

Programme d'œuvres en devenir de P.-É.B. (1959-1960)

Notes

In October 1952, painter and instigator of the automatiste movement, Paul-Émile Borduas, disclosed to journalists his upcoming departure: New York, Paris and maybe Tokyo [Gagnon 316]. In April 1953, P.-É.B. leaves Canada to go to New York, spending a few month in Provincetown on the way. On September 21st 1955, he leaves America and travels to France, a destination Borduas had long dreamed about reaching [Gagnon 393]. On his arrival in Paris, he settles in the 7th arrondissement, at 19 rue Rosselet. He was found dead at this address on February 22 1960.

It is said he had a longing to return to Quebec. [Gagnon 467]

2004. It is at Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal that I can observe the 21 inks (*Sans titre*, 1959-1960). My attention is drawn to an unusual element in Borduas' oeuvre: two horizontal straight lines, of a certain blue, positioned at the top and bottom of the surface. These inks on Gitane cigarette packages are said to have been executed in Paris near the end of Borduas' life. [Gagnon 459]

Gagnon develops: In all of Borduas' paintings, the calligraphic aspect is pronounced, as if the artist wished to write a large assertive sign on the canvas' white background. Could the 21 inks in fact be some form of preparatory context to larger canvases, impossible at that time to create because Borduas was confined to bed and unable to create larger oil pieces? The inks all have a calligraphic quality and are seemingly sketches of larger paintings in the style of *Compositions 65* and *66*. When Jean-Paul Filion visited Borduas' studio after his death, he noted the presence of a "table filled with ink bottles". Could that be the indication that the ink pieces had been done close to the time of his death? [Gagnon 459]

Josée Bélisle writes: The 21 inks can be understood as an ambitious program of artworks to come. [Bélisle 17]

The two Gitanes blue lines create a space of citation. The gestures/movements, for the majority supported by horizontal outlines, are ideograms installed in the opening of the ready-made support.

Via anecdote and History, I dove with fascination into this "program of artworks". Acts of appropriation and perversion, these re-productions present themselves as hard-edge acrylic compositions.

Francine Savard, July 2018