

at considerable cost to the time he should be devoting to his own work, Molinari acted as director. He says of this period: "We were the atheists of painting," meaning that they were striving for an art based on its own formal values and divorced from spiritual or emotional associations.

Out of the gallery experience, and the contacts it provided with other young artists, Molinari moved firmly into position as a leader of the painting community; for a period, in fact, he was engaged more as an artistic polemicist than as an artist. He is physically suited for the role: though short and slight, he has a mobile body and a strong expressive face with a suitably prominent Roman nose. Sometimes his skin seems alabaster pale and old, at other times he looks surprisingly youthful; what is most impressive however is the sense of presence, of dignity and integrity that he radiates. He expresses himself fluently and pointedly in either French or English and discusses ideas with the greatest of ease in either tongue. Molinari is all of a piece: it is hard to imagine that a man who speaks as he does could paint in any way other than the one he uses.

The man's self control is evident in a consistency of mood — he is articulate and precise whether teaching painting at Sir George Williams University in downtown Montreal or working in his studio in a converted boxing gymnasium in Montreal's gritty north end. In the studio, under brilliant electric lamps, he darts about like some reincarnation of the boxers who once trained there, efficiently pulling from the giant racks which line the dark perimeters of the gym, dozens and dozens of his immense canvases.

Molinari has meticulously catalogued and photographed his output, for he is confident of his place in art history — at the forefront. His estimate doesn't seem unrealistic: no serious show of modern Canadian art, either at home or abroad, had been mounted since 1965 that did not include at least one example of Molinari's work. Among the major foreign exhibits in which he has been represented are the Museum of Modern Art's *The Responsive Eye* (1965), The Guggenheim Fourth International Awards Exhibition held in New York (1964) and the crowning goal of any artist's ambitions, the Venice Biennale (1968).

Molinari doesn't lend himself to artistic comparison shopping; confronting one of his paintings, the viewer isn't tempted to stack Molinari up against someone else. The paintings simply exist to be experienced by the viewer; one reacts to them, in the mountain-climbing cliché, "because they are there."