



# Eric Tardif

*Beauty, Liberty, Eternity*



*Twist*, different angle, cherry, 23 x 18 x 14 in.

**S**culptor Eric Tardif's ultimate desire is to lead us on a journey to discover the essence of each of his pieces. For him a sculpture cannot exist without reference to something abstract, ineffable. His work is metaphorical – reality provides the form from which to

extract and refine the idea. Sculpting, the process of working various types and textures of wood, is as much a matter of capturing the flight of a bird as it is of representing the bird itself.

The seed of Tardif's career as a sculptor was planted years ago when he was a naturalist at Cap Tourmente National

Wildlife Area, a wetland on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in the Charlevoix region of Quebec. It was there that he spent countless hours observing and photographing the many species of birds that either made the wetland their home or used it as a stop-over during their migrations.



*Over the Mountains*, cherry, 30 x 20 x 5 in.

Tardif used the negatives of his photographs to experiment with techniques for rendering more abstract impressions of the images. He would etch, on a negative, accentuating lines of motion, then project the image onto a canvas. The richness of texture and motion intrigued him, but it wasn't until he began contemplating the structure of the grains of woods that his true medium of expression suggested itself. Classes in sculpting followed: the likeness of a Cap Tourmente barnacle, fashioned from wood shavings, was his first creation.

Tardif perfected his wood sculpting technique by making thin wood slats pliable with steam and then shaping them by hand to suit his vision. Elm, maple, walnut and cherry woods yielded and continue to yield poetic results. "The material dictates the way I form the piece. The flexibility of wood and the singularity of each defect it may contain give me a notion of the bird that will ultimately be represented," he explains, expressing empathy for the methods of the "Native artists who listen to their material so it may guide their hands to reveal the form hidden within."

Tardif, a son of Rivière-du-Loup, where the river merges with sea and where the Gaspé peninsula and the Atlantic provinces are a virtual stone's throw away, draws inspiration from the open spaces and the horizon stretching out from the shore – amplified by the salt wind and brilliant light of this his



*Flight*, elm, 10 x 15 x 10 in.



*The Dancer*, black walnut, 27.5 x 21 x 14 in.



*The Dancer*, close-up detail, black walnut.

natal region. Central to his art, of course, are the flights of the imagination the birds of the area give wing to. But all this would be nothing more than personal enjoyment if it weren't for his unique gift of being able to read the grain of a piece wood and by his hand release its story into the world at large.

His elegant, balletic birds are welcomed wherever they alight. Tardif's work is very well represented in collections around the globe – in Canada, the United States, Martinique, Italy and Japan. He seems now to travel as freely as his sculptures suggest they do in their flights of fancy, exhibiting his work to a curi-

ous international public. But Tardif always takes care to touch down and spend time in his studio where the interpretation and shaping of the resonances of his natural medium are continually renewed. **I**

**Michel Bois**

Éric Tardif is represented by the following galleries: Iris, Baie-Saint-Paul; Créa, Montreal; Guilde canadienne des métiers d'art, Montreal; Rendez-vous Art Gallery, Vancouver, B-C; Blue Heron Gallery, Cap Cod, MA; L'Attitude Gallery, Boston, MA, USA. Tardif also has a Web site at : [www.ericardif.com](http://www.ericardif.com)