

Guido Molinari

b. 1933

Throughout history there have been two major kinds of artistic expression: intellectual and emotional. Some artists paint mainly on the basis of what they think; others, on the basis of what they feel.

Antoine Plamondon and Joseph Légaré, for example, were both fine early Canadian artists, though their styles differed greatly. Plamondon's paintings were ordered and disciplined; his work was carefully thought out to express his ideas about life. But Légaré's approach was far more emotional. He allowed his imagination to guide his painting, and he encouraged his viewers to follow him.

In our own time Paul-Émile Borduas and Guido Molinari have been leading representatives of these two different kinds of artistic expression. Borduas and *Les Automatistes* believed that art should be allowed to flow directly and freely from the subconscious mind onto the canvas without the conscious mind interfering. By allowing their paintings to develop in this way, *Les Automatistes* felt that they were in touch with the inner spiritual forces of man – forces that relate us all to something beyond the visible world.

But Guido Molinari supported the views of another group of artists who called themselves *Les Plasticiens* and worked in Montreal during the 1950s. In their opinion, art was not a product of the subconscious mind at all, but a carefully thought out, organized arrangement of form and colour.

Molinari was born in 1933 of Italian parents. His father was a musician, and one of his grandfathers was involved in the plaster casting of sculpture. As a result of his background, Molinari was exposed to the arts at an early age, and he knew members of *Les Automatistes* and other Montreal artists. In 1948 when *Refus Global* was published, Molinari was still at school. He was also taking night classes at the École des Beaux-Arts, but he found the methods

there too dry and academic. Later he continued his studies at the School of Art and Design at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for a short time.

The work of *Les Automatistes* interested Molinari, and he experimented with their technique. In order to test their ideas about direct expression from the subconscious mind, he painted several canvases blindfolded. Molinari also tried Jackson Pollock's method of dripping paint onto a canvas and considered Borduas's theory that an almost personal relationship can develop between painter and paint applied with a palette knife.

None of these methods satisfied Molinari's organized and intellectual mind, and by the middle of the 1950s he allied himself with *Les Plasticiens* in their opposition to *Les Automatistes*. *Les Plasticiens*, a group that Molinari never actually joined, drew up the following formal statement of their aims:

Les Plasticiens are principally concerned in their work with the 'plastic' facts: tone, texture, form, line, the ultimate unity of these in the painting, and relationships between these elements. . . . *Les Plasticiens* are not concerned at all, at least consciously, with possible meanings in their paintings.

In fact, they were advancing the theories of James Morrice even further than he himself had done. While Morrice believed that a painting is a work of art to be enjoyed for itself alone, he did paint recognizable landscapes. But *Les Plasticiens* claimed that their works had no deliberate relationship with anything outside the painting.

Mutation Sérielle Verte-Rouge is an example of what is now called hard-edge painting. It has been said that Molinari started using the technique after watching masking tape being used in car painting to prevent the colours overlapping. But the same type of style was also used at the time by New York