

## **Sorel Etrog (1933-2014)**

Romanian-born, Canadian artist, writer and philosopher Sorel Etrog dies at 80 (1933-2014) after prolonged illness. His astonishing international career (he represented Canada at the Venice Biennial in 1966, as a highlight event) was interwoven with his extraordinary encounters and long-lasting friendships with many great figures, such as John Cage, Samuel Beckett or the Romanian-born playwright Eugene Ionesco (with whom he also collaborated). In 1968, he created the design of Genie Award (Canadian equivalent for the Oscars), that soon became The Etrog (nowadays known as the Canadian Screen Awards). His passion for music and literature is visible in most of his creations and collaborations with other artists.

"Sorel Etrog has only to take two metal bars and twist them together to produce independent life: he twists in with them his own energetic spirit and the principle of growth. His art is as fundamental as that but it is also infinitely complex." (Sir Philip Henty (1900-1980), was director of National Gallery in London from 1946 to 1967)

"Whether working in two or three dimensions, Etrog strives invariably for the same effect: to sustain a tension of ordinary moments on the surface of the canvas or in space, to speed up every rhythm, accentuate every peak, dynamize to the utmost the relationships between colours, shapes, volumes, shadows, degrees of light. In sculpture, for instance, he opts for the slowest, heaviest of materials, and labours over it until it takes on an expression of soaring. In drawing, he labours over lines until they translate an impression of volume and their blackness produces colour." (Florian Rodari, *Secret Paths*, 1999-2000 - excerpt from *Sorel Etrog. Five Decades*, edited by Ihor Holubizky, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2013. Florian Rodari is a Swiss writer and curator of Jean and Suzanne Planque Foundation.)

"In fact, Etrog has always sensed that he is condemned to live with his contradictions and, primarily, with the most constraining of them all, history. He cannot deny history, if only out of duty, out of memory: a duty that is more essential, necessary, sufficient, than sacred. If he cannot eradicate the presence of memory, cannot reject it as a finality beyond him, he turns against it ("I am confronted by the entire history of man"), he ignores its temporal aspect and, above all, he refuses its transcendence. He submits to immanence without sublimation and, although he rejects history's fatalism, he roots himself in fatality: inner vertigo, the explosion of sameness, narcissistic fidelity to his own vocabulary, to his shapes, his signs, his links, his hinges and bolts." (Pierre Restany, *Sorel Etrog with an Essay by Pierre Restany*, Prestel, Munich, 2001)

"The painted constructions have a continuing importance in themselves as well as for their germinal relation to so much of the sculpture. His art of the decade of the constructions is one of equiposed tensions built out of polarities on every level of formal structure and meaning, and on interpenetrations and fusions of form and colour." (Theodore Allen Heinrich, *The painted constructions*, 1968. Theodore Allen Heinrich was a professor at York University and a curator at the Metropolitan Museum, New York.)

His works can be found in international public collections, such as Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada, MoMA New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, University of Chicago, Illinois, Haifa Museum of

Art, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Kunstmuseum Basel, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Tate, London, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel etc.