

# Capturing the mood of the Rockies

*By Dayna Connoly*

Making the most of the light, Kelowna-based artist Roger D. Arndt is at home in the Rockies.

Arndt mainly paints the ever-changing landscapes of the Canadian Rockies, including luminescent mists. His latest one-man show, which includes mountains, gardens and ocean views, opens at the Canada House Gallery on June 17 from 1 to 4 p.m. To celebrate Father's Day, the first 50 guests will receive an art card.

His career as an artist began in 1973 at the age of 14, when he apprenticed for four years with Lorne Adams in Vancouver. He sold his first oil painting while still a teenager, and within a few years became a self-sustaining artist. Today, his work is featured in private and major corporate collections throughout North America, and his following extends as far as Japan.

He learned to paint painting the ocean. He recently started painting the ocean again. The West Coast's Haida totems are part of the June 17 showing. Garden scenes are his version of still life, said Arndt.

His love, however, is the Rockies.

"The Rockies are my specialty," he said. Having worked at Deer Lodge for six years in the 1970s, he likes to paint Lake Louise, Lake Minnewanka and along the Icefield Parkway. "There's no place like it in the world," he said.

"It can be a beautiful, sunny day. Then it rains. Then it's sunny again. The landscape is always changing. When you're photographing or painting, it's always fresh."

He has explored the area on horseback, by helicopter, with a trailer, while camping and hiking. Often he will paint an oil study on location. At other times he will spend a day photographing and painting in his studio.

His favourite peaks to paint are Mt. Steven, near Field and Mt. Hector near the Icefield Parkway, where he tries to "capture that sense of movement, the mist is rising up, with the cloud formations are moving."

With their solid walls and square quality (compared to the pointy nature of the mountain range as it extends into the U.S.), Arndt said he enjoys recreating the "many moods of the Rockies."

A distinguishing quality of an Arndt painting is the ever-present, gently flowing mist, whether it depicts an early morning haze, or a deepening sky at twilight. "I love early morning, when the sun's coming up."

The mysterious and evocative nature of Arndt's work is achieved through a painstaking technique that originated with 15th century Flemish artists. Using smooth brush strokes and intensive glazing of layer upon layer of colour, he achieves greater depth and range, yet subtlety of colour.

"I'll never be done painting the Rockies... They are forever changing."

In the future, Arndt would like to compile a book of the 35-40 paintings he does each year, as a tour through the Rockies.