

This issue of the *Journal of Canadian Art History* and another to be published in 2012 celebrate the career of the eminent art historian François-Marc Gagnon. The texts constitute a *Festschrift* in honour of his direct and indirect contributions to Canadian art history, whether through his own numerous writings or through the work produced by two generations of Canadian scholars, who have been inspired by the brilliance of his ideas and the relentlessness of his devotion to our discipline. For many of us, he is and will always remain the very image of a mentor. It is impossible to satisfactorily summarize his professional career in Canadian art history that began over forty years ago. A mere overview of François-Marc's accomplishments – his teaching in Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa and Israel, his public lectures and scholarly conferences nationally and internationally, his awards and prizes, his many advisory positions, his curatorial work, and his wide-ranging publications – would constitute a substantial text on its own. The second part of this *Festschrift*, however, will make one contribution to his unwritten biography by publishing a detailed bibliography of his almost three hundred texts, from his early art reviews in Montreal newspapers to his new books that will have appeared by 2012.

The idea of putting together a collection of commissioned articles in honour of François-Marc Gagnon came to me several years ago. In the midst of reading a *Festschrift* dedicated to a European art historian, I realized that we had never accorded a similar mark of respect to an historian of Canadian art, let alone an art historian who was Canadian. It was patently obvious to me that François-Marc Gagnon deserved and was due a celebratory publication. Because he was one of the members of the *Journal's* original editorial board and had also given our periodical its French-language title, it seemed most appropriate that the *Journal* be associated with the project. This resolve sent me to the library to peruse dozens of *Festschriften* in various disciplines to get a better idea of the paths that others had taken for a similar project. Needless to say, there were endless ways to consider the proposed contents of such a publication – by theme, by period, by geography, and the list goes on – regardless of the scholarly sphere. (The choice of contributors seemed more obvious: seasoned scholars, former students, long-time colleagues, and so forth.) Despite the plethora of scholarly ways and means that the *Journal* could replicate in its *Festschrift*, none felt perfectly attuned to the breadth of François-Marc's Gagnon considerations of Canadian art history.

Having read his writings and listened to his talks over several decades, I felt that one distinguishing feature of his scholarship was his great respect for the art object. Whether it was the starting point or the central focus, the work of art never lost its pride of place. Ironically, this is even true of

his very recent publication, *Jean Berger, peintre et complice?*, though Berger's artwork has never been discovered. François-Marc Gagnon's interests covered Canadian and international art of the past and the present, and his scholarly approach involved such a broad but cohesive interlace of methods, from within and without art history. So it seemed only natural that the contributors to the *Festschrift* enjoy the same openness in their own choice of subject or theme in Canadian art history. All that I asked was that a particular work of Canadian art should initiate the discussion; the rest was up to the author. I drew up a list of potential contributors and then sought the honouree's approval and advice, emphasizing that this publication was to be a celebration and we could plan the party as we pleased.

This first part of the *Festschrift* reflects François-Marc Gagnon's enormous contribution to Canadian art history in several ways. All of the authors have enjoyed a close association with him over many years and in various activities – teaching, conferences, publications, and exhibitions. At the same time, the content of their articles references the diversity of ideas that we have come to expect from François-Marc Gagnon himself. His autobiographical text gives us some indication of where all of that came from, and how it has shaped his life and thought. Each of the other articles, like François-Marc Gagnon's own writing, demonstrates the interdependency of art and context. Charles Hill's positioning of George Reid's "mortgage" paintings within the plots of Canadian politics has a subtle relationship to Esther Trépanier's analysis of Adrien Hébert's painting *La Rue Saint-Denis* in light of the eponymous street itself, its symbolic role in the intellectual life of Montreal, and its definitions of modernity. The personal context of art works is the backstory for Dennis Reid's analysis of Lawren Harris's unusual self-portrait and its metaphorical meaning within the artist's psychological life. Similarly, Gilles Lapointe's layering of the relationship of Ozias Leduc and Borduas onto that of Jean Paul Lemieux and Edmund Alleyn shows the often-contradictory effects of mentorship in the intellectual and creative life of an artist. Each of these studies honours the discipline of Canadian art history and each in its individual way, honours the achievements of François-Marc Gagnon.

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