

JOAN MURRAY



CANADIAN

in the Twentieth Century

ART

Fig. 112. Louis Belzile (b. 1929)

Untitled, c. 1955

Oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 40.3 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

Photo: Brian Merrett

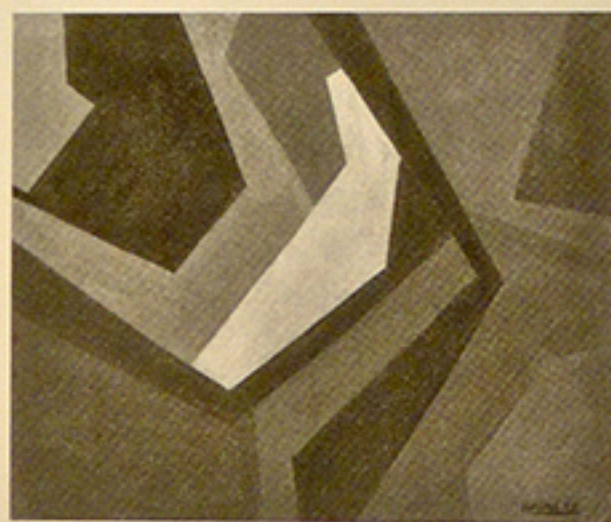


Fig. 113. Jean-Paul Jérôme (b. 1928)

Untitled, 1955

Oil on canvas, 76.9 x 92 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

Photo: Brian Merrett

Fig. 114. Jauran (Rodolphe de Repentigny) (1926-1959)

No. 28, c. 1955

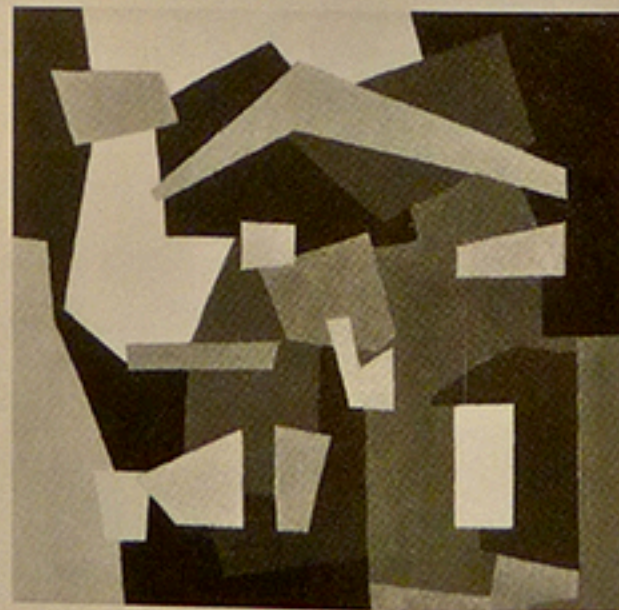
Oil on waxed canvas, 40 x 41 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

Photo: Brian Merrett

every trace of individual expression. By contrast to the gestural accidental quality so much a part of automatism, they proposed a rational detached structured approach. For them, Mondrian's dynamic coloured planes provided a new method of formulating a spatial structure, one that eliminated all illusion of depth and substituted instead a dynamic surface that integrates colour and structure. Members included Louis Belzile, Jean-Paul Jérôme, Fernand Toupin, and Jauran [the painter-name of art critic Rodolphe de Repentigny]. Their first exhibition was held in 1954 in Montreal at the Librairie Tranquille, a combined bookshop and exhibition space. In 1955, on the occasion of a group exhibition held at Montreal's L'Échourie café, Jauran published the *Plasticien* manifesto as an alternative to the earlier Automatist aesthetic, in which he reduces painting to its plastic aspects: tone, texture, form, line, over-all effect, and relation between the elements. "The real content of the picture is its order," Jean-Paul Jérôme had told Jauran in 1954.⁷

What the *Plasticiens* meant by "order," was abstract patterning and geometric division conveyed with colour and a light touch. The *Plasticiens* deliberately left their paintings untitled or identified them by number. Belzile, for instance, built a rational structure of rectangular forms combined with strong value contrasts and a restricted range of colours in his *Untitled* (c. 1955, fig. 112). Jérôme's *Untitled* (1955, fig. 113), included in the first exhibition of the *Plasticiens*, is notable for the geometric rigour of its overlapping abstract forms. Jauran's *No. 28* (c. 1955, fig. 114) is composed of gold geometric shapes on a ground with geometric shapes in colours of grey, brown, red, black, and white. Toupin began to modify the traditional shape of painting and make the shape a consequence of the composition.



A second wave of *Plasticiens*, composed of Guido Molinari, Claude Tousignant, Denis Juneau, and Jean Goguen, stressed the importance of spatial composition composed of simplified forms, large blocks of colour, and coloured planes.