



# BRUCE LE DAIN, PRCA

## A PASSIONATE ENTHUSIAST OF NATURE AND ART



«Night Fall Providence Bay, Manitouin» Oil on panel 8 x 12 po.



«Québec from Louise Basin» Oil on panel 16 x 24 po.

**B**ruce Le Dain, President of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, radiates an aura of tranquility. Tall and lean, he conveys a calming humour that accompanies his serenity.

A passion for nature lies at the core of his art, and continues to be the foundation of his commitment to landscape painting. He admires those rare artists who exhibit what he calls "singular talents" in terms of style, and like him are not threatened by the solitude of nature.

At his grandmother's cottage at Sixteen Island Lake, during his youth, the

only mode of transportation was by water. Le Dain vividly remembers commuting seven miles for the evening mail with his father and brother in a canoe. He can still hear the splashing sound of paddles, and remembers how he would gaze with wonderment at the sky. He recalls a sense of peace that filled his being and the associated feeling of ease.

The step from being a lover of nature to landscape painter was a natural one for him. His first experience with oil paints came in the form of a gift from an aunt when he was eight years old. He reminisces about his first reaction to the amazing

"prismatic spread". Even then he wanted what he calls "these buttery blobs" to be part of his life for a long time.

Le Dain was further inspired by a short National Film Board documentary on A.Y. Jackson. The experience left him "absolutely riveted" by a man, who subsequently along with others, became a model for him.

He has achieved success as an artist. In Montreal, he has been represented by the Walter Klinkhoff Gallery since 1972. His work is also widely disseminated in over 50 corporate collections and in private homes in Canada, the United States, France,



«Autumn Impression, Manitouin Island» Oil on panel 8 x 12 po.



«Last of the Light, Canark County, Ont.» Oil on panel 20 x 30 po.



«View to Tattingston, Suffolk England» 12 x 16 po.



«A Pot for a Blooming Patient» 36 x 28 po.

Holland, Israel, Japan and Germany.

There is passion in Le Dain's paintings which is evident in the energy of his brushwork, as well as in his choice of subjects. These qualities are particularly striking in his recent "Gaia" series. To Bruce this series connotes the life force that lies at the heart of existence and of his beloved wilderness.

The second work of the Gaia series is a large (54" x 36") oil on canvas, titled "In the Eyes of a Sparrow". This painting hints at a spiritual domain. The top quarter shows a knot of grass, chaotic in its tangled growth. Seen from close-up, the turf appears as a sparrow's eye may see it. As the foliage exists only in its watery image there is a significant ambiguity in the remainder of the vertical space which consists of clear reflections of unseen trees.

One wonders what is reality? Is it what we (or the birds) see, or reality hidden behind the visible? The mir-



«Mountain Light» Oil on panel 24 x 32 po.

rored bark of the trees in fact appears more tangible than the "real" grasses above them. Here is an element of mystery.

The question of reflections and light is vital to Le Dain and it appears in various forms in his paintings. Sometimes its multiple dimensions are seen in a dramatic sunset. In others, it is evident in fluid reverberations or in light reflected off distant snow covered mountains. In his wide travels he has had the opportunity to examine the many characteristics of light. His keen powers of observation are obvious in his analytical applications.

Even before becoming a landscape painter, Le Dain had a career as art director in advertising in England and Canada. Indeed, some of the success in that field may be measured by the many graphic design awards he won between 1959 and 1977. They range from the Canadian Photographer Magazine Award for Art Direction (1961) to the American Television and

Radio Commercials Festival Best Award/Art Direction Prize (1968), as well as many more. These tributes are in addition to those numerous prizes he later received in the field of fine arts.

Perhaps the most prominent honour to be bestowed on Bruce Le Dain was his election to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1984. This tribute was enhanced by his subsequent elevation in 1991 as its 25th President. He is the first president in the discipline of painting in 22 years — for him it was truly a "joyous moment".

Bruce believes in the healing power of art. A significant achievement is his role in spearheading a project to improve the grounds of the Douglas Hospital in Montreal. This has given the long-term psychiatric patients, who are unable to leave the hospital grounds, a place where they can enjoy fresh air, fragrant flowers and sunshine. As a result of his consider-

able efforts this green space was named the Bruce Le Dain Park. His role in founding this natural sanctuary reflects his belief in art and in nature as potent forces. His objective in painting "is to share a feeling of calm in the frantic pace of lives". A noble idea indeed. **I**

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