

# Nicole Laporte

*Looking back in time*

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**F**or most of us, childhood memories bring back warm happy thoughts and emotions. These are the kind of memories we can see when we look at the pictures of naive artist Nicole Laporte. Her work is highly evocative of times of happiness carved in the past and engraved in our memory as unique and unforgettable events. Her subject matter is made up of the Kodak moments of an earlier childhood, told in a way that takes us back to happier, simpler times.

With titles like *Vite, on va être en retard pour souper!* / *Hurry, We'll Be Late For Dinner!* or *Après la messe du same-*

*di soir* / *After Saturday Night Mass*, her paintings tell cute little stories everybody can relate to. Expressing the joy of being alive and the beauty of nature are the central themes of Laporte's work.

"My paintings have to be happy and the scenes must be full of joy. I am not a landscape artist but I still want nature participating greatly as a support in my pictures." Each of her creations shows brief happy moments of life caught in midair and are illustrated with candour. Laporte lives in Rigaud, west of Montréal, and the beauty of the surrounding hills and waterways infuse her work and provide her with inspiration. "I love canoeing and going for walks in the

woods. Aside from painting, they are my only other real interests."

Laporte started painting more seriously after having worked as a court clerk for years. With time, her hobby turned into a profound passion. While she always drew, she began to teach herself how to paint during the beginning of the 1980s and as she became more involved, she also started to exhibit it. Laporte polished her oil technique by taking some private lessons with Marcel Bourbonnais but evolved mostly by herself.

Always attracted by history, she decided that her subject matter would be made up of her Québécois' heritage.



Her work is sprinkled with details that make it easy to understand what is being said. It is as if you are hearing a story teller narrate to you his tale but you are seeing the different intonations through your eyes. Along with numerous winter scenes, Laporte focuses on the 20s and 30s. "I had an old clothing store for a while and I remain fascinated with the elegance and refinement of the period. The cars, the clothing, the way of life all speak about a concern to make things well and lasting."

Perhaps Laporte is leaning on the past as a simple counterweight to the speed and quick passage of modern life. Her choice of children as her preferred subject matter is another way to bring back a sense of calm and security that is often lacking nowadays.

During her summer vacations, Laporte stayed with her grandparents who lived in a cabin on a waterfront. Her grandfather made wooden rowboats and fishing was the principal occupation of people. "Fish, worms, wooden boats... I grew up with all of these things which provided me with unforgettable memories that I use today as my subject matter." Equally noticeable is the fact that the people in her pictures all have small black dots for eyes and nothing else characterizes their faces. "I decided not to be more specific in my figures because I don't want them to be the central focus of the work when they are mostly accessories. I give them eyes so that they become a presence but more so that they can clearly lead you to the narrative."

She has been successful because when you look at one of her works, your eyes don't linger on the figurative aspect. Instead, they are in continual motion going from one narrative element to the next before focusing on a particular detail. Her use of vibrant colours contributes to this sense of visual animation.

While Laporte's winter scenes are popular with her public, she hopes to do more summer and autumn work that will be appropriate to convey her emotional vocabulary.

"I want to develop my figurative subjects around the theme of family, to give adults more participation." Asked if she doesn't want to use her memories of court life as subject matter, she says that she has hesitated for a long time to go in that direction because she didn't want to be compared to



Normand Hudon. "More and more, I am thinking about painting pictures of lawyers and situations which I have seen in court. My mind is filled with colourful incidents and I am going to use them in my work but I can't know ahead of time where my creativity will take me." Laporte concludes that all she wants to do is to continue to evolve within her art. "The more I work, the more stories I have to tell." 