

NORMAND HUDON

For some time now one of the most colourful personalities in the Québec artistic world, Normand Hudon takes the crown of fame quite casually and does not exactly know what to do with it, seeing that it is too big to wear on his finger like some pontifical ring and too small to make a big fuss about. You might ask why he doesn't wear it on his head like any other self-respecting celebrity? Well, quite simply because Normand Hudon respects nothing and has only retained one guiding principle from his religious upbringing: If you're going to make a caricature, start with yourself!

Ahead of his time, Normand finished his first mural just before receiving his first spanking at age three-and-a-half. His career had nevertheless begun, so much so that he didn't have to sign the caricatures that he made of his teachers on the blackboard to merit being on the top of the list of detentions and other punishments.

Faced with a totally unjust misunderstanding of his innate gift, for which he in no way felt guilty, he decided to live the rest of his life according to the following motto: Have a good laugh. With this decision came the enormous difficulty of finding people who shared this ideal, and especially of making sure they kept to the often tumultuous practice of such an ambitious program.

It's no use trying to look elsewhere for the sources of his painting. It would be too easy to get lost in the classes of the Montréal School of Fine Arts, in the stairways of Montmartre in 1950 (he was 20 then), under the reflectors of the television studios during the heroic "live period", in the cubicles of Montréal newspaper caricaturists or in any number of fashionable cabarets since omnipresence is one of his lesser talents.

Indeed, it's this ubiquity that explains his continual presence on the picture rails of art galleries beginning with his first personal exhibition in 1950, and the reproduction of his drawings in a surprising number of periodicals and books, including his own collections from *La Tête la première* up to *À la potence*.

As a result, I just have to believe him when he says quite innocently: "I'm shy, really shy, convinced that I'm gifted, but forced to constantly repeat it myself, since you don't seem in a hurry to tell me so..." Luckily, the spring sun is there to make the fresh wine sparkle on the table of his home in Magog. Otherwise, I would go elsewhere to find artists with a little more respect for my own misplaced vanity. The only things keeping me there are my half-empty glass, my desire to see the old paintings and drawings in his house and the fact that he is the author of "attacks" of Justice worthy of Daumier, "Scenes of religious life" which Balzac didn't have the slightest idea about, and wildly exuberant collages. Like him or hate him, Normand Hudon leaves no one indifferent.