

# RODOLPHE DUGUAY

## True Nature

### A Peek at the MAJ Collection

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Much has been written about Rodolphe Duguay (1891–1973), but also so little. His daily thoughts, spanning across nine diaries that date from 1907 to 1927, have greatly contributed to our understanding of his aspirations. Duguay died in the early 1970s when Québec was experiencing tremendous change and the practice of painting, anchored in pictorial abstraction, no longer represented reality in ways that were familiar to him. This new world was light years away from his own life in rural Québec.

The MAJ is honoured to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of an artist whose career has been overlooked by History. In doing so, it hopes to reintroduce audiences to this painter and engraver who, after a seven-year stint in France as Québec's first artist grant recipient, chose to return to his native Nicolet, away from the spotlight. On this occasion, sixteen of Duguay's works from the MAJ collection will be exhibited, most of them for the first time.

For some, Duguay's legacy is as a printmaker, notably for his innovative approach to representing light. Printmaking helped him earn a living. In the 1930s, he produced 155 works. But his preferred medium was painting and he excelled at it in his landscapes—for him, the ultimate genre.

As indicators of rural life, his scenes of the natural world became more expressive over time, and he arranged them based on his inventive *mise-en-scènes*. A man of deep faith, Duguay viewed nature as one of life's great mysteries.

Duguay's works are quite intimate in size. He typically shunned larger formats and commissions for religious murals, and did not particularly enjoy portrait painting. Nevertheless, two works from the MAJ collection on view here prominently feature human figures, including an anatomical study from his time at the Académie Julian in Paris.

One recurring character in his oeuvre is the sky. It plays a dominant role as an enveloping, and sometimes hostile, element. Individuals and animals are often portrayed with bowed heads, either in sadness or in submission before such immensity. Duguay's highly expressive landscapes remind us that we are mere particles in an otherwise vast universe. In today's era of climate change, the emphasis on nature, simplicity, and daily life far from the city takes on new meaning. It is what we often want but somehow never quite achieve: taking time to notice the changing seasons, for the good of the Earth.

Julie Alary Lavallée, Collections Curator

# RODOLPHE DUGUAY

Nicolet, Québec, 1891 – Nicolet, Québec, 1973

## 1. *Portrait académique d'un homme*, 1925

[Academic Portrait of a Man]

Oil on canvas, 35.5 x 30.6 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection  
2017.040

## 2. *Sans titre*, n.d.

[Untitled]

Oil on panel, 30 x 36.6 cm

Gift of Jean-Marie Pépin  
Ed.2018.003

## 3. *Sans titre*, 1935

[Untitled]

Oil on panel, 11 x 12.4 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection  
2017.041

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## 4. *Sans titre*, n.d.

[Untitled]

Oil on panel, 26.4 x 31.4 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection  
A.2017.017

## 5. *Deux amis*, 1958

[Two Friends]

Oil on panel, 11.2 x 12.3 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection  
2017.042

**6. *L'enfant et la fortune*, n.d.**

[The Child and Fortune]

Oil on panel, 40.9 x 32.8 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection

A.2017.011

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**7. *Paysage d'automne*, c.1935**

[Autumn Landscape]

Oil on panel, 19.7 x 24 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection

A.2017.015

**8. *Le pêcheur de minuit*, tiré de l'album**

***Bois gravés*, 1935**

[The Midnight Fisherman, from the album *Bois gravés*]

Woodcut, 21.2 x 25.8 cm

Gift of Jean Guilbault

1995.328

**9. *Effet d'orage, rivière Nicolet*, n.d.**

[Storm Effect, Nicolet River]

Oil on cardboard, 38.4 x 45.3 cm

Wilfrid Corbeil Collection. Gift of the Clerics of St. Viator of Canada

2012.052

**10. *Colline*, n.d.**

[Hill]

Oil on cardboard, 33 x 40.5 cm

Séminaire de Joliette Collection. Gift of the Clerics of St. Viator of Canada

2012.055

**11. *Sans titre*, n.d.**

[Untitled]

Oil on panel, 20 x 25.5 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez and André Provencher Collection

A.2017.014

## **12. *Paysage*, c.1930**

[Landscape]

Oil on panel, 12.7 x 17.6 cm

Gift of the Rachel Martinez et André Provencher Collection

A.2017.016

## **13. *Ô fortunatos*, tiré de l'album**

***Bois gravés*, 1935**

[*Ô fortunatos*, from the album *Bois gravés*]

Woodcut, 19.3 x 21.5 cm

Gift of Jean Guibault

1995.329

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## **14. *Aurore boréale*, tiré de l'album**

***Bois gravés*, 1935**

[*Aurora Borealis*, from the album *Bois gravés*]

Woodcut, 30 x 42.7 cm

Gift of Lisette and Jean Guibault

1994.019.17

## **15. *Cantique du soleil*, tiré de l'album**

***Bois gravés*, 1935**

[*Song of the Sun*, from the album *Bois gravés*]

Woodcut, 35 x 42.7 cm

Gift of Lisette and Jean Guibault

1994.021

## **16. *Effet de neige*, tiré de l'album**

***Bois gravés*, 1935**

[*Snow Effect*, from the album *Bois gravés*]

Woodcut, 30 x 42.7 cm

Gift of Lisette and Jean Guibault

1994.019.13

These three woodcuts are part of the collection *Bois gravés*, produced in 1935. The accompanying text by Father Albert Tessier, with its nationalistic undertones, states that only 3% of artworks in private homes were produced by Canadian artists. The objective behind this album was to introduce local artists to the broader public. Advertised in the Trois-Rivières newspaper *Le Bien public*,

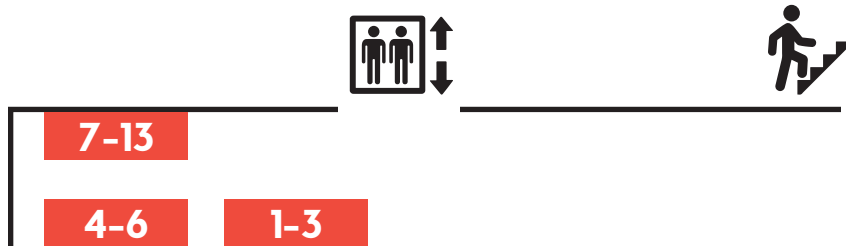
it was comprised of two editions. The first, a regular edition of two hundred copies, contained twenty engravings. The second, a special edition of fifty copies, contained twenty-six engravings, including one in colour, titled and signed by the artist. A commercial success, the album sold out in five days. This production made Rodolphe Duguay one of the first, if not *the* first Canadian printmaker, some decades before the emergence of Albert Dumouchel.

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## FLOOR PLAN

### 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in the hallway

Espace 3<sup>e</sup> étage



### 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

Salle Famille D<sup>r</sup> Richard Morisset

