

ERRATA (list of works)

PIERRE AYOT : complete version only.

COLLABORATION (Corridart 1976-): complete version only.

MARC CRAMER : complete version only.

Cover pages LOUISE ROBERT N° 276, 1975. Graphite and wax pencil on paper. 76 x 56.5 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal



MICHEL LAGACÉ Dessin nº 180, 1977. Charcoal, graphite, masking tape, pastel and coloured pencil on paper. 61 x 91 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal



DENIS DEMERS Corpus naos nº 4, 1984. Mixed media on paper. 92 x 115 x 4.1 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

RENÉ PAYANT BEQUEST

Pierre Landry

This exhibition presents most of the works bequeathed to the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal by critic and art history professor René Payant. With his death in 1987, the Québec visual arts scene lost one of its most energetic players.

From theory to polemical debates, from research to criticism and university teaching, René Payant indeed was, and remains, a preeminent figure.

Rigorous and exacting, yet also highly curious and receptive, Payant cast a watchful, discerning eye on contemporary art, employing a critical approach in the fullest sense of the term. His "bequest" to art history and the visual arts world as a whole is consequently substantial. His art collection is one - and so far the least well known - facet of this legacy. It contains some 45 works (drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, etc.) produced between 1975 and 1985, mainly by artists active in Québec.

René Payant could be combative, as is illustrated

by the "Remarques intempestives [...]" (Untimely Remarks), written shortly before his death, by way of an introduction to *Vedute : pièces détachées sur l'art, 1976-1987*, an extensive anthology of his articles. Payant defended, with force and conviction, the autonomy of the work of art — an aspect that various lines of discourse cannot admit even today.¹ One of Payant's great strengths, in this struggle and elsewhere, was this attention he paid to the paradoxes that surround the work of art and form much of its foundation. He states, for example, on the subject of the autonomy of the work: "[...] we might say, paradoxically, that the work of art is autonomous and dependent, while stressing the fact that it makes this dependence the subject of its consideration.²²

This defence by Payant of the autonomy of the work of art is partly based on the formalist approach developed in the United States by Clement Greenberg. While conscious of the directive and somewhat restrictive aspects of that approach,³ Payant repeatedly emphasized the importance of

Greenberg's legacy, even at the height of the challenges put forward by so-called alternative practices or movements (conceptual art, installation art, video art, etc.): "[...] to construct this theory, he [Greenberg] showed a rare degree of attention to the work of art. The Greenberg eye is exceptional, the starting point for all his analyses."4 René Payant followed current developments on the Québec visual arts scene very closely, convinced of the power and originality of its various expressions. He defined some of its characteristics, being careful not to set these

up as an absolute specificity that would reveal a single identity supposedly embodied and perpetuated by the work of art. Payant insisted, here again, on the autonomous nature of the work of art — on that distance which separates it from politics and "grand schemes." Invited, in 1979, to comment on a selection made by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal of works for the exhibition *Tendances actuelles au Québec* (painting section), Payant wrote, in the catalogue published for the occasion: "Painting concerns itself with painting. But politics, which likes to concern itself with everything, would also like to concern itself



ANDRÉ MARTIN Sans titre, 1984. Silver print, 1/4, 51 x 41 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

with painting. And so painting should concern itself even more with painting. [...] it is consequently an instrument of change which remains 'disoriented.' Its only purpose is to stand beside, and yet point to the other. In my view, the political function of art is to point to politics."⁵

Payant held a special interest in painting, and often took it as his basis in defining certain characteristics of Québec art. In the same catalogue, Payant emphasized, for example, the "changes in the use of gestures in Québec painting." He went on to say, regarding that use of gestures and in reference to the Automatism of the forties, that it is "fundamental to the makeup of Québec painting."⁶ However, that gesturalness, which we find, to varying degrees, in the present exhibition, in the paintings and drawings of Denis Asselin, Richard Mill and Louise Robert, could not have the same meaning in the late seventies as during the forties: "[...] what has been repressed does not return in the same form: in the interim, a whole history has been written."

This history cannot be summed up by a strictly chronological listing of artistic movements and events. The forms and reasons for its development are, on the contrary, manifold and complex, as is demonstrated by the art of the past 20 years. The questioning of traditional categories of art by multidisciplinary practices, the use of quotation in art, and the return to an obvious subjectivity eloquently attest to the fact that every work of art stems, in large part, from a certain heterogeneity, both in formal terms and in its connections with history.

René Payant was especially aware of this heterogeneity of the work, an aspect that was extensively utilized in the art of the eighties, moreover. In the present body of works, it may be seen particularly in pieces that combine text or writing with the effects of the image or the drawn surface (Raymonde April, Michele Parisi, Louise Robert) and, more generally, in those pieces that endeavour to foil the codes and conventions governing traditional artistic disciplines (Pierre Boogaerts, Denis Demers, Guy Pellerin, Bill Vazan).

The heterogeneity, through which the work of art fully reveals its constructed nature, is also evident in the very form of Payant's writings. Payant derived considerable inspiration from the social sciences, which he saw "as a bank of analytic and theoretical operators on which art historians draw to obtain new analytic tools that will be used for gaining a different understanding of the work of art."8 There is therefore no question, in Payant's view, of a single, closed analysis, in search of certainties or absolute truth. He proposes, instead, a theoretical approach based on various borrowings (from semiology, psychoanalysis, structuralism in general, etc.) rigorously articulated in a discourse that immediately seems, in its actual form and like the work of art, to be a construction.

No doubt it is there, in this way of conceiving artistic discourse (and consequently art history, as well) as a series of questions rather than a method giving access to the truth of the work, that much of the critical strength of Payant's work lies. His commitment to this approach, which the works in his collection reveal, in their own way, has proven to be essential.

 This was true, as Payant himself stated, of traditional art history, particularly iconology, and of certain Marxist-type approaches.

 René Payant, "Remarques intempestives en guise d'introduction," in Vedute : pièces détachées sur l'art, 1976-1987, Laval, Québec, Éditions Trois, 1987, p. 21.

3. Let us briefly recall that Greenberg's approach, based on an evolutionary view of painting, defined pictorial modernism as relating to a kind of self-criticism by which the painted work, through a process of refinement, is eventually defined solely with respect to the formal characteristics specific to it, namely flatness and the delimitation of flatness.

4. Vedute : pièces détachées sur l'art, 1976-1987, op. cit., p. 23.

5. *Tendances actuelles au Québec*, exhibition catalogue, Montréal, Musée d'art contemporain, 1978, p. 40.

- 6. Ibid.
- 7. Ibid.

8. Vedute : pièces détachées sur l'art, 1976-1987, op. cit., p. 21.

RENÉ PAYANT BEQUEST

This list comprises all of the works bequeathed to the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal by René Payant. Works marked with a single asterisk (*) are part of the complete version of the exhibition only. Those marked with a double asterisk (**) will not travel, mainly because of the fragility of some of them.

RAYMONDE APRIL

Moncton, New Brunswick, 1953 Sans titre, 1979 (2nd in a series of 3 photographs) Silver print on paper, 5/10 40.6 x 50.8 cm

DENIS ASSELIN

Québec City, Québec, 1943 Sans titre, 1975 Charcoal and pastel on paper 112 x 71 cm N° 1-31, 1978 Acrylic on canvas 152 x 244 cm

PIERRE AYOT

Montréal, Québec, 1943 Sans titre, 1981 Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) (65.8 x 50.6 cm

GILLES BOISVERT

Montréal, Québec, 1940 Report nº 1, 1964 Lithograph, 1/8 50 x 63.3 cm

PIERRE BOOGAERTS

Brussels, Belgium, 1946 Voitures bleues et ciel (croix), 1978 From the 4 x 16 x 20 album, 1980 (see COLLABORATION) Colour print, 5/30 40.5 x 50.8 cm

** Série écran : ciels de rues, N.Y. 1978/1979 : 37th et 7th Ave., 1978-1979 Colour prints 11 elements: 284 x 345 cm (overall)

JEAN-LUC BRISSON

**Sans titre, about 1983 Acrylic on canvas 113 x 193 cm

COLLABORATION

(Pierre Boogaerts, Suzy Lake, Serge Tousignant, Bill Vazan) 4 x 16 x 20, 1980 Album of 4 colour prints and 1 text by René Payant, 5/30 40.5 x 50.8 cm (box)

COLLABORATION

(Pierre Ayot, Marc Cramer, Laurent Gascon, Michael Haslam, Bob-Kevin McKenna, Guy Montpetit, Jean Noël, Kina Reusch, Jean-Pierre Séguin, Françoise Sullivan, Jean-Claude Thibodeau, Bill Vazan)

**Corridart 1976-, 1982 Album of 12 serigraphs, artist's proof I/XXI 71.6 x 52.2 cm (box)

LOUIS COMTOIS

Montréal, Québec, 1945 -New York, New York, U.S.A., 1990 Patmos, 1977 Oil pastel and graphite on paper 36 x 49 cm

MARC CRAMER Paris, France, 1946

** Ne pas les tuer, 1981 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

MARY-ANN CUFF

Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Québec, 1956 **Sans titre, 1982 Mixed media on cardboard, paper, acrylic, charcoal, graphite, glue, metal, wood, leather and enamel paint 130 x 147 x 60 cm

DENIS DEMERS

Montréal, Québec, 1948-1987 Corpus naos nº 4, 1984 Mixed media on paper 92 x 115 x 4.1 cm

DENIS FARLEY

Tracy, Québec, 1956 Oborigenous Realitas, 1984-1985 Silver print 62.5 x 80.5 cm

PNINA GAGNON

Israel, 1940 External Clouds, 1975 Serigraph, 4/19 70 x 50 cm

LAURENT GASCON

Montréal, Québec, 1949 * Tunnel, 1982 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

DENYSE GÉRIN

Magog, Québec, 1940 Sans titre, 1981 Charcoal, photograph and pastel on paper 101.6 x 66 cm

MICHEL GOULET

Asbestos, Québec, 1944 Sans titre, 1976 Charcoal on paper 50.5 x 65.5 cm Lieu interdit IX, 1978 Acrylic and painted steel

MICHAEL HASLAM Montréal, Ouébec, 1947

*Hommage à Jesse Owens, 1982 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, attist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

IVAN

**Sans titre, 1979 Embossing on paper, artist's proof 11/11 65 x 50 cm

ALAIN JULLIEN-MINGUEZ

** Petite pluie du 21 septembre 1981, 1981 Acrylic on paper, glued to cardboard 92.5 x 75.5 cm

MICHEL LAGACÉ Rivière-du-Loup, Québec, 1950 Dessin nº 180, 1977 Charcoal, graphite, masking tape, pastel and coloured pencil on paper 61 x 91 cm

SUZY LAKE Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., 1947 Phrases, 1979 From the 4 x 16 x 20 album, 1980 (see COLLABORATION) Colour print, 5/30 40.5 x 5/8 cm

RICHARD LANCTÔT

Montréal, Québec, 1949 ** Edge Row, 1981

Mixed media on paper 66 x 50 cm

RAYMOND LAVOIE Montréal, Québec, 1950

Pour ma lête et mon cœur, un, 1981 Acrylic on paper 40.5 x 50.5 cm *M et moi*, 1983 Acrylic on canvas 178 x 264.4 cm

SERGE LEMOYNE

Acton Vale, Québec, 1941 Ayotoportrait, 1978 Serigraph, 35/45 57.3 x 72.5 cm

ANDRÉ MARTIN

Rimouski, Québec, 1956 Sans titre, 1977 Mixed media 91 x 61 cm

**Phagocytose n° 6, 1980 Mixed media 53 x 12 cm Étude pour Nihil, 1982 Mixed media 25.3 x 25.4 cm

**Phagocytose (hors série)*, 1982 Mixed media 18 x 5 cm * Traversée d'Italie n° 4, 1982 Mixed media on paper, glued onto masonite 121.7 x 243.5 cm Sans titre, 1984 Silver print, 1/4 51 x 41 cm

BOB-KEVIN McKENNA Ouébec

*Ode to the Structure of their Achievements, 1982 From the Corridar 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

RICHARD MILL

Québec City, Québec, 1949 Sans titre, 1976 Acrylic on canvas 168 x 168 cm Sans titre, 1976 Charcoal on paper 77 x 62 cm

*Sans titre, 1979 Acrylic on canvas 155 x 309 cm

GÉRARD MINKOFF

Geneva, Switzerland, 1937 *Sans titre, 1986 Acrylic and photograph on wood 27 x 23 cm

GUY MONTPETIT

Montréal, Québec, 1938 *Épithafe aux tirvissculs, 1981 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 65.8 x 50.6 cm

JEAN NOËL

Montréal, Québec, 1940 *Sans titre, 1981 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

MICHELE PARISI

Cangliano, Italy, 1949 *Sans titre, 1982 Mixed media on paper 63.6 x 96.5 cm

GUY PELLERIN

Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Québec, 1954 Tablette blanche, 1981 Wood, canvas and enamel 26 x 21.5 x 24.2 cm

JUDIT REIGL

Hungary, 1923 Sans titre, 1981 Acrylic on canvas 33 x 41.3 cm

KINA REUSCH Montréal, Québec, 1940

When in the Garden L., 1982 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 65.8 x 50.6 cm

LOUISE ROBERT

Montréal, Québec, 1941 N° 276, 1975 Graphite and wax pencil on paper 76 x 56.5 cm N° 315, 1977 Pastel and graphite on paper 80 x 121 cm **N° 78-44, 1981 Acrylic on canvas

PAUL ROTTERDAM

Vienna, Austria, 1939 ** Zuar II, 1977 Graphite on paper 101.3 x 66.1 cm

183 x 244 cm

GEORGES ROUSSE

Paris, France, 1947 * Sans titre, 1983 Cibachrome print, 2/5 127 x 171 cm

SATORY

***Sans titre*, 1974 Serigraph, 2/100 64 x 50 cm

MICHEL SAULNIER

Rimouski, Québec, 1956

**Rue de banlieue, 1982 Mixed media on wood (5 elements) 52.4 x 450 cm (overall)

JEAN-PIERRE SÉGUIN Montréal, Québec, 1951

** Sans titre, 1977 36 silver prints 41 x 51 cm (each)

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*Sans titre, 1981 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 65.8 x 50.6 cm

FRANÇOISE SULLIVAN

Montréal, Québec, 1925 *Labyrinthe, 1981 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

JEAN-CLAUDE THIBODEAU Ouébec

*Drôles d'oiseaux, 1981 From the Corridari 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 50.6 x 65.8 cm

FRANÇOISE TOUNISSOUX

France, 1947 Feuille, 1982 Acrylic on canvas 74 x 100 cm

SERGE TOUSIGNANT Montréal, Québec, 1942

Géométrisation solaire carrée, 4 variations, 1979 From the 4 x 16 x 20 album, 1980 (see COLLABORATION) Colour print, 5/30 40.5 x 50.8 cm

BILL VAZAN

Toronto, Ontario, 1933 Flat Approach, 1979 From the 4 x 16 x 20 album, 1980 (see COLLABORATION) Colour print, 5/30 50.8 x 40.5 cm

*Source de l'Égypte, 1978-1982 From the Corridart 1976- album, 1982 (see COLLABORATION) Serigraph, artist's proof I/XXI 65.8 x 50.6 cm



RAYMOND LAVOIE *M et moi*, 1983. Acrylic on canvas. 178 x 264.4 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal



RAYMONDE APRIL Sans titre, 1979. (2nd in a series of 3 photographs). Silver print on paper, 5/10. 40.6 x 50.8 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

