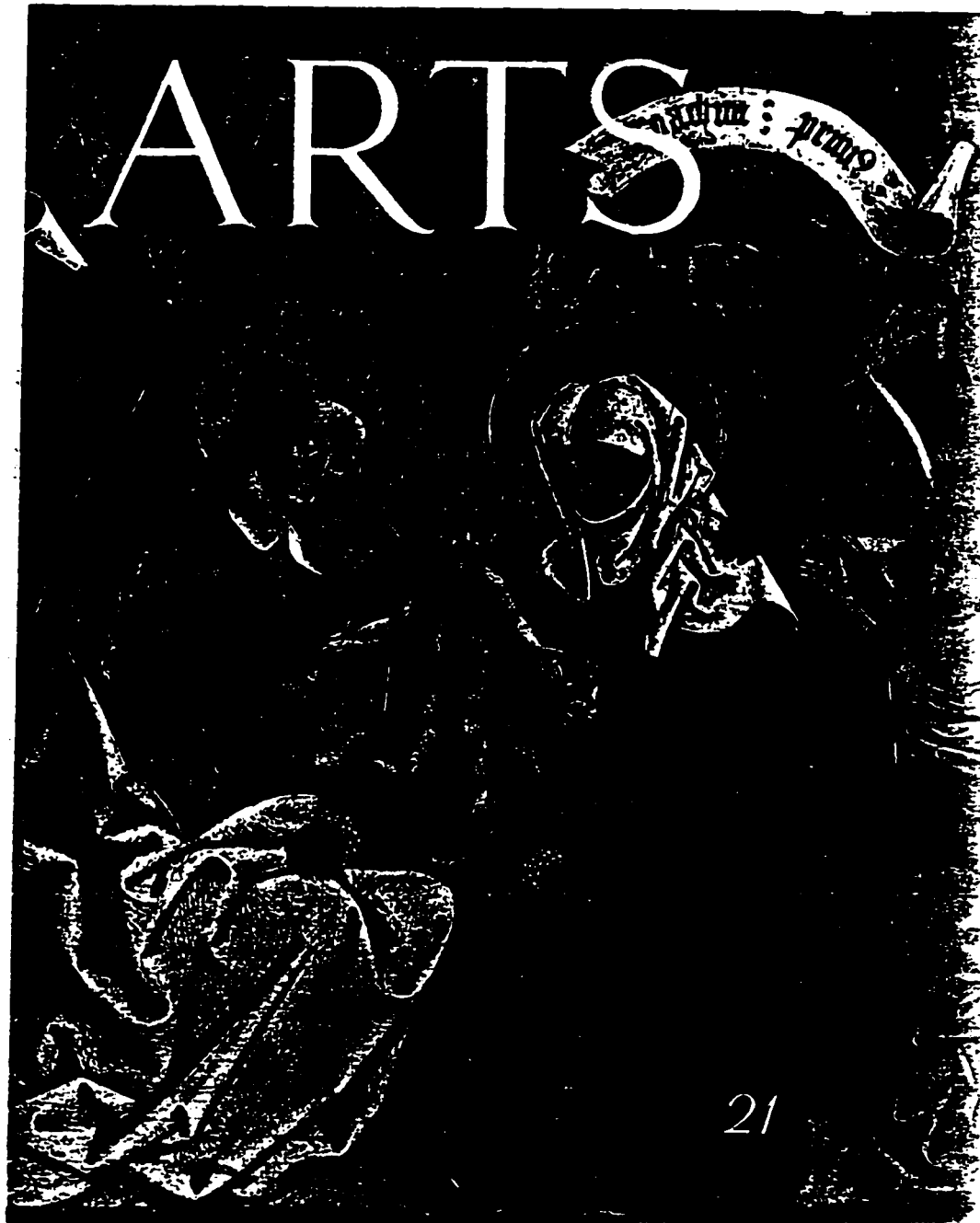


Plate 10

Front cover, issue no. 21, Christmas 1960

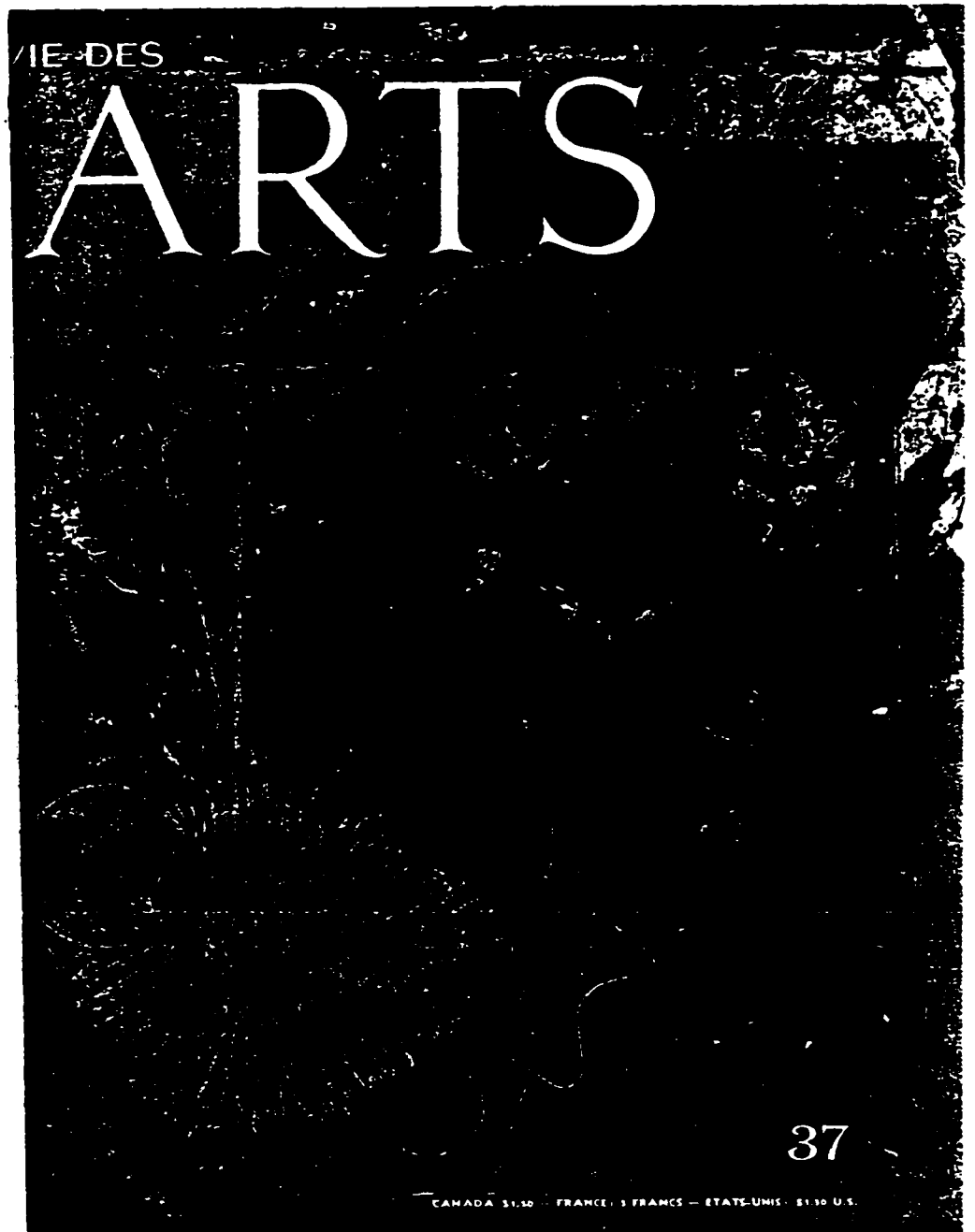
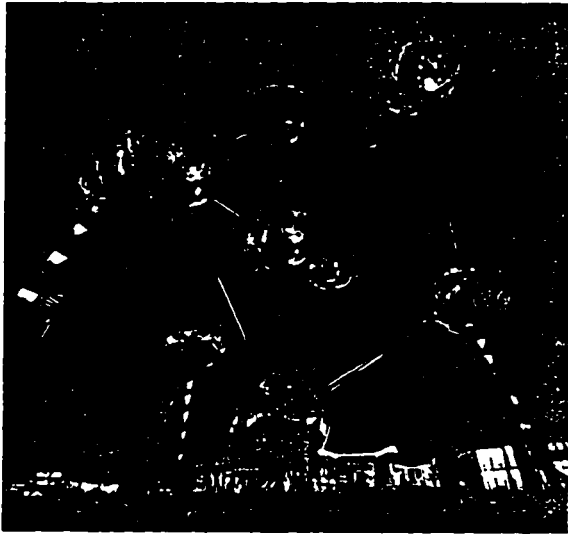


Plate 11

Front cover, issue no. 37, Christmas 1964



ATOMIUM LA NUIT

Tous deux dehors, le monde veille Sur Bruxelles, sur l'Europe, sur le monde surtout. A cloche-pied sur les nuit Pyramides prises au piège, retenues, amarrées. Haut, après les rangées de lumières. Bâbord suspendu les écorces d'osselets. Seine communiante. Ballons pour les phares du ciel. Régime de grenades. Ce nouvel Olympe est démenté par les dieux. Ils n'y trouvent, absent-ils, ni l'inspiration, ni cette né-vacante odeur humaine sans quoi leur divinité n'a plus de sens.

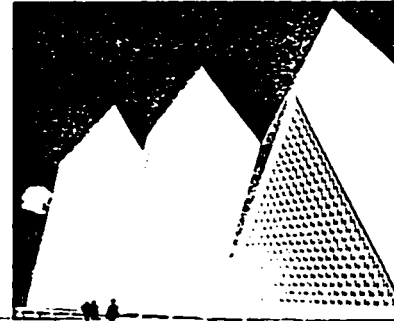
A Bruxelles, le Canada s'affirme comme une action continue de faire connaître les différents aspects de son activité et d'un développement qui étouffe, par sa puissance souvent pesante, l'Europe à la suite de l'ouest-germe, sur certains plans de la pensée et des arts. Pour la première fois, notre pays voit l'occasion de souligner cette intelligence réelle et totale de la vie artistique à la vie nationale. L'événement est trop fertile en significations heureuses pour que la « Vie des Arts » ne laisse passer sans observer.

promenade à L'EXPOSITION de BRUXELLES

Texte de Raymond Marie LÉGER
Photos de Graham WARRINGTON

GRANDE-BRETAGNE

SUEZ venqz ils ont enlevé les Pyramides les ont taillées en diamant. Transvaal. C'est tout. Il y a, dans l'équilibre des lignes et des formes. L'Algérie n'a rien de la Belle France.



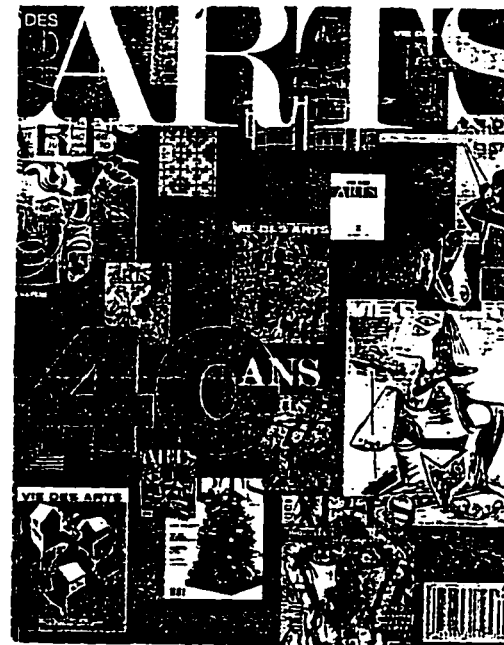
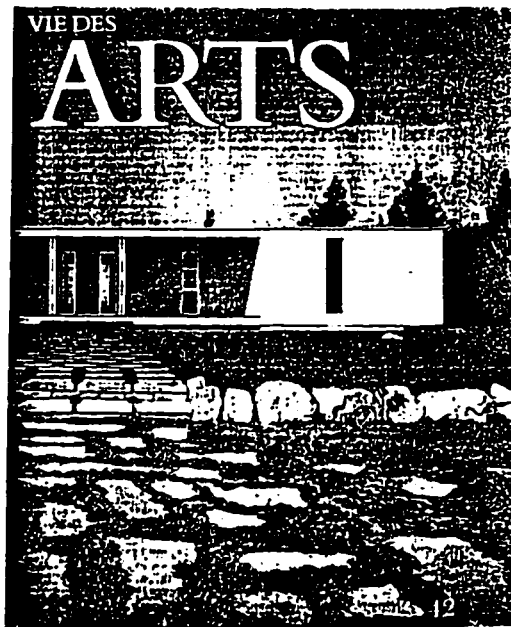
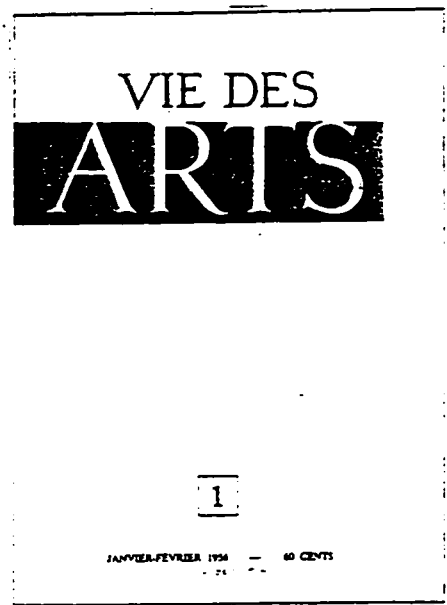
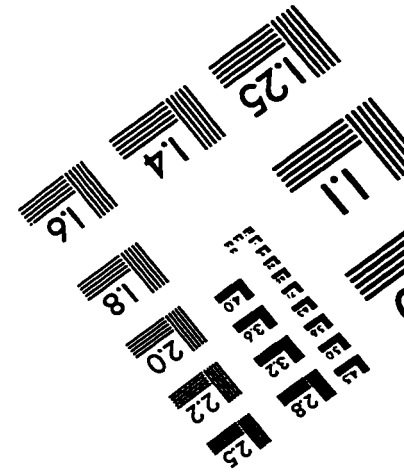
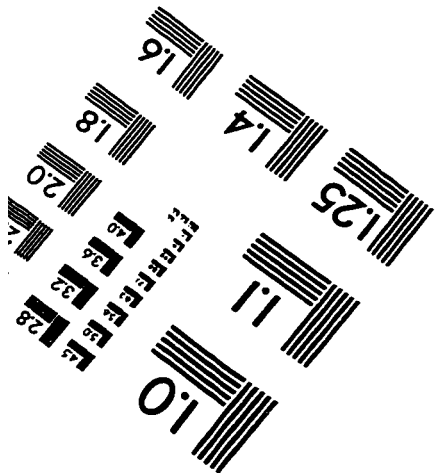
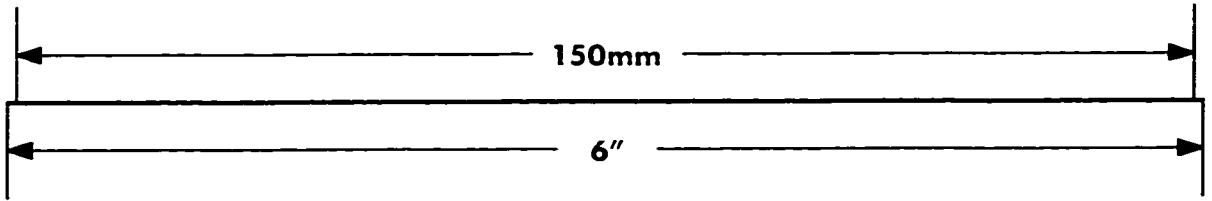
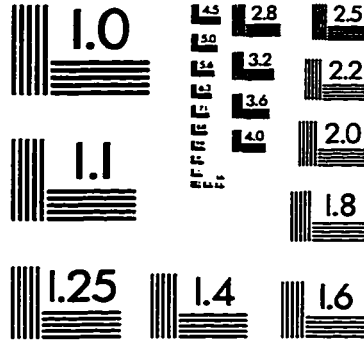
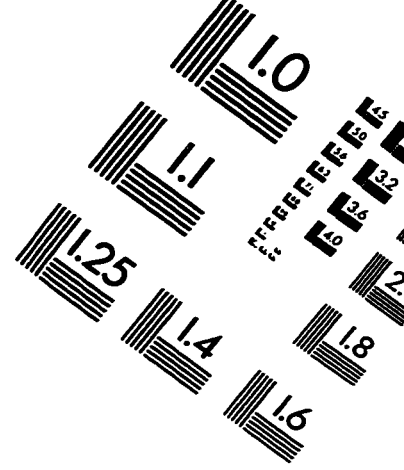
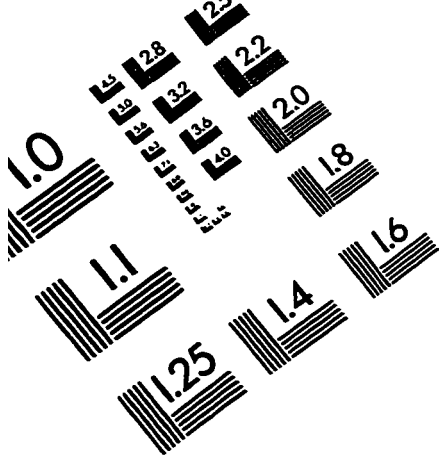


Plate 13

Front covers of issues nos. 1 (January/February 1956), 42 (spring 1966, Tenth anniversary) and 162 (spring 1996, 40th anniversary). The cover of issue 41 depicts the house discussed in the article "A Saint-Sauveur-des-Monts, une résidence classique dans la nature sauvage" by Claude Beaulieu; the cover of issue 162 shows a montage of Vie des Arts covers.

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