



A LOVE THAT SPANS GENERATIONS

The owner of a St. Lambert gallery bestows her passion for art on her children

LIKE A PEBBLE TOSSED INTO A POND, Bonnitta Beauchamp's love of art has sent ripples across her life and those of her children.

To hear her daughter Natalie tell the tale, it was a true love – one that sparked early and grew over the ensuing decades. It was initially seen the year when, as a teenaged girl Bonnitta landed her first summer job. With the money she had earned, she bought two things she wanted: a pair of shoes and a book about art.

And the flame was lit.

While she was raising a young family in south shore St. Lambert, her love of art was stirred again with the discovery of a local art gallery. When her youngest of two daughters was old enough to head off to school, Bonnitta bought the gallery to give herself a focus and to fill her days.

The move not only fanned the flame that would fill Bonnitta's life with her passion for art, it would profoundly influence the course of her children's lives. That was 32 years ago. Today, Le Balcon d'Art gallery has transitioned from hobby to a family-run business, where the love of art not only burns brightly, but, like a torch, it is carried by Natalie Beauchamp and her sister Fay.

Now, in a bigger location, but still in St. Lambert, Le Balcon d'Art specializes in Quebec and Canadian art.

"The dream of the parents has been transferred to the children," says Natalie, the company's secretary-treasurer. She joined the business, as did her sister, after completing her education. Their mother, however, is still very active in the day-to-day operation.



"This is not really a business you retire from," Natalie explains. "It's a passion. To own a gallery, you have to love art."

Their mission is to share their love and make art accessible to everyone – one piece at a time, one customer at a time. It's a very personal experience.

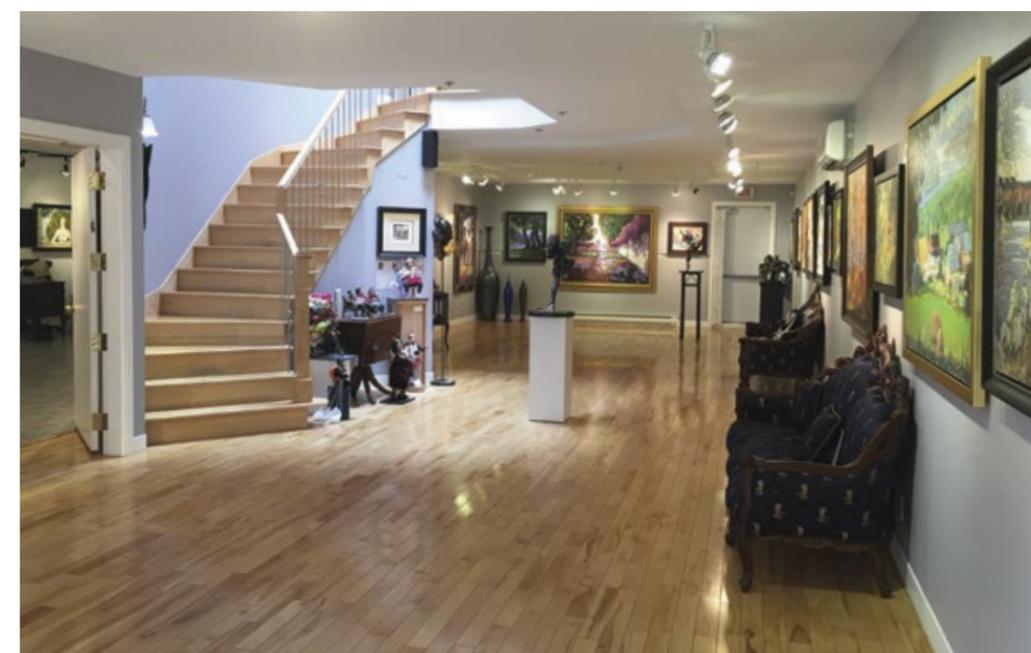
Every customer, Natalie explains, whether they travel by private jet and arrive by a chauffeur-driven car or stop in while cycling, wearing shorts and carrying a helmet, are treated like family, and receive a warm welcome.

Customers are not limited to people who buy art. The gallery also offers custom framing. "We are members of the Professional Picture Framers Association (PPFA) and offer custom design services for framing of all sorts: paintings, works on paper, sports memorabilia. We take the time to find the perfect design for every client and job," she says.

The gallery is also a venue that can be rented to host receptions, corporate events and parties.

The family loves to expose people to their enthusiasm for great works.

But some customers know what they want. Such as the woman who loved the work of French artist André Bertouesque, who immigrated to Canada and did most of his painting in Quebec. According to Natalie, this customer's husband wanted a lot of children, and so the couple struck a deal: They would have as many kids as the husband wanted on condition that he buy his wife a Bertouesque



painting upon the birth of each child. The woman, over the years, would come to own four 36-by-48-inch works.

"Those paintings – for that family – represent the birth of each child. We get to share these beautiful moments with our clients," Natalie says.

"A piece of art – a true piece of art – is an emotion. You can fall in love over and over again with the same piece," Natalie continues, tossing another pebble into the pond and watching the ripples spread. ➤

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