

couleurs du u bec... in uand Deux peintre

GABRIEL BONMATI

Gabriel Bonmati comes from Morocco where he was born. What was he like as a young boy?... *“self-analysis leads me to conclude that I was gentle, in fact, just about perfect although others found me rather...overbearing, something of a autocrat but, of course, that’s their viewpoint. I was also an altar boy for a year or so, I never knew exactly what I was supposed to do! There were two altar boys, one on the right and other on the left, one would lead and the other would follow... I was the one who followed. You had to know when to kneel etc.”* At school, little Gabriel was a model pupil, always first or second of his class each year... *“Oh yes, and that was also the case later. It would seem that I was always overbearing towards my sister and my mother...yet... I was always available to do everyone’s bidding, to run errands and things like that.. I liked to do this because I’d often use some of the left-over shipping money to pay my admission to the swimming-pool. My mother let me bargain, she knew what was going on.”* He sat for his high school examinations (Lycée) at the age of ten and a half and, over the following years. *“I was made to study Latin, I didn’t know why: I was also made to study Arabic and when I would speak Arabic to an Arab, he’d tell me don’t bother I speak French- there just wasn’t any way for me to demonstrate my learning! Anyhow things went rather well, I marked time and in third form suddenly realised that I had reached my teen and then without flattering myself unduly, I d say I’m rather brilliant... except in Arabic where I always ranked last...”* When he got his B.A. in literature, he really had no use for it. He then went on to philosophy class but could see no avenue opening before him except Law of Economics and although somewhat attracted by a diplomatic career, he went to Paris where he took a first year class in drawing at Claude Bernard Lycée (attached to

Beau-arts School) from when he emerged a professor. He was then twenty years old. Naturally, being in France, he lost a year because of his compulsory military service (he was the official decorator of offices and acted as librarian) and used that year to study for a higher degree in teaching. "I got my degree because I was lucky and also because I was brilliant- only nine of the two hundred applicants were accepted." He went back to Morocco where in nineteen fifty one; he began to teach plastic arts. He was very happy in that profession which left him plenty of free time, among other things to design theatre sets, to do some silk-screen printing and to start a small publicity business. Bonmati designed the Air Maroc logo. Life went on smoothly for him until trouble broke out in Morocco after the events in Algeria; he then went to teach for four years in Nice and a little by little developed an urge to come to Canada something he'd had in mind for a number of years already. *"First of all, in Nice, I was a foreigner, then the events of nineteen sixty –eight occurred with their accompanying turmoil which wasn't to my taste, so I came to Canada in sixty-nine, as a teacher. A profession I intended in principle to pursue... Oh yes, I had already exhibited my works and had, in fact, won a prize in Corsica, in a special category. In Canada? I adapted like everyone else, became familiar with the language, the customs, in fact everything went very smoothly."* He lost some time at the beginning, having no contacts with art galleries, knowing nothing of the art market in Québec so he continued to paint for his sole pleasure. In any case, Gabriel was not thinking in terms of a painting career but little by little, he met people in the trade and wheels began to churn. Very quickly he became known and a few art galleries did well with his pieces. Having to give up living in Morocco during this youth was probably the major disappointment of his life by nature, Gabriel believes in *"passive resistance".... "Oh.. When dealing with an idiot I don't react, unless he tries to prove that I'm as much of an idiot as he is, that I don't take, but if he's content just to be a idiot, I couldn't care less. Oh I'm very tolerant!*

Besides, I have so many qualities, (laughter) and then, wisdom comes with *age.*” Gabriel Bonmati is a charming man with a cool sense of humour which is never caught short. He can’t stand noise, particularly noise from machinery, but I can reassure any possible doubter that Gabriel Bonmat is not in any way a grouch, quite the opposite in fact.

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