

# La Maison des Arts

By REA MONTBIZON

FINALLY, I have managed a visit to the charming Maison des Arts La Sauvegarde. Situated at 160 Notre-Dame East, the life of this new gallery need not be gauged with the usual—and usually justified—apprehension. Its future does not depend on sales and profits.

The idea came about when Gaëtan Ducharme, grandson of the founder of the old Montreal Insurance Company La Sauvegarde, took an art course with Madeleine Boyer and became generally interested in the arts. With a neglected, but structurally sound end-eighteenth-century house on hand, Monsieur Ducharme envisaged a gallery which would offer young Quebec artists a free forum, encouragement, publicity and exhibitions without obligation and charge.

Professional artist and educators joined in a committee of advisors and jurors, and the architectural firm of Jean Alain, Associates was entrusted with the restoration and adaptation of the old building. Francois Lamy is responsible for the furnishings and decor.

The results are heartening. Restraint, simplicity and plain good taste have turned the little stone house with a small office and two large galleries into a very charming Maison des Art, indeed. Madame Mireille Fortin is its director in charge, while M. José Detuncq of La Sauvegarde handles the public relations. On the board of professional advisors are the artist-teachers Madeleine Boyer, Claude Girrard and Francois Lamy.

Gallery hours at La Maison des Arts are Monday to Thursday from noon to six; Fridays from noon to nine; Saturdays and Sundays from noon to five. The present, i.e., first exhibition, opened on November 22, and ends on January 6.

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Of the 400 works seen since last summer by the advisory and selection committee in various regions of the province, 40 works by six artists were chosen for the first show. The artists are Jean-Pierre Ajmo of Québec City, born in 1938; Jean-Guy Barbeau of Chicoutimi, born in 1925; Micheline Couture-Calvé of Montreal, born in 1936; René Guimond of Trois-Rivières, who is only 20;

Dorothy Haegert, born in 1938 in Toronto, now of Montreal; and finally, Denise Gérin-Tétrault from Knowlton, who was born in 1940.

This is a neat, uncrowded exhibition of good average quality, highlighted by the works of one exceptional contributor. Four of the six artists are abstractionists, two work figuratively.

Ajmo, who is an Ecole des Beaux Arts graduate of Québec City, does simple and sensitive abstract designs in charcoal, sanguine and chalks. With more refinement than ingenuity, he creates curtain-like, fan-shaped spatial arrangements, interactions of atmospheric densities, expressed through delicate gradations of his medium.

Micheline Couture-Calvé shows abstract works, some of which approach the 'single image' done in a romantic, personal style. I remember dryly painted suns or moons surrounded by halo-like radiations, and one large horizontal abstract, a near monochrome in the red family, with a decorative, somewhat formalized arrangement.

Denise Gérin-Tétrault, who studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Montreal, also favors a sunny, fiery palette for her juicy abstractions with strings and pieces of jute incorporated for pattern and design. What this artist does, she does well; but I fail to detect much depth beneath these accomplished exercises of a familiar experiment.

Dorothy Haegert has her

roots in a different tradition and she shows it. Her objective, representational work is firm and decorative. This young artist started out at the Banff School of Arts, and she studied drawing at the University of British Columbia. She now works with the versatile Montreal painter Carreau-Kingwell and is a credit to her.

René Guimond, who won several second and first prizes at Trois-Rivières regional exhibitions, is a very young artist whose experience does not yet match his need of expression. However, there is great intensity in his painting of a green-faced, hollow-eyed youth, against a background of symbolic intent.

Last but not least, there is Jean-Guy Barbeau, who teaches and exhibits at Chicoutimi. It seems like a major miracle, that we have not heard of this artist before. According to his curriculum vitae, he is sufficiently versatile to teach modelling at a local school, to have gained recognition for stained glass work in the form of posters and pictures, to have won the grand prize in a national showing of the Quebec Regional Exhibition, and to have charmed us, as no one has in a long time, with a poetry in brush and ink, of a rare, lyrical quality.

Although Barbeau's soft, patternful designs in finely graded greys or colors and blacks, appear to be fully abstract, they are of a suggestive kind. In their lyricism is a hint of mystery that stimulates active participation, that makes one imagine into these works as much as one reads out of them. Besides, they are inventive technically, done with a facility and perfection that bespeak a professionalism of the first order.

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All in all, an atmosphere, a presentation, that make us look forward to the Maison des Arts' forthcoming selections.