

LOUIS TREMBLAY

Imparting Significance To Every Stroke

Louis Tremblay has long been associated with winter, a season that enables him to express himself by using various whites and creating contrasts.

« For me, summer used to be just one big green palette, » Tremblay says bluntly.

Nothing is left to chance in Louis Tremblay's work. Every gesture, colour and stroke has significance. He persistently seeks out and finds privileged moments, like daybreak, to express his way, in his style. His preferred media are acrylics and water-colours because they enable him to recreate it mentally and grasp all its nuances.

Over the past few years, Tremblay has expanded his territory. Québec's rolling Charlevoix region, the nearby Grands Jardins, the Saint Lawrence River and rural scenes remain Tremblay's favourite subjects. However the rugged north coast beckons him eastward where the artist finds inspiring compositions. Surprises, Tremblay describes his reaction.

« It's funny, even if I come from the Charlevoix, a region of mountains and valleys; I'm not a « vertical painter ». The spruce trees, the rocky coastline, the horizons and fishing villages of Québec's North Shore suit his style perfectly. In fact, Tremblay's panoramic paintings are not subjects milked to meet the current demand: instead, they are complete compositions in which the artist maximizes every inch of canvas.

Louis Tremblay has been exploring this coastline for a long time. As a child, he loved to hear his father tell of painting there with a friend, René Richard. Yet Tremblay's association with the Swiss artist has not always helped. It took years for Tremblay to shed the false labels and false expectations. As the artist himself says, « some people wanted me to continue René Richard's career. Others felt that I was trying to imitate him. »

Regardless, Louis Tremblay could never stand in the shadow of another artist. Naturally he wanted to create his own style, with his own vision, and as he liked. Tremblay's art does not follow any one artist or school but does reflect somewhat the tradition of Brenner, Fortin and Gagnon, each of whom managed to illustrate the essence of Nordic landscaped within his own period.

Louis Tremblay has succeeded by finding his own niche and creating his own palette. He also has developed his particular themes, subjects and approach so that his paintings certainly stand out. Yet most of all, anyone viewing a Tremblay painting feels that the artist wants to paint, go a bit further.

« One day I might just slip into complete abstraction. » Tremblay predicts.
« Everything depends on my research, my feelings, and what I can convey ».

Tremblay clings to a special vision that of the *coureur des bois* who is moved upon seeing a coastal village and tries to understand what led man to tame the sea. In the same way he always tries to answer to call of the forest that comes from within. Nature, raw and pure, exudes from Tremblay's paintings. The vastness of the cosmos captivates this warm-hearted artist who has never felt more in control of his tools and technique.

« It's a privilege to be able to create from scratch. In fact the only way to appreciate it is by trying to outdo myself each time, » Tremblay explains. He adds that he still learns something now every day, be it « the contrast, colour or other times, the perspective... something always captures my attention, sparks my curiosity, or actually awes me. » Speaking between strokes, the artist stops.
« For me, painting is an infinite universe ».

The freshness of Tremblay's remarks is surprising, given his 30 years of experience. Now aged 49, the Baie Saint-Paul native grew up in a milieu where art, painting and nature blended. Only Tremblay could truly be considered the heir to the great artistic tradition of the Charlevoix, a region where he finds refuge, isolated in his own universe within his studio. It is there that he develops his subjects further.

« When I started out, I imagined things would get easier and that I'd just wander around and paint the countryside as I wished. With time, I have recognized the subtleties involved in conveying emotion. Now I'm working harder than ever. »

Louis Tremblay uses diffuse, discreet light in his own particular way to make mass and shape stand out. He interacts with the innermost feelings, the mirrors of the soul, where elements are interpreted according to one's mood. In his own words, « I try to appeal to the cerebral and visceral, to find the right balance between the two. »

The visceral is expressed in his long country promenades, along the shore or in the forest. There he sketches using acrylics. His simple brush strokes give details about shapes, try out compositions and perspectives.

« I go by deduction rather than impulsion. My acrylics help me primarily in finding the lines. » When back in the studio, Tremblay returns to his impulses to translate them into compositions. At this point, the long creative process begins. He carries out intense research on light, which he creates by softening colours through a synthesis that generates a feeling of warmth. In fact this aspect of Tremblay's work lends his landscaped their richness, their strength and ever their magic.

The artist began painting on masonite but for the past ten years has preferred canvas, a surface he considers more alive. Spare in details, his paintings have only a few structures, like a cabin, a church gable or a rowboat. People are rare. Tremblay's work freezes a moment on the canvas to tell a story. Yet the constant narrative could be described as one of Man as midget before Nature, the all-encompassing giant.

Tremblay uses stains and lines to expose nature but the details must come from the viewer. As an artist, he does share by contributing the central lines, framing the moment and letting in some emotion. Over time abstraction has become increasingly present in his work. He controls abstraction better, shows mastery of the brush, demonstrates greater fullness in composition, and has become more daring. Louis Tremblay's unique way of rendering such subtle elements as the shades and shadows on the ground, the movement of ice or melting of snow gives him a unique style developed around and unlimited respect for nature and a heightened sensitivity.

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By Denis Gauthier

Louis Tremblay is listed in the *Biennial Guide too Canadian Artists in Galleries*. His work may be seen in the following galleries: Galerie d'art Au P'tit Bonheur, Pointe-au-Pic; Galerie d'art Les Peintres Québécois, Québec; Galerie Michel-Ange, Montréal; Galerie Art et Culture, Montréal; Kastel Gallery, Westmount; Galerie Archambault, Lavaltrie; Art Mode Gallery, Ottawa, galleries Christin, Toronto.