

Normand Hudon

The Colours of Life **Part I**

right, *La Grand Montée* (1993), 12" x 10"

written by Debra Usher

First there was the line, then the colour. That has always been the brilliance of Normand Hudon, an artist who could draw exceptionally well. Then came the moment that he added colour to his work and it came to life – animated on the canvas – telling story after story for his audience. And Normand Hudon loved an audience.

The Journey

Normand was a painter whose talent never stopped developing, growing and forging itself in the fire of an intense, at times tumultuous, and always passionate life. Even at the height of his career, Hudon was racing ahead creating the magic that was his alone to share with the world.

Hudon embraced life, with all the events that, in the lives of certain people, would resemble a roller coaster. Both the highs and the lows. The sway of the golden corn on the prairies and the shining peaks of snow-covered mountains in the sun. There were streams to cross – not always a simple matter during a spring flood – and the steep rock faces to climb, where you never know if the root you are grabbing will hold, or if the stone

under your foot will give way. He believed what is most important is to keep climbing and keep moving down the road. Like Saint-Exupéry, for whom crossing the desert meant putting "one foot in front of the other," Normand Hudon was always exploring, performing and creating a rich and very dramatic life.

The deserts Hudon crossed, the rocky slopes he confronted, are there in his images – where line and colour meet, extracted from what he has seen, from what he felt, from what his heart has known. The scenes from daily life, which has not been for him "the everyday life" but a long succession of days and nights, overflowing, animated and even bombarded by a talent that is more possessive than the most ardent mistress.

Hudon, the painter, the artist – as he exists on the pages of this story – whole and finally, completely, himself.

The Performer and the Artist

Since the beginning of Normand Hudon's career, a visual dichotomy has affected his artistic production. In fact, the whole body of his work has been profoundly influenced by his stage experience, before he began painting full-time,





la récréation nocturne

normand fustan 18/8



previous spread, *La Récréation Nocturne*, 24" x 36"
above, *La Course Folle* (1997), 24" x 30"

when Hudon was a respected club and television actor. The result of both a merging of television and painting and a desire to keep them separate has characterized his career. To his audience, Hudon revealed himself as an engaging and even endearing artist, particularly because, as a professional, he remained scrupulously honest on stage as well as on canvas.

A painting by Hudon is essentially distinguished by the mobility of the lines, the value of the colours and his consistently imaginative composition. Influenced by the cartoon, of which he was one of the Canadian masters, he unfailingly imparts a purely human denominator to his subject or, at least, a human angle. When he was making a drawing, collage or painting, Hudon's aim was always to please and surprise.

There was a keen difference, however, between Hudon the artist and Hudon the "entertainer." Two very different temperaments springing from the same personality. Perhaps that is the mystery of Hudon, a mystery which the

artist kept alive by cultivating the two different aspects of himself. There is a facet of his work where Hudon tries to engage the audience to see from his vantage point – sometimes there is a humorous and sarcastic tone which causes a reaction from the viewer, depending on their life's journey.

Hudon became an important stage and television performer and, because of his great love for this spotlight, he knew his audiences well. And they responded in kind to him. He loved the attention, yet, although some might see this as a flaw, his intentions remained as pure as the honesty and candour of his art.

Because of the broad spectrum of his work, he was hard to describe to others. He went from one medium to another, flawlessly and with great grace, closer to an artist like Toulouse-Lautrec than an artist of the modern day schools. His career spanned more than four decades and it has been suggested that it also paralleled the growth and dramatic changes of Quebec.

right, *Coin de Rue*, 24" x 18"





23 à 17

normand hudson
1981



previous spread, 23 à 17, 18" x 24"
left, Rue de Québec, 10" x 8"

above, Le Retour au Collège, 20" x 24"

His Own Course

Hudon always claimed that his art career was linear, like the journey through life, and he was truly part of the characters he created and the different facets of life they represented. He never worried about what people might say – he was charting his own course. Thus, Normand Hudon remains a master on his own turf and of his own technique, influenced as he may be by those artists who have blazed the trail before him.

His path was always affected by the spirit of the times and the individuals around him. The cartoon, more than any other mode of artistic expression, became a path for him to express and interpret the world he walked through. To understand the mystery and the phenomenon that was Hudon it is important to understand the notable artists who contributed to his journey. These masters help to further enhance his artistic vision and skill.

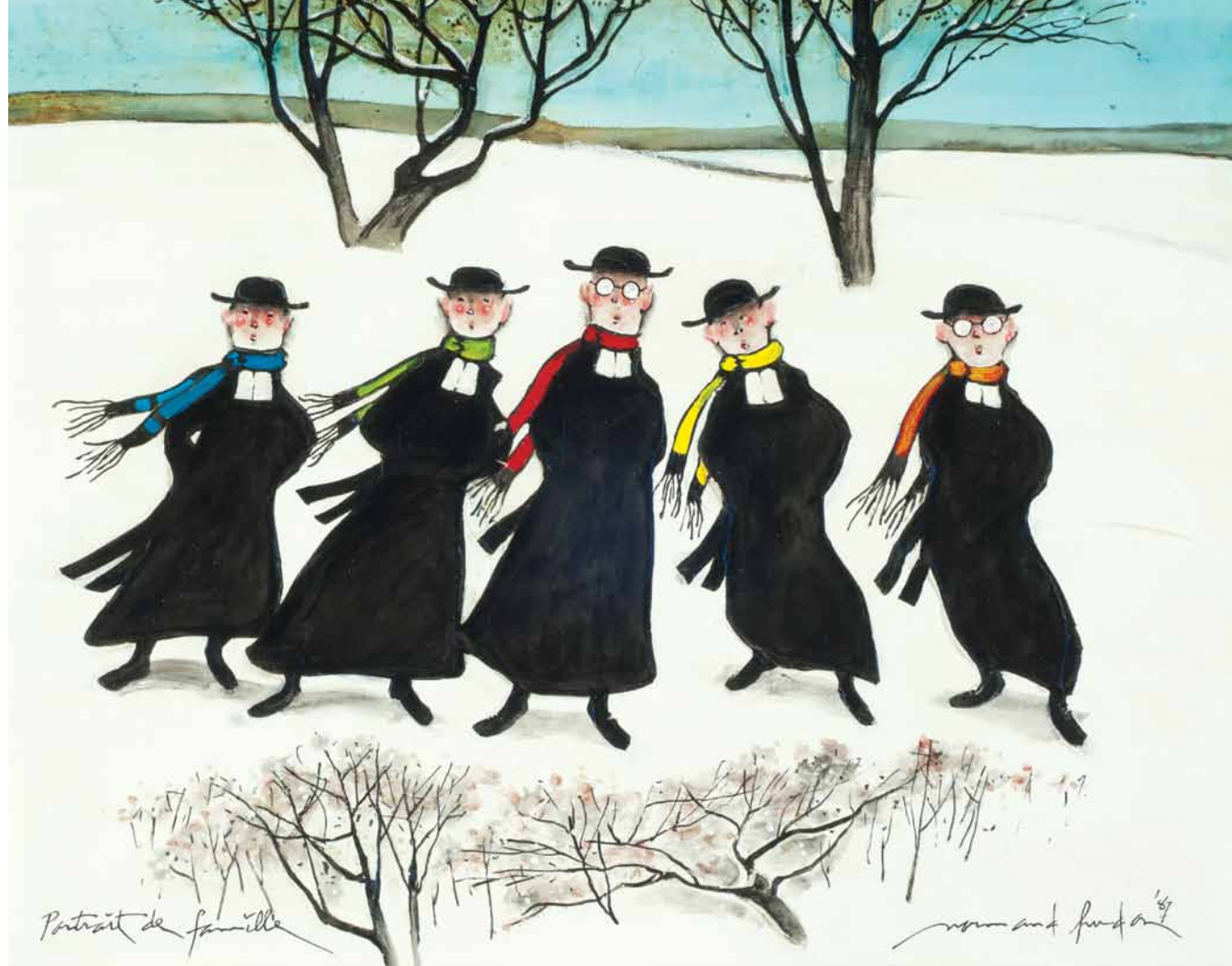
Hudon took his most important drawing lesson from Pablo Picasso, who taught him how to

synthesize his lines and to strengthen their purpose in the painting. From Henri Matisse, Hudon learned the freedom and ease of fewer lines and the joy of colour to create more movement.

A Timeless Legacy

In summary, it is difficult to imagine Normand Hudon as either old or out of the spotlight. Many will always remember him as a caricaturist, devilishly gifted in shaking the pedestals beneath public figures. More than a humorist, and much more than an artist whose brushstrokes bite, Normand was a poster artist, illustrator, ad man, actor, radio and television host, author... the list goes on. However, no matter what else Hudon was doing, he was always painting.

Born in Montréal in 1929, Normand Hudon eventually reached the École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal and then the Académie Montmartre in Paris in 1949. There, in the City of Lights, he met many influential personalities including Picasso and Léger.



above, Portrait de Famille, 16" x 20"



above, Quatre Soeurs dans l'Vent, 8" x 10"

below, sans titre, 16" x 20"



below, Détente pour les Révérends Freres, 22" x 28"





La Messe de Six Heures, 16" x 20"



Rue Notre-Dame, Est. 1890, 24" x 30"

Normand's talent as a caricaturist surfaced early. While still a student, his work was published in *La Patrie* and *Le Petit Journal* newspapers. His caustic drawings appeared in several dailies, weeklies and periodicals, such as *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. The subject of many articles, Hudon was also published alone or in collaboration with other albums of caricatures.

This might make us neglect the fact that Normand Hudon had been exhibiting his work regularly since 1947 at the Salon du Printemps of the Montréal Museum of Fine Art and, on several other occasions, elsewhere in Québec, in Canada and abroad. Among the first galleries to accept Hudon's work were Agnès Lefort's and Waddington.

Today, the caricaturist stands in shadow behind the increasingly well-known painter.

Over the years, children, fantastic houses, awkward priests and quixotic lawyers have filled his canvases, revealing an exquisite sensitivity and tenderness rather unexpected in this pitiless opponent. Not surprisingly, drawing was essential to his compositions. Hudon worked to deform the familiar and clearly express his point of view. His apparent naiveté cannot hide the critic within the artist.

Hudon often uses mixed media. His colours, both sombre and highly contrasted, underline the purpose of the drawing. The black of clothing (priest's and lawyer's robes) offsets



Montréal, Début de Siècle, 14" x 18"



Le Docteur Cyprien et Madame, 14" x 18"



AMERICA!

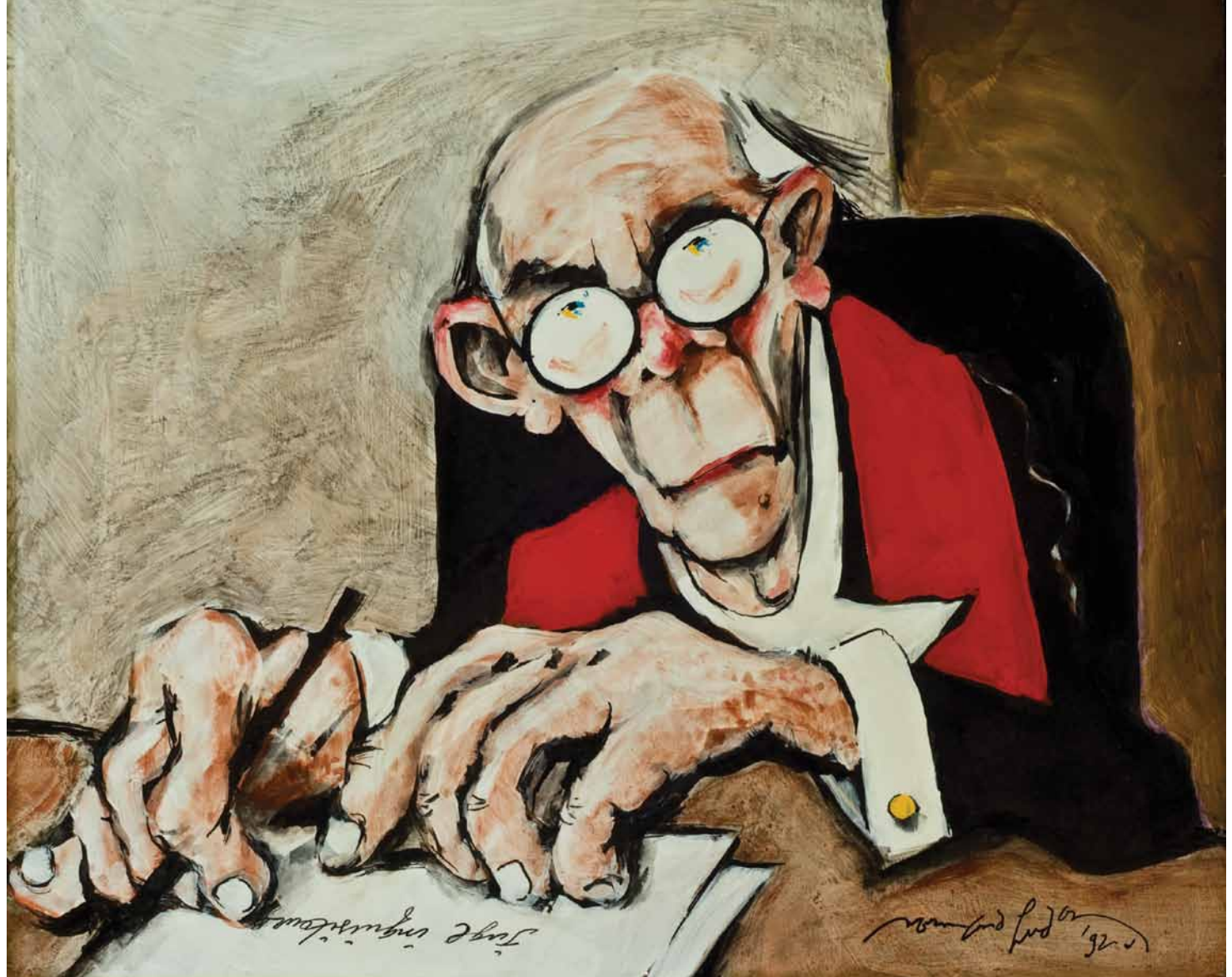
LES TRUS

Conflict syndical

Norman Rockwell



previous spread, *Conflit Syndical*, 12" x 16"
left, *Juge Sévère*, 12" x 10"



above, *Juge Inquisiteur* (1992), 10" x 12"

red noses and ruddy cheeks. Using people and objects for his own purposes, Hudon constantly portrays movement. The overall impression the spectator gets from Normand's work is one of laughing naughtiness.

The artist draws upon daily life in popular neighbourhoods, where the authentic can be picturesque. Hudon's irreverence strikes the dull world of clerics and judges, where solemn silliness and conservatism take refuge. In many respects, the artist and his work has helped to open the minds of our society more than our public figures or politicians.

Ahead in Part II

A serious artist, warm performer and graphic genius, Normand Hudon, the artist, always brings a smile to my face and joy to my heart. In Part II, we will showcase his artistic journey and announce

the release date of a new book, currently being written. Nowhere is there an artist who portrayed so many moods and expressed both political and life views in such a colourful and artistic format.

Galleries featuring the timeless works of Normand Hudon include:

Balcon D'Art
Saint-Lambert, Quebec
www.balcondart.com
1.866.466.8920

Multi-Art
Saint-Lambert, Quebec
www.multi-art.net
1.450.466.8511

Pousette Gallery
Vancouver, British Columbia
www.pousettegallery.com
604.563.2717

Normand Hudon

Walking the Tightrope **Part II**

written by Debra Usher

Normand Hudon was the complete artist. He was one of the rare individuals who possessed total expressive qualities; he had a feeling for the cartoon, he was a painter and he worked his canvas into a sculptural arrangement. Hudon was also an excellent colourist. Gifted with a beautiful and sometimes poetic imagination and a solid understanding of composition he was able to make the transfer from the real to the surreal.

For Normand Hudon each work was a torment to surmount and overcome. From one element to another, it became a constant battle to obtain the particular effect of a line, a mark, or even an expression.

In most of his work Hudon had a vision of the painting that represented an ordinary dream or fantasy and thus made obvious the need for purity, and even innocence, which was the very basis of Hudon and his personality.

A Page of Quebec History

Normand Hudon is like a page in the history of Quebec, someone who has grown up with Quebec and at the same time saw Quebec grow

Le Point Vainqueur, oil on canvas, 9" x 7"

up. He was someone who painted, drew and reinvented Quebec even before it knew it existed.

Some of the critics of Hudon found Normand to be a very pleasing artistic mix, although somewhat bitter, in which there is a little of Japanese art and the style of the great French cartoonists. The eye can stay for a long time contemplating his drawings and sketches. Sometimes we have to go back just to capture a forgotten detail and smile at the irony there, even if it is not always kind, there is always something which makes us appreciate the optimistic spirit.

His scenes are brilliant with simplicity and there is that sharp and incisive drawing that sometimes knocks you over with the hidden meaning. His work is rather paradoxical and the key to the mystery is the simplicity of the means and the end – a work in the sense of art which is both popular and honest.

The Critic

Some of the art critics have found Hudon and his work analogous to someone grinding their teeth. Hudon moved among us with far away eyes. Who has not been startled by his haughty, yet miserable figures and who does not recognize his untrimmed





Le retour en forêt d'Eloïse - romant / rust 88



Soeur Angèle et ses protégés -

left, Le Retour Enforet D'Eloïse, oil on canvas, 18" x 24"
above, Soeur Angèle Et Ses Protégés (1988), oil on canvas, 12" x 24"

below, La Rentrée, oil on canvas, 10" x 12"



La rentrée -

romant / rust 88



Vieux Montreal, 1860

Normand Fordon '85

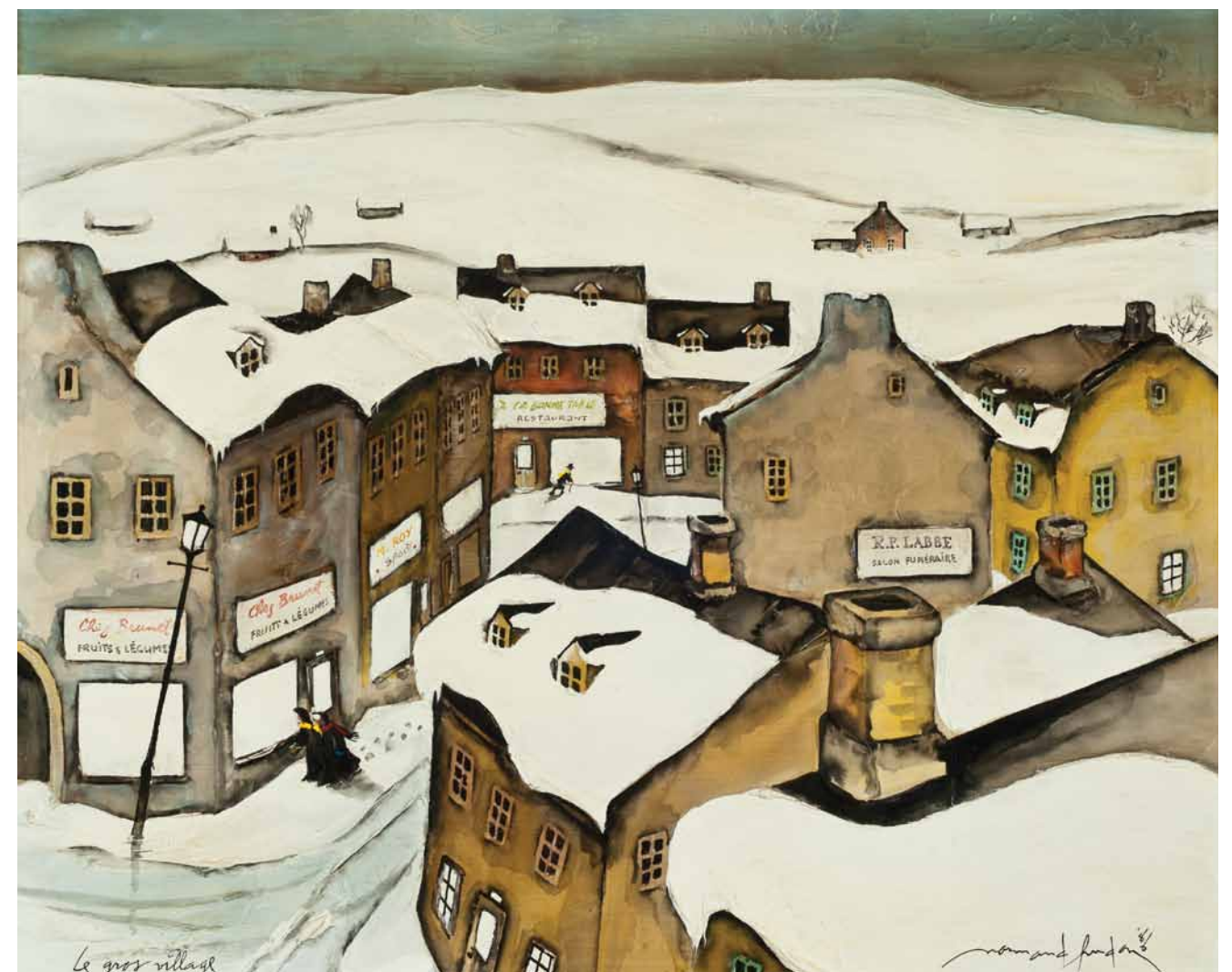


Medecin de Campagne, circa 1880

Normand Fordon '85

left, Vieux Montreal (1980), oil on canvas, 20" x 16"
above, Medecin De Campagne, Circa 1880 (1985), oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

below, Le Gros Village, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"



Le gros village

Normand Fordon '85



above, *La Recreation* (1992), oil on canvas, 24" x 30"
 below, *Le Bonhomme De Luc Et Clementine* (1991), oil on canvas, 12" x 24"



below, *Le But Vainqueur De Charles-Edouard* (1991), oil on canvas, 18" x 24"

lines, his abstract space and his simple words?

There is a discrete elegance that emanates from these paintings with their cool harmony.

Influences beyond Scope

Hudon took his most important drawing lesson from Pablo Picasso, who taught him how to synthesize his lines; this candid use of his pencil or pen became his hallmark. In many of his paintings, Picasso created an abstract middle ground; this, too, captured the attention of Hudon, particularly in the beginning of his painting career and occasionally after.

With Henri Matisse, Hudon was drawn to the freedom of his line and pliable quality; with just a few lines Matisse was able to cover an entire surface. Also there was the masterly use of colour to synthesize the expressiveness of the painting. Hudon would never forget the lessons he learned from Matisse.

Without Fernand Leger, his teacher in Paris, the compositions of Hudon would not possess their rigorous geometry. Nor would his collages enjoy such unbridled fantasy. The satiric work of Hudon would occasionally recall the hieratic gestural language of these characters.

The anecdotal character and virtuosity of the drawings of Raoul Dufy are also reflected in the drawings of Hudon. By means of an economy of scale and without intellectual pretensions, Dufy achieved paintings which held together and maintained a strong pictorial presence.

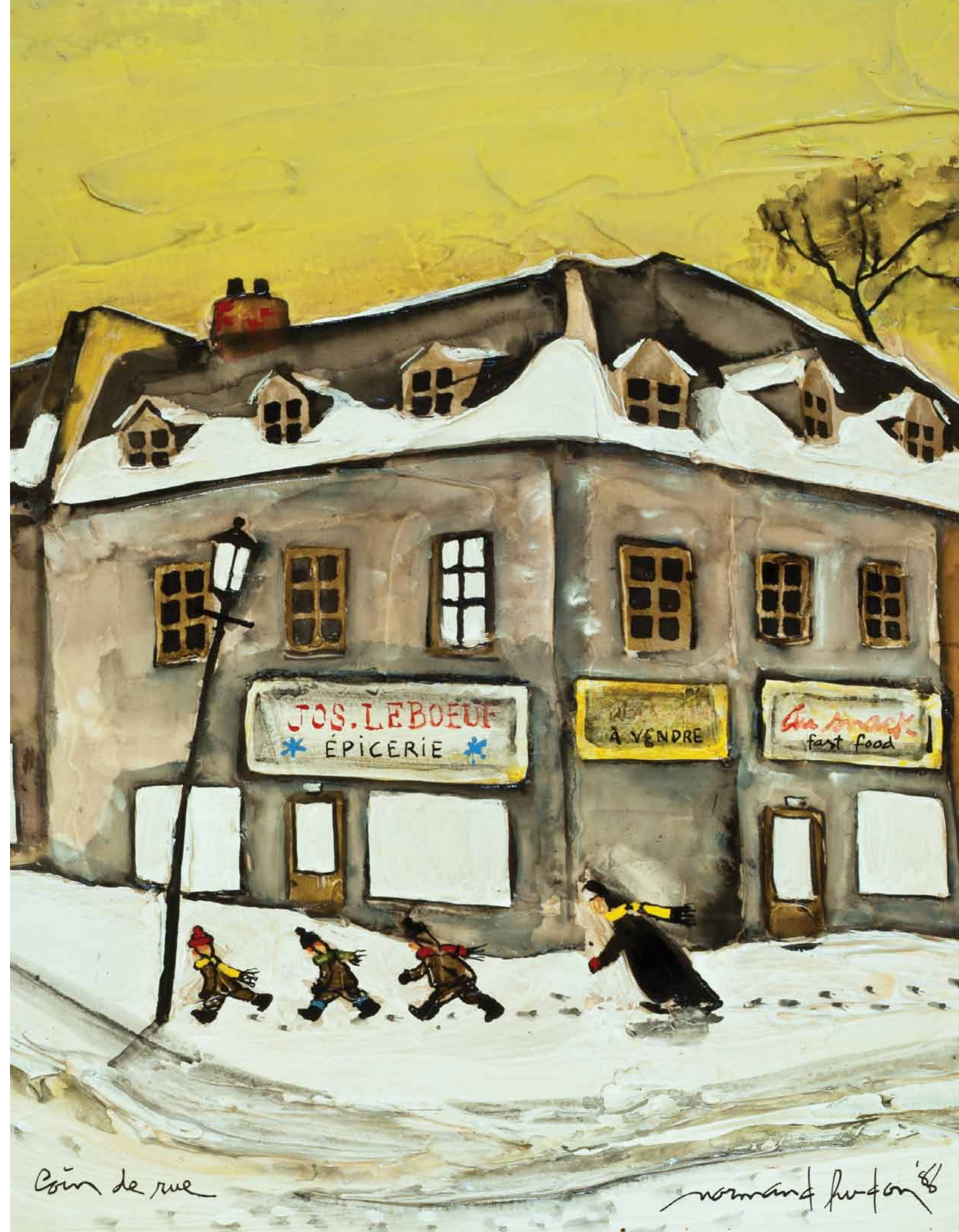
But it is Alfred Pellán who is the only Canadian painter that Hudon willingly acknowledged to be an influence and inspiration. It was also Pellán and his refusal to compromise that Hudon so admired.

You Have to Be Able to Draw

A fundamental truth emerged from Hudon and his work. To be a truly great artist, one must be



above, L'Objet D'Art Du Balcon D'Art, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"
 below, Coin De Rue, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"



right, Coin De Rue, oil on canvas, 12" x 10"

Coin de rue

normand hudson '88



left, Marie-Anne(1986), oil on canvas, 18" x 14"
above, Marie, 3 Ans (1982), oil on canvas, 5" x 7"

below, Mado Au Chapeau, oil on canvas, 8" x 10"





above, Seize Heures, 9 Aout, oil on canvas, 12" x 16"
below, La Fausse Note D'Elphege, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"



right, Catherine, La Servante Du Curem, oil on canvas, 8" x 10"



Catherine,
la servante du curé

Norman Hudson '91



above, *Hola, Votre Seigneurie! Petit Detail Tres Important* (1993), oil on canvas, 12" x 24"

able to draw, quickly and with great intent.

All the great masters knew how to draw and it is drawing that is the cornerstone of all pictorial and sculptural art.

Obviously anatomy occupies a dominant place in art but anatomy is not only the beauty or form of a body, it is the movement, expression and those characteristic traits which lend themselves to satire.

Hudon was always more preoccupied with giving life to his drawing than a specific definition, always more descriptive than abstract in his satire. Thus he does not confine himself to a single inspiration but instead he explored a variety of facets.

A Delicate Balance

As a serious artist he was most importantly able to build a scene. Whatever the subject, he immediately knew how to create a balance. He was able to draw a symmetry that is in harmony with the subject and situated within a well-defined frame.

But it is the great imaginative spirit that we remember Hudon for. With his incisive imagination, he rendered an improbable air to his characters.

There was a great contrast in the work of Hudon. He sought both the romanticism of nature and the realism of the city. Between the two the artist searched for himself and a way of acting

without truly finding either. We find evidence of this throughout the career of Normand Hudon.

Equally Hudon was divided between his childhood and his maturity. For him the child was potential and therefore open to all kinds of promise, both on the canvas and in real life. Whereas the adult had potential as well but was incomplete and vulnerable to a reality which allowed him very little of its richness. Perhaps that is why Hudon sought refuge in fantasy rather than take himself or others too seriously.

For his entire artistic career Hudon walked a tightrope – ever conscious not to fall. From adult to child and from city to country he would lean first to one side and then to the other allowing him to explore the human soul. The world of Hudon belonged entirely to him and we can only catch glimpses when we follow him into his world through his art. Galleries featuring the timeless work of Norman Hudon are below:

Balcon D'Art

Saint-Lambert, Quebec
www.balcondart.com
 1.866.466.8920

Multi-Art

Saint-Lambert, Quebec
www.multi-art.net
 1.450.466.8511

right, *Mon Client Est Un Innocent* (1989), oil on canvas, 12" x 10"

