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ARABELLA



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For Desson the act of painting is like drawing. But he takes it further line by line, brush stroke by brush stroke. Many of Desson's colourful paintings reflect a humanist spirit.

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FRONT COVER ARTIST

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More artist cover details in editorial. "Soul Mates".

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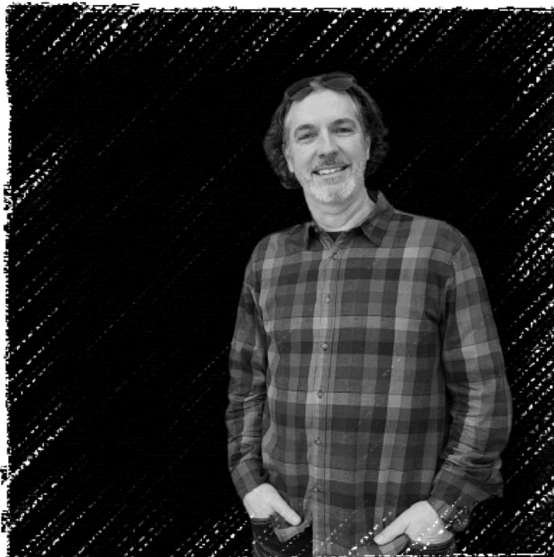


Photo : Natalie Beauchamp

ALAIN VEILLEUX

Top left :
I'm Coming Out!
c.2022
Mixed Media 40X40

Middle left :
My Life
c.2022
Mixed Media 30X30

Bottom Left :
Horse With No Name
c.2022
Mixed Media 48X60

Top right :
Shape of the Heart
c.2022
Mixed Media 40X40

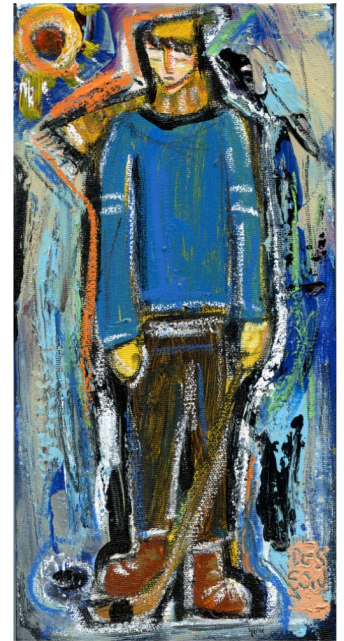
Bottom right :
Be My Baby
c.2022
Mixed Media 40X30



Aux sommets
c.2022
Mixed Media 14X11



Le Lac Rond
c.2022
Mixed Media 36X36



Hockey-bottines
c.2022
Mixed Media 12X6

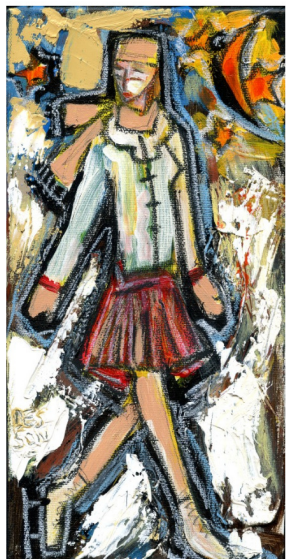


Deux pianistes et un peintre
c.2022
Mixed Media, 30X40

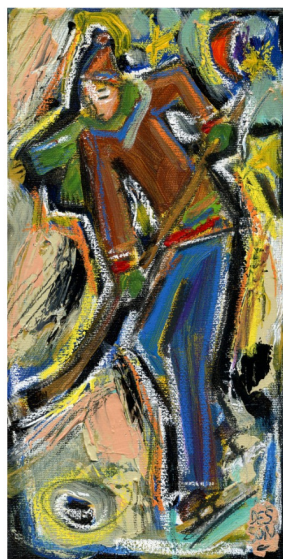


Photo : Ana Jovmir

DESSON



Left :
Patinons
c.2022
Mixed Media 12X6



Right :
L'échappée
c.2022
Mixed Media 12X6

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Desson

DENIS DESSON CHIASSON



Ana Jovmir, Photography





Artist Photograph, **Ana Jovmir**, Photography
Cover Page, **La musique de nuit**, oil, 30"x 24"
This Page, above, **L'offrande**, oil, 24"x 24"
Following Page, **Traverser la rivière**, oil, 24"x 24"

Denis DESSON Chiasson

Written by the artist (italic)
Written by John K. Grande

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For Denis Desson the act of painting is like drawing. The artist Desson takes it further line by line, brush stroke by brush stroke. Many of Desson's colourful paintings reflect a humanist spirit. With their bold dark outlining, and love of life, Desson's paintings recall Raoul Dufy's woodcut illustrations for Guillaume Apollinaire's *Le bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*.

A model once asked me, "Why do you paint?" That's a tough enough question I thought. I responded by turning my sketchbook over so that she could see one of the drawings. See that? That's why. I paint so I can draw.



This Page, above, **La halte des bohémiens**, oil, 40" x 30"

Following Page, **La parade**, oil, 40"x 30"

I love drawing, not just live models but everything in my life. It is almost a documentation of my days on earth - maybe it is a search for authenticity, the truth. Once you draw a subject you will never forget it, that feeling and you cannot lie to yourself. There is also the sense of finishing, a drawing or a painting. For me, I know a painting is finished for many reasons - I'm satisfied, or I cannot have anything more, it's well-balanced, or the colours are just right.





This Page, above, **Seul dans le village**, oil, 36" x 36"

Following Page, **trois villages jaunes**, oil, 48" x 36"

My painting reflects my reality and my dreams, I guess it is me. I have the fear of emptiness and that's reflected in my art. And to know that I have finished a sketch or a painting, it becomes almost a purpose, a way of life.

This search for authenticity resides in the small details that surround me and the composition of the painting. I had to understand what went together. For example, an easel with a painting on it, I don't understand why there are not more painters that paint their easel, it's the first thing we see in the morning, and it's the start of everything – a nexus in the center of our studio.



I could go on with other small details of my life. My paintings contain a vase of dried sunflowers, a pot of tea, animals, a window to the moon and rain - and then there comes my imagination, what I miss, my longing. Like the music, the women, mixing all this together with water, nature, tree and houses. I can have a sketch of a model or two that's how I construct a painting. It is a magic combination of life, longing and dreams.

In the space of a single painting, every conceivable area is filled with details. The painting becomes a space that represents an inner world, a world that the artist fills up internally with sometimes melancholy, other times joyous reveries that are drawn from the ordinary world, and this is extraordinary. This is what links Desson's paintings with the Beats, with Jack Kerouac, for there is a certain sadness to the dream-like quality of these paintings as if we were all on the road but never quite sure where we will end up. Each painting is pulled like a rabbit out of a hat, from an ongoing stream of unconscious associative elements that are always there. The women, the interiors, the animals – all the elements in a Desson painting can be drawn from nature as witnessed by the birds, wolves, cats or pigeons, or from the artist's studio life as with the easel, or from travel, or numerous other aspects of life.

For my painting, I like the analogy of a theater, with actors and props fixed in time. Somehow they always tell a story. During this process, I don't always know where I'm going exactly, that's why I always do a sketch first to give me a guideline. Accidents still happen, the choreography of the painting changes direction, and I'm glad it does. That is what makes me progress and by the time I'm finished, I am exhausted, but ok with what I've done. I know that it is well balanced. There is a story there - I can see it. I have worked very hard at what I do - everyday I'm at it. Sometimes the client sees another storyline and it is all good – my subjects live free.

These paintings are full of atmospheres that are not atmospheric. These places are conceived, and as conceptions they are ideal, exist in no particular place. Yet they are very solid, decorative, like a lost language, written in the spirit of a 1950s Henry Miller novel, but done for our times and that is less natural in its expression, even de-naturalized. Like images of art and industry from the post-war era, these paintings by Desson build an ideology, for they grab their subjects in a populist, stylized, and decorative way.

I've written about models earlier, they are very important in the process. I hire them to pose and I never know exactly what will happen. A series of poses happen and it is all quick poses, I manage to get maybe 40 sketches as I draw very fast. Mostly I let them do their things, some play the guitar, write or recite poetry, dance or just pose, some poses are a simple one, sitting, standing, reclining and then the model sometimes surprises me with a complicated pose that I never drawn before, it is beautiful. I redraw some of those and surround the models in the sketchbook with plants, water and the sun - everything that you need to live in a real life. They are ready to go if I want to transpose it on a canvas. Having that meeting with models opens me up to a vast new world of free women, bohemians and artists with a great power in their hearts.

It is as if all these women, and the accoutrements were integrated into a theatrical wheel of life, and the reverie co-exists with the ordinary. life as Desson presents it, could be a dream or it could be real, or both.



This Page, above, *Deux pianistes et un peintre*, oil, 30"x 40"

And the women are beautiful and omnipresent, even more than in real life. As idealized embodiments of abstract desire, sometimes real, other times dreams, they are there on paper or canvas. Desson's paintings represent a desire that exists in the collective imagination, that is tangibly intangible, and these dreams are colourful, joyful, voluptuous, sad, vivid. A certain enduring naiveté persists here, and a very folksy spontaneity.

Very human feelings fill these paintings and are transposed with a simplicity that is hard to find in today's intricate and complex world. The women who populate Desson's paintings exist in a variety of states of composure. Whether is a state of repose, or reflection, posturing or introspection, they populate an idealized place, and are themselves idealized.

The tableau is an island they these women, these painterly scenarios all exist on, and we appreciate their repose at a dream-like distance. The spirit is classical, with hints of Paul Cezanne, of Pablo Picasso, or of Marc Chagall.





Previous Page, **L'aventure**, oil, 36"x 24"

This Page, above, **Aller de l'avant**, oil, 24"x 30"

Following Page, **Déjeuner sur l'herbe avec une loutre**, oil, 36"x 24"

Following Page 2, left, **Attente à la gare**, oil, 36"x 12"

Following Page 2, right, **Nues pieds dans l'océan**, oil, 30"x 10"

I, of course, must ask the model, "Why do you pose?" For the money of and that is a very good answer, of course they need the money – we all do. The scenes, the paintings, the drawings – they all took place in my studio,

I have a small yellow house, on the south shore near the St. Lawrence River. I paint in the morning and then in the afternoon I have got to get out, go for a walk in the woods with my lunch and a book. I have to clear my head, sit down on a rock and look at the deer go by. See the geese fly in a white sky, seeing an animal or a bird without being detected makes me feel like I'm almost not here, and that's the kind of serenity that I love. Ideally I would like to have a separate studio from my home, but that's my life right now, I can't complain.







This Page and Following Page, one painting, **Le discret faon blanc**, oil, 48"x 96"

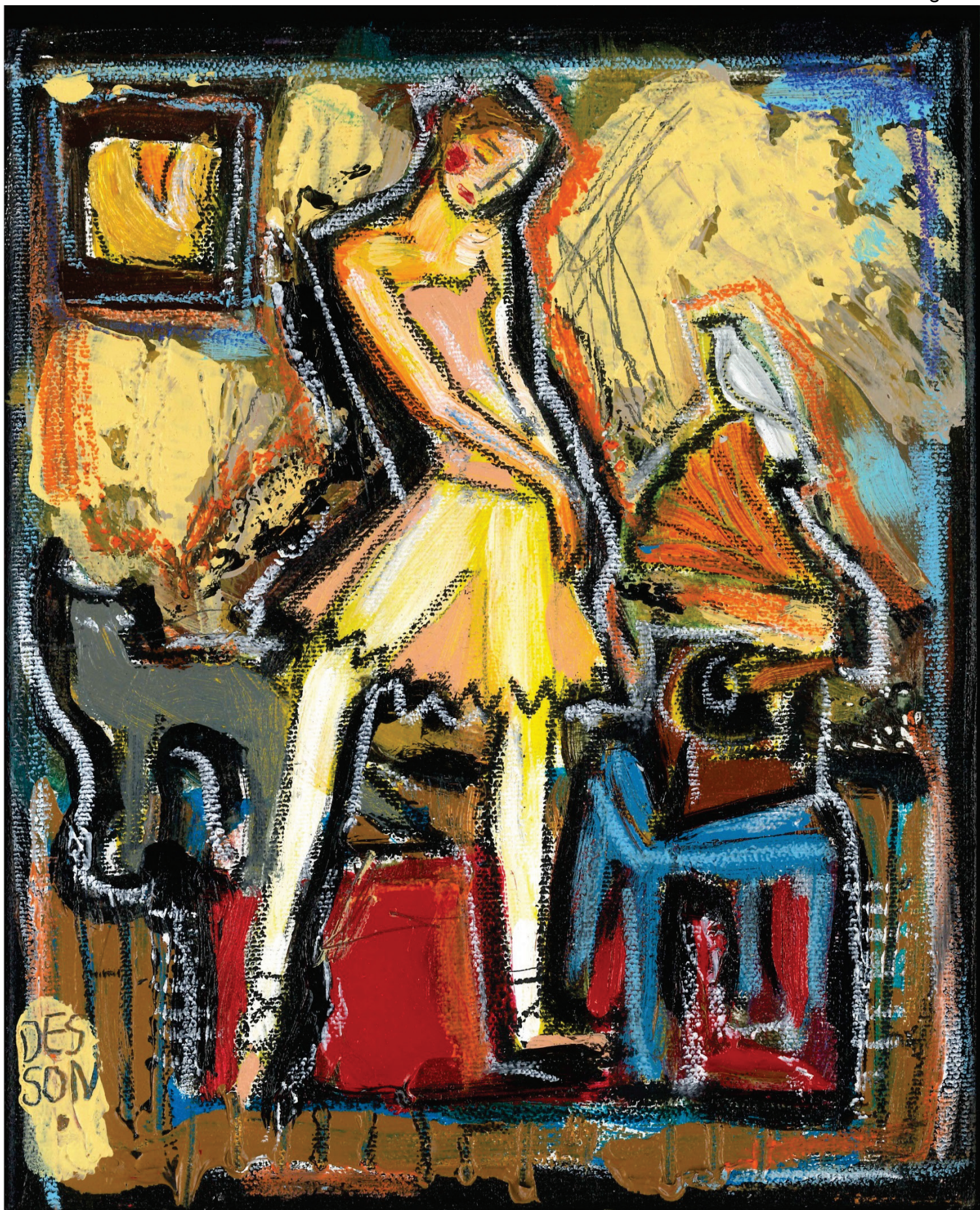
Sometimes I fall asleep on a park bench and when I wake up the foxes are staring at me. Then I must go home and tomorrow the day will start all over again.

I work very hard at what I do. I went to college to study graphic design, where I met a professor who now is a painter like me. Being immersed in art at the university I learned a variety of different crafts; like sculpture, screen printing, engraving, etc. We also studied about paintings from the past.

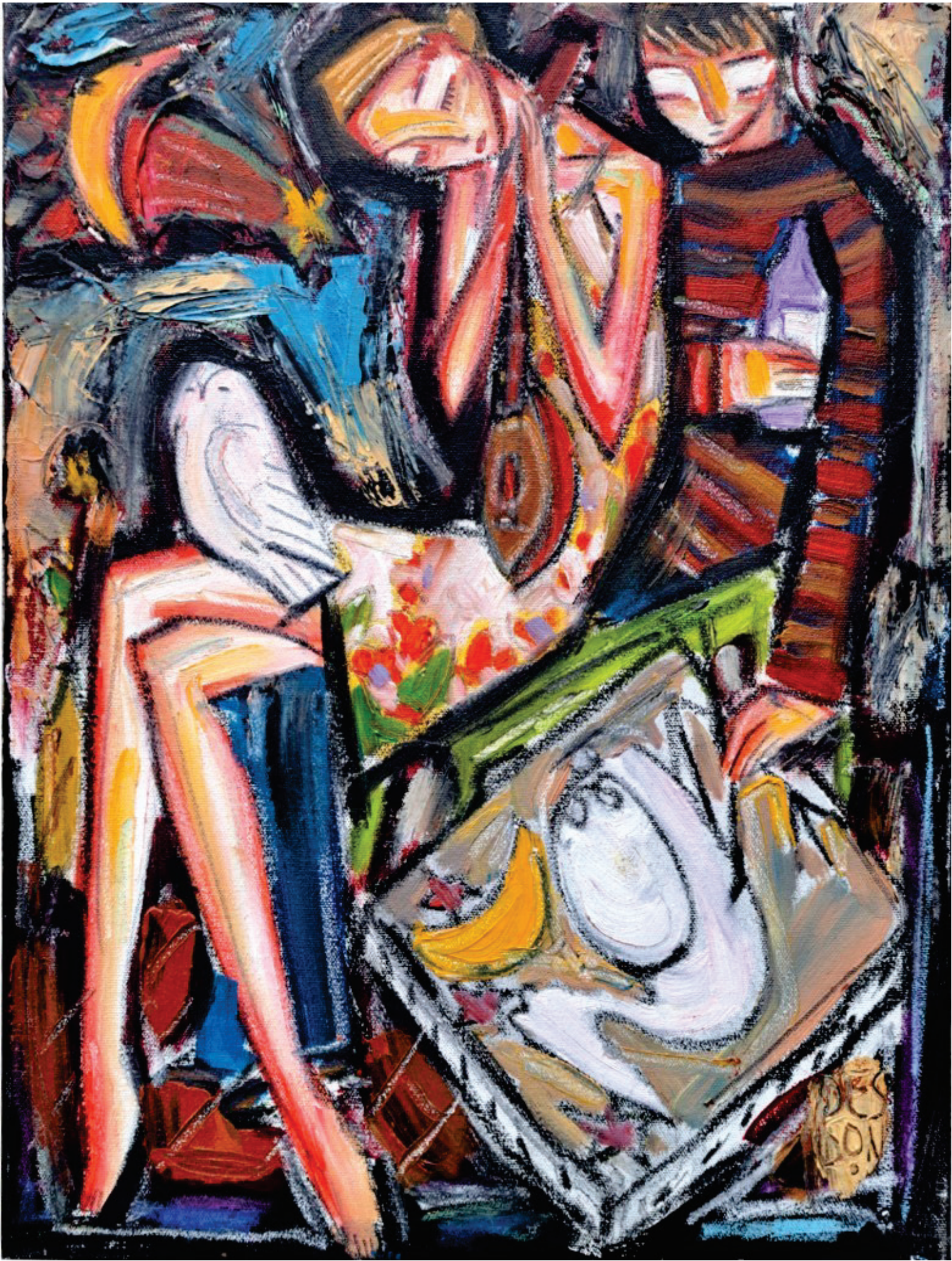


I liked Gauguin right away, Matisse, Degas, Buffet - I like the romantic painter. I considered myself a post-romantic, primarily because of my subject, they're interior and melancholy. Those long classes would turn out to be my golden years. I would never experience again in my life, being with 30 others artist, all creating our own universe, sharing and laughing. Now I am alone in my studio, with the occasional visit of a model or a gallerist.

When I went on to be represented in galleries - the first year I think I found 10 galleries that would represent me.



This Page, above, **Balerine rose et blanche**, oil, 10" x 8"
Following Page, **La toile d'oiseaux**, oil, 18" x 14"





This Page and Following Page, one painting, **La musique des bohemiens**, oil, 48" x 96"

I had a great fear of being copied, so in my mind if I'm everywhere, no one would dare copy my style or subject. I was in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Quebec and even Newfoundland. Being in a lot of galleries really freed myself to paint any subject I want. I knew that of all the galleries one of them would take the painting I was working on.



With the help of a gallerist I learned to organize myself, do solo art shows or a collective one. One of the best memories I had was my first solo art show in Calgary. I met a lot of clients and other artists as well, I just felt so welcome. It was a very nice feeling when you work alone. The next day, the gallerist asked me “Do you want to see the mountains?” I almost said no as I was so tired. We went in her truck and drove. Slowly the Rockies grew from the horizon, it was majestic, we went to Lake Louise, Banff and other sites in the region.



This Page, above, **Le chat et l'accordeoniste**, oil, 20"x 16"



This Page, above, **Le petite ensemble**, oil, 24"x 20"





Previous Page, **The field of Lili**, oil, 36" x 24"

This Page, above, **La petite fille qui lit**, oil, 20" x 16"



This Page, above, **Le lac rond**, oil, 36"x 36"

I saw a lot of elk everywhere. It was one of the best days of my life. I might have, if I knew that Banff existed when I was 16, I would have gone there and never come back. It was such a beautiful experience.

Every chance I get to do a painting exchange with another artist, I do it - even the exchange of a drawing. Two stand out for me because they are so different from my craft - my old professor Dansereau and Marie-Eve Cournoyer.



This Page, above, **autoportrait**, oil, 24"x 24"

Following Page, above, **Aux sommets**, oil, 14"x 11"

Following Page 2, right, **La femme seule dans un cafe**, oil, 8"x 24"

They made paintings with only form and colors. You could build a room around one of the paintings. Their work seems to expand, take the light and does what they want with it. You buy a chair that goes with it, then a table, etc. You build a nest around the painting. On the contrary my paintings could go anywhere, you could hang them in a barn or on a tree, they are like a window, a little world - that's a good term for what I do, a little melancholy world.



DES
SON

With Desson's latest studies, the life of the model and the life of the artist meet in the studio. When Desson first engaged models simply to work on his drawing and painting technique they actually transformed his approach to, and artistic process. In searching for a greater depth and meaning in his painting, his drawing, he inadvertently discovered a deeper appreciation of life. And this was the exchange that occurred as if by surprise when these models began to spur on the artist's imagination.

His drawing process improved, but the model's visit brought much more. In the words of the singer Georges Moustaki, "Non je ne suis jamais seule avec ma solitude." In the words of Desson, "My solitude disappears and finally I find myself creating together with my models." Models bring light for Denis Desson. All the world may come and go speaking of Michelangelo, but for Desson the models who come and go have so much to offer, and that includes their own artistic predisposition whether it be in dance, literature, painting, music composition or photography.

Desson learns as he draws from life, draws from the models who bring life to his studio, and to his life. And he will often draw them while they are engaged in these interests... As he says, "To draw someone who is drawing is a very special experience. My paintings and drawings are ultimately homages to these women, the models I work with." These women are the ultimate source of mystery for Denis Desson. "Somewhat bohemian, they bring a lot to my life." And to his art which is a part of life, and vice versa!

To see more of his work please contact Natalie Beauchamp, natalie@balcondart.com

Denis DESSON Chiasson
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