



Lumière de l'aurore, 14 x 18 in

From a difficult childhood where he was subjected to the violent temper of a father who had been shattered by war and imprisonment in Siberia and from the anguishing hazards of his youth, Léonard Gilbert was able to build-up a forceful mindset thanks to his painting. Born in Saguenay in 1942, Léonard is the twelfth child of a family of thirteen siblings. He loses his father at ten years of age and his mother, who was choir master and organist at church, at fourteen. Thus he becomes a child of social welfare. But as the saying goes “every cloud has a silver lining” and for Léonard, contrary to many others in the same situation, the silver lining is that

being a child of welfare provided him with an education.

At nineteen, after having finished classical studies in college with the intention of joining a religious order, he becomes even more strongly invested in art. He is at a point in his life when leading an ordinary lifestyle appears near impossible; he feels different and abandoned. His brothers and sisters who have their own family to sustain cannot be of help to him. Sailing against wind and tide, he sleeps in sheds in summer and takes to the road wandering much as a stray animal looking for food. Here, he says, is when he became conscious of really being different.

After graduating from Québec Fine

Arts School and having completed studies in Interior Design in Montréal, a friend informs him of the existence of an impressionist movement in the United States. That's when he decides to go to Massachusetts where he will remain all summer, living in a tent, selling paintings to earn a bit of money. In 1963 a Baptist pastor who had been admiring his work invites him to live and paint in his unused basement, which enables Gilbert to paint up to five small paintings daily. Then one day, a man who introduces himself as also being a painter, comes to photograph Léonard's works and informs him right then and there that he doesn't really have a good sense of colour. The man was American painter