

Following the evolution of an artist like André Bertounesque means recognizing the same talent that has seduced us before in a new more assertive manner. If he was earlier noted for his beach, vacation and sea scenes, a period which lasted for ten years or more, today he

paints scenes inspired by the sun and skies of Provence, where he spent his childhood.

His present work is clearly impressionistic, saturated with warm lively light that exhibits his mastery of the play of light and shadow. "It's not true that you become good after practicing for a couple of months or years. In order to become better you have to lose your way and make mistakes and continue to experiment," he says.

When Bertounesque paints he completely isolates himself from the outside world to help give form to the vision in his imagination. He is the exact opposite of those painters who continuously search for the best light to work in. Bertounesque works in a studio where the windows are boarded up to keep the outside world at bay.

"Before I even touch a paintbrush I have already finished the painting in my mind's eye. I have no other reference point other than the image that I see in my mind and I work in a frenzy to paint what I see because I am impatient to see it." In order to work as quickly as possible Bertounesque doesn't bother to prepare his surfaces and works directly on masonite boards. To keep up the pace he also generally uses only one paintbrush.

He works with intensity to create an effect, one where light flows and compositional elements are blurred. His work is like an invitation to savour the time generously offered in a suspended landscape where trees, grass and flowers flourish abundantly. There is a path in the landscape that whispers follow me, to those who see it. It leads us to a chair under a tree and seduces us into stopping to enjoy the moment.

If the feminine was a key element in his earlier work, now it is barely hinted at. "When I draw a house it's to show that someone planted those flowers and takes care of them." This subtle understatement about the cojoining of man and nature permeates his work and provides a sweet poetry of balance to the whole of his work. No energy or force dominates the other. In Bertounesque's work nature is not stalling. It may be superabundant but it freely exists with the man made environment without breaking the balance of their silent partnership.

If Bertounesque's earlier palette was sober and reduced it is now big and pure. The vibrant colour of the butterflies he collects have inspired his present choice of strong harmonious colours. Bertounesque is fascinated by rocks, by insects and by anything that

has to do with nature. He marvels with passion before its many faces. He is a sedentary adventurer animated by an insatiable curiosity to discover the world through his imagination. The beauty lying in a peach pit can be enough to set him off and take his imagination traveling to exotic realms.

Even though he finds it difficult to continuously harbour new ideas, he can't stop himself from falling in love with them. In order not to repeat himself, Bertounesque completely forgets a painting once he has completed it. There is very little evidence of anything recent in his home. And very little to do with winter. All of his recent work features a combination of warmth and peace. "I only paint places that I want to escape to. I have already had to endure so much cold that I don't want to have it in my personal universe." **I**

Lisanne Le Tellier

André Bertounesque is represented by the following galleries: Le Balcon d'art, St-Lambert; Galerie Michel Bigue, St-Sauveur; Galerie Iris, Bois-St. Paul; Galerie Bonheur du Jour, Magog; Galerie du Château, Mont-Tremblant; Galerie Drummond, Drummondville; Master's Gallery, Calgary. He is listed in the *Biennial Guide to Canadian Artists in Galleries* published by MAGAZIN'ART.



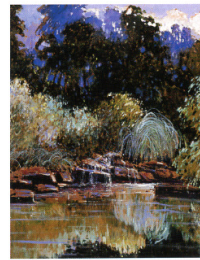
QUIÉTUDE, MAISON FLEURIE, acrylic, 40 x 30 in., 2003. Multi-Art.



COME INTO MY GARDEN, acrylic, 30 x 24 in., 2003. Multi-Art.



A CORNER OF PARADISE, acrylic, 30 x 40 in., 2003. Multi-Art.



CITÉ EN COCOON, acrylic, 30 x 24 in., 2003. Multi-Art.