

Art Promoter : D. Beauchamp

This January, a new art gallery, Galerie Beauchamp et Joncas will open in a renovated building at the corner of Sherbrooke and Cote-des-Neiges in downtown Montreal. Several Saint Lambert residents are involved in the project, including Mr. Denis Beauchamp, part-owner of the gallery and the only painters' agent in Canada. Guy Joncas, Beauchamp's partner, resides in Saint Lambert as does Jacques Nadeau, the architect who designed the gallery and Alfai Notario, Beauchamp's brother-in-law, who does all the framing and the distribution of the paintings. As well, Beauchamp's son Claude works with him as he is learning to be a painters' agent.

Beauchamp's love of figurative and impressionistic paintings led him to involvement in the art world on the most subjective level, painting itself. After studying painting for several years, Beauchamp came to the conclusion that he would never be an artist and decided to devote his time to representing painters' businesses interest instead. While he was studying art, he sold art supplies and opened several galleries throughout the province. But since making the decision to become an agent eight years ago, Beauchamp has never looked back. He thrives on his work for many reasons, notably, the stimulation he feels when dealing with the artists, the satisfaction he experiences when an exhibition goes well and the travel aspect of his work.

At the beginning of his work as an agent, Beauchamp had to seek out his clients; now the reverse is true. Presently, he handles the work of fifteen painters, among them, Normand Hudon, Monique Mercier, Del Signore, Claude Picker, Louise Kirouac and Pauline Paquin. Beauchamp feels that he could not handle more than one or two additional painters' presently because of time constraints. All the artists are Quebec artists in the sense that they have resided here for a lengthy period of time and have received immigrant status at the least. All are also figurative artists because Beauchamp does not appreciate abstract art. Beauchamp says proudly that not one of his painters has left him yet. Contrasts 'signed' with a handshake have proven more lasting than many committed to paper.

Beauchamp's goal as an agent has been to allow Quebec painters to gain recognition on the national level. To this end, he deals with high-profile galleries in Calgary, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Montreal and has succeeded in bringing the majority of his painters to the attention of people across the country. At the same time, the painters' agent has ensured that the price of his clients' work remains accessible to

the average person. Although it took Beauchamp approximately five years to crack the Canadian market, he says that, ironically, the worst representation of his painters is to be found in Montreal itself. This is why he wants to open Galerie Beauchamp et Joncas in the heart of the art gallery territory in Montreal. The gallery will feature the work of Beauchamp's painters among that of other Canadian painters.

However, Canada is not the limit of Beauchamp's horizons. He has tried to penetrate the American market for several years and says that he has run up against stiff resistance from circles dominated by abstract artists in New York and Boston. Still, he has succeeded in exhibiting his artists in Los Angeles and Boston and says that a great deal of his energy will be devoted to the American market in the near future.

Galerie Beauchamp et Joncas has been in the works for the past two years. The building needed extensive renovations due to a fire which ravaged it three years ago. Because the building is a hundred years old, the city would not allow more than 50% of it to be renovated and this complicated the conversion process even more. Beauchamp says that the only thing remaining from the former building is the exterior which is made of historic Scottish stones. The interior of the gallery, which will comprise two floors including a picturesque tower, will be entirely modern. The exhibition space will be between 4,000 and 5,000 square feet and will be well lit because of the many windows in the building.

But, Beauchamp is not a man content with one art gallery and a full-time job as a painters agent. Recently together with his wife Bonita and Sylvie Soulières, he bought another gallery, Le Balcon d'Art, in Saint Lambert. While the two women run the gallery, Beauchamp occupies the rest of his time with a travel agency owned by him, and his daughter and a restaurant he owns in the Laurentians. In the tradition of all those who drive themselves hard to succeed, he summarizes his life, saying 'You've got to keep buys, you know' He seems happy as he says this and it is evident that his happiness is the result of the combination of his love for art and his love of business.

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