

Introduction

se réorganisent sans cesse en de nouveaux ensembles optiques. La répétition des séries fait jouer sur les toiles les rythmes et les contre-rythmes dans un mouvement de va-et-vient plus ou moins rapide. Dans ses colonnes Comtois s'en remet à la main plutôt qu'à l'oeil du spectateur pour modifier la forme. L'axe autour duquel les éléments évoluent n'étant pas centré dans le cas de la plupart de ces sculptures les transformations possibles sont infinies. Un léger coup de pouce du spectateur et la forme devient une large courbe gracieuse ou une silhouette asymétrique aux arêtes vives.

Après avoir arrêté mon choix, je me suis retrouvé dans un restaurant avec Comtois et Molinari en train de parler de la chanson à succès des Rolling Stones « She is a Rainbow » et de l'accent mis sur la couleur en Amérique du Nord de nos jours. J'étais un peu mal à l'aise, car peut-être avais-je rendu un mauvais service à Comtois en ne choisissant que des sculptures incolores. Comtois a dû s'en rendre compte, car il me fit remarquer que les surfaces d'aluminium reflétaient toute la couleur de l'environnement et qu'à Venise, de ses sculptures réjailliraient les tons vifs des peintures de Molinari. Ce rapport symbiotique non prévu fera vraisemblablement de l'exposition une merveilleuse expérience de la couleur.

Brydon Smith
Le conservateur de l'art contemporain
La Galerie nationale du Canada

In the selection of the works by Ulysse Comtois and Guido Molinari for the Canadian participation at the 34th Venice Biennial, two considerations dominated my choice: I wanted to present the most beautiful works the artists had done before the final selection in February 1968; I also wanted to assemble an exhibition in which the two artists would keep their identities.

Although both artists have worked successfully in the mediums of painting and sculpture, I have selected paintings by Molinari and sculptures by Comtois. This arbitrary division was made easier by Comtois having devoted the past four years almost exclusively to sculpture. However, during this time, his sculptures have ranged from small pieces in polychrome wood, and metal, to the large aluminum column exhibited here for the first time. The selection of Comtois' non-colouristic aluminum and phenolic laminate sculptures, and Molinari's recent paintings, has emphasized a stylistic link between these Montreal artists. They compose their works by repeating simple geometric units. Molinari divides his canvases into a series of vertical stripes of equal widths. Comtois builds his columns by stacking one rectangular block or circular disk upon another around an axis. However, within these austere formal limits, both artists achieve a wide range of effects. The coloured stripes in a painting by Molinari do not remain inactive on the surface; the coloured stripes in his paintings since 1964 constantly reorganize themselves

into different optical groupings. Because these stripes are painted in a repeated series, rhythms and counter-rhythms play back and forth at different speeds across the entire picture surface.

In his column sculptures, Comtois relies on the hand, not the eye, of the viewer to change the forms. Because the axis on which the units turn is off-centre in most of these sculptures, the possible arrangements are multifarious. The form of one of his sculptures can become, with a little help from the viewer, a graceful sweeping curve or a jagged asymmetric silhouette.

After the final selection was made, Comtois, Molinari and I were sitting in a restaurant in Montreal discussing The Rolling Stones' popular song, "She's a Rainbow", and the emphasis on colour in contemporary North American life. I felt a little uneasy, realizing that perhaps I had done Comtois a disservice by including only non-colouristic sculpture. Comtois may have sensed this, for he remarked that the aluminum surfaces of his sculptures reflect all the surrounding colour, and that at Venice they would interact with Molinari's colourful paintings. This unanticipated symbiotic relationship should turn the exhibition into a beautiful colour experience.

Brydon Smith
Curator of Contemporary Art
The National Gallery of Canada