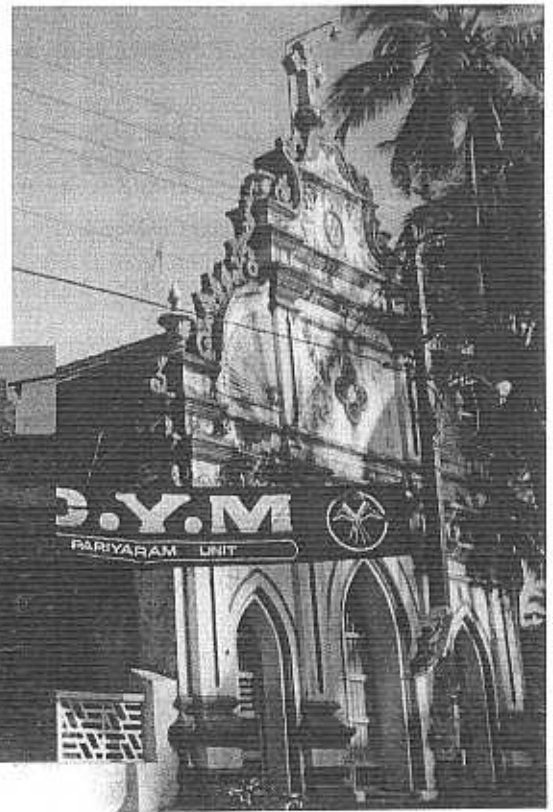
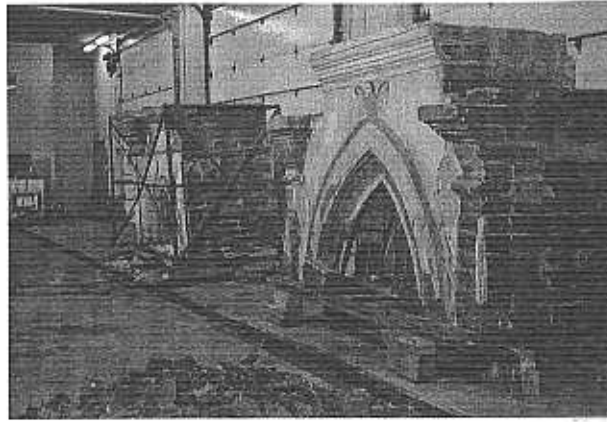


Opposite A nineteenth-century Kerala courtyard fence to be installed in a street in Larouche.

For right One of the eighteenth-century Indo-Portuguese churches in India where it was due to be demolished to make way for a car park. After two years of negotiations, Simard managed to buy it and transport it to Larouche where it will be rebuilt (right).



fervently that art and architecture could enrich, educate and inspire. Briton William Morris (1834–96) of the Arts and Crafts movement at the end of the nineteenth century comes to mind, as do the pioneering German and Dutch modernist architects of the 1920s, and those of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Constant, Archigram and Archizoom. Closer to home, in a Canadian, and particularly, Quebecois context, Simard's project can be seen as extending the project of modernizing Quebec society and dragging it into the international arena begun by predecessors such as Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–60) and Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923–2002). In 1948 Borduas and his followers published *Refus Global* (Total Refusal), which took the conservative political regime to task and laid much of the blame for the provincial, repressed nature of Quebec society on the Catholic Church. As much a political manifesto as an artistic one, the document and the attitudes it expressed has since led the artists involved to be credited with helping to propel Quebec into the modern age. Simard seems to be extending the programme to this forgotten corner of the province.

In an age of archness and defeatism, when irony and cynicism are fashionable (or easier?), what a joy to encounter an artist who genuinely and passionately believes in the possibility and power of

art to effect change. Importantly, this conviction is backed up by the drive and commitment to put it into practice. Instead of bemoaning the state of the world, or the arts, Simard has knuckled down and taken on the challenge of proving to himself and others that art can be redemptive, and a force for good. To do this, he has had to learn and take on the roles of a museum, or indeed, those of an urban planner – fundraising, planning permission, consultation and convincing those affected of the positive outcomes of his plan.

While some were originally suspicious of Simard's motives, his enthusiasm for the project and the commitment he has demonstrated so far have been infectious. The Centre International d'Exposition de Larouche (CIEL, International Centre for the Exhibition of Larouche) has been formed to purchase works and local government is firmly on board, hiring a full-time employee to catalogue all the works. What began as the vision of one man has evolved into the shared aspirations of a large part of the community. While Simard squirms when confronted with the altruistic nature of his project, insisting that it is as much to do with his artistic vision as his social commitment, I for one, am confident that the transformation of Larouche will enhance and enrich the lives of its residents and visitors alike.