



MONIQUE HARVEY

SILENT TUMULT



SINGING ROOSTER/COQ CHANTANT, 24 x 30 in. Loch & Mayberry Fine Art, Winnipeg.

At first glance, the work of Monique Harvey resembles naive art, but first impressions can be deceiving.

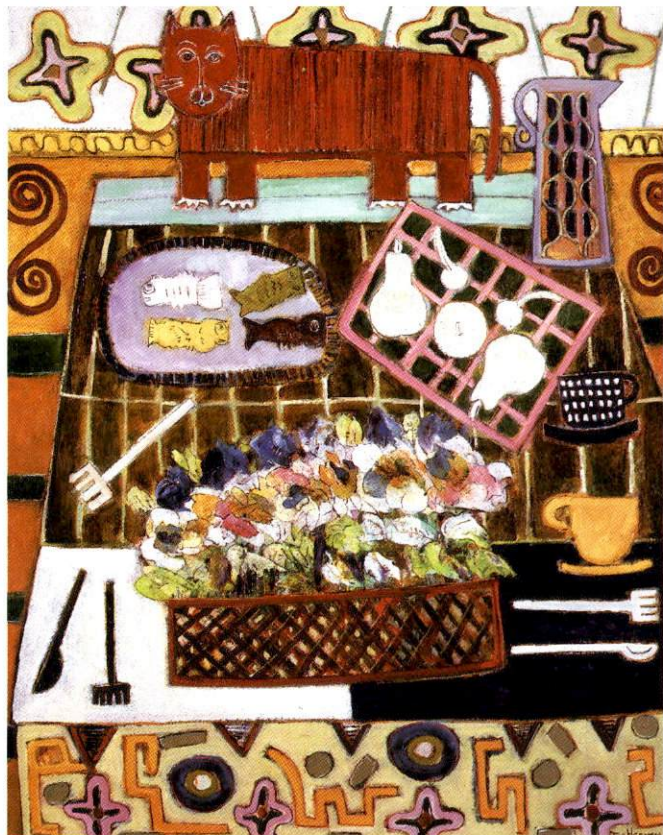
Her paintings are a rich mosaic of colour and forms, tightly packed landscapes populated by simplified human figures and animals, of buildings and plants, all meshed in

a thick tangle resembling the art of Henri Rousseau (called *Le Douanier*).

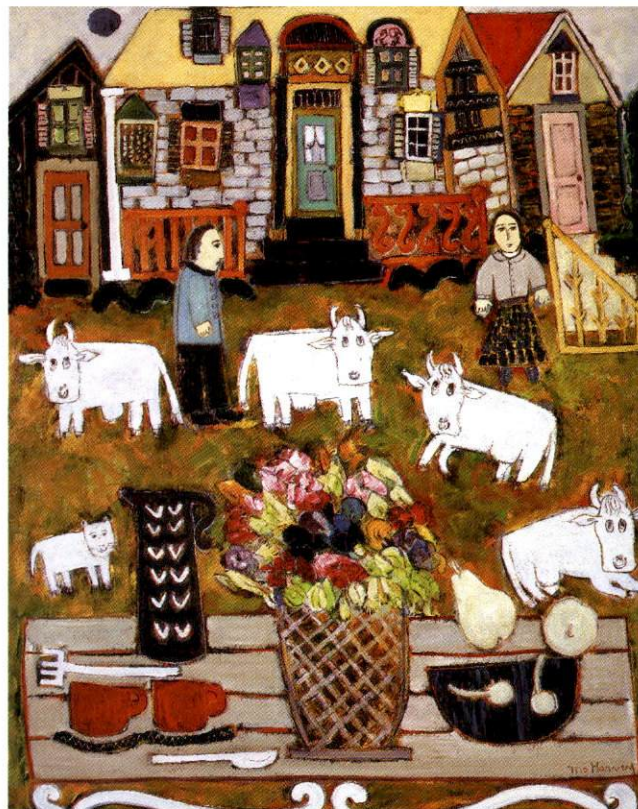
But just as Rousseau's distortion of scale, creating an arising, invading effect reinforced by the insistent, static quality and monumentality of his figures, was by no means the fruit of "innocence", neither are the childlike paintings of Monique Harvey the res-

ult of playful explorations.

"People say my work is not of this century," Rousseau complained. "You realise very well that I cannot change my style, which is the result of obstinate work." 'Obstinate' is just another word for determined, and is particularly apt when applied to describe Monique Harvey's approach to her



RED CAT'S FEAST/LE FESTIN DU CHAT ROUGE, 30 x 24 in. Masters Gallery, Calgary.



THE CITY FARMERS/LES FERMIERES CITADINS, 30 x 24 in. Galerie Lydia Monaro, Montreal.

métier. Mainly a self-taught artist, she came to painting via several other disciplines, like photography, music and dance, only to discover her voice in the plastic arts.

An admirer of Chagall and Picasso, Harvey has, nevertheless, created her own, unique visual vocabulary, establishing in the process a dedicated following, and her works are eagerly snapped up by a phalanx of art collectors.

Like Rousseau, Harvey's art comes closest to the work of the Fauvists, a motley crew of artists whose paintings confounded art critics unable to fit them into a neat category. The trend lasted a mere three years, between 1905 and 1908, and its proponents included such great painters as Derain, Matisse, Dufy, Braque and others, artists enamoured of colour and visual exuberance. Characterised by the abandonment of traditional pictorial approach and perspective, the use of pure colour, the modification of the relationship between painting and reality, Fauvism (from the French word for 'wild') changed the course of art. The idea was to liberate colour and form, and in Fauvist paintings "no point is more important than another", to quote Matisse.

In Monique Harvey's works, the fig-



MARIE'S MELODIES/LES MÉLODIES DE MARIE, 24 x 30 in. Masters Gallery, Calgary.

ures are on par with the surrounding structures and fauna, forcing the eye to meander around the contours of the shapes as if following an Ariadne's thread leading into the light. Her paintings can be viewed on several levels, and while we may at first be

drawn by the simplicity of the drawing and the ebullience of colour, the more discerning viewer will appreciate the artist's mastery of technique and medium.

Her paintings begin as abstract backgrounds on which the artist later



THE TWIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING/LE BLOC APPARTEMENT DES JUMELLES, 36 x 48 in.
Galerie Lydia Monaro, Montreal.



SERENADING/POUR UNE AMOURETTE QUI PASSAIT PAR LÀ..., 24 x 30 in. Masters Gallery, Calgary.

imposes her colourful menagerie. She makes no preliminary sketches or drawings, embarking as if on a visual journey whose final destination is still unknown. "I never step back to look at the painting," Monique Harvey explains. "And yet, somehow, it holds together, it may be crooked, but still it's solid, it has a life of its own." She'll start on a painting in the morning, her best time, and by the end of the day an image will have formed. "It has to be

pretty", to satisfy the artist, and there's no doubt that Monique Harvey's paintings evoke an instant feeling of joy and playful abandon we all crave. But, again, looks can be deceiving, for beneath the innocent, childlike faces and simplified structures lies a world of silence and loneliness.

In *Le Bloc Appartements des Jumelles/The Twin's Apartment Building*, faces stare out of endless windows, blank, unseeing, each person locked

in their own reverie, unaware of others. The impression is drawn from the artist's experience of living in a block of flats, a community of strangers. "Nobody looks at one another," she recalls. "We are always alone despite being surrounded by people." *Les Fermiers Citadins/The City Farmers* further carries the theme of alienation, and in this colourful painting, it's the country folk who are lost in the urban metropolis, just as out of place as the cows they have in tow.

Animals are messengers of freedom in Monique Harvey's visual vocabulary, a respite from the world of man-made buildings, and indifference. "They speak to me," she says. "Just seeing them makes me feel good, they make the world better." They are also an integral part of her imagery, and Harvey has a particular knack at rendering them with the greatest economy of gesture. In a marvellous portrait titled *Anne Bleue au Chat Blanc/Anne In Blue With White Cat*, a dreamy-eyed female figure is accompanied by a white cat, sketched with barely a few lines, and yet all there, alive, perched in the corner of the canvas like a silent sentinel.

A traveller and observer, Monique Harvey continually changes and hones her visual language, drawing inspiration from the quotidian, translating the every-day reality into a magical, innocent realm of pure visual expression.

At 50, she has spent close to 20 years in the pursuit of her art, but admits it will take "a lifetime" to fulfil her creative mission. "I want to detach myself, as if from my parents," says Monique, who admits to enjoying the solitude painting demands. "I like to work alone, and not be part of a group." That she has accomplished. Her art is staunchly, resolutely personal and original. Matisse once said about one of his works, "I did not create a woman, I made a painting", and the same can be said of Monique Harvey. Her colourful, busy scenes are first and foremost works of art. **I**

Dorota Kozinska

Monique Harvey's work is in permanent display at the following galleries: Loch & Mayberry Fine Arts, Winnipeg; Masters Gallery, Calgary; Lydia Monaro, Montreal; Iris, Baie Saint-Paul; Hollander York, Toronto; Las Olas Fine Art, Fort Lauderdale FL; St-Laurent+Hill, Ottawa. Monique Harvey is listed in the *Biennial Guide to Canadian Artists in Galleries*, published by MAGAZIN'ART.