

Films on Art and/or Art on Film: Jacques Giraldeau's Cinematic Vision of the
1960s

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Abstract

Films on Art and/or Art on film: Jacques Giraldeau's Cinematic Vision of the 1960s

Linda Benguigui

Films on art have provided audiences with new ways of apprehending art since the early part of the twentieth century. Yet, the film on art did not remain a strictly didactic tool since there have always been film directors to blur the boundary between a film on art and an art film. Jacques Giraldeau is one of these film directors. This thesis looks at three of Giraldeau's films: *La forme des choses*, *Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont* and *Bozarts*. The first film is an abstract look at the works shown at the first international sculpture symposium in 1964 in Montreal. It is a deliberate collage of images of the sculptures interspersed with images of the landscape in which they were exposed. The second film is a bleak look at an architectural project started by a group of recent university graduates to revamp an alleyway in an impoverished district of Montreal. The film showcases the residents's disillusionment and frustration with their plight. It provides ground for a discussion on class disenfranchisement. The last film is a survey of the art scene in Québec in the late 1960s. It takes note of the various actors's opinions, such as gallery owners, museum directors, art critics and artists. Coupled with the views of the lay public and their incomprehension of the hermetic art world.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the nature of films on art by providing a context for the genre's evolution. It begins with a brief history and characterization of the genre and then moves on to look at three films on art by film director Jacques Giraldeau. Giraldeau has been involved in over a hundred films as either writer, producer or director throughout his long career at the National Film Board of Canada. Many of them had art as their subject matter. His films are not strictly documentary but are rather open, multifaceted and fragmented leaving the viewer to draw his own conclusions. In fact, his films on art all verge on the side of being art films in and of themselves. The films discussed in this thesis are set in the context of the period in which they were made. The historical background provided is meant to set in relief the artistic and social significance of the films. The methodology used for this thesis consists of interviews with the director and a variety of primary and secondary sources including archival material obtained from the National Film Board of Canada.

Film has surpassed its hundredth anniversary and television its fiftieth. So where do films on art fit into this history? As a specialized category of film, they have a history of their own, reflecting the interests and points of view of filmmakers at different times, the technical advances and changes in the media, and the evolving tastes of their audiences. At the turn of the century, the Lumière brothers' 'cinématographe' gave audiences around the globe a totally

unprecedented sense of seeing the world. While none of these early shorts could be described as a 'film on art', this sense of discovery and experiment is one that pervaded all filmmaking in the early days. Museums soon began to use the medium to document their activities.

Chapter 1: Film at the service of art

1) Films on art vs art films

On the whole it remains difficult to date the exact beginning of the film on art. Fanny Étienne explains in her book *Films d'art/Films sur l'art: le regard d'un cinéaste sur un artiste* that the expression 'film d'art' first appeared in 1907. The original terminology designated a film company owned by the Frères Lafitte whose films were distributed by Pathé. 'Film d'art' was also used in reference to an entire category of films perceived to be more creative and artistically authentic. The term 'film d'art' carried all the more significance for it underscored the legitimacy of film as an art form. In this early period, filmmakers and producers wanted to make film a noble art and dissociate it from its humble beginnings in popular venues. These early art films adapted plays from respectable theatre productions and hired the talents of well known actors such as Sarah Bernhardt who acted out her part in silence in front of a static camera. Despite their good intentions these early art films did not hold the attention of many spectators. During this same period, Pathé and Gaumont developed two smaller companies: Série d'Art and Le Film Esthétique. These companies gave the 'auteur' greater prominence and directors were given top billing on film posters.¹

The first films on art were designed to cultivate the general public. The film on art came to be known as its own genre in the 1920s when the documentary film widened the scope of its agency as a popularizer of knowledge and turned its

attention to art. These films were for the most part filmed sequences of stills or lantern slides and therefore hardly cinematic. The first veritable film on art that made use of cinematic devices to bring art to life was made in Belgium by Henri Storck in 1936. The film, *Regards sur la Belgique Ancienne*, was a propaganda piece to encourage tourism. Three years later, André Cauvin directed *L'Agneau Mystique* whose main thrust was to analyze the work of art in question, and of showing aspects of the work, that could not be apprehended in a single viewing.

In 1948, Henri Storck worked with Paul Haeserts to direct the film *Rubens*. About which Jean Mitry wrote: "C'est le seul film qui soit un film sur l'art (...). Des mouvements de caméra qui s'identifient au regard du spectateur et qui sont conduits par l'architecture secrète du tableau aident à le déchiffrer et à en découvrir les prolongements."² During the same period Luciano Emmer directed *Guerriers*, a film on Hieronymous Bosch made from the works of Ucello Mantegna and Simone Martini. Henri Lemaître wrote, "C'est avec Emmer que le film sur l'art devient à la fois de l'art au second degré et du cinéma au second degré. Ainsi s'explique que le film sur l'art ne soit pas seulement, comme chez Cauvin, explicatif et révélateur mais qu'il soit aussi narratif."³ The film theorist and historian Carlo Ragghianti invented a new conception of the film on art which moved away from the illustrated catalogue. He invented the 'critofilm' such as the better known *La Déposition de Raphaël* from 1948. Ragghianti experimented with several different shots and established the use of film language itself as a means of

analysis. He in fact dispensed with verbal commentary and relied almost exclusively on cinematic devices to compose his narratives.

Films on art were more widely made after WWII. Alain Resnais was one of the first fictional filmmakers to show an interest in films on art. He directed *Van Gogh* in conjunction with an exhibition held at the Musée de l'Orangerie. Resnais made the film from black and white photographs of Van Gogh's works since the exhibition had closed by the time he got started. The film is a voyage through the artist's work by way of associating several key details from different paintings. Resnais went on to make many more films on art throughout his career. In 1955, Henri-Georges Clouzot directed what has come to be a classic film on art, *Le Mystère Picasso*. The purpose of the film was to enable the spectator to identify most closely with the artist during the creative process. In the film, Picasso appears to paint directly onto the screen. The viewer can only see brush and marker strokes appear onto a blank white screen. In this way, the creative process takes shape right before the spectator's eyes.

By 1949, enough films on art had been and were being made to found the FIFA (Fédération Internationale du Film d'Art), with headquarters in Paris and Amsterdam. The FIFA offered to act as an international cinémathèque, a learning and information centre and to contribute to and support the making of films on art. Étienne writes that

L'objet de la fédération est de grouper les personnes et les institutions qui s'intéressent à l'art et au cinéma. Elle cherche à encourager la réalisation et la diffusion du film sur l'art en créant les conditions nationales et internationales favorables, et, par le rapprochement de ses membres, souhaite faciliter le développement du film sur l'art dans le monde, en élever le niveau, et en rendre l'usage plus facile. La FIFA a réuni des réalisateurs, des producteurs, des critiques d'art, des conservateurs de musées, et d'une manière générale, des personnalités intéressées par cette nouvelle forme d'expression et d'analyse de l'œuvre d'art.⁴

The FIFA organized several international congresses:

- First congress in Paris in 1949 with 64 films produced by 11 countries.
- Second congress in Brussels in 1950 with 39 films produced by 15 countries.
- Third congress in Amsterdam in 1951 with 23 films produced by 8 countries.

The FIFA also collaborated with UNESCO in the preparation of catalogues of films on art. "La FIFA espère ainsi favoriser la connaissance des films déjà produits, ainsi que leur diffusion dans le monde, point de départ d'un mouvement international en faveur du film d'art qu'elle souhaite provoquer pour le plus grand profit de l'art cinématographique de la culture artistique."⁵ The FIFA gave producers the opportunity to hold screenings with distributors and film producers. It was strongest at organizing festivals that showcased films on art.

The FIFA equally recognized the important pedagogical role films on art could play. As discussed at the table ronde in Bergamo in 1961, "Le film sur l'art est l'un des moyens indispensables pour l'enseignement de l'histoire de l'art à tous

les niveaux, étant donné la valeur de l'enseignement visuel comme moyen moderne de compréhension internationale, étant donné aussi l'intérêt universellement accordé aujourd'hui aux moyens audio-visuels et à la culture artistique(...)."6 The FIFA shut down in 1970. In general, fewer films on art were being made as of 1960, and by the early 70s, most films were made for television. However, the films banked at the FIFA remained actively circulated around the world. The FIFA had also itself tackled the problem of terminology: 'film d'art' or 'film sur l'art'. The latter was generally preferred however no clear choice was ever delineated and both terms of expression were used interchangeably.

According to Gisèle Breteau-Skira - the executive in charge of films on art at the Centre Georges Pompidou until 1999 and the editor in chief of the journal *Zeuxis*, devoted to the study of films on art - the film on art, is a film that covers all genres: fiction, documentary, art and essay, and experimental. There exist two probable reasons for the long-standing problem of defining the film on art. The first being the limited distribution films on art have generally gotten has perpetuated the idea that films on art are boring. "Le film sur l'art revêt une connotation péjorative. Il porte en lui une marque ancienne, un style qui l'enferme dans une réputation semblable à celle des films d'après-guerre, à vocation essentiellement pédagogique - en dehors de deux ou trois titres capables d'insuffler un nouveau regard au genre documentaire, il est fâcheusement resté aux yeux du

public un mauvais film. Ne parvenant pas à se confronter aux autres films, il reste captif d'un genre mal perçu, qui le malmène, l'étouffe et le dessert."⁷

In Italy, Carlo Ragghianti lamented the fact that the film on art was still being perceived in the context of the 1940s: "

L'habituel 'documentaire d'art' consiste en une succession d'images généralement fixes, de plans, de photogrammes, parfois de travelling ou de panoramiques (ces derniers étant plus rares), malheureusement agencés mécaniquement ou suivant une logique démonstrative. L'enchaînement n'est soutenu par aucun parti de composition, aucun travail de montage ni aucun rythme autonome, intrinsèque, inhérent à l'œuvre d'art ou l'artiste abordé, il ne fait qu'illustrer - là encore à la manière de diapositives ou de documents imprimés - un texte littéraire ou critique (le 'sujet').⁸

Films on art have long since made use of a full arsenal of cinematic devices and both directors and producers have tried and continue to try to make them as interesting as possible. Problems with definitions persist in the United States where according to Arthur Knight "there is a further complication in terminology, at least in this country. For years foreign features have been brought over and shown as art films. The theaters in which they play are even known in the trade as art houses. Of course, the art implied is the art of the film, not art in its more traditional sense. Foreign films are supposedly more artistic than our home-grown variety"⁹

In France, Dominique Païni understands the term film on art as such "une attitude éthique du réalisateur et à un statut esthétique (...). Le film sur l'art est avant tout documentaire et sa finalité est heuristique - montrer des œuvres d'art,

peinture, architecture, sculpture bien que l'intervention de l'écriture cinématographique sur un ensemble de signes organisés plastiquement produise des effets multiples débordant le seul point de vue documentaire: fiction, discours critique, évaluation subjective."¹⁰ While Pierre Aubry, film director, writes "le film sur l'art n'est ni interview filmée (ce n'est pas la radio en images), ni un documentaire pédagogique (ce n'est pas un CD-rom sans informatique et sans interactivité). C'est un vrai film de nonfiction, à savoir la mise en scène d'un regard qui est celui d'un auteur."¹¹

Finally, Robert Hessens conceives of the film on art as "une création, en partant de l'œuvre d'art et en lui faisant dire autre chose. Si je devais donner une définition du film d'art, ce serait ce que je ressens et non pas ce que j'apprends. Pour moi, le film d'art est de la même famille que celle de l'art, avec cette seule différence qu'il y a une dimension d'une vie et d'un temps qui est encore différent."¹² The definitions of the film on art advanced above all agree on the fact that any film remains subjective. Nevertheless, the above definitions share several common features. Firstly, what 'film' signifies in the expression 'film sur l'art', within the various genres. Thereafter the meaning of 'sur' (on) remains ambiguous for some use the term 'films sur l'art' while others prefer 'film d'art' to designate the same category of films. Furthermore, what does one mean by 'art' in this context. Hence, what is meant by 'film on art', a category that groups according to Gisèle Breteau-Skira, fiction, documentary, art and essay, and experimental films.

Fanny Étienne first and foremost defines the film on art as essentially a documentary film. It may be a documentary that varies between fiction at one extreme and reportage at the other. A film on art is basically a filmmaker's take on an artist, a work of art or a form of art. The filmmaker's gaze upon the art or artist is in fact one medium's understanding of another. It is the medium of film put to the service of another medium. The film on art is generally a documentary film because one should distinguish it from an art film. An art film is a work created by an artist as part of a creative process that may include film among other media. While a film on art has an intrinsic archival element to it, in that, it documents a finite and discrete object, person, place and/or event. The documentary, calls upon reality and draws from a knowable account of subjects which it transmits as faithfully as possible.

A documentary has a historical value by way of its ability to document past and current events. Thierry Garrel, an executive at the Arte network defines the documentary as a film which,

ne serait pas une machine à voir mais une machine à penser: une restitution synthétique, dans une durée donnée, d'une expérience de connaissances complexes que l'auteur restitue à travers son langage. Machine à penser aussi pour le spectateur qui fait une expérience du monde qui n'est pas littérale, qui n'est liée au direct ou à la transparence du monde, mais au temps de la pensée(...). "Qu'est-ce que vivre?" Voilà ce qui agite les documentaristes. La question qui est renvoyée au spectateur à travers un documentaire, quel qu'il soit, même quand il a pour sujet une peinture, une œuvre, est une question qui chaque fois renvoie à l'humanité.¹³

René Prédal situates the film on art within the category of the documentary but pulls away from the pole of the reportage suggesting that "le film sur l'art est toujours un film d'auteur. Sans quoi, il n'est qu'un reportage informatif sans profondeur, un exercice de journalisme construit à base de 'trucs' de métier, susceptible de fonctionner à propos de n'importe quoi"¹⁴ Therefore the film on art finds itself at the convergence of many genres and most notably the auteur documentary. The film director Stan Neumann has declared "j'ai toujours refusé la distinction entre film sur l'art et film tout court: je pense que filmer un bout de tableau ou un bout de trottoir exige le même désir. Il y a cependant une différence: un film sur un artiste ou sur une œuvre est condamné au second degré, à la lecture non plus du réel mais d'une autre lecture."¹⁵

This multitude of definitions coming from festival and television producers, film directors and museum executives is a testament to the fact that the choice between the expression 'films on art' or 'art film' remains uncertain. The term 'film on art' connotes the documentary genre while that of 'art film' puts art and film on an equal footing by which the film needs to be a work of art in and of itself. It would seem that the latter definition be too exclusive and that the expression 'film on art' be more user-friendly in that it may include the idea of the 'art film' within its broader label.

2) Films on art in context

In the United States one of the earliest films on art was made at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1922¹⁶. Short, low-budget documentaries on painting and sculpture began to appear more frequently in the US and in Europe during the late 1930s and postwar years. These early films are often the work of one individual who is deeply attached to the art in question and who is involved in all aspects of the project from research, writing, camera, editing, and music and generally have a very personal stamp to them. The film on art began to achieve status and independent recognition from both the art film and the documentary in the 1940s. By the end of the decade, interest in films on art had extended beyond national boundaries and was embraced as a vehicle for international cultural exchange. UNESCO published three consecutive catalogues in 1949, 1951 and 1953 covering most of the filmmaking countries in its international membership.

With the advance of television, the development of color, and the proliferation of television sets, films on art entered a whole new era. A far greater audience could be reached than ever before. The earliest major advances were in Great Britain where the educational possibilities of television meant that the BBC played a leading role in producing documentary programs on art and culture. Several people have tried to define the film on art most often by binding it to the documentary film. The idea being that the medium of film is used to document a work of art. However, as in most things that pertain to art, the film on art has proved resistant to easy descriptions and narrow definitions. It is a genre that has

created and recreated itself on its own terms over the years. Nevertheless, broad distinctions of genres within the film on art have generally been identified and what follows is a brief review of these genres:

- 1) The historical tour with an on-camera host. One of the most prevalent forms of film on art. It involves the presentation of a wide array of works of art usually in the format of a historical survey presented by a distinguished host.
- 2) The biographical profile of an artist, living or dead, remains a leading category. Historical material, interviews, live-action footage, and reproduction of the art are combined to document the subject's life and work.
- 3) Another popular genre is the visit to the studio, where the artist is seen at work, often commenting on the process.
- 4) The fiction feature on an artist's life remains a daunting category. The fictionalized biography was a Hollywood staple in the forties and fifties but lost popularity in later years.
- 5) The history of a particular period or art movement, dealing with a number of artists linked by style or time or theme is an approach frequently taken by both North American and European directors.
- 6) Variations on a theme. This approach is however infrequently used. An example of this type might be a film on Greek temples which traces the evolution of the temples through the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian styles. It

makes use of live-action footage, reproductions such as architectural models and engravings as well as animated reconstructions.

- 7) Site specific art that exists only briefly and often in remote places is the subject of a number of films that serve as the essential record of these projects. A better-known film that comes to mind is Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*.
- 8) The 'how to' or 'process' film is an additional genre. It serves an important function in art education by documenting a process or technique. These films cover a range of subjects such as the making of mobiles, stained glass to origami the Japanese art of papermaking.
- 9) The critical essay. This genre involves analysis of and commentary on an artist's work, an art movement, or the role of art in society. A popular example of this genre is John Berger's famous series *Ways of Seeing*.
- 10) Still another biographical genre is the docudrama, where dramatized vignettes of key incidents in the artist's life are worked into the documentary.
- 11) The visual essay which uses one particular artwork or art type to illustrate a story or describe a period.
- 12) The film poem uses the filmmaker's lyric vision to shape the film. Such films usually use music but little or no narration. An early example is Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1921).

- 13) Cutting across categories is the compilation film, which assembles a great variety of materials, including graphics, photographs, archival footage, reenactments, live action, location shots, or interviews.¹⁷

The intersection of art and film raises some important issues about the perception of art, the practice of art history, and about film itself. Although there is arguably some compromise in translating from one medium to another, there is also the possibility of enhancing the experience of looking under different circumstances. For instance, film can offer a more immediate conduit to the art object than can most publications. Films on art have historically been addressed to an audience without specialized knowledge. Furthermore, through television and festivals, films on art reach a broader and more varied public than those attending university courses and even art exhibitions. As such they can very well be conceived as agents of cultural democratization. They possess the potential to present multiple art practices to a wide and diverse audience.

However, the cherished concept of art for everybody has not come to bear for a variety of reasons. As some would have it, are films on art condemned to oversimplification, mystification, and mere populism? As Judith Wechsler asks "does popular appeal preclude film as a vehicle for scholarship? Can a film on art be critical and historical in any creditable sense? Can one present theory visually? Are certain kinds of art history more relevant for film than others?"¹⁸ Filmmakers convey subjects not only by the choice of images and text, but in the 'look' of the

film - through framing the image, choosing details, pacing camera moves, and editing - all of which affect our perception of works of art. Technical issues inherent to film have methodological and theoretical implications that lie outside the traditional practices of art history.

Art history and film can intersect and overlap, but some might argue that they present distinct conceptual modes. As Judith Wechsler explains, "what is thought to be 'evidence' in film differs from that of the written tradition of scholarship. Some of the usual habits or conventions of art history may be less effective in film: digressions can be confusing, arguments cannot be developed in detail, and footnotes are inexistent. The visual predominates in film as the word does in art history."¹⁹ There is a growing body of literature on the 'intertextuality' of art and film. Film has its own language and strategies. Certain distortions of the art object occur in film and video through the format, the representation of scale, and the translation of color. The sense of space in film is unlike that of painting.

Films on art confront the paradox that art objects are still, while films trace movement in space and time. Film and the traditional forms of art history - the monograph, book, article, catalogue, lecture - can be viewed as complementary though they have quite different purposes. Film can be another vehicle for art history, one that allows for another way of knowing, bringing a new kind of discourse to our understanding of art objects. Wechsler states that "we diminish the possibilities of the medium if we apply to film strict methodological criteria

from art history regarding modes of argument and evidence. The focus should shift to the larger enterprise of furthering the interest in and understanding of art. There are no formulas. There is a need for awareness of the issues, familiarity with the means and ends of art history and film."²⁰

Wechsler further explains that "film can suggest visually a balance of established practice and innovation, the deliberations of the artist, the processes a work undergoes in its development, the constraints and possibilities of a given medium. Art historical issues can be raised on more popular and accessible level - dealing with questions of pictorial conventions, genres, and taste,"²¹ The genre, films on art, came to be identified as such through a series of trials and tribulations. Today it has come to signify an identifiable genre which encompasses a wide array of films that cover a great variety of subjects. The film on art has long been part and parcel of other didactic material, be it a museum catalogue, lecture or television program on either a specific artist, theme or exhibition. What is the specificity of film in its relationship to other forms of communication? What do we understand to be a film on art as opposed to an art film? Both forms of expression are still used today, how are we to differentiate between them? Besides the problem of definition, and the contradictions and polemics it raises, the essential question turns on, how does one film art?

Making images of works of art available to a wide audience is not the only benefit films on art provide. The medium in general is socially influential, so

consequently it can open doors that would generally remain closed to the layperson. Viewers gain access to precious objects in private or foreign collections that they would normally never encounter. Interviews also introduce them to famous living artists, critics and scholars they would otherwise find difficult to meet. Even when a film on art shows a place accessible and familiar to viewers, film's technical resources enable them to see more than would be possible with the naked eye alone. These are obvious points, but they are easily overlooked when the reproductive limitations of film in respect of works of art are cited.

3) Collage and Jacques Giraldeau's film *La forme des choses*:

Jacques Giraldeau, a long-time director at the National Film Board of Canada and the creator of numerous films on art has repeatedly and therefore intentionally referred to his films on art as 'collages'. The term is meant to draw upon the films's openness and fragmented way of presenting their subject matter. Giraldeau believes that making art is fundamentally an act of liberty. Collage may be the most versatile and free medium available. As Katherine Hoffman explains in her chapter "Collage in the Twentieth Century: An Overview", collage may be seen as a quintessential twentieth-century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to a variety of forms and realities, and to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities.²² As Clement Greenberg wrote, "Collage was...a major turning point in the whole evolution of modernist art in this century."²³ Hoffman also writes, once considered a folk art, collage in the

twentieth century has emerged as both a medium and an idea, and has led to some of the most significant developments in art criticism in our time.

Hoffman reminds us that it is important to consider the emergence of collage in the context of changing concepts of time, space, and reality that have evolved as the twentieth century has progressed. She explains that with the advent of the new century, artists, scientists, and philosophers began to shatter nineteenth-century monism and concepts of a monolithic Absolute. Dualism and pluralism began to replace nineteenth-century monism. Philosophers such as Henri Bergson began to attack old monoliths such as Truth and introduce new concepts of time and perception. Hoffman writes that "for Bergson 'before' and 'after' were not important. Rather time was a continuous duration and there were definite fixed objects in time. Further, Bergson felt that one could view the world in two ways - intellectually and intuitively. Intuition allowed for the direct perception of the inner core of an object and enabled one to transcend the everyday facts of eternal appearance."²⁴

Hoffman turns her attention to other important thinkers such as Freud and the new psychologists who as she writes began to shatter rationalism and probe into both the unconscious and conscious mind. Freud's early books opened the doors to the world of dreams, nightmares and revelations, and brought forth a wealth of material for artists and writers. While Freud challenged accepted views of psychology, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim laid the foundations for modern

sociology. Hoffman elaborates on these events and explains that discoveries in the world of science also touched the arts. The disintegration of the atom, Einstein's theory of relativity, and quantum physics began to shake people's faith in the reality of a given, concrete, visible world. Hoffman writes "there was no longer one true vision of reality but the possibility of the perception of multiple realities... It is with this background that Modernism, and collage as a fine art form, were born in the early part of the century."²⁵ Artists and writers of the early twentieth century were sensitive to trends and conflicts in the larger society, and sought new forms and languages. For some, as Hoffman describes, "this breaking away from an established order implied a sense of chaos, and the vocabulary of chaos - disintegration, fragmentation, dislocation. But for others, Modernism may also be seen as bringing a new kind of integration to the forefront. The concepts of disintegration, fragmentation, and integration are perhaps particularly important for the medium of collage."²⁶

Thus far, in setting the philosophical and theoretical stage for the growth of collage and criticism thereof, the term collage has been used without differentiating among the variety of collage forms. Hoffman iterates that the French word collage, from the verb, coller, means pasting, sticking, or gluing onto a surface, for example, the application of wallpaper. The past participle collé refers to something fake or pretend in slang. Papier collé is a somewhat narrower form of collage referring only to the use of paper, and often referring to the paper

collages of the Cubists.²⁷ Picasso is usually credited with the beginnings of the use of collage by modern artists, while Braque is usually credited with the innovation of papier collé. The first experiments in collage as a legitimate art form may be seen in the work of Picasso, Braque, and other Cubists such as Juan Gris.

Cubist painting began to portray simultaneity in time and space. Collage introduced an interaction between the pictorial surface and the real environment and freed the artist from the technicalities of brushwork. As Hoffman writes the Cubists' use of materials such as grained papers, newspaper clippings, and wallpaper allowed for a complex interplay between illusion and reality, and for the transformation of one reality into another. She asks "were wallpaper patterns that formed part of a guitar, or newspaper that formed the sound hole of a guitar part of a guitar, part of another context or object from which the wallpaper or newspaper was taken, or signposts pointing to other meanings and questions?"²⁸ The play and interplay of meanings becomes complicated. What was presented, represented, and represented, and conversely, what was not presented or represented behind the pasted pieces is complex. In the use of newspaper, bottle labels, etc., one also sees both the confrontation and integration of 'high' and 'low' cultures. Thomas Crow writes, "The principles of collage construction itself collapses the distinction between high and low by transforming the totalizing creative practice of traditional painting into a fragmented consumption of already existing manufactured images."²⁹

In the spring of 1912, Picasso pasted a piece of oilcloth printed with a trompe l'œil chair-caning pattern to the surface of a small, oval canvas representing a café still life. This work, which he framed with a coarse rope, has acquired legendary status in the history of art as the first deliberately executed collage - the first work of fine art, that is, in which materials are appropriated from everyday life, relatively untransformed by the artist, intruded upon the traditionally privileged domain of painting. The use of these materials, which retain their former identity within the new pictorial context, challenged some of the most fundamental assumptions about the nature of painting inherited by Western artists from the time of the Renaissance. The invention of collage put into question prevailing notions of how and what works of art represent, of what unifies a work of art, of what materials artists may use; it also opened to debate the more recent Romantic definition of what constitutes originality and authenticity in the work of art. If the *Still Life with Chair-Caning* remains an enigmatic and powerful work even now, more than ninety two years after it was executed, it is because of the audacity with which it raised these questions, which continue to be of importance to artists and theorists today.

By the late fall of 1912, Picasso had embarked on the series of collages and cardboard constructions that was to be one of his most remarkable achievements, both in terms of the creative freedom and invention it exemplifies and in terms of the critique of representation it posed. Inspired of a Grebo mask Picasso had

purchased in Avignon during the summer, Picasso's works of the fall and winter reflect his recognition that plastic signifiers, like those of writing, bear an arbitrary rather than substantive link to their signifieds. This led him to explore the traditional codes of representation in order to undermine their seeming transparency through a systematic play of formal and material oppositions.

According to Christine Poggi, author of *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage*, for both Picasso and Braque, the invention of collage was also a means of introducing color into their works without allowing it to take on the emotional and representational function it had had in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century avant-garde painting. Both artists rejected the use of brilliant, sensuous color in the early period of their collaboration. This has often been explained as a means of concentrating on form and structure, color being too uncontrollable, too much of a wild card. Poggi writes that "Picasso's technique of appropriation and recontextualization can be described as a form of allegory, a mode of speaking as if with two or more voices. In the place of a perfect, transparent unity of form and content, we find evident manipulation of codes and a preference for multiple meanings and fragments. This process allows fragments and other borrowed materials to sustain the superposition of new second-order meanings within a new context. Yet the elements - styles, objects, or materials - retain something of their earlier signification, so that the unity of the sign is fractured from within."³⁰ According to Poggi, this opens a distance between

old and new meanings. A similar distance can be seen between the artist and his manipulation of codes and conventions.

Girardeau's irony and humor in his film collage, *La forme des choses* (1965) are aspects of his recognition of this distance and of the freedom it granted him.³¹ If art and film could be viewed as a set of conventions to be borrowed, fragmented, and displaced, so too could the traditional techniques of illusion: perspective and chiaroscuro. His filming of the works at the International Symposium of Sculpture in 1964 which showcased the sculptures of 11 artists: Josef Pillofer from Austria, Krishna Reddy from India, Carlo Sergio Signori from Italy, Sklavos from Greece, Pierre Szekely from Hungary, Armand Vaillancourt, Irving Burman, and Robert Roussil from Canada, Augustin Cardenas a Cuban from Paris, Louis Chavignier from France and Eloul Kosso from Israel retains the language of illusion but renders it enigmatic and largely inoperative. In this film, the perspective orthogonals of the sculptures converge in a number of contradictory directions, so that the mechanism of linear recession is rendered visible. Similarly, chiaroscuro is divorced from its traditional function of modeling; fragmented bits of light and dark are dispersed throughout the film without regard for a consistent source of illumination. In fact, the works are filmed in a variety of seasonal and climactic conditions thus under very different light. These apparently arbitrary reversals, fragmentations, and displacements create a striking effect of estrangement, which allows the devices of illusion to be freshly

perceived and analyzed as conventions rather than accepted as transparent signifiers of the external world.

Poggi advances that a number of art historians, including Leo Steinberg, Rosalind Krauss and most recently Yve-Alain Bois, have compared the relational structure of forms in Picasso's construction *Guitar*, as well as in his collages, to the contemporary linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure. Without positing that Picasso had any knowledge of Saussure's revolutionary theories, these art historians have argued that a parallel understanding of the arbitrary nature of signs informs Picasso's synthetic Cubist works, especially those executed in constructive collage techniques. In this light, according to Poggi, the critique of prior theories of representation that lies at the base of both the *Guitar* and the subsequent collages, is viewed as inaugurating a revolution in the visual arts comparable to that inaugurated by Saussure in linguistics.

Poggi explains that a brief review of Saussure's structural analysis of language will clarify what is at stake in this interpretation of Picasso's collages. Saussure's great innovation was to conceive language as a synchronic, relational system, complete and coherent at each moment of its temporal existence. In opposition to his immediate linguistic predecessors, Saussure proposed a model in which the temporality of language consisted of a series of static systems succeeding each other in time. Without denying the importance of historical change, Saussure insisted that as a total system language existed in a kind of

perpetual present and that meaning emerged only as a result of this synchronicity.³²

Poggi further explains that by distinguishing the synchronic from the diachronic dimension of language, Saussure was able to direct attention to the universal, structural organization of language. This structure proved to be based on a self-governing system of relational values or differences, which established the possibility of meaning at every level of linguistic articulation, from the smallest phoneme to larger syntactical units. Poggi offers as an analogy that "the differential nature of this system might be compared to that which governs the exchange of bills in the modern economy, in which it is the difference between a five- and a ten-dollar bill, rather than the intrinsic value of the paper, which carries meaning."³³ Similarly, according to Saussure, as explained by Poggi, the linguistic signifier does not bear a positive, or substantive, relation to a given signified; its primary relation is to the other terms in the language system that might have been chosen in its stead. Value is established as the negation of the other possibilities of the system as Poggi writes, "instead of pre-existing ideas, then, we find in all the foregoing examples values emanating from the system. When they are said to correspond to concepts, it is understood that the concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system."³⁴ In conclusion, linguistic signifiers are more clearly identified by being what others are not.

Poggi adds that Saussure further argued that because of this differential structure, the relation of individual signifiers to their respective signifieds is purely arbitrary. This relation depends on social conventions and usage, rather than on a substantive link between words and mental concepts or images. Poggi contends that, "everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this, in language there are only differences. Even more important, a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up, but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system."³⁵

Giraldeau's self-consciously structural approach to filming the sculptures led him to emphasize the conceptual status of the work of art. To say that the film *La forme des choses* is conceptual, however, does not imply that it is true to the essential nature of what it represents. By deploying sets of binary opposites - recessed versus projecting forms, transparent versus opaque planes, straight versus curved edges - Giraldeau called attention to the relational value of the formal signifiers in the film. This pairing allowed him to treat his formal elements as empty signifiers that would be granted meaning by the context. Thus a projecting cylinder can signify the recession of Roussil's sculpture, and a delimited open space can be made to read as the equivalent of Vaillancourt's solid, sculptural

form. Whereas the value of a linguistic is predicated on the absence or negation of other possible alternatives, the spatial simultaneity of the sculptures allowed Giraldeau to construct his film out of copresent opposites. This allowed the oppositional or relational value of his formal elements to become especially evident. Our ability to interpret these formal elements as meaningful antinomies depends on their prior existence as opposing artistic conventions.

In addition, Giraldeau also used sound and music to underscore and counterpoint his images in order to create effects that point to new meanings. The film was scored by the renowned composer Pierre Mercure who created percussive sounds to dramatically inflect the images with a tempo that sets the pace of the sequences. The use of collage is therefore extended to sound and music wherein they are matched to the images in ways that juxtapose their significance in a manner that embellishes the film's visual structure. Specific sounds correspond to specific shapes and the whole comes together as a well orchestrated musical piece put to film and art. Giraldeau thus employs the devices of collage on many levels and in many ways beyond the simple effects of editing. The film *La forme des choses* stands as an homage to the polymorphous effects that collage has to offer an artist.

Chapter 2: Art and culture in Québec in the 1960s

1) The 1960s in context

'The 1960s' is a construct with varied and contested meanings. The earliest and perhaps the most consistent derives from a composite of media-constructed images evoking material prosperity, cultural innovation and youthful rebellion. The central aim of this chapter is to penetrate beyond the conventional emblems of the sixties and begin to elaborate a much more complex and precise history of what occurred in some of the central spheres of cultural life in Québec during these years.

The thrust of Jacques Giraldeau's films of the period, as a whole, is towards recognizing differences and contradictions within the cultural practices of the 1960s. Thus it needs to be stressed at the very beginning, and this too is part of the work of demythologizing, that there was in those years no single monolithic counter-culture or cultural opposition with a coherent programme. There were diverse attacks on official culture and that too was a more fissured and de-centred formation than the very term suggests, but in myriad locations - not only within the academy, within art institutions of all kinds, within politics, but also within more dispersed spaces around issues of gender, class, race and generation. Greater specificity about chronology, location and often problematic interrelationship of these engagements is crucial to any adequate interpretation of the changes, the incorporations and the marginalizations of the cultural politics of the 1960s.

In Québec, disillusionment with the sixties has been particularly marked in relation to the decade's impact on the arts. Triviality and an obsession with the private sphere are charges commonly laid against much artistic practice in the 1960s. A recurrent charge against the 1960s avant-garde is that it attempted to destroy the very categories of art and culture. Symptomatic of this vandalism were: the erosion of the status of the individual artist, for instance by stressing group collaboration or the obliteration of the distinction between performer and audience, whether in theatre, poetry readings or 'happenings'; the blurring of the status of the artwork by the use of 'found objects' and collage in the visual arts, found texts and cut-ups in writing, or the use of everyday gestures in dance; the instrumental use of art in agit-prop; and, at the other end of the spectrum, the interest shown in chance and random occurrence as constitutive elements in composition.

Critics have been particularly critical of two of the most striking directions taken by the avant-garde: the erosion of distinctions between politics and art, and between 'high' and 'popular' culture. The former tendency, it is argued, led to a vast overrating of new creative voices whose combination of theatrical sensation and political naivety failed to produce art that merited more than passing attention. Cultural decline was also apparent in the widespread interest in the uses of popular forms. An emerging orthodoxy about the 1960s, which this thesis questions,

concerns the apparent ease and speed with which the decade's cultural radicalisms were absorbed into the Establishment they so vociferously opposed.

First, that assimilation did not occur without a good deal of political counter-pressure. The state intervened directly to contain a range of challenges. In any case, so far as one does accede to the proposition that substantial elements of the counter-culture were subsequently assimilated within the mainstream, this can be interpreted as testimony of its success rather than its failure. The spectacular transformation of styles of dress, of relations between the sexes, of attitudes to authority, of the whole content and style of many radio and television programmes, of the output of journals and publishers, of work within major sectors of the academy, of the marked internationalization of debate within intellectual culture and the arts by the 1970s, may not have amounted to a political revolution.

Nor did it realize the amorphous utopias of the counter-culture. Nevertheless, in all kinds of ways, the political ramifications of cultural change in the 1960s were undeniably significant. As Andrée Fortin writes in her chapter "Affirmation collectives et individuelles", "dans ce projet de libération, le politique est indissociable du culturel et le collectif de l'individuel, mais la transformation à faire, est d'abord individuelle...pour accéder à un nouveau Nous québécois, il faut passer par des Je désaliénés, conscientisés."³⁶ Looking at the 1960s only in terms of what came after, and not also in terms of what went before,

can obscure that significance. Focusing more precisely on the dominant values and cultural formations of the 1950s produces a different set of emphases, in understanding the subsequent decade. As Francine Couture writes "On assiste alors à une transformation de l'image publique de l'artiste moderne. Dans les années 1940 et 1950, cet artiste vivait dans une sorte de maquis culturel qui avait pris la forme d'une petite communauté formée de sympathisants à sa cause, intellectuels, marchands de tableaux et collectionneurs, qui s'était mise en position de rupture avec le pouvoirs politique et religieux."³⁷ It was exactly the sense of the exhausted potential of central institutions, practices, canons and definitions in sphere after sphere of cultural life that animated much of the activity and dissension of the 1960s.

2) Jacques Giraldeau's Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont and class disenfranchisement

The cultural activities we are looking at here- Jacques Giraldeau's films on art of the 1960s - were varied in their point of attack on established values. The alleged preoccupation with private experience was not then necessarily a withdrawal from the public sphere but a recognition of the institutionalized narrowness, both of what was conceived as art and of who was permitted to have access to it. Hence the concern to explore the boundaries between public and private, to insist sometimes that 'the personal is the political', to redefine the very nature of what was political. As feminists were beginning to argue by the end of

the 1960s, those boundaries ensured the invisibility of key forms of women's oppression. The Gay Rights campaigns of the late 1960s were making a parallel case. This privative and elitist though 'public' institutionalization of discourse also marginalized and de-politicized other areas of social experience and certain largely unquestioned facets of Quebec's official self-image.

A case in point is the problem of poverty and class disenfranchisement. Giraldeau's film *Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont* depicts the problem of exclusion and social alienation in a vivid and touching portrait of a group of residents living in a low-income district of Montreal.³⁸ In 1968, a small group of then recent graduates from the school of architecture at the Université de Montréal wanted to undertake a project which they deemed realizable in contrast to the more theoretical problems given to them in school. They wanted to revamp an alleyway, the Rue Demers in the Mile-End district, by putting in a green space with a flower bed and by painting the sides of the buildings. The project was to be done on a kind of barter system whereby the residents would do the work and have paint and supplies furnished to them. The film follows the entire project from the early conversations between the students and the residents all the way to the final hours when the residents and the students cannot agree on how to prolong the project. Giraldeau's film traces the social and class tensions at work between the students's vision of the project and the residents's apathy and profound incredulity.

The film strikes a bittersweet portrait of life in an impoverished district of Montreal with little access to resources let alone if any aesthetic experiences. The thought of embellishing the alleyway can only seem futile to a group of people whose concerns are centered on meeting their primary needs with little regard for the color of their walls. The students's ideas and efforts come off as shallow and superficial. Their initial understanding of this project as being realistic and doable rings hollow and entirely dismissive of the residents's veritable needs. Many scenes of the film underscore this very undercurrent of futility and quiet despair. The intended project takes little heed of the many external restrictions and socioeconomic deprivations impeding its fruition.

The film seems to be critical of the utopian dimension of the student's project. We are left to ponder if the project foundered due to the students's misunderstanding or the residents's disillusionment. However, the film stands as an example of the kinds of far-reaching questions being asked at the time wherein all boundaries, social and aesthetic, were dissolvable. The very nature of art was put under direct scrutiny. What is art? The term refers to practices and institutions connected with creative production. All those objects and practices which, demand to be experienced aesthetically. While they may also have a function and double as a mode of entertainment, the goods and services in this field are not made so that they will be functional, they are intended to be first of all, aesthetic. In other words, the things produced in the field of cultural production are in the first

instance symbolic rather than material. They are primarily designed not to make money, but to make some sort of statement about the artist's vision or the social universe. Hence, the argument goes, they are made under the principle of 'disinterestedness'.

One of the most significant features of Pierre Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production is that it breaks with this romantic idea - still associated with art, despite all evidence to the contrary - that creative production is imbued with some sort of special language of grace. This implies that the creative world is somehow divorced from the everyday world and its demands, and that creative practitioners - and their audiences, 'people of distinction' -are especially gifted, specially sensitive and alert beings. By analyzing this world Bourdieu is able to show that in fact it is organized, regulated and structured like other social fields: its rules and discourses, narratives, agents, institutions, specific capital can all be identified. And in identifying these, Bourdieu takes pains to demystify cultural practice, and show that it comes out of a set of social conditions, and performs a set of social functions.

For Bourdieu, something can only be identified as art if it is found in a context that is recognized as artistic; and/or it is made by someone who is known to be an artist; and/or if those authorized to make such judgements tell us that in fact it is art. In other words, something becomes art only when it is named as such by figures of legitimation, or gatekeepers. The prize in the competition of the field

of cultural production is to become recognized as a regulator of the field, the true reward being symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is capital in the sense that a person has acquired it through competition, inherited it from their family, or learned in school. Bourdieu shows that the ability to appreciate art, and possession of a taste for art, are closely connected to one's education and class status. Middle-class people in Bourdieu's studies were far more confident than working-class people about approaching cultural products and cultural institutions. Bourdieu's argument was that this was because they had acquired conceptual skills and social confidence from their families and their middle-class schools, rather than because they were born mysteriously possessed of a natural love of art. In other words, their social origins and education provided them with symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's ideas are exemplified in Giraldeau's *Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont* in the way many of the residents seem uncomfortable in discussing their immediate environment. Most act as if they had never given the question any thought. One set of residents, a mother and daughter living in the same apartment, are completely uninterested in revamping the alleyway. They are first and foremost desperate to leave the whole place behind them. Only the film shows that they cannot afford to leave and therefore appear to be stuck there, for the rest of their lives, generation after generation. Not only do they not have the physical resources to improve their lot they in fact cannot make use of any conceptual resources to imagine themselves a better situation. All they do is get by, always

overtaken by the daily grind. The effervescence of the 1960s seems to be passing right by them without a chance of ever touching their lives.

3) The 1960s and cultural democratization

In contrast to some critic's claims that much of the decade's innovative activity was little more than the vehicle for the self-definition of a new cultural elite, this chapter looks at varied attempts to democratize access to, and conceptions of, culture. There were for instance transformations in the material base of cultural production - the expansion of higher education, the protest of L'Opération Déclic, the Rioux Commission on art education and the broadening use of mass technologies. There was also the emergence of alternative spaces to house drama, dance, poetry readings and so on. Redefinitions of the role of the artist, which stressed the involvement of others in the making of the artwork marked the weakening boundary between performer and audience and, raids on popular culture, all helped to demystify art and undermine distinctions between 'high' and 'low'. As Andrée Fortin explains "Dans les happenings, le public n'est plus simple spectateur, il devient acteur; on lui demande de participer... En effet, si l'art ne nécessite aucun savoir, corrélativement, il suffirait d'être mis en sa présence pour le comprendre, idéalement d'être témoin du processus créateur."³⁹ Such developments encouraged a wider and more confident access to the arts.

Neither blanket condemnation nor nostalgic celebration of the sixties is now very useful. Dominant representations of the 1960s too often fail to make careful

analytical distinctions or to identify the precise discourses and institutions where specific contestations were occurring at specific times. The chronologies of change in these years were extremely complex and not reducible to some central and pivotal moment or some *zeitgeist* simultaneously inhabiting the diverse spheres of Québécois life. If we need to recognize the horizontal complexities of chronology we have also to be attentive to vertical tensions within particular art forms and genres. No art form or genre was an undifferentiated bloc. Many of the radical ideals and projects that emerged in Québec in the 1960s failed, degenerated or were marginalized. The opening out of political culture was arrested and, in part, closed down again in the 1970s. As Andrée Fortin writes "Les limites du projet de la prise de la parole apparaissent au début des années 1970. La répression durant la Crise d'octobre met fin à l'idéal participationniste déjà ébranlé par l'échec relatif du Parti Québécois en avril 1970 qui ne fait élire que 7 députés sur 108 avec 23% du suffrage populaire."⁴⁰ The counter-culture proved more evanescent. It disintegrated rapidly after 1970. Its newspapers and more avant-garde journals, such as *Parti-Pris*, faded and closed down. Some of its elements moved up-market. Others disappeared. Fragile connections broke down. Of course, there was a great deal about the counter-culture that was trivial, vacuous, and merely bizarre. However, in the pages of the alternative press in the late 1960s can be found a rich, complex, often contradictory, mix of genuine radical critique - often influenced by the likes of Herbert Marcuse and closer to home, Marcel Rioux.

New kinds of radical synthesis were offered emphasizing, among other things, the political significance of matters previously thought peripheral to the cause. The nuances of everyday style, lifestyle, language and taste were no longer to be seen merely as private or individual quirks, but as symptomatic, as telling indices of more general values and allegiances. In 1968 students at l'EBAM (l'École des Beaux Arts de Montréal) saw little signs of such vision in their own society. The very imprecision of their idealism conveyed the frustration and the anomie they complained of. They spoke abstractly and abstractedly of a yearning to believe there is an alternative to the present and that something could be done to change circumstances. Their account of the downside of prosperity, the pressures towards social and intellectual conformity and the complacent narrowing of horizons, was reminiscent of Marcuse's notion of North American society made one-dimensional. Their plea, was above all else, for a clearing of a critical space, for the consideration of alternatives, to break the national quietude where elites resolve complex and specialized problems of modern, industrial society. Social engineering and the careful instrumental outlook took their toll in terms of personal identity and personal fulfillment. Personal cultivation of the mind was offered as a preferable goal to conventional material rewards.

The terms in which this plea was made and the language it employed were significantly varied. On the one hand, there was the suggestion that given contentment and prosperity and a developed indifference to human affairs, and

given the muting effects of consensus and the dearth of dramatic just causes, political proclivities would surface not in open public controversy but in personal style and lifestyle, in dress, in social habits and personal ambitions. Culture in this broad sense was foregrounded, and would become the field of difference amid the quietism of political consensus. The complementary assumption latent here, but soon to become a staple of counter-cultural politics, was that as well as public advocacy, changing style and lifestyle, reaching for 'authentic' personal identity, was essential to the radical project.

Therefore a film such as *Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont* captures more than the limitations of the residents it also conveys the spirit of the times in the attitudes of the students. Their project exemplifies the falling away of the boundaries between the public and the private wherein the private everyday existence of the residents stands in for a greater social inequity. Towards the end of the film, the students act as frustrated as the residents in regards to the dissolution of the project. Each blames the other. One student gets particularly angry with a resident for complaining about her lack of means reiterating the idea that if all the residents got together to complete the project it might actually get done. In other words, her complaints fall on deaf ears. Of course, the student does not take into consideration Bourdieu's notion of habitus whereby the residents's way of thinking is dictated not by a lack of will but by a lifelong lack of means. The student himself may not at this point in his life possess much more monetary

capital than the resident but he does possess much more symbolic capital in the form of education and access to a well remunerated employment. The residents's and their children's lot has, according to Bourdieu, long been decided. There is very little chance they will achieve a greater social status than their parents.

Bourdieu refers to the partly unconscious taking in of rules, values and dispositions as the 'habitus', which he defines as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations ...(which produces) practices."⁴¹ In other words, habitus can be understood as the values and dispositions gained from our cultural history that generally stay with us across contexts. These values and dispositions allow us to respond to cultural rules and contexts in a variety of ways, but the responses are always largely determined - regulated - by where we have been in a culture.

Bourdieu's main concern is not with aesthetics but with the principles behind people's tastes: why do some people spend their time and energy in making cultural products? Why do some people buy, for instance paintings or theatre tickets? How does it help them organize their world? What meanings are attached to these sorts of practices? The reason for his interest in these questions is that: "there is no way out of the game of culture; and one's only chance of objectifying the true nature of the game is to objectify as fully as possible the very operations which one is obliged to use in order to achieve that objectification."⁴² If there really is no way out of the game, our best option is to understand the game.

Bourdieu's writings on the field of cultural production go some distance to help us understand the game. His findings are published in several articles and books, *Distinction* is perhaps the most important and certainly the best known of all these writings, and here he explores the relation between artistic taste and social background. The consistent feature of all Bourdieu's writings is the attention he pays to the effect of social and political structures on aesthetic taste, and on what he calls 'practices of distinction'. That is Bourdieu's notion is that culture is the domain of those who, by virtue of their class, status and education, are possessed of cultivated tastes, and able, by virtue of the same sorts of capital, to inscribe these tastes as being at the same time natural, and the markers of a natural superiority.

4) The public and the private as dissolvable spheres

In the 1960s, there was, too, the elevated language of an older tradition, the abstract universals of the enlightenment tradition; not simply the quotidien world of taste and manners, but humanity's heroic struggle for perfection. Given, this mixture of traditions, the use of 'cultivation' here was particularly ambivalent. Students and their spokespersons argued against what they believed to be outmoded political precepts; they called for a necessary mixture of state and private controls in a mixed economy and for national programmes to address social and cultural issues too long left on the periphery. They also celebrated the achievements of the welfare state, urging developments along the same lines to

deal with the problems of health and poverty. They were ambivalent about bureaucracy - against the faceless social engineers, but also urged the extension of legislation into new areas.

They insisted on the connection, not the separation, of public and private, on the social determinations of personal life. Thinkers such as Marcel Rioux, called for social analysis to be scaled down and humanized so that 'private troubles' could be seen in context. These determinations were harder to demonstrate in a prosperous or allegedly prosperous society than in one where deprivations were immediate, felt in the belly. Issues had to be clarified to people mystified by modern complexity and unaware of larger causes. Argument, demonstration, moral suasion were the means by which reform would be achieved.

Economic growth was also the precondition for the expansion in selective cultural provision. The number of book titles more than doubled during the decade. Such growth reflected a new public for the arts. The number of students in higher education also more than doubled during the decade. The overall growth in state education and arts funding created space for increased kinds of explicitly non-commercial cultural and artistic activity, whose practitioners sought a position outside state control while still claiming the right to public funding. As noted by Francine Couture, during Opération Déclat in November 1968, artists from all disciplines gathered at the Bibliothèque Nationale defined themselves as educators and humanists. She writes, "la responsabilité de l'artiste, lit-on dans le rapport de

l'événement, est de contribuer à l'instauration d'une culture alternative en créant des œuvres qui communiquent des valeurs humaines et positives' et qui 'envisagent le bien commun culturel dans le but de contribuer à l'avènement d'un mieux-vivre pour l'individu et la collectivité."⁴³ While such attempts to break free from state control often entailed an equally vehement opposition for the directions of a new commercial market, at times these two positions could unite in their championing of an 'independent' position free from state regulation.

The dominant cultural bloc frequently sought to deal with such developments by absorbing them within existing institutions, as in the incorporation of the pop radio format within the CBC or the extension of the Canada Council for the Arts patronage into new fields. A broader challenge to all cultural producers, whether state, commercial or alternative, was the ability of the population at large to make their own selection from what was being offered, in ways that did not fit any preconceived pattern. Youth culture throughout the 1960s was a frantic dialectic between the consumer of culture - in the thousands of amateur 'beat' and 'hippie' groups, the dress, style and behaviour of the mods, and the diverse use of drugs by the different subcultures. Such cultural resistance, however, has to be seen as occurring within, and frequently against the grain of, the powerful dominant media, cultural and arts institutions that inevitably set most of the cultural agenda.

The 1960s was the first decade when television unequivocally dominated the media stage in Canada. Between 1955 and 1960 the number of people possessing television sets doubled; by the end of the decade 90 per cent of the population had access to a set, the great majority of these being multi-channel.⁴⁴ During the 1960s this dominance was such as to force a re-definition of the functions of the other media. In a decade of cultural expansion, radio, cinema and the national press all suffered some diminution of audience directly attributable to television; equally significant was their adaptation to new secondary roles as television came to dominate the provision of evening entertainment and news. Television was now the central medium of the culture. The continuing presence of a commercial mass media was only one of a number of threats that defenders of traditional cultural standards had to contend with during the 1960s. In Canada such standards are typically maintained as much by informal assumptions as by formal codifications. Nevertheless, during the 1960s a number of key sites of cultural reference: Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, the Conseil des arts du Québec and commercial art galleries, can be identified as instrumental in the setting of artistic norms and standards and, equally important as possessing the power, influence and material resources to make their judgements operative.

4) The student's protests and the Rioux Commission

Many if not all of the socioeconomic issues discussed above came to a head in the students's protest of the late 1960s. The protests marked more than a

generational conflict. They signified a profound shift in the social fabric of most Western liberal democratic nations or to what Marcel Rioux referred to as the postindustrial society. In August 1968, Marcel Rioux, president of the Commission d'enquête sur l'enseignement des arts au Québec, presented his report to the provincial government.⁴⁵ Two and half years after the commission had been erected on the 31st of March in 1966, the 800 page report was finally tabled and its three tomes distributed to the public at large in April 1969. In her article "La Commission Rioux et la place de l'art dans une société postindustrielle" Suzanne Lemerise comments on the report within the context of a broader research into the role of art in a postindustrial society. The Rioux report came on the tail end of the Rapport Parent dedicated to the democratization of the entire educational system. The Parent report written from 1963 to 1965 proposed an 'active educational system' centred on the needs of the child at the elementary level and on the needs of Québec society at the secondary and collegial level. The thrust of the Parent report recommended a rationalization of educational institutions and the establishment of the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) in order to centralize the administration of all educational matters as well as the creation of the 'écoles polyvalentes' and the Cégeps (Collèges d'enseignement générale et professionnel) hereafter the gateway to a university education.

In this great reordering of the educational system, the École des Beaux Arts de Montréal (l'EBAM), recently integrated into the Ministère de l'Éducation du

Québec (MEQ) and the music and drama conservatories, until now under the jurisdiction of the Ministère d'affaires culturelles (MAC) were left to their own demise. In the Fall of 1965, the students of l'EBAM, went on strike. As the result of its many strikes from 1965 to 1968, l'EBAM received a lot of media coverage and consequently became a symbol of student protest in Québec. The strike of 1965 denounced the quality and teaching conditions of the institution: dilapidated locals, inadequate materials, deficient educational programs, conflicts with professors, the absence of students in pedagogical committees and most importantly, the poor recognition of the diploma and lack of professional prospects. The students based their grievances on what they construed to be the reduced role of the arts in the school system and the society at large. They asked that "l'artiste commande autant de respect que l'universitaire gradué ou non."⁴⁶ They also requested that the minister of education conduct a study on the teaching of the arts.

The committee's mandate was to: 1) étudier le problème de la formation artistique à tous les niveaux et dans toutes les disciplines, 2) étudier le problème de toute production directement ou indirectement reliée à l'art, 3) enquêter sur les besoins actuels et futurs de notre société dans le domaine de l'art.⁴⁷ Extremely difficult negotiations began between the students of l'EBAM and the minister of education and cultural affairs. Discussions broke over issues such as the type of committee to be erected, the scope of the study and its presidency; the ministries

suggested a ministerial committee while the students wanted a full investigative commission.

Marcel Rioux was favored for president by the students but less popular among the various government agencies. It should be understood, as Lemerise points out, that Rioux was a bit of a renegade. He was a sociology professor at the Université de Montréal who had made a reputation for himself through his anthropological studies of Québec society. In the early 1960s, Rioux proclaimed his socialist convictions which led him to break away from the Liberal party. He then engaged with the secular faction of the French language movement and in 1964 at a congress for the Association internationale des sociologues de langue française he declared himself a separatist. His university courses drew much from Marxism as did his 1964 study with Robert Sévigny on the youth of Québec.

A second strike broke out in March 1966, this time in which several institutions participated. General art schools and schools for the applied arts as well as music and drama conservatories joined in the conflict. The students's grievances received a lot of attention from the press, a fact that may have influenced the then Liberal government to concede on virtually all points. A commission was eventually established with the mandate "d'étudier toutes les questions relatives à l'enseignement des arts, (...)"⁴⁸ and Rioux was chosen to preside over it.

More than twenty years later, Lemerise finds it difficult to understand how the protests at l'EBAM, a school with no more than 250 students could have so readily gotten its way. Of course, the then Liberal government most certainly did not appreciate the negative attention brought on by the strikes in an election year. Furthermore, as Lemerise explains, it may have been easier for an already overburdened ministry of education (MEQ) to acquiesce the students's demands for an independent commission than to take on the issues itself. It is also true that the protests at l'EBAM inscribed themselves within a much larger period of profound societal and political change: the rise of the unionist movement, the birth of a progressive nationalism and a total reshuffling of the educational system. The students at l'EBAM took a leading role within the wider student protest movement of l'UGEQ (Union générale des étudiants du Québec), a movement that coincided with the unionization of the teaching corps.

The students at l'EBAM may have also been encouraged by changes within the artistic landscape itself. Between the many preparations for the universal exhibition of 1967 and the numerous contracts it entailed, the sculpture symposiums, the integration of art to newly built architectural projects, and the political stances taken by various artists's groups towards government cultural policies, made for a situation whereby the artist no longer worked in the privacy of his workshop but had in fact become a public figure. Furthermore, many young artists "visent à étendre, à modifier et même à briser les cadres du champ

institutionnel, pour rejoindre un nouveau public, élargir le registre des moyens d'expression plastique, définir un nouveau rôle de l'artiste dans la société."⁴⁹

Consequently, the commission on art education, presided by Marcel Rioux, belongs to an ensemble of events, circumstances and expectations formulated by different parties principally from the sector of the arts. In addition to Rioux, five other personalities sat on the board of the commission: Réal Gauthier, student representative from l'EBAM, Jean Ouellet, architect, Andrée Paradis, director of the art journal *Vie des Arts*, Jean Deslauriers, orchestra director and Fernand Ouellette, writer and director at Radio Canada. The commissioners were all well-known and respected figures of the cultural sector and served as a counterweight to the more radical voice of the students. The Rioux Commission distinguished itself from the Parent Commission in that all of its participants were actors taken directly from the area of study. Some thought this impeded the commission's objectivity and therefore diminished its legitimacy.

The final report was officially presented to the Conseil des Ministres in August 1968. By September, large parts of the report were leaked to the press and reprinted in *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. Curiously, parts of the report appeared in the press on the very day the minister of Education declared that the report would not be made public. More of the report was leaked in February 1969. The full version was finally made available to the public a few months later, in April of the same year. The recommendations of the report on one hand drew from the

educational reforms advanced in the Parent Report and on the other from the proposal put forth by the Rocher Commission on the founding of a French language university, l'UQAM. The report recommended that all art education come under the jurisdiction of the ministry of education (MEQ). Art classes were to be increased at all levels of education, from kindergarten to university. It was also suggested that the ministry of cultural affairs become the ministry of cultural development.

The first volume of the Rioux report is entirely devoted to general considerations on Québec society, culture, art and education. The report draws on philosophy, sociology and anthropology to support its claims. The thrust of the report was "il s'agissait d'insister sur le pouvoir de création de chaque individu et d'établir un système qui en permettrait la mise en valeur. Il ne s'agit pas d'aller diffuser le bon message à des masses considérées comme incultes mais de mettre tous les citoyens en mesure de participer à la création de la bonne vie et de la bonne société de notre époque."⁵⁰ The report attempted to define Québec society, culture, art and education not only in the way they were but also in the way they should be. Lemerise explains that the Parent Commission had previously delineated certain features of Québec as an industrial society: rationalism, individualism, and functional specialization. The Rioux Commission questioned further the effects of an industrial society. It asked what societal changes had taken place during the decades Québec was industrialized? What happened

"depuis les nombreuses décennies que dure la société industrielle? Les processus cumulatifs (économie, science, technique) (...) ont pris tellement d'importance qu'ils ont érodé la culture première (les traditions ou culture code) des classes sociales et renvoyé à la vie privée tous les processus non-cumulatifs (sensorialité, sensibilité, sensualité, spontanéité)." ⁵¹

Lemerise understands the Rioux Commission as thereafter questioning the viability of a postindustrial society: the technocratic rationality through further automation and the recent means of mass communication determined the value of Quebec society's symbols by incorporating them into the system of production and consumption. While the Commission proposes that "l'homme extéro-dirigé de nos sociétés industrielles avancées devra succéder l'homme autonome qui saura fonder sa personnalité et sa conduite sur des valeurs qu'il saura créer et assumer." ⁵² In contradistinction to a normal man desired by the society of consumption, the Commission calls for a normative man, "qui pourra créer et assumer des normes" ⁵³ that allow him to take advantage of all technological advancements without being dominated by them.

The Commission devoted much of its attention to education. It stated that the past and recent educational system tended to align its imperatives with the needs of an industrial society: to educate youth for the production of goods and riches. Only a small élite benefited from a more humanist and less utilitarian education. The Parent Commission wished to revitalize the humanist tradition in

order to complement the technical and scientific formation necessary to a contemporary citizen. As Lemerise writes, the Rioux Commission completely moved away from such a conception of education wherein various parts are joined to create a complete whole. The Rioux Report wanted education and more particularly art education to "former des hommes qui puissent retrouver un sens à leur vie et contribuer à créer une nouvelle culture, un nouveau code de mise en ordre de l'expérience humaine. Il s'agit de passer de la culture humaniste, culture de l'élite dans la société industrielle, pour en arriver à une culture ouverte qui sera mieux adaptée à la société industrielle". The Commission established its own views on the culture it wanted to see instored, "cette culture ouverte serait une nouvelle culture: si culture veut dire relations avec le monde extérieur, il est de toute nécessité d'équiper l'homme pour qu'il puisse vraiment entrer en relation avec le monde, non seulement par l'entremise des mots, mais à travers tous les sens, à travers tous les modes de connaissance."⁵⁴

As Lemerise points out, the central question was the following: "Comment réinsérer des significations et des symboles (culture ouverte) dans une culture qui est devenue un sous-produit du système technique? Comment parvenir à resémantiser notre univers? Comment arriver à faire participer le plus grand nombre à cette tâche? Il a semblé à la Commission que l'éducation artistique détient l'une des clefs principales de la solution."⁵⁵ The commissioners of course had to then come up with a definition for art - of art as a form of knowledge

centred in the creative imagination; a creativity that allowed for all things possible: "l'art par définition est liberté. Il est une ouverture sur l'imaginaire, une réorganisation des symboles revivifiés (...) L'œuvre d'art, dans son action profonde, traumatise la société et la défie, en l'obligeant à se remettre en question, ou à se remettre en relation avec des nouvelles valeurs (...) La société industrielle a en quelque sorte sécrété son propre anticorps."⁵⁶ In conclusion, the Rioux Commission posits that "la créativité artistique développe toutes les formes de créativité, en ce sens, nous croyons qu'elle est la forme de créativité la plus englobante, celle qui engage le plus totalement l'homme (comme l'art, d'ailleurs, est pour nous l'activité la plus totale."⁵⁷

Lemerise further explains that the Rioux Commission considerably broadens the traditional definition of art. High art, a marginalized and elite form would be a category of the first stage of an industrial society: "Désormais, ce n'est plus dans les musées que les œuvres d'art sont rassemblées, mais dans tout ce qui nous entoure: l'environnement lui-même se confond avec le musée qui devient 'un mécanisme de communication populaire'. L'exposition universelle de Montréal en 1967 a bien en lumière le fait de l'environnement global qui tend à intégrer tous les médias et dans lequel les arts sont eux-mêmes médias."⁵⁸ The Commission posits that the traditional arts were undergoing a profound mutation. Lemerise advances that this change extended itself to the industrial arts wherein the Bauhaus contributed to the definition of a new type of industrial production, in fact

industrial design and informational design condition both the aesthetic and the semantic dimension of our industrial and informational goods.

According to Lemerise, the Commission proposes a very inclusive definition of art. One which adds to the traditional arts, all forms of audio-visual arts that fall under the rubric of mass communication. The Rioux Report proposes to regroup the teaching of the arts under two categories: 1. Those related to the communications sector and 2. Those related to the environment.⁵⁹ The Commission calls for an open culture that would further the democratization of politics, economics and society. This transformative process would take place by way of a greater cultural democracy that would reflect the achievements (culture-code) and the aspirations of contemporary society (culture-dépassement). Lemerise contends that the Commission's recommendations should be applied so that every member of society, every artist and the government can work together to define the good society in an economy of creativity and solidarity.

The Rioux Commission captured the full effervescence of the profound societal and idealistic changes taking place in the 1960s. Art, artists and education were all key components in this broad overhaul of society. Although most of the Commission's recommendations were not followed through upon and are still to this day being tabulated, the report stands as a complex and insightful testament to the times in which it was written. The 1960s marked a period of greater openness whereby many cultural boundaries were reexamined and redefined. It was a time

that called first and foremost for greater democracy and personal emancipation.

Chapter 3 - Jacques Giraldeau's film *Bozarts*: art and society in the 1960s

1) *Bozarts* in context

The film *Bozarts* is an articulate survey of the art scene in Québec by people closest to it - artists, sculptors, critics, museum directors, teachers and members of the lay public.⁶⁰ As background to what is said on the screen, the film moves in and out of art exhibitions and galleries, pausing at some individual works. Among these is one by Armand Vaillancourt, internationally known metal sculptor whose monumental, non-objective shapes often draw controversy. Here, he is seen beside a sculpture he designed for the mining town of Asbestos, engaging in vigorous conversation with a group of students and workers who question the meaning of his work. More weighed expression of views comes from other exponents such as the art critics Claude Jasmin and Yves Robillard. Québec actress Dyne Mouso, the former wife of the artist Jean-Paul Mousseau, reads from *Le Refus Global* and thus attributes to it some of the new and innovative trends in art.

The film asks how can art become an integral part of people's lives. According to the opinions in the film, art is on the periphery of most people's lives, accessible mainly to initiates, to a small élite. Do galleries still have a place? Should museums do more? How should art be taught in schools? How can artists assume a greater role in the designing of a community's total living environment? All these questions come to the fore in this wide-ranging assessment of the role of art in Québec.

The Québec Minister of Culture, Radio-Canada and the National Film Board sponsored *Bozarts* first screening in December 1969 at the newly opened Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. The film also aired on television several times. First on Radio-Canada in February 1970, and two months later on the station's showcase cultural program *Les Beaux Dimanches*. In addition, *Bozarts* received international exposure by its showing at a UNESCO convention in Ottawa and at several cultural centres in various European capitals. Many professors, around the province, elected to present the film to their students enrolled in CEGEP and University arts programs. The film received enough acclaim to merit dubbing in English and the CBC consequently aired the film in 1972.

Giraldeau's own thoughts are that *Bozarts*, chronicles not only the specific events found in the film, but speaks to all of the major cultural developments from the period of the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Giraldeau recounts this collective journey by way of his symbolic linking of *Le Refus Global* to *L'Opération Déclat*. Moreover, his account reflects his own evolution from his days as a University student to those of a professional filmmaker. *Bozarts* addresses the democratization of art, by looking at the creative pursuits of several Québécois artists, the various sites available for the exhibition of their works, the views of contemporary art critics, the claims advanced by cultural policies, the role of art in education and the opinions of the lay public.

The 1960s were driven by utopian ideas for an ideal society. It was also a period that saw the realization of several concrete and socioeconomic changes. These changes were important enough for some to perceive this period as a foundational moment in Québec history. A new Québec came to the fore, open to the world, proud of its culture, aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and ready to change and evolve. Québec had been going through a process of modernization since the late 1940s. A change most clearly marked within Québec's cultural discourse by Paul-Émile Borduas's *Le Refus Global* published in 1948. The 1960s were firmly inscribed within this push to modernization while new reasons for protest emerged. Institutions were in need of reevaluation, as were notions of progress and the importance of technology. This reevaluation was expressed in political debates as well as in lifestyle choices calling for a return to nature and communal life.

What role did artists play in this tumultuous period? What kind of art did they produce? In November 1968, a group of artists initiated a series of demonstrations and debates on the relationship between art and society. The event, known as *l'Opération Déclat*, lasted five days and took place at the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. The issues were broad and the conclusions of the debates, written in a report, were considerable. The report asserts grievances relative not only to the visual arts but also to the fields of literature, music, theatre and film. The report states the need for the arts to build and keep close ties with all of the

other sectors of society. A primary concern being the role and responsibilities of the artist, the State, the private sector, the media, and the public. The role of the public is central in terms of the reception of art as much as in its production. The report underscores the need for greater political will in regards to matters of culture. It is hoped that this will could be translated into a comprehensive and coherent political agenda which would include definite policies in support of the arts. Artists, are for their part, invited to participate in the cause as fully engaged members of society who bear a critical stance toward existing institutions, structures and outdated notions of art.

Québec's collective memory retains most vividly from the 1960s the rise of nationalism, and more generally the collective affirmation of the Québécois. Many groups expressed a desire for their emancipation. The Révolution Tranquille was not only the expression of a collective political will but was comprised of sub-groups such as women and the rise of feminism, the sexual liberation, greater social justice, and the democratization of the educational system. In fact, the student movement very often took the lead in representing all of these causes. Students's requested that institutions be self-governed in the hope that a new, more open pedagogical system be erected. This kind of emancipatory project deflated the political into the cultural and the workings of a collective identity was conflated with the expression of the individual. The revolution could only begin

with a new consciousness on the part of the individual. It was not meant to be a top down process.

The formation of this new consciousness was to take shape by way of self-expression. This expression was expressive and not analytical. This form of expression was meant to dissociate the social project from intellectualism. The goal was to have the populace express and affirm itself. These concepts took hold in virtually all art forms. It was very prominent in films of this period evidenced by the dominance of direct cinema or more specifically cinéma-vérité. This focus on personal expression was meant to lead to a much broader-based political participation. It was hoped that an emphasis on personal expression would allow the emergence of a more varied popular consciousness that would do away with stereotypes. Such ideas and desires gave birth to a slew of artistic manifestations which were believed to find their source in Borduas's *Le Refus Global*. The film *Bozarts* chronicles the profound changes in the cultural scene in Québec from the time of *Le Refus Global* to *l'Opération Déclat* by way of juxtaposing interviews and images of the art scene.

2) Borduas in the 1960s

An important event took place in the field of the arts in 1960: the death of Paul-Émile Borduas. His death brought on a reevaluation of his contribution to art as well as the role of art in Québec society. It must be noted that immediately after his death Borduas was remembered first and foremost outside the French

community. For example, a retrospective exhibition of his work was organized in January 1961 in Amsterdam at the Stedijik Museum. It was the first posthumous international exhibition of Borduas's œuvre. The following retrospective took place at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1962. The exhibition subsequently travelled to the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Toronto. Among the francophone community, Borduas was embraced by only a few isolated artists and intellectuals who wrote for highbrow journals such as *Liberté* and *Cité Libre*. These thinkers present Borduas as a model of authenticity, of intellectual and artistic rigour, of liberty and freedom of thought. Borduas is made out as a persecuted hero, as a martyr who gave his life to Québec's cultural revolution.

According to Patricia Smart, author of *Refus Global: Genèse et métamorphoses d'un mythe fondateur*, the myth that surrounds the text of *Le Refus Global* has more to do with the resonance it has had with the many generations of québécois artists and intellectuals in the last fifty years than with the specifics of the text. Each decade, more or less, the manifest gets forgotten to only then be reborn in a slightly different manner for a new generation to discover. Smart, traces this very process of discovery and rediscovery, generation after generation. She tries to identify the features of the manifest and the Automatistes movement that are repeatedly taken up by each generation as a kind of intellectual beacon.

Four hundred examples of the manifest, *Le Refus Global*, were published and launched at the Librairie Tranquille on August 9, 1948.⁶¹ Among the signatories one reads, Paul-Émile Borduas, Magdelaine Arbour, Marcel Barbeau, Bruno Cormier, Claude Gauvreau, Pierre Gauvreau, Muriel Guilbault, Marcelle Ferron-Hamelin, Fernand Leduc, Thérèse Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Maurice Perron, Louise Renaud, Françoise Riopelle, Jean-Paul Riopelle and Françoise Sullivan. The manifest stays current for the close ties it draws between the transformation of individual consciences and the greater forces of history. It denounces the alienation of a conquered people tightly knit around traditional values perpetuated by the nation's élite of government officials and the clergy. The manifest lists the various fears imposed upon society by its élite:

Peur des préjugés - peur de l'opinion publique - des persécutions - de la réprobation générale - peur d'être seul sans Dieu et la société qui isole très infailliblement - peur de soi - de son frère - de la pauvreté- peur des relations neuves - peur des écluses grandes ouvertes sur la foi en 'l'homme - peur de toutes les forces susceptibles de déclencher un amour transformant...⁶²

The manifest speaks of an alienation situated within the broader cultural crisis of the then contemporary culture - a culture that the manifest describes as on the brink of exhaustion and as full of an apocalyptic violence of which the Second World War and the Holocaust are but symptoms. It describes a profound schism in Western culture, which since the Middle Ages has sacralized reason at the expense of emotion, spontaneity, eroticism and magic. The revolution advanced by the manifest is one wherein a transformation of consciences by art would take place

and traditional dualisms, spirit and matter, reason and emotion, spirituality and the body could be transcended.

The most significant position advanced by the manifest, and the most bothersome to the general public, was its implicit atheism critical of the Church and its Christian traditions. This led to Borduas's being fired from his position of professor at l'École du Meuble. After several months the fury over the manifest and Borduas's firing died down. The debate was only revived in February of 1959, when the journal *Situations* presented a dossier on the subject to underscore the manifest's tenth anniversary. Smart suggests this to be the first sign of the creation of a new pantheon of heroes, progressive and rebellious, which would become in the next years a kind of foundation myth for a modern Québec.

All commentators of *Le Refus Global* noted the importance of its critical stance towards a conservative nationalism upheld by the province's élite and the clergy. Less noted was the manifest's reference to the Patriot's Rebellion of 1837-1838 which it presents as the first manifestation of a break within the close alliance between the British conquerors and the powerful clergy. Within 15 months of the publication of Borduas's commemorative edition of the journal *Situations*, Québec virtually imploded into a new era. Most notably with the death of Duplessis in September 1959 and the election of Jean Lesage's Liberal government. Smart considers that Borduas's death within this period helped his consecration as a mythical precursor of the Révolution Tranquille. Borduas had

described himself in one of his letters as having been someone "né trop tôt dans un pays trop jeune."⁶³ Little by little the discourse around Borduas acquired a social dimension which according to Smart was laced with elements of guilt and self-accusation similar to the one around the myths of other québécois tragic figures such as Émile Nelligan, Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau, Hubert Aquin and Claude Gauvreau. For example, Smart notes that on the occasion of Borduas's first canadian retrospective held at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, opened by the ministre des affaires culturelles George-Émile Lapalme in February 1962, a television program on Radio-Canada presents the artist in the following manner:

À la recherche de son idéal, Borduas a tout sacrifié. Il a dû se résigner à l'exil, et à la solitude; son art l'a consumé tout entier. Maintenant qu'il est mort, il est accueilli avec tous les honneurs, par le Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal et par le public de son pays. Hier nous le trouvons encombrant, nous commençons de nous apercevoir que sa place est ici et qu'elle est immense.⁶⁴

Smart explains that to a large extent, the evolution of thought on automatism was conducted by the intellectual and cultural journals - *Situations*, *Liberté*, *La Barre du Jour*, *Chroniques* and *Les Herbes Rouges* - which carried the various ideologies generally advanced by each journal. Smart points out that two important journals, *Cité Libre* in the 1950s and *Parti Pris* published from 1963 to 1968, did not present any in depth analysis of Borduas's social contribution. Smart believes that *Cité Libre* omitted a discussion of the manifest's political material because its editors Pierre-Elliott Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier were avowed

catholics who would have had significant problems with the manifest's blatant atheism. While *Parti Pris*, a militant journal dedicated to the triple goals of independence, socialism and secularism, would have been deterred by the manifest's denunciation of nationalism and socialism alike. Smart concedes that in any case, it was Borduas himself, in the 1960s, who aroused the most comments and not the content of *Le Refus Global*.

According to Smart, Borduas's true consecration came in the form of Pierre Vadeboncoeur's 1963 essay *La Ligne du Risque*. Vadeboncoeur analyzes the root causes of Québec's spiritual torpor. He believes that the entire period from the Patriot's Rebellion through the twentieth-century was one of "atonie spirituelle" whereby the spirit which he broadly defines as intellectual curiosity, spiritual values, the will to create and question the divine and the human, was overwhelmed by an omnipresent conformism. The most flagrant symptom of this torpor is the lack of outstanding French Canadian individuals. Vadeboncoeur lists as examples many artists and intellectuals, Graham Greene, Orson Welles, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir, all of whom, as noted by Smart, stand out as remarkable individuals. Vadeboncoeur writes that the best measure of truth of an individual or a society is its art, for "rien ne résiste mieux à la corrosion et à la contrainte que l'absolue loyauté du créateur envers son œuvre."⁶⁵

Borduas appears as a giant in Vadeboncoeur's article. A lone figure, an example of liberty and authenticity who revolutionized the French canadian

universe. Borduas marked an all important rupture in Quebec's tightly woven social fabric as Vadeboncoeur writes, "Borduas fut le premier à rompre radicalement. Sa rupture fut totale (...) Notre histoire spirituelle recommence à lui."⁶⁶ Smart considers that Vadeboncoeur deliberately mythifies Borduas as he saw a need for a spiritual hero around which those in favor of a modern Quebec could rally. She points to the manner by which complex historical changes are glossed over and reduced to a single act by a single man, "il a brisé notre paralysie organisée. Il l'a annéantie d'un seul coup, par son refus global."⁶⁷ Smart remarks that it is not the text of the *Refus Global* that sparks Vadeboncoeur's interest but rather this notion of rupture, of a great change.

It is unusual to see Borduas appropriated by nationalist thinkers and artists since he had declared in the late 1950s that he had "tous les nationalismes en horreur."⁶⁸ Although these thinkers never pretended that Borduas was a nationalist they nevertheless drew a connection between the two generations, the 1940s and the 1960s. Smart points to a 1968 article by Hubert Aquin which traces a revolutionary tradition in québécois art and literature to the publication of *Le Refus Global*:

Ces pages incendiaires ont déclenché chez les artistes québécois une volonté de libération qu'on retrouve, encore toute chaude, dans les poèmes récents de Paul Chamberland ou de Miron, ainsi que dans les romans de Godbout ou dans les livres violents de Marie-Claire Blais. Il serait difficile de parler ici d'influence strict du mot, car il n'est pas sûr que les écrivains que je viens de mentionner aient pris connaissance du

texte même de *Refus Global*; il faudrait plutôt parler de parenté secrète ou de filiation inconsciente.⁶⁹

For Aquin, Borduas appears as the father of the artistic revolution of the 1960s: "Borduas a, pour ainsi dire, donné le signal d'une révolution artistique qui continue, encore aujourd'hui, de se répercuter dans les meilleures productions plastiques et littéraires du Québec. Ce petit livre (...) est le premier chaînon de cette longue entreprise de "déplafonnement"."⁷⁰ Aquin is not alone to reach back to Borduas for inspiration. Giraldeau also links the *Refus Global* to the claims of *l'Opération Déclat*. His film *Bozarts* chronicles the changes in art, education and the art scene. The film proposes that we integrate art into everyday life, take down the barriers between creators, change our notions of what is artistic by listening closely to the commentaries of painters, sculptors, art critics, museum and gallery directors who express their point of view in the film. Giraldeau has said that "J'ai fait mon film à la manière d'un collage parce que cette forme s'est imposée à moi comme l'image même de la vie. Je ne propose pas un film arrêté mais, j'espère, un film ouvert, en mouvement."⁷¹

3) *Bozarts* and cultural democracy

Luc Perreault wrote in *La Presse* in February 1970 that "*Bozarts*: ce titre ingénu coiffe un film qui se veut d'une simplicité totale, sans effets d'art précisément, un film destiné à un très vaste auditoire et qui, malgré tout, parvient à communiquer une réalité peu facile d'accès: le monde de l'art tel qu'il se présente à

nous au Québec en 1970 et tel que le public le perçoit, c'est à dire très mal!"⁷²

Girardeau has put his film to the service of art wanting to showcase his subject as opposed to drawing attention to his film as a film. The film was designed to appeal to a broad public, much broader than the usual few who attend museums and galleries. The film presents a panoramic view of the different conceptions of art expressed in Quebec at the time. It looks closely at the role art plays in our society and the existing divide between those who present art to the public, museums and galleries, and the general public for whom it is supposedly destined.

One of the most striking sequences in the film is an exchange between the sculptor Armand Vaillancourt and a student from the local school d'Arts et Métiers d'Asbestos. We sense on the part of the student a sincere will to understand the work of the sculptor. Although the communication between the two is somewhat difficult since the student's knowledge of art is admittedly limited and he avows to not being able to apprehend Vaillancourt's abstract sculpture. At the second international sculpture symposium held at the time many of the sculptures had been vandalized and demolished by unknown local residents who described the works as a 'tas de ferraille'. The residents either did not or most could not appreciate the works presented to them and thought the whole project to be invasive of their public space.

Perreault advances that attitudes towards art by the public at large needed to change and that there was a veritable link between *Le Refus Global* and

l'Opération Déclat in that they both called for a profound shift in society toward greater creativity and openness. He writes "Le moment du déclat a alors sonné pour plusieurs. Songeant à l'influence qu'avait eu sur le monde artistique québécois le Refus Global de Borduas en 1948, Giraldeau à eu l'idée, vingt ans plus tard, de diffuser le message de Borduas mais cette fois à l'échelle de toute une société pour qui l'heure du déclat a enfin sonné."⁷³ Giraldeau equates his own professional development with the series of social contestations that had taken place since the 1940s. He said in an interview with Luc Perreault that "Le Refus Global date de 1948. La grève d'Asbestos, qui a marqué le début de cette série de combats qui devaient amener la société que nous connaissons aujourd'hui, date de l'année suivante. Je pense aux cinéastes de ma génération (j'ai 40 ans): finalement, toute la première partie de notre vie professionnelle a été consacrée à toutes sortes de combats. Dans mon cas, en 1948, je me suis battu avec Michel Brault pour fonder un ciné-club à l'Université de Montréal."⁷⁴

Giraldeau draws a close parallel between his own career and historical events. He explains that he felt obliged to leave the National Film Board in 1953 because he was forced to write his film scripts in English. He declares that "ainsi donc ma première préoccupation ne fut pas la création mais le combat. En fondant le ciné-club universitaire, notre premier souci était d'attirer des spectateurs. En fondant ma propre compagnie de production, je cherchais à échapper à l'ONF. Mais je me suis rendu compte que c'était pratiquement impossible. Tout ce qu'il

nous était permis de faire, c'était d'offrir nos services techniques à la télévision. En 1960, j'ai du mettre la clé à ma compagnie car ça ne marchait pas. Je suis retourné à l'ONF."⁷⁵ However, he concedes that the struggle continued on other fronts. The International Festival of Film was established in Montreal, as was the Association professionnelle des cinéastes which was very dynamic at the time. All of these early organizations requested that the government protect the burgeoning film industry and that it take the proper measures to facilitate its development.

Giraldeau posits that "en faisant *Bozarts*, je voulais un peu faire le point sur tout ça. Bon an mal an, depuis dix-sept, dix-huit ans que je fais du cinéma, à travers tous ces combats et au milieu de ces difficultés, j'ai acquis toutes sortes d'expériences. Je pense que dans ce pays, on n'arrive à une certaine forme de maturité qu'à 40 ans. *Bozarts* résume cette expérience."⁷⁶ According to Giraldeau, *Bozarts* is a film about liberty through the discovery of art. Art belongs to the everyday. He explains that "entre le moment où les jeunes refusent la forme d'enseignement artistique qu'on leur impose et cette prise de conscience de l'œuvre d'art par le grand public à l'Expo, il y a un cheminement."⁷⁷ He contends that liberty and personal expression are inextricably bound to each other. He wishes the public to be inspired by his film to see art in all things humanly created. He believes that all forms of communication are creative and that art can be appreciated by all. Society can only change one person at a time.

4) Artists and society

The question of artists's social engagement is a recurrent theme in the arts. The 1960s in Québec was no exception and during the Quiet Revolution the government became the main body responsible for cultural matters. Along side this development, artists also regrouped themselves into various associations inspired by aesthetic and political considerations and marked the period with a higher level of artistic professionalization. These associations organized exhibitions and repeatedly solicited the government for greater support so that artist's working conditions could be improved. These associations called for more social and institutional recognition of their contributions. The struggles they led, in preparing reports and in meeting with government officials helped define and establish cultural policies. Their political actions had a direct effect on the expansion of the government's role in the arts. It gave the artists a professional status and a code of conduct whose decrees would eventually become law.

The various forms of pressure exerted by the associations forced the government to recognize artists as full-blown professionals, among others, whose rights and responsibilities had to be respected. All of this was inscribed in a tremendous push to democratize culture. Artists attempted different experiences whereby participation was the mainstay. They also tried to establish exhibitions and happenings outside the traditional artistic circuit by interventions in open spaces, such as Expo 67, in popular sites as well as already designated sites, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Notre-Dame Church. Certain artists even

associated themselves with political groups who hoped to radically change society. One such group was Fusion des Arts who denounced a consumer society and uncontrolled capitalism. There was also a small group made up of Claude Paradis, André Fournelle and Lucie Ménard who wanted to prolong the changes invoked during the *Opération Déclat*.

During the 1960s, according to Michel Roy, visual artists established associations with the mission to defend their interests. These associations were less concerned with aesthetic issues than with attributing themselves a definite role in society. The central theme of most debates was whether or not the artist had to be socially engaged. Artists grouped themselves by medium, music, visual art, theater, etc. The principal claims of these groups was for an increased number of exhibition spaces and to defend their professional interests to the government. Their role became most significant in the tabling of cultural policies. Artists also sporadically came together to claim their rights at specific points in time. For example, in 1961, a group of painters addressed a memoir to the recently appointed minister of culture in which they listed their expectations. They proposed the establishment of a commission on the visual arts, more bursaries and scholarships to promote art, the creation of a major Québécois biennale, funds for travelling exhibitions, more exhibition spaces in more diverse regions, a museum of contemporary art in Montréal, the construction of workshops that could offer room and board to artists, that public buildings affect two per cent of their budget

to art or ornamentation, and that a tax credit be given to those who buy contemporary art.⁷⁸

On the whole the group of painters demanded that the creation of the ministry of cultural affairs allow for the proper support for the production and exhibition of works so that french canadian culture could grow and occupy its deserved place in the province and the country. According to this group of painters the importance of the role of artists in society is wholly dependent on the joint efforts of artists and the ministry of cultural affairs. This memoir expresses the principal claims of all artist's groups in the 1960s. Other associations would take up similar claims throughout the decade. Among these are the Association de sculpteurs du Québec and the Société des artistes professionnels du Québec. Both of these associations represented a wide array of artists and veritably established an ongoing dialogue between artists and the government. Such a dialogue had already been previously established. One can recall the Kingston Conference on the arts in 1941 which marked the creation of the Federation of Canadian Artists. This federation and other professional organizations obliged the government to reflect upon the role it ascribed to the arts. As a result a Royal Commission on the development of the arts, letters and sciences was put in place in 1949 which recommended the creation of the Art Council of Canada.

While canadian artists played a major role in the establishment of national cultural institutions the same could not be said of Québec. The formation of a

minister of culture was orchestrated by politicians who sought an occasion to reinforce Québec's presence on the national stage. Roy explains that by way of the ministry, Québec could draw more importance to itself among the Canadian and international francophone community by way of a greater cultural diffusion.⁷⁹ The ASQ and the SAPQ played a significant role in many important cultural dossiers such as the nomination of Guy Robert to the directorship of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the project to decorate the city's metro stations. These associations took up similar claims to those advanced by the painters in 1961. Contrary to the Art Council of Canada who awarded its first bursaries in 1957, the Québec ministry of culture only established a bursary system three years later. In fact, the SAPQ proposed a different bursary system in 1966 which would replace the previous one. The new system entailed that the artist receive funds for a short period of time so that he may develop his creative research. In return, the artist would donate his works to the state. In this way, artists would be employees of the state and the state could accumulate a broad collection of works which it could then properly exhibit. The new proposal was not retained by the government which preferred to return to its previous mode of operation. It was also only in 1972 that the government decided to allot one per cent and not the originally demanded two per cent of a public building's budget to art.⁸⁰

Fusion des arts was one of the most active artist's groups of the time although it lasted for only a brief period. It was established in 1964 for a duration

of five years. It regrouped artists from many disciplines, Richard Lacroix, printmaker, Henry Saxe, painter, François Soucy, sculptor, François Rousseau, architecte and Yves Robillard, aesthete. The group was very dynamic and underwent many transformations in both its formal and political approaches. It began with strictly formal considerations and a search for new plastic forms of expression only to switch to a practice that sought social change. Roy explains that Fusion des arts inscribed itself within a general social impetus and renewal that argued for secularism, socialism and the independence of Québec. The group was able to organize over thirty members to intervene on cultural policy in a variety of disciplines: cinema, video, theatre, poetry, etc. Together they set up a system to distribute films, a film festival and various social animations making use of video and other new media. Many of the group's projects were postponed after the Lesage government investigated the group and cut all of its funding in October 1969. The group eventually dissolved and its members continued to work on individual projects.⁸¹

Yves Robillard participated in the film *Bozarts* whereby he criticizes the gallery system for its hermeticism and its inability to answer the needs of current art practices. He is seen to be saying, "Qu'est-ce qui soutient le commerce d'art, c'est les galeries mais les galeries ne peuvent faire les environnements, tout ce qu'il faut, surtout dans notre situation à Montréal, les galeries vont vendre mais elles peuvent pas faire des expériences qui sont pas rentables, elles peuvent le faire

quelquefois mais elles reviennent vite à... Alors tous ceux qui vont faire des environnements, des activités, des manifestations comme ça, la galerie n'est plus là, alors comment ça va pouvoir exister?...⁸² Robillard considers it insufficient to tell people that art is important and that more should attend museums and galleries. He believes that the experience of viewing art needs to be adapted to the spectator's expectations so that it can inspire a new consciousness. He contends that the present exhibition system is stale and inadequate. It cannot meet the requirements of the artists nor the public.

Others interviewed also criticize the traditional exhibitionary circuit. Claude Jasmin for one considers that the role of the art gallery is virtually finished. He is seen to be saying, "La galerie a un rôle qui est terminé. Vous savez que moi, pendant cinq ans à La Presse, j'ai couvert les galeries assidûment, laborieusement. Je m'en suis pas rendu compte, ça fait deux, trois ans que je me suis réveillé à certaines réalités. J'y croyais à cette époque-là, mais je vois bien que c'était peut-être insensé. Il y avait peut-être soixante personnes qui passaient dans une galerie par semaine; il y a une population d'un million et demi dans le grand Montréal, c'est très très grave. C'est tragique. Il y avait une poignée d'initiés, il y a quelques collectionneurs... mais c'est un petit milieu fermé..."⁸³ His views resonate with those of Yves Robillard. Both denounce the hermeticism of the present exhibition spaces and the general public's disinterest and alienation from the world of art. The film then shifts to a sequence on the second sculpture symposium in Asbestos

where the situation is even worse. Certain members of the public actively sought to destroy the works put in front of them. There was a wide gulf of incommunicability between the artists of the period and the public at large.

5) Art and the child

One of the ways to bridge this important gulf is through increased and better quality art education. The advances made in art education during the sixties were considerable and helped usher in a modern Québec. The integration of art courses to the university curriculum marked an important step in the recognition of the arts as part of society. By way of artist's groups the art sector developed into a vibrant and autonomous entity. Sometimes this autonomy was questioned since it may have drawn artists further away from the general public with too great a focus on internal dissensions. In the 1960s specialized education in art in Montreal was concentrated in three schools, Sir George Williams University, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the francophone l'École des beaux arts de Montréal. There was also a reevaluation of the arts programs in primary and secondary schools. Suzanne Lemerise explains that the discovery and valorization of the child's spontaneous drawing are intimately connected to modernism. The art historian Meyer Schapiro closely covered the debate at the end of the nineteenth-century on the discovery of the spontaneous drawings of children. Many texts issued by the Blaue Reiter movement and artists such as Klee, Kandinsky and Borduas celebrate the freshness of children's artistic expressions. Lemerise points

to the 1949 exhibition on the world of forms organized by F. Minkowski as having established precise links between the works of modern artists and the works of children.⁸⁴

Many art educators familiar with modern aesthetics became interested in the pedagogical development of the child artist. They adopted a form of education that sought to undo the strict norms of the classical academic model of education to be replaced with a more open child-based model. Innovative art educators criticized the school's system emphasis on the utilitarian role of the arts. Then was taught the rudiments of industrial design and the codes of representing nature. Lemerise writes that at the start of the century the method of F. Cizek, which favored the child's self-expression became popular. The majority of innovations in child art education came as a result of artistic developments of the twentieth-century, theories of the psychology of the child and the philosophies of the likes of John Dewey, H. Read and C. Rogers. Therefore, many currents attempted to replace a formal academic art education by introducing new paradigms whose elaboration held developments in child psychology and new aesthetic currents into account.⁸⁵

In Québec, art education was organized under the tutelage of Arthur Lismer and Anne Savage at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts on Saturday mornings. A debate evolved between the likes of Maurice Gagnon, Paul-Émile Borduas and father F. M. Couturier who were opposed to the thinking of Charles Mailland, director of L'EBAM and Maurice Lebel the director of drawing at the CECM. The

latter called for a utilitarian and academic teaching of the arts while the others saw it necessary to focus on the child's means of free expression and creativity. Irène Sénécal led the way in art education within the francophone community. She tried to instore a new vision to the field only to find the authorities in place little interested in change. From the early 1950s she broadened the kinds of materials used in art classes, favored three dimensional works and group activities. She also slowly supplanted exercises in observation and decoration with projects that called upon the memory and the imagination. Sénécal also introduced new themes to the curriculum generally related to the child's school, home and social life. She thought it best for the child to engage in a narrative representation of his surroundings so he may learn to manipulate a complex register of plastic signifiers. For Sénécal there was a continuity between the formation of the artist and the new pedagogy. She thought it necessary for artists to also be educators.⁸⁶

In 1968, the minister of education implanted a new art education program both at the primary and the secondary school level. The latter was divided in two: plastic arts and plastic arts as a means of mass communication. The new programs sought to develop the child's creative spirit, fully enhance his personality and enable the child to express himself as best he could. A tension existed between the expressive values of art and the formal and aesthetic qualities of the object. The new programs remained nonetheless a far cry from the free expression and spontaneous creativity advocated by A. Stern or Frère Jérôme. The latter was

opposed to S  n  cal's approach and called for the absolute liberty of the child. Fr  re J  r  me was critical of the art education programs delineated by the ministry of education. He is seen in the film *Bozarts* expressing his views, "je suis depuis assez longtemps en d  saccord avec les programmes trop pr  cis que l'on distribue    partir des Beaux-Arts, soit dans les   coles de la province, soit dans les parcs qui ont pourtant d  rout   tr  s librement et qui ont donn   de tr  s bons r  sultats et qui deviennent de plus en plus bloqu  s, st  r  lis  s..."⁸⁷

6) Art and the influence of mass culture

The 1960s marked a turning point in the relations between the traditional roles of art, society and the state. Guy Bellavance contends that the traditional institution of the Beaux-Arts was completely transformed during this period. Its role had to be redefined within the new remodeled education system, the new market for cultural goods, and the state sponsored art cultural policies. Bellavance explains that the 1960s was foremost a time for consumption. The multiplication of resources and a young generation of baby-boomers is at the origin of a veritable explosion of consumerism. The liberalization of the cultural markets is therefore often perceived as a form of liberation. Two new private television stations CFTM and CFCF modified the cultural market and enforced a form of cultural democratization. Bellavance understands the period as a meshing of pure art and mass culture. Within this meshing existed a sort of utopian vision of

communication the whole supported by quick technological innovations in the recording of sound and image.⁸⁸

It is this very meshing that has led philosophers such as Noël Carroll to attempt to define the nature of mass art. That is his attempt to produce a philosophical theory that isolates the common structural and functional features that enable us to group assorted films, TV programs, photographs, ads, songs, pulp novels, fiction magazines, and so on under the rubric of mass art. According to Carroll, mass art has been with us, to a certain extent, since the invention of the printing press. But it has become increasingly omnipresent with the advent and the expansion of the industrial revolution due to the creation of new technologies for the mass distribution of pictures, stories, songs, etc. Moreover, in the so-called postindustrial age, the electronic means for disseminating art have been further augmented to the point where it becomes conceivable that we will reach - if we have not already reached - an historical juncture where almost no human being will be able to escape at least some exposure to mass art.

Carroll explains that throughout the period of the ascendancy of mass art, most philosophers of art have either ignored mass art or have been outright hostile to it - demoting it to the rank of either kitsch or pseudo-art. This resistance to mass art crosses philosophical traditions and can be found in the disparate theories of R.G. Collingwood, Jose Ortega y Gasset, T. W. Adorno and art theorists/critics like Clive Bell and Clement Greenberg. Carroll situates

philosophy's resistance to mass art as the result of a tendency of Western aesthetics to misconstrue Kant's analysis of free beauty, as advanced in his *Critique of Judgment*, as a theory of art. Carroll explains that among other things, that theory identifies free beauty with the active response to phenomena for their own sake - phenomena that, in turn, are not subsumable under a concept or purpose. For Kant, the response to beauty is a free, spontaneous, cognitively constructive response that eschews all rules and formulas. The point Carroll makes is that if philosophers of art harbor - if only subconsciously - something like this view of art proper, then they will have no way of coming to terms with mass art. Carroll writes,

they will observe, with some justice, that mass art is formulaic; that, in certain pertinent respects, the response to mass art is passive; that mass art is often designed and appreciated not for its own sake, but to induce predetermined emotional experiences (e.g., tear-jerkers) and to advance moral views; that works of mass art are often not striking for their uniqueness and particularity; that mass art neither elicits free play of the faculties nor does it obviously border on any other realm of freedom; and so on.⁸⁹

Carroll's response to the problem is to furnish a classificatory definition of mass art. His approach has both a negative and a positive component. The negative component is a sustained critique of what he calls the elimination theory of mass art, while the constructive component offers an original, comprehensive and elaborately defended philosophical definition of mass art. As he explains it the elimination theory attempts to account for mass art in terms of social considerations and conventions, rather than in terms of purely

formal or physical features of artworks. Any such move, Carroll thinks, must be wrong. He believes - and attempts to defend the belief - that there are, and have to be, formal properties or structures that distinguish mass art from other products of human creation. This is why he thinks it important to combat social reductionist explanations of mass art. Carroll maintains that structural features are thought to be partly definitive of mass art. According to him, x is a mass artwork if and only if:

- 1) x is a multiple instance or type artwork
- 2) which is produced and distributed by a mass technology
- 3) and which is intentionally designed to gravitate in its structural choices (for example, its narrative forms, symbolism, intended affect, and even its content) toward those choices that promise accessibility with minimum effort, virtually on first contact, for the largest number of untutored (or relatively untutored) audiences.⁹⁰

The third condition is rightly regarded by Carroll as being of primary interest. According to it, mass art requires choices that result in structures that promise ease of comprehension. If this is right, he thinks, any attempt to explain mass art in terms of social rather than structural or formal properties must be wrong. Mass art is differentiated from the more amorphous category of popular art in terms of mass delivery technologies. Furthermore, mass art is differentiated from other forms of art that exploit mass delivery systems in virtue of the functional tendency of mass

art to gravitate toward choices of devices, structures, affects, and even contents which promise easy accessibility with minimum effort for the largest number of untutored audiences.

This debate has only been recently opened and as Carroll suggests would be greatly advanced by conducting serious empirical enquiries into the problem. The 1960s may have been the period when this definition could best come to be applied. It was a period marked by a deep reevaluation and questioning of art and its role in Québec society.

Conclusion

Films on art provide audiences with multivarious ways for them to apprehend art in all of its facets. They can range from the strictly didactic to openly poetic. Within this wide gamut of possibilities lies the opportunity for filmmakers such as Jacques Giraldeau to express their thoughts and emotions. This thesis has provided a structured account firstly of the genre then secondly of three of Giraldeau's films on art by situating them in the historical context in which they were conceived. This context has ranged from the mid-1960s to the late 1960s in Québec when society was undergoing a widespread overhaul of its political and social underpinnings. If art, as Giraldeau asserts, is an act of liberty then his films stand as an homage to this very idea since they present their subject matter in such a way as to inspire the viewer to want to know, see and feel more. His films not only account for many of the changes occurring in the field of art at the time but in fact belong to those times as works of art themselves.

Films on art can rightly reach beyond the merely didactic toward cultural democratization. They can serve the purpose of introducing the viewer to new ways of seeing and understanding all forms of art. As we have seen and as Giraldeau's films testify, films on art can virtually be called art films since they can stand as works of art in themselves and as a testament to the times in which they were made. Giraldeau's films do both of these things as they are truly a creative exercise as well as a historical document. Giraldeau tried to live up to the

art he chose to present by not reducing his films to a simple rudimentary presentation of works overlayed with a scholarly voice-over. He infused his film with his own poetry and statements about the sociocultural environment in which this art was being both created and received.

Endnotes

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- ³ Étienne, 14.
- ⁴ Étienne, 17.
- ⁵ Étienne, 17.
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- ⁸ Étienne, 23.
- ⁹ Étienne, 24.
- ¹⁰ Étienne, 24.
- ¹¹ Étienne, 24.
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- ³³ Poggi, 48.
- ³⁴ Poggi, 48.
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Chapter 2

- ³⁶ Andrée Fortin, "Affirmations collectives et individuelles" in Déclics: Art et Société le Québec des années 1960 et 1970. (Montréal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal et Éditions Fides, 1999: 22)
- ³⁷ Francine Couture, "Identités d'Artiste," Déclics Art et Société: Le Québec des années 1960 et 1970, eds. Marie-Charlotte de Koninck and Pierre Landry (Québec: Musée de la Civilisation and Montréal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1999) 51.
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- ³⁹ Fortin, 32.
- ⁴⁰ Fortin, 35.
- ⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 78.

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- ⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London: Routledge, 1984) 12.
- ⁴³ Couture, 56.
- ⁴⁴ Gilles Héneault, "Le début des années 60: un nouveau contexte culturel," *Georges-Émile Lapalme*, ed. Jean-François Léonard (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1988) 167.
- ⁴⁵ Marcel Rioux ed., *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête sur l'enseignement des arts au Québec*. 3 vols. (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1966)
- ⁴⁶ Suzanne Lemerise, "La Commission Rioux et la place de l'art dans une société postindustrielle," *Practising the Arts in Canada: La pratique des arts au Canada*, (Montréal: Association for Canadian Studies: Association d'études canadiennes 1990) 36.
- ⁴⁷ Lemerise, 37.
- ⁴⁸ Lemerise, 37.
- ⁴⁹ Lemerise, 38.
- ⁵⁰ Lemerise, 39.
- ⁵¹ Lemerise, 40.
- ⁵² Lemerise, 40.
- ⁵³ Lemerise, 40.
- ⁵⁴ Lemerise, 40.
- ⁵⁵ Lemerise, 41.
- ⁵⁶ Lemerise, 41.
- ⁵⁷ Lemerise, 41.
- ⁵⁸ Lemerise, 41.
- ⁵⁹ Lemerise, 42.

Chapter 3

- ⁶⁰ Jacques Giraldeau, dir. *Bozarts*. National Film Board of Canada, 1969.
- ⁶¹ Paul-Émile Borduas, *Le Refus Global et autres écrits* (Montréal: Les éditions de l'Hexagone, 1948).
- ⁶² Borduas, 68.
- ⁶³ Patricia Smart, *Refus Global: genèse et métamorphoses d'un mythe fondateur* (Montréal: Programme d'études sur le Québec de l'Université McGill, 1998) 10.
- ⁶⁴ Smart, 11.
- ⁶⁵ Smart, 14.
- ⁶⁶ Smart, 14.
- ⁶⁷ Smart, 14.
- ⁶⁸ Smart, 15.
- ⁶⁹ Smart, 16.
- ⁷⁰ Smart, 16.
- ⁷¹ Mireille Kermoyan, *Bozarts: le film de l'ONF engage le débat "créateur vs public"* (Montréal, Communiqué de l'ONF, 14 août 1972) 30.
- ⁷² Luc Perreault, "Du refus au déclic," *La Presse* Février 1970, C14.
- ⁷³ Perreault, C14.
- ⁷⁴ Perreault, C14.
- ⁷⁵ Perreault, C14.
- ⁷⁶ Perreault, C14.
- ⁷⁷ Perreault, C14.
- ⁷⁸ Michel Roy, "Artiste et société: professionnalisation ou action politique," *Les Arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante Tome II: l'éclatement du modernisme* (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 1993) 342.
- ⁷⁹ Roy, 343.
- ⁸⁰ Roy, 355.
- ⁸¹ Roy, 387.
- ⁸² Jacques Giraldeau, dir. *Bozarts* transcript 1968, 5.
- ⁸³ Jacques Giraldeau, dir. *Bozarts* transcript 1968, 4.
- ⁸⁴ Suzanne Lemerise, "L'art - l'artiste - l'école" *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante: la reconnaissance de la modernité*. (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1993) 312.

⁸⁵ Lemerise, 312.

⁸⁶ Lemerise, 313.

⁸⁷ Jacques Giraldeau, dir. *Bozarts* transcript 1968, 13.

⁸⁸ Guy Bellavance, "Institution artistique et système public au Québec, 1960-1980: Des beaux-arts aux arts visuels, le temps des arts plastiques" *Déclics Art et Société: Le Québec des années 1960 et 1970*, eds. Marie-Charlotte de Koninck and Pierre Landry (Québec: Musée de la Civilisation and Montréal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1999) 232.

⁸⁹ Noël Carroll, "The Nature of Mass Art," *Philosophic Exchange* 23 (1992): 5-37.

⁹⁰ Carroll, 20.

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