

The high point of the *Automatiste* movement came in 1948 with the group's publication of a book whose central text was Borduas' *Refus global*. The essay was vigorously, often bitterly, debated not only among artists but in broader intellectual and political circles; it crystallized the complex tensions in Quebec society, between the authoritarian provincial government of Maurice Duplessis, the Church's control of education and thought there, the movement for centralist reform, and appeals in Quebec nationalism. Despite Borduas's insistence that his call was for spiritual revolution and not direct political action, it was read by many as inciting opposition to Quebec's political and religious institutions; "The religion of Christ," he wrote, "has dominated the universe. Look at what has happened to it: the sister faiths turning into exploiting little sisters." And "Our duty is simple: to break definitively with all conventions of society and its utilitarian spirit!"

The outcome was swift, Borduas was dismissed from the *École du Meuble*. He was already facing opposition from the *Prisme d'yeux* and members of the CAS and soon there were differences among the *Automatistes* over the interpretations of surrealism and the relationship between the Montreal and Paris movements. Through this, Borduas's reputation as a painter continued to grow, but the strain of his personal situation became intolerable and, in 1953, he decided on a period of self-imposed exile. He spent some time in New York and then, in 1955, moved to Paris where he died in 1960. His later work, affected by his contact with New York abstract expressionism, shifted from a surrealist illusion of space to a more emphatic plastic and painterly structure.

This shift was signalled in Montreal art through the 1950s, particularly towards a formal approach that traced its roots to Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935) and Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Russian and Dutch painters respectively. Expression of these concerns came from the young critic and painter Rodolphe de Repentigny (1926-59) who, with three other artists, formed *les Plasticiens* in 1954. Their work, however, was immediately surpassed by the more rigorous approach of others, notably Fernand Leduc, back in Montreal during the years 1953-59, and two very young artists, Guido Molinari (b. 1933) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), who developed paintings of uncompromising hard edge abstraction and powerful saturated colour.

If the radical edge of painting in Montreal into the 1960s was marked by hard-edge abstraction it was only one aspect of the Quebec scene. Pellán, who moved to Quebec City, continued as a major figure as did others of the *Prisme d'yeux* group, notably Goodridge Roberts and Jacques de Tonnancour (b. 1917). Riopelle settled permanently in France and became one of the first modern Canadian artists to gain a major reputation in Europe and the United States. And standing apart from the Montreal debates and movements