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The whimsical art of Normand Hudon



By Bernard Mendelman, November 5th, 2014

A major exhibition and sale of 40 years of Normand Hudon's artistic achievements plus a new book, Normand Hudon, artist or magician, will be launched this Sunday at Le Balcon d'art in St. Lambert.

Born in Montreal in 1929, a man of multiple talents, Hudon's ability as a caricaturist surfaced early. He sold his first pieces to La Presse when he was 16 years old. Two years later, he enrolled in the École des beaux-arts de Montréal. During this three-year period he published his first caricatures in La Patrie and the Petit Journal. At this same time, he also began to show his artwork in Montreal.

In 1951, Hudon travelled in Europe where he attended the Académie Montmartre in Paris, and studied the grand masters at the Louvre. Returning to Quebec in 1952, Hudon again started working as caricaturist and illustrator for several newspapers. In a new departure, he took to the stage in a cabaret show, which combined humour and drawing and that same year he made his television debut when the medium first appeared in this province.

He continued as an illustrator for the books of many Québécois authors and produced a number of posters, all the while still displaying his paintings in Montreal galleries. In 1954, he published the first of four collections of his caricatures. Then, in 1958, he became the caricaturist for Le Devoir, where he gained recognition for his scathing political cartoons of Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis, whom he always showed accompanied by a vulture. He moved to a similar position at La Presse in 1961 and remained there until 1963.

Hudon loved to poke at public figures. He took pot shots at Charles de Gaulle, Jean Drapeau, Jean Chrétien and Richard Nixon. Had he still been alive I can imagine all the biting jibes he would have directed towards members of the Parti Québécois.

In 1965 Hudon designed a cover for Time magazine and that year also prepared four ceiling panels for the Energy Pavilion at Expo 67. From that year forward he concentrated only on his art.

Hudon, who once met Picasso, was influenced by Pablo's imagery of fish, which led him to develop his own fish fetish, incorporating them into his works a number of times. A most popular subject of Hudon's art are priests and lawyers who he scrutinized with his dry, whimsical humour. Children in spontaneous merriment often appear in his works.

Hudon died in 1997 and since his death, demand for his paintings has seen them quadruple in value. Anxiously awaiting the exhibition will be Westmount resident Denis Lépine, who has acquired more than 250 illustrations, caricatures and paintings by Hudon, picking them up wherever he could at auction houses and garage sales.

Collecting Hudon's output has been Lépine's passion for over 25 years. I first met Lépine in 2001 when he was displaying his Hudonist collection at a community centre. Over the years he has shown his collection at 14 such non-for-sale venues, allowing the public to share his enthusiasm for the artist.

The Hudon exhibition at Le Balcon d'art will consist of nearly 100 works including paintings, drawings, lithographs, serigraphs and giclées. The exhibition will open with a reception on November 9 from 12 to 5 p.m. and will continue until November 19. This spacious art gallery, under the guiding hands of Bonnitta, Fay and Natalie Beauchamp, has been in operation since 1985 and is an integral part of this growing community.

The book, Normand Hudon, painter or magician, edited by Pierre St. Martin (in collaboration with Multi Art), will be in bookstores Nov. 10. A deluxe, limited edition in a genuine leather cover is available exclusively at the gallery.

Le Balcon d'art is located at 650 Notre Dame Ave. in St. Lambert (20 minutes from downtown Montreal over the Victoria Bridge).

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The whimsical art of Normand Hudon

Bernard Mendelman
Write Where I Belong



Normand Hudon's Le Frère Léo, Wouups!

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- ★ Candlelight Concert: Classical Trio with Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano
Thursday, November 20 at 7 pm
Keiko Otani, Radu Covaciu and Mariana Muscaluc from the local Musicians of the World Symphony Orchestra play classical favourites for oboe, clarinet, and piano. Tickets \$5, on sale now at the library.
- ★ Meet the Artist with Antonietta Grassi
Thursday, November 27 at 7 pm
Visual artist Antonietta Grassi opens her exhibit Deliberate Apertures and Accidental Enclosures at the Library Art Gallery. Light refreshments will be served. Free!

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