

ily. Her first summer job, doing some ironing for a local hotel, earned her \$20. "With this \$20, I purchased a dress, shoes and a book on the National Gallery of Canada. The Lucius O'Brien painting featured on the front book cover had made a very strong impression on me. In fact, I still own that book." Her interest in art is confirmed when she moves to Québec and meets her future husband, Denis Beauchamp, co-owner of a chain of galleries where she works up to her first pregnancy. During the following ten years she raises her two daughters and then finds herself idle when they are both in school. That is when, along with a friend of hers, she takes over a small gallery called *Le Balcon d'Art* which had opened only six months earlier but, unsuccessful, was set to close its doors. Bonnitta and her friend shared a work schedule and, as little as a year later, the premises already became too small for their growing clientele.

Sharing the same values as her husband, Denis Beauchamp, whose Multi-Art gallery now also shares the location, her main goal is to feature Québec talent and help it radiate internationally. The only way to operate is with honesty and by keeping an open mind. "Life is a learning experience you can either accept with open arms or push away. In art, our arms are wide opened," she says. "By being honest with ourselves, the artists we represent and our customers, we're aiming at the long term."

A certain amount of sensibility is needed to connect potential collectors with pieces of art, to be able to detect their inclinations, to discern the unspoken vibe that emanates from them. This is the quality that ensures the continued existence of *Le Balcon d'Art*. Bonnitta prefers to call it a "privilege" and regards it as the most appreciated aspect of her many tasks. "I am privileged to be able to witness the emotion felt by the artist for a piece of art and then to also witness the customer's reaction to it. The human interaction is incomparable." Having been dealing with art lovers for so many years, she dresses a very laudatory portrait of them all: "People who are attracted to art generally possess good values



The inviting exterior of the gallery.



and strong sensibility. Knowing them has been a privilege for me." She can recount many stories as proof of the special relation that exists between art and the people who appreciate it as well as the middle man between the two, the gallery owner. "One of the great lessons I have learned over the years is never to judge people on their appearance."

Families stretching over many generations have become art collectors: marriages, baptisms, are occasions which merit an imperishable gift, young professionals dress-up their apartments with beautiful pieces of art. The family legacy already being assured, Bonnitta now works at the service of her children, still keeping an eye on things however as she considers the business "her baby". "I oversee with love. It is important to delegate in order for others to learn."

Rightly proud of her accomplish-

ments, Bonnitta is today able to savour the fruits of her long journey into the art business world, with hopes that it will go on for many years to come, until it can be taken over by her grand-child Denis, so named in honour of his grand-father who passed 6 years ago. "My generation was very lucky. I find that things are much more difficult for young people today. We had nothing to lose."

Who cares about bad weather when the sowing has been done? **I**

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