

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Woldemar Neufeld to attend first showing of collection at WLU

Waterloo (Sept. 7) — Woldemar Neufeld will be present and more than 30 of his works exhibited at what will be Wilfrid Laurier University's first showing of the Woldemar Neufeld Art Collection on Saturday, Sept. 11.

The event will celebrate the signing of a three-year agreement that the university will house and exhibit the City of Waterloo's collection of Neufeld's art, which comprises about 300 paintings.

About 30 of Neufeld's works in ink, water color and ink, and color block will be on display in the Robert Langen Gallery, immediately adjacent to the John Aird Centre recital hall on campus. About 10 oil paintings will be hung in the foyer of the recital hall.

Teri Hranka, curator of the Neufeld collection and co-ordinator of the university's art gallery, says the exhibit portrays the gradual but dramatic changes in Neufeld's work from the 1930s to the 1980s. "His art moves from freer abstract forms to those with sharper focus and greater detail. Yet through it all, Neufeld's affection for the people and places of Waterloo is a constant."

While Saturday's event is by invitation only, the exhibit will be open to the public from Sept. 8 through Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Sept. 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

Neufeld has been a dedicated printmaker and sculptor. However, he is best known for his water colors and oils — lively, vigorous, buoyant work, joyously blending abstract form with realistic details of the places around him. His work hangs in many private collections and prominent public museums and galleries in Canada and the United States. In the fall of 1988, Laurier awarded Neufeld an honorary doctor of letters degree.

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Born in a village of German-speaking Mennonites in Russia, Neufeld immigrated to Waterloo as a teenager in 1924 and began a relationship with the area that he has woven into his career for more than 60 years.

After attending Waterloo College School (on what is now the WLU campus) from 1927 to 1930, Neufeld studied at the Ontario College of Art, the Cleveland Institute of Art, and Case Western Reserve University. In 1945 he moved from Cleveland to New York City and began a new phase of his career as a New York City and New England artist. In 1949 he established a studio and art school in New Milford, Connecticut.

Neufeld has painted in many parts of Canada but about 25 years ago, he committed himself with renewed vigor to painting the Waterloo area.

The celebration will include a six-minute video presentation, *Images of Waterloo: Woldemar Neufeld's Sense of Place*, produced by Paul Tiessen, a professor of English at WLU.

The program will also include remarks from the artist; Milo Shantz, chair of the collection's management committee; Brian Turnbull, mayor of Waterloo; Lorna Marsden, president of Laurier; and Leslie De'Ath, chair of WLU's cultural affairs committee. The Penderecki String Quartet and soprano Marie Criscione, a 1992 graduate of Laurier, will perform.

Under the terms of the agreement, Laurier will hold at least one major exhibition of the Neufeld collection a year and will house it, along with the university's own collection, in a new facility on the top floor of the John Aird Centre. The collection will be shared with the community through travelling exhibits and school outreach programs. A seven-member management committee will oversee the collection and its curator, funded in part by the city.

Laurier has 43 works by Neufeld in its collection of 400 pieces. About 95 per cent of the collection is in circulation on campus.