

Sylvie Cloutier

A Dynamic Marriage of Esprit and Fantasy

More than 40 years ago Joseph-Emile Muller described Wassily Kandinsky in his book *Modern Art* as having a "truculent vitality restrained by a strong regulatory spirit." While these words were written about Kandinsky they apply equally well to Sylvie Cloutier not only because the sentiments ring true but also because Kandinsky along with Joan Miro have been her strongest influences.

Cloutier needs all the energy and vitality she can muster because along with being an abstract painter she also teaches art in high school and works for a number of humanitarian causes.

As she herself says, "How could I not devote myself totally to what I am doing, it has been my dream since

I was twelve when I told my mother that I would be an artist and an art teacher."

As a child Cloutier was encouraged to develop her artistic talents and she became particularly interested in painting. She studied art until she had her degrees in both fine arts and in education. Her training led to her doing a lot of research in the field of painting. But it wasn't until 1985 that her real career as a painter started when she began to explore geometric forms. She still recalls a solo exhibition at the Balcon d'art in St. Lambert where she was gnawed by doubt, asking herself what kind of reception the public would give her work.

But the reaction was favourable and by 1987 she had decided to devote herself to abstraction and opted to fol-

low a type of painting that manipulated form and colour staying away from figurative work. As she worked she developed her own techniques. She follows Jackson Pollack in that she likes to work with her canvas flat. She puts design on hold and works through instinct and spontaneity using geometric forms and collage.

Her work goes through many stages. To begin with she draws simple geometric forms like circles, squares and rectangles. Then she makes collages with different types of paper in different forms, to provide the composition with structure and to create relief. At times she will also use stencils to create repetitive patterns. Finally, to intertwine areas of significant relief she will apply colour directly from the tube to the canvas. When she has reached this stage she allows movement and gesture to take control where the first movement gives birth to the second and so she creates circles, spirals and lines which take us to the stars. She also adds music to her creative mix to provide her movements with rhythm.

All of this combines to take her painting far away from something sad and arid. The forms, the textures, the uncommon colours and the titles she chooses always provide a refreshing note of gaiety if not clearly a touch of humour which brings a smile to her audience. As well, in order to confuse our perception, a certain duality often manifests itself in her work, strength mixes with delicacy, somber touches border transparency.

Cloutier always works with acrylics because according to her the medium permits more spontaneity. She will also use lacquer because she believes it provides her work with diaphanous and rhythmical qualities. While Cloutier works mainly in large formats she will also work from time to time in small ones. She prefers working with larger canvasses because they provide her with the space she needs to move freely. She likes to create diptyches and even triptychs because of the larger surface they provide her with.

The act of painting is so important to her that she can't let a week pass without going to her studio. All of this requires an immense amount of discipline because along with painting she teaches, animates creativity workshops, attends conferences and supports humanitarian causes such as the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

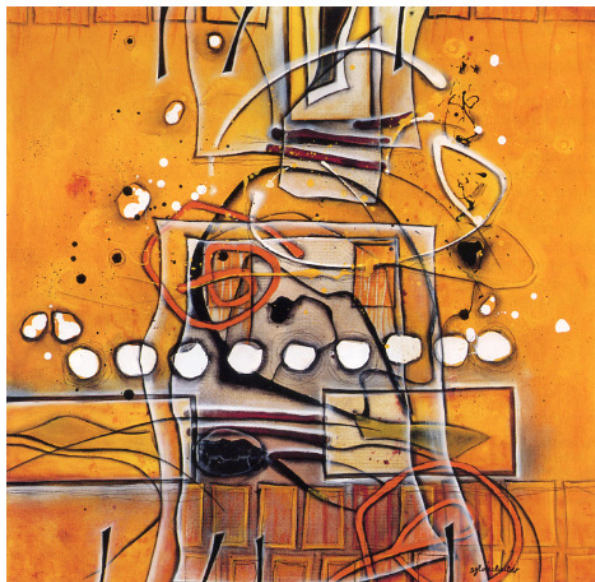
Cloutier is happy to be able to do what she loves and thinks herself lucky to have succeeded in the difficult field

of abstract art. She is satisfied by the way her life has turned out and quite proud of the fact that she has recently been approached to show her work in Los Angeles and also in Paris. You can meet Cloutier herself this October 30th at the Galerie Michel-Ange in Montréal during the vernissage for her new exhibition. **I**

Michel Beauchamp



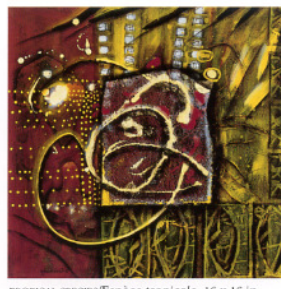
BE SMOOD/La couleur, 21 x 12 in.



A SEA OF CITRUS FRUITS/Une mer d'agrumes, 30 x 30 in.



TRY AND FIND A WAY OUT/Essayez donc de trouver une issue, 18 x 18 in.



TROPICAL SPECIES/Espèce tropicale, 16 x 16 in.



ONE THING LEADING TO ANOTHER/De fil en aiguille, mixed media on paper, 2005

Yves Suroagou