

The end of a beautiful day

by Edmund Alleyn

an exhibition circulated

by the Musée d'art contemporain

Montreal

INTRODUCTION

Since it is unfortunately almost impossible for English-speaking visitors to fully understand the meaning of the text, which is written phonetically, of Quebec poet Raoul Duguay, we would like to try to suggest it. It is actually untranslatable, but we are sure viewers from Vancouver to Halifax would like to feel the underlying significance.

"The End of a Beautiful Day", presented by the Musée d'art contemporain of Montreal as a travelling exhibition is an indication of a new state of mind, a new reflection on the collective awareness in Quebec, and an enhancement of certain images of identity which are difficult to explain in rational terms.

Robert Charlebois has interpreted them with a very expressive term, LA SOLITARITUDE. Like the theater of Michel Tremblay, and the songs of Quebec, these characters, so familiar in their anonymity, and the sunsets in Alleyn's work do not reveal their meaning easily; they must be examined on several levels at once. The sunsets may be interpreted, with a certain degree of irony, as a commentary on various schools of painting.

If they have evolved concurrently with other literary and artistic trends in the rest of the world, these paintings, evidence of the meaning of a specific cultural identity, presented in a narrative manner, convey in a sense one of the primary intentions of the artist: "To look and to love".

Alain Parent
Director of Exhibitions
Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal.

Exhibition "The End of a Beautiful Day"

Le Soleil, Québec City

Edmund Alleyn "To look and love"

For months I spent more time with these people than with my own family. For years I was fascinated with the anonymous throng; these paintings were born from that fascination. The crowd. An anonymous procession. People you will never actually know. People move in such a restricted circle. For instance, it is unthinkable to speak to someone on the street. Or to enter a home, drink a glass of beer with people and go away. Everybody represses that.

"This exhibition is an attempt to reconcile nature and human beings", says Alleyn. It is a festival; half joyful, for human unity; half sad, for the passing of death. With those families. Those characters who are getting old together. Sharing the traces of time.

This exhibition may be understood on many levels. For those who may penetrate more deeply into secret motivations, there is a mortuary halo. A great cosmic osmosis. Do we die to fertilize the land?

There is also a lyricism of the commonplace. "Yes", adds Alleyn, "to ennoble everyday reality, to rehabilitate it".

"There is truly the feeling that they are displaced in time and space".

Jean Royer

"The End of a Beautiful Day"

Paul Dumas

INFORMATION MÉDICALE ET PARAMÉDICALE, February 4, 1975

Tired by their long walks, their eyes vacant and image-saturated, dressed in every kind of attire, these people, drawn from the crowd and placed there with great care and tenderness by the painter, with their absent-minded unconcern indicate the fragile fleeting character of human joys, and the loneliness on the watch for the individual in the midst of metropolitan multitudes.

In "The End of a Beautiful Day", everyone will have been able to recognize Alleyn's accomplished art and the sense of human warmth and brotherhood which was less evident in his earlier hermetical works.

Guy Robert, Vie des Arts, été 1974

In each case, time - frozen, suspended, stopped - has been a faithful leitmotiv in Alleyn's work for 20 years.

In the six pictures of the SUITE QUÉBÉCOISE, the course of time stops at the same strategic moment, that of twilight. Nevertheless, the place varies, in an intriguing way. At one end of the series, an orthogonal composition, in the manner of Mondrian in the nineteen twenties, but where one of the rectangles becomes a sunset, according to an astonishing "Veduta" in this geometric language. At the other end of the series, another surprise, palm trees which stand out in relief in front of a sunset directly inspired by a colored postcard; at first we think of Miami, which is a part as we know of contemporary secular Québec poetics.

And yet these figures seem at first to be in no way related to the landscapes.

Mainly, because it is a matter of a suite, a (linguistic) sequence, a connected discourse, an ensemble, a link and a location, a liaison with multiple reciprocal consequences, in short, a global situation, where something should happen. A ceremonial, in that a festival is involved, a mystery, a ritual in six tableaux, a final scene under the twilight appearance of time suspended in its inexorable course, with thirty officiating priests secretly torn from their daily life and parachuted into a sacred enclosure. We are reminded of Stonehenge, of the Tower of Babel, of the huge statues of Easter Island, of the Mysteries of Eleusis, of the Sphinx.

The enigma of the six sunsets, simultaneous and yet so unconnected, and that of the thirty effigies scrupulously depicted on the view side in the details of their outfits and accessories, but turning their reverse side (we might as well say their shadowy double toward the last impenetrable ray of light.

Virginia Nixon, The Gazette, October 19, 1974

Alleyn's realism is not in "magic realism" details. It's rather in the precise way he captures the slouch of a shoulder, or the thrust of a foot - - all the little physical gestures that reveal how a person is thinking and feeling.

On the back of each figure he has stamped "Made in Quebec, La Belle Province", and this, combined with the postcard sweetness of some of the sunsets, especially the one with the palm trees and the setting sun trailing a path of bright orange across the water (for many Quebecers Miami is an extension of Quebec), makes one wonder to what extent he is being ironical toward his subjects.

Alleyn, quoted by Guy Robert, Le MacLean, Oct. 1974


"It can no longer be taken for granted that a painting is art, nor that art is art".

Quoted by Gilles Toupin, La Presse, October 19, 1974

"During my last years in Paris", continues Alleyn, "my main concern was to do work which might be understood by people whom I would not necessarily call simple, but who do not in any case have the cultural prerequisite which is indispensable when considering most contemporary art".

Claude Gosselin, Le Devoir, October 19, 1974. Edmund Alleyn comes back.

Alleyn's work responds to a major trend in Québec, which is in search of a national identity. It is in line with other work of his contemporaries in sociology, in psychology, cinema, theater and literature which attempt to discover and bear witness to the cultural identity of the Québécois. In this sense, Edmund Alleyn's exhibition marks an important step in the development of painting in Québec. It is also linked with the work already started by certain printmakers.



Edmund Alleyn

Born in Québec in 1931

Studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Québec, 1951-55

Lived and worked mainly in Paris, 1955-71

Returned to Québec in 1971

Since 1972 has been teaching in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Ottawa

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1956 - Smithsonian Institute Travelling Exhibition - Canada, USA
 - 1957 - 63 - 65 - Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Art - National Gallery
 - 1958 - 60 Guggenheim Competition - New York
 - 1958 - 59 - 63 - 65 - 66 - Réalités Nouvelles, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
 - 1959 - Contemporary Art in Canada - Musée Rath, Geneva - Walraf Richartz Museum, Cologne
 - 1959 - Sao Paolo Biennale - Brazil
 - 1960 - Venice Biennale
 - 1960 - Arte Canadiense - Museo Nacional d'Arte Moderno - Mexico
 - 1962 - Canadian Painters - Warsaw Art Museum, Poland
 - 1962 - Six Canadian Painters - Galerie Arditti, Paris - Galleria Levi, Milan
 - 1963 - 66 "Donner à voir" - Musée d'art Moderne, Paris
 - 1963 - Illème Biennale de Paris - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
 - 1964 - "Mythologies quotidiennes" - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
 - 1965 - Pintura Redonda - Sala del Prado del Altoneo, Madrid
 - 1965 - "La Figuration Narrative" - Galerie Creuse, Paris
 - 1965 - "Latino Américains" - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
 - 1965 - "Opiniao" - Museo de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro
 - 1966 - Fifty painters of the Paris School - Gmund, Darmstadt, Germany
 - 1966 - "La Figuration Narrative" - Basel - Zurich - Lausanne, Switzerland
 - 1966 - Galerie Edouard Smith, Paris (with sculptor Ulysse Comtois)
 - 1966 - "Zoom I" - Galerie Blumenthal - Mommaton, Paris
 - 1967 - Expo 67 - Québec and French Pavilions
 - 1967 - "Le Monde en Question" - Musée d'Art moderne, Paris
 - 1967 - Science Fiction - Kunsthalle, Berne - Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
 - 1967 - Biennale Internazionale della Giovane Pittura - Bologna, Italy
 - 1967 - May Exhibition - Museum of Modern Art, Havane, Cuba
 - 1968 - Salon de Mai - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
 - 1968 - Painters of Québec - Museum of Contemporary Art, Montréal - Québec Museum, Québec City
 - 1969 - "Distances" - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
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PRINCIPAL ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS

- 1952 - "L'Atelier" - Québec
- 1955 - 60 - Galerie Agnès Lefort, Montréal
- 1957 - Galerie du Haut-Pavé, Paris
- 1958 - Théâtre Fauteuil, Basel
- 1960 - Galerie Denyse Delrue, Montréal
- 1960 - 64 - Roberts Gallery, Toronto
- 1962 - Galerie Desdnere, Montréal
- 1964 - 67 - Galerie Soixante, Montréal
- 1967 - Galerie Blumenthal - Mommaton, Paris
- 1968 - Delta Gallery, Amsterdam
- 1970 - L'INTROSCAPHE - Musée d'Art Moderne (sect. ARC) Paris

LIST OF WORKS

All paintings (sunsets) are acrylic on canvas; all panels (characters) are oil on plexiglass.

1) Massawipi

Painting, 7' x 12'

Panel 1: old woman with cane, 66 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$

2: woman in white with two children, 66 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 61"

3: two men in blue, 66 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 43"

2) Brome Lake, Kamouraska

Painting, 7' x 12'

Panel 1: Man pushing carriage with two children, 68" x 68"

2: Lady in blue shawl, carrying child, 34" x 68"

3: Old lady in blue, 68" x 38"

3) Red Sunset

Painting, 8' x 9 1/2"

Panel 1: Man with a pink ear, 73" x 32"

2: Two girls seen from behind, 73" x 58"

3: Small man in powder blue jacket, 73" x 28"

4) Mondrian at Sunset

Painting, 67 1/2" x 67 1/2"

Panel 1: Two girls in blue jeans, 68" x 39"

2: Boy with ice cream, 68" x 28"

5) Trapezoidal Sunset

Painting in two sections

Upper: 75 1/2" x 35 1/2", lower trapezoidal

Panel 1: Young woman from behind, in red boots, 72" x 40"

2: Green athlete, 72" x 40"

6) Québec - Miami

Painting, 72" x 96"

Panel 1: Woman wearing sunglasses and summer clothes

2: Young secretary

3: Young blond mother with pointing child, 70" x 68"

SEPARATE PANELS:

7) Four Characters (1) Girl with a ball, 70" x 30"

(2) Indian, 69 3/4" x 32"

(3) Woman with red cardigan, 69 3/4" x 31"

(4) Man holding child in his arms, 69 3/4" x 31"

8) Two separate panels

Panel 1: Old man, 32 3/8" x 66 1/2"

2: Woman from behind with bag and blue and white dress 66 1/2" x 39 1/2"
