

Press Release
New Exhibition
Opens 20 February 2014

Fernand Leduc

Painter of Light



Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
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Québec City, Wednesday 19 February 2014 □ As part of the redeployment of its collections in the new museum complex, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is pleased to devote a gallery to Fernand Leduc – the very first permanent gallery of the artist’s work in Canada – with the exhibition *Fernand Leduc, Painter of Light*. The Charles Baillairgé pavilion is now the go-to place for the four major artists in the history of Québec art included in the exhibition *Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec*: Jean Paul Lemieux, Alfred Pellan, Fernand Leduc and Jean-Paul Riopelle.

The exhibition *Fernand Leduc, Painter of Light* presents the remarkable, more than forty-year career of this exceptional artist with paintings from the Musée collection or whose acquisition is pending thanks to a exceptional gift undertaken by the artist. To mark this ultimate tribute to him, he agreed at the end of his life to donate officially three of the works included in this selection.

In 1987, Fernand Leduc declared: “As an artist, I see myself working in an Impressionist tradition of ‘painters of light.’” From his early gestural Automatism to the monochrome canvases of his later years, this quest for

light through colour has always been at the root of Leduc’s work. It is a quest born of “inner necessity,” as he liked to describe it. Leduc’s non-figurative painting nevertheless evokes a battle between a landscape and the artistic material, then conveys the light of a land or becomes a set of coloured signs that stand out against a background of various shades. Beginning in the mid-1950s, these shapes form coloured masses and become geometrical.

With *Jaune (Yellow)*, the formal and chromatic equilibrium of his work relaxed and colour definitively took centre stage en route to “islands of light,” to borrow the title of Fernand Leduc’s collected writings. From this point on he would work with coloured forms shifting in a chromatic space placed in a state of tension. In the 1970s, the vibration of light alone became the subject of his “microchromes,” accomplished by superimposing multiple layers of thin paint. Leduc’s journey continued on from there. It traversed the twentieth century and emerged into the twenty-first, always extending further this quest for light, which becomes a place, a celebration of life, a pure coloured study of day or night . . .

Some of the must see paintings among the 23 on display include: *Composition*, created in 1949, when Leduc was just starting out in Automatism and was partial to accidents (one might even call them splatterings) in a dense and indistinct world, later privileging a certain order; *La Voie et ses embûches (The Path and its Obstacles)*, from 1952, in which Leduc, with increasing desire to convey the peculiar light of the European countries in which he stayed, diversified his colour palette; *Les Portes (The Doors)*, from 1960, a fine illustration of the shift to resolutely geometric works, juxtaposing dense masses of pure, contrasting colours; *Yellow*, from 1962, a turning point in Fernand Leduc’s painting, a decisive stage in the quest for the harmony of form and colour towards the liberation of light; *Microchromie 70, Z.L. rose tyrien (Microchrome 70, Z.L. Tyrian Pink)*, from 1970, one of six paintings in which Leduc eliminates any notion of a picture, including what could be suggested by the flat geometric forms; and finally *Viva Canaletto, suite et fin (Viva Canaletto, Final Instalment)*, a triptych created in 1989 and the conclusion of a series of variations on yellow inspired by a painting of St. Mark’s Square by Canaletto, “golden like the light of Venice.” All these vibrant works, bathed in light, will both spellbind viewers and induce in them a state of contemplation.

The Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec exhibitions have received funding from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications.

Chronology

1916

Fernand Leduc is born on 4 July in Viauville, a suburb of Montréal.

1938

Leduc studies at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal.

1941

Leduc meets Paul-Émile Borduas and stays at his home in Saint-Hilaire the following summer.

1943

Alongside such figures as Charles Daudelin, Pierre Gauvreau, Thérèse Renaud, Françoise Sullivan and Jacques de Tonnancour, Fernand Leduc participates in the exhibition *Les Sagittaires* at the Dominion gallery in Montréal.

1944

Leduc becomes a member of the Contemporary Arts Society (CAS).

1946

In April, Leduc participates in the first exhibition of paintings by the group which would later be called the “Automatists,” on Amherst St. in Montréal.

1947

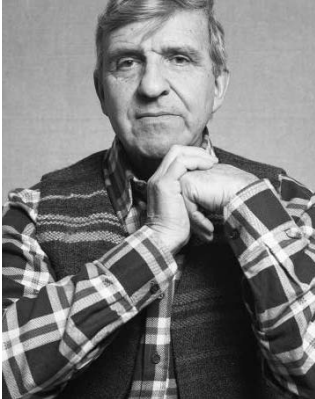
Following the second Automatist exhibition on Sherbrooke St. in Montréal, Leduc sojourns in Paris with Thérèse Renaud, whom he marries on 27 May. Leduc participates in the exhibition *Automatisme* at the Galerie du Luxembourg and meets André Breton on two occasions.

1948

The *Refus global (Total Refusal)* manifesto, which includes a text written by Leduc, “Qu’on le veuille ou non” (“Whether You Like It or Not”), is published.

1950

Leduc joins Riopelle for the exhibition *Leduc-Riopelle* at the Raymond Creuze gallery in Paris. He sojourns at La-Flotte-en-Ré, in Charente, giving rise to the series *Île de Ré* (from his second sojourn in 1951). He then exhibits some sixty oils and gouaches at the Cercle universitaire de Montréal.



1953

After a few years in Europe Leduc returns to Montréal, where his work is included in the exhibition *Place des Artistes*.

1954

Leduc's work can be seen in the exhibition *La Matière chante*. (*The Artistic Matter Sings*)

1956

Very active, Leduc helps found and serves as president of the l'Association des artistes non figuratifs de Montréal, whose first exhibition is held at the Hélène de Champlain restaurant on Sainte Hélène's island.

1957

Fernand Leduc receives first prize, *ex aequo*, in the Concours artistiques de la province de Québec (decorative arts) for a tapestry entitled *Rencontre totémique à Chilkat* (*Totemic Encounter at Chilkat*), executed by Mariette Rousseau-Vermette from a sketch by Leduc.

1959

Leduc returns to Paris, where he settles.

1966

The Musée du Québec and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal organize and present the exhibition *Fernand Leduc*.

1970

The National Gallery of Canada organizes a travelling exhibition of recent work, and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal organizes and presents a retrospective of his work.

1977

Leduc wins the Canada Council for the Arts Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton award. The Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris prepares and presents the exhibition *Microchromie gris puissance 6* (*Microchrome Grey Power 6*), which then travels to the Musée municipal in Brest.

1980

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the Musée du Québec prepare and present the exhibition *Fernand Leduc: dix ans de microchromies 1970/1980* (*Fernand Leduc: Ten Years of Microchromes, 1970/1980*).

1981

From this date until 2004 Leduc spends his summers in Casano on the border of Liguria and Tuscany in Italy.

1985

The Musée des beaux-arts de Chartres produces and presents the exhibition *Fernand Leduc, from 1943 to 1985* (*Fernand Leduc, from 1943 to 1985*). Leduc has lived in the region since 1975.

1988

Leduc receives the Paul-Émile Borduas award.

1997

The Musée du Québec produces and presents the exhibition *Fernand Leduc: Recent Works (1992-1996)* (*Fernand Leduc: Recent Works (1992-1996)*).

2006

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec produces and presents the exhibition *Fernand Leduc: Libérer la lumière* (*Fernand Leduc: Liberating Light*). Leduc then returns to and settles in Montréal.

2014

Fernand Leduc dies in Montréal on 28 January.

Credits

The exhibition *Fernand Leduc, Painter of Light* is an original production of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

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The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a government corporation which receives funding from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec.

General Information

OPENING HOURS OF THE MUSÉE

Until 31 May 2014

Tuesday to Sunday,
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wednesdays until 9:00 p.m.
Closed Mondays

1 June to

1 September 2014

Daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Wednesdays until 9:00 p.m.

ADMISSION

Adults: **\$18**
Seniors (65 years and over): **\$16**
18 to 30 years: **\$10**
13 to 17 years: **\$1**
12 years and under: **free**
Members: **free**
Wednesdays from 5:00 p.m.
to 9:00 p.m.: **half price**
Reduced rates for groups

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Fernand Leduc, *Triptyque ocre-violet-rouge (Ochre-Violet-Red Triptych)*, 1965. Oil on canvas, 195.4 x 291.6 cm.
MNBAQ coll. Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre © Fernand Leduc/SODRAC (2014)

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Portrait of Fernand Leduc by the photographer Richard-Max Tremblay, 1987