

# JEAN PAUL LEMIEUX

## A vision of Canada in Beirut

During the Francophonie Summit, art lovers in Beirut were able to explore the work of a renowned Quebec painter. *Jean Paul Lemieux: His Canada* is the title of an exhibition sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the National Archives of Canada, and the Canadian Postal Museum—Canadian Museum of Civilization. It features 12 paintings commissioned by Canada Post for a set of commemorative stamps issued to mark Canada Day 1984. The canvases depict scenes from each of Canada's 10 provinces plus the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Lemieux created them over a period of several years, working primarily from memory and his inner store of images.

The stamps were unveiled and the paintings first displayed in Quebec City in June 1984, at the official residence of the Governor General of Canada. "Extraordinary!" said one of the viewers to Lemieux at the opening. "You really think so?" replied the painter. "It's only my vision of the country." Fourteen years later, in 1998, the Canadian Postal Museum—Canadian Museum of Civilization in the National Capital Region mounted the exhibition that now is being shown in Beirut.

Born in Quebec City in 1904, Jean Paul Lemieux started painting at an early age. He studied at Montreal's École des beaux-arts and later in France, spending time also in California. He began as mainly a

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***I am especially interested in conveying the solitude of man and the ever-flowing passage of time. I try to express this silence in which we all move.***

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—Jean Paul Lemieux

landscape painter but the best-known works of his maturity show sparse, flattened figures against austere backgrounds. His minimalist style clearly was edging toward abstractionism, but he never created totally abstract art.

Before his death in 1990 he received numerous awards, including the Order of Canada, and he was posthumously made a Grand Chevalier of the Ordre du Québec. Today he remains one of Quebec's most-exhibited artists.

Running to October 30, the show is being held jointly with a larger exhibition of postage stamps from countries of La Francophonie. It marks the first time that this collection of Lemieux paintings has travelled overseas, and it is the very first exhibition in Beirut devoted to a Canadian painter. It was officially opened by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. 🍁



Prince Edward Island (top) and Saskatchewan, two of the paintings by Jean Paul Lemieux commissioned by Canada Post in 1984 for a set of 12 commemorative stamps



photos: Canada Post Corporation