

# 19 Guido Molinari

AANFM LP QMG RCA SAPQ 1933 - 2004

## Triangle vert-mauve

acrylic on canvas, on verso signed, titled and dated 1971 on the exhibition label, dated 12/71 and inscribed *G.MT-1971-07* and *Caisse #8/Section v1* and *Private Collection/Cat.* 57 (*Ref.* #1785) on a label 78 × 90 in, 198.1 × 228.6 cm

### PROVENANCE

Collection of the Artist Estate of the Artist

### LITERATURE

Sandra Grant Marchand et al., *Guido Molinari, Une rétrospective*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1995, listed page 71

#### **EXHIBITED**

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, *Guido Molinari, Une rétrospective*, May 19 – September 17, 1995, catalogue #57 Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary, *Guido Molinari*:

Master Works, October 3 - November 23, 2010

GUIDO MOLINARI'S *Triangle* series (*Triangulaires*) was the culmination of a decade exploring colour and form with vertical stripes, each stripe always equal in width and differentiated by colour. These so-called *Stripe* paintings brought Molinari international recognition as one of the most significant artists of his time. By 1970, his *Stripe* paintings had been presented in numerous exhibitions in Europe, Japan and North America, as well as acquired by public collections from Vancouver to New York. Molinari's unique talent was recognized in 1968 with the David E. Bright Foundation award when he represented Canada in the *Venice Biennale*. Molinari's *Triangulaires* were presented in solo exhibitions at the Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris (1974) and Canada House Gallery, London (1975).

The Triangle series features Molinari's most complex Stripe paintings, and Triangle vert-mauve (1971) is an outstanding example—it was once destined for purchase consideration by the National Gallery of Canada. Like all of his *Stripe* paintings, as Molinari himself said, "The painting-environment sucks you in. A new type of space is created, fictional space because it happens in the mind and yet also involves the totality of perception." This painting offers a multiplicity of readings and rereadings of colourform relationships, each dependent on what a viewer chooses to focus on, whether it is a single triangle, a pair, or repeating groups of shapes or colours. In addition, the width of the four rectangles each supporting a pair of triangles introduces a new horizontal emphasis at the top and bottom edges, in counterpoint to the array of vertical and diagonal distortions at play. The perceptual vibrating of triangular forms, plus the colour modulations within distinct hues when seen at the centre or at the periphery of each triangle, contribute to the almost limitless spatial complexity of these final Stripe paintings.

As it is with all of Molinari's oeuvre, *Triangle vert-mauve* disarms you with its simplicity. The flat opaque surface of each

Triangulaire painting is divided vertically, each repeated form identical in its dimensions. Wide bands of colour taper to a point, and every colour appears twice, forming an inverted echo with its partner. Four colours and a simple pattern are somehow stunningly rich with colour, space, rhythm and repetition. Serious consideration of these elements is crucial, something aided by naming the colours, red—mauve—green—blue—mauve—green—blue—red, to set out the unique rhythmic arrangement of Triangle vert-mauve.

Monumental in size, *Triangle vert-mauve* is relatively easy to break down into its constituent elements, but almost counterintuitively the seemingly simple grows in complexity. Triangles are unique perceptual challenges, and the surface of this painting can be read in many ways (as four rectangles each bisected diagonally, as two repeated groups of three identically coloured triangles bracketed by red) and can be examined sequentially from an edge to the centre, then beyond, then in reverse. Complicating the optical distortions active in *Triangle vert-mauve* even further are the facts, first articulated by Jean Piaget, that human vision tends to overestimate acute angles and underestimate obtuse angles, which contributes to our general perceptual inability to keep parallel lines parallel, or accurately estimate length.<sup>3</sup> Each factor plays its part in activating the *espace dynamique* so essential to Molinari.

The scale of this work obliges viewers to plunge straight into the colours in order to discern the space. In *Triangle vert-mauve*, a shallow undulating space of troughs and ridges pushes colour out towards you, and the logic of a repeating pattern takes over and the colours seem more spatially restrained. Then your mind is off again, prodded by the notice of any small perceptual distortions. For Molinari colour is a form of energy, and through the introduction of the diagonal he liberates chromatic energy to create a constantly active environment of colour/space. He stated, "In using chromatic energy as a structural element in this new spatiality, I was intending to create an art more expressive than anything that had gone before." His intent is embodied brilliantly in *Triangle vert-mauve*.

We thank Gary Dufour, adjunct associate professor, University of Western Australia, for contributing the above essay. Dufour curated the exhibition *Guido Molinari*, 1951–1961: The Black and White Paintings, shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Windsor and Art Gallery of Ontario in 1989–1990.

- 1. Handwritten notation on the stretcher of *Triangle vert-mauve* (1971): "This work...is here for purchase consideration in 1972. (P. Théberge)." Pierre Théberge was curator of Canadian contemporary art and curatorial administrator at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, in 1972.
- 2. Guido Molinari, quoted in Pierre Théberge, *Guido Molinari* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976), 50.
- 3. Robert Welsh, "Molinari and the Science of Colour and Line," *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review* 5, no. 1 (1978): 18 20.
- 4. Molinari quoted in Théberge, Guido Molinari, 54.

ESTIMATE: \$60,000 - 80,000

34 35