



MONTREAL EXHIBITION BY CONTROVERSIAL PAINTER

Quebec Chronicles, a group of 250 paintings by Arthur Villeneuve of Chicoutimi, Quebec, which was on exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for over a month, closed on April 16.

The display, organized by Léo Rosshandler, the Museum's deputy director, which was opened on March 2 by Madame Marie-Claire Kirkland Casgrain, Quebec Minister of Cultural Affairs, will be shown at the Museum of Quebec from May 31 to July 9 and at the Vancouver Art Gallery from August 8 to September 17.

"Villeneuve's *oeuvre* was born amid bitter controversy and in presenting this survey, we are fully conscious of the fact that the embers of the controversy — is Villeneuve a true artist or an aberration of the art world — may flame anew," says David Giles Carter, director of the Montreal Museum. "What is beyond question is that Villeneuve has his own vision of the world around him. Certainly this is acutely true of Quebec, where he was born, and which he has painted in the style of a chronicler of old."

Prime Minister Trudeau and Mayor Drapeau of Montreal are among the private collectors of Villeneuve's work, and both have lent to the exhibition.

François Gagnon, acting head of the department

of art history at the University of Montreal and author of a major essay on Villeneuve's painting in the exhibition catalogue, calls Villeneuve "one of Quebec's greatest painters".

UNIQUE HOUSE EXTERIOR

Villeneuve, now 62, became known in 1956 when he decided to decorate the inside and outside walls of his Chicoutimi house with his own paintings. Villeneuve, who quit school in Grade 3 at the age of 13, was a barber at the time. He had previously worked in a paper mill and in a lumber camp. In 1946, ten years before undertaking the painting of his house, Villeneuve had made timid attempts to draw; a school copybook with a number of sketches of the same representation of a house, carefully drawn with a ruler, a series of bizarre faces executed with wax crayons, a collage showing the same house with, on the steps of the porch, a cut-out photo of his father-in-law, all belong to the same period.

The painting of nearly all the walls and ceilings of his Taché street home — which he later called "Musée de l'artiste" — was a monumental work, "unique in the annals of painting", says Gagnon.