

Press Release 2/2/12

Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction Announced

J. Roger Léveillé has been named the ninth recipient of the Manitoba Arts Council's Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction. This \$30,000 award is presented biennially to recognize the highest level of artistic excellence and distinguished career achievements by a professional Manitoba artist. Léveillé will be honoured at a new Manitoba Arts Award event at the Qualico Family Centre on May 16th, 2012.

Previous Award of Distinction recipients include: William Eakin (2009), Roland Mahe (2008), Dr. Robert Turner (2007), Aganetha Dyck (2006), Guy Maddin (2005), Grant Guy (2004), Robert Kroetsch (2003), and Leslee Silverman (2002)

media contact

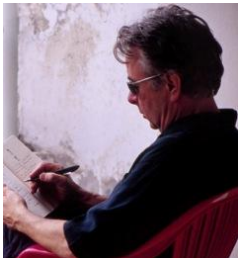
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J. Roger Léveillé

Born in downtown Winnipeg in 1945, J. Roger Léveillé is one of Manitoba's most eminent francophone writers since Gabrielle Roy. His innovative and extensive body of work and his promotion of the arts have been pioneering in establishing a francophone literature in Manitoba, and in enriching both Manitoba's cultural environment and Canada's literary landscape.

Léveillé has published nearly thirty works, mainly in Manitoba but also in Ontario, Quebec, and France. His writing has received widespread critical attention across Canada, and his work has been the object of theses, published volumes, and of an international symposium that was hosted by Winnipeg's three universities in 2005.

His writing is recognized for its innovative and postmodern qualities; it is at once experimental and elegant, in a variety of genres (novel, essay, poetry) and styles (narrative, deconstructive, multimedia). His first works between 1965 and 1968 were studied at that time at the university level, and they were fundamental to the development of Franco-Manitoban literature.

Léveillé's novel *The Setting Lake Sun* was the winner of the Winnipeg Public Library's On the Same Page contest in 2011. In all, his work has garnered a variety of awards. J.R. Léveillé was the second author to receive the Manitoba Writing and Publishing Lifetime Achievement Award (2006) after Carol Shields.

Not only are his fiction and his poetry recognized throughout French Canada and studied in Canadian and European universities, but his essays have exported Franco-Manitoban literature and culture across Canada and abroad. He has written extensively on Franco-Manitoban authors, on the theatre and the visual arts (on the work of Dominique Rey, for example), in magazines and reviews, for national and international conferences, and in published books. He has produced an anthology of French poetry in Manitoba from 1814 to the present that remains the standard reference work on this subject. For these reasons, he was selected writer-in-residence and guest professor at the Université de Rennes in France in 2008, and remains a sought-after speaker for conferences, readings, and bookfairs. He has sat on various juries, most recently for the Governor General's Awards in poetry in 2010.

On the Manitoban scene, he has sat and continues to sit on a number of boards and cultural committees, such as the Winnipeg International Writers Festival for which he developed a francophone component; he has edited and participated in special issues of the well-known local journal, *Prairie Fire*; he established the collection Rouge at Éditions du Blé to further new writing; he created a world premiere of a Samuel Beckett text for the Manitoba Theatre Centre's inaugural Beckettfest; and he has collaborated with the Winnipeg Art Gallery in producing Marcel Gosselin exhibition catalogues.

He has also been mentor or editor for some of French Canada's most widely recognized authors, such as Marc Prescott, Lise Gaboury-Diallo, and Charles Leblanc. The books he has published or edited have often garnered awards for design. The aesthetic and hybrid nature of his writing has led him to collaborate and publish with various artists such as Tony Tascona, Étienne Gaboury, and Lorraine Pritchard (Carman/Montréal). He has edited and published books and chapbooks by artists such as Arthur Adamson, George Swinton, Suzanne Gauthier, Bruce Head, and Winston Leathers. In 2010, he gave the keynote conference at the symposium on cultural minorities in Avignon, France, with a presentation of the works of Franco-Manitoban artists.

Though his promotion of all facets of Manitoban, Franco-Manitoban in particular, art and culture is noteworthy in itself, all this is anchored in his own work and in his rigorous application of the art of writing. It is for this accomplished body of work that J. Roger Léveillé has been named as the recipient of the 2012 Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction: over forty years of writing, always at the forefront, forever exploring and renewing itself, remaining thoroughly modern. These are qualities that continue to make his work one of the most exciting, meaningful and current expressions by a Manitoba author.