

1989, alors que trois spectacles européens (France, Espagne, URSS) se trouvaient aussi sélectionnés.

3. Ce jury était présidé par la comédienne québécoise Patricia Nolin et était composé de: Carmelinda Guimarães (Brésil), critique, théoricienne et historienne du théâtre brésilien; Lorraine Pintal (Québec), comédienne, metteuse en scène et codirectrice du Théâtre de la Rallonge; Joe Dekmine (Belgique), directeur artistique du 140, théâtre de recherche de Bruxelles; Nigel Hunt (Canada), rédacteur en chef de la revue *Theatrum* de Toronto; Jean-Pierre Léonardini (France), directeur des pages culturelles et critique dramatique au journal *L'Humanité* de Paris; Paul Lefebvre (Québec), professeur et critique de théâtre. J'indiquerai en note, dans le cours de l'article, les prix décernés par le jury.
4. Signalons au lecteur que je n'ai pas revu les spectacles québécois auxquels j'avais déjà assisté en cours de saison; de même, je n'ai pu revoir le *Hamlet* du DNA Theatre que j'avais vu à Toronto le 4 février 1989.
5. Le jury a accordé le Prix de la meilleure interprétation à Linda Roy qui jouait Violaine.
6. J'apprends que le Théâtre Expérimental des Femmes, fondé en 1979, a été récemment dissous pour devenir exclusivement Espace GO.
7. Ce spectacle s'est d'ailleurs mérité deux prix du jury: le Grand Prix et le Prix de la mise en scène.
8. Voir mes commentaires sur ce spectacle, dans *Parachute* n° 48, Montréal, 1987, p. 59.
9. «Exposé introductif» par D. Bablet, dans *Collage et montage au théâtre et dans les autres arts durant les années vingt*, Lausanne, La Cité — L'Âge d'Homme, 1978, p. 14.
10. Dans son premier manifeste, Schwitters écrit: «Je réclame la convergence complète de toutes les forces artistiques pour parvenir à l'œuvre d'art totale. Je réclame l'égalité de base de tous les matériaux (...), cité par Helga Vormus dans «Collage et montage dans le théâtre dadaïste de langue allemande», *ibid.*, p. 221.
11. Helga Vormus précise que «Pour Schwitters, juxtaposition, superposition, agrandissement, déformation,

donc simultanéité chaotique, sont les seuls moyens de rendre la multiplicité de la réalité moderne et, bien sûr, de détruire toute illusion au théâtre, but beaucoup plus esthétique que politique.», *ibid.*, p. 222.

12. Cité par Friedhelm Lach, dans «Le principe MERZ», *Merz Opéra*, Montréal, VLB éditeur, 1988, p. 142.
13. D'un point de vue esthétique et idéologique, le théâtre de Schwitters est un avatar de la vision totalisante qui hante tout un courant de la modernité, dans le sillage du romantisme philosophique de Nietzsche: l'artiste s'y rêve demiurge et visionnaire, prophète du surhomme... Mais la fragmentation n'a eu de cesse de déstabiliser cette utopie, repoussant toujours plus loin la possibilité d'une retotalisation des matériaux hétérogènes, voire de leurs éléments constitutifs, qu'une intense activité autoréflexive de différenciation n'a eu de cesse de disséminer. Aujourd'hui, le théâtre-merz ne gagnerait rien à être repris tel quel — à quoi bon: il peut certes servir de déclencheur, d'amorce à une démarche de création, mais ne devrait dispenser personne d'avoir, justement, à inventer sa théâtralité.
14. Perec, Georges, *Je me souviens*, Paris, Hachette, 1978.
15. Le jury a décerné à cet artiste le Prix de la parole pour sa performance.
16. Le deuxième volet avait été présenté lors du 2e FTA, en 1987. Voir l'article déjà mentionné à la note 5.
17. Ce spectacle s'est mérité le Prix spécial du jury.
18. On trouvait dans le programme un résumé des principaux épisodes de *la Tentation de saint Antoine* de Flaubert en regard des séquences du spectacle qui a sa propre «narrativité».
19. Voir mon article intitulé «Une dramaturgie à deux vitesses», dans *Parachute*, n° 52, Montréal, 1988, p. 66-69.
20. Cette comédienne a remporté, ex æquo avec Linda Roy (Violaine dans *L'Annonce faite à Marie*), le Prix de la meilleure interprétation.
21. Ce spectacle s'est mérité le Prix de la meilleure conception visuelle et sonore, décerné par le jury du FTA.
22. Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. «Idées», 1964, p. 54.

## CONDEMNED TO HISTORY (BUT NOT INVITED TO LUNCH)

Had Greg Curnoe actually read my introduction and not merely listed it(!) among the section headings of my essay, he would have discovered what I was and what I was not writing. Compositionally, an introduction serves that purpose and for that reason I repeat it here:

This exhibition charts Paterson Ewen's movement through landscape imagery, from the early "abstractions" with their rudimentary signs of and material resemblances to landscape, through the semiotic schemata of weather phenomena, to the more painterly evocations of the phenomena of light and space.

The focus in the exhibition is on the plywood landscape paintings. If the landscape works constitute a break in both the image and practice of Ewen's art, it is logical to limit the exhibition to what most fully exemplifies that break, rather than try to lead up to it with earlier works as if to keep the career within the narrative model of the retrospective. Needless to say, the notion of the retrospective is implicitly questioned in this presentation. In accordance with this conviction, the catalogue text avoids the narrative pull of a history and instead concentrates on the materials and methods of Ewen's practice. Insofar as the images of Ewen's work are discussed, they are treated in their sign function, where image and appearance are brought together in the materials of presentation. If phenomena can be recognized as a type of sign, their transcription in art is a further semiotic interpretation.

It is perfectly clear that I was writing neither a history nor a biography, and that these very terms, as *traditionally* thought, were under question in the essay. Moreover, the presentation of the work in the exhibition implicitly called into question (which I explicitly repeat here) the model of the retrospective, allied as it is to an academic, narrative art history (you know: the first works anticipate the last and, in turn, are interpreted by what comes

after but none are treated in their own right, which is also the result biography and "influences" bring into play). Perhaps, it is not so much a particular idea of history I am avoiding as the tampering with the retrospective format — with which Greg Curnoe has been *honoured* — that Curnoe finds so objectionable.

I am more willing to listen to Andy Patton, however long his and Curnoe's lunch must have been as they came to agreement on my abuses of history *and* Paterson Ewen. How is one, after all, to interpret the uncanny resemblance of their arguments?

At least Patton knew what I was attempting in the catalogue and the exhibition, and he actually starts from the introduction Curnoe overlooks. But for Patton not only have I not produced a history, *even if I wanted to* I would not be able. I don't quite know how to respond to a lengthy argument that deals with a subject I did not engage nor really feel that I should have to justify not pursuing: for instance, "if Monk had been committed to writing a history." This was not my task; and I can't help but think that the seriousness of Patton's critique is marred by the misdirection of his analysis. (In quoting my "the measure of competency of a curator should be: how many histories is one capable of," Patton presumes that the presentation of a history can only be *written*, whereas I was implying that a curator has to present multiple histories through a collection. I find it revealing that Patton wants to hold me to the altogether different criteria expressed in my past practice as a critic and does not refer to a more programmatic text I produced as a *curator*, "In Retrospect: Presenting Events.") Nevertheless, let's take one of the criticisms, for instance, the notion of the "break." Andy Patton writes 346 lines and more, approximately

2750 words — a good sized article in itself — on my mention of this word. I'm a bit embarrassed to say I did not use this word as a "concept" or "model" as Patton reads it. Not for me the *coupure épistémologique* of French post-structuralism; I was using the word in its ordinary English sense. (The past tense "broke" gives hint of this usage in the first line of the essay.) That gets away from any non-existent claims I might have made for a model of avant-garde or modernist rupture as opposed to some consideration of historical continuity or any suggestions Patton reads into my — once again non-existent — claims for Ewen's as an avant-garde practice. Yes, Andy, after all he is a landscape painter as you and I point out. Patton's statement "For one of the most obvious things about the works is that they are landscapes" gives permission to think otherwise about Ewen's work.

These other and not obvious things were the aim of my essay. The claims that I made for the materials and methods of Ewen's practice were my way of celebrating his art whose essential character and achievement I saw as "paintings with the power to signify by profoundly material means." Patton seems to think that I have thus reduced Ewen's paintings to merely material objects detached from any form of significance; but their marvellous quality is that they are signifying things. Patton instead would have me write about Ewen's works as if they were emblems of history or indices of biography. After all, he claims I should read Ewen's paintings in terms of "the mounting ecological disasters we have created" and look at the materials and methods of his art in light of his personal upheavals and marriage breakdown.

What is it in my close attention to what an artist actually produces that Curnoe and Patton find so abusive of the artist's intentions? What is it about Ewen especially that makes the biographical detail and environmental milieu so essential? Why has *History* been taken as the offended party with Curnoe and Patton so willing to be its advocates? What makes these respondents so uneasy that

they either have to insult me and produce their *own* (and let's keep the emphasis on proprietary) history (Curnoe) or invest energy in a wilful misreading (Patton)? And they are not alone, judging by other published responses to the exhibition. I can understand why traditional academics and journalists have their orthodoxies unsettled, but why these painters? Could it be that Greg Curnoe, for instance, worries what would be left of his works if we concerned ourselves with the materials and methods and avoid their (auto) biographical content? Having reread my essay, somehow I feel that this demand for history and context, rather than letting the work stand in its own right, is an unconsciously envious attempt by Curnoe and Patton to diminish the achievements of Ewen's art.

Why are *both* so offended by my mention — and their misreading — of Snow, Smithson, Morris, Pollock and Serra as if these were considered as influences or measures? They were merely means of directing expectation from traditional landscape image and iconography to the materials and methods of Ewen's work. By the way, I don't need Greg Curnoe to tell me how to be nationalistic.

And please tell me, Mr. Curnoe, what is this "real chronology" you demand? Is it something like a *real* man and not just an American gigolo? Does it go something like this: "1968, moves to London, meets Greg Curnoe"?

— PHILIP MONK

## BILDERSTREIT

Museum Ludwig, Cologne, April 8 – June 28

Over one hundred artists, with at least a thousand objects, are represented within an area of 10,000 square meters in the mammoth exhibit *Bilderstreit* in Cologne. Siegfried Gohr, director of the city's Museum Ludwig, and Johannes Gachnang, a Swiss publisher, presented Cologne with an ambitious concept, the basis of which was an intuitive, associative and subjective selection process that would present art from 1960 on, in an "extraordinary and fascinating panorama." *Bilderstreit* [literally: Quarrel of Images] is both title and concept: around 1960 a new attempt at understanding the image in its relation to public space and audience was developed. The generally acknowledged view of the world, *Bild der Welt*, had been shattered with World War II, opening the way for Arte Povera, Pop Art, Concept Art, Minimal Art, Action Painting. Through these developments, the contributions of older artists like Munch, Fautrier, Balthus or Giacometti gained a new status. This exhibition attempts to make clear the relationship between both generations.

*Bilderstreit*, as a phenomenon, has accompanied the history of art and religion through the centuries. In the first millennium, *Bilderstreit* meant a ban on pictures most radically expressed by the Book Exodus: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is

in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." The Christians adopted the Old Testament's ban on images. Only symbols or interpretations of certain events from Christ's life, such as miracles, were permitted. In the fourth century, people's desire for images gained influence, and using the argument of education, the church allowed images to be made. Pope Gregor the Great (c. 600) stated: "What the written word is to the learned, the picture is to the unlearned." In the eighth century, the controversy flared up again, resulting in iconoclasm, the planned destruction of holy images. The Byzantine kings supported iconoclasm; the people and monks, the making of holy images.

In 726, all imagery was ruthlessly removed from the churches. There appeared a number of theological texts defending image making; the most famous are by Damascenus and Theodor Studites, who differentiate between image and original and make clear the difference between worship (belonging to God alone) and admiration (of the images). In 737, the Council of Nicæa's decision in favour of images resulted in the blossoming of icon-painting, which stretched through the century. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, during the Reformation, systematic iconoclasm passed through Europe for the last time: in 1566, in Britain and the Netherlands in particular, all the icons were destroyed.

The history of ideas has brought fundamental change. The Nazi dictators of our century knew how to use art for their own purposes and issued it into the service of propaganda. The newest societal development places art in the service of helping the Corporate Identity of great companies, as decoration or justification of certain corporate doings (as well as tax breaks) — famous examples include Saatchi & Saatchi, Mobil Oil, and Philip Morris.

