

Robert Roy *Free Spirit*

Born in the small rural community of Sainte-Perpétue, 135 kilometers northeast of Montréal, near the banks of the St. Lawrence river, Robert Roy hails from a family of merchants.

As a young man, while working at the family's general store, he found some measure of freedom to develop his creative talent. "I often took leave to paint. The guys weren't too hard on me. You could often find me in a corner behind an easel," says Roy. As he "played more seriously with pigments", Roy began to sense that he was destined to be a painter. He has been painting for over 30 years now.

Throughout his career Roy has developed a style which is at the same time expressionist and figurative, a style which was inspired by his many trips around the world. His travels and trial and error laid the foundation for his self-taught technique. "However", Roy explains, "after traveling all over the world and meeting other painters, I finally studied art at the University of Québec in Trois-Rivières."

The impetus to pursue formal training was sparked by meeting Luc Duguay, son of Québec artist and member of the Order of Canada Rodolphe Duguay (1891-1973), who taught college-level arts courses. "We spoke the same



PASCALINE'S DREAM/Le rêve de Pascaline, oil on canvas.



NATURE AND POETRY/Nature et poésie, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

language and that hit me," says Roy, "then, when I entered Rodolphe Duguay's workshop in Nicolet, something happened. I absolutely knew that I had found my vocation."

Even so, the road to public acceptance was not a smooth one. "I remember once, in order to gain some recognition in Québec City, I rented two rooms at the Château Frontenac to exhibit my works. This was in 1989. I had 50 paintings to show and I couldn't hang them on the walls, so I had to build 50 easels," recalls Roy. "In the end, I sold just enough canvasses to cover my expenses. People thought I was utterly mad."

Today, Roy's work is represented in seven Canadian provinces and in France. Earlier this year, Roy was awarded the Best Foreign Artist prize at the 121st Salon international de printemps de la Société lyonnaise des Beaux-Arts, where he exhibited 64 works. The passion exuding from his paintings of children playing hockey out-of-doors really impressed the jury.



HERE COMES THE GANG/La gang arrive, oil on canvas

Robert Roy's paintings are a reflection of the artist: spontaneous, simple and complex, all at the same time. His brushstrokes convey a sense of calm, even in the midst of action. This combination of thoughtfulness and freedom of action gives Roy's work an outstanding quality. The aura of tranquility emanating from his paintings is his trademark.

Robert Roy is as prolific as he is humble. He works on average seven hours a day, either in his self-built studio or outside, close to nature. His palette varies with the physical location but he always tends to limit his selection of brushes to a few. Roy usually starts each canvas by sketching the outline of his subject. Colour, tone, shade and hue is only added when he is satisfied with the composition. His speed of execution has enabled him to develop a reputation for fine, accurate on-site painting. He is regularly invited by organizations to immortalise significant events on canvas.

"This isn't work... it's a passion! I enjoy nothing better than the



TRAVELING COMPANION/Compagnon de voyage, oil on canvas, 6 x 12 in.



MIDWY SUN/Soleil du midi, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

process of creation. Life is too short. It should be lived fully and intensely," says Roy.

On September 11, 2001, same day that the Trade Center towers fell in New York City, Robert Roy was delivered a shocking personal blow when he received a diagnosis of cancer. This news, however, has only served to strengthen his resolve to make the most of his life.

"It connected me to what is really important. I looked deeper into myself and my contact with nature," he explains.

Robert Roy is now busier than ever. He was chosen by Ford Canada as one of six artists who will be creating works inspired by the car manufacturer's various models. In August of this year, he was invited, for a second consecutive

year, to participate in an artists workshop at the Canada House Fine Art Gallery in Banff Alberta.

The public will also soon have the opportunity to view a Robert Roy solo exhibition, from November 5 to 15, at the Charles-Alexandre gallery in Montréal, 2165 Crescent Street, where nearly 30 of his recent works will be on display, including pastoral landscapes and urban scenes. **I**

Dominic Villeneuve

Robert Roy is represented by: Galerie Le Chien d'or, Québec City; Galerie Charles-Alexandre, Montréal; Galerie Saint-Antoine, Trois-Rivières; Gallery Christin, Toronto; State of the Art Gallery, Toronto; Gallery River Coyote, Saskatoon; Canada House Fine Art Gallery, Banff; Webster Galleries, Calgary; Lando Gallery, Edmonton; Adele Campbell Fine Art Gallery, Whistler; Galerie Moy, Megève, France. He is listed in the *Biennial Guide to Canadian Artists in Galleries* published by MAGAZINART.