

Vancouverite who becomes acquainted with Quebec through the eloquent paintings of Jean-Paul Lemieux, are better able, assuredly, to hold a dialogue and to appreciate the values of their respective traditions that form - let us not forget it - a common inheritance.

Art as Cement

If one considers the present effulgence of Quebec, one must recognize that much of the credit is to be given to Quebec artists. For the past 20 years, Canada has seen a great development in the field of arts, but it is not untrue to say that a good part of our prestige has been brought by the artists of Quebec. I further believe that art constitutes the most precious cement that can unite nations and, in our case, strengthen the ties of the two major ethnic groups. The Torontonians, the residents of Winnipeg, the citizens of Moncton or of Montreal can discover the common points which draw them closer together; they can define their identity as Canadians more easily by being in contact with works of art than through any other way. The success of a Riopelle and the achievements of a Harold Towne constitute, on the national as well as the international level, self-assertions of which Canada can be justly proud.

The art film which helps our nationals to acquire a better knowledge of their own artistic wealth can also bring to Canadians a fraternal message from other countries. During the next season, thanks to a travelling exhibition of the National Gallery, Picasso will be, to the hundreds of thousands who will visit museums, something more than a name to be used as a handy designation for modern art. To a still greater extent than these exhibitions, films can reach huge audiences. Until now, films on art have been only a sub-section in the general category of cultural films. In the future, it will perhaps be appropriate to make a sharper distinction and to intensify the specific distribution of these films. I am inclined to believe that more could be done for the diffusion of films on art. Nothing should hamper such diffusion, provided that the general public is not frightened away by demonstrations which are too technical or too austere and provided the best way is found to reach the average spectator.

This Seminar and Festival is a proof of an ever-growing interest in art. While it is true that the responsibilities of the state imply the realization of many other objectives of vital interest, I am ready to acknowledge that an answer must be given immediately to the needs which were frankly and clearly stated by the specialists gathered at this 1963 meeting.

I agree, therefore, in principle to the wishes you expressed and I shall put before my colleagues in the Government the resolutions adopted at the conclusion of this conference with regard to the creation of an information centre which would possess a unique and detailed catalogue of new productions, Canadian or foreign, in the field of art films. This initiative would result in a better integration of art films within the Canadian distribution network. You agree that, in fact (and one should praise here the wonderful work of the Canadian Film Institute), this centre does already exist, but you wish to assure its development. I fully endorse your suggestions, so true is it that the diffusion of arts holds a unique, inalienable and predestined place in the upkeep and development of civilization.

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