

## Bonnitta Beauchamp

### The Heart and Soul of the Balcon d'Art



MRS BONNITTA BEAUCHAMP WITH DAUGHTER, CHANTAL.



**T**en years ago Bonnitta Beauchamp, appeared in MAGAZIN'ART'S second issue. The Saint Lambert gallery owner now helps us celebrate the end of 1998, our tenth anniversary year. It is indeed a pleasure to reintroduce one of the finest and kindest in the business.

Bonnitta Beauchamp's love of art began, when, as a young girl, she saw a reproduction of a work by Lucius O'Brien. It was like love at first sight. Born into a modest British Columbia household, Mrs Beauchamp remembers that working one's way through school was the only way to go. She remembers slaving hard one summer to put her money toward school expenses and a book published by the National Gallery with *Sunset on the Saguenay* by Lucius O'Brien on its cover.

Did that scene affect her? Perhaps since a few years later the young Mrs Beauchamp moved to Québec. Once there, she demonstrated her strongest trait: her strong will. She arrived in Montreal without knowing a single word of French. She then enrolled in nursing, in French. Many people do not know that Bonnitta worked in an east-end hospital in Montreal until she met her husband, Denis Beauchamp.



THE GARDENS WHERE VISITORS MAY STROLL DURING SUMMER.



At that time, Denis Beauchamp had a few galleries and plenty of work. Bonnitta settled nicely into the milieu. In fact it soon became her passion, although she chose to put everything on ice while raising two daughters.

In 1986, Bonnitta Beauchamp returned to the art world. This time she arrived in style and opened the Balcon d'Art Gallery in its current location, rue Notre-Dame in Saint Lambert.

Initially, the gallery displayed works

from artists represented by her husband, who had become an agent. Over the years the agency, under the business name Multi-Art, has represented the work of two dozen Québécois artists throughout Canada. The Balcon d'Art now houses works by over thirty artists. One third of those artists were discovered by Bonnitta herself. Sharon Mark, featured in this issue, and Lise Lacaille, another very successful artist, belong to this group.

Some six to eight vernissages, including a special Christmas exhibition of smaller works, are held annually at the Balcon d'Art. Of course activities require personnel. Mrs. Beauchamp is now part of a team of seven, including the youngest Beauchamp daughter, Fay, who works weekends and school holidays.

Visitors to the Balcon d'Art feel right at home. Bonnitta Beauchamp remains faithful to her original mission of demystifying art. Viewers can find out about the art on display and often even meet the artist at the gallery. The staff also finds ways of encouraging ownership, e.g. helping a young couple purchase that first painting through a trial period and possibly through deferred payments. Of course the savvy collector can exchange a new painting for another over a one-year period. If the painter's work 'costs more' after that year, the exchange rate will be adjusted accordingly.

"Hard work pays." The Balcon d'Art provides ample proof of that popular saying. Another gallery addition, soon to be, serves as further proof of Bonnitta Beauchamp's ever-increasing clientele. With the new space, Bonnitta will be in charge of one of the largest galleries in Montreal. All the better for the art-loving friends of the gallery who will soon be able to see even more works from even more artists.

Come to think of it, Bonnitta Beauchamp has another strong suit: her integrity. No one can dispute this quality in her. Her unwavering integrity and kindness make Bonnitta the heart and soul of the Balcon d'Art. █

**Louis-Philippe de Montreuil**