

## CANADA'S ARTIST IN WOOL

In a setting unchanged by the years, at Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, an artist named Elizabeth LeFort turns out unique masterpieces. She creates pictures in wool.....dyeing the yarn before putting it to the painstaking handhooked process that has been passed down through generations of French Acadians. Miss LeFort was introduced to the art when, as a little girl, she received a Christmas card and decided to try to duplicate it in a rug. Now her tapestry pictures have been hung in Buckingham Palace, the Vatican Fine Arts Gallery and the White House. Tourists are attracted to displays of Miss LeFort's art. A popular work is "My Country, 'Tis of Thee"..... a composite of Presidential portraits on backgrounds of scenes from American history. This picture is valued at twenty thousand dollars. Former President Eisenhower, and recently President Kennedy have received their portraits..... Miss LeFort's religious works have won wide acclaim. This is her reproduction of DaVinci's "The Last Supper."



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Release

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, MONTREAL

Cameraman: Ray Jones

Prod. No. 61-321-9

Cable Code: ARTIST
Cable Address: Newsreels,
Canadafilm, Montreal.

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ELIZABETH LEFORT WHOSE HANDHOOKED PICTURES HANG IN
SOME OF THE FAMOUS GALLERIES OF THE WORLD

Margaree Harbour, Cape Breton
Island, Nova Scotia, 1961

In homes along the historical Cabot Trail in Cape Breton Island -- off the mainland on Canada's East Coast -- century old traditions are preserved by descendants of the French Acadians. From July to September, at the Paul Pix Shop in Margaree Harbour, Miss Elizabeth LeFort may be seen working quietly in one corner surrounded by many of her pictures which have earned her international recognition.

She creates pictures in wool -- colourful tapestries handhooked in a painstaking process that has been handed down through generations of Acadians. Miss LeFort learned the art of hooking rugs as a little girl watching her mother and neighbours. About 1940, she received a Christmas card which appealed to her so much that she decided to try to duplicate it in a rug -- this was the beginning of her tapestry pictures. Her work was discovered in 1954 by Mr. Kenneth Hansford, owner of the Paul Pix Shop, when he was going from door to door in the Cheticamp area looking for authentic island handicrafts for his tourist gift shop.

Miss LeFort lives on a farm at Point Cross and walks across the fields to Margaree Harbour to work in the gift shop during the busy tourist season. Most of the yarn she uses is made from the wool of sheep raised on a farm at Margaree Harbour. The wool is sent to nearby Prince Edward Island, where it is processed into the fine two-ply yarn she uses and this Miss LeFort dyes to the colours she requires for her work. The only time she uses anything but locally produced wool is when she requires a pure white colour. Because sheep's wool is never a pure white, she used Angora wool imported from England for the white of the dress in her portrait of Queen Elizabeth II -- which she presented to Her Majesty in 1959 when the Queen visited Sydney and this picture now hangs in Buckingham Palace; the gown and cap of her portrait of Pope Pius XII, now hanging in the Vatican Fine Arts Gallery; and in the collars of the Presidents of the United States in her famous picture "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" which is approximately 6' x 10' and is shown in our story.

Miss LeFort and her manager, Mr. Hansford, spent a year doing design and preparatory work on the portrait "My Country, 'Tis of Thee", and six months were required for the actual production. The tapestry is a composite of the Presidential portraits on backgrounds of scenes from American History. It has an interesting symbolism. In the heart of the picture are the Presidential Seal and Great Seal of the U.S., representing the law and authority of Government. The first ten Presidential portraits are superimposed over a background scene of Independence Hall as in Colonial Days, upper left. In the upper right, the second ten Presidential portraits are placed over a scene from the Battle of Antietam in the Civil War. The next six Presidents in the lower left cover the period of western development depicted in the wagon train scene: the next six Presidents, of the two World-War-period, are placed over a World War II scene of the American capture of the Remagen Bridge over the Rhine. The centre panel graces the portraits of President Kennedy and President Eisenhower on a background scene of a Cape Canaveral Rocketfiring, which extends up into a night sky with the full moon at the top, indicating today's exploration of space and hope in the future -- "man reaching for the stars". The border, comprised of the fifty State Emblems, indicates the Union of the United States. This picture is valued at \$20,000.

Another of her famous portraits is a reproduction of DaVinci's "The Last Supper" -- 8'x4½'. To prepare the yarn for this, Miss LeFort dyed and blended 154 shades -- a time consuming chore. This picture is, also, shown in our story.

She was invited to the White House in 1957 to present her first portrait of President Eisenhower and at a reception preceding a testimonial dinner honoring Senator Carl Hayden in Phoenix, Arizona on Nov. 17th of this year, Miss LeFort's portrait of President Kennedy (shown in our footage) was presented to the President. This will, therefore, be the second of her works to hang in the White House.

Miss LeFort's tapestry portraits of animals, Cape Breton and other scenes receive just as much attention as her works on world famous figures. Many of these hang in the homes of tourists who have visited the peaceful villages and pleasant harbours of Cape Breton Island.



## Shot list

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1. MLS Cheticamp, Cape Breton (on Cabot Trail)
2. LS looking across fields and hill
3. MCS Elizabeth LeFort drawing water from well (at her home at Point Cross)
4. MS Miss LeFort carrying bucket of water into home
5. MCS wool being dyed in bucket on range
6. MCS dyeing operation
7. CS water running into wool in pot and wringing out wool
8. CS Miss LeFort hooking portrait of Prime Minister Diefenbaker
9. MS same, showing room with artist's work on walls
10. HA/MCS hooking Prime Minister Diefenbaker's portrait
11. BCU hooking through material
12. LA/CU wool being fed through material, camera pans up to reveal top of table with same action
13. MLS Margaree Harbour - tourist arriving
14. MS interior of Paul Pix Shop - tourist entering and looking at Miss LeFort's work in the gallery
15. MS tourists grouped around Miss LeFort
16. MS tourists looking at Miss LeFort's work with portrait "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" in centre background
17. MS tourists with portrait of President Kennedy in centre background (since presented to him)
18. MCS tourists looking at handhooked scenes
19. MCS tourists watching Miss LeFort work, camera pans away from right to left to reveal some of her work on the wall and then camera pans back left to right to tourists chatting with Miss LeFort
20. HA/CS Miss LeFort working on Diefenbaker canvas
21. CU "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" portrait
22. BCU same as above, camera pans left to right to miscellaneous portraits ending with one of Lord Beaverbrook
23. CU President Kennedy's portrait
24. CU schooner
25. CU palomino pony with scenery in background
26. CU Saint Basil
27. BCU same as above
28. CU bird with young in nest

29. MCS religious figure in centre, surrounded by portraits of birds
30. BCU same religious figure
31. CU of central figure in portrait and camera dollies back to reveal whole picture - reproduction of DaVinci's "The Last Supper"
32. LS exterior - countryside camera pans left to right to show houses and a little village
33. LS Elizabeth LeFort returning home, walking away from camera into the sunset