

Guido Molinari is a giant figure on the landscape of Canadian art, as a painter and as the acknowledged leader and spokesman for French-Canadian artists, both in Quebec and throughout the country.

David Thompson, highly respected art critic of the London *Times*, writing in the catalogue for the Canada Council Collection, circulated by the National Gallery of Canada in 1969, said of Molinari's work: "[it] is colour painting that works, not on the nerves, but on the emotions, and a manipulation of colour contrast in which tension and brilliance are remarkably allied to spaciousness and – a quality that only one or two Canadian painters can match – a solid, unhurried grandeur of presence."

There is nothing tentative or indecisive about Molinari's work; for some years now he has produced paintings of mature power and clarity of vision. His *Mutation*, for example (ill. p. 167), is reminiscent of a musical chord, vibrating rich colours in complex juxtaposition with each other. David Thompson, speaking of Molinari's colours generally, says, "The effect is less of the energy of colour than of its resonance and orchestration." Molinari's work is genuinely a triumph of the whole over the parts: the latter are cunningly simple, but have been put together to form a whole of massive integrity and beauty.

The musical references which Molinari calls forth are appropriate: he was born of Italian parentage in Montreal, where his father was a musician. His maternal grandfather had a studio casting figures in plaster, rather like the inexpensive and popular art of that time. Molinari was at ease in the artistic atmosphere and decided early to become an artist.

In 1948, the year of Borduas' tradition-shattering *Refus Global*, Molinari, then fifteen and still in high school, enrolled at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts for night classes. At that time these classes were extremely academic and Molinari found them inhibiting, a precocious, but accurate, judgement. Molinari was fortunate: the comings and goings in the family home included artists – students of Borduas and followers of Les Automatistes, among others – and he had become interested in them while still a child. Before he was in his teens, he remembers, he talked to these men and studied their paintings; he also recalls seeing the first Automatiste exhibit in 1949, an event which made him conscious of the international non-figurative movement.

Like Tousignant, Molinari studied at the art school of the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, where one of his teachers was Gordon Webber. By the time he was seventeen, Molinari had committed himself to personal research and was curious about the Automatiste belief that painting could be done automatically, intuitively, out of the subconscious. Molinari blindfolded himself and painted in the dark in order to explore fully the concept of spontaneous, gestural painting about