

Henry Hensche who later accepted Gilbert in his school, The Provincetown Art School, as a non paying student. Léonard Gilbert thus spends the next two summers in Provincetown where the light is outstanding and where he remains close to Henry Hensche and experiences life in such ways that profoundly mark his progress as an artist to eventually confirm his artistic fervour in his own mind.

Léonard Gilbert has a strong propensity towards impressionism. He states being able to 'understand' Renoir, but prefers Monet above all. One would thus be tempted to label him with the 'impressionist' descriptive, but thus cataloguing someone isn't that how you stifle an artist? For Léonard Gilbert, painting is a medium that allows self-analysis, an existential mirror that helps him learn more about himself and offers the possibility of entering the realm of sensation. Léonard is in fact more interested in the manifestation of the senses than of the intellect. Of timid nature added to an inherent simplicity, Léonard Gilbert readily admits being modest: "I do not feel I am exceptional, I am a rather naïve person but I feel good about myself," says the artist.

When he began painting, Léonard was using a durable paper called 'canvas skin' which had a texture similar to canvas and on which he painted with oil using shellac to produce a glaze, dilute thick paint or reduce drying time. In Henry Hensche's workshop, where quality of mediums was primordial, shellac was never used. Artists worked with eight values and discovered distinctive ways of mixing colours together and even acrylic with oil. Today, Léonard Gilbert structures everything. After a first coat of acrylic, when all values are there, he heightens the work with oil in his own workshop. Hence his paintings distinguish themselves through a certain duality. A first plane where the artist expresses a tangible relation with nature and a slightly vaporous second plane, which appears neutral, without anecdote nor explanatory or narrative note, and where light appears to dissolve all

shapes and forms to render them indiscernible. Apparently removed from sensible production, Léonard seems to commend a certain pleasure in creating without message, in painting a presence, an absence or an illusive reality.

Léonard Gilbert has exhibited his works in Toronto and in Québec at the Château Frontenac gallery. His works are now part of several corporate and private collections in France, the United-States and in Canada. Among distinguished collectors is Jean-Noël Tremblay, previously Québec's Cultural Affairs Minister who was the first person to gift a number of Léonard Gilbert's works to various museums. **I**

H. Bouhioui

Léonard Gilbert's work can be purchased at
Le Balcon d'art, Saint-Lambert, QC.