



49 Jean Paul Lemieux

CC QMG RCA 1904 – 1990

La Seigneurie / Le manoir

oil on canvas, signed twice and on verso titled *La Seigneurie* and titled *Le Manoir* on the exhibition label and inscribed

À Madeleine, 1973

16 ¾ × 26 ¾ in, 42.5 × 67.9 cm

PROVENANCE

Galerie d'art Michel Bigué, Saint-Sauveur-des-Monts
Private Collection, Montreal

LITERATURE

Anne Hébert, *Jean Paul Lemieux*, Musée du Québec, 1974, titled as *Le manoir*, reproduced, unpaginated

Guy Robert, *Lemieux*, 1975, titled as *Le manoir*, reproduced page 149 in an installation shot of the 1974 Musée du Québec traveling exhibition and page 218

EXHIBITED

Musée du Québec, Quebec City, *Jean Paul Lemieux*, 1974, traveling in 1974 – 1975 to Moscow, Leningrad, Prague, Antwerp and Paris, catalogue #66

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Homage to Jean Paul Lemieux*, October 22, 2004 – January 2, 2005, traveling in 2005 to the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, and McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, catalogue #50

JEAN PAUL LEMIEUX'S body of work spans more than 60 years. In his long career as a painter, the 1960s and 1970s were his most prolific decades. Upon retirement in August of 1965 from l'École des beaux-arts de Québec, where he had taught for 28 years, Lemieux devoted himself exclusively to painting and to the drawing he did even during the trips to Florida he and his wife Madeleine made to escape the Quebec winters. The 1960s and 1970s also saw a flourishing in the dissemination of his work, as evidenced by two large retrospectives presented in 1967 and

1974, among numerous other exhibitions Lemieux participated in during this period. The first, which was organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and afterwards traveled to Quebec City and Ottawa, highlighted the centennial of Canadian Confederation in 1967. The second toured exclusively abroad in 1974 to 1975: presented first in Moscow and Leningrad, it continued its tour in Prague and Antwerp, before finishing in Paris. Prepared by the Musée du Québec (today the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec / MNBAQ) at the request of the government of Quebec, this retrospective brought together as many works as years of the painter's life, Lemieux having just turned the venerable age of 70.

The exhibition covered Lemieux's output starting in 1956, the first year of his classical period. It featured such celebrated works as *Le train de midi* (The Noon Train), 1956, collection of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC); *Le visiteur du soir* (The Evening Visitor), 1956, collection of NGC; *1910 Remembered*, 1962, private collection; *La mort par un clair matin* (Death on a Clear Morning), 1963, collection of MNBAQ; *Julie et l'univers* (Julie and the Universe), 1965, private collection; *La Floride* (Florida), 1965, collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; *La visite* (The Visit), 1967, collection of NGC; and *Hommage à Émile Nelligan* (A Tribute to Émile Nelligan), 1971, collection of the Université de Montréal. The touring show was extremely successful, particularly in Russia, where viewers enthusiastically shared Lemieux's northern sensibility.

The organizers and the artist made sure to include a dozen recent works in the presentation. In this way, it was possible to see *La Seigneurie / Le manoir* for the first time, titled as it was in the catalogue and which the artist dedicated to his wife, Madeleine. The composition combined formal simplicity with the balance of masses of colour characteristic of the strides Lemieux made in art experimentation starting in 1956. The work's theme invited the viewer to dive into the country's history, into those times long past when the seigneurial system developed the land adjacent to the St. Lawrence River. In this regard, the inscription "La Seigneurie" on the back of the painting is not insignificant. The view of the manor and its park evokes the seigneurial residences of the French regime of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Lemieux was a history buff. He shared his passion for historical works of art with his wife, Madeleine, who was a painstaking collector. When they were first married, the couple settled in an ancestral home very near Quebec City in the village of Beauport, one of the oldest in French America, still agricultural in the 1940s. The seigneurie of Beauport was one of the first seigneuries granted by the French regime in 1634. Despite the lack of seigneurial vestiges at the time the Lemieux family lived there—the imposing, 18-metre-long manor having been

destroyed by fire in 1879—the street names bore witness, and continue to do so today, to the area's rich seigneurial heritage. In his tableau, could the painter have imagined the manor as it appeared during the time of the Beauport seigneurie? With a single storey, made of mortar-whitened stone, punctuated by numerous windows to let in the light, and furnished with the central avenue bordered by trees that bestows such character on the seigneurial estate... the inscription and dedication found on the back of the work could suggest this. In any event, the ambience created by this magnificent painting defies the passage of time, and fits perfectly with the cycle of reminiscences begun by Lemieux a decade earlier with *1910 Remembered* (1962), which gave rise to some of the artist's most remarkable works.

From a formal point of view, *Le manoir* echoes another composition exhibited in the retrospective of 1974, *Les noces de juin* (The June Wedding, 1972), collection of Radio-Canada, which Lemieux painted in a larger format (114 × 178 cm) the year of his 35th wedding anniversary. He used the same perspectival device of an avenue bordered by trees, which leads the gaze all the way to the manor-style home. Yet the animation of the summer celebration with its 20 guests seated at table or strolling through the park, also embellished with a gazebo on the left, gives way in *Le manoir* to a single hunter accompanied by his two dogs. Under a lowering grey sky, precursor to the heavy snowfall so frequent at the beginning of the cold season, the scene is filled with the silence before the next rifle shot fired by the hunter. Though never a hunter himself, Lemieux admitted in 1972 that he liked to explore this theme, which was introduced in his 1946 work *Les chasseurs*, collection of MNBAQ. It in turn inspired several other compositions, as evidenced by two compositions in the retrospective of 1974: *La chasse à la perdrix*, 1969, catalogue #70, and *La chasse d'octobre*, 1971, catalogue #53.

After 1974, the public had little chance to see *Le manoir* again until the National Gallery of Canada selected the work in 2004 to be among the 51 paintings and drawings in *Homage to Jean Paul Lemieux*, an exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the artist's birth.

We thank Michèle Grandbois, author of *Jean Paul Lemieux au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec*, for contributing the above essay.

ESTIMATE: \$150,000 – 250,000