

News of the arts

Exhibit features lost paintings by renowned Quebec artist

Six paintings, once considered to be among the finest works ever painted by Antoine Plamondon, one of Canada's most famous early artists, are featured in an exhibition recently opened at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895). The Way of the Cross of the Church of Notre-Dame de Montréal is the first exhibition devoted entirely to the religious works of this famous nineteenth-century Quebec painter. It is also the first time all six surviving paintings of the artist's most important religious suite have been shown together in this century.

The Quebec artist Antoine Plamondon is considered one of the most important of the province has ever produced. Although he is known today primarily as a brilliant portraitist, most of his many paintings were in fact religious works.

In 1961, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts acquired the six surviving canvases of the most important religious commission the artist ever received: the 14-station Way of the Cross suite for Notre-Dame Church in Montreal. This commission, awarded in 1836, was a great compliment to the young artist, who had been apprenticed to Joseph Légaré and had studied in Europe in the 1820s before setting up practice in Quebec City. The masterful suite of 14 paintings that Antoine Plamondon produced over three years for Notre Dame was rejected by the Church on liturgical grounds, but was nonetheless hailed by contemporary critics as a triumph, and may still be considered one



Portrait of Soeur Saint-Alphonse (1841).

of the finest religious series ever produced in North America. In colour alone, the power and impact of these paintings is unsurpassed in nineteenth century Quebec art.

After their rejection by the original client, the paintings in the suite suffered indignities and even a few more triumphs. They eventually disappeared, and the six surviving works were only rediscovered in an attic in the 1930s. A series of contemporary documents enables the public to visualize the eight lost episodes and to follow the suite's unusual fate. Didactic panels and photographic material also provides a detailed study of the European works which inspired Antoine Plamondon, including paintings by Cardi, Mignard, Jouvenet, Stella and Titien.

Canadians plan film on Picasso

Tom Patterson, founder of the Stratford Festival, and art gallery owner Chris Yaneff have acquired the option to produce a film based on *Life with Picasso*, Françoise Gilot's account of the time she spent with the late artist.

Miss Gilot, who lived with Pablo Picasso from 1944 to 1954 and is now married to medical pioneer Dr. Jonas Salk, had turned down all offers from producers in the 20 years since her memoir was published. According to Tom Patterson, "even her agent was surprised when she agreed to talk to us. But Miss Gilot made it clear that it was the Stratford connection that had impressed her the most". The festival, however, will have no part in the production of the film.

The author and Claude, her son by Pablo Picasso, are to work with Tom Patterson and Chris Yaneff on the film and, although she has final approval on all aspects of the project, "she's so cooperative we're not worried. She has agreed to everything we've wanted except the choice of director", Tom Patterson said.

Casting will not be decided for another two months, although a number of actors including Ben Kingsley and Anthony Quinn are said to have expressed interest in playing Pablo Picasso in past years.

Tom Patterson said the role of Miss Gilot will be as important as Pablo Picasso's, and the film will be "in the form of a love story". Budget and other details are not yet known, but it is expected the film will be shot on location in France next fall.

Arts briefs

Julio Ness, an Italian-born singer-composer who lives in Toronto, was named top performer in one of Latin America's top song competitions for his rendition of *Love Is Here To Stay*. The competition was held in Vina Del Mar, Chile.

Canadian cellist Ofra Harnoy gave the Arthur Bliss Cello Concerto its North American *première* recently in Santa Barbara, California. The piece received its world *première* in 1970 from Mstislav Rostropovich in Aldeburgh, England. Lady Bliss, widow of the English composer, travelled from London for the event.



The Deposition from the Cross, oil on canvas, painted by Antoine Plamondon in 1839.

National Gallery of Canada

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts