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Schooling at Collège Sainte-Marie:
Pierre Gauvreau, Claude Gauvreau,
and Bruno Cormier

At the Gesù:
Exhibition by Pierre Gauvreau
Muriel Guilbault plays in Huis-clos

Claude Gosselin, C.M., July 28th, 2020

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Pierre Gauvreau, Claude Gauvreau and Bruno Cormier attended Collège Sainte-Marie. Pierre Gauvreau and Bruno Cormier walked together regularly between their homes and school. Pierre Gauvreau studied there from 1934 until the end of the 1937-1938 school year. During this period, a copy of Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du mal* and a collection of Rimbaud’s *Poésies*, two forbidden works, were found. Thus at the start of the 1938 school year, he was refused admission, citing “that he had stubbornly refused to submit to the prescriptions of the Index of prohibited books” (François-Marc Gagnon, *Chronique du mouvement automatiste québécois 1941-1954*, p. 50). His poor academic record and delays in school fees payments were also reasons for his dismissal. Forced to take a year off, he occupied himself with reading and drawing. Painter René Chicoine, who occasionally participated in Mrs. Gauvreau’s *Lundis littéraires*, advised him to apply at the École des beaux-arts. Once accepted, Pierre Gauvreau entered preparatory class at the Monument national for the 1939-1940 school year. “Considered very talented, it was intended to protect him against this very talent, and he was forced to draw cubes, spheres, pyramids for a year”. (François-Marc Gagnon, *Chronique du mouvement automatiste québécois 1941-1954*, p. 50)

His brother Claude Gauvreau entered Collège Sainte-Marie in the fall of 1937. But due to his mother’s financial difficulties, she pulled him out of school the following year. It was not until September 1939 that he returned to the College before being expelled in November or December for making “heinous” drawings. He was readmitted in the fall of 1941 and was dismissed a second time in 1945 “for having supported ideas incompatible with official teachings” (Claude Gauvreau and Jean-Claude Dussault, *Correspondance 1949-1950*, Montreal, Éditions de l’Hexagone, 1993, p. 126). He recounts having developed an anti-clerical feeling that was ineradicable from his time at the Collège Sainte-Marie (François-Marc Gagnon, *Chronique du mouvement automatiste québécois 1941-1954*, p. 75).

**Exhibition of summer works in the hall of the Gesù**

In 1941, even though he was no longer a student at the College, Pierre Gauvreau was part of a group exhibition for that year’s graduating class. His friend Bruno Cormier, who was still a student there himself, suggested he participate in the exhibit. Gauvreau showcased around twenty oils inspired by the works of Fauve artists Matisse and Picasso. Paul-Émile Borduas, who was invited to award a prize to the best students, was surprised by the quality of Pierre Gauvreau’s works.

Borduas wanted to give the first prize to Pierre Gauvreau for his work, but the College authorities refused. Borduas gave him a recognition award instead. In addition to the prize, Borduas invited him, through his student Guy Viau, to attend his workshop, where regular meetings were held on Tuesdays. He happily accepted and asked to bring his friends: Bruno Cormier and Françoise Sullivan. Permission granted. Afterwards, he invited his group from the École des beaux-arts Magdeleines Desroches, Louise Renaud, Adrien Villandré and Fernand Leduc.
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