

Louise Kirouac The wonder of it all

Louise Lecor Kirouac was born in the Laurentian village of Brownsburg, near Lachute in 1939. Her father was a Breton who moved to Canada because of its wild country and wide open spaces. Kirouac still lives in Brownsburg, loving above all else, the country side and nature.

Before settling in Quebec her father had attended the Paris school of Fine Arts and traveled the world. In Quebec he divided his time between local politics and acting theatre. Both of her brothers, Paul and Jean-Claude are artists. Paul if of course Tex Lecor, the one-time chansonnier and guitarist and well know Québécois painter.



Kirouac started out by painting at the kitchen table. "At meal times I had to put it all away and then after diner bring out again." Henry-Paul had studied art and theatre in Paris. With his family he created an atmosphere where art and the exchange of ideas held first place. "Father encouraged discussion whether or not my point of view provoked him," says Kirouac. In this way each of the Lecor children developed their own identities. Their mother, a Québécois of Norman stock brought to the table a vivid appreciation of nature which she shared with her children.



Her older brother Tex rapidly developed into a painter and in his turn taught Louise what he knew, showing her how to look, and more importantly, how to see. Tex mastered painting early on and Louise found it difficult to constantly compare her work to that of her older brother. Always keenly aware of nature, Tex would share his ability to see it with her and lead her out into to country to paint on site.

Driven by her passion for art, she would sometimes catch up with her teacher and sometimes overtake him. In the process and by listening to her intuition, she learned to develop her own distinctive style. Kirouac is driven by a high set of self-imposed critical standards. She is her own worst critic constantly setting herself

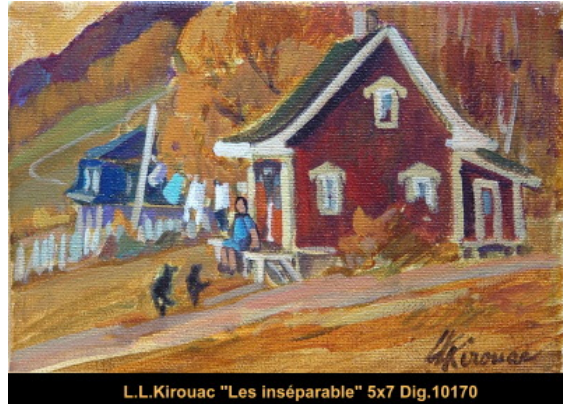
artistic challenges which she then sets out to meet with all the determination she can muster. Kirouac knows that as an artist, you can't rest on your laurels.

Like her father and older brother Kirouac loves the vastness of Quebec and the variety of wide open

landscapes it offers. She crisscrosses it in search of inspiration. Her trips become a quest for the beauty that will fire her inspiration. When inspiration does strike she stores it in her memory and then swiftly renders it onto canvass.

In much the same way as she waits for the spark that will set her imagination on fire to paint, she believes that anyone who buys one of her paintings should feel the same spark of emotion before buying on her paintings. "You have to fall in love with a painting. You can't buy it just because it suits your furniture. There must be an emotional response."

When Kirouac starts to paint she does so without any commercial notions, painting only to please herself. Trying to find the ideal spot to paint is an endless ambition which fuels her travels in search of the unique detail, a sense of complete oneness with nature, or the right quality of light which will perfectly reveal her subject. Like any perfectionist she is always on the hunt.



As she wanders the back roads in search of the perfect vista she likes to talk to the people she meets and listen to their stories. Often the resulting oral history will form part of her painting and the painting will become a sort of visual witness to the past. She dreams of one day producing a book on Quebec villages and has an archive of photographs as inspiration to that end. She doesn't want rural history or the nature of our past to be lost.

To properly convey the emotional attachment that Kirouac feels for rural Quebec she works on a large scale typically using canvasses that are 24 x 30 or 30 x 36. The work she bring to life is sweet and strong at the same time, partially because of their size but mostly because of their forceful use of harmonious vibrant colour. While she is faithful to her subject she has also been known to add an imaginary touch.

Part of her success lies in her ability to chose the right moment, the right light and the right time of year to suit her subjects. This ability is supported by her ability to see nature through a state of grace.

Kirouac has decided to paint the rural Quebec of the past, the Quebec she grew up with, the rural scene that is slowly eroding and disappearing as progress continues and the future becomes the present and small towns are turned into Disneylands for tourists. She wants to preserve our heritage through her paintings before it completely vanishes.

"Modern materials like vinyl siding or aluminium may be more practical but they hide the beauty of old houses. I understand that people want to do as little maintenance work as possible because they don't have the time to do it anymore but I prefer to paint them the way they used to be." This longing for the way things used to be explains why she will often insert cows or sheep into landscapes where they no longer exist. "You hardly see any animals grazing in the fields anymore thanks to the way they are now raised. I like to take them out of their barns in my paintings."

Driven by her passions, Louise Kirouac has always known to tale time to live. She has limited her material needs to preserve her independence and her ability to paint what she wants to paint. "The greatest wealth lies in freedom. For me this freedom takes the form of escaping through nature or being able to take my paintbrush in hand in front of the tranquil landscape and breath a little infinity. It is a kind of contemplative retreat."

Like a child, Kirouac goes to bed each night impatient for the next day to begin, for the next great adventure to start. Like a child she is still full of wonder and still young at heart. And it is that state of wonder that she paints so well.