

## Riopelle exhibition makes international tour

A major retrospective exhibition of the work of the internationally renowned abstract painter, Jean-Paul Riopelle, opened recently at the Modern Art Museum in Caracas, Venezuela after being presented for six weeks at the Modern Art Museum in Mexico.

This represents the first major visual arts exhibition presented by Canada in Mexico and Venezuela and given the scope and aesthetic significance of the exhibition, it is important in reinforcing and advancing Canada's cultural programs

in these countries.

The exhibition, which opened its tour at the Centre Pompidou in Paris last September, and will close at the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal, Quebec this summer, was organized by the Bureau of International Cultural Relations of the Department of External Affairs, the Musée du Québec and the Musée nationale d'art moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou.

The development of Riopelle's art is revealed in the exhibition of 60 works, most of which have been borrowed from private sources. They were selected in consultation with the artist himself and with his biographer Pierre Schneider.

### Abstract art

Abstract expressionism is early art associated with the Quebec cultural revolution during the 1940s and the *automatistes*; Riopelle was a signatory of this group's *Refus global* manifesto in 1948. His art was first "imbued with surrealist thought, developed in parallel and in harmony with the trends of abstract expressionism and lyrical abstraction", writes Michel Martin, curator of contemporary art at the Musée du Québec in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition.

Early in the 1950s Riopelle individualism became apparent, however, and he began to dissociate himself from the various movements and his style was seen



Owl P.10, Jean-Paul Riopelle, 1970.



Without title, painted by Jean-Paul Riopelle in 1946.



Owl, Jean-Paul Riopelle, 1939.

to take "its inspiration from a concept of freedom of thought and expression in an ongoing relationship with reality".

Martin states that "each period of Riopelle's production is marked by a range of colours that reveals what was on the painter's mind at the time. The colours are not chosen haphazardly, but in accordance with their intensity and the active role that the artist wishes to give them, both symbolically and pictorially. When superimposed or placed in juxtaposition, they give meaning to and jostle with one another, creating an impression of space, depth, projection, light, shadow and natural forms. Here there is room for rhythm, colour, creative imagination — room for poetry".

### Began painting early

Riopelle was born in Montreal in 1923. He took an early interest in painting and photography and studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and at the Ecole du Meuble. His first group exhibition was in 1946, the year of his first visit to France. Since 1974, he has divided his time between his studio in Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies, France and Sainte-Marguerite, Quebec.

Riopelle, who has received numerous awards for his work including the Prix Borden in Quebec in 1981, set up a foundation in his name to receive independent artists from all over the world.

The catalogue which accompanies the exhibition was produced in French by the Centre Pompidou and a Spanish edition was printed in Mexico for use in Mexico and Caracas.