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**The Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de  
l'Est: Its History and Contribution to Local  
Art and to Art Education, 1973-1988**

**Ophra Benazon**

**A Thesis**

**in**

**The Department**

**of**

**Art Education and Art Therapy**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada**

**May 1988**



**Ophra Benazon, 1988**



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## Abstract

The Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de  
l'Est: Its History and Contribution to Local  
Art and to Art Education, 1973-1988

Ophra Benazon

RACE was founded in 1973 as an association of Eastern Townships high culture visual artists. The group's headquarters and centre of activities is in Sherbrooke. The association includes artists with a wide variety of styles and orientations who attained professional level through university education or through professional experience.

The main section of the thesis includes a year-by-year history of RACE from 1973 to 1988. It attempts to show that RACE developed from a group of artists catering mainly to its own needs, (1973-1983) to an association which from 1983 has been continuously serving the public.

For fifteen years members of the association have organized group exhibitions, participated in local cultural events, contributed to local cultural institutions, organized studio workshops, arranged excursions to museums and galleries, operated printmaking and multidisciplinary studios; in the last five years, it has managed an art gallery that presents twenty contemporary exhibitions a year by local artists together with artists from outside the area, as well as a series of public lectures by specialists in the various fields of visual art.

In the concluding chapter the author attempts to show how RACE contributed to the development of art and art education in the

Sherbrooke region. RACE gradually and consistently developed a complete art world along the lines described by H.S. Becker in his book Art Worlds (1982). RACE increased the art work production, devised distribution and sale mechanisms, arranged for financial support to artists and institutions, fostered a small but appreciative audience, raised critical attention, and offered art education both to students and to the public at large.

The contribution of RACE to art education is evaluated along the lines of Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) and H.J. Gans' (1975) analysis of public taste. RACE contributed to art education through didactic exhibitions, demonstrations in the various techniques in art, and lectures to an audience which, because of its education and economic level, was predisposed to high culture: it was a middle-class audience from 1973 to 1983, and an audience of artists and art students after 1983.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract . . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	1
History of the Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est:	
<b>1. Formation: 1973-1975</b>	
1973 . . . . .	6
1974 . . . . .	24
1975 . . . . .	32
<b>2. Friendship: 1976-1977</b>	
1976 . . . . .	39
1977 . . . . .	46
<b>3. Cultural Politics: 1978-1979</b>	
1978 . . . . .	53
1979 . . . . .	64
<b>4. Crisis and Transition: 1980-1982/83</b>	
1980 . . . . .	71
1981-1982/83 . . . . .	76
<b>5. Galerie HORACE: 1983/1984-1988</b>	
1983/84 . . . . .	84
1984/85 . . . . .	91
1985/86 . . . . .	97
1986/87-1988 . . . . .	104
<b>6. Contribution to Art and to Art Education . . . . .</b>	<b>110</b>
References . . . . .	138
Documents . . . . .	141
Bibliography . . . . .	160

## INTRODUCTION

This year the Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est (RACE) is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary. It was founded in 1973 by fifteen artists who sought to encourage individual artistic creativity, promote exhibitions for the members, and collectively convey the artists' point of view on different aspects of cultural community life.

RACE has not attempted to create a school of art or to manifest a particular philosophy of art. On the contrary, the group consists of artists with a wide variety of orientations and styles. They grouped together in order to enrich themselves through a continuous exchange of ideas arising out of their creative endeavours. The association has not attempted to limit the number of its members. RACE opened its membership to all visual artists living in the Eastern Townships who wished to join and who had attained a professional level of performance in art either through university education or through experience.

During the fifteen years of RACE's existence the members of the group have been engaged in a variety of activities: organization of group exhibitions; participation in local cultural events; organization of studio workshops with prominent artists; excursions to museums and galleries for the purpose of professional development; operation of printmaking and multidisciplinary studios; organization of public art lectures; and, in the last four years, the management of an art gallery that presents as many as twenty contemporary



exhibitions a year by local artists together with artists from outside the area, mostly from Montreal.

Although RACE includes in its ranks artists from various parts of the Eastern Townships, the group's headquarters and centre of its activities is Sherbrooke, a city with a population of approximately 75,000. In spite of its relatively large population, Sherbrooke does not generate as many cultural activities as one might expect from a city of its size. One reason for this deficiency lies in its geographical proximity to Montreal. Many of those who are interested in culture prefer to seek it in the big city rather than to create it themselves in Sherbrooke. Others, who are less attracted by Montreal, or who cannot afford to visit it frequently are not offered a stimulating variety of cultural activities by local authorities. The Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est has filled a part of this void in visual art and, one hopes, will continue to do so in the future.

The term visual art is subject to various interpretations. For the purpose of this thesis I shall limit the term to high culture art, because the artists of RACE perceived and continue to perceive themselves as belonging to the world of high culture. The sociologist, Herbert J. Gans (1975) describes high culture as the constructing of cultural products concerned with form, substance and method, as well as with content and symbolism. This art very often places a high value on mood, feeling, introspection, and subtlety. It is an art fashioned in the image of the creators, and thus deals with individual alienation and with the conflict between the individual and

society. In recent decades innovation and experimentation in form have dominated high culture art (Gans, 1975, pp. 75-77). The artists of RACE would by and large align themselves with this orientation.

I joined RACE only a few months after it was founded in 1973. I served several years on its executive committee in a variety of roles: treasurer in 1974, vice-president in 1976, president in 1982, advisor in 1983, treasurer from 1986 to 1988. During my 1982 presidency, our executive committee did the planning for a multi-disciplinary studio space and a gallery, both of which went into operation the following year. RACE, which began as an artists' association catering mainly to its members' needs, has become a group of artists who are also engaged in art education through an active gallery schedule, including a series of public lectures by specialists in the various fields of visual art.

I shall try to show that RACE has made a major contribution to visual art and to some aspects of art education in the Sherbrooke region by providing a full historical survey of the group's activities, its motives and philosophy. In the concluding chapter I shall analyse these activities along the lines proposed by Howard S. Becker (1982) in his description of art worlds, by Herbert J. Gans (1975), and Pierre Bourdieu (1984) in their analyses of the dynamics prevailing among artists, art, and public taste.

In the years prior to the founding of RACE, Sherbrooke's art world consisted of a few artists and a newly established contemporary art gallery affiliated with the University of Sherbrooke. I shall attempt to show that the artists, through their association, gradually

and consistently built a complete art world in the region. They increased the art-work production, devised distribution and sale mechanisms, arranged for financial support to artists and art institutions, fostered an appreciative audience, raised critical attention, and offered art education to students and to the public at large.

Perhaps the weakest link in the chain of developments leading towards a local high-culture art world is the group's inability to create a wide audience. However, I hope to show, with the help of the analyses of public taste formulated by Bourdieu (1984) and Gans (1975) that RACE succeeded in attracting a public which, because of its high educational and socio-economic level, was predisposed to high culture. At first, during the 1973-1983 period, RACE enjoyed the attention of a middle-class audience; after 1983, when RACE opened the innovative and experimental Galerie HORACE, the group attracted a following of artists and students.

I have dedicated the major part of the thesis to the history of RACE, because I agree with Chantal Pontbriand's view expressed in her article "For a Canadian Museography" that artist-run centres have contributed more than museums to "advancing, promoting and disseminating contemporary art." Pontbriand argues that

Artist-run centres have enabled new generations of artists to become known to the public. They are scouting grounds for critics and curators as they are for the artists themselves. They often provide the starting-point for young art administrators. Moreover, they have given rise to the

epiphenomenon of the "independent curator" (Pontbriand, 1987, p. 134).

The history of RACE is based on several hundred primary documents. I have not attempted to identify all the reference sources taken from these documents (unless they are direct quotations) because to do so would interrupt the reading flow. In like manner, I have not included these documents in the reference list. Instead, I have listed separately the primary documents for each year in chronological order. Photocopies of the documents and newspaper articles have been entrusted to the documentation centre of the Cultural Centre in the University of Sherbrooke.

1. **Formation: 1973-1975**

1973

As an artist living in the vicinity of Sherbrooke during the previous five years [prior to the founding of RACE] I really felt quite isolated because there was actually no other artist around. There was none of that sort of exchange that I think that one can have and should have between artists, so that you can measure your work with that of others and try your ideas out on other people, and I think this was a fairly funny sort of situation that there seemed to be actually nobody around. (Cantieni, 1987).

This is how Graham Cantieni, the founder of RACE, described the artistic milieu in the Sherbrooke area in the period before he made contact with other painters and induced them to form an association of artists in the Eastern Townships.

The idea of forming an association came to Cantieni as he was socializing with students, young poets and writers in Manoir de l'Estrée, a pub close to the University of Sherbrooke, where the young literati connected with the University of Sherbrooke used to gather for beer and discussions. It is there that he developed the idea that visual artists should work together with young poets and authors in order to promote each other's work. The artists could print posters to advertize reading events, and the authors could publish articles about the artists. In order to reach the artists, Cantieni contacted Claude Lafleur, who was the director of the Art Gallery at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke and asked him to

supply the names of artists who would be disposed to form an association. After making personal contact with the artists, Cantieni invited them to meet to discuss further steps towards organization.

On April 10, 1973 eleven artists of Sherbrooke and area gathered at Cantieni's studio on Esplanade Street in Sherbrooke to discuss ways of informing the public of the existence of practising contemporary artists in the Eastern Townships. These artists had been professionally trained in visual art and were engaged in teaching, animation, and other art-related activities in the area. Naturally, an exhibition of their work would be the most obvious means of announcing their existence. Six days later, on April 16, five of the painters who had participated in the first meeting gathered to organize a group exhibition to be held in the coming summer. In order to realize this project, they decided unanimously to form an association of regional painters called simply Peintres des Cantons de l'Est (PCE). At the beginning, only those artists who had attended the first gathering together with several other invited painters, were eligible to join the association. For the short term they decided to (1) organize an exhibition for the summer of 1973; (2) generate publicity to coincide with the planned exhibition in order to inform the public of the existence of the new association; (3) arrange a meeting with the architects in the region, preferably at the start of the exhibition; (4) plan a travelling itinerary for the exhibition in order to reach other regions in the province.

In addition to the preparations for the inaugural exhibition of the association, Graham Cantieni, in the name of PCE, approached the

Public Relations Office of the City of Sherbrooke with a proposal to present successive exhibitions of paintings by PCE members in the City Hall. The paintings were to be distributed in various corridors of the building as well as in selected offices for a period of two months, after which time they would be changed for new ones, a process which would ensure varied professional exhibitions all year round.

The painters were eager to exhibit their work. In his letter to the City of Sherbrooke, Graham Cantieni took pains to explain in detail how these paintings could be hung without causing damage to the walls. He also assured the officials that the artists would execute all the work necessary for this project, and that they would defray all the expenses incurred, except for the cost of insurance which he asked the City to undertake.

Not surprisingly, the City was quick to accept the PCE offer, and in mid-May it sent a contract to this effect to the association for signing. The terms of the contract reflected the submissive mood of Cantieni's initial advances: although all PCE propositions were accepted, a clause was added whereby the artists would not be allowed to put a written price tag beside their paintings. The tone of the contract revealed a condescending attitude on the part of the City vis-à-vis the artists: "Le locateur accorde gratuitement au locataire, ce acceptant, le privilège de tenir une exposition permanente de peintures dans l'édifice de l'hôtel de ville" ("Procès verbaux," 1973, May 7). (The rentor accords the tenant the privilege of holding an exhibition free of charge in the building of the Municipality). This privilege was granted for the period of one year,



starting on July 1, 1973, to continue until June 31st, 1974. The signing of the contract with the City of Sherbrooke had to be delayed until procedures for association, which were in the meantime being undertaken by the artists, could be terminated, so that the members could ratify the agreement with the City in a general assembly.

On May 15, 1973 all fifteen Eastern Township painters gathered for the first official general meeting of the association. Their first move was to elect a provisional executive committee composed of five people: Jacques Barbeau, Roxanne Bergeron, Graham Cantieni, Denyse Gérin-Tetreault, and Claude Lafleur. At an executive meeting held on May 23, 1973 the five elected members divided their responsibilities as follows: Graham Cantieni - president; Denyse Gérin-Tetreault - vice president; Claude Lafleur - secretary and treasurer; Roxanne Bergeron - advisor; Jacques Barbeau - advisor.

The discussions in the May general assembly focused on the following issues: (1) regulations for the new association; (2) incorporation of the association; (3) publicity; (4) preparation of four exhibitions to take place concurrently between July 1st and August 31st, 1973. The exhibitions were to be in four places: the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke, the Caisse populaire de Sherbrooke est, Sherbrooke City Hall, and Bishop's University, the latter as part of Festival Lennoxville, a well-known Canadian summer theatre festival.

The assembly gave the executive committee a mandate to gather more information about regulations and incorporation and to take active measures to promote the exhibitions at the Cultural Centre and

at the Caisse populaire. As for the other two exhibitions, the assembly postponed the discussion on the City Hall show for the next meeting and proceeded to take decisions on some unresolved issues related to the group's participation in Festival Lennoxville. The resolutions the assembly adopted in this matter were indicative of the exclusive, monopolistic, and even aggressive attitude of the association.

Unlike the other three exhibitions, the proposal for an exhibition in conjunction with the theatre festival did not originate with the PCE, but with the organizing committee of Festival Lennoxville. The latter was looking for local artists and artisans to participate in an exhibition of arts and crafts in a hall adjacent to Centennial Theatre. Claire Heilig, a local resident who had been appointed by the committee to organize this exhibition, approached artists in the area, including PCE members, and requested their individual participation. Initially she succeeded in getting the consent of some of the artists. However, in mid-course, artists who belonged to PCE notified her that they would not be able to participate in the show as individuals, and they advised her to approach the group as a whole. She did so, reluctantly, in order to save the exhibition.

After discussing the Lennoxville Festival proposal, the PCE took the following decisions: (1) to exhibit as a group at Festival Lennoxville; (2) to demand exclusive rights of participation in the exhibition (not including the crafts part of it); (3) to demand that publicity for the exhibition be given the same importance as that

given to other activities of the festival; (4) to refrain from taking punitive measures against members who would exhibit individually, in case Festival Lennoxville refused to accept the PCE conditions.

In his official reply to Claire Heilig on May 27, Cantieni, the newly elected president of PCE, conveyed to her the group's decisions and added a few more specifications: Festival Lennoxville was to undertake insurance of the works and to provide all the necessary means for hanging the paintings; all members of the group were to take part in the exhibition; the artists themselves were to choose the works to be included in the show; the mounting of the exhibition was to be done in collaboration with representatives of PCE. The letter also emphasizes the importance of equal publicity for the visual arts aspect because "we are fearful of participating in an exhibition which may take on the value of a hot-dog stand beside an event of importance" (Cantieni, 1973, May 27). The Festival Lennoxville Committee accepted the PCE conditions, since it realized the impossibility of organizing an exhibition of professional quality, representing the visual arts of the area, without the participation of the artist-members of the PCE.

The artists took a firm position concerning the exhibition in Festival Lennoxville not so much because they felt threatened by other artists, but primarily because of their desire to establish themselves as recognized professional artists as far removed as possible from amateurs and folk artists. It was status they were seeking rather than material gains. By demanding sole exhibiting rights they felt that they could control the quality and the contemporary nature of the work

on display. Most PCE members were newly arrived in the area and brought with them the taste and tendencies of art prevalent in the large cities, thus connecting Sherbrooke and area to the international dialogue of contemporary styles in art.

Having addressed these two outstanding issues, the PCE decided to sign the contract with the City of Sherbrooke with regard to permanent exhibitions in the City Hall and to take concrete measures towards legal incorporation of the association. At a meeting of the provisional executive on May 23, the advantages of incorporation were discussed. In the course of this discussion the further aims and goals of the PCE became apparent. The members were aware that legal status would facilitate negotiations with government and private cultural or commercial institutions as well as with other art organizations; it would increase the chance for obtaining grants and raising funds, and it would also be of help to individual artists in certain aspects of their profession: e.g. tax deductions, the purchase of art materials in bulk at reduced price, etc.

The procedures towards incorporation proceeded smoothly except for the rejection of the name "Peintres des Cantons de l'Est" by the Ministry of Institutions and Finances, Companies and Cooperatives. Once the name was changed to "Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est" (RACE) the responsible ministry accorded the letters patent in July of 1973, and thus the association became a corporation known unofficially as RACE.

The legal document summarized RACE's objectives: (1) to organize the professional artists of the Eastern Townships in order to promote

visual art in the region; (2) to facilitate work and exchanges among group members; (3) to familiarize the public with the works of the Eastern Townships artists through regional, provincial, and national exhibitions; (4) to encourage encounters with other disciplines; (5) to permit negotiations with various government and university authorities and to encourage relations with other associations similar to RACE; (6) to study, promote, protect, and develop in every way possible the economic, social, and professional interests of the members; (7) to create a fully-equipped centre of printmaking open to all members, and occasionally to give as well as take courses in various techniques of printmaking; (8) to collect membership fees from members and to receive all forms of donations and grants.

This list of objectives was more than a mere guideline for the future. Some of these objectives had already been implemented. The preparations for the exhibitions were in full swing; frequent meetings of members generated personal contacts and exchanges; negotiations were continuing with government, private, and university authorities--the City of Sherbrooke, the University of Sherbrooke, Bishop's University, and the Caisse populaire; a modest sum of \$200 was set aside by the City of Sherbrooke to cover insurance expenses; membership fees were levied and steps were taken towards securing a printmaking studio for members' use.

The proposal to set up printmaking facilities originated in Cantieni's idea of printing silk-screened posters to advertise literary readings by young poets and authors. Together with Claude Lafleur, who founded the Ateliers d'animation culturelle in the late

sixties, Cantieni managed to secure a small space for the artists in the Ateliers which were then located in a building that once served as the Ste-Jeanne d'Arc school. However, once the artists acquired this space, they did not hurry to set up a silkscreen studio in accordance with Cantieni's vision of collaboration with the writers. Instead, since most of them were painters, they used it as a painting studio. The idea of acquiring printmaking facilities, however, was still current, since the artists wanted to try various forms of expression other than painting.

Before the end of the year, RACE was finally able to secure a printmaking studio for its members in the new location of the Ateliers d'animation culturelle at 1215 Kitchener Street, a cultural community centre directed jointly by the Department of Recreational Activities of the City of Sherbrooke and the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. In the contract signed between RACE and the Ateliers, the latter offered RACE space and equipment for the purpose of printmaking, with accessories and utensils evaluated at \$1800 in yearly rent. In return, RACE members undertook to engage in animation and teaching activities as well as in occasional demonstrations of various printmaking techniques for clients of the Ateliers. Over the years, RACE fulfilled this educational role by giving courses without remuneration whenever the Ateliers managed to organize courses. Unfortunately, there was not much public interest in this specialized medium, and the courses were given only sporadically.

With the political hurdles over, most of the activities were now focused on the organization of the four exhibitions in July, not a

small task for a newly formed group of artists in a milieu which lacked a basic support system. Only the Cultural Centre at the University of Sherbrooke possessed a well-equipped gallery and a competent administration. The Caisse populaire, in turn, provided a minimum of hanging facilities for small paintings in a constricted space. The two other locations for exhibitions, City Hall and Bishop's University, had to be transformed from halls and corridors into exhibition spaces. In order to meet this challenge, specific tasks had to be divided among all members of the association. These tasks were assigned in general meetings which were held at frequent intervals. Members took on various undertakings in a spirit of camaraderie and enthusiasm and were rewarded by a sense of achievement when all the preparations for the final presentation of the exhibitions were terminated.

The first public manifestation of the existence of RACE occurred when three of the four exhibitions opened officially at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke on July 4th. The exhibition at Festival Lennoxville opened later, on July 14th. All four exhibitions were to last until the end of August. On this occasion RACE issued a press release which stressed the historical meaning of this event--the first group exhibition of professional artists of the Eastern Townships, the main goal of which was to familiarize the local population with the work of the various members. By spreading the exhibitions geographically, RACE reached a wide local audience from all walks of life, which came in contact with the art works on their day-to-day errands. It also reached out-of-town visitors who came to the theatre festival during the summer.

The exhibitions received a great deal of attention in the press. The local daily newspaper, La Tribune, acknowledged an important educational aspect to the exhibition: "Cette exposition n'attend pas passivement que les visiteurs s'y intéressent, elle va les rejoindre dans leur milieu de travail" ("Sherbrooke," 1973, August 4). (This exhibition does not stand by passively waiting for visitors to show interest in it; it sets out to find them in their places of work.) When a journalist asked some City Hall employees to express their reaction to the exhibition they did not show much enthusiasm, although they admitted that the exhibition did not leave them indifferent, and that the paintings helped to create a more lively atmosphere in the building. Others said that they did not dare judge the works since they were not knowledgeable enough in art. Some complained that the exhibition was not sufficiently diversified, since it was composed mainly of abstract paintings, while they would have preferred to see more figurative work. The mayor too was challenged on this occasion with regard to his plans for purchasing art for a future municipal building. He acknowledged the need to spend money on art and the desirability of giving local artists opportunities to show their work to the public: "C'est plus qu'une affaire de décoration, mais bien de revalorisation, d'une opportunité à donner aux artistes de se mieux connaître" ("Sherbrooke," 1973, August 4). (It is less a matter of decoration, and more a matter of revaluation, an opportunity to give the artists a means of making themselves better known.) The article concludes: "On connaît la qualité d'une ville et d'un pays à la place qui est faite à ses artistes, ainsi qu'à son rayonnement culturel"



("Sherbrooke," 1973, August 4). (The quality of a city may be known by the place it accords to its artists and by the distribution of its culture.)

The impact and the enthusiasm generated by the exhibitions on the public and on the participating artists were reflected in another article in La Tribune written by Pierrette Mondou and René Berthiaume which appeared on July 21st. It quotes one of the visitors at the opening night: "Plus besoin d'aller à New York pour voir une excellente exposition" (Mondou, Berthiaume. 1973, July 21). (It is no longer necessary to go to New York to see an excellent exhibition.) Quotations from the artists reflect their elation with regard to their recently formed association:

C'est une espèce de stimulant dont on a besoin, on s'aperçoit que l'on n'est pas tout seul: ça nous donne du courage.

. . . . .

Apprendre à se connaître et à découvrir peu à peu ce que son voisin fait, fut la première étape du groupe. . . . Mais en second lieu . . . il faudrait penser d'entrer plus en contact avec le public (Mondou, Berthiaume, 1973, July 21).

(It is the kind of stimulation we need; we realize we are not alone: it has given us courage.

. . . . .

To learn to know one another and to discover bit by bit what our neighbour was doing was the first step of the group

. . . next, we had to think in terms of getting more in touch with the public.)

The article concludes that, Montreal need no longer be the only place where one can find interesting things in art. Faced with such vitality and dynamism, one cannot help wishing to follow the progress and development of these artists in their future activities. The article also expresses the cautious hope that the painters of the Eastern Townships will develop a distinguished, local, stylistic identity. The wide-ranging publicity and the hundreds of paintings now accessible to the public at four different ends of the city brought to fruition RACE's most pressing goal: to familiarize the public with the group's existence and with its members' art works.

When the dust of the exhibitions had settled, members of the group gathered for their first general meeting under the new corporation on September 22, 1973. Their main task was to ratify a charter for RACE which included thirty-nine clauses regulating all procedures for functioning as a group of artists. The corporation is defined as a non-lucrative form of association. The general assembly is sovereign. It gathers at least once a year for an annual meeting to elect an executive committee composed of five members. These five members divide among themselves the following positions: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and advisor. In order to ensure constant rotation in the executive committee its members must resign en bloc at the annual meeting, and only three of the departing members can be re-elected to the new committee. In between annual assemblies the executive committee can call special assemblies in order to pass

resolutions which require the consent of a majority of the members. All decisions in the general assembly are taken by a majority open vote unless a secret vote is requested by at least five members present in the assembly. The charter makes provisions for accepting new members on the basis of an examination of their art portfolios so as to maintain a high professional level in the group. The new candidates become members after 80% of the members present in a general assembly vote in favour of accepting them into the group.

After the members voted unanimously to accept the regulations, the general assembly proceeded to elect the first permanent administrators for the coming year by re-electing the members of the previous provisional executive committee; the committee members assigned themselves to the same tasks they held in the provisional executive committee.

The next time RACE reached out to the public was through a poster exhibition on a theme related to the provincial election campaign of October 1973. Again, in order to reach the public, the exhibition was staged in a shopping centre in Rock Forest, a western suburb of Sherbrooke. As in the case of the summer exhibitions, this one too was well appreciated by the local press, not however, by the public which did not have a chance to see the exhibition owing to the mysterious overnight disappearance of the posters after only one day on exhibition. In a short report on the exhibition, the reporter René Berthiaume of La Tribune points to some of the roles of the artist in society--to give more beauty to the world, and to make people aware of reality in everyday situations. The public could be

made more aware of a boring electoral campaign by a few provoking posters: "La démocratie, mon oeil", "Recette de uncle Sam", "Le terrorist", "Ile verte", "La Baie James", "Soirée funèbre", "Le politicien", "Avez vous besoin de patron?" (Berthiaume 1973, October 24). The reporter succeeds in instructing the public on the nature of the artistic interpretation of daily events by stressing that this type of exhibition was not meant to be a direct intervention by the artists in politics; it is more the manifestation of a universal way of seeing politics through its multiple facets, than a local electoral partisanship. However, this was not the way some campaign workers understood the exhibition. The missing poster-paintings were later discovered in a vacant office not far from the exhibition area, where the Liberal Party's campaign office had previously been lodged. This incident sparked humorous headlines in various publications in Sherbrooke: "Des tableaux ont disparu 'liberalement'" (Lafleur, 1973, November 11). (Paintings disappeared liberally) or "Quand les libéraux se font collectionneurs" (1973, November 11). (When the liberals become art collectors).

Towards the end of 1973 RACE made the first political move to intervene in the general art scene in the area. It took the initiative by writing a letter in the name of RACE and several other artistic and cultural institutions. This letter was addressed to the general director of La Tribune, requesting the newspaper to allocate more space to the arts in the daily and weekly editions and to separate the arts from the variety section in the newspaper, so as to give the arts more prominence and prestige.

A summary and an evaluation of the first year of RACE's existence is essential in order to focus the inquiry on the future issues and in order to see how these issues continued to develop or perhaps change over the years. Perhaps the most important aspect of the birth of RACE was the need felt by the artists to organize themselves in order to overcome feelings of isolation. Since there was no outlet for the artists' work, many of them did not even bother to produce anything, in spite of their long training. In order for art to flourish it needs the stimulating setting of an art world comprised of (1) artists engaged in producing work as part of a dialogue with other artists, (2) galleries as outlets for their work, (3) critics to assess the work, and (4) a public to enjoy the art and buy it. Since all these ingredients were lacking in Sherbrooke, the artists decided to create these conditions by themselves. By getting together, the artists opened a channel for the exchange of ideas among themselves; by exhibiting their work in galleries and in public places which they turned into make-shift galleries, they turned the public's attention to themselves, and by inaugurating four exhibitions concurrently in one month they attracted the local press. Although the Sherbrooke newspapers did not have professional critics, their reporters occasionally filled this role quite successfully. RACE members were not very successful in selling their works during the first year, but over the years, a market developed for paintings, and some of the artists managed to sell their work regularly.

The pressing need to create a complete art world around them was so strong that the artists were oblivious of differences among

themselves either on an ideological or on a social level. They worked with enthusiasm and devotion; they had to produce quickly in order to keep up with the pace of the exhibitions. In an atmosphere of hard work towards a common goal there was no room for conflict. On the contrary, people got to know each other well and became friends. In addition to frequent meetings, members spent time together socially in pubs or in parties at members' homes.

Another basic concern of RACE was to maintain the professional level of the members in the group. RACE members were adamant in dissociating themselves from folk artists, artisans, or amateurs. This was the reason why they insisted on exclusivity in their exhibitions. They did not trust Lennoxville Festival organizers to mount a professional show and therefore acted aggressively by presenting an ultimatum: accept us on our terms or we will not participate. At the same time RACE was ready to accept as many professional artists as there were in the area. They did not want to remain a small closed group; on the contrary, they hoped to increase their numbers and, indeed, at times the group held as many as forty members.

Cantieni did not think that RACE's role should be to serve the public through dispensing free art education. But he admitted that this happened as a positive side-effect. Artists wanted to reach the public, and in order to do so over a wide radius they went to the City Hall, where people paid their taxes; the Caisse populaire, where they dealt with their money; and Festival Lennoxville, where they went for entertainment. Although the people did not go there seeking art, they

nevertheless had a chance to broaden their visual experience by confronting a style of art with which they had not previously been familiar. The same is true with regard to the classes that RACE members gave to clients of the Ateliers d'animation culturelle. The members did not think that it was their duty as artists to give free lessons; however, they felt they had to do it in order to justify their use of the printmaking facilities. As a result, the public benefited from the entente between RACE and the Ateliers. As the artists promoted their own interests by carving themselves a place in the community they lived in, they also contributed to that community by indirectly serving it.

Years later Cantieni summed up the goals of RACE in its first year of existence:

I guess our goals were quite simple and quite self-centred in a sense that we wanted to make ourselves known; we wanted some sort of credibility as artists in the society in which we lived and that, as I said before, was our unifying force both professionally and socially (Cantieni, 1987).

1974

In his presidential report at the end of 1973 Graham Cantieni found the first year of the association's existence to be impressive in its accomplishments. The initial goals of RACE had been achieved; the public was well aware of the presence of the artists through an enthusiastic press coverage; and the coveted printmaking studio, although not perfect, was ready for members to use. In assessing the future goals of the association, Cantieni urged the artists to concentrate on their personal and professional development, to work in close contact with other artists, and to exchange ideas and activities with group members who shared similar orientations.

The year 1974 saw the consolidation of the achievements and gains of the association and an enlargement in the scope of activities beyond the limits of Sherbrooke. The second annual general assembly in January 1974 reelected the three executive members who held the positions of president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer.

As a result of the artists' success in breaking through their isolation, they were stimulated to produce a large body of work, which they managed to exhibit in solo or in small group exhibitions. Their increased production and enthusiasm induced them to exhibit in the towns around Sherbrooke as well as in Montreal. This was also a year for solidifying personal friendships. Several of the official meetings were held in places of entertainment i.e. restaurants and bars as well as in members' homes. Meetings which were held in business locations were often followed by a social activity with the artists' families and friends joining in.



Desirous of expanding the activities of RACE beyond the immediate region, the executive committee requested a grant of \$7,764 from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in order to organize itinerant exhibitions of small groups of artists in nine towns of the Eastern Townships during the period between September 1974 and April 1975. The exhibitions were planned as part of an educational project in the art history of the Eastern Townships. Its purpose was to acquaint the population with past and present local art. In addition to the presentation of contemporary art, these exhibitions were to include a slide projection of a series of works by artists such as Bartlett, Krieghoff, Suzor-Coté, Coburn, and Roberts who featured the area in their prints and paintings. Unfortunately the committee, which acted for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, did not grant RACE the funds needed and recommended that RACE members should avoid expensive exhibitions, and that they should limit their activities to more affordable solo exhibitions. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs thus missed an opportunity for a comprehensive educational project in several small towns in the Sherbrooke area.

In 1970 the Ministry of Public Works brought in regulations requiring contractors of new government buildings to introduce art work worth a certain percentage of the total cost of the building. In order to benefit from these regulations RACE called a meeting of the local artists and artisans with the architects of Sherbrooke. The meeting took place on February 22nd in the form of a working luncheon at the home of Graham Cantieni. The discussion focused on the placing of art works in public buildings. The participants in this meeting

quickly realized that despite the wide artistic resources in the Townships, many contracts for art works in public buildings were offered to artists from outside the region. In order to prevent such practice in the future, it was decided to prepare a file on all the Townships artists and artisans. These files would be at the disposal of those responsible for the construction of local public buildings. It was also decided to hold more such meetings in the future in order to share information of mutual interest to artists and architects. In view of these developments, RACE members organized a documentation centre with files on the individual artists which included slides of their work, an up-to-date curriculum vitae, and other pertinent information. The centre would thus be a consultation centre used by architects and designers when they needed to select artists for executing art projects.

As in the previous year, the main activity of RACE was to arrange for major group exhibitions. The contract concerning the exhibitions at the City Hall was coming to an end and a new contract for 1974/75 had to be negotiated. On this occasion RACE suggested a couple of changes: that the exhibitions be changed every four months instead of every two months, and that the paintings would henceforth be hung only in areas of the building where there was a large public circulation i.e. the entry hall, the accounting room, and the corridors. In a letter to the Municipality, Cantieni conveyed RACE's position vis-à-vis the exhibitions in the City Hall. RACE would maintain its commitment to diffuse works of art in public places; however, it now expected the Municipality to make a few purchases of paintings for its

offices. Cantieni adopted an assertive approach by rejecting the City's attitude which considered the exhibitions to be a favour granted to the artists. He added that although the artists enjoyed the privilege of exhibiting in the Municipality, they did not draw any material benefit from it. The artists may have gained some publicity for themselves, but so did the City. This initiative resulted in the renewal of the contract on RACE's terms for another year, but there was no purchase of paintings for the offices. However, the contract did not last the whole of the second year; it was mutually agreed to cancel it in December. According to an article in La Tribune ("Les artistes du RACE," 1974, December 10) the artists realized that the new officials of City Hall were not in favour of continuing the collaboration with RACE. In a letter to the Municipal Council, RACE declared its readiness to continue contributing to artistic development in the City of Sherbrooke and reaffirmed its conviction that it had a social role to play in integrating art with the urban milieu. "'Une ville,' déclare la vice-présidente du RACE, Denyse Gérin-Tétreault, 'n'est pas seulement un centre administratif mais aussi un milieu humain où l'homme doit s'épanouir et participer à l'élaboration d'un mieux-être collectif'" ("Les artistes du RACE," 1974, December 10). ("'A city,' declares the vice-president of RACE, Denyse-Gérin-Tétreault, 'is not only an administrative centre but also a human environment where man is to grow and participate in the elaboration of a better collective well-being.'") The exhibitions at City Hall were to convey the notion that the Municipality belonged to the people: "'Chaque citoyen', croyaient-ils alors, 'pris

individuellement ou collectivement, doit essayer, dans la mesure de ses moyens, de donner à cet édifice municipal une figure nouvelle qui deviendrait le reflet de ses aspirations'" ("Les artistes du RACE," 1974, December 10). (Every citizen taken individually or collectively, has to try, according to his/her means, to give the Municipality a new appearance that will reflect his/her aspirations.)

The next activity of RACE in a social-popular setting occurred when the group decided to participate in the Festival des Cantons de l'Est in May of 1974. The festival was a multimedia manifestation of popular culture in the streets, parks, and public buildings of Sherbrooke. It included exhibitions and sales of arts and crafts, and of formal and informal performances of music, theatre, and dance over a period of several days. RACE, which wanted to protect its image of a professional artists' group, participated in the event with an exhibition of its own in the visual arts section of the festival in a location separated from the other artists whom it considered as amateurs.

Members of RACE were increasingly ready to take their work out of Sherbrooke into the surrounding areas. The first opportunity to do so as a group occurred when they were invited to exhibit in the pavillion of L'homme et la musique at the Orford Art Centre from June 29 to August 25, 1974. The Orford Centre of Art is the summer home of Les Jeunesses musicales du Canada, one of the largest and most ambitious of the associations of young musicians. It serves as a centre for musical study and concerts. In spite of its location in the heart of the Eastern Townships, it was regarded as an elitist establishment by

the local population and therefore shunned by area residents. Gaston Germain, the director of the Centre was anxious to make the Centre more accessible and open to the people of the Townships. As a step in this direction, he invited RACE to present an exhibition during the summer festival. RACE enthusiastically accepted the proposal for an exhibition in the Art Centre. The artists were glad to participate in such rich and harmonious artistic activities. They interpreted it as a sign of recognition of the quality of their work and of their role as representatives of the professional artists in the region.

After a successful and well-appreciated exhibition at Orford, RACE made its first venture into Montreal. An exchange of exhibitions was arranged between RACE and the artists who exhibited regularly at the Bourguignon Gallery. RACE would exhibit in Montreal from September 27 to October 17, 1974, and the Montreal artists would exhibit at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke at approximately the same time. Considering the importance of the exhibition in Montreal, RACE planned this event carefully. Since it was an opportunity for selling some works, it was decided to include as many as thirty-five paintings and prints of small format not exceeding \$250 each. In addition, members could exhibit five-to-six graphic works, under acetate, arranged in a special group portfolio. In order to assure a high-quality exhibition, a selection was made collectively at a general meeting prior to the exhibition.

The local press did not fail to inform its readers of the significance of the Montreal exhibition for the local art scene. The Montreal audience was familiar with the crafts produced in the Eastern

Townships, through the yearly Salon des metiers d'art held in Place Bonaventure. The present exhibition of RACE members in the Bourguignon Gallery was an opportunity for Montrealers to acquaint themselves with art production in the Townships, a step towards the decentralization of art in Quebec, an idea favoured by artists in small communities. The newspaper also commented on the versatility of the artists' work which included figurative as well as abstract images with no clash between the two orientations ("Treize artistes," 1974, September 28).

The last exhibition for 1974 took place between November 7 and December 1st at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. On this occasion, André Vigeant, the new director of the art gallery, stressed that RACE's exhibitions at the centre were indispensable for the artists as well as for the animation programmes of the Cultural Centre.

To celebrate the opening night and to assure adequate press coverage of the exhibition, the artists invited a journalist from La Tribune to join them at a friendly supper. RACE members, who did not wish to be considered as perched on an ivory tower, hoped to be better understood by the public through personal contacts. A journalist who would get to know the artists would be better able to convey the essence of their art to the readers. This approach indeed produced an article in La Tribune in which the journalist explains to the public the concerns of the artists and the nature of their work:

La peinture est non seulement un moyen de gagner leur vie, mais également un art de vivre, une recherche

personnelle évolutive; l'expression de leur univers intérieur, une façon de voir, la maîtrise d'une technique, la volonté de toujours mieux faire, un souci, un besoin! ("Une exposition au RACE," 1974).

(Painting is not only a means of making a living, but also a way of life, an evolutionary personal research; an expression of an interior world, a way of seeing, the mastery of a technique, the wish to always do better, a worry, a necessity.)

In summing up the year's activities, the President highlighted three major developments in the group: (1) the members improved the quality of their work and affirmed themselves as practising artists; (2) RACE made its first outing as a group to Montreal, a step which enabled the members to make contact with a commercial gallery in Montreal; (3) through personal exchange of ideas members were able to stage small group exhibitions of artists with shared affinities.

Despite the close interaction among the artists in the group, they did not develop a common style in their painting that might have led to the creation of a distinct school of art in the region. On the contrary, their work continued to be diversified in media, styles, and ideas.

1975

At the beginning of 1975 the group decided to print and distribute membership cards to the artists. Card holding members were entitled to: (1) receive the information bulletins; (2) participate in the annual group exhibitions at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke; (3) receive a 40% reduction on purchasing metal frames in the Galerie Place Royale in Old Montreal; (4) be included in an annual list of members distributed regularly to museums, documentation centres, government offices and architects; (5) be allowed to use the documentation centre of RACE; (6) participate in special RACE activities i.e. Festival des Cantons and other group exhibitions; (7) receive photocopies of press clippings reporting on group as well as individual activities; (8) have access at all times to the printmaking studio.

Holding a membership card was not only a practical device but also a gesture of assertiveness and a feeling of group pride on the part of the members. If 1974 saw the consolidation of the corporation, 1975 was the year for fine-tuning it. During this year the association elaborated a new policy for exhibitions by reducing their number and increasing their quality; it increased considerably the work in the printmaking studio, and issued its first information bulletin.

The 1975 annual assembly reelected Cantieni, Gérin-Tétreault, and Lafleur to the new executive committee. Cantieni remained president whereas the other roles were shuffled. The role of treasurer was



separated from that of secretary in order to distribute the workload more evenly among the executive committee members. A minor amendment to this effect was introduced to article 32 of the corporation's regulations later in the year.

At its first meeting in 1975 the executive committee issued a political press release in response to the threat that the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke would be closed due to budgetary difficulties. RACE could not accept that the doors of the only place which operated a professional gallery would be shut to them. In the nationalistic tones that prevailed in Quebec during the mid-seventies, RACE reminded readers that artists are the greatest awakeners of a society. The artists of Quebec are its missionaries abroad:

Sans s'en rendre compte, sans pouvoir évaluer exactement la portée du geste artistique, la population en écoutant Vigneault ou Custeau, en voyant Lemieux, Pellan ou les peintres de la région, en applaudissant le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde où le Théâtre de l'Atelier, prend conscience des possibilités des nôtres, se forge une opinion personnelle et découvre l'expression d'un peuple que l'on a trop longtemps satisfait avec du pain et des jeux (Communiqué, 1975, January).

(Without realizing, without exactly evaluating the effect of the artistic gesture--the population, by listening to Vigneault or Custeau, by contemplating the works of Lemieux, Pellan or the artists in the region, by applauding the

Théâtre du Nouveau Monde or the Théâtre de l'Atelier, becomes conscious of our possibilities, forms a personal opinion, and discovers the expression of a people which was too long satisfied with bread and circuses.)

The closure of the Cultural Centre would isolate Sherbrooke and the region from the culture which builds a nation. RACE thus joined forces with other institutions and individuals in asking the leaders to accord the financial support necessary to save and develop the "queen" of the Eastern Townships. This concerted effort bore fruit. The Cultural Centre remains to this day the heart of the cultural life in the region.

Although discussions on limiting the number of group exhibitions had already started, 1975 still saw five group exhibitions; two in the Orford Art Centre, an exhibition at the Hotel le Baron in Sherbrooke, an exhibition in Montreal, and an exhibition and demonstration of printmaking techniques in the framework of the Festival des Cantons. A planned exhibition at the Cultural Centre was postponed to the following year.

RACE, which greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the artistic activities at Orford, was pleased to exhibit there twice during the year, once in the spring during the conference of the Institut d'étude Canadien des colleges communautaires du Canada in the lobby of the concert hall and again during the summer concert season in the l'Homme et la musique pavillion. In accordance with the new intention of fine-tuning RACE's performance, the exhibition in the rotunda of the concert hall was planned to give a unity to the show by

requiring all the works to be identically framed in 24" x 32" metal frames. With a view to further improving RACE's participation in the cultural activities at the Art Centre, RACE suggested future solo exhibitions of its members in the rotunda of the concert hall and small group exhibitions in the Pavillon de l'homme et de la musique. Solo and small group exhibitions would have more unity and consistency compared to the fragmented large group exhibitions. The new format would also constitute a new challenge for the artists. Unfortunately, the Orford Art Centre did not accept the new proposal, and tension arose between the two organizations, which lasted several years: no RACE exhibitions were held there until 1981.

Concurrently with the Orford spring exhibition, RACE staged a brief display of paintings at Hotel Le Baron in Sherbrooke during a week-end conference of the Quebec Medical Association. In his letter to RACE, Dr. J. Murray, the chairperson of the organizing committee and the initiator of the exhibition, stressed the mutual benefits of such an exhibition for both parties. It would "help to stimulate interest on the part of our members in coming to the convention and would also, I believe, be interesting and profitable to your group" (Murray, 1975, March 31). RACE accepted the offer in order to make its members known to conference participants coming from all parts of Quebec, and possibly to sell some of the works on display. Hanging an exhibition in a hall that was not equipped for it required an effort on the part of the artists which proved to be far beyond what they gained from the show. There were no reactions from the doctors, and there were no purchases of paintings. The artists realized that their

work served as mere decoration. Indeed, in his thank you letter, Dr. Murray stated that the "Quebec Medical Association and I greatly appreciate the display of paintings which added a lot to the decor of an otherwise plain hall" (Murray, 1975, September 23). However, RACE gained some minor physical benefits: it now possessed some chain and other hardware paid for by the QMA which had been used for hanging the paintings. There was also a small sum of money paid to artists for their time and effort. The disappointment from this exhibition led to a decision taken later in the year not to organize any more group shows of short duration outside of well-equipped exhibition halls. Members agreed that such projects involve too much work for too few benefits.

To prepare for public demonstrations of printmaking techniques to take place at the Festival des Cantons in May 1975, RACE organized apprenticeship sessions for its members. Workshops in silkscreen and linoleum printing were offered on two separate week-ends, animated by CEGEP teachers who were members of the association. These sessions, which took place in RACE's printmaking studio, encouraged members to take up printmaking in addition to painting. The studio had to be reorganized to meet the new interest. After putting together an inventory list, new materials were bought in bulk in order to cut expenses and time. Members who frequently used the studio made a successful request for grants from the Canada Council. A sum of \$7,800 was later allocated by the Council for the studio. The now active printmaking studio also served to make posters for RACE's exhibitions. A decision was taken to make one member responsible for

a poster for every exhibition. The accelerated activities in printmaking increased the public's interest in this form of art. Two group members offered workshops to the clients of the Ateliers d'animation culturelle thus fulfilling RACE's side of the agreement signed with this institution.

Less than two weeks after the exhibition at the Hotel Le Baron, RACE members were busy animating a make-shift printmaking studio in a tent as part of the Festival des Cantons. It was believed that the festival, a popular event with a large public participation, would offer an opportunity for selling low-priced prints made on the spot. The tent was equipped with facilities for silkscreen, woodcuts and linoleum, and RACE members worked there during the week of the festival. The public showed interest in the activities; the tent was crowded with curious onlookers and RACE members hoped that informing people about the technical aspects of art would enhance their appreciation and eventually make them more disposed to consume it. As in the previous year, RACE managed to exhibit its members' work in Montreal. A group exhibition was held in June in Galerie Signal operated by la Société des artistes professionnels du Québec.

With the proliferation of its activities, RACE decided to issue a thrice-annual newsletter to its members. The newsletter would facilitate the dispensing of information and would also serve as a platform for exchanging or sharing ideas. The first Bulletin appeared in September 1975. The other two were planned to be published in February and in March. The newsletter was written in a chatty informal style. It fulfilled its role as a dispenser of information,

but failed to be a forum for sharing ideas. The Bulletin appeared fairly regularly until 1982. There were altogether forty publications.

After three years of activities focusing on the organization of numerous group exhibitions, RACE elaborated an exhibition policy that would serve as a guide for the future: (1) RACE would not participate in short-term exhibitions initiated outside of RACE's framework; (2) RACE would nominate one of its members to be responsible for each exhibition. His/her task would be to carry out in detail the instructions given by the executive committee in order to ensure an orderly co-ordination for each show; (3) RACE would exhibit annually at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke.

**2. Friendship: 1976-1977**

1976

After three years of serving on the executive committee, Cantieni, Gérin-Tetreault, and Lafleur were ready to relinquish their positions to other members. The group needed a wider participation on the part of its members if it wanted to develop and become more dynamic. On leaving the presidency in January 1976, Cantieni summarized his three years of executive work:

Le bilan de ce que nous avons accompli se résume en des réalisations concrètes--les expositions et les manifestations organisées par le RACE surtout, mais aussi les échanges, l'encouragement et l'appui qui ont permis aux individus d'agir de leur propre gré et à leur propre compte. De ce point de vue notre accomplissement est fort impressionnant: depuis 1973 RACE et ses membres ont participé à dix neuf expositions solo et à trente et un expositions de groupe, dont plusieurs à Montréal. De plus, RACE a organisé six ateliers, stages, ou démonstrations pour ses membres ou pour le public. En tout, cinquante six activités en deux ans et demi, soit une activité tous les seize jours. Ces chiffres révèlent adéquatement l'intensité de l'activité artistique de notre région à laquelle nous avons contribué par la mise à jour des mécanismes de collaboration et d'échange entre artistes (Cantieni, Rapport du président, 1976).



(Our accomplishments can be summarized in concrete achievements--mainly the exhibitions and activities organized by RACE--but also in the exchanges, the encouragement and the support which enabled members to act on their own initiative for their own interest. In this respect our accomplishment is impressive: since 1973 RACE and its members participated in nineteen solo exhibitions and in thirty-one group exhibitions, many of which took place in Montreal. In addition, RACE organized six workshops, apprenticeship sessions, or demonstrations for its members and for the public. Altogether, fifty-six activities in two and a half years, one activity every sixteen days. These numbers reveal the intensity of the artistic activity in our region to which we have contributed by putting together mechanisms of collaboration and exchange among artists.)

Cantieni rightfully measures RACE's contribution to the region not only by the group-activities it engendered, but also by the achievements of its individual members who spread a net of solo and small group exhibitions around the Eastern Townships.

In the second part of the presidential report Cantieni is concerned with the danger to the autonomous status of the artists in the region vis-à-vis the growing influence of the SAPQ (la Société des artistes professionnels du Québec) based in Montreal. Cantieni strongly advocates regional autonomy for the artists, an issue he continued to pursue until 1978 when he organized a symposium on the

merits of the decentralization of culture in Quebec. Cantieni finishes his report urging the artists to continue to defend the status of their profession in the region. He strongly recommends that RACE seek greater recognition from the City of Sherbrooke by requesting monetary contributions from the Municipality, thus involving the latter in the artistic life of the Sherbrooke citizenry. However, it took several years before the Municipality started regularly to contribute a modest sum of money to help RACE pay rent on its present premises.

The annual assembly of 1976 elected four new members to the executive committee replacing those who had served two and a half years. Jacques Barbeau was nominated president by the newly elected committee.

In 1976 RACE was ready to implement its new exhibition policy of reducing the number of group exhibitions. Unfortunately, the first casualty was the exhibition at the Orford Arts Centre. Since the Centre's authorities did not accept RACE's suggestion of solo and small exhibitions in choice locations, RACE rejected a counter offer made by the Centre for a group exhibition in one of the corridors of the Orford complex. Another near-casualty was RACE's participation in the Festival des Cantons in Sherbrooke. In spite of a group decision not to participate in the 1976 event, a last-minute offer of better exhibition conditions was considered by the membership, but no acceptable solution was found for 1976. However, the following year RACE returned to the Festival when a sheltered space was offered to house RACE's exhibition.

Since the new policy advocated high quality exhibitions, RACE spent most of 1976 planning an ambitious, multifacet exhibition for its annual show at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. The year 1976 was a period of accelerated developments in the printmaking studio. These activities reached a peak in terms of improved working space, the number of artists involved, and the quality of the art work produced. In compliance with the policy of a more even work distribution among all RACE members, the group, not surprisingly, put Graham Cantieni in charge of the printmaking studio and Claude Lafleur in charge of the annual exhibition.

The big boost to the printmaking studio came from a \$7,800 Canada Council grant to supplement the operational cost of the printmaking establishment. It would cover mainly the cost of perishable materials such as inks and paper. A certain amount of money would be used to defray costs of materials used in apprenticeship sessions as well as to remunerate graphic artists who would conduct the workshops. Cantieni, who was now in charge of the studio, set out to properly equip and organize it. He called a special meeting on March 18th for all the members who intended to use the printmaking facilities. The nine members who attended the meeting elaborated new operating regulations for the studio: members using the printing facilities would pay a yearly fee of \$60. In return, each member would receive a key that would give access to the storage facilities. Members would have to monitor the use of perishable material so that it could be replenished without delay. Members would also devise a calendar for press and space reservation. The members present in this meeting

passed a resolution whereby the users of the premises would decide together on all matters concerning the studio. They also decided to undertake a sizeable renovation of the work area: i.e. construction of tables; shelves for papers, inks, solvents, etc.; storage cupboards; drying frames for fresh prints; a luminous table; a special table for photomechanic work; and an acid room. The City of Sherbrooke agreed to provide all the building materials necessary for the renovation, and RACE members volunteered their time to carry out this project by working together on Wednesday nights for several weeks until the work was completed in May 1976.

In addition to workshop sessions in RACE's printmaking premises, the studio committee organized an apprenticeship week-end (an initiation to photomechanic techniques) in the well-known Graff studio in Montreal. This opportunity for professional development was offered to all RACE members free of charge. In accordance with its obligation to the Ateliers d'animation culturelle, RACE again offered courses to the public. Three members of RACE undertook to team-teach nine sessions of silkscreen to clients of the Ateliers.

The annual RACE exhibition in November 1976 was the most ambitious and the most comprehensive of the group's exhibitions to date. It was held in the Grand Hall of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke from November 13 to December 5. The exhibition included twenty-five works by twelve artists in oil, acrylic, ink, photography, weaving, charcoal, silkscreen, and wood prints. In order to assure a high level for this exhibition, the works were chosen by a jury composed of three persons: André Vigeant,

the director of the gallery; a RACE member; Jean-Claude Leblanc, an art critic from Le Devoir. This was the first time that RACE members presented their work to the scrutiny of a jury.

In addition to presentation of works, the exhibition featured workshops in kiosques where members again demonstrated to the public their respective techniques in silkscreen, wood and linoleum printing, acrylic painting, and photography. The show also included a presentation of a slide projection portraying the members' various activities, interests, and artwork. A silkscreen poster and a small catalogue of the exhibition were prepared for the public.

Because of the complexity of this undertaking, members were assigned to various tasks: jury selection, hanging of the exhibition, co-ordinating the demonstrations, designing the poster, designing the catalogue, producing the slide projection, taking care of publicity, and framing of the works. Altogether eleven members shared responsibility for the show.

Shortly before this exhibition, Cantieni became the new director of the University of Sherbrooke Art Gallery, replacing André Vigeant who resigned. In the press release he issued for the exhibition, Cantieni reminded the press and the public of RACE's achievements in the region and added a new critical dimension by linking the work of the local artists, beyond the immediate region, to the contemporary art scene in Quebec as well as to prevalent international currents.

In his thank you letter to RACE, Cantieni, now director of the University of Sherbrooke Gallery, informed the president that the exhibition had attracted 3,000 visitors: "Je crois que ceci est en

soi une bonne indication de la renommée du RACE et de l'intérêt du public de la région pour les artistes de la région" (Cantieni, 1976, December 13). (I think that this in itself is a good indication of RACE's reputation and the public's interest in the artists of the region.) He also asked RACE's permission to use the slide projection for didactic purposes i.e. to show it to school children who visit the gallery. This slide projection, he noted, would also serve as a core to a new documentation centre on the artists and artisans of the region that he was about to found.

1977

Shortly after RACE's major exhibition at the Cultural Centre, members of the group gathered for their 1977 annual assembly. A newly elected executive committee nominated Claude Lafleur as president of RACE. In his first address to the association, in the pages of the Bulletin, Lafleur disclosed his main goal as president--to increase communication among the group members by accelerating the social encounters, by more frequent Bulletin publications, and by circulating an opinion questionnaire to all members (1977, February).

As part of his effort to increase interaction in the group, Lafleur revived an old Quebec custom of a social gathering on the first Friday of every new month. These informal RACE gatherings took place at the printmaking studio, at members' homes, or at any other place conducive to the exchange of ideas, the planning of projects, etc. Snacks and drinks enhanced the social atmosphere in these meetings.

In order to steer the group towards an orientation that would satisfy most of the members, Lafleur launched an opinion poll in the form of a questionnaire to be answered by all RACE members. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first section explored members' perception of RACE at the time; the second section polled RACE's contributions to its members; and the third investigated what the members expected of an artists' association.

The new executive committee which analysed the results of the polling concluded that RACE fulfilled most of its members' wishes.

However, they recognized that there had been some dissatisfaction on an ideological, social, and professional level. Members complained of lethargy, passivity, lack of mutual understanding, elitism, and excessive individualism in the group. The committee's conclusions did not seem to deal directly with the ideological and social discontent. Instead, it listed a string of activities it would undertake to organize for the coming year: (1) founding a RACE gallery; (2) organizing high quality group exhibitions in Sherbrooke as well as outside of the immediate region; (3) dispensing information on art supplies and materials; (4) wholesale group purchasing of art supplies; (5) soliciting solo and small group exhibitions for members; (6) continuing the social gatherings; (7) inviting artists from outside of the region to exhibit, to demonstrate, and to talk to members.

In compliance with these conclusions, Lafleur contacted Laurent Bouchard, an old friend from his student days at the Ecole des Beaux Arts de Montréal, who had become the Director of the Musée du Québec. In his letter to Bouchard, Lafleur informs him of the existence of RACE and requests information with regard to the Museum's policy of group or solo exhibitions. Would it be possible to have a RACE exhibition at the Museum? What is the Museum's acquisition policy? What service does it offer to Quebec artists? Lafleur also expresses the wish to receive all information and publicity documents from the Museum.

A friendly reply to the letter arrived a month later. It included all the requested information. However there was no



indication that it would be easy for RACE as a group, or for any of its members to exhibit in, or to sell work to the Quebec Museum. The Museum, according to its director, operated on a very high level and was relying solely on jury decisions for its selection of exhibitions and for its acquisitions.

On learning that Bishop's University collected the work of local artists, Lafleur addressed a letter to Bishop's public relations service informing the University of the existence of RACE, its history, and its activities. He also enclosed a list of the members. No official answer came from Bishop's University, and no acquisition of any RACE member's work was made by this institution.

In order to further implement the wishes of the membership, the president, together with the executive committee, concluded that the association would greatly benefit from professional secretarial facilities, from an art gallery as an outlet for members' work, and from the presence of a studio co-ordinator. Part of the studio would be set up as an office, and a small room adjacent to the studio would be converted into a gallery. The operating costs would be shared, since all three facilities were lodged on the same premises. The gallery would operate as a regular commercial gallery with the net profit remitted to the exhibiting artists. A competent gallery manager would be in charge of soliciting exchanges with other commercial galleries, thus diffusing the work of Quebec artists as well as serving the clients.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs reacted to RACE's request for grants with a frank and detailed letter by Pierre Lachapelle who was

in charge of the Ministry's Department of Plastic Arts. He notified Lafleur that regardless of RACE's well-founded association and regardless of the quality of the services it offered its members, the government could not help the association financially for lack of available funds allocated to artists' associations. However, since Lachapelle believed that in the future his department would have better means to help artists' associations, he took the liberty of expressing his personal opinion on RACE's request for a grant.

Lachapelle pointed out that a recent history of government support to artists' associations revealed that all the funds were spent on payment of rent and other bills, i.e. telephone, photocopies, etc., to the extent that nothing was left for covering costs of the artists' activities. In addition, some associations accumulated deficits. In view of this situation the government had been encouraging the various artists' associations to amalgamate into one multidisciplinary association. Would RACE join such an association?

As for RACE's particular project, Lachapelle thought that it was strange that a single association would request rent and telephone payment for three locations as well as a salary payment for three different persons. (Unfortunately, he had not noticed that all three projects were located at the same place and that the work could be shared by one or two persons.) Lachapelle also criticized RACE members for not paying sufficiently for the services they were benefiting from. He took the trouble to calculate that members pay only five cents a day in membership fees and only sixteen cents a day for the use of the printmaking facilities. The government would perhaps be

willing to share in the artists' association expenses, but would not be willing totally to support them.

Lafleur reacted angrily to Lachapelle's letter. In his reply, Lafleur blamed Lachapelle for misunderstanding RACE's proposal; he criticized Lachapelle's calculation of the members' contributions, pointing out that Lachapelle seemed completely unaware of the artists' outlay for art supplies and frames. Lafleur also reminded him that the members contributed by teaching courses to the public without being remunerated for it. He ended the letter by ridiculing Lachapelle's call for RACE to join a non-existent provincial multidisciplinary association.

A three-day trip to New York in May was the highlight of RACE's activities for the year. Together, members visited museums and galleries and participated in the SOHO art festival. The executive committee members had a chance to visit the Westpath Graphic Workshop and managed to arrange an interview with one of the workshop's members. They also met representatives of the association of the artist-run galleries and gathered information on how co-operative galleries function, in preparation for the founding of RACE's own gallery.

As in previous years, RACE once again joined a public celebration. This time the occasion was Heritage Week (Semaine de patrimoine). The members organized a kite-launching event on the grounds of the University of Sherbrooke campus. The public of all ages was invited to join in the making and flying of kites.

After a year of absence, RACE reappeared at the Festival des Cantons with an exhibition of works by members and other local artists selected by a RACE jury. RACE consented to participate once again in the event because this time the Festival committee offered a sheltered exhibition space in a hall in the basement of the Sherbrooke Cathedral. However, some members were dissatisfied with the group's performance. In a call to the members urging them to voice their concern openly in the Bulletin pages, André Lacroix, the vice-president, mentioned some of the rumours that were circulating in the group. These included complaints that the executive committee had contravened a previous decision not to participate in the Festival, that the exhibition was at best unequal in quality, and at worst outright poor, and that the facilities in the hall were not up to expectations.

The printmaking studio continued to function with around eight members steadily at work there. When the City of Sherbrooke bought a new etching press for the studio, RACE was encouraged to organize two etching workshops for its members led by Francine Beauvais, an instructor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). RACE also arranged a workshop in lithography at the CEGEP de Sherbrooke, animated by Jacques Benoît, a teacher at the same institution.

The year's activities terminated with a cash and carry pre-Christmas exhibition at the printmaking studio. Members exhibited two-to-three small works and stored some extra pieces nearby to serve as replacements in case of a sale. In addition to the profit it brought some artists, this exhibition permitted the public to visit

the printmaking studio and to become familiar with the equipment and operating style of the place.

In accordance with Lafleur's intention to increase communication among the members, the year was spent in modest professional activities and in an acceleration of social activities. The group organized a memorable trip to New York, a successful sugaring-off party, and numerous Friday night gatherings. However, not surprisingly, friendship and openness brought dissatisfaction and dissent to the surface. The main reason for the tension stemmed from an unequal commitment on the part of the members, some of whom were active as artists and as organizers, while others, less energetic, felt left out.

**3. Cultural Politics: 1978-1979**

1978

Claude Lafleur characterized 1977 as the year of friendship. In the annual report he claimed that it was mainly through social contacts within the group that members succeeded in advancing their professional accomplishments. Moreover, RACE had become a strong visible force on the cultural scene in the region. As such it had been occasionally accused of monopolizing the local art scene. However, Lafleur rejected any such accusation since it had never been RACE's intention to exercise power. It was "normal" he argued that an active group of artists would have an impact on the local cultural dynamics.

Lafleur was renominated to serve as president for the 1978 term. He determined to embark on community projects, an orientation which would involve RACE deeply in the region's cultural politics. RACE became active in the deliberations over the founding of a regional museum and in the negotiations over the future of the Festival des Cantons. RACE was also frequently consulted on artists' copyrights, CEGEP art programming, the fate of heritage buildings, and the issue of regionalization versus centralization in the art domain.

Parallel to the insurgence of political activities, RACE members continued to further their professional interests through exhibitions and through their work in the printmaking studio. RACE gained some provincial recognition in the pages of Vie des Arts (1978, autumn). Claude Lafleur wrote a comprehensive article on RACE as a group, while Gilles Daigneault presented a critical review of the work of several RACE members.

Daigneault (1978) viewed RACE as a group of artists who constituted a microcosm of the international preoccupation with form in painting, rather than as an isolated group of provincial artists. Nonetheless, Daigneault observed that several of the artists reflected on their identity by depicting images of people and places emanating from their past (Daigneault, 1978, pp. 34-35).

The cash and carry exhibition and sale at the end of 1977, which had attracted 350 visitors and sold fifteen works, encouraged the members to proceed with a plan to open a commercial gallery. The entry hall, and a small room which had served as a sitting room for the printmaking studio, were converted into gallery space. The gallery opened officially on April 23, 1978 with an exhibition of drawings and lithographs by Jacques Benoit, a RACE member. Another addition to RACE that year was a new logo designed by Pierre Jeannotte, a member who specialized in commercial graphic art.

RACE's constant effort to enlarge its audience over a wider radius was finally rewarded when it won a coveted grant from the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs to mount an itinerant exhibition to circulate in the Eastern Townships. The art historian, Richard Milot, took charge of the curating and co-ordinating of the exhibition. Milot was motivated and encouraged by the recent resurgence of cultural activities within the Townships. New cultural facilities had sprung up in many communities, and professional personnel had been hired to promote and organize cultural events.

The exhibition consisted of three complete units which travelled separately. The three exhibitions differed from each other in



content, form, and materials. Visou consisted of figurative work; Manière presented abstract work; and Mélange included works of mixed media. The exhibition was launched with an official opening night at the Musée de Patrimoine operated by the Eastern Townships Historical Society in Sherbrooke, which hosted the exhibition for the month of November 1978. RACE also collaborated with the Association de paralysie cérébrale du Québec in an art auction which took place on September 27, 1978. Fifteen pieces were sold.

Mimi Dupuis, the person in charge of the print studio for that year, organized more workshops for RACE members: a week-end of etching in the Open Studio in Toronto, and an apprenticeship session in wood engraving in RACE's Sherbrooke studio led by Jeanine Leroux from Montreal. RACE also renewed its contract with the Ateliers d'animation culturelle for the period stretching from June 1st to May 1979 with the intention of a yearly renewal of the contract until such time as one of the signators wished to terminate it. The new agreement permitted RACE to use the premises for various activities apart from printing.

As RACE became prominent in the region, it took part in major decisions relating to local cultural activities and institutions. When the Fine Arts Department of the CEGEP de Sherbrooke was lobbying for an addition of two more courses to its department--ceramics or weaving--it solicited a letter of recommendation from RACE to the Ministry of Education. Similarly, RACE officially supported the recommendation of the Eastern Townships Historical Society to the city councillors to preserve the Paton Complex, the oldest set of factory

buildings in Sherbrooke. These buildings, constructed in loyalist style, and located on the banks of the Magog River in the heart of downtown Sherbrooke, had been deserted for several years and were gradually disintegrating. Richard Milot, acting as president of the Eastern Townships Historical Society, undertook this initiative in order to prevent the imminent demolition of the buildings. Today this complex is undergoing complete rehabilitation for purposes of lodging, business, and entertainment.

RACE also supported the League of Human Rights in its efforts to defend the rights and liberties of artists. The League sent RACE a press-release in which it expressed its concern over the neglect of artists' rights and liberties by public, business, and governmental institutions. It pointed to the existence of repeated violations of artists' copyrights, especially by educational authorities, to the frequent limitations on the freedom of expression by the state, and to the repeated examples of discrimination based on age or style. The League thus called on all artists to report any such violations whenever they occurred and to join a special committee which would follow the cases. Lafleur answered the call in the name of RACE. He then participated in a meeting of the committee responsible for the preservation of the rights and liberties of artists. Later, the Quebec Interministerial Artists' Rights Committee, nominated by Camille Laurin, the Minister of State for Cultural Development, invited Lafleur to convey his position vis-à-vis the artists' rights problem.

Cantieni, still a prominent RACE member, had been highly involved in the issue of centralization vs. regionalization of the visual arts domain in Quebec. The provincial Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which had been increasingly subsidizing artists' associations, was anxious to deal through one central organization rather than through a number of small associations. To this end, the Ministry put pressure on the major existing artists' associations to fuse into a central federation. The executive committee of such a federation would include three representatives for each of the three major disciplines in the visual arts: painting, printmaking, and sculpture. Cantieni viewed with alarm the trend toward centralization of the visual arts' administration. In an emotional unpublished letter to the editor sent to Le Devoir (Bulletin, 13), Cantieni warned that existing small organizations with specific orientations such as a common working space or with shared geographic interests, as in the case of RACE, would be marginalized or outright excluded from a central organization. Since these groups had proven their capacity to function effectively, their marginalization would be a loss to the visual arts domain on the provincial as well on the regional level. Instead, Cantieni suggested the formation of a federation of all the existing organizations which would take into consideration the forces which were already present in the province.

To promote his idea, Cantieni, in his capacity as artistic director of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke, planned a three-day symposium on Les arts visuels--régionalisation ou centralisation with the participation of numerous public agencies

involved in the administration of visual arts in Quebec (September 22-24, 1978). RACE's executive committee examined Cantieni's proposal with interest and expressed complete support for the project. The committee also suggested that the Conseil de la culture be included in the symposium and be asked to contribute money for it.

Several months before the symposium took place, Le Devoir reported that the professional associations of the three arts disciplines in Montreal had been fused into one organization composed of three councils--painting, sculpture, and printmaking. The administration of the new federation was to be composed of a representative from each discipline, leaving full autonomy for each council to run its own projects. This new body would serve as a liaison between the artists and governmental agencies (Leblond, 1978, March 20).

By the end of the 1970s, the visual arts in the region were thriving. The CEGEPs and universities included versatile art programmes; the Ateliers d'animation culturelles offered courses in a variety of art media; the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke featured exhibitions of contemporary art; the Festival des Cantons brought folk art to the fore; the Séminaire de Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships Historical Society each operated a museum in which it presented exhibitions pertaining to the past heritage of the region; and RACE relentlessly promoted local contemporary art. This vitality in the visual arts prepared the way for a regional museum which would collect and preserve past and present art.

RACE was involved in the deliberations on the future museum from the beginning. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which undertook to encourage collaboration among the various cultural organizations in the province, invited the representatives of these groups to a meeting in Sherbrooke on March 7, 1970. The meeting was called to discuss the formation of a committee to investigate all aspects pertaining to the founding of a regional museum in Sherbrooke. Lafleur was one of seven regional representatives invited to the meeting. Two other members of RACE participated in these discussions: Cantieni, as artistic director of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke; and Jacques Barbeau, in his role as president of the Conseil de la Culture de l'Estrie (a federation open to all the cultural organizations in the Eastern Townships).

The provincial government which had already allocated \$120,000 for the Museum project, was inclined to give the money to the existing Museum of Natural Sciences linked to the Séminaire de Sherbrooke. However, the Ministry expected the latter to take into consideration the legitimate interests of the visual arts and the heritage sectors. Needless to say, such a position was not favoured by RACE or by any of the other organizations. RACE's executive committee gathered a few hours previous to the March 7 meeting and passed a resolution informing the responsible organizers of RACE's position with regard to the Museum: (1) RACE believes in a regional museum composed of three distinct and equally important sectors—fine arts (including crafts), patrimoine, and natural sciences; (2) RACE believes that the government overestimates the value of the natural science collection

in the region; (3) RACE also believes that with the existence of a museum it will be possible to gather art and heritage works which will surpass, by far, both in number and in quality what already exists in the realm of natural sciences.

The meeting of the cultural organizations opened with a presentation by the Department of Private Museums and Exhibition Centres of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs which advocated the formation of a responsible corporation and a study committee for the Museum. It was followed by an historical summary of the Museum of the Sherbrooke Seminary by its representative who also appealed to the delegates to accept the Seminary as the legitimate body in charge of an enlarged regional museum. The Seminary would then appoint the proposed study committee. This procedure was unacceptable to Lafleur. He then presented RACE's vision of a museum composed of three equal sectors. After an animated discussion, the meeting unanimously passed a motion proposed by Lafleur and seconded by Cantieni:

Vu notre accord que le futur musée de Sherbrooke deviendra un musée à trois volets d'importance égale--les sciences naturelles, les Beaux-Arts et la Patrimoine dont le volet sciences naturelles sera d'envergure nationale, il est proposé de former un comité d'implantation d'un musée, représentatif des trois volets à part égale et reconnu par la corporation du Musée du Séminaire et le Ministère des Affaires culturelles. La Ville de Sherbrooke est également représentée sur ce comité (Lafleur, 1978, Bulletin, 12, p. 3).

(In view of our agreement that the future Museum be composed of three sectors of equal importance—Natural Sciences, Fine Arts and Heritage, in which the Natural Science sector will take a national dimension--it is proposed to appoint a museum founding committee which will represent the three sectors equally and will be recognized by the Corporation of the Seminary and by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The City of Sherbrooke will also be represented on this committee.)

Lafleur represented the visual arts section in the newly appointed committee. The Seminary later notified all groups concerned that it would not recognize the founding committee in its present form.

The last political hurdle of the year was the issue of the declining vitality of the Festival des Cantons. RACE, together with other cultural organizations, felt dissatisfied with the way the relations between the Festival organizers and the Festival participants had deteriorated over the years. In order to convey their position to the public and to the Festival organizers they formed a Common Front, composed of the principal cultural participants in the Festival. Almost all the members of the Common Front complained of a lack of communication between themselves and the festival organizing committee, which, they claimed, had not fully appreciated the cultural input that the various groups had brought to the Festival. In view of this pessimistic view, the Common Front members passed a four paragraph resolution: (1) that the Festival democratize its structure in such a way that the principal cultural

organizations have adequate representation on the Festival's executive committee in order better to reflect the spirit and the objectives of the Festival; (2) that the Festival objectives be better articulated by the new democratic structure in order to integrate more harmoniously the popular and cultural elements in the Festival; (3) that the Festival better develop its regional character by favouring the local artists, artisans, and other animators, though leaving the door open to outside input; (4) that the Festival recognize the professional competence of the participants by offering them a reasonable remuneration, and that it grant them complete freedom in organizing the professional aspect of their participation.

In the face of this challenge to its authority, the Festival administration decided to hold a popular consultation, open to everybody, on the future of the Festival. However the Festival specifically invited twenty-four public organizations to the consultation. The list included, in addition to the cultural organizations, groups such as the Police, the Ambulance Service, the Golden Age Groups, the Chamber of Commerce, etc.

In response to the invitation, the Common Front decided to attend the consultation only if the following guarantees would be made: (1) that the director and the executive committee of the Festival be present at the consultation; (2) that there would be room for an exchange of opinions between the participants and the organizers of the Festival; (3) that there be access to certain memoranda presented in the past, and that a complete report be published before the end of January 1979; (4) that the Festival directors decide on the orientation of the next Festival by January 1979.



The Festival administration rejected the Common Front's conditions for joining the public consultation. The Common Front responded by boycotting the consultation and by calling a press conference in order to explain the Front's position to the public. The decision over the issue of participation in the 1979 Festival was now left to the discretion of each group. RACE, a staunch supporter of the Common Front policy, decided to abstain from the next Festival as long as the circumstances remained unchanged.

1979

After two stormy years, Lafleur handed the presidential reins over to Pierre Jeannotte who had been serving on RACE's executive committee. Jeannotte, despite his aversion to politics, inherited several complex political files: the Festival des Cantons, the Regional Museum, the issues of regionalization and decentralization, and artists' rights.

The Common Front continued to press for the democratization of the Festival. It decided that unless this was assured by January 31st, 1979, the Common Front members would abstain from the next Festival. Jacques Delorme, President of the Festival des Cantons appealed to Jeannotte and to other Common Front group leaders to reconsider their negative decision with regard to the 1979 Festival. Delorme argued that the corporation's executive committee could not change the election procedure without ratification from its general assembly. Delorme pointed out that, in this period of reflection and evaluation, he had nominated a committee to engage in consultations with various members of the Sherbrooke community involved in the Festival. If consultation with the milieu revealed a need for change in the fundamental structures, regulations, or the orientation of the Festival, this would then be discussed at a general assembly.

The final fate of the Festival was decided at an enlarged Common Front meeting on February 21st, 1979, a meeting in which each organization was represented by its entire executive committee. RACE was represented by five of its members. After an evaluation of the

situation, the membership unanimously voted on a motion recommending the Common Front organizations to abstain from any participation in the 1979 Festival. Thus came to an end the saga of RACE's participation in the Festival des Cantons. The Festival collapsed two or three years later.

After a year of lobbying on the part of the Eastern Townships Historical Society, the Crafts Association, and RACE--co-ordinated by the Conseil de la Culture--the Ministry of Cultural Affairs accepted the proposal of establishing a tripartite Regional Museum. A letter by the Deputy Minister to Jacques O'Bready, the Mayor of Sherbrooke, explains the position taken by the Quebec Government. It states that the Museum is to be composed of three sectors--Natural Sciences, History/Heritage, and Fine Arts, and that the executive committee of the existing Seminary Museum is to be enlarged to assure a democratic representation of all concerned groups. While the Mayor, RACE, the Crafts' Association, and the Historical Society endorsed the Minister's position, the Seminary's Corporation only partially accepted it. The corporation agreed on the principle of a three-sector museum, but it refused to make changes to its executive committee. The corporation offered to enlarge the committee by two seats to be filled by representatives from the City of Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships.

RACE's executive committee reacted to the Seminary's position by passing a counter proposition: (1) that the concerned sectors--Natural Sciences, History/Heritage, and Fine Arts--form a consultative committee with equal representation from the three sectors; (2) that

after research, exploration and consultation, this group form an executive committee with a mandate to apply the recommendations of the consultative committee for the establishment of a multidisciplinary museum in Sherbrooke. Because of the rising tensions between the Seminary Corporation and RACE, Jeannotte cancelled a possible RACE exhibition at the Centre d'Exposition Leon Marcotte, affiliated to the Seminary Museum.

Regardless of the attention given to community culture, RACE continued to pursue its social and artistic activities: the monthly Friday night meetings were popular; a trip to Boston was organized; the three itinerant exhibitions continued to circulate in the Eastern Townships; more RACE members became involved in the new workshops; they undertook to develop a RACE silkscreen album; and the yearly RACE exhibition took place at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke.

It took the whole of 1979 to conceive and to bring the silkscreen album entitled Gens Diverses to completion. This project was made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and by a \$100 supplement paid by each participating member. The artists engaged in the production of the album were professionally assisted by Louis Desaulniers, a well-known Montreal silkscreen printer. The work of ten members was included in the album which was launched on December 6, 1979 on the occasion of the opening night of the Salon des metiers d'art des Cantons de l'Est at the Sherbrooke Armoury.

The trip to Boston took place on the week-end of May 19-20, 1979. Members and their friends enjoyed socializing and visiting museums,

galleries, and other places of interest. Eight RACE members took advantage of a Canada Council grant to travel to Toronto for another workshop in the Open Studio on June 9-11, 1979. The workshop was conducted by Toronto artists Brian Kelly, Moira Clark, and Lorna Livey who helped RACE members to perfect their colour techniques in etching.

RACE's yearly exhibition at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke took place in November as part of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the University. The number twenty-five was the theme of the show. Members composed their work with this number in mind, i.e. using twenty-five colours, or twenty-five forms, etc. The result was an interesting guessing game and a high-quality exhibition. Members enjoyed working on a common theme, a practice they would occasionally repeat in the years to come.

In his capacity as Director of the University of Sherbrooke Art Gallery, Cantieni wrote to RACE thanking the members for the recent exhibition. Cantieni was pleased that this exhibition had raised a particular interest in the public. Cantieni also remitted a symbolic cheque of twenty-five dollars to each participating member. This was the first time that RACE members were paid for taking part in an exhibition. Cantieni's joy did not last long. Shortly after the November exhibition, Cantieni was jolted by a letter to the editor in La Tribune by RACE member Mimi Dupuis, in which she accused the University of Sherbrooke and its Cultural Centre of mistreating local artists. Dupuis deplored the lack of proper remuneration to artists who lent their work for exhibitions as well as the lack of an acquisition policy for the purchase of local art.

Mais l'artiste lui, ne doit pas compter. Son oeuvre, son travail ne se calculent pas en heures ou en semaines, ils n'existent pas.

L'artiste est-il dupe ou est-il à ce point écoeuré qu'il ne réagit même plus? Qu'il ne se réveille pas trop tard, il aura passé sa vie à être manipulé au profit de l'image que veulent se donner ces soi-disants entreprises sans but lucratif (Dupuis, 1979, November 27).

(But the artist does not count. His work and his labour are not counted in hours or weeks; they do not exist.

Has the artist been duped or has he become so fed up that he does not react any more? Let's hope he doesn't wake up too late to find he was manipulated in order to foster the creation of a self-image that the supposedly non-lucrative enterprises aspire to give themselves.)

Dupuis touched a raw nerve in Cantieni who saw in the founding of RACE a way of protecting artists from the abuse they suffered by public and private institutions. In an apologetic article in La Tribune entitled "Six ans de progrès dans le domaine des arts visuels" Cantieni blames the artists' organizations for this state of affairs. These organizations are torn by internal conflicts and lack the solidarity needed to fight for artists' rights. Cantieni points out, however, that the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke has already taken steps towards remedying this situation and will continue to do so in the future. Cantieni also explains why local art is so poorly represented in the university collection. A detailed summary

of the history of the acquisitions since 1963 reveals that most of the collection consists of donations and of works chosen by juries (Cantieni, 1979, December 11).

In summing up 1979, Jeannotte complained that RACE, which often had been consulted in the cultural milieu, was unfortunately drawn into political organizations, a situation he detested since it consumed time which could have been better used for constructive and creative preoccupations. In the catalogue RACE dix ans: 1973-1983 Jeannotte expressed his disappointment:

En plus de créer, il fallait jouer un rôle culturel venant pallier les lacunes d'autres organismes de la région.

Tout ce travail était harassant, épuisant même. Nous n'avions plus le temps de parler, d'échanger sur nos préoccupations créatives. Il est évident que ces activités étaient nécessaires, pour ne pas dire obligatoires. C'était dans l'ordre des choses, nous nous étions impliqués.

Les premiers de s'en féliciter, furent le Ministre des Affaires culturelles et le milieu. Mais l'artiste, lui se contentait d'un idéal culturel, parfois des honneurs.

C'est lorsque la présidence d'un tel organisme vous tombe dessus que vous vous rendez compte jusqu'à quel point la raison d'être d'une association d'artistes avait pu être idéalisée (Jeannotte, 1983).

(It was necessary to play a cultural role, not merely to create, in order to make up for the deficiency of other organizations in the region.

All this work was harassing and even exhausting. We no longer had time to talk and to exchange ideas about our creative preoccupations. It is clear that these activities were necessary, if not obligatory. It was in the order of things; we were involved.

The first to praise themselves were the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the milieu. But the artist had to be content with a cultural ideal and only occasionally with honour.

It is when the presidency of an organization of this type is thrust upon you that you realize to what extent the raison d'être of an artists' association could be idealized.)



**4. Crisis and Transition: 1980-1982/83**

1980

To outsiders RACE seemed to be sailing smoothly, but in 1980, some of the tensions which over the years had been gathering force rocked the boat. On the occasion of RACE's tenth anniversary in 1983, all the past presidents of RACE were asked to reflect on the year of their presidency. For 1980, Norman Achim wrote:

Ma réflexion me reporte à un passé très lointain, une période difficile, qu'on appelle maladroitement la crise de croissance ou de maturité. Le RACE se devait de passer cette étape difficile avec succès, pour mieux évaluer ses priorités et ses actions. Aujourd'hui j'en suis certain, membres et ex membres ressentent la même fierté (Achim, 1983).

(My memory takes me back to a remote past, a difficult period clumsily called a development or maturity crisis. RACE had to pass through this difficult stage successfully in order to better evaluate its priorities and actions. Today, I am sure, members and ex-members feel the same pride.)

Although in 1980 RACE did not maintain the previous years' pace of activities, it nevertheless was an important year, a year in which new ideas were generated, ideas which came to fruition several years later and drastically changed RACE's orientation. Achim and his executive committee did not keep up with the projects they had

inherited. The executive committee suffered three resignations during 1980. RACE withdrew from the leadership of the Sherbrooke Museum campaign, an issue which came to a dead end because of the inability of the cultural organizations and the Seminary to reach an acceptable agreement over future procedures in the development of the Museum. RACE also lost the leadership in the decentralization issue, leaving the Cultural Council to proceed with it.

There was also a parallel slackening down in RACE's internal activities: the Bulletin did not appear on time; the gallery lasted for only a few months; there was a decrease in social activities; and enthusiasm in the printmaking studio subsided partly because of a partial breach in the agreement between RACE and the Ateliers d'animation culturelle.

Nevertheless, RACE did not come to a complete halt. The exhibitions continued. RACE came to an agreement with the Caisse populaire whereby RACE artists would exhibit in the Caisse populaire Gallery solo or in groups for ten months of the year. RACE also received a grant from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for three itinerant exhibitions. However, only two materialized in 1980: (1) 6/32 RACE, an exhibition of six members which reached the Orford Art Centre, Drummondville, and Valcourt; (2) Figuration 5, an exhibition of five members which travelled to the Orford Art Centre, Coaticook, Valcourt, and Disraeli. RACE also held its yearly exhibition at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke from November 16 to December 17.

As RACE's activities became more ambitious and complex, it had to resort more and more to government grants, a strategy which required long-range planning. As a result, plans made by an executive committee one year could only materialize the next year during the office of a new executive committee.

Towards the end of 1980, Cantieni, acting as artistic director of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke, invited RACE to participate in a didactic exhibition entitled Voir pour voir as the third itinerant exhibition to complete the three others launched in 1980. The exhibition travelled in 1981-82 to Shawinigan, Sainte-Foy, Laval, Rivière-du-Loup, Baie Comeau, Coaticook, and Amos. In his request for a grant from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Cantieni stated that one of the goals of the exhibition was to reach a public which is geographically far from the University, or a public which perceives the University as a remote elitist place. A more specific goal was to draw the public closer to the art world by presenting it with examples of different approaches practised by artists. The exhibition would demonstrate the various stages in the preparation and execution of art works as well as photographs of artists at work.

The difficulties in the printmaking studio stemmed from two sources: restriction of accessibility to the studio area imposed by the Ateliers d'animation culturelle and a general decline of interest in printmaking in art circles with the advent of the new media: installation, performance, video, etc.

When the Ateliers d'animation culturelle introduced a security alarm system, RACE members could not use their keys to enter the

building any more, and were thus restricted to working only when the building was open to the general public. This denied members the use of the studio during the precious hours of the late evening and weekends when they were free to pursue their work.

In face of the limited access to the studio, the early demise of the gallery, and the need for studio space to accommodate the large-size works produced by the new trends in art, RACE began to think of renting a combined work and gallery space in downtown Sherbrooke to provide an outlet for members' work. This dream was to materialize three years later. Meanwhile, some RACE members, anxious to have an immediate commercial outlet for their work, made arrangements to sell their work at a Wellington Street arts and crafts shop operated by the Association des métiers d'art de l'Estrie (MACE).

In response to a need expressed by the artists and the public, RACE initiated a project of compiling a practical guide for the promotion and diffusion of visual art in the region. The guide was to consist of an inventory of all the artistic outlets: galleries, exhibition centres, boutiques, and various other public and commercial institutions. It would include specific information on each establishment: the name and qualifications of the person in charge, the orientation, exhibition policy, technical facilities, services, fees, and activities. The guide would also identify various service organizations, artists' groups, schools and classes, government programmes, media information, etc. A list of artists operating in the region was to be included with a short curriculum vitae and description of their work. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs approved a \$3,000 request by RACE for publishing the Guide Pratique.

Regardless of the decrease in activities and the slackening in enthusiasm and participation among the members during 1980, RACE continued to plan for the future and thus had something to look forward to in the years to come.

1981-1982/83

With the increase in grants awarded by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, RACE was obliged to submit a financial report at the end of each fiscal year. This was the main reason why the group decided henceforth to hold its annual meeting shortly after the end of March rather than in January. Normand Achim, thus continued his presidency until the next annual meeting on April 4, 1981 in which Pierrette Mondou was elected president.

In addition to RACE's now routine involvement in regional cultural politics, RACE executed three major projects during 1981. It circulated the exhibition Voir pour Voir over a wide radius in the province, published a Guide Pratique, a catalogue of fifteen RACE members--15/81, and participated in a special enlarged exhibition of Sherbrooke artists at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke, entitled Sherbrooke 81.

RACE once again briefly intervened in the procedures leading to the establishment of a city Museum by rejecting a report prepared by the Comité de concept du Musée de Sherbrooke under the sponsorship of the Seminary Corporation. The objection was based on the grounds that RACE had never accepted the Seminary's leadership in the Museum, and that the committee had failed to consult Cantieni at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke as well as the representatives of the Department of Visual Arts of the CEGEP de Sherbrooke. The General Assembly mandated the executive committee to send a telegram conveying RACE's position to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Two

years later, a group of concerned citizens founded a separate Fine Art Museum Corporation. The Corporation solicited donations of art work by local artists and collectors. RACE members contributed generously to the Museum's collection.

In an effort to increase remuneration to participants in exhibitions, RACE sent a letter to the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke asking for better compensation for the artists. In his letter to Cantieni, the secretary of RACE, Richard Milot, mentions RACE's appreciation for the symbolic pay the members received for their participation in the previous two exhibitions. However, the artists hope for a more realistic remuneration in the future. A copy of the letter was sent to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. RACE did not write this letter in order to challenge Cantieni, but in order to help him raise more money for the purpose of financially rewarding the artists for their work.

In 1981, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs allocated a sum of \$20,000 to the Sherbrooke region to help individual artists in specific projects. All artists were deemed eligible for this grant administered by the regional Cultural Council. However, priority was to be given to literary projects for 1981. RACE protested against this policy and asked for clarification of the Cultural Council's method of establishing priorities. RACE also conveyed to the Council its criteria for setting future priorities: (1) professionalism; (2) quality of project; (3) no priority to any specific sector.

Nicol Benoit, who was then in charge of the printmaking studio, tried to generate more activities and often called on members to



submit project proposals to be subsidized by grant money set aside for this purpose. Six members benefited from this offer. RACE decided to spend the \$3,000 left over from the publication of the RACE catalogue, 15/81. Fifteen members under the coordination of Claude Lafleur brought the project to completion in September 1981. The catalogue contained two black and white photographic reproductions of each participant's work. The catalogue also included an article by art historian Richard Milot: "Vers un art contemporain en Estrie." The article was divided into two sections: (1) "1945-1973," a short history of visual art activities in the regions--artists, institutions, and patrons of the arts; (2) "RACE," a short description of the group and a short critical review of the style and orientation of the artists included in the catalogue. The catalogue was launched publicly in the presence of the media on September 24, 1981 in the Grand Hall of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. Radio Canada screened a television broadcast of the event for its programme Femmes d'aujourd'hui.

The executive committee decided to implement its decision, taken the previous year, to publish a guide to artists and art outlets in the region. A RACE jury entrusted Diane Boudreault, a new RACE member, with the task of executing the project. The Guide Pratique was published shortly after.

The exhibition Sherbrooke 81 was the last activity of RACE for 1981. It took place at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke from November 22 to December 20. This exhibition was not conceived initially as a RACE exhibition, but rather as another link

in Cantieni's chain of events intended to promote local art in its width and diversity. However, all but one of the eleven artists who participated in the exhibition were RACE members. In its format, Sherbrooke 81 differed from other group exhibitions. The Grand Hall of the Cultural Centre was divided into eight bays, each presenting a collection of work by one artist. The three remaining artists presented their work collectively in another section of the hall.

Cantieni wrote the text for the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition. In his introduction, he elaborated on the didactic goals of the exhibition:

C'est la première fois qu'à Sherbrooke tant d'artistes sont présentés simultanément avec un tel ensemble de leurs oeuvres, ce qui donne à cette manifestation l'allure d'une série de petites expositions particulières. Le visiteur aura donc une occasion unique de voir, en même temps et dans un même lieu, un ensemble important d'oeuvres de chacun de ces artistes. Il sera donc possible, à la fois, de situer une oeuvre précise dans la démarche propre à son créateur et de comparer l'ensemble de la production d'un artiste à l'ensemble des créations des autres participants (Cantieni, 1981, p. 3).

(It is the first time that in Sherbrooke so many artists simultaneously present a collection of their work in a group exhibition composed of a series of small individual displays. The visitor will have a unique opportunity to see, at the same time and in the same location, an important

collection of work by each artist. It will also be possible to situate the particular work of an artist in the context of his overall production and development, as well as to make comparisons among the productions of the artists.)

In addition to the general introduction, the catalogue included a critical review of each artist's development and one or two photographs of his work.

The end of 1981 brought an end to an era in RACE's existence. At the next annual meeting, in May 1982, Ophra Benazon became president. Various possible activities for 1982 were discussed at the meeting, but no decisions were made to undertake any specific project. A few days after the meeting Graham Cantieni, Pierrette Mondou (Cantieni's spouse) and Olaf Hanel announced their resignation from RACE in the smoke of a media blitz which they orchestrated. In an article "changer pour échanger" in RACE 10 ans: 1973-1983 published on the occasion of RACE's 10th anniversary in 1983, Mondou explained her motives in leaving the group:

Une production personnelle de plus en plus engagée et très peu de contacts sur le plan professionnel (discussion, échange, confrontation avec mes collègues) m'ont fait me rendre compte que l'aspect idéologique n'entre pas ou peu en ligne de compte dans notre association. Celle-ci se voit ouverte à tous les médiums et à toutes les tendances. Cette ouverture pourrait être des plus stimulante s'il pouvait exister entre les membres des échanges autres que sur le plan social (Mondou, 1983).

(A more demanding personal production and very few contacts on a professional level (discussion, exchange, confrontation) with my colleagues, made me realize that the ideological aspect had not counted at all or had not counted for much in our association. RACE is open to all media and all tendencies [employed by artists]. This openness could have been more stimulating if the exchanges among the members were other than on the social level.)

Cantieni's restlessness with RACE stemmed from the group's inertia. The inactive members often voted against the new projects proposed by Cantieni. Since he did not want to be at the mercy of RACE members whenever he wished to seek grants for new projects, he founded a new association, Darcheu, which was composed of three members only: himself, Mondou and Hanel. Such a group, he believed, would be flexible enough to move quickly and efficiently in acting on his ideas. Indeed, within a short period, Darcheu organized two major events in the area: a land-art project in an abandoned quarry at Eustis, which was executed by outside and local artists including some RACE members, and a performance art week-end, with invited artists from various parts of Canada and the U.S., which took place in a small theatre in downtown Sherbrooke.

RACE was amazed and shocked by the latest events. Members were angry with the defectors for not acting openly and for concealing their intention to create a competitive group to RACE. As a result of these upheavals, RACE lost credibility in the eyes of government and cultural organizations. The new executive committee was thus faced

with a bleak year: no planned projects, no grants, and a demoralized group with no clear direction. The committee could either dismantle the group or change it drastically to fit the new developments in art.

It chose the latter. RACE passed a year of soul searching. Before RACE could change, members had to acknowledge that the group was indeed stagnating, either because of lack of interest or because of the comfort provided by a good market, for some members. In order to restore the group's self-esteem and enable it to resume its role in the community, it was necessary to channel its energy towards innovative activities. Two ideas surfaced during the year: a proposal to establish a multidisciplinary studio work-space for members who work in large format or on installations, so as to encourage this kind of production, and a proposal to open a non-lucrative parallel gallery of innovative experimental art which would exhibit work by local as well as by outside artists.

In order to realize these projects, RACE needed a generous grant from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Fortunately, in 1983 the latter launched a new assistance programme--Aide aux organismes--centre d'artistes. A request for a grant was initially made in January 1983, but RACE had to wait until May when the new assistance programme came into effect.

In a letter which accompanied the assistance request, Diane Boudreault, the vice-president, briefly emphasized RACE's rationale for the new undertaking. Since RACE's main goal remained to produce and diffuse art, the time had come to establish itself at a site easily accessible to the public and to enjoy better production

facilities. RACE's members had worked until then in a printmaking studio at 1215 Kitchener Street. However, the working space available to RACE had been gradually absorbed by the Ateliers d'animation culturelle. Also, these premises were inadequate for the multidisciplinary nature of the members' work. A RACE presence at a commercial site in the centre of the city would better enable it to dispense animation and information to the public in the form of exhibitions, installations, performances, films, videos, slides, etc.

Parallel to this initiative, an exhibition committee had started preparations for RACE's tenth anniversary retrospective exhibition -- RACE 10 ans: 1973-1983--to take place from November 20 to December 18, 1983. This exhibition was planned as a joint project of RACE and the Art Gallery at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke with Cantieni as head co-ordinator.

With two mammoth projects to look forward to, 1982/83 ended on an optimistic note. RACE seemed to have emerged from the crisis ready to take up the new challenges of art production and art diffusion. With the establishment of new facilities the members could look forward to trying more innovative and experimental art techniques and to a closer contact with the public through the gallery.

5. Galerie HORACE: 1983/1983-1988

1983/84

The new executive committee for 1983/84 was elected on May 14, 1983. Gilles Larivière became president. On August 5, 1983, in a letter to RACE members, Larivière was happy to announce confirmation of a \$13,000 grant from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the renting of new quarters for RACE at 906 King Street West in central Sherbrooke. "Tous les espoirs sont permis. Notre projet nous permettra de revitaliser nos activités, d'augmenter nos services ainsi que la participation de nos membres" (Larivière, 1983, August 5). (All our hopes can be realized. Our project will enable us to revitalize our activities, to increase our services as well as the participation of our members.) Larivière invited the members to an all-day session of cleaning and painting the new quarters on Saturday, August 13, 1983. The day would end with a social supper at a restaurant, in which members could discuss at their leisure the activities in the new studio and gallery.

The new lodging for RACE consisted of an entry hall turned into a small gallery and office, a large gallery, and three working studios. The two smaller studios were rented by individual members and the large one shared by several members. All users of the facilities paid fees according to the size of the space they occupied.

In order to provide the envisaged animation and services, it was necessary to furnish the new quarters with the proper equipment. RACE again resolved to request monetary assistance from the Ministry under the programme Aide financière aux équipements culturels. RACE asked



for and received funds to build partitions for the gallery, to install lighting fixtures, and to buy a slide projector and screen.

The management of the new studio and gallery could not be carried out by voluntary work alone, due to the time required for the programming, the functioning, and the maintenance. Diane Boudreault, nominated co-ordinator, received a salary of \$100 a week for ten hours of work. She was helped by an employee, allocated to RACE through a special government programme of employment for young people Aide à l'emploi-projets culturels.

The main preoccupation of RACE until October 1983 was to devise a temporary modus operendi for the gallery. Permanent regulations were drawn up later in the 1984/85 period, based on the experience of the previous year. The gallery was named Galerie HORACE. It was defined as a parallel gallery dedicated exclusively to innovative and experimental contemporary art. The government agreed to subsidize the project on the grounds that it was an alternative rather than commercial gallery. It operated largely on the basis of volunteer work with RACE's executive committee in charge. The immediate task was to programme the exhibitions in the two halls, to establish a selection criteria, to devise publicity procedures and a financial policy, and to draw up a time-table for animation and surveillance.

The gallery officially opened on October 21, 1983 with the exhibition sept contradictions by Nicole Benoit in the large hall. A selection of works by RACE members was exhibited in the smaller gallery in accordance with the policy of reserving the smaller gallery for a succession of RACE group exhibitions. The programme of

exhibitions for the larger gallery included exhibitions by prominent artists from Montreal, a practice that RACE has constantly maintained. In addition to exhibitions, the gallery would host public lectures on various aspects of art and artists. A discussion on artists' rights led by Claire Héon, a legal adviser and specialist in the subject, was the first such event. The discussion was focused on a brief presented to the federal government: "Pour une nouvelle loi sur le droit d'auteur" prepared by the Conférences des associations de créateurs et créatrices du Québec.

During November 17-December 7 the Bishop's-Champlain Art Gallery in Lennoxville, in collaboration with Gallery HORACE, organized a juried exhibition open to all artists in the region. Through this project, RACE hoped to discover new artists eligible to join the group as well as to attract the attention of the English audience associated with Bishop's University and Champlain College.

In the autumn of 1983, representatives of an artists' association from Normandy, France came to Sherbrooke for a short visit. The visitors were interested in making contact with artists and galleries in a rural area of Quebec which had similarities to their home base, Beauval-en-Caux, located, like Sherbrooke, in a non-urban region. Anxious to exhibit in France and pressed by the shortness of the visit, RACE quickly agreed to an exchange of exhibitions with the French group--PromARTcaux. RACE would send an exhibition to Normandy and would host an exhibition of the French artists in Galerie HORACE. An exchange of letters between the two groups settled the technical aspects of the exhibition including such details as dates, framing,

shipments, opening ceremonies, etc. In order to obtain grants to cover the expenses, RACE requested slides of the PromARTcaux artists' work. But RACE was disappointed with what it saw. Their art did not conform to RACE's orientation of contemporary experimental art. Gilles Larivière, who was a staunch promoter of experimental art, convinced a RACE general assembly to cancel the exhibition with PromARTcaux. However, some RACE members were disappointed by the group's decision and decided to go ahead, as individuals, with the exchange of exhibitions. PromARTcaux's exhibition took place at the Sherbrooke Fine Arts Museum which had adopted a conservative orientation in art. Hélène Richard and Arlette Vittecoq took the work of six RACE members to France in June 1984.

A major event for RACE was the retrospective exhibition at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke RACE 10 ans: 1973-1983 from November 20 to December 18, 1983. It consisted of approximately one hundred works of past and present RACE members. The exhibition was conceived by Cantieni with the idea of recreating the atmosphere of the various past exhibitions which had marked RACE's evolution. However, Cantieni did not stay to coordinate the exhibition. He left Sherbrooke in the summer of 1983 for a one-year teaching position at the University of Victoria and afterwards rented a studio in France in order to dedicate himself to painting.

RACE 10 ans was divided into three sections placed separately in the Cultural Centre according to the periods: 1973-1976, 1977-1979, and 1980-1983. The exhibition also included an archival section with posters, catalogues, photographs, and some documents from the last ten

years. An exhibition of RACE members' prints took place simultaneously in Hall I of Galerie HORACE while an exhibition of the works of RACE members for commercial purposes was presented in Hall II.

The catalogue which accompanied the exhibition was intended to present an historical review of the aims and achievements of RACE. Each president wrote a section concerning issues during his/her term of office. Cantieni's article gave an historical description of the first three years of the association. Others preferred to muse in a frank manner over problems they encountered during their period of presidency. The catalogue also included photographs of social events as well as of invitation cards and posters of various RACE activities.

However, serious flaws and mistakes in the catalogue aroused the ire of various people in the Sherbrooke art community. A missing line in Cantieni's historical review eliminated the names of several founding members, Lafleur among them. There were also many editorial changes in Lafleur's article which were made without consulting him. (Lafleur left RACE shortly after the exhibition.) There appeared to be a misunderstanding between Galerie HORACE and the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke as to which gallery was in charge of sending invitations to RACE members. As a result, the latter did not receive invitations, and tension arose between Brouillet and RACE's president Gilles Larivière. Brouillet also felt short-changed by what she thought were insufficient acknowledgements of her work in preparing the exhibition. The City of Sherbrooke, too, complained that it had not received full acknowledgement of its participation in

the event. The two RACE members, who were in charge of the catalogue and absorbed the heat of all these mistakes, complained in turn that they did not receive any help from fellow members and thus could not produce a better catalogue within the time limits they had been given. However, regardless of the unfortunate mistakes, the catalogue reflected a frank image of RACE as viewed by its most active members.

RACE 10 ans was featured in the local press. La Tribune devoted three successive articles to it. In "Pour l'assurance d'un excellent talent estrien" Pierette Roy states:

Cet événement consacré aux dix ans du RACE constitue une mine inépuisable de renseignements sur la vie artistique estrienne, sur les développements qui l'ont marquée, sur les différents courants et tendances qui l'ont ponctuée (Roy, 1983, November 26).

(This event, dedicated to ten years of RACE, constitutes an inexhaustible mine of information on cultural life in the Eastern Townships, on the developments that marked it, as well as on the different currents and tendencies which dotted it.)

Roy also observes that the exhibition enables the visitor to see the various stages of development of individual artists. Although the articles in La Tribune did not attempt to present a professional critique of the exhibition, they nevertheless drew attention to the art in the region, encouraged the public to visit, and gave clues as to what to look for in the show.

RACE 10 ans marked the end of an era. The departure of Cantieni, Lafleur, and other founding members drastically changed the group's character. New younger members who joined RACE in the last few years have introduced more contemporary experimental and innovative art styles. As a result of changes in the membership, social activities declined drastically, resulting in a further departure of established members who realized that RACE reflected neither their art styles nor their expectations of friendship any longer. Thus a new generation of members came to the fore. They were ambitious, business-like and professional. It was mainly this group, with a sprinkling of old-timers who adapted to the change, who took over the leadership of RACE.

1984/85

The annual general assembly held on May 11, 1984 elected Gilles Larivière as RACE President for a second term. Larivière worked determinedly and efficiently to promote contemporary experimental art among RACE members and in the community through exhibitions, lectures, videos, and performances in Galerie HORACE. He spent his second year in office consolidating the gallery and the multidisciplinary studio where he had installed his sculpture workshop.

RACE had been collecting grants from several sources over the years, mainly from the various assistance programmes of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Since 1984 RACE had also obtained funds from the City of Sherbrooke as a subsidy for the rent payment on the new premises. However, these grants had to be greatly increased for RACE to fulfill its new vocation. The main funding came from the Programme d'intervention communautaire en arts visuels. Larivière, in presenting the 1984/85 request for assistance, elaborated on the reasons for a higher government contribution to RACE. He argued that the restrained budget of the gallery would not permit it to continue its high-quality functioning. Voluntary work should be replaced by a professional coordinator who would tend to the gallery regularly and who would develop long-term programming and animation. Publicity should be enhanced so as to reach a wider public. In order to be active outside of the immediate area, the gallery needed assistance in covering its expenses for participation in symposia or other events of interest. And last, but not least, the gallery wished to remunerate artists for

their exhibitions by assuming the cost of invitation cards, transport, posters, and insurance. RACE did not receive all it asked for, but managed to increase its income to enable it to continue its development during 1984/85.

The programme Aide à l'emploi and later Travaux communautaires supplied RACE with additional personnel and some money. In accordance with this programme, RACE undertook to train three young unemployed adults during their work for RACE. In addition to the work benefit it gained, RACE received a money supplement to cover the cost of materials spent in the training of the three employees. Additional income to the gallery was collected through gallery membership and occasional sponsors.

With financial support assured, RACE was free to develop its services to the members and to the community. After a trial and error period for over a year, a gallery policy was drawn up and ratified in a general assembly. Galerie HORACE was established: (1) to promote professional contemporary production and other activities of RACE members, regionally and nationally, through exhibitions and animation; (2) to stimulate artistic production in the milieu by offering local artists a prestigious exhibition location, and by presenting stimulating exhibitions which will serve as a catalyst to local production; (3) to draw more artists to the region--in the short term, by inviting them for special activities and in the long term, by making Sherbrooke a dynamic and attractive centre for the visual arts; (4) to educate the public and to make the local milieu aware of contemporary experimental art.



The gallery reserves fifty percent of its activities for local artists, including non-RACE members; the other fifty percent of its activities is open to artists from outside the region selected by RACE members. Two of the outside exhibitions are arranged by special invitation to well-known artists. All expenses for the invited exhibitions are assumed by the gallery.

All solo exhibitions consist of recent works executed in the two years preceding the exhibition. A gallery committee, or the executive committee is in charge of the selection of exhibitions. All selected projects have to be accepted by a majority of eighty percent of the committee. The selection of work is based on the applicant's curriculum vitae, on excellence of production, and on the degree of the project's interest. The yearly selection is made in order to present a balanced programme which will include a variety of media and tendencies. In the case of projects of equal quality, RACE members have priority over other local artists.

RACE's direct financial participation in the exhibitions is limited to publicity in the local media, the mailing of regular gallery invitations, and insurance. Other expenses--invitation cards (optional), posters, postage for artists' personal invitations, transportation, and opening night refreshments--are to be defrayed by the exhibiting artist. The gallery, however, will contribute up to fifty dollars for an opening night for RACE members.

In 1984-85 RACE established a documentation centre. It began, years ago, as a collection of files on RACE members. In recent years, and particularly during the first year of Galerie HORACE's existence

in 1983/84, it accumulated a wealth of information and documents which were of interest to RACE members and to a certain clientele in the region. In 1984 the Centre benefitted from the help of two trainees, students in the Visual Arts Department of the University of Québec in Montréal. In 1984/85 it became an active documentation centre which permitted artists and public to examine: (1) files on RACE members, on artists who exhibited in Galerie HORACE, on art galleries, and on exhibition centres throughout the region; (2) directories of various artists' services, suppliers of art and gallery materials; (3) documentation on art-related issues--artists' copyrights, examples of contracts, administration and financial tips, grant and award programmes, competitions, regional and national activities; (4) publications--magazines, catalogues, newspapers, technical books, etc.

In the only Bulletin which appeared in 1984/85, Larivière suggested that a special gallery committee be formed to alleviate the heavy load weighing on the executive committee which had been administering the gallery as well as the association. He believed that a separate administration for the gallery and for the artists' association would enable each section to develop without provoking a conflict of ideology. The gallery had to remain experimental in its orientation, while allowing members to pursue other styles in their personal production. In the annual general assembly on May 24, 1985 the group unanimously supported the proposition to separate HORACE from RACE by creating a gallery committee composed of three members: director, co-director and treasurer. Michelyne Caouette was elected as director, Ophra Benazon as co-director, and Sylvie Couture as treasurer.

RACE members took full advantage of the new facilities. The gallery functioned efficiently presenting two exhibitions every month. RACE artists eagerly filled their half share of the local exhibition space with a couple of small group shows—Noir et blanc and Oeuvres sur papier, as well as with several solo exhibitions of video, installation, performance, etc. The gallery hosted the first annual RACE exhibition Mur et Plancher in the new gallery in March 1985, as well as a retrospective exhibition of the prints of Albert Dumouchel. The gallery unfortunately was able to organize only two lectures because of a lack of funds. It participated, together with other cultural institutions, in a Rallye Culturel organized by the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke. RACE was also invited to exhibit at the Orford Art Centre for the summer of 1984.

The multidisciplinary studio continued to be used by RACE members. Three artists permanently installed their studios there, while others used it sporadically for the preparation of projects and exhibitions. The printmaking studio, however was in decline. Only one or two members used it for brief periods.

The new direction RACE took in these two years changed its membership as well as its sponsors. Until 1983, when RACE members' work was figurative and abstract impressionist, the exhibitions drew a middle-class audience of art lovers and collectors. With the switch to a more experimental art, in conformity with international mainstream art, RACE lost its middle-class audience. The latter organized the new Corporation for the Sherbrooke Fine Arts Museum in order to pursue their art interests. Galerie HORACE's new audience consisted

of artists from all disciplines; art students from the Sherbrooke Seminary, the two CEGEPs, and the two universities in the region; as well as a sprinkling of interested people from the wider public.

1985/86

In a letter which accompanied a grant request for 1985/86, shortly before the end of his presidency, Larivière drew a rosy image of RACE. He described the passing year as fruitful and dynamic for the members as well as for the Eastern Townships cultural milieu: Galerie HORACE dispensed local and external art; RACE members participated in solo and group exhibitions; the exhibition Mur et Plancher reflected RACE members' integration into experimental art; RACE fulfilled all its planned activities for 1984/85; several members took advantage of the facilities in the multidisciplinary studio for their own production. Larivière was looking forward to the continuing development of RACE and Galerie HORACE through the combined energy of two separate committees. He concluded his letter with the hope that in 1985/86 RACE would manage to distribute its members' work outside of the immediate region.

When the executive committee for 1985/86 was elected on May 24, with Diane Boudreault as president, RACE looked forward to a year of expansion and development in the association as well as in the gallery. However, a personal conflict between the membership and the gallery director eventually led to a total breakdown of communication between the association and its gallery. This did not harm the gallery, but it angered many RACE members and nearly caused a breakup of the association.

Following an interview with the gallery director, Mme Caouette, Pierrette Roy of La Tribune summarized the goals of Galerie HORACE in

its third year: "Ne pas se cloisonner dans un seul genre et approvoiser à l'art contemporain un public de plus en plus large" (Roy, 1985, September 7). (To avoid cloistering oneself in a single form of art and to enlarge the public's interest in contemporary art.)

The director, conscious of a slackening off in the number of visitors to the gallery, attributed the phenomenon to the public's lack of interest in an art loaded with symbols and messages of social criticism. Caouette believed that a series of lectures on opening nights would enable the public better to understand this art. Ten lectures, subsidized by a Canada Council grant were delivered by prominent art historians and critics: Hedwidge Asselin, Jean Tourangeau, Michel Gaboury, René Payant, Leo Rosshandler, and others were invited. Instead of attracting a new public, however, the lectures alienated visitors, including some RACE members because they disrupted social interaction and because they appeared to be geared to an intellectual elite, rather than to the average person.

Caouette succeeded in developing the facilities in the gallery. An entry space which initially served as a reception hall was fitted with lighting so as to enlarge the exhibition area of the small hall. A sophisticated video system was also added to RACE's cultural equipment. This acquisition enabled the gallery to put on tape all its activities: exhibitions, lectures, performances, etc., which were placed in the newly established documentation centre to serve the public. Caouette also succeeded in attracting the attention of the local media. Several T.V. and radio stations featured gallery events, some on a continuous basis. Caouette succeeded in organizing high-

quality exhibitions featuring such artists as Francine Simonin, Lise Landry, and others, thus giving the gallery credibility in the art world. She also managed to involve the public in the gallery by enlarging the membership list, by attracting more sponsors, and by organizing a volunteer committee to help in gallery activities.

Regardless of the gallery's achievements, in 1985/86 RACE experienced a severe crisis. Shortly before the opening of the first exhibition of the season, two gallery committee members resigned because of their inability to communicate with Caouette. Gilles Larivière and Luc St. Jacques replaced the departing members. Although the new gallery committee continued to function, it had very little communication with the executive committee, since the latter too was faced with Caouette's inability to work co-operatively with other members.

The morale in the group dropped, reminiscent of the period following Cantieni's departure. In a general meeting on November 1985, Boudreault raised two major questions: Does RACE exist only for obtaining grants? Is the gallery the only RACE activity? In the discussion that followed, the members had an opportunity to express their opinions and their wishes. Some saw the root of the problem in the separation of HORACE from RACE. Since the gallery siphoned off a great deal of energy, little was left for other group projects. Others felt that the gallery catered to outside artists and did not do enough to promote RACE's work outside of Sherbrooke. The assembly resolved the immediate crisis by adopting a resolution which declared that the gallery committee was to be subordinate to the executive committee,

and that a member of the gallery committee would join RACE's executive so as to ensure cooperation between the two administrations. The assembly also decided that the gallery would continue in its role of exhibiting art work, whereas RACE, as an association of artists, should define its other activities. The assembly delegated the executive committee to poll the members for guidance as to the group's future orientation. The meeting ended with the resignation of the president, Diane Boudreault. Arlette Vittecoq refused to become president, but later agreed to continue to lead RACE from her position as vice-president. Regardless of the attempt to settle the RACE-HORACE crisis, the relations between the group and Caouette-Larivière continued to deteriorate to the extent that Caouette refused to take charge of RACE's annual exhibition, which was undertaken by Luc St. Jacques, the third member of the gallery committee. Caouette and Larivière resigned from RACE at the end of their mandate in April.

Caouette conveyed her explanation of the rift between herself and RACE in her 1985/86 report on the gallery activities:

Il faut savoir regarder les choses en face. L'association d'artistes RACE et sa galerie divergent d'orientation. L'expansion de la galerie insécurise et crée des mécontents. Il convient de constater que le conseil d'administration remet en question la vocation nationale de sa galerie et la rigueur de son fonctionnement. Convaincus que les qualités de vie artistique et le professionnalisme d'une région n'évoluera pas en vase clos, que l'excellence est une valeur inestimable, Gilles Larivière . . . et moi même, nous nous



voyons dans l'obligation de démissionner du RACE ("Rapport des activités," 1986, April).

(We must face the situation squarely. The artists' association and its gallery have parted ways in their orientation. The expansion of the gallery caused insecurity and created discontent. It is worth stating that the executive committee questions the Gallery's Quebec-wide vocation and the rigour of its operation. Convinced that the qualities of artistic life and the professionalism of a region will not evolve in a closed space, that excellence is an inestimable value, Gilles Larivière . . . and myself, feel obliged to resign from RACE.)

In another section Caouette asks the question: "La Galerie HORACE avait-elle trop de panache pour ses artistes locaux? C'est l'histoire qui en décidera ("Rapport des activités," 1986, April). (Did Gallery HORACE have too much panache for these local artists? History will decide.)

Now, two years later, the gallery continues to operate as before, with only a few minor administrative changes. An opinion poll launched at that time reflected the severity of the crisis:

L'image globale du RACE qui ressort des sondages est, sans nul doute, très terne . . . Le groupe manque de déterminisme, de motivation et d'implication. On l'a qualifié même d'"association moribonde." Un regard plus positif observe un groupe qui vit une crise et qui va se transformer ("Compte rendu," 1986, February).

(The image of RACE which emerges from this poll is, without any doubt, highly tarnished. The group lacks determination, leadership, motivation, and participation on the part of the members. RACE is called a "dying association." However, another more positive view perceived that the group was moving through its crisis and was about to be transformed.)

The gallery was the target of heavy criticism from those members who perceived the management of the gallery as lacking in integrity, honesty, and inspiration as well as being involved in a conflict of interest:

On pourrait affirmer qu'il y a eu manque de probité de la part de certain membres du comité de coordination de la galerie quand ils se sont servi du bien commun et du peu de fonds publics pour leur promotion personnelle et exclusive. Ce manque de droiture a dégénéré en conflit d'intérêt ("Compte rendu," 1986, February).

(One could claim that there has been a lack of probity on the part of certain members of the gallery coordination committee, who served themselves from the common good and to some extent from public funds for their personal and exclusive promotion. This lack of integrity has degenerated into a conflict of interest.)

The members agreed that the gallery should continue to function in the service of RACE members by promoting their work outside the region and by an exchange of exhibitions with other artists' groups;

that the gallery should remain a place for an exchange of art ideas through lectures, but that these should be given at times other than opening nights; that the gallery be used for educational purposes for children and students by organizing guided tours and by hosting exhibitions of a didactic nature; and that the association hire a gallery administrator outside of RACE.

Regardless of the crisis, RACE members organized two major group exhibitions: the annual exhibition in March 1986 and Evenement sortie. The latter was an exhibition aimed at integrating art and environment, architecture and nature. For this purpose, artists individually or in small groups organized outdoor art events in the community. The photographs of these activities were exhibited in the small hall during September 1986.

1986/87-1988

The annual assembly on May 22, 1986 reverberated with the RACE-HORACE crisis: Caouette and Larivière, who had resigned, were not present at the meeting; consequently, there was no one to interpret the gallery budget report which, though it did not show an immediate deficit, revealed a lack of the funds necessary for the continuation of the gallery operation until the arrival of the next grant in August. As a result, money from RACE had to be transferred to the HORACE budget. In order to prevent the repetition of such a situation, the assembly decided that in the future there should be one budget and one treasurer for RACE and HORACE. There were also other changes to the gallery management policy: the gallery would be directed by a co-ordinating committee instead of the previous directing committee, and it would be headed by a hired co-ordinator from outside RACE. His/her role would be to programme, co-ordinate, and animate the activities in the gallery. The gallery committee would include two RACE members--a treasurer and a member responsible for publicity and for the mounting of exhibitions. The selection of the exhibition would be made by the co-ordinating committee together with one RACE executive committee member. Exhibition projects would be adopted by a vote of at least 75% of the selection committee members. The assembly elected Ophra Benazon as treasurer and Luc St. Jacques to be responsible for exhibitions. The co-ordinator was to be engaged later on depending on the 1986/87 grants. Silvie Bernier, a Ph.D. student at the University of Sherbrooke, was recommended as a

plausible candidate. The assembly also elected a new executive committee with Arlette Vittecoq as president for 1986/87.

In 1986/87 RACE won considerably higher grants than it had previously received: \$27,000 from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs with an additional \$6,000 for engaging personnel under the programme Travaux Communautaires; \$1,586 from the Canada Council for the lecture series; and \$1,500 from the City of Sherbrooke as assistance in rent payment. RACE also collected \$900 from sponsors and gallery members and close to \$600 from sales revenues. Additional grants were awarded for RACE's special project for the year Art et écologie.

With these resources assured, RACE hired Silvie Bernier as gallery co-ordinator. Over 1986/87 Bernier managed to keep up the various gallery activities: she organized twenty exhibitions and six lectures given on Wednesday nights from September 1986 to June 1987; the gallery audience rose to 40-50 people on opening nights, and to 100-175 visitors each month; the documentation centre was regularly consulted by students and artists; the gallery continued to enjoy the attention of the local media--newspapers, radio, and television. Under pressure from the gallery membership, the gallery was opened one night a week, in addition to the afternoon opening hours, to better serve the working public. Bernier understood the importance of collaboration with RACE members. In an article in La Tribune, following an interview with the new gallery co-ordinator, R. Lussier quotes Bernier: "La galerie est dirigée par un collectif et mon premier travail consistait à me mettre à l'écoute, à bien saisir l'approche des gens du Rassemblement. Maintenant il s'agit de

concrétiser tout en continuant de travailler en collaboration" (Lussier, 1986, September 13). (The gallery is directed by a collective, and my first task consisted of listening attentively to the approach of the members of the association. Now it is a question of putting it all into practice while continuing to work in collaboration with them.) Indeed Bernier and RACE's executive committee fully cooperated on all matters concerning RACE and HORACE.

The new RACE administration amalgamated the gallery committee and the executive committee into one body. This arrangement made the executive committee responsible for RACE and HORACE. For a while, Silvie Bernier was regularly invited to attend the executive committee meetings. However, in November 1987, the general assembly accepted Bernier as a member in the association and invited her to join the executive committee as a sixth member. An amendment in the constitution to this effect will be tabled in the annual assembly for May 1988. Thus ended the RACE-HORACE dichotomy, when RACE members finally concluded that the gallery was now the main activity of the association.

Art et Ecologie was the major group project for 1986/87. The goal of the project was to draw the artists' attention to social issues and to democratize RACE by opening it to artists outside of the group as well as to penetrate further into the population of the Eastern Townships. The call for artists outside of RACE was successful. More than half of the thirty participating artists were not group members. To these were joined two invited artists--Bill Vazan and Armand Vaillancourt--whose development had been closely

connected with social and ecological issues. The project also included a children's painting competition entitled l'Arbre chef d'orchestre en Estrie organized in collaboration with the Sherbrooke Catholic School Commission. The purpose of this competition, which involved approximately 100 primary school children, was to make them aware of the quality of their environment.

The finished project consisted of (1) an open juried exhibition of local artists in Galerie HORACE; (2) three environmental sculptures by Olaf Hanel, Bill Vazan, and Armand Vaillancourt in Jacques Cartier Park; (3) a performance and a panel discussion on Art and Ecology in the Théâtre de l'Atelier situated in the park; (4) the children's exhibition in the lobby of the theatre. The entire project was documented in a catalogue which included photographs of all the art work, a text by the three panelists and a critical article on the entire project by Silvie Bernier. Unfortunately, a planned itinerant exhibition as well as plans for a video workshop were cancelled for lack of funds. In a letter addressed to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Vittecoq adopted a positive tone:

La saison 1986/87 de la Galerie HORACE a été particulièrement réussi et la qualité de sa programmation lui a permis de se bâtir une solide réputation dans le milieu culturel de la région et de l'extérieur . . . nous jugeons important de souligner que le RACE depuis sa naissance, grâce au dynamisme et au professionnalisme de ses membres, a joué un rôle important dans la diffusion des arts visuels dans la région (Vittecoq, 1987, May).

(The 1986/87 season in Galerie HORACE was particularly successful and the quality of its programme has enabled it to build a solid reputation in the regional cultural milieu and outside . . . Owing to the dynamic activities and the professionalism of its members, RACE, since its foundation, has played an important role in the diffusion of the visual arts in the region.)

At the end of her 1986/87 mandate, Bernier recommended only a few changes for the next year: longer opening hours for the gallery; more contacts with galleries and other cultural institutions outside of Sherbrooke; guided tours for primary and high-school students in the gallery and in the printmaking studio; one more lecture a year; and more work hours for the coordinator--possibly a full-time position.

Bernier was re-engaged to co-ordinate the gallery for the 1987/88 season under the presidency of Kevin McKenna. In his first letter to the members, McKenna thanked Vittecoq for her role in overcoming the previous year's crisis:

Arlette, on s'en souviendra, a travaillé avec acharnement pour le RACE qui traversait une période de transition peu commune puisque l'administration précédente n'avait pas facilité le transfer de responsabilités du RACE et de la Galerie HORACE . . . Par son énergie, sa diplomacie, son humour et son expérience, Arlette redonna au Regroupement un coup de barre bien placé. Bravo et merci Arlette (McKenna, 1987, June).



(Arlette, we will recall, has worked unremittingly for RACE, which passed through an unprecedented transition period since the previous administration did not facilitate the transmission of the responsibilities of RACE and of Gallery HORACE. By her energy, her diplomacy, her sense of humour, and her experience, Arlette gave the association a timely push. Bravo and thanks, Arlette.)

During the summer of 1987 the 906 King Street West building was sold. The new proprietor requested a rent much higher than RACE could afford to pay. Both sides agreed to cut the rented area by half. RACE had to let go of the multidisciplinary studio, which, by then, was hardly being used. The remaining half area has been renovated into two galleries, an office, and a printmaking studio. In 1988 RACE seems to be a healthy organization, free of intrigue and looking forward to many more fruitful and productive years.

**6. Contribution to Art and to Art Education**

### Contribution to Art and to Art Education

On March 27, 1988, the members of RACE and their audience celebrated the association's fifteenth anniversary with a party and auction sale. Seventy-five of the approximately one hundred works on display were auctioned off--an unprecedented success for RACE, considering the usual limited commercial appeal of contemporary art in Sherbrooke. Although the works were sold for bargain prices, the members of RACE felt they had finally succeeded in reaching the hearts and pocket-books of their audience. In assessing the events, the members acknowledged that their appeal was still limited to a small section of the Sherbrooke public. The crowd gathered at the auction was a high-culture audience of artists, a few university professors, young professionals, students and former art students. The Sherbrooke establishment of well-to-do collectors, which until 1983 was part of RACE's audience, were conspicuously absent from the event.

In order to explain this change in audience, I shall attempt to analyse the interaction between RACE and the Sherbrooke public as part of an evaluation of the contribution RACE made to visual art and art education in the region. I hope to show that RACE succeeded in developing a full-fledged high-culture visual art world over the fifteen years of the group's existence. I shall show how RACE built a high-culture art world by drawing parallels between RACE's activities and the dynamics of art worlds described by Howard S. Becker in his book Art Worlds (1982). For the analysis of the relationship between RACE and its public, I shall draw analogies between the public reaction to the art work of RACE members and the dynamics of public

taste described by Herbert J. Gans in Popular and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste (1975), and by Pierre Bourdieu in Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1984).

RACE members, mostly art-school graduates, have always considered themselves as contemporary high-culture artists. They were also perceived as such by critics and art historians. In his article "Lignes et rythmes dans les Cantons de l'Est" in Vie des Arts (Autumn 1978), the art critic Gilles Daigneault views RACE members as local artists who share the concerns of contemporary art together with international artists:

Ces créateurs qui, pour la plupart, forment le Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est (le RACE), n'ont pas l'allure provinciale que les gens des grands centres prêtent volontiers aux autres. Les images, les signes et les rythmes qu'ils inventent constituent un microcosme qui manifeste, en même temps qu'une grande vitalité, le même souci qu'ont tous les peintres du monde de répondre aux grandes questions que la peinture pose à son tour à ceux qui l'interrogent (Daigneault, 1978, pp. 34-35).

(These artists, most of whom belong to the Association of the Eastern Townships Artists do not have a provincial air about them, which big city dwellers readily bestow on others. The images, the signs and the rhythms which they create form a microcosm which at the same time demonstrates a great vitality, a preoccupation which they share with international artists--the need to answer the big questions

that painting poses to those who dare to question it.)

Art historian Richard Milot also perceives RACE members' work as conforming to the prevailing international tendencies in art:

L'activité des membres de ce premier âge du Regroupement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est en est une surtout de rattrapage culturel dans les différentes formes et techniques modernes. Chacun, développait sa manière propre, façonnée elle-même au contact de l'art international lors de leur période de formation universitaire. Elle s'est perfectionnée à la suite des recherches et expériences personnelles qui s'ensuivirent. Ces manières s'inscrivaient dans les tendances contemporaines de la décennie 1970: autant les tendances de l'expressionisme figuratif ou abstrait, du symbolisme figuratif, de l'abstraction géométrique ou lyrique, que l'engouement pour les arts graphiques avaient localement, des répondants originaux et dynamiques (Milot, 1986, p. 4).

(RACE's first generation activity was mainly a cultural catching-up with the various modern forms and techniques. Each member developed a particular style shaped by contact with international art during his/her university years, a style which was later perfected by personal research and experience. These styles corresponded to the contemporary tendencies of the seventies: as much to the tendencies of figurative or abstract expressionism, figurative symbolism and geometric or lyric abstraction, as to the infatuation

with graphic art [printmaking]. All these had original and dynamic local practitioners.)

Becker (1982) observes that the creating, producing, and preserving, of art work involves the co-operation of a number of people; it is a joint activity which always leaves its mark on the work. The forms of co-operation are not random. They often become routine and produce patterns in the collective activity which Becker calls an art world. Art worlds thus consist of the people and the activities which are necessary for the production of art works (Becker, 1982, pp. 1, 34). In the visual art world Becker speaks of a co-operation among artists, manufacturers, dealers, collectors, curators, critics, the state, and the public:

Painters thus depend on manufacturers for canvas, stretchers, paint, and brushes; on dealers, collectors, and museum curators for exhibition space and financial support; on critics and aestheticians for the rationale for what they do; on the state for the patronage or even the advantageous tax laws which persuade collectors to buy works and donate them to the public; on members of the public to respond to the work emotionally; and on the other painters, contemporary and past, who created the tradition which makes the backdrop against which their work makes sense (Becker, 1982, p. 13).

A brief survey of the visual art activities in Sherbrooke during the twenty years prior to RACE's foundation will help to demonstrate

the extent of this group's contribution to the contemporary art world in the region. In her article, "Initiative culturelle: Deux décennies d'implantation" (1978), the art historian Johanne Brouillet, presently director of the Art Gallery of the University of Sherbrooke, briefly describes the recent history of art in the region. Brouillet writes that apart from a few artists, who were attracted to the beauty of the Eastern Townships during the summer, there was no art world worth speaking of. It wasn't until the mid-1950s that local residents started to take some initiatives in the visual arts. In 1960 a Mme. Carrier and some other local personalities founded Sherbrooke Art, a group which organized sporadic exhibitions at the Sherbrooke Municipal Library, and later on at Domaine Howard, close to downtown Sherbrooke. A similar group--l'Association pour l'avancement des arts operated in the mid-1960s. The group consisted of a few university professors and two art teachers--Thérèse Lecompte and Claude Lafleur, the latter with a particular interest in art education for the general public. It was this group which formed the beginning of the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke with Claude Lafleur as the Centre's animator.

Lafleur planned a variety of cultural programmes including exhibitions, and performing art shows: theatre, dance, music, etc. which took place in one large hall. After the inauguration of the Maurice O'Bready Hall (1560 seats), Lafleur, in collaboration with the Department of Itinerant Exhibitions of the National Gallery, succeeded in claiming a space which was transformed into a gallery. Shortly afterwards, in 1968, the gallery moved to its present quarters in the Pavillon Central, next to the library and to the Maurice O'Bready

Hall, a central location, thus attracting audiences from among library users and the theatre-going crowd (Brouillet, 1978).

RACE was founded in 1973 while these events were taking place. Sherbrooke was a developing but deficient art world which included approximately fifteen artists--mostly painters with little contact among themselves, one new public art gallery, a scattering of commercial art galleries of traditional art, no patrons, no state or municipal support, no active art historians or critics, no university art departments, in short, an unstable situation for artists who normally need a wide support system. Since some of the artists taught at schools and colleges, there was some art education for young students, but very little for the adult population.

RACE members, who needed an appropriate structure to survive as artists, set out gradually and consistently to build a full-fledged contemporary art world, and by so doing they enriched the entire visual art world in Sherbrooke. During its fifteen years of existence RACE tackled the various aspects which Becker describes as integral parts of an art world.

I can distinguish six main components to the co-operative art world described by Becker (1982): art and the artists; diffusion of the art work--distribution and sale; state and municipal support; an appreciative audience; a rationale for and evaluation of art; education and training in the conception and the techniques of the art work. In the subsequent sections, I shall attempt to show how RACE developed each of the activities listed by Becker.



## (1) Art and the artists:

Both participants in the creation of art works and members of society generally believe that the making of art requires special talents, gifts, or abilities, which few have.

. . . . .

We think it important to know who has that gift and who does not because we accord people who have it special rights and privileges (Becker, 1982, p. 14).

By forming a select group, RACE members succeeded in distinguishing themselves from the rest of the Sherbrooke artists whom they considered as less gifted or able, thus securing special privileges, status, and prestige for themselves. By creating an association, the members also formed close contacts with artists of similar orientation on whom they could depend for support. Membership in RACE contributed a great deal to the professional and social development of its members. Stimulated by interaction in social activities, exhibitions, workshops, cultural trips, and community involvement, the members were able to increase, improve, and sustain their artistic production.

## (2) Diffusion of the art work--distribution and sale:

Becker points out that the distribution of works of art produces the means by which further art work can be produced. The distribution can be done by conventional or alternative forms of distribution. However,

By using other than the conventional means of distribution or no channel of distribution at all, artists suffer some disadvantages, and their work takes a different form than might have [sic] if regular distribution had been available. They usually see this situation as an unmixed curse, and hope to gain access to regular channels of distribution (Becker, 1982, p. 6).

Through their association, RACE members managed to open new, conventional, and alternative means of distribution. Until 1983 they exhibited annually at the Cultural Centre of the University of Sherbrooke and found access to other cultural centres in the Townships for solo and small group shows. For a while, RACE members exhibited regularly in solo exhibitions at the Caisse populaire de l'est and were regular contributors to commercial galleries in Sherbrooke. One RACE member opened a commercial gallery, but unfortunately it never became commercially viable, and had to close its doors after one year. RACE also made it possible for its members to reach a wider audience by arranging for alternative exhibition spaces: the City Hall, Centennial Theatre (Festival Lennoxville), Hotel LeBaron (Quebec Medical Association Convention), in various parks or public buildings in Sherbrooke (Festival des Cantons), and at the Orford Art Centre. In 1983 RACE opened its own gallery--Galerie HORACE--organizing twenty exhibitions a year of contemporary experimental art. RACE was also influential in the founding of the Sherbrooke Fine Arts Museum Corporation by members of RACE's audience, Jeannine Blais, for example, who served as a volunteer director of the Museum for the

first five years of its existence. Some of the founders of the Museum Corporation were for years followers of RACE, frequenting its exhibitions, purchasing its art work and joining cultural trips and other activities organized by the group. The donations of art work by RACE members to the Museum Foundation constitutes the basis for the present Museum collection of over three hundred works of art. For a while, RACE was also heavily involved in local politics having to do with the development and orientation of the Museum, and to this day RACE members or ex-members serve on the Museum executive committee. It is also worth mentioning that some RACE members worked for several years as directors of public art galleries in the region--the Art Gallery of the University of Sherbrooke and the Bishop's-Champlain Art Gallery at Bishop's University.

The development and securing of exhibition space not only serves as an outlet for the artists' existing work, but also stimulates further art production, as Becker has observed:

The network of distributive organizations art worlds develop--galleries, concert halls, theatres, and publishing companies--requires the continuous creation of a body of work to be distributed. These institutions may cease operating, thus requiring less work. But while they exist, they look for work to display, and some of the many people who aspire to be integrated professionals [sic] will provide it. Furthermore, the aesthetic current in a world will certify as sufficiently good to be displayed roughly the amount needed to fill the display opportunities [sic]

(Becker, 1982, p. 230).

(3) State and municipal support:

"Artists depend . . . on the state for the patronage or even the advantageous tax laws which persuade collectors to buy works and donate them to the public" (Becker, 1982, p. 13). With the visibility acquired by RACE, some of the members managed to secure a limited market for their work, perhaps just enough to cover their expenses, but it permitted them to continue and to sustain their production. In order to further develop their own work and its distribution, RACE managed to secure financial contributions from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Canada Council, and the City of Sherbrooke. At first, the grants were given for the purpose of specific projects i.e. itinerant exhibitions, workshops, special exhibitions, etc. But since 1983 RACE has been subsidized on a yearly basis, mainly by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The yearly grants from the latter have gone up from \$16,000 for 1984 to \$30,000 for 1987. From 1983, the Canada Council and the City of Sherbrooke each contributed approximately \$3,000 a year. On occasion, additional funds were allocated for special individual or group projects. Thus, the three levels of government enabled RACE to maintain studio and exhibition space, various activities, and such projects as exhibitions, catalogues, lectures, workshops, etc.

(4) An appreciative audience:

Although artists are mainly engaged in self-expression, they need people to listen, view, and react to their work: "Someone must

respond to the work once it is done, have an emotional or intellectual reaction to it, 'see something in it', appreciate it" (Becker, 1982, p. 4). Becker as well as Gans distinguish between two kinds of audiences: (1) the "serious audience members" (Becker, 1982, p. 48) or the "creator oriented public" (Gans, 1975, pp. 78-79); (2) the "well-socialized members" (Becker, 1982, p. 42), or the "user-oriented public" (Gans, 1975, p. 76). The serious or creator-oriented public is distinguished from the socialized or user-oriented public by its knowledge of the conventions of a particular discipline or medium of the art world:

Knowing the conventions of the form, serious audience members can collaborate more fully with artists in the joint effort which produces the work each time it is experienced. Further, steady patrons of art events--those who attend performances and exhibitions . . . provide a solid basis of support for these events and objects and for the activity that produces them. Such serious and experienced audience members belong to the art world, more or less permanent parties to the cooperative activity that makes it up (Becker, 1982, p. 48).

Becker goes on to say:

What serious audience members know about an art often conflicts, because of innovative changes, with what well-socialized members of society know (Becker, 1982, p. 48).

By exhibiting in unconventional public places and in large public gatherings, RACE made an attempt to reach people from all walks of life. However, RACE succeeded in recruiting an audience only from among "highly educated people of upper and upper-middle class status, employed mainly in academic and professional occupations" (Gans, 1975, p. 76), which according to Gans is a typical audience of high and middle-high culture. From 1983 on, with the advent of experimental art at the newly founded Galerie HORACE, RACE lost its upper-middle class audience; instead, it attracted an audience open to the innovative orientation RACE has adopted.

The change in audiences should not be attributed to a fault in RACE's judgement, or to a neglect on its part, but rather to the predisposition of certain types of publics to certain types of artists and art work, as Bourdieu (1984) in France, and Gans (1975) in the U.S.A. discovered through their extensive research into public taste. I shall use the findings of Bourdieu and Gans, and their interpretations of the phenomenon, without necessarily adopting their sociological orientation or point of view, since my subject is limited to the reaction of the people of Sherbrooke to the work of RACE artists. Although Bourdieu and Gans reflect a reality prevalent in France and in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, their overall observations on culture and taste are relevant to all modern western societies, and thus applicable in general, to Sherbrooke in the 1970s and 1980s.

Bourdieu (1984) and Gans (1975) comment that people do not make choices randomly; their choices are related. Both stress that taste

in art is closely related to economic and educational levels--the basic components of class distinction.

These relationships between choices exist because the choices are based on similar values and aesthetic standards . . . . The values and standards constitute the basis . . . of taste culture, and the people who make similar choices for similar reasons are a taste public. Different taste cultures and taste publics exist because of the diversity of and disagreement about aesthetic standards and values (Gans, 1975, p. 68).

Gans (1975) and Bourdieu (1984) observe three major taste cultures and taste publics. Although the division of the various taste cultures is not identical in both authors, the following synthesis will suffice for the purpose of my analysis: (1) legitimate taste (Bourdieu), or high culture (Gans); (2) middle-brow taste (Bourdieu), upper-middle culture and lower-middle culture (Gans); (3) popular taste (Bourdieu), low culture and quasi-folk low culture (Gans).

Unfortunately we must acknowledge that the images in the work of RACE members never appealed to popular taste or low culture, because the art work of RACE members was closely related to the formalist aesthetic which, as Gans (1975) and Bourdieu (1984) would argue, is quite detached from the practical realities of life and addressed to abstract social, political, and philosophical questions. This aesthetic is alien to the working class, which favours a culture stressing substance rather than ideas and is closely related to day-to-day life. It has, according to Gans, "no explicit concern with

abstract ideas or even with fictional forms of contemporary social problems and issues. As a result, high and upper-middle culture is almost never borrowed and adapted" (Gans, 1975, p. 90). Bourdieu (1984) observes the same phenomenon in the popular aesthetic, which is based on the affirmation of the continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to function.

. . . . .

Popular taste applies the schemes of the ethos, which pertain in the ordinary circumstances of life, to legitimate works of art, and so performs a systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 4, 5).

RACE succeeded in attracting a serious middle-class audience until 1983 because the work of RACE members, situated in the modernist aesthetic of figurative and abstract expressionism, was in tune with middle-class values and standards. It is interesting to note that although conceptual art was already widely in practice during the seventies, RACE members did not catch on to it during the period between 1973 to 1982. The work RACE members produced was still closely related to what Bourdieu (1984) calls the pure aesthetic approach based on the formalist conception still popular with the critics during the 1960s. Bourdieu points out that this aesthetic corresponds to the middle-class values of people who have freedom from economic concerns and from the rigours of the daily struggle for survival. Moreover, the bourgeoisie can thus use art as another means of separating itself from the lower classes:



'Pure' taste and the aesthetic which provides its theory are founded on a refusal of 'impure' taste and aisthesis [sensation], the simple, primitive form of pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses . . . . It could be shown that the whole language of aesthetics is contained in a fundamental refusal of the facile, in all the meanings which bourgeois ethics and aesthetics give to the word . . . . The refusal of what is easy in the sense of simple, and therefore shallow, and 'cheap', because it is easily decoded and culturally 'undemanding', naturally leads to the refusal of what is facile in the ethical or aesthetic sense, of everything which offers pleasures that are too immediately accessible . . . (as opposed to the deferred pleasures of legitimate art) (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 486).

It would be naive to assume that high culture could live in peace and share values with the bourgeoisie. Quite the contrary, high-culture art is often created to flout middle-class values. Yet from 1973 to 1982, RACE artists lived in perfect harmony with the Sherbrooke middle-class establishment to the mutual advantage of both. RACE artists produced work in tune with the bourgeois taste for peaceful and pleasant art based on the notion of cultivated "pure" taste. Artists and their middle-class audience huddled together on opening-nights, which Lafleur nostalgically described as parties. Works were purchased and artists were flattered by the visitors' adulation; in turn, the members of the audience enjoyed the social gatherings which provided them with an opportunity to show their

expensive and well-chosen clothes and to enjoy the prestige derived from sharing company with artists. The relationship between the two sections of the art world was so close that RACE member Jacques Barbeau suggested that the more active members of the audience be accepted as RACE members (Barbeau, personal communication, March, 1988).

This close fusion between artists and the middle-class public was possible probably because middle-class taste--which, according to Gans (1975), often "chooses what has already become popular among the user-oriented, high-culture public" (Gans, 1975, p. 83)--had already caught up with abstract expressionism and other previous trends in art, whereas RACE members had not yet embarked on conceptual art.

This situation lasted until 1982 when RACE started to show some divisions in its ranks. Cantieni, who turned to conceptual art and to such new forms of expression as land art, performance, video, and installation felt he was being held back by his colleagues. He withdrew his membership from RACE and founded another group called Darcheu. And indeed, during its first year of existence, Darcheu organized two major conceptual art events in the region financed by government grants: a land-art happening in Eustis and a weekend of performances in Sherbrooke.

The shock of Cantieni's defection, the participation of members in university graduate programmes, the trickling in of new, younger members straight from university, all contributed to RACE's turn towards an experimental and innovative orientation. Galerie HORACE, which opened in 1983, publicly declared its preference for recent

styles in art. Larivière and Caouette, both students at UQAM, used their knowledge and contacts to invite prominent Montreal artists for exhibitions and art historians for public lectures. RACE was revitalized, but not without some negative repercussions within the group vis-à-vis the public. RACE lost a large chunk of its public and some of its members.

RACE's move towards innovative art can be interpreted as a maverick act:

Every organized art world produces mavericks, artists who have been part of the conventional art world of their time, place, and medium but found it unacceptably constraining. They propose innovations the art world refuses to accept as within the limits of what it ordinarily produces. Other participants in the world--audiences, support personnel, sources of support, or distributors--refuse to co-operate in the production of those innovations (Becker, 1982, p. 233).

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Not surprisingly, mavericks get a hostile reception when they present their innovations to other art world members. Because it violates some of the art world's conventions in a blatant way, the work suggests to others that they will have trouble co-operating with its maker (Becker, 1982, pp. 233-234).

Whereas the bourgeoisie quietly conducts its struggle with the artists--by using its economic capital and its political skills--the artists, Bourdieu (1984) argues, publicly challenge the bourgeoisie by

adopting a life-style and a style of art that is a challenge to the bourgeois way of life. Artists have replaced easel paintings with large-size canvases, installations, video art, and performances, thus depriving the bourgeoisie of a supply of art for home and office decoration which the latter used as "emblems of distinction" and "a reinforcement of its self-assurance" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 293). Contemporary artists also challenge the moral practices and ethics of other tastes, mainly the bourgeoisie's. They depict harsh realities through scenes of violence and sex which offend traditional bourgeois morality--"a combination of ease and asceticism, i.e. self-imposed austerity, restraint, reserve" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 176). Artists also use more subtle ways of shocking the bourgeoisie by introducing styles which are spurned by this class: kitch, pop-art, etc., and by abandoning notions of a harmonious composition--making ugly or pretty (rather than beautiful) things. Artists also mock at what Bourdieu sees as the gap between knowledge and recognition in the bourgeoisie. Although the middle class recognizes the importance of culture, it does not master it. It does not have a culture of its own: "What makes middle-brow culture is the middle-brow relation to culture--mistaken identity, misplaced belief, allodaxia" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 327)--what intellectuals and artists regard as philistinism.

RACE also lost some of its intellectual audience. Bourdieu notes that although the artists' attitude towards the intellectuals is somewhat better than their attitude to the rest of the bourgeoisie, there is no love lost between the two groups. Artists, who cannot accuse the intellectuals of lack of knowledge, blame them for being

pedantic and prudent. Intellectuals may join artists from time to time to hit the bourgeoisie by their support of artistic innovation, but they often enter into conflicts with the artists over the definition of culture during the inevitable struggle for supremacy. RACE's intellectual audience consists mainly of professors. Bourdieu believes professorial taste in culture to be ambiguous:

Their preferences are balanced between a certain audacity and a prudent classicism; they refuse the facile pleasures of right-bank taste without venturing into the artistic avant-garde, exploring 'rediscoveries' rather than 'discoveries', the rarest works of the past rather than the contemporary avant-garde (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 264).

Bourdieu also injects a social-economic reason for the schism between artists and the middle-class--the wish on the part of the artists to distinguish themselves as a separate and elitist group. He sees the difficulties of the artists vis-à-vis the intellectuals and the bourgeoisie as stemming from two opposing artistic interests: on the one hand the need to attract a large audience, and on the other hand the need to distinguish themselves, through work which is not easily accessible:

their interest in cultural proselytism, that is, winning a market by widening their audience, which inclines them to favour popularization, and concern for cultural distinction, the only objective basis of their rarity; and their relationship to everything concerned with the 'democratization of culture' is marked by a deep ambivalence

which may be manifested in a dual discourse on the relations between the institutions of cultural diffusion and the public (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 229).

Artists, who draw their power by setting what they perceive as high standards in art, have an interest in maintaining this role by using "the most risky but also the most profitable strategy of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 282). Bourdieu and Gans (1975) notice that when the artists win acceptance they move on to new forms and new standards in order to maintain "a permanent revolution in taste" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 282). Under these circumstances, the artists do not really wish to educate the middle class to the point that it sees the light and abandons its own taste in favour of the artists' taste. The artists are content to keep permanent tension between themselves and the bourgeoisie. However, in the process of baiting the middle class, the artists have also provided it with exposure to art work, knowledge, and enjoyment of the various styles of art as manifested through art history.

Whereas until 1983 RACE was situated in high and middle-high culture, in 1983 RACE became part of high culture only which, according to Gans (1975), is dominated by creators and critics and is preoccupied with innovation and experimentation. In espousing high-culture production, RACE lost some of its artists, who could not situate themselves in RACE's new art world. It is interesting to note that when these same artists were asked their opinion of RACE today, they criticised the low quality of Galerie HORACE exhibitions, accusing the gallery artists of failure to master proper painting

techniques. A similar negative attitude vis-à-vis those who left the group exists among present RACE members who accuse the former members of practising old-fashioned and passé art in order to achieve easier accessibility to the art market, thus confirming the hypothesis that these two groups of artists no longer inhabit the same art world: "Art worlds typically devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art, and who is and isn't an artist" (Becker, 1982, p. 36).

It is not surprising that RACE's new audience contains a great many art students. They are the most knowledgeable sector of the serious audience. They are trained in art; they know the conventions and the vocabulary of the medium and the different styles and periods of art history. They are the most likely crowd "to support experimental works which would have trouble attracting the general public, less attuned to the conventions of new work (Becker, 1982, p. 53). They are "the most understanding and forgiving audience, on whom the riskiest experiments may be attempted . . . They also help less adventurous audience segments catch up with newer developments by weeding out the grossest and most obvious failures" (Becker, 1982, p. 54). The close relationship between artists and students can also be explained in the light of Feldman's (1982) observation on artist-teachers.

Today, artists teach for a variety of reasons: for prestige, to have artistic descendants, because they want to influence the aesthetic climate, or simply because they enjoy teaching. Mainly, they teach for a living . . . It

should be added, too, that many artists seem to need the adulation of students. Teaching satisfies appetites that artistic performance leaves unfulfilled. Finally, the necessity of sharing ideas, technical approaches, and artistic objectives with students often serves serious artists as a means of defining their own creative philosophy (Feldman, 1982, p. 203).

(5) A rationale for and evaluation of art work:

Becker observes that art worlds create a rationale, according to which all these other activities make sense and are worth doing. Rationales typically take the form, however naive, of a kind of aesthetic argument, a philosophical justification which identifies what is being made as art, as good art, and explains how art does something that needs to be done for people and society (Becker, 1982, p. 4).

Philosophers, art educators, and critics assist the artists in forming and maintaining the rationale. Since the art world is extremely competitive, the critics play a crucial role in the success of an art world as well as in the success of the individual artist:

They create the arena of struggle, they build the publics that follow artistic developments, they announce artistic fashions and trends, they declare standards, they foment aesthetic controversies, they explain the value of the new, they destroy and resurrect reputations (Feldman, 1982, p. 211).



According to Feldman (1982), the role of the critic is particularly important in the contemporary system of artistic production in which outside professionals are required to represent the buyer's interest. Faced with a proliferation of competitive high-priced art products, the buyers do not trust their own taste and judgement. Instead, they endorse what already has been acclaimed and promoted by the critics.

The lack of an art critic in the Sherbrooke area is a great deficiency of the contemporary art world in the city. This probably accounts for the lack of acceptance and poor sales of contemporary art products. The public art galleries, however, fill part of the critic's role by publishing press releases and, occasionally, catalogues. From time to time the local public press publishes short descriptions of exhibitions, or interviews with artists by journalists who are not trained in art. These, however, serve as publicity rather than criticism. Perhaps the next major activity of RACE should be to encourage the development of art criticism in the area.

(6) Education and training in the conception and techniques of art:

Members of RACE have been engaged at all levels of art education in the schools as high-school art teachers and as instructors in CEGEPs and universities. Both the English and the French CEGEPs offer diversified art programmes. Bishop's University operates a combined Fine Art and Art History programme, and the University of Sherbrooke includes a Certificat d'expression artistique programme in its adult education school. These departments employ several past or present RACE members; all of them have experienced a rise in the number of

students over the past ten years, in accordance with the general trends in this direction in North America. Although there is not necessarily a cause-and-effect relationship, one can nevertheless assume that RACE made a considerable contribution to the professional formation of its teacher-members. Teachers who were or are RACE members have observed that the enrichment they gained through RACE indirectly contributed to the quality of their teaching.

It is more difficult to assess RACE's contribution to the art education of the general public. I have no statistics or other data for measuring the effects on art education provided through the numerous public activities of RACE. Although most of RACE's activities were not directly planned to dispense art education, I would argue that almost all the projects open to the public must have affected the participants' knowledge and sensibility to art, especially among the "serious audience" which I described previously.

In the past, art was not taught at university level. Students who attended universities were expected to acquire a knowledge of art in an auto-didactic way, as described by Bourdieu (1984). He speaks of

the enterprise of legitimate 'autodidacticism' which the acquisition of 'general culture' presupposes, an enterprise that is ever more strongly demanded as one rises in the educational hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 24).

. . . . .

Thus it is written into the tacit definition of the academic qualification formally guaranteeing a specific

competence (like an engineering diploma) that really guarantees possession of a 'general culture' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 25).

That is to say, students learned about art through frequenting art activities: the various performances, dance, music, theatre, etc., and by attending exhibitions where they interacted with other knowledgeable visitors or artists:

Audiences learn unfamiliar conventions by experiencing them, by interacting with the work and, frequently, with other people in relation to the work. They see and hear the new element in a variety of contexts. The artist teaches them what it means, what it can do, and how they might experience it by creating those contexts (Becker, 1982, p. 64).

RACE's exhibitions were almost always accompanied by such interpretative literature as press releases and catalogues. This has been especially true since 1983. Every year Galerie HORACE offers six to ten lectures on art. Some of these lectures focus on the exhibitions. In addition, the reviews in local newspapers of RACE's exhibitions and other activities, although not critically oriented, help to facilitate public understanding and appreciation of the art work. To this we might add the special art educational activities RACE has presented to the public over the years--didactically oriented exhibitions and demonstrations of the various artistic techniques. However, these activities were sporadic, perhaps not enough to claim too much credit for art education. Although it is possible for people

to acquire knowledge in art in an auto-didactic manner, this method is inherently superficial. It may lead to the kind of knowledge which is often present in the ranks of the middle class, ridiculed by artists and intellectuals alike.

Although much of the foregoing analysis has been based on Bourdieu (1984), I am not quite ready to accept his deterministic approach, which assumes that art and art education depend on class predisposition. Bourdieu and Gans (1975) do not integrate in their analyses of public taste the effects of art education offered outside the traditional school system. To my knowledge, only the large museums have art education programmes serving the general public. Perhaps an independent art education council composed of the various components of the art world could devise and execute a sustained art education programme for the general public by using all the facilities, resources, and programmes of the museological institutions in a given area.

I have attempted to demonstrate that RACE has developed and enriched the contemporary art world in Sherbrooke and region, and that it provided some art education for its former middle-class public as well as for its present largely student audience. RACE still reels from the loss of a large chunk of its public. But as Nicole Benoit (an official of the visual arts section in the regional branch of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs) commented in a recent interview, RACE has continued to exercise some educational influence even on those who turned away from it:

Au niveau de la qualité de vie des gens de Sherbrooke, Le RACE a été important, parce que même s'ils n'aiment pas ça [the art], ça les a dérangés en leur donnant au moins un point de référence, ça ouvrait l'esprit du tout le monde (Benoit, 1988, interview).

(With respect to the quality of life of the Sherbrooke public, RACE was important, because even if [the public] didn't like what was offered, [the art production] shook them and gave them at least a point of reference; it opened everybody's mind.)

In her article "For a Canadian Museography," Chantal Pontbriand points out the large contribution that artist-run centres have made to the development of Canadian art. The alternative system developed by contemporary artists has been promoting, advancing, and diffusing contemporary Canadian art as well as disseminating international art in Canada. It has established a wide network of artists, curators, and critics; it has produced a great many innovations by abolishing the hierarchy of disciplines in according the same importance to artists' books, videos, installations, performances as to their paintings; it has introduced the use of non-traditional spaces for exhibiting art work: subway stations, abandoned buildings, etc.; it has exploited to maximum advantage the limited financial resources it possessed. In effect, it reflects better than any other institution the reality of the contemporary Canadian art scene (Pontbriand, 1987, pp. 134-135).

Although some RACE members and former members have integrated into the large Canadian art world, RACE as a group has not extended its influence beyond the Sherbrooke region. However, in constituting a link in the chain of the alternative system, it has contributed its share to the development of contemporary Canadian art and, indirectly, to art education.

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